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Rūta Eidukevičienė
Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania
Kristina Aurylaitė
Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

"WOR(L)D": AESTHETIC AND EXPERIENCED MULTILINGUALISM IN AKVILINA CICĖNAITĖ'S NOVEL "ANGLŲ KALBOS ŽODYNAS" / "A DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH" (2022)

Abstract. This article analyzes manifestations of multilingualism, focusing on their aesthetic and thematic functions in Akvilina Cicėnaitė's autofictional novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas* [*A Dictionary of English*] (2022), which employs numerous languages, most frequently English, in a predominantly Lithuanian text to explore the migrant experience. The novel follows a Lithuanian writer and her French-Canadian husband on a road trip across Australia, in which both currently reside, and constantly find themselves in a state of translation between languages, different realities, and cultures. Each chapter of the novel is titled with an English word, forming a dictionary-like structure which frames the narrator's meditative reflections. The research problem of the article is how multilingualism is made evident in Cicėnaitė's text and what literary functions it performs in the novel. The analysis draws on theoretical propositions about literary multilingualism by Rainier Grutman (2006, 2024), Till Dembeck (2020), Werner Helmich (2016), Marianna Deganutti (2022), and others, as well as about the functions of multilingualism in fiction by Till Dembeck and Anne Uhrmacher (2016), András Horn (1981), Markus Huss (2021) and others. Central to the analysis is their emphasis on the constructedness of multilingual configurations in literary texts and the two functions, aesthetic and thematic ("experienced" multilingualism), literary multilingualism performs. First, the analysis explores how the novel's narrative structure is supplemented with multilingual structures, which transform the text into a carefully organized multilingual textual space and enhance the exploration of the migrant's condition. Then the analysis discusses the instances of "experienced" multilingualism, which root the narrative in specific social and cultural realia of multicultural and multilingual Australia. The article links the analysis of multilingual manifestations in Cicėnaitė's text to the writer's exploration of the experience of displacement, the condition of the migrant figure, and her efforts to find a relevant artistic expression for it.

Keywords: aesthetic and experienced multilingualism; Akvilina Cicėnaitė; dictionary; literary multilingualism; migration literature; "staged" code-switching.

"*Words are suitcases crammed with culture*." (Gunnars, 2022, p. 13)

Introduction

This article discusses manifestations of multilingualism, focusing on their aesthetic and thematic functions in Akvilina Cicėnaitė's (b. 1979) latest novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas* [A dictionary of English] (2022). Its plot follows a married couple embarking on a road trip across Australia during the COVID pandemic. The characters are the first-person narrator, who is a Lithuanian writer living in Sydney, Australia, and her French-Canadian husband, who has accepted a job contract there. Both characters are migrant figures, who find themselves in the state of constant translation between languages, different realities, and cultures. The novel is largely autobiographical: the Lithuanian writer and translator Akvilina Cicėnaitė has spent the last 13 years living in Sydney, but she regularly visits Lithuania. In her literary *oeuvre*, Cicėnaitė often reflects on the experiences of living on a foreign continent as well as on the issues of mobility, e.g. in the essay "Apie nostalgiškas, nomadiškas ir nebaigtines tapatybes" [About nostalgic, nomadic and non-finite identities] (2013); in the novels for young adults (*Kengūrų slėnio paslaptis* [The secret of the Kangaroo valley], 2014; *Raudonosios uolos prakeikimas* [The curse of the Red Rock], 2015); and, particularly, in the novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas*.

After the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990, diasporic literature has received significant critical and scholarly attention; in recent years, such attention has been directed to new (trans)migratory literature by Lithuanian writers who live abroad but write in Lithuanian and are published in Lithuania, aiming at the Lithuanian reader (Kolevinskienė, 2016, p. 101). Nonetheless, despite the prominence of the topic of migration in literary texts, explicitly multilingual fiction is quite a recent trend in Lithuania. More than a decade ago, the literary critic Dalia Satkauskytė (2011) noted that there was little evidence of linguistic hybridity in Lithuanian literature (p. 123). However, the recent decade has seen a number of publications, of both fiction and autofiction, in which multilingual manifestations are much more prominent and often foregrounded, e.g. the novels by Gabija Grušaitė, Akvilina Cicėnaitė, Dalia Staponkutė, and others. Contemporary diasporic writers now feel they have more freedom to choose the language/s in which they write; for instance, the poet Rima Juškūnė (Palubinskienė) has spoken about "a third space" in her

writing and everyday life: "Man ir daugeliui mūsų, vadinamųjų emigrantų ir imigrantų, būdingas transnacionalizmas, manęs yra daug abiejose vietose, ir dar daugelyje kitų, ir tų vietų manyje taip pat daug" (in Tumasonytė, 2015, para. 2).[1] Such writers are now embracing hybridity and accepting transnationalism as a symbolically established phenomenon (Pulkauninkė, 2024, pp. 134–135). Notably, these texts are mostly written by women authors, and they often deal with migrant or nomadic experiences as well as evoke foreign languages to reflect on the various ways characters adjust to other environments, feeling linguistically—and thereby culturally and socially—spaced out, or, by contrast, smoothly traversing both linguistic and cultural codes.

Still a rather recent phenomenon, explicitly multilingual contemporary Lithuanian writing has not been analyzed extensively (e.g., Laurušaitė, 2019; Eidukevičienė, 2020, Eidukevičienė & Aurylaitė, 2023). By contrast, in other countries, texts which explore issues of migration and the (post)colonial condition and employ such textual devices as intratextual code-mixing and code-switching have gained significant scholarly attention (Kellman & Lvovich, 2022, pp. 18–19). In 2023, Brill Publishing launched *The Journal of Literary Multilingualism*, which examines texts from around the world, written in non-native languages, in a mix of languages, or alternating languages – that is, employing textual strategies shaped by multilingual and multicultural contexts. Notably, the latest issue of the journal focuses on "the linguistic composition of Australia's multicultural, transnational literary landscape" (Edwards & Hogarth, 2024, p. 162), to which writers such as Cicėnaitė contribute.

In her novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas*, Cicėnaitė consistently makes the presence of foreign languages, most frequently English, explicit. Moreover, she employs the English language to provide a structure for her novel – that of a dictionary. Simultaneously, the text speaks *about* languages, both native and foreign, offering a thematic meditation about the narrator's experiences as a migrant as she and her husband adjust to the realities of an Australian

[1] Just like many of us so-called emigrants and immigrants, I am transnational. There is a lot of me in both places [Lithuania and Denmark], and in many more, and there is a lot from these places in me, too. (Here and subsequently, translation by the authors of the article).

metropolis and deal with the three "disruptions" which Salman Rushdie (1991) singles out as definitive of the figure of the migrant: the loss of the home place, acquiring a new language, and adapting to new social norms (p. 277–278).

This article explores the various manifestations of multilingualism as employed in Cicėnaitė's novel, seeking to supplement the still scarce body of analysis of explicitly multilingual contemporary Lithuanian writing. The research problem of this article is how multilingualism is made evident in Cicėnaitė's text (how foreign-language insertions are marked, placed, integrated, explained, etc.) and what literary functions it performs in the novel. To conduct such an analysis, the article draws on theoretical propositions about literary multilingualism by Rainier Grutman (2006, 2024), Till Dembeck (2020), Werner Helmich (2016), Marianna Deganutti (2022), and others, as well as about the functions of multilingualism in fiction by Till Dembeck and Anne Uhrmacher (2016), András Horn (1981), Markus Huss (2021) and others. Of particular importance is their emphasis on the constructedness of multilingual configurations in literary texts and on the two equally important functions, aesthetic and thematic ("experienced" multilingualism), literary multilingualism performs. This article links the analysis of multilingual manifestations in Cicėnaitė's text to the writer's exploration of the experience of displacement, the condition of the migrant figure, and her efforts to find a relevant artistic expression for it.

Multilingualism in Literature: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approaches

Rainier Grutman (2006, 2024) has repeatedly foregrounded the importance of recognizing the authorial constructedness of multilingual manifestations in literary texts as opposed to various forms of code-switching and code-mixing that occur in real-life situations. In an essay published in 2006, he proposed the term 'heterolingualism' to refer specifically to multilingual configurations in literary texts, arranged to perform particular stylistic and/or thematic functions, emphasizing that they are never attempts to mimetically reproduce real-life speech patterns (Grutman, 2006, p. 18–19). Although the term 'heterolingualism' has not been

embraced by international scholarship and has not replaced 'multilingualism' in the area of literary studies, Grutman (2024) continues to underscore how multilingual manifestations are always 'staged' and 'enacted' in literary texts and insists on accordingly modifying terms and concepts borrowed from sociolinguistics because such strategies as code-switching in texts are always more "produced than [they are] reproduced, enacted instead of merely being portrayed," be it narration or direct speech (pp. 22, 19). The modified terms, such as 'staged code-switching,' are helpful "to foster awareness of the specific nature of the phenomenon as it appears in literature and, additionally, provide a better understanding of where and when it tends to appear" (Grutman, 2024, p. 20).

