e-ISSN: 2304-7607
Polyphonie_Mehrsprachigkeit_Kreativität_Schreiben
https://riviste.unige.it/index.php/polyphonie

Polyphonie Vol.17, Nr.1/2026

Poetic multilingualism: memory, resistance and deconstruction in the work of Irena Klepfisz and Matsi Hatzilazarou

Golda van der Meer[1] / Nadia Georgiou[2]

Universitat de Barcelona[1] / University of Wales Trinity Saint David[2]

goldavandermeer@gmail.com[1] |n.georgiou@uwtsd.ac.uk[2]

[Received 01.12.2025; Accepted 26.06.2026; Published online 24.11.2026]

ABSTRACT

The article examines the uses and effects of multilingualism in the poetry and lives of twentieth-century women poets, Irena Klepfisz (1941-present) and Matsi Hatzilazarou (1914-1987). We present the linguistic backgrounds of both poets, and analyse how their linguistic profiles shape their distinct engagements with language and inform their artistic practices. Through close readings of poems, we examine multilingualism's formal and thematic function, which, in Klepfisz's poetry, foregrounds memory and in Hatzilazarou's, insists on expressive subjectivity. Finally, our analyses show that multilingualism can function as an aesthetic device, and as a medium for remembering as resistance and deconstruction.

L'articolo esamina gli usi e gli effetti del multilinguismo nella poesia e nelle vite delle poetesse del ventesimo secolo, Irena Klepfisz (1941-presente) e Matsi Hatzilazarou (1914-1987). Presentiamo i background linguistici di entrambi i poeti e analizziamo come i loro profili linguistici plasmino i loro distinti rapporti con la lingua e influenzino le loro pratiche artistiche. Attraverso letture attente di poesie, esaminiamo la funzione formale e tematica del multilinguismo che, nella poesia di Klepfisz, mette in primo piano la memoria e in quella di Hatzilazarou insiste sulla soggettività espressiva. Infine, le nostre analisi mostrano che il multilinguismo può funzionare come espediente estetico e come mezzo per ricordare come resistenza e decostruzione.

Der Beitrag analysiert die Auswirkungen der Mehrsprachigkeit auf die Poetik und Biografie zweier Dichterinnen des 20. Jahrhunderts: Irena Klepfisz (1941-) und Matsi Hatzilazarou (1914–1987). Dabei werden die sprachlichen Hintergründe beider Dichterinnen beleuchtet und analysiert, um zu verdeutlichen, inwieweit ihre sprachlichen Profile ihre Sprache und künstlerische Praxis prägen. Anhand einem Close reading wird die formale und thematische Funktion der Mehrsprachigkeit untersucht, die im Fall von Klepfisz auf einer Poetik der Erinnerung beruht, während sie im Fall von Hatzilazarou deren expressive Subjektivität betont. Schließlich wird unsere Analyse zeigen, wie Mehrsprachigkeit als ästhetisches Mittel des Gedächtnisses, des Widerstands und der Dekonstruktion fungieren kann.

KEYWORDS: multilingualism; women poets; modern Greek; Yiddish; activism.

1. Introduction

Multilingual texts, in their polyphonic and multifaceted nature, have been interpreted as textual sites of resistance and deconstruction, and as artistic expressions where multiple (counter-)narratives simultaneously co-exist. The significant study by Yildiz (2012) introduced the view that contemporary socio-cultural contexts are defined by a 'postmonolingual condition', in which monolingual ideologies, problematically representing the assumed homogeneity of a nation-state, are losing their legitimacy. Literary multilingualism is a practice that spans centuries and geographical locations, a result of and response to "postcolonial and post-Cold War developments, mass migrations, exile, transnational lifestyle, and, most recently, by economic and political globalization" (Lvovich 2023: 1). A growing body of scholarship attests to the predominance of multilingualism as a cultural phenomenon, both across languages and cultures and across time. The examples collected by Kellman and Lvovich (2021) explore different literary genres from across the globe, from Greco-Roman translingual literary production to the Persianate world, to Medieval Jewish literary culture and Neo-Latin in Latin America. As an object of scientific inquiry, there is a proliferation of recent studies (Kellman/Lvovich 2021, Lotta Lino/Lukas 2023, Wanner 2024) exploring literary multilingualism's reach, as well as its functions and impact on readers.

In our own case study, we explore the uses and effects of multilingualism in the poetry of twentieth-century women poets, Irena Klepfisz (1941-present) and Matsi Hatzilazarou (1914-1987). The two poets who are the focus of this article share a number of points in common despite their differences in terms of periods of artistic activity, their nationality, and the reasons instigating their multilingual poetics. Irena Klepfisz was born in 1941 in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Second World War and emigrated first to Sweden and then the United States as a child. Thirty years prior, Matzi Hatzilazarou was born in Thessaloniki in 1914, on the brink of WWI, then spent two years with her family in Italy and France before resettling in Athens in 1919. From this common starting point of a childhood spent in exile under the threat of war, both poets developed their multiple identities in a state of continuous displacement. Irena Klepfisz frequently identifies as a Yiddish activist, poet, feminist, and lesbian; these intersecting identities are foundational to her literary, translational, and editorial work. They inform not only the thematic concerns of her writing but also her broader scholarly commitments and political attachments, shaping the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of her creative practice. Similarly, Matzi Hatzilazarou was a woman who frequently painted outside the lines in her non-

conformity to prescribed patriarchal norms. Hatzilazarou, similarly to other women artists of the time influenced by Surrealism (Watz 2020), experimented with poetry, photography, crafting, collage, and jewellery-making to explore the affordances and expressive potential of different media.

In the article, we demonstrate the functions of each poet's use of multilingualism in her poetry: Klepfisz, asserts both personal and communal identity, linking her poetry to historical memory, feminist activism, and political engagement, and establishing a model for multilingual literary practice in exile and diaspora. Hatzilazarou, on the other hand, borrows liberally Surrealism's irreverence towards grammar and syntax, its unorthodox imagery, its verbal, visual and acoustic experimentation and its formal playfulness as the optimal tools for self-expression leading her to formalise her aesthetic positionality.

Finally, our alignment with Taylor-Batty and Dembeck's claim that "the study of linguistic diversity in literary texts cannot be viewed without considering the authors' linguistic repertoires (and the biographical reasons for their particular linguistic competence)" (2023: 11), is reflected in the structure of the article. After a section providing context regarding poetic multilingualism as a specific literary strategy in the twentieth century, we examine the life trajectories of Klepfisz and Hatzilazarou, with a special focus on the acquisition of their multiple languages. At the same time, in response to Taylor-Batty and Dembeck's (2023) point about the disciplinary divide signaled by terminological variation, with 'multilingualism' designating a text-oriented approach and 'translingualism' alluding to production-oriented approaches, we aim to bridge this divide by foregrounding the impact of multilingual lived experience on the ideological and aesthetic principles governing the formation of these poets' work. In addition, we are conscious of critiques regarding over-emphasising (auto–)biographical elements when examining the work of women writers (see, for instance, Allmer 2020) and we strive for balance in our analyses. As such, the section following the biographical accounts of the poets presents a close reading of a multilingual poem by each poet. While the aim is to highlight how each poet uses multilingualism as an expressive strategy or an ideologically charged medium, broader inferences about the different functions of poetic multilingualism will be drawn in the concluding section. The article also tackles what Selimović calls the "neglect of minoritized languages," in literary multilingualism by discussing languages of lesser diffusion, Yiddish and Modern Greek, alongside major languages, English and French, in an attempt to mitigate "risks perpetuating [racialized linguistic] hierarchies" (2023: 77).

