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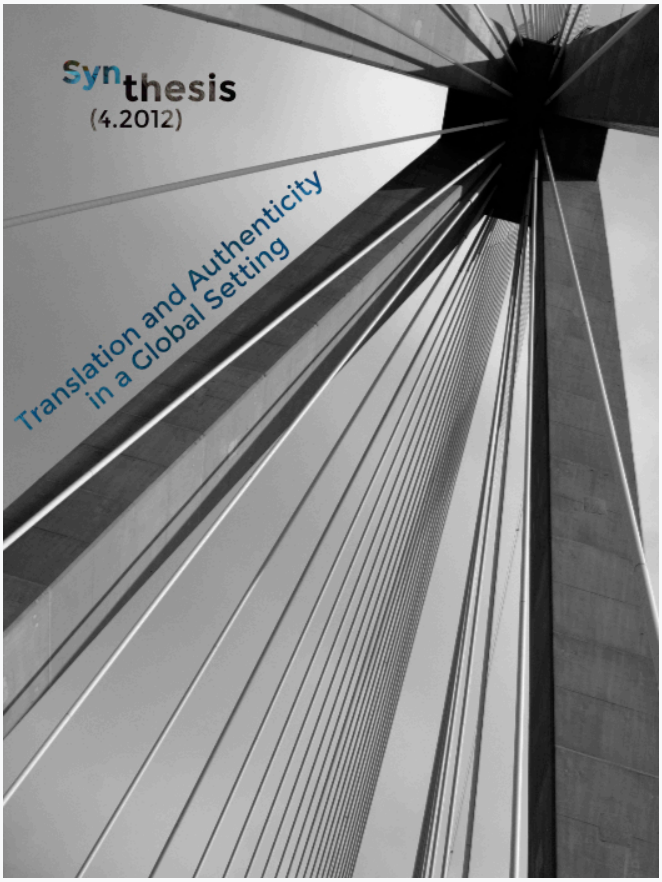

Challenging Tongues: The "Irreducible Hybridity" of Language in Contemporary Bilingual Poetry

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Abstract
Contemporary bilingual poetry provides readers with an opportunity to explore and better understand how contemporary artists address the reality of their linguistic contexts. These works pose a challenge to traditional canonical (often national) literatures; furthermore, bilingual poets are keenly attuned to the ways language use represents the personal and political values at stake for their cultures. Bilingual poetry functions as a site of translation where languages interact within the text without traditional demarcations of original and translated text, representing a larger ideological challenge to institutional hierarchies that are often imposed on language. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Internet has fostered bilingual poetry; the quality and proliferation of these works emphasise the need for more critical recognition of this form of expression. The friction, fluidity, cacophony, and subversive impulse of bilingual poetry embodies the convergence of enmity and rapport experienced by the very real speech communities that give them context.

> One demands two things of a poem. Firstly, it must be a well-made
> Verbal object that does honor to the language in which it is written.
> Secondly, it must say something significant about a reality
> common to us all, but perceived from a unique perspective.
> What the poet says has never been said before, but, once he
> has said it, his readers recognize its validity for themselves.
> W. H. Auden, *Joseph Brodsky: Selected Poems*

> Some of them restent en anglais.
> Some of them then die wenigen petit pois go jouer.
> Them then die vielen grossen állati nagy Imre. Sway this
> way, petit pois des bois.
> Ann Tardos, *Cat Licked the Garlic*

Despite numerous recent and global efforts to fix the status of official languages or cast foreign languages as marginal, impure, or diasporic, a substantial case against monolingualism (both in practice and in policy) has been built in academic, legal, and public domains.[1] Contemporary political philosophers have embraced this model of contingent difference and hypothesise political formulas that thrive on multiplicities that expose or challenge power relations by allowing for antagonism and dissent.[2] These forms of democracy reflect the diverse linguistic reality of the populations they are modeled on: as Doris Sommers asserts, speech acts like code switching, translation, and heavily accented language are imperative to democratic speech, "because they all slow down communication and labor through the difficulties of understanding and reaching agreement" ("Choose" 298). Bilingual poetry offers us an opportunity to explore and better understand how modern states and their artists address the reality of their linguistic contexts. My aim with this project is to argue that contemporary bilingual poetry poses a challenge to traditional canonical (often national) literatures; furthermore, I suggest that bilingual poets are keenly attuned to the ways language use represents the personal and political values at stake for their cultures. Then, in my discussion of multiple examples of bilingual poetry, I argue that bilingual poetry functions as a site of translation where languages interact within the text beyond traditional demarcations of original and translated text, representing a larger ideological challenge to institutional hierarchies that are often imposed on language. I will then attempt to illustrate how and why the Internet has fostered bilingual poetry, and argue that the quality and proliferation of these works emphasise the need for more critical recognition of this form of expression. The friction, fluidity, cacophony, and subversive impulse of bilingual poetry embodies the convergence of enmity and rapport experienced by the very real speech communities that give them context.

