

William Mackey

Literary Diglossia, Biculturalism and Cosmopolitanism in Literature

In areas where two written languages are used, each may be limited to its set of functions or literary genres. Some writers, by becoming masters of two languages and cultures succeed in overcoming both the pitfalls of cosmopolitan authors writing only in their second or acquired language and the difficulties of unilingual authors writing in or about a culture which is not their own. The latter and their cosmopolitan literature, once considered an oddity, have now become commonplace in Western Europe, North America and other areas of massive immigration. The literature produced in such contexts is sometimes characterized by special traits such as semantic shift, over-generalization, code-switching, avoidance strategies, interference and uncertainty. In balance, however, if we examine the production of bilingual and bicultural literature in our century, we could say that, far from impoverishing the literatures to which they contribute, they are more likely to enrich them.

The concept of cosmopolitanism goes back to the creation of the nation-state in Europe between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries. It was first understood as an opposition to nationalism and patriotism. Appearing in English before the middle of the seventeenth century, the terms *cosmopolitan* and *cosmopolite* acquired a connotation opposite to patriotism and nationalism. Cosmopolitanism has been associated both with the ideal of citizen-of-the-world and with the reality of émigré populations at home in two or more languages and cultures. It is especially the effect of two languages and cultures on the creation of literature which concerns us here: the cosmopolitanism and bilingualism of writers and, in particular, the effects of the related phenomena of biculturalism and diglossia on the production of literary texts.

Cosmopolitanism in literature, as it has been called by nationalists who find it unfitting, is by no means exceptional. Writers and artists and others of various skills and ambitions have always gravitated toward the centers of productivity, power and influence where they could find both uses for their talents and a public that permitted them to live by their pen or their brush. During the centuries of Roman supremacy, all roads led eventually to Rome.

It should not surprise us therefore if many of the masters of Latin literature were not Roman by birth.¹ In fact, the first known Latin author, Livius Andronicus, who composed a Latin version of the *Odyssey*, was a Greek slave. Even the earliest Roman writers were seldom of Roman birth. Seneca, Quintilian, Lucan and Martial were all from Spain; so were several of the later writers, like Orosius, Prudentius and, of course, Isidore of Seville. Even Virgil, Catullus, Livy and the two Plinys were not of Roman blood; they were reputedly of Celtic origin. Ovid and Horace were both Oscan. Cicero was Volscian, and Varro was from Gaul. And just as non-Romans wrote the classical literature that was the glory of Rome, non-Arabs

like the Persians, wrote great literature in Arabic at a time when that language was dominant over a wide area of the world.²

Native-born writers of national literatures have claimed to have been enriched by study of another tongue. Roman authors like Cicero and Caesar are known to have written in Greek, a foreign tongue which most patricians liked to acquire, sometimes even before their native Latin.³ Many of the pioneers of the great vernacular literatures, the very makers of the written languages of Europe, chose to write some of their works in an acquired tongue. Chaucer, for example, produced some of his works in Italian, the leading literary language of his time. Milton wrote several of his sonnets in Italian; he was also fluent in three other written languages. Tolstoy wrote parts of his work in French. After attempting to write in Russian (possibly under the influence of Lou Salomé),⁴ Rilke succeeded in writing poetry in French as Stefan George had done.

Until some time in the seventeenth century, most writers were, by definition, biliterate. Since they were schooled and had become literate within a classical tradition of learning, they wrote for a reading public who had been similarly educated. After the emergence of national vernacular languages, the European classical tradition looked to Latin and Greek models to imitate for form, style, content and even language. So much so, that many academics remained quite indifferent to their national vernacular, especially in smaller countries like Holland where academic life in the seventeenth century was lived jointly in Italian, Latin, French, Dutch and English. Even when their countries were at war with each other, this did not prevent writers from using the language of the enemy.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, such indifference was no longer tolerated. For a new idea had taken hold of Europe: the idea of national and linguistic allegiance. It had entered that complex of collective sentiments crystalized in the Romantic Movement whose

most militant form, political romanticism, was expressed in the dominant ideology of the period: one people, one nation, one culture and one language.

In this one language, the national tongue, the Romantics presumed to have discovered the soul of the nation. Love of the national language became identified with love of country as it did, for example, during the Magyar Revival of the 1840s, enkindled by great writers like Lajos Kossuth and Sandor Petöfi, and during the Italian Risorgimento by the Count Benso de Cavour, Alessandro Manzoni and his famous disciple, Giuseppe Verdi. It was in the national tongue that writers were supposed to express their innermost thoughts and feelings, to show their love of the language by the way they used it, thereby enriching and improving the language. It was on the basis of their works that standard dictionaries, grammars and guides to usage could be compiled. The writers of the nation were expected to write in the national language since it alone embodied the national “character.” Never mind that within the boundaries of the nation and those of its ever expanding empire there were people who spoke other languages. It was up to the “lesser breeds within the law” to conform if they hoped to become civilized.

Within this new context of linguistic nationalism, bilingual writers had to decide to which nation they owed their allegiance, for they were put in the often difficult position of having to choose to write in one language rather than in the other. The decision often depended on the masters of their changing borderlands. In Alsace-Lorraine, for example, writers like René Schickele, Hans Arp and Iwan Goll switched their language allegiance from French to German to French according to the changing circumstances.⁵ It is not surprising that one of Goll’s masterpieces was entitled *Jean sans Terre*. Although Goll would have preferred to have been identified simply as a citizen of Europe, he was claimed by both France and Germany.

