



## PLURILINGUISMES / MULTILINGUALISM

### TRANSLINGUAL LITERATURE: COMPARATIVE BY NATURE OR BY CHOICE?

“Translingual literature” (the term coined by Steven Kellman, 2000) is literature written by authors in a language other than their primary one. Spanning time and across continents and languages, from Petrarch and Descartes to Beckett and Nabokov to present day Nancy Huston, Ha Jin, Ilan Stavans, and Gary Shteyngart, among many others, this emerging field has been growing steadily over the last century, making visible strides on the literary scene of our increasingly globalized world and reflecting a new zeitgeist of cultural nomadism, cosmopolitanism, and fragmented national identity. Plurilingual speakers (bi- and multi-lingual, polyglot) who have acquired two or more languages through migration, displacement, education, travel, economic domination or territorial re-configurations are profoundly marked by these dynamics. Translingual literature mirrors and echoes their voices. Interdisciplinary and comparative by nature, the study of translingualism extends from multiple perspectives of the examination of literary text (all genres) to studies in bilingualism, socio- and psycho-linguistics, cultural anthropology, psychology, and arts—all across humanities. In the spirit of the conference theme, Comparative Literature as a Critical Approach, the proposed seminar will examine a number of topics which demonstrate that translingual literature is simultaneously an object, subject, and agent of inquiry, both a research method and data, and, most importantly, a site for literary, linguistic, inter-cultural, and psychological transgression. The diverse papers included in the proposal represent literary works from different historical and geographical/cultural intersections, such as East and West, and reveal a variety of literary and lingua-cultural phenomena explored from textual, qualitative, phenomenological, autobiographical, and empirical perspectives. They include such topics as plurilingual writing in Germany in the 1900s (Rilke, George, and Wedekind); the story of a trilingual poet, journalist, and publisher, Eugene Jolas; multilingual writers in Alsace after World War II; the “dual lives” of Leonard Michaels, Mary Antin, Louis Wolfson, Assia Djebar; the exodus and literary rebirth of Soviet Jews (Gary Shteyngart, Alina Bronsky); and linguistic interlopers, Andrei Makine, Nancy Huston, and Alba de Cespedes. Stemming from these and other subjects of translingual inquiry, new theoretical concepts and metaphors have emerged: the theme of involuntary dissent in immigrant memoir; bilingual writers, protagonists, and individuals as mythical tricksters; the relationship between multilingual readers, writers, and monolingual texts; the issue of national literature and transnational affiliations; and the history of trans-atlantic (multilingual) literary criticism. The proposed seminar brings together recognized scholars across continents (Eastern and Western Europe, USA, Australia, New Zealand) and within a wide interdisciplinary spectrum. AILC is a perfect venue for the group to share research and to communicate to fellow scholars. As of now, we are twelve (12) participants. We are requesting a four (4) day seminar: three presenters per 90 minutes per day, 20 minutes per presentation, 5 min. for immediate questions after each presentation, and 15 min. discussion at the end of each day session.

#### References

Kellman, S. (2000). *The Translingual imagination*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.

### PLURILINGUISME LITTÉRAIRE 1900

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#### Réflexions théoriques et études de cas

L'intérêt pour l'expression littéraire du plurilinguisme va croissant, comme en témoigne la récente réédition de l'ouvrage *The Poet's Tongues : Multilingualism in Literature* (1970) de Leonard Forster (Cambridge University Press, 2010) dont les études de Schmitz-Emans et Schmeling, notamment, ont pu rappeler le caractère pionnier (Schmeling & Schmitz-Emans 2002 ; Schmitz-Emans, 2004) et en favoriser la redécouverte. Sans toutefois connaître la même inflation que les études interculturelles, champ avoisinant, les travaux autour du plurilinguisme littéraire, en plein essor, sont eux aussi à mettre en relation avec les bouleversements nationaux (réunification allemande), européens (élargissement de l'UE et unification) et mondiaux (mondialisation et migrations) qui donnent une nouvelle acuité à la question de la culture, et conséquemment aux enjeux identitaires et linguistiques. Cet ancrage dans les interrogations de notre temps éclaire certainement les risques d'anachronisme et d'appropriation politique qui guettent le concept d'interculturalité (Heimböckel et alii, 2010) mais également les études d'auteurs et/ou de textes plurilingues. Aussi, afin de prévenir de telles méprises et de contribuer éventuellement à circonscrire l'esprit de la littérature comparée, notamment en ce qu'elle se distingue des études interculturelles, le présent séminaire propose de donner une place explicite à la contextualisation, afin