Despite its potential for theoretical investigation (or perhaps because of it), the bilingual subject emerges as a blind spot in the development of contemporary Western philosophy of language; remarkably few language philosophers have ventured to write bilingually in their texts, despite the fact

that many have well-documented bilingual proficiency.[3] Furthermore, canonical anthropological and semiotic research, ranging from the works of Ferdinand de Saussure to Noam Chomsky, has centered on the monolingual individual as she functions in a monolingual speech environment. Not considering bilingual individuals or contexts, often in the interest of purported 'intelligibility,' appears problematic, particularly given that much of postmodern language theory works to negate the potential or possibility for a mutual and conclusive understanding of any text. The rise of bilingual and comparative studies, and a growing acceptance of practiced literary bilingualism, seems to be encouraging new arenas for bilingual experimentation. Sommers acknowledges that while immigration, displacement, and the bilingual text are certainly not new phenomena, the current proliferation of bilingual writing is differentiated by the "great numbers, the visibility, and the postmodern cultural mood that make multilingual experiments a significant feature of literary art" ("Belonging" 96). But perhaps more important than the channeling of moods or trends in bilingual creativity is the opportunity this form of writing offers for political or personal expression; as Alan Rosen argues, the fragmented strategy of bilingual texts is an "artistic strategy," a means to articulate an experience of cohesive cultural and linguistic practice (53). Hence, these poems are not only creative works, or even creative criticisms; they become experiments of language, testimonies of the bilingual experience and the potential for a more authentic form of representation.

Interestingly, code switching (the conscious moving back-and-forth between two or more languages) is commonly practiced in traditional Western literary canons: Petronius, Cicero, medieval translators, Rabelais, Montaigne, T. S. Eliot, Pound, Stein, Sterne, cummings, and Tolstoy all have instances of code switching in their writing. There are prominent examples of creative experimentation with language in European literature from the past century: take, for example, the Russian Futurists' creation of their own language, or James Joyce's multilingual play in *Finnegan's Wake*, where fragmentation, the breaking up of linear narrative, and pastiche, the combining and rearranging of multiple elements of a piece, are used to consistently evade and challenge conventional models of coherency by emphasising stylistic pluralism and distortion. While the aesthetic maneuvering of contemporary bilingual poetry and Western modernism's experimental texts may share some similarities, the former seems to defy the utopian impulse often attributed to experimental poetry. Many European and American modernists focused on language as a game in which the relationship between words is more important than the relationship of words to reality. While these writers strove to reinvent modes of representation in any way possible, contemporary modes of bilingual word play strive to present a certain cultural stake in collaborative difference: to embody, to borrow Gayatri Spivak's paradoxical phrase, the "irreducible hybridity" of language and identity (9). Bilingual poetry rarely attempts to orient the reader; in fact, the effect is often one of disorientation. While this poetry may look to discomfort the experience of the reader, it is an intimately experienced reality of many contemporary speech communities. The bilingual text serves to relate an experience; it is more than a tool for structural or thematic wordplay. Linguistic rules are broken; seemingly arbitrary connections are realised. The poetic form provides a prescriptive arena for language to both struggle and thrive.

