Heterographics as a Literary Device

Auditory, Visual, and Cultural Features

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Abstract

Heterographics (“other lettering”) refers to the use of two scripts in one text or a translation of a text from one script to another. How might the occasional use of heterographics in literary texts highlight issues of cultural diversity? Drawing on intermedial theory and studies of literary multilingualism, literary translation, and pluriliteracies, this article examines various functions of heterographics in selected contemporary literary texts. Examples of embedded Greek, Chinese, Cyrillic, and Arabic script are analysed in works published in Swedish, French, and English between 2004 and 2015, selected because they thematise cultural diversity and linguistic boundaries. The conclusion is that heterographic devices emphasise the heteromediality of literary texts, thereby heightening readers’ awareness of the visual-spatial features of literary texts, as well as of the materiality of scripts. Heterographics influence readers’ experiences of cultural affinity or alterity, that is, of inclusion or exclusion, depending on their access to practices of pluriliteracies.

Keywords

heterographics – reading – mono- and biscriptalism – pluriliteracies – cultural diversity – World Literature

What happens when a reader encounters a word or phrase in an alien script in a literary text? How do embedded scripts—heterographics—influence the reading and understanding of a novel or poem? Considering that the author’s and reader’s lingual and scriptorial competences are not always identical, what are the possible outcomes of reading such texts? This article will address these questions within a framework which brings issues of mediality, literacy, and

cultural diversity to the fore. Its aim is to examine single, occasional instances of heterographics, associated with particular cultures and their (national) languages, in a selection of contemporary literary texts.¹

However, embedded scripts can be found throughout literary history (Damrosch; Bunčić et al.), not least in canonical modernist works such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, where Greek and Chinese scripts, respectively, are inserted into the Roman-script text. Script alternation and script hybridity are also visible in all kinds of communicative situations that involve language contacts, such as in advertisements, slogans, licence plates, and text messages (Angermeyer; A. Fischer).

These kinds of phenomena are neither new nor rare, and they ought to be of great interest to the study of world literature from the various perspectives of literary translation studies, research into translanguaging, literary multilingualism or heterolingualism, and mixed-language written discourse (Kellman; Grutman; Sebba et al.).² Yet, as Julia Tidigs and Markus Huss have noted (Tidigs and Huss 221), they seem to have been largely ignored. Furthermore, only little attention has been paid to the role of the reader in studies of heterolingualism (or multilingualism, or translanguaging) in literary texts; for example, to readers' various experiences of cultural diversity.

Nevertheless, there are encouraging exceptions: concepts of bi- or multi-scriptality and its German counterpart "*Mehrschriftlichkeit*" have recently been explored with particular reference to literary texts (Bunčić et al.; Schmitz-Emans), while concepts such as typographic landscapes and scriptworlds have been the focus of attention in special issues of *Social Semiotics* (2015) and *The Journal of World Literature* (2016). As to the role of the reader, there have been important and inspiring studies of literary multilingualism, most recently by Tidigs and Huss, who propose a multimodal approach when studying "how readers with different language skills partake in making literary multilingualism happen" (Tidigs and Huss 208). Earlier, Rainier Grutman demonstrated that it should not be taken for granted that a bilingual author also has bilin-

1 Similar issues concerning the reading of constructed languages and their made-up scripts in fantasy, science fiction, and utopian narratives fall outside the scope of this study. For a discussion of made-up scripts in literature, see Schmitz-Emans, "Mehrschriftlichkeit" and "Geschriebene," 130–4.

2 For updated overviews of research within the field of literary multilingualism, in particular within a Nordic context, see the recent dissertations by Julia Tidigs (2014) on the Finland-Swedish authors Jac. Ahrenberg and Elmer Diktonius, and Anne Karine Kleveland (2017) on the Norwegian author Kjartan Fløgstad. For a more general bibliography of scholarship related to transcultural literature, see Kellman and Lvovich.

gual readers (Grutman “Mono,” “Le Bilingualism”). Julie Hansen has emphasised the ability of translingual texts to “heighten the reader’s awareness of the medium of language and the process of reading” (Hansen “Making” 556), and Juliette Taylor-Batty has looked into modernist representations of polylingual episodes that “deliberately produce in the reader the experience of semi- or even incomprehensibility” (Taylor-Batty, 42). Such insights are also productive when it comes to examining the impact on the reader of heteroglyphics in literary texts.