It is characteristic of nation-states to claim as their own all writers who were born within their borders. In 1909, France was proud to proclaim that one of its writers had won the Nobel Prize in literature, conveniently forgetting to mention that the texts for which the prize was awarded were not written in the official national language of France but in a tongue which at the time was systematically suppressed, its use forbidden both in school and at play. This language was the Provençal of Frédéric Mistral.

At the height of European nationalism, it did not seem normal that a writer should produce work in any language other than that of the state in which he was a citizen. As George Steiner has pointed out,

*until very recently, a writer has been almost by definition a being rooted in his native idiom, a sensibility housed more closely than ordinary men and women in the skill of one language.*⁶

Today, however, with a few notable exceptions, it has become increasingly difficult for the nation-state to impose linguistic and cultural hegemony without engendering interethnic conflict or civil strife. One need only reflect on the demise of the Soviet Union and the rise of the notion of “ethnic cleansing” in parts of Europe where irredental nationalism has prevailed over a moribund economic ideology. In the rest of Europe, linguistic chauvinism had become less fashionable. As a result, Steiner continues,

*the conditions of language stability, of local national self-consciousness in which literature flourished between the Renaissance and say the 1950s are now under extreme stress.*⁶

The changes have affected, not only the choice of language but also its forms as an examination of contemporary English will attest. Dominated by a youth unschooled in the classical tradition of neologism, the

unbridling of English in the 1960s, as well as its expanded use as a world idiom have accelerated the evolution of its traditional Germanic morpho-syntax into one of juxtaposition.⁷ As our century draws to its close, we are witnessing the beginning of what has been called “the breakdown of nation.” The expression is that of Leopold Kohr, who predicted the phenomenon.⁸ As a result, if the number and importance of supra-national commonwealths like the Council of Europe are increasing, there are likely to be within them more not fewer nations and states, many of them, like those of the Basques and the Catalans in Spain, the result of linguistic irredentism or of language revivals such as experienced by writers in Israel and the Irish Republic.

As a consequence of the very linguistic nationalism that most of these future writers must now transform, they will not have been trained to write in their ancestral tongues. They will have to repeat the story of the rise of the very European national languages that stunted the growth of their own national vernaculars. Some of these literary movements will succeed while others will fail. Nevertheless, because of the geolinguistic importance of supra-national languages like English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese, it is doubtful that all of these local tongues will be able to assume all the functions of society, especially those related to technology and scientific research.⁹ The nation-state of the future is destined to thrive in situations of literary diglossia, and its writers in contexts of literary biculturalism.

Let us first take a look at some contemporary states which have developed plurilingual societies (the context of the writers) before going on to the examples themselves. The term “plurilingual” refers to bilingual and trilingual writers, or to those possessing competence in any number of languages that can be found within a given society. The term “society” is appropriate since it is less restrictive than the term “state.” For plurilingual societies are found not

only in the bilingual state, where two or more languages are given juridical status—often in order to enable each language group to live and function in one language. There are, therefore, many more plurilingual societies than there are bilingual or plurilingual states. Luxembourg, for example, is a plurilingual society with a national official language, Luxembourgish, the home language of nearly all its citizens, and two foreign languages, German and French, in constant use and indeed dominant in many of the essential functions of society. The situation in Switzerland is very different. In that plurilingual state, German and French along with Italian are national official languages, with Rhaeto-Romance as a national language. But the cantonal varieties of speech used by seventy per cent of the population are not official written languages like German and French.

Yet both Switzerland and Luxembourg house a large population of nationals from other lands, including many foreign workers. In both countries they account for almost twenty percent of the population, contributing to the plurilingual make-up of these countries. This proportion may seem unusual, but it is remarkable only because of the relatively small size of these countries. In an area where “everybody knows everybody,” one is more likely to notice the presence of people from other lands. The actual percentage is no greater than in more highly populated centers like New York and Paris where, it has been said, one person in four is either an immigrant or of foreign ancestry.

If we cross the Channel to London, we get similar but much better documented figures. In the latest language survey (1987) of the Inner London Education Authority, we find a hundred and seventy-two languages spoken by students as mother-tongues in the schools of London.¹⁰ This is more than twice the number of local and national languages in all the countries of the European Community. Of course, plurilingual societies can be found on all

continents. Another recent survey, this one from Los Angeles, counted more than a hundred mother-tongues in the primary schools of that city. Indeed, half of the kindergarten school population was unable to understand the language in which they were being taught.

Plurilingual societies are typical of our century—especially the second half. Never have so many people traveled so far and so fast to change residence. Since the end of the two world wars, there has been a veritable exodus of émigrés, displaced persons, boat people and foreign workers whose temporary residential status has served simply to confirm the French dictum that “*il n’y a rien de plus permanent que l’intérimaire.*” Not to speak of the thousands of refugees whose numbers have often transformed the language and ethnic make-up of entire cities. In the space of less than a decade, for example, some half million political refugees transformed Miami into the second largest Cuban city. The effects on the civic institutions and services were such that in 1974 Spanish was declared an official language of the municipality.¹¹

With this great movement of peoples from all quarters of the globe, it is not surprising to find expatriate writers producing more of their works in one of the main languages of their adopted countries. Clearly, plurilingual societies are no longer exceptional. In the larger centers of population they are even becoming the norm. Much of the writing produced in the world today is done of necessity within the context of bilingualism. But what does this mean?

