Case Histories in Babel – Psychoanalytic Approaches to Multilingual Fiction

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0. Introduction: Wounded in Babel

The first sentences spoken in Alejandro González Iñárritu's 2006 film, *Babel*, are unlikely to be understood by a major part of its intended audience – they are spoken in Berber. As if to relish the situation of non-understanding, the filmmaker has the viewer do without subtitles until finally displaying them from about the fifth sentence onward. The feeling of alienation aroused in the viewer in such an immediate way dominates this third part of the unofficial trilogy after *Amores Perros* (2000) and *21 Grams* (2003). The film consists of four narrative strands set on three different continents that are woven into a pattern marked by communication barriers, isolation and desperation. A US-American married couple, Richard and Susan, travel to Morocco trying to save their marriage after the death of their infant third child, to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The couple export the emotional encapsulation they experience abroad and seem not only isolated from each other and the rest of the tour group – the tour bus appears like a tiny protective capsule in the midst of a hostile and foreign desert landscape. Communication with locals is not part of the tour, until a storyline, followed by the viewer with a sense of foreboding, violently and incomprehensibly bursts into the emotionally void, but still protective sphere. A Moroccan shepherd's son, thoughtlessly testing the range of a rifle he and his brother have been given to shoot jackals, fires a bullet at the tour bus and critically wounds Susan, startling her from her sleep as well as from her state of depressive apathy.

The gun, uncannily presented as the only means of making contact between the local and the tourists, triggers a narrative leading into two directions: on the one hand, to the nurse of the couple's other two children, whose forced decision to take the children along to her son's wedding in Tijuana ends in a nightmarish episode of border-crossing with a catastrophic outcome. On the other hand, the trace of the rifle leads to a Japanese businessman, who, after a trip through Morocco, had given the rifle as a present to his Berber guide. The businessman has difficulty in communicating with his deaf-mute teenage daughter, who is not only longing for love and appreciation, but is also traumatized by her mother's suicide.

As indicated by the film poster, in which the five letters of the word "Babel" draw a vertical separation line through its center, language also draw dividing lines between human beings in a globalized world. As in the myth of the tower of Babel (*The Bible*, Genesis 11. 1-9), in which God punishes mankind for their hubris by confusing their tongues and scattering them all over the world, the characters of Iñárritu's film find themselves divided and distanced from each other – an insurmountable distance, which soon seems to justify physical

and psychological violence against the other. Picking up on this Babelian sense of alienation, one review opens with the words:

> Shut your mouth. Communication is impossible. There are too many languages. There are too many tongues. And there is far too much cultural white noise to ever decipher the emotions and intent above the clatter and ricochet issuing from the globalized maw. The sheer volume of linguistic and societal back-spatter promises discontinuity that only ends in one of two ways: silence or babble. (Savlov 2006, online)

While silence, in fact, pervades critical moments in all of the narrative strands, the assertion that there are "too many languages" is debatable, since it evokes the image of a world, in which language boundaries prevent human beings from communicating. Even though the language repertoire of the film encompasses five different languages – English, Arabic, Spanish, Japanese and sign language – the greater communication barriers persist between speakers of the same languages: husbands and wives as well as parents and children. As another reviewer writes, "language is far from the principal barrier" (Chocano 2006, online). This view is also confirmed by the director, who says that "Babel is about how our everyday lives are affected by walls, miscommunications and barriers" (Iñárritu in Michael 2009, online). Thus, the film only takes its cue from the idea of language difference to bring home the message: Babel is a human condition.

In contrast to the stories ridden by communication barriers, the film aspires to talk about universal sensitivities. Thus, Iñárritu stresses in a different interview that "despite all obvious differences, we humans have extremely much in common. And this is how I had the idea to make a film about borders that, eventually, are utterly redundant" (Iñárritu in Sturm 2006, online, translation mine) [1]. In a review, titled "Emotion Needs No Translation", A.O. Scott argues that Iñárritu conveys human feelings through a film language easily accessible to everyone:

> We may not be able to read minds or decipher words, he suggests, but we can surely decode faces, especially when we see them at close range and in distress. Loss, fear, pain, anguish – none of these emotions, it seems, are likely to be lost in translation. (Scott 2006, online)

While the dominant close-ups and landscape shots certainly have a wide appeal, the words of the reviewer make multilingualism appear like an obstacle that Iñárritu could not keep out of the film. This seems misleading since the director has stated in several interviews that he, in fact, had to overcome severe obstacles in order to bring multilingualism into the film, for

[1] In the original: "Trotz aller offenkundigen Unterschiede haben wir Menschen extrem viel miteinander gemeinsam. Und so hatte ich die Idee, einen Film über Grenzen zu machen, die im Endeffekt völlig überflüssig sind."

instance, having to employ translators for effectively communicating with the amateur Moroccan actors (cf. Chang 2007, online).

Contrary to the statement that emotion needs no translation, I would argue that Iñárritu very consciously takes his characters to language boundaries since they entail a tremendous metaphorical potential. The boundaries of languages are linked here to limits of articulation, beyond which lies the unspeakable. One does not need to look very long for what the film presents as unspeakable: the trauma of the incomprehensible loss of loved ones, inscribed as the backstory wound both of the American couple and the Japanese family. What is considered traumatic in the field of Trauma Studies are experiences that cannot be processed because they resist their integration, into narrative memory, and therefore also their translation into symbolic language (cf. Caruth 1995, 153-54). Such a translation does not seem to have taken place in the two narrative strands in *Babel*, causing unprocessed sensations and languages – no matter whether English or sign – to exist parallelly in an emotional Babel. The figure of the language boundary makes visible the limits of what the characters are able to verbalize. The violent transgression of the border to the other – even if it occurs through a rifle bullet – surprisingly also shows a wholesome effect: the spouses reach out for each other again. She articulates her feelings of guilt, while he admits to having run away from the painful realization of their child's death.

However, Iñárritu takes not only the characters, but also the viewers to language boundaries. By staging dialogues in a language the viewers are not likely to understand, the filmmaker tropes what it means to reach limits of understanding. Thus, multilingualism as used in the film effectively implants a sense of alienation and helplessness in the viewer. This narrative strategy, in turn, exerts the effect of what critics have described as "traumatic realism" (Foster 1996, Rothberg 2000, LaCapra 2001). In *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* Dominick LaCapra uses the expression to describe fiction that "somehow attempts to come to terms, affectively and cognitively, with limiting experiences involving trauma and its aftereffects" (2001, 26). By confronting the viewers with limits of understanding, the film can be said to use "multilingual realism", which recreates a symptom of trauma and seeks to convey an emotional understanding of it.

This short analysis demonstrates three aspects: first, the film tropes the transgression of language boundaries as a dangerous and almost impossible endeavor, since in its Babelian world, communication does not proceed by means of words, but of bullets. Second, the film metaphorically uses the figure of the language boundary as a communication barrier between characters. In the context of traumatic experience, the figure can represent the limits of

understanding that prevent the traumatized from 'translating' unconscious sensations into narrative memory. Finally, the use of multilingual passages serves as an aesthetic strategy for intensifying the sense of alienation and isolation for the viewer and, thus, affectively approaching the intricacies of trauma.

Babel is not an isolated example of a work of fiction in which characters are sent to linguistic borderlands. A large number of works present a similar concern and engagement with linguistic border-crossings. Sofia Coppola's film *Lost in Translation* (2003) tells the story of an encounter between two Americans, who feel lost in their linguistic environment as well as in life, and briefly find a safe haven in each other during their stay in Japan. The disconcerting experience of the immersion into a foreign language is used to trope a more general feeling of disorientation. In Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog* (1999), the protagonist finds his best friend in an ice-cream vendor with whom he does not share a common language. Understanding is achieved across and despite the language boundary between them. In Beeban Kidron's *Swept from the Sea* (1997), a film based on Joseph Conrad's 1901 novella *Amy Foster*, two characters even fall in love while being unable to communicate across language boundaries. In a critical moment, however, their non-understanding of the other's language has disastrous consequences.

A differently troped, but equally strong interest in linguistic border-crossings persists in literary fiction. In the grandmaster of multilingual fiction, Vladimir Nabokov's, *Pnin* (1957), the émigré protagonist's struggle to make himself at home in the English language is a metaphor of his trying to lead a meaningful life that has been shaped by a constant experience of loss. Julia Alvarez, in her *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), tells stories of four sisters who migrate to the US from the Dominican Republic and experience their initiation into English as part of a wider coming-of-age process. And in Anne Michaels' novel, *Fugitive Pieces* (1996), translation is used as a central metaphor of coming to terms with Holocaust trauma.

The figure of the language boundary and its transgression forms the main focus of my investigation of multilingual fiction. As shown through the example of Iñárritu's *Babel*, the thesis pursues the following questions: on the one hand, it is interested in the negotiation of linguistic border-crossings: How are such transgressions achieved and what emotions are they invested with? Do the border-crossings present a danger to one's life and mental integrity or a chance of liberation that cannot be found otherwise? These issues take into account the sociopolitical backgrounds in which the transgressions occur and are closely related to psychological and psychoanalytic theories on multilingualism and the acquisition of a second

language. On the other hand, the thesis explores the ways in which transgressions of language boundaries are used in metaphorical and aesthetic terms to trope psychological phenomena and their evolvement in linguistic borderlands. This investigation will mainly draw on translation theories concerned with the ethics and aesthetics of language boundaries and their transgression. Finally, the thesis shall closely examine the multilingual aesthetics involved in the troping of linguistic border-crossings and develop an understanding of the uses of 'multilingual realism'.

This thesis deals with a number of linguistic border-crossings in fiction, all of which have far-reaching consequences for the protagonists. The scenarios of these transgressions feature characters of most various linguistic, cultural and political backgrounds. Some of them are monolingual travellers in exophonic territories who cannot do without translators and take more or less secure steps with the help of the latter. Others have grown up in linguistic borderlands or bilingual territories and are deeply familiar with linguistic border-crossings. Still others are translators or interpreters of different levels of linguistic competence, whose main activity consists in the transgression of language boundaries. Finally, language migrants, whose trajectories include the crossing of language boundaries, can be seen forming different relationships with their first or also their second languages – from denying their mother tongue to demonizing their second language. Whether the characters become dependent on the linguistic services of translators or turn translation or self-translation into the central projects of their lives – Babel never leaves the soul unmarked. Of course, the sociopolitical context in which the border-crossings occur as well as the political status of these subjects is crucial and must receive adequate attention in the analysis of multilingual fiction. However, as I agree with Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman, contemporary fictional representations of multilingualism and translation have developed an increased interest in the troping of subjective experience in linguistic borderlands (2005, 22-24) – a circumstance which shall be centrally addressed in this thesis.

From the trauma of translation to the translation of trauma

Fiction that sends its protagonists across language borders is typically concerned with the chances and hazards of these border-crossings. Their negotiation can be conceptualized on an imaginary scale reaching from scenarios that end in calamity to those leading to salvation. What unites the works analyzed in this thesis is a common engagement with interconnections

between the transgression of language boundaries and psychological conditions. These interconnections specify the scale in the way that different mental conditions and developments appear at its opposite poles. At the pessimistic end, one can find representations of pathologies originating in acts of linguistic border-crossings, at times troped at traumas of 'self-translation'. Among these are anxiety, neuroses, the fragmentation of one's self, and, at worst, even schizophrenia – afflictions surfacing through symptoms such as nightmares or obsessive-compulsive behavior. At the other end of the scale, one can position the representations of the linguistic border-crossing as a chance of relief of pre-existing mental conditions or limitations, culminating in a possible working-through of traumas from the past.

Fictions of linguistic border-crossings are mutually connected with political, cultural, linguistic, psychological and psychoanalytic discourses on multilingualism and translation, which, in turn, have mutually conditioned each other. In some of these fictions the points of reference are clearly visible, in others they are less apparent. Both ways, they are never isolated figurations, but resonate with tenets from different disciplines. This thesis seeks to examine the existing connections and to put the works of fiction in a productive dialogue with other theoretical positions which are sometimes consistent with the fictional tropings of linguistic border-crossings and sometimes put their internal gaps or contradictions into question in a deconstructive manner. While this dialogue shall take place in the following chapters, I would like to cast a brief glance at some discursive positions that make up the cornerstones of the configuration of linguistic border-crossings.

As late as in 1982, François Grosjean published a study, *Life with Two Languages*, in which one chapter is titled "The Bilingual as a Person". In this chapter, the author strives in all seriousness to present some advantages of being bilingual, to defend the mental sanity of bilinguals and to prove that bilingualism does not necessarily have to produce split minds and schizophrenic psychoses. To illustrate his point, he even puts together a list of "Well-known Persons Who Were or Are Bilingual", in which he includes as disparate examples as Martin Luther, Indira Gandhi, Marshall Tito, Henry Kissinger, Jesus Christ ("who may even have been trilingual"), Marie Curie, Frédéric Chopin, Pablo Picasso, and finally also Samuel Beckett and Vladimir Nabokov, who "are the proof that one person can write literature in two different languages" (1982, 284-288). Why does Grosjean strive to make such a strong case for bilingualism and what discourses does he respond to?

As Aneta Pavlenko explains in her study, *Emotions and Multilingualism* (2005), since the 19th and throughout most of the 20th century, discourses on bilingualism were dominated by the academic consensus that the phenomenon presented a pathological condition. Until the

late 1970s, one could observe the trend in the disciplines of linguistics, psychology, education and sociology to point out "adverse effects of bilingualism on children's cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development" (2005, 25). Thus, researchers diagnosed and prophesied "alienation, apathy, cognitive dissonance, and emotional vulnerability" as well as "anomie", a term connoting "the feelings of anxiety, social isolation, personal disorientation, and rootlessness experienced by people who are in transition from one social group to another" (ibid.).

Different approaches were taken in psychology and psychoanalysis to explain this variety of pathological conditions. One line of research, pursued particularly until the 1940s, claimed that a life in two languages necessarily led to the development of multiple identities in one person (see Pavlenko 2005, 26). However, even in the late 1970s, the view was still present that bilingualism could lead to a split identity (see Clarke 1976, Adler 1977). Thus, writing about foreign students in the USA, Mark Clarke associated second language and second culture acquisition with schizophrenia, where "social encounters become inherently threatening, and defense mechanisms are employed to reduce the trauma" (1976, 380). Drawing on Gregory Bateson's ideas (1972), Clarke framed the process of second language learning as an experience involving double-bind phenomena, since the learner needs to have contact with speakers of the language in order to learn, while being at high risk of being misunderstood or even rejected due to his or her limited communicative competence. In Clarke's view, the culture shock that comes with the immersion into a new language and culture is likely to trigger schizophrenic defense mechanisms, as described by Gregory Bateson: first, the subject might "assume that behind every statement there is a concealed meaning which is detrimental to his welfare"; second, he might "tend to accept literally everything people say to him"; and third, he might choose to ignore metacommunicative messages, in which case "he would find it necessary to see and hear less and less of what went on around him, and do his utmost to avoid provoking a response in his environment" (Bateson 1972, 211). It hardly needs to be said that the analogy established between language learners and schizophrenic patients relegates the former into a passive victim position.

The possibility of being traumatized in the process of second-language learning is also pointed out by Alexander Guiora and associates, who base their notion of the "language ego" on the Freudian notion:

> In a manner similar to the concept of the body ego, language ego too is conceived as a maturation concept and refers to a self-presentation with physical outlines and firm boundaries. […] The permeability of the language ego boundaries […] is developmentally and genetically (in the psychoanalytic sense) determined. […] Thus a child can assimilate native-like speech in any

> language. Once ego development is concluded, flexibility will be sharply restricted forever. (1972, 112)

If flexibility of the "language ego" is restricted, it may become threatened by the second language, which, as Aneta Pavlenko notes, makes second language learning "a traumatic experience" (2005, 30).

Claiming that the experience of second language learning was traumatic in its nature, these studies tend to ignore the fact that, as migrants, the second language learners were exposed to much harsher confrontations than that with the new language. As Pavlenko writes, a number of studies dating back to the 1940s and 1960s had already made the point that "the emotional maladjustment of the bilingual student is environmentally determined and is not the result of mental conflict" (Spoerl 1943, quoted in Pavlenko 2005, 26). What this means is that mental suffering resulted not so much from the exposure to the second language, but rather from the social stigmatization and degradation that language learners commonly experienced in their monolingual host communities. The role of the language learner's social status is best demonstrated through the double standard involved in the responses to bilingualism and second language learning from the 1920s. "'Elite bilingualism' – that is, bilingualism of the upper and middle classes", Pavlenko explains, "was typically presented as a positive phenomenon", while the "bilingualism of immigrant and linguistic minority children was commonly associated with mental retardation, moral inferiority, split identity, and linguistic shortcomings" (ibid., 24). One could go so far as to claim that is was this bias that first invited the pathologization of bilingualism and second language learning.

These pathologizing discourses are relevant for this thesis, since they resurface in autobiographic writing on second language learning and bilingualism, as vividly demonstrated by Tzvetan Todorov's essay, "Bilinguisme, dialogisme, et schizophrénie" (1985), or, more famously, by Eva Hoffman's language memoir, tellingly titled *Lost in Translation* (1989) and in fictional tropings of linguistic border-crossings, as, for instance, in Michel Gondry's *The Science of Sleep*. Tracing these discourses in the works analyzed in the thesis shall bring us closer to understanding the troping of self-translation as traumatic.

At the celebratory end of the scale, on the other hand, one can find works of fiction that overtly draw on psychoanalytic and translation theories and make use of the metaphorical potential of multilingualism and translation. In this case, the intersection between trauma and translation is reversed. What is at stake here is not the question of trauma stemming from a process of translation, but that of the 'translatability' of traumas that existed before the act of translation. How can trauma become subject to a linguistic operation like translation? The

idea is derived from the 'translational metaphor' that has been used in psychoanalysis since Freud. As Patrick Mahony outlines, the notion of translation has been used by Freud in many contexts. Thus,

> neuroses and symptoms are translations of unconscious material; and the manifest or pictorial dream is nothing but a kind of internalized intersemiotic translation or transformation of the previous verbal latent dream. The analyst's interpretations are also translations, and even more than this, the very movement of material in the psychic apparatus as such is understood as translation whereas repression is a failure of translation. (Mahony 1982, 64)

Since Freud's times, the metaphor has been in use in psychoanalysis and has, more recently, been appropriated in Trauma Studies, where the process of processing traumatic experience has been described as the translation of trauma (Caruth 1995, 154; van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995, 173; Pestre and Benslama 2011). "When people are exposed to trauma, that is, a frightening event outside of ordinary human experience", psychiatrists Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart write,

> they experience "speechless terror" […]. The experience cannot be organized on a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level: as somatic sensations, behavioral reenactments, nightmares, and flashbacks" (1995, 172).

Drawing on the translational metaphor, we could conclude from van der Hart's and van der Kolk's description that traumatic experience needs to be translated into symbolic language, since in its untranslated form, it tortures the traumatized subject by resurfacing through a number of symptoms. But can such a metaphorical phrasing do justice to the mental suffering of trauma victims?

As shall be demonstrated in the thesis, the translational metaphor proves highly productive in the troping of traumatic experience, and can be therefore found in fictional representations of trauma, or serve as a heuristic tool for analyzing the latter. To explain my point, I will draw on the notion of trauma as understood by Cathy Caruth and the contributors to her edited volume, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995). Among the multiple characteristics of trauma, two aspects stand out that seem to reach out for the translational metaphor: the incomprehensibility of the traumatic event and its literal repetition in the mind of the traumatized.

As Caruth argues in the context of Holocaust Studies, trauma victims are precluded from accessing their own memories of the traumatic event, since the latter "escapes full consciousness as it occurs", is never "fully experienced", and, therefore, not integrated into narrative memory (1995, 153, emphasis in the original). For this reason, the victims are faced with the impossibility of understanding what precisely they have witnessed and survived:

"For the survivor of trauma, then, the truth of the event may reside not only in its brutal facts, but also in the way that their occurrence defies simple comprehension" (ibid.). In its incomprehensibility, trauma can be likened to an unintelligible text in the foreign language of the unconscious, asking to be translated and, at the same time, resisting its translation. The translational metaphor appears valid in this context, since incomprehension can be seen as *tertium comparationis* between the problems posed by trauma and the lack of knowledge of a foreign language.

Further, Caruth draws on the pioneering mind in the field of trauma, Pierre Janet, who "proposed that traumatic recall remains insistent and unchanged to the precise extent that it has never, from the beginning, been fully integrated into understanding" (Caruth 1995, 153). Modern analysts, as Caruth continues, have commented on the "surprising literality and nonsymbolic nature of traumatic dreams and flashbacks, which resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely, literal" (1995, 5). The insistence, or repetition, is an aspect that traumatic memories share with repressed memories, as described by Freud, whose theories Caruth strongly relies on. In the essay "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (1958), Freud explains that "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts it out*" and, during the hypnotic treatment, "repeats [it] under the conditions of resistance". As to the indicated therapy, the analyst's task lies in uncovering this resistance, acquainting the patient with it and allowing him or her time to "to *work through* it" in order to overcome the traumatic neurosis (1958, 150-155, emphases in the original).

As psychoanalysts Élise Pestre and Fethi Benslama argue in their article on "Translation and Trauma", to break out of the literal repetition of the traumatic memory, the traumatized subject must escape his or her own trauma-ridden inner language:

> The symbolic agency which produces meaning can be represented by the subject's *entrance into a language other than his own*, […] or by an encounter with an analyst – simply put, by a third agency, an Other who triangulates what has remained undifferentiated, in this way helping the resumption of the process of symbolization. (2007, 21, emphasis mine)

Thus, it appears that the traumatic memory needs to be carried across a language boundary and pass through the language of an other in order to emerge in a non-literal, symbolic quality. Unless this happens, not only the trauma victim, but also his or her children can be burdened by the silenced trauma throughout their lives. As Pestre and Benslama write:

> In the context of survival, the unsaid often accumulates and is transmitted "en bloc" to the heirs. It then forms a dense and opaque mass, composed of enigmatic contents and buried memory traces, which nonetheless remain alive in the heir's psyche. These silenced events have disastrous consequences and remain psychically active throughout the person's entire life. (2007, 19)

These thoughts are closely related to Nadine Fresco's concept of "remembering the unknown" (1984), Nicolas Abraham's and Nicholas Rand's notion of "phantomized" memories (1988, 4), Henri Raczymow's idea of "memory shot through with holes" (1994), and Marianne Hirsch's term of "postmemory" (1997), which all describe the after-effects of trauma on the descendants of the traumatized, and which we shall deal with in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this thesis. What stands out in Pestre's and Benslama's argument, is their reliance on the translational metaphor in the context of trauma. Thus, they point out that

> [a] true work of translation (from the Latin traducere), in the sense of moving from one place to another, must therefore take place if the subject, a child of the suffering exiled parents, wants to grow without falling prey to another's captivating and often destructive memory. (2007, 20)

If working through trauma depends on a "true work of translation", what can, and must, such translation look like? And if the translational metaphor is incorporated in works of fiction in order to speak about trauma, what are its aesthetic and ethical implications? Finally, if we encounter tropings of trauma in multilingual fiction, how can we meaningfully put it in dialogue with the notion of translation? As I want to argue and as shall be demonstrated throughout the thesis, the translational metaphor in the field of trauma demands an ethical basis and invites a particular body of theory. In outlining a few characteristics implied by this metaphor, I shall map some of the main theoretical positions that inform my exploration of the translation of trauma.

First, if trauma can never be fully accessed, its possible translation must be freed from its traditional image of functioning as a copy of an assumed original. This aspects clearly relates it to deconstructive positions, such as that by Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man, who, in their writing on translation, dismiss and undermine the notion of any original (Derrida 1985, de Man 1985). In the context of trauma, there can be no fully restorable original, nor could one truly wish to produce a copy of a traumatic memory that is frozen in its literality. Second, if the traumatized subject is to be released from the grip of literal repetition, the notion of a translation of trauma must be based on a "refusal of mimesis" (cf. Benjamin 1989, 130), so as to renounce the expectation of equivalence between original and translation.

Further, since the processing of traumatic memories depends on the patient's breaking-out of a traumatic inner discourse and, as Pestre and Benslama inform us, on "the subject's entrance into a language other than his own" (2007, 21), the translation of trauma is best described by Derrida in terms of transformation:

> In the limits to which it is possible, or at least appears possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more is translation and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: *a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another*. We will never have, and in fact

> never have had, to do with some 'transport' of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument – or 'vehicle' – would leave virgin and untouched. (Derrida 1981, 26, emphasis mine)

In the context of trauma, the restoration of the "difference between signified and signifier" is crucial, if the patient is to overcome his or her "speechless terror" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995, 172), and the ensuing impossibility of articulating the traumatic experience through the symbolic means of language.

Derrida's idea of the "regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another" (1981, 26) can be seen as an answer to the concern in Trauma Studies, as to how traumatic memories can be integrated into narrative memory without, however, reaching narrative closure. "The danger of speech, of integration into the narration of memory," Cathy Caruth writes, "may lie not in what it cannot understand, but in that it understands too much" (1995, 154). In the deconstructive view, translation, as governed by the principle of *différance*, always remains on the way without ever fully reaching its destination, which is why closure can never be attained.

Derrida's mentioning of the "signifying instrument" that would necessarily also transform a traumatic text, brings up the role of the analyst's discourse, and, in consequence, touches upon the involvement of the analyst himself. Significantly, in Trauma Studies, it is highly debated to what extent a therapist should try to mitigate the force of trauma by helping a patient imagine alternative scenarios to the traumatic scenes witnessed by him or her. Thus, van der Kolk and van der Hart recall the example of a "therapist of a Holocaust survivor [who] had the patient imagine a flower growing in the assignment place in Auschwitz – an image that gave him tremendous comfort" (1995, 178). With regard to such alternative scenarios, the psychiatrists wonder "whether it is not a sacrilege of the traumatic experience to play with the reality of the past" (ibid., 179). These considerations coincide with Alan Bass' deconstructive comment on the translator's complex involvement in the process of translation, which, in his view, marks any translation as a mistranslation (cf. Bass 1985, 138-39). This idea, at the same time, draws attention to what Lawrence Venuti has criticized as "the translator's invisibility" (1995) – a topic that shall be addressed in regard to the fictional translator figures present in the corpus of this thesis. The translational metaphor may be a matter of controversy, as demonstrated by Lewis A. Kirshner's criticism of its use in clinical practice (2010), however, in fictional representations of trauma, it finds its validity and suggestive power, as shall be demonstrated in the thesis.

From language politics to psychological experience at language borders

Particularly in the English-language context it is worthwhile to explore multilingual fiction, since English is both the lingua franca in the world and the language of both the US-American 'melting pot' and the Canadian 'cultural mosaic'. Until the 1990s, as Maria Lauret points out, the USA have been the site of a continuous struggle around the question whether the country should be regarded as monolingual or multilingual (cf. 2014, 20-24). As a result of the pressure of militant monolingualism, the field of literature has seen a strong emergence of literary studies seeking to make the multilingual heritage and contemporary cultural potential more visible.

One of the early publications pursuing this objective is Alfred Arteaga's collection of essays, *An Other Tongue* (1994), that brings together distinguished scholars, including Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Tsvetan Todorov, and Gerald Vizenor. In 1998, Werner Sollors publishes another volume of essays, *Multilingual America*, followed by *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature*, co-edited with Marc Shell (2000). Shell's own edited volume, *American Babel* (2002), appears only two years later. Another fierce attack against the dictate of monolingualism in the United States is launched by Doris Sommer, who demonstrates, first in her edited volume, *Bilingual Games* (2003) and then in her monograph, *Bilingual Aesthetics* (2004), the subversive political potential of literary and everyday multilingualism. Finally, Lawrence Rosenwald, in his monograph, *Multilingual America* (2008), examines the history and the linguistic representation of encounters between communities speaking different languages, and considers how multilingual fiction can be translated and incorporated into US-American literary history. The ground for these broad explorations is prepared by studies focused on different ethnic literatures. Among those, the monographs by Alan Rosen (2005) and Hana Wirth-Nesher (2006) offer important contributions in the field of Jewish-American, and Gustavo Pérez Firmat (2003) and Isabel Alvarez Borland and Lynette Bosch (2009) in the field of Hispanic-American literary studies.

Since neither the drawing of linguistic borders nor the negotiation of mono- or multilingualism of individuals and states take place in a politically neutral territory, it is vital to the explore the sociopolitical and historical contexts of language boundaries. Nevertheless, this thesis shifts the attention to psychological processes of individuals moving in these contexts. The background of this focus is a simple and complex one at the same time: first, the significance of the sociopolitical context results from the fact that individuals are affected directly in their inner life by language politics. Colonial endeavors of imposing a new

language would not matter much if they did not do violence to colonial subjects by repressing their own languages and submitting them to a hegemonic discourse in a foreign language. Migration would be much less of a strain if the immersion into a new language did not have strong psychological effects on migrants. Finally, debates over possible multilingualism in a country would have less weight if it did not matter to its citizens whether they daily move within one or several languages. It seems difficult to ignore these connections, which makes explorations of the human psyche in linguistic borderlands and its fictional representations a worthy subject.

At the same time – and this is the complex issue at stake here – the question arises about the effects that the transgression of language borders can have on the emotional and psychic constitution of individuals. What exactly happens in the mind of migrants, who feel forced to abandon their mother tongues in favor of a new language? And what does it mean if the inner life of individuals is coded in two languages from the very beginning? In this context, psychoanalytic and psychological explorations become relevant, and will play an important part in this thesis.

Such studies range from Sigmund Freud's and Josef Breuer's writings on multilingual patients such as Anna O. in their *Studies on Hysteria* (1955d) or Freud's thoughts on the multilingual encoding of dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1953b). Another important study for my work is Nicolas Abraham's and Maria Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (1986), a rereading of the case history of Freud's long-term patient, in which the authors develop the idea of a mechanism for encrypting unspeakable experiences by means of crossing language boundaries.

While Abraham and Torok approach the Wolf Man, whom they never meet in person, as an encrypted text requiring a particular reading practice, other studies rely on the clinical work with 'language migrants', that is patients whose migration included the crossing of language boundaries. Thus, my thesis is informed by the work of Leon and Rebeca Grinberg (1989), of Salman Akhtar (1995, 1999, 2011) and of Sophie Walsh and Shmuel Shulman (2007), who have researched the phenomenon of immigration from a psychoanalytic perspective. Further, I draw on linguistic explorations of multilingualism pursuing psychoanalytic perspectives. These include François Grosjean's work on bilingualism (1982, 2010), the contributions to the edited volume, *Multilingualism, Second Language Learning, and Gender,* by Aneta Pavlenko et al. (2001) as well as her study on *Emotions and Multilingualism* (2005) and Claire Kramsch's study of *The Multilingual Subject* (2009). Finally, I take my cue from Jacqueline Amati-Mehler's, Simona Argentieri's and Jorge

Canestri's *The Babel of the Unconscious* (1993), which offers enlightening insights into their psychoanalytic work with multilingual patients and presents, up to date, the most comprehensive study of the psycho-emotional effects of multilingualism.

From translingual authors to multilingual scenarios and aesthetics

To come back to studies of multilingual fiction, nearly all of them highlight the fact that literary multilingualism raises psychological questions, which, however, have not yet been examined systematically. There is a considerable body of work on multilingual writing that pursues psychological perspectives such as by Elizabeth K. Beaujour (1989), Steven Kellman (2000, 2003), Isabelle de Courtivron (2003), Georg Kremnitz (2004) and Axel Englund and Anders Olsson (2013). However, the focus of these studies lies not so much on multilingual fiction as on "literary translingualism, the phenomenon of authors who write in more than one language or at least in a language other than their primary one" (Kellman 2003, ix). In the politically and socioculturally highly charged field of multilingual writing, these studies choose to keep the authors 'alive', strongly emphasizing their biographies and relying on their reflections on their own writing, rather than putting the emphasis on the aesthetic strategies and narrative strategies employed in their fiction.

While these critical studies give productive impulses for this thesis, my main interest lies not so much in the multilingual lives of fiction writers, but rather in works experimenting with multiple languages. As I want to suggest, in our globalized times, the focus on translingual biographies sets a rather narrow frame to the study of multilingual works. This is not only due to Roland Barthes' proclamation of the death of the author (1967), but also to the fact that such biographies do not appear entirely exceptional in our times. The migration of millions of people for political and economic reasons has been, as Delabastita and Grutman note, an ongoing phenomenon since the early 19th century (2005, 14). Additionally, due to globalized politics, economy and education as well as the promotion of mobility, we nowadays witness increasing numbers of language migrants, who choose to leave their linguistic homeland for professional or personal reasons. Therefore, it is safe to say, with Manfred Schmeling, that Babel is our reality (cf. *2004, 222)*.

This Babelian reality, in my view, also suggests a different approach to multilingual fiction. Rather than analyzing the psychology behind the act of its creation, it seems interesting to focus on its highly imaginative configurations of the transgression of language

boundaries as well on the ways in which these configurations are presented by means of multilingual aesthetics. As the thesis shall show, the corpus of fiction dealing with linguistic border-crossings is by far not limited to works of those who have undergone language migration themselves, as is clearly proved by the case of Jonathan Safran Foer, Michel Gondry or Lars von Trier. Like their translingual colleagues, their almost fantastic psychological scenarios at language borders and their aesthetic experiments with multilingualism and translation definitely deserve critical attention.

My interest in depictions of psychological experience in the transgression of language borders is most closely related to approaches centrally focused on the aesthetics of multilingual fiction. Thus, my thesis is informed by contributions to the edited volumes by Johann Strutz and Peter Zima (1996), Manfred Schmeling and Monika Schmitz-Emans (2002), Monika Schmitz-Emans (2004), Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman (2005), and Susan Arndt, Dirk Naguschewski, and Robert Stockhammer (2007). Also, my readings are influenced by Leonard Forster's pioneering study of multilingualism in literature (1970) and K. Alfons Knauth monograph, in which he defines translation and multilingual literature as a new field of research in Comparative Literature (2011).

With regard to my focus on linguistic encounter between English and other languages, my work is related, to a certain degree, to Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien's study, *Weird English*, in which she promotes the "sometimes unrecognizable English created through the blending of one or more languages with English", claiming that it "constitutes the new language of literature" (2004, 3-4). Also, I take my cue from Maria Lauret's remarkable study, *Wanderwords*, in which she develops a poetics of otherness inscribed into English by authors whose work is influenced by language migration. She argues for a multilingual reading practice that focuses on the function and aesthetic effect of "wanderwords" or "words and passages in other languages that deliberately appear to obstruct the transparency of English" (2014, 1). A study of equal importance to my framework is Martha Cutter's *Lost and Found in Translation* (2005), in which the critic assigns the trope of translation a central role in American ethnic writing, demonstrating that "there is a trope of cultural and linguistic translation specific to this body of writing and distinguishable from the treatment of this topic in Anglo-American literature" (1). Exploring literary multilingualism within the field of German Literature, Yasemin Yildiz' book, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, that studies "the working of the monolingual paradigm and multilingual attempts to overcome it" (2012, 4), offers valuable impulses.

After this introductory presentation, it may come as a surprise that I have chosen to open the discussion of multilingual fiction with the only non-fictional exception to the corpus: Eva Hoffman's memoir, *Lost in Translation* (1989). The work is assigned this prominent place since it has been singled out as a milestone by critics dealing with the topics of language migration, multilingualism, translation and, most importantly in this context, with psychological experience at language borders. Since the memoir is vastly familiar in academic circles, I consider it a good departure point for discussing a corpus of fictional works, related to the same issues and, as in the case of the most experimental ones among them, still fairly unknown in academia. The memoir's quality as non-fiction does not alter the approach that I have described above and shall take to analyze it. As with the works of fiction, my main interest lies in the troping of the figure of linguistic border-crossing, the social and academic discourses on psychology and translation it is based on, and the aesthetics employed to emphasize the evaluation of multilingualism and translation. Finally, rather than merely celebrating the memoir as a sincere and touching account of language migration, I set out to investigate the gaps and silences that I regard as constitutive for this work.

From cushioned to radical multilingualism

In my understanding of literary multilingualism, I rely on an open and flexible concept of languages, as suggested by Delabastita and Grutman,

> which acknowledges not only the 'official' taxonomy of languages but also the incredible range of subtypes and varieties existing *within* various officially recognised languages, and indeed sometimes *cutting across* and challenging out neat linguistic typologies (2005, 15, emphases in the original).

This concept allows me to embrace not only works that draw on English and at least one other clearly identifiable language, but also texts that employ hybrid languages such as Haitian Kreyòl, as in Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*, and Dominican Spanglish as in Junot Diaz' *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, and even artificial varieties of English as the one composed by Jonathan Safran Foer for his translator figure in *Everything Is Illuminated*. This decision is motivated by the fact that, as I agree with Delabastita and Grutman, what matters in the critical interpretation of multilingual texts is not so much the official status of the languages used, but their textual interplay (cf. 2005, 16).

The question of the textual interplay, in turn, goes beyond a technical evaluation of the quantity of foreign-language insertions or their degree of prominence in the text. Rather, it is relevant to examine multilingual aesthetics in their functional context, both in regard to the

fictional worlds they configure and their accessibility to monolingual, bilingual and multilingual readers. As to the former, it is interesting to investigate how the works of fiction "linguistically orchestrate the various character and narrative voices" (Delabastita and Grutman 2005, 16), which means to analyze the characters' linguistic origins and trajectories; their linguistic competence and emotional relations to the languages used by them and around them; and finally, the personal and political statements implied in the characters' use of their mother tongues or foreign languages.

The extent to which authors choose to mimetically render the languages that their characters are supposed to be using of course depends on their choices to address a certain audience – an audience that is naturally smaller, if the knowledge of two or more languages is necessary for the understanding of the text. To describe the multilingual aesthetics used in the works I examine, I shall draw on the systematization of code-switching strategies as developed by Lourdes Torres in her essay on Latino/a writers publishing in the United States (2007). The critic distinguishes between three main strategies of including languages other than English, which challenge the monolingual reader to different extents.

First, a writer can decide to cater to a monolingual audience by drawing on an "easily accessed, transparent, or cushioned" multilingualism (2007, 79). In this case, the foreign language would be used with the prime objective to create a "more ethnic text" (ibid., 78) that would be merely flavored with a scent of exotic linguistic otherness. Strategies of this kind include using only foreign-language words that the monolingual reader would understand or marking them as foreign bodies by italicizing them and giving the English translation. Thus, the reader "does not have to leave the comfortable realm of his/her own complacent monolingualism" (ibid.). Second, authors can choose to gratify the bilingual reader, for instance by making use of unmarked and untranslated phrases or entire sentences or drawing on informal expressions in the foreign language (cf. ibid., 83). As Torres argues, "[t]he bilingual, bicultural reader will derive most pleasure from this text, while the monolingual reader will find parts of it inaccessible" (ibid., 85). Third, writers can resort to "radical bilingualism", in which both languages are used so extensively that the texts can be only understood by bilingual readers (ibid., 86). This significantly reduces their publishing opportunities, which is why texts like Giannina Braschi's *Yo-Yo Boing!* (1998) and Susana Chavez- Silverman's *Killer Crónicas* (2004) are published by academic presses, rather than mainstream ones (cf. ibid.).

Torres' systematization of multilingual strategies displays a clear political perspective and shall prove useful in my readings. However, rather than 'applying' this taxonomy on the

texts and categorizing them as more or less politically engaged, I favor a more integrative approach that considers writers' choices of aesthetic strategies both in the context of their intended reception by the readers and in that of the fictional scenarios they develop. As shall become clear, the political agendas involved in the choice of multilingual strategies and the configuration of the story may be at odds with each other, which forces us to take a closer look at the ethics involved in their multilingual aesthetics.

Why multilingual films?

As implied by the introductory example, my analysis of trauma and translation in multilingual fiction is not limited to written texts, also includes fiction films. To be sure, whereas literature consists solely of language, language in films figures mainly at the level of dialogue, which makes up but a part of the filmic code. However, what justifies the decision to combine the two media in this framework is the fact that, like literary fiction, film is a narrative genre as confirmed by influential film studies such as Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978) or David Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) and *Poetics of Cinema* (2007). The categories used by Bordwell for analyzing narrative cinema, that is "story world", "plot structure" and "narration" do not stray far from those for analyzing novels, which enables the common treatment of the two media.

What is more, the extent to which multilingualism is exerted in fictional discourse of novels and films can be analyzed within the same framework. Thus, Lukas Bleichenbacher, in a study of multilingualism in Hollywood productions (2008), draws on a taxonomy established by Petr Mareš representing the treatment of multilingual discourse in fictional texts. The taxonomy distinguishes four strategies that, according to Bleichenbacher can be equally found in fiction film: "elimination", in which "any speech that would have been in another language is completely replaced with an unmarked standard variety of the base language"; "signalization, where the replaced language is explicitly named in a metalinguistic comment"; "evocation", in which "characters speak a variety of the base language that is characterized by interference (transfer) from the language they would really be speaking"; and finally, "presence", in which "the other language is not replaced at all" (Bleichenbacher 2008, 23-25).

While originally detected in written texts, the strategy of evocation, in particular, can be practiced in film even more easily than in novels. "While literature", as film scholar

Verena Berger reminds us, "uses language in its written form, cinema and theatre have the advantage of allowing their audiences to experience language at an acoustic level." (2010, 8). This enables the playing with accents in film dialogue – an experiment that, in literary texts, can be realized only by means of violations of orthography and, therefore, brings about a much more alienating effect on the audience. To this I would add that the presence of different languages in film entails a lesser experimental risk than that in novels because dialogue constitutes only a small part of film language. Thus, verbal non-understanding can be easily compensated though the visual channel, for instance, by means of acting techniques, the action in a scene or the mise-on-scène, which can provide the necessary context for divining the content of a foreign-language dialogue.

What makes the consideration of film particularly attractive in this analysis is the fact that, from its moment of birth, cinema has been a multilingual genre commonly relying on translation. In relation to the processes of film production and distribution, Tessa Dwyer points out that the era of silent film featured a vast array of translation practices: "Intertitles were swapped, films were accompanied by live commentators/interpreters, and whole storylines were transformed." (2005, 301) Along similar lines, Tijana Mamula and Lisa Patti recall

> cinema's popularization through urban immigrant communities at the turn of the twentieth century; the fact that Hollywood itself was built in good parts by immigrants, and classical Hollywood narrative and style consolidated through the work of countless displaced practitioners" (2016, 1)

Therefore, even linguistically homogenous films are not free from hidden "undercurrents of polyglottism", which is why recent research has focused on uncovering "multilingualism's traces beyond the soundtrack" (Mamula and Patti 2016, 5-6).

As to its traces in the very soundtrack, Ella Shochat and Robert Stam discuss in a pioneering essay of 1985 the way Hollywood has strengthened US-American monolingual politics by making language difference in its story worlds invisible:

> Hollywood both profited from and itself promoted the universalisation of the English language as *the* idiom of speaking subjects, thus contributing indirectly to the subtle erosion of the linguistic autonomy of other cultures. By virtue of its global diffusion, Hollywood became an agent in the dissemination of Anglo-American cultural hegemony. (36)

While silencing language difference in some cases, Hollywood productions have, on the hand, exposed it, as Bleichenbacher argues, for the sake of characterizing and stereotyping certain characters. In contrast to this Hollywood practice, particularly European cinema, in the last two decades, has created 'polyglot films' which take into account the conditions of migrant

and diasporic existence. In a much-quoted essay, Wahl defines polyglot film as a genre acknowledging multilingualism in the world:

> [In] polyglot film […] languages are used in the way they would be used in reality, They define geographical or political borders, 'visualise the different social, personal or cultural levels of the characters and enrich their aura in conjunction with the voice. (Wahl 2005, online)

In a more emphatic way, Hamid Naficy defines the entire corpus of cinema made by exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial ethnic and identity filmmakers who live and work in countries other than their country of origin as inherently "accented" (Naficy 2001, 11ff). Since the main emphasis in this thesis lies not so much on the translingual biographies of the artist, but on the fictional negotiation of linguistic border-crossings, my own approach is more closely related to Wahl's understanding of "polyglot film". Thus, while the notion of "accented cinema" will surface rather briefly in my discussion of Atom Egoyan's film *Calendar*, I regard the former as a constitutive part of what I shall describe as 'multilingual realism'.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter starts out at the pessimistic end of possible negotiations of linguistic border-crossings and analyzes constructions of trauma and other pathological conditions suffered at this threshold. For this purpose, it zooms in on two works dealing with the process of language migration: Eva Hoffman's 'language memoir' *Lost in Translation* (1989) and Atom Egoyan's feature film *Calendar* (1993). The chapter explores how the works trope and negotiate the process of 'self-translation', in which language migrants settle down in the new language, and how they are characterized in their role as "translated men", to speak with Salman Rushdie (1991, 16).

Since both works link the transgression of language boundaries to psychopathological conditions, it will prove relevant to examine the psychoanalytic patterns they draw on to configure their narratives at language borders. How do they configure the course of the illness? To what exactly do they ascribe a traumatizing effect? How do they stage the later return of the memories of traumatic linguistic border-crossings? What earlier experiences of the characters do they reference to explain the traumatic quality of the encounter with the foreign language? And finally: How do the works enact symptoms of the pathological conditions and how do they trope possible ways of therapy?

In this context, it will be important to understand what stance the works take in general towards multilingualism and translation. The chapter asks, therefore, what political and academic discourses on the two topics the works rely on. What is at stake here are traditional images of multilingual individuals in "postmonolingual" societies (Yildiz 2012), as well as approaches to the politics of translation. In the context of the latter, the chapter explores the hierarchical structures the process of translation is governed by: How do the works configure the relation between the 'original' and its translated version? What position is assigned to translator figures? And what is the political potential ascribed to the act of translation?

Moreover, the chapter focuses on the aesthetics and narrative strategies employed in the two works for troping the figure of linguistic border-crossing. It sets out to demonstrate that, on the one hand, they draw on multilingual aesthetics in various ways in order to transmit the characters' psychological experience at language borders to the reader or viewer. On the other hand, I shall argue that in opting for one type of multilingual strategies or another, the works always implicitly position themselves in regard to the topics of multilingualism and translation.

The second chapter explores how the figure and the aesthetics of linguistic border-crossings are productively used to map a different field, relevant in the psychoanalytic context: the social and individual construction of gender and sexual identities. Focusing on Yann Martel's novel *Self* (1996) and Junot Diaz' *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), the chapter analyzes fictions, in which the development of this part of identity is closely linked to the language identity of the protagonists. As shall be argued, these narratives emphasize a correlation between the monolingualism of a society and its dictate of gender roles and sexual orientation. Therefore, it shall prove useful to examine how the figure of the language border is associated with gender difference and heteronormativity so as to understand how the novels negotiate the chances in the transgressions of boundaries in all three fields.

In order to investigate this metaphorically structured negotiation, I shall put the works of fiction in dialogue with theories on the role of the mother tongue in the psychological constitution of the individual, as developed by Jacqueline Amati-Mehler et al. (1993). The question at the base of such negotiations is, as shall be shown, whether a renunciation of the mother tongue is possible, and if so, whether such a move is configured as an act of liberation or the trigger of a traumatic inner split. Furthermore, the chapter traces the references that the two novels establish to psychoanalytic theories on the development of gender identity and sexuality, as formulated by Jacques Lacan (2006) and Jacqueline Rose (1985). As shall be

illustrated, these theories map the ground for the metaphorical connection with multilingualism and translation.

It shall be argued in the chapter that multilingual aesthetics play a central part in the negotiation of language and gender identity. The two novels offer fertile ground for the exploration of different forms of literary multilingualism and its functions. Martel's *Self* depicts the split of the narrative voice into two languages, and inserts long untranslated passages in languages which the target audience is unlikely to understand. In regard to *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, my analysis focuses on the lexically, syntactically and phonetically hybrid linguistic discourse that is often also referred to as Spanglish. The chapter discusses in what ways these different multilingual strategies are used to subvert or enforce dominant discourses on gender identity and sexuality.

The third chapter investigates the staging of multilingual dreams in two transnational films, Lars von Trier's *Europa* (1991) and Michel Gondry's *The Science of Sleep* (2006). My investigation is guided by the hypothesis that the multilingual dream texts are used in the films as projection screen for collective and individual repressed memories and anxieties, respectively. The chapter analyzes how the dreams enacted in the films strongly deviate from the "pleasure principle" initially assumed by Freud (1953a), and how the viewers are led into a realm of darkness and impotence. As shall be argued, the multilingualism of the staged dreams is troped as subverting multiple human faculties: the ability to understand, to communicate, to process experience, and to determine one's own actions. It is the central aim of this chapter to demonstrate how the films design a 'Babel of terror' in order to release the repressed and to expose the protagonists to voices in languages they had, literally or metaphorically, tried to silence in themselves.

As enactments of the "via regia to the unconscious", the two films reveal an intense dialogue with Freud's writings on *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1953a,b). As shall be demonstrated in this chapter, both filmic narratives subject their protagonists particularly to one aspect dealt with extensively in psychoanalytic thinking: regression, or the condition of being thrown back into childhood. Additionally, in the context of Lars von Trier's *Europa*, I take my cue from Arnold van Gennep's (1960) und Victor Turner's (1964, 1969, 1974) theories of rites of passage so as to trace the process and the implications of the English-speaking protagonist's linguistic initiation into his German-speaking surroundings. In regard to Michel Gondry's *The Science of Sleep*, Freud's study on "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*" (1957a) and his writings "On Narcissism" (1957b) shall prove useful in

order to understand the protagonist's struggle for control over the languages lodged in his unconscious.

My analysis is also focused on the multilingual aesthetics of the two films, which have been largely ignored by critics up to date. First, I shall examine how subtitles are used to provide the viewers with an information advantage in comparison to the protagonists, and how, at the same time, they are led to face limits of understanding. Second, I pursue the question of fictional characterization in a multilingual context and wonder to what extent and with what effect psychological realism plays a role in the linguistic set-up of the characters. Finally, the chapter discusses the interrelation between multilingualism and the technically complex and experimental visual world as employed in the two films. This will help clarify the central question: whether and to what end the visual aesthetics also attract the viewer's attention to the films' multilingual set-up, or rather serve to distract from the latter.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the figure of linguistic border-crossing in the context of historical trauma and its literary representation in Jonathan Safran Foer's Holocaust novel *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) and Edwidge Danticat's novel *The Farming of Bones* (1998), which narrates the 1937 genocide of the Haitian population in the Dominican Republic. As shall be shown, the figure of linguistic border-crossing is of particular relevance in the context of traumatic experience, situated, as psychoanalysis and trauma theory teach us, at the limits of language. The chapter, therefore, explores the interconnections between the limits of languages and language as such. It suggests that the novels trope the possibility of working through historical traumas by means of negotiating possible transgressions of language boundaries.

To explore the troping of the limits of language(s), the novels are analyzed, on the one hand, with regard to their depictions of symptoms of trauma, potential ways of healing from it, and the psychological after-effects on the descendants of the traumatized. This exploration mainly draws on the writings of trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996), Shoshana Felman (1992), Dori Laub (1995) and Ernst van Alphen (1999), as well as on ideas regarding the transmission of trauma as formulated by Nadine Fresco (1984), Henri Raczymow (1994) and Marianne Hirsch (1997). On the other hand, the two novels are brought into productive dialogue with Walter Benjamin's (2000), Jacques Derrida's (1985) und Paul de Man's (1985) theories on translatability. I shall devote particular attention to questions arising at the intersections of psychoanalysis and deconstructive translation theories: How can trauma be inscribed as a multilingual legacy in one's family narrative? What are the traces left in the psyche by an individual's expulsion from their own language?

Can traumatic memories be translated? And what exactly would be the task of the translator of trauma? Finally, the chapter raises the question of the ethics involved in the translation of trauma, both in the context of psychoanalysis and the politics of translation. In this exploration, the Bakhtinian ideas of dialogism and heteroglossia shall provide a valuable basis (1981).

Since trauma presents, among other things, a phenomenon of language, the linguistic texture of its literary representations is a crucial issue. As the chapter proposes, the limits of language(s) can not only be written about, but inscribed into the very texture of literary works, thus becoming an ingenious narrative strategy for representing traumatic experience. Two further forms of literary multilingualism can be observed here: in Danticat's novel, the insertion of translated and explained words in Spanish and Kreyól into an otherwise English text, and in Foer's text, the opposition between correct and broken or unidiomatic English constituting what could be called pseudo-multilingualism. Both the aesthetics of multilingual transparence and that of the pseudo-multilingual intransparence are discussed as strategies for representing trauma and its after-effects on the descendants of the traumatized.

1. Losses in Translation and the Translation of Loss: Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* (1989) and Atom Egoyan's *Calendar* (1993)

In works of fiction and non-fiction, one often encounters the fantasy of a world without language borders and the need for translation. This can be observed in the introductory example of Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel* as well as in Sidney Pollack's film *The Interpreter* (2005), the film poster of which presented the telling slogan: "the truth needs no translation". However, there is hardly a title that epitomizes this longing for a pre-Babelian world more famously than *Lost in Translation*. Drawing on the title of a poem by James Merrill, Eva Hoffman first prominently used it to render the hardships of her language migration. The fact that Hoffman struck a nerve of the time with the re-use of this title can be clearly deduced from the large number of works, most prominently Sofia Coppola's 2003 film, that subsequently adopted the title for their own purposes.

The question of potential losses in translation is also raised, in Atom Egoyan's 1993 film, *Calendar*, in which the protagonist takes his wife along on a journey as his interpreter and literally loses her in the process of translation. In the two works by Hoffman and Egoyan, the transgression of language boundaries in the shape of language migration appears as the pivotal figure. Both works explore the relation that language migrants develop towards their first and their second languages. Also, they negotiate the implications of traces of the first within the second language, which figure on the semantic, syntactic, or also phonetic level in the form of an accent.

Curiously, *Lost in Translation* and *Calendar* both narrate stories of linguistic border-crossings through psychological case studies, which encompasses the naming or staging of symptoms, the exploration of their origins, and the suggested therapies, in turn, closely linked with multilingualism and translation. This chapter examines how these multilingual narratives are constructed and what elements they comprise. The representation and negotiation of language learning processes is central in this context: What are the emotions that accompany such processes? What goals do language migrants seek to achieve in their new language and what compensation mechanisms are triggered for the sake of succeeding? Since language learning always implies an encounter with what is perceived as different or foreign, it is interesting to analyze how the protagonists react when faced with linguistic difference. The narratives' construction as case histories suggests to examine where and how these reactions were acquired.

Set within particular socio-political and historical contexts, the two narratives also invite a reading for their internal gaps and contradictions as well as the ideological constructs they draw on to approach the issue of difference. For examining the two works, it shall prove instructive to scrutinize the translation theories and politics underlying the negotiation of linguistic border-crossings. Thus, it will be relevant to question hierarchical relationships set up between perceived originals and their translations, the relationship between the source and the target language and the role of the translator. Finally, we will deal with the multilingual aesthetics and narrative strategies and their role in the works' staging of their case histories. In examining these questions, we will develop an understanding of narratives that associate linguistic border-crossing with the experience of loss.

The (Un)Translatability of One's Self: Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*

Hardly any other work appears more appropriate for opening the following thesis than Eva Hoffman's Lost in Translation. Written by one of the countless language migrants to North America, the book was published at the onset of a historical period marked by waves of mass migration from East to West in the aftermath of the Cold War and the Fall of the Iron Curtain. It owes its popularity not least to the fact that thousands of migrants of the 1990s could identify with Hoffman's autobiographic narrative about her cultural and linguistic transition from her native post-war Poland to Canada and later the United States of the 1960s. However, it is more than just a convenient chronological point of departure. With the two suggestive notions of a 'loss' and of 'translation', Eva Hoffman maps out a significant part of the terrain that this thesis sets out to cover. However, rather than marking two distinct points on a route, the memoir, which Alice Yaeger Kaplan would classify as a 'language memoir' (1994), puts up signposts to numerous destinations.

First, the notion of 'loss' at the borders between languages: is it transitory or permanent and who or what exactly does not seem to survive the passage? Second, and more complexly, translation: where there is translation, there must also be a translator. The curious aspect in Hoffman's text is that she engages in self-translation, in which she emerges simultaneously as a text to be translated and the translator of her own self. Also, Hoffman's text presents a curious deviation from the common practice in literary translation: Instead of translating a text from a foreign into her mother tongue, she veers in the opposite direction, seeking to translate her Polish text of self into her new language, English. What is more, in

her metaphorical use of the notion, Hoffman refuses to restrict herself to the type of translation termed "interlingual" by Roman Jakobson in his 1959 essay (2001, 114). Instead, her translation operates simultaneously in a cultural, linguistic and psychological sphere and suggests different tracks of interpretation. Depending on the choice of the track, cultural, linguistic or psychological, one can observe different phenomena – on the one hand, losses that occur in the field of translation, on the other, translation operating in the field of loss. Let us begin with the first one.

The first loss she suffers that of a sense of unity, which she anticipates through a spatial metaphor even before arriving to Vancouver, the destination of her "exile":

> The train cuts through endless expanses of terrain, most of it flat and monotonous, and it seems to me that the relentless rhythm of the wheels is like scissors cutting a three-thousand-mile rip through my life. From now on, my life will be divided into two parts, with the line drawn by this train. (100)

The train can be said to function as the vehicle of her 'translation'. Hoffman leaves no doubt about the fact that this process of translation is violent, unstoppable and forced upon her. The "rip" through her life is lifted out of the metaphorical domain, when she recalls a ceremony of "careless baptism", which she and her younger sister undergo against their will upon entering school. In this ceremony, their names are assimilated to sound more English, with "Ewa" turning in "Eva" and "Alina" into "Elaine" (105). Hoffman's portrayal of the scene remains closely connected to the imagery of the train ride, since it sets a mechanism in motion that relentlessly makes the distance to themselves grow, or as she puts it, that "make[s] us strangers to ourselves" (ibid.).

While Hoffman recites this ceremony as an example of a split afflicted to her by her surroundings, it is mostly herself who, in the following, carefully preserves the divide between what she perceives to be her Polish and her English self. Thus, the alienation that Eva feels toward her 'translated' name becomes generalized, when she enters the process of second-language learning: "The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue" (106), she complains, and gives an example:

> "River" in Polish was a vital sound, energized with the essence of riverhood, of my rivers, of my being immersed in rivers. "River" in English is cold – a word without an aura. It has no accumulated associations for me, and it does not give off the radiating haze of connotation. It does not evoke. (106)

It is curious to observe how the adult narrator hurries to rationalize her feeling of alienation by associating it with "structuralist wisdom" (107). In fact, her analysis of the word 'river' expresses much more than what she will address as "the problem […] that the signifier has become severed from the signified" (106). While the use of Saussurean vocabulary attests to

her later familiarity with academic thought popular in the United States during the time of her studies, her thoughts on her linguistic transition attest to a radical feeling of foreignness.

Most importantly, however, her comparison between her first and second languages displays a clear tendency to idealize and romanticize her mother tongue against the background of the new language. The division of her self proceeds along the lines of the dichotomy of 'original and copy'. Reflecting on the word "river", Hoffman makes clear that whereas the Polish 'original' encompasses vitality, essence and an aura, the process of translation into English "drain[s] the world not only of significance but of its colors, striations, nuances – is very existence" and therefore causes "the loss of a living connection" (107). In line with this polarizing view on linguistic translation, she observes the negative traces translation has left on her own body, writing that "after the passage across the Atlantic, [she has] emerged as less attractive, less graceful, less desirable" (109).

This evaluation of the relationship between the original and the translation as well as that between the source and the target language can be associated what Paul Ricoeur's theory, in which, drawing on psychoanalytic vocabulary, he describes "the work of remembering" and "the work of mourning" in translation (Ricoeur 2004, 3). The central challenge in the former is posed by a "resistance" to translation that can be found both on the side of the native and the foreign language, with the psychoanalytic term denoting an unconscious, but "deceitful refusal" (ibid., 5). Relying indeed on a quasi-neurotic mechanism, the language of reception, in Ricoeur's account, may refuse hospitality to the threatening 'foreignness' of the source language, which can put it to the test. On the other hand, the source language may express the tendency to preserve an original text in its own realm and to resist against its duplication by another original in the language of reception. As Ricoeur suggests, the resistance from both sides perforce leads to a sense of loss, which necessitates some "work of mourning" in order to "give up the ideal of the perfect translation" (ibid., 8).

Since in Hoffman's text, as noted above, the common direction in translation is reversed into the source language being the mother tongue and the language of reception being the foreign language, both kinds of resistance seem to apply at the same time. Thus, in the passage from *Lost in Translation* quoted above, one can identify the resistance on the side of Hoffman's mother tongue, since the mere idea of a (self-)translation "attacks the view that the mother tongue is sacred, the mother tongue's nervousness around its identity" (Ricoeur 2004, 4). The anxiety on the side of the mother tongue is expressed again when, invited in by her new neighbors, the narrator finds difficulty in tagging their manners as "kindly" and "pleasant", as implied by her English Canadian surroundings, or as "silly" and "dull", as her

Polish consciousness seems to suggest (108). Compelled to opt for the positive terms, she formulates that she feels threatened by a "cultural unconscious [that] is beginning to exercise its subliminal influence" (108).

In addition, this passage voices the fear of tampering with or losing one's original self altogether, like an original text, both on a linguistic and a cultural level. Thus, Hoffman soon begins to debate in inner dialogues, which of her two selves is "more real" (120). Initially giving a clear preference to her 'original', Polish self, the fear seems to come true when eventually when she finds her English self capable of attacking her Polish self with the words: "I don't have to listen to you any longer. I am as real as you now. I am the real one." (231) Likewise, when suspiciously examining other immigrants' stories of success, she comments that "these successful immigrants have lost some of their meaning. In their separateness and silence, their wisdom – what they used to know in an intimate way, on their skin – is stifled and it dries up a little" (143). The nervousness surrounding the mother tongue and the fear of losing the original "wisdom" or "meaning" leads Hoffman to the assumption of both her own untranslatability and her inability as translator. Therefore, she keeps repeating, in different contexts, that "the translation doesn't work" (107, 108, 144, 175),

As to the deeper roots of the resistance to translation, Ricoeur detects them in "linguistic ethnocentrisms, and more seriously, numerous pretensions to […] cultural hegemony" (Ricoeur 2004, 4). Indeed, this explanation finds correspondence in Hoffman's autobiography when she mourns her lost sense of a center: "I have been dislocated from my own center of the world, and that world has been shifted away from my center." (132) Exaggerating her own sense of displacement, Hoffman decries the shift of the world and thus the 'translation' – the process of being carried over – of her original self as an act of violence. After having claimed already on the first pages of the memoir that Cracow to her is "both home and the universe" (5), she realizes that her worldview cannot reasonably be defended against other, equally ethnocentric perspectives: "I will not convince these teenagers in this Vancouver classroom that Poland is the center of the universe rather than a gray patch of land inhabited by ghosts" (132). From the moment of arrival to what she calls the "New World", the narrator is aware of the politics of ethnocentrism. In describing herself as a "marginal, off-centered person who wants both to be taken in and to fend off the threatening others" (110), she formulates precisely what it means to be in the center: to be included and entitled to exclude others. Despite her realization of the hegemonic claims of ethnocentrism, she does not quite renounce such claims on her own part. This becomes palpable, as Eva Karpinski points out (2012, 145), in her invocation of the traditional frontier motif, when Hoffman calls

herself "a naturalist trying to orient myself in an uncharted landscape, and eyeing the flora and fauna around me with a combination of curiosity and detachment" (173-74). What is more, in my view, she even crosses the bridge to Darwinist rhetorics, describing people around her as a "puzzling species" (174).

The invisibility of self-translation

Hoffman links her sense of displacement and disempowerment with a feeling of being decentered within herself, which she attributes to her split of self or her "bifocal vision" (213). Tortured by her polarizing vision of Polish and American sets of values, she finds herself longing for a perception of reality beyond culturally specific norms, a perception she describes as "normal" (211). However, when she tries to formulate messages that would release her from her ongoing polarization and "triangulations", her internalized sense of power relations in translation becomes visible, since these messages suddenly emerge in French as "C'est normale" and "N'exagères pas" (211). It is ironic that this sudden switch to French, which both in Poland and in the United States carries connotations of high culture, seems like an appeal to a higher authority that could stop the fight between her own two languages.