Finally, a brief note on the material used in this article for the biographical sections regarding the poets: this is primarily paratextual documents, such as introductions to poetry

collections, biographical notes, and interviews. Some information about Matsi Hatzilazarou's poetic process were found at her unpublished literary archive currently stored at the historical archives of the Benaki museum in Athens.

2. Poetic multilingualism as literary strategy in the 20th century

Poetic multilingualism in the twentieth century has functioned as a creative force while also advancing a political agenda. The Dada movement (Zurich, 1916–1920s), born in exile, employed multilingual, transnational, and anti-national artistic practices as acts of linguistic sabotage, rejecting the "mother tongue" that had become complicit with nationalism and war. Artists such as Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara, and Hans Arp composed sound poetry that interwove German, French, Romanian, and nonsensical syllables, producing an anti-semantic poetics in which language appears ungrounded and detached from national belonging. Dada's multilingual poetics similarly denationalize language, staging multilingualism as a site where linguistic identity is fractured, displaced, and rendered politically volatile. Similarly, within the modernist context, poets such as A.G. Leyeles, one of the founders of the avant-garde Yiddish poetic movement *Inzikh*, introduced English words into his Yiddish poems. For example, in his poem *Subvey*, the verse "rush hours" is embedded within the Yiddish text, suddenly situating the poem in an American urban context and imbuing it with the rhythms of New York life.

Recent studies of multilingual poetry include case studies of the multilingual texts of poets, such as the journalist and poet, Eugene Jolas, who published poetry in English, French and German (Kelbert 2015) or the study of Kay Sage's Surrealist poems, composed in French and English, in which she "unlocks precise and intentional double meanings whereby one language, one meaning, overlaps with and haunts the other" (Conley 2020: 124). Similarly, Irakleous examines how trilingualism (Greek, Turkish and English) in the poetry of the Cypriot poet Vasilis Michaelides in the late 19th and early 20th centuries acts as a conscious literary strategy to reflect and critique the complex Cypriot sociolinguistic profile of the time (2025). The bilingual poetry of Irish poet Cathal Ó Searcaigh, oscillating between Irish and English, destabilises notions of 'native tongue' and examines the repercussions of colonialism on language (Bennett-Kastor 2016). The poet Gloria Anzaldúa, who writes in English, Spanish, Spanglish, and Nahuatl, is another example of multilingual blending of registers and orthographies. In her writings, Anzaldúa exposes the impossibility of "pure" linguistic identity: "I am my language," (1999: 81) she writes, but that language is already hybrid, wounded, and politicized. Her poetics and essays make the border a metaphor: the place where identities and languages are both divided and remade. Finally, in their poetry, Canadian Aboriginal authors

Gregory Scofield and Louise Halfe juxtapose English and Cree in a dialectic that both examines and crosses the boundaries between the languages (Stigter 2006).

Significantly, such studies recognise that "language switching in literature is not the result of confusion or inability to separate the languages, but rather stems from a conscious desire to juxtapose the two codes to achieve some particular literary effect." (Lipski 1982: 191). As Selimović has shown, using multilingualism as a literary device problematises notions of natural or national languages and challenges any unexamined ethnic and racial hierarchies embedded in them (2023); Grutman (1993) has argued that literary multilingual can expose the monolingual biases of literary history and help linguistic and historical complexities resurface. However, though literary multilingualism has often been seen in an "emancipative way, as a one-sided promise of unfettered, liberating and in some cases even redemptive cultural and political multiplicity and equality" (Guldin 2020: 3), Grønlie (2023) cautions against viewing it exclusively as a celebration of plurality, reminding us that, as any device, it serves the ideological position of the author.

Finally, from a stylistics point of view, "the very act of switching from one language to another constitutes a radical moment of foregrounding … It is one of the most overt ways of having language call attention to itself" (Keller 1976: 283) with results that may defamiliarise readers and even break their immersion in the poem. Scholars have noted the initial defamiliarising shock of encountering this unexpected element while reading, observing, for instance that, "the crossover effect of some of [Kay Sage's] word choices, between French and English, initially inspires a double-take, and then lands with a moment of recognition" (Conely 2020: 124). Others remain sceptical of the effects of multilingualism on readers, pondering how difficult it is to "imagine how a reader not immersed in this [Irish English] bilingual context could fully fathom the nuances, innuendoes, puns, and undercurrents in the works" (Bennett-Kastor 2016: 124). Multilingualism's effects on the reader is a point to which we return in the conclusions.

Our analyses of the poets' work have shown that in Klepfisz's poetry, the interlinear pairing of Yiddish and English foregrounds translation, memory, and the persistence of diasporic cultural history, transforming bilingualism into a site of resistance against linguistic and historical erasure. Hatzilazarou's poetry, by contrast, explores multilingual expression through shifts between Greek and French that reflect both modernist experimentation and the negotiation of personal and literary identities.

3. Irena Klepfisz and Matsi Hatzilazarou: life trajectories and multilingual poetics



The following section sketches a linguistic biography of the poets, focusing on the factors that shaped their multilingualism.

3.1. Irena Klepfisz

After the Second World War, Klepfisz and her mother settled briefly in Łódź, where they lived among Jewish survivors. Her father, Michał Klepfisz, a Bund activist and member of the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB) who was killed during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, would later become the subject of several of her poems and prose writings. In 1946, mother and daughter emigrated to Sweden with other Bundist survivors, living in a collective house near Stockholm, where Klepfisz attended a Swedish school and became fluent in Swedish. Three years later, they immigrated to the United States, settling in the Bronx within a community of Holocaust survivors. At home she spoke Polish and understood spoken Yiddish, while in New York she attended both an American public school and a secular Yiddish shule (Klepfisz 2024: 605-607). These successive linguistic environments would later shape the bilingual poetics that characterize her literary work, later recalling that she had "no language in which I was completely rooted" (1983: 39).

Klepfisz pursued her formal higher education in English literature. Rather than emerging from a single formal pedagogical lineage, Klepfisz's engagement with Yiddish developed through sustained participation in postwar Yiddishist intellectual and cultural networks in New York, including YIVO-affiliated scholarly circles, as well as through community-based study and activist practice. Over the course of her academic career, she taught primarily at Barnard College, where her work encompassed English literature, feminist and gender studies, and Jewish studies, while her teaching and mentorship in Yiddish frequently took place in extra-institutional and interdisciplinary contexts. This combination of formal academic training and communal modes of learning shaped both her scholarly work and her approach to Yiddish as a living, politically charged language in ongoing dialogue with English and other modes of expression. As noted by Zohar Weiman-Kelman in the *Jewish Women's Archive* (2019), Klepfisz served as the first Yiddish editor of the Jewish feminist magazine *Bridges*, where she published the essay "*Di mames, dos loshn* / The Mothers, the Language: Feminism, Yiddishkayt and the Politics of Memory" in 1994. She also wrote a feminist introduction to *Found Treasures: Stories by Yiddish Women Writers* (1994) and co-organized, as well as co-edited, the proceedings of the national conference *Di froyen; Women and Yiddish: Tributes to the Past, Directions for the Future,* published by the National Council of Jewish Women in 1995 and 1996.

