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**(De-)Constructing translingual identity.
Interpreters as literary characters in *Simultan* by
Ingeborg Bachmann and *Between* by Christine
Brooke-Rose.**

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Eva Schopohl

Introduction

- 1 Translators and interpreters are not only gaining importance in our globalized world, they have also increasingly been appearing as characters in literary texts since the mid-twentieth century. Two exemplary texts from 1968 that centre on a female conference interpreter are discussed in this article: the story *Simultan* by the Austrian author Ingeborg Bachmann and the novel *Between* by the British author Christine Brooke-Rose¹. Both texts do not only share an interpreter as protagonist, but also have the main topic in common: multilinguality and transculturality and their impact on the constitution of identity, or, in more general terms, the connection between language and identity. This relationship is explored in the depiction of the female interpreter, who is immersed in various languages and constantly changing places due to her occupation and lifestyle. In both texts she experiences some sort of identity crisis closely related to her professional status as a kind of 'translating machine', and an alienation from, as well as a longing for, the mother tongue.
- 2 The presentation of these thematic issues involves the employment of certain literary techniques at the discourse-level. By doing so, both texts explore conditions and possibilities of the representation of characters in language(s) in the literary text itself. Most of the literary techniques employed in *Simultan* and *Between* can be looked at in terms of the Bakhtinian notion of polyphony or heteroglossia. These techniques will be analysed with respect to focalisation, the merging or hybridisation of different forms of

speech representation, multilinguality (or polyglossia) as well as intertextuality. Through these literary techniques, several points of view are combined, and meaning as well as identity emerge only within this texture of discourses.

Transitional Settings and Multilinguality

- 3 Before taking a closer look at the discourse-level, I will introduce both texts by comparing their settings and identifying the central topics: multilinguality and transculturality in connection with the role of the mother tongue, as well as interpreting and translating².
- 4 *Simultan* is situated in a temporal and local 'off'³. The simultaneous interpreter Nadja and the FAO-employee Ludwig Frankel spend a few days off the job together. They travel along the coast of Campania, far-off from Rome, the centre of international conferences where they have met shortly before. It is also an in-between: a trip between two conferences, which takes place on the road, in the car and in different hotels at the seaboard. At the same time, it is a voyage into memory, as both characters are confronted with their past and as their love-affair is constantly overshadowed by the memory of former relationships.
- 5 The setting of *Between* does not constitute such a secluded time and space, but an even more pronounced interstice: hotel rooms, buses, airports, and particularly airplanes that take the protagonist, a nameless female conference interpreter (whom I will call 'Madame', as she is often referred to), from one congress to another, flying at "a speed of total immobility"⁴. These places seem all alike as they are described in very similar terms with only minimal variations of insignificant details. Likewise, it is impossible to clearly establish the amount of narrated time as the whole story is narrated in present tense, even though it relates both to memories of the interpreter's past and to the supposed present time. The temporal setting, then, is best described as a "timeless continuum, concerned rather with the space and the time of the central character['s] psyche"⁵.
- 6 Because of their jobs and lives, both interpreters, Nadja as well as Madame are constantly in touch with many different cultures and languages and thus experience themselves as being made up of alien discourses. They thus embody the postmodern, flexible individual, which on the one hand is characterised by a maximum of spatial, social and psychic mobility, but on the other hand suffers from an enormous pressure to perform and from being threatened by a loss of security, personal relationships and anything to hold on to⁶. This ambivalent notion of the *condition postmoderne* is explored in both texts by depicting the character's longing for their lost mother tongue.
- 7 For Nadja, this is the whole reason to depart on the trip with Frankel, whom she hopes will help her recover her lingual and local origin, Vienna, his own home town as well as hers. Madame likewise attempts to recapture her cultural and linguistic origin, the France of her early-childhood, by settling in Paris, detaching herself from her English ex-husband, and by taking up a love-affair with her courteous French suitor, Bernard. In both texts, the attempts fail, thus showing the longing for the mother tongue to be a utopian hope; and for this reason, the integral self, firmly rooted in the one home country and the one mother tongue, is exposed as a lost and never regainable origin, and as always having been illusionary. Identity then is not understood as some transcendental value, but as a discursive construction, shaped by the languages the individual meets⁷.

