



STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS  
BABEȘ-BOLYAI



# PHILOLOGIA

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# STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI

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## PHILOLOGIA

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## **TRANSLATION. EVALUATION. INTERPRETATION. COMPARATIVE AND IDENTITY STUDIES**

### **I. Nordic studies and institutional foundation**

The *Nordic Studies and Institutional Foundation* section comprises contributions from linguistic, literary but also cultural and business-oriented perspectives.

The authors of the articles, from Norway to Poland and Romania, essentially reveal the role of languages, literature and culture – in this case Norwegian, Sami and Swedish – in our global world.

Language and cultural communication, through classic or contemporary literature, performing arts as well as literary translations, impressively promoted by Norwegian Literature Abroad (Norla), are reflected in a variety of articles on Norwegian literature as world literature, or on Sami theatre in a global context.

While one of the case studies presents valuable insights into proficiency levels in minor languages correlated to students' job satisfaction, another analyses the context of institutional development.

The articles also present automatically-classifying variants of the modern Norwegian language, perspectives on issues of multimodality and identity in the 21 century, as well as specific academic, cultural and labour market frameworks.

The literary research showcased in a couple of articles - from Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg to emblematic contemporary writers - reflects the preoccupations of Romanian academics representing the educational environment provided by specific bachelor programmes offered by Babeş-Bolyai University and the University of Bucharest, for the comprehensive field of Scandinavian Studies.

### **II. Comparative and identity studies**

Some proposals of linguistic and lexical interpretation, in a comparative way, in diachrony, but especially in synchrony, are added to the studies in the first section: by probing the didactics of language teaching in an absolutely innovative context of using virtual platforms, in the constraints that the current communication has to face.

The facts of communication, language and culture presented in these approaches are associated with an approach of an extremely productive genre in the contemporary culture, such as the graphic novel, a genre that is captured in comparative translation, in statistical dimension, and in relationship with the norm and trends, manifested especially in contemporaneity, in the first decades of the 21st century.



To the comparative approach regarding the subjunctive in Italian and French on the basis of some graphic novels, an approach that presents the specificity of the Romanian imperative, this time on the basis of a corpus constituted through the research of orality, is added.

A proposal to look at how language policies have consequences on the behavior of related languages that come from one and the same family of languages, how neology is encouraged, controlled or motivated by a certain social gear, leads us to historical factors that could possibly explain the change in the aspect of a language.

Then, three exemplary readings lead us to the territory of terminology that is in close connection with the cultural interpretation. The first one, validated in the literary field, focuses on the terminology of the self in order to capture the representation of the individual according to the repetitive patterns that dissociates his personality. The second one, starting from a certain way of reading the narrative, proposes an investigation of the collective memory that holds a certain interaction with the other as the basis for its own identity. The third reading, also identity-based in our perspective, broadens the horizon of cultural investigation towards a series of values that Christianity and, hence, the idea of sacredness, provides to contemporary poetry.

Finally, a proposal that reveals the importance of language in discovering the imaginary of national identities illustrates, in turn, the constraints that are generated by a certain linguistic anchoring, a rupture of identity, the solutions of its recovery through the creation of language.

Bringing together effective studies of translation as a cultural fact, of didactics, of linguistic acquisition and evaluation in a broader sense than that of the educational process, following the thread of the comparative approach, the volume retains a certain process of institutional foundation that Cluj culture projects in an easily recognizable identity.

**Sanda TOMESCU BACIU, Oana Aurelia GENCĂRĂU**

## NORGE SOM GJESTELAND PÅ FRANKFURTER BUCHMESSE 2019. THE DREAM WE CARRY

MARGIT WALSO<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Norway as Honorary Guest at Frankfurter Buchmesse 2019. The Dream We Carry*<sup>2</sup>. The article gives an in-depth presentation of the achievements of Norway as honorary guest at the prestigious international bookfair in Frankfurt in 2019. It deals with the substantial cultural contributions Norway brought internationally in connection to the bookfair: Norwegian literature translated into German, exhibitions, book-launches, etc.

**Keywords:** *Norwegian literature, Norwegian culture, international Bookfair in Frankfurt, translations, NORLA, writers, translators.*

**REZUMAT.** *Norvegia, invitat de onoare la Frankfurter Buchmesse 2019. Visul ce-l purtăm.* Articolul oferă o prezentare în profunzime a contribuției Norvegiei în calitate de invitat de onoare la prestigiosul târg internațional de carte de la Frankfurt, 2019. Articolul tratează contribuția culturală substanțială pe care Norvegia a adus-o și în plan internațional ca invitată de onoare la târgul de carte de la Frankfurt prin traduceri din literatura norvegiană în germană, expoziții, lansări de carte etc.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Literatură norvegiană, cultură norvegiană, Târgul internațional de carte de la Frankfurt, traduceri, NORLA, scriitori, traducători.*

### Introduksjon

Norges slagord som gjesteland ved Bokmessen i Frankfurt var «The Dream We Carry», på tysk «Der Traum in uns». Slagordet er hentet fra Olav H. Hauges folkekjære dikt «Det er den draumen». For NORLA representerte diktet en drøm for gjestelandsprosjektet: at norsk litteratur skal åpne hjerter og dører til lesere i Tyskland og internasjonalt og ta oss med inn «på ein våg me ikkje har visst um».

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<sup>1</sup> Director of *Norwegian Literature Abroad* (Norla). **Margit Walsø** coordinated on behalf of Norla the participation of Norway as honorary guest at the International Bookfair in Frankfurt 2019. She is a well-known Norwegian writer. E-mail: [margit.walso@norla.no](mailto:margit.walso@norla.no)

<sup>2</sup> Data on the participation of Norway as Honorary Guest at the International Bookfair in Frankfurt 2019 have been previously published in the Norla Report. [https://www.dropbox.com/s/zssb4hprjiics2y/Rapport-Norge\\_som\\_gjesteland\\_p%C3%A5\\_Frankfurter\\_Buchmesse\\_2019%E2%80%93The\\_Dream\\_We\\_Carry.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/zssb4hprjiics2y/Rapport-Norge_som_gjesteland_p%C3%A5_Frankfurter_Buchmesse_2019%E2%80%93The_Dream_We_Carry.pdf?dl=0)

Som gjesteland har Norge klart å engasjere og overraske. Mange nye stemmer er introdusert for verden, etablerte stemmer har fått økt oppmerksomhet. Forfatternes ord og fortellinger gjorde inntrykk på lesere over hele det tysktalende området, og tyske bokhandlere ble et viktig møtested. De mange utstillingene og lesingene har vist sider av Norge som kanskje var ukjent for mange tyskere, og gjennom den fornyede kontakten har vi fått viktige impulser tilbake. Gjestelandspaviljongen ble en oase med stor publikumsappell, som bød på sterke visuelle opplevelser av norsk litteratur, kultur og samfunn. Responsen fra publikum og i media i Tyskland var overveldende gjennom hele året, og vitner om at avtrykket av Norge som gjesteland kan holde seg i lang tid fremover.

NORLA benyttet gjestelandsstatusen som en arena for å få frem stemmer fra Norge og satse på leseglede, og ikke minst som en talerstol for å fremme ytringsfrihet:



Share the stories of voices from Norway



Spark the joy of reading



Encourage freedom of expression

Gjennom litteraturprogrammet før og etter messen, kulturprogrammet og programmet i løpet av messen har forfattere og kunstners historier blitt delt med et internasjonalt og tysk publikum. Gleden ved litteratur og lesing har gjennomstyret prosjektet, og de skulpturelle bordene i paviljongen har både vært med på å dele historier og å styrke leseglede. Ytringsfrihet har vært et gjennomgående tema for gjestelandsprosjektet, og med Freedom of Expression Series var hovedscenen viet ytringsfrihet hver eneste dag under messen.

Forberedelsene til å være gjesteland ved Bokmessen i Frankfurt 2019 var omfattende og avgjørende for de gode resultatene. NORLA har gjort en ekstraordinær innsats som startet mange år før selve gjestelandsåret, og den faste staben ble utvidet med nye kollegaer.

Oversetterne, de litterære agenturene, møtene mellom forfattere og tyske lesere og kontakten med tysk bokbransje og kulturliv løftet gjestelandssatsingen. Statlige og private aktører – regjeringen og bokbransjen i Norge, kulturinstitusjoner, sponsorer, organisasjoner og stiftelser – gikk sammen i en stor, kulturell dugnad.

## **Bokmessen i Frankfurt og Norge som gjesteland**

Bokmessen i Frankfurt er uten tvil verdens viktigste bokmesse. Det gjelder ikke minst for salg av rettigheter og for internasjonal utbredelse av litteratur i alle

sjangre. Dens popularitet har holdt seg stabil i mange år, med omkring 300 000 besøkende årlig. Det er rundt 7000 utstillere fra omkring 100 land, og av de besøkende er halvparten fagpublikum. Messen har en over 500 år lang historie, og den holdes hvert år i oktober. I 1976 innførte bokmessen et konsept kalt gjesteland, eller æresgjest, hvor et land, en region eller et språkområde skulle være i fokus på messen. De fleste land har dessuten samarbeidet med kulturelle institusjoner i Tyskland om å presentere sin kultur i bred forstand gjennom utstillinger, forestillinger og konserter, ikke minst i Frankfurt by.

Utgangspunktet for å søke om å bli gjesteland ved bokmessen er et sterkt ønske og et beviselig godt samarbeid mellom bokbransjen og myndigheter samt et godt budsjettgrunnlag. Dessuten må man ha et program for oversettelsesstøtte, og selvfølgelig en interessant litteratur som flere land kan oppdage.

## Litteraturprogrammet

### Oversetterne

En forutsetning for at bøker kan utgis på et annet språk, er at det finnes oversettere som kan oversette dem. NORLAs arbeid er derfor tuftet på godt samarbeid med oversettere. Som en sentral del av forarbeidet til gjestelandsåret ble det i desember 2017 holdt et seminar for 38 tyske oversettere på Literaturhaus Hamburg. Det å ha oversetterne med på laget har hele tiden vært et ønskemål, ettersom gode oversettelser er en forutsetning for å nå frem til tyske lesere. Oversetterne fungerer ofte som norsk litteraturs fremste forkjempere og ambassadører, og gjør et uvurderlig arbeid for å fremme norsk litteratur. Når en norsk forfatter står på en tysk scene, er det også takket være tyske oversetteres formuleringsevner.

Det var et sterkt ønske om at Frankfurt-satsingen skulle få ringvirkninger også i andre språkområder enn det tyske. Derfor ble det innvilget et lite reisestipend til Bokmessen i Frankfurt for oversettere av norsk litteratur, både tyske og fra alle andre land. 40 oversettere fikk slik støtte. I tillegg kom mellom 15 og 20 oversettere til Frankfurt for egen regning for å overvære litteraturprogrammet på messen. Til sammen kom det oversettere fra norsk fra over 20 land.

### Oversettelser

NORLA har siden starten i 1978 bygget opp og hatt gjennomgående god kontakt med forlag i Tyskland, Østerrike og Sveits. Denne kontakten og omfanget av den ble intensivert i årene før messen.

Et av de viktigste incitamentene for utgivelse av norsk litteratur rettet mot tysk- og engelskspråklige forlag var å garantere støtte til oversettelser. Forlag fra disse språkområdene som utga norske bøker i 2018 og 2019, kunne søke om utvidet oversettelsesstøtte fra NORLA og var garantert en oversettelsesstøtte på 50–75 prosent.

## **Forleggerbesøk**

Det ble gjort et grundig forarbeid for å sikre at norske forfattere ble solgt til og utgitt på forlag i Tyskland, Østerrike og Sveits. Både kjente og nye forlag ble oppsøkt. Totalt ble 54 tyskspråklige og ti engelskspråklige forleggere invitert til Norge på ekspertreiser i syv ulike puljer i løpet av 2017 og 2018.

## **Bokhandlerstrategien**

Gjestelandene på Bokmessen i Frankfurt har ofte noe samarbeid med tyske og tyskspråklige bokhandlere, men Norge utvidet samarbeidet med bokhandlerne betraktelig. Bokhandlerne var en av de viktigste samarbeidspartene i gjestelandsprosjektet og hadde mye å si for salget av de norske bøkene.

I 2018 inviterte NORLA til sammen to grupper på i alt 19 tyske bokhandlere til Norge og Oslo. I mai 2019 kom ytterligere ti bokhandlere for å delta på Norsk Litteraturfestival på Lillehammer. De fikk treffe forfattere som var under oversettelse til tysk, illustratører og norske bokhandlere, og fikk en innføring i det norske litterære systemet. Programmet viste bredden i norsk litteratur og skapte stort engasjement hos bokhandlerne.

## **Forfatterprogram *Nye stemmer***

Nyrekruttering av forfattere og å bringe frem nye litterære stemmer internasjonalt var et viktig mål med Frankfurt-satsingen. Derfor inngikk NORLA et samarbeid med Den norske Forleggerforening og Talent Norge om utviklingsprogrammet «Nye stemmer», som fokuserte på den internasjonale dimensjonen av forfatteryrket. Programmet skulle legge til rette for utvikling gjennom erfaringsutveksling, reiser, foredrag, aktiviteter og nettverksbygging.

Av de 25 deltakerne i Nye stemmer-programmet er 14 så langt oversatt eller under oversettelse til tysk. Deltakelse i programmet har for mange av disse vært en medvirkende årsak til oversettelsen. Seks «nye stemmer» deltok i det litterære programmet under selve Bokmessen i Frankfurt.

## **Programmet igjestelandsåret**

Litteraturprogrammet er selve kjernen i gjestelandsprosjektet og ble til som et resultat av god dialog med litteraturfestivaler, bokhandler, biblioteker, litteraturhus og andre samarbeidspartnere i Tyskland, Østerrike og Sveits de siste årene.

Målet har vært å vise bredden i hva norsk litteratur har å by på i ulike sjangre. Det har også vært viktig å bidra til eksponering av mange ulike kunstneriske uttrykk, som illustrasjonsutstillinger, dukketeater basert på barnelitteratur, teateroppsetninger samt paneldiskusjoner om litteratur.

### **Festivaler og universiteter**

NORLA inngikk et tett og aktivt samarbeid med en rekke festivaler som Lit. Cologne som arrangeres i Köln i mars hvert år, og trekker store navn. Hit ble Johan Harstad invitert, og arrangementet, der skuespiller Matthias Brandt leste tekstutdraget fra *Max, Mischa og Tet-offensiven*, var utsolgt med hele 700 solgte billetter.

Flere arrangementer ble også avholdt i samarbeid med universitetsmiljøene i Kiel, Bonn, Münster, Berlin, Basel og Zürich. I Berlin ble det holdt bildebokseminar med Gro Dahle, Martin Berdahl og Stian Hole, og Espen Ytreberg, Ida Hegazi Høyer, Hanne Ørstavik, Cecilie Løveid og Roskva Koritzinsky var blant forfatterne som besøkte de ulike universitetene. Enkelte av disse arrangementene foregikk i samarbeid med litteraturhusene, som fikk besøk av Lotta Elstad, Matias Faldbakken, Lars Mytting, Knut Ødegård, Ida Hegazi Høyer, Espen Ytreberg og Kjersti Annesdatter Skomsvold.

NORLA har et tett samarbeid med universiteter i utlandet der det undervises i norsk. Norskstudenter i Tyskland, Sveits og Østerrike fikk muligheten til å søke om reisetilskudd til bokmessen, og i underkant av 40 studenter fikk tildelt et reisetilskudd.

### **Litteraturtoget**

14.–15. oktober 2019 reiste HKH Kronprinsesse Mette-Marit og HKH Kronprins Haakon Magnus med Litteraturtoget fra Berlin via Köln til Bokmessen i Frankfurt sammen med 19 forfattere. Litteraturtoget i Tyskland var et samarbeid mellom Utenriksdepartementet, NORLA og Deutsche Bahn.

Litteraturtoget i Tyskland ga en enestående mulighet til å vise frem litteratur fra Norge til et stort tysktalende publikum. Elever fra to tyske barneskoleklasser var invitert med på toget fra Berlin. Anna Fiske og Svein Nyhus holdt tegneverksted med barna i en kupé, mens Jostein Gaarder og Maria Parr leste for barn i en annen kupé. Både tyske og norske medier viste svært stor interesse. På strekningen fra Köln deltok i tillegg Lars Saabye Christensen, Inga Ravna Eira, Lotta Elstad, Erika Fatland, Erik Fosnes Hansen, Johan Harstad, Edvard Hoem, Mona Høvring, Lars Mytting, Synnøve Persen, Simon Stranger, Andreas Tjernshaugen og Herbjørg Wassmo. Toget ankom Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof rett før åpningen av messen 15. oktober.

## **Programmet i Frankfurt 15.-20. oktober**

Høydepunktet i prosjektet Norge som gjesteland på Bokmessen i Frankfurt 2019 var det omfattende litterære programmet på bokmessen under messeuken, og da særlig programmet i den norske gjestelandspaviljongen i Forum 16.-20. oktober. Det kom over 100 norske forfattere for å delta på over 120 programposter over to scener i gjestelandspaviljongen alene

### ***Paviljongen***

De 22 bordene ga plass til lesere og bøker og var tredimensjonale abstrakte verk som fortalte en historie. Designet var inspirert av prosjektet «Ukens dikt». Alle bordene hadde spesifikke faglige temaer, og tyske utgaver av norske bøker i de forskjellige sjangrene var plassert på hvert bord. Paviljongprogrammet ble åpnet på hovedscenen onsdag morgen av kulturministeren og med etterfølgende taler av forfatterne Herbjørg Wassmo og Thorvald Steen.

### **Frihetens time**

Hver dag under messen var det en programpost viet ytringsfrihet på hovedscenen i paviljongen som en del av «Frihetens time / Freedom of Expression Series». Eksempelvis ble Frihetens time-serien åpnet av blant andre Grete Brochmann fra Fritt Ord, ordfører i Stavanger Christine Sagen Helgø og ICORN-forfatterne Ali Dorani og Asli Erdogan. Det var også programmer om norsk-samiske relasjoner med forfatterne Máret Ánne Sara og Niillas Holmberg.

### **Grønn time-serien**

Hver dag var det også opptil flere programposter viet miljø og natur. «Grønn time / Green Hour Series» ble åpnet onsdag formiddag av Anita L. Trosdahl, prosjektleder i Oslo European Green Capital 2019, og forfatter Gert Nygårdshaug i samtale med Ulrich Sonnenschein fra Hessischer Rundfunk. Åpningen ble etterfulgt av programposten «Om store og små dyr», med Andreas Tjernshaugen og Anne Sverdrup Thygeson.

### **Samisk program**

Det var også daglige programposter med samisk litteratur i paviljongen. Onsdag morgen ble programmet åpnet med en presentasjon av samisk litteratur ved Harald Gaski, med opplesninger av Inga Ravna Eira og Niillas Holmberg. Det var også flere programposter viet lyrikk, barne- og ungdomslitteratur og joik.

## Kulturprogrammet

I løpet av året ble det arrangert flere hundre programpunkter hvor kunst og kultur fra Norge har inngått. Kulturprogrammet har omfattet utstillinger, konserter, gjestespill, turneer, filmvisninger, scenekunst, arkitektur, kunstnersamtaler, workshops m.m. Av disse fant nærmere 60 programposter sted på ulike arenaer i Frankfurt by under bokmessen. Gjennom pågående utstillinger fortsatte kulturprogrammet i månedsvis etter bokmessens avslutning. Et av høydepunktene var utstillingen *HANNAH RYGGEN. WOVEN MANIFESTOS* på Schirn Kunsthalle (26.09.2019–12.01.2020).

## Konklusjon

Ser man på hovedmålene som NORLA satte seg for gjestelandssatsingen, ble disse oppnådd. Målet var å fornye fotfestet til norsk litteratur i Tyskland og skape nye suksesser i det tyske bokmarkedet, skape ny internasjonal interesse for norsk litteratur og legge til rette for at mange norske forfattere kan slå igjennom internasjonalt i et langsiktig perspektiv. Videre ønsket man å gjøre Tyskland og resten av verden oppmerksom på Norge som en moderne kulturnasjon og å oppdatere og revitalisere forholdet mellom Norge og Tyskland gjennom samarbeid om litterære og kulturelle prosjekter.

100 forfattere fra Norge kom til Bokmessen i Frankfurt, og 198 forfattere deltok i et program i Tyskland, Østerrike eller Sveits i 2019. 25 forfattere ble invitert til Nye stemmer-programmet. 100 000 gjester kom til paviljongen. I 2019 var det 1120 litterære eller kulturelle begivenheter i det tyskspråklige området i forbindelse med Norge som gjesteland. Det var 120 litteraturarrangementer i gjestelandspaviljongen, 30 andre steder på messen og over 40 i byen. Ut over det var det 60 kulturelle arrangementer i byen under bokmesseuken. Det var 700 litteraturarrangementer på 108 steder arrangert i samarbeid med 358 partnere, av dem over 200 bokhandler. I tillegg var det 170 arrangementer i kulturprogrammet utenom messetiden.

510 norske titler kom på det tyske bokmarkedet i 2019 – dvs. oversettelser fra norsk og bøker skrevet om Norge og norsk kultur på tysk. Av det er 296 oversettelser og 229 nye bøker. Av oversettelsene er 16 prosent barne- og ungdomslitteratur og 27 prosent sakprosa. 80 norske forfattere ble oversatt for første gang til tysk. Seks norske titler kom på bestselgerlister i Tyskland (plass tjue og høyere) i løpet av 2019. Norge har hatt et strategisk samarbeid med tyske bokhandlere som er unikt i gjestelandssammenheng.

De i alt 1120 litterære og kulturelle begivenhetene med norsk deltakelse i det tyskspråklige området dekket et stort kulturelt felt; litteratur, design, bildekunst, musikk, teater og performance. Eksempelvis ble det holdt mer enn ti utstillinger av



norsk kunst i Frankfurt og andre tyske byer. Mange aktører i norsk kulturliv (som NAA) var involvert og deltok i samarbeid med tyske kulturinstitusjoner.

Det norske litterære systemet ble gjort kjent gjennom programmer i den norske paviljongen på bokmessen i Frankfurt, og ytringsfrihet og språklig mangfold ble tematisert, f.eks. gjennom programserien Frihetens time.

Norge som gjesteland skapte stor oppmerksomhet i tyske medier. I oktober kom 8385 saker om Norge som gjesteland på trykk i tyskspråklige medier, det var 1084 radioprogrammer, 262 TV-innslag og 3256 saker på nettet. I alt ble Norge som gjesteland omtalt 14 997 ganger i tyske medier i oktober 2019, noe som er rekord for et gjesteland ifølge Bokmessen i Frankfurt.

Gjennom flere år med forberedelser og gjennomføring har NORLA, bokbransjen, kultur- og samfunnsliv knyttet nye kontakter mot Tyskland som kan gi verdi for norsk litteratur og kultur i mange år fremover. NORLAs apparat har vist seg godt egnet til å utvikle samarbeidsprosjekter både med norske og utenlandske aktører, og organisasjonen tar mange ting fra satsingen med seg videre. Samarbeidet med forfatterne, oversetterne, agentene og de utenlandske forlagene har fungert svært godt. I tillegg har vi opparbeidet en bred kontakt med tyske litteraturfestivaler og andre litteraturformidlere, og i fremtiden vil det være interessant for NORLA å arbeide enda tettere med disse om litteraturprogram. I denne sammenhengen er det også viktig å videreføre den gode erfaringen fra bokhandlersamarbeidet. Dette kan utvides til andre markeder, og dermed styrke markedsføringen av norsk litteratur i flere språkområder. Det samme gjelder pressereiser, gjerne i samarbeid med de respektive norske utestasjoner. Det er et mål å bygge videre på erfaringene fra denne internasjonale satsingen som omfattet hele kulturfeltet, ved fremtidige internasjonale mønstringer.

Slagordet «The Dream We Carry», på tysk «Der Traum in uns», som var hentet fra Olav H. Hauges folkekjære dikt «Det er den draumen», representerte vår drøm for gjestelandsprosjektet. Norsk litteratur skulle åpne hjerter og dører til lesere i Tyskland og internasjonalt og ta oss med inn «på ein våg me ikkje har visst um». Drømmen ble oppfylt, og den lever videre.

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## CONTEXT FOR DESIGNING A MA PROGRAMME IN NORWEGIAN LITERARY AND NON-LITERARY TRANSLATIONS AT BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

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**ABSTRACT.** *Context for Designing a MA programme in Norwegian Literary and Non-Literary Translations at Babeș-Bolyai University.* This study aims to explore the degree of motivation of current BA students and alumni as concerns their enrolment for a pilot MA-programme in Norwegian literary and non-literary translations at Babeș-Bolyai University (BBU). Details are provided regarding the context for designing such a unique master's programme and the academic perspectives, as well as job opportunities that can be envisaged. A total of 147 respondents were included in this study and selected using convenience sampling. A structured questionnaire comprising open-ended and closed questions items was formulated in Romanian and sent online to respondents via Google

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forms. The study concludes that 95.2% of the respondents would be interested in enrolling for this pilot MA programme Norwegian literary and non-literary translations and thus, further consolidate their skills in Norwegian acquired during the BA programme in Norwegian language and literature.

**Keywords:** *Norwegian language, master's programme, literary and non-literary translations, graduate education, Babeș-Bolyai University.*

**REZUMAT:** *Contextul dezvoltării unui program masteral în domeniul traducerilor ficționale și non-ficționale, în limba norvegiană, la Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai.* Acest studiu își propune să exploreze gradul de motivație al actualilor studenți și al absolvenților specializării *Limbă și literatură norvegiană* în ceea ce privește interesul pentru înscrierea acestora la un program pilot de master în domeniul traducerilor ficționale și nonficționale la Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai (UBB). Sunt oferite detalii cu privire la contextul proiectării unui astfel de program masteral și al perspectivelor academice, precum și al oportunităților de muncă ce pot fi avute în vedere. Un total de 147 de respondenți au fost incluși în acest studiu și au fost selectați utilizând eșantionarea de comoditate. Un chestionar structurat cuprinzând itemi cu întrebări deschise și închise a fost formulat în limba română și trimis online către respondenți prin intermediul aplicației formulare Google. Studiul concluzionează faptul că 95,2% dintre respondenți ar fi interesați să se înscrie la acest program masteral desfășurat în limba norvegiană în domeniul traducerilor ficționale și nonficționale. Acest demers va susține consolidarea competențelor lingvistice în limba norvegiană dobândite în timpul programului de licență – *Limbă și literatura norvegiană*.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *limba norvegiană, program masterat, traduceri ficționale, traduceri nonficționale, învățământ superior, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai.*

## Introduction

A primary pillar of the Bologna Declaration (1999) incorporated within the Romanian educational system referred to the reform according to which a complete study programme at university level would comprise three years of bachelor studies, followed by two years of master studies, and concluding with three years of doctoral studies. The undergraduate Norwegian language and literature study programme established at BBU in 1991 is not followed by a master's programme. Still, BA graduates have the opportunity to enrol for PhD studies in Norwegian. Therefore, this paper intends to close this missing link, discuss the context of a demand analysis, and highlight the interest of both

current and former students as regards their enrolment for a MA programme in Norwegian literary and non-literary translations.

The field of literary translations from Norwegian into Romanian has flourished and much of this development is grounded in the establishment of the BA programme in Norwegian language and literature. According to a survey that aimed to identify the number of translations of Norwegian literature into Romanian that were issued in the last 25 years (Golban, forthcoming), it is indicated that over 173<sup>7</sup> titles have been published. Out of this number, 42 volumes (Golban, forthcoming), were translated directly from Norwegian by alumni of the Norwegian language and literature BA programme. Five additional translations from Norwegian are also connected to the founder of the Norwegian programme.

As a direct consequence of the growing demand of literary translations from Norwegian and with the intent to connect various knowledge domains, we have explored the potential that such a master specialization would bring in order to provide graduate education to a growing number of graduate students that reached a peak of 355 enrolled students in the academic year 2018-2019 (Tomescu Baciu et al., 2019).<sup>8</sup>

As in other similar studies conducted in Romania with the purpose to investigate pilot programmes in higher education (Grindei et al. 2013; VasIU et al. 2012), this paper highlights the opinions of BA students and alumni as regards their motivation to enrol for an independent MA programme fully conducted in Norwegian.

### **Brief history of Norwegian studies at Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania**

The undergraduate Norwegian language and literature study programme was established at BBU in 1991. With the opening up of the country after the fall of the Berlin wall, BBU responded positively to an initiative to create this undergraduate programme, one year after an optional Norwegian language course enjoyed great success among the students of the university. At the moment, this programme (Norwegian major and minor) is the only one of its kind accredited in Romania, and thus it attracts students from all over the country, with about up to 300 students in Norwegian language and literature benefitting also from a Nordic Studies Library, established in 1997 with the support of Nordic embassies in Romania.

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<sup>7</sup> These volumes were translated either directly from Norwegian, or through English, French and German.

<sup>8</sup> Graduates can also become sworn interpreters and translators. Candidates need to pass an official examination in various domains covering juridical sciences, literature, economics, medicine or pharmacology etc.

Supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy, the Norwegian Ambassadors in Bucharest, and important academic and cultural institutions in Norway,<sup>9</sup> the Norwegian language and literature Bachelor's programme in Cluj-Napoca gained visibility in the national and international academic environment, by organizing international workshops, publishing joint volumes, offering doctorates in co-tutoring, and by collaborating with Norwegian universities, through mobility programmes for students and professors (funded by EEA or Erasmus-grants) or by cooperating mainly with NORLA, with the international book fair in Cluj, with the Gaudeamus book fair, with several publishing houses, and even business enterprises.

A complete master's programme in Norwegian will link the two study levels already existing at BBU: the undergraduate – Norwegian language and literature specialization major and minor – and the doctoral programme that has been operating successfully since 2010. Published or finalized PhD theses on, for example, Lars Saabye Christensen, Jon Fosse, Jan Erik Vold, Karl Ove Knausgård, Bjørn Andreas Bull-Hansen and Siri Pettersen or on the phenomenon of the reception of Norwegian classics in Romanian literature, such as Knut Hamsun, represent some of them.

Literary translation competences were developed through three specific courses at the undergraduate level and at MA level by providing an optional module, within the MA programmes offered at the Faculty of Letters, in *Norwegian language, culture and literature*. Literary translation workshops in close cooperation and with the support of NORLA were organized for former and current students, contributing to the increase of the participants' interest for translations from Norwegian literature into Romanian. One assumed reason for the interest in literary translations is also the participants' opportunity to discuss their own translations with the writers attending the workshops and the presentations given by representatives from NORLA on the supporting translation programmes offered by the agency. The writers participating in the two workshops were later published in a Nordic collection of a publishing house in Cluj-Napoca.

Therefore, the existence of the only Bachelor's and doctoral programme in Romania comes in the support of creating a master's programme in Norwegian as a link between undergraduate and doctoral studies in Norwegian. It would also further strengthen the prestige of the Norwegian programme at BBU nationally, as students can choose to continue their studies in Romania, since over 64 % of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students prefer to remain in Romania (Tomescu Baciu et.al., 2019: 264).

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<sup>9</sup> The Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU), the Norwegian Literature Abroad (NORLA), the Centre of Norwegian language teaching (SNU), the Centre for Ibsen studies (University of Oslo)

All these considerations led us to question and analyse the interest of BA students and alumni as concerns their enrolment for a complete, full time Master's programme in Norwegian literary and non-literary translation.

### **Demand analysis**

The Bologna Declaration (1999) comprised various educational reforms intended to make higher education more compatible to the labour market, as well as to provide a standard for educational opportunities to students across Europe. In order to account for social and economic demands in the context of globalization, there has been observed a growing interest towards enrolling for higher education programmes (Welde, 2003), and in particular in the field of liberal arts and science education (Van Damme, 2016). In fact, the number of tertiary students worldwide doubled in size in just 20 years (Welde 2003), and, even after the financial crisis from 2008, a “growing demand for education, especially in vocational education and training and in tertiary education” (Van Damme & K. Kärkkäinen, 2011: 7) could be observed. In this line of thought, higher education can be perceived as a “tool for development” (Knight, 2007), and for creating opportunities to respond to the current demands and challenges of the labour market.

As indicated above, there is a constant need to improve and diversify opportunities for students enrolled for higher education programmes. Therefore, the missing link between BA and PhD studies in Norwegian at BBU needs to be accounted for and supplemented with a master's programme in Norwegian. Hence, this programme would offer alumni opportunities to engage in graduate education in Norwegian. To support this demand analysis, a study conducted on former alumni students of the Norwegian language and literature programme at BBU (Tomescu Baciú et al., forthcoming) concluded that 40% out of 123 respondents, chose to continue their graduate education in the field of humanities at the Faculty of Letters.

In addition, this master's programme could help students succeed in the labour market as it would offer a wide range of job opportunities such as: literary translator, authorized translator, employment in various cultural centres, research centres, literary publishing companies, multinational companies, etc.

Equally important is the fact that no other Master's programme in Norwegian is offered in Romania. A thorough review of MA programmes<sup>10</sup> in the field of translation studies or related to translations concluded that currently, in Romania, eleven universities offer sixteen master's programmes. Most of them are delivered in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese,

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<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Education and Research, <https://www.edu.ro/institutii-invatomant-superior>. Retrieved on June 15, 2020.

Catalan or Russian. Three of these universities are private universities, out of which two offer MA programmes in translation, in Hungarian. Considering the fact that Norwegian is taught at BA level only in Cluj-Napoca, such a master's programme is both required and necessary in order to cover the missing link in students' studies of Norwegian. Furthermore, in order to pursue a PhD in Norwegian language and literature, it is beneficial to earn a master's degree in the very same discipline, in order to have continuity in the study and research process.

### **Significance of the study**

The results of this research paper are significant as they would pave the way for the accreditation process of a MA programme in Norwegian literary and non-literary translations. In addition, the findings of this study indicate a very high percentage (95.2%) of respondents who would be interested to continue their master studies in Norwegian. Thus, given the high interest of students to enrol for such a master's programme, and that the number of students at BA level has steadily increased, the intake of students per year would not constitute an issue.

### **Research methodology**

This research aims to investigate the interest of both current Bachelor's students studying Norwegian (major or minor), and of alumni students as regards their motivation to continue their academic development by enrolling for a MA programme in Norwegian literary and non-literary translations. A survey research was conducted by using a questionnaire as the main instrument for collecting data. The questionnaire was validated in a previous research conducted by Associate Professor Elena Platon at BBU for another pilot master's programme (The Department of Language, Culture and Romanian Civilization). Still, two items have been adapted. The questionnaire comprised eight closed questions (multiple choice, check boxes or Likert scale) and two open questions. It was formulated in Romanian and sent to respondents via Google forms.

### **Participants**

A total of 147 respondents were included in this study and selected using convenience sampling. A link with an online questionnaire was sent not individually, but via faculty groups to both current students and alumni. Therefore, it was not possible to indicate a response rate as there was no control over how many students accessed the questionnaire, but did not want to submit it. The time limit for collecting the data was set for one week, in May 2020.

## Data analysis

The closed questions with pre-coded answers (multiple choice, checkboxes, Likert scale) were analysed in a quantitative manner using the functions provided by Google forms. The open-ended questions were investigated by using a coding process that identified within respondents' answers several clusters that developed into concepts.

## Analysis of results

The first three items in the questionnaire are linked to the profile of the respondents. For the first item ("*When will/did you graduate the BA in Norwegian language and literature?*"), the data analysis yielded 142 valid answers. The breakdown of respondents in terms of year of study/graduation rendered that 31% are 3<sup>rd</sup> year students, 22.5 % are 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, 19.7% are 1<sup>st</sup> year students and with lower percentage rates alumni (9.9% respondents who graduated in 2019, 7.7% respondents who graduated in 2018, and the remaining part those who graduated in 2017, 2016 and 2014).

As regards the second item that targeted professional status, more than two thirds of the respondents (~73%) answered that they are currently students, while almost a quarter of them (~22%) are employed or self-employed at the time when the questionnaire was conducted. In addition, the results indicate that 8% of the respondents are continuing their education after graduating the BA programme in Norwegian at BBU. Only 4% of the respondents answered that they are not students, nor self-employed or continuing their studies.

The total response percentage exceeds 100% for this particular item because the question used checkboxes to collect answers. Thus, the total number of answer choices selected for a question was greater than the number of respondents who answered. The rationale in doing so consisted in having a broader understanding of the options that current students and alumni have in terms of job and study opportunities. Nevertheless, the fact that the majority of the respondents were currently enrolled students (107) could constitute an argument for the overwhelming interest in continuing their education by pursuing a master's programme in Norwegian.

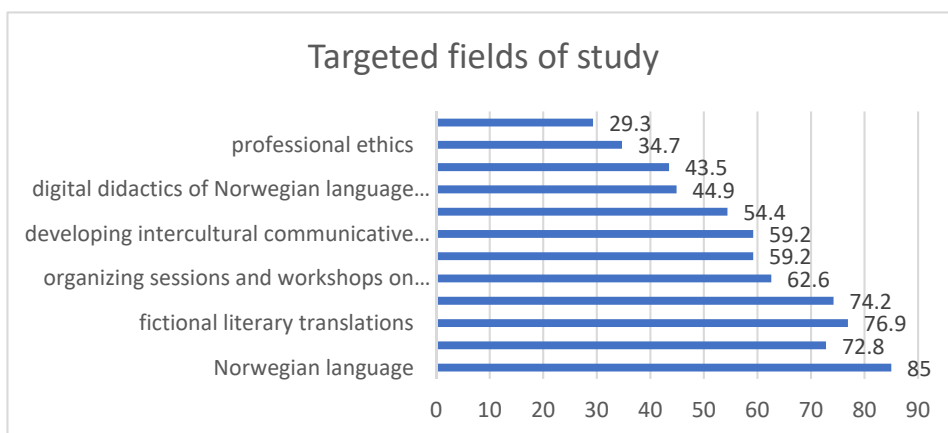
The third item ("*Did you graduate from a master's programme?*") indicates that 96% of the respondents have not completed a master's programme, as compared to six of them who already hold a Master's degree. The fourth item ("*Would you be interested in pursuing a MA programme in Norwegian fictional and non-fictional literary translations?*") intended to investigate their interest in enrolling for a MA in Norwegian fictional and non-fictional literary translations. A percentage of 95,2% of the respondents provided a positive answer. By relating the third item to the fourth item, it renders almost the same high



percentages and this allows us to conclude that the 95.2% students who have not completed a master programme are willing (96%) and open for such a continuation of the BA studies.

Item number five (“*Do you consider that such a MA programme would be beneficial to your professional needs?*”) focused on the relevance of a master’s programme in Norwegian with regard to respondents’ careers and job opportunities. The answers revealed that the overwhelming majority (90%) consider the MA programme in Norwegian as important for their professional needs, out of whom 52% state that the programme is highly important, while 39% rate it as important. Nearly 7% declare themselves neutral on the matter, while only 3 of 147 respondents see the MA programme as less important for their professional needs.

Respondents were asked to rank their preferences as regards the disciplines of study that might be integrated in the master programme (“*What disciplines would you like to study especially within this MA programme?*”). The total response percentage exceeds 100% for this particular item because the question used checkboxes to collect answers. Findings indicate that the top five disciplines/academic skills preferred by the respondents target: studying the Norwegian language (85%), engage in fictional literary translations (76.9%), collaboration with publishing houses and cultural entities from Romania and from Norway which promote literary translations (74.2%), engage in non-fictional literary translations (72.8%), and organizing sessions and workshops on literary translations in collaboration with publishing houses (62.6%). Fig. no. 2 below indicates other areas of interest that respondents considered to be relevant in the MA programme in Norwegian literary and non-literary translations.



**Fig. 2.** Areas of interest in the master’s programme in Norwegian

As concerns their interest in enrolling for this MA programme in case there are offered only places with tuition fees, a considerable number of respondents (i.e. 81% comprising 32.7% highly interested and 48.3% interested) provided a positive answer.

In order to ascertain the demand analysis for such a master's programme in Norwegian, the next item in the questionnaire inquired respondents about the availability of a similar study programme. In total, 97.3% answered that they are not familiar with any other similar study programme in graduate education. With regard to the number of students that might enrol for such a programme, respondents were requested to indicate how many other acquaintances they know to be interested in such programme. Organized as a multiple-choice item with four pre-defined options, respondents conceded that 29.9% of them know one or two more persons, 29.9% of them are aware of three to five more persons who are interested, 35.5% of them have knowledge of more than five persons, while 4.8% do not know anyone who would be interested.

The last item consisted of an open-ended question that required from respondents different suggestions regarding piloting such a master's programme. It was not compulsory to submit an answer. Therefore, this item rendered only 43 answers that were grouped according to various recurring patterns that were interrelated. In this regard, we coded the answers into a couple of clusters: disciplines (language, fictional and non-fictional literary translations), academic skills (digital skills and text editing, problem solving) national and international cooperation (mobilities, institutional collaboration), employment (labour market, lifelong learning education), academic relevance (continuing education, unicity of the programme, prestige at national level). Respondents' answers covered the following clusters: a number of 61 suggestions regarding the disciplines that should be taught and incorporated (16 references to language learning, 11 to literature, 16 to practical teaching activities, 9 to fictional translation and 9 to non-fictional translations); a total of 11 references targeted digital skills and text editing (4 references) and developing problem-solving skills (7 references); a number of 13 references referred to encouraging institutional collaboration (both national and international), and opportunities for exchange mobility (3 references); 2 references were provided regarding employment opportunities in relation to the lifelong learning education that is provided during this master's programme; as regards academic relevance, 10 references regarded the opportunity of this pilot MA programme to support continuing education, 4 references focused on the unicity of the programme, while 6 references targeted the national prestige of the BA programme in Norwegian language and literature.

## Discussion

The interpretation of the findings yielded that there is a real interest from the respondents – the majority of whom are students enrolled in the BA programme Norwegian language and literature – to pursue a MA programme in Norwegian fictional and non-fictional literary translations in order to have continuity in their chosen field of study. Moreover, this interest is fuelled by the belief that such a master’s programme would be beneficial to their future careers, and one can notice high percentages in both cases, namely 95.2% are interested in a MA programme in Norwegian, while more than 90% consider it as useful in their professional life. The answers provided by the respondents show that they are interested in further studying the Norwegian language, as this is the discipline that 85% would choose to study.

At the moment, BA graduates of the Norwegian language and literature specialization are offered an optional course conducted in Norwegian (*Norwegian language, culture and literature*), as a part of the available MA programmes at the Faculty of Letters. Even if there is no bridge between BA and PhD studies in Norwegian, some alumni students have continued their path in the academia field by enrolling in a PhD programme in Norwegian available at the Doctoral School of Linguistics and Literary Studies at the Faculty of Letters since 2010. Thus, nine alumni have been granted a PhD in Norwegian language and literature or are currently PhD students. Thus, seeking for accreditation of a MA programme in literary and non-literary translations constitutes a new terrain that would comprise both fundamental and specialized knowledge in Norwegian language, literature and the field of translations.

As regards respondents’ career perspectives and professional needs, it is useful to connect the answers to two other studies conducted by the same team at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature at BBU. The first study, published in 2019, analysed the factors leading to the increase in the numbers of students pursuing a BA programme in Norwegian language and literature. It revealed that “over 80% of the respondents seem to be aware that they want to use Norwegian in a work-related context and that Norwegian gives them better perspectives in the labour market.”, the same opinion being reinforced by the answers to other items, as they showed that “about 80% of the students are aware that Norwegian, as a niche language, gives them the chance to get a better paid job” (p. 263). Furthermore, another analysis was conducted in 2020 to evaluate the alumni perceptions of their BA programme in Norwegian at BBU (Sanda Tomescu Baciu et al., *forthcoming*). The answers provided by 123 alumni have highlighted their choice to study Norwegian in the section dedicated to motivation, since their answers to item 4 and 7 of this

section reveal that 56,9% of them chose Norwegian as they wanted a better paid job, and 83% considered that Norwegian provided better career perspectives in a global world. In this line, it is relevant to point out the fact that the graduates who participated in the study regarding alumni perceptions of their BA programme in Norwegian at BBU (Sanda Tomescu Baciu et al., *forthcoming*) work mainly in education and research (30 references), IT (15 references), whilst translation and proofreading is the third popular field (11 references). This is a significant aspect that comes to support the necessity of a master's programme in translations for the students who graduate the BA programme in Norwegian at the Faculty of Letters of BBU.

In this context, the practical courses that will be included in the Norwegian Master's programme are very important and continue the academic path of our students. The MA students will have a broader knowledge of specific terminologies and a certain discipline and ethic related to work experience. They will be able to apply methods and tools that they acquired proficiency in during the BA studies, thus becoming better at their jobs. In the open question from our survey, we identified 16 references related to the students' wishes to practice the language both in written form and orally.

Literature is an important part of the MA studies and continues the academic path the students have chosen. That is why 28 references were related to interest in literature, fictional or non-fictional translations, in favour of cooperation with publishing houses and literary agencies, underlying the importance of such a master's programme. The students mentioned that they prefer a well-structured traineeship opportunity at a publishing house or an internship which can allow them to gain experience in the field<sup>11</sup>. Below is indicated a verbatim response:

“The collaboration with publishing houses seems to me absolutely essential to round the student's confidence in putting into practice what he assimilates on a theoretical level. For me, practice refers directly to the profession and the possibilities on the labour market”.

A good practice example to be followed is the experience of organizing literary translation workshops with Norwegian writers with the support of NORLA. These workshops resulted in published translations of the respective authors by our alumni.

In teaching foreign languages, we can use a large variety of exercises. Interactive lessons, dialogue, role-playing, group discussions or project presentations are just a few examples. The students will be given a wider perspective on that

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<sup>11</sup> Students have been involved in and benefitted from traineeships during the BA programme.

it means to be a translator, where the requirement of solid language knowledge is not sufficient, but must be completed by cultural and social perspectives. A total of 16 students have mentioned their interest in continuing the studies with linguistic based courses which is a *sine qua non* for this kind of MA programme. A verbatim response from an open-question is included below:

“I believe that it will be beneficial for any student who has studied Norwegian for three years to be able to continue his master's studies. It is important to create a programme that will develop the knowledge acquired during the university years [...]. Such a programme should be based more on Norwegian grammar as well as translations because these categories are useful for anyone and help you in the social and professional environment”.

References to digital competences (4) related to humanities are salient in today's globalized context and the current labour market. The creation of new job profiles, such as cross-language data consultant, speech analyst or language technician have made it clear that students' capacity to develop new competences and implement the knowledge gained during the BA or MA studies is highly valued and very useful.

### **Limitations**

This research has some limitations. Firstly, we consider the objectivity of the responses provided by the participants. Mathers, Fox & Hunn (2009) conclude that the respondents might agree with the statements only to please the researcher. Secondly, as regards the analysis on the open-questions, we need to have in mind that self-reported data can carry risks of miscommunication or confusion (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2009).

### **Conclusions**

The study investigated the degree of interest of graduate students in enrolling for a MA programme in Norwegian literary and non-literary translations. The results verify the value of our intention to build a bridge between the BA and the PhD programmes in Norwegian language and literature at BBU which have been the only existing one in Romania until now. Furthermore, the results also verify the respondents' interest in a master's programme in Norwegian in the first place, with a focus on fictional and non-fictional translations.

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## MELLOM SNORRES KONGESAGAER OG JOIKENS RYTME. OM BEAIVVÁŠ SÁMI NAŠUNÁLATEÁHTERS SNØFRID (2018)

MARIA SIBINSKA<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Between Snorre's King Sagas and the rhythm of the joik: On The Sami National Theatre's Snøfrid (2018).* "Beaivváš" is a Sami theatre having the status of a national theatrical institution in Norway. In 2021 it celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The article focuses on the performance of *Snøfrid* which was staged by the Sami National Theatre in 2018. The performance is based on the story about the marriage between King Harald Fine-Hair and a young Sami woman. The story is known thanks to Snorri Sturlason. His *Heimskringla* was instrumental in forming ideas concerning the founding of the Kingdom of Norway and became a significant point of reference for the definition of Norwegian national identity in the 1800's.

The author of the article wishes to show the dual function of the performance: both as a correction of preconceptions of minority culture and as an expansion of the discourse on the state and nation of Norway. *Snøfrid* is interpreted from a postnationalistic perspective and viewed as a correcting voice compared to the mythology of national unification, and it is emphasized that the corrective voice of the performance is not a critique of Norse narrative tradition; rather, it is a critique of the 19<sup>th</sup> century version of that tradition. The author of the article identifies the individualization of the main character as the correcting strategy of the performance. The article throws light on those selective elements of performance aesthetics that contribute to the process of individualization.

**Keywords:** *Beaivváš Sami Theatre, Old Norse literature, the unification of Norway, postnational discourse, Sami culture.*

**REZUMAT.** *Între scrierile saga despre regi ale lui Snorri Sturlason și ritmul joik-ului: despre spectacolul Snøfrid al Teatrului Național Lapon (2018).* „Beaivváš” este un teatru lapon având statutul de instituție teatrală națională în Norvegia. În 2021 sărbătorește 40 de ani de la înființare. Articolul se concentrează pe spectacolul *Snøfrid*, care a fost pus în scenă de Teatrul Național Lapon în 2018. Spectacolul se bazează pe povestea despre căsătoria dintre regele Harald Hårfagre (Harald cu Păr Frumos) și o tânără laponă. Povestea este cunoscută datorită lui Snorri Sturlason. Scrierea sa, *Heimskringla*, a contribuit la formarea

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ideilor privind fondarea Regatului Norvegiei fiind un punct de referință pentru definirea identității naționale norvegiene în anii 1800.

Autorul articolului dorește să arate dublă funcție a spectacolului: atât ca o corecție a preconcepțiilor despre cultura minorității, cât și ca o extindere a discursului asupra statului și națiunii Norvegiei. Spectacolul *Snøfrid* este interpretat dintr-o perspectivă post-naționalistă și privit ca o voce corectivă la mitologia unificării naționale, arătând că vocea corectivă a spectacolului nu este nicidecum o critică adusă tradiției narative norvegiene; ci mai degrabă, este o critică a versiunii secolului XIX a acestei tradiții. Autorul articolului identifică individualizarea personajului principal ca strategie de corectare a spectacolului. Articolul aruncă lumină asupra acelor elemente selective ale esteticii teatrale care contribuie la procesul de individualizare.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Teatrul lapon Beavváš, literatura norvegiană veche, unificarea Norvegiei, discursul post-naționalist, cultura laponă.*

## Innledning

Beavváš Sámi Našunálateáhter i Kautokeino skal feire 40 års jubileum i 2021. Utviklingen av det samiske teaterlivet i Norge har blitt en del av det flerdimensjonale samiske identitetsprosjektet, der den etniske og nasjonale identiteten forankres i politikk, media og kunst, og påvirkes av fremveksten av urfolks pågående kamp for selvdefinisjon<sup>2</sup>. Selv om samer ikke hadde hatt noen tradisjon for det sceniske uttrykket tidligere, har teateret likevel blitt et kjennetegn på samisk moderne kunstuttrykk.

I *Polare scener. Nordnorsk teaterhistorie fra 1971–2000*, kalles ideen om å skape et profesjonelt samisk teater i Norge «en evolusjonsprosess, uten en tidfestet begynnelse» (Eilertsen 2005: 166). Ideen vokste fram i dialogen mellom samiske teaterkunstnere, forfattere, musikere, samt teaterinteresserte kulturaktivister. Fellesnevneren for dem var politisk engasjement i den samiske kulturrevitaliseringen knyttet til Alta-saken som utløste «et etnopolitisk jordskjelv» (Bjørklund 2016). Den samiske forfatteren og journalisten John Gustavsen oppsummert situasjonen tretti år senere:

I europeisk historie er begrepet 1968-generasjonen velkjent. Men denne omfattet ikke det som skjedde lengst mot nord, blant samene. Her taler man

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<sup>2</sup> Den samiske scenen i Kautokeino er ikke den eneste samiske teaterinstitusjonen i Norden. Det samiske teaterlivet begynte med gruppene Dálvadis i Sverige (1971), Rávgoš i Finland (1981) og Beavvas i Norge (1981). Etter at Dálvadis avsluttet sin virksomhet, la gruppen grunn til det som i dag heter Giron Sámi Teáhter med setet i Kiruna. Siden 1985 har det også eksistert et sørsamisk teater (Áarjelhsaemien Teatere), som er et kraftsenter for den sørsamiske kulturen både på den norske og på den svenske siden av grensen.

heller om 1978-generasjonen, samiske aktivister som både hentet inspirasjon fra det som hadde hendt i Praha og Paris og som så behovet for å skape en samisk kultur som svar på påvirkningen utenfra (Gustavsen 2011).

Den første kunstneriske begivenheten som satte Sápmi på det nordiske teaterkart, var «en joike-rocke-opera» *Min duoddarat* (Våre vidder) som tematisk kretset rundt spenningene mellom den samiske minoriteten og den norske majoriteten. Den tok blant annet opp myndighetenes utnyttelse av Finnmarksviddas ressurser. Tekstgrunnet for forestillingen ble forankret i diktene til forfatteren Ailo Gaup («store Ailo»), og som komponister bidro Sverre Hjellseth, Ingor Ánte Áilo Gaup («lille Ailo»), Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Svein Birger Olsen og Halvdan Nedrejord. Det sceniske ansvaret hvilte i stor grad på Knut Walle og den etterhvert anerkjente teater- og filmregissøren, Nils Gaup. Urpremieren fant sted i Kautokeino 13. juni 1981, og gruppa som sto bak forestillingen kalte seg Beaivváš («den lille sola»).

I løpet av 40 år er det som i starten var en gruppe entusiaster, blitt en av Norges nasjonale teaterinstitusjoner, sammen med Nationalteatret, Det Norske Teatret og Den Nationale Scene<sup>3</sup>. Beaivváš Sámi Našunálateáhter (BSNT) har en klar kunstpolitisk linje og er den eneste profesjonelle teaterinstitusjonen i Norden som konsekvent bruker samisk som scenespråk<sup>4</sup>. Teatret er et turnéteater som flere ganger i året besøker hele det samiske området i Norge, Sverige og Finland, noen ganger også i Russland. I tillegg gjør teatret jevnlig turnéer i Norge utenfor Sápmi, og de har også vist sine produksjoner i flere land utenfor Norden (jf <https://beivvas.no/nb/teahtera-birra/>).

Selv om teaterkunst i seg selv ikke har noen dype røtter i den samiske tradisjonen, bygger BSNT på den samiske kulturarven, særlig på joik og muntlig fortelling. Begge to er improvisasjonsuttrykk, noe som påvirker måten man tenker teater på ved BSNT. Samtidig har Kautokeino-teateret åpnet seg mot impulser fra andre kulturer og teatertradisjoner (både europeiske og ikke-europeiske), som bl. an. i form av dramaturgisk diktning, oppsetningsestetikk, spilletradisjoner er med på å skape det særegne ved BSNTs forestillinger som alltid har dobbel adressat. Blant mange av de formative impulsene bør samarbeidet med Ulla Ryum nevnes. Hun er en dansk forfatter og sceneinstruktør med doktorgrad i teatervitenskap. På 1980-tallet kom hun i kontakt med Beaivváš, og holdt workshop for samiske dramaforfattere med utgangspunkt i ikke-

<sup>3</sup> I 1987 ble Beaivváš stiftet som aksjeselskap og kulturinstitusjon, og i 1993 fikk den status som en av Norges nasjonale teaterinstitusjoner.

<sup>4</sup> Rundt 2005 begynte teateret å prøve seg fram med «surtitling», dvs. en løsning som beror på projisering av replikk-oversettelsen over scenen. Siden sesongen 2012/2013 har «surtitling» blitt brukt konsekvent ved nesten alle BSNTs produksjoner, med unntak av barneforestillinger (jf epost fra Britt-Inga Vars ved BSNT, 18.8.2017)

aristotelisk dramaturgi (Brask, Ryum 1989). Et annen grunnleggende element ble brakt inn av Haukur Gunnarsson, teatersjef ved Beivváš i to perioder: 1991–1996 og 2007–2015. Hans kjennskap til japansk teaterkunst ble i mange år avgjørende for utformingen av teaterets særegne estetiske retningslinjer. Gunnarsson samarbeider fortsatt med Kautokeino-scenen som instruktør ved enkelte prosjekter. Stykket i hans regi vil bli omtalt i denne artikkelen.

Teateret henvender seg til både et samisk og et ikke-samisk publikum. «This double communication has been necessary because the theatre has been faced with the task of not only constructing Sámi identity but also influencing the image that outsiders have of the Sámi» (Lehtola 2011:18). Gjennom en redefinerings av det samiske setter BSNT et spørsmålsteget ved majoritetens representasjon av minoritetskulturen. Samtidig utvides også diskursen om den norske staten og den norske nasjonen.

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Når man snakker om diskursiviseringen av den norske nasjonale identiteten, er Snorre Sturlason et vesentlig referansepunkt, og det først og fremst kongesagaene i *Heimskringla* (1225) man sikter til. Sagaene tematiserer den turbulente prosessen som førte til samlingen av et rekke uavhengige høvdingdømmer – som ofte var i konflikt med hverandre – til ett rike. Snorre «var islending i hele sin dannelselse. Men med hovedverket skapte han ikke bare den beste framstillingen av Norges historie, han skapte også, mange hundre år senere, norsk historie», poengterer Harald og Edvard Beyer i *Norsk i litteratur historie* (Beyer, Beyer 1978:44).

I foreliggende artikkel ønsker vi å fokusere på BSNT som en korrigerende faktor i diskursen både om det samiske og om det norske. Inspirert av debatten rundt det postnasjonale vil vi belyse noe utvalgte aspekter ved *Snøfrid*, en Beivváš-oppletningen fra 2018, som eksplisitt utfordret den norske nasjonalmytologien. *Snøfrid* har nemlig betydningsfulle narrative forelegg. Det dreier seg først og fremst om et utdrag fra *Heimskringla* som handler om samejenta Snøfrid som blir tatt til ekte av Harald Hårfagre<sup>5</sup>, men Beivváš-stykket bygger også på andre norrøne kilder.

Manuset til *Snøfrid* ble skrevet Arne Berggren som hadde hatt erfaringer med TV-produksjoner. Forestillingens komplekse tekstur besto også av joik, en av de viktigste samiske identitetsmarkørene, som også er blitt en strukturerende komponent i mange av BSNTs oppsetninger. I *Snøfrid* ble sang- og joiketekstene diktet av Rawdna Carita Eira, en samisk poet og dramaforfatter, og de skapte

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<sup>5</sup> Fortellingen finnes også i *Ágrip*, den eldste av de kjente norske kongesagaene. Om *Snøfrids* dialog med den norrøne tradisjonen jf. Sibinska 2018 b.

sceneverdens mytiske og poetiske dimensjon. Et vellykket persongalleri ble gestaltet av Ingá Márjá Sarre (Snøfrid), Ánte Siri (Harald), Egil Keskitalo (Ilyas), Nils Henrik Buljo (Svåse), Anja Saiva Bongo Bjørnstad (Volva/Noaidi), Mary Sarre (Mormor), og ikke minst Anitta Suikkari som var svært overbevisende i rollen som Sigurd, kongens venn og rådgiver. Stykket ble regissert av den allerede nevnte Haukur Gunnarsson.

Med *Snøfrid* turnerte Beaivváš i Sápmi, og dessuten ble det gitt to forestillinger i Det Norske Teatret i Oslo. Anmelderne understreket at historien om kongen og samejenta var en lite kjent (eller en praktisk talt ikke kjent) episode fra de norrøne fortellingene (Larsen 2018; Gerhardsen 2018)<sup>6</sup>, de skrev om «poetiske språkbilder», om «mangetydige rom» som ble manet fram av Berggren og Eira (Gerhardsen 2018). Dessuten verdsatte man forestillingen som helhet:

I Haukur J. Gunnarssons regi er «Snøfrid» blitt et vellykket forsøk på å gjenskape en svunnen tid, samtidig som en til tider overraskende moderne språkbruk tydeligvis vil understreke det allmenne i skildringen av forholdet mellom samisk og norsk kultur. Bård Lie Thorbjørnsens enkle men effektive scenebilde veksler mellom å være en samisk gamle, villmark og norsk kongsgård, Berit Marit Hættas kostymer er både gammelmodige og tidløse, og joiken gir stykket den rette samiske stemningen (Larsen 2018).

Et tett samarbeid med den anerkjente samiske kostymedesigneren Berit Marit Hætta, har blitt et kjennetegn på Gunnarssons teaterproduksjoner (i tillegg til inspirasjon som hentes fra asiatiske teaterkunst, særlig det japanske Noh-teateret). Han er interessert i drakthistorie og i uttrykk som knyttes til urfolksdrakter, noe han benytter i sine oppsetninger. I kostymer som korresponderer med hver enkel oppsetnings grunntanke, finner man gjerne lån fra forskjellige kulturer og tidsepoker. En ting blir uendret: den samiske koftesnittet ligger i grunnen (Gunnarsson 2020). Dette kunne man også se i draktene som ble brukt i *Snøfrid*, den samiske kofta skimte hos begge folkegrupper: samer og det norrøne folket. Dette var et kraftig signal om at det sceniske universet skulle underordnes det samiske perspektivet.

### ***Snøfrid* eller det post-nasjonale?**

I nyere norsk litteratur er synliggjøring av det samiske blitt en del av den postnasjonale diskursen, slik den defineres av Elisabeth Oxfeldt. I *boka Romanen, nasjonen og verden. Nordisk litteratur i et postnasjonalt perspektiv* tar

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<sup>6</sup> Situasjonen har muligens forandret seg siden 2018. Se oppslagsartikkelen i SNL om samisk jernalder, der *Snøfrid* kalles «jernalderens mest kjente same», og avsnittet illustreres med blant annet et bilde fra Beaivváš-forestillingen (Berg-Nordlie, Mundal 2020).

hun utgangspunkt i begrepet "den nasjonale roman" (Oxfeldt 2012). Den nasjonale romanen, som blomstret opp i løpet av 1800-tallet i kjølvannet av nasjons- og identitetsskapende prosjekter i de vestlige samfunnene, oppfatter hun som en metonymisk, allegorisk, nasjonspedagogisk fortelling, der enkeltindividets skjebne fremstilles med Historien i bakgrunnen. Med forankring i bl. a. den postkoloniale teoretiseringen til Homi Bhaba, betraktet hun den postnasjonale diskursen, som har gjort seg gjeldende etter andre verdenskrig, heller som en utvidelse og bearbeidelse enn forkastelse av nasjonsbegrepet. Litteratur som oppfordrer til en redefinering av nasjonsbegrepet, deler Oxfeldt i fire tematiske undersjangere: nasjonskorrigerende fortellinger, filosofisk dekonstruerende fortellinger, skyld- og skamfortellinger og minoritetens motfortellinger. De overlapper hverandre, og felles for dem er problematiseringen av det essensialistiske bildet av nasjonen<sup>7</sup>.

I den første gruppen plasserer Oxfeldt nasjonskorrigerende eller "refsende" fortellinger som retter søkelyset mot den ferdigbygde nasjonen som har havnet på feil spor, særlig med tanke på dens internasjonale rolle. Den filosofisk dekonstruerende romanen stiller seg derimot kritisk til den positivistiske tid- og historieoppfatningen, og dermed polemiserer den med selve ideen om en nasjonal historie. De to gjenstående undersjangrene tematiserer møter mellom minoritets- og majoritetskulturer. Den ene identifiserer Oxfeldt som skyld- og skamfortellinger om urbefolkningen. Her gransker man den urettferdige behandlingen av urfolket, som gjerne fant sted i de unge nasjonalstatene – ikke minst i Norge. Den andre undersjangeren, som også springer ut fra møter mellom storsamfunnet og minoriteten, omfatter motfortellinger, der perspektivet bestemmes og ordet føres av representanter for befolkningsgrupper som føler seg ekskludert fra den nasjonale diskursen og dens definering av "vi, folket".

Grunnideen bak det postnasjonale perspektivet rundt den nyere litteraturen kan overføres til diskusjonen om dagens teaterproduksjoner i Norge. I et slik lys kan BSNTs *Snøfrid* oppfattes som en motfortelling som polemiserer mot den norske nasjonalmytologien. Det korrigerende blikket rettes på sett og viss mot den norrøne fortelletradisjonen, men i mye større grad mot 1800-tallets fortolkning av den:

Tradisjonene om det tette samværet mellom det norrøne og det samiske folket var helt glemt da nasjonsbyggerne Rudolf Keyser og P.A. Munch formet sine tanker om Norge og nordmenn i nasjonsbyggingsfasen på 1800-tallet. Da ble landets nordligste befolkning holdt utenfor det norske, samer og kvener og skogfinner ble betraktet som fremmede

<sup>7</sup> Også de to siste tematiske linjene som de tilsynelatende skaper et motsetningspar, kan gjerne overlape hverandre, særlig når litteratur prøver å ta tak i situasjonen der både bosetnings- og assimileringspolitikken har demontert eller utydeliggjort de etniske tilhørighetsmønstrene (Sibinska 2018 a).

nasjonaliteter. Man hadde ikke det vidsyn som middelalderens historikere demonstrerte med fortellingen om den fredelige foreningen av de to folkegruppene gjennom Haralds og Snøfrids ekteskapsinngåelse på Dovre (Steinsland 2014:199).

### **Det kongelige bryllupet eller en fortelling om ett felles rike**

Ekteskapet med Snøfrid ikke er den eneste «same-episoden» den norrøne litteraturen knytter til kong Harald. *Fortælling om Halfdan Svarte* som finnes i *Flateyjarbók*, inneholder to parallelle hendelser fra Haralds barndomsår som knytter guttens modning til å bli konge med møte med finner<sup>8</sup>, dvs. samer (Rafn 1836). I begge tilfeller setter kongesønnen seg imot sin far: han hjelper en fange som ble fengslet av den gamle kongen, Halvdan Svarte. I den første episoden er det en viss finn som klarer å flykte takket være kongesønnen, i den andre dreier det seg om en jotun med navnet Dovre. Etter den andre flukten ble gamlekongen så provosert at han jaget bort sønnen, men gutten fikk hjelp av den takknemlige jotunen. Kjempen tok vare på tronarvingen, og ga ham kunnskap som den fremtidige herskeren kunne ha bruk for. Med sitt opprør mot gammelkongen markerte kongesønnen avstand til slekten, ga seg over til jotnen og ble oppdratt til Norges samlingskonge. Navnet på den unge kongens mytiske beskytter, som er identisk med navnet på fjellkjeden i Midt-Norge, understreker Haralds nære forhold til det norske landskapet.

I denne sammenhengen er det verd å huske at «jotner» kunne i sagalitteraturen fungere som et synonym for «finner» som var datidens vanlige betegnelse på samer. Omtalen av samene som mytiske vesen kan tyde på at norrøne forfattere tolket sitt forhold til det samiske folket i lys av myter og mytologiske mønster (Mundal 2012). I den norrøne myteverdenen lever menneskene og gudene i Midgard, noe som gjør det mulig å se ekvivalensen mellom menneske- og gudeslekten. I Utgard bor jotunfolket. Med andre ord møtet mellom Harald og samefolket kan tolkes som er et møte mellom de to gruppene som legemliggjør universets grunnleggende motsetningen. Grunnmotsetningen i norrøn mytologi er likevel ikke motsetningen mellom godt og ondt, slik kristendommen gjerne ville se det, men mellom orden og kaos, hevder Else Mundal (ibid.) Kaosmaktene er farlige, de kan være truende og destruktive, men er ikke entydig onde. Det er fra dem gudene får sine dyrebare artefakter og en god del livsviktig kunnskap. Fra Utgard fikk noen guder sine hustruer.

Også mennesker kunne finne seg en hustru i Utgard og på denne måten skape en grobunn for en mektig slekt. Gro Steinslands forskning i norrøne tekster (Steinsland 1992; Steinsland 2014) viser at selv om man vanligvis foretrakk

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<sup>8</sup> Om eksonymet «finn» se for eksempel Hansen, Olsen 2019:47–49.

ekteskap mellom to like parter fra ett og samme folk, ble situasjonen annerledes da en herskerslekts opphav skulle kartlegges. Da ble et eksogamisk ekteskap mellom en mann og en Utgard-kvinne gjerne eksponert som et utløsende moment for [den særegne] maktens tilblivelse. Urmyten som ligger bak en slik forestilling finnes i *Skirnesmål* som skildrer en erotisk pakt mellom guden Frøy og jotunkvinnen Gerd (Steisland 2014:193).

I *Sagaen om Harald den Hårfagre* ser vi ekvivalensen mellom samer og jotner helt tydelig: tittelen på kapitlet som omhandler Haralds giftemål med Snøfrid lyder «Om jotunen Svåse» («Frá Svása jøtni»), mens i hovedteksten kalles Svåse for en finn. Snorre forteller at Harald holdte et julegjestebud på Tofte i Oplandene en vinter. Juleaften dukket det opp en ubuden gjest, en finnekonge som het Svåse og som ville at kongen skulle komme ut til ham. Kongen ble irritert, men gikk likevel ut da han hørte at mannen var den finnen som han hadde tillatt å bygge seg en hytte i nærheten av kongsgården. Ikke bare gikk han ut, men han samtykket også til å følge Svåse hjem selv om hoffet hadde delte meninger om situasjonen: noen mente han skulle ta imot Svåses invitasjon, mens andre frarådet det. Da Harald kom inn i finnens hytte, så han den vakre Snøfrid som skjenket ham et krus av mjød. Mens Harald tok imot drikken som skulle vise seg å ha magisk kraft, berørte han jentas hånd, og følte med det samme «en brændende hede i sin krop. Han ville have samleje med hende straks samme nat, men Svase sagde, at dét skulle ikke ske uden hans tilsagn, med mindre kongen forlovede og giftede sig med hende ifølge loven» (Sturlason 2012). Kongen giftet seg med Snøfrid lovmessig, og etter Snorres ord «elskede hende så vildt, at han tilsidesatte sit kongedømme og alle sine pligter» (ibid.). Snøfrid døde etter omtrent fire år (det nevnes fire sønner som ble født i dette ekteskapet: Sigurd Rise, Halvdan Hålegg, Gudrød Ljome og Ragnvald Rettelbeine), men hennes utseende forandret seg ikke etter døden. Kongen forble i den trolske skjønnhetens vold, våket ved den avdødes leie i tre år, og forsømte alle sine kongelige forpliktelser. For å kurere Harald for vanvidd overtalte Torleiv den Kloke ham for å flytte Snøfrid fra sengen.

Men så snart hun blev flyttet fra sengen, kom der rådden lugt og dunst og alle slags fæl stank fra liget. Da blev et bål hurtigt lavet, og hun blev brændt, men før dét blev liget helt blå og ud derfra strømede slanger og øgler, frøer og padder og alle slags fæle kryb. Så sank hun i aske, men kongen kom til forstanden og glemte tåbeligheden og styrede derefter sit rige og blev stærkere; han havde glæde af sit folk og folket af ham og riget af dem begge (Sturlason 2012)

Da Harald skjønte at det hadde blitt kasten trolldom over ham, ble han rasende, og fordrev bort sine og Snøfrids fire sønner. Likevel besinnet kongen seg, og han tok vare på barna. Det var vel ikke guttenes skyld at de hadde fått

en trollkvinne til mor, antyder Snorre. Og skal man tro slektstavlen som kan rekonstrueres på bakgrunnen av Snorres kongesagaer, stammer den norske kongerekken fra Sigurd Rise<sup>9</sup>.

Selv om dagens historikere betrakter tradisjonen om kong Haralds rolle som rikssamlingens far med skepsis, er hans posisjon i den nasjonale mytologien utvilsomt veldig sterk (jf. Den norske kongerekken 2018). Mens Else Mundal utelukker ikke at historien kunne gjelde faktiske forhold, og det at Snøfrid var samejente, kunne være grunnen til at fortellingen om forholdet mellom henne og kongen ble formet etter det mytiske mønsteret (Mundal 2012:283), slår Gro Steinsland fast at fortellingen om Harald og Snøfrid ikke opererer med fakta (Steinsland 2014). Steinsland nevner slike eventyrlige bestanddeler av handlingen som tidspunktet for begivenheten (julaften), «den sørgende kongen»-motivet ( et typisk vandremotiv, kjent for eksempel fra sagn om Karl den store som i tre år satt og sørget over sin døde hustru), og jentas navn – som ikke er noe vanlig samisk eller norrønt navn. Navnet kan tolkes som «vakker som snø» (Steinsland 2014:198), men det har også andre konnotasjonsfelt. *Friðr* kunne nemlig også bety «kjærlighet», men også «sikkerhet», «sikkerhet knyttet til juridisk status», «sikkerhet knyttet til bestemte hellige tider eller steder», «avtale», dvs. det kan knyttes til politisk aktivitet (Hilmisdottir 2015). Navnet kan i tillegg minne om Snøhetta, fjelltoppen i Dovre-fjellet hvor begivenhetene foregår, og kan dermed konnotere landskapet som kongen innlemmer i det norske riket.

Uansett hvordan man skal forholde seg til Snøfrid-fortellingen som fakta, påpeker både Steinsland og Mundal at den norrøne tradisjonen om Haralds giftermål hadde en metaforiserende funksjon og bør også tolkes som en billedlig syntese av visse historiske prosesser. Denne episoden kan sees i forhold til den såkalte «rikssamlingsmyten» som er tett knyttet til «det hellige kongebryllup»-fenomenet (Steinsland 1992, Steinsland 2014, Mundal 2012) I følge tradisjonen pleide Harald å gifte seg med kvinner fra områdene han hadde tilsluttet sitt kongedømme, og da han fikk gifte seg med den danske prinsessen Ragnhild den Mektige, måtte han skille seg av med ni av sine koner. Fortellingen om ekteskapskontrakten med Snøfrid kunne være en billedgjøring av den siste etappen i Haralds politiske storprosjekt, og budskapet var at også «de andre» er blitt integrert i Haralds kongedømme. Samtidig har man med den kongelige slektens opphavsmyte å gjøre. Som nevnt forankrer de mektigste ættene sitt opphav i motsetningenes syntese, så det er ikke overraskende med en historie om det eksogamiske ekteskapet mellom den norrøne herskeren og «ei verdsleg Utgards-kvinne» (Mundal 2012:283) som skaper en grobunn for kongemakten i det samlede riket. Det er ikke så vesentlig om begivenhetene foregikk presis

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<sup>9</sup> Sigurd Syr (døde ca. 1018), kjent som stefar til Olav den Hellige (995–1030) og far til Harald Hardråde (1015–1066), var ifølge sagaene sønnesønnen til Sigurd Haraldsson Rise.



slik Snorre og de andre norrøne forfatterne beskrev dem, om den norske kongeslekten virkelig har samisk blod i årene. Det som er av betydning, er at det var riktig for krønikeskriverne å flette fortellingen om møtet med det samiske folket inn i historien om den norske statens opphav (Bergstøl, Reitan 2008: 25–26; Steinsland 2014:198–199).

### ***Snøfrid* eller om å fortelle sin egen historie**

Beivvaš-oppsetningen bygger både på *Fortælling om Halvdan Svarte* og på *Sagaen om Harald den Hårfagre*. De første tolv scenene fører en viss dialog med fortellingene om Haralds barndomsår. I versjonen som ble foreslått av Kautokeino-teateret, er den unge Harald ikke noen rådsnar, modig og opprørsk kongespire. Han framstår heller som en tolvåring som er usikker på seg selv, på terskelen til det voksne livet. I motsetning til de statiske sagaheltene som fra fødselen av demonstrerer karaktertrekkene som skal bestemme deres voksne liv, er den unge Harald ingen helstøpt person («Ingen hadde trodd den gutten skulle bli så sterk. Eller farlig», (54)<sup>10</sup>).

Halvdan Svarte utkjemper ett av sine store slag. I den nærliggende samiske landsbygda dukker Iljas opp, kongens samiske tjener, som har desertert fra slagmarken. Han fører med seg et gissel, den tolvårsgamle Harald, kong Halvdans sønn. Landsbygdas overhode, Svåse, er klar over at Iljas dumdristighet kan få kongen til å hevne seg grusomt på det samiske folket, men å sende gutten tilbake nå, vil ikke gjøre saken bedre. Samtidig antydes det at Harald – antagelig for første gang – har fått en sjanse til tre ut av skyggen til sin fryktinngydende far. Han fortsetter å bo hos samene, blir venn med Svåses datter, Snøfrid, og de to unge blir uatskillige. Svåse legger fort merke til ungdommenes gjensidige fascinasjon og pønser ut en plan der en sentral rolle skal spilles av hans datter og kongesønnen hvis far, den fryktede Halvdan, nylig druknet i en fjord. I sine kjønnspolitiske planer overser Svåse totalt sin datters følelser. Planen må vente, for hirden kommer og henter tronarvingen, og dette skjer mot guttens vilje («Du ... Dere ... er mitt folk», s. 42). Slutten av scene 12 og hele scene 13 er koreografiske. Etter å bli skilt fra vennen som er blitt kjæreste, finner Snøfrid tilbake til en slags balanse takket være sin avdøde mormor hvis nærvær jenta opplever konkret. Scene 13 framstiller overgangsfasen i livet til både til Harald og Snøfrid. Jenta blir en kvinne som ikke kan drive ut av tankene ham som var hennes første kjærlighet. Gutten blir en mann og en konge.

Fra scene 14 presenteres det en egen versjon av Snorres historie. Under juleblotet får Harald, som siden sist målbevisst har strebet etter makten, besøk av Svåse som vil bruke sin datter for å få den unge, mektige kongen som sin

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<sup>10</sup> Alle sitatene fra *Snøfrid* er fra Berggren 2018.

allierte. Harald tar imot invitasjonen, fast bestemt på å benytte anledningen og underholde seg med én natts kjærlighetseventyr. Da han og Snøfrid møtes, vekkes følelsene i ham igjen. Selv om han ikke blir overmannet av blid kjærlighet fra første stund, gir han etter for Svåses krav og han gifter seg med Snøfrid. Dette gjør han på tross av at hans venn og rådgiver, Sigurd, fraråder ham det på det sterkeste. Etterhvert utvikler seg det som skulle være en ukomplisert erotisk erobring til et intens kjærlighetsforhold, som fører Harald og Snøfrid inn i grenselandet, der galskap og død truer, og der ingen utspekulert, politisk tenkning som både kongens rådgiver Sigurd og Snøfrids far, Svåre, er eksponenter for, kan trenge gjennom. Harald bergtas av kjærligheten, kan ikke fullføre rikksamlingskallet, og er dermed ikke lenger noen verdifull allierte for Svåse.

Hendelsene som punktvis og fragmentarisk antydes på scenen (den blinde pasjonen som holder kongen vekkt fra hans politiske gjerning, kongen som finner sin plass blant samefolket, de fire kongebarna som fødes av den samiske moren, den elskede kvinnens død, kongens treårige våking over den døde kvinnen, hans nedbryting av trollringen og tilbakevending til de kongelige pliktene) følger på sett og viss sagaenes narrative linje.

Det som er skiller den middelalderlige narrasjonen fra *Snøfrids* sceniske verden, er måten kvinnens krefter er definert på. Snøfrid vekker kongens pasjonen ved makt av sin kjærlighet, til det trenger hun ikke noen trolldomskunst: drikken som hun tilbyr kongen framstår heller som en del av den erotiske leken enn en magisk artefakt. Hennes kjærlighet er dessuten så dyp at hun velger å gå over til de dødes verden for at hennes elskede kunne vende tilbake til sin verden.

Ideen om å trekke seg bort fra Harald, får hun under samtalen med sin avdøde mormor. Det er hos henne at Snøfrid finner trøst og støtte, selv om kvinnen døde like etter handlingen ble satt i gang. Likevel gjennomtrenger de dødes og de levendes verden hverandre, og åndenes nærvær framstilles som noe hverdagslig i det sceniske universet.

«Alle mennesker har et oppdrag (...) Det fins et øyeblikk i alle menneskers liv der du skal være der for å utføre oppdraget» sier den gamle. (104). I løpet av samtalen med mormor går det opp for Snøfrid hvordan hun skulle tolke en drøm hun nettopp har hatt:

Og jeg kunne se hvordan han befalte vannet, hver eneste lille bekk, dugg fra marken, dråper fra trærnes blader. Alt i samme retning. Og hver bekk møtte elven som vokste seg bredere og større og gravde seg ned mellom fjellene. Skapte dalen. Og mormor la hånden under haken min og løftet blikket mitt mot enden av dalen der den åpner seg mot havet, akkurat da solen kom frem fra skyene og jeg kunne se hvordan elven møtte havet. Rytteren var Harald. Og mens han red mot det store havet, ble han en mann (96)

Selv hun er klar over dette skal gjøre Harald ulykkelig som menneske, bestemmer hun seg for å gi slipp på livet for at han hun elsker, skal vokse i sitt kall. Drømmen og den forklarende samtalen med mormor gjør at Snøfrid vil gi etter Historiens gang. Hun dør mens hun føder sin og Haralds fjerde sønn. Kreftene som spiller mot hverandre rundt Snøfrid er mer komplekse enn det som antydes gjennom den norrøne narrasjonen. Det dreier seg om den politiske maktkonstellasjonen som ikke bare Harald, men også hennes far er en del av («SVÅSE: Jeg tenkte at om vi temmer ulven, vil vi kunne bruke den senere», s. 93), uviljen fra både Snøfrids eget folk som ikke ser noen nytte av å ha en allierte som er blitt dratt inn i kjærlighetens galskap («SVÅSE: Han er veik. Syk. Han er farlig. For oss. For deg. For meg. For oss alle», s. 94), og forventningene hos Haralds hoff («SIGURD: Han skal komme tilbake og gjenoppta sine plikter. Folket venter på ham. Han er deres konge», s. 83). I tillegg dreier det seg om kjærlighetens ustyrlige urkraft: «Kjærligheten har ingen vilje. Hjertet pumper blod. Det spør ikke. Det bare pumper. Til det er slutt», hører Snøfrid hos mormor (102). Kjærligheten er dermed ingen trolldom som den trollkyndig kan beherske. En ide om at kjærligheten kan styres eller underordnes det kjønnspolitiske, noe som Sigurd er eksponent for («SIGURD: Nei, nå må du gi faen. Hjertet er en muskel som pumper blod. Ta deg sammen. Du er kongssønn. Konge», s. 88), motbevises gjennom hendelsenes gang. Det er forresten Snøfrid selv som får kongen til å akseptere sannheten om at hun er død. Hun viser seg for Harald og gir ham styrke som er nødvendig for å at han skal gi slipp på henne.

Som nevnt er Snøfrid hverken noe typisk samisk eller norrønt navn, men navnet er laget i samsvar med det norrøne språkets regler. Det konnoterer bl. an. et vilt fjellandskap som kongen gjerne vil ta i besittelse, samt freden og sikkerheten som skal blir et resultat av kongens maktprosjekt. Med andre ord skal Snorres Snøfrid fungere som et symbol, hennes rolle begrenses til å være bærer av rikssamlingstankene.

I BNSTs oppsetning får jenta ikke sitt eget samiske navn tilbake. Strategien som brukes er likevel en form for individualisering av personen Snøfrid: den norrøne formen fylles med et individualiserende innhold. Mens «mytene» eller de kollektive forestillingene oppstår, koloniseres det primære språket, hevder Roland Barthes i *Mytologier*. Det primære tegnet annekteres, og dets *signifié* fordrives eller settes i parentes. Når den primære betydningen fjernes, kan det primære tegnet i sitt helhet fungere som mytens *signifié*. og det kan bli bærer av en eller annen ideologi (Barthes 1990). Snøfrid i den norrøne tradisjon reduseres til et emblem, det komplekse ved hennes menneskelige natur fortreges: hun blir til et halvt mytisk vesen hvis det vesentligste trekket er trolldomskraft legemliggjort av den erotiske utstrålingen. Vil vi bruke Barthes' terminologi, kan vi si at BNSTs oppsetning forsøker å fylle tegnet «Snøfrid» med

emosjoner, følelser, mellommenneskelige relasjoner. Tegnet fylles med jentas historie som forankres i det samiske. Hun får individuelle trekk, og historien om ekteskapet med Harald, som Beavivvaš forteller ut fra hennes perspektiv, blir heller en historie om kjærlighetens voldsomme og uregjerlige kraft enn en fortelling om forsterkningen av kongemakten.

***Det sceniske universet, det samiske universet.***

Allerede den første scenen definerer klart at det er det samiske perspektivet som skal dominere. Slike begivenheter som vanligvis står i fokus i sagalitteratur, er blitt situert i utkanten av det sceniske universet. I scene 1 iakttar Snøfrid og mormor et slag som utspiller seg i det fjerne.

SNØFRID:

Hva er det som lyser der nede i dalen?

*Mormor bak henne.*

Brann. Ødeleggelse. Det er kongene som kriger.

SNØFRID:

Mot hvem?

MORMOR:

Konger kjemper alltid. Og hvis de ikke finner noen å kjempe mot, går de til krig mot seg selv.

SNØFRID:

Hva kjemper de om?

MORMOR:

Om land. Makt. (2–3)

Jenta og den gamle kvinnen befinner seg i et flerdimensjonalt grenseland, mellom fjelltoppene og dalen, mellom «vår verden» og «deres verden», og det antydes motsetninger som går på tvers av forskjellige sfærer. Selvsagt presenteres det en etnisk basert spenning mellom det samiske og det norrøne, men vi er også vitne til et skille mellom den politisk og krigersk orienterte mannlige verdenen og den mer stillferdige kvinneverdenen. Dessuten skal samtalen forberede Snøfrid på mormors død, og den antesiperer den gamle kvinnens vandring mot de dødes land.

I lys av den sistnevnte opposisjonen (de levendes land vs. de dødes land) blir polariseringen av det iscenesatte universet ambivalent. Samværet mellom de levende og de forrige generasjonene framstår som er en naturlig, «udramatisk» relasjon, noe som er forankret i det tradisjonelle samiske verdensbildet. Dermed mister også de andre kontrastene noe av sin skarphet, selv om det er ikke snakk om utvisking eller nivellering av de grunnleggende motsetningspar:

ILJAS:

Snart tror han at han er én av oss.

SVÅSE:

Ja, det er vel ikke det verste som kunne skje?

VOLVEN:

Hva kunne vært verre?

SVÅSE:

At vi blir som dem (40)

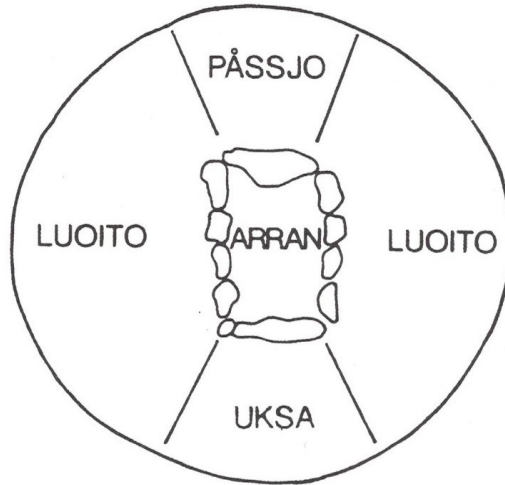
*Snøfrids*-universet ble iscenesatt i scenerommet inspirert av det japanske Noh-teaterets standardiserte løsninger (Suzuki 2012): med en hovedscene og en gangbru, med publikumets oppmerksomhet trukket mot midtpunktet på scenen og en svært minimalistisk scenografisk utforming. Fargene kom egentlig kun fra kostymene.



Snøfrid (Ingá Márjá Sarre) og Harald (Ánte Siri). Foto: Johan Mathis Gaup.

Selv om utformingen av scenerommet i *Snøfrid*-oppsetningen primært bygget på den asiatiske inspirasjonen (Gunnarsson 2020), ble forankringen i Noh-tradisjonen ikke den eneste faktoren som ga scenerommet en særegen semantisk tyngde. Scenerommets runde utforming, med et klart midtpunkt, kunne også bli knyttet med mange tråder til den tradisjonelle samiske forestillingsverden. Det konnoterte runebommeformer og viste til verdensbildet med den sentralt situerte sola. Scenerommets semantikk ble etter vår mening

forankret også i det tradisjonelle samiske innendørs-universet (Storli 1994)<sup>11</sup>, med arran, den hellige bål-plassen, i midten.



Rominndelingen i den tradisjonelle samiske boligen ( Storli 1994:62)

Dramaturgien i *Snøfrid* underordnes ikke en lineær handlingsutvikling alene, men handlingen drives også fram av personenes gradvis utvidete innsikt og erkjennelse, slik man erfarer i den koreografiske overgangssekvensen i scene 12:

Mormor går bort til Snøfrid, holder rundt henne, beveger henne rundt, som om hun viser Snøfrid hvordan hun kan overvinne tyngdekraften, danser henne vekk fra denne verden, før hun lar Snøfrid bevege seg videre uavhengig av henne, studerer henne mens hun trekker seg tilbake (...) Snøfrid bevegelser stadig mer regressive, energien ledes innover (45).

Denne sekvensen peker mot Snøfrids skjebnesvangre avgjørelse og hennes død. På overflaten dreier den seg om finne trøst etter at jenta har blitt skilt fra sin kjære, men den viser også bakom det konkret smertefulle: den dreier seg om å finne sin indre tyngdekraft i en prosess som beror på å gå over fra ønsket om å eie til evnen til å gi slipp på det aller kjæreste. Denne dobbeltheten i uttrykket er noe som hører til joikens kommunikasjospotensiale. Joiken bærer

<sup>11</sup> Hovedinndelinger i den tradisjonelle samiske boligen: ukxa - dørrområdet, luoito - midtrommet, påssjo - bakrommet, og arran - ildstedet (Storli 1994:62-63). Om forbindelsene mellom den samiske kosmologien og måten den tradisjonelle boligen (gammen/teltet) var innredet på se for eksempel Hansen, Olsen 2019:97-103.

alltid et dobbelt budskap: på overflaten benytter den seg av distinksjoner forankret i den konkrete verden, men disse assosieres metaforisk med abstrakte opposisjonspar – f.eks. lykke/ulykke, ervervelse/tap, rikdom fattigdom (Graff 2001:271-272).

Sekvensen drives fram av en sirkulær bevegelse, og anskueliggjør på sett og vis et mønster for den underliggende rytme i *Snøfrids* sceniske univers. *Snøfrid* befinner seg nemlig i spenningsfeltet mellom den lineære handlingsfokuserete sagafortellingen og joikens ikke-lineære gang som kan beskrives som en bevegelse «within an unsymmetrical circle» (Somby 1995:16)

\*\*\*

Bildet av samer i den nordiske kulturen har i mange århundrer vært essensialistisk, eller ikke-eksisterende. I sagafortellingene kan man finne bevissthet om at riket fra begynnelsen av var bebodd av både norrøne folk og samer, selv om kontakter med "de andre" som oftest ble skildret ved hjelp av mytifierende og metaforiserende grep. «De andre» kunne bli betraktet som et farlig, trollkyndig, vanskelig å kontrollere, men ikke kulturelt underliggende folkeslag. I narrasjonen om opphavet til det norske riket som oppsto i kjølevannet av Norges nasjonale ambisjoner på 1800-tallet, ble det samiske folket usynliggjort eller tildelt en mindreverdige rolle i diskursen om staten og nasjonen.

Beaivváš Sámi Našunálateáhters oppsetning kan betraktes som et forsøk på å korrigere rikssamlingsmyten, særlig 1800-tallets fortolkning av den norrøne tradisjonen. De gjenforteller den [u-]kjente Snorre-episoden fra sitt eget perspektiv, noe som markeres både verbalt og gjennom oppsetningsestetiske grep. Strategien som ble brukt kan betegnes som individualisering av samejenta *Snøfrid*. Hun får tilbake sin egen historie, blir noe mer enn bare et symbol i fortellingen om Haralds store politiske prosjekt. Det ble satt ord og gester på hennes følelser og motivasjon. Snorres fortelling om kongen som gifter seg med ei samejente, ble gjort om en fortellingen om kjærligheten mellom *Snøfrid* og Harald. Samtidig får også *Snøfrids* folk flere individualiserende trekk. De framstår ikke under navnet som de norrøne forfatterne brukte om dem (finner/jotner) – de er samer, et folk med egen kultur og egne politiske ambisjoner.

Med sin fortelling om *Snøfrid* og Harald lagde *Beaivváš* også en fortelling som skulle minne om at det alltid hadde eksistert to folk som hadde levd «side om side gjennom århundrer, noen ganger i fred og gjensidighet, andre ganger i mistro og fiendtlighet» (*Snøfrid* 2018). En slik bevissthet er vesentlig både i diskusjonen om det norske og om det samiske.

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## STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON FUTURE CAREERS: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LANGUAGES? A ROMANIAN CASE STUDY

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**ABSTRACT.** *Student Perspectives on Future Careers: What is the Role of Languages? A Romanian Case Study*<sup>4</sup>. This article explores language learner motivation among Romanian students studying Norwegian at bachelor level. The article focuses on the students' views on career opportunities and on how their language skills can open possibilities for different kinds of language-related careers. Two cohorts of students were interviewed. The second cohort had experienced internships in international companies, which was reflected in the interviews of this group. The study adopts a plurilingual perspective with a focus on the role of English in Europe. The study provides insights into the labour market involving proficiency in minor languages and into the perspectives of students entering this job market with regard to job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** *language learners, minor languages, motivation, career paths, job satisfaction.*

**REZUMAT.** *Perspective în carieră ale studenților: Care este rolul limbilor? Un studiu de caz românesc.* Articolul explorează motivația cursanților, în rândul studenților români care studiază norvegiană la nivel licență. Articolul se concentrează asupra opiniilor studenților asupra oportunităților de carieră și asupra modului în care abilitățile lor lingvistice pot deschide diferite posibilități în carieră legate de această limbă. Două cohorte de studenți au fost

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<sup>4</sup> This article is part of the project "Students of Norwegian at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, Romania: Motivation and perspectives on learning Norwegian", May 2018 - December 2021 performed by the authors of the present contribution.

intervievate. A doua cohortă a efectuat stații în companii internaționale, ceea ce s-a reflectat în interviurile acestui grup. Studiul adoptă o perspectivă plurilingvă, cu accent pe rolul limbii engleze în Europa. Studiul oferă perspective asupra pieței muncii care implică competența în limbile minore și perspectivele studenților care intră pe această piață a muncii în ceea ce privește satisfacția la locul de muncă.

*Cuvinte cheie: cursanți de limbă, limbi minore, motivație, traseu în carieră, satisfacție la locul de muncă.*

## 1 Introduction

The present article relates to a project which researches Romanian students' motivation for choosing to study Norwegian, a minor language with 5.2m speakers. The project period runs from May 2018 to 31 December 2021 and is a collaboration between one Romanian and two Norwegian researchers. The project also addresses whether students foresee any challenges with working in a language which is not their first; how they plan to cope with these challenges; and how they see the role of English in their future careers. This is knowledge that may only be gained by interviewing students who have chosen to study Norwegian in a Romanian context.

We have chosen to research these questions using a case study method, viz the study of 'a single entity with clearly defined boundaries' (Dörnyei 2007: 151). The research design is based on qualitative interviews with two cohorts of Romanian bachelor students at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Cohort1 in 2018 and Cohort2 in 2019 (for details, see section 3. Method/Material).

While both cohorts were asked about their motivation for studying Norwegian and their relationship with other languages, the second round in 2019 took the subject further. Career prospects were also in focus in 2018. However, Cohort2 had experienced internships in an international company in Cluj, which was not the case for Cohort1. We therefore decided to include questions relating to this experience in our Interview questions. See Appendix 1 & 2 for the interview questions used for the two cohorts.

The interview material yielded information on a number of issues relative to the case. In the present article we have chosen to focus on the following research questions:

- RQ1 Why do the students choose to study a minor language like Norwegian?

- RQ2 What kind of career do the students envisage?
- RQ3 How do students see the role of other languages in their future careers?
- RQ4 (2019 cohort only) What do students regard as most important with respect to job satisfaction?

## 2 Theoretical considerations

Learning languages is an important component of EEA/EU educational policies, as the acquisition of at least one second language is mandatory (*Eurostat*). The first language of choice is English, and it has thus become a truism that mastering English at some level has become a basic skill in a European context. Higher education will expect students to be able to access information and produce texts in this language even in a domestic context, as few subject fields can be studied at higher levels without this practice. In a European context English is thus no longer learnt with the aim of integrating in a country which has it as its mother tongue, but is used as a lingua franca or 'contact language' (Seidlhofer 2005: 339), 'that is, used as a means of communicating with others from different first-language backgrounds' (Piekkari et al. 2014: 5). A corollary is that the language is learned in different domestic contexts, which leaves room for situated research to uncover its role in different European countries, Romania being a case in point.

English has thus become an essential qualification when it comes to employment in international business. In Europe, multinational companies may decide to offshore (i.e. relocate while retaining the activity with the firm) or outsource (i.e. hire an independent supplier) part of their operations for financial reasons (Marin 2006). This will often mean relocation to countries where English is not the first language. This practice, which includes offshoring of jobs from Western European to Central and Eastern European countries has become prominent since the 1990s (Marin 2006). In such contexts, English will have the role of contact language. Proficiency in the language will be a requirement for employment, and impact on career paths. Thus, those wishing to be employed in such firms may find that they are not hired if they lack English language skills, or are prevented from 'pursuing vertical career opportunities' for the same reason (Piekkari et al. 2014: 136). Linguistic fluency can thus be a source of power, as it places the individual in question in a privileged position when it comes to possession of and communication of critical information, in addition to being 'associated with professional competence' (Piekkari et al. 2014: 63).

One field that is relevant when it comes to the importance of languages is the offshoring of language-sensitive services, i.e. services that require proficiency in a specific language. Such services exemplify relocated activities requiring skilled or intellectual labour (Piekkari et al. 2014: 194). This practice is particularly interesting when it comes to delivering services that require proficiency in the language of a high-cost country, Norwegian being a case in point. Norwegian is a minor language with about 5.2 million native speakers, but the language is also close to, and mutually intelligible with the other Scandinavian languages, Swedish (about 9.6m speakers) and Danish (about 6m speakers). This means that handling language-sensitive services requiring Swedish or Danish is within reach with a moderate additional language study.

Norwegian courses are available in all EEA/EU countries, but the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca has the largest programme in Europe for learning Norwegian outside Norway, spanning from bachelor programme via optional master courses to PhD programme. Norwegian companies have a substantial presence outside Norway in the EEA area, including about 60 companies in Romania (*Norwegian Embassy website*). In such cases, English is normally chosen as the corporate language to bridge the language gap between the two countries. However, Norwegian proficiency will necessarily represent an additional part of the picture and present opportunities for employment where one of the Scandinavian languages is in demand. These opportunities broaden the employment prospects of a university degree in Norwegian and come in addition to the traditional avenues of employment for language graduates, such as teaching, translation and doing research.

