

Working alongside a mentor in the context of *Double Theatre* has been an ongoing dialogue, shaped by questions and insights. Rather than focusing solely on outcomes, this report explores the process: how misunderstandings became moments of clarity and how collaboration shaped both the code and the way I approached it.

At the heart of our exchange was a shared reflection on plurilingualism—a theme that emerged naturally from my own background, having grown up in Switzerland with roots in the former Yugoslavia. Through this lens, we explored how languages coexist, disappear, and reconfigure identity. One country holds on to its linguistic plurality as part of its national fabric; the other carries its memory in fragments. This contrast became the entry point for deeper conversations.

This reflection also echoes through my first play, *Ecdisi*, where I made a deliberate choice to use multiple languages. In that work, plurilingualism was not just a thematic element but a structural one: language became a tool for expressing identity, resistance and transformation. The mentoring experience provided a new space to return to these questions with fresh perspective, bridging my creative work and evolving relationship to language.

This mentoring program came at a particularly special and transformative moment in my life: I had just become a mother for the first time. Beyond the practical challenge of carving out time and energy for anything outside of childcare, a more intimate and complex question began to take shape: how do I pass on my language of origin to my child? Should I? My partner and I come from different linguistic backgrounds, and suddenly, the abstract question of plurilingualism became a deeply personal one. I found myself wondering whether the language I learned in the 1990s in Yugoslavia — and continued to speak with my family — still truly exists, or if it is now a language frozen in time, anchored to memory and nostalgia more than to current use. Or, going even further, can we say that this language I learned is a living frozen piece of time itself? When we take a photograph, we record a specific moment in time; however, that moment is no longer alive. A photograph, a film, or any medium-based documentation reproduces a fixed temporal fragment that remains unchanged. By contrast, a language acquired in a diasporic context, yet no longer present (or disappearing) in its place of origin, constitutes a form of living historical material — akin to a bacterial colony preserved in isolation within a sealed environment.

When I first entered this mentoring program, my intention was to work directly on *Ecdisi*, with the aim of rewriting and refining the play. However, this plan gradually shifted — partly due to the demands and transformations of motherhood, but also because of the direction our conversations took. Through the exchange with my mentor, I began to realize that the reflection on plurilingualism reached further than I had initially thought. It wasn't just about identity or memory, it also revealed an intricate link between language and class. This realization opened up a new line of inquiry, one that didn't quite fit into the structure of 2 *Ecdisi*, but instead called for its own space. It became clear to me that this intersection deserved to be explored in an entirely new play.

The connection between language and class is something I have witnessed and experienced in both of the cultural contexts that shaped me: the former Yugoslavia and Switzerland. In former Yugoslav Republics, language variation is loaded with meaning— speaking with a Belgrade accent, for instance, carries a certain prestige, a marker of urban belonging and cultural authority. Even within a shared language continuum, the way one spoke could immediately signal class and origin.

At a certain point of our dialogue, my mentor suggested to meet with Alexandra Portmann, Professor at the Institute of Theatre Studies of the University of Bern. This exchange was particularly meaningful. We spoke about the way language functioned in former Yugoslav republics (but not exclusively), often mirroring an imperial dynamic — one that established a clear divide between the center and the periphery. The linguistic norm associated with Belgrade, for instance, was not only seen as correct or neutral, but also as desirable. This central standard became the model against which all other variants were measured. Meanwhile, regional accents and dialects — particularly from rural or marginalised areas — were often dismissed as unsophisticated or even laughable. Speaking with a “peripheral” accent was frequently equated with being uneducated or backward, reinforcing a deeply rooted association between language and social class. This hierarchy shaped not only how people spoke, but also how they were perceived and how they perceived themselves, keeping the internalized class stigma burning. In this way, language played a quiet yet powerful role in maintaining social stratification, echoing patterns of cultural dominance that outlived the country itself.

In discussing linguistic dominance, Switzerland constitutes a plurilingual context in which hierarchical language dynamics remain firmly in place, despite institutional efforts to promote equilibrium among linguistic groups. Within the Ticino region, these dynamics manifest with particular clarity, producing forms of what might be termed soft linguistic imperialism. Such processes are observable in everyday situations; for instance, in restaurant menus that, in certain areas, appear exclusively in German or foreground German as the primary language. This example might seem trivial, but it mirrors a reality present in multiple other and more articulated contexts.

To conclude, this mentoring program has, on the one hand, afforded me access to a network of individuals whose research and creative orientations align closely with my own, and with whom I can now meaningfully engage as I pursue future projects. On the other hand, it has enabled me to more clearly articulate and further develop a conceptual knot that is currently informing the dramaturgical process of my new play.