Grutman's emphasis on the constructedness of code-switching in literary texts foregrounds the importance of recognizing the stylistic effects of foreign language insertions and the patterns they establish in a specific text rather than focusing merely on their contents. That is, he highlights the aesthetic aspect of literary multilingual configurations. This aesthetics is also an important focus of the scholars Till Dembeck and Anne Uhrmacher (2016), who insist on distinguishing between what they call "experienced" and "aesthetic" literary multilingualism, which supplement each other in any given text (p. 10). In the case of "experienced" multilingualism, attention is paid to the thematic use of different languages "with regard to their cultural, social, political implications" and on "the experiences [these languages] transport, or at least connote, such as migration, being part of a (linguistic) minority, etc." (Dembeck, 2017, p. 1). On the other hand, focusing on "aesthetic" multilingualism, analysis considers "multilingual situations that demand to include [. . .] purely aesthetic or rhetoric patterns into the picture" (Dembeck, 2017, p. 3). Dembeck and Uhrmacher criticize the tendency to over focus on the social, ideological, and political aspects of multilingual texts, thereby marginalizing the aesthetic effects of multilingual configurations (Dembeck & Uhrmacher, 2016, p. 11). This is particularly true of the study of multilingual migration and travel literature, borderland novels, or works written by minority writers, because texts dealing with various forms of social integration or exclusion have a greater tendency to invite an analysis of multilingual social contexts, disregarding specific aesthetic patterns, which can be extremely

important in enhancing the thematic—"experienced"—aspects, as will be discussed in the subsequent analysis of Cicėnaitė's novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas*.

That both thematic and aesthetic aspects of literary multilingual configurations are equally important can be seen in, for instance, Dirk Skiba's (2010) discussion of multilingualism in migration literature. He focuses on the strategies such texts use in order to make the multilingual and multicultural contexts comprehensible for their (usually) monolingual readers. In his analysis, he considers annotations added by the writers to explain foreign words (footnotes, endnotes, glossaries), doubling, or the translation following an original phrase, as well as meta-linguistic insertions, where the narrator functions as a multilingual mediator and comments on the foreign language or culture (Skiba, 2010, pp. 327–328). Thus, while such an analysis can seem to be foregrounding the importance of the contents of foreign-language insertions, which need to be made accessible for their readers, it also considers the constructedness of the comprehension aids as used in specific texts.

Earlier analyses of multilingual texts, too, addressed both thematic and technical / aesthetic functions of textual insertions in foreign languages, acknowledging their constructedness. For instance, András Horn notes that explicit code-switching can be used as a means of characterization; to convey the "illusion of greater realism"; to convey nuances of meaning that are easier to express in other languages; for quotations from foreign-language texts (to perform various functions in a specific text depending on their source) or of popular sayings; to reproduce phonetic qualities of foreign utterances; or to create comic effects (Horn, 1981, pp. 226–227). The range of functions Horn identifies in his article addresses both what Dembeck and Uhrmacher (2016) categorize as "experienced" multilingualism (Horn's comments about "illusion of greater realism") and "aesthetic" multilingualism (e.g. Horn singling out comic or sound effects of foreign utterances). In a similar way, but without employing the term "aesthetic," Werner Helmich's (2016) discussion of explicit manifestations of multilingualism in literary texts relies precisely on their constructedness and aesthetic effects. He proposes that an analysis focus on such strategies as adding graphic emphasis to insertions in foreign languages; their placement in the text, including direct speech and narration; their individual length and total number (e.g. individual lexemes, sentences, phrases

of different sizes and their total proportion in the text); the degree of penetration or mixing; comprehension aids; connotations of individual foreign languages; and the degree of correctness (Helmich, 2016, pp. 30–32). Markus Huss (2021) draws attention to more explicitly aesthetic multimodal—visual and acoustic—aspects of literary multilingualism and their effects, including incomprehension, when foreign insertions do not convey a message but intrude into textual space as unfamiliar sights and sounds, or noise/s (pp. 156–157).

Addressing the number of foreign-language insertions in literary texts, Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman (2008) argue that "the actual quantity of foreignisms in a text is less important than the qualitative role they play within its overall structure, i.e. their potential as functional elements" (p. 17). In this way, they reiterate the importance of recognizing the presence of foreign insertions in the text as arranged, that is, constructed, and invite an analysis of their aesthetic effects. This is equally important in the case of latent multilingual practices, which "carry multilingualism without being quantitatively relevant" (Deganutti, 2022, p. 595). Marianna Deganutti (2022) defines latent multilingualism as "the presence of languages in a text even when they are not immediately perceptible" (p. 595). Grutman (2024) describes such forms as "multilingualism in the absence of code-switching," which he explains as follows:

> What I have in mind are texts that foreground more than one language (and are therefore multilingual) but without being in any way 'rooted' in diegetic codeswitching, without refracting or 'translating' bilingual speech events, as no such events took place in the fictional universe. (p. 28)

Deganutti notes that scholars have traditionally paid more attention to explicitly manifest instances of multilingualism, "which are the first to jump out in a text, breaking the narrative's linguistic homogeneity", although latent multilingual practices "are more widespread than manifest practices – it happens more often that multilingual stories, encounters, backgrounds, etc. are offered monolingually to the assumedly monolingual reader than they are directly inserted in a foreign tongue inside a text" (2022, p. 595). What is important, according to her, is that manifestations of latent multilingualism influence fundamentally the way literary texts are read and understood, even

though they are not explicitly disrupted by deliberately staged instances of code-switching:

> Latent practices spur us to vertical readings – in other words, to understand what happens beyond the surface of the narrative, to investigate how multilingualism functions in narratological terms (e.g. how the author, the narrator, the reader interact in the story, what is filtered and mediated and by whom). (Deganutti, 2022, p. 610)

For an analysis of latent manifestations of multilingualism, Deganutti, referencing other scholars, suggests looking at such aspects as language overlaps, fictional translation or "translational mimesis" (Meir Sternberg), "signalization" and "evocation" (Petr Mareš), "language references" and "language reflections" (Gulia Radaelli), as they all contribute "to raising linguistic awareness" and displaying multilingualism "in a less disruptive way, which allows the monolingual reader to overcome his limitations" (Deganutti, 2022, pp. 602–604, 610).

Drawing on the propositions and employing the concepts discussed above, the subsequent sections of the article undertake an analysis of Akvilina Cicėnaitė's novel, focusing on its aesthetic and "experienced," or thematized multilingualism. First, the analysis explores how the novel's narrative structure is supplemented with multilingual structures, which transform the text into a carefully organized multilingual textual space and enhance the exploration of the migrant's condition, which is at the core of the narration. Then the analysis shifts the focus to the examples of "experienced" multilingualism, which root the narrative in specific social and cultural realia of multicultural and multilingual Australia.

The Aesthetics of a Dictionary: Configuring a Multilingual Textual Space

Akvilina Cicėnaitė's novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas* follows a nameless married couple—a Lithuanian woman and her French-Canadian husband—on a lengthy road trip from their home in Sydney to Broken Hill in the far west region of the Australian outback, and back. The trip is envisioned as a brief

family holiday during the COVID pandemic, when the Australian continent closed its borders to non-residents, and the main narrative line follows the route that has been planned in advance, punctuated by numerous stops in various towns and at various sites. This is not the couple's first road trip, and both assume familiar roles: the wife drives, whereas the husband shows the way (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 46). The narration is rather seldom broken up by dialogue, the verbal exchanges between the characters shown as brief and fragmented, for instance, a repetitive invitation to continue the journey:

> Einam?
> Einam. (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 63, 92, 136, 180, 185)[2]

The scarce conversational fragments in this novel are not marked with conventional punctuation and formatting used to signal direct speech in written texts. More frequently, the husband's words are reported and blend into the narrator's internal monologue. The novel is written in the mode of a stream-of-consciousness as the sites, sights, and stops along the route trigger the narrator's insights, associations, and memories as well as related and unrelated musings. This results in a highly fragmented narrative, which constantly escapes the linear chronological structure of the road story and allows the narrator, in her mind, to traverse both geographical and temporal boundaries, with frequent flashbacks to the narrator's years as a graduate student in New Zealand, her move and adjustment to Sydney, the visit to her husband's native Montreal, and her own past in Lithuania. The novel's narrator thereby travels through landscapes both external and internal, juggling and trying to make sense of various experiences, phenomena, and languages. Notably, the main characters in the novel are not named; this foregrounds their status as migrants, which implies constant movement, not naming themselves, and not identifying with any specific place (Ivanova, 2023, para. 6).

One recurrent motif in the narrative is that of language: the novel explores the role the native and acquired languages play in the couple's relationship as well as in their lived experience as immigrants in Australia,

[2] Let's go?
Let's go.

which is highly multicultural and multilingual, particularly when it comes to its metropolises, such as Sydney. Cicėnaitė's novel offers a thematic meditation about the narrator's experiences as she and her husband deal with the three "disruptions" that Salman Rushdie (1991) identifies as defining the figure of the migrant: the loss of the home place, "enter[ing] an alien language," and learning to adapt to new social norms and codes (pp. 277–78). Cicėnaitė's narrator herself quotes from the same book by Rushdie while musing about her native Vilnius, which has turned into "an imaginary city" rooted in the memories, which keeps returning to her in dreams and mental images, overlaying the sights in front of her eyes: "Išvykę rašytojai neišvengiamai susiduria su netekties jausmu, troškimu atgauti prarastąją teritoriją, atsigręžti atgal netgi rizikuodami virsti druskos stulpu, rašė Salmanas Rushdie" (p. 199).[3] Due to such disruptions, migrants "are by definition fragmented beings" (Wilson, 2018, p. 57). Therefore, both attempting to reconstruct what has been lost and to make sense of the new condition, the migrant is "obliged," as Rushdie puts it, "to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human" (pp. 277–78). A similar idea is reiterated by Rita Wilson (2018) in her discussion of contemporary migrant writers in Italy: she notes how "their polyvocal works test the boundaries of form as they explore the limits of expression and thus the boundaries of the self" (p. 55). Cicėnaitė's narrator, too, speaks about the need to invent a new language, a language of departures and returns, a language which could overcome the silence in her and her husband's relationship and, implicitly release the tensions cause by the disruptions and fragmentation in her own experience as a migrant (p. 272).

