



## Poets of Bifurcated Tongues, or on the Plurilingualism of Canadian-Hungarian Poets

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### Article abstract

Poets of Bifurcated Tongues, or on the plurilingualism of Canadian-Hungarian Poets — This article aims at an analysis of the plurilingualism of four poets of Hungarian origin, living in Canada: Robert Zend, George Vitéz, László Kemenes Géfin and Endre Farkas. Before examining the poems themselves, the various concepts of plurilingualism and the aspects of grouping these poems, including the code-switching strategies used in them, are reviewed. The base language and the nature of code-switching is discussed with a special emphasis on the relationship of grammatical units, intra- and intersentential switches within contexts where plurilingualism occurs. The first three poets have become bilinguals as adults: they form part of Hungarian literature as well as of Canadian writing. The last one, however, has a childhood bilingualism and is considered an English-Canadian Poet. Since they have a twofold minority status (Hungarian origins, plus writing in English in Montréal), analysis of these poets requires a special approach. The main hypothesis of the article is that, when using more than one language within the same work, the author is able to reach special effects which would be otherwise impossible. These poems, plurilingual in nature, also show that, for these authors, language is of multiple use: not only is language a tool of communication, but also the theme of some of their poems: they are often self-reflexive, making formal and semantic experimentation possible.

# Poets of Bifurcated Tongues, or on the Plurilingualism of Canadian-Hungarian Poets

Katalin Kürtösi

Plurilingualism/bilingualism are terms most extensively used in our days — and in Canada perhaps more than anywhere else. These terms are approached from a variety of fields — linguistics, psychology, law, etc. — and the literature offering partial or more complex analysis is numerous: the MLA bibliography alone contains at least 1500 entries, and it is far from being all-encompassing.

In this essay, I shall restrict this wide area to the manifestation of individual plurilingualism in literature, focusing above all on four Canadian-Hungarian poets. By individual plurilingualism, J.-G. Savard means the ability of a person "to actively or passively use two or more languages with some skill," as opposed to institutional plurilingualism, when "the state undertakes to deal with its citizens in the language of each individual, or at least in more than one official language" (Savard, 1979, p. 19), which is the case in Canada. In Hungarian literary criticism, the question of multilingualism is not very frequently raised — which, of course, should not lead us to the conclusion that it does not exist or can be neglected. It has been present in Hungarian literature throughout the centuries: like in

the rest of Europe, all writers used to be multilingual (classical languages — Latin, Greek — plus vernacular) until, in line with the demands of political Romanticism, the concept of one people, one nation, one culture, one language became more and more widely spread (Mackey, 1989, p. 24). As I. Fried puts it, bilingualism was a natural way of life for the Hungarian intelligentsia of the late 18th and 19th centuries (Fried, 1989, p. 48); then, he points out that "bilingualism is existing today, too, though differently than in the 18th century or before that [...] there is a difference between Eastern European and Western European bilingualism" (p. 60). As regards the problem of bilingualism in contemporary Hungarian literature, little has been done so far. On the level of journalism, two articles were published in 1990, one by Fülei-Szántó Endre, calling for research into the bilingualism of Transylvania (giving some basic definitions and typology of bilingualism), the other by Határ Győző, writing an obituary for Thinsz Géza who not only wrote about bilingualism, but wrote in Hungarian and in Swedish, and translated from one language to another, enjoying the "art of dialogue" (Határ, 1990) where the conversing parties are two languages. Without underestimating the abovementioned contributions, we can agree that much has to be done to discover and evaluate this special aspect of Hungarian literature.

This is an outline and an analysis of a special phenomenon, meant to be above all an encouragement for future scholars to investigate. Also, I shall be approaching the work of these Hungarian-Canadian poets (Robert Zend, György Vitéz, László Kemenes Géfin and Endre Farkas) from the point of view of Canadian literature.

Like with all hyphenated literatures, the problem of pigeonholing arises: who are they, what are they? Do they belong to Hungarian literature? Yes, the first three do. Are they Canadian poets? Yes, in my view, all four of them are. Is it good or bad that they are part of two literatures, using (at least) two

languages?<sup>1</sup> There may be negative and positive answers to this question — on my part, I agree with Canadian scholar W. F. Mackey who, in a 1988 paper, stated that "bilingual expatriate writers are a blessing to the literatures" (Mackey, 1989, p. 21) they form part of. Having laid down these principles, let us have a closer look at the manifestations of plurilingualism and the language strategies of these poets. Before doing so, however, it might prove useful to get acquainted with the basic terminology to be used in the course of analysis.

The most frequently quoted definitions of bilingualism are the following: for Bloomfield, "In the case where the perfect foreign language learning is not accompanied by loss of the native language it results in bilingualism, native-like control of two languages," while for Haugen "Bilingualism [...] is understood [...] to begin at the point where the speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in the other language." And finally, let me quote Weinreich, according to whom "the practice of alternately using two languages will be called *bilingualism* and the persons involved *bilingual* [...], *multilingualism*, the practice of using alternately three or more languages<sup>2</sup>." In line with the third definition, E. Simpson states that "le bilinguisme littéraire est l'alternance de deux ou plusieurs langues dans la même œuvre ou plusieurs œuvres [...] par un auteur" and also admits that "le bilinguisme en littérature créatrice n'est qu'un phénomène restreint [...] l'unilinguisme semble être la règle générale dans le domaine de la création littéraire" (Simpson, 1978, p. 5). Hamers and Blanc make a more subtle differentiation, creating the term of *bilinguality*, by which they mean "the psychological state of the individual," and using *bilingualism* in a sense which includes *bilinguality* and "refers to a state of a linguistic community in which two languages are in