Interpreting and Translating

- 8 The concept of identity, moreover, is closely linked to the depiction of interpreting and translating. Both texts present simultaneous interpretation as a contributing force to the interpreter's self-alienation, a merely reproductive, mechanistic activity that demands total immersion into an alien discourse.
- 9 In *Simultan*, one central paragraph demonstrates this notion of interpreting:

After all, her life consisted of connections and linkings and everything attached to them, [...] and [she] rubbed her ears at the spot where she usually wore her headphones, where the switches were thrown automatically and the language circuits were broken. What a strange mechanism she was, she lived without a single thought of her own, immersed in the sentences of others, like a sleepwalker, furnishing the same but different-sounding sentences an instant later; she could make *machen, faire, fare, hacer* and *delat'* out of 'to make,' she could spin each word to six different positions on a wheel, she just had to keep from thinking that 'to make' really meant to make, *faire faire, fare fare, delat' delat'*, that might put her head out of commission, and she did have to be careful not to get snowed under by an avalanche of words.⁸
- 10 Nadja appears as a mediator ("connections", "linkings"), totally "immersed in the sentences of others" which prevent her from introducing her own personality and creativity to the process ("without a single thought of her own"); instead, as the machine-metaphor shows, she feels a "strange mechanism" ("the switches were thrown automatically", "she could spin each word to six different positions on a wheel"). On the one hand, she is totally in control of languages as her material, but on the other hand, this same materiality of language, the "avalanche of words", threatens to bury her⁹.
- 11 The problem of the automatism of interpreting is thus linked to the problem of language in general: the interchangeability of one signifier with the other that lies at the basis of this 'mechanistic' interpreting, threatens to be revealed as a mere construct; for according to the deconstructionist notion of language¹⁰, the link between signifier and signified is not a stable one but subject to a constant deferral of sense. That is why for Nadja, "thinking that 'to make' really meant to make [...] might put her head out of commission"; this hints, in its tautological structure, at the void behind the signifier, where there is no transcendental meaning to be found. Consequently, interpreting at the conferences does not serve communication. Instead, the speeches seem to be "gibberish¹¹" and Nadja feels as if she only contributes to the delegates' misunderstanding one another¹².
- 12 At the end of the story, Nadja's view of interpreting and translating changes: attempting to translate an Italian sentence in the Bible, Nadja for the first time thinks about and intuitively grasps the meaning of the words. But it is exactly because of this that she realises the abyss between words and meaning which makes translation impossible: "She couldn't have translated the sentence into any other language, although she was convinced that she knew what each of the words meant and their usage, but she didn't know what this sentence was really made of.¹³" This realisation, although painful, leads to Nadja finally accepting the incommensurability inherent in all translation: "She began to cry. [...] She just couldn't do everything.¹⁴" The title of the story, then, signifies that translation is at the same time – 'simultaneously' – impossible and necessary, as Greber points out in relation to Bachmann's own poetological statements¹⁵. Consequently, at the

very end, Nadja is capable of a real act of communication and the story closes with her speech act of congratulation: “Auguri!”¹⁶”

- 13 In *Between*, the conferences, and with them the activity of interpreting, constitute one of the recurring plot-fragments; still, the central problematic is the same as in *Simultan*: “We merely translate other people's ideas, not to mention platitudes, si-mul-ta-né-ment. No one requires us to have any of our own. We live between ideas, nicht wahr, Siegfried?”¹⁷ What Madame utters here, seems very similar to Nadja's thoughts about interpreting: the interpreter does not have any 'own' ideas, but only 'translates other people's ideas', thus lives 'between ideas', i.e. immersed in alien discourse; which, moreover, consists of 'platitudes' – at the conferences “no communication ever occurs”¹⁸, words even “prevent any true exchange of thoughts”¹⁹. Like in *Simultan*, the interpreter appears as a translating machine, a “neutralised transmitter”²⁰, and interpretation seems to be an automatic mechanism: “[...] his words flowing into the ear through earphones in French and down at once out of the mouth into the attached mouthpiece in simultaneous German.”²¹ As in *Simultan*, to interpret successfully, it is crucial that the interpreter not try to grasp the meaning, but remain just at the edge of understanding, that is to say: “one has to understand immediately you see because the thing understood slips away, together with the need to understand.”²²
- 14 Nevertheless, the problematic view of interpretation as an annihilation of the interpreter's self is contrasted with the possibility of managing this in-between status by looking at it not as a flaw but as an advantage, opening up simultaneous worlds. Madame considers this issue when she dwells on the younger generation of interpreters: “They seem a different species altogether who learn from listening and live simultaneously all channels alert on all levels unless they merely block off different ones as yet unknown and unimportant or reduce them all to manageable size with poise and instant knowledge.”²³ In the end interpreting or, more generally, translating is not used to perform the annihilation of the interpreter's self, but to create it. As argued above, identity is always shown as already fragmented, as hybridized, as nurtured by alien discourses. This will become clear in the following analysis of the discourse-level of the texts.