In the EU, the most popular languages are the ones of the largest populations, viz. English, French, Spanish, Russian and Italian (*Eurostat*), and it is reasonable to assume that the opportunity to reach large numbers of native speakers together with the availability of language programmes will be important factors here. For minor languages like Norwegian, the motivation for their study can thus not be based on the number of native speakers. It may, however, be motivated by a generally international orientation; any professional opportunities linked to a degree in the language; together with the availability and quality of an educational programme. It should also be noted that Romania is a multilingual country in terms of mother tongue speakers. Romanian has 17 million, Hungarian 250,000 and Romani 50,000 speakers, in addition to speakers of German, Ukrainian, Lipovenian Russian, Turkish, Tatar and Polish, to mention the largest groups according to the 2012 census (Kuiken and van der Linden 2013: 10). Being exposed to different languages is thus common for the Romanian population.

As for the offshoring of language-sensitive services requiring other languages than English, an internationalising firm may decide to teach the language in company time (Bjørge and Whittaker 2019). In such cases, the job interviews for entry positions may be carried out in English, and English proficiency be regarded as an indication of the ability to learn other languages. Alternatively, a firm may recruit to entry positions based on language qualifications present in the local labour market. In both cases we are looking at recruitment requiring higher educational background including university degrees.

Another issue concerns the pressure on the mother tongue that comes from the growing influence of English. This is a major issue in Norway, where there is rising awareness of the need to develop the language to prevent domain loss in terminology fields, and to create ground rules for the use of Norwegian and English under the motto 'Bruk norsk når du kan, og engelsk når du må!'<sup>5</sup> (*The language council of Norway*). Romania's relationship with English is somewhat different, as Romanian is a Romance and not a Germanic language, and the historical influence from English-speaking countries like the UK and the US is less strong. Also, French used to be the first second language taught in schools before being gradually replaced by English in the last decades.

### **3 Method/Material (Research design)**

#### ***3.1. Method***

The method chosen was that of the semi-structured individual interviews (Dörnyei 2007). The semi-structured format was chosen because it opens up for reflections on the part of the interviewee, and for follow-up questions on the part of the interviewer(s). The design worked according to plan, as the students spoke relatively freely, both when responding to main questions and to any follow-up questions.

The interviewees were all bachelor level students. They signed consent forms and were informed that they could stop the interview at any time without giving any reason. None of the students used this option. The interviews were sound recorded and transcribed verbatim. To preserve anonymity, the names of the interviewees were not recorded.

The interviews were structured according to main interview questions combined with any follow-up questions and recorded. The textual data were then subjected to content analysis (Dörnyei 2007). In addition, each transcription was read through with a view to additional relevant material. For further details, see Table 1.

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<sup>5</sup> "Use Norwegian when you can, and English when you have to"

### 3.2. Material

The material is set out in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Interview rounds 1 (2018) and 2 (2019)

<b>Interview round 1 (Cohort 1)</b>	<b>Interview round 2 (Cohort 2)</b>
07–09 May 2018	09–10 May 2019
8 bachelor students	11 bachelor students
3 first year students (Cluj1–3) 2 second-year students (Cluj4–5) 3 third-year students (Cluj6–8)	11 second-year students
Code: Cluj1–Cluj8	Code: Cluj21–31
Total time: 1h 58min	Total time: 3h 31min
Interviewers: Bjørge, Tomescu Baciu	Interviewers: Bjørge, Tomescu Baciu, Whittaker
Location: Babeş-Bolyai University	Location: Babeş-Bolyai University

Interviews Cluj 1–3 were carried out in English, since they were first-year students. Cluj 4–8 and Cluj 21–31 were carried out in Norwegian and translated by one of the authors.

### 4 Findings

The findings will be presented according to relevance for the research questions set out above.

- ***RQ1 Why do the students choose to study a minor language like Norwegian?***

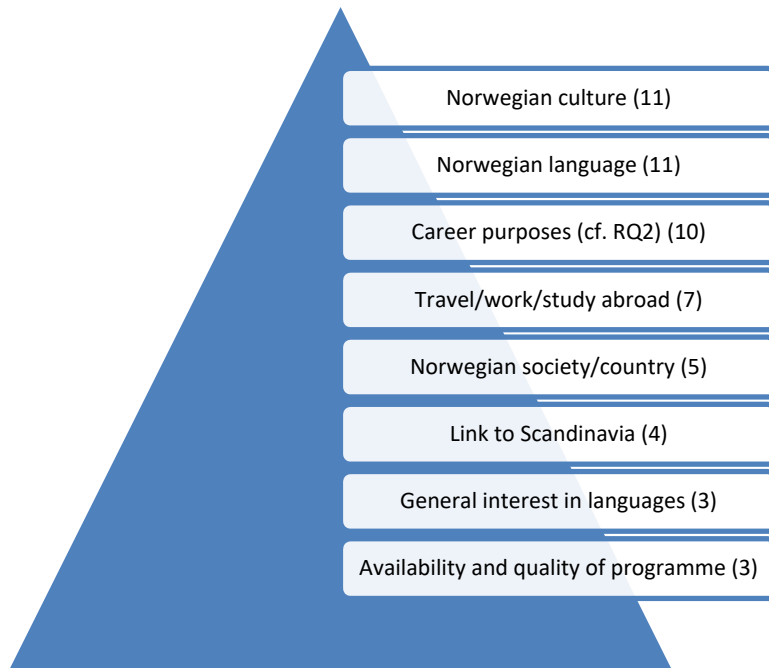
Both cohorts were of course students of Norwegian and had made their choice for different reasons. They answered to the question: Why do you study Norwegian?

Figure 1 presents the factors mentioned by the 19 students when asked ‘Why do you study Norwegian’, and how many times each factor was referred to by the interviewees (figures in brackets).

Features of Norwegian culture mentioned by the students included the country’s literature, mythology, Old Norse, history and even the youth cult series *Skam*<sup>6</sup>. When it came to the Norwegian language, students found it exotic and musical in addition to being genuinely interested in the language for its own sake.

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<sup>6</sup> Popular TV series in Norway and abroad.



**Fig 1.** Why do you study Norwegian? (n=19)

Cohort 1 were also asked the question ‘What did you know about Norway before you started studying Norwegian?’ Of the eight students, two reported having a generally positive image of Norway, three stated ‘not much’ while three had some background in the language or culture from upper secondary school. Features mentioned were literature, culture, mythology, geography (‘fjords’), Fridtjof Nansen, the language itself, and the Cluj programme.

Several were motivated for studying or working abroad, but not necessarily on a permanent basis. The image of Norwegian society was to a certain extent linked to a generally positive image of Scandinavia. Some of the students were genuinely interested in languages in general. Finally, the availability and quality of the programme was mentioned as a deciding factor.

- ***RQ2 What kind of career do the students envisage?***

#### ***Cohort 1 – first interview round, 2018***

Cohort 1 were asked questions relating to career ambitions in general. They were also asked whether they would like to work for an international



(Nordic/Norwegian) company, and their impressions of what working for such a company in Cluj would entail.

These students reported career ambitions relating to translation, teaching, writing articles, doing research in Norwegian language and literature in addition to studying and working internationally, perhaps in the Nordic countries. When asked whether they would like to work for a Nordic/Norwegian company, only one of the group of eight reported this as the primary aim. While the others did not reject this option outright, they had formed an opinion of what such a career would entail. They saw it as an opportunity to use their Norwegian in a professional capacity and practise the language, together with getting work experience. However, they were not keen to work in what they perceived as routine jobs in call centres but were positive to working for a company provided the work was non-routine.

### ***Cohort 2 - second interview round, 2019***

In this interview round, ten members of the cohort (Cluj21–24, Cluj26–31) had done a period of internship for the offshored operation of an international company. They were asked for their views of how they could use Norwegian in the Romanian job market. They were thus in a better position to have an opinion on the kind of job opportunities that were offered by these companies. This company recruits to some entry positions (Piekkari et al. 2014) on the basis of specific linguistic competences, as they deliver language-sensitive services.

The interview material was concentrated round three topics, namely employment opportunities for using Norwegian; whether the students were positive to working for an international corporation, and their reasons for choosing or rejecting this option (cf. Appendix 2).

The interviewees reported on employment opportunities in working for international companies, call centre work, embassy work, public administration, contact with Scandinavia, translation, teaching, interpreting and academic careers in general.

Nine of the ten were positive to working for an international corporation. The reasons were wide-ranging. Working for an international firm makes it possible to get ‘in contact with different ways of living and different ideas’ (Cluj21), ‘Scandinavian calm, because we [Romanians] are very stressed every day’ (Cluj 21), ‘you get many opportunities and you get to know other cultures and ... you can learn to be more accepting’ (Cluj23), ‘it is an opening to other cultures and it is an opportunity to learn how other people work’ (Cluj24), ‘more contact with Scandinavia and with a country or with other countries that we believe are more developed ... work policies and human resources’ (Cluj24), ‘learn more Norwegian and learn about systems, system work from Norway and

Nordic countries' (Cluj26), 'the environment is different from jobs in Romania and where I do my internship they have a space for relaxing' (Cluj26), 'I like the work environment' (Cluj27), 'working for a Norwegian company is less stressful' (Cluj28), working for the company 'was very nice and the people are...kind' (Cluj29), 'you have to be patient, easy to talk to and helpful' (Cluj31).

The interviewee who rejected the option of working for an international company gave her main reason that 'I want to do something more creative, perhaps, like translation' (Cluj30), I think it can be very boring to do the same thing every day' (Cluj30).

For most candidates, pay and opportunities for travel were important. Call centres were described as 'interesting ... but it can be difficult' (Cluj21)

- ***RQ3 How do students see the role of other languages in their future careers?***

Both cohorts were multilingual in the sense of having 'knowledge and use of three or more languages' (Bhatia & Ritchie 2013: xxi). They all had Romanian, English and Norwegian, and reported familiarity at some level with one to four more languages. These included Hungarian (mother tongue for some students), French (which used to have a strong position in the Romanian school system before it was replaced by English), Italian, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Swedish, Japanese, Polish, Finnish and Korean.

The interviews with Cohort 1 took place in 2018 and included questions on expectations regarding the use of English in professional contexts and concerning proficiency in other languages than Norwegian. In addition to these questions, the interviews with Cohort 2 (2019) also included a question regarding the use of their mother tongue at work.

For **Cohort 1** English was regarded as an essential qualification; 'all the people I know speak English' (Cluj1), 'since we are always surrounded by information that comes from all these other parts of the world' (Cluj2), 'it is quite impossible to work in a place today and not use English' (Cluj4), 'a language that all the world knows and that we have in Europe' (Cluj4), 'if we have colleagues from other countries of course we will use English for them (Cluj7).

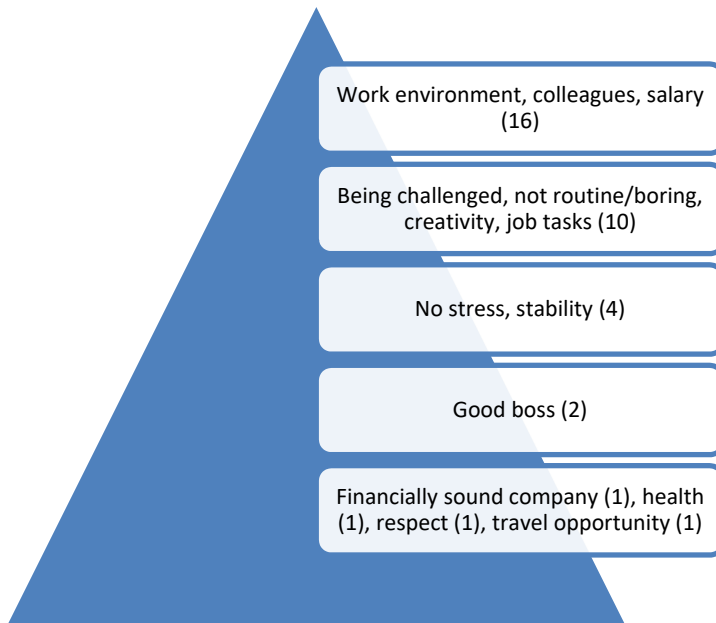
As for languages in general, they were seen as a competitive career advantage, and useful for travelling and studying internationally; 'I have an advantage over the competition and I see that as a way of making my way through the work-field' (Cluj1), 'especially when you know more languages' (Cluj3), 'more and more are multilingual...it's really a natural thing for us it's like you speak (five) languages in all things' (Cluj3)

For **Cohort 2** English was also regarded as an essential qualification, ‘a sign of professionalism’ (Cluj24), ‘to have a good job that gives you opportunities for advancing’ (Cluj25), ‘[Romanian] is important, but if you work in a multinational it is only important to speak with colleagues because English is more important than Romanian’ (Cluj26), ‘international auxiliary language’ (Cluj 28), ‘if one wants to work for corporations ... not allowed to be unable to speak English’ (Cluj31).

However, Romanian was of course essential at work. ‘Here in Cluj we use Romanian as the main language and it is very important to know it. Abroad it can be an advantage because I can use it as a second language’ (Cluj22), ‘I can’t imagine working here without speaking Romanian’ (Cluj23), ‘[Romanian] is important to have good contact if I choose to work in Romania... so I must communicate well with colleagues’ (Cluj24), ‘important when you communicate with each other so that you are not misunderstood, and there are some expressions you can only use in your own language’ (Cluj28)

On the other hand, Cluj27 stated that Romanian ‘would not play a great part [professionally] because employers look for rare languages, they like English, Norwegian or Swedish, not Romanian’ (Cluj27). When asked whether this also applied to a domestic career in Romania, the answer was still affirmative.

- **RQ4 (2019 cohort only) What do students regard as most important when it comes to job satisfaction?**



**Figure 2.** Important factors for job satisfaction (n=19)

Figure 2 presents the factors mentioned by the 19 students as important for their job satisfaction according to how many times the feature was referred to by the interviewees (figures in brackets).

## 5. Discussion

The discussion is presented according to the findings referring to the four Research Questions.

### *RQ1 Why do students choose to study a minor language like Norwegian?*

This may be linked to the EEA/EU policies promoting languages to encourage mobility in the European labour market, both in terms of jobs and labour. By encouraging the study of languages such policies may contribute to an international orientation among students in European countries, who are exposed to other cultures during their studies. This orientation may be of a general nature or directed towards working internationally for shorter or longer periods.

Based on the 19 students interviews a number of reasons for studying Norwegian were identified (cf. Figure 1). From a student perspective learning the language was associated with a positive perception of Norway being a modern and developed country with a high standard of living, in line with other Scandinavian countries. It is also of interest that the Babeş-Bolyai cooperates with a company that provides internships relevant for students of Norwegian (from 2018), which arguably strengthens an already strong study programme (Cf. RQ2 below).

### *RQ2 What kind of career do the students envisage?*

Academic careers were clearly important, as would be expected for students attending a language programme. However, offshoring has created a local labour market where Norwegian is a transferable skill and working for international companies locally was of interest. It is worth noticing that those who had experience from working as interns for the company in question were, with one exception, positive to this kind of employment. Two things may be noted here. First, the exposure to other cultures that was part of a language education was regarded as positive. Thus, learning about working and living conditions and human resource management in Scandinavia left the students with an impression that these compared favourably with their perception of local conditions. Secondly, the work environment was perceived as positive, both the physical premises in a new and modern building that had spaces for relaxation, and the work atmosphere itself that was described as less stressful than their perception of local companies. Their being interns and not full-time

paid employees may partly account for this. This may be linked to a perception of a labour market that straddles several EU/EEA countries and motivation for labour mobility. Employees working for different national systems may find differences that they may relate to. Thus, it may be noted that interviewees working for the outsourced unit of a Norwegian company in Latvia reported positively on their work environment, specifically the non-hierarchical management structure, which they saw as comparing favourably with the domestic situation (Bjørge and Whittaker 2019).

*RQ3 How do the students see the role of other languages in their future careers?*

The interviews confirmed the role of English as a contact language (Seidlhofer 2005), together with its role as a mandatory professional qualification (Piekkari et al. 2014). Interestingly, none of the interviewees mention a link to the UK or the US but talk about a language ‘that all the world knows and that we have in Europe’ (Cluj4) and an ‘international auxiliary language’ (Cluj 28). It was clearly perceived as even more important than the mother tongue if they were to work for an international company, in the sense that entry positions would have it as one of the qualifications. However, Romanian was of course important for communication with other Romanian speakers, particularly when it came to clearing up misunderstandings and expressing things that could only be explained in the mother tongue.

The Romanian students were all multilingual, and thus had a background for analysing the roles of the different languages that they mastered, e.g. using English to include non-Romanian speakers.

*RQ4 (2019 cohort only) What do students regard as most important when it comes to job satisfaction?*

A number of issues were mentioned (cf. Figure 2). Of particular importance is perhaps the focus on non-routine jobs that would allow them to develop and use their creative potential. Cohort 2 pointed out that learning about e.g. work conditions in other countries made them more aware of how labour market conditions differed from country to country. They thus have a comparative perspective on human resource management when they start working, which they may take with them in their further careers. It may also be the case that offshoring, as the activity is retained within the company, provides a broader exposure and awareness of such issues.

Again, data like these may help to build up a picture of what it is like to work for offshored companies in a country like Romania. This information should be of interest to companies recruiting in the country in the future.

## 6. Conclusion

Learning languages is one way of promoting mobility in the EEA/EU labour market. In this case study the authors present situated research from the perspective of a future labour force in Romania that are going to be part of this market, and that live in a country that receives offshoring from other European countries. Language skills thus become important in ways that are different from e.g. Scandinavian countries, where learning other languages than English primarily qualifies for teaching and translation employment. In Romania, on the other hand, learning other languages may qualify for entry-positions in offshored units of international companies that provide language-sensitive services. 'Exotic' languages like Norwegian can give opportunities for well-paid employment in this market. It is also clear that English is a basic skill in this market and functions as a contact language in situations where the interlocutors do not share a first language. Compared to Norway, however, the influence of English is not explicitly addressed in government policies aimed at protecting the mother tongue(s) from domain loss and describing appropriate guidelines for usage. On the other hand, the interviewees had opinions on the importance of using their mother tongue in certain contexts, such as its importance to ensure understanding and express things that could only be expressed by using their first language. In this we also see the awareness of linguistic issues that comes with a university education of a linguistic nature.

It is also clear that the job market within offshoring is varied. The present piece of research describes job opportunities of a non-routine nature that are attractive both from a working environment and pay perspective. By approaching the issue from the student perspective it becomes clear that they see a domestic job market that includes jobs that are interesting from a university-educated individual's point of view. It thus contributes to a diversified view of offshoring jobs, illustrated by the different opinions of the two cohorts that may be related to having had internship experience.

Finally, this is a case study with limited generalisability. It does, however, present situated research that lends a voice to a future workforce planning to work in the European labour market by exploiting the multilingual education advocated by EEA/EU policies.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Interview questions 2018 (Interviews in English and Norwegian)

#### GENERAL

1. Are you a bachelor or a master student?
2. How many credits have you taken/ are you planning to take in Norwegian?
3. What did you know about Norway before you started studying Norwegian?
4. About other Nordic countries? (Sweden, Denmark, Finland)
5. Did you have any Norwegian before you started studying the language?
6. What other languages do you speak?

#### MOTIVATION

7. Why do you study Norwegian?
8. Interest in the language? Literature? Culture?
9. Career as a researcher / teacher?
10. To get an advantage on the labour market?
11. In Romania? In a Nordic country?

#### NORWEGIAN FOR CAREER PURPOSES

12. Would you like to work for a Norwegian/Nordic company?
13. If so, why?
14. Do you know anybody who works for a Norwegian/Nordic company? (Type of company?)
15. Do they use Norwegian for job purposes/at work?

16. Do you think you will need Norwegian for job purposes? (Written communication? Oral communication?)
17. What do you find challenging with using Norwegian?
18. What challenges do you expect to meet if you are to use Norwegian in a job setting? (e.g. speaking on the phone, writing emails)
19. Do you have a strategy to solve these challenges?
20. Do you expect to use English at work?

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 2019 (interviews in Norwegian; English translation in brackets)

#### GENERELT

1. Hvor lenge har du studert norsk? (How long have you been studying Norwegian?)
2. Hvilke språk snakker du? (What languages do you speak?)
3. Hvilken rolle tror du engelsk vil ha i din yrkeskarriere? (What role do you think English will have in your career?)
4. Hvilken rolle vil morsmålet ditt ha i jobben? (What role will your mother tongue have in your job?)

#### MOTIVASJON

5. Hvorfor studerer du norsk? (Why do you study Norwegian?)
6. Hvordan tror du at du kan bruke norskstudiet på arbeidsmarkedet her i Romania (evt. overføringsverdi til svensk/dansk)? (How do you think you can use your Norwegian studies in the labour market here in Romania (also whether it has transferable value to Swedish/Danish)?)
7. Hvordan tror du det er å jobbe for et utenlandsk (norsk/skandinavisk/annet) firma her i Cluj/Romania? (What do you think it is like to work for a foreign (Norwegian/Scandinavian/Other) company here in Cluj/Romania?)
8. Hvordan vil følgende faktorer påvirke din motivasjon for en slik jobb: (How will the following factors impact on your motivation for this kind of job?)
  - a. Arbeidsoppgaver – rutine/ikke-rutine? (Job tasks – routine/non-routine?)
  - b. Karriere – muligheter for avansement? (Career – opportunities for advancing?)
  - c. Arbeidsmiljø – lokaler/hierarki? (Work environment – localities / hierarchy?)
  - d. Lønn – god i lokal kontekst/mulighet for opprykk? (Pay – good in local context / opportunity for advancing?)
  - e. Reisemuligheter – i Romania/ i utlandet? (Opportunities for travel – in Romania / abroad?)
  - f. Annet? (Other?)
9. Hvilke arbeidsoppgaver regner du med å håndtere på norsk? (What job tasks do you expect to deal with using Norwegian?)



- a. Telefonhenvendelser fra Skandinavia (Telephone calls from Scandinavia?)
  - b. Epostutveksling med Skandinavia (email correspondence with Scandinavia?)
  - c. Annet? (Other?)
10. Hvilke utfordringer tror du at du vil møte i denne sammenhengen? (What challenges do you expect to meet with in this connection?)
11. Hvordan har du tenkt å løse disse utfordringene? (How are you planning to deal with these challenges?)
12. Hvilke kunnskaper i tillegg til språk er viktige i dette jobbmarkedet? (What kind of knowledge in addition to languages is important in this job market?)
- a. Kjennskap til generelt regelverk i Skandinavia? (Familiarity with general regulations in Scandinavia?)
  - b. Kjennskap til skandinaviske enkeltbedrifter? (Familiarity with individual Scandinavian companies?)
13. Kan du nevne tre ting som er viktige for deg når det gjelder tilfredshet med en fremtidig jobb? (Can you mention three issues that are important to you when it comes to job satisfaction in your future job?)
14. Ble du mer motivert for norskstudiet etter praksisperioden/internship? (Did your period as an intern make you more motivated for studying Norwegian?)

## THE PROCESS OF REWRITING IN KARL OVE KNAUSGÅRD'S *A TIME FOR EVERYTHING. A FRACTAL APPROACH*

ROXANA-EMA DREVE<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *The process of rewriting in Karl Ove Knausgård's A time for everything. A fractal approach.* *A time for everything*, Knausgård's second novel, has been often referred to as a retelling of the Bible. Although the intertext with the biblical stories is not to be ignored, it is our opinion that Knausgård also rewrote some passages from the previous novel or included elements that he later used in the series *My struggle*. We consider *A time for everything* a fractal image of Knausgård's writings and attempt to analyse items related to death and despair, from a fractal approach. Our aim is to demonstrate that there is a stochastic narrative, self-similar, both at a micro- and a macro-level.

**Keywords:** *rewriting, fractal, creating, authenticity, fiction*

**REZUMAT.** *Procesul de rescriere în romanul Orice lucru își are vremea lui de Karl Ove Knausgård. O abordare fractală.* *Orice lucru își are vremea lui*, cel de-al doilea roman al lui Knausgård, a fost adesea denumit o rescriere a Bibliei. Deși intertextul cu narațiunea biblică nu trebuie ignorat, credem că procesul de rescriere cuprinde și alte pasaje din textele publicate anterior sau din seria *Lupta mea*. În analiza noastră am pornit de la considerentul că *Orice lucru își are vremea lui* reprezintă o imagine fractală a scrierilor lui Knausgård și am încercat să interpretăm unele elemente legate de moarte, disperare și durere, pornind de la o abordare fractală. Scopul nostru a fost să demonstrăm că există o similaritate stohastică, atât la nivel micro, cât și macro.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *rescriere, fractal, creare, autenticitate, ficțiune*

### Introduction

"To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down,

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and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.” (Ecc, 3:1-8)

This is the reference most people point at when talking about Karl Ove Knausgård’s second book, *En tid for alt*, translated from Norwegian by James Anderson and published under two titles *A Time for Every Purpose Under Heaven* (2008), and *A Time for Everything* (with two different editions, 2009 and 2015).

However obvious, the intertextuality with the biblical text is not, in our opinion, the most intriguing one, as Knausgård rewrites some passages from his previous book and perfectly integrate them in the latest, most debated series, *My struggle*. Wanting to address the issue of rewriting both as self-narration and reference to external texts, we will examine the author’s narrative strategies from a fractal analysis perspective and do so by using Vøllø’s words: “[...] an overarching theme in Knausgård’s rewriting is concerned with roots and beginnings: the roots of place, the roots of tradition, the roots of memory” (Vøllø, 2019, 173). We will not start from the criteria Vøllø embodies in her thesis – autogeography, autobiography and subjective phenomenology –, but rather focus on the process of rewriting and its connection to the beginnings<sup>2</sup> seen as a fractal image, leaving out the autoreception and the autoreceptive narration Vøllø admirably traces in her paper on *A time for everything*<sup>3</sup>.

Our understanding of the rewriting process will not necessarily aim to enumerate the occurrences of change and permutations in Knausgård’s texts, but on the contrary prove that there is a red narrative thread, a recurrent frame, starting from the first novel, *Out of the world* and ending with the worldwide famous *My struggle*. The novels, as different and unique as they may seem, could be regarded as a trilogy<sup>4</sup>, as the author himself mentioned it in several interviews.

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<sup>2</sup> The beginnings of his writing career and the memories regarding the beginnings of his life.

<sup>3</sup> As Ida Hummel Vøllø states in her thesis (*op. cit.*, pp. 12-13), in 2010, Stefan Iversen introduces the term “autoreception” that comprises both self-criticism and rewriting of one’s texts. In this article we will focus on the second term. As Iversen suggests, this does not imply the rewriting of a specific text, but more the rewriting of several texts. (Iversen, 2010, 49-62).

That is exactly what happens in Knausgård’s case. He is continuously rewriting his texts, creating stochastic fractal patterns. Some critics stated that a significant aim might have been to create a new text while lacking inspiration or the fact that the author was concerned with the reception of a text that he found improper or not rising to his standards.

<sup>4</sup> The critics name the books a trilogy as well. Haugen mentions that *Out of the world*, *A time for everything* and *My struggle* can be analyzed as a trilogy “a story within a story about Karl Ove himself” (Haugen, 2010, 12-18).

Jan Thomas Holmlund (2009) has been writing about this issue even before, when he stated that the books are a classical trilogy.

Our point of view, nevertheless, is that they represent a fractal image, characterized by stochastic similarity.

### 1. Is rewriting retelling, recreating or creating?

Named often by the critics a prodigy, a genius or an unscrupulous writer, Knausgård has certainly been interpreted and analysed with extreme and often contrary perspectives. While some praise him for being shameless others point out his shamefaced actions, depicting ethics and morality, or the lack of it, as two important pillars of his novels. If the series *My struggle* has gained a lot of attention in the latest years, not the same publicity has been given to *Out of the world* that won Critic's Prize and *A time for everything* that was nominated for The Nordic Council Literature Prize. These novels are often set aside and forgotten in the analysis of Knausgård's style and narrative techniques. The shadowing presence of these books in the nowadays reception was also described by Liesl Schillinger who stated in the article "Why Karl Ove Knausgaard Can't Stop Writing", the fact that for the Norwegian author *A time for everything*, his second novel is his favourite book. Why is that so? Why does Knausgård point out this book of all the books he has written? For some readers acquainted to the writer's autofictional and autobiographical style, this is "the most fictional book. [...]" that centres upon angels, trying to find an answer to their disappearance: "It's about angels, like angels do exist, they really were around. The mystery in the book is where did they go? It's a retelling of the stories in the Bible." (Schillinger citing Knausgård, 2015, 7)

And yet, it is so much more than that. What Knausgård does best is to make us look the other way, forget about our first impulses, not stay too long on a page and casually progress towards the end. He is doing it by using stories within a story, scenes that are characterized by stochastic similarity. He is acting like a guide, highlighting some aspects and shadowing others in a novel, only to do the exact opposite in another. As true as it is that *A time for everything* is a book about the Bible, the interpretations one can add to this novel are so numerous, creating a fractal net rather than a mirror. Marc De Kesel also states that "[...] the title refers to the real topic of the novel: the non-linear and non-cyclic "constant flux", in which all things happen in the same 'indifferent' temporal space" (De Kesel, 17). Taking this under consideration, we do not believe Knausgård's *A time for everything* is a retelling of the Bible, especially of the First Testament, in the sense of a reconstruction of the original text, as the author implies. We believe we should think of the second part of the definition, where to retell is "to tell a story again, often in a different way" (Online Oxford Dictionary, "retell").

In the Bible, God appears as fearless, powerful, almighty, deciding upon the humans and creating them after His image:

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” (Gen, 1:26)

But there might be a flip side of the coin, since in Knausgård's *En tid for alt* the presence of the angels makes us fundamentally question God or the nature of the human beings (Maeseneer, Meszanos, 2015, 450-464). Because the angels are the connecting element between the mortality and the immortality, between God and humans, their transformation from perfect beings to imperfect, dying creatures make us, humans, doubt if “spiritual and moral progress is possible (*Ibidem*)”<sup>5</sup>. Arguably, as Marc De Kesel underlines, “[...] after God's death, the angels fell, slowly, very slowly, until they definitely lost their immortality and died” (De Kesel, 1).

This is the reality Antinous Bellori witnesses:

“Antinous now sees that its jaw, too, is shaking. But its expression is firm, its eyes cold and clear. The first one bites into the fish and pulls off a piece with a jerk. Then it takes the torch for the other, which grips the fish in both hands and bends its head slowly forward. It is as if the effort increases the shaking, and the first one places a supporting hand on its arm. And so, standing close together, the light flickering across their faces and the bottom of their cloaks trailing in the water, they stand eating the fish. Antinous stares at them, spellbound. The teeth that sink into the fish's flesh, the scales that cling to their chins, the eyeballs that now and then turn up and make them look white and blind. Then they look like statues standing there, for without the life of the eyes, the deadness of their faces is emphasized. Each time he sees it, Antinous recoils in fear. *They're dead*, he thinks. *They're dead*. But then the eyeballs correct themselves, the faces again fill with life, and what a moment before was loathsome in them is now beautiful again” (Knausgård, 2009a, 16-17).

Once we talk about this transformation, we talk about the angels' death. Once we talk about *kenosis*, we also talk about God's imperfection, powerless actions and confusion. The imperfection characterizes not only the angels and their appearance, but also everything else connected to God. Bellori's God is indeed the God of emptiness, and the perfect imperfect incarnation of this concept. He is the ruler of this *non praesentia*, He is inconsistent and incoherent (Maeseneer, Meszanos, 2015, 450-464). Both in the world, and out of this world,

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<sup>5</sup> How was this transformation possible and even accepted by God? That is the question raised by Knausgård in this novel: “Why they chose the exact form that they did, and transformed themselves into human baby-like beings, isn't difficult to understand. Their fear was that their barbarity and appetite and terrible rage would show themselves, and so it was innocence they sought, and as man was created in their image, they selected man at his most innocent as their new model”. (Knausgård, 2009a, 449).

if we are to paraphrase Knausgård's first novel, appears to be God's, the humans' and the angels' common point. Not belonging to a certain space or landscape. Not being a part of something, definitely, permanently. The absence of stability makes the connection to the title of this second novel. There is a time for everything, for every purpose under heaven, but that time does occur sporadically. The rest of our lives lie in the loveless, godless existence. There is a time for God's despair; there is a time for the human's meaningless life, for every action that we make. Analysing *A time for everything*, Bern Lage Breivoll arrives at the conclusion that the novel it's not about religion but about the importance of human values that overcome the divine ones (Breivoll, 2006, 1-10).

As for the line between fiction and authenticity, the present and the past, one must wonder if retelling really means rewriting. And is rewriting creating a new text or continuing the same one?

Let's focus on the last fifty pages that have aroused a lot of questions regarding the novel's theme and motives. The bestseller that takes place in Norway, in 2000, ends with Henrik Vankel's<sup>6</sup> perspective. We hence find out that he is the one to tell the story of Antinous Bellori, the fictional author of *On the Nature of Angels* (1584) and that the descriptions we had in the first 500 pages were just part of his point of view. If we are to trust the author, the seagulls first appear in Norway in 1732, being angels that transformed themselves, as the last line of Bellori's study suggests "*The angels have fallen. They are out there somewhere*". Can this however be authentic? Can Knausgård be trusted? And, moreover, should he be trusted? Or should the text be interpreted without reference to the author's biography? If so, what does the story of a teacher in North Norway falling for a pupil (*Out of the world*) has to do with the story of angels and their transformation into seagulls, with the story of Cain, Abel, Noah and Ezekiel (*A time for everything*) or with the story of the struggle a man named Karl Ove goes through (*My struggle*)? Several critics have mentioned that there is not an obvious link between the different novels, as there is no obvious link between the parts of *A time for everything*. Morten Abrahamsen goes further and states that the end of the book seems to be superficially added to the plot<sup>7</sup>, while others criticize Knausgård's lack of fluidity in this novel. But for what is worth, *A time for everything* is a fractal of Knausgård's entire career as a writer, being different, yet similar at a micro- and macro-level. As Yves De Maeseneer and Julia Meszaros demonstrate, the mood that "connects Vankel, Bellori and the angels is one of deep despair" (Maeseneer, Meszaros, 2015, 450-464). Paraphrasing this sentence, what connects Knausgård's novels and creates his unique style is the same despair.

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<sup>6</sup> Ida Hummel Vølle mentions it, the first name given to the character was Henrik Møller –Stray. (Vølle, 2019, 119).

<sup>7</sup> "Problemet er bare at denne avsluttende delen av boken virker svært påklistret." (Abrahamsen, 2004).

## 2. A time for rewriting one's story

In correlation to the beginning of a novel, most people refer to its first lines. However, the first line is not the starting point of a book, but the result of a struggle, the written metamorphosis of its inception. We often ask ourselves how the author managed to write his first lines, what thoughts were behind his actions. This struggle to write something great, something novel, has also crossed Knausgård's mind in relation to the novel *A time for everything*, as we find out from Ida Hummel Vøllo's PhD thesis. Already acknowledged as a writer, Knausgård wanted to continue the story from *Out of the world*, but he could not do it, because he lacked the inspiration. Instead, he used several narrative transgressions about angels and their transformation into seagulls that he has previously written. Knausgård allegedly got to see something intriguing in the wooden floor of his first office and noticed that "[...] the knots and grain, perhaps two meters from the chair where I was sitting, formed an image of Christ wearing a crown of thorns" (Vøllo citing Knausgård, 2019, 174).

While Claus Elholm Andersen insists on the probable anxiety of influence the Norwegian author had, which could explain his lack of inspiration, Vøllo questions Knausgård's words and anxiety and argues that

"[b]y this I am not claiming that Knausgård actually and necessarily saw the face of Christ in the wooden floor of his office in Stockholm in 2004, but rather that the scene is placed here with strategic intention to connect the author-images past and present: to connect this autobiographical and autogeographical memory with his author-image in 2008 and with *Min kamp*" (*Idem*, 174).

As a direct consequence of this scene, Bernt Lage Breivoll insists on the fact that the present can change the past, that *A time for everything* is a text that ignores the time rules and has flashbacks as main narrative strategy (Breivoll, 2006, 79). Everything we think we know is hence based on supposition. We suppose that Knausgård artificially added the story of the wooden floor to connect the missing dots, we suppose the story of Antinous Bellori happens in Henrik Vankel's head, but we do not know that for sure. Seen from this perspective, there is no coherent connection between the angels, God, the humans and the main characters presented in the book, Cain, Abel, Lamec, Noah, Anna, Lot, Ezeziel, Antinous Bellori and Henrik Vankel besides Knausgård's intent to make it seem like a novel<sup>8</sup>. Unless we read the book from a fractal perspective and

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<sup>8</sup> In the article "Of Squawking Seagulls and the Mutable Divine: Karl Ove Knausgaard's *A Time for Everything* (With Reference to My Struggle)", P. J. Sabo writes "Henrik's purposeful isolation, for instance, is reminiscent of Knausgaard's biblical characters: Cain lives solitarily in a house in the forest, Noah lives away from society on a mountain meadow, and Ezeziel lives for years under self-imposed house arrest. The closest connection is to Cain, as Henrik's mutilation of his chest and face echoes the mark that God set on Cain". (Sabo, 2016, 112).

realize that chaos is the incipient reorganization of a system, in a different manner. Most of the literary discussions nowadays place the literary creations in two categories: fiction or authenticity. But if we implement a fractal reading paradigm, we do not have opposite literary classifications, but rather ramifications of a similar-like structure. What is chaotic for us could be regarded as structured for somebody else. It depends on the point of view one is embracing.

### 3. A fractal analysis approach

In the following part of the article, we base our analyse on the belief that Knausgård's texts have a fractal structure that can be extended to the examination of his narrative techniques, of the themes used in the books and of the relationship between God and humans.

The fractal theory experienced a boom in the 1980s, with Mandelbrot's approach on chaos theory and its relation to nature in *Fractals: Form, Chance, and Dimension*. Fractals are complex mathematical structures that have several properties such as self-similarity, non-linearity and strange attractors<sup>9</sup>. The usage of this concept in literature is showing a process of metaphorically transferring concepts and analysing methods from science to humanities.

In order to emphasise the fractal structure of a text, we have to take a motif and see if it is rescaled and reused in other works, to the size of the original document or at different levels. Since the number of items taken into consideration is just a matter of personal choice or subjective preferences, it is however difficult if not impossible to prove that two texts are self-similar in every aspect. Therefore a stochastic analysis is to be preferred.

One can argue that Knausgård's narrative is not complex at all, since it is inspired by personal stories and describes the everyday life. Nevertheless, the iterations of certain themes such as shame, death or despair, having the father-son relationship in the middle is the proof that Knausgård is using what Lawrence Beemer calls a "fractal narrative" (Beemer, 2011).

It can be argued, as Polvinen states, that the concept of "fractal analysis" must be seen as a metaphorical concept applied to literature (Polvinen, 2008, 71). Arguably, in the examination of *A time for everything* we are refraining from

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<sup>9</sup> The literary fractals are closely linked to symbols or motifs, to places, to the characters that appear in the book or to the phrase structure the author is creating. In the online dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fractals> are being defined as "any of various extremely irregular curves or shapes for which any suitably chosen part is similar in shape to a given larger or smaller part when magnified or reduced to the same size", self-similarity has been defined as "the quality or state of having an appearance that is invariant upon being scaled larger or smaller", a strange attractor as "the state of a mathematically chaotic system toward which the system trends : the attractor of a mathematically chaotic system" and stochastic as "involving a random variable, involving change or probability..



making comparisons between the texts and analyse all the non-linear items, and we are stressing the analysis towards the recurrent theme of death or despair. The destructive outbursts ignite the character's self-destruction and represent the self-similar element in the fractal image of this article.

*Out of the world* is a novel about a twenty-six year old teacher that leaves North Norway and establishes himself in Kristiansand, after his relationship with a pupil is discovered and condemned. Shame, "all-encompassing and devastating" (Lindholm, 2004), plays an important role.

Following the fractal pattern, the same symbols flow back and forth between the two books. We see Henrik Vankel from *Out of the world* in the novel *A time for everything* in despair and ashamed, dwelling on his haunted past and thinking about his epitaph: "Henrik Vankel. 1970-1998. He died in order to prove to himself that his feelings were genuine" (Knausgård, 2009a). According to Fredrik Wandrup: "Here he is split between an increasing experience of the beauty of nature and a compulsive neurotic urge to injure himself. Read in the light of the rest of the book: He is a fallen angel, most like a dead seagull - a bird species that according to his father «was once angels»" (Wandrup, 2004, our translation)<sup>10</sup>.

A similar passage is found in the series *My struggle*, book three, where Knausgård writes:

"Anne Lisbet emerged from the sea.

She was wearing a bikini bottom and a white T-shirt. It was wet, and her round breasts were visible. Her wet black hair shone in the sun. She beamed her broadest smile. I watched her, I couldn't keep my eyes off her, but then I noticed something beside me, and turned my head, and there was Kolloen, he was watching her too.

There was no difference in our gazes, I realised that at once, he saw what I saw and he was thinking what I was thinking.

About *Anne Lisbet*.

She was thirteen years old.

The moment didn't even last for a second, he looked down as soon as I noticed him, but it was enough, and I'd had an insight into something which a moment before I didn't even know existed". (Knausgård, 2015a, 447-448)

In the fourth volume of *My struggle*, Knausgård presents himself as an alter-ego of Henrik, since his feelings towards the thirteen-year-old Andrea could be interpreted as such. The character named intentionally Karl Ove, is a sexually frustrated eighteen-year-old man that works as a school teacher in

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<sup>10</sup> "Her er han utspent mellom en tiltakende opplevelse av naturens skjønnhet og en tvangsnevrotisk trang til å skade seg selv. Lest i lys av resten av boka: Han er en fallen engel, mest lik en død måke - en fuglesort som ifølge hans far «en gang var engler»".

order to save up money to travel and start his career as a writer. His feelings for Andrea and the sexual attraction he has towards his pupil end up in humiliation and despair. However, as Claus Elholm Andersen mentions, Karl Ove is not that obsessed with Andrea as Henrik was with Miriam in *Out of the world* (Andersen, 2015, 95-105), even if the story about Karl Ove's love for Andrea appears to be the main plot of the fourth volume of *My struggle*<sup>11</sup>.

“Was I in love with Andrea?

Was I in love?

No, no, no.

But I was drawn to her in my thoughts. I was.

When I was at the school during the night, when I stood by the dark, motionless water in the swimming pool, I imagined she was in the changing room, alone, and that soon I would go in. She covered herself, looked up, I knelt down in front of her, she looked at me, at first with apprehension, then tenderness and openness” (Knausgård, 2015b, 424).

In the real life, Knausgård himself was a teacher in North Norway, in 1987, when he went there to work for a year. In the sixth volume of *My struggle* he confesses that the feelings he had for a thirteen-year-old girl while being himself an eighteen year old teacher were dangerous and inappropriate, thus acknowledging that the story from *Out of the world* could be authentic.

Furthermore, the author's father was an English teacher and the episode of him having an affair appears in several volumes of the series. So it seems like the teacher sexually interested in an adolescent girl, could be a fractal element in Knausgård's writings.

Another self-similar aspect is the presence of death. Rather than accepting his condition, Vankel operates on despair and sadness, self-destructing and self-harming himself. He is thinking about death and physical pain. The resemblance between these passages and the opening lines in *My struggle*, book 1 is striking (Vøllo, 2019, 159).

In the famous series Knausgård writes:

“For the heart, life is simple: it beats for as long as it can. Then it stops. Sooner or later, one day, this pounding action will cease of its own accord, and the blood will begin to run toward the body's lowest point, where it will collect in a small pool, visible from outside as a dark, soft patch on ever whitening skin, as the temperature sinks, the limbs stiffen and the intestines drain. These changes in the first hours occur so slowly and take place with such inexorability that there is something almost ritualistic about them, as though life capitulates according to specific

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<sup>11</sup> Andrea appears from the beginning of the text on page 44 as the young teacher reads the catalog.

rules, a kind of gentleman's agreement to which the representatives of death also adhere, inasmuch as they always wait until life has retreated before they launch their invasion of the new landscape. By which point, however, the invasion is irrevocable. The enormous hordes of bacteria that begin to infiltrate the body's innards cannot be halted. Had they but tried a few hours earlier, they would have met with immediate resistance; however everything around them is quiet now, as they delve deeper and deeper into the moist darkness" (Knausgård, 2009b, 3).

In *A time for everything*, Knausgård describes the moment of death but from a different angle. Abel is the one to take Jared's heart out of the body to examine it. While reading the Bible, Abel is presented as a shepherd and as a killer. The feeling that led to the murder is considered to be jealousy as Cain's sacrifices were not accepted by gods. But when reading Knausgård's *A time for everything*, one sees another Cain, merciful and upset because of Abel's gestures. This lack of empathy from Abel could be the reason he is going to be killed by his brother.

"Then the heart stops beating, then the lungs stop breathing, then the thoughts stop revolving. Because they have a limit, and an exact point when that is reached, and it is that exact point Abel longs to witness. Not from the outside, as he would if he'd stuck the knife into the brain or the heart, but from the inside, as he will if only he can get hold of the heart with his hands. That has to be the way to 'help' him, he thinks. Grip the heart so hard that it stops. Feel the heart stop. *Feel* Jared's heart stop and the life cease between his fingers" (Knausgård, 2009a).

In addressing this issue, Ane Farsethås states that the reflections about death and the description of the heart in *A time for everything* and *My struggle* have some main differences, where the fame that the opening line has brought to *My struggle*, while remaining unnoticeable for the readers of *A time for everything*, remains essential (Farsethås, 2012, 284-285).

It is worth mentioning that in her PhD thesis, Ida Hummel Vøllø continues Farsethås demonstration and points out that the body the heart description is referring to is not the "anonymous, universal body, but instead [...] Henrik Vankel's father" (Vøllø, 2019, 160), thus implying the fact that Henrik Vankel's father resemble Karl Ove's fictional father figure.

Another important element of the rewriting process in Knausgård's texts is the retelling of the Bible. Several stories are included, such as the story of Cain and Abel, the story of Noah and the great flood, of Ezekiel or Lot. Breaking the stereotypes from the Bible that normally places people into two categories, good or bad, Knausgård proves how the humans are much more complex and unique than we think. The difference between individualism and collectivism is used here to emphasise the relationship between the brothers.

We should pause now to interpret Cain and Abel's behavior. One is the good shepherd that even the God likes; the other one is the bad farmer that is set aside by God and by his family. And yet, the good brother ends up being a killer just like his sibling. Knausgård makes us question the biblical story and the reasons behind God's choices by rewriting the frame of the narrative and completing it with the missing passages. In the Bible, there is no explicit narrative explaining why Cain murdered Abel. We only suppose it was jealousy, or the fact that his sacrifices were not accepted. Then came Knausgård, venturing into the mysticism of the Bible and pointing out the fact that Abel was infatuated, selfish and mean, used to killing, because of his job, while Cain acts to defend the ones in need from Abel's impulse to harm others. The reason of the fratricide is in *A time for everything* Cain's despair, his way to cope with his brother's behaviour towards Jared. When finding Jared in the woods, hurt, with half of his face destroyed, Abel cuts his eye and cuts him open in an attempt to feel his heart dying. The scene is too much to bear for Cain who is willing to stop Jared's pain, by throwing a stone to his head. This thought and the thought of revenging Jared's death haunts him his entire life:

"Then he tipped it back, opened his mouth, and screamed. Cain couldn't endure it. He wanted to help him, but he couldn't, and suddenly it filled him with rage: in one bound he was on his feet, he had to get out, he put on his shoes, snatched his jacket, and ran down the field to the river. It had been six months before, when he'd held the rock above his head on the mountain, ready to smash Jared's head, that the thought of killing Abel had come to Cain for the first time. The thought was a terrible one, and he justified it by saying to himself that he'd been blind with rage, and that the thought belonged to his wrath and not to him. But it wasn't true. Once the thought had been thought, it suddenly lay there as a possibility. He could distance himself from it, he could laugh at it, he could ignore it, but he couldn't eliminate it: after that occurrence on the mountain, fratricide would always be something he'd have to reckon with". (Knausgård, 2009a)

The fundamental idea behind the reiteration of death and despair is that they are self-similar elements that one could multiply and examine at micro-scales in *A time for everything*. Whereas the presence of Vankel at the end of the novel appears superficially added, one must not forget that what Henrik and Abel have in common is the despair they are going through. Prima facie, this despair connects the characters on a metaphorical level. But on the other hand, it also emphasises what has been coined as a fractal narrative. At the end of the novel, emotionally in pain, Henrik Vankel cuts his face and chest to feel physical pain. Abel, on the contrary, cuts Jared's face and chest, provoking him physical pain, in order to try to understand his emotions. That being said, pain and despair are interchangeable parts of a bigger fractal image.

Continuing the quotations from the Bible with his own words is another self-similar narrative technique Knausgård is using in the novel. In the King James' Bible, we have this paragraph explaining God's anger at Cain:

“The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand'. But Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, this day You have driven me from the face of the earth, and from Your face I will be hidden; I will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me'” (Gen, 4:10-13)

In Knausgård's book, the lines from the Bible are integrated in the text. The author presents us why God is showing himself to Cain and when that is happening. And everything takes the form of a unique narrative. No marks of quotation are to be found in the original text. However, in the English translations, the quotation marks make it easier for the reader to identify where the Bible stops and where Knausgård's text begins.

“In his misery and boundless sorrow, he didn't notice that the light around him was getting weaker and weaker, and finally vanished altogether. On his knees at his brother's side he stroked his hair, kissed his cheeks, his brow, his lips. Lovely little Abel, he said, my lovely little brother, he said it over and over again, until he had no more tears, and rose trembling to his feet. Only then did he see that it was dark around him. And that a light now shone out over the field.

There was something alluring about the light, all willpower seemed to disappear from him, without thinking he began to walk toward it. Out there Cain actually saw God and fell to his knees”. (Knausgård, 2009a)

Ultimately, beyond the explicit rewritings of the biblical text there are many implicit rewritings as well, as for example, the landscapes or the presence of seagulls<sup>12</sup>. Knausgård places the biblical story in the Scandinavian landscape, because his geography is what Ruhl calls “autogeography”. For the critic, the discrepancies between the detailed narrations and Knausgård's deny of any autobiographical element, suggests the fact that he is unconsciously reconstructing his autobiography by reconstructing its geography (Vøllo citing Ruhl, 2019, 137). This is the case for *A time for everything*, where the landscape presented is not the original Garden of Eden, but the forests of Norway.

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<sup>12</sup> The symbol of seagulls appears often in *My Struggle*. “These shrunken angels, who have been condemned to screech and scavenge their way through life, are everywhere in *My Struggle*, as they are in our world, and yet because of this sort of omnipresence they blend unassumingly into the background”. (Sabo, 2016, 113).

## Conclusion

We have argued that Knausgård's novel, *A time for everything*, has a fractal narrative, iterating some symbols and elements, not only at a micro-level, but also as intertext with other novels. The constant interventions of the writer in the biblical story have not changed the theme of the book, but on the contrary helped us understand the despair, the death, the shame of the humans, their way of living in a world where God is "dead on the cross, and the angels [are] imprisoned here". Of course, more research is needed in order to investigate all the self-similar and non-linear aspects that appear in the book. But what remains certain, is that there is a time for everything, a time for humans, for their values, for their imperfect lives created after what seems to be an imperfect model. That time is now and Knausgård writes about it.

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## FOSTERING NEW LITERACIES IN TEACHING NORWEGIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

RALUCA POP<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Fostering New Literacies in Teaching Norwegian as a Foreign Language.* It is of paramount importance to understand how language knowledge and literacy are evolving in accordance with the demands of the 21st century society. Digital media are changing reading and writing practices and are conducive to the development of a new set of literacies. Therefore, it is relevant to seize the educational opportunities that arise and understand their implications in the field of foreign language learning. This paper intends to focus on the relationship between language, culture and new technologies in order to highlight issues of multimodality and identity.

**Keywords:** *foreign language learning, digital literacy, multimodal literacy, multicultural literacy, critical literacy, multimodality, Norwegian, Digital Age.*

**REZUMAT.** *Promovarea unor noi modele de alfabetizare în contextul predării limbii norvegiene ca limbă străină.* Este important să înțelegem cum învățarea unei limbi și procesul de alfabetizare se adaptează cerințelor societății secolului al XXI-lea. Mass-media digitală determină o schimbare în abilitățile de scriere și de citire favorizând astfel dezvoltarea unui nou model de alfabetizare. De aceea, este necesară conștientizarea acestor oportunități educaționale precum și înțelegerea implicațiilor pe care acestea le exercită în domeniul învățării limbilor străine. Acest studiu intenționează să se concentreze pe relația dintre limbă, cultură și noile tehnologii pentru a evidenția aspecte legate de multimodalitate și identitate.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *învățarea limbii străine, alfabetizare digitală, alfabetizare multimodală, alfabetizare multiculturală, alfabetizare critică, multimodalitate, Norvegiană, era digitală.*

### Introduction

This paper intended to highlight the extent to which an intercultural perspective and the emergence of new technologies reshape and guide didactic

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practices in the context of teaching a foreign language in a formal educational setting. The paper articulates some questions that relate to the need to re-imagine pedagogy, the notions of literacy and the way one decodes and makes sense of the multimodal communicative environment.

### **Teaching Norwegian as a foreign language**

Norwegian as a foreign language has been taught at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature within Babeş-Bolyai University for almost 30 years. During this long tradition, Norwegian language and literature was offered both as a major (starting with 2008) and as a minor specialization (starting with 1991). The singularity of such a BA programme based on a niche specialization has gained awareness and recognition to such an extent that the total of students who attended in 2019 the BA programme in Norwegian language and literature amounted to 355 students (Tomescu Baciú et al., 2019). A variety of courses are offered in order to enhance students' linguistic and communicative competence, as well as their intercultural communicative cultural competence that tackles intercultural knowledge, intercultural skills and intercultural attitudes.

As face-to-face teaching has ceased on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 as a consequence of the rapid outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the courses pertaining to the spring semester had to be delivered fully online. This had direct implications on the teaching practices as both teachers and students had to get familiarized with online teaching platforms, to adapt teaching resources, to establish norms for interaction patterns and delivery of individualized feedback, to receive student's assignments and to establish some contingency plans in case various situations cause a breakdown in the online communication. This unprecedented situation has slowly but steadily requested students to make use of their digital skills and to use digital technologies as educational tools. Of particular importance in the context of teaching Norwegian online was the know-how of incorporating new literacies in didactic practice.

This paper does not intend to focus on issues of assessing the effectiveness of online teaching practices or on offering an extended view of various literacies found in the literature. In this respect, the current paper is centered on a guiding principle that targets the triad model - language, culture and new technologies – which is questioned from a didactic perspective.

Firstly, it is relevant in this context to draw attention on the particularities of learning a foreign language. These refer to: a limited amount of time available for language instruction, a lengthy, conscious process that implies effort, instruction is usually performed in a formal environment, cultural aspects are taught explicitly and language learning is highly dependent on learners' motivation.

The outcome of such an effort would be attaining communicative language competence comprised of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences (CEFRL 2001, 13). Thus, language and culture are both present in the learning of a foreign language.

Secondly, the digitalization of the educational system and of the teaching practice (online courses, digital content, online evaluation etc.) has an impact on teachers' and students' expectations as well as on decoding and making-sense of these new resources. In view of this given context, this paper intended to refer to the intricate link between language, culture and the new technologies as a premise for language development.

### **Reconceptualizing pedagogy**

Digital technologies have become an inseparable part of today's learning process. Rethinking pedagogy in the Digital Age is essential in order to fully grasp the idiosyncrasies of the "new learning environment" (Dreamson, 2020). Instead of having within the educational system separate dimensions that develop on their own (such as pedagogical practices, content development and ICT tools), Dreamson (2020) motivates the need to merge these and to consider the overlapping nature of them since together they reshape the educational practices. Thus, this "transformed learning environment" (Scott, 2005) needs to blend new tools for learning (Learning 2.0), with increased student collaboration and self-responsibility and with personalized content and differentiated teaching and assessment (Pedagogy 2.0).

This discussion raises issues of competence. Although the distinction between "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001) is widely used, it cannot be entirely transferred and acknowledged in pedagogical practices. Dreamson (2000) regards every participant as 'digital immigrant' based on the fact that one needs to undertake a new learning identity in this learning environment in which updated pedagogical practices, new digital content and ever-changing technology tools are constantly incorporated. Thus, the learning experience is new to everyone and is unique for the particular multilingual and multicultural (virtual) classroom in which it takes place. In the same line, Bullen, Morgan and Qayyum (2011) conclude that there are "no meaningful generational differences in how learners say they use ICTs" even if individual differences and preferences can be identified. Therefore, one cannot openly state that students who pertain to the category of digital natives have a built-in digital competence. Still, they exhibit some characteristics that are commonly accepted: continuously connected, involved in experiential learning, able to perform multitasking, showing a need for immediacy in receiving information, preference for social activities, involved in the community (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

From a didactic perspective, teaching conducted in this new learning environment would be guided by an acknowledgment of the different types of literacies that it incorporates, all at once, in the teaching sequence. In doing so, the main aim would be to offer learners various individualized pathways to reach *Bildung* understood as a comprehensive development of students into responsible human beings (Hillen, Sturm & Willbergh, 2001:11). Further one, teaching is about making deliberate decisions “over how to construct interpretations of teaching content” (Hillen, Sturm & Willbergh, 2001:11) in a Digital Age when learners are progressively requested to manage non-linear information structures such as digital storytelling, animations or videos. Thus, this discussion outlines the need of being able to manipulate various types of educational content in order to fulfil “technological, social and cultural expectations” (Chaka, 2019: 60).

### **Notions of literacy**

Diverse concepts have been developed in literature as an outcome of exploring the flexible, adaptative and context-bound nature of literacy that resonates and adapts to current technological advancements. As the parameters of communication undergo changes, in light of an increased globalized and information-rich world, meaning-making needs to incorporate social and cultural spheres of understanding. The traditional definition of literacy based on the abilities to exhibit receptive (to read and to listen) and productive skills (to speak, to write) in a language has been extended and reconceptualized in order to incorporate new directions and realities grounded on the one hand in current technological advancements and the digitally mediated society and on the other in intercultural perspectives that have permeated the educational landscape in the past two decades.

At the moment, an array of experiences is connected to literacy that is no longer perceived in a narrow sense (i.e. exhibiting proficiency in productive or receptive skills). The demands of the 21st century society and education have implications for understanding the intricacies of literacy and the pedagogical aspects that derive out of it (i.e. reconsidering the role of teachers, the manner in which assessment is going to be performed, the way in which interaction patterns and collaboration undergo changes).

In the context of teaching a foreign language, it is relevant for a teacher to understand that “literacy development in one language supports literacy development in the second or subsequent languages learned” (ACTFL)<sup>2</sup>. Thus, knowledge from one’s mother tongue (L1) can be explored and deepened in the foreign language (FL). Still, the context within FL is different as one considers the diversity of educational resources used, the different aims of tackling teaching materials or the particularities of the socio-cultural contexts existing within the classroom.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.actfl.org/guiding-principles/literacy-language-learning>

On the one hand, in this current paper, foreign language teaching and learning is viewed as being deeply connected with the concept of culture (Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013) and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997). Norwegian is taught by making connections to its literature and history, by contextualizing learning experiences and by understanding that every utterance is situated in a socio-cultural setting. This connection to culture, as a broader concept, with its explicit and implicit elements of cultural representation, constitutes the foundation for understanding that language cannot be taught out of its deeply rooted cultural context. Building on the perspective that language is social practice, students would need to develop a certain kind of literacy that would enable them to mediate between cultures and exhibit respect, curiosity and openness toward what is perceived as different. Consequently, literacy in the FL should not be limited only to linguistic abilities but also to cross-cultural understanding (Piera, 2011) of the FL society.

On the other hand, considering that digital technologies are an inseparable part of today's learning process, the teaching Norwegian would also incorporate digital media and resources and digital apps in order to facilitate learning. Implicitly, this uptake of digital usage would need to have in mind an appropriate didactic use of ICT tools.

As communication practices have been redefined as a consequence of the emergence of these new technologies and of an understanding that communication is always situated in a socio-cultural context, a taxonomy of new literacy skills and practices has been formulated in order to grasp the extent of these changes. Therefore, concepts such as digital literacy, new media literacies, Internet literacy, social media literacy and multimodal literacy have been coined.

Based on the triad framework indicated above, the grid below includes some of the new literacies that have already been incorporated, to some degree, into the teaching practices of students who study Norwegian:

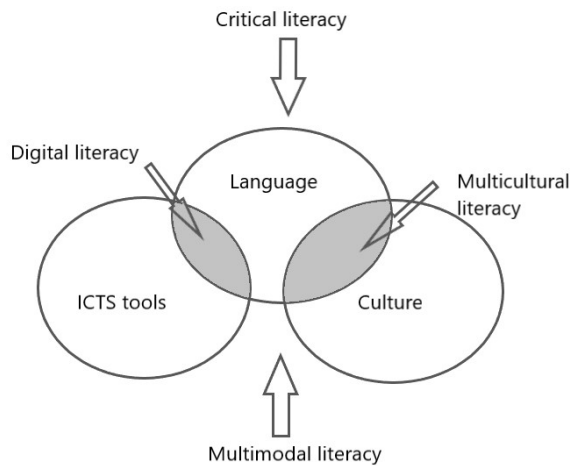
**Table 1.** Literacies and foreign language learning

<i>digital literacy</i>	It refers to the ability to understand information items in the hypertext and multimedia formats (Gilster 1997; Bawden 2001). It is not a mere technical skill grounded in information retrieval, but a cultural tool for engaging in everyday experience mediated by a variety of digital sources (Buckingham 2010)
<i>multimodal literacy</i>	The ability to interact in a meaningful way with multimodal texts (icons, visual representations, sound, video) and to create multimodal and digital resources (Scolari, 2019)
<i>critical literacy</i>	The ability to interpret critically texts pertaining to different genres and discourses (Miller, 2015). Access and analyze information, evaluate messages from a wide variety of media, apply creativity to express and analyse messages (ACTFL) <sup>3</sup>
<i>multicultural</i>	Multicultural literacies involve complex literacies intertwined with and embedded in social and cultural practices, ability to relate to diverse people, in diverse communicative contexts (Chaka, 2019)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.actfl.org/guiding-principles/literacy-language-learning>

These new literacies indicated above “are often more collaborative, more participatory” (Chaka 2019, 57), develop new mindsets and widen the angle of perceiving literacy. In order for students to become fully literate in today’s world, the curriculum should incorporate new literacies as pathways for engaging in critical and culturally sensitive thinking, in collaboration practices and in using ICT tools responsibly (International Reading Association, 2009). Communication mediated by digital technology follows an online etiquette and the emergence of these new literacies “are central to full civic, economic, and personal participation in a global community” (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008: 1).

Fig. 1 below indicates, in my view, the elements that interrelate in shaping these literacies in the foreign language classroom:



**Fig. 1.** The interplay of new literacies in the foreign language classroom

This framework points out that the connection between language learning and culture is facilitated by the development of multicultural literacy, while the relation between language learning and ICT tools is enabled by the development of digital technology. Critical thinking, as a nexus for developing critical literacy, represents a 21<sup>st</sup> century skill (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) that needs to become visible both when using the new technologies or when relating to culture (educational resources or people pertaining from different socio-cultural contexts). The demands posed by the digitally mediated society on teaching practices refer to the need of analysing, conceptualizing and understanding information from both traditional print-based sources and digital resources that envisage a multitude of genres. Therefore, multimodal literacy becomes essential when language and communication are rendered through a variety of channels.

## Multimodality

Multimodality is rooted in diverse disciplinary fields, but as a concept, it refers to perceiving communication as taking place in multiple modes, linguistic and non-linguistic ones. According to Kress (2010), multimodality is a normal state of human communication as people use different modes of making meaning. Given this stance, different modes render distinct potentials for making meaning: an image can substitute a text that is too long to read, writing is used when something is too difficult to represent visually and colour can be used in order to highlight specific aspects (Kress, 2010:1). As a consequence, all these modes have the effect of maximizing understanding and offering a broader view of the message intended to be decoded. Slowly but steadily, multimodality has extended the narrow focus on language towards “an interest in language and its other relations to other means of making meaning” (Jewitt, Bezemer & O’Halloran, 2016:4). In this line of thought, the decoding process is grounded in the interplay between language and visual representations or language and sounds.

Stated like this, it implies that the principles of multimodality are relevant to consider in the domain of foreign language teaching and learning. Firstly, learners need to be able to make sense of complex communication repertoires that combine both text and information that is sent through different channels: video, audio, visual imagery etc. In the foreign language classroom, such multimodal resources are the norm because students seldom engage only with resources that are monomodal, i.e. they contain a single mode of interpretation. In this respect, coursebooks contain multimodal resources that combine information sent through different channels. Technological advancements and the emergence of new digital tools generate an increased focus on embracing simultaneously visual, auditory and textual stimuli. Thus, learners both engage in a complex process of decoding the message and expand the way in which they communicate their ideas.

Another salient aspect of multimodality in the context of foreign language teaching resides in the way learners perceive or understand the target culture. Culture is ubiquitous in language learning, is always in the background and challenges learners’ “ability to make sense of the world around them” (Kramsch, 1993: 1). By acknowledging the fact that “language fulfils a range of social functions” (Jewitt, Bezemer & O’Halloran, 2016: 8), learners of a foreign language would better understand the different modes of communication and the complex issues of identity to be found in a multimodal communicational frame. Since language learners are required to become intercultural mediators across languages and cultures (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Kohler 2015;), it is necessary for them to have exposure to different multimodal resources that would facilitate

the understanding of the intertwined relation between cultural differences and communication. In addition, learners of a FL are “constantly building connections between a familiar and a new language and culture” (Kohler, 2015:194)

A fundamental premise resides in considering the differences between learning one’s mother tongue and learning a foreign language. In the first case, the elements of culture are integrated implicitly, in an unconscious process and language and culture co-exist. On the other hand, in the case of foreign language learning, much more focus is placed on learning vocabulary and grammar structures out of context and the elements of culture are taught explicitly. Troncoso (90 in Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2010) advocates for making use of learning materials that act as a source of exposure to both language and culture. In this regard, multimodal resources would be able to provide that missing contextualization and the decoding of the message would have in view for making meaning linguistic, social and cultural resources. In trying to untangle the intertwined relation between cultural differences and communication, one needs to ascertain that “differences between cultures means differences in representation and meaning” (Kress, 2010:8). In this respect, language distance needs to be addressed, as more pronounced cultural differences generate greater differences in the resources of representation and in the practices of their use (Kress, 2010). These differences can be found in the area of politeness, proxemics, gestures, facial expressions or different symbols.

At the moment, teaching practices need to adapt to a new demand: the learning expectations of students from Y and Z generations differ from requirements of former generations (Baumöl & Bockschecker, 2017:1). References are made to collaboration and sharing, as driving forces and paradigms that change the manner of interaction and of making information available (Baumöl & Bockschecker, 2017). Moreover, the processes associated to electronic reading are different in comparison to those used in linear-printed forms (books, magazines etc.) (Zammit, 2014). Meaning is achieved through making connections to images, colours, sound, graphic organizers, videos in addition to language. In evaluating messages from a wide variety of media, students develop their digital literacy, multicultural literacy, critical literacy and multimodal literacy.

As indicated in the Framework for 21st Century Curriculum and Assessment issued by the National Council of Teachers of English (2013)<sup>4</sup>, the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies refer to the ability to critically analyse and interpret multimedia and information sent through different channels of communication, to create and share knowledge with the global community, to be able to engage in cross-cultural communication, to be able to master diverse ICT tools and the ethics required to engage in such complex environments.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://secure.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Positions/Framework\\_21stCent\\_Curr\\_Assessment.pdf](https://secure.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Positions/Framework_21stCent_Curr_Assessment.pdf)

## Conclusions

This paper intended to highlight that the ubiquity of ICT tools in the educational landscape has determined rapid and constant changes in didactic practices. Thus, the notions of literacies need to be constantly redefined. By acknowledging that digitization determines changes and leaves room for challenges in the teaching practice, attention must be directed towards using digital technology in order to make teaching and learning more flexible, purposeful, authentic and channelled towards autonomous and lifelong learning.

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## NOTES ON HENRIK IBSEN SCHOLARSHIP TODAY: POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES IN COMBINING HISTORIOGRAPHICAL METHODS, DIGITAL HUMANITIES, AND THEATRE/LITERARY STUDIES

GIANINA DRUȚĂ<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Notes on Henrik Ibsen Scholarship Today: Potentials and Challenges in Combining Historiographical Methods, Digital Humanities and Theatre/Literary Studies*<sup>2</sup>. This paper explores the potentials and challenges encountered in the recent Henrik Ibsen scholarship emerging from the methodological combination of historiographical methods, digital humanities, and theatre/literary studies. In the first part, the article discusses the methodological intercrossings through examples from the Ibsen field. For this purpose, it takes theatre historiography, theatre/literary studies and digital humanities as different yet interconnected methodological portals to access the Ibsen world. In the second part, the article takes the methodological discussion further, by bringing into light the main four steps generally taken by researchers when working with this methodological combination. In this account, the IbsenStage Database<sup>3</sup> is the most powerful example of a research tool at crossroads between historiography, digital humanities, theatre and literature in the Ibsen field. Finally, the article concludes that the potentials and challenges in combining historiographical methods, digital humanities and theatre/literary studies revealed in the examples demonstrate the inescapable interconnectedness of quantitative and qualitative approaches not only in the Ibsen research, but also in the humanities in general.

**Keywords:** *Henrik Ibsen, IbsenStage, theatre historiography, digital humanities, theatre studies, literary studies, potentials, challenges, methodology*

**REZUMAT.** *Note asupra cercetării ibseniene recente: Oportunități și provocări în combinarea metodelor istoriografice, umanoarelor digitale și a studiilor literare/teatrale.* Acest articol explorează oportunitățile și provocările din cercetarea ibseniană recentă care a valorificat combinația metodologică dintre

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<sup>3</sup> <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/>

metodele istoriografice, umanioarele digitale și studiile teatrale/literare. În prima parte, articolul discută aceste intersecții metodologice prin exemple din studii care abordează opera și receptarea lui Henrik Ibsen. Din această perspectivă, articolul consideră istoriografia teatrală, studiile teatrale și literare, precum și umanioarele digitale ca portale metodologice diferite, dar interconectate prin care putem accesa universul ibsenian. În a doua parte, articolul duce discuția metodologică și mai departe, punând în lumină cei mai importanți patru pași urmați de cercetători atunci când aleg această combinație metodologică. În acest context, baza de date IbsenStage este exemplul cel mai puternic de instrument de cercetare la intersecția dintre istoriografie, umanioare digitale, teatru și literatură în domeniul studiilor ibseniene. În cele din urmă, articolul demonstrează prin exemple prezentate privind oportunitățile și provocările care apar atunci când combinăm metode istoriografice și umanioarele digitale cu studiile literare/teatrale că studiile cantitative și calitate sunt interconectate nu doar în cercetarea ibseniană, ci și în domeniul umanioarelor în general.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Henrik Ibsen, IbsenStage, istoriografie teatrală, umanioare digitale, studii teatrale, studii literare, oportunități, provocări, metodologie*

## 1. Introduction

With the rich spectre of research material revolving around the literary texts, theatre performances, film adaptations, translations circulating across the world from 1850 until today, it is no wonder that Ibsen studies has become a research field *per se* opened to a variety of methodologies. This paper focuses on how the combination of historiographical methods, digital humanities and theatre/literary studies was approached in the recent Ibsen scholarship. In studying the complex impact of Henrik Ibsen as world dramatist, we inevitably draw these methodologies together. The examples I will give demonstrate the development up to date of a new research tradition in Ibsen studies based on methodological intercrossings. This awareness around the mechanisms at work when combining different methodologies is particularly relevant in today's interdisciplinary research in the humanities. In this sense, Ibsen field is a playground for methodological experiments. Therefore, the examples of how methodological combinations are tested here, and the discussion of the potentials and challenges these experiments imply, can also serve other researchers conducting investigations in the theatre and literary studies.

But first, it must be clear that historiography, digital humanities, and theatre respectively literary studies are different methodologies. That is, they propose different ways of looking at a research object. Besides, I also must acknowledge that researchers encounter numerous challenges when working

with Digital Humanities. The main reason is the unconventional way of analysing data, rooted in the natural sciences and based on distant reading, which contrasts with the traditional close reading used in the humanities. While we can still identify some common issues, these challenges are usually unique in the backstage journey of each researcher. In the following, this paper demonstrates how the Ibsen stories of the past can be developed, shifted or amplified by bringing together historiography, digital tools, literature and theatre. Then it will move further to a more detailed discussion of the methodological steps and the general challenges entailed by this combination of research approaches.

## 2. Theatre historiography

First of all, the study of Henrik Ibsen's impact as world dramatist entails awareness of how history in general, and theatre history in particular is approached and written. In this respect, the field of theatre historiography makes no exception from the general rules of studying history.

Yet we have to demonstrate a special awareness when a theatrical event is at the core of our research. Why? Because a theatrical event has unique characteristics compared to other historical events. As Thomas Postlewait notices, "in the process of examining performance events, we can study them for their aesthetic or formal qualities, apart from the historical factors that may contribute to their significance"<sup>4</sup>. In other words, "a theatre event is to be understood simultaneously as an aesthetic and a historical event"<sup>5</sup>.

For example, when Postlewait discusses the performance and reception of *A Doll's House* in London in 1889 starring Janet Achurch<sup>6</sup>, he makes us aware that the approach of the historical records of the performance and its reception requires both historical and aesthetic thinking. Postlewait questions the historiographical perspective on Ibsen's breakthrough on the British problems emerging in the reconstruction of the production. His inquiry is based on a comparison of the contrasting meanings regarding the impact of the production extracted from reviews written by Robert Buchanan or G.B.Shaw. Also, Postlewait dedicates a considerable part of his analysis to William Archer and his equally central and controversial role in the staging as translator and active participant in the rehearsals.

With such a sharp theatre historiographical meta-commentary of this renowned Ibsen production, Postlewait highlights the historian's challenges and potentials when interpreting historical documents on theatre performances.

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<sup>4</sup> T. Postlewait *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 117

<sup>5</sup> Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 119

<sup>6</sup> Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 131-143

He also demonstrates us that the historiographical analysis of the theatrical events cannot be separated from the analysis of the meanings extracted from the dramatic text and the performance by all agents involved: actors, directors, audiences and, finally, scholars. It is when these meanings and the audience's reception on their enacting on stage are contradictory that the historian is challenged the most. Nevertheless, the plurality of perspectives turns into an advantage as the richness of theatre history emerges from the hybrid nature of the theatrical event.

### 3. Ibsen in-between literature and theatre

Hybridity is also the keyword for a scholarly approach to Ibsen because of his belonging both to the literary and theatrical realm.

Because of the hybrid nature of a playwright's activity, the greatest temptation is to follow the path of either literary or theatre studies as opposite solutions. The main reason for this situation, which is also the greatest methodological challenge, is that the dramatic text is a common research object that theatre and literary studies share.

Yet, the centrality of the performance in theatre studies and the centrality of text in literary studies indicate clear boundaries. To put it simply, theatre and literary studies look at the dramatic text, and, implicitly, at the activity of playwrights such as Ibsen from different perspectives. On the one hand, in theatre studies, the dramatic text is a tool used for a larger purpose, that is, the performance: "the term 'theatrical text' has been coined, which is used increasingly in theatre studies to refer to the textual basis of a performance. (...) The term 'drama' we can restrict to a historical and generically definable form, which certainly continues to be produced but is by no means synonymous with theatre (...). A theatrical text encompasses any kind of textual blueprint that is intended for or attains performance."<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, in literary studies, the dramatic text and its meanings constitute the main research object, whereas the performance is a by-product. In Postlewait's words, "literary critics typically focus on these aesthetic features of characterization and themes, but theatre historians want to understand how such matters were turned into the theatrical event."<sup>8</sup> In spite of these differences, the intercrossing of theatre and literary studies and their mutual influence is inevitable when discussing Ibsen's dissemination on the international book and theatre markets. As it follows, I will look closer at examples of how translations, adaptations and the mechanisms of cultural transmission affected Ibsen's impact as world dramatist.

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<sup>7</sup> C. B. Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, p. 125

<sup>8</sup> Postlewait, *Theatre Historiography*, p. 132

### 3.1. *Ibsen translations*

Let us take the example of the translations of Ibsen's plays. We usually consider them from a literary perspective. Their circulation on the book market, copyright issues or the loyalty of the translation to the original text are the most common aspects we look at. However, in the case of playwrights, translations can also be analysed from a theatrical perspective, as they belong to the theatre market too. In this respect, the process of translation helps us understand the asymmetrical cultural relationships affecting the book and the theatre market alike. Ultimately, translation is not only a matter of transmitting texts, but also of moving across historical, social, political and aesthetic contexts, as researchers such as Lawrence Venuti<sup>9</sup> or Pascale Casanova<sup>10</sup> prove it.

To understand this double literary and theatre perspective upon the Ibsen translations, it can be enough just to remember that dramatic texts usually constitute the background for if not the very script of the theatre performances. The case of Ibsen reveals that the emergence and dissemination of translations in the literary field is usually a consequence of the recognition they acquired in the theatre field. In addition, that a playwright manages not only to publish, but also to disseminate at such as a large scale his plays as literary works is a sign of canonization and establishment of his position in the literary field for the future.

For example, the translations of Enrico and Icilio Polese affected Ibsen's impact on the Italian stage and book market alike between 1891 and 1894, as Giuliano D'Amico demonstrates by looking at how Ibsen's plays were "domesticated" for the local audience<sup>11</sup>. Another example is Petre Sturdza, the most representative Romanian Ibsen actor. He published his own stage translations of *An Enemy of the People* (1907)<sup>12</sup> and *Ghosts*<sup>13</sup> as books. The Spanish example of Gregorio and Maria Martinez Sierra's stage rewriting of *A Doll's House* at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>14</sup> also proves the entanglement of the literary and theatre fields. The analysis of Ibsen's dissemination on the German stage also reveals the tight relationship between the literary and theatre market. The publishing of the *Complete Works* edition in German

<sup>9</sup> See L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation. Second Edition*, Routledge, London, 2008; L. Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> See "The Tragedy of Translated Men" in P. Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2004, p. 254-302

<sup>11</sup> G. D'Amico, *Domesticating Ibsen for Italy: Enrico and Icilio Polese's Ibsen Campaign*, Torino, Università Degli Studi Di Torino, 2013

<sup>12</sup> P. Sturdza, *Un dușman al poporului: piesă în 5 acte*, Bucharest, Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay, 1907

<sup>13</sup> P. Sturdza, *Strigoii*, Bucharest, Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay

<sup>14</sup> Iris Muñoz, *A Doll's House of Their Own: Gregorio and María Martínez Sierra's Feminist Rewritings of Ibsen in Silver Age Spain*, Oslo, Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for Litteratur, Områdestudier Og Europeiske Språk, 2018

translation between 1894 and 1904 was directly influenced by Ibsen's previous success on the German stage. This event also prepared the advent of the symbolist plays between 1899 and 1918 when Ibsen was performed most on the German stage.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.2. Adaptation

The analysis of translation invites us to a larger discussion of adaptation as an equally ambivalent and challenging tool in literary and theatre studies. From a literary perspective, adaptation usually entails the rewriting of a story, but the term has always been difficult to define as it entered other fields such as theatre or film. Linda Hutcheon coined it eventually as "1. An acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; 2. A creative and an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging; 3. An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work"<sup>16</sup> One proof is that, for theatre scholars, adaptation goes far beyond the plot level into the acting and staging practices. That is, the meanings extracted from the plot and the perspectives on the role of the dramatic text in the theatre production can indicate to what extent a play is adapted.

A famous example is the German alteration of the ending of *A Doll's House* for the 1880 premiere with Hedwig Nieman-Raabe. It even created a tradition on the German stage followed even by directors of recent stagings of the play, such as Thomas Ostermeier, according to the latest Ibsen research<sup>17</sup>. Italian star-actors such as Ermete Zacconi or Ermete Novelli also used to heavily cut, add or replace pieces of a text to please their audience in plays such as *Ghosts*<sup>18</sup>, *An Enemy of the People*<sup>19</sup> or *The Wild Duck*<sup>20</sup> at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The fame of the Italian literary and theatre practitioners for domesticating the plays went so far that Ibsen himself is said to have expressed his discontent with Ermete Zacconi's approach of *Ghosts*: "Zacconi recita sotto il mio nome un dramma, Spettri, che non è il dramma mio."<sup>21</sup> Petre Sturdza also followed the Italian example when he deliberately and freely chose to either preserve or delete the gathering scene when staging the Fourth Act of *An Enemy of the People*. For example, in his touring performances with the play in 1907-1908,

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<sup>15</sup> J.-M. Hanssen, *Ibsen on the German Stage 1876-1918. A Quantitative Approach*, Tübingen, Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2019, pp. 154-158

<sup>16</sup> L. Hutcheon, and S. O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*. Second edition, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 8

<sup>17</sup> See C. Räthel, "Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater-Multiple Authorship in Ibsen's Nora." *Ibsen Studies*, Vol.20, Issue 1, 2020, pp.67-87

<sup>18</sup> D'Amico, *Domesticating*, pp. 131-166

<sup>19</sup> D'Amico, *Domesticating*, pp. 240-254

<sup>20</sup> D'Amico, *Domesticating*, pp. 108-130

<sup>21</sup> U. Ojetti, *Cose viste. Con una prosa di Gabriele D'Annunzio. Tomo secondo*, Florence, Sansoni, 1951, p.21

he excluded the scene. However, in the production of 1912 at the National Theatre of Bucharest, he decided to keep the scene and confessed the troubles he had to ensure a homogeneous ensemble throughout the staging: "Soon after, we staged *An Enemy of the People* by H. Ibsen. But this time, we performed it entirely, including Act IV – that of the meeting – which I had omitted in Craiova because of the lack of personnel. (Yet I had noticed this omission in the [performances of the] Italian ensembles, without demeaning either the meaning or the effectiveness of the work.)"<sup>22</sup> By contrast, French Ibsenites such as Andre Antoine acknowledged the primacy of the dramatic text, judging by his interest in the quality of the translations: "Je voudrais surtout trouver le moyen de confronter le texte original, norvégien, original, des *Revenants*, avec la traduction que j'ai entre les mains"<sup>23</sup>. However, the naturalist approach of Antoine contrasted, for instance, with the extremely symbolist approach of Despres and Lugne-Poe<sup>24</sup>. This reveals how the extremely diverse Ibsen adaptations are rooted in the encounter of the literary meanings extracted from the plays with specific sets of theatre practices, whose analysis requires both literary and theatre expertise.

### 3.3. Cultural transmission

Both translation and adaptation have been considered by literary and theatre scholars as mechanisms of cultural transmission.

However, when it comes to a playwright of global impact such as Ibsen, the very understanding of the notion of cultural transmission becomes a challenge, because it has been articulated differently at crossroads between theatre and literature. Why?

Different laws rule the theatre and the literary fields, and this often makes scholars in theatre and literary studies develop irreconcilable perspectives. This controversy is further rooted in the fact that, in contrast to authors of novels, playwrights do not depend on the book market alone, they have their other foot in the theatre market. In the Ibsen field, these controversies most clearly emerge in the debate on the playwright's international breakthrough in light of cultural transmission. Whereas the tendency in the literary studies is to attribute Ibsen's breakthrough to the circulation of his plays on the book market, theatre scholars highlight the role of the global theatre market in ensuring Ibsen's worldwide consecration.

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<sup>22</sup> "Curând după aceasta s-a montat *Un dușman al poporului* de H. Ibsen, de astă dată jucată în completul ei și cu actul al IV-lea, al întrunirii, pe care îl omisesem la Craiova din lipsă de personal, (omisiune pe care de altfel o văzusem și la trupele italiene și care nu știrbește câtuși de puțin nici înțelesul, nici eficacitatea lucrării)." (P. Sturdza, *Amintiri. 40 de ani de teatru*, Bucharest, Meridiane, 1966, p. 244)

<sup>23</sup> A. Antoine, *Mes souvenirs sur le Théâtre-Libre*, Paris, 1921, p. 170

<sup>24</sup> K. E. Shepherd-Barr, "Ibsen in France from Breakthrough to Renewal", *Ibsen Studies*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, 2012, p. 61



This debate deepened once the concept of world literature and the focus on the relationship between centres and peripheries won the scholars' attention. One classical example is Pascale Casanova's Ibsen approach. She wrongly attributes his successful career as world dramatist to his consecration in Paris and London by means of William Archer's translations<sup>25</sup> and appropriation by the avant-garde theatre environments represented by Antoine and Lugne-Poe<sup>26</sup>. In this sense, Narve Fulsås and Tore Rem's research on "Ibsen, Scandinavia and the Making of a World Drama" contradicts Casanova's demonstration through a nuanced investigation of the complex network marking Ibsen's book dissemination in Scandinavia, Britain, Germany and France. They highlight that: "A threefold pattern can be discerned. In northern Europe, Ibsen was already firmly appropriated both as book and theatre. In Britain, his existence was conditioned on the still-existing divide between literature and theatre, with Ibsen soon being established as literature, while belonging to the 'independent', minority theatre sector; in France, he remained a minority interest both as book and performance."<sup>27</sup>

Theatre scholars also dismantled Casanova's approach: "Pascale Casanova has argued that it was the collective foreign adoption of Ibsen in Britain, Ireland, and France that made him 'universally recognised as universal' (2007, 229). (...) It is easier to defend Ibsen's value by highlighting his connections with the men of the European avant-garde than by his association with the actress-managers of the nineteenth-century commercial touring circuits; after all, the European avant-garde was to have a profound influence on the development of twentieth-century theatre."<sup>28</sup> Thus, quantitative analysis proved that Ibsen's consecration as world dramatist is highly indebted to the theatre practitioners who performed Ibsen all over the world.

Eventually, the conclusions of both literary and theatre scholars provide a rather decentralized view on the theatre and literary markets. In other words, the relationship between "centre" and "periphery" tends to be dissolved into a much more diverse landscape marked by mutual influences and constantly changing conflicting points and competing agents. While the stories told by literary and theatre scholars about Ibsen's international success are different and sometimes even contradictory, we must acknowledge that they point at two different contexts that do not necessarily exclude one discourse in favour of the other.

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<sup>25</sup> Casanova, *World Republic*, pp. 159-161

<sup>26</sup> Casanova, *World Republic*, pp. 162-163

<sup>27</sup> N. Fulsås, and T. Rem. *Ibsen, Scandinavia and the Making of a World Drama*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 5

<sup>28</sup> J. Holledge, J. Bollen, F. Helland, and J. Tompkins, *A Global Doll's House*, London, Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2016, p. 31

#### 4. Digital Humanities

Digital humanities has challenged our way of looking at the stories about Henrik Ibsen's literary and theatre past even further. Why? Because applying quantitative analysis to qualitative interpretations has allowed us to see previous biases in the interpretation of historical facts. Franco Moretti's distant reading model taught us to read literature through maps, graphs and trees<sup>29</sup>. This model encouraged scholars to set up corpuses of texts and build infrastructure to facilitate Digital Humanities-based research. Transferred to the theatre field, distant reading highlighted the unique dynamics of performances moving across the global theatre market. According to Debra Caplan, the current digital archives, theatrical environment, visualisations and databases<sup>30</sup> in the theatre and performance field "demonstrate the medium's potential to tackle some of our discipline's most formidable challenges"<sup>31</sup>.

The Ibsen studies field also adopted Digital Humanities as historiographical tool for both literary and theatre analyses, because it "offers possibilities for extending the bounds of Ibsen scholarship"<sup>32</sup>. While this combination is a common feature to all the examples I will mention, the models they generate are different. The main reason is that while a typical literary approach can benefit from the exploration of a research object through a pre-established theoretical framework, theatre historiography and Digital Humanities entail a phenomenological approach of the resources. On the one hand, the technical steps are roughly the same: archival investigations, the use of a database such as IbsenStage, the extraction and processing of data in order to generate networks and maps. On the other hand, the results of these similarly executed steps reject pre-established frameworks. The archive materials and the possibility to access them differ based on geographical and temporal criteria. Consequently, the theoretical models emerging from the combination of quantitative and qualitative tools can hardly be duplicated. In the following, I will focus on some examples of Ibsen research combining historiographical methods, digital humanities and theatre/literary studies.

In the literary Ibsen field, there are currently two major models based on digital tools. Firstly, the project "Mapping Ibsen's Productivity" casts light on Ibsen's self-imposed exile, on the influences around him, and traces of these

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<sup>29</sup> F. Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*, London, Verso, 2007; F. Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature", *New Left Review*, Issue 1, 2000, pp. 54-68

<sup>30</sup> See Caplan's overview of such digital resources in D. Caplan, "Notes from the Frontier: Digital Scholarship and the Future of Theatre Studies", *Theatre Journal*, Vol.67, Issue 2, May 2015, p. 351

<sup>31</sup> Caplan, "Notes from the Frontier", p. 348

<sup>32</sup> Holledge, *A Global Doll*, p. 8

places in his works through maps.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, the National Library of Norway has also developed a platform with statistical graphs and network visualisations where it is possible to see the connections between Henrik Ibsen and other influential intellectuals of the epoch based on his correspondence.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, the IbsenStage Database is by far the most complex Digital Humanities historiographical research tool in Ibsen studies. Jens-Morten Hanssen described it as “an event-based, relational performance database currently holding more than 23,000 records with data from Ibsen performance from 1850 until the present day”<sup>35</sup>. More precisely, this database currently consists of 24335 records<sup>36</sup>. But IbsenStage is not just a “collection” or “a way to organize data”.<sup>37</sup> It is also “a set of procedures to facilitate interaction between data and users, and a set of research methodologies to enable scholars to use the database for research purposes”<sup>38</sup>.

The major way in which IbsenStage has been used is to map theatre production history. The stories emerging from the mapping challenged the traditional narrative on Ibsen’s international breakthrough. From a history about key translators and avant-garde artists, the “cartographic revelations”<sup>39</sup> changed it to a history about commercial theatre networks controlled by star-actor and actor-managers. More concretely, Ibsen’s international success has been attributed to translators such as Wilhelm Lange, William Archer or Moritz Prozor, critics such as Georg Brandes, George Bernard Shaw or Edmund Gosse, or avant-garde producers such as Otto Brahm, André Antoine or Aurelien-Marie Lugne-Poe.

By contrast, the early success between 1890 and 1914 of the Noras discussed in *A Global Doll’s House* appears ephemeral compared to the long-term impact of translators, critics and avant-garde theatre practitioners. The “*Et Dukkehjem* maps suggest that it was the early Noras from Germany, Denmark, Norway, France, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Japan, the UK, and Greece who secured Ibsen’s first international successes.”<sup>40</sup> It was the commercial success of the play ensured by actresses who established Ibsen in the theatrical and even

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<sup>33</sup> “Although places in Ibsen’s life have been particularly well documented by previous biographers, often down to the level of address and date of residence, the visualization of that information on a map allows us to see new relationships in the material. For example, we can compare the places that were productive for him, we can visualize the stages of composition for each play in terms of place, and we can get a better sense of the pace and range of the mobility of both Ibsen’s person and his writing.” (<http://tango.bol.ucla.edu/orientnorth/ibsen.html>)

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.nb.no/hanske/brev/aarsliste.php?id=64> ; <https://www.nb.no/hanske/brev/knute.php?id=64&aar=1879> .

<sup>35</sup> Hanssen, *Ibsen on the German Stage*, p. 16

<sup>36</sup> Last SQL interrogation of IbsenStage was on 10th July 2020.

<sup>37</sup> Hanssen, *Ibsen on the German Stage*, p. 16

<sup>38</sup> Hanssen, *Ibsen on the German Stage*, p. 16

<sup>39</sup> J. Bollen and J. Holledge, “Hidden Dramas: Cartographic Revelations in the World of Theatre Studies”, *The Cartographic Journal*, Vol.48, Issue 4, 2011, pp.226-236

<sup>40</sup> Holledge, *A Global Doll*, p. 32

literary field. The mapping<sup>41</sup> of the global trajectories of the actresses performing Nora at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was also backed by their personal histories. This demonstrates how the meeting between quantitative and qualitative methods changed the discourse around Ibsen's first international breakthrough revolving around translators and avant-garde theatre practitioners, pointing at the major role of the commercial theatre circuits. Starting in Europe, travelling to the East and West alike, the global outreach of the early Noras can only be compared with the geographical expansion of the Ibsen performances after 1990.

The maps<sup>42</sup> further show that a second global expansion of *Et dukkehjem* emerged at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These tours travelled farther than the performances in the first global wave. They also entailed a much greater linguistic diversity, as German and English no longer dominated the performance landscape. Another pattern in the mapping of these productions reflect that they originated outside Europe, usually in the Americas, and East and South Asia. A qualitative inquiry reveals that soft power policies are behind this global expansion after 1991. Since *Et dukkehjem* has been part of the UNESCO documentary heritage since 2001<sup>43</sup>, Norway has constantly nourished the Ibsen industry through initiatives such as the International *Ibsen festival*, *Ibsen Awards*<sup>44</sup> or *Nora's Sisters*<sup>45</sup>.

Jens-Morten Hanssen's research based on maps and graph visualisations also highlights a unique feature of the German Ibsen tradition, namely the Ibsen cycles performed by Ibsen Ensembles between roughly 1899 and 1910: "the tradition dates back to the end of the 1880s and continues into the 1920s, but I would argue that the first decade of the twentieth century constituted the golden days of the Ibsen cycles and that the very fact that they proliferated during these years testifies to Ibsen's strong command of the German stage."<sup>46</sup> Beside the combination of historiographical close reading and digital visualisation, the discussion of this trend required a mix of literary and theatre perspectives. The notion of Ibsen cycle is rooted in the literary view of Ibsen's work as a system organised chronologically and aesthetically in a clear order. The concept was imported by the theatre practitioners in the Ibsen ensembles and re-invested with meaning. For these ensembles, an Ibsen cycle was "a non-fixed set of Ibsen plays"<sup>47</sup>,

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<sup>41</sup> See the map "The First Global Expansion" at <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/project/130>.

<sup>42</sup> See the map "The Second Global Expansion" at <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/project/130>.

<sup>43</sup> Holledge, *A Global Doll*, p. 28

<sup>44</sup> One relevant example is the Romanian project "Hedda's sisters. Empowering Women Theatre Artists in Romania and Eastern Europe" which was granted the *Ibsen Awards* in 2014. See more at: <http://ibsenawards.com/scholarship/winner/hedddas-sisters/>

<sup>45</sup> See the map "Norwegian Funding between 2006 and 2011" at <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/project/131>.

<sup>46</sup> Hansen, *Ibsen on the German Stage*, p.176

<sup>47</sup> Hansen, *Ibsen on the German Stage*, p. 181

usually staged as a series of performances during tours. Ibsen cycles also create density and frequency in the graphical visualisations of performances across a short time span. More specifically, the graphs<sup>48</sup> and maps<sup>49</sup> tell us the story of the high degree of consecration, canonization, and naturalisation, as well as of the commercial impact of Ibsen on the German stage at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Network analysis has also revealed invisible connections between theatre practitioners and links between productions that earlier were hidden from the scholars' eyes. In Jens-Morten Hanssen's work on *Ibsen on the German Stage*, the networks reveal the power of the star-system when promoting *A Doll's House*<sup>50</sup>. The contributor-contributor networks reveal the impact of Agnes Sorma's interpretation of Nora on the German stage. They also highlight the power of the touring performances organised by the star-actress and the impact of the solo-guest performances on the geographical distribution and on the commercial success of *A Doll's House*. In this respect, the network of Sorma displays weak ties due to her numerous performances as solo-guest artist together with different ensembles across the German-speaking world. By contrast, the networks of resident artists such as Emil Lessing point at ensemble-based productions with stronger cohesion, but less geographical expansion, and, most probably, less commercial impact too.

Networks are also crucial in the building and transmission of an aesthetic tradition. The Nordic Noras participated in and supported a "process of aesthetic blending"<sup>51</sup> by travelling across Scandinavia. Actresses such as Betty Hennings, Adelaide Johannesen, Ida Aalberg, Johanne Dybwad and Tore Segelcke fuelled a common Ibsen experience in this geographical area<sup>52</sup>. Not only the ensembles that these guest-actresses performed with assumed their influence, but also the other way round. Mutual influence and collaboration were the keywords for the Nordic Ibsen network.

This digital travel in the past invites us not only to look at maps and networks to understand the challenging methodological combinations when analysing Ibsen. For example, the virtual reconstruction of Komediehuset in Bergen invites us to step in on the 19<sup>th</sup> century theatre stage, and follow Ibsen's steps at this place where he "learnt his craft"<sup>53</sup> by staging one of his first historical plays, *Olaf Liljekrans* in January 1857<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Hanssen, *Ibsen on the German Stage*, p. 184. See also the graph in section 5 "The German Naturalisation of Ibsen" at <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/project/152>.

<sup>49</sup> See the maps in section 6 "The German Ibsen cycles" and section 7 "Touring in the name of Ibsen" at <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/project/152>.

<sup>50</sup> See the network in section 4 "A *Doll's House* and the Star System" at <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/project/152>.

<sup>51</sup> Holledge, *A Global Doll*, p. 75

<sup>52</sup> See the map "Touring Trajectories of Major Nordic Noras 1879 to 1937" at <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/project/131>.

<sup>53</sup> <https://ortelia.com/project/the-virtual-reconstruction-of-komediehuset-bergen/>

<sup>54</sup> <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/event/77883>

## 5. A methodological journey

As mentioned earlier in this paper, researches based on methodological combination of historiographical methods, digital humanities and theatre/literary studies involve several technical steps. To make this methodological process clearer, I will explore here the main four steps that we take when combining quantitative and qualitative research tools. For this purpose, I use the IbsenStage database as the main example of digital tool used for such investigations in the current Ibsen scholarship.

The first step is to gather enough information in order to build and work with a reliable dataset. Archival investigations are most typical in this phase. The second step is to interrogate the raw dataset of events in IbsenStage based on various criteria such as language or country. The third step is to extract the main patterns of analysis through a further processing of the initial results in graphs, maps or networks. The fourth step is to decipher the story told within these patterns by going back to a qualitative analysis of the historical resources.

### 5.1. Common challenges

Before explaining how these interconnected methodological steps are combined into a back and forth movement, I also have to make it clear that each of these four steps entail many challenges that apply when we investigate not only the Ibsen field, but the humanities in general. Matthew Wilkens<sup>55</sup> identifies some of them, and highlights that these challenges are common to any researcher combining historiographical methods and digital humanities tools across fields such as literature and theatre.

The first challenge entails legal and technical issues regarding the corpus of archival material on which the dataset is based. Copyright regulations are most problematic for researchers who gather documents but are prevented from their further publishing and processing in research: "it can be difficult to assemble suitable corpora for computational analysis, especially in the era after 1923 when many texts remain in copyright"<sup>56</sup>.

Training challenges constitute an issue too, as humanities researchers often lack "skills and methods necessary for computational work"<sup>57</sup> at the beginning of their projects. For example, I also had to learn a new language – SQL or Structured Query Language – in order to be able to extract the information I needed from the IbsenStage database. Information such as the number and list of the 110 Romanian

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<sup>55</sup> M. Wilkens, "Digital Humanities and Its Application in the Study of Literature and Culture", *Comparative Literature*, Vol.67, Issue 1, 2015, pp.11-20

<sup>56</sup> Wilkens, *Digital Humanities*, p. 18

<sup>57</sup> Wilkens, *Digital Humanities*, p. 18

events performed between 1894 and 1945, or the number and list of the 277 Romanian actors who performed in Ibsen plays in the same period were extracted by writing SQL queries applied to IbsenStage. Moreover, it is not only a matter of technical skills. We also have to learn how to understand and interpret the findings that this new informatics language communicate to us as researchers.