Klepfisz first returned to Poland in 1983, accompanied by her mother, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This visit marked an important turning point in her literary trajectory and served as a catalyst for the incorporation of Yiddish into her English-language poetry. She subsequently became particularly known for her bilingual poetry in Yiddish and English, which she began publishing in the 1980s. In interviews she has also explained that conversations with writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa encouraged her to experiment with Yiddish within her own poetry, prompting her to reconsider her relationship to her "mother tongue" and the political and affective valences it carries. Her bilingual poems such as, '*Etlekhe verter oyf mame-loshn* / A Few Words in the Mother Tongue', for example, stage Yiddish not as a decorative addition but as an essential site of meaning and resistance, using code-switching and translation to make the language accessible while retaining its cultural specificities. Klepfisz borrows much of her core idea from Gloria Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands / La frontera* where the text lives in a linguistic and cultural in-betweenness, with the significant difference that in Klepfisz's poetry, Yiddish and English coexist; they comment on rather than replace one another. Although both poets use multilingual writing to defy linguistic assimilation, Klepfisz goes a step further in reclaiming an erased history: in her work, language becomes a site of survival. Her bilingualism resists the erasure of diasporic memory and asserts continuity with the past; bilingualism thus functions as an act of resistance and memory.

Scholarly analyses (Weiman-Kelman, 2019; Kubińska, 2018; Shulman, 2014) have shown that Klepfisz's bilingual writing stages the encounter between Yiddish and English as a space where dominant linguistic norms are challenged and new poetic possibilities emerge. Rooted in her multilingual upbringing, the experience of exile, and the persistence of Yiddish within secular Jewish culture, her work negotiates identity across linguistic, cultural, and gendered boundaries. In doing so, it contributes to a broader project of cultural recovery and feminist reclamation that spans her work as a poet, translator, editor, and critic. Rather than serving merely as a medium of expression, Yiddish functions in her oeuvre as an active force in the construction of a diasporic, feminist, and queer literary space. This is exemplified in the poem *Etlekhe verter in mame-loshn / A Few Words in the Mother Tongue*, in which the term *lezbianke* (the Yiddish word for "lesbian") appears for the first time in published Yiddish literature (Szwarcman-Czarnota, 2010; Weiman-Kelman, 2019). By introducing *lezbianke* into Yiddish literary discourse, Klepfisz makes a significant linguistic and cultural intervention, explicitly naming lesbian identity within a tradition that had previously addressed same-sex desire only indirectly or through coded forms. Her bilingual practice thus demonstrates how

language can become a site for negotiating sexuality, diasporic belonging, and cultural continuity.

As discussed in the previous section, this tradition of bilingual experimentation has precedents in Yiddish poetry, albeit with different intentions. While Leyeles and other Yiddish poets often employed bilingualism with ideological purposes, there is also a distinct stylistic element: the interplay of languages foregrounds modernist concerns, making the form of the poem itself part of its thematic expression. This formal and linguistic sensibility parallels Hatzilazarou's use of multilingualism in her poetry, examined in the following section.

3.2. Matsi Hatzilazarou

Maria Loukia (Matsi) was born in Thessaloniki in 1914, on the brink of WWI, to an affluent and well–connected family with royalist affiliations, who quickly lost much of their wealth and status after her birth, leaving Thessaloniki for Italy and France. After the end of WWI, the family resettled in Athens. During Hatzilazarou's childhood years the family traveled in Europe and Hatzilazarou seems to have had a busy social life as an adolescent before the family's circumstances further diminished during the 1929-1931 financial crash (Daniel, 2013: 13-14).

Between 1931-1936 Hatzilazarou married and divorced twice and lost both parents. To come to terms with their deaths, in 1937-8 she sought the help of psychoanalysis. This led to her meeting the surrealist poet Andreas Embiricos, in his capacity as a therapist, whom she married in 1940. Hatzilazarou acknowledges her apprenticeship alongside Embricos and the influence of his surrealist teachings (Liappa 1984). Word games and exercises found at her archive at the Benaki Museum testify to the enduring legacy of surrealist techniques in her poetic training and the formation of her poetics. However, Hatzilazarou characterises her poetry as both associative and meta-surrealist, identifying more freely with the poet Yannis Ritsos, known for the imagery and emotional intensity of his poetry (Liappa 1984). In his edited volume of surrealism in Greece (2008), Stabakis also positions Hatzilazarou in the second generation of surrealist poets, among those who started their apprenticeship not during the interwar period but right at the start of the 1940s.

Hatzilazarou spent more than 20 years in Paris between 1945 and 1973 where she published her poetry and translations. After returning to Athens permanently, she continued composing poetry in either Greek or French. In 1984 her trilingual poetry collection *Εφτά γραπτά στα ελληνικά - Sept textes en français - Seven writings in english* was published, finally expressing her multilingualism and her matured poetic voice which reaches its peak with her 1985 collection *Το δίχως αλλο. Αντίστροφη Αφιέρωση - Dedicace á Rebours*.

In an 1986 interview, Hatzilazarou self-described as trilingual, speaking English, Italian and Greek (Tsagkarousianos 1999). Daniel (2013: 14) offers a slightly different account, stating that she

> was raised in a, at least, trilingual cosmopolitan environment (Greek, English used by the family to speak to each other, French due to her home schooling); we should also add Italian which she learned during her early years while she stayed in Italy but also Slavic and Macedonian, which she understood as it was spoken in the village she originated from and on the land that her family owned[1].

The artistic expression of Hatzilazarou's multilingualism is inextricable from her multilingual, upper middle-class upbringing as well as her life trajectory. Exploring the linguistic landscape of 1930s Athens, a "peculiarly Greek diglossia" (Connolly 2020: 14) must be accounted for: it refers to the parallel use of the demotic Greek alongside the purist *katharevousa*[2]. Additional bilingualism, especially with French as the second language, was common among the upper-middle classes of Hatzilazarou's milieu. Even individuals with no formal education, like Hatzilazarou, were often home schooled in French. Poets such as Andreas Embiricos and Odysseas Elytis, also raised in upper-middle class families, read and spoke advanced French, having stayed and studied in France for long periods (Embiricos 1980; Elytis 1995), with Elytis even translating poetry from French into Greek (Loulakaki-Moore 2010). Their personal correspondence and diaries show that all three poets often practiced 'conversational code–switching' from Greek, to French and English, using artistic terminology often in its language of origin, such as Italian or German (Elytis 1995; Embiricos 1980). Elytis' and Embiricos' spoken multilingualism does not translate into their poetry, however, as names of foreign authors and works are transliterated into Greek.