How is this fight enacted on the textual level? After all, a text that capitalizes the linguistic phenomenon of translation in its title arouses the expectation that an encounter between two languages will be inscribed into its texture. In Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*, this is hardly the case, which leads to the assumption that the author practices not only a discourse, but also an aesthetics of loss. It appears almost paradoxical that a narrative that pivots around the notion of untranslatability is presented as an almost entirely monolingual text in English. While on the level of the *histoire*, Hoffman traces a process of translation from its beginning to its end, she scarcely makes use of the possibility to stage this process on the textual level. In other words, on the level of the *discours*, the translation process seems to be completed by the very onset of the narrative.

The result of the process bears only few traces of Hoffman's mother tongue, Polish. These traces are all introduced in the first chapter, "Paradise" to mark Poland as the author's place of origin and departure. The Polish words Hoffman acquaints us with can be grouped into several categories: forms of address and proper names, artifacts associated with Poland, and abstract terms that are presented as epitomes of Polish culture. The first one encompasses

the words “Pan”, “Pani” and “Ciocia”, which Hoffman translates for us as “Mr.” (12), “Madame” (17) and “Auntie” (20), as well as place names such as the untranslated “Biały Dunajec” (18) and the “Planty” (40), of which she gives detailed descriptions, and semi-translated names such “Urzędnicza Street” (6), “Tatry Mountains” (17) and “Florianska Gate” (49). The second category contains material entities presented as essentially Polish, such as “kogelmogel”, described as “a creamy, thick, sweet mixture of egg yolk, sugar, butter, and cocoa” or “banieczki”, translated as “cuppings” (50). The third one, finally, is made up of precisely two words, which Eva Karpinski rightly describes as concepts that are “crucial to Hoffman’s construction of cultural difference” (2012, 134): “tęsknota”, which the author defines as “a word that adds to nostalgia the tonalities of sadness and longing” and invokes many times throughout the book (4, 20, 28, 91, 115, 116), and “polot”, depicted by Hoffman as “a word that combines the meanings of dash, inspiration, and flying” (71).

What is striking about this set of Polish vocabulary is that while it is preserved in its original sound, Hoffman never leaves any doubt about its meaning and translates or carefully explains every single lexical item in English. This narrative strategy calls up Friedrich Schleiermacher’s distinction between two approaches in translation, presented in Lawrence Venuti’s *The Translator’s Invisibility* as

> a domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home, and a foreignizing method, an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad. (1995, 20)

Of the two tendencies, Hoffman’s text clearly represents the former. Rather than positioning the Polish words as stumbling blocks in her text, which would recreate an estranging effect or even the feeling of being lost in translation for the reader, Hoffman uses them as if to teach short Polish language lessons to an English-speaking classroom. Especially when introducing ‘polot’ as one of “the true Polish values”, she falls prey to an essentializing tendency, which turns the Polish word into an easily absorbed and consumable entity. As Venuti cautions:

> The “foreign” in foreignizing translation is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text and is valuable in itself, but a strategic construction whose value is contingent on the current target-language situation. Foreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language. (1995, 20)

Far from disrupting any American English codes, Hoffman defuses the subversive force of her Polish vocabulary, which could otherwise challenge the centrality of English in the narrative.

After presenting the reader with this tamed ‘foreign’ vocabulary, Hoffman silences her mother tongue altogether, declaring early in the second chapter, “Exile”, that “Polish, in a

short time, has atrophied, shriveled from sheer uselessness. Its words don't apply to my new experiences" (107). Instead of articulating her new experiences in her mother tongue, Hoffman bans Polish into ancient times, writing that using it would be "like resorting to Latin or ancient Greek" (120), and waits to be proficient enough to voice them in English. Naming "speechlessness" as one of her symptoms and lamenting the "lack [of] a voice of [her] own" (219-20), Hoffman, as I agree with Karpinski, falls into "re-enact[ing] a literacy narrative about finding a voice in English" (2012, 147). As Hoffman stresses, she yearns "to give up the condition of being a foreigner" (202), and "to live within a language and to be held within the frame of culture" (194). It is this yearning that keeps her from making the border area between her languages productive, and instead pushes her to cross the border as quickly and inconspicuously as possible so as to evade any border patrol.

The exclusive belonging to the dominant linguistic group is even more essential in her career as a writer and critic, since what is at stake for Hoffman is not only her private experience of self-translation, but also the successful publication of her account of the latter. As Karpinski points out, a "complicity with the dominant culture ensures that immigrant autobiographies can gain access to the printed world" (2012, 147). Hoffman seems highly aware of this interconnection, when she recalls a Polish friend complaining about the difficulty of getting his book published. In response to his complaint, she repeats his editor's demand that the book "needs more references for an American audience" (256), thus clearly taking sides with the dominant culture. Realizing that this lifts her out of her position of marginality, Hoffman readily accepts the hegemonic claims of her new language and writes: "Of course, it has helped in nurturing this confidence that I live in an imperial center whose currency is the international standard and whose language is the Esperanto of the modern world." (251) It is curious to observe how the sense of a 'center', the loss of which she initially mourns, suddenly makes its entry back into her language. In this sense, I also agree with Karpinski, who "cannot but suspect that [Hoffman] has travelled from centre to centre, substituting the centrality of New York for that of Cracow in her childhood" (2012, 146).

It is this substitution of one center for another, as I would argue, that also seems to resolve the problem of her split. Curiously, Hoffman herself gives a different explanation, maintaining that her identity, like everyone else's in her surroundings, is affected by postmodern fragmentation. Falling into poststructuralist rhetorics, she argues: "[I]nstead of a central ethos, I have been given the blessings and the terrors of multiplicity. […] I step into a culture that splinters, fragments, and re-forms itself as if it were a jigsaw puzzle dancing in a quantum space" (164). Ignoring the power relations involved in the perceived fragmentation

of her migrant identity, she declares in an uncritically celebratory tone: "Perhaps a successful migrant is an exaggerated version of the native" (164). It is tempting to characterize Hoffman's autobiography, as Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez does, as "a version of the classic American immigrant success story, but with a postmodern ambivalence that prevents her from falling into traditional assimilationist melting pot rhetoric" (1997, 31). As I would argue, however, she constantly oscillates between a postmodern and an assimilationist stance, at times embracing the former and then once again longing "to break out of my difference and reclaim a state of ordinariness in which, after all, we want to live" (179). Her submission to the dominant culture becomes most obvious when she asks: "In a splintered society, what does one assimilate to?" and answers it herself with: "Perhaps the very splintering itself." (197) Close as she is to acknowledging the potential of beating the dominant culture at its own game and unmasking both the parallels and differences between her own and a postmodern sense of fragmentation, she instead finds consolation in the fact that American culture around her is not as monolithic as it initially presented itself to the immigrant. Therefore, rather than striking a subversive stance, she chooses the mode of assimilation, of playing according to the same rules and absorbing the same sense of fragmentation she perceives around herself. The losses she suffers through her self-translation are thus absorbed in the process of assimilation.

From self-translation to self-analysis

Hoffman's negotiation of her self-translation is complicated by the fact that it is not only "interlingual" in Roman Jakobson's terms (2001, 114). Partly, it represents what Richard Kearney, in his introduction to Ricoeur's *On Translation*, has called 'ontological' paradigm in translation, which "refers to how translation occurs between one human self and another" (2004, xii). In *Lost in Translation*, Hoffman uses the term 'translation' synonymously with 'understanding'. Thus, "the translation doesn't work" when she does not understand how her friend feels (107); when she cannot make sense of people's gestures, she "can't translate them into [her] mind's eye" (108); friends "pose[…] problems of translation", which can be encountered by "set[ting] out to *understand* each other at will" (175, emphasis mine) and "hoping that [they] can translate [them]selves for each other" (189).

More prominently, however, Hoffman draws on a translation paradigm that can be called the 'psychoanalytic'. As shall soon become clear, Hoffman's understanding of

translation approaches the one implied in many of Freud's writings. As mentioned in the introduction, Patrick Mahony observes in an article on the understanding of translation in psychoanalysis that, in Freudian vocabulary,

> neuroses and symptoms are translations of unconscious material; and the manifest or pictorial dream is nothing but a kind of internalized intersemiotic translation or transformation of the previous verbal latent dream. The analyst's interpretations are also translations, and even more than this, the very movement of material in the psychic apparatus as such is understood as translation whereas repression is a failure of translation. (1982, 64)

As I would like to show in the following, Hoffman develops a very similar view on translation. As in the figure of linguistic self-translation, in which she occupies both the role of the translator and the translated text, here, she appears as both patient and analyst.

"This is the twentieth century, you can't be a modern person and pretend to be innocent of psychoanalytic knowledge", Hoffman quotes an American friend of hers towards the end of her narrative (262). In fact, her entire project of self-translation is anything but innocent of it. Psychoanalysis makes its first appearance already in her childhood narrative in the first chapter, when Hoffman is too young to have any knowledge of it. Thus, she recalls her early encounter with Freudian thinking, in which her friend Basia brings her "an arcane bit of revelation" by confronting her with the idea of the Oedipus complex. Basia's laconic account that "girls of our age are in love with our fathers and therefore want to kill our mothers" startles and appalls young Eva so much that she runs to her mother to make sure she has no intent to kill her. Comical as this encounter and Eva's feeling of shock may seem, they turn out to be telling in regard to what she later presents as her compatriots' perspective on psychology in general:

> When my parents, or their Polish friends, use the word 'psychological,' it's to suggest something weird, verging on crazy. […] Normal human beings are assumed to have understandable feelings and motivations. […] Outside of those normal paths and knots of the human heart lies the murky pit of the psychological. (261-62)

More than just the perspective of her parents and friends, this is a view which, had she stayed longer in Poland, in all likelihood, she would have adopted. Significantly, she concludes the childhood episode with the words: "I might never think about Freud again – at least not until I find myself in a country where I'm forced to think of him all the time" (77). Polemically as the adult narrator may react to the words of her American friend and call psychoanalysis "just one version of modernity" (262), a few pages later, she admits: "In the project of gaining control, I've been aided by the vocabulary of self-analysis" (270), by which she refers to the vocabulary of psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalytic vocabulary finds itself as the most prominent marker of Hoffman's retrospective narration. To begin with, the narrative of her migration and entry into the English language is framed by two dreams, which she reports in detail and for which she offers interpretations. The first of the two is a nightmare, in which she sees herself "drowning in the ocean while [her] mother and father swim farther and farther away from [her]" (104). The nightmare is followed directly by its interpretation, which betrays her narrative voice as that of an adult: "I know, in this dream", she explains, "what it is to be cast adrift in incomprehensible space; I know what is it to lose one's mooring" (104). The second dream presents quite the opposite picture. The scenery is replaced by the idyllic 'comprehensible space' of a warm cottage, which is even praised in two rhyming sentences: "*The Cottage is the Heart of Desire; it's the Sun itself that stokes the Fire.*" (243) As Hoffman solemnly informs us, she "can see its Jungian implications, and the Freudian ones, its sexual symbolism and its archetypal allusions" (ibid.). The greatest cause of exultation for her, however, is the fact that the dream is in English, that the language "flows in [her] bloodstream" (ibid.)

The linguistic journey that leads her from an "incomprehensible" into the eventually comprehensible space of English language and North American culture is largely figured in a psychoanalytic manner. To begin with, her acquisition of the new language is invested with the feelings of desire and guilt. As Hoffman reports, the recognition of her marginality makes her initially "become immune to desire [and] snip the danger of wanting in the bud" (136). Also, along with the split between her two linguistic selves, "the unity, the seeming organic growth of [her] desires is becoming fragmented" (158). At the same time, she acknowledges that her "desires, when freed from their protective covering, are forceful, and they are unchanneled as an infant's id" (160). After these phases of denial and fragmentation, her desire resurfaces through a libidinal investment of language: "When I fall in love", she writes, "I am seduced by language. When I get married, I am seduced by language" (219).

Directing her desire at being taken in by American language and culture, however, Hoffman is also haunted by feelings of guilt towards her parents, which may be seen as a reason for her polarization between her native and her second language. The tendency of idealizing the mother tongue is thermalized by psychoanalysts Leon and Rebeca Grinberg, when they remark that some individuals

> put up strong resistance rooted in dissociative defenses to learning a new language: they maintain that their mother tongue is the only authentic one and the best suited to expressing life experiences, and they scorn the second language as poor and unequal to the task. This reaction may arise from a feeling of guilt at being disloyal to one's parents' language. (1989, 110)

The "feeling of guilt at being disloyal" to the parents and their linguistic and cultural background indeed figures as a recurring topic in *Lost in Translation*. Thus, after a prolonged process of acculturation in Canada, Hoffman ponders over what she perceives to be a reproach on her mother's part: "My mother says I'm becoming 'English.' This hurts me, because I know she means I'm becoming cold" (146). The connection between language and family bonds becomes even clearer when the adult narrator finds herself 'seduced' into falling in love with and marry an American-born man. While the choice of a partner, who speaks a different language from that of the parents, seems to bespeak Hoffman's successful individuation, the feeling of guilt comes to haunt her in her adult life. When she joins her husband in a lively intellectual exchange, at a party after her doctoral ceremony, she cannot escape highly ambivalent feelings: "I feel my parents' eyes looking at me with pride: look how far she's come, look how well she's learned to behave – and I want to stop, pained at their approval" (227). This provokes her to question her relationship with her husband and remark that "every one of [her] complicities is a small betrayal" (227).

The pathology of self-translation

Drawing on vocabulary that could be taken from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), Hoffman also ventures further into the domain of the pathological. Although she never applies it directly to her persona, she repeatedly uses the strategy of describing her own psychological symptoms in order to then draw a connection to a mental illness. Thus, when arguing in regard to her own situation that speechlessness can result in "impotent, murderous rage" , she deducts in a careful and distanced way: "If all therapy is speaking therapy – a talking cure – then perhaps all *neurosis* is a speech dis-ease" (124, italics mine). In a similarly cautious manner, she approaches another pathological term when recalling her first attempts to write a diary in English and being unable to do so in the first person: "I do not go as far as the *schizophrenic* 'she' – but I am driven, as by compulsion, to the double, the Siamese-twin 'you'" (121, italics mine). Later, Hoffman mentions the risk of a "mild cultural schizophrenia" when speaking about her alienation from many of her American friends' common beliefs and assumptions; her fear of not finding the right words is associated with "hysteria […] brought on by tongue-tied speechlessness" (219). When invoking a fourth psychiatric notion, that of 'trauma', she tries to convince a psychologist that she is directly affected by it: "You don't believe that culture shock can be a real shock", she attacks him and

continues mockingly: “You don’t believe that its trauma can be as real as seeing your father naked when you’re three months old.” (268)

Even though Hoffman approaches all of the psychiatric notions in of neurosis, schizophrenia, hysteria and trauma in a rather tentative manner, her choice of words remains striking and raises the question of why she is drawn so much into the domain of the pathological. Of course, one option would be to confirm Hoffman in her pathological terminology. Such a project is undertaken by literary critic Susan Ingram, who consults the DSM-IV to establish that Hoffman’s narrative displays schizoid tendencies and is therefore a “schizophrenic autobiography” (1996, 259-260). In my view, however, the case of *Lost in Translation* is more complex and subtle. To address the question of the symptoms described by Hoffman, two approaches seem instructive: the first is to have a look at discourses that could have motivated the negative evaluation of her self-translation; the second one to closer examine the intrapsychic reasons Hoffman offers us in her narrative.

To begin with the former, it is curious to note that throughout the book, the author who portrays her process of absorbing a second language does not describe herself as ‘bilingual’ even a single time. This may be attributed to the fact that Hoffman immigrated at a time when bilingualism was not exactly presented as an advantage in popular and academic discourses in North America. One need only consider that although Canada has been populated both by English- and French-speaking settlers from the 17th century on, it was only in 1969 that the federal government passed the Official Languages Act, declaring English and French both official languages and giving them equal status in all aspects of the federal administration. What is more, the legal act has not had the desired impact, since it was met with resistance on both the Anglophone and the Francophone sides. While outside Quebec, education and public services were still not sufficiently provided in French, the Quebecois were and are highly concerned that the equal status of English and French in Quebec would eventually lead to an extinction of French. In 1977, the fear of losing the Francophone identity even led the government of Quebec to the monolingual policy of passing the Chartre de la Langue Française, which declared French the sole official language of the province (cf. Grosjean 1982, 16-18). The debates on official bilingualism in Canada, which, significantly, did not involve any mention of languages other than English and French, give an impression of the status of bilinguals, who, like Hoffman, immigrated to the country in the late 1950s.

In a similar vein, linguistic academic discourses assumed monolingualism to be the norm, from which bilingualism seemed to be an aberration. As Aneta Pavlenko and James Lantolf observe, “[l]inguistic theories, including those prevalent in SLA [second-language

acquisition] research, have traditionally assumed monolingualism to be the unmarked case" (2000, 157). The authors also highlight an ironical remark from a study by Sridhar and Sridhar (1986), according to whom "SLA researchers seem to have neglected the fact that the goal of SLA is bilingualism" (quoted in Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000, 157).

Apart from this traditionally dominant view in linguistics, the assumption existed until the 1980s that bilingual subjects presented pathological cases. Such a view was championed, for instance, by Max Adler, who wrote that a bilingual child's "standards are split, he becomes more inarticulate than one would expect of one who can express himself in two languages, his emotions are more instinctive, in short, bilingualism can lead to a split personality and, at worst, to schizophrenia" (1977, 40). As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, one only needs to cast a glance at François Grosjean's 1982 study, *Life with Two Languages*, to get a sense of the influence of the monolingual paradigm. Were it not for militant defenses of monolingualism, the author would not need to take up the cudgels for bilingualism as a non-pathological and sometimes even advantageous condition.

Early encounters with the incomprehensible

While it is illuminating to view *Lost in Translation* in its discursive context, it is also possible to look for explanations of the self-pathologization within the text itself. As I would like to show, the first chapter, "Paradise", in which Hoffman depicts her childhood in Poland, offers a key to the solution. Curiously enough, except for the humorous account of her first encounter with Freudian thinking, this chapter remains entirely void of psychoanalytic vocabulary. Hoffman's self-analysis thus begins only with the account of her emigration and not with her childhood, which, as we learn, is tragically marked by her parents' stories of Holocaust survival. This may be explained by the author's stylistic decision to adapt the discourse to the linguistic and intellectual capabilities of the child that she is in the narrative of the first chapter and not to introduce too much vocabulary that she could not have been acquainted with. Another reason may be her – questionable – belief that as a child she was "not yet divided" (74), which would explain her choice not to endow her childhood persona with the critical distance which will later dominate her life and is implied in the use of psychoanalytic vocabulary.

However, unless she wanted to "pretend to be innocent of psychoanalytic knowledge" (262), she can hardly imply that her childhood is irrelevant to her self-analysis. After all, it is

one of the major premises of psychoanalysis that patterns of emotion and behavior are acquired mostly in early childhood and only brought to the core in adolescence. In my view, while Hoffman does not apply psychoanalytic vocabulary to her childhood, she is at the same time far from denying the influence that the presence of her parents' Holocaust memory had on her post-war childhood. The topic of the Holocaust figures in all three parts of her memoir and its psychological after-effects, though not explicitly diagnosed as symptoms, are inscribed into her narrative in a more subtle form.

Thus, we learn about her parents' attitudes to remembering their own survival and the deaths of all other relatives. Her father hardly mentions the topic, since "dignity for him is silence, sometimes too much silence" (23). The mother, Hoffman informs us, in contrast, "wants me to know what happened, and I keep every detail of what she tells me in my memory like black beads" (24). Much in line with Nadine Fresco's article, "Remembering the Unknown" (1984), on the transmission of psychological symptoms from Holocaust survivors to their children, Hoffman points out that, as a child, she does not "understand what [she] remember[s]" and is pushed into a double-bind situation: "To atone for what happened, I should relive it all with her, and I try. No, not really. I can't go as near this pain as I should. But I can't draw away from it either." (24-25) Confronted with the stories about killed relatives, she oscillates between repressing them with the fantasy that "[m]aybe it didn't happen after all, maybe it's only a story, and a story can be told differently, it can be changed" (7) and accepting the horrible heritage just like her name, Ewa Alfreda, which she has acquired from both her killed grandmothers. All in all, while she seeks to avoid the notion of the Holocaust by referring to it as "the war" (16) and even the "Thing" (25), she nevertheless inscribes it into the origins of her family. She refers to the Holocaust as her parents' "second birthplace" (16), and what is more, claims these origins for herself with the statement of having 'come from the war', which she compulsively repeats almost literally throughout the book (23, 25, 129, 230).

Unsettling as these comments are, they do not take up much space in Hoffman's narrative and remain rather vague in terms of the psychological effects on the narrator. However, as I would like to argue, they can be seen as preparing the stage for Hoffman's multiple 'losses in translation' and her choice of diagnostic vocabulary in the second and third part of her autobiography. This reading relies on Freud's observation that "in every case the later neurotic illness links up with the prelude of childhood" (1964b, 184), and on the temporal structure he observes in the development of a neurosis: "early trauma – latency – outbreak of neurotic illness – partial return of the repressed" (Freud 1964a, 80). Drawing on

this Freudian insight, trauma theorist Cathy Caruth argues that since "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located", it becomes "fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (Caruth 1995, 8-9).

Both Freud's and Caruth's arguments shed light on the narrative presented by Eva Hoffman. Thus, it seems striking that when the author for the first time draws on psychoanalytic imagery it is to speak about the "primal scream of [her] birth into the New World" (104), as if introducing another childhood narrative. Significantly, while the scream is the result of a nightmare related to her migration experience, both her choice of words and her description of the scene in which it occurs calls up uncanny associations with what she had previously referred to as her parents' "second birthplace" (16): the Holocaust. For when she wakes up "in the middle of a prolonged scream" (104), her penniless family has just found refuge in the house of a well-established, but rather unsympathetic couple in Vancouver, where they are "relegated to the basement" (102). At the latest when the narrator recounts that instead of comforting her, "her parents wake up and hush [her] up quickly; they don't want the Rosenbergs to hear this disturbing sound" (104), the reader is uncannily reminded of a hiding place, which her parents would not have sought for the first time in their lives.

This incident is only the prelude to the migration experience and its psychological effects that Hoffman will present in the following and that seem to be marked by the experience of growing up as a child of Holocaust survivors. Thus, her perceived speechlessness in the New World finds its antecedent in the lack of words for accounting for her family heritage, as demonstrated in her expression of 'coming from the war'. The feeling of guilt of being disloyal to her parents' language is easily associated with the burden of memory she has inherited from them already in her childhood. Finally, her sense of dispossession and of being divided between different worlds reflects the loss and irrecoverable memory of family members, whose deaths preceded her birth. These uncanny connections between the two periods of her life may lead to a view taken by Marianne Hirsch, who, in the early 1990s, coined the term 'postmemory' and whose biography displays striking parallels to that of the author. Alienated by the latter's "obsession with the canyon, with a disjunction that defines her life and her book" and her "pervasive nostalgia that clings to everything Polish", emphatically appeals to Hoffman: "I want her to see that in Poland, as a child, she was already divided" (1994, 76-77).

In defense of Hoffman's narrative, one could offer a psychological and a textual explanation. First, it has been argued by Salman Akhtar that "[r]esulting from a retrospective idealization of lost objects, nostalgia helps the immigrant defend against the aggression

resulting from current frustration" (1999, 123). It can be therefore seen as a value of Hoffman's writing that she does not delete these sentiments, which seem overcome by the end of her narrative, from her book, but exposes her "nostalgic defense" (ibid.) as part of her integration process in the New World. Second, I would argue that she does not seem completely unaware of this seeming 'return of the repressed'. For instance, when she learns about the suicide of her childhood love, Marek, the explanation she offers is that both of them are "children who came from the war, and who couldn't make sufficient sense of the several worlds they grew up in, and didn't know by what lights to act" (230). Also, when wondering how it has "come about that from the age of thirteen on [she has] not known what peace of mind feels like" and why 'peace of mind' "strikes [her] as a phrase from another world", she immediately voices her sense that these symptoms stem from an earlier time: "Is it that I come from the war, while my parents were born before it? Is it that I have only struggled with specters – their specters among others – while they have battered themselves against hard realities?" (129)

When Hoffman informs us of her visits to a psychotherapist towards the end of the narrative, she zooms in on her parents as the characters that connect the different thematic strands of what she calls her "psychodrama" (267). In doing so, she weaves in the story about the death of her father's relatives in the Holocaust that had been silenced in the family narrative for many years. Facing the pain of what "is no longer a frightening fairy tale, as it would have been in childhood", she admits her narratological dilemma: "There's no way to get this part of the story in proportion. It could overshadow everything else, put the light of the world right out. I need seven-league boots to travel from this to where I live. And yet, this is what I must do." (252-53) In my view, this passage reveals most clearly that Hoffman has constructed her story as a psychoanalytic case history, since her account of her migration symptoms cannot be fully understood without the background of her childhood. And at the same time, her post-Holocaust childhood narrative would remain untold if it were not reactivated in the course of her migration.

Translation as therapy

It is in this context that I interpret Hoffman's project of self-translation. Thus, when she introduces the notion of "translation therapy" (271), it refers less to a therapy against the losses inflicted on her in the process of self-translation than to translation as a therapeutic

means for uncovering and coming to terms with earlier losses from a time when she was not yet 'translated'. To be sure, the challenge of growing into a new language and culture is not neutralized or denied, when Hoffman stresses that her "going to a shrink is, among other things, a rite of initiation […] into the language of the subculture within which [she] happen[s] to live" (274). However, it more than that: for in the medium of psychoanalytic translation, the "talking cure" begins to emerge as "a second-language cure" (271), which means that the second language ceases to make the narrator speechless, and allows her to develop a sense of self. As she points out, psychotherapy

> becomes a project of translating backward: The way to jump over my Great Divide is to crawl backward over it in English. It's only when I retell my whole story, back to the beginning, and from beginning onward, in one language, that I can reconcile the voices within me with each other (271-72).

At this point, the psychoanalytic reading, albeit invited by Hoffman's vocabulary, cannot remain entirely consistent. First, her emphasis on being able to retell her whole story "in one language" is not entirely innocent of some promotion of monolingual discourse, be it in Polish or English, as a natural condition for a united sense of self. As such, it misses a central point forwarded by psychoanalysts working in the field of multilingualism. Thus, Jacqueline Amati-Mehler argues in *The Babel of the Unconscious* that the acquisition of a second language has the advantage of allowing individuals to re-experience and re-articulate painful episodes from their pasts from the safe vantage point of a language *different* from their mother tongue. The effect, in the psychoanalyst's view, lies in the possibility of being lifted out of the discursive framework of one's parents and place of origin as well as out of the emotional patterns associated with it. In hurrying to "jump over the Great Divide", however, Hoffman does not succeed in making the gap between her two languages productive in a psychological sense due to her persisting fear of staying "[b]etwixt and between" (116): "The gap cannot fully be closed, but I begin to trust English to speak my childhood self as well, to say what has so long been hidden, to touch the tenderest spots. Perhaps any language, if pursued far enough, leads to exactly the same place." (274) From her perspective, this gap can never be closed enough and she seems to forgive English for its foreignness only because it allegedly leads her back to precisely the feelings she had in her Polish childhood.

In consequence, while hinting many times at the parallels between her post-Holocaust childhood and her migration experience, she fails to map them out consistently. "[W]hile therapy offers me instruments and the vocabulary of self-control", she writes,

> it also becomes, in the long run, a route back to that loss which for me is the model of all loss, and to that proper sadness of which children are never afraid; in English, I wind my way back to my old Polish melancholy. When I meet it, I reenter myself, fold myself again in my own skin. (274)

It seems that she almost arrives at the full realization of how her later sense of loss and deprivation was shaped already in her childhood, but stops short of it, generalizing her 'postmemory' into her "old Polish melancholy" and a "proper sadness of which children are never afraid". In this sense, it is difficult to defend *Lost in Translation* from Marianne Hirsch's critique that Hoffman idealizes her Polish childhood while lamenting her later split of self.

What remains even more disquieting is another aspect. While claiming that translation is possible since "any language, if pursued far enough, leads to exactly the same place", she continues her search for a more universal language. Thus, she formulates that she wants "a calm and simple language that will subsume the clangor of specialized jargons and of partial visions, a language old enough to plow under the superficial differences between signs, to the deeper strata of significance" (212). Throughout most of the narrative, Hoffman remains vague about what language, or rather, what kind of language that could be. It is only on the last pages that she specifies that it could be the "language of psychology", which gives her troping of translation a rather unexpected turn:

> Perhaps the homogenizing language of psychology is a way of coping with a bewilderment of heterogeneity. It's a language that provides universalizing explanations for strangers whose circumstances are unknown to us, a language of familiarity and of ripened habit from which the speech of colloquial intimacy and of common observation grows. (267)

Especially in the context of translation, the attributes "homogenizing" and "universalizing" appear highly questionable, since Hoffman seems to dream of a pre-Babelian linguistic state, in which translation would turn superfluous. At this point, her two figures of self-translation, the linguistic and the psychological one, coincide in the same contradiction. Thus, when searching for a "true voice" for her memoir, she acknowledges that "there's no returning to the point of origin" (273), but still longs to calm down all foreign voices inside herself and immerse herself into silence, a "white plenitude" (275). In the context of her 'postmemory', one may wonder whether this silence can be a pre-Babelian or still a post-Holocaust phenomenon. Concluding her narrative, however, Hoffman opts for a version of silence as a "white blank center, the level ground that was there before Babel was built, that is always there before the Babel of our multiple selves is constructed." (275). This phantasy stands in stark contrast with Ricoeur's philosophy of translation, according to which the translator, as which Hoffman also presents herself, must acknowledge that "[t]ranslation is always *after Babel* [and] renounce the dream of a return to some adamantine logos of pure correspondences. The attempt to retrieve a prelapsarian paradise of timeless signs is futile." (Kearney in Ricoeur 2004, xvii) Be it that the self-translation brings about a loss, which can

be compensated by completing the translation process and leaving the mother tongue in the periphery, or that it helps to uncover and work through earlier losses – Hoffman's narrative is held together by the various figures of translation, while she cannot quite give up the hope for a loophole of universality that would liberate her from the necessity to translate. Whether one interprets Hoffman's project of self-translation in a linguistic or a psychoanalytic sense, the blind spots and contradictions in her narrative remain present and symptomatic of her ambivalence towards translation.

Trauma and Desire in the Language of the Other: Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*

Atom Egoyan's feature film *Calendar* presents us with another loss in translation. An Armenian-Canadian photographer, disconnected from his Armenian language and culture, travels to his ancestral country in order to shoot pictures of ancient churches for a calendar. He is accompanied by his wife Arsinée, who takes on the role of a translator between him and their Armenian driver and guide Ashot. The diasporic couple's encounter with their historical country of origin triggers a chain of events set in linguistic borderlands. While the photographer re-experiences a trauma from his childhood and falls into deeply neurotic behavior, Arsinée falls in love both with the Armenian rural scenery and the native guide. As a result, the protagonist is not only lost, but also loses his wife in translation. The journey, configured as a return to and of the repressed for the protagonist, is narrated retrospectively through his scraps of memory and his footage shot in Armenia. In the cinematic present, he engages in dating women with a foreign background, turning the pages of the finished calendar and composing an account of the journey addressed to his wife.

As the present chapter sets out to explore, Egoyan stages a case history of linguistic trauma and sets up a scenario in which the photographer, a central protagonist and the filmmaker's intradiegetic double, himself consistently tries to set up a scenario for staging traumatic memories. The film displays the structure of an analytical – and psychoanalytic – drama and prompts the question, what circumstances have led to the photographer's repression of his mother tongue, his neurotic behavior and eventually his loss in translation. In a first step, I will focus on this question and will analyze the protagonist's case history according to the Freudian categories his behavior calls up. For this, I will examine the visual symptoms of the linguistic trauma in *Calendar* and consider causes, symptoms, and remedies against this trauma as presented on the plot level. Also, I will open my analysis to a Lacanian discussion of the protagonist's encounter with a foreign language so as to present an understanding of the film which integrates the film's intertwined themes of language, desire, neurosis and the Other. In a second step, I will shift my focus from the protagonist's perspective to that of his wife and translator, Arsinée, and analyze her way of encountering a foreign language, which Egoyan presents as an alternative to linguistic trauma. Lastly, I will debate the political agenda behind her role as translator and compare them to the ideological project of the photographer. In doing so, I will examine the ways in which Egoyan's film negotiates the traumatic and liberating effects of the transgression of linguistic boundaries as well as their ethico-political implications.

Linguistic trauma and the game of *fort/da*

Considering *Calendar* as a case history about linguistic trauma first of all raises the question of the representation of trauma in the cinematic narrative. According to Anne Whitehead, author of *Trauma Fiction*,

> [n]ovelists have often found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection (2004, 3).

What the author identifies in literary fiction is also precisely at work in the cinematic narrative of *Calendar*, since, on a formal level, it incorporates many qualities commonly ascribed to traumatic neurosis. As Whitehead explains,

> [o]ne of the key literary strategies in trauma fiction is the device of repetition, which can act at the levels of language, imagery or plot. Repetition mimics the effect of trauma, for it suggests the insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression (2004, 86).

On the level of the plot in *Calendar*, the device of repetition indeed figures most prominently, and thus mimics the protagonist's state of mind. In the extradiegetic narrative we encounter the photographer as a withdrawn, emotionless character displaying many kinds of obsessive behavior. Once a month, through a dating agency, he arranges for a date in his Toronto apartment, throughout which, however, he remains utterly distant, impassive and unexpressive. While the looks and the dresses of his escorts, as well as the dinner music and the dishes for dinner change every month, each date follows exactly the same scenario. As soon as the dinner is finished and the last of the wine poured, each of the escorts asks to use the photographer's telephone and proceeds to seemingly make a phone call to a lover, with whom each of them flirts in a different foreign language. By portraying the protagonist as abandoned and excluded from the escort's foreign language affairs, these scenes effectively restage his alienation and separation from his wife, who had grown attracted to a speaker of Armenian in the process of translation.

Interestingly enough, the repetitive dinner scenes quickly turn out to be orchestrated not by an extradiegetic narrator, but scripted and staged on an intradiegetic level, namely by the photographer himself. This is first of all betrayed by his lack of interest in the conversations with his dates, and the lack of emotion and surprise, when all of them systematically leave the dinner table as soon as he pours the last of the wine. The consternation visible on the face of one of the escorts, who, significantly enough, tells him about her experience as an actress, betrays his action as a cue for her to break off the conversation and ask for the telephone. A recorded phone message from the dating agency concerning the choice of foreign languages to be spoken by the escorts as well as their

English accent, unidiomatic speech and grotesque way of flirting on the phone clearly reveals them not as real dates, but as amateur actresses enacting his scenario. While the women perform their poorly acted and strongly accented foreign language telephone flirts, the feigned character of the dates culminates in the protagonist reaching out for his notepad, which, absurdly enough, turns out to be positioned on the dinner table just outside the frame, and starting to write to his wife Arsinée.

How can his repeated enactments be read? In psychoanalytic terms, the photographer's behavior can be a reenactment of the *fort/da* game, which Freud discusses in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1955c). Observing his 18-months old grandson playing with a wooden reel by throwing it over the side of his draped cot so that it disappears from view, and hauling it in again, Freud comes to the conclusion that the child symbolically represents the absence of his mother and learns to accept it "by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach" (1955c, 15). Likewise, in *Calendar*, the photographer creates a playful space in order to come to terms with his traumatic loss of Arsinée, or, in Freud's words, "to play 'gone'" (ibid.). By directing the dinner scenes, the photographer seeks to regain control of the situation, much in the way Freud describes his grandson's game: "At the outset he was in a *passive* situation – he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an *active* part" (ibid., 16, emphases in the original). Indeed, the photographer takes on such an 'active' part that he robs the escorts of any agency of their own and treats them like mere "objects he ha[s] at hand" for dramatizing the loss of his wife. This accounts for the performance of the dinner dates appearing bleak, emotionless, and badly rehearsed, since the photographer interrupts some of the escorts in mid-sentence by pouring the last of the wine and thus giving the cue for them to ask for the telephone. Just like children who "repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, […] abreact the strength of the impression and, as one might put it, make themselves master of the situation" (ibid., 17), the protagonist restages his traumatic separation to master his present situation.

The protagonist's attempt to direct his own situation finds itself literally translated into cinematic vocabulary. As the photographer, an intradiegetic figure, snatches the direction of the film from the director's hands, he seems to avoid being at the mercy of the narrative. Unlike most traumatized fictional characters, whose subjectivity in the extreme case is annihilated and whose agency is undermined, the protagonist in *Calendar* seemingly remains in charge of the situation. Instead of employing the stream-of-consciousness technique, one of the most common narrative strategies in trauma fiction allowing the reader or spectator to

gain a direct insight into the wounded psyche of the traumatized character, Egoyan seems to make a concession to his neurotic protagonist, who, as shall be explained later, loves to watch, but not to be seen. The photographer fervently protects his inner life from the gaze of others, and, in staging the dinner dates, externalizes his mental state on the plot level.

However, the illusion of the protagonist's control over the dinner scenes soon collapses, since all other cinematic elements apart from the script escape his command and infringe upon his well-controlled form of repetition. First of all, the image composition restricts his and the escort's actions to a very confined space. The dinner scenes consist solely of close-ups and medium shots, which narrow down the gaze and do not allow the viewer to get a proper sense of space in the apartment. The feeling of confinement deepens, when the photographer remains at the dinner table while the escorts walk away to use the phone. While the protagonist, sitting at the table, occupies the foreground, his dates – instead of moving out of the frame – walk into the background of the same image, where they can be seen performing their telephone flirts. In the reverse shot, it is the photographer himself who can be seen in the background while the escort appears in the foreground. The fact that the only real movement during the dates precisely follows one single line strongly contributes to a claustrophobic sense of space.

With only one exception, when the photographer is seen sitting naked on a couch and masturbating to the video images of Arsinée (0:20:17), the characters are filmed from only three camera positions, which are repeatedly used for all interior shots. In addition to the afore-mentioned shot directed at the protagonist at the dinner table and the reverse shot with the escort speaking on the phone, the camera also switches to a third shot aiming frontally at the wall with the telephone and the calendar next to it. The repetitive use of the same camera perspectives adds a new dimension to the repetition on the plot level. Here the protagonist cannot control the image, but is controlled by it and confined to the narrow space granted to him by the frame of the image. Seen from Anne Whitehead's perspective, this stylistic repetition compulsion clearly functions as a hint at his traumatic condition. The fact that all interior shots are static constitutes an entirely indifferent camera gaze. Indeed, the camera itself seems to be bored by the scenes in which the possibility of any development or movement that transgresses the image frame is precluded from the outset. The monotony and bleakness of the apartment scenes is further underlined by the color filters and the image and sound editing employed in the film. All interior shots are deprived of brightness by means of a bleak and disharmonious color composition. If brownish and yellowish tones dominate the image, the bright red lipstick worn by several of the escorts stands out in sharp and irritating

contrast to the surroundings, thus highlighting the absurdity and inauthenticity of the staged dinner scenes.

Furthermore, as Anahid Kassabian and David Kazanjian observe, the film, and these scenes in particular, is "structured in an obsessive form" (2005, 133). Apart from the photographer's absurd dating practice, every month in the narrative is marked by a recurring cycle of images and sounds: the ringing of the phone, the protagonist's recorded voice saying that he is busy in the darkroom, the turning of the calendar page. The slight deviations from and intrusions into this scenario, such as Arsinée's voicemail messages or the different appearances of and conversations with the escorts, do not notably alter the cyclical course of events. Since the protagonist continues carrying out his own unchanging script throughout most of the film, they hardly seem to enter his reality. Thus, the protagonist's repetitive staging is embedded in a larger time loop. Repetition as a device deployed throughout the film evades the protagonist's control and closes in on him, betraying his traumatic condition. As psychoanalysts Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart explain in an article on memory and trauma, "the traumatic experience/memory is, in a sense, timeless. It is not transformed into a story, placed in time, with a beginning, a middle and an end" (1995, 177). A beginning, a middle and an end are precisely what the episodic narrative strand set in the Toronto apartment lacks. The breaking with the expectation of a progression of narrative time creates a highly irritating effect, thereby allowing a glimpse into the protagonist's mental state of traumatic neurosis.

The traumatic organization of time is paralleled by a fragmentation of cinematic reality. This comes about when the protagonist's memories, triggered by each escort's withdrawal into a foreign language, appear on screen in the shape of video images. The co-presence of the two media, film and video, establish a fictional world that fails to cohere. The very opening of the film presents the viewer with images from Armenia only later to reveal them as part of the video footage shot by the protagonist and thus as part of a metadiegetic narrative. As the viewer is initially deceived about the diegetic status of these images, cinematic reality appears not only fragmented, but ontologically destabilized. Just like in Michael Haneke's psycho-thriller *Caché* (2005), which sets out with a scene recorded on a video camera and watched on a TV set within the cinematic diegesis, the viewer is left to wonder about the reality status of the images presented on screen. Although in *Calendar*, unlike in *Caché*, the two types of images are clearly set apart from each other through their quality – the unsaturated colors and the static shots of the interior scenes are contrasted by the grainy, bluish-tinted and shaky video images shot with a hand-held camera – the viewer

initially falls prey to the illusion of the video images as 'actual reality' and has to figure out in the course of the film how the two types of images relate to each other. What then appears as an ingenious trick for incorporating scenes from the past into the present and to radically set apart the mythic Armenian scenery from the dull setting in the Toronto apartment at the same time functions as a marker of trauma. As trauma theorist Cathy Caruth argues, traumatic memories are marked by a "surprising literality and nonsymbolic nature […], which resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely, literal" (1995, 5). As the protagonist's memories are represented through video images, which he never seems to edit, they indeed remain literal and "unassimilable to associative chains of meaning" (ibid.). When at the end of each date, the photographer sets out to verbally articulate his experience of loss in Armenia, his memories still intrude upon him in their visuality. The switch to the visual medium again exposes him to traumatic memories, which are replayed without any modification.

Finally, the film title betrays the centrality of the calendar as an epitome of trauma. Appearing in the image at the beginning of each of the twelve sequences of the film, it serves as a structuring device of cinematic time, which in *Calendar* can be said to pass in a traumatic way. For although the turning of the calendar pages announces the progression of time, every new month only brings a series of recurring irritating actions, namely the photographer's staged dinner dates, his wife's unanswered phone calls and his musing about the journey through Armenia, which led to Arsinée's departure. Locked in repetition, the protagonist's life stands in sharp contrast to the passing of the calendar months. In addition, the calendar represents the initial trigger of the journey to Armenia and the photographer's alienation and separation from his wife. It therefore functions both as cause and later symptom of the protagonist's suffering.

Not surprisingly, the printed pages of the calendar in their characteristics resonate with traumatic memories. Much in line with trauma theory's assumptions, the photographs in the calendar appear as frozen, static images, foreclosing any possibility of development. Their motifs, Armenia's historical churches, not only cater to a nostalgic diasporic memory, but also underline the standstill of time. The absence of human life from these pictures adds a sterile touch to them and symbolically disallows any agency, since potential agents are kept outside of the frame. Lastly, as van der Kolk and van der Hart put it, traumatic memories are "unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language" (1995, 176). Their transformation into language, however, is precisely what does not occur, which marks both the protagonist and his photographic creations as utterly speechless. What is more, the silence

of the calendar photographs expresses his refusal to communicate, which is pointed out by Arsinée:

> I finally received the calendar. It turned out really great. But I'm very upset though, you just sent it without a letter or anything. I really want to know what's going on in your mind. We've known each other too long to play these games. We've loved each other for too long. It's very mean to send me something that – I don't know – something that meant so much to both of us without letting me know how you feel about it. […] Just share with me whatever there is to share. Please, please write to me. I do miss you. (0:09:16-0:10:20)

Significantly, the photographer does not even answer his phone, which is why Arsinée's complaint can be only heard as a message recorded on his voicemail. All of the protagonist's trauma symptoms, but most of all his speechlessness, mark his loss of control as a narrative authority. It becomes clear that he does not manage to work through the loss of his wife or to contain the experience within the script of the dinner dates, which instead appear as a form of acting out. According to his script, the presence of the escorts is followed each time by their spatial and linguistic departure so that his *fort/da* game turns into a more traumatic game of *da/fort*. Unlike the game of Freud's grandson, the photographer's scripted scenes do not include a jubilatory moment of a return. This is not surprising, since unlike Freud's grandson, Egoyan's protagonist is not trying to come to terms with the absence, but with the loss of a loved person. Therefore, rather than alleviating his suffering, the date scenes merely trigger his painful memories, which he then begins to narrativize by writing letters to Arsinée.

Re-viewing his video recordings and mental images and virtually adding to them a new voice-over, the photographer can be said to undergo a 'talking cure'. As highly ritualized, continuously repeated and, most importantly, purely verbal encounters, the dinner scenes most palpably mimic psychoanalytic sessions, which gradually bring about an improvement of the protagonist's condition. Significantly, there is no intradiegetic figure of a psychoanalyst to whom his narrative is addressed. Neither the escorts – with one exception which will be discussed later – nor Arsinée take on this role, since he does not establish any real contact with the women and never sends the letters he is composing to his wife. Instead, his 'talking cure' relies utterly on the address to the reader, who, in Jonathan Romney's words, "should ideally have the perceptions of a psychoanalytic sniffer dog" (2003, 1). After all, the verbalization of his traumatic memories does not only help the protagonist to work through his past, but also establishes a frame for his scraps of video footage, thus granting the viewer access to the cinematic narrative.

Representing a series of psychoanalytic sessions, the dinner dates can be identified as the last phase of a longer case history. When the film sets in, the origins of the protagonist's suffering already lie in the past, while the cinematic present is entirely devoted to an

unfolding case analysis. This makes obvious that the film is structured as an psycho-analytic drama. Like in the analytic drama of Ibsen, *Calendar* does not present any evolving conflict, turning point or climax with a resolution of the conflict or a catastrophe. Instead, all of the film's stagnating action is devoted to the reactivation and gradual reconstruction of the protagonist's memories so as to explain what factors have led to his neurotic condition in the present. Here the analytic and the psychoanalytic structures of the film coincide, which of course does not surprise, considering that Freud modeled his own method upon the technique of analytic dramatists such as Sophocles. Freud acknowledges in his *Interpretation of Dreams* that the dramatic technique in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* "can be likened to the work of a psycho-analysis", since "[t]he action of the play consists in nothing other than the process of revealing, with cunning delays and ever-mounting excitement" (1953a, 261-62). Likewise, *Calendar*, puts its viewers into the role of psychoanalysts and urges them to solve the riddle of the protagonist's neurotic condition.

The 'original trauma' in language migration

If on the formal as well as on the plot level *Calendar* presents itself as a trauma narrative, this raises an obvious question: What trauma does it deal with and what are its origins? While the first answer may be that the film depicts the protagonist's trauma of separation from his wife, it only provokes more questions: Why is the separation staged on their journey through their ancestral homeland Armenia? Why do husband and wife relate to the country and its language in such different ways? Why does the photographer behave in an obsessive and authoritarian, and at the same time careless way towards his wife? And why, finally does he have to literally lose her in translation? As I would like to show, this loss cannot be understood without an earlier one that functions as the back-story wound. More precisely, the protagonist's case history corresponds to the structure of a traumatic neurosis as outlined by Freud in his last work, *Moses and Monotheism* (1964a). Egoyan's use of the formational elements of the neurosis – "early trauma – latency – outbreak of neurotic illness – partial return of the repressed" (Freud 1964a, 80) – will be analyzed in the following.

As the discovery of an "early trauma" presents the goal and end of every trauma analysis, it has to be sought in the last of the 'psychoanalytic sessions' enacted in the film. And indeed, the last of the staged dinner dates diagnoses the back-story wound and opens up the view onto the origins of the protagonist's traumatic neurosis. Talking about identity and

belonging with the last escort, who, significantly enough, shares the protagonist's Armenian roots and his migration history from Egypt to Canada, the photographer recalls a scene from his early days in Canada:

> No, it was really difficult, I mean, at the beginning, because I actually didn't speak any English at all, and ah, like I can remember this one time where I was on the beach and there were all these kids and they were all singing like "Yellow Submarine," and I didn't know the words and all I could hear was like "yalla submarine," like "yalla submarine." So I started singing with them and I was going like "yalla submarine, yalla submarine". It was completely ridiculous. [*Pours last of wine.*] I mean you're so vulnerable to that, right, when you're a kid, I mean you just sort of like, you just sort of imitate like what you think other people would wanna hear but it doesn't really have anything to do with what you are feeling or, you know, what's going through your mind or anything like that. (01:02:31-01:03:05)

However, Egoyan's complex exploration of his protagonist's mental constitution invites the viewer not only to spot the early trauma, but to ask what kind of trauma it is and how it could come about. For the discussion of the origins of the trauma presented in *Calendar*, I will first revisit two explanations given by Kassabian and Kazanjian (2005) and by Monique Tschofen (2005/06) to then develop my own line of argument.

In their analysis of diasporic nationalism in Armenian cinema, Kassabian and Kazanjian work "against what [they] see as a central obstacle in the contemporary configuration of postcolonial studies – the rush to celebrate diasporas" (2005, 144). They rightly point out that the protagonist's recapitulation of the story is interrupted by his well-rehearsed pouring of the wine as the last of his "rigorous and systematic efforts to fend off the memory of his childhood cultural dislocation". In a more questionable move, however, they proceed by describing this memory as "figured by the sign for *traumatic, diasporic hybridity* that he uttered as a child: 'yalla submarine'". As they conclude, "[d]iasporic assimilation emerges from this scene not as a triumphant ideal, but rather as *foundationally traumatic*, constitutively impossible and, indeed, psychically disruptive" (2005, 135, emphases mine). While I agree that Egoyan has his protagonist struggle against this unsettling memory, I feel troubled by the fact that the term "traumatic" is so easily integrated into their discourse without ever being clearly defined. In the following, they do offer an insightful account of the protagonist's neurosis, which I will discussed later. However, they skip the explanation of why diasporic hybridity in *Calendar* should be seen as traumatic and merely pathologize it by terming it "constitutively impossible" and "psychically disruptive".

In her article on modalities of translation in Atom Egoyan's work, Monique Tschofen cites Kassabian's and Kazanjian's argument on the "originary and foundational trauma of diasporic assimilation" (2005/06, 34), but does not evaluate it further. Instead, she suggests that the photographer's condition can be understood as "a kind of trauma (not yet translated

into language) from having experienced the limits of speech and meaningfulness, and the threatened dissolution of his self this experience brought" (Tschofen 2005/06, 34). Without mentioning it explicitly, Tschofen here approaches the tenets of psychoanalytic trauma theory, which understands as a trauma "an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation" (Whitehead 2004, 3). From the perspective of trauma theory, experience and language represent different ontological orders, which have to remain firmly connected, since the subject has to process one through the other. Trauma emerges when the two orders are out of joint and (real-world) experience cannot be transformed into narrative language. What happens, however, if as in the case of Egoyan's protagonist, the experience is not extralinguistic, but comes about through an encounter with language, or more precisely, with a foreign language? The childhood incident presented in *Calendar* does not consist in a traumatic episode that the protagonist cannot articulate, but in the mere inability to articulate his thoughts during the period of second-language acquisition. But what is traumatic about a phrase from a Beatles song that a child funnily distorts when imitating other children? Does this childhood incident, as Tschofen argues, really expose "the limits of speech and meaningfulness", let alone a "threatened dissolution of [the] self"? Shall the protagonist be trusted in his evaluation that his misinterpretation of "Yellow Submarine" was indeed so ridiculous that it could leave traces of trauma? And finally, if the inability to express oneself or the tendency to imitate were to be categorized as 'traumatic', would the acquisition of any language, the mother tongue included, not have to bear the same label?

The struggle to go native

Both Kassabian's and Kazanjian's and Tschofen's lines of argument appear undermined by the fact that Egoyan also presents a figure which stands in stark contrast to the obsessive neurotic protagonist: the non-traumatized figure of the translator. Monique Tschofen does devote some attention to the role of the translator, but eventually fails to establish an integrative perspective on the contrast and relation between these two central figures. While the role of Arsinée will be discussed later in this chapter, one obvious difference between her and the photographer is worth pointing out right away. Unlike her, the photographer has completely forgotten his mother tongue and obliterated the traces of his assimilation. It is important to point out that such phenomena do not only exist in fiction, but have been

observed in psychoanalytic studies. Thus, Leon and Rebeca Grinberg write in their *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (1989), originally published in Spanish in 1984, that some immigrants "react with manic overadjustment, rapidly identifying themselves with the habits and manner of functioning natural to inhabitants of the new country, trying to forget their own" (1989, 89). This forgetting forms the basis of what I would like to describe as the protagonist's 'linguistic trauma'. I suggest that this type of trauma occurs in and through language, and befalls language migrants, who sacrifice their mother tongue in the process of adopting a foreign language. In my view, linguistic trauma consists neither in the shock of the encounter with the foreign language, nor in diasporic hybridity, but in the young migrant's loss of the mother tongue, in which his self had been previously encoded.

Like any other loss, the loss of the familiar language and culture environment needs to be mourned in order to be worked through. "Immigrants who deny the loss and do not gradually mourn the abandoned culture of origin" psychologist Olga Marlin argues, "become blocked in adjusting to a new life" (1997, 254). A decade later, psychologists Sophie D. Walsh and Shmuel Shulman conduct a study, in which they research the immigration experience of Former Soviet Union residents in Israel. Like Marlin, they come to the conclusion that

> [t]he *absence of conscious grieving* cannot serve as a basis for future organization. A deeper analysis of those immigrants who appeared to have reached higher levels of integration […] showed that the so-called 'integration' or 'resolution' that they showed was not, in fact real, stable integration but rather a form of *superficial resolution* that covered inverted splits" (Walsh and Shulman 2007, 369, emphasis in the original).

The denial of loss and the absence of grieving are themes echoed in *Calendar*. It is striking enough that the protagonist, who upon his arrival in Canada "didn't speak any English at all", undergoes a developmental process after which he neither speaks nor even understands his mother tongue. What is more, however, is the fact that the protagonist's mother tongue is never mentioned throughout the film. The cinematic text displays a significant gap, for without drawing biographic parallels to Atom Egoyan, we do not even learn what language it is – is it Armenian? or, inferring from his understanding of the word 'yalla', is it Arabic? Indeed, the film models the protagonist's perception in such a way that he imagines himself to have been in an almost pre-linguistic state before his acquisition of English. It becomes clear that he has not only forgotten his mother tongue, but has also repressed the memory of this forgetting.

What keeps him from mourning the loss, from a Freudian point of view, is not a complete deletion of this memory as in amnesia, but precisely the mechanism of repression:

"The trauma, instead of being forgotten, is deprived of its affective cathexis; so that what remains in consciousness is nothing but its ideational content, which is perfectly colorless and is judged to be unimportant" (Freud 1955a, 196). As Freud further develops in this study of the Rat Man (1955a), traumatized subjects resort to obsessive behavior as an additional defense against the resurfacing of their traumatic memories. These two defense mechanisms are also effectively staged in *Calendar*. If the protagonist's misinterpretation of the song line, "yalla submarine", exhibits his migration history from Arabic-speaking Egypt to Canada and thus, in his eyes, makes him "vulnerable", in his adult life we see him, as the passage quoted above demonstrates, armed with colloquialisms such as "I mean", "like", "sort of" and "you know", which speak to his chronic attempt to pass for a native. His linguistic origins are thus extinguished as if they never existed and his excessively colloquial language, along with his ritualized dating practice, appears as a manifestation of obsessional neurosis.

Desire and the language of the Other

Taking the analysis one step further, one may wonder what makes him abandon his mother tongue in the first place. With psychoanalyst Josiane Paccaud-Huguet, we can see this act as part of a larger symptomatics, which migrants may develop in foreign language surroundings. Thus, she writes: "The subject in exile [and, likewise, the language migrant] is condemned to imagine what the Other wants, and is tempted to respond by a logic of sacrifice which is the neurotic way of giving the Other imaginary consistency" (2006, 285). If in Paccaud-Huguet's view the migrant is lured into neurosis, her use of the Lacanian notion of the 'Other' also presupposes a host community which is monolingual, culturally homogenous and therefore seen as radically different by the immigrant. While this seems to be an overly monolithic conception, it nevertheless finds itself confirmed in the filmmaker's own experience. In a BBC interview, Egoyan stresses that at the time when he and his parents moved to Victoria on the Canadian West coast, it was "a very isolated community" and they were "the only Armenian family there". Furthermore, he states:

> English is not my mother tongue and I remember very clearly not being able to communicate. Going to school and having to, and wanting nothing more than to be like everyone else. That was a very important part of my upbringing, this idea of shedding an identity and embracing another one (Egoyan and Tusa 2010, online).

In *Calendar*, the filmmaker, who himself began relearning his mother tongue at the age of eighteen when he first got in touch with the Armenian community in Toronto (Egoyan and

Tusa 2010, online), develops the fantasy of a character who does not acknowledge the forgetting of his mother tongue as a loss. His first neurotic act of sacrificing one language identity in favor of another remains constitutive in the formation of his adult personality.

While the linguistic sacrifice occupies the position of the back-story wound, it is prominently mirrored on a different level, which is briefly mentioned in Kassabian's and Kazanjian's article (2005). Drawing on the protagonist's account of the childhood incident cited above, they write that for the young language migrant

> [s]peech was severed from 'what you were feeling' and 'what's going through your mind', becoming instead an impoverished response to 'what you think other people would want to hear'. In effect, signs became attached to an *unstable fantasy of the desire of the other*, producing both imitations of the other that seem 'ridiculous' because of that instability and a subjectivity constantly 'vulnerable' to the return of that instability (2005, 135, emphasis mine).

As the authors observe, the protagonist is not only plagued by the anxiety of being unable to understand English or express his thoughts, but is first and foremost deeply affected by his constant attempts to adapt to the desire of others. To understand the significance of this observation, one only need to notice how the themes of trauma and neurosis are constantly intertwined with the theme of desire. Thus, the narrative of the Armenian journey, which restages scenes of the protagonist's linguistic alienation, is clearly focused on attraction and desire. The photographer's neurotic behavior within the context of translation results in the loss of his love to a native speaker of his lost mother tongue. Second, the protagonist's obsessive restagings of his linguistic alienation from Arsinée are also deliberately set within the context of desire. For even though the dinner scenes, as already mentioned, show purely linguistic encounters, the photographer unceasingly arranges for dates with attractive women through an escort agency. Finally, the protagonist overcomes his neurotic condition by stumbling upon his own desire, which however shall be explained later.

As I would like to show, Calendar invites a reading based on Lacan's statement formulated in *Écrits*: "[M]an's desire is the Other's desire" (2006, 525). In order to develop this argument, I will first recall some of Lacan's ideas on language and identity relevant for the film. To begin with, the protagonist's absurd entry into the English-speaking world, as depicted in the quotation above, seems to reenact Lacan's ideas about the child's entry into the sphere of the Symbolic. Lacan's ideas are reflected in the protagonist's view that as a child you imitate, and thus adapt your desire to speak to "what you think other people would want to hear". If there is space for his own desire in this constellation at all, it is in Lacanian terms, "'desire of the Other's desire', which means both desire to be the object of another's desire, and desire for recognition by another" (Evans 1996, 37-38). The reason why the protagonist feels so "vulnerable" in his desire for recognition can also be accounted for by

Lacan's thinking. For while Freud ascribes "primary narcissism" and "phantasmatic omnipotence" to the little child (van Haute 2002, 116), Lacan takes the opposite view that "the capricious, real Other appears omnipotent to the child" (ibid., 116-17).

If Lacan releases the child from the power of the first Other through the entry into the Symbolic, he does not set the subject free from a different Other – the language and laws of human society. Thus, the child abandons imaginary identification with the object of lack of the mother only to enter the realm of the Symbolic, governed by "the law of the Other, which makes possible the development of one's own desire" (ibid., 191). However, this desire is also not completely one's own – and here we come to the second interpretation of the thesis that "man's desire is the Other's desire" – since in the realm of the Symbolic the subject cannot but construct itself through language, which for Lacan "is like an alien body that grafts itself onto the order of the body and of nature" (ibid., 25). This means that human desire is not generated by the subject in a self-contained system, but is predetermined and formed by discourses exterior to the subject, from which there is no escape. Or as Lacan puts it, "there is no Other of the Other" (2006, 688).

Seen from a Lacanian perspective, the encounter of Egoyan's protagonist with the children on the beach restages an encounter with the Other in Canada. Badly wanting to be accepted in their circles, he tries to approach their (musical) discourse at least phonologically. However, he remains painfully aware of his vulnerable position, since the Others seem to possess the key to group belonging, while he can only mimic it in a ridiculous way. Confronted with the language of the Other, the protagonist begins to wonder what "other people would want to hear", thus reviewing and reshaping his self through the desire of the Other. Indeed, already in his rendering of "Yellow Submarine" as "yalla submarine" he sacrifices meaning for sound, thus showing first signs of neurotic behavior. Just like in the Lacanian model, he tries to overcome his dependence on these real Others by subjecting himself to the higher law of the Other in the Symbolic order, that is, by learning to speak English. However, the process of second-language learning does not bring about the desired effect of liberation, since, as Claire Kramsch and Linda von Hoene argue, it implies a sense of inequality and even mental colonization. "From the perspective of second language learning", they write, "the native speaker functions as a desired site of mimesis or identification". Therefore, "the goal of foreign language study, i.e. to acquire native speaker fluency, takes as its implied goal identification with the native speaker ideal and the erasure of anything that would make the learner deviate from the native speaker ideal" (Kramsch and von Hoene 2001, 285).

In *Calendar*, the "identification with the native speaker ideal" and the erasure of difference are taken to the extreme. The protagonist's process of second-language learning seems to be literally modeled after Lacan's idea of a child's entry into the Symbolic. Here, however, the previously mentioned textual gap comes into play. As his adaptation to the foreign-language surroundings takes place after the acquisition of his mother tongue, neither his submission to the real nor to the symbolic Other comes without a price. Trying to replicate a process that can only originate in a pre-linguistic state, the protagonist denies the existence of his mother tongue and thus abandons the sphere of the symbolic Other, in which his desire was already developed. As expressed in his statement that the imitation of others "doesn't really have anything to do with what you are feeling" or "what's going through your mind", the protagonist loses touch with his own desire.

Being a translation neurotic

In his adult life, his alienation from his own desire becomes palpable in relation to his wife and their driver Ashot on the journey through Armenia, which eventually brings about a return of the repressed. When he reencounters the country of his ancestors as a foreign-language environment, the photographer follows the logic of submission to the native speaker, this time however, not of English but Armenian. He seems to have generalized this logic, since upon his encounter with Ashot, the protagonist begins to desire him as a figure of identification and, in consequence, to take on his desire. This is conveyed through the photographer's gaze directed at Ashot through the camera. In many of the recorded video sequences, the protagonist's attention and his camera are entirely focused on the Armenian driver, who appears in the forefront as if introducing the image to the camera (image 1). While Ashot effortlessly enters the frame, he literally has to help Arsinée into the image by stretching an arm out to her and dragging her inside (image 2).


Image 1


Image 2

Arsinée's entry into her husband's reality is mediated by the driver not only in this physical way, but also through his gaze. This becomes visible in a long take in which Arsinée is exposed to the voyeuristic gaze of the camera that slowly glides down her body (0:12:58). While the camera gaze seems to fall prey to the magnetic attraction of her body, the protagonist first directs it at Ashot (0:12:46), follows his gaze, and only then almost undeliberately lingers on Arsinée's body. Although the camera, through which the viewer eventually witnesses this scene, is operated by the photographer, the gaze at Arsinée does not seem to be his own, but the driver's. Eventually, it is not Arsinée's body, but Ashot's gaze at her that seems to be the subject of this scene. Commenting on the photographer's focus on the driver, Kassabian and Kazanjian go as far as to detect homosexual desire, writing that in her role of the translator, Arsinée "is positioned between the Photographer and the driver, mediating their desire for each other, redirecting that desire into a more comfortable and familiar regime of heterosexual rivalry" (2005, 139). Countering this view, I would instead argue that by following Ashot's gaze, the photographer fully identifies with this Other's desire, ironically enough directed at his own wife. Being obviously detached from his own desire, the protagonist corresponds to van Haute's description of obsessional neurotics, who "exhaust themselves trying to adapt to the desire of the Other" (van Haute 2002, 262). "The obsessional neurotic", van Haute continues,

> is thus a follower, a slavish adept. As soon as he is in a situation where he must choose for himself – where he must speak in his own name without the support of his master – he is blocked. […] In obsessional neurosis desire is reduced thus to the demand of the Other; the obsessional neurotic subject never desires "in his own name". […] In fact, he almost finds it annoying that he *has* his own name, because it reminds him that he is summoned to his own desire, which does not dissolve into the desire of his master (van Haute 2002, 263).

