Negating Multilingualism:
Anti-mimetic Speech Representation in Terézia Mora's *Seltsame Materie* and *Alle Tage*

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1. Literary Multilingualism and its Analytical Models

In contemporary German-language literature, multilingualism represents both a thematic concern and a formal strategy of significant importance, so much so that Sandra Richter describes the German-language literary landscape as "deterritorial, transnational, multilingual" (Richter 2017, 432). Consequently, numerous studies have focused on individual authors or on the broader development – or, more accurately, the diverse developments – of this phenomenon, especially in the past fifteen years.[1]

These analytical approaches require further expansion, as evidenced by the analysis of selected works by the German-language author and translator Terézia Mora. This expansion should focus on two key aspects: the function of multilingualism within the plot, and its interaction with the narratological structure of the

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[1] For the most significant studies that address the categorical definition of multilingual literature and aim to develop analytical tools for its investigation, see: Kremnitz 2004; Radaelli 2011; Yildiz 2012; Dembeck & Mein 2014; Dembeck & Parr 2017; Blum-Barth 2021; Kilchmann 2024.

text. In order to highlight the distinctive features of Mora's use of multilingualism, I adopt the deliberately ambiguous expression "negating multilingualism". In the following pages, this concept will be contextualized within the scholarship on multilingual literature in the German-speaking context.

The broadly accepted term used to refer to this aesthetic phenomenon,[2] literary multilingualism ("literarische Mehrsprachigkeit"; see Dembeck & Parr 2017; Kilchmann 2024), emphasizes the distinction between multilingual speech as it occurs in real-life communicative contexts and its function within literary texts. In other words, literary multilingualism encourages us to examine multilingualism as a component of diegetic construction, rather than as a direct reflection of extradiegetic reality. That is to say, multilingualism does not appear in a literary text simply because the author aims to depict a multilingual environment, nor does the author's ability to speak multiple languages automatically justify or require its inclusion (Sepp 2017, 52-54).

This does not mean, of course, that literary multilingualism is entirely disconnected from extradiegetic reality; on the contrary, it is frequently – but not exclusively – discussed with regard to questions of cultural difference (Dembeck 2017, 17). Simultaneously, though, such a perspective asserts the need to develop specific analytical tools both to examine and, crucially, to recognize its presence in literary texts.

This is the aim of the groundbreaking handbook edited by Dembeck and Parr in 2017, in which various analytical models are applied to a wide corpus of texts from a diachronic perspective, drawing on tools from linguistics (e.g., categories such as code-switching, code-mixing, etc.) and integrating translation and intertextuality as strategies for engaging with plurilingualism.

However, the analytical tools developed so far – while focusing primarily on the formal interaction between languages – still require refinement from a semiotic and narratological perspective, particularly with regard to narrator's speech and

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[2] For a comprehensive overview of the terminology see Helmich 2016, 13-32.

character speech, the alternation and construction of narrative voices, and the placement of focalization. The need for a more systematic integration of these elements, central to narratological analysis, is acknowledged within the handbook itself by Rüdiger Zymner, who regards such integration as a desideratum in current scholarship. In his view, an exception is the volume by Giulia Radaelli (2011), which builds on Gérard Genette's categories of narrative voice (Zymner 2017, 295) to demonstrate, among other things, that literary multilingualism should not be reduced to the presence of clearly identifiable and measurable languages within a text. Thus, Radaelli (2011, 54-66) distinguishes between manifest forms of multilingualism ("manifeste Mehrsprachigkeit") and latent ones ("latente Mehrsprachigkeit"). The former refers to visible deviations from the dominant language of the text and is typically recognizable in practices such as code-switching – i.e., the insertion of words, expressions, or entire sentences from other natural languages – as well as in forms of code-mixing or interference, in which hybrid constructions draw on multiple idioms. By contrast, latent multilingualism is less immediately perceptible. It includes any textual feature – formal or thematic – that draws attention to the role of language(s) within the narrative. One prominent example of this category, according to Radaelli, is the presence of translation, whether in thematic form (e.g., through the figure of the translator) or through subtler practices such as "hidden" translations from other languages. In my opinion, it is evident that such latent multilingualism often becomes more legible when accompanied by manifest multilingual elements, which, in a sense, prepare the reader to recognize and interpret the less explicit linguistic layering of the text.