A final challenge Wilkens mentions concerns the ability of “working across multiple languages”<sup>58</sup>. This entails both the software’s capacity to process data in several languages and that of the researchers to cross the linguistic boundaries. However, a collaborative research approach, involving a team as opposed to individual scholars, opens the possibility of working across disciplines and cultures.

### **5.2. Four steps in a process**

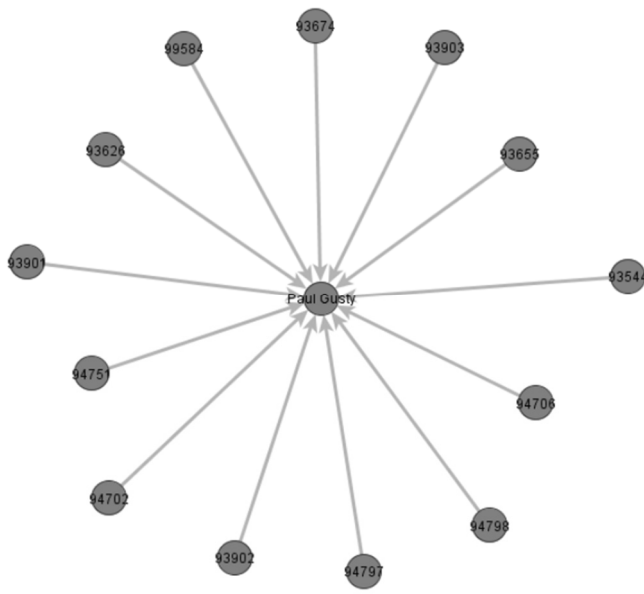
The first step in the methodological journey I propose here is based on previous research and archival investigations that enable researchers to build the IbsenStage datasets. The main challenge here is that the dataset constantly changes as more information is registered in the database. This mobile nature of the dataset highly can affect the next two steps, often leading to a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis already from the start of the research. We can still perform data interrogation while we register information in the database, when the dataset is not complete. This usually helps to identify the main research directions and guides us to choose which historical resources to focus on. But, we must be aware that the results of the initial data interrogation can change if historical investigations indicate that we must expand our dataset. The main research paths might be same, but significant details might emerge and lead us to new historical investigations.

What happens when we proceed to the second step, which is the data interrogation? In this respect, the Romanian Ibsen tradition prior to 1947 offers, for example, particular challenges for researchers because it is marked by a unique pluralism and fluidity. Historical facts such as constantly changing national boundaries and the mix of languages make it hard to apply only one criteria such as language or country when interrogating the IbsenStage dataset. The data interrogation and, later on, the pattern extraction, can also affect the theoretical choices of the researcher, whose initial assumptions might simply be wrong. For example, the combination of Digital Humanities and theatre historiography made me abandon the initial post-colonial framework in my research on Ibsen in Romania. Thus, I adopted the concept *histoire croisee* to address the diversity, openness and playfulness in the cosmopolitan early Romanian Ibsen suggested already by the initial results of the data interrogation on plays, actors and organisations.

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<sup>58</sup> Wilkens, *Digital Humanities*, p. 19

On this background, we can take the third step, which entails the pattern extraction based on graphs, maps or network visualisation. These tools draws the path for the application of historiography, and theatre/literary theories even further. Moreover, the extraction and selection of graphs, network patterns and tables needed for the elaboration of map layers entail several steps themselves. In the case of IbsenStage, the initial quantitative part of the research is performed by using SQL queries. Then, the network software Visone or mapping software such as ArcGIS/QGIS are needed in order to process the initial data extracted from IbsenStage and to obtain networks and maps of Ibsen contributors and events<sup>59</sup>. But, we must remember that graphs, maps and network do not tell us the whole story. The analysis of the patterns requires the return to qualitative analysis of historical resources to rebuild the Ibsen past.



**Fig. 1.** Contributor event network capture

The challenge here is to know how to “read” the various elements of a network, so that the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis really helps us to tell the hidden Ibsen stories. On the one hand, the dots are the elements that we want to find more about: events, contributors such as actors or directors, theatre institutions and venues. The lines with arrows at one end are vectors that tie these elements together. The arrow connects the central

<sup>59</sup> See more at <https://ibsenstage.hf.uio.no/pages/browse/projects>.



elements we inquired about in the SQL query. For example, if I am interested to find the plays in which the Romanian actors performed most, the arrows connect the plays with the contributors. The same applies to institutions and venues that bring the actors together in the same way as the plays or the productions.

The understanding of graphs, maps and network patterns depends on a final fourth step: the qualitative analysis of historical resources. Archival documents, biographies, memories and theatre reviews complete the stories hidden in the main visualisation patterns. Nevertheless, there are many challenges hidden behind working with historical resources at crossroads between digital humanities, theatre and literature.

For instance, the theatre reviews are among the most important and the most sensitive resources we work with. Historically, they document the performances, their reception and the changes in the theatre field, as Postlewait demonstrated in his analysis of *A Doll's House*. In the Ibsen field, both older and newer research has demonstrated the major role of theatre reviews when conducting theatre historiographical research and performance analysis<sup>60</sup>. Yet, from a quantitative perspective, if these reviews are not “stored” in a digital version, but kept in analogue archives, they are sensitive to the passing of time and can be easily corrupted. Thus, resources that previous researchers could consult 50 years ago might simply not be available anymore for researchers today. In addition, the absence of a digitized version of such reviews makes it almost impossible to investigate them using a more complex quantitative method such as text mining.

Another challenge is that theatre reviews are a written “site” in-between literature and theatre, as both theatrical and literary documents. However, this challenge is also one of the greatest research potential of these resources. Due their versatility and ambivalence, we can use them to analyse both the theatrical and the literary reception of Ibsen based on two different, yet interconnected standpoints. In other words, the in-between nature of the theatre reviews is rooted in the double literary and theatrical meaning that the researcher can draw from their interpretation.

## 6. Concluding remarks

The exploration of these four steps demonstrates that the potentials and challenges I focused on stem from the continuous back and forth movement entailed by the methodological combination of quantitative and qualitative research tools. I therefore want to stress that the introduction of digital humanities in the field of Ibsen studies does not make the crossing of discipline boundaries

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<sup>60</sup> Postlewait, *Theatre historiography*, pp. 132-140

between history, literary studies and theatre studies any less complex. There will always be challenges as we move from historiography as the writing of experiences of the past, literature as the creation of fictional worlds, and theatre as the spatial, visual and bodily representation of this fiction on stage. Digital Humanities only brings a quantitative analysis methodological approach from the sciences into the world of qualitative interpretation. The patterns in the data visualisations that I have shown you have all stimulated new research questions. But the answers entail the return to traditional close reading methodologies of historiography, literary and theatre theory, as Joanne Tompkins also highlights: "Taking advantage of digital humanities tools does not dilute or compromise intellectual inquiry; rather, it has the potential to extend the parameters of research in theatre and performance."<sup>61</sup> Jonathan Bollen strengthens this view, reminding us that "rich descriptions and interpretations, not the abstractions of data models, are what preserve the artistic, linguistic, and cultural authenticity of performance and archival resources."<sup>62</sup>

To conclude, the methodological models of combining historiographical methods, digital humanities and theatre/literary studies I have presented revealed a great research potential, where challenges encourage creative theoretical and practical solutions. The examples I presented teach us how recent Ibsen research explores the combination of historiographical close-reading and digital humanities distant reading tools to re-discuss Ibsen's global and local impact by tracing unknown histories and challenging consecrated discourses. Eventually, only by choosing the best combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and tools can we reveal the story behind the nodes, lines, arrows and polygon layers in the fascinating maps, graphs and trees that have changed our way of seeing the Ibsen world and the humanities in general.

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<sup>61</sup> J. Tompkins, "Editorial Comment: Theatre, the Digital, and the Analysis and Documentation of Performance", *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 68, Issue 4, 2016, p. xi

<sup>62</sup> J. Bollen, "Data Models for Theatre Research: People, Places, and Performance", *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 68, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 621

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## AUTOMATISERT KLASSIFIKASJON AV NORSKE MÅLFORMER VHA. DATAUTVINNING AV UANNOTERT TEKST

FARTEIN TH. ØVERLAND<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Automated Classification of Variants of Norwegian by Means of Text Mining of Unannotated Text.* This article presents a model for automatically classifying different variants of modern Norwegian Language (*bokmål* and *nynorsk* ranging from 1930 to 2011) by means of data mining unannotated text. The model is built in the Orange visual programming interface, and is based on a modification of an example model presented by the project which had the original purpose of semantical classification of fairy tale types in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index. The core modules of the model are Bag-of-Words and Logistic Regression. The model is trained with four different translations of the Gospel of John, and cross validated with various random texts. The model is proven to be very sound for classification of Norwegian language variation, and yields correct classification in 100% of the realistic tests.

**Keywords:** *Language Variation, Text mining, Orange Data Mining, Text Clustering, Text Classification, Bag-of-Words, Logistic Regression, Predictive Model, Norwegian Language, Nynorsk, Bokmål*

**REZUMAT.** *Clasificare automatizată a diferitelor variante de norvegiană utilizând extragerea digitalizată a textelor neanotate.* Acest articol prezintă un model pentru clasificarea automată a diferitelor variante ale limbii norvegiene moderne (*bokmål* și *nynorsk*, între 1930 și 2011) cu ajutorul extragerii automatizate a textului neanotat. Modelul este construit în interfața de programare vizuală Orange și se bazează pe modificarea unui model-exemplu prezentat de proiect, care a avut ca scop inițial clasificarea semantică a tipurilor de povești din indexul Aarne-Thompson-Uther. Modulele de bază ale modelului sunt Bag-of-Words și Regresie logistică. Modelul este axat pe patru traduceri diferite ale Evangheliei lui Ioan și este validat de alegerea aleatorie a fragmentelor. Modelul s-a dovedit a fi foarte solid pentru clasificarea variației limbii norvegiene și obține o clasificare corectă în 100% din testări.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *variația limbii, extragerea digitalizată, interfața de programare Orange, clasificarea textelor, Bag-of-Words, regresie logistică, model predictibil, limbă norvegiană, nynorsk, bokmål*

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## 1. Innleiing

Føremålet med denne studien er å utvikla og testa ein sjølvverkande modell for klassifikasjon av ulike variantar av norsk språk. Modellen vil verta bygd opp og køyrt i programvaren Orange; ei verktøykasse for visuell programmering av datautvinning (eng. *data mining*) utvikla ved Universitetet i Ljubljana (jf. Demar J et al. 2013 og nettsida til prosjektet<sup>2</sup>) og stør seg i stor mon på dette prosjektets retningslinjer for klassifikasjon av tekst med visse brigde for å tilpassa modellen til mitt føremål. Kjernen av klassifikasjonsmetoden er pose-med-ord-modellen (etter eng. *Bag-of-Words*, mi omsetjing) (jf. Zellig 1954) og logistisk regresjon. Denne modellen fungerer med tekst utan metadata og både korpuset som vil verta nytta for å trenar og testa modellen er såleis rein, uannotert tekst. Norsk språk etter unionstida skil seg frå mange andre språk ved å ha stor variasjon, mest openbert med omsyn til dei offisielle skriftspråka, men også pga. hyppige språkreformer og stor valfridom mellom ulike former innanfor kvar av målformene. Artikkelen vil også kort drøfta kva fylgjer denne variasjonen får for bruk av pose-med-ord-modellen på norsk jamført med språk med mindre variasjon i rettskrivinga, som t.d. moderne engelsk. Denne drøftinga knyter seg til hovudproblemstillinga fordi føremålet til klassifikasjonsmodellen min modell byggjer på er klassifikasjon av genrar, ikkje språkvariasjon. Det vil også verta gjeve ei vurdering av bruken av Orange frå eit brukarperspektiv, og skisser til vidareutvikling av metoden som vert presentert her for andre forskingsmål innan nordiskfaget.

## 2. Val av korpus til trening av modellen

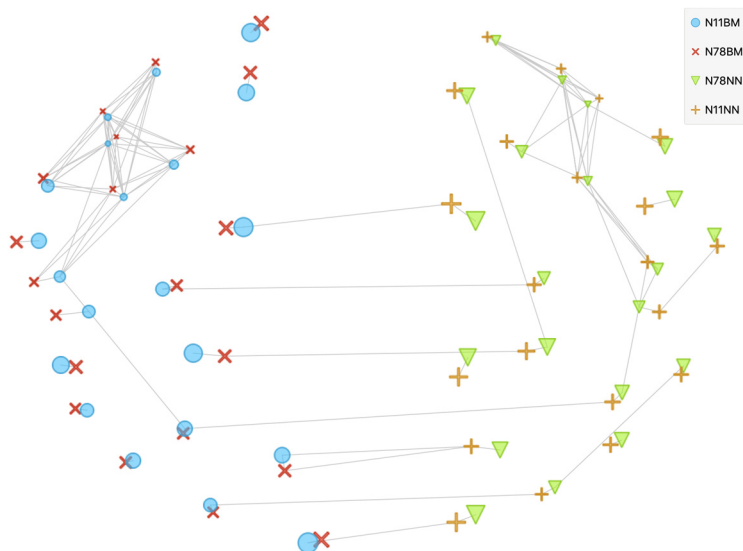
For denne studien er det naudsynt med eit korpus med tekst som finst i parallelle versjonar med ulike variantar av bokmål og nynorsk med tilstrekkeleg lengd til å byggja ein solid modell og med liknande tekstar til å testa modellen med. Alternativ kunne vore offisielle dokument som offentlege vedtekter og lovtekstar eller lærebøker, men eg ynskte helst eit korpus med narrative trekk (som på einskildordplanet ovrar seg som høg frekvens av m.a. personlege pronomen og verb for handlingar, t.d. *gå og* talehandlingar, t.d. *seia*). Eit godt alternativ har vist seg å vera norske bibelomsetjingar, særleg sidan Bibelen har eit velutvikla system for tekstinndeling og kryssreferansar og ulike delar med liknande innhald. Ulike omsetjingar av Johannesevangeliet (som utgjer 21 kapittel og om lag 6000 ord) har vorte nytta for å trenar modellen. Av praktiske omsyn har eg nytta dei omsetjingane som er tilgjengelege digitalt frå Det Norske Bibelselskap<sup>3</sup>. Eg tolkar deira *Retningslinjer for bruk av Bibelselskapets*

<sup>2</sup> <https://orange.biola.si> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>3</sup> På <http://www.bibel.no/Nettbibelen> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

*bibeloversettelser*<sup>4</sup> som at denne bruksmåten av dataa er gangbar med tanke på opphavsrett. Dei aktuelle utgåvene er bokmålsutgåvene frå 1930, 1978/85 og 2011 (heretter: N1930BM, N78BM og N11BM) og nynorskutgåvene frå 1938 (også kjent som Indrebøbiblen) 1978/85 og 2011 (heretter: N38NN, N78NN og N11NN). Det er ikkje plass her til å gå i djupna når det gjeld utgjevingshistoria til desse utgåvene og dei tidlegare utgåvene dei byggjer på, her viser eg vil Bibelselskapets eigne oversyn *Oversettelser 1814-1938*<sup>5</sup> og *De nyeste bibeloversettelsene til norsk*<sup>6</sup>.

Når eg visualiserte modellen si klassifisering av utgåvene, viste det seg, som ein kunne venta, at N78NN/N11NN og N78BM/N11BM ligg så nær kvarandre språkleg at dei ikkje kan brukast til å skilje ulike variantar av målformene. Ein kan nytta multidimensjonal skalering for å framstilla desse forholda visuelt.



**Figur 1.** Fråstanden mellom N78NN, N11NN, N78BM og N11BM visualisert med multidimensjonal skalering (skjermdump frå Orange)

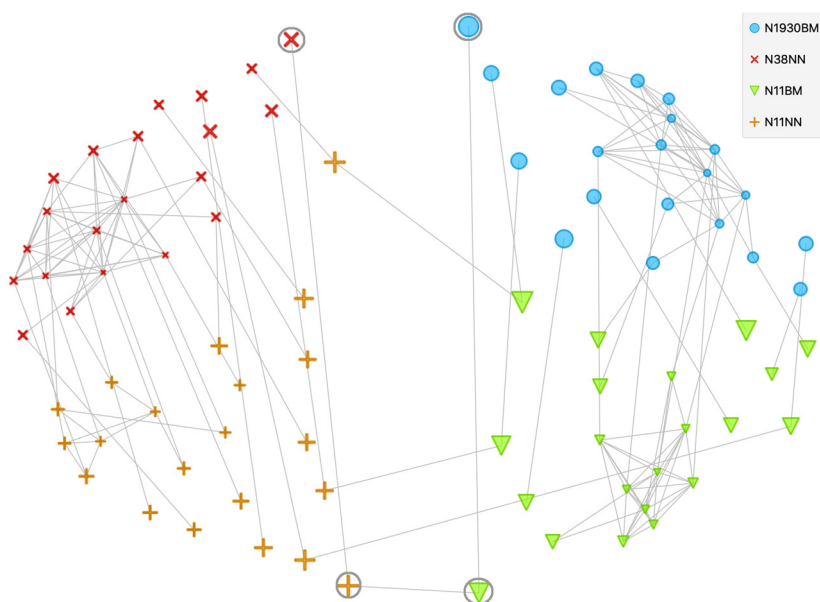
Punkta i figuren utgjer dei 21 kapitla i Joh og linene liknande par. Som ein kan sjå er skilnadene i språkføringa mellom 1978/85- og 2011-utgåvene så liten at identiske ordformer til ord frå bestemte kapittel ligg nærmare kvarandre mellom utgåvene enn ordformene til andre kapittel i same utgåve. Jamføring av språkføringa i N78NN og N11NN stadfester dette; N78NN bruker fleire tradisjonelle

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.bibel.no/Nettbibelen/Opphavsrett\\_2](http://www.bibel.no/Nettbibelen/Opphavsrett_2) (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bibel.no/OversettelseSprakLitteratur/Bibeloversettelser/Oversettelser-Norge/Oversettelser1814-1938> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bibel.no/OversettelseSprakLitteratur/Bibeloversettelser/Oversettelser-Norge/Etter1938> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

former som t.d. *fylgja*<sup>7</sup> (Joh 3: 21), *ljøs* og (Joh 12: 35) og *hjá* (Joh 12: 8) medan N11NN nyttar *følgja*, *lys* og *hos*. Større variasjon kunne ein heller ikkje venta seg med tanke på normeringshistoria i den perioden det er snakk om. Bortsett frå det er skilnaden mellom utgåvene fyrst og fremst omsetjingsmetodane; 1978/85-utgåvene er i stor grad konkordante (grunntekstnære) og 2011-utgåvene idiomatiske (meiningsnære) (jf. *Ulike måter å oversette Bibelen på*<sup>8</sup>). For å maksimalisera den språkleg kontrasten til dei eldre utgåvene har eg difor vald å ikkje bruka 1978/85-utgåvene. Då står N1930BM, N38NN, N11BM og N11NN att, og desse dannar eit korpus med fin symmetri mellom eldre riksmål og nynorsk og yngre bokmål og nynorsk. Det er fleire variantar av norsk som ikkje er inkludert i modellen (1800-tals riksmål, klassisk landsmål, midlandsmål og moderne nynorsk og bokmål med samnorskformer), men det er god grunn til å rekna med at dei ville fungert på same måte i modellen som dei variantane som finst i korpuset, og, som me skal sjå i kap. 5.3 nedanfor, kan modellen også estimera nærskylde målformer som han ikkje har vorte trent i.



**Figur 2.** Fråstanden mellom N38NN, N11NN, N1930BM og N11BM visualisert med multidimensjonal skalering (skjermdump frå Orange, med nokre punkt manuelt markert av forfattaren)

<sup>7</sup> Dette og alle fylgjande døme på einskilde ord er ført opp i lemma-form, ikkje den bøyingsforma dei har i teksten, men mindre noko anna er oppgjeve.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bibel.no/OversettelseSprakLitteratur/Bibeloversettelser/Oversettelsesmetoder> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

Språket i N1930BM kan ein karakterisera som eldre riksmål med ein del danske former som t.d. *I* (Joh 12: 8), *op* (Joh 12: 10) *mig* (Joh 12: 14), *øie* (Joh 12, 37) og *nogen* (Joh 12: 47) der N11BM har *dere*, *opp*, *meg* *øye* og *noen*. Språkføringa i N11BM gjer seg elles nytte av moderate og riksmålsnære variantar innanfor offisiell bokmålsnormering. Sjølv om N38NN kom ut same året som den store rettskrivingsforma i 1938, fylgjer omsetjinga reforma frå 1917 med i-mål med skilnad mellom sterke og linne femininum, t.d. bund. f. sg. *gravi* (Joh 20: 1), men *kona* (Joh 8: 4) og bund. f. pl. *synagogone* (Joh 16: 2), men *piler* (1. Sam 20: 20) og tradisjonelle former som t.d. *fyr* (Joh 8: 54) *skjota* (1. Mos 40: 10) og *ganga* (2. Mos 3: 3) osv. der N11NN har *grava*, (*kona*), *synagogene*, (*piler*), *før*, *skyta* og *gå*.

Ein kan leggja merke til at MDS-visualiseringa også viser semantiske mønster som kan vera av interesse for semantisk analyse. I fig. 2 kap. 2 i dei fire utgåvene med gråe sirklar, og ein kan sjå at dei har stor avstand (dvs. høg frekvens avvikande ordformer) frå andre kapittel i same utgåve. Dette mønsteret kan visa oss at kapittelet er tematisk avvikande frå resten av evangeliet, noko som nærlesing vil stadfesta (adjektivet *drukken* (Joh 2: 10) opptre t.d. berre i framstillinga av bryllaupet i Kana i heile Joh). Om ein bruker eit korpus med einsarta språkform, vil slike mønster verta tydelegare.

### 3. Strukturen til treningsdelen av modellen

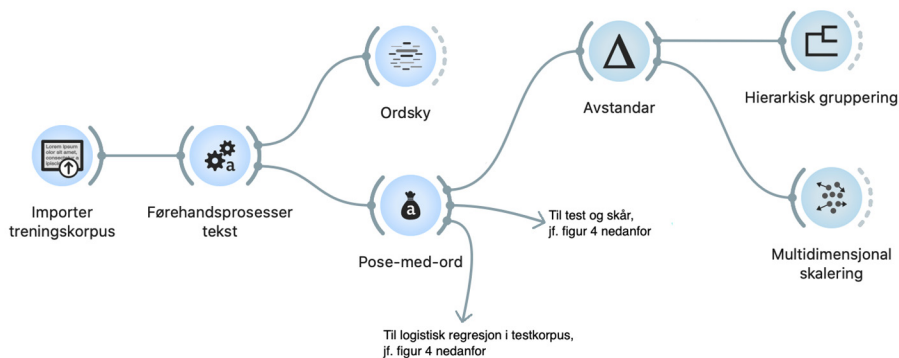
I tillegg til skriftleg dokumentasjon, har Orange-prosjektet dokumentert ei innføring i bruk av programvaren i videoformat. Dette gjeld også tilleggspakken (eng. *add-on*) for datautvinning av tekst (eng. *text mining*) (Orange3-Text<sup>9</sup>) Mi røynsle har vore at dette fungerer utmerkt som eit didaktisk hjelpemiddel, men er ikkje like lett å visa til i skriftleg form. Men i og med at mitt prosjekt byggjer direkte på ein modifikasjon av dømeprosjekta i instruksjonsvideoane, vil det vera lettare å fylgja og etterprøva framstillinga med å visa til desse. Sidan audiovisuelle læremiddel ikkje har sidetal eller laupande tekst, vil sitat vera tufta på transkripsjon av undertekster og tidsstempel. Føremålet til dømeprosjektet eg byggjer på – presentert *Getting Started with Orange 18: Text Classification*<sup>10</sup> – er å treni ein model med eit korpus av tekstar frå *Brørne Grimms eventyr* som er klassifiserte etter Aarne-Thompson klassifikasjonssystemet som *dyreeventyr* eller *eigenlege eventyr* (jf. Antti Aarne og Stith Thompson 1961) og deretter føreseia om andre uklassifiserte eventyr høyrer til i den eine eller andre kategorien.

<sup>9</sup> Dokumentert på <https://orange3-text.readthedocs.io/en/latest/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>10</sup> [https://youtu.be/zO\\_zwKZCULo](https://youtu.be/zO_zwKZCULo) (Sett den 29. juni 2020)



Sidan modellen er bygd opp med visuell programmering, vil det vera lettare å fylgja den vidare framstillinga ved fyrst å sjå på den grafiske visninga av modellen og deretter omtala funksjonen og innstillingane til kvar einiskild modul.



**Figur 3.:** Strukturen til treningsdelen av modellen (skjermdump frå Orange med omsetjing til norske namn på modulane (eng. *widgets*) og digital biletbehandling av forfattaren).

### 3.1. Import av treningskorpus

Bruken av modulen *importer treningskorpus* (orig. modulnamn *Import Documents*<sup>11</sup>) vert forklart i instruksjonsvideoen *Getting Started with Orange 19: How to Import Text Documents*<sup>12</sup>. Grunnfunksjonen er å importera filer med rein tekst (.txt) for å byggja opp eigne korpus (andre val for i Orange er spesielle filformat for tekstkorpus eller direkte lesing av diverse nettressursar). Filene vert klassifiserte etter struktur til mappene dei ligg i utan andre metadata.

### 3.2. Førehandsprosessering av tekst

Bruken av modulen *førehandsprosesser tekst* (orig. modulnamn *preprocess text*<sup>13</sup>) er forklart i instruksjonsvideoen *Getting Started with Orange 16: Text Preprocessing*<sup>14</sup>. Grunnfunksjonen til modulen er å fjerna teiknsetjing, tal osv. for å klårgjera teksten til vidare maskinlæring med ord som einiskilde datapunkt, typisk vha. pose-med-ord-modellen. I datautvinning av tekst der siktemålet er

<sup>11</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/text-mining/importdocuments/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>12</sup> <https://youtu.be/falqvWxFGRC> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>13</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/text-mining/preprocesstext/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>14</sup> <https://youtu.be/V70UwJZWkZ8> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

å finna semantiske mønster, vil ein ofte også filtrera ut ord med den tekniske termen *stoppord* (eng. *stop words*), dvs. ord som ikkje ber mykje semantisk innhald (subjunksjonar, konjunksjonar, preposisjonar osv.). For vårt siktemål er nettopp stopporda av ekstra stor verdi, for sidan dei opptrer så frekvent i alle former for tekstar vil ein kunna byggja opp ein solid modell utan å trena han på eit enormt stort korpus. Den sentrale rolla til stopporda i måten modellen predikerer målform på er påvist i nomogrammet i 4.2 nedanfor.

### 3.3. Pose-med-ord og avstandar

I instruksjonsvideoen *Getting Started with Orange 17: Text Clustering*<sup>15</sup> vert funksjonen til modulen *pose-med-ord* (orig. modulnamn *Bag-of-Words*<sup>16</sup>) forklart slik: “*For machine learning we need to transform text into numerical representation, and a simple way to do it is to count how many times each word appears in the text. This approach is called bag-of-words.*” (ibid. [0:26-:0:40]). Modulen lagar altså ein matrise over ordformene i korpuset der kvar ordform dannar ei kolonne med ein vektor som tel kor mange gonger ordforma ovrar seg.

Som nemnd ovanfor, vart analyse (med ein modell konstruert av logistisk regresjon, jf. 4.2 nedanfor) av ordform-matrisen brukt for å klassifisera eventyrtypar i Oranges døme prosjekt, som min modell byggjer på. Min fyrste tanke når eg såg at dette var mogleg på engelsk, var at liknande ikkje ville fungera like godt for ei korpus med ueinsarta norske tekstar, og enno dårlegare for tekstar med større variasjon, t.d. diplomatarisk transkripsjon av norrøne eller mellomnorske handskrifter eller fonetisk transkripsjon av talte norske dialektar. Som eit *argumentum ad absurdum* kan ein tenkja seg korleis pose-med-ord ville handsama eit korpus bygd opp av lister av variantformer frå ordbøker. Som døme kunne ein tenkja seg lista over variantar av det ubest. pron. *nøkkur* ‘noen’ i Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog<sup>17</sup> – som har identifisert over 600 distinkte former! Pose-med-ord ville vekta kvar av desse med 1, og det klart at ein treng enormt store korpus eller ein modell som tek omsyn til syllabisk struktur for å handsama slik variasjon. Eit meir relevant døme frå moderne norsk kunne vera at pose-med-ord vil klassifisera dei sju ordformene *gren*, *grenen*, *grener*, *grenene*, *grein*, *greina* og *greini* som distinkte oppslag og ikkje ha noko grunnlag for å kopla dei til eitt lemma. Som jamføring vil eit engelsk korpus berre ha to distinkte ordformer for ordet *branch* ‘grein’: *branch* og

<sup>15</sup> [https://youtu.be/rH\\_vQxQL6oM](https://youtu.be/rH_vQxQL6oM) (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>16</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/text-mining/bagofwords-widget/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>17</sup> I digital utgåve på <https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o57831#> (>Comp., Gloss., Litt &c.) (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

*branches*. Men for denne studien er det nettopp å bruka modellen til å identifisera variasjonen som interesserer oss.

Som dokumentasjonen til modulen forklarar bereknar *avstandar* (orig. modulnamn *Distances*<sup>18</sup>) avstanden mellom rader og kolonnar i eit datasett og sender ut ein matrise over avstandane mellom dei. For at eit menneske skal kunna tolka denne matrisen, kan ein visualisera han på fleire vis. I *Text Clustering*-videoen nyttar dei hierarkisk gruppering (orig. modulnamn *Hierarchical Clustering*<sup>19</sup>) som fungerer utmerkt for semantiske grupperingar. Denne visualiseringsmetoden viste seg å fungera dårleg for mitt korpus pga. av likskapen mellom ordforrådet i dei ulike kapitla på tvers av utgåvene. Ein meir formålstenleg visualiseringsmetode viste seg å vera *multidimensjonal skalering* (orig. modulnamn *MDS*<sup>20</sup>) som framstiller datapunkta – i vårt tilfelle kapitla – som punkter på ein to-dimensjonal flate, og knyter liknande par saman med liner (jf. fig. 1 og 2 i kap. 2 ovanfor).

#### 4. Testdelen av modellen

Som det snart vil verta vist, kan ein bruka logistisk regresjon som utgangspunkt for ein modell for å predikera kva for ei målform dei ulike datapunkta – altså kapitla – høyrer til basert på utdata frå pose-med-ord-modulen i treningsdelen av modellen som vart drøfta i kap. 3 ovanfor. Før me ser på det, vil eg kort drøfta alternative modellar som kunne vorte nytta til same føremål og deira føremon og ulemper jamført med modellen som vert presentert i denne studien.

##### 4.1. Alternative modellar

Den mest openberre alternative metoden er manuell klassifisering. Ein person med kjennskap til norsk rettskrivingshistorie ville utan nærlesing kunna identifisera målforma i dei fire ulike bibelutgåvene (jf. kap. 2 ovanfor) som har vorte nytta som korpus for å trena denne modellen (jf. kap. 3 ovanfor) med å sjå på eit avsnitt i fugleperspektiv. Eg vil nedanfor (i 4.1) argumentera for at tankeprosessen personen då går gjennom svarer til modellen den logistiske regresjonen i modellen denne studien genererer (heretter omtalt som LR-modellen). Prosessen baserer seg på eit hierarki av minimale par av frekvente

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<sup>18</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/unsupervised/distances/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>19</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/unsupervised/hierarchicalclustering/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>20</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/unsupervised/mds/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

ord- og bøyingsformer som skil dei ulike variantane frå kvarandre. T.d. vil det minimale paret *ikke/ikkje* vera nok til å avgjera om ein tekst er skriven på bokmål eller nynorsk, *efter/etter* om han er skriven på tradisjonelt riksmål eller moderne bokmål og *um/om* om han er skriven på tradisjonelt landsmål/nynorsk eller offisiell nynorsk etter 1938-reformen. Ulempa med denne metoden er sjølvsagt at det vil innebera mykje arbeid å klassifisera store datamengder.

Ein annan modell kunne vore manuell programmering av logiske reglar etter same logikk som er skissert i avsnittet ovanfor. I pseudo-kode kunne ein tenkja seg dette som reglar som *VISS ordform = "ikkje": målform = nynorsk, ELLES målform = bokmål* og så bortetter. Ulempa med denne metoden er igjen arbeidsmengda. For å kunna fungera på kortare tekstutdrag vil modellen trenga mange reglar, og der ein med manuell klassifisering vil kjenna att målforma utan å måtta tenkja medvite på kva slags logikk ein bruker for å resonnera, vil ein for denne metoden tenkja gjennom kva for nokre minimale par ein reknar med er mest frekvente.

Om ein har korpus med morfologisk annotasjon, kan enklare logiske reglar skilja ulike variantar frå kvarandre. Ta midlandsmål som eit døme. Berre i denne normaliserte varianten av moderne norsk skriftspråk finst det fleirtals former på *-ir* og *-ine*, som t.d. *synir* der alle andre variantar vil ha *syner*. Ein einskild regel som *viss eit substantiv i ubund. form pl. ender på -ir, er målforma lik midlandsmål* vil då vera nok til å klassifisera målforma automatisk, og ein kan lett konstruera liknande morfologiske kriterium for alle normaliserte norske målformer med éin eller nokre heilt få reglar. Ulempa her er at metoden berre vil fungera for morfologisk annoterte korpus og ikkje kan nyttast på rein tekst.

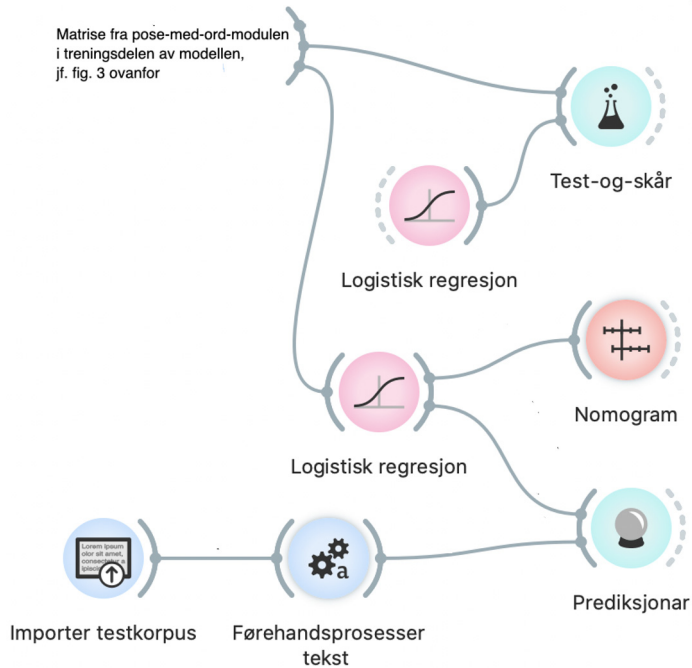
Eit siste alternativ kunne vore å bruka djup læring (eng. *deep learning*) til å trena modellen. Antakeleg vil det laga den sterkaste modellen for å identifisera språk, men ulempa er at det er vanskeleg, eller umogleg, for eit menneske å forstå korleis modellen fungerer (jf. Øverland 2017, s. 223).

#### **4.2. Strukturen til testdelen av modellen**

Grunnlaget for strukturen til testdelen av modellen er dømmodellen som vert lagt fram i instruksjonsvideoen *Getting Started with Orange 18: Text Classification*<sup>21</sup>. Denne delen har den statistiske metoden logisk regresjon som kjernefunksjon og to hovudelement; eit for å testa og gje ein skår til prestasjonsnivået til modellen og ein for å predikera målforma til uklassifiserte tekstar. Grafisk sett ser modellen slik ut.

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<sup>21</sup> [https://youtu.be/zO\\_zwKZCULo](https://youtu.be/zO_zwKZCULo) (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

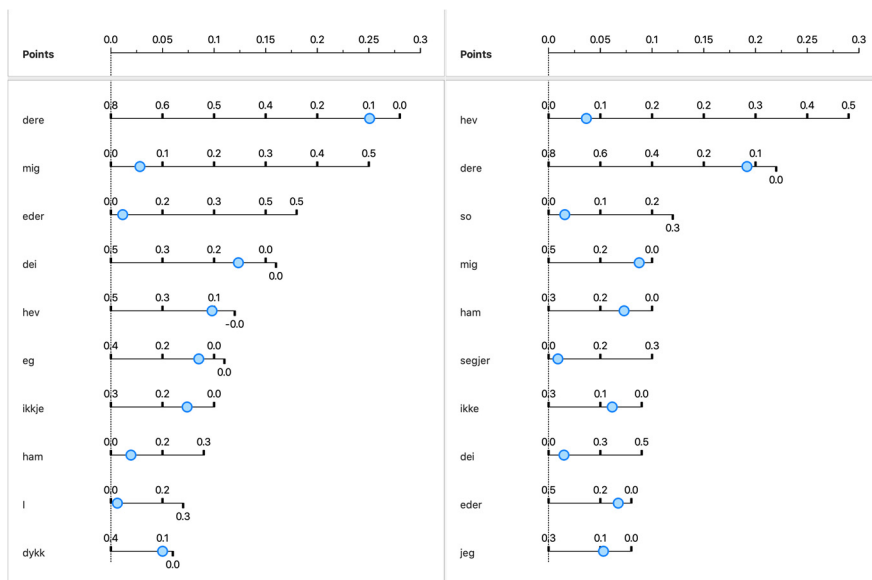


**Figur 4.** Strukturen til testdelen av modellen. (skjermdump frå Orange med omsetjing til norske namn på modulane og digital biletbehandling av forfattaren).

Matrisen med ordformer med vektorar som tel kor mange gonger dei opptre i tekstane frå pose-med-ord-modulen i treningsdelen av modellen (jf. kap. 3.3 ovanfor) vert nytta som inndata for *logistisk regresjon* (orig. modulnamn *Logistic Regression*<sup>22</sup>), som genererer ein modell for å predikera kva for ei målform eit kapittel høyrer til. Det matematiske grunnlaget for logistisk regresjon er for omfattande til å gå inn på her, men det er ganske intuitivt å korleis LR-modellen fungerer om me visualiserer modellen i eit *nomogram* (orig. modulnamn *Nomogram*<sup>23</sup>).

<sup>22</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/model/logisticregression/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>23</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/visualize/nomogram/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)



**Figur 5.** Nomogram for N1930BM (venstre) og N38NN (høgre) (skjermdump frå Orange).

Nomogrammet til venstre viser dei ti høgst rangerte orda LR-modellen for å predikera om eit kapittel er frå N1930BM. Me kan leggja merke til at alle orda er svært frekvente ord, og dei fleste eller alle ord som ville vorte rekna som *stoppord* om me såg etter semantiske mønster (jf. 3.2 ovanfor). Orda er det eit av to i minimale par av den typen som vart drøfta som mentale kriterier for manuell klassifisering i kap. 4.1. Det høgst rangerte ordet *dere* er ein del av det minimale paret *I/dere* som vart drøfta i kap. 2. Modellen seier altså at om ordet *dere* finst i ein tekst (dette er forma som vert nytta i N11BM), er det svært liten sjansje for at han har same målform som N1930BM medan om ordet *I* (her er det sjølvstøtt naudsynt å skilja mellom små og store bokstavar) finst i teksten er det svært høgt sannsyn for at han har same målform som N1930BM. I andre tekstar med liknande innhald som Joh, vil dette kriteriet vera nok for å skilja eldre riksmål og moderne boksmål. Ordet *hev* (pres. av *hava* i målforma brukt N38NN) vs. *har* som vert nytta i N1930BM og *eg*, som vert nytta i både N38NN og N11NN, vs. *jeg* er vil vera nok til å skilja målform i N1930BM frå nynorsk i tekstar der desse orda finst. Nomogrammet kan gje eit falskt inntrykk av modellen berre vil fungera på tekstar med høg frekvens av personlege pronomen, sidan dei fleste av dei ti mest rangerte orda høyrer til denne ordklasse, men også ord med langt lægre rangering kan vera utslagsgjevande kriterium, men det er ikkje plass til å visa hundrevis av rangeringar her.

Modellen for kor sannsynleg det er at ei ordform har same målform som ei av utgåvene kan verta testa med av modulen *test-og-skår* (orig. modulnamn *Test and Score*<sup>24</sup>). I prosjektet i *Getting Started with Orange 18: Text Classification*<sup>25</sup>, som, som nemnd i kap. 3 ovanfor, hadde som føremål å klassifisera eventyr frå *Brørne Grimms eventyr* i Aarne-Thompson klassifikasjonssystemet fekk LR-modellen ein AUC-skår (*Area under ROC curve*) på 0.91 (ibid. [2:03 – 2:34]). Det vil seia at modellen kan skilja mellom eit *dyreeventyr* og eit *eigenleg eventyr* i 91% av tilfella. Nomogrammet viser at utslagsgjevande ord er ord som *fox* ‘rev’ (høg sjanse for *dyreeventyr*) og *king* ‘konge’ (låg sjanse for *dyreeventyr*). Men desse semantiske kategoriane er ikkje like mekaniske som rettskrivingsreglar – t.d. er det ikkje umogleg at ordet *king* ovrar seg i eit *dyreeventyr* (eller at eit *eventyr* ikkje rettar seg etter Aarne-Thompson klassifikasjonssystemet i det heile, men blandar element frå *eigenlege eventyr* og *dyreeventyr* – nettopp dette vert oppdaga og drøfta i videoen), medan det på hi side er utenkjeleg at ordet *ikkje* opptrer i ein bokmålstekst (med mindre det er eit sitat frå ein nynorsktekst inni teksten, og det er for det fyrste ikkje aktuelt for det korpuset me har nytta og vil for det andre i nesten alle tilfelle ha så låg frekvens at det ikkje vil påverka prediksjonen). Såleis det er det ikkje uventa at modellen vår har ein AUC-skår på 1.0 og vil predikera kva utgåve eit kapittel høyrer til i korrekt i 100% av tilfella. Men som det vert påpeika i videoen: “*We don’t want to predict something we already know*” (ibid. [2:35-2:42]).

Ved å setja inn ein korpusmodul til kan me testa andre uklassifiserte tekstar imot den modellen som har vorte trent med Johannesevangelie-utgåvene. Både testkorpuset og prediksjonane frå LR-modellen vert kopla til modulen *prediksjonar* (orig. modulnamn *Predictions*<sup>26</sup>) som vil freista å føreseia kva for ei av utgåvene eit anna tekstutdrag ligg nærmast.

## 5. Utprøving av testkorpus

I det neste kapittelet vil me testa modellen med tekstar av aukande estimert vanskegrad. Det speler i prinsippet inga rolle kva slags tekstar som vert nytta for det er sannsynleg at alle norske tekstar av ei viss lengd inneheld nokre ord som vil ha ei sannsynsrangering i testdelen av modellen som vart drøfta i førre kapittel. Det er naturleg å rekna med at ein annan del av NT i dei same utgåvene av Bibelen som modellen har vorte trent på vil ha lægst vanskegrad, ikkje berre har dei nett same språkform, men omtalar også i stor grad om dei same

<sup>24</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/evaluate/testandscore/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>25</sup> [https://youtu.be/zO\\_zwKZCULo](https://youtu.be/zO_zwKZCULo) (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>26</sup> Jf. dokumentasjon på <https://orange.biolab.si/widget-catalog/evaluate/predictions/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

hendingane og vil såleis ha mange parallelle ordformer for mindre frekvente ord også, eit døme kan vera ordforma *vinranke* (Joh 19: 29 og Luk 23: 36).

### 5.1. *Matt 4 som testkorpus*

Eit testkorpus bygd opp av kap. 4 av evangeliet etter Matteus frå dei same utgåvene modellen har vorte trent opp på gjev fylgjande resultat i prediksjonar-modulen.

	Logistic Regression	name
1	0.37 : 0.19 : 0.26 : 0.19 → N1930BM	N1930BM_Matt 4
2	0.29 : 0.19 : 0.31 : 0.21 → N11BM	N11BM_Matt 4
3	0.20 : 0.26 : 0.21 : 0.33 → N11NN	N11NN_Matt 4
4	0.19 : 0.36 : 0.19 : 0.27 → N38NN	N38NN_Matt 4

**Figur 6.** Prediksjonar for Matt 4. (Skjermdump frå Orange)

I fig. 6 indikerer blått sannsynet for at tekstutdraget har same målform som N1930BM, raudt for N38NN, grønt N11NN og oransje N11NN. Modellen har predikert riktig målform for alle dei fire versjonane av Matt 4. Den relativt høge rangeringa av dei andre utgåvene kan verka merkeleg, men til tross for skilnadene mellom dei, vil det vera mange ordformer som er identiske på tvers av i alle utgåvene, t.d. *du*.

### 5.2. *Eit vilkårleg utval tekstutdrag som testkorpus*

Neste nivå er å av vanskegrad er å testa modellen mot andre tekstar. Eg har vald eit vilkårleg utval av tekstar der med liknande målformer som testkorpuset. Novelletten *Sletten* av Sigbjørn Obstfelder<sup>27</sup> (språkforma liknar N1930BM, men har nokre trekk som ligg nærmare dansk) som døme på eldre riksmål, den nyleg publiserte forskning.no-artikkelen *Hvor mange tanker kan hjernen tenke samtidig?*<sup>28</sup> som døme på moderne bokmål, kap. 1 av Matias Skards omsetjing frå 1930 av *Soga um Håvard Isfjording*<sup>29</sup> som døme på nynorsk etter 1917-normalen og den nyleg publiserte nrk.no-artikkelen *No er brua over Noregs best besøkte*

<sup>27</sup> I Dokumentasjonsprosjektet ved UiOs utgåve på <https://www.dokpro.uio.no/litteratur/obstfelder/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>28</sup> <https://forskning.no/hjernen-menneskekroppen-psykologi/hvor-mange-tanker-kan-hjernen-tenke-samtidig/1705172> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>29</sup> I digital utgåve frå Heimskringla.no på [https://heimskringla.no/wiki/Soga\\_um\\_Havard\\_Isfjording](https://heimskringla.no/wiki/Soga_um_Havard_Isfjording)



*naturattraksjon på plass*<sup>30</sup> som døme moderne nynorsk. Modellen predikerte riktig målform i for alle fire utdraga med omlag same p-nummer som for Matt 4 i førre kapittel.

	Logistic Regression	name
1	0.28 : 0.20 : 0.30 : 0.22 → N11BM	Hvor mange tanker kan hjernen tenke samtidig?
2	0.23 : 0.27 : 0.23 : 0.27 → N38NN	Soga um Håvard Isfjording, kap. 1
3	0.22 : 0.25 : 0.22 : 0.31 → N11NN	No er brua over Noregs best besøkte naturattraksjon på plass
4	0.34 : 0.19 : 0.27 : 0.20 → N1930BM	Obstfelder - Sletten

**Figur 7.** Prediksjonar for vilkårleg valde tekstutdrag (Skjermdump frå Orange)

### 5.3. Testkorpus med nærskylde målformer

I førre kapittel vart det påvist at modellen kan predikera riktig målform for testkorpus med tekstar med tilsvarende språkdrakt. Som påpeikt i kap. 2 ovanfor, er det fleire variantar av norsk språk modellen ikkje har vorte trent på, inkl. midlandsmål og klassisk landsmål (som er mest nærskylde til N38NN) og 1800-tals riksmål (som er mest nærskylde til N1930BM). Utprøving av kap. 1 av bondeforteljinga *En glad gut*<sup>31</sup> av Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson som eit døme på 1800-tals riksmål, kap. 1 av Arne Garborgs roman *Mannfolk*<sup>32</sup> som døme på midlandsmål og Ivar Aasens omsetjing av *Den burtkomne sonen*<sup>33</sup> (d.e. Luk 15: 11-32). Modellen plasserte dei tre døma i dei mest nærskylde målformene; *En glad Gut* → eldre riksmål (N1930BM) og *Mannfolk* og *Den burtkomne sonen* → eldre nynorsk (N38NN).

### 5.4. Testkorpus med svært stutte tekstar

Dess lenger eit tekstutdrag er dess større sjanse er det for at det har ordformer som er vekta av modellen. Det kan såleis vera interessant å testa modellen på svært korte tekstar, og eg har nytta Olav H. Hauges tingdikt *Sagi* som testkorpus. Hauges målform fylgde med visse små avvik 1917-normalen, og riktig klassifikasjon vil altså vera → eldre nynorsk (N38NN). Diktet har berre elleve ord, og i i-målsforma i *sagi* kan ikkje vera til hjelp for klassifikasjonen

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.nrk.no/vestland/den-kontroversielle-gangbrua-over-voringsfossen-er-kome-pa-plass-1.15076627> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>31</sup> I Dokumentasjonsprosjektet ved UiOs utgåve på <https://www.dokpro.uio.no/litteratur/bjoernson/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>32</sup> I Dokumentasjonsprosjektet ved UiOs utgåve på <https://www.dokpro.uio.no/litteratur/garborg/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

<sup>33</sup> I digital utgåve frå Wikikilden på [https://no.wikisource.org/wiki/Den\\_burtkomne\\_Sonen](https://no.wikisource.org/wiki/Den_burtkomne_Sonen) (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

fordi dette ordet ikkje finst i treningskorpuset. Diktet inneheld heller ingen av dei 10 høgast rangerte orda i modellen. Men likevel vekta modellen → eldre nynorsk (N38NN) med 30% sannsyn og predikerte at det var den mest sannsynlege målkategorien. Det er ordforma *segjer* som er utslagsgevand, denne forma finst berre i N38NN (medan N11NN nyttar *seier*). Dei hine orda i diktet, *stød, ved, ho, kva tykkjer* har same form i N1NN (medan ljodordet *skrat*, som ein kunne venta, korkje finst i treningskorpuset eller ordbøker), så det einaste ordforma *segjer* modellen kan bruka til å klassifisera målforma riktig.

Det vil kanskje vera mogleg å finna korte tekstar som ikkje vil verta riktig klassifiserte, men om ein aukar storleiken til anten trenings- eller testkorpuset til over 20 ord, trur eg det er umogleg.

### **5.5. Forsøk på å lura modellen med homonymi er moglege...**

Det er mogleg å lura modellen ved å medvite velja korte tekstutdrag som inneheld homonym som svarer til ord med høg vekt i modellen. Om me t.d. nyttar lina 1 frå strofe 4 av Arne Gardborgs dikt *Mot soleglad*<sup>34</sup>: “*Naar Dagen sig som Eld og Blod*” som testkorpus vil det verta feilklassifisert som → eldre riksmål (N1039BM) pga. den høge rangeringa av ordforma *sig*, som der er det frekvent brukte refl. pron. 3. pers og ei unik form for denne varianten, medan det i diktet er homonymet *sig* pres. av *å siga*.

Men slike freistnader når ikkje så langt. Om me nyttar heile strofa (18 ord) vert den riktig klassifisert som → eldre nynorsk, rett nok med berre litt høgare vekt for N38NN enn N1930BM.

## **6. Konklusjon og vegen vidare**

Modellen som har vorte prøvd ut i denne studien har vist seg å vera svært solid for det føremål som vart presentert i innleiinga – å automatisk klassifisera kva for ein variant av norsk skriftspråk ein tekst er skriven i. Modellen vart trent med fire kategoriar (eldre riksmål, moderne bokmål, eldre nynorsk og moderne nynorsk), og ein kan rekna med at han ville fungert på same måte for andre variantar han ikkje vart trent på (t.d. 1800-tals riksmål, klassisk landsmål og midlandsmål). Når andre variantar vart nytta som testkorpus, i kap. 5.3, vart dei riktig klassifisert i den mest nærskylde varianten i treningskorpuset. Fyrst når me med vilje prøvde å lura modellen med homonym i svært korte tekstutdrag (<10 ord), i kap. 5.5., oppnådde me feilklassifisering.

<sup>34</sup> I Dokumentasjonsprosjektet ved UiOs utgåve på <https://www.dokpro.uio.no/litteratur/garborg/> (Sett den 29. juni 2020)

Det er sannsynleg at modellen vil fungera like godt for å klassifisera variasjon i mange andre skriftspråk, eller identifisera kva for eit av fleire språk ein tekst er skriven på. Modellen er likevel ikkje den sterkaste til dette føremålet, og eg peikte på andre modellar i kap. 4.1. Føremona til modellen er at han er enkel å forstå og implementera og ikkje krev manuell programmering av reglar. Drøftinga her gjev neppe nye innsikter i norsk språkvitskap, men modellen er eit startpunkt som kan verta utvida, t.d. med eldre tekstar der det vanskelegare å nytta intuisjon for å sjå variasjonsmønster.

Modellen har fylgt døma i introduksjonsvideoane til Orange-prosjektet tett. Frå eit læringsperspektiv har kombinasjonen av eit visuelt programmeringsrammeverk og audiovisuelle læremiddel fungert svært godt. For nokre år sidan ville det vore naudsynt å ha EDB-fagleg bakgrunn for å vera i stand til å byggja og køyra ein slik modell. Orange skal ha honnør for å gjera denne typen databehandling meir tilgjengeleg, og eg tilrår alle som er interesserte i å bruka datautvinning i si forskning å prøva ut programmet.

I ein framtidig studie planlegg eg å testa ut den same modellen på det mellomnorske materialet i Diplomatarium Norvegicum. I kap. 3.3 peikte eg på utfordringar pose-med-ord-metoden har med korpus med stor variasjon. Likevel er min hypotese at det er mogleg at dette materialet er stort nok til å byggja opp ein modell som t.d. kan klassifisera typar av diplom eller dialektbakgrunnen/skriftnorma til skrivaren.

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## THE PORTRAIT OF AN ENLIGHTENED MONARCH: STRINDBERG'S GUSTAV III

CARMEN VIOREANU<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *The Portrait of an Enlightened Monarch: Strindberg's Gustav III.* A defining feature of Strindberg's historical drama is that history is only the background, while the individual is the one around whom the play is built. This article maps the three planes (human, political and cultural) on which Strindberg constructs the image of the enlightened monarch Gustav III, both in the play from 1902 and in the volumes *Svenska folket* and *Svenska öden och äventyr*. The character traits and historical events highlighted in Strindberg's play are compared to memoirs from the eighteenth century.

**Keywords:** *Gustav III, Strindberg, Swedish Enlightenment, Swedish 18<sup>th</sup> century, Swedish History, Theatre, Historical drama.*

**REZUMAT.** *Portretul unui monarh luminat: Gustaf III în viziunea lui Strindberg.* O trăsătură definitorie a dramaturgiei istorice strindbergiene este aceea că istoria constituie doar fundalul, în timp ce individul este cel în jurul căruia este construit textul dramatic. Articolul de față cartografiază cele trei planuri (uman, politic și cultural) pe care Strindberg construiește imaginea de monarh luminat a lui Gustav III, atât în piesa omonimă din 1902, cât și în volumele *Svenska folket* și *Svenska öden och äventyr*. Trăsăturile de caracter și evenimentele istorice evidențiate în piesa lui Strindberg sunt comparate cu surse memorialistice din secolul al XVIII-lea.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Gustav III, Strindberg, Iluminismul suedez, Secolul al XVIII-lea în Suedia, Istoria Suediei, Teatru, Dramaturgie istorică*

In the wake of an Inferno crisis marked by artistic and scientific quests interrupted by and mired in suffering, Strindberg returned to playwrighting, completing no fewer than 26 plays over less than five years, between 1898 and 1903.<sup>2</sup> Not entirely purged by the flame of self-inquiry, he now went on

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<sup>2</sup> Vioreanu 2016:59-60

trying to achieve self-understanding by turning his attention to a number of Swedish historical figures. Thus, each common feature he found with the fate and the mental and moral qualities of such historical figures, equally misunderstood in this regard by their contemporaries and by posterity, fulfilled a therapeutic role. By shaping them in his well-documented but subjective vision, filtered, moreover, by his genius of playwrighting and directing, Strindberg strove that his historical plays should redeem the image of personalities such as Magnus Eriksson, Gustav Vasa, Erik XIV, Olaus Petri or Queen Christina. To do this, he dared consider everything that, in their self-absorbed search for recreating the historical truth, chroniclers and historians never had. Furthermore, he created a gallery of authentic and fascinating characters and “became Sweden’s Shakespeare in terms of history plays”<sup>3</sup>.

Few have noticed the humility with which Strindberg worked on his historical plays. Some of these he wrote for financial and personal reasons<sup>4</sup>, but to him, historical playwrighting was the perfect arena revealing his conviction that this theatrical subgenre can be addressed to everyone through lines written in a rich, beautiful Swedish language and through an accessible way to approach the history and culture of Sweden.

Strindberg understood that one cannot write historical plays without rigorously exploring the work of one’s predecessors. In the same way one cannot understand the society one lives in and one’s role in it unless one knows one’s national history, one cannot create for the stage without going back to the classics.

*Ur några Förord till Historiska Dramerna* and *Det historiska dramat*<sup>5</sup> are two of the dramatic theory works where Strindberg explains the influence that Shakespeare and Schiller had on the structure and shaping of characters in his historical plays. Already in his first historical drama, *Master Olof* (1872), Strindberg had not placed the Father of the Swedish Reformation, Olaus Petri, on a pedestal of historical facts: these ones serve just as a background.<sup>6</sup> Two decades and a half later, when he took up historical drama again, Strindberg

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<sup>3</sup> Prideaux 2012:38

<sup>4</sup> The Middle Ages, for instance, were a popular theatre topic in Paris at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Gustav Vasa* he wrote on the occasion of the 400-year commemoration of the Swedish king’s death (Vioreanu 2016:63). The powerful character Queen Kristina he created mainly for his young wife, the Norwegian actress Harriet Bosse (1878-1961), as it appears from his correspondence from the autumn of 1901.

<sup>5</sup> These essays were written and published by Strindberg over the course of almost two years (1908-1909) and contain explanatory notes to his historical plays. The notes were later published in the volume generically called *Teatern och Intima Teatern*, also comprising his documents regarding *Intima Teatern* (his beloved project, founded together with August Falck in 1907), “open letters” to the artistic teams, articles and texts featured in the brochures of the respective performances.

<sup>6</sup> Strindberg 1999:193, 207

developed the idea and, like Shakespeare before him, set out to depict people's lives as rich in small and large events, leaving history in the background once more. To avoid the undramatic chronicle style and adapt the historical play to the spirit of his times, Strindberg considers time compression as essential and never follows the real time sequence of the historical events.<sup>7</sup>

One of the Swedish kings who aroused Strindberg's interest and curiosity was Gustav III (1746-1792). From Strindberg's correspondence, we understand that he worked on the play dedicated to the enlightened Swedish monarch from September 1901 to March 1902.

As with other historical plays, Strindberg did some serious preliminary research on Gustav III and the Gustavian era. According to Lamm and Ollén<sup>8</sup>, his main source seems to have been *Berättelser ur svenska historien* (1886) by C. Georg Starbäck and P.O. Bäckström. In addition, Kullberg's study on Gustav III and his court (*Gustaf III och Hans Hof*, 1838) had a certain influence on the playwright, as indicated in a letter he sent to Harriet Bosse.<sup>9</sup> To round off his perspective on the Swedish monarch, Strindberg also considered some existing speculations about Gustav III's both androgynous<sup>10</sup> and tyrannical personality features. Even though he never approved of the king's politics, especially in the last years of the latter's reign, Strindberg identified himself with the king and sympathised with his views, especially on the question of marriage and couple relationship. Moreover, Strindberg himself was a kind of actor, according to Ollén.<sup>11</sup>

In his open letters to Intima Teatern, Strindberg sums up his opinion of Gustav III as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* pp.195

<sup>8</sup> Ollén 1982:471

<sup>9</sup> In a letter addressed to Harriet Bosse on 28 September 1901, Strindberg mentions having started to do some research for a play about Gustav III, finding, in the pages of Kullberg's *Gustaf III och Hans Hof* (*Gustav III and His Court* (1838), answers about himself (Gunnar Ollén, in Strindberg 1988:323). The time of writing the play about Gustav III was marked by mixed feelings, on the one hand about his failed premiere of *Engelbrekt* (Svenska Teatern, December 1901) and on the other, of joy at the success of *Karl XII*. In March the following year (1902), Strindberg writes his German translator that he feels tired because he had just finished writing something. From his diary entry on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1902, we understand that he had been trying hard to finish the play by 16<sup>th</sup> March, the date when Gustav III had been shot at the masquerade ball at the Royal Opera House. The play was rejected by the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, as it was considered defamatory, injurious and disrespectful towards the founder of the theatre, Gustav III. (Brandell 1989:221). Strindberg did not give up hope that the play would be performed. In a letter from 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1908 to August Falck, Strindberg wrote: "I have redesigned Gustav III as a Chamber Play, and that can be played on the Molière (rococo) stage too." (Robinson 1992:765; Törnqvist&Steene 2007:121). The first performance of the play was to be staged at Nya Intima Teatern only as late as 1916, on 15<sup>th</sup> January.

<sup>10</sup> Brandell (1989:223) suggests that Strindberg dismissed Gustav III's androgyny which is vaguely addressed in his play.

<sup>11</sup> Ollén 1982:471



"The enlightened despot who carries out his own French Revolution at home in Sweden, that is to say, crushes the aristocrats with the help of the third estate – this is a paradox that is hard to depict! And as a character he is full of contradiction, a tragedian who plays comedy in life, a hero and a dancing master, a despotic friend of liberty, a humanitarian, a disciple of Frederick the Great, Joseph II and Voltaire. He is almost likeable, as the Revolutionary who falls into the hands of the Revolutionaries (...)."12

Over the course of the play's four acts, Strindberg creates an environment typical of the second half of the Swedish eighteenth century by placing the action in settings that are representative of the Gustavian era (the king's audience room in the Pavilion at Haga, the Huvudsta estate on the shore of Lake Ulvsunda, the Kina Castle on the royal domain of Drottningholm), by elements of interior design – busts of Rousseau and Voltaire, along with French newspapers in Holmberg's bookshop – and last, but not least, by drawing a list of characters embodying cultural figures such as the philosopher Thomas Thorild (1759-1808), the troubadour and entertainer Carl Michael Bellman (1740-1795), or Gustav Badin (1747-1822). The characters often use Gallicisms in their regular conversations and the humanistic ideas typical of the Enlightenment, expressed throughout the play, complete the general picture.<sup>13</sup>

Corresponding to the last few years in the life of Gustav III, the period selected by Strindberg to illustrate the Gustavian era was a troubled time not only in Sweden, but all around the world. Gustav had been on the Swedish throne for 17 years now, long enough to justify a retrospective survey meant to analyse his actions. Bearing in mind the historical truth, the choice of the moment is quite appropriate as it offers an explanatory view of the events that were to take place on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1792 at the Royal Opera House in Stockholm.

Every time Strindberg wrote historical plays about Swedish monarchs, he chose to set the action at a very difficult point in time, not only so as to be able to start the play in a dynamic manner, but also to give the character gallery the chance to debate the existing situation in the kingdom. This time, too, the main character finds himself in a key moment: the summer of 1788, when Gustav III had just returned from Finland, right after the Anjala uprising and after Denmark had declared war on Sweden.<sup>14</sup> Besides the two wars, the king has

<sup>12</sup> Strindberg 1999:204, translated in Törnqvist&Steene 2007:161

<sup>13</sup> "Why are you insulting your black brother, man?" Thorild asks, referring to the African Diasporan Badin. "Is he not born of woman, with rights as any man, like you or like me?" Badin is also called a child of nature "spoilt by a rotten civilisation on the way to its grave" (First Act, p.177)

<sup>14</sup> According to the memoirs of Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, Gustav had arrived in Stockholm completely unannounced on the morning of 1<sup>st</sup> September, leaving immediately to see the Queen at Ulriksdal castle.<sup>14</sup> (Bonde 1903:328)

specific plans to change the form of government in order to limit the social and economic privileges of the nobility and to grant more power to the other social estates.<sup>15</sup>

It is a well-known fact that, despite some antipathy, Strindberg is a defender of his historical characters. This holds true in the case of Gustav III as well. An idea that permeates the play is that, like any other human being, Gustav was inherently kind and honest, before being corrupted and damaged by society, a concept that leads back to Rousseau and his *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* (*Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 1750) and *Discourse on Inequality* (*Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 1755)<sup>16</sup>.

The environment that Gustav III has been brought up in is one pervaded by lies and slander. "Here at the court they never question if it's true; that's surely why they are lying dreadfully!" Armfelt concludes in his conversation with Munck.<sup>17</sup> The hatred of the aristocracy, emphasised by Strindberg in his play, would lead, three-four years later, to the assassination of the king. The first step was their boycott, which Gustav was well informed about. In a letter to Elis Schröderheim on the first day of 1790, Gustav III mentioned that he did not think he would experience *les délices de la société* ever again.<sup>18</sup> In Strindberg's play, the nobility are relentlessly plotting against the king, seeking to keep the royal prerogatives within certain bounds. The conspirers do not hesitate to use any available means of assault, including personal defamation, as exemplified by Lady Schröderheim who is trying to turn the queen against the king.<sup>19</sup>

In the spirit of Voltaire, Gustav III believes that an autocratic monarchy is the best political system of government, as long as the king takes into account the needs of the people and follows the basic principles of the Enlightenment. Strindberg's character Gustav III speaks about himself as "the first citizen of a free country, a man of the people and the defender of the oppressed."<sup>20</sup> Talking to Olof Olsson, the representative of the peasantry, Gustav III maintains that his major duties as king are freedom and the people.<sup>21</sup> This aspect is in fact the supreme contention of the Swedish nobility in Strindberg's play: that Gustav III sides with the commoners. Anckarström tells the king that he hates him for his autocracy, since "more eyes can see better than two, more minds can fulfil more

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<sup>15</sup> The Riksdag (Parliament) in Sweden retained a four-estates system: nobles, clergy, burghers and peasant.

<sup>16</sup> see Cole 1923:125-246

<sup>17</sup> Strindberg 1988:182

<sup>18</sup> Artéus 2013:137

<sup>19</sup> Strindberg 1988:190

<sup>20</sup> Strindberg 1988:207

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* p. 208

wishes and more needs!"<sup>22</sup> Some of the aristocracy led in fact a smear campaign against the king, spreading false rumours about him, as, for instance, about his insensitivity to the people's rough living conditions, to their needs and suffering.<sup>23</sup>

Gustav was raised and educated as a prince and a citizen. The aversion and negative attitude towards the autocracy would constitute the basis of the crown prince's education, as established by the Riksdag (Parliament) ever since Adolf Fredrik had been elected as heir to the Swedish throne, in 1743.<sup>24</sup> Some of the key figures on the Swedish political scene at that time, such as the Scheffer brothers and Fredrik Axel von Fersen, would nevertheless realise that the inherent corruption of the political parties was more dangerous than an increased royal power.<sup>25</sup> While Scheffer was Gustav's governor, the future monarch understood that people were equal by nature and that the duty and mission of the rich was to extend a helping hand to those less fortunate.<sup>26</sup> Already by the age of six, the crown prince was expected to participate in the philosophical readings organised on the royal domain of Drottningholm,<sup>27</sup> and encouraged to read extensively. Several of the literary, philosophical and political works he studied thoroughly as a teenager and in his early twenties, such as Voltaire's *The Henriad* or Lemercier de La Rivière's *L'Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* would influence his decisions to act as an autocratic monarch.<sup>28</sup> Another considerable influence on Gustav's childhood and adolescence was his mother Lovisa Ulrika's active interest in the culture and science of the Enlightenment.

Very often, those in charge of the crown prince's education had to appeal to allegory for instilling moral values, turning to comparisons with drama and theatre, which the prince loved more than anything else. An extract from Tessin's letters *En gammal mans brev till en ung prins (Letters from an Old Man to a Young Prince)*, written between 1751 and 1754, provides a telling example of this aspect:

"An actor who wants to succeed must necessarily be familiar with the scene. He ought to know how his predecessors played, in which manner and by what means they earned the favours and applauses of their audience. What is man other than such a thespian? The Earth is his theatre."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* p. 272

<sup>23</sup> Among them Count Adolf Ludvig Hamilton (1747-1802), whose memoirs and letters were published by Oscar Levertin in 1901.

<sup>24</sup> Karle 2011:26

<sup>25</sup> Anderberg 2009:53

<sup>26</sup> Anderberg 2009:53

<sup>27</sup> Molander Beyer 2017:21

<sup>28</sup> Later on, Scheffer would state that one could discern traces of Mercier's ideas in Gustav III's coup d'état of 1789 (Anderberg 2009:55)

<sup>29</sup> Karle 2011:24 (my translation)

In Strindberg's work, Gustav III appears to be caught in a constant struggle between the Swedish tradition – as he was the third Gustav, he had to follow in the footsteps of the other two before him and thus act as a warrior king – and the European tradition, requiring that he should act as an enlightened European monarch would.

It was common behaviour for the Swedish monarch to hide his melancholy and worries by displaying joy and good cheer in front of others. In his memoirs, Axel von Fersen mentions that, from the very start of Gustav's reign in 1771, whenever he was planning something new or unusual, the king used to close himself off from others and write comedy, opera or tragedy, so as to mislead everyone into thinking that he was serenely contemplating lyrical subjects; it was, in fact, the silence before the storm.<sup>30</sup> In Strindberg's play, Gustav III is just as skilful in hiding his worries about the very difficult political situation he finds himself in, not by writing plays or opera, but by getting intensely and energetically involved in arranging a party at Drottningholm. On his return from the Dalarna province, he spends his time before the ball in the grand hall of the Chinese Pavilion doing needlework. Asked by the queen "What's with the needlework, sire?", the king answers: "My mother taught me how to do it, and later on I found solace in it! I can think so clearly when doing needlework and holding all those threads in my hand!"<sup>31</sup>

The Enlightened Swedish monarch was often claimed to master the art of dissimulation, and Strindberg unequivocally exploits this defining personality trait as well. While waiting for people to enter the audience room at the Haga Pavilion, the king is exercising grimaces and affectation, seemingly shifting between masks.

This two-facedness, acquired and permanently practised since childhood, was justified, in his case, not only by considerations related to his love for the theatre. By adopting such behaviour, the crown prince was trying to please not only a very controlling mother and his own teachers, but also the court and the people. In the play, the king's enemies think of him as duplicitous in the extreme. The character Fersen claims that "the king has already learnt to lie as a child – especially during the failed coups d'état."<sup>32</sup> "And later on he got so caught in his own web of lies that he no longer knows who he is, and, since he makes fun of everything, he can no longer distinguish between seriousness and joke."<sup>33</sup>

Even after he became king, Gustav did not abandon theatre, his greatest passion; on the contrary, the social and cultural life of the court was one of his

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<sup>30</sup> Klinckowström 1871:10

<sup>31</sup> Strindberg 1988:257-258

<sup>32</sup> Strindberg 1988:289

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

priorities. Under Gustav III's directorial supervision, the Swedish court enjoyed a rich theatrical activity. The Swedish courtiers were themselves acting in performances with plays by Corneille, Racine or Voltaire. Gustav himself was a very keen and appreciated performer until his personal and political advisers, but also the French ambassador, persuaded him to abandon this passion they saw as unsuitable for his position as king and extremely offensive to his subjects.<sup>34</sup> Forced to leave acting aside, Gustav III began investing time, energy and enthusiasm in theatre directing, costume and stage setting, translating plays and writing his own plays and libretti.<sup>35</sup> Besides drama, the court members also practised a kind of amateur theatre called *divertissement*. Such artistic activities, almost ceremonial in nature and defining for the Gustavian court culture, involving many characters and a script allowing for improvisation, were also organised under the direction of Gustav III, being occasioned by events in the royal family – name days, birthdays, christenings, marriages or funerals – but also by the reception of foreign diplomats or by national celebrations.<sup>36</sup> Besides entertainment, Gustavian cultural life was aimed at imparting knowledge, educating the court, forming and refining taste, all this by setting up themed readings – on history, memoir, fiction or foreign publications – organised in the evenings, but also by arranging academic colloquia on a regular basis during the 1770s – as many opportunities for debate between Gustav and a select circle of writers, artists and scholars.<sup>37</sup>

As early as 1882, some of the socio-political aspects of the Gustavian era had been the target of Strindberg's disapproval. In the second volume of the historical work *Svenska folket (The Swedish People)*, Strindberg criticised "the despotic Gustav III"<sup>38</sup> for his decrees and measures of 1780 regarding freedom of the press.<sup>39</sup> The king had not delivered press freedom to the nation as a well-meaning gift, but out of fear of the French Revolution, which was about to break out.<sup>40</sup>

This time, too, Strindberg condemns Gustav III for his disregard for the administration and financial problems of the realm. Two of the issues he emphasises in the play, which reveal Gustav's despotic trait, are freedom of the press and the national distilling monopoly. By revision of the decree on freedom of the press, no fewer than three times (in 1774, 1780 and 1785), many

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<sup>34</sup> Artéus 2013:119

<sup>35</sup> see also Sauter & Wilis 2014:7

<sup>36</sup> Such events are mainly depicted in the memoirs and diaries of Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta and the letters of Carl August Ehrensvärd to Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd.

<sup>37</sup> Artéus 2013:94

<sup>38</sup> Strindberg 1912:315

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.* p. 319

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* p. 320

of the provisions of the law enforced in 1766 law were subsequently limited. Among other things, the law now implied that an author and his editor could face the death penalty.

A line spoken by Halldin, one of the characters, according to which he had felt “the bitter taste of death, while Holmberg the bookseller had tasted bread and water”<sup>41</sup> alludes to the well-known episode in 1779 when journalist Johan Gustaf Halldin had been condemned to death for an article published in *Stockholms-Posten* criticising the king’s decision to ban private distillation of *brännvin*. While he was sentenced to death and imprisoned (before being pardoned), Holmberg, the editor, also spent eight days in jail on bread and water only.

According to Strindberg’s perspective, freedom of speech is limited: whoever writes a stanza against the king incurs his displeasure. Thus, Anckarström is accused of lese-majesty for having cheered for the treacherous Anjala-officers as they returned home, right on the pontoon bridge outside the Stockholm Royal Palace, with people spitting on them as traitors.<sup>42</sup> Also, Baron De Geer, who had offered to protect the Anjala traitors, was attacked and beaten up by the crowds<sup>43</sup>, an act attesting to the Swedes’ love for and faith in their monarch.

Another aspect of the war against Russia outlined by Strindberg in his play is the context surrounding the start of the conflict, a further eloquent feature of enlightened autocracy. Thus, Horn considers the war to be “illegal, unconstitutional and, above all, insane!”<sup>44</sup> According to Sweden’s Constitution of 1772, the king needed the agreement of the Riksdag (Parliament) chambers to declare war. However, he found a way to set things in motion without the Parliament’s approval. Moreover, in order to arouse the population’s hatred against the enemy (the Russians), he ordered counterfeit Russian bills and coins forged on the Drottningholm domain to be put into circulation in Finland.<sup>45</sup>

In Strindberg’s play, the king is also condemned for deliberately suppressing information about Baron von Nolken’s letters, in which Russia expressed its “peaceful intentions, as well as the Empress’ direct wish to avoid going to war against Sweden or persecuting any Swedish citizen.”<sup>46</sup>

The trip to Dalarna, taken by Gustav only days after his return from Finland and meant to gather an army to oppose the Danes outside Gothenburg, is briefly mentioned at the beginning of the Third Act. Strindberg emphasises King Gustav III’s manipulative power over the common people and his undeniable charm.

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<sup>41</sup> Strindberg 1988:153

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.* p. 178

<sup>43</sup> Strindberg 1988:179

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* p.155

<sup>45</sup> Munck intends to use such currency in Holmberg’s bookshop. (First Act, p. 15)

<sup>46</sup> Klinckowström 1871:30

This scene is also based on historical fact. In his memoirs, Axel von Fersen noted that, before setting out for Dalarna on 13<sup>th</sup> September, the king had secretly sent there his close companion, Baron Armfelt, to survey the general state of mind and prepare the arrival of the king.<sup>47</sup> From the same memoirs of von Fersen we also know that Gustav III showed up on a Sunday outside Falun church, dressed in traditional folk costume, and delivered a persuasive, tearful speech explaining that, in the middle of the war against Russia, Denmark had mounted a cowardly attack against Sweden and that his duty, like that of his ancestor, Gustav Vasa, was to save the fatherland, which was only possible with the help of the brave Dalecarlian peasantry. This campaign led to 2400 people enrolling and was continued in the neighbouring province of Värmland, with the same measure of success.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Gustav III's letters confirm that there were moving moments during this campaign in the western region of the realm.<sup>49</sup>

In Strindberg's play, it is the conspirators that sum up the king's visit to Dalarna. According to them, the king then proceeded towards Gothenburg, by which time the war with Denmark had been avoided, thanks to the intervention of the English and Prussian ambassadors. Back in Stockholm, the king summoned the Parliament. "The coup d'état is launched, and so is autocracy" is Horn's conclusion.<sup>50</sup>

The fact that the king "publicly appears to be a man of the people and a freedom-fighter, that he overthrows the nobility with the help of the other estates just as he reveals himself as an autocratic ruler of the four estates",<sup>51</sup> is considered to be perverse by Anckarström, while Pechlin maintains that the king is "a really skilful player", difficult to deal with precisely because he has no regard for rules.<sup>52</sup>

The same idea, only in kinder terms, was to be taken up again by Strindberg three years later, in the new edition of the short story collection *Svenska öden och äventyr*, in the piece *En kunglig revolution (A Royal Revolution)*, where he again portrays "Frederick the Great's nephew, the disciple of Voltaire and Rousseau."<sup>53</sup> His enemies among the high aristocracy describe him in

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.* pp. 65-67

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> King Gustav's words were: "Jag har i detta landskap blifvit emottagen med de lifligaste uttryck af vänskap och tillgifvenhet samt med nitälskan, som aldrig i så hög grad visats mig alltsedan den minnesvärda tidpunkten år 1772, hvilket så mycket mera rört mig (...)." (from a letter quoted by Ducess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta in Bonde 1871:352)

<sup>50</sup> Strindberg 1988:239

<sup>51</sup> Strindberg 1988:240

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.* p. 245

<sup>53</sup> Strindberg 1990:347

detail as unfaithful, confused and unscrupulous<sup>54</sup>, a version of Caligula, since "everything he does is perverted." Whenever they speak well of him – by admitting, for instance, that he saved Sweden from "the deepest humiliation", that he abolished torture and the excess of law courts, that he banned domiciliary visits and provided press and economic freedom"<sup>55</sup> – they only do so in order to underline "how deep he had fallen".<sup>56</sup> Strindberg's depiction of Gustav III's entry into the room where the conspirators are waiting reveals clearly a conciliation with the king:

"(...) the de facto liberator and saviour from the yoke of oppression by foreign subsidies, a poet regarding life as a theatre play, casting himself in every role; raised among rancour and court intrigue, accustomed to dissimulation from an early age, with no other guidance in his actions except an inherent goodness and a lot of benevolence; a man who was not evil, who could forgive his enemies and forget injustices, an enlightened despot who, in fact, constitute alone the entire political opposition, a paradox whose best actions felt like pranks and whose worst features seemed like the outcomes of a good heart; but above all, an actor and a skilful orator. The stage he was witnessing now was his own; his entrance was carefully prepared; he himself spoke his first line and was now getting into the role."<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusions

Strindberg constructs the image of Gustav III as an enlightened monarch from a three-angle perspective: political, cultural and human.

In the eyes of the nobility, Gustav III is a tyrant because of his policies limiting their privileges and because he takes decisions on his own, without consulting them. The fact that the monarch protects the people, even the commoners, makes him an "enlightened despot"<sup>58</sup>. Strindberg's character appears to be a victim of the court education, a product of the principles expected to define a prince in the Age of Enlightenment.

Although not being staged and translated so often as other popular Strindbergian plays, the controversial manner in which Strindberg portrays Gustav III allows a genuine glimpse into the Gustavian era, recreating the atmosphere of the turbulent times at the end of the 1780s.

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<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* p. 341

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Strindberg 1990:347 (my translation)

<sup>58</sup> Strindberg 1988:287



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## VISUAL LITERACY IN THE GRAPHIC NOVEL *NESTE GANG BLIR ALT RIKTIG (EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT NEXT TIME)* BY LENE ASK

RALUCA-DANIELA RĂDUȚ<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Visual Literacy in the Graphic Novel Neste Gang Blir Alt Riktig (Everything Will Be All Right Next Time) by Lene Ask.* This article aims at analysing the novel *Neste Gang Blir Alt Riktig (Everything Will Be All Right, Next Time)* written by the Norwegian writer and illustrator Lene Ask (b. 1962) by using the close reading technique and the concept of visual literacy which emphasises the importance of the pictures in the understanding and the interpretation of this graphic novel. With respect to the interpretative level of the book, the accent is placed on the analysis and the evolution of the main character, Marit, and the effect of her dysfunctional family and her parents' behaviour on her development as a grown-up. Marit's simple and yet complicated life is presented from two main perspectives, a narrative and a visual one, aiming both her past and present.

**Keywords:** *Norwegian graphic novels, visual literacy, dysfunctional family, visual perspective, Lene Ask, narrative perspective.*

**REZUMAT.** *„Alfabetizarea vizuală” în romanul grafic Data viitoare totul va fi bine de Lene Ask.* Acest articol are ca scop analiza romanului grafic *Neste Gang Blir Alt Riktig (Data viitoare totul va fi bine)* scris de ilustratoare și scriitoare norvegiancă Lene Ask, folosind analiza pe text și conceptul de „alfabetizare vizuală”. Acesta din urmă pune accentul pe folosirea imaginilor în procesul înțelegerii și interpretării romanului grafic. Referitor la nivelul interpretativ al cărții, accentul este pus pe analiza și evoluția personajului principal, Marit, precum și pe disfuncția familială și pe efectul comportamentului părinților acesteia în dezvoltarea ei ca adult. Viața simplă și totodată complicată a lui Marit este prezentată prin intermediul a două perspective, narativă și vizuală, ambele vizând atât prezentul, cât și trecutul acesteia.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *romane grafice norvegiene, „alfabetizare vizuală”, disfuncție familială, perspectivă vizuală, Lene Ask, perspectivă narativă*

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## Introductory remarks

In the 20th century, during the interwar period, among the Norwegian writers of books for young adults who wrote especially about young girls was Evy Bøgenæs (1906-1985), one of the most productive writers of her time: “the genre’s most productive [writer] in Norway, [...], who from the 1930s and all the way up to the 1970s wrote a book per year about young girls who met their great love [...]”<sup>2</sup> (Ørjasæter 1997: 703, my own translation). Other resonant names regarding this type of literature were: Margit Ravn (1885-1960), Annik Saxegaard (1905-90) and Juli Wiborg (1880-1947). According to Tordis Ørjasæter, between 1920s and 1930s, the protagonist of almost all the books for young adults was a young girl “[placed] in a solid social environment, the importance of a close relationship with the parents, dreaming about love, [...]”. In the history of literature and the literary criticism, these books have been totally neglected due to their lack of literary qualities, but they have been very popular among girls, [...]”<sup>3</sup> (Ørjasæter 1997: 704, my own translation). Nils Bjørgås (1910-1983) in *Siste sommaren* (*The Last Summer*, 1950), Halldis Moren Vessas (1907-1995) in the book entitled *Tidleg på våren* (*Early in Spring*, 1949), Finn Havrevold (1905-1988) in *Vigo*, all followed a real and concrete pattern, regarding the construction of the plot with real life common themes which help the reader portraying the protagonists’ interior changes and experiences. Moreover, these types of stories and novels taught young readers how to face the struggle and the difficult situations in their lives (i.e. the divorce of their parents, the single parent family, the loss of the parents). In this sense, one of the Norwegian writers who presented how the main character could face struggles and problems of a dysfunctional family was Kari Ørbech (1902-1997). For instance, in the novel *Det kan ikke være sant* (*It Cannot be Real*, 1956), the protagonist, a young girl, had to face the conflicts of her divorced parents.

Tjordis Ørjasæter in the seventh volume of the History of Norwegian Literature stated that writers such as: Marit Kalstad (1931-2016), Anders Havelid (1929-20018), Else Breen (b. 1927) placed the difficulties of those times and the social problems to the centre of their stories, thus giving the reader the opportunity to be compassionate towards the unpleasant experiences of the protagonists and even associate with them. Therefore, the readers can find the themes and the real life problems presented and analysed in these books for young adults,

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<sup>2</sup> “genres flittigste utøver i Norge, [...], som fra 1930- og helt opp i 1970-årene langt på vei skrev én bok pr. år om unge piker som møter den store kjærligheten, [...]”

<sup>3</sup> “[plassert] i et solid miljø, betydningen av nær kontakt med foreldrene, drømmen om kjærligheten, [...]. I litteraturhistorien og i litteraturkritikken har disse bøkene vært totalt neglisjert på grunn av deres manglende litterære kvaliteter, men de har vært svært populære blant de lesende pikene, [...]”

as being something they can relate to and identify themselves with the protagonists: “the characters are created so that the young readers can identify with and try to experience the world from their point of view”<sup>4</sup> (Ørjasæter 1997: 706, my own translation). With respect to the literature for young adults of the 21st century, it is important to mention that while Jostein Gaarder (b. 1952) is creating the plot of his novels and stories using elements of fantasy and philosophy, Gro Dahle (b. 1962) is deeply anchored in the actual problems of a modern family, including psychological problems, trauma and abuse.

In discussing contemporary literature, one cannot dispute the ever-growing popularity of graphic novels – especially for teens. Graphic novels, [...], have long had a foothold in the publishing industry (they were quite popular in Europe long before the United States. [...] Within the genre of graphic novels, it must be noted that there are several types that readers can enjoy – including history, biography, classic adaptations, and science information – but teen fiction is still by far the most popular (Carter qtd. in Hayn and Kapland 2012: 27-28).

From the beginning of the 1900s up until now, the Norwegian literature for children and young adults has undergone a series of changes. Regarding their form and structure, the long narrative stories and novels full of details and depictions, turned gradually into comic books and graphic novels. Consequently, the children and the teenagers are encouraged to use their own imagination, creativity and intuition in order to understand the message of the story which resides behind the comic frames and the pictures from a graphic novel. As concerns the comic books and the graphic novels published in Norway in 2019 and 2020, here are a few examples: *Krypto ned i dypet* (*Into the Deep. Crypto*, 2020) written by the Norwegian animator and illustrator Hans Jørgen Sandnes (b. 1979), *Nordlys bok 3 - Kråkesøstre* (*Northern Lights book 3 - The Crow Sisters!*, 2020) by the Norwegian writer Malin Falch (b. 1993), *Bjørnar – En historie fra Nordlys!* (*Bjørnar – A Tale From the Northern Lights!*, 2019), and illustrated by Regine Toften Holst, *Jellyvamps*, 2019, by Ida Eva Neverdahl (b. 1993). These are only a few Norwegian contemporary writers and illustrators who are using in their books for children and young adults, plenty of fantastic features but also concrete and simple things taken from nature and everyday life experiences, thus being able to create a subtle crossing line between reality and fiction, between fantastic characters and protagonists belonging to the real world.

It is important to remark as well the writer and illustrator Lene Ask who was born in 1974, in Stavanger, Norway, and who wrote and illustrated books for

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<sup>4</sup> “man vil skape skikkelser som unge lesere kan identifisere seg med, og prøver å oppleve verden fra deres synsvinkel.”

children and young adults, thus trying to bring up in front of the contemporary young adult readers the classic stories of the 1900s, by introducing elements of interest for the new generation of teenagers. She is a writer, photographer and illustrator of graphic novels, comic books, picture books and also word-free books (*Du – You*, 2016). The recurrent themes that appear in her books are friendship and mystery in *Usynlige sammen (Invisible Together)*, 2019), *Mai og Juni (May and June)*, 2018), teenagers' difficulties, experiences and their first love in *Det du ikke sier, er sant (What You Say Isn't True)*, 2017) and *Det hjelper ikke å blunke (Blinking Doesn't Help)*, 2016) and family histories in the epistolary graphic novel *Kjære Rikard (Dear Richard)*, 2014).

### ***Neste gang blir alt riktig (Everything Will Be All Right Next Time, 2012)***

*Neste gang blir alt riktig (Everything Will Be All Right Next Time)* is the story of a girl, Marit who lives and works in Oslo, but was born and raised in the countryside. The plot of this graphic novel is built on two different narrative plans, namely a plan which follows the present moment when Marit is a grown-up, working and living in Oslo, while the second plan is made of several forays into the first plan, through various flashbacks from Marit's childhood. Thus, the reader is subtly invited to be a part of this graphic novel, by trying to interpret the images, the colours, the facial expressions and the body language of the characters more than the words which are not so many in this graphic novel but still are very attentively used by the illustrator and which helps the reader to better understand the context. In the article entitled "Picturing Family Histories: Torill Kove and Lene Ask", Melissa Gjellstad states that: "To read comics requires an understanding of two factors: first, what is pictured inside the frame of each comics panel, and second, what is implied in the space outside the frame" (Gjellstad 2010: 439).

In order to analyse this graphic novel, one of the most important skills that should be used is the visual ability to watch attentively each and every detail illustrated in the rectangular frames of the graphic novel. According to the Professor and art historian James Elkins, "since the 1980s the rhetoric of images has become far more pervasive, so that it is now commonplace in the media to hear that we live in a visual culture, and get our information through images" (Elkins 2009: 4). The term "*visual literacy* has been around for some time as a fundamental notion in the study of art history, iconology and visual culture. It is a strong and seemingly unavoidable metaphor, one that compares the acquisition of skills, competence and expertise (quite distinct levels of mastery) to the mastery of language and literature. Seeing, it suggests, is something like reading" (Mitchell 2009: 13). Thus, it is of great importance that the readers know what and how to interpret a graphic novel. According to the Professor

Carrie Patterson, “visual literacy is the ability to accurately receive visual message, to use those messages to construct meaning, and then to create and convey visual messages. The more proficient you are in visual literacy, the more visual power you have” (Patterson 2019: 8).

The opening scene of the book illustrates a supermarket in Norway and a mother with her girl entering the library where Marit works as a librarian in Oslo. The image of the mother together with her girl is not placed by chance in the beginning of this graphic novel. The deeper the reader goes into its plot, the more serious and problematic the relationship between Marit and her mother seems to be. While the first three pages of the book present Marit at work, the following four pages are flashbacks generated by the scene with the mother and the girl and their arguable conversation at the library, in front of Marit. The sudden change of the scenes, the different content of the speech bubbles represent both a change of the scenery and of the characters, except Marit who this time is a school girl, illustrated in five rectangular frames together with her best friend Martin. Furthermore, the fact that she wears the same clothes in most of the scenes of this graphic novel, a green sweater and a pair of light brown trousers, requests the reader’s attention in order to observe the changes of the protagonist throughout the whole novel. Besides this, the illustrator portrays attentively the differences between Marit’s representations in the countryside, when she was a little girl, and those from Oslo, where she is an adult, having the same haircut, but being a little bit taller and having the body structure of an adult female.

Graphic narrative in particular, with its infinite possibilities of arranging frames, panels, and individual scenes within frames and panels (including, but by no means limited to, arrangement in a sequence), should provide ample illustration for the necessity to employ a more dynamic and multileveled conception of reading that takes into account the manifold schemata, assumptions, inferences, and hypotheses that readers rely on to impute narrative meaning to a sequence of images” (Lefèvre qtd. in Thon and Stein 2013: 38-39).

In addition, the fact that Marit wore almost the same clothes may symbolise that regarding her relationship with her mother, nothing has been changed since she was a little girl. Both Marit and her mother remain the same, and even more, her childhood’s trauma is unchangeable and she is still affected by the memories she had with her mother. Her mother’s unusual behaviour, her neurotic crisis, forced Marit to see herself as being almost all the time, a bad and uneducated child. “Trauma provokes a shock. It’s not just a rough time, it’s an *impasse*, something that doesn’t go away. Time freezes at this moment. Repeat: trauma remains forever in the present. The pain remains acute, an open wound. More exactly, trauma is repetition” (Huston qtd. in Ireland and Proulx 2013: 38-

39). The contrast between Marit's mother, Reidun, and her father, John, also resides in the colour of their clothes. Every time her father is illustrated in one of the scenes, his is smiling and is wearing vivid and colourful clothes. In fact, Marit perceived her father as being one of her best friends, the one with whom she had the best memories from her childhood. Her father, John was a very kind, tolerant and wise person. Martin, the best friend of Marit, told about his father the following: "Your father was good enough even if he was a Christian"<sup>5</sup> (Ask 2012: 20). In addition, this religious aspect of the story is also emphasised through the icons in the form of photographs which appear on the walls, in Marit's room since she was a little girl. These are made intentionally visible by the illustrator in order to place the accent on the fact that Marit was born and raised in a Christian family. She was surrounded by guarding angels on the walls, while her father used to thank God before and after the meal time: "God bless the food. Amen"<sup>6</sup> (Ask 2012: 8). Although, Marit is Christian she is tolerant with those of other religions, for instance with a Muslim boy, Azin, who came to the library in Oslo. Thus, "exposure to different cultures enables the individual to become more reflective. By experiencing different cultures, individuals tend to become more aware and critical of their own cultural values, beliefs and perceptions. [...] Nevertheless, becoming aware of one's cultural dynamics constitutes a difficult assignment because it triggers the observer to undergo changes that are affective, behavioural or cognitive in nature" (Pop 2016: 91).

It is worth mentioning that the talented illustrator Lene Ask is able to give life to its sketches, by giving them the right colour, the right appearance and even name them. For instance, the fact that there are names on the buildings in the book, helps the reader to observe easily a set of details which are necessary in the understanding of the text, when reading is performed visually. "Barbara Stafford has suggested we call 'visual competence', a kind of baseline skill (like the ability to read) that is necessary, but far from sufficient, condition for the more advanced and specialized skills we might want to call *visual literacy* – that is, connoisseurship: rich, highly cultivated, and trained experiences and techniques of visual observation. [...] One has to possess visual competence in order to *read* a text (unless it is written in Braille), but hearing is perfectly adequate as a threshold for normal competence in a natural language" (Mitchell 2009: 13-14). Therefore, Lene Ask, through her illustrations and pictures, creates a clear visual field full of impulses which gradually develop the reader's visual competences in order to understand and interpret the whole novel. For example, the reader is aware that Marit is living in Bleiken, because in the book this name is on the railway station where the protagonist waited for the train to Oslo.

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<sup>5</sup> "Faren din var godt likt selv om han var kristen".

<sup>6</sup> "Gud signe maten. Amen"

When she arrives in Oslo, in the background is written Oslo Sentralstasjon (Oslo Central Station).

The final part of this graphic novel is also full of importance in the sense that Marit's feelings towards her mother are gradually changing from hate to love and care. After her father died, her mother was lonely in Bleiken, a village situated at 80 kilometres from Oslo. Martin, the best friend of Marit visited often her mother. He tried to mediate the conflict between them who were not so close to each other. The death of her father affected her a lot because they used to walk together, go hiking together, decorate the Christmas tree, go to pick forest berries, which were all beautiful and unforgettable experiences for a child. Whenever Marit wanted to talk to her mother she was yelling at her and sent her immediately into her room. The open end of this graphic novel portrays Marit, Martin and her sick mother, together at Bleiken. Reidun suffered a stroke and she could not talk anymore and Marit was taking care of her. Thus, the graphic novel *Neste gang blir alt riktig* (*Everything Will Be All Right Next Time*) ends in an optimistic tone and the characters are portrayed into a brighter light full of hope and new beginnings. With respect to the messages the pictures send to the reader, there is a concrete line between darkness and light, winter and spring, the life in the city and the life in the countryside. The end of the book begins with an illustration of a tractor sowing seeds on the moist field. "In graphic narratives, the combination of text and pictures – [...] is the vital element of storytelling. [...] In graphic narratives, word and image correlate and compete in a plethora of ways" (Thon and Stein 2013: 197). It is also important to remark that "[...], literature provides personal enrichment because it encourages the individual to interpret *self* and *other* in diverse contexts of social and cultural exchange" (Pop 2016: 96).

### Concluding remarks

All things considered, the graphic novel *Neste gang blir alt riktig* (*Everything Will Be All Right Next Time*) presents the difficulties and the life experiences of the main character Marit and her interior changes that occur as a result of her interaction with different people from different social classes and cultures. In light of these events, the talented illustrator and narrator, Lene Ask, creates a substantial Norwegian universe where she sets the emphasis on different and important cultural and social aspects which can define the Norwegian society. Thus, the story from this graphic novel is used as background in order to point to the specific things related to the Norwegian culture and civilisation and several intertextual elements. For instance, Martin is willing to borrow and read a book from the library and that book is *Markens Grøde* (*Growth of the Soil*) by Knut Hamsun (1859-1952), the Norwegian writer who was awarded the Nobel Prize



in Literature, in 1920. In addition, the librarian also recommended the book written by Lars Monsen (b. 1963), the Norwegian journalist and adventurer. Besides, in one of the previous scenes, the reader can notice a TV-programme broadcasting by NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation). Moreover, the accent is also placed on the fact that Norway is a multicultural country where religious and cultural tolerance are strongly supported and promoted among the population. In this sense, there is a very high level of complexity of this graphic novel. Furthermore, it can be interpreted from different perspectives beginning with its interpretative features which combine both the close reading technique and the visual literacy concept and ending with its cultural and social features which offers the reader the possibility to explore a small but significant part of the Norwegian society and culture.

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## CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PARTICULARITIES OF LITERARY TRANSLATION FROM NORWEGIAN TO ROMANIAN, AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATION OF MORTEN STRØKNES' *HAVBOKA*

ADRIANA DIANA URIAN<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Cultural and Linguistic Particularities of Literary Translation from Norwegian to Romanian, as Illustrated in the Romanian Translation of Morten Strøknès's Havboka.* The present study aims at presenting the various cultural and linguistic particularities arising within a literary translation, placing a specific focus on the literary translation from Romanian to Norwegian and offering practical examples from the Romanian translation of Morten Strøknès's *Havboka*. The article opens with a discussion on the importance of culture in literary translations, illustrating the essential impact of the cultural element over the preference for a perfect semantic equivalence. The research, then, focuses on those elements which bring out the specificity of the translation proper, providing a varied palette of examples, meant to highlight the cultural particularities of the Norwegian language and the manner in which these particularities were handled within the translation, in order to preserve the unity and meaning conveyed in the source text. Pursuant to remaining loyal to the nature of the source text and to the realities of the target language, the study reflects on the importance of cultural uniqueness, and examines its decisive resonance within the translation proper.