There has been some effort to categorise multilingual code-use in the literary text. The poetry that will be examined in this project seems to fall into what John Lipski designates as the Type III category of bilingual literature: "Type III bilingual literature exhibits intrasential code switches typical of the "compound bilingual" who has learned both languages at approximately the same time and in similar or identical contexts. It is in such texts that the high degree of integration of a bilingual grammar becomes most apparent" (195).[4] While there are similarities in the bilingual linguistic strategies exhibited at all levels of authorial bilingual competency and usage, it is important to emphasise that the 'compound' bilingual does not appear to use these strategies for necessarily similar purposes.[5] While bilingual poetry certainly poses difficulties in interpretation for language and meaning, it avoids the realm of the purely abstract. Bilingual texts do tend to share certain characteristics: interruptions, delays, and code switching are among the most common rhetorical features of these texts. The goal is not to alienate the reader but to unsettle our conception of the seemingly 'natural' capabilities of language. Though the text may be alienating for reasons of

intelligibility, we get the impression that the writer experiences an alienation from fixed notions of language. Sommers suggests that the instances of code switching in bilingual poetry elude traditional configurations of modernity because they "hold something back from the universal embrace: "[They] know how to play with the difficulty in language and don't dismiss it as noise. Bilinguals understand the arbitrariness of language even more intensely than do theorists who, after Paul de Man, call language allegorical because words are of a different order from their elusive referents" ("Belonging" 108).

The following examples of bilingual poetry exemplify the antagonism that is played out in contemporary bilingual art and literature. I will first consider the way bilingual writers use their bilingualism in similar means (if not for similar ends). I will then briefly consider how the Internet has provided bilingual writers with a new medium for democratic artistic expression. While my consideration of contemporary bilingual poetry is by no means exhaustive, I hope it will at least draw more attention to the potential this kind of poetry offers for critical enquiry.

This untitled poem is carved into the stone edifice of the Wales Millenium Centre in Cardiff, Wales:

> Creu gwir in these stones
> Fel gwydr horizons
> O ffwrnais awen sing. (Lewis, *Chaotic* 13)

The poem's author, Gwyneth Lewis, was the first poet to be given laureateship in Wales, a distinction awarded to her in 2005. Lewis writes in both Welsh and English; born into a Welsh-speaking household, her father began teaching her English at the age of five, and she maintained the languages in bilingual institutional settings. The above poem is unique not just for its linguistic manoeuvres, but for the subject matter it considers: Gwir, or truth, and the difficulty of communicating truth authentically. The stones are said to create truth from glass (gwydr). The English words in the text look as though they can sufficiently stand alone, but it is only with their Welsh counterparts that we get the full effect of the text: that truth is transparent, and though words may be carved in stone, their meaning cannot be afforded the same opacity. For Lewis, English and Welsh work through "a kind of magnetic attraction and repulsion" ("On Writing" 82). Languages work in "syncopation": "I know them both so intimately that they are often transparent to me," she states, "so that I'm aware not of hearing Welsh or English but of understanding the thoughts of another person speaking" (82). Lewis describes her languages as inextricably bound to each other in her understanding and use of them, a notion that is reflected in her poetry.

Chicana poet Gloria Anzaldúa's *La Frontera/Borderland: The New Mestiza* offers readers a collection of poetry and essays that blend personal narrative with cultural critique:[6]

> 1,950 mile-long open wound
> dividing a pueblo, a culture,
> running down the length of my body,
> staking fence rods in my flesh,
> splits me splits me
> me raja me raja
>
> This is my home
> This thin edge of
> barbwire. (23)

Anzaldúa uses multiple creoles and hybrids of English and Spanish throughout the text: in "How To Tame a Wild Tongue," there are at least eight outlined specifically (53-59). However, in this opening section of the book, "The Homeland, Atzlan/ El otro Mexico," we most clearly see multiple languages in dialogue with each other. Lea Ramsdale suggests that while Anzaldúa turns away from a vacancy in

either Spanish or English, she essentially finds a "home" in her Chicano hybridisation, represented as the "thin edge of/ barbwire" in the stanzas above (169). Anzaldúa's attempt to desconstruct and create, to tiptoe through and borrow from different linguistic codes seems to strongly suggest that this writing is not meant as a space to define authenticity. Anzaldúa herself describes her writing as "full of variations and seeming contradictions," as always avoiding a "central core, now appearing, now disappearing in a crazy dance" (66). One cannot delegitimise the political nature of Anzaldúa's writing, however. Anzaldúa's personal political and social interests, and the way her texts have been widely used to serve and discuss those interests, point not to language as a space of 'home' but as a space of agency. While her text serves to destabilise meaning, it also recognises the currency of language in a socio-political system. More accurately, the poetry challenges the accepted norms of those systems and the ways those essentialised norms serve as a means of oppression and marginalization. For bilingual writers like Anzaldúa, agency is constituted from their unique linguistic perspective, a constant dialogical position of calculation, negotiation, and interrogation.

