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## 12

# Hyper-Intentional Hybridity as Aesthetic Principle in Contemporary German-Speaking Prose

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## THE BAKHTINIAN CONCEPT OF LITERARY HYBRIDITY

The term hybridity usually refers to critical studies dealing with the intersection of cultural codes related to phenomena of colonialism, post-colonialism, and migration. Key words here are 'pidginisation' and 'creolisation'—linguistic phenomena that 'preserve the real historical forms of cultural contact' (Young 2002, 5) in documenting processes of superimposition and marginalisation within the medium of language itself. Pidginisation is the phenomenon of colonised or marginalised groups articulating themselves in the language of the hegemonic culture in a rudimentary and irregular form, due to the necessity of having a shared code; e.g. 'pidgin English' in U.S. American slave cultures (Mein 2004, 206). Creolisation, on the contrary, is the 'process of one ethnic group, confronted by another, hegemonic culture, at first being bilingual and in the long run collectively melting their mother tongue with the new language into an autonomous monolingual creole language'; whereas pidgin languages are established 'as helpful constructs next to existing, fully developed languages', creole languages are to be considered as 'independent new languages that are even capable of



suppressing existing languages in the same area and will be taught to descendants' (Erfurt 2003, 22–23).

One of the most prominent literary scholars conceptualising not only linguistic but also cultural hybridity is Homi K. Bhabha, who discusses it with regard to post-colonial encounters (in the U.S.), developing the oft-quoted concepts of the 'third space' and 'inbetweenness' (Bhabha 1994). Bhabha claims that hybridity constitutes (or rather 'is') a 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge (Bhabha 1990, 211): 'The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation' (ibid.). The second line of productive application, more relevant to the study of linguistics and literature (although less explicitly interested in power structures and processes of cultural and political hegemony), originates from the literary critic and language theorist Michail Bakhtin's theory of the novel, namely his aesthetic concepts of 'hybridity', 'dialogism' and 'heteroglossia' (as pre-post-colonial terminology).

In response to the question, 'What is hybridisation?' Bakhtin writes, '[i]t is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor' (Bakhtin 2002, 358). According to Robert Young, the term hybridity should refer to, 'the condition of language's fundamental ability to be simultaneously the same but different' (Young 2002, 20). This insight is often identified in literary theory with so-called 'Romantic Irony' (ibid.). The most important effects of romantic irony in nineteenth and twentieth century literature are disillusionment (the destruction of illusions, e.g. of a harmonic synthesis of different cultures or cultural interests), and critical distancing (from reality or one's own narration). In the twentieth century, (romantic) irony was treated as a much-debated concept by post-structuralist thinkers Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida, amongst others, 'who point to it as a general characteristic of language, a non-decidable oscillation in which it becomes impossible to tell which is the primary

meaning' (ibid.). Bakhtin refers to 'hybridization' to conceptualise a related idea, namely to describe the ability of one voice to ironise and unmask the other within the same utterance (ibid.; also see Konuk 2001). The decisive characteristic of this phenomenon of so-called 'double-speech' can be characterised as follows:

What we are calling a hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and axiological belief systems. We repeat, there is no formal—compositional and syntactic—boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a single sentence, within one utterance then two speech manners, two styles two semantic and axiological belief systems are mixed. (Bakhtin 1981, 304)

Bakhtin calls this phenomenon 'intentional hybridity'. Its counterpart is termed 'organic hybridity', a form of unconscious (or non-intentional) hybridity (Young 2002, 21), which tends towards fusion in that two or more cultural codes merge into one, turning into a new code. There is, however, no conscious intellectual intention or activity involved. The example that Young uses here is that of linguistic 'creolization' (ibid.).

Organic hybridity is also, in contrast to intentional hybridity, non-dialogical (Bakhtin 1981, 360). Young has emphasised that Bakhtin's two forms of hybridity offer a new model for cultural interaction:

Bakhtin's doubled form of hybridity therefore offers a particularly significant dialectical model for cultural interaction: an organic hybridity, which will tend towards fusion, in conflict with intentional hybridity, which enables a contestatory activity, a politicised setting of cultural differences against each other dialogically. Hybridity therefore... involves an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism, with the unconscious set against the intentional, the organic against the devious, the generative against the undermining. (Young 2002, 22)



Bakhtin emphasises that intentional hybridity aims at presenting—and at the same time linguistically performing—cultural conflicts. Within a single discourse, one voice may unmask the other (ibid.). This dynamic leads to the destruction or undermining of authority, because authoritative discourse, and Young is here arguing with Bakhtin, has to be singular, since it is 'by its nature' incapable of being double-voiced (ibid.; Bakhtin 1981, 344 and 360). This thesis is of high relevance to the literary texts that will be discussed later. According to Bakhtin, of all the literary genres, dialogism is most prominent in the novel. One reason he names is that the writer or narrator can use language as a tool—not to 'speak in a given language' but to speak 'as it were, *through* language' (Bakhtin 1981, 229):

Thus a prose writer can distance himself from the language of his own work, while at the same time distancing himself, in various degrees, from the different layers and aspects of the work. He can make use of language without wholly giving himself up to it, he may treat it as semi-alien or completely alien to himself, while compelling language ultimately to serve all his own intentions. (Bakhtin, 299)

Introducing the speech of another into the author's discourse often appears in '*concealed form*, that is, without any of the *formal* markers usually accompanying such speech' (ibid., 303). According to Bakhtin, this technique results in a 'parodistic stylisation' (ibid., 301). Bakhtin mainly refers to classical nineteenth century novels, and uses the language of ceremonial speeches, official banquets or court language as examples for the parody of a certain, often old-fashioned or reactionary mode of speaking (ibid., 303). He emphasises (as we will see later) that 'boundaries are deliberately flexible and ambiguous, often passing through a single syntactic whole, often through a simple sentence, and sometimes even dividing up the main parts of a sentence' (ibid., 308). The general term for these various forms of alienated speech is the Grecism 'heteroglossia', which is defined as '*another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*' (ibid., 324).