Since mid-century the notion of bilingualism has expanded from an either/or, all-or-nothing concept to one of wide-ranging relativity. So much so that it has become a field of study in which thousands of titles can now be found.¹² The works listed cover several different areas of study ranging from individual bilingualism to institutional bilingualism; they include special fields of study like the analysis of interference, bilingual writings, interlinguistics,

language contact, linguistic borrowing, linguistic irredentism, bilingual education, multinational societies and bilingual language policy.

Several of these distinctive areas are important for the study of literature. They include the differences between individual and collective bilingualism, which relate to content and context, to form and meaning in the literary text. Then, there is the further distinction between the bilingualism of the text and the bilingualism of the writer. Some authors with low bilinguality (the nature, quality and degree of personal bilingualism)¹³ produce highly bilingualized texts in a single language, e.g., Loranger. Others of a high degree of bilingualism produce entirely unilingual texts, but in two languages, e.g., Beckett. In plurilingual societies, differences between the bilinguality of the authors and the bilingualism of their writings can produce a literature of remarkable variety.

Comparing these literatures of plurilingual societies can supply insights into the relation between language, culture and society. For no two plurilingual societies are likely to be identical; their differences may be considerable, especially in the uses to which they put their constituent languages, and in the degree in which these uses are structured. In some plurilingual societies, each language has its specific set of functions—in which case we have a situation of diglossia. This is a common situation in societies with stable ethnic minorities who use their ancestral tongues in speaking and the national or official language for writing, since it is in that language that they have been schooled. Quite often their spoken tongue is actually a dialect of their national language. This difference is common, for example in countries like Switzerland, Austria and Germany, where German is one of the official languages. In some cases, however, both languages are used for writing but not for the same purposes. Official, academic and scientific writing may be done in one language; literature, drama and journalism may be the

functions of the other language. This type of functional distribution has been called “literary diglossia.”¹⁴

The term *diglossia* is the Greek word for bilingualism. Toward the end of the last century, French Hellenists used the term to describe the functional distribution of the classical and the vernacular in Greek society. In this century it was not until the mid-fifties that the notion began to expand to mean what it does today—the functional distribution of languages and language varieties.¹⁵ A growing realization of the importance of the functional distribution of language in society (including its literature) has given rise to a wide range of descriptive studies on the great variety of diglossic situations to be found in different quarters of the globe.¹⁶

Although the term *diglossia* may not be as well-known as the term *bilingualism*, the idea of different languages for different purposes has been around for a long time. It used to be thought that certain languages were needed for certain purposes. These functional attributes of language appear in diglossia folklore, which changes however from age to age. The language of love, for example, has changed from Occitan to Italian to Spanish to French. For Marguerite of Navarre, author of the *Heptaméron*, it was Castilian. For Charles V, however, this noble tongue was the language of God. French was the language of ambassadors and mistresses, while Italian was reserved for ladies of the court and German for the driving of horses. Some centuries later, this Germanic dialect had acquired more noble functions. The Austrian writer Grillparzer, for whom German was a mothertongue, reserved that language for the highest of functions. While he considered French to be the language of conversation and Italian the language of song, it was Greek for philosophy, Latin for rhetoric and English for the exchange of platitudes.

But the functional distribution of languages is not limited to the folklore of diglossia. In some societies it is of most vital importance.¹⁷ For more than a millennium,

for example, the only appropriate language for Roman Catholic services all over the world was Latin or, in the case of the Eastern rites, a language of comparable antiquity.

Another example of literary diglossia is the language of commemorative inscriptions on monuments such as the Wolfe-Montcalm monument in Quebec City, which Governor Dalhousie had erected in 1827. England at the time had many other such monuments with Latin inscriptions, for the classical tradition was still strong in Europe. So much so that even that ardent Anglophile and “harmless drudge,” Samuel Johnson declared (in 1776) that he would not tolerate seeing the sacred walls of Westminster Abbey desecrated with inscriptions in English. This was perhaps understandable when we consider that, for many centuries in Europe, Latin had been reserved for writings that were supposed to endure; since the form and meanings of a classical language remained unchanged, it could supposedly be understood by the literate anywhere and at any time. While vernaculars were considered unstable and dialectal, Latin was seen as permanent and universal. It was believed that Latin would outlast all of the national vernaculars. Even the erudite Francis Bacon was to declare in his *Novum Organum* that when people were better educated, Latin would become universal thereby making English obsolete. At that time, most scientific writings in Europe, whether originating in Paris, Prague or Berlin, were written in Latin, which was also the language of all academic writing. Latin was also the medium of instruction in many European universities well into the last century.

In plurilingual societies today, it is rather the national tongue—often along with an international language like French or English—which has assumed the functions formerly reserved for Latin. The same functions normally attributed to the national languages are now being assumed by local vernaculars. But this type of diglossia has not yet stabilized, since the dynamics of irredentism moves

more and more functions to the side of re-emergent national languages.

