

BOOKS

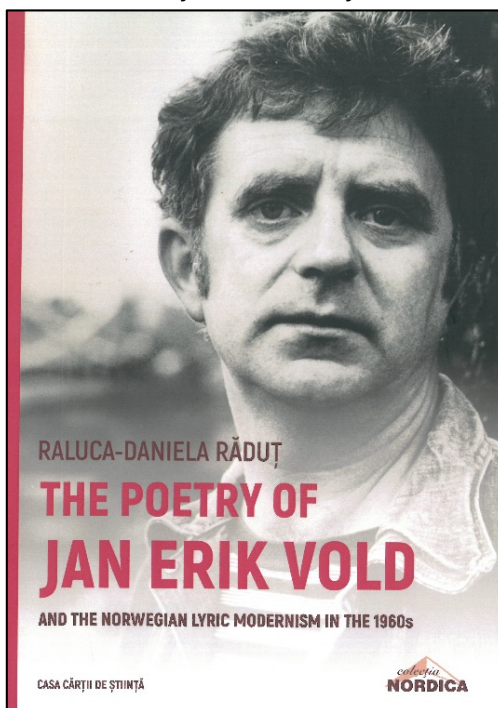
RALUCA-DANIELA RĂDUȚ, *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2018, 354 p.

OTHER: Book-review

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE STUDIES: philology, studies of literature, theory of literature, translation studies

In September 2016, Raluca-Daniela Răduț, currently junior lecturer, Ph. D., at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature at the Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, defended her Ph. D. dissertation entitled *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s*. Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu (Babeș-Bolyai University) was the advisor for the Ph.D. project and Professor Henning Howlid Wærp (University of Tromsø – The Arctic University of Norway) functioned as a tutor for Răduț during a stay in Tromsø, supported by EEA research grants. In 2018 the dissertation was published in book form at Casa Cărții de Știință, as a part of the series Colecția Nordica.

The main focus point of Răduț's research is the role of the Norwegian poet Jan Erik Vold in the Norwegian literary milieu of the late 1960s, especially in connection to the *Literary Circle Profil*. Jan Erik Vold is arguably one of the most important poets and literary critics of Norway in the post-war era, and the activities related to the writers involved in the *Literary Circle Profil* at this time can be viewed as central to the development of modernism in Norway. In most stages of modernism Norway received the new impulses from the rest of the world later than the neighbouring Scandinavian countries, as the author and other schol-



ars have pointed out, but for this relatively short time span the literary activities of the *Literary Circle Profil* contributed to a rapid and free flow of new ideas and influences. This period and milieu "made a great contribution to the formation of Jan Erik Vold as a poet, critic and translator", as Răduț observes (p. 91). The author places the circumstances leading up to the formation of the *Literary Circle Profil* in the broader context of the Norwegian and international developments in modernism.

Vold's poetry has been the subject of public debate and academic research, the latter in several articles and a comparative study in a Ph. D. dissertation, "Tingenes mysterium" ("The Mystery of Things", Strand, Erik, University of Oslo, 1979). Nevertheless, Răduț's work is to my knowledge the first Ph. D. dissertation focusing exclusively on his work. So, in a sense, this book constitutes a world premiere. The dissertation's primary sources include a selection of Vold's poems from five poetry collections of his early period (spanning from his 1965 debut *Mellom speil og speil* (*Between Mirror and Mirror*) to *Spor, snø* (*Traces, Snow*)¹), audio recordings of Vold's readings of his poetry, a broad range of material from Norwegian and international literary journals and manifestos from the relevant period and, last but not least, a never before published interview with Vold conducted by Răduț in February 2015.

Many of these sources are presented in the appendices of the book: the journal articles in English translation and the poems and the interview with parallel bilingual text. Many of the poetry collec-

tions the author has selected material from have not been translated before, so the publication of Răduț's competent translations is of great value. I hope the author will continue this effort and present to the Romanian public a Romanian translation of one of Vold's poetry collections. One may wonder why a poetry collection like *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes*) from 1968, which is central in the poet's authorship, has not seen any international translation. I think the answer lies in the difficulty of translating this poetry. Paradoxically the difficulty could stem from the very *simplicity* of Vold's poetry, as can be seen from the excerpt quoted at the end of this review. This relates to two of the central theoretical concepts discussed in the dissertation, *nyenkelhet* (in the author's translation, *new simplicity*) and *konkretisme* (concretism). These terms have been used to describe features of modernist poetry. While the latter is well known in international criticism and discourse on modernist poetry, *nyenkelhet* is a specifically Scandinavian term.

In the interview Vold has granted to Răduț, he points out how this term was first used ironically by literary critics to describe the tendency in Scandinavian poetry at the time to focus on everyday situations, objects, places, humour and language use. Such themes can have many cultural connotations that might be lost in translation, but could also awake feelings of enthusiastic recognition when understood and related to own experiences, and it is my impression that this kind of enthusiasm has been a motivating factor for Răduț's research. Later the term *new simplicity* has taken on a more neutral, descriptive meaning, but has never been precisely defined. Răduț's thorough analy-

¹ These and all following translations of the titles are those given by Răduț in her book.

sis of the term and tracing of the history of its usage is thus an important contribution to the understanding of this phenomenon.

The main method of the dissertation is a close reading of the selected Vold poems through the lenses of these two terms. The author successfully demonstrates how Vold's poems could be analysed in relation to *new simplicity* and *concretism*. Vold is seen as a characteristic example, within the broader perspective of the history of literary modernism. It could be interesting to see Răduț build further upon this solid base of understanding of Scandinavian modernism in general, and late 1960s Norwegian modernism in particular, for example by applying the same analysis tools to the literary works of other members of the *Literary Circle Profil*. As Vold notes in the interview, this period is very interesting to look back on because it was the last period when modernist literary experimentation on the level of form

could cause outrage in the public debate, which is not the case in Scandinavia today.

I recommend *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s* to anyone with an interest in post-war modernism in Scandinavia: the book is a fine presentation of one of the most important Norwegian poets of that era.

To conclude, I want to give a taste of Vold's poetry and Răduț's translation of it. The selected excerpt from *Tale for loffen* (*Speech for the White Bread*) from *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes*), 1968, is a characteristic example of *new simplicity*, the poem being considered by many to be typical of Vold's style of this period. It also demonstrates the challenges in translating parts of Vold's poetry and the strategies Răduț has used to solve them.

TALE FOR LOFFEN

Jeg vil holde en tale
for de tykke og de smale – nei
det vil jeg ikke, jeg vil snakke
om loffen, vår alles venn
i brødveien, loffen
sprø og fersk og rykende varm like
fra butikken, som man stakk fingeren inn i
og grov ut
varmt deilig hvitt
loffestoff [...]

SPEECH FOR THE WHITE BREAD

*I will give a speech
for the fat ones and the thin ones - no
I do not want to do that, I want to talk
about the white bread, everyone's friend
in the category of bread, the white bread
crispy and fresh and piping hot just
from the shop, which one stuck his finger
into
and dug out
warm delicious white
crumb [...]*

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