

1 Translingual Textures in Contemporary Russophone 2 Prose: Code-Switching, Ethnocultural Markers, and 3 Identity in Guzel Yakhina and Narine Abgaryan 4

5 *This study examines literary multilingualism and translingual practices in*
6 *contemporary Russophone prose, focusing on Guzel Yakhina's* *Zuleikha Opens*
7 *Her Eyes* *and Narine Abgaryan's* *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* *and* *People Who*
8 *Are Always With Me*. *Bridging linguistics and literary studies, the analysis*
9 *situates these works within debates on code-switching, ethnoculturally marked*
10 *language, postcolonial reflection, and identity formation. Building on theoretical*
11 *insights into written code-switching, multilingual literacy practices, and the*
12 *paradox of language boundaries in literature, the study shows how authors deploy*
13 *embedded foreign words, dialectal forms, accented Russian, and culturally*
14 *specific lexicon as representational strategies. In Yakhina's novel,* *Tatar,* *Russian,*
15 *Mari,* *Chuvash,* *German,* *and French elements create a polyphonic narrative that*
16 *foregrounds Soviet-era multilingualism, minority language challenges, and the*
17 *sociocultural work of glossaries and untranslatable terms. Abgaryan's prose*
18 *showcases Armenian village lifeworlds through lexicon drawn from cuisine,*
19 *kinship, ritual, material culture, and blessings, alongside Cyrillic transliterations,*
20 *Armenian script, and playful Russian interjections. These translingual devices*
21 *function not merely as stylistic ornamentation but as sites of negotiation of power,*
22 *cultural memory, and belonging. Russophone literature, especially by women*
23 *writers, mobilizes multilingual repertoires to represent superdiverse realities,*
24 *interrogate colonial legacies and linguistic hierarchies, and reconfigure readerly*
25 *perception through deterritorialized language use. The conclusion advances a*
26 *translingual perspective that views language as dynamic, emergent, and locally*
27 *reconstituted, demonstrating how these works exemplify the re-localization of*
28 *meaning and writerly agency in the post-Soviet and diasporic contexts.*
29

30 **Keywords:** *translingual practices; code-switching in modern prose; ethnocultural*
31 *legacy; Russian as a lingua franca; cultural heritage; literary multilingualism;*
32 *Russophone literature*
33

34 **Introduction**

35
36
37 Research on multilingualism in literature bridges linguistics and literary studies,
38 forming a multidisciplinary area of inquiry. As interest in multilingualism and code-
39 switching has grown in recent years, scholars have increasingly focused on how
40 multiple languages function in fiction and how literary practices relate to spoken
41 code-switching and other written multilingual forms. Literary texts provide a unique
42 lens for examining how languages interact within individuals and societies, as well as
43 how authors use language choice to shape texts and guide readers, raising questions
44 about cultural depiction, characterization, stylistic strategies, representational
45 techniques, and the sociolinguistic implications of languages in contact.

46 In an era defined by globalization and heightened mobility, contemporary
47 literature increasingly foregrounds minority experiences and transcultural identities,
48 reflecting shifting local and global interdependencies that reconfigure both

1 individual and collective allegiances (Bakalova 2024; Pahta et al. 2018; Schulze-
2 Engler and Helff 2009; You 2018). By contrast, relatively little attention has been
3 devoted to such processes in contemporary Russian prose, although recent studies
4 have begun to address this gap (Kulieva 2020; Proshina 2024). The traces of
5 multilingualism in diverse literary works can be found by treating translation as a
6 key mode of experiencing the world and as an expression of Europe’s cultural
7 richness and examining how deterritorialization and translation reshape literary
8 form, cultural memory, and readers’ perceptions (Laukkanen and Parry 2017).

9 This article argues that the repertoire of inclusions identified in the works of
10 Russophone authors frequently mirrors shared cultural knowledge from the Soviet
11 and post-Soviet eras, while also introducing regionally specific and emotionally
12 resonant material. Dialectal forms, distinctive speech styles, and representations of
13 accented Russian further enrich these texts, capturing the verbal texture of the
14 environments they depict. By embedding foreign words and phrases (elements that
15 appear to the protagonists as alien, unfamiliar, strange, or incomprehensible) within
16 otherwise Russian-language narratives, writers simultaneously celebrate linguistic
17 diversity and emphasize continuities of human experience amid the complexities of
18 contemporary communication. In this sense, translanguaging emerges not only as a
19 distinctive artistic device but also as a critical lens for analyzing evolving cultural
20 and linguistic identities in Russian literature.