Multifocalisation and Polyphony

- 15 The literary techniques in both texts aim at a combination of several points of view and a presentation of different voices, thus creating an example of what Bakhtin, referring to Dostoevsky, calls the 'polyphonic novel', which is characterised by a “plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices”²⁴. Moreover, in double-voiced discourse, these independent voices are internally dialogised. Beyond this merging of voices, Bakhtin also developed a concept for the merging of different languages, heteroglossia:

Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel (whatever the forms for its incorporation), is another's speech in another's language [...]. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions [...]. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they – as it were – know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold a

conversation with each other. Double voiced discourse is always internally dialogised²⁵.

- 16 In *Simultan* and *Between*, heteroglossia or rather polyglossia, i.e. multilinguality, is a principal trait of the discourse. Before regarding multilinguality as well as intertextuality, I will inquire into the connection of polyphony and focalisation and then analyse the hybridisation of different forms of speech representation.
- 17 In *Simultan*, the focalisation is primarily internal on Nadja, but at times, Frankel also appears as focaliser. Shifting between these two perspectives means shifting between the male and female voice. What makes this change of focalisation particular, is that it can neither be identified as a mere alternation of two independent points of view, nor as Nadja's imagination of the other perspective – the focalisation is not always clear but sometimes appears double-voiced. This undecidability brings about an 'effect of simultaneity', the seamless combination of standpoints. This merging, here described for the female and male voices, also applies to narrator and characters, sympathy and irony, speaking and thinking, present and past, conscious and unconscious as well as foreign language and mother tongue²⁶.
- 18 For *Between*, the case seems even more complicated. Applying the concept of focalisation, one would have to speak of a radically internal focalisation, as everything seems to be presented as seen through the interpreter's eyes, who is herself never shown from the outside. But in this case, internal focalisation does not really serve to give an insight into the character's psyche or personality. Instead, Madame rather “correspond[s] to a perceiving consciousness which is simply 'hit' by external phenomena, apparently unable to act upon the surrounding Reality, passively receiving external stimuli and registering what is happening around [her] in a highly objectified (even though subjective) narrative²⁷”. Thus, the internal focaliser in *Between* is reduced to a mere focal position and “the protagonist exists only as a focal point within the text, a depersonalised enunciative 'position' and nothing more²⁸”. This narrative situation permits the direct presentation of perceptions, fragments of thought and memory, dreams of the protagonist alongside conference speeches, dialogues and postcards or letters. Here, too, a hybridisation takes place: the different discourses are merged with one another, so that they often cannot be clearly ascribed to one origin. Only little by little is the reader able to ascribe certain repeated (and still contradictory) information about her appearance, her age, her life etc. to the interpreter, so that it is only after a while that he can identify her as the focaliser and protagonist: she literally emerges only within the textual network she produces herself – and her character underlies the same constant deferrals and displacements that characterise the whole text.
- 19 In this manner *Between* challenges traditional concepts of identity, as well as the reader's attempt at naturalising the narrative in a realistic parameter²⁹. This effect is reinforced by the highly artificial associative structure with its heavy stress on the signifier. The whole text seems to consist of repeated fragments, which appear again and again in ever new combinations, and throughout the text, different leitmotifs and their variations are woven into this texture like colourful threads. This make-up gives the novel an almost musical structure, challenging the boundaries between genres, as it seems to rely on similarities and oppositions at the textual level more typical for poetry, rather than the links that characterise the narrative genre³⁰. The main leitmotif could be called the 'between-motif', which opens and closes the text and which appears in twenty-one permutations, some of which are: “Between the enormous wings the body of the plane

stretches its one hundred and twenty seats or so in threes on either side towards the distant brain way up, behind the dark blue curtain and again beyond no doubt a little door.”, “Between doing and not doing the body floats.”, “The body floats in a quiet suspension of belief and disbelief [...]”, “[...] the body floats in willing suspension of loyalty to anyone, stretching interminably between the enormous wings [...]” and “Between the enormous wings the body floats.”³¹

- 20 The knotting together of the different fragments is based on “relations of contiguity.”³² Often, one word or part of a sentence serves as a link between two different fragments, thus generating a change of scene (or of voices or a leap in time). One example is the shift from airport to conference: “A voice calls out continuous flight and gate numbers and *the murmur of the talking delegates* as they wait in rows of desks like a giant class fills the great congress hall.”³³ The associative structure is supported by Brooke-Rose's innovative syntax that often leaves out punctuation, incorporates many enumerations, often out of place, or binds together disparate fragments with conjunctions that create illogical sentences. This structure emphasises the creative potential of language and the force of the signifier, as the protagonist (and the reader) is transported long distances in time and place, merely through links on the level of the signifier.