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1. Concerning bilingualism and bioculturalism, F. Grosjean states that many bilinguals are bicultural and he quotes Haugen whose view is that bilingualism and bioculturalism are not necessarily coextensive (François Grosjean, 1982, p. 157).
  2. Quoted by Ekundayo Simpson (1978, p. 4).

contact" (Hamers and Blanc, 1989, p. 6). These are multidimensional phenomena where the main aspects of analysis may concern the relative competence, the cognitive organization, the age of acquisition, the exogeneity, the social cultural status and cultural identity. An individual can also be a balanced bilingual (with an equivalent competence in both languages) and a dominant bilingual (for whom competence in one of the languages is superior to competence in the other) (p. 8). If we consider the age of acquisition, the main types would be childhood bilinguality (before age 11, simultaneous or consecutive), adolescent bilinguality, and thirdly, adult bilinguality. Based on the presence of L2 community in the environment, bilinguality is either endogenous (presence of L2 community as in the case of *émigré* writers) or exogenous (absence of L2 community). When we examine the relative status of the two languages, bilinguality can be additive (LA/1 and LB/2 socially valorized, which means cognitive advantage) and subtractive (when L2 is valorized at the expense of L1, resulting in a cognitive disadvantage). And finally, according to group membership and cultural identity, there are bicultural bilinguality (double membership and bicultural identity), L1 monocultural bilinguality (LA/1 membership and cultural identity), L2 acculturated bilinguality (LB/2 membership and cultural identity), and finally, deculturated bilinguality (ambiguous membership and anomic identity) (p. 9). The above aspects, though transcending the boundaries of usual, strictly literary aspects of analysis, will be useful when having a closer look at the texts and various activities of Hungarian poets living in Canada. Language has manifold roles: it is a component and transmitter of culture, the vehicle of literary activities, and the use of two or more languages makes all of these relationships even more complex. Mastering the language, or linguistic assimilation, does not necessarily mean acculturation. Bilinguals tend to develop a cultural identity which is different from that of a monolingual: bilinguality and cultural identity are interrelated (p. 125). Also, it is generally accepted that the bilingual person is more than the sum of two monolinguals (p. 15).

Once we have reached a "consensus" on the idea of bilingualism, we can go on to discuss the degrees and strategies of this phenomenon. The first step is "passive," or "receptive" bilingualism, when a person has no productive control over a language but is able to follow and understand it (Romaine, 1989). This might be considered the lowest level of proficiency — while the other extreme is the case of equilingualism or balanced bilingualism, which means that the given person is equally fluent in both languages. Most scholars agree, however, that this is an exceptional case<sup>3</sup>, since at the semantic level a bilingual may be able to express meanings better in one language than another (Romaine, 1989, p. 13). Alternation of the languages may have different degrees and may depend on several factors — like the topic, the situation, the communicative partner, or to give a truly literary example, the genre. A special aspect of alternation is language interference which shows us "the extent to which the individual manages to keep the languages separate, or whether they are fused" (p. 11).

The procedure of changing from one language to another is usually called *code-switching*. To quote some more sophisticated definitions, let me mention that of Gumperz, for whom it means "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems."<sup>4</sup> So it may involve two different languages, varieties of the same language, or styles within a language. F. Grosjean puts it more simply, saying that code-switching means the "alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance of conversation" (Grosjean, 1982, p. 145). G. D. Keller applies it to literature, stating that code-switching in literature means the "alternation of (two or more) languages within a single literary text" (Keller, 1984, p. 171). This alternate use of languages may again vary in degree, ranging from using one word, a phrase, a sentence or several sentences which are different from the *base*

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3. "Rares sont les bilingues qui possèdent un répertoire identique dans les deux langues" (Mackey, 1989, p. 3).

4. Quoted by S. Romaine (1989, p. 111).

*language*. (For the bilingual, it is also a question of decision which of his or her languages to use as base language.) F. Grosjean points out that "switching is different from borrowing a word from the other language and integrating it phonologically and morphologically into the base language. In code-switching the switched element is not integrated; instead, there is a total switch to the other language... [It is an] extremely common characteristic of bilingual speech and some bilingual writers and poets reflect this in their works [...]. [Code-switching] is used to enhance the content of the verse" (Grosjean, 1982, p. 146).

The linguistic manifestations of code-switching can be on the grammatical/syntactic or discourse/pragmatic levels. "The grammatical perspective is primarily concerned with accounting for the linguistic constraints of code-switching. [...] The pragmatic framework assumes that the motivation for switching is basically stylistic and that code-switching is to be treated as a discourse phenomenon [...]" (Romaine, 1989, p. 111). When looking at the types and degrees of code-switching, the three main groups are:

- . "Tag-switching" which means no violation of syntactic rules.
- . Intersentential switching, i.e. a switch at a clause or sentence boundary, where each clause of the sentence is in one language or another. This requires greater fluency in both languages than tag-switching.
- . Intrasentential switching involves the greatest syntactic risk and may be avoided by all but the most fluent bilinguals. It may also include mixing within word boundaries (pp. 112-113).

Code-switching may provoke different reactions — the attitude of monolinguals is very often negative and they consider the alternate use of two or more languages a grammarless mixture, saying that those who code-switch know neither language well enough. Some bilinguals — those who never switch — also reject it, saying that it is done only out of laziness. Many bilinguals tend to avoid code-switching "with those who have very strict norms concerning language use (teachers,

parents)" (Grosjean, 1982, p. 147). Another dimension of the same phenomenon — also supported by evidence from bilingual writing, particularly plays — is that "monolinguality is more commonly found in economically dominant groups, while members of minority or subordinate groups tend to be bi- or multilingual" (Hamers and Blanc, 1989, p. 13).