21 In this article, I try to answer the following questions: What narrative and
22 ideological functions does multilingualism serve in contemporary Russophone
23 prose? How do intra-linguistic register shifts and cross-linguistic insertions interact
24 to produce heteroglossia? How do authors’ translation/glossing strategies mediate
25 access and ethics of reading? In what ways do Yakhina and Abgaryan differently
26 mobilize translanguaging to represent history and community?

27 28 29 **Literature Review**

30
31 The present study is situated at the intersection of literary multilingualism,
32 code-switching, postcolonial reflection, and ethnoculturally marked prose, drawing
33 on research that conceptualizes language not only as a medium of representation but
34 also as a site of tension, negotiation, and meaning-making. Prade (2013) addresses
35 a central paradox of literary criticism: while distinguishing between languages is
36 essential for reading, literary texts simultaneously destabilize this distinction by
37 revealing the interconnectedness of languages, cultures, and the estrangement
38 inherent even in one’s mother tongue. Drawing on texts from the sixteenth to the
39 twenty-first century, Prade argues that literature transcends linguistic norms both
40 formally and semantically and thus serves not merely as evidence of cultural
41 transition but as a privileged site where language itself is questioned and reshaped.
42 By examining works in several European languages, the study demonstrates that
43 linguistic boundaries are both demonstrably precise and irreducibly uncertain, with
44 the separation between “mother tongue” and “other tongues” defined by this
45 productive uncertainty.

1 Research on code-switching has traditionally focused on spoken language,
2 leaving written language alternation comparatively underexplored despite its long
3 historical presence and widespread use in both traditional and digital media. Sebba
4 et al. (2014) address this gap by examining multilingual writing across time, media,
5 and language pairs, using diverse empirical and interdisciplinary methods. Treating
6 written code-switching as a distinct discourse phenomenon, they emphasize literacy
7 practices, multimodal semiotics, and the interaction between textual and visual
8 environments. Complementing this perspective, Kannadhasan and Ganesan (2019)
9 collect contributions that examine how global circulation, reception, and translation
10 shape literature, emphasizing the rise of world literature amid globalization and the
11 formation of a relatively stable canon. Their volume explores how literary texts and
12 debates expand in response to rapid cultural change, covering literature across
13 historical periods, travel writing, reception and translation studies, exile and
14 diaspora, colonialism, and postcolonialism. It argues for the value of marginalized
15 literatures and underscores how cultural encounters shape literary production and
16 interpretation, advocating a more inclusive and globally aware literary scholarship.
17 Bakić and Škifić (2017) examine how bilingualism relates to a person's identity and
18 the ways they express emotions and thoughts, exploring both theoretical foundations
19 (definitions of bilingualism and its link to identity, emotion, and cognition) and
20 empirical research that investigates whether bilingual individuals prefer their first or
21 second language or a mix of both when expressing feelings and thinking, showing
22 that language choice varies by context and influences identity construction.

23 In literary depictions of travel to foreign-language settings, interactions between
24 linguistic minorities and majorities, and the lived experiences of immigrants, the
25 presence of borrowings and code-switching is almost inevitable in constructing
26 characters' speech (Danilina and Khromova 2021; Hausbacher et al. 2025; Lebedeva
27 2022; Sorvari 2016). At the same time, the extent and manner of employing these
28 devices vary considerably across authors. Contemporary Russian women's prose, in
29 particular, examines a female perspective on the formation of new identities, language
30 use, and self-positioning in a superdiverse world (Protassova, Yelenevskaya 2024).

31 Multilingualism has also been interpreted differently in the Soviet and post-
32 Soviet periods. In the USSR, interaction among the peoples of the Soviet Union was
33 encouraged, and books by ethnic minorities were translated into Russian as the
34 language of interethnic communication, with culturally specific vocabulary
35 preserved and explained as exoticisms (e.g., Arutyunova 2012; Pomerantseva 1979).
36 In the post-Soviet era, newly independent states began to pay greater attention to
37 their own cultural identities, and Russian came to be perceived as a language that
38 belonged to them but also partially hindered the development of national literatures
39 and administrative practices (Krasnykh 2011; Smyth and Opitz 2013). Gradually,
40 scholars recognized that varieties of Russian functioning in different cultural
41 contexts needed to be understood and described in different ways, and Russian
42 increasingly began to be interpreted as a colonial legacy (Fedorova and Protassova
43 2024). Through this process of self-reflection, a new literature emerged that
44 connects past and present while critically reassessing linguistic and cultural
45 hierarchies.