**Keywords:** *literary translation, cultural particularities, linguistic particularities, Norwegian language, Romanian language, semantic equivalence, significance.*

**REZUMAT.** *Particularități culturale și lingvistice ale traducerii literare din limba norvegiană în limba română, ilustrate în traducerea cărții lui Morten Strøknès's Havboka.* Prezentul studiu își propune să analizeze diferitele particularități culturale și lingvistice ce apar în cadrul traducerilor literare, punând accentul pe traducerea literară din limba română în norvegiană și oferind exemple practice din traducerea în limba română, a cărții *Havboka* scrisă de

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Morten Strøknes. Articolul se deschide cu o prezentare a importanței culturii în traducerile literare, ilustrând impactul marcant al elementului cultural în detrimentul preferinței pentru echivalența semantică perfectă. Cercetarea se concentrează apoi pe acele elemente care vizează specificul traducerii, oferind o paletă variată de exemple, menite să evidențieze particularitățile culturale ale limbii norvegiene și modul în care aceste particularități au fost tratate în cadrul traducerii, pentru a păstra unitatea și semnificația transmise în textul sursă. Urmărind redarea într-un mod cât se poate de fidel a textului sursă, dar în același timp și a realităților limbii țintă, studiul reflectă asupra importanței unicității culturale și examinează rezonanța sa decisivă în cadrul traducerii în sine.

***Cuvinte cheie:** traduceri literare, particularități culturale, particularități lingvistice, limba norvegiană, limba română, echivalență semantică, semnificație.*

## **1. The Importance of Culture in Literary Translations**

The cultural aspect has always been of incommensurable importance for rendering the full meaning to translations in general and all the more in the case of literary translations. Literary translations represent a more particular area within the broader field of translations as the full semantic content of a literary translation needs to be accurately integrated within the cultural paradigm it belongs to, while at the same time maintaining the same sense of wholeness and strength of conveyance it renders, in the original language.

Aiming at preserving the meaning of a text in its entirety through a translation is, as such, not only linked to the faithful preservation of an absolutely accurate semantic rendering from one language to another, but also to a careful, sensible and almost intuitive understanding of the cultural background from where the text originates, and which is very well part of the textual DNA, a component that must be carried across all languages into which that text is translated. This is one of the main reasons why translators of literary texts should not only be considered translators of texts, but also translators of culture, a particularity that can be seen at its fullest specifically in the translations of literary texts.

To the untrained eye, the notion of culture might appear as an ambiguous territory especially because of the multifold valences which are attributed to this term. Perhaps, it would be useful to briefly explore what culture is from the perspective of a translator of literary texts. Answering this question by providing a single, straightforward definition of the term could prove to be a never-ending task, which in the end might not even produce a very accurate

result. As such, we could exemplify the notion by considering, for instance, several random examples of words belonging to certain languages which have no equivalents in other languages. These words can be considered as living proof of the fact that language and culture coexist in such a way that they create concepts which are fully accessible only for the native receivers of the culture and language which originated them. This does not necessarily mean that outsiders to the culture cannot understand the concept the word conveys, but rather that finding a perfect equivalent for that word in a different language might prove to be impossible.

Take for instance the word *hygge*, present in several Scandinavian languages. The word refers to the feeling of coziness. While the English language has found a relatively close equivalent for this word, the notion of *coziness* does not fully describe the meaning of *hygge*, as the word comprises several other meanings such as “a form of everyday togetherness”, “a pleasant and highly valued everyday experience of safety, equality, personal wholeness and a spontaneous social flow”. Collins English Dictionary defines the word as “a concept (...) creating cozy and convivial atmospheres that promote wellbeing”. The case of this word is not singular. In Romanian one can also identify such examples of words which have no equivalents in other languages, such as the well-known example of the word *dor*, depicting a feeling of longing.

The examples illustrated above demonstrate that there is a powerful cultural bias, if one may call it so, across languages, a feature that is closely engendered in the manner in which different nations, as cultural individualities, perceive their surroundings in a way that is so personal, one may even say intimate, that it ends up being reflected in the way they communicate with each other and to the rest of the world, which thus becomes quintessentially filtered into their language. Translating such notions that are more likely to be encountered especially in literary works, is a linguistic endeavor as much as it is a creative effort to unify different cultures and languages in order to obtain a sound and unitary literary work in the translation’s target language.

Perhaps the best way to understand the endeavor of a translator and all the more of a translator of literary texts, is by filtering it through Pushkin’s words. Pushkin considered that a translator is “a courier of the human spirit”. Yet, irrespective of the metaphor one chooses to indulge in when theorizing about literary translation, the unshakeable truth still remains that literary translation cannot exist without a good sense of multiculturalism attached to it or as Robert Wechsler playfully asserts: “it is a celebration of otherness, a truly multicultural event without all the balloons and noisemakers.” (1998: 8)

## 2. Norwegian and Romanian, a Translator's Quest Conquering both Language and Culture

When specifically referring to literary translations from Norwegian into Romanian, the cultural aspect and the purely linguistic undertaking are very closely intertwined. One of the major challenges that arise when translating a literary work from Norwegian into Romanian stems from the many cultural differences between the two languages and cultures. It is not enough to simply accept that two nations and their languages are different to begin with, when producing a translation of a literary text. Just like in the case of the word *hygge* exemplified above, culture transpires through language, a phenomenon which is best at play in the field of literary translations.

Eco (2001) offers the same perspective over the topic, asserting that a translator needs to take into account considerations that are not solely linguistic, but mostly cultural. Offering a literal translation for a proposition may suggest a similar semantic meaning in the target language, but the same proposition might have a different cultural impact. The difference between the purely semantic meaning of a translation and its cultural apprehension presents an incredibly interesting ground for analysis, because it is this realm of distinction and significance that not only poses challenges for the translator, but that also contains the necessary code to making a literary translation whole within the target language. Omitting the cultural interface, may render a translation incomplete, a translation that might be semantically precise, but lacking in substance, giving the impression that the text itself isn't fully grounded in the target language.

Norwegian and to a good extent Scandinavian culture is extremely particular and quite hermetic, which means that translations from Norwegian especially, are bound to create more than a couple of cultural dilemmas, at least for a native Romanian translator. These dilemmas might arise from favoring a more target-oriented perspective over the translation. Such a perspective needs to ascertain that a semantic equivalence between the target language and the source language must exist in order for a translation to be possible.

Yet, for literary translations that have Norwegian source texts and Romanian as target language, such a perspective proves to be annihilating, since there are so many instances of words or expressions depicting objects, animals, feelings, world-views, that do not have a perfect equivalent or that do not have any equivalent in Romanian. For such instances, the resolution most translators adhere to would be to provide not a perfectly valid semantic translation, but rather to provide a culturally valid interpretation of the terminology, in order for it to gain significance in the target language. There are various strategies that can be used to achieve this end. If semantic inequivalence applies to a

singular word only, one might opt for maintaining the word in the source language and providing additional explanations in endnotes or footnotes. By doing so, the translator can provide the reader with the contextualized cultural background necessary for understanding the context in which such a word is used, the need for using this particular expression and not a similar one which might have a semantic equivalent in the target language and for ensuring that the cultural mark of uniqueness in the source language is adhered to in the target language as well.

Translating strategies might differ when semantic inequivalence applies to more than one word or to a complex phrase. In such a situation, keeping the entire construction in the source language might prove to be a difficult endeavor. The resolution in these highly complex instances, as suggested by Eco (2001), is freely interpreting the source text and recreating it in the target language, with emphasis being placed no longer on the perfect semantic equivalence between source language and target language, but on the effect of the translated text on the target culture.

The two situations described above proved to be recurrent elements in the translation process surrounding Morten Strøksnes' book, *Havboka*, from Norwegian into Romanian, a book in the translation of which, an in-depth knowledge of Norwegian lifestyle and culture, proved to be an invaluable resource. Whether it is the general topic of life at sea, so near and so deeply engendered in the country's and its people's livelihood or whether it surfaces because of the work's non-fictional feature, portraying Norwegian history and landscape, both subjectively and many times scientifically unbiased, with the astute accuracy of a biologist, historian, insider and objective observer, this masterpiece provides an ample and captivating territory for discussing linguistic and cultural particularities of source to target text differences, from Norwegian to Romanian.

### **2.1. Cultural and Linguistic Particularities in Morten Strøksnes' *Havboka***

Morten Strøksnes' novel, *Havboka*, is not essentially a work of fiction. While the author might have made use of those dramatic techniques that provide novels with the artsy fictional support, the novel under discussion is a non-fiction novel. The genre is relatively new and according to The Encyclopedia Britannica, it appeared in 1965, Truman Capote being named its originator, through his book *In Cold Blood*. The fact that Strøksnes' novel is categorized as belonging to the nonfictional genre, because of its increasingly artistic nature, with descriptive accounts and passages rendering the work almost lyrical, which is in a way atypical of nonfictional works, makes the process of translating such a piece of work even more interesting, both from a theoretical and from a practical point of view.

When dealing with a complex text, such as the one under discussion, which in addition borderlines the nonfictional genre, one must understand from the offset that the translation is bound to be suffused in elements presenting cultural and linguistic conflicts between the source language text and the target language text. Taking this general idea as a given, one would have to at least envision that the realm of cultural and linguistic discrepancies would pose various challenges in the translation process, especially when it comes to those linguistic elements which are void of meaning in the target language, in the absence of the much needed background information provided only through creating access pathways to the cultural environment that produced the text in the source language.

## ***2.2. Notions Which Depict Fish, Fishing Tools, Fishing Establishments and the Life of Fishermen***

The most important aspects that begin to raise cultural and linguistic discrepancies when translating Strøksnes' text from Romanian into Norwegian, are related to those notions which depict fish, fishing tools, fishing establishments and most of the activities surrounding this lexical area, which is understandably more developed in the Norwegian language as opposed to the Romanian language. Some practical examples are easy to find throughout the novel.

To begin with, we could study the case of such words as *fiskebruk* and *trandamperi*. *Fiskeruk* poses less of a challenge linguistically speaking, since it can be equated to the Romanian *peșcărie/fabrică de pește*. Yet, at least to some extent, the Romanian translation is culturally challenged, for what is understood by a fishery in Romanian, cannot begin to comprise the entire range of meaning of a fully functional Norwegian establishment, for the same purpose. The fishery is described in accurate detail later on in the novel, which works favorably for the purpose of the translation as well. Since the description is perfectly accurate and believable, as the account is non-fictional and the building actually exists on the Norwegian island of Skrova, Strøksnes's authorial input helps the translation process, in that it perfectly creates the much needed cultural clarification, enriching the meaning of the simple Romanian equivalent with a description of a traditional Norwegian *fiskebruk*. Furthermore, culturally speaking, the differences between the Romanian *peșcărie* and the Norwegian *fiskebruk* are striking and obvious, for while depicting an establishment where fish is procured and processed, the Norwegian word bears more than a purely technical understanding and it is deeply linked to the specific way of life of Norwegian fishermen.

The second example highlighted above, namely the case of the word *trandamperi* is more problematic for the Romanian text. For starters, there isn't

a single word in the Romanian language that can be perfectly equated to its Norwegian counterpart. From a strictly linguistic standpoint, it could prove difficult to find an explanation for why a language such as Romanian does not have one word to perfectly match the Norwegian *trandamperi*, however, such a situation is justifiable from a cultural viewpoint. The Norwegian vocabulary is much richer in terminology related to fishing, fishmongery, fish processing, life at sea, the life of fishermen and the tools they use on a daily basis, which are not only part of their day to day activities, but have come to be a definition of their identity and an essence of their being, an aspect which the novel also conveys quite clearly and being a non-fictional text, such pieces of information must be understood as valid, cultural facts.

When faced with the dilemma of translating a word with no perfect, unique equivalent in the target language as is the case of the word *trandamperi*, a valid option, though not the only solution available in such situations, is to resort to employing a clarification of this establishment's purpose. This was also the course of action taken in the Romanian translation as well, where *trandamperi* was translated as "*fabrică mică de procesare a uleiului din ficat de cod.*" (op. cit) One of the possible cultural explanations for why Romanian does not have a perfect equivalent for this notion could be the fact that the Romanian industry never specialized in processing cod liver oil and therefore, there was no need for the language to create a lexical item to name such an establishment. Despite not having a perfect equivalent to match the Norwegian notion, the target language text doesn't necessarily lose much in terms of meaning or stylistics, in this particular case at least. The justification would be that the Romanian translation, though not employing a one-word-equivalent, still manages to capture the essence of the term, not by finding a perfect equivalent in the target language, but by providing a definition of it, a strategy which, in this case, bridges the gap between the source and the target language.

Another element of great interest also related to this area of fishing and life at sea, comes out in Strøknes's text in the context of describing a hunt for wolffish. While the description of the hunt itself offers a valuable cultural insight into the authentic Norwegian fishermen's life and activities, what is of interest for the present paper represents the use of a particular tool, used when catching wolffish at sea. The Norwegian word for this tool, namely *pik*, constitutes yet another example of a lexical item without perfect equivalence in the target language.

Historically speaking, Scandinavian peoples engaged in complex and rather barbarian hunts for larger fish species. Some of the most hunted specimens were whales of all kinds, which were slaughtered to the point of extinction and exploited for their meat, blood, gray amber and liver oil. During such hunting expeditions fishermen developed various tools to help them handle such heavy



sea creatures and invented, for this purpose, a large and wide variety of weapons, among which, probably the most famously known tool worldwide is the harpoon. However, there are different kinds of harpoons, which were adjusted to the type of fish they were used in catching. One such harpoon is the one referred to as *pik*, which one needs to understand is a smaller type of harpoon used to sting wolffish (the wolffish being smaller in size than the whale, for instance).

As it was a specific tool, a special artifact which needed to be individualized, the target language text perceived it rather as a proper name and preserved it as such, in the original form offered by the source text. The choice was also justified by the manner in which the tool was presented in the source text, where in addition to being named, a description for the tool and its usage, was also provided: "(...) *Hugo și prietenii lui stăteau în larg toată noaptea ca să pescuiască lupi de Atlantic cu pik-ul – un harpon cu vârf întărit care se aruncă din barcă pentru a străpunge lupii de Atlantic sau calcanii care înotau nestingheriți pe fundul apei.*" (op. cit) Thus, as the fragment above demonstrates, keeping the original, source language term feels natural in the target text as well.

The two situations exposed above, that of the word *trandamperi* and that of the word *pik*, bring into discussion the notion of equivalence in translation and whether seeking utmost equivalence is in fact a desirable end result. Eco (2001) states that: "*equivalence in meaning cannot be taken as a satisfactory criterion for a correct translation, first of all because in order to define the still undefined notion of translation one would have to employ a notion as obscure as equivalence of meaning, and some people think that meaning is that which remains unchanged in the process of translation. We cannot even accept the naïve idea that the equivalence in meaning is provided by synonymy, since it is commonly accepted that there are no complete synonyms in language.*" (9)

Understandably enough, aiming for perfect equivalence in the translation of a literary text is not a realistic goal. Languages are not perfect elements in themselves and, at times, it is quite difficult to find a perfect synonym for a lexical element within the same language. The quest of finding perfect equivalents across different languages has more to do with utopia than with the linguistic reality at hand. Thus, the fact that there were no equivalents for the Norwegian words *trandamperi* and *pik* in Romanian, doesn't mean that the Romanian translation loses on account of meaning. Perfect equivalence would be possible if perfect languages existed and perhaps at some ideological level they do exist, but aside from the mystical sense, languages have their imperfections and what can realistically be obtained out of a translation is finding a compatible convergence between source and target language. This way, the quintessential meaning is still preserved, as convergence also helps mend the eventual cultural gaps created

by such notions that are culturally engendered in a language, but culturally absent from another.

Undoubtedly the most interesting linguistic elements that draw attention in the source text and that are still related to this broader category of fish and sea life, refer to the extremely rich lexical domain that Norwegian reserves for the different types of cod. These multifold variations can name cod fished in different areas, but they also include notions that distinguish between the different manners of processing and preparing this type of fish. For instance, an example would be the notion of *klippfisk*, which refers to a variety of dry, salted cod or *kaffetorsk*, which is a kind of cod that weighs over thirty kilos. Just as in the cases studied above, there is no equivalent for these lexical items in the target language, for which reason, the Norwegian word was preserved in the translation as well, accompanied by an explanation provided additionally by the translator. *Skrei* and not the general *torsk* is the Norwegian word for cod from the Atlantic Ocean.

The existence of this additional terminology referring to cod in Norwegian, suggests yet another interesting cultural particularity of the Norwegian culture and the way in which it is reflected through language. It is not perhaps so surprising, taking into consideration that cod is considered to be Norway's national fish. This means, that culturally, this particular species is an important part of the country's broader national identity, so it feels quite natural that there should be several names within the language to distinguish between the various kinds or species of cod. The name *skrei* in particular would pose problems for any other target languages Strøknæs' text might be translated into, as the word only exists in Norwegian. But again, since the aim of a translation is not to seek absolute linguistic equivalence, this dilemma can easily be resolved. One valid option is keeping the original Norwegian word in the target language text as well and yet again accompanying it with an explanation or a description of what it represents, either within the target text itself or in a footnote. Either way, the receivers of the target text should be made aware one way or another of what the word represents in the source text. While perfectly equating its meaning in the target language is neither possible nor desired in the end, a brief description of the term will suffice to create the cultural background that legitimizes the word in the target language and creates that area of convergence between source language and target language.

One last element which could be worth mentioning as part of this category, belongs to the specifics of fishermen life in Norway. Though these aspects are reflected in multifold ways throughout the text, the most striking reflection of a culturally specific distinction regarding the life of fishermen in Norway is represented by the incredibly rich variety of fishing ships, each

adapted to the fishing expedition they were designed for. Understandably, distinctions such as these are common in every well-established culture that bases its livelihood on fishing and exploiting the resources within the seas and oceans of the world. Still, for the purpose of this article, the elements which will be brought forward are just those that are absolutely specific for the area of Norway and arctic fishing.

One such ship is named in the source text as *ishavsskutte*. Once more, we are presented with a lexical element that only exists in the source language, thus having no equivalent in Romanian. The term refers to a special type of vessel which was especially designed for hunting seals; therefore, it was meant to endure extremely low temperatures and to pierce through frozen waters while remaining in one piece. It is quite obviously ludicrous that seal hunts have never been a part of the Romanian culture and such fishing activities have never defined the livelihood of Romanian fishermen, which represent a rather small community and which is by no means as developed as fishermen communities in Norway. This is why, the translation into the target language does not specifically name the vessel, but it refers to it as: “*o navă robustă (...) destinată vânătorii de foci din zonele arctice.*” (op. cit)

The terminology related to sea life and fishing is extremely rich in the Norwegian language. This is one of the linguistic particularities which, as the present paper also shows, has its roots in the cultural background, stemming from the very unique way of life of Norwegian fishermen, that has made its way to language as well. For what we express through language, is not only semantics, it is also an expression of personal identity and cultural bias, a reality which is so well illustrated through the practice of literary translations.

### ***2.3. Notions Which Depict Mythological Creatures Specific for Norse Culture***

In addition to offering a thorough, non-fictional account of seafaring know-how and blending in deeply intimate details about Norwegian fishermen's lifestyle and their perception of the sea and sea life, Strøknes's text also descends into mythology, bringing forward a rich palette of mythological Norse creatures that pose interesting dilemmas from a translator's point of view.

The names of mythological creatures remain to a great extent unaltered in the target text. It is after all common sense that such notions should be greatly treated as proper names, despite the fact that they do not possess all the distinctive features that proper names do. One such instance is the case of the word *Ziphius*, a monster belonging to the area of the Faeroe Islands. The contrast between the source language text and the target language text poses a difference in treatment of this lexical item. For a proper illustration of the situation, a tiny

snippet from the source text, will be exposed in parallel with the target language translation below.

Source text:

*“Hva gjør man for eksempel om man møter på Ziphius?” (op. cit)*

Target language text:

*“Ce-ar fi făcut marinarii dacă ar fi întâlnit, de exemplu, un ziphius? (op. cit)*

As it is, perhaps, quite visible, the source text treats *Ziphius* as a proper noun, as the basic capitalization rule of proper nouns is applied, whereas, in the target language text, *ziphius* is converted into a common noun, being accompanied by the indefinite article “*un*”. Up to this point, most of the justifications for preserving a word in the target language in its original form were rooted in the cultural differences between source language and target language, namely that certain activities or tools were not specific for the Romanian lifestyle and therefore they were culturally not included in language. In addition, their form was not altered and, most of the times, they were also accompanied by clarifications already provided by the author or added into the translation. The present situation, however, brings about a completely different situation, mainly because the word is only halfway preserved whole in the target language text.

The explanation is quite simple and resonates well, with one of the views that Eco (2001) expresses as well and which refers to the fact that translators are actually permitted to make alterations to the literal meaning of the original text, and quite interestingly, Eco continues asserting that even alterations to the original text’s reference are permitted, as long as the effect created in the translation resonates better in the cultural context of the target language. In the case of *Ziphius* the alteration is not too major, but within the framework of the receiving culture, where a *Ziphius* is not so clearly distinguished as a mystical creature, the translation “*un ziphius*” resonates far better, as it hints to any such representative of a certain species. And thus, the mental picture the translation creates, doesn’t do any disfavor to the source text, especially since it helps create the necessary reference which culturally might not have existed in the target language. Notably, though, the interpretative task of the translator is of considerable importance in such situations.

Continuing the journey of the source text into the depths of Norse mythology, the figure of the *draugr* emerges as an element of interest from the perspective of the Romanian translator. Not quite distinctively, Romanian folk culture is no stranger to the creation of mystical and maleficent creatures of

demonic nature, mostly due to the religious feeling that suffuses Romanian folk beliefs. *Draugr*s are very good equivalents of the Romanian *strigoi*, because, just like the Romanian *strigoi*, they were believed to be reincarnations of dead men, and even their descriptions are cross culturally similar. A *draugr* was described as having red, lifeless eyes, it preserved the physical abilities it possessed during its lifetime, but gained certain magical abilities through death, which were used for the purpose of evil. Norse culture and mythology distinguish between land-draugurs and sea-draugurs. Sea-draugurs represented embodiments of dead fishermen coming to hunt the living. Strøksnes's references sea-draugurs. This is quite clearly because he provides a detailed description of these creatures picturing them having heads that looked like clumps of seaweed, which is specific for sea-draugurs and not land-draugurs.

The case of the word *draugr* is extremely interesting as part of the translation endeavor. To start with, we have a situation in which the target language offers a close equivalent to the source language word, namely that of *strigoi*. As shown above, there are certain similarities between the two notions, when it comes to their features in a sort of a cross-cultural bestiary. It goes without saying that automatically and unequivocally accepting *strigoi* as an equivalent for *draugr* and creating a translation where *draugr* translates to *strigoi*, would have been an overstepping within the target text translation. In a manner of thinking, this problematic reflects the issue of sameness and reference discussed by Eco (2001), but the end result is a reversed process of the example Eco uses in order to illustrate the matter from the perspective of the translator. Eco (2001) presents a situation in which a poetic reference sending back to Leopardi in an Italian source text, was altered to Keats in the English translation, as by way of interpretation the translator sees Keats as a better choice for the English target text. In a reversed manner, while *strigoi* would have been perfectly integrated in the cultural background of the target language, in this case Romanian, so the choice would have been culturally justified, a great deal of the Norse specificity of the source text would have been considerably lost in exchanging *draugr* for *strigoi*. Thus, it is worth underlining that relying solely on cultural equivalence in a translation is not sufficient. A literary translation is a quintessentially complex artifact which needs to consider various aspects, of which cultural particularities and semantic equivalence represent just two of the various interfaces.

It would be impossible to ignore one of the most representative creatures in Norse mythology which could not forego being mentioned in Strøksnes's text as well, the frightening *kraken*. But perhaps because it is so well engendered within cross cultural references, it has, in a manner of speaking, become the most iconic beast of the Nordic mystique. Elements such as this, that have become

iconic across cultures, raise very few problems in the translation process. There is no point in even considering changing or translating their name within the target language text, because by being so representative for the culture they belong to, no other literal translation or externally inserted interpretation is necessary.

Strøknes's non-fictional accounts of the mystical Norse creatures are taken from bishop Erik Pontopiddan's *The Natural History of Norway (Norges naturhistorie)*, a work, which in its time was considered to be a scientific chronicle of the existing marine monsters inhabiting the coasts of Norway. Ignoring the fact that the beliefs of the time (1752) are no longer valid for today's modern world realities, and that the existence of Erik Pontopiddan's terrible monsters is, from a modern perspective, a fictional account, rather than a scientific undertaking; from a translator's perspective, the monsters presented there, that are further mentioned in Strøknes's text, should nonetheless be treated as scientific terminology, for which a literal translation in the target text is not recommended.

#### ***2.4. Unique Terminology Specific for Northern Norway***

This brief research study of the elements comprising the linguistic and cultural particularities in the translation of Morten Strøknes's *Havboka*, would not be complete without stopping upon a few quite intriguing lexical items included in the text of the novel, a set of lexical items whose uniqueness is dictated by the fact that they only exist as part of the very restricted vocabulary of Northern Norway and the archipelago of Lofoten in particular.

Quite scarcely spread throughout the text, Strøksnes exposes terminology that is utterly specific for the area of Northern Norway, inserting instances of local vocabulary specific for Lofoten. The archipelago of Lofoten is one of the most mysteriously beautiful regions of Norway. Part of its mystery is owed to the fact that the archipelago is located north of the Arctic Circle, turning it into a world which has long sparked the interest of many explorers both because of its location and its beauty.

Strøksnes dedicates several entries to the description of Lofoten, not only through his very own authorial lens, but also through various chronicles that were written about the region. The nature of textual uniqueness which this region poses for the present article, refers to the insertion of a couple of lexical items that do not exist anywhere else with the exception of the Lofoten area. The most striking examples in this respect are listed below, together with an explanation of their meaning.

*Examples of unique terminology specific for the Lofoten area:*

*sjybårturn* - the sound of the ocean heard through a bedroom window on a summer night.

*transtilla* - the rare occasions when the sea is perfectly calm.

*hundredagene* - the hottest period in the year between July 23<sup>rd</sup> and August 23<sup>rd</sup>

*opplætt* - referring to the time when the sea hasn't quite calmed down in the aftermath of a storm

*mjøll* - a thin and smooth layer of snow

*brækkar* - a larger wave which results from several smaller waves come together

*rennedrev* - a combination of stormy weather and snow

*hjeller* - pyramidal drying racks (used for drying pollock)

*snag* - a promontory that rises above sea level, but that also continues deeply under the sea

All of these lexical items, markers of the uniqueness of the vocabulary in the Lofoten area, are vivid representations of the strong cultural ramifications that can occur within language and that remain unparalleled in any other languages, of which Romanian is no exception. From a translator's point of view, such terminology, as the examples mentioned above, needs to be preserved in its original, source text form, in order for the cultural component of the message to be transferred as wholly as possible in the target language text. In the specific situation of these very unique words, they were preserved as such, both in the Romanian and the English translations. Domesticating these lexical items, to use a term suggested by Eco (2001), is quite impossible in this case. These words reserve no possibility for being domesticated in any target text, because their existence is uniquely linked to activities, feelings, natural phenomena, that are too characteristic of the archipelago of Lofoten and thus, individualizing them to the same extent in any other language is close to impossible.

Once more, it would seem that, at times, strong cultural particularities have a greater impact upon translations in the detriment of linguistic equivalence. Still, acquiring equivalence at all cost should never be the end goal of a literary translation, because a literary translation in itself, both in terms of what it represents, and as an end result, consists of a ramification of processes, each complex in its own way.

### 3. Conclusions

Analyzing the linguistic and cultural particularities of literary translations from the perspective of Morten Strøknæs's text, has offered impressive opportunities for discussing the impact that cultural elements can have on a translated text

with Norwegian as source language and Romanian as target language. The text of this non-fiction novel is rich in terminology that is specific for the Northern area of Norway and even more so, for the area of the archipelago of Lofoten.

Thus, cultural particularities have an astounding impact from a translation's point of view, as they raise several problematics which cannot be accounted for linguistically (see the cases of *skrei*, *pik*, *trandamperi* or the cases of *sjybårturn*, *transtill* etc.) and which can be resolved through the translator's intervention in the target language text. Resolving cultural dilemmas raised by certain linguistic elements, is a task of increased complexity, which has nothing to do with the blind quest for perfect semantic equivalence, but rather with an interpretative act on the part of the translator, an endeavor which aims to integrate the source text into the realities of the target language.

The effort that needs to be made in order to mend the breach between the linguistic element and the cultural diversity engendered within each language, is towards achieving a good degree of convergence, thus admitting that the source text and the target text are not necessarily equal, but that they are rather equally valid, both from a linguistic and a cultural viewpoint, within the realities of their languages and the cultures that contain them.

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## SEEKING REFUGE IN THE PAST. BERET'S FAMILY CHEST IN O.E. RØLVAAG'S GIANTS IN THE EARTH

IOANA-ANDREEA MUREȘAN<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Seeking Refuge in the Past. Beret's Family Chest in O.E. Rølvaag's Giants in the Earth*<sup>2</sup>. This study explores the importance of homeland treasures for the immigrants longing to belong. Beret Holm, the female protagonist in *Giants in the Earth*, speaks for the difficulties faced by Norwegian settlers in the Dakota prairie during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both in what concerns the land they are about to conquer, but also in what concerns their sense of belonging, as well as the preservation of their identity in the American melting pot. The family chest she had brought from Norway, in which she kept all the treasures, all the memories from the homeland, would become her shelter during a locust plague that ravages the settlement. Torn by remorse for having left her country and parents, Beret seeks refuge from the wrath of God, hiding with her children in the very object that was so dear to her, her sole remembrance of an intangible past. The family chest that she sees as her coffin in a moment of despair would become the altar for the ritual of communion held by a Norwegian Lutheran priest, a ritual which would bring comfort to her troubled soul.

**Keywords:** *Norwegian-Americans, Ole Edvart Rølvaag, Giants in the Earth, Norwegian heritage, cultural identity, immigrant chest, immigrant belonging, homeland memories*

**REZUMAT.** *Căutând adăpost în trecut. Cufărul lui Beret din Uriași pe pământ de Ole Edvart Rølvaag.* Studiul de față analizează importanța lucrurilor de preț din țara natală pentru imigranții care tânjesc după apartenență. Beret Holm, protagonista romanului *Uriași pe pământ*, este exponenta dificultăților întâmpinate de pionierii norvegieni în preeria din Dakota în secolul al XIX-lea, atât în ceea ce privește pământul pe care sunt pe cale să-l cucerească, cât și în privința sentimentului lor de apartenență și păstrarea identității în creuzetul american de culturi. Cufărul familiei, pe care-l adusese din Norvegia și în care își păstra toate lucrurile de preț, toate amintirile din țara natală, va deveni adăpostul ei în timpul unei invazii a lăcustelor care face ravagii în așezământ. Chinuită de remușcări fiindcă și-a părăsit țara și părinții, Beret caută adăpost de mânia lui

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Dumnezeu și se ascunde împreună cu copiii tocmai în obiectul care-i era atât de drag, singura amintire a unui trecut intangibil. Cufărul familiei care aproape-i devine sicriu într-un moment de disperare va fi altarul în ritualul împărțășaniei ținut de un preot luteran norvegian, ritual care va aduce pacea sufletului ei tulburat.

*Cuvinte cheie: norvegieni-americiani, Ole Edvart Rølvaag, Uriși pe pământ, moștenire norvegiană, identitate culturală, cufăr de imigrant, apartenența imigranților, amintiri din țara natală*

## Introduction

The immigrant chest that Beret Holm, the female protagonist in Ole Edvart Rølvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, had had in her family for generations is the object that connects her the most to her roots, to her Norwegian heritage, acting both as a depository of her family and homeland values, and as a shield from the challenges of the pioneer life in the prairie. Its role in Beret's immigrant life is to provide her with an anchor in the past, in the familiar and safe environment she had left in the Old World. The chest is used throughout the novel, in certain key moments, when the heroine's restlessness and anxiety reaches paroxysmal heights, to sway the balance, to give her comfort and solace, to make her look forward by looking backwards.

## Losing the Connection with the Homeland while Venturing into the Unknown

One has to bear in mind the fact that the decision to emigrate to America taken by the pioneers in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was far more consequential in terms of changes in the lives of the immigrants if we compare it to the decision of the migrants of our century. In most cases, the emigration implied a complete fracture with the homeland, besides the possibility of never reaching the shores of the New World because of the frequent sickness among the passengers who crossed the Atlantic Ocean, particularly in the first half of the 1800s. People faced the unknown with few chances of returning to the only world they had known, while the only means of maintaining the ties with the homeland were the things they had taken with them on the journey, the letters exchanged with their family and friends, and, in the case of the fortunate ones, the voyages back home.

This rupture caused by the distancing from the familiar surroundings which offer stability, but also from the loved ones, brings about the awareness of a certain lack, a certain loss, and our need for anchoring, for filling the void left by this lack, leads to questions of identity and belonging (Muresan: 353). The historian Oscar Handlin has drawn the attention upon the effects of

immigration on people's lives, who found themselves cut off from their homelands, oftentimes in hostile environments, obliged to start things over, and discover new meanings to their lives:

Emigration took these people out of traditional, accustomed environments and replanted them in strange ground, among strangers, where strange manners prevailed. The customary modes of behaviour were no longer adequate, for the problems of life were new and different. With old ties snapped, men faced the enormous compulsion of working out new relationships, new meanings to their lives, often under harsh and hostile circumstances. (Handlin: 5)

Despite the great expectations and the enthusiasm the immigrants might have had, most of them went through difficult times, and experienced a shock as they tried to adjust to a new world, and perceived all the differences, starting with the language, with the geography, the people and the new customs they met. Hence, "strangers, the immigrants could not locate themselves; they had lost the polestar that gave them their bearings. They would not regain an awareness of direction until they could visualize themselves in their new context" (Handlin: 85).

Once the immigrants became aware of their situation, once they realised they were in-between continents, countries, identities, they found themselves caught between the desire to preserve their identity, their home culture, and the need to fit in the new one, to find a place to belong to. They eventually realise they no longer belong to their homeland, nor entirely to their new land, that they have become strangers to the family and friends left home, but that they are also strangers to those they had come to (Rølvaag 1971: 126). This acknowledgement creates tension and anxiety, but it also leads to a better understanding of their need for cohesion within their communities.

### ***Giants in the Earth and the Story of an Unsettled Soul***

The questions of identity and belonging, but also the need to preserve the cultural heritage of the homeland on the path to Americanization as they emerge from immigrant experiences are the focus of *Giants in the Earth*, written by Ole Edvart Rølvaag. The author experienced emigration himself, as he left Northern Norway in 1896, as a twenty-year old fisherman. Twenty years later, after having worked on different farms in South Dakota, having graduated from Augustana Academy in Canton, South Dakota, and earned a bachelor's degree from St. Olaf College, in Northfield, Minnesota, he became professor at the same college, while in 1912 he published his first book, *Amerika-breve fra P.A. Smevik til hans far og bror i Norge* (translated as *The Third Life of Per Smevik*, 1971). Despite his dim beginnings, despite the difficulties he, like many other immigrants, had to go through on his way to adapting to a new culture, he found in America a suitable

environment to fulfil his dream of learning and becoming a writer. More than that, he fully dedicated himself to the Norwegian-American community, describing in his narratives the journey of the Norwegian settlers in America, and their struggle to Americanize without losing their Norwegian identity.

*Giants in the Earth* was published in 1928 as a translation of two books first written in Norwegian and published in Norway in 1923 and 1924. O. E. Rølvaag translated it together with Lincoln Colcord as the first novel of a trilogy that continues with *Peder Victorious* (1928) and *Their Father's God* (1931). The core tension in *Giants in the Earth* lies in the contrast between the two main characters, Per Hansa and his wife Beret, between Per's prideful optimism in the vast landscape and Beret's profound loss of space, unmasking the tensions in the Norwegian-American community (Schultz: 91). Per Hansa used to be a fisherman in Norway, like Rølvaag, and convinced Beret to elope with him, to move to America and become farmers. His enthusiasm and determination seem to be almost surreal, and help him conquer the ruthless prairie despite little knowledge about the hardships they were to face, while Beret is frightened by the immensity of the prairie, and her mental condition degrades as she immerses in loneliness, and emptiness. Yet, Rølvaag chose to highlight the perils of emigration, to speak of the angst that immigrants dealt with, and, as Simonson concluded, "Beret is the one in whom Rølvaag portrays the psychological anguish accompanying the immigrant experience. She is the one who suffers from being uprooted and alone in a new land. She is the one who knows the true cost of immigration" (Simonson 1987: VII).

Built antagonistically, Per and Beret have very different views about their life in the prairie: Per rejoices in the boundlessness of the prairie, exploiting all challenges as opportunities, working hard to build themselves a place they could call home, but Beret sinks into disappointment, feeling lost in the vast prairie, and feels that only her faith, and the traditions inherited from the homeland could bring her comfort. It becomes apparent that they are polar opposites, as they have contrasting reactions to the prairie, to pioneering and immigration; above all, "they also embody the clash between the traditions of the old world and the freedom of the new, the clash between the temporal and the eternal in their past, their present, and their future" (Paulson: 201). Hence, the contrast and tension between the two major characters embodies the contrast and tension between the New World (Per Hansa) and the Old World (Beret). April Schultz brings forth the questions arising from this conflict: "How is this tension to be resolved? Do we toss away our culture and blindly follow the new? Or do we hang onto those values that give meaning and richness to our lives while also contributing to our new culture? Do we have a choice if one extreme leads to madness and the other to death?" (Schultz: 94). It seems that neither of the two ways is without perils. However, the end of the novel reveals that Per Hansa's role has ended once the Norwegian settlement in South Dakota is well established, as he gives his last breath when facing the prairie blizzard,

while Beret slowly finds her place in the settlement, continuing her fight for the preservation of the religious and moral values of the Old World.

As the story of the settlers unfolds itself, so does the longing Beret feels. Growing more and more restless as Per becomes more and more immersed in the building of their new life in the Dakota prairie, Beret has the impression that her world is shattering: "But it had been as if a resistless flood had torn them loose from their foundations and was carrying them helplessly along on its current – flinging them here and there, hurling them madly onward, with no known destination ahead. Farther and farther onward ... always west. ..." (Rølvaag 1929: 40). Per Hansa is the one who lives fearless and masculine (Simonson 1987: 6), embracing with almost frantic courage the challenges of the frontier, whereas his wife has the impression that their wandering will never stop, that "she had lived many lives already, in each one of which she had done nothing but wander and wander, always straying farther way from the home that was dear to her (Rølvaag 1929: 40)". The thought the prairie is making her husband and the other settlers forget about their homeland, about rules and even God, is almost unbearable for Beret. The striking contrast between her and Per is evident:

"... Beret represents the antithesis of the American frontier. Whereas her husband lives and dies facing westward, she looks eastward to Norway, to her family and cultural origins and an inherited Christian orthodoxy. On the frontier devoid of governing landmarks, she at once appears totally unsuited, physically and psychically fragile, fearful. [...] When people forsake the past, scoffing at the lessons history teaches, Beret is afraid. The frontier is no place for such a person (Simonson 1987: 6)."

Rølvaag was interested, as Laura Patton Samal observed, in highlighting the price paid by the immigrants in pursuit of their dreams. When analysing Beret's attitude towards the transformation undergone by the settlers during their pioneer experience, one cannot help noticing her deep spiritual and existential disorientation, while "Beret's sense of dislocation is not simply the result of weakness but of a deep awareness of the spiritual value of these alternative methods of orientation that provide a connection to the past and to God" (Patton Samal: 110-111). She perceives the rupture from the beliefs and traditions of the past at the highest level, and feeling that her family is enclosed in a sort of magic ring that cuts them off from God, unconsciously isolates herself and her house by covering the windows or hiding in the family chest (Patton Samal: 111).

### **Treasure and Refuge**

Upon their departure for the New World, emigrants were accompanied by their large wooden chests, which contained all the goods they could take with them: clothes, bedding and blankets, tools, household goods, seeds, books,

documents, family pictures and jewellery, the family Bible, as well as some food supplies for the journey. The chest represented more than a piece of luggage or furniture, it was an essential element in the immigrant experience, an almost impersonated partner on the voyage, especially if we consider the lone travellers. Personalized for each owner, many times with the birth or wedding date carved onto it, the chest or trunk was meant to be passed from generation to generation, and its importance was further emphasized by the flower ornamentation elements painted through the use of rosemaling, an art that has its roots in the villages from the Norwegian valleys.

But they continued to be useful and worth keeping for practical reasons, too. The pioneers had a difficult start in the prairie, beginning with the strenuous journey from the Atlantic shores towards west, and throughout the immensity of the prairie as they were searching for a suitable piece of land they would settle on, and build a home they would call their own. The immigrant chests were used for storage all along their journey, and, once the pioneers decided to settle, the chests were the first pieces of furniture in their newly built sod houses, since they were used both for storing the few memories from the homeland, but also items of clothing, and some of the food. In addition, the chests were used as benches, due to their size and sturdiness, but also because the pioneers had very few pieces of furniture until they would build them if we consider the limited space on the wagon. They became, hence, central pieces in the life of an American immigrant, serving both practical and psychological purposes.

Beret's family chest is a central piece of their existence in the vast Dakota prairie. Built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it had carried their precious homeland items that she and Per had travelled the New World with, among which the family Bible is the most valuable. It becomes essential as Beret becomes more and more troubled by the prospects of a life full of dangers in the wilderness, as she deepens into sadness. Schultz argues that Beret's distress arises out of her longing for the Old World, and her strong disapproval of forgetting the old ways. Her family chest is the "symbol of that longing for the security of her old community" (Schultz: 105). Furthermore, "the seventeenth-century chest embodies the deep roots of her family in Norway. She is the one among the settlers who most consciously holds onto the past and reacts more strongly to any changes in the native culture of the settlers." (Schultz: 105).

The family chest appears throughout the novel in several key episodes which shed light on Beret's powerful connection to the homeland, on her belief that roots must not be forgotten, that the settlers' life in the prairie estranges them from their cultural heritage, and above all, from God.

Their first Christmas in the settlement is near, but Beret, pregnant, grows more and more anxious, and despair grips her as she fuels her anxiety over their life in the New World. Convinced that she would soon die, she looks

for a coffin where she could be buried in, and realizes the family chest would be the most appropriate:

If he could only spare her the big chest! ... Beret fell to looking at it, and grew easier in her mind. ... That chest had belonged to her great-grandfather, but it must have been in the family long before his day; on it she could make out only the words "*Anno 16—*" ... the rest was completely worn away. Along the edges and running twice around the middle were heavy iron bands. ... Beret would go about looking at the chest – would lift the lid and gaze down inside. ... Plenty of room in there, if they would only put something under her head and back! She felt as if she could sleep safely in that bed. (Rølvaag 1929: 230)

The immigrant chest acts here as an enclosure, along with the other two enclosures suggested by the text, namely the prairie, and the sod house (Paulson: 202). It symbolizes a barricade that separates the couple, "Beret's ultimate enclosure, a box within a box, that signifies both the stifling restrictions of her allegiance to the Old World and refuge from a place she cannot acknowledge as home. She is, quite literally, placeless." (Quantic: 255). Per Hansa feels no restraints, sees no enclosures, as he rejoices in the boundlessness of the prairie, thinking of the countless opportunities their life in the New World would bring. April Schultz underlies the contrast between Beret and Per Hansa, since "in Beret's reactions to her husband and in her own peculiar behaviour – covering the windows at night to ward off evil, packing and unpacking her father's chest and finally crawling inside it to die" (Schultz: 95), as her inward nature and the strong ties with the homeland is antithetical to Per's choice to look to the future.

As the birth of her child is approaching, Beret becomes convinced that the delivery would bring her death, that she would be punished for her sins, and urges Per Hansa to bury her in the family chest once she's gone:

To-night I am leaving you... Yes, I must leave you. ... I know this is the end! The Lord has found me out because of my sins. ... [...] "But promise me one thing: put me away in the big chest! ... I have emptied it and made it ready... Promise to lay me away in the big chest, Per Hansa! ... And you must be sure to dig the grave deep! ... You haven't heard how terribly the wolves howl at night! ... Promise to take plenty of time and dig deep down – do you hear!" (Rølvaag 1929: 235)

This episode had been preceded by an encounter with a family of Norwegians that had arrived in Spring Creek, with the woman tied to the cart. Their youngest son had died several days before as they were making their way through the ruthless prairie. The child had become sick and, after his death, his parents had nothing to bury him in other than his clothes. The woman, named



Kari, was, naturally, extremely affected by her loss, and could think of nothing else but that they had to go back after him and bury him properly. Her husband, Jakob, was forced to tie her to the cart lest she should run back for the boy. The chest of this immigrant family is a symbol for suffering, for crucifixion:

The sight that met his eyes sent chills running down his spine. Inside sat a woman on a pile of clothes, with her back against a large immigrant chest; around her wrists and leading to the handles of the chest a strong rope was tied; her face was drawn and unnatural. Per Hansa trembled so violently that he had to catch hold of the wagon box, but inwardly was swearing a steady stream. To him it looked as if the woman was crucified. (Rølvaag 1929: 316-317)

Eventually, Per Hansa leaves together with Hans Olsa to find the grave of the boy and bring him to be buried as all Christians should be, but they return defeated by the vastness of the wilderness after they do not succeed in finding the grave. Beret is the one to be most of all impressed by their story. Her sadness and depression deepen as she becomes more and more convinced that the place they had come to is full of wretchedness and evil. She even covers the windows in an attempt to keep the evil away from their home.

Another significant episode that reveals the symbolic use of the immigrant chest in *Giants in the Earth* is related to the occurrence of a plague of locusts, which the Norwegian settlers compare to the Egyptian plague described in the Bible. As the settlers prepare to harvest their crops, hordes of locusts begin to devastate the land. Miraculously, Per Hansa's crops are saved, since he had been the first to seed the fields, and managed to gather the crops, but all the others' crops are destroyed by the insects. Beret perceives the locusts so threatening that she is convinced the plague is a punishment for their sins, for their poor faith, and for having severed the ties with their Lutheran heritage. She seeks refuge in the family chest, where she is desperate to hide with the children to avoid being engulfed by the evil which surrounded them. Per finds Beret hidden in the chest, and "the scene closes with one of the mystical personifications of the prairie which Rølvaag drops into the narrative to underscore both Beret's sense of demonic power and the futility of human endeavour in the great wilderness." (Weber: 187) Hence, "Beret, who, locking her past inside a trunk, stood a stranger in the American wilderness, a place of crisis where light and dark held tryst and where the terror beyond the promontory filled the earth and sky." (Simonson 1983).

There is, however, hope of redemption, as a Norwegian Lutheran minister arrives in the settlement, and decides to hold the ritual of communion in Per and Beret's sod house. On the planned Sunday, the service is held, and the big chest Beret had inherited from her family serves as altar, connecting her link to the Old World with their home in the prairie (Quantic: 255). The service has a strong impact on all the settlers, making them think about the hardships of

pioneer life, but also giving them a sense of community as they all sing the hymns. "During the service the minister, though conscious only of his own inadequacy, speaks to the people with great power; when he places his hand on Beret, she feels released from all sin, all burden instantly lifting from her soul." (Weber: 187). Beret is uplifted, her dark thoughts begin to fade, as she realizes she had been absent from her home and children for a long time, eager to rediscover the joys of motherhood. As Ronald Weber observed, "with the healing of her spirit comes a new stability and an eagerness for life" (Weber: 187).

Beret's return to mental and spiritual health comes after she feels both divine and human love around her (Paulson; 207). The communion ritual performed by the Lutheran minister brings her divine grace, while she finally understands Per's unconditional love for her. The healing of her spirit is achieved through the use of the family chest, "which she had envisioned as her coffin now becomes the altar for the sacred ritual of communion and a symbol emphasizing both the structure and the theme of death and rebirth" (Paulson: 207). Furthermore, the chest becomes an instrument of redemption for the entire community of Norwegian settlers, as "the use of the chest as the foundation of the church symbolizes that the immigrants, though afflicted with homesickness and fear, have at last found their homeland in the prairie" (Jin: 85). Once the church is established in the settlement, Beret becomes convinced there is though a possibility to found a civilization in the vast and wild prairie. Ha Jin concludes that "this classic scene in American literature illustrates the appropriate use of the past in establishing the immigrants' present existential order" (Jin: 85).

## Conclusions

The story of immigration would not be complete without the inner struggles generated by the difficulties of adjustment to a new culture. Crises of identity are inevitable, and Rølvaag perceived the dangers of uprootedness, that is why he illustrated in *Giants in the Earth* both the immigrant that feels empowered by the possibilities offered by new shores (Per Hansa), and the one that feels shattered by the loss of the Old World values and way of life (Beret). Upon their very arrival in the settlement, Per Hansa begins the process of implacement, by settling on the unmarked land, whereas his wife "attends to her steamer trunk, her link with the familiar places in Norway that she abandoned when she acquiesced to her husband's determination to emigrate. It is the one possession that remains with her for the rest of her life on their Dakota farm" (Quantic: 247).

The family chest accompanies the couple on their immigrant journey, at sea, but its role becomes more relevant in the vast Dakota prairie, as it provides refuge for the troubled soul of Beret, who cannot seem to find peace knowing they had deserted their parents and homeland in search of a life devoid of

tradition and religion. She feels the stark contrast between the security of the past and the vulnerability of the present (Simonson 1983), and the chest she had inherited from her father acts as the missing link between her sordid life in the wilderness, which she refuses to call home, and her Norwegian cultural and spiritual heritage. Harald Simonson praises Rølvaag's achievement, as the author's "greatest theme is not doom but a heart made strong by nurturing connection with voices of the past that join the present in essential continuity. One will search American literature in vain for a portrait more sustained and textured in this theme than Rølvaag's Beret" (Simonson 1987: 8).

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## THE EXPLORATION OF THE SELF WITHIN THE FAMILY CONTEXT IN KARL OVE KNAUSGÅRD'S *MY STRUGGLE*

ȘTEFANA POPA<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *The exploration of the self within the family context in Karl Ove Knausgård's My Struggle.* The aim of this paper is to explore the self as it can be found in the novel *My Struggle* by adopting a psychological criticism method. The central conflict in the six-volume novel is based on the tumultuous relationship between the main character Karl Ove and his father. By using theories from psychology and applying them to the text, new dimensions and aspects of the narrative come into light. Instead of focusing solely on the conflict between father and son, this research shows how the main character is constructed in the context of a family. Concepts taken from Abraham Maslow, Karen Horney and *family systems therapy* work together and reveal the journey of the self and the great influence the family has on it.

**Keywords:** *Karl Ove Knausgård, My Struggle, psychological criticism, FST, humanistic psychology, the self, the father, autofiction.*

**REZUMAT.** *Explorarea construcției sinelui în contextul familiei în romanul Lupta Mea de Karl Ove Knausgård.* Scopul acestei lucrări este de a explora sinele întâlnit în romanul *Lupta Mea* folosind metodele criticii psihologice. Conflictul central al romanului în șase volume este conturat în jurul relației tumultuoase dintre personajul principal, Karl Ove și tatăl său. Prin folosirea anumitor teorii din psihologie și aplicarea lor pe textul operei studiate, noi dimensiuni și aspecte ale narațiunii ies la iveală. Lucrearea de față nu se concentrează în mod exclusiv pe analiza relației dintre tată și fiu, ci arată cum personajul principal este constituit în contextul unei familii. Conceptele preluate de la Abraham Maslow, Karen Horney și *family systems therapy* funcționează împreună și dezvăluie evoluția sinelui pe parcursul romanului precum și impactul major pe care familia îl are asupra sa.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Karl Ove Knausgård, Lupta Mea, critică psihologică, FST, psihologie umanistă, sine, autoficțiune.*

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## Short introduction

Published in 2009 in Norway, the novel *My Struggle* and its now internationally known author Karl Ove Knausgård, has rapidly become one of the most discussed and debated pieces of literature of the last decades. This paper aims at analyzing an important aspect of the novel, namely its main thematic tableau, given by the protagonist and narrator Karl Ove and his problematic family relationships. At the same time, one of the goals of this essay is to show that psychological approaches to literature are still valuable and they can enrich the reading of contemporary works. In the particular case of *My Struggle*, theories from psychological criticism can be easily interwoven and used in such a way that they can reveal more about the narrative and its characters than it seems at a first sight. Accordingly, this paper is divided into three parts. First, I briefly present the advantages of following a psychological approach when reading literary works and how the understanding of this type of criticism has changed in the last years. In the second part I draw on the three main theoretical directions that form the framework for the close reading of the novel conducted in the third section. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, together with Karen Horney's main concept of self-realization and the family systems therapy's understanding of family influence will give a solid base for the main analysis.

## A (re)turn to psychological criticism

In Knausgård's works, the central place is taken by the human being and the world within. The narrator's preoccupation with and the amount of time that he's spending inside his own mind are a defining dimension of the novel. At the same time, his ambition of describing life exactly as it is mostly connected with his capacity of being as honest with himself as possible, which means that he has to explore the chore of his thoughts and emotions. The complex characters he constructed and the interactions between them, as they are perceived, understood and described by the narrator represent the nucleus of *My Struggle*. In order to grasp and reveal the meaning of this synergy I argue that conducting an eclectic psychological analysis can have satisfactory and explanatory results.

When we talk about psychological criticism or psychological approaches to literature, the denomination can be confusing. In the majority of the books and compendiums that cover the most important theoretical views regarding literature throughout the years, psychological is replaced with psychoanalytic so implicitly such a criticism becomes an application of Freud's, Lacan's or Jung's works. In the fifth edition of *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, one chapter bears the name "Psychological approach: Freud", so the entire account is

actually a brief introduction and explanation of Freudian concepts and their applicability on certain canonical literary pieces<sup>2</sup>. In the very comprehensive dictionaries of literary terms (I consulted the fifth edition of J.A. Cuddon's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*<sup>3</sup> for instance) there is no entry for psychological criticism, only for psychoanalytic(al) criticism, focused again mostly on Freud with a brief mention to Lacan and Jung. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*<sup>4</sup> places a subchapter named "Psychoanalytic Theories" as a part of poststructuralist theories, where except for the classics Freud and Lacan, the authors also dedicate some pages to the research of Julia Kristeva and Deleuze and Guattari.

Nonetheless, in the *Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, the authors note that one of their purposes is "to outline a psychological theory often used as an interpretative tool"<sup>5</sup>, giving in this way room for the possibility of other psychological theories beneficial for literature. They admit that "of all the critical approaches to literature, the psychological has been one of the most controversial, the most abused, and - for many readers - the least appreciated"<sup>6</sup>. The concerns are understandable to a certain extent, since there are many ways in which a psychological approach can hinder the interpretative act and neglect the qualities of a literary text. Since Freud was such a phenomenon and was followed with sympathy and even frenzy after his breakthrough, those who applied his theories on literature were often extreme and exclusive, as if psychoanalysis was the one and only way. But, Guerin et.al acknowledge the advantages of using a psychological approach. Although "it is axiomatic that no single approach can exhaust the manifold interpretive possibilities of a worthwhile literary work: each approach has its own peculiar limitations"<sup>7</sup>, they "hope to introduce the reader to a balanced critical perspective that will enable him or her to appreciate the instructive possibilities of the psychological approach while avoiding the pitfalls of either extremist attitude"<sup>8</sup>.

On the same note, the American professor Joseph Natoli advocates for the fruitful use of psychological theories when investigating fiction. In 1984, he edited a collection of essays entitled *Psychological Perspectives on Literature: Freudian Dissidents and Non-Freudians. A Casebook*. The book is aimed to serve a twofold purpose, as Natoli himself notes: "[...] I feel the need of making a double defense -

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<sup>2</sup> Wilfred L. Guerin, Earle Labor eds., *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, Fifth Ed., Oxford University Press, New York, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Fifth Ed., Willey-Blackwell, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, Peter Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, Fifth Ed., Pearson Longman, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Wilfred L. Guerin, Earle Labor eds., *op.cit.*, p.152.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.154.

one to all those antideterminists who yet maintain the sovereignty of the literary text, and one to all those psychoanalysts who doggedly pursue that same text in the footsteps of Freud"<sup>9</sup>. He believes that literature and psychology do belong together and that there is a lot to extract from an interdisciplinary collaboration. "[...] I know then that there is a merit in seeing literature and psychology residing on one block, that there is something quite right about placing imaginative portrayals of human consciousness and action, and formal psychology studies of human consciousness and action in a reciprocal relationship"<sup>10</sup>.

Even if it might seem impossible to do "serious" psychological criticism that is not connected with the work of Freud, several scholars have dedicated their research to proving that the idea mentioned above is just a misconception. One of them is Bernard J. Paris, an English literature professor whose books and studies brought into my attention the possibility and adequacy of using a Horneyan approach to fiction. Or more recently, John V. Knapp is investigating a new direction that gains more and more popularity in therapy called family system therapy, which reassigns a central role to family in both real people and fictional characters' life.

### **Theoretical considerations**

In this part of the paper, I will provide an overview of some of the main ideas and concepts from psychological criticism that can successfully be used in the reading of the novel *My Struggle*. Each of them brings something new to this study, while they are connected mainly through their approach of the human essence and the self.

Abraham Maslow was one of the most influential psychologists in the branch of humanistic psychology. He believed in the concept of self-realization, as the most important stage of human development. Maslow was mostly preoccupied with what he called the theory of motivation. In his view, humans are motivated to achieve certain needs, which he called basic needs. He designed a five-stage model of basic needs, with the physiological needs at the bottom (e.g. hunger), self-actualization at the top (achieving one's full potential) while the safety needs, the love needs, and esteem needs represent the stages in between<sup>11</sup>.

When talking about the needs for safety, Maslow underlines the major role that parents have in providing a secure space in the life of their children. An individual, being a child or an adult is deeply connected with his early life

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Natoli, "Introduction", *Psychological Perspective on Literature: Freudian Dissidents and Non-Freudians. A Casebook*, Edited by Joseph Natoli, Archon, 1984, p.1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>11</sup> A.H. Maslow, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, available at <https://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>, accessed at 20.06.2020.

and the relationship with his closest caregivers, usually the parents and older siblings. He also notes that “the average child in our society generally prefers a safe, orderly, predictable, organized world, which he can count on, and in which unexpected, unmanageable or other dangerous things do not happen, and in which, in any case, he has all-powerful parents who protect and shield him from harm”<sup>12</sup>. In *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow analyzes love needs together with the need for belongingness. He notes that the individual “will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group or family”<sup>13</sup> and for those who don’t find their place, the effects are disastrous. Equally important in the process of healthy development is the fulfillment of esteem needs. These refer to both confirmation and appreciation from the others and from oneself. “Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world. But thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness, and of helplessness”<sup>14</sup>. Finally, with all the basic needs satisfied, one still feels like there is something missing, an empty space that must be filled. Maslow calls this the need for self-realization, which is fulfilled when an individual is following his own nature. “A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man *can* be, he *must* be. He must be true to his own nature”<sup>15</sup>.

Third force psychology is also built around the concept of the self. Bernard J. Paris is a professor who dedicated a substantial part of his research to the study of third force theory and its influential militant, Karen Horney. He notes that “third force psychologists see healthy human development as a process of self-actualization and unhealthy development as a process of self-alienation”<sup>16</sup>. Maslow’s theory of motivation is an example for the process of self-actualization while Horney’s work mostly revolves around self-alienation. In the beginning, third force psychology, mostly known under the broad term humanistic psychology was conceived as an opposition to both behaviorism and psychoanalysis and was focused on the holistic study of the human being as individuals. Among its practitioners’ preoccupations are the exploration of “emphasized existential and interpersonal themes such as meaning, purpose, values, choice, spirituality, self-acceptance, and self-actualization”<sup>17</sup>. Or in other

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, Harper & Row, 1954, p. 44

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard J. Paris, “Third Force Psychology”, *Psychological Perspective on Literature: Freudian Dissidents and Non-Freudians. A Casebook*, edited by Joseph Natoli, Archon, 1984, p.156.

<sup>17</sup> Steven C. Hayes, “Humanistic Psychology and Contextual Behavioral Perspectives”, *Psychotherapy*, 2012, Vol. 49, No. 4, 455-460, DOI: 10.1037/a0027396, p.455.



words, like Paris notes that “what Third Force psychologists have in common is their belief that man is not simply a tension-reducing or a conditioned animal, but that there is present in him a third force”<sup>18</sup>. This force is not evil, like Freud believed, but it’s neutral or good and it must not be repressed or ignored. The key to human growth and the possibility of a healthy individual is the following of that inner force, which is considered our true self. Paris advocates for adopting a Horneyan approach when reading literature by arguing that

Horney’s theories explain behavior in terms of its function within the present structure of the psyche rather than in terms of infantile origins. While literature gives little or no information about infancy, it reveals a great deal about the adult. A Horneyan approach does not force us to invent a character’s early history but permits us to utilize exactly the kind of information that literature supplies<sup>19</sup>.

Like Maslow, Horney believed in a “*real self*” as that central inner force, common to all human beings and yet unique in each, which is the deep source of growth”<sup>20</sup>. Although the power of reaching that perfect state of balance and satisfaction lies in each and one of us, we cannot get there alone, without any help from the world outside us. Horney notes that „like any other living organism, the human individuum needs favorable conditions for his growth [...] he needs an atmosphere of warmth to give him both a feeling of inner security and the inner freedom enabling him to have his own feelings and thoughts and to express himself”<sup>21</sup>. At the same time, he “needs healthy friction with the wishes and wills of others. If he can thus grow *with* others, in love and in friction, he will also grow in accordance with his real self”<sup>22</sup>. But more often than not, those responsible for guiding the growth of a child are unable to provide the needed environment or to set the grounds for such an enterprise. Due to

a variety of adverse influences, a child may not be permitted to grow according to his individual needs and possibilities. [...] the people in the environment are too wrapped up in their own neuroses to be able to love the child, or even to conceive of him as the particular individual he is; their attitudes toward him are determined by their own neurotic needs

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<sup>18</sup> Bernard J. Paris, *loc.cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Bernard J. Paris, *Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature*, NYU Press, 1997, xi.

<sup>20</sup> Karen Horney, *Neurosis and Human Growth. The Struggle Toward Self-Realization*, Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD, London, p.17.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

and responses. In simple words, they may be dominating, overprotective, intimidating, irritable, overexacting, overindulging, erratic, partial to other siblings, hypocritical, indifferent, etc. It is never a matter of just a single factor, but always the whole constellation that exerts the untoward influence on a child's growth<sup>23</sup>.

Because of that, the child develops what Horney calls *basic anxiety*, when he does not achieve the feeling of belonging but on the contrary a deep insecurity. On the basis of that insecurity, a person can react according to different strategies, to move toward, against or away from others. If in a healthy person, these strategies are still present, they take place on a normal level, and they are not exclusive, when the basic anxiety is present, the moves become extreme and exaggerated<sup>24</sup>. Another consequence of the lack of favorable environment is the concept of *self-idealization*. "Gradually and unconsciously, the imagination sets to work and creates in his mind an *idealized image* of himself. In this process he endows himself with unlimited powers and with exalted faculties; he becomes a hero, a genius, a supreme lover, a saint, a god"<sup>25</sup>.

A newer form of psychological criticism is promoted preponderantly by professor John V. Knapp and it's put together by using the tools provided by family systems therapy (in literature, the abbreviation FST is often used). The language used for terms belonging to the FST area is borrowed from cybernetic and systems studies, but it can be easily understood by literature scholars and enthusiasts as well. Knapp explains that

from the point of view of family systems psychotherapy (fst), the family system becomes the source of the matrix of identity, rather than only the individual character. Thus, the "causes" of a given problem in growing up (and beyond) is much less the person construct or event, and more the emotional process that links people and events. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts [...] so that to understand a member(s) of a fictional family, one needs to understand the family system - "real" family or step-family<sup>26</sup>.

In therapy one can observe the tension "between the representations of the individual (biological?) self ('hard reality') and the living system to which that self belongs, the family network ('soft or cultural reality')"<sup>27</sup>. Also, the families are

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>26</sup> John V. Knapp, "Family Systems Psychotherapy, Literary Character, and Literature: An Introduction." *Style*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1997, pp. 223-254. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/45063758](http://www.jstor.org/stable/45063758). Accessed on 06.03.2020, p. 225.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

considered a “co-evolutionary ecosystem”<sup>28</sup> which means that inside a family each member can influence the evolution of the rest of the group while in a greater context, the environment surrounding it, that is the sociocultural system (such as school, work), represents the coevolutionary ecosystem. Ideally, in a functional family the healthy ties between its members permit and encourage the development of an independent, confident “solid self”<sup>29</sup>, which is well integrated in the family at the same time. On the other hand “in dysfunctional families, fear and anxiety usually force members to create a *pseudo-self*, so that one’s inner feelings and outer behavior are often *not congruent*.”<sup>30</sup>

The theory of family system therapy operates with several key concepts. In his very illuminating introductory essay, John V. Knapp puts together a compilation of approaches to or models of FST underlining the similarities between them but also the novelty or a key concept that each of them promotes. However, what I find most suitable for the context of this paper, are some concepts originally expressed by Murray Bowen. Initially, he identified six concepts: *differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, multi-generational transmission process, and sibling position*. Later, two new concepts followed: *emotional cutoff* and *societal emotional process*<sup>31</sup>. In the following section, some parts of *My Struggle* will be analyzed using some of Bowen’s ideas, that put together with Horney and Maslow’s theories will give us a different image of the self in the family context of the novel.

### **The exploration of the self in *My Struggle***

The main character of *My Struggle* narrates his life story throughout the six volumes from childhood to the present of writing. We can easily identify a fragile self, in a constant search of something that would give meaning to his life, without being able to point out what that could be. He cannot find happiness in his family life and he is waiting for something to bring him fulfillment. “And with every passing day, the desire grows for the moment when life will reach the top, for the moment when the sluice gates open and life finally moves on”<sup>32</sup>.

Starting with the first pages of the first book, we learn that an important character is playing a decisive role in the narrative and in the protagonist’s life, namely his father. His first depiction in the beginning of *My Struggle* is remarkable and shows the terror that he generates in his youngest

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Michael E. Kerr, Murray Bowen, *Family Evaluation. An Approach Based on Bowen Theory*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 1988, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Karl Ove Knausgård, *My Struggle. Book One*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2013, p.30.

son. The character is constructed in such a way that in the eyes of Karl Ove, he remains the same throughout the entire novel. In other words, the way Karl Ove perceives his Dad in the beginning of *Book One* is the same until the very present of writing. Even though the father-son dyad represents the nucleus of the novel, we must be aware of the fact that it cannot be seen as an isolated dimension. It exists in the context of a family drama, thus discussing other significant relations between characters is equally important.

Eivind Tjønneland claims that we don't really find out why Karl Ove's father was so strict with him or why he started drinking so much<sup>33</sup> and it is true. The text doesn't provide any consistent and directly articulated explanation to Kai Åge's behavior, or in fact to Karl Ove's behavior either. By following a psychological criticism, we achieve a better understanding of the relation between father and son and we get answers to questions that otherwise would remain locked in the text.

From the first moment we get to know the Knausgård family, in Karl Ove's childhood, we understand that the characters involved are not coexisting in harmony, that the balance is broken, both for them as a family and on an individual level. Shame, fear or anger, are just a few of the feelings that are present now and will never leave the protagonist until the end. As he grows old, the same patterns repeat themselves under various forms, contributing to the formation of an unhappy and unsatisfied adult, on the edge of sickness. (In *Book Two*, for instance, he mentions his depression "Then a pudgy, clearly depressed Norwegian stands there hailing Bergman as the new man."<sup>34</sup>). But where does all this dissatisfaction come from? If we were to look objectively at Karl Ove, at different stages of his mature life, it seems that he has everything he has wished for. He was one of the best students at the university, he got married with the woman he loved, he published great books, he had children, a beautiful family, money and so on. But nevertheless, he never managed to reach a satisfactory level of fulfillment. The narrator expresses his unhappiness several times, without really identifying its source. Sometimes he would say things like: "the life around me was not meaningful. I always longed to be away from it. So the life I led was not my own. I tried to make it mine, this was my struggle, because of course I wanted it, but I failed, the longing for something else undermined all my efforts. What was the problem?"<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Eivind Tjønneland, *The Knausgård code. A ideology critical essay*, Spartacus, Oslo, 2010. (*Knausgård-koden. Et ideologikritisk essay*) p.110 and p. 112.

<sup>34</sup> Karl Ove Knausgård, *My Struggle. Book Two. A Man in Love*, Translated from Norwegian by Don Bartlett, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2014, p.15.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Karen Horney's theory on neurosis provides some interesting perspectives regarding the obstacles that hinder the full development of a sane person and at times, they seem to describe Karl Ove and his struggles. She claims that we humans strive to reach our real self and only then we can feel complete, in harmony and balance with ourselves and the world around us. But most of us tend to aim for an ideal self, that is in fact impossible to reach, because it is not based on who we really are and what we really can become, but on a series of fake expectations and wishes that were transmitted to us by our society, culture, family or we have created them ourselves. Horney notes that

man, by his very nature and of his own accord, strives toward self-realization, and that his set of values evolves from such striving. Apparently he cannot, for example, develop his full human potentialities unless he is truthful to himself; unless he is active and productive; unless he relates himself to others in the spirit of mutuality. Apparently he cannot grow if he indulges in a dark idolatry of self' (Shelley) and consistently attributes all his own shortcomings to the deficiencies of others. He can grow, in the true sense, only if he assumes responsibility for himself<sup>36</sup>.

Horney believes that childhood plays an important part in the deviations from the path of finding one's real self. Very often, this process is hindered from an early age. The lack of love and attention, the self-confidence that should be nurtured by the adults surrounding the child can have repercussions. Karen Horney talks about the atmosphere of warmth and love that must surround children, so they can be able to express what they feel and think. Karl Ove recalls how strict his father was with them, how limited their power of decision was. "We were not allowed to cut bread ourselves, nor were we allowed to use the stove"<sup>37</sup>. Their mother, on the other hand, was more permissive, but instead of annihilating the negative effects from Kai Åge, allowed them to continue as it would just create a fracture in the family. The learned behavior in childhood doesn't change as the years go by. If during the first years of life, Karl Ove was mostly taught by his father that he should not express his feelings and thoughts, that his sensitive part is shameful, once he reaches maturity he keeps the same attitude. "I never say what I really think, what I really mean"<sup>38</sup>.

Regarding the influence that aggressive parents have on the life of their children, Maslow states that

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<sup>36</sup> Karen Horney, *op. cit.*, p.15.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Ove Knausgård, *My Struggle. Book One*, p.17.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

the central role of the parents and the normal family setup are indisputable. Quarreling, physical assault, separation, divorce or death within the family may be particularly terrifying. Also parental outbursts of rage or threats of punishment directed to the child, calling him names, speaking to him harshly, shaking him, handling him roughly, or actual [p. 378] physical punishment sometimes elicit such total panic and terror in the child that we must assume more is involved than the physical pain alone<sup>39</sup>.

Many of the interactions between Karl Ove and his father can be characterized as toxic for the healthy development of the child so that he can reach the final step on his human growth. Not only the physical punishment that Kai Åge used as a method to establish discipline and order in his house represents a problem here, but the lack of love, warmth, understanding, the psychological pressure and unnecessary evil behavior from the father's side are critical.

'Stop doing that', Dad said.  
 'Okay, but I'm freezing cold!' I said.  
 He sent me an icy stare.  
 'Oh, you're fweezing, are you?' he said.  
 My eyes filled with tears again.  
 'Stop parroting me,' I said.  
 'Oh, so I can't pawwot you now?'  
 "NO!" I yelled.  
 He stiffened. Dropped the ax and came toward me. Grabbed my ear and twisted it round<sup>40</sup>.

This dialogue taken from *Book Three* reveals a young boy, who has some speaking problems and who is bullied by his own father for something he cannot control. When he tries to react, which doesn't normally happen, his father physically punishes him. This kind of gestures can have consequences in adult life by creating the idea that one has to take the blame even for things and actions that are not in his area of control. And the scene repeats itself towards the end of the volume: "[...] steer into the fricking wind, he would say, *into the wind*, I told you, you idiot! Can't you do anything! Steering's not so easy, I said, and he replied, it's not *steewing*, it's *steering*! RRR. STEERING! I was crying and frozen [...]"<sup>41</sup>. Following the same pattern, there is another

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<sup>39</sup> A.H. Maslow, *A Theory of Human Motivation*.

<sup>40</sup> Karl Ove Knausgård, *My Struggle. Book Three: Boyhood*, translated from the Norwegian by Don Bartlett, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015, p. 137.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.376.

scene when father's reactions are completely illogical and impossible to understand for the young boy. One day, Karl Ove was reading in his room and his father came in and told him to play a card game. Then he just threw all the cards on the floor and made the boy collect them while laughing at him. This doesn't have any explanation. What lesson can be learned from such a behavior? It was not even a punishment because Karl Ove hadn't done anything bad, it was just mean and childish. Furthermore, when the boy reacts, he physically hurts him until he starts crying. "I had thought he really wanted to play cards and was so disappointed he was only messing around and I had to go down on my knees and pick up all the cards while he sat on the bed laughing that I muttered an expletive"<sup>42</sup>. This type of interactions is just messing with the head of Karl Ove, who cannot understand why his father is pretending to be nice and warm and only minutes after laughing at him and in the end hurting him. There is no sign of love and tenderness in Kai Åge's behavior, neither appreciation or emotional support.

But in the context of a family, the father is not the only caregiver or responsible for the children's well-being. The question of motherhood in *My Struggle* is an interesting aspect of the novel. There is not too much material to work with when approaching it. However, the narrator reveals every so often details from his early life that permit us to comment upon the mother's role in her sons' childhood, their upbringing and education. In the narrator's consciousness, his mother, Sissel, has always been a good mother, kind and understanding, a real friend, caring and supportive with her sons. A warm tableau of Sissel is presented in the middle of the third book. The narrator analyzes his parents in comparison, how they were as persons and how they were toward him. He writes: "For if there was someone there, at the bottom of the well that is my childhood, it was her, my mother, Mom"<sup>43</sup>. Referring to his own childhood as a dark place, limited and restrictive, like a well, he recalls his mother as being there, close to him, helping him to move forward in his not so happy life. He continues: "She saved me because if she hadn't been there I would have grown up alone with Dad, and sooner or later I would have taken my life, one way or another"<sup>44</sup>. The representation of Sissel in the text is problematic, because if we don't look closer, we get the impression that she is flawless. Unarguably, her attitude and behavior regarding her children are much more positive compared to her husband's. She listens, she gives them small tasks meant to support their independence, she doesn't react with anger when they do something wrong and she never punishes them. Nonetheless, if we analyze the

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 259 - 260.

text with psychological lenses, we can pick up several pieces of the puzzle that put together say more than the narrator directly tells us. She is a contradictory character. For a woman in the sixties she was very independent and strong, focused on her career and dividing housework with her husband. But at the same time, she is never described as defending her children, standing up for them in front of her husband. At the same time, her love and affection are never expressed physically and she never uses her time by playing with her sons. In *Book Four*, the narrator uses a conversation with his brother to talk about the lack of physical signs of affection in their family, which brings tears into Karl Ove's eyes ("I started to cry. But it was dark, and not a sound came from me, so he didn't notice")<sup>45</sup>.

In *Book Three*, when describing a pleasant afternoon spent at his grandparents' house, he reveals representative details about his upbringing. His paternal grandmother was very close to her grandsons, even closer than their mother, as we can understand from the following quotes). She takes Karl Ove on her bike to see the football game even if he initially was supposed to stay at home because he was too little to go to the stadium. "It felt good holding her, and cycling with her was fun. Grandma was the only person who touched Yngve and me, the only person who gave us hugs and stroked our arms. She was also the only person who played with us"<sup>46</sup>.

But except for the relaxed atmosphere of a summer afternoon, a more disturbing fact is expressed here, namely that in Karl Ove's family, the paternal grandmother, whom they seldom see, is the only one that shares physical affection with the children and plays with them. This means that they don't receive that kind of attention from their parents, which are the closest caregivers, and the most important people in their lives. Neither Sissel nor Kai Åge are fulfilling their children's needs for love and affection and create a cold and problematic home environment.

But how do all these childhood failures from the parents' side affect the young adult and hinder his human growth? When she talks about the neurotic person, Horney claims that he is in a search for glory, based on his idea of an idealized self, which affects his life on multiple levels. Some characteristics of this search for glory can be identified in the character of Karl Ove as well, both as a teenager and later as an adult.

like any other compulsive drive, the search for glory has the quality of insatiability. It must operate as long as the unknown (to himself) forces

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<sup>45</sup> Karl Ove Knausgård, *My Struggle. Book Four*, translated from the Norwegian by Don Bartlett, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016, p. 150.

<sup>46</sup> Karl Ove Knausgård, *My Struggle. Book Three: Boyhood*, p. 147.



are driving him. There may be a glow of elation over the favorable reception of some work done, over a victory won, over any sign of recognition or admiration—but it does not last. A success may hardly be experienced as such in the first place, or, at the least, must make room for despondency or fear soon after. In any case, the relentless chase after more prestige, more money, more women, more victories and conquests keeps going, with hardly any satisfaction or respite<sup>47</sup>.

In other words, for the person aspiring to an ideal that is not in concordance with his real self, nothing is enough, no matter how many achievements he gathers throughout his life, he is always almost obsessively reaching for more. And it is not a healthy, realistic ambition that is absolutely normal for everyone who wants to improve, to become better, but a consuming, damaging and after all, fake struggle to go against one's own nature.

Karl Ove behaves in many situations like the neurotic Horney describes. Starting with childhood, when he always wants to be the best in class and is extremely disappointed when the professor doesn't read his essays every single time, these characteristics become more and more visible with the passage of time. Probably the best example here would be his attitude regarding his work, his novels. After publishing his first novel, which was very well received he is extremely happy and flattered, proud that he finally fulfilled his lifelong dream. But all these feelings soon fade away and he feels miserable and unhappy until the publishing of his second book. The same scenario repeats itself years later, when he is writing *My Struggle* and he is willing to give up his family just to get it done.

Linda went to her mother's and called me several times a day. She was so angry that she screamed, actually *screamed* on the phone. I just held it away from my ear and kept writing. She said she would leave me. Go, I said. I don't care. I have to write. And it was true. She would have to go if that was what she wanted. She said, I will. You'll never see us again. Fine, I said. [...] She cried, she begged, she pleaded, what I was doing to her was the worst thing anyone could do, leaving her alone. But I didn't care, I wrote night and day<sup>48</sup>.

We have here the confession of a man who leaves his wife and baby alone, abandoning them in order to complete his ambition. In those moments nothing, not even the well-being of his own child is more important than his work. But in other circumstances, the opposite is true as well. In the spring

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<sup>47</sup> Karen Horney, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>48</sup> Karl Ove Knausgård, *My Struggle. Book Two. A Man in Love*, p. 345.

when he fell in love with Linda, that was his only concern, nothing else mattered. He didn't feel the need to write or to do anything else, he was only interested in his new love story, he fused with his partner. In FST, the concept of fusion is connected with that of differentiation of the self. The differentiation of self is hypothetically the goal of every healthy individual and it takes place when members of a family manage to define themselves as a separate entity inside the matrix. This does not mean that there has to be a rapture or a total denial of the family, just that the fusion between members is not shadowing their uniqueness. However, complete differentiation is also impossible to attain. "The level of stability, cohesiveness, and cooperation in a group is affected by the interplay of individuality and togetherness. [...] The interplay between individuality and togetherness results in emotionally significant relationships existing in a state of balance"<sup>49</sup>. Jenny Brown explains that when there is no differentiation, the fusion is in place and it means that "individual choices are set aside in the service of achieving harmony within the system"<sup>50</sup>. In the case of Karl Ove, a healthy differentiation seems impossible to attain. He either loses himself into the family life, which he eventually starts hating, or dedicates himself completely, almost with madness to writing. The fusion is visible also in the dyad father-son, with the son having low self-differentiation. He is never able to break the fusion with his father, not even after his death. In *Book One* he confesses: "[...] my father had a hold on me that I never succeeded in breaking"<sup>51</sup>.

Another essential concept in FST is that of triangles. "Triangling is said to occur when the inevitable anxiety in a dyad is relieved by involving a vulnerable third party who either takes sides or provides a detour for the anxiety"<sup>52</sup>. (Bowen Family 3). Knapp explains that in every family there are subsystems, with the original spouse-spouse dyad and the following parent-child and sibling-sibling. But a dyad cannot keep its balance, because its members are finding themselves in the position of developing a new self as that has to be part of a new construct. So a third part is drawn in, "in order to reduce the tension and establish an equilibrium, even though this is often done at the considerable personal expense of the third party"<sup>53</sup>. Karl Ove can be seen as the third party in the original family, especially after his older brother Yngve rebels

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<sup>49</sup> Michael E. Kerr, Murray Bowen, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>50</sup> Jenny Brown, *Bowen Family Systems Theory and Practice: Illustration and Critique*, available at [https://www.thefsi.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Bowen-Family-Systems-Theory-and-Practice\\_Illustration-and-Critique.pdf](https://www.thefsi.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Bowen-Family-Systems-Theory-and-Practice_Illustration-and-Critique.pdf), accessed on 15.06.2020.

<sup>51</sup> Karl Ove Knausgård, *My Struggle. Book One*, p.41.

<sup>52</sup> Jenny Brown, *loc.cit.*

<sup>53</sup> John Knapp, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

and moves away. The triangle works in the detriment of the son, who in the end is sent to live alone, before the divorce of the parents. But an important point in Bowen's theory is that the conflicts transcend generations. Thus, "the family projection process describes how children develop symptoms when they get caught up in the previous generation's anxiety about relationships"<sup>54</sup>.

At the same time, another concept connected with the generations entanglement is what he called *multi-generational transmission process*. It "describes how patterns, themes and positions (roles) in a triangle are passed down from generation to generation through the projection from parent to child"<sup>55</sup>. Without getting into too many details about his parents' upbringing, with some occasions the two families are described by the narrator. While he enjoys visiting both parts, when it comes to the dynamics between the two couple of grandparents, Karl Ove observes the cold and distant ambient at the Knausgård family, while the opposite, an atmosphere of joy is present at Sissel's original home. Especially the relationship between Kai Åge and his father is reserved and limited at few superficial encounters. This has been transferred to his own family and to the relation between him and his boys.

When faced with conflict, some people choose to react by breaking away or growing away from the family, a process described by Bowenian as the *emotional cutoff*. In *My Struggle* there are many attempts of emotional cutoff. And in the end, both the parties in the father-son dyad choose this solution. But only in terms of physical distance, because the emotional bond can never be broken, no matter how hard they try. The death of Kai Åge in the end of the first novel could have offered a closure, but the conflict between them remains unresolved for Karl Ove.

## Conclusions

This paper showed how psychological criticism can be used in order to enrich the reading of the novel *My Struggle* by Karl Ove Knausgård. Approaching literature from a psychological perspective was for a long time connected with Sigmund Freud and his famous psychoanalysis, and has been avoided by literary scholars in the recent times. However, there are to be found other schools of thought and methods that prove to be useful and enlightening for both the classic and contemporary texts.

I argue that the theories promoted by Abraham Maslow, Karen Horney and the newer Family Systems Therapy open up to a new understanding of the

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

narrative and characters in the novel. Following the idea of the self that aims toward realization, fulfillment and communion we observe the struggles of the main character and narrator of the story and how they develop in a familial context. Without a favorable environment for growth, Karl Ove's path in childhood as well as maturity is often disturbed and unbalanced which leads to emotional distress.

Moreover, another conclusion that can be drawn from this paper is the importance of the mother in *My Struggle*. Focusing on the evident conflict between father and son, the role of the mother is often ignored in Knausgård scholarship. This analysis shows that when looking beyond what the narrator directly tells us, Karl Ove's mother has also contributed to the hindrance of a healthy development of the self.

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## NORWEGIAN LITERATURE IN ROMANIAN TRANSLATION: 1990-06.2020

PAUL-DANIEL GOLBAN<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Norwegian Literature in Romanian Translation: 1990-06.2020<sup>2</sup>.*

The present paper offers an insight into the Norwegian literature translated into the Romanian language that was published after the fall of the communist regime and until the first half of 2020. The main problems that were studied include the number of Norwegian authors that were translated, the Romanian translators, the contact languages and the books published with grants from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), the preferred genres, the Romanian publishing houses, the cities where the books appeared and an overview of the books per year. Attention was also given to BBU alumni that translated directly from the Norwegian.

**Keywords:** *Norwegian literature, Scandinavian studies, translation, distant reading, quantitative studies, NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), Babeş-Bolyai University*

**REZUMAT.** *Literatura norvegiană tradusă în limba română: 1990-06.2020.*

Prezenta lucrare oferă o privire de ansamblu asupra literaturii norvegiene tradusă în limba română de după căderea comunismului și până în prima jumătate a anului 2020. Principalele probleme studiate includ numărul de scriitori norvegieni traduși, traducătorii români, limbile de contact și fondurile de la NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), genurile preferate de către public, editurile românești, numărul de cărți traduse per orașe și statistica per an. O atenție considerabilă a fost acordată și absolvenților UBB care au tradus direct din norvegiană.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *literatură norvegiană, studii scandinave, traducere, literatura văzută de departe, studii cantitative, NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai*

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<sup>2</sup> The article is part of a forthcoming bibliography of Norwegian literature translated into the Romanian that is about to be published at Casa Cărții de Știință (Cluj-Napoca) in the collection *Nordica* coordinated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu. The author has tried to show as much as possible an extensive image of the topic while taking into consideration that new documentary sources can always appear in the research horizon. The following study focuses primarily on the volumes published and not on the periodical literature or manuscripts of translations.

Norwegian literature in translation does not occupy the main area of interest when it comes to international literary or translation studies and even less space is given to quantitative studies overall. This is in part due to the fact that Norwegian is seen as a minor language in Europe, one that is indexed in catalogues and libraries with the other Northern Germanic counterparts, such as Danish, Swedish, Icelandic and Faroese. Among these, Norwegian does not hold a central role, as Swedish is the most translated Scandinavian language into Romanian.

Focusing on Norwegian literature translated into Romanian, I will try to showcase the main Norwegian authors, translators and publishing houses, while also discussing the main contact languages and giving an overview of the number of translations per year. Another area of interest is given to translations made by BBU alumni directly from the Norwegian original. Of course, many translations in Romania and in many other countries would not be possible without NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), the main institution which promotes Norwegian literature outside of Norway.

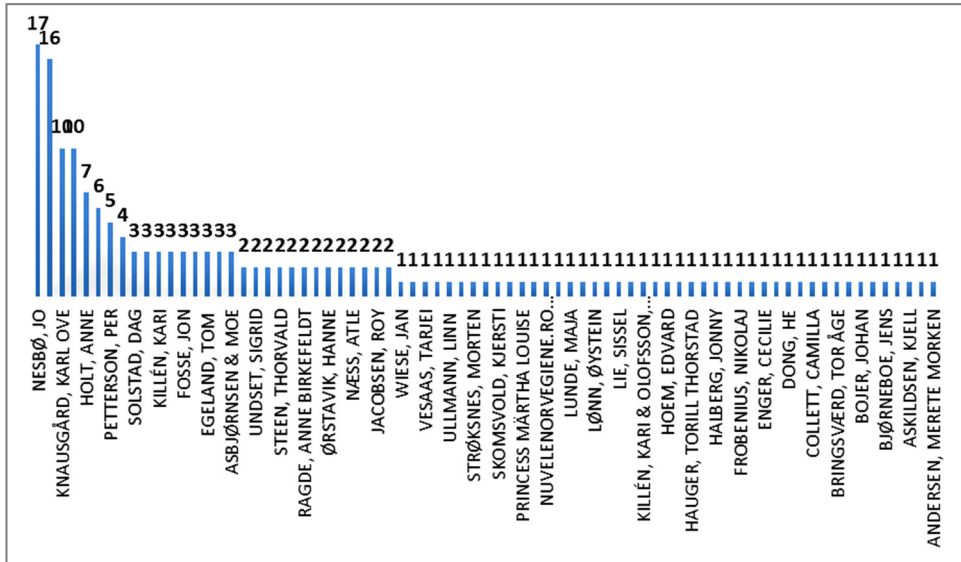
The present study borrows Franco Moretti's concepts of distant reading and quantitative studies in order to construct an overview of the situation of Norwegian literature in the Romanian literary landscape after the fall of the communist regime. In order to do that I have selected a corpus of 173 volumes containing 202 titles, including stories, short prose, theatre plays and micro novels, that were published after 1990 and until the first half of 2020. The titles were selected mainly from the catalogues of "Octavian Goga" Cluj County Library and „Lucian Blaga" Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca. The information gathered was then double-checked in other national and international catalogues, such as the *Romanian National Bibliography* and *Index Translationum*. Another relevant catalogue in my research was *Oria.no*, containing the translations from Norwegian into Romanian found at the National Library of Norway<sup>3</sup>. More so, I have consulted *The Chronological Dictionary of Translated Novels in Romania 1990-2000 (DCRT)*, published by the Romanian Academy (Cluj-Napoca Branch).

The first subject of analysis was the current situation of Norwegian authors (or authors of Norwegian language) translated into the Romanian language. All in all, there are a total of 75 Norwegian writers that have been translated into Romanian in the period between 1990 and June of 2020 (see figure 1). Jo Nesbø is the most translated writer into Romanian with 17 translations, followed closely by Jørn Lier-Horst with 16. The famous author of the series *My Struggle* and *The Seasons Quartet*, Karl Ove Knausgård and Jostein Gaarder, most known for his work *Sophie's World: A Novel About the History of Philosophy*, have both

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<sup>3</sup> Oria.no, NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad) [[https://bibsys-almaprimo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo\\_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=NORLA](https://bibsys-almaprimo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=NORLA)].

10 titles translated. Gaarder's *Sophie's World* has been translated 3 times, most famously by Mircea Ivănescu (with 5 editions and perhaps more), by Mariana Petrescu and by Ana Mihăilescu. The following authors are Anne Holt with 7 translations, Knut Hamsun with 6 volumes containing 9 titles, Per Petterson with 5 entries and Lars Saabye Christensen with 4 translated titles and 2 editions of *Beatles* (translated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu).



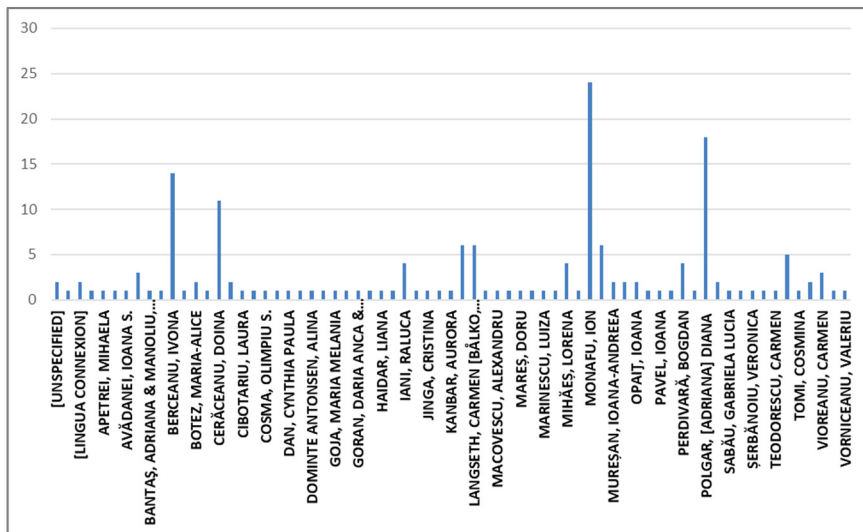
**Figure 1.** Norwegian literature in Romanian translation: 1990-06.2020.

The next authors have all 3 translations overall: Dag Solstad, Amalie Skram, Kari Killén, Henrik Ibsen, Jon Fosse (with a total of 7 titles), Knut Faldbakken, Tom Egeland, Finn Carling and, finally, Asbjørnsen & Moe. With 2 volumes translated, we find: Sigrid Undset, Lars Svendsen, Thorvald Steen, Åsne Seierstad, Anne Birkefeldt Ragde, Bobbie Peers, Hanne Ørstavik, Fridtjof Nansen, Atle Næss, Hedvig Montgomery, Roy Jacobsen and Ingvar Ambjørnsen. All the rest have one translation each.

It is worth mentioning that there are 2 volumes of fairytales with unknown author. Also, there exists only one anthology entitled *Nuvele norvegiene.ro: norske noveller.no* (published by Casa Cărții de Știință in Cluj-Napoca) that contains 12 short stories only by Norwegian writers translated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu. These authors are: Knut Hamsun, Johan Borgen, Kjell Askildsen, Bjørg Vik, Øystein Lønn, Sidsel Mørck, Wera Sæther, Gunnar Staalesen, Lars Saabye Christensen, Jan Kjærstad, Thorvald Steen and Unni Lindell.



Another key element of my research is focused on the Romanian translators, whether they translated directly from the Norwegian or from English, German and French (see figure 2 with a total of 69 translators).



**Figure 2.** Romanian translators of Norwegian literature (1990-06.2020).

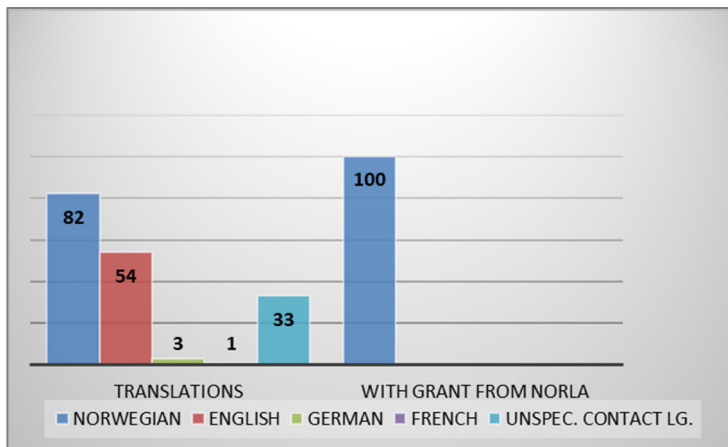
The most translations pertain to Ion Monafu with 24 translations in total (from English) that appeared at Pandora Publishing. He is followed closely by the BBU graduate Diana Polgar with 18 titles translated directly from the Norwegian original. Another tireless and enthusiastic translator, Ivona Berceanu (also a BBU alumni), has currently translated 14 titles from the Norwegian with an incredible steadiness. The following is Doina Cerăceanu with 11 volumes, although the contact language is not always specified. With 6 translations in total, we have Aurora Kanbar & Erling Schøller and Carmen Langseth (or Karmen Bålko). Valeriu Munteanu has also translated 6 volumes containing 9 titles by Knut Hamsun. He is the central figure that has translated Knut Hamsun's literary work into Romanian.

Sanda Tomescu Baciu, who laid the foundations of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at „Babeș-Bolyai“ University, follows closely with 5 translations from authors such as Henrik Ibsen, Lars Saabye Christensen and Maja Lunde. Even more, she translated an anthology dedicated to the genre of short prose.

With 4 entries, we have Raluca Iani, Lorena Mihăeș and Bogdan Perdivară. Justina Bandol has currently translated from the English the first 3 volumes from *The Seasons Quartet* by Karl Ove Knausgård. Carmen Vioreanu has also translated 3 volumes which contain 7 titles from which 4 are plays by Jon Fosse, also dubbed “the other Ibsen”.

Two translations are by an unspecified translator. Another two unspecified translations are made through Lingua Connexion (in partnership with RAO Publishing). Also with 2 translations are Maria-Alice Botez, Marlena Chirilă Røimål, Ioana-Andreea Mureșan, Ovio Olaru, Ioana Opaț, Simina Răchiteanu and Marie-Jeanne Vasiloiu.

With just one entry, there is a translation made through Graal Soft. The translators with just one entry are the following: Georgiana & Ionuț Achim, Mihaela Apetrei, Venera Antonescu, Ioana S. Avădanei, Bantaș Adriana & Victoria Manoliu, Angela Benea, Marius Blăjuț, Speranța & Marian Brătescu, Laura Cibotariu, Anamaria Ciobanu, Olimpiu S. Cosma, Aurel Covaci, Cynthia Paula Dan, Maria Dobrinioiu, Alina Dominte Antonsen, Roxana-Ema Dreve, Maria Melania Goja, Daria Anca Goran, Daria Anca Goran, & Ana Muntean, Monica-Livia Grigore, Liana Haidar, Petru Iamandi, Mircea Ivănescu, Cristina Jinga, Antonia Kacsó, Aurora Kanbar, Ramona Lupu, Alexandru Macovescu, Bogdan Nicolae Marchidanu, Doru Mareș, B. Marian, Luiza Marinescu, Ana-Daniela Micu, Ana Mihăilescu, Corneliu Papadopol, Ioana Pavel, Liliana Pelici, Mariana Petrescu, Gabriela Lucia Sabău, Simona Schouten, Veronica Șerbănoiu, Ciprian Șiulea, Carmen Teodorescu, Cosmina Tomi, Bogdan Voiculescu, Valeriu Vorniceanu.

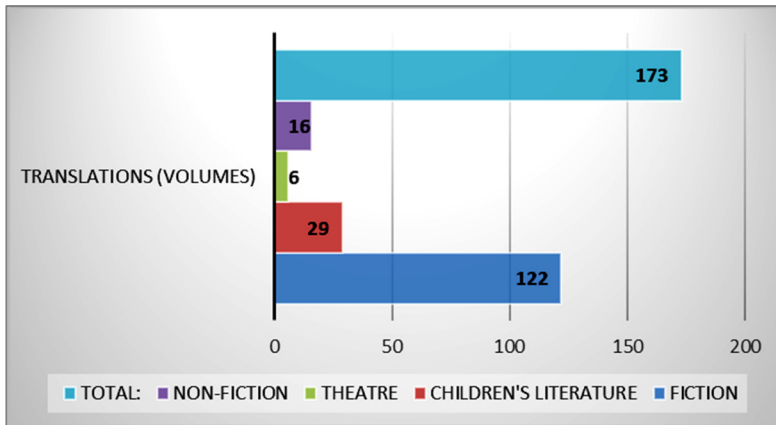


**Figure 3.** Contact languages and grants from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad).

Another crucial aspect was the language of contact and how many of these translations have been published with grants from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad). As we can see below, there are 82 volumes that have been translated directly from the Norwegian. English occupies, evidently, the second place with 54 translated volumes. There are 3 translations with German as the contact language, while only one has been made through French. A considerable 33 volumes do not specify their contact language, although it can be easily inferred that it is English.

A staggering 100 volumes have been published with grants from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad)<sup>4</sup>, the main institution that promotes Norwegian literature outside of Norway. The highest number of translations from the Norwegian have been published in 2019, namely 25, coinciding with Norway as the Guest of Honour at Frankfurter Buchmesse. The leader of this project was Halldór Gudmundsson, coordinated by NORLA's director Margit Walsø. In the autumn of 2018-2019, NORLA managed to grant the publishing of 510 titles for the German market. Participation was also high, with 100 Norwegian authors taking part in the festival and with 100.000 guests at the pavilion.

Romania has deeply benefited from NORLA's work, especially after the fall of communism in December of 1989. Without censorship and the dissolution of Securitate, a steady increase of translations from Norwegian writers could be seen in Romania as a way to reconstruct democracy and to synchronise with other countries and cultures.