The repression of his own name and desire is most vividly expressed in the scene, in which Ashot is asked to enact a KGB agent checking Arsinée's passport. While the photographer wants to capture the Other's gaze by making him perform directly to the camera, he is startled from his hiding place behind the camera, when Ashot, in his role of the agent, addresses him instead of Arsinée. Having to reveal his own identity, the photographer forgets about his plan to film the KGB performance and escapes the situation by stopping the running camera and thus editing his exposure from his reality.

On the one hand, the gaze of an Other can also be said to help the photographer hide his own desire, which would otherwise exhibit his helplessness and lack. By following the driver's gaze, he not only channels, but also rationalizes his own desire, trying to free himself from any subconscious stirrings. "The obsessional neurotic subject", van Haute writes, "reduces his existence to his conscious existence, so that he is completely independent from

the Other and neutralizes it. He wants to banish every reminder of limitation and lack from his life" (van Haute 2002, 261). In *Calendar*, the protagonist's lack is doubled since it not only speaks to his dependence on Arsinée as his lover, but also as the translator of the language he has banned from his life. The protagonist refuses to acknowledge his dependence on neither of her roles, which prompts her to briefly step out of her role as translator:

> **Translator:** What does it mean when you hear me tell you his stories?
> **Photographer:** What does it mean?
> **Translator:** Yeah, it's practical, right?
> **Photographer:** What's practical?
> **Translator:** My services as a translator.
> **Photographer:** I guess. (0:16:35-0:16:50)

Just like the photographer avoids getting interested in Ashot's explanations about the history of the churches they visit – "Does this mean anything to you?", Arsinée wonders (0:16:18) – in order to play down his dependence on her as a translator, he also does not pay much attention to her as a partner. In fact, he treats her in such an authoritarian and ignorant way that it is difficult for the viewer to empathize with him when she eventually leaves him for the driver. As an obsessional neurotic, he "organizes his sexual life in such a manner that any loss of control is excluded – for him […], depending upon and yielding to the Other as the cause of his desire would equal his very destruction as a subject" (van Haute 2002, 271).

The obsession with control, on the one hand, and with hiding his own desire, on the other, culminate in the protagonist's obsessive filming and taking of pictures. This leitmotif is introduced early in the film, when a dispute between him and his wife over whether she may film with the video camera makes clear that he wants to seize control over the visual field instead of being exposed to the gaze of the camera. While not realizing that he thus edits himself out of the others' lives, he appreciates that with the visual medium he can assert his independence from them. For the calendar pictures, he makes use of his professional authority as a photographer and asks Arsinée and Ashot to move out of the frame of his image (0:14:38), thus reducing their presence in his reality. Likewise, when shooting with the video camera, he prefers recording their departure rather than their uncontrollable presence. Thus, when Arsinée asks him to join her and Ashot for a walk he uses the already positioned camera as an excuse for staying behind. In the voice-over he adds to his recordings later in Toronto, however, he admits: "It's not a question of wanting to go or not. It's much stranger than that. What I really feel like doing is standing here and watching. Watching while the two of you leave me and disappear into a landscape that I'm about to photograph" (0:52:14-0:52:37).

The protagonist's obsessive watching of Arsinée and the driver can also be identified as 'scopophilia'. Drawing on Freud's "Three Essays on Sexuality" (1953c), Laura Mulvey, in

her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", associates "scopophilia with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (1975, 9). In assuming the role of the "bearer of the look" (Mulvey 1975, 12), the photographer then can be said to seize control and make himself master over the subjects in his visual field. However, in line with Freud, who describes scopophilia as a possible symptom of obsessional neurosis in the case study of the Rat Man (1955a, 160ff), this act can at the same time be seen as compensatory behavior. This interpretation is at work in *Calendar*, since the visual medium offers the protagonist an escape from language, the medium in and from which his neurosis originated. Both aspects of scopophilia help him evade the repressed memory of his traumatic entry into English.

The return of the repressed

However, the protagonist's reviewing of the scene of Arsinée's and Ashot's departure marks a turning point in his case analysis. His wife's behavior indicates the irreversible course of events, since she introduces a linguistic boundary between him and herself. While she can be seen engaging in a lively conversation with the driver in Armenian, for her husband she reserves only the English word "Bye!" (0:52:48) Moreover, when he later recollects the situation, the photographer surprises both himself and the viewer by noticing more of the scenery of Arsinée's and Ashot's departure. The two disappear between a church and a fortress ruin, which symbolically represent the different directions Arsinée and the protagonist take at that moment. While her way leads her towards Armenian spiritual history and very likely towards a traditional marriage, he is left behind with the ruins of the fortress he set up around himself.

It is not a coincidence that the image of the fortress recalls Freud's neuropsychological concept of the human psyche. In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Freud describes "as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield" of the psyche, functioning as an "efficacious barrier against stimuli" (1955c, 29). Seeing traumatic neurosis, as Freud does, "as a consequence of an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli" (ibid., 31), explains why traumatized subjects unconsciously try to set up barriers so as to protect themselves from other violent stimuli. It becomes obvious that a "barrier against stimuli" has materialized from the very outset in the shape of the camera lens, which protects, but also isolates the

photographer from his surroundings. The fortress in ruins then stands out as a symbol of his wounded psyche, which he has 'fortified' through obsessive behavior. Reviewing the scenery of Ashot's and Arsinée's departure before his inner eye, he zooms in on this symbol and contemplates: "A church and a fortress. A fortress in ruins. All that's meant to protect us is bound to fall apart, bound to become contrived, useless and absurd. All that's meant to protect is bound to isolate. And all that's meant to isolate is bound to hurt" (0:53:57-0:54:26).

A few takes later, remarkably, an elderly Armenian man appears on screen, whom the photographer interviews about the fortress in Arsinée's absence without understanding a single word (0:56:05-0:58:45). During the long monologue of the man, the breach between speaking und understanding seems absolute; the scene condenses the distress of linguistic alienation both for the protagonist and the viewer. Seen from a psychoanalytic perspective, the monologue presents itself as an ingenious comment on the protagonist's trauma. He cannot understand the content of the man's words, which symbolically speaks to his non-understanding of his trauma. Yet, the code used in the monologue, that is the Armenian language, points to the source of his trauma, which the loss of his mother tongue. It is most striking that when Arsinée – together with Ashot – arrives at the scene of non-translation and makes a first attempt at explaining, the photographer zooms in on the old man, thus leaving her outside the frame and editing her and the translation from his reality. While this maneuver previously seemed like a rude imposition of his worldview, this time it appears in a different light. He refrains from relying any longer on her translation, which he has used to deny the loss of his mother tongue, and begins to expose himself to his trauma.

His giving up of resistance is interpreted on the visual level through the collapse of barriers between the images and their smooth connection by music, without which they previously, just like the protagonist himself, appeared isolated and stirred little emotion in the viewer. Whereas before, the photographer, as Katrin Kegel observes, could interrupt Ashot in his explanations, Arsinée in her translations, the escorts in their conversations and even confuse the viewer by his fast-forwarding or rewinding of the video material (cf. 2007, 85), from this moment on, he seems to lose control, and the images enter into an uncontrollable flow, a cinematic stream of consciousness. The editing style, based mostly on abrupt and laconic jump cuts between the takes, turns 'emotional' and unleashes images that had previously been under strict control. Just after Arsinée's "Bye!", which signals a final goodbye, a song sets in from an initially off-screen source and begins to smoothly link the images (0:52:52). The following take for the first time shows a desolate urban landscape, which violently breaks into the protagonist's idealized pastoral vision of Armenia and clearly

places him outside the context of his work, where he could still exert professional authority as a photographer.

When he moves inside from the balcony, from which he was shooting the view of the city, it becomes clear that he is but a guest in Ashot's apartment. The guide is seen singing the song previously heard, a popular Armenian song that, significantly, tells the story of two lovers in the mountains.[2] As Arsinée joins in singing, she abandons her job as translator and excludes her husband from their company. The long suspense-creating take that shows the photographer's slow and shaky movement from the balcony to the interior of the apartment anticipates this scene like an epiphany. Not only does it bring home the realization that he has irretrievably lost Arsinée, the scene also triggers a most literal return of the repressed from his childhood. Of all things, it is once again a song sung in a foreign language, which most likely used to be his own, that appears as an epitome of untranslatability and the ultimate boundary of understanding. Arsinée's question: "Do you know the song?", returns him to the very origins of his neurosis, when he as a child was marked as an outsider in a foreign-language community and could not join other children in their singing. If the course of his dinner dates does not explain why he eventually comes up with the memory of trying to sing along to "Yellow Submarine", the memory of the apartment scene in Armenia does.

In the unstoppable flow of images, this scene returns him to his own apartment, where we see the second last of the dinner dates with different eyes. After a neighbor of the protagonist, as we learn, has mistaken the escort for Arsinée, the mechanism of substitution, which was at work throughout the dating scenes, is exposed and ceases to work. The setting remains the same, but instead of talking over dinner, the photographer and the escort are shown sitting at the table in silence, as if mourning together the loss of his mother tongue, his translator and his wife. In correspondence with this act, the film here takes on an aesthetics of mourning, since the apartment settings in Armenia and Toronto are connected through what approaches a match cut, with the escort's beautiful hair graphically matching that of Arsinée. The visual comparison highlights the non-identity of the two women and the irreplaceability of Arsinée, whom the photographer then remembers in the voice-over. Finally, Egoyan exposes the illusion of the escort's enacted phone conversation by making a recorded message – and not a lover's voice – audible on the other end of the line (0:55:48).

[2] I thank Tatevik Zürker for the translation of the song.

Returning to "full speech"

At the end of *Calendar*, however, something unusual for Egoyan's films occurs – the protagonist's dating ritual actually brings about a therapeutic effect and the series of obsessively repeated scenes closes, as Katrin Kegel puts it, in a "conciliatory gesture elegantly swaying between release and surrender" (2007, 86). The last of the dinner dates most palpably formulates what function the ritualized encounters eventually fulfill. Apart from serving as a game of da/fort and exemplifying the photographer's neurotic behavior, as outlined before, they serve the recovery both of his past and his desire, which combines the aims of analysis in the Freudian and in the Lacanian perspectives. Viewing *Calendar* with Freud, healing occurs when the revelatory lines about his traumatic encounter with a foreign language are spoken during the last of his dinner dates. They signal the protagonist's eventual remembrance of one of probably many similar traumatizing instances from his childhood and release him from the burden of the past.

From a Lacanian perspective, his "release and surrender" can be observed not only in his recollection of and re-exposure to his forgotten past, but first and foremost in a recovery of desire expressed through speech. In Lacanian terms, the protagonist in the course of his ten psychoanalytic sessions, disguised as dinner dates, undergoes a development from 'empty' to 'full' speech. Whereas in 'empty' speech "the subject seems to speak in vain about someone who – even if he were such a dead ringer for him that you might confuse them – will never join him in the assumption of his desire" (2006, 211), 'full' speech comes "closer to the enigmatic truth of the subject's desire" (Evans 1996, 194). A linguistic misunderstanding between the photographer and the last of the escorts offers the key to the unexpected resolution:

> **Escort:** I mean, I consider myself to be Egyptian and I grew up in Canada. I was born in Canada and I still trace myself, you know –
> **Photographer**: Yeah, but you act Egyptian in like the way you walked in here and stuff and you know –
> […]
> **Escort:** I see. [laughs]
> **Photographer**: But you wouldn't probably get that in me, or anything, like.
> **Escort**: Well, I can I *can see* it in you. I mean I wouldn't think that you're Canadian –
> **Photographer**: You you you *conceive* in me?
> **Escort**: I can *see it* in you –
> **Photographer**: Oh, you can see it –
> **Escort**: I wouldn't think that you were Canadian. Just from the way that you look. (01:07:35-01:08:26)

Although the mishearing of "can see it in you" as "conceive in you" seems rather absurd, the sexual touch of the interpretation as well as the context in which these words are spoken are

momentous in the protagonist's recovery. The mishearing takes on the same role as the slip of the tongue in Lacanian theory. As Lacan argues, the psychoanalyst faces the tremendous task to read and interpret symptoms in the patient's speech, since it is in the very nature of repressed subconscious memories that they will not be simply linguistically articulated. The psychoanalyst therefore has to listen to "what the subject is not saying" (Lacan 2006, 206). A slip of the tongue on the part of the patient, however, can allow the analyst a sudden glimpse of what the conscious subject represses, for in a slip of the tongue

> the subject is overtaken by her own statement, as it were, or more precisely, overtaken by a signifier that intrudes autonomously upon her statement independent [sic] of her conscious intentions. In other words, the self-conscious subject disappears for a moment, and in the place it just occupied, a signifier appears (van Haute 2002, 44).

This very signifier also intrudes upon the neurotic photographer, since in the context of the conversation it suddenly highlights the connection of the two themes that lie at the heart of the film: identity and desire. While the initial unvoiced neurotic conflict has its origins in the repression of the protagonist's desire in the course of his adaptation to Canadian identity, desire now resurfaces in the conversation on belonging and national identity. The escort's remark that she would not have taken him for a Canadian unmasks his history of inauthentic adaptation and surprises him so much that he finds himself voicing a signifier of repressed desire.

Through this misinterpretation the protagonist can be said to turn from 'empty' to 'full' speech as "speech which aims at, which forms, the truth such as it becomes established in the recognition of one person by another" (Evans 1996, 194). Indeed, an act of recognition underlies the mishearing, since only during the last date the protagonist seems to notice the woman at his table, and not only "a prop within his inner drama of restitution" (Wilson 2009, 69). He is even surprised when she asks for the telephone upon his pouring of the last of the wine. In turning to 'full' speech, the protagonist recovers his position as a desiring subject and thus overcomes his initial neurotic tendency to submit himself to the desire of the Other. With the linguistic misunderstanding that replicates the 'Yellow Submarine' episode, but reverses its effect, the narrative – or case history – comes full circle. The protagonist's memory and his desire are finally recovered, which, from both a Freudian and a Lacanian point of view, marks the end of a successful case analysis.

The multilingual subject

So far, my analysis has only dealt with the protagonist's perspective, presenting second-language learning as a precarious process, which the film interprets in terms of trauma and desire. To discuss a counter-perspective presented in *Calendar*, I would like to return to an already mentioned argument by Josiane Paccaud-Huguet, in whose words the migrant subject "is condemned to imagine what the Other wants, and is *tempted* to respond by a logic of sacrifice which is the neurotic way of giving the Other imaginary consistency" (2006, 285, emphasis mine). Significantly, the subject is "tempted", but not bound to respond in a neurotic way. As I would like to show, *Calendar* resists the idea of a necessary neurotic response to foreignness by contrasting the figure of the obsessive protagonist with the figure of his wife. Why is she, a diasporic Armenian like him, not affected by the same neurosis? A question posed in Claire Kramsch's study on second-language learning offers an important hint:

> [The] self is not just learning another system of signs, but the language of a foreign Other. How can it learn to speak like the Other without losing itself in the process, that is, how does it construct itself as a multilingual subject? (2009, 78)

The beginning of the quotation refers to what has been discussed above: the attempt to merge with the Other as a migrant's potential neurotic response to his or her foreign-language surroundings. In the last part of her question, however, Kramsch not only asks how to remain oneself while learning a second language, but simultaneously provides the answer: precisely by constructing oneself as a multilingual subject. The last two sections of the chapter examine Arsinée's construction as a multilingual subject in *Calendar* and discuss how she relates to her task of the translator.

What obviously sets Arsinée apart from her husband is the fact that she has retained her mother tongue, Armenian. However, despite being fluent both in English and Armenian, she does not show native speaker proficiency in her second language. Her English is often non-idiomatic and marked by a heavy accent and a peculiar intonation. How can this imperfection in her linguistic appearance can be accounted for? As Rosina Lippi-Green argues in her book, *English with an Accent* (1997), a foreign accent, has been and is still often conceived of as a marker of social inferiority, lower intelligence and rebellious attitude particularly in the United States. While the photographer seems to believe in this stereotype and therefore desperately tries to avoid having a foreign accent, Arsinée's case is well described by Hamid Naficy, who sees accent as "one of the most intimate and powerful markers of group identity and solidarity, as well as of individual difference and personality" (2001, 23). In contrast to her husband, Arsinée resists going linguistically native, as if

agreeing with Claire Kramsch and Linda von Hoene in that "the very term '"native" speaker' connotes the colonialist image of a stereotyped, monolithic, foreign other" (2001, 285). Her accent can be seen as a strategy of resistance against simplistic categorization, since it upsets binary oppositions of 'native' and 'foreign' and marks her as a multilingual and multicultural subject.

In her refusal to be cut off from her Armenian roots, Arsinée's linguistic situation also seems comparable to that of a famous real-life language migrant, Hannah Arendt. Having fled to the United States from Nazi-occupied Europe, Arendt, despite her profound mastery of English, continued writing in her mother tongue, German. In a conversation with Günter Gaus, she explains this attachment stating that

> there is no substitution for the mother tongue. People can forget their mother tongue. That's true – I have seen it. There are people who speak the new language better than I do. I still speak with a very heavy accent, and I often speak unidiomatically. They can do all these things correctly. But they do them in a language in which one cliché chases another because the productivity that one has in one's own language is cut off when one forgets that language (2003, 13).

This passage effectively illustrates the contrast Egoyan's film sets up between Arsinée and the photographer. While the translator exudes a sense of freedom and authenticity despite her accented English, her husband, desperate to pass for a native English speaker, seems caught up precisely in clichés, such as the excessive use of colloquialisms, speculations about the last escort's 'Egyptian behavior' (01:07:42), or, more generally, the arrangement of dates through an escort service.

Furthermore, his eradication of traces of his mother tongue from his English can be seen as symbolic of his disconnection from the diasporic history of his family. According to literary scholar Alan Rosen, foreign "[a]ccents […] serve as a shorthand memory, identifying the community to whom one belongs and embodying the memory of privation. […] accordingly, the eradication of an accent signals the eradication of memory" (2005, 81). Written in the context of Holocaust Studies, these lines equally address the Armenian "memory of privation", which lies at the heart of diasporic consciousness. While Arsinée's accented English bears witness to her cultural origins, the photographer's linguistic assimilation can be likened to that of Edward Wallant's protagonist in *The Pawnbroker*, Nazerman, whom Alan Rosen describes in the following terms: "His English is a tongue without memory; it locates him neither in place nor culture nor community" (Rosen 2005, 81). In the light of the photographer's disconnection from place, culture and community, it does not seem surprising that he can only be seen inside his apartment, but in no public spaces which might speak to his cultural belonging. The apartment is furnished in an utterly

inexpressive, culturally unmarked fashion and could be theoretically located anywhere in the Western world.

Significantly, the only cultural symbol that briefly enters the image is an 'evil eye' wall pendant, a both Armenian and Turkish talisman. Provoked by an unpleasant dinner conversation about the photographer's intrusive behavior at a belly-dance performance and possibly driven by an antipathy towards Armenians, the Turkish escort turns over the talisman during her enacted telephone flirt (0:33:28). This act of defiance marks the only tangible cultural encounter before the last date with an Egypt-born Armenian woman, with whom the protagonist eventually discusses the topic of national identity. Apart from these two occasions, the theme of cultural belonging does not come up during the dates at all despite the protagonist's explicit choice of women with a foreign-language background. This fact lends itself to two interpretations: first, these indifferent encounters appear as a critique of Canadian multiculturalism, the idea of which the protagonist seems to have assimilated and can be seen performing in *Calendar*. While the film, as Kassabian and Kazanjian rightly point out, "does not allow us to see or hear of disjunctures between the guests' ethnicities and their position within predominantly white, English-speaking Canada" (2005, 139), the protagonist, in staging a series of multicultural dates, seems to celebrate the Canadian society model of the 'cultural mosaic', in which different languages, cultures and ethnicities peacefully co-exist. However, he undermines his own celebratory gesture both by displaying an obsession with linguistic assimilation and by revealing that the encounters between different cultures in the Canadian mosaic are first and foremost constituted by economic relationships – such as his own use of the escort service – and linguistic and cultural non-understanding.

Second, it seems remarkable that although the protagonist, being monolingual, is doomed to be cut off from any foreign-language conversation, his choice of languages spoken by the escorts is not arbitrary. As Atom Egoyan points out himself, "the languages of the 'guests' the photographer has invited represent countries that have 'hosted' Armenian communities" (2008, 97). Thus, the multicultural dates not only illustrate Canadian diversity he is surrounded by in the present, but also function as a picture-book of countries with an Armenian diasporic population, with whom he shares his origins. On the one hand, the director's words imply that his protagonist is rehearsing the role of a host, having left behind his past as a guest in Canada, which can be seen as an expression of successful assimilation. On the other hand, however, the link to the Armenian diaspora signals his utterly abstract relationship to Armenia, which the director admits to having had himself (cf. 2008, 93). A confrontation with his origins seems to come about during the last date rather coincidentally,

as the escort turns out to share his Armenian origins. Regarding the other dates, however, his choice of women with a foreign-language background serves him merely for rehearsing scenes of estrangement.

Precisely the opposite can be said about Arsinée, for her command of two languages connotes familiarity with her surroundings. It could be objected that in turning away from her husband, Arsinée seeks to abandon her bilingualism in favor of her mother tongue, Armenian. However, *Calendar* is not so much about the linguistic environment, in which the characters eventually settle down, but about the psychological freedom to define oneself and to choose where to belong. As Monique Tschofen argues in her essay on *Calendar*, Arsinée's bilingualism implies a powerful position:

> The translator's voice resonates in both distinct linguistic spheres and brings to each articulation traces of the other. Accented speech for her is not linked to estrangement as it is for the photographer, but rather constitutes her as a powerfully liminal figure able to access multiple realms of knowledge and experience (2005/06, 36).

Moreover, Arsinée's intimate connection to her surroundings is reflected on the visual level of the film. In order to expand on this, I would like to draw on a line of argument developed by literary critic Anne Malena. She suggests that "[m]igrants are translated beings" (2003, 9) and can be distinguished by their degree of translatability:

> [T]he new versions of their selves may be "perfect" translations, creating the illusion that they are native to the target culture, or retain traces of the foreign, proclaiming their difference and forcing transformation on the target culture. While some migrants achieve a high degree of translatability – hence of invisibility – most remain visible because they carry along many untranslatable components, ranging from visual appearance to cultural practices and beliefs (2003, 9).

"[T]ranslation" here is closely associated with 'transition', implying that migrants who leave behind one culture and language to enter another possess a higher degree of translatability than others who "retain traces of the foreign", that is their own culture and language. Though terminologically rather problematic, since '"perfect" self-translation' is understood as the erasure of an old identity in favor of a new one, this passage establishes an interesting connection between visibility and language, which is also at work in *Calendar*. If the photographer, in Malena's terms, seeks to excel in his "degree of translatability" by trying to pass for a native, he at the same time becomes invisible and unlocatable in a cultural, linguistic and most literal sense. His profession is highly symbolic of this development: as a photographer he not only manages to escape the medium of language, in which "traces of the foreign" may still show, but also, at least during the journey through Armenia, remains outside the cinematic frame, hiding behind the camera. As I argued earlier in this chapter, his attempts at editing himself out of reality and his practice of scopophilia function as symptoms of his obsessional neurosis. In that sense, the film presents a severe evaluation of what Malena

calls "'perfect' translations" – to rid oneself of all traces of the native culture and language means to fall into neurosis.

In contrast, Arsinée is presented as an untranslated or not entirely assimilated subject, engaging in an ongoing process of translation from and into English and Armenian. Her indispensability in her role as an interpreter and her integration of traces from both languages and cultures relate to her strong presence on screen. Although in the photographer's footage she can also be seen filming with a video camera, we never get to see her footage. While on the one hand, this can be linked to the photographer's patriarchal gesture of denying her a perspective of her own, on the other hand, this speaks to her visibility, which functions as a sign of her non-traumatizing self-translation and her construction as a multilingual subject. Not only is Arsinée visually much more present than her husband, she is also filmed in an entirely different way. The photographer, when he does appear on screen in a frozen posture during the dating scenes, is exposed to an utterly indifferent camera gaze. In contrast, the camera seems to be in love with Arsinée and mostly captures her in motion. Unlike the photographer, who always looks absent-minded and never meets the gaze of the camera, his wife fills the video frame with her radiant presence, at times fearlessly looking straight into the camera, as if she were looking into her husband's face (0:55:44, image 3). Running with a flock of sheep (0:18:38), walking through the landscape and merging with it or even balancing on ruins while translating for her husband (0:16:07), she combines untamed beauty and playfulness. Apart from appearing closely connected both to the photographer and the driver, she first and foremost seems in touch with herself. This is visually represented through her physicality. Thus, in two video scenes, for which the photographer interrupts the fast-forwarding mode and switches into real time or even pauses the image, Arsinée can be seen stroking the bare skin of her legs (0:13:55) and hugging her own upper body (0:19:57, image 4) – both of these acts which Monique Tschofen interprets as auto-erotic (2005/06, 37). The bluish-tinted, grainy images of the photographer's footage present her both as already lost and highly desirable, but most of all, unlike the protagonist, in possession of her own uncompromised desire.


Image 3


Image 4

The politics and ethics of translation

While Egoyan devotes much attention to the psychosocial portraits of his mono- and bilingual characters, to interpret *Calendar* only in terms of language migrant psychology would be to ignore the film's negotiation of power structures at work in linguistic border regions. In order to explore the power relations between the photographer as a monolingual English speaker, Arsinée as an English-Armenian bilingual, and Ashot as a monolingual speaker of Armenian, Egoyan gathers the characters in a field of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic communication: the field of translation.

On the journey through Armenia, the photographer clearly finds himself as the linguistically most helpless character, since he does not understand the language of his own ancestors and is entirely dependent on his wife's translation. If Egoyan does not equip him with at least a basic level of Armenian, he provides him with a different instrument of self-assertion before the eyes of the viewer: the camera. Whereas in the context of the photographer's neurosis, the camera functions as the symbol of his scopophilia and obsession with imaginary control, in the linguistic battlefield, the camera plays a crucial role for the simple reason that it records not only images, but also sound. Since the protagonist is assigned both the role of a cameraman and a sound engineer, he not only imposes his visual perspective on the viewer, but also manipulates the audio track during and after the recording. With the microphone obviously attached to the camera, the one in closest proximity to the camera can also be heard best. This fact enables the cameraman to establish a hierarchy of linguistic discourses on the audio track of the footage.

Considering how the three characters are positioned in regard to the camera helps us understand how the recording device is employed an as instrument of power. Being closest to the microphone, the photographer is privileged, as his comments in English, though scarce, easily drown out everything that is spoken further away. Significantly enough, Arsinée, who switches between English and Armenian, and Ashot, who speaks Armenian only, are left to compete for the second and third rank in this hierarchy, interchanging their positions several times throughout the film. As I would like to argue, two ideological paradigms struggling in the protagonist's mind underlie this competition. The first paradigm privileges the driver, who is monolingual like the protagonist and whose national identity is undisputed. With these characteristics, Ashot reaffirms the stereotype adopted by the protagonist that a subject can be rooted in one culture only and, as a native local, appeals to the photographer as a figure of identification. A second paradigm, however, relegates Ashot to the weakest position and lets

Arsinée rank second, since despite her liminal and ambiguous role, she translates into the *lingua franca* of English. Freeing the protagonist from the necessity of learning another language, Arsinée confirms the hegemony of his own position. What in any case remains undisputed on the audio track is the dominance of the English monolingualism of the protagonist, who in his identity crisis sometimes favors the discourse of the bilingual and sometimes that of the monolingual foreign-language speaker.

In his militant monolingualism, the photographer resembles a colonial explorer, who not only does not understand the language of the natives, but also tacitly postulates the superiority of his own language. Imposing his comments in English on the scenes he captures, he silences the foreign-language voices of the local and the translator and thus presents an easily consumable display of Armenian foreignness to a presumably English-speaking audience. Moreover, his meeting with Ashot echoes encounters between oral and written cultures, since the photographer uses a technical recording device, while the Armenian driver's discourse calls up oral story-telling traditions. Disrupting the driver's explanations on the churches they visit through his own comments as well as requests to move out of his image frame, the photographer claims superiority to the native both in language and technology. However, it is only through the technical device that the protagonist can reassure himself of the dominance of his English monolingualism. Moreover, he can do so only in the eyes of the viewer, who has no other way of knowing about the journey through Armenia, but through the photographer's footage. It is not Arsinée or Ashot, but the viewer alone who is presented with the result of the protagonist's filming and eventually listens to an audio track dominated by English. And even so, while the protagonist's account of the journey reaches its audience, his display of imperialist power fails, since through the evolving events in Armenia, the film tells a different story.

Far from subjecting Arsinée and Ashot to the dominance of the photographer, *Calendar* empowers both the foreign-language speaker and the bilingual. Thus, Ashot does not carry out his job as the silent native driver, which the photographer had expected him to be. Instead he offers detailed explanations on almost every church they visit and succeeds in exposing the photographer's ignorance about Armenia. For instance, he remarks that one of his photographic motifs – supposedly only churches – is not a church at all, but a pagan temple (0:28:58). When, in response to this, the protagonist points out that he hired Ashot as a driver and not as a guide (0:29:20), we witness not only his explicitly stated concern about the payment for the job, but also his fear that the native as a speaking subject may assume a role much more important than the one assigned to him. The protagonist's fear of course comes

true when the native, whom the photographer had employed for a silent job, much like Shakespeare's Othello, manages to impress Arsinée with his stories and to win her for himself.

Not only does Ashot transgress his role as a driver, his discourse also reaches far beyond that of a guide. In his conversations with Arsinée, he raises many unresolved personal issues of the diasporic couple. For example, he discusses with the translator why she and her husband do not have children and whether it is not advisable to raise them in the land of one's ancestors. Later on in their journey, he unsettles the photographer's sense of identity when he jokingly enacts a KGB officer doing a passport check. What starts out as a little entertaining performance between him and Arsinée, suddenly collapses into seriousness, when the photographer wishes to capture this scene as a touristic souvenir and asks Ashot to "do it to the camera" (01:04:24). For instead of simply performing for the camera, the guide asks the protagonist for his – significantly, Canadian – passport, thereby symbolically raising the question of national identity, a highly problematic question for the photographer. What is more, the guide's enactment of a communist figure unsettles the protagonist's commodified image of Armenia, which otherwise largely consists of archaic churches and pastoral landscape. It thus becomes clear that Ashot's foreign-language discourse is by far not naïve or subservient, but unfolds the power of subverting the protagonist's ideological views.

If the driver's discourse, linguistically and culturally alienating both for the protagonist and viewer, succeeds in unfolding this power, this is due to Arsinée's mediation as translator. The film reviews her task as a translator much in line with ethically and politically minded theorists such as Carolyn Shread, who argues that

> the task lying before translators is to engage not with situations of equivalence but to become involved with the asymmetries of difference. […] The recognition of power differentials and their extensive effects requires different strategies, but shares a general ethical mistrust of hegemonies. The task of the translator then becomes an ethico-political intervention motivated by a desire to rectify inequalities and deconstruct abusive power systems via a flexible range of strategies suited to the particular situation (2007, 217).

Arsinée's "ethico-political intervention" begins with her rendering of her translation as somewhat dysfunctional to her husband. Whether due to a limited proficiency in English, a fully conscious resistance, or, most likely, a combination of both, Arsinée's translations mostly come out as neither very fluent, nor fully graspable in their content. This can be observed, for example, in the following passage, in which she translates Ashot's remarks on the particular locations of the churches:

> He says it's a wonderful idea that you're making pictures of the churches… [*Ashot gives explanations in Armenian*] … oh, because apparently, the churches are supposed to be completely in relation with their, uh… [*speaks to the driver in Armenian*] Oh, actually the spot is – has

> something to do with the actual, uh, importance of that, of that place, so it had to be in a particular landscape, but regardless of, uh, if it's beautiful or not, it was more based on where the actual energy of that place is. (0:11:39-0:12:40)

The long and tedious translation borders on the incomprehensible and almost seems to excuse the fact that the photographer's attention fades and, in his later mental reviewing of the scene, shifts to Arsinée's body (0:13:05). This shift of attention from the translator's words to her body, or from the challenge of interpretation to voyeurism, is symptomatic of the protagonist's attempt to master a linguistic situation that evades his control. At the same time, however, we can hear him struggling to make sense of Ashot's explanation and inquiring further about the locations of the churches as well as about Ashot's thoughts on his own positioning of the camera for photographing them. Particularly his eagerness to hear Ashot confirm that the position of his camera is not accidental – which of course seems obvious to him from an aesthetic point of view – demonstrates that he desperately seeks a connection between the guide's remarks and himself. This is precisely what Arsinée refuses to establish in her translation, for instead of taming and accommodating Ashot's words within her husband's worldview, she passes them on in an impersonal and obscure fashion. In doing so, she responds to Lawrence Venuti's call for "foreignizing" translation, which originates in his critique of

> the prevalence of fluent strategies that make for easy readability and produce the illusion of transparency […]. Fluency masks a domestication of the foreign text that is appropriative and potentially imperialistic, putting the foreign to domestic uses which, in British and American cultures, extend the global hegemony of English. It can be countered by "foreignizing" translation that registers the irreducible differences of the foreign text […] by deviating from the values, beliefs, and representations that currently hold sway in the target language (Venuti 2000a, 341).

Venuti's critique applies well to the two opposing forces in *Calendar*, namely the photographer as an imperialistically minded traveller and defender of the global hegemony of English and the translator as a rebel against the commodification of the foreign. The photographer likes pointing at the artifacts he films and demanding prompt explanations from the native guide. Instead of engaging on a real dialogue, he interrupts both Arsinée and Ashot and makes them repeat comments and translations so as to leave no detail in his images unexplained. His pointing finger, which enters the video image (0:23:09), not coincidentally reminds of the patriarchal symbol of the phallus. In order to counter her husband's appropriative attitude, Arsinée confronts him with the foreignness of Ashot's discourse. She does not gloss over, but exposes the photographer to the traces of the foreign, seeking "to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation" (Venuti 1995, 20). Drawing on Venuti's ideas, her foreignizing translation can be seen as "a strategic cultural intervention in the

current state of world affairs, pitched against the hegemonic English-language nations and the unequal cultural exchanges in which they engage their global others" (1995, 20).

Fluency and transparency are not the only sacrifices made in foreignizing translation. As Carolyn Shread argues, Venuti's call, and consequently also Arsinée's translation practice, present "a direct challenge to an ethics of fidelity" (2007, 216). This remark gains particular weight in *Calendar*, since fidelity is not only undermined in Arsinée's translations, but also in her relationship with the protagonist. As Monique Tschofen observes, this linkage calls up the Italian dictum "traduttore traditore", which marks the translator as a traitor (2005/2006, 36). Egoyan parallelizes the two kinds of infidelity most palpably in a scene, in which the photographer, in apparent desperation, confronts Ashot with the question of how he feels about having a love affair with his wife. Even in this emotionally charged context, Arsinée does not stray from the technique of foreignization and translates to the protagonist:

> **Translator**: He feels that you are a two adventurous.
> **Photographer**: That I'm too adventurous?
> **Translator**: No, that the two of you are adventurous men. […] He says because we know that we're talking about something and within it you can find many other things such as evil and the divine.

If the formulation "two adventurous" seems to be a literal translation that after some clarification can still be understood, the mentioning of the "evil and the divine" doubtless leads into obscurity. The non-Armenian viewer does not learn how much of this effect is owed to Ashot's own linguistic manoeuver, through which he seeks to evade the confrontational question. What is obvious, however, is that Arsinée does not undertake any efforts to domesticate his words and make them easily understood by her husband.

While the last passage demonstrates that in her foreignizing translation, Arsinée ruthlessly follows the agenda of an ethically and politically motivated translator, Egoyan makes her acknowledge another argument brought forth by Lawrence Venuti:

> The ethically and politically motivated translator cannot fail to see the lack of an equal footing in the translation process, stimulated by an interest in the foreign, but inescapably leaning towards the receptor. This translator knows that translations never simply communicate foreign texts because they make possible only a domesticated understanding, however much defamiliarized, however much subversive or supportive of the domestic (Venuti 2000b, 469).

Indeed, Egoyan makes Arsinée go beyond mere foreignization by having her translate from and into both English and Armenian, thus subverting the boundary between the source and the target language. This has to do with the figure of the driver, who himself demands equal footing in the translation process in rejecting the silent role intended for him. By raising questions which the photographer has to respond to, he prompts Arsinée to translate long stretches of dialogue not only from Armenian into English, but also in the reverse direction.

While her initial task is to translate only for her husband, she fully accepts Ashot as an equal partner in communication and quickly begins to lean towards him as a receptor. It can even be said that the translator, finding more interest on the side of the native guide, opts for Armenian as the domestic language and soon seems more engaged in explaining the Canadian context she lives in as something foreign to Ashot than in communicating Ashot's comments to her husband.

Clearly, Arsinée's translation strategies do not only help to empower Ashot, but also promote her own emancipation. First, she has good reason to present her husband with a foreignizing translation, since his attempts to domesticate the foreign reveal a monolithic conception of English. As Venuti notes, a "translator may find that the very concept of the domestic merits interrogation for its concealment of heterogeneity and hybridity" (Venuti 2000b, 469). As a bilingual character, the translator in *Calendar* then seems bound to resist the domestication of the foreign, even if simply for the reason that this implies the application of a certain linguistic standard or norm, which she, as her accented speech makes clear, never adopted. However, there is more at stake than a defense of hybridity. As one of the first scenes of the film, in which the photographer tries to forbid her to use the video camera (0:08:20), reveals, the protagonist exerts patriarchal power over his wife. He largely draws this power from his mastery of English, and from the hegemonic position of the language in the world. Seeing the camera, as outlined above, as his weapon for defending a hierarchical order of languages, one can easily understand the implications of his attempt to monopolize the recording device. The patriarchal act we see him perform relates directly to his fears of being dethroned in and by another language and, therefore, to his endeavors to secure the hegemonic – or simply, the loudest – position of English.

While to the photographer, Armenian presents itself as foreign and dangerous territory, for Arsinée, the language functions as a liberating force: it reconnects her with her native culture and establishes a communicational and ideological *tabula rasa* between her and her husband. Armenian enters the stage as a foreign language that does not bear any traces of their common discourse, the clichés, to quote Hannah Arendt, they may have fallen prey to by communicating in English – a language originally foreign to both of them – and the power relations that have evolved between them. The words of the Armenian driver, which Arsinée carries across into English, disrupt the discourse of the diasporic couple by exposing the silences between them and opening up a new, though not neutral, linguistic space for renegotiating their relationship. For instance, Ashot voices the unresolved question about their ties to the country of their ancestors:

> **Translator:** He [Ashot] says, so if you didn't have the calendar project proposed to you, you would have never come to Armenia?
> **Photographer:** Does that bother him or is that an issue?
> **Translator:** I don't know.
> **Photographer:** Well, I don't… No, I wouldn't have probably.
> **Translator:** You wouldn't have come to Armenia?
> **Photographer:** Well, no, I mean, not if I didn't have a specific reason to come here, no. (0:36:21-0:36:42)

What is remarkable in this exchange is the way in which Arsinée maneuvers between her own voice and her voice as a translator. Significantly, Ashot's question is part of a longer dialogue, the rest of which Arsinée does not translate. Her selection of what to translate as well as her insistence on the question betray her personal interest in raising the subject of her husband's relationship to Armenia. At the same time, she hides her own attitude when she refuses to comment on the provocative undertones of Ashot's question and pretends to merely repeat it in English. Her 'task of the translator' becomes a 'mask of the translator', for it allows her to raise questions without assuming authorship for them. Her transgression of the role as a translator does not go unnoticed by the photographer and provokes his later comment in a voice-over:

> **Photographer (voice-over):** How can you be so passive? How can you ask me to respond to these questions when you know all the answers? How can you pretend that my responses are a surprise to you? Why can't you refer to our history of each other? Why can't you tell him what you know I would think? (0:36:44-0:37:06)

Although Arsinée can be said to abuse her role as a translator by hiding behind Ashot's provoking questions and rejecting her husband's answers as not satisfactory, the film does not judge her for this behavior. The photographer reproaches her for subverting the asymmetrical relationship that has developed between them by accusing her of passivity. Surely, Arsinée's role is marked not by passivity, but by active agency, with which she disrupts her husband's hegemonic discourse. In fact, his accusation is revelatory since it points to his secret wish to make her remain passive and loyal, abandon her liminal role as translator and calmly settle down in his own discourse. His words express his desire to appropriate her discourse, to have her function as his mouthpiece and to defend his position from the discourse of the Other. This very attempt to secure his hegemonic position justifies Arsinée's use of her task as a mask of the translator.

Mostly, however, Arsinée does not use her role as a translator in order to hide, but on the contrary, to highlight her own position. This goal is mostly achieved through Arsinée's strategy of interrupting her translation or leaving large stretches of Armenian dialogue untranslated, which keeps both the photographer and non-Armenian viewers out of her conversations with the driver and thus, by means of multilingual realism, mimics the protagonist's sense of alienation. Early on their journey, her withholding of the translation has

less to do with a wish to keep her conversations with Ashot secret, than with the attempt to make her role as a translator visible. For as pointed out earlier in this chapter, the protagonist, who has repressed the knowledge of his mother tongue, denies his lack by playing down the importance of his wife's translation. By withholding it and explicitly commenting on her "services as a translator" (0:16:48), she reminds him of his lack and his dependence on her translation as a substitute for his own knowledge of Armenian.

Again, Arsinée's translation strategy does not only expose a psychological issue, since the photographer's denial relies on the marginalization of translation, which Venuti sharply criticizes in *The Scandals of Translation* (1998). Using English as an instrument of power, the protagonist tells Arsinée when and what to translate, interrupts her and corrects petty mistakes such as her use of the word "catalyzer" instead of "catalyst" (0:38:33). In treating her like a mere imperfect translation device, he seeks to conceal his dependence on her. Eliminating the translator as an active agent becomes part of his patriarchal enterprise, since, as *Calendar* demonstrates, a translator can pursue an "ethics of difference" and "choose to redirect the ethnocentric movement of translation so as to decenter the domestic terms that a translation project must inescapably utilize" (Venuti 1998, 82). If the photographer at times seems successful in silencing Arsinée's foreignizing discourse, the translator's complete silence – the withholding of the translation – turns radically against him and decenters the domestic even more. As Monique Tschofen points out, the untranslated passages make clear that *Calendar* "refus[es] to subordinate other languages to the increasingly global hegemony of English" (Tschofen 2005/2006, 31). Thus, by making the foreign language heard, Arsinée advocates equality for all languages and simultaneously exposes her husband's need and devaluation of translation.

Finally, Arsinée's role as a translator between the two monolingual men commands a linguistic space that Michael Cronin, in his book *Translation and Identity* (2006), describes as the "triangular space of negotiation" (135). The figure of the triangle connotes both the process of translation as communication between three parties and Egoyan's portrayal of the translator as a woman torn between two men. Cronin links the two connotations by ascribing to translation

> a form of ethics, which is predicated on complexity, distance and desire. The desire to know means the necessary triangulation of relationships (source text – translator – target text) which is more complex and less readily assimilated than the polar simplicities of binary opposites and involves an inevitable distancing effect but one which brings closeness, not familiarity (2006, 135).

In regard to the characteristics of complexity and distance, Egoyan's characters mirror Cronin's view in several ways. First, Arsinée's discourse as a translator is in fact not easily

assimilated, for its distancing effect upsets her husband's assumption of familiarity. Instead, it offers closeness, which the native guide, however, knows to use better than the photographer. While Ashot sees the distancing effect as a challenge – in this sense, he really is an "adventurous" man – the protagonist seeks to eliminate or at least marginalize translation. Such attempts are addressed by Cronin, when he writes:

> To remove the space of mediation, the intermediary zone of time and difficulty which is the attempt to get to know another culture and another language, is to move from the triangular space of negotiation to the binary space of opposition (2006, 135).

Precisely this movement underlies the protagonist's worldview, since it is the assumption of a binary opposition between self and Other which makes him abandon one language for another in his childhood and marginalize foreign languages and their speakers for their very foreignness in his adult life. Translation subverts this logic and does more than this. The "triangulation of relationships" opens up not only a space of negotiation, but also a space of desire. Cronin argues that

> [t]ranslation and interpreting, rather than being treated as an unfortunate impediment to the progress of understanding and true love between peoples [sic], are arguably what ensures that people remain interested in each other. Both activities involve the obligation to know, to understand better, to open up the space of mediation in the absence of which individuals and communities remain marooned in the discrete islands of their own prejudice. Collapsing the space brings not proximity, but alienation (Cronin 2006, 135).

In *Calendar*, translation indeed becomes the trigger of Arsinée's and Ashot's interest for each other. It could be argued again that, in leaving her husband, Arsinée seeks to leave the field of translation. However, in my view, Egoyan does not first and foremost stage her changing of sides, but highlights her ability to connect her own, diasporic experience with that of a foreign, native Armenian Other. Predicated on the attraction to difference, the act of translation becomes an act of desire, one of reaching out towards the unknown and connecting through language. The translator's and the guide's intimate ties, tragic as they are for the photographer, call up celebratory lines from translation theory. In her essay, "The Politics of Translation", Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes: "Translation is the most intimate act of reading. I surrender to the text when I translate. […] The translator earns permission to transgress from the trace of the other […] in the closest places of the self" (1992, 178). She concludes that "[t]he task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow" (Spivak 1992, 178). Laying the foundation for both Spivak's argument and Venuti's ideas on foreignizing translation, Walter Benjamin writes in "The Task of the Translator" that "a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must *lovingly* and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language" (2000, 21). He proclaims that

"the kinship of languages is to be demonstrated by translations" (2000, 17). Egoyan shifts this statement from a metaphysical to a sociopolitical context: in *Calendar*, the kinship of languages is demonstrated through intimate encounters at their borders. The border zone is configured as a force field, in which translators and their audience, if they enter unarmed, are likely to experience love and desire.

To come to a conclusion, the film contrasts two opposing perspectives on language migration and translation. The first part of the chapter presented the view that the encounter with a foreign language is potentially traumatizing, since in their need to be accepted in the host community, language migrants repress their own identity. In the film, linguistic trauma resurfaces as an obsessional neurosis, in which the protagonist, for lack of his own desire, continuously subjects himself to the desire of others. His case history only reaches its conclusion when the loss of both his mother tongue and his wife are mourned and his desire recovered.

In contrast, the character of the translator, who initially comes into play as oppressed by a patriarchal regime, undergoes a process of self-empowerment through translation. Apart from serving a political enterprise, translation is also configured as an act of desire, since it relies on the wish to connect with the Other. The positions are thus contrasted through the absence or presence of one's desire as well as through opposing political attitudes, which the neurotic and the bilingual tend to assume.

Although Egoyan endows the character of the translator with more happiness and fulfillment than his protagonist, he consciously refuses to idealize one position or the other. He sympathizes with the photographer by employing elements of a trauma aesthetics, such as fragmentation and repetition. At the same time though, he highlights the dangers of traumacentrism. He problematizes the protagonist's status as a traumatized victim by exposing his complicity in patriarchal structures both in the scenes set in Armenia and those in Toronto. Arsinée's authenticity, radiance and openness, in turn, attract the viewer's sympathy, but are also overshadowed, since she abandons her husband in a linguistic and emotional situation which he cannot master.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed different perspectives on multilingualism and translation, which are at play in Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* and Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*. The two works present us with stories of loss in translation, which are narrated as case histories.

As such, they retrace the protagonists' first encounters with their second languages. They outline that language migrants find themselves in a marginalized position, which tempts them into choosing radical ways of dealing with their first languages. In *Lost in Translation*, the defense from the foreign language triggers an idealization and romanticization of the first language, in which life in the homeland is preserved like a lost paradise. The reverse tendency is enacted in *Calendar*, where the helplessness of the young language migrant leads to the wish of passing for a native speaker of the second language at all costs, even if it means forgetting one's first language.

While both narratives stage the encounter with the foreign language as traumatizing, they also allow for a different reading. In this chapter, I have shown that, in *Calendar*, trauma can be rather traced back to the repression of the first language, which, after a period of latency, resurfaces in the shape of 'translation neurosis': the desire to keep translation processes invisible and forgotten. In *Lost in Translation*, the extreme feelings of disintegration and melancholia that Hoffman associates with her language migration can, in fact, be retraced to the unprocessed postmemory of her parents' survival in the Holocaust. Thus, in both narratives, the perceived trauma of self-translation is a result of a projection, which both of them reveal by eventually staging translation and multilingualism as a means of working through their initial traumas.

As to the politics of translation underlying the narratives, the two works take different paths. Thus, in *Lost in Translation*, the process of self-translation is evaluated as one of marginalization, which can be explained through Hoffman's notion of translation as governed by the principle of invisibility and domestication – or, as in the case of the language migrant, absolute assimilation. Even though, after a long struggle, Hoffman seems to accept that her life is defined by both of her languages, she eventually seeks refuge in what she perceives as the 'universal' language of psychology. Therefore, her narrative is marked by a longing for a pre-Babelian condition, which could guard her from the feeling of fragmentation and disempowerment.

Calendar, in contrast, presents us with two different perspectives on multilingualism and translation. On the one hand, the protagonist, a 'translation neurotic' and militant monolingual, seeks to repress the presence of translation and, even more, his dependence on it, by means of authoritarian behavior, until he loses his wife in translation. What stands out in the process of translation, in his view, is the issue of fidelity, which after all, is reflected in the undermined fidelity of his wife and translator. Seen from Arsinée's perspective, translation appears in a radically different light: as an instrument of emancipation as well as an act of

desire, since it relies on the attraction to otherness. This also highlights a different politics of translation and self-translation. Rather than extinguishing all traces of the first or source language, her translation practice favors the tendency of foreignization, which allows for the inscription of traces of the source into the target language and allows for a more integrated image of the multilingual subject.

The negotiation of multilingualism and translation is also carried out in both works on the level of aesthetics. Thus, the traces of Hoffman's first language, Polish, appear only scarcely and in a highly domesticated form. Rather than exposing the monolingual English-speaking reader to the foreignness of her first language, she carefully translates and explains each of the Polish words she uses. In contrast, *Calendar* presents the viewer with much dialogue in Armenian, parts of which are left untranslated. By employing a translator figure at the center of the narrative, the process of translation is rendered highly visible. Like the protagonist, much of the target audience depends on Arsinée's translation, but, due to her foreignizing translation technique, is not granted an easily consumable and transparent rendering of the dialogue. Considering this multilingual aesthetics, it is safe to say that *Calendar* propagates a more empowering vision of translation than *Lost in Translation*, which, eventually, remains more strongly dominated by the hegemonic dictate of monolingualism.

2. Gender and Sexuality in Linguistic Borderlands: Yann Martel's *Self* (1996) and Junot Diaz' *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007)

In Eva Hoffman's memoir, *Lost in Translation*, and Atom Egoyan's film, *Calendar*, we have encountered multilingualism and translation as dominant topics in the lives of their real and fictional protagonists. The stories of their second language acquisition turned out to be central in their mental case histories constructed by means of self-diagnoses, as in the case of *Lost in Translation*, or the enactment of symptoms and the therapeutic process, as in the case of *Calendar*. As we have seen in the introductory example of Alejandro González Iñárritu's film, *Babel*, the figure of the linguistic border-crossing is not only used in fiction in order to negotiate the cultural and linguistic identities of characters, but, even more interestingly so, in its metaphorical quality.

It is in this quality that the transgression of language boundaries is evoked in the novels that will be dealt with in the present chapter: Yann Martel's *Self* (1996) and Junot Díaz' *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). In both narratives, the protagonists are born into bilingual settings and, consequently, grow up bilingual. In *Self*, this setting is the capital of Canada, Ottawa, situated right at the border of the country's Anglophone and Francophone territories. In Díaz' novel, the main character grows up in a Dominican diasporic community in New Jersey, which is why he is familiar from the onset with both English and Spanish. As readers, we accompany both protagonists from their childhood on and into early adulthood and quickly learn that their lives are mostly defined by their search for love.

This search is cast in a particular light in both cases, since the protagonists do not conform to the stereotypes of gender and sexuality set by their surroundings. For both of them, these dominant stereotypes are closely associated with the languages of their families. Thus, Martel's protagonist encounters the dictate of gender difference and heteronormativity in French, while Díaz' character, Oscar, becomes acquainted with Dominican machista discourses in Spanish and Spanglish. What is at stake, then, in both narratives, is the question whether can liberate themselves from the dominant discourses on gender and sexuality encoded in their mother tongues. The present chapter sets out to examine in what ways the two novels negotiate the possibility of breaking out of one's native language, and along with it, of prescribed gender identities. In the course of this examination, we will also approach the question of how the aesthetics of literary multilingualism influence such a negotiation.

Language and Metamorphosis: Yann Martel's *Self*

As we have seen, both in Atom Egoyan's *Calendar* and in Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*, mono- and multilingualism tend to be associated with mental conditions. Thus, monolingualism is linked to the hardship of adaptation, the danger of isolation and weakened empathy, neurotic tendencies, self-centeredness and finally loss and its denial. Multilingualism, in contrast, stands for rootedness, the attempt to understand others and resistance against patriarchal structures. In narrating the process of second language acquisition, these two works show that, for subjects originally rooted in one language, migration can mean a challenge and a crisis, from which they can emerge either broken or strengthened in their personality (Grinberg and Grinberg 1984, 14-15).

Can multilingualism also be imagined without the taste of crisis? In his 1996 novel *Self*, Yann Martel undertakes precisely this enterprise. Having his nameless protagonist grow up with French at home and English at school, Martel tropes bilingualism as the norm, as a natural human condition. The protagonist's numerous voyages along language boundaries – in chronological order, those to Spanish, Czech, German, Turkish and Hungarian – do not carry any connotations with fear. On the contrary, the character constantly feels attracted by speakers of foreign languages, even though in the majority of cases he is not able to understand them. To be more precise, it is not despite but because of his verbal non-understanding that strangers and their languages have a magnetic effect on him.

Admittedly, the protagonist's affinity to everything 'foreign' also has to do with the fact that he grows up as the son of diplomats. In socio-political terms, he finds himself on the other side of the embassy counter, and thus of the hegemonic divide that separates him from political or economic refugees such as Eva Hoffman in her language memoir or the photographer in Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*. The continuous migration of the protagonist in *Self* is not involuntary, but part of his well-respected parents' métier. Rather than being drawn into an uncontrollable whirlwind of events, they stand, as it were, above the turmoil of migration and are masters of their situation. What makes the novel interesting, however, is not the fact that Martel situates his protagonist in a socially advantaged milieu and derives from this that the transgression of language boundaries can also be effortless, depending on from whose vantage point it is experienced. Instead, the particularity of this novel consists in the fact that multilingualism is not only – though also – used as a metonymy of multiculturalism, migration and travelling, but enters into a metaphorical relationship with the topic of gender identity. In the present chapter, I will analyze the cross-mapping between the domains of

'language' and 'gender' and their mutual structuring. Thereby, I shall closely look at the following points of intersection: firstly, the formation or acquisition process that underlies both linguistic and gender identity and is, in both cases, envisioned in a psychoanalytic context; secondly, the troping of borders between languages and genders and the possibility and consequences of their transgression, or, in other words, the extinction of binary oppositions such as mother tongue and foreign language, masculinity and femininity and homo- and heterosexuality and their translation into a sphere of multiplicity; and thirdly, trauma and translation.

Such an enumeration of points of intersection suggests that the novel offers a systematic negotiation of language and gender identity. In fact, this is not the case. What stands out instead, is a certain indecisiveness and fragmentation both in terms of structure and ideological content. As critic Gerry Turcotte pointedly notes, it is not only *Self*'s protagonist, but the novel itself that "suffer[s] from a serious identity crisis" in moving "between bildungsroman, travelogue, philosophical treatise and soft porn" (Turcotte 2003). To this I would add that the socio-political comments formulated in the novel do not form a consistent line of thought, but rather appear as experimental statements. Martel even admits to a critic: "In *Self* I had the impression I was getting over my head […]. I was getting into an area of gender conflict, sexual relationships and so on, that's really complicated. I can't say it's an area I really feel comfortable in" (quoted in Marchand 2001). This discomfort on the one hand and the somewhat overambitious attempt to encompass too many weighty subjects on the other, have provoked rather unsympathetic reviews. The novel was described as "simply dull" and with "its focus blurred by trivia" (Ferraro 1996), as "a bad case of over achievement [sic] […] haunted by an off-putting tone of smug precociousness" (Waters 2001), as a "puppyish, baggy blend of fiction and autobiography" (Adams 2003), and as "stumbl[ing] into excess, as though the voice he is seeking has eluded him until the end" (Turcotte 2003). However, though *Self* does suffer from several not unusual flaws of a first novel and betrays that Martel, above all, sought the experiment both in aesthetic and philosophical terms, I would like to demonstrate that there are interesting insights to be gained from precisely this experimental arrangement.

The inconsistence and fragmented character of the novel are at the same time quite likely the reason why literary scholars have largely remained silent about the novel, even though the exploding sales figures and numbers of essays on Martel's second novel, *Life of Pi* (2001), have made it almost impossible not to take notice of his debut novel. Up to date, to my knowledge, only three published articles have addressed *Self*. The first one, published by

Anglo-Canadian critic Smaro Kamboureli nine years after the publication of *Self*, does not focus on the novel at all, but solely on an interview, in which Martel had bluntly declared that the aim behind *Self* was to overcome his own sexism (Sielke 2003, 16-17). Leaving aside the literary qualities of the work and the text in general, the critic brings the author, pronounced dead by Roland Barthes (1967), back to life and sets out to critically examine "how the novel performs Martel's turn to ethics" (Kamboureli 2007, 944). Pirouetting around this and several other indeed unfortunate interview statements on 18 pages, the critic mentions only two passages from the novel, presumes to discover a racialized discourse, and concludes that Martel has not succeeded in overcoming his sexism after all. With these comments on the author's persona, Kamboureli's essay hardly contributes to a discussion of the literary qualities of the novel.

The topic of gender is picked up again in the latest article published on *Self* in 2011, albeit in a very different fashion. In his short but illuminating paper, Mirko Casagranda zooms in on the construction of gender through grammatical categories and exemplifies his point through the comparative analysis of passages from the novel in the original English version and its Italian translation. In analyzing the transformation not of Martel's central character, but of the novel itself, when it is translated from a largely gender-neutral language such as English to one with a grammatical gender system such as Italian, the critic convincingly argues that novels like *Self* "are like sleeping hermaphrodites that are waiting to be unveiled in order to show their complexity and their polycentric nature" (Casagranda 2011, 214).

The only essay that offers an interpretation of the novel in its entirety was published in 2009 by Franco-Canadian critic Rainier Grutman, who has extensively contributed to the field of literary multilingualism and translation. In his essay, he carefully examines the novel's multilingual setup and devotes close attention to the languages employed in *Self* – to all except for one. For when he sets out to explore the "frequency of the use of the languages" and the "modalities of their insertion"[3] (Grutman 2009, 61, translation mine), he focuses on the use of French, Spanish, Czech and Hungarian, however, leaving out the most important question of why most of the narrative is composed in English. This may be due to the fact that in his analysis he heavily relies not only on the original, but on Hélène Rioux's French translation of the novel (1998). In fact, the dominance of English may tempt even the reader of the original version to consider only the inserted languages other than English. However, as I shall argue, it is crucial that the narrative is conveyed retrospectively by an originally Francophone adult narrator, whom we encounter in his own present only on the last page of

[3] In the original: "fréquence d'emploi des languages" and "modalités de leur insertion".

the novel. If in the narrative present, the narrator addresses us in English, then the choice of language must have been made in the course of the narrated time, and the narrative has to contain certain key moments explaining this choice. These key moments will play a central role in my own analysis.

Another difference between Grutman's and my analysis lies in the interpretation of the relation between the novel's two main languages: English and French. This aspect cannot be considered separately from the division of numerous passages in *Self* into columns, which serves as a graphic representation of the novel's multilingual narration. Grutman observes that the aesthetics produced by this division present a challenge to common reading habits (2009, 61-62). For a moment, indeed, the division produces the illusion of a narrative simultaneity, as the columns run from top to bottom completely parallel to each other. Nonetheless, this aesthetics does not break with all reading habits, since the arrangement of one column on the left-hand side and the other on the right-hand side of the page also implies their chronological succession. In that sense, Martel does not force us to abandon our reading habits, for such a column aesthetics already exists for instance in newspapers. Rather than to newspapers, Grutman compares the narrative to legal and official Canadian texts, which are likewise bilingual and printed in two neighboring columns (2009, 61). Thus, with his columns in French and English, Martel seems to be graphically imitating an 'essentially' Canadian voice. While Grutman suggests that the two-column aesthetics creates true multicultural equality (2009, 57), it is my contention that Martel's narrative also absorbs the problematic aspects of the column aesthetics in official Canadian bilingual texts. As the columns never touch or reach out towards each other, they invoke what Hugh MacLennan has called the 'Two Solitudes' (1945) – the coexistence of Anglo- and Franco-Canadians without much communication or interaction.

Moreover, the two columns run parallel to each other, as if this layout could entirely exclude a privileging of one of the two languages. The relation between the two languages is then not so much one of equality, but of competition – an implication that even an academic text such as Grutman's seems to half-consciously act out. Thus, the critic on the one hand notes that "Martel's narrator refuses to choose between languages"[4] (Grutman 2009, 57) – an observation which, as I argue in this chapter, can be easily contested. Despite his assertion of a neutral and equal relationship between the two languages, Grutman formulates an odd comment on the protagonist's relation to English and French. He points out that the columns are arranged in a way – with French on the left and English on the right – that leads us to read

[4] In the original: "Le narrateur de Martel refuse de choisir entre les langues".

the French column first and pay attention to the chronology in the protagonist's acquisition of languages. However, Grutman also claims that Martel decides to "place the French text, which will be read first and have a more immediate effect, on the left-hand side, followed by a translation on the right-hand side"[5] (2009, 61). At this point, it can be objected that French only has a more immediate effect on a reader who understands French in the first place. Unless this is the case, an English-speaking reader will be much more inclined to read first and perceive as more immediate the column written in English. More importantly, however, the phrase "more immediate" puts the two languages in the hierarchical relation of an original and a translation, and thus betrays an ideologically charged perspective.

With the ideological tug of war between the two official Canadian languages set in motion, even the sober statement: "I speak English and French" (331), uttered in the closing lines of the novel, lends itself to ideological interpretation. Why do French and English suddenly change place despite the chronological and hierarchical relation that Grutman assumes? Does the narrator speak primarily English just because the language is mentioned first in his concluding sentence? Or did the sequence "English and French" simply sound better to the author than "French and English"? This confusion demonstrates, on the one hand, on what slippery ground we tread when trying to pursue the ideology behind Martel's use of English and French. On the other hand, it also demarcates the boundaries of a constructive argument, for, in my view, the novel resists its appropriation as a projection screen for speculations on the power relations between Anglophone and Francophone Canada.

While displaying a clear socio-political dimension, *Self* and its protagonist are not much concerned with the relation of the two official Canadian languages, but instead focus on the phenomenon of bilingualism. In this context, both Anglophone and Francophone Canada are criticized for hypocritically holding up the idea of multiculturalism, laid down in the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, instead of putting it into practice. The critique is directly voiced by the protagonist, when he arrives in Ottawa at the age of twelve and encounters

> the Anglophone intolerance that reigned in the capital of [his] country during the years [he] lived there, where those who spoke two languages were despised by those who spoke only one (and poorly at that). (72)

The experience of intolerance repeats itself on the other side of the divide. When, after her studies, the now female protagonist settles in Montreal in the Plateau Mont-Royal, she quickly finds herself disillusioned about the multicultural and multilingual atmosphere of her neighborhood:

[5] In the original: "placer le texte français à gauche, où il sera lu d'abord et aura un effet plus immédiat, puis en y joignant une traduction, à droite".

