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PERSPECTIVES ON THE SCANDINAVIAN CULTURAL IMAGINARY



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PERSPECTIVES ON THE SCANDINAVIAN CULTURAL IMAGINARY FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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WEAK AND STRONG ADJECTIVES IN OLD NORSE: AN EXAMINATION OF *KONUNGS SKUGGSJÁ*

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ABSTRACT. *Weak and Strong Adjectives in Old Norse: An Examination of Konungs skuggsjá.* All early Germanic languages distinguish between a weak and a strong adjectival declension. This contrast is traditionally described in terms of definiteness, the strong declension expressing indefinite reference and the weak one definite reference. Such a description, however, might be more suitable with regard to Modern Scandinavian languages than to Old Norse (and other early Germanic languages), where the strong declension is found in a number of contexts where in Modern Norwegian only the weak one is acceptable, for instance with certain demonstratives and in noun phrases with possessives. This article takes a look at the Old Norse didactic work *Konungs skuggsjá* and examines various contexts that unambiguously require the weak declension in Modern Norwegian: demonstratives, possessives, proper nouns, vocatives and others. The role and referential properties of the determiners *sá* and *hinn* are given special focus.

Keywords: *weak adjectives, strong adjectives, Old Norse, Konungs skuggsjá, determiners*

REZUMAT. *Adjective slabe și tari în limba norvegiană veche: o analiză a textului Konungs skuggsjá.* Toate limbile germanice timpurii se diferențiază prin două tipuri de declinare adjectivală: a adjectivelor slabe și a celor tari. Acest contrast este descris în mod tradițional pornind de la tipul articolului folosit, declinarea tare făcând trimitere la referința nearticulată și cea slabă, la referința articulată. O astfel de descriere, totuși, ar putea fi mai potrivită pentru

¹ **Terje WAGENER** teaches Norwegian Language at Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. His PhD-thesis from the University of Oslo was published (in a revised and extended version) as a book at Mouton DeGruyter Publishing House in 2017, titled "The history of Nordic Relative Clauses". He has also been teaching Norwegian at universities in Poland and Italy and has worked as a lexicographer on the NAOB dictionary. Email: terje.wagener@ubbcluj.ro

limbile scandinave moderne decât pentru limba norvegiană veche (și alte limbi germanice timpurii), în care declinarea tare se găsește într-o serie de contexte. În contrast, în limba norvegiană modernă, se acceptă doar cea slabă, de exemplu cu anumite demonstrative și în sintagmele nominale cu posesive. Acest articol prezintă textul didactic *Konungs skuggsjá* din limba norvegiană veche și analizează o serie de contexte care necesită în mod cert declinarea slabă în limba norvegiană modernă: demonstrative, posesive, substantive proprii, vocative și altele. Rolului și proprietăților referențiale ale determinanților *sá* și *hin* li se acordă o atenție deosebită.

Cuvinte-cheie: *adjective, limba norvegiană veche, Konungs skuggsjá, determinanți sá, hinn*

1. Introduction

All the early Germanic languages distinguish between a strong and a weak adjectival declension, cf. this Old Norse contrast:

(1) gamall maðr
old. STRONG man
'an old man', 'the old man'

(2) hinn gamli maðr(inn)
HINN old.WEAK man(-the)

The standard way of describing the strong-weak contrast is in terms of definiteness (see f.ex. Faarlund et al 1997, 387f; Kristoffersen 2002, 916f; Lyons 1999, 85; Harðarson 2017, 921), the strong inflection being associated with indefinite reference and the weak one with definite reference. All the Nordic languages still maintain such a distinction today².

This distinction is found in all early Germanic languages and is thus assumed to be inherited from Proto-Germanic (Ringe 2006, 169f). This means that it predates the rise of the suffixed definite article, which is not found before the Old Norse period.

While describing weak and strong adjectives straightforwardly in terms of definite vs. indefinite might be accurate with regard to present-day Scandinavian - "the distribution of the two declensions [in Swedish] correlates

² Modern German also has strong and weak adjectives, but the distinction is not related to definiteness as such.

precisely with the definite–indefinite distinction" (Lyons 1999, 85) – the Early Germanic data present a more complicated picture (see f.ex. Ratkus 2011, 222ff). As we will see below, several referential and/or formal contexts that in today's Norwegian unambiguously require a weak adjective, are compatible with a strong adjective in Old Norse. As shown by Dyvik (1979, 59), there is no requirement to formally mark definite reference in Old Norse, even after it acquires a definite article: a noun phrase with a strong adjective is thus unmarked for definiteness. According to Nygaard (1905, 54) this is "just as common"³ as overt definiteness marking on the adjective. Since Leiss (2000) it has been common to refer to a language like Old Norse as *hypodetermining*, as opposed to a *hyperdetermining* language like Modern Norwegian, in which formal marking of definite reference is obligatory⁴.

In all the early Germanic languages, the weak adjective is closely associated with a "preadjectival determiner"⁵ (Nygaard 1905, 48). In Old Norse (Wagener 2017, 68ff), this preadjectival determiner is normally *hinn*; in the other early Germanic languages (including Old Swedish), it is a cognate of Old Norse *sá*, a descendant of Proto-Germanic *sa*. It thus seems reasonable to reconstruct *sa* as the preadjectival determiner in Proto-Germanic. While Old Norse prefers *hinn* preadjectivally, *sá* is also found in this use (Nygaard 1905, 52ff), and indeed the first Ancient Nordic attestation of the preadjectival determiner has *sá* and not *hinn* (Lindblad 1953, 34).

2. *Konungs skuggsjá*

The text excerpted for the purpose of this article is the didactic work *Konungs skuggsjá* "The King's mirror", henceforth referred to as *KS*. It has the advantage of being available as a grammatically annotated and searchable online file, as part of the *Medieval Norwegian Text Archive (MENOTA)* at www.menota.org. The search function enables you for example to look up all the instances of a certain lemma in a given work⁶. The text in *MENOTA* is based in its entirety on the manuscript *AM 243 b a fol*, assumed to be from around 1275.

The contrast between a popular and learned style in Old Norse literature was famously noted by Nygaard (1905, 2ff). Popular style is characterized by a

³ "Vel saa almindeligt" (Nygaard 1905, 54, my translation).

⁴ I use these terms without necessarily subscribing to all aspects of Leiss' analysis. Leiss' claim is that definiteness in Old Norse is only marked in syntactic positions where you expect an indefinite noun phrase, meaning that subjects remain unmarked for definiteness. That might be the case, but I would like to see this hypothesis tested on a larger data sample.

⁵ "den foranstillede artikel" (Nygaard 1905, 48, my translation).

⁶ It does not allow you to search for inflectional endings, so in order to identify all the weak adjectives, for example, one still has to read through the text.

more concise form and less subordination. Learned style, by contrast, has more subordination and more elaborate sentences. Popular style is supposed to be found in "original works with narrative content and in the original legal language"⁷, whereas typical learned-style texts are "translations or adaptations from foreign languages or works that presuppose a knowledge of foreign literature" (1905, 2)⁸. However, Nygaard adds that in Classical Old Norse [i.e. the 13th century], the popular style is common also among learned scribes.

The didactic work *Konungs skuggsjá* is regarded as a learned style-text, known for its "highly ornate style"⁹ (Wellendorf 2013, 345). It represents a Norwegian example of the continental speculum literature. This has direct relevance for some of the questions discussed in this article, for instance the nature of the preadjectival determiner *hinn*, which Nygaard (1905, 48) sees as more of a learned-style phenomenon.

The English translations are my own. In interpreting the Old Norse examples, I have sometimes consulted the Danish translation (Jónsson 1926; also available on *heimskringla.no*).¹⁰

Each example from KS is provided with its location in the online file of the manuscript AM 243 b a fol: The page number followed by the line number. Since each page consists of two 30-line columns, I have added *a* or *b* after the line number, where *a* means the first column and *b* the second. The URL is as follows: <https://clarino.uib.no/menota/document-element?session-id=254903717011510&cpos=323433>. The link can also be found in the bibliography under "Primary source".

3. Definite contexts explained

Before starting the analysis of the KS data, I would like to identify what will henceforth be referred to as *definite contexts*. For the purposes of this article, I take *definite contexts* to mean contexts that unambiguously require a weak adjective in Modern Scandinavian¹¹.

⁷ "originalværker af fortællende indhold og i det originale lovsprog" (Nygaard 1905, 2, my translation).

⁸ "oversættelser eller bearbejdelser fra fremmede sprog eller i verker, der forudsætter kjendskab til fremmed literatur" (Nygaard 1905, 2, my translation).

⁹ "høyt ornamentert stil" (Wellendorf 2013, 345, my translation).

¹⁰ While there are certain differences in the way Danish expresses definiteness compared with Norwegian (briefly, that Danish, unlike Norwegian and Swedish, does not allow so-called double definiteness), the two languages behave identically when it comes to the form of the adjective.

¹¹ This is a practical definition for the purposes of this article and not an attempt to define more generally the concept of definiteness, which is outside the scope of the present article. I do not claim that there is always a 1-to-1 relationship between a weak adjective and definite reference in Modern Norwegian, as I do not wish to claim that Modern Norwegian represents a sort of definiteness 'end point'.

As mentioned above, the Old Norse strong adjectival inflection (and noun phrases with indefinite nouns in general) is unmarked for definiteness, meaning that it is compatible with both indefinite and definite reference (Nygaard 1905, 54). This begins to change in late Old Norse and continues in the Middle Norwegian period, the strong inflection becomes gradually marginalized from definite noun phrases¹².

The focus of this analysis will be on these linguistic contexts, which all unambiguously require the weak adjective in Modern Norwegian:

- noun phrases where the head is a definite noun (4.1)
- noun phrases with the demonstratives/determiners *hinn* and *sá* (4.2)
- noun phrases where the head is a proper noun or a pronoun (4.3)
- noun phrases used in direct address (vocatives) (4.4)
- noun phrases with possessives (4.5)
- noun phrases with inherently definite adjectives (4.6)
- noun phrases with only one referent (4.7)
- noun phrases with superlatives (4.8)

4. KS attributive adjectives in definite contexts

4.1. Noun phrases with a definite noun

In Modern Scandinavian, a weak adjective is an automatic consequence of a definite noun, i.e. a noun with the suffixed definite article (Faarlund et al. 1997, 387ff). However, Skrzypek (2012, 58ff) presents examples from Old Swedish (and Modern Icelandic) where a strong adjective modifies a definite noun. In such cases, she argues, the adjective is descriptive and not individualising; it adds additional information much like a non-restrictive relative clause would and does not restrict the set of referents.

KS offers one example of a strong adjective modifying a definite noun.

(3)	ǽit	[ec]	engan	ǽisan	mæistarann	þann
	Know	[I]	no	wise.WEAK	teacher-the	SÁ
	er (KS4r:1b)					
	REL					
	'I know of no wise teacher who...'					

¹² Having said that, even late Middle Norwegian sources offer examples of strong adjectives in contexts that require a weak one in Modern Norwegian, so the impression is that this process is not yet completed by the end of Middle Norwegian. I hope to take a closer look at the Middle Norwegian data in a future article.

Although the noun contains the suffixed article, it clearly does not carry definite reference, since it falls under the scope of the indefinite quantifier *enginn* (‘no’). In other words, it seems not to fall in line with the examples discussed by Skrzypek¹³.

Proto-Germanic, Ancient Nordic, and indeed the early Old Norse Runic inscriptions (Seip 1955, 55) do not have a definite article suffixed to the noun¹⁴. In the 13th century KS, it is still a relative novelty compared to the weak adjective, which is inherited from Proto-Germanic. This makes it important not to „project” from the situation in Modern Norwegian, where a weak adjective is an automatic consequence of a definite noun. As Dyvik (1979) shows, the suffixed article expresses different referential properties from the weak adjectival inflection. Given the difference in referential properties one should not expect a 1-to-1 relationship between them: One may occur without the other¹⁵.

It might be of some significance that the noun in (3) is modified by a relative clause, cf. 4.2.1.2 below.

A remark on double definiteness: This has not been a main focus of this study, but the impression is that the noun has the indefinite form in a clear majority of examples with *hinn*. Double definiteness only emerged in the 1200s (Lundeby 1965, 48) and still seems to be a marginal phenomenon in this text (from ca. 1275), although examples can be found, cf. (KS11v, 13b), (KS12v, 29b) and (KS13r, 3a) below.