In this article I will apply the Bakhtinian concepts of hybridity and dialogism to contemporary German-speaking prose. These texts reflect various power structures of race, gender, and class-related hierarchies that are not merely represented within literature but also critically displayed through the means of a linguistic juxtaposition, or rather: linguistic clash. All four authors I will deal with—the Austrian novelist and dramatist Elfriede Jelinek, the German writers Thomas Meinecke and Marcel Beyer as well as the Turkish-German author Feridun Zaimoglu—are considered 'language acrobats' in literary criticism. Their writing cannot simply be characterised using Bakhtin's concept of 'intentional hybridity'—the juxtaposition of different cultural spheres and codes is so obvious that it does not need to be deciphered by literary criticism in the first place. I have therefore chosen the term 'hyper-intentional hybridity' to describe a heightened form of hybridity that consciously exposes and as such aims to profoundly irritate the reader and his cultural self-understanding. All four writers work with language and specific idioms in a highly elaborate manner, combining and confronting semantics and codes from disparate origins and cultural spheres.

I will focus especially on hybridisations of 'high' and 'low' culture in order to show that they are usually contrasted by antagonistically setting distinct poetic language against slang or urban street talk. Another level of comparison will be the respective clash between the intellectual realm and the sphere of bodily and sexual functions that is also to be found in all texts. Interestingly, this focus on sexuality is thematically related to the concept of hybridity itself. As Young has pointed out: 'The historical links between language and sex were ... fundamental. Both produced what were regarded as 'hybrid' forms (creole, pidgin and miscegenated children), which were seen to embody threatening forms of perversion and degeneration and became the basis for endless metaphoric extension in the racial discourse of social commentary' (Young 2002, 6), especially in the nineteenth century. I will not go into details with regard to this vexing correspondence between language and sexuality, but considered it necessary to be mentioned as a further argument for my choice of theme.



THE LINGUISTIC CONTAMINATION OF 'HIGH CULTURE':  
AESTHETIC HYBRIDITY AND GENDER DISCOURSE IN  
CONTEMPORARY GERMAN-SPEAKING PROSE

Elfriede Jelinek: 'Die Klavierspielerin' ('The Piano Teacher')  
and 'Lust'

The prose texts of Nobel Prize winner Elfriede Jelinek are illuminating with regard to the theme of this volume because of her extensive work with intentional hybridity and heteroglossia. *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983, translated as 'The Piano Teacher'), Jelinek's early and still most famous novel, is a shocking portrait of a woman bound between a repressive society and her darkest desires. Erika Kohut, a piano teacher at the prestigious Vienna Conservatory, still lives with her domineering and possessive mother. Depicted are two highly neurotic female characters, who hate each other but still cannot live without their 'partner'. Specific to Jelinek's style is the forceful but intangible narrative voice that constantly shifts between an interior and an exterior perspective. Authorial comments are interwoven into the characters' perspectives, fundamentally manipulating the reader; the narrative mode depicts and performs a micro-politics of power that the text wants to deconstruct by linguistic means (Benthien 2010).

Another goal of Jelinek's writing is the unmasking of so-called 'trivial myths', such as nature, sexuality and high art—here she is explicitly referring to Roland Barthes' concept used in one of her essays (Jelinek 1980; Barthes 1972). The first example for this strategy taken from a scene where Erika and her mother take a day trip to the *Wienerwald* (the Vienna Woods):

*Die beiden Damen schreiten rüstig fürbaß. Ein Lied singen sie nicht, weil sie, die etwas von Musik verstehen, die Musik nicht mit ihrem Gesang schänden wollen. Es sei wie zu Eichendorffs Zeiten, trällert die Mutter, denn auf den Geist, auf die Einstellung zur Natur komme es an! Nicht auf die Natur selber. Diesen Geist besitzen die beiden Damen, denn sie vermögen sich an Natur zu erfreuen, wo immer sie ihrer ansichtig werden. Kommt ein rieselndes Bächlein daher, wird daraus auf der Stelle frisches Wasser getrunken. Hoffentlich hat kein Reh hineingepißt. Kommt ein dicker Baumstamm oder ein dichtes Untergehölz, dann kann man selbst*

*hineinpissen, und der jeweils andere paßt auf, daß keiner kommt und frech zuschaut. | Bei diesem Tun tanken die beiden Kohuts Energie für eine neue Arbeitswoche, in der die Mutter wenig zu tun hat und der Tochter von Schülern das Blut ausgesogen wird. (Jelinek 1986, 35–6)*

(The two women stride along, hale and hearty. They never sing, because, knowing a thing or two about music, they don't care to violate music by singing. This is like the days of Eichendorff, Mother chirps, the important thing is your spirit, your attitude towards nature! Nature itself is secondary! The two women have the proper spirit, for they are able to delight in nature, wherever they catch sight of it. If they stumble upon a rippling brook, they instantly drink fresh water from it. Let's hope no doe has pissed into it. If they come to a thick tree trunk or dense underbrush, they can take a piss themselves, and the nonpisser stands guard to ward off any impudent peepers. | By taking their hike, the two Kohut women store up energy for a new work week, in which Mother will have little to do and Erika's blood will be sucked out by her students. [Jelinek 1988: 32])

Jelinek depicts mother and daughter as reactionary 'consumers' of nature. In their own consciousness they consider themselves as distinct, as something better, elevated through their acquaintance with classical music and arts, and the intellectual realm. Their seeming 'distinction' is mimetically depicted in the choice of words and the elegant literary syntax. But it is drastically and instantly contrasted with the lexeme 'to piss', used twice in the German original (and even three times in the English translation). This verb is found in (non-marked) direct speech by one of the women ('Hoffentlich hat kein Reh hineingepißt'/'Let's hope no doe has pissed into it') then integrated into the narrator's language. This colloquialism cuts short the conventional prose style Jelinek uses—or rather: displays it. Overall, the narrative voice imitates the language of the novel's characters while at the same time manipulating it through its own constative language. At the end of the quote, the voice also ironically comments on the seeming parity of the Kohut women by exposing the factual injustice of their work-load, using a drastic vampiric metaphor.