My analyses will address two main questions: First, how can embedded scripts highlight various auditory, visual, and material aspects of literary texts? Second, how may the occasional use of heteroglyphics in literary texts influence readers’ experiences of cultural affinity or alterity, that is, of inclusion or exclusion? After introducing a few conceptual considerations in the first section, I will proceed by analysing the functions of embedded Greek, Chinese, Cyrillic, and Arabic scripts in a selection of contemporary literary works. All of these texts, published between 2004 and 2015, are conventionally expected to use only Roman script since they are written in Swedish (Svenbro; Kivelä), French (Kristeva), and English (Matar). They all exemplify occasional insertions of scripts in literary texts. The various uses of scripts within these texts relate explicitly to the content, or they are motivated by themes and discourses of cultural diversity; sometimes the embedded script functions as a clue for decoding a riddle or cipher.³

The auditory and visual features of heteroglyphics are then explored in the second and third sections, while the fourth section inquires into its cultural features, i.e. the importance of readers’ lingual and scriptorial competence for their various potential reading experiences of cultural affinity or alterity. I will discuss possible readings from the perspective of intermedial theory, and I will take examples of readers’ reactions and reading outcomes from public forums where authors, reviewers, and translators have made comments on the use of alien scripts and heteroglyphics.

3 See the categories suggested by Schmitz-Emans, “*Mehrschriftlichkeit*,” 183, for a more detailed examination of the highly complex phenomenon of multiscriptality in literature, or “[m]ehr- oder vielschriftliche Literatur”.

Heterographics, Heteromediality, and Pluriliteracies

Terminology presents a significant challenge within research on writing systems, lingual and scriptorial competences, and literacy. This is also the case in studies of various kinds of script worlds or linguistic, semiotic, graphic, and typographic landscapes, since there are several synonyms and many polysemous expressions in current usage (Bunčić 50).⁴ Therefore, some distinctions are necessary.

In order to designate the use of more than one script in a literary text, this article will use the term *heterographics* ("other lettering"), proposed by Charles Lock, i.e. the use of two scripts in one text or the translation of a text from one script to another (Lock "Heterographics" 97, 102). The reasons for this choice are the following ones: the term heterographics emphasises difference without specifying the languages and scripts included;⁵ it functions interdisciplinarily within textual, literary, and translation theory (Lock "Heterographics" 97); and it has ideological implications, in a similar way as modernist multilingual techniques have been ideologically motivated (Taylor-Batty 9–12, 42). Lock rightly emphasizes the ideological implications of heterographics: he refers to Stanley Morison (the typographer and print historian who developed famous typefaces such as Times New Roman) and his argument that no writing system is free from ideological purpose or political considerations.⁶ Lock concludes: "Those who look at scripts, instead of 'merely reading' them, will discover that there is nothing neutral in their constitution and that their use can never be wholly innocent" (Lock "On roman" 170).

Particularly when discussing the characteristics of texts and media, there seems to be an agreement on the use of the prefix *hetero-*, as opposed to the prefix *poly-* (as in polyglot) or *multi-* (as in multilingual).⁷ Thus, Grutman ("Refraction" 18) argues in favour of the notion of *heterolingualism* when dealing with

4 See also the suggestions for a terminology describing the use of two or more written forms of one language (*biscriptality*).

5 Cf. Calvet's use of the terms *monographism*, *bigraphism*, and *trigraphism* (Calvet 78, 35), focusing on the number of writing systems involved.

6 The more specific, ideologically imbued meaning of heterographics, touched upon by Lock ("Heterographics" 107, 109), will, however, not be in focus here. See further the sociolinguistic aspects of *hetero-graphy* (Blommaert 85–6), as well as the issue of literacies in Africa, where "a semiotic difference is converted into social inequality" (Juffermans, Abdelhay, and Asfaha 29).

7 Tidigs and Huss have, however, argued in favour of the prefix *multi-* also with regard to literature. In their thorough discussion of the meaning of multi- in literary multilingualism (215–9),

the literary use of foreign languages, rather than their use in real-life situations.⁸ Other examples of the use of the prefix “hetero-” may be found in Naoki Sakai’s discussion of the *heterolingual address* (Sakai 1–11) and in Jørgen Bruhn’s exploration of *heteromediality* (Bruhn 15).

The concept of heteromediality, proposed by Bruhn, provides an important point of departure for the present article. It “emphasizes that blending is an a priori condition in all texts,” since “[m]ixedness characterizes all medialities and all specific texts” (Bruhn 15). If regarded as a medium, a script may be characterised primarily by its visual and spatial qualities. This medium is then capable of being transmediated into a literary text, characterised by yet other medial qualities, i.e. by being auditory and temporal. Therefore, literary texts are characterised by their simultaneous visual-spatial and auditory-temporal qualities (Elleström 2010, 212–3).⁹ These particular qualities of the letters of the alphabet distinguish them not only from the special features of punctuation marks, but also from phenomena such as visual signboards (for example, traffic signs) (Adorno 300, 305; Lock “On roman” 170). Since neither of these are intended to sound or to be voiced, they have no auditory or temporal qualities.

When it comes to the readers who encounter heterographics in literary texts, they are, for the purposes of this article, supposed to be highly literate, since they qualify as readers (and in my examples even as authors, reviewers, and translators), but they may have different lingual and scriptorial competences. I will use the terms *monoscriptal* and *biscriptal reader* to designate readers with knowledge of how to decode one or two scripts.¹⁰ It is essential for my analy-

they conclude that “bi- and multilingualism are now the dominant terms in research on literary multilingualism on both sides of the Atlantic” (216, n. 2).