Code-switching may have several reasons and aims — it may take place because of a lack of facility in one language when talking about a particular topic or when the speaker cannot find an appropriate word. It may also be a way of quoting someone, or specifying addressee, mark or emphasize group identity, convey emotional meaning (anger, annoyance), exclude somebody from conversation (e.g. parents do not want the child to understand), change the role of speaker by raising his/her status, adding authority, showing expertise, etc. "Switching at a particular moment conveys semantically significant information<sup>5</sup>." Gumperz considers code-switching a meaningful verbal strategy. We will return to these aspects and strategies of code-switching when taking a close look at some poems by Hungarian-Canadian poets.

Turning to the literary aspects of bilingualism and code-switching, let us first cast a glance at the most frequent manifestations and motives of this literary practice. The three main groups of bilingualism in literature are:

*1. Intraterritorial:* The writer — despite code-switches — remains within the literary tradition of his base language. He may use another language because of the "requirements" of a genre or topic (Milton's love poems in Italian), or for experimentation, or for his amusement (e.g. Oscar Wilde and R. M. Rilke writing in French). In these cases, the change of language is voluntary and conscious. I would put the works of various experimental writers into this group — be it dadaism, futurism or the frequently returning method and game of "creating" a language — very often using the basic rules of an already existing one.

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5. Gumperz quoted by Grosjean (1982, p. 152).



("Vargyalgás," by Robert Zend, will be our Hungarian-Canadian example.)

2. *Extraterritorial*: The writer belongs to a literary tradition different from the mother-tongue. The reasons for this shift may be optional (like in the case of Joseph Conrad, F.P. Grove) or a result of some kind of pressure, like immigration or the case of third-world writers who very often use the language of their colonizers (like W. Soyinka, Ch. Achebe).

3. "*Double appartenance or affiliation*" is not very frequent, still some of the most significant figures of twentieth-century literature belong in this group. Here we do not mean the case of T.S. Eliot who is listed as an American poet as well as an English poet (and also used code-switching as a dominant language strategy in *The Waste Land*), since his base language is English. But Vladimir Nabokov and Samuel Beckett, as well as Julien Green — all the three of them are self-translators, too — are clear cases of being parts of two literary traditions.

In the course of the analysis it will be seen that the Hungarian poets I have chosen tend to move from one group to another at various points of their writing processes. Their case contains an additional element which has become more and more important during the past few decades, even if literary criticism — with the exception of W. F. Mackey (1989), Gary D. Keller (1984), F. Lorriggio (1987) and J. Pivato (1991) — tends to neglect this aspect of bilingualism, namely their *ethnicity*. In the case of ethnic writers, language, culture and territory do not coincide. Ethnicity, as Lorriggio points out, is a perspective; it relies on the author, his or her social identity. It cannot be defined formally, since any style, any genre can be ethnic (Lorriggio, 1987, p. 55). The linguistic behaviour of ethnic writers is generally affected by their polyglotism. They have a subtle relationship with the literatures of both the "mother country" and the "new country," which relationship very often contains restrictions and contradictions. Also, because of their special situations, they are facing refusal and misunderstanding from both sides. Still, there is no doubt that with ample tolerance — or, in a better case, with

some encouragement — the ethnic, or , as W.F. Mackey calls them, "bilingual expatriate" (1989, p. 21) writers can be a blessing to both literatures.

### Robert Zend

For Robert Zend's many-sided language strategies, let us have a closer look at the posthumous collection of *Versek, képversek* (Poems and pictograms), published by Magyar Műhely in Paris, in 1988. The volume is divided into four parts: Portraits, "Vargyalgás," "A kék füzetből" and "Typescape-ek," preceded by a typed self-portrait and a "Kiáltvány" (manifesto) (p. 7). In the following analysis I am restricting myself to the manifesto and the second and third parts, as most suitable for our purposes.

The manifesto at the beginning of this slim volume is of double interest to us. At the time of serious discussions concerning language laws, demanding — on behalf of the Hungarians living in Canada — French to be the second language of this country, and English "of course," the third, not only shows the poet's primary interest in language, and his self-definition as the Hungarian of Canada, but the *irony* behind the lines (he never tells us which should be the *first* language, but with some modest imagination we all may guess) gives this wish a special twist. And at the same time, it also prepares us to be on the alert: an exciting intellectual game awaits us in the following poems and we all are participants of this game.

The game is unfolded in front of us in its full scale in "Vargyalgás." For the title the poet created a non-sense word using Hungarian sounds (like the "gy"), attached a Hungarian suffix to it thus making a "noun": following the rules of the language, he found out a non-sense term, and as title of this series, it is an apt indicator of what follows. And what follows is a series of thirteen four-line poems, with a footnote. All the thirteen poems have a title of their own and a note beside them to make it easy for us to find out which non-sense language the poems resemble the most. After each four-line poem we can find an accordingly "distorted" version of the poet's name. The

"languages" are Sumerian, Greek, Hungarian, German, French, English, Turkish, Hindi, Japanese, Latin, Russian, Hebrew and Italian.

The Hungarian title is the same as that of the whole sequence. Zend's strategy of constructing a language begins with taking it apart — or "deconstructing" it. In this four-line poem, there are altogether four grammatical entities that do exist in the Hungarian language today: the definite article "a" in the first line, the first element "fü" of a compound word, the conjunction "ha" and the relative pronoun in the accusative form "akit" in the second line. All the other verbal elements were created by the poet, based mainly on the sound of the words, occasionally supplying them with existing prefixes and suffixes (like in *elsefötyölne*). The last line, in its word-formation and sound alike, resembles the state of the Hungarian language several hundred years ago. Based on my knowledge of a few other languages "used" here, I take the courage to conclude that the basic procedure was similar with them, as well.