A second example further illustrates these tendencies of melting diverse and disparate levels of cultural expression. Here we find Erika Kohut living one of her secret desires, visiting cheap peep



shows in a poor (Turkish) part of Vienna. Depicted in the scene are Erika's reflections and observations, entangled with drastic narrative comments, cultural clichés and also short perspective glances from the sex workers and men visually consuming their bodies on display:

*Diese Frauen haben ja noch gar nichts Tiefgreifendes erlebt, sonst stellten sie sich nicht so zur Schau. Sondern gingen gutwillig mit, anstatt nur so zu tun als ob. Dieser Beruf ist doch nichts für eine Frau. Am liebsten nähme man gleich eine mit, egal welche, im Prinzip sind ja alle gleich. Sie unterscheiden sich nicht grundsätzlich, höchstens in der Haarfarbe, während die Männer doch mehr Einzelpersönlichkeiten sind, von denen der eine lieber das hat und der andere lieber das. Die geile Sau hinter dem Fenster, also quasi auf der anderen Seite der Barriere, hat zum Ausgleich den dringenden Wunsch, daß diesen Ochsen hinter den Glasfenstern der Schwanz abreißt beim Wichsen. Auf diese Weise hat jeder etwas vom anderen, und die Atmosphäre ist recht entspannt. (Jelinek 1986, 53)*

(These women have never experienced anything profound, otherwise they wouldn't flaunt their bodies here. They'd come along nicely rather than just pretend to come. This is no work for a woman. A customer would gladly take any of them, it doesn't matter which, they're all alike. You can barely tell them apart; at most, by the colour of their hair. The men, in contrast, have individual personalities: some men like one thing, some like something else. On the other hand, the horny bitch behind the window, beyond the barrier, has only one urgent desire: That asshole behind the glass window should keep jerking until his cock falls off. In this way, the man and the woman each get something, and the atmosphere is nice and relaxed. [Jelinek 1988, 49])

In this passage, Erika's perspective is not explicitly present. However, a latent presence appears in those chauvinistic remarks, in so far as Erika, who is missing an autonomous identity, might even be the person having these thoughts herself (from a rather 'male' perspective). Firstly, the old-fashioned and seemingly terminological German term '*Einzelpersönlichkeiten*' ('individual personalities' instead of '*Individuen*' ['individuals']), might be considered a mimicry of an Austrian formal language. This is then parodied by the half-phrase following it, which claims that one such individual personality likes '*das*' and another '*das*': using the identical word twice (instead of, at least, '*dies*' and '*das*', even if this is one of the

vaguest formulae the German language has to offer). In addition to this, a seemingly cultivated term such as '*Einzelpersönlichkeiten*' stands in harsh contrast to the brutal slang words 'horny bitch', 'asshole', 'to jerk' and 'cock' that immediately follow it (Bakhtin would discuss this under the heading 'parodistic stylisation'). The final phrase of the quotation is a highly ironic authorial comment on the inequality of the sexes—and stands once again antagonistically against the verbal aggression performed before.

This literary technique of juxtaposing 'high' and 'low' culture is also frequently found in Jelinek's most controversial novel *Lust* (1989, translated as 'Lust'). This narrative follows the housewife Gerti as her dominant and brutal husband and Austria's patriarchal society in general systematically mistreat her. There is no dialogue, the plot is untwisting, the characters are flat and seem to be completely paralysed. No one exhibits a modicum of sympathy for anyone else—not even the narrator for the characters. Gerti's antagonist is her husband Hermann, the financially potent director of a paper factory and a violent patriarch. Here is just one passage from this depressing but at the same time also (to one's regret) painfully funny work, from the introductory part where Hermann's sexual dominance over his wife is repetitively demonstrated and melted into a critique of capitalism:

*Der Mann ist immer bereit und freut sich auf sich. Der fröhliche Tag ist Armen wie Reichen gegönnt, doch leider gönnen ihn die Armen den Reichen nicht. Die Frau lacht nervös, als sich der Mann, noch im Mantel, gezielt vor ihr entblößt. Er entblößt sich nicht, seinen Schwanz dahingestellt zu lassen. Die Frau lacht lauter und schlägt sich mit der Hand erschrocken auf den Mund. Ihr werden Prügel angedroht. Sie hallt noch wider von der Musik auf dem Plattenteller, wo sich ihre und anderer Menschen Gefühle in Gestalt von Joh. Seb. Bach für den menschl. Genuß bestens geeignet, im Kreis herum drehen. Der Mann ragt inmitten seiner Stacheln von Haar und Hitze aus sich heraus. (Jelinek 1999, 16)*

(The Man is perpetually ready to go. Greedy for his pleasure. To pleasure himself. Lo, this happy day is there for the rich and the poor, but unfortunately the poor begrudge the rich. The woman laughs nervously as the Man, still wearing his coat, deliberately exposes himself to her. And there it is, the thick-headed thick head and shaft of his member. The woman's laughter grows louder and she slaps



herself on the mouth, startled. She's threatened with a beating. Her head is still full of music, Johann Sebastian Bach, expressing her own feelings and those of others, music guaranteed to give pleasure, going round and round in circles on the record player, chasing its tail. The man is chasing his tail too, or his tail is chasing and he is following. [Jelinek 1992, 15]

