

PERSPECTIVES ON THE SCANDINAVIAN CULTURAL IMAGINARY FOREWORD

Issue 2/2023 of the *Journal Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Philology*, entitled *Perspectives on the Scandinavian Cultural Imaginary*, contains contributions from Romanian and foreign researchers who tackle a broad variety of subjects connected to Scandinavia. What brings these papers together, despite the heterogeneous topics and theoretical approaches, is the analysis of different cultural, literary or linguistic sets of images that articulate the concept of “imaginary” in the far North. Apart from the exploration of the “self” in relation to others, both reality, fiction, history and memory have been re-evaluated through the lens of the imaginary.

The remarkable didactic perspectives are reflected in four articles which begin with the one entitled *Weak and Strong Adjectives in Old Norse: An Examination of Konungs skuggsjá* signed by Terje Wagener, which focuses on the declension of adjectives in Old Norse. Katarína Motyková together with Josef Wikström, in *Didactic Considerations When Working with Languaculture in a Modern Language Classroom*, approach the use of *languaculture* when teaching modern languages in higher education, especially Swedish. In the paper entitled *Current Media Perspectives on the Norwegian Language. Norwegian, norsklisk or better English?* Crina Leon offers an overview of the use of English language in Norway and the influence of *norsklisk* based on a series of articles selected from the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten*. The last contribution of this section, *Jan Erik Vold's Concrete Poems: A Way to Enhance Students' Creativity and Grammar Skills in Norwegian*, is written by Raluca-Daniela Duinea and presents the didactic use and the effectiveness of Jan Erik Vold's concrete poems in teaching different grammatical, lexical and syntactic structures in Norwegian, in order to improve students' creativity and grammar skills.

Scandinavian myths and mythology provide researchers with various opportunities to investigate the unique cultural imaginary in Eddic poems, saga literature, in stories or beliefs and customs. In her paper entitled *Mermaids and Other Undines: Medieval Representations of Scandinavian Aquatic Figures*, Elise D'Inca compares different aquatic figures within the Scandinavian imagination and analyzes the types of risk they can pose. A similar topic is tackled by researcher Ugnius Vizgirda Mikučionis in his paper “*They Were Such Skilled Craftsmen*”. *How to Manipulate a Dwarf*. The author focuses on Old Norse literature and succeeds in presenting how different characters manipulate dwarfs and how these in turn respond to manipulation techniques. The concept

of manipulation is dealt with from a semiotic perspective and examples of positive and negative manipulation are provided. The seven case studies indicated in the paper aim to offer readers a thorough perspective on the balance of power between the manipulator (gods, a jötunn, and human beings) and the manipulatee (the dwarfs). Another paper in which Norse gods and goddesses together with giants and magical animals create a mesmerizing Scandinavian imagery bears the title *Revisiting Norse Mythology: The Case of A. S. Byatt's Ragnarök*. In this paper, Cristina Mihaela Nistor explores Byatt's *Ragnarök* from a narratological and cultural perspective and binds together ideas and themes ranging from pollution to discussing women's emancipation issues. The paper provides a glimpse into the evolution of mythological events in connection to the way in which these have been rewritten in Byatt's 21st century book.

The final part of this issue comprises a group of five articles whose main theme is to analyse representative writers and motives which appear in the Scandinavian literature. The first article, signed by Ioana Gabriela Nan entitled *Girlhood and Girl Friendship in the Narratives of Bjørg Vik and Karin Sveen*, accounts for female friendship, underlying the importance of the environment, the power hierarchies and the beliefs in freedom and solidarity as foundation for the fictional rendering of the girls' and the women's allegiances. In the second article, *In Blood Gardens, Dance Halls and Sleep Plains. Ellen Einan's Creation of Fiction*, Eva Pitronova examines the Norwegian Imaginary in the poems of Ellen Einan, suggesting that the poet's works represent an interconnected universe, built upon folk beliefs, old ancient myths and the writer's own mythology. From mythological gardens we go over to *Summer Storms, Food and Representations of the Climate Crisis in Brit Bildøen's Sju dagar i august and Agnar Lirhus's Liten kokebok*. In this article, Georgiana Bozîntan tackles the climate change imaginary in contemporary realistic fiction in Norway, aiming to illustrate that the essence of the "cli-fi" novel is for Brit Bildøen and Agnar Lirhus interwoven with an affective dimension. The fourth article is centred around the Norwegian novelist Roy Jacobsen. In this sense, Călina-Maria Moldovan's focus in *Fluid Landscapes and the Insular Imaginary in Roy Jacobsen's Barrøy-series* is set upon the island imaginary and the independence and autonomy of nonhuman entities like the island and the ocean in relation to human life. The contribution that concludes these group articles, authored by Paulina Przywuska, *A Distorted Body Image: Valuation and Categorization of the Human Body in Linnéa Myhre's Novel Evig søndag (Eternal Sunday)*, analyses the way in which autobiography and reality are interconnected and expressed through the language imaginary that reflects the valuation and categorization of the human body.

The present issue also includes a set of interviews with three prominent Norwegian writers, Jan Erik Vold (b. 1939), Jon Fosse (b. 1959) and Siri Pettersen (b. 1971). The first interview entitled *Jan Erik Vold – The Renowned Norwegian Word Architect and Performer* was conducted by Raluca-Daniela Duinea and begins with a few questions related to Jan Erik Vold's visit to Cluj as a special guest present at the launch of the first Norwegian-Romanian bilingual anthology of poetry, *Briskeby blues*. He is an emblematic literary figure of the 1960s in Norway, who had a great contribution to the renewal of Norwegian poetry, being the first poet who introduced the concepts of concretism and *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*) in Norwegian literature. His answers refer especially to the relation between poetry and music and to his collaboration with famous jazz and blues musicians like Jan Garbarek and Chet Baker. He also offers interesting remarks about concrete, *new simple*, haiku, meditative poems, *Voldposten* and about his latest publications. Regarding his future writing plans, Vold states: "I keep on working. There is a lot of editorial work to be done". In *Samtale med Jon Fosse* (A Dialogue with Jon Fosse) conducted by Diana-Ciot Monda, the main themes debated are the connection between inspiration, the past and the surrounding Nordic landscape, clearly presented in Jon Fosse's masterpiece, the modern novel, *Aliss at the Fire* (*Det er Ales*). Literature, melancholy, loneliness, myths are only a few subjects tackled by Fosse, one of the most prominent contemporary Norwegian writers, with literary works translated in more than fifty languages. The series of interviews concludes with the fantasy writer, Siri Petterson, an award-winning author and a famous Young Adult novelist, whose books have been translated in more than ten languages. The interview *Siri Pettersen – Subverting Reality through Fantasy* is conducted by Cristina Vişovan and is focused on Norwegian fantasy and on Young Adult fiction.

Several peer-reviewers and collaborators helped to get the manuscripts ready for publication, with pertinent suggestions and pieces of advice. We thank all of them for their time and effort. We especially thank the contributors for their interesting and diverse papers which point to the fact that the Scandinavian Cultural Imaginary still has a lot to say in today's society.

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