So far, so good — we could say —, a poet takes delight in imitating and parodying languages: it must be a nice distraction after long periods of deep concentration. But then, we reach the last part of this work: the Footnote. It is a pleasant surprise that it is written in English, i.e. an existing language. The playfulness is not left behind, though: we learn of a small island of Southern Amnesia with its proud and peaceful people, the Hepatites. The moving story that follows is a parody of linguistic research and researchers. All in all, several layers of linguistic activities are meditated upon: translations, comparing "translations with one another or with the original text itself" (sounds like part of a highly academic discourse!), and then comes the real surprise: the pictogram, finally another teasing of us, unhappy academics: "Researched and edited by Robert Zend" (p. 19). The stylistic and rhetoric elements of the footnote contain several *clichés* we all are quite familiar with (the days of the tribe were numbered; the ruthless progression of technology... antiballistic missiles and mosquitoes) as well as verbal games (daymares instead of nightmares), logical deductions (only one

old man was alive, rather half alive, that is half dead). This abundance of linguistic resources and tools creates a total effect, drawing attention to the self-reflexive nature of language and at the same time giving a parody of it and also underlying the inadequacy of language in describing certain phenomena or messages.

Another beautiful example of Zend's fascination with language is the poem *Für Ludwig* in which he creates syllables and words that are evoked in him by listening to *Für Elise*, this way creating a link between language, poetry and music, another art. Still another art form is evoked by the *Magritte* poems. The Belgian master of Surrealism inspired other writers, too (Tom Stoppard). The reason why Magritte seems such a suitable subject for literary re-usage may be explained by Pere Gimferrer's statements in the first paragraph of the introduction of the painter: "les approches du monde de René Magritte ont été, en effet, surtout poétiques... Toute œuvre de Magritte, il est vrai, fonctionne exactement comme le ferait un poème; mais en revanche, il n'existe aucun poème qui fonctionne comme une œuvre de Magritte" (Gimferrer, 1986, p. 5). We should also remark that Magritte himself was a writer, and as in his painting, in his writings his technique was a mystification of banalities, using elements of melodrama to create a shocking effect (Schneede, 1982, pp. 10-12).

Most of the short poems — all written in Montréal, at the end of February, 1971 — can be easily linked to individual paintings by Magritte. My choice of musing a bit is no. 9, entitled *Kétnyelvű Magritte* (Hunglish) which has a subtitle, too: "Mondscheinparty Budán egy angol lánnyal." In the two-dimensional poem, the vertical line reads "Feljött a hold az égre" (The Moon has come up on the sky), while the horizontal line is "Please, hold me tight," with "hold" as junction point. It is quite clear, this is a bilingual poem — as the poet himself defines it — in Hunglish. The subtitle, however, extends the boundaries: Mondschein is in German, so it would be more accurate to call it a multi- (or at least tri-)lingual poem. The subtitle, besides mixing the languages (or, if you prefer, intrasentential code-

switching) offers us a kitschy picture of all the necessary ingredients: moonlight, Buda, with a girl, who is English. The poem proper goes on in this manner, containing two cliché-statements. What is then special about it? Zend makes use of Magritte's favourite techniques: the *collage* and the *picture within the picture* (extending it to *language within the language*): "hold" functions both ways and with this method of the text reaching out in two directions, we can go beyond the simplicity of the two utterances: the poem acquires an extra dimension of playfulness where the two key elements are the design itself and the identical spelling of a word in Hungarian and in English. Consequently, the poem acquires extra elements which cannot be replaced by anything else and so the poet can reach a unique effect.

The activities of the following two poets, György Vitéz and László Kemenes Géfin, are closely related with *Arkánium*, the literary journal they launched in the early eighties and edited until recently. In the eighties — along with *Magyar Műhely* in Paris — *Arkánium* was regarded as one of the major strongholds of experimental poetry in Hungarian. The journal itself would very well deserve a detailed study — here I only wish to highlight the preoccupation with language, which is a true reflection of the tendency of modern poetry to be self-reflexive, to examine, analyze and take to pieces its vehicle. Bakucz József was doing it consistently in his poems — very often switching between mainly Hungarian and English — while Miklós Molnár in no. 6 wrote a whole poem about associations in connection with language ("Nyelvleleckéztetés").

### György Vitéz

György Vitéz was preoccupied with language in an indirect way before *Arkánium* was started. *Missä agnostica*, his volume of poetry published by Magyar Műhely in Paris (1979) is a convincing example. The title itself gives us a key to the main issues of this sequence of poems: the poet follows the pattern of the *mass* as a *form*, and *Latin* will be used, being the adequate language of ceremony in the Catholic church. The title, at the same time gives away a secret: this is not a believer's mass — the element of *irony*

is present already in the title. The individual poems themselves have titles, too — *Introit, Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Hosanna, Agnus Dei* and *Ite Missa Est*: all in Latin, indicating consecutive parts of the mass. The whole volume follows this dual attitude of the poet: choosing a highly traditional form, keeping its basic elements, using its "official" language and conveying thoughts that are in sharp contradiction all the time. The reason for this negative attitude towards the norms of religion are given in the poem, *Credo*.

If we focus our attention on Vitéz's *language strategies* in these poems, we can enjoy a diversity of solutions. In *Kyrie*, he follows a procedure very frequent in bilingual writing: After "Uram irgalmazz," he puts the *names of languages* suggesting that actually the beginning of the prayer is meant to be in these other languages — namely in Greek (still all right, a classical language), the language of Brobdingnag (if anybody had doubts about the satirical edge, you can dispense with them), and Esperanto (an artificial language, meant to be as universal in our age as Latin was in the Middle Ages, the peak period of Catholicism). The next two stanzas go on listing names of languages — languages long dead (Got, Thrakian, Vizigot) and the language of gypsies: a minority language in Hungary (and several other parts of the world) with which most of us are ill at ease. Once different languages are introduced, in the next part of the poem, the poet can go on utilizing them — and this is exactly what happens: "quelles belles histoires!" is part of a train of thought, so much so that there is no typographical or whatever differentiation between the Hungarian words and the French exclamation.