The first sentence contains a literary pun (not present in the English translation), uncovering Hermann's phallic narcissism. According to the text, he is not looking forward to Gerti but only to himself, his sexual pleasure. There are further puns that have not been translated by Michael Hulse: the man uncovers himself (*entblößt sich*) but he also *entblödet sich*, a non-existent term, standing perhaps for something like 'he is not too good for', but also contains the German word for 'stupid'. The slang, or rather pornographic word 'Schwanz' ('prick', here translated as 'member') appears right after some rather traditional literary phrases depicting Gerti's reaction as a shocking materialisation of 'lust'. The most obvious 'clash of cultures' in this passage, however, is Gerti's aesthetic and spiritual interest in Johann Sebastian Bach and Hermann's desire for direct, crude sex. Jelinek and her protagonist are 'spoiling' the highly acclaimed composer of sacred music on two levels at once: firstly, through the narrative voice's use of the word 'consuming' to criticise the desire to produce and evoke sentimental feelings with classical music; and secondly, by directly contrasting religious spirituality with pornographic sexuality. The fact that Jelinek abbreviates the name 'Joh. Seb. Bach' in the German original, together with the 'human feelings', not only refers to the manifest literariness of her text (as a self-referential technique often found in her works), but also creates distance and emphasises the mediality ('*Mittelbarkeit*' as the respective German narratological category) of the narrative mode (Genette 1980, 162f.). In this regard, the hybridity of this literary text produces immediacy and distance at the same time.

#### Marcel Beyer: 'Das Menschenfleisch' ('The Human Flesh')

In contrast to Jelinek, who deconstructs patriarchal sexuality as the ultimate realm of ideology, reactionism and violence, Marcel

Beyer undertakes a serious effort to depict the precise and singular 'language' of *eros* while using a rather unusual narrative mode—a shifting form of internal monologue—in his novel *Das Menschenfleisch* (1991, 'Human Flesh'). Beyer closely alludes to Roland Barthes' *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* ('A Lover's Discourse: Fragments') as well as many other post-modern and post-structuralist theoretical texts by Jacques Lacan, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and others, listed in the end of the novel like bibliographic references in a scholarly study. Fragments of these discourses appear throughout the novel, creating a fundamental heteroglossia interwoven in the narration. My first example is from the chapter 'Der Körper des Körpers des Körpers' ('The Body of the Body of the Body'). Here Beyer integrates sentences and fragments from Alex Comfort's 1970s' erotic manual *Joy of Sex* into a dialogue between the two lovers on jealousy, singularity, and sensual memories that can get into the way:

Gehst du auf sie zu sprichst du sie an wie ist das berührt ihr einander nein gar nichts sage ich Position 7 der Mann liegt auf dem Rücken die Frau sitzt auf ihm daß er von unten eindringt ich bin ihr keine Stütze sie sagt ich werde schon allein darüber hinwegkommen daß du andere Frauen außer mir triffst ich treffe niemand sage ich Position 1 Gesicht zu Gesicht ich mag es wenn ich sein ganzes Körpergewicht auf mir spüre aber du hast doch Erinnerungen und die verschwinden nicht wenn du mich anfaßt fällt dir automatisch auch ein anderer Körper ein den du angefaßt hast ich sage ich erinnere mich an gar keinen Körper ich bin ihr eine Stütze denn wenn das stimmt was sie sagt wenn es für sie zutrifft dann bildet mein Körper immer eine Stütze für die Erinnerung an einen anderen Körper dein Schatten gehört jemand anderem Position 4 Überschlagnagel das ist keine Eifersucht ich sage nur wie es ist meint sie Position 14 während der Mann von hinten mit Mund und Zähnen den Haaransatz der Frau berührt wie Katzen die einander ins Genick beißen dabei um den anderen festzuhalten und tiefer eindringen zu können du siehst einen Haaransatz und weißt zugleich zu welcher Person er gehört die du kennst gekannt hast gebissen geküßt oder auch fremde Frauen bestimmte Merkmale erinnern dich einfach an jemanden und du bist einen Moment lang verwirrt weil du mit dieser fremden Person wie selbstverständlich das tun willst was du mit einer bekannten Person selbstverständlich tust. (Beyer 1991, 26-7)



(Do you approach her do you talk to her how is it do you touch each other no nothing I say Position 7 the man is lying on his back the woman is sitting on top of him so that he enters from below I am no support to her she says I will get over it on my own that you are see women other than me I am not seeing anybody I say Position 1 face to face I like it when I feel his entire body weight on top of me but you still have memories they do not disappear when you touch me you automatically remember another body that you touched I say I do not remember any other body I am a support for her because if what she says is right if it applies to her then my body always acts as the support for the memory of another body your shadow belongs to someone else Position 4 rollover that is not jealousy I am only saying how it is she says Position 14 while the man touches the woman's hairline with his mouth and teeth from behind like cats bite each other in the neck to hold the other and to be able to penetrate deeper you see a hairline and know at once to whom it belongs that you know have known bitten kissed or even other women strangers certain features simply remind you of someone and you are confused for a moment because naturally you want to do exactly the same things with a stranger that you do naturally with a familiar person. [transl. by Claudia Benthien and Guntrud Argo])

Each chapter of *Das Menschenfleisch* takes a different stylistic and narrative approach—they are *essais* in the French meaning of this term. Beyer examines different modalities of mimetically depicting and linguistically imitating touch and feelings in the medium of language. In the example chapter, Beyer experiments with the interweaving of discourses through the elimination of punctuation marks. His discourse imitates the flow of thoughts and associations: the grammar is not coherent, different spheres melt into each other. Various numbered poses of sexual intercourse taken from Comfort's manual are interwoven into a dialogue between the first person narrator and his antagonist, a woman named 'K.'—as the first letter of the German word '*Körper*' ('body') in the chapter title. The reader does not get a clear indication from the narrative voice of whether the two protagonists are reading the sex manual, practising these intimate poses and simultaneously talking, or whether the mentioning of the poses is part of a stream of thoughts one of them is having while interacting verbally with the other. This passage is

hybrid, not only because different linguistic codes are contrasted, but also because of the effects and results of the composition. On the one hand we have the factual descriptions from the manual, on the other hand the very personal dialogue about the erotic past and present of two lovers.