> Around us, the Plateau: that is, a neighbourhood where the store signs were in French but where inside one might hear Greek, Portuguese, Yiddish, Spanish, Arabic and others, in addition to French, and where the Volapük was often a functional, beaten-up English flavoured with myriad accents. The mix seemed easy between the variously integrated ethnic groups, the Anglophone university students, the hipsters, cool people and wannabees, and the Francophone Quebeckers. Or so it seemed to me. I could identify with up to three of those groups, *which made me not so much a hybrid as a chameleon*. Depending on the speaker I could change my persona, though unfortunately my Quebec accent has never been very good for having lived in France as a child, so sometimes, far from fitting in, I stood out all the more. On occasion, when I made the *faux pas* of addressing a nationalist Québécois in English and was replied to in French, which would bring out my French French, I went from being une maudite anglaise to being une maudite française. (238, my emphasis)

As both passages show, the protagonist experiences a Canada, which does not allow him/her to freely live out his/her bilingualism. Exposed to discriminatory treatment on both sides, the character is forced to suppress what he/she considers her 'hybridity' and instead to adapt to the different 'solitudes' around her like a "chameleon". Far from representing multilingualism, Martel's Canada can be described with Yasemin Yildiz' term "postmonolingual", which refers to "the period *since* the emergence of monolingualism as dominant paradigm, which first occurred in late eighteenth-century Europe" and captures the "ongoing dominance of the monolingual and well as the incipient moves to overcome it" (2012, 4). According to Yildiz,

> monolingualism is much more than a simple quantitative term designating the presence of just one language. Instead, it constitutes a key structuring principle that organizes the entire range of modern social life, from the construction of individuals and their proper subjectivities to the formation of disciplines and institutions, as well as of imagined collectives such as cultures and nations. (2012, 2)

Martel's depiction of Canada in the 1970s strongly reverberates with this description. Not only is the protagonist confronted with militant monolingualism; as a "key structuring principle" of social life around him, it is accompanied by other forms of ideological violence, such as his being bullied for wearing long hair as a boy and thus seemingly blurring the boundaries between the genders (60).

The recognition that gender and language politics are driven by similar homogenizing attitudes is crucial for the novel since it offers a key to understanding the language and gender transformations of the protagonist. While Rainier Grutman contends that the change of languages does not correspond with that of gender, since as a man and as a woman the protagonist speaks the same languages (2009, 56), I do detect deep structural parallels between the linguistic and the gender transformations. A perspective which does not consider these parallels cannot account for central passages devoted to the narration of the protagonist's mental and emotional life or for his development and metamorphosis of gender and sexual identity and thus falls short in offering a consistent interpretation. After all

Martel's negotiation of multilingualism is interesting for the very reason that it takes place both on a socio-political and a psychological level and reminds us that language and, along with it, bilingualism are not only a matter of language politics. Therefore, without detaching the protagonist's sexual and linguistic development from the socio-political context, I would like to propose a reading that stresses the psychic dimension of multilingualism in the novel and integrates the topics of gender and multilingualism.

Ironically enough, if one believes Martel's statements in the interview that Smaro Kamboureli takes as the basis for her discussion of the novel, then the author is "not really interested in psychological novels" (Martel quoted in Sielke 2003, 15). However, the novel itself tells a different story. In fact, it brims over with hints to psychoanalysis, two of which shall be highlight right away. I agree with Julian Ferraro when he notes that the opening passage of the narrative that reads like "a textbook example of Freudian theories of infant sexuality" (1996). In fact, the protagonist proudly produces "a magnificent log of excrement" as a present for his mother and takes her smile as a return of pleasure: "Pleasure given, pleasure had", he expounds (2). Seemingly regretful about having given the psychoanalytic reference such a prominent place, Martel soon has his narrator contest another psychoanalytic lesson, this time by means of a direct reference to Lacan's "The Mirror Stage" (2006, 75 ff). Thus, the narrator ponders:

> Do children look into mirrors? (...) I didn't. Of what interest was a mirror to me? It reflected me, a child - so what? (...) Childhood, like wisdom, is an emotion. Feelings are what register deeply of one's early years. What the eye catches, the visual aspects of these feelings, is secondary. So it is that I have no memories of mirrors, no memories of clothes, of skin, of limbs, of body, of my own physical self as a child. As if, paradoxically, I were then nothing but a huge eager eye, an emotional eye, looking out, always looking out, unaware of itself. (11)

Rather than positioning the narrative outside of a psychoanalytic framework, this passage achieves the opposite effect. Firstly, the objections on emotionality and visuality do not carry against Lacan's thoughts in "The Mirror Stage", which does not seek to reduce the child's experience to a purely visual one or deny emotions involved in the encounter with one's own mirror image. Secondly, and more importantly, the reference and vague objections to Lacan only grant the psychoanalytic text a greater presence in the novel and have a similar effect as the joke in which one is told not to think of a pink elephant. This suggests that despite its ambiguous relationship to psychoanalysis, the novel asks the reader to keep the theory in mind and thus implicitly invites a psychoanalytic reading. As the further analysis of language, gender and trauma in *Self* shall demonstrate, the novel can hardly be reasonably considered without the psychoanalytic references inscribed in it.

Language and gender acquisition

The first instance in which this becomes apparent is Martel's troping of language and gender development as learning processes. From the onset, Martel establishes a parallel between his narrator's development of language and of gender. It is not an accident that the narrative sets in with the protagonist still being in a prelinguistic and, in Freudian terms, pre-Oedipal, anal stage. Both language and the triad of sexuality, gender and desire are presented as yet undiscovered territories, to which the protagonist's view will open up only gradually. What is more, neither language nor gender development are accepted by the narrator as natural phenomena; they are instead encountered with incomprehension and a sense of shock. Thus, the narrator puts his discovery of the verbal nature of thought into the following words:

> I became aware of a voice inside my head. What is this, I wondered. Who are you, voice? When will you shut up? I remember a feeling of fright. It was only later that I realized that this voice was my own thinking, that this moment of anguish was my first inkling that I was a ceaseless monologue trapped within myself. (2)

A similarly significant experience as his entry into language is his first confrontation with the issue of sexuality. He first encounters it, as he says, in an "epiphanous moment of television", when he sees an image that he takes for "a simple anatomical drawing of the cross-section of an eye. Next came the fluid images of hundreds of silvery fish swimming as a school" (15-16). Remaining true to his childhood experience, the grown-up homodiegetic narrator never explains what it was in fact that he had seen on TV at the age of five. From his depiction of the images, the reader may infer that what the child sees is an explanatory drawing of the process of insemination. This is also implied by the ironic comment of the adult narrator, who explicitly tropes this experience as a primal scene: "I walked into the garden and sat under a tree, my senses bloated, my head racing with the thoughts that come from *a sudden understanding of things*" (15, my emphasis). While the reader may smile at this overstated "sudden understanding", the young protagonist intuitively chooses an appropriate frame of interpretation for his experience. Thus, he reaches the conclusion that "love is the food of eye fish and only love will bring them out" (15). Significantly, this primal scene occurs when the narrator is watching TV in Costa Rica, where his family has just recently moved. Therefore he encounters the topic of sexuality in Spanish, "a language [he] had not as yet absorbed" (14). The development of sexuality seems to work along similar lines as his second language acquisition. Both language and sexuality are new arenas for the protagonist so that he arrives at absorbing the new language and understanding sexuality by undergoing parallelly staged learning processes.

While the discovery of sexuality causes exultation in the young protagonist, learning the vocabulary and grammar rules of sexual difference presents him with a greater challenge. It is not before his mother disapproves of him wanting to marry his kindergarten friend Noah that we are implicitly informed that the protagonist is male (20). The idea of sexual difference thus violently breaks into a narrative in which the narrator had hitherto remained unaware of his own sex and gender. Linking the issues of sex and gender, the adult narrator reflects upon his parents' roles: "I cannot recall noticing, as a small child, any difference between my parents that I could ascribe to sex. Though I knew they weren't the same thing twice over, the distinctions did not express themselves in fixed roles" (5). The protagonist's distress upon being enlightened about his sex and the idea of sexual and gender difference by his mother echoes the psychoanalytic observation that young children have difficulty in grasping this idea. Such an argument can be found for instance in Polly Young-Eisendrath's monograph *Gender and Desire: Uncursing Pandora* (1997), in which the author revisits Jung's idea of contrasexuality, "the notion that each of us has an unconscious (or less conscious) personality of the opposite sex" (1997, 32), and calls for a non-essentialist approach to gender. Thus, she describes gender as an "identity club into which we are assigned at birth, when our bodies are read by the elders who say whether we are female or male" (1997, 27), and explains:

> Although children begin to think in gender categories almost as soon as they can identify a separate embodied self, around eighteen months of age, they do not understand the permanence and exclusivity of this concept until much later. Very young children easily may say, for instance, that boys have penises and girls do not, or that boys run faster than girls; but they do not grasp the power of this difference – that it permanently may constrain who they themselves can become. Nor do they understand that sex cannot be changed through changing one's appearance or name, or that some of these exclusive differences will last a lifetime. (1997, 38)

Questioning the imposition of gender roles based on sexual difference, Young-Eisendrath nevertheless stresses the "power of this difference" and seems to take such an imposition for almost unavoidable. "The sex we are born as and the gender we become are not the same thing", she writes, "although one flows from the other" (1997, 27). In *Self,* Martel invokes these ideas by placing his protagonist in a society that insists on clear gender differences and punishes everyone who seeks to blur the boundaries between them. While the protagonist in fact cannot change his sex by simply changing his looks, for his social environment, gender difference is coded precisely through a particular appearance. Thus, upon his return from Paris to Canada at the age of twelve, he suffers both physical and verbal harassment from his classmates for wearing long hair:

> I didn't think anything of my long hair […]. But in North America, I discovered quickly and brutally, girls could have their hair short or long, though most had it long, but boys, boys I say, could only have it short. The first day of school, within the first minutes, just as I sat down, the

> class clown came up to me and asked me if I was a boy or a girl. I said flatly that I was a boy, but my response didn't register, or even matter, since he was not really asking a question so much as making a comment which elicited the desired chuckles and snickers from the class. (60)

However, rather than merely exposing his protagonist to separate instances of gender violence, which in Saussurean terms, can be likened to the 'parole' of gender discourse, Martel addresses its very 'langue' – the set of rules it is governed by (de Saussure 1983). What is more, he regards this set of rules as being rooted in language. Thus, the narrator pronounces ideas that seem more radical than the psychoanalytic stance of Young-Eisendrath and betray their origin in Lacanian psychoanalysis, which centers on the connection between language and the unconscious:

> Once at the McDonald's near the school, at an unhappy moment of tension, I stood in front of the washrooms with Sonya, sweet Sonya. MEN said one door, WOMEN said the other. I thought, 'No, no, this isn't right. It shouldn't be this way, not MEN, not WOMEN. It should be FRIENDS and ENEMIES. That should be the natural division of things, one that would better reflect reality. That way Sonya and I could go together through one door, and the others through the other.' (64)

The protagonist's thoughts are highly reminiscent of a famous passage from Lacan's *Écrits*, in which he replaces Saussure's model of the linguistic sign by a drawing of two bathroom doors, which we recognize due to the signs "GENTLEMEN" and "LADIES" (Lacan 2006, 416). On the basis of this drawing, Lacan demonstrates in a poststructuralist fashion that the notion of sexual difference does not represent factual reality, and not even, as in Saussure's view, mental images, but creates this reality and the related mental images in the first place. As Lacan puts it, "the signifier in fact enters the signified – namely, in a form which, since it is not immaterial, raises the question of its place in reality" (2006, 417). Thus, the door labels, linguistic signs in their essence, impose particular patterns of thought and behavior. "Any speaking being whatever", Lacanian critic Jacqueline Rose comments, "must line up on one or other side of the divide" (1985, 42).

Martel's protagonist resists this very pattern of thought from early childhood on. As a toddler, he is already preoccupied with the matter of dichotomies, which finds expression in the narrator's very use of the word "dichotomy" to describe his parents' gender roles (6). In what afterwards reads like a prophecy and is described by the narrator as a "cataclysm in the garden" (2), the boy discovers that the sun and the moon, which the reader easily decodes as symbols of masculinity and femininity, can appear in the sky at the same time. Their simultaneous apparition shatters his belief in dichotomies: "At the time I thought the sun and the moon were opposite elements, negations of each other. The moon was the sun turned off, like a light-bulb, the moon was the sun sleeping […] – whatever the case, one excluded the other" (2). When the protagonist utters: "I glanced a last time at the moon. My God, it was a

free orb. It moved at random in the universe, like the sun. Surely one day they would clash!" (3), the subversion of the symbolically highly charged opposition foreshadows the later gender transformations.

Before these can occur, however, the protagonist finds himself exposed to his mother's lessons on sexual difference. What unsettles him most is the fact that there are but two sexes between which he is not even free to choose: "Things were far more limited than my open mind had imagined", he comments, "[t]here were in fact only *two* sexes, not infinite numbers" (21, emphasis in the original). In this passage, *Self* almost literally echoes Jacqueline Rose's explanation of the Lacanian view on sexual difference:

> Sexual difference is then assigned according to whether individual subjects do or do not possess the phallus, which means not that anatomical difference *is* sexual difference (the one as strictly deducible from the other), but that anatomical difference comes to *figure* sexual difference, that is, it becomes the sole representative of what that difference is allowed to be. It thus covers over the complexity of the child's early sexual life with a crude opposition in which that very complexity is refused or repressed. The phallus thus indicates the reduction of difference to an instance of visible perception, a *seeming* value. (1985, 42)

As in Lacan's theory, for Martel's protagonist, sexual difference emerges as a kind of violent and inacceptable opposition relying on a game of signifiers out of touch with any signified. Both in *Self* and in Lacan's account, as Rose writes, "sexual identity operates as a law – it is something enjoined on the subject. For him, the fact that individuals must line up according to an opposition (having or not having the phallus) makes that clear" (1985, 29).

By presenting the relationship between the sexes as one of complementarity, the protagonist's mother introduces him to what Adrienne Rich has termed "compulsory heterosexuality" (1980, 631), or, in Michael Warner's words, to "heteronormativity" (1991, 3). Initially, the idea of sexual complementarity sets off a romantic fantasy in the mind of the young protagonist. As if practicing a new set of vocabulary, he exclaims: "Imagine: somewhere out there, totally separate, of independent origin, was a sexual organ tailored to suit me. I set out to find my complementary sexual organ, my true love." (20) However, when his mother insists that his kindergarten friend Noah – despite his androgynous name – does not have the "sexual organ tailored to suit [him]", he is confronted with the restrictive power of the heteronormative system. Echoing Rose's comment on sexual difference quoted above, the young protagonist exclaims:

> I was amazed. This question of complementarity referred merely to a vulgar point of *biology*, an anatomical whim? The menu for ocular fish had only two items on it? And it was decided in advance which they could select, either little bum or little finger, steak or chicken? What kind of restaurant is that, Mother? (21-22, emphasis in the original)

Much in line with Lacan, Martel seeks to unmask both sexual difference and heteronormativity as fictions. He opposes these two orders and the narratives they produce by presenting us with a different fiction, in which the foundational principles of the former are turned upside down. In his version, the protagonist finds himself released from the inalterability of sex and is allowed to experience relationships both with men and women.

At the same time, Martel's decision to transform his protagonist's body cannot entirely resolve the ideological issues raised in the previous paragraphs. On the contrary, the gender metamorphoses introduce a break in the ideological framework of the novel. In exposing sexual difference and complementarity as an "anatomical whim", the narrator seems to be one step ahead of the author. For despite equipping his narrator with a critical Lacanian attitude, Martel figures the metamorphoses as transformations of the body and not of the mind. In this fashion, Martel's text itself becomes a silent affirmation of the equivalence between anatomy and sexual identity. Thus, while the protagonist unmasks sexual difference as based on anatomy as an artificial construct, Martel creates a fiction that is no less arbitrary. The reader is left with the impression that Martel could not avoid the pitfall he so clearly outlines through the voice of his narrator.

Likewise, the critique of heteronormativity is not consistently thought through, for eventually the protagonist's personality seems to be so strongly molded by the dominant opinions in his/her society that, except for a few short homosexual affairs, he/she finds greatest fulfillment in heterosexual relationships, first with Marisa and later with Tito. Having seemingly been converted to heterosexuality through the episode with Marisa, the character, curiously enough, exports his interest in women into his/her life after the gender transformation. After the first metamorphosis, the now-female protagonist, whose mindset has not changed in the least, is initially interested in women only. It then comes as a surprise both for her and for the reader that her sexual orientation suddenly changes: "I'm not sure why, as a woman, I began to desire men. After a moment of surprise it became a matter of feeling – and I acted upon that feeling, without reflection. It's an odd thing to question desire" (184). What seems even odder at this point is that the idea of heteronormativity, which the protagonist has so far been protesting against, suddenly returns and is accepted in the guise of desire. The lessons taught by the homophobic society around her seem absorbed when she, for the first time, starts an affair with a man. Thus, she comments: "He's *a man. This is homosexuality. I'm a homosexual*. Which is crazy, I know. We were doing the perfectly heterosexually normal, the banal even, but it came, over and over, *he's a man, this is homosexuality, I'm a homosexual*, though this sense of committing the forbidden forbade

nothing" (201, emphasis in the original). While these circles of thought are understandable given the ever-present homophobia in her society, the narrative and the protagonist nevertheless seem to take different paths: the text attacks heteronormativity while the protagonist silently accepts it.

What nevertheless justifies the figure of the gender metamorphosis in *Self* is the fact that is occurs as part of a larger experimental arrangement that could be called the 'languages of the self'. Thus, what matters is not so much the ideological outcome of the metamorphosis, but rather its genesis. As I shall argue in the following section, this supernatural element can be read as a materialized vision of a psychological development that Martel carefully traces in his novel. If gender identity is so firmly rooted in language and is not just developed, but acquired along with the mother tongue, then how, he seems to ask, can the gender identity of a multilingual character be configured? What role can a character's ability to transgress boundaries play in his or her formation of the self? In tracing the protagonist's way through different languages, we shall come closer to understanding the nature of the metamorphosis as it is troped in the novel.

Desire across languages

It is interesting to note that although the protagonist's mother regards her son's multilingualism as a "[v]ery Canadian" trait (18), he does not grow up with several languages from his birth on. Throughout the first years of his life, he views his surroundings through the lens of a single language, which is French, the language of his parents. This fact allows Martel to narrativize his hero's acquisition of languages as a chronological process and to link it with his psychological development. Furthermore, the linguistic origins form the prerequisite for the figure of linguistic transgression, which would look very different if several languages were present in the protagonist's family. The transgression of language boundaries is based on the fact that the languages in question are not situated in the same psychological terrain. The movement from one language to another is thus clearly traceable.

What is more, however, is that Martel takes the notion of the mother tongue literally and equates it with the actual discourse of the protagonist's mother. Through the maternal discourse, as stated before, the young boy is introduced to the restrictive orders of sexual difference and heteronormativity. It is his mother who explains to him the impossibility of marrying Noah. It is also her who tries to answer the young protagonist's persisting questions

about the sex of things and beings like cars, trees, the wind and finally a cow and an earthworm (24-28). The boy's animistic worldview, which makes him assume that all objects and natural phenomena have a life of their own, does not allow him to easily absorb her explanations. While the mother triumphs when she can finally answer his question about the sex of the cow – "[s]he'd got it right, she thought" (25) – for the protagonist, the lesson on sexual difference remains frustrating and incomprehensible.

Later, in his teenage years, the protagonist draws on the same connection between the mother tongue and the maternal discourse and turns toward the mother tongue to examine and validate his lessons about sexual and gender difference. As his struggles with his gender identity reveal, the French language remains one of his few points of orientation:

> I sought guidance where I could. At one point I turned to the French language, which gave me the gender of all things. I would readily agree that trucks and murders were masculine while bicycles and life were feminine. But how odd that a breast was masculine. And it made little sense that garbage was feminine while perfume was masculine – and no sense at all that television, which I would have deemed repellently masculine, was in fact feminine. When I walked the corridors of Parliament Hill […] I would say to myself, '*C'est le parlement*, masculine. Power, it's *le pouvoir*.' I would return home to *la maison*, feminine where, as likely as not, I would go to my room, *la chambre*, where I would settle to read *un livre* masculine, until supper. During the masculine meal, feminine food would be eaten. […] At one time, for a few days, I even took an affected aversion to being in the kitchen, *la cuisine*. As I entered it I would put on a disdainful expression and say to myself,
>
> 'Les femmes font la cuisine ici, mais pour moi, une cuisine, c'est un endroit où Robert Kennedy se fait tuer.
>
> 'Women cook here, but a kitchen, to me, is a place where Robert Kennedy gets killed.'
>
> (61-62)

Conceptualizing gender through grammatical gender of course does not help the protagonist in his search for meaning. Instead, it projects Saussure's descriptions of linguistic signs as arbitrary and convention-based onto gender categories and underlines Lacan's point that sexual difference is defined by a mere phantasmatic relationship between signifiers. Thus, after practicing the grammatical gender gymnastics quoted above, the narrator admits that he never had an emotional connection to the grammatical order of gender:

> But this is nonsense. I write it to be truthful to the moment, but it is nonsense. Not far from my house in Ottawa there was a large field, a vast, rolling expense of grass. Often I would go there alone and lie down, angel-like. I would look up at the male yellow sun and the male blue sky. I would turn and smell and feel the female green grass. Then I would roll over and over and over down the incline till I was dizzy, mixing up the colours and the genders. I felt neither masculinity nor femininity, I felt only desire, I only felt humid with life. (62)

Considering his disappointing encounters with the concept of gender in his mother tongue and through his mother's discourse, it is very telling that none of his numerous upcoming relationships evolves in the realm of the French language. Indeed, love and sexuality unfold in *Self* in all languages but French. Thus, the maternal francophone lessons on gender and sexuality are contrasted by the protagonist's personal theory of love and sexuality, which he

develops while watching TV in Spanish. The new language he "had not as yet absorbed" (14) immediately becomes a loophole for escaping the conservative discourse on sexuality in his mother tongue. Whereas the teachings of his mother rely on binary oppositions, in the 'new' language, the protagonist creates a space for himself that allows for multiplicity – a multiplicity of gender enabled through and corresponding with the multiplicity of his languages.

When he falls in love for a second time, albeit this time with a girl, it is, significantly, a love across languages. As he informs us, Marisa, who in 1971 fled with her parents from the political unrests in former Czechoslovakia, "was my age, eight, and spoke, as far as I could tell, no language known to humanity beyond the Esperanto of our first names. We looked at each other, mutually surprised at the gibberish the other was speaking. But she smiled again" (34). The protagonist feels attracted to the girl despite the impossibility of verbal communication – or is it rather because of it?

> We began – in spite of not sharing a common tongue – to communicate, although I'm not sure what. She whispered to me in her sweet East European Chinese and I whispered back in French that I thought painfully clear and boring, but she seemed happy enough, for she replied right away each time, hardly letting me finish. The only word she spoke that I understood, the most powerful word in her language, was my name, which she said four or five times, each time dazing me for a few seconds. (34-35)

As this passage implies, the absence of a common language creates a brightly illuminated space of encounter. The protagonist's daze upon hearing his own name recalls Martin Buber's ideas on the encounter with oneself in the face of the other (1923). The narrator literally seems to become 'I' through his relation with a 'Thou', since he views his own name as a word in Marisa's language and thus creates the impression that he receives his name from the Czech-speaking girl.

Apart from these philosophical implications, two fantasies are at play in the encounter of the two children. Firstly, there is the imaginary scenario of communicating without a common language. The only means of signification are paralinguistic and consist in the lowering of the voice – the whispering, and the quick turn-taking in the conversation, signaled by the fact that Marisa hardly lets the protagonist finish his sentences. The passage quoted above therefore reminds of the controversial study by Albert Mehrabian and Susan S. Ferris (1967), according to which, in human communication, the tone of voice accounts for 38 per cent, body language for 55 per cent and the verbal content for only 7 per cent of a verbal message. Here, however, the verbal content is reduced to even less, that is to a single first name. In this Babelian conversation, which almost leaps from the romantic into the absurd, the prename plays a central part, since it serves as a firm proof of the protagonist's existence

and his role in this scene. It brings to the fore a kind of poststructural poetics, in which despite the protagonist's changing and shifting self, his name – albeit unknown to the reader – appears as an anchor point in a sea of free-floating signifiers.

At the same time, the protagonist's attraction to Marisa lies in the overwhelming fantasy of the other's difference. While Marisa's Czech is exoticized as "sweet East European Chinese" and the protagonist's own language, French, is utterly deromanticized as "painfully clear and boring", the space in between, in which the utterance of a first name can be "dazing", appears as a magical border area between Marisa's and the protagonist's languages. In contrast, when Marisa begins "reconciling herself with fate, thinking of Australia, *already speaking her first words of English* – 'boat', 'bed', 'dictionary'" (41, my emphasis), the foreign-language charm loses its power. The magical space between their languages is extinguished in the moment, when Marisa enters the territory of English, a language known to the protagonist. The "boat" as the means of transport that will bring her to Australia already precedes the "bed", in which the children have previously ended their Babelian conversation with a kiss, while the "dictionary" demystifies the charms of foreign languages. Although it is not Marisa, but her parents who take the decision to move to Australia, the reader is left with the impression that the actual crossing of language boundaries signifies departure and separation.

Interestingly enough, Martel does not relate to us any of their words in Czech or French. These languages are only used by their parents (36), whom the protagonist wants to keep out of the romance. One of the few sentences spoken in French – "Ne dérange pas Marisa" (36) – immediately provokes the protagonist's inner rebellion as a response: "What did that mean, *ne dérange pas Marisa*, don't bother Marisa? I narrowed my eyes. If my parents had died that second I would have been delighted" (37, emphasis in the original). As these words imply, the fantasy about the parents' death, which, in a twist of fate, will come to a catastrophic realization, is mostly a fantasy about silencing the mother tongue, for it obtrusively enters the stage as the language of nonsensical imperatives. This is also the reason why, upon being put into the same bed by their parents, both children switch into languages that are not their respective mother tongues. While Marisa begins to speak German, the protagonist draws on Spanish, the language in which he has previously developed his own theory of love. In this fashion, they continue exchanging completely disconnected phrases:

'Ich bin nicht müde. Und du?' […]	'I'm not sleepy. Are you?' […]
'Ocho años. Casi ocho y medio.'	'Eight years old. Nearly eight and a half.'
'Hier gefällt es mir überhaupt nicht.'	'I don't like it here at all.'
'Tengo calor. Pero estoy bien. Estoy contento.'	'I'm a little hot. But I'm fine. I'm happy.'

'Ich will zurück nach Prag. Die Leute hier sind schrecklich.'	'I want to go back to Prague. The people here are nasty.'
'¿Te gustan los helados?'	'Do you like ice-cream?'

(37-38)

As to the reason of switching languages, the protagonist gives us a curious explanation: "I replied in the language which by virtue of being my third and last, was the most foreign to me and therefore, surely, the closest to Czech" (38). While this way of childish reasoning serves the comical tone of the narrator's account of his childhood, it seems crucial that both children break out of the realms of their mother tongues in order to articulate their love for each other. The affection is also highlighted by the layout of the columns: for the first time in the novel, two different languages – German and Spanish – appear together, intimately intertwined, in the left column, taking the space that had been previously reserved for utterances in French. The childhood escapes from one's mother tongue are thus used to trope the romantic aura and the liberating force of linguistic transgressions.

The romantic aura of multilingual encounters is re-invoked later in the protagonist's life, when, after the gender metamorphosis, the female protagonist gets to know Tito, an immigrant from Hungary. Although Tito, unlike Marisa, does speak English, she obviously feels attracted to him because of the traces of foreignness in his speech:

> I liked his voice. He had an accent, an unusual timbre derived from I don't know what native tongue, though his English was flawless, and he spoke in a measured way. His words didn't come out in a hurried, jumbled pile the way mine did, but one at a time, each with its own dignity and heraldic right, a sort of aural pageant. I registered every word he said, even the vassal words, the *the*s and the *and*s. Listening to him, I was aware not only of what he said, but of the language we spoke, as if I were on the outside, hearing English for the first time. (249)

No longer does the protagonist dream of a communication without a common language. However, Tito's non-native English enables a conscious and fresh encounter with her language and thus with herself. Just like in the exchange with Marisa, the narrator conjures the magic of proper names in foreign languages: "I kept saying his name; already it was my favourite Hungarian word, the jewel of my tongue. A few times he said my name I acted like a dog: I nearly dropped whatever I was handling and looked up, as if I had been called" (250). And once again the narrator admits that she does not have a clue of the language of her beloved: "It occurred to me that I didn't know boo about Hungary. A few newspaper facts, Bartók, Kodály, Liszt – that was about it; and that Hungarian was a weird language, related to no other in the area, only to Finnish" (253). Finally, the narrator himself draws a direct connection to Marisa. When she says: "It has only happened to me twice in my life: I could hardly see him [Tito] for the fish in my eyes" (258), she literally repeats her own words previously uttered in regard to Marisa (40).

Liberated or split?

Apart from recounting the protagonist's early encounters with foreign languages, the childhood escapes from one's mother tongue anticipate one of the novel's most central events: the first gender transformation, accompanied or even enabled, and metaphorically structured by a linguistic metamorphosis, in psychological and aesthetic terms, respectively. The turning point that motivates this metamorphosis is marked by the death of the protagonist's parents in an airplane crash. Through the depiction of the tragic event and the metamorphosis in its consequence, the literary multilingualism employed in the novel and the narrator's transgression from French to English emerge as multi-faceted strategies for representing liberation and emancipation, on the one hand, and trauma and split personality, on the other.

While the death of the parents, as soon shall become clear, is presented as one of the lynchpins of the narrative, the narrator plays down the significance of this event: "My parents' sudden, foreign deaths", the narrator recounts, "struck me not as the tolling of a bell, but as another stage in my ever-expanding metamorphic life" (93-94). Indeed, long before his parents' death, the narrator weaves an elaborate discourse around the idea of metamorphosis, which for him remains the discursive framework for the sudden and tragic event. The transformation is anticipated from the very first pages on, when the protagonist "spen[ds] entire afternoons watching carrots boil in water" (8). The childhood fascination with the process around the not coincidentally phallic symbol is expressed as follows: "It was the transformation from hard to soft that fascinated me, my mother said later. Indeed, from my earliest years the idea of transformation has been central to my life" (8). The reference to hardness and softness lifts the scene out of its naïve obscenity and forms a direct allusion to what Susan Jeffords, in her study on Hollywood masculinity in the Reagan era, has called "soft bodies" and "hard bodies" (1994). Drawing on ideological constructions of gender and race, Jeffords describes the "hard body" as "the normative body that enveloped strength, labor, determination, loyalty, and courage" (1994, 24), while the "soft body" forms its precise Other. "In this system of thought marked by race and gender", Jeffords writes, "the soft body invariably belonged to a female and/or a person of color, whereas the hard body was, like Reagan's own, male and white" (1994, 25). In this picture, the connection between the boiling of carrots and the idea of transformation becomes obvious. For what the protagonist in fact observes in all respects reads like a prophecy of his own later transformation – encompassing both the fantastic transgression from masculinity to femininity and the ideology-breathing social context, in which it occurs. Curiously enough, the protagonist's transformation from

"hard body" to "soft body" will even occur precisely in 1981, the year of Ronald Reagan's inauguration as the President of the United States.

While Martel thus inscribes traces of the established gender ideology into the protagonist's childhood, the hero himself sees transformation as a most natural, ubiquitous process, not much charged with ideology. This is demonstrated by his naïve and comical over-generalizations of the idea of metamorphosis:

> When I started losing my baby teeth and was told that larger, more durable teeth would grow in their stead, I took this as my first tangible proof of human metamorphosis. I had already gathered evidence on the metamorphosis of day and night, of weather, of the seasons, of food and excrement, even of life and death, to name but a few, but these teeth were something closer to home, something clear and incontrovertible. I envisioned life as a series of metamorphic changes, one after another, to no end. (9)

Apart from these physical processes, which the young protagonist takes for metamorphoses, the narrator depicts another instance of a pseudo-metamorphosis: his "nightly transformation" into a rabbit (17). While the adult narrator humorously admits that his "time as a rabbit was closely related to that strange condition called sleep" (16), the vividness of the description of his bodily transformation into a rabbit in his dream hardly differs from that of his experience of the gender metamorphosis. What he remembers "with absolute lucidity", as he says, is

> [n]ot the process – the shrinking in size or the stretching of my ears and legs, although, if I close my eyes and concentrate, I can nearly feel the growing of my soft, thick fur – not the process, but the result: a medium-sized rabbit, brown and white except for the tips of my ears, which were black. (17)

Furthermore, he situates his transformations in the context of identity formation: "I changed schools, languages, countries and continents a number of times during my childhood. At each change I had the opportunity to re-create myself, to present a new façade, to bury past errors and misrepresentations" (9). Finally, he presents us with his physical development around the age of twelve, which he registers as "a new hairiness, an awkward physical growth, a skin disease, the discovery of a secret pleasure" (50). In this instance, too, he does not content himself with the common term "puberty". In line with his vision, he presents his account as "the metamorphosis that begins at puberty" (50). All five examples to some extent approach the phenomenon of the metamorphosis as "a change of the form or nature of a thing or person into a completely different one" (Oxford Dictionary 2013, online) from symbolic, childish-naïve, imaginary, identitary and physical points of view. Most of all, however, they prepare the ground for the actual metamorphosis, which, due to the anticipating transformations, is envisioned as a natural and positive one: "I envisioned life as a series of metamorphic changes, one after another, to no end" (9), this is how the adult narrator puts his childish worldview into words. Given this pseudo-metamorphic pre-history, it does not surprise at first

glance that the protagonist also comes to see his parents' deaths as "another stage in [his] ever-expanding metamorphic life" (93-94). However, this statement neither accounts for his description of their deaths as "foreign" nor for the trauma aesthetics involved in the representation of the accident. As I shall argue, the 'foreignness' appears both as a marker of trauma and of the linguistic metamorphosis which the protagonist is about to undergo.

With the parents', and particularly the mother's death, the narrator's mother tongue fades from the narrative. Even the news of the catastrophe does not reach the protagonist in his mother tongue, but in a second language, Spanish, which makes the parents' deaths appear as "foreign deaths" (93):

> Ante todo, el viento y el ruido. Aquel día el mar estaba como un espejo sin nada de viento. Yo estaba remando. Oí algo como un grito, un grito de niña, no más, y al darme la vuelta ví un inmenso chorro de llamas viniendo hacia mí. Cayó del cielo azul como un volcán.
>
> First there was the wind and the noise. That day the sea was as flat as a mirror and without a whisper of wind. I was rowing. I heard what I thought was a scream, a little girl's scream, no more, and I turned to see an enormous flaming streak of colour coming towards me. It fell down from the blue sky like a volcano.
>
> (88)

This passage is only the beginning of a two-page long testimony, which breaks into the narrative without any warning, even though the narrator has mentioned the fatal accident on the first pages of the novel (7-8). The narrative frame of the testimony itself, however, does little to announce or round off the report on the parents' death. In the passage preceding the testimony, the narrator reflects upon his love-hate relationship towards his boarding school, and the passage that follows the testimony leads us back to his everyday school life. As the narrator laconically notes, his "parents' death was witnessed only by an old man and the sea" (89). With this immediate reference to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), the narrator refuses to take notice of the horrible event and presents it as but a topic of an English lesson by informing us that it "so happened that [they] were studying *The Old Man and the Sea* that very moment" (90). What is more, by shifting his attention to the novel, he effectively assigns the tragedy a place in fiction rather than in reality. He hardly allocates any space for this event in his memory, which makes the adult narrator admit upon rereading Hemingway's classic:

> My reaction was a blend of blankness and upheaval, for my memory had mixed the work of art with my parents' death. I can't see a plane crashing into the sea. The noise, the colours, the burning, the scattering of bodies and luggage – it's beyond my imagination. But I can see a large fish tethered to the side of a skiff. I can see it being attacked by sharks and other fish until nothing is left. […] Sometimes I have to scold my memory and remind it that my parents did not drown, their bodies found by a fisherman, but died in a plane crash, their bodies found by no one. (90)

The near amnesia and the fictionalization of the catastrophe expose the trauma inflicted upon him through the loss of his parents. Also, in line with the trauma theory introduced in the first

chapter, the lack of a narrative frame expresses precisely that the testimony does not lend itself to any meaningful framing, that the experience of the loss resists its narrativization and is therefore only conveyed by the figure of an old man, who is a stranger to the narrative.

This is also where the use of Spanish becomes significant. As noted earlier, Spanish is the language in which he first formulated his understanding of love and which he drew on in his exchange with Marisa. However, these undertones of desire seem radically extinguished, since his previous wish to silence the French family discourse has come true in a gruesome fashion. With French being replaced by Spanish in the left column, the testimony unfolds its uncanny effect, as the message comes to the protagonist in a familiar and intimate shape, but brings along a horrifying content. At the same time, the attribute "foreign" testifies to a distancing effect not unlike the one achieved by the fictionalization, which seems to foster if not the amnesia, then the repression of the painful memory. The event seems to bypass his emotions and does not insert itself in his memory precisely because it is encoded in a foreign language. Thus, the adult narrator relates to us that "[i]n many ways [he] denied [his] parents' death" (93) and "[a]s for emotion, [he] was a spectator at its theatre" (92).

The insertion of the testimony in a language that is not the main language of the novel reproduces an alienating effect also for the reader, since in its English-language surroundings, the text appears like a foreign body. By dividing this section into two columns, Martel on the one hand preserves the initial shock and the coping strategy inscribed through the Spanish text; the leap into Spanish emerges as a uncanny marker of trauma and the ensuing attempts to overcome it. On the other hand, the narrator leaves space for an English translation. This translation is not simply addressed to readers who do not understand Spanish, but signals that the adult narrator has eventually worked through the memory, for he has integrated it into his own discourse. Thus, the translation brings home the painful message – especially so for readers who do not know any Spanish – but also mitigates the traumatic effect, since it signals that the event has found its place in the narrator's English discourse, and thus in the protagonist's conscious memory.

However, the intrusion of the tragic message in Spanish also fulfills an entirely different function, for it appears as a rite of initiation in the linguistic and gender metamorphosis. The link to French is abruptly cut, and in fact, the language figures twice more in the entire novel: once, in a later passage, in which the protagonist resorts to her bilingualism in order to stress her Canadian identity. "Je ne veux pas être comme toi / I don't want to be like you" (151), she repeats six times in a row in her 'Canadian voice' when an unpleasant American soldier declares "that there was no difference between Americans and

Canadians" (150). The second time that French still figures is in the next bilingual scene after the Spanish-English news of the parents' death – the transformation scene, which shall be shortly discussed in more detail.

It is because of the transformation scene that I do not agree with Grutman's view of the parents' death as a "disappearance which also signals the loss of importance of French in his life"[6] (2009, 51). For rather than simply losing his mother tongue out of sight, the protagonist seems to escape it willingly and to turn to another language that will allow him to construct his personality anew. As argued above, the mother tongue also stands for the motherly discourse that governs the themes of gender and sexuality. Thus, the death of the mother tongue opens the way to a new freedom, for which the gender metamorphosis is merely a material expression. It does not seem as a coincidence that the language he turns to, English, hardly possesses any grammatical gender. Freed from the dominance of gender difference und heteronormativity, the protagonist seems to refute the doctrine that a subject can only belong to one or the other sex, and begins to enter relationships both with men and women. Thus again, the transgression of language boundaries is encoded as a liberation from a restrictive regime of gender and sexuality.

The effect of this linguistic transmigration strongly recalls observations made by psychoanalysts working with multilingual patients. Thus, there are clear parallels to Jacqueline Amati-Mehler's, Simona Argentieri's and Jorge Canestri's report on several multilingual female patients, all of whom looked back on primary relationships marked by deep conflicts and all of whom had abandoned their respective mother tongues such as Spanish and English in favor of Italian upon their migration to Italy. In their book, *The Babel of the Unconscious* (1993), they comment on the commonalities between these cases and reach the following conclusion:

> As far as these patients are concerned, it seems to us that by substituting the language of their childhood with a new language – the conveyor of new thought and affect routes – and by adopting a cultural and emotional context not mortgaged by the archaic conflicts, they not only rendered a service to resistances and defenses, but they also created new passages that provided them, albeit at the cost of deep and painful splittings, with valid and structured introjections on which to reorganize their adult feminine identity. (Amati-Mehler, Argentieri, and Canestri 1993, 71)

Quite the same seems to be true of Martel's protagonist. Significantly, the gender metamorphosis occurs precisely on the day on which the protagonist attains his majority. The development of a new gender identity thus signals the beginning of the protagonist's adulthood. As for Amati-Mehler's, Argentieri's und Canestri's patients, for Martel's protagonist, "'adopting' a second language seems to have genuinely represented a new

[6] In the original: "disparition qui signale aussi la perte d'importance du français dans sa vie".

opportunity for repeating the evolutive journey toward the acquisition of a more developed and less mutilated identity" (1993, 75), since the "new language represents a life-saving anchor which allows for 'rebirth'" (ibid., 108)

In order to better understand the relation between English and French in the narrative from a psychoanalytic point of view, and particularly to uncover the implications of the column aesthetics, let us look more deeply into the first transformation scene:

> Cela s'est terminé au cours d'une nuit. Je me suis *réveillée* soudainement. Je ne sais pas pourquoi ni à quoi je rêvais. Je me suis *dressée*. Tout était confus. Je ne me rappelais de rien, ni de mon nom ni de mon âge ni où j'était. L'amnésie totale. *Je savais que je pensais en français, ça au moins,c'était sûr. Mon identité était liée à la langue française. Et je savais aussi que j'était une femme. Francophone et femme, c'était le coeur de mon identité.* Je me suis souvenue du reste, les accessoires de mon identité, seulement après un bon moment d'hésitation. […] J'étais en train de me rendormir. Je me suis allongée sur le côté, j'ai tiré le drap jusqu'à ma joue, et je suis retournée dans les bras de Morphée, le sourire aux lèvres. Tout allait bien, tout allait bien.
>
> It was over the course of a night that things came to completion. I awoke suddenly. I don't know what I was dreaming, why I should have awakened. I sat up. I was confused. I couldn't remember anything - my name, my age, where I was – complete amnesia. *I knew that I was thinking in English, that much I knew right away. My identity was tied to the English language. And I knew that I was a woman, that also. English-speaking and a woman. That was the core of my being.* The rest, the ornaments of identity, came several seconds later, after some mental groping. […] I was falling asleep again. I lay on my side, brought the sheet up to my cheek and returned, smiling, into the arms of Morpheus. Everything was all right, everything was all right.
> (107-108, my emphasis)

Considering the arrangement of the columns, one could proceed from Grutman's statement that the French text is positioned on the left "où il sera lu d'abord et aura un effet plus immédiat, puis en y joignant une traduction, à droite" (61). The observation on the arrangement seems in this case more convincing than the conclusion. As argued above, the effect of immediacy should not be taken for granted. In my view, the spatial arrangement does represent a chronology, however not so much that of the reader's steps through the text, but that of two psychological aspects about the protagonist. First, it illustrates the process of acquisition by the protagonist, with French as the first and English as a second language. What is more, a reason for the English version to come 'later' can be that it stands for a greater maturity of the narrator. It can be argued that the English column stands for the narrator's overcoming of the dominance of his family discourse and the liberation he has achieved by turning towards his second language. The fact that the English text appears like a translation does not devalue it as less original, but rather signals that the contents of the left column have been worked through and integrated into the discourse of the adult narrator. The moment of belatedness does not diminish the significance of the translation or the working through; on the contrary, without the working-through a narrativization is unthinkable.

Despite the bilingual assertion of the narrator that "[t]out allait bien, tout allait bien", and "[e]verything was all right, everything was all right" (108), the harmonious self-image raises suspicion. While the transformation scene ends with the celebratory and humorous synthesis: "I'm Canadian, a woman – and a voter" (108), a different truth can be detected behind the uniting attribute 'Canadian'. Upon closer analysis, the two linguistic sides of the protagonist in the transformation scene are much less complementary than one may initially assume. "Tout en racontant son histoire en anglais", Grutman writes, "la première langue qu'il ait appris à écrire, il clame haut et fort son attachement à la langue française, qui fait partie de son identité autant (mais pas plus) que la langue anglaise" (2009, 57). This comment demonstrates that, independently from the spatial arrangement of the columns, a reader, in this case Grutman himself, is tempted to rely primarily on the column the language of which is well known to him or her, and to sometimes ignore the other one altogether. Comparing the statements in the two columns, one may notice that the right one does not offer a translation of the left one. At this point, Martel goes further in playing with readers' expectations and deliberately misleads us. For in fact, the narrator does not simply claim to have a close connection to French while choosing English as the main language of narration. In French, he states during the transformation scene: "Mon identité était liée à la langue française" (107). At the same time, however, he claims in the neighboring column: "My identity was tied to the English language" (107). As this translator's trick shows, a complementary relation between English and French in the protagonist's personality can hardly be assumed. So what kind of 'self' does Martel ultimately present us with?

What finds itself paradigmatically expressed for the whole novel in the transformation scene, stands in line with the column aesthetics. For a central characteristic of the columns is their non-connectedness. In German, the word for 'columns' – 'Spalten' – even shares its roots with 'Gespaltenheit', which in English means 'split' or 'disjunction'. As implied earlier in this chapter, the protagonist is also split into two solitudes. The transformation scene lays bare that he/she does not coincide with him/herself. In Julia Kristeva's terms (1991), he/she can be said to become 'a stranger to him/herself'. This in turn corresponds with Amati-Mehler's, Argentieri's and Canestri's observations. Thus, the authors write about patients who abandoned their mother tongues in favor of second languages:

> It is evident that although certain fundamental aspects of the personality can be 'saved' through such an operation […], the process can be neither painless nor peaceful. In fact, the problem in psychoanalytic terms is to understand the internal cost of a defensive organization such as this, and which are the repressive and splitting mechanisms that have been set in motion. (1993, 75)

The splitting mechanisms are crucial, which is why I once again have to disagree with Rainier Grutman, who describes the identity of the protagonist as "inclusive (man AND woman; francophone AND anglophone) rather than exclusive (one OR the other, without any possible intermediate solution)"[7] (2009, 58, translation mine). The narrator himself articulates the feeling of being split in a passage quoted above, when he comes to see his own personality "not so much a hybrid as a chameleon" (238). Here, Grutman seems to pay less attention to the novel than to the celebratory stance on fragmented subjects that has become dominant in Gender Studies. This stance is called into question by psychoanalyst Lynne Layton:

> [O]ften, after reading a brilliant piece of cultural criticism, my clinician self feels very uncomfortable. For in this work fragmentation is essentialized, universalized, and celebrated in a way that seems not to acknowledge what it feels like to experience fragmentation. Fragments are not seen as arising from specific relational interactions or specific historical circumstances but rather are seen as the condition of selfhood. While such texts demean any notion of a unified self, any wish for an integration of fragments, they paradoxically leave the reader with the sense that their protagonists are in total control of their fragments, that they are auteurs who pick and choose how they wish to represent themselves at any given moment. (1995, 109)

In fact, Martel does not simply celebrate a fragmented self; he also problematizes such a celebration, and thus integrates the tenor of cultural studies with a psychoanalytic perspective. In line with Layton's view that it is illusory to believe that fragmented "protagonists are in total control of their fragments", the narrative derails in the transformation scene even before the contradiction just described. The narrator seems already to lose control over his own discourse when, due to the necessary grammatical gender marker in French visible in the verbs "réveillée" and "dressée", the left column betrays the protagonist's transformation into a woman earlier than the English one on the right.

In the negotiation of the first metamorphosis and its consequences, the narrative again displays significant intersections between the topic of gender and that of language. Whereas Grutman stresses that the changes of language do not correspond to those of sex, since the narrator speaks the same languages as a man and as a woman (2009, 56-57), I would argue that if this were true, then the already ideologically somewhat contradictory narrative would be led ad absurdum. It is important to note that in the transformation scene, the narrator links his language and gender identity by highlighting them in both French and English as the "coeur de mon identité" and "the core of my being" (107). I do agree with Grutman that Martel does not perform the rather banal trick of attributing a language to each of the two sexes of the protagonist and thus distinguishing a Francophone male and an Anglophone female identity. However, the metamorphosis only begins to make sense through the

[7] In the original: "inclusive (homme ET femme; francophone ET anglophone) plutôt qu'exclusive (l'un OU l'autre, sans qu'il n'y ait de solution intermédiaire possible)".

connection between the mother tongue and the gender discourse that accompany the protagonist throughout his adolescence. The themes of language and gender intertwine in the troping of the metamorphosis as a moment not only of liberation, but also of splitting. While the figure of gender transformation finds itself celebrated in many contemporary narratives, Martel seems to acknowledge Lynne Layton's criticism that

> [o]ften, the protagonists of these texts – the lesbian, the transvestite, the sadomasochist, the hermaphrodite [and we could add the figure of the magical transformer] – are made emblems of a third space, a space outside of various forms of cultural oppression. In this status, they perform an important cultural service – they challenge heterosexism, reified notions of gender identity, repressed forms of sexual expression, the hypocrisies of a puritan, yet violent, culture. At the same time, when these figures become postmodern heroes and heroines, the pain of fragmentation, of marginality, of indeterminacy is often overlooked or glossed over. (1995, 110)

If the first metamorphosis does not yet sufficiently prove that Martel does not merely naïvely celebrate fragmented subjects, this is achieved through the second metamorphosis, which turns the protagonist back into a man. From the perspective of Gender Studies, it is interesting to trace the difference between the two metamorphoses through the intertextual reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* inscribed into the novel. While the classical text presents linguistic transformations only between human and animal languages, it acquaints us with five figures that undergo gender transformations. In restaging the *Metamorphoses*, Martel seems to draw on two different episodes: the famous one of Tiresias and the less famous one of Caenis.

The more obvious parallel is the one to the story of Tiresias who "had once struck with his staff two great serpents / As they were mating in the greenwood, / And, transformed amazingly from man to woman, / Spent seven autumns in that state", after which he turned back into a man (Ovid 2010, 75). The killing of one of the serpents reminds of the cruel childhood games played by Martel's protagonist with worms, snails, ants, turtles, lizards, spiders, slugs, frogs and toads (28-30). Another parallel is the curiosity about sexuality from the vantage point of the other sex. In the *Metamorphoses*, it is voiced through Zeus' and Hera's question to Tiresias as to whether it is men or women who can experience greater sexual pleasure. In *Self*, this curiosity plagues the protagonist himself. Thus, when he becomes close friends with Sonya, one of his prime issues of interest is her menstrual cycle: "Sonya's cycle became an affair between the two of us. […] I thought that if only I could understand the menstrual cycle, this slow, balancing ballet of hormones, this one mystery, I would understand everything. My curiosity became a starvation" (66). Soon enough, however, his curiosity is satisfied, since, like Tiresias, he miraculously transforms into a woman and can experience the menstrual cycle him/herself (118). By offering the reader numerous and detailed passages dealing with the protagonist's sexual encounters after the transformation,

Martel, in a somewhat dubious move, even seems to confirm Tiresias' view on the greater intensity of sexual pleasure in women.

Multilingualism and non-understanding

While the story of Tiresias serves as the background for the first metamorphosis, this is no more the case with the second one. Nothing betrays the attempt to turn back into a man by means of the same transformation ritual – in Tiresias' case the killing of a snake copulating with another. On the contrary, after the female protagonist finds happiness in a heterosexual relationship and becomes pregnant, a transformation back into a man is the last thing she could wish for. Instead, the second metamorphosis is triggered by an utterly traumatic episode, in which the protagonist is brutally raped by a neighbor. Here, the narrative conjures another episode from the *Metamorphoses* – the story of beautiful Caenis, who is raped by Neptune and afterwards transformed into a man. After "the god of the sea / Had her by force" and "had enjoyed / The pleasure of this new love" (Ovid 2010, 331), Caenis is granted a wish, which she formulates in the following way:

> 'The wrong you've done me demands the great prayer
> That I never be able to suffer this again. Make me
> A woman no longer and you will have given me all.'
>
> She spoke the last words in a huskier voice
> That seemed like a man's. And so it was,
> For the sea god had already answered her prayer
> And granted her besides that she could not be wounded
> Or fall to any weapon. Caeneus now
> Went away happy and spent all his time
> Pursuing manly arts in Thessaly's fields. (Ovid 2010, 332)

Caenis' wish to "never be able to suffer this again" is almost literally cited in *Self* when the protagonist utters after the rape: "Never again to be so open to attack. Never" (310). At this point, however, the differences to Ovid's narrative also become palpable, since Martel's protagonist cannot rejoice about her transformation or the possibility to pursue "manly arts". This difference does not surprise since being a woman generally is a disadvantage in the *Metamorphoses*: "Girls are a much greater burden," Ovid tells us in the story of the providential transformation of Iphis into a man, "[a]nd it is their misfortune to be weak" (Ovid 2010, 259). As critic Carla Meyer points out, in the *Metamorphoses*, all transformations into men are troped as acts of liberation, propelled by the gods' pity (1995, 45), so that their prehistory is rendered almost irrelevant. Not coincidentally, the only character appalled by his

own gender transformation is Hermaphroditus, who has the fortune to be born as a boy, but whose good luck abandons him, when the nymph Salmacis tricks him into merging with her, and he turns into a creature both male and female, or, as Ovid has it, into "half a man" (2010, 103).

In *Self*, this ancient and misogynous discourse is opposed by a psychological one, for the protagonist's wish "[n]ever again to be so open to attack" stands at the end of a traumatic stream of consciousness, significantly split again into two columns, which echo the splitting of the protagonist's consciousness. Thus, the novel corresponds with Lynne Layton's discussion of cases in which female rape victims begin to develop a split personality and partly take on a masculine identity, for "when the experienced trauma is sexual abuse or rape, splitting and fragmentation operate on gender identity" (Layton 1995, 113). Female victims can afterwards imagine, as the psychoanalyst explains, to possess both a female and a male – better protected – identity. In this self-image, "[e]ach identity is split between highly negative and highly positive traits; identifying with either is fraught with anxiety and pain because each has complex associations to the abuse and the gender of the abuser" (Layton 1995, 113). Indeed, in the novel, it seems both an act of self-defense and of punishment that the protagonist in the end shares the gender of her abuser. In a gruesome scene, the gender-split re-masculinized protagonist even falls into the role of a perpetrator, when he makes out a seemingly inferior Other in a heavily drunk Native American, whom he attacks and beats up. A laconic confession articulated as if by the feminine voice in him betrays the background of the deed: "The simple truth is, I am afraid of men" (322).

Addressing the question of why Martel puts his protagonist through such an ordeal, two answers seem plausible: one stands in relation with the author's negotiation of gender, the other one with that of multilingualism. Within the framework of the gender discussion, the rape appears to prove the point that there are no clear boundaries between the genders, except for the difference in their position and power in society. Polly Young-Eisendrath comments in a similar fashion that "a major component of gender difference worldwide is power difference, with female people having less power" (1997, 29). In such a context, it makes sense that Martel's young male protagonist dreams of becoming Prime Minister of Canada (56), while the adult female ends up as a waitress at a "posh greasy spoon" (242). By taking her through the excruciating experience of rape, the author seems to imply that being a woman includes being exposed to male power even in its most extreme expression. This power materializes not only in the shape of sexual violence, but also in the status of rape as a taboo topic in society.

The unspeakability of the crime marks the second reason for which Martel may have chosen to have his narrative culminate in a rape scene. In a novel that negotiates multilingualism in all its facets, the silence that surrounds such an experience of extreme violence presents the other end of the linguistic spectrum – the sheer negation of language, which makes the pages turn blank. Arranged in two columns, the traumatic rape scene, the account of which is squeezed into the left column, most palpably cries out for a translation. While calling up the expectation of a translation once again through the graphical arrangement, the narration of gruesome facts on the left only finds itself echoed through the fragments "pain", "fear" and "baby" and endless dots as a sign of speechlessness on the right (286-308). The missing translation and the fading out of the narrative on blank pages (308-312) imply that an understanding of the events remains impossible and the trauma of rape remains unprocessed throughout the narrative, unintegrated into the protagonist's narrative memory.

The presence or absence of a translation, and thus the possibility of understanding, is a central criterion in *Self*'s negotiation of multilingual lives and encounters. Significantly, the effect of non-understanding is practiced both on the protagonist and the reader shortly before the rape scene, when a longer passage is inserted in Tito's mother tongue, Hungarian (261-265). At a first glance, the reader feels reminded of the same technique in the narration of the protagonist's encounter with Marisa. This time, however, the maneuver occurs with a different twist: in contrast to the conversation with Marisa, which the narrator finds himself miraculously able to recount in the Czech original with an English translation – or, more probably, to reinvent in a plausible fashion – the Hungarian text is not translated in the right column. Does Martel want his reader to understand the passage at all? In answer to this question, Grutman argues that it is difficult to conceive of an author who would count on his reader's inability or reluctance to decipher his text, for in his view, this would contradict the basic rules of the hermeneutic exercise (2009, 77). In my view, however, the passage is multiply addressed: both to readers who understand Hungarian or will make the effort to find a translation of this passage, and to those who will neither understand nor try to translate it.

Those who understand the meaning of the Hungarian passage or make the effort to do so, encounter, as Grutman elaborately uncovers in his essay (2009, 66-75), passages from Béla Balázs' libretto for the opera *Bluebeard's Castle* by Béla Bartók (1918). More precisely, they witness young Judith follow her husband, Bluebeard, to his gloomy castle with the locked rooms, in the last of which, as the opera connoisseur knows, she will eventually perish. The fact that these passages are arranged in the column on the left, while on the right, the

narrator tells us in English how comfortable she felt in the Hungarian community (260-265), creates a most uncanny effect. The tremendous discrepancy between the two columns introduces a fatal split between the seeming and the real and foreshadows the gruesome rape scene, in which many elements, such as the absence of windows in the protagonist's office, her search for her keys and even the moustache of the rapist, are strongly reminiscent of motifs from *Bluebeard's Castle* (cf. Grutman 2009, 76). This relatedness in motifs recalls the already quoted passage dealing with the death of the protagonist's parents, which the narrator integrates into the fictional framework of Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea*. Having previously encountered such a connection as a narrative strategy for conveying trauma, the reader can only feel alarmed at the intrusion of a seemingly unrelated fictional text into the narrative. Likewise, the rape scene acquires its ghastly effectiveness by unexpectedly intruding into the narrative and bringing the course of the action to a sudden and dreadful halt. Shortly before the end of the novel, the narrator will mention *Bluebeard's Castle* also in English and reveal another metaphorical connection betraying the traumatic quality of his memories: "My soul is like Bluebeard's castle: it has a few locked rooms in it" (329).

On the other hand, the passage in Hungarian has a similarly powerful effect on readers who do not understand it – even more since they share this non-understanding with the protagonist. The arrangement of the passage in columns calls up the expectation of a translation, which this time – for the first time in the narrative – is not fulfilled. Even without any knowledge of Hungarian, the attentive reader will notice that the text in English graphically sets in before the Hungarian one and hardly contains dialogue, whereas the column in Hungarian consists of dialogue only. Bearing in mind the many parallels between the two love stories with Tito and with Marisa, the reader may be tricked into believing that the protagonist is so much at ease in the Hungarian community that she does not feel the need to understand the language spoken around her. The name 'Judit' facilitates the deception, since it is both the name of Bluebeard's bride and Tito's mother. Both the reader and the protagonist believe to find themselves in a new Babel, in which a peaceful and fulfilled existence is possible without the permanent need for translation. However, the reader who joins the protagonist – and narrator – in her feigned non-understanding, is even more shocked about the rape scene that defies understanding in a different sense. For only then does this reader realize that the absence of a linguistic translation of the Hungarian passage anticipates the impossibility of a mental translation of the rape scene.

Killed in Translation: Junot Díaz' *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Like Yann Martel, Junot Díaz in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*[8] links the topics of language and nation with gender and sexual identity. Whereas Martel, however, particularly explores the motif of gender difference and transformation, which was previously troped in a multilingual context by Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* (1928), Christine Brooke-Rose in *Between* (1968) and Brigid Brophy in *In Transit* (1969), Junot Díaz finds himself in a much longer tradition of Hispano-American writing set on performing borderland experiences and identities by engaging with multilingual experimentation. Such a border identity is ascribed to the central character named in the title of the novel, Oscar. Growing up in the Dominican diaspora in New Jersey as the son of a first-generation migrant mother, he is only vaguely aware of the fact that she has fled from the dictatorship of General Trujillo in the homeland. Like for Martel's protagonist, Oscar's main objective is to find love and belonging between his cultures and languages – an objective, however, complicated by his marginal position both in the US and within his diasporic community.

Oscar is mainly characterized by two factors: his passion for the genres of science fiction and fantasy, and his deviation from Dominican gender stereotypes, which becomes apparent in his sentimentality and his lack of success with women. While he does not show any tendency towards same-sex relationships, he can be categorized as 'queer' in line with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who interprets this notion as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't* be made) to signify monolithically" (1994, 8). Like Martel's protagonist, Oscar grows up bilingual, with English and Spanish. However, in contrast to the former, Díaz' main character is not rewarded for his code-switching ability, since neither of his two languages and cultures offer him a safe haven. While as a diasporic subject, he is doomed to remain a marginal in terms of nation, his own community makes him an outcast due to his non-conformity with regard to gender and sexuality. Thus, instead of granting his protagonist the possibility of liberating border transgressions, Díaz tropes bilingualism and translation as a marker of weakness and exposes Oscar to the violence of his surroundings. It is my objective to explore why the bilingualism of the protagonist does not serve him as an instrument of empowerment. In analyzing the ethics and aesthetics of Díaz' novel, I will demonstrate why literary bilingualism per se does not always necessarily serve as a strategy of resistance against hegemonic discourses.

[8] In the following referred to as *Oscar Wao*.

Multilingualism in the novel: a strategy of resistance or a marker of authenticity?

While Junot Díaz, in contrast to Yann Martel, mainly draws on only two languages – and a number of slang varieties – literary multilingualism is exercised in his novel in a still more radical way. The two languages, English and Spanish, are not separated in any way from each other, neither by grammatical nor by narrative structures. In grammatical terms, as Eugenia Casielles-Suárez points out (2013), Díaz does not restrict himself to *intersentential* code-switching, as can be observed in a passage, in which Oscar's mother is enraged because of his sentimentality: "Moms de León nearly exploded. Tú ta llorando por una muchacha? She hauled Oscar to his feet by his ear." (14) Instead, *intrasentential* code-switching dominates the discourse of the narrator as well as of most of the characters. This is illustrated in the characterization of Oscar's mother by one of her colleagues: "In her twenties, sunny and amiable, whose cuerpo was all pipa and no culo, a 'mujer alegre' (in the parlance of the period)" (112). Furthermore, the narrative discourse does not merely unite lexical items from both languages in common sentences. On a syntactic level, English is influenced by Spanish with the result that some of the English sentences absorb Hispanicized inversions: "To exhaustion and beyond they prayed" (145) or "To the latecomers are left the bones" (219). Finally, even the phonetic realization of words in English is colored by Spanish, for instance, when Díaz imitates a Dominican's pronunciation of 'New York' as "Nueba Yol" (72). Taking Díaz narrative language under close linguistic scrutiny, Casielles-Suárez comes to the conclusion that the author practices a "radical hybridism":

> there is a more intimate connection between the two languages, where Spanish does not so much alternate with English, but 'invades' English. […] I propose the term 'radical hybridism' to refer to the use of spontaneous loan words, and sustained insertion and congruent lexicalization à la Díaz, where rather than switching to Spanish for more than one phrase, what we find is massive borrowing of single words, and single and multiple insertions of Spanish phrases in shared structures. (2013, 485)

While Casielles-Suárez, however, insists "that the term 'radical hybridism' does not refer to an established mixed language", this assumption can be contested in the context of Díaz' novel. Thus, Gloria Anzaldúa has claimed that "Chicano Spanish is a border tongue which developed naturally" and exists as a "language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both" (1987, 77, emphasis in the original). Similarly, theorist Ilán Stavans argues that "Spanglish is not only a form of code switching; it is an altogether fresh tongue" (2000, 556), existing in many varieties, which depend on the speakers' countries of origins and their place of residence in the US. Countering the common accusation that Spanglish is spoken only by those who "are no longer fluent in the language of Cervantes but have also failed to master

that of Shakespeare" (2000, 555), Stavans compares Spanglish to Yiddish, which was also released from its stigma as the lingo of the uneducated Jews in Eastern Europe mainly through its literary use by writers such as Sholom Aleichem and Itzak Leib Peretz.