4.2. Noun phrases with the determiners *sá* and *hinn*

Before I move on to analyse adjectives preceded by demonstratives, I would again like to stress that indefinite nouns are unmarked for definiteness in Old Norse. An indefinite noun – on its own or modified by a strong adjective – can for example have anaphoric reference. In KS, if an anaphorically referring noun is modified by an adjective, the adjective will normally be preceded by a determiner. But this is not obligatory, cf. (4), where the reference is clearly anaphoric:

(4) <i>iyir</i>	<i>hæilagt</i>	<i>alltari</i> (KS68r, 15b)
over	holy.STRONG	alter
'over the holy alter'		

¹³ KS also offers two examples of the phrase *æinn ængillinn* (KS58r:26a; KS58r, 7b), where the numeral *æinn* 'one' is followed by a definite singular noun. This is rendered as a partitive construction in the Danish translation: "en af englene" 'one of the angels' (Jónsson 1926, 153); see also Faarlund (2004, 74, ex. 62a) for a similar example. The nominative case and the singular form is unexpected; the normal way of rendering the partitive meaning would be with a plural noun in the genitive case.

¹⁴ According to Stroh-Wollin (2009, 6), the first instances of the Scandinavian suffixed definite article appear in Runic inscriptions from the 11th century.

¹⁵ What we never find in the Old Norse data, however, is a strong adjective preceded by *hinn*.

It is my impression that KS generally prefer to leave noun phrases (those that do not contain an adjective) unmarked for definiteness – although this has not been the focus of this investigation, so I will not make any strong claims. What I can say is that double definiteness seems to be rare (although it occurs). If double definiteness is an indicator of how far ahead the language was in the process of rendering definiteness marking obligatory, then KS seems to be at a relatively early stage¹⁶.

4.2.1. Noun phrases with *sá*

The Old Norse determiner *sá* (traditionally referred to as a demonstrative; see Wagener 2017, 64ff) is the ancestor of the Modern Norwegian preadjectival article *den*. In Modern Norwegian, this determiner always requires a weak adjective (and normally, but not always, a definite noun).

4.2.1.1. *Sá* in noun phrases that do not contain a relative clause

Non-relative *sá* is definite, in the sense that it carries unique reference; see Dyvik (1979, 49ff); Wagener (2017, 64ff). Wagener (2017, 66), relying on some theoretical insights from Abraham (2007), shows that (non-relative) *sá* behaves as an *anaphoric demonstrative*, in that it, for example, only seems to refer to rhematic information from the previous sentence and cannot continue a topic.

Given that *sá* has these characteristics, we would expect the adjective to have the weak inflection when preceded by (non-relative) *sá*. According to Nygaard (1905, 52f), however, this is in general rare in Old Norse prose, although he points out that it is common in certain learned-style works (like the *Book of Homilies*) and suggests that this use of *sá* points forward to the Modern Norwegian preadjectival article *den/det/de*, which etymologically derives from *sá*. According to Faarlund (2009, 13f), "the demonstrative took over the role of the independent definite article", a process already manifested in Norwegian manuscripts from the early 13th century.

I have found three examples of non-relative *sá* with an adjective (excluding inherently definite adjectives, see 4.6). One has a strong adjective and an indefinite noun: *þeim hælǵum manne* 'the/that holy man' (KS8r, 15b); the reference is clearly anaphoric, there is a mention of *hinn hælgi Patricius* 'the Holy Patrick' (KS8r, 9b) earlier in the sentence. The other one has a weak adjective and a definite noun: *þeim kallda fæginum* 'the/that cold zone'. Again, reference is anaphoric. The third one is (5), also anaphoric:

¹⁶ As Nygaard points out (1905, 47), there can be major differences between works (and even within them) with regard to the extent to which the definite article is used. He mentions that works translated from Latin tend to use the article less, since their source text does not have it. KS is not a translated work, but it represents a genre that has Latin works as models. I intend to look at a 'popular-style' text (one of the sagas) next, to get a more complete picture.

- (5) þæss hins hælga hus er sætt er
 SÁ HINN holy.WEAK house REL placed is
 i þat hælga sæti (KS68v, 26a)
 in SÁ holy.WEAK seat
 'the holy house, where the holy seat has been placed'

The adjective here is weak, but it follows a noun phrase with *sá* and *hinn* earlier in the sentence; one can speculate that the author has deleted the second *hinn* for stylistic reasons. Given that the noun phrase has anaphoric reference, *hinn* serves no referential purpose.

The other cases where *sá* co-occurs with the demonstrative *hinn* will be discussed in 4.2.3 below.

4.2.1.2. *Sá* in noun phrases that contain a relative clause

As demonstrated in Wagener (2017, 101ff) and (Dyvik 1979, 50ff), *sá* may lose its definiteness if the NP is modified by a relative clause, in the sense that it is compatible with non-unique reference. This is seen clearly in noun phrases where *sá* falls under the scope of a non-unique quantifier like *einn*, *einnhverr*, *nokkur* etc – although *sá* may fail to cause unique reference even in the absence of such a quantifier.

The text offers many examples of *sá* in relative contexts, like (6), where it falls under the scope of the indefinite quantifier *einn*. The adjective is always strong.

- (6) er þar ænn ýatn æitt miket þat
 is there also lake one big.STRONG SÁ
 er heiter Logri (KS6v, 27a)
 REL is-called Logri
 'There is also a lake there called Logri'

But even if the reference is clearly definite, the adjective is still strong:

- (7) þu atzt sætt æpli þat er
 you ate sweet.STRONG apple SÁ REL
 þu toct (KS44v, 2b)
 you took
 'You ate the sweet apple that you took'

As in the examples above, *sá* tends to follow the noun and the adjective when it is non-unique (cf. Wagener 2017, 59ff), but there are also examples where it precedes the adjective. This has no effect on the form of the adjective, which is strong either way. But the fact that relative *sá* can, and even tends, to

be separated from the adjective in this way, shows us that it is not a preadjectival determiner like *hinn*. *Hinn* always precedes the adjective and is never separated from it¹⁷.

Only three contexts may allow a weak adjective: a) The adjective is inherently definite, cf 4.6 below, or b) *sá* co-occurs with *hinn*, see 4.2.3, or c) the noun is definite, like in (8).

(8)	hafet	mykla.	þat	er	umhværfis
	ocean-the	big.WEAK	SÁ	REL	around
	rænnr	heiminn (KS13r:17a)			
	runs	world-the			
	'the big ocean that circles the world'				

4.2.2. Noun phrases with *hinn*

The demonstrative *hinn* is the source of the Norwegian suffixed definite article (Faarlund 2009, 6f; Stroh-Wollin 2009, 3ff), which originates in the Old Norse period. But in Old Norse there is also a preadjectival *hinn*, often referred to as an "an independent definite article" (Faarlund 2009, 6; a similar term is used by Nygaard 1905, 48). Both Faarlund and Nygaard see *hinn* as a preposed counterpart to the suffixed definite article; Stroh-Wollin (2009, 7f) however sees *hinn* as having "a quite different function from the definite suffix". I will return to this question in the conclusion.

Both in Old Norse and Modern Norwegian this article always requires the weak form of the adjective. A discussion of the referential properties and the evolution of *hinn* is given in Wagener (2017, 68ff). I will henceforth refer to this element in Old Norse as the *preadjectival determiner*¹⁸.

Also, Modern Norwegian has a preposed adjectival article (*den/det/de*), which however derives from *sá*, not from *hinn*. It requires a weak adjective and a definite noun (Stroh-Wollin 2009:4)¹⁹.

Nygaard lists (1905, 48ff) a number of contexts where *hinn* is used: With anaphoric reference (although mainly in poetry and to some extent in learned-style texts; in other genres it is normally accompanied by *sá*), with numerals and inherently definite adjectives like *sami*, with proper nouns like *Haraldr hinn hárfagri* 'Harald Fairhair', in direct address, with absolute superlatives

¹⁷ *Sá*, whether relative or non-relative, will always precede *hinn* when it co-occurs with it, which is another indication that *hinn* has a closer relationship with the adjective.

¹⁸ In ON, *hinn* is also found as a determiner/pronoun with other-deixis and possibly with a different etymology. It is only in this use that it has survived in Modern Norwegian dialects.

¹⁹ The noun can be indefinite in very formal usage and with non-specific reference (see Dyvik 1979, 67ff).

and with generic noun phrases (although according to Nygaard (1905, 51) generics normally prefer an indefinite noun and a strong adjective).

By late Old Norse, according to Lundeby (1965, 77), *hinn* had largely been replaced by *sá* and predominantly confined to proper names, especially noble titles.

In KS, *hinn* is found in all of these contexts. It never precedes a strong adjective. As expected, it is particularly frequent with proper nouns like *hina hælgu Mariu* '(the) Holy Mary' (KS3v, 14b), *hinn hælgi Patricius* 'the Holy Patrick' (KS8r, 9b) etc. Nygaard (1905, 54) writes that such examples also often lack *hinn*, but I have not come across any such cases in this text.

Hinn is also frequently found with some kind of generic reference, often as a substantivised adjective: *hinn fatæka* 'the poor one', 'poor people' (KS39v, 20b). In this use, it alternates with indefinite plurals (with strong adjectives), which is the more common way of expressing generic reference in this text: *hinn hviti biorninn* 'the white bear' (KS11v, 13b) vs *svarter birnir* 'black bears' (KS11v, 10b). Similarly, with superlatives, *hina bæztu siðu* 'the best customs' (17v, 4a) alternates with *bæzter siðarmænn* 'the best men of education' (KS17v, 7a). It is found with absolute superlatives, which by their nature are referentially indefinite: *hinar mæsto ugiptor* 'the greatest accidents', ie. 'very great accidents' (KS3r, 17a). It is common but not obligatory with inherently definite adjectives like ordinals, cf. 4.6 below.

As mentioned above, Nygaard found that *hinn* is rare with anaphoric reference, outside of learned-style texts and unless accompanied by *sá*. KS offers very few clearly anaphoric examples with *hinn*. One is *sƿærd hins unga mannz* (KS57v, 18a) 'the young man's sword', where the young man in question has been mentioned in the previous sentence. Another possible example is where the noun *vegr* 'zone' is introduced – *þa tva ƿægo er í himni liggia* 'the two zones that lie in heaven' (KS12v, 8b) – and then subsequently referred in the paragraphs that follow, with a contrast between warm and cold zones: *Hinn heiti vægrinn* 'the warm zone' (KS12v:29b). *Hinn* alternates with *sá*, *þeim kallda ƿæginum* 'the cold zone' (KS13r:7a), or *sá* and *hinn* co-occur in the same NP, *þeir hiner kalldu ƿægirnir* 'the cold zones' (KS13r:3a). But here the reading is primarily contrastive and not anaphoric.

Sometimes, the meaning borders on generic. The strong substantivised adjective *skilningar laus* 'a penniless person' (KS17v, 14b) is followed in the same paragraph by *hinn skilningar lausi* 'the penniless one' (KS17v, 19b). The reference is anaphoric in the sense that it seems to point back to an antecedent. On the other hand, since the meaning is generic, the use of *hinn* would be licensed also without the anaphoric reference. I am thus inclined to count this as an example of generic *hinn*.

One might in fact speculate that the author chooses *hinn* and not *sá* exactly to avoid an anaphoric reading. An illustration is the example *hit toma haf* 'the empty sea' (KS13r, 20a). The paragraph has already had several mentions of *haf* 'ocean'. Using *sá* would favour an anaphoric reading; the reader would be encouraged to look for an antecedent, which is to be avoided if the meaning is primarily generic. In Modern Norwegian, the equivalent phrase is acceptable with the simple definite, *det tomme hav*, which suggests an abstract, generic reading, cf. Dyvik (1979, 67).) One could also argue that *sá* has an emphatic element (cf. Lundebj 1965) that renders it unsuitable for a phrase such as *hit toma haf*, where it is the adjective that is emphasized.

4.2.3. *Sá* and *hinn* co-occurring in the same noun phrase

Sá and *hinn* might be found in the same noun phrase, and in popular-style texts this is, according to Nygaard (1905, 48), the most common way of expressing anaphoric reference.

KS offers 13 examples of *sá* and *hinn* together (as well as one with the proximal *þessi* and one with *slíkr* 'such'²⁰). The adjective is always weak.

- (9) Kona þærs hins rika mannz ælskaðe
 Wife SÁ HINN wealthy.WEAK man loved
 Joseph (KS35v, 14a)
 Joseph
 'the wife of that wealthy and powerful man loved Joseph'

What (if anything) is achieved referentially by adding *þærs* to *hins rika mannz*? Without *sá*, you may get a contrastive reading: the wealthy and powerful man as opposed to the poor and powerless man. With *sá*, the noun phrase becomes more clearly anaphoric: 'The wealthy man mentioned previously' (i.e. it points back to *þeim hofðingia [...] er hans hærra þar* 'the chieftain that was his master' in the previous sentence).

