

SABIRA



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MoonSoon

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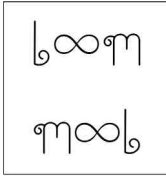
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experimental
multilingual
multiartistic books
in cooperation with LangueFlow*

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Waxing Crescent

mikazuki

三日月

“third day moon”

walking home at night
waxing crescent exits clouds
waking winds and waves



‘Moon’ in Chinese
oracle bone script
second millennium BCE

this is a third
intensely polyglot book

PolyglIntro

A polyglot writer's brain is like the ocean. There are many layers and innumerable ecosystems. The deeper we go, the darker it gets. Writers' brains and oceans are both full of strange creatures: Some are visible, but others can only be discerned through the signals they emit. Certain creatures never show themselves at all, yet they exist somewhere in the depths. What they are doing, or what their functions and place in the larger picture are, we might never know. Only a small part of the oceans on this planet have been explored, and the same is true for the multilingual author's brain, playing with and use of languages.

Polyglut writers, as I see it and as I am, are far more than users of a minimum of two languages. *Multilingualism* is today a fashionable term used for events and situations to counterbalance *monolingualism*, which is increasingly seen as limited and limiting in a globalised world. Actually, other terms such as *translingualism* or *translanguaging* would be more correct in many cases. They carry the idea that more than a single language is involved, and imply that the other language is not a first or primary of the writer or speaker.

Yet, the basic idea is still that language, ethnic group and national identity go together, and that one language is our emotional language and therefore forms the foundation for our thinking, existence and writing. It might be like this for

many authors, especially for those who have changed from one main language to another because they have migrated or other reasons. For multiauthors these suppositions and automatic assumptions are not valid: Multis are not lost in translation, transition or translanguaging. We do not have a single First Language; or if you insist on one, then I suggest that multilingualism is the First. We also have no need to possess any clear identity of an ethnic/language/minority/majority/community/nation kind, or anything similar. We do not feel strange or odd when we cross borders to other language or cultural dimensioner; we have been doing it all our lives, so we do not even blink.

My view of multilingualism is also nicht *plurilingualism*. This term stops at personal ability of switching languages. Multilinguals do that constantly, but we also interconnect languages and mix. We do a lot of *code-switching*, but for a multi it does not only mean to jump between two or more language/culture codes, or adding here and there words or sentences in other languages. Our code-switching is vast, multilayered and multidimensional. We constantly learn, use, create, mix and invent new codes in several languages. Codes bubble up like waters from a well deep inside, and we use countless codes and levels every day, even when we dream. A lot of our koder cannot even be identified from outside, because they carry meanings only for ourselves, or for one or a few other people who know us well and share daily life, journeys or experiences with us. Where exactly

the border between the *covert* (visible) and *overt* (hidden) multilingualism goes in polyglot texts is debatable.

So what is multilingualism, then? Academically it has not yet been clearly defined, and a lot more research must be done before it can be disentangled from other *-isms*. As I see it, being multilingual means to use many languages for thinking, dreaming, talking, writing, listening... de facto to *live multiple languages in an ocean of unlimited linguistic possibilities*. We use several languages in diverse ways, often without special reflection. We just go ahead, talk or write, joke or mix languages. The threshold for using languages is low and we do not think: "Help, I have to do a lecture in Martian!" or "How can I make myself understood in Mercurian?" Instead, we reply: "So you want me to talk in Jupiterian at your event? No problem, I'll just check up on grammar and vocabulary" or: "Aha, this person speaks Saturnian. What words do we have in common? I'll try to talk Neptunian, it should be close, let's see if it works. If not, I can always use gestures and smile a little."

Research tells that all languages are active at the same time in the brain, and the brain is working hard to connect the elements. In a multilingual brain, there is not only one centre for language, but languages seem to be all over the brain. Brains work with connections and combinations, so it should not be surprising that they come up with lots of creative solutions for language use. A multilingual person

is not always conscious about these complex workings, but usually possesses and develops at least some *bevissthet language awareness* and sensitivity to languages.

I often get the same question: “So, how did you become a polyglot?” Scholars and ordinary people want to know how I built my Tower of Babel, which language is the foundation (keep to one, bitte!) and which wonderful, magical winning strategy (just one, s’il vous plaît) I use for learning *so many* (dozens) of languages. One of my ancestors was accused of using black magic for learning while at universität, but that was in the seventeenth century. Today he would have been marked by teachers as a hard-working student with a good memory. As a scholar and writer, living in what we believe to be a modern scientific world, I can assure you that my linguatower contains little magic; the cement is interest in idiomias and the bricks are linguistic elements from lots of jezici. That is why my babeltorn looks strange and has flere many foundations; I use all available materials creatively. What my (or your) tower turm could turn into with extra boosts of magic I leave to your imagination to invent.

In my multiple functions as a multilingual and -cultural writer, publisher, researcher, and other more or less odd professional roles, I often stumble on the question about how the polysloth brain functions. I do not think there is one simple answer, because every brain is different and unique. You brain does not function like mine in so many ways, especially when it comes to languages, although we

share some common features and functions – otherwise we would not be able to understand each other. Traditional research would look for the reasons for our differences in our biographies or environments, but I would search for both similarities and differences in our incredibly creative and fertile brains, auch myös too.

Multilingual authors are (not yet) common enough, and not ordinary enough, to be generally accepted by readers and scholars. The majority of book readers and also many academics are fairly conservative and prefer to read books they understand; just look at bok sellers' lists, bog stores in airports and erudiet academic publications on literature. Most publishers prefer not to lose money over books which will surely not sell: multiliterature requires "too" advanced language skills. Yet, publishers never refuse, because they are in one language only, manuscripts on highly specialised topics, although only a few libraries will buy the book and most people are unable to grasp even the basics of it. Buch publishing and literary studies are still firmly anchored in national and language harbours and seldom venture out onto the open sea zee.

In this situation, the polygnat writing we multiauthors are doing is sheer pioneer work. We have full freedom to explore multilingual writing now, but I am afraid that when multibooks become popular and common, there will be a lot of rules and schools, and academic and creative groups

screaming and fighting over multilingual writing and how to do it best and most correctly, and who is the “real” multi and who is just a fake polyglott. Total freedom is difficult to handle, but I enjoy it, and I could never live and write in an atmosphere where someone tries to limit me. So probably I will be doing something else when that multipopular day comes and probablyglot writing turns into a plastic toy.

Speaking with only one mouth

(note: language play!)

is as dangerous as being stung
by a stingray.

Chinese characters
from right to left:
yī kǒu, literally
'one mouth'.



At the end of this far too long polyglintroduction, I want to point out that all what is written in this book is my view of multilingualism here and now. Other follyglot writers have their own individual outlooks and strategies, so I will not sigge say much about them, because I do not know them as well as I kenne know mig myself selbst. I will probably talk about them another time and more scientifically. I will just close this chapter and move on to explanations about how this book came into being and what it contains.