Considering Anzaldúa's and Stavans' claims, it stands to reason that even though the strategy of mixing two languages offers fertile soil for linguistic ad hoc creations, Díaz, in his novel draws on a well-established and widespread register. The mixed narrative language in *Oscar Wao* is thus not an invention made by the author, as is the case in Martel's *Self*, but looks back to a longer history and clearly reflects a social reality. This observation raises the question of how the author employs the presence of two languages in a narrative context. In regard to his own assertion that he "sought coherence" in his use of Spanish (Céspedes 2000, 904), I want to argue that his language strategy is not carried out in full consequence.

On the one hand, following a logics of mimesis, he introduces the pattern of quoting different characters in their respective original languages. Thus, being part of the Dominican diasporic community, both Oscar's family and the narrator mix English and Spanish in a rather believable way. On the other hand, the narrative also presents us with Dominican characters who are not in touch with English at all, but whose linguistic discourse seems to be compromised for the sake of the monolingual English-speaking reader. One of these characters is Oscar's grandmother, who has never left the Dominican Republic, but who is nevertheless made to speak English with only few interspersed phrases in Spanish. Thus, she scolds her flirtatious young grandson with the words: "Muchacho del diablo! This is not a cabaret!" (13). At times, Díaz entirely erases the presence of Spanish, drawing on a traditional strategy of just naming the language of a character, but providing the reader with a clean English discourse. This becomes palpable when Oscar's sister explains about her running training in the Dominican Republic that her friend "Karen would pass out if she could see me running sprints out behind my school while Coach Cortes screams at us, first in Spanish and then in Catalan. Breathe, breathe, *breathe*!" (71, emphasis in the original)

The fact that Díaz linguistic strategy appears as a compromise to an English-speaking audience raises the more general question of the text's accessibility to monolingual and bilingual readers. The accessibility for intended readerships is the main criterion according to which Lourdes Torres has systematized strategies for the inclusion of Spanish in Latino/a literary texts (2007). At one end of her scale, the critic positions texts by authors such as Nicholasa Mohr and Judith Ortiz Cofer, who draw on "easily accessed, transparent, or cushioned Spanish", which does not challenge the monolingual reader of English while at the same time "mak[ing] the text more exotic and allow[ing] the reader to believe the s/he is

interacting with and appropriating the linguistic Other" (2007, 78-79). At the other end, Torres situates texts such as Giannina Braschi's *Yo-Yo Boing!* (1998) and Susana Chávez-Silverman's *Killer Crónicas* (2004), which, due to their "radical bilingualism" can be fully understood only by bilingual readers (2007, 86). Torres locates texts by authors like Sandra Cisneros and Junot Díaz somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. For on the one hand, they avoid 'Othering' words in Spanish by means of italics or similar markers. Also, they do not provide extensive comments and translations of words from languages other than English – a strategy we have encountered in Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* and will encounter in Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* in the last chapter. On the other hand, as described above, they do not leap into radical bilingualism; while gratifying the bilingual reader, they challenge, but do not exclude the monolingual reader. This is why, in Lourdes Torres' view, Díaz' text is not particularly radical, but nevertheless stands out in its political agency and its subversive potential.

The language-mixing strategy as used by Junot Díaz has been praised by many critics as a strategy of resistance. Thus, in the chapter "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" of her work *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa argues for the freedom "to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate" (1987, 81) und denounces the linguistic dictate both of defenders of Standard Spanish and of Standard English as "linguistic terrorism" (1987, 80). And as poet and critic Naomi Quiñónez points out, "[t]he use of untranslated language functions to inscribe difference, since it makes the non-Spanish speaker the 'other.' In postcolonial writing, the use of untranslated words is a political act" (Quiñónez 2002, 143). Also, Junot Díaz himself comments in an interview that his project in writing is a project of inner decolonization:

> You come to the United States and the United States begins immediately, systematically, to erase you in every way, to suppress those things which it considers not digestible. You spend a lot of time being colonized. Then, if you've got the opportunity and the breathing space and the guidance, you immediately – when you realize it – begin to decolonize yourself. (Céspedes et al. 2000, 896)

Later in the interview, he specifies his linguistic strategy:

> Spanish is not a minority language. Not in this hemisphere, not in the United States, not in the world inside my head. So why treat it like one? Why 'other' it? Why denormalize it? By keeping the Spanish as normative in a predominantly English text, I wanted to remind readers of the fluidity of languages, the mutability of languages. […] When I learned English in the States, this was a violent enterprise. And by forcing Spanish back onto English, forcing it to deal with the language it tried to exterminate in me, I've tried to represent a mirror-image of that violence on the page. Call it my revenge on English. (Céspedes et al. 2000, 904)

Drawing on these statements by Díaz, some critics agree that Spanglish fulfills the function of challenging the centrality of English: "Such language allows for the opening of a

transformational space from which to interrogate unequal power relations based on race and class, and therefore functions as a site of resistance in relation to mainstream American norms of language." (Kondali 2012, 106) Likewise, Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien argues that

> Junot Díaz invests language with the power to influence political and social vision. He forcefully incorporates Spanish into his mainly English texts, showing concretely the linguistic violence that Spanish inflicts on English and vice versa. Instead of contorting English to fit Spanish, he demonstrates the inadequacy of English by substitution rather than metonymy or metaphor (2004, 22).

As I want to argue, a closer look at Díaz' use of Spanglish betrays some implications different from the assumed strategy of resistance. To clarify my argument, I would like to look at the semantic fields invoked mainly in Spanish in the novel.

Like many other authors drawing on Spanglish, Díaz uses words for referring to persons, such as *hombre*, *muchacha*, or *viejos*, kinship, such as *hija*, *tío*, or *abuela*, food, such as *pastelitos*, *pescado frito*, or *arroz con habichuelas*, and nationalities, such as *dominicano*, *chileno*, or *argentino* in the original language. Apart from this, two semantic fields in which Spanish is used stand out in particular: pejorative and abusive words, and expletives and obscenities. The former group comprises expressions such as *maldita borracha* (13), *muchacho del diablo* (13), *gordo asqueroso* (17), *puerca* (17), *parigüayo* (19), *fea* (56), *idiota* (56), *figurín de mierda* (60), *brutos* (128) and *cochinos* (128). The latter group encompasses formulations such as *What in carajo* (22), *Where in coñazo* (4), *coño* (53), *jodido* (106), *cuero* (127), *mona* (131), *culo* (73), *un mujerón total* (91), *tetúa* (92), *tetatorio* (93), *pechonalidad* (93), *toto* (141, 210, 217), *monita* (141), *hijo de la porra* (113), *No me jodas* (138), *cara de culo* (141), *hijos de puta* (142), and *cuerno* (195).

The linguistically more complex expletives and sexual allusions clearly betray whether they are uttered by Dominicans in the homeland or in the diasporic community. Thus, expressions such as: "Ese muchacho está bueno!" (13); "A culo que jalaba más que una junta de buey" (92), and "Cómeme el culo" (141), are included in Spanish, while an abusive exclamation like: "Hija de gran puta, would you stop jodiéndome!" (130), displays traces of a linguistically mixed discourse. The number of such hybrid expletives, however, is rather small, since most of the named expressions are used when the action is taken to the Dominican Republic. Due to the high concentration of expletives and obscenities in the text and their prominent position within the Spanish discourse, they appear in the novel as essentialist markers of Dominican machismo.

While the use of violent and abusive language stands in for the register of Dominican street slang, it also produces another effect: against its background, English, albeit also

coloured by street slang, turns bleak and seems to represent a weakened form of reality. In fact, Díaz' use of the language of aggression and sexuality in Spanish raises the suspicion that there is an underlying attempt of creating a binary opposition between the two languages by means of an implied marker of authenticity.

In his study, *The Romance of Authenticity*, Jeff Karem makes the point that "because so many of America's minorities have suffered from white caricature and cultural appropriation, one of the most valued qualities of recent ethnic fiction is its 'authenticity'" (2004, 1). However, as Karem shows, 'authenticity' in ethnic fiction is a highly unstable and problematic category, since whether a literary work is deemed 'authentic' seems to largely "depend on the interpreter's own horizon of expectations regarding the culture in question" (2004, 7).

Karem's point can in fact be observed in the critical reception of Díaz' work. Indeed, some critics readily assume that, in *Oscar Wao*, Spanish makes a greater claim to authenticity than English. This, for example, seeps through in Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien's study when she writes that: "[f]or Díaz, the presence of Spanish signifies explosive agency and lack of self-consciousness […]. By infusing English with new rhythms, he rejuvenates it" (2004, 208-09). The invocation of both the terms of explosive agency and of rejuvenation in regard to the use of Spanish bespeak an exoticizing image of Díaz' project. The mentioning of "new rhythms" can be even said to take it into the sphere of the erotic. On the contrary, English, with its need for infusions and rejuvenation, is implicitly characterized as decrepit and sick. The same combination of exoticization and eroticization is articulated in Kondali's article, when she writes that Díaz "*infuses* English with the *passion* of his native Dominican Spanish idioms and metaphors" (2012, 107, emphasis mine). Such polarizing and essentializing visions of the two languages used by Díaz seem to prove Karem's argument that, until today, critics are easily seduced by a sense of consumable 'authenticity'. This, in turn, undermines the argument that Díaz' use of Spanish or Spanglish presents a strategy of resistance. In line with Karem, we can instead observe in the criticism on *Oscar Wao* how "the practices of literary editing, publishing, and reception have been and continue to be resistant to hybridity in their privileging of cultural authenticity" (2004, 13). As Karem makes clear, hybridity and authenticity present two mutually exclusive agendas underlying the production of ethnic narratives. As shall become clear in the following, Díaz's novel seeks to encompass both, thus producing an utterly paradoxical effect.

The "authenticity" of the diasporic dictate of virility

What raises serious doubt about whether Díaz' use of Spanglish can be seen as a strategy of resistance is his choice of characters whom he endows with a voice in this hybrid language. Significantly, the violence and obscenity of street language mostly characterize the discourses of Oscar's mother and other characters living in the Dominican Republic. The narrator does not draw as strongly on expletives and obscenities; and Oscar seems far from using them. For as a US-born diasporic Dominican he fails to fully master Spanish; he also "lack[s] all aggressive and martial tendencies. […] Oscar had like zero combat rating […]. Intimidation and aggression out of the question." (15) Thus, instead of providing the protagonist with a strategy of resistance against marginalization, the violent Dominican slang marks the diasporic background against which Oscar has to authenticate himself.

The language of his diasporic origins serves as the violent basis for marginalizing Oscar in his sexual and gender identity. Dominican street Spanish brings along an image of masculinity which does not apply to Oscar in the least. Instead of displaying a stereotypical macho attitude by means of verbal or physical violence, as Elena Machado Sáez notes, the protagonist sheds countless tears throughout the narrative (2011, 536). Such unfitting behavior is a provocation to macho discourses on masculinity, which is why he is severely reprimanded by his mother: "Tú ta llorando por una muchacha? […] Dale un galletazo, […] then see if the little puta respects you." (14)

His sentimentality, also expressed through his non-aggressive language, is presented as the reason why Oscar has no success with women. Gender and national identity form a fatal alliance, since in Oscar's case, they seem to undermine each other. As the narrator informs us at the onset of the narrative, the diasporic community regards it as "*very* un-Dominican" that "dude never had much luck with the females" (11, emphasis in the original). His origin is repeatedly questioned by schoolmates observing his nerdish interest in fantasy and science fiction: "You're not Dominican", some of them comment in English (49); "Tú no eres nada de dominicano", others certify in incorrect Spanish (180). Clearly, his situation does not improve when, instead of showing some aggressive response, Oscar "would insist unhappily, I am Dominican, I am" (180).

If the absence of strong language in Spanish becomes a central marker of Oscar's cultural inauthenticity, the novel seems to imply that authenticity can be found precisely in the obscene language of his surroundings. How can the use of a language that the author draws on to construct a machista discourse, however, be considered at the same time a strategy of

resistance and who would this resistance be directed against? These open questions raise the concern that instead of empowering any of his marginalized characters, Díaz' use of Spanish mostly replicates Dominican hegemonic discourses on masculinity. The paradoxical character of Díaz' endeavor is put in a nutshell by Jason Cortés when he writes that "Díaz […] has made a career of depicting, questioning, and at times, being complicit with the authoritarian and oppressive aspects of Dominican hypermasculinity" (2015, 98).

By associating Spanish so strongly with the Dominican macho discourse, the novel seems to rob Oscar of a possibility to articulate his own concerns in his native language and leaves him almost no space to hide from it. The violent presence of this discourse in his life explains the protagonist's affection for escapist genres such as comics, fantasy and science fiction. Despite being branded as "GhettoNerd" (11), Oscar submerges himself entirely in "a steady stream of Lovecraft, Wells, Burroughs, Howard, Alexander, Herbert, Asimov, Bova, and Heinlein […] – moving hungrily from book to book, author to author, age to age" (21). What apparently attracts him, are the languages present in these works. Thus, feeling expelled from Spanish, Oscar seeks to enrich his English vocabulary by using "a lot of huge-sounding nerd words like *indefatigable* and *ubiquitous*" (22). Even more curiously, we learn that he "[c]ould write in Elvish, could speak Chakobsa" (21). This fluency in fantasy languages confirms the assumption that he is looking for a discursive space not invaded by the degrading undertones he is familiar with from Spanish.

With Oscar left without a language in which to defend himself from his diasporic surroundings, street Spanish is used in the narrative to ascribe to him a number of attributes that deny his masculinity due to his lack of success with women. Not only is his affection for a friend from school described as "amor de pendejo" (36), as a coward's love; soon enough his interest in the female sex is questioned in general and he is branded as queer, which turns him into a target of homophobic attacks. Terms from the lowest registers of Spanish are used to refer to his gender and sexuality. Instructing Oscar about how to get his sexual life started, his uncle tells him: "Listen, palomo: you have to grab a muchacha, y metéselo. That will take care of everything. Start with a fea. Coje that fea y méteselo!" (24) Apart from the obscene, derogatory and violent discourse on women, the expression *palomo*, literally meaning 'pigeon', stands out in the uncle's address to Oscar. According to E. Antonio de Moya, who, in an enlightening sociological study, deals with masculinity as a central discursive factor in the production of political legitimacy in the Dominican Republic, *palomo* is used to refer to "[m]en who are at the bottom of subordinate heterosexual categories of masculinity […] and are generally treated as outcasts, pariahs or non-persons" (2004, 86). As de Moya explains,

the expletives *mariconcito* ('little faggot') and *pájaro* ('bird'), "are regularly used to designate in a pejorative way men who are homosexual by choice" (2004, 90). The assumption that homosexuality is a matter of choice implies, importantly in the context of *Oscar Wao*, the possibility to opt for heteronormativity instead.

It is implied several times that the 'right' decision for heterosexuality is already inscribed into Oscar's last name, "de León", and his misconduct is traced back to the fact that he is not mindful of the latter. Ironically enough, his last name associates him with the lion, symbolizing "the notion of *hombría* (manliness or manhood), understood here as courage, determination and power" (de Moya 2004, 79, emphasis in the original). As we learn later when he leaves for the Dominican Republic, he disregards not only his last, but also his first name, which is originally "Huéscar". It almost seems as if the translation of his name into "Oscar" has made him susceptible to sensitivity and weakness. It is the narrator's, Yunior's, idea to associate the translated version of the name with Oscar Wilde. Being ignorant of English literature, a friend of Yunior's assimilates the name of Oscar Wilde into the more Spanish-sounding "Oscar Wao" and thus pronounces Oscar's future nickname (180). This nickname seems to turn him into a mix of a homosexual English writer and Doctor Who, a character from a BBC science-fiction television program – an identity reinforced by Oscar when on "Halloween he made the mistake of dressing up as Doctor Who, was real proud of his outfit too" (180). In Yunior's view, the protagonist's failure lies not only in acquiring such a name, but mostly in not fighting against it. As he informs us, "dude started answering to it". Thus, the translated and distorted name that makes its way into the title of the novel seems to stand in for Oscar's chosen queerness, incomprehensible to his surroundings.

The main reason why Oscar is robbed of the chance to emancipate himself by means of transgressing language boundaries lies in the fact that the account of his sexual life is not presented by himself in the first person, as is the case in Yann Martel's *Self*, but in the third person. In the context of Queer Studies, the distinguishing factor between first- and third-person narratives is lucidly elaborated on by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her essay "Queer and Now". Commenting on the very term "queer", the critic states that

> a part of its experimental force as a speech act is the way in which it dramatizes locutionary position itself. Anyone's use of 'queer' about themselves means differently from their use of it about someone else. This is true […] because of the violently different connotative evaluations that seem to cluster around the category. (1994, 9)

While the notion of queerness is not mentioned literally either in *Self* or in *Oscar Wao*, Kosofsky Sedgwick's argument appears instructive on the context of the two novels, if we allow the term to symbolically stand in for the overall performance of gender and sexuality. In

its performativity, queerness defines gender and sexuality in different ways, depending on whether it is applied as an attribute to one's own identity or that of another.

In contrast to the terms 'lesbian' and 'gay', which, according to Kosofsky Sedgwick, "present themselves (however delusively) as objective, empirical categories governed by empirical rules of evidence (however contested)",

> '[q]ueer' seems to hinge much more radically and explicitly on a person's undertaking particular, performative acts of experimental self-perception and filiation. A hypothesis worth making explicit: that there are important senses in which 'queer' can signify only *when attached to the first person*. One possible corollary: that what it takes – all it takes – to make the description 'queer' a true one is the impulsion *to* use it in the first person. (1994, 9, emphasis in the original)

The decisive distinguishing factor between the discourses in *Self* and *Oscar Wao* is, then, that the definition of sexual and gender identity is performed in the first and the third person, respectively. While Yann Martel's protagonist is free to perform "acts of experimental self-perception and filiation", Oscar is denied the performative power of defining himself in the first person.

This difference is paralleled by that in the characters' access to their respective languages. While in Martel's novel, the potential of retaining or transforming a multi-faceted sexual and gender identity is derived from the fact that the initially genderless narrative voice can easily maneuver between familiar and even unfamiliar languages, Díaz' protagonist never acquires any freedom of movement between his languages. Not only does he lack language; his voice almost entirely disappears behind that of a different character, Yunior, who usurps the power of a "narrator-dictator" in the novel (Machado Sáez 2011, 551).

Due to his deviation from heteronormativity, Oscar occupies a de-centered social position as a diasporic subject. In his marginal role within the marginalized diasporic group he can be considered as subaltern, since he can be likened to the oppressed women in post-colonial India described in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). While critics like Ksenija Kondali consider Díaz' language-mixing as a strategy of "subaltern linguistic resistance" (2012, 106), I want to argue that in Oscar Wao, the permeation of English through Spanish, at the same time, perpetuates the silence of the subaltern, embodied by Oscar. In line with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's argument, he, in fact, cannot speak and is instead spoken for (1988).

Oscar's inauthenticity points toward the figure that is being authenticated by implication on the basis of the binary opposition: to Yunior, the narrator. In narrative terms, the question arises as to why the chronology of the narrated events is anything but linear; why in some chapters the authority of focalization and seemingly even of narration is passed on to

Oscar's sister, Lola; and finally, why Oscar, in a narrative in which he does not occupy a more central role than other members of his family or than Yunior himself, is appointed as protagonist. At this point, I agree with Elena Machado Sáez' argument that "Yunior's insecurities as narrator reveal that his investment in telling Oscar's story is motivated by an inability to tell the full story about himself" (2011, 524). Oscar serves the narrator as a background that Yunior uses to articulate his own emotions and thoughts.

The narrator's difficulties in telling his own story point to areas of insecurity that he shares with Oscar – diasporic and gender identity. As to the latter, Yunior initially presents himself as a Casanova, constantly chased by women and thus affirmed in his masculinity. He does not seem to last in any monogamous relationship, and instead is involved in two to three affairs at a time. Only gradually, it becomes clear that Yunior is subject to a compulsive infidelity that makes him lose his great love, Lola, who is Oscar's sister. After being left by a girlfriend for cheating on her, he decides not to deal with his own problem, but to focus on "something easy and redemptive. Out of nowhere", he says, "and not in the least influenced by my own shitty state – of course not! – I decided that I was going to fix Oscar's life" (175). When, at the end of the narrative, he fantasizes about being visited by Lola's daughter, he voices his own feeling of failure: "Could have been my daughter if I'd been smart, if I'd been – " (329). The fact that the narrator's voice fails him confirms his perplexity.

As to the narrator's diasporic identity, he hurries right at the onset of the narrative to characterize Oscar's lack of virility as "un-Dominican". This move suggests that in the field of gender, Yunior discovers a safe terrain in which to encounter his Dominican heritage. However, his own extensive footnote explanations make clear that the violence that had become a normality under the Trujillo regime forms a part of the legacy that is more difficult to confront. In his incapability to analyze the dynamics of this violence, Yunior romanticizes it as the result of a curse called "fukú". He hardly needs to specify its name as "fukú americanus", since the origins of this thinly disguised curse obviously lie in English profanity. By characterizing the fukú as an American phenomenon, Yunior exculpates the Dominican Republic of agency in its own history of violence.

At the same time, Yunior has internalized the idea of dictatorship so much that he exercises it in his narrative project in regard to Oscar. While, on the one hand, he uses Oscar as a negative example to implicitly authenticate himself in his own identity, on the other hand, he takes on the project of domesticating and silencing Oscar's difference. At this point, Díaz' novel, like Martel's *Self*, engages with the motif of transformation. In the context of the colonizing gender discourse described above, however, it does not come as a surprise that the

transformation, as it is troped in *Oscar Wao*, is not spontaneous, self-initiated, voluntary or liberating. Instead, mentoring the protagonist in his sexual life, Yunior zealously and violently works towards one educational goal: Oscar's integration in a pattern of testosterone-driven misogynous masculinity and heteronormativity. Since Oscar comes to believe his surroundings that "no Dominican male has ever died a virgin. […] [I]t's against the laws of nature for a dominicano to die without fucking at least once" (174), his late transformational turn appears less as a liberating moment than as a result of a desperate attempt of national self-authentication.

Death in translation

The apotheosis of Oscar's miraculous transformation, in Yunior's view, occurs during the former's stay in the Dominican Republic and consists in his romance with Ybón, who happens to be a prostitute and, of all, the ex-girlfriend of a jealous Dominican policeman. Seeing his love requited seems to change Oscar so much that he willingly and fearlessly accepts the danger of death. Within a homophobic discourse, the romance seems to absolve him of his queerness, which is proved by the reactions of his relatives: "His tío seemed thrilled that he no longer had a pájaro for a nephew. I can't believe it, he said proudly. The palomo is finally a man." (286-87) Proving his masculinity through his short love relation with Ybón seems to allow Oscar to become a legitimate part of the genealogy of the de Leóns and Cabrals, in which he had previously appeared as an incomprehensible accident.

At the same time, this genealogical belonging leads Oscar directly to the trauma suffered by his mother and his grandfather under the Trujillo regime. The fact that Oscar's violent death seems programmed, since Ybón's boyfriend is a representative of state authority and violence, suggests, in my view, two different readings. On the one hand, one could argue that limitless violence is implied from the very beginning in the stereotyped image of masculinity and, therefore, presents but a logical consequence of Oscar's transformation into a 'real' man. Following this logic, the deadly risk of fighting against a rival seems to be inscribed into Oscar's love affair with Ybón. When Oscar manages to authenticate himself as Dominican by proving his masculinity, it is not surprising that he is initiated into the sphere of Dominican violence, which seems to confirm his masculinity even more.

On the other hand, Elena Machado Sáez argues very convincingly that after the episode of Oscar's final success with a woman, the narrator, Yunior, is seeking a quick

closure of the narrative, since this success seems to produce an inconvenient truth: instead of completing the process of transformation demanded by Yunior, Oscar might have found love precisely because of his sentimentality (Machado Sáez 2011, 549). To canalize this subversive element, Oscar and his voice, then, have to be eliminated from the narrative as fast as possible. This reading is made plausible by the narration of Oscar's violent death. For on the one hand, Oscar manages to fulfill a male stereotype, which is symbolically represented through his heroic speech to his murderers, in which he intrepidly curses them and their descendants. Significantly, he does so in flawless Dominican Spanish, the language that had not quite seemed as his own because of his diasporic and queer identity. On the other hand, this image is broken when Oscar is led by his kidnappers to perform an act of translation and thus tricked into pronouncing the order to carry out his own murder. Naively, he falls into a rhetorical trap when his murderers suggest:

> Listen, we'll let you go if you tell us what *fuego* means in English.
>
> Fire, he blurted out, unable to help himself. (322)

In this moment, the ideal of masculinity propagated by Yunior fails in several ways. Not only does he get involved in a childish language game with his murderers, from which he can only emerge as an infantile loser. He also performs the act of translation, which, in Lori Chamberlain's terms, has been coded as a reproductive and therefore traditionally feminine act (cf. 1992, 57), which we have already dealt with in the context of the translator figure in Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*. In fact, rather than speaking for himself, Oscar listens to the instruction of his murderers and follows their discourse. The act of translation is thus degraded as a mere repetition of a firing order, which presents his mobility between languages as a weakness. In addition, Oscar's 'blurting out' of the translation makes him appear as if he were not the master of his own voice. His body seems to succumb to translation in a feminine way, which renders him "unable to help himself" (322).

In ascribing this weakness to Oscar, the narrative presents his death as unavoidable, thus revealing a metanarrative, in which translation appears as a practice despised and persecuted in dictatorships. As we learn from Ricoeur, "[a]ll translation involves some aspect of dialogue between self and stranger. Dialogue means just that, *dia-legein*, welcoming the difference." (Kearney 2006, xvii) Difference, especially from a hegemonic discourse, is precisely what is not welcome in dictatorships, and therefore threatened to be extinguished. Oscar's queerness and bilingualism can be said to present a deviation from a monolithic discourse, which is why he is prevented from interpreting his diasporic identity in his own way. A stereotyped version of Dominicanness is enforced at his cost, which can be seen as a

form of dictatorship. With Oscar undermining the stereotypes of national belonging and gender which Yunior draws upon to authenticate himself in his own identity, the latter, as narrator-dictator, eliminates and silences him.

The lethal act of translation stands in symbolically for Díaz' overall negotiation of multilingualism and translation, which is marked by a basic paradox. For on the one hand, as suggested by Díaz himself and many critics, the author's strategy of denying the English-speaking monolingual reader a translation from Spanish can be seen as way of strengthening and valorizing the mixed language of the Dominican diaspora. His strategy of, as Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien calls it, "assertive nontranslation" appears as a challenge against the nationalist rhetorics of the melting pot, which contributes to a 'colonization' of speakers of languages other than English in the US (2004, 209). On the other hand, this challenge relies on a homogenization of the Dominican diasporic discourse – both in terms of language and of gender constructions. This point is articulated by Elena Machado Sáez, who writes that

> while Díaz's novel aims to represent the linguistic diversity of the Dominican diaspora, it does so by following the nation's logic of consolidation, specifically demarcating the borders of a representative diasporic subject in terms of masculinity and sexuality (2001, 523).

Establishing such a logic, as Díaz demonstrates, silences those who cannot or do not want to live up to this violent pattern operating under the guise of a resistance strategy. And even while a certain criticism may be heard in the book, Díaz, in my opinion, fails to offer a corrective.

Interestingly, Díaz seems perfectly conscious of the fact that he empowers a dictator-narrator, who robs other diasporic subjects of their freedom of speech and interpretation. Thus, in an interview, he emphasizes the relation between authorship and dictatorship:

> We all dream dreams of unity, of purity; we all dream that there's an authoritative voice out there that will explain things, including ourselves. If it wasn't for our longing for these things, I doubt the novel or the short story would exist in its current form. I'm not going to say much more on the topic. Just remember: In dictatorships, only one person is really allowed to speak. And when I write a book or a story, I too am the only one speaking, no matter how I hide behind my characters. (quoted in O'Rourke 2007, online)

As this statement shows, the author justifies narrative dictatorship through an assumed dream of or desire for unity and purity. In the context of multilingualism and translation, this rhetoric evokes a time before Babel, in which mankind was allegedly united by one original language. This conjured original language, usurping the place of multiplicity, forms the basis of dictatorship – a dictatorship that Díaz seems to accept.

Conclusion

The contradictions in the discourse on linguistic resistance and gender violence constitute a curious parallel to Martel's novel. While sharing an interest in the interrelation of gender, sexuality, multilingualism and translation, neither of the novels succeeds in resolving their inherent contradictions in their negotiation of these issues. Thus, Martel leaves it open whether the splitting of the narrative voice is solely a sign of the protagonist's liberation by means of transgressing language boundaries or whether it is at the same time a marker of trauma. Likewise, Díaz writes in a hybrid code, partly established as Spanglish and partly made up of ad hoc creations, but uses it to perpetuate a machista Dominican discourse on gender and sexuality, which eventually drowns out the protagonist's own multilingual voice. The author even views the fragmented character of his discourse as programmatic and explains: "In my mind the book was supposed to take the shape of an archipelago; it was supposed to be a textual Caribbean. Shattered and yet somehow holding together, somehow incredibly vibrant and compelling." (quoted in O'Rourke 2007, online)

In their negotiation of linguistic border-crossings, the two novels can be seen as the positive and the negative image of a similar scenario. Both narratives acknowledge the power of the language in which dominant gender discourses are encoded and have their protagonist's self-realization depend on whether or not they manage to transcend the limits of the language of their surroundings. Thus, in *Self*, the protagonist's ability to switch between different languages sets the outline for his struggle against the constraints of a clear-cut gender identity and sexual orientation, which he initially absorbs through his mother's discourse and, in broader terms, with his mother tongue. From early childhood on, he forms an understanding of love and sexuality in and through foreign languages and their speakers, and performs multiple escapes from the bonds of his first language, French. In my reading, the fantastic element of the protagonist's gender metamorphosis, triggered by his parents' death, serves as a physical expression of the linguistic transformation, in the course of which gender difference and heteronormativity are unmasked as fictions. Traumatic news, namely the death of his parents, enter the protagonist's life as a foreign text demanding a linguistic and mental translation. The failure of processing the trauma of rape, in consequence, is signaled by a failure of translation and the fading of one of the narrator's languages into silence.

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao similarly endows its protagonist with the ability to switch between languages, but does so only to demonstrate the consequences of silencing his multilingual voice. Not only does the novel rob Oscar of the possibility to

articulate an own understanding of gender and sexuality by narrating his story in the third person; it also keeps him imprisoned within the language of his diasporic community, which imposes a machista view of masculinity over his own sentimental discourse on love. The fulfillment he finds in his brief relationship with Ybón suggests that, at least for a short time, Oscar manages to transgress the boundaries of the dominant discourse. Eventually, particularly the Oscar's forced translation of his own death sentence shows the dictatorial persecution and extinction of difference implied in the freedom of stepping across language boundaries.

3. Dreams and Nightmares in Babel: Lars von Trier's *Europa* (1991) and Michel Gondry's *The Science of Sleep* (2006)

Bilinguals often find themselves confronted with a question asked by monolinguals seeking to unmask the mysterious phenomenon of bilingualism: What language do you dream in? The question hides a request to show one's colors and pledge allegiance to one of the two languages: the richer one, the more emotional one, the dominant one. The answer given to this question by a large majority of bilinguals in a survey conducted by François Grosjean comes, then, as a surprise: "[D]epending on the situation and the person we are dreaming about, we will use the one language, the other, or both." (2010, 128)

In the field of fiction, this question resurfaces particularly in films, which, as Laura Rascaroli confirms in an essay on the "Oneiric Metaphor in Film Theory" (2002), have always shared an intimate relationship with dreams. Two of the films interested in multilingual dreaming are Lars von Trier's *Europa* (1991) and Michel Gondry's *The Science of Sleep* (2006). To pursue the question of dream languages in an experimental way, the films send their protagonists from the American to the European continent, where both of them have their family roots. Thus, von Trier's Leo travels from the United States to post-war Germany and Gondry's Stéphane arrives to France from Mexico. Despite the entirely different motivation behind their journeys – the former seeks to contribute to the reconstruction of Germany, while the latter returns to the country of his childhood trying to come to terms with the story of his broken family – the two travellers have a lot in common. First, both travel to countries, whose languages they do not master and try to keep afloat by means of their English. In their helplessness, they are both thrown back into the state of childhood and find themselves surrounded by characters who, due to their linguistic advantage, find it easy to influence or manipulate them. As a result, they are both forced to undertake different attempts to regain control over their lives.

The central focus of the two films lies on what happens in the minds of their protagonists. In exploring this, they allow the viewers to accompany the characters not only in their waking life, but also into the unconscious world of their dreams. The latter play a crucial part in both cinematic narratives: While in *Europa*, the entire journey of the protagonist takes place within a hypnotic dream, in *The Science of Sleep*, the protagonist's dreams invade his reality, also blurring the line between the two for the viewer. What unites the two films in this context is their common interest in the impact of linguistic border-crossings on the unconscious in general, and on dreaming in particular. While dealing with collective and

individual traumas, respectively, both films engage in a negotiation of the risks and chances in the transgressions of language boundaries.

Interestingly, they share two more aspects, one of which conditions the other. Both productions show an intense self-awareness of their aesthetics, thus signaling the artificiality of the filmic image. In this sense, both films are filled to the brim with visual effects that exercise an almost hypnotic effect on the viewers, thus pushing them into a blurry liminality where dream and reality cannot be clearly told apart. The spectacularity of the visual world that merges dreams and reality seems to distract the attention from the significant fact that the two films are concerned with linguistic border-crossings. Curiously, this fact is largely overlooked even by film critics, who, as well, seem to be mostly attracted to the visual strategies of staging dreams. This circumstance clearly raises questions around the ethics and aesthetics of the representation of multilingual dreaming.

Rites of Passage in Hypnotic Babel: Lars von Trier's *Europa*

So far, we have encountered different ways in which multilingualism can be inscribed into literary and cinematic works, as well as the effects produced by multilingual narratives. Be it through separate foreign-language words in an otherwise monolingual text or extensive untranslated passages in a foreign language, through narrative voices split into parallel multilingual narrative strands or through staged acts of translation – multilingual narration always strikes the reader as a particular narrative strategy. Its aesthetics in turn entail implications for the negotiation of linguistic border-crossings. In pathologizing representations of involuntary language migration and its after-effects as in Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*, in depictions of the repression of one's own linguistic identity and the ensuing neurotic structures of desire as in Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*, and in narratives about interpersonal translingual attraction and gender and language metamorphoses as in Yann Martel's *Self* – each time, the characters face encounters with an Other and integrate them more or less productively into their experience. Is it possible, however, that the characters of a multilingual narrative hardly take any notice of their own linguistic border-transgressions? Or that a multilingual work does not draw attention to its own maneuvering around language boundaries? That both the characters' multilingual encounters and the multilingual aesthetics of a fictional work appear as an incidental detail? And if this is possible, what does it imply for the aesthetics and for the negotiation of multilingualism?

Regarding the critical reception of Lars von Trier's *Europa*, it seems that the bilingualism of the film in fact has gone unnoticed as a subsidiary matter. The film's technical virtuosity and sociopolitical context as well as its central issues with historiography and hypnosis have been widely foregrounded, thus for instance by Hampton (1995), Stewart (2005) and Greenberg (2008). However, in most reviews and critical essays, there is no reference to the film's bilingual setup. Among all reviewers, Jonathan Rosenbaum is the only one to highlight the bilingualism of *Europa* at all (1992, online). Unfortunately, even he casts only a cursory glance at the phenomenon and draws hasty conclusions from not quite accurate observations on the interrelation of English and German in the film. Other critics merely establish *that* the film is "bilingual" (Mosier Richolson 1992, online) or that it "was filmed in English and German" (Galt 2005, 4) – which again raises the question already posed in the introduction: what does it mean for a film to be shot in two languages? Strictly speaking, only a documentary that takes speakers of different languages as its protagonists can be "filmed" in two languages, whereas a fiction film has to be composed and staged in a multilingual fashion. Moreover, if a fiction film incorporates multilingual characters, does such a technique simply serve the purpose of literally depicting a historical encounter between speakers of different languages?

Two aspects concerning the production and the reception seem obvious right away: First, an unusual effort was involved in the shooting of *Europa* since the actors, as Jean-Marc Barr points out in the audio commentary to *Europa*, had to learn German for their parts in von Trier's film. As for the viewers' experience, the consequences can also hardly be overlooked: for unless the latter are fluent in both English and German, they have to rely on subtitles – provided that they do not take their non-understanding as a matter of course. However, the film does not suggest this option. For unlike in Egoyan's *Calendar*, which, instead of giving a translation, presents the viewer with the highly comical remark, "speaking foreign language", in the subtitle line, *Europa* provides subtitles in nine different languages. The viewers can easily select their preferred languages from a roadmap-like DVD menu. The abundance of language options in *Europa* can hardly be said to obscure the linguistic setup of the film. Indeed, it fulfills a similar function as the missing translation in *Calendar*: it draws the viewers' attention to the multilingualism of *Europa*.

What is it then about von Trier's film that keeps critics from lingering over and doing justice to its thoroughly bilingual setup? Why has the obvious never been adequately addressed? As I would like to show in this chapter, it is no coincidence that the film's multilingualism has been ignored or at least never systematically analyzed in critical writing.

It shall become clear that both the inconspicuousness and the erratic use of multiple languages are intended and can be made productive for an interpretation. In order to trace the strategies behind this 'inconspicuous multilingualism', I shall first focus on its incorporation on the plot level and demonstrate why and in what ways it eludes a systematic approach. In a second step, I shall address the question of psychological realism in *Europa* and examine the structures of psychological phenomena inscribed into the film. Finally, the results of this examination shall be integrated with one of the aspects that has attracted most attention from critics: the context of the film production and von Trier's representation of the postwar Germany.

Against psychological realism

Set in the aftermath of World War II, the film stages an encounter between representatives of defeated Germany and of the United States as the prime occupation force, and thus an encounter set at language borders. Indeed, most characters can be described as linguistic border figures, crossing the lines between English and German various times. The most obvious transgression is undertaken by the protagonist, Leo Kessler, a young American of German descent, whose arrival to Germany marks the opening of the film. His idealist objective is to contribute to the reconstruction of Germany as a civilian, or as he puts it "to show this country a little kindness" and "make the world a better place" (17:10).

The world from which Leo arrives is not introduced visually; as soon as he appears on screen, he is already in Germany. His travel route and his cultural background are presented verbally by an off-voice belonging to a hypnotist, whose role will be discussed in the second part of the chapter. Using the pronoun "you", the voice addresses the viewer and the protagonist at the same time: "You've been travelling by train from Bremerhaven and before that on a ship from New York" (03:50). Apart from a country of origin, the voice also endows Leo with a linguistic background. For since the protagonist obeys the instructions given in American English, he seems to share the language of the hypnotist. As to the protagonist's appearance, neither his clothing nor his behavior can be qualified in any way as American. The linguistic baggage Leo arrives with will remain the only signifier of his cultural and geographical background.

Accompanying him on his ways as a sleeping-car conductor, the viewer notices that the location of his journey is not marked by any recognizable national artifacts or architecture.

The only way to conceive of the location is to believe the off-voice, which informs us that the setting is Germany in 1945. Apart from this verbal definition, there is hardly any shot of an urban landscape. Instead, interior shots in apartments and train compartments make up the largest part of the footage. When the viewer, along with Leo, is allowed to catch a glimpse of the outside world, it is never by daylight, since Leo's voyage is a voyage „through the German night" (21:15). Nothing but the ruins in front of the Hartmanns' villa and a bombed cathedral represent the post-war setting. It does not even surprise that the exterior shots were not made in Germany, but in a Polish town named Chojna, while the interior shots were entirely produced at Nordisk Studio in Copenhagen. The setting of the film could not only be located in any other country; von Trier's film in general does not create the impression of a real coherent location. Only rarely, isolated interior spaces are briefly illuminated like islands in the dark. What labels the setting as Germany is once again language. German is present in almost all scenes, be it in the dialogues between characters or at the numerous ceremonies such as Max Hartmann's funeral, Leo's and Kat's wedding and the midnight mass held by the German priest. Performative utterances at these ceremonies not least fulfill the function of constituting Germany as the setting of the film.

Considering the language behavior of the protagonist, a more or less comprehensible development can be observed. Upon his arrival in Germany, Leo has only very basic knowledge of German, which is why he mainly draws on English. In the course of the film, he gradually acquires some German and can be heard uttering complete sentences in the new language, though with a heavy American accent. The language skills of the Germans he encounters pose a greater riddle. Thus, three of them, that is, femme fatale Katharina Hartmann, her brother Larry and Leo's uncle, have an impressive command of English. They speak without any syntactic or semantic flaws and are only recognizable as non-natives due to their clearly German accent. In all three cases, but most of all in the case of uncle Kessler, it remains a mystery where and how they could have acquired such language skills. These skills stand outside of the characters' psychological and social fictional reality. Leo's communication with other characters, who hardly speak English, such as Katharina's father Max Hartmann, the German priest and the Werewolf manipulator, Siggi, poses further questions. The dialogues between them are obviously bilingual, however, it is difficult to make sense of their language behavior, to determine the rules of the game. How does understanding come about in conversations in which some characters speak English and some speak German? Or does it? Moreover, how is it possible that the question of a common language of communication is never even touched upon? Do the characters notice at all that

they speak different languages with each other? As the film refuses to answer all of these questions, any form of psychological realism is seriously undermined.

This fact brings us back to the question as to why multilingualism has never been explored systematically in Lars von Trier's film. As I would argue, this has not happened precisely due to the seeming lack of psychological realism, which lies at the heart of what is commonly understood as language behavior. This seeming lack sets the film apart from all the other works analyzed in this thesis, in which the language behavior of each of the characters can be examined through a psychological lens. Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* has been effectively turned into a textbook on the multilingual mind, since it presents us with the real story of a real person, who comes to experience language migration. Likewise, all of the fictional works – from those grounded in realism such as Egoyan's *Calendar* to those including supernatural elements such as Martel's *Self* – are grounded in psychological realism in regard to the linguistic setup of the characters. The language behavior of the latter, as in Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*, can be exaggerated to a comical degree, however, the characters still play according to certain psychological rules and thus seem apt for a systematic examination.

In the case of *Europa*, a reading which treats the characters as independent beings with an autonomous inner life quickly reaches its limits. In my view, Jan Simons, who approaches the *Europa Trilogy* as "a virtual reality drifting ever closer to entropy" (2007, 103), comes closer to capturing the essence of von Trier's characters: "[I]n this endless bout of shadow boxing", he writes, "there is no such thing as an 'authentic identity' or an 'innocent soul'; there are only roles that people are obliged to adopt and forced to play by circumstance" (92). While I agree with Simons' view, I would stress a terminological point: more than in any other fictional work, in *Europa*, it seems problematic to speak of "people" who occupy roles and not simply of characters. For even though the characters come to haunt Leo with their orders and instructions, they seem to lack autonomy in their deeds and thoughts, which, as shown above, becomes obvious in regard to their language behavior. In his review of Lars von Trier's *Europa* trilogy, Howard Hampton points out even more sharply:

> Von Trier doesn't give us characters so much as refugees from a catastrophic Tarot deck (Fool, Authority, Werewolf Fatale). In turn, these walking omens serve as heralds of eternal return, whether of Fascism, Plague, or plain old Original Sin (1995, 41).

The hypnotist and the dreamer

However, even in *Europa*, the lack of psychological realism is only a seeming one and the choice of languages does underlie certain rules, which I shall soon examine more closely. The reason of this seeming lack is rooted in the narrative framework of the film. If von Trier does not endow the characters with an independent emotional life, it is only because he puts one mind in control of them all. As Jan Simons writes: "The world in *Europa* is not a representation of an independently existent reality, but is continuously conjured up by the voice of the narrator, who thereby becomes the creator of a world of which he himself forms no part" (2007, 85). What Simons refers to as the "voice of the narrator" is, not irrelevantly so, the voice of a hypnotist, impressively embodied by Max von Sydow. The voice opens and concludes the cinematic plot and guides the viewer and the protagonist through the film like through a hypnotic séance. While this séance can hardly be said to have a factual hypnotic effect on the viewer, the voice creates a narrative frame, which does not leave any doubt about the status of the thus embraced action: everything about to happen is part of a hypnotic dream. Therefore, the film has to be read not only as a text, but as a dream text.

The fact that the action is presented as if in a hypnotic dream points towards the central mind in charge of the other characters' behaviour and language choice. Is this central mind the hypnotist? As psychoanalysts assure us, the author of the dream is never the hypnotist, but always the dreamer him- or herself (cf. Frohne-Hagemann 1999, 166). Who then is the dreamer in *Europa*? As mentioned earlier, the hypnotist's use of the second person pronoun "you" implies that Leo and the viewer are addressed at the same time. However, since the protagonist is never shown together with the hypnotist, the two seem to be situated on different ontological levels. In narratological terms, the invisible hypnotist could be termed an intradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator, while Leo then exists only in his intradiegetic narrative. It can therefore be argued that the role of the dreamer in the film is reserved not so much for Leo, but for the viewer. Such a reading explains why, in contrast to the setup in *The Element of Crime*, the hypnotist in *Europa* never appears on screen and the psychoanalytic session is not visualised. By appointing the viewer as the author of the dream text, von Trier ingeniously has his story reach beyond the diegetic frame – a move which empowers the viewer and holds him or her liable for the protagonist's actions. This reading puts Leo in line with all other characters, who do not seem to possess an independent inner life. The protagonist appears as a mere puppet, in whose body the viewer can travel through the imagined world – a focalizer not in his own, but the viewer's 'hypnotic dream'.

The film imitates a hypnotic séance in numerous facets, only few of which shall be outlined here, since they have been closely analysed by Andrea Keil in her book on the phenomenon of hypnosis in Lars von Trier's *Europa Trilogy* (1996). The opening sequence clearly mimics the induction of a hypnotic dream. The monotonous and captivating linear forward motion along train tracks, as Achim Forst points out, replaces the swinging of a pendulum (1998, 87). The deep, penetrating voice, which von Sydow, as we learn from the audio commentary to the film, modulated by lying on his back on the floor of Nordisk film studio, embodies a hypnotist's calm and assertive direction. Classical elements of hypnotic induction are also represented through the counting down from ten and the instructions for physical relaxation. As Keil further points out, the hypnotic séance in the film is characterized by the verbal rapport of the hypnotist towards the hypnotized, the hypnotist's omnipresence, associative figures of repetition, the breaking of the time-space continuum, and missing logical structures in the narrative (1996, 57ff.) – a phenomenon which has been otherwise referred to as "trance logic" by Martin T. Orne (1959, 295).

The interpretation of a dream

As psychotherapist Philip Zindel convincingly argues in an essay on dreaming and hypnosis, hypnotically induced dreams differ from common night dreams only in the conditions under which they emerge, but not so much in their quality (cf. 1998, 236-245). It therefore does not surprise that the hypnotic dream in *Europa* is modelled like a textbook example from Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1953a,b). First, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the setting is outlined only vaguely and orientation seems impossible. Jan Simons links the images of Germany to Freud's concept of the *Tagesreste* when he writes that the country appears as

> a cinematographic simulacrum, not a historical reproduction. To the extent that the trilogy refers to a historically and geographically factual Europa, these references are made through such a dense layer of cinematographic treatment and allusion that – just as in the Tagesreste in the dream – any direct connection with the actual, original historical and geographical context is lost (2007, 88-89).

Also, we can observe many instances of dream condensation in the film, that is multiple relations between dream-content and dream-thoughts (cf. Freud 1953a, 284). Thus, in a Freudian manner, we could analyze the train, in cinematic terms, as a sign of the inalterable progression of the narrative and a symbol of the film-viewing experience itself. Critics have picked up on this aspect, formulating that "*Europa* is a film-train that dashes at high speed

into our viewers' night" (Danton 1991, 34, translation mine)[9] or commenting: "Trains are popular in movies because they're like the moviegoing experience itself. In a sheltered, unchanging capsule, four or five hundred people watch moving pictures through rectangular screens" (Kennedy 1991, 69). Within the *histoire*, the train establishes a claustrophobic setting and Leo's place of work and initiation into Zentropa, while in its toy shape it appears as a prop in the love scene between Kat and Leo and foreshadows the disaster that their relationship will lead him into; in historical terms, finally, the train stands in as a symbol of the deportation and extermination of the Jews as well as of the fatal combination of a subservient spirit and excessive authority in the Third Reich.

Just like in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, the "construction of collective and composite figures" (Freud 1953a, 293), that is, the merging of several different persons into one due to a connecting characteristic, figures as the central instance of dream condensation in *Europa*. One curious example of this is certainly Lars von Trier's cameo in the role of a Jew, who helps release Max Hartmann of his guilt as a Nazi collaborator. Taking the director's biography into account, it could be argued that the director chose to appear in this role, since he was convinced that he himself had Jewish origins until 1995, when his mother confessed to him that he was not the biological son of the Jewish man whom he had always considered his father (cf. Munzinger Online). In this context, it does not seem entirely accidental that the name of the director's biological father was Hartmann (cf. ibid.) – the name he chose to give to his fictional Nazi collaborator. Whether or not von Trier with his cameo wanted to stage a forced reconciliation with his biological father, does not truly advance the interpretation of the film. However, we shall return to this cameo in a different context later in this chapter.

A more important instance of a composite figure can be seen in the protagonist, since he enters the hypnotic dream merely as a representative of the 'hypnotized' viewer. This is underlined by the fact that the viewer is addressed by the hypnotist from the very onset of the film, while Leo enters the stage only when the hypnotist begins to sketch out the setting of the dream. Moreover, *The Interpretation of Dreams* helps us understand how Leo is constructed as an identification figure within the 'hypnotic dream' of the viewer. "It is my experience, and one to which I have found no exception", writes Freud,

> that every dream deals with the dreamer himself. Dreams are completely egoistic. Whenever my own ego does not appear in the content of the dream, but only some extraneous person, I may safely assume that my own ego lies concealed, by identification, behind this other person; I can insert my ego into the context (1953a, 322-23).

[9] In the original: "*Europa* est un film-train qui fonce à grande vitesse dans notre nuit de spectateur".

The possibility of such an undercover appearance in one's own dreams explains the fact that the viewer does not and, of course, cannot actually appear in the film. With Philip Zindel, it can be added that the dreamer enters the dream in a dissociated shape since the camera perspective mostly does not coincide with that of Leo. In fact, Zindel could be almost describing *Europa*, when he writes that in dissociated dream experience the dreamer "can see himself from outside, as if filming himself through a camera, as a kind of actor standing in for him" (1998, 237, translation mine)[10].

Back to childhood

A chief characteristic that marks Leo's appearance and behavior within the hypnotic dream can be described in psychoanalytic terms as regression. This term is not understood here in the initial, 'topographical' sense, with which Freud sought to describe the systems of the psychic apparatus that contributed to the production of dreams (cf. 1953b, 533-547), but in the temporal sense, on which he would expand only after his research on the infantile psychosexual development in 1910-12 (cf. Laplanche and Pontalis, 2006, 386). In a paragraph added to the chapter on regression in *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1919, Freud notes that "dreaming is on the whole an example of regression to the dreamer's earliest condition, a revival of his childhood, of the instinctual impulses which dominated it and of the methods of expression which were then available to him" (1953b, 548). The idea of the re-living of infantile scenes captures the essence of Leo's initial appearance. When the protagonist appears on screen for the first time, his face expresses nothing but surprise. He looks around through his round innocently shaped spectacle lenses, as if he had arrived not from New York, but from an entirely different reality, not least since his appearance in the image seems like a conjuring trick performed by the off-voice. His expression does not betray any past or experience. Critics aptly describe Leo as a "blank slate or […] a white canvas, on which anything can be projected" (Müller 2000, 125, translation mine)[11] or "tabula rasa" (Greenberg 2008, 46). As Marion Müller writes, everything about his face seems or is round (cf. 2000, 125), which makes him look like child. Moreover, he resembles a child in that he does nor

[10] In the original: "er kann sich selber von außen sehen, wie sich selbst durch eine Kamera filmend, als eine Art Schauspieler, der für ihn dasteht".
[11] In the original: "unbeschriebenes Blatt oder […] weiße Leinwand, auf die sich alles projizieren lässt".

arrange his life in Germany on his own, but is sent to a relative, Uncle Kessler, who at the same time receives a letter from Leo's father with the request to find a job for his son.

The adult world is represented not only by Uncle Kessler, who takes on the role of an educator, but also by all other Zentropa employees, such as the doctor, who examines Leo, the tailor, who sews his uniform, the secretary, who provides him with his conductor's equipment, and finally and most curiously, the Inspector, who offers him candies. The protagonist does not seem to be informed about anything – not about the political situation in Germany, not about the company he works for, not even about relationships between men and women. Thus, he immediately responds to Kat's seduction, even though her brother Larry draws his attention to her calculating manner (40:10). After she deliberately drops her cigarette case and has Leo crawl for it under a table like a toddler, she follows him to kiss him in a moment of childlike intimacy.

Regression also appears as the defining feature of Leo's linguistic capacities. Since Leo hardly speaks German upon his arrival to Germany, he seems locked in an almost prelinguistic state. From the onset, he is spoken for by others. Thus, he silently enters the setting as if conjured by the hypnotist. After his character is introduced through the words of the hypnotist in English, Uncle Kessler takes over the task of introducing Leo and continues to create his identity on the intradiegetic level, this time in German. If the hypnotist at least addresses him with "you", his uncle refers to him to in the third person, which strongly undermines his agency on the intradiegetic level. In checking his nephew's passport at the gates of Zentropa and pronouncing in a nasal and clichéd staccato German: "Sein Name ist Leopold Kessler" (04:32), he seems to carry out a performative act of baptism. In receiving a German name, Leo, who has been previously culturally defined by the hypnotist as American, is associated with both cultures, albeit through the words of others. Moreover, he seems to be subjected to an authoritarian education, when he is repeatedly prohibited to speak. Every time he makes an attempt at speaking, he finds himself interrupted by his uncle and succeeds in uttering a complete sentence only 9 minutes into the film. As if to justify his ways of education, the uncle admonishes Leo in German: "Demut, Kessler! Nie die Demut vergessen!" (07:35)

Upon his entry into the world of Zentropa, Leo is constantly characterized in German by the characters around him: thus, he is called "echter Idealist" by Kat (07:20), "Schafskopf" by his uncle (21:05), "ein vernünftiger junger Mann" by Max Hartmann (24:02). Leo accepts all of these characterizations without any protest, as if he were simply happy in a childlike manner to learn new words that refer to him. Moreover, his vocabulary does not suffice for

him to formulate his own thoughts, which is why protest on his part appears even more unlikely. For instance, when a tyrannical passenger complains about the missing chalk mark on his freshly polished shoes, Leo, instead of seeing the larger absurd picture, finds himself lost for words and finally stutters: "Doch, ich glaube, ich habe diese Schuhe geputzt." (1:35:33) Interestingly, even in his relation to Colonel Harris, with whom he does not have to speak German, he cannot escape his role as a child. Although he can make himself understood in English, the Colonel is far ahead in age, rank and authority, for which reason he receives instructions from him throughout the film.

A linguistic rite of passage

Apart from the elements of the Freudian interpretation of dreams, the dream metaphor calls up a further thematic field, which sheds light on the linguistic setup of the film. For as shall be explained in the following, the motif of regression only prepares the stage for the larger motif of initiation. The connection of psychoanalytic dream theory and rites of initiation was prominently elaborated upon in Joseph Campbell's seminal structuralist study on myths, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), which may well have served von Trier as a source of inspiration for *Europa*. Significantly, the Zentropa Inspector points out to Leo upon the latter's employment as a sleeping-car conductor: "Gestatten Sie mir, diese Aufgabe mythologisch zu nennen" (11:25). What initially sounds like an instance of megalomaniac self-glorification can be decoded in a different manner with Campbell. The creation of *Europa* as a myth, reflects a Campbellian awareness of the fact that myths are closely related with psychological patterns. Thus, we read in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*:

> According to this [psychoanalytic] view it appears that through the wonder tales – which pretend to describe the lives of legendary heroes, the powers of the divinities of nature, the spirits of the dead, and the totem ancestors of the group – symbolic expression is given to the unconscious desires, fears, and tensions that underlie the conscious patterns of human behavior. Mythology, in other words, is psychology misread as biography, history, and cosmology. The modern psychologist can translate it back to its proper denotations and thus rescue for the contemporary world a rich and eloquent document of the profoundest depths of human character." (Campbell 1968, 256)

Against this background, it is more easily understood why von Trier stages the 'mythological task' of his protagonist in the frame of a dream. What is more, this mythological task is situated within a particular historical context, which the director, provocatively enough, considers to be mythological as well. In an interview, he formulates:

> Our conceptual world and our mythological world are rooted in this time of World War II. For my generation, this is completely natural. We have not lived through the war, which turns it into a great mythological event (von Trier quoted in Steinborn 1987, 16, translation mine).[12]

At this point, it already shines through that *Europa* is less concerned with the negotiation of the memory of World War II, but with the creation of an inner landscape shaped by this collective memory. Linking myth, psychology and history, von Trier lends this dream landscape a mythological structure and shapes his protagonist's journey through it as a rite of initiation. This structuring strongly resonates with Campbell, who writes about the beginning of a mythical hero's quest: "Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" (1968, 97). In fact, in *Europa*, the beginning of the hypnotic dream coincides with a transgression of a threshold, when the representative of the dreamer steps through the gates of Zentropa (04:40). Also, Leo can literally be said to undertake a "voyage to the underworld" (Campbell 1968, 98), where he "must survive a succession of trials" imposed on him by the conflicting forces of the American occupiers, the Werewolves, and the officials of Zentropa. If the film incorporates the structure of a rite of initiation, or, in more general terms, a rite of passage, it seems instructive to take a closer look at this originally anthropological notion coined by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1909) and developed further by Victor Turner in the 1960s. In analyzing the incorporation of this notion and its structure, we shall come closer to understanding Leo's linguistic development within the hypnotic dream and the film's multilingual setup.

According to van Gennep, rites of passage "may be subdivided into *rites of separation, transition rites*, and *rites of incorporation*" (1960, 11). Turner rephrases and expands on van Gennep's findings:

> all rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen, signifying 'threshold' in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state'), or from both. During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated (1969, 94-95).

Comparing this account with the structure of von Trier's cinematic narrative, it becomes apparent that the exposition of the film represents the first two of the three phases of a rite of

[12] In the original: "Unsere Begriffswelt und unsere mythologische Welt liegen in dieser Zeit des 2. Weltkrieges. Für meine Generation ist das eine ganz natürliche Sache. Wir haben den Krieg nicht erlebt, was ihn zum großen mythologischen Ereignis macht".

passage: separation and liminality. It shall remain to be debated later in the chapter whether the third phase, reaggregation, also plays a part in the cinematic narrative. The separation ritual that Leo undergoes vividly corresponds to a description given by Edmund Leach:

> The initiate who is undergoing a change of status must first be separated from his (her) initial role. This separation may be represented in a variety of ways all of which may appear as part of the same ritual proceedings, e.g. […] the initiate may take off his (her) original clothing [and] surface 'dirt' of the initiate may be removed by ritual washing, shaving, etc. In general these initial rites of separation have the effect of removing the initiate from normal existence; he (she) becomes temporarily an abnormal person existing in abnormal time (1976, 77)

All of these aspects apply to Leo's development. First, he changes his own clothes for a Zentropa uniform (06:00); second, he undergoes a ritual of purification, when his uncle cuts his hair, examines the cleanness of his hands and nails, and gives him a demonstration of how to rinse out his mouth (07:15). This scene calls up the notion of impurity, which Turner considers to stand in connection with the phase of liminality. Since the initiate has been detached from all secular structures, his position in society has become unclear, and "what is unclear and contradictory (from the perspective of social definition) tends to be regarded as (ritually) unclean. The unclear is the unclean", Turner rephrases the observations of Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger* (Turner 1964, 7).

Finally, Leo is clearly removed from normal existence is every sense of the word: not only does he leave behind the United States as the space that can be considered his linguistic and cultural home ground; he also enters an "abnormal time" in the sense that his journey will only lead him into what the hypnotist calls the "German night" (21:15). For Leo, there is no 'German day', not only because his position a as sleeping-car conductor obliges him to work at night, but also because upon his entry into the world of Zentropa, he enters into a state of seclusion. Von Trier's depiction of this state again matches Edmund Leach's description:

> The general characteristic of such rites of marginality (rites de marge) is that the initiate is kept physically apart from ordinary people, either by being sent away from the normal home surroundings altogether or by being temporarily housed in an enclosed space from which ordinary people are excluded (1976, 77).

The parallel between Leo's journey and the state of seclusion is first visually introduced when the protagonist arrives at a paled gate and waits for his uncle to let him into a vast storage hall crowded by passively crouching German soldiers in uniforms. Their uniform appearance marks them as a community of equals, which Leo is about to enter, and can be therefore compared to what Turner has termed "communitas" (1969, 96). Several times throughout the film, the camera will perch over Leo lying in his bed in a huge underground dormitory, apparently surrounded by sleeping fellow initiates. Both the darkness of the dormitory and the silent company of his fellows are constitutive for the state of seclusion.

Even when Leo performs his tasks as a sleeping car conductor and does not seem to be separated from the rests of society, he is encapsulated in a seclusion space. While the camera accompanies him on his visits to different compartments, it always returns to show Leo confined in his tiny conductor's compartment. The sense of seclusion is intensified by his uncle's prohibitions to raise the window blind and take a look outside. "There is nothing there to see!", Uncle Kessler exclaims as if reminding Leo that as an initiate he must not seek any contact to the outside world.

Leo's appearance and behavior also fit into the picture of an initiate. As mentioned above, both his general and his language behavior are marked by "submissiveness and silence", two major characteristics of the liminal phase as outlined by Victor Turner (1969, 103). His appearance also bespeaks his entry into a liminal phase, for "(t)he neophyte in liminality must be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to his new status" (Turner 1969, 103). What is more, Leo is thrown into a "limbo of statuslessness" (Turner 1969, 97), since he as an American, he is a representative of the occupiers, while as an employee of Zentropa, he is situated in the lowest ranks of a strictly hierarchical system. Finally, as Turner writes, "liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon" (1969, 95). Leo's condition encompasses several of these aspects: he is surrounded by permanent darkness as if during the eclipse of the sun, his sexual identity becomes apparent only due to his seduction by Kat, and the final images of his death in water strongly resemble those of an embryo in a mother's womb.

In the world of Zentropa, in which employees have to spend a fortune on their own uniforms and work equipment and the restoration of a luxurious sleeping car moves his superiors to tears (12:40), Leo is engaged in a constant struggle for understanding. While this struggle is directed at the logics and social structures of Zentropa, it is prominently symbolized through the figure of linguistic understanding. Thus, the viewer, who is provided with subtitles for all passages and enjoys an information advantage, witnesses Leo's helpless gaze and undetermined expression when he is addressed in German by the custodians of Zentropa, be it by Fräulein Schulze or the Inspector. In contrast to the viewer, Leo initially does not understand anything uttered in German. What is more, the representatives of the train company do not make any attempt at explaining or at least repeating their utterances and thus appear to ensure his non-understanding. It seems significant that the Inspector shares the news of the restoration of the first First Class car only in German, as if wanting to preserve the

sacrality of Zentropa. German thus acquires the status of a sacred language, reserved only for topics which are important in a national context. By switching into English a few minutes later, the Inspector demonstrates that he could as well communicate in English, but does not wish to hand out important information to an outsider like Leo or to desecrate an object of national pride by speaking about it in a 'profane' language. And indeed, he endows English with a sense of profanity by giving an utterly absurd speech about a sweet tin and instructing Leo on how to eat sweets in an American manner: "Take two and crush them, as is the custom in your country." (13:05)

While Leo is constantly confronted with his non-understanding, Kat, ironically, establishes a connection to him by complimenting his knowledge of German. By inviting him into her train compartment with a French "Entrez!" (15:42), she initially creates a linguistically neutral ground between them, while, of course, also presenting herself a member of high society. Kat's presence brings Leo out of his shell and seduces him to utter a first sentence in German. If a few minutes before, when Leo is trying to sell first class train tickets in the midst of a huge crowd, we can hear him flee from his German "Erste Klasse Fahrkarten" to English with "first class only", he now justifies his clumsiness in making the bed with the words: "Entschuldigen Sie mich bitte. Es ist meine erste Reise" (16:30). Kat immediately shows interest in him by switching into English and flattering him with the comment: "Your German is not bad at all, Herr Kessler!" Her mixing of languages reveals her strategy: by using English, she enters his linguistic world and makes him feel at ease; by addressing him with "Herr Kessler", she assigns to Leo a place in German society. With Kat in his surroundings, Leo does not have to set forth on his initiation journey on his own. She even seems to free him from his inferior role as an initiate in the system of Zentropa.

