



# **O**n semantic and semiotic multilingualism in earlier and latest works of Sabira Ståhlberg and Tzveta Sofronieva

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## **Abstract**

*The present study describes the poetics of two contemporary multilingual writers, one born in Finland (Sabira Ståhlberg) and one in Bulgaria (Tzveta Sofronieva). Besides being prolific writers in literary genres such as poetry, prose, drama, both also translate and edit world literature. Early in their career each of them achieved a PhD. Sofronieva and Ståhlberg carry out academic activities through their research studies. After visiting a multitude of places, they have become not only literary figures of both their birth countries' literature and the literatures of several other countries, but real literary citizens of the 'new' world literature (McDougall, 2014). Their philosophical and ecological aestheticism voices the most urgent problems of humanity by incorporating the latest insights of brain studies, quantum physics, psychology, migration and cultural studies. Their oeuvre addresses any reader irrespective of language(s), background(s), and location(s).*

*After looking into the monolingually multilingual (using hidden code-switching) as well as multigraphic and multilingual (using overt code switching) artistic production of Sofronieva and Ståhlberg, this study compares two poems, one by each of them, sharing the common metaphor of the sea horse. The aim of this comparative study is to point out how their highly topical poetries activate the*

## **Rezumat**

*Studiul de față descrie poetica a două scriitoare contemporane multilingve, una născută în Finlanda (Sabira Ståhlberg) și cealaltă în Bulgaria (Tzveta Sofronieva). Pe lângă faptul că sunt scriitoare prolifiche care se exprimă în genuri literare precum poezia, proza, drama, ambele traduc și editează literatură universală. La începutul carierei, fiecare dintre ele a obținut un doctorat. Sofronieva și Ståhlberg desfășoară activități academice materializate în studiile publicate ca rezultat al cercetărilor pe care le întreprind. După ce au vizitat o multitudine de locuri, au devenit nu numai figuri literare cunoscute ale creației din țările lor natale și ale literaturii altor țări, ci adevărați cetățeni literari ai „noii” literaturi universale (McDougall, 2014). Estetismul lor filozofic și ecologic exprimă cele mai stringente probleme ale umanității prin încorporarea celor mai recente perspective ale cercetărilor asupra creierului, fizicii cuantice, psihologiei, migrației și studiilor culturale. Opera lor se adresează fiecărui cititor, indiferent de limbă(i), background(uri) și locație(ii) geografică(e).*

*După ce analizează producția artistică multilingvă monolingvistică (folosind comutarea codului ascuns), precum și pe cea multigrafică și multilingvă (folosind comutarea codului deschis) a celor două scriitoare, acest studiu compară două poezii, câte una din creația fiecăreia, împărțind metafora comună a calului de mare. Scopul acestui studiu comparativ este de a scoate în evidență modul în care poeziile lor de mare actualitate activează multilingvismul cititorilor, precum și*

*multilinguality of any reader, as well as how the linguistic, alphabetic code-switching and shifts of interpretation paradigms loosen formal and conceptual borders. By their act, the reader is empowered to take part in not only piecing together but creating a better 'new' world.*

*maniera în care schimbarea codurilor lingvistice, alfabetice și schimbările paradigmelor de interpretare slăbesc granițele formale și conceptuale. Prin actul lor, cititorul este împuternicit să ia parte nu numai la reunirea, ci și la crearea unei „noi” lumi mai bune.*

**Keywords:** multilingualism, code-switching, multiverse, zero code-switching (ZCS), 1st -5th degree code-switching (CS1-CS5), ecological literature, Anthropocene

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## Introduction

The deconstructionists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have proven that concentrating on the level of the static linguistic meaning in our hermeneutic processes is an underlying ideal of Western culture. However, language is a much more multimodal undertaking, incorporating most of all the risk of continuous semantic and semiotic dissemination. The shift in meaning from context to context, the so-called '**difference and deferral of meaning**' (Derrida, 1982, 5), also gives a pleasure to puzzle things together in a new way. In this respect, writing and reading literature is a process of opening all the intuitive, cognitive and sensual sensors so that something otherwise not yet experienced may arise on the basis of something constantly merging. This study explores how reception of two visionary multilingual poetics can set the reader on a fascinating semiotic journey also because, as the thesis of this paper says: by this act the reader becomes empowered to envisage a better new world. Showing this, the present study departs from the sociological and positivist/biographical contextualization of multilingual literature, and via code-switching it offers an ecocritical linguistic approach.