Place, as considered in many bilingual poems, often involves crossing borders and boundaries. This is important, as place is both a creation and creator of language and literature; to demarcate the place is to demarcate the language. Language is often viewed as only communicative: it belongs to the speaker, the speaker belongs to a culture, cultures belong to nations, and, in an almost circular logic, a nation belongs to its people. Unfortunately, language often becomes a vehicle for exclusionary practices. When the language of a text begins to transcend clear boundaries, for instance, by moving from Spanish to English and then back to Spanish, and then perhaps to a creoled Spanish or a hybrid English, the supposition that a single position or identity can be held within the configurations of that text (or nation) is called into question. No one language begins to represent the 'home' of the author; instead, home is, as Anzaldúa writes, a place that has been split or gashed ("splits me splits me/ me raja me raja") (23). While we could perhaps find 'home' in the place where the reader enters the text, the discomfort of not understanding or not feeling fully comfortable is precisely what the author intends us to feel. For the bilingual author, national identity and national languages can take a certain primacy in the upsetting of conventions and norms that do not account for the loyalties to language that fall outside of those largely accepted as 'official' national languages. This supposition seems greatly invested in loyalty to an ideal nation and an ideal monolingualism developed within that nation. The decision to use a certain language, especially one that falls outside of a traditionally accepted national language, allows a writer to transcend geographical and ideological boundaries. The bilingual optic allows for writers and readers to appreciate metonymic connections between native and adoptive dwelling places and also languages, allowing for hybrid variations and conceptions of the two.

Anne Tardos's "Ami Minden" is written in Hungarian, English, French, and German:

> Ami minden quand un yes or no je le said
> viens am liebsten hätte ich dich du süßes
> de ez nem baj das weisst du me a favor
> hogy in en se faire croire
> tous less birds als die Wälder langsam verschwinden.
> Minden verschwinden, mind your step and woolf. (*The Dik-dik's* 286)

The poem is repeated across several pages of her collection, superimposed over a variety of images. In the title, "ami" can be read as a 'male friend' in French, or as 'that' or 'which' in Hungarian. "Minden" means 'everything' in Hungarian. Thus, the title can be interpreted variously as 'friend everything,' 'all that,' 'all friend,' etc. Tardos not only upsets the conventional use of language; she also upsets the interpretation of meaning and upends locality in terms of language. Born in France in a French-Hungarian speaking household, moving to Budapest at the age of five and Vienna at the age thirteen, Tardos learned fluent German and went to a French high school. Her seven published books, all containing multilingual poems, vary in the degree of translation included in the text. *Cat Licked the*

Garlic, in which "Ami Minden" first appeared, contains no translation: as Tardos explains later in her collection *The Dik-dik's Solitude*, "the reader is left to fend for herself" (286). Tardos makes no excuses for the unintelligibility of her work: as she writes in the preface to her 1995 collection, *Maeg-Fish*, she regards her writing, "a liberation from language segregation" (ix). In the examples I have provided, Tardos's work perhaps serves as the clearest example of poetry that does not privilege one language over another; in Tardos's poems, languages perform on an even plane, not striving for universal comprehension or meaning, but representing the potential to coexist.

Bilingual art and poetry has proliferated on the Internet, particularly in user-generated forums that are not dictated or restrained by traditional publication protocol. The Internet has been both scrutinised and valorised for the obvious instability it provides the written text: perhaps it is no wonder that proponents of print media are discomforted by emerging genres of hypertext. Web pages have the ability to change from day to day in a way that books cannot. They can adapt to political and social climates over time. Authorship, place of publication, and other predictable markers of credibility or authority are often less clear or even completely obscure on the Internet. Hypermedia, the application of multimedia facilities like sound and video to hypertext, has proven to be a rich terrain for exploring new modes of creativity and textual interpretation as a medium that challenges traditional concepts of centralisation and hierarchical order. Hypermedia promotes struggle and a sense of deterritorialisation, and while it is often considered experimental, the medium's ability to reflect modern technological advances while challenging the possibilities of representation make it an exciting and culturally relevant site of praxis for contemporary theoretical dialogue. Such is the case with bilingual poetic hypermedia and works of electronic poetry that use one or more language system.