At the same time, she gradually initiates him into a different role. The fact that she seeks to recruit him as a supporter of the Werewolves is anticipated when the train passes two hanged Werewolves, whom Kat and Leo see from the compartment window. After this shocking sight, she asks Leo to keep her company on the pretext of being frightened in tunnels. At this point, the film again shares a common imagery with Victor Turner's depiction of the liminal phase. For in order to capture the temporal dimension of the rite of passage as well as "its hidden nature, its sometimes mysterious darkness", Turner conceptualizes the transitional phase precisely as "cunicular, 'being in a tunnel'" (1974, 232). One does not emerged unchanged from a tunnel, Lars von Trier seems to agree, and to highlight once more the circles into which Kat seeks to integrate Leo, von Trier, in the tunnel shot, situates the *Reichsadler* on the front of the roaring locomotive in the very center of the image (18:55).

Finally, instead of dissolving the menacing motif, the film links it with the face of peacefully sleeping Kat through a match cut. This element of montage reveals her close association with Nazi circles and the particular interest she takes in Leo. The impossibility to stop the locomotive is literally inscribed into her face, and while Kat herself is asleep, the viewer senses that Leo has taken a path towards initiation not into German civil society, but into the Werewolf group. Putting one social group on a level with the other, Kat will again praise Leo's ability of understanding, as if complimenting his German: "You're so good in understanding. I find that a little provoking. Allow me to test your tolerance. Ich bin Werwolf" (48:15).

Finally, as an aspiring sleeping-car conductor, he has to undergo an initiation exam that strongly resembles a language test. The examination questions are utterly absurd and the examiner tends to answer them himself before Leo can do so. The assessor, for his part, rejoices in grotesque trick questions to then suddenly withdraw for a nap: "Der Herr Beisitzer möchte sich ein paar Stunden ausruhen, bevor wir mit der Prüfung fortfahren", Leo is informed by the examiner (01:33:30).While the protagonist visibly struggles to understand the exam questions in German, the absurdity of the examination is emphasized when the examiner suddenly switches into English to utter a casual "Think it over!" (01:34:05). This part of the hypnotic dream not coincidentally calls up the image of the 'examination dream', which was described already by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* as a "typical dream" (1953a, 273-76). Apart from the fear of failure present in such a dream, Leo's dream features a displaced fear, for the bureaucratic madness of the examination overlays his dangerous mission of planting a bomb on his own train. When the examiner comments on Leo's making the bed with the words: "Die Uhr läuft!" (01:26:40), the viewer is bound to take this as a reminder of the ticking time bomb.

After the examination, the demands of the Werewolves, the staged threat to his wife and the complaints of a pedantic passenger push Leo to his limits, he undergoes at least one consistent transformation. He abandons his role of the initiate, the language learner and the civilian and seizes the role of an American soldier. He arms himself with the gun of a military police officer, threatens the passengers, bellows orders in American English through the entire sleeping car, and for once makes everyone turn silent for a moment. By switching back into English, Leo temporarily breaks out of the inscrutable foreign-language dream. To the viewer's surprise, in reaction to the pedantic complaint, he bursts out in his mother tongue: "Your problem is not important!" (01:34:50) In reaction to the assessor's astonished outcry: "Die Notbremse! Sie haben die Notbremse gezogen!", Leo even succeeds for the first time in

pronouncing the most tabooed destination of the Zentropa trains: “I don’t want this train to go to Munich, Bremen, Frankfurt or fucking Auschwitz. I want it to stay right here!” (01:35:07)

A failed passage

As we know, this breaking out does not prevent the ultimate catastrophe, so that Leo’s rite of passage culminates in his own death. Three reasons can be named for his failing reintegration after the liminal phase. First, and most obviously, his initiation turns out to be a farce staged according to the different scenarios of the Zentropa officials, the Werewolves and the American occupation forces. Operating Leo like a puppet, the three parties are guided by colliding objectives, which undermines the possibility of Leo’s integration into any system.

Second, the question of Leo’s status cannot be resolved in the narrative, since he is not only a liminal, but also, in Turner’s terminology, a “marginal” persona. Turner characterizes marginals as persons

> who are simultaneously members (by ascription, optation, self-definition, or achievement) of two or more groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from, and often even opposed to, one another […]. These would include migrant foreigners, second-generation Americans, persons of mixed ethnic origin (1974, 233).

Leo appears as marginal in a double sense. First, he has grown up in the United States as the son of German expatriates, for which reason he is affiliated with both cultures; and second, he does not occupy a military or political function in Germany, so that he belongs neither to the occupiers nor to the occupied. Therefore, Leo’s condition fully corresponds to Turner’s description: “Marginals like liminars are also betwixt and between, but unlike ritual liminars they have no cultural assurance of a final stable resolution of their ambiguity” (1974, 233). It therefore does not surprise that both the occupiers and the occupied find in him a perfect subject for exploitation, while refusing him a real perspective of integration into one group or another.

A third reason for Leo’s failing reaggregation is finally the fact that at the time of his arrival, there is no functioning system in Germany, which he could be integrated into. Leo enters the stage at a moment, in which Germany itself is caught in a liminal phase. Although the war is over, instead of a new beginning, there are only the ruins of the past and an uncertain future. It is a time between ideologies, without any central political governance. In Turner’s words, Germany can be described as “at once no longer classified and not yet

classified" (1964, 6). With the Nazi regime overthrown, Germany does not find itself immediately redefined in territorial, social and political terms. There is no doubt that the country must undergo structural changes and that purely cognitive changes, such as an understanding of the extent of the Nazi crimes or re-education in the name of denazification do not suffice for such a purpose. What is at stake here, to quote Turner, "is not a mere acquisition of knowledge, but a change in being" (1964, 11).

Curiously enough, we see the country obsessed with ceremonies, such as Max Hartmann's staged absolution of responsibility for his support of the Nazi regime or that of his later funeral, Leo's and Kat's wedding ceremony or the midnight mass. All ceremonies enacted in Europa heavily rely on performative language and all of them, significantly, are carried out in German. So while the Germans in 'Europa' are obsessed with performing ceremonies, which confirm them in their national identity, the country is endowed with characteristics of liminal personae. Like a transitional being, Germany as such has become almost invisible. Lars von Trier portrays it not only as a realm of constant night and darkness; it is also entirely in ruins. In this respect, Uncle Kessler's exclamation: "Da gibt es nichts zu sehen!" can not only be understood as a prohibition, but also as a stating of facts. This point is also confirmed by the example of the town of Wöllstadt, where a Jewish family on Leo's train seeks to return after the war and which is shown as reduced to a place-name sign and the wreck of a cab. Apart from that, there is in fact nothing else to see.

Also, the Germans have forfeited their rights as proprietors. Whereas in the beginning of the film, the Hartmann family are introduced as the proprietors of Zentropa, in the course of the film, this propriety is confiscated and their private compartment even becomes Katharina Hartmann's prison cell, after she is arrested for her Werewolf activity. The absence or loss of propriety corresponds to a characteristic of transitional beings described by Turner, namely "that they have nothing" (1964, 9). This refers not only to material property: "They have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows" (Turner 1964, 9). In fact, the Germans seem to be reduced to their status as the occupied – their churches are bombed out, their industry is being destroyed and taken apart, and congregations are prohibited by the Americans. They are also obliged to show submission in other respects: their defeat is multiply restaged in chess games such as the one between Colonel Harris and the German priest and they are obliged to fill in questionnaires designed by the Americans to test the degree of their participation in Nazi crimes. In this context, it appears striking that the popular names of the questionnaires bear connotations with processes of ritual purification. Thus, a confirmation of one's non-

involvement in Nazi crimes, as it is forged for Max Hartmann, is referred to as a 'Persilschein' – as a license to wash the stains of history off oneself and to emerge purified in the present. The questionnaires also enable the alleged perpetrators' transition from an unclear to a clear status, since they allow to classify them as major offenders, offenders, lesser offenders, followers and exonerated persons, and to proceed with them accordingly (Control Council Directive 1946, 184).

Therefore, for Germany, just like for the American protagonist, there is no reaggregation in sight yet. The structure of the rite of passage breaks off in the liminal stage, while the film brings another structure to the forefront: the structure of the Freudian model of trauma. This partly accounts for the fact that a 1991 film, instead of celebrating the end of the Cold War, looks back to events which date back to 1945 and earlier. Lars von Trier does not only revisit the Holocaust as a trauma because World War II indeed created the ground for the ensuing collective trauma of the Cold War. This move can also be explained through the Freudian trauma model: "early trauma – latency – outbreak of neurotic illness – partial return of the repressed" (Freud 1964a, 80). Thus, the traumatic experience of the Cold War is not integrated into collective memory, but triggers the memory of the earlier trauma of the Holocaust, which has never been and cannot be entirely worked through.

Envisioning the traumatic events, as Cathy Caruth does in her theory (1995), as experience which cannot be articulated, partly explains why the protagonist of *Europa* is exiled into an almost prelinguistic state. For the lack of language is symptomatic of the traumatic quality of experience that a subject may wish to verbalize. This accounts for the fact that Lars von Trier has Leo stutter throughout most of his cinematic narrative and allows him to switch back into his mother tongue only towards the end, when the catastrophe cannot be prevented anymore. In switching back into English and raising his voice, the protagonist in a certain sense can be said to verbalize his experience in 'Europa'. Therefore, as Greenberg argues, it appears as a cathartic moment when Leo pulls the emergency break and bursts out in English that he does not "want this train to go to Munich, Bremen, Frankfurt or fucking Auschwitz" (Greenberg, 49).

From hypnotic dream to multilingual nightmare

But is it a working-through that Lars von Trier aims at with *Europa*? Hardly so, for two reasons: the utterly untherapeutic approach of the fictional hypnotist and the quality of the

memory images the protagonist is eventually exposed to. Let me first expand on the first point. As Zindel argues in his essay, both in the conditions of sleep and hypnosis, dreams can only come into being when the patient lets go his or her waking functions of will (cf. 1998, 245)[13]. In the latter condition, the presence of the hypnotist plays a decisive role. Approaching hypnosis with a therapeutic objective, as Zindel does, presupposes that the presence of the hypnotist is experienced by the patient as protective (cf. Zindel 1998, 246). To highlight the fact that the presence of the therapist shall not limit the inner freedom of the patient, Zindel speaks of "abstinent nearness" (1998, 252, translation mine)[14]. He goes even further by describing the nearness as symbiotic: "Only in a good symbiosis, the human being can succeed in learning to truly be him- or herself in dialectical situations" (1998, 269, translation mine)[15].

While the presence of the hypnotist is very prominent in *Europa*, his relationship with the dreamer is entirely different from that described by Zindel. Both the exaggerated tone of voice and the disquieting string theme evoke violent control instead of a protective presence. Also, the hypnotist snatches the control over the dream from the hypnotized by choosing a train journey as the metaphor for the dream voyage. By putting the protagonist of the dream on a train, he subjects him to an imaginary train schedule, so that the dreamer cannot influence either the direction or the stops or the destinations. Due to his position as a sleeping-car conductor, the representative of the dreamer is not only obliged to obey the will of other passengers rather than his own; as he can hardly leave the train, he is also disconnected from the setting the train passes through. As pointed out earlier, even the possibility of looking outside is reduced to a minimum, since he permanently travels through the night and the window curtains are regularly pulled shut in front of his eyes by his uncle and other characters.

Two rather helpless attempts of resistance to the violent hypnosis are suggested to the dreamer, which find themselves inscribed into the dream text as leitmotifs: sleep and the pulling of an emergency break. When the red emergency break in the conductor's compartment is first shown on screen, Leo is optically separated from it, since he appears in the same image only due to a back projection, from where the break seems unreachable. Nevertheless, von Trier allows him to reach out from his projection screen and indeed, in the course of the film, Leo pulls it three times. The first time he does so not out of his own will,

[13] In the original: "daß das wesentliche gemeinsame Charakteristikum von Schlaf und Hypnose in Bezug auf das Entstehen von Träumen das möglichst vollständige Loslassen der wachen Willensfunktionen ist".
[14] In the original: "abstinente Nähe".
[15] In the original: "Nur in einer guten Symbiose kann es dem Menschen gelingen zu lernen, in dialektischen Situationen wirklich er selbst zu sein".

but in response to Larry's request to enable an illegal funeral for his father, Max Hartmann (57:55), which does not help him stop, but rather propel the cinematic action. The second time he pulls the emergency break, he does succeed in decelerating the course of events at least for a short time. Briefly, he seems to successfully rebel against the scenario set up for him by the hypnotist. Thus, he reacts to the German passenger's complaint by bursting out in English: "Your problem is not important!" (1:35:42). Also, he interrupts the absurdity of his conductor's exam by commenting in English: "You'll have to excuse me. I need some time to think" (1:36:16). After he wrests a machine gun from a soldier of the military police and threatens the passengers on the train, the hypnotist does not tolerate any more protest on the protagonist's part. He sets the train in motion again in front of Neuwied Bridge, which Leo was charged with blowing up by the Werewolves. When the protagonist tries to bring the train to a halt for a third time, his attempt fails and pulls the emergency break in vain. It remains unclear whether Leo eventually detonates the bomb himself or whether he simply cannot prevent the explosion. In either case, the explosion immediately brings the hypnotist back into power, who mercilessly begins a countdown to the protagonist's death.

As to the second attempt of resistance against the hypnotist, we observe the protagonist several times as he tries to go to sleep. Twice he is shot in the dormitory by a camera perching over his bed and slowly spinning around its own axis. The vertiginous rotation is accompanied by the already familiar disquieting string motif and the verbal presence of the hypnotist. The off-voice evokes physical unease such as shivering in the protagonist: "You are in Germany just after the war. You are cold. You're covering yourself up with clothes you have in your suitcase" (08:05). At other moments, the voice does not let him rest due to its sheer presence. Thus, the hypnotist cynically declares: "When you're rested you will be on your way to your new job", only to command one second later: "Get up. Get up and be on your way." (08:27) Finally, he directs other figures like puppets to come and wake the protagonist as soon as we see him asleep. As soon as the hypnotist utters: "On the count of three there will be a message for you of great importance. One, two, three" (21:10), Uncle Kessler is on the spot shaking him out of his sleep and delivering an invitation from the Hartmann family. With the frightening action progressing, insomnia seems to become a natural condition for Leo, which the hypnotist does not need to reinforce anymore. Violently intruding into his privacy, he lays bare the reason of Leo's sleeplessness:

> It is New Year's morning, year one. You are on your honeymoon in the Hartmann family's private compartment. You have been making love. You have enjoyed the tenderness of your wife. But now she is asleep and you are alone. For the first time you experience the fear of being on a train with no possibility of getting off and no idea of where the journey may end. (1:08:30)

The fact that it is the hypnotist himself who put him on this train of course remains unmentioned.

Having been refused sleep as a means of briefly escaping his nightmarish journey, the protagonist finds a last resort from the absurdity of his conductor's exam in fainting. The hypnotist seems to cynically support him in this endeavour and declares: "The exhausting run has made you sick. Your clothes are soaked with sweat and you're afraid of fainting. Your heart is bumping faster and faster in panic. You cannot breathe" (1:24:50). And after excruciating Leo with nausea, he finally sarcastically pronounces: "On the count of three you faint. One, two, three... One second of infinite rest" (1:26:25). Of course, this "second of infinite rest" does not rescue the protagonist from the hypnotist's power. As soon as he collapses, the hypnotic image of passing railway tracks forces its way onto the screen as if to lead the protagonist back into the hypnotic dream and indeed, one second later he is already dragged back into the farce of the conductor's examination.

To stress the importance of the motif of sleep, the hypnotist constantly has other characters around Leo fall asleep and, what is more, has Leo watch over their sleep by assigning him the bizarre position as a sleeping-car conductor. In this position, he has to fulfill a task formulated by the Zentropa Inspector in the exposition of the film: "Nur der Schlafwagenschaffner hat den direkten Kontakt zu den Reisenden: Er kann sagen: 'Überlassen Sie mir die Verantwortung für Ihre Reise. Ich kümmere mich um alles. Schlafen Sie ruhig" (11:15). From the onset of the film, he is violently initiated into this role. Thus, in a moment, in which Leo pulls opens the window curtains in a dormitory, he is roughly rebuked by his uncle: "What are you doing? Do you want to wake the sleeping? All these people work at night and they need their sleep" (07:55). During his very first train journey, he begins to take over a function which Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams* ascribes to dreaming itself – he becomes the 'guardian of sleep' (cf. 1953a, 233). First, he restrains from waking up his uncle, who falls asleep on duty after consuming some strong drink. Left alone with the task of taking care of the passengers, he is summoned for the first time by Katharina Hartmann to make her bed and to keep her company while the train passes through a tunnel. Having previously witnessed the sight of two hanged Werewolves, Leo helps Kat go to sleep by seemingly absorbing the nightmare that could come to haunt her. Thus, after she falls asleep, we catch a glimpse of the protagonist's mind being invaded by the word "Werwolf" (19:35). Finally, when later in the film Leo is plagued by insomnia due to the already mentioned "fear of being on a train with no possibility of getting off", his image is ironically contrasted by that of Kat, who can be seen lying peacefully asleep next to him.

Through this contrast, the title of Leo's position at Zentropa is revealed as a pun in all its facets. As a *sleeping-car* conductor he is denied the possibility to become a *sleeping* car-conductor – this, however, only on the intradiegetic level. The existence of the extradiegetic framework of hypnosis explains why Leo is constantly refused his sleep. For as soon as the dreamer's representative falls asleep and becomes inactive, the dream action comes to a halt. The peculiar power of the hypnotist then lies in the fact that he censors all images of sleep within the dream while at the same time inducing precisely a semi-somnolent state in the extradiegetic dreamer to send him or her on the journey to 'Europa'. Not only does the hypnotist seize the control over the contents of the dream in an utterly untherapeutic manner. His violent manipulation culminates in his refusal to let the dreamer wake up after the protagonist's death: "You want to wake up to free yourself from the image of Europa. But it is not possible" (1:43:45).

Manipulation, in fact, can be seen as the central theme of the film, for which reason it does not surprise that the director performs a cameo in the scene of the falsification of Max Hartmann's denazification certificate. To the viewer's surprise, von Trier appears in the role of a Jew who is blackmailed into whitewashing the Nazi crimes of important figures in post-War Germany. While the director appears in all three films of his *Europa Trilogy*, this cameo differs both from that in *The Element of Crime*, in which von Trier plays an insignificant role of a hotel receptionist, and that in *Epidemic*, in which he performs as a script writer. In my view, the choice of this role is not sufficiently explained by the circumstance that Lars von Trier had assumed for a long time that he himself had Jewish origins. Instead, I would argue that Lars von Trier steps in as the non-fictional hypnotist, who has drawn the viewer into the cinematic dream in the first place. With Philip Zindel, the director can be regarded as the introjected therapist, who enters his patient's dream in a symbolic shape (cf. 1998, 252-258). According to Zindel, the technique of introjection enables three different types of intervention: First, the silent presence of the symbolized therapist can offer protection for the patient and stimulate the dream creation; second, the therapist has the chance to ask about the feelings, objectives and possibilities of his symbolized image; third, in particularly difficult phases, the therapist can intervene more directly and take certain actions (cf. Zindel 1998, 256). What we witness in *Europa* is clearly the third case – a hypnotist-director who has his introjected image appear constantly to keep the dreamer's representative restricted within an already claustrophobic scenario.

As to the dream images imposed on Leo and the viewer, one can hardly detect any therapeutic qualities about them. Following Rosalind Galt's argument, one could give von

Trier credit for restraining from using redemptive images of postwar Germany. For as the critic points out, his film differs from postwar films such as Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* (1948), Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1948) and Jacques Tourneur's *Berlin Express* (1948), which are also all set in and deal with Germany after World War II, in that in *Europa*, "there are virtually no shots of destroyed urban landscapes", and thus, no "ruin images" (2005, 9). She explains the effect of this cinematic strategy by drawing on Thomas Elsaesser, who has argued that

> the films set in Germany took the ruin as a liberal – rather than as a radical – signifier of political redemption. In the conflation of liberation with ruination, images of rubble became signifiers of the cleansing of Germany, in which the Third Reich was physically swept away and the pain of destruction became cathartic for the German people. The ruin was the fresh start made material. Like the famous year zero, ruin images propose a fictional break that preempts any need to engage with the recent past (Galt 2005, 9).

While the rejection of a redemptive stance in a certain way corresponds with a trauma aesthetics, the film does not betray any attempt to work though the trauma of the Holocaust. This is best exemplified by a scene which calls up immediate associations with the Holocaust. While Kat's brother, Larry, leads the protagonist through the train to the carriage in which Max Hartmann's coffin lies hidden the hypnotist announces: "You are led through carriages you never knew existed" (56:10). Images of emaciated prisoners that seem to be cut out from photographs of concentration camps contextualize the otherwise absurd utterance of the hypnotist. It stands to reason that the carriages with the in 1945 anachronistically placed prisoners metaphorically represent the repressed memory of the Holocaust. What appears rather bizarre is, however, the insinuation that they should be carriages "you never knew existed". As Udi Greenberg underlines,

> [t]he audience of the Nineties needed no hint of the Holocaust when dealing with Germany in 1945. The concept of Stunde Null had been a well-known legend for many years, and, after the flood of monuments, ceremonies, and movies dealing with the Holocaust – known as the 'memory boom' – few Western viewers would miss the connection between trains and concentration camps (2008, 48).

Likewise, film critic Howard Hampton regards the Holocaust-related images in *Europa* merely as "memory-salvaging prompters, scavengers of the repressed" (1995, 41). Considering the technique of back projections, he points out that instead of working through a traumatic piece of history in a dream, the protagonist is exposed to a series of entirely de-realized images on celluloid. As Hampton writes, "spellbound Kessler […] is taken through a grand maze of celluloid, a torrent of projection and conditioning that washes over him until it slowly dawns on the transfixed sleeper that he is not dreaming but drowning" (1995, 41). Thus, von Trier can be said to create at best a nightmare full of manipulated flashbacks. For

this reason, I agree with Elizabeth Stewart, when she observes in her Lacanian analysis of *Europa* that the hypnotist "is the analyst who *repeats* the trauma, who makes Leo himself dissolve in water, lost in identification with the real" (Stewart 2005, online, emphasis mine).

Projecting collective repressed memories

The manipulation takes place not only on the level of the image, but also on that of language. By putting the young American of German descent on the 'train of history', the hypnotist charges him with riding on international memory tracks and catering for German and American interests at the same time. However, he deprives his envoy of a linguistic ground by shoving him into a space between languages. In this in-between space, as von Trier demonstrates, intrigues prosper and repression prevails. The dreamer can be said to ride on ramifying railway tracks, the memory tracks in English and in German. The differences between these memory tracks cannot be leveled out and the points of intersection unavoidably form points of collision. Von Trier's train of history, as Kat explains, "transported Jews to concentration camps and American officers first class afterwards" (1:10:55) is bound to derail, for Leo's attempt to understand all of the passengers with their different languages and backgrounds turns out as utterly naïve.

The result of combining these international memory tracks is symbolized not only through the death of the protagonist, but also through the word that appears in the last shot of the film: EUROPA. While the spelling of the proper name is German or Danish, the pronunciation, as demonstrated by the hypnotist at the onset of the film, does not stem from any existing language. With its English pronunciation of the first syllable, but the German stress on the second and the "a" in the last syllable, "Europa" encompasses traces of both languages, but does not sound right in either of them. The bold lettering of the word in red and the black background in the last shot present the colors of anarchy, however, not to proclaim political liberation, but rather chaos and confusion.

When the letters crowd the final image, at the latest, it becomes clear that von Trier's agenda goes far beyond negotiating and manipulating the memory of the Holocaust. The appearance of the proper name "Europa" at the closing of the film raises the question about the connection between the time in which the film was produced and the time in which it is set. The answer that suggests itself is that the historical, political and linguistic manipulation staged in the film provides a vivid metaphor for the time shortly before the signing of the

Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which the filmmaker's home country, Denmark, significantly, refused to participate in. As film critic Harlan Kennedy comments: "The film is about the present thinly disguised as the past. The 'Europe 1945' setting vouchsafes a continent in chaos searching for unity, just like Europe 1991 pre-federalization" (1991, 68). Significantly, the film was produced at a time when the political and philosophical disorientation and destabilization which arose in the wake of the redrawing of the political map in 1989/1990 created a need of self-discovery through historical narratives (cf. Csáky 2004, online). Von Trier, however, refuses to draw on such historical narratives and to depict the Holocaust and the post-war time as consolidated memories. Instead, the Third Reich and the Holocaust haunt the film like nightmares, which implies that the breach of civilization is not available for the construction of desired historical narratives.

Just like the historical and political chaos, von Trier uses the linguistic confusion as a metaphor for mapping fears and expectations around the unification of Europe. The linguistic confusion in the name "Europa", its metaphorical weight, the hypnotist's god-like position and, finally, the fact that Leo is punished for trying to be too understanding all draw an parallel to the myth of Babel. At a first glance, the linguistic circumstances in the myth of Babel and in that of von Trier's Europa seem to differ, since Babel presupposes monolingualism as the original condition, while Europa appears multilingual from the onset. However, Europa can hardly be seen as a redemptive consequence of Babel, in which understanding is enabled by translation. For the only one who is offered a translation is the viewer, who as a dreamer seems to merely fantasize about multilingualism in post-apocalyptic Europe. In contrast, the characters communicate with each other in intransparent ways with the difference between their languages being silenced, denied, or at best, used as an instrument of intrigue. A Jewish train passenger, who seeks to return to his destroyed home town, Wöllstadt, and speaks German with a distinct Yiddish accent, stands out as the only marker of real difference. Significantly, there does not seem to be any space for difference on Leo's train: believing that Wöllstadt has been spared in the war, the passenger exits the train with his family, whereupon the viewer witnesses how their speech fades and is reduced to the crying of their child (36:10).

Babel and Europa are not only sites of linguistic confusion; they are also both presented as symbols of human hubris in the attempt of creating a megalomaniac monument to unification and hegemony. In her study, *Utopia of Understanding* (2012), Donatella di Cesare describes the implications of the Tower of Babel:

> A single, universal metropolis, marked by the Tower that touches the sky, where everyone speaks one universal language: This is the ultimate end, the extreme result of the totalizing and totalitarian centralism of the Babelian venture (di Cesare 2012, 39).

Indeed, the central motif in von Trier's oeuvre, the train with its first class sleeping car, shares many characteristics with the Tower of Babel. It is the work of many days and nights, as the Inspector points out (10:35), set on tracks with the effort of hundreds of people, especially women and children; a vehicle of seemingly indeterminable length containing carriages "you never knew existed" (56:10); finally, a symbol of the extermination of Jews in concentration camps, hypocritically disguised as an elitist project designed to celebrate economic recovery after a mythologized Zero Hour. It seems that the soaring tower has toppled into the horizontal to transport Europe's totalitarian history of the 20th century on railroad tracks. Not coincidentally, the railway company is called Zentropa – a name derived from the historical company "Mitropa" and expressing precisely the centralization or concentration implied in the Tower of Babel.

"Yet Babel, the place of concentration", as di Cesare writes, "becomes the place of dispersion" (di Cesare 2012, 39). This dispersion is visually translated into the violent image of the explosion that causes the train to fall off a bridge. Thus, the film reenacts the destruction of the Tower, merely inverting the direction of its fall:

> The fall of the Tower directs the human gaze, which had sought to take refuge in the closed verticality of the Tower, toward the open horizontality of the world. From the chimera of a single language, or of a single name, humanity falls from the Tower, falls with the Tower, and is dispersed throughout the individual diversity of languages, which are the fragments of that shattered Tower (di Cesare 2012, 39-40).

Von Trier can be said to go even further than that, for after his characters fall with and from the train, language seems to be extinguished altogether. Significantly, he has his protagonist die under water, where there is no possibility of speech at all any more, no matter in what language. Above water, the survivors of the explosion cannot be heard uttering any understandable word, but instead scream in pain and fear. This reveals a certain parallel between von Trier's *Europa* and Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*: the figure of the destruction of one common language of communication is equated with that of the traumatic destruction of language in general.

At this point, the film's agenda in regard to the time of its production again becomes recognizable. Donatella di Cesare's thoughts on the myth of Babel can be said to capture the essence of von Trier's programmatic oeuvre: "[W]ith the confusion of languages and the dispersion that ensues", she writes,

> God prevents this totalitarian concentration in one city, around one Tower, under the banner of one idolatrous name, the artificial pillar of one language that allows for no differences within itself. Through Babel, God prevents the merciless tyranny that this totalitarianism would produce, because Babel is not only a proper name, but rather a divine event that repeats itself in time" (di Cesare 2012, 40).

Similarly, Lars von Trier's film seems to undermine a unification "under the banner of one idolatrous name" – the name "Europa". The artificial multilingualism of the characters not only provides a basis for misunderstanding and intrigues. It also denounces a "utopia of understanding" (di Cesare 2012), resists any redemptive stance and marks the Holocaust as an entirely unprocessed historical event, thus also declaring an integration of Europe as impossible.

Lost in the Language of Dreams and Delusions: Michel Gondry's *The Science of Sleep*

The Science of Sleep revolves around a thirty-year-old creative mind, Stéphane Miroux, who returns to the France of his childhood after a long time in Mexico. Having grown up in France, the son of a French mother and a Mexican father, has witnessed his parents' separation and left with his father for Mexico. Years later, when the father has died of cancer and his mother has talked him into returning for a creative job in Paris, he returns to the old family apartment and moves back into his children's bedroom. Incapable of expressing himself properly in French, a language he seems to have forgotten, and overwhelmed by the memories and dreams of the parents' break-up and the death of his father, Stéphane suffers a psychological regression through which his fantasies get increasingly mixed with his reality. Finding himself torn between the Spanish of his father and the French of his mother as well as his new Parisian surroundings, he turns to an emotionally neutral, but power-invested English, thus relegating his first two languages to the unconscious realm of his dreams and nightmares. Among the several Parisians he meets, Stéphanie, his French-and-English bilingual neighbor, attracts his emotional energies and becomes the objective towards which Stéphane directs not only his love drives, but most especially his obsessive behavior.

The film proves to be a witty mixture of low-tech special effects and dream sciences that smoothly combine to recreate the experience of confusion in Stéphane's mind. Immersing the viewer into the protagonist's dream world, the film resists a strict ontological separation between reality and fantasy within the fictional universe. Reviewers have taken different takes on this ontological confusion. Thus, Ethan Alter centers on the frustration of the young protagonist, who has to face the "mindnumbing drugde work" that his mother has found for him (2006, online). "Stuck in a dull office with aggravating co-workers," Alter argues, "it's no wonder that he allows his imagination to roam free, transporting him to magical forests and his own personal TV studio." (ibid.) Sam Davies, on the other hand, finds the reason for Stéphane's inability to discern between reality and delusion in the traumatic memories he carries within himself. As Davies puts it, *The Science of Sleep* is "a portrait of a reality-phobic designer," Stéphane Miroux, who "has painful memories of his own – and these, together with the discomfort of facing up to the cold realities of everyday life, lead him to a tissue of distracted daydreams" (2006, online). Gondry himself gave a very short summary of the movie in an interview in 2007. As he said, it is "a story about this guy who gets gradually more and more confused by dream and reality" (in Wood 2007, online).

The Science of Sleep between neuroscience and psychoanalysis

To better understand Michel Gondry's engagement with the process of dreaming, it is useful to first cast a glance at his background as an artist. In 2005, Gondry was an Ida Ely Rubin Artist in Residence at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Since then, he has been collaborating with the MIT in different cultural programs and artistic projects. Within this program, renowned artists from all over the world have taken part, among them Spanish architect, Santiago Calatrava; Chinese composer and conductor, Tan Dun; North-American writer, Tony Morrison; or Brazilian filmmaker, Kátia Lund, the co-director of *City of God* (2002). As Matt McGann, director of admissions at MIT, affirms: "They're not just regular artists" (2005, online). At this center for advanced research, Gondry pursued his interest in the neurosciences because, as he himself acknowledged, "they understand the connection between science and the arts. […] It was brainstorming all the time" (in Hillner 2007, online).

Bearing in mind Gondry's interest in the scientific world as well as his emphasis on the state of sleep rather than on the act of dreaming in the title of his film, one would expect *The Science of Sleep* to approach dreaming mostly from the perspective of the neurosciences. A popular publication in this field in Allan J. Hobson's *Dreaming: A Short Introduction* (2005), in which the author, a neuroscientist, programmatically states that "the study of dreaming is inextricably linked to the science of sleep. The science of sleep is inextricably linked to neurobiology. Thus, the science of dreaming is inextricably linked to neurobiology" (2005, 142). In this view, dreams are nothing more than the psychic debris and random delusions of the sleep function of the brain. Thus, the process of dreaming is defined though its physicality and directly associated to the functions of the brain. Dreams are then part of a conception of the human psychic life governed by a "brain-mind isomorphism," implying that "every form of mental activity has a similar form of brain activity. Therefore, if we detect a dream form, we can seek a corresponding brain form" (2005, 30). Brain activity dominates psychic activity, which is why dreams are subject, in a most direct way, to physical processes in the brain. It is clear that this radical imposition of the brain over the mind reduces the function of dreams to a state of unnecessary residues of bodily functions.

Such an agenda exposes Hobson as a radical critic of psychoanalytic theories of dreaming. In line with Hobson, Michel Gondry has expressed an overt animosity against Freud's understanding and analysis of dreams. Thus, the director declares: "Well, I think it's kind of a little upsetting that Freud's theories are… you know… worked out one hundred

years ago when they had very little knowledge of what's actually happening inside the brain" (Gondry 2004, 09:26).[16] In a different interview, Gondry goes on to say that "with psychoanalysis and dream interpretation, the functional bases have been proven wrong by scientists who are working with neurobiology" (in Guillen 2006, online). Apart from the fact that Freudian dream analysis was developed over a century ago, the filmmaker mostly attacks the idea that dreams should have a clear and fixed meaning that is independent from the dreamer. He is upset by the thought that dreams should have a universal language that may be decoded according to a dictionary of symbols or catalogued according to their archetypal figures as done by Carl G. Jung.

However, the harsh attack on psychoanalysis, which we have encountered in a similar shape in the context of Yann Martel's novel *Self*, appears very curious in the light of how Gondry's film ultimately engages with dreams. Thus, right at the opening of the film, the viewer gets to see Stéphane, the protagonist, demonstrating, much like in a cooking show, the process behind the creation of dreams. While throwing more and more symbolic ingredients into a large pot, he explains:

> A very delicate combination of complex ingredients is the key. First, we put in some random thoughts. And then we add a little bit of reminiscences of the day, mixed with some memories from the past. Love, friendships, relationships, and all those ships, together with songs you heard during the day, things you saw, and also personal (01:27).

What is striking in this staging of the genesis of dreams is the similarity to Freud's ideas on the sources of dreams. Thus, the film seems to quote almost literally from *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1953a,b) that the day's residues and childhood memories constitute the main material that dreams are made of. Moreover, the dream-work staged in the film can be understood in Freudian terms of condensation and displacement. Stéphane's formulation of "friendships, relationships, and *all those ships*" demonstrates the work of displacement following the rule of representability. As Freud argues,

> [t]he direction taken by the displacement usually results in a colourless and abstract expression in the dream-thought being exchanged for a pictorial and concrete one. The advantage, and accordingly the purpose, of such a change jumps to the eyes. A thing that is pictorial is, from the point of view of a dream, a thing that is *capable of being represented* (1953b, 339-340, emphasis in the original).

[16] This statement is taken from a documentary about Gondry's work, entitled *I've Been 12 Forever*, directed and released by Gondry himself in 2004, while still working on *The Science of Sleep*, which would appear only two years later. This documentary may be said to work as a non-fictional counterpart for *The Science of Sleep*, as it is also a work that mixes dreams and reality in the visual world with stop-motion animation and French and English in its soundtrack. As I mentioned briefly in the first pages of the analysis of *Europa*, strictly speaking, only a documentary that takes speakers of different languages as its protagonists can be "filmed" in two languages, whereas a fiction film has to be composed and staged in a multilingual fashion. Thus, *I've Been 12 Forever* is in fact a realist multilingual production, as it features interviews in French with Gondry, his mother and his family, as well as in English, with Björk, or Dave Grohl, among many other artists, both native and non-native speakers of English.

While the symbolic value of the image of ships as associated to friendships and relationships will be discussed later in the chapter, another repetitive motif can equally be said to demonstrate the work of displacement: the skiing trip with Stéphane's colleagues. On his very first day at his work place, his colleague, Guy, tells him that he is the one "qui va t'expliquer ton travail dans quelques secondes" (08:18). Very meaningfully, the English subtitles translate the French expression as "I'll show you the ropes". Right after this statement, another colleague, Martine, who sits in front of an enormous wall picture of a snowy mountain, interrupts and responds that she also can "show him the ropes". Instead of explaining the job to Stéphane, however, she begins to talk about the ski weekend that she organizes every year for the colleagues.

As the film soon reveals, the concept of "ropes", Martine's picture of the mountain, the "ski weekend" and Stéphane's bewilderment about the new job become interconnected in his mind. For this reason, every time that he dreams, the "ski weekend" motif will reappear in the form of this imaginary mountain covered by threads and ropes of different shapes and colors. For instance, in the very first dream he has right after this meeting, Martine's wall already shows all these yellow, red, and green threads creating a visible mountain top (14:20). The walls will remain covered by these threads throughout the rest of Stéphane's reveries that take place at the office (39:31). This imagery reaches its apotheosis when Stéphane dreams about the ski weekend itself (1:03:48). As part of his self-created imagery, the mountain is made of cotton and is covered by tons of ropes of the same colors that could be seen on Martine's wall during his reveries. The setup of the dream as well as its interpretations as suggested by the film clearly expose the influence of psychoanalytic thinking on Gondry's work.

Finally, the enactment of the process of 'dream preparation' appears like an allegory of the Freudian claim that the dreamer is, even though unconsciously so, the sole author of his or her own dreams. In the film, this is illustrated though Stéphane's self-presentation in his tellingly titled program, "Stéphane TV", in which he occupies all necessary roles in the creation of his 'dream show'. Thus, he appears in front of the camera, as the master of ceremony, as well as behind the camera, as the director of photography, the sound engineer and as a musician. As the opening scene of the film shows, despite the director's interview statements, *The Science of Sleep* presents anything but a neurobiological exploration of dreams, and is instead, ironically enough, largely informed by psychoanalytic theory.

As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, Gondry's film not only extensively draws on different psychoanalytic concepts, but can also be regarded as a cinematic rewriting of Freud's study of "Delusions and Dreams in Wilhelm Jensen's 'Gradiva'" (1957a). Like Gondry's film, Jensen's novella, "Gradiva", centers on a protagonist who cannot quite tell his dreams from reality. In both narratives, the protagonists are devoted to science which they, however, put "in the service of imagination" (Freud 1957a, 18). While the characters resemble each other in their seeming asexuality, their scientific interests are directly related to the study of the unconscious. Thus, Jensen's Norbert Hanold works in the field of archeology, which Freud likens to psychoanalysis, since both seek to uncover traces and layers of human and psychic history, respectively. Gondry does not metaphorize upon the central interest of his protagonist and names it right away in the title: "The Science of Sleep".

Each of the protagonists gets to meet a young woman, whom they seem to engage with more in their dreams than in reality. The parallels between these encounters are striking. In both works of fiction, the focalizers are plagued by delusions to such an extent that the reader or viewer finds it impossible to discern fantasy from reality within the fictional world, and to understand whether the female characters have an existence of their own or are but figments of the protagonists' imagination. Thus, even before meeting the young woman, Zoë, Hanold dreams of a graceful antique statue that comes to life in Pompei, which makes him travel there to search for her. When he instead encounters a young woman of flesh and blood, in whom he believes to recognize his statue, Gradiva, the latter shows curiosity about his delusions and begins to take on the role of a therapist. As the reader learns later, her interest is motivated by her affection for Hanold. As it turns out, she and Hanold had known and been fond of each other in childhood, living just across the street from one another. Zoë has good reasons to believe that what lies at the core of his condition is his repressed desire for her. Her struggle to cure Hanold from his delusions is doubly rewarded, since it results not only in his recovery from his symptoms, but also in their marriage.

Most of these plot elements can be found in *The Science of Sleep*, albeit with a different resolution. In Gondry's film, the protagonist, encounters his attractive neighbor and her friend, named Zoë, right upon his arrival to France. The neighbor's name is not less telling than that of her friend: Seemingly made to be the protagonist's counterpart, she is called Stéphanie – a circumstance leading the viewer to wonder even more whether she is but a product of Stéphane's imagination. However, despite her adaptation to the protagonist's language, English, this character, like in "Gradiva", also seems to have an existence of her own. Like Jensen's Zoë, she is soon confronted with the main character's delusions and,

similarly, shows her interest in him by involving him in what could be described as art therapy.

Despite the strong correspondence to Jensen's "Gradiva", *The Science of Sleep* does not end with a happy resolution, since Stéphanie does not succeed in curing the protagonist from his condition, and the prospect of a happy relationship is therefore thwarted. In the following, it shall become clear in what ways Stéphane's delusion is different from that analyzed by Freud and why he cannot be helped by means of the same cure. As I shall argue, Gondry's film constructs a story of childhood trauma and compulsive monolingualism underlying the narrative of the protagonist's delusions. In tracing the causes and the development of Stéphane's condition, we shall uncover the metanarrative behind the figure of linguistic border-crossing in *The Science of Sleep*.

Regression or the return of repressed languages

As already mentioned, the protagonist's return to France is prompted by the death of his father in Mexico and his mother's promise to find him a creative job in Paris, the city of his childhood. It is suggested that he grew up speaking French until his parents got divorced. If the parents' break-up is presented as part of the backstory wound, even more so are its consequences – a forced decision between his parents and their languages. The possibility to stay only with one of them seems to imply for Stéphane that he can keep only one of their languages. Thus, in metaphorical terms, the separation turns him compulsively monolingual. Following his father to Mexico, he switches into Spanish, and thus left behind both his mother and his mother tongue. The fact that, by the time of his return, he has almost forgotten his first language suggests an analogical situation regarding his relationship with his mother. His first language migration is depicted as a trauma inflicted upon his infantile psyche. As in Freud's trauma model in *Moses and Monotheism* (1964), after a period of latency, a second trauma – the death of his father – triggers the return of the first one that had been previously repressed.

This time, it is Spanish that remains only as a trace of trauma in his psyche. While opening with a Spanish countdown to a musical number in Stéphane's imaginary show – which shall be described later – the film features the language exactly only once. A traumatic space opens up at the beginning early in the film when Stéphane, in a dream, remembers a Duke Ellington concert that he attended together with his father. In this dream, accompanied visually only by psychedelically moving colored patterns, the protagonist can be heard

ventriloquizing an dialogue between himself and his father – with the father speaking Spanish and himself answering in English only.

His recourse to English gives a first glimpse at his attempts to move into linguistically neutral territory and thus avoid, if not resolve, the conflict between his parents' languages. However, the impossibility of such an easy resolution is immediately stated. Despite the father's Spanish in the dream, Stéphane's own English provokes a displacement that more than questions Freud's initial assumption that dreams are governed by the pleasure principle. Thus, when Duke appears on stage, he has a duck's head, which makes the father realizes that "this isn't Duke Ellington. It's Duck Ellington!" (03:18). Curiously, he expresses this confusion in Spanish: "Esto no es Duke Ellington. Esto es un pato, es un pato Ellington." Clearly, the linguistic confusion of the father in the dream, the Duke/duck, can only work in English, since in Spanish there is no sound or letter relation between "duke" and "pato." Thus, we witness that despite Stéphane's switch into English, the linguistic confusion shatters the fantasy of happy times with his father, and the protagonist finds himself forced to remind the father of his lost battle to cancer. This dream also exposes Stéphane's overwhelming pain over his father's death. In the same dream, he continues: "I cried so hard. I could feel my tears forming two rivers under my eyes. In dreams, emotions are overwhelming" (03:40). Thus, rather than granting Stéphane the wish of remembering his father in happy terms, the dream brings forth unprocessed memories and falls into the category of dreams described by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1955c). The father's Spanish becomes the marker of trauma that cannot be mitigated by Stéphane's recourse to English.

At the same time, his return to France and to the French language does not create any healing distance for dealing with his father's death. Instead, it plunges him even deeper into the consequences of his abandonment of French in his childhood. As soon as the thirty-year-old protagonist meets the caretaker of the house of his childhood, she announces that he has become "presque un homme", only *almost* a man (05:00). What is more, his inability to communicate in French returns him to the stage of psychosexual development that he had reached before leaving France as a child. Upon entering the apartment in which he grew up and is now greeted by the toys in his children's bedroom and his childhood photos on the walls, he finds himself entirely enveloped by his own childhood. Falling into the role of child, he tries to show some of his paintings to the janitor, who does not have time for such childishness.

His father's suit jacket, discovered in a wardrobe of his bedroom, tempts him to play more children's games. On a children's rug patterned with car tracks, Stéphane spreads the

jacket as if to stage a road accident. In this function, the jacket seems reminiscent of the reel in the fort/da game, commented on by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, through which the child moves on from the pleasure to the reality principle. More precisely, it can be described as a "melancholy object", a notion outlined by Margaret Gibson and based on Donald Winnicott's concept of the "transitional object": "Like the transitional objects of childhood, the bereaved often mourn through intimate things belonging to the now deceased. […] As concrete symbolic material, objects orient in time and space the often disorientating and displacing experiences of grief" (Gibson 2010, 285). In line with this depiction, Stéphane's spreading the jacket on the rug represents an attempt of coming to terms with his father's death. At the same time, it is striking what time and space Stéphane chooses to provide himself with a sense of orientation. Significantly, the suit has remained in the wardrobe throughout all the years of the parents' separation, and symbolizes a time not just before the father's death, but before the break-up and Stéphane's departure from France. The space that offers comfort is then, not surprisingly, the children's bedroom – the space symbolizing the sense of security and integrity before the irreversible splitting of the family and their languages.

The suit confronts Stéphane with his lack not only because it belonged to the deceased father. Trying on the piece of adult clothing in a childlike manner, the protagonist discovers an electric shaver in its pocket: an obvious symbol of maturity that he seems to lack. The shaver provides a link to Stéphane's new workplace, where he is immediately reproached for, if at all, having "shave[d] with a toast" (12:52). What stands out upon his arrival to his new job at Latreille is mostly his inability to communicate in French and to have 'adult conversations' with his colleagues. While the colleagues, Guy, Martine and Serge, switch into his accented English, they import a topic that does not figure in Stéphane's child universe: sexuality, or, as Guy formulates in a more child-oriented fashion: "dirty stuff and naughty stuff" (26:54). Thus, Guy presents himself right away as a "lady-killer", openly discusses the sexual orientation of his colleagues, seems preoccupied with the question of sexual positions. Under the influence of the sexual discourse at his workplace, Stéphane soon dreams up awkward images of himself as a "lady-killer" and of emotion-free sex scenes with his colleague Martine.

The 'naughtiness' of the topic of sexuality at Latreille's can be explained through Freud's ideas in, "Civilisation and Its Discontents" (1961). In this essay, he describes art as one of the possible channels of sublimation of the sexual drives in Western society. In the context of *The Science of Sleep*, it is significant that Stéphane's allegedly creative job has in

fact nothing to do with art or creativity. Instead, as Guy explains to Stéphane upon his arrival to work, the company produces nude calendars, for which they do not even design the photos, but only the layout around pre-chosen and obscenely ridiculous pictures. While a more creative job might present the protagonist with a more sublimated form of sexuality, his boss shows no interest in Stéphane's own creative ideas for a calendar. Thus, he is confronted with a world of grotesquely unsublimated sexuality – a world whose language he does not speak or understand neither in a literal, nor in a metaphorical sense.

The protagonist's encounter with his pretty neighbor, Stéphanie, can be described along similar lines. The prelude to their actual meeting, that is, her friend's accidental drilling through the wall and into the neighboring apartment of Stéphane's family, is presented as a penetration of his world, in which girls do not seem to figure as potential love objects. Soon enough the protagonist amuses the two girls with his absurd attempts of speaking French, which leads him to declare that his French is "pathétique" (20:33). In this context as well, the French language stands for flirtation and love – two areas that Stéphane is precluded from accessing. Comically, he first finds himself hiding the fact that he is Stéphanie's neighbor and the son of her landlady, and tries to admit it in a letter written in a somnambulist state and in utterly broken French. Significantly, he slips into English and into finishing his letter with the question: "By the way, do you have Zoë's phone number?" (35:03) The slip of the tongue that he will try to undo seems to state his initial interest in Stéphanie's friend, but can also be read differently: On the one hand, it can be understood as another rehearsal of his role as the "lady-killer", in which he would try and flirt with both girls. On the other hand, and this is what the further course of the action suggests, his switch into English is an attempt to run away from romantic feelings which he will develop for Stéphanie, who is much more like-minded, similar and close to him – in every sense of the word.

A relationship with Stéphanie is presented as his chance to grow up and to be cured of his delusions. However, his insistence on English as his language is precisely what marks the departure of Gondry's narrative from Jensen's novella. Whereas in "Gradiva", the protagonists turn out to share a native language, in *The Science of Sleep*, they approach each other through two different languages. The chance of healing seems to depend on the protagonist's switch into his neighbor's, or therapist's language. But just like Stéphane will not manage to cross the language boundary and speak Stéphanie's language, French, he will not overstep the line of a Platonic relationship. The happy resolution, in which the protagonist is healed by admitting his love for the woman who acts as his therapist, is not possible here since Stéphane never takes up French, presented as the language of emotions.

Shortly before leaving France, Stéphane, strangely enough, tells Stéphanie: "Your English is very good." (1:31:30) While her English has never been an obstruction to their communication, and indeed seems somewhat more natural than his own accented English, Stéphane's French has not developed during his stay. Therefore, Stéphane will be forced to admit to his neighbor that his language barrier coincides with an emotional barrier: "I can't speak French with you. I'm too shy." (1:31:34) His inability to speak French is portrayed largely as the result of his family history: "I cannot speak French", he explains to Stéphanie and his mother, "because whenever I speak I feel that my moustache grows more than when I speak Spanish". (1:13:00) What sounds like a childish and whimsical refusal can be interpreted as his inability to overcome the death of his father, who would have spoken Spanish to him. It appears that he is trying to freeze in time and not undergo any changes that he cannot share with his deceased father. This can be said to account for his unconscious refusal to act as a grown-up in French as well as for his urge to work on paintings of catastrophes for a calendar, a means of orientation in time and an obvious parallel to Atom Egoyan's film discussed in the first chapter.

Stéphane's return to France transports him back in time, until, to use a metaphor from the film, he seems to fall into a black hole. Stéphanie, trying to comfort him on the phone, says: "You know you could never see someone fall in a black hole. Because the image of the traveller who passes the horizon would slow down till it would remain stuck in the same position. The state he was when he crossed the line" (1:11:17). Stéphane's behavior and regression can be understood through this image of the individual stuck in time. His mind seems to have returned to the moment when he was still living in France, with his parents, and when they still were a family unit. The line that he has crossed back is the traumatic memory of the broken family and his feeling of guilt about leaving his mother. This can explain the ending of the film when he apologizes to his mother: "I'm sorry I went with dad when he left" (1:29:47).

Stéphane's regression to a childhood state lends itself to an analysis in psychoanalytic terms. According to psychoanalysis, the ego is developed following a series of phases that lead to the healthy and complete formation of the self in the world. The stages of psychosexual development – oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital – are necessary steps on the way towards a healthy sexuality. As the film implies, Stéphane returns to the anal phase of psychosexual development. As Lacan points out, "childhood sexuality goes through an anal stage of organization and grant erotic value to the excretory function and the excremental object alike" (2006, 73). Anna Freud further explains this phase, arguing that "the well-known

sublimatory occupations of *painting, modeling, water and sand playing* point back to anal and urethral preoccupation. The dismantling of toys because of the wish to know what is inside betrays sexual curiosity" (1989, 19).

These ideas seem to describe Gondry's Stéphane in many ways. First, he enjoys creating and painting, as well as being surrounded by the creative energy of Stéphanie, whom he does not perceive as a potential sexual partner but as an artistic playmate. Moreover, he keeps his grotesque collection of paintings for a calendar, his "Disasterology," inside a big green folder bearing the motto: "Intestino grueso". This name is Spanish for "large intestine," the last section of the human digestive system, whose function is to store faeces before defecation. The connection with an anal stage of psychosexuality seems obvious, and is even reinforced when his colleague, Guy, pronounces his opinion on the young artist-to-be: "The collection is crap anyway" (10:47), a statement that Stéphane accepts without hesitation or protest. Further, Stéphane enjoys assembling and disassembling toys and machines, and in his dreams he also seems to enjoy playing with sand. For instance, when, in a dream, he destroys the whole world, the reconstruction is depicted through the sandbox-like image of toy machines digging up an apocalyptic landscape. Stéphane controls these toy machines as if he were the conductor of an orchestra, showing manifest expressions of pleasure and fulfillment (51:21).

As to Stéphane's dream studio, its entire design seems to be the product of handicraft, which, as mentioned above, points to a typical activity of children in their anal stage of psychosexual development. Thus, the walls are covered by egg cartons, a home remedy for sound isolation, and the cameras are made of old cardboard boxes. A bluebox is visible behind a transparent plastic curtain. Significantly, one of the walls of his studio displays two little windows, which can be said to represent his eyes and vision of the external world. This symbolic set-up deserves further attention. Positioned between the unconscious world of his dreams that can be accessed through the bluebox and the conscious world that lies outside the studio windows, the studio itself can be said to occupy the position of the preconscious. By manually operating the blinds of the windows as well as the rest of the studio, Stéphane seems to struggle for control over his entire mental apparatus, or, in Freud's terms, to make his ego "the master in its own house" (1955b, 143).

Visually, the film emphasizes the perception of Stéphane's world as something self-made and obsessively created by means of the use of stop-motion animation and other camera effects that work more like handicrafts than as special effects. The visual world of the film seems to celebrate the protagonist's dreams of absolute control by leaving little space for an

external reality as perceived through a different point of focalization. The editing is defined by "transversal cuts in the film, heterogeneous assemblages, producing transformations or 'becomings' that are both childlike and childish" (Shaviro 2006, online). At the moment of highest control, the curious gadgets and visual effects move beyond the simple childishness of the character, beyond his apparent "wide-eyed innocence" (Lawrenson, 2006: online), and point to Stéphane's obsessive behavior. He seems to be driven by the desire to reach a certain power that will allow him to show himself off as a world creator deserving praise and admiration. In this sense, he is not so different from the neurotic film director in Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*: not only do both prove to be obsessed with controlling their surroundings by dominating the visual space; significantly, they both professionalize as creators of calendar images, which appears to make them 'masters of time'. However, their attempts stand out mostly in their traumatic quality, since they both try to freeze 'catastrophic' moments in time: the loss of one's partner in *Calendar*, and natural and technical disasters in *The Science of Sleep*.

In line with this, the utmost wish to control reality inspires Stéphane to create a compulsively repetitive one-second time-travel machine. Although it appears that Stéphanie is just playing along with Stéphane's fantasies, the machine allegedly allows them to go back or forth in time for just one second. When given the machine, Stéphanie asks: "What are you going to do with just one second?", to which Stéphane replies: "Well, it just adds up, and life is too precious" (1:01:11). However, instead of adding up, the machine actually allows him to repeat the same action once and again, seemingly without moving on in time. Not coincidentally, the machine, as can be seen in a close-up, is made of old pieces of an old "Simon says" game (1:01:40), in which the main task consists in quickly following pre-recorded commands. Thus, rather than granting free movement in time, the machine is marked by the rule of repetition-compulsion.

Narcissism and monolingual anxiety

Moreover, Stéphane's condition is dominated by narcissism. Whereas primary narcissism is considered by Freud as normal in children during the 'oral phase' of their psychosexual development, secondary narcissism, as in the case of Stéphane, implies that "[t]he libido […] has been withdrawn from the external world [and] has been directed to the ego" (1957b, 74). In his essay, "On Narcissism: An Introduction", Freud defines an extreme case of narcissism as "paraphrenia", a combination of paranoia and schizophrenia, which, in its morbid form, he

characterized by the "detachment of libido from its objects and, further, megalomania, hypochondria, affective disturbance and every kind of regression" (1957b, 86). This clinical picture seems to well describe Gondry's protagonist. His regression and megalomania have been pointed out in the previous paragraphs. As to his detachment of libido from its objects, this materializes particularly clearly in his relationship with Stéphanie. While he may present her in a childish way with self-made gadgets, his narcissism gets in his way with the first signs of his falling in love. As Freud highlights, "the aim and the satisfaction in a narcissistic object-choice is to be loved" (ibid., 98). For the extreme narcissist or "paraphrenic", then, "[l]oving in itself, in so far as it involves longing and deprivation, lowers self-regard; whereas being loved, having one's love returned, and possessing the loved object, raises it once more" (ibid., 99). The fear of falling in love and not having his love returned is most palpable in the scene, in which Stéphane, upon reaching the café in which Stéphanie is waiting to meet him for a first date, turns around and runs away, being entirely convinced that she will not show up and his dependence on her will have disastrous consequences.

Further, in narcissism, the state of sleep, in which the viewer repeatedly gets to watch the protagonist, occupies a central part. Thus, Freud writes:

> The condition of sleep, too, resembles illness in implying a narcissistic withdrawal of the positions of the libido on to the subject's own self, or, more precisely, on to the single wish to sleep. The egoism of dreams fits very well into this context. (1957b, 83)

In fact, in the film, Stéphane's condition of sleep and dreaming increasingly take up all space until they clearly dominate over his fictional reality. What stands out in this context is his continuous wish to be taken to sleep by Stéphanie. Thus, Gondry shows us three scenes, in which his neighbor almost lulls him into sleep. These scenes demonstrate his need to feel loved and at the same time to escape into sleep and into egoistic dreams, before Stéphanie can possibly voice the demand to be loved back.

In Freudian terms, the emergence of secondary narcissism can be traced back to the development of the three parts of the psychic apparatus. As he writes in his essay on narcissism,

> [t]he development of the ego consists in a departure from primary narcissism and gives rise to a vigorous attempt to recover that state. This departure is brought about by means of the displacement of libido on to an ego ideal imposed from without; and satisfaction is brought about from fulfilling this ideal. (1957b, 100)

Troping Stéphane's state of narcissism, the film centers on the formation of his "ego ideal", a term used synonymously with "superego". Contrary to Gondry's assertion that he is not interested in psychoanalysis, the film incorporates a structural model of the psychic apparatus as introduced by Freud. Thus, Stéphane's dreams clearly represent the world of his drives, or

his “id”; his imaginary show, “Stéphane TV”, features his “ego ideal” or “superego”; and the remaining scraps of reality highlight his ego as it tries to mediate between the other two systems.

As I would like to argue, the film tropes the conflict between the parts of the protagonist’s psychic apparatus as a conflict between his languages. As mentioned above, French, for him, comes to symbolize the sexual drives, while Spanish, the language of his deceased father, is largely associated with the death drive. At this point, it remains to discuss the role of his English, which, as shall be shown, is the language in which the protagonist tries to regain power in his internal and also external reality. The hint for such an attempt seems to be given by a toy action figure that can be repeatedly heard reproducing the recorded message: “Come in action two; can you complete the mission?” (06:33) English is thus summoned in the context of taking urgent action and succeeding in one’s enterprise, and the recording can be well understood as addressed to Stéphane. Thus, his return to France may be seen as “action two” and his “mission” to restore control over his own life.

Given this context, it comes as no surprise that despite the French title of his TV program, “Télévision Educative”, English is the exclusive language spoken ‘on air’. While in the external world, the protagonist is confused and helpless with regard to the language spoken around him, in his ‘dream show’, he initially appears as the true *master* of the ceremony. Using English, he does not seem ‘lost in translation’; on the contrary, he presents himself as an eloquent speaker ready to enlighten the viewer on comically complex notions, such as the “Parallel Synchronized Randomness” (18:30) or, the parody of the Rapid Eye Movement (REM), the “Rapid Eye Monitronics” (49:56).

In his “Stéphane TV”, the protagonist finds the stage to present an idealized image of himself, perfectly shaved, combed and dressed. As Sam Davies points out, “this super-confident Stéphane, part science-lecturer, part artist, is the opposite of the troubled and reclusive individual we see struggling to cope with the waking world” (2006, online). Perfect and spotless, he is the director of his own show and the master of his world. Particularly his wearing of his father’s suit marks this image of himself as his own “ego ideal” or “superego”, the institution of self-control, obeying and perpetrating rules and morals imposed by society. What is more, he not only gives rational explanations on the science of sleep, he also actively prepares his own dreams like a chef in a cooking show. This emphasizes another function of the “ego ideal”. Choosing ingredients such as “random thoughts”, “reminiscences of the day” and “memories from the past”, he becomes the film director of his dreams, editing and

censoring anything that does not fit in his ideal vision of the world. This fact strongly resembles Freud's contention that

> if we enter further into the structure of the ego, we may recognize in the ego ideal and in the dynamic utterances of conscience the *dream-censor* as well. If this censor is to some extent on the alert even during sleep, we can understand how it is that its suggested activity of self-observation and self-criticism […] makes a contribution to the content of the dream (1957b, 97, emphasis in the original).

The act of censoring is demonstrated when, much to Stéphane's surprise, we see his mother appear in the TV studio. With the words: "Are you trying to mock me on air?" (17:19), he takes action as a stage manager and relegates her backstage. His desire to control his dreams is also palpable in his waking life. When Gérard, his mother's new partner, explains to him, in a comically wrong way, the significance of eye movement during deep sleep, and how it can be controlled, Stéphane exhorts triumphantly: "No more sleeping slavery!" (50:16) The very night of this discovery, he creates an ingenious device through which to guide his dreams in the direction he wants by means of a tape recorder that switches on during the REM phase of his sleep. That way, he hopes to achieve absolute mastery of the dream world. In fact, in this controlled dream, he becomes a god-like figure who destroys the old world and rebuilds it according to his wishes and imagination. This is the ultimate dream of the narcissistic personality: in his work colleagues, he finds an audience to whom to demonstrate his almighty powers, and he has absolute power over the world. It is precisely this controlled dream that means a turning point in the film, as Stéphane's behavior will become more obsessive and controlling from this moment on.

In the long run, the protagonist's attempts to edit his dreams are not crowned with success, since his monolingual dream studio cannot withstand the pressure of reality and his unconscious. Initially presented as an educational and creative space, the studio gradually turns into a bunker protecting Stéphane from his everyday life and his own dreams, but, most of all, the languages of his parents. His mother's sudden appearance in this bunker therefore signals a hostile intrusion – an intrusion that cannot be warded off. After all, Stéphane's attempt to make his mother disappear only demonstrates that his studio has but one door: the entrance door to his unconscious. Due to this design, the metaphorical attempt to repress the presence of his mother only leads to her entry into his dreams. Immediately, a home video showing old scenes from their family life appears on his dream screen and, despite his protest, Stéphane is left without any means to turn off the dream images. This intrusion only anticipates other one to come: soon enough the studio is invaded not only by his mother, but

also by his French-speaking colleagues, who appear like uninvited talk show guests and undermine the imposed monolingualism of the protagonist's studio.

At the same time, it becomes obvious that the English language does not offer any protection from the intrusion of unconscious memories in Stéphane's everyday life either. Although Stéphanie switches into English to communicate with him, a grotesque slip of the tongue – confirming the suspicion that she is but a figment of the protagonist's imagination – marks the impossibility of escaping from the past: "How is your dad … ah… your hand?" (28:02), she asks the protagonist after he has had an accident while trying to help carry her piano and has told her about the death of his father. The fast healing process of his injury, which Zoë, with an expert gesture, had treated with an odor neutralizer, seems to be mentioned only to contrast the incurability of his father's disease.