Radaelli's categories will prove useful in the present analysis, alongside other tools firmly rooted in narratology which, perhaps surprisingly, are not referenced in Zymner's survey – that is, Robert Stockhammer's taxonomy of languages' functions in narrative speech (2015).[3] It offers valuable support to identify and

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[3] For the discovery of Stockhammer's text, I am indebted to Kilchmann's work (2024, 27), which provides an overview of his categories. For their application – specifically in

describe more subtle or nuanced instances of multilingualism, particularly those of the latent kind. Firstly, building on Bakhtin, Stockhammer argues that works of literature can create their own linguistic world – and even their own language – by determining the degree to which linguistic variation is modulated or fore-grounded. The diegetic linguistic world of each text – its "linguality" ("Spra-chigkeit") – thus makes no mimetic claim to real-world language use and may not even be internally consistent: "Jeder literarische Text […] ist insofern einsprachig: Jeder entwickelt das Idiom, in dem er verfasst ist" (Stockhammer 2015, 170).[4] Within this framework, Stockhammer develops several analytical categories to address different manifestations of multilingualism in literary speech. The first dis-tinction lies between "glottomimetic" ("glottamimetisch") and "glottodiegetic" ("glottodiegetisch") forms (147-151). In a glottomimetic representation, linguistic diversity is visibly marked on the level of *discours* – that is, the narrative surface – through syntax, orthography, or morphology, reflecting the multilingual reality of the characters on the level of *histoire*. By contrast, a glottodiegetic representation involves a discrepancy between *discours* and *histoire*: the presence of a foreign language is acknowledged within the story, but it is not formally rendered in the text. This form often appears in narrative prose, where linguistic diversity is re-ported or implied rather than directly displayed. The last two categories, which are at times difficult to separate, are *glottapithanony* ("Glottapithanon") and *glot-toaporetic* ("Glotta-Aporetik"). The former concerns the plausibility (or lack thereof) of linguistic interaction – such as situations where characters' foreign language abilities seem implausible or difficult to have been acquired within the diegetic world (151ff.). The latter refers more broadly to instances in which lin-guistic constellations are implausible or outright impossible, encompassing any violation of the expected mimetic consistency in the representation of language

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the field of comics analysis – and further discussion, see also Laser 2024, 202-204.

[4] "Every literary text […] is monolingual in this sense: Each one develops the idiom in which it is written". Unless otherwise indicated, translations are by the author.

(164ff). However, even with respect to this taxonomy, the analysis of Terézia Mora's texts reveals a particular manifestation that, while fitting within the last category, still requires further clarification. Firstly, from a structural perspective, multilingualism in Mora's work may initially seem less prominent than in texts often cited as paradigmatic examples of literary multilingualism. Moreover, as we will see, certain instances of multilingualism in Mora's works defy reader expectations – for instance, by repeating sentences in only one language where multilingual passages or conventional markers of linguistic diversity would typically be expected. This overt play with the reader's expectations does not appear to be accounted for in Stockhammer's taxonomy – or indeed, in any existing framework. However, it is on another level – the function of multilingualism and its cultural value – that the distinctive use of multilingual strategies in Mora's texts sets them apart from much contemporary literature and calls for the development of new analytical tools.

In its various manifestations, multilingual literature is frequently viewed as an ethically charged literary strategy: by emphasizing the presence of multiple cultures and their syncretism within society, it resists any claim to cultural purity or homogeneity (Sepp 2017, 53), thereby challenging what Yasemin Yildiz (2012) has termed the "monolingual paradigm" and revealing the potentially subversive political dimension of multilingual writing.

So much so that, according to Esther Kilchmann (2024, 23), who here builds upon Helmich's work (2016), literary studies often harbor a positive bias toward multilingualism, interpreting it as a marker of "culture-connecting" and "progressive values". Kilchmann argues that "[…] Yildiz' unumschränkt positive Besetzung von „multilingualism" in der historischen Kontextualisierung [sich] nicht halten [lässt]. Gerade jene Texte, die mit Zweitem Weltkrieg und Shoa und deren Nachgeschichte verbunden sind, lassen demgegenüber in der Mehrsprachigkeit eher ein Signum der Katastrophe erkennen" (25)[5]. She further contends that this

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[5] "Yildiz's unreservedly positive connotation of 'multilingualism' in historical

interpretation stems from a culturally oriented and politically progressive reading tradition originating in U.S. scholarship (23).