To foreground these motifs beyond a thematic exploration of them, Cicėnaitė imposes upon her disjointed narrative the structure of a dictionary, as identified in the title of the novel, *Anglų kalbos žodynas* [A Dictionary of English]. Each chapter in the novel uses an English word as its title, arranged alphabetically. As a structure, the dictionary in Cicėnaitė's novel subjects a predominantly Lithuanian text to the alphabet and vocabulary of a foreign language, underscoring the central tension between the narrator's native

[3] Writers who are exiles or emigrants or expatriates are inevitably haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt, wrote Salman Rushdie.

Lithuanian and the language of the host country, English. Highlighted as chapter titles on a separate page and added on every second page of the book, they clash with the Lithuanian text that immediately follows as the titular word is not introduced immediately, sometimes only several pages in:

> Afterlife
>
> Tą rytą priešgaisrinės sirenos suveikė dėl laiku neišjungto skrudintuvo. Išgirdau kauksmą duše tiesdama ranką užsukti vandenį, užsimečiau suknelę ant drėgno kūno, įsispyriau į basutes ir išėjau pro duris pasiėmusi tik raktus, miegamajame ant grindų palikusi pradėtą krauti krepšį. (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p.8)[4]

Graphically marked with italics inside the text, which, as mentioned earlier, otherwise refuses to signal direct speech with conventional punctation, the English words unsettle the Lithuanian text visually. The reader is meant to notice and acknowledge them, despite the fact that s/he might already know their meaning, and despite Cicėnaitė's frequent cushioning of such insertions with explanations or translation, before or after a foreign word or phrase, as, for instance, in the first and second quotations, respectively:

> Norėjau […] priglausti pamestą, brokuotą, *broken*. (p. 38)
>
> […] galvojau, kaip išversti žodį *broken*. Šio žodžio reikšmė buvo platesnė, nei galėjai pastebėti iš pirmo žvilgsnio, nei apskritai norėjai žinoti. Sugadintas, palaužtas, brokuotas galėjai būti visaip. *Broken* galėjo būti ir žmogus sulaužytais sparnais. (p. 28)[5]

Formatted this way, the English insertions are intended to disrupt the text as sights or spectacles, taking up space in it, adding a multimodal

[4] Afterlife
That morning, the fire alarm got activated by a toaster, forgotten by some neighbour. I was in the shower, about to turn the water off when I heard the blaring; I put on a dress, my skin was still damp, put on the flip-flops and went out. I took only the keys, leaving a half-packed travelling back on the floor in the bedroom.

[5] I wanted […] to shelter the lost, the broken, *broken.*
I thought how to translate the word *broken.* Its meaning was wider than you would think, than you wanted to know. You could be broken, damaged, ruined in all kinds of ways. A man with broken wings could be *broken.*

aspect to the text's multilingual configuration, implying the constant need to translate and explain. Notably, such insertions of a foreign language do not attempt to convey an impression of code-switching during conversations; even when the text inserts a sentence uttered by a character in English, it is obvious the entire exchange between its participants takes place in this language: "Kartą į veterinarijos kliniką senutė plastikiniame maišelyje atnešė gatvėje rastą į skraistę suvyniotą rožinę kakadu lūžusiu sparnu. Paukštį apžiūrėjęs veterinaras pasakė nebegalįs jo pagydyti. *Some broken things can't be fixed*, pasakė jis apgailestaudamas" (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 27).[6] All such linguistic disruptions take place in the internal monologue of the narrator, "staging," to borrow Grutman's (2024) phrase, the disruptions related to language and culture that define the migrant, as suggested by Rushdie (1991, pp. 277–78). They also foreground the state of the migrant and the new "nomadic citizen" as a "polyglot[t] travelling in between languages, in a permanent stage of (self-)translation," as Reine Meylaerts puts it (2006, p. 1), leading also to "[t]he writing and reading act of multilingual literary texts [being] defined as an ongoing *translation* process between the languages involved" (Meylaerts, 2013, p. 520).

Despite the central image of an English dictionary, Cicėnaitė's novel is not bilingual but multilingual: the text is dotted with words and brief phrases in languages as different as Latin (e.g., pp. 22, 32, 35, 64, 65, 229, 240); the narrator's husband's native French (e.g., pp. 141, 280, 290); Polish (pp. 199, 263), Spanish (p. 230), Brazilian Portuguese, Italian, Japanese (pp. 199, 158), Aboriginal languages (e.g., p. 286); all such insertions are graphically marked with italics. In some cases, languages are invoked only latently by identifying them, e.g. Russian, which she remembers from her childhood in Vilnius (p. 199), or various languages spoken by immigrants in Sydney (p. 158). However, the presence of these other languages does not suggest the narrator's discomfort in relation to them.

[6] Once an old woman came into the veterinary clinic. She brought a pink cockatoo, wrapped in a scarf; she had found it on the street, its wing was broken. The vet examined the bird and said he was not able to help it. *Some broken things can't be fixed*, said he, apologetically.

Notably, even the narrator's childhood memories uncover her familiarity with multilingual realities. In one of the numerous episodes in which she remembers Vilnius, the narrator says, inserting a sentence in Polish: "*Wilno jest cudem*, tyliai galėjau ištarti savo pamiršta kalba, bet argi galima iš tikro pamiršti kalbą, argi pamiršęs kalbą nepamirštum savęs?" (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 199).[7] The sentence is graphically marked, as usual, but unlike in most other cases when it comes to foreign insertions, it is not translated or explained. Reminding the reader of Vilnius's own multicultural and multilingual history, the untranslated sentence in Polish also signals not only the narrator's familiarity with the language, but a degree of comfort, even intimacy that she admits to not having with English when she speaks of lacking the sense of it: "Neturiu anglų kalbos jausmo ir turbūt niekada neturėsiu" (p. 106). By contrast, Polish, although "forgotten," is described as an inextricable part of the narrator's selfhood: as she contemplates whether one can truly forget a language, her conclusion is that forgetting a language would entail forgetting oneself (p. 199). Polish is the narrator's first language among several learned in her childhood: "Išmokusi tarti pirmuosius žodžius, iš pradžių kalbėjau tik lenkiškai, prosenelės kalba, pati to nežinodama gyvenau savo uždaroje, miniatiūrinėje užsienio teritorijoje. Sesuo mokė lietuviškų žodžių, kiemo vaikai – rusiškų" (p. 104).[8] In this passage, she also metaphorically describes languages in spatial terms: her great grandmother's Polish constructs a "foreign territory" at home, coexisting with the sister's Lithuanian, whereas the outside – children's games in the yard – is linked to Russian.

One of the last chapters of Cicėnaitė's novel, titled "Wor(l)d," reiterates a similar motif, albeit in a different way, foregrounding, already in its title, the connection the narrator wants to see between words and worlds, that is, entire systems and structures or sets of meaning that they open to. The chapter reads in its entirety:

[7] *Wilno jest cudem* [Vilnius is a miracle], I could say silently in my forgotten language, but can you really forget your language; wouldn't you forget yourself if you forgot your language?

[8] After I learned to pronounce my first words, at first I spoke only Polish, the language of my great-grandmother; without being aware of it, I lived in my own secluded miniature foreign territory. My sister was teaching me Lithuanian words, the children outside – Russian ones.

Jau miegi?
Ar pastebėjai, kad tik viena raidė skiria *word* ir *world*?
Kaip manai, ar tai ką nors reiškia?
Man norisi tikėti, kad reiškia.
Jei nemiegi, kartok paskui mane.

One word at a time.

jei suis	*aš esu*
tu es	*tu esi*
il, elle est	*jis, ji yra*
nous sommes	*mes esame*
vous êtes	*jūs esate*
ils, ells sont	*jie, jos yra* (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 280)[9]

Although addressed to the narrator's husband, these lines are part of the narrator's internal monologue, not an actual conversation. They stage an imaginary attempt to teach him the narrator's native Lithuanian: she speaks of this repeatedly in the chapter preceding "Wor(l)d," in which the repetition extends over several pages and creates an incantatory effect as the narrator lists numerous aspects of Lithuanian she wants to teach him, including reading and writing, words and swearwords, and how to pronounce them, past simple and past frequentative tenses, but also eating, driving, and making love in Lithuanian:

> **Aš išmokysiu tave lietuviškai**, pasakiau jam, o gal norėjau pasakyti, tada, kai mus užklojo naktinė Voga Vogos tyla be menkiausio garso, kokia būna mieste, kuriame nieko nevyksta. **Išmokysiu tave** kitokių namų. [...] **Išmokysiu tave** valgyti lietuviškai, skaityti lietuviškai, rašyti lietuviškai, vairuoti lietuviškai, keiktis lietuviškai, mylėtis lietuviškai. [...] **Išmokysiu tave**, kad visi šie žodžiai reikalingi, kad negalima pamiršti nė vieno. **Išmokysiu tave**, kaip juos ištarti. [...] **Išmokysiu tave** mylėti būtąjį kartinį ir būtąjį dažninį laiką. **Išmokysiu tave** tikėti būsimuoju laiku. [...]
> O tada tu galėsi išmokyti mane prancūziškai. (pp. 274–76; emphasis added)[10]

[9] Are you asleep?
Have you noticed only one letter separates *word* and *world*?
Do you think it means something?
I would like to believe it does.
If you are not sleeping, repeat after me.
One word at a time.