Recently, an abundance of easily accessed hypertext versions of print texts that link original and translated versions of the text have appeared on the Internet. This seems to be a move by publishing houses intended to reach an audience of readers that increasingly becomes accustomed to participatory models of Web reading. Creative web artists such as Caroline Bergvall, Eva Quintas, Isabell Heyuer, and John Cayley are creating unique and exciting new pieces of hypermedia that demonstrate how the Internet is proving to be the ideal medium for bilingual creativity. On one level, the medium is attractive precisely because it challenges established notions of authorship: almost anyone with a computer, knowledge of code (or the means to employ an outside source), and Internet access can self-publish their work on the Internet. The destabilisation of body, place, hierarchy, and order that electronic media creates closely reflects the cultural and political interests of contemporary writers and artists. Katherine Hayles notes that electronic media have created a similar sort of process-adaptive human, having "a craving for continuously varying stimuli, a low threshold for boredom, the ability to process multiple information streams simultaneously, and a quick intuitive grasp of algorithmic procedures that underlie and generate surface complexity" (117). The connection to bilingual interaction and exchange works similarly: we may even go so far as to see the bilingual individual as a node, constantly receiving various sources of information that are somewhat congruous but ultimately encoded, becoming a site of meaning-making and the producer of communicable response. Bilingual exchange requires a slowing down or clashing of languages in order to generate meaning: bilingual hypermedia artists invoke this 'clashing' in an effort to contribute to the polysemy of the textual surface.

We see an example of this in Caroline Bergvall's "About Face," a work that the artist originally created as a performance piece before re-formatting it in hypertext (eventually transmuting it into print form, which I use for analysis here). London-based French/Norwegian poet and performance artist Bergvall uses multilingual word play to upset accepted notions of gender:

> Begin a f acing
> at a poi nt of motion
> How c lose is near to face a face
> What makes a face how close too near
> Tender n r pace m

just close enough makes faceless
too close makes underfaced
Ceci n'est pas une fesse
Past nest urn face
Sees here your passing. (25)

In the hypertext version of Bergvall's poem, originally created for the Liminal Institute Festival in Berlin, audio recordings of live readings of the poem in unedited German translation play in the background. Each line fades in as white text on a black background; in Bergvall's writing it is often impossible to distinguish between individual words. In choosing the face as her subject matter, Bergvall invokes a long literary and artistic tradition of using the face as a space from which to draw meaning. In his book *Cinema I: The Image Movement*, Gilles Deleuze outlines three traditional renderings for the face: as individuating, as demarcating specific social roles, and as an entity of communication not only between two people but also between an individual's role and his character (99). Deleuze sees the face as a both a site of signification and subjectification inextricably bound to a patriarchal system of signifiers (99). If we accept this supposition, Bergvall's transposing the English word 'face' with the French word 'fesse' (meaning 'buttock') demonstrates her use of these words to comment on hierarchical models of language: she is literally working from 'the bottom' up. The climax of the piece portrays a violent removal of the face:

This face is pulled off by
Ea T ing much fig
Uch eating choking on face
Eating much fg is chking on fc
Veg erot, think about, -gnize, another would have it,
Mm. (27)

The reference to "fig" is particularly potent if it is read as upsetting the conventional figure or form of poetry. While an argument could be made that the code switching in Bergvall's poetry is strictly phonemic and morphemic experimentation, it is undeniable that she uses her bilingualism to push the boundaries of conventional language use and poetic form. By reading the "fig" of this text as relating to a rather vulgar French connotation of female genitalia, and noting the violent disembodiment of a face being "pulled off," we may also see Bergvall's attention to traditional and patriarchal ways of mediating the body. In their book *Remediation*, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin argue that "new media are thus fully involved in the contemporary struggle to define the self as both embodied and mediated by the body," at once contributing to the transparency that constitutes the male gaze, while simultaneously reconstituting the normative gaze and its view of male and female identity (240). To focus on bodies or media alone in their interaction with hypermedia is to only see part of the picture: artists like Bergvall embrace the multifaceted nature of hypermedia by using layers of code and word play to critique conventional practices of the body, gender, and language.

