Guest Editor's Note

HEIDI GRÖNSTRAND

It is not too much of an exaggeration to claim that in recent years, multilingualism has become a very popular research area, not only in Nordic countries, but also globally, covering a disciplinary spectrum from linguistics and literary studies to social science. One evidence of this interest is this special issue of *Multiethnica*, the second one that brings together these different approaches on multilingualism. While the 2019 special issue addressed multilingualism and multilingual literature in a minority language context, this issue of *Multiethnica* is characterised by a thematic variety that aptly reflects the current ideas of the research field. It includes contributions that discuss, for example, the phenomenon of self-translation in contemporary translanguaging writers' texts and the multilingualism of an Austrian-German and Czech comedy from the early nineteenth century.

Along with the growing popularity of research on multilingualism, especially on literary multilingualism, there also seem to be a need to reflect on such questions as what the most distinctive features of the research area are, its history and what future challenges exist (see e.g. Kauranen, Huss & Grönstrand 2020; Gröndahl 2018). One of the most recent answers to these kinds of questions can be found in the latest issue of *Edda: Scandinavian Journal of Literary Research* (03/2020) that focuses on literary multilingualism, or to be more precise, on the interaction between a multilingual text and its reader. In their editorial, the co-editors Helena Bodin and Julia Tidigs refer to the close connection between literary multilingualism and such research fields as the sociology of literature, world literature, translation studies and studies on intermediality, but at the same time, they also emphasise how literary multilingualism has grown into an independent field of research in literary studies in the Nordic countries. Instead of seeing multilingualism as a phenomenon that is stable and easily defined, a certain feature of the text or dependent on the writer's background, they point out that multilingualism is an event that takes place in the reading process, in the interaction between the text and the reader and how the border between a monolingual and multilingual text might not be clear-cut at all (Tidigs & Bodin 2020, 146).

Self-translation, the case when the writer produces texts in more than one language and the outcome is two (or more) distinct works speaking to different audiences, is an illustrative example of literary multilingualism as an event in which languages are in a close interaction, overlapping and intersecting with each other. In this issue of *Multiethnica* Marja Sorvari examines how two contemporary writers, Zinaida Lindén and Polina Kopylova, approach the multilingual writing process. Lindén and Kopylova are both Russian-born writers living in Finland and can be called self-translators. Lindén writes and publishes her novels and short stories not only in Russian, but also in Swedish, and Kopylova's languages are Russian and Finnish. It is, however, important to note that both writers themselves are critical of the idea that

their texts in different languages would be considered as self-translations. The authors see both versions as co-produced literary creations in their own right.

While most research that deals with literary multilingualism usually looks at contemporary literature (see, for example, Edda 3/2020; Grönstrand, Huss & Kauranen), it is important to also acknowledge the history of literary multilingualism, a topic that in my view has not yet received scholarly attention at a great level. That is why the second article of *Multiethnica*, Agnes Kim's "Mark my (foreign) words: On the relation of text-internal and -external functions of multilingualism in dramas", makes a welcome contribution to the understanding of the historical perspective of literary multilingualism and its connections with the history of nationalism. Kim focuses on an Austrian-German and a Czech play in early-nineteenth-century Prague, from a time before the Czech national movement had taken shape, and examines the artistic strategies and functions of imitating different languages and speech-styles of the multilingual city of Prague. The plays discuss Czech-German bilingualism, but also include characters who enhance their linguistic repertoire by integrating single features of languages with high prestige, French and Italian, into their utterances.

In the third article of this issue, Aleksej Tikhonov's provides a detailed "research note" entitled "Multilingualism and identity in German Rap lyrics in the twenty-first century", focusing on the phenomenon of contemporary literature and culture. Tikhonov takes a corpus-based approach to rap lyrics and shows how Turkish and Arab vocabulary, among many other languages, has become an integral part of Deutschrap. The last article, "The Vietnam War, the Whale Hunt and the Wall in Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale*" by Pirjo Ahokas, diverges from the others as it does not deal with multilingualism. Instead, it explores war traumas in the context of Native American history. In her analysis, Ahokas demonstrates that *People of the Whale* is a significant contribution to Native American and American literature, because it offers a nuanced fictional exploration of a traumatised Native American veteran's painful process of reconstructing his devastating memories from the Vietnam War and of his process of reconstructing his identity. The war theme is also present in the review of Kristin Wagrell's dissertation "Chorus of the Saved": *Constructing the Holocaust Survivor in Swedish Public Discourse, 1943-1966*.

All in all, this special issue of *Multiethnica* continues the exploration of the phenomenon of multilingualism by showing its multifaceted nature, but also reminds us of the importance to develop new perspectives in this field.

References

- Gröndahl, Satu. 2018. "Emansipaatiota vai etnifiointia? Kielellistä rajankäyntiä pohjoismaisessa kirjallisuudessa", *Avain* 3/2018, <https://journal.fi/avain/article/view/75232/36699?acceptCookies=1>.
- Kauranen, Ralf; Huss, Markus & Grönstrand, Heidi. 2020. "Introduction: The Processes and Practices of Multilingualism in Literature", in *The Aesthetics and Politics of Linguistic Borders: Multilingualism in Northern European Literature*. Eds. Heidi Grönstrand, Markus Huss & Ralf Kauranen. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2020, 3–23.
- Tidigs, Julia & Bodin, Helena. 2020. "Flerspråkig litteratur och läsare i interaktion", *Edda* 03/2020, vol. 107, https://www.idunn.no/edda/2020/03/flerspraakig_litteratur_och_lasare_i_interaktion.