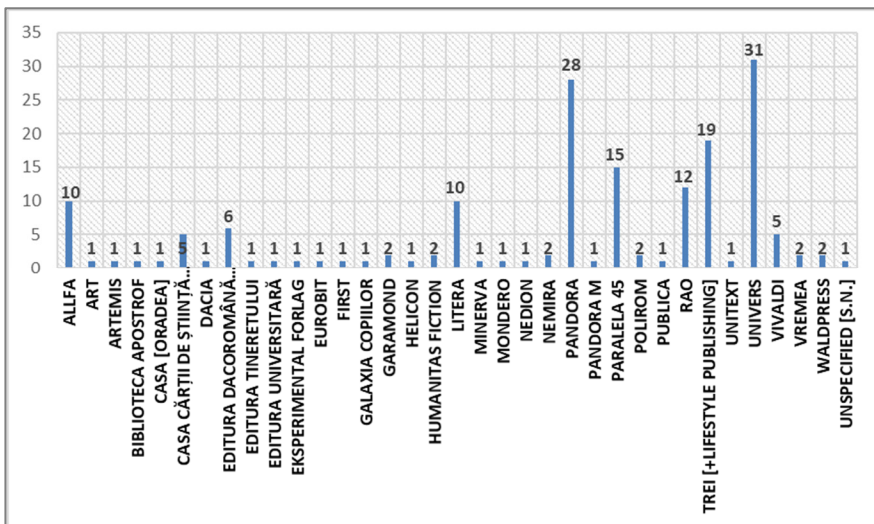


**Figure 4.** Overview of the genres translated.

<sup>4</sup> Earlier known as MUNIN (Marketing Unit for Norwegian Non-Fiction) from 1996 until 2003 and founded by Elisabet W. Middelthon. However, it was Kristin Brudevoll who was NORLA's first director from 1978 until 2006.

When it comes to the genres most translated into Romanian, fiction is the most preferred genre with 122 volumes translated. Children's literature is on the rise generally in Romania, with the book market increasingly promoting the genre. A number of 29 translations from Norwegian authors have appeared in Romania. Non-fiction is the next most liked genre, with 16 titles translated. Lastly, theatre is represented by writers such as Henrik Ibsen (3 titles translated) and Jon Fosse (3 volumes containing 7 titles).

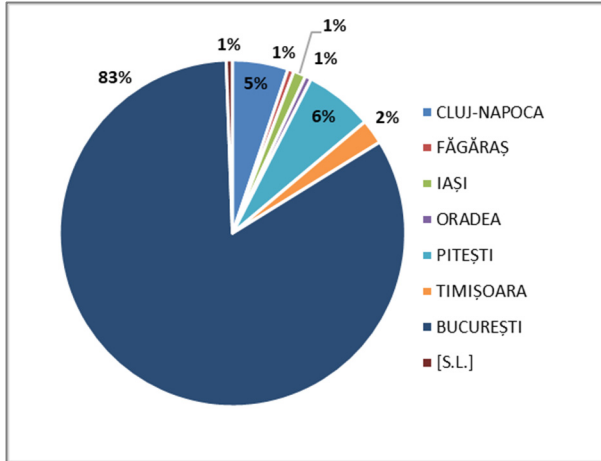
The publishing houses in Romania have learned time and time again to hire translators that are capable of working with the original: a gladdening thing in itself. All in all, there are 36 publishing houses that have showed interest in Norwegian writers. From these, Univers Publishing House has translated 31 titles, mostly from the Norwegian. Pandora Publishing follows with 28 titles (from English). Trei Publishing (including the imprint Lifestyle Publishing) has translated 19 titles. Paralela 45 has published 15 titles and RAO 12. Alfa and Litera follow with 10 titles translated. Tempus Publishing (also called Tempus Dacoromânia Comiterra or Editura Dacoromână TDC) has translated 6 titles. From Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință has published 5 titles, the same number as Vivaldi Publishing. With 2 translated titles, we have the following publishing houses: Garamond, Humanitas Fiction, Nemira, Polirom, Vremea and Waldpress.



**Figure 5.** Romanian publishing houses translating Norwegian authors.

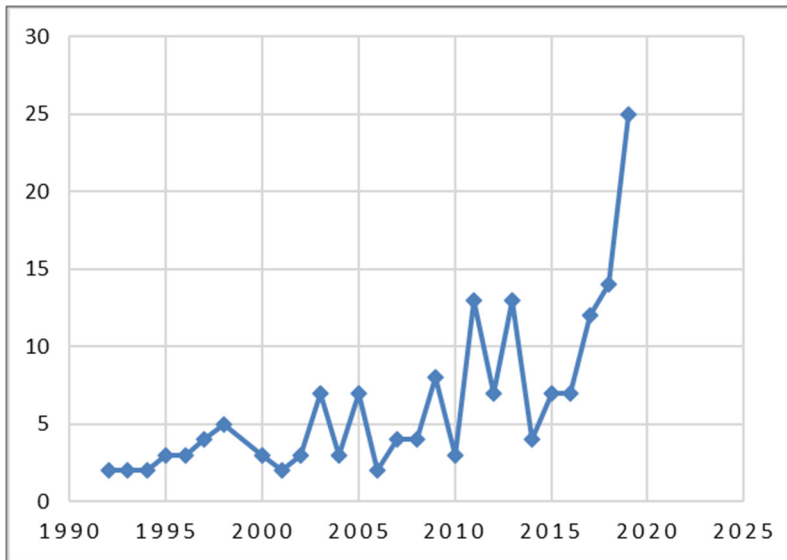
All the rest have published only one title: Agape, Art, Artemis, Biblioteca Apostrof, Casa [Oradea], Dacia, Editura Tineretului, Editura Universitară, Eksperimental Forlag, Eurobit, First, Galaxia Copiilor, Helicon, Minerva,

Mondero, Nedion, Pandora M, Publica, Unitext. There is also one title published by an unknown publishing house.



**Figure 6.** Distribution of translations per city.

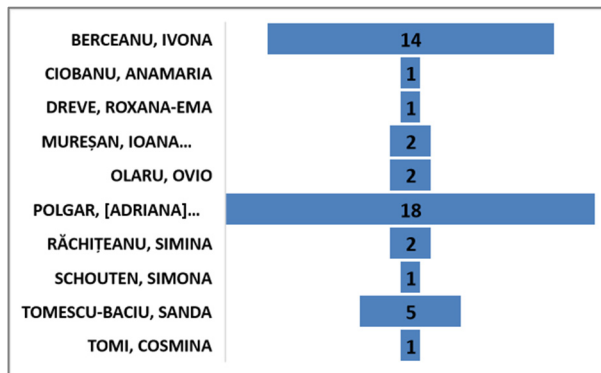
The distribution per cities is quite unequal unfortunately. As expected, the capital Bucharest (București) has published the most titles.



**Figure 7.** Distribution of titles per year.

As we can see above, Bucharest has published 83+% of the translations, namely 144 titles. The other cities have only a few titles published, such as Pitești with 11 titles (6%), Cluj-Napoca with 9 titles (5%), Timișoara with 4 titles (2%), Iași with 2 titles (1%), Făgăraș and Oradea with 1 title (1%) and an unlocated publishing house with 1 title (1%).

As the above graph shows, the number of titles has increased each year. In the period **1990-2000**, there are about 2 to 5 titles published each year for a total of **24 titles** published during this decade. This situation changes in the 2000's with as much as 7 titles published in the years 2003 and 2005 and a high of 8 titles in 2009, respectively. During the period **2001-2010**, **43 titles** have been published. The highest numbers are maintained throughout the period **2011-2020** with inasmuch as **106 titles**, as follows: 3 titles in 2010, 4 titles in 2014 and 2020, 7 titles in 2012, 2015 and 2016, 12 titles in 2017, 13 titles in 2011 and 2013, 14 titles in 2018 and a high of 25 titles published in 2019, when Norway was the Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair.



**Figure 8.** BBU alumni translating directly from Norwegian.

Finally, close attention should be given to the promoters of the Norwegian language and culture from „Babeș-Bolyai“ University in Cluj-Napoca, who have translated directly from the Norwegian. These translators are BBU alumni and all of them have studies in the Norwegian language and literature from „Babeș-Bolyai“ University, except the founder of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures, Sanda Tomescu Baciu, who has also graduated from the University of Oslo.

Overall, they have published 47 books translated directly from the Norwegian original which makes up for 21% from the total market of 173 volumes published. The publishing houses that represented them are: Allfa,

ART, Biblioteca Apostrof, Casa (Oradea), Casa Cărții de Știință (Cluj-Napoca), Galaxia Copiilor, Humanitas Fiction, Litera, Nemira, Paralela 45, Polirom Trei (including the imprint Lifestyle Publishing), Univers and Waldpress.

At last, we notice an upward trend of translations from the Norwegian language that could not have been possible without the strong collaboration between NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad) and „Babeș-Bolyai“ University, as well as the aforementioned Romanian publishing houses.

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## BECOMING LOVABLE – HOW WAS THE WORLD-FAMOUS IBSEN RECEIVED IN HUNGARY IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY?

ASZTALOS VERONKA-ÖRSIKE<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Becoming lovable – how was the world-famous Ibsen received in Hungary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?* <sup>2</sup>This study aims to show the controversies encountered in the early period of Henrik Ibsen’s Hungarian reception (up till 1895). The Norwegian author and his dramas are deeply rooted in the local cultures, and, we can also gain insight into *glocal* literary modernities by examining local disputes about Ibsen. The global success of “The Doll’s House” was divisive in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the performance, in general, triggered ambivalent responses from the audiences: while some critics and viewers greeted it as a world-famous, modern work exploring contemporary social issues, others viewed it as an immoral drama that would have a harmful influence on society. The play triggered a major debate on the role of the women in Hungarian society and their emancipation.

**Keywords:** *Hungarian stereotypes, Ibsenism, ambivalence, marriage, divorce, Ibsen’s visit, The North, reception.*

**REZUMAT.** *Devenind iubit – cum a fost primit renumitul Ibsen în Ungaria în secolul al 19-lea?* Acest studiu își propune să arate controversile întâmpinate în perioada inițială a recepției maghiare a lui Henrik Ibsen (până în 1895). Autorul norvegian și dramele lui sunt adânc înrădăcinate în culturile locale și de asemenea, putem obține o perspectivă asupra modernităților literare locale, examinând dispute locale despre Ibsen. Succesul global a dramei „O casă de păpuși” a fost divizibil la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea, iar performanța, în general, a declanșat reacții ambivalente din partea publicului: în timp ce unii critici și spectatori salutau ca o operă de renume mondială, modernă, explorând probleme sociale contemporane, alții au văzut-o ca pe o dramă imorală care poate avea o influență dăunătoare asupra societății. Piesa a declanșat o dezbateră majoră asupra rolului femeilor în societatea maghiară și emanciparea lor.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *stereotipuri maghiare, ibsenism, ambivalență, căsătorie, divorț, vizita lui Ibsen, Nordul, recepție.*

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<sup>2</sup> This work was supported by the Collegium Talentum 2019 Programme of Hungary. This is a summary of two published Hungarian studies (Asztales, “Taming...”, 2019, 74–95.; Asztales, “Guest...”, 2019, 28–40).



## General remarks

Henrik Ibsen is one of the most popular authors in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nineteenth-century theatres often staged his dramas: “A Doll's House”, “Hedda Gabler”, “Ghosts”, “The Wild Duck”, etc. could often be seen in the major theatres of the world. But his presence and the reception of his dramas are not only global phenomena, but also deeply rooted in the local cultures. By examining local disputes about Ibsen, we can gain a much better understanding of *glocal* literary modernities. All these controversies are excellent opportunities to understand the glocal stereotypes and clichés regarding not only Ibsen's works, but also the cultural stereotypes his oeuvre was framed with.

My research will give insight into the multi-layered Hungarian reception of Henrik Ibsen from the early period up till 1895. These texts foregrounded and debated not only Ibsen's personality and works but also geopolitical stereotypes and images of the North and Norway. Consequently, I will focus on: (1) the first plays and their translations establishing the writer's name in Hungary; (2) the success of “A Doll's House” in Hungary; (3) the Hungarian stereotypes about the *North* recycled through the discourse upon Ibsen; (4) Henrik Ibsen's visit in Budapest interpreted as a turning point in the author's reception. The latter is also a remarkable juncture in the discourses regarding Ibsen because this play triggers a major debate on the women's role in society and their emancipation.

## First steps – the Hungarian audience and Ibsen

Even before staging Ibsen, Hungarians already had encountered a strong German discourse on his personality and plays, and this determined the later translations of his texts.<sup>3</sup> The Hungarian pieces and news on Ibsen often mirrored a mixed German discourse on the opinion of foreign critics' on Ibsen, on the impressions of Hungarian writers living abroad, but also on innumerable scandals around the writer or his plays. Thus the Hungarian readers met Ibsen's works before the texts could be read, or the plays were staged in Hungarian.

The very first Ibsen play to be staged in Hungarian was “The Pillars of Society” in Arad in 1879. It had no success even though Ibsen's figure was already known and had received attention in the Hungarian press. The failure of the play contributed to the defocusing of the critical attention, and Ibsen still needed to be rediscovered again much later.<sup>4</sup> That is why the first meaningful and impressive theatrical experience of a work of Ibsen in Hungary was “A Doll's House” on 4th October 1889. The play was translated from German by

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<sup>3</sup> About Hungarian Ibsen's dramas translations, bibliography, performances (Staud 1943; Rubinyi, 1919).

<sup>4</sup> On the play's reception at Arad (Enyedi 2014, 11–14).

Gyula Reviczky under the title “Nora” following the similar German title. This play divided and shocked the Hungarian audience and made Ibsen extremely interesting and challenging for the Hungarian general public and criticism.

In 1887 Jenő Péterfy, an important critic of the time, wrote a significant review about “Rosmersholm” and “The Wild Duck”. He prescribed what kind of attitude the Hungarian readers and audience needed to have toward the plays and texts. According to him, Ibsen's dramas must be known by those who love European literature – implicitly by Hungarians, too. He argued that the dramas would always suffer from an ambivalent reception and Ibsen texts are too hard to read (Péterfy 1887, 427). Béla Lázár, a Hungarian literary critic, also had a strong impact on Ibsen's early Hungarian reception. He pointed out many times that Ibsen's work had to be introduced to the Hungarian public, and also suggested to the National Theatre of Budapest that Emília P. Márkus, one of the most popular actresses of the time, should play Nora, after he saw the play in Berlin and was not satisfied with the performance of the actresses who embodied Nora.<sup>5</sup> Emília P. Márkus was one of the most iconic actresses in Budapest whose best performances included roles in which “she could have shaped the modern nervous life of a woman captivated by her whims and passions.” (Cenner 1961, 34). Despite that Emília P. Márkus as Nora did not renew the established and used theatrical techniques which were based on French dramas, the play brought an innovation to contemporary drama at the level of ideas (Pukánszky Kádár 1940, 344).

The National Theatre accepted the advice, and “Nora” premiered on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1889. The press heavily debated whether this and similarly immoral dramas can be performed in the theatre – and this was a recurring issue for the National Theatre, too. Their main problem was that audiences would expect original, valuable plays from the Hungarian National Theatre, written exclusively by Hungarian authors (Margócsy 2005, 34). Should the audience not get them, the public-sponsored theatre program would be attacked by the press and by the public because of an alleged decline of Hungarian culture.

Encouraged by the success of “Nora”, another play, namely “The Pillars of Society”, was translated from Norwegian by Béla Lázár (“The National Theatre” 1890, 3) and premiered on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1890. Still, the press did not like it and compared the play to “Nora”. Two other plays by Ibsen were received in a similarly negative manner: “Ghosts” in Kolozsvár/Cluj on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1890 (“Ibsen in Paris” 1890, 1131), and “An Enemy of the People”, premiered by the National Theatre

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<sup>5</sup> „Returning to the theater, I would like to talk about the success of the poet who came into vogue here: about “Nora” of Ibsen. (...) but that “Nora” could expect even greater success here with Mrs. Emília Márkus, is certain. This “Nora” is a play with a special air, Ibsen's most interesting play with the most dramatic effects so far.” (Lázár 1888, 2569)

on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1891 in Budapest. However, the criticism framed the plays of Ibsen as acceptable, arguing that all these plays should be legitimate also on the Hungarian stage since they are played all over the world (“Hedda Gabler” 1893, 900).

Throughout the debates surrounding the staging of these plays the term *Ibsenism* was introduced and used as a swearword or cultural illness, and the Hungarian press treated it like a contagious disease, giving a double interpretation of this phenomenon. In one interpretation, *Ibsenism* was characterized by a sense of strangeness, clichés about the *North*, linked to the dramas of Ibsen, which were said to be immersed with darkness and oddity. The second interpretation used *Ibsenism* as characterized by psychological and non-action-driven dramas, which seemed innovative not only for critics but also for the audience.<sup>6</sup> The concept of *Ibsenism* was strongly framed especially by dilemmas and tensions regarding the institution of marriage in Ibsen's plays. Both of the interpretations were debating Nora's decision to leave her husband and children after eight years of marriage, and whether a woman had the right to 'turn her back on her duties' in a 'selfish way' only because her marriage was not based on love (“Hedda Gabler” 1893, 899). Hungarian interpreters of the time suggested that instead of writing about people in general, Ibsen wrote about probable but rare cases that were lacking any moral sense.

### **The Hungarian success of “Nora” and the debate on the nature of marriage and divorce**

The global success of “Nora” was divisive in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though more famous actresses chose to impersonate the main character, the performance, in general, triggered ambivalent responses from the audiences. While some critics and viewers greeted it as a world-famous, modern work exploring contemporary social issues, others viewed it as an immoral drama that would have a harmful influence on society. The Hungarian press of the 1880s also stigmatized the play and perceived it as an interesting but immoral drama (Szinnyei 1880, 641). The stigma and ambivalent labels were taken over from foreign media reports, and this controversial rating of the drama continued to be commonplace in the later Hungarian discourse. As a response, Hungarian Ibsen fans interpreted Ibsen's dramatic texts and their worldview as a universal experience, which had a revealing power in portraying current tensions. They emphasized that social issues and problems, such as the issue of

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<sup>6</sup> About the „well made play” tradition: Booth 1995, 327; Baráthy 2005, 329; about the drama models mixture: Bécsy 1974, 273–284; about the analytical drama: Egri 1983, 13–83; Szeredás 1989, 279–296.

an unhappy marriage, were not bound to one culture. Ibsen's dramas were not well received by those who found inappropriate for literature to debate and represent social and religious issues, and by those who feared the power of literature and its impact on society, and by who thought that these dramas represent unacceptably human relationships and a false image of femininity.<sup>7</sup>

“Nora” was more than just a play; it broadened the discursive boundaries of thinking about women and gender roles and even shaped contemporary ideas and debates about literary representation. Critics opposing Ibsen's dramas attacked this as a 'Nora-mediated ideology.' They labeled the drama-mediated female type immoral, sick, ungrateful, perceiving it as alien, unrealistic, outrageous, and out-of-the-box (Timár 1889, 2068–2069). In 1894, a change took place in the Hungarian legal system, when the rules of civil marriage were laid down (Gáspár 2007, 77). This was so close to the first Hungarian premiere of “Nora” that the audience felt the play was alluding to this fierce debate about the institution of marriage and the possibility of divorce.

In 1892–93, Eleonora Duse was invited for some guest appearances in Budapest, and among other plays, she showed her talent in the role of Nora to the Hungarian audience. Her performances provided an opportunity to intensify and to add new nuances to the debate on female emancipation. Critics highlighted her hand and wrist movements, the naturalness and simplicity of her acting style, but her interpretation was followed by a comparison between her performance and the well-known acting style of P. Márkus. Duse was among the actresses who refused earlier to play “Nora” with the original ending (Rubinyi 1919, 59), when Nora leaves her family, but it seems that in Budapest, in 1892 she played “Nora” in the original way Ibsen had written it.<sup>8</sup> This change in her attitude also includes the actress' new conception of “Nora” that developed over time.

Before the premiere in 1889, “Nora” was explained as a drama that portrays a type of marriage unknown by Hungarians. It seems that the play and its interpretation by Duse foregrounded and empowered the fearful “female emancipation”. Actually, it only served as an incentive of a series of emancipatory gestures that were already present in the Hungarian discourse on urbanization. It had also been the influence of the French dramas, which established new patterns in the traditional Hungarian society (Pukánszky Kádár 1940, 343).

There have been divergent views on the Italian actress' casting of Nora. These were not surprising since the clichés about Ibsen and the way his drama should be played have already been institutionalized. These disagreements

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<sup>7</sup> About Hungarian naturalism: Borbély 2014.

<sup>8</sup> The “happy” ending can be found between pages 172–173 in the original Hungarian textbook of “Nora”, under the sign N.Sz.N.117 in the National Széchényi Library's Theatre History Collection. This means that the National Theatre knew this ending as well, but the articles I know do not suggest that it was performed with the rewritten one.

reinterpreted the protagonist's actions: they had been discussed along with the latest patterns of female emancipation. It seems that by 1893 the Hungarian public finally came to accept Nora's deed that had been stigmatized and unacceptable before: to leave an unhappy marriage and her children. Hungarians mainly associated this new attitude with the world-famous acting style of Eleonora Duse, even though Hungarian actress, P. Márkus had vaguely alluded to this in her former performances.

Despite the fact that "Nora" was accepted on Hungarian stages, and the general view was that the main character can be understood, there were a few articles in Hungarian press which highlighted the fear that (Hungarian) women in the real life could behave in this "cruel way" under the influence of the play. This ambivalence in the interpretations show that Nora became a symbol, and staging the play years after years triggered a common opinion about women's role in the society. One critique argues ironically and belittling that "[t]he idea is beautiful and noble that a woman with whom the husband only had played with like a puppet but did not live in a spiritual community should show the husband that she can face the serious tasks of life and rise to the ideal height of morality through independent work and struggle" (Robin 1893, 8), but is impossible that a real, self-sacrificing woman/mother/wife could leave her husband and children. The contradiction in the review is in the end when the critic sums up he did not like Duse's performance because the actress could not show Nora's moral ascension.

The series of Duse's guest appearances in 1893 was concluded in *Budapesti Hírlap* by a striking debate between two well-known public figures of the age. The opinions of Bernát Alexander and Sarolta Geőcze, differed sharply in relation to "Nora", and thus also about the female emancipation aspirations of the time. Bernát showcased his fears about the emancipated woman from a "male" perspective, and even he maintained that he understands that a fictional character as Nora is able to take this decision (Bernát 1893, "Duse as Nora", 8; "The real Nora-question" 1-4). On the other hand, according to Sarolta Geőcze "you men, can judge in any way: for us, for women, Nora will always be understood. And no one knew the female soul better than Ibsen." (Geőcze 1893, 3).

It is striking that the guest appearances of Duse had a major impact on the reception of "The Doll's House" in Hungary. The spread and wider discussion of the discourses on early feminism of the 1890s moderated, changed, and clarified the preconceived notions about "Nora".

### **Ibsen, "the Viking king without crown"**

Preconceived notions, clichés, imagological schemes of the Northern landscape have been incorporated into the reception of Northern writers in

Hungary, in this case Ibsen, influencing how Ibsen's dramas and person can be understood, interpreted and imagined. Thus, dramatic interpretations, critiques, press articles had raised prior expectations and ideas in the readers' minds that have not really stood in their way. In fact, readers of contemporary Hungarian press and literature were able to get to know Ibsen earlier, as a representative of “the cold and dark world of the North”, whose personality carried not only the features of his dramas, but also the attributes, the associated values and interpretations of his homeland. It seemed natural to Hungarian critics that “in the land of Ibsenism, in the Scandinavian north” (“King Midas” 1890, 828), in the far country, everything should work differently from their home country. According to contemporary sources, Ibsen seems to have become a prototype of the North, to whom not only the aftertaste of his drama but also all the (supposed) features of mystical Scandinavia<sup>9</sup> have been attributed by metonymic contact to these interpretations. Identifying the North with Ibsen and the atmosphere of his plays, and not least blending the drama heroes and the real Norwegian people, led to Hungarian criticism not being able to deal with the real Norwegians, and their supposed eccentric behaviour.<sup>10</sup> The aspect of strangeness has arisen many times in the minds of Hungarian critics, who ceaselessly projected their geographical conceptions on the interpretation of dramatic texts and plays based on these, while they began to interpret the North through the Ibsen dramas and relations met in these works. These Northern stereotypes were taken as interpretive frames for Ibsen's “weird” characters and themes and they were considered completely unknown in Hungary.

The Edda's mythological world was also used in this reception to convey the strangeness of the Norwegian/Northern world. These mythological elements and characters known by Ibsen works were used for landscape descriptions and for portraying Norwegian women.<sup>11</sup> The sense of strangeness and the urge to

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<sup>9</sup> „The mystical fog that flows through its fjords takes shape and is constantly changing, playing with colors and becoming different; then comes closer, then leaves, once tears, then the sun's rays pass through it, now dense and serious, again fine and breathable. And the sea, with its ripples and murmurs, its miraculous mystery and changing shape, which reminds us of the Infinite, the Accidence. The Norwegian writer also has this changing mood, his figures are embodied researchers, everyone wants to know Everything and Nothing. They long for fresh air and are held in handcuffs by the sea.” (“The Consecration of the Bridge by Arany and its relatives” 1889, 1938)

<sup>10</sup> “Ibsen needs to know if his Scandinavian people are really such stupid Philistines as he portrays them, and whether the few clever people, really are so unscrupulous, useless, what they look like in his dramas. Of course, what we find impossible, incomprehensible, he can say: Yeah, that's the custom in Norway.” (“Hedda Gabler. Henrik Ibsen's new play” 1890, 2)

<sup>11</sup> “Coldness would fire you because you foolishly believe there are warm passions behind this cold Walkyr armor... But you are disappointed. Even if you embrace these Walkyr-beautiful bodies, the citadel: the soul of the Hedda Gabler's remains incomprehensible: elusive.” (Pekár “From the country of the midnight sun” 1895, 2)

idealize defined the basic critical texts in a twofold way; while classifying it as exotic and distant, it constantly referred to like the unfamiliar world of Ibsen dramas. Their oddity was mainly explained by stereotypes about the North and the nature of the North, so Ibsen and his dramas became fundamental works in the interpretation of a mystical Scandinavia.<sup>12</sup>

Ibsen's visit was a very important event, as the newly discovered Norwegian writer was able to get to know the Hungarian audience not only from his descriptions and portraits, but even in person during his trip to Budapest in 1891 between 19–24 April (Lázár 1891, 265). The news of Ibsen's coming spread like wildfire, and artistic and writing circles prepared to welcome him ("Ibsen in Budapest" 1891, 3).

Ibsen's welcoming was not unique because it triggered entirely new schemes or gestures from contemporary event organizers, but because the Norwegian author, who had been known in Hungary for almost two years, was treated like an old acquaintance, an exiled Hungarian, or a returned world-famous local actor. The Norwegian author became familiar to the Hungarians, creating a new Ibsen-image: an old, prestigious, kind writer who loves to be in Hungary. The writer was surrounded by an attitude, which foregrounded what the Hungarians thought of themselves, their nation and ethnicity in general: "[Ibsen] wandered to Budapest, at the call of his admirers, to see the strange nation that lives here, not speaking any language related to the European language, but speaking one language completely different in material as well as in form; which nation is nevertheless part of European civilization, is in the community of this European culture, worships the same gods of art, and walks the same paths of knowledge." ("Ibsen" 1891, 1). The warmly welcome secured the position of the Hungarian nation in the European cultural world and pointed out that despite its lingual and numerical differences, it was able to remain in it.<sup>13</sup> The contradiction in this discourse is that Ibsen was not well-liked by Hungarian critics for his mainly demoralizing dramas, and because he was constantly understood as a foreign and incomprehensible person.

The series of events related to the visit reinforced this impression. The Hungarian attitude towards Ibsen was strange even for the writer, because he

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<sup>12</sup> „On this Ibsenlike day, I am leaving Ibsen, with the last impression of the country's greatest genius, the realm of Nordkap. With its shreds of fog, the inexplicable, unsettling daughters of Ibsen's genius rippled in front of my eyes as I travelled: the Noras, the frighteningly masculine Hedda Gablers, the Petras, the West Rebekas, and Wangel Hildas. They accompany me, I feel on myself the look of their blue walkyr glances" (Pekár "At the Viking king without crown" 1895, 4)

<sup>13</sup> "And Ibsen can tell his native people about us that he was a guest of people compared to whom others are several in numbers, but they are not as receptive as they are to what is beautiful and noble and not more grateful to whom who approaches them with his heart, not even the largest in number." ("Ibsen" 1891, 2)

was not used to being so loved and approached, because at that time he was not even celebrated in his own country in a similar way like in Hungary. The author was welcomed every night with banquets where the most important politicians and artists gave their speeches; saw the most famous Hungarian actresses in theatres (Emília P. Márkus performing Nora; Mari Jászai performing Elektra; Lujza Blaha performing in *The Red Purse*); visited the statue of Sándor Petőfi (one of the most well-known poet of 19<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary), and also met the press.

Ibsen's visit in Hungary was described by the Hungarian press as exemplary for the rest of the world, since no other nation had given “a similar celebration” to him before April 1891 (“In honor of Ibsen” 1891, 5) – and it was very important in contemporary public opinion as it proved just how warm and welcoming Hungarians were. The Hungarians treated Ibsen and the Western, foreign culture as one and identified them as justifying the acceptance and attitude of the Hungarian nation towards foreigners by fully satisfying the wishes of the Norwegian author during his stay in Budapest. During the visit, everyone celebrated the Norwegian author and stated that Ibsen must be loved by all Hungarians, as Ibsen also loves Hungarians.

The imprint of the visit was also felt in later literary and theatre criticism as the attacks on the author and his works diminished and almost disappeared. The fact that Ibsen came to Budapest and saw “Nora” meant also that Hungary was a part of the European cultural world, and that this was mainly linked to the presence of the playwright. The poem “To the Hungarians”, which Ibsen wrote during the War of Independence of 1848–49, was used as a reference, a precursor to this connection (“Ibsen at Budapest” 1891, 277).

### **Becoming lovable. The early Ibsen in Hungary**

Henrik Ibsen and his dramas were often mentioned in the Hungarian press in context and in company with Émile Zola, Ivan Turgenev or Gerhart Hauptmann. Ibsen's reception and canonization should not be interpreted as peculiar or unique, but must be seen in this context. Zola's Hungarian reception included almost the same oppositions, ambivalence, and cultural problems that arose in connection with Ibsen (Schreiber 1934, 13–30). Russian literature was also introduced to the Hungarian readers with the help of German and French languages, and only under the influence of Turgenev did the formation of a more realistic image of Russia begin (D. Zöldhelyi 1983, 53). Hauptmann was also only meaningfully dealt with by Hungarian critics in the next century (Rózsa 1938, 11–15) because of the bad plays (like Ibsen after the premiere in Arad).

However, Ibsen's visit to Budapest played a significant role in popularizing the author in Hungary. He had been introduced only two years ago in the



cultural sphere and he was celebrated by the capital's nobility like a good old friend – and this moment was decisive in the author's reception. Hungarian critics spoke moderately about Ibsen from the mid-1890s: they acknowledged that his dramas could be shown in theatres, and if they were condemned for some reason, they did so either because of the acting of the actors or on the basis of preliminary clichés (due to thematization of social issues, etc.). It is this reference to familiarity that defined the early phase of Hungarian Ibsen reception and distinguished the way Ibsen and his plays were interpreted in comparison with his contemporaries: literary nationalism tamed the writer, making him specifically glocal.

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## LA VÉRITÉ NÉGOCIÉE DANS L'OEUVRE D'IBSEN

ANCA SOCACI<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Negotiating truth in the works of Ibsen.* Truth can be regarded as a complex, often multi-faceted notion in the literary universe of Henrik Ibsen. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the discursive (as well as fictional) nature of truth in *Wild duck* and *Ghosts*, presenting it as a consequence of social negotiation. I hypothesize that the perishing bodies of Hedvig and Oswald respectively illustrate not only a typical 19<sup>th</sup> Century fascination for heredity, but also symptoms of hidden truths, widely considered as vicious in the mostly rural, traditional Norway that Ibsen frequently depicts. Being the reincarnations of their respective fathers and therefore bringing forward their vitalist heritage, the two children are the objects of a double anamnesis (made by both the reader and the other characters) – medical and social. The two are connected by the hereditary and degenerative nature of their illness, which implies that finding the cause will undoubtedly reveal a vice that has been transmitted in family. In effect, Hedvig's blindness connects her to her real father, while Oswald's syphilis is a sign of his father's debauchery. Even though these facts – eventually released into the community – could provoke a greater debate about moral values and their limits or question authority, they are instead integrated into various discourses and fictions that negate or dissimulate the realities they present, therefore preserving the *statu-quo*.

**Keywords:** *Ibsen, truth, heredity, symptom, anamnesis, medical, social, diagnosis, negotiation.*

**REZUMAT.** *Adevărul negociat în opera lui Ibsen.* În universul literar al lui Henrik Ibsen, adevărul poate fi considerat drept o noțiune complexă, pluri-fațetată. În această lucrare, voi demonstra că, în piesele *Rața sălbatică* și *Strigoii*, adevărul ibsenian are o natură discursivă (dar și ficțională), fiind consecința unei negocieri în comunitate. Pornesc de la prezumția că trupurile malade ale lui Hedvig și Oswald ilustrează nu numai o fascinație tipică a secolului al XIX-lea pentru ereditate, ci și simptome ale unor adevăruri ascunse, considerate drept vicioase în Norvegia (în mare parte) rurală și tradițională pe care Ibsen o ilustrează frecvent. Fiind reîncarnările părinților lor și, prin urmare, reprezentând moștenirea

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lor vitalistă, cei doi copii sunt obiectele unei duble anamneze (realizate atât de cititor, cât și de celelalte personaje) - medicale și sociale. Aceste două laturi sunt conectate prin natura ereditară și degenerativă a bolilor, ceea ce implică faptul că găsierea cauzei va dezvălui, fără îndoială, un viciu transmis în familie. În fapt, orbirea lui Hedvig o leagă de tatăl ei adevărat, în timp ce sifilisul lui Osvald este un semn al libertinajului tatălui său. Chiar dacă aceste realități - diseminate în cele din urmă în comunitate - ar putea provoca o dezbatere de largă amploare cu privire la valorile morale și la limitele lor sau chestiona autoritatea, ele sunt integrate în diverse discursuri și ficțiuni care neagă sau disimulează realitățile pe care le prezintă, păstrând așadar statu-quo-ul.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Ibsen, adevăr, ereditate, simptom, anamneză, medical, social, diagnostic, negociere*

*Le canard sauvage* et *Les revenants* présentent l'image d'un milieu rural, où l'influence du protestantisme est fortement ressentie et les coutumes des vieilles générations prévalent encore, à l'opposition des centres urbains dynamiques qui semblent s'imposer peu à peu dans l'Europe occidentale. Le thème du village norvégien éloigné de ces développements soci(et)aux hante Ibsen qui dresse dans ce cadre des croquis des personnages plus ou moins typiques, ainsi que des conflits moraux naissant au carrefour des dogmes et des personnalités fortes.

Dans les deux pièces que l'on va traiter, le dramaturge montre que la tradition qui semble régner sur ces endroits est mise en question par des personnages d'un vitalisme exceptionnel, comme le vieux Werle ou le capitaine Alving. En effet, il est possible de dire que ce n'est pas la loi des autorités traditionnelles (comme l'église, par exemple) qui gouverne, mais celle de ceux qui peuvent l'imposer et qui sont d'ailleurs les plus respectés de la communauté. De ce point de vue, le but des pièces est de faire entendre ce renversement de l'autorité et faire valoir la loi – moralement douteuse – qui détermine réellement la société.

Toutefois, il ne s'agit pas d'accepter la déchéance face au comportement vertueux des prêtres ou des docteurs car ces derniers vivent eux-aussi dans la loi qu'incarnent les plus puissants. Le docteur Relling accepte cette position et il est conscient du compromis qu'il faut faire pour vivre, tandis que le pasteur Manders fait semblant de ne pas accepter la débauche. D'ailleurs, on peut voir dans le soutien qu'il apporte à Engstrand (pour transformer l'orphelinat dans un lieu de refuge pour les marins) sinon l'approbation, au moins un aveuglement (hypocrite) face au comportement qu'il reproche à Madame Alving.

Par conséquent, la communauté et ses autorités sont réclamées pour rendre compte de la construction de la vérité et de la loi qui les gouverne, en indiquant qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une réalité immuable : au contraire, elles sont toujours mises en question. Alors que les actants sont différents, puisque la décision sur la vérité est prise soit en couple (Hjalmar - Gina), soit en société (le drame de Madame Alving étant peu importante), le mécanisme est similaire : les membres de la communauté doivent agir ensemble pour prendre une décision par rapport à ce qui a été dévoilé.

La pénétration de la vérité dans le corps social se fait par le corps malade, dont le fonctionnement se rapproche de celui de la rumeur, puisqu'il incarne le problème mis en analyse et installe ainsi le doute dans la communauté. On peut donc isoler deux processus. Du côté du *revenant* qui oblige à la prise d'une décision, on observe le frémissement du corps et la manifestation progressive d'une maladie qui menace, tout comme la rumeur, l'état des faits et les fictions que les communautés ont construit autour de la paternité de Hedvig et de la condition du capitaine Alving. Puis, la vérité est retouchée : un nouveau régime de vérité est mis en place par la construction d'une nouvelle fiction qui empêche un vrai débat sur une valeur considérée avant comme moralement douteuse dans une communauté protestante.

Dans les deux cas, la vérité dévoilée implique la mise en place d'un nouveau mensonge vitale (*livsløgn*), en démontrant que chez Ibsen la vérité n'a d'effet que hors scène – en ce que les concerne, les communautés reconstruisent une fiction qui est parfois identique à celle du départ (Hjalmar et Gina repartagent le corps et la parenté de Hedvig), ou bien différente (la débauche du capitaine Alving est acceptée et 'transformée' en vertu). On peut donc se demander quelle est la fonction du corps et de sa maladie dans la société ibsenienne et comment on négocie la vérité cachée après l'effacement du corps qui la met en lumière.

D'abord, on va se pencher sur le lien le plus évident entre le père et l'enfant, à savoir la cécité de Hedvig et la pipe d'Osvald. Alors que l'hérédité et la syphilis respectivement sont des éléments qui apparaissent plus tard dans les pièces, au moment de la confrontation de la vérité pour certains personnages, les deux traits mentionnés illustrent dès le début la filiation, de sorte qu'elles permettent une identification immédiate. Progressivement, d'autres symptômes se font entendre, si bien que celui qui les analyse est en position de faire à la fois une anamnèse médicale et une autre, sociale, puisque les questions que posent les corps malades touchent la société entière. On va alors s'interroger sur le lien entre biologique et social dans l'œuvre d'Ibsen, afin de démontrer qu'*interpréter* une maladie implique la gestion de la doxa autour de laquelle elle se construit. Enfin, on va montrer le processus de négociation de la vérité à

travers deux scènes-clés, à savoir celle de la lettre reçue de la part du vieux Werle et celle de la décision de construire une maison pour les marins.

### I. Le corps spéculaire

Chaque enfant représente l'image spéculaire de son père biologique, concentrée dans un élément-clé, un symbole qu'Ibsen propose pour illustrer la filiation, qu'elle soit connue ou pas. Pour Hedvig, il s'agit de la cécité qui renvoie à la maladie du vieux Werle, tandis qu'Osvald incarne le seul souvenir clair qu'il a de son père et dont le symbole est la pipe. Pendant la pièce, les conflits entre sa mère et lui vont tourner autour de cette représentation symbolique, de la même manière que la maladie de Hedvig est ce qui attire l'attention de tous les personnages. Ainsi, dans chaque cas, l'enfant se révèle comme un *revenant*, imitant, parfois malgré lui, les caractéristiques du père.

En ce qui concerne Hedvig, la perte progressive de sa vue est la première caractéristique qui nous est présentée : les didascalies la surprennent « les mains devant les yeux et les pouces dans les oreilles (...), absorbée dans une lecture »<sup>2</sup>. La réaction de Gina accentue ce trait car elle exige de Hedvig de ne pas lire autant, afin de se protéger. L'intérêt pour la maladie de la fille est présent également chez Hjalmar : il la décrit à Gregers en mentionnant la cécité à venir. Ainsi, Hedvig est à la fois « notre plus grande joie dans ce monde »<sup>3</sup> et « notre plus grand souci »<sup>4</sup>, avoue-t-il au jeune Werle. Pourtant, il ne se sent pas responsable du comportement de la fille – lorsque celle-ci prend le pinceau pour aider à la retouche, Hjalmar lui dit : « Mais il ne faut pas t'abimer les yeux, tu entends : ce n'est pas moi qui suis responsable, c'est toi... toi toute seule... je te préviens »<sup>5</sup>. D'ailleurs, on peut dire que la différence entre l'attitude de Gina et celle de Hjalmar joue aussi sur la responsabilité de chacun. La mère est activement impliquée dans la protection de sa fille<sup>6</sup>, alors que le père aime bien le portrait qu'il dresse de lui-même en prenant soin de son enfant, mais il est incapable de prendre la responsabilité pour quoi que ce soit. Par conséquent, la façon dont ces deux personnages se rapportent à la maladie de leur fille nous indique leur caractère.

Comme la fille, Osvald est présenté dès le début en copie conforme de son père. Son entrée en scène le montre « fumant une grande pipe en écume de

<sup>2</sup> Henrik Ibsen, *Drames contemporains*, Paris, Le Livre de poche, 2005, p. 511.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 522.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 538.

<sup>6</sup> Peut-être pour que sa maladie ne l'expose pas à la rumeur – dans ce moment de la pièce on sait, grâce à Madame Sorby, que le vieux Werle a également des problèmes et que la cécité de Hedvig est héritée.

mer »<sup>7</sup>, une image qui reprend le souvenir le plus puissant que le jeune homme a du capitaine Alving. Plus ou moins consciemment, il refait le geste de sa mémoire, de sorte que la question joviale de Madame Alving, qui se demandait si le pasteur allait le reconnaître, semble bizarre rétrospectivement. Cependant, elle illustre la fabrique de la vérité à laquelle la femme s'adonne depuis le vivant de son mari. L'image qu'elle construit de son fils avant son entrée renvoie à la filiation, mais le lie plutôt à elle-même qu'à son père<sup>8</sup>, en essayant d'effacer par son propos toute tâche de dépravation héréditaire. Cette stratégie qui va jusqu'à nier les similarités entre père et fils indique la crainte de l'hérédité telle que la décrit Alain Corbin dans son article *L'hérédosyphilis ou l'impossible rédemption. Contribution à l'histoire de l'hérédité morbide*<sup>9</sup>.

Alors, il est pertinent de dire que, dans les deux pièces, il y a un conflit entre l'affirmation du lien parental et sa négation. En ce qui concerne les actions de Hjalmar, on peut observer que sa position change progressivement. S'il avoue sans hésitation à Gregers que sa fille est atteinte par une maladie héréditaire, après la conversation intime avec ce dernier qui lui dévoile les rumeurs de la relation entre son père et Gina, il modifie son discours et joue le rôle d'un père attentif, en signalant le rôle des facteurs extérieurs pour la dégradation de la santé d'Hedvig. Prenons l'exemple de la première confrontation avec sa femme, qui suit à la discussion entre les deux hommes : Hjalmar ne la commence pas avant de faire sortir la fille, en lui disant que « si, il faut sortir. Il me semble que tes paupières se ferment. Cela ne te fait pas de bien, tout cet air malsain »<sup>10</sup>.

Dans ce contexte, la référence aux yeux paraît combler la représentation d'une maladie qui remplit l'espace. Ainsi, le personnage nous donne l'impression que, mise à part l'hérédité, il y a également des facteurs extérieurs qui conditionnent l'apparition de toute forme de décadence (physique et spirituelle). Dans ce léger changement d'avis, on peut reconnaître à la fois la réécriture de la fiction parentale d'Hjalmer (qui joue, cette fois-ci, le père responsable) et un détournement de la violence avec laquelle la reconnaissance d'un héritage va frapper, si l'on estime que Hjalmar comprend la possibilité d'un lien plus proche entre sa fille et le vieux Werle. D'ailleurs, pendant la fête, ce dernier se plaint de sa vue de moins en moins saine, ce qui laisse entendre la possibilité que Hjalmar, accumulant

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, p. 300.

<sup>8</sup> « Son cœur est tout à sa mère, on peut le dire » - *Idem*, p. 293.

<sup>9</sup> Alain Corbin, « L'hérédosyphilis ou l'impossible rédemption. Contribution à l'histoire de l'hérédité morbide », dans *Romantisme*, 1981, no. 31, pp. 131-150, [https://www.persee.fr/doc/roman\\_0048-8593\\_1981\\_num\\_11\\_31\\_4477](https://www.persee.fr/doc/roman_0048-8593_1981_num_11_31_4477) (consulté le 07 mars 2020). D'après Corbin, « la syphilis symbolise l'angoisse d'une bourgeoisie qui se dent menacée par la démoralisation sexuelle » (*Idem*, p. 132).

<sup>10</sup> Ibsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 561-562.



des indices au fur et à mesure, se rend éventuellement compte de la vérité. Ainsi, il est possible d'affirmer qu'il commence à se poser la question de l'héritage avant même qu'elle ne soit mise en lumière par la lettre de donation et il essaie de *détourner* la vérité autant que possible.

Quant à Osvald, le geste de fumer est la manière de le faire sont les indices physiques le plus importants qui lient son corps à celui de son père. Alors que Madame Alving pousse encore plus loin la négation, en se révoltant contre les affirmations du pasteur (« Ah ! comment pouvez-vous dire... ? Osvald ne ressemble qu'à moi »<sup>11</sup>), celui-ci voit dans le geste un rappel irréfutable : « Oui, mais il y a là un trait, aux coins de la bouche, quelque chose aux lèvres, qui me rappelle tant Alving... et en tout cas maintenant, quand il fume »<sup>12</sup>. Le débat entre les deux continue et provoque la réaction d'Osvald qui fait la connexion entre son geste et le souvenir le plus clair de son enfance (paradoxalement, dit Madame Alving), celui d'avoir essayé la pipe de son père, sous l'emprise de ce dernier. Cet épisode représente également la première manifestation 'clinique' de la *joie de vivre* (*livsglede*), qualité si importante chez les personnages ibseniens : « Il [le capitaine Alving – je note] me prit sur ses genoux et me mit sa pipe à la bouche. Fume, garçon, dit-il ; allons, une bonne bouffée. Et j'ai fumé tant que j'ai pu, jusqu'à me sentir pâlir et que la sueur ruisselle sur mon front. Alors il s'est mis à rire de si bon cœur »<sup>13</sup>.

Pour Madame Alving, accepter que son fils soit biologiquement (et spirituellement, car les deux vont ensemble dans la perspective héréditaire d'Ibsen) lié à son père est le conflit central de la pièce. Autrement dit, l'intrigue l'oblige à regarder *les revenants* en face, à ne pas les traiter comme des apparitions transitoires sans effet, puisqu'il y a bien des conséquences à ces liens qui déterminent l'avenir des personnages. C'est pourquoi au moment où elle accepte qu'Osvald fume dans le salon, il est pertinent de dire qu'elle décide d'affronter le passé. D'ailleurs, les conversations entre les deux ont place autour de la pipe d'Osvald qui est présente dans chaque dialogue, en tant que rappel du père.

D'un point de vue symbolique, l'approbation du geste de son fils signale que Madame Alving commence à interroger (et simultanément à accepter) le lien entre le passé et le présent. Le corps d'Osvald se donne à elle à travers leurs conversations où il avoue ne pas pouvoir travailler dans les conditions de chez lui (car il y manque du soleil), avoir des maux à la tête et des nausées et, finalement, être atteint par une maladie débilitante et incurable. Pourtant, ce n'est pas le témoignage d'Osvald que la femme confronte, mais les conséquences de la déchéance de son père. Ainsi, lorsque le fils se confie à elle en lui disant

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<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, p. 301.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*, p. 302. Ce récit appartient à Osvald.

qu'il a sans doute attrapé la syphilis en fréquentant les prostituées et les libertins de son milieu artistique – explication tout à fait raisonnable à cette époque-là<sup>14</sup> –, sa réponse éclaircit la situation. Pour elle, il n'y a pas de doute que la maladie soit génétique car tout en Osvald imite le corps de son père. Se confronter à lui, c'est se confronter à la débauche de son mari à qui elle a toujours trouvé des circonstances atténuantes, en dressant ainsi une faille entre l'apparence (dans la société) et l'essence (intime).

Par conséquent, il convient de dire que les corps de Hedvig et d'Osvald obligent à la fois à une anamnèse d'ordre médical et à une autre, d'ordre social. Il n'est pas nécessaire que les deux se produisent simultanément, même s'il semble que ce soit le cas en ce qui concerne Osvald. Puisque la vie secrète du capitaine Alving est déjà connue au moment où le fils commence à parler de sa maladie, il est plus naturel que les deux viennent ensemble : chaque découverte du corps (à travers des symptômes de plus en plus précis) entraîne le soupçon de Madame Alving qui finit par affirmer l'hérédité de la syphilis, mais aussi de l'hédonisme vitaliste, dont les conséquences atteignent plusieurs générations. En revanche, l'entourage de Hedvig insiste sur une anamnèse médicale dès le début de la pièce, en ajoutant des points de vue multiples concernant l'état du corps, alors que la conséquence sociale entre en scène lorsque la paternité réelle est dévoilée. A la suite des deux situations, les communautés peuvent se poser des questions sur la déchéance et sur la parenté en général – quel est l'effet produit dans le corps social par la débauche ou par la fausse paternité ?

## II. La maladie chez Ibsen – entre biologique et sociétal

Dans l'œuvre d'Ibsen, la maladie est *interprétable* car elle est souvent le signe d'un secret honteux dont les effets sur la réputation dans la communauté sont à craindre. La maladie n'est jamais une simple affaire du corps, un déséquilibre du milieu intérieur, et le regard que l'on porte sur ce corps ne peut pas l'isoler en tant qu'objet médical. En effet, le malade représente un problème sociétal qui est rendu visible par sa présence et dont la solution se trouve en dehors du corps, dans la communauté. Tout cela nous indique le fait que le personnage dont l'état de santé se dégrade progressivement est l'image même d'une crise qui oppose la réalité aux idées reçues et à la tradition. Naturellement, son apothéose entraîne la prise d'une décision qui est purement sociale – autrement dit, le malade est le point du départ d'une négociation autour des valeurs d'une communauté.

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<sup>14</sup> voir Corbin, *art. cit.*, *passim*.

Dans le cas de la paternité de Hedvig, il y a une séparation entre la preuve biologique et les données sociales qui détermine le conflit central de la pièce. En ce qui concerne l'héritage physique, le lien entre Hedvig et le vieux Werle est incontestable. Toutefois, étant donné que l'œuvre littéraire présente plusieurs types de cécité et d'aveuglement, il est nécessaire de bien discerner entre les catégories et les filiations. En effet, Hedvig n'hérite pas de la pulsion correctrice de sa mère qui retouche les images et les rend un peu différentes, mais toujours reconnaissables. Elle est également très loin de la complaisance naïve de son père car sa nature est plutôt active, alors que Hjalmar est un personnage qui fuit l'action. Si l'on tient compte de ses passions et ses rêves, Hedvig aurait plutôt aimé faire de la gravure pour illustrer des livres, c'est-à-dire bâtir le monde à nouveau, de jouer librement sur la vraisemblance. Cela la rapproche de son père biologique, avec qui elle partage, par conséquent, des traits non seulement physiques, mais aussi symboliques : tous les deux sont des personnages très forts qui peuvent reconstituer le monde qui les entoure. Tandis que Hedvig n'a pas le temps pour en faire preuve, le vieux Werle est directement impliqué dans la construction des histoires : c'est précisément lui qui 'crée' l'amour de Gina pour Hjalmar (tandis que les deux jouent les rôles attribués), la culpabilité du père Ekdal, mais aussi la folie de la mère de Gregers. Ses fictions se répandent dans le monde et l'organisent, de sorte que tous acceptent le mensonge vital qui leur est donnée. Gregers, qui assume le rôle du *treizième à la table* et qui a longtemps vécu hors de son influence, est le seul à forcer le regard au-delà des fictions construites par son père.

Cependant, même si la parenté biologique de la fille est assez facilement déductible à travers une lecture symbolique de la pièce, sa parenté sociale est plus compliquée, comme le suggère Ibsen dès le début. Sur la liste de personnages, Hedvig apparaît sur la cinquième position, après les deux Werle et les trois Ekdal (père, fils et belle-fille). L'enfant est positionné juste après ses parents prétendus au début de la pièce et, quoique son nom soit suivi par la mention *leur fille*, il est pertinent d'affirmer que chaque personnage la construit en *fille*, en s'exprimant autour de sa position. Le vieux Werle établit leur filiation en envoyant la lettre de donation, Gregers est celui qui soupçonne la parenté secrète de Hedvig, le vieil Ekdal est le complice de Gina, qui corrobore ses histoires pour cacher la vérité de Hjalmar, Gina est la mère qui attribue faussement la paternité afin de mettre à l'abri sa réputation, alors que Hjalmar est le mari crédule, qui doit finalement se confronter à la réalité<sup>15</sup>. Ainsi, il s'avère que la question de la paternité est une fiction que non seulement le père doit construire

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<sup>15</sup> Comme l'on a déjà montré, il est possible que Hjalmar soit au courant avant même que la situation ne soit dévoilée devant tout le monde. Ainsi, la reconnaissance publique de la paternité du vieux Werle ne fait qu'obliger Hjalmar à trouver un rôle qui convient à la situation.

(comme l'affirme, par exemple, Nancy Huston<sup>16</sup>), mais à laquelle peuvent participer plusieurs membres de la communauté. Chaque personnage mentionné a une version propre de la paternité de Hedvig, qui correspond à une fiction particulière. Par conséquent, le dévoilement du secret les oblige à jouer un rôle et à prendre une décision par rapport à la nouvelle.

La parenté de Hedvig est donc plus compliquée qu'on ne l'estime au début. Malgré les liens biologiques et symboliques entre elle et le vieux Werle, la position de la fille dans la société détermine chaque personne à la définir. En revanche, en ce qui concerne Osvald, il n'y a aucun doute sur la paternité : non seulement il connaît son père, mais il l'imité aussi. Sa maladie est pourtant le signe du *libertinage* de capitaine Alving qui hante son corps, lui aussi marqué par le goût des plaisirs charnels. La question se pose toujours autour de l'hérédité, mais la situation est encore plus délicate. Comme le montre Alain Corbin, à la fin du XIXe siècle, les écrivains sont fascinés par la déchéance à laquelle mène la maladie héréditaire<sup>17</sup>. En outre, la perspective d'une syphilis tardive est d'autant plus intéressante qu'elle menace de loin et pèse sur les personnages.

A cette époque-là, on connaissait bien sûr que la syphilis n'est pas toujours une affaire génétique. D'ailleurs, Osvald lui-même semble convaincu d'avoir attrapé le virus en fréquentant les milieux libertins parisiens, comme il l'avoue à sa mère. Le pasteur Manders réfère également à la condition d'artiste qu'a vécu Osvald : « N'avais-je pas raison d'être profondément inquiet au sujet de votre fils ? »<sup>18</sup> demande-t-il à Madame Alving, puisque ce dernier se trouvait « dans des cercles où l'immoralité s'étale effrontément, où elle acquiert, pour ainsi dire, droit de cité »<sup>19</sup>. Par conséquent, on peut estimer que, au cas où les nouvelles de la maladie d'Osvald se répandraient dans la communauté, celle-ci va blâmer premièrement le milieu (étranger, libertin).

Toutefois, la rumeur de la débauche de capitaine Alving a déjà pénétrée le corps social, grâce au témoignage de Madame Alving qui se libère du poids de ses choix devant le pasteur. Ainsi, au moment où elle affirme l'existence du libertinage de son mari, les conséquences se mettent en lumière l'une après l'autre. En effet, la structuration de la pièce, ainsi que la technique rétrospective qu'Ibsen emploie dans toute son œuvre 'déterminent', d'une certaine manière, l'hérédité de la maladie. Autrement dit, la syphilis ne peut pas être attrapée : le spectateur (mais aussi les acteurs) la juge comme (forcément) héréditaire,

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<sup>16</sup> Nancy Huston, *The Tale-Tellers : A Short Study of Humankind*, MacArthur and Co. Publishing, 2008, *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> Et pour ce qu'il appelle l'« hérédité morbide » - voir Corbin, *art. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>18</sup> Ibsen, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

puisqu'elle fait preuve de la déchéance d'une lignée qui se déroule devant ses yeux. En outre, le corps d'Osvold est en toute apparence une répétition de celui du capitaine Alving, comme le note le Pasteur Manders : « Quand j'ai aperçu sur le seuil Osvold la pipe à la bouche, j'ai cru voir son père en chair et en os »<sup>20</sup>. Ainsi, le châtement du fils punit indirectement le capitaine qui a échappé, de son vivant, à toute forme de compensation pour ses actions.

Étant construite dans la tradition des tragédies antiques, *Les Revenants* pourrait éventuellement être lue sans rendre compte d'une représentation sociale. La déchéance, l'hérédité malade, l'incendie qui ressemble à une foudre divine et dont le but est de révéler l'essence de la mémoire du capitaine Alving, tout semble coupé de la société. Pourtant, la fin de la pièce dévoile une vérité essentielle pour la communauté et ses valeurs : le pasteur Manders condamne le libertinage (de Madame Alving), Engstrand semble jouer le rôle du pieux, alors que tous deux usent de ces représentations de la vertu afin de couvrir leurs propres vices, comme l'a fait le capitaine Alving. Le père de Regine demande le support du prêtre pour s'assurer une bonne vie, en manipulant sa fille dans un même temps et lui promettant le succès qui n'est, en réalité, que celui apporté par la prostitution. Similairement, le pasteur essaie de sauver sa réputation qui lui coûte plus que les valeurs qu'il garde : bien qu'il pense faire preuve de dignité en refusant les avances d'une femme mariée, il est à la fois prêt à soutenir la maison de marins et la désigner comme une institution chrétienne pour soigner les âmes, alors qu'il est bien conscient de sa fonction.

Il convient alors de dire que la maladie et la mort d'Osvold, quoiqu'elles soient terribles pour Madame Alving, entraînent non pas la condamnation du libertinage du capitaine Alving, mais son acceptation, tout en le couvrant d'un discours sur les vertus. C'est pourquoi il est juste d'affirmer que la vérité est négociée à partir de l'image du père et à travers celle de l'enfant.

La représentation du père est à la fois l'élément qui relie le côté biologique et celui social et qui pose une question dont la réponse se produit en négociant la vérité au sein d'une communauté. Dans les deux cas, on a affaire à un père patriarcal, comme le montre Jørgen Lorentzen<sup>21</sup>, quoi qu'il ait échoué ou soit mort à cause de ses passions. D'une part, le vieux Werle organise la communauté où il se trouve, en arrangeant des mariages et des punitions qui lui conviennent et en soutenant financièrement la famille Ekdal, tandis que l'esprit du capitaine Alving se répand dans toute la société. Tous deux sont des personnages menés par une force vitale, si bien qu'ils paraissent les seuls à concentrer la vie sociale autour de leurs personnalités puissantes. C'est la

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<sup>20</sup> *Idem*, p. 301.

<sup>21</sup> voir Jørgen Lorentzen, « Ibsen and Fatherhood », dans *New Literary History*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2006, pp. 817-836.

représentation de ce que l'exégèse ibsénienne appelle *livsglede*, la joie de vivre. Par conséquent, la différence entre le vieux Werle et le capitaine Alving n'est qu'une de degré et de chance – alors que la maladie du premier lui permet une vie longue, le deuxième meurt plus subitement, peut-être suite à la syphilis.

Puisqu'ils sont des figures aveuglantes, d'une certaine manière, ils introduisent au sein de la communauté des problèmes que celle-ci ne peut pas gérer selon les coutumes et les dogmes protestantes, étant soumise au charme ou à l'autorité du personnage. Toutefois, ils laissent des héritiers qui incarnent la même philosophie, mais qui n'arrivent pas à s'imposer dans la société car ils sont soit trop jeunes (c'est le cas de Hedvig), soit longtemps absents, ce qui nuit à leur influence (le cas d'Osvald). Pourtant, leur corps, miroirs de ceux de leurs pères, posent des questions autour de la paternité et du libertinage, face auxquelles le corps social doit éventuellement prendre position. Autrement dit, Hedvig et Osvald sont les représentations en embryon des questions que l'attitude de leurs pères a produit au sein d'une communauté.

Par conséquent, mise à part la manifestation physique de la maladie, qui n'est tragique que pour quelques personnages, ce qui est réellement mis en scène est le dialogue sur les valeurs sociétales. Dans un groupe déterminé par le rapprochement à la morale (protestante), les actions excentriques sont intégrées et décrites d'une telle façon qu'elles puissent se mouler sur le discours vertueux général, en indiquant une forme d'hypocrisie, ainsi que de dissimulation (et de dissémination de fictions compensatives dans la communauté).

### III. La vérité négociée

Dans ces deux pièces, Ibsen propose une méthode à travers laquelle la vérité pénètre dans le corps social. Quoiqu'elle y réside depuis longtemps, des événements comme la mort de Hedvig ou celle d'Osvald obligent la communauté à prendre position. Ainsi, on peut affirmer que le corps malade porte en lui une rumeur qui va faire entendre la vérité pendant que différents témoignages s'y ajoutent.

Si l'on estime que la vérité elle-même est une notion nécessairement sociale, puisqu'elle dépend du partage des informations et de leur assemblage, on peut affirmer, comme le sociologue Jean-Noël Kapferer le fait, qu'« est vrai ce que le groupe croit vrai »<sup>22</sup>. En ce faisant, on met la vérité et la rumeur dans la même catégorie, pourvu qu'elles déterminent la même réaction dans la communauté. La véracité en soi devient alors moins importante – ce qui compte est l'histoire qui s'entre-tisse autour des informations, vraies ou fausses, modifiées ou non au sein du récit.

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<sup>22</sup> Jean-Noël Kapferer, *Rumeurs. Le plus vieux média du monde*, Paris, Seuil, 2009 (1987), p.22.

En effet, outre ces deux niveaux que constituent la vérité initiale (l'état des faits au début des pièces) et celle avérée (et introduite par le corps malade – à savoir la vraie paternité et le vrai caractère du capitaine Alving), on peut distinguer un troisième, qui correspond au récit final. En fait, bien que la rumeur introduise la vérité dans l'œuvre d'Ibsen, cette dernière n'est pas reconnue en tant que telle. Elle participe pourtant à la construction d'un récit (personnel, mais aussi social) qui tient compte de nouvelles, mais les détourne, les défigure.

A la fin des deux pièces proposées pour analyse, la 'rumeur' que portent les corps des enfants et qui est censée mettre en question l'état de fait devient visible : on sait que Hedvig était la fille du vieux Werle et que le capitaine Alving n'a pas mené une vie vertueuse, mais ces deux informations sont resémantisées dans le texte par les personnages. Ainsi, Hjalmar reprend formellement la paternité de Hedvig, en la partageant à moitié avec son épouse, et le docteur Relling note qu'il va continuer à broder sur la fiction de la mort malheureuse d'une fille bien-aimée même si la vérité (maintenant connue) contredit son propos. Similairement, dans les *Revenants*, la transformation de l'orphelinat en 'foyer' formellement patronnée par le capitaine Alving représente à la fois la prise en charge de la vérité et sa réinterprétation. La communauté et ses membres, parmi lesquels Engstrand et le pasteur Manders, concèdent tacitement au libertinage du capitaine, mais ne prononcent pas ces mots : Engstrand se contente de présenter le projet comme s'il s'agissait d'un lieu où les pauvres marins peuvent se reposer.

Ainsi, l'on peut affirmer que la vérité qui se fait entendre est tout de suite négociée dans la communauté, de sorte que la fin n'apporte pas de changements radicaux, d'un point de vue narratif : Hjalmar assume la paternité et le pasteur Manders ferme les yeux face au vice qu'il dénonce devant Madame Alving et participe même à sa glorification. Cependant, le spectateur vient d'être témoin de la construction de ce récit final qui suppose la dissimulation des faits et même des preuves biologiques. Après la mort des enfants, il n'y a plus de façon de démontrer ces histoires corroborées qui tiennent désormais debout, mais la rumeur persiste dans le corps social, en indiquant l'hypocrisie du milieu.

Il convient également de souligner que les deux scènes qui montrent cette négociation sont collectives, quoi que l'on parle de la lettre de donation qui est offert à Hedvig devant tout le monde (sauf le vieux Werle) ou de la promesse du pasteur Manders. Par conséquent, les deux ont un caractère théâtral qui va à l'envers de ce que la mort des enfants prouve : les problèmes sous-jacents (l'adultère, le libertinage, les rapports de pouvoir, le mariage) ne sont pas remis en question. Pourtant, on leur garde une place dans la cité, en les recouvrant de discours vertueux.

Celui qui joue le plus sur cet aspect est Hjalmar car au moment de la confrontation il *semble* être le seul à ne pas avoir compris le lien biologique

entre les deux cas de cécité. Ainsi, il nous faut tenir compte de l'implication que la paternité a sur la *fiction* de Hjalmar. En se considérant jusqu'à ce moment-là le père légitime de Hedvig, il entraînait une image plutôt positive de soi en tant que père – c'est pourquoi il se décrit de cette façon à Gregers. Par conséquent, il est pertinent de dire qu'il réagit comme il aurait été approprié pour un père proche de sa fille – au lieu d'assumer la vérité de sa relation avec Hedvig et d'analyser la situation à partir de là, il joue la posture que lui attribue la fiction dont il fait partie. Néanmoins, à la fin il revient sur cette comédie et reprend formellement la paternité, comme s'il n'y avait jamais de rupture (c'est ce que pense, par ailleurs, Relling).

Similairement, ce que le pasteur Manders ne peut pas concéder à Madame Alving ou à son fils, il le promet à travers le foyer qui remplace l'orphelinat. Il faut sûrement entendre le mot 'foyer' en un sens ironique : la description qu'Engstrand en fait au début à Regine nous montre qu'il pense à un lieu de débauche, où sa fille pourrait jouer le rôle de la maîtresse. Pourtant, le paysan dissimule, comme il le fait d'ailleurs tout au long de la pièce, et se présente en homme honnête. En fait, il opère un chantage auprès du pasteur Manders, en proposant de prendre sur lui l'incendie (dont il est quand même le suspect principal) pour que le prêtre ne soit pas puni. En revanche, il exige le support de ce dernier pour bâtir la maison des marins qui va s'appeler l'« Asile du chambellan Alving » et qui, assure Engstrand, va être digne de ce nom, en honorant la mémoire de son patron. Ce qui, d'ailleurs, est vrai : elle va promouvoir le libertinage qui était si cher au capitaine. Ainsi, on peut affirmer que cette suite d'actions montre que la communauté a pris conscience du vrai héritage d'Alving et le montre sous la forme du foyer, en changeant la réalité à travers le discours.

Toutefois, ces récits finaux laissent, sinon des preuves contraires, au moins des témoins : le docteur Relling prédit la dissimulation de plus en plus théâtrale de Hjalmar, alors que Madame Alving comprend la duplicité du pasteur. De surcroît, les pièces peuvent être considérées comme étant elles-mêmes des témoignages de ce phénomène, en faisant de cette négociation qui supprime et réécrit la vérité un fait que l'on observe sans les nommer.

Pour conclure, il est pertinent de dire que la vérité est mise en scène dans l'œuvre d'Ibsen, mais elle est dissimulée, de sorte que le récit final, celui auquel on réfère dans la communauté, s'établit à travers le discours et la négociation. Les corps malades portent le poids d'un vice germinal qui va éclater et obliger à la prise en considération de ce que la société protestante considère comme une déchéance. Pourtant, les personnages qui forment le corps social détournent la vérité afin de faire valoir la loi et l'état de fait, tout en y intégrant ces manifestations déviantes, sans les individualiser ou reconnaître en tant que



telles. Ainsi, rien n'est véritablement changé, ce qui rend les morts d'autant plus tragiques qu'elles ne provoquent pas une réaction assez forte pour ouvrir le chemin d'une discussion honnête des vices et des vertus.

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## USO DEL CONGIUNTIVO IN ITALIANO E FRANCESE IN UN CORPUS DI FUMETTI E GRAPHIC NOVEL

SOPHIE SAFFI<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Uses of the subjunctive in Italian and French in a corpus of comics and graphic novels.* We propose the study of the uses of the subjunctive in Italian and French and the alternative solutions in each of the two languages on the basis of a corpus of 18 comics and graphic novels (9 originals and their translation) published from 1997 to 2017. 49,7% of the 227 items obtained correspond to the use of the subjunctive in Italian and alternative solutions in French; 29% to the use of the subjunctive in both languages; 21% to the use of the subjunctive in French and alternative solutions in Italian. We describe the profile of the uses, the syntactic context and the type of semantics involved. Our objective is to determine the systemic coherence of these uses and to produce an inventory of the use of the subjunctive in the French and Italian neo-standards, as close as possible to the current use of the two languages, for the first two decades of the 21st century.

**Keywords:** *subjunctive, French, Italian, comics*

**REZUMAT.** *Întrebuințarea conjunctivului în italiană și franceză într-un corpus de bandă desenată și de roman graphic.* Pe baza unui corpus constituit din 18 benzi desenate și romane grafice (9 originale și traduceri) publicate în perioada 1997 – 2017, vom studia în articolul nostru utilizarea conjunctivului în italiană și în franceză, precum și soluțiile alternative în fiecare dintre cele două limbi. În ansamblul corpusului, 49,7% din 227 intrări corespund utilizării conjunctivului în italiană și soluțiilor alternative în franceză; 29% trimit la utilizarea conjunctivului în ambele limbi; 21% reflectă utilizarea conjunctivului în franceză și soluții alternative în italiană. Descriem profilul de utilizare, contextul sintactic și tipul de semantică implicat. Obiectivul nostru este cel de a determina consistența sistemică a acestor utilizări, dorim totodată să furnizăm un inventar al acestora în nivelul neo-standard al limbii franceze și al celei italiene, apropiindu-ne cât mai mult posibil de utilizarea contemporană a acestora, mai ales în primele decenii ale secolului XXI.

**Cuvinte cheie :** *conjunctiv, franceză, italiană, benzi desenate*

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Ci si propone lo studio degli usi del congiuntivo in italiano e in francese e delle soluzioni alternative in ciascuna delle due lingue sulla base di un corpus di 18 fumetti e *Graphic Novel*<sup>2</sup> (per un totale di 108.977 parole) composto da 9 opere originali, 5 in francese (*Golden city* ; *L'Appel* ; *Quatuor* ; *Peplum* ; *Pauvres Zhéros*) e 4 in italiano (*Intervista a Pasolini* ; *Per questo mi chiamo Giovanni* ; *Brancaccio* ; *Peppino Impastato*), e le loro traduzioni in italiano o francese. Questi testi sono stati pubblicati dal 1997 al 2017. È stato selezionato un corpus eterogeneo sia per lo stile di scrittura che per i temi trattati al fine di ottenere un panel più rappresentativo possibile del mezzo fumettistico. L'unico vincolo era l'esistenza di una traduzione nell'altra lingua.

Il corpus comprende gli originali scritti in una lingua che rispetta lo standard, ma alcuni autori si permettono deviazioni dallo standard scritto per rappresentare meglio i dialoghi orali. Tuttavia, queste deviazioni rimangono nel quadro di ciò che è già generalmente accettato, per esempio l'omissione della *ne* di negazione prima del verbo in francese. I fumetti appartengono al genere delle Scritture brevi<sup>3</sup>, ma si differenziano dagli SMS ed e-mail perché sono una creazione artistica. Quindi offrono al linguista un'opera scritta non spontanea, di cui uno degli obiettivi è quello di proporre una ricostruzione del contesto del dialogo interlocutorio naturale e spontaneo: quella del suo autore.

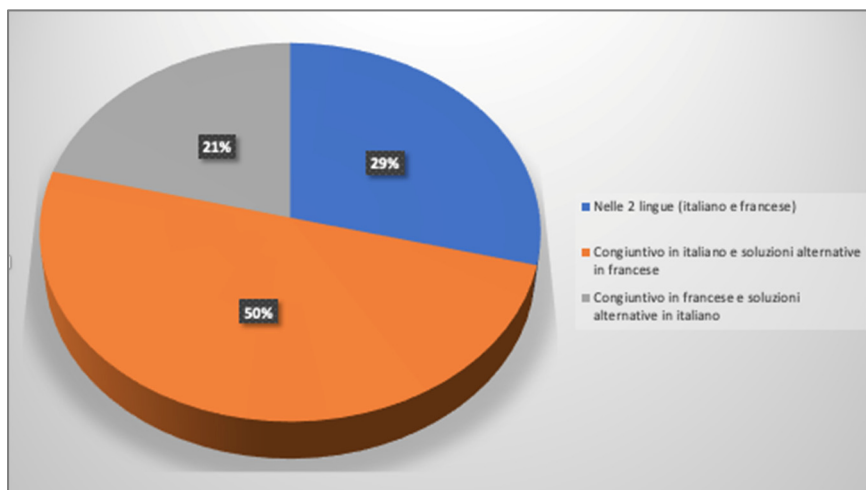
Il nostro corpus combina gli originali e le loro traduzioni, che riflettono anche la lingua standard accettata. L'interesse di un insieme di testi misti è quello di permetterci di proporre ipotesi sull'uso del congiuntivo, che si basano su scritti in lingua standard lasciando spazio alle creazioni del neo-standard dell'orale più condiviso dalla comunità di madrelingua.

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<sup>2</sup> Il genere *Fumetti-Graphic Novel* presenta la caratteristica principale di un'arte del racconto per immagini come il cinema, e quindi di avere un legame tra testo e immagine. Il genere si specializza con una standardizzazione di soggetti e forme e l'apparizione, almeno nel mondo francofono, di una cultura Fumetto negli anni Ottanta, quando la cultura underground diventa dominante. La *Graphic Novel* è una categoria nata dalla porosità tra fumetto e letteratura, e dalle iniziative di autori underground degli anni '60 e '70, le cui produzioni hanno in comune la caratteristica di non cercare un bel disegno, di rivolgersi a un lettore adulto e di affrontare temi difficili. Il *Graphic Novel* italiano rivendica lo statuto di movimento letterario con una strategia di diffusione negli scaffali letterari delle librerie adottando un formato diverso dal fumetto e più vicino a quello del romanzo.

<sup>3</sup> Le Short Writings o Scritture brevi si definiscono dal punto di vista della variazione diatematica, cioè l'aspetto della variazione che dipende dai diversi mezzi tecnici utilizzati come strumenti di comunicazione linguistica. Questi testi brevi appartengono a specifici generi testuali (ad es. fumetti, *tweet*, *chat online*) che presentano una complessità di bi-polarizzazione diatematica tradizionale, così come alcune varietà di testi antichi e moderni (come iscrizioni su epigrafi, tavolette di piombo, monete, ecc.) che possono essere rilevati in testi scritti anche se tradizionalmente attribuiti alla parola o, al contrario, possono essere rilevati nella lingua parlata anche se tradizionalmente attribuiti a testi scritti. Chiusaroli (2012a: 7) nota per gli SMS, e Saffi (2016: 427) per i fumetti, che questi testi sono caratterizzati da una rinnovata modalità espressiva grafica che in qualche modo annulla la distinzione dei tradizionali concetti di variazione diatematica tra scritto e parlato.

Il nostro obiettivo è quello di determinare la coerenza sistemica di questi usi e di farne l'inventario nei neo-standard francese e italiano, il più vicino possibile all'uso attuale delle due lingue, per i primi due decenni del XXI secolo.



**Fig. 1.** Uso del congiuntivo in un corpus di fumetti italiani e francesi

I risultati del corpus sono suddivisi in 3 categorie:

1) Gli usi del congiuntivo in italiano corrispondenti a soluzioni alternative in francese rappresentano la soluzione maggioritaria: il 49,7% dei casi (113 voci su un totale di 227).

2) Gli usi del congiuntivo in italiano e francese rappresentano il 29% delle occorrenze (66 su un totale di 227).

3) Gli usi del condizionale in francese corrispondenti a soluzioni alternative in italiano rappresentano il 21,1% dei casi (48 voci su un totale di 227).

Così, gli usi del congiuntivo sono più numerosi nel corpus italiano che in quello francese, come ci si poteva aspettare sulla base dei risultati delle grammatiche descrittive dell'italiano standard (Dardano: 2009; Tekavčić: 1972). Il francese contemporaneo, invece, non applica strettamente la concordanza dei tempi osservata nel sistema italiano ed ereditata dalla *consecutio temporum* latina (Brunot, 1965: 782; Begioni & Rocchetti, 2013).

La concordanza dei tempi risponde all'esigenza di coerenza nella frase complessa, il che si ottiene facendo combaciare l'aspetto formale, modale e quello temporale dei sintagmi verbali della proposizione reggente e della sua o delle sue subordinate. Così, in latino, il verbo della subordinata riprende i segni

aspettuali, temporali e modali del verbo della reggente. Tuttavia, con il movimento evolutivo di deflessione dal latino alle lingue romanze, questa necessità è sempre meno sentita, e finisce per essere vista come una ridondanza quando il legame sintattico tra le proposizioni si stabilisce per mezzo di congiunzioni di subordinazione (fr. *Je pense que c'est vrai* vs. it. *Penso (che) sia vero*). Il movimento di deflessione verbale dal latino alle lingue romanze contemporanee è passato attraverso tappe intermedie. In italiano e in francese classico, il verbo subordinato riprende solo i segni del tempo e del modo (it. *voglio (che) venga / volevo (che) venisse*; fr. class. *je veux qu'il vienne / je voulais qu'il vînt* [Begioni & Rocchetti, 2013 : 34]), in francese contemporaneo, si constata in certi casi la ripresa dei soli segni modali (fr. *Dans ce cas, il vaudrait peut-être mieux que je prenne les commandes, vous ne croyez pas ?* [Goldy-fr-cond-5-b] vs. it. *In questo caso forse sarebbe meglio che prendessi io i comandi, non crede?* [Goldy-it-cond-5-b]).

Begioni & Rocchetti (2013: 27) ritengono che l'evoluzione che abolisce la necessità di assemblare le due forme verbali della reggente e della subordinata, che tende a riunire informazioni formali e semantiche e a focalizzarle nel verbo della reggente, termina quando non c'è più duplicazione di informazioni. Mettono in relazione "queste evoluzioni ad una ristrutturazione della frase dovuta al passaggio dall'indoeuropeo, lingua agglutinante, con il verbo in posizione finale, alle attuali lingue indoeuropee che integrano diverse proposizioni incorporate le une nelle altre, una o alcune delle quali sono reggenti e le altre subordinate"<sup>4</sup>. Così, essi tracciano un parallelo tra "il processo di creazione dell'articolo a partire dal pronome [che] risulta dall'applicazione della deflessione al sintagma nominale" e "la creazione della subordinazione [che] è l'applicazione dello stesso processo al sintagma verbale"<sup>5</sup>. Tracciano un parallelo tra i segni del genere e del numero nel sintagma nominale e i segni del modo e del tempo nei sintagmi verbali della reggente e della sua subordinata: secondo loro, "lo scopo della subordinazione è infatti la trasformazione di una frase nell'equivalente di un sostantivo in modo che il tutto così "sostanziato" possa essere integrato in un'altra frase"<sup>6</sup> (Begioni & Rocchetti, 2013: 34).

Il nostro corpus ci permette di descrivere l'evoluzione dei sistemi contemporanei italiano e francese in questo processo.

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<sup>4</sup> « [...] ces évolutions avec une restructuration de la phrase due au passage de l'indo-européen, langue agglutinante, avec le verbe en position finale, aux langues indo-européennes actuelles intégrant plusieurs propositions enchâssées les unes dans les autres, dont l'une ou les unes sont régissantes et les autres régies »

<sup>5</sup> « [...] le processus de création de l'article à partir du pronom [qui] résulte de l'application de la déflexivité au syntagme nominal » ; « la création de la subordination [qui] est l'application du même processus au syntagme verbal »

<sup>6</sup> « [...] l'objectif de la subordination est en effet la transformation d'une phrase en l'équivalent d'un substantif pour que l'ensemble ainsi « substantivé » puisse être intégré dans une autre phrase »

## 1. Uso del congiuntivo nelle due lingue

Si è constatato l'uso del congiuntivo in entrambe le lingue principalmente nelle subordinate: complete: 56%, circostanziali: 16,6%, relative: 7,5%. Nel 15% dei casi si tratta di una proposizione *clivée* (cosiddetta falsa relativa)<sup>7</sup>. Sono stati trovati un solo caso di proposizione indipendente (1,5%) e due casi di uso del congiuntivo nella costruzione di locuzioni (3%; fr. *quoi que ce soit, quelle que soit*; it. *qualsiasi, quale che sia* la cui composizione include una relativa: pronome + relativa).

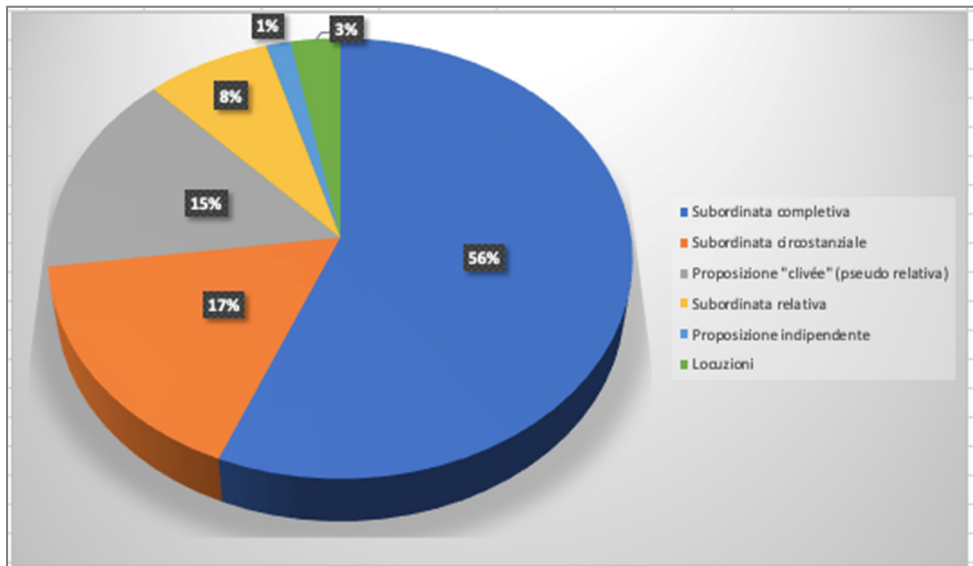


Fig. 2. Contesti d'uso del congiuntivo nelle due lingue

Il contesto maggioritario in cui il congiuntivo è usato in entrambe le lingue è quello di una subordinata congiuntiva completa:

(Appel-cond-2) - Il faudra que j'aïlle commander de la toile aux camionneurs.

(Appello-cond-2) - Bisognerà che ordini della tela ai camionisti

(Giov-fr-cond-24) -C'est ça. Giovanni ne veut pas qu'une autre fille coure ce danger. [...]

(Giov-it-cond-22) - Infatti. Giovanni non vuole che un'altra ragazza corra lo stesso pericolo. [...]

<sup>7</sup> Per i criteri di discriminazione tra relativa e *clivée*: cf. Brault-Scappini, 2007. Per una bibliografia sulle *clivées*: cf. Rouquier, 2018.

Ci si aspettava questo risultato sapendo che:

« [...] i verbi francesi e italiani dipendono semanticamente dalla soggettività di chi parla, sia in forma personale (fr. *vouloir, souhaiter, désirer...* , it. *volere, augurarsi, desiderare...*) o impersonale (fr. *il faut que, il est nécessaire que, il est possible que, il se peut que...* , it. *bisogna/occorre che, è necessario che, è possibile che, può darsi che...*) [...] richiedono nella proposizione subordinata una modalità virtuale, resa sia in francese che in italiano dal congiuntivo. »<sup>8</sup> (Begioni & Rocchetti, 2013: 34-35)

Poi, in ordine decrescente di frequenza, una subordinata congiuntiva circostanziale, con 6 item di subordinata di scopo, 2 item di subordinata di tempo, 1 item di subordinata di luogo, 1 item di concessiva e 1 item di subordinata di condizione:

Scopo:

(Goldy-fr-cond-29) - [...] J'ai été obligée de l'enfermer pour qu'elle n'agresse plus personne !...

(Goldy-it-cond-27) - [...] L'ho dovuta rinchiudere affinché non aggredisca più nessuno!...

Tempo:

(Paso-fr-cond-7) - ... J'aurai des choses à vous montrer avant que vous ne partiez. Pouvons-nous parler frioulan ? Vous parlez le frioulan ?

(Paso-it-cond-7-b) - Mi piacerebbe farle vedere delle cose prima che se ne vada. Possiamo parlare in friulano? Lei parla friulano?

Tra queste 11 occorrenze, 2 presentano la particolarità di avere un contesto sintattico diverso in francese e in italiano:

Subordinata di scopo in francese, con la reggente sotto-intesa: risposta a una domanda:

(Goldy-fr-cond-10) - Pour que vous me disiez où sont les hydrojets.

Completiva in italiano: la risposta viene elusa e sostituita da un'affermazione:

(Goldy-it-cond-10) -Basta solo che mi diciate dove sono gli idrogetti.

Concessiva in francese:

(Paso-fr-cond-34-b) Environ un an après, et après qu'ils aient rencontré une quantité de femmes sans qu'aucune ne leur convienne à tous les deux...

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<sup>8</sup> « [...] les verbes français et italiens dépendant sémantiquement de la subjectivité du locuteur, qu'ils se présentent sous une forme personnelle (fr. « vouloir, souhaiter, désirer... » , it. *volere, augurarsi, desiderare...*) ou impersonnelle (fr. « il faut que, il est nécessaire que, il est possible que, il se peut que... » , it. *bisogna/occorre che, è necessario che, è possibile che, può darsi che...*) [...] requièrent dans la proposition subordonnée un mode virtuel, rendu en français comme en italien par le subjonctif. »

Relativa in italiano:

(Paso-it-cond-42) Circa un anno dopo e dopo avere incontrato tante femmine e nessuna che potesse andare bene a tutti e due...

Questi esempi illustrano il ruolo del traduttore le cui scelte sintattiche influiscono sulla comprensione del lettore.

Nel 16,6% dei casi, il congiuntivo è utilizzato in una *clivée*. Questo processo di messa a fuoco è ampiamente usato nel francese parlato e si trova anche nel codice scritto: la parte estratta che si vuole mettere a fuoco è introdotta da *c'est*; in alcuni casi è anche usato *il y a*. La parte estratta è seguita da una relativa introdotta da *qui* se il gruppo estratto è il soggetto della relativa, e da *que* in tutti gli altri casi. Nel nostro corpus, il verbo di questa relativa è coniugato al congiuntivo:

(Goldy-fr-cond-6-b) - [...] Pourtant c'est impossible que ce soit lui puisqu'il est actuellement au bain !

(Goldy-it-cond-6-b) - [...] Eppure è impossibile che sia lui visto che si trova in prigione!

(Goldy-fr-cond-9) - C'est incroyable que vous ayez réussi à vous évader de là-bas ! ... Personne n'y était arrivé jusqu'à présent !

(Goldy-it-cond-9) - È incredibile che sia riuscito a evadere da quel posto! Nessuno fino ad oggi c'era mai riuscito!

(Giov-fr-cond-42) -Regarde là-haut... Il est juste que tous ceux qui débarquent à Palerme sachent immédiatement que ce n'est pas la ville de la mafia : c'est la ville de Giovanni et de Paolo.

(Giov-it-cond-39) - Leggi là sopra... È giusto che chi arriva a Palermo sappia subito che questa non è la città della mafia: questa è la città di Giovanni e di Paolo.

(Quatuor\_cond\_5) - C'est un MIRACLE que je vous aie gardé si longtemps !

(Quartetto\_cond\_5) - È un miracolo che non l'abbia licenziata prima !

Sono anche stati rilevati delle occorrenze di proposizioni relativi (15%):

(Giov-it-cond-38-a) - Giovanni aveva rinunciato ad avere un figlio, cioè alla gioia più grande che si possa provare, perché sapeva che un giorno la mafia l'avrebbe ucciso.

(Giov-fr-cond-41-a) Giovanni avait renoncé à avoir des enfants, c'est-à-dire à la plus grande joie qui soit, parce qu'il savait qu'un jour, la mafia le tuerait.

(Goldy-fr-cond-1) - C'est le plus beau cadeau qu'on m'ait jamais fait !

(Goldy-it-cond-1) - È il più bel regalo che abbia mai ricevuto!

Se si confrontano con i contesti d'uso del congiuntivo in italiano quando il francese usa una soluzione alternativa, e viceversa (congiuntivo in francese, soluzione alternativa in italiano), si constata che:



- le subordinate completive (compresi le interrogative indirette e le completive con funzione soggettiva in italiano) rappresentano il contesto maggioritario d'uso del congiuntivo, tranne nel caso d'uso del congiuntivo in italiano con una soluzione alternativa in francese, in cui le subordinate circostanziali sono di poco il contesto maggioritario (completive 42,4%, circostanziali 44,2%).
- L'italiano ha la caratteristica di utilizzare regolarmente il congiuntivo in una subordinata di condizione, cosa che non avviene in francese, dove la forma del congiuntivo non è stata mantenuta dopo la particella di subordinazione *si*:

« Infatti, *que* pone mentre *si* suppone. Il congiuntivo è quindi necessario dopo *que*, per esprimere la virtualità quando è richiesta dal verbo della reggente. Alle stesse condizioni, l'indicativo è richiesto dopo la congiunzione ipotetica *si*. »<sup>9</sup> (Begioni & Rocchetti, 2013 : 30)

- Le subordinate relative (comprese le *clivées* in francese e le locuzioni di tipo fr. *Quoi qu'il en soit*, *quoi que ce soit*, *quelle que soit* et it. *qualsiasi*, *quale che sia* in quanto, come sopra indicato, queste locuzioni incorporano una relativa nella loro composizione) competono con le subordinate circostanziali per il secondo posto nella classifica dei contesti d'uso del congiuntivo.

Contesto sintattico	Uso del congiuntivo		
	nelle due lingue	in italiano e soluzioni alternative in francese	in francese e soluzioni alternative in italiano
<b>Subordinata completiva</b>	56%	42,4%	60,4%
<b>Subordinata circostanziale</b>	16,6%	44,2%	20,8%
di condizione	1,5%	41,5%	-
di concessione	1,5%	1,7%	4,1%
di scopo	9%	0,8%	10,4%
di tempo	3%	-	6,2%
di luogo	1,5%	-	-
<b>Costruzione di tipo 'relativa'</b>	25,5%	8,8%	16,6%
Proposizione "clivée"	15%	-	-
Subordinata relativa	7,5%	7,9%	10,4%
Locuzioni	3%	0,8%	6,2%
<b>Proposizione reggente</b>	-	-	2%
<b>Proposizione indipendente</b>	1,5%	4,4%	-

**Fig. 3.** Confronto dei contesti sintattici d'uso del congiuntivo in italiano e francese in un corpus di fumetti

<sup>9</sup> « En effet, *que* pose alors que *si* suppose. Le subjonctif est donc nécessaire, après *que*, pour exprimer la virtualité lorsque celle-ci est exigée par le verbe de la principale. Dans les mêmes conditions, l'indicatif s'impose après la conjonction hypothétique *si*. »

## 2. Uso del congiuntivo in italiano corrispondente a soluzioni alternative in francese

Si tratta della soluzione maggioritaria rilevata nel corpus (50%). Le soluzioni alternative in francese all'utilizzo del congiuntivo italiano sono in ordine decrescente di frequenza:

### 2.1. *Indicativo imperfetto o più che perfetto: 42%*

(Giov-fr-218) -Tu sais ce qui se passerait si Tonio faisait régner sa loi pendant plus d'un siècle et qu'il continuait à voler l'argent

(Giov-it-cond-7-b) -Sai cosa succederebbe se Tonio per un secolo intero continuasse a intascare i soldi dei compagni di classe?

(Pauvres\_Zheros\_cond\_11) - ... Il a rien vu, et même s'il avait vu quelque chose, faudrait pas trop s'y fier, non ?

(Povere\_nullità\_cond\_12) - ... Non ha visto niente, e anche se avesse visto qualcosa c'è mica da fidarsi troppo, no?

Si è già indicato che l'italiano usa il congiuntivo in una subordinata di condizione mentre il francese usa l'indicativo in questo caso. Infatti, la virtualità delle subordinate di condizione è, in francese, portata dalla particella di subordinazione, mentre in italiano è condivisa tra quest'ultima e la modalità congiuntiva del verbo. In generale, le congiunzioni di subordinazione possono essere facoltative in italiano, mentre sono indispensabili in francese.

### 2.2. *Indicativo presente o passato prossimo: 37%*

(Mafia\_tabloids-201) - En effet, on peut penser que des génies ont construit ces rues complexes !

(Peppino\_cond\_5-b) - In effetti, si potrebbe pensare che siano stati dei geni a inventare quelle strade arzigogolate!

(Quatuor-fr-212) - Elle est belle la future princesse, vous ne trouvez pas ?

(Quartetto\_cond\_26) - Non trova che la futura principessa sia bella?

Il primo esempio illustra il fatto che in francese in generale l'aspetto semantico del verbo della reggente (in questo caso: fr. *penser* vs. it. *pensare*) gioca un ruolo più decisivo che in italiano nella semantesi dell'intera frase. L'opposizione aspettuale perfettivo/imperfettivo è un'opposizione semantica in francese, si basa sul significato del verbo e non è resa né per coniugazione né per un qualsiasi affisso sistematico. Wilmet (1997: § 386) specifica che "una prima decantazione avviene tra l'aspetto semantico e l'aspetto formale"<sup>10</sup> secondo

<sup>10</sup> « une première décantation s'opère entre l'aspect sémantique et l'aspect formel »

il significato del verbo o un indizio concreto che trasmette l'informazione aspettuale. La stessa osservazione vale per il sintagma verbale della reggente nel primo esempio (fr. *on peut penser*, it. *si potrebbe pensare*): in francese, la semantica del sintagma verbale è sufficiente a evocare la possibilità di un'opinione e tutta la frase è coniugata all'indicativo, mentre in italiano questo ruolo è svolto dall'uso del condizionale nella reggente e del congiuntivo nella subordinata.

Nel secondo esempio, l'inversione della costruzione sintattica tra francese e italiano spiega il cambio di modo: in francese, il locutore inizia con un'affermazione (indicativo) e poi chiede all'interlocutore il suo parere; in italiano, il locutore chiede direttamente il parere dell'interlocutore (congiuntivo). La paratassi usata in francese è attribuibile al genere Fumetto, perché questa figura stilistica del discorso copia la lingua parlata e rende la spontaneità dei dialoghi. Tuttavia, la versione italiana dello stesso fumetto presenta un'ipotassi. Questa preferenza va di pari passo con la regolarità della concordanza dei tempi in italiano: è sistemica.

### 2.3. Condizionale: 7%

(Giov-fr-cond-31) Leoluca, par exemple, sans jamais nommer Giovanni, laisse entendre que celui-ci serait du côté du monstre...

(Giov-it-cond-29) Leoluca, per esempio, non fa il nome di Giovanni, ma sembra suggerire che stia della parte del mostro...

(Paso-fr-cond-24) Je pense que Pasolini, quand il était jeune et qu'il fouillait la librairie, aurait pu imaginer cette possibilité...

(Paso-it-cond-30) Quando Pasolini era ragazzo e cercava dentro la libreria penso avesse immaginato questa possibilità...

In questi esempi, l'uso del condizionale aiuta ad attenuare il significato dell'affermazione ed è sintomatico del fatto che il locutore non assume la responsabilità dell'affermazione (Abouda, 2001). Se il condizionale è sostituito da un altro tempo dell'indicativo, l'enunciato diventa molto più assertivo (*Leoluca laisse entendre que Giovanni serait du côté du monstre* vs. *Leoluca laisse entendre que Giovanni est / était / sera du côté du monstre*; *Je pense que Pasolini aurait pu imaginer cette possibilité* vs. *Je pense que Pasolini a pu / avait pu / pourra imaginer cette possibilité*).

Si potrebbe pensare che il ruolo del verbo servile *pouvoir* non sia insignificante in francese, che fornisce informazioni sul carattere ipotetico della semantesi verbale, tratto che viene trasmesso in italiano attraverso l'uso del congiuntivo. Tuttavia, questa sarebbe una falsa interpretazione, poiché nel nostro corpus sono stati trovati casi d'uso anche in italiano di *dovere* e *riuscire* in quanto verbi servili coniugati al congiuntivo imperfetto e seguiti dai verbi

*tradirti e deciderti* all'infinitivo, corrispondenti in francese dei verbi *trahir* e *décider* coniugati al condizionale:

(Quatuor\_cond\_36) - Dans le cas où ta mémoire te trahirait, tant pis pour ton tailleur...

(Quartetto\_cond\_43) - Nel caso in cui la tua memoria dovesse tradirti, puoi salutare il tuo sarto ...

(Quatuor\_cond\_40) - Pourquoi erres-tu comme une femme folle dans le jardin, remuant les lèvres comme si tu cherchais à dire quelque chose et tu ne te déciderais pas à le PRONONCER !?!

(Quartetto\_cond\_46-b) - Perché vaghi per il giardino come una folle, muovendo le labbra come se cercassi di dire qualcosa e non riuscissi a deciderti di FARLO ?!

#### **2.4. Forma non verbale: 6%**

(Bran-fr-201) -Tu as raison. Mais, hélas, leur présence ça plaît pas à certains, et ils viennent se plaindre à moi...

(Bran-it-cond-7) -E non hai ragione? Però purtroppo alla gente non piace che stiano lì, e poi vengono a lamentarsi con me...

(Pauvres\_Zheros-201) - Mais ça aussi, c'est des conneries... Ma chienne, moi, elle renifle même sous la pluie...

(Povere\_nullità\_cond\_9) - Ma anche queste sono tutte cazzate... La mia cagna, mi creda, riesce a fiutare anche sotto la pioggia...

#### **2.5. Infinitivo: 3%**

(Giov-fr-202) -Peut-être qu'à une époque, quand l'Italie venait à peine de se former, on avait effectivement besoin de groupes pour défendre les plus faibles. Quand l'État ne disposait pas encore de solides institutions.

(Giov-it-cond-13) - Forse un tempo, quando l'Italia era appena nata, c'era davvero bisogno di associazioni che difendessero i più deboli, perché lo stato non aveva ancora istituzioni salde.

#### **2.6. Futuro: 2%**

(Paso-fr-206) - Parce que je ne sais pas dire non, parce que je me dis que ça servira à l'interviewer et à quiconque écoutera, etc., etc.

(Paso-it-cond-8) - Perché non so dir di no, perché penso che sia utile all'intervistatore e a chi ascolta, ecc. ecc.

(Paso-fr-205) J'espère qu'il m'écrira bientôt... Qu'il n'a pas réellement fait ce projet insensé.

(Paso-it-cond-67-a) Spero che mi scriva presto... che non sia davvero questo il suo folle progetto.