The process is, of course, nothing new. It occurred during the Reformation and the Renaissance, and again during the nationalist revolutions of mid-nineteenth century especially in Eastern Europe during the rise of new national languages like Hungarian and Czech. It emerged once again with the movements of national self-determination that redrew the map of Europe after World War I, supposedly along ethno-linguistic lines, but at the same time creating new plurilingual states like Yugoslavia, a country left with two alphabets, five official languages, three religious traditions, eight nationalities, all of which have again become forces in the creation of more nation-states.¹⁸

In each of these changing political and social upheavals bilingual writers are caught in the cross-fire. For writers of this sort, and indeed for any bilingual author who must write down in one language what is perceived in another, there are problems deeper than the choice of language, the greatest being those of literary biculturalism. Most of the difficulties of bicultural writers stem from the need to express in one language concepts that come to them from another—difficulties not only in expressing them, but even in thinking about them. At times, polyglotism has been associated with the behavior of multiple personalities. For example, while living as one of his twenty-five personalities, Billy Milligan spoke Serbian during moments of aggression.¹⁹ Such situations have created fundamental problems through the inextricable relationship between thought, language and culture.²⁰

Bilingual writers caught in a social or radical transition period are often unsure which language to use. In the Prague of the early twentieth century writers like Kafka and Rilke were at times linguistically ill at ease. Kafka, for example, had Czech, Yiddish and German, a language in which he was not entirely at home but felt obliged to use.

Sometimes this linguistic uncertainty leads to a creative paralysis, as it once did in the case of the German poet Stefan George who at one time wrote better in French than in German, or at least felt he did. After returning to Germany, there was a period in which he wrote nothing at all, because, as he said "*Ich weiss einfach nicht in welcher Sprache ich schreiben soll.*" He simply didn't know which language to use. But it may not have been only the second tongue that made him hesitate. He had some knowledge of eight.²¹

This problem of language choice is now becoming widespread, not only in the re-emerging regional languages of Europe, but also in the developing vernaculars of the Third World, scheduled to replace the imperial languages of Europe as the vehicles of new national literatures.²² Yet since most potential readers in the Third World will have been educated in French or English, many writers may hesitate to write in the vernacular.²³ The Caribbean is a good example of the gap between policy and practice. For half a century there has been talk of producing a literature in the creole vernaculars of some five million people. Yet the leading writers like Césaire, Roumain, Schwartz-Bart and Patrick Chamoiseau continued writing in French, albeit with increased interlarding of local idiom.²⁴ For such writers, the problems of bilingualism are compounded by those of biculturalism.

The notion of biculturalism or multiculturalism is, of course, dependent on the meaning of culture. With some hundred attested definitions of culture, some of them mutually exclusive, it is not surprising that biculturalism has meant different things to different people. What concerns the literary text, however, are the meanings which relate to the two conceptual universes of the writer.

Since languages are both the products and the constituents of cultures, different cultures will make use of the elements of language in a different way, selecting what is important for the culture and ignoring the rest. Some

cultures may represent one area of the physical environment by making numerous functional distinctions in the conceptual categories and the language elements standing for them. Others may make few such distinctions.

The subtleties are not always obvious, especially to émigré writers, who sometimes find themselves in the position of the educated foreigner, as illustrated by this passage from an English novel of the mid-twenties. The context is that of an agency in London. Leonard has just been interviewed by Dr Stack, the headmaster of a grammar school in the south of England. After the interview, Leonard is told to check with the clerk on his way out and report on the results.

Leonard was endeavouring to formulate the results of his parley with Dr. Stack. I've got the job.—No, that would do for at home. I've been taken on. Sounded like a dock-labourer. I've been engaged.—That was not quite the thing either. The clerk came to his rescue, and made further verbal experiments unnecessary. Did Dr Stack offer you the post? What figure did he mention?

Paul Selver. 1927. *Schooling*.
London: Jarrolds, 20-21

Although the basic relations in language are those that exist between linguistic forms and the extra-linguistic settings in the contexts of situation and communication and culture, the most operable relations are those that are found between the elements themselves as they change values according to the context of other elements with which they associate.

No two languages are likely to group referents in the same way. The hundred or more meanings of *run* in English are not those of its usual French equivalent, *courir*.

Compare:

<i>Run a car</i>	<i>Conduire une auto</i>
<i>Run away</i>	<i>Partir à la course</i>
<i>Run for election</i>	<i>Présenter sa candidature</i>
<i>Run a shop</i>	<i>Tenir un magasin</i>

The meaning of each word or other element is not only affected by those with which it occurs; it also has an effect upon them. Linking *run* with *fast* gives a meaning to *fast* quite different from what it would be if the same word were linked with *stand*, for example. *Run fast* implies movement; *stand fast*, implies the opposite. Even with the aid of verbal context, however, there is room for much ambiguity. It is the situational context that helps to reduce this.

In the transmission and understanding of meaning, all contexts act and interact at once. Where one language may respond grammatically to a change in context, another may do so by altering a word or even by calling for an entirely different sentence. Where the same change of context may affect a single word in one language, it may call for the formulation of an entirely different sentence in another language. If the English *Hello, Mr. Martin* is equivalent to the French *Bonjour, Monsieur*, it does not hold that *Hello, stranger* can be rendered as *Bonjour l'étranger*. French requires a different approach to the situation as expressed in the sentence *On ne vous voit plus*. (Literally: *One does not see you*.)

The languages of the bilingual writer may react differently to changes in different types of context. Yet each language is the prisoner of the wider context in which it is used, that is, the context of culture within which the entire hierarchy of all other contexts can have meaning—verbal and non-verbal.