## Literary path of Tzveta Sofronieva

Since her childhood Tzveta Sofronieva has experimented with many languages such as Macedonian, Greek, English, Swedish, Finnish, Latin, or French besides her native Bulgarian. Nevertheless, she applied to study physics at the University of Sofia, from where she graduated in 1986. Her interest in the sociology and history of science became evident in her

dissertation, which she wrote about the creation of quantum mechanics as a discipline. She has published poetry, drama, essays in Bulgarian, English since the beginning of her twenties, and later in German, too. So far she has published nineteen volumes of poetry and prose. In these books there are various strategies of working with multilingualism. There are bilingual books, like the very first one in Bulgarian and English (*Chicago Blues*, 1992), and there are monolingually published volumes in Bulgarian, English and German, all working with hidden multilingualism. In the last decades, her multilingualism has radically diversified itself. Let us just recall the 2017 volume, *Anthropocene*<sup>1</sup> using German and English as matrix languages for the poems including a dozen of other languages. These codes include Arabic, Bulgarian, Catalan, English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Romanian, Spanish, or guitar chords, and musical notation. Besides being an innovative multilingual writer, Sofronieva --just as Ståhlberg -- paves the way for the literary reflection of such poetry. Her recently published selected volume entitled *Multiverse* (including poems written between 1981- 2020) introduces further poetic categories, like *clone poems* and *alterverses*<sup>2</sup>. Her works have so far been translated into more than twenty languages, including English, German, Finnish, Hungarian, French, Spanish, Japanese, Uzbek and Ukrainian. Beside her many edited and translated anthologies, Sofronieva is an excellent networker, bringing together poets from all around the world.

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<sup>1</sup> The book's title is the author's invention combining 'Anthropocene' and 'scene' referring to "a psychological state in which one is obsessed with fears and in order to escape from them, again believes to be the center of the universe and the purpose of the world's creation; this does not prevent from destroying more than creating. Provoked by anthropocentrism, an unscientific, religion and idealism related doctrine" —as the 8. poetic definition describes it (2020, 145).

<sup>2</sup>In the *Author's note* Sofronieva writes: "In this volume I include self-translations and other forms of my poetic. New versions are edited and slightly modified poems with the same original. Clones refer to the cell concept of the word as coming from the same gene but being fully different beings, as well as to the multiple existence of the same matter as a wave and particle in the manifestations of the same electron. Alterverse emerges when a strong diversion in the poetic theme occurs, together with a change in the observation and time dimension. The latter two forms can occur also in the monolingual work but in the multilinguality manifest more clearly. Creating them is not a self-translation: it is a process of giving birth to a different poetic world." (2020, 238)

For example, the *Verbotene Worte* (Forbidden Words) online literary platform, initiated by Sofronieva in the mid-1990s and built over several years, allowed nearly a hundred European and American authors to hear their thoughts on the subject. From the writings of this website, she selected pieces for the anthology of the same name, which was published in 2005. In 2010 she published with Manja Ristić the anthology entitled *119 Web Streaming Poetry* including works from the material of literary evenings and events broadcast on the web interface from 119 authors. However, Sofronieva carries out not only significant intercultural work among writers, publishers, literary intermediaries and audiences, but through her interdisciplinary work combines the insight of humanities and sciences (esp. multilingualism, ecology and physics). Her visual works (poetic installations) also demonstrate this productive intermingling. As the title of her latest volume suggests, Sofronieva's poetry offers a *multiverse* corresponding both to the aesthetic search in a multilingual poetry and to the advanced contemporary knowledge in the natural sciences seeing multiverse as a way of explaining the nature of existence. As George Ellis, quoted in the book, says: "the contemplation of the multiverse is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the nature of science and on the ultimate nature of existence: why we are here..." (2020, 201). This is the *ars poetica* of Sofronieva, and as we will see, of Ståhlberg as well.