My second example is taken from the chapter '*Anagramme eines menschlichen Körpers*' ('Anagrams of a Human Body'). Here, the question of body and text—highly relevant to cultural theory of the early 1990s—is treated, both on a referential and on a performative level:

[I]ch lese etwas ab, spreche nach, zeichne etwas ein, ihr Körper oder niemand, immer solche ganz konkreten Leerstellen, es geht um diese Berührungen, unser taktiles Stoßgebet, ich meine Schoßgebet, wie sie es nennt, um die Einlaßworte, ... ich kann nicht sprechen, habe für kurze Zeit meine Zunge entfernt, von Zeit zu Zeit küsse ich den Text, werfe etwas ein, reiße ein Stück Papier heraus, so daß Wörter fehlen oder nur Teile von Wörtern, die Spuren am Hals hinunter, Fasern des Texts, Luftwurzeln in den Nacken gefahren, Bißstellen, kommen jetzt in das Gebiet der Schultern, lassen die Geräusche hinter uns, ganz sachte in den Nacken gebissen, mit den Lippen, der Zunge, ich fasse sie an, muss alles mit den Händen anfassen, womöglich sollten wir eine Sprechpause einlegen, die Sprache ist eine Haut: ich reibe meine Sprache an einer anderen, so als hätte ich Worte anstelle von Fingern oder Finger an den Enden meiner Worte... (ibid., 76)

(I read something, repeat it, sketch something in, her body or nobody, always such very specific blank spaces, it is about these touches, our quick tactile prayer, I mean womb prayer [in German a non-translatable pun], as she calls it, about these words of admission,... I cannot speak, have removed my tongue for a short while, from time to time I kiss the text, throw something in, tear out a piece of paper so that words are missing, or only parts of the words, traces down the neck, fibres of the text, aerial roots driven into the nape, bite marks, are now coming into the region of the shoulders, leave the sounds behind us, very gently bitten into the nape, with my lips, my tongue, I touch her, have to touch it all with my hands, we should take a break from speaking if possible, language is a skin: I rub my language against another as if I had words instead of fingers or fingers at the end of my words... [transl. by Claudia Benthien and Guntrud Argo])



The speaker considers his lover's body as a text that needs deciphering to fully understand its meaning. He does so by touching and kissing 'it': the body, the text. This 'body of words' is very fragile, pieces can be torn, fall off, etc. The last phrase of the quotation is of heightened significance as it is a direct quotation from Barthes' *Lover's Discourse* ('Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words.' [Barthes 1979, 73]). Here again, a certain sensuality of theme and language is contrasted to an analytical, abstract discourse, most obvious in words such as 'Leerstellen' ('blank spaces').

### Thomas Meinecke: *Tomboy*

Katharina Picandet subsumes both the writers Marcel Beyer and Thomas Meinecke under the catchphrase of 'Diskursjockeys' ('discourse jockey', as opposed to the English word and German Anglicism 'Discjockey') (Picandet 2010, 423; see also Dunker 2006). Their linguistic play with various discourses is analogised to the work of a DJ and his techniques of sampling, mixing, blending, scratching etc. One may also compare Meinecke's literary technique to a film and new media genre in that he also uses 'found footage'—not only from popular culture though, but also from highly elaborated cultural theory. The tendency to compose something new out of existing cultural products is even more obvious in Thomas Meinecke's novel *Tomboy* (1998), my next example. In American English, a girl that behaves like a boy, contrary to standard gender role clichés, is called a 'tomboy', taken literally a tautological term. In using it as his title, Meinecke raises the question of why this doubly male expression is only used for girls and why, for example, a man cannot be a lesbian. Meinecke's novel is a bizarre cabinet of 'Gender Trouble' (Butler 1990). Set in a Heidelberg student community, gender relations are depicted as strongly hybrid, as the polarity of 'male-female' is eroded and its constructivist character exposed, thereby being transformed into productive oscillation. In his novel, Meinecke, however, not only takes the terminology of gender theory as his object but also transforms its main theorems into a plot. Surprisingly, the text is a serious treatment and a parody of gender theory at the same

time (compare Renz 2011). Here is a first example, which makes the complexity and confusion of theoretical positions more than evident:

*Mit seiner offensichtlich anerkennend gemeinten, latent einschmeichelnden Anspielung auf Vivian's herausgewachsene Kurzhaarfrisur hatte er [Hans] die in mehrfacher Hinsicht hierarchisierende, immer unter Sexismusverdacht stehende Preisung körperpartikulärer Schönheit durch die tendenziell zunächst einmal positiv gefasste Kategorie einer, wenngleich hier ausführlich unbestimmten, Abweichung ersetzt und damit Qualität durch Differenz, die galante Konstruktion durch äquivoke Empirie. Hierzu würde sich die Vierundzwanzigjährige, der ahnungslose Hans war eben pinkeln gegangen, einmal in aller Ruhe gründliche Gedanken machen, vielleicht auch ein paar offene Fragen notieren wollen. Überhaupt kein Problem dagegen, als Vivian nun, im ungleichen Gegenzug, des fröhlich zurückkehrenden Freundes hochmodische Aufmachung lobte. (Meinecke 1998: 17)*

(With his obviously approvingly-meant, latently ingratiating allusion to Vivian's outgrown short hairstyle, he [Hans] had replaced the praise of the beauty of partial body objects, which was in various ways hierarchy-producing and always under the suspicion of sexism, by a category of deviation, which at first seemed to be conceived of as positive, although here it was explicitly vague, and by doing so, replacing quality with difference, a gallant construction by an equivocal empiricism. The twenty-four-year-old would want, the unsuspecting Hans had just gone for a pee, to profoundly reflect upon, maybe also jot down some pending questions. Contrary to this, there was absolutely no problem whatsoever when Vivian now, in an unequal countermove, praised the highly fashionable outfit of the happily returning friend. [transl. by Claudia Benthien and Guntrud Argo])