In Canada and the United States, authors writing in French, Italian and German and other languages are faced with North American concepts categorized in English and with English labels.²⁵ In none of the “foreign” languages of these authors are there exact equivalents of such everyday North American concepts as “job,” “boss,” “gang,” “tough,” “cute.” Although such notions may be quite usual in the everyday speech of their North American readers, often with such adaptations of the English origi-

nal form as *une jobbe* or *la giobba*, writers who wish to avoid such forms are faced with a real dilemma. If they elect to use only the forms of the standard language in which they are writing—not *une jobbe* but rather *un emploi*, *un métier*, *un travail*, or *une profession*; not *la giobba* but rather *il impiego*, *il mestiere*, *il lavoro* or *la professione*—then they are unlikely to convey the North American idea of work found without obligation of attachment or interest, including the product of such work (*il m'a fait une bonne jobbe*). And if, in spite of this, writers still decide to stick to the standard forms, they may unwittingly fall into another trap, making use of the standard form in a borrowed phrase, pattern or collocation, as indeed some Canadian novelists have done.²⁶ Emile Gagnon, for example, in his novel *Une fille est venue* writes “*Il avait de l'emploi dans un magasin*” following the pattern of *He had a job in a store*.

The influence, however, goes far beyond the words of the language in which the author is writing. It may penetrate the style and even the grammar. When it does, the influence is more subtle and much more likely to escape notice. It would lead us too far afield to go into this matter here. One could supply from the works of North American writers, quotations in the use of prepositions, gerunds, participles, infinitives, structural adverbs, compound adjectives, agreement of tenses and collocations to illustrate the subtle influence of one language on the other. As a consequence, some bilingual writers suffer from an ill-defined feeling of linguistic insecurity—at least in one of their languages. Unexpectedly, surprising gaps may be found in the vocabulary of one of their languages, as illustrated in the amazement voiced by G.K. Chesterton when he realized that Joseph Conrad, at the height of his literary fame, did not know the English word *cad*—although he could have found a seemingly suitable equivalent in the word *scoundrel*.

This feeling of uncertainty is akin to what has been called “schizoglossia,” a sort of paralysis before the unfor- giving norm of one of the writer’s languages, especially if it happens to be one with a low degree of tolerance for deviation.²⁷ Schizoglossia is not to be confused, however, with language schizophrenia where the bilingual writer rejects all further contact with the mother-tongue because it is so emotionally associated with some profoundly detested personal experience.²⁸

Some bilingual writers get out of the dilemma by playing a foxy game where the stakes are always kept low. The game consists of conveying a well-known borrowed cultural notion belonging to what will later be included in the concepts of high intensity, not by the foreign word usual in the speech of the readers, but by a term which is completely acceptable in the standard language. The catch is that this term is not a very well-known word, either in the standard language or in the speech of the readers; it can therefore be easily tampered with. What the bilingual writer does is simply to make an imperceptible extension of the accepted meaning of the word. For example, in North America it has been said that you have to have push to get by, but without getting too pushy—especially if you don’t have any pull. It is almost impossible to convey this notion of push and pushy in standard French, since any word in the usual repertoire, whether it be *dynamisme* or *débrouillardise*, just does not cover the subject. How did the Canadian novelist Ringuet (pen name of Philippe Panneton) get out of this dilemma in his novel, *Le Poids du jour*?²⁹ The author solved his problem by enlisting the rather rare French word, *entregent*, not really meaning “push” or “pushy,” but with the accepted sense of “worldly wisdom.” His readers, however, gathered from the context that it meant something akin to the American “to have plenty of push”—and no one was any the worse for this slight extension in meaning.³⁰

If, however, bilingual writers refuse to revive a dying vocabulary in order to save their reputation, and limit themselves to simple, usual words, they may then fall into still another trap. The catch here is that the simple word may cover much more ground than does the concept one is trying to convey. In the language of the North American superhighway, for example, no matter how you pass someone on the road, you simply pass him—on the left, head-on or far beyond. In French, however, the way you pass him makes an obligatory difference, depending on whether you are passing on one side (*doubler*), passing head-on (*croiser*) or going beyond (*dépasser*). Not one of these terms covers the ground of the English word pass. The French cognate of this form, the verb *passer*, also covers a lot of ground, but it does not cover the same ground. By making it cover the same ground, the writer may well be using an equally simple and usual word to convey the concept he has in mind, as does Roger Lemelin in *Au pied de la pente douce*; but he may not convey the precision that some readers of the European standard language might expect. Some sentences may even be ambiguous to these readers. Other bilingual writers solve this problem by using two terms—one from each language. For example, in Germaine Guèvremont's novel *Marie-Didace*³¹ the borrowed word *peddleur* is followed by a standard equivalent *colporteur*.

This device is of great antiquity: it was well known in England during the Middle Ages.³² And examples of such French-English bilingual doublets can be found in the English literature of the period from the *Ancren Riwe* of the year 1225 or thereabouts, where we find such phrases as *ignoraunce, that is, unwisdom*, through Chaucer, right up to the time of Caxton (*glasse or mirroure*). On the whole, the evidence seems to indicate that literary biculturalism can exert a subtle influence upon a writer's choice of words, including those borrowed from the other language.

In some plurilingual societies, the incorporation of elements from the other language is tolerated and sometimes even welcomed, especially if the effect hits home.³³ The practice often simply conforms to what writers see and hear in the context about which they write. For example, a bicultural writer describing a bicultural milieu to a bilingual audience cannot afford to ignore the bilingual nature of either, for to do so is to risk irrelevance. If the audience itself is in the habit of switching from one language to the other, so must the characters.