Mora's distinctive deployment of multilingualism appears to corroborate Kilchmann's thesis, as in the diegetic world of the texts to be analyzed, multilingualism is represented in non-celebratory terms, if not outright carrying a negative connotation. Multilingualism is a fraught condition – a symbol of loss, fragmentation, and alienation, one that negates belonging, identity, and stability.

The term *negating* thus refers both to the apparent absence of multilingualism in the text and to its negative function within the diegetic construction of Mora's reflection on language. It also points to the ways in which multilingualism is actively suppressed or undermined in her narrative strategies.

Employing the above-mentioned categories, Mora's negating multilingualism will be analyzed following a discussion of her linguistic background, which offers insightful perspectives on the poetic motivations behind her narrative use of literary multilingualism.

2. Terézia Mora: A Brief Language Biography

Terézia Mora was born in 1971 in Sopron, a city in western Hungary near the Austrian border, and belongs to one of the country's German-speaking minorities – specifically, the bilingual German-Hungarian minority known as the *Ungarndeutsche*. When talking about her childhood, she describes her life as that of an outsider ("Außenseiterleben", Weidermann 2004). As Tatasciore reconstructs in detail (2009, 27-28), Mora's family background is marked by significant linguistic stratification, which in turn was shaped by the geopolitical history of the Sopron region. Her maternal relatives spoke an Austrian variety of German enriched with Hungarian vocabulary, while Mora herself would address them in

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contextualization cannot be maintained. Especially those texts connected to World War II, the Shoah, and their aftermath reveal multilingualism rather as a sign of catastrophe".

Hungarian. German only became an actively mastered language for Mora during her secondary school years. Prior to that, her use of the language had been passive, limited to the family context and to brief early childhood exposure.[6]

Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, she moved to Berlin and attended university. Here, her language competencies were reinforced as her "own" German was confronted with that of the city:

> Als ich – 1990, im Alter von 19 Jahren – nach Deutschland, genauer, nach Berlin, kam, konnte ich bereits etwas, das man eine deutsche Sprache nennen konnte. Aber zum einen stammte diese Sprache aus einem anderen Territorium: Minderheitendeutsch aus dem ländlichen Ungarn vs. Nachwende-Ostberlinerisch vs. Nachwende-Westberlinerisch vs. Humboldt-Universitätshochdeutsch vs. so weiter. Du kommst mit deiner Sprache, die von vornherein deterritorialisiert gewesen wäre, in eine Situation, in der auch in der Sprache der bereits anwesenden Mehrheit gerade eine starke Wandlung vor sich geht. Du kannst dem Schock, den ihr gerade parallel erlebt, keinen Namen geben, und sie ebenso wenig (Mora 2015, 12-13).[7]

Her German, or rather "something that could be called the German language", is "deterritorialized": first, it was the language of a minority in Hungary and thus

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[6] For a comprehensive linguistic biography of Mora, as well as an overview of the *Ungarndeutsch* dialects spoken by the communities to which she belongs – and the processes of linguistic transfer within them – see Tatasciore 2009, 24-34 and 55-58.

[7] "When I – in 1990, at the age of 19 – came to Germany, more specifically, to Berlin, I could already speak something that could be called the German language. But on the one hand, this language came from a different territory: minority German from rural Hungary vs. post-reunification East Berlin German vs. post-reunification West Berlin German vs. Humboldt University High German, and so on. You come with your language, which would have already been deterritorialized from the start, into a situation where a strong transformation is also taking place in the language of the majority already present".

never fully belonged to that community; second, this language was later transplanted to Berlin, where it encountered the city's diverse and historically layered varieties of German. It was in Berlin that Mora began writing. One striking aspect of her language biography is that she writes exclusively in German and translates only from Hungarian into German, never the other way around. She reportedly followed the Hungarian translation of her novel *Alle Tage* only with some difficulty (Tatasciore 2009, 33). Her relationship to language(s) is undeniably complex, particularly within a context in which individuals are often assigned a language based on their place of birth. To give an example, when Mora was awarded the controversial Adelbert von Chamisso Prize for emerging writers – an award intended for so-called "non-native" authors –[8] she implicitly rejected the label of "foreign-language writer," stating:

> Offenbar nimmt man an, daß ich es (aus bekannten Gründen) besonders gut wüßte, wie es ist, fremd zu sein. Nun, ich weiß es, aber ich weiß es nicht deswegen, weil ich nicht in meiner Muttersprache schreibe. In meiner Muttersprache war ich stumm. Und ohne diese „fremde" Sprache, die deutsche, wäre ich es immer noch, nicht gedoppelt zwar, aber dennoch fremder als fremd, denn erst dadurch, was man (anders als die Herkunft) wählen kann, bin ich schließlich geworden, was ich bin: ein freier Mensch. Eine, die sich äußern kann, Schriftstellerin (Mora 2000, 839).[9]

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[8] The Adelbert von Chamisso Prize (1985-2017) was traditionally awarded to authors writing in German who were considered either non-native speakers or of non-German origin.

[9] "Apparently, it is assumed that I, for obvious reasons, would know very well what it is like to be foreign. Well, I do know, but this is not because I do not write in my mother tongue. In my mother tongue, I was mute. And without this 'foreign' language, German, I would still be mute – not doubly so, but still, more foreign than foreign, because only through that which one can choose (unlike origins) have I finally become what I am: a free person. One who can express herself, a writer".

In this somewhat unconventional acceptance speech, Mora asserts that German had never been a foreign language (*Fremdsprache*) to her; rather, it was foreign to the community she belonged to – and, as a result, it made her a foreigner as well. Conversely, the native language of that community, Hungarian, which should have been her mother tongue, did not offer her a sense of expression or belonging. Mora's language biography, along with her reflections on language, identity, and diversity, profoundly shapes the linguality of her works and the role language plays within them. In the following, I will focus on Mora's first two publications: the short story collection *Seltsame Materie* (1999) and the novel *Alle Tage* (2004). It is important to note that the coexistence of Hungarian and German in Mora's writing – particularly in these two works – has already been extensively examined by Bianka Burka (2016) and Tatasciore (2009).[10] What follows, therefore, concentrates exclusively on the forms that build the phenomenon I have termed negating multilingualism, a dimension which, to my knowledge, has not yet been systematically explored.

3. Forms of Negating Multilingualism

To date, Mora has published seven works of fiction,[11] which primarily center on marginalized individuals – figures she presents as archetypes of subjectivity in a globalized society. She has even coined a term for this archetype: the

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[10] While Hungarian words and expressions appear in many of Mora's texts, the presence of the language is not always overt. It often remains concealed in calques and quotations (Tatasciore 2009, 53-59), syntactic structures, or even in the conceptualization of time and its representation within the grammatical verbal system (68-81).

[11] *Seltsame Materie* (1999); *Alle Tage* (2004); *Der einzige Mann auf dem Kontinent* (2009, part of the Darius Kopp trilogy); *Das Ungeheuer* (2013, Darius Kopp trilogy); *Die Liebe unter Aliens* (2016); *Auf dem Seil* (2019, Darius Kopp trilogy); and *Muna oder Die Hälfte des Lebens* (2023).

"Überzählig", meaning "superfluous" or "redundant". This concept functions as one of the key codes through which the anthropological transformation of contemporary society is articulated. Indeed, the experience of otherness and estrangement in Mora's work is not bound to specific linguistic, national, geographic, or historical contingencies. In this context, literary multilingualism often functions as a means of further articulating the Otherness of the characters; it has an "isolating" function, as Anne Fleig points out: "die Mehrsprachigkeit ihrer Figuren [ermöglicht] keineswegs mehr Verständigung […] – Mehrsprachigkeit ist vielmehr Teil der Erfahrung von Flucht, Migration und globalisierter Ökonomie und kann dadurch sogar isolierend wirken" (Fleig 2019, 56).[12]

3.1. *Seltsame Materie*, or Negating the Native Language

The collection *Seltsame Materie* comprises ten short stories, all set within the same geographical and temporal frame: a small, unnamed village near three borders in East-Central Europe, during the latter half of the twentieth century (Mora 2007, 334). In the diegetic world, however, neither the location nor the historical moment is explicitly stated. Nevertheless, it is evident that the setting is inspired by Mora's own biography and her upbringing behind the Iron Curtain. The work can therefore be read as a narrative unit (Tatasciore 2009, 46). Each story is narrated by a different unnamed homodiegetic narrator, frequently young adults – most of them women – who are portrayed as outsiders.