In *Gloria*, there is a consequent alternation of Latin and Hungarian, but the Latin praise of God is cut into pieces, followed by the "commentaries" in Hungarian which very often question the validity of the Latin statement or provide us with a false translation:

*et in terra pax/ hominibus/ bonae voluntatis* — Kik a jóakarató emberek?/ Naponta látok egyet kettőt a szívárványos

képernyőn/ hallom őket bégetni (nyiratlan emberbirkák) a rádióban...; In hoc signo vinces/ Itt frd alá Vince!

Let me point out here that the Latin words which are part of the mass-text are always in italics, and this way typographically differentiated from the poet's remarks. Most often, the Latin words form a distinct unit within the poem — at one point, however, we get a *word by word translation*, followed by the usual sarcastic remarks.

In the poems of *Missa agnostica*, we can see a truly bi- or multi-lingual practice in the sense that there is an *alternation of languages*. The surprise effect is due to the poet's insistence on a highly codified form: the mass, its traditional language: Latin to carry a really modern series of ideas, connotations and message, therefore the overall impact of these poems is divided between the evocation of tradition and *ardent experimentation*.

In the poems, published in *Arkánum*, this practice is used in *Stabat Mater* (no. 5, pp. 10-13). In most poems published in the journal, another aspect of language occupies the central place: mother tongue. It will have two dimensions in the eighties for Vitéz: he writes about his native language and *translates into* it.

The title of this paper was borrowed from Vitéz's poem entitled *In Illo Tempore*, which begins like "Az illó időben megalusznak a jáspiskígyók/ bifurkált nyelvében él a nemzet/ sírásója [...]," (p. 62) and then again mentions language: "Bemegyek a kétágú nyelv oltárához." The poem has a Latin title, but it is in Hungarian, containing several elements of Hungarian cultural tradition, word-play (a recipe following the word "fogás" which means a hard problem to solve, and a kind of fish), ironical twist ("Arany miséjét mondja fölötte a sűrke barát" and scientific information concerning the different functions of the two sides of our brain. What we do not come to know exactly, however, is what the poet means by bifurcated tongue/language. Is it the Hungarian spoken in Hungary and by the *émigrés*? True enough, many Hungarians living outside Hungary lost their live contact with native tongue. But not poets like Vitéz. Or is it the necessity of using a foreign language in daily activities while

safeguarding the mother tongue at home? Both answers, I think, are relevant. (A third possibility would be using the word "bifurcated" in the truly American — or Indian — sense, hinting at the possibility of abusing language.)

*A falvédőről jött ember* further elaborates this question. The middle of this relatively long poem mentions the delicate problem of gypsies again: a minority in Hungary with a language of their own and no. 1 target of racist remarks. The second part of the dramatic insert has *émigré* Hungarians as "speakers" — the one living in "America" (i.e. the U.S.) shifts into English and so does his wife. Then some others would speak Hungarian, but with an accent (of Thuringia, another one with that of Bavaria): so in this poem code-switching appears side by side with diglossia. Following the practice of most bilingual literature, our attention is drawn to the different languages or the differences within a given language with verbal hints within the text of the work itself. ("Mölders repülőezredes leteszi tárogatóját, a pódium közepére lép, meghajol, tősgyökeres türingiai kiejtéssel szavalni kezd" [p. 67], "springen Sie doch auf?" kérdezte bajor kiejtéssel" [p. 69].) These foreign accents and borrowed phrases are not only vital parts of the poem, but also remind us constantly that for the poet language is a tool and material which he can apply in many ways.

In the abovementioned poems of Vitéz *experimentation* has central role: experimentation both concerning the ideas, far-reaching associations which span several continents and historical ages and systems of beliefs, and concerning the language itself: not only does he utilize foreign languages to achieve a pun or structure his poem, but — as G. Bisztray rightly points out, there is an "associative metalanguage" (Bisztray, 1988, p. 47) in his poems of the 1970s. When trying to exploit all the possibilities that language offers for him to convey a very exciting and complex view of the world and of life, he cannot resist the possibilities *other* languages offer him in his pursuit. This method reminds me of the Rubik's cube: turning one side results in the change of three others and we obtain a totally new pattern in all four of them.



Another facet of Vitéz's poetic activity is translating English Canadian poetry into Hungarian — he is one of the chief contributors to the volume called *Gótika a vadonban* (Steele, 1983), but in this paper I do not go into details of translation. Instead, I will briefly elaborate on still another practice of György Vitéz which very often happens with bilingual writers: self-translating, or writing two versions of a poem. Of all the possibilities of bilingual literary creation, the phenomenon of *self-translating/rewriting in another language* has provoked most critics for scrutiny<sup>6</sup>.

"The body is not in question (In memoriam, Salvador Dali)<sup>7</sup>" and "VALÓSÁG FELETT ÁL(L)OM (Horváth Elemérnek) In memoriam Salvador Dali<sup>8</sup>" are two poems manifesting an exciting game of *contact points* and *distancings*. At first sight, we can notice that the Hungarian poem is at least twice as long as the English one and the first one is divided into four parts. The method is the same in both poems: Dali's death inspired the poet for a series of loosely connected, Surrealistic ideas, utilizing the possibilities offered by language ("come to my tent, my in tent; conventional smile on the convention floor," p. 101) and cultural heritage ("the sixteen chapels — one was not enough for/Angel Mike and Julius Two," p. 101; "dear departed (dear as in expensive)," "conjurer of happenings no longer happening/ at a Gala evening," p. 102.) The English language poem is really in English, without any code-switching — as we could see, even the names of Michelangelo and Pope Julius II were "translated."