It is curious to observe that in Stéphane's dreams, his colleagues begin to speak not only French, but also an unintelligible gibberish that cannot be translated. A scene at his workplace shows that Stéphane is trying to avoid not only the languages of his parents, but also any sudden transgressions of language boundaries – a pattern of behavior that can be understood in the context of his sudden departure with his father into a different country and language. When Guy spontaneously mixes, of all, the two languages of Stéphane's parents, the protagonist turns hysterical and yells: "I can't understand you guys when you talk to me in two different languages. It makes me feel schizometric" (57:20) This moment once again reveals the irresolvable conflict that young Stéphane had absorbed with the break-up of his parents. To hear both languages or voices at the same time, seems to trigger a panic in him as if he was being torn apart. The delusions caused by his own linguistic border-crossing back into French cannot be cured until the end of the narrative. This makes his impending departure back to Mexico appear as an ultimate defeat, since the psychological conflict between the two languages has not been defused and the viewer can only imagine Stéphane's condition upon returning into his deceased father's language, Spanish.

Nevertheless, the farewell scene with Stéphanie, which postpones or possibly even cancels his departure, provides a glimmer of hope. Entering his neighbor's apartment, the protagonist notices that she has completed the work both on her bunk bed and on a little fabric boat that, in Stéphanie's words, "is looking for its mer/mère" (30:55). The ambiguity of "mer/mère", which, as the young woman points out herself, "sounds both like 'mother' and 'sea' in French", opens a metaphorical space linking Stéphane's situation to that of the boat. Like the boat, the protagonist is not in his element, which in his case can be mostly interpreted as not being in the 'right' language. The search for the right element and language is revealed

as connected to the figure of the mother. In this way, the little boat metaphorically explains Stéphane's confusion about his return both to his mother and his mother tongue. Clearly, neither of them is simply found just because of Stéphane's setting foot on native territory.

At the same time, the observation that work on the little boat is completed helps him draw a boundary between Stéphanie and his mother, whom he had previously compared in their inability to finish anything. The effect of transference thus seems to be contained and leads to the final dream presented in the film. In this dream, he and Stéphanie are sailing on the very boat that is looking for its mer/mère. The symbolism of the boat had been already hinted at by Stéphane in the opening scene of the film, in which he subsumed friendships and relationships under the label of "all those ships". Through the bilingual troping of the boat's objective, Stéphanie clearly references his longing for a reconnection with his mother. The search for the mother figures as a missing link in his traumatic family narrative, in which he has left her behind, giving preference to his father. The dream images also include the rivers that, as we learn from the protagonist's first dream, his tears had formed after his father's death. The linguistic border-crossing implied in Stéphanie's description of the "boat looking for its mer/mère" seems to break down Stéphane's resistance and makes him take a first step towards healing. Thus, while the film's ending in a dream can hardly be seen as a sign of the protagonist's recovery, the dream comes to encompass all his three languages, which eventually raises a spark of hope for the working-through of the family conflict and his inner split between languages.

Conclusion

As the analyses of the two films show, despite their technically complex visual depictions of the unconscious, both *Europa* and *The Science of Sleep* are deeply engaged with the issue of linguistic border-crossings. While both films have their protagonists perish or get lost in multilingual confusion, they are far from formulating an apology for the hegemony of monolingualism. On the contrary, the longing for monolingualism – in *The Science of Sleep* on the part of the narcissistic protagonist and in *Europa* on the part of the military forces gathered in post-war Germany – presents the very cause of the protagonists' breakdown and demise. Thus, both films present a meta-narrative that seems deeply critical of monolingual claims to power.

The fact that both films seek to captivate the viewers by means of spectacular aesthetics can be said to reveal a hidden agenda. Struggling to discern between dream and reality within the fictional world, the viewers find themselves hypnotized by the baffling visual effects and lulled into a dream-like state. In the cinematic dream, they hardly become consciously aware of the pattern behind the linguistic code-switching in the film. While supporting the viewers with subtitles, the films subtly immerse them into a multilingual dream. This way, the audience is both engaged and influenced in formulating a response to the initial question of this chapter: Which language do you dream in?

4. Translating Trauma: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* (1998)

As the examples of *Self* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* point out, multilingualism not only plays a central role in the creation of national and gender identities. Fostering polyvocality, it also enters the stage as an antagonist of trauma, which can be understood as the annihilation of any voice. This aspect at the same time introduces the topic of the final chapter of this thesis: the negotiation of linguistic border-crossings as a means of working through trauma. The two works discussed in this chapter, *Everything Is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer and *The Farming of Bones* by Edwidge Danticat, present an utterly different connection of the themes of trauma and translation from the one established in Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation* and Atom Egoyan's *Calendar*. Whereas in the latter works, translation is depicted in its potentially traumatizing capacity, the former two envision the act of translation as therapeutic in dealing with historical trauma. Far from being depicted as a readily available remedy, translation emerges as a difficult or even impossible mission. As I would like to contend, the question of translatability is closely bound up in both novels with the possibility of healing, of working through psychical as well as physical trauma.

The traumas at the center of Foer's and Danticat's novels are linked to two genocides that occurred at a similar time in different parts of the world – the extermination of Jews in Ukraine during the Holocaust in *Everything Is Illuminated* and the so-called Parsley Massacre of 1937, in which thousands of Haitians living in the border area of the Dominican Republic were killed at the order of Rafael Trujillo. Published in 2002 and 1998, respectively, the two novels are united by the fact that they both deal with events dating back roughly 60 years – or two generations. The historical distance is accompanied by a geographical one. Both writing projects begin in New York, where the two authors currently live, and from where each of them, in preparation to the writing, undertook a journey to the real setting of their narratives. Not surprisingly, the accounts of their research journeys coincide in that neither of them found any traces of traumatic history in the places they visited. Thus, Foer reports on his journey to Ukraine:

> I found nothing but nothing, and in that nothing – a landscape of completely realized absence – nothing was to be found. […] I returned to Prague, where I had planned to write the story of what had happened. But what had happened? […] What made beginning so difficult, and the remainder so seemingly automatic, was imagination – the initial problem, and ultimate liberation, of imagining. (Foer, date unknown, online)

In a similar vein, Danticat recalls in an interview arriving at the Massacre River, the border river between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and encountering a striking "ordinariness of life", which would not betray any sign of the origins of the river's name:

> I think it was what I didn't find there that most moved me. I had read so much about the Massacre River, going from the first massacre of the colonists in the nineteenth century to this present massacre […]. So, it was the lack of event there that inspired me, that made me want to recall the past and write about this historical moment (Danticat in Wachtel 2000, 107-108).

Both writing projects are thus sparked off by the absence or invisibility of traces of the two genocides. This fact opens the view onto another effect of their crossing of language boundaries – as a means of bridging historical and geographical distance in transgenerational memories. The following chapter seeks to trace the ways in which the figure of linguistic border-crossings serves in the troping of traumatic memory and its aftereffects on the descendants of the traumatized.

On the Way to the Limits of Language: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*

As a paradigmatic example of third-generation Holocaust fiction, Foer's novel is concerned with linguistic border-crossings in various ways. The first problem that poses itself is that of translingual memory, that is, of memory carried across language boundaries. Along with works by authors such as Saul Bellow, Sylvia Plath, William Styron, or more recently, Martin Amis, Nathan Englander, Tova Reich, Michael Chabon, Markus Zusak or John Boyne, Foer's novel belongs to a large body of Holocaust fiction in English, a language that was not a direct witness to the disaster. "The primary language of neither the persecutors nor the victims," as critic Alan Rosen informs us, "English has generally been viewed as marginal to the events of the Holocaust." (2005, x) A heritage that was handed down primarily in Yiddish, Polish, German, Ukrainian and Russian necessarily raises the question of translatability. This notion shall offer a first key to the question of why Foer engages a translator figure at the center of his narrative.

The main focus of my exploration, however, shall be on Foer's strategy of positioning the figure of translation in relation to the much-invoked idea in Holocaust and Trauma Studies that the experience of the Holocaust breaches the limits of linguistic representation. This invocation is immediately apparent even in book and essay titles, such as *Probing the Limits of Representation*, a 1992 prominent collection of essays edited by Saul Friedlander, which

among others contains an essay by Berel Lang called "The Representation of Limits", or Naomi Mandel's *Against the Unspeakable* (2006), a study which considers the issue of complicity in the Holocaust. Addressing these postulated limits of language, Foer draws on the metaphorical dimension of translation highlighted, as explained in the introduction, already in Freud's writings. If trauma imposes perceived limits of language, his novel implies, then translation enters the stage as a necessary operation that can demarcate these limits and possibly transcend them by carrying the expression of traumatic experience over into a different language. The present chapter examines Foer's troping of his fictional translator as a crucial element in a psychical process of working though trauma and the peculiar correlation established between the chances of healing and the translator's success.

As I would like to argue in this chapter, the figure of the interpreter and the language employed as his intradiegetic discourse are pivotal in Foer's troping of the search of a Holocaust language. In order to analyze the theme of translation in *Everything Is Illuminated*, it shall prove instructive to draw on Yale School trauma theory, in which the notion of 'trauma' has been mainly used to describe experiences which resist their integration with mental schemes as well as their verbal articulation (cf. Hartman 1995, Caruth 1995, van Alphen 1999), as well as on the psychoanalytic works of Abraham and Torok, on translation theories that negotiate the chances and aporias of translation and on Bakhtin's idea of *heteroglossia*. The mapping out of connections between these theories shall open the view onto Foer's negotiation of a working-through of Holocaust trauma through the transgression of language boundaries.

Troping the search for a language of the Holocaust in allegorical terms, the novel presents us with a young Jewish American protagonist, who shares the author's name of Jonathan and travels from the USA to Ukraine seeking to shed light on his grandfather's story of survival during the Holocaust. Relying on the services of the dubious travel agency, "Heritage Touring" (3), he finds himself accompanied by Alex, a self-appointed interpreter, and the latter's grandfather. While the search for Augustine, the alleged saviour of Jonathan's grandfather, is not crowned with success, it becomes the frame of various comical episodes of intercultural exchange between the two young protagonists and eventually brings forth a different discovery: the traumatic story of Alex' grandfather's forced turn-over of his Jewish friend Herschel to the SS troops. The narrative is presented as an epistolary novel consisting of three narrative strands: Jonathan's magic-realist account of the shtetl history until its destruction, the interpreter's letters to Jonathan, and Alex' imaginative account of their

common journey through Ukraine – with the last two strands boasting a highly unidiomatic, hilarious "language of English" (4).

In fact, the idea of the linguistically and otherwise turbulent journey is sparked off by a previous language barrier, namely the one between Jonathan and his Yiddish-speaking grandmother, who had fled to the United States as a Holocaust survivor before meeting his now deceased grandfather. Being the only person from whom Jonathan could learn about his grandfather's escape, the grandmother is a problematic source of information, since she seems to never have carried her memories of war-time Europe over into English, but kept them locked away in Yiddish. The only clue the boy receives from her about Holocaust survival is a visual one, namely an old photograph of his grandfather with his alleged saviour, Augustine, which later guides his search for their traces in Ukraine. The search for Augustine becomes a project of translation, since the testimonies of the witnesses the protagonists manage to find are entirely mediated through the discourse of the interpreter, Alex.

To be sure, Foer's narrative strategy that shall be treated as multilingual in this thesis widely differs from those employed by writers such as Yann Martel, Junot Diaz or Edwidge Danticat. While the latter work with one or more languages other than English, thus establishing a multilingual mental geography, Foer's novel lacks any trace of a real language other than English and encompasses only two linguistic variations: standard English and its broken, unidiomatic counterpart. Also, in contrast to cinematic narratives such as in *Europa* or *Calendar*, Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*, just like its film adaption by Liev Schreiber, does not present a multilingual fictional world, in which the non-English characters would speak their non-English languages. Even though the entire narrative is set in north-western Ukraine, the novel does not contain a single word in Ukrainian. Whatever the Ukrainian characters say is mediated through the interpreter's broken English. Were it not for the film adaptation, in which Alex faces some local workers' animosity for coming from the in Soviet times Russian-speaking capital of Ukraine, the reader or viewer might not even wonder whether the language he is meant to interpret into English is Russian or Ukrainian.

What is more, the unidiomatic language of the interpreter is as artificially constructed as the boundary between the two linguistic discourses in the novel. While the author has us believe that Alex speaks a "fusion of Russian and Ukrainian" (112), his discourse is not coloured by either of the languages. Significantly, the source of the interpreter's verbal faux pas is not a bilingual dictionary, but an English thesaurus given to him by Jonathan (23). The brokenness of his English is largely constructed through distortions of English idioms. Thus, in Alex' discourse, the idiom "to eat humble pie" mutates into "eat[ing] a slice of humble pie"

(23) and the expression "pins and needles" becomes "needles and nails" when Alex describes his tired legs (31). Other expressions are unidiomatically transformed into adjectives, which results in creations such as "being an upright person" (31) instead of 'standing upright' or "[to be made] a tickled-pink person" instead of being 'tickled pink'. Alex unskilled use of the thesaurus serves as the explanation of his lexical confusions such as "currency" for 'money' (53), "rigid" for 'difficult' (54), "amputate" for 'remove' (55) or "guilelessly" for 'sincerely' (55). All these examples demonstrate that Foer's puns originate exclusively in English and not along the language borders to Ukrainian or Russian. Thus, in contrast to Anthony Burgess' slang *A Clockwork Orange*, the interpreter's discourse is neither hybrid nor even accented, but is best described as *thesaurese*.

This absence of a real second language in the discourse of the novel implies that Foer's main interest does not lie on the sociopolitical circumstances of the journey. However, in the context of this thesis, the exploration of *Everything Is Illuminated* is useful and necessary for two afore-mentioned reasons: first, the centrality of the figure of the translator, whose narrative voice in fact dominates the novel, and second, the particularity of his broken language. Both features stress the significance the figure of language boundaries in the novel, and suggest to read the novel as an allegorical text negotiating the relation between trauma and translation theories.

The task of the translator

While the search for Augustine is initiated by Jonathan, Foer makes the success of this endeavour depend on the performance of the translator figure, Alex. Hired almost by accident and obviously against his will, as we learn from the young man's exchange with his father (4), Alex occupies centre stage in the novel, both in his role as Jonathan's companion and as the focalizer and voice behind the travelogue, through which the reader learns about their journey through Ukraine. How exactly does the novel negotiate the role of the interpreter? How does Alex perform in this role? And why does Foer centralise his character to the extent of making him an equal narrator next to Jonathan?

To approach these questions, I shall take my first cue from Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" (1923). The translator depicted in this essay does not operate in a functional context of merely transporting certain content from one language into another, or to help addressees who may not understand the language of the original. Instead, the translator is

entrusted with the metaphysical task of making the kinship between different languages visible through translation and, thus, to expose a greater language that is held captive in an alienated shape in all languages. In Benjamin's view,

> it is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language. (2000, 22)

At first glance, it seems tempting to draw a parallel between the tasks of Foer's and Benjamin's translators. At the onset of the essay, Benjamin raises the question of whether translation operates in the service of its addressee: "Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?" (2000, 15) In the context of Foer's novel, Benjamin's question can be rephrased as: Does Alex' translation really serve his American guest, who would otherwise be unable to follow the conversations in Russian and Ukrainian? Like in Benjamin's essay, this question is clearly answered in the negative in *Everything Is Illuminated*. In fact, the translation is anything but addressee-oriented, which for example becomes clear in the passages, in which Jonathan is stopped by the interpreter while trying to ask Augustine an entire catalogue of questions:

> "Ask her to tell us everything", the hero [Jonathan] said. "I want to hear about how she met my grandfather, and why she decided to save him, and what happened to her family, and if she ever talked to my grandfather after the war. Find out," he said quietly, as if she might have comprehended, "if they were in love." "Slowness", I said. (148)

Alex not only takes the lead in the conversation, he also presents the reader with certain utterances that are left untranslated during his journey with Jonathan. Thus, when the cruelty of the narrated events, such as the shooting of Augustine's family, becomes unbearable to the latter, he withdraws from the conversation with the words: "'I don't want to hear any more,' the hero said, so it was at this point that I ceased translating" (186). Despite this interruption by the addressee Alex continues his narrative, which is how the reader learns about Augustine's survival of the Holocaust. In the moment of resisting the wish of his client, Alex demonstrates his twofold task: to help the traumatized witnesses speak about their experience and to find a language that would carry the burden of trauma.

As Benjamin formulates in his essay, there is a close connection between translation and survival: "a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife" (2000, 16). In the narrative of *Everything Is Illuminated*, the success of the protagonists' search of course also depends on the survival of the eye-witnesses, who have absorbed a traumatically charged original text. The interdependence between the traces of this original and the search for them that is figured as an act of translation is thematised in the novel when Augustine passes on a wedding ring to Jonathan which a shtetl inhabitant had

hidden and buried in the ground. At first, the protagonists assume that the burying of the ring had been meant to provide evidence, documentation and testimony for generations to come (192). However, Augustine proves them wrong by reversing the cause-effect relationship between the search and the existence of traces: "The ring does not exist for you. You exist for the ring." (192) In analogy to Benjamin's ideas, the survival of an original does not depend on its translation – it is the translation that comes into being because of the afterlife of original traces.

At the same time, the relation between survival and testimony is put into question in the novel. As psychologists note, survivors of the Holocaust perceive the act of testimony as a very difficult task, since for the victims, the dehumanizing racial discourse of the Nazis extinguished any possibility of an address to an other. Invoking Martin Buber's philosophical postulate of the encounter with the Other underlying the formation of subjectivity, psychoanalyst Dori Laub points out that the racial discourse on the inhumanity and otherness of the Jews

> extinguished philosophically the very possibility of address, the possibility of appealing, or of turning to, another. But when one cannot turn to a 'you' one cannot say 'thou' even to oneself. The Holocaust created in this way a world in which one could not bear witness to oneself (1995, 66).

Laub's philosophical argument that the annihilation of subjectivity is caused by the impossibility of turning to an Other is enacted in the novel in an almost literal way, when Augustine recalls the neighbors turning their backs on her suffering (187), after previously admitting: "I am so ashamed […] You had to do anything. You could not allow anyone to see your face after." (155)

As Dori Laub contends, "*the event produced no witnesses*" due to the intrinsical nature of the Holocaust. This statement does not only encompass the historical reality of physical extermination, for, as Laub explains, "the inherently incomprehensible *and* deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims" (1995, 65). According to Laub, this structure consists in the fact that on the one hand it was impossible to detach oneself so as to view the cataclysmic events from *outside*, as in the light of the "contaminating power of the event" no observer could possibly maintain their integrity, falling either into the role of victim or perpetrator (1995, 66). As being inside the events meant that "one *could not bear witness to oneself*", and staying in the proximity, but outside the events, was inconceivable, the very possibility of witnessing the Holocaust was precluded.

It is this impossibility that Alex seeks to work against by taking over not only the role of the translator, but also that of an empathetic listener. In this endeavor, Foer has him encounter what Shoshana Felman und Dori Laub have described as the "radical crisis of

witnessing" (1992, xviii). The loss of subjectivity becomes evident during the first encounter with Augustine. After denying Alex' question of whether she has "witnessed anyone in the photograph" brought by Jonathan on their journey over and over again, she finally responds with "a tear descend[ing] to her white dress" to a rephrasing of the initial question: "Has anyone in this photograph ever witnessed you?" (117-18) With the change that eventually provokes her response being a reversal of the subject and the object, the inference suggests itself that Augustine has become incapable of taking a subject position on account of viewing herself merely as an object exposed to the tortures of the German army. In this context, Alex is assigned the task of liberating the traumatized witness from her object position. Even if the survival of the testimony, in Benjamin's terms, does not depend on its translation, the silence caused by trauma can only be broken by an act of empathetic listening. Thus, the interpreter himself enters the stage as a necessary witness to survival of the traumatized woman.

If Foer's translator manages to help the eye-witness, and thus an original testimonial text, speak, he immediately has to face the fragmented and enigmatic nature of this text. The task of the translator encompasses not only an act of witnessing, but also that of the interpretation of a traumatic discourse. The work on fragmented material reveals a further point of intersection with Benjamin's translation theory. This becomes clear through a passage from "The Task of the Translator", in which the philosopher draws on the metaphor of language as a broken vessel:

> In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel. (2000, 21)

What Foer's translator figure devotes himself to structurally resembles the task described by Benjamin: to make scraps of language recognisable as the shattered pieces of historical trauma. The two 'original texts' that put the interpreter's abilities to the test are two testimonies of Holocaust witnesses, namely of the woman the protagonists take for Augustine and, later, Alex' own grandfather.

To outline the challenge faced by the interpreter, I would like to examine more closely the testimony given by the woman who considers herself to impersonate or *be* the destroyed shtetl of Trachimbrod (118). Modelled on real survivor's testimonies, her account exhibits traces of shatteredness which make it almost appear like a riddle. The first puzzle the interpreter has to confront concerns her narrative voice. It is expressed in her account of the shooting of her family, which she begins in the first person, but continues by splitting into a first and a third person, the person of her older sister, after recalling her young sister's death.

This split of voice clearly violates traditional narrative principles and provokes perplexity in her listeners about the seeming disappearance of the first-person narrator from the scene of the killing: "'What about you?' Grandfather asked. 'Where were you?' 'I was there.' 'Where? How did you escape?'" (187) The question of how she escaped is answered in a way strongly alluding to the narrator's disintegration: "My sister, I told you, was not dead." (187) The fact that her older sister is introduced as an alter ego in order to tell her own story, can also be deduced from the internal focalization in sentences such as: "She was very cold, I remember, even though it was the summer." (186) As she falls into vividly describing 'her sister's' feelings, Alex's reasonable question: "How can you perceive this?", yields only one possible answer, namely that it is not a different character, but herself shivering at the sight of the horrid killing scene in the summer.

As this passage shows, the interpreter is confronted with anything but a coherent original text, which he could translate into English for his client, Jonathan. Instead, he finds himself torn between the impulse to repair it by introducing coherence and to keep his translation truthful to the shatteredness of the testimony. This ambiguity is what characterizes his role as a 'translator of trauma'. The fragmented nature of narrative language in real testimonies of traumatized Holocaust survivors has been commented on by trauma and Holocaust scholars alike. It could be said that Alex' response oscillates between the attempts to cure the survivor and to render historical truth. Thus, psychiatrists Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart, who have worked much with Holocaust survivors suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), describe traumatic memories as "unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language" (1995, 176). In this vein, the task of the interpreter would appear to be that of a therapist seeking to initiate a process of healing precisely by facilitating the integration of traumatic experience into narrative memory.

However, the indebtedness of Foer's interpreter to the literal truth of the testimony positions him closer to the role of a historian, which is pointedly described by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi: "[F]or the wounds inflicted upon Jewish life by the disintegrative blows of the last two hundred years the historian seems at best a pathologist, hardly a physician" (1982, 93-94). As a pathologist, Alex is precluded from mending the broken pieces of the witness's account, but finds himself obliged to instead lay bare all its traces of violence. At this point as the latest, it becomes clear that Foer's translator cannot live up to Benjamin's task of assembling the "fragments of a vessel" into a "greater language" or "pure language" (2000,

21). To better grasp the role of the translator in the novel, one needs to focus on the fact that the translation project is mainly defined by its failure.

The failure of the translator

How does the novel negotiate the translatability of Holocaust trauma? To approach this question, I shall draw on two deconstructive comments on Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" by Jacques Derrida (1985) und Paul de Man (1985). The departure point of Derrida's argument is the Genesis myth of the Tower of Babel, known as the myth of origins of both multilingualism and translation. In this myth, Derrida is mostly interested in the first word ever split by an act of translation, which in his reading is the word "Babel" itself – a proper name. Drawing on Voltaire, he assumes that "Babel" was originally the name of God:

> Babel means not only confusion in the double sense of the word, also the name of the father, more precisely and more commonly, the name of God as name of father. The city would bear the name of God the father and of the father of the city that is called confusion. (1985, 167)

By proclaiming "Bavel, Confusion", God introduces a translation for the name of the city, thus marking the proper name with a split – "God deconstructing", Derrida ironizes (1985, 170). This performative act entails two aspects: On the one hand, mankind is shown, in the very moment of linguistic confusion, a way of future communication – namely through translation. On the other hand, however, this endeavor is led *ad absurdum*, since translation is practiced upon a word, which as a proper name is not subject to translation. "Now, a proper name as such remains forever untranslatable", Derrida writes, and concludes that the myth of Babel recounts "the necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity *as* impossibility" (1985, 171).

Jonathan Safran Foer's novel displays strong parallels to this line of thought, since it explores the question of whether and how traumatic experience can be articulated or even overcome by means of translation processes. In connection with Derrida's essay, it is striking that *Everything Is Illuminated* develops a downright obsession with the translation of proper names. In its multiple tropings of translation, we can divine a meta-narrative which betrays more about the central motif of the third generation's search for traces than about the actual plot. At the very onset of the novel, Alex, as narrator, draws our attention to the multiple versions of his own name – "Sasha", "Shapka", "Alexi-stop-spleening-me" (4-5). As soon as the American guest arrives, his own name is taken to the test of translation and "Jonathan", due to Alex' pronunciation problems, is translated into "Jon-fen" (32). This moment of his

being translated or literally carried across a boundary reminds of Leopold Kessler's arrival in Lars von Trier's *Europa* and can also be read as a rite of passage, in which the young American enters both the Ukrainian geographical setting and the discourse of his translator.

In contrast to these playful and innocuous 'translations', the name of the alleged savior of Jonathan's grandfather, Augustine, poses a greater problem. It is not accidental that this name appears exclusively on the back of a pre-war photograph, which Jonathan duplicates and tries to use as a signpost to the shtetl of Trachimbrod. According to Marianne Hirsch, who in turn draws on Roland Barthes (1981) and Susan Sontag (1989), the photograph functions as a "harbinger of death" , since the captured moment is always already lost to the past (1997, 19). Instead of pointing to a living subject, whom Jonathan seeks to find on his journey, the photograph is an indexical sign with a lost subject of reference, a "Photo Morgana", as Christina von Braun pointedly expresses (1989, 119). With its indexical character undiminished, the photograph, taken fifty years before the search, shows a young "Augustine", who eventually merely becomes the projection screen for the desire of both protagonists. Without the possibility of time-travelling, the search for "Augustine" appears desperate.

The same is true for the mysterious savior's name. If a geographical translation of "Jonathan" is portrayed as more or less possible, the attempts to translate or carry across the name of "Augustine" from the past into the present remain futile. Even when the protagonists do find a last survivor from Trachimbrod, who can remember Jonathan's grandfather, the name and the subject of reference cannot be entirely matched, since the identity of the woman – who in want of another name is spontaneously christened "Augustine" – remains unclear. Driven by the naïve desire to find a proper translation of her name, Alex eventually cannot suppress the question: "Who are you?" As the traumatized survivor surprisingly informs them, her name is "Lista" (193). However, the name does not facilitate her identification; on the contrary, it calls up manifold scenarios of self-denial, split personality and the extinction of history – a translator's nightmare. If this untranslatability reveals the truism that proper names are simply not subject to translation, the wish to overcome this condition, as the novel shows, is undeniable. With Derrida we could say: the protagonists obtain a legacy that obliges them to translate, but at the same time makes translation impossible, thus dooming them to fail.

Another name without a recoverable object of reference is that of the destroyed shtetl of Jonathan's grandfather. From the onset, "Trachimbrod" bears traces of trauma. First, it points back the name of an imaginary forefather, Trachim, whose death by accident marks the

point of departure in Jonathan's magic realist account of the shtetl history. Second, "Trachimbrod" stands in competition to its Slavic name "Sofiowka" (51), which metaphorically splits the shtetl in two and anticipates the later split of the name and the object of reference. When the protagonists come searching for the shtetl, it is only understandable that it cannot be physically located, for, since its destruction, it exists only as a name on a monument placed by Israeli authorities, which, significantly, reminds of the genocide not only in Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Yiddish and German, but also in Ivrit and English (189). Faced with such a multiplicity of signifiers and the absence of an actual object of reference, Alex can hardly express his perplexity:

> There was nothing. When I utter 'nothing' I do not mean there was nothing except for two houses, and some wood on the ground, and pieces of glass, and children's toys, and photographs. When I utter that there was nothing, what I intend is that there was not any of these things, or any other things. (184)

If the names of "Augustine" and "Trachimbrod" reflect an irreversible split between language and extralinguistic reality, then a different name in the novel reveal the traumatic origins of translation: the name "Alexander", which Jonathan's translator has inherited from his father and his grandfather. Once again a proper name turns out to have been subject to translation, once again a translation of an impossible kind. Early in the narrative, Alex presents us with a whole genealogy of Odessa-born Alexander Perchovs, which, as if according to a natural law, brings forth only male firstborns:

> Grandfather's name is also Alexander. Supplementally is Father's. We are all primogenitory children in our families, which brings us tremendous honor, on the scale of the sport of football, which was invented in Ukraine. I will dub my first child Alexander. If you want to know what will occur if my first child is a girl, I will tell you. He will not be a girl. (5)

Yet, a confession of Alex' grandfather disrupts this picture and produces a different truth, after the latter has been recognized by the protagonists in an old picture from Augustine's collection. Contrary to his initial statements, as he admits, he was born in a shtetl close to Trachimbrod, in which he used to be addressed by the Jewish name "Eli" (250). It is left open to debate whether the name attests to his own Jewishness – which he, however, denies (246) – or is meant to be a Jewish version of the name "Alexander", particularly because the grandfather's intradiegetic narrative about his past does not necessarily seem reliable. What comes to light, though, is the deeply traumatic fact that he had lived in a shtetl named Kolki until the genocide and turned in his Jewish best friend, Herschel, to Nazi troops, in order to save his own family.

Through his betrayal and its consequences he destroys the language in which his experience could be articulated and stays behind with a traumatic discourse that is inflexible

and fixed in its own literality (Caruth 1995, 5). Thus, his original first name is revealed in a stream of consciousness, in which both punctuation and the blanks disappear between the words and the thoughts of the grandfather cannot be separated from those of Herschel:

> I felt Herschel's hand again and I know that his hand was saying pleaseplease Eli please I do not want to die […] I am begging you Eli youaremyfriend do not let me die I am so afraid of dying Iamsoafraid it will be OK I told him it will be OK do not do this he said do something do something dosomething dosomething it will be OK it will beOK who was I saying that to do something Eli dosomething I am soafraidofdying. (250f)

The dissociation suffered by Alex' grandfather is symbolized through his flight to a name of different linguistic origins, namely to the ancient Greek 'Alexander'. Even though this self-translation from "Eli" to "Alexander" occurs under the threat of death, it replicates the hubris of the sons of Noah in the Genesis, who, according to Derrida, are punished not for the construction of an overly tall tower, but for striving to make a name for themselves and found their genealogy upon it (1985, 169). Thus, Alex' grandfather incurs additional guilt by repressing the memory of his betrayal that is intricately linked to his new name. Both the name and the guilt are passed on to his descendants.

The blindspot of a primal scene

What occurs in Trachimbrod could, with Alfred Hirsch, be termed a second "primal scene of linguistic indebtedness" (1997, 398, translation mine)[17]. For with the experience of the genocide, the language of the survivors splits in two; the articulation of one's own past becomes impossible. What remains are names referring to still more names which cannot effectively refer to the extralinguistic world. In the context of Foer's novel, the psychoanalytic notion of the 'primal scene,' which, in Freud's terms, denotes the young child's witnessing of the parents' sexual intercourse, of which the child retains an unconscious memory (cf. Laplanche and Pontalis 2006, 335) is particularly illuminating. By sending his protagonists on a "rigid search" for the survival story of Jonathan's grandfather, Foer can be said to stage their search for a primal scene, since Trachimbrod can be seen as the place of miraculous survival which can be compared to an act of conception of the generations to come. This is most vividly reflected in Alex's address to Augustine: "By saving his grandfather, you allowed him to be born." (150) Interestingly, such a connection has already been established by Nadine

[17] In the original: "Urszene sprachlicher Verschuldung".

Fresco, who compares the post-Holocaust generation's inaccessibility "to the life that existed before their birth" precisely to the "blindspot of some primal scene" (1984, 420).

Interestingly, Foer stages his protagonists' experience upon finding Trachimbrod very much like a primal scene in the Freudian sense. After finding the woman they think to be Augustine and listening to her memories of the violent end of Trachimbrod and the neighboring shtetls, they are unexpectedly excluded from a presumably intimate conversation between her and Alex's grandfather (156), like children sent to play outside. Augustine's request to leave them alone is preceded by the grandfather's interruptions and insults – especially during her narration of Eli's betrayal of Herschel – which attract Alex' attention even more than Augustine's stories. With the two elderly people withdrawing, the narrative focuses on the generation of the descendants. Both protagonists find themselves in a situation that they are experiencing not for the first time, namely being excluded from their families' myths of origin. A familiar scene seems to be repeated here, with the difference that this time the exclusion is evident and forces the protagonists to reflect upon their own situations and to draw parallels in their family histories. This becomes clear in a scene reminiscent of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in which the two characters, at a loss for words, begin to peel corn for Augustine:

> 'I don't know what to do,' the hero said.
> 'I do not know also."
> After that there was a famine of words for a long time. We only removed the skin from corn. […]
> 'What should we converse about?' I asked, because I knew that it was a common decency for us to speak. 'I don't know.' 'There must be a thing.' 'Do you want to know anything else about America?' he asked. 'I cannot think of anything at this moment.' (156)

After a brief exchange on unimportant facts about the USA, Alex gathers courage and directs the conversation to the topic he is truly interested in: "Tell me more about your grandmother" (157).

This prompts Jonathan to remember the presence of his grandmother's experience of narrow survival in his childhood. He informs Alex and the reader about their non-verbal and paraverbal communication, both of which exhibit traces of the old woman's trauma and the boy's reception of it. Thus, the protagonist remembers how, during family visits, she regularly used to lift him into the air "with one of her wonderful terrifying hugs", which turns out to be more than a sign of joy at seeing her grandson. As he learns only later, her war-time experience of starvation caused her obsessive habit of checking her grandson's weight: "It was important to her – more important than that I had a good time – that I gained weight whenever I visited. I think she wanted the fattest grandchildren in the world" (158).

As to the paraverbal exchanges, we learn that Jonathan's grandmother seeks the alliance with her young grandson in order to break her lifelong silence, which is conveyed through their common game of screaming the longest words they can think of off her back porch at night (159). However, this revolt against silence does not facilitate communication about her or the grandfather's escape from Nazi Europe. While Jonathan comes up with the Greek and Latin words "Phantasmagoria!" and "Antediluvian!", thus unwittingly articulating his relation to his family's past, his grandmother resorts to Yiddish words, which the boy cannot understand. Not only do the unspeakable contents of the family memories remain hidden, they also appear to be frozen in Yiddish, the language in which they have come into being, and resist translation into English. Thus, displaying an indexical connection to her past on a linguistic as well as paralinguistic level, the grandmother's screams do not bridge her and Jonathan's discursive frames of reference. This sad 'game' reflects insights from the psychoanalytic study of the transmission of trauma. As Nadine Fresco lucidly shows in her 1984 analysis of interviews with children of camp survivors, Holocaust survivors, more often than not "transmitted only the wound" (1984, 419), but not its meaning, which becomes apparent in a rupture of the discursive order between the generations. Sensing such a rupture in his own family, Alex questions his companion about his grandmother:

> "What were the words that she would scream?" "I don't know. I never knew what they meant. I can still hear her." He screamed a Yiddish word into the street. "Why didn't you ask her what the words meant?" "I was afraid." "Of what were you afraid?" "I don't know. I was just too afraid. I knew I wasn't supposed to ask, so I didn't." "Perhaps she desired for you to ask." "No." "Perhaps she needed you to ask, because if you didn't ask, she couldn't tell you." "No." "Perhaps she was shouting, Ask me! Ask me what I'm shouting!" (159)

As this dialogue reveals, it is not only Jonathan's non-understanding of Yiddish, but also the silent imperative not to inquire about the past and a lack of real address on both sides, which prevents them from communicating about the historical trauma. This corresponds to Ernst van Alphen's statement that the condition for real understanding, that is, proper address, is often left unfulfilled between Holocaust survivors and their descendants, which results in the latter's inability to relate to their family's past (2006, 481). As Nadine Fresco confirms, the survivors handed on nothing but "compact void of the unspeakable" to their children, a silence the second generation has kept so as not to expose the parents' wounds (1984, 419).

If silence dominates the relationship of the first-hand witnesses to their children, the following, third generation, receives the legacy of a double gap in memory. The passing on of the Holocaust and war trauma to the third generation exponentiates what Henri Raczymow has called "mémoire trouée", or "memory shot through with holes" (1994, 98). Such intergenerational silence is ingeniously inscribed in the narrative through the configuration of

the parents' generation as a blank space. While Jonathan's parents hardly emerge in any of the narrative strands, in Alex' family, as Fresco might say, silence itself has been silenced through the boy's father's alcoholism and violence. Thus, the memory holes condition Jonathan's keenness to embark on a "very rigid search" through the Ukraine (105), while at the same time, they account for Alex' initial disinterest in guiding a "Heritage Tour". In a famous study, Marianne Hirsch introduces the concept of *postmemory* as a form of consciousness shared by the descendants of Holocaust survivors (1997, 22). According to Hirsch, "[p]ostmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth" and presents "a powerful and very particular form of memory", whose "connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation" (1997, 22). Such an imaginative investment can be clearly recognized on the part of Jonathan, who has grown up surrounded, if not by narratives, then at least by signs pointing to his grandparents' Holocaust experience. The magic realist account of the history of Trachimbrod seems precisely the product of the desire to fill in the gaps of the family narrative.

The character of Alex presents a different case, since his family narrative is marked not by memory holes but by a total erasure of memory. As explained above, the grandfather's 'translation' of his own name from "Eli" to "Alex" suggests a Derridean reading. This act of translation aims at the separation of his person from his name, which is supposed to make his guilt invisible. In consequence, the split becomes the marker of trauma and of guilt, which is evacuated from the family narrative only by sinking into its unconscious. Thus, Alex encounters this guilt as an invisible and unconscious legacy, which, in Derrida's terms, can be described as "insolvent debt within a genealogical scene" (1985, 176). Without his knowledge, his inherited name continues to refer to the traumatic split between the signifier and the signified. Derrida's troping of translation as "Wiedergabe, Sinnwiedergabe, restitution, restitution of meaning" (ibid.) can explain why Alex is forced by his father to work as a translator for "Heritage Tours". With the family narrative forever separated from historical truth, its continuation in the life of the descendants also appears devoid of meaning, which explains the pointless existence of Alex' father, which is reduced to alcoholism and violence.

While the "task of the translator" is forced upon Alex due to the burdensome legacy of his grandfather's 'original' creation of the false family narrative, the latter, in Derridean terms, cannot be considered absolved of his original guilt: "The original is the first debtor, the first petitioner; it begins by lacking and by pleading for translation." (1985, 184) In

psychoanalytic terms, the "lacking" and "pleading" constitute an impossibility of mourning, which is why real and linguistic guilt remain intricately connected. Therefore, Alex can be described as an "indebted subject, obligated by a duty, already in the position of heir, entered as survivor in a genealogy, as survivor or agent of sur-vival" (ibid., 179). In a literal sense, Alex' translated name bears the memory of a traumatic survival at the cost of his grandfather's best friend – a guilt that cannot be redeemed neither in a real nor in a linguistic sense.

Finding himself excluded from his grandfather's and Augustine's intimate conversation, Alex is freed for a moment from his duty of having to translate for others. Along with Jonathan, he is gradually led to discover the primal scene to which he owes his existence: the survival of his own grandfather. The interpreter immediately feels anger well up in him due to this exclusion:

> Why could he [the grandfather] say things to this woman that he had never before encountered when he could not say things to me? Or perhaps he was not saying anything to her. Or perhaps he was lying. This is what I wanted, for him to present not-truths to her. She did not deserve the truth, not as I deserved the truth. Or we both deserved the truth, and the hero, too. All of us. (156)

Despite his anger, Alex seems to show restraint in the manner of a psychoanalyst – or a translator of the words of others – and lets Jonathan tell as much as possible about his childhood: "I did not utter a thing, so that he would persevere" (157). But a few lines later, he senses the unconscious guilt that has turned him into a translator in the first place. With Derrida, one can say that he "appears to himself as translator in a situation of debt" (1985, 176), which makes him feel "ashamed" (157). Convinced that Jonathan must have noticed his uneasiness, he retrospectively wonders: "Did you feel sorry for me? Is that why you persevered?" (159)

Interestingly, the above-mentioned passage also ends in a turn that may have been anticipated with Derrida's translation theory. Describing translation as "the mission to which one is destined (always by the other), the commitment, the duty, the debt, the responsibility", Derrida postulates that the translator "*must* also acquit himself, and of something that implies perhaps a fault, a fall, an error and perhaps a crime" (1985, 175, emphasis in the original). This coincides the turn at the end of the passage in Foer's novel, when Alex peaks into Jonathan's diary and finds his own future described by his companion. What the diary predicts and what is realized towards the end of the novel, is the expulsion of his father from the family, announced by the declaration: "You are not my father." (160)

The workings of cryptonymy

Does this renunciation help Alex to recover the truth about his family narrative and finally succeed at the task of the translator? According to Paul de Man, the original title of Walter Benjamin's essay, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers", betrays the tragic destiny of the translator, for "Aufgabe" in German denotes not only "task", but also "defeat" or "giving up" (1985, 33). As de Man writes, "the translator, per definition, fails. […] The translator has to give up in relation to the task of refinding what was there in the original." (ibid.). To demonstrate this failure, Foer endows his translator figure with a low level of proficiency in English, which the latter admits in his first letter to Jonathan: "Like you know, I am not first rate with English. In Russian my ideas are asserted abnormally well, but my second tongue is not so premium." (23)

This failure of the translator is then enacted paradigmatically in *Everything Is Illuminated* through the interpreter's constant verbal slippages. Alex' unskilled use of the English-English dictionary presented to him by Jonathan accounts for countless lexical faux pas such as "currency" instead of 'money', "rigid" instead of 'difficult', "to amputate" instead of 'to remove', "guilelessly" instead of 'sincerely' or "to harmonize" instead of 'to agree'. These lexical mistakes highlight the purely linguistic side of his utterances, with the signifiers occupying centre stage while the signified is transferred to the backstage. In its constant aberrations, the language of the interpreter appears as a system of signifiers endlessly referring to other signifiers and thus never reaching a destination.

The translator's *thesaurese* demonstrates how the novel uses translation as a metaphor for the recovery of historical truth, with their possibility or impossibility being their common denominator. Drawing on the image of the failing translation, the novel plays with multiple scenarios of the extinction of history. By turning his protagonists into historiographers who, in word or deed, keep negotiating the rules of writing history, Foer labels his novel as *historiographic metafiction* as discussed by Linda Hutcheon (1988). Thus, the author moves Jonathan's history of Trachimbrod into the genre of magic realism, which, from the first sentence on, produces a narrative in which "Trachim B's double-axle wagon *either did or did not* pin him against the bottom of the Brod River" (8, emphasis mine). While this narrative is permeated by an obsession with memory and genealogy, the desire to recover memory is comically frustrated and the belief in history shattered constantly. Thus, Jonathan metaphorizes memory as the sixth sense of the Jews (198), and provides the Trachimbroders with a "Book of Antecedents" (36), absurdly updated every day in the time before the war and

rediscovered by the protagonists among Augustine's collected items under the title "The Book of Past Occurrences" (224). However, his narrative never ascribes any content to their memory. "*It is most important that we remember* […] *The* what", a Trachimbroder declares, "*is not so important, but that we should remember. It is the act of remembering, the process of remembrance, the recognition of our past* […] *Can somebody tell me where I was?*" (36) Bereft of any substance, memory appears as a void filled with a flow of words, which is most vividly illustrated through mad squire Sofiowka's attempts to remember "something terribly important". As we learn from Jonathan's narrative,

> he was once found on the Well-Regarded Rabbi's front lawn, bound in white string, and said he tied one around his index finger to remember something terribly important, and fearing he would forget the index finger, he tied a string around his pinky, and then one from waist to neck, and fearing he would forget this one, he tied a string from ear to tooth to scrotum to heal, and used his body to remember his body, but in the end could remember only the string (15).

What is presented in this passage is but a metaphorized version of Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance,* in which meaning is posed as forever deferred through an endless chain of signifiers. The obvious consequence is that memory along with history is largely inaccessible, and the idea of historical truth becomes extinguished.

As to the other historiographer and man narrator, Alex, Foer does not make him consciously create mythologies, but endows him with a lack of knowledge even of his own family history. Responding to Jonathan's magic realism, Alex wonders about their relationship to historical truth: "We are being very nomadic with the truth, yes? The both of us? Do you think that this is acceptable when we are writing about things that occurred?" (179) From these considerations, he initially derives a particular poetic license: "[I]f we are to be such nomads with the truth, why do we not make the story more premium than life? […] I do not think that there are any limits to how excellent we could make life seem." (179-180)

Despite pondering the possibility of a reinvention of history, Alex never puts the idea into practice in his own narrative strand. This proves that it would be wrong to view the novel exclusively in the tradition of postmodern historiographic fiction denying any certainty about historical facts. To be sure, the novel is far from celebrating any definitive recovery of historical truth. Thus, the existence of a 'true' Augustine becomes a matter of belief, just as it is left open whether the Jewish name of Alex's grandfather is supposed to reveal his Jewish identity, which would once again cast a different light on his betrayal of Herschel. Moreover, the grandfather's memory returns in such a traumatically unprocessed quality that the latter is driven into suicide. However, the pure fact that Alex does find out about his grandfather's

forced collaboration with the Nazis, makes clear that Foer does not subscribe to a view of history or language as pessimistic as de Man's.

To return to the metaphor of translation, a closer look at Alex' language reveals that the novel does not entirely lend itself to a deconstructive reading and, to a certain extent, does put an end to the play of signifiers. Thus, on the surface, Alex struggles to understand the statements made by his American guest. For instance, when Jonathan shows the picture of his grandfather together with Augustine and explains: "This was taken during the war", the translator promptly responds with the question: "From who?" (59) It is tempting to read Alex' difficulty in understanding and his word-by-word translation, which results from his ignorance of the idiomatic expression "to take a picture", in terms of de Man's view of translation: "[F]rom the moment that a translation is really literal, *wörtlich*, word by word, the meaning completely disappears. […] The meaning of the word slips away […] and there is no grammatical way to control this slippage." (1985, 41, emphasis in the original).

However, the way in which Foer models this slippage through his translator figure's discourse is highly controlled in linguistic terms. The interpreter may well be bound to fail because of his linguistic competence, which he himself describes as "not first rate" (23). But at the same time, it becomes apparent that this failure occurs in the very moment in which Jonathan comments on the irredeemable loss of his grandfather's carefree youth. One could say that the latter had indeed been "taken", in the sense of "taken away" or "stolen", for, as mentioned above, the photograph epitomises the impossibility of recovering the captured moment. Thus the translation fails on the surface, but manages to leave a trace that points to a hidden history of trauma.

At this point, it is illuminating to study the works of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, to some of which Derrida has composed extensive prefaces and which, however, present "a theory of readability" (Rand 1986, li) that appears like an optimistic rewriting of deconstruction. The writers focus on the clinical cases of patients whose discourse seems to resist analysis in a radical way, since they are plagued by a suffering not of their own but of an *other*. Abraham and Rand refer to them as

> visitors to the couch who, unbeknownst to themselves, carry the concealed shame of their families. These people are prey to strange and incongruous words or acts, transferred from events unknown to them, events whose initiator was *an other*. (1988, 2)

To describe the effect of this "concealed shame" on the patient, Abraham draws on the notion of the *phantom*: "The phantom is a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious – for good reason. It passes – in a way yet to be determined – from the parent's unconscious into the child's." (1987, 289) The author detects the reason of this

'phantomization' of memories in the fact that they were consciously kept secret by family members – which is also telling about their nature. For a memory becomes "'phantomized' because it was unspeakable in words, because it had to be wrapped in silence" (Abraham and Rand 1988, 4). What a descendant inherits in such a case is "a gap in the unconscious, an unknown, unrecognized knowledge – a *nescience* – subjected to a form of 'repression' before the fact. The buried speech of the parent becomes (a) dead (gap), without a burial place, in the child" (Abraham, Torok and Rand 1984, 17). This formulation not coincidentally reminds of Nadine Fresco's and Henri Raczymow's ideas of "remembering the unknown" and the "mémoire trouée", which describe precisely the same phenomenon in the context of the Holocaust.

However, Abraham's and Rand's exploration takes us still further. The patient's "living-dead knowledge of *someone else's secret*" or his or her "awareness-unawareness" produce two contradictory tendencies (1988, 3). Thus,

> the 'haunted' individual is caught between two inclinations. He must at all costs maintain his ignorance of a loved one's secret, hence the semblance of unawareness (nescience) concerning it. At the same time, he must eliminate the state of secrecy, hence the reconstruction of the secret in the form of unconscious knowledge. (ibid.)

In order to keep the secret safely hidden, such patients draw on a number of mechanisms of concealment, one of which Abraham and Torok refer to as *cryptonymy* (1986). This term emerges out of a re-examination of Freud's case history of the Wolf Man, whose discourse, as the analysts observe, encompassed numerous enigmas and absurdities that were meant to hide his knowledge of his sister's sexual abuse by their father. By "transform[ing] the Wolf Man's unreadability itself into his foremost symptom" (Rand 1986, lix), Abraham and Torok subject case of the multilingual patient to a translingual decoding process, thus gradually laying bare the traces of the childhood trauma. As they establish, the Wolf Man had succeeded in barring the access to a traumatic memory of witnessing by encrypting it in English, the language of his nurse, and thus making use of the mechanism of *cryptonymy*.

This theoretical basis, which Abraham and Torok also suggest for the analysis of literary texts, seems apt for explaining the linguistic structure of Foer's narrative. As I want to argue, the absence of the invoked Russian or Ukrainian language symbolises a hidden discourse that has lodged itself in the unconscious of Alex' family. Significantly, we learn that both Alex' father and grandfather that he works for a company named "Heritage Touring" (3), sometimes forcing Alex to take over jobs for them as well. The irony of the company name is obvious since it is the own heritage that is silenced in their family. The functioning of the company reflects the contradictory inclinations described by Abraham. For

on the one hand, the notion of 'heritage' stands out, as if to deny any sense of secrecy. On the other hand, it only refers to a service offered to foreign clients – "Jews, who try to unearth places where their families once existed" (3) – thus negating any connection to the Perchov family. Also, the name "Heritage Touring" betrays a mechanism of concealment of the "awareness-unawareness", which finds itself already described in Breuer's case history of Anna O. (1955): the translation of unspeakable contents into a foreign language. This way, the motif of the heritage, which is hidden behind a family romance invented by Alex' grandfather, is decontextualized or encrypted.

With Alex' employment as Jonathan's guide the hidden family narrative undergoes a second displacement. For, due to his "not so premium" English (23), the interpreter is presented a thesaurus by Jonathan, which serves him an instrument of encrypting. Thus, Alex not only draws on English as cryptonymic code, but also distorts all of his statements through his seemingly unskilled use of the thesaurus. In fact, the function of the latter is of course designed systematically: in his constantly wrong choice of vocabulary, albeit related to the seemingly intended words, the displacement of a secret discourse becomes palpable along with the pathology of identifying with the discourse of an other. In its cryptonymic quality, the thesaurus can be compared to the Verbarium of the Wolf Man as elaborated by Abraham and Torok (1986), since it encompasses an entire system of cryptonyms enabling the hiding of unspeakable facts.

The most prominent example of a cryptonym is contained in the very title of the novel: "illuminated". First of all, the title "Everything Is Illuminated" appears enigmatic and poses the questions: What is "everything" and in what way can it be "illuminated"? Initially, the verb "to illuminate" and its derivatives are used in an unidiomatic, but nevertheless predictable sense – as 'to cast light on something', as in: "he was *illuminated* at her window" (133), or 'to explain something, as in: "I do not have any additional *luminous* remarks, because I must possess more of the novel in order to *lumin*." (25, emphases mine) Later in the narrative, the chapter titles "An Overture to Illumination" and "Illumination" (219, 243) anticipate that there is a deeper, hidden meaning of the word used so prominently by the interpreter. Finally, it is only when Alex' grandfather is overwhelmed by his traumatic memories and gives a stream-of-consciousness testimony of the genocide in his shtetl and the death of Herschel that the reader learns what lies behind Alex' cryptonym of 'to illuminate':

> [T]he guards put him [Herschel] in the synagogue with the rest of the Jews and everyone else was remaining outside to hear the cryingofthebabies and the cryingoftheadults and to see the black spark when the first match was it by a youngman who could not have been any older than I was or Herschel was or you are it *illuminated* those who were not in the synagogue those who were not going to die (251, emphasis mine).

This passage makes clear that the verb 'to illuminate' is most intimately connected with the grandfather's witnessing of the Holocaust and the etymological origins of the latter term in Greek, meaning 'entirely burnt'. With Abraham and Torok, it can be argued that it is this meaning that underlies Alex' numerous repetitions of the cryptonym 'to illuminate'. Thus, the use of the word points to the unspeakable scene of betrayal and death while making this reference unintelligible at the same time.

Three further lexical faux pas demonstrate how Alex' awkward discourse is used as a projection screen for unconscious contents: his prominent misuse of the words 'to witness' and 'to desire' and 'queer', which are recurrently used to replace the words 'to see', 'to want' and 'strange'. This produces utterances such as: "First I *witnessed* the television", and "It is almost impossible to *witness* her"; "He *desires* to write a book about his grandfather's village", and: "I *desire* him to feel as if he has a cool brother"; and finally: "Father said something *queer*. […] And then he said something even *queerer*" (6, 68, 144, 182, emphases mine). These unidiomatic constructions serve more than just a comical effect. Rather, they break up the otherwise cryptonymic discourse and allow the reader to catch a glimpse of the hidden heritage in the Perchov family. It stands to reason that the verb 'to witness' points to the role of Alex' grandfather during the genocide in the Ukraine. As shall be explained in the following, 'desire' and 'queer' point to the interpreter's own psychic topography resulting from the *phantom* of the grandfather's past.

As Esther Rashkin points out, the essential problem of patients 'haunted' by an unknown past consists in the impossibility of an independent individuation. Commenting on Abraham and Torok's thought, she explains that a child's "unwitting involvement in this mute past interferes with the normal processes leading to a successful introjection and inhibits its emergence as an autonomous subject" (1988, 40). In the narrative of *Everything Is Illuminated*, this interference is troped as an inhibition of love and sexuality – a suffering voiced through the interpreter's misuse of 'to desire'. His – and, in a similar way, Jonathan's – difficulty in directing his desire becomes palpable when the protagonists examine the old photograph of Jonathan's grandfather's alleged savior, Augustine, and seem to both fall in love with her. While Jonathan "move[s] his finger along the face of the girl in the photograph as he mention[s] her", Alex looks at her "for many minutes" until uttering: "She was so so beautiful." (59) By turning Augustine's picture into the projection surface of their desires, Foer demonstrates how their own desire is corrupted by the desire to recover their family histories. In this context, the chapter title, "What We Saw When We Saw Trachimbrod, or Falling in Love" (181), does not come as a surprise.

Likewise, desire becomes a dominant theme in Jonathan's fantastical account of the history of Trachimbrod. Instead of composing a history narrative featuring a few enlivening love stories, the young author tropes the history of his grandfather's shtetl as a history of falling in love, grotesquely also titling four of his chapters "Falling in Love". Not only is the shtetl notorious for its orgies during the Trachimday festival, which can bizarrely be spotted by astronauts two centuries later as "a tiny speck of light" (95). More importantly, Jonathan reimagines his grandfather's escape from the Nazis as owing to his appeal to women. The attraction of his limp arm, symbolizing his just awakening sexuality, again establishes a link between desire and survival.

This link resurfaces in the protagonists' conversation in the key scene analyzed above that can be considered a reenactment of a primal scene. Alex' urgent questions about Jonathan's relationship with his grandmother betray his curiosity about the connection between one's own desire and the life of one's grandparents. The emotionally charged formulation, "I decided to peril everything once again. 'Tell me about you and her'" (157), shows that Alex senses suspicion about his own family history, which, in the meantime, he can only try to verify through the analogy with Jonathan's story. In this fashion, the reader learns about Jonathan's childhood habit of hiding under his grandmother's dress at family dinners (157). Through this habit, he seems to be unwittingly enacting an unborn child and thus trying, as Nadine Fresco puts it, to gain access "to the life that existed before their birth" (1984, 420). Significantly, Jonathan's hiding place holds not only the secret of birth, but also that of survival, for the grandmother's varicose veins, which young Jonathan likes touching, are an indexical sign of her escape from the Nazis:

> My grandmother got them from the war, because she had to walk across Europe to escape. It was too much for her legs. […] I'd run my hands up and down her varicose veins. I don't know why, or how I started doing it. It was just something I did. I was a kid, and kids do things like that, I guess. (157)

A clear intertextual reference to Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum*, Jonathan's story confirms Alex' suspicions. Thus, when Jonathan explains his and his grandmother's afore-mentioned screaming game with the words: "We were both secretly in love with words, I guess", Alex seems to be waiting to diagnose a more painful truth: "And you were both secretly in love with each other" (159). The utterances of Jonathan's grandmother express a double bind, imploring the grandson to ask and not to ask about the hidden meaning of the Yiddish words. What Alex mistakes for a love relationship is, however, "a pathogenic dual union with the [grand]parent, in a silent partnership dedicated to preserving the secret intact" (Rashkin 1988, 40).

As we learn, Alex has also grown up with the maxim of not inquiring about the reasons of his grandfather's melancholia. This condition emerges after the death of Alex' grandmother, who "died two years yore of a cancer in her brain, and Grandfather became very melancholy, and also, he says, blind." (4-5) As can be seen in this passage, the grandfather invents improbable symptoms that are meant to distract the attention from the cause of his suffering. Thus, it becomes an imperative in Alex' family not to ask about his feelings: "Father commanded me never to mention Grandmother to Grandfather. […] It will make him melancholy, Alex, and it will make him think he is more blind." (6)

Ironically enough, the crumbling of the ostensible continuity of this family narrative is anticipated through a trifle detail about the grandfather's dog, whose name, Sammy Davis Jr. Jr., satirizes the naming tradition of the Perchovs' firstborn sons. As we learn from Alex, the dog was not purchased, as the boy's father claims, but picked up from "the home for forgetful dogs" (5). Both this whimsical hint and Alex's lexical mistake, point to a graver form of 'forgetfulness', to wit, the gaping void in one's family's history. What is interesting, however, is the fact that in consequence the bitch is denied her real sex, which she resists by making advances at members of the male sex such as Jonathan (56).

Similarly, the repression of memory and true identity in Alex's family is troped as a repressed desire, manifesting itself in his closeted homosexuality, a circumstance anticipated by the lexical misuse of the adjective 'queer'. Just like his grandfather, whose real first name "Eli" is revealed in a stream-of-consciousness monologue (250) and points to his denied Jewish origins, Alex is characterized by the denial of a trait of his, for which he is likely to be victimized by his intolerant surroundings: "There is such a thing as love that cannot be, for certain", Alex writes to Jonathan, and continues: "If I were to inform Father, for example, about how I comprehended love, and who I desired to love, he would kill me, and this is no idiom" (241). And just like his grandfather tries to cover up his origins by excessively praising Odessa and behaving in an overtly anti-Semitic way before eventually confessing that he converted his Jewish name "Eli" into "Alex" after the genocide (275), Alex boasts about his success with girls before admitting to never having "been carnal with a girl" and to being afraid to come out as homosexual (144). The reason Alex gives for hiding his true identity thus also applies to his grandfather's self-denial: "I think I manufacture these not-truths because it makes me feel like a premium person" (144).

The only possible autonomous future for Alex can be to break with all of his previous relationships. As his grandfather says about him and his younger brother before committing suicide: "They must begin again. They must cut all of the strings, yes? With you […], with

their father (who is not gone forever), with everything they have known. Sasha [Alex] has started it, and now I must finish it." (275)

It is important to mention that Alex' 'cutting of the strings' – uncannily anticipating the Grandfather's slitting of his wrists – is predicted off all by Jonathan. With their complementary perspectives on the "living-dead knowledge" of their grandparents' past (Abraham 1988, 3), Alex and Jonathan are enjoined like two puzzle pieces. This invites a reading through Abraham and Torok's idea of the symbol. As the theorists write, patients haunted by a phantomized memory of an other, communicate through symbols that are inherently incomplete, since they point to a further symbol that they hide. What they derive from this insight, are implications for the work of the psychoanalyst, whose task it is "to retrace the broken symbol's lines of fracture":

> Psychoanalytic listening consists of a special way of treating language. Whereas normally we are given meanings, the analyst is given symbols. Symbols are data that are missing an as yet undetermined part, but that can, in principle, be determined. The special aim of psychoanalytic listening is to find the symbol's complement […], in other words, the fragment that "symbolizes with" – or, we might say, that "cosymbolizes" (1986, 79-80).

This understanding of the symbol can account for Foer's design of his interpreter's broken language. The fact that the "undetermined part […] can, in principle, be determined" once again highlights that the discourse of the fictional translator does not invite a purely deconstructive reading. The psychoanalytic interpretation, as suggested by Abraham and Torok, does greater justice to the skillfully created language of the interpreter, whose discourse is dominated by the silenced past of his grandfather.

An etymological explanation offered by Esther Rashkin casts more light on Abraham and Torok's theory of the symbol:

> For the Greeks, the *symbolon*, was a piece of pottery or earthenware that was broken in two prior to someone's (usually a warrior's) voyage. One of the two pieces remained at the site of departure while the other was carried by the traveler and "voyaged" with him. Upon his return (often many years later), the traveler's piece of pottery served as a sign of recognition and as proof of his identity when it was rejoined with its matching complement. The word "symbol" referred to each of the two pieces individually as well as to the act of putting the two pieces together (from the Greek *symballo* = to put together). (1988, 47)

This story behind the symbol can we be retraced in *Everything Is Illuminated*. As shown by the story of Alex' grandfather, the Holocaust divided vast parts of Europe into victims and perpetrators, who could impossibly compose a common historical account of the catastrophic events. Instead, they became the bearers of different fragments of a discourse, which, in its unprocessed or secret quality, was passed on to their descendants. It is as such that Alex and Jonathan bring along their fragments of a narrative and a language. Their encounter is not only one between a traveller and his guide or between the descendant of a Holocaust victim

and that of a perpetrator; it is also one between two authors of the same story, between two hapless lovers, between two parties of an existential dialogue. Thus, Foer has Alex write in a letter to Jonathan:

> We are talking now, Jonathan, together, and not apart. We are with each other, working on the same story, and I am certain that you can also feel it. Do you know that I am the Gypsy girl and you are Safran, and that I am Kolker and you are Brod, and that I am Alex and you are you, and that I am you and you are me? (214)

Indeed, the encounter between the two protagonists symbolizes an absolute dissolution of boundaries. In this sense, the narrative strands and the linguistic discourses produced by them, in the end, do seem to fit together like the fragments of the broken vessel described by Walter Benjamin, even if the dream of a greater language can only appear a mirage in the light of the civilization-breaking experience of the Holocaust.

Against the appropriation of the Holocaust

If the protagonists fit together like chalk and cheese, this does not imply that they are able to piece together all the discourse fragments of the two Holocaust witnesses they get to know. This confirms the tenets of trauma theory, which highlights the risk of trivializing traumatic discourse: "The danger of speech, of integration into the narration of memory", Cathy Caruth argues, "may lie not in what it cannot understand, but in that it understands too much" (1995, 154). Seeking to preserve the strangeness and incomprehensibility of traumatically charged language, Foer has his fictional translator tread on linguistically foreign ground in his attempt to work through the memory of the Holocaust. Since this foreign ground is not easy to conquer and constantly evades the translator's control, Alex' linguistic slippage undermines the possibility of appropriating a language.