1 Within this framework, numerous scholars have explored recurrent motifs in
 2 ethnically marked prose, particularly in Guzel Yakhina's *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes*.
 3 Bogumil and Pobivaylo (2020) analyze transformations of hunting motifs in the
 4 novel, while Oshchepkova and Sleptsova (2023) examine its mythological and
 5 folkloric poetics. Wang (2020) systematizes color metaphors, and Kondakova (2019,
 6 2020) focuses on motifs of dream and death. Cuiying and Nesterova (2019) compare
 7 women's communicative practices in traditional lifestyles in China and Russia
 8 through a cross-cultural reading of works by Yakhina and Lu Xun, demonstrating
 9 how verbal and non-verbal communication reflects the dual, which means
 10 constructive and destructive, role of ethnocultural traditions amid tensions between
 11 established norms and socio-cultural change. Kravtsova (2019) further argues that
 12 *Zuleikha* legitimizes Russian (neo-)colonial and (neo-)imperial narratives by
 13 portraying Soviet-era assimilation as emancipation, reinforcing an image of
 14 harmonious Russian–Tatar coexistence while obscuring inner coloniality. She
 15 situates this reading within contemporary expansionism, civilizational nationalism,
 16 Islamophobia, and liberal intellectual complicity, against which decolonial feminist
 17 and indigenous movements propose a transformative counter-vision.

18 A substantial body of scholarship also addresses the novel's narrative and
 19 linguistic style. Karaeva and Minibayeva (2022) examine the use of exoticisms,
 20 arguing that foreign lexical items reflect the social structure and everyday life of the
 21 Tatar people while contributing to the novel's artistic concept. They conclude that
 22 non-equivalent vocabulary lends a literary text a distinct national flavor by enabling
 23 readers to perceive national intonation, visualize everyday life and culture, and
 24 metaphorically enter a foreign cultural space—either discovering common ground
 25 or recognizing cultural uniqueness. Sirota (2020) focuses on linguistic and stylistic
 26 features, highlighting the blend of realistic and romantic tendencies, the interaction
 27 of prosaic and poetic principles, and the role of syntax in conveying ideological and
 28 artistic meaning. Gareeva (2017) analyzes the Tatar worldview through
 29 untranslatable vocabulary, while Arzjamova (2015) demonstrates how Yakhina
 30 constructs an ethnoculturally marked idiolect through domestic and material culture
 31 lexemes (mainly Turkisms and Tatarisms), mythological and folkloric figures,
 32 customs, rituals, religious terms, culturally mediated formulas, and onomastics.
 33 Arzjamova identifies three types of markers (ethnosemantic, culturally mediated,
 34 and transposed) and shows how their interaction encodes Tatar cultural
 35 consciousness while inflecting Soviet realities with specific connotations. Salimova
 36 and Solunova (2019) describe the speech portraits of the novel's main characters,
 37 and several authors focus on the mythology of the bird Semrug (e.g., Kukleva 2020).
 38 At the same time, Zhuchkova (2020) offers a sharply critical view, claiming that
 39 Yakhina commits numerous linguistic errors in every language used in the text.

40 Some articles address Narine Abgaryan's *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* and
 41 *People Who Are Always with Me*. In reviews, the first novel is described as an
 42 account of an exotic, memory-laden place and as an extraordinary, near-miraculous
 43 narrative (May 2020; Prindiville 2020; Zilberbourg 2021). Osiecki (2023) critically
 44 evaluates the Polish translation from an Armenological perspective, noting the lack
 45 of reliable linguistic research in Armenology and the frequent incorrect
 46 transliteration of Armenian terms. Zimina (2024) analyzes the challenges of