The Hungarian poem applies the same methods — but adapted to the language and the broader sphere of culture. The poet's richness of imagination manifests itself in distorted versions of phrases ("a jó bórnek nem kell cégér, Hawking, a béna libapásztor, ki a ludas, kérdi," "ha nem szól Sade, nem fáj

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6. Rose (1975, pp. 785-788); Simpson (1978); Beer (1985).

7. Vitéz (1990, pp. 101-102).

8. Vitéz (1991, pp. 12-15).

fejed") and playful allusions to Hungarian culture and Dali's oeuvre ("húzd rá Fráter (Czigány) Lóránd," "elköltözött az is akit/mindenki sanyikának hívott," "a pályaszélen/Dali pár pistolyával övében a festő," "dalimadár fenn az égen," "Összeverődik a Gálás vasárnapi nép"). The poem in Hungarian is a requiem not only to the Spanish painter, but also to one of the most remarkable Hungarian poets of our century: Sándor Weöres. The English version does not contain this element (like several others, e.g. Báthory Erzsébet, Károlyi Mihály, Balassi), since these hints would not achieve the same results with foreign readers. There are, however, mentions of internationally well-known people, too, in the Hungarian poems (Artaud, Hölderlin, Sade, mother Courage) absent from the English one, while the latter elaborates on Cyrano. As to the technique, the Hungarian poem does contain elements from other languages ("keep smiling, down, boy, down"; "Tierra germinavit Salvadorem"), though only these two.

The example of these two poems shows us that even when the basic idea is common for the poems, the two different languages mean two separate systems for the poet and the determining factor is the language-culture sphere matching, instead of a "faithful" translation. This way the poet seems to be at ease in both cultures, achieving a state of "double affiliation" (Hungarian literature, English Canadian poetry) besides serving as a bridge through his translations and a follower of international and Hungarian experimental poetry utilizing languages other than his mother tongue.

### **László Kemenes Géfin**

Like György Vitéz, László Kemenes Géfin also left Hungary after the 1956 revolution, at the age of nineteen, and settled down in Canada the following year. His poetry focuses on the two cultures he belongs to: Hungarian by birth, through language, imagery and mythology, and North American by "profession" — the clashes and meeting points of these two cultures offer a new rhythm and surprising insight into both. He claims himself to be the follower of the great experimentalists of the language of

English language literature: James Joyce, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Apart from being a poet, he is also recognized as an excellent translator (mainly of Pound's *Cantos*, but of less known contemporary Canadian and American writers, too) and literary critic.

László Kemenes Géfin is fascinated by the possibilities languages offer him — very often he applies a technique of fine art with languages: his texts often resemble the collage-technique of László Moholy-Nagy of the Bauhaus whom Kemenes Géfin greatly admired, and to whom he dedicated Chapter XXIII of his mythic epic, *Fehérlófia* (1991). In this book, the poet offers us a many-sided world vision containing elements of the oldest Hungarian legends, passages dedicated to his favourite writers and artists like Pound, Wallace Stevens, Robert Southwell, Swift, Borges, Bartók, Burroughs, Moholy-Nagy, etc. His basic technique is free association, flashbacks, quick changes of locations achieved by typographical means, the presence of other languages that are usually connected with the given artist, like a short passage in German in the case of Moholy-Nagy — or quoting lines in the original and then translating them into Hungarian; for example, in the case of W. Stevens, he first gives the Hungarian translation, then quotes a few lines in the original English, followed by English lines without translation, and finally moving into another field remembers the twentieth anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and closes the passage with a very prosaic statement on the exact time, the fact that his wife is doing overtime and he heats up the supper: lentils with smoked ribs (p. 34). This way, the abstract level of the poem — underlined by the English lines — is brought down to earth and smashed into pieces.

In *Fehérlófia*, code-switching is exploited to its utmost limits: not only does Kemenes Géfin quote world literature, other languages, he also juxtaposes highly poetic style with simple everyday statements and "re-creates" the Hungarian of the early Middle Ages, just to de-construct it with an anachronistic statement: "igg estve Kulomb-kulomb mulatozasoc es aldomasoc utanna mondua woluftram neki oz ifiont urnuc imrenec, yovel

chyac holuo camorambele hug mutuothasac nekied kipiaket szent achson sziz mariaruĭ es wimagguc w kegilmet terdin allua" (p. 48). Form is also part of the game: sometimes the text is Joycean, at other times the poet obeys the strictest rules of poetry, then changes into dialogues and scenes, thus *crossing the borders of genre* towards drama. In his attempt to give us an all-compassing vision, North America is represented not only by literary figures, but by geographical allusions, too: the street names of Toronto and Montréal are frequently mentioned. Language for Kemenes Géfin offers limitless possibilities for experimentation — he considers himself multilingual ("J'suis multilingue," p. 45).

Language is the central concern in the third part of his *Tractus Alogico-Philosophisticus* (p. 49), where he is preoccupied with the basic questions of language, touching a point which Magritte (whom we have already mentioned in connection with Robert Zend) exploited in his so-called "language-pictures" and arriving at a statement saying that "language has no limits, only thinking does." And this is exactly what the poet is trying to realize in his poetry: expanding the boundaries of language, using other languages either to say something that has not yet been said or for "duplicating." Even if it is an exact translation, in the other language we get a different text, as vital part of the whole — most often without any formal differentiation (like typesetting).

Similarly to Robert Zend and György Vitéz, language for Kemenes Géfin is of multiple importance : it is self-reflexive, a tool for crossing boundaries in space and in time offering several levels of style, a vehicle for conveying information otherwise inaccessible to non-speakers of a foreign language (via translations). All these features of language offer the poet limitless possibilities to express the complexity of this world vision which contains the Hungarian heritage as well as the North American experiences with both cultures as reflections of these impressions.