Quest'ultimo esempio permette di distinguere la scelta tra futuro e passato prossimo in francese quando l'italiano usa in entrambi i casi il presente del congiuntivo: in italiano prevale l'informazione modale mentre il francese usa i tempi indicativi per la loro informazione temporale, essendo la caratteristica ipotetica dei processi già data dalla semantica del verbo della reggente (*J'espère*).

### 2.7. Imperativo: 2%

(Goldy-fr-201) - Oui ! ... Mais à une condition : promets-moi de recommencer à manger, d'accord ?

(Goldy-it-cond-13) - Sì!... Ma a condizione che tu mi prometta di ricominciare a mangiare, d'accordo?

La costruzione sintattica italiana (locuzione congiuntiva *a condizione che* + congiuntivo) corrisponde in francese a una successione di proposizioni indipendenti il cui legame è reso nello scritto dal “:” ma che, nella parola parlata, non richiede alcuno strumento particolare per rafforzare la coerenza tra la semantesi di queste proposizioni. La stessa osservazione vale in generale per un confronto tra il discorso italiano e quello francese: l'italiano utilizza spesso connettori come *quindi, eppure, oppure, tuttavia, purtroppo, ecc.* non utilizzati in francese.

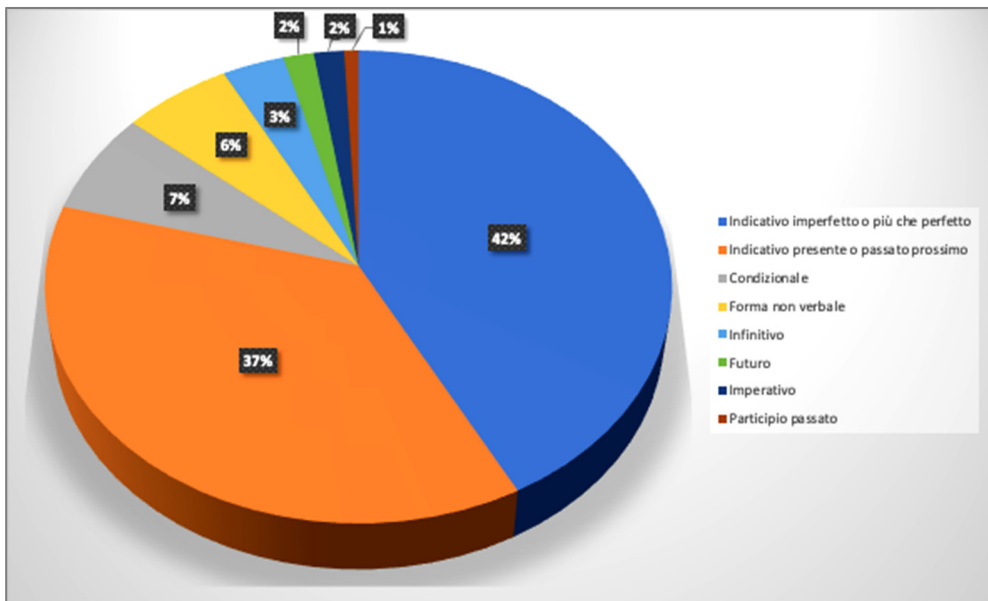


Fig. 4. Soluzioni alternative in francese all'uso del congiuntivo in italiano

### **2.8. Participio passato: 1%**

(Giov-fr-201) C'est une rafale de « coupables », comme sortis du canon d'une kalachnikov, six cents « coupables » par minute.

(Giov-it-cond-26) Una raffica di 'condannato' come se li sparasse col kalashnikov, seicento 'condannato' al minuto.

## **3. Uso del congiuntivo in francese corrispondente a soluzioni alternative in italiano**

Il congiuntivo è meno usato in francese che in italiano, quindi questa categoria è quella meno nutrita (20%). Le soluzioni alternative in italiano all'uso del congiuntivo in francese sono in ordine decrescente di frequenza:

### **3.1. Indicativo presente: 32%**

(Paso-it-311) [...], oppure ho solo bisogno vedere ancora una volta l'opera di Paul Mc Carthy, proprio davanti alla fontana.

(Paso-fr-cond-1) Il se peut aussi que j'aie simplement besoin de voir, une fois encore, l'œuvre de Paul Mc Carthy.

(Povere\_nullità-307 et 306) - ... E poi bussano appedate contro la porta e poi cercano di aprirla!!

(Pauvres\_Zhéros\_cond\_2-a et b) - ... Et pis qu'ils tapent à coups de pied dans la porte, pis qu'ils essaient de l'ouvrir !!

### **3.2. Infinitivo: 29%**

(Bran-it-302) - Devo andare, Carme'... tanto ci vediamo dopo, no?

(Bran-fr-cond-2) -Faut que j'y aille, Carmelo... Mais on se voit après, non ?

(Giov-it-304) La persona che adesso non c'è più si era sacrificata per noi, per non esserci più mafia, per farci vivere un futuro più bello.

(Giov-fr-cond-46) Cette personne qui n'est plus là s'est sacrifiée pour nous, pour que la Mafia disparaisse, pour nous offrir un avenir meilleur.

### **3.3. Forma non verbale: 23%**

(Giov-it-301) - Ma potrebbe anche succedere che tu spaventato, dia a Tonio i tuoi cinque euro, e come tutti gli altri.

(Giov-fr-cond-4-b) -Mais il se pourrait aussi que, mort de peur, tu donnes tes cinq euros à Tonio, et que tous les autres enfants en fassent autant.

(Paso-it-304) - [...] prestarsi in qualche modo a contribuire a questa marcescenza è, ora, il fascismo.

(Paso-fr-cond-45) - [...] le fascisme, aujourd'hui, revient à contribuer de quelque façon que ce soit à cette marcescence.

(Paso-it-303) - Vada verso Roma e aspetti un mio segnale

(Paso-fr-cond-37-a) - Dirigez-vous vers Rome et attendez que je vous fasse signe.

### **3.4. Condizionale: 6%**

(Goldy-it-cond-46-b) - Temevo che mi avresti condannata!... Ancor peggio, che mi avresti odiata!... Non l'avrei sopportato: sarei morta di dolore!... Così ho preferito tacere.

(Goldy-fr-cond-49-a) - Je redoutais que tu me condamnes !... Pire : que tu me haïsses !... Je ne l'aurais pas supporté : je serais morte de chagrin !... Aussi ai-je préféré me taire.

### **3.5. Indicativo imperfetto o il più che perfetto: 4%**

(Giov-it-305) - Andai lì per l'inaugurazione. Vicino alla statua avevano messo delle panchine di legno dove i ragazzi potevano sedersi, guardare Giovanni e pensare a lui.

(Giov-fr-cond-52) -J'y suis allée pour l'inauguration. Juste à côté de la statue, ils avaient même mis des bancs, pour que les jeunes puissent s'asseoir, regarder la statue et penser à Giovanni.

(Bran-it-303) - Com'è che ancora non gli avete fatto la tac?

(Bran-fr-cond-14) - Comment ça se fait que vous lui ayez pas encore fait un scanner ?

### **3.6. Futuro: 2%**

(Quartetto-it-307) - E non mi pare di avere avuto molte difficoltà a ricordare il mio nome. Siete stato buono, signore, ma temo che tra un anno stringerete tra le braccia solo vento e rimpianto.

(Quatuor\_cond\_37-b) - Et je ne vois pas que j'aie eu beaucoup de difficultés à me souvenir de mon prénom. Vous avez été bon, Seigneur, mais dans un an, je crains que vous ne serriez dans vos bras que du vent et du regret.

### **3.7. Imperativo: 2%**

(Peplum-it-303) - AHAAAH! Non farti di queste illusioni.

(Peplum\_vf\_cond\_13-b) - HAAAAHA ! Je ne voudrais pas que tu aies de telles illusions.

### 3.8. Gerundio: 2%

(Peplum-it-302) - Salve a te, campagnolo. Che cosa brucia dietro la cima della montagna creando un tale pennacchio?

(Peplum\_vf\_cond\_11) - Salut à toi, campagnard. Que fait-on brûler derrière ce piton qui produise un tel panache ?

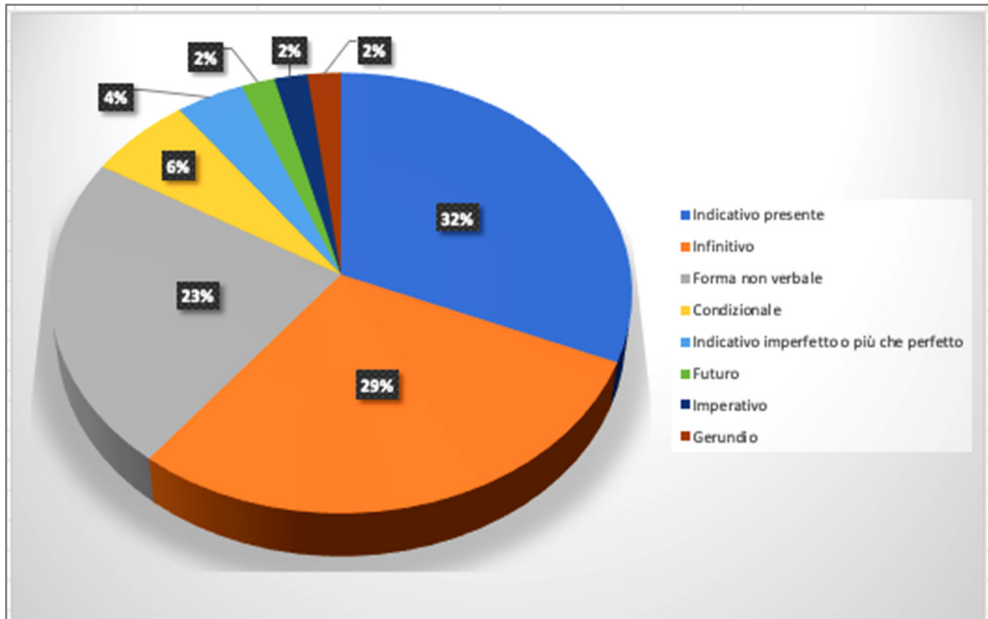


Fig. 5. Solutions alternatives en italien à l'emploi du subjonctif en français

## 4. Confronto francese-italiano delle soluzioni alternative all'uso del congiuntivo

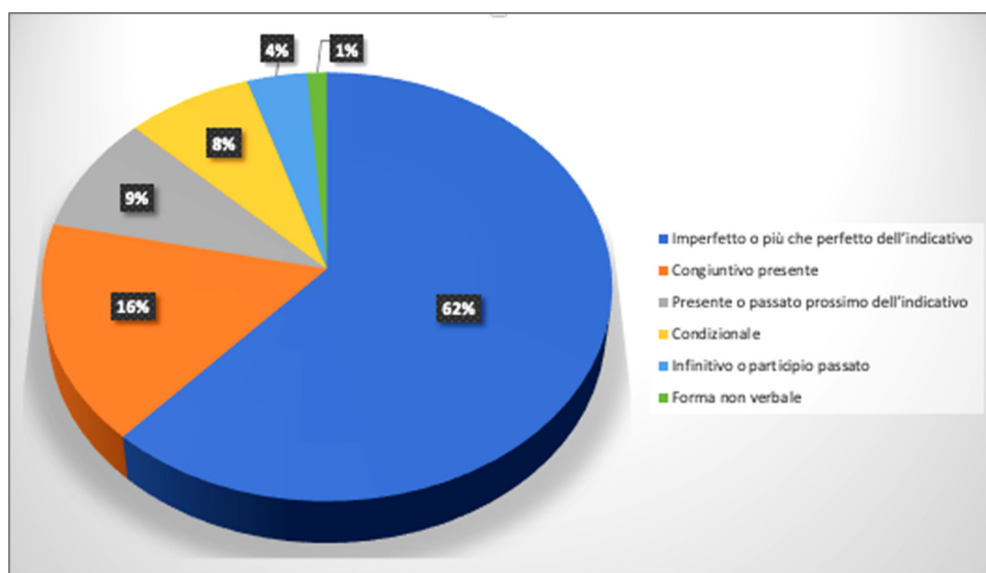
	Francese	Italiano
<b>Indicativo presente</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Indicativo imperfetto o più che perfetto</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Infinitivo</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Forma non verbale</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Condizionale</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Futuro</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Imperativo</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Participio passato o gerundio</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>

Fig. 6. Confronto francese-italiano delle soluzioni alternative all'uso del congiuntivo



Entrambe le lingue danno importanza al presente, usano in misura minore il condizionale, e più raramente il futuro, l'imperativo e il modo nominale. Il presente dell'indicativo è un'alternativa importante in entrambe le lingue: il testo a fumetti tenta di riprodurre il discorso orale dove l'uso del presente è quasi egemonico.

D'altra parte, le due lingue divergono sull'uso dell'indicativo imperfetto o più che perfetto, una soluzione maggioritaria in francese (40%) e una soluzione minoritaria in italiano (4,2%): questa differenza si spiega con l'estensione in francese dell'ambito di utilizzo dell'indicativo imperfetto in seguito all'abbandono del congiuntivo imperfetto<sup>11</sup>. Sono state calcolate le soluzioni alternative in francese al congiuntivo imperfetto italiano. Su un totale di 78 voci (cioè il 34,2% del nostro corpus), l'indicativo imperfetto o più che perfetto rappresenta il 62% delle soluzioni: occorrenze molto più numerose del congiuntivo presente (16%), dell'indicativo presente o passato prossimo (9%), del condizionale (8%), dell'infinito (2,5%), del participio passato (1,2%) o delle forme non verbali (1,2%).



**Figure 7.** Soluzioni alternative in francese all'uso del congiuntivo imperfetto italiano

Il contesto di utilizzo dell'indicativo imperfetto o più che perfetto in francese equivalente ad un congiuntivo imperfetto o più che perfetto in italiano

<sup>11</sup> (Cellard, 1996 : 7), (Blanche-Benveniste, 1997 : 53).

è costituito principalmente da subordinate circostanziali di condizione (81%) introdotte da “*si*”, “*si...et que*”, “*comme si*”; e in misura minore da complete e interrogative indirette (19%). Si è trovato il congiuntivo presente soprattutto nelle complete (77%) e l’indicativo presente per lo più in subordinate circostanziali di condizione (86%). Si può constatare che, in generale, le complete richiamano il congiuntivo, mentre le subordinate circostanziali di condizione richiedono un tempo dell’indicativo. La nostra ipotesi è che in certe condizioni, in francese, l’informazione modale cede il passo all’informazione temporale e si usa l’indicativo piuttosto che il congiuntivo. Al contrario, quando l’informazione modale è necessaria, l’informazione temporale si perde perché c’è solo il presente al congiuntivo in francese, visto che l’imperfetto è scomparso da questo modo.

Nelle interrogative indirette, il verbo della reggente (*comprendre, se demander*) porta in seno alla sua semantica una virtualità sufficiente a far sì che il congiuntivo non sia necessario.

(Giov-fr-204) - Oui, il les étudiait pour comprendre d’où venait l’argent.

(Giov-it-cond-51) - Sì, li studiava per capire da dove provenissero i soldi.

In alcune complete, il verbo della reggente (*penser, croire, on aurait dit que, ignorer, ne pas savoir*) porta la carica di virtualità e si usa l’indicativo. Per esempio, nello stesso traduttore (quello di *Rencontre avec Pasolini*), si rileva l’uso del congiuntivo presente nelle complete equivalente a un congiuntivo imperfetto nella versione italiana, principalmente quando il verbo della reggente è *vouloir*. In qualche occorrenza, il verbo della reggente è *craindre* o l’espressione *il est fort probable que*. Tuttavia, non troviamo gli stessi verbi di quelli con la subordinata completa all’indicativo.

(Paso-fr-cond-14-b et c) - [...] Je voudrais qu’il m’appelle. Qu’il me fixe un nouveau rendez-vous. Je voudrais entendre à nouveau sa voix.

(Paso-it-cond-19-b et c) - [...] Vorrei che mi chiamasse, che mi desse un altro appuntamento, vorrei sentire ancora la sua voce, eccolo.

(Paso-fr-cond-9-c et d) - [...] On ne voulait pas que les Italiens parlent en dialecte. On ne voulait pratiquement pas qu’il y ait des paysans et des ouvriers.

(Paso-it-cond-11-c et d) - [...] Non si voleva che gli italiani parlassero dialetto, praticamente non si voleva che ci fossero dei contadini e degli operai.

vs.

(Paso-fr-212) - [...] J’ignorais ce qu’étaient ces objectifs.

(Paso-it-cond-40) - [...] e io non sapevo che cosa fossero questi obiettivi.

(Paso-fr-211) - [...] En fait, je pense qu’il récitait des poèmes...

(Paso-it-cond-49) - [...] Anzi penso recitasse poesie...

Allo stesso modo, nell'autore di *Goldy*, l'unica occorrenza in francese di completiva con un congiuntivo tradotto da un congiuntivo imperfetto in italiano non ha lo stesso verbo nella reggente che le complete con l'indicativo:

(Goldy-fr-cond-5-b) - Dans ce cas, il vaudrait peut-être mieux que je prenne les commandes, vous ne croyez pas ?

(Goldy-it-cond-5-b) - In questo caso forse sarebbe meglio che prendessi io i comandi, non crede?

vs.

(Goldy-fr-204) - J'ai vraiment cru que vous étiez le chacal !

(Goldy-it-cond-30) - Ho creduto davvero che Lei fosse lo sciacallo!

(Goldy-fr-203) - Vous pensiez que j'étais mort dans l'explosion !

(Goldy-it-cond-35) - Pensavi che fossi morto nell'esplosione!

Il contesto d'uso del condizionale in francese equivalente a un congiuntivo imperfetto o più che perfetto in italiano è vario (relativa, circostanziale di condizione, completiva), non sembra essere decisivo: il valore di base sembra piuttosto il rifiuto, da parte del locutore, di assumere la responsabilità del proprio discorso (Abouda, 2001).

Le due lingue si differenziano anche per l'uso dell'infinito e il ricorso a forme non verbali, soluzioni ricorrenti in italiano ma poco utilizzate in francese (infinito: il 29,7% in italiano contro il 3,4% in francese; forme non verbali: il 23,4% in italiano contro il 6% in francese). L'italiano sembra favorire l'uso dell'infinito quando condivide lo stesso soggetto del verbo della reggente. E va sottolineato che per la metà delle occorrenze con l'uso dell'infinito il verbo della reggente è *dovere*.

## Conclusioni

Nel 50% dei casi osservati nel nostro corpus, l'uso del congiuntivo in italiano corrisponde a soluzioni alternative in francese. Queste sono principalmente:

- Indicativo imperfetto o più che perfetto (42%)
- Indicativo presente o il passato prossimo (37%)
- Condizionale (7%)

Abbiamo trovato nelle traduzioni che in francese le soluzioni alternative all'uso del congiuntivo imperfetto in italiano sono l'uso di:

- Indicativo imperfetto o più che perfetto (62%)
- Congiuntivo presente (16%)
- Indicativo presente o passato prossimo (9%)
- Condizionale (8%)

Si mantiene così la gerarchia delle soluzioni alternative al congiuntivo: l'indicativo imperfetto o più che perfetto è la soluzione maggioritaria, prima dell'indicativo presente o passato prossimo. Il francese non applica una concordanza dei tempi sistematica perché il più delle volte la carica della virtualità viene portata dalla semantica del verbo della reggente. Quando l'informazione modale non è più portata dal verbo della subordinata, l'informazione temporale (presente, passato) e quella aspettuale (compiuto-incompiuto) determinano la scelta di uno dei tempi dell'indicativo. L'uso del condizionale indica che il locutore non assume l'enunciato. I pochi casi in cui il francese usa il congiuntivo presente nella subordinata sono quelli in cui il verbo della reggente è *vouloir*, *falloir*, *préférer*, o le locuzioni verbali *valoir mieux*, *être probable*, *juste*, *inutile*, *impossible*, *incroyable* ecc., ma anche i verbi *espérer*, *imaginer*, *croire* che possono essere seguiti dall'indicativo o dal congiuntivo a seconda del grado di realtà o virtualità assegnato al processo della subordinata.

Nel 21% dei casi osservati nel nostro corpus, l'uso del congiuntivo in francese corrisponde a soluzioni alternative in italiano. Queste sono principalmente:

- Indicativo presente (32%)
- Infinito (29%)
- Forma non verbale (23%)
- Condizionale (6%)

Tuttavia, rimane un terzo dei casi osservati nel nostro corpus per i quali sia il francese che l'italiano usano il congiuntivo. Ma quando l'italiano applica la concordanza dei tempi tra la reggente e la subordinata, il francese non lo fa, avendo eliminato il congiuntivo imperfetto dalla sua cronogenesi. In francese, alcuni verbi della reggente richiedono il congiuntivo nella subordinata: si tratta di verbi la cui semantica non indica chiaramente la virtualità del processo che seguirà nella subordinata (*vouloir*, *falloir* ecc.).

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## LES ANGLICISMES EN FRANÇAIS, EN ITALIEN ET EN ROUMAIN : DES COMPORTEMENTS LINGUISTIQUES DIFFERENTS

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**ABSTRACT.** *Anglicisms in French, Italian, and Romanian: Different Linguistic Patterns of Behaviour.* In this article, we reflect, in an extended comparative way, upon the attitude that is adopted with regard to the use of anglicisms in French, Italian, and Romanian. We observe different patterns of behaviour starting with phrases in the field of maximum evidence, namely: computer science, a field that does not already inspire the feeling that anglicisms extend even over other language-adapted neologisms. We describe the institutional framework in which the focus of our attention is on the circulation and tendency of limiting anglicisms in the case of French. We also focus on the impact and effects of the belated establishment of the Italian nation within a language policy oriented towards neology and anglicisms. We keep in mind the Romanian context in which French and Italian neology make room for anglicisms, firstly through contact languages, and secondly, owing to the factor with repercussions in the global linguistic policy.

**Keywords:** *anglicisms, neology, French, Romanian, Italian, language policy*

**REZUMAT.** *Anglicismele în franceză, în italiană și în română: comportamente lingvistice diferite.* Reflectăm în acest articol, într-o modalitate comparativă extinsă, asupra atitudinii pe care o adoptă în privința anglicismelor, franceza, italiana și româna. Constatăm comportamentul diferit pornind de la fraze din domeniul de maximă evidență, anume: cel al informaticii, domeniu ce ne inspiră deja sentimentul că anglicismele se extind chiar și asupra altor neologii adaptate limbii. Explicăm cadrul instituțional în care se discută circulația și tendința de limitare a anglicismelor în cazul francezei. Ne oprim la repercusiunile constituirii tardive a națiunii italiene în politica lingvistică orientată spre neologie și spre anglicisme. Reținem contextul românesc în care neologia franceză și cea italiană fac loc anglicismelor, întâi prin limbile de contact, apoi datorită factorului cu repercusiuni în politica lingvistică globală.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *anglicisme, neologie, franceză, română, italiană, politică lingvistică*

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## 1. Introduction

Dans le contexte des langues latines, le français, l'italien et le roumain semblent avoir des comportements très différents par rapport aux emprunts à la langue anglaise. Le français essaie de limiter les emprunts avec une politique linguistique spécifique qui favorise la néologie dans le cadre institutionnel. Il va tout autrement en Italie où les anglicismes se répandent abondamment dans tous les domaines sans qu'aucune décision ne soit prise au niveau des autorités officielles en particulier sur le plan éducatif et culturel. En Roumanie, les anglicismes ont envahi presque tous les domaines de la société contemporaine, remplaçant notamment le lexique urbain roumain par des emprunts anglais récents.

Si l'on prend la phrase française suivante dans le domaine de l'informatique :

J'allume mon **ordinateur**, sur le **bureau**, je prends la **souris** je choisis un **dossier** et j'ouvre un nouveau **fichier** pour y écrire mon **rapport** de mission.

Celle-ci pourra être traduite en italien par :

*Accendo il **computer**, prendo il **mouse**, sul **desktop** scelgo una **cartella/directory** e apro un nuovo **file** per scrivere il **report/relazione** della mia missione.*

En roumain, la traduction sera la suivante :

*Deschid **calculatorul /ordinatorul / computerul** pe **desktop** / interfață, iau **mausul /mous-ul**, aleg un **folder** și deschid un nou **fișier** pentru a scrie un raport de misiune.*

Dans cet exemple, on constate que le français n'utilise aucun anglicisme pour les six mots en caractère gras. L'italien utilise quatre emprunts intégraux qui n'ont pas d'équivalent dans la langue italienne (**computer, mouse, desktop** et **file**) et deux emprunts moins stabilisés qui ont un équivalent italien (**cartella/directory** et **report/relazione**). Dans le domaine informatique, le mot **directory** étend son influence surtout chez les spécialistes de l'informatique et chez les jeunes alors que dans le domaine économique l'utilisation du mot **report** suscite un effet de modernité et tend à souligner les compétences linguistiques du locuteur et sa dimension « internationale », l'effet communicatif étant perçu comme plutôt positif par un public surtout tourné vers la mondialisation qui caractérise l'évolution des nos sociétés.

En roumain, pour **computer**, il y a une concurrence entre deux termes qui viennent du français, à savoir: **calculator** et **ordinator**. L'un des termes anglais,

c'est le cas du mot *file*, trouve un équivalent dans le mot *fichier*, un prêt français en roumain, sémantiquement enrichi. Deux termes anglais, *folder* et *mouse* gardent leur forme de la langue d'origine sans adaptation ou avec adaptation phonétique.

Ces différences de comportement linguistique face aux emprunts à l'anglais nous poussent à en rechercher des causes linguistiques, culturelles et politiques. Nous reprenons ici et nous continuons les réflexions d'une autre phase de notre recherche (Begioni : 2013, 25-32) concernant l'attitude des langues romanes face à la néologie.

## 2. Les anglicismes en français

Ainsi, le français qui a influencé l'anglais pendant presque deux siècles après l'arrivée de Guillaume le conquérant sur le trône d'Angleterre en 1066 et qui est à l'origine d'environ 60% du lexique anglais (H. Walter) attitude de limitation des emprunts par des organismes institutionnels clairement définis : en particulier Ac fr, DGLLF, Commission de néologie et de terminologie. Il s'agit là d'une volonté de politique linguistique en faveur de la défense de la langue française. Rivalité historique séculaire entre les deux pays (guerre de cent ans, ...).

Emprunter ou ne pas emprunter telle est la question. Il s'agit là d'un vaste problème où les critères à prendre en compte sont historiques, culturels voire politiques. Dans l'histoire des langues européennes, les emprunts ont toujours existé et ils sont le signe de l'influence d'un pays, d'une culture sur d'autres pays et d'autres cultures. Très souvent, ce sont des secteurs spécialisés de la langue qui sont concernés : arts, économie, philosophie, sciences et techniques, etc. En Europe, la langue française a remplacé petit à petit le latin, surtout à partir de l'époque classique dans les domaines culturel, philosophique, scientifique, etc. L'« exportation lexicale » a été très importante : au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, le siècle des lumières où la diffusion de l'Encyclopédie a joué un rôle fondamental, mais aussi au XIX<sup>e</sup> et au XX<sup>e</sup> siècles dans de très nombreux domaines grâce au rayonnement culturel et scientifique de la France en Europe et dans le monde. D'autres langues européennes ont fait aussi l'objet d'influences linguistiques dans des secteurs spécialisés. C'est ainsi le cas de l'italien dont les mots et expressions des domaines artistiques ont été largement diffusés : architecture, arts, musique, théâtre etc. Aujourd'hui, la langue française est en net déclin dans le monde. La position internationale de la France ne correspond plus à celle d'une puissance mondiale qui a rayonné sur les plans culturel, politique, scientifique, ...encore une bonne partie du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Aujourd'hui, la France fait partie de l'Union Européenne et les pays francophones ont beaucoup de mal à faire résister la langue française face à l'hégémonie de l'anglais. En Roumanie, le français, la langue étrangère la plus étudiée depuis plus de 200 ans, a perdu du terrain face à l'anglais. Les Etats-Unis constituent la première puissance économique du monde et ils dominent de très nombreux secteurs où ils sont à la

pointe : l'économie et le commerce international, les sciences, les technologies nouvelles, etc. Par ailleurs, l'anglais s'est imposé comme langue de communication au niveau planétaire, telle une « lingua franca » qui est utilisée non seulement par de très nombreux spécialistes et chercheurs dans de très nombreux domaines, mais également par les nombreux touristes qui sillonnent le monde. Cette diffusion massive et, rappelons-le hégémonique de la langue anglaise en particulier dans des domaines professionnels spécialisés se caractérise par une utilisation conséquente de termes et d'expressions anglo-saxonnes dans la plupart des autres langues du monde.

C'est aussi le cas en français. Devant cette « avalanche lexicale », certains pays francophones - surtout la Province de Québec au Canada qui subit de plein fouet ces influences linguistiques - et la France ont tenté de réagir. Nous présenterons ici quelques aspects de ces réactions en nous concentrant sur la situation française. La célèbre loi Toubon, ministre de la culture en 1994, est sans doute l'action la plus significative de la République Française. Cette loi s'appuie sur une disposition introduite en 1992 dans la Constitution : « La langue de la République est le français » (article 2). Ainsi la loi reconnaît le droit au citoyen français, pour les textes légaux, mais aussi au salarié pour tout ce qui touche au contrat de travail et au consommateur pour ce qui concerne la présentation des produits, les modes d'emploi et les garanties, de s'exprimer et de recevoir toute information utile en français. Corrélativement, elle crée l'obligation d'une rédaction en langue française. Toutefois, la loi Toubon a été fortement « allégée » par le Conseil constitutionnel qui a estimé que le principe de la liberté de pensée et d'expression, inscrit à l'article 11 de la Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen, s'opposait à ce que la loi fixe la terminologie précise à employer par les organismes de télévision ou de radio ou par des personnes privées dans l'ensemble de leurs activités. Le législateur ne peut régler le vocabulaire à employer que pour les personnes morales de droit public et les personnes de droit privé dans l'exercice d'une mission de service public (article 5 de la loi). Le décret d'application du 3 juillet 1996 relatif à l'enrichissement de la langue française, a mis en place un dispositif pour le développement lexical de la langue française. Il impose l'usage des termes en français dans les services et établissements publics de l'État (articles 11 et 12 du décret) :

Art. 11. - Les termes et expressions publiés au Journal officiel sont obligatoirement utilisés à la place des termes et expressions équivalents en langues étrangères :

- 1) Dans les décrets, arrêtés, circulaires, instructions et directives des ministres, dans les correspondances et documents, de quelque nature qu'ils soient, qui émanent des services et des établissements publics de l'Etat ;

2) Dans les cas prévus aux articles 5 et 14 de la loi du 4 août 1994 susvisée relative à l'emploi de la langue française. La commission générale observe l'usage prévu au présent article des termes et expressions publiés.

Art. 12. - Les listes de termes et expressions approuvés en vertu des dispositions réglementaires relatives à l'enrichissement de la langue française précédemment en vigueur sont assimilées aux listes publiées en vertu du présent décret. Elles peuvent être modifiées selon la procédure prévue aux articles 7 à 10 du présent décret.

L'application de la loi peut être contrôlée par les organismes officiels suivants :

- la Direction générale de la concurrence, de la consommation et de la répression des fraudes, le Bureau de Vérification de la Publicité, pour la publicité,
- le Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel, pour la communication audiovisuelle,
- les associations de défense de la langue française (conformément à l'article 199).

A la suite de ce décret d'application, afin d'encourager, d'accompagner l'évolution du lexique - qui doit en permanence rendre compte de réalités nouvelles dans les domaines scientifiques et techniques - et afin de répondre à des besoins d'expression que ne satisfait pas l'état actuel de la langue, l'État a mis en place un dispositif visant à proposer des termes nouveaux désignant les objets et les notions en « voie d'apparition ». La délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France anime et coordonne ce dispositif d'enrichissement et participe à la diffusion du vocabulaire recommandé. Sur son site <http://www.dglf.culture.gouv.fr>, très exhaustif en la matière, on peut trouver les résultats des travaux de la Commission générale de terminologie et de néologie, avec, en particulier, les listes de termes, expressions et définitions adoptés et publiés au *Journal officiel* de la République française dont voici la liste, par domaine, disponible à ce jour : affaires étrangères, agriculture et pêche, architecture, armement, automobile, biologie, chimie, physique, composants électroniques, courrier électronique, culture et éducation, défense, droit, économie et finances, équipement et transport, informatique et internet, ingénierie nucléaire, mathématiques, pétrole et gaz, polymères, santé, sciences humaines, sport, stéréochimie, techniques spatiales, « Tous domaines », « Zone euro ».

Chaque liste de termes et de définitions est suivie d'une table d'équivalence des termes. Voici quelques exemples, dans le domaine économique et financier :

**marchandisage, n.m.**

*Domaine* : Économie et gestion d'entreprise.

*Définition* : Ensemble des méthodes et techniques ayant trait à la présentation et à la mise en valeur des produits sur les lieux de vente.

*Note* : Les spécialistes invoquent la règle dite des « 5B », qui consiste à présenter le bon produit, au bon prix, au bon moment, au bon endroit et en bonne quantité.

*Équivalent étranger* : *merchandising*.

Ce mot n'existe ni en italien, ni en roumain.

**marchandisation, n.f.**

*Domaine* : Économie et gestion d'entreprise.

*Définition* : Passage d'une forme non marchande à une forme marchande de l'offre de biens et services.

*Équivalent étranger* : *marketisation*.

Un mot sans potentiel de dérivation ni en italien, ni en roumain.

**marchandiseur, -euse, n.**

*Domaine* : Économie et gestion d'entreprise.

*Définition* : Spécialiste de la gestion des linéaires des magasins en libre-service.

*Équivalent étranger* : *merchandiser*.

Un concept qui n'est pas inventorié par l'italien, ni par le roumain.

**mercatique de terrain**

*Domaine* : Économie et gestion d'entreprise.

*Définition* : Assistance aux vendeurs qui vise à rendre plus efficace l'animation commerciale des points de vente.

*Équivalent étranger* : *field marketing*.

Productif en français, moins intéressant pour les deux autres langues romanes.

Il s'agit de fiches terminologiques comportant des rubriques comme le domaine (parfois le et/ou les sous-domaines), la définition, le cas échéant des notes et un équivalent en langue anglaise. Ce travail de fond des différentes sous-commissions de terminologie permet aux spécialistes et aux professionnels des secteurs examinés d'avoir à leur disposition d'un ensemble thématique de termes en langue française qui leur permet d'éviter d'utiliser les termes anglo-saxons équivalents.

En regardant attentivement les termes anglais qui ont fait l'objet de fiches terminologiques néologiques, on se rend bien compte que dans de nombreux cas, il est possible de deviner par transparence linguistique leur signification. Que faire emprunter ou créer un néologisme ? La question est délicate. En effet, nombre de ces mots anglais viennent du français (ou plutôt de l'ancien français) et parfois

sont refaits directement sur le latin avec un changement souvent non négligeable de la signification. Toutefois, pour certains d'entre eux la proximité sémantique est évidente et l'on aurait pu éviter un travail de néologie puisque le terme étranger reste largement employé dans la langue française. C'est ainsi le cas du mot anglais *marketing* qui vient de l'ancien franco-normand *markè* équivalent du français *marché* dont l'origine latine est *mercatum/marcatum*. La création dans un premier temps de *marchéage* – qui a été pratiquement abandonné très certainement en raison d'une suffixation et d'un enchaînement phonétique malheureux – puis de *mercatique* (cf. ci-dessus) montre les limites de la néologie.

### ***La prise en compte de la diachronie***

Au contraire de la linguistique, la terminologie ne semble pas s'intéresser à la diachronie.

Personnellement, il nous semble essentiel de prendre en considération l'évolution diachronique du lexique et tenir compte des passages précédents d'une langue à l'autre. On peut observer une situation analogue pour les termes que nous avons cités dans les fiches terminologiques précédentes qui dérivent en particulier de *merchant* (marchant) : *merchandising*, etc. Les créations, par exemple, du terme *marchandisage* équivalent de l'anglais *merchandising* et de *marchandiseur* équivalent de *merchandiser* ne semblent, en dehors de la suffixation française, n'apporter rien de bien nouveau, la transparence sémantique, étymologique et morphologique étant très forte. Des cas analogues et très nombreux concernent des termes du même type : *franchising* (qui vient du français *franchise*), *management* (qui vient de l'ancien français *mesnage/manage*), *finance* etc. Sans doute faudrait-il dresser des listes thématiques de termes « transparents » et autoriser leur utilisation dans les discours spécialisés.

Un autre procédé linguistique pour la néologie terminologique est la métaphore. Lorsque l'on regarde celles-ci, on est parfois surpris par l'écart qui peut exister entre le domaine courant d'utilisation et le domaine métaphorique. C'est ainsi le cas de l'expression anglaise *start up* qui signifie en français une « jeune entreprise à croissance rapide » pour laquelle la commission de terminologie et de néologie a proposé la métaphore *jeune pousse* qui en raison de son domaine d'appartenance courant peut faire sourire. Il en va de même pour le terme *chat* largement utilisé sur internet pour le dialogue en direct et pour lequel on a proposé l'équivalent *causette*. Ici, on ne peut s'empêcher de mettre en relation ce terme avec l'expression *faire la causette* qui ne correspond en rien à la situation communicative sur internet ni au registre linguistique de départ.

Pour l'histoire de ces mots anglais qui proviennent du franco-normand et/ou de l'ancien français, nous renvoyons au célèbre ouvrage d'Henriette Walter *Honni soy qui mal y pense, l'incroyable histoire d'amour entre le français*

*et l'anglais*<sup>3</sup> qui donne une vision quasi-exhaustive des relations linguistiques entre le français et l'anglais au cours de l'histoire en mettant, entre autres, l'accent sur les vrais amis, les faux amis et les phénomènes lexicaux de va-et-vient. Elle consacre, entre autres, un paragraphe très révélateur sur le vocabulaire de l'informatique où elle montre que les origines françaises et latines dominent.

Une analyse de trois petites brochures présentant le vocabulaire anglais de l'informatique dans des secteurs spécialisés (France Michel, *Vocabulaire de l'échange de documents informatisés*, Cahiers de l'Office de la langue française du Québec, 1991, Carole Verreault, *Vocabulaire de la sécurité informatique*, Cahiers de l'Office de la langue française du Québec, 1992, Yvan Venev, *Dictionnaire anglais-français-russe de l'informatique et des sciences (1499 expressions)*, Paris, Economica, 1984) a fait apparaître un résultat tout aussi surprenant : sur l'ensemble des 490 termes anglais glosés dans ces brochures, on constate qu'il y en a 80% d'origine latine, exactement 392, dont : 247 par l'intermédiaire du français, comme *transfer*, *computer*, *code*, *test*, *index* ou *information*, 140 venus directement du latin (par exemple *index*, *digit*, *scanner*) [...](note idem p.323)

Un regard pédagogique croisé sur les deux langues permettrait de réconcilier les puristes de la langue française avec les « emprunteurs » à la langue anglaise surtout si l'on considère qu'environ 70% du lexique anglais est emprunté à l'ancien français, au français et souvent directement du latin. En quelque sorte, l'anglais pourrait être considéré sur le plan lexical comme une langue « cousine » des langues romanes et ne plus être cet épouvantail hégémonique ?

Dans la langue courante de nombreux mots ont fait le va-et-vient. Ainsi le verbe *flirter* emprunté à l'anglais *to flirt* vient de l'ancien français *fleureter* qui est resté en français littéraire et soutenu dans l'expression *compter fleurette*. De la même manière le mot anglais *bacon* a pour origine *bacon* en ancien français qui signifiait « viande de porc ». Dans certains mots anglais, on ne reconnaît plus l'origine française en raison de leur « nationalisation ». Ainsi, *mushroom* qui signifie « champignon » est issu de l'ancien français *mousseron* (champignon qui pousse sur la mousse, comparable au « rosé des prés ») et a été phonétiquement adapté.

Toutes ces remarques sur l'origine romane et française de nombreux mots anglais nous conduisent à nous poser la question de l'emprunt. Il nous semble que le regard averti du linguiste, en particulier en sémantique diachronique, va permettre de prendre des décisions relevant du bon sens plus que de l'opposition systématique aux anglicismes. Un renouveau des pratiques pédagogiques privilégiant la prise en compte des phénomènes linguistiques de transparence lexicale entre les deux langues nous semble plus que souhaitable et ce, malgré les recommandations de la loi Toubon. N'oublions pas que la

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Henriette, *Honni soy qui mal y pense, l'incroyable histoire d'amour entre le français et l'anglais*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2001.

langue anglaise a de tout temps emprunté aux autres langues, en particulier et massivement à la langue française.

### 3. Les anglicismes en italien

En revanche, il en va tout autrement pour la langue italienne qui historiquement a vu le jour avec l'unification du pays en 1861. Pour des raisons linguistiques La diversité linguistique du pays (plus de 2000 dialectes) et historiques l'émigration importante vers les USA surtout à partir de 1880, et la libération en 1945 par les armées anglaises et américaines, l'Italie a souvent montré une attitude anglophile et surtout américanophile une grande « tolérance » linguistique face aux emprunts et une attirance politique et culturelle qui a favorisé l'utilisation importante de mots anglais

En raison des sa constitution tardive par rapport aux autres nations européennes, l'Italie n'a été unifiée qu'en 1861. Le choix de la langue nationale « *Questione della lingua* » s'est orienté sur le toscan « littéraire ». L'italianisation du pays qui a surtout commencé par le nord et, pour des raisons politiques, économiques et culturelles a mis plus d'un siècle pour être réalisée. D'abord l'école obligatoire (*Scuola dell'obbligo* qui date de la fin du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle) puis la diffusion de la radio et surtout de la télévision ont permis d'italianisé l'ensemble du pays. Face à plus de 2000 dialectes (enquête Istat de 2007), des variétés de langue italienne régionale se sont mises en place. Le toscan en est le fondement mais de fortes variations phonétiques, lexicales, et parfois morphosyntaxiques. La communication entre locuteurs appartenant à des régions différents repose sur une intercompréhension et donc une grande « tolérance » linguistique face à ces variations. Même si jusqu'à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle un certain « racisme linguistique » surtout liés aux écarts phonétiques s'est manifesté entre le nord et sud et ce, pour des raisons d'abord économiques mais aussi largement culturelles.

Plusieurs vagues d'émigration à partie des années 1880 vers les USA jusque dans les années 1950, la libération de l'Italie par les armées anglaise et américaine, le plan Marshal et les contacts entre les familles américaines d'origines italiennes et leurs familles d'origine (voir le roman de Leonardo Sciascia, *Gli zii d'America*) sont des phénomènes qui sont très certainement à l'origine de l'anglophilie des italiens aujourd'hui.

Pour ces toutes ces raisons, la langue italienne a emprunté massivement les mots de la langue anglaise en particulier dans les secteurs de l'économie, des sciences, des TIC en faisant preuve de la même tolérance linguistique que dans les interactions linguistiques en langue italienne. Pour expliciter ce phénomène, nous pouvons donner quelques exemples dans le domaine de l'informatique comme *Computer, mouse, file, directory, frame, software*, etc. Dans la langue courante, les mots et expressions anglais foisonnent. On trouvera ainsi *fiction* pour « drame télévisé », *single* pour « célibataire », *over 65* pour « plus de 65 ans » etc.



Les organismes comme l'Accademia della crusca n'a pas le même rôle institutionnel que l'Académie française, la DGLFLF et les commissions de terminologie.

D'où l'importance des emprunts à l'anglais. Les mécanismes cognitifs de la reconnaissance des mots sont étroitement liés au fait que l'italien reste une langue fortement flexionnelle et que le mot italien est construit sur la base d'une racine lexicale construite en langue, cela peut constituer une hypothèse complémentaire pour expliquer ces emprunts massifs.

#### 4. Les anglicismes en roumain

Le roumain, la langue considérée comme la plus conservatrice<sup>4</sup> parmi les langues romanes, a privilégié pendant les trois derniers siècles les emprunts au français et à l'italien, suite à la modernisation de la société roumaine. Le contact avec la France a été un facteur essentiel pour la quête de l'identité et pour le réveil national roumain, les emprunts au français conduisant à une récupération<sup>5</sup> de la configuration latine du lexique roumain.

Quelle en est la conséquence ? Parmi les 49649 mots que compte le *Dictionnaire de la langue roumaine moderne*<sup>6</sup> de 1958, 19129 sont considérés comme étant d'origine française dont 12770 emprunts, soit un pourcentage de 38,42 des emprunts récents à la langue française<sup>7</sup>.

Le contact avec le français a conduit au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle à un changement quasi total du lexique administratif et politique, de la terminologie des sciences et de la philosophie<sup>8</sup>. La création lexicale, la dérivation, les clichés linguistiques sont à leur tour marqués par cette présence massive des emprunts faits au français.

Les auteurs des premiers dictionnaires bilingues français-roumain/roumain-français jouent un rôle important dans ce processus<sup>9</sup>. Ils considèrent que les emprunts doivent servir à la traduction des œuvres littéraires aussi bien qu'à la rédaction des documents de l'Etat roumain, ce qui fait que les mots d'origine française s'imposent non seulement dans les domaines de l'art mais aussi dans le langage de l'administration.

Les emprunts<sup>10</sup> à l'italien datent du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, ils concernent surtout les domaines de l'art, de la littérature et notamment de la musique. Il ne faut cependant

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<sup>4</sup> Pușcariu, *Études de linguistique roumaine*, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> Lupu, *Lexicografia românească în procesul de occidentalizare latino-romanică a limbii române moderne (1780-1860)*, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Macrea, *Dictionarul limbii române moderne*, 1958.

<sup>7</sup> Pour plus de détails : Macrea, *Studii de lingvistică română*, 1970 et *Probleme ale structurii și evoluției limbii române*, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Eliade, *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public în România. Originile. Studiu asupra stării societății românești în vremea domniilor fanariote*, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Vaillant, *Vocabular purtăreț rumănescu-franțozesc și franțozescu-rumănesc urmat de un mic vocabular de Omonime*, 1839.

<sup>10</sup> Felecan, *Vocabularul limbii române*, 2004.

pas oublier qu'une série d'emprunts lexicaux à l'italien enrichissent en roumain le lexique financier et bancaire ainsi que celui de l'alimentation et de l'architecture.

Les premiers emprunts faits par le roumain à l'anglais datent de la fin du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Il ne s'agit pas d'emprunts résultés de contacts directs entre le roumain et l'anglais. C'est toujours la langue française qui va, dans un premier temps, jouer le rôle de vecteur pour la plupart des emprunts anglais de cette période. L'allemand et le russe favoriseront eux aussi les contacts entre le roumain et l'anglais.

Les changements politiques qui ont débuté à la fin de 1989, ainsi que la mondialisation, ont fait changer les centres d'intérêt de la langue et de la culture roumaines. Les anglicismes, d'origine britannique ou américaine s'imposent de plus en plus. Les profonds changements des échanges conversationnels en milieu urbain sont à l'origine de nouvelles caractéristiques linguistiques *in itinere*. Les mots anglais remplacent progressivement des mots d'origine française qui, pour des raisons diachroniques et typologiques, nous semblent cependant beaucoup plus adaptés aux spécificités de la langue roumaine.

### Conclusion

Même si le français, l'italien et le roumain appartiennent typologiquement à la même famille de langues, nous avons pu mettre en évidence, par nos réflexions, leurs comportements différents relatifs aux emprunts à l'anglais. Nous pouvons certainement trouver des éléments d'explication dans leurs changements diachroniques divergents, en particulier sur le plan de la typologie lexicale, étroitement liés aux évolutions historiques et culturelles. Bien évidemment, le nouvel *esprit du siècle*, la mondialisation, peut également expliquer ces comportements divergents face aux emprunts à la langue anglaise et surtout à l'anglo-américain.

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## **ANALYSIS OF FIRST YEAR STUDENTS' EVALUATION DATA REGARDING THE SHIFT TO eLEARNING. A CASE IN POINT: THE ENGLISH MORPHOLOGY SEMINARS**

**ALEXANDRA COTOC<sup>1</sup>, DORIN CHIRA<sup>2</sup>**

**ABSTRACT.** *Analysis of First Year Students' Evaluation Data Regarding the Shift to eLearning. A Case in Point: The English Morphology Seminars.* In the remote learning setting of the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020, students suddenly had access to the academic context only in a digital format. As such, content, academic instruction, peers and instructors were all part of an impromptu teaching-learning process. This study explores the relation between students and technology before/during and after the second semester. We also look at the students' perception of a particular form of academic instruction, namely a seminar, and a particular topic, English Morphology. In order to obtain a valid analysis, we also present our students' academic profile, their perception and attitude towards their fields of study (Philology) and towards the ideal (online) language instructor.

**Keywords:** *Higher Education, English Grammar, eLearning, students' perception*

**REZUMAT.** *O analiză a evaluărilor studenților din anul I privind tranziția la predarea online. Cazul seminarului de morfologie.* În contextul predării online din semestrul al doilea al anului universitar 2019-2020, studenții au avut acces la mediul academic doar în format digital. Astfel, conținutul, predarea, colegii și profesorii au fost parte a unui proces de predare-învățare adaptat brusc la cerințele din spațiul digital. Acest studiu analizează raportarea studenților la tehnologie înainte, în timpul și după terminarea semestrului II. Vom analiza, de asemenea, percepția studenților asupra unei anumite forme de predare universitară (seminar) și a unui anumit subiect (Morfologie engleză). Pentru a obține o analiză validă, vom prezenta și profilul academic al studenților, percepția și atitudinea lor asupra domeniului de studiu (Filologie) și a profesorului ideal (față-în-față sau online).

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Învățământ superior, gramatică engleză, predare online, percepția studenților*

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## **Introductory remarks**

The sudden shift from a face-to-face teaching-learning environment to an entirely online medium of instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about challenges for the two main participants in the context of higher university: instructors and students. The syllabus, the teaching methods, the students' engagement and participation were assiduously and spontaneously reshaped to suit a new medium of instruction.

At Babeş-Bolyai University, depending on the students' profile, their fields of study and the digital literacy of the course/seminar leader, every instructor chose the digital platforms, tools and the teaching method that they considered appropriate in the given context. This sometimes produced a heterogeneous medium of instruction at the level of the same institution, comprising a multitude of platforms and digital learning tools being used by the instructors. Thus, students had to conform with the different sets of rules and various digital platforms and assignments proposed by the instructors.

By its very nature, the courses and seminars in the higher education medium of instruction are heterogeneous in the sense that instructors are autonomous in choosing the topic, designing the curriculum and the teaching methods. In the context of the pandemic, this heterogeneity was doubled by a vast array of online platforms and approaches, which proved to be challenging for our students, especially the ones enrolled in their first year of study. For this reason and because the online medium of instruction constitutes a demand of nowadays society, we embarked in this study with the aim of analysing the first year students' perception of the shift from face-to-face interactions to online interactions combined with the autonomy of each course and seminar and their perspective on the (online) English Morphology seminar, which is an essential component of their curriculum.

### **1. Theoretical Considerations**

Students' attitudes towards the academic content, the didactic approach and the use of digital tools in the learning process are determined by their profile. This is, in its turn, directly and constantly shaped and reshaped by the rapid evolution of new technologies and the new societal demands because "globalization and technology have substantially changed the ways that we work, teach and learn" (Boothe, 2019: 187).

Our students' profile can be described in relation to their online patterns of behaviour. Students engage in dynamic and interactive activities, perform multimodal exposures on various social networks, connect with other peers and build networks (see Stern, 2007: 98). On social networks, they are multimodal

content creators, constructing and reconstructing self and other representations. They produce and consume images, videos and auto-biographical content. What is more, they engage in activities which involve self-expression and communication through visual, audio-visual elements and metadata tags (hashtags) or text combined with these elements, rather than text alone.

Adapting fast to the constant updates of the affordances of the online environment, they have taken up various online roles: bloggers, vloggers, influencers. They sometimes make a transition from self-representation to self-branding (see Arriagada and Ibáñez, 2020). Therefore, specialised literature has sketched students' profile in relation to their online behaviour on social media and this constitutes a fundamental aspect of their daily routine and has shaped their behaviour in both their (online and face-to-face) personal and professional/academic encounters. As our students are both producers and consumers of content, they have developed this behaviour in the academic environment as well and they have become 'consumers' of education, manifesting a 'consumption behaviour' (Rosén, Billore, 2019: 100). To all these, we add the fact that students are increasingly interested in having an active role in the educational process, being aware of "the highly competitive global situation regarding education, skill development and employment opportunities" (Rosén, Billore, 2019: 100).

## **2. Hypotheses and Motivation of the Study**

Given the complex and complicated learning scenario caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but also by our students' profile, needs and interests, our aim is to analyse a concatenation formed of our students' relation to new technologies, their level e-literacy and the role of the English Morphology seminar in the curriculum and in the formation of a (relevant) academic and professional identity for our students. Observing our students throughout a semester, we had several postulates and we verified them through an online survey. We consider that the validation or invalidation of these hypotheses contributes to a better understanding of our students' profile and an improvement of the teaching act. Thus, we postulated that:

- (1) Not many first-year students know what 'Philology' entails before enrolling in the field of study.
- (2) Students perceive digital literacy mainly as sweeping practices on social media.
- (3) Video conferences are perceived as being the most efficient for online teaching.
- (4) Students perceive a very high improvement of their digital literacy after the remote learning performed during the second semester.

### 3. Description of the Learning Context

In this study, we explore our students' attitudes towards the content of a seminar and the use of digital tools in the learning process in the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020.

The context of this study is the sudden shift from a face-to-face medium of instruction to an online environment because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the students under focus were first year students enrolled at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. All the students have English Language and Literature as their major field of study and their minor is represented by the language and literature of another foreign language (Chinese, Korean, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian, Spanish) or the field of Comparative Literature. We decided to target this group of students because English represents a preferred line of study at the Faculty of Letters. Moreover, we chose first year students because they represent the group who has recently performed a transition from a pre-university medium of instruction to higher education, being a more vulnerable group. As such, out of roughly 150 students enrolled at the beginning of the academic year, about 120 students remained after the second semester. We mention that there were 74 regular participants at the seminar under focus (we counted the students with at least 3 attendances).

We focus on the English Morphology seminar because it represents one of the fundamental academic contents for a student in Philology and we decided not to include the course as well because the seminar is the academic format which is more student-oriented. The English Morphology Seminar is a compulsory seminar, consisting of seven meetings as the students have the seminar once every two weeks. The topics covered during the seminar are following: the noun (the number), the adjective (semantic and syntactic classifications of the adjective, the comparison of adjectives, order of the adjectives), the adverb, sequence of tenses and past tense. The first meeting was conducted face-to-face and the other six took place online.

As the seminar took place online, the students were members of a Facebook group: *English Morphology Seminars\_English Major\_2019-2020*. The group was created with the purpose of communication with the students and of providing the gateway to the seminar content (PowerPoints, handouts, sites, pdf books) which was stored in the Google Drive. Moreover, the Facebook group offered our students a medium for expressing their opinions, addressing their questions, posting their comments and making suggestions. In this way, our students were provided with a familiar digital space and they were part of a *community of learners* (see Cotoc, 2019: 60; Cotoc, 2019: 310)

#### 4. Analysis of Evaluation Data

A very good source of feedback from the students is a survey because students can express their opinions in an anonymous and confidential manner, thus providing useful feedback for the instructor. As such, a month after the semester was over, we sent a survey to our students and some of our hypotheses were supported by their answers, whereas others were invalidated. Out of the 74 regular participants, we had 46 respondents: 40 female respondents and 6 male respondents, 39 with the age 18-21, 6 with the age 21-25, and one participant aged 40-50. They are students in Cluj-Napoca, but they come from all over Romania.

Our survey addressed many problematic aspects encountered by the students in the second semester, it contained closed questions and open-ended questions and it was structured in five sections:

- In section I, students were asked to introduce general information about themselves and their general perception about their field of study (Philology) and future jobs;
- section 2 narrows down the focus to the English Morphology seminar;
- sections 3, 4 and 5 investigate the students' relation to the new technologies before the pandemic, during the second semester and after the second semester;
- the last section addresses the students' perception of the ideal online language instructor.

The first section (General information) offers us a valuable insight into the reasons why our students related to our seminar and the approach used in a particular way as it addresses the students' reasons for choosing to study English Language and Literature, their perception on the Philology field and their future plans.

When asked about the reasons why they chose to study at the Faculty of Letters, the first three reasons were: passion for reading (33 students), a passion for humanities in general (30 students) and good job opportunities (17 students). Unfortunately, there were also 4 students who stated that it was a random choice.

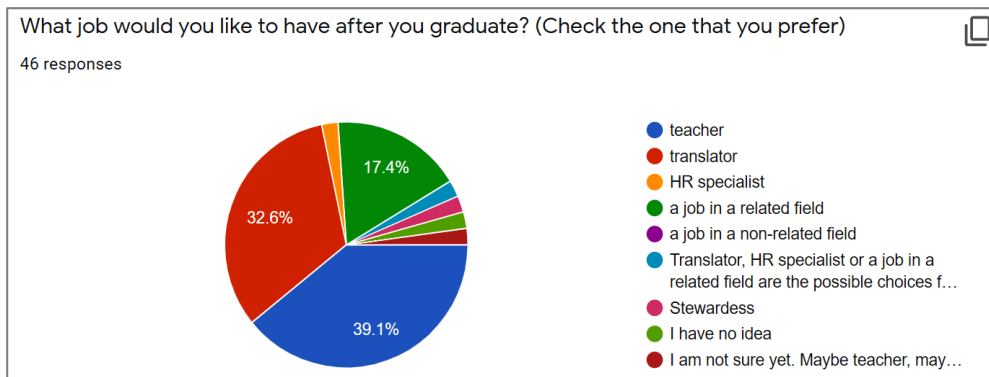
When addressed the question 'Why did you choose English as your major?', the top four reasons were:

- It is the most useful foreign language (18 students);
- It was the only foreign language that I knew (quite) well (17 students);
- I am passionate about English literature and English linguistics (17 students).
- I am passionate about English literature (16 students).



As in the last two years we noticed that many students are surprised by the fact that they have to study theoretical and abstract aspects about the English grammar, we wanted to find out their perception on the Philology field. Hence, we asked them if they knew what the Philology field entails and the kind of courses and seminars taught at the Faculty of Letters when they enrolled. Surprisingly enough, the vast majority of the students (28 students) declared that they knew about the field / had some knowledge about the field, but they did not know what courses and seminars are taught at the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca; 17 students declared that they didn't know much about the field, 3 of them declared not knowing anything about the field. Only 7 students declared having been fully informed about their choice when they enrolled at the Faculty, selecting the answer 'Yes, I knew everything about the content of this field of study and the courses and seminars in the curriculum'. These answers show that many students were not properly informed when they chose their fields of study and this is quite surprising as this information is only a click away nowadays. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see that after a semester, they declared planning to have a job in this field/a related field. For instance:

- teacher (18 students)
- translator (15 students)
- a job in a related field (8 students) (see fig. 1 below).



**Fig. 1**

The second section (The English Morphology seminar) offered us insight into what triggers our students' interest in relation to the English grammar. The seminar focuses on theoretical explanations for complex grammar aspects (the plural of the nouns, the adjective, the adverb, sequence of tenses) and this kind of discipline can be difficult to grasp for the first year students, especially nowadays

when many students are mainly interested in practical aspects, not in theoretical ones. Hence, unsurprisingly, the students stated that they liked the theoretical aspects covered during the seminar (only 17 students) and the grammar exercises (only 17 students), but what they actually enjoyed were the apps and the activities through which they discovered the theoretical explanations (the gamification process in which we involved them).

Regarding the problematic aspects related to the format of the seminar, most of the students reported that they did not have good time management and that they did not know how to organise the tasks efficiently, that the deadlines were tight and there was too much content. Some of them also found problematic the fact that the seminar was two-folded (Zoom meeting and online survey as a follow-up activity). Hence, we consider that the problematic aspects were a consequence of the fact that students are not autonomous learners when they are in the first year, they still need instructional scaffolding and a lot of guidance from the part of the language instructor, not being yet adapted to the requirements of the academic environment.

In terms of useful tools and resources, our students chose the following: the interactive apps (32 students), the Zoom sessions (31 students), followed closely by Google form quizzes (28 students), the handouts and PowerPoint presentations (24 students), the Facebook group (19 students). They didn't find very useful the hyperlinks to other sites, the pdf books uploaded in the Google drive or the videos which contained presentations of the main aspects discussed during the seminar or feedback to their work. One possible explanation for this could be that all these 3 resources require them to perform an independent learning activity (watch the video / read and select the relevant points) and this is a more time-consuming process which requires them to select what is relevant on their own.

Regardless of the problems encountered, the students found the seminar useful and very useful (43 students). They also perceive the seminar as essential for any student majoring in English Language and Literature and the reasons they selected are the following:

- Any future graduate who specialises in English Language and Literature should have knowledge of the theoretical aspects of the English grammar and should be able to explain complex language phenomena (36 students).
- At the end of their studies, students are certified English teachers and English Morphology is essential for this purpose (22 students).
- Regardless of the job that students will have in the future, this type of seminar is helpful to master the explanations behind complex language phenomena (19 students).
- Through the content of this seminar, students develop transversal skills (19 students).

The students also declared that the participation in the seminar not only helped them gain grammar and vocabulary knowledge, but also improved and developed a great variety of skills: writing, listening and communication skills, digital skills, time management skills, discipline, attention to details.

The third, fourth and fifth section (Your relation to technology before/ during the second semester and after the second semester) offers us insight into the students' perception on the transition from the on-site medium of instruction to the online environment. As can be seen in fig. 2 below, the students perceive some improvement of their digital skills after a semester online, but not an astounding improvement. Moreover, when asked explicitly if they think the online learning improved their digital literacy, almost half of them answered positively, 16 chose 'maybe' and 10 students answered negatively.

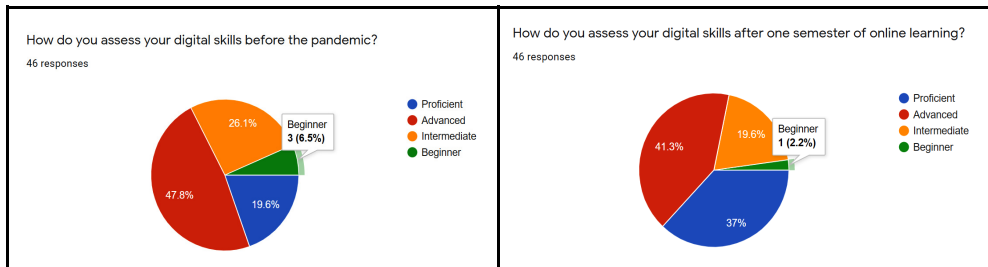


Fig. 2

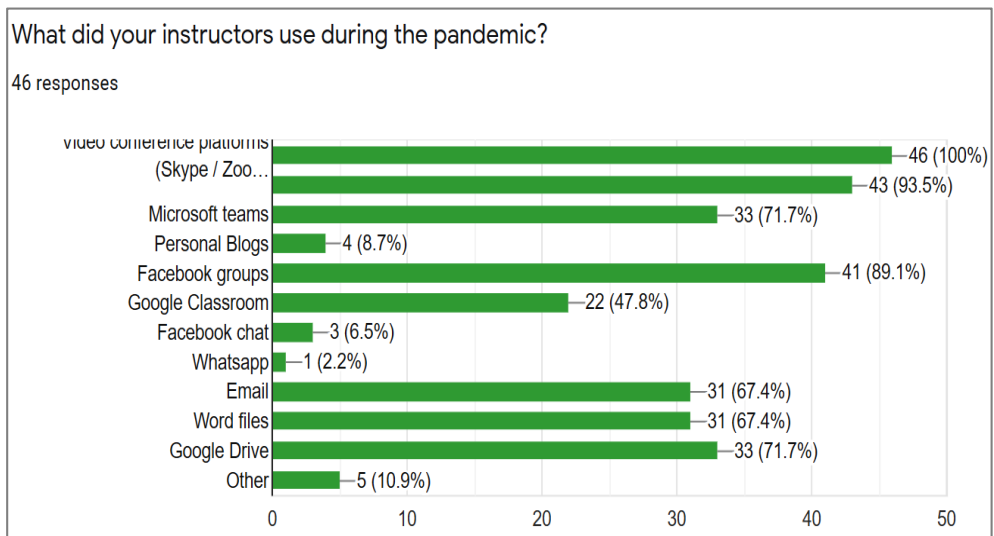
When asked to define what digital skills are, we noticed that many of their answers include references to social media and smartphones. Moreover, even though there are some students who mention more advanced digital skills, most of the answers cover basic digital literacy (for e.g: using a video conference platform, PowerPoint, Microsoft Office) and social media literacy. This can be seen by a selection of their answers:

- *Digital skills could mean the range of abilities to use digital devices, communication.*
- *In my opinion, digital skills refer to the capability of using technological devices for satisfying the basic needs of an individual living in the 21st century (knowing how to use the basic programs such as a word document, PowerPoint and so on), as well as having the knowledge of working any program you are presented with (such as skype or zoom in our case).*
- *To be able to use digital devices without any difficulties with using apps like Microsoft office, Facebook etc.*

- *The ability to use the internet, computers, smartphones etc. efficiently.*
- *The proper use of technology while studying.*
- *Social Media*
- *The ability to use digital devices as a laptop or a computer or communication applications like facebook or zoom.*

Students' use of technology during the teaching-learning process in highschool is similar to their use of technology in the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021. With a few exceptions, the most prevalent use of technology that they mention is represented by pdf books, Microsoft Office, email, online dictionaries, electronic libraries and Facebook/WhatsApp groups. Even so, most of them declared that the integration of new technologies motivated them in the learning process.

When asked to select the technologies used by their instructors during the pandemic, the students chose a plethora of technologies: video conferencing tools (Skype, Zoom, Microsoft teams); Edmodo, Facebook groups, Google classroom, email, word files, Google drive, personal blogs (see fig. 3 below).



**Fig. 3**

Given the fact that the respondents were all part of the same group (first year students, English Major), we witness a very heterogeneous teaching-learning

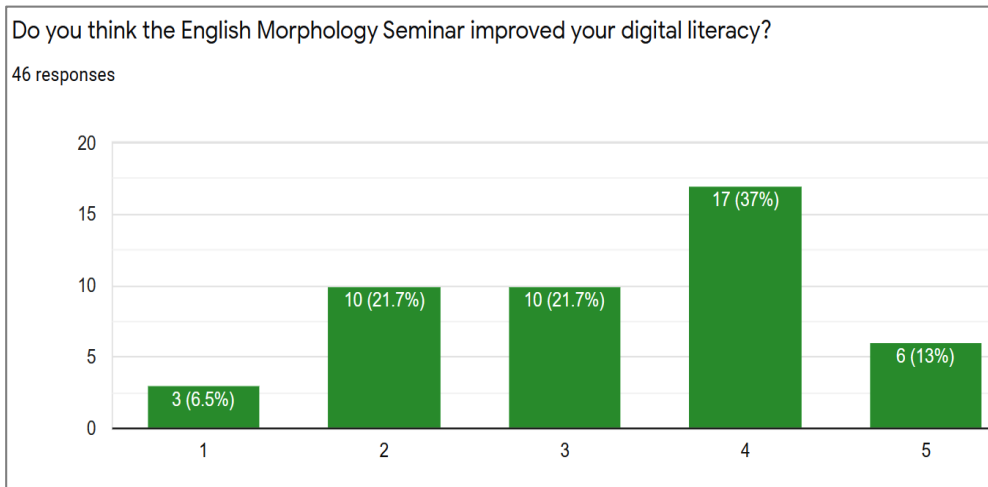
environment and we would expect students to declare that they experienced a lot of difficulty during the semester, but the vast majority of them declared that they did not have any technical problem. There were a few who declared not having a stable internet connection and a few who declared that they could not hear the instructor and the colleagues properly during the video conferences.

Among the most useful technologies used during our seminar, the ranking provided by our students is the following: Zoom meetings, online quiz, the handouts, different learning apps. Moreover, when asked to select their preferred teaching-learning formats, students ranked them as follows:

1. synchronous (Zoom meeting)
2. asynchronous (Google form quizzes)
3. asynchronous (interactive activities)
4. asynchronous (google drive files)
5. asynchronous (videos on YouTube/Loom).

This ranking might indicate a preference for a learning environment which resembles the on-site learning environment.

Regarding our seminar, 33 students considered that the seminar improved their digital literacy (see fig. 4 below). The vast majority of the students also suggested that, even in a face-to-face setting, the English Morphology Seminar should embed the following: YouTube videos and Facebook.



**Fig. 4**

When asked if they are eager to use the new technologies in the new academic year, only half of them answered positively, the other half was represented by the students that remained neutral (15 students) and by those that answered negatively (only 5 students).

Another interesting aspect in our survey was revealed by the following question: "After the experience of the second semester, do you consider that all courses and seminars are suitable for online teaching / remote teaching?". Most of the students answered 'no' to this question and among the reasons for this choice were the following:

- Teachers not having digital skills:
  - *I do believe they can all be taught online per-se, but not all the teachers are equipped to do so.*
- The content of some courses. For instance, many students mentioned the subjects below [emphasis ours]:
  - **Chinese**, because it is **too complicated** to be taught online.
  - **Literature** courses and seminars would have been a lot better face-to-face. *I feel like we would have had the chance to discuss more and maybe even debate certain topics. I really missed the energy that I used to feel during those courses.*
  - **Secondary languages** that we learn from the start such as modern languages, asian languages etc.
- External factors (family)

When asked the question 'Would you like to continue using new technologies in the learning process after the pandemic or do you prefer a more traditional setting?', 28 students chose 'A combination of the two elements (new technologies and traditional format)', 9 students were firm in stating that they would definitely prefer a more traditional setting and 9 students would definitely like to continue using new technologies.

The last part of the survey (The ideal online language instructor) showed that the most important aspects for our students are collaboration and flexibility. Not all students perceive the instructors' digital literacy as paramount, half of them declaring that instructors should have a high level of digital literacy, but the other half considering that minimal digital literacy is enough. In contrast with digital literacy or being up-to-date with the latest research in their field, most first year students value instructors' flexibility and openness to collaborate with the students both in an online context and on-site (see fig. 5 below). This shows that first year students are learners which need a lot of support as they are new to the academic environment.

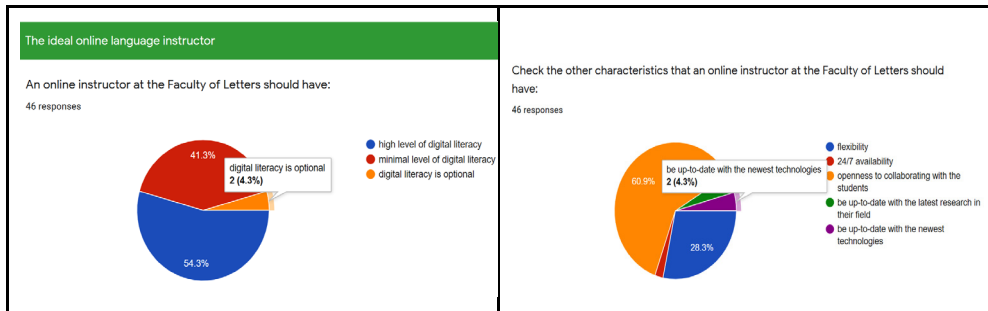


Fig. 5

## 5. Discussion of Results

Research hypothesis 1 (Not many first year students know what 'Philology' entails before enrolling in the field of study) was invalidated by our students' answers, the survey revealing that many of the first year students know what philology is, but what prevails is their lack of information about the subjects that are being taught at the institution where they will be enrolled as students.

Research hypothesis 2 (Students perceive digital literacy mainly as sweeping practices on social media) was only partially validated by our students' answers as many of their answers included social media practices, but many students also mentioned Microsoft Office (word, PowerPoint presentations, pdf documents) and video conferences. This shows that their perception of digital literacy is biased because it is directly influenced by their interests, needs and their own level of digital literacy.

Research hypothesis 3 (Video conferences are perceived as being the most efficient for online teaching) was validated by our students' answers as most of the students declared a preference for the video conferencing.

Research hypothesis 4 (Students perceive a very high improvement of their digital literacy after the remote learning performed during the second semester) was invalidated as the students did perceive an improvement, but they did not perceive they improved their digital skills to a great extent, as we expected.

## 6. Conclusions

The second semester of the academic year 2019-2020 marked an abrupt transition from an on-site medium of instruction to an online format. Firstly, the instructors adapted the content of their discipline to the new

teaching context using the new technologies that fitted their own level of digital literacy and that they considered appropriate for the content of their discipline. On the other hand, students had to adapt to the requirements and use new technologies in order to have access to the academic instruction and content.

The relation to new technologies was one of the key factors in this first step of reinvention of the teaching-learning process. In this process, students' perception represents a key element in the effective teaching-learning process. This study offered us valuable insight in this respect, exploring the relation between students and technology before/during and after the second semester and also the students' opinion on their fields of study (philology) and the English morphology seminar. Thus, our study showed that our students enrol at the Faculty of Letters without being fully aware of the academic path they will undertake. This might be an explanation for the fact that first year students need a lot of guidance and support in the transition from pre-university level to university level and even more so in the online medium. Moreover, digital literacy is important to our first-year students in philology, but it functions only as a tool to have access to the instructors, peers and the content of their courses and seminars. Their perception on courses and seminars is also influenced by the way in which content is delivered to them, by their general interests and their current online patterns of behaviour.

This study is based on the answers provided by a part of the participants in the English Morphology seminar and we consider that it can constitute the basis for other investigations either with a larger number of respondents or with students who have a different academic profile (another major, a different field of study or even a different year of study).

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## THE STORY OF THE LAST ENCOUNTER OF BRITAIN WITH FRANCE

CĂTĂLIN DEHELEAN<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *The story of the last Encounter of Britain with France.* This study is about a story which narrates an important event for British culture. Literary theory postulates that reading any story has several layers of interpretation. Reading this story is by no means an exception. Depending on the approach one can identify various elements which relate to legends, myths and folktales. This article presents a story of an episode which has an almost legendary place in British culture. The narrative speaks of a French interaction with the British. This took place in a place in Wales called Fishguard in 1797. Its legendary feature is given by the unexpected turn of events. In other words, an otherwise serious event is quasi-comical in nature. This story also contains a mythical element. It is said to have been an action of the local women. The local women are said to have dressed in their traditional attire. This display is said to have scared the French into submission. The entire story is being told by the locals as part of their inherited tradition. They have identified with the story to such an extent that they have even created a material culture around it and have put it on display.

**Keywords:** *story, legend, myth, France, Britain.*

**REZUMAT.** *Povestea ultimei întâlniri a Marii Britanii cu Franța.* Acest studiu prezintă narațiune unui eveniment important pentru cultura britanică. Teoria literară postulează că lectura oricărei narațiuni are mai multe nivele de interpretare. Lectura acestora nu este nicidecum o excepție. În funcție de abordare, se pot identifica diferite elemente care se referă la legende, mituri și povești populare. Acest articol prezintă povestea unui episod care are un loc aproape legendar în cultura britanică. Narațiunea aceasta vorbește despre o interacțiune dintre francezi și britanici. Acest lucru a avut loc într-un loc din Țara Galilor numit Fishguard în 1797. Trăsătura sa legendară este dată de o turnură neașteptată a evenimentelor. Cu alte cuvinte, un eveniment altminteri serios are o natură cvasi-comică. Această poveste conține și un element mitic. Este vorba despre o acțiune a femeilor din partea locului. Se spune că acestea s-au îmbrăcat în ținuta lor tradițională. Se spune că această apariție i-ar fi speriat pe francezi să

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se supună. Întreaga poveste este spusă de localnici ca parte a tradiției lor moștenite. Ei s-au identificat cu povestea într-o asemenea măsură încât au creat chiar o cultură materială în jurul ei și au expus-o.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *narațiune, mit, legendă, Franța, Marea Britanie.*

One was looking for a story that is tale-telling to British culture. As such one has stumbled across a story from the late eighteen century which is relevant for the cross-Channel relations of the time. It was called the last invasion of Britain.

But if one has already mentioned the narrative in the abstract, it has to be said that does not tell the whole story. Its purpose is to give a glimpse. The body of this article is meant to mention a bit more of its elements.

This is quite necessary, in fact. As the narrative is not an objective account of the events. It is rather full of subjectivity. It is peppered with myths, i.e. parts which were added later. It is remembered as mock-heroic and presented with a sense of humour.

### **1. The rivalry between England/Great Britain and France**

One was in search of a story representative of British culture. A much-debated aspect thereof is Anglo-French relations. The rivalry between the two sides of the Channel is old and goes back to the Norman invasion of England.<sup>2</sup> The problem of the time was that William Plantagenet referred to as the Bastard, who after defeating King Harold Godwinson at the battle of Hastings, acceded to the throne of England as William I and changed his nickname to the Conqueror, but, at the same time, kept his possessions in France. This led to an uncertain situation where the Kingdom of England was independent but was ruled over by a king who was also paying feudal homage to the King of France. The problem had only worsened as the Kings of England started to acquire more lands in France. At a certain point in time, the King of England controlled more than half of the Kingdom of France. That is when the bubble burst and a horrible series of confrontations generically called the 100 Years' War started and it ended up with King John losing all the Plantagenet possessions in France, except for the Channel Islands and the Pale of Calais.<sup>3</sup> However, this was not the end of the story. When King Henry VIII instituted his religious reformation,

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<sup>2</sup> Chibnall, M. [1986]. pp.11-13.

<sup>3</sup> Prestwich, M. [2003]. pp.307-312

the Catholic King of France tried to help the English Catholics, which due to the unbending official stance, could only have been subversive in nature. After Queen Elizabeth I, styled Gloriana, died without issue, the first in the line of succession to the English throne was the King of Scotland James VI, who is known in the English royal row call as James I.<sup>4</sup> He had to deal with the Tudor legacy of the religious and sectarian divide. While he had some success, like the King James Bible, which is a landmark of literary English, he did have some undertakings which would come back later to haunt the establishment. These were the settlement of protestants in Ulster, also known as the Plantation, and the establishment of colonies on the eastern coast of North America. In the first, case, it would stir up constant unrest in a population already unhappy with its overlords. In the second case, though it would lead to all-out and prolonged war. He was succeeded to the thrones of England, Scotland and Ireland by his younger son, Charles, as Charles I. Unlike his father, Charles was never desperately confident with diplomacy. While, he was not a catholic, but was raised an Anglican, he did marry a catholic, a French royal princess no less. This was bound to cause trouble. His closeness to both the French and the Catholic Faith would prove his undoing. During his reign, England had plunged into a bloody civil war which ended up with him being beheaded and the country turned into a puritan Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell. It was during this time that England helped the Protestants in France. The French kings harboured and supported the Stuart dynasty. After the death of Cromwell, the Stuarts were restored to the throne of England while they secretly hoped and tried to make England a Catholic country once more. That didn't come to be, because the glorious revolution had brought the Dutch Prince of Orange to the throne, as well as a new mercantile orientation. After his daughter, Queen Anne, failed to produce an heir, the King of Hanover, George I, was offered the throne, because he was the only close relative who was a protestant. It was during the time of his grandson, George III, that the American War of Independence occurred and the French helped out because they had been previously pushed out of Canada by the British. The huge expenditure of French resources in America was one of the causes of the French Revolution. As the French revolution grew increasingly bloody, the now British government was willing to help the royalists. This antagonised the two sides even more, and they were in a permanent state of war. The French Revolution turned into the French Directory which not only centralised the country but started to conquer their neighbours in order to make satellite states in its own image, the so-called "Sister republics", e.g. The Batavian Republic, Ligurian Republic, etc.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> McLynn, F. [1987]. pp. 84-89.

<sup>5</sup> Van Wie, P. D. [1999]. pp. 116-117

## 2. The road to invasion

In 1797, despite more pressing domestic matters, poor supply of food in Paris, the members of the French Directory<sup>6</sup> decided to seek revenge for the British involvement in the French revolution when and where it overtly and generously propped up the supporters of the Ancien Régime, i.e. the Royalists. French general Lazare Hoche, a man whose name is inscribed on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris (Northern Pillar, Column 03) due to his revolutionary and Napoleonic exploits, was selected for the job. It has to be said that he did not draw up a plan to invade Great Britain. It was supposed a series of two diversionary landings in Britain, to enable a successful landing in Ireland in order to help “United Irishmen”. One was supposed to take place in Newcastle and the other one in Bristol. The landings were expected to be successful and then without encountering any British armed resistance, or dealing with it swiftly, the two forces would eventually merge, thus cutting the country in two. Moreover, the Directory was hoping that the local populace would see the invaders as liberators and fraternize with them, thus undermining the British Establishment. Due to poor weather conditions both the feint in Newcastle as well as the main landing at Bantry Bay failed miserably. The only French expedition which would manage to get to British shores would be the invasion force meant for Bristol. As such, the events took place between 22 February 1797 to 24 February 1797 and historiographers have given it the catchy title The Battle of Fishguard. Today it is purported to be the last invasion of Britain, even though that was not its purpose, and, sadly, it was not the last attempt at a foreign military incursion into the Isle of Britain, as World War II would make it painfully clear.

## 3. The French forces

The French Directory consisted of very determined statesmen who were very keen on achieving their agenda. However, on closer scrutiny, one will notice a few problems from the start. Most of the French army was fighting abroad, so they only had some reserve troops which were rejected by the commanders because they were not really fit for service. And, truth be told, they would part with them only half-heartedly. The French authorities had to improvise and found their recruits in some of the most unexpected places. The promised freedom to inmates and they hired foreigners such as Irish and even Spanish. This rather mixed group was given the title of “Seconde légion des Francs”, the Second French Legion.

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<sup>6</sup> Lyons, M. [1975] pp.159-173

Provisions were also badly needed. Luckily for them, they did manage to capture a supply of British uniforms. But since they naturally wanted to differentiate their troops from the ones would be fighting, they tried to dye them black. The results were rather mixed with uniforms bearing hues ranging from brown to black. Nonetheless, due to their somewhat darker appearance, the troop was given the moniker “Legion noire”, the Black Legion.

#### **4. The way to Fishguard**

The French diversionary invasion plan was not particularly well connected to the realities of the terrain. The French sailed from Brest and were heading to Bristol according to plan. The problem was that navigation in the Bristol Channel is extremely difficult at the best of times. And it wouldn't be the best of times for the French. The dangers for navigation are many. There are the extremely powerful coastal currents which can smash anything flowing against the shore or, take them out to the high seas without any possibility of control. Then there are the tides which can leave the seabed exposed during the ebb and sweep everything in its path at flow. And then there are banks which lie invisible, making the estuary extremely shallow in these places being able to ground any ship no matter how big.

Today the ships entering this important waterway have plenty of help. First and foremost, all navigators require considerable river and sea training with extra rules in place just for the Bristol Channel. There are automated lighthouses which can be used as a reference in low visibility conditions. Navigators have at their radar devices, sonar and geopositioning satellite systems. They also have state of the art communication systems to enable communication with the ports in and around Bristol. Then there are the pilots provided to every ship which are familiar with the local conditions and can take action at a moment's notice.<sup>7</sup>

Back then, at the end of the Eighteenth Century, there was virtually none of that. The only development when it came to safety was a type of ship called a Pilot Cutter. It was indeed safer for navigation in the Bristol Channel due to a few innovations. The problem was that the French did not have the privilege of using one and had to make do with their rather conventional frigates. Once the invading armada reached the mouth of the estuary, the French commander quickly realised that the objective of reaching Bristol was untenable. But let's not forget that he was quite an adventurer. So, not to be deterred, he simply decided that they should land in a safe haven and start the

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<sup>7</sup> Steers, J.A. [1964]. p. 750

invasion there. Then they steered north instead of the original easterly direction, and kept going along the Welsh coastline of Pembrokeshire until they reached Carreg Wastad Head by Fishguard, where the local bay offered the ideal conditions for landing. They did so on the 22 February 1797.

### **5. An alternate history**

Alternate histories are interesting because they stir up the imagination of the public. The main reason for their success is that they are well-crafted scenarios. They are so well-crafted that they almost seem natural. Thus, they come with a high degree of plausibility. However, one must keep in mind that they never came to be. Consequently, alternate histories are entirely fictitious.

This is a perfect example thereof. In an account of the battle published almost a century after the events, i.e. in 1892 one is presented with a completely different story of the French invasion at Fishguard. According to this story, the French fleet, after avoiding the Bristol Channel went up the Pembrokeshire coast, but did not stop at Carreg Wastad but, instead entered the harbour of Fishguard directly. But, the port of Fishguard was guarded by an impressive fort which was manned and armed with guns. The French were said to have been fired upon by the British at which point they retreated to Carreg Wastad point which was unguarded and landed there.

But this alternate story does not end there. It goes on to say that it was in fact all a huge misunderstanding. No one was expecting an invasion. The commander of the local fort thought that the fleet was British and was returning home. So, he ordered a few rounds to be fired as a greeting. The rounds fired were blanks. Not that he had any choice. After all, he only had only three cannonballs left in store so he couldn't afford to waste any of his precious ammunition. But, as the story goes, the French were completely oblivious to these facts. Had they known in what the intention of the fort commander was and the dire straits in which the local garrison was munitions-wise, they could have simply taken over the fort as well as the town and begin an invasion in earnest. But, being in the dark, the French lost this precious opportunity.

On closer inspection though, one will notice a few inconsistencies. While the actual land invasion would prove to be a complete disaster, the actual naval expedition was led and manned professionally. The French were supposed to land inconspicuously and not sail straight into a well-guarded fort and that is what they did.

### **6. On dry land**

Once the French infantry reached dry land, they were confronted with a real enemy. This enemy was not human in nature but something more efficient:

the wind. It was too cold, wet, and salty. They simply could not set up camp where they landed above Fishguard. So, the French Commander simply decided to go down towards Fishguard, but not in the town itself. Instead, they went for three farmhouses in the close vicinity of the town. Not wanting to lose their livelihoods, the local farmers whose properties were being trespassed tried to put on some resistance, but it was a game of numbers and the French won and the farmers had to run for their lives.

The French infantry had another incentive for this quick victory. They were going to loot the places. While they were doing just that and settling in, they discovered a prize that exceeded their wildest dreams. The locals had managed to collect salvaged port wine in remarkable quantities. Unable to believe their luck, the rowdy French troops quickly despoiled the places and got on with the job of consuming it. In this state they got the courage to conquer even more places to despoil and, of course, nothing was sacred.<sup>8</sup>

## **7. The mythical counterattack**

People are told that the argument that tipped the odds in favour of surrender was the fact the British managed to bring in reinforcements. William Tate stood with a severely depleted and unreliable force without much chance of success. It was right at this time that he was shown a most horrific sight to behold: rows of English redcoats above the hills of Fishguard. Realising his men were just about to be attacked from an elevated position, he sent two officers to sue for peace.

But what he couldn't have known was the fact that there was going to be no attack, for there were no reinforcements. What he was shown by a soldier in an equally distressed and disturbed state was nothing more than the most elaborated bluff the locals could pull. Apparently, the local women had kitted themselves in their traditional dress, which consisted, among other things, from a red shawl and a black Welsh hat, which very much resembles a top hat. In an inebriated state, any French soldier, unable to get too close, and expecting a British attack, could have easily mistaken them for the reinforcements. William Tate himself would have been disturbed enough by now to take the information at face value, seeing no reason to doubt it, even when he went to take a look at the supposed army.

## **8. A local heroine**

But the story in the previous paragraphs is most likely only a piece of lore. The fact of the matter is that there is no evidence of such a bold display.

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<sup>8</sup> J. E. Thomas [2007]. p.138.



The origins of this story can be traced back to the deeds of a local woman called Jemima Nicholas. While she came from a respected cobbler family, nobody expected what would happen next. She donned her clothes and arms, by which we mean a pitchfork, and led an attack of sorts on a group of invading soldiers. After the latter had busied themselves with looting and vandalising the local church of Saint Mary's where they managed to tear apart a precious bible and steal the chalice, they finally succumbed to drunkenness. As such, they were easy pickings for the local women led by Jemima. They were captured and held until being handed over to the proper authorities. The news of her extraordinary deed did not go unrecorded. Her reward was not just plenty of praise and remembrance, but also a nice pension for the rest of her life. Sadly her personality brought her in some trouble with the law when later in her life she got quagmired in a local riot. The details of what happened afterward are, however, unknown.

### **9. The French surrender**

On the 24 February 1797, the French commander accepted the unconditional surrender. The French delegates were expected at the British headquarters. They were welcomed inside and presented with the instrument of surrender which they duly signed. Then they were made prisoners along with the rest of the French invading force. Their ships were requisitioned and put into service by the Royal Navy.

This episode shows a rather interesting circularity. The French invasion started with a landing in a place where it should not have taken place and ended with their surrender in a Pub. In any case, the local publican has preserved the table where the surrender was signed for posterity, as a sort of testimony for this most weird of moments in history.<sup>9</sup>

### **10. An unexpected and lasting consequence**

Much like today, the City of London was, at the time, a booming financial hub. There were various financial institutions like the Bank of England and, of course, the London Stock exchange. Anyone who was anyone was doing business in London. The monetary system of the Kingdom of Great Britain was working on the principle of convertibility. That is to say that the money could be redeemed at any time by their value in gold. Due to the many wars Great Britain waged, there was inflation to the point that there was more than twice

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<sup>9</sup> James, W. [2015] pp.95-96

the amount of money in circulation than the gold reserves in the banks. This was not really a problem as long as people did not want to trade in the money for gold. However, every time a sudden and unexpected event happens, the creditors tend to get fearful and pull their reserves from the banks. The French invasion of Fishguard and the ensuing battle was just such an event. In its aftermath, there was a scare of invasion and the creditors flocked to the banks to turn their money into gold. This was not just a peril for the banks which would obviously have had to close shop but it would have bankrupted the entire country. Usually, desperate times call for desperate measures, but what Parliament did next was nothing more than forward-looking and trendsetting. What they did was to make the pound inconvertible. To wit, nobody could go anymore to a bank and ask for the value in gold of the money they held. They introduced the fiat money, that is to say, money which was not tied to any source of material wealth, but, rather, their value stemmed from the law establishing them. In other words, the pounds went from being a proof of how much gold one had to an "I owe you" note. To be fair, this was neither the first attested time in history, nor the last time it happened, but, it helped The Kingdom of Great Britain and its successor state, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, get over the Napoleonic wars and form an empire which would come to influence the affairs all over the world.<sup>10</sup> This episode shows just how much a story can influence society as a whole.

### **11. The tapestry of the battle**

After the battle of Hastings, a large representation thereof was made to commemorate the event. Historians are not entirely certain who commissioned it. It may have been William the Conqueror himself or someone in his immediate family, i.e. his wife or his brother. Since it was made in Bayeux, France and kept in the local Cathedral, it came to be known as the Bayeux Tapestry, although it has had several other names. Calling it a tapestry is a misnomer in a textile sense. A true tapestry is woven, but this particular example of cloth is embroidery.<sup>11</sup>

It was exactly this quirk that helped the Fishguard Arts Society to embark on a commemorative project of its own. They decided to pay homage to the event by making a tapestry depicting the Battle of Fishguard. While the underlying idea of the Fishguard tapestry seems to be remarkably similar to the one of the Bayeux Tapestry the style is not merely a pastiche of the later. It is much more than that. It is a work which combines local sewing traditions with a modern take on the events. So, the style is rather unique and fresh.

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<sup>10</sup> Foster, R. T. [2010] pp. 59-60

<sup>11</sup> Beech, G. [2005] pp.19-31

The Bayeux Tapestry is silent when it comes to its makers, while Fishguard tapestry is very explicit, naming all the people involved in the commissioning, design and manufacture. Like the Bayeux Tapestry, the one in Fishguard has panels. They both have titles, but, while the Bayeux tapestry is described by Latin titles, the Fishguard tapestry is bilingual, with the headings in Welsh, and the same information repeated in the footer in English. The Bayeux Tapestry is an excellent example of lay Romanesque, while the Fishguard tapestry is mock-heroic and romantic even. Last but not least, the feeling of the Bayeux Tapestry is that of miniatures from a religious book of the time, while the Fishguard tapestry is naive and brash.

### **Conclusions**

The entire endeavour was ill-conceived poorly planned and executed. The reasons for the invasion were and to rally up the underprivileged masses and destabilize British society thus forcing the British government to pull out of the war of the First Coalition. The folly of this plan is that the French Directory were assessing the situation according to their own recent revolutionary experiences. As such it did not take into account the historical developments in Britain itself, which had become relatively stable.

While there certainly was discontent in the Kingdom of Great Britain, it tended to be about personal advancement in an increasingly mercantile society. Almost everyone by now expected political change to be slow and predictable, so as not to damage business or, indeed the running of daily lives. Moreover, while there was some desire for political reform it was largely expected to be top-down and not vice-versa. This meant a general repudiation of violent action against the establishment. The establishment is a loose term referring to the way society is being run and involves very complex, mostly economical and political, relations between the various strata. The French Directory advocated a strict separation of powers as well as a submission of the economy to itself and its own purposes, which at the time was war. In Britain the opposite was true: any war was meant to protect the business interests of the ruling elite. The population accepted it because this wealth would trickle down to them and because, through enterprise, one could indeed climb this social ladder. In other words, the average British were incentivised to play by the rules.

It is true that the situation in Ireland was markedly different. But the fact of the matter is that the French understood it even less. There were parts of Ireland which were settled with Scottish and English Protestants, which were staunchly loyal to the Crown. Most of the arable lands were in the hands

of a couple of dozen families which were either English or thoroughly anglicised, while most of the local populace was being pushed westwards, where the lands were rocky and poorly suited for agriculture. The locals were indeed completely disenfranchised, but lacked the tradition of unity, save for their shared Roman Catholic faith, as their Gaelic language was being pushed to extinction. The truth was that the Irish were beginning to starve and the only solution was to emigrate. Some migrated to the isle of Britain, while many more to North America, especially to the United States, where they could actually make a living instead of just trying to survive in an increasingly inhospitable Ireland. The masses which the French expected to rise up against the British overlords simply could not rally under the given circumstances.

Then there was the actual planning. The idea of diversionary attacks may have seemed brilliant but the places chosen for landing in on the isle of Britain were indeed very poor choices. The French were well-advised to steer well clear of the ports in the South like Portsmouth, Bournemouth, Plymouth, etc., as well as the Thames estuary, i.e. London. These places were well-defended by a number of impressive coastal fortifications. The fortifications relied on a network of lookout posts and an efficient communication system to spot incoming enemy vessels and raise the alarm. The French were also aware that there were no such complicated military installations in place on other places on the British coastline. They may also have been aware that the seas were treacherous due to storms breaking out at a moment's notice. But the desire to go ahead with the plan proved stronger and the French went ahead with it, despite any red flags, just assuming that nothing would go wrong.

The French invasion forces were also a problem. France was engaged in wars with everyone who was anyone in Europe, and even beyond. While France did have the largest population of any country in Western Europe at the time, it did put a strain on its human as well as its material resources. Basically, France could ill afford such an invasion. But, since there was political will for it to happen, it had to happen. Obviously, they could not spare any experienced sailors nor any experienced infantry. All they had were a few hundred men who were unfit for service, but the French had correctly calculated that these wouldn't be enough. To go through with their plans they had to find a lot more men. They reckoned that since their jails and prisons were full of reprobates which were just a burden on their society, maybe they could put them to good use. So, the French promised amnesty to inmates willing to fight the British. The simple logic was that rather than staying inside and risk being beheaded, it was worth taking a risk in Great Britain.

While France could only spare a few soldiers, it could spare even less experienced commanders. The result was that the commanders chosen for the

invasion also had maverick streaks. They were little more than unexceptional men who desired to escape the routine of their daily lives rather than professional military men of some stature. They were thus unable to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks, and manage their tasks accordingly. The result of such poor decision-making was a chain of errors which nullified the chances of success from the start.

Reading about the events one cannot but be astonished about the farcical nature of the French invasion of 1797. However, these events have brought about serious consequences. The response of the population was that of rallying against a common enemy. The spirit of social cohesion was thus strengthened. But it was much more than that because this solidarity would come to shape the hearts and minds of the British. At the same time, out of necessity, there was a quick but fundamental rethinking of the British financial system in order to withstand and even thrive through military campaigns. So, the French invasion, far from weakening the British society helped transform it, if only ever so slightly, into the superpower which it would be in throughout the nineteenth century.

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## THE JUNGIAN ARCHETYPES AND THE CONFLICT WITH THE DOUBLE SELF IN *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*

ELENA-DANIELA SANDU<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *The Jungian Archetypes and the Conflict with the Double Self in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* The current paper analyzes Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* from a psychoanalytical perspective. The analysis presents the Jungian perspective of collective unconscious that proposes the existence of several archetypes that inhabit the mind of every human as a set of repeating patterns. The focus of the paper is put on the Archetypes of Shadow, Ego and Persona that appear in the psyche of the protagonist, Dr. Jekyll. The paper explains the manifestation of the schizoid personality in Dr. Jekyll's psyche. Jekyll's relationship with his double-self is presented as the main cause of Dr. Jekyll's failure to individuate and unify all the Archetypes of his psyche.

**Keywords:** *archetype, unconscious, double, shadow, ego, persona, individuation, Victorian*

**REZUMAT.** *Arhetipurile Jungiene și Conflictul cu Sinele Dublu în „Straniul caz al doctorului Jekyll și al domnului Hyde”.* Lucrarea de față își propune să analizeze scurta povestire a lui Robert Louis Stevenson intitulată „Straniul caz al doctorului Jekyll și al domnului Hyde” dintr-o perspectivă psihanalitică. Analiza expune perspectiva Jungiană a inconștientului colectiv care propune existența unor arhetipuri prezente în mintea fiecărui individ ca un set de tipare repetitive. Miza lucrării este concentrată pe arhetipurile de Umbră, Ego și Persona care apar în psihicul protagonistului, Dr. Jekyll. Lucrarea explică manifestarea personalității de tip schizoid în psihicul doctorului Jekyll. Relația doctorului Jekyll cu sinele său dublu este prezentată ca principala cauză care împiedică procesul de individuație și unificarea tuturor arhetipurilor din psihicul doctorului Jekyll.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *arhetip, inconștient, dublu, umbră, ego, persona, individuație, Victorianism*

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Robert Louis Stevenson publishes his gothic novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in January 1886, about ten years before Freud establishes psychoanalysis as a new science of the unconscious mind. Psychoanalysis that is inaugurated as a science by the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud, studies the dimensions of the unconscious mind. Otto Rank explains that “the technique of psychoanalysis generally aims at uncovering deeply buried and significant psychic material, on occasion proceeding from the manifest surface evidence”. (3)

Even though the most important papers on psychoanalysis appear in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Victorian literature comes to an end, various Victorian writers became aware of the fact that the characters that they create could possibly possess a complex internal world that cannot be explored through complete objectivity and realism. Robert Louis Stevenson is an example of such a writer that understands that the literary characters could literally imitate the internal processes that human beings go through, and they are not only puppets on a fictional stage that execute the commands of the narrator.

Stevenson’s novella is a combination of gothic storytelling with horror elements, and psychoanalytical case-study, which prevails to analyze the manifestations of the dissociative personality disorder in literature prior to the official scientific statement of such a mental disease. Being a part of the literary heritage of the Victorian England, Stevenson’s novella challenges the standards of the Victorian way of thinking because it explores the idea of duality of man caught in the battle between opposite human values. It presents the repercussions of leading a double life in a society where people should be unequivocally educated and respectable.