1 translating the text into English, while Sargsyan (2023) emphasizes the importance
 2 of translating works rooted in Armenian cultural and linguistic specificity from
 3 Russian into Armenian, highlighting the need to preserve dialectal wordplay and
 4 stylistic richness through shared humanistic values. The second novel is
 5 characterized as a comforting and intimate depiction of everyday life (Hayden 2015).
 6 Molodtsova and Vertinskaya (2024, 2025) argue that Abgaryan’s work illustrates
 7 how national language, mythology, rituals, and religion preserve cultural heritage
 8 and strengthen ethnic identity, demonstrating literature’s vital role in transmitting
 9 cultural and spiritual values in the context of globalization. They highlight the use
 10 of native language, the description of customs and vernacular realities, the value of
 11 ethnic roots, family, lineage, and memory, as well as connections with mythology,
 12 ancestors, omens, God, and nature; they also note the inclusion of local recipes and
 13 the polyphonic character of the text. Kurchastova (2024) focuses on the notions of
 14 home and family, while Pavlova (2023) analyzes Abgaryan’s works through the lens
 15 of gender, demonstrating that the representation of female genealogy, memory, and
 16 women’s psycho-emotional experience shapes the narrative structure, artistic
 17 concept, and aesthetic potential of her texts, while underscoring the gender
 18 specificity of her writing and women’s literature more broadly.

19 The aforementioned studies demonstrate that literary multilingualism, code-
 20 switching, and ethnoculturally marked language function not merely as stylistic
 21 devices but as sites where power relations, identity formation, and cultural memory
 22 are negotiated, thereby providing the theoretical foundation for the present analysis.
 23 All quotations from the novels discussed are translated by the author of this article.
 24
 25

26 **Guzel Yakhina’s “Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes”**

27
 28 In recent scholarship on multilingualism in contemporary Russian-language
 29 literature, increasing attention has been paid to how linguistic diversity functions as
 30 a narrative and ideological resource. Within this context, the work of Guzel Yakhina
 31 offers a particularly productive case for examining the intersection of language,
 32 identity, and historical experience.

33 Guzel Yakhina, a Tatar-born Russian writer currently residing in Kazakhstan,
 34 offers in her novel *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes* (Yakhina 2018) a sophisticated
 35 exploration of linguistic and cultural diversity, capturing the complex interrelations
 36 of identities in the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s. Tatar, Russian, Mari,
 37 and Chuvash voices intersect in Tatarstan, where protagonist lives in the village
 38 Yulbash. Another constellation of human destinies happens in Siberian settlement
 39 with representatives of twenty-one nationalities. The narrative unfolds through the
 40 perspectives of a Tatar woman, a Russian man, and a German professor.

41 The novel portrays the linguistic challenges confronting minority groups who
 42 had to acquire Russian, while Tatar words, customs, and worldviews serve as salient
 43 cultural markers throughout. A glossary at the end of the book defines fifty-six Tatar
 44 terms, encompassing clothing and footwear (e.g., *yaga*, *tulup*), objects, pagan spirits,
 45 Islamic practices, forms of address, animal names, and even insults. Many Tatar
 46 words are intelligible from context, for instance, “It’s impossible to pass silently in

1 felt kota” or “To slip quietly behind the chintz charshau.” However, intuition alone
 2 can be misleading, as these terms carry culturally specific meanings. In ambiguous
 3 cases, expressions are translated with the Tatar word italicized, e.g., *Ubyrly karchyq*
 4 (female ghoul), *zhebegän tavyk* (wet hen), while others remain untranslated, e.g.,
 5 *eni* (mother) and *janym* (my soul). Exclamatory interjections, such as *Oy-ya-a-a...*,
 6 and Muslim prayers are similarly left in the original.

7 Zuleikha’s struggles with Russian linguistic barriers: she hears *kolkhoz* as
 8 *kalkhuz* and *yacheika* (cell) as *yashcheika*. The grain requisitioning campaign is
 9 rendered as “more frightening with each passing year—like an *albasty* [female
 10 demon], greedier than a *dev* [evil giant spirit], more insatiable than a *zhalmavyz*
 11 [giant old woman, man-eater].” Soviet authorities adapt traditions, renaming the
 12 pagan holiday *Saban-tuy* (“Plow Festival”) as *Traktor-tuy*.

13 Even in Siberia, Zuleikha remains connected to the spirits of her native place,
 14 such as *shurale*. She recalls household rules arrangements, where “children sleep on
 15 the chests, and adult women are allotted a small part of the *säki*, separated from the
 16 men’s section by a thick *çibildak* [curtain or partition].”

17 In the world of the Russian-German Doctor Leibe, code-switching extends to
 18 German words (*Januar; Mein Gott*) and Latin phrases, e.g., *Hic locus est ubi mors*
 19 *gaudet succurrere vitae* (“This is the place where death rejoices to help life”). The
 20 arrival of Leningrad aristocrats introduces French as a coded language, with phrases
 21 like “Votre Grand Hôtel m’impressionne, mon ami” and “Messieurs, ne vous
 22 disputez pas!” signaling irony or exclusivity.