It is particularly significant that Foer chooses a descendant of a collaborator to be the main narrator in a Holocaust narrative. Alex' and Jonathan's narrative strands can be said to encircle the central traumatic events of the Holocaust. While Jonathan's magic realist account approaches the genocide through a phantasmagoric prehistory of his grandfather's shtetl, Alex is involved in a retrospective search for eye-witnesses and traces. Despite its linguistic turbulence, Alex' account is more strongly rooted in realism, which implies that he is assigned the authority of the Holocaust narrative despite the silenced past of his family. This

delicate and precarious endeavor, as it is described in an essay by Ulla Haselstein (1991), can be said to be cushioned by Alex' limited language skills.

The fact that the interpreter's language differs from that of Jonathan only in the level of proficiency calls up not only Walter Benjamin's idea of the interrelatedness between languages, but also Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of intralinguistic dialogism. In regard to Alex' use of the thesaurus, in particular, Bakhtin's thoughts on heteroglossia in the novel offer a valuable comment. Thus, the critic describes the socio-ideological component of any given speech act:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent […]. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (1981, 293-94)

The appropriation of "someone else's" word is precisely what Foer's translator fails in. One could argue that dictionaries do not guarantee for absolute neutrality. They can well be instrumentalized as pillars of authority, however, only so by someone who knows how to use them effectively. This is not the case with Alex, who, out of all synonyms offered in the thesaurus, always seems to choose the least appropriate one. The effect of the fictionalized use of the thesaurus is an entire de-contextualization of his words – which, metaphorically, stands in for the search for a new language.

Bakhtin's description of the dialogic relationship between the speaker and the addressee helps uncover another aspect the fictional young translator's discourse reverberates with. Bakhtin writes: "[E]very word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates." (1981, 280) This idea is clearly at work in *Everything Is Illuminated*, since Alex produces a thoroughly tentative discourse that cannot entirely speak for itself, but, in its awkwardness, stumbles towards the addressee. In his highly comical, knotted language, he repeatedly asks the recipient of his letters, Jonathan, to correct his drafts on their common journey, but also to understand his difficulty in writing: "I tried bestly, and did the best I could, which was the best that I could do. It is so rigid for me. Please be truthful, but also please be benevolent, please" (26). In entrusting his notes to Jonathan, the translator reveals every single one of his words to be "semi-alien" (1981, 299). In passing his words on to the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, the translator seems to address both his difficulty of creating a Holocaust discourse in general, and his particular moral burden of speaking from the position of a descendant of a Holocaust witness forced into traumatic complicity with the Nazis.

What is not least important is also the material context of the exchange between the protagonists. While, problematically enough, receiving "currency", that is payment, from Jonathan for his writing job, Alex insists on his incorruptibility as far as the truth of his account is concerned:

> I have only one remark about your remarks about my writing. With regards for how you ordered me to remove the section where you talk about your grandmother, I must tell you that this is not a possibility. I accept if because of my decision you choose not to present me any more currency, or if you command for me to post back the currency you have given me in the previous months. It would be justifying every dollar, I will inform you. (179)

As this passage demonstrates, accounts of the Holocaust cannot be entirely separated from the commercial components of the literary market. Yet, the text argues against their appropriation and monopolization by descendants of both the victims and the perpetrators. Thus, Foer sets up a dialogue, in which neither of the protagonists can claim the ownership of the historical trauma. In doing so, the author confirms trauma theorist Cathy Caruth's view, according to which history, like trauma, is marked by intrinsic dialogism: "[H]istory, like trauma, is never simply one's own, [...] history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas." (Caruth 1996, 24)

Despite "rigid attempts", the protagonists do not reach a common language. For while Alex' travelogue and Jonathan's magic realist account of his own genealogy in Trachimbrod approach each other asymptotically, they never merge into one narrative. Most importantly, the novel does not display a single letter of response by Jonathan, even though such a response is implied in Alex' own letters. Their "complementarity and difference", as Ulla Haselstein writes, "reflects the general absence of a dialogue between the descendants of victims and perpetrators as a burdensome historical legacy" (2006, 210, translation mine).[18] This painful absence can be clearly detected in the translator's broken discourse.

At the same time, Foer offers an optimistic corrective insofar as he sends the descendants of both parties on a common search for a language for the civilization-breaking experience of the Holocaust. The search for a language for the Holocaust is encoded in the complex figure of translation. The so-called third generation, shaped not by the experience of the Holocaust but precisely by its non-experience, sets out for Babel, if not to restore a common language, then at least to recover the "primal scene of linguistic indebtedness", which led to the traumatic split of language in the first place. The recovery of such a scene

[18] In the original: "[I]hre[…] Komplementarität und Differenz […] reflektieren die weitgehende Absenz eines Dialogs der Nachfahren von Opfern und Tätern als historische Erblast".

bears the hope of assembling some broken pieces of language, yet not of extinguishing the rupture traces, which is why the search for a language of trauma must remain unfinished.

Traumatic Passages between Two Nearly Native Tongues: Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*

Seeking to trope a deeply traumatic historical episode, Danticat, like Foer, chooses to disrupt the chronological linearity of events so as to inscribe the resistance of traumatic experience against its verbalization into the very structure of the narrative. Like *Everything Is Illuminated*, *The Farming of Bones* is woven together out of separate narrative strands – with one of them tracing the chronological progression of events, while the other, visually marked by bold face printing, delves entirely into the protagonist's inner world made up of circularly recurring memory images, dreams and thoughts. However, this can be named as the only crucial commonality. Writing from a similar geographical and generational distance to the genocide she depicts at the center of her narrative, Danticat mostly employs different narrative and linguistic strategies. While Foer incorporates his attempt of bridging this distance by sending his fictional alter ego on a journey from New York to Ukraine, Danticat keeps the historical leap and the journey to the Haitian-Dominican border out of the diegesis. Her narrative unfolds partly on Dominican and partly on Haitian ground and her protagonist does not need to travel to these settings from somewhere else, but inhabits them as a young adult at the time of the 1937 massacre – thus living two generations before the author. The metareflexive distance to the narrated events also seems reduced: Danticat does not linger for too long on considerations about an impossible recovery of history, about its possibly failing translation into another language and another time and space, or about an interminable search for a language for the unspeakable. While Foer's novel, with Linda Hutcheon, could be classified as historiographic metafiction (1988, 5), Danticat transports the reader directly into the year 1937 and focalizes the narrative through a survivor, who has no generational distance to the catastrophic events and therefore cannot metareflect on the post-memory of the massacre. Born in Haiti in 1969 and having a good command of both Kreyòl and Spanish in addition to English, Danticat, finally, does not share Foer's linguistic distance to the survivor figure and therefore does not need to rely on failing translator figures. However, this does not render her depiction of the genocide less powerful. As I would like to show in the following, it is precisely through the employment of all three languages that Danticat tropes the traumatic historical events of 1937.

The border as the site of trauma

Mapping translation in metaphorical terms presupposes a crossing-over from one side to another or a transgression of a border. While *Everything Is Illuminated* presents translation in linguistic, historical and psychological terms, it does not invoke the figure of crossing a physical or national border. All of its three narrative strands are geographically situated in Ukraine; even in the correspondence between Alex and Jonathan a border-crossing is not thematized, since the reader is only presented with Alex' letters to Jonathan, not with the latter's replies, and the process of transportation of these letters from Odessa to New York is never highlighted. What distinguishes Danticat's from Foer's novel is the central figure of a clearly locatable and transgressible physical border. As I want to argue, the employment of a linguistic border-crossing in *The Farming of Bones* can be explained through this central figure of the border, and more specifically that of the border river.

Two aspects of the latter invite and necessitate a process of translation: first, the troping of the river as a site of repeated traumata, which demand a working-through, and second, the contrast between the border river as a natural boundary and the national and linguistic border as a symbolic one. Let us begin with the first aspect. Early in the narrative, Danticat directs our attention to the fact that the border river bears a marker of trauma in its very name, Massacre River. When Señora Valencia recalls why she and her father, Don Ignacio, travelled to the river, where they first met, or, as she puts it, "found" eight-year old Amabelle: "I wanted to see the Massacre River where the French buccaneers were killed by the Spaniards in my history lesson" (91). With the inscription of death in its name, Massacre River seems destined to become the site of a traumatic origin in the narrative – the death of Amabelle's parents before the girl's eyes, after which she is quasi-adopted by Don Ignacio and remains in the Dominican Republic instead of returning to Haiti. This disaster in Amabelle's life intertwines from the very beginning with a traumatic episode suffered previously by her future foster family, the death of Señora Valencia's mother in childbirth. Don Ignacio's and his daughter's trip to Massacre River is directly linked to this death, since the child's interest in pirates is motivated by the fact that, left alone to raise her, her father takes to adventuresome methods of upbringing. As Señora Valencia recalls: "He took me hunting for birds and taught me to shoot a rifle, as if I were the son who took Mami's life in childbirth" (91). Upon encountering Amabelle, the two can be said to enter a bond of pain with the girl, whom they find sitting unmoving by the water, frozen in shock after having witnessed her parents drowning in the torrent of the river.

As the reader learns already in the first lines of the narrative, Amabelle regularly relives the memory of her parents drowning in traumatic nightmares (1). The trauma suffered

by the protagonist is so fundamental that she initially presents Sebastien in the role of her therapist before introducing him as her lover. The first time she quotes him in direct speech – "lie still while I take you back" – we witness him creating the mental image of a "cave across the river" meant to direct Amabelle's attention away from the traumatic site of her parents' death and to a different site, where water appears as soothing and energizing rather than a dangerous and uncontrollable force (1). Not only does Sebastien try to offer her comforting images; in a manner highly reminiscent of psychoanalytic treatment described by Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart (1995), in which a "therapist of a Holocaust survivor had the patient imagine a flower growing in the assignment place in Auschwitz", Sebastien suggests to Amabelle to rewrite her memories:

> 'I don't want you to dream of that river again,' he said. 'Give yourself a pleasant dream. Remember not only the end, but the middle, and the beginning, the things they did when they were breathing. Let us say that the river was still that day.'
>
> 'And my parents?'
>
> 'They died natural deaths many years later.' (55)

With his remodeling of his lover's memories, Sebastien seems to acknowledge van der Kolk's and van der Hart's argument that "[o]nce flexibility is introduced, the traumatic memory starts losing its power over current experience. By imagining these alternative scenarios, many patients are able to soften the intrusive power of the original, unmitigated horror." (1995, 178) To seal the effect of his rewriting, Sebastien provides it with a teleological element. In response to Amabelle's question why she came to the Dominican Republic if her parents had not drowned in the border river, he tells her: "Even though you were a girl when you left and I was already a man when I arrived and our families did not know each other, you came here to meet me." (55) Having encountered the young man in the role of both therapist and lover – for the "cave across the river" also happens to be the place "where Sebastien and [Amabelle] first made love" (100) – it is the more painful to witness how, in the course of the 1937 massacre, Amabelle is forced to return to the very site of her parents' death without him and master the act that had taken their lives. While she herself survives, the border river becomes the site of a traumatic repetition – the death of Wilner and Odette, a Haitian couple, with whom Amabelle is fleeing from the Dominican Republic. Against the background of the unyielding physical boundary between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, boundaries such as the ethnic, national and linguistic are highlighted as purely symbolic, though no less calamitous. Danticat emphasizes that the logics of ethnic distinction between Haitians and Dominicans has always been undermined. Thus, the protagonist perceives herself as a

member of the Dominican family she grows up in and later works for: "The señora and her family are the closest to kin I have", Amabelle states (110). And this perception seems mutual, since it appears more than a joke when Señora Valencia tells Amabelle about her newborn daughter: "And my daughter favors you […]. She's taken your color from the mere sight of your face" (11). At the same time, however, Amabelle's mistress knows about the dangers of such a misattribution: "My poor love," she says to the protagonist, "what if she's mistaken for one of your people?" (12). In fact, Danticat demonstrates the consequences of such a misattribution when, after the massacre, she gathers survivors in an improvised hospital and mentions a Dominican man, who "was black like the nun who came to re-dress his wounds. He's been mistaken for [a Haitian] and had received a machete blow across the back of his neck for it. There were many like him in the room" (217). The violence that underlies an ethnic classification also becomes palpable in the case of Doctor Javier, who seeks to help a group of Haitians escape the massacre and is arrested along with them: "If he wanted to be a Haitian, [the soldiers] told Doctor Javier, they would treat him like a Haitian" (248). In addition to the absurdity and violent logics of ethnic difference, Danticat stresses the fact that mixed marriages between Haitians and Dominicans were no exception. To do so, she has Amabelle encounter the sisters Dolores and Doloritas on her flight to Haiti, who seem to be "Dominicanas – or a mix of Haitian and Dominican" (171). Once again, we are reminded of the absurdity of the distinction when Amabelle adds that "in some cases it was hard to tell" (ibid.).

The Shibboleth myth

As to the linguistic border, Danticat initially sets the reader on a misleading trail by quoting the myth of Shibboleth in the prologue. The Shibboleth myth, which Jacques Derrida deals with in an eponymous work on Paul Celan's poetry, tells the story of the besiegement of the Ephraimites by the Gileadites. Having captured the fords of the Jordan, the Gileadites subject everyone willing to cross to a pronunciation test, using the word 'shibboleth'. The purpose is to identify Ephraimites, who would mispronounce the word as 'sibboleth', and to kill them before they can escape. Derrida emphasizes in his analysis that linguistic difference is inscribed into their bodies, which is why they cannot outwit the enemy: "In the word, the difference between *shi* and *si* has no meaning. But it is the ciphered mark which one must *be able to partake of* with the other, and this differential power must be inscribed in oneself, that is, in one's own body" (1994, 29, emphasis in the original). Derrida specifies that

> [t]his inscription of difference in the body (for example the phonatory ability to pronounce this or that) is nonetheless not natural, is in no way an innate organic faculty. Its very origin presupposes participation in a cultural and linguistic community, in a milieu of apprenticeship, in short an alliance. (1994, 29)

In *The Farming of Bones*, Danticat exposes a view that significantly deviates from Derrida's implication of the inalterability of the bodily mark as well as the cultural and linguistic alliance. Rather than using the Shibboleth myth to rationalize absolute borders between languages, Danticat presents us with a protagonist who, linguistically and culturally, is familiar with both Haitian and Dominican communities. As I would like to show in the following, Danticat constructs an image of linguistic borders which are blurry and easily transgressible unless guarded by state violence.

The permeability of linguistic boundaries is first of all reflected in the use of three different languages in her novel – English, Spanish and Kreyòl. It would have been easy to model a Shibboleth effect by playing with the reader's linguistic understanding of the text. However, instead of introducing untranslated passages as Atom Egoyan or Yann Martel do in their works, Danticat meticulously translates even those passages from Kreyòl and Spanish into English which readers are most likely to understand. Thus, "Frè Antoine" is translated as "Brother Antoine" and "Man Irelle" as "Mother Irelle" (33); "pobrecita manman mwen" is translated as "[m]y poor mother" (25); and an inscription on a coat of arms saying "Dios, Patria, Libertad" is translated as "God, Country, Liberty" (43). Only few expressions that add local color are not accompanied by English translations, such as "cafecito" (18), "patrón" (37), "granmèmès" (69). Even the title of the novel turns out to be a translation from the Kreyòl "travay tè pou zo" (55). Relying on multilingualism and translation at the same time, this narrative strategy is best described as 'translingual'. Warranting for absolute linguistic clarity, this strategy clearly does not champion a "radical bilingualism" (Torres 2007, 86). However, while it may be said to fall into the category that Lourdes Torres describes as "easily accessed, transparent, or cushioned" multilingualism (2007, 79), this strategy does not only serve the purpose of catering to the monolingual reader. Rather, it can be read as a conscious decision to promote transparence and avoid any tensions at the borders between languages.

This reading is supported by the way in which the author reframes the Shibboleth myth on the level of the *histoire*. While in the biblical narrative, the meaning of the word 'shibboleth' as 'river, stream, ear of grain, olive-twig' is not very relevant – even though the latter could be seen as related to the crossing of the Jordan – Danticat does not reduce her attention to the signifier 'perejil' or its "value of a password" for Kreyòl-speaking Haitians

(Derrida 1994, 24). Instead, she focuses on parsley as a signified and introduces it many times into the narrative before reaching an actual shibboleth moment. This is first enacted in a scene in which Doctor Javier passes through a doorway to the pantry in Señora Valencia's house and has "suspended bundle of dried parsley [brush] his scalp, leaving behind a few tiny stems in his hair" (18). At first sight, this mentioning of parsley appears slightly forced, given that Danticat explicitly sets the narrative in "the year 1937, the ninety-third year of independence, in the seventh year of the Era of Generalissimo Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina" (17), and thus makes no secret of the fact that the narrative will culminate in the so-called Parsley Massacre. Nevertheless, the symbolism of the parsley motif is effectively at work in this scene: first, clinging to Doctor Javier's hair, it appears as a harbinger of the fact that he will later perish together with the group of Haitians he tries to save. Second, this scene demonstrates that the relationship between Haitians and Dominicans, as servants and masters, is defined by a sense of untouchability, since Amabelle does not dare to flick the parsley stems from the doctor's hair. Finally, the staging of such a trivial occurrence as parsley clinging to a man's hair clearly demystifies the Shibboleth narrative around 'perejil'.

When parsley recurs as a motif it once again serves to undermine the graveness of the Shibboleth myth. Significantly, the motif is evoked as "pèsi, perejil, parsley" in all three languages used in the book, as if to demolish the notion of linguistic boundaries in this one sentence. In addition, Danticat again focuses not so much on the signifier, as on the practical uses of parsley:

> We used pèsi, perejil, parsley, the damp summer morningness of it, the mingled sprigs, bristly and coarse, gentle and docile all at once, tasteless and bitter when chewed, a sweetened wind inside the mouth, the leaves a different taste than the stalk, all this we savored for our food, our teas, our baths, to cleanse our insides as well as our outsides of old aches and griefs, to shed a passing year's dust as a new one dawned, to wash an infant's hair for the first time and – along with boiled orange leaves – a corpse's remains one final time. (62)

Even in depicting Trujillo's inhuman strategy of distinguishing Haitians from Dominicans, the author refrains from presenting the word 'perejil' as a shibboleth. She insists on keeping 'parsley' in the realm of the signified and its practical uses. When Amabelle repeats that parsley was used "to cleanse our insides as well as our outsides", and continues: "Perhaps the Generalissimo in some larger order was trying to do the same for his country" (203), we witness the employment of the parsley motif in a metaphorical sense, which however, dispenses with the signifier as a shibboleth.

The focusing of attention on parsley as a signified culminates in a long anticipated scene, in which Amabelle and Sebastien's friend, Yves, find themselves helplessly exposed to

the violence of a mob of Dominicans, before escaping across the border river. A shibboleth moment is in fact invoked when two "young toughs [wave] parsley sprigs in front of [their] faces", and say: "Tell us what this is […]. Que diga perejil" (193). However, this prompt appears less as a test question than as a mere quotation of the latter, and in fact, the theme of the shibboleth is only invoked to be subverted a moment later, since the young toughs are prepared for violence independently of any preceding pronunciation test. Strikingly enough, even the narrator seems deceived in her expectations:

> At that moment that had I wanted to, I could have said the word properly, calmly, slowly, the way I often asked 'Perejil?' of the old Dominican women and their faithful attending granddaughters at the roadside gardens and markets […]. But I didn't get my chance. Our jaws were pried open and parsley stuffed into our mouths. My eyes watering, I chewed and swallowed as quickly as I could, but not nearly as fast as they were forcing the handfuls into my mouth. (193)

As the violent feeding turns into a beating, we may discern another comment on the Shibboleth myth. Contrary to Derrida's picture of language as a mark on one's body – hence, the inability to switch to a different pronunciation – in *The Farming of Bones*, it is physical violence connected to the signified of the shibboleth that leaves inerasable marks on the victim's language. As we learn later about Yves, as a traumatic consequence of the slaughter, he not only "loathed the taste of parsley […]; the sound of Spanish being spoken – even by Haitians – made his eyes widen, his breath quicken, his face cloud with terror, his lips unable to part one from the other and speak" (273). As for Amabelle, the violent feeding and the beating physically rob her of the ability to speak for a long time. With her "chipped and cracked teeth […] snapping against the mush of open flesh inside [her] mouth", Amabelle finds herself unable to communicate with her companions on the flight, and most importantly, to voice the question concerning the place where Sebastien and his sister may be still detained (197-99). Parsley turns out as the embodiment of everything that makes a person mute; the shibboleth is revealed not as a password, but as a silencing device.

As critic Marta Caminero-Santangelo points out, the traumatizing effect of this violence becomes palpable in its compulsive repetition, which manifests itself as "the repetition of violence which silences speech – that is, as Amabelle's accidental killing of Odette", one of Amabelle's Haitian companions on her flight from the Dominican Republic (2009, 14). Although, during the crossing of the border river, Amabelle decides that she would rather "drown alone, with nobody else's life to be responsible for" (200), she cannot help sealing Odette's mouth when they hear the shot that kills the woman's husband, Wilner. Caminero-Santangelo explains:

> Amabelle's recounting of this scene bears traces of the earlier parsley test – the violence of the muting, the justification of collective good that presumably vindicates the violence. Later, as Odette dies, she utters with her last gasp the Kreyòl word for parsley, further linking the two scenes; both are connected by what is not said. […] In some sense, the trauma is the silencing itself, which Amabelle compulsively repeats. (2009, 14)

Taking this point further, I would add that the violent silencing, the compulsive repetition and the silent disappearance of Sebastien and his sister, after the death of Amabelle's parents, constitute the protagonist's second trauma, which, in turn, is aggravated by the fact that Amabelle is denied the possibility to give her testimony and is thereby silenced once again. Along with the trauma of her parents' drowning, this second trauma pursues her in her dreams. Trying to keep herself busy with work most of her time, the narrator describes her time of inoccupation, her "dead season", as "one never ending night", in which she finds herself haunted by the question about the significance of the shibboleth, or, in her words, whether "one simple word could have saved all [their] lives" (264). Eventually, Danticat has her protagonist reach the realization that language, in fact, had never constituted a real boundary between Dominicans and Haitians. The narrator characterizes herself as being familiar with both sides, stating that she "knew as well how to say 'pèsi' as to say 'perejil'" (265). Commenting on the primitive test, she highlights that the Haitians' mastery of Spanish was far more accomplished than that, since Trujillo "asked for 'perejil,' but there is much more we all knew how to say. Perhaps one simple word would not have saved our lives. Many more would have to and many more will." (ibid.) The last words, as I want to argue, can be read as programmatic for Danticat's novel. After demystifying the shibboleth myth, she proceeds to trope two crucial aspects of the narrative through the figure of linguistic border-crossing: Amabelle's testimony of the slaughter and the author's bridging of post-memorial distance to the 1937 massacre both become translingual projects.

Translingual witnessing

The theme of witnessing is introduced long before the narrative of the massacre breaks loose. Initially, it is not linked to the memory of trauma or survival, but denotes the remembrance of common cultural ties and the exchanging of life narratives within the Haitian diasporic community. When Father Romain emphasizes his being from the "same village of the world" as Amabelle, namely Cap Haitien, the protagonist explains the underlying notion of witnessing:

> Father Romain always made much of our being from the same place, just as Sebastien did. Most people here did. It was a way of being joined to your old life through the

> presence of another person. At times you could sit for a whole evening with such individuals, just listening to their existence unfold, from the house where they were born to the hill where they wanted to be buried. It was their way of returning home, with you as a *witness* or as someone to bring them back to the present, either with a yawn, a plea to be excused, or the skillful intrusion of your own tale. This was how people left imprints of themselves in each other's memory so that if you left first and went back to the common village, you could carry, if not a letter, a piece of treasured clothing, some message to their loved ones that their place was still among the living. (73, emphasis mine)

In contrast to a more common notion of witnessing, in which a person "sees an event, typically a crime or accident" (Oxford Dictionary, online), the witnessing in question involves no particular occurrence. What lies at the heart of this 'diasporic witnessing' is a confirmation of one person's memories and ties to their country of origin and a permission to travel back in time through the presence of a compatriot. What is practiced here is a deliberate act of witnessing that does not presuppose an expected delivery of a report, but appears rather as a 'witnessing just in case' – in case the witness accomplishes the desired return to the homeland first and can export a sign of life of the one remaining in the Dominican Republic back home across the border.

What is also interesting in this example of bearing witness to one's own heritage in regard to the whole narrative of *The Farming of Bones* as a multilingual testimony is the fact that it occurs exclusively within the community of Haitians and, as we have to believe despite Danticat's mainly English discourse on it, within their mother tongue, Kreyòl. This difference can be seen, in fact, as owed to a connection between the two instances of witnessing, which lies in the long history of discrimination and marginalization of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. What sets them apart from Dominicans is not so much their different language as their different institutional treatment. To demonstrate this, Danticat, for a moment, guides her protagonist away from the cane workers' misery to the settlement of "stable non-vwayajè Haitians […] whose families had been in Alegría for generations" (68). Directing Amabelle like a camera eye – or a witness – past their houses and their tiny school building, Danticat has her record their complaints about being forever stigmatized as foreigners, refused both "birth papers" and a proper school education (69). Indeed, it is among these well-established expatriates that Amabelle for the first time hears of rumors about deportations and killings of Haitians on Dominican territory. In this context, the "common ties: language, foods, history, carnival, songs, tales, and prayers", of which Father Romain regularly reminds the Haitian congregants (73), function as a protective mechanism, which is why this instance of 'diasporic witnessing' is situated only within the Haitian community.

While not propagated by Father Romain, there is also an unspoken assumption that a stronger assimilation to the Dominican community and a mode of in-betweenness weaken the Haitian expatriates. Thus, from Amabelle's perspective, we initially gain the impression that speaking "a mix of Alegrían Kreyòl and Spanish" constitutes a verbal deficiency, since it is described as "the tangled language of those who always stuttered as they spoke, caught as they were on the narrow ridge between two nearly native tongues" (69). Particularly the expression "nearly native tongues" implies that the speakers of the language mix are not considered as natives to either of the two. This assumption is certainly not free from implications of the power relations between Haitians and Dominicans. While an in-betweenness on the part of Haitians is evaluated as a deficiency, the same does not apply to Dominicans. Thus, Amabelle ascribes the stuttering only to Haitians, for whom Spanish has become almost a mother tongue, but not to the Dominican Doctor Javier, who, "spoke Kreyòl like a Haitian, with only a slight Dominican cadence" (79). It therefore appears that a unilateral linguistic border control, established by a dominant discourse, is absorbed even by Haitians themselves, as in the case of Amabelle.

After surviving the Parsley Massacre, as Pamela Rader rightly observes, Amabelle is precluded from giving her testimony three times (39): first, by Yves' mother, Man Rapadou, who claims to already know her story (227), second, by the justice of the peace (235), and finally, by priests, who state that they can offer nothing to those who have lost relations (254). Remarkably, these three failing attempts to testify occur on Haitian ground and not in the Dominican Republic, where the massacre took place. It appears crucial that Amabelle is thus prevented from giving her testimony in her native language, Kreyòl. When Yves brings the news of priests who listen to and write down survivors' testimonies, Danticat has him comment on the issue of linguistic authorship: "I know what will happen […]. You tell the story, and then it's retold as they wish, written in words you do not understand, in a language that is theirs, and not yours." (246) While he does not make specific reference to national languages, such as Spanish or Kreyòl, Yves does point out the danger of translating a testimony into a language that does not remain true to the original account of the witness.

In his essay, "Poetics and Politics of Witnessing" (2005), Jacques Derrida deals precisely with the issue of language engaged in an act of witnessing. Examining Paul Celan's poetry as a case in point, Derrida observes about the original language, in which a testimony is formulated: "As always, the idiom remains irreducible. This invincible singularity of the verbal body already introduces us into the enigma of testimony […]. This idiom is untranslatable, at bottom, even if we translate it." (2005, 67). What Derrida seeks to discover

in the language of witnessing is a singularity that could release it from being affected by *différance*, from the shifting of signifiers, through which meaning remains forever deferred or postponed. If a testimony presupposes the "irreplaceability of the singular witness" (ibid.), then it must engage words that can warrant for its truth, and therefore must be located almost outside of the drifting system of language. From this paradoxical demand, Derrida derives the same characteristics of witnessing as those he attributes to translation in "Des Tours de Babel" (1985): both acts are as necessary as they are impossible. It is therefore no coincidence that these two acts are intertwined in Derrida's argument on the singular language of testimony:

> We see already announcing itself the poignant question of untranslatable testimony. Because it must be linked to a singularity and to the experience of an idiomatic mark – for example, that of a language – testimony resists the test of translation. It thus risks not being able to cross the frontier of singularity, if only to deliver its meaning. But what would an untranslatable testimony be worth? Would it be a non-testimony? And what would a testimony that was absolutely transparent to translation be? Would it still be a testimony? (2005, 68-69)

It is interesting to observe that Edwidge Danticat's troping of Amabelle's testimony is intimately connected with the need of translation and its impossibility. Just like Foer, Danticat links the trope of the limits of translation to what Derrida has described as the "proper-name effect" (1987, 312). The name in question is introduced in the very first sentence of the narrative: "His name is Sebastien Onius" (1). Bearing in mind Derrida's point that a proper name is seemingly located outside of language and is therefore untranslatable, we may understand how the invocation of the murdered lover's name signals a rupture in the narrative discourse on the slaughter. Remaining, at least partly, outside of language, Sebastien's name cannot be integrated into what is presented as Amabelle's narrative memory.

Opening and closing the first chapter (1, 4), the name functions as a signpost to the ontology and temporality of the narrative. As outlined above, the chapters and passages in bold print signal a reaching out into an ontological order different from that in which the story-line is conveyed – the order of Amabelle's dreams and memories, in short, of her psychological reality. When the protagonist relates to us that "[a]t times Sebastien Onius guarded [her] from the shadows. At other times he was one of them" (4), we get a sense of his liminal presence both in the narrated fictional past and in Amabelle's inner world. As to the narrative time, the introduction of Sebastien's name in the present tense – "His name *is* Sebastien Onius" – arouses the expectation of an entire novel written in the present tense. When this tense is contrasted by the past tense of the second and most other chapters with even numbers and, at the latest, when the fact of his death is established in the novel, it

becomes clear that this present tense does not stand in any chronological relation to the past tense, in which the story unfolds. Rather, its use marks a memory frozen in time, a bygone present that nevertheless cannot become past.

Translating proper names

Both the traumatic quality of this memory and the denied possibility of giving her testimony are presented as reasons of Amabelle's inability to start a new life after the slaughter. This fact displays another curious parallel to Derrida's concept of witnessing. Examining Paul Celan's poetry as an epitome of witnessing through language, Derrida focuses on the German word 'zeugen' in the poem "Aschenglorie", which apart from 'to witness' also translates as 'to procreate'. He uses the second meaning to establish a link between the passing on of a testimony and the continuation of a genealogical line (2005, 74). Precisely this connection is negotiated in *The Farming of Bones*, when Danticat portrays Amabelle's life as a childless witness of the slaughter. A futile inquiry about Sebastien that she tries to send to Doctor Javier, who, after his unsuccessful attempt to help a group of Haitians escape across the border, seems to have suffered the same fate as her lover, of course remains forever unanswered. Sensing that there is no addressee neither for her testimony nor for her inquiry, Amabelle is caught in a double-bind between trying to mourn and to forget Sebastien, and "wait[s] for Doctor Javier's reply by growing old" (267). This double-bind is not eased, but only reflected in Sebastien's friend Yves, with whom she comes to live without ever loving him. Having forfeited the chance to have a family with him, Amabelle admits:

> I regretted that we hadn't found more comfort in each other. After I realized that Sebastien was not coming back, I wanted to find someone who would both help me forget him and mourn him with me. Perhaps this was too great a gift to ask of a man who was in search of the same thing for himself. (274)

Since Amabelle has remained childless, it is highly symbolic that when joining a parade of survivors celebrating Trujillo's death in 1961, she is for the first time addressed as "Man Amabelle", literally meaning 'Mother Amabelle', by someone who notices her dancing the traditional *kalanda* (269). Significantly, Amabelle is surprised both by her own dancing, which she had not been conscious of, and by the form of address with a "title belonging to an elder […] before [her] name" (269). In this moment, it seems, she suddenly officially turns into a survivor-witness, without having ever been allowed to testify and into a mother without

having ever had a child. The title 'Man' transforms her name, translates it into a different, more desirable version of her life. However, this sudden transformation hardly marks the end of a successful mourning period, but only evokes the vision of what could have been – a vision that quickly vanishes in the face of Amabelle's feeling of guilt: "How dare you dance on a day like this? […] It's like dancing on all the graves." (270)

In contrast, the vision of continuing one's life after the slaughter is surprisingly realized by Father Romain, the Haitian priest from Alegría, who, along with Doctor Javier, had been involved in the plan of escape across the border and had in consequence suffered torture in a Dominican prison. His opting for life despite having been witness to the massacre is, in turn, signaled by a successful transformation, or translation, of his own title. When Amabelle addresses him as a priest with "Father", he informs her about this translation: "I am no longer a father, […] I am a father to three young boys. I am no longer with any order." (272) Strictly speaking, the change in his title is a minimal one, since it consists only in the loss of a capital letter. However, this minimal difference bespeaks a more salvaging translation that Amabelle's sudden nomination as "Man Amabelle". His having become a witness seems to demand an act of procreation, as he explains: "It took more than prayers to heal me after the slaughter […]. It took a love closer to the earth, closer to my own body, to stop my tears." (272)

These transformations of proper names lie at the heart of Danticat's negotiation of a possible recovery after the genocide, for as in Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" (2000), in *The Farming of Bones*, survival is closely linked up with translation. It is interesting to note that even the 'translations' of Amabelle's and Father Romain's names are not merely enacted against the background of Sebastien's name, but that Danticat probes into the translatability of the very name of Amabelle's killed lover. Throughout most of the narrative, Sebastien's name remains a stumbling block, resisting its own integration into narrative memory, and appearing instead as a symptom of a traumatic repetition-compulsion. This becomes most palpable toward the end of the narrative, when we are presented with a four-time repetition of the sentence: "His name is Sebastien Onius" (281-82), which gives Amabelle four attempts to continue it in different ways. The first of these continuations clearly bespeaks an impossibility of the narrativization of Sebastien's story: "His name is Sebastien Onius and his story is like a fish with no tail, a dress with no hem, a drop with no fall, a body in the sunlight with no shadow." (281) Since the circumstances of his death cannot be fully known, his story lacks the integral part of an ending and thus remains forever incomplete. The second continuation expresses how everything crystallizes and fades around

this name, opening an abyss of infinite longing: "His name is Sebastien Onius. Sometimes this is all I know. My back aches now in all those places that he claimed for himself, arches of bare skin that belonged to him, pockets where the flesh remains fragile, seared like unhealed burns where each fallen scab uncovers a deeper wound." (281)

However, after these two repetitions a certain reevaluation can be observed. After invoking her lover's name, in a Derridean sense, as a marker of untranslatability, or, in other words, of the impossibility of working through his loss, Amabelle turns her attention to the fact that it is precisely his name that preserves him from being forgotten. As she declares, "[m]en with names never truly die. It is only the nameless and faceless who vanish like smoke into the early morning air." (282) This turn sets a process in motion that can be regarded as a process of mourning. Repeating his name for a third time, she suddenly situates his death on a timeline – seven years after his father's death. Finally, the last repetition of his name directs her toward the future, since she realizes where she could find a place to say farewell to her dead lover: "His name is Sebastien Onius and his spirit must be inside the waterfall cave at the source of the stream where the cane workers bathe, the grotto of wet moss and chalk and luminous green fresco – the dark green of wet papaya leaves." (282)

To travel back to the cave, the symbol of both love and healing, means to leave Haiti and cross over to the Dominican Republic, both in territorial and linguistic terms. The crossing is anticipated by Amabelle's sudden attraction to the Spanish language. It becomes palpable in a scene, in which she absentmindedly begins to follow a group of tourists around Cap Haitien: "I wasn't certain why I had picked that particular group of white foreigners and Haitian guide to follow until I realized that both the guide's talk and the things that members of the group were whispering to one another were in Spanish." (278-79) With Derrida, this attraction can be explained through the fact that Spanish had become a "privileged witness" to the massacre and, thus, "present at everything that was capable of destroying […] existences of innumerable number" (2005, 67-68). As such, it seems to offer a key to the incomprehensibility of the traumatic events.

However, Danticat's project, unlike that of Foer, goes beyond sending her protagonist to an enigmatic site of slaughter and survival to confront her once again with the unspeakability of the traumatic events. Significantly, Amabelle does speak the language of the country, in which she massacre occurred, and this language is not merely treated in the Derridean sense as a witness; instead, Danticat highlights the fact that, having enabled the racialized discourse in the first place, the Spanish language had thus become unwittingly complicit with the perpetrators. When Amabelle travels back, she therefore pursues a twofold

objective: one the one hand, to mourn Sebastien, and on the other, to reclaim her voice in Spanish and to deliver her testimony to the system that had engendered the violence. The need to talk back to the perpetrators is first formulated long before her journey back to Alegría. It is upon Odette's death, which occurs while the massacre is still continuing on the Dominican side of the border, that Amabelle's thoughts wander to Trujillo as the initiator of the slaughter, who, in her view, should be confronted with Odette's last word, "pèsi":

> The Generalissimo's mind was surely as dark as death, but if he had heard Odette's 'pèsi', it might have startled him, not the tears an supplications he would have expected, no shriek from unbound fear, but a provocation, a challenge, a dare. To the devil with your world, your grass, your wind, your water, your air, your words. You ask for perejil, I give you more. (203)

As Amabelle's words make clear, the word 'pèsi' is uttered in direct response to the humiliation involved in the distinction between Haitians and Dominicans based on their pronunciation of a word as banal as 'parsley'. To insist on one's own pronunciation is to refuse to be subjugated to the ridiculous and inhuman test, to make "no effort to say 'perejil' as if pleading for [one's] life" (ibid.). Being a "challenge" and a "provocation", the word needs to be delivered to the site of origin of the hateful myth.

Danticat directs our attention to this myth one last time, when, at the close of the narrative, she has Sylvie, Señora Valencia's young new maid, ask the elliptic and yet clearly understandable question: "Why parsley?" (303) By presenting the question in English, Danticat once again defamiliarizes the word from its shibboleth context and tropes Sylvie's bewilderment as the only adequate reaction. When her question prompts her mistress to recount the anecdote of Trujillo's 'insight' owed to the word 'perejil', the answer appears as an attempt to justify the massacre. For it remains unclear whether she speaks for herself or quotes Trujillo, when she says: "On this island, you walk too far and people speak a different language. Their own words reveal who belongs on what side." (304) What does stand out clearly, though, is the fact that the discourse that had engendered the violence is still alive and uncritically perpetuated by the Dominican high-class society.

In reaction to this fact, Danticat has her narrator undertake a linguistic move which allows the latter to undermine the Dominican discourse of power. Already before the massacre, the provocative question is raised by Sebastien's sister, Mimi, as to why their masters and mistresses had to be addressed as 'Señor' and 'Señora': "But what would be so terrible if we did say only their Christian names?" (63) Even after the massacre, Amabelle's concern that it "would demonstrate a lack of respect" seems to persist (ibid.), for she still refers to her former mistress as "the señora" (294). However, Amabelle's discourse proves

subversive when she entirely drops the first name and addresses Señora Valencia exclusively by the title denoting her social status, thus robbing her of individuality and personality. This address is also presented as a response to the latter's neutral, unempathetic tone, for the protagonist comments:

> I felt as though she were speaking on behalf of someone else. I couldn't stop thinking that perhaps an older member of her family, a doña with a similar face, similar manners, and a voice similar to hers, had come to keep me company until Valencia herself could talk to me. (297)

Realizing that Valencia will not emerge, Amabelle addresses her final farewell not so much to her former mistress, as to the Dominican class system that had enabled the discrimination of Haitians, saying: "*Go in peace, Señora*" (306).

At the same time, this farewell does not imply a farewell to either the country or the Spanish language. On the contrary, the last journey across the border allows Amabelle to recover a part of her life narrative, marked by the impact of traumatic events at this border. Significantly, Danticat's narrative closes on the very border, which is troped not only as a physical, national and linguistic one, but also one between dreams and reality as well as between life and death. Even the threat of the torrential river seems mitigated by this symbolism, when Amabelle slips into the water: "The water was warm for October, warm and shallow, so shallow that I could lie on my back in it with my shoulders only half submerged" (310). However, one would wait in vain "for softness, for a gentler embrace", since, as the narrator notes, "nature has no memory" (309-10). This observation takes us back to our point of departure, the fact that it is precisely the lack of memory in nature that has inspired Danticat's narrative, which transgresses generational, geographic and linguistic distance.

English as the impartial listener

The linguistic transgression finally prompts us to ask how English as the language of the narrative voice relates to the story set between Spanish and Kreyòl and what effects this choice of language brings about. In a most obvious sense, the language choice signals the author's post-memorial distance to the diegesis of her narrative. What is more, the strategy of translingual writing allows Danticat to effectively trope a historical trauma that, as Cathy Caruth derives from her readings of Freud, can be fully known only after a period of latency (cf. 1995, 7). If the theorist argues that traumatic events become "fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (ibid., 8), Danticat seems to add that they

reveal themselves in connection with another language. As trauma theorist Ernst van Alphen convincingly argues, memory and trauma can be considered as "symptoms of discursivity" (1999, 24). Drawing on ideas originally based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, he argues that "forms of experience do not just depend on the event or history that is being experienced, but also on the discourse in which the event is expressed" (ibid.). In other words, trauma causes a breach in memory not only because the triggering event is unprecedented but because the structures inherent to language resist its representation. In this context, a translingual narrative strategy points to a way out of the impasse of unrepresentability. To transgress the boundary between Spanish and Kreyòl as the two languages involved in the historical trauma, Danticat summons English as an uninvolved third party. This reflects Derrida's point, derived from Paul Celan's poem "Aschenglorie", that the language present at a disaster becomes a witness, and as such, cannot deliver its testimony to another witness, since the other is as singular and as involved (cf. 2005, 89). If in *The Farming of Bones*, both Spanish and Kreyòl are invoked as witnesses to the slaughter, English figures as a more impartial listener.

At the same time, the use of English establishes a connection to a political context in which Danticat's novel, as I agree with Marta Caminero-Santangelo, appears highly topical: the US American context with its current climate of escalating hostility to illegal immigration (cf. 2009, 22). As Caminero-Santangelo convincingly demonstrates, Danticat's depiction of the 1937 atmosphere in the Dominican Republic displays multiple parallels to the current situation of illegal immigrants in the United States, starting with the rhetorics on cultural, linguistic and economic difference and the alleged threat of the foreign and finishing with the inhuman treatment these rhetorics vindicate. This connection between the two violent and traumatizing situations leads us back to the idea proposed by Cathy Caruth:

> "In a catastrophic age, […] trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves." (Caruth 1995, 11)

In *The Farming of Bones*, trauma is indeed troped as "the very link between cultures": first, between Dominican and Haitian culture, which were violently separated under Trujillo by means of state authority; and second, as a link between the marginalization of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and that of illegal immigrants in the United States. In retracing the protagonist's relation to the imposed border between her "nearly native tongues" (69), Danticat's novel "listen[s] through the departures we have all taken from ourselves" and opens the view to other departures, which are currently being taken in the United States and around the world.

Conclusion

The two novels analyzed in this chapter, present us with trauma narratives that hinge on the figure of linguistic border-crossing. In *Everything Is Illuminated*, the figure is used to signal the historical and linguistic distance that would need to be bridged in order to recover the transgenerational memory of the Holocaust. With Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, we can say that the task of the translator is forced upon the 'third generation', since they grow up surrounded by their grandparents' traumatic or repressed memories of the Holocaust, which, metaphorically speaking, demand to be translated, or worked through. To mark the difficulty of accessing these memories and retracing historical truth, the novel engages a translator figure boasting a comically limited competence of English. His unidiomatic use of vocabulary, however, is symptomatic of the "phantomized" memories of his family, to speak with Nicolas Abraham.

While Foer's novel allows the protagonists to approach the gaping void in their family narratives without ever fully reaching, let alone, filling it, in *The Farming of Bones*, the historical distance to the narrated genocide seems reduced and traumatic memory not as inaccessible. Instead, the figure of the language border stands in for the site of trauma, with the 'Parsley Massacre' relying on the Shibboleth myth of a clear distinction between Haitians and Dominicans. Years after the massacre, the transgression of this border seems to neutralize its violent imposition, and, therefore, brings along a healing effect for the protagonist. The fact that the narrative ends at the very site of the border is highly symbolic: By immersing herself into the border river, the protagonist revisits her own site of trauma and seems ready to come to terms with her traumatic memories. In terms of language, Amabelle, in addition to Kreyòl, reclaims Spanish, thus refusing to remain exiled from her nearly native tongue. Her position at the border thus signals her freedom to partake in both of her languages.

Troping the possibility of healing through the transgression of language boundaries, the novels draw on multilingual aesthetics in different ways. Thus, in *Everything Is Illuminated*, English not only marks the distant point of departure, from where the search for traumatic history begins; it also remains, in its standard and its broken version, the sole language available to the protagonists in their attempts to articulate Holocaust trauma. This highlights the impossibility of fully recovering the trauma buried in the languages of the victims of the Holocaust. In *The Farming of Bones*, the languages that become 'witness' to the genocide, Kreyòl and Spanish, are separated through state violence, which introduces a split into the memory of the genocide. Bringing them together on the level of the discourse

signals an overcoming of this traumatic condition. English, in turn, enters the stage as an impartial listener, enabling the expression of the traumatic link between Dominican and Haitian history. Thus, while diverging in their views on the success of the therapeutic process, both narratives engage with multilingualism and translation as key figures to the working-through of historical trauma.

5. Conclusion

Considering the multiple psychological scenarios of linguistic border-crossing in fiction that have been discussed in this thesis, we can observe an oscillation between two opposite poles: the transgression into another language as the beginning of a nightmare or as the source of a possible salvation. I have taken my point of departure through Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*, a sentimental account of the difficulties of language migration, and the only non-fictional text dealt with in this thesis. The autobiographic persona's movement from Polish to English, framed by other hardships of migration, is strongly defined by her sense of marginalization and destabilization in Canada. This leads her to an inner conflict, in which she idealizes her mother tongue as a lost paradise and condemns her own stepping across the border into the new language. Visibly influenced by her environment's skepticism about bilingualism and its effects on the human psyche, Hoffman associates her linguistic border-crossing with a feeling of loss and estrangement.

However, as we have seen in the depiction of the translator figure in Atom Egoyan's film *Calendar*, an inner conflict in linguistic borderlands is not the only outcome of encountering and learning the foreign language. Instead, linguistic border-crossings can be mastered without exerting violence against one's self by allowing the first and the second language to permeate each other. This hybridizing strategy is troped as a way of facilitating a better balance between the two languages and of keeping track of one's personal history by means of retracing the marks it leaves in one's language(s). At the same time, this strategy emerges as a form of protest against absolute assimilation, since it renounces the native-speaker ideal and fosters true bilingualism.

As suggested in the first chapter, Hoffman's narrative of language migration displays the wish to assign her mother tongue a hegemonic position in the New World and thus never to have to feel decentered. A similar tendency and struggle can be observed in two of the films I have analyzed. The photographer in Atom Egoyan's *Calendar* feels tortured by the fact that, on his journey to his diasporic homeland, Armenia, he depends on his wife's translation services and tries to impose an authoritarian rule to contain the power of her discourse. In Michel Gondry's *The Science of Sleep*, the protagonist finds himself equally helpless in a language that had previously been his mother tongue. Due to his conflict-ridden relationship both to his mother's French and to his deceased father's traumatically charged Spanish, he seeks to banish the influence of both languages and replace them, even in his unconscious life, by English. An imaginary studio, in which he seemingly prepares his own

dreams, is presented as a monument to his narcissistic dictatorship in English. To speak with Julia Kristeva, this characterizes the protagonists as strangers to themselves (1991), and reveals their resistance against multilingualism as a neurotic reaction.

Significantly, the totalizing tendencies fail in all three works: Eva Hoffman's autobiographic self finally adapts to her English-speaking surroundings, Egoyan's photographer loses his translator-wife to his Armenian rival, and Gondry's Stéphane gets lost between dreams and reality. This can be explained through the fact that all of these works are united by the theme of repression. Be it the half-knowledge of the parents' Holocaust trauma, as in *Lost in Translation*, the memory and feeling of guilt about the parents' separation, as in *The Science of Sleep*, or the knowledge of one's own mother tongue as in *Calendar*, all of the protagonists seek to repress central issues of their lives. Their journeys into 'foreign' language territory, in turn, confront them with what they have tried to forget. In this context, their militant monolingualism appears as an attempt to resist the return of the repressed. Thus, the 'foreign' language exerts a subversive power, but is also configured as a releasing force, since it eventually makes the protagonists give up their neurotic resistance and begin to come to terms with their memories.

The figure of linguistic border-crossings also lends itself to troping collectively repressed memories, as shown in the case in Lars von Trier's *Europa*. Taking the delusive dream of a totalizing discourse still to a different level, the director casts his naïve American protagonist into a lethal nightmare, in which he becomes a victim of the linguistic tyranny of others. Seduced by the intrigues of German-speaking supporters of the Nazis, the protagonist recovers his own voice in English too late and perishes in a hypnotic Babelian nightmare while trying to follow the orders of the Werewolves. To put it differently, the protagonist is sent into the realm of nationalist myth-making, where independent cinema's enfant terrible, Lars von Trier, takes on the task of confusing human language, as done by God in the myth of Babel, so as to stop the creation of totalizing discourses. The death of the protagonist, carefully established as an identification figure for the viewer, can be read as political criticism of redemptive fantasies about European unity at the end of the Cold War. Thus, linguistic border-crossing emerges as powerful figure for putting the audience on the psychoanalytic couch and exploring the collective unconscious.

In other configurations, the transgression of language boundaries is troped as a possibility for the protagonist to undermine a hegemonic discourse exerted in one language. The character does not necessarily need to succeed in subverting an entire regime in order to prove the force of linguistic border-crossings. Thus, Junot Diaz' *The Brief Wondrous Life of*

Oscar Wao makes the case that a multilingual subject's notion of love and desire can considerably deviate from the discourse on sexuality as dictated in his first language. Upon arrival to the diasporic homeland, the Dominican Republic, Oscar Wao's difference from the norm in terms of gender and language is figured as a provocation to the machista discourse inherited from the times of the Trujillo regime. The protagonist's easy crossing of language boundaries is presented as a dangerous power, which, in consequence, is brutally extinguished.

Other protests against and escapes from hegemonic discourses analyzed in this thesis prove more successful. This has been demonstrated in Yann Martel's *Self*, where the protagonist's bilingualism fosters his/her questioning of gender difference and heteronormativity, and eventually enables him/her to transcend the limits of the discourse imposed by his/her mother tongue. A similar liberation can be observed in the case of Atom Egoyan's translator figure, whose character is diametrically opposed to her husband's 'translation neurosis'. As shown in the analysis of *Calendar*, the female character role as translator allows her to resist the photographer's militant monolingualism and empowers her to freely cross the lines between her Canadian and her Armenian world. As both Egoyan and Martel lead us to believe, the foreign language, if not perceived a source of anxiety, can exude a strong sense of attraction. It is not accidental that both characters fall in love in the process of translation or, as in *Self*, when faced with the enchanting strangeness of a foreign language. Therefore, in both works, we encounter the language boundary as a magnetic line, promoting the two sides' desire for each other.

If love relations with speakers of the 'foreign' language are viewed rather skeptically in Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation*, this has to do with the author's troping of the migrant as divided or split between the first and the second language. What makes the language memoir particularly interesting for my exploration are the gaps, tensions and contradiction present in Hoffman's text. Thus, as I have suggested, her own text allows to trace her feeling of an inner split back to her childhood. Her idealization of Poland appears in an awkward light, since it is also the country where most of her Jewish family died in the Holocaust. With Marianne Hirsch, I have argued that a feeling of split between herself and her surroundings can be assumed to have been present already in her childhood and that the moving to Canada offered a welcome possibility to transfer this feeling from an earlier, more painful context to the difficult, but not inherently traumatic context of her language migration.

In fact, the postmemory of her parents' Holocaust trauma resurfaces in the language memoir, and this is where the process of translation, in metaphorical terms, suddenly acquires

therapeutic value. Reading Hoffman's psychological translation process as a means of searching for a "blindspot of some primal scene" (Fresco 1984, 420) clearly connects her narrative to Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated*. As we have seen in the fourth chapter, his novel tropes translation as a means of finding access to the linguistically and historically almost unreachable story of his grandparents' survival in the Holocaust. Here, as well, translation is configured in its therapeutic potential – which does not mean that the healing process is successful. Well-aware of the pitfalls of redemptive narratives, Foer turns the process of translation into tragicomical adventure, reflecting, in a Derridean sense, the necessity and impossibility of translation. Ironically, it is from the translator's failing language that the author salvages a "phantomized" memory of the latter's family own involvement in the Holocaust (Abraham 1988, 4). The highly revealing slips of the tongue that occur in the process of translation once again confirm the transformatory potential of the transgression of language borders.

Translation is presented as necessary not only for the descendants of Holocaust survivors, but, even more so, for the traumatized witnesses, whose experience has taken them to the limits of language and understanding. At this point, the figure of linguistic border-crossing looms large in its metaphorical potential to trope and possibly even extend precisely these limits. The crossing of language boundaries is also presented as the key to a possible working through historical trauma in Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*. In this narrative, trauma is most closely related to language, since it deals with the thin and unstable boundary drawn between Dominicans and Haitians as well as their languages – a boundary that quickly justifies the eruption of genocidal violence. What is staged as a traumatic Shibboleth moment is unmasked as a pure act of violence that robs the Haitian protagonist of the right to feel native in the Spanish of the Dominican Republic. Barely surviving the genocide, Amabelle finds herself expelled from Spanish and robbed of the ability to give her testimony. In this context, the recovery of both of her languages is troped as the only way of healing. Therefore, the act of returning to the traumatically charged language border is troped as the only way to protest against the violently imposed monolingualism, to mourn her lost love, and to regain some sense of dignity.

All in all, it is safe to say that while some of the works discussed in the thesis trope linguistic border-crossings as a source of anxiety and melancholia, all of them seem to agree that translation is a process rather to be found in than to be lost. The films and books, in which multilingualism or translation, at a first glance, appear as potentially traumatizing, suggest – explicitly or implicitly – that these evaluations are derived, to a great extent, from different

traumatizing contexts, which reveals them as results of transference. Ventures into foreign-language territory are thus troped as helping characters to recover traumatic and repressed memories, to confront their own fears, to undergo transformations, to become familiar with themselves.

As I have shown, multilingual aesthetics not only evaluate fictional scenarios of linguistic border-crossings; they also provide a powerful strategy for transmitting the emotions involved in them to the audience. In analogy to the notion of "traumatic realism" (Foster 1996, Rothberg 2000, LaCapra 2001), it can be said that the works examined in this thesis make a strong case for "multilingual realism", a style that mimics multilingual modes of signification and, thus, stays true to multilingual fictional settings and the characters' multilingual inner lives in order to make the psychological experience of linguistic border-crossings accessible to readers and viewers alike. While more extensively practiced in film due to its multiple channels through which meaning is conveyed, multilingual realism also prominently surfaces in literary works: In literary fiction, as we have seen, it opens a wide space for experimentation – be it through hybridizing techniques, the readers' exposure to long untranslated passages in languages that the target audience is not likely to understand, or pseudo-multilingualism.

Lost and found in translation

Taking into account the impact of the title of Eva Hoffman's language memoir, it is illuminating to take a look at the eponymous narrative poem by James Merrill, which was published in 1974 in the New York Times and first coined the now familiar title. Significantly for our context, the poem is both multilingual – drawing on English, French, German and even Arabic – and concerned with memory, trauma and translation. In the poem, the speaker recounts a traumatic summer in his boyhood, in which he is confronted with the long absence and impending divorce of his parents. Left in the care of his governess, "His French Mademoiselle" (l. 14), he impatiently awaits the arrival of a jigsaw puzzle from a New York puzzle-rental shop. The metaphorical character of the puzzle is hinted at when the lyrical persona notes: "A summer without parents is the puzzle / Or should be." (ll. 11-12) As the puzzle arrives and he and Mademoiselle begin to assemble it, they do not fail to notice, each in their different way, some parallels between the emerging image and the troubled domestic situation. In two completed parts of the puzzle, "two ragged wooden clouds", the boy discerns

the figures of a “Sheik with beard” and “a dark-eyed woman veiled in mauve”, who “gaze from cloud to cloud / With marked if undecipherable feeling” (ll. 92-99). The figures represent the parental couple, which is confirmed by the fact that a “slave or page-boy” appears between them, whom Mademoiselle quickly recognizes as the woman’s son. In the child’s perception, she does so “mistakenly”, which gives a clue of his denial and repression of the situation (ll.101-102). However, the poem speaks a different language since a missing puzzle piece, that of the page-boy’s feet, is finally found at the child’s feet, betraying their relation.

With Donald Winnicott, the puzzle can be considered a “transitional object” (1953), helping the child symbolically deal with his parents’ absence and separation. The traumatic quality of the experience is highlighted in the retrospective narrative, since the narrator initially withdraws from the scene by speaking of “the boy” (l. 12) in the third person, before beginning to speak of Mademoiselle and himself as “us” (l. 95) and getting through to the first-person “I” only in line 110. Assuming the identity of the boy only belatedly, the narrator shows signs of a dissociative memory. The puzzle with its “thousand hand-sawn / Sandal-scented pieces” (l. 40-41) stands in for his fragmented perception and memory of the domestic situation as well as for the broken home itself. As soon as the puzzle is finished, it begins to crumble, undermining the unity of the family in the picture, and needs to be dismantled and returned to the rental shop, which robs the child of his transitional object.

The fact that the boy secretly keeps one puzzle piece, to retain at least a small part of the family picture, brings up the theme of translation, since it seems to show an “innocently branching palm” (l. 46) – an association that is later linked to a poem by Valéry titled “Palme”, to which the adult narrator struggles to find a German translation by Rilke. Ransacking libraries in different countries, he obsesses over the question of where he might have encountered this translation before. The Proustian search for the translation, like a search for memory, in turn leads him back to Mademoiselle, who has taught him French and German and has undergone, as the narrator learns only as an adult, a ‘self-translation’. For the governess, “a widow since Verdun” (l. 15), is “only French by marriage” (l. 108), while being the daughter of a German father and having grown up in Alsace – a heritage she is ashamed of and seeks to repress and hide after the war. Coming from the border area between Germany and France, it is no wonder that she “does borders” (ll. 57, 83) in the puzzle, as the narrator insists twice in the poem. With her family history, or her “pitiful bit of truth”, hidden away (l. 176), her inner life seems split in two, into her “French hopes” and “German fears” (l. 23).

Growing up in her care, the narrator unwittingly inherits a linguistic symptom of her repression, and is told as an adult that he speaks French with a German accent.

Mademoiselle's self-translation from German to French and Rilke's translation of Valéry's poem from French to German complement each other and are intertwined in the narrator's mind. Significantly, these translations are inscribed not only in his memory, but also literally into the body of the poem. Mademoiselle mixes the two languages – "Schlaf wohl, chéri" (l. 119) – and the narrator tries to render the translation of Valéry's poem by tentatively translating one line himself: "Patience dans l'azur. / Geduld im… Himmelblau?" (l. 36-37) The search for memory is thus intimately bound up with the act of translation; to recover the past is to translate it.

Just as he learns about Mademoiselle's repressed past, he succeeds in finding the translation of "Palme", which turns out to be the German motto preceding the poem. Celebrating the recovery of lost memories and words, the poem, ends on a positive note:

> But nothing's lost. Or else: all is translation
> And every bit of us is lost in it
> (Or found – I wander through the ruin of S
> Now and then, wondering at the peacefulness)
> And in that loss a self-effacing tree,
> Color of context, imperceptibly
> Rustling with its angel, turns the waste
> To shade and fiber, milk and memory. (ll. 198-205)

It is surprising to discover how much of the discourse on multilingualism and translation later developed in the works that are analyzed in this thesis is anticipated in this last stanza of Merrill's poem. Drawing on the translational metaphor that has been, from Freud's time and until today, popular in psychological discourse, the phrase that "all is translation" not only confirms George Steiner's comparison of understanding and translation (1975) and Jurij Lotman's claim that "the elementary act of thinking is translation" (1990, 143); it also highlights the centrality of the literary figure of linguistic border-crossing that I have analyzed in many of its facets in this thesis. What is more, Merrill's formulation that "every bit of us is lost in [translation] / (Or found […]" prefigures the entire spectrum of the negotiations of linguistic border-crossings as discussed in the previous chapters. According to Merrill's own evaluation, translation pervades all spheres of human life and shows the way to working through painful memories and understanding one's personal history. His optimistic troping of translating is reflected in the multilingual texture of the poem, which shows but another parallel to the works I have examined.

As I would like to point out, Merrill's poem suggests several directions for future research. First, it places the figure of linguistic border-crossings in the context of another

theme which is present in most of the works I have discussed, but which has not been addressed in its own right: the theme of coming of age. Clearly, the question of where and how one learns another language is bound up with that of where and how one grows up in general. Further, in its metaphorical dimension, the motif of translation implies a retracing of one's personal life narrative – a project that necessarily points back to childhood and adolescence. It is not coincidental, therefore, that the theme of growing up and coming of age figures in many multilingual works. Thus, *Self* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* both qualify for the label of the 'Bildungsroman'; *Lost in Translation* does so, albeit in the genre of non-fiction; *Everything Is Illuminated*, *The Farming of Bones*, *Calendar* and *The Science of Sleep* are centrally concerned with stories from the protagonists' childhood or youth; and *Europa* seems obsessed with the theme of initiation.

Since the theme of coming-of-age stands out so prominently in the works discussed, it would be worthwhile to devote more attention to its interconnections with the issue of multilingualism and translation. More specifically, it would be relevant to explore the multilingual 'Bildungsroman' in a diachronic perspective in order to understand whether the figure of linguistic border-crossing or the aesthetics of literary multilingualism in any way appear constitutive of the genre. Also, research could focus on multilingual stories of initiation in the context of nation-building narratives or, to speak with Benedict Anderson, the making of "imagined communities" (1983). Independently of the issue of multilingualism, such research has been carried out in the fields of literature and film in different national, post-colonial, ethnic, and diasporic contexts (cf. Müller 1987, Millard 2007, Bolton 2010, Dodgson-Katiyo and Wisker 2010, Bennett and Beirne 2011, Bolaki 2011). An essay such as by Josephine May, who argues that adolescence is used in Australian cinema as a metaphor for a young nation's coming of age and its transition from colonial to post-colonial conditions, is representative of this line of research (2011). Taking Adams' and Carfagna's sociological study, *Coming of Age in a Globalized World* (2006) as an impulse, it would be also interesting to examine whether multilingual stories of initiation can be seen as part of the myth-making of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

Furthermore, Merrill's "Lost in Translation" proposes still another project for future research. While a French Mademoiselle has traditionally been a character announcing an elitist multilingual upbringing, the governess in the poem seems to be the closest caregiver the young boy has, while his family is breaking apart. What is more, she is endowed with an own story. By placing her repressed past at the center of the narrative poem, Merrill undermines the image of the elite multilingualism, and focuses on the Mademoiselle's personal

multilingual trajectory as a language migrant, which is partly associated for her with the feeling of shame. Significantly, the boy's inherited German accent in French also displaces the idea of flawless elite multilingualism and stands out as a marker of a not so flawless, and simply human past.

As has become clear from the opposition between works such as *Lost in Translation* and *Self*, within the frame of multilingual fiction, it still makes a big difference whether linguistic border-crossings take place in the context of political migration or youthful experimentation. However, as the majority of the works analyzed in the thesis demonstrate, literary multilingualism has been lifted out of the elite position that it used to occupy, as mentioned in the introduction, in literary history. This raises the question of the position of contemporary multilingual fiction in the literary and cinematic market. While the films discussed in the thesis derive their freedom of multilingual experimentation from being art-house productions, other, less experimental, productions such as Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Babel* or Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* have helped multilingualism reach the cinematic mainstream. The multilingual literary fiction explored in the thesis cannot yet be said to represent a literary mainstream. However, particularly *Lost in Translation*, *Calendar* and *The Farming of Bones* present us with multilingualism as a topic and a technique clearly not exclusively reserved for an elite market niche. It remains to be seen whether a wider trend of writing multilingual fiction without the air of elitism can be observed in the future.

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