Hybrid forms of speech representation

- 21 The polyphony of both texts owes a great part to the merging and the sudden change of different forms of speech representation. In *Simultan*, there is a constant, unmarked and seamless shift between (and a combination of) different forms of the representation of speech and consciousness as well as narrator's report, which include direct and indirect speech, narrated monologue, and interior monologue. Following Holeschefskey, Greber moreover points out new forms of interference: “gehörte Rede” (heard speech) and “erlebten Dialog” (narrated dialogue)³⁴. The merging or the indistinguishability of these forms is achieved through various means: the radical omission of quotation marks, largely dispensing with hints at who is speaking or thinking, a fragmentary syntax that permits changes in one and the same sentence, and the total abandonment of individual style. Often this is also responsible for difficulties regarding the identification of the person speaking/thinking or narrating. The following example involves indirect speech, direct speech and narrator's report as well as the sudden change between Nadja and Frankel speaking (and the change between languages, which will be discussed further on):

Except for San Francisco, she sincerely regretted that, no, never, and that was just what she'd always wanted, after all those dreadful places there, Washington over and over again, how awful, yes, he too had found it awful and that was one place he could never, no, she couldn't either, then they fell silent, drained, and after a while she gave a small sigh, *please, would you mind*, je suis terriblement fatiguée, mais quand-même, c'est drôle, n'est-ce pas, d'être parti ensemble, tu trouves pas³⁵?

- 22 As Brinker-Gabler states, this technique gives the text an oral or conversational quality³⁶. Expanding on this idea, I think that the whole text is structured like a continuous dialogue: the narrator's report constitutes only a small part of the text, whereas the major part consists of the thoughts of and dialogue between Nadja and Frankel. Therefore, what is going on can often only be concluded indirectly from thought or dialogue passages. For example, at the very beginning the setting is only known through Nadja's narrated monologue “this finally seemed to be Paestum” and her direct speech

“there's an old hotel here³⁷”. This structure strongly hints at the fundamental link between language and the constitution of reality.

- 23 As suggested in the analysis of focalisation and the leitmotif-structure, in *Between* there is a similar merging of different forms of speech and thought representation, often making it impossible to clearly identify the subject of the enunciation. For example, narrator's report and direct speech of a lady speaker as well as a hissing by the audience are combined as follows: “[...] the speech of the lady in the flowered silk suit at the microphone up in the gallery who has tried for some minutes to address the reception as the members of the Congress burble on in a conducted tour for those who wish to shshshsh!³⁸” The ways in which the distinction of the forms of speech representation and of the sources are obscured are basically the same as in *Simultan*. Only the presentation of direct speech shows some particular characteristics. It is, in many cases, graphically highlighted through dashes but it can also be incorporated in the continuous text or merged with it at the beginning or end of the statement³⁹. Sometimes, a dialogue that is at first presented as continuous text is, when repeated, presented as a dialogue with dashes, or vice versa.
- 24 The hybridisation of different forms of speech representation in both texts thus allow for the polyphonic presentation of different voices and points of view.

Multilinguality (Polyglossia)

- 25 Another form of incorporating different voices closely related to the subject of the texts is multilinguality. *Simultan* is mostly written in German, but incorporates English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian and Viennese-German. As Greber points out, the multilinguality of the text imitates the simultaneous speech when interpreting, thereby conveying the permanent pressure of changing languages and Nadja's *deformation professionnelle*, the mechanistic treatment of language and the predominance of small-talk in the international jet set⁴⁰. The important difference is the one between mother tongue (German/Viennese) and foreign language; so mostly, the different foreign languages are not applied according to any specific pattern. The only exception is Russian, which is neither understood by Frankel nor by most of the readers, and thus serves as a sort of secret code. For instance, when Nadja uses Russian for her declaration of love (“ljublju tebja⁴¹”), this once more demonstrates the difficulty of real communication between Nadja and Frankel. The alienation from the mother tongue can be seen in the dialogues between Nadja and Frankel, who only rarely use Viennese-German. Instead, only a non-verbal understanding is possible, which culminates in the love act: “[...] and she fought bitterly and wildly for her invention, speechlessly in the direction of a single language, toward the only one which was explicit and exact.⁴²” The superiority of this speechless speech demonstrates Bachmann's linguistic scepticism.
- 26 The use of the different languages also generates interlingual puns, which, according to Greber, demonstrate that the narrative discourse cannot remain unaffected by the multilinguality. Greber for example concisely analyses the doubling of the verb “to make” as belonging to both meta- and object-language in the sentence: “she could make machen, faire, fare, hacer and delat' out of 'to make'⁴³”. Additionally, Greber hints at heteroglossia in the medium of script – ‘heterography’ – in relation to the incorporation of the Cyrillic alongside the Latin alphabet and the presentation of brand names in small capitals as well as the visual accentuation of the bible-text and the “Adorni”-cries⁴⁴.