But in the majority of examples the addition of *sá* could be said to give the noun phrase more of an emphatic character.

- (10) Tre þat hit fagra er þit seet
 tree SÁ HINN fair.WEAK REL you see
 at stændr í miðri paradiso (KS40r,16b)
 that stands in middle paradise
 'the/that beautiful tree that you see standing in the middle of paradise'

²⁰ See Wagener (2017, 80ff) for a discussion on the referential properties of *slíkr*.

It is similarly used to add emphasis to particularly evil characters: *Sa hinn ofunnd fulli anndi* 'that hateful ghost' (KS43v, 21a), *sa hinn illgiarni anndi* 'that evil ghost' (KS43v, 25a). In two of the cases, the insertion of *sá* may be motivated by the presence of a postmodifying relative clause, cf. 4.2.1.2.

4.3. Noun phrases headed by a proper noun or a pronoun

4.3.1. Noun phrases with proper nouns

Nygaard mentions three different alternatives when the adjective modifies a proper noun: One featuring *hinn* and a weak adjective, *Haraldr hinn hárfagri* 'Harald Fairhair' (1905, 50); one with no determiner and a weak adjective, *Ólafr digri* 'Olaf the big one' (1905, 54); and finally, in the older literature, one with no determiner and a strong adjective, *Ketill flatnefr* 'Ketill the flatnosed' (1905, 50).

In Modern Norwegian, names always take a weak adjective. The presence of a preadjectival determiner depends on the referential properties. If the adjective is restrictive, the preadjectival determiner is normally used: *den nye Anita* 'the new Anita' (as opposed to the old one). If it only provides additional descriptive information, no preadjectival determiner is present: *gamle Anita* 'old Anita', i.e. 'Anita, who by the way is old'.

In KS, only the first of Nygaard's alternatives mentioned above is attested: If the proper noun is modified by an adjective, the adjective is always preceded by *hinn*: *hina hælgu Mariu* '(the) Holy Mary' (KS3v, 14b), *hinn hælgi Patricius* 'the Holy Patrick' (KS8r, 9b), etc (although, unlike in Nygaard's example above, *hinn* and adjective precede the proper noun). This then represents the only KS context where *hinn* seems to be obligatory with weak adjectives.

4.3.2. Noun phrases with pronouns

In Modern Norwegian, adjectives modifying pronouns are always weak (Faarlund et al 1997, 390). If they are descriptive/non-restrictive (*søte deg!*, lit. 'sweet you', i.e. 'you, who are so sweet'), they take no preadjectival article²¹. If they are restrictive (*den nye meg*, 'the new me', as opposed to 'the old me') they normally take the preadjectival article.

The texts offer one potential example of an adjective modifying a pronoun. It is descriptive/non-restrictive and has a strong adjective and no determiner.

²¹ I.e. they take no determiner when they are preposed to the pronoun. If postnominal, they require a determiner (*jeg den svake* 'I, who am weak'), but I would argue that we are then dealing with apposition and not modification. Modern Norwegian does not allow postnominal adjectives and many language users would insert a comma before the determiner.

- (11) ec ustyr fell i miclar sakir ȳiðr
 I weak.STRONG fell in great debt with
 þic (KS45r, 18a)
 you
 'I, weak as I am, fell in great debt with you'

This construction then differs in two ways from the Modern Norwegian equivalent: The adjective is strong and it is postmodifying. But the very fact that it is postmodifying may suggest it is in apposition to the pronoun and not modifying it. An apposition is also what is opted for in the Danish translation (Jónsson 1926, 129): *Jeg, svage menneske*, 'I, weak person', albeit with a weak adjective.

4.4. Noun phrases used in direct address (vocatives)

According to Lyons (1999, 152) "noun phrases used in direct address, in vocative function [are] of uncertain status in relation to definiteness". In some languages, they take definite nouns, in others indefinite ones. In Modern Scandinavian, vocatives require an indefinite noun and a definite adjective, but are incompatible with the preadjectival determiner (Lyons 1999, 85). Julien's (2014) more detailed investigation shows that definite nouns are not excluded from (certain types of) Norwegian vocatives; what is not allowed, is the preadjectival determiner *den*.²²

Ringe (2006, 170) points out that vocatives normally take weak adjectives in Early Germanic. According to Nygaard (1905), Old Norse vocatives can be both definite and indefinite. In the former case (1905, 50f), they feature *hinn* and a weak adjective; in the latter case (1905, 56), they feature a strong adjective and no demonstrative.

KS offers both of Nygaard's types, both the definite one, with *hinn* and a weak adjective as well as the indefinite one, with a strong adjective and no demonstrative. (12) has both types of vocative constructions in the same sentence.

- (12) Hœyr þu hinn milldazti huggare heilagr
 hear you HINN mildest.WEAK comforter holy.STRONG
 annde (KS53r, 28a)
 spirit
 'Hear, you the mildest comforter, the Holy Ghost'

There are two observations to be made here. One is that the examples with *hinn* all have an adjective in the superlative, the ones without *hinn* do not.

²²According to Julien (2014, 143), this is because vocatives contain a deictic 2nd person feature, which is incompatible with the 3rd person feature of *den*.

Secondly, and more importantly, all examples could be argued to be in apposition to the pronoun *þú* 'you'. This renders a comparison difficult, since even Modern Norwegian tolerates the preadjectival article in noun phrases that stand in apposition to vocatives: *Du, den deiligste jenta i hele Skien* 'You, the hottest girl in all of Skien'. Appositions can be seen as non-restrictive relative clauses (with deleted relativizer and copula), so all noun phrases that would be acceptable as a subject complement in a non-restrictive relative clause are in principle acceptable as appositions. I can add here that even most of the examples of vocatives with *hinn* offered by Nygaard (1905, 50f) are in apposition to *þú*. A more extensive data sample is thus necessary to shed light on the vocatives in Old Norse with regard to the presence of determiners like *hinn*.

4.5. Noun phrases with possessive pronouns and genitives

As Lyons (1999, 124) states, "there is little reason to draw a major distinction between possessives based on pronouns and possessives based on full noun phrases, since their syntactic behaviour is essentially the same".

4.5.1. Noun phrases with possessive pronouns

In Modern Norwegian, noun phrases with a possessive unambiguously require a weak adjective (Faarlund et al 1997, 388), even if, as mentioned above, the noun is indefinite.

In Old Norse, on the other hand, possessives are not inherently definite. As shown by Dyvik (1979, 65), they can co-occur with indefinite determiners like *einn* (one, a), *nokkur* (a, some) and *einnhverr* (any), unlike their Modern Norwegian counterparts. Cross-linguistically, this is not unusual, as many languages, for instance Italian, allow indefinite determiners in possessive noun phrases, cf. Lyons (1999, 22ff).

According to Nygaard (1905, 52), possessive noun phrases may take either a weak or a strong adjective. If they take a weak adjective they usually also feature the demonstrative *hinn*. Otherwise, the adjective is strong.

Delsing (1994) has investigated adjectives in possessive noun phrases in Old Swedish and finds a strong correlation between a weak adjective and the order possessive-adjective-noun. When weak adjectives appear in possessive noun phrases in his data, it is always with this order. (Though it is worth mentioning that Old Swedish does not have the preposed article *hinn*.)

In possessive noun phrases in KS, the adjective is always strong, like in (13) and (14) (with the exception of the one example with *hinn* discussed below, and noun phrases with inherently definite adjectives, cf. 4.6):

(13) at skilia oc kunna heilagt logmal
 to understand and know holy.STRONG law
 þitt (KS54v, 6a)
 yours
 'to understand and to know your holy law'

(14) mæðr þinni heilagri miskunn (KS54r, 15a)
 with your holy.STRONG mercy
 'in your holy mercy'

The relative order between possessive, adjective and noun makes no difference in this regard. The majority of examples have the order adjective-noun-possessive, like (13), but there are also several instances like (14), with the order possessive-adjective-noun – the order found by Delsing (1994) to favour a weak adjective – as well as three examples with other orders. In all cases, the adjective remains strong. I have found one possessive NP that features *hinn* in KS, *mina hina liotligo asion* 'my ugly face' (KS43v, 12a). As expected, the adjective is weak.

4.5.2. Noun phrases with possessive genitives

The adjective is always strong in KS noun phrases with possessive genitives. These examples are less numerous than the one with a pronominal possessive; they normally have the order with the adjective before the noun in the genitive, as in these examples.

(15) heilagt guðs alltari (KS68r, 12b)
 holy.STRONG God's.GEN alter
 'God's holy alter'

(16) í fullu konongs trausti (KS20r, 13a)
 in full.STRONG king's.GEN trust
 'in God's full trust'

(17) æingetinn guðs sun (KS53r, 27a)
 only-begotten.STRONG God's.GEN son
 'God's only begotten son'

4.6. Noun phrases with inherently definite adjectives

There is a group of Old Norse adjectives that can be said to be 'inherently definite'. It includes ordinals, *sami* 'same', adjectives expressing order (*næstr* 'next', *fyrri* 'former' etc) and adjectives referring to unique locations (like *syðri* 'southern', *hægri* 'høyre' etc). Ratkus (2011, 141) speaks of "adjectives [that involve] an absolute or extreme notion". Nygaard (1905, 54)

notes that they frequently appear without the preadjectival article *hinn*. Their Modern Norwegian counterparts may also, and often tend to, appear without a preadjectival determiner. I take this as evidence of the determiner-like quality of these adjectives.

Most of these adjectives are diachronically comparative (*syðri, fyrri, ytri*) forms; the ordinals and *næstr* are originally superlative forms. Comparatives always follow the weak declension in Old Norse, the same goes for ordinals. The Old Norse word for 'same' has both a strong form *samr* and a weak form *sami*, the latter being more common (Heggstad et al 2012, 516). The Modern Norwegian determiner *samme* descends from the weak form.

In KS, inherently definite adjectives are always weak. I have not found a single strong form of *sami/samr*. These adjectives are usually (but not always) preceded by a determiner, which is normally *hinn* but may also be *sá* (*þann fyrsta fisk*²³ (KS39v, 12a); with *sami*, *sá* is the preferred option in temporal expressions meaning 'the same day' etc). The determiner tends to be absent in more or less set phrases like *mæð sama hætti* 'in the same way' (KS24v, 28a).

4.7. Noun phrases with only one referent

Some noun phrases have by their semantic nature only one referent, like *God, The Holy Spirit* etc. In Modern Norwegian, such nouns take a weak adjective. All the Old Norse examples offered by Nygaard (1905, 55) have a strong adjective.

In the several KS examples featuring a referent of this kind, the adjective is strong: *almatkan guð* 'the almighty God' (KS1v, 24a), *þionostomannum heilagrar kirkiu* (KS53v, 28b) 'the servants of the Holy Church', *sannr guð* 'the true God' (KS54v, 8a). One example deserves a special mention:

(18) þa er þætta æitt satt upphaf (KS1v, 8b)
 then is this one true.STRONG origin
 'so this is the only true beginning'

The Danish translation uses "det eneste" 'the only (one)' (Jónsson 1926, 16)²⁴, a superlative of the quantifying adjective *ene* 'the one', used in definite noun phrases and always with a weak adjective. Old Norse does not have a quantifier/adjective with this specialized meaning, instead it relies on the numeral *einn* to express it. However, the numeral *einn*, which only has a strong form in Old Norse, acquires the weak form *eina* in Middle Norwegian (cp.

²³ Although it should be said that the noun here is modified by a relative clause, a context that favours *sá*.

²⁴ "så er dette det eneste sande ophav" (Jónsson 1926, 16).

Modern Norwegian *ene*) when used in the sense of 'the one, the only' (see Wagener 2017, 257, fn. 1 for an example)²⁵.

4.8. Noun phrases with superlatives

According to Nygaard (1905, 62), Old Norse superlatives expressing the highest degree are normally strong. Absolute superlatives, on the other hand, are weak and take *hinn*.

Most attributive superlatives in KS are weak and modified by *hinn*, both definite superlatives, *hinn fægrsti staðr er mænn ytu* 'the most beautiful town that people know' (KS8r, 30a), and absolute superlatives *hinar mæsto ugiptor* 'the greatest misfortunes' (KS3r, 17a). There are a few examples where the superlative is weak but not preceded by *hinn* (*alettazta aldre* 'in the best age', i.e. 'in my best age' KS1v, 25b) or where it is strong (*þæira er bæzter siðarmænn ero* 'those who are the best men of education' KS17v, 7a).