8 Grutman mentions also equivalents to heterolingualism in Dutch, *anderstaligheid*, and German, *Anderssprachigkeit* (“Refraction” 40, n. 1), and discusses it in a comparison with Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia (“Refraction” 19).

9 These aspects have been explored by Lars Elleström in several works. See Elleström 2010 for a more general outline of a model for understanding intermedial relations, and Elleström 2015 for a specific analysis of visual, auditory, and cognitive iconicity in a poem. For an application of Elleström’s multimodal model to the study of literary multilingualism, see Tidigs and Huss 223.

10 There might be multiscriptal readers among the biscriptal ones, but the examples of heterographics used in this article do not comprise any multiscriptal literary texts. Calvet uses the term *digraphic* when speaking of graphic environments and people who are “acquainted with the system that allows them to note down their own language and another system, which is as often as not the Latin alphabet” (Calvet 34). I will not use this term, since *digraphia* usually signifies the use of two writing systems for the same language, which is not the case in my literary examples.

ses of heterographic literary texts that this knowledge comprises decoding, in the sense of pronouncing, voicing, and understanding the meaning of words, and phrases written in a certain script, while I do not inquire into the readers' lingual competence in a more general sense.¹¹

The concept of *pluriliteracies* will also be used, inspired by an article by Ofelia García, Lesley Bartlett, and JoAnne Kleifgen, in which they develop a pluriliteracies approach. This approach makes it possible to conduct an analysis viewing literacy not as a previously attained, singular knowledge of how to read and write, but rather as manifold practices of a "continuous interplay of multiple languages, scripts, discourses, dialects, and registers" (García et al. 217). The prefix *pluri-*, as in plurilingualism and pluriliteracies, is in this case invested with the idea that linguistic tolerance should be valued (García et al. 208).¹² For the present article, it is important that practices of pluriliteracies challenge the normative and hegemonic monolingual and monoscriptal paradigm, characteristic of the "hyper-central system" of the Roman script (Calvet 78; Bunčić 330). Practices of pluriliteracies and the Roman script are both worldwide phenomena but valued differently in regard to power relations.

By combining the concepts of heterographics, heteromediality, and pluriliteracies as the point of departure for analyses of heterographics in literary texts, and by taking into account the fact that readers' scriptorial competence may differ, my intention is to propose an approach that allows for varied understandings and reading outcomes, especially concerning experiences of cultural affinity or alterity.

Reading as Voicing and Hearing—Auditory Features of Heterographics

Within a European context, practices of reading aloud have existed simultaneously or alternatively with practices of silent reading, depending on con-

11 A monoscriptal reader may be bilingual without knowing the script of the second language, or a bисcriptal reader may be a poor speaker of the language represented by means of heterographics, but such cases will not be discussed in this article.

12 The notion of multiliteracy would not be suitable in this case, since it designates literacy in various media rather than in various scripts. According to García et al., the term pluriliteracies has a broader scope: "a *pluriliteracies approach* captures not only literacy continua with different interrelated axes, but also an emphasis on *literacy practices in sociocultural contexts*, the *hybridity* of literacy practices afforded by new technologies, and the increasing *interrelationship of semiotic systems*" (García et al. 215; emphasis in original).

text and situation, insofar as we have reliable records (S.R. Fischer; Saenger). As media theorist Friedrich Kittler has demonstrated, ever since the alphabetisation campaigns and “the phonetic method from the Mother’s Mouth” in the early nineteenth century, Western readers have learned to imagine that they *hear* what they are merely reading by sight, that a voice, “as pure as it is transcendental, rises from between the lines” (Kittler 65). Kittler states that the alphabet was translated in this way from visual to audible language, and that the “revolution of the European alphabet was its oralization” (Kittler 32–33). There is evidence to suggest that reading aloud was preferred and taught as late as in the 1960s, guided by the principle that “language is sound” (van Kalmthout, esp. 153, 149). Even in the kind of silent reading which is sometimes called “mental reading” (van Kalmthout 152), it is conventionally presupposed or imagined that the reader experiences an inner voice.¹³ As the following examples demonstrate, however, the view that a reading needs to be voiced has crucial implications for the reading of heterographic texts.