The protagonist of the second story in the collection, *STILLE.mich.NACHT* (Mora 1999, 21-52), works as a border patrol officer. Though born in the village, he was raised abroad by his father and acquired other languages during that time. Upon his return, he is unable to reintegrate into the community. His sense of alienation

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[12] "The multilingualism of her characters by no means enables greater understanding […] rather, multilingualism is part of the experience of flight, migration, and the globalized economy, and can therefore even have an isolating effect".

is underscored by his inability to fully master either his native language or any other, as he recalls referring to the reason he stopped attending school:

> Ich habe nichts verstanden von dem, was da vor sich ging. Ich habe die Worte nicht verstanden. Ein einziges Chaos. Das geht mir nicht ins Gehirn. Ich erzähle ihm, ich habe im Ausland gelebt. Und als ich hierherkam, als mich unser Vater einfach wieder hierherbrachte, hatte ich das Gefühl, ich verstehe meine eigene Vatersprache nicht. Ich spreche fünf Sprachen. Und ich habe nicht eine verstanden. Und nach einer Pause: Ich hab's aufgegeben (23-24).[13]

When a foreigner is caught at the border trying to flee the country, the protagonist is called upon to act as an interpreter, as the prisoner does not speak the local language. In this scene, we encounter a clearest example of manifest multilingualism in the collection. The protagonist attempts to communicate in French, English, Russian, and Italian; however, the man appears to understand only Romanian – a language the protagonist cannot speak:

> *Bonjour*, sage ich. *Je suis le traducteur. Quel est votre nom ?* […] *Eu nu înțeleg*, sagt er […] *Nu vorbesc decît românește.* Er schaut mich an, mit geringer, fast desinteressierter Hoffnung: *Românește*? […]
> *Maybe we could try it in English, then?* versuche ich es. […] Schließlich sage ich, und die Stimme zittert mir, weil was, wenn das die einzige Sprache ist, die er kann und ich nicht: *Kak was sowut?* […]
> Er ist kein Russe, sagt der Diensthabende hinter meinen Rücken. Es klingt ungeduldig. Ich drehe mich nicht um.

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[13] "I didn't understand any of what was going on there. I didn't understand the words. It was total chaos. It doesn't go into my brain. I tell him, I've lived abroad. And when I came back here, when our father simply brought me back here, I had the feeling that I didn't understand my own father's language. I speak five languages. And I didn't understand a single one. And after a pause: I gave up".

> *Alors, vous venez de la Roumanie*, sage ich zum Mann.
>
> *Romania, da*, sagt er.
>
> Ich sage ihm, sein Versuch, illegal die Grenze zu passieren, sei gescheitert, und mache mit den Händen eine schneidende Bewegung. *C'est la fin de votre voyage*, sage ich. […] *Finito. Pas de chance.* […] *Solo una questione di tempo*. Diesen letzten Satz sage ich schon, ohne zu erröten, fest und sicher, verleihe meinem Gesicht ein strenges Aussehen. […] Der Mann blinzelt, sagt nichts. […]
>
> Dabei ist das alles nicht meine Schuld. Ich spreche fünf Sprachen. Rumänisch gehört nicht dazu (31-33).[14]

Sentences in these four languages – four of the five spoken by the protagonist – are presented in italics, and at the end of the book, they are translated in a glossary. This form of code-switching can be identified as a glottomimetic representation of language in speech, according to Stockhammer's terminology. Regarding the function of multilingualism here, it is important to consider the protagonist's psychological state in this scene: he trembles and is as nervous as the prisoner. Rather than facilitating dialogue, multilingualism intensifies the protagonist's feelings of worthlessness.

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[14] "Bonjour, I say. Je suis le traducteur. Quel est votre nom ? […] Eu nu înțeleg, he says […] Nu vorbesc decît românește. He looks at me with slight, almost disinterested hope: Românește? […] Maybe we could try it in English, then? I try. […] Finally, I say, and my voice trembles, because what if this is the only language he knows and I don't: Kak was sowut? […] He's not Russian, says the officer behind my back. It sounds impatient. I don't turn around. Alors, vous venez de la Roumanie, I say to the man. Romania, da, he says. I tell him that his attempt to illegally cross the border has failed, and I make a cutting gesture with my hands. C'est la fin de votre voyage, I say. […] Finito. Pas de chance. […] Solo una questione di tempo. I say this last sentence already, without blushing, firmly and confidently, giving my face a stern look. […] But none of this is my fault. I speak five languages. Romanian is not one of them".