### **Literary path of Sabira Ståhlberg**

In her recent handbook written to increase language awareness of multilingualism, and entitled *Multicolored language* (2020), Sabira Ståhlberg reflects on multilingualism in general and on her personal life in the following way:

Language is one of the main working tools for an author and a researcher. In both capacities and over many years I have followed the scientific development of such widely separate fields as languages and cultures, pedagogy, ophthalmology and brain research. Multiple languages have always existed in my world. I teach and study about several *multi-topics*, including *multilingualism*,

*multiculturalism, creativity, integration and adaptation*, in various countries, in several languages and for all age groups. (2020, 4)

Sabira Ståhlberg is an independent researcher, academic, international traveler and creative writing teacher, but especially the most polyglot author of contemporary literature worldwide. Growing up in a multilingual surrounding that suppressed multilingualism and encouraged bullying, she became aware early of the missing dialogue between the two poles. Beside this never ceasing motivation of uncovering subaltern worlds, her literary works are strongly influenced by her academic interests in the sustainability of nature, endangered languages and world cultures. Her PhD dissertation analyzes the history of cultural, linguistic, social and economic exchange between China and Central Asia. The wide-ranging travels and periods spent living in different regions in Europe and Asia made her develop a special multilingual and stylistic aestheticism. Ståhlberg has written more than twenty Easy to Read books in several languages (such as her *Filip* series), and multilingual children's literature (*Hundvåder på Svarta havet*, *Dog Weather on the Black Sea*, *Hundewetter auf dem Schwarzmeer*, *Koiran elämää Mustallamerellä*, 2014). Her 2015 poetry volume *Polyglotta Sabirica* (a volume published with German translations as *Polyglorica*, 2017) translanguages with more than 30 languages and several alphabets. These include English, German, Finnish, Swedish, Romanian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, Tatar, Mongolian and other languages. Her works have so far been translated into a dozen languages, including English, German, Finnish, Hungarian, Serbian and Bulgarian.

Ståhlberg is a shaping figure for creating a democratic multicultural discourse in Scandinavia and the Balkans. Her work however has reached out to further areas, like Germany and Hungary. The debut novel written both in Swedish and Finnish (*Molnvandraren*, *Pilvivaeltaja*, 2006) reflects on intercultural relationships among Mishar Tatar, Finnish, Swedish, Russian, Chinese and several minorities, as well as interreligious relationships between Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, atheists and others, and manifests

a narrative based on zero-degree code-switching<sup>3</sup>. Put in other words: using only stylistic devices of the language of the novel the author manages to give the impression of language challenges of the figures in the fiction. Through stylistic heteroglossing, the multilingual soundscapes of the fictional reality with its variety of linguistic encounters are given back isolingually. Both Ståhlberg and Sofronieva were largely using this technique of multilingualism coded into a monolingual narration in their earlier works, while their later works manifest more radical experimentation. Below we will give an example from each of the discussed authors.

### **An example of zero code-switching by Ståhlberg**

As mentioned above, Ståhlberg's youth novel *Molnvoandraren / Pilvivaeltaja* (Cloud Wanderer) was written both in Swedish and Finnish (2006). In 2014 it was translated into German and Bulgarian, and a year before partly into Hungarian (2013). The novel has been recently turned into English by the author herself (in print). The major character, Altan, wanders through the world like clouds in the sky. Altan is considered to be different by the bullying Finnish children surrounding her. Therefore, she decides to look for a place where she can be peacefully herself. Along her path only the Burtas (in fact Tatar) grandfather supports her. When Altan follows in the footsteps of his eventful life, the adventurous journey takes her far east to the great Idel (Volga) River, where the grandfather originally came from. Without switching back and forth between the codes of the obviously matrix and embedded languages, the polyglot narrator by continuous hidden translation enables the reader to follow the multilingual reality of Altan without any linguistic challenge.