The author offers a controversial view on what hides behind the mask of the Victorian gentleman, for whom the established moral codes, austerity, reservation, and a clear public image are suddenly contradicted by the perspective of a double life in which an individual can easily relish secret and forbidden pleasures.

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, who was Freud’s pupil and the loyal adept of his theory of the unconscious mind, parts from his master in 1912, when he sets the foundation for his own psychoanalytical theory named analytical psychology. Starting from the concepts of conscious and unconscious that Freud initially defined, Jung elaborates his own theory of the Archetypes of the human unconscious.

The concept of Archetype is created to demonstrate that in the moment of birth, human mind is not a tabula rasa, but it is filled with layers, ideas and concepts which are common for all individuals. The Archetypes are defined as “primordial, structural elements of the human psyche”. “Archetypes manifest both on a personal level, through complexes, and collectively, as characteristics of whole cultures”. (Sharp 12)

Throughout the entire life, every individual should undergo a process called Individuation, one of the most important key concepts formulated by Jung

besides those of collective unconscious and archetypes. Individuation “refers to the process of becoming the personality that one innately is potential from the beginning of life”. (Papadopoulos 198)

A psycho-critical Jungian view on Jekyll’s psyche reveals that the protagonist, Dr. Jekyll, has the curious revelation “that man is no truly one, but two” (Stevenson 61), which determines him to explore his own mental structures in order to confront and intuitively integrate the Archetypes of his own personal unconscious through the process of Individuation. Dr. Jekyll discovers that he possesses a dark side of his personality, which signals the moment in which he becomes aware of his Shadow-self.

The problem arises when the respectable Victorian doctor gradually offers his newly discovered Shadow Archetype too much power over his personality, resulting in the destruction of the rest of the Archetypes that should remain intact in the structure of his psyche such as Persona.

The first Archetype that appears is Stevenson’s story is Persona that is represented by Utterson, the narrator of the story. Persona could be defined as “usually ideal aspects of ourselves, that we present to the outside world”, a functional complex that comes into existence for reasons of adaptation or personal convenience”. (qtd. in Sharp 57).

The character’s name is suggestive for his role in the story, “to utter” the strange case of one of his best fellows, Dr. Henry Jekyll. The whole story is narrated from Utterson’s point of view, sustained by the facts he collects for his personal investigation meant to offer a clear image of the strange case he encountered in his experience as a lawyer.

Utterson embodies the perfect image of the collective Persona desired by Victorian society, a respectable gentleman who works in the field of law, unrelated to any scandal and seen with good eyes by the members of his community. His portrayal as a sober, reserved and uninteresting individual symbolizes the ideal character for every Victorian gentleman: “a man of a rugged countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary, and yet somehow lovable”. (Stevenson 3)

The lawyer avoids expressing any passion or pleasure for anything such as theatre or other cultural activities because he has to keep a calm and collected facade in society, so his personality and actions are all about the image he has to maintain. Despite his apparently tedious image, Utterson is a tolerant and altruistic gentleman, and usually “the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men”. (Stevenson 3)

Despite the loyalty he has for his close friends, he confesses that he doesn’t involve himself in their personal lives, but only adopts the Persona of lawyer and takes responsibility in defending the public image of the fallen men after the wrongdoings already happened: “I incline to, Cain’s heresy [...]. ‘I let



my brother go to the devil in his quaintly: own way". (Stevenson 3) Utterson's actions represent a trial to defend the general impeccable image of Victorian society through covering the mistakes of the reputable gentlemen in the public eye that is always secretly ready to consume any piece of scandal.

The relationship Utterson has with Dr. Jekyll is based on a friendship with "a similar catholicity of good-nature" (Stevenson 4) as the Victorian morals he follows strictly. But despite his cleanliness of character, there could be a possible dark curiosity for exploring the hidden part of human nature which determines Utterson to become Jekyll's confidant: "sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds". (Stevenson 3)

As Jung explains, "The more a man's life is shaped by the collective norm, the greater is his individual immorality". (6: 622) The members of Victorian society fear to explore the truth behind the surface because they unequivocally obey the moral system to keep their reputation clean, but the more they keep their Personas in the most impeccable state, the more their personal belief system rots. As a consequence, Victorians grow shadows that become bigger and bigger, ready to come to the surface in order to cause a revolt against the collective moral system.

Utterson fears to explore his own shadow, so he becomes fascinated with Jekyll's shadow and his strange case. He involves in Jekyll's mystery to meet his own Shadow, becoming a regulatory element between Jekyll and Hyde, and Jekyll and Victorian society. Utterson himself declares "If he be Mr. Hyde, [...] I shall be Mr. Seek". (Stevenson 13) While exploring the Shadow side of human experience in a scientific and cold manner, Utterson prefers to avoid revealing what he discovers about Jekyll's situation during the investigation, in order to keep intact both Jekyll's image and his own image as Jekyll's friend and as a public lawyer. Utterson's bond with Jekyll is both of professional nature and personal nature, so he has enough reasons to keep the image of the respectable doctor as clean as possible, despite the incomprehensible relationship he develops with Hyde. Hyde is the perfect opposite of the friends that Jekyll usually has, and even of Jekyll himself. Mr. Hyde seems completely incompatible with everything that Jekyll means for the public expectations, so the risk that the doctor assumes for being close with such a decadent individual is a mystery for Utterson.

As Dana Brook Thurmond suggests, Utterson meets the Shadow Archetype for the first time through dreaming, confronting Hyde prior to their first physical encounter. "The dreams spurred him to action". (38) Psychologically, playing the role of Jekyll's Persona, the horrid image which appears in Utterson's dream could symbolize the meeting with Dr. Jekyll's Shadow. But as Jung notes in his writing about dream analysis, the content of a dream tells something about the dreamer too. The shadow from his nightmare that moves through the streets of London at night, terrorizing and hurting innocent people, could represent Utterson's murderous instincts that are kept chained in the chambers of the

unconscious. The elements of his dream hide some specific information related to his own personality that he keeps under moral control.

Though, the demonic figure which appears in Utterson's dream depicts not only Utterson's Shadow as individual, but also the overloaded collective unconscious of Victorians. For a Victorian society which undergoes a process of scientific evolution, repressing any obscure concept such as the existence of the Shadow self comes naturally. Victorian society's fear of primitivism projects on Hyde all the repressed content of their unconscious and makes him the symbol of the collective Shadow that grows monsters in basements to maintain respectable personas and controlled Egos.

The Archetype of the Ego is realized through the character of Henry Jekyll, a respected doctor with a curious mind and a strong attraction for controversial scientific experiments. The Ego is defined as "the central complex in the field of consciousness" (Sharp 26), the Archetype which includes the greatest part of the conscious thoughts, actions, and feelings in the daily life.

The meaning of his name could contain a reference to the forthcoming ending he will suffer as a consequence of the dangerous procedure he exposes himself. If the construct "kyll" from Jekyll is associated with the verb "to kill", the character's name predicts his fated destiny, the act of suicide as a release from a situation that gradually became out of control.

Dr. Jekyll is the character that offers the insight of the real person that hides under the surface of Persona. The physical and psychological description of Jekyll presents the portrait of a common Victorian gentleman. Physically, he was "a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness" (Stevenson 19). His appearance exudes trust, warmth, and refinement, making his acquaintances to approach him without hesitation, but also doubting the well-rounded character he always presents. It is visible that Jekyll takes care of his personal image both in the way he maintains his appearance and the relations he has with others.

The relationship Jekyll has with Utterson is established on the interaction between Ego and Persona: "you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection". (Stevenson 19) The two characters have a close relationship with each other because Jekyll needs to surround himself with members of the nobility. The character of every Victorian gentleman is not judged only through his actions and choices, but also through the people with whom he maintains close relations with.

Though, Jekyll removes from his personal life any individual who could represent a threat to the image he is trying to maintain in the public eyes. His close connection with a former friend, Lanyon, comes to an end when Jekyll's attitude suddenly changes. Jekyll starts to keep secrets from Lanyon, following a wrong path and directing his attention to the dark side of science. Jekyll possibly loses the trust he put in his friend because he possesses some dangerous

information about Jekyll's past. Lanyon affirms about his relation with Jekyll: "But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake's sake, as they say, I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash," added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple, 'would have estranged Damon and Pythias". (Stevenson 12)

Mr. Poole, Jekyll's servant, is the one that suggests for the first time the restless temper that Jekyll had in his youth, which caused him troubles: "my mind misgives me he is in deep waters! He was wild when he was young; a long while ago to be sure; but in the law of God, there is no statute of limitations. Ay, it must be that; the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace: punishment coming, PEDE CLAUDO, years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault". (Stevenson 17)

In order to adapt to his social status required as a doctor, Jekyll had to repress all the instincts that could bring him unwanted shame and scandals. All the repressed content that he grows in his subconscious determines him to appeal to the experiment of splitting his own consciousness in two separate parts, one purely good and the other purely evil, in order to indulge in any pleasure he dreamt of whenever he feels without being affected negatively.

In his final statement of the case, Jekyll confesses that he abandoned his wild side, adopting a sober persona, because of "a certain impatient gaiety of disposition" which made him prone to fall in disgrace. However, he felt forced to become a hypocrite, indulging in some of his pleasures secretly and committing himself "to a profound duplicity of life". (Stevenson 60)

The experiment of splitting starts with the realization "that all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil" (Stevenson 64). Jekyll is aware of the "primitive duality of man", and even acknowledges the natural existence of his own personal shadow, describing the relationship between him in Mr. Hyde as "polar twins" (Stevenson 61). When he explains in his journal that he sold himself to his "original evil" (Stevenson 63), believing that this evil part which he hosts inside of him is close to primitivism. When he encounters his dark side for the first time he also declares: "This too, was myself. It seemed natural and human". (Stevenson 64)

Through understanding and accepting of Shadow, he could have started a healthy process of Individuation and finally integrate the Archetypal components into his own psyche. But Jekyll makes a mistake when he splits from his Shadow completely, and then gradually loses the control over it. The repression of past experiences accumulates gradually and at one point they inflate Jekyll's Ego. In this case, the repressed content from Jekyll's youth develops a strong Shadow function, and the Ego becomes less sensitive to the imperatives of the social and moral systems.

Jekyll develops a mental imbalance and shows signs of a schizoid behavior when the phenomena of splitting alters his Ego so much that Dr. Hyde

becomes like a separate person with his own will. One of Dr. Jekyll's former friends, Lanyon, mentions that the doctor suffers from some sort of a mental illness which makes him act strangely: "The more I reflected the more convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease". (Stevenson 55) This mental imbalance could be similar to a case of dissociative personality disorder, as Anne Stiles mentions in her paper: "At least one contemporary reader of Stevenson's novella recognized the similarity between its dual protagonist and late Victorian cases of multiple personality disorder, particularly the symptoms that occur when a patient changes personalities". (893) Though, Jekyll explains his observations on the case and underlines that his consciousness is awoken in the moment of splitting, because he witnesses everything that Hyde does, but only up until a point. In the real medical cases of multiple personality disorders, none of the patient's personalities is aware of the actions of the other, but considering the fact that Jekyll controls the transformation of one personality in another by drinking a potion, his complete awareness when the splitting happens could be justified.

Anne Stiles also believes that Jekyll is associated with the rational part of the brain, while Hyde takes control over the emotional part of the brain: "While Jekyll exhibits left-hemisphere attributes (masculinity, whiteness, logic, intelligence, humanness), Hyde embodies right-hemisphere traits (femininity, racial indeterminacy, madness, emotion, and animality)". (885) The potion that Jekyll uses to transform himself in Hyde could create an asymmetry of the brain, permitting the emotional side to express all the repressed contents without any limitation coming from the intellect.

The potion he invents symbolizes an act of self-reinvention that follows an original scientific method. Dr. Jekyll is no longer satisfied with his plain personality and decides to reinvent himself by adding a special compound to it, the Shadow side. The doctor favors science over religion when choosing to recreate himself as the individual he wants to become, but instead of creating a second-self more much evolved than his actual Ego, he awakens a purely evil force in an early stage of development.

The creation of the potion imitates an alchemical process which Jung associates with the process of Individuation: "I had long since prepared my tincture; I purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required; and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke together in the glass, and when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion". (Stevenson 76)

Through his experiments of separating the conscious from the unconscious, Dr. Jekyll becomes a pioneer in the scientific world. The success of creating two dissociate Personas of the same individual, different in terms of both appearance and behavior, could be described as a successful and innovative product for the Victorian era.

The portrayal of Mr. Edward Hyde fits the primitive image of Shadow, because all the features create the impression of an underdeveloped creature: "Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice". (Stevenson 15-16) Jung explains: "The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real". (9/2: 8)

Mr. Hyde's youth, low height and deformity represent the lack of development of the Shadow Archetype from Jekyll's psyche. His name, "Hyde", is suggestive for the darkness that he emanates, symbolizing everything that hides under the surface of the Victorian style of life.

A comparison of the physical appearances of the two "polar twins" (Stevenson 61) does not indicate a single similarity between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The moral functions of the two split personalities are also opposed, because while Jekyll tries to live following all the society standards and takes care of his image as a respectable man, Hyde savagery reaches a critical point, transforming him into a murderer that kills children and elders. Hyde's creation through a scientific method criticizes the loss of spirituality and human values of the entire Victorian society that started to abandon religion in favor of science. While religion symbolizes a primitive belief, science expresses innovation and modernization. This cultural perspective motivates the fact that Mr. Hyde, who embodies the traditional frame of mind, enters a competition with Dr. Jekyll, who embodies the modern frame of mind,

Jekyll creates an entire new identity for Hyde, purchasing a house for him in the disreputable neighborhood of Soho, with a personal housekeeper, new clothes, a personal bank account and a signature. The doctor makes Hyde an official guarantor in his will, making sure that if needed, Hyde would be able to take possession of his goods.

The relation between Jekyll and Hyde seems harmonious for a short period of time in which Jekyll tastes the pleasure of a completely free life under the mask of anonymous Mr. Hyde. The liberties that Jekyll assumes while embodying his Shadow-self are immoral, but the doctor still keeps a decent control over his own actions. After a period, he realizes that the incorporation of all his flaws, negative thoughts and dark feelings, Edward Hyde, "had grown in stature" (Stevenson 68). Jekyll loses all the control over his own body and consciousness in the moment when his transformation in Hyde comes unannounced, without consuming the potion: "Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde". (Stevenson 68)

Because Dr. Jekyll strongly repressed the violent tendencies of his Ego all of his life, Mr. Hyde's aggressiveness transform all the frustration in criminal

acts designed to annihilate any social limitations. The Freudian Superego represented by the Victorian society sets a conduct code that inhibits Dr. Jekyll's psychic apparatus, and the violence that he represses in order to fit the community explodes in the moment in which Mr. Hyde grows stronger: "Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil". (Stevenson 64)

With every crime, the censorship dissipates and the appetite for life transforms into a thirst for more destruction and violence. Mr. Hyde releases the thirst for death making innocent victims because his underdeveloped psyche cannot sublimate his primal instincts. The desire to kill grows stronger and he releases it externally. The crimes he commits represent rebellious acts against a society that shows no indulgence for sinners or disreputable people who have the courage to face death and destruction. Through his immoral and damaging actions, Mr. Hyde gradually becomes a danger to the Victorian society.

The advantage for Mr. Hyde is that his strength increases faster than Dr. Jekyll expected and he becomes capable of taking almost full control over Dr. Jekyll's consciousness in a short span of time. In this situation, Dr. Jekyll's Persona risks to disappear completely and the Shadow has the opportunity to possess the entire psyche, transforming Mr. Hyde into the single host of the protagonist's body. Even when Jekyll tries to distance himself from Hyde, the power of his Shadow starts to consume all the vital energy he has, making him sick: "I have lost confidence in myself". (Stevenson 29) Jekyll feels like a lost man and promises that he gives up on meeting Hyde again, but he is too involved in the situation and he fails.

When he loses almost all the control over his Shadow, Dr. Jekyll tries to save himself turning to his religious roots again. The narrator notes about Dr. Jekyll that "he had always been, known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion". (Stevenson 32) But this altruism fades when scientific curiosity makes him doubt his trust in the moral and religious systems. Mr. Hyde represents everything that Dr. Jekyll was ever afraid to criticize in his society.

If God made the man his image and likeness, Dr. Jekyll makes Mr. Hyde devil's image and likeness. Utterson associates Mr. Hyde with Satan two times in the story - "the man in the middle, with a kind of black, sneering coolness — frightened too, I could see that — but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan" (Stevenson 6) and, respectively, "if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend". (Stevenson 19) The fact that Mr. Hyde shows his face only late at night - "about three o'clock of a black winter morning" (Stevenson 5) - amplifies his connection with the dark side of humanity.

Through Hyde, Jekyll mocks fake religiousness that promotes absolute positive values without taking into consideration the fact that men are naturally composed of both good and bad. The obligation of accepting and using only the right behavior tempts every man to abandon himself to the dark side, adopting an immoral behavior that leads to an unhealthy and uncontrollable Shadow.

Jekyll wants to disclose the deceit he observes in religion as he mentions: "I was driven to reflect deeply and inveterately on that hard law of life, which lies at the root of religion and is one of the most plentiful springs of distress". (Stevenson 60)

Related to the Darwin's Theory of Evolution, Hyde's deformed development illustrates the fear of the Victorians of regressing at a primitive stage. "Pale and dwarfish", giving an "impression of deformity without any nameable malformation", with "a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness" and a "husky", "broken voice, Jekyll manages to arouse disgust and rejection in any ordinary citizen. The more Jekyll's Shadow grows, the more inhumanly-looking becomes Hyde, reaching the point of being compared by the other characters of the story with "a dwarf" (Stevenson 44), "a monkey" (45), and an "ape-like" creature (77).

Horrified by the situation of his psyche, Dr. Jekyll reaches the point in which completely rejects his Shadow-side: "He, I say – I cannot say, I". (Stevenson 74) The revelation makes him see the monster he created, a creature that overdeveloped its powers and now takes the entire control over his life. Jekyll declares that Hyde is inhuman, deciding that the only fate for such a scientific mistake is death: "he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic". (Stevenson 76) When the Shadow started to annihilate the other Archetypes, the only escape that Jekyll saw was suicide, an act that could destroy both the Ego and the Shadow.

In conclusion, the pressures of Victorian social standards made from Dr. Jekyll a victim who initially aimed to undergo a healthy process of Individuation. However, because of all the restrictions he encountered, he grew a thirst for absolute freedom which resulted in a self-destructive schizoid psyche that became annihilated by the Shadow-self.

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## ROMANIAN IMPERATIVE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PRAGMATIC PRINCIPLE OF (IM)POLITENESS

EMILIA KELEMEN<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Romanian Imperative from the Perspective of Pragmatic Principle of (im)Politeness.* Following a short presentation of the principle of politeness, the article approaches the Romanian imperative identifying negative and positive strategies of (im)politeness, which the imperative is part of. There were identified conventional forms of impoliteness of imperative. The exemplification of (im)polite strategies is based on a corpus elaborated by us. The imperative is present in the most diverse strategies of (im)politeness, however the occurrence of imperative does not mean the interlocutor's threatening act toward the public image (face threatening act). The interpretation depends on several factors, among which the situation of the communication, the relationship between the interlocutors, the presence of intensifiers or attenuators etc.

**Keywords:** *imperative, politeness, face, strategies of politeness, impoliteness.*

**REZUMAT.** *Imperativul românesc din perspectiva principiului pragmatic al (im)politeții.* După o scurtă prezentare a principiului politeții, articolul abordează imperativul românesc, identificând strategii ale (im)politeții negative și pozitive din care face parte imperativul. Au fost identificate formule convenționalizate de impolitețe cu imperativul. Exemplificarea strategiilor se face pe baza corpusului întocmit de noi. Imperativul ia parte la strategii ale (im)politeții dintre cele mai diverse, însă apariția imperativului nu înseamnă neapărat un act amenințător la adresa imaginii publice a interlocutorului. Interpretarea sa depinde de mai mulți factori, printre care situația de comunicare, relația dintre interlocutori, prezența intensificatorilor sau a atenuatorilor etc.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *imperativ, politețe, imagine individuală, strategii de politețe, impolitețe.*

### 1. Introduction

Approaching the imperative, the directive speech act in general from a pragmatic point of view, analysing the speakers' attitude, the effects which follows

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using the imperative, you can easily get to the idea of politeness. As follows, we are going to treat imperative constructions from Romanian language taking into account the reciprocal adjusting mechanisms of the communicative behaviour of those who interact, having a microcorpus starting point elaborated by us. On these premisses, we are going to clarify the following concepts: *face*, *politeness*, *positive politeness*, *negative politeness*, *impoliteness*. In fact, the recognition of the fact that language usage is not only action but also interaction leading to different approaches of pragmatic politeness, Fraser (1990) looks over verbal politeness approach (Lakoff, Leech, Brown and Levinson), but different definitions of the concept are presented in Culpeper (2011b). As follows we are going to make a presentation of the main approaches, based especially on these two above-mentioned works (Fraser 1990, Culpeper 2011a, 2011b), and others from the given bibliography (Culpeper, Haugh and Kadar 2017).

## 2. Theories of politeness

Classical theories of politeness are based on the theories of language acts (Austin 1962, Searle 1969) and on the idea of conversational implications (Grice 1975). Pragmatically, politeness refers to an important component of the communicative behaviour (see DŞL 2001: 392-393), for different researchers there are different nuances interpreting the concept. Politeness is treated as a conversational maxim (Lakoff, Leech), as part from a conversational contract, being under continuous negotiation (Fraser), or as a result of the participants' concerns in the communication avoiding their public image being prejudiced (Brown and Levinson). The principle of politeness is considered a basic principle in pragmatics, next to the cooperative principle having a complementary relationship. The first has a role in providing social cohesion, and the second provides communicative coherence.

Grice's model with the four maxims: (i) maxim of quantity, (ii) maxim of quality, (iii) maxim of relevance and (iv) maxim of manner constituted the starting point of the Lakoff (1977) and Leech (1983) model. Lakoff proposes two rules of pragmatic competence: 1. be clear 2. be polite. The later concretizes in three rules: 1. Do not impose. 2. Offer some options. and 3. Do it in a way so that the receptor feels good. Leech talks about an interpersonal rhetoric and a contextual one. The principle of cooperation and politeness belongs to interpersonal rhetoric. Leech proposes the following maxims of politeness: the maxim of tact, generosity, approval, modesty, agreement and sympathy.

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model was considered the most coherent by the majority of researchers, till now. They consider politeness a universal strategy in different social interactions and one of the subsequent critics brought to this theory is in connection to this idea of universality. In their

concepts the principle of politeness regulates the realization of verbal changes keeping an amiable relation between the participants and a social balance. Brown and Levinson's theory emphasises the rationality of the human behaviour and represents the social image, focusing on the concept of *face*, the public image of the individual, taken from Goffman (1967) with a certain reductionist modification of the meaning (remarked by Culpeper among others, 2011b). Brown and Levinson (1987) see the concept of politeness as collaboration between interlocutors for maintaining reciprocally the image (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, 2003: 74). The individual public image has got two hypostasis: on one hand, a tendency to keep your own territory, namely the desire of everyone's independency (*negative face*), on the other hand, the tendency of imposing a favourable image of self, the desire of being appreciated by others (*positive face*). Most verbal acts contain a threatening potential. This threatening potential is calculated based on three variables: social distance (D), relative power (P), interference grade (I) of the act, in relation to the desire of independence or the appreciation of the individual. Hence, a rational attitude from the individual presumes adapting strategies which diminishes the threatening potential of the acts. This strategic behaviour means an unambiguous language (*on record*) of communicative intentions, together with the redress explicit or implicit actions intended for counter-balancing the possible threat or an ambiguous language (*off record*) of intentions for leaving open to possibly negotiate the meanings. We can see that even the unambiguous language can form a strategy, especially in cases where efficiency is prioritized (for example emergency situations). These strategies are organised hierarchically. We illustrate these hierarchical organizations for the directive acts:

- (i) Direct language without redressive actions: Închide telefonul! (SDM113) - 'Hang up the phone!'
- (ii) Direct language with redressive explicit actions: Ține-le puțin, te rog frumos! (SDM44) - 'Hold it a bit, please!'
- (iii) Direct language with redressive implicit actions: Nu pune mânușele pe la urechi! (SDM695) - 'Don't put your hands in your ears!'
- (iv) Indirect language: Asta e stricată! (Arunc-o!) - 'This is spoiled. (Throw it away!)'

Positive politeness intends to protect the participants' positive self, and negative politeness the negative self of these. Positive politeness considers the speed up of social relations, emphasises common points, whereas negative politeness emphasises the distance from the other, the affirmation of independence. Each of them subsumes a series of strategies.

Starting from the theory of politeness, Culpeper (1996, 2011b: 391-436) proposes a model for impoliteness. Impoliteness means deviation from the requirements of polite behaviour using aggressive procedures, with potentially creating dissension between interlocutors. Determining the grade of impoliteness the same factors are in view as Brown and Levinson proposed for politeness: social distance, power and the level of interference. Ionescu Ruxăndoiu (2003: 102) points out the graduality of transition from politeness to impoliteness, a fact, which we cannot lack the situational context in interpretation. Generally, impolite constructions have a provocative character (Culpeper 2011b), offensive. Therefore, we presume that imperative structures make a practical usable tool when it is about impoliteness mainly the directive acts, specially the order, are considered *threatening* (Haverkate 1994, 2004 in Mihăilescu 2009) having a *taxemic* and *offensive* value (Bigot 2005:46 in Mihăilescu 2009). But at the same time there is a need of precaution, as long as a linguistic structure is not polite or impolite in an inherent way (Watts 2003 in Hoop et al. 2016:42). Culpeper (1996) defines positive impolite strategies and negative impolite strategies.

Intimacy and equality relations lead to a decrease in using polite manifestations, and the personality or sympathy/dislike between interlocutors plays an important role in polite manifestations. We observed that a bare imperative in a certain situation can be an impolite strategy, in other cases it can be considered unmarked from politeness point of view, like in emergency situations (as it was seen by other researchers), when the efficiency comes first or in intimate conditions, in peaceful collaborative moments. For instance, carrying out housework together, the utterance *Pune-l acolo!* 'Put it there!' is neutral from politeness perspective.

### 3. (Im)politeness strategies

Further on, we identified strategies of politeness/impoliteness, in utterances which have an imperative verb in their structure, and as for the terms of strategies we used Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu (2003). The examples come from a microcorpus prepared by us, which contain samples of spoken language and also samples of written texts. The samples from our corpus were entirely extracted from two well-known collections of transcriptions of real conversations in standard Romanian language (IVLR, CORV), respectively recorded spoken language samples from dialectal folk collections, samples from a reality show Wife Swap (Schimb de mame) (12 episodes, generally 1 hour 20 minutes each) and samples collected occasionally.

The written text samples come from fictions and other sources like flyers, online texts (blogs, forums, comments, advertisements, notices) etc. First of all, the

superimposed styles are colloquial and belletristic. There were used contemporary, epical and dramatic literary texts. The number of imperative structures which form the inventory is 3986, out of which we manually selected relevant examples for illustrating the approach of the problem in this present article.

### 3.1. Positive impoliteness strategies

Further, we follow the positive impoliteness strategies, which we identified.

#### a. dissociation from the other

On one hand, noticing the I – you opposition (1), (2), (3) marked linguistically, using the appropriate personal pronoun, and verb forms for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person, expressing the delimitations from each other, the difference between the two or the action of the two. In example (4), the delimitation attitude is expressed through the *leave* verb in imperative form. We can see an accumulation of the strategies in example (5), where dissociation is marked on one hand by using the 2<sup>nd</sup> personal pronoun in singular form, on the other hand there is the *we*, where the speaker is self-included and this plural form is meant to suggest the difference in power in favour of more and, which from the speakers point of view, represents the correct position in the discussion. And to all these it is added the ironic address form *luminatule*, 'enlightened one'.

- (1) Pune-ți, mă și mănâncă singur că eu n-am chef să îți pun nici masa, nici să strâng masa! (SDM502) – 'Set the table and eat alone 'cos I'm not in the mood to set or clear the table!'
- (2) Ia du-te tu la tine la Teleorman, și fă ce vrei tu acolo și nu da la mine ordine! (SDM671) – 'Why don't you go back home to Teleorman and do what you want there and don't give me orders!'
- (3) Fă tu treaba ta, eu treaba mea! (SDM769) – 'Do your job and I do mine!'
- (4) Hai lasă-mă că mă freci atâta, hai lasă-mă! (SDM365) – 'Leave me alone, don't bust my balls, leave me alone!'
- (5) Ia zi-ne tu, luminatule, cum funcționează democrația? (Net09) – 'Tell us, you, enlightened one, how democracy works?'

#### b. disinterest

The imperative verb *to leave* followed by the direct object, 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun is part of an imprecation structure combined with the noun *dracu'* – 'the devil/hell', a colloquial form, showing not only the disinterest toward the topic, but also a surplus of resentments (6).

- (6) Lasă-mă dracu' cu camera ta, că asta îți trebuie ție. (SDM640) – 'Leave me the hell alone with your room, 'cos it's all you're about.'

### c. using inappropriate identity marks, improper forms of address

In the following examples the imperative forms of the verbs are associated with inappropriate forms of address of the situation or the relation between interlocutors. In each given situation, social distance is unimportant; the speaker is the one who self-positions himself above the interlocutor, imposing a subordinate position. The appellation *măi femeie* – ‘you, woman’ from (7), (8) is disparaging. The name of kin in these cases (9), (12) have nothing to do with the comforter or with the common territory, but inadequate familiarity induces a patronizing treatment, what is more a despire. We can notice the use of an interlocutor’s pronoun (10), who is not known, in fact, associated with the imperative followed by an ironical completion. The figurative language *boule* – ‘you jackass’ – it is a direct insult toward the interlocutor (14), and the example (13) constitutes a conflictual challenge through its disregarding and hostile formula containing *tu* – ‘you’ retaken, and the demonstrative popular form referring to the person of the interlocutor followed by the imperative and the observation of dislike.

- (7) Stai, mă, femeie, că nu se poate chiar așa! (SDM72) – ‘Hold on You, woman, that can’t go like this!’
- (8) Du-te, măi femeie, că mă enervezi! (SDM74) – ‘Go now, you, woman, you get on my nerves!’
- (9) Lasă-l, frate, că-i sănătos! (SDM895) – ‘Leave him, bro’ ’cos he’s well!’
- (10) Ioane, păi fă tu mai mulți, dacă tot îți pasă de rasa pur românească. Fii un exemplu! (Net15) – ‘John, you make some more, if you care about the pure Romanian rase. Be an example!’
- (11) Moșule, ține-ți simpatia! (Net62) – ‘Old man, keep your sympathy!’
- (12) Oprește-te, mămică! (Net70) – ‘Stop, ma!’
- (13) Tu, tu ăla de-acolo, nu te mai uita la mine! Nu-mi placi. (FCGP36) – ‘You, you over there, don’t stare at me! I don’t like you!’
- (14) Nu pune mâna! Lasă-l așa, că e ars, boule, și-i smulgi pielea! (FCGP68) – ‘Take your hands away! Leave it ’cos it’s burnt, you jackass, you’ll rip off your skin!’

### d. using taboo words, swearing, abusive or defiler language

Example (15) is a direct attack to the interlocutor’s positive face through the insulting assertion, followed by the ironical imperative. In (16) swearing is accompanied by imperative negative form which limits the other’s free expression, the despised attitude is expressed by the demonstratives popular form and highlights the lack of interest. In example (17) the register is chosen inadequately because it is about an adolescence and an older lady, quasi guests in his house, more educated, who tries to give advice with good intentions but unasked.

- (15) Tu esti bolnavă mintal, tratează-te! (SDM227) – ‘You are mentally ill, go and treat yourself!’
- (16) Lasă-le dracu, nu mai spune mie de alea că n-o să le caut! (sensul cuvintelor) (SDM363) – ‘Fuck off, don’t tell me such things,’cos I won’t look up for it!’ (word meaning)
- (17) Aicia iar ai luat-o pe ulei și nu-mi place! N-o mai lua pe ulei degeaba! (SDM968) – ‘Here, you hit the bottle again, and I don’t like it! Don’t do it for nothing!’

**e. interest in making the other to feel uncomfortable** – through aggressive acts which threatens the interlocutor’s face, through the interlocutor’s contradiction, through complaint about the right to talk

Example (18) contains a threat in case the interlocutor does not fulfill his action named by the imperative.

- (18) Toacă-o și tu mai mărunț, că dacă nu, mă duc și te iau cu o bardă! (SDM127) – ‘Chop it more finely, if you don’t, I go and cut you with a cleaver!’

Example (19) argues the mode of belonging to the other, thus turning it into an insult.

- (19) Învață măcar să asculți! (SDM 108) – ‘At least, learn to listen!’
- (20) the interlocutor is intimidated by the imperative appeal, in fact an accumulation of imperatives, and in (21) the imperatives are framed at the beginning and at the end of the sentence with interjectional appellation from the familiar language of *hai* – ‘come on’.
- (20) Hai, scoate caietul te rog și arată-mi și mie ce ați scris! (SDM201) – ‘Come on, take your notebook out and show me what you’ve written!’
- (21) Hai, lasă telefonul ăla jos, și pune mâna și ajută-mă, hai! (SDM94) – ‘Come on, put that phone down, and get your hands and help me, come on!’

Complaining about the right to talk is another aggressive strategy, expressed almost routinely with the imperative verb form *taci din gură* – ‘shut up/hold your tongue/zip it/be quiet’ etc.

- (22) Mai taci din gură! Lasă-mă să citesc aicia! (SDM84) – ‘Shut up! Let me read here!’
- (23) Vai Simona, taci din gură, că prea te bagi unde nu-ți fierbe oala! (SDM226) – ‘Oh, Simona, hold your tongue ’cos you poke your nose where doesn’t belong!’
- (24) Ia mai taci din gură, da? (SDM372) – ‘Zip it, yeah?’

### 3.2. *Negative impoliteness strategies*

#### **a. inoculation of fear from the other**

- (25) Domnu' Terezianu, ia seama, acum mecanismul s-a pornit, o să te fărâmăm încetul cu încetul. (FGC55) – 'Mr. Terezianu, beware, cos' the mechanism's started and we gonna crush you little by little.'

#### **b. highlighting the transmitter's power regarding the receptor**

(despise, being ridiculed, looked down) – irony, sarcasm

In (26), the despise is facilitated by the hierarchical difference of the interlocutors: representative of an authority, namely a curious citizen, in (27) the same attitude comes from the expert consciousness of the speaker toward the interlocutor.

- (26) Dă-te înapoi, madam, unde te-mpingi? Organele au de lucru aici! (FCGP57) – 'Get back, madam, where are you pushing? The bodies have work here!'
- (27) Fă usturoiul ăla cu zahăr, și răspund eu pentru el! (SDM38) – 'Make this garlic with sugar, and I'll be responsible for it!'

Examples (28), (29) show despise, especially in (28) onomatopoeia:

- (28) Nu mai mă tăcăni toată ziua, taca-taca-taca-taca! (SDM133) – 'Don't crack my brain all day, tock-tock-tock!'
- (29) Continuă așa că în două minute revin! (SDM 245) – 'Go on this way 'cos I'll be back in two!'

Irony and mocking are used in (30), (31), (32)

- (30) Ia zi că nu ești perfectă! Ia zi! (SDM101) – 'Say you're not perfect! Say it!'
- (31) Dar mai arată un pic! (cum se șterge praful) (SDM243) – 'Show me a little bit more!' (dusting) - mocking
- (32) Vorbește și cu mine românește, ce dracu e aia matrice, că eu nu știu. (SDM361) – 'Talk to me in Romanian, what matrix is, I don't know.'

**c. invading the other's territory** (intimate subjects, inadequate relation between speakers)

Example (33) approaches a delicate subject, a personal problem, without, according to conventions, their relation would permit such thing.

- (33) Ia zi-mi și mie, care-i treaba cu pariurile alea sportive! (SDM234) – 'Tell me, what's the deal with those sport bets!'

The first name terms from the (34) reply is intimidating, inadequate relations, it is about an older patient and a younger nurse who see each other for the first time, and the situation of the patient is a delicate one.

(34) Gata! Îmbracă-te! (asistent-pacientă) (FON227) – ‘All right! Get dressed!’  
(nurse - patient)

The fact that using the first name term in a situation like this is felt verbally aggressive comes out from the comment of the character in the following part:

(35) „Ajut-o pe bătrână să se dezbrace! (cel care face razele către fiul adult al pacientei) – ‘Help the old hag to get undressed!’ (nurse to the patient’s adult son)

Eu mă adresez cu dumneavoastră, ăsta mă ia la per tu!” (FON 222) – ‘I address him politely, and he talks to me in first name terms!’

**d. explicite association of the other with negative aspect** (underlining the opposition me and you)

(36) Nu fi hoț! (SDM 248) – ‘Don’t be a thief!’

(37) Uită-te la mine când vorbești! (SDM816) – ‘Look at me when you talk!’

**e. explicite expression of the fact that the receiver is in debted to the sender, minimalization of the other**

Nu da praful la mine că mă enervezi, pfu! (SDM129) – ‘Don’t throw the dust at me, you’re making me nervous, phew!’

Culpeper (2011a: 135-6) makes an inventory of the conventionalised forms of impoliteness in the English language, syntethises in a table. I used the same idea, only we proposed to identify conventionalised forms of impoliteness which implies the imperative based on the corpus. We got to a short list, probably because of the limited corpus and its specification.

**Table 1**

<b>Impoliteness formula</b>	<b>Example</b>
insult, vocative negative	<i>Ia zi, pulică!</i> – ‘Say it, you little prick!’ <i>Spune, dobitocule!</i> – ‘Say it, you, asshole!’
imprecation/curse/swearing	<i>Lasă-mă dracului în pace!</i> – ‘Leave me, the hell, alone!’ <i>Du-te, băi, în mă-ta cu ața ta!</i> – ‘Screw you with your thread!’
intensifiers	<i>pune mâna și</i> – ‘get your hands on it and’

*Conventionalised impolite forms which imply the imperative (adapted after Culpeper 2011a: 135-6)*



#### 4. Politeness strategies

The imperative takes part in realizing the strategies of politeness.

##### 4.1. Positive politeness strategies

###### a. forming sentences, which reflect the attention given to the interlocutor

- (1) Povestește-ne cum ți-a fost și ție ziua! (SDM971) – ‘Tell us how your day was!’

###### b. including both partners in the considered activity

In example (2) the idea is achieved by using the inclusive plural:

- (2) Ia un castron să punem roșiile astea să le spălăm puțin. (SDM151) – ‘Take a bowl, we put these tomatoes in to wash them a bit.’

Using confirmative question can have the same effect, of inclusion of partners, as shown in the example (3).

- (3) Nu mai plânge, da? (SDM555) – ‘Don’t cry anymore, all right?’

**c. using specific forms of expression for showing relations between members of the same group**, forms of address and specific reference; regional or slang forms; elliptical structures (the idea of common informative background)

- (4) Letucuta, te rog frumos du-te și scutură asta! (SDM686) – ‘Letucuta, I kindly ask you to go and shake this!’  
(5) Stai, ștregărițo! (SDM591) – ‘Wait, you little scamp!’  
(6) Ia fata mea, du și tu asta afară! (SDM681) – ‘Take this out, my dear daughter!’ The word does not mean any relationship between the communicators, the sender is older than the receiver.  
(7) Tată, ia atitudine, și nu te lăsa înjosită! (SDM655) – ‘Dad, take attitude, and don’t let yourself to be humiliated!’

Example (7) is a typical case of inverse addressing, (address forms used by children are used in adults’ language - Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 2003: 81)

**d. assumption or affirmation of the existence of a common territory through diverse procedures**

In (8) the meaning of the expression in imperative is doubled for making a gesture underlines the idea of cooperation. In (9) we find a very careful expression:

turns to the information, which communicators share in order to introduce the imperative by the opponent for potentially generating a complaint, and the imperative is attenuated on through a minimalizer *a bit* to close with a justification.

- (8) Mă ajuți? Bate cupa! (bat palma) (SDM22) – ‘Can you help me? Give me five!’  
 (9) Păi, știi că vă place (pescuitul), dar lăsați un pic mai departe că, până la urmă mai importantă este casa. (SDM110) – ‘Well, I know you like (fishing), but leave it a bit because after all, the house is more important.’

**e. assumption or affirmation of reciprocity as a justification for certain acts, of which the aggressive potential is attenuated**

- (10) Am respectat ce am stabilit, acum, strânge masa, spală vasele! (SDM168) – ‘I kept my end of the deal, now clear the table and wash the dishes!’  
 (11) Uite, ia lădița asta că mut eu sacii ăștia! (SDM138) – ‘Look, take this casket, I’ m gonna move these sacks!’

**f. joke**

- (12) Sebi, mai respiră! (în timp ce mănâncă) (SDM 233) – ‘Sebi, take a breath!’ (while eating)  
 (13) Dacă tu crezi că te-am chinuit eu psihic, gândește-te la mine cu voi doi pe cap! (SDM688) – ‘If you think that I tortured you psychic, think about me with you two on my head!’

**4.2. Negative politeness strategies**

**a. reducing the level of interference through restrictive or litote elements or constructions**

- (14) Dă-mi un pic grebla! (SDM479) – ‘Give me the rake a bit!’  
 (15) Ia trage un pic de aer în piept! (SDM901) – ‘Take a deep breath!’

**b. forming excuses: asking for forgiveness**

One of the means of linguistic expressions of excuse is the imperative. Excuse is an act of speech with double nature, carrying not only the characteristic of expressive acts but also directives (v. Cebotaroș 2017). Some of the excuse forms contain in their structure verbs/phrasal verbs in imperative: *iartă-mă/iertați-mă* – ‘Forgive me’, *scuză-mă/scuzați-mă* – ‘Excuse me’, *dă-(mi) voie/dați-(mi) voie* – ‘Let me’, or the negative forms *nu te supăra/ nu vă supărați* – ‘Don’t mind/No

*offence/Don't get mad/angry*'. In most frequent cases their usage is connected to typical situations, clichés. Researchers' opinion is not univocal. Some treat the excuse as a valuable act for the recipient, but threatening for the speaker, others think that it is beneficial for both parties taking part in the act of communication. Excuses are anticipated in (16), (17), (18), (19) situations, referring to a future or possible offence, thus the excuse itself gains a mitigating character. In (16) the excuse it is preceded by an act of speech, which can be upsetting for the recipient and in (17) a provocative act, in (18) an act which prejudices the communicator's image. The disturbance is felt as an offence, at the same time covers a benefit on the image of the speaker, who shows knowledge of good manners (19). In example (20) the excuse presents the diminution of the insulting tone of the act which follows.

- (16) Iartă-mă că spun, dar mie nu mi se pare... nu-mi place nici cum arată... (SDM 648) – 'I'm sorry to tell you, but it doesn't seem to me that...I don't even like how it looks...'
- (17) Dar nu te supăra, tu practici sport? (SDM919) – 'No offence but, you practice any sports?'
- (18) Dă-mi voie să nu te cred că aceste lucruri se întâmplă, având în vedere situația ei școlară. (SDM928) – 'Let me not believe you, that these things happen, considering her school results.'
- (19) Nu vă supărați, pe unde se ajunge în spate? (FON241) – 'Excuse me, how can we get to the back?'
- (20) DOMnu președinte↓ dați-mi voie să încep să am îndoieli din moment ce nimeni nu spune că noi am făcut-o GRATIS# de la constanța înseamnă că cineva o fi luat bani pe ea. (Rux100) – 'Mister President, let me start having strong doubts as long as no one says we did it for free, from Constanta, it seems someone took money for it.'

### **c. impersonalization**

The transition from using plural imperative verbs to singular ones with generic value tempers the powerful directive force from the beginning.

- (21) ÎnvăȚȚAȚi i mă și voi↓ coboRÎȚi la amărîțȚ↓ DAȚi-le mă ceva↓ nu le lua de fiecare dată↓ i-a murit ăla și-i lași în casă dacă nu-ți dă: (Rux153) – 'You, teach me something, get down to the needy, give them something, don't always take from them, that one died and you leave him in the house if he doesn't give anything'.

### **d. using justifications**

The explanations attenuate the produced imposed effect.

- (22) Am pierdut și cuiul! Păi lasă cuiul, termină mai repede că îngheț aicia! (SDM 285) – ‘I lost the nail, too! Leave that nail and finish it quickly because I froze here!’
- (23) Schimbă subiectul că nu vreau să mă apuc de plâns. (SDM 323) – ‘Change the subject ‘cos I don’t wanna start crying.’
- (24) Nu mă înțelege greșit, dar abia aștept să scap de tine! (SDM906) – ‘Don’t get me wrong, but I can’t wait to get rid of you!’

#### **e. using terms of endearment**

One of the complementary redress strategies (Kerbrat-Orecchioni în Constantinovici 2017) is using terms of endearment (25). The form, which contains an imperative *fiți amabilă/fii amabilă* – ‘be so kind/be nice’ it is a cliché meant to diminish the effect of the act, which follows (26).

- (25) Mămico, mai fă și altceva că mie-mi trebuie carne! (SDM946) – ‘Mummy, do something else, because I need some meat too!’
- (26) bună ziua. fiți amabilă↓ aveți cumva> loțiune gerovital↑ pentru regenerarea părului. (Rux92) – ‘Good afternoon. Be kind and tell me if you have any gerovital hair reconitioner lotion.’

#### **f. using *please* formula**

Usually, adding *please* to an imperative is a negative politeness strategy (27). However we must mention that sometimes the apparition of this form has an impolite effect (28).

- (27) Dați-mi și mie vă rog trei cepi! (SDM921) – ‘Please, give me three onions!’
- (28) Bă, lasă-mă în pace, te rog frumos! (SDM299) – ‘Hey you, leave me alone, please!’

### **5. Conclusion**

Often the imperative is involved in realizing polite and impolite strategies in Romanian language. We captured various imperative combinations with various means (morphologic, semantic, pragmatic) having (im)politeness effect. Furthermore, it can be identified even conventional impolite imperative forms. At the same time, we observed that using the imperative in itself does not imply impoliteness too; its interpretation depends on the situation, relation between communicators but also joining elements, verbal, nonverbal and/or paraverbal.

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## ARAB NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE IN *DHAKIRAT AL-JASAD AND THE MAP OF LOVE*

AMEL KHIREDDINE<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Arab National Identity through Language in Dhakirat al-Jasad and The Map of Love.* In their novels, the Algerian Ahlam Mosteghanemi and the Egyptian Ahdaf Soueif adopt specific linguistic approaches that render their imaginary of Arab national identities. Drawing upon the theories of Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha's Hybridity, this paper argues that through their unique employment of language, Mosteghanemi and Soueif project two different visions of Arab national identity. In using Arabic to write her fiction, Mosteghanemi enacts a rupture with *francophonie* in order to sustain the purity of Arabic as a strong emblem of Arab national unity and identity. Conversely, by creating a hybridised language, Soueif seems to showcase that the creation of a new language might lead to the creation of new heterogeneous national identities.

**Keywords:** *Arab national identity, homogenous pure identities, heterogeneous hybrid identities, linguistic approaches, contemporary Arab women's writings, Ahlam Mosteghanemi, Ahdaf Soueif, Homi Bhabha.*

**ABSTRACT.** *Identitatea națională arabă prin limbă în Dhakirat al-Jasad și Harta iubirii.* În romanele lor, algerianul Ahlam Mosteghanemi și egipteanul Ahdaf Soueif adoptă abordări lingvistice specifice care redau imaginarii identităților naționale arabe. Bazându-se pe teoriile despre hibriditatea lui Homi Bhabha și Benedict Anderson, această lucrare susține că prin angajarea lor unică în limbă, Mosteghanemi și Soueif proiectează două viziuni diferite ale identității naționale arabe. Folosind araba pentru a-și scrie ficțiunea, Mosteghanemi adoptă o ruptură cu francofonia pentru a susține puritatea arabei ca o emblemă puternică a unității și identității naționale arabe. În schimb, prin crearea unui limbaj hibridizat, Soueif pare să arate că crearea unui nou limbaj ar putea duce la crearea de noi identități naționale eterogene.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *identitate națională arabă, identități pure omogene, identități hibride eterogene, abordări lingvistice, scrieri contemporane ale femeilor arabe, Ahlam Mosteghanemi, Ahdaf Soueif, Homi Bhabha.*

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## 1. Introduction

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson describes “official nationalism” as characterised by linguistic nationalism (109). According to him, state’s language(s), the originators of linguistic nationalism, began to grow in Europe during the seventeenth century (42). The fear of elimination and marginalisation that spread rapidly in mid-nineteenth century Europe by smaller imagined communities within nations (Anderson 109-110), exhorted a number of European governments to propagandise to the concept of “official nationalisms” by enforcing linguistic nationalisms on their populations (Anderson 42). Thus, during the nineteenth century, citizens from different European nations asserted their allegiance and ownership of a single official language and began to promote its authority within their nation-states as a means of maintaining linguistic cohesion and hence national unification. Anderson points to the magnitude of “two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper” (24-25). These new cultural forms provided the technical means for “re-presenting the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation” (Anderson 25). Anderson stresses the substantiality of mass-produced books and newspapers in everyday languages, what he terms as print capitalism, in the production of the national imagined collectivity. According to him, printed cultural output contributes to frame the community’s national identity. Anderson contends that it is only through reading in a common language that the cohesion of the nation is imagined, and thus guaranteed (145). More explicitly, the daily practice of reading a newspaper or a novel in a shared language triggers a sense of common experiences within the public which in turn leads to fostering the cohesive identity of the community, “there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests. The image: unisonance” (Anderson 145).

Anderson’s credence postulates that the fiction of a single national language contributes a great deal to creating and unifying the nation (84). In other words, it is through novels that the national community is imagined and the nation-state is made present to its members. This underscores the central role the language of the fiction of a particular nation performs in fostering feelings of nationalism and belongingness to that community among the daily speakers and readers of that specific language. Readers come to develop an awareness of a common people who share their similar identity. This leads to the conviction that this shared language is the property of the members of that specific community who come to feel entitled to it and to their position as equals within their imagined community (Anderson 84).

Anderson’s theory is applicable to the fiction of the contemporary Arab women novelists, the Algerian Ahlam Mosteghanemi and the Egyptian Ahdaf

Soueif. Both Mosteghanemi and Soueif are intent to adopt a certain approach to language, in their respective novels *Dhakirat al-Jasad*<sup>2</sup> (1993) and *The Map of Love* (1999), which would reflect their national imaginary. They enact linguistic approaches in order to mirror their national vision of the Arab “imagined communities” each in her own unique way. Mosteghanemi projects her vision of a homogenous Algerian Arab national identity through her investment in the Arabic language. She announces a total break with the former coloniser’s language and culture, both through her narrative discourse and the linguistic composition of her texts. Conversely, Soueif imagines a potential alternative to the homogenous pure national community for which Mosteghanemi calls. This is mostly apparent through her translational use of language where Egyptian dialects and cultural traditions merge in total harmony with the imperial English, she consciously chooses to craft her fiction. This gives rise to a third in-between language that reflects Soueif’s heterogeneous hybrid vision of an Arab national identity.

## **2. Mosteghanemi’s Investment in Arabic Language**

Standard Arabic language comes to serve as one of the pillars of modern Arab nationalism around which people could rally, and through which they could communicate and come to identify with one another as members of one larger nation. In using Arabic to write her fiction, Mosteghanemi enacts a rupture with *francophonie* on two levels both thematically and linguistically in order to preserve the purity of the Arabic language as a strong emblem of Algerian national unity and identity.

### **2.1. Thematic Rupture with francophonie**

In *Dhakirat al-Jasad*, Khaled, much like Malek Haddad, is left with a sole French prosthesis writing pen. Taking the coloniser’s pen implies a sort of betrayal to the very noble national principles, for which he has vehemently fought. Therefore, instead of immersing into silence like Haddad, Khaled takes a healing brush to paint his native land and along with it his traumatic painful memories. In fact, Khaled’s choice of painting over writing cuts short the coloniser’s expectations for him to become a distinguished francophone writer: “my teachers had always predicted a glowing literary future for me – in French. Maybe that was why I answered without thinking or, as I discovered later, with the response that was already deep inside me, ‘I prefer painting’” (Mosteghanemi,

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<sup>2</sup> The included quotations however are taken from the English translation *The Bridges of Constantine* (2013).



*Bridges* 34). Not only does such an act rebut colonialism's "prophecy" for Khaled but it also rebuts its prophecy for a postcolonial "francophone" Algeria as argued by the critic Shaden M. Tageldin in his article "Which Qalam for Algeria?" (486). Ostensibly, through Khaled, Mosteghanemi heightens the tragedy of post-independent Algerian intelligentsia who, like the protagonist, lost their writing arm for *francophonie*; yet who are still keen on retaining their national language and keeping their identity away from colonial infiltrations, each in his/her unique way. Tageldin points out: "Having lost not just his left arm to anti-colonial battle but also, figuratively speaking, his right arm 'ostensibly his writing arm' to the silencing effect of French, Khalid has suffered in effect a double amputation" ("Which Qalam" 486).

Khaled attends secondary school and studies French language and literature; yet his heart is fully determined by Constantine's native language and culture. Constantine, Khaled confirms, is "a city where it was impossible to ignore the authority of Arabic and its esteemed place in people's hearts and memories" (Mosteghanemi, *Bridges* 21). Arabic infiltrates Khaled's mind and heart, in one scene and while observing his canvases, Ahlam tells him that his art "speaks" Arabic: "I think if I were an artist, I'd paint like you. I feel that we both share the same sensibility" (Mosteghanemi, *Bridges* 49), suggesting that both her pen and Khaled's brush speak Arabic. Such an assumption makes his paintings and her Arabic novels seem to her "translations" of one another for both of them view things with the same Arabic heart. Like her creator Mosteghanemi, Ahlam masters French but decides to write her fiction in Arabic arguing: "What matters is the language we speak to ourselves, not the one we use with others!" (Mosteghanemi, *Bridges* 50). Even when she speaks French, Ahlam "intends" Arabic. For the heroine, speaking French is a mere habit while Arabic is the language that flawlessly renders her love, feelings and creativity: "I could have written in French, but Arabic is the language of my heart. I can write in nothing else. We write in the language we feel with" (Mosteghanemi, *Bridges* 50).

The ultimate decision of the two protagonists to cease using French in their conversations for Arabic constitutes the turning point in the narrative in that resolves a linguistic tension felt by the reader and engendered by the flow of the colonial language on the tongues of a former *mujahid* and a daughter of a *shahid*. Mosteghanemi intentionally enacts such a tension to further stress the rupture between the ex-coloniser and colonised. From this point forward, Elizabeth Holt holds, "speaking in French, becomes a sort of betrayal of a linguistic contract or a measure of distance from the contemporary situation of the majority of Algerians" (135).

Another break with the former coloniser is epitomised in Khaled's willingness, in his "one-way ticket" back to his hometown, to abandon his canvases of the bridges of Constantine, to his French lover Catherine as a sign of cutting off all bridges that may connect the nascent nation with its past torturer (E. Holt 133). Only then, will he be able to recover his Algerian soul and memory. More explicitly, Khaled's rejection of French writing and then the paintings produced on the ex-coloniser's land "destroys all the bridges of communication, of influence, and of transport that French colonial infrastructure implanted in Algerian minds and on Algerian soil" (Tageldin, "Which Qalam" 488). Only when leaving painting for writing in Arabic, does Khaled at last free himself from the "complex" of Algerian reliance on French culture (Tageldin, "Which Qalam" 495). By rehabilitating Khaled's writing arm, Mosteghanemi recovers Arabic and assassinates French. The novelist stresses an arrival to "a time when martyrs were still being buried on the pages of newspapers and between the covers of books" (Mosteghanemi, "Writing" 82). If the new struggle for Algerian liberation is about language, Mosteghanemi maintains, "let it unfold 'lovingly,' in language. Let the assault on the ideological temptations of *francophonie* be a 'character assassination' waged through characters like Khaled and Ahlam, on the pages of novels, by the pen and not by the gun" (Tageldin, "Which Qalam" 496). Through her fictional characters, Khaled and Ahlam, Mosteghanemi seems to take part in the Arabisation process of her nascent nation as an effective instrument to obliterate colonial linguistic and cultural residues. This new linguistic struggle for the nation's liberation will be waged by the pen on the pages of books and not by guns in warring terrains.

## **2.2. Linguistic Rupture with *francophonie***

At the linguistic level, Mosteghanemi does include French lines in her novel *Dhakirat al-Jasad* only to manifest the shift and the discrepancy which exist between the two languages. No simple reader can fail in figuring out the linguistic breach Mosteghanemi is intent to maintain between the two languages in her texts. While the coalescence of Algerian dialect and cultural expressions within the narrative discourse flow spontaneously and naturally, the inclusion of occasional lines of French surfaces as eccentric and intrusive to the overall narrative. In other words, Mosteghanemi could have used Arabic Alphabet to write the included French expressions, but she intentionally writes them in their original form to accentuate the rupture between the two languages. In so doing, Mosteghanemi is in a way of protecting the purity of her peculiar Arabic language from the clutches of the coloniser's tongue as well as of restoring in her linguistic text the homogeneity of an Algerian national linguistic and cultural identity. Not only does the novelist announce a rupture with *francophonie*

through her characters' determination to write and live in Arabic, but she also enacts this break at the level of the written word.

Furthermore, as Holt notes in her article "In a Language That Was Not His Own", despite her excellent command of this language, Mosteghanemi is nowhere noticed as taking part in the French translation of her novel (133). In this French translation, the intrusive francophone lines which clearly mark the linguistic and cultural bridge between the two languages and cultures fade away. For instance, in the Arabic original, Khaled asks in French written in Latin letters: "Mais comment allez-vous Mademoiselle?" The following line is written in Arabic: "فتردين علي بنفس المسافة اللغوية" pursued by Aḥlam's answer in French: "Bien...Je vous remercie" (Mosteghanemi, *Dhakirat* 59). In this conversation, Mosteghanemi lays bare her intent to enact a linguistic distance in her text. For instance, instead of writing: "Bien...Je vous remercie" in Latin letters, the novelist could have written "بيان...جو فو غوماغسي"; however such a transliteration might threaten the linguistic split she intends to enact in her text. This linguistic distance which takes place between the French and Arabic lines in the Arabic text *Dhakirat al-Jasad* vanishes in the French version. In this regard, Holt notes:

What *Mémoires de la chair* cannot translate is precisely this linguistic distance, for it is orthographically, historically, dramatically *not the same*. The French translation can only point its readers to a vague linguistic distance that its readers must imagine. The Arabic original, on the other hand, orthographically shows the distance, and it is one that can be apprehended by Arabic readers whether or not they speak French: the very jarringness of two Algerians speaking *in French* in the middle of an Arabic novel marks the distance. (134-135)

Holt explains that the linguistic distance Mosteghanemi is willing to maintain in her Arabic text, and which is effortlessly perceived by any Arabic reader, disappears in the French translation due to the sole use of Latin alphabet.

Therefore, Mosteghanemi imagines a homogenous exclusionary Arab Algerian national identity through her linguistic feat. By making the two major players in the novel move to the use of their mother tongue, and by creating a certain linguistic detachment between Arabic and the incorporated French expressions, Mosteghanemi endeavours to preserve the homogeneity of Arabic while excluding the colonial tongue (the Other).

### 3. Soueif's Hybridised Language

#### 3.1. Arabised Muslimised English

Though she chooses to write in English, Soueif advertently deploys Arabic in her fiction to project the Egyptian colonial and postcolonial experiences by

reworking the language of the former coloniser. By infusing the two languages together, the novelist in a way creates in Susan Darraj's view her "own particular, postcolonial brand of English" ("Narrating England and Egypt"). In so doing, Soueif attempts to refute the notion of a single national tongue as a signifier and unifier of national community. Arabic language which is applauded by Arab nationalists as a robust marker of the very existence of an Arab nation and its distinctiveness within other "imagined communities" is deconstructed in Soueif's textual narratives, alluding that there is no such thing as a pure Arabic outside Western cultural influences.

Soueif's linguistic feat in her novel *The Map of Love* exhibits her own stance against the consigned modes of authenticity, purity and fixity of Arab national identity. Her unique use of language which is a blend of different aspects of the linguistic and cultural norms of Egyptian culture with English language gives birth to a third in-between tongue. As such, the linguistic design of Soueif's texts is first and foremost targeted to facilitate the integration of both cultures and languages by creating a linguistic middle ground between Arabic and English.

Soueif twists, abrogates and refashions Standard English to fit her own linguistic and national agenda. She makes use of a strategy grounded on the incorporation of typical Arabic and Egyptian colloquial expressions in the dialogues in a natural flow with the overall English narrative text. Her English is thus arabised and even muslimised, in a way that generates a compelling paradox which evidences that English "despite all its colonial evocations and its atavistically anti-Muslim connotations, can be utilised as a sophisticated [Arab and] Muslim currency of credible communication" (Malak, *Muslim Narratives* 7). In his book, *Muslim Narratives and the Discourse of English*, Amin Malak states that, in spite of the sensational stereotypes connected with each of them, words like *fatwa*, *hajj*, *hijab*, *halal*, *inshallah*, *imam*, *intifadha*, *jihad*, *mecca*, *shari'a*, and *ummah* have already ascertained themselves in contemporary phraseology (7). According to Malak, Muslim authors of narratives in English, have functionally muslimised the language without looking for permission from any authority, be it literary, religious, or institutional (*Muslim Narratives* 7).

Soueif's English texts are imbued with the Egyptian atmosphere as well as the cadence and discursive pattern of Arabic. They abound with heavy socio-cultural characteristics of Egyptian people, to mention a few: Arabic names, expressions and phrases, metaphors, greetings and forms of address in addition to Quranic verses. In this light, Malak puts forward, "[h]erein then lies the happy irony of Muslim writers 'appropriating' a language with a perceived hostile history toward [Arab world and] Islam and turning it into a medium conveying inclusivist ethos, enriching understanding, and establishing bridges" (*Muslim*

*Narratives* 11). The irony is in using a language with colonial connotation to write about the very cultural and linguistic aspects of the people of an Arab Muslim nation.

Mohammed Albakry and Patsy Hunter Hancock study the role of code switching between Arabic and English in *The Map of Love* and contend that the novel's interplay between the two languages is an exemplary characteristic of postcolonial literature. Using Bhabha's definition of hybridity, Albakry and Hancock maintain that Soueif employs a hybrid English and in so doing pushes the "frontiers of the English language... as a way of finding a 'new English' a language between two languages" (233). They consider this linguistic *mélange* as a process of code switching that enables the writer to play a part in both worlds.

Bhabha states that cultural identity always surfaces in the "Third Space of enunciation" (*Location* 54-55), which according to him "erases any essentialist claims to the inherent originality or purity of cultures" (*Location* 83). Bhabha defines cultural difference as challenging "our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People" ("Cultural Diversity" 156). Instead, cultural difference is a Third Space "though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew" ("Cultural Diversity" 157). It is "the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism or multiculturalism of the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" ("Cultural Diversity" 157). Soueif functions within Bhabha's "Third Space of enunciation", as she reworks, appropriates and translates fixed implications and emblems of cultural identities. In so doing, she reaffirms the principle of cultural difference and impurity by crafting hybridised narratives where she deconstructs the concept of homogenising cultural representation.

In his article "Agency and Translational Literature", Wail Hassan introduces the concept of translational novel which is a form of postcolonial literature that involves more than simply mixing two languages. Translational literature is described by Hassan as "a product of cultural translation and transculturation, a cultural hybrid that foregrounds the question of agency and undercuts the myth of autonomous cultural and civilisational identities" ("Agency" 756). Translational literary texts are thus to "participate in the construction of cultural identities from that in-between space" (Hassan, "Agency" 754). The postcolonial fictional genre chosen by Soueif is thus for Hassan a quintessence of translational literature. Hassan scrutinises the different linguistic registers at

work in *The Map of Love* and holds that the stylistic element of translation functions “at once to maintain the theme of translation consistently before the readers, who are never allowed to forget the complexity of cultural and linguistic mediation, and to offer insights into the workings of the Arabic language” (“Agency” 758).

In his examination of Soueif’s novels, Joseph Massad observes Soueif’s fascinating experiments with translation. He pinpoints how Soueif “transforms English into Arabic and Arabic into English in revolutionary ways” by rendering “Arabic phrases into English without any syntactic compromises” and “in the very narrative structure of the novel” (75) as well as in her “creative use of etymology in explaining Arabic words” (80). The novelist herself divulges her intention in an interview: “In *The Map of Love*, there is a constant attempt to render Arabic into English, not just to translate phrases, but to render something of the dynamic of Arabic, how it works, into English. So, there is this question of how to open a window into another culture” (Soueif and Massad 85). Soueif thus takes the burden of translating not only words, ideas and information, but an entire culture. Her novel juxtaposes the English and Egyptian cultures and tongues, enabling her characters and readers alike to transcend fixed frontiers and cut across allegiances.

Translation, transliteration and transculturation are manifested in Soueif’s intermingling of Arabic and English. The novelist blurs all existing cultural and linguistic boundaries between the coloniser and the colonised, creating in the process a language between two languages: a third language, and along with it a third culture, community and national identity.

### ***3.2. Arabic’s Etymology and Substance Rendered through English***

In contrast to Mosteghanemi who celebrates the purity of Arabic language and works throughout her texts to accentuate the linguistic discrepancy between it as a national tongue and French as a colonial language, Soueif seems to tear down the legendary status of Arabic as a defining and unifying power of the Arab national identity. She accomplishes so not only by using English to write about the very etymology of Arabic, but also by merging the colonial language with (Arabic) idiomatic expressions and culture. In an examination of the novel, Radwa Ashour comments on Soueif’s linguistic experimentations as follows: “Vocabulary, proverbs, wise sayings and linguistic devises are disseminated into the foreign language, bringing with them something of the soul of the nation and the culture” (“In the Eye” 265).

Unlike Mosteghanemi, who shows reluctance in transliterating French expressions by using Arabic letters, in order to cut the bridge and underscore the linguistic breach, Soueif deliberately builds this linguistic bridge through the use of transliteration. Indeed, the novelist uses the English alphabet to write

Egyptian or Arabic words such as *marhab* (welcome), *khalas yakhti* (enough my sister), *alfa mabrouk* (a thousand congratulations). Such transliteration of Arabic words in addition to translating colloquial Arabic/ Egyptian expressions into English, like “May your bounty have increased,” “May your hands be saved,” “May the name live long,” “God will compensate your patience,” load the Soueifian English with an Arab character. Hassan asserts that “translational texts may Arabize, Africanize, or Indianize English, sometimes by transliterating words and expressions for which there is no English equivalent, then explaining them in the text or in a glossary or not all” (“Agency” 754).

Not only does Soueif use English to write and translate Arabic words and cultural expressions, but she also uses the imperial language to explain Arabic’s very basics. This is perceived in the scene when Amal attempts to explain to Isabel the way Arabic language is structured and its root system:

Everything stems from a root. And the root is mostly made up of three consonants or two. And then the word takes different forms ... Take the root q-l-b, qalb. *Qalb*: the heart, the heart that beats the heart at the heart of things... Then there’s a set number of forms, a template almost that any root can take. So in the case of “qalb” you get “qalab”: to overturn, overthrow, turn upside down, and make into the opposite; hence “*maqlab*”: a dirty trick, a turning of the tables and also a rubbish dump. “*Maqloub*”: upside-down; “*mutaqallib*”: changeable; and “*inqilab*”: a coup.... So at the heart of all things is the germ of their overthrow; the closer you are to the heart, the closer to the reversal.... Every time you use a word, it brings with it all the other forms that come from the same root. (Soueif, *Map* 81-82)

Soueif intrudes the “static” discursive realm of Arabic by upsetting its very construction. In her explanation and deconstruction of the term “qalb”, Amal calls for an intersection between the former coloniser’s language and her native tongue.

In one of her letters, the British heroine Anna describes her impressions of Cairo using a number of Arabic terms and expressions, “*Dear Sir Charles, It feels very strange these days not to be in England [ . . . ] We sat under a tree which they say sheltered Our Lady in her flight to Egypt with the infant Jesus, and I am myself touched by the simple faith with which our guide spoke of Settena Maryam and her son Yasu al-Masih*” (Soueif, *Map* 86-88). Such a merger between Arabic and English signals the close relationship between the two languages, but also carries a wider more symbolic dimension in relation to a possible merging between the two opposing nations. Soueif’s use of English letters to transliterate Arabic words related to Christian religion “*Settena Maryam*”, “*Yasu al-Masih*” breaks the sacred link which associates Arabic to Islam. While Mosteghanemi makes her characters announce their break with French for Arabic; Soueif

readily involves her English heroine in the Egyptian “Other’s” linguistic and cultural sphere by making her endeavour to learn Arabic.

Therefore, through her investment in language: her use of translation, transliteration and transculturation, Soueif creates a new hybrid language. This in-between language reflects the novelist’s heterogeneous hybrid vision of Arab “imagined communities”.

#### 4. Conclusion

It has become clear that the two contemporary Arab novelists are intent to employ the language in a way that renders unambiguously their visions of Arab national identity and community. Mosteghanemi and Soueif hold two different imaginations of the nation through their investment in language. Mosteghanemi insists on maintaining Arabic linguistic homogeneity and thus a homogenous exclusionary national identity which excludes the Other’s tongue and culture, while Soueif’s hybridised language conceives a hybrid inclusionary national identity. Mosteghanemi’s homogenous national imaginary surfaces through her choice and use of Arabic as a strong marker of an Algerian national identity. The author proclaims a total break with the former coloniser through her linguistic feat. She makes her protagonists shift to the use of their mother tongue through the narration. In addition, she creates a certain linguistic distance between Arabic and the included French lines in her texts in an attempt to maintain the purity of the former and exterminate the latter. Conversely, Soueif switches between the two languages to demonstrate how language could be used to erase antagonistic borders between Egypt and Britain, the colonised and the coloniser, the “Self” and the “Other”, as well as how it is able to contribute in redefining cultural identity and by extension national identity. In creating a hybridised in-between language through her fiction, Soueif seems to argue that the dissolution of the Self into the “Other” is possible and that the creation of a new language might possibly lead to the making of new “inauthentic”, impure heterogeneous national identities and communities.

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## THE STRANGE AND FAMILIAR ETERNITY. THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN CONTEMPORARY HUNGARIAN LYRICAL WORKS

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**ABSTRACT.** *The Strange and Familiar Eternity. The Experience of God in Contemporary Hungarian Lyrical Works.* While in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian literary criticism, the topic of sacrality in lyrical poetry was quite emphatically present in many scientific studies (e.g. in György Rónay's, László Rónay's, György Rába's, and Éva Cs. Gyimesi's works), this area has been unfairly neglected for the past few decades. We might say that, apart from a few lucky exceptions, among the contemporary lyrical analyses, one can hardly find a study that focuses mainly on the various motifs of Christianity, the aesthetic-poetic characteristics of transcendental experience, and the forms of expression of faith and doubt. The essay examines transcendental experiences in contemporary Hungarian poetry, and seeks to identify that attitude of the modern author, which can be described as a dialog-based approach to the Christian tradition. In this paper, we propose to present those aesthetic-poetic initiatives in István Bella's, István Ágh's, and Imre Oravecz's lyrical works, in which the relations between man and sacrality are reevaluated, as well as the role of poetry and the entire modern culture.

**Keywords:** *Hungarian poetry, contemporary literature, transcendence, faith and doubt, Christianity*

**REZUMAT.** *Eternitatea familiară și străină. Experiența sacralității în poezia maghiară contemporană.* În timp ce în a doua parte a secolului 20 aspectul sacralității, relațiile dintre om și Dumnezeu au fost reprezentate destul de intens în analiza și critica literară maghiară (de ex. György Rónay, László Rónay, György Rába, Éva Cs. Gyimesi), în ultimele două decenii, aceste subiecte au fost în mod nedrept ignorate. Am putea afirma că – în afară de câteva excepții – cercetările literare contemporane au neglijat studierea experienței transcendente, apariția valorilor creștinismului, caracteristicile estetico-poetice ale credinței și îndoielii,

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deși în lirica contemporană aceste valori sunt prezente cel puțin în aceeași măsură ca și în creațiile literare de dinaintea celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial. Studiul propune o analiză asupra prezenței sacralității în poezia maghiară contemporană, bazându-se pe o scurtă prezentare a liricii lui István Bella, István Ágh, Imre Oravec.

***Cuvinte-cheie:** lirica maghiară, literatura contemporană, transcendență, credință și dubiu, creștinism*

According to Martin Heidegger, in early Greek thinking “physis” is the concept which denotes the all-encompassing, comprehensive functioning of the universe. In the inseparability of existence and being, the human being and nature are not interpreted as components of the part-whole relationship, but as a motion conferring unity to the universe. It is this motion that gives importance to every element only in their relation to totality. Consequently, in itself, nothing is absolute and constant; nothing is permanent, only in the co-changing with the universe and the others: it can be recognized in its increase or decrease, development or disintegration. “Plants and animals are in motion even when they are standing still and resting. [...] The φύσις [physis] is the origin as well as the preordination of motion and stillness” (Heidegger, 2003: 233). Christian philosophy attributes this all-inclusive motion that gives purpose to everything to God. Outside of Him, every being has a beginning and an ending; everything can be divided and multiplied. There is nothing without God, and everything is becoming only by Him. A 15th century Christian philosopher, Nicolaus Cusanus, said: “only [God] the infinite, eternal autohypostaton exists by itself, because nothing can be added to or taken away from it. [...] if we don’t perceive this One in diversity, we’ll see nothing else but infinite deformity and indeterminable chaos” (Cusanus, 2000: 25–27). However, the relationship with God is, essentially, a hermeneutical one. This means that it can only be realized by the recognition of the fundamental difference between the human being and God, knowing that “we are able to put the entirely different in front of us just as it is” (Gadamer, 2003: 90). This relationship results not from the orientation towards scientific (subject-object) knowledge, but it requires humble attention and open-mindedness. Modern man, however, usually puts himself in the focus of every dialogue or conversation, i. e. he can only speak from a position that “experiences its basic relation to the being[s] in the objectification facing him, namely by overcoming it” (Heidegger, 2003: 232). Thus, the individual interpreted in its subjectivity as “ego” becomes unable to create and maintain true dialogue, his or her endeavors do not go beyond the limits of self-orientation and the attitude of defining the “other” as a stranger. In the 20th century, until the 60th, 70th, perhaps only a few Hungarian poets – such as Jenő Dsida and János

Pilinszky – managed to somewhat surpass this perspective. Through the analysis of István Bella's, István Ágh's, and Imre Oravecz's poems, in this study, we seek to ascertain which are the main motifs that define the experience of God in contemporary Hungarian poetry from the viewpoint of the dialogue with Christian tradition, faith, and doubt.

### István Bella

István Bella's poetry was mostly influenced, regarding both the tone and the typical topics, by the poetic heritage of Attila József, although – as Bella himself emphasized it – in the development of his individual style, the poetry of Gyula Illyés and Sándor Weöres, or that of the only a few years older generation than him, can be considered a starting point. “It has a lot to do with folk song, the *Kalevala*, the modernity of Béla Bartók, Attila József, and Zoltán Kodály, as well as with those whom he can call his elder brothers: László Nagy and Ferenc Juhász. It is not difficult to discover the reader of the Bible and the Psalms in his verses, either”, Jenő Alföldy observes (Alföldy, 2009: 46). And indeed, irony, tragic, gentle humor, and word game are equally typical of this poetic career starting in the mid-1950s, and even of the already completed oeuvre as a whole.

The title of István Bella's first volume, *Szaggatott világ* [Fragmented World] (1966), illustrates the peculiarly modern duality – by this pointing to the poetic tradition of Attila József, Gyula Illyés, and Endre Ady even – which, in the relationship with transcendence, with God, becomes the dominant feature of all his later poetry: the undecidability of acceptance and refusal, faith and doubt, desire and rejection. In the 1950–1960s poems of István Bella, besides the “community voice” required by the aesthetic expectations of the era, the consciously suppressed personal experiences constantly emerge in connection with the painful – but usually joyfully, nostalgically recalled – events of childhood, such as poverty, loss, and orphanage. This attitude views the past and religious tradition experienced as a child not only by performing the gestures of identification, the definite commitment to continuity, but undeniably as the dominant source of identity and poetic existence:

I sang the crucified Jesus  
 nine-year-old orphan Evangelist  
 I brought with me the song from there  
 (*Szaggatott világ* [Fragmented World])

Of course, instantly – and not without self-irony – he adds: “now that I have nothing to do with God”, justifying, even before himself, the problematic nature of the restoration of religious belief and confidence. All this can be regarded not so much as an effort to comply with ideological and political expectations but rather as an honest confession of the lyrical self – the

acknowledgement of the fact that what had happened during and before World War II definitively became inaccessible to the poet creating in the Rákosi- and the early Kádár-era which propagated the materialist “salvation history”.

Considering the context of the 1950–1960s, obviously the fact itself is significant that this theme is at all present in the young poet’s verses, moreover, from 1966 onwards the motifs of religiousness, the allusions to the biblical stories and Christian tradition, begin to increasingly define István Bella’s poetic voice (*Szaggatott világ* [Fragmented World]; *Betlehem* [Bethlehem]; *Dödögő* [Babbling]). A typical figure of this lyrical orientation is the shepherd who in the first poems is formed from concrete childhood experiences, flesh and blood persons (*Izmini József* [József Izmini]), later, however, almost exclusively referring to the Savior Jesus Christ, as an expression of the relationship with God, develops into a constant metaphor of the presence of the Holy. Consequently, in István Bella’s poetry, Christian past is not just an external reference point but, from the very first volumes, a priceless heritage, a living tradition. Nothing proves this better than the relaxed and intimate, bantering and playful tone that depicts the dialogue with God through the sincerity of the relationship between the father and child:

My God, I’ve had enough  
coolness and so much youth  
that you do not have to fear  
that for my beggar life  
you will have to pay with my years.  
(*Nyugtalanság* [Disquiet])

A specific form of this dialogue is the sometimes self-denying, sometimes God-praising confessional tone (*Tékozló meztelenség* [Prodigal Nudity]; *Elégiák* [Elegies]), prayer (*Invokáció* [Invocation]; *Fény és levegő nélkül* [Without Light and Air]), and the emphasizing of the hope of Salvation (*Bízz hát* [So, Trust]; *Karácsonyesti vers* [Poem for Christmas Eve]; *Érdi Betlehem* [Nativity Play in Érd]).

In István Bella’s poetry, a prominent place belongs to those verses which allude to the two most authentic representatives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian religious lyricism: Jenő Dsida and János Pilinszky. As for Pilinszky, the speaker shows the search for God as the only possible way of transcending the earthly “convict-condition”, as the never ending obsession of the believer: “takes his discus-glory into his hand / throws it / and never lets it go”; as for Dsida, the Transylvanian poet living and creating between the two World Wars, he discovers the bond of common destiny – besides the confidence in Eternity – in the breath of approaching death, in the chronic heart failure: “Jenő Dsida, I understand You / Your every word-beat / is mine” (*Dsida Jenő*) [Jenő Dsida]. The same identity-seeking attitude appears in the poems recalling the memory of the father, who died in World War II; here the personal relationship

with God – as a recurring motif in Bella’s oeuvre – is based on the analogy of the early lost, but always present personal contact, the father–son relationship (*Önarckép* [Self-portrait]; *Válasz nélkül* [Without Answer]; *A címzett ismeretlen* [The Unknown Addressee]; *Gyermekdal* [Children’s Song]; *Eleven fényed* [Your Live Light]; *Apám* [My Father]; *Első versem* [My First Poem] etc.). Despite all modern skepticism and pessimism, the cycle-title *Játszom Istennel, s ő velem* [I Play with God, and He Plays with Me] of the 1991 volume *Arccal a földnek* [Facing the Ground], which emphatically represents the motifs of aging and passing away, convincingly demonstrates the continuity of the direct relationship of trust even in the poems created after the 1989 change of regime:

I play with God. How long has He,  
the Lord been playing games with me!  
It’s Christmas Eve. For a thousand years  
we’ve sat beneath his canopy  
in a silent corner of the word.  
I play with Him, and God with me.  
(*Karácsonyesti vers* [Poem for Christmas], translated by Adam Makkai)<sup>2</sup>

However, this lyrical orientation is far from being devoid of rebellious and ironic moments. The inscrutability of the divine plan, the presence of cruelty and evil in the world, the personal experience of approaching death show the specific states of being and mind of the individual struggling between absolute fidelity and ultimate despair. The tragic tone of the exclamation “Throw my poem away, son of man!” (*Világot írni*) [Writing a World] is as much a part of this poetic endeavor as the hopeful feeling of „I know: there is no death” (*Tudom*) [I Know]. Especially the (post-)apocalyptic Cain-monologues – where we can recognize the 20-21<sup>st</sup> century social and human relationships – of the 1998 volume *Ábel a sivatagban* [Abel in the Desert] represent this creative stance, pointing to the inner reality and hellish depths of that solitude and loneliness which is, probably, most authentically shown by Attila József in Hungarian poetry: “where there is neither god, nor human handhold” (*Mint egykor*) [Like It Once Was]. “One reality kills the other one – it’s only natural. Absolute truth is with God, or nowhere else. But still, why does the world exist? [...] If we want to unlock the secret of Bella’s poetry, we must first follow this lead”, István Kemsei states (Kemsei, 1999: 90). The struggle between love and hate defines these verses, the perpetual dilemma between faith and doubt, the lack of the tangible, perceptible, anthropomorphic God. It is no coincidence that in István Bella’s poems written after the 1989 regime change the motif of the doubting Thomas’s finger penetrating into Christ’s wound repeatedly appears (*Hasonlatok* [Comparisons]; *Egy utcafához* [To a Street-Tree]).

<sup>2</sup> All the poems with the translators mentioned above are cited from A. Makkai and E. Watson Liebert, 2003.

The last cycle of poems of the 1998 volume *Ábel a sivatagban* [Abel in the Desert] paint a particularly pessimistic picture of the world. The title itself conveys a sense of hopelessness and the vulnerability of the individual. Abel's chance of survival in the rough and violent world of earthly existence is minimal; his major "sin" – that he is, after all, gentler and, in the strictest sense of the word, nobler than Cain – seals his fate. No wonder that in these verses we can hear his voice only post-hoc, after the murder (*Ábel a gyilkokról* [Abel about the Murder], *Ábel álma álmairól* [Abel Dream about His Dreams]; *Ábel a sivatagban* [Abel in the Desert]; *Ábel fősóhajt* [Abel Sighs]). In fact, we can see the events – the rebellion against God, the impenitence, the denial – from the perspective of Cain; it is he who speaks even in those verses which apparently reflect on the events from the outside (*Isten halottkém-jelentéséből* [God's Autopsy Report]; *Emlékfoszlány Isten időbárcájából*) [Memory from God's Time Ark]. "By Abel, the creator of values, the Lord's beloved one perishes for the first time in history, but unfortunately not for the last, with whom the Cain-world still does not know what to do, no matter whether he is alive or dead" (Kemsei, 1999: 92).

From this point of view, the murder is inevitable: it is the consequence of the human inclination to evil, of being expelled from the Garden of Eden. And, basically – if we can talk about such a thing at all in connection with the cycle of poems *Ábel a sivatagban* [Abel in the Desert] – as a paradoxical, final conclusion, it can be said that the difference between the two brothers comes only from the Lord's attention. By themselves, both Cain and Abel are lost, only the testimony of the Lamb, sacrifice and redemption, repentance and forgiveness can save the human being and humankind from damnation:

Abel could be Cain  
and Cain could be Abel.  
But the lamb,  
it is always the same.  
(*Csak a bárány* [Retrial], translated by István Tótfalusi)

However, in the symbolic "stories" of the 1998 volume, Cain finally loses not because he committed the murder, but because he is not able to repent, moreover, as a self-proclaimed "prophet", he constructs an ideology for himself, creating the apotheosis of rebellion and wickedness. In István Bella's poetry, Cain is the prototype of modern man, the embodiment of material culture, moral relativism, and rational thinking, who chose the possibility of definitive separation from God:

*Carissime,*  
if you want to kill someone,  
if you want to make someone perish forever,  
son that even his death can be killed,

Do not kill him!  
[...]  
Kill all of his dead!  
Eradicate his cemeteries  
to seventh generation,  
visit devastation upon  
the graves, the cradles that rock the future,  
scatter the bones among the rock,  
grind them into bone-white flour,  
burn them with quicklime mixed  
with water.

Have the wooden grave-posts and the headstones  
burned, grind them to powder  
and cast them to the winds,  
especially if the runes and writing  
cannot be scoured away.  
Have a hundred-thousand tiny Babels erected in their place.  
*(Káin próféta első levele a Cainus-beliékhez [The Prophet Cain's First  
Epistle to the Cainites], translated by Adam Makkai)*

According to Krisztina Hanti, in these poems “Bella shows God through Cain’s eyes, while he identifies himself with Abel. Even as a poet, he acts as Abel. He is aware of the fact that he carries death in his own fate, and yet he stands up against the destruction of values with his own means” (Hanti, 2008: 100).

The 1999 collected edition *Tudsz-e még világul?* [Do You Still Speak Worldish] and the 2008 posthumous volume *Mintha tükrök között beszélnek* [As if I Were Talking between Mirrors] largely confirm the same experience. The playful-ironic tone of the newer poems, the linguistic humor and self-reflection, however, despite the realization of the hopelessness of the Abel-existence, bring comfort and the old confidence of the father–son relationship back into the dialogue with God:

As someone who’s made mischief,  
You’ve caught me, my God.  
Around me, sixty years’ flames, ashes.  
I promise I won’t do it again.  
*(Hatvan év [Sixty Years])*

“After sixty years of flaming, a mischievous child asks God for forgiveness [...] And in the schoolboy greetings of the sixty-year old friends, the memory of Csokonai, Petőfi, and the puckish humor of our school years seem to revive, it rejuvenates you, and he, the little bit older, looks at them with János Arany’s resigned wisdom”, the old friend, himself a poet, recalls the last meeting with István Bella, while reading his posthumous volume of poems (Ágh, 2007: 126).



## István Ágh

István Ágh's first volume *Szabad-e énekelni* [Is it Permitted to Sing?] appears in the middle of the 1960s, in 1965; three years later, in 1968, it is followed by the second one entitled *Rézerdő* [Brass Forest], and in 1971, by the third one: *A tündér megkötözése* [Binding the Fairy]. István Ágh's poetry is characterized by an apolitical attitude, different from the one typical of the era, it is a mature poetic orientation aspiring to classicism that is, however, determined – especially considering the lyrical works of the 1970–1980s – by the different tendencies of the avant-garde. From the beginning, there is some sort of reserved outside approach in this poetry, which feels at home only partially on Earth and keeps looking upwards, from where the most prosaic “pub-reality”, the basest manifestations of human existence are always seen and shown in the light of eternal spirituality, the relationship with transcendence, while the lyrical self finds his own identity in semi-presence in the world. The atmosphere of this unusual identity-search and spirit, the effortless lyricism, is intensified by surreal situations and images reminding us of Sándor Weöres' poems:

But I break my heart,  
and drive it into crowded pubs:  
drunk men and women  
lean against the tin counter.

[...]

Dawn feathered me  
with rainbow rays,  
I circled around you, world,  
like a winged angel.

(*Másnap* [The Next Day])

The 1965 volume *Szabad-e énekelni* [Is it Permitted to Sing?] brings to mind the tradition of Christmas holiday greetings, the Nativity play, one of the most typical events of popular custom. “Chanting, walking from house to house, had an important role in cultivating or establishing relations of kinship, friendship, and faith, as well as in the involvement in traditions, initiations”, Béla Márkus remarks (Márkus, 2015: 51).

It is but obvious that in István Ágh's poetry, right from the first poems, there are such expressions as *the Mount of Olives, Angel, Eucharistic Procession, Advent, Absolution etc.*, even though references to the Gospel and the Catholic tradition in the poems of the 1960–1970s are usually connected to a profane spatial and temporal dimension. The desacralized context, however, is far from serving the purpose of ironic reflection, instead creates the medium of that specific homeliness which makes the presence in the world, the existence of the individual partial but the poetic forms of (self-)expression unique and complete.

In some of the poems of the first volume, nature appears as something the first human couple might have experienced immediately after the Creation, in the Garden of Eden, in the unspoiled tranquility and joy of God's closeness; and because violence and destruction, the idea of death are not part of this world, the harmony of the eternal present free from strife, the experience of genuine happiness, the lack of the awareness of mortality confer a special atmosphere to István Ágh's poems:

My grass hut with trees clinging onto the Moon,  
full of mosquito bites,  
my evening love-scenes,  
the smell of whipped up dirt on the plant-scented wind,  
my green tent for the ball,  
it was I who ransacked your foliage,  
it was I who hired your musicians,  
I was the one who chose your women,  
in the dawn of the bicikle's solitude,  
immortal in all the gossip,

oh, youth, my youth.  
*(Ifjúságom [My Youth], translated by Mike Starkweather)*

Nevertheless, this atmosphere comes not from the illusion of youth, from wishful thinking that obscures reality, but rather from a lyrical point of view which sees the world as beautiful as it is, since he finds the inalienable place and function of all objects and living beings in it. In this interdependence without hierarchy, old age is as natural as youth (*Nyári vásár* [Summer Fair]; *Arcok a tűznél* [Faces by the Fire]; *Búzavirágok kéklenek* [Cornflowers Bluening] etc.), and human life is described by the lyrical self as a wandering, a pilgrimage towards the Transcendent (*Imádság*) [Prayer].

In some early poems, hopelessness and the prospect of death are present, but only as a kind of transition between the present and eternity, because not only man and nature but also the world of objects is waiting to continue its duty beyond this world, yearning for Resurrection, the promised Salvation:

The attic: a red tile coffin,  
store of memories.  
Baby shoes, hundred-year-old boots  
weep for the old body,  
they're waiting for the resurrection.  
*(Our Lamb Faced Yellow House [Báránycú sárga házunk])*

Besides, the tone of István Ágh's lyrical poems alludes in a much more concrete way to the relationship between man and God – by evoking religious

poetry, folk prayers, and the Hungarian classical poetic tradition (*Balassi* [Balassi]; *Sivatagi testamentum* [Desert Testament]), or by combining almost blasphemously the desire for holiness and earthly love and passion (*Szerelmes himnusz*) [Love Anthem]. In this particular world, on rare occasions, irony appears, pointing out the fragility of life, vulnerability, the imperfectness of man and society, which later, from the 1968 second volume, results in a more tragic and pessimistic view.

István Ágh's later poems, therefore, no longer depict a perfect world. The harmony between God and man, man and nature is disrupted, and, apart from a few exceptions, it returns only in the verses written after the 1989 regime change, in a completely different context, due to the recognition of divine grace and providence. In the poems of the 1968 volume entitled *Rézerdő* [Copper Forest], temptation, sin, and hopelessness take the form of the devil, indicating that, for the believer, the estrangement from God implies not so much worldliness, or the fulfillment of the materialist ideology, but the risk of falling victim to the ancient power of evil and lie, the fatal presence of the invincible tempter, the fallen angel who bears the external marks of female sexuality:

It's a robber and has horse hooves,  
and doesn't steal 'cause finds sorrow,  
it's a big predator but shedding woman hair  
Golden eagle circles smoking  
Ezekiel's wheeled angel  
silence, silence, after the whirr  
somebody's been here something hair shedding  
carved its horseshoe into my wall.  
(*Valaki járt itt [Somebody Has Been Here]*)

In the second half of the 1968 volume, through the figure of the sailor and the old woman, the speaker of the poems metaphorically bids farewell to the times of childlike confidence and cloudless hopes, to his own youth.

"The world is no longer a motionless idyll", Géza Vasy states in a contemporaneous literary analysis, "but a changing and contradictory reality, where disharmony is always present. [...] Attila József's »mature man« becomes Ágh's personal experience, but just like Attila József, Ágh challenges this thought, he fights against the increasing loneliness of man, seeks the shelter of a »protecting community«" (Vasy, 2003: 377). Without questioning the authenticity of this emotional turn and the poetic honesty, we have to state that in the volume entitled *Rézerdő* [Copper Forrester] the motif of "growing up", of disillusionment – in the same way as in Attila József's early poetry – is rather a rhetorical pose, the expression of that theoretical and poetical orientation according to which the tragic is the only category fit for modern poetry, while the most genuine feeling of the 20<sup>th</sup> century poetry is existential alienation (Adorno,

1998: 25–26). It is probably no coincidence that in István Ágh's poetry, from the volume *A tündér megkötözése* [Binding the Fairy], the pessimistic tone of the love and mortality poems, old woman and sailor dialogues of the *Rézerdő* [Copper Forrest]) loses its initial momentum, but it is no longer able to return to the ingenuity of the first verses. Piece VII. of the cycle entitled *Csillagra-törők* [Star Conquerors] of the 1973 volume *Jóslatok az újszülöttnak* [Predictions for a Newborn Baby] perfectly illustrates this state of being and mind:

Heaven is not the same any more,  
as if it were trampled down,  
striped with blood,  
ribboned with breath,  
full of planted flowers,  
afflicted by us,  
adorned with us,  
sanded with our smiles.

Consequently, in the 1970s, hopelessness, death, and estrangement from holiness become the dominant motifs of István Ágh's poetry, more authentically than in the second volume, since the displayed experiences are related to real life, to the eternal departure of acquaintances and friends, including Ágh's brother, László Nagy, who died in 1978. Instead of the rebellion against the injustices of life, remembering, taking leave, and resignation dominate the tone of these verses. The vocabulary of religious poetry, the metaphors of transcendent worldview, the expressions referring to the mystic secrets of Catholicism, however, are mostly present as non-functional, empty forms in the 1970s poems, they demonstrate the aimlessness of human life and poetry, the uselessness of faith and creation:

The oakum of our hair, as white as lime,  
falls, stopping the machine, which spills  
the songs before us onto our table,  
freely disgorged the songs are wips,  
the eat each other, they spread squirming  
on this winter plain, children's songs,  
girl's songs of farewell, keenings,  
soldier's songs, chants,  
and a tune gathers again  
to shape the prayer of the woeful mouth:  
Deliver me, Lord, from eternal death...  
a change of clotes can't fend away  
death, wich unbuttons pelisses  
*(Dalaim halottai II. [The Dead of my Songs 2], translated by Alan Dixon)*

The wasting of divine grace, the experience of sin and atonement, the loss of faith in the effectiveness of creative work, are all part of this lyrical orientation (*Végső* [Last]; *Után* [After]; *Család mínusz egy* [Family, Minus One]). With its (self-)ironical title, the poem *Idézetek az Ábránd utcából* [Quotes From Dream Street], by the statement “you took me too seriously, father”, indicates the idea of unfulfilled desires, the vanity of the poetic, intellectual, and prophetic role. In this regard, not only individual existence but the whole society, even the world itself is chaotic and unpredictable, and the self is only a party and witness to the crisis of mankind moving towards final annihilation and apocalypse. *Szeptember 30.* [September 30] is one of the poems dealing with the personal experiences of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, even though the reality depicted in it goes beyond the specific events:

Here I stand in line between two believers  
who call for death  
and I'm singing like a fool

„The dreadful reality of the fear of void is the existential experience of the 20<sup>th</sup> century human being, and through the filter of this ontological anxiety, characteristic of our age, one can discern the fragments of memories which make up the material of the poems, the motifs and requisites of life” – Mátyás Domokos remarks in his analysis (Domokos, 2005: 1298). In the 1977 volume *Jól vagy?* [Are You Well?], the painful self-reflection trying to express the experience of vulnerability, decay, and death thus leads to total negation (*Gyász hang gyász* [Grief Voice Grief]; *Istenem* [My God]; *Apám* [My Father]). However, the loneliness of modern man, the idea of the universe without a God – as Béla Márkus’ monograph rightly points out – here can be associated not so much with Attila József’s lyrical attitude or the scientific concepts of the end of the millennium but rather with a vision of nature and man which, regarding Hungarian literary tradition, appears first of all in Csokonai’s poems and is based on the classical Newtonian worldview (Márkus, 2015: 94–96). In István Ágh’s poetry, from here on, the path leads upwards, viz. by clinging to the memories of early faith, through recalling the father and the mother, the grandparents and the childhood experience of God (*Békességet* [Peace]; *Az újjáépítés fogantatása* [The Conception of Reconstruction]; *Körmenet* [Procession]).

In the volumes of the 1980s, religious references are more frequent (*Napvilág* [The Light of Day], 1981; *Keseredik a föld héja* [The Earth’s Crust Is Growing Bitter], 1984; *Napló és tulipán* [Diary and Tulips], 1987). The fear of passing away, the disillusionment, the apocalyptic visions are almost entirely missing from these volumes, as well as resignation and the tragic note. Instead, playfulness and (self-)irony prevail, which reflect on the previous poems of the

oeuvre, on the poetic attitude giving too much importance to the poem, the role of the poet, the pain of the individual and world, mostly within the limits of a humorous dialog with the tradition of the 20<sup>th</sup> century modern Hungarian poetry – namely with Gyula Illyés' and Mihály Babits' works (*Egy Babits-sor megfejtése* [Explanation of a Babits-line]; *Amit Illyés mutat be* [What Illyés presents]). Relief is also a part of this change, which actually discovers the happiness of one-time, unique events, the beauties of life, the creative power of memory and imagination in the awareness of the naturalness of aging (*Keseredik a föld héja* [The Earth's Crust Is Growing Bitter]; *Vénasszonyok nyara* [Indian Summer]). Confessional tone and self-analysis become the characteristic features of this poetic diction which, through sincere remorse and search for transcendence, and by recognizing everyday miracles, finds its way back to the vital dialogue with God.

Where is god  
whom I learned to write in small letter,  
and this small g made me an insect, too  
[...]  
This ditch flower has withered,  
and the first gossip of the somewhere existing sentimentalism  
is hanging on the table,  
and it would quench thirst like Christ.  
Vinegar for me! Remorse!  
(*Árokparti virág* [Ditch Flower])

After the 1989 regime change, in Ágh's poetry, the metaphors of faith and doubt are closely linked to the recollection of various personal experiences and events, for instance the Italian tour or the 1956 revolution, as well as the Budapest daily life. The time of the events and the locations, in these poems, are mostly clearly identifiable, thus the relationship to sacrality always appears in a well-defined context, but not in all cases can be subordinated to the situation to which it is connected. So, real events help, simply by their uniqueness, the lyrical self-reflection, the attitude ignoring concrete space and time, the partial – but with the individual consistently aiming at the full – realization and understanding of the goal of human existence, the laws of society, the events and opportunities of individual life. One can find here the dichotomy between reality and vision, repentance and rebellion (*Az öreg Michelangelo* [The Old Michelangelo]; *Innen indulnak* [They Start Here]; *Mindig virágos* [Always Blooming]; *A bélpoklosok Messiása* [The Lepers' Messiah] etc.), while the dialogue with God also belongs to this effort:

My age-worn holiday, homeless  
Mother of God, if the stall  
of Bethlehem is a roofless ruin,

if the key to the vacant dwelling is lost,  
where could Mary bear her son?