The review of a recent Swedish poetry collection by the poet, essayist, and philologist Jesper Svenbro (b. 1944), entitled *Ekeby trafikförening* (The Traffic Society of Ekeby, 2015), discusses how heterographic text may challenge monoscriptal readers since they are unable to read it aloud. Set in southern Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s, the collection enacts discussions of a group of friends who appear under the names of Pre-Socratic philosophers. The reviewer, Stina Otterberg, expresses frustration at the many words rendered in Greek script because they were not transcribed according to “our alphabet,” i.e. the Roman one (Otterberg). She argues that although the words in Greek script might function within the poems as “beautiful emblems,” the use of this device excludes the majority of readers, who are not familiar with Greek (unlike the author, who is a well-known philologist). The collection also contains several phrases in Danish, English, French, and German; yet the reviewer does not express any objection to the poems’ overall macaronic features. Thus, phrases in a foreign language *per se* were not a problem, but rather the words in Greek script, due to their particular silencing effect. According to this reviewer, monoscriptal Swedish readers would not be able to decode or pronounce these heterographic words, but only view them as one admires emblems, or as one is intrigued by the visual appearance of “mysterious rune stones.”¹⁴

13 While there are conventions saying that reading is not only to grasp the meaning of the text, but also to listen to it—aloud or silently, by means of your mind’s ear—there are of course also other methods of reading, such as speed reading, where subvocalization is eliminated.

14 In Swedish: “Visst kan orden ändå ha funktionen av vackra emblem eller runstenslika

The next example concerns Chinese script, which is of decisive importance for the plot of Julia Kristeva's detective novel *Meurtre à Byzance* (2004) (*Murder in Byzantium*, 2005), which investigates the role of Byzantium for contemporary Europe (Bodin). Western literary modernism has had a special relationship with Chinese script ever since Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, and French post-structuralism expressed a desire for Chinese utopias and a profound interest in Chinese script (Lowe 136–89; Bachner 24–33). Such was the case when Kristeva engaged with Chinese culture and language in the 1970s. The Chinese script in her so-called “Byzantine novel” must be regarded as a late manifestation of this.

One of many examples of the use of heterographics through embedded Chinese script in *Meurtre à Byzance* is found in a quotation from Lao Zi. One of its phrases is rendered in Chinese script and transcribed into Pinyin: “*celui qui est expert à prendre soin de sa vie, à ménager sa vie* (攝生, *she sheng*)” (Kristeva *Meurtre* 233). Later in the novel, this phrase is rendered as “[s]e confondre avec le flux de la vie—*she sheng*: 攝生 ‘nourrir la vie’” (Kristeva *Meurtre* 325).¹⁵ The alias of one of the murderers is also rendered in Chinese script: “Xiao Chang, alias *Wuxian*: 無限, autrement dit l’Infini” (Kristeva *Meurtre* 333).¹⁶ The murderer leaves a message in Chinese script, which is discussed in a dialogue between two of the fictional characters (Kristeva *Meurtre* 247–8; *Murder* 155–7). Various possible meanings of this message are considered before a coherent interpretation is presented to the reader. The latter is thus invited to participate in deciphering the often complex meanings of Chinese characters in order to solve the crime.

In these examples of heterographics, Chinese characters are inserted into the French text, but they are also transcribed into Pinyin in Roman script, and marked in italics as in the quotations above (for more examples, see Kristeva *Meurtre* 330, 332; *Murder* 214, 216). Hence it becomes possible for monoscriptal readers to voice and hear them.¹⁷ Especially with spoken dialogue, the sounds

hemligheter i texten—men greppet blir uteslutande” (Otterberg). All translations from the Swedish are my own.

- 15 Since the first quotation is rendered in italics in Kristeva's French novel, its transcription in Pinyin is in regular font style. In English: “Those who are filled with life” (Kristeva *Murder* 147) and “[t]o blend with the flux of life—*she sheng*: 攝生, ‘to nourish life’” (Kristeva *Murder* 210). The quotation is from Lao Zi, *Dao De Jing*, ch. 50. I am grateful to Immy Schweiger at Stockholm University for help with the Chinese characters.
- 16 In English: “Xiao Chang, alias *Wuxian*: 無限, in other words, the Infinite” (Kristeva *Murder* 216).
- 17 It should, however, be noted that the transcription does not include the necessary markers of tone, which are indispensable in Chinese.

and meanings of the written lines need to be, according to convention, potentially performable. One possible explanation of Kristeva's transcription of the Chinese characters is therefore that they must be rendered as audible, in order for the dialogues to be credible also for monoscriptal readers.

While the transcription of Chinese into Pinyin comprises a kind of westernised adaptation of Chinese, the effect on the novel as a whole is the opposite: due to its use of heteroglyphics, it becomes orientalist and exoticised as it is inscribed with Chinese characters. As Andrea Bachner observes in *Beyond Sinology* (2014), Chinese calligraphy and language exemplify for Kristeva "the materiality of signification," which she sees "as erased in much of Western culture" (Bachner 25). This materiality is also brought out by the heteroglyphics as the Chinese characters are rendered on the pages of the novel.

In the cases of Svenbro's poems and Kristeva's novel, the literary device of heteroglyphics involves the auditory features of reading, though in opposite ways. Simultaneously, their use of heteroglyphics raises issues of excluding or including monoscriptal readers. While a monoscriptal reader can be troubled and thus excluded by Svenbro's heteroglyphic poems because of their silencing effect on the reading, all readers will be able to voice the heteroglyphic dialogues in Kristeva's novel. The Chinese characters are inserted in order to fulfil Kristeva's wish to reinstate the materiality of signification in her French novel. They do not impede or exclude monoscriptal readers since there is also a westernising transcription into Pinyin.