Hatzilazarou does not ascribe to the programmatic tendency that had Elytis proclaim "Greek the language they gave me … My only care my language on Homer's shores." (Elytis 1974: 31). She uses multilingualism across her written interactions, in correspondence, and diaries. When it comes to her poetic practice, Hatzilazarou's multilingualism becomes a tool, a literary device used intentionally to evoke or provoke, not unlike her contemporary fellow surrealist poet Nikos Engonopoulos who imbued his poetry with "dialectical and sociolectical forms and with loan words and foreign words (Turkish, Albanian, French, Italian, Latin) often within the same poem" (Connolly 2020: 15). Hatzilazarou takes her use of multilingualism one

[1] Daniel's work is published in Greek. The translations, unless otherwise stated, are done by the author.

[2] *Katharevousa* refers to a form of Modern Greek that was designed by Greek scholars in the 19th century as a compromise between Ancient Greek and the vernacular of the time. It was used as a literary or official language, resulting in an often violent language dispute which was not settled until 1976 (see Alexiou 1982 or Browning 1982).



step further, however: her plural and interchangeable poetic languages intermingle, breaking grammatical moulds and syntactic order and creating onomatopoeic neologisms. As a result, her provocative, subversive use of multilingualism produced a poem that became a medium for creative self–expression creating in the process her individual aesthetic manifesto.

4. Poetic multilingualism: the poet at work

In this section we offer close readings of Klepfisz's and Hatzilazarou's poetry, highlighting their uses of multilingualism as specific literary strategies.

4.1. Irena Klepfisz's "*Di rayze aheym* / The Journey Home"

Before engaging in a close reading of Klepfisz's poetry, it is important to understand the linguistic and cultural context of Yiddish. From its origins, Yiddish has been a language without a territorial homeland, a condition that has profoundly shaped its literary, linguistic, and socio-cultural character. Emerging in the German-Jewish contact zones of the Middle Ages, it developed through constant interaction with other Jewish languages, such as Hebrew and Ladino, as well as with the non-Jewish languages of surrounding societies. This extraterritorial and plurilingual nature created ongoing negotiations between internal Jewish traditions and dominant external languages, including English, which for many European Jewish refugees functioned simultaneously as a site of refuge, exile, and pressure toward assimilation.

In the postwar period, with the near-total destruction of European Yiddish-speaking villages, poets increasingly recognized that the survival of Yiddish depended on literary and cultural acts rather than geographic space. Yiddish became both a marker of identity and a medium for universal literary expression, transforming "Yiddishland" from a physical to a cultural and textual space (Steiner 1996). For immigrant writers in the United States, such as Klepfisz, transnational life required negotiating engagement with American culture while preserving Jewish linguistic and cultural heritage. Exile reshaped the relationship to the mother tongue: as Cassin (2016) interprets Arendt, it is language rather than land that constitutes the homeland, "the only part of their home they still mastered" (Cassin 2016: 46). Within this framework, Yiddish poetry functions as a site of memory, continuity, and identity, maintaining connection to a lost world while enabling the articulation of present experience.

Irena Klepfisz's bilingual Yiddish–English poetry emerges directly from this historical and linguistic context. In "*Di rayze aheym/* The Journey Home", Klepfisz enacts the very tensions identified by Steiner, Cassin, and later critics: the necessity of linguistic preservation

and the ethical imperative of reclaiming memory through poetry. The poem's bilingual structure, alternating Yiddish and English lines, dramatizes the negotiation between past and present, between inherited language and adopted tongue, reflecting both the loss of a homeland and the creation of a cultural and textual refuge. In the poem, Yiddish words disrupt English syntax, compelling readers to encounter linguistic and historical displacement:

Ire zikhroynes
her memories
will become monuments
ire zikhroynes
will cast shadows.

The poem alternates between Yiddish and English, often presenting paired lines in which a Yiddish phrase is immediately rendered in English. In this excerpt, Klepfisz begins with the Yiddish line *ire zikhroynes*, followed by its English translation, "her memories." However, the subsequent lines, "will become monuments" and "will cast shadows," appear only in English, with no corresponding Yiddish version. This selective deployment of bilingualism underscores the poem's thematic concerns: memory and survival are simultaneously rooted in a Yiddish linguistic heritage and made legible to an English-speaking audience. The interplay between the two languages thus becomes more than a translational device; it is not merely stylistic ornamentation but expresses the central thematic conflict between belonging and estrangement. The speaker, referred to in the third person, moves between landscapes: from the alien "eternal present" of her American cityscape to her Yiddish past, marked by an absence she wishes to construct with "her memories" which "will become monuments" or poems.

The poem's bilingual form stages the encounter between Yiddish and English as a site where both languages' dominant cultural norms can be challenged. She transliterates Yiddish using the Latin alphabet and presents these words in italics, making the language accessible to non-Yiddish speakers while preserving its musicality and foreignness. This transliteration deliberately blurs the boundaries between English and Yiddish, exemplifying a form of strategic bilingualism that challenges conventional monolingual reading practices. Only the Yiddish-fluent reader can recognize that practically each Yiddish verse is accompanied by an English translation, while the English-only reader must infer or wonder at the meaning of the foreign words. In both cases, the reader experiences a dynamic interplay of languages, a rhythm in which Yiddish and English engage in a dialogic "dance," as demonstrated in the following excerpt of the poem:

Zi flit
she flies
vi a foygl



like a bird
vi a mes
like a ghost

The grammar throughout most of the poem is minimal and precise, as can be seen in the opening verses cited above; each Yiddish line is a simple subject-verb construction or simile, mirrored syntactically in English. This economy of language intensifies the imagery while allowing the bilingual interplay to carry semantic and emotional weight. Structurally, the poem progresses from action ("*Zi flit* / she flies") to contrasting similes of life and death ("*vi a foygl* / like a bird" to "*vi a mes* / like a ghost"), producing a three-part arc that is both visual and thematic. Instead of conventional rhyme, the repetition of the "*vi a* _ / like a _" pattern creates rhythmic parallelism, reinforced by phonetic contrasts between the soft, flowing sounds of "*foygl*" and the abruptness of "*mes*." This juxtaposition mirrors the poem's broader thematic tension between life and death, presence and absence, or corporeal and spectral existence. The concrete, animate image of the bird evokes vitality, movement, and freedom, while the ghostly image suggests loss, memory, and ethereality. By positioning these contrasting metaphors across two languages, Klepfisz amplifies the emotional and cultural resonance of the poem: Yiddish conveys the historical and communal weight of memory and loss, while English mediates access for the broader readership, creating a layered experience in which linguistic form and thematic content are inseparable. By the near end of the poem, the poet underscores that, for the Jewish immigrant, there is no simple return to a homeland; instead,

In der fremd
among strangers
iz ir heym
is her home.
Do
here
ot do
right here
muz zi lebn
she must live.

The bilingual layout thus becomes emblematic of a diasporic poetics in which the self must negotiate multiple languages and identities simultaneously. The spatial arrangement of the verses is equally significant, echoing strategies found in concrete poetry. In much of the poem, the Yiddish lines are positioned on the left and the English lines on the right, establishing a visual distinction that simultaneously produces a mirror-like symmetry across the page. The arrangement is purposely inverted- English appearing on the left, the usual position of Yiddish, and Yiddish on the right, the usual position of English - producing a complex stylistic effect.