Another example of multilingualism, this time latent, appears in the fifth story, *Der Fall Ophelia*. The protagonist comes from a German-speaking family that has recently moved to the community and experiences marginalization, partly due to their language, which still bears the negative connotations linked to the Second World War:[15] "In der Geschichtsstunde drehen sich alle um und starren mich an. Die Lehrerin hat es gerade erklärt: Wer spricht, wie man in meiner Familie spricht, ist ein Faschist" (116).[16]

In the few instances when German is actually spoken at the level of the *histoire*, it is explicitly marked by a comment in the text, signaling a deviation from the fictional dominant language of the community: "Was ist das, was ihr da sprecht? Kroatisch? Ich sage ihr, es sei Deutsch" (121);[17] "Guten Tag, sage ich zu Herrn Priester, aus Versehen in unserer Sprache" (117).[18] Obviously, this cannot be visible on a formal level in the *discours*, since the text itself is written in German – making it an example of glottodiegetic representation of speech. But observing these examples, at this point we might ask ourselves: how is the linguistic world created by all the stories in the collection structured? What does this world's linguality look like?

Several foreign languages are mentioned and also appear in the text: English, French, Italian, Romanian, and Russian are formally visible, while German and Croatian are only referenced. What is neither visible nor directly named in the diegetic world is the fifth language spoken by the protagonist of *STILLE.mich.NACHT* – the language of the community, typically the national language of the setting. This language should be present, yet it never appears, and

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[15] For the connotations associated with the German language in these territories, see Tatasciore 2009, 24-25.

[16] "In history class, everyone turns around and stares at me. The teacher had just explained it: Anyone who speaks the way people in my family speak is a fascist".

[17] "What is that you all are speaking? Croatian? I tell her it's German".

[18] "Good day, I say to Mr. Priest, accidentally in our language".

its absence is made even more striking by the fact that the stories are written in German.

We could refer to Mora's biography and infer that this language must be Hungarian. Its absence of is also noted by Tatasciore (2009, 54-55), who points out that Hungarian is present within the German used by Mora, as many quotations from Hungarian songs, sayings, and literary works are reported in translation. However, this makes the concealment of Hungarian even more evident. It may respond to a desire to trace the power dynamics and hierarchies operating between languages (137-140), to shield herself from being labeled a foreign-language writer, as suggested by Fleig (2019), or to extend the discourse on linguistic otherness beyond the specific example of German-Hungarian conflict (128-135).

In any case, if we stay within the diegetic world and do not expect from it any mimetic claim, we must conclude that the native language of the community does not exist. All languages mentioned or used are those considered foreign, including German. This makes narrative sense, since the narrators are all outsiders, and from their perspective there is no language that creates a sense of belonging – that is, no native language.

3.2. *Alle Tage*, or Anti-Mimetic Multilingualism

A similar function of language characterizes Mora's first novel, *Alle Tage*, where multilingualism also plays a central thematic role. The protagonist, the translator Abel Nema, flees his homeland in the wake of a civil war – although his reasons for leaving are of a different nature. Over the ten years covered in the book, the conflict leads to the fragmentation of Abel's country. Eventually, he settles in the metropolis called B. Mora has confirmed that Abel comes from the former Yugoslavia, the story is set in the 1990s, and B. can be understood as Berlin. However, the third-person narration never explicitly states these details. Similar to *Seltsame Materie*, the novel avoids toponyms. While language names do appear, neither Abel's native tongue nor the national language of the metropolis B. are

mentioned. Instead, they are replaced with deictic terms such as "Landessprache" (national language) or "Muttersprache" (mother tongue).

Before arriving in B., Abel is involved in an explosion that grants him the extraordinary capacity to speak no fewer than ten languages, initially mixing them all together but eventually mastering them flawlessly. He also loses his accent, making it impossible to infer his origin from his speech.