Reading as Looking at Signboards—Visual Features of Heteroglyphics

A script unknown to the reader activates visual rather than auditory perception. In this section, I will further examine the visual features of heteroglyphic texts in order to determine whether words and phrases in an embedded script may function as visual signboards within the text, and I will discuss how this may affect readers' experiences of cultural affinity or alterity.

In calligraphy, the visual aspects of script are taken to an extreme. This has prompted the comparatist Sakai to pose the following questions in his discussion of translation and subjectivity; these questions are equally relevant to analyses of heteroglyphics in literary texts: "Is a calligraphic text verbal or non-verbal? Is it a text to see or a text to read? Is it possible to translate a calligraphic text?" (Sakai 10). Likewise, Lock asks how a script can be distinguished from an ornament: "what are the markers that, for the uninformed, might distinguish the graphic from the decorative?" (Lock "On roman" 159). Therefore, calligraphy

raises vital questions in connection with heterographic texts, which confront monoscriptal readers with elements they can only view and not voice, whether aloud or silently (by means of the mind's ear or an inner voice).¹⁸

Issues of calligraphy and scripts in relation to the visual and auditory aspects of a literary text have also been addressed by the Turkish writer and Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk, in the context of the art exhibition "Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking" at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2006). Pamuk's short text on this topic is entitled "The Old Meaning Speaks Out" and fills two pages of the exhibition catalogue. Here, "the old meaning" of a literary text—conventionally perceived as one of the text's intrinsic qualities—speaks in the first person, i.e. as an "I." The text protests intensely against being regarded as only one among many calligraphic items on display at the exhibition: "Look—the only reason I'm here is to mean something. But you look at me like I'm just an object" (Pamuk 28). Viewing a text as if it were a picture is not enough to grasp its meaning, according to this "old meaning." Nonetheless, the text is in the hands of the readers, at the mercy of their vocal cords and voices, since by itself it can "speak out" (Pamuk 28) only by visual means. In this way, the historical *paragone* debate between word and image, between verbal and visual arts (Mitchell 49), is expressed anew in Pamuk's prose contribution to the art exhibition at MoMA, in which the visual treatment of texts is scrutinised.

The novel *Du eller aldrig* (You or Never, 2006) by the Finland-Swedish author Malin Kivelä (b. 1974) is another literary text that brings visual and material aspects to the fore by means of heterographics. In this case, there are several embedded phrases in Cyrillic script; I will analyse one representative example.

The female protagonist-narrator of Kivelä's novel, Aija, leads a circumscribed and uneventful life in central Helsinki. As noted by Kristina Malmio, she has an intense interest in signboards, such as commercial signs, and numerical data, such as prices of products and figures in the news (Malmio 310). Aija merely registers the surrounding world and never describes complex emotions or feelings, except for what can be observed physically, through measurement for example. Her obsession with written text suggests that it might be her notes—her own written records of what she sees in the city and reads in books—that are presented in the novel. A Russian dictionary is also important for her lifestyle. She keeps it in a secret box associated with a previous trauma and disturbing memories, perhaps—the narrative suggests—of a lost or abandoned child.

18 For a discussion of noise as a potential outcome of readings of literary multilingual texts, see Tidigs and Huss.

Of the many signboards and advertisements registered by Aija, one is in Russian. It hangs above the door of a tent in central Helsinki, where a Russian man, who catches Aija's interest, works. The novel conveys this signboard in its Cyrillic script: "Печёные каштаны" (roasted chestnuts) (Kivelä 23). No translation is given until some thirty pages later, where it is mentioned first in Latin, marked in italics, "*Castanea sativa*" (Kivelä 61), and then in Swedish: "Rostade kastanjer" (Kivelä 65). Since the phrase in Cyrillic is never transliterated, monoscriptal swedophone readers are unable to voice its words. If they tried, the phonetics of the Roman alphabet might lead them to mispronounce some of the letters (such as ё and н), while other letters specific to the Cyrillic alphabet (such as ч, ы, and ш) would likely remain opaque. Monoscriptal readers are thus compelled to view the phrase in Cyrillic script as a visual signboard. However, it is rendered exclusively in script, by means of heterographics, without any kind of conventional pictorial devices, such as a frame or the form of an illustration. Russian culture and multilingual practices in Helsinki are thus not only represented as part of the story, i.e. thematised or referred to, but they are rendered materially present in Kivelä's novel. By means of this heterographic device, all readers, mono- and biscriptal ones alike, are faced with an iconic representation of the Russian signboard, generally pointing to Russian culture.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the signboard in Cyrillic marks not only the entrance to the tent in Helsinki where roasted chestnuts are sold. On a meta-level, it also marks the linguistic and cultural boundary between the pluriliteracies approach of Kivelä's novel and the lingual and scriptal competence of its swedophone readers, the vast majority of whom are monoscriptal. The protagonist Aija eventually assists them in overcoming this obstacle when she looks up the words in her Russian dictionary (Kivelä 65, 69, 76–7).²⁰ This leads the reader to further knowledge—of these particular Russian words, but also implicitly of Aija's background since she must have learned the Russian alphabet earlier in life. The heterographic phrase in Kivelä's novel thus functions as a riddle, shared by the protagonist-narrator and the reader until the former solves it for both. In this way, the reader becomes involved in Aija's registering and writing activities. The analysis of Kivelä's use of heterographics thus reinforces an interpretation