5. Conclusion

This examination has shown that the only context that unfailingly triggers a weak adjective is the determiner *hinn*. In other definite contexts, strong adjectives are at least possible. In the case of possessives as well as noun phrases with only one referent, they seem to be the only option. They also vastly outnumber weak adjectives when co-occurring with the demonstrative/ determiner *sá*, which is unexpected from a present-day point of view, since it was *sá* that gave rise to the Modern Norwegian preadjectival article *den*. They seem to be obligatory in noun phrases with one referent, and at least available as an alternative with superlatives and vocatives (if the examples in this text actually qualify as vocatives, which is dubious).

In Ratkus' (2011, 142) detailed study of adjectives in Gothic, all weak adjectives that lack a preadjectival determiner are inherently definite (cf. 4.6 above) or occur in vocative noun phrases. He has "not found a single clear attestation of a weak adjective without a determiner that would not conform to either of these explanations." The present study shows, as was noted already by Nygaard (1905, 52ff), that it is possible to leave out *hinn* in almost all contexts. The one context where a weak adjective is always preceded by *hinn* in KS is with names (cf. 4.3.1). This could represent a late Old Norse development; Nygaard (1905, 54) writes that such examples "very frequently"²⁶ lack *hinn*. Lundebý (1965, 77) argues that by late Old Norse, *hinn* had largely been replaced by *sá*

²⁵ It is not the only quantifier to acquire a separate weak, or definite, form. *Sjalfr* 'self' found only with a strong declension in Old Norse, has a definite form *selve* in Modern Norwegian. The same goes for *annat* 'second, other': Exclusively strong in Old Norse, it has a separate definite form *andre* in Modern Norwegian.

²⁶ "Meget hyppig" (Nygaard 1905, 54, my translation).

and predominantly confined to proper names, especially noble titles, where it connotes reverence. So when *hinn* is always found with names in KS, this might then represent a use that is stylistically and pragmatically conditioned, and not required by syntax or semantics.

Ratkus reconstructs a (referentially empty) preadjectival determiner for Proto-Germanic, the only candidate being *sa*, the ancestor to Old Norse *sá*. The first attestation of a preadjectival article in the Ancient Nordic Runic material is *sá* and not *hinn* (Lindblad 1953, 34). This means that *hinn* at some point represented a Scandinavian innovation. As Stroh-Wollin writes, "it could be tempting to take the more discriminating inflection of *(h)inn* to compensate for the weak forms of the adjectives", an approach which would align with Ratkus' (2011, 222ff) analysis of the original Proto-Germanic preadjectival determiner as an "artroid", whose function is not referential, but to realize morphosyntactic features not expressed in the adjectival paradigm. This was a role originally performed by Proto-Germanic *sa*, but Old Norse *sá* could have evolved into too much of an anaphoric demonstrative to be suitable for this function. Old Norse *sá* has a more deictic nature than for instance its cousins in Old English and Old High German (Wagener 2017, 65), given that the latter languages' cognates of *sá* are used also used to express "indirect anaphoric reference" (like for example reference to body parts); in Old Norse this type of reference is reserved for the definite article (or an unmarked noun). Moreover, in Old Norse, the weak paradigm has far more syncretism than the strong one, which could motivate the (optional) insertion of *hinn* as a kind of artroid. The suffixed definite article, of course, derives from *hinn*, meaning that *hinn* must have lost much of its deictic character and was then more suitable than *sá* as a (referentially empty) preadjectival determiner. But it was not obligatory in this function and could be dispensed with, as the present study shows.

In cases where an adjective appears in a noun phrase with anaphoric reference, one could always call upon *sá*. In some cases, this would lead to the anaphoric *sá + hinn*-construction, common in some Old Norse works (see 4.2.3). This might seem like counter-evidence to the hypothesis suggested above that *hinn*'s role is to express morpho-syntactic properties, since the same properties are expressed by *sá*, which would render *hinn* redundant. However, I think there is good reason to assume that the *sá + hinn* construction cannot have been widespread in colloquial language. Such a construction is typologically marked; I know of no European language that avails itself of two determiners of that kind in the same noun phrase. At best, it must have been diachronically very unstable, which would explain why it seems to have been so short-lived. Another point is that as the suffixed definite article becomes generalized, the morpho-syntactic features of a noun phrase are expressed on the noun, so there is less need for *hinn*²⁷.

²⁷ The role of preadjectival determiner is of course eventually taken over by *sá*, or a descendant thereof, which however is no longer a mere 'artroid' and serves a different role than *hinn* used to.

I would like to end with a few words on the referential properties of the weak adjectival declension. It is clearly not anaphoric, cf 4.2.2 above; *sá* needs to be added in such instances. I see the referential function of the weak adjective as primarily contrastive. This may for instance explain why KS prefers strong to weak adjectives in the many examples of noun phrases with possessive pronouns and possessive genitives. Adjectives used in possessive noun phrases in KS are not contrastive²⁸:

(19) þarf ec mæirr miscunnsamligrar γægðar þinnar
 need I more merciful.STRONG mercy yours
 (KS45r, 15a)
 'I need your forgiving mercy more'

(20) guðdomligan matt guðs (KS51r, 29b)
 divine.STRONG power God's.GEN
 'your divine power'

'Your forgiving mercy' and 'your divine power' are not contrasted with 'your non-forgiving mercy' and 'your non-divine power'. The equivalent Modern Norwegian phrases would unambiguously require a weak adjective, despite the referential properties being unchanged. This shows that weak adjectives in Modern Norwegian serve a different referential function than they did in Old Norse and possibly had done ever since Proto-Germanic.

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²⁸ There are a few potential counterexamples, all with the adjective *rettr* 'right, correct' (f. ex. *rettr sun min* 'my right son' KS1v, 17a), where you might argue that the meaning is contrastive. However, *rettr* is always strong whenever used attributively in KS. And given that strong adjectives are referentially unmarked anyway, one must assume that they are also compatible with a contrastive meaning. Another question is why *rettr* is always strong in KS; the Gothic word meaning 'right' is always weak (Ratkus 2011, 242). Cf. also 4.6 above.

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DIDACTIC CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH LANGUACULTURE IN A MODERN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT. *Didactic Considerations When Working with Languaculture in a Modern Language Classroom.* The article investigates how educators in higher education can work with *languaculture* in a modern language classroom by using critical languacultural awareness, critical discourse analysis and translatology instruments. The article begins with a brief summary of how the term *languaculture* has developed over the years, how it has been adapted to a didactic setting by other scholars and how translation tools can resolve issues regarding equivalents and lacunas when working with texts between different languages. Thereafter, the article provides two examples of how one can work with typical Swedish cultural-specific expressions such as *miljonprogrammet* and *snilleindustrin*.

Keywords: *Critical languacultural awareness, critical discourse analysis, equivalence, languaculture, languarealia.*

REZUMAT. *Considerații didactice atunci când se folosește Languaculture într-o clasă de limbă modernă.* Articolul investighează modul în care experții în educație din învățământul superior pot lucra cu *languaculture* într-o clasă de limbă modernă, utilizând conștientizarea critică a *languaculture*, analiza critică a discursului și instrumentele de traducere. Articolul începe cu un scurt rezumat al modului în care termenul de *languaculture* s-a dezvoltat de-a lungul anilor, modul în care a fost adaptat de către alți cercetători unui mediu didactic și cum pot instrumentele de traducere să rezolve problemele referitoare la termeni

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echivalenți și lacune atunci când se lucrează cu texte între diferite limbi. În continuare, articolul oferă două exemple despre cum se poate lucra cu expresii specifice culturii suedeze, cum ar fi *miljonprogrammet* și *snilleindustrin*.

Cuvinte cheie: *conștientizarea critică a linguaculture, analiza critică a discursului, echivalare, linguaculture, languarealia.*

Introduction

The aim of this article is to investigate how critical languacultural awareness, critical discourse analysis and translatology tools can help students, not only highlight cultural-specific vocabulary, but also be a resource in connecting the two languages and their vocabulary, and give the students tools to investigate the meaning(s) of foreign words on their own. This article intends to answer the questions of how these approaches are relevant in the Modern Language Classroom and how teachers and students could work together with these concepts in the classroom.

Inspired by Michael Agar's concept of *languaculture* and the category of *languarealia* used by Slovak linguists, i. e. culturally specific phenomena manifested in language, we attempt to integrate these approaches in a class with undergraduate students studying Swedish at a B2 level. All of the students entered the university without any prior knowledge of Swedish, their native language is Slovak, and they study Swedish as part of their translation and interpreting studies in combination with English or German. In this article we discuss two cultural-specific expressions in detail – *miljonprogrammet* and *snilleindustrin*. In order to approach these phenomena, we work with concepts stemming from *languaculture* and critical discourse analysis, as well as concepts stemming from the translatalogical field – especially Koller's (2011) equivalence theory.

Languaculture and languarealia

The term *languaculture* originates from the linguistic anthropologist Michael Agar (1994). The term is a continuation of *languaculture* used by Paul Friedrich (1989). Both Friedrich and Agar dealt with the old perception that language and culture can be divided into two separate units and subsequently can be studied independently of one another. According to Friedrich (1989, 307), language, ideology and political economy are dependent on each other,

and what must be studied is the relation between the three. Agar (1994, 100) changed the term into *languaculture* and advocates for a change in how we perceive language and culture. According to him, we can find *languaculture* in so-called rich points. We stumble upon rich points in our different *languacultures* when we realize that the communication is flawed and what we say is interpreted differently by the participants in the communication. Agar (1994, 90) stresses that in order to understand the utterance of another, we must also understand the cultural context in which it is uttered. A *languaculture* is not something which only exists between different languages in its classical meaning, but also within and between speakers of the same language. A language is a carrier of culture, and culture carries language. But, as Friedrich (1989, 307) rhetorically asks, “how much of each?”. Rather, we should see both language and culture as one entity – *languaculture*.

This pragma-linguistic turn in linguistics has also shaped the study of the so-called *languarealia* (in Russian called *languaculturemes*), which, as the Slovak linguists Dulebová and Cingerová (referring to Russian linguistics, especially V. V. Vorobyov is one of the leading figures of this approach) point out, is dealt with as a frontier discipline – linguaculturology. Indeed, this paradigm shift in linguistics brought about a move away from the isolated investigation of linguistic phenomena, and linguistics began to focus on the interdisciplinary dimension of the study of language and speech (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 9). Related to this is the fact that structuralistically defined linguistics was not enough to explain and subsequently understand certain linguistic phenomena, and it was also necessary to take into account “[...] a relatively stable set of associations, symbolism, culturally specific connotations, the extra-linguistic cultural milieu, and the imaginary network they form, the boundary of which is labile and fluid”³ (Vorobyov 1997, cited in Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 10). *Languarealia*, in this sense, can be understood as units of *languaculture*.

Languarealia and Precedent phenomena

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish the concept of *realia* from the concept of *languarealia*. *Realia* are the names of subjects focused on history, politics and culture in the study of languages at universities. When teaching the *realia* of a particular country, the emphasis is on analyzing the facts of cultural,

³ “[...] zobrat’ do úvahy pomerne ustálený súbor asociácií, symboliku, kultúrne špecifické konotácie, mimojazykové kultúrne prostredie a pomyselnú sieť, ktorú vytvárajú a ktorej hranica je labilná a pohyblivá” (Vorobyov 1997, cited in Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 10, our translation).

social, historical and political life. *Languarealia*, on the other hand, "[...] is about learning about their reflection in the lexical plane of the language"⁴ (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 14). To give an example, we can use the Battle of Poltava from a Swedish point of view. This historical battle is explained in terms of facts in history-oriented teaching, while as linguists we are interested in the term Poltava, which evokes associations and connotations such as defeat, humiliation and so on, in a member of the Swedish *languaculture*. These concepts are often dealt with simultaneously in practice, as we often combine teaching about the country with the teaching of the language, so that *languarealia* forms a natural part of subjects focusing on the political or cultural history of Scandinavia. Conversely, when teaching language-oriented subjects such as translation seminars, the teacher often moves away from linguistics to culture or realia, in order to clarify new facts or contexts. When teaching a foreign language, sooner or later we will encounter language phenomena with a national-cultural meaning component – these are what we call *languarealia*. These phenomena include non-equivalent vocabulary, aphorisms and idioms (containing stereotypical representations of certain phenomena), and so-called precedent phenomena (specific expressions, names, texts and situations) (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 9). The latter can be considered as the most complex type of *languarealia*, and will therefore be discussed in more detail.