de se situer dans une perspective d'histoire littéraire, fidèle à l'héritage de Forster aussi bien qu'aux prémisses de la littérature générale et comparée. Le plurilinguisme littéraire sera envisagé selon deux facettes (qui peuvent aller de pair) : le plurilinguisme intertextuel pratiqué par les auteurs polyglottes qui, d'un texte à l'autre, utilisent des langues différentes (Mehrsprachigkeit), et le plurilinguisme intratextuel, mélange de langues au sein d'un même texte (Mischsprachigkeit). Cette distinction (Knauth, 2004) est fondamentale à l'hypothèse de départ à laquelle ce séminaire invite à réfléchir : avec la fin du XIXe siècle se constitue une ligne de partage dans l'accueil et le maniement du plurilinguisme littéraire. Qu'Oscar Wilde écrive sa *Salomé* (1894) en français fait scandale, alors qu'un siècle auparavant, personne n'avait rien trouvé de malséant dans le fait que l'anglais Beckford eût choisi d'écrire en français sa fantaisie orientale *Vathek*. Cet exemple permet-il, et si oui, dans quelle mesure, d'évoquer l'idée d'un renversement dans les représentations ? Des études de cas d'auteurs polyglottes (appartenant à la génération née autour de 1860/70 : Jules Laforgue, Jean Moréas, Stuart Merrill, Marie Krysinska, Teodor de Wyzewa, Emile Verhaeren, Frank Wedekind, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Fritz Mauthner, Rainer Maria Rilke ...) sont-elles à même de prouver l'émergence d'une nouvelle sensibilité à l'égard du plurilinguisme ? Peut-on affirmer que l'auteur plurilingue, après avoir été un non-phénomène/problème pendant environ 2000 ans, est dans le XIXe siècle finissant considéré comme hors-norme, fêté ou rejeté mais ne laissant plus indifférent ? Peut-on parler d'un paradoxe du plurilinguisme 1900, dans la mesure où le plurilinguisme des auteurs est désormais visible et remarqué, tandis que l'hybridité des textes, proscrite selon la norme de la puritas, commence à percer, pour, au courant du XXe siècle, s'établir comme option esthétique reconnue ?

#### Theoretical Approaches and Case Studies

Interest in the literary expression of multilingualism has recently been growing as can be seen by the publication in 2010 of a new edition of Leonard Foster's *The Poet's Tongue: Multilingualism in Literature*, originally published in 1970. Two authors, Schmitz-Emans (2002) and Schmeling (2004), have specifically contributed to the rediscovery of Foster's pioneering work. While literary multilingualism has not witnessed the same amount of interest as has in recent decades the related field of cultural studies, the considerable growth of research in this area can be understood in the context of transformations at different levels: national (German reunification), European (enlargement and intensification of ties within the EU), and global (globalisation and migration). These changing landscapes present a new challenge to understanding the nature of culture and related issues of identity and language. Such contemporary questions are not free of the danger of anachronism and political appropriation, often found both in the concept of interculturalism (Heimbröckel et al, 2010) and in studies of multilingual texts and/or authors. The purpose of this seminar is to give explicit attention to contextualisation, situating papers in a historical literary perspective true to the heritage of Foster and to the premises of comparative literature, and thus to contribute to highlighting the possible differences between comparative literature and cultural studies. Literary multilingualism will be approached from two perspectives (which can co-exist): firstly, the intertextual multilingualism of polyglot authors, who use different languages in different texts and secondly, intratextual multilingualism (mixing languages in the same text). This distinction (Knauth, 2004) is fundamental to the hypothesis this seminar seeks to reflect upon, which is that the end of the nineteenth century constitutes a watershed in the reception of and engagement with literary multilingualism. Oscar Wilde created a scandal by writing his *Salomé* (1894) in French, but a century earlier there was no objection to the English novelist Beckford writing his *Vathek* in French. Does this example allow us to identify changing attitudes, and if so, to what extent? Could case studies of multilingual authors belonging to the generation born around 1860/70 (such as Jules Laforgue, Jean Moréas, Stuart Merrill, Marie Krysinska, Teodor Wyzewa, Emile Verhaeren, Frank Wedekind, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Fritz Mauthner, Rainer Maria Rilke...for example), prove the emergence of a new attitude towards multilingualism? For some two thousand years multilingual authors had neither been a special phenomenon nor a problem. Could one argue that at the end of the nineteenth century they were no longer received indifferently, being either rejected or celebrated? Could one contend that multilingualism was paradoxical in 1900: multilingual authors were now noticed and visible, but textual hybridity, previously forbidden by the norm of puritas, began to emerge as a new aesthetic option for the twentieth century?