19 On this device, see further Andreas Fischer's article on print advertising, where he demonstrates that words or phrases in alien scripts may be used "to iconically indicate the presence of the culture identified with that alphabet" in a context where the writing norm implies the use of a certain script (Fischer 268).

20 See Grutman's exploration of the device of translation, allowing the bilingual writer to communicate with monolingual readers in the code that they both share (Grutman "Mono" 210).

of the novel as a fictional document, identical with Aija's many notes, written in both Roman and Cyrillic letters. The question of Aija's enigmatic trauma, obscurely associated with something Russian and perhaps with a lost baby, remains unresolved, since it is never cured.

In her article on translingual literature, Hansen argues for an approach "which does not take linguistic or cultural boundaries for granted," focusing more on "[the] space between languages, in which the reader's interaction with the text becomes more visible" (Hansen "Translating" 115). My analysis implies that Kivelä's heterographic novel offers just such a space, where linguistic and cultural boundaries are not stable but negotiated by the reader. In this case, it is in the space between the *scripts* that the reader's interaction with the text takes place, highlighting its visual and material features.

In Pamuk's text, the "old meaning" could only speak out if the reader stopped viewing it as an object or piece of calligraphy and asked instead for its verbal meaning. In Kivelä's novel, the protagonist-narrator serves as a model for monoscriptal readers by looking up the Russian words in Cyrillic script in her dictionary in order to decode the message of the signboard. In this case, the visual and material aspects of the heterographic phrases in Cyrillic script remain the primary ones. The words in embedded Cyrillic are only translated into Swedish and never transliterated into Roman script.²¹ While the signboard in Cyrillic remains silent to monoscriptal readers, the same readers are not excluded from grasping its meaning.

Reading Alterity—Cultural Features of Heterographics

Literary representations of interlingual encounters tend to foreground difference and problems of intercultural communication (Taylor-Batty 40). Elke Sturm-Trigonakis draws the following conclusion in her exploration of multilingualism as a poetic strategy in relation to monolingual readers: "[A]lterity is

21 Kivelä's novel also contains Russian words that are rendered only in Roman script, not in Cyrillic. Such cases occur mostly in sparse dialogues conducted partly in English, partly in Russian (Kivelä 62, 107, 126, 143–5, 157, 169–72), recalling the way in which Kristeva used not only Chinese characters but also Pinyin in dialogues, in order to make them performable. I have found only one example of a word rendered in both Roman and Cyrillic script in Kivelä's novel, "Tax free (ТАКС ФРИ)", on a signboard on a building Aija passes during a walk (Kivelä 163). It is presumably written in both scripts, which would mean that she does not produce this transliteration herself, but merely copies what she sees on the signboard.

experienceable by readers quasi ‘firsthand’ during the reading process, because they do not read *about* experiences of alterity, but they read alterity *directly* and without any intermediaries” (Sturm-Trigonakis 107; my italics). This point is applicable not only to multilingual, but also to heterographic devices in literary texts—particularly with regard to their implications for readers’ experiences of cultural affinity or alterity.

As I have demonstrated above, there are cases involving alien scripts and heterographics in which a mode of reading different from that of voicing the text is both possible and fruitful. When monoscriptal readers are confronted with a heterographic word, they are able to process it as a non-framed pictorial illustration, or as a visual signboard, situated within the literary text. This is because the device of heterographics does not primarily thematise or refer to experiences of biscriptality, but renders them present within the text by means of the visual and material features of the embedded script. From Sturm-Trigonakis’s conclusion on multilingualism as a poetic strategy in literary texts, one could infer that heterographic words can, in a similar way, prompt monoscriptal readers to experience cultural alterity directly. When the appearance in the text of an embedded script for a moment impedes their reading (in the sense of voicing the text), they read alterity directly, without intermediaries, instead of reading *about* experiences of alterity.