Only once does Klepfisz disrupt this pattern when the word *Do* ("here") appears in the space where the English translation would normally be expected. In this moment, Yiddish permeates the English side, asserting its presence and resisting erasure within the Anglophone literary landscape. This gesture may also evoke her father's Bundist background, as the socialist Jewish movement known as the Bund, founded in Vilna in 1897, embraced the concept of *doykayt* ("hereness") as a central ideological principle, affirming a diasporic Jewish life rooted in Yiddish language and culture. This deliberate play with spatial placement allows Klepfisz's bilingualism to operate on multiple levels, inviting the reader to engage with the interplay of languages both visually and linguistically. The shifting roles of Yiddish and English, and the resulting multilingual effect, not only reinforce the tension between memory and translation but also create layered readings reminiscent of modernist poets (e.g., Ezra Pound, A.G. Leyeles, Hatzilazarou) who strategically insert words or phrases from another language to disrupt monolingual reading and highlight cultural displacement, foreignness, or hybridity, a dynamic that will be explored further in the following discussion of Hatzilazarou's poetry

4.2. Matsi Hatzilazarou's "Αντίστροφη Αφιέρωση-Dedicace a Rebours".

Inside the file with Hatzilazarou's drafts at the Benaki museum, there were handwritten notes in pencil, switching between Greek and French, scribbled on the back of a notebook, concerning the arrangement of the poem's sections as well as their linguistic composition. One note is particularly telling:

> XXIII
> *regarder en grec et en français les voudrais θα θελα j' avais voulu*
> *για το τελευταίο μέρος γαλλική παραλλαγή*
> *[illegible] απόδωση του μέρους και στα γαλλικά*
> *το τελευταίο μέρος αποδίδεται και στα γαλλικά*[3]

Not only was '*Αντίστροφη Αφιέρωση-Dedicace a Rebours*' deliberately composed in French and Greek, but Hatzilazarou had very specific thoughts on which sections should appear in which language.

So how does Hatzilazarou use multilingualism to construct her poem? The poem is introduced with the titular dedication '*Για κείνον με την αντρίκια φωνή-ματιά,*'[4]which Hatzilazarou's exegetes have taken to refer to her Surrealism mentor and former husband,

[3] XXIII look in Greek and in French they I'd like I would have liked for the last part French version render the part in French too the last part to be rendered in French too.

[4]'For him with the virile voice-gaze' (Stabakis 2008: 179).



Andreas Embiricos, who had been dead for a decade at the point of the poem's creation. In terms of overall stylistic features, there are several types of deviation throughout the poem . Deviation refers to "the occurrence of unexpected irregularity in language" (Jeffries/McIntyre 2010: 31) or "the violation of a norm set up by the text itself" (Van Peer 1986: 22) which may surprise the reader. The type of deviation observed is graphological, which arises when texts use punctuation, capitalization, hyphenation, and/or spacing unexpectedly. The poem is characterised by complete lack of punctuation throughout. In addition, the inclusion of the Latin alphabet words (in French) introduces another layer of graphological deviation, which is specific to certain sections of the poem. The text alignment is initially justified, reminiscent of prose poems but the text appears with gaps and blanks separating certain phrases, as if dictating a specific reading rhythm. This prose-like section constitutes a type of introduction before the poet's voice becomes more lyrical and the text is aligned left, as a clearer indicator of the switch from prose-like to a more traditionally poetic visual modality. The single instance of code-switching in the prose-like part comes in the form of a verse from Stéphane Mallarmé's poem 'Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui' which Hatzilazarou cites in French to explain her response to something the poem's addressee says to her 'for thirty years I've been waiting for you' (Stabakis 2008: 179). Here Hatzilazarou is trusting her reader to follow both the allusion to the poem and failing that, to at least identify the language in which it is presented. Interestingly, the geographical location 'Bering Strait' is transliterated into Greek (*διώρυγα του Μπέριγκ*) while other culture specific items, such as the proper names Giacometti and Ucello, are inserted in the Latin alphabet. The prose-like introduction tapers into the more lyrical part when Hatzilazarou speaks of her intention to 'dishevel syntax a little bit and sing you as I learned to in Paris' (2008: 180).

Hatzilazarou proceeds to 'dishevel' syntax' and produce grammatical deviations in the Greek part of the poem by turning Middle Voice verb '*ερωτεύομαι*' ('to fall in love') into Active Voice *ερωτεύω* and accompany it by the personal pronoun you in the Accusative: '*σε ερωτεύω*'. Her grammatically correct '*σε ζηλεύω*' ('I envy you') is then subverted in the following line by a combination of pronoun (in the Accusative) + noun ('*σε γιασεμί*') ('you jasmin'). In addition, the Greek diglossia mentioned in section 3.2 creates a distinct mixture of registers in the poem: the demotic *σπλάχνο* (literally, entrails or innards)[5] is followed by the more formal, purist *μίσχος*

[5] The word as used in Greek even today is semantically more akin to *ciğer* which is the Turkish word for liver, also used in Greek to denote someone precious but also a vital part of one's body. The word 'heart' in English comes close as a term of endearment but does not carry the visceral sense of corporeality and messiness found in *σπλάχνο*.

(stem of a flower), followed by the purist, descendant from the Ancient Greek, *φόρμιγξ* (forminx) (a type of ancient harp) and the only word kept in Greek in all the versions, both by Hatzilazarou and the one translated by Stabakis. The purist and lyrical *Φλοισβίζεις* (the sound of waves crashing against the shore) is followed by the colloquial *ζαργάνα*, (literally a type of fish, metaphorically a voluptuous woman). Internal consonance and alliteration connect these words: the '*χ'* sound of *σπλάχνο* and *μίσχος,* the '*φ*' sound of *φόρμιγξ* reproducing alliteration in *Φλοισβίζεις* and the '*ζ*' of *ζαργάνα* creating a cyclical symmetry.

The insertion of French verses occurs three times across the poem. Hatzilazarou reproduces this pronoun+noun-instead-of-verb combination in the French verses of the poem, introducing a parallel syntactical structure in the phrases of both languages:

tu m'abysses
tu m'oasis
je te gougouch
je me tombeau bientôt

The insertion of the French intensifies the feeling of graphological deviation by introducing words in the Latin alphabet that readers may not be able to follow semantically or even sound out. A type of parallelism comes in the form of the consonance of the sibilant 's' of the words '*abysses*' and '*oasis*', which can also be seen as semantically opposed. The iambic metrical foot of the fourth line (*je me tombeau bientôt*) with its ABBA scheme introduces symmetry through the internal consonance of the last two words tom-beau bien-tôt. Hatzilazarou continues to layer deviations by creating the onomatopeic 'gougouch' on line three, introducing hybridity on a morphological level. The French sounding 'gougouch', pronounced with a hard 'g' and 'ch' as in the word 'shoe', is an idiolectic word from the private vocabulary shared by Hatzilazarou and Embiricos, also found in their private correspondence (Daniel 2013).
Grammatical deviation is reapplied in the second set of verses in French.

tu me Mallarmé Rimbaud Apollinaire
je te Wellingtonia
je t'ocarina

This time we have combinations of pronouns and proper nouns instead of verbs. Parallelism is again Hatzilazarou's preferred method of deviation here, introducing internal consonance in the repetition of the 'l' and 'r' in the poets' names in the first line. The poets selected here are significant in relation to Hatzilazarou's apprenticeship in Surrealist thought: the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud, Guillaume Apollinaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, whose verse Hatzilazarou cited at the beginning of her poem, both anticipated and inspired Surrealist poetic works.