## Endre Farkas

Endre Farkas (b. 1948) belongs to a younger generation of the immigrants of 1956: his bilinguality is a childhood one, since he spent only one year of schooling in Hungary. He speaks fluent Hungarian, but never uses his first language in his creative writing, though he considers himself one of those with "forked tongues" (Farkas and Norris, 1991, p. 11). Memories of Hungarian literature and culture are of great importance for him and they are clearly reflected in his first volume of poetry, *Szerbusz*, published in 1972: the poet considers it a roots-book — but the Hungarian ties do not overshadow his Canadianness: twenty years later he says "My ambition is to be Canadian/ whatever that means" (Farkas and Norris, 1991, p. 51). Farkas is very sensitive to the question of identity and often analyzes his manifold minority status in his poems: being an English-speaking Jew of Hungarian origins in his Québec pushes him towards peoples of similar fate. He finds his situation analogous with that of the gypsies: another wandering people, sensitive to arts (music), always and everywhere a minority, forced to use a second language to be understood and accepted. All these ideas make up the essence of Farkas's poetry: trying to find a definition for his own identity which is basically Canadian (including Québec — e.g. lines in *The Scribe* "thinks in English of how to save the French," "swears in french about yankeenization of canader," (Farkas, 1979, pp. 56 and 58) with his Jewishness and Hungarianness as extras. The result is more than half a dozen of poetry volumes and several poems of Hungarian gypsy poet Károly Bari translated into English (in manuscript).

In Canadian literature, Endre Farkas considers A. M. Klein as a forerunner: another Jew in Montréal, writing in English. In a fictitious letter addressed to the older master<sup>9</sup>, Endre Farkas follows the general strategy of bilingual writing to express the experience of difference: he mentions different nationality (minority) names (Greek, Portuguese), includes words,

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9. "Letter to A. M. Klein" (Farkas, 1988, pp. 60-61).

then phrases from the other language — here it is French — to suggest the presence of different cultures and attitudes. Farkas, who — as we have already seen — considers himself a Canadian, offers a variety of practices for the alternate uses of the two official languages of the country. We can find *intrasentential* code-switching as well as *intersentential* ones. For the first type, there are two examples: "... your grandchildren, whose parents *travaillèd* so hard to escape your St. Urbain...," "... your ghetto has become *très chic!*" (p. 60) "*Travaillèd*" is *typographically* differentiated from the rest of the sentence — the French verb gets an English past tense ending. In the case of "has become *très chic*," the *verbal element* of the compound predicate is *English* while the *adverb and its attribute* is *French*. Later on, in the same letter, we can find other strategies: cliché-like French phrases inserted into the English text: "The anglos of power are still in the pentagons of Washington and the vaults of New-York. Their branch plant managers have perennial FOR SALE signs growing on their lawns because the *Anciens Canadiens* of La Belle Province have become *Gens du pays*. They find their provincial *vêtement* too confining and do not want any more hand-me-downs" (p. 61). Code-switching here — like in several other cases — serves a double purpose: it draws the attention to the *side-by-side presence* of the two language-communities (the intrasentential code-switching is especially powerful at it) and at the same time contains an element of *irony*.

Three years later, in a volume co-edited with Ken Norris, E. Farkas went one step further and made his intentions clear in the subtitle: *Howl, Too, Eh? and other satires*. Here, besides self-definition, he tries to describe the Canadian identity, too. After the introduction of the Free Trade Agreement, several things have changed, the polarities have crystallized and the poet felt endangered and thought that the country itself was in danger, too. He reminds us of events of the past: Brébeuf, "Susanna roughing it in the bush," Voltaire's description of French Canada as "quelques arpents de neige." The present, however, is like a nightmare "I had another vision/ on television: images of our politicians/meeting at Meech Lake; custom-tailored men/ dressed as real estate agents/ selling our century 21" (pp. 25-26).

His view about the possibilities of Canadians is not very optimistic.

After the Canada-problem, the poem "The Language Cops" takes us to the Québec of the early 1990s: the base language of the poem is English again, with the presence of French in a way that often *disobeys the basic rules of grammar* — like in the first sentence: *Une We are the language/ We are the real Québécois/ We stand on guard for thee/ Our dossier full with les langues laws*" (p. 43) (French article, English noun), or later on, when speaking of the West Island: "Here, la,/ Les For Sale signs are raised;" "C'est comme ça/In Tête Carré Land" (p. 45). Language intolerance makes the poet feel hopeless and he thinks that it leads to a point of no return. "For Victory is ours./ Vive Le and Vive La!/ Sens unique is the way./This is the way our battle ends./ Il a fini comme ça" (p. 47).

In "Au Canada" Endre Farkas discusses again the Canada problem, of which language is a crucial one: "We can't understand our own languages/ Canada when will we end this maudite guerre?" "Canada, after all, it's moi et toi/qui sont perfectly bilingue;" Canada I used to be an immigrant when I was a kid/now I'm an allophone./ I have bilingual visions and multicultural vibrations" (p. 49). Language usually helps in self-definition; for Canadians, it (or rather, they) mean a trap, and since language is the tool of the poet, he feels endangered. That is probably why it is of such a great importance for him not only to *use language* but also to *speak about it*.

In these examples we could see that in the case of Endre Farkas, L2 acculturation has completely taken place — his base-language is English, with a presence of L3, since he is active in Montréal, Québec. The old country is present in memories, sometimes it inspires poems (like the unedited ones about Szeged and Budapest following his visits to these towns in 1991), and translation means a link between the two: he himself translates bilingual (gypsy Hungarian) poet Károly Bari's works, and some poems by Endre Farkas have also been translated into Hungarian. To use Philip Stratford's metaphor of translation as

a bridge<sup>10</sup>, it has a two-way traffic and these poets of Hungarian roots in Canada contributed a lot to it.