Yet there are cases when an alien script that remains silent to a monoscriptal reader may be perceived as challenging in a positive way. Svenbro, whose Swedish collection of poetry was discussed above, was only a boy when he unexpectedly lost his father, a clergyman in the Church of Sweden. In an interview, he mentions his childhood fascination with the copy of the New Testament written in Greek that had belonged to his father. Looking at its script, which he did not understand, he felt as if he were standing before something “completely impenetrable,” and so he decided to learn this alphabet as a way of communicating with his dead father (Svensson).²² A similar experience has been described by another Swedish writer, Pooneh Rohi (b. 1982 in Iran), author of the novel *Araben* (The Arab, 2014). In a short essay, she recalls her mother’s books on the shelves in their living room. Because she could not read the Arabic letters in their titles, they were silent to her. Yet she felt that the Arabic script gave more weight and value to these books than the Roman script did

22 In Swedish: “Jag såg de här grekiska bokstäverna. Det var helt ogenomträngligt. Jag förstod ingenting. På något drömartat sätt blev det som en metafor för kommunikationen med min döde far. Jag måste lära mig detta för att upprätta en kommunikation med de döda, min far i första hand” (Svensson).

to other books: "There was something more than books on those shelves. I felt it strongly. A kind of value. [...] The books on my mother's shelves stood few and far between, but were all the more weighty."²³

As Svenbro's and Rohi's recalled reactions to Greek and Arabic scripts demonstrate, monoscriptal readers may be attracted by the silence and visual forms of alien scripts even if—or perhaps precisely because—they are unable to understand the actual meaning of the words. Furthermore, these examples show that alien scripts may carry emotional significance for the perceiver. In the above examples, they are associated by children with parents, or imbued with their absence, and perhaps also charged with the parents' cultural origin or profession.

The issue of languages and scripts associated with parents is likewise central to the anglophone novel *Anatomy of a Disappearance* (2011) by the translingual Libyan author Hisham Matar (b. 1970). It tells the story of a teenage boy, Nuri, whose dissident father exiled in Cairo suddenly disappears and never returns. In an earlier passage, set on a boat travelling up the Nile to Luxor, a single line in Arabic script is inserted. By diving into the river from the steamer and then swimming fast to catch up with it, Nuri and his father attract the attention of several bystanders on deck. They complete their performance by switching between several languages: "[W]e relished the questions we imagined our appearances and accents, our tongues that switched comfortably from Arabic to English to French, provoked in others" (Matar 70). Both French and Arabic are rendered in the dialogue:

'Ça, c'était vraiment rafraîchissant,' Father called out from the deck.

And knowing full well his purpose, I replied, 'Ah oui, c'était superbe.'

'يجب أن نتذكر دائماً أن الحياة للأحياء، يابني.'

MATAR 70

Since the heterographic phrase in this case renders a line within a spoken dialogue, it needs to be both voiced and interpreted in order to make sense as part of the story. It is not sufficient for the monoscriptal reader to appreciate its ornamental qualities. Nothing is added to facilitate an interpretation of the Arabic line for the anglophone, monoscriptal reader: there is neither a translation nor a transcription. Such readers' non-understanding of the remark in

23 In Swedish: "Det fanns någonting mer än böcker i de där hyllorna. Jag kände det tydligt. Ett slags värde. [...] Böckerna i min mammas hyllor stod glest men vägde desto mer." (Rohi) On Rohi's novel and the notion of home, see further Wulff.

Arabic mirrors—and inverts—the role played in the novel by the admiring bystanders on the boat. These are children and men who—unlike anglophone readers—seem to be monolingual Arabic speakers, since they are “provoked” and excluded when the father and his son speak English and French (Matar 69–70). Furthermore, the line in Arabic offers a cue for the boat’s captain to join in the conversation with Nuri’s father.

In this context, readers who do not understand Arabic might conjecture that the heterographic phrase conveys a repetition of the previous line in French, but this is not the case since it translates as “We must always remember that life is for [the] living, my son!”²⁴ Perhaps this exhortation is merely a hackneyed saying, but it would nevertheless serve to convey the son’s feeling of affinity with his father, partly based on their shared multilingual skills, an affinity that on a meta-level is shared also with the bicultural readers. At the same time, bicultural readers can understand the heterographic phrase as ominous, since it underlines the tension between life and death, and foreshadows the disappearance of Nuri’s father who speaks these words and obviously enjoys life.²⁵

The exchange between father and son constitutes a significant moment in the story, and it is conveyed partly in Arabic, the language which Matar has described as the one of his own childhood (Matar “I don’t remember”; Gana; Doshi). He also recalls that Arabic was of great importance to his father, Jaballa Matar, and that its religious and political potential was often discussed at home (Matar “I don’t remember”). Matar’s numerous reflections on the use of Ara-

24 This conjecture was expressed by the Turkish translator (alias “ironjawedangel”) of *Anatomy of a Disappearance* who asked for help with this single line in Arabic on WordReference Forums, 27 Aug. 2016: “The french [sic] sentence is about how refreshing it was to swim in the river, so I guess the arabic [sic] sentence can be similar.” Another user’s response presents a translation, “We must always remember that life is for living [beings], my son,” and adds a short discussion of the somewhat opaque meaning, in this case, of “living” in Arabic: “I think the intent might have been ‘life is for living’ [...]—but the English gerund ‘living’ got mistranslated in Arabic as living beings/things” (WordReference Forums). A similar English translation, “Life is for living, my son,” has also been suggested by Tasnim Qutait in a blog post (Qutait “notes”). The translation above is my own, with the kind help of Astrid Ottosson al-Bitar at Stockholm University.