Hatzilazarou introduces some morphological deviation in having Wellington's name neologised as Wellingtonia, likely to rhyme with next line's ocarina. Interestingly, what follows this reference to three significant French poets and the English politician and military man, are two verses grounded in the Greek landscape, evoking picturesque villages and the river Vikos in Epirus, Northwest Greece. This sharp juxtaposition offers semantic contrast that Hatzilazarou uses here as another type of deviation.

je te ouf quelle chaleur
tu m'accèdes partout presque
je te glycine

The final verses appearing in French offer further deviation, following several verses in Greek. The parallelism Hatzilazarou introduced earlier through internal consonance is replicated in these verses as well, through the repetition of 'l' in the first verse and the alliterative 'p' in the second line. The third verse symmetrically reproduces both the 'l' sounds of the first line and the sibilance of the second line.

Through these layered deviations, Hatzilazarou carves out an expansive and inclusive visual and aural space on paper. Her linguistic and stylistic mashups allow her to create a multisensory mosaic celebrating lived experience across and above languages: from the vivid visual imagery of a majestic Greek river to the Andes, from the imagined sounds of the ancient harp *φόρμιγξ* and the known sound of the ocarina, to the poetry of Rimbaud, to evoking the heady smell of wisteria (*glycine*), Hatzilazarou draws from the sensory and intellectual repositories at her disposal to create her song. The result is a lyrical hymn which manages to challenge the wisdom and purpose of preconceived literary and ethno-national affiliations, problematising belonging while celebrating the power of poetic creativity. As a result, poetic multilingualism becomes an aesthetic manifesto for Hatzilazarou, a scripted rebellion which allows her to express thoughts and emotions unfettered by normative understandings of language and poetry.

5. Poetic multilingualism: functions, effects and the reader.

Our analyses of Klepfisz's and Hatzilazarou's poems demonstrate how the poets weave different languages into the structure of their poems, as tokens of resistance, deconstruction, and celebration and as a means of articulating subjectivity across cultural and historical boundaries. As we showed, both poets share multilingual upbringings and were born on the threshold of major historical upheavals. These events shaped their works in both comparable and divergent ways. The aftermath of the First World War fostered an atmosphere of artistic

experimentation within the avant-garde, challenging established aesthetic norms and linguistic boundaries. This environment, together with Hatzilazarou's travels and her engagement with multiple artistic forms, encouraged her to incorporate multilingualism as an aesthetic and experimental strategy and a medium of aesthetic self-expression. Klepfisz's trajectory, by contrast, was shaped by wartime displacement, exile, and the pressures of postwar assimilation. In her poetry, bilingualism emerges as a space of memory, survival, and cultural continuity.

An interesting divergence comes in the form of the degrees of deviation noted in their respective poems: Hatzilazarou uses the Latin alphabet for French and the Greek alphabet for Greek, either in complete disregard of readers who are non-fuent in French or assuming that, as with most of the contemporaries of her class, everyone must speak French. In this sense, her poem on the one hand becomes a site of connection linking the geographical locations, the people and the practices evoked in it; on the other, through its generous all-encompassing linguistic, morphological and graphological deviations, it excludes. As for Klepfisz, she deliberately transliterates the Hebrew alphabet of her Yiddish verses. For Klepfisz this ensures that the English reader can encounter and read the Yiddish words, even without understanding their meaning. In this way, Yiddish interrupts English, making the poem accessible to English readers rather than reserving it solely for those fluent in Yiddish. Klepfisz's work demonstrates that for a language to remain vibrant, it must be actively incorporated into contemporary life. As she notes: "The survival of Yiddish and its culture does not rest on our ability to find the right term for 'corn flakes' or 'jet lag'; but rather on our ability to find a proper place for *yidishe kultur* in our lives, a place among other commitments" (2001: 46). Unlike Hatzilazarou, therefore, who primarily explores the aesthetic possibilities of multilingual writing, Klepfisz's bilingualism carries an ideological dimension. Yet despite these different origins, both poets began writing multilingual poetry only later in life, in the 1980s. This convergence suggests that, for both writers, the mature phase of their poetic work became an opportunity to revisit earlier linguistic experiences and transform them into a deliberate poetic practice that reclaims and rearticulates their cultural and linguistic heritage. Ultimately, in both poets, this movement between languages and times foregrounds memory and loss, demonstrating how multilingual expression can mediate between personal history and the pressures of cultural dislocation.

Within this framework, the multilingual poetics of Hatzilazarou and Klepfisz challenges the "monolingual paradigm" (Yildiz 2012), the modern assumption that identities, and literary traditions are naturally organized around a single dominant language. Rather than adhering to this paradigm, both poets foreground multiple linguistic affiliations within the same poetic space. Their work thus aligns with broader scholarship on multilingual literature that

understands linguistic plurality not as an exception but as a constitutive feature of modern literary expression. By weaving different languages into their poetry, Hatzilazarou and Klepfisz transform multilingualism into both aesthetic strategy and historical testimony, revealing how language can become a site where memory, displacement, and cultural continuity are negotiated. By highlighting the poetic possibilities and political implications of writing across, and within, languages, exemplified by these two poets, the study contributes to broader discussions of the function and significance of multilingual literature.

References

Alexiou, Margaret (1982): "Diglossia in Greece". In Haas, William (ed.). *Standard Languages: Spoken and Written*. Manchester University Press. 156–192.

Allmer, Patricia (2020): Outside-in: translating Unica Zürn. In Watz, Anna (ed.): *Surrealist Women's Writing: A Critical Exploration.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. 142-155.

Anzaldúa, Gloria (1999): *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, California: Aunt Lute Books.

Bennett-Kastor, Tina (2016): *Multiliterate Ireland: literary manifestations of a multilingual history*. London: Bloomsbury.

Browning, Robert (1982): "Greek Diglossia Yesterday and Today". *International Journal of the Sociology of Language 35*, 49–68.

Cassin, Barbara (2016): *Nostalgia: When Are We Ever at Home?* Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault. New York: Fordham University Press.

Conley, Katherine (2020): Kay Sage alive in the world. In Watz, A. (Ed): *Surrealist Women's Writing: A Critical Exploration.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 122-141.

Daniel, Christos (ed.) (2013): *Μάτση Χατζηλαζάρου, Γράμματα από το Παρίσι στον Ανδρέα Εμπειρίκο (1946-1947) και άλλα ανέκδοτα ποιήματα και πεζά της ίδιας περιόδου*. Athens: Agra Editions. [*Matsi Hatzilazarou, Letters from Paris to Andrea Embiricos (1946-1947) and other unpublished poems and prose of the same period.*]

Elytis, Odysseas (1995): *Open papers*. Denver, Colorado: Copper Canyon.

Elytis, Odysseas (1974): *The axion esti.* Translated by Keeley, Edmund/Savvidis, George. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Embiricos, Andreas (1980): *Γραπτά ή Προσωπική Μυθολογία (1936-1946)*. Athens: Ágra Editions. [*Writings or Personal Mythology (1936-1946)*]

Engonopoupolos, Nikos (2020): *Cafes and Comets After Midnight*. Translated by Connolly, David. Athens: Aiora Press.