[10] **I will teach you** Lithuanian, I told him, or maybe I just wanted to tell him that after the silence of the Voga Voga night covered us like a blanket, the total silence of a city

The passage and the chapter end with the narrator's suggestion that later he teach her French, and the chapter "Wor(l)d," which follows immediately after, thus stages an imagined lesson during which both participants are expected to switch from English, in which they speak to each other, to their mother-tongues, Lithuanian for the narrator, and French for her French Canadian husband, the language he admits to forgetting (p. 160). This exchange structured upon the principle of translation thus foregrounds the motif of a dictionary, which at this point can be seen as being given a metaphorical meaning to suggest the relationship between the narrator and her husband. The imagined lesson stages a rhythmical exchange of phrases which conjugate the verb "to be" in French and English, translating from his native French to her native Lithuanian. The lines are formatted to resemble poetic stanzas, in which each line can be read as an independent sentence, asserting the existence of various Subjects, in two languages.

Formatted this way, the page containing in the chapter "Wor(l)d" is thus a carefully constructed multilingual space, in which lines in the three languages relevant in the couple's relationship are arranged in such a way as to invite to a dialogue with one another, leaving it to the reader to explore the similarities and differences between the sentences, particularly their spelling and pronunciation, that is, the multimodal aspects of visuality and sound (e.g. the similarity of the French "tu es" and the Lithuanian "tu esi"). Notably, too, the lines conjugating the verb "to be" in Lithuanian are also italicized, the graphic emphasis reserved in the predominantly Lithuanian text to mark words and phrases in other languages or quotations from poems. Thereby these Lithuanian lines are subsumed by the format of the poem and a bilingual language game, in which both languages participate on equal terms without any unease or tensions.

The latter mark only the narrator's relationship to English and the English-speaking society of Australia, the host country, in which her status,

where nothing ever happens. **I will teach you** a different home. **I will teach you** to eat in Lithuanian, to read in Lithuanian, to write in Lithuanian, to drive in Lithuanian, to swear in Lithuanian, to make love in Lithuanian. [...] **I will teach you** that all these words are necessary, that none can be forgotten. **I will teach you** to pronounce them. [...] **I will teach you** to love the past tense and the past frequentative. **I will teach you** to believe in the future tense. [...]
And then you can teach me French.

unlike her husband's, is still precarious as she is not a citizen. For instance, during a stop at a car park, she notices a garbage can with the words "NO VEGAN" spray painted on it and says to her husband:

> Dar betrūksta užrašo GO BACK WHERE YOU BELONG, tarstelėjau.
> Jis būtų skirtas ne man, atsakė vyras.
> Ne tau. Nes tu turi Australijos pilietybę ir valgai mėsą.
> Ir angliškai kalbu be akcento, pridūrė vyras.
> Su Šiaurės Amerikos akcentu, pataisiau jį. Tavęs, kaip ir manęs, dar klausia, iš kur esi, nors jau penkerius metus nebuvai grįžęs į Monrealį. (Cicėnaitė 2022, p. 160)[11]

In addition to her heightened awareness of not belonging in Australia, the narrator is also more sensitive than her husband to their accents, albeit quite different, marking them as outsiders. But she also perceives English as "jarring," intrusive and possibly disruptive as it enters the language of migrants: "Bet sykiu man ausį rėžė emigrantų kalba – vos išvažiavę jie į kiekvieną sakinį prikaišiodavo angliškų žodžių, tarsi angliškai kalbėdami atrodytų protingesni, o iš tikro kabindavosi už tų žodžių kaip už ramentų, bergždžiai ieškodami savo neišverčiamam naujam gyvenimui tūrio ir svorio" (p. 158).[12] In this passage, the narrator once again underscores the migrant's state of "permanent (self-)translation," to borrow Meylaert's phrase (2006, p. 1), the state which is both thematized in the novel and organizes the narrative, employing the structure of a dictionary.

The narrator is not new to English, the language she first learnt at school in Lithuania (p. 106), used during her graduate studies in New Zealand, in her marriage, and in the numerous years in Sydney (p. 167). Nonetheless, what she focuses on are the moments when English, which she assumed she

[11] All that's missing is the line, GO BACK WHERE YOU BELONG, I mumbled.
It wouldn't be meant for me, answered my husband.
It wouldn't. Because you have Australian citizenship and eat meat.
And my English has no accent, added my husband.
You have North American accent, I corrected him. You, just like me, still get asked where you are from, though you haven't been to Montreal in five years.

[12] But at the same time, I found the language spoken by emigrant jarring – as soon as they left, they would start cramming English words into every sentence, as if that would make them sound smarter, but in reality they were hanging onto those words as if these were crutches, vainly searching for substance and weight for their untranslatable new lives.

knew, would "laugh in [her] face" (p. 158). As the narrator explains: "Galėčiau mintinai išmokti visą žodyną, bet vis tiek jausiuosi *lost in translation*, pasiklydusi vertime, srovės nublokšta liksiu paraštėje. Visuomet atsiranda žodis, kuris neturės ribų, krantų, atitikmenų. Žodis, kurį reikės išgalvoti" (p. 159).[13] This leads to her exploration of individual words as utterances, as messages, but also as sounds and sights, as Cicėnaitė herself says in an interview (in Tüür, 2022, para. 7), and as can be seen, for instance, in the chapter "Wor(ld)," whose title constructs a pun, highlighted in the following line:

> Ar pastebėjai, kad tik viena raidė skiria *word* ir *world*?
> Kaip manai, ar tai ką nors reiškia?
> Man norisi tikėti, kad reiškia. (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 280)[14]

Notably, unlike with the majority of other foreign, particularly English, insertions, neither the word "word" nor "world" is translated: indeed, translating them would mean erasing the pun. In a similar way, each chapter is centred around the titular word, which is discussed, analysed, exemplified, put in contexts, compared to Lithuanian words, linked to the narrator's experiences. In some cases, an English word even relieves anxieties caused by specific social norms to which the narrator does not conform, for example:

> Ieškodama prieglobsčio anglų kalboje, radau atsakymą, atsivėrusį dviem žodžiais – *childless* ir *childfree*. *Childless*, arba bevaikė, buvo žodis, kurį visi žinojo, tai buvo įdagas kaktoje, nuosprendis, žodis, žymintis neturėjimą, praradimą, skausmą […].
> *Childfree*, arba laisva nuo vaikų, buvo žodis, kurį žinojo ne visi, žymintis moterį, išdrįsusią patikėti, kad ji ir jos kūnas gali būti vertingi patys sau, netapę *kito* tąsa, paslaptingu indu kitai gyvybei sukurti.
> Aš tiesiog esu aš. Aš nesu -*less*. […]

[13] I could learn an entire dictionary by heart, but I will still feel *lost in translation*, lost in translation, carried away by a flow, stranded into the margins. There will always be a word which will have no boundaries, no shores, no equivalents. A word which I will need to invent.

[14] Have you noticed only one letter separates *word* and *world*?
Do you think it means something?
I would like to believe it does.

> Nesu nei *child-less*, nei *child-free*. Aš tiesiog esu aš; aš tiesiog esu *free*. (pp. 39–40)[15]

What is also important is that such passages uncover the very different principles at work behind multilingualism and translation: as Grutman (1998) points out, while multilingualism "evokes the co-presence of two or more languages (in a given society, text or individual)" and thus is supplementary, translation "involves a substitution of one language for another" (p. 157).

Thus the novel is structured as a wordbook, in which each chapter's English titles are arranged alphabetically, and the final chapter "Zzzz" brings all the previous titular words together, integrating them into the description of the characters' return to their home in Sydney as their trip is over. Asked about the selection, Cicėnaitė speaks about words being connected to her personal experiences or suggestive of the issue of untranslatability, but she also admits to some being rather random or even unexpected choices (in Tüür, 2022, para. 7). Indeed, apart from the alphabetical order in which the words used for the chapter titles are set, it is difficult to trace one single consistent thematic pattern behind them. The list reads, in its entirety: "Afterlife," "Broken," "Childfree," "Damaged," "Eternity," "Falling," "Ghosts," "Homesick," "Intimacy," "Jetlag," "Kismet," "Lost," "Missing," "Nevermore," "Outback," "Petrichor," "Quiet," "Reality," "Serendipity," "Thanatophobia," "Unicorn," "Virga," "Wor(l)d," "Xenophobia," "Yearning," and "Zzzzz." The words are not linked to the geography behind the road trip, or to the two characters' stories of migration, although the name of their current country of residence, Australia, starting with "A" would seem a tempting choice: the more so that in the opening chapter of the novel, titled "Afterlife," the narrator remembers a border guard at the airport in Sydney returning her passport and greeting her with "*Welcome to Australia. Welcome home*." (Cicėnaitė 2022, p. 10)

[15] Looking for refuge in the English language, I found an answer which opened up for me in two words – *childless* and *childfree*. *Childless*, or without children, was a word everybody knew; it was a mark branded onto one's forehead, a verdict, a word marking not-having, loss, pain […].
Childfree, or free from children, was a word not everybody knew, describing a woman who dared to believe that she and her body can be valuable in themselves, without becoming an extension of somebody *else*, a mysterious vessel to create a new life.
I am just me. I am not *-less*. […]
I am neither *child-less*, nor *child-free*. I am just me; I am simply *free*.