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<sup>3</sup> Sociolinguists and linguists of multiple language acquisition have proposed several concepts for multilingual linguistic production, such as "integration" (Haugen 1953), "language interlanding" (Agheysi 1977), "code mixing" (Bokamba 1988), or more recently "translanguaging" (Garcia & Wei 2014) and "polylinguaging" (Jørgensen et al. 2011), multilingualism (Doris Summer, 2004) or postmonolingual condition (Yasemin Yildiz, 2012). However, code-switching, coined by the linguists Myers-Scotton and Ury in 1977, is presently still the most frequently used term when everyday and literary text production is analyzed. Since this study looks to its material through the linguistic lens, code-switching proves to be a suitable theoretical framework.

This narratorial technique supports the reception process of the addressed audience (that of the Finnish or Swedish reader), and at the same time it gives back the communicatory attitude of the multilingual major character, who relates easily to all those languages. The writer indeed marvelously manages to manifest the linguistic biographies of the minoritarian and majoritarian characters. Altan is multilingual since her early age. She is not at all aware of the code-switching she does, just only after she gets older, when she realizes that in order to resolve her traumatic experiences, she has to tell her story. In their everyday study, grandfather Balban Oras uses the Finnish or Swedish words and grammar with the accent of a foreigner. However, when he speaks to his Burtas family in his mother tongue, the omniscient monolingual narrator does not show his linguistic strangeness. In this way the impression of a native speaker is created. The Burtas all speak a more flowery language, but at the same time they address the person more directly without, however, insulting her. Furthermore, when Balban Oras relates stories of the oral tradition from his childhood, the narrator switches to archaic idioms and specific metaphors of a traditional life not known by the Finnish or Swedish characters of the story, nor by the Finnish or Swedish readers of the book.

### **An example of zero code-switching by Sofronieva**

In her poem *Journey to the West* published first in her English-Bulgarian debut volume *Chicago blues* (1992) and most recently in *Multiverse* (2020), Sofronieva starts with describing how it feels entering a new language, hearing a foreign word. In the opening line *A word in an unknown language*, the specific word is, however, not mentioned; the word is presented through a zero code-switching only as a form, which must make sense, must have meaning, however we do not know what. In the second unit of the poem starting with the line *Learning all languages*, the lyrical “I” goes to the wellspring of language, to its most basic unit, the phoneme. This is the mostly shared component between all languages, while morphemes, lexis and syntax become more and more specific. This investigation goes so far that the lyrical “I” declares: *I am a word*. Twenty years later, in the German publication of this poem in *Landschaft, Ufer* the poem is cut here, symbolizing

that the author has reached the shore, and now she is safe and can rest (2013, 47). The English original goes on with the next line: *I am already acquainted with it. It is foreign*. Not only are the perspectives changed, but the reality of physical communication itself turns into a total linguistic universe, again reporting the experience in zero code-switching. This CS modality remains throughout the closing line of the poem, where, at last, meaning suddenly starts to come back to its alienated form.

*Journey to the West*

for Margaret Atwood

A word in an unknown language.

I know there must be sense,

must be a meaning.

It's probably marginal.

Maybe a preposition

or a noun.

Either used often or

too strange for the ear.

Learning all languages

I listen attentively

to the springs of their speech.

I follow the air in the circles

of the vowels coming to me

from the mouths of people

close to me and far away;

search for a language in which

I am a word.

I am already acquainted with it. It's foreign.

I have no idea about its syntax and morphology.

Even after studying the grammar for a long time,

I do not appear in the right place in the sentence.

Foreign in my own language, too,

in the Bulgarian spoken on the streets of Sofia and used in my

mom's letters.