If the action of a play, for example, takes place in the city hall of a bilingual town it is likely that both languages will be heard. For example, in a Quebec play called *Medium Saignant*³⁴ in which there is a meeting of the town council, Françoise Loranger serves us scenes like this: Ouellet, arriving late at the council meeting apologizes and takes his place, while some of the local ratepayers in the sidelines make the following remarks:

- Ouellette *Je m'excuse. . .*
 Citoyen II *Aie, c'est Ouellette qui arrive!*
 Une Citoyenne *Ouellet, le roi des grosses aubaines!*
 Alice *Ouellette, lui, y en fait de 'argent!*
 Tonio *That's Ouellette, the richest man
 in town!*
 Pinkerton *Wallet, Hey? I didn't know we had
 an English counselor*
 Tonio *I said—Ouellette, not Wallet*
 Pinkerton *Wallet, that's what I said*

And later on, as the meeting heats up, we hear this:

Animateur (enchaînant)

*Allez-y M. le Maire. Il nous faut
 immigration massive. And you too,
 Mister Ouellette. We need plenty
 of mighty men to build this nation!
 Here's the country for you!*

*Cinquième et dernier tableau, 20e
siècle. Suffocation progressive des
Québécois par l'immigration.
Come on, come on, all of you!*

Françoise Loranger. 1990.
Medium Saignant, 67

If the writer places the action in the context of a work situation where the dominant language of management is not that of the work-force, this will also have to be taken into account if the audience is to recognize the situation for what it is. In a play entitled in the crazy style of the sixties *Tiens-toi bien après les oreilles à Papa*,³⁵ Gilles Richer has the Anglo boss's halting bilingualism counter the insistent French of an employee (Suzanne) asking him (Thompson) for a raise.

- Thompson** *Come in, Miss David, come in.
What can we do for you?*
- Suzanne** *C'est pour une augmentation,
Monsieur Thompson. Vous aviez
promis. . .*
- T** (comme s'il ne comprenait pas)
What?
- S** *Une augmentation. . . A raise. . .
Dix dollars d'augmentation.
A ten dollar raise.*
- T** *Oh? that. . . Of course. . .
Suzanne. . . Yes. . . (Se levant)
You see, my dear Suzanne, tous
nous autres ici, grande famille,
you know what I mean.*

Gilles Richer. 1971. *Tien-toi bien
après les oreilles à Papa*

Even in the interpersonal relationships within a bilingual community, the role of differences in culture and language cannot be entirely ignored. If an author chooses to write about a relationship between people from two

different cultures, then typical language behavior must be reflected in the text if it is to be recognized as typical and appropriate. For example, in the novel *Le Couteau sur la table* by Jacques Godbout,³⁶ we find exchanges between the spoiled anglophone girl and the militant francophone boy—both of them more or less bilingual—like this:

Ça ne t'emmerde pas chéri de porter comme ça le monde entier sur tes épaules? I mean come on, get that chip off your shoulder! Je ne suis pas une raciste moi, mais les seuls nègres que j'ai connus étaient porteurs à bord des trains, I can't get upset like you. . . ça te coupe vraiment l'appétit? (Godbout, 1965, 29)

Better still, we can take the case of that celebrated Russian émigré Vladimir Nabokov, who was equally at home in French and English as well as, of course, in his native Russian, a genius at translating any one of his literary languages into the other: both the French and English versions of Russian classics, Russian versions of English and French classics, English versions of his French writings and Russian versions of his French and English works, including a famous Russian version of *Lolita*. Clearly, Nabokov had many strings to his bow, but that does not mean that all of them were slack. In fact, some specialists of English literature stated shortly after Nabokov's death that this Russian émigré may well be considered as one of the great English stylists of our century.

In conclusion, bilingual expatriate writers have indeed been a blessing to the literatures to which they have contributed. English literature has profited by the contributions of Hungarians like Arthur Koestler and George Mikes, of Spanish writers like Santayana and Salvador de Madariaga, of Bengalis like Tagore, of Poles like Joseph Conrad—to name only a few. French literature has also been enriched by Rumanians like Ionesco and Tzara, by Americans like Julian Green and Stuart Merrill,

by Cubans like Hérédia, by Flemings like Maeterlinck, Greeks like Moréas and more. As many examples could be given for writings in German, Italian, Spanish and other literatures, both present and past.

Some critics are now asking whether for the literature of any country this sort of writing is a curse or a blessing. Is the burden of bilingualism a hindrance or a help for the writers themselves? Does their bilingualism limit their horizons? The belief, for many years, has been that bilingualism is a drawback.³⁷ And the eminent creolist Hugo Schuschartd suggested that if a bilingual has two strings to his bow, both are rather slack.³⁸

I would argue the opposite view and contend that bilingualism can be an asset to the creative writer, even the writer who learns a second language as an adult. It is possible to demonstrate that a person can study a foreign language as a school subject, and in this new language obtain a Nobel Prize. Take the 1969 Nobel Prize, for example, awarded to an Irishman, Samuel Beckett, who studied French at Trinity College in Dublin, wrote about half his work in French and the other half in English, and translated most of it himself into the other language. Some works, like *Malone Dies* and *Waiting for Godot* first appeared in French, while others like *Happy Days* and *After the Fall* were first written in English. Yet, if we examine Beckett's translation of any of these, it is impossible to say which one was the original.³⁹ This demonstrates an exceptional mastery of two literary languages in their written forms.⁴⁰

Many writers like Beckett and Nabokov, by becoming masters of two languages and cultures, have succeeded in avoiding both the pitfalls of cosmopolitan authors writing only in their second or acquired language, and the difficulties of unilingual authors writing in or about a culture which is not theirs. Such writers and their cosmopolitan literature once considered an oddity, have become commonplace, especially in Western Europe, North America and other areas of massive immigration. If we examine the

productions of cosmopolitan bilingual and bicultural writers in our century, we can say that, far from impoverishing the literatures and languages to which they contribute, they are much more likely to enrich them.