However, only one titular word, the untranslatable "outback," references Australian realia. The words on the list are nouns and adjectives/ participles, and even an onomatopoeia ("Zzzzz"); some are negative in meaning, such as "broken," "damaged," "lost," "missing," or "xenophobia," and convey discomfort or longing (e.g. "jetlag," "falling, "ghosts," or "yearning"), while others are positive, e.g. "serendipity"; many are recognizably English, while some are borrowings from other languages, e.g. "kismet," "petrichor," "virga"; some denote abstractions, while some others refer to specific cultural realia ("outback"), legendary beings ("unicorn"), or are intertextual references ("nevermore," the title of Edgar Allen Poe's poem, passages from which are quoted in the correspondent chapter). What is in common among most of the titular words is challenges translating them into Lithuanian as each opens up to an entire "world." As Laimantas Jonušys (2023) suggests in his review of the novel, Cicėnaitė's dictionary of English is explicitly Lithuanian as it seeks to convey and address the discomfort and cultural tensions which mark the narrator's state as a migrant (para. 8). Still, the Lithuanian migrant's musings are subjected to the logic of a foreign alphabet, which restricts the number of the words as well as arranges them in a sequence.

In her analysis of alphabetization as used in literary texts, Jacquelyn Ardam (2014) identifies two "competing" ways of understanding and employing the alphabetical sequence and its "distinctive orderly aesthetic": seeing it as "a horizontally organized, nonhierarchical trope of metonymy, or as a vertically oriented, hierarchical trope of metaphor" (pp. 138, 139). The metonymic reading underscores the alphabet as "pure form" (Ardam, 2014, p. 139), in which the ordering of the elements is, as pointed out by Susan Stewart (1978), arbitrary and non-hierarchical, lacking a meaningful order (p. 190). In other words, "Z isn't worth more than A is. It's just further along" (Ardam, 2014, p. 139). Nonetheless, according to Ardam, "[i]n almost all literary texts, the [alphabetical] sequence functions as a metaphor for order or power, the symbolic register, or even for civilization itself" (2014, p. 138). The metaphorical interpretation relies on the fact that, as Roland Barthes (1994) puts it, "everyone knows [the alphabet], recognizes it, and agrees on it," thereby endowing the sequence of arbitrary signs – letters – with meaning (p. 147).

In Cicėnaitė's novel, both interpretations supplement each other. On one hand, there being no single consistent identifiable pattern to the titular words for the chapters gestures towards the metonymical reading of the alphabetical order and supplements the mode of the stream of consciousness of the narrative: there is no particular reason why a specific word is mentioned in a specific place. Indeed, the novel can be read as any dictionary or reference text, picking out specific titular words and thus chapters in whichever order. Yet, as musings on specific words are frequently not contained withing the limits of a specific chapter, but extend into others (see also Ivanova 2023, para. 4), the alphabetical order of the chapter titles becomes linked to the narrative structure, that of the road story, which establishes the novel's chronology and linearity. Along with its foreign alphabet, the dictionary in/of the novel becomes a metaphor: the motif of the travel of the main narrative line is extended to suggest a travel in the English language, following the route set by its alphabet and with specific words becoming sites and sights on which the traveller-narrator's gaze dwells for longer.

Experienced Multilingualism in the Novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas*

Analyzing multilingual literary texts, it is equally important to address the fact that they can refer to the real-life socio-historical realia and can also employ different multilingual practices to foreground them. Akvilina Cicėnaitė's novel focuses on two immigrants in Australia, finding themselves in the state of constant translation between languages, different realities, and cultures. The characters' lived or "experienced" multilingualism is mostly reflected in latent form, supplementing the narrator's personal musings with theoretical insights and concepts, such as the "third space', the "imaginary homeland", etc.; yet such musings can be disrupted by explicit instances of multilingualism, as in the passage in which the narrator remembers her arrival in Australia, which would become her new home. She begins by commenting on the gradual loss of her native language because of her move to an English-speaking environment and ends with the untranslated English phrase "*Welcome to Australia. Welcome home*,"

foregrounding the issue of belonging and that shift into a different language:

> […] pasijutau lyg pirmosiomis dienomis Pietų pusrutulyje, kai atvažiavau manydama mokanti angliškai, **bet iš tikro supratau kas antrą žodį, apkurtau, atsitrenkiau į uždarytas kalbos duris**. Bėgo dienos, savaitės, mėnesiai, pamažu ėmiau atgauti klausą, užsklęstos durys prasivėrė, galėjau šmurkštelėti į kalbos vidų, užuosti naujumu kvepiančių žodžių formas, nešiotis juos pakibusius ant liežuvio galo, vieni švelnūs it šuns kailis, kiti švitriniu popieriumi nudilginantys pirštus. **Anuomet dar nežinojau, kad viskas klostosi maždaug taip: iš pradžių nežinai svetimos kalbos žodžių. Paskui juos įsimeni, bet vis pamiršti. Tada imi pamiršti žodžius gimtąja kalba. Tada dalis tavęs pradeda gyventi tik vienoje kalboje. Galiausiai atsiranda neišverčiamumas.** Iš viso žmogaus lieka pusė, kaip tada, kai pagaliau ištrūksti iš didžiojo banginio Airbus A380 vidurių [...]. Atiduodamas pasą jis [pasienietis] mostelės man praeiti. ***Welcome to Australia. Welcome home***. (Cicėnaitė, 2022, pp. 9–10; emphasis added)[16]

As the literary critic Eglė Mikulskytė notes, one of the central issues addressed in the novel is how to "tame" the in-between state and to accept the language of the new country (Mikulskytė, 2023, para. 2). As the narrator continuously reflects on this issue, three distinct layers of "experienced" multilingualism can be identified in the text: 1) the global and historical overview (the Australian continent and its multicultural / multilingual history), 2) the multilingual Australian society and, in particular,

[16] [...] I suddenly felt the way I had during my first days in the Southern Hemisphere, where I had arrived, thinking I knew English, **but in fact, I could only understand every other word and felt I was going deaf, hitting on the closed door of the language**. With passing days, weeks and months, I slowly began to regain my hearing: the locked door opened a crack, and I could slip inside, into the language, and breath in the shapes of its words, which smelled of newness. I carried those words hanging on the tip of my tongue – some soft like the fur of a dog, some coarse, like sandpaper**. I didn't know then that it works like this when it comes to a foreign language: at first, you don't know the words. Then you memorize the words but keep forgetting them**. **Then you start forgetting words in your own mother tongue. Then part of you starts living in one language only. And eventually, you have to deal with untranslatability.** You have been reduced by half, like when you finally break away from the bowels of the great whale Airbus A380 and line up at the immigration gate [...]. Handing back my passport, he [the border guard] waves me to go ahead. ***Welcome to Australia. Welcome home*.**

the metropolitan space of Sydney, 3) the Lithuanian narrator's relationship with her French-Canadian husband as they communicate with each other in English.

Australia, the Multilingual Continent

"With a continuing civilisation of over sixty thousand years and approximately 250 languages surviving into the twenty-first century, Australia has always been a multilingual nation-continent", says the introduction to the recently published special issue of the journal *Literary Multilingualism* (Edwards & Hogarth, 2024, p. 161). In the novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas*, the global and historical perspective on multilingualism finds expression in a latent form, employing what Deganutti (2022) calls "language reflections" (p. 610), when the narrator speaks about Australia's Aboriginal tribes and their languages, erased by British settler colonialism: "Prieš kolonizaciją žemyne gyveno daugiau nei penki šimtai čiabuvių genčių, kalbėta dviem šimtais penkiasdešimčia skirtingų kalbų, kiekvienoje kalbų grupėje dar būta skirtingų dialektų. […] praradus kalbą užmarštin nugrimzta ištisi pasauliai, prarandamos nesuskaičiuojamos kultūrinės visatos" (Cicėnaitė, 2022, pp. 160–61).[17] In this context, the narrator reflects on how quickly English "covered this continent" and speculates about "what it would be like now without the dominance of English" (p. 287). She makes an ironic comparison of the English language to the invasive species brought to the Australian continent by the colonizers: "Jeigu anglų kalba būtų gyvūnas, ji būtų triušis" (p. 288).[18] It is worth noting that critics such as Mikulskaitė (2023) consider the reflections on multi-ethnic and multilingual Australia in the novel to be even more successful than the descriptions of the narrator's in-between state as a migrant or the analysis of the relationship with her husband (para. 4).