What a funny accident--right now,

history sits at my parents' tea table.  
In Bulgaria words slowly acquire  
their old meanings.

### **Explicit multilingualism**

After exemplifying zero code-switching in the youth novel by Ståhlberg and in an early poem of Sofronieva, this study engages in exemplifying other types of overt code-switching in their literary works. Using the sociolinguistic concepts of intra- and inter-sentential code-switching (proposed by Myers-Scotton and Ury in 1977) as well as the terms of the matrix and embedded languages (proposed by Myers-Scotton in 1993), several other types of literary code-switching can be defined. The degree of thematic, stylistic, and formal code-switching allows us to scale the multilingual methodologies of literary texts from covert/hidden (ZCS) to overt/open manifestations (CS1-CS5). In the latter case of overt literary multilingualism, the following types can be distinguished<sup>4</sup>:

- the use of a few foreign words in the sentences of the text (intra-sentential CS, i.e. *1<sup>st</sup> degree CS / CS1*)
- the use of sentences in another language in the text (inter-sentential CS, i.e. *2<sup>nd</sup> degree CS / CS2*)
- the use of a high number of embedded syntactic units in a text (blurring the border of matrix and embedded languages, i.e. *3<sup>rd</sup> degree CS / CS3*)
- the use of a high number of diverse lexical and morphological units in a sentence (lexico-morphologic translingualism, i.e. *4<sup>th</sup> degree CS / CS4*), and finally,
- the complete disappearance not only of the matrix language, but also of understandable words (homophonic translingualism, i.e. *5<sup>th</sup> degree CS / CS5*).

Below we will shortly analyze a poetic work using manifest CS techniques from each of the authors.

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<sup>4</sup> See the classification with examples in Domokos 2020, 47.

### Sea horses in CS2 and CS4

In their multilingual poetries Sofronieva and Ståhlberg use all of these CS techniques; however, our next examples, the poem *The beginning and end of a metaphor* by Sofronieva and *Sea horse* by Ståhlberg, incorporate mainly CS2 and CS4, namely intersentential code-switching in the first case and lexico-morphologic translanguaging in the second. However, the abundance of reflexive thoughts, the multifaceted perspectivation of actions, the developed, clear, courageous, poetic moments of these works show the effect of these apparently simple techniques. Including multilingual elements in the literary work is not as easy as it may seem. Both authors have had several disputes with their editors. About Ståhlberg's challenges in publishing her novel using a much more heteroglossing style and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree CS, I have written in an earlier study (Domokos, 2018).

Regarding Sofronieva's case, the publishing history of the poem below gives us an opportunity to reflect on multilingualism edited out from the original manuscript. In the table below I place two versions side by side. On the left side the recently published version can be seen (from *Multiverse*, p. 90), on the right side the longer version from the manuscript including further linguistic triplets and duplets. During the editing processes, the multilingualism of the poem was radically reduced by cutting out the two French triplets (*Hue, hue, hippocampe! /Précipiter. /Souffle.*<sup>5</sup> and *Ah, vous dirai-je... / Le début et la fin. / La confiance dans la journée*<sup>6</sup>) as well as the Japanese triplet (using the logographic Chinese characters, *kanji*, along with the syllabic writing system, *kana*). The multilingual triplet with mythological reference to the Nereids, the female spirits of the sea waters, as well as the atmospheric references to polar light, solar wind, and the ozone along the reference to the special horse breed (*Precipitation bred, fake horses, /nereids, electron precipitation, / aurorae, Ozon im Meer*) were also cut out. By this reduction, the poem loses a big part of its field of associations and underestimates the reader's ability to cope with more complex challenges. Indeed, the book publication culture of modernism has long conditioned the reader to monolingual texts. However, the poem included in the trilingual

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<sup>5</sup> Hue, hue, sea horse! /Precipitate. /Breath.