- 27 As shown above, Nadja eventually accepts the incommensurability of every act of translation which derives from the fundamental *différance* inherent in language and the impossibility to recover an always already fictional origin, be it a transcendental signified or an integral personality. In this spirit, Greber sees the use of foreign languages in the story as a 'metaphor for the fundamental heteroglossia and the irreducible alterity of man'⁴⁵.
- 28 Multilinguality in *Between* differs in some points from that in *Simultan*. There is again one main language, English, but the total share as well as the diversity of foreign languages is much larger. Although this contributes to the disorientation of the reader – who is even less sure what is going on – the application of the specific languages also has an orienting function. The different languages, ranging from Greek over Romanian to Dutch, Polish, Italian, Spanish, Russian and many more, appear on menus, on labels (especially mineral water), on shops, on signs, in the lift, on the toilet door, in hotel room instructions, in phrase-books, in songs, in letters, in airplane announcements, at the airport or on the bus, in conference speeches and in dialogues with waiters, chambermaids, stewardesses or in the ever present “travel talk⁴⁶”. They are traces of the outside world and hint at “the theme the time the place the climate⁴⁷”, as repeated numerous times in one of the novel's leitmotifs. So a mingling of languages often hints at temporal and local confusion; but it is also the normal state of Madame's consciousness, thus often blurring the differences between memory or thought and outside action.
- 29 In addition to this background noise, specific languages are attached to the main characters: it is remarkable that although Madame's mother tongue is French, the major part of the novel is written in English – which could either hint, if we see the text as the content of her consciousness, at an even deeper alienation from her mother tongue, or we can take it as another hint towards the artificiality and constructedness of the novel which cannot be reduced to a stream of consciousness. Nevertheless, conversations with Siegfried are marked by German, which is also used in memories of her youth in Germany, and Bertrand's letters are in French. The whole love-affair with Bertrand, paralleling the adventure of Nadja and Frankel, is connected to the French language and Madame's longing for her mother tongue: in him and in his French letters, she looks for the “language of a long-lost code⁴⁸”. Significantly, the fiasco of this short love-affair is presaged by the fact that, at their first actual meeting, they speak English, a foreign language to both, finding back to French only after a while⁴⁹.
- 30 The whole use of multilinguality is marked by a constant shifting and changing, blurring the boundaries between one language and the other: “Language is treated as a fluid magma in her novel, and the subject is seen as traversing the boundaries between idioms.⁵⁰” The fragments of foreign languages intruding into the protagonist's consciousness at first seem like 'foreign bodies'⁵¹, but then are integrated into the narrator's voice, thus pointing once more to the fundamental heteroglossia of her identity, which appears to be completely made up of foreign discourse. For example, the slogan “la vérité, la justice, l'humanité⁵²”, first appearing in a conference speech, and the shop sign “TUTUNGERIE⁵³”, are later merged into an obsessively recurring fragment in Madame's consciousness: “Ladies and gentlemen, kindly extinguish your cigarettes and do not weave circles round him thrice with eloquent gestures that wrap up la Vérité, la Justice, l'Humanité et la Tutungerie.⁵⁴” In this passage, the stewardess' announcement fades into the memory of a flirting lady at a congress and then into the mentioned slogan and sign.

- 31 Brooke-Rose's playful and joyful treatment of language as well as her insistence on its creative function with emphasis on the level of the signifier are shown in various interlingual puns: "He likes ready-made stories the schmutziger the witziger with a burst of crude laughter *tout de suite and the tooter the sweeter*.⁵⁵" This interlingual pun shows how in *Between* associations usually run alongside the level of the signifier: translation is not seen as a metaphoric process (replacing one signifier by another because of a shared signified) but as a metonymic one (replacement due to similarities of the signifiers themselves)⁵⁶. Playing with the difference between sound and writing, Brooke-Rose creates real hybridisations, presences of two different languages in one and the same word, such as this: "Nous avons entendu ce matin une belle fiction. Le professeur Strauss – *don't j'*admire profondément les études [...] *57*", "don't", while being spelled the English way, has to be pronounced as the French word "dont"; similarly, in the conversation between Siegfried and Madame: "erronish" (for German 'ironisch'), "feel" (for German 'viel')⁵⁸. Even more intricate is the use of "man" as the English word meaning 'human being' but at the same time as the German word meaning 'one/you', this time creating an interlingual polysemy: "Man works with hands [...] man feels as an abstract study in seduction man performs with the precision of the mouthpiece [...] *59*". This hybridisation is recurrently described metaphorically as a loving, bodily unification of languages: "As if languages loved each other behind their own façades [...] As if words fraternised silently beneath the syntax, finding each other funny and delicious in a Misch-Masch of tender fornication [...] *60*".
- 32 By the described associations on the level of the signifier, multilinguality also serves as a displacement of the text: the crossing of language boundaries does not only imply a geographical dislocation, but also a crossing from one discourse to the other⁶¹. Like this, the above mentioned effect of a simultaneous 'orientation' and 'disorientation' of the reader through language changes is achieved, undermining once more a merely mimetical or realistic reading of the text. Instead of representing an outside reality, the text itself only creates the reality of which it speaks: "The scene of the enunciation in *Between* is, as it were, emptied of actors, the world appearing to the interpreter as a self-sufficient language factory, an infinite *mise-en-abyme* of idiolects.⁶²"
- 33 One more feature of the performativity of language in *Between* is 'heterography', as Greber has called the same phenomenon in *Simultan*⁶³. Brooke-Rose makes use of different fonts, and especially Greek and Cyrillic alphabets (while the Latin alphabet is itself interspersed with those special letters that only exist in certain languages), of capital letters and of other signs such as numbers and the nationality-tags of cars, which are both highlighted by being circled. Capital letters, for example, can indicate a sign: "The words prevent any true EXCHANGE caught in the late afternoon sun that stripes the airport hall [...] *64*", or high volume as in "Ah, du witzige sweet SCREAM why what's the matter?⁶⁵". In these examples, language acts by itself, gaining a performative quality that goes beyond its merely constative function.