The subject in virtual space is in a constant state of flux. In Loss Pequeño Glazier's *Dig[iT]al Poet(I)(c)s: The Making of E-Poetries*, he argues that the online medium lends itself to forms that disrupt traditional notions of stable subjectivities and ego-centered discourses (4). Bilingual hypertext often mediates between stylistic and cultural commonalities and differences, simultaneously celebrating and questioning our ability to belong to language. This is not to suggest that the bilingual subject is any more fragmented than a monolingual subject; only that, by processing fragments of language on a continual basis, a bilingual subject may be more keenly aware of this fragmentation. The fragmented nature of hypermedia allows the authors to share this splintered relationship to language: in a sense, writer and reader are brought together by fragmentation. The amorphous structure of place in hypermedia makes it a privileged ground for bilingual creative endeavor. The materiality of the image is marked by instability: the electronic nature of hypertext often simulates an appearance of durability, however, the image constantly needs to be refreshed by the scanning

electron beam that forms an image on the screen. Also, while we may consider hypertext as navigable space, it cannot be marked in the manner that characterises place, perhaps most noticeable in legal domains that have struggled to impose local legal codes on the almost universal domain of cyberspace. However, the Internet is not immune to systems of classification and hierarchy that closely resemble geopolitical divisiveness. Katherine Hayles points out that the genres within the canon of electronic literature are often divided by the structure and specificity of the underlying code (*Electronic* 4). Web communication even has its own forms of critical scrutiny concerning the standard use of language, with growing interest and concern in some sectors over the way e-communication has influenced conventional language standards: for example, letters are often left uncapitalised, misspellings are common, odd abbreviations and run-on sentences are deemed acceptable in the interest of brevity.

Internet code is remarkable in that it often mimics spoken language. Electronic communication often looks more like a conversation than a formal document. It should also be noted that the Internet initially gained popularity as a system of communication: e-mail made it easier than ever to bridge the gap across space. The shift to a mimicking of colloquial interaction in e-mail, chat, and weblogs may also work to inspire the bilingual creativity we see in multi-coded hypermedia. Writers and artists using hypermedia are able to subvert hierarchical domination by attempting to challenge concepts of linearity and hierarchy. The impeccable attention to detail and language in the bilingual hypermedia considered in this essay seems to be influenced by an intimate experience with verbal communication that simultaneously creates and confuses meaning. John Cayley explores this connection further in his hypermedia work "Translation." The source texts used are not Cayley's original works: he relies on various fragments of literature and theory written in French, German, and English, notably including Walter Benjamin's essay "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," still considered a foundation text in translation studies. Cayley, however, reconfigures his pieces in a way that exposes their similarities on the level of linguistics, allowing the viewer to hypothesise the congruency of languages. Using a process he calls "transliteral morphing," Cayley uses algorithms to transform texts into words letter by letter. Code, like the phonemic 'bits' of language, is comprised of bits in their minutest form. Cayley's text works to alert the viewer to the algorithmic procedure of constructing meaningful language (regardless of which language is being used). As this happens, the reader is also invited to read and contemplate the theoretical implications of the texts he chooses, all concerning the process of translation. Acts of translation always force the translator to recognise structural similarities and differences, and transmute these discrepancies in a way that best serves the interests of the text (or the translator). In her article "Print is Flat and Code is Deep," Hayles points out that although most humans learn to read using a "digital method" of sounding out each letter, we soon begin to recognise the shapes of words and phrases, "thus modulating the discreteness of alphabetic writing with the analogue continuity of pattern recognition" (79). Hypertext demands a complex and continual processing of multiple images and sources of information. With multilingual hypertext, every word becomes a dynamic image, placing even more emphasis on the process of transmutation that occurs in bilingual exchange and translation. Language is comprised of bits and pieces that work together to create meaning. Bilingual discourse is a constant process of working through difference to find intelligibility.