Notes

¹ Campanile, Enrico and Giorgio R. Cardona, Eds. 1988. *Bilinguismo e biculturalismo nel mondo antico*. Pisa: Giardini.

² Woolner, A.C. 1938. *Languages in History and Politics*. London: Oxford University Press, 131-132; 159-160.

³ Dubuisson, Michel. 1981. Problèmes du bilinguisme romain. *Les études classiques* 49: 27-45. See also his 1985. *Le latin de Polybe. Les implications historiques d'un cas de bilinguisme*. Paris: Klincksieck.

⁴ Schmidt-Mackey, I. 1956. *Lou Salomé: Inspiratrice et interprète de Nietzsche, Rilke et Freud*. Paris: Nizet.

⁵ Phillips, James. 1984. *Yvan Goll and Bilingual Poetry*. Stuttgart: Heinz. See also: Kushner, Eva. 1966. Yvan Goll: deux langues, une âme. *Actes du IVe Congrès de l'AILC*, The Hague: Mouton, 576-588.

⁶ Steiner, George. 1971. *Extraterritorial*. New York: Atheneum.

⁷ When this influence becomes long-lasting and widespread, it can modify the very nature of the language. Three centuries of contact with Viking Norse on the one hand and Norman French on the other, transformed Anglo-Saxon from an inflecting Indo-European language to an analytic structure loaded with French and classical vocabulary. As this cosmopolitan tongue developed into the written language of millions in all quarters of the globe, devoid of classical culture, it began to slow down its classical intake. Especially since mid-century the practice of open-ended basic English word formation (*walkman, input, up-scale*) has added new words to the language at an ever accelerating speed. These words were sometimes invented and propagated by writers from all over the globe many of whom spoke tongues far removed from the classical sources on which English had so long depended. As a cosmopolitan language, English is now beyond the control of any sovereign state or national academy. See Mackey, W.F. 1992. The Re-Anglicisation of English. *Homage to W.R. Lee*. (ed. by A. van Essen and E.L. Burkart) Berlin and New York: Foris Publications, 243-247. See also Mackey, W.F. 1991. Language Diversity, Language Policy and the Sovereign State. *Journal of the History of European Ideas* 13:1/2, 51-62.

- ⁸ Kohr, Leopold. 1957. *The Breakdown of Nations*. London: Routledge. In this context, March 16 of 1988 may be seen by historians as a memorable date. It was on that day in Strasbourg that the Standing Committee on European Regions of the Council of Europe, after twenty-three attempts, finally passed the remarkable Charter of European Regional Languages, later incorporated into the Maastricht Treaty. This Charter accords quasi-official status, especially in areas of education and mass media, to many of the regional languages of Europe long suppressed by the unilingual language policies of the nation-state. As a result, there is bound to be a future demand for writers of languages like Breton, Occitan, Corsican, Frisian and Welsh. See W. F. Mackey. 1992. L'irrédundisme diglossique: potentiel et contraintes. *Plantejaments i processos de normalització lingüística*. Lleida: Institut d'Estudis Ilerdencs, 91-96.
- ⁹ Mackey, W.F. 1988. Geolinguistics: Its Scope and Principles. C. Williams, ed. *Language in its Geographic Context*. Cleveland and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 19-46.
- ¹⁰ ILEA. 1988. *Language in the Schools of the Inner London Education Authority: The 1987 Language Census*. Preprint for the International Conference on Minority Language Rights. Ithaca: Cornell University Center for International Studies.
- ¹¹ Mackey, W. F. and Von N. Beebe. 1977. *Bilingual Schools for a Bicultural Community: Miami's Adaptation to the Cuban Refugees*. New York: Harper and Row.
- ¹² The second edition of the *International Bibliography on Bilingualism* classifies almost twenty thousand titles in some fifty languages. (W.F. Mackey. 1982. *Bibliographie internationale sur le bilinguisme*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.)
- ¹³ Hamers, J. and M. Blanc. 1989. *Bilinguality and Bilingualism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. For a structured and comprehensive definition of these fields, see W.F. Mackey, Bilingualism and Multilingualism in *The International Handbook of the Science of Language in Society-Sociolinguistics* (Volume 1: chapter 88). U. Ammon, N. Dittmar and K.J. Mattheier, eds. 1987. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 689-714.
- ¹⁴ Mackey, W.F. 1976. Langue, dialecte et diglossie littéraire. H. Giordan and A. Ricard, eds. *Diglossie et littérature*. Bordeaux: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 19-50.
- ¹⁵ For a more complete treatment of the notion of diglossia, see W.F. Mackey. 1989. La genèse d'une typologie de la diglossie. *Revue québécoise de linguistique théorique et appliquée* 2, 11-28.

¹⁶ For a comprehensive analytic bibliography of cases of diglossia of over a hundred language groups, see the two thousand annotated titles of Mauro Fernandez in his forthcoming *Bibliography of Diglossia*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

¹⁷ Vallverdú, Francesc. 1971. *Sociologia y lengua en la literatura catalana*. Traducción por José Fortes. Madrid: Cuadernos para el Dialogo.

¹⁸ Mackey, W. F. and A. Verdoodt, eds. 1975. *The Multinational Society*. New York: Harper and Row.

¹⁹ Keys, Daniel. 1981. *The Minds of Billy Milligan*. New York: Bantam Books.