Precedent phenomena

Precedent phenomena are immediately recognizable units in a language. They are stable, logical, and understandable to most speakers. These qualities, as Dulebová and Cingerová state, make them "[...] very attractive in different types of discourses (especially in the media, advertising and politics) [...]"⁵ (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 19). They are defined very broadly as linguistic forms that encode underlying ethno-cultural realities with rich and typical content in a particular culture, with a tendency for regular repetition (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 16). Dulebová, who has dealt with the issue of precedent phenomena in Slovak linguistics more in depth, draws attention to the relationship between precedence and intertextuality, whereby precedent phenomena, like intertextual signs, point to something that has already happened. It can be a particular text, an author, a personality, a fictional (literary) or even a

⁴ "[...] pri výučbe lingvorealíí ide o spoznávanie ich odzrkadlenia v lexikálnej rovine jazyka." (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 14, our translation).

⁵ "[...] obzvlášť prítlačlivými v rôznych typoch diskurzov (najmä v mediálnom, reklamnom a politickom) [...]" (Dulebová and Cingerová 2017, 19, our translation).

real situation, a phenomenon, etc. (Dulebová 2015). Technically speaking, these are two different theoretical approaches to understand the same phenomenon. To use an example, the sentence *Du skall inte tro att du är något* (you're not to think you're anything special), reproduced many times and in different contexts, can be considered a precedent expression. This utterance evokes all connotative shades in Swedish speakers without necessarily recognizing the literary source from which it originated. The speakers understand that the expression refers to the so-called *Jantelagen*, the Law of Jante, the code of conduct, but it is not necessary to know that it was formulated by Danish-Norwegian writer Aksel Sandemose in his novel *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks* in 1933 and is a common, Scandinavian idea. Precedent names are mostly appellatives such as Quisling (in the meaning of a traitor, "en svensk quisling" – a Swedish quisling), onyms such as Lucia (in the meaning a beautiful girl with long blonde hair, "en typisk Lucia" – a typical Lucia), but also real toponyms such as Saltsjöbaden or Saltis (meaning rich snobs, "snobbiga saltis-människor" – snobs from Saltis) or imaginary toponyms such as Nangijala (in the novel *The Brothers Lionheart* by Astrid Lindgren, meaning the place of afterlife, where children go after they die, "vi ses i Nangijala" – see you in Nangijala).

The categorization of *languarealia* and, within them, the focus on those that can be called precedent phenomena, could serve as a kind of analytical proto-tool. From this point of view, it makes sense to define *languarealia* as a separate category, as expressions that the student acquires at the same time as the culture whose phenomena these expressions manifest. When comparing two texts, for example in the process of translation, the equivalence theory can be used (Koller 2011). This is offered by the article in the first example – *snilleindustri*. By solving equivalences and finding appropriate expressions, we break away from the perception of language and culture as two separate drawers, and by comparing and actively searching for a solution (that can never be wrong), the protagonists are brought into a languacultural interspace in which their previous experience of not only the foreign, but also their own language is relativized.

Critical languaculture awareness through critical discourse analysis

Two scholars who have tried to formulate teaching practices using the concept of *languaculture* are Risager (2005) and Díaz (2013). Risager (2005, 195) says that we must broaden the view on language and culture, that "the target language should be seen as a cultural phenomenon, and simultaneously literature and other texts in the target language should be seen as linguistic

phenomena” (Risager 2005, 195). Díaz (2013) builds her practice on Michael Byram’s (2012) ideas about intercultural communication. Byram (2012, 86) makes a distinction between being bilingual and/or bicultural and being intercultural. Being intercultural means for example the act of translating from one language to another, while being bilingual doesn’t necessarily require any transfer between the two languages or cultures. To have intercultural competences means to have a certain mindset and the ability to act in an intercultural way. An intercultural person is someone who uses two cultures and makes them work together, as opposed to just letting them live side by side. Just as Agar (1994, 82) says, an intercultural act isn’t necessarily an act between two different languages – it might also happen within one language area but with two different cultural groups represented.

Díaz (2013) tries to formulate a more didactic approach, using both critical intercultural competences and *languaculture* as a base. While Díaz (2013) mentions three different areas in which this didactic and pedagogical method needs to be implemented, we will in this article only focus on the pedagogical area which takes place in the classroom. What Díaz (2013) suggests is something called critical *languaculture* awareness, in which the aim of the studies is to become critically conscious of how *languaculture* is described and manifested, and to be able to (re)frame the new knowledge by substituting, negotiating and adapting the knowledge to the same and other *languacultures*. The criticality lies in the fact that the students (and the teachers for that matter) need to be aware of how a certain image is being portrayed and spread via textbooks, literature and other forms of texts. Students therefore need to be critical, not only of what information is given to them, but also about their own *languaculture*, and the implication it has on their analyses of the foreign *languaculture*. This idea of criticality can be seen also in the works of other scholars, such as Freire (1972) and Kumashiro (2002). It is no longer mere knowledge we’re after, but empowerment to change what is wrong in society. Even if Agar (1994, 128) did not focus on the didactic implications of *languaculture*, he did write:

And culture, once you make it up, doesn’t leave you where you were when you started. When you’re done with the job, you’re aware of something about your own identity that used to lurk on the edges of consciousness as the natural order of things. And you understand an alternative to who you are, and now imagine that probably there are many more. If you hit a rich point, think you’ve solved it, and haven’t changed, then you haven’t got it right. (Agar 1994, 128)

Criticality is a critical stance not only towards what you learn about the other, but also (perhaps even more) about who you are yourself.

If the goal is to educate critical *languaculture* awareness, how does one do that? Speaking with one eye towards Freire (1972), Díaz says that ‘teaching’ might not be the concept to use when speaking about cultural awareness as it implies a static viewpoint. Furthermore, Díaz (2013, 52) writes that “we are in a post-method era, in which well-defined methods should be abandoned in favor of identifications of practices or strategies of teaching design to reflect local needs and experiences”. It’s important to notice that Díaz does not advocate a methodless teaching, but rather a “beyond-methods approach” (Díaz 2013, 53), flexible enough to suit different language levels and different learning situations. In the background of the concept of *languaculture* and its pedagogical aspects lie also the ideas brought forward by discourse analysts such as Fairclough (1992) that language is not static and different words can have different meanings depending on in which discourse they partake. Agar (1994) mentions the importance of context in order to understand an utterance, and the way certain words can have different meanings depending on in which context they are uttered. Also, Risager (2005, 193) mentions this connection when she writes: “Languaculture is related to one or more specific languages. The concept is a theorization of the interface between language and the rest of culture. But the cultural view of language should also embrace the concept of discourse. The concept of discourse may be used as an intermediary concept between the concepts of language/languaculture and the more general concept of culture”. Later on in this text we will give an example of how one can use different discourses when investigating a languacultural rich point.

In conclusion, we can say that *languaculture* and the pedagogy that surrounds it have in common that they try to deal with the old notion that things (culture, language and the teacher-student relation) are neatly divided in separate containers which can be dealt with or handed out one by one in a certain order. Instead, they argue that language and culture are not to be understood as separate units but understood as two aspects of the same – *languaculture*. The criticality lies in the idea that one needs to investigate and be aware not only of the foreign, but also one’s own *languaculture*, since the idea is not to educate students to become bicultural but intercultural. The same goes for the teachers, as one hardly can ‘teach’ culture if by teaching we mean explaining how a certain culture is. Díaz (2013, 54) writes: “Therefore, to explore the target *languaculture*, learners need to be given the opportunity and encouraged to develop the appreciative capacity to ‘explore’ their own cultural behaviour at the same time they explore the target one”. Not teaching – exploring.

Languarealia – exploring through translation

Students acquire a foreign language through language and its phenomena; language is not only a goal but also a tool. In the process they find themselves in a situation where they are forced to translate – either literally or for themselves, often finding themselves lost in translation, much like the migrants that the Slovak Germanist Paulína Šedíková Čuhová writes about in her monograph on the figures of translators and interpreters in migrant literature. They find themselves, as it were, in Homi Bhabha's (2000) third space: “[...] sort of an in-between-space offering them the insight into both cultures and the opportunity to confront the differences between them” (Šedíková Čuhová 2019, 145). It is always a very challenging situation – whether it is the translation of a specific text where the student is looking for solutions, or a teacher's attempt to explain a concept different from the extra-linguistic reality in which the student lives or with which he or she is intimately familiar. We can understand translation as a possibility for the intellect to try the experience of the relativity of one's own world and as a way to transcend the horizons of language (Flusser, 2005).

It could be said that by using translational terminology, we are interested in those *languarealia* that belong to the so-called non-equivalent vocabulary. In this case, we register so-called lacunas in the target language. According to the Slovak linguist Ján Horecký (1999, 95), lacunas refer to obscure places, difficult to decrypt text-sections that require philological and culturological analysis. These are, as Horecký says, blanks, holes or gaps, and they are found in the vocabulary of particular languages when it comes to naming cultural specifics.

Thus, from the point of view of foreign language teaching, it makes sense to deal with those *languarealia* which belong to the non-equivalent lexis without being precedent phenomena, as well as those that belong to the non-equivalent lexis and unambiguously can be labeled as precedent phenomena. The first group includes for instance culinary specialities, natural and national specifics or supernatural beings that have no equivalent in the target language but do not refer to any specific situation, person or utterance, such as *tack för senast*, *surströmming*, *fika*, etc. The second group includes terms such as *folkhemmet*, *miljonprogrammet*, *Poltava*, *snilleindustrier* or *allemansrätten*. This division does not take into account the translation aspect, i.e. the difficulty of translation solutions in specific texts; both groups may contain complex *languarealia* (terms such as *fika*, *folkhemmet*, *miljonprogrammet*) or less complex (*surströmming*, *Poltava*) *languarealia* from a translational point of view.

The two examples we offer in the next section both represent precedent phenomena, referring to whole (discourse) situations and, within them, to other

linguarealia. The teacher can use this network to explain further contexts, to present a more holistic historical and political context, thus increasing not only the linguistic, but also the cultural competence of the student.

Ett svenskt snille as study object

The Swedish expression *ett snille* came up in a translation seminar with B2-level students in the article “Snillen byggde landet” from the newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, published on the 23rd of December 2000 (Ahnlund 2000), and led to a discussion surrounding the *linguarealia ett svenskt snille* (a Swedish genius). In Swedish the term is understood as Swedish quality, originating from *svenska snilleindustrier*. As this was a translation class, we communicated this *linguarealia* and associated facts with the instruments provided by translatology.

The first step was to resolve the translation of *ett svenskt snille* referring to the phenomenon *svenska snilleindustrier* as an expression for which there is no equivalent term in Slovak. The second step was to deal with examples of texts where this expression appears in the text as *linguarealia*, i.e., it is not used to explain facts, but to activate connotative meanings.

Behind the expression or the word *snilleindustri* lies the meaning of a symbol of Swedish identity creation in the 20th century – important Swedish entrepreneurs in the late 19th and early 20th century. Thus, if we want to translate the term *snilleindustri* into Slovak, we have to think about the concept that is hidden behind this term. Because “[t]he term is the linguistic expression, while the concept is what we mean when we use the term”⁶ (Institutet för språk och folkminnen 2021). The important thing is that the connection between a word (a sound or written image) and its referent happens through our imagination. Between our perception of a word (with the sense of hearing or sight) and the interpretation of this perception, our representation, a process of meaning takes place. The connection between this representation and phenomena in reality and abstract concepts arises through an act of reference (Cassirer 2003, 108).

Searching for a translation equivalent can be complicated, because languages are not symmetrical. They are different on a phonetic, morphological, syntactic, lexical and pragmatic level. The last two levels play an important role in the translation of realia. Although Slovak has both the term *snille* (génius)

⁶ “Termen är det språkliga uttrycket, medan begreppet är det vi menar när vi använder termen.” (Institutet för språk och folkminnen 2021, our translation).

and the term *industry* (priemysel), a counterpart does not exist. This means that a lacuna, a gap, is perceived at the lexical level.

We can conclude that in the source language, Slovak, there is no corresponding expression, and that the Slovak cultural context lacks the same realia that could be referred to. We can distinguish between the interlingual and the intertextual equivalence relationship (Kenny 2011). In the first type, the interlingual relationship, the comparison consists between two language systems, in the second between two text types or two concrete texts - one in the source language (here Swedish) and the other in the target language (here Slovak).

So far, we have been dealing with the first type of equivalence, the interlingual one. It may be fruitful to move on to concrete texts and co-texts. Considering the relationship between the source text and target text, Koller distinguishes five levels of equivalence: denotative, connotative, text normative, pragmatic and formal-aesthetic equivalence (Koller 2011). If we take a closer look at the text “Snillen byggde landet”, we can consider the terms *snille* and *snilleindustri* in this rather modern text which takes up the terms without explaining them to the intended reader. At first glance, we can already identify the problem at the denotative, connotative and pragmatic equivalence level. While the first level of equivalence refers to the extra-linguistic, i.e. to comparison at the denotative level, the second level is played out at the cultural and social level and the pragmatic one refers to the recipient. The expression is thus a challenge on all three of these levels; the search for an adequate translation solution is at the same time a conscious work with both the lexical and discourse levels.