Electronic hypertext pieces can be considered characteristically bilingual: electronic hypertexts, like all electronic texts, consist of multiple layers of text that combine computer code and natural language. Remarkably, it is through this coded bilingualism that we find the constraints of hypertext language. For example, Web pages must be formatted using HTML or a similar markup language in order to be properly executed. In fact, the constraints on hypertext code are almost more stringent than the constraints on natural language: hypertext relies on the exactitude of coding for it to even be brought into existence. Bilingual speakers are also not immune to the constraints of mutual cognition: the public sphere often requires a *lingua franca*. Hypertext writers like Adam Sondheim, Mary Ann Breeze, and Talan Memmott have attempted to push the boundaries even further by creating their own hypertext languages. Known as code work, the languages are constructed from a hybrid of natural

and programming languages, to the extent that in their purest form they are readable to both machine and human. Hayles demonstrates that this code is "replete with puns, neologisms, and other creative play," and suggests that, "such work enacts a trading zone in which human-only language and machine-readable code are performed as interpenetrating linguistic realms" (*Electronic* 21). The text serves as a mirror and challenges the reader to find his/her place in the text. The text rarely works to orient the reader; in fact, the effect is one of disorientation, an effect we first saw in the examples of print bilingual poetry.

Not only elusive, the intersections of everyday speech-acts can also be downright opaque when they confront each other (sometimes intentionally opaque, as a reminder of surviving cultural differences). One hypermedia text that addresses these differences while promoting an idea of coexistence is Eva Quintas's *Civilités/Civilities*. The project brings together ten Montreal artists of various disciplines and backgrounds, each contributing their take on certain shared themes such as city, civility, civilianism, coexistence, family, religion, and religious tolerance. The purpose of "Civilities" is introduced on the opening page with a single line of enquiry, provided in both French and English: "How to live together?" The work explores multiple levels of coexistence and community, from simple, basic politeness to family issues to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The viewer clicks on a character, object, or word to trigger a scene, while a ubiquitous soundtrack serves to lend unity to the succession of interfaces. Upon clicking each module, the viewer is presented with fragments of conversation and various declarations; excerpts from Roland Barthes's *Comment vivre ensemble?* serve as base text upon which to build reflection in *Civilities*. The collection includes transcriptions from classes and seminars Barthes gave at the Collège de France in 1976 and 1977 that explore the potential for living together offered by very small groups, where cohabitation does not preclude individual freedom. *Civilities* also takes excerpts from other texts that deal with issues of citizenship, public spaces, the coexistence of peoples and nations, spoken in both French and English. The use of multiple languages in the piece serves to further question coexistence on linguistic and communicative planes. The attitude towards coexistence in the piece is not one of 'we can,' but one of 'we must.' *Civilities* questions, condemns, incites, and provokes. Each of the artists who take part in the project attempts to elicit a reaction, a feeling, or rebellion towards the current state of the world. The dominant colour in the work is an arresting red until the final module: here, the viewer finds a colourful public space that opens up the end of the project by inviting the user's participation. Any viewer can send in text, an image, or a drawing that will be added to the work, providing a public communal space in the seemingly borderless horizons of the Internet.

Bolter and Grusin argue that while the Internet provides users with the ultimate freedom to alter and define themselves, it simultaneously forces users to realize their immersion in an "interrelated or connected" community (233). The networked self is constantly participating in a collectivity:

> This networked self is constantly making and breaking connections, declaring allegiances and interest and then renouncing them –participating in a video conference while sorting through email or word processing at the same time…The remediated self is also evident in "virtual communities" on the Internet, in which individuals stake out and occupy verbal and visual points of view through textual and graphic manifestations, but at the same time constitute their collective identities as a network of affiliations among these mediated selves. (232)