Grønlie, Espen (2023): Reactionary Multilingualism: Ezra Pound's "Addendum for C". *Journal of Literary Multilingualism*, *1*(1), 55-72.

Grutman, Rainier (1993): Mono versus Stereo: Bilingualism's Double Face. *Visible Language, 27* (1-2), 207-228.

Guldin, Rainer (2020): *Metaphors of Multilingualism: Changing Attitudes towards Language Diversity in Literature, Linguistics and Philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Irakleous, Stelios (2025): "Language and society in late 19th and early 20th century Cyprus through the work of Vasilis Michaelides: turkisms and multilingual poetry", *Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes 55*, 337-365.

Jeffries, Lesley/McIntyre, Dan (2010): *Stylistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kelbert, Eugenia (2015): Eugene Jolas: A Poet of Multilingualism. *L2 Journal*, *7*(1), 49–67.

Keller, Gary (1976): "Towards a stylistic analysis of bilingual texts: From Ernest Hemingway to contemporary Boricua and Chicano literature". In: Beck Mary et al. (eds): *The Analysis of Hispanic Texts: Current Trends in Methodology.* New York: Bilingual Press, 130–149.

Kellman, Steven (2000): *The Translingual Imagination.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Kellman, Steven (2003): *Switching Languages: Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Kellman, Steven/Lvovich, Natasha (eds.) (2022): *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translingualism*. New York: Routledge.

Klepfisz, Irena (2001): "Secular Jewish Identity: Yidishkayt in America" In: Kaye/Kantrowitz, Melanie and Klepfisz, Irena (eds): *The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Women's Anthology.* Boston: Beacon Press, 32-50.

Klepfisz, Irena (1990): *A Few Words in the Mother Tongue. Poems Selected and New (1971-1990)*. Portland, Oregon: The Eighth Mountain Press.

Klepfisz, Irena (2016): "Yiddish: It's Complicated". In Joshua Miller and Anita Norich (eds.): *Languages of Modern Jewish Cultures. Comparative perspectives*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 394-406.

Kubińska, Olga (2018): "Fasetowany język: Bilingwalna Poezja Ireny Klepfisz W Poetyckim Dyskursie O Zagładzie". *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka, nr 33* (październik), 327-47. ["Faceted Language: The Bilingual Poetry of Irena Klepfisz in the Poetic Discourse on the Holocaust."]

Liappa, Frida (1984): Female Portraits, Ep: Matsi Hatzilazarou. EUscreen - Female Portraits, Ep: Matsi Hatzilazarou (Last Accessed on 15 March 2026).

Lipski, John (1982): Spanish–English language switching in speech and literature: Theories and models. *The Bilingual Review* 9(3), 191–212

Loulakaki-Moore, Irene (2010): *Seferis and Elytis as translators*. Lausanne: Peter Lang.

Lvovich, Natasha (2023): Literary Multilingualism: The Babel of Modernity. *Journal of Literary Multilingualism*, *1*(1), 1-6.

Selimović, Ena (2023): Balkan, Creole, Other: Dislocating Contemporary Multilingualisms. *Journal of Literary Multilingualism*, *1*(1), 73–93.

Shulman, Naomi (2014): "Extraterritorial Language and the Ethics of Plurilingualism: Yiddish as Poetic Force in the Work of Thomas Kling and Irena Klepfisz." In Didier Lasalle and Dirk Weissmann (eds.): *Ex(tra)territorial: Reassessing Territory in Literature, Culture and Languages / Les Territoires littéraires, culturels et linguistiques en question*. Leiden: Brill, 231–44.

Sommer, Doris (2004): *Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Steiner, George (1996): "Our Homeland, The Text." In *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1996.* London: Faber and Faber, 307-324.



Stigter, Shelley (2006): The Dialectics and Dialogics of Code-Switching in the Poetry of Gregory Scofield and Louise Halfe. *American Indian Quarterly*, 30(1/2), 49–60.

Taylor-Batty, Juliette/Dembeck, Till (2023): Introduction: Literary Multilingualism Studies: Key Questions and Debates. *Journal of Literary Multilingualism*, *1*(1), 7-14.

Tsagkarousianos, Stathis (1999): *Αντίο παλιέ κόσμε. Συνομιλίες με αξιοσημείωτους ανθρώπους.* Athens: Dromeas Editions, 107-122. [*Goodbye old world. Conversations with remarkable people.*]

Van Peer, Willie (1993): Typographic foregrounding. *Language and Literature (Harlow, England)*, *2*(1), 49–61.

Wanner, Andrian (2024): A Poet among Languages: The Multilingual Identity of Karolina Pavlova. *Slavic Review*, *83*(4), 718–735.

Watz, Anna (2020): *Surrealist Women's Writing: A Critical Exploration.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Weiman-Kelman, Zohar (2019): "Legible Lesbian Lines: The Bilingual Poetry of Irena Klepfisz." *Journal of Lesbian Studie*s, 23(1), 1–18.

Yildiz, Yasemin (2012): *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition.* New York: Fordham University Press.

Appendix A: Irena Klepfisz's "Di rayze aheym / The Journey Home"

Zi flit
she flies
vi a foygl
like a bird
vi a mes
like a ghost
Zi flit
iber di berg
over the mountains
ibern yam
over the sea.
Tsurik
tsurik back
back
In der fremd
among strangers
iz ir heym
is her home.
Do
here
ot do
right here
muz zi lebn
she must live.
Ire zikhroynes
her memories
will become monuments
ire zikhrynes
will cast shadows.

Appendix B: Matsi Hatzilazarou's "Αντίστροφη Αφιέρωση-Dedicace á Rebours"