Driving the car to the Australian outback with her husband, the narrator ponders about the extinct Aboriginal languages and the English

[17] Before the colonisation, this continent had been home to more than five hundred indigenous tribes. They spoke two hundred and fifty different languages, and each language group also had different dialects. […] with the loss of a language, entire worlds sink into oblivion. Countless cultural universes are lost.
[18] If English were an animal, it would be a rabbit.

toponyms which preserve traumatic cultural memory of the continent. The following passage is an example of such musings, textually presented by combining latent and explicitly manifest forms of multilingualism, the latter instances graphically marked with italics:

> Vienos iš tų pirmųjų tautų kalbų mirė visiems laikams. Kitos kalbos miega ir gal dar kada nors pabus. Vienoms kalboms mirštant, kitos prisimena – žemyno žemėlapis nužymėtas vietų, pavadintų *Massacre, Poisoned Waterhole Creek, Haunted Creek, Murderers Flat, Massacre Inlet, Slaughterhouse Gully*. Gal kolonijų istorija ir bus nugalėtojų istorija, bet kalba išduos praėjusių amžių nusikaltimus. (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 285)[19]

The novel refers to the initial clashes between the new settlers and the Aboriginal tribes, to the "fundamental misunderstanding" (p. 286) between the two groups, the forced assimilation of Aboriginal peoples, and attempts to preserve Aboriginal languages. In a fast-changing world, the narrator searches for stability and permanence, and brings up the motif of immortality, particularly the immortality of a language, or at least of individual words: "Nemirtingumo ieškau žodžiuose – savo ir svetimos kalbos." (p. 183)[20] Forgetting is often equated with death; to forget a language is to forget oneself: "argi galima pamiršti kalbą, argi pamiršęs kalbą nepamirštum saves?" (p. 199).[21] The narrator's reflections on the Aboriginal cultures and languages that have been erased by settler colonialism echo the motif of death, repeatedly evoked in the novel: time after time, the narrator mentions global catastrophes, particularly those ravaging the Australian continent (p. 153), contemplates her own possible death (p. 13), and imagines the loss of her loved ones in the face of the COVID pandemic (p. 16).

[19] Some of the languages of those first peoples are dead. Others have been asleep, and there is a chance they may wake up at some point. While some languages die, others remember – the map of this continent is dotted with places named *Massacre, Poisoned Waterhole Creek, Haunted Creek, Murderers Flat, Massacre Inlet, Slaughterhouse Gully*. The history of the colonies may be the history of the victors, but the language betrays the crimes of the past.

[20] I look for immortality in words – in my own and in those of a foreign language.

[21] can you really forget your language; wouldn't you forget yourself if you forgot your language?

Alongside the narrator's reflections on Australia's multilingual past and her composing a personal dictionary of English, she tells the story of Patyegarang, a fifteen-year-old Aboriginal girl of the Gadigal tribe. At the end of 18th century, Petyegarang taught English lieutenant William Dawes (1762–1836) the language of her people and, as explained by the narrator, she is thought to be one of the first people to have taught an Aboriginal language to the early colonists in New South Wales (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 286). Petyegarang assisted Dawes in documenting the Eora language, spoken by the Gadigal people and other tribes, sometimes referred to as the Sydney language. During this collaboration, Patyegarang learned to speak and read English from Dawes: "Antipodal as they were, this pair still managed to converse regularly, often intimately, studying each other's utterances, feeling a trust grow that can fairly be called affection" (Gibson, 2010, p. 245). This relationship of two people from two different worlds, learning each other's language, becomes an expectation that the narrator projects onto her own marriage. As discussed in the previous section of the paper, this becomes particularly evident in the chapter "Wor(l)d" (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 280), in which the narrator stages an imaginary language lesson for her husband. Both examples foreground the need to explain/ translate for each other and thereby employ the central image of the novel – that of a dictionary – as a metaphor for a relationship.

In Cicėnaitė's novel, Australia is described as a continent of numerous extinct Aboriginal languages, and simultaneously, one that contains multitudes of languages and cultures due to waves of immigration and globalization (2022, p. 288). The narrator and her husband are two of hundreds of thousands of immigrants, contributing to a cultural and linguistic mix of contemporary Australia. The novel explores the issue of migration and postcolonial condition, employing what Deganutti (2022) calls "language references" and "languages reflections" (p. 610), as well as intra-textual code mixing, including in the Lithuanian narrative not only English but also some Aboriginal words, e.g., "tariadyaou", "tyerabarrbowaryaou", or "putuwa" (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 286), thereby bringing extinct languages back to life, albeit temporarily, raising linguistic awareness, and, at least in part, freeing her own narrative from the dominance of English-language insertions.

Multilingualism and the Metropolitan Space of Sydney

The second and very important aspect of experienced multilingualism in Cicėnaitė's novel is related to the narrator's identity as she feels she is "nenusakomos tautybės, nenusakomo amžiaus, nenusakomos profesijos, jaučiausi nenusakoma" (2022, p. 13)[22] and, particularly, to her relationship to the metropolitan multicultural and multilingual space of Sydney, or the host society in general.

In line with the metaphor of the dictionary, which structures the novel, Sydney is also presented as an alphabet: the narrator's adjustment to the new continent, the new city and the new cultural and linguistic environment is described as beginning with the letter A (p. 10). A little later comes a more specific parallel between the city and a dictionary: "Sidnėjus turėjo daug veidų, skirtingose jo kampuose galiojo skirtingos taisyklės, – ir vėl galėjau pasijusti prašalaite, miesto abėcėlėje įstrigusia jei ne ties A, tai ties C raide" (p. 33).[23] The narrator wanders the streets of Sydney, comparing different suburbs, observing people, and learning a new dialect:

> **Mokiausi australiško žargono, nors visa paslaptis dažniausiai buvo trumpinti žodžius:** taip *afternoon* virsta *arvo, avocado – avo*, *barbacue – barbie, breakfast- brekky***.** Dar buvo kitų, kuriuos galėjai išmokti mestelėti su australišku nerūpestingumu: *Chrissie, crikey, devo, esky, fai dinkum, flat out, good on ya, heaps, lollies, Maccas, mate, mozzie, no drama, no worries, pissed, reckon, sickie, Straya*! (p. 62; emphasis added).[24]

A middle class intellectual with a long personal experience of migration and linguistic competences (that is why numerous other languages besides

[22] of indescribable nationality, of indescribable age, of indescribable occupation. I felt indescribable.

[23] Sydney had many faces, and different rules governed different parts of the city – and thus I felt like an outsider once again, stuck in the city's alphabet – maybe not at the letter A, but certainly at C.

[24] **I was learning Australian English, although the main secret was simply to abbreviate most words**: thereby, *afternoon* becomes *arvo*, *avocado* becomes *avo, barbacue* becomes *barbie, breakfast* becomes brekky. There were other words, too, which you could learn to insert here and there with ease: *Chrissie, crikey, devo, esky, fai dinkum, flat out, good on ya, heaps, lollies, Maccas, mate, mozzie, no drama, no worries, pissed, reckon, sickie, Straya!*

English are present in the novel, latently or explicitly), the narrator gets to know Sydney and its surroundings rather quickly. She adapts to the city's lifestyle and feels she has unlocked the doors to a new cultural and linguistic environment. In this, Cicėnaitė's narrator stands in contrast to the Lithuanian or East European migrant workers in Great Britain, as described in the texts by other Lithuanian writers, e.g. by Paulina Pukytė in her multi-genre book *Bedalis ir labdarys* (A Loser and a Do-gooder) (2013) or by Unė Kaunaitė in her novel *Žmonės iš Alkapės* (People from Alkapė) (2015). Cicėnaitė's narrator embraces the changes that have accompanied her move to Sydney: "Šiame saulėtame pusrutulyje tapo nebesvarbu, kas buvo anksčiau" (2022, p. 36).[25] According to Ineta Pulkauninkė (2024), this is how a non-traumatized creative mind works – it is able to detect, analyze, and perceive other variations of itself, to tolerate the doubling of ethnic identity (transnational identity), and, if necessary, to re-create the identity in relation to oneself or others in the new social context (p. 140).

On the other hand, the narrator admits that she is still influenced by her Nordic background and her native language:

> **Bet įgimta kito krašto sakinių melancholija buvo per giliai įsigėrusi į odą.** Jos negalėjai nuplauti. Jos kvapai buvo neišdizenfekuojami. […].
> **Mano širdis buvo kompasas, kuris rodė kryptį į šiaurę**. (p. 36; emphasis added)[26]

The narrator describes her state as a migrant crossing landscapes, cultures, and languages through latent multilingualism, e.g. in the chapter "Eternity," she reflects on what it would mean for her to grow old and to die in this strange city, Sydney, surrounded by a foreign language, thereby explicitly acknowledging her own Otherness:

> Galvodavau apie tai, ką reikštų pasenti šitaip, angliškai, ką reikštų mirštant klejoti lietuviškai ir niekas aplinkui tavęs

[25] In this sunny hemisphere, it no longer matters what used to be before.
[26] **But the innate melancholy of the sentences of the home country had penetrated your skin too deeply**. You couldn't wash it away. Its smell could not be extinguished with any detergent. […].
My heart was a compass that pointed North.