The passage is a parody of gender studies jargon. A compliment about a haircut is analysed from a 'critical perspective' and in a highly discursive and self-referential manner. Again, as with Jelinek, we find the theme of urination set against an elaborate cultural discourse, as a form of 'spoiling' the intellectual sphere. Another level of intentional hybridity (parodistic stylisation) used in this passage is that of narrative archaisms: Meinecke has a tendency throughout the novel to use old-fashioned words, grammar and sentence structure: e.g. in the last subordinate clause, but also in composites such as



'Kurzhaarfrisur' ('short hairstyle') or 'die Vierundzwanzigjährige' (the 'twenty-four-year-old') as substitute for the name 'Vivian'. The highly fashionable and up-to-date discourse of gender studies is set against such archaisms as well as against a consciously conventional or seemingly traditional mode of narration.

In a second quote these tendencies are even more obvious. It is taken from a scene in which Vivian, Hans, their female friend Frauke and her sexually ambiguous husband-wife Angela/Angelo are returning by car from Munich, where they have had the opportunity to listen to a lecture by the 'master thinker' of gender theory, the American philosopher Judith Butler:

Angela Guida wollte selbst auf der Autobahn noch nicht einsehen, dass ihre allseits als perfekt empfundene Gender Impersonation als parodistische Wiederholung diskursiver Bezeichnungspraxen des Geschlechtlichen zu bewerten sei, als subversiver Akt im höheren Auftrag einer revolutionären Multiplikation der Geschlechter, nämlich jenseits des, wie alle im Ford befanden, absolut schrottreifen binären Systems. Andererseits wollte sich Angela ihren Penis, der, laut Frauke, auf einen Frauennamen hörte, keinesfalls wegmachen lassen, was sie lautstark mit der kartesischen Trennung von Körper und Geist begründete, Vivian Atkinson hingegen in Erinnerung rief, daß auch Simone de Beauvoirs ursprünglich emanzipativ gelesene Unterscheidung von Sex und Gender, also anatomischem und sozialem Geschlecht, diskursiv produziert wurde und in der hierarchisierenden Trennung beider Kategorien letztendlich ganz reaktionäre Biologismen phallogozentrisch festgeschrieben wurden. Sex war nämlich, laut Judith Butler, immer schon Gender. (ibid., 90–1)

(Even on the highway Angela Guida was not willing to accept that her universally acclaimed gender impersonation should be judged as a parodistic repetition of discursive designation practices of the sexual, as a subversive act of a higher mandate of a revolutionary multiplication of the sexes far beyond the binary system, which, as everybody in the Ford agreed, was overdue for the scrap heap. On the other hand, Angela was not at all willing to have her penis taken off (which, according to Frauke, answered to a female name), for which she argued loudly by referring to the Cartesian split between body and soul. Vivian Atkinson, however, made the point that even Simone de Beauvoir's distinction between sex and gender, anatomical and social sex (originally read as emancipatory), was

produced discursively, and that through the hierarchical separation of the two categories, in the end, nothing but reactionary biologisms were rewritten phallogocentrically. Because sex was, according to Judith Butler, always already gender. [transl. by Claudia Benthien / Guntrud Argo]

Obviously, the first noticeable thing about this quote is the complexity of the discourse, hardly understandable for an outsider to gender theory. Amidst this intellectual analysis of Angela Guida's 'sex' and 'gender' we find the words '*absolut schrottreif*' ('overdue for the scrap heap') that somehow stand out, especially in combination with the term 'binary system'. Intimate information about Angela's (or Angelo's) penis are interwoven into the argument.

Here, it is the protagonists themselves that produce linguistic hybridity within their speech, not the narrator. By constant reference to the theory of parodistic repetition the text performs its own content. A further form of hybridisation are Anglicisms such as 'Gender Impersonation', 'Sex' and 'Gender' that have become part of the German scholarly discourse. Meinecke's novel is itself a hybrid form of gender discourse and literature. In his subsequent novel *Hellblau* ('Light Blue') of 2001, the author explores a comparable hybridity within post-colonial discourse.

#### Feridun Zaimoglu: 'Koppstoff' ('Head Stuff')

Feridun Zaimoglu's very popular *Kanak Sprak* (1995, 'kanak' being a slang word for a 'Turk' in Germany [Röttger 2003; Keck 2007], 'sprak' being a grammatically incorrect version of '*Sprache*' ['language']) is a collection of interviews with young men from Turkish migrant background. The subsequent volume *Koppstoff: Kanaka Sprack vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (1998, the title being a neologism for something like 'head stuff'; subtitle: 'Kanaka speech from the margins of Society') is a collection of interviews with young women from the same ethnic background. *Koppstoff* is to be considered a double exception to my aforementioned example texts. Firstly, because it is, strictly speaking, not a fictional but a documentary work. Secondly, because the prominent Turkish-German writer explicitly deals with concepts of cultural difference and hybridity (Skiba 2004; Günther



1999). It is useful to integrate Zaimoglu's book into the present investigation because its language is also characterised by a specific hybridity of 'high' and 'low' culture and the clash between the intellectual and analytical realm. The sphere of body and sexuality is also to be found in most of the interviews that Zaimoglu transforms into 'literary' form. The following quote is from the chapter 'Viel Harmonie und viel Schiß' ('A lot of harmony and a lot of fear'—the last word being a colloquial German word for 'shit'). It depicts the words and experiences of 29-year-old Suzan, a translator of German and English:

*Und dann die andre Sorte von untertänigst Alemanbefolger, die werden, wenn die Tür da zufliegt, und sie kommen da man nicht inne Alemanloge rein, die werden also zu Türkenbomben, zu so Ekelpaketen, die sagen: Man ich bin ne ganz wilde Heikelnummer, ich bring's fertig und zerfetz jede Pussy, wo mir vorn Schwanz kommt. So n Crack is denn plötzlich n Halbmondfreak mit ner undichten Stelle, und die is in seinem Hirn, da leckt die Folk-Sülze raus, un die Type kleckert sein Wanzenleben damit voll, und mit Voll-Macht kracht er durch die Tür und kracht durchn Hinterausgang wieder raus, und wenn er nicht gestorben is, rennt er heut noch rum und kracht in jedem Haus genau zweimal: rein und dann raus, und mehr is nicht. Sowas is natürlich ne ausgewachsene Niete, der hat sich den Gescheit-Sproch des Aleman richtig gemerkt, und der heißt: Mach mal ne Runde Ursprung, mach mal ne Runde Kultur. (Zaimoglu 1998, 39)*

(And then the other kind of most-humble-servant Aleman-follower that they turn into—when the door slams shut, and they can't get into the Aleman Lodge—they turn into these Turk-bombers, these sickening-packets who say: Man, I'm a real crazy motherfucker, I handle my shit and tear up every pussy that crosses my dick's path. That kinda crackpot's suddenly a half-moon-freak with more than one screw loose, and it's loose in his brain, where the folk-aspic leaks out and this guy splatters his insect-life full of it, and crashes full-force through the front door and right out again through the back, and if he hasn't died yet, he's still running around and crashing into every house exactly twice: in and then out, twice and no more. Of course that kinda thing's a full-blown blank, he's taken note of the Aleman's clever slogan that goes: come on an' give us a round of roots, give us a round of culture. [transl. by Kristin Dickinson, Robin Ellis and Priscilla Layne])

The passage is different from the other texts in the corpus because the juxtaposition of 'high' and 'low' culture is not (only) the conscious compositional act of the author, although the degree of Zaimoglu's manipulation of the material and its composition remains indeterminable. This text is closer to what Bakhtin terms 'organic hybridity'. Nevertheless, we find some of the significant structures discussed before. This text is much more colloquial and full of street talk and slang. Still it contains vocabulary such as 'Ursprung' ('roots': in German: a very prestigious, culturally elevated word that also means 'origin') and 'Kultur' ('culture' with a capital first letter, standing for 'high culture', the arts). A central quality of the passage is its rhythmical (prosodic) quality, reminiscent of Turkish-German rap, a genre that was especially popular in the years around the publication of this book. Also, one immediately notices the literary quality in the choice and composition of word such as 'Alemanloge' or 'Voll-macht' (ibid., 39; literal translation: 'authority', but written here with a hyphen, leading to the translation 'full-force'). These words are paradigmatic of the so-called 'Kunstsprache' ('art-language') that Zaimoglu has become famous for in German literary criticism. They are hybrids of different linguistic and cultural registers and systems of reference. 'Wenn er nicht gestorben ist' ('if he hasn't died yet') is the traditional formula of the last line of German fairy tales. This passage makes it more than obvious that the speaker (and/or the author) is in full possession of the German language and is able to manipulate it profoundly, giving it a subversive quality.

In another example, taken from the text *Aus Euch Stinkern werden Gottessöhne* ('You Stinkers will Become God's Sons'), based on an interview with a 31-year-old woman named Leyla, an insurance sales woman, the hybridity between 'high' and 'low' cultural codes becomes even more evident:

*Für die Männer ist das Leben eine einzige Entleerung, und damit meine ich nicht nur den Samenerguß. Nun gut, das klingt wie ne fette Portion Moral mit Emanzenquark, wie es die deutschen Mädels draufhaben. Außerdem hinterläßt es Spuren, wenn man sich mühsam durch die hiesigen Lehreinrichtungen geschleppt hat. (ibid., 66)*

(For men, life is one big emptying out, and I'm not just talking about ejaculation here. Now that sounds like a heaping portion of



emancipation-nonsense, just like the German girls have it in them. Besides, it leaves behind traces when you've painstakingly schlepped yourself through the local educational establishment. [transl. by Kristin Dickinson, Robin Ellis and Priscilla Layne]

'*Samenerguß*' ('ejaculation'), a biological term, is contrasted with the colloquialism '*ne fette Portion Moral mit Emanzenquark*' ('a heaped portion of emancipation-nonsense') and the old-fashioned, distinctive formula '*hiesige Lehranstalten*' ('local educational establishment'), a reactionary term that could just as easily be found in Jelinek. Zaimoglu's interview partners are capable of playing with the 'German tongue' and it becomes obvious, that they are not just passive users of its vocabulary and grammar, but highly creative and self-reflexive in their application of language. Their cultural hybridity results in a potent hybridity of language, displayed with a certain aggression and triumph.

#### COMPARATIVE SUMMARY AND FURTHER THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this essay the Bakhtinian concept of intentional hybridity was applied to several post-modern literary texts. All of these works make extensive use of, on the one hand, theoretical jargon and elaborate discourse, and, on the other, of course, urban slang, proletarian language or street talk. The writers discussed make use of a whole range of sociolects and aesthetic codes; they often combine them within single utterances, sometimes even within one composite word. A central question arising out of the fact that these hybridisations appear in prose texts would be: who is 'producing' or creating this hyper-intentional hybridity? In Jelinek, it is a non-distinguishable mixture of narrator and (third person) protagonist; in Beyer, of author and first-person narrator; in Meinecke, we see a mixture of protagonists and their consciousnesses; in Zaimoglu, it is a—likewise non-distinguishable—mixture of protagonists (the women interviewed) and the author, Zaimoglu. Since *Koppstoff* consists only of direct speech, there is no narrator. Jelinek and Zaimoglu, especially, with their peculiar and highly original hybridisation of language, show political interests and aim at a

fundamental irritation (and questioning) of the solid position of the reader and of hegemonic social structures. Hybridity, therefore, is not to be found on the lexical level alone, but also on the levels of narration and thematic display, and of the speaking and reflecting instances. In contrast, Beyer's and Meinecke's intentions are more focussed on a widening of literary discourses and of mixing fictional and factual genres.