²⁰ Mackey, W.F. 1972. Concept Categories as Measures of Cultural Distance. S.K. Ghosh, ed. *Man, Language and Society*. The Hague: Mouton. See also Beatens Beardsmore, Hugo. 1978. Polyglot Literature and Linguistic Fiction. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 15, 91-102. See also Sternberg, Meir. 1981. Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis. *Poetics Today*, 2:4, 221-239.

²¹ Forster, L. 1970. *The Poet's Tongues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²² The Nigerian constitution which went into effect in 1992 recognizes three national languages, Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo—along with English and twelve regional tongues.

²³ Griffiths, Gareth. 1978. *A Double Exile: African and West Indian Writing Between Two Cultures*. London and Berkeley: University of California Press.

²⁴ It is only in 1976 that a major creole novel appeared, the *Dézafi* of Frankétienne. For such writers the problems of bilingualism are compounded by those of biculturalism. Mackey, W.F. 1980. The Creole Dilemma. E. Blansitt and R. Teschner, eds. *Studies in General Linguistics and Sociolinguistics*. Rowley: Newbury House, 182-188.

²⁵ Simon, Sherry. 1987. The Language of Difference: Minority Writers in Quebec. *Canadian Literature*, Supplement No 1, May, 1987: J.M. Bumsted, ed. *Papers from the 1984 Ottawa Conference on Language, Culture and Literary Identity in Canada*, 129-137.

²⁶ Pivato, Joseph. 1987. Constantly Translating, The Challenge for Italian-Canadian Writers. *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 14:1, 60-76.

²⁷ Gobard, Henri. 1976. *L'aliénation linguistique. Analyse tétraglossique*. Paris: Flammarion. See also: Haugen, Einar. 1962. Schizoglossia and the Linguistic Norm. *Georgetown University Monographs on Languages and Linguistics* 15, 63-69.

- 28 Wolfson, L. 1970. *Le schizo et les langues*. Paris: Gallimard.
- 29 Panneton, P. 1947. ("Ringuet.") *Le Poids du jour*. Montreal: Variétés, 359
- 30 Graham, R.S. 1956. Widespread Bilingualism and the Creative Writer. *Word* 12:3, 370-381.
- 31 Guèvremont, G. 1947. *Marie-Didace*. Montreal: Beauchemin, 61.
- 32 Brugnolo, Furio. 1983. *Plurilinguismo e lirica medievale. Da Raimbaut de Vaqueiras a Dante*. Rome: Bulzoni. See also Harvey, Carol J. Macaronic Techniques in Anglo-Norman Verse. *L'Esprit créateur* 18:1, 70-81.
- 33 It is the source of much of the macaronic literature of the past. See Segre, Cesare. 1979. La tradizione macaronica da Folengo a Gadda. Ettore Bonora and Mario Chiesa, eds. *Cultura letteraria e tradizione popolare in Teofilo Folengo*. See also Spitzer, Leo. 1923. Sprachmischung als Stilmittel und als Ausdruck der Klangphantasie. *Germanistisches und Romanistisches Monatschrift*, XI, 193-217.
- 34 Loranger, F. 1970. *Medium saignant*. Ottawa: Editions Leméac.
- 35 Richer, G. 1971. *Tiens-toi bien après les oreilles à papa*. Ottawa: Editions Leméac.
- 36 Godbout, J. 1965. *Le couteau sur la table*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- 37 See, for example, G. Schmidt-Rohr. 1936. Zur Frage der Zweisprachigkeit. *Deutsche Arbeit* 36:82, 408-441. See also Izak Epstein. 1915. *La pensée et la polyglossie*. Paris: Payot.
- 38 Spitzer, Leo. Ed. 1928. *Hugo Schuschardt-Brevier*. Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses: 151-169.
- 39 Fitch, Brian T. 1987. *Beckett and Babel. An Investigation into the Status of the Bilingual Work*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (Romance Series 57). See also Simpson, Edundayo. 1978. *Samuel Beckett traducteur de lui-même. Aspects du bilinguisme littéraire*. Quebec: Centre international de recherche sur le bilinguisme; De Clercq, Marine. 1980. Samuel Beckett as a bilingual writer: a test case. Peter Hans Nelde, ed. *Sprachkontakt und Sprachkonflikt*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 219-224; Hanna, Blake T. 1972. Samuel Beckett traducteur de lui-même. *Meta* 17:4, 220-224.
- 40 But it does not mean, of course, that Beckett's spoken French was also comparable to his spoken English. For, like his fellow expatriate Dubliners James Joyce and Oscar Wilde who preceded him, he spoke English with a slight Dublin accent and French with a slight English accent.

Chronological Chart

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first writing at Uruk
Years BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3000 phonetic rebus writing begins
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2500 first Sumerian literary texts • Ebla tablets—first bilingual lists • Sargon of Akkad (ca. 2300)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2000 first bilingual lists and literary texts in Babylonia • Hammurabi of Babylon (ca. 1750)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1500 Akkadian is <i>lingua franca</i> of Near East; cuneiform texts at Hattusas, Ugarit, Emar and in Egypt
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000 Guzana statue • Ashurbanipal of Assyria (668-627) • Cyrus conquers Babylon (539)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 Darius I (521-486) • Antiochus Soter (280-262) • Rosetta Stone (196)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1

Jerrold S. Cooper is a professor of Assyriology in the Department of Near Eastern Studies, The John Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and has been a visiting faculty member at the University of California, Los Angeles and Berkeley, and the University of Padua. He publishes widely on Sumerian literature and Mesopotamian history and maintains a strong interest in the origin and development of writing systems.