Intertextuality

- 34 Finally, I will shortly hint at the use of intertextuality in both texts, which is another feature of their heteroglossia⁶⁶. In *Simultan*, this concerns the passage from the Bible that Nadja tries to translate and that plays a crucial role for her enlightenment and the change of her attitude towards language and life – as it were, the 'miracle' that takes place. But as

Greber points out, the heteroglossic, or heterotopic, significance only results from the discursive arrangement⁶⁷. The miracle is presented in a foreign language (“miracolo⁶⁸”) and is not part of the narrator's report, but only appears in the Bible-text and in Nadja's attempts at translating it; that is, it is only presented in the intertext. So, as Greber concludes, Bachmann places the miracle 'in a numinous domain that is only accessible as radically other – in the textual foreign country'⁶⁹. Therefore intertextuality, albeit only present in one single sentence, plays a crucial role in *Simultan*.

- 35 In *Between*, intertextuality is more widely present. The narrative technique described above could be regarded as principally intertextual, as many of the fragments in foreign language are introduced as foreign texts, intertexts: the labels on the bottles, the signs, the instructions, the horoscopes, the letters and postcards, the conference speeches and so on. Intertextuality thus also applies to the make-up of the central character: Madame cannot be detached from the many alien discourses in the novel – she is constituted but in and through them. So her identity and her image in the reader's mind are never fixed but always changing. Following Canepari-Labib, she herself can be seen as “a piece of writing, that is, for Barthes, the site where different languages come into play and where all authority is lost⁷⁰”.
- 36 In addition, in *Between*, intertextuality also plays a role in a narrower sense, as an incorporation of foreign literary texts or an allusion to such texts. They range from Homer through Cavalcanti, Bertran de Born, Hartmann von der Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Schiller, Goethe, Somerset Maugham and T.S. Eliot to Bertolt Brecht. Alongside a verse of Cavalcanti's *Rime*: “che fa tremar di claritate l'âre⁷¹”, Goethe's *Erlkönig* is among the most frequently quoted sources: “Du liebes Kind, komm, geh' mit mir. Gar schöne Spiele spiel' ich mit dir.⁷²”, as is Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: “Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty place [pace] from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time.⁷³” The function of these texts is not to allude to some hidden meaning, represented by the cited literary works; rather, they are themselves included in the linguistic play of the novel and become a part of its perpetual dislocations and deferrals of sense. Thus, the citation from *Erlkönig* is a recurrent part of the dialogues between Siegfried and Madame, as she answers his proposal: “We have played those games mein Lieb⁷⁴”. The passage from *Macbeth* gets incorporated into a paronomastic play, the “petty pace” being replaced by “petty place” and later “petty luogo⁷⁵”. In this manner, literature itself is shown to be a part of the texture of discourses, and subjected to their constant displacements: posing, with an ironic undertone, the self-reflexive question: “Lirrechur eh?⁷⁶”

Conclusion

- 37 Looking at interpreters as literary characters in *Simultan* and *Between*, similarities at the thematic level were first identified: both texts are located in an exceptional and in-between setting, and multilinguality as well as the longing for the mother tongue play an important role, as do interpreting and translating. In both texts, a negative view of multilinguality and transculturality as causes for homelessness and the loss of the mother tongue are contrasted with the acceptance of untranslatability and transculturality as fundamental conditions of any lingual understanding and of any constitution of identity. Thus, even on the topical level, identity is not viewed as closed and stable, but as a discursive product that is only created in and through language.