The scene in which the protagonist acquires this Pentecostal ability is one of the few instances of glottomimetic speech and manifest multilingualism in the novel. This appears as a form of code-switching on the lexical level, where foreign language elements are not formally marked. There is no gloss indicating which word belongs to which language or providing translations, although the meaning of some words or expressions can be deduced from context: "Prime bjen esasa ndeo, sagt der Junge [Abel], Prime. Was? Songo. Nekom kipleimi fatoje. Pleida pjanolö [...] Man denkt, man versteht, was er sagt, und dann versteht man's doch nicht" (Mora 2004, 72-73);[19] "Er dachte: Semmel, zsemle, roll, petit pain, bulotschka. Dachte vaj, Butter, butter, maslo, buerre. Dachte…ein großes Durcheinander" (90).[20]

Similar to the protagonist of the short story *STILLE.mich.NACHT*, Abel's multilingualism also serves as a marker of his Otherness and is a product of his many losses: the fragmentation of his homeland, the trauma of war, and his dispersion in the globalized world. Not only that, but his extraordinary linguistic ability seems to replace other cognitive functions, such as his sense of orientation, significant parts of his memory, his sense of self, and even his ability to have sexual intercourse. In other words, rather than being a Pentecostal apostle, Abel – as noted

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[19] "Prime bjen esasa ndeo, says the boy [Abel], Prime. What? Songo. Nekom kipleimi fatoje. Pleida pjanolö [...] One thinks they understand what he's saying, but then they don't understand it after all".

[20] "He thought: Semmel, zsemle, roll, petit pain, bulotschka. Thought vaj, Butter, butter, maslo, buerre. He thought…a big mess".

by several scholars (see Allocca 2016, 134-135) – is a messenger of the chaos of Babel.

This may explain why, similarly to that of *Seltsame Materie*, the linguistic world of this novel explicitly detaches itself from any mimetic claims. The first example occurs when Abel works as an interpreter alongside colleagues who translate into various languages:

> Irgendwann im Laufe des Frühlings war Abel […] zu einem weiteren Job gekommen. Synchrondolmetschen in einem nahen Kongresszentrum […]
> Sie sind ein Skandal! Brüllte der Ire.
> Sie sind ein Skandal, sagte die kleine Frau mit dem Pagenschnitt in der Kabine nebenan.
> *Sie* sind ein Skandal! brüllte der Serbe zurück.
> Sie sind ein Skandal, sagte Abel ins Mikrophon (Mora 2004, 183).[21]

The different languages are nowhere to be seen; instead, the original German phrase is repeated four times. A similar scene occurs when Abel imagines giving a Russian lesson to his stepson, Omar:

> Abel hätte den Satz auf Russisch niedergeschrieben und ihn vorgesprochen, Omar hätte ihn wiederholt.
> Willst du verreisen?
> Niet, ja ne chatschu ujechatj
> Nein, ich will nicht verreisen.
> Wolltest du jemanden abholen?

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[21] "Sometime during the spring, Abel […] had gotten another job. Simultaneous interpreting at a nearby conference center […] You are a scandal! shouted the Irishman. You are a scandal, said the small woman with the pageboy cut in the adjacent booth. *You* are a scandal! shouted the Serbian in return. You are a scandal, said Abel into the microphone".

Wolltest du jemanden abholen?

Nein.

Was wolltest du dann dort?

Was wolltest du dann dort?

Ich wohne in der Nähe.

Ich wohne in der Nähe (260).[22]

This passage begins with code-switching between German and Russian. However, the scene continues solely in German, once again duplicating the sentences. This anti-mimetic choice might be placed within Stockhammer's category of the glottoaporetic, as a sort of subcategory. Nevertheless, this categorization fails to fully capture the explicit anti-mimetic nature of Mora's narrative strategy, and more importantly, the aspect of negation or obliteration of multilingualism.

Indeed, among the many possible interpretations of this strategy, my belief is that it projects the protagonist's estrangement and dissociation – expressed through a latent multilingualism that plays with the reader's expectations – onto both the diegetic world and the reading experience.

A particularly striking example of this anti-mimetic use of language concerns another character, Abel's flatmate Kostantin. His voice is characterized by a neurotic and prolix discursive style that, upon his first appearance, unfolds in a three-page monologue alternating between direct and indirect speech, the latter filtered through the narrator. Here is a brief excerpt:

Was kann ich dir sagen, diese sind *hysterische Zeiten*! Als würde die ganze Welt Die Reise nach Jerusalem spielen. Panik, Geschiebe, Gewimmer, Gekreisch. Suchen ihren Platz. Oder einen. Eine harte Kante für den halben, Verzeihung, Arsch.