25 There is also the possibility that this line alludes to a famous poem, “Note in Music,” by the black American poet Langston Hughes: “Life is for the living. / Death is for the dead. / Let life be like music. / And death a note unsaid” (Hughes 200). This poem may also allude to the saying, but in the context of Matar’s novel, the intertext it provides strengthens the interpretation of the heterographic phrase as ominous.

bic and on issues of language suggest that the effects on the reader of the heterographic phrase in Arabic in *Anatomy of a Disappearance* are worthy of examination.

Moreover, the heterographic phrase indicates a prominent and recurring theme in all three of Matar's novels—in addition to *Anatomy of a Disappearance*, *In the Country of Men* (2006) and the autobiographical *The Return: Fathers, Sons, and the Land in Between* (2016). Tasnim Qutait examines Matar's works in her dissertation on nostalgia in Anglo-Arab literature (Qutait "The Pathos"). She also demonstrates in an article on patrilineality and nationalism in Arab British fiction that Matar focuses particularly on the conflicted relationship between a lost or disappeared nationalist-and-patriot father (who may symbolise the lost homeland) and his son, who grows up in exile and is unable to inherit and continue his father's work (Qutait "Like his father"). I would add to Qutait's conclusion that in the particular case of heterographics in *Anatomy of a Disappearance*, Matar conveys the importance of language choice, including script, for portraying the relationship between a dissident father and his son in exile. Although the use of Arabic is not explicitly thematised in this novel, Arabic is visually present through its script and becomes materialised in print in the dialogue between father and son.

My analysis of *Anatomy of a Disappearance* has demonstrated that, for monoscriptal readers, the heterographic phrase may function variously as a visual ornament, a provocation excluding them from understanding what the father says, or as a simple, insignificant exhortation. For biscriptal readers, it may instead express affinity between the father and his son, pose a riddle, or function as an omen. Monoscriptal readers are in this case prone to experience alterity, while biscriptal readers become included—for better or for worse—so that they may experience the affinity between the father and his son, conveyed in Arabic, but also the ominous character of the saying in Arabic that is pointing to the father's subsequent disappearance.

Readers' potential interpretations of this episode and its significance for the story thus differ in culturally diverse ways, as does their experience of exclusion or inclusion during the reading process. It would be simplistic, however, to conclude that monoscriptal readers are necessarily excluded from taking part in a heterographic text's content and overall meaning, and that biscriptal readers are necessarily included. As the examples from the childhood of Svenbro and Rohi demonstrate, even the silence of an alien script may be perceived as both a challenge and a temptation.

Conclusion

As my analyses have demonstrated, heterographic texts can be read in different ways, depending on the reader's access to practices of pluriliteracies. Monoscriptal readers unable to decode, voice, and understand the embedded script, tend to oscillate between the visual-spatial and auditory-temporal modalities of the heterographic text, while biscriptal readers may transmediate heterographic passages into an auditory-temporal performance and thereby continue to combine visual and auditory perceptions in order to make sense of the literary text. In this way, heterographic devices intensify readers' awareness of the visual-spatial features of scripts and emphasise the heteromedial dimensions of literary texts.

Moreover, we have seen that literary uses of heterographics contribute to heightening readers' awareness not only of the medium of language and of the reading process (as is the case with translingual literary texts), but also of the fact that language in literary texts is mediated through scripts, which are never free from ideological purpose. A heterographic literary text therefore comprises not so much a case where a biscriptal author's work encounters and challenges a monoscriptal reader's reading and understanding on an individual level, but rather an example of the clash between practices of pluriliteracies and a normative monolingual and monoscriptal paradigm (in this article represented by the Roman script).

My conclusion is that heterographics as a literary device serves to render present to readers a multilingual, multiscriptal, and culturally diverse world where pluriliteracies are practiced. Since the embedded script renders an alien culture visually and materially in the text, monoscriptal readers who are confronted with heterographics may experience cultural alterity directly rather than vicariously. Nevertheless, the experience of cultural alterity does not necessarily entail lasting effects of exclusion, but may rather lead to inclusion, as we have seen in examples of literary texts in which readers are invited to decipher messages presented by means of heterographics (Kristeva; Kivelä). Other examples have shown how readers may experience cultural affinity based on practices of pluriliteracies shared with the author and portrayed in the poems and novels by means of the fictional characters' lingual and scriptorial skills (Svenbro; Matar). Pluriliteracies approaches answer in these cases the challenge of heterographics by offering the reader possibilities to negotiate and transgress linguistic and cultural boundaries in ways that involve perceptions of scripts as material and literature as heteromedial.

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