> nesuprastų, **ką reikštų užgesti šalia žmonių, su kuriais nesieja nei kalba, nei kultūra**, tik vienas bendras žmogiškumas; **ką reikštų klajoti ilgais pomirtiniais koridoriais, kur dvasios nekalba tavo kalba, kur jos išvis neturi tavo kalbos žodyno**. (p. 68–69)

> Ir jei mirsiu čia, tolimame žemyne, mieste, kuriame taip lengva ištirpti, gal niekas ir nesužinos, kad esu mirusi. **Jei bendruomenė žodžiais neišglostys mano veido ir neišlydės vardo**, gal iš tikro ir nebūsiu mirusi. (p. 273)[27]

Living in Sydney, she feels "divided" and frequently speaks with her husband "about staying or going back" (p. 79). In the chapter "Homesick", the narrator admits that for them – modern nomads – home was "čia ir ten. Namai reiškė gyvenimą pasidalijus, pusiau čia, pusiau kitur, visur laikinai, su laikrodžiais, rodančiais skirtingų laiko zonų valandas" (p. 111).[28] In her review of Cicėnaitė's novel, the writer Sandra Bernotaitė (2022), who also spent a decade living in Australia, notes that *Anglų kalbos žodynas* is a novel that breaks through barriers and shows both sides, allowing you to feel both here and there; she adds that the novel feels relatable to those who live in Lithuania and those who have emigrated (Bernotaitė, para. 4).

In this context, latent and explicitly manifest forms of multilingualism can be seen as one of the main means of characterization, as proposed by Horn (1981, p. 226). As modern nomads, Cicėnaitė's protagonists are constantly on the move, employing different languages and adjusting to different cultures. For example, travelling across Australia, the narrator notes that she is gaining a better understanding of the host society and language:

> Žinosime, ką reiškia *bogan* – tas žodis turi atitikmenų kitose šalyse ir kitose kalbose, ar tai būtų *rednecks*, ar *white trash*,

[27] I would often think about what it would mean to grow old like this, in English; what it would mean to die delirious, raving about in Lithuanian with nobody around to understand you; **what it would mean to fade aways near people with whom you share no language and no culture, only mere human-ness; what it would mean to wander along the long corridors of the afterlife, where spirits don't speak your language, where they don't even have a dictionary of your language**.
And if I die here, on this distant continent, in a city where it is so easy to dissolve, maybe no one will ever know that I am dead. **If my community does not caress my face and say goodbye to my name**, maybe I will not even be really dead.

[28] Home was both here and there. Home meant a life divided, half here, half elsewhere, everywhere temporarily, with clocks showing the hours of different time zones.

> ar runkeliai, ar buduliai. Tai tie, kurie dėvi berankovius marškinėlius, geriau žinomus kaip *wifebeaters* [...] Jeigu jiems pavyksta praturtėti, pavyzdžiui, dirbant kasyklose, būna praminti *cashed-up bogans*, taškosi pinigais ir trokšta pademonstruoti turtus. (2022, pp. 80–81)[29]

Multilingualism also comes into play when the foreign phrases inserted into the main text are popular quotations or famous sayings (Horn, 1981, p. 227), for instance, when the narrator reflects on climate change and sustainability, she adds: "*The future is now. There is no Plan(et) B. You'll have to excuse us, kid, we're in a bit of a pickle here*" (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 53); elsewhere, she reiterates George Floyd's famous phrase "*I can't breathe*" (p. 251). One can also find shorter or longer passages from English literary texts (e.g. chapter "Nevermore" quotes from Poe's poem several times), and such intertextuality adds another dimension to a narrative, rooted in social and cultural realia.

Differently from some rather sophisticated or abstract English words used for the chapter titles, other English words included in the text of the novel often refer to the everyday realities, thus creating an "illusion of greater realism," to borrow Horn's phrase (1981, p. 227). They include, for example, global companies (*McDonald's*, *Kellogg's, Kmart, etc.*), Australian music bands (*Cold Chisel, Midnight Oil, Savage Garden, Grinspoon*), Australian products (*Vegemite, Shapes*), cultural realia of Sydney (*Bra Boys*), as well as the meteorological phenomena of the continent (*East Coast Low, Dust devil, southerly change*). The latter are integrated into the narrative through explanations provided by the narrator's husband, a meteorologist: "Kai susituokėme, jau žinojau, kad *rain* yra ne tas pats, kas *showers*, kad *serein* yra lengva dulksna, krintanti iš giedro dangaus po saulėlydžio, o *thanatophobia* yra baimė prarasti mylimą" (p. 16).[30] In this case, explicit code-

[29] We will already know what *bogan* means – the word has equivalents in other countries and other languages, be it *rednecks, white trash*, or sheeple. It describes those who wear tank tops, better known as *wifebeaters* [...] If these people manage to make money, for example, by working in the mines, they get nicknamed *cashed-up bogans*. These like to splash out on fancy things and are always eager to show off their wealth.

[30] When we got married, I already knew that *rain* is not the same as *showers*, that *serein* is a light mist which falls from the clear sky after sunset, and that *thanatophobia* is the fear of losing someone you love.

switching staged in the text also helps, to use Horn's phrasing, "convey nuances of meaning that are easier to express in other languages" (1981, pp. 226–227).

In general, the narrator tries to find what could facilitate her adjustment to and, at least partial, integration into the new society. A multilingual configuration constructed in the text and the "comparisons" provoked between the languages included in it (Deganutti, 2022, p. 596) are a sign of complex identity of an individual navigating the global world and accommodating several linguistic and cultural dimensions in his/her daily life. New linguistic experiences allow the narrator to add to her own world-view new concepts and ideas, and give voice to previously unnamed feelings, e.g. "thanatophobia," the fear of death or, as it is explained in the novel, the fear of losing a loved one.

Multilingualism in the Relationship of the Couple

In Cicėnaitė's novel, experienced multilingualism is related not only to the social and public sphere, but, even more importantly, to the intimate relationship, as the protagonists—a Lithuanian woman and her French-Canadian husband—communicate exclusively in English, a language foreign to both, albeit to a different extent. Sometimes the narrator sees her multilingual marriage as a chance to broaden her worldview and boost linguistic competence: "Sužinojau, kad angliškai meilė skamba kitaip nei lietuviškai. […] Sužinojau, kad įsimylėjimas angliškai yra *falling in love*. Sužinojau, kad mylėti galima ir antrąja, ir trečiąja, ir ketvirtąja kalba, kad jausmas gali atsiverti tarpuose tarp žodžių" (2022, p. 77).[31] Sometimes, she feels sad and anxious about the lack of a common language and wonders if her husband also feels that "mes neturime bendros kalbos. Ar žino, kad santuoka yra bendro žodyno paieškos" (p. 121).[32] These words also foreground the motif of a dictionary,

[31] I learned that love sounds different in English and in Lithuanian. [...] I learned that in English you *fall in* love. I learned that one can love in a second, third or fourth language, and that feelings can open up in the spaces between words.
[32] we have no common language. Does he know that marriage is a search for a common vocabulary.

which, in addition to providing Cicėnaitė's narrative a structure, also serves as a metaphor of a relationship.

In the novel, the narrator tells her life story, but also her husband's, so the reader learns about their backgrounds and the history of their relationship. As already mentioned, there is very little dialogue in the text, and as much as there is conveyed in Lithuanian, the narrator assuming the role of what Deganutti (2022) calls a "fictional translator" (p. 610). Only when she wants to stress the growing emotional distance between them, does the narrator include some lines said by her husband in English, the language they speak to each other in. The effect of linguistic and emotional tension is even stronger because these English lines are a response to the narrator's request, which in the text is written in Lithuanian: "Papasakok man istoriją, paprašiau. […] *I have no stories to tell*, atsakė jis." (Cicėnaitė, 2022, p. 117)[33]; and "*I have no stories to tell*, dar sykį pakartojo jis. *I'm a lonely little planet in a big universe and like it that way*" (p. 120).[34]

If one compares the two characters, the husband seems to be less connected to his native Canada and his first language, French: as the narrator puts it, "Jo širdis buvo kompasas, kurio rodyklė nustojo rodyti kryptį į šiaurę" (p. 120).[35] The impression is that the narrator's husband finds it easier to cope with the loss of his homeland; in contrast to his wife, he manages to escape "nuo savo *mother tongue*" (pp. 143–44).[36] After he moves to Australia, "[j]is gavo progą perrašyti save naujai kalbai, kurią puikiai mokėjo" (p. 119).[37] As for the narrator, the new continent and the new language are at times perceived by her as restrictive and imprisoning, so breaking free from English sometimes implies breaking free from Australia: "Anglų kalba mus suvedžiojo. […] Ji turėjo tapti mums laisve, bet tapo dar vienu kalėjimu" (p. 157); „Australija man tapo kalėjimu" (p. 272).[38] Thus an analysis the connotations of individual foreign languages in the text, as proposed by Helmich (2016,

[33] Tell me your story, I asked […] *I have no stories to tell*, he replied.
[34] *I have no stories to tell*, he repeated once more. *I'm a lonely little planet in a big universe and like it that way*.
[35] His heart was a compass whose needle had stopped pointing North.
[36] from his *mother tongue*
[37] He got a chance to rewrite himself in a new language he knew well.
[38] English has led us astray. […] It was supposed to set us free, but it has become one more prison" (p. 157); "Australia became a prison for me.