Homework:

1. Search for the word *snille* in the Swedish Academy Dictionary.
2. Go to the Swedish Academy website, discuss the expression *Snille och smak* and its historical context.
3. Discuss the expression *industrisnillen*.
4. Read the text “Snillen byggde landet” by Lars Ahnland from Svenska dagbladet (2000-12-23). Find all the sentences where *snille* is used in the text. Try to translate the expressions as well as whole sentences in which they are found.

The term *snilleindustri* in the text being studied refers both to a Swedish phenomenon of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also functions as a complex *linguarealia* in today's Swedish vocabulary. A final challenge is related

to this: Discuss how the term *snilleindustri* is also used in connection with digitalisation (as an example Benner 2018, online).

The Swedish concept of *miljonprogrammet* as study object

During the spring semester of 2022, we decided to work with the word *miljonprogrammet*, a political project with the goal to build a million new housing facilities in ten years in Sweden between 1965 and 1975. There were several reasons for why this particular word was chosen. One reason was the fact that it would work as a continuation of another theme we'd discussed during the autumn – the Swedish countryside. From the countryside to the city. On top of that, we'd discovered that the students had difficulties understanding the word *förort* (suburb), as this word has many different connotations the students could not transfer to a Slovak context. *Miljonprogrammet* would thus be of help in order to better understand also *förort* in a Swedish context. Both *miljonprogrammet* and *förort* are interesting in that they convey many different connotations for different people. Even if they can be explained very briefly, as we've just done, the explanations don't tell us everything that is implied if you say that you grew up in a *miljonprogramsområde*, for example. Another reason for why the word is suitable to investigate is that it gives the students a chance to learn more about Sweden's contemporary history and welfare society.

The main idea was for the students to read different articles and other genres all containing the word *miljonprogrammet* in order to get a better understanding of how the word is used, and which connotations the word creates in Swedish. The students study interpretation and translation from Swedish to Slovak and had, at the beginning of the semester, studied Swedish for 5 semesters. Their proficiency level of Swedish was somewhere between B1 and B2 according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR). The theme was part of the optional course Conversation in Swedish 2, and the theme was one of three covered throughout the semester. The theme was discussed during 4 classes of 90 minutes and was evaluated by a written assignment. Below follows a detailed description and analysis of how the project was carried out.

The political discourse surrounding *miljonprogrammet*

For the first encounter with the word *miljonprogrammet*, the students read a text published on the website Stockholmskällan, a historical resource site

managed by the City of Stockholm. Stockholmskällan is a collaboration between the Stockholm City Archives, the Stockholm City Museum, the Medieval Museum, the Stockholm City Library and the Stockholm Education Administration. The website contains information and historical sources to several different themes and the students read the text “Miljonprogrammet” (Stockholms stad, n.d.). The text briefly explains the origin of the word and the goal and visions of the political project of building a million new housing facilities. The text worked as an introduction to the theme since it explains the origin of the word, but also because the text contains several words related to different types of neighborhoods and city planning. The students were told to read the text before class, and during the class we discussed both the content of the text and spoke about the meaning of the new words the students had come across. The students were asked if they knew of any similar housing project which had taken place also in Slovakia, but they did not know of any such housing project.

Having read and discussed the text, we watched the movie *Historien om Bergsjön Centrum och Kortedala Torg – Göteborgslokaler 25 år*, a commercial movie produced by Göteborgslokaler (2021), a real estate company owned by the city of Gothenburg. The movie presents the history of the neighborhoods Bergsjön and Kortedala and, being a commercial movie, it mentions the reconstructions that have been made in the areas. The movie shows the neighborhoods by using calm music and bright, positive photos. The areas are described as being a realization of the political vision of *folkhemmet*, a word introduced by Per Albin Hansson, the leader of the Social democratic party, in 1928. The movie, in many ways, repeats the information given in the text from Stockholmskällan, even if Kortedala and Bergsjön anticipate *miljonprogrammet* by some ten years. The movie was used as a simplified version of the information introduced in the text, and the students were given the opportunity to listen to spoken Swedish and see pictures of what was described.

The last text dealing with *miljonprogrammet* in a political context was a text written by Heidi Avellan (2013) and published in the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenskan* in 2013. Although the language in the article itself did not cause any problem for the students, the article is filled with references to ongoing political debates regarding suburbs, exclusion and immigration. This made the text difficult to understand for the students, which is why we chose individual paragraphs from the text to discuss which underlying discussion or debate the paragraph made reference to. What’s especially interesting when studying *miljonprogrammet* is the fact that Avellan writes: “Simply put, the only common denominator between the different suburbs is that they are all areas built during *miljonprogrammet* and that they only receive public interest outside of their own borders when they are set on fire and stones are thrown”

(Avellan, 2013)⁷. The images portrayed by Avellan of the areas built during *miljonprogrammet* are fundamentally different from the information we received in the text from Stockholmskällan and the commercial from Göteborgslokaler. Together with the students, we concluded that there seem to be two opposing images of the areas built during *miljonprogrammet*: one image talks about *miljonprogrammet* as a democratizing project with cheap housing easily accessible in the bigger cities – the other image talks about negative stereotypes and high crime rates.

***Miljonprogrammet* in a popular cultural discourse**

In order to investigate how *miljonprogrammet* and adjacent concepts are described in Swedish popular culture, we chose three different texts from three different media, which all deal with the theme: the novel *ABC-staden* by Måns Wadensjö (2011), the short documentary movie *Drömmar i nordost* (Hjortén and Jönsson, 2013) and the song *Bredäng centrum* by Doktor Kosmos (2002).

The novel *ABC-staden* (Wadensjö, 2011) tells the story of how the neighborhood Vällingby in Stockholm was built. This was before *miljonprogrammet* was introduced, but the neighborhood shares many of the features typical also for neighborhoods built during *miljonprogrammet*. Approximately 10 pages were chosen for the students to read before class, together with questions to be discussed during class. The aim of the questions were to place the construction of Vällingby in a historical context, to pinpoint the goal and visions of the new neighborhood, and how the author of the book expresses his view on how well these visions and dreams were fulfilled. Is the image of Vällingby given in the book a negative or a positive one?

We continued by listening to the song *Bredäng centrum* by Doktor Kosmos (2002). Having discussed difficult words and new phrases in the lyrics of the song, the students were asked to come up with three words that describe the image given of Bredäng centrum and *miljonprogrammet*, and explain why they had chosen those words.

The movie *Drömmar i nordost* (Hjortén and Jönsson, 2013) narrates the story of suburbs in Gothenburg. By interviews with people living in the northeast of Gothenburg, we understand their ambitions, dreams and feelings toward the neighborhoods in which they grew up. Simultaneously, we get to know about the housing projects in the areas and the visions surrounding the

⁷ “Enkelt uttryckt är en gemensam nämnare att ‘förorterna’ är miljonprogramsområden och att de bara väcker intresse utanför sina egna gränser när det brinner och stenarna viner.” (Avellan, 2013, our translation).

project at the time of the construction. We learn that the apartments are all designed to be functional for a middle-class family, with lots of green areas between the buildings for the kids to play in. The neighborhoods built in the middle of the woods surrounding Gothenburg are compared to Brasilia, the capital of Brazil built during the 1960's. The apartments were considered to be hypermodern and supposed to solve the problems with cramped housing accommodation. At the same time as the movie shows the problems related to the neighborhoods, it also manages to show a certain pride in living there. One of the characters expresses that she has learnt a lot by living in a multicultural neighborhood, and that she knows things other habitants in Gothenburg might not know, precisely because of her upbringing in Hjällbo. The task given to the students was to come up with as many contrasting pairs as possible in the 14 minutes long movie. They came up with pairs such as: old – new; green nature – gray concrete; nature – city; built for Swedes – inhabited by (second generation) immigrants; industry – nature; forgotten – present; home – away and idea – reality. These contrasts were later on used as inspiration for when the students were to write their texts which would serve as the examination of the course.

***Miljonprogrammet* in a scientific discourse**

To show a more scientific approach to *miljonprogrammet*, the students were to read 18 pages from the introduction and summary of the book *Förorten* by Peter Esaiasson (2020). The book is built on the opinions and experiences the author collected from people living in Bergsjön and Hjällbo, two suburban areas built as a part of *miljonprogrammet*. After conducting the research, Esaiasson summed up what he had seen in 19 bullet points. The introduction explains how the survey was done, why these specific areas were chosen (and how they are categorized using different terms) and quickly summarizes what the 19 bullet points are. The material was chosen to provide the students with another way of how to conduct research – by working with surveys. Furthermore, the book served the purpose of giving us a view coming directly from the people living in an area built during *miljonprogrammet*. Although the author himself does not live there, the basis of his conclusions comes from the opinions of the people themselves, as opposed to medial representations, as had been the case in the other text the students met. The book furthermore gave the students another description of how the words *förort* and *miljonprogrammet* coincide, and when they don't:

There is no generally accepted clarification of the areas that belong to the suburb in the meaning referred to in this book. It's more complicated than to assume that the suburbs are areas built during miljonprogrammet with high-rise buildings. Even though almost every suburb was built during miljonprogrammet, there are several areas built during miljonprogrammet which would not be considered suburbs. (Esaiasson, 2020,15)⁸

The assignment for the students was to read the 19 bullet points and pick out two or three of them which caught their attention. These bullet points were later on discussed in class from both an understanding point of view – what does the text say about it – and a comparative point of view – could this be said also about one or more areas in Slovakia?

Another interesting side to the book is that it compares the visited suburbs to the rest of society, or at least to an idea of how the rest of Sweden is organized and constructed. This caused many interesting discussions on how Sweden in general is perceived, and whether the students perceive Slovakia to be similar or not. To mention one example, Esaiasson (2020) concludes that the supposed lack of trust towards the authorities could not be seen in his survey. The level of trust towards other individuals, however, was lower than in other surveys done in other areas of Gothenburg and Sweden. This caused a discussion in class whether or not the students themselves trust the authorities and other individuals in Slovakia, and how their perception of Slovakia is in this regard.

How to evaluate critical languacultural competences?

In order to evaluate and grade the students' knowledge and critical languacultural competences, we chose to let the students write a text which would fit as a column in a newspaper. There were several reasons for why this form of examination was chosen. First of all, the competence in writing different types of texts had been highlighted as one area in which the students needed practice. Furthermore, a column or a chronicle has the benefit that it is supposed to have a personal touch, which is why the students would have the chance to focus on intercultural communication. In one way or another they have to relate the situation in Sweden to a situation in which they have found themselves. The assignment given to the students was to write a column using one

⁸ “Det finns ingen allmänt accepterad precisering av vilka områden som är förorter i den mening som avses här. Det är svårare än att utgå från miljonprogramsområden med höghusbebyggelse. Även om så gott som samtliga förorter är miljonprogramsområden finns det många miljonprogramsområden som inte är förorter” (Esaiasson, 2020, 15, our translation).

or more of the different contrasts we had found surrounding *miljonprogrammet* in the texts we'd worked with.

There was no need to make explicit reference to the studied texts, as we as teachers had seen that the students understood the texts when discussing them in class. Nor was the course itself intended to be theoretical, but rather to have an informal communicative approach. What the assignment did was to force the student to transfer or translate what they had learnt from the Swedish examples to a Slovak context.

All of the students chose to write about different topics, and their topics dealt with themes such as fighting stereotypes that exists between city and countryside, the role of nature in the city, old architecture in a new era, tourists versus inhabitants in the city – who has priority, and identity changes when moving from a small town to a big city.

Although they received different grades depending on linguistic aspects in the texts and on how well their texts met the criteria of how a column should be constructed, all of the students, it turned out, managed to transfer one or several of the contrasting images surrounding *miljonprogrammet* to a Slovak context.

Conclusions

Having worked with the two languacultural concepts of *snilleindustrin* and *miljonprogrammet*, we could see that the students gained a deeper understanding of the concepts. Not only of the meaning of the words, but also of how these concepts and words were created and their different use in different discourses. This emphasized the awareness that languages don't exist in a 1 to 1 relation with each other. Furthermore, the students gained experience in investigating potential lacunas and conducting critical discourse analysis. By having to translate the concepts into Slovak, both in the traditional way of translating (word by word, sentence by sentence) and in the wider sense (discussion topics around *miljonprogrammet* into a Slovak context), the students were forced to work with an intercultural perspective, leading to critical languacultural awareness. This type of learning uses the concept of *languaculture* by not treating language and culture as different areas, but instead working with words and concepts which in themselves are cultural representations.