Για κείνον με την αντρίκια φωνή-ματιά και με χέρια μεγάλες φτερούγες που δεν τις ξεχνάω το απόγεμα είπες τριάντα χρόνια σε περίμενα κι ένιωσα πρώτη φορά «le vierge le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui» μετά έντονος αέρας αγάπης άνοιξε διάπλατα ένα παράθυρο μέσα μου και μπήκανε μεγάλες σταγόνες αγαλλίασης καθώς ο νοτιάς έστριβε βουίζοντας απ' τη γωνιά της καρδιάς μου το σώμα είναι χώμα διψασμένο από σένα έμαθε τις πλημμύρες του έρωτα πολλά νομίζω θα μιλήσω τώρα πολλά που φύλαγα σε μια κρυψώνα θα τ' απλώσω εδώ όσο μπορώ καλύτερα και ό, τι θέλει ας γενεί στοές θα σκάψω κάτω πάνω μέσα απ' τα λόγια τι συνεννόηση θα' χουμε αλλιώτικα ήρθανε βλέπεις κι έδεσαν στις δικές μας σημαδούρες ξένοι με διαφορετικές γλώσσες πως τρυπώνω τα χέρια μου παραμάσχαλα αναμένοντάς σε τις νύχτες όταν κρυώνω έτσι αυτή τη στιγμή έχωσα εδώ και θα χώνω αλλού λέξεις κλεμμένες ή δικές μου που σου αρέσανε για να σε χαϊδεύει η μουσούδα του γραφτού μου πάλι ό, τι βρω δικό σου θα το φάω θα το τραγανίσω θα το καταπιώ ώσπου μιαν ώρα μες στο λιοπύρι θα μου βγει αχνός ίδρωτας πάνω απ' το στόμα θα' θελα ν' ακουμπήσω δίπλα σου κι άλλα της εκλογής μου μέρη μέρη διάσπαρτα με ασφόδελους ή μεγάλες άγριες μαργαρίτες και πιο πέρα έναν τεράστιο κέδρο του Λίβανου αλλού πάλι να' χει αμμόλοφους με σπόνδυλους από δωρικές κολόνες αραδιασμένους χάμω θα' σου έρθει κείνο το κυβικό κλουβί που σου' χω τάξει με μικρά κόκκινα γαρίφαλα μέσα να πετάνε πέρα δώθε τραγουδώντας φλογερά και σαν λαχανιάζω από τον πολύ οίστρο θα' θελα τότε οι κουβέντες μου να' ναι για σένα ξόμπλια όμοια με πέρδικας φτερά θα' θελα μερικά από τ' αστεία που μαζί ξαναφέρναμε (α εκείνες οι συμπαιγνίες) να χαμογελάνε ακόμα με λακκούβες στην άκρη των χειλιών θα' θελα να είχαμε πάει οι δυο μας στην πόλη άλλοθι όλων των σύννεφων θα' θελα όταν τα σανίδια κάτω στο πάτωμα τρίζουνε ξαφνικά τη νύχτα την ίδια ώρα που τα έπιπλα και η κασέλα αντιλαλούν θα' θελα να δημιουργείται το γνωστό έργο της συγκεκριμένης μουσικής που λέγεται «κοντσέρτο για έναν άνθρωπο μόνο» θα' θελα εσένα που η καρδιά σου πιάνει από την διώρυγα του Μπέριγκ μέσα απ' όλη τη Ρωσία και απ' το φαράγγι Λονδίνο Παρίσι Γενεύη για να φτάσει ως το Αιγαίο θα' θελα όποιοι και να' ναι οι πόθοι που έχεις να σου τους φέρνει ο γέρο άνεμος μπροστά σου εκεί που στέκεις να πέφτουνε βροχή όπως τα βατράχια τα σαλιγκάρια και άλλα μικρά ζώα που μας έρχονται έτσι από μακρινές περιοχές υπερπόντιες να σε κοιτάει ο κόσμος και να σαστίζει βλέποντας τον εσαεί ευδαίμονα άντρα μαζί δεν λέγαμε ότι για την τύχη μας οι πόθοι σαν χορταίνουν άλλους πόθους γεννάνε

θα' θελα μα πόσο θα' θελα ναι θα' θελα αμέσως τώρα τώρα
θέλω να ξεμαλλιάσω λίγο τη σύνταξη για να σε τραγουδήσω όπως
έμαθα στο Παρίσι
εσένα σ' έχω Δεινόσαυρο από τους πιο εκπληκτικούς
εσένα σ' έχω βότσαλο φρούτο απαλό που τ' ωρίμασε η θάλασσα
σ' ερωτεύω
σε ζηλεύω
σε γιασεμί
σε καλπασμό αλόγου μες στο δάσος το φθινόπωρο
με φοράω νέγρικο προσωπείο για να μας θέλεις εσύ
με κεντρίζεις μεταξένια άσπρο μου κουκούλι
με κοιτάζεις πολύ προσεκτικά
tu m' abysses
tu m' oasis
je te gougouch
je me tombeau bientôt
εσένα σ' έχω δέκα ανθρώπους του Giacometti
σ' έχω κόνδορα καθώς απλώνεσαι πάνω από τις Άνδεις
σ' έχω θάλασσα γύρω τριγύρω από τα νησιά του Πάσχα
εσύ σπλάχνο μου πως με γεννάς
σε μίσχος
σε φόρμιγξ
με φλοισβίζεις
σε ζαργάνα α μ' αρέσει
δυο κροταλίες όρθιοι στρίβουν και ξαναστρίβουν γλιστρώντας ο ένας γύρω
απ' τον άλλο όταν σταματήσουν η περίπτυξή τους είναι το μονό-
γραμμά σου
tu m' es Mallarmé Rimbaud Apollinaire
je te Wellingtonia
je t'ocarina
εγώ σε Τσεπέλοβο Πάπιγκο Ελαφότοπο
εγώ σε Βίκο με τα γιοφύρια του κει που διαβαίνει ο χρόνος
σ' έχω πει και ψέματα για να τους ξεγελάσουμε
εγώ σ' έχω άρωμα έρωτα
σ' έχω μαύρο λιοντάρι

σε ονειροβάτησα μαζί μου ως το γκρεμό
εσέ ασύλληπτο θυμάμαι και τον ύπνο μου χάνω
εσύ μάχες και ένσαρκα άλογα του Uccello
εσύ δωρητής (δεξιά κάτω της εικόνας) εκείνου του μικρού κίτρινου αγριολούλουδου
εσύ κένταυρου ζέση
εσύ συντεχνία ολάκερη που έργα ποιείς διαβαίνοντας εν τη ανωνυμία
je te ouf quelle chaleur
tu m' accèdes partout presque
je te glycine
εσύ φεγγάρι που ένα σύννεφο αναβοσβήνει
εσύ δε βαριέσαι παράτα το το σύμπαν έτσι που το' χουμε αλαζονήσει
και δαύτο πώς να συναντηθούμε ποτέ
εσύ σε τρυφερό λόγο με το λόγο έτσι δεν είναι πες
εσύ σελίδα μου
εσύ μολύβι μου ερμηνευτή μου
σε ανοίγω συρτάρια
πώς γιατί δεν ήρθες τόσες φορές
σε ξεμάκρυνα εγώ λέω τώρα
δίχως τέλος λυπάμαι
σε κρυάδα γνώρισες ποτέ την καρδιά μου
σε μιαν έκπαγλη χρονιά ανταμώσαμε
σε ληστεύω από αλλουνού τα χέρια
σε ακούω από δω από κει
σε σιωπώ μες στην απέραντη τρυφερότητα
σιγά σιγά να καταλαγιάσουμε
όλα δεν τα' χω πει
ΜΕ ΕΚΡΙΖΩΝΕΙΣ
7.2.1985

Citation

van der Meer, Golda/Nadia, Georgiou: Poetic multilingualisms: memory, resistance and deconstruction in the work of Irena Klepfisz and Matsi Hatzilazarou. In: www.polyphonie.at, Vol 17, Nr. 1/2026, ISSN: 2304-7607, begutachteter Beitrag/peer-reviewed article.

Bibliographic note

Golda van der Meer holds a PhD in linguistic, literary, and cultural studies from the University of Barcelona. Her research project focuses on the development of Yiddish avant-garde poetry during the interwar period, primarily on women poets. She is currently a professor at the Institut de Formació Contínua at the University of Barcelona and works as a translator of Yiddish poetry into Catalan.
Nadia Georgiou holds degrees in modern languages, translation and comparative literature. She currently works as postgraduate supervisor at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David. Her research specialisms focus on reader responses to (translated/multilingual) texts, poetry translation and the sociology of literature.