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Translingual Identity and Art: Marc Chagall's Stride Through the Gates of Janus

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Abstract

This hybrid piece, combining scholarly inquiry in several disciplines (from bilingualism and literary theory to visual art, cultural anthropology, and psychoanalysis) with the genre of personal essay, explores the concept of multilingual identity and creativity in visual art. Establishing the parallel with the phenomenon of 'literary translingualism' and exemplifying most salient identity features of several translingual writers, I coin the concept

of 'artistic translanguaging.' The essay is focused on multilingual life and art of an immigrant artist, Marc Chagall, and analyzes his several paintings within the framework of three translanguaging constructs: duality, ambivalence, and liminality. The complexity of translanguaging identity, and specifically Chagall's, is illuminated by my personal and my family's Jewish Russian roots and immigrant history, amplifying the historical and human context for understanding of exile, multilingualism, and creativity.

Author Biography

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Natasha Lvovich is Professor of English at Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York. Her background is in language and literature (French) and her Ph.D. is in applied linguistics/second language acquisition. Her publications include both academic and creative work focusing on “translanguaging literature,” multilingual identity, psyche, and memory, among which a book of personal essays, *The Multilingual Self* (Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997). Her creative nonfiction appeared in academic journals (*Life Writing*, *New Writing*, *Lifewriting Annual*), anthologies, and literary magazines (*Post Road*, *Nashville Review*, *Two Bridges Review*, *NDQ*). She has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.



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