It is our hope that this article will help facilitate an intercultural education in critical languacultural awareness, and that analytical tools from translatology will be seen as cornerstones in the Modern Language Classroom.

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APPENDIX: MATERIAL USED IN CLASS

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CURRENT MEDIA PERSPECTIVES ON THE NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE. NORWEGIAN, *NORSKLISH* OR BETTER ENGLISH?

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ABSTRACT. *Current media perspectives on the Norwegian language. Norwegian, norsklisch or better English?* The present paper explores the current situation of the English language used in Norway, as rendered by different articles published by *Aftenposten*, a Norwegian newspaper of significant circulation. The countries' English language skills are annually tested, and according to the 2022 Education First's English Proficiency Index, Norway is ranked number four in the world, with very high skills. Nowadays, English is used in schools, at higher education institutions, at work, but English words are more and more used in Norwegian in everyday life especially by teenagers. This leads to a mixture of English and Norwegian known as *norsklisch*. The newspaper articles present various opinions about the level of English proficiency required in different fields, the influence of *norsklisch* on the language of youth, and even the need for Norwegians to improve their English language skills. The influence of the English language on the speech of different generations in Norway varies, as each generation has had different exposure and experiences with this language. Norwegians are moreover exposed to a wide variety of language variants given the fact that they have two official written norms (Bokmål and Nynorsk) and quite many dialects, which are used

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in various aspects of the public life. Fields such as research, higher education, international business may be seen as threatened by the use of English mostly because there is a clear lack of terminology in Norwegian.

Keywords: *Norwegian language, norsklisch, bilingualism, Anglicization, media*

REZUMAT. *Perspective media actuale asupra limbii norvegiene. Norvegiană, norsklisch sau mai bine engleză?* Lucrarea de față examinează situația actuală a limbii engleze folosite în Norvegia, așa cum este redată de diferite articole publicate în *Aftenposten*, un ziar norvegian cu un tiraj semnificativ. Competențele de limbă engleză ale țărilor sunt testate anual și, conform indicelui de cunoaștere a limbii engleze din 2022, furnizat de Education First, Norvegia este clasată pe locul patru în lume, cu competențe foarte bune. În zilele noastre, limba engleză este folosită în școli, în instituțiile de învățământ superior, la locul de muncă, dar cuvinte englezești sunt din ce în ce mai folosite în norvegiană în viața de zi cu zi, în special de către adolescenți. Aceasta duce la un amestec de engleză și norvegiană cunoscut sub numele de *norsklisch*. Articolele de ziar prezintă diverse opinii despre nivelul de competențe de limbă engleză solicitat în diferite domenii, despre modul în care *norsklisch* influențează limbajul tinerilor și chiar despre nevoia norvegienilor de a-și îmbunătăți abilitățile de limbă engleză. Influența limbii engleze în vorbirea diferitelor generații din Norvegia variază, deoarece fiecare generație a fost expusă diferit și a avut experiențe diferite cu această limbă. Mai mult decât atât, norvegienii sunt expuși la o paletă largă de variante lingvistice dat fiind faptul că au două norme oficiale scrise (Bokmål și Nynorsk) și destul de multe dialecte, care sunt folosite în diferite aspecte ale vieții publice. Domenii precum cercetarea, învățământul superior, afacerile internaționale pot fi văzute ca amenințate de utilizarea limbii engleze, mai ales din cauza faptului că există o lipsă evidentă a terminologiei în limba norvegiană.

Cuvinte-cheie: *limba norvegiană, norsklisch, bilingualism, anglicizare, media*

Introduction

The countries' English language skills are annually tested by Education First² and according to the latest ranking (EF English Proficiency Index 2022), Norway occupies the fourth position, with very high skills. Top three includes the Netherlands, Singapore and Austria. A reason could be the fact that English

² Education First (EF) is an education company known for its language training, which has measured adult English proficiency on the basis of an online English test in 111 countries and regions.

has been a compulsory subject from the first grade since 1997 and nowadays it has “a unique position as 1st foreign language in Norway. Both by way of the education system and outside education (music, media etc.), it is the dominant ‘other language’” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2003-2004, 17). Most of the countries that have registered high scores are located in Europe and are countries with a high level of education.

In Norway significant resources are spent on education³, and children and teenagers seem to understand the importance of having a good command of the English language as a *lingua franca*. They are exposed to English not only at school, but also through music, movies, video games, or social media. Those who want to learn English well may also attend short-term or long-term study programs in English-speaking countries. This can include language courses, summer schools, or even Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programs that are taught entirely in English. In this way, students can improve their language skills quickly and effectively, in addition to getting opportunities for personal development, intercultural communication, and a global perspective.

In the article entitled “Why the Level of English in Your Country Is So Important”, Kaisa Schreck Danielsson states that “English skills matter because they give people access to a wider range of information, a more diverse, international network, and more job opportunities than ever before. They also matter at the national level because they can tell us a lot about a country’s level of innovation, competitiveness, and future prospects.” (Schreck Danielsson 2022).

Indeed, English is used in research, at schools and universities, at working places mainly in international companies, and although, nowadays Norwegian may be seen as threatened by the use of English in these fields, the Norwegian language is not in danger of disappearing. However, it has extensively changed over the past years. English words are, for instance, more and more used in Norwegian in everyday life especially by teenagers. This leads to a mixture of English and Norwegian known as *norsklisch*, and some people worry that there are too many English words in today’s language. There is even an academic interest in the way English influences Norwegian, in form of research projects, such as *Norsklisch – engelsk i norsk*, a project expected to end in August 2023 and developed at the University of Oslo by the Centre for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan.

Globalization has led to a need for bilingualism as a means of communication, but the discussion regarding bilingualism is quite complex. Colin Baker refers for instance to making a distinction between “individual

³ See for example the government expenditure on education in 2021, provided by Eurostat, with reference to Norway and other European countries: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_education.

bilingualism” and “societal bilingualism” (Baker 2001, 2), but also between “language ability” and “language use” (3) at an individual level. In her study *Bilingualism: The Situation in Norway*, Maria Asbjørnsen considers that “bilingualism enhances the development of many cognitive skills, including children’s attentional and executive control, cognitive flexibility and linguistic creativity” (Asbjørnsen 2013, 16) and that “bilingual children differentiate their two languages early on and share the same developmental path as their monolingual peers” (24). In fact, research has shown that children who grow up learning two languages simultaneously do not experience any confusion between the two languages or any delay in their language development. Bilingual children may have better problem-solving skills, improved memory, and greater cultural awareness. Moreover, they could switch between languages more easily and have a larger vocabulary overall.

When Norway struggled to become a nation in the 19th century, “it was considered important for the nation to have a pure language, and the language was seen as an expression of the people’s character, [whereas] a mixed language was seen as an identity in dissolution, but this is a delusion. There is no pure national language” (Langset 2014)⁴. At that time, a ‘pure’ language meant a national language that was free from foreign linguistic influences. This could support the idea of national identity and unity among Norwegians. However, there is no such thing as a ‘pure’ national language because languages change and evolve constantly through contact with other languages and through the influence of different social, historical, and cultural factors.

Media Perspectives

In the following, we analyse current perspectives regarding the use of the English language in Norway, as rendered by different articles published in the Norwegian newspaper of significant circulation *Aftenposten* after the year 2005. This year is chosen as it marks 100 years since Norway regained its state independence. *Aftenposten* is one of the oldest newspapers in Norway being in circulation since 1860, and it is considered a reliable and respected source of information.

The newspaper covers a wide range of topics related to language, including language policies, dialects, and the use of English in Norway, and can provide valuable insights into how language issues are perceived and discussed

⁴ “Da var det sett på som viktig at nasjonen hadde ett rent språk, og språket ble sett på som et uttrykk for folkets karakter, et blandet språk ble sett på som en identitet i oppløsning, men det er en forestilling. Et rent nasjonalspråk finnes ikke” (Langset 2014, my translation).

in the public sphere. By analysing articles published in *Aftenposten*, we can thus gain a better understanding of how language-related issues are discussed and viewed by different stakeholders.

Although English is the first foreign language taught in Norwegian schools and Norwegians are considered, as above-mentioned, to have good knowledge of English, there is a difference between the command of the oral language and that of the standard written one. In the article entitled “The Threat Coming from Norwenglish”⁵, the author Bernt Hagtvat is of the opinion that “the very idea that we Norwegians think we know English is the main obstacle to getting better at the language”⁶. He also writes that “a little modesty towards what is correct English and willingness to accept criticism are a good start” (Hagtvat 2005)⁷.

A similar opinion reappears in *Aftenposten* years later, when Tia Tiller writes the article “Stuttering English Does Not Hold! English Teaching Must Be Improved”⁸. The author states moreover that “the most spoken language in the world is not Mandarin, but poor English”⁹ and that “if there’s a language you should know, then that is English. And stuttering English does not hold”¹⁰. The author means that English should be a compulsory subject in the second high school year as well, since the compulsory character ceases after the first year. In high school there is not even an interest in choosing other subjects related to English such as English literature and culture. After the first high school year many students are not yet so good at English to be able to use it in a working environment. And English is chosen as a working language in many large companies with an international environment. “Therefore, your chances to get a job drop considerably if you are not good at English” (Tiller 2016)¹¹.

According to an *Aftenposten* article from 2013, Professor Glenn Ole Hellekjær from the University of Oslo considers that “students who are good at ‘TV English’ think they do not need to learn more. When they start further

⁵ “Trusselen fra norwenglish“ (my translation).

⁶ “Selve tanken at vi nordmenn tror vi kan engelsk, er det fremste hinderet for å bli bedre i språket” (Hagtvat 2005, my translation).

⁷ “Litt ydmykhet overfor hva som er korrekt engelsk og vilje til kritikk er en god begynnelse” (Hagtvat 2005, my translation).

⁸ “Stotrende engelsk holder ikke! Engelskundervisningen må forbedres” (my translation).

⁹ “Det språket som snakkes mest i verden er ikke mandarin, men dårlig engelsk” (Tiller 2016, my translation).

¹⁰ “Er det et språk du burde kunne, så er det engelsk. Og stotrende engelsk holder ikke” (Tiller 2016, my translation).

¹¹ “Dermed synker jobbutsiktene dine betraktelig hvis du ikke er god i engelsk” (Tiller 2016, my translation).

studies, many notice that they struggle to understand the bibliography, and this particularly affects those studying science” (Skogstrøm 2013)¹².

On the other hand, in an article published in 2010, using English is considered “entirely natural [...] Before English got into Norwegian in the form of certain loanwords. Now it comes as idiomatic expressions and full sentences, and it rubs out parts of the old mother tongue”¹³. Annjo Klungervik Greenall, associate professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim states that “to a large extent, a language consists of loanwords. From that point of view, all languages are hybrid. But word borrowing used to be much slower before than it is now, when we see significant differences from year to year” (Christiansen 2010)¹⁴.

Kristin Høiland writes about English words and expressions which have become quite popular and which come automatically in the teenagers’ everyday language. Provided examples include *Best friends forever*, *Ready, Random, Love and peace*, *Oh my god* etc. (Høiland 2015). As a result of watching American films, listening to songs in English on the Internet, reading English books and newspapers or playing computer games, teenagers are no longer aware of how much influence these may have on their writing and speaking. All the languages are dynamic and subject to constant changes, and teenagers bring their contribution to this development by the language used, for instance, while talking, chatting or playing.

“Norsklish’ Takes over the Youth Language”¹⁵ is the name of an article published by Kristine Grue Langset in 2014. Although widely used by teenagers all over the country, abbreviations such as *lol* (laugh out loud) and *yolo* (you only live once) appear on the list of expressions not fully understood by adults. Professor Bente Ailin Svendsen from the University of Oslo is of the opinion that “teenagers have always used their own linguistic expressions”¹⁶ and that “teenagers revolt through language”¹⁷ (Langset 2014). However, teachers do not seem so concerned about the use of this mixture of English and Norwegian, as they are about the correct use of Norwegian sounds such as /ç/ or /ʃ/.

¹² “elever som er flinke i ‘TV-engelsk’ tror de ikke har behov for å lære mer. Når de begynner på videre studier merker mange at de sliter med å forstå pensumlitteraturen, og dette rammer spesielt realistene” (Skogstrøm 2013, my translation).

¹³ “helt naturlig [...] Før kom engelsken inn i norsk i form av enkelte lånord. Nå kommer den like gjerne som faste uttrykk og hele setninger og visker ut deler av det gamle morsmålet” (Christiansen 2010, my translation).

¹⁴ “Et språk består i stor grad av lånord. På den måten er alle språk hybrider. Men innlån av ord skjedde tidligere mye langsommere enn nå, da vi ser store forskjeller fra år til år” (Christiansen 2010, my translation).