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[22] "Abel would have written the sentence in Russian and spoken it aloud, Omar would have repeated it. Do you want to travel? Niet, ja ne chatschu ujechatj. No, I don't want to travel. Did you want to pick someone up? Did you want to pick someone up? No, I don't. Why were you there then? Why were you there then? I live nearby. I live nearby".

Freiwillig, unfreiwillig. Hart ist das Leben überall, gerade jetzt, da sie nichts Eilige-res zu tun haben, als sämtliche Kontingente einzufrieren, als gäbe es keine, wie sagt man so schön: *internationale Lage*! […] Es war nicht notwendig oder möglich, etwas zu sagen, er redete ohne Pause, moderierte die fabelhafte Rettung *unseres jungen Helden*, zwischendurch holte er hektisch Atem, als würde er schwimmen, die Armbewegungen waren auch so […] Voilà, der Ort, an dem es keine Dunkelheit gibt. Oder nur Dunkelheit. Das ist so eine Ja-und-nein-Angelegenheit (alle Kursive: Kostantin) (93-94).[23]

But after this introduction to the character, the narrator continues as follows:

So lernte Abel Kostantin T. kennen. Er schien eine Vorliebe fürs Französisch zu haben, aber abgesehen davon, war von seinem Monolog, ehrlich gesagt, nicht all-zuviel zu verstehen. Er sprach, obwohl schon ein Jahr hier, die Landessprache nicht besonders gut. Gerade mal das Wesentliche. Du Hunger? Essen? Eier und das hier (95-96).[24]

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[23] "What can I tell you, these are *hysterical times*! As if the whole world were playing musical chairs. Panic, shoving, whining, screaming. Searching for their place. Or one. A hard edge for half an, pardon me, ass. Voluntarily, involuntarily. Life is hard everywhere, especially now, when they have nothing more urgent to do than freeze all quotas, as if there were no, how do you say it nicely: *international situation*! [...] It was neither neces-sary nor possible to say anything, he talked nonstop, narrating the fabulous rescue of *our young hero*, catching his breath hastily in between, as if he were swimming, his arm movements matched that too [...] Voilà, the place where there is no darkness. Or only darkness. That's such a yes-and-no kind of thing (all italics: Kostantin)".

[24] "This is how Abel met Kostantin T. He seemed to have a preference for French, but apart from that, to be honest, not much of his monologue was understandable. Although he had been here for a year, he didn't speak the local language very well. Just the es-sentials. Hungry, you? Food? Eggs and this here".

Kostantin, therefore, is unable to express any of what he has just said. And despite this revelation by the narrator, the character will continue to speak within the diegetic world in a convoluted German, rich in adjectives and complex constructions. To conclude, negating multilingualism means that these anti-mimetic forms – which can be classified under the broad category of glottoaporetic, that is, phenomena that theoretically should not function as they do – intervene precisely where multilingualism is introduced as a thematic element and thus expected as a formal one. By disrupting the reader's expectations, these formal strategies provoke a broader reflection on the relationship between the self and language, whose strong ties are negated by Mora. The result of these anti-mimetic speech representations is the opening of an abyss that separates the textual universe from the reality that language is supposed to represent. Thereby, through multilingualism, the referential capacity of language is negated – not of any single language, not of the native language nor of any foreign language, but of all languages. This negating multilingualism in Mora's writing participates in a much broader reflection on the fraught relationship between the individual and their language.[25] As Claudia Tatasciore notes, in Mora's work,

> la lingua non è tematizzata nei testi in qualità di lingua straniera (con tutto ciò che questo può portare con sé: apprendimento, estraneità, emarginazione), o meglio, questa è solo una componente di un'interrogazione molto più generale che riguarda la capacità di linguaggio dell'uomo nelle condizioni di panico e violenza in cui è costretto a vivere. Una situazione insomma in cui il problema non è il conflitto con e tra una lingua L1, L2, L3…, ma con la lingua tout court (Tatasciore 2009, 97).[26]

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[25] This conflict often manifests in the physicality of Mora's characters. See also Willner 2007 and Tatasciore 2009, 97-128.

[26] "Language is not thematized in the texts as a foreign language (with all that this might entail: learning, estrangement, marginalization), or rather, this is only one aspect of a much more general interrogation concerning human beings' capacity for language under

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conditions of panic and violence. In other words, it is not a matter of conflict between or within L1, L2, L3…, but with language tout court".

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