As a summary of the main aspects concerning the bilingualism of these four poets of Hungarian origins and active in Canada, we can first of all state that all four of them have an *additive bilingualism*, but the base language for György Vitéz and László Kemenes Géfin is Hungarian, for Robert Zend it varies, and in the case of Endre Farkas, it is always English. The Hungarian of György Vitéz, L. Kemenes Géfin and R. Zend is standard Hungarian, not a diglossic version; *code-switching* in their case is *related to the genre* as well as a tool for *experimentation* in poetry. As G.D. Keller puts it, "literary code-switching obeys an aesthetic canon rather than a social, communicative function" (Keller, 1984, p. 188). The element of *irony* is present in the oeuvre of all the four of them and code-switching is very *consciously* used to enhance it. In contrast with everyday conversation, in poetry (and in literature, in general) code-switching is very consciously used<sup>11</sup> by the writer who is fully aware of the *extra meanings* (Keller, 1984, p. 180) or "additional features" he can add to his writing by the alternate usage of different languages. W. F. Mackey contends that "bilingualism can be an asset to the creative writer, even the writer who learns a second language as an adult" (Mackey, 1988).

Rainier Grutman worked out a system concerning the writer, the text and the reader (Grutman, 1990); my examples would fit group 8: *bilingue, bilingue, bilingue*, but I feel a further subdivision is required which takes into consideration the exact

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10. "Translation is a little observed, seldom discussed but omnipresent, subjacent fact of Canadian life. [...] [S]omeone is always translating when Canadians of different ethnic allegiances meet. Our perennial Canadian search for identity is nourished by the fact that we are forever translating ourselves to ourselves" (P. Stratford, 1983, p. 8).

11. François Grosjean states that code-switching takes place unconsciously (1982, p. 148).



bilinguality of the author and text. R. Zend is Hungarian-English bilingual and used all the three varieties in his poems: L1 (Hungarian) monolingual, L2 (English) monolingual, bilingual and created language poems. György Vitéz is also Hungarian-English bilingual, uses his L1 (Hungarian) as base-language and switches into English, French or German, but also into Latin. L. Kemenes Géfin is Hungarian-English bilingual, with L1 (Hungarian) as base-language, and switches into L2 (English) occasionally borrowing words and phrases from German. Endre Farkas is Hungarian-English bilingual, with L2 (English) as base-language, switching to French in order to create atmosphere or achieve an ironic effect, and in his case L1 is only used when he translates from his mother tongue into English.

And what about the readers of such works? To fully comprehend all the layers and indications of bi- or multi-lingual writing, of course, the *ideal reader* should also be *bi- or multilingual*. However difficult it is to achieve this state, the rewards — the intellectual experience — is worth it.

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**ABSTRACT: Poets of Bifurcated Tongues, or on the plurilingualism of Canadian-Hungarian Poets** — This article aims at an analysis of the plurilingualism of four poets of Hungarian origin, living in Canada: Robert Zend, George Vitéz, László Kemenes Géfin and Endre Farkas. Before examining the poems themselves, the various concepts of plurilingualism and the aspects of grouping these poems, including the code-switching strategies used in them, are reviewed. The base language and the nature of code-switching is discussed with a special emphasis on the relationship of grammatical units, intra- and intersentential switches within contexts where plurilingualism occurs. The first three poets have become bilinguals as adults: they form part of Hungarian literature as well as of Canadian writing. The last one, however, has a childhood bilingualism and is considered an English-Canadian Poet. Since they have a twofold minority status (Hungarian origins, plus writing in English in Montréal), analysis of these poets requires a special approach. The main hypothesis of the article is that, when using more than one language within the same work, the author is able to reach special effects which would be otherwise impossible. These poems, plurilingual in nature, also show that, for these authors, language is of multiple use: not only is language a tool of communication, but also the theme of some of their poems: they are often self-reflexive, making formal and semantic experimentation possible.

**RÉSUMÉ: Poètes à la langue fourchue ou du plurilinguisme des poètes canado-hongrois** — Cet article a pour but d'analyser le plurilinguisme de quatre poètes d'origine hongroise vivant au Canada: Robert Zend, George Vitéz, László Kemenes Géfin et Endre Farkas. Avant d'analyser les poèmes choisis, un bref aperçu est donné des différentes acceptions du concept de plurilinguisme, ainsi que des aspects suivant lesquels les poètes et leurs ouvrages pourraient être groupés, y compris les pratiques de changement de code. Quelques remarques sont faites sur la langue de

base et la qualité du changement du code: une attention particulière est consacrée aux relations avec des unités grammaticales et transphrastiques et aux contextes où ces poètes utilisent plusieurs langues. Dans notre cas, il s'agit d'adultes devenus bilingues qui, bien qu'ils soient considérés comme poètes hongrois, font également partie de la littérature canadienne. Le dernier poète analysé est considéré comme un poète anglo-canadien. Étant doublement dans une situation minoritaire (origine hongroise, écrivant en anglais dans une ville francophone), ces poètes demandent une analyse particulière. L'hypothèse principale de l'article est que, en utilisant plus d'une langue à l'intérieur du même ouvrage, l'auteur peut obtenir des effets spéciaux impossibles à atteindre autrement: l'analyse des poèmes de ces quatre auteurs montre en effet que la langue est, pour eux, un moyen d'expression multiple. Ce n'est pas seulement un moyen de communication, mais le thème de certains poèmes: elle est souvent auto-réflexive, rendant possible l'expérimentation formelle et sémantique.