What Bakhtin remarks about nineteenth century authors has gained an increasing importance in the discussion of twentieth century literature (and, in a new wave, in that of the authors of the twenty-first century I have discussed here): 'Another's speech... is at none of these points clearly separated from authorial speech: the boundaries are deliberately flexible and ambiguous, often passing through a single syntactic whole, often through a simple sentence, and sometimes even dividing up the main parts of a sentence' (Bakhtin 1981, 308). The term hybridity has proven to be useful with regard to the phenomena in question, because of its basic denotation as a 'mixture' or 'melting' of non-identical entities—entities that often carry different, especially hierarchically structured, cultural values. Hybridity can be associated with 'impurity' as well as with the notion of a 'contamination' of (hegemonic) culture.

Literary hybridity in Jelinek, Zaimoglu, Beyer and Meinecke is provocative because it questions and subverts established social hierarchies and cultural values. Whereas Zaimoglu's interview partners often articulate direct and aggressive criticism, the questioning of cultural properties appears mostly implicitly in Jelinek, through subtle linguistic and rhetorical means, verbal tricks and word-play. One of the key elements of this indirect strategy is the use of irony. Jelinek is especially interested in a postmodern and post-structuralist conception of irony, considered as a 'collision between the performative and the constative' (Biti 2001, 427; transl. from the German by Claudia Benthien). Jelinek uses irony to deconstruct the characters and their reactionary world-views. On the level of self-explanation, Zaimoglu's text operates without such irony. But taking his author's comments aside, his work also displays the limited views and insights of his 'characters'. It is their emotional involvement that becomes visible, especially through



their aggressive and artificial mode of speaking and articulating their anger.

Regardless of whether these prose works are written in a conceptually oral or conceptually scriptural style, a central feature of all five texts discussed here is their high degree of literariness (the German equivalent being '*Literarizität*' or '*Poetizität*'). This much debated term originated in Russian Formalism and stands for a vague but still distinct quality that differentiates literary texts—works of art—from non-literary texts (van Peer 2003, 111). According to Günter Saße, literary language is different from pragmatic, everyday language on three levels: pragmatism, semantics and syntax. Firstly, literary language has another modality of using linguistic signs; secondly, it is characterised by changes and expansions of their modes of signification; thirdly, it contains deviations of syntactic order and combination (this is most prominent, of course, in poetry [Saße 1980, 698]). Harald Fricke claims that a use of language can only be considered 'poetic' if two features coincide, namely an obvious deviation of linguistic norms and the specific function they are supposed to fulfil (Fricke 1981, 87; see also Rühling 2003, 43). Together with these pragmatic, semantic and syntactic deviations often comes an increased self-reflexivity, an attentiveness towards the act of uttering and the 'material fact' (Eagleton 1983, 3) of literature. All of the texts chosen for the present article feature a high level of literariness in fulfilling many of the criteria just mentioned. It is their hybrid application and use of language on the micro-level of the lexemes as well as on the macro-level of syntagma and text construction.

Finally I would like to focus on another aspect of interest in comparing these works. It is clear that the gap between these two realms of sociolects (roughly speaking) often coincides with the distinction between written and oral language. This marks a central difference between Jelinek's and Zaimoglu's styles. Jelinek's literary works, from her numerous plays to her many novels and essays, can be characterised by exhaustive and endless monologues. There is hardly any direct speech and one finds practically no dialogues in her prose works. The interaction is based on prepared reactions and stereotypes and the absence of dialogue implies that the author does

not believe in the world-changing or merely expressive function of language (Grissemann 2001, 127–8). In contrast, Zaimoglu's *Koppstoff* texts consist of numerous monologues that are based on oral interviews. It is highly evident that Jelinek's writing—as well as that of Thomas Meinecke and Marcel Beyer—is based on what the German linguists Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher have termed 'conceptual scriptuality'; on the other hand, Zaimoglu's writing is based on 'conceptual orality' (Koch and Oesterreicher 1985). Therefore, the hybrid word constructions and grammatical configurations that Zaimoglu adapts and creates for his protagonists' speech create a significantly different kind of hybridity to the semantic hybridities that Jelinek is so famous for.

I would like to conclude this analysis with the phenomenon of dialogism. Bakhtin, as is well known, negates the possibility of monologic and fully self-controlled speech as such. He considers it simply a phantasm, an illusion: 'Only the mythical Adam, who approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word, could really have escaped from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object.' (Bakhtin 1981, 279: '[I]t is precisely this intentional dialogism that has such enormous power to shape style.') According to Bakhtin, all language—whether in the form of monologue or dialogue, in the form of literary narration or oral speech—consists of dialogism and heteroglossia. He exemplifies the difference between dialogism and dialogue as follows:

The internal dialogism of authentic prose discourse, which grows organically out of a stratified and heteroglossic language, cannot fundamentally be dramatized or dramatically resolved..., it cannot ultimately be fitted into the frame of any manifest dialogue, into the frame of a mere conversation between persons; it is not ultimately divisible into verbal exchanges possessing precisely marked boundaries. (ibid., 326)

Language, especially literary language, contains an internal dialogism that cannot be neatly split into distinguishable voices or instances. Therefore, a literary analysis of post-modern texts with an augmented and hyper-intentional linguistic hybridity will never



reach a final and definite answer to the pending question of 'who is speaking?'

## NOTE

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# 'Impure Languages'

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## *Linguistic and Literary Hybridity in Contemporary Cultures*

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