Cultural fissures are a reality today; they mark the increasing complexity of our global relations. In the global geopolitical system, it is more apparent than ever that countries and people cannot exist apart from one another; in fact, they are intertwined and irreversibly bound. Similarly, the Internet is a non-centered rhizomatic system: it consists of the "smooth surfaces and striated spaces" that Deleuze and Félix Guattari outline in their model of the rhizome in A Thousand Plateaus (489). While nomadic smooth spaces represent areas that lack hierarchical structure, logos and authority govern striated spaces. Like global government systems, user-restricted areas of the Web represent the striated space. Likewise, mutual comprehension of language exchange is restricted by the receiver's knowledge and familiarity of the code being employed. Perla Sasson-Henry asserts that "smooth space" on the Web is

comprised of weblogs (i.e. 'blogs') where people around the world can interact with one another, contribute with comments, and share ideas (62). The authority of the Webmaster is undermined by the public debate that occurs within a page he can format and control. Hypertext poetry, while on one hand maintaining the semblance of non-hierarchical language use, still provides the reader with the words in the order and form they designate. In fact, the unfamiliarity of the words, along with the sometimes frustrating process of navigation demanded by the hypertext, may work to purposefully discomfort the reader. The smooth space in these texts, however, comes from their ability to provide the reader with multiple options in both the way he chooses to interact with the medium through link choice and the way he generates meaning from the text.

Bilingual exchange, the medium of hypertext, and the art of bilingual hypertext poetry participate in and work to subvert hierarchical order. This model of network democracy and citizen participation has faced resistance: likewise, bilingualism is often met with fears of political or cultural dissent or dissipation. Similarly, emerging media have always faced resistance and fear at their beginnings: Sasson-Henry cites Umberto Eco's hypothesis that the pharaoh in Plato's Phaedrus sees writing as "dangerous because it decreases the power of the mind" (296). These systems, concepts, and media challenge traditionally accepted models of social organisation and communication. The writers and creators of multilingual hypermedia turn to the Internet as a way to represent and speak to societies that confront these issues on a continual basis. The urgency of these issues is reflected in wars that are fought in the name of political and religious difference, laws made on the basis of preserving national or regional language.

While several examples and forms of bilingual hypermedia are examined in this essay, and despite the common practice of global bilingualism, examples of published bilingual art and literature remain surprisingly scarce. Currently, bilingual literature seems to find its lifeforce in the public domain: several American universities offer courses in bilingual poetry writing, urban coffee houses offer multilingual poetry slams, and blogs entirely devoted to posts written in bilingual prose are easily accessible to Internet users. Positioning the proliferation of bilingual poetry in the public sphere against the lacking interest in 'official' recognition of the genre in the publishing market raises interesting questions about the politics of language that may relate to the avoidance of the 'bilingual subject.' Perhaps because many bilingual writers belong to traditionally stigmatised and marginalised minority groups, their poetry challenges privileged notions of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Perhaps the theme of collective difference that permeates these pieces threatens the dominating power structures that rely on univocal suppression to discourage dissent. Regardless of the limits placed on bilingual literature, the potential and possibility of this work continues to be an exciting frontier for critical exploration.

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[1] See Edwards. He extensively explores the history of multilingualism across numerous global cultures: topics include the origin of languages, bilingualism, prescriptivism, language in conflict, language and identity, and the relationship to language in culture. Other important sources in the field include Mansour and Braunmuller and Ferraresi.

[2] For further reading on theories of political democracy that thrives on diversity, see Butler, Laclau, and Žižek; Laclau and Mouffe; Mouffe 31-45.

[3] Foucault's deconstruction of power discourses, Derrida's consideration of the effect of language on consciousness, and Lacan's analysis of language and psychological development each hold aspects of identity, language, and power at the basis of their theories. All three thinkers lectured widely in multiple languages in many different countries, but failed to write any of their texts bilingually.

[4] Lipski designates Type I literature as the monolingual text with occasional L2 usage, and Type II as exhibiting intersentential code switching "which any type of bilingual individual may produce." See Lipski 195.

[5] Cintron and Mendieta-Lombardo distinguish "marked" and "unmarked" uses of code-switching in written literature and poetry. For these authors, "unmarked" poetry requires a bilingual readership, and the switches in linguistic code are meant to emphasise words or phrases that are only relevant to that perspective code and culture.

[6] Code-switching is a prominent theme in much of Chicano/Chicana writing; Anzaldúa is one of many who do this in their work. Other Chicano/a writers who use code-switch to various degrees include Miguel Piñero, Jim Sagel, José Antonio Burciaga, Pedro Ortiz Vasqeuz, Alurista, Tino Villenueva, and José Montoya.

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