23 Prison slang features prominently in the speech of the thief Gorelov, including
 24 terms such as *amba* (the end of it all), *shkety* (kids), and prison songs with lines like
 25 “Done two stints, bro. Did time in Sakhalin, soaked in Solovki.” GULAG official
 26 Kuznets occasionally employs rustic or regional expressions.

27 Italicized terms signal concepts that are new to Zuleikha, such as railway
 28 terminology *rukav; bokobaia vetka, otstoinik* (“sleeve,” “side branch,” and “settling
 29 tank”). For Ignatov, neologisms include euphemisms such as *ubezhat’ na tu storonu*
 30 (“escape to the other side”), *vybit’* (“beat out”), and *kulackii rost* (“kulak growth”). For
 31 Leibe, Sovietisms function as neoplasms, for example *vakhtovyi metod* (“rotational
 32 work system”). Each new activity introduces specialized vocabulary, enriching the
 33 narrative with practical and culturally grounded lexicon. The cook Ashkenazi, called
 34 *maitre*, incorporates culinary terminology such as *passer* and *blanchir*, as well as
 35 *bouillon* for soup, *goujon* for pieces of fish, and *grenki* for rusks, terms that were
 36 previously unfamiliar to Zuleikha. Similarly, when a painter decorates the local club,
 37 colour terminology is introduced, culminating in the declaration, with an Italian touch,
 38 *Finita la comedia* (a misspelled variant of *commedia*).

39 Through this intricate layering of languages, registers, and discourses, Yakhina
 40 constructs a richly textured and polyphonic narrative in which multilingualism
 41 functions as a key mechanism of representing identity, power, and cultural memory.
 42 The novel not only reflects the historical realities of linguistic contact in the Soviet
 43 context but also demonstrates how language mediates experience, shapes perception,
 44 and encodes ideological transformations. In this sense, *Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes*
 45 contributes to a broader literary rethinking of multilingualism as an essential

1 component of narrative form and as a critical lens for understanding the
2 entanglement of individual lives with larger historical and cultural processes.

3 4 5 **Narine Abgaryan’s Novels**

6
7 Within the broader discussion of multilingualism and translanguing practices in
8 contemporary Russian-language literature, particular attention has been given to
9 how authors represent culturally marked spaces through linguistic diversity. In this
10 regard, the prose of Narine Abgaryan provides a compelling example of how
11 multilingualism operates as both a narrative strategy and a means of cultural
12 preservation.

13 Narine Abgaryan, an Armenian-born Russian writer currently residing in
14 Germany, offers in her works *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* and *People Who Are*
15 *Always With Me* (Abgaryan 2018) a vivid literary exploration of life in highland
16 Armenian villages, particularly those situated along the Armenian–Azerbaijani
17 border. Her narratives unfold against a backdrop dense with historical and cultural
18 nuance, shifting between places such as Kirovabad and Moscow while engaging
19 with the complex history of the South Caucasus, including references to events such
20 as the rise of the Musavatists in Baku. These novels poignantly depict the
21 experiences of repatriates from regions as diverse as Europe, Iran, Lebanon, Syria,
22 and the United States, foregrounding their linguistic challenges. Although many of
23 these characters are fluent in Western Armenian, English, French, Greek, Persian,
24 Turkish, and Arabic, they struggle with Eastern Armenian and the Berd dialect,
25 illustrating the deep cultural and linguistic diversity that permeates Abgaryan’s
26 prose.

27 Abgaryan’s characters embody the influence of multiple cultures, which is
28 reflected in their environments, thought patterns, and dialogues. Her texts frequently
29 incorporate foreign-language elements, often rendered in Cyrillic transliteration and
30 occasionally in the Armenian alphabet. For example, a carpet is embroidered with
31 lines from Grigor Narekatsi’s *Word to God from the Depths of the Heart* in classical
32 Armenian. The author herself provides translations and glosses, such as *Tsavt tanem*
33 (“I will take your pain”), or “little black bricks of bread — for some reason people
34 called it ‘klooch’” thereby facilitating the reader’s access to idiomatic expressions
35 and cultural realities. However, some concepts are explained much later than when
36 they first appear in the text, or even in a different work, and some are not always
37 translated at all (*mintana, skhtor, karas, alabai*). “Es ko tiroj mery!” is spoken during
38 a children’s ring game, which is presented both in Russian and in Armenian (in the
39 Armenian alphabet with a translation).