p. 32), in the case of Cicėnaitė's novel reveals an ambivalent attitude to them: English is simultaneously seen as a shelter and a prison; it both liberates and limits the protagonists, turning them into global citizens, but also into internally divided, fragmented—"damaged"—individuals, particularly when it comes to the narrator (pp. 50–51, p. 106). The tension in their relationship, miscommunication and silence, and the differences of their experience, all uncovered during their journey to Broken Hill, are also fueled by the fact that for the narrator's husband, forgetting his French and Canada means something very different than to her: "Žinojau tik tai, kad jis niekada nesigailėjo. Australija buvo jo laisvė" (p. 301).[39]

The narrator frequently reflects on the possible return to her native Vilnius, but she wants to return there with her husband, in which case, language would become an even bigger issue and barrier. In a moment of intimacy, she muses how she would like to teach her husband Lithuanian, but also about Lithuanian and how fundamentally it pervades the narrator's being and selfhood:

> **Aš išmokysiu tave lietuviškai**, pasakiau jam, o gal tik norėjau pasakyti […]. Tu suprasi, kodėl negaliu būti angliškai, kai mano kaulai dainuoja lietuviškai, kai jų daina degina mūsų namų grindis, lubas ir sienas. Tu suprasi, kodėl sakau, kad negaliu čia likti, negaliu čia mirti. **Dabar nesupranti, nes mes kalbame skirtingomis kalbomis.** [...] **Aš išmokysiu tave savo sunkiausios, giliausios, melancholiškiausios kalbos**, ir tu suprasi, kodėl kartais pardedu dusti [...]
> **O tada tu galėsi išmokyti mane prancūziškai.** (p. 274; emphasis added)[40]

However, the narrator acknowledges that Australia has become their home, so they must find a language that will bring them "closer together":

[39] All I knew was that he never regretted it. Australia was his freedom.
[40] **I'll teach you Lithuanian**, I told him, or maybe I just wanted to tell him […] You will understand why I cannot be in English when my bones are singing in Lithuanian, when their song sets the floors, ceilings and walls of our house on fire. You will understand why I say I cannot stay here; I cannot die here. **You don't understand yet because we speak different languages. […] I will teach you my language – the hardest, deepest, and most melancholic**, – and you will understand why I sometimes feel as if I were suffocating […]
And then you can teach me French.

> Mokysimės esamojo, būtojo kartinio, būtojo dažninio ir būsimojo laiko. Mokysimės pripildyti beprasmybę prasmės. Rasti priebėgą žodžiuose. [...] **Išsigalvosime naują, išvykusiųjų, kalbą; migrantų, popieriniais lėktuvėliais skriejančių į tą patį tikslą**. (p. 314; emphasis added)[41]

As is evident in these passages, in a multicultural and multilingual relationship, language becomes "a zone of negotiation", to borrow another Lithuanian writer Dalia Staponkutė's phrase: speaking about language is the only way to overcome the discomfort of being split into two parts (in Gimbutaitė, 2017, para. 10), both in real life and in fiction.

Conclusions

Creative incorporation of multiple languages in Akvilina Cicėnaitė's novel *Anglų kalbos žodynas* is an example of another contemporary Lithuanian writer setting out to break linguistic and cultural boundaries in her text. The sometimes-provocative ways contemporary Lithuanian literature has recently embraced multilingualism, particularly its explicit manifestations, used in abundance and carefully "staged," to borrow Rainier Grutman's phrase (2024, p. 22), also reveals the extent to which certain texts meet the current tone of global migration and mobility literature. Cicėnaitė's entire novel, from beginning to end, is a play with language/s, which supplements the first-person narrator's reflections about language and the history of Australia, observations of Sydney and its people, and exploration of her personal relationships and transformations of identity. In a text like this, the technical aspects of multilingualism—the number, localization or length of insertions in other languages (mainly English) into the narrative—are less important than the functions they perform, structurally and visually enhancing the themes related to the migrant condition, explored in the text.

[41] We will learn about tenses: the present tense, the past simple and past frequentative, and the future tense. We will learn to fill meaninglessness with meaning. […] **We will invent a new language, the language of those who have left, the language of the migrants aboard paper airplanes, flying to the same destination**.

Foreign languages in Cicenaitė's novel are incorporated for both aesthetic and thematic purposes. A multilingual configuration constructed in the novel imposes upon it a structure, that of a dictionary, which supplements the narrative structure of a road story. In addition to organizing the narrator's meditative narration, it also offers instances of intertextuality and word play. Simultaneously the dictionary in the novel is also a central motif and metaphor, foregrounding the narrator's multilingual and multicultural experiences in Australia with her French-Canadian husband. The dictionary and the processes of translation implied in it are used as a metaphor of relationships: with other human beings, with other places, languages & cultures.

The novel's explicit multilingualism also illustrates the voice of the global migrant generation. The first-person narrator frequently reflects on the status of various languages, particularly the gradual shift from the mother tongue to English, which is presented rather ambivalently. For 'global nomads', English is a refuge and a means of communication, both in the host society and in an intercultural relationship. At the same time, the narrator explores the role English played to silence the former cultural polyphony of the Australian continent and foregrounds her own personal discomfort at being unable appease homesickness and suppress the echoes of her own native language, despite her seemingly comfortable bilingualism, transcultural identity as well as her experience and skills in navigating different cultural codes: this is evident in the narrator's description of the English language as a "prison," simultaneously acknowledging how this experience is extremely subjective as her husband feels "freed" from his mother tongue. It is also important that the linguistic and cultural tensions in the consciousness of the migrant and his/her (dis)integration in/to the new space are also reflected in the personal story of the Lithuanian narrator's relationship with her French-Canadian husband.

Analyzing multilingual fiction, particularly multilingual migration and mobility literature, it is always dangerous to overfocus on the social and ideological aspects of the texts, disregarding specific aesthetic play, which can be extremely important, as is evident in the novels, such as *Anglų kalbos žodynas* by Cicėnaitė. We therefore want to emphasize the importance of addressing both experienced/ thematized multilingualism and its aesthetic staging in a given text, with particular attention to explicit code-switching, but

also to latent multilingualism, which is sometimes easier to overlook and overhear.

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Rūta Eidukevičienė
Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Lietuva
r.eidukeviciene@vdu.lt
Kristina Aurylaitė
Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Lietuva
k.aurylaite@vdu.lt

„WOR(L)D“: ESTETINIS IR PATIRTINIS DAUGIAKALBIŠKUMAS AKVILINOS CICĖNAITĖS ROMANE „ANGLŲ KALBOS ŽODYNAS“ / “A DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH” (2022)

Anotacija. Šiame straipsnyje analizuojamos daugiakalbystės apraiškos, sutelkus dėmesį į estetinę ir teminę funkcijas Akvilinos Cicėnaitės autofikciniame romane „Anglų kalbos žodynas“ (2022). Lietuvių kalba parašytame tekste, reflektuojant migrantų patirtis, vartojamos įvairios kalbos, dažniausiai anglų. Romane pasakojama apie lietuvių rašytoją ir jos Kanados prancūzų kilmės vyrą, gyvenančius Australijoje ir automobiliu keliaujančius po šalį. Jiedu nuolat jaučiasi esą vertimo būsenos – tarp skirtingų kalbų, realybių ir kultūrų. Kiekvienas romano skyrius, pavadintas anglų kalbos žodžiu, kuria žodyno struktūrą, padedančią sujungti meditatyvines pasakotojos refleksijas. Tyrimo problema – kaip Cicėnaitės tekste atsiskleidžia daugiakalbystė ir kokias literatūrines funkcijas ji atlieka. Analizė remiasi teorinėmis prielaidomis apie literatūrinę daugiakalbystę, suformuluotomis Rainierio Grutmano (2006, 2024), Tillio Dembecko (2020), Wernerio Helmicho (2016), Mariannos Deganutti (2022) ir kitų; taip pat daugiakalbystės funkcijų grožinėje literatūroje apibrėžimais ir klasifikacija, kurias aptaria Tillis Dembeckas ir Anne Uhrmacher (2016), Andrásas Hornas (1981), Markusas Hussas (2021) ir kiti. Remiamasi šiais pagrindiniais principais: literatūrinių tekstų daugiakalbystės „režisavimu“, t. y. konstravimu, ir dviem pagrindinėmis literatūrinės daugiakalbystės atliekamomis funkcijomis – estetine ir temine („patirtine“ daugiakalbyste). Pirmoje analizės dalyje nagrinėjama, kaip romano naratyvinė struktūra papildoma daugiakalbėmis struktūromis, kurios tekstą paverčia kruopščiai sukonstruota daugiakalbe tekstine erdve, padedančia atliepti migrantų padėtį ir būvį. Antroje analizės dalyje aptariami „patirtinės“ daugiakalbystės pavyzdžiai, kurie naratyvą įtvirtina konkrečiomis socialinėmis ir kultūrinėmis daugiakultūrės ir daugiakalbės Australijos realijomis. Cicėnaitės tekste pasireiškiančios daugiakalbystės analizė straipsnyje siejama su rašytojos tyrinėjimais apie migranto patirtį ir pastangomis rasti tam tinkamą meninę išraišką.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: Akvilina Cicėnaitė; estetinė ir patirtinė daugiakalbystė; literatūrinė daugiakalbystė; migracijos literatūra; „surežisuota“ kodų kaita; žodynas.