[...]

so I offer a tattered stall, myself,  
the tiny crib of my heart,  
the breath of my lungs, the myrrh of my liver,  
the incense of my teeth, the gold of my eyes,  
the Christmas tree of my backbone,  
tinsels and the Galaxy on my ribs,  
silver thorns to the Saviour for my salvation.

*(Föläjánlom magam [I Offer Myself], translated by István Tótfalusi)*

In such a context, the memory absorbed in childhood's faith, in the joy of holidays, or Haydn's music, creates the continuity that, despite the negative life experiences, the disillusionment, the pains and diseases of old age, opens the way for hope and trust, giving a sacred purpose and meaning to the final farewell to life, as well (*A Teremtés* [The Creation]; *Születésnap, 1938* [Birthday, 1938]; *Az orr látomásai* [The Nose's Visions]; *Gyászesemény* [Bereavement]). „You try to somehow reach the corner of God's cloak” – István Ágh notes in an interview in the 2000s. „Of course, you never succeed, as on Michelangelo's fresco God's and Adam's finger can't meet, either. But the gesture and the will are clearly visible” (Ágh, 2004: 117).

### **Imre Oravecz**

Just like István Bella's and István Ágh's poetry, Imre Oravecz's poems are defined, from the very beginning, by a poetic attitude focusing on sacrality, on transcendence. We could even say that each moment of the vast oeuvre reflects this relationship, not only by connecting to the traditionally religious rural culture but as a basic experience of individual creative life, as a source of past and present, man and history, culture and civilization.

The religious motifs, starting from the 1972 volume *Héj* [Skin], constitute an essential part of this universe (re-)created consciously from personal memories and elements of imagination, while in the later volumes the experiences of sacrality result from the relationship with the family, ancestors, and the tradition of peasant society, from the values of Catholicism and universal Christianity. Words like “psalm”, “mass”, “cross”, “prayer-book”, and “rosary” are, as well, part of this existential stance, as mutual assistance between neighbors, or the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed held over the graves of unknown soldiers:

Ever since I can remember,  
they had always been there,  
in our garden, next to the cemetery,

they were lined up in the potato field,  
packed in side by side,

[...]

once every year, on All Souls' Day, we'd weed them thoroughly,  
put them in order,  
and place lighted candles on them,  
as if they were relatives,  
but only one on each,  
because they cost money

sometimes I tried to relate them to bloodthirsty beast in Soviet films,  
but it didn't work,  
I couldn't take offense at them,  
my friend Miki always came to mind,  
whose father hadn't come home from the war  
and might be buried like this somewhere in Russia,  
or even worse than this  
*(Katonasírok [Soldiers' Graves], translated by Bruce Berlind)*

The space and time perspective of Oravecz's poems is also special, since through metonymic relations, metaphorical images, allegories, and enumerations individual destiny appears – despite the concrete referentiality – embedded in a historical, salvific, and mythological dimension. Although from an external (e. g. the reader's) viewpoint all this may seem chaotic, the individual always finds his place and role in it. The speaker of the poems appears as an initiate, as a bearer of secrets in these situations, but the source of knowledge is the community surrounding him, while the values and standards not only help at the level of everyday events, but also provide guidance regarding the development of sacred relationships, even the understanding of human existence and the world.

Thus, in Imre Oravecz's poetry the connection to tradition is created by those objects, scenes, and natural elements, which in their distinctive functions are able to evoke the various aspects of traditional rural culture, peasant activities, and religious life (*Egy földterület növénytakarójának változása* [Changes in the Flora of a Tract of Land], 1979; *Halászóember* [Fishing Man], 1998; *A megfelelő nap* [The Right Day], 2002; *Távozó fa* [Departing Tree], 2015). The memories juxtaposed – images mostly originating from the narrower metaphorical and metonymical space of childhood and family – create, due to selection, a unique existential medium that points back and forth in time: “in the corner half-made bed, / dusty books on the shelves, / photos on the nightstand, / in



the drawers and boxes memories, relics, / here clothing, clock, glasses, / over there phone, prayer-book, calendar" (*Csendélet*) [Still-life].

The non-poetical, prosaic, objective tone strengthens, paradoxically, the personal, even the intimate nature, the authenticity of the (narrated) events, the community ties come alive in the sincere emotional relation to the evoked characters and the empirical world. At the same time, the documentation of momentariness is, right from the first volume, an elementary part of this orientation, which subordinates everything, human being, nature, and object to the awareness of impermanence. From the point of view of Oravecz's poems, we can never see the whole, only the fraction, the fragment that, building on memories, shows immobility, the state before or after the action, event, documenting photographically, as it were, the presence of life, the traces of the physical, mental and spiritual existence of man:

solemn icon  
in front of the bed  
in the unstirred silence  
old banknotes  
leaf tobacco  
notebook chaff hair bulb  
wrapped in damask

In the poems of the 1972 volume *Héj* [Skin], we mostly can't see the speaker; we can only hear his fragmented speech. These lyric episodes don't have flesh and blood characters; a body part or a gesture emerges now and then from the bursting stream of memory. Only the figures brought into existence, so to say as a fiction, by things, instruments, machines, places, and the (imagined) space and time constitute an exception (*Dubrovník* [Dubrovnik]; *H. Bosh álma* [The Dream of H. Bosch]; *Áldozat* [Sacrifice]; *Lingua* [Lingua]). In this relation, therefore, reality is present through various places, buildings, objects, and paintings; the values of Christian past – mostly related to the religious and cultural context of Medieval Europe – appear only incidentally, from the imprints of different periods and locations. This depersonalized discourse is characterized by projecting surrealistic images on one another, genuinely illustrating that the existence evoked here finds its meaning, beyond the linguistic, visual, and temporal dimension, in a higher, sacral context:

The clock struck. On its face  
a handcart made its way,  
the wheels creaking,  
the seat empty  
(*Idő* [Time], translated by Bruce Berling)

The prose poems of the volume *1972. szeptember* [*When You Became She*] simultaneously display the period from the Creation to the Fall, and from Christ's Coming to the Apocalypse, adding a salvific dimension to the experience of the birth and death of love, of happiness and despair, of heaven and hell. The personal issues, here, metaphorically evoke the eternal struggle between good and evil, love and hate, life and death, since by reflections alluding to the Gospel stories they transcend the space and time limitations of subjective memory. In the introductory part, for example, we can recognize the first words of Saint John's Gospel: "there was you, there was there, there was / then, there was blue sky, there was sunshine, there was spring, / there was warm, there was meadow [...] there / was trust, there was giving, there was richness, there was pleasure, / there was gaiety, there was laughter, there was song, there was / talk, there was prayer [...] then the you became she, the / there became here, then became now [...] affirmation / became negation, faith became doubt, hope became despair, love / became hate, future became past" (*Kezdetben volt* [*In the Beginning*] translated by Bruce Berlind).

Just like in István Ágh's poetry, in Oravecz's poems humankind plays a central role – including, in particular, the destiny of Hungarian people, of traditional peasant society. The post-apocalyptic portrayal of life and death, of reality addresses this issue, as well. Contrary to the present state of being, to the destructive effect of modern age on identity and community, to the civilization-stricken rationalistic society, the 1983 volume *A hopik könyve* [*The Book of the Hopi*], depicts an ideal – probably non-existent – world which accepts the process of birth, life, and death as something natural, and the human being as God's creation:

the first vibration center of the human body is on the crown,  
 the Creator places life in man  
 through the first vibration center,  
 and takes it out from there through it, as well  
 (*Eototo és Aholi az embertestről* [*Eototo and Aholi about the Human Body*])

The Indians in the 1983 volume are, basically, the allegorical characters of an old, traditional, happier society, of a universe in which all the events are subject to the divine order and to the wisdom coming from tradition; even death or irrational events have a meaning, cause and consequence affecting sacred relationships. "*A hopik könyve* [*The Book of the Hopi*] is an ancient story, a reality that existed about ten thousand years ago, which is for us now like a myth and fiction. At that time, the world was a better place, a lot of problems didn't exist, though human existence always and everywhere is the same, we are born, we suffer, we are happy sometimes, and then we die. [...]

Even today, there are people for whom the fact that you have to die does not cause a big problem – but for most of them it does cause a great deal of problem. All the more so since death is eliminated from our lives. We live as if we were never going to die, and we bury our dead in the same way – we die as if we had never lived” – Imre Oravecz remarks in an interview (Herczeg – Lapis, 2008: 26).

This experience, according to the testimony of Oravecz’s works, is inaccessible to the modern man, but it can be reconstructed, to some extent, from childhood reality based on confidence and emotional decisions, bizarre games, and actions built on rites (A régi Szajla [The Old Szajla]; A gyermekkor módosítása [Modification of Childhood]; Támpontok a gyermekkor módosításához [Clues to the Modification of Childhood]). That is so even if the “stories” themselves are formed from a timeless, universal dimension that always resists the efforts searching for specific references and time limitations. “The retrospective angle of the remembering self usually portrays and searches for the past from the consequences of growing up and, by doing so, the once private appears already as stranger and lost, and gains meaning as such, yet – precisely because this perspective is determined by the experience of absence – the meaning manifesting itself is no longer relevant, given that in the context of the present, i.e. in the temporal context of remembering it cannot be retrieved”, Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó states (Kulcsár-Szabó, 1999: 91).

In the 2000s poems, turning to tradition, remembering, and settledness bear witness to that attitude which is able to accept death as a part of life and the inevitable impermanence of worldly things. Rejoicing over unexpected love and giving thanks become part of the transcendental dialogue, as well as the playful-ironic prayer poems for easy old age, for the mercy of good death (*Bőség* [Abundance]; *Kívánságlista* [Wish List]; *A kérés részletezése* [Detailing the Request]). In this context, it is not so much the preordained death of every human which lends a melancholic tone to the expression but rather the fate of traditional society, the (self-)liquidation of rural communities, and the disappearance of the ancient forms of sacrality. The demoralizing and identity-crushing irresponsibility of communism, nationalization, and then the consequences of the political decisions made after the regime change, as well as the related family stories and personal experiences intensify the tragic aspect of Oravecz’s poetry:

Father Győző presents the wafer,  
and we pray aloud.  
We are around fifteen or twenty people in the church.  
In Szajla, the Lord has neither workers nor harvest any more.  
(*Mise* [Mass])

Péter Szirák correctly notes: “The destruction of Hungarian peasant society is part of a worldwide trend, with a delayed land distribution and a little collective farm detour. But elsewhere, something new grew out of the old: in the West, they provide large subsidies for the maintenance of the rural world. Because it slows down the unbearable expansion of urbanization, strengthens community life and environmental awareness. It’s expensive everywhere, yet they assume the costs. Over here, however, rural life has been ruined to such an extent that there is nothing instead. In many places, farming has disappeared; people do not even sow in the kitchen-garden. In many places, even the young live on welfare, or on disability pension. No one wants to cultivate the land anymore. [...] In Hungarian literature, which nowadays mostly moves in a vacuum, producing neat historical novels, and manufacturing puns, only Imre Oravecz keeps us posted about all this” (Szirák, 2008: 42).

After the change of regime, the optimistic objectivity of Oravecz’s poetry, its strong faith, and the playfulness with which it turns to God is, on the other hand, unique in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Hungarian literature. The evocation of simple peasant life, of the happiness and joyfulness, despite all the hardships, of childhood (*Középkor*) [Middle Ages], the unbroken trust in Salvation, in the existence of afterlife, in the validity of redemption (*Túl* [Beyond]; *Halottaim* [My Dead]; *Megkönnyebbülés* [Relief]), the epigrammatic *Szekuláris bizonyíték* [Secular Proof] completing, (self-)ironically, Pascal’s wager with the reality of the (post-)modern age are equally part of this kind of poetic space. This orientation – though in some ways it has been present since the first volumes – is able, more maturely and tested, near the end of life, experiencing the process of aging, to look at the personal past and future serenely: “God is like a light / we can only see that He shines” (*Egy hívő naplójából*) [From a Believer’s Diary].

If it’s allowed to speak from the perspective of a contemporary literary interpretation, the conclusion of Oravecz’s poetry is that: just as focusing on transcendence and remembering have a purpose and meaning, so human life and death cannot be in vain. As the counter-poem of the *Egy hívő naplójából* [From a Believer’s Diary], written in English, convincingly demonstrates:

Feeling God’s presence in my lonely nights  
 makes me think of a beautiful garden  
 I have always wished to be a gardener in  
 (*Confession of a Faithful*)

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## BOOKS

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### Arnhild Lauveng, *I morgen var jeg alltid en løve* [*Tomorrow I Was Always a Lion*], Oslo, J.W. Cappelens Forlag AS, 2005, 200 p.

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As well as being a person who has defied most people's pessimistic expectations about the likely course of her adult life, Arnhild Lauveng is also the author of a book that challenges any easy or handy review profiling. To say that she has received the Norwegian Fritt Ord (Free Speech) Honorary Award in 2008 would be only one way of introducing her work. Indeed, mentioning this kind of acknowledgement would speak for the sincerity and honesty that pervade her presentation not only of a painful personal experience, but also of systems and institutions that cannot cope with people who need much more support to deal with similar challenges.

Another thing that speaks just as much about the importance and success of her book would be the number of languages into which the volume has been translated so far: English, French, German, Spanish, Polish and Lithuanian are only a few editions to mention, with a

Romanian version to be published soon. Speaking about translations, one thing that appears to have posed a challenge to all the foreign editors so far seems to be the title of the book itself. Thus, none of the existing translations have chosen to keep its *ad litteram* rendering in the respective languages.<sup>1</sup> This editorial decision is probably due to the

fact that, at first glance, the syntagm *I morgen var jeg alltid en løve* [*Tomorrow I Was Always a Lion*] appears to make little logical sense, blending, as it does, a future placed in the past with an adverbial indicating permanence. Moreover, what would a lion have to do with it all? All these elements occurring at the same time were probably felt as potentially confusing for the readers. However, one cannot help feeling that, by choosing to replace the title syntagm with vari-

ous euphemisms based on ideas or images found in the book, the foreign editions may have failed to capture the very



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<sup>1</sup> In English, the title was translated as *A Road Back from Schizophrenia: A Memoir* (New York, Skyhorse Publishing, 2012).

spirit of the book, present in its title: the author's journey from indescribable confusion to headstrong determination to live life to the fullest. In fact, this title is nothing but the last line of the poem that opens the volume, so that, as soon as one reads these introductory lines, one is able not only to understand the title thoroughly but also to prepare for the story ahead.

The lion metaphor is, moreover, a recurring one in the book. Even if choosing to make it a defining metaphor for the "happy" outcome of the book might seem like a cliché, especially when the power of this metaphor is, furthermore, predicted on its contrast with the sheep metaphor, the choice is not random. However, based on this element alone, someone may think that the story of Arnhild Lauveng can be summed up quite simply: it is the story of someone who began as a humble, gray sheep in a sad flock marred by illness, but who knew that she had the inner strength to overcome her seemingly impossible situation and did so in the end. Seen from this perspective, the subject of Arnhild Lauveng's book is a well-known recipe for any successful novel: the heroine who beats the odds to find professional success and a fulfilled personal life.

Except that, with this book, things are never what they seem, and they are very far from simple.

First, the narrative is full of animal metaphors, real or imagined: besides sheep and lions, there are horses, crocodiles and egg-laying dragons, all of them meant, as the author acknowledges herself, to express the inexpressible pain of mental suffering.

Because this is, in fact, the topic of Arnhild Lauveng's book: living one's young age as a schizophrenia patient. Secondly, even if it may be read as fiction – and many of us would prefer to know such experiences may only be imaginary – it is a true account, a memoir of the author's inner and outer journey through one of the most mysterious and least accessible mental illnesses known to medical science to this day.

Fictional examples of books depicting mental illness, and especially schizophrenia, even if not abundant, can be found in world literature. A semi-autobiographical one, Joanne Greenberg's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, is cited by Lauveng herself. Besides, the Norwegian Critics Prize for Literature in 2010 also acknowledged the value of a story on the very same topic, told by Beate Grimrud (*I en dare fri*).<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, unlike fictional or semi-fictional accounts, non-fictional stories of schizophrenia have steadily increased in number, especially since the 1990s. Some of them are written by therapists on behalf of their patients (*Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl: The True Story of "Renee"*, by Marguerite Sechehaye), others by journalists documenting patients' experiences (*The Quiet Room: A Journey Out of the Torment of Madness*, by Lori Schiller with Amanda Bennett). Others still are testimonials written by patients themselves (*Mind without a Home: A Memoir of Schizophrenia*, by Kristina Morgan, or *The Collected Schizophrenias: Essays*, by Esmé Weijun Wang). Very few of them, however, are authored by professionals – psychologists or psychotherapists – who

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<sup>2</sup> *A Fool, Free* (English translation by Kari Dickson), London, Head of Zeus, 2015. Grimrud's novel has also been awarded or nominated for several other Norwegian and Swedish literary prizes.

happen to be patients themselves. This double perspective allows for a much more complex and nuanced look into the subject, which explains why such works will always enjoy lasting attention. In English, the book that has become such a classic is Elyn R. Saks' *The Center Cannot Hold: My Journey through Madness*. The author is Professor of Law, Psychology, Psychiatry, and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Southern California Law School and has lived with schizophrenia for most of her life.

Speaking with professional authority about a condition one is painfully intimate with cannot be an easy feat, as Arnhild Lauveng is abundantly aware of, too. Numerous times during her account she underlies the fundamental difference between being a patient, unaware of one's actions and reasons, and being in the therapist's chair, writing, remembering, explaining and giving hope to the many people out there who desperately need it. Unlike any other author mentioned so far, Lauveng is uniquely positioned to do just that – inspire courage. That is because, as she makes it clear from the very first line of the book, she is no longer a schizophrenia patient. In other words, what she claims is a reality that very few patients can hope for and very professionals will acknowledge: the fact that it is possible to find one's way back from the blood-red, iron forest that she felt mental illness to be like and live to use all the colours in one's life box.

The whole book rests on metaphors like the ones above. Besides, plenty of literary and scientific references are scattered throughout. Some of these are so well-known to Norwegian readers that they do not require explanation, such as, for instance, the poems of Bjørnstjerne

Bjørnson, the lines of André Bjerke or Alf Prøysen or those of a German song, not to mention the whole chapter in which parallels are drawn between a patient's helpers during their journey to recovery and Askeladden's helpers in the folk tale. Needless to say, such references need to be explained to readers from other cultures, something that adds to the complexity of the translator's task. What is really remarkable about Lauveng's book is the way she knows how to combine such easy-to-understand allegories of illness with significant scientific data. Not only does she mention and explain the procedures and outcome of several psychological experiments, but she does so at critical points in the book, with a view to demystifying common misconceptions about this particular illness. By doing so, she definitely helps complete the complex imagery relying on metaphor with solid scientific fact, proving herself, in the process, to be a highly trained, reliable and efficient professional for her own patients.

At the same time, even when she talks with authority about psychological fact and medical classification, the author does so from the perspective of the patient, telling the readers all she would have liked to have been told by the professionals in the system at the time of her own hospitalization and therapy. This way, she hopes to change things not only for the patients, but also for the members of the medical profession involved in treating schizophrenia. As she herself states, it is not treatment the patients lack, it is care. Care for their feelings, for their humanity, for their individual needs. And courage to believe that their condition is not hopeless, that they can still be functional and useful members of society. In other words, that they can keep their dignity by being allowed



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to use their skills to become independent. This, in turn, can be done by looking at them not primarily as patients, but as fellow human beings, something that seems often forgotten once one becomes diagnosed with any form of mental illness.

Arnhild Lauveng's book is not an easy read. Not because she does not use a warm, empathetic and sometimes funny tone, and not because her words and images are not easy to relate to. It is because her experiences with the illness and with the systems in charge of dealing with the patients are sometimes terrifying. But,

precisely because of this reason, it is a book that needs to be read by patients and professionals alike. One cannot start changing – whether it's minds or systems – without looking the truth in the face. For those of us who have not experienced the destructive force of a mental illness like schizophrenia, Lauveng's book is a revelation. For psychologists and psychotherapists, it may be an inspiration and a call for change. And for patients themselves, the most sincere proof of deep understanding and a beacon of hope.

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## BOOKS

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### **Maja Lunde, *Istoria albinelor (Bienes historie)*, traducere de Sanda Tomescu Baciu, București, Editura Humanitas Fiction, 2019, 384 p.**

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The dystopian novel, *Istoria albinelor* written by Norwegian author Maja Lunde, presents a fiction with a terrifying potential to become reality in the near future. Initially written as a standalone book, *Istoria albinelor* becomes the first pillar in the tetralogy called *The Climate Quartet*. The second one, *Blå* (2017) and the third, *Przewalski's hest* (2019) are both new-born international bestsellers. The fourth is yet a mystery. What the novels have in common is the multivalent perspective when it comes to main characters, periods and places.

*Istoria albinelor* appeared in Romanian in year 2019, with the support of Norwegian Literature Abroad (NORLA) in the *Raftul Denisei* Collection of the Humanitas Fiction Publishing House, translated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu professor and founder of the Norwegian language and literature bachelor programme at the Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. She has translated a number of Norwegian authors into Romanian such as Henrik Ibsen, Lars Saabye Christensen and Knut Hamsun. Regarding this translation,

it gives the Romanian public the opportunity to encounter with a novel of high magnitude internationally, as being sold in millions of copies and published in over 35 countries. The translation of *Bienes historie*

(*Istoria albinelor*) was published with the support of NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad).

Maja Lunde manages by imagination to create an absolutely plausible scenario considering the current climate changes, the most important one being global warming. The novel has a certain degree of tension and suspense that attracts the reader in its lecture.

The action is divided into three temporal and spatial perspectives. Three families, from different continents and times, encounter the drama of the

disappearance of the bees. The story starts with Tao, a young hard-working mother, who is suffering a family crisis. Space and time are well defined, namely District 242, Shirong, Sichuan in 2098. Also, in the beginning we find out that the bees disappeared in 1980, being killed by pesticides used in agriculture. The history continues with William, in Maryville, Hertfordshire,



England, 1852. A naturalist with high aspirations, he falls ill by recognizing his nothingness. In an impulse to overcome his condition and to rise in the eyes of the family, he gets involved in building an innovative hive, which later proves to be an additional disappointment. The third storyline presents George from Autumn Hill, Ohio, USA. Convinced traditionalist, he strongly opposes the methods of industrialization used by competition. He wants to leave a legacy, the beekeeping business that has been in the family for generations. However, he cannot avoid the phenomenon of bees disappearing, but he hopes that if he manages to arouse his son's interest, the business will be reborn.

The three narrative voices, distinct at first sight, alternate and evolve each with its story, to the point where they become convergent. Finally, the stories of the characters merge into one, as the life of each character is directly or indirectly related to the existence of bees.

The book, although it presents a fictional world, has a documentary basis, the CCD syndrome - Colony Collapse Disorder, being as real and topical as possible. George's words draw attention to the causes behind the disappearance of bee colonies: *[I always have kept bees away from poisons because they became apathetic, which inevitably led to losses. But in recent years, many beekeepers have adopted new methods. .... I would have liked farmers to continue to use the methods of yesteryear, when crops survived on their own without the help of insecticides. But it seems that it was no longer possible. The pests could destroy an entire crop in one night. We were already far too numerous, and the price of food, low, while the cost of living was too high for anyone to dare to take any risk]* (p.173). Unfortunately, the

phenomenon of over industrialization can make the inevitable predicted by Maja Lunde a reality in the near future. The novel also serves as a warning for the existence of all mankind.

The family universe is the secondary theme of the novel. The relationship between parents and children is addressed in each of the three stories. William embodies a misogynistic character, who gives credit to his only son, rather than to his daughters. Later, he realizes that Charlotte was the one who managed to get him out of the terrible melancholy that kept him bedridden and to restore his former passion. George sees the only hope of the family business in his son Tom who shows very little interest in his father's aspirations, as he wants to become a writer. The problematic relationship between father and son is intensely highlighted. In another narrative plane, Tao, overwhelmed with guilt, gets increasingly estranged from his life partner. Unhappy in her married life, she decides to go on a journey to find her beloved son, taken by the authorities after a tragic accident. Wrapped in mystery, the story of the journey and the attempt to find answers keep the reader in suspense. Also, the relationship between man and nature is very well illustrated. The book emphasizes that nature lives and can survive very well without the human component, but man without nature is inevitably doomed to death.

A tense moment of the novel is the apocalyptic description of Beijing - a ghost town with deserted streets, closed shops, abandoned subway stations and hospitals where the elderly are left behind and thus sentenced to death. People were forced to leave their homes in order to be relocated to agricultural fields, dealing exclusively with manual pollination.

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The key to the survival of the human species lies in the very universe of bees. As the novel points out, they live for the community, they cooperate and sacrifice for the collective. By itself, one bee means nothing, being so small and insignificant, but together with all the others, it is everything, because they all together

form the hive. Following the example of bees, man must avoid being an individualist. He should be aware of the need for community, he should learn to be part of a whole. Even if the future seems bleak and distressing, the novel ends on a positive note, hope being the leitmotif of human existence.

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## BOOKS

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### Maja Lunde, *Blå [The End of the Ocean]*, Oslo, Aschehoug & Co., 2017, 216 p.

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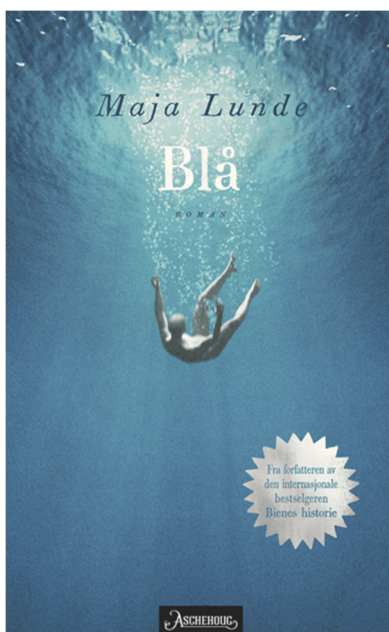
*The End of the Ocean* is the second novel in Maja Lunde's *klimakvartetten* (climate quartet), following her worldwide success *The History of Bees* (*Bienes Historie* in original Norwegian, *Istoria Albinelor* in Romanian; the novel has been translated into Romanian by Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu and published in 2019). The original Norwegian title of *The End of the Ocean* is *Blå*, meaning "blue", a fit title since the novel revolves around the importance of water for human and non-human beings, but also for maintaining the balance of our ecosystems.

The book is constructed in the same manner as *The History of Bees*, but this time the reader is confronted with only two storylines, instead of three. The first one revolves around Signe, a 70-year-old woman who sets out on a voyage to France, where she plans to meet her long lost lover, Magnus. The action takes place in present day Norway, but Lunde often uses flashbacks to familiarise the reader with Signe and Magnus' past. The two lovers met in college, and they were both

environmental activists. However, they began to drift apart when Magnus changed his attitude regarding the conservation of the glaciers and agreed with the selling of ice they fought so hard to preserve.

The second narrative, set in a near, dystopian future (to be more precise, the action takes place in the year 2041 in France) follows the story of David and his young daughter, Lou. They are climate refugees, constantly on the go, running away from the drought and the wildfires that threaten the whole continent. Separated from the rest of their family (David's wife and other child, a boy), the father-daughter duo undergo famine and starvation, thirst, and the constant anxiety of having to live from day to day, without any certainty of what to-

morrow will bring. Just like in *The History of Bees*, the stories will eventually come together, as everything is ultimately connected. What Magnus and Signe did a few decades ago turns out to be extremely important for David and his daughter, Lou.



Climate change, the extinction of various animal species, and environmental pollution have become important themes in contemporary literature. Lunde's *klimakvarttet* has been categorised by critics and readers as *cli-fi*, or climate fiction. Even though this type of discourse was initially typical for American literature, since the *wasteland* as a space of non-life and absence is a concept profoundly ingrained in the American collective imaginary and literary tradition, climate fiction (or ecofiction) has entered the European literary scene as well.

Maja Lunde is one of the writers who tackle these issues. The aforementioned «wasteland» is present in *The End of the Ocean*, as the characters witness the disintegration of the natural world around them. Signe eventually loses her dear glacier, which she named Blå, while David watches the vegetation around him die out, turning the once green, lively terrains into barren land.

But Signe's Blå seems to be more than just a glacier. Lunde describes it not as an inanimate piece of the natural decorum, but as a real, living creature: "Blå is a sad creature" (179) Signe says, adding that her glacier is a "big, quiet animal" (5). Water (in all its forms) thus becomes a living force, a breathing organism that has a life on its own. The nonhuman environment is therefore not only a framing device, but an active presence, according to Greg Garrard, one of the most important researchers in the field of ecocriticism at the moment. Because of this, the glacier's demise becomes even more traumatic for Signe, since she loses a friend and a companion, and not only a mere block of ice.

If *The History of Bees* tackles, apart from climate change and pollution, the "question of the animal", as Cary Wolfe

calls it, insofar as it illustrates how important a role bees play in maintaining the balance of our ecosystems and how vital their work is for us human beings, *The End of the Ocean* does not discuss non-human beings explicitly. However, there are a few hints in the text that allude to this type of discourse, as Signe and David do often think of themselves as animals following their instinctual impulses, survival and reproduction. The border between human and non-human is often erased in this novel, leaving space for a world where these two dimensions are inextricably intertwined. Lunde herself mentions in an interview (from October 2019) that this was one of her primary intentions when writing the novel, to disclose this side of our human nature and the whole debate that arises from the nature vs. nurture/culture dichotomy.

Apart from all these motifs that revolve around climate change and the destruction of the natural environment, *The End of the Ocean* is ultimately a novel about the constant yearning to connect with those around us. The Anthropocene may have rendered us disconnected from the *Other* (be it human, like for example climate refugees, or non-human). In an unstable, unpredictable world like that of Signe or David, the characters tend to be decentralized and their sense of identity becomes fragmented. For Signe and David it becomes almost impossible to connect with their dear ones, both physically (since both Magnus and David's wife are far away from them), but also emotionally. Just like in *The History of Bees*, Lunde creates in this novel an excellent depiction of the dynamics of our personal relationships in a world where you are essentially on your own.

Lunde's candid and raw writing style has the power of immersing the reader

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into the story. The vivid descriptions of the landscapes create both awe and fear in those who read the novel, since we witness the greatness of nature being slowly replaced by wastelands and barrenness.

The parallel structure of the novel conveys this duality between balance and chaos, between man as an all-powerful, destructive force, and man as just another piece of the ecosystem.

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## BOOKS

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**Daniel A. Finch-Race, Stephanie Posthumus (Eds.), *French Ecocriticism. From the Early Modern Period to the Twenty-First Century*, Peter Lang, 2017, 294 p.**

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Mostly sceptic towards politically oriented approaches in cultural studies - such as postcolonialism, gender or animal studies - French critics have also been slower in adopting methodologies from the field of ecocriticism, which emerged and developed mostly in the anglophone context. French publications addressing environmental concerns in humanities became more prolific in the last years and the present volume, *French Ecocriticism. From the Early Modern Period to the Twenty-First Century*, responds the need to draw a framework for the French ecocriticism, casting light upon specific traits and directions that distinguish it from the anglophone tradition.

As the editors Daniel A. Finch-Race and Stephanie Posthumus explain in the introduction, one of the purposes of this volume is to demonstrate that ecocriticism does not solely deal with concrete political ecological commitment, but equally with formal and aesthetic elements. It is also worth mentioning that,

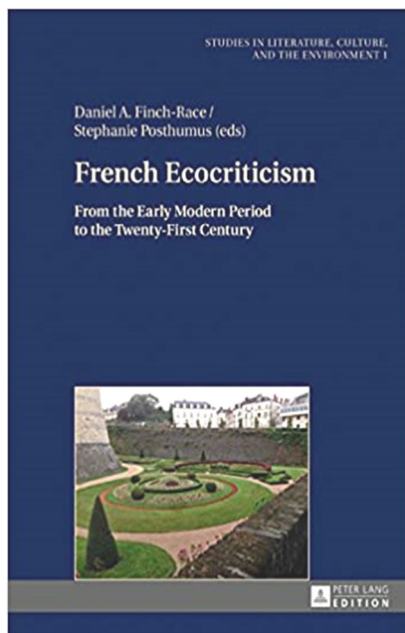
reuniting studies conducted by researchers from different countries, one of the strong points of the work is that it relies on a cross-cultural perspective.

The volume contains seven parts that provide a complex overview of French envi-

ronmental thinking over the centuries. The authors propose a rich variety of subjects, not only concerning literature, but also cinematography and theoretical texts within the field of ecocriticism.

The first part, entitled "Early Modern Economies and Ecologies" brings attention to how works from the sixteenth century can be interpreted in light of modern ideas of environmental awareness. Jeff Persels reads a set of texts belonging to the didactic genre of the *principum specula* ('mirrors for princes'), ques-

tioning how the care for the environment was at the time considered an indicator of good stewardship. Pauline Goul, in her chapter on Montaigne's vision of the New World, identifies a very specific relation between the human and the non-human,



outlined in two chapters of the *Essais*. She argues that the sensations of sickness and fear experienced by the writer during the sea-voyage are a suggestion for the environmental risk posed by the colonial politics of the time. This is further linked to a concern for sustainability that, as Goul argues, can be associated with George Bataille's theory of expenditure, thus affirming the relevance of Montaigne's writings for contemporary ideas on ecology.

Passing from the Middle Ages to the literary period of the nineteenth century, the authors of the second part, "Romanticism and Nature; Naturalism and Animality" revisit the works of the classics Victor Hugo and Émile Zola. Karen A. Quandt argues that Hugo's exile in the Channel Island and his poems from this period – collected in the volume *Les Contemplations* – represented a turning point in his understanding of the nature. Although a romantic writer, with *Les contemplations*, Hugo surpasses the romanticised vision that presents the natural world as a mere setting for human emotions and seems to gain awareness of the entangled relationship between the human and the non-human. Quandt further argues that the experience from the Channel Islands prepared the utopian vision from the fourth book of *Les Misérables*, where Hugo, through depictions of nature in the hybrid landscapes of Paris' peripheries, pleads for the re-establishment of the natural ecosystem.

Next, Claire Nettleton approaches the theme of animal aesthetics in Émile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*. Zola's declared mission of depicting his characters as human animals is traditionally understood in terms of degradation of the human (thus positing the animal on an inferior scale). Nettleton pleads for a completely different interpretation of Zola's naturalist thesis, questioning

whether the association between human and animal nature could instead be considered as "the basis of a radical, non-anthropocentric aesthetic" (82). She associates Zola's methods with Deleuze and Guattari's theorisations of Francis Bacon's work, relying on the concepts of 'becoming-animal' – which forces us to understand the inner wild nature of Thérèse and Laurent in relation with the environment in which they live – and the concept of 'painting of sensation', which, transposed in Zola's work, is supposed to "shock bourgeois sensibilities and undermine aesthetic principles" (86).

The next part, "Nineteenth-Century Eco-poetics", comprises two chapters that focus on the works of Arthur Rimbaud and Marie Krysinska. Reading the "ecopoetic adventures" in Rimbaud's poems 'Ma bohème' and 'Sensation', David A. Finch-Race goes beyond a mere interpretation of figures of speech and poetic images that "accentuate the sensorial immediacy of the narrator's engagement with unembellished elements of nature" (101-102) and engages in an in-depth analysis of the formal elements. He argues that the distinctive versification of the two poems from Rimbaud's early period mirror the changes brought by industrialisation in 19<sup>th</sup> century's France. In this way, Finch-Race demonstrates how the rhythm, the alternation between feminine and masculine rhyme pairs, caesura, alliterations and assonances, the feminine *e caduc*, the verb tenses, all articulate the poet's encounter and immersion with the "female-inflected nature" (106).

In a literary tradition defined by the alexandrine, Marie Krysinska was a pioneer of the French *vers libre*. David E. Evans argues that, although Krysinska's poetry from her *Rythmes pittoresques* mostly recycles the same romantic clichés

of the nature, it is worth using the ecocritical lenses in a formal reading, rather than a thematic one, in order to grasp the originality of the poet. He pleads that Krysinska's innovative poetry is a '*frais dispositif*' which might have the "potential to shape ecocritical reading strategies" (121) by constantly questioning and challenging the 19<sup>th</sup> century reader's habits, accustomed to the fixed forms of the sonnet and the ballade. Both the contributions of Finch-Race and Evans are ultimately justifying why French ecocriticism cannot ignore problems related to formal elements.

In the fourth part, "Twentieth-Century Ecological Thought" Teófilo Sanz discusses environmental thinking in Marguerite Yourcenar's works – a writer who publicly stated her beliefs by supporting causes such as animal rights. Sanz points to different ecological directions that can be traced in her writings, from the notion of *place-connectedness* to some ideas suggesting ecofeminist positions. However, animal thinking remains the writer's central environmental concern. The subject is developed primarily in the novel *Un homme obscur*, where, through the figure of Nathanaël, Yourcenar "adopts a kind of biocentrism that encompasses an ethic of responsibility towards every non-human entity" (148), as Sanz argues.

This chapter is followed by a more theoretical discussion, as Christopher Watkin approaches Michel Serres's relation to ecocriticism. The philosopher refused to use terms such as 'ecocriticism', 'ecology' or 'eco-philosophy', that he considered to be too "narrow", because their use in political discourses diminishes the complex dimension of what ecology scientifically means. As Serres suggests, we should rather regard ecology as a complex network of links and interactions that exist

not only in the natural milieu, but between all domains of existence. In this respect, Watkin proposes the terms of 'restricted' and 'general' ecology to discuss the inextricable relation between the so-called 'narrow' and 'broader' dimensions of ecology, arguing that "the entire paradigm of ecology as 'conservation' and 'protection' is bankrupt and self-undermining" (157). Watkin draws his arguments on Serres's discussion on pollution: as the philosopher asserts, we should consider this problem by asking ourselves not '*how* to stop polluting' but '*why* we pollute'. Since pollution is in fact a natural phenomenon common to animals and humans, the boundaries between 'natural' and 'cultural' become questionable. Watkin further argues that Serres's plea for a new 'cosmography' – a political system where non-human actors would be represented and considered alongside with the interests of humans – is shaped by his ideas on 'natural' and 'cultural'. That is because only by being aware of the interconnectedness between the human and the non-human could we adopt such a political system that would seek a real and effective equilibrium between humans and the environment.

In the volume's fifth section, entitled "Millennial Bodies, Origins and Becoming-Milieu", the authors investigate the notion of landscape and its interactions with the human body, both in literature and cinematography. Jonathan Krell contributes with an ecocritical reading of Stéphane Audeguy's *La Théorie des nuages*. In the novel that begins by exploring a natural phenomenon (and a romantic topos) – the clouds, Audeguy arrives at making analogies between the natural world and the microcosm of the human body. With references to names such as Luc Bureau, Mircea

Eliade, Goethe, Michel Tournier or Plato, Krell investigates how the female sexuality has long been associated with natural elements in multiple domains: geography, mythology, philosophy, literature. On the other hand, Nikolaj Lübecker draws on Gilbert Simondon's concept of the *individuum milieu* to explain Jean-Claude Rousseau's depiction of the encounter between human body and landscape in the experimental film *La Vallée close*. He shows that techniques and formal work is relevant to ecocritical discussions not only in literature, but also in cinematography.

The next part, "Twenty-First-Century Natural Limits" focuses on specific themes from the American eco-literature, as they appear in the works of French contemporary writers. Anais Boulard examines how the apocalyptic discourse finds its own specificity in French fiction through Éric Chevillard's *Sans l'orang-outan* and Michel Houellebecq's *La Possibilité d'une île*. Boulard argues that the originality of these writers resides in the diegesis and the aesthetics of their writing. Not so much interested in militating for the environmental cause, Chevillard and Houellebecq are mostly concerned with the formal construction of their novels, experimenting with the notions of subject and time. Thus, "[t]he objective of the two novels is to focus on the ubiquity of fear and a sense of apocalypse, rather than the catastrophe in itself" (220). Moreover, the metanarratives and the parodic tones in the two novels suggest that French fiction is more open towards creativity, which finally represents "a way of overcoming the overwhelming anxiety of environmental catastrophes" (225), as Boulard concludes.

Hannes De Vriese explores the motif of wilderness in the autobiographical nonfiction book *Dans les forêts de Sibérie*

by Sylvain Tesson, who draws his inspiration from Thoreau's *Walden*. Although both the French and the American writers depict their retreat from civilisation into the pristine nature, Tesson presents a more radical experience, as well as a more problematic ecological position. That is because, as De Vriese argues, the French writer's experience in the wilderness has rather hedonistic and aesthetic purposes. However, this is not to say that his work is less valuable. De Vriese points to the differences and tensions between 'ecocriticism', understood in terms of ecological commitment, and 'ecopoetics', which, focused on aesthetic and formal elements, seems to be definitory for French environmental literature. In this respect, Tesson's *Dans les forêts de Sibérie* is ultimately representative for the French ecopoetics.

In the seventh and last part, "Horizons and Prospects", Stephanie Posthumus engages in formulating an original theory on French environmental thinking. Paying careful attention to the connotations of terms such as 'environnement', (which etymologically suggests an anthropocentric perspective), 'nature', 'écologie', or the English 'ecocritique', she proposes the notion of 'French *écocritique*' in order to highlight the specificity and the strangeness of the French case. After surveying how French ecological thinking has generally been shaped by theories related to space and place (such as *écopoétique*, *géocritique*, *géopoétique*), Posthumus outlines her specific contribution by proposing two theoretical concepts, namely *ecological subjectivity* and *ecological dwelling*, that she applies in her readings of literary works by Marie Darrieussecq and Marie-Hélène Lafon. It is worth mentioning that Posthumus largely developpes her theory in a separate volume: *French*

## BOOKS

*'Écocritique': Reading Contemporary French Theory and Fiction Ecologically* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

Finally, the present volume can be considered a milestone for the French environmental studies. Despite the multitude of studies proposed, drawing on thematic and formal analyses, as well as theoretical enquires, the authors of *French Eco-criticism* manage to outline some general and unitary perspectives in the field, with an emphasis on comparative and diachronic

approaches. If the readings of contemporary works have an unquestionable value for today's environmental context, the attention given to historic and classical texts do not have a merely theoretical and academic importance – the authors of these studies also challenge us to reconsider and constantly challenge our reading habits in order to form an analytical eye, so much necessary for putting in practice a real and efficient eco-criticism.

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## BOOKS

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### Lotta Elstad, *Jeg nekter å tenke (I refuse to think)*, Oslo, Editura Flamme Forlag, 2017, 240 p.

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Lotta Elstad is one of Norway's new literary stars, enjoying considerable international attention after her debut in 2008. Elstad (b. 1982) is a writer, journalist, historian and non-fiction editor, a complex figure, standing out through her original contrasting style. Between the few chosen ones for NORLA's talent development programme, *New Voices*, as part of Norway's project as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2019, Elstad was present with her newest novel, *I Refuse to think*. She had already made her entrance to Europe with her books translated to languages such as English, German or French, and now for the first time, to Romanian as well.

Winner of the Oslo Prize for best novel in 2017, *I refuse to think* is a daring and witty feminist dark comedy, extremely contemporary, written in the author's specific energetic and light, but also sharp satirical style. It is a book of high contrasts, as Lotta Elstad is a master of blending serious themes, such as abortion and politics, with humour, writing at a fresh, energetic pace, while maintaining the intellectual feature of her works through various references

and ingenious subtext. Hence we also encounter traditional timeless literary motifs, such as love, the right to decide for oneself and the attempt to control one's own destiny, typical of Norwegian literature.

The book captivates the reader from the very beginning and transposes them

into the main character's existence: "My name is Hedda Møller. I am thirty-three biblical years old. I've lost my boyfriend (an "erotic friendship"), my job (a verbal contract), and have just survived a plane-crash in the mountains around Sarajevo." And the adventure goes on until the last page. On her way back to Oslo, Hedda has a regrettable one-night-stand in Berlin with Milo, a hipster she meets on Tinder, who keeps texting her in CAPS LOCK, and follows her back home, where another surprise awaits: the news of her upcoming unwanted preg-

nancy. She immediately decides to take an abortion, aiming for a "quick procedure", but it turns out that "the quick procedure was forbidden last year", and this is thus not possible anymore before officially thinking about it for *three working days* – a rule imposed by the Norwegian Healthcare System, supported by the state. This strong





motif generates the novel's title: "*I refuse to think. I refuse - and it's as hopeless as urging someone not to imagine a zebra. You spend the next hour shaking the striped horse out of your head.*"

The abortion theme is depicted from feminist, but also political perspective, and the source of Lotta's inspiration lies in real life, as in most of her writings. The author was stirred by the problematic abortion law in Poland, one of Europe's most restrictive laws in this sense, and she makes various references to even more prohibitive countries throughout the story, like Texas, Indiana, El Salvador or Saudi Arabia. Moreover, concerns have been raised even in Norway, when the Christian Democratic Party proposed a mandatory reflection time of two days before abortion. Elstad considers this mandatory thinking as a political act and a manipulative strategy, being imposed by authorities, and she raises awareness over the fact that the women's right to decide upon their own lives is threatened. Additionally, another central element to the book is how to make a living in an uncertain and insecure world, addressed especially to the younger generations born with a tricky benefit of freedom and opportunities. Hedda is a well educated freelancer, with no stable income, and little support from the social security welfare system. This motif is however best portrayed in Milo, who, according to Lotta Elstad in an interview for Dagsavisen (<https://www.dagsavisen.no/kultur/svart-og-feministisk-komedie-1.995380>), represents a Europe in crisis, living spontaneously from job to job in his caravan, free to go wherever he wants – but this freedom becomes a necessity, he doesn't really have a choice. The contrasts between the characters who share the same final

goal, are illustrated in a vibrant and fascinating way.

The novel strikes as contemporary not only through its very up-to-the-minute themes, but also through Lotta's accurate depictions of reality – *Tinder, Starbucks, Trump, Aloe Vera juice that has a cure for everything* – and modern writing style: "*I want you to get in my bed as often as in my news feed.*" This style has great appeal for young audiences, such as millennials or Generation Y and Z who may easily identify themselves in the book, having been born into times marked by technological achievements, the digital world and endless possibilities. However, the contemporary mark, rich in spontaneity and authenticity, is masterfully combined with intellectualism, which makes the novel exceptional, thus broadening its target audience.

The translated version into Romanian was published this year in September by Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, as part of the Nordic Collection led by Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu, and supported by Norwegian Literature Abroad (NORLA). Translating this novel represented a very special experience for me. As a reader, I couldn't put down the book, as it caught me from the first paragraph, but as a translator, I was challenged by the numerous references and brilliant undertones. The novel is contrasting through its fluent modern writing style and the intellectual remarks that go from feminism to politics, philosophy, literature and culture.

*A Feminist direct hit* (according to Stavanger Aftenblad), *I refuse to think* is a novel that makes you stop rushing through life, and think. By joining Hedda in her journey through Europe, but also her inward journey, we get to distance ourselves from the social pressure, and open up some gates towards our inner selves.

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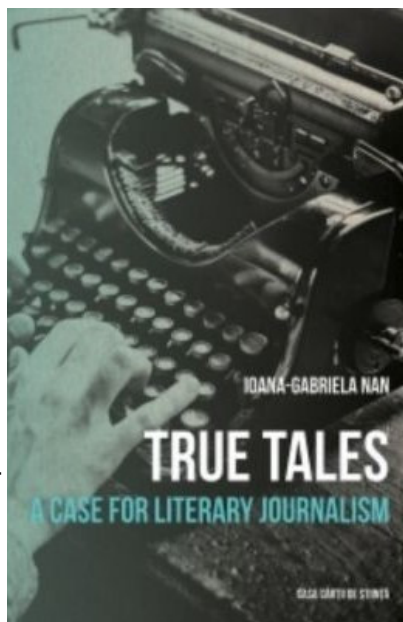
## BOOKS

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### Ioana-Gabriela Nan, *True Tales. A Case for Literary Journalism*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărtii de Știință, 2018, 279 p.

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The question prompting the author's research has been around for at least several decades now, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world of letters. Interestingly enough, the book's publication coincides with renewed interest in the debate surrounding it. From Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* to the latest controversy sparked by Karl Ove Knausgaard's extremely popular and richly awarded *My Struggle*, the question of fact versus fiction has preoccupied linguists, semanticists and narratologists alike. The author acknowledges such previous contributions by summing up the existing research on the issue in all these fields. However, her approach is unexpected in the sense that she does not proceed by analysing the novelistic output of authors such as the above. Instead, she follows the consequences of the manifesto of New Journalism, published by Tom Wolfe in 1973, whose text was announcing nothing short of a revolution in the way novels were to be written, using all the journalists' tools to produce non-fiction that was to be read "as fiction".



The main reason for this peculiar approach seems to be what the author feels to be the insufficient amount of research done to cover all the many-faceted aspects of journalistic writing, especially its softer, human interest version. In this respect, she seems to be in agreement with other authors who call for a reconsideration of some of the writing practices of journalism as forms of literary art. However, while prominent structuralists such as Barthes or Genette already approached the journalistic output from a literary-narratological perspective, literary studies in general seem to have been more reluctant to accept this stance. A short review of British and American history of journalistic writing is provided to illustrate the evolution of this particular, narrative genre of journalism, as well as its advantages and disadvantages in the face of the more traditional and "professional" fact-based journalistic accounts whose aim is communication, rather than story-telling.

Apparently, this kind of narrative ability applied to journalistic writing also

seems to have contributed to the confusion surrounding it. Usually, we tend to associate telling stories with literary fiction, so a very important difference is being thoroughly investigated by the author: that between literariness, narrativity, and fictionality. Moreover, the difference between the fictional and the fictitious is also underlined as relevant, especially in the case of journalism. To analyse all these aspects, the methods of semantic studies have been chosen as the most appropriate to provide convincing proof not only of the fact that not all literature is fictional (which, at first sight, appears commonsensical), but also of the fact that not all fiction is literary and of the fact that the texts of the narrative journalists, however literary in their aesthetic, cannot be said to be fictional.

In fact, a whole chapter is dedicated to proving this point from a speech act theoretical perspective starting from Searle's illocutionary approach to fiction and the central role played by the notion of "pretence" in differentiating between fact and fiction, while also taking into account the critiques to Searle's theory provided by more recent researchers such as Gregory Currie, Marie-Laure Ryan and Christopher New.

However, the concept of story and the question of whether literary journalists were actually truthful in their accounts was felt to require further investigation, and the author turned, for answers, to the perspective of possible world semantics, whose framework and conceptual tools have been considered crucially complex and detailed to allow a correct assessment of the kind of literary novels that narrative journalists claimed to be able to produce. Thus, two concepts central to possible world semantics – the

ontological status of possible worlds and transworld identity – are explored in detail by summing up the way they have been put forward by their foremost proponents from Lewis to Kripke, Plantinga and Rescher and by explaining their relevance to the later theories concerning the possible worlds of fiction.

The latter, in turn, occupy the space of a whole chapter, which explores essential issues such as the way in which the notion of truth relates to that of a fictional world (David Lewis), what possible worlds look like (Thomas Pavel, Lubomir Doležel), how one can walk through them without getting lost (Umberto Eco) or the gestures one has to perform in order to "make believe" (Marie-Laure Ryan). This is because, as the author explains, borderline types of discourse such as those represented by literary journalistic accounts cannot be discussed without such thorough investigation and without understanding what makes a discourse fictional.

Of all these accounts of fictional worlds, one seems to the author to come closest to explaining the nature and position of literary journalistic stories. Thus, Marie-Laure Ryan's proposal of considering such discourse as "true fiction" constitutes the focus of an analysis meant to compare this model to historiographical models of narrative non-fiction as described by Hayden White. In both cases, the challenges of narration seem to bring literary journalism and historiographical discourse closer to fiction than they themselves would sometimes wish to be. That is why Ryan's conceptual tools establishing rules of world separation and world connection are invaluable in determining the distance that separates the worlds of journalism and historiography from those of literary fiction.

In particular, the notion of recentering as the defining feature of fictionalisation is a point where the author's arguments seem to differ from Ryan's, to the effect that literary journalism does not, in her opinion, belong to Ryan's class of true fictional accounts in which she includes novels such as Mailer's or Capote's. To support her position, the author presents the writers' own testimony that they never intended their novels to be more than lively but true accounts of the events described. Moreover, in the case of Capote or Wolfe, the texts are based entirely on accurate and acknowledged recordings, excluding any gesture of fictional recentering and, consequently, any difference between the actual world and the textual actual world. Thus, such novels seem to come closer to the genre of memoir, in which the details, rather than being imagined or invented, are instead recorded thoroughly. At most, the journalist's eye for the dramatic has made him/her use novelistic techniques (point-of-view, detail, dialogue) to bring the story to life, thus foregrounding the aesthetic qualities of the discourse.

The degree of literariness, however, is not enough to justify a text as being fictional. So the author does not seem to endorse Genette's view that the discourse of literary journalism is "almost fictional" and instead opts for an either-or position: either they are "true-fictional", as Ryan ar-

gues, or they are factual, but highly subjective and aestheticised accordingly. Unlike some journalists themselves, who insist that the division between fiction and non-fiction is as fluid as to allow writers to pass indifferently and comfortably between them, the author, in agreement with Eco, insists that there are both textual and paratextual features put in place by the writers that, when ignored by the reader, will lead to misunderstanding and false belief. In view of her investigations, the author believes that a thorough investigation of the work of literary journalists leads her to believe that, far from being artificial or new, the separation between fiction and non-fiction is an important aspect of written discourse and it becomes a crucial one in the case of journalistic output, professionally committed to non-deception either in the fictional or in the fictitious sense.

However – and this is perhaps one of the merits of the book – the author does leave the question open for further arguments to be brought in support of one of the two possible semantic modes, making room for other perspectives and renewed research effort. A rich, multidisciplinary bibliography and a certain stubbornness of discovery by multiple perspectives makes this book a worthy project, one that should be continued and refined as journalistic non-fiction, as well as confessional novels, are becoming an increasing part of the contemporary literary mainstream.

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## BOOKS

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**Karl Ove Knausgaard, *Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer*  
[*Om høsten, Om vinteren, Om våren, Om sommeren*],  
London, Harvill Secker, 2017 & 2018, 1.057 p.**

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How does one measure a life and how to make sense of it? Is it chronological age, or rather the sum of our days morphed into experience?

A constant reminder of the passage of time and the cyclic patterns of our existence, the four seasons have, throughout the ages, been a recurring allegory for countless writers, artists and the like. One of these is Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgaard, whose *Seasons Quartet* was greeted with wide international acclaim, although the six-volume autobiographical novel, *My Struggle*, seems to be the 'magnum opus' of his career so far.

Exquisitely translated from the Norwegian by Ingvild Burkey, whose thoughtful and penetrating approach to the text exudes empathy and lends it a fresh new voice, the four volumes in Knausgaard's *Seasons* series are beautifully illustrated by Vanessa Baird, Lars Lerin, Anna Bjerger and Anselm Kiefer. I became acquainted with his writing through *Autumn*, the first volume, which was gifted to me right after its release in English translation and of which I then read only a few pages.

But books know better when to find you and so, back home after a long enough period living abroad, the four hardbacks – three of which I had ordered at a later date – seemed to be the best companions on this quest.

Tired of introspection after the publication of his monumental memoir, the Norwegian author turned his focus to the outside world and so, starting from a

letter written to his unborn daughter, he embarked on a new editorial venture - the *Seasons Quartet*. In a 2016 interview with Christian Lund, he revealed the motivation behind this series: "I have a feeling that the world is disappearing. The sensuous, physical, material world is disappearing into pictures somehow. It's an attempt to investigate this tiny world, and you see all the layers." The resulting volumes, followed by a novel that interrupts the narrative sequence unexpectedly (*Spring*, the third volume), make up his very own encyclopedic index

of everyday objects, beings, body parts or abstract notions, presented in the most candid and yet most poetic of ways.



He writes about such diverse and unexpected subjects as plastic bags, frames (with our “longing for authenticity” and the search for “a world unframed” - *Autumn*, p. 32), bees, loneliness, war (poignantly describing it as “the simple shape of the arrowhead and the complicated life that it annihilates” - *Autumn*, p. 65), forgiveness, drums, the migration of birds (and, with it, the terrible realization that our world isn’t “boundless but limited” - *Autumn*, p. 95), buttons (used to “train ourselves in self-restraint” - *Autumn*, p.125), the willow tree, the nose, atoms (“Now we live in atomic reality, and we are alone in the world” - *Winter*, p. 155), habits (a way of framing the unforeseeable), windows (“the weak points of houses” - *Winter*, p. 251), lawn sprinklers, short trousers (and their apparently odd association with age and freedom), fullness (“perhaps fullness is the guiding principle from which art springs” - *Summer*, p. 382) or ladybirds. In each of these cases, a thorough elemental description is followed by a chronicle of these objects’ use and meaning in the world, where we are summoned to shift our perspective from the material to the cultural and social dimension. It is as if learning to look at things for the first time, while searching for “depth in surfaces”.

In *Autumn* and *Winter*, the first two installments in the series, Knausgaard addresses his then unborn fourth child, gradually unpacking the symbolism of existence in small everyday items that constitute a world in themselves, while confessing his own need for meaning: “These astounding things, which you will soon encounter and see for yourself, are so easy to lose sight of, and there are almost as many ways of doing that as there are people. That is why I am writing this book for you. I want to show you the world, as it is,

all around us, all the time. Only by doing so will I myself be able to glimpse it. [...] showing you the world, little one, makes my life worth living.” (*Autumn*, p. 4) For how else can we live in the present moment and be fully aware of our surroundings if not by recording it all – in his case through writing? What makes Knausgaard’s writing so real, so unpretentious and revelatory, is this very present moment he shares with us, his readers. As novelist Zadie Smith noted, it feels “as if the writing and the living are happening simultaneously.”

Drifting away from the epistolary and essayistic form, the third volume - *Spring* - comes as a complete surprise. Here, Knausgaard opts for the novel as literary genre, since the story he is about to tell is much too daunting for an essay to do it justice. A deeply intimate account and a heartrending portrait of a family plagued by trauma, the book examines, down to the minutest details, a day in the author’s life. The wife’s severe depression and the flashbacks setting the scene for his hospital visit, together with his daughter, are like stones that, thrown into the water, create a ripple effect that hovers over the father’s struggle to create a normal life for his four children. Just as tears purify our hearts and minds, this particular piece of writing struck me as profoundly cathartic. It’s almost as if the guilt and shame the author experiences evaporate with the concluding words of the volume, in which he is looking back on a memory of Walpurgis Night: “I stood there for a long time, looking at all the people standing about in the dusk, talking and laughing, the children scampering between them, the orange flames of the bonfire stretching into the darkness. When I bent down over you, tears were running down my cheeks. You smiled as you saw my face

approaching, because you didn't know what tears were either." (*Spring*, p. 177)

Finishing this towards the end of an unprecedented spring, I didn't know what to expect of the ensuing *Summer* – for 2020 seemed to hold many surprises. The fourth and last book in Knausgaard's seasonal quartet proved to be the lengthiest of them all and the hardest to pin down. Apparently built around the same narrative structure as the first two in the series, comprising a selection of personal essays that testify, yet again, to the author's keen sense of observation and the alluring poetic landscapes of his language, the volume marks a shift in style. A major difference is the addition of ample diary entries for the months of June and July, in which we are to find a writer whose musings on personal identity seem to take centre stage. His main concern, it seems, is finding a way of telling his story without using himself, which prompts exploratory discussions with his editor: "Something we have talked a lot about lately is how one can tell a story about something one has experienced personally without giving one's own version of it, as happens when it isn't the 'I' that is the main thing but the experience." (*Summer*, p. 125) This might explain why the diary entries are interspersed

with fragments of fiction set during the Second World War, in which Knausgaard chose to adopt the persona of an old woman who recalls a catastrophic love affair: "The woman I am writing about knows what she has done and reflects upon it; while she has forgiven herself, she has not been able to prevent it from ruining her life." (*Summer*, p. 296) Through her, we can conclude, the author is coming to terms with his past and present, trying to make sense of his own actions.

In a reality muffled by masks and pretence, Karl Ove Knausgaard has restored my faith in authenticity and the simplicity that is yet to be claimed for ourselves when all else seems too complicated. His commitment to show the world to his daughter in the most truthful manner turns him into an acute observer, lending urgency and substance to his writing. "Our small lives are traversed by momentuous movements, avalanches in the depths of the everyday" (*Summer*, p. 282), he notes in his last volume, and this piercing rendition of life's bitter and sweltering seasons, which reminds me of a superb piece of ballet by Canadian choreographer Crystal Pite - 'The Seasons' Canon' -, leaves me pondering on the weather conditions to come.

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## BOOKS

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### Linn Ullmann, *Neliniște, (De urolige)*, traducere de Ovio Olaru, Iași, Editura Polirom, 2020, 367 p.

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The latest translation from Linn Ullmann, - one of the most important voices in the contemporary Norwegian literature - *Neliniște* (*De urolige* in the original Norwegian title), published by Editura Polirom in 2020, has previously been a success among the Scandinavian countries, being translated into sixteen languages and nominated at the Nordic Council Prize. This book tackles a variety of universal human experiences, from the problematic of memory and love to the perspective of death and its ways of manifestation. While the present novel can be considered a portrait of a missing father, Linn Ullmann's prose is undoubtedly one that documents more than a single image, that of the celebrated figure of Ingmar Bergman, and opens the discussion over the valability of human interaction, the relationship between different generations and the possibility of living with the constant feeling of solitude.

The book starts with exposing the central issues that are experienced by Linn Ullmann, the last children of Ingmar

Bergman and the daughter of the famous actress Liv Ullmann. In fact, the reader can perceive the importance of the act of remembering and that of understanding, two simultaneously actions that Linn Ullmann put to work in this documentary-prose. In other words, *Neliniște* is a writing that implies not descriptions of people and places, but, on the contrary,

descriptions of feelings that are left behind in the mind of the author as a result of what proves to be minor interactions or marginal dialogues. *To see, to remember, to understand* are passive actions that become relevant in the reconstruction not only of the father portrait, but rather in the fragile and personal understanding of life.

The volume is structured in six chapters that chronologically follow short daily moments from early ages of the daughter, Linn Ullmann, with sum-

mer vacations spent at Hammars to the final days of the father, Ingmar Bergman, now a ghostly presence on Fårö island. The red line that seems to connect all of the other points in this book is the fragmen-



tary perception of one's memory. The author doubles the feeling of strangeness and incoherence with a strong revelation of silence. What it should have been a documentary-prose and a monument for the power of communication is, in fact, almost a 'journal' of silence.

The portrait of the father and daughter is formed while revealing a few voice recordings taken months before Bergman's death. These recordings, usually named *our work* or *our project*, that were meant to document the life of one of the most known cinema directors prove to be in the end nothing but a sample of incomplete pieces of dialogues. The silence and the feeling of loneliness are caught in the absence of a purpose of these dialogues, commonly ending in monosyllabic affirmations ('*Are you missing Stockholm?/ Yes./ Are you missing theatre?/ Yes.*'). It is also a sense of rationally playing with reality in these short documentations; deleting or modifying events are part of a desire to build a different existence, comparable only with a cinematic, fictional character. Moreover, it is a perpetually degradation of the self which is brought to reader's attention in the process of forgetting memories, places and people. The real drama that this book evokes in this point is not only an absence of communication between two distinct personalities, but also a sense of losing the connection with one's individuality. The silence is complete and the death occurs when there is nothing to remember about the most intimate image of the self.

Regardless writing's methods of creating a certain sadness and taking into consideration a general distant approach in terms of family relationships, Linn Ullmann's volume is not a book about

despair and disappointment, but a meditation over love seen through the eyes of a young girl, which is forced to deal with double absence: both the father and the mother are always absent. While there is a legendary situation created around the image of the father, the same principles function when it comes to the maternal image. Liv Ullmann remains firstly an actress and only after a mother, becoming almost an anti-model to her daughter, a girl which develops a sense of guilt and a permanently fear of losing her only source of fragile stability. Therefore, it is also a desire to communicate an intimacy which never fully existed in reality, because, after all, everyone in Linn Ullmann's book is dealing with its own instability, isolation and loneliness. In the same way, the relationship between the two parents is a genuine outburst of passion, but by lacking a needed maturity, they remain in an unstable personality and act infantile on their turn when dealing with the condition imposed by real life.

Another relevant aspect when discussing the book is the conscience of aging and the close experience of death. To age is an act of labor, a work that impose boundaries for the body, as for the soul. There is a continuously obsession for work, in fact, for an equilibrium that imposes strict rules for the existence. Also, the process of time-passing is not only related to the feeling of dissolution, to death, but in the same time with the irreversible act of losing the control over memory. What the reader is facing is a slowly recognition of the fact that memory is what makes the real substance of an individuality. Death does not occur at a certain time and space, but is a progressive disappearance along with the material of memories, that being

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a final discovery for Linn Ullmann's document of absence and love.

*Neliniște*, in the exceptional and in-depth translation of Ovio Olaru, is therefore recommended not only to those passionate about Scandinavian literature, but also to those who are interested in an elusive style, like a cinematic exposure of life

depictions. This book is certainly a tribute for the close relation between language and memory, reality and fictional constructions of existence, as for love, time-passing and loneliness, as ways of modeling and reconfiguring identities.

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## BOOKS

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**Rita-Marie Conrad, J. Ana Donaldson, *Engaging the Online Learner*,  
Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2011, 139 p.**

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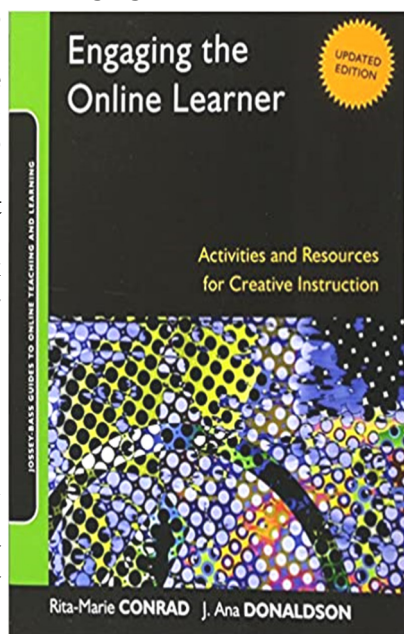
In this period of rapid adaptation to life within a pandemic, most teachers have had to move their classes online, despite having little to no experience holding courses in such an environment. For just such an endeavor, a great resource may be *Engaging the Online Learner*, written by Rita-Marie Conrad, an award-winning digital learning consultant who has worked at such prestigious universities as Duke and Berkeley, and by author J. Ana Donaldson, who updated the book to its 2011 version. Even at a first glance, it is clear that this book aims to give quick answers to pertinent questions. At just 139 pages, this is not a text meant to debate and analyze the validity of online teaching. Rather, it is a step-by-step guide to setting up and running an online course, which is great for the busy teacher that has to quickly reshape their classes.

Structurally, *Engaging the Online Learner* is divided in two main parts – ‘Part One: Constructing Activities to Engage Online Learners’ and ‘Part Two: Activities to Engage Online Learners’, which could also be viewed in terms of theory and practice. There is also

a previous section entitled ‘Learning in an Online Environment’, which serves as an introduction. At the same time, the book is also divided into ten chapters, where the introduction coincides with Chapter 1, Part One includes Chapters 2-4, and Part Two covers Chapters 5-10.

As mentioned, Chapter 1 is also the introductory section.

This part should be of particular interest to the teacher that has so far been accustomed to face-to-face classes, as it illustrates the differences in approach when it comes to creating class materials and getting information across to the student. An example of how online classes differ from face-to-face ones is that, in an online class, student interactions are more important than the content that is delivered because, unlike in a traditional setting, there might be little to no socializing among students outside the class setting. Thus, “the most important role of the instructor in online classes is to ensure a high degree of interactivity” (Conrad and Donaldson 2011:5). The teacher still plays a key role in managing the course, but



student participation takes precedence. Beyond illustrating differences, the authors also conveniently present a general outline of how a teacher might set up a successful online class, with an emphasis on what to focus on every week.

With Chapter 2 'Designing Online Engagement', Part One begins. In this chapter, the authors dive deeper into methods of adapting in-class activities to an online environment so as to ensure that student interest is captured and held. This chapter also touches upon what digital tools (e.g. chat, email, Skype) work best in various situations, a subsection which has the inevitable drawback that certain technologies that were popular at the time of writing may be considered out of style today (CD-ROM, fax). Nevertheless, even here the information that the authors provide regarding synchronous and asynchronous activities make for an interesting read regardless of the digital tools of the day.

Chapter 3 'Measuring Online Engaged Learning' touches upon how both the teacher and students might assess an online activity in order to determine whether it aids in the educational process or not. For this, the authors present a rubric system for this endeavor which, while visibly off-putting, they assure is nevertheless highly useful and informative. This chapter also dedicates several pages to peer-to-peer assessment and self-assessment of student work, which could prove especially practical when dealing with a large class, where the instructor might not be able to properly assess the work of each individual.

Chapter 4 'Learning to Use Online Tools' discusses an issue that remains important regardless of the technology of the day: how well students understand

and know how to utilize the tools and platforms that you as the instructor wish to employ. As with the previous chapter, Conrad and Donaldson waste little time before providing a means of identifying any lapses in the student's digital capabilities. Their solution is an easy to use list of recommended tasks that the students might be asked to complete, including a questionnaire that tests their previous experience with online learning and a non-graded scavenger hunt meant to see how well they are able to find information online. Although the students that the authors have in mind are adults, we should keep in mind that, even when they fall under the category of so-called *digital natives*, there is no guarantee that the students are familiar with the particular online tools that the teacher wishes to use, making the information in this chapter especially relevant.

Part two moves us away from theory and towards a practical illustration of what can be done online. Thus, each subsequent chapter offers six categories of activities, such as 'Peer Partnerships and Team Activities' (Chapter 6), 'Reflective Activities' (Chapter 7), 'Authentic Activities' (Chapter 8) or 'Games and Simulations' (Chapter 9). For each category, Conrad and Donaldson offer step-by-step explanations of how to set up the overall tasks, as well as a varied list of specific examples that a teacher can choose from. As an example, Chapter 8 includes the exercise 'Case study', where "each student will work up one case study within an assigned group of three students (Conrad and Donaldson 2011:95). Chapter 10 'Learner-Led Activities' is meant to present the pinnacle of a successful online course. Here the authors point out that this category allows the student to see

himself as an active contributor, since “it is at this point that learners recognize that they are of knowledge generators” (Conrad and Donaldson 2011:114). As with the other chapters, the author provides easy to follow instructions on setting up the activities and the conditions for them to be possible. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine how these learner-led exercises could work in a medium to large class, since time management may be an issue. Of more general interest might be Chapter 5 ‘Online Icebreakers’. Here we find exercises that help compensate for the lack of social connections that naturally form in face-to-face classrooms, without which students will soon lose interest in the course content.

Perhaps the only real drawback to this book has to do with its target reader. Conrad and Donaldson make it quite clear

that *Engaging the Online Learner* is meant primarily for instructors of online courses with a small number of adult students. For this reason, several of the activities found in Part Two are unusable in their given form for a teacher of a large group of teenagers or young adults. Still, the overall structure of an online course, as provided in Chapter 1, is worth considering regardless of circumstance and the exercises can always be adapted to fit student needs. Whether you teach many students or few, old or young, and especially if you are new to online teaching, *Engaging the Online Learner* is a must-read book. The theory is solid, the explanations clear and, all in all, Conrad and Donaldson provide all the tools necessary in order to get a successful online course up and running.

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**Amélie Nothomb, *Soif*, Paris, Éditions Albin Michel,  
2019, 162 p.**

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L'auteure Amélie Nothomb a choisi avec beaucoup d'inspiration un thème unique et très intéressant pour son roman *Soif* – le jugement et la peine de mort d'un personnage qui a influencé le cours de l'histoire et qui a eu une fin de vie très controversée et contestée. Le roman présente la condamnation et la crucifixion de Jésus Christ, mais il s'agit d'un Jésus plus humain qu'un Dieu, qui semble douter de la divinité, qui s'inquiète, pose des questions qui ne sont pas spécifiques à sa nature divine.

Contrairement aux attentes, le roman présente une histoire qui ne se trouve pas dans les pages de la Bible, les épisodes canoniques étant interprétés, réinterprétés ou dévoilés par leur propre protagoniste : Jésus-Christ. Les dernières heures de sa vie ont mis à l'épreuve son côté divin, lui rappelant constamment son amour non consommé pour Marie-Madeleine, l'amour maternel, son temps avec ceux qu'il aime.

La lutte entre le sacré et le profane, qui se déroule dans l'esprit de celui qui est fait des deux, met en évidence à la fois le côté divin et celui d'homme qui a des dé-

sirs et des regrets. Il doute de Dieu le Père, conteste sa toute-puissance et n'est pas entièrement d'accord avec son plan pour sauver le monde. Parfois, il le juge et se moque de lui « la plus grande réussite de mon père c'est l'incarnation » (p. 18). Il sous-estime son intelligence surhumaine, le considérant comme un génie parce qu'il a créé le corps humain, un fait extraordinaire pour un « architecte sans domicile » (p. 19).

La partie divine de Jésus est présente et exprimée, même si elle semble perdre la lutte contre la corporalité. Il sait qu'il va mourir à cause des accusations injustes et toute l'action du roman tourne autour de cela : « J'ai toujours su que l'on me condamnerait à mort. » (p. 7).

Il est très intéressant à remarquer que les témoins sont des gens qui ont reçu un certain type d'aide de la part de Jésus Christ – les mariés de Cana, l'officier royal, les trente-sept miraculés, l'ex-possédé de Capharnaüm, l'ancien aveugle, l'ancien lépreux, les pêcheurs de Tibériade, Lazare, la mère d'un enfant guéri par Jésus etc. Amélie Nothomb réussit, avec ce détail,



de souligner le défaut de l'être humain – l'incapacité d'être content ou satisfait avec ce qu'il a.

Dans la Bible, le saint apôtre et évangéliste Jean mentionne certaines paroles de Christ qui se réfèrent à la soif : « Celui qui boit de cette eau n'aura plus jamais soif » (Jean 14:4). Le fait que l'auteure ait choisi le terme « soif » comme titre du roman n'est pas accidentel et regorge de significations à différents niveaux de la vie. Le narrateur protagoniste, Jésus-Christ, raconte comment il a choisi cette région de la planète pour réaliser le grand plan du Père. Les habitants de cet endroit traversaient des moments très difficiles et ont eu « soif » de salut, de paix et de calme. En passant par une brève philosophie des besoins corporels, il conclut que lorsque les gens ont faim, ils mangent et arrivent à la « satiété », lorsqu'ils sont fatigués, ils se reposent et atteignent un stade de « repos », lorsqu'ils se débarrassent de la souffrance, ils finissent par le « réconfort », mais quand ils ont soif, ils boivent de l'eau et leur évolution s'arrête là. Il n'y a pas de mot pour dire que l'homme n'a plus soif. Jésus-Christ

voit cette « soif » comme la seule chance d'atteindre l'absolu, comparant la première goutte d'eau bue par un homme assoiffé à la divinité. Retarder le moment attendu conduit à un fort sentiment d'appréciation, lorsque l'idéal est atteint. Ceci est également confirmé par la nature humaine de Christ à la fin du roman : « Pour éprouver la soif, il faut être vivant. J'ai vécu si fort que je suis mort assoiffé. C'est peut-être cela, la vie éternelle. » (p. 148)

*Soif* est un roman qui captive dès la première page, en mêlant le réel à l'imagination, le bien au mal, le possible à l'impossible. Le style d'Amélie Nothomb transforme un sujet très grave comme la condamnation et la crucifixion de Jésus Christ dans une leçon de vie, qui vise à éduquer le lecteur et à répondre aux questions très importantes. Un dieu plus humain est aussi un dieu dont les gens se sentent plus proches. La peur ressentie par le Fils de Dieu n'est pas seulement destinée à souligner la condition corporelle de Jésus, mais aussi à rappeler au lecteur que l'expression des sentiments est une chose digne.

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**Pauline Delabroy-Allard, *Ça raconte Sarah*, Paris,  
Les Éditions de Minuit, 2018, 192 p.**

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Entourée par des rayons de littérature grâce à son père écrivain et à sa carrière de libraire documentaliste, Pauline Delabroy-Allard fait son début avec un roman intrigant et controversé qui change le visage de l'amour souvent pudique. Son optique élargie et éhontée sur la poétique du corps féminin lui vaut une reconnaissance critique importante tant par le Prix Goncourt : le choix polonais et le choix roumain que par le Prix des étudiants France Culture-Télérama. Sa voie littéraire est ainsi pavée de lauriers et l'écho de son œuvre a une résonance étourdissante. Son écriture fiévreuse surgit des réactions contradictoires qui montrent un dualisme actuel entre un esprit ouvert et un autre rigide. Ses mots deviennent de souffles, mais ils sont étouffants pour ceux qui se cachent derrière le mur des inhibitions.

Avec une fraîcheur de débutante, l'auteure esquisse la relation ardente d'amour fou et paralysant avec Sarah, le personnage chimère auquel la narratrice rend un hommage fictionnel. Le lecteur comprend le dénouement de la relation brûlante dès le début analeptique : « Je ne

parviens pas, dans cette nuit moite, à détacher mes yeux de son corps nu et de son crâne cireux. De son profil de morte. » (p. 10) L'éventail des émotions met en œuvre des leitmotifs existentiels qui tracent la figure multiforme de Sarah, la violoniste pétulante. D'ailleurs, l'œuvre commence

avec une description minutieuse de Sarah qui a le rôle fondamental de figer l'essence du roman et de crayonner le chemin sur lequel on va passer doucement. Cette première partie dépeint une rencontre foudroyante qui mélange la béatitude et l'amertume spirituelles. La multitude d'énumérations vivantes et colorées concernant la figure archétype de Sarah soulignent la passion folle envahissant le lecteur.

L'intrigue surgit au moment où Sarah rejoint la fête du Réveillon comme

« une tornade inattendue » (p. 18) et l'atmosphère rigide change radicalement de nuances. On peut dire que l'apparition de Sarah est comme l'émergence du serpent démoniaque dans le paradis tranquille de la narratrice. Sa vie devient aussitôt un mélange de passions sexuelles et de tourbillons de folies et déceptions. D'un enseignante ordinaire à un lycée et d'une



mère bienveillante, la narratrice devient la proie hypnotisée de Sarah et tisse une relation de dépendance avec cette femme exaltée et capricieuse.

Le roman se compose de deux parties antithétiques qui forment, au fond, un binôme. La première partie esquisse sous une tension oppressante l'apogée de l'amour fou. Les frôlements décrits permettent au lecteur de jeter un coin d'œil sur une relation d'amour inhabituelle, hors du commun, mais plus forte qu'une passion entre un homme et une femme. Donc, les premières pages de cette prose quasi parfaite font vibrer les canons de la littérature traditionnelle *ad vitam æternam*. Au fil des pages, on peut observer une ressemblance entre Sarah et la déesse grecque Daphné parce que les deux montrent un attachement sans borne par rapport à la personne adorée. En ce cas, on pourrait dire que Pauline assume le rôle d'un mythographe impressionniste.

D'un autre côté, la deuxième partie de cette œuvre, nommée « l'exil », tourne radicalement en une déchéance de la narratrice due à cette tornade amoureuse : « l'assourdissant chagrin qui m'emplit entièrement et le désespoir qui gronde au fond de moi. » (p. 112) L'action se passe à Trieste, une ville italienne qui semble se métamorphoser en un troisième personnage, une matriarche dans cet univers scindé : « C'est une non-ville, un non-lieu. »

(p. 174) De plus, par les paysages de cette fresque méditerranéenne, l'auteure nous parle de la mort, de la déception et d'une aliénation à la fois. On peut sentir le désarroi de la narratrice qui perd son amour et sa lucidité. Sa vie devient comme suspendue et mise en sursis à cause de la douleur dévorante.

La répétition du syntagme *Ça raconte Sarah* devient un leitmotiv, une anctienne qui souligne la centralité et l'effet ahurissant de cette présence féminine sur la vie de la narratrice. Toute l'action gravite autour d'elle comme une obsession sempiternelle qui cause finalement la détresse et la solitude. En ce qui concerne le rythme haletant de l'écriture, on peut observer une sensualité extraordinaire qui se précipite dans la première partie et ralentit subitement dans la deuxième. Bref, il y a une virtuosité qui emporte le lecteur et l'émeut par la précision et la sincérité de la plume

Finalement, l'ivresse amoureuse, les larmes et les serments s'écroulent et deviennent les cendres brûlées d'un Eros immobile, cloué à une croix damnée. Pauline Delabroy-Allard compose par *Ça raconte Sarah* un chant d'amour fou qui dévore les âmes et s'effiloche sous une tension lancinante. C'est un souffle vital qui s'avilit et qui plonge l'esprit dans l'abîme de la solitude.

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**Santiago H. Amigorena, *Le Ghetto intérieur*,  
Paris, P.O.L, 2019, 192 p.**

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Le plus récent roman de Santiago H. Amigorena, *Le Ghetto intérieur*, gagnant du Prix Goncourt, *Le Choix de la Roumanie* et *Le Choix de la Belgique*, lutte contre l'oubli et contre l'ignorance à force de l'évocation du passé, afin que ses horreurs ne se répètent pas.

Le protagoniste du roman, Vicente Rosenberg, émigre de Pologne à Buenos Aires, où il fonde une famille, avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Entre temps, sa mère, sa sœur et son frère restent en Europe, où ils vont subir les horreurs de l'Holocauste. Au plan extérieur, celui des événements guerriers en Europe, connus tardivement en Amérique de Sud, s'oppose le plan intérieur des remords du protagoniste. Ainsi, c'est l'introspection qui confère de la profondeur au récit, en invitant le lecteur à une méditation sur l'identité et le silence, les thèmes centraux du roman.

Tourmenté par son identité reniée, par son ethnicité juive qui lui est imposée brutalement dans le contexte de la guerre, Vicente Rosenberg fait l'expérience d'un processus de deshumanisation. Outre la culpabilité d'avoir abandonné sa famille en Europe, il

ressent aussi un éloignement symbolique de sa lignée. En commençant par l'image paradisiaque qu'il se faisait de l'Allemagne, la honte de ses origines, l'utilisation des langues allemande et polonaise dans le détriment de l'yiddish, qu'il ne se rappelle plus, jusqu'à l'oubli de son nom initial, tout cela engendre en Vicente des remords et de la frustration. Captif dans ce cercle tragique et sans pouvoir répondre à ses propres questions, Vicente Rosenberg choisit de s'isoler lui-même dans un « ghetto intérieur », analogue à l'« enfer surpeuplé », où la mort n'était qu'une « mécanique purement industrielle », un enfer auquel sa famille d'Europe tentait de survivre.

La métaphore du titre se construit autour d'un silence général, en dénonçant soit l'ignorance de la société face aux atrocités de l'époque, soit l'impuissance de l'individu. En tout cas, le protagoniste du roman utilise le

silence comme un mécanisme de défense contre la réalité qu'il ne peut plus supporter. En vivant sa vie machinalement, en s'éloignant de sa famille, Vicente Rosenberg devient un cadavre vivant,



ainsi qu'une victime indirecte du racisme et de la cruauté humaines. Au niveau onirique, la reprise de la métaphore du titre, signale encore une fois l'impossibilité de se sauver. Il a un cauchemar récurrent dans lequel il est encerclé et est suffoqué par un mur qui se serre toujours autour de lui. Le seul moyen de s'en sortir, la mort, lui apparaît sous la forme d'un couteau parce que percer le mur par le couteau, c'est se tuer lui-même. C'est une solution qui semble plus agréable à Vicente que de mener une vie fantomatique, hantée par des remords : « Mourir d'une mort douce. Une douce mort. Ma mort. Mourir de ma douce mort à moi. » (p. 175). Mais pour Vicente Rosenberg, comme pour tout le monde, l'apparition de (la) Victoire va tout changer.

Vicente « [...] voulait parler, mais, prisonnier du ghetto de son silence, il ne *pouvait* pas parler. Il ne savait plus. »

(p. 158) Le lecteur l'assiste, lui-même impuissant, dans son silence, dans ses tourments. Cependant, si le protagoniste du livre n'a pas conscience du pouvoir des mots – « Que sont les mots ? À quoi ils servent ? » (p. 89) –, l'auteur du roman, contrairement à son grand-père, en est pleinement conscient. Amigorena écrit son roman pour récupérer le passé et pour le transmettre aux générations suivantes. D'ailleurs, la force de l'introspection est d'autant plus frappante que les pensées du protagoniste survivent au silence général, en témoignant que les grandes tragédies, soient-elles personnelles ou collectives, doivent être racontés à voix haute. La même idée est développée dans l'épilogue du livre de sorte que, après une lecture intense, mais pas alerte, on reste avec l'idée que vivre dans la mémoire des autres est le seul moyen de nous délivrer et de vivre réellement, malgré le temps.

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## BOOKS

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### Louis-Philippe Dalembert, *Mur Méditerranée*, Paris, Sabine Wespieser Éditeur, 2019, 332 p.

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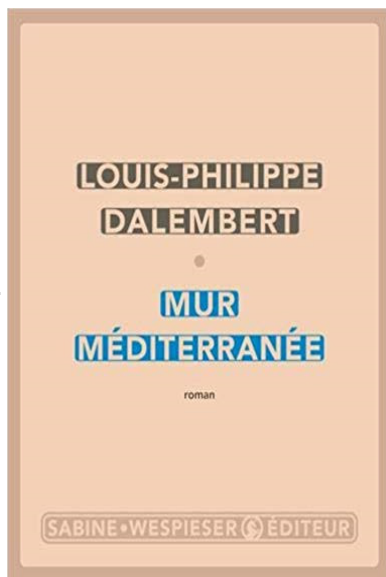
Louis-Philippe Dalembert est un écrivain haïtien d'expression française et créole qui s'empare de sujets historiques et sociaux. À titre d'exemple il explore la condition des déportés lors de la Traite négrière avec son roman *L'autre face de la mer* (1998) ou il traite du rôle joué par le peuple haïtien pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans *Avant que les ombres s'effacent* (2017). Dans la même direction, mais prenant cette fois-ci une position plus engagée, avec *Mur Méditerranée*, paru en 2019, Dalembert pratique une écriture d'urgence sur le thème de la migration contemporaine. L'ouvrage s'est retrouvé dans la même année 2019 sur la liste Goncourt et a remporté le Choix Goncourt de la Pologne et de la Suisse, ainsi que le Prix de la langue française.

*Mur Méditerranée* est inspiré d'un fait divers de 2014, alors qu'un pétrolier danois sauve plusieurs centaines de réfugiés qui traversent la mer dans un bateau clandestin. Dalembert imagine le destin de ceux qui font ce voyage, s'appuyant sur la vie de trois femmes : Chochana – Nigériane, Semhar – Érythréenne et Dima – Syrienne. Le récit s'articule sur différents plans où

les chapitres alternent analepses et fil narratif central. Les analepses donnent un aperçu de la vie que menaient les trois femmes par le passé. Le fil narratif représente le voyage à bord du chalutier qui doit les mener de Sabratha à Lampedusa, l'île italienne connue comme la « Porte de l'Europe ».

Un des enjeux centraux du roman est certainement de mettre en évidence l'humanité et l'individualité des migrants. Il défend ainsi la condition des ceux-ci et rend audible les raisons qui entraînent leur départ à travers trois portraits de protagonistes féminins.

Tout d'abord, le lecteur rencontre Chochana, une Nigériane juive qui fait des études de droit et qui semble avoir un avenir promettant. Malgré cela, la sécheresse causée par les changements climatiques va l'obliger à reconsidérer toute sa vie, de sorte qu'elle décide de partir pour l'Europe avec son frère Ariel et son amie Rachel. Après une année de doutes et de plans, la décision de quitter le pays et le continent sera prise définitivement. Ils arriveront à Sabratha, sur la côte libyenne où ils resteront dans un entrepôt. Ici, séparée de son frère, Chochana





est obligée de travailler et de se prostituer pour gagner la somme nécessaire que les passeurs demandent pour la traversée. Humiliée, épuisée et presque sans espoir, elle sera un jour appelée à s'embarquer au bord du chalutier où son destin croise celui de Semhar. Venue de l'Érythrée, pays sous régime dictatorial, Semhar avait le rêve de devenir institutrice. Toutefois, elle est contrainte d'y renoncer lorsqu'elle part pour le service militaire national à durée indéterminée. Comme la seule chance d'y échapper est soit de tomber enceinte, soit de s'enfuir, elle choisit la deuxième option. Enfin, le lecteur fait connaissance avec Dima, musulmane syrienne, qui ne semble avoir aucune raison de quitter son pays, puisqu'elle fait partie de la bourgeoisie et sa vie y semble bien assurée. Toutefois, les attentats d'Alep vont menacer la sécurité de sa famille, et elle va donc prendre le risque d'un voyage clandestin, aux côtés de son mari et de ses deux petites filles.

Ainsi, une autre problématique que le roman soulève concerne la séparation par classes sociales, en fonction du prix payé par les passagers. Il y a donc des gens qui voyagent sur le pont, comme Dima, une petite partie dans les cabines, tandis

que la majorité, des Subsahariens, sont enfermés à l'intérieur de la cale. Le sens du titre prend ainsi une nuance importante ( au-delà du sens premier, où la Méditerranée devient une vraie frontière entre deux civilisations ), car il y a un mur métaphorique entre les « calais » et ceux, plus chanceux, qui voyagent sur le pont. Le point culminant est atteint lorsque les premiers vont se libérer pour monter sur le pont, ce qui va déclencher des affrontements entre les hommes. Finalement, lorsque le bateau commence à prendre l'eau, le péril de la mort étant imminent, ils vont se rendre compte qu'ils « fuyaient tous quelque chose. Tous, ils cherchaient la vie » ( p. 274 ), qu'au fond, ils étaient égaux.

Finalement, l'auteur réussit à transformer un fait divers en une excellente œuvre littéraire dont la valeur esthétique est donnée par le rythme dynamique de la narration, grâce à l'alternance des plans narratifs et par la création de trois portraits de femmes vulnérables, mais fortes et déterminés. La qualité de l'écriture documentée du roman permet à Dalembert de tirer un signal d'alarme sur la manière dont est traité le sujet de la migration.

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## BOOKS

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### Karine Tuil, *Les choses humaines*, Paris, Gallimard, 2019, 352 p.

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Publié a trois ans distance du roman *L'Insouciance* (2016), *Les choses humaines* est le livre qui apporte à l'écrivaine Karine Tuil deux prix littéraires importants : le prix Interallié et le prix Goncourt des lycéens.

L'élément paratextuel est en mesure de donner au lecteur un premier horizon d'attente, car celui-ci dévoile, d'une façon évidente, le sujet du roman, c'est-à-dire la vie des hommes à partir des événements les plus triviaux. Ayant comme point de départ deux problèmes ontologiques actuels – l'accent que l'homme met sur ses impulsions, ses instincts et le pouvoir de décision, de lucidité dans des moments flous – le roman se présente comme un véritable miroir de la société contemporaine.

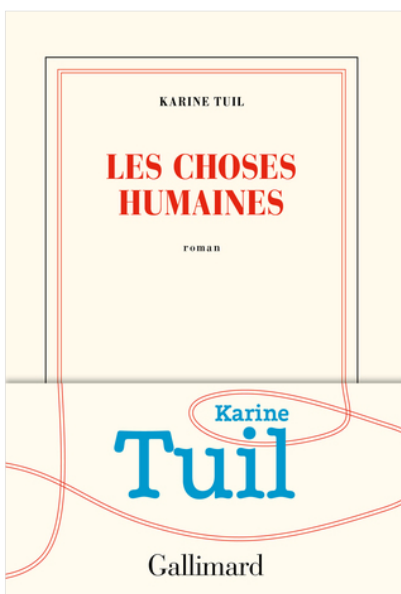
Le personnage dont les actions impriment une évolution au récit est Alexandre. Il est le fils du célèbre journaliste Jean et de l'essayiste féministe Claire. Le couple qu'ils forment montre à quel point l'amour dans notre société est devenu une affaire éphémère qui a tranché avec tout ce qui tenait de la pureté et du sacré, car ils vont divorcer sans avoir des raisons concrètes.

En revanche, Alexandre qui est un étudiant éminent, mais introverti et sensible, prépare son acceptation à l'une des plus prestigieuses universités américaines. Son admission va être mise en question suite à une accusation de viol. C'est grâce à cet événement que le récit et la structure du roman pourront être coupés en deux parties : d'une part, on retrouve la présentation et l'incursion

dans la vie intérieure des personnages principaux et, d'autre part, on assiste au déroulement du procès. En outre, en ce qui concerne le style, on observe que l'écriture fluide de la première partie est abandonnée dans la deuxième partie en faveur d'un récit dynamique et très captivant.

Exploitant d'une manière ingénieuse ses études en droit, l'écrivaine présente le procès du viol par une série de mécanismes très raffinés qui témoignent de

la virtuosité narrative. À noter la perspective hétérodiégétique qui s'entremêle avec celle homodiégétique, en donnant au lecteur la possibilité d'interpréter et de juger les faits à sa manière. C'est justement ici un des enjeux majeurs du récit, car le lecteur sera mis dans l'impossibilité de décider qui



est le vrai coupable : Alexandre, qui a mené son pari à la fin en réussissant à séduire et à violer Mila ou bien la jeune fille qui n'a pas marqué son désaccord d'une manière évidente lors de l'acte sexuel, mais qui, toutefois, a déposé plainte.

Choquant par les événements exposés, mais reposant par le style de l'écriture,

le roman de Karine Tuil plonge le lecteur non pas dans des univers exotiques ou irréels, mais dans le dérisoire et la trivialité du monde contemporain, en démystifiant, de cette manière, la réalité et en donnant la possibilité de réfléchir sur l'existence en général et sur les conséquences de nos actes.

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## BOOKS

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### Abel Quentin, *Sœur*, Paris, Éditions de l'Observatoire, 2019, 249 p.

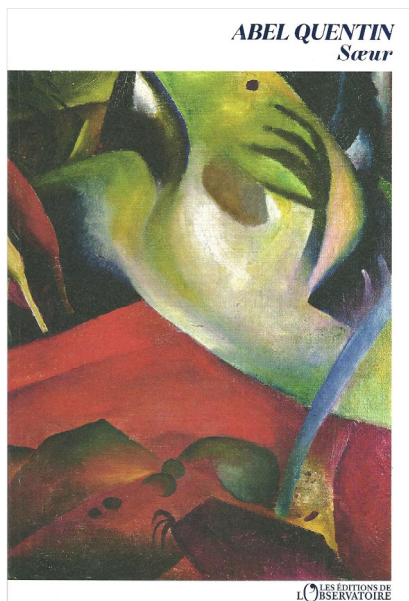
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*Sœur*, le premier roman d'Abel Quentin, est l'histoire d'une fille française, Jenny Marchand, qui arrive à se convertir à l'islam. Après une enfance et une adolescence pleines de troubles émotionnels, la protagoniste décide de prendre le chemin de la religion islamique, en s'écartant de ses proches et de sa vie habituelle. À cause de la haine qu'elle avait accumulée et de l'impossibilité de trouver un équilibre intérieur, elle est attirée dans le piège de l'islam. Illusionnée, elle accepte de changer son nom, donc de perdre son identité, et elle devient Chafia. Jusqu'à cette métamorphose, le narrateur omniscient présente quelques moments-clé de la vie de Jenny. Par exemple, Quentin choisit à accentuer le phénomène de *bullying*, un problème très actuel de la vie scolaire des adolescents. De ce fait, l'échec social de Jenny est souligné par le fait qu'elle a été la victime d'une vidéo déshonorante postée sur Facebook par certains collègues du lycée. À la suite, elle veut se suicider, mais elle connaît Dounia, qui se fait appeler sur la Toile « la grande Sœur », qui l'initie dans les coutumes islamiques : « Jenny s'initie

pendant deux mois, à la haine. Dounia la guide dans le dédale baroque des sites djihadistes [...] » (p. 133).

Sous couvert d'une écriture précise, Abel Quentin commence son roman par la stratégie de la prolepse. De cette manière, le narrateur nous fait connaître Chafia qui est soumise par certains hommes politiques français à un régime basé sur la violence physique et à la torture psychologique en ce qui concerne la disparition de Dounia Bousaïd. Il est très intéressant d'observer comment Abel Quentin a construit ce premier chapitre du roman, en utilisant aussi la technique du parallélisme. D'une part, il présente l'interrogatoire auquel Chafia est soumise en France par rapport à l'absence de Dounia.

D'autre part, on a comme personnage principal Dounia, qui doit répondre aux questions des Islams car elle veut devenir une femme islamique. Une fois développée cette stratégie narrative, le roman va garder la structure composée de deux plans narratifs : premièrement, le plan individuel de la jeune fille française qui s'offre à l'islam et, deuxièmement, il s'agit d'un plan



politique où on peut observer les détails d'une élection présidentielle et la lutte des Français contre le terrorisme. L'oscillation entre un univers intime comme une miniature et la réalité socio-politique offrant plusieurs perspectives sur les djihadistes propose un regard dans le miroir. Les problèmes politiques d'un État se reflètent violemment dans les vies privées des citoyens.

Le dynamisme des dialogues et la clarté des événements qui se passent au fil de cette histoire soutiennent les ressorts de la tension romanesque et l'authenticité de l'action. Même s'il y a beaucoup de descriptions spatiales pareilles aux didascalies d'une pièce de théâtre, les portraits des personnages sont bien esquissés. L'individualisation de la figure de Dounia met au premier plan son caractère de chef et sa présence imposante parmi les autres filles. « Dounia la grande sœur, l'épaule amie et la parole enveloppante, le bureau des pleurs et surtout l'initiatrice, la maîtresse de cérémonie, le pygmalion [...] l'*alma mater* » (p. 128) marque le narrateur, qui aborde la question de l'identité des femmes au sein de l'État islamique.

En ce qui concerne le plan politique, en France les campagnes électorales pour les élections présidentielles ont commencé et l'homme politique Cyril Benevento profite de la lutte contre l'Islam pour aug-

menter le nombre de ses sympathisants. Saint-Maxens, le président actuel, est en fait le symbole d'un système politique en déclin. Simultanément, l'état islamique gagne de plus en plus de jeunes gens qui se convertissent à leur religion, comme Jenny, et orchestrent des attaques contre la France. Grâce à une perspective narrative objective, le lecteur peut découvrir les choses problématiques par une vision panoramique et comparative. Les mécanismes islamiques de manipulation, la peur exacerbé qui gagne les Français et les fissures de la structure politique en France se mélangent avec des sujets privés, au centre des familles. L'auteur n'essaye pas de dissocier le plan social de celui politique, mais de les approcher afin de révéler une relation de cause à effet entre les faiblesses d'une situation politique en transition et la confusion croissante de la population.

Pour conclure, Abel Quentin illustre dans son roman *Sœur* la trajectoire des subterfuges politiques influençant d'une manière indirecte la vie individuelle d'une jeune fille qui ne réussit pas dépasser ses souffrances d'adolescence et qui se laisse tromper. En outre, le destin de Jenny gagne une dimension universelle, de sorte que le roman puisse prendre le pouls de quelques problèmes spécifiques à notre époque.

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