¹⁵ “«Norsklish» inntar ungdomsspråket” (my translation).

¹⁶ “Ungdom har alltid brukt sine egne språklige uttrykk” (Langset 2014, my translation).

¹⁷ “ungdom gjør opprør gjennom språk” (Langset 2014, my translation).

Norwegians, in general, are moreover exposed to a wide variety of language variants, given the fact that they have two official written norms (Bokmål - Book Language and Nynorsk - New Norwegian) and quite many dialects, which are used in various aspects of the public life. This linguistic diversity is seen as an advantage for language acquisition, as it exposes Norwegians to different language variants from an early age, and can make it easier for them to learn foreign languages later on.

Bokmål is the dominating written norm, being used by 85-90% of the population. Although it is in fact Norwegianized Danish, it contains loanwords from languages such as English, German, French etc. (Langset 2014). Nevertheless, both written variants, Nynorsk and Bokmål, are part of the school instruction and have been treated equally by law. According to the Language status, the 2012 Language policy status report of the Language Council, "the percentage of students using Nynorsk in schools has decreased from 34 per cent in 1944 to 14 per cent today. Many students with educational objectives in Nynorsk switch completely or partially to Bokmål later in life. In private, 8 per cent write Nynorsk, 5 per cent both Nynorsk and Bokmål" (Språkrådet 2012, 91)¹⁸. In the 2021 report there were about 550,000 Nynorsk users mentioned for the previous year (Språkrådet 2021, 10).

The 2017 Language report issued by the Language Council makes reference to the pressure exercised by the English language on Norwegian, including both Bokmål and Nynorsk.

For example, we see that Norwegian specialized terminology is minimally used in certain fields. In such subject areas, we are in danger of domain loss, and we are in danger of not being able to use Norwegian vocabulary any longer when we refer to these subjects. The lack of supply of Norwegian language standards to use in all aspects of the working and social life also leads to a weakened Norwegian specialized terminology and can have consequences such as insufficient efficiency, poorer profitability, a greater risk of errors and failing safety at the workplace¹⁹ (Språkrådet 2017, 12).

¹⁸ "Frå 34 prosent i 1944 er nynorskprosenten i skulen redusert til 14 prosent i dag. Mange elevar med nynorsk opplæringsmål skiftar heilt eller delvis til bokmål seinare i livet. Privat skriv 8 prosent nynorsk, 5 prosent både nynorsk og bokmål" (Språkrådet 2012, 91, my translation).

¹⁹ "Til dømes ser vi at norsk fagspråk på enkelte område er minimalt i bruk. På slike fagområde står vi i fare for at det skal skje domenetap, og at vi ikkje lenger har eit norsk ordforråd å bruke når vi kommuniserer om desse faga. Mangelen på tilfanget av norskspråklege standardar til bruk i alle delar av arbeids- og samfunnslivet fører òg til eit svekt norsk fagspråk og kan ha konsekvensar som mangelfull effektivitet, dårlegare lønsemd, større fare for feil og sviktande tryggleik på arbeidsplassen" (Språkrådet 2017, 12, my translation).

A conclusion is that “the lack of Norwegian terminology can quickly bring about full use of English” (Språkrådet 2017, 18)²⁰. An example is provided in an *Aftenposten* article from 2019, where the readers are given the following situation: a university student who has attended lectures in English and has read bibliography for an exam in English chooses to answer an exam assignment in Norwegian. Although being well prepared for the exam, the student cannot find equivalence in Norwegian for various terms. This happens because many students find it difficult to guess the Norwegian equivalent when the bibliography and the lectures are only in English. In the given situation, here is some of what the student wrote in her paper: “«Mechanistic *strukturer* bruker individual specialization *der* organic *strukturer* har joint specialization. Managers *evne* til å *velge* det *beste alternativet* i en decision-making process *svekkes* av bounded rationality, opportunistic behaviour *og* specific assets»” (Wetås 2019). Italics have been used for the words the student has written in Norwegian, so as the blending of Norwegian and English could become more obvious. Marita Kristiansen gave this example in some research done for the Language Council in 2019, which involved the language used in 250 Bachelor’s exam papers. As previously mentioned, the students under consideration had had lectures and had read bibliography in English, and at the exam they could write in either English or Norwegian. According to the article, 75% of the students wrote in Norwegian, and 33% of those who chose Norwegian, made use of quite many English specialized terms in their answers. Since the students must often find Norwegian equivalents by themselves, this could turn quite frustrating for them because many times they do not know the specialized terminology in Norwegian and do not have access to it. Norwegian terminology will also be useful when the students take up work and communicate with other Norwegian speaking people (Språkrådet 2017, 12). But unfortunately, in some fields there are hardly any written sources containing the necessary terms in the mother tongue. That is why, in general, the bibliography includes English titles and Norwegian alternatives if there are any (Brandt and Schwach 2005).

In the above-mentioned article from 2010, reference is made to several forms of the English influence on the Norwegian language: domain takeover, when bibliography and lectures are in English or when the specialized terminology is in English and not in Norwegian; code-switching, referring to loan of full phrases or sentences in English, as a consequence of following for instance certain trendsetters; loan translation, which is a direct translation of idiomatic expressions from English into Norwegian, as we may find in online newspapers (Christiansen 2010).

²⁰ “Mangel på norsk terminologi kan fort utløyse full bruk av engelsk” (Språkrådet 2017, 18, my translation).

English as a teaching language had been more and more used first and foremost in Master's studies at Norwegian institutions preoccupied by internationalization, but its use at a Bachelor's level has started to increase over the past years. According to an article from 2009 "27 per cent of Master's students in Norway attend English-language programs [and] 85 per cent of the students in these study programs have Norwegian citizenship"²¹. Sylfest Lomheim, former director of the Norwegian Language Council from 2003 to 2010, stated: "I do not want to seem to oppose the use of English. [...] If there were many of these students who did research or worked internationally, it would have been a different matter. But 95 per cent work in Norway when they are done with their education. Therefore, it becomes pointless" (Dons 2009)²².

This paradox regarding the difference between the study language and the working language is also pointed out in an earlier article from 2005: "On the one hand, students and professionals need to learn an English specialized terminology. On the other hand, professionals must work with non-professionals, and they must be prepared to pass on their skills and competence to patients, students, clients and the general public."²³ Several reasons for the use of English instead of Norwegian in higher education are provided:

Teaching shall qualify for studies as part of an exchange program abroad, another reason can be that the teacher does not master any Scandinavian languages. A third reason is closely related to the objectives for the internationalization of the Norwegian higher education and partially for the coordination of the degree system in Europe (the Bologna process). Norway wants to attract foreign students, and today, they are rarely expected to learn Norwegian (Brandt and Schwach 2005)²⁴.

²¹ "27 prosent av masterstudentene i Norge går på engelskspråklige programmer [...] 85 prosent av studentene på disse studieprogrammene, har norsk statsborgerskap" (Dons 2009, my translation).

²² "Jeg vil ikke fremstå som motstander av bruk av engelsk. [...] Hvis det var slik at mange av disse studentene skulle forske eller jobbe internasjonalt, hadde det vært en annen sak. Men 95 prosent jobber jo i Norge når de er ferdig med utdanningen sin. Derfor blir det meningsløst" (Dons 2009, my translation).

²³ "På den ene siden har studenter og yrkesutøvere behov for å lære et engelsk fagspråk [...] På den andre siden skal yrkesutøvere arbeide sammen med ikke-fagpersoner, og de må gjøres i stand til å formidle sine ferdigheter og kompetanse til pasienter, elever, kunder og til almenheten" (Brandt and Schwach 2005, my translation).

²⁴ "Opplæringen skal kvalifisere til studier som del av et utvekslingsprogram i utlandet, en annen grunn kan være at underviseren behersker ingen skandinaviske språk. En tredje grunn henger nært sammen med mål for internasjonalisering av norsk høyere utdanning og delvis samordningen av gradssystemet i Europa (Bologna-prosessen). Norge ønsker å tiltrekke seg utenlandske studenter. I dag forventes det sjelden at de skal lære seg norsk" (Brandt and Schwach 2005, my translation).

The findings of the Education First's English Proficiency Index from 2022 show, among others, that men have improved their English scores to such an extent that they have surpassed women "in every region of the world and in two-thirds of the countries surveyed, although in some cases those gaps are small. English proficiency has risen significantly among all cohorts over 25 since 2015, however proficiency among the youngest cohort is declining" (Schreck Danielsson 2022).

From an early age, children in Norway, just like children in many other countries, have access to the new media and begin to use English in different online resources or by playing computer games. That is why there is a concern for the use of high quality Norwegian content in the media. The Norwegian TV and radio channel *NRK Super*, which is aimed at children, is seen as playing an important role from this point of view. As far as the use of English in advertising is concerned, one main finding of the Norwegian Language Council is that "the population is more positive about the use of English in advertising nowadays than in the past. This applies especially to the young urban population. [...] Although on the whole, Norwegian is strong in Norway, there is a tendency for English to have an increasing status and use in several areas"²⁵ (Språkrådet 2017, 13).

From an *Aftenposten* article published in 2019 we learn that the percentage of students who will mainly use the Norwegian language in the working field in Norway after graduation is about 90. This shows the important role played by universities and university colleges, which have to help the students acquire the necessary specialized terminology in Norwegian. The same idea is stressed by the Language Council. "The institutions must ensure that the Norwegian specialized terminology is developed in correlation with the subjects, and they must ensure that the Norwegian specialized terminology is used both in textbooks and in other types of written dissemination. Otherwise, we risk that more and more subjects cannot be taught in Norwegian"²⁶ (Wetås 2019).

Since Norwegian is widely used in the working and economic fields, the principle "use Norwegian when you can and English when you have to" (Språkrådet 2017, 15) should apply²⁷. There is a clear need for terminology

²⁵ "befolkninga er meir positiv til engelsk i reklame no enn tidlegare. Dette gjeld særleg den unge befolkninga i byane. [...] Sjølv om norsk i hovudsak står sterkt i Noreg, er det på fleire område tendensar til at engelsk har aukande status og bruk" (Språkrådet 2017, 13, my translation).

²⁶ "Institusjonene må se til at det norske fagspråket blir utviklet i takt med fagene, og de må se til at norsk fagspråk blir brukt både i lærebøker og i annen skriftlig formidling. Hvis ikke risikerer vi at stadig flere fag ikke kan formidles på norsk" (Wetås 2019, my translation).

²⁷ "norsk når du kan og engelsk når du må" (Språkrådet 2017, 15, my translation).

clarifications and for Norwegian language instruction in these fields even if English is used in various international companies.

An interesting aspect is that nowadays Norwegians also speak English with the Danes although Norwegian and Danish are historically related languages. In an *Aftenposten* article from 2019 Joacim Lund writes that “one out of three young Norwegians now speaks English with the Danes. [...] I think it’s because [...] it is hopeless for Danes to understand Norwegian when they do not even understand Danish” (Lund 2019)²⁸.

Conclusions

Although rather small compared to other European languages, Norwegian has two written forms and a wide variety of dialects. The general research on bilingualism and multilingualism suggests that exposure to multiple language variants can be beneficial for cognitive development. It is a fact that the Norwegians’ high English skills have been proved throughout the years in different rankings measuring English proficiency. But some argue that Norwegians need, on the contrary, to improve their English language skills. For instance, the listening skills suffered after the children’s and youth programs were increasingly dubbed. Moreover, the level of writing skills got lower given the number of abbreviations used by teenagers, which led to elementary errors in the students’ writing, and to the students’ being unaware of these deficiencies.

The influence of English on the speech of different generations in Norway reflects the changing role of English in Norwegian society. While previous generations may have regarded English primarily as a foreign language they learned in school, younger generations have grown up in a world where English is used as a *lingua franca*. From an early age, children are exposed to English due to English-language movies, music, or computer games. English is used not only consciously, but also unconsciously in oral and written situations. Quite often a mixture of Norwegian and English is preferred especially by the young people. Social media platforms allow people to connect with English speakers and access a wide range of English-language content. A ‘pure’ national language cannot exist in a globalized world. But there are still debates regarding the need for using the mother tongue to fully understand what is learnt or what is transmitted. Even if the Language Council tries to Norwegianize some of the English words, there are others that are borrowed in the original form.

²⁸ “1 av 3 unge nordmenn snakker nå engelsk med dansker. [...] Jeg tror det skyldes [...] at det er håpløst for dansker å forstå norsk når de ikke engang forstår dansk” (Lund 2019, my translation).

While high school students may only study English for one year, some may still achieve a high level of proficiency through individual study and practice outside of school. University students who use English for academic purposes are often highly proