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A Poetics of Multilingualism: A Comparative Analysis of Ivan Blatný
and Pavel Ulitin

Multilingvální poetika v dílech Ivana Blatného a Pavla Ulitina

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Vedoucí diplomové práce (supervisor):
Mgr. Hana Kosáková, Ph.D.

Zpracoval (author):
Anton Romanenko

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I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Prague, July 25, 2024

Anton Romanenko

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Introduction

Preliminary remarks

This MA thesis discusses the work of the Czech poet Ivan Blatný (1919-1990) and the Russian writer Pavel Ulitin (1918-1986) in a comparative perspective. The focus of this study is how these authors develop a multilingual poetics.

The comparison of the two authors is possible on the basis of similarities between their work and some aspects of their biographies. At some point of their lives both writers were put in a position where their work could only be published after having gone through a comprehensive editing process, which affected how we engage with their writing today.

The MA thesis will analyze Ivan Blatný's poems included into the collection *Pomocná škola Bixley*, which were written throughout the 1970's and published in 1979 (reissued in 1987 and 2011), and Pavel Ulitin's prose *Четыре кварка для доктора Марка / For Quarks for Dr. Marx* completed in 1969 and published for the first time in 2018. Starting with thematic and formal parallels, up to textual, editorial, and archival difficulties related to the publication and critical reception, these texts coincide in many respects. By highlighting the commonalities and differences between the books, the comparative method can enrich critical appreciation of Blatný and Ulitin's work.

Aspects of multilingual poetics that Blatný and Ulitin's books explore is just one of the many parallels between them, but it provides an effective common

denominator to approach their work. In most general terms, the poetics of multilingualism can be defined as a literary method that consists in combining several languages inside one text for the purpose of an artistic effect. Historically, poetics of multilingualism has manifested itself in various forms such as macaronic poetry. Today multilingual literary texts can be viewed from the perspective of the post-monolingual framework that is developed by Yasemin Yildiz. She argues that in contrast to the monolingual paradigm, which highlights the importance of the mother tongue, human subjectivity can be comprised of several languages:

what is called the “mother tongue” combines within it a number of ways of relating to and through language, be it familial inheritance, social embeddedness, emotional attachment, personal identification, or linguistic competence. Contrary to the monolingual paradigm, it is possible for all these different dimensions to be distributed across multiple languages, a possibility that becomes visible only in multilingual formations or when the monolingual paradigm is held in abeyance. Multiple origins, relations, and emotional investments are possible and occur daily [...]¹

Both Blatný and Ulitin were in close contact with foreign languages through their whole lives, which influenced their work. Along with their native Czech and Russian they also used German, French, and primarily English in their writing. The particular ways in which multilingual inclusions correlate with each and with the rest of the texts is what constitutes the multilingual poetics in the work of these authors. In my thesis I am going to analyze certain aspects of these multilingual arrangements. I

¹ Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* (New York, Fordham University Press 2012), 205.

will also contextualize Blatný and Ulitin in the tradition of European multilingual literature, focusing mainly on modernist and postwar writers.

Chapter 1 contextualizes Blatný and Ulitin in various literary discourses, briefly discusses the parallels in their biographies, and provides a short discussion of examples of their work.

Chapter 2 conceptualizes the poetics of multilingualism as a process of multilingual mixing that can take place at various levels of a linguistic system. Four levels of multilingual mixing are discussed. The discussion is based on the work of writers who employed the multilingual method. The chapter discusses forms of multilingual mixing employed by Blatný and Ulitin. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Blatný and Ulitin's work using the notion of montage, as conceptualized by Russian formalist critics. Throughout the whole chapter Russian formalist thinkers are referred to for theoretical interpretations of individual types of multilingual mixing techniques.

Chapter 3 synthesizes themes and discussions from the previous section to make the final statement about Blatný and Ulitin's use of multilingual poetics in their work.

The photographs of Blatný's manuscripts (see the Attachment) were given to me by Josef Hrdlička. The photo of a page in Ulitin's book was taken by me.

Note on the use of original texts

In this thesis I quote from a number of texts written originally in Czech or Russian. In cases where it was possible, I provided the quote in an English

translation. In other cases, I used the excerpt from the original text accompanying it by my comments in English which always try to sum up the argument of the quoted passage. In rare cases, I have translated the text from the original language into English myself. Numerous examples of Blatný and Uitin's work are quoted in "the original" which in many cases is a multilingual passage.

Chapter 1: Contextualizing Ivan Blatný and Pavel Ulitin

The Czech poet Ivan Blatný and the Russian writer Pavel Ulitin both belong to a generation of European writers who through their writing in post-war Europe contributed to the transition from modernist literary practices to those that started to emerge after the year 1945 throughout 1960's and 1970's and eventually became a kind of transition, between the pre-war modernist culture and the postmodern. Living in the part of the world that was shaped by the USSR's political dominance, which it acquired as a result of the Second World War, Blatný and Ulitin through their writing and through their biographies reflect what it means to live and work as writer in that world. It is the thought-provoking coincidences of the techniques they used, as well as the parallels in how they related to the context of a totalitarian discourse that gives ground for a comparison of the two authors.

Ivan Blatný

Blatný's work that I am analyzing in this thesis was created during his exile in England. When Blatný made the decision to stay in England in 1948, he had already been an established Czech poet known, among other things, for his poetry collection *Melancholické procházky* (1941) (*Melancholy Walks*) and as a participant of the art collective *Skupina 42*.² After Blatný decided to stay in England, his poetry had been mostly blacklisted in Czechoslovakia. During his first year in exile, Blatný would publish occasionally some translations in literary magazines, but less and less

² See, for instance: Janoušek, P. – Čornej, P. (eds.): *Dějiny české literatury IV. díl* (1945–1989), 1969–1989, (Praha: Academia 2008)

of his work started to appear after the year 1958.³ Blatný had been almost completely absent from the public space until 1979 when a collection of his poems *Pomocná škola Bixley* (Bixley Remedy School) was published in Toronto. Three years later, in 1982, another collection *Stará bydliště* (*Old Addresses*) came out in Prague underground circles as samizdat. In 1987 *Pomocná škola Bixley* was reissued in Toronto. It contained the original texts and included new poems written during the period of 1979-1982. In my thesis I am going to use the edition of *Pomocná škola Bixley* that came out in 2011 (Prague: Triáda). Today, this is the fullest edition of Blatný's multilingual poems that has received the most detailed editorial attention based on Blatný's manuscripts. In comparison with previous editions, this edition has also been enlarged by a new selection of texts written in the 80's, which gives an additional perspective on Blatný's work. The publication is accompanied by commentaries written by Blatný's editors (the spouses Adéla Petruželková and Antonín Petruželká, among others) who provide a historical introduction into Blatný's work as well as discuss the problematics of his texts, such as the problem of mistakes or misspellings in the manuscript. Selected poems from *Pomocná škola Bixley* have been translated into English by Anna Moschovakis and Veronika Tuckerová. The selection was included into a collection of Blatný's poems in English from different periods. It came out in Ugly Duckling Press in 2007. The translations capture elements of multilingual poetics including even those lines that

³ Josef Hrdlička, *Poezie v exilu: Čeští básníci za studené války a západní básnická traduce* (Praha: Karolinum Press, 2020), 135–136.

Blatný originally wrote in English. In those cases, the translators used color to distinguish the originally English lines from those that were translated into English.

The poems included into the first edition of *Pomocná škola Bixley* were written by Blatný when he was a resident at a mental institution, the Bixley Ward-Warren House of St.Clement's Hospital in Ipswich. Assumably, Blatný continued writing poetry for a long time during his stay at the hospital, but most of his hand-written drafts were disposed of by the medical personnel. This changed in 1977 when one of the nurses Frances Meacham started to take care of his writings.⁴

Blatný continued writing daily. He created an extensive body of poems, much of which have not been yet published. These texts, preserved in the Museum of Czech literature (also known as Památník národního písemnictví) in Prague, give an idea of the scope of Blatný's work, which includes around 280 000 verses, or 5500 paper pieces filled with dense writing. The sheer vastness of Blatný's work of that period shows that the published collections represent only a fraction of his overall oeuvre. Moreover, the selection of poems included into *Pomocná škola Bixley* was to a great extent controlled and manipulated by editorial mediation of Blatný's original text. At the same time editors of Blatný's work, Adéla Petruželková and Antonín Petruželká, point out that Blatný took a part in coming up with the concept and layout of the original collection *Pomocná škola Bixley*.⁵ Yet, it is important to remember that the form of a printed collection, which is today the only way a

⁴ Hrdlička, *Poezie v exilu*, 136.

⁵ Hejda Z., Farber V., Petruželka A., "Ediční poznámka," in Ivan Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, eds. Z. Hejda, V. Farber, A. Petruželka (Praha: Triáda 2011), 311.

common reader can read Blatný's exile poems, is still a modelled and authoritatively controlled way to engage with Blatný's work.

Pavel Ulitin

There are striking parallels between Blatný and Ulitin's lives and literary work, between the conditions in which they operated and the state of their textual archives.

Like Blatný, who in 1948 went into exile in Great Britain, Ulitin attempted to leave USSR in 1951 when he tried to enter the territory of the U.S. embassy in Moscow.⁶ As a result, Ulitin was arrested and in 1952 he was sent to undergo compulsory treatment at a mental health establishment in then Leningrad (today's St. Petersburg) called Leningrad prison psychiatric hospital (Ленинградская тюремная психиатрическая лечебница – ЛТПБ). One can argue that in the USSR's context of the 50's before Stalin's death this meant a less severe sentence than being sent to a workcamp. Yet, coming in touch with the Soviet punitive system still left huge marks on Ulitin's life. Some of the consequences affected his literary career. During his de facto incarceration at the hospital, Ulitin was obliged to work in the bookbinding workshop. This experience may have caused his future interest in book binding and affected his unique approach to the typographical dimension of his work.⁷ Ulitin spent three years in the hospital until he was released in 1954. This was not the first time when Ulitin was forced to undergo compulsory treatment in a

⁶ Биографическая справка, in Павел Улитин, *«Четыре кварка» и другие тексты*, предисл., сост М. Айхенберг (Москва: Новое Литературное Обозрение, 2018), 487-489.

⁷ Михаил Айзенберг, in Улитин, *«Четыре кварка» и другие тексты*, 8.

psychiatric establishment. In 1938, when Ulitin was studying at Moscow institute of philosophy, literature, and history (the Russian abbreviation being – ИФЛИ), he was arrested for being a part of a student anti-Stalinist communist group. The group proclaimed as its goals organizing a “Leninist national party.” All its members were arrested except for the poet Pavel Kogan.⁸ Ulitin was incarcerated for two years until 1940. Out of that time he spent 4 months in the psychiatric ward of the Butyrka prison. During the “investigation” process, which in the totalitarian atmosphere of the Soviet Union of the 1930’s was almost always a staged procedure based on physical torture and forgery of documents, Ulitin received serious health damage. As a result, he limped for the rest of his life. Between the two arrests Ulitin continued to study foreign languages. In 1955 he was restored as a student of 4th year at the first Moscow pedagogical institute of foreign languages (after having been expelled in 1951 for attempting to enter the territory of the U.S. embassy).

Assumingly, Ulitin wrote literature for most of his life. His archive was confiscated twice, in 1951 and in 1962. After the first arrest, the manuscript of a novel as well as drafts of two unfinished books were expropriated. Some of Ulitin’s manuscripts were preserved in the personal archives of his friends. During Ulitin’s life, his acquaintances and friends were main readers of his work who received it mainly through samizdat. Starting since 1976 some of Ulitin’s work had been published in the émigré press in such journals as *Время и мы* (Time and us) or *Синтаксис* (Syntax).⁹

⁸ Биографическая справка, in Улитин, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 487.

⁹ Биографическая справка, in Улитин, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 490.

Ulitin's text that I am going to analyze in this thesis will be referred to as *Four Quarks for Dr. Marx* (1969), or *Four Quarks*. The Russian title is *Четыре кварка* or *Четыре кварка для доктора Марка*. The English variant of the title, which is translated by Ulitin himself and is included into the book, and the shorter Russian variant of the title appear on the first page of Ulitin's manuscript. The longer variant of the Russian title then appears on the second page. Interestingly, the English name *Marx* is probably not the exact translation of the Russian variant *Марк*, which should be rendered into English as *Mark*. Already at this level we can see how multilingual poetics in Ulitin's writing creates a sort of quantum space where meaning is constructed as a dynamic category between linguistic systems.

Strictly speaking, Ulitin's book is not comprised of just *Four Quarks*. Rather, it is a collection of texts bought together in one edition. The most accurate way to describe this kind of writing is through the term *prose*, however the term *novel* will also be used to refer to Ulitin's text. This term seems to be acceptable since it highlights the vast spectrum of "characters" and themes that appear in Ulitin's prose in a complex spatiotemporal configuration. The full Russian name of the publication I am using is *Four Quarks and Other Texts / «Четыре Кварка» и другие тексты*. The publication came out in 2018 in the publishing house called NLO (New Literary Observer / Новое литературное обозрение), which is one of the leading publishing houses in Russia specializing in literary studies and humanities. Similar to the edition of Blatný's *Pomocná škola Bixley*, this edition of Ulitin is also accompanied by comments and essays giving an insight into Ulitin's biography and poetics.

Since the integrity of Ulitin's archive was distorted by the intrusive actions of Soviet punitive authorities and since Ulitin was so rarely published during his lifetime, he remains a bit of a mysterious figure that is difficult to contextualize in the Soviet literary culture. The poet Mikhail Aizenberg says that he employed two strategies: that of a samizdat writer and that of a reclusive writer (писатель-затворник). Aizenberg sees Ulitin as a figure belonging to the context of the 1960's:

We do not know when Ulitin started to write "his" special prose. His early works are not preserved and we can only speak about them hypothetically. We see Ulitin's work as a literary fact of the 1960s for one simple reason: in 1962 his home was searched [by the KGB agents] and everything that he had wrote, including drafts and notebooks, was confiscated.¹⁰
(*translated by me – AR*)

Seeing Ulitin as a representative of the literary generation of the 1960's places him in the tradition of Soviet intellectuals, writers, and human right activists who were known for publicly pursuing a liberal, anti-Soviet agenda. Structurally and thematically, Ulitin's novel *Four Quarks* belongs to that context, even though Ulitin's self-effacing multilingual poetics can hardly be compared to the exaggerated self-representational strategies of authors like Brodsky, who in his poems and public life constructed the self-image of an exile banned from the Soviet Union.

Ulitin's archive, most of which has not been yet published, contains several dozens of finished books-texts. As Mikhail Aizenberg remarks, Ulitin's oeuvre was published not even partially, but fragmentarily.¹¹ This suggests that an even more

¹⁰ Айзенберг, in УЛИТИН, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 8.

¹¹ Айзенберг, in УЛИТИН, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 8.

selective approach has been chosen to his texts than in the case of Blatný. Similar to Blatný's collection *Pomocná škola Bixley*, Ulitin's novel *Four Quarks* should be understood as an aesthetic and physical object that came into being thanks to external intervention of literary authorities. In Ulitin's case, however, the intervention is somewhat more radical. The problem is that Ulitin can also be considered a visual artist. He took great care to not only compose the linguistic content of the novel, but also to work out the layout of the text on the pages. When the editors were confronted with Ulitin's work they made the choice to preserve the indigenous aspects of the manuscript, including the complex paratextual elements, the possible spelling inaccuracies, and other text-related features of the original artifact forged by Ulitin.¹²

In the case of Blatný's poems the main editorial challenge was to decide which of the poems from the vast archive should be included into the selection. Blatný's manuscripts sometimes look like a continuous flow of text. In some cases, the text is divided into units that can be conceptualized as poems, yet in other cases the question where one text ends and another begins can be a matter of editorial choice (See pictures 1, 2, and 3 in the attachment). With Ulitin's text the question is rather how to translate the layout of individual pages of the manuscript into a printed form (see picture 4). The difficulty consists in correlating the layout of an aesthetic object, which was created as a physical artifact manually, with the printed edition, which

¹² However, not all aspects of Ulitin's original manuscript could be rendered in a printed edition. Instead, the NLO edition included photographs of Ulitin's manuscript showing how sometimes a page would consist of just a few words written by hand in different colors. Mikhail Aizenberg discusses the editorial choices that were made about Ulitin's text in the introductory essay to the NLO edition. According to him, the main effort was to preserve as much variability and multimodality of Ulitin's manuscript as possible, including even the parts of his book that were written by hand. In the printed edition such parts are italicized.

has different physical characteristics. The printed version is only an approximate rendition of the original object.

The concrete 2011 and 2018 editions of Blatný and Ulitin's text that I am using for my analysis should be considered as literary objects of secondary origin. As mentioned before, Blatný played a role in coming up with the concept of the original collection *Pomocná škola Bixley*. Yet, the newer edition of his work, includes texts that were selected by the editors. As such, the concrete editions of Blatný and Ulitin represent preprocessed, controlled, and modelled literary artifacts that provide a smooth and authoritative, comprehensive insight into the work of two unique authors who lived and worked in the second half of the 20's century.

Writing in a panoptic environment

During the time when Ivan Blatný and Pavel Ulitin were creating their unique work, they both lived in an environment that can be understood through Michel Foucault's notion of panopticism. In his seminal book on the development of power mechanisms in modern Europe *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault described the panopticon as a metaphor of disciplinary mechanisms in general. "The panoptic schema," as Foucault calls it, is rather an abstract principle that can find its application in a number of institutions and contexts. As Foucault writes:

The panoptic schema, without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was destined to spread throughout the social body; its vocation was to become a generalized function. The plague-stricken town provided an exceptional disciplinary model: perfect, but absolutely violent; to the disease that brought death,

power opposed its perpetual threat of death; life inside it was reduced to its simplest expression; it was, against the power of death, the meticulous exercise of the right of the sword. The Panopticon, on the other hand, has a role of amplification; although it arranges power, although it is intended to make it more economic and more effective, it does so not for power itself, nor for the immediate salvation of a threatened society: its aim is to strengthen the social forces – to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply.¹³

The environments in which Ivan Blatný and Pavel Ulitin worked can be understood as a point of condensed panoptic relations and practices because of the obvious reasons concerning the role of authorities in their lives. In Blatný's case these authorities were represented by the personnel of the medical institution where he was undergoing treatment (according to Foucault the hospital is an exemplary kind of a corrective establishment where mechanisms of power-knowledge are exercised); and in the case of Ulitin these authorities are represented by the repressive state itself, and particularly by its punitive instrument, the KGB agency. The presence of these two external forces in the context of the writers' lives is an important force in the genesis of their writing. It affected the destiny of the physical manuscripts and sometimes the thematic arrangements of the texts. For example, in *Four Quarks* there is a passage about changes that happen to famous literary texts. In the first part of this passage the author makes a hint that these changes may be controlled by external forces and not solely by the author's will:

“Собачье сердце” тоже ведь называлось у автора
“Записок покойника” “Собачьей жизнью”. А кто

¹³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 207-208.

переименовал “Брута”? Книгоимпорт. А по-французски и по-английски книга так и осталась “БЕЗ собачьих радостей”, чех Ашкенази. Блондинка-спорщица обвиняла КГБ: органы бдят, органам все известно. Комсомолка-спорщица вдруг: – Неправильно и даже трусливо вы развиваете революцию. Зачем подписи? За подписи увольняют с работы. Неужели вы не понимаете, что НЕ ЭТО НАЗЫВАЕТСЯ РЕВОЛЮЦИЕЙ?¹⁴

The texts referred to in this passage are Mikhail Bulgakov’s novella *Heart of a Dog* and the story *Brutus* by the Czech writer Ludvík Aškenazy. Both stories, as the narrator reports, were renamed. In Bulgakov’s case the renaming of the story can have something to do with the author’s creative process. In Aškenazy’s case the name was changed by “Knigoimport” which apparently was a Soviet agency in control of the import of foreign books. Remarkably, the passage thematizes how the destiny of texts can be affected by external forces, but it does not resolve this topic. Instead, it proceeds to depict a scene of two people arguing about the Russian revolution. This method of “gluing” together different pieces is Ulitin’s most characteristic device.

In Blatný’s *Pomocná škola Bixley* the panoptic environment is thematized through the details of the poet’s everyday life that are filtered into the poems:

K obědu by měl být chleba
pain à volonté
there should be soup like in Czechoslovakia
there should be jugs of water standing on the stůl

Mr. Thatcher, I’m sure that boys in puberty
Have wet dreams about you at night-time¹⁵

¹⁴ УЛИТИН, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 198.

¹⁵ Ivan Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, eds. Z. Hejda, V. Farber, A. Petruželka (Praha: Triáda 2011), 303.

It is remarkable that, like in Ulitin's passage, the speaking subject mixes together different themes – including everyday dining routine, sexuality, and politics – inside the short space of the poem. Similar to Ulitin's text the heterogeneous thematic arrangement is processed through a poetics of multilingualism.

In the case of both writers, the connection between thematic arrangements and poetical principles can be seen as an example of how the panoptic schema influences the textual outcome of their work. Ultimately, this panoptic arrangement puts Blatný and Ulitin's writing in a unique modality. This modality can be described as a kind of subversive counter-writing whose aim is to contradict the totalizing disciplinary effect of the panoptic discourse in which the writers operated.

Inside these discourses Blatný and Ulitin's work emerges on the intersection of privacy and publicity, which endows their work with a unique status. Blatný's writing was part of his daily routine at the hospital. The poet's main goal may not have been to publish poetry collections (although it would be a natural intention for him considering his lifelong occupation as a writer). In turn, for Ulitin his writing was more a matter of reclusive activity that was not part of the bigger literary underground movement. The section below discusses how this interrelation of concealment and publicity in Blatný and Ulitin's textx has affected critical engagement with their work.

Blatný and his everyday routine

As pointed out, Blatný took part in working out the concept of *Pomocná škola Bixley*, but at a certain point he stopped thinking of poetry in terms of finalized

collections of texts and began to approach writing as a kind of flow of creativity that surpassed any artificial constraints. A description of that period of Blatný's life is provided by Josef Hrdlička:

V této době má Blatný zajištěnou možnost pravidelně psát a o jeho rukopisy je postaráno. Zároveň se ale cosi mění. Zejména poté, co začal psát do sešitů, Blatný již neuvažoval o komponovaných sbírkách, ale o prostoru a čase, který má k psaní, a to jak v rámci denního rozvrhu, tak v rovině prázdného prostoru, který otvírá nepopsaný sešit. [...]

V tomto smyslu se někdy v období Pomocné školy, kdy ještě Blatný píše na volné listy, proměňuje jeho chápání poezie a od komponování sbírek se posouvá k soustavnému psaní. Už tato sbírka vzniká na pozadí rozsáhlého souboru básní, z nichž původní Blatného Pomocná škola Bixley představuje jen menší část. V následujícím období toto textuální, psané pozadí zcela převažuje a tvoří podstatnou součást Blatného denního rytmu či rutiny.¹⁶

The notion of everyday rhythm or routine mentioned at the end of this description is crucial for understanding the specific modality in which Blatný's texts emerged. As a part of his daily activity, poetry writing turns into an occupation that is close to diary keeping, which has been pointed out by some interpreters of Blatný's work (see discussion below). From this perspective, his poems can be seen not only as texts endowed with literary value, but primarily as events of his psychological life.

The idea that writing may have something to do with the author's psychological state is as old as literary criticism itself. However, psychological forms of literary criticism have changed over time. Today, some parts of psychoanalytical knowledge have been successfully appropriated by literary theory.

¹⁶ Hrdlička, *Poezie v exilu*, 137.

René Wellek discusses how the psychological viewpoint explains the roots of literary activity:

The artist [says Freud] is originally a man who turns from reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction as it is first made, and who then in phantasy-life allows full play to his erotic and ambitious wishes. But he finds a way of return from this world of phantasy back to reality; with his special gifts, he moulds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life. Thus by a certain path he actually becomes the hero, king, creator, favourite he desired to be, without the circuitous path of creating real alterations in the outer world.¹⁷

Much of Freud's heritage has been rethought and reconsidered by authors working in the psychoanalytical field. Even though René Wellek's remarks, which he bases on Freud, can be helpful in thinking about the peculiarities of Blatný's writing (for example, the recurring erotic motives in his multilingual poems), the passage quoted above is still a generalization. The relation between the psyche and the writing subject is too complex to be explained in terms of an economy of repressed erotic impulses and sublimation. What is undoubtable, however, is that such a relation exists. It is this link between the psychic drive, which may remain hidden, and the (semi-)public activity of writing that calls the attention of literary analysis.

In contemporary psychoanalytic theory a perspective on the correlation between the psyche, writing, and trauma has been presented by Julie Reshe. In her book *Negative Psychoanalysis for the Living Dead*, she discusses the idea that traumatic events shape the psyche giving it form. Trauma is understood not as a

¹⁷ René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1956), 82.

temporary damage that happens to a person and has to be overcome in time, or in treatment. Rather it is a negative force that defines the person as such:

Each one could comprehend themselves as a wound within the register of trauma. This story would be the most genuine story about the subject, her primordial narrative. Those stories are so horrible that they can't be told. Perhaps they are too horrible not only to put into words but even to cry about. The actual story of our life, if fully accepted and the only one remaining, is annihilating. It is not really a story; it has no coherency, and it consists of disruption, meaninglessness and pain. It discloses the heart of who we are. To go on living, we have to reinvent the narrative, put bits and pieces together, bring coherency, install meaning, or come to terms with the absence of meaning.¹⁸

Later in her book Reshe discusses the idea that writing is often fueled by traumatic experience. She quotes the psychoanalyst and philosopher Slavoj Žižek who in one of his interviews has confessed that writing saved his life when he was having suicidal thoughts because of a difficult emotional situation in his life. Reshe interprets this confession as a confirmation of the idea that writing is not just a strategy that Žižek used to cope with his problem, but in fact it is what remains of him as a subject. Writing becomes the only reality of the philosopher's existence, the result of the trauma that he has experienced:

One could say that anywhere beyond the text Žižek is already dead, his constant new books are ashes of his dead body finely woven together to imitate his existence. His texts are his posttraumatic dead body, and his only body.¹⁹

¹⁸ Julie Reshe, *Negative Psychoanalysis for the Living Dead: Philosophical Pessimism and the Death Drive* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-31201-4>.

¹⁹ Reshe, *Negative Psychoanalysis*, 42.

Reshe's ideas can give an insight into the problematics of Blatný's writing and its genesis. His vast and unsorted textual heritage is the result of his urge to create, a physical outcome of the trauma that his psyche had experienced. Blatný continued to write because writing was not just a literary occupation, but a way of living. Perhaps nowhere it is illustrated better than in the following lines:

Zakrnělé pohlaví včel dělnic se otvírá jak květ
jako japonské květinčky ve vodě

Budete mě vidět, když nebudu psát?
Řeknu vám všechno

Jak uhodnouti čas když nehraje radio
půjdu se podívat...²⁰

Blatný's poems included into *Pomocná škola Bixley* are just a fragment of a broader material. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan famously proclaimed that the unconscious is structured like a language. It may be an exaggeration to claim that Blatný's unpublished text is a translation of his unconscious. At the same time, the relation between his published poems and those unpublished can be conceptualized as the relation between speech and the unsaid. Moreover, Blatný's published poems have been "modified" by the attention of the editorial literary authorities and therefore should be approached with caution. Any statements regarding the possible operations of Blatný's unconscious in *Pomocná škola Bixley* is ultimately a statement made about poems that have been chosen and edited by other people, whose own understanding of the unconscious may have affected the way the theme of unconscious writing manifests itself in the collection. While arguing that at the

²⁰ Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, 132.

core of Blatný's writing there is a fundamentally psychoanalytical dimension, one nevertheless should restrain from interpreting his poems psychoanalytically. Yet, using psychoanalytical concepts can be beneficial in that they highlight how the work that originally emerged as an event of the author's private psychological dynamics came to be read as a publicly acclaimed literary artefact.

Blatný's exile writing subverts the standard writer-reader relation. Traditionally, a published literary artifact is understood as something that is created to be read by someone else than the author. This puts certain implications on the nature of the emerging text. Such a text comes into being as a thing that is not complete in itself, but rather as something that receives finalization in an intersubjective relation between the writer and the reader. René Wellek described the ontological status of a literary text as

an object of knowledge *sui generis* which has a special ontological status. It is neither real (physical, like a statue) nor mental (psychological, like the experience of light or pain) nor ideal (like a triangle). It is a system of norms of ideal concepts which are intersubjective. They must be assumed to exist in collective ideology, changing with it, accessible only through individual mental experiences, based on the sound-structure of its sentences.²¹

Blatný's poems are unique in that they are located on the margins of the coordinates pointed out by Wellek. On the one hand, Blatný's poems are ontologically closer to the genre of diary, which is something that has, first of all, a private value in the context of a person's life, and only then a possible public value. Yet, even if Blatný

²¹ Wellek, *Theory of Literature*, 156.

continued writing for his own psychological (perhaps even therapeutic) purposes and did not intend to publish his poems, he did it as someone who had already been an established poet. From the perspective of literary criticism, this makes his texts not simply personal documents, but also potentially valuable literary artefacts. In other words, Blatný's poems have the potential of producing literary value even though literariness may have not been on Blatný's mind. One of the major aspects of literariness in this case is the vagueness and impenetrability of the poems, which can be associated with elements of multilingual poetics.

The combination of several languages in a text creates a collision of different cultures. At this moment, the personal becomes transnational. This indicates a paradox at the core of Blatný's writing: even though it emerged in the domain of his private life, it nevertheless was perceived as the intention of reaching out, of overcoming the limitations of the personal.

Ulitin and dissident writing

At the core of Pavel Ulitin's writing there is a similar paradoxical relation of concealment and publicity. On the one hand, his novel *Four Quarks* is a text that communicates extensively with other texts and cultures by quoting them or addressing them indirectly. On the other hand, Ulitin's novel does that in such a complex manner that it is difficult to understand most of the novel's concealed references.

Ulitin's radical style is an attempt to create an alternative communicational model that would contradict the dominating Soviet cultural modes, including even

those that were developed in the literary underground and that channeled a liberal agenda. Even though Ulitin's *Four Quarks* shared a lot in common with the underground literature (mainly its anti-totalitarian appeal and an appreciation of Western culture), it can be seen as belonging to it only to a certain extent.

Most studies on Soviet underground literature stress that underground literary activities and samizdat were attempts to create an alternative cultural space that would be dissociated from the official culture and that would constitute an alternative creative environment. For example, Ann Komaromi in her work speaks about the Stalinist mentality as the negative point of reference. An alternative to it was supposed to be achieved in the underground culture:

In this case, dissidents of the late Soviet era may have understood a covert “private” sphere in precisely these terms, as characteristic of a Stalin-era mentality. Splitting the private from the public in order to protect it was not the goal. Rather, dissidents aimed to forge a new type of public that would authentically reflect the concerns and aspirations of a variety of constituents.²²

In his early university days Ulitin shared this strong anti-Stalinist agenda, which made him enter the Leninist student group, and eventually led to his arrest. However, his later work lacks the attempt to forge anything that would be in active disagreement with the dominating Soviet discourse. Ulitin's poetics were too different to take on that goal. At the same time, Ulitin's work is not just an example of “splitting the private from the public in order to protect it.” Like Blatný's writing,

²² Ann Komaromi, *Uncensored: Samizdat Novels and the Quest for Autonomy in Soviet Dissidence*, ed. Gary Saul Morson (Northwestern University Press, 2015), 5. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/natl-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5491112>.

Ulitin's literary activity was located on the intersection of private and public life. Ulitin shared an anti-Soviet point of view, which can be seen in many places in his texts, but his anti-Soviet passages never quite share the same fervor as other famous examples of the Soviet underground literature circulating in samizdat.

In the work of many writers published in samizdat one can feel a conscious attempt to create the new alternative culture and to actively foster a new mentality. As Josephine von Zitzewitz writes, readers of self-published literature constituted social networks in which dissidents operated:

Samizdat texts and the channels by which they circulated were instrumental to the functioning of informal networks, including those that readers, both Russian and Western, have in mind when they say 'dissidents.'²³

In Ulitin's work one can hardly feel the attempt to develop a dissident consciousness. Dissidence is a stance that requires active self-identification against a set of values that is declared unacceptable. A writer who creates a literary model suitable for such self-identification is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. His *The Gulag Archipelago* (1958-1968) / Архипелаг ГУЛАГ is a work of at times almost journalistic quality attempts to fulfill the pragmatic goal of mobilizing public opinion and exposing the historical lies of the Soviet state. In doing so, Solzhenitsyn de facto makes his book serve the ideological function of denouncing ideology. *The Gulag Archipelago* presents a model of alternative cultural identification, norms, and values for a group of

²³ Josephine von Zitzewitz, *The culture of Samizdat: Literature and Underground Networks in the Late Soviet Union* (London, New York: Bloombury Academic, 2021), 7-10.

dissidents who, fighting against the Soviet regime, nevertheless remain who they are, Soviet dissidents.

In contrast, Ulitin's work presents no such positive and self-conscious model of self-identification. The novel merely deconstructs the cultural material that it engages with and does not consolidate any new solid meanings. *Four Quarks* problematizes its own method and calls into questions its own literary identity. This is why it can only partially be understood as an example of underground literature. On the one hand, it shares the fundamental intention of underground authors to create an alternative intellectual environment for the stale atmosphere of Soviet culture. Like many other underground literary works *Four Quarks* raises questions and does not present ready-made ideological solutions. On the other hand, its poetics of uncertainty is too radical for the underground context. The novel, rather, is mostly focused on its own textual and literary existence. From that perspective, the novel cannot be even considered as a typical example of samizdat culture. Samizdat means self-publication, but in the case of *Four Quarks* the more correct word would be self-creation. The novel is a unique artefact of literary and book culture that makes more sense in the specific context of Ulitin's life, rather than as an example of a broader social movement.

Critical approaches to Blatný and Ulitin

In the previous sections I have discussed Blatný and Ulitin as writers operating within various registers of the panoptic schema such as dissident writing. My argument in this section is that these notions have been hiddenly affecting critical

interpretations of Blatný and Ulitin, and that one way to move away from these critical positions is to focus on the poetics of multilingualism in their work.

Blatný and Ulitin's published work falls under the category of writing that Umberto Eco described as an open text. Eco writes:

[...] (i) 'open works, insofar they are in *movement*, are characterized by the invitation *to make the work* together with the authors and that (ii) on a wider level (as a subgenus in the *species* 'work in movement') there exist works which, though organically completed, are 'open' to a continuous generation of internal relations which the addressee must uncover and select in his act of perceiving the totality of incoming stimuli. (iii) *Every* work of art, even though it is produced by following an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity, is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal *performance*.²⁴

Blatný and Ulitin's work can be seen as 'open' texts from more than one viewpoint. Firstly, their published texts are not organically completed. As discussed in the previous sections, the relation between their published work and the rest of their writing is nuanced in that the writers did not have absolute control over how the final variants of their books looked like. Since their published work remains only a fragmentary peek into their overall oeuvre, any critical engagement with their texts must take this structural incompleteness into account. Secondly, the internal features and structure of Blatný and Ulitin's published work make it 'open' texts because the reader has to work together with the author to "complete" the texts in a manner that is as radical as in the case of some experimental literary texts like James Joyce's

²⁴ Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 63.

Finnegans Wake. Books that are radically “open” do not present readers with ready-made meanings, but instead require cooperation and interpretation. This openness, however, has its limits. Texts that are too “open” stop being seen as deserving interpretative efforts. The openness of a text may reach a point in entropy where the relations between the elements of a poetical system can no longer be seemingly conceptualized as a whole. At this point openness effectively means impenetrability.

Critical interpretations of Blatný and Ulitin have touched upon this problem of too radical openness of their work (the same, to a certain extent is also true of Joyce’s work). Elements of their poetical systems cannot be easily integrated into usual interpretative frameworks. With other writers who combine intertextual allusions with multilingual elements, the literary work often provides clues helping to unveil meanings that it encodes, or at least it gives the clues to the educated editor who then makes the text accessible to the reader. For example, the American poet Ezra Pound as well as the British-American poet T.S. Eliot filled their poems with references to old English texts and other examples of European literature, including old Greek and Latin traditions, yet these references are often easily traceable if not by the general reader themselves, then by an editor. This is not the case of Blatný’s collection *Pomocná škola Bixley* that often leaves the critic at a loss. The 2011 edition of *Pomocná škola Bixley* has a detailed annotation, but integrating this matters into an interpretative narrative has proved to be a matter of difficulty:

Míra stylizace Blatného výpovědí se pohybuje mezi dvěma krajnostmi od prostých, téměř deníkových záznamů až po automaticky psané texty s ne vždy dešifrovatelnými asociativními řetězci. Volný tok básnických představ je přerušován citáty, glosami, apely

a makaronismy a v této mozaice se mísí vědomé s podvědomým v touze člověka, v jehož trýznivé samotě zůstal jediným východiskem svět paměti evokovaný básní.²⁵

One aspect of the above interpretation deserves a more detailed attention. The author says that in the “mosaics [of Blatný’s] poems the conscious is mixed with the unconscious.” The question that can be asked in this regard is whether that statement is different from any other examples of written or oral speech? Is it not the case that everything the human subject says or writes a combination of conscious and unconscious drives? Arguably, in the above critical interpretation of Blatný certain aspects of his collection still remain a blind spot for the interpreter. These blind spots are given the name of the unconscious. The notion of the unconscious in this context is a signifier that relates to a certain feature of Blatný’s poems, but this feature cannot be described in a more detailed way. It can be merely identified as a presence of some kind of allusion or meaning. Other critics have been able to partly wash away this blindness and notice some of the more nuanced processes inside Blatný’s poems.

One such critic is Jiří Trávníček:

Každá báseň je pro Blatného stavem nově vykonávané asociální svobody a současně chvílí neodkladných a svévolně se dostavujících refrénů, které – ač 32iter odváděny proudem představ na první pohled odstředivých – se ostinátně vracejí: třicátá a čtyřicátá léta, 32iterature, dávní přátelé, erotická nenaplněnost. To vše vytváří pro čtenáře atmosféru hádanek, nápovědí, odkazů ke skrytým významovým zdrojům, zejména historickým a kulturním, evokačního proudu plného slov, jež v sobě mají zakuklená další slova, slov – schránek nepřestajné intertextuality, teprve jejímž

²⁵ Janoušek P. and others, eds. *Dějiny české literatury. IV. díl (1945–1989), 1969–1989* (Praha: Academia, 2008) 255.

přispěním si lze pomoci v tom, jak nalézt spoje mezi motivy, skrytou „logiku“ básnickovy poezie.²⁶

Trávníček's interpretation acknowledges the intertextual reality of Blatný's poems, which is undoubtedly an important part of the collection's poetics. Yet, his inspirational and detailed engagement with Blatný still ends with the proclamation that there is “a hidden logic of the collection.” This “hidden logic” is the main appeal of Blatný and Ulitin's texts that makes their texts so interesting and challenging. However, it seems that it is impossible to go beyond that surface description and expose the inner mechanisms of their work in a more detailed way.

In a similar manner, approaches to Ulitin's novel *Four Quarks* have pointed out interpretational challenges of these texts. In a critical essay accompanying the NLO edition of *Four Quarks*, Daria Baryshnikova (Дарья Барышникова) starts her discussion of Ulitin's prose by saying that it lacks everything that the “normal prose” has.²⁷ The concept of “normal prose” here refers to such traditional elements of narrative fiction as plot, fabula, characters, etc. Trying to further conceptualize and contextualize Ulitin, she sees him as a representative of a tradition going back to the Dada movement and the futurists who in their work used the fragment as the dominant artistic principle. However, the main context for Ulitin's work is what Baryshnikova identifies as the experimental texts of the 1960's and 1970's. This tradition is represented in the West by authors like William S. Burroughs, Samuel

²⁶ Jiří Trávníček, *Poezie poslední možnosti* (Praha: Torst, 1996), 169.

²⁷ Дарья Барышникова, “«Найти слова, не имеющие прибавочной стоимости»,” in Улитин, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, предисл., сост М. Айхенберг (Москва: Новое Литературное Обозрение, 2018), 536.

Beckett, etc.²⁸ One of the characteristic features of these writers is that their texts were based on the principle of “creating montage fragments”: “В 1960-е годы возникает большое количество разных экспериментальных текстов, главным принципом создания которых был монтаж фрагментов.”²⁹ The notion of the fragment then serves as an important literary tool in Baryshnikova’s essay that she uses to explain some of the peculiarities of Ulitin’s text.

The idea of a fragment appears in other interpretations of Ulitin as well. In an introductory essay to the NLO edition of *Four Quarks* the poet Mikhail Aizenberg relies on that concept in characterizing Ulitin’s prose as “reported speech” (чужая речь) and as “a mosaics of someone else’s words, mixed and put together anew, according to new principles.”³⁰ On the pages of Ulitin’s books, Aizenberg says, there are no characters, but lots of voices (“на страницах этих книг нет персонажей, но есть множество действующих лиц”).³¹

It is a noteworthy coincidence that Aizenberg uses the notion of mosaics to characterize Ulitin’s prose and the same word appears in the interpretations of Blatný’s poems quoted few pages earlier. For one thing, the use of that word indicate how close these authors were to the tradition of modernism where the fragmentary method was a widespread literary device. Critical engagements with Blatný and Ulitin all point out that the poetical systems of the two writers are based on the combination of heterogeneous fragments. However, the logic behind that

²⁸ Барышникова, “Найти слова,” in Улитин, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 538.

²⁹ Барышникова, “Найти слова,” in Улитин, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 538.

³⁰ Михаил Айзенберг, in Улитин, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 5.

³¹ Михаил Айзенберг, in Улитин, «Четыре кварка» и другие тексты, 5.

combination remains more or less unfathomable. As such the fragment is a function that allows to bring together non-homogeneous parts of the text, but it is also the reason why the intertextual interpretative strategy fails with Blatný and Ulitin. Traditionally, intertextuality “denotes a transposition of one or several sign systems into another or others.”³² The problem with intertextual relations in Blatný and Ulitin’s published work is that the operation of intertextuality is radically hindered by the very structure of the text itself. In other words, their texts are openly intertextual in their nature, but they are also intertextually obscure.

The obscurity can be explained by several reasons. Firstly, in many cases intertextual relations are hidden. Secondly, the intertextual relations often are formed not with other texts written by other writers, but between the parts of Blatný and Ulitin’s texts themselves. This is especially true with the multilingual insertions. The multilingual elements constitute a closed-up system whose parts correlate with each other based on the logic that reminds that of intertextuality. In many of these cases the fragment is the basic device that allows to perform these operations.

³² J.A. Cuddon, “Intertextuality” in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Terms*, revisited by C.E. Preston (England: Penguin Books, 1999), 424.

Chapter 2: Fragmentation and Multilingual Poetics

Fragmentation

Fragmentation is a principle that is inherent to all multilingual writing to some extent. One can speak of degrees of fragmentation in a text combined of several languages. The basic distinction between different fragmentation techniques concerns the extent to which multilingual elements are mixed with the rest of linguistic material. Multilingual elements can make their way into a linguistic system either as homogenized units, or they can operate as separate units keeping their heterogeneity.³³ In contrast to grammatical borrowing, which serves the function of seamlessly including the word into a linguistic system, multilingual fragmentation is an artistic use of language which calls attention to itself.

Multilingual mixing can take place at different levels of a linguistic system. The smallest unit of meaning in a language is a phoneme. Meaningfully combined, groups of phonemes constitute words which are understood as sound images conveying imprints of meanings. However, phonemes can also be combined into sound clusters for a sonic effect. Such clusters are not necessarily to be seen as words. They can be comprised of multilingual phonemes, or same language phonemes imitating the sound of a foreign language.

Following the phoneme, the further linguistic levels are the word, the sentence, and the passage. At each of these levels multilingual mixing of fragments

³³ The process of homogenization can be defined as a grammatical mechanism of word borrowing. For example, the Czech word “diamant” and the English word “diamond” originate from the same root, but they have been differently appropriated by the two languages.

can occur. At the lexical level, the smallest multilingual unit is a word, at the syntactic level it is a sentence, and at the broader textual level it is a passage. This classification implies that at each level of multilingual mixing the smallest unit of the exogeneous linguistic inclusion is combined with equally small units of the dominant language. For example, in Ulitin's *Four Quarks* most English installments come as passages that are included among passages written in Russian. Together, these four levels – the phoneme, the word, the sentence, and the passage – constitute a paradigm which can be used to classify different types of multilingual writing based on what level a given text operates.

The first distinction to be made between techniques of multilingual mixing is the distinction between phonetic and semantic logic.

Phonetic level: examples

The beginning of multilingual poetics takes its roots in the modernist preoccupation with language in general. Perhaps there is no other modernist writer who illustrates this development better than James Joyce. Already his novel *Ulysses* (1922) is a book deeply interested in language, but Joyce's later work *Finnegans Wake* (1939) takes that interest to the next level. David Vichnar summarizes the differences between the two masterpieces in the following manner:

Where Ulyssean superstructures are diachronic, in the *Wake*'s "presentation" everything exists in the continual present of the act of writing, whose plethora of meanings exist contemporaneously, replacing any linear sense

with the larger relationships of language to its own history.³⁴

Vichnar's remarks concern not only narrative strategies, but also linguistic strategies in Joyce's two novels. I will discuss Joyce's work later in the section dedicated to multilingual mixing at the lexical level. Now it is more relevant to look at one of Joyce's contemporaries, the publisher of *Finnegans Wake*, Eugene Jolas (1894-1952) whose work provides an illustration of phonetic multilingual mixing.

Jolas was the editor of the modernist journal *transition* where installments of *Finnegans Wake* came out while it was still known as *work in progress*. Critics point out that as an editor Jolas did a lot to promote Joyce's unusual work.³⁵ Jolas's own literary activities included writing poetry that in some respects coincides with Joyce's poetics. One of the major differences, however, is that Joyce's logic of multilingual mixing often prioritized semantic logic whereas Jolas often relied entirely on sound. Some of his poems consist entirely of made-up words. A good example is provided by the scholar Eugenia Kellbert. The following is a stanza from Jolas's poem "Incantation" (the exact date when it was written is unknown):

Allala roona acastara leeno
Moorano clista astara moolan
Glinta alooks orostinta metanta
Billala clanta erasti roolan³⁶

³⁴ David Vichnar, *The Avant-Postman: Experiment in Anglophone and Francophone Fiction in the Wake of James Joyce* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2023), 32.

³⁵ See discussion in Vichnar, 23-24.

³⁶ Eugenia Kelbert, "Eugene Jolas: A Poet of Multilingualism," *L2 Journal* 7, no.1 (2015): 54, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9f7486t2#author>.

According to Kelbert, the earlier drafts of “Incantation” indicate that writing the poem was a matter of meticulous editing. What can be mistakenly seen as nonsense at the first glance, turns out to be a matter of thorough design. Kelbert describes Jolas’s meticulous creative process that can be seen in the drafts:

To the poet, as we can immediately see, these words are far from arbitrary or replaceable. [...] The poem is written in a four-foot dactyl, scrupulously observed, and the double vowels are, judging from the meter, diphthongs, which suggests an English-like pronunciation. And, above all, even visually, the draft looks like a draft of any other poem, with words replaced thoughtfully, especially at the ends of the lines, presumably to improve the rhyme. Even the way previous versions are crossed out - effaced, rejected, made all but illegible - is telling. These words clearly matter; they seem to mean something definite to Jolas. In any case, the difference between the original “laroon” in line four and the ultimate “roolan” is crucial to the poet.³⁷

Jolas’s sound mixing poetics were designed as a modernist experiment to provide a practical illustration for his idea of a universal human language.³⁸ In “Incantation” there is no one dominant language, even though it may be argued that most of the made-up words used by Jolas sound Italian. This poem is an attempt to create a verbal statement through linguistic material that is not associated directly with any established phonetic system of any existing language. Yet, while the poem is a powerful instance of sound mixing and poetic estrangement, it is still a product of its time and context. Jolas’s multilingual poetics may be seen as an example of a

³⁷ Kelbert, “Eugene Jolas: A Poet of Multilingualism,” 54-55.

³⁸ This is discussed in a more detailed manner in Kelbert’s essay.

larger body of texts appearing in different languages and inside different national traditions that all sought to overcome the constraints of traditional phonetic writing.

Jolas's poem can be contextualized among other European poetic practices experimenting with sound such as Dada or Futurism. In the Russophone context, the futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov can be seen as an author whose work partially coincides with the multilingual intentions of Jolas. Khlebnikov's poem "Bo-beh-oh-bee is the lipsong..." ("Бобэоби пелись губы...") written in 1908-1909 illustrates how futurism used elements of sound mixing for the purpose of poetic estrangement.

The English translation captures that effect:

Бобэоби пелись губы,
Вээоми пелись взоры,
Пиээо пелись брови,
Лиэээй — пелся облик,
Гзи-гзи-гзээ пелась цепь.
Так на холсте каких-то соответствий
Вне протяжения жило Лицо.

Bo-beh-óh-bee is the lipsong
Veh-eh-óh-mee is the eyesong
Pee-eh-éh-oh is the eyebrowsong
Lee-eh-éh-ay is the looksong
Gzee-gzee-gzéh-oh is the chainsong
On the canvas of such correspondences
somewhere beyond all dimensions
the face has a life of its own.³⁹

This poem expresses an idea that there is a correspondence between natural sounds, phonemes, and parts of the human body by creating a sound effect through made-up words such as "Bo-beh-óh-bee" and "Veh-eh-óh-mee." These clusters of phonemes deprived of conventional semantics are not words of a foreign language per se. Yet,

³⁹ Velimir Khlebnikov, "Bo-beh-oh-bee is the lipsong..." trans. Gary Kern, *Russian Poetry in Translation*, last accessed July 25, 2024, <https://riverses.com/velimir-khlebnikov/bo-beh-oh-bee-is-the-lipsong/1434/>.

they function as signifiers of a language that is not Russian, the dominant language of the poem. The futurist poetics do not yet rely on foreign languages and do not include multilingual mixing as such. But it still makes an important gesture. It moves away from the dominant language by introducing phonetic clusters that operate as non-language known as *zaum* language. This can be seen as the beginning of multilingual poetics. The main difference between the futurist and the multilingual method is that in latter the empty signifier, which in the futurist poetics represents non-language, is occupied by a an exogeneous (from the dominant language's perspective) linguistic inclusion.

Phonetic level: theory

Jolas's multilingual poem and Khlebnikov's futurist poem approaching multilingual mixing can be analyzed from the standpoint of two concepts developed by Russian formalist critics. These two concepts are Yury Tynyanov's the equivalence of the text, and *zaum* as conceptualized by Viktor Shklovsky. The notion of the equivalence of the text can provide an insight into how individual phonemes are forged into sound clusters (such as those used by Jolas). In turn, the notion of *zaum* can explain the uses of these phonetic clusters within a linguistic system.

Yury Tynyanov discusses the notion of textual equivalence (эквивалентность текста) in his book *Problema Stikhotvornogo Yazyka* (The Problem of Poetic Language) that came out in 1924. Tynyanov comes up with this term speaking about the limitations of the purely acoustic approach to poetry, which cannot account for all the variety of meanings contained in a poem. The concept of

the equivalence of the text refers to all nonverbal elements that can substitute a word in a text, indicating a hidden logic of selection which is not governed by merely phonetic considerations. The examples of such equivalence can be found in writers' drafts, or sometimes in published unfinished works. Tynyanov, who is known for his research on Alexander Pushkin, draws his examples from the Russian bard's oeuvre. He discusses two versions of the poem "To the Sea" (К Морю). In one version of the poem that came out in 1824 there are no blank spots, whereas in a version reissued in a 1829 edition, which was the last variant of the text published while Pushkin was still alive, only two words remain:

Мир опустел... Теперь куда же
 Меня б ты вынес, океан?
 Судьба людей повсюду та же:
 Где капля блага, там на страже
 Иль просвещение, иль тиран.
 Прощай же море (1824)

Мир опустел

 (1829)⁴⁰

Discussing the two versions of the poem, Tynyanov refuses to see the relation between them as a linear development. Rather, he suggests that both texts present an invariant interpretation of the same metrical structure underlying the two versions of the poem, which therefore can be seen as synchronically related variants of the same text. In the case of the first version, the metrical structure is filled with words, whereas in the second version, it exists as a non-actualized potentiality. Yet, the second version still lays out a metrical arrangement for words to be used in the poem.

⁴⁰ Юрий Тынянов, *Проблема Стихотворного Языка* (Ленинград: Academia, 1924), 22.

According to Tynyanov, the dots do not (and cannot) suggest any palpable semantics, nor can they predict the phonetical arrangement of the text. But they can operate as an equivalence of the text, suggesting a sense of intentionality and meaning behind what seems to be a vacuum of words:

Точки здесь, само собою, не намекают даже отдаленно на семантику текста и его звучание, и все же они дают достаточно для того, чтобы стать *эквивалентом текста*. Дан метр в определенном (определяемом инерцией) строфическом расположении; и хотя метрическая единица далеко не совпадает с синтаксической, а вследствие этого качество синтаксиса ничем не указывается, но в результате предшествующего текста могла отстояться, стабилизироваться некоторая типичная форма распределения в строфе синтаксиса, а вследствие этого может быть дан намек и на количество синтаксических частей. [...] метр дан как знак, как почти не обнаруживаемая потенция; но перед нами знак равенства отрезка и точек целой строфы, позволяющей отнести к стихам следующей строфы («Прощай же море») именно как к следующей строфе. [...] При этом обнаруживается огромная смысловая сила эквивалента. Перед нами неизвестный текст (неизвестность которого однако же несколько ограничена, полу открыта), а роль неизвестного текста (любого в семантическом отношении), внедренного в непрерывную конструкцию стиха, неизмеримо сильнее роли определенного текста: момент такой частичной неизвестности заполняется как бы максимальным напряжением недостающих элементов— данных в потенции,—и сильнее всего динамизирует развивающуюся форму.⁴¹

In Tynyanov's considerations three things appear to be particularly important: his stress on the syntactical and metrical form, and the connection of the stanzaic unit

⁴¹ Тынянов, *Проблема Стихотворного Языка*, 23-24.

with the rest of the poem. Tynyanov's insistence that the equivalence of the text, although it does not suggest any particular syntactic arrangement, nevertheless gives a hint as to what that arrangement may look like, is crucial as it connects a non-verbal dimension of the text with its verbal dimension, the concrete linguistic material. Tynyanov stresses that the dotted text is a continuation of other Pushkin's stanzas. Thus, the equivalence of the text can be seen as a certain mental guideline that foreshadows the direction of the whole text's completion. Poetic form here is understood as a dynamic category created by the friction between tradition (texts that have been written earlier in time, even by the same author), the potential semantics of words that can be used instead of the dots, and the author's intention.

Tynyanov's notion of the equivalence of text can provide an insight into Kelbert's discussion of Jolas's workflow in his drafts. The fact that Jolas meticulously edited the seemingly nonsensical poem "Incantation" means that he must have followed a kind of a mental map of the poem that had emerged before individual sound clusters were chosen. This logic can be described as that of the equivalence of the text. Here the equivalence of the text becomes a broader concept than just a metrical structure. As Tynyanov notices, "the equivalence cannot be acoustically transmitted, only a pause can."⁴² A pause is a natural characteristic of language. As such, the pause is integrated into the phonetical system of a language. Pauses are intertwined with the prosodic features of a linguistic system. The pause co-determines how phonetic material is organized on the suprasegmental level. But

⁴² ТЫНЯНОВ, *Проблема Стихотворного Языка*, 25.

since Jolas was trying to move away from any constantly recognizable and fixed linguistic system, he could not rely on any particular system of prosody. Since different languages have different prosodic systems, bringing various languages in one text results in clashing prosodic rules that languages in question rely on. Jolas solved this problem by writing in an invented language which is merely evocative of real languages. This allowed Jolas to have more flexibility in choosing the metrical arrangement. As the notion of the equivalence of the text suggests, in such texts multilingual material should follow a logic that is broader than the concrete prosodic system of a language. Such logic can be defined as the logic of prosodic potentiality. It still relies on rules and tendencies defined by the linguistic systems, but it is less rigid than preexisting metrical forms allowed by the prosodic systems of concrete languages.

Another critical concept that can give an insight into the nature of multilingual phonetic mixing and linguistic estrangement is the term *zaum*. It is discussed at large by Viktor Shklovsky. In his numerous essays the Russian formalist critic conceptualized *zaum* as a linguistic device that is comparable to the invention of rhyme in its significance. According to Shklovsky, *zaum* is more than a simple literary technique. It is a faculty of language that was brought into life by the futurist poetic practice. Much of Shklovsky's thinking revolves around the idea that in mundane everyday language usage words become fossilized and eventually lose their poetic potential. Expressions that make their way into language as inventive combinations based on the use of poetic devices, such as metaphor or metonymy, at some point lose their originality and become common place formulas whose sole

goal is to ensure communication at the cost of creativity and vividness. Having gone through that process words are no longer experienced through their sound qualities and become mere parodies of themselves that are perceived automatically like algebraic signs. As Shklovsky writes in his essay “Воскрешение слова” (1913) (“The resurrection of the Word”):

Слова, употребляясь нашим мышлением вместо общих понятий, когда они служат, так сказать, алгебраическими знаками и должны быть безобразными, употребляясь в обыденной речи, когда они не договариваются и не дослушиваются, — стали привычными, и их внутренняя (образная) и внешняя (звуковая) формы перестали переживаться. Мы не переживаем привычное, не видим его, а узнаем. Мы не видим стен наших комнат, нам так трудно увидеть опечатку в корректуре, особенно если она написана на хорошо знакомом языке, потому что мы не можем заставить себя увидеть, прочесть, а не «узнать» привычное слово.⁴³

Shklovsky bases his theory of literary estrangement on a philosophy arguing that the main function of art is to reveal uniqueness of things that gets lost in the automatization of everyday experience. The concept of *zaum* can be seen as a continuation of this philosophy. Yet, *zaum* is arguably a more radical way of artistic estrangement because it concerns language as a whole system of signs. While in narrative fiction the effects of estrangement can be reached through focalization and other narrative techniques that do not require to break down individual subsystems of language (such as the phonetic subsystem), *zaum* depends on the stretching out of

⁴³ Виктор Шкловский, *Собрание Сочинений. Т. 1 Революция* (НЛО, 1910-1950), 27.

linguistic material and its complete transformation to the point where it becomes almost foreign to itself.

Foreignness is a concept that plays an important role in how Shklovsky conceptualizes *zaum*. In one of his essays, he emphasizes that poetry, as it is expressed in words, receives a new life, and almost becomes translated into a new language:

Поэзия, оформляясь в словах, получает новую жизнь, она словно переводится на другой язык. Это происходит и с заумным языком, он попадает в другую систему. Эта система поэтическая, художественная, условная.⁴⁴

Zaum creates a new parallel system of meaning inside a text that is so strange in comparison to the dominant language that it can also be perceived as an foreign language. This system is freed from the semantic and logic relations. It is artistic and arbitrary, but it can subvert the traditional relations between sound and meaning bringing out an aspect of signification that gets lost in the automatic mundane language usage. Shklovsky emphasizes that this effect is possible because at its core poetry is multilingual. The exact wording that he uses in Russian is “поэзия многоязычна.”⁴⁵ The word “многоязычна” is the short form of the adjective “многоязычный” derived from the noun “многоязычность” which can be translated into English as “heteroglossia.” This concept may imply something different from multilingualism. It can relate to a system of multiple voices expressed inside a text. Strictly speaking, such a system may not have anything in common

⁴⁴ Шкловский, *Собрание Сочинений*, 173.

⁴⁵ Шкловский, *Собрание Сочинений*, 174.

with the poetics of multilingualism. It can mean something similar to Bakhtin's notion of dialogic imagination that describes literary artifacts as dialogs of ideas. Yet, Shklovsky is different from Bakhtin in that he stresses the linguistic significance of *zaum*. Even though *zaum* is related to language, it somehow enables the poet to leave the boundaries of a natural language. In doing so poets practicing *zaum* reach what Shklovsky calls the pre-language:

Заумники пытались воспроизвести этот
копошащийся хаос пред-слов, пред-языка. И в
строгом смысле слова, заумный язык – не язык,
а пред-язык.⁴⁶

This notion of pre-language is where Shklovsky's idea of *zaum* resembles the poetics of multilingualism. It is also where the practice of *zaum*, as exemplified by Khlebnikov, coincides with the multilingual intention of Eugene Jolas. Their experiments can be seen as an attempt to distort the phonetic system of the dominant language in which the literary text is written. At the same time, their work can be interpreted as an early attempt to abandon the monolingual paradigm and move towards the poetics of multilingualism.

This phonetic estrangement in Jolas and Khlebnikov's texts results in the creation of a second parallel semiotic system. This is where *zaum* differs from multilingualism. Unlike the poetics of multilingualism, *zaum* does not imply further semantic relations. From the perspective of the dominant language, multilingual insertions operate as both phonetic and semantic elements. Phonetically, they represent sound signifiers that are "strange" from the perspective of the dominant

⁴⁶ Шкловский, *Собрание Сочинений*, 172.

language. However, these sounds can also imply meaning if their foreignness is uncovered. These hidden semantical relations can correlate with similar meaning relations in the dominant language.

Whether the distorting of the dominant language's phonemes comes from experimenting with the phonetic system, or whether it is the result of an infusion of foreign phonemes into the dominant language, the outcome is that the poetic text receives a secondary system of phonetic relations which starts to exist on its own along with the phonetic system of the dominant language.

Morphological mixing

While much of the sound-mixing strategies of Jolas and Khlebnikov is based on producing phonetic gestures defamiliarizing phonetic systems, it is notable that these authors do that by grouping phonemes as units. Both Jolas and Khlebnikov create phonetic clusters. Formally, these constellations operate as words. This means that there is a movement towards word-formation in how Jolas and Khlebnikov approach phonetical material, which is essentially a tendency towards grammaticalization.

In some Jolas's poems the phonetic level becomes the basis for the introduction of what can be called a poetics of grammatical gestures. This refers to a kind of multilingual poetics where individual sound clusters are grouped in a manner that imitates the operation of a grammar. There seems to emerge between individual phonetic units a logic that is reminiscent of how natural grammar works.

A good example of such grammatical gesturing is a poem by Eugene Jolas called “Arra” (like with the previous Jolas’s poem the exact date when it was written is unknown, the poems are contained in the writer’s unpublished archive). In this poem phonetic clusters are mixed with existing English words, but the made-up words receive linguistic markers reminding grammatical morphemes:

Crimes are hidden in the nettle-forests
Fleeta boor rinde glossa aston
A glasta groons in lallaboontarim
The munsterbells thunder sin

Minder alaroos annafrintam rinf
Goonna brasts perimens
Brinta briolster anagram frilla
A ghorla heelts the ropam in its juft
Frimantana roons questicrams
Ums rinters
Ams froors
The ancient guilt weeps⁴⁷

The parts of the words that can be interpreted as grammatical markers do not express any real grammatical relations. Rather they suggest and poeticize the mere notion of a grammatical system. Grammar in the poem functions metaphorically and not functionally. The first sentence of the poem, which is written in English, sets the linguistic paradigm in which the rest of the “nonsensical” parts of the poem are to be viewed. For example, in the line “A glasta groons in lallaboontarim” the letter “A” can be seen as an indefinite article modifying the word “glasta”. Since the next word “groons” ends with the letter “s,” it suggests that it can be a verb in the third person singular. And since the next word is “in,” the whole line “A glasta groons in

⁴⁷ Kelbert, “Eugene Jolas: A Poet of Multilingualism,” 56.

lallaboontarim” may be seen as expressing the syntactic structure SVA, where S is the subject, V is a verb, and A – an adverbial phrase. Another reading of the stanza is possible, if the next line is seen as continuing the sentence in the first stanza. In that case the line “The munsterbells thunder sin” can be interpreted as the object of the verb “to groon” suggesting a picture in which the nominative unit “glasta” produces an action over the nominative entity “munsterbells” (perhaps additionally modified by the adjectival phrase “thunder sin”?), and all that takes place in a location described by the adverbial phrase “in lallaboontarim.”

In Jolas’s, poem phonetic clusters tend to move towards word-formation and grammaticalization. This indicates a shift in the logic of multilingual mixing. Instead of merely sonic considerations, such mixing now moves to a higher structure level and becomes a matter of semantics.

One of the best examples of how semantic elements has been put to work in an instance of multilingual mixing of morphemes is James Joyce’s novel *Finnegans Wake*. The literature on Joyce is extensive, there are numerous comments on his work and method. To quote but one of the many excellent examples of such criticism, Umberto Eco’s discussion of Joyce’s puns may be addressed. In Joycean criticism the pun is a term referring to the made-up words of *Finnegans Wake*. Another way to refer to these units is “portmanteau words.” Eco comments on how these words operate as semantic nodes correlated with each other in the cosmos of the novel:

[in these puns] the structure of the linguistic expression is acted upon in order to produce alterations also at the level of content, similar to those which operate in

metaphors. A metaphor substitutes one expression for another in order to produce an expansion (or a “condensation”) of knowledge at the semantic level. The Joycean pun obtains analogous effects, but through two new procedures. On the one hand, it modifies the very structures of the expression: a pun such as *scherzarade* in fact produces a word that did not previously exist in the English lexicon. On the other hand, it produces a metaphor *in praesentia* because it does not annul one term, substituting it with another, but unites three preexisting words (scherzo, sharped, and Scheherazade), in a sort of lexical *monstruum* (metaplasma), and in so doing it bilges us to see similarities and semantic connections between the joke (*scherzo*), the enigma (*charade*), and the narrative activity (*Scheherazade*).⁴⁸

Joyce’s method of multilingual mixing is different from Jola’s in that it relies more on semantic allusions as much as it relies on phonetic associations. In *Finnegans Wake*, the made-up words are sometimes changed to express an unexpected meaning (as Eco’s analysis demonstrates), but in other cases the words are altered to provide a new perspective on what they “describe.” Unlike Jolas’s phonetic clusters, Joyce’s word-puns refer to each other semantically. To illustrate this, a passage from one of the early episodes of *Finnegans Wake*, published in 1930 in the form of an episode known as *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, may be quoted:

Well, arundgiron in a waveney lyne aringarouma she pattered and swung and sidled, dribbling her boulder through narrowa mosses, the diliskydrear on our drier side and the vilde vetchvine which midway or weser to strike it, edereider making Chattahoochee all to her ain chichiu, like Santa Claus at the cree of the pale and puny, nestling to hear for their tiny hearties, her arms encircling Isolabella, then running with reconciled Romas and Reims, then bathing Dirty Hans’ spatters with spittle, with a Christmas box apiece for aisch and

⁴⁸ Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, 139-140.

everyone of her childer, the birthday gifts they dreamt
the gabe her, the spoiled she fleetly laid at our door!⁴⁹

Some of the words in that passage seem to have been created to describe, through their unusual spelling, the things they describe. For example, the words “a waveney lyne” is probably a rendition of “a wavy line.” If this interpretation is correct, the sound cluster “veney” should be seen as a sonic modification fulfilling a mimetic function as it arguably attempts to include a representational aspect into how the word looks. Other mutations like “arundgirond,” “ain chichiu,” “edereider,” “cree,” or “childer” are non-existent English words, even though they can be “decoded” if one learns the patterns of Joyce’s prose. These puns have several functions in the text. On the one hand, as pointed out by Eco, they connect heterogeneous linguistic fragments together. By doing that they also blur the linguistic homogeneity of text. Language turns into a multilingual universe where various lexemes, whether they are made from English roots or out of borrowed ones, coexist in a synchronic simultaneity.

In comparison with Jolas’s phonetic clusters, Joyce’s puns move towards a different form of the multilingual poetics. These words still rely on sound, but they also depend more on semantic associations.

Lexical level

Lexical multilingual mixing takes place at a level that is higher in the hierarchy of linguistic subsystems than phonemes and morphemes, but historically

⁴⁹ James Joyce, *Anna Livia Plurabelle* (London: Faber&Faber, 2017), 24.

this type of multilingual poetics is one of the oldest. The inclusion of individual foreign words into a text is most commonly associated with macaronic poetry:

Properly speaking, macaronic verse is made when a writer mixes words of his own language with those of another and twists in his native words to fit the grammar of the foreign tongue (e.g. *standez, wumenorum*). Broadly speaking, the term applies to any verse which mixes two or more languages together.⁵⁰

Macaronic verse is often humorous, satiric, and bawdy in nature:

King Louis, when passing through Bruges
Met a lady whose **** as so huge
That he said, as he came
In that fabulous dame,
'Atta girl! Apris moi le ddluge.'⁵¹

In these examples the foreign words have a fixed humorous function, and they are closely tied to the assumptions of the genre. In modernist and postwar literature alternative forms of multilingual words mixing emerged.

An example of a writer who, following the macaronic tradition, was able to provide a new context for it is Vladimir Nabokov, who is known as a virtuoso of word puns (here the notion of pun has a more traditional meaning bearing no parallels with how it is used in Joycean criticism). Nabokov often disguises foreign words in his English texts, making sure that the multilingual aspect of his writing is evident only to those readers who speak, as he did, English and Russian (Nabokov also spoke French, but French is a rarer choice for word puns in his novels). For example, in *Pale Fire* (1962) the narrator is coming from a fictional land named

⁵⁰ J.A. Cuddon, "Macaronic," in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 485.

⁵¹ Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 486.

Zembla. It is only halfway through the novel that the reader has the chance to learn that the name of this country is a way of writing the Russian word “земля” (meaning “land”) in Latin alphabet, where the letter b represents the modifying sign “ъ,” which in Russian is used to indicate the softening of the upcoming sound. We learn this in the moment where the word “Zembla” is put next to another Russian words “rodnaya,” which means “native”:

Were those phantom thugs coming for me? Would they shoot me at once – or would they smuggle the chloroformed scholar back to Zembla, Rrodnaya Zembla, to face there a dazzling decanter and a row of judges exalting in their inquisitional chairs?⁵²

Formally speaking, “Zembla” is a macaronic word. But it is so well disguised, so well integrated into the syntagmatic flow of English sentences that there is a small chance of perceiving it. Most of Nabokov’s macaronic elements are disguised as names of characters. This is different from standard macaronic poetry where foreign words are not names. Nabokov’s method is based on semantic logic. In some cases, names in his novels can still function as foreign words, however their meaning is hidden for some readers. For example, in his novel *Pnin* (1957), one of the non-English words is disguised even more exquisitely than in *Pale Fire*. It appears in the form of the last name of a student enrolled to the main character’s course that he teaches at a university. This time, however, there are no indications in the text that would help to disclose the humorous meaning of the word for a non-Russian speaker:

In the Fall Semester of that particular year (1950), the enrolment in the Russian Language courses consisted of one student, plump and earnest Betty Bliss, in the

⁵² Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (USA: Penguin Books, 2011), 81.

Transitional Group, one, a mere name (Ivan Dub, who never materialized) in the Advanced, and three in the flourishing Elementary: Josephine Malkin, whose grandparents had been born in Minsk; Charles McBeth, whose prodigious memory had already disposed of ten languages and was prepared to entomb ten more; and languid Eileen Lane, whom somebody had told that by the time one had mastered the Russian alphabet one could practically read ‘Anna Karamazov’ in the original.⁵³

In this passage the word “dub,” which in Russian means “oak,” has the humorous connotations not only because of its meaning, but also due to how it sounds. The word “dub” is a less offensive synonym of “stupid.” It can be used to refer to a person who has made something unclever. From the phonetic point of view, the combination of sounds /d/ and /p/ (written as “b”) sounds funny to someone who speaks Russian. The effect may be lost in English where the word “dub” should probably be read as /djub/ and not /dup/ as it would according to the rules of Russian pronunciation. It might be also interesting to note that in this passage all names provide a fruitful field for linguistic experimentation. For example, Charles McBeth is an obvious allusion to Shakespeare’s play, and Betty Bliss as well as Eileen Lane, who is described by the phonetically similar adjective “languid,” are based on assonance. This shows how the name, which Nabokov uses as a macaronic device, can be a form of phonetic mixing that is somewhat similar to Jolas’s method.

Nabokov uses character names as a formal device for this purpose in many of his novels, most notably in *Lolita* (1955). The name of the main protagonist Humbert Humbert is an odd, but deliberately invented name that Nabokov charges with

⁵³ Vladimir Nabokov, *Pnin* (England: Penguin Books, 2010), 3.

various multicultural allusions. Carl R. Proffer in his extensive study of *Lolita* collects all the uses of Humbert's name that appear throughout the novel, showing how each of the instances in which his name was used bears in itself a cultural connotation:

Humbert the Terrible, Humbert The small, Humbert the Wounded spider, Humbert the Hoarse, Humbert the Humble, Humbert the Hound, Humbert the Cubus, Humbert Le Bel, Humbert the Hummer, Humbert the popular butcher, Herr Humbert, Humbertoldi, Jean-Jacques Humbert, San Humbertino Humbert, Homburg, Hamburg, Humbird, Humburg, Hummerson, Hummer.⁵⁴

“Humbert the Terrible” clearly alludes to Ivan the Terrible, Russian medieval ruler, and Jean-Jacques Humbert resembles the name of the French philosopher. Transformations (even on the phonetical level) that Humbert's name undergoes unleash cultural connotations, which is how Humbert's story reaches a connection with universal facts of history. Importantly, a certain macaronic aspect is characteristic of many uses of Humbert's name (such as Herr Humbert, or Humbertoldi). In most of these cases the macaronic elements are associated with a humorous effect. Alternatively, they function as a cultural riddle.

Lexical level: theory

To illustrate how Nabokov's use of macaronic elements is different from the example discussed at the beginning of this section, I would like to refer to Boris Eikhenbaum's notion of sound gesture described in the essay “How Gogol's

⁵⁴ Carl R. Proffer, *Keys to Lolita* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1968) 9.

Overcoat Was Made” (1918). My main argument is that in traditional macaronic poetry multilingual elements are integrated tightly into the structure and semantical profile of the text, whereas in modernist multilingual poetics they need to be “unlocked” by the reader’s cooperative effort.

Eikhenbaum argued that the entire narrative technique, including the choice of character names in Gogol’s *Overcoat*, is based on the logic of a sound gesture as opposed to the standard narrative logic where a character’s name expresses semantic content. In Nabokov’s novels a similar logic of sound gesturing is involved.

The main idea of Eikhenbaum’s influential essay is that the originality of Gogol’s story comes out of how he conceptualizes the narrator, whose ability to create phonetical puns is more significant than the traditional story elements such as plot, characters, or events. One of such word puns identified by Eichenbaum is the main protagonist’s name, Akaky Akakievich. Even to a non-Russian speaker it is obvious that the name is based on assonance. The name is not allegorical. Unlike Tolstoy’s novels where the name of a character often expresses important information about his or her social rank, Akaky Akakievich does not say much about the character’s social position. Rather, it characterizes him by being in itself a cluster of sounds that produce a ridiculous sound effect. Eichenbaum calls this effect a sound gesture. This concept refers to a particular movement of “acoustic semantics” that is meant to evoke an emotion in the reader. The characters in Gogol’s story are not named according to a mimetic or historical logic, but rather according to acoustic logic. Descriptions of Akaky Akakievich do not provide the reader with information as to how he looks like, yet the reader is confronted with a cognitive picture of the

character. Eikhenbaum bases his discussion of this mechanism, among other things, on Gogol's drafts that reveal the process behind choosing the name:

- 1)Еввул, Моккий, Евлогий;
- 2)Варахасий, Дула, Трефилий;
(Варадат, Фармуфий).
- 3)Павсикахий, Фрументий.

In the later draft the list is the following:

- 1)Моккий, Сессий, Хоздазат;
- 2)Трифиллий, Дула, Варахасий;
(Варадат, Варух)
- 3) Павсикахий, Вахтисий и Акакий⁵⁵

Put together in this manner in Gogol's draft, the names reveal that behind the selection process there is a phonetic logic. In fact, these names remind Jolas's sound poem "Incantation". There is a chance that for someone who does not speak Russian these names may appear as mere phonetic constellations much like those that Jolas forged in his experimental poem. However, the main difference between Jolas and Gogol is that Gogol creates a sound gesture based on the defamiliarization of linguistic units (proper names), whereas Jolas seeks to extract meaning from seemingly random phonetic clusters put together as words.

However, in Gogol's story the name Akaky Akakievich does not yet become an instance of the multilingual poetics. Gogol's way of working with names is closer to Khlebnikov who chooses to focus on sounds instead of words. Yet, unlike Khlebnikov Gogol introduces sound estrangement through the use of proper names. This is also where Gogol differs from Nabokov. Gogol remains in the Russian

⁵⁵ Борис Эйхенбаум, "Как сделана шинель Гоголя," accessed July 24, 2024, <https://www.opojaz.ru/manifests/kaksdelana.html>

phonetic system, whereas Nabokov clashes the English phonetic system with the Russian.

Multilingual mixing is based on the use of signifiers referring to different linguistic systems. Such signifiers can be either acoustic, semantic, or both. In the work of the analyzed modernist authors multilingual poetics manifests itself mainly on the phonetic and lexical levels. There is a higher interdependency between these two levels. Jolas and Joyce's clusters of phonemes imitating foreign languages tend to function as words in the same manner as Nabokov's and Gogol's words tend to rely on sound in producing an effect of acoustic and semantic estrangement.

Syntactic level: Ivan Blatný

Differentiating between the four textual levels of multilingual mixing (the phoneme, the word, the sentence, and the passage) can help to establish a stricter and clearer system of correlations between individual types of multilingual mixing and literary forms. The way an author introduces multilingual material into their work may determine how s/he approaches form.

The correlation between techniques of multilingual mixing and formal arrangements can be seen in Ivan Blatný's *Pomocná Škola Bixley*. Blatný's most preferred method of introducing multilingual material is through individual sentences, however he also uses other techniques such as individual words and sometimes titles. Blatný's strategies of multilingual mixing can be explained by his life-long occupation as a poet and his literary habits. Since poetry has a long tradition

of stanzaic division, some of Blatný's poems naturally end up dividing different languages in different stanzas:

The houses in Tudor style
are simple and elegant
like all the reign of Elizabeth Tudor

Nemám žádné předsevzetí
Nemám žádné předsudky
Nemám žádné zásudky.⁵⁶

In this poem form introduces order into heterogeneous linguistic material, making the encounter of languages a more meaningful, yet still intensified process. Unlike modernist writers discussed in the previous section, multilingual mixing in Blatný's work consists out of larger units of exogenous linguistic material. Another poem called "Rozhodnutí" is a good example of this. The poem is also interesting insofar it has a Czech title that "envelops" the first English stanza with Czech language. One possible explanation of this is that by using titles Blatný highlights which of the text's languages should be considered the dominant one:

The encounters with pirates cost many a soul
save our souls
I'll be glad enough naked
it will come like a bolt from the blue

Duchna je rozthána pozor na peří
kdykoli ráno vstanu budu šťasten.⁵⁷

In this text the stanzaic division not only differentiates Czech and English, but also emphasizes the semantic rhythm of the poem. Arguably, the meaning of this text can be a matter of several interpretations. Yet, despite the seeming difficulty of the text,

⁵⁶ Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, 97.

⁵⁷ Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, 15.

there is a structural connection between the individual elements of the poem. The English phrase “I’ll be glad enough naked” can be seen as a counterpart of the Czech line “kdykoli ráno vstanu budu šťasten.” The parallel consists in aligning two grammatical constructions whose meaning is “if only I get enough of something, I will be happy.” The English phrase “to be glad enough” is different from “to be glad.” The former implies a partial state of happiness that is not totally complete. The same meaning, albeit based on a different grammatical mechanism, is expressed in the Czech line “kdykoli ráno vstanu budu šťasten.” By putting the phrase “budu šťasten” (I’ll be glad) at the end of the sentence the author creates a semantical stress on that part resulting in a shift of meaning. The condition of being happy/glad now consists in that the speaker can simply wake up. The exact English rendition of that phrase would be: “I’ll be glad enough to wake up.” This is different from a phrase like “I’m glad when I wake up.” The idea of this partial, limited happiness thus becomes the main theme of the two sentences and, consequently, of the whole poem.

In other cases, Blatný mixes Czech and English sentences inside one stanza.

For example, in the poem “Model” the Czech language appears inside the first tercet:

The young widow had transparent black stockings
také my musíme chodit ve smutku
He had a flair for calves

I lived opposite to a maternity
But such girls don’t marry and don’t have children
They stand on the stage all alone⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, 17.

To find the meaning of the Czech inclusion, we need to ask the question what would happen with this poem if the Czech line was taken away from it? The most obvious consequence would be that the poem would lose one of the grammatical forms of person, namely the first-person plural *we*. With the Czech line in its place, each of the sentences of the poem expresses a different category of person:

The young widow – SHE (*third person singular*)
také my musíme – WE (*first person plural*)
He had – HE (*third person singular*)

I lived – I (*first person singular*)
But such girls don't marry – THEY (*third person plural*)
They – (*third person plural*)

The only category of person that is missing from the poem is the second person singular and plural. Apart from that, the Czech line completes the grammatical paradigm. By introducing the *we* person into the text, the Czech inclusion adds another perspective enriching the focalizing capability of the poem. From that regard Czech language operates not as a counterpart to English, but rather as a logical continuation of grammatical categories expressed in the English part. Two grammatical systems correlate with each other, creating a unified grammatical space.

In other Blatný's poems English lines are combined with Czech ones more freely without following a strict formal logic. In the poem "Signál," each stanza has an English and a Czech line, except for the first stanza where English is combined with Slovak. The only identifiable principle guiding the arrangement of these lines is that each following stanza starts with a line written in the language that completes the previous stanza:

Six wages have a guarantee in medals
ještě by som si zatrkala

Uhodni prs uhodni vemeno
when I came for the first time to Claybury Hospital

I read the Coming of the Bill
zapískám a počkám až se ozvou.⁵⁹

This roll call of Czech-Slovak and English sentences is a structural complication that follows the same logic of aligning two grammatical systems inside one text. Examples of such structural complication can be seen in more of Blatný's texts. In the poem "Surrealismus" the English lines constitute a couple of two stanzas divided from the first stanza:

Surrealismus, i když myslí,
svět, který voní, i když smysly.

A barn-owl, named Titan:
Nepotopí se jako Titanic.

Orchestr ještě hraje anglickou hymnu.
Open the cabaret.⁶⁰

In this poem, again we can see some parallels between poetic devices in English and Czech. The assonance expressed in the Czech line through the words "myslí" and "smysly" is reenacted through in the couple "Titan" / "Titanic." Blatný is fond of this technique and enacts it in several poems. Another notable example is the text called "Menue":

Kdyby mě nějaká žena pozvala do „pokoje"
měl bych potom úplně šťastný den
také nemám tolik cigaret jako včera
také nemám tolik cigaret jako včela

⁵⁹ Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, 14.

⁶⁰ Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, 18.

Perhaps it is macaroni cheese
I'll go for dinner
there is perhaps the drug called happiness.⁶¹

Here the somewhat surrealistic combination “včera” – “včela” structurally constitutes a pair to the combination “cheesy” – “happiness.” Even though the latter word is not written in a standard English spelling, it indicates the author’s attempt to create a word pun, ridiculing the graphical semblance of the word cheese with the made-up variant of the word “happiness.” One possible interpretation is that by doing that Blatný is making fun of list-keeping, the example of which is the menu, and of how human happiness often depends on those lists of material goods.

Level of passages: Pavel Ulitin

Compared to Blatný’s *Bixley Remedy School*, Pavel Ulitin’s *Four Quarks* has fewer parts written in a different language than Russian. Yet, the text still can be considered as exploring the multilingual poetics because it problematizes the correlations between different linguistic systems.

The most used second language in the novel is English. Other languages include French and German, even though in comparison to Blatný Ulitin does not use them quite as often. Ulitin mostly operates at the level of multilingual mixing where the smallest unit of text is a passage, although in some instances he mixes sentences and words like Blatný. Ulitin’s technique of multilingual mixing is partially determined by the general conception of his book. As discussed in Chapter

⁶¹ Blatný, *Pomocná škola Bixley*, 20.

1, the smallest textual unit in Ulitin's book is a page. Individual multilingual inclusions of words and sentences in his texts occur on a lower structural level and are rather occasional. Ulitin's truly innovative approach to multilingualism manifests itself in cases where he approaches larger textual fragments thinking on the scale of a passage or a page.

Sometimes the whole page of *Four Quarks* is written in one language following a page written in another (the most common alteration is between English and Russian). In other cases, the page contains a piece of text comprised of multilingual passages:

Учитесь плавать, П.У, плавать учитесь, У.П. !

And if they do reply, then give them all the lie.

No pleasure, no leisure. I am not sure of my orthography. Let no such man be trusted.

I shot an arrow into the air, it fell to earth, I knew not where. A friend indeed, really. Felt like a fish out of water. Unfit to live up to it. Unable to live your own little life. I forget what I was looking for.

А Юркин Павел, знал мать его, конечно, конечно, и с матерью Ивана Шумилина познакомился на Пятницкой улице но она мою мать не помнит. Что подделаешь, не у всех в молодости была холера или поляпус утери, иначе она бы помнила докторицу из станицы казанской в 1910 году.

А называлось это еще "Мультимиллионер на футболе", и еще Миров тогда с Дарским читали в кафе, и Дарский еще не поссорился с Мировым из-за лучшей женщины России.⁶²

As identified in the editorial notes, the English part of the passage is a constellation of quotes from English writers such as Sir Walter Raleigh, Shakespeare, and Henry

⁶² УЛИТИН, «Четыре кварка», 37.

Longfellow. However, Ulitin does not leave clues in the text helping to understand that the English part is a citation. In the Russian part, the names Mirov and Darsky probably refer to real historical figures, artists Lev Mirov (1903-1983) and Evsey Darsky (1904-1949). In this passage the multilingual elements interact with each other on a larger semantic scale than words, sentences, or phonemes. The “meaning” of that interaction probably consists in bringing together excerpts from English literary tradition in contact with real Russian historical figures. This creates a vague semantic movement between literary allusion and historical chronicling, but this movement is not straightforward. This correlation is enacted through multilingual encounter that adds a further semiotic layer to the whole arrangement.

The first five pages of *Four Quarks* are written entirely in English. Most of that text is comprised out of different quotations from Aldous Huxley’s novel *After Many a Summer* (1939), as identified by the book’s editors. Ulitin provides these quotations with the numbers of pages from which he quotes, but he never mentions the name of the source. Similarly, the logic according to which he selects individual excerpts is not clear, although some quotes touch upon the themes developed later in the book. For example, one of the passages describes Huxley’s characters talking about socialism (in the edition of Huxley that Ulitin is quoting from the passage is on the page 121):

“You’d like socialism, Pete,” Mr. Propter continued.
“But socialism seems to be fatally committed to centralization and standardized urban mass production all around. Besides, I see too many occasions for

sluggish people to display their bossiness, for sluggish people to sit back and be slaves.”⁶³

The next quote following this one is also from Huxley’s novel, but in the original Huxley’s text it is located a few pages earlier, on page 109. However, thematically it can be seen as a continuation of the previous excerpt:

“What are you trying to get at?”
“Merely at the facts. You believe in democracy; but you’re at the head of businesses which have to be run dictatorially. And your subordinates have to accept your dictatorship because they’re dependent on you for their living. In Russia they’re dependent on government officials for their living. Perhaps you think that’s an improvement,” he added, turning to Pete.⁶⁴

The first piece of English text that is not a quote per se comes on page 18 in Ulitin’s book. Yet, the first sentence of that passage is a translation of a famous line from Pushkin’s poem “A talk of a bookseller with a Poet” (Разговор книгопродавца с поэтом) written in 1824:

You can’t sell the inspiration but you can sell the manuscript. Inspiration cannot be sold, but manuscript can. The price? The equivalent of 2 years of labour and of 10 years of prison in a Siberian camp. What is yours?⁶⁵

The first sentence of the above passage in the original goes as follows: “Не продаётся вдохновенье, Но можно рукопись продать.” This phrase is one of the most well-known Pushkin’s lines. Ulitin translates this citation into English without giving any textual clue in the text that he is quoting Pushkin. This method is similar

⁶³ Улитин, «Четыре кварка», 15.

⁶⁴ Улитин, «Четыре кварка», 16.

⁶⁵ Улитин, «Четыре кварка», 18.

to how Nabokov uses the word “dub” for a humorous effect as understanding the multilingual pun, the reader must know Russian and be familiarized with the Russian literary tradition. If Nabokov hides the macaronic nature of his pun, Ulitin hides the fact that the phrase is an instance of intertextual relation.

Both, Russian and English parts of *Four Quarks* follow this logic of hiding intertextual allusion. For example, in one passage the narrator mentions Mikhail Bulgakov’s novel *The Master and Margarita* (1940) by calling the names of the main characters:

“Вот придет мастер, мастер все исправит. Придет мастер, пойдём к Маргарите. В Лондоне в 1969 году вышел «Мастер» со всеми поправками к «Маргарите»: 40 000 слов по подсчетам тех, кто печатал редакторские «выбросы, когда печатали в журнале МОСКВА.» Ладно, скажу.”⁶⁶

Interestingly, this quote not only mentions Bulgakov’s novel, but it uses it to elaborate on one of Ulitin’s most prominent themes: the alterations that a text undergoes through editorial process. Another prominent theme of the passage is numbers and dates. In comparison to letters and words, numbers is a different kind of sign. Unlike words, numbers cannot take ambiguous meanings. A number always indicates a precise concept, and a date – a precise point in time. Ulitin’s narrator seems to be using these unambiguous signs to anchor the textual ambiguity:

As if to embrace him — then stabbed. He was immediately arrested. It was on Friday 15 1960. See Daily Worker. 15.7.60
Can’t hurry — TOO FAT. 600 000 000 in a HURRY.

⁶⁶ УЛИТИН, «Четыре кварка», 74.

It was 10 years ago. So much for this particular
item — James Joyce in Russian.⁶⁷

The numbers in this passage are an example of the text's inner interrelatedness is based on unambiguous signs. This connectivity operates on the multilingual level, combining different languages in a textual space whose architecture is defined by external facts and realities. Inside these rigid coordinates textual permutations unfold. The correlation between the English and the Russian parts of *Four Quarks* discussed above can be described as a kind of connectivity that is different from standard intertextuality. No clear relation between the two text excerpts can be established. Besides, none of the two texts mock or parody each other. Yet, there is a sense of suggestiveness and allusive correlation between the English text and the Russian one.

The method of uniting various multilingual elements via thematic threads can be observed throughout Ulitin's whole book. Some parts of *Four Quarks* are united into larger thematic constellations that are similar to division into chapters. In these chapter-like formations the Russian and English parts, although not obviously correlated, provide variations on the same theme. One such chapter-theme is entitled "SHOOTING THE HOLY RUSSIA FOR YOU." Interestingly, its Russian title is "СНИМАЕТСЯ СВЯТАЯ РУСЬ" which is not the exact translation. The exact translation of the Russian variant would probably be "Holy Rus is being taken off." Here we can observe another difference between Ulitin and Blatný. In Blatný's poems titles often help to establish a hierarchy of languages. A poem can be written

⁶⁷ УЛИТИН, «Четыре кварка», 54.

entirely in English and have a Czech title, which raises the question of who the ideal recipient was. Ulitin, however, is more interested in the permutations of meaning as narration switches between languages. Another difference is that in Blatný's poems multilingual inclusions cooperate with each other helping to establish a unified meaning, whereas in Ulitin multilingual inclusions seem to wash meaning away by extending the semantic boundaries of the things being described.

The *Holy Russia* part extends from page 237 to 252 in the NLO edition. The thematic range of this section is wide, but most of the motives go back to drawing and, in particular, to Mikhail Nesterov's famous painting *Holy Rus* (1901-1906), which is mentioned in one of the texts. Other passages mention the theme of paining in passing along with other topics whose meaning is contextually obscure:

That's my contradictory trouble, too. The same. The same. Always the same words to give the same satisfying sense of the time not wasted. Keep the aspidistra flying. An extra diversion towards le detournement des mineours. He didn't like it. Of course, I can express myself only by English typewriter.

She smiled, the bitch, when I stopped. Smile, I wispered. Smile, I said. Keep smiling. The fat girl of a bitch was standing opposite the nude and watching the reaction of everybody else's. I contemplated the picture for about half a minute, decided that it is half in the manner of Renoir and went further.⁶⁸

This passage was most probably written entirely by Ulitin himself, which can be deduced, partially, by the rare spelling irregularities and unusual phrasing such as in the sentence "I can express myself only by English typewriter." Other languages

⁶⁸ УЛИТИН, «Четыре кварка», 242.

used the *Holy Russia* part are German and French. The whole section culminates in a mosaic of multilingual textuality:

<239 об.>

Shooting the Holy Russia for you

p.8

*Все это на том же основа-
нии и строилось.*

*Ты же не будешь царапаться, вопить
И настаивать? Нет, конечно.*

p.13 ~~p.12~~

Это уже было.

*The sye sying
The sie, alas, is the same
siing*

*Я, конечно, ожидал
больше.*

<239 об.>

Shooting for the Holly Russia for you

p.11

*Not a world about Ilya Glazunov on Volkhonka. Not
a word about it. Too many beginnings to be explored,
too much to be said "summing up". But nobody
Wants to "sum up". 8.7.69*

*13-я страница сочинения
«Жестокий ребенок» (1963, 16-го
Марта: 16.3.63; 20 стр).
Боже мой, уже там все сказано.⁶⁹*

In quoting this passage I have tried to follow the original design of the text as much as possible, including the typographical aspects and the position of words on the page. The construction of multilingual poetics in this passage is closely tied with the

⁶⁹ Улитин, «Четыре кварка», 252.

typographical arrangement of the linguistic material on the page and, to a certain extent, with transmediality. The logic according to which multilingual elements are included into the text is correlated with the logic of their spatial arrangement on the page. Arguably, this level of multilingual poetics is possible because Ulitin's main unit of multilingual mixing is a passage. Operating on the level of passages enables Ulitin to study different focalization techniques by literally controlling how the reader is confronted with the individual pieces of text and with individual languages. This technique is essentially an exercise in manipulating attention. It takes its roots not merely in the semantic properties of language, but also in its visual side.

Sentences and passages: theory

Forms of multilingual mixing taking place at the level of sentences and passages explored by Blatný and Ulitin can be conceptualized through the notion of montage. Early notions of montage were discussed by Russian formalist critics and filmmakers who understood it as a principle that was in close connection with literary practice. In the present study, the notion of montage can be evoked to highlight the transmedial aspect of multilingual poetics.

Sergei Eisenstein, who was not only a prominent director but also a cultural theoretician, wrote on cinema and montage extensively. In his essays he made analogies with other artistic mediums such as language or painting. Discussing montage in this manner, he points out that in other artforms the artwork is often more "organic" because the material the poet or the painter uses is more homogeneous than in cinema:

The musician uses a scale of sounds; the painter, a scale of tones; the writer, a row of sounds and words-and these are all taken to an equal degree from nature. But the immutable fragment of actual reality in these cases is narrower and more neutral in meaning, and therefore more flexible in combination, so that when they are put together they lose all visible signs of being combined, appearing as one organic unit. A chord, or even three successive notes, seems to be an organic unit. [...] A blue tone is mixed with a red tone, and the result is thought of as violet, and not as a "double exposure" of red and blue. The same unity of word fragments makes all sorts of expressive variations possible. How easily three shades of meaning can be distinguished in language – for example: "a window without light," "a dark window," and "an unlit window."⁷⁰

Eisenstein's slightly biased argument that "cinema is able, more than any other art, to disclose the process that goes on microscopically in all other arts"⁷¹ characterizes him as a person who deeply believes in the power of his artistic medium. Yet, other critics, who were not involved so much into the cinematic world, also made parallels between montage and language. For example, Viktor Shklovsky in his essay on cinematic language compares cinema with a "Chinese drawing" arguing that it is located between language and painting. The cinematic image transforms into a hieroglyph as it is presented on the screen. At the same time every cinematic effect has its analogue in language:

Кино больше всего похоже на китайскую живопись. Китайская живопись находится посередине между рисунком и словом. Люди, движущиеся на экране, своеобразные иероглифы. Это не кинообразы, а кинослова, кинопонятия. Монтаж – синтаксис и этимология киноязыка. [...] Условность

⁷⁰ Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 4.

⁷¹ Eisenstein, *Film Form*, 5.

пространственности, условность безмолвия, условность неокрашенности в кино – все имеет свою аналогию в языке. Кинематографическое правило, что нельзя показать, как человек сел за стол, начал есть и кончил есть, т. е. правило выделения из движения одной только его характерной части – обозначение движения – и есть превращение кинообраза в киноиероглиф. Поэтому нельзя говорить, что язык кино понятен всем. Нет, он только всеми легко усваивается.⁷²

The fact that Shklovsky uses the analogy with the hieroglyph to speak about cinema introduces a certain translingual aspect into his discussion. To move between different artforms is like to move between languages. While some meanings can be lost in such transitions, this transversality can also be beneficial. (One cannot but recall Ezra Pound's fascination with Chinese language which inspired a lot of his philosophy of writing.) One of Shklovsky's important ideas is that poetry can be created through cinematic language. This suggests an idea that poetry is more of a cognitive principle according to which artistic material can be organized, rather than a genre of literary activity.

In his other essays on poetry and prose in cinema Shklovsky discusses how the poetic principle can be applied in different artforms. According to him, poetry can be defined as the substitution of a thematic element with a formal element. In mass cinema the logic of plot and fabula control how sequence of events and scene is presented to the viewer. Narrative elements, or as Shklovsky calls them, elements of meaning, proceed one after another showing scenes from reality. In poetry this

⁷² Шкловский, *Собрание Сочинений*, 325.

narrative logic is substituted with the device, which is a formal element like an unexpected transition or exposition. As Shklovsky puts it:

существует прозаическое и поэтическое кино, и это есть основное деление жанров: они отличаются друг от друга не ритмом, или не ритмом только, а преобладанием технически формальных моментов (в поэтическом кино) над смысловыми, причем формальные моменты заменяют смысловые, разрешая композицию. Бессюжетное кино есть «стихотворное» кино.⁷³

Shklovsky's and Eisenstein's ideas on the interrelation between cinema and language can provide an insight into how multilingual poetics work. The poetic effect is conceptualized as a cognitive operation that can be applied in different mediums, not just language. Secondly, the mere transition from one medium to another is akin to a transition between languages. Shklovsky speaks about the language of cinema. It is true that it follows its own logic, which makes it as difficult to understand as hieroglyphic writing, but it is still a language.

Shklovsky and Eisenstein's formalist ideas on cinema, montage, and language are evocative of what the contemporary translingual poet Wong May said about her work in one of her interviews. May is a translingual poet, however she is also a painter, which makes transmediality an important category for all her artistic activities:

No matter what I do, language is not important. – it is poetry. Even words are not important. I will always be doing poetry. I can be painting. I could be doing anything. It would be poetry by any other means. [...] I'm no longer interested in the well-contained poems. I want to do something that's more like a symphony with

⁷³ Шкловский, *Собрание Сочинений*, 329.

all the different trends coming together. That's free, coming and going, anything can happen. Poetry and picture, visual arts send us out to the world and see how the world can save us.⁷⁴

Eisenstein, Shklovsky, and Wong May all highlight the importance of the fragment in their understanding of art, and particularly, in poetry. The success of the work of art is based partly on how well it follows the principle of fragmentation. In Eisenstein's example cinema's capacity to show the difference between phrases "a window without light," "a dark window," and "an unlit window" depends on the masterful use of montage. In a similar manner May's translingual sensibility conceptualizes the poetic effect as something that enables transitions between mediums: drawing and language.

In multilingual writing fragmentation acquires a more transmedial form, reminding more the principle of cinematic montage. As such, the multilingual text remains a homogeneous artifact consisting of just one type of material: language. However, it starts to resemble more the logic of cinema.

In a homogeneous linguistic environment different elements, such as sentences, or words are mixed with each other seamlessly. Passages written in one language are drawn to each other by the logic of resemblance. This is why texts comprised out of elements written in the same language are so effective in conveying what is understood by "meaning": thoughts and ideas that in speculative interpretative acts. Contrary to this, in a multilingual text the mere principles of

⁷⁴ Wong May, "Wong May Profile," *Windham-Campbell Prizes and Literary Festival*, YouTube, March 23, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmJYwxF5K3Q>.

connection, according to which individual textual elements are united in one space, is put into question. To go back to Eisenstein's example, the question now is not how to express the differences in meaning between the phrases "a window without light" and "a dark window." The question now is what happens when the word "dark" is replaced with the word "temný" turning the sentence into a multilingual collage. It is important to distinguish here the different types of motivation that can stand behind such a replacement of words.

Unlike the more obvious motivation of macaronic poetry where the combination of multilingual elements often has a comic effect, the new type of multilingual writing practiced by Blatný and Ulitin follows a more complex logic. This logic reminds something of Shklovsky's notion of poetic montage according to which the poetic principle is something that manifests itself in the form of a separate textual entity such as stanza or a passage.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

Strategies of multilingual literary mixing have been used by writers throughout all history of literature for one simple reason: as far as there are different languages there is an urge to clash them, looking for natural parallels, sonic and semantic coincidences, instances of assonance, semblances, and other unexpected discoveries. What changes in different period is not how often writers turn to multilingualism, but how visible their multilingual work is. The prominence of multilingual writing in a literary field depends on many factors such as the conditions of the market, literary trends, etc. Some form of multilingualism is often present in a literary discourse. The question is how much of this multilingual work is accepted as standard literary production and how much of it is considered experimental work.

Multilingual poetics does not represent a new development in literary history. Another crucial aspect that changes from period to period is the author's relation to multilingualism in general and the way it is related to textuality. In Ulitin's work there is a great interdependence of multilingualism and typography. Modernist writers relied on techniques such as montage, which is a principle that also characterizes Ivan Blatný's and, to a greater extent, Pavel Ulitin's approach to multilingual mixing. Yet, there is a difference in how montage is applied in modernist examples of multilingual mixing and in postwar multilingual texts. This change can be described as a movement towards a greater reliance on the reader as the co-author of the literary work. Blatný's method consists in creating texts that

require a further investigation of their inner logic: of how the individual multilingual parts of the poem work together to create a meaningful unity. In turn, Ulitin's multilingual poetics depends on the reader's ability to uncover the hidden intertextual relations. A similar logic, although on the lexical level, extends to Nabokov and his macaronic word puns.

After the modernist experiments the multilingual method became a more flexible literary technique. Ivan Blatný used it for the construction of lyrical subjectivity in his poems as effectively as other poetic devices. In other words, multilingualism in his poems was not just an intellectual technique, but it also became a way of attaining lyrical subjectivity. Crucially, the use of multilingual poetics in the work of Blatný and Ulitin is not an experiment for the sake of experiment. Rather, it can be seen as a natural response to their life situations. Blatný, who lived in England, incorporated English into his life, which his writing reflected. In turn, Ulitin used multilingualism as a response to the staleness of official Soviet culture, on the one hand, and to the civil fervor of the underground Soviet literature, on the other. Ulitin did not fully belong to any of these discourses. His writing was truly unique in combining intellectual sophistication and anti-totalitarian political appeal. It may be interesting to notice that while Eugene Jolas dreamed of creating of universal language through his multilingual experiments, Ulitin used multilingualism to escape the universalizing politics of the Soviet state that sought to turn people and whole cultures into generic Soviet subjects, formally diverse, but deprived of their uniqueness in reality.

In a sense, Jolas and Joyce's appeal to multilingualism was possible because they wanted to forge a new subjectivity that would challenge the accepted ways of meaning making. The futurists with their *zaum* language essentially attempted to do the same, but as Shklovsky shows, they ended up creating a non-language rather than a foreign language. From that perspective, the multilingual aspirations of Jolas and Joyce is a more positive project. Whereas *zaum* deconstructs linguistic relations already exists, the multilingual poetics investigates the future and imagines the world where languages co-exist and correlate in unexpected, creative ways.

The postwar Europe in which Blatný and Ulitin lived turned out to be a place like that, although it is true that the coexistence of languages in their work is not a symbol of progress or prosperity. Rather, it the consequence of political catastrophes. In a way both Blatný and Ulitin developed multilingual poetics as a result of their struggle with the totalitarian regimes they lived in: Blatný as a consequence of his emigration and Ulitin because of living in an aggressively ideological, totalitarian culture. On a broader level, however, their work envisions a situation where switching between different languages is an integral part of what it means to be a writer. In today's globalized world, which still has not resolved many of the traumas it received in the 20th century, this tendency manifests itself in the emerging popularity of translingual writing and translingual poetry. More and more authors begin to write in a language that is not their mother tongue. As wars continue to rage, as people are forced to leave their homes and families and move to new countries, multilingualism more and more becomes not just a literary method, but the key feature of the contemporary human situation. This means that more and more

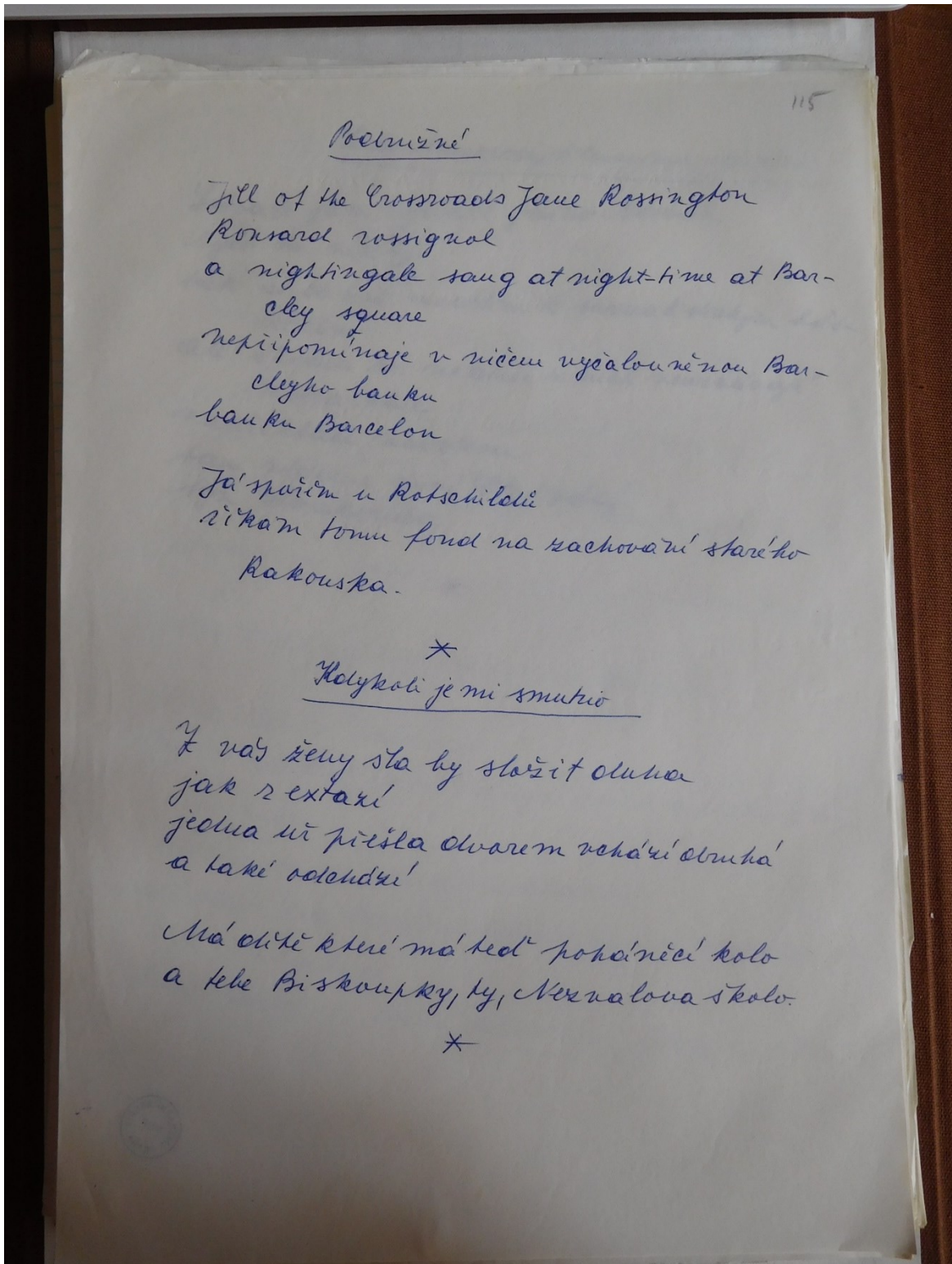
literary forms on multilingualism may appear. The development of these forms is possible, among other reasons, thanks to writers like Blatný and Ulitin who in their work showed how multilingualism can be a matter of generic flexibility and sophisticated semantic complexity.

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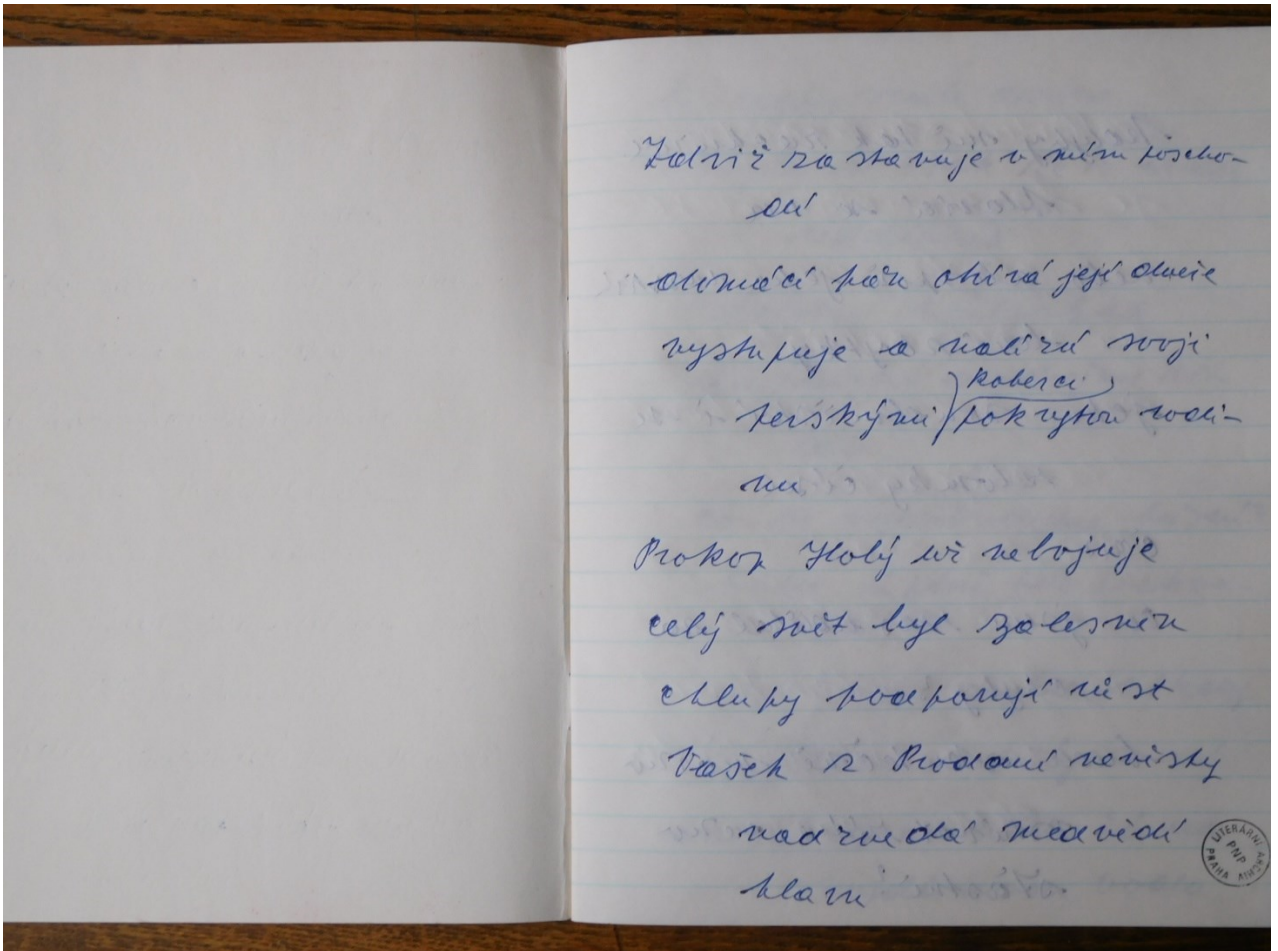
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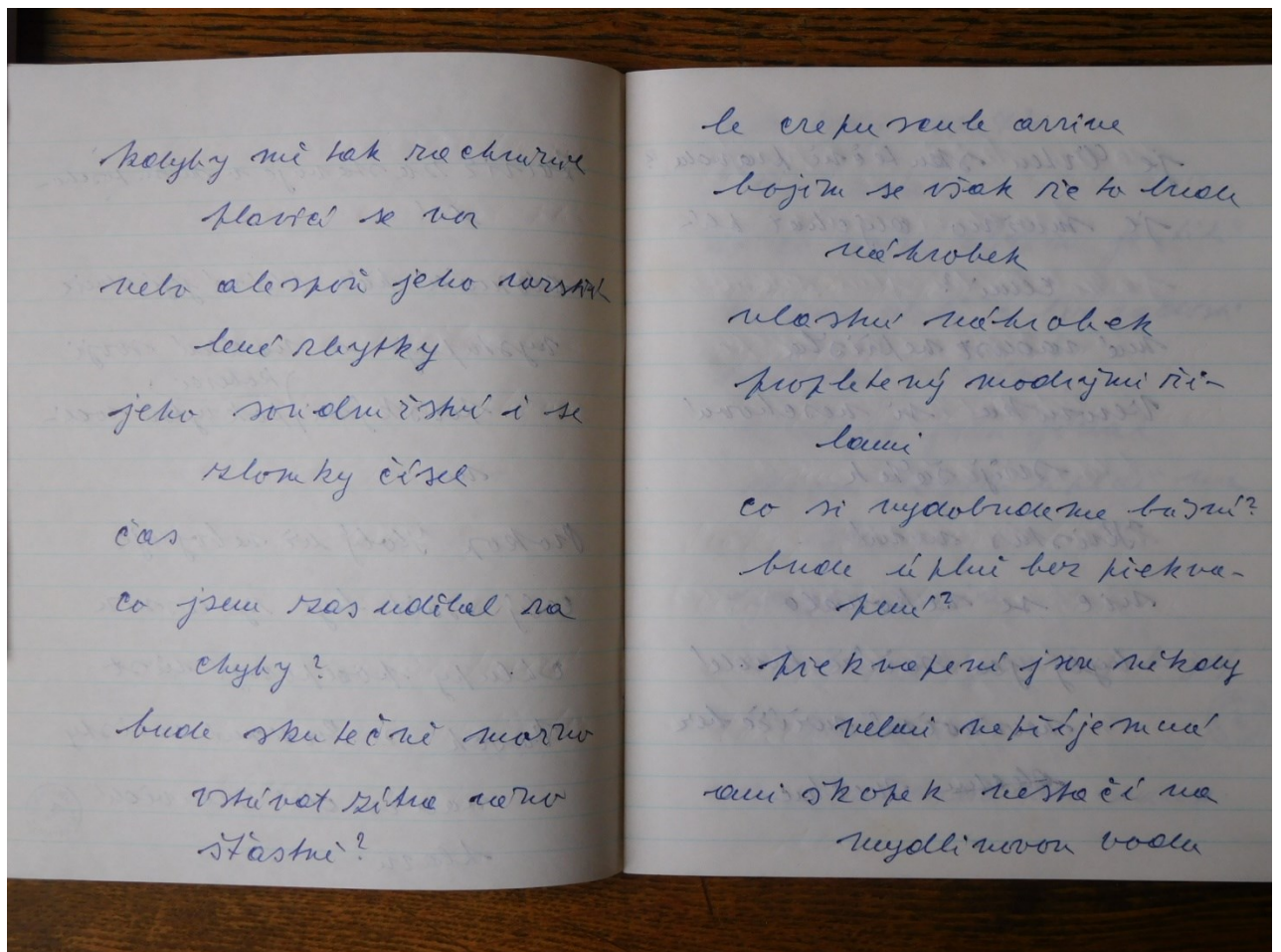
Attachments



(Picture 1)



(Picture 2)



(Picture 3)

раздирать на куски

38

Жалкое впечатление – от "Забытой ленты": любовь ямщиков, как всякая деревенщина. Озеро в жаркий день недаром враждует с магнитофоном. А сначала у них были прекрасные отношения. Я даже как-то пожертвовал ему вечер и ушел: для хорошего человека и ленту не жалко.

Он думал там, где можно только верить. Он видел там, где нужно стать слепым. Только и всего. Он даже не говорил ничего о плахе. И не оскорблял он доброго монаха. Он вообще ничего не делал. Он вообще молчал. Но одного этого было достаточно.

Глухонемым надо стать.

The Back of Beyond

у чорта на куличках;
в противоположной стороне города;
изнанка потустороннего мира;
стр. 390 – 404 мы читали вслух 20 июня 69
20.6.69

*W. Somerset Maugham
for reading out loud*

для Разрезки

(Picture 4)

Abstract

This MA thesis discusses the work of the Russian writer Pavel Ulitin (1918-1986) and the Czech poet Ivan Blatný (1919-1990) in a comparative perspective. These authors both developed a poetics of multilingualism in their writing. The term multilingualism refers to a literary method where several languages are combined for an artistic effect. Ivan Blatný started writing multilingual poetry during his exile in England. As a result, a collection of poetry entitled *Pomocná škola Bixley* came out in 1979. Pavel Ulitin's prose was also created in specific circumstances. A reclusive writer, Ulitin shared his manuscripts mainly with his friends. His text *Four Quarks for Dr. Marx* (1969) was published for the first time in 2018. Both Blatný and Ulitin's books represent complex literary artifacts as their publication was possible thanks to additional editorial processing of the manuscripts. The MA thesis discusses how the intervention of the editors shaped the ways in which Blatný and Ulitin's writing can be read today. The MA thesis consists of two parts. In the first part, aspects of Blatný and Ulitin's biographies are discussed. The writers are then contextualized with various literary and critical discourses. In the second part, the poetics of multilingualism is discussed in a historical perspective. Comparisons are drawn between Blatný and Ulitin and modernist writers who also employed the multilingual method. The discussion of literary multilingualism is reinforced by the theoretical work of the Russian formalist critics such as Viktor Shklovsky and Yury Tynyanov.

Key words: translingualism, multilingualism, modernism, poetry, poem, poetics, literature, formalism

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na komparativní analýzu vybraných děl ruského spisovatele Pavla Ulitina (1918–1986) a českého básníka Ivana Blatného (1919–1990). Tito autoři využívali ve své tvorbě multilingvální metodu, čímž jsou myšleny texty, které kombinují více než jeden jazyk. Blatný začal psát mnohojazyčnou poezii, když se nacházel v exilu v Anglii. Výsledkem této tvorby je sbírka *Pomocná škola Bixley* (1979). V této knize dochází ke kombinaci několika jazyků pro vytváření literárního efektu. Podobný přístup k mnohojazyčnosti můžeme pozorovat také u Pavla Ulitina, jehož próza *Čtyři Kvarka* (1969) existuje spíše ve formě rukopisu. Pavel Ulitin psal svoji prózu také ve specifických podmínkách. Jeho hlavními čtenáři byli jeho známí a kamarádi. Kniha *Čtyři Kvarka* (1969) vyšla poprvé v roce 2018. Texty Blatného a Ulitina jsou komplexními literárními artefakty, jejichž publikace byla možná jenom kvůli dodatečnému redaktorskému zásahu a zpracování rukopisů. Předkládaná diplomová práce se také zabývá tím, jak tento redaktorský zásah ovlivnil finální podoby textů, s nimiž se dnešní čtenář může setkat. Diplomová práce se skládá ze dvou částí. První část se věnuje biografickým autorů a uvádí literární a recepční kontext pro jejich tvorbu. Druhou část práce představuje komparativní analýza děl Ulitina a Blatného s cílem situovat jejich tvorbu do kontextu vývoje multilingvální literatury v Evropě počínaje modernismem. Diskuse o literárním multilingvismu je založená na základě teoretických textech představitelů ruského formalismu jako Viktor Šklovskij a Jurij Tynjanov.

Klíčová slova: translingvismus, multilingvismus, modernismus, poezie, báseň, poetika, literatura, formalismus