- 38 This concept of identity is further elaborated by specific literary techniques, which at the same time explore possibilities of presenting a character in the literary text: While Bachmann's story still has a coherent plot, precisely situated in time and place, and the interpreter Nadja appears as a clearly outlined character, in Brooke-Rose's novel time, place, and events are presented only as discontinuous fragments, and the character of the interpreter only slowly emerges within the textual network. The denial of a fixed identity is emphasised by the fact that in the whole novel, the verb 'to be' is not used once. The examined literary techniques can be captured by the Bakhtinian concepts of polyphony and heteroglossy – a hybrid merging of different voices and languages. In *Simultan*, one way of achieving this is multifocalisation, whereas *Between* features an extreme internal focalisation, which at the same time allows for an artistic associative structure that incorporates many alien voices, and which is characterised by the repetition of plot-fragments and leitmotifs metonymically knotted together along the level of the signifier. In both texts, polyphony is further achieved by the merging of different forms of speech representation as well as by multilinguality or polyglossia. In both, multilinguality is used to underline the fundamental heteroglossia of human life. It also reflects language itself by means of interlingual puns, which are found in both texts, but to a greater extent as well as with greater intricacy in *Between*. Here, meaning is again shown not as transcendently fixed, but rather as a product of constant dislocation and deferral. Through 'heterographic' elements, language is even made an actor itself, as its performative quality is underlined. Finally, intertextuality is used in *Simultan* in order to locate the 'miracle' of Nadja's central insight in the nature of language in a 'textual foreign country', thus displacing and decentering it. In *Between*, intertextuality can be regarded as a narrative strategy and as another hint at the fundamentally 'intertextual' nature of any literary text – and of human identity.

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NOTES

1. *Simultan* was published in slight variations as a radio broadcast by NDR Hannover in October 1968 and first printed in the magazine *Neue Rundschau* in 1970; finally it constituted the cover story of Bachmann's last story collection *Simultan*, München 1972. The citations follow Ingeborg Bachmann, *Simultan*, München, 2002 and the English translation by Mary Fran Gilbert: "Word for Word" in *Three Paths to the Lake*, New York, 1997, respectively (the difficulties of translating a multilingual text like this cannot be discussed in detail here but will be taken into account where necessary). *Between* was originally published in 1968, then reprinted in *The Christine Brooke-Rose Omnibus* together with her other experimental novels *Out*, *Such* and *Thru*. The citations follow: Christine Brooke-Rose, *Between*, Manchester, 1986. (In the following quoted as *Simultan/Word for Word* and *Between*.)
2. Another central issue is the gender-difference, which is not astonishing, both texts being written in 1968 and centring on a female protagonist. Each establishes an analogy between the role of the interpreter and the role of the woman in society. Because of the limited space, this cannot be dealt with in detail here.
3. Erika Greber speaks of an "Auszeit" (time-out) and an "Ausnahmeraum" (exceptional space) and, linking it to Bakhtin's notion of 'chronotope', a "Chronotopos des Umbruchs und der Krise" (chronotope of change and crisis) (*Fremdkörper Fremdsprache*, Leipzig, 2002, p. 179).
4. *Between*, p. 406, p. 442, p. 560 and slightly varied p. 410, p. 456 and p. 558.
5. Michaela Canepari-Labib, *Word worlds*, Frankfurt/Main, 2002, p. 119.
6. This is suggested, in relation to *Simultan*, both by Jost Schneider (*Simultan und Erzählfragemente aus dem Umfeld*, Stuttgart and Weimar, 2002, p. 161) and Gisela Brinker-Gabler (*Living and Lost in Language*, Riverside/CA, 2004, p. 189), referring to Richard Sennett's depiction of this type of individual in his book *The Corrosion of Character*.
7. For *Simultan*, this is stated by Greber, *op. cit.*, p. 183; for *Between*, by Canepari-Labib, *op. cit.*, p. 205 and 210.
8. *Word for Word*, p. 13f.
9. For the interpretation of this paragraph see also: Greber, *op. cit.*, p. 180 and Brinker-Gabler, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
10. Jacques Derrida develops his central idea of 'différance' in: *La différance*, Paris, 1972.
11. *Word for Word*, p. 24.

12. *Ibid.*: "[...] when you listened in like she did and helped them to misunderstand and corner each other even more [...]"
13. *Word for Word*, p. 34.
14. *Ibid.* Brinker-Gabler illuminatively discusses this scene in relation to Walter Benjamin's translation theory in "The Task of the Translator" (*op. cit.*, p. 200-204).
15. Greber, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
16. *Word for Word*, p. 36. She says this to the boy at the bar referring to the Italian victory in a bicycle race.
17. *Between*, p. 413. Almost identically Siegfried, p. 426 and p. 457.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 421, also p. 429.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 399.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 474. The machine metaphor is expanded by linking the interpreter to the airplane: "the distant brain way up", that first applies to the cockpit, then is assigned to the brain of the interpreter, turning her into a gigantic machine. Also see Maria Del Sapio Garbero, *Between the Frontiers*, Amsterdam, 1994, p. 205-206.
21. *Between*, p. 398. This motive is repeated very often throughout the whole novel, the cited passage being its basic form, which is altered and amended in the different iterations: p. 399, 407, 424, 427, 443, 463, 474, 478, 482, 503, 505, 509, 510, 518, 533, 538, 555, 561, 570-571. More about this technique, see below "Focalisation".
22. *Between*, p. 429; similarly p. 435 and p. 486.
23. *Between*, p. 470.
24. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Minneapolis, 1984, p. 6.
25. *Discourse in the Novel*, Austin, 1981, p. 324.
26. Greber, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
27. Canepari-Labib, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
28. Del Sapio Garbero, *op. cit.*, p. 206. Because of this depersonalization, Canepari-Labib, referring to Brooke-Rose's experimental novels, speaks of "non-narrators" or, following Wayne Booth, "undramatised narrators" (*op. cit.*, p. 67).
29. Canepari-Labib, *op. cit.*, p. 68-69.
30. Canepari-Labib in a different context also hints at Brooke-Rose's interest in interrogating the traditional ways of structuring narrative (*op. cit.*, p. 115.)
31. *Ibid.*, p. 395, again p. 395, p. 406, p. 461, p. 575.
32. Del Sapio Garbero, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 400 (my italics).
34. *Op. cit.*, p. 182.
35. *Word for Word*, p. 4. Regarding the use of different languages, a flaw of the English translation can be seen here: the italics ("please, would you mind") hint at a part that already is in English in the German original text; but at the same time two other originally English parts are not highlighted in the translation ("no, never" and "after all those dreadful places there"), thus eliminating the language difference.
36. *Op. cit.*, p. 191.
37. *Word for Word*, p. 1.
38. *Between*, p. 403 (my italics).
39. Canepari-Labib calls this form of dialogue representation a "'free-direct speech', that is direct speech but not in dialogue" (*op. cit.*, p. 68).
40. Greber, *op. cit.*, p. 183-184. For the following, see *ibid.*, p. 185-186.
41. *Word for Word*, p. 21.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Word by Word*, p. 13. See Greber, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

44. *Op. cit.*, p. 192-193. Her analysis of the last episode in the story, the television broadcast of a cycle race, is also very enlightening, see p. 188-189.
45. *Op. cit.*, p. 183.
46. *Between*, p. 396.
47. *Between*, p. 408.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 535.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 547-532. The difficulty of communication between the two is moreover indicated by Bertrand not hearing very well and repeatedly asking "Hein?".
50. Del Sapio Garbero, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
51. As Greber also states for *Simultan* in the title of her article: 'foreign body foreign language' (*Fremdkörper Fremdsprache*).
52. *Between*, p. 399.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 404; Romanian for 'tobacconist's'.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 407 (my italics).
55. *Ibid.*, p. 423 (my italics).
56. This is hinted at by Canepari-Labib, *op. cit.*, p. 211.
57. *Between*, p. 509 (my italics).
58. *Ibid.*, p. 447.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 447-448.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 447. In this spirit, Canepari-Labib calls *Between* a "text of pleasure" (Barthes) (*op. cit.*, p. 212-215).
61. Canepari-Labib, *op. cit.*, p. 211-212.
62. Del Sapio Garbero, *op. cit.*, p. 211.
63. See above and Greber, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
64. *Between*, p. 399.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 448.
66. Julia Kristeva developed her concept of intertextuality in close relation to Bakhtin, see *Word, Dialogue and the Novel*, New York, 1986.
67. *Op. cit.*, p. 193.
68. *Word for Word*, p. 34.
69. *Op. cit.*, p. 193.
70. Canepari-Labib, *op. cit.*, p. 212-213.
71. *Between*, p. 475.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 413.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 429.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 413.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 435.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 476.

ABSTRACTS

The story *Simultan* by the Austrian author Ingeborg Bachmann and the novel *Between* by the British writer Christine Brooke-Rose both have a female interpreter as their central character. In depicting the influences of multilinguality and transculturality on the construction of identity,

both texts reflect on the connection between language and identity. Moreover, they explore the conditions and possibilities for the representation of characters in language(s). Most of the literary techniques employed can be analyzed in terms of the Bakhtinian notion of polyphony or heteroglossia. The analysis that follows deals briefly with these main topics, before focusing on the discursive level, taking into account notions of multifocalisation, polyphony, multilinguality as well as intertextuality.

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