40 Eating habits include chasing hot bean soup with pickled Solomon’s seal and a
41 crescent of homemade bread. “The memorial menu is strict and unadorned, with no
42 frivolous salads or pickles.” For a woman who has just given birth, one must prepare
43 a tarragon pie, lightly salted bryndza, a peppered meat appetizer, and sweet havets—
44 a dish made from wheat flour. Bread is made with sourdough, not yeast. There are
45 mentions of cherry plum compote, goose baked with dried cornelian cherries, a
46 salad of boiled chicken with crushed walnuts, and slices of lightly salted bryndza

1 fried in a batter of cornmeal and white wine. Foods and dishes include: matsoni (“a
2 fermented dairy product similar in taste to clabber”), kamats matsoni, lavash,
3 wedding baklava with nuts and honey with a lucky coin tucked inside, basturma,
4 sujukh, spas (“a fermented dairy soup with wheat groats, eaten cold in summer and
5 hot in winter”), sali—layered flatbreads with sugar, “sali should be eaten hot,”
6 arisa—wheat porridge with meat, tsipul—dried slices of potato, zhengilov hats—
7 “flatbreads filled with herbs,” pohindz—“flour made from roasted wheat.” “When
8 the bread gets stale, she makes konchol—country bread soup on fried onions.” Also:
9 gata, krkeni—gata for important occasions (“For dessert they chose krkeni—a
10 special gata baked exclusively in ashes and served on the most important dates”),
11 khokhobe made with turkey (a dish of poultry, onion, and pomegranate seeds; one
12 dough baked within another), beef khashlama, a Persian-style omelet with onion,
13 mint, cheese, and black pepper, tsogol—unripe apricot eaten with salt, dzaval—
14 “wheat groats,” with its porridge called kashika, one of the obligatory Easter dishes
15 (as are “last year’s aged bryndza in dried mountain herbs, a spinach and red bean
16 pâté, and buttermilk-scented butter,” etc.), and kchakhash—an autumn porridge of
17 corn, beans, and spelt with salted cabbage.

18 Plants (e.g., *lalazar*, *aveluk*, *kotem*, *sindruk*, *shushan*), clothing, and everyday
19 objects further enrich the cultural landscape. References include *gulpa* socks and
20 *trekh* shoes, traditional garments such as *arkhaluk* and *mintana*, *mutaka* – an
21 elongated divan cushion (declinable), *tonir* – a traditional oven, *chipot* – a stick used
22 for beating wool. The reader learns geographic names (e.g., *Manish-kara*, *Khali-kar*)
23 and musical instruments (*zurna*, *doohl*, *duduk*). Characters are named *Ano*, *Nazeli*,
24 and *Tatevik*; kinship terms include *ayric* (“father”), *babo* (“grandmother”), and *dayi*
25 (“uncle”) etc. The addition of *-jan* (“my soul”, term of endearment conveying
26 affection and intimacy) in forms of address occurs after the name, as in *Vano-jan*,
27 *Volodya-jan*.

28 The text is interwoven with blessings (invocations such as *May my foot step*
29 *onto your threshold with goodness! I have brought sweet things, so that your work*
30 *may go easily! May your hands never know weariness, and your eyes never know*
31 *tears! May the sun always shine in your home’s windows!*) and descriptions of rituals,
32 including the ways to utilize every part of the walnut and the burning of incense in
33 an iron bowl on graves. Specific mythological names include *azhdaak* (giant); the
34 four sons of the Heavenly King, *Arevelk* (East), *Yusis* (North), *Arav* (South), and
35 *Arevmut* (West); the evil *dēv* *Aslan-Balasar*.

36 Interjections coordinate the phrases: *Ohai!* (a satisfied exclamation
37 accompanying each sip of tea); *Ohaaa-ai!* (an address to God); *vuy* (horror), *vaim*
38 (regret, apprehension), *uy?* (surprise) etc. A lot of expressions are notable for their
39 cultural nuances, e.g., “It’s as if *zahremar* [Persian: snake venom] is dripping from
40 his eyebrows!” — a sign of respect toward a strong man, accompanied by clicking
41 the tongue. Some curses are written in the Armenian alphabet.

42 The narrative also incorporates Russian playful rhymes that capture the rhythm
43 of accentuated colloquial speech, such as *Ligushka – bitaya kruzha* (“Little frog –
44 broken mug”), *Komu griaz, a komu almaz!* (“What is dirt to some is a diamond to
45 others”) and *U ptitsi gusi – belye trusi!* (“That bird goose has white underpants”)
46 [some words are orthographically/grammatically incorrect].

1 Abgaryan's novels constitute a celebration of cultural distinctiveness, offering
 2 a richly textured mosaic of traditions, languages, and histories. Through her
 3 narrative strategies, she demonstrates how multilingualism functions as a lived and
 4 embodied practice, shaping perception, memory, and social interaction. From a
 5 translingual perspective (Lu and Horner 2013), her work exemplifies how meaning
 6 emerges through the dynamic interplay of languages rather than through adherence
 7 to fixed norms. This observation aligns with Alastair Pennycook's (2010) view of
 8 language as continuously re-localized and produced across centers and peripheries.

11 Conclusion

13 A translingual approach views language as a dynamic, evolving practice shaped
 14 by time, context, and user interaction, emphasizing that meaning and difference
 15 emerge through repeated language use rather than fixed standardized rules, thereby
 16 challenging monolingual ideologies and recognizing writers' agency in shaping
 17 language (Lu and Horner 2013). What we have observed, supports the idea that
 18 language is continually re-localized in different locations, reconstructed
 19 spontaneously and produced not only from one center, but from periphery as well
 20 (Pennycook 2010). Contemporary Russian literature demonstrates a rich interplay
 21 of language, culture, and identity, with authors employing diverse stylistic strategies
 22 to explore these intersections.

23 Narine Abgaryan and Guzel Yakhina foreground the cultural and linguistic
 24 specificity of their settings. Abgaryan evokes the layered heritage of Armenian
 25 highland communities through language, rituals, food, and folklore, while Yakhina
 26 captures the multilingual complexity of Soviet multiculturalism, illustrating identity
 27 formation amid Tatar, Russian, German, and other voices.

28 Yakhina's historically grounded narratives and Abgaryan's autobiographically
 29 inflected realism differ substantially in genre, but each is a marker of identity, a
 30 stylistic resource, and a cultural or historical trace. Taken together, these works
 31 demonstrate how Russophone writers mobilize translingualism across genres to
 32 feature self-reflection, critique, and cultural hybridity.

33 In comparison with Guzel Yakhina, whose historically grounded narratives
 34 foreground multilingual Soviet realities, Abgaryan emphasizes the micro-level of
 35 community life and cultural continuity. Despite differences in genre and narrative
 36 scope, both authors employ translingualism as a key literary device: it serves
 37 simultaneously as a marker of identity, a stylistic resource, and a repository of
 38 cultural and historical meaning. Taken together, their works demonstrate how
 39 contemporary Russophone literature mobilizes multilingualism to articulate
 40 hybridity, enable cultural self-reflection, and challenge monolingual frameworks of
 41 interpretation.

42 In the works discussed, multilingualism operates, beyond stylistic
 43 ornamentation, as a narrative mechanism for identity construction, power
 44 negotiation, and cultural memory. Foreign insertions, dialectal forms, and accented
 45 Russian index social positions and cultural affiliations; they also stage tensions of
 46 center/periphery and majority/minority relations. In Yakhina, Tatarisms, German

1 and Latin formulae, prison argot, and Sovietisms map the social stratigraphy of
 2 1930s–40s Soviet space; in Abgaryan, Armenian lexicon and blessings enact a lived
 3 ethnolinguistic world, preserving ritual knowledge and communal bonds. Culinary
 4 terms, blessings, and object lexicons are dense repositories of cultural knowledge,
 5 anchoring language in practice. They scaffold memory and identity (e.g., Armenian
 6 and Tatar dishes, ritual formulas), enabling the prose to “show” culture rather than
 7 “tell” it. These domains facilitate naturalistic insertion of non-equivalent vocabulary,
 8 reinforcing the sense of place and communal ethics. Thus, multilingualism is
 9 constitutive of plot world-building and ideological critique, not mere decoration.

10 Intra-linguistic mixing (e.g., colloquial, argot, regional speech) calibrates social
 11 evaluation and character voice within Russian; cross-linguistic mixing (Tatar,
 12 German, Latin, Armenian) foregrounds intercultural contact, otherness, and
 13 translation as experience. Together, they produce a layered heteroglossia that both
 14 reflects historical multilingual realities and creates interpretive friction, prompting
 15 readers to navigate partial intelligibility and cultural distance. Paratextual tools
 16 (Yakhina’s glossary) and typographic cues (italics for new concepts) scaffold
 17 comprehension while preserving cultural specificity. Deferred or absent glossing
 18 (Abgaryan) sustains immersion and invites inferencing, fostering an ethics of
 19 hospitality/strangeness: readers are asked to inhabit uncertainty, accept partial
 20 understanding, and learn culturally situated meanings over time.

21 The texts align with research that treats translation and deterritorialization as
 22 central to modern literary form. Yakhina’s glossary and selective translation
 23 practices dramatize the reader’s movement between linguistic regimes; Abgaryan
 24 alternates explanation, delayed glossing, and non-translation to simulate immersion
 25 and estrangement. Both models turn translation into a narrative event, making
 26 readers feel the pressures of mobility, diaspora, and cultural mediation.

27 The inclusions mirror shared Soviet/post-Soviet cultural knowledge, like
 28 Sovietisms, prison slang, and bureaucratic terms, while adding region-specific,
 29 affectively charged lexicon (Tatar household terms; Armenian foodways, blessings,
 30 and interjections). This combination encodes collective memory (e.g., GULAG
 31 discourse, collectivization) and local particularities (rituals, cuisine, kinship terms),
 32 demonstrating how post-Soviet literature integrates macro-historical frames with
 33 micro-ethnographic textures. Yakhina dramatizes Soviet center–periphery dynamics
 34 via Russian as *lingua franca* and Tatar as local identity marker, showing both
 35 coercive assimilation and resilient cultural practices. Abgaryan recenters the
 36 periphery: Armenian village life becomes the epistemic core, with Russian serving
 37 as relay while Armenian carries ritual authority and affective intensity. Both thereby
 38 complicate the notion of a singular “center” of Russophone culture. Yakhina’s
 39 historically grounded, multi-perspective narrative uses multilingualism to map
 40 institutional power (state, imprisonment, medical discourse) and to track identity
 41 formation amid coercive modernization. Abgaryan’s community-focused realism
 42 foregrounds continuity, ritual, and embodied practice; multilingual elements
 43 preserve microcultural memory and intimacy (foodways, blessings, kinship) rather
 44 than adjudicating imperial structures. Both rely on translanguaging, but with distinct
 45 emphases: Yakhina toward sociopolitical stratification; Abgaryan toward cultural
 46 preservation and affect.

1 By situating Russian alongside Tatar, Armenian, and other languages, the texts
 2 expose Russian's dual role: a shared interethnic medium with translational reach and
 3 a language historically implicated in domination. The interplay of Russian with
 4 minority lexicons and rituals makes visible both assimilationist pressures and
 5 countervailing local sovereignties, supporting current scholarship that reads Russian
 6 as a colonial legacy variably reappropriated across contexts. In the classroom, the
 7 texts enable multiliteracies: students can practice interpreting code-switching,
 8 register shifts, and culturally laden lexicon; they learn how language indexes
 9 identity and power, and how translation mediates meaning. Centering such texts
 10 advances critical literacy by requiring evidence-based inference, contextual research,
 11 and reflection on monolingual ideology, aligning with calls to integrate authentic,
 12 translanguingual materials in advanced classrooms. Close reading should be paired with
 13 paratext analysis (glossaries, typography), reception studies (how readers process
 14 multilingual cues), and light quantification (distribution of code-switching by narrator/
 15 character/scene) to avoid impressionism. Distinguishing intra- vs. cross-linguistic
 16 mixing clarifies semiotic functions, while integrating historical sociolinguistics and
 17 translation studies situates textual devices within broader language ideologies and
 18 mobility regimes. Such texts normalize partial comprehension, require readers to
 19 explore multiple codes, and problematize any single authoritative voice. The result
 20 is a reading practice attuned to ambiguity and heterogeneity, aligned with
 21 translanguaging: meaning emerges from use-in-context and circulation across
 22 centers/peripheries, not from fixed linguistic norms.

23 In sum, multilingualism constructs identity, negotiates power, and preserves
 24 cultural memory, shaping world-building and reader positioning. Register shifts
 25 calibrate social evaluation within Russian; insertions foreground intercultural
 26 contact and alterity; together they create layered, partially intelligible worlds.
 27 Glossaries, italics, and deferred explanations balance accessibility with immersion,
 28 inviting readers into translational labor and cultural hospitality. Yakhina maps
 29 multilingual Soviet modernity and institutional power; Abgaryan centers communal
 30 continuity and ritual, both challenging monolingual interpretive norms.

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