<sup>6</sup> Ah, I will tell you ... / The beginning and the end. / Confidence during the day.

version, of Bulgarian, English and German, also offers a beautiful ride to the source of the language, a ride that is propelled by the idiomatic English reference. The ancient English proverb that has been in use since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, says “You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink”. In this idiom the horse is used as a metaphor for a creature that is strong and obstinate, as humans can be, and water as a metaphor for something that is necessary for survival (just as language is for the poet).

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### **The Beginning and the End of the Metaphor**

Дий, водно конче!  
Вдишай  
доверие в деня.

Дий, водно конче!  
Вдишай  
доверие в деня. [Bg]

Giddy up, dragonfly!  
Breathe  
confidence from the day.

Giddy up, dragonfly!  
Breathe  
confidence from the day. [Eng]

Giddy up, my horse!  
I can take you to the water to drink  
myself.

Giddy up, my horse!  
I can take you to the water  
to drink myself. [Eng]

Giddy up, water horse!  
Breathe! All my words  
I take from the horse’s mouth.

Giddy up, water horse!  
Breathe! All my words  
I take straight from the horse’s  
mouth. [Eng]

Giddy up, hippocampus!  
Breathe, brain!

Hue, hue, hippocampe!  
Précipiter.  
Souffle. [Fr]

Hüh, Seepferdchen!  
Atme

Precipitation bred, fake horses,  
nereids, electron precipitation,

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Vertrauen in den Tag.

aurorae, Ozon im Meer. [Mix]

Giddy up, sea horse!

Giddy up, hippocampi!

Breathe

Geh, Hirn!

confidence into the day.

Breathe, brain! [Eng, Germ]

(Multiverse, p. 90)

Ah, vous dirai-je...

Le début et la fin.

La confiance dans la journée. [Fr]

[... Japanese...]

Hüh, Seepferdchen!

Atme

Vertrauen in den Tag. [Germ]

Giddy up, sea horse!

Breathe

confidence into the day. [Eng]

In the *Author's Note* of her latest book, *Multiverse, new and selected poems*, Sofronieva writes about this poem:

'The Beginning and the End of the Metaphor' is the third poem I wrote with this title. In the other-verses in German I use the word *Seepferdchen* (English: sea horse) and in Bulgarian *водно конче* (in English: "water horse" if we take the two separate words but as a whole meaning the translation is "dragon fly"). In my first language the poem comes from the joy of breathing from the crisp air while riding a dragon fly over the water, but if you ride a sea horse you need to learn a new way of breathing, don't you? Going back to the space time of my English, a second learned language in my early childhood, the new poem is referring to the source and to the place of memory acquirement in the brain.' (2020, 246)

The same challenge is required when Sofronieva meets, as she often calls it: *my adoptive and fifth learned language, German*. Going back to the hippocampus (a word coming via Latin from Greek ἵππόκαμπος, 'sea horse' to English), to that major component of the brain that is responsible for turning short term memory into long term memory, the lyrical "I" needs to master new ways of existence, like breathing in a completely new way. And by working poetically with languages the lyrical "I" manages this, for the poem itself proves this at the end.

By picking up a theme in one language and altering it a little bit by each further linguistic step, Sofronieva's multilingual poem uses the compositional technique of minimalism. In contrast, the poem *Sea horse* by Ståhlberg uses a more dynamic code-switching. Incorporating multigraphic and multilingual word elements from 17 languages in an English matrix language, the visual poem takes us to Southeast Asian waters.

Ståhlberg's most recent poetry book entitled *Wan Sun* (2021) uses a Chinese-English composite word pun, which is explained throughout several poems, and translanguages with far more than 30 languages and more than a dozen alphabets, playing also with fonts and graphic text. This volume of Ståhlberg's offers itself the most to be compared with Sofronieva's 2017 volume of *Anthroposzene* published in Germany and included as a further enlarged cycle named *Anthropocene* in her 2020 volume published in the US. In their volumes, both authors heavily criticize the exploitive attitude of man towards nature and human resources.

### Sea horse

Syngnathidae

sea monster ἵππόκαμπος crustaceans

shrimp Ἰππὸπῶ larval fish iwak

invertebrates

no stomach

eat 吃 constantly

seaweed coral anchor

สาหร่ายทะเล batu karang

hồ mỏ neo

camouflage  
 overfishing overfiske  
 habitat destruction Ødeleggelse  
 traditional Chinese medicine 中药  
 plastico fantastico catastrophico  
 Endangered Terancam punah  
 インポテンシー impotence  
 食物 food  
 pain 고통  
 Nature? aquarium  
 Alam sold in kg  
 is there the end of  
 終わり

The volume *Wan Sun* has five cycles, those of *Earth, Air, Water, Fire and Void*, and includes an author's note of interpretive key words at the end. The visual poem *Sea Horse* is part of the third cycle, *Water*, a cycle reflecting ecological challenges of water life. All languages except Latin, Greek and macaronic are spoken in countries where sea horses are fished, consumed as food, or used for medicine. In this respect, the matrix language of English, referring to English-speaking areas, is no different from the others. As a reader knowing some English can figure it out already, the poem tells about the biology and behavior of sea horses, ecological threats and the human use of them. As we know, several sea horse species are already extinct, and the rest are seriously endangered. Inserting the identifiers of language, the poem can be given back in the following way:

Syngnathidae [Latin]  
 sea monster ἰππόκαμπος [Greek] crustaceans  
 shrimp இறால் [Tamil] larval fish iwak [Javanese]  
 invertebrates  
 no stomach

eat 吃 [Chinese] constantly  
seaweed coral anchor  
สาหร่ายทะเล [Thai] batu karang [Malay]  
hồ mỏ neo [Vietnamese]  
camouflage  
    overfishing overfiske [Norwegian]  
    habitat destruction Ødeleggelse [Norwegian]  
    traditional Chinese medicine 中药 [Chinese]  
    plastico fantastico catastrophico [macaronic]  
Endangered Terancam punah [Indonesian]  
インポテンシー [Japanese] impotence  
    食物 [Chinese] food  
    pain 고통 [Korean]  
Nature?      aquarium  
Alam [Filipino]    sold in kg  
    is there the end of  
    終わり [Japanese]

The inserted square brackets uncover the linguistic background of the word, which – as we mentioned before – localizes the endangerment by overfishing of sea horse species. Let us hope, that research and breeding aquaria established to assist repopulation of the oceans with many sea horse species will succeed in some way. The last four lines of the poem verbalize not only the endangerment of the sea horses, but an end on a much larger scale, that of the nature. The form of the tail, turned backwards instead of curling to the front as it is natural with live sea horses, also conveys a message about the exploitation of sea horses.

Bringing the two poems together, we come to the conclusion that the beginning and the end of a simple metaphor can lead not only to human suffering but to natural disasters. As we see, it is the human that plays a major role in the present apocalypse. Mapping the biological, geographical, social and literary context of this circumstance, these poems reveal that code-switching reveals linguistic, cultural and biological barriers, de-automates

semantic production, addresses the appropriation of linguistic, aesthetic, cultural and ecological diversity. All these manage to stage alterity efficiently.

### **Conclusions**

This study employed concepts from linguistics and literary theories (code-switching, deconstruction) in order to contribute to the reception of multilingualism in contemporary literature, as well as to enhance the methodology of literary code-switching. Crucially, however, the degrees of code-switching outlined above are not only applicable to the analyzed authors. By employing this analytical framework in many other cases, we can gain further proof of how strongly literary code-switching underlines the materiality of language, alphabets, and grammar, thus gaining new insights into the connections between the verbal, the poetic, and the world around us.

The so-called 'new' world literature is distinguished not only by its preponderance of code-switching material, but also by the fact that code-switching and translanguaging are used deliberately and programmatically, and are systematically accompanied by poetic reflections. The recent increasing number of instances of multilingualism/code-switching in literature urges linguistics, literature, and cultural studies to develop new analytic tools to better understand this versatile phenomenon in all its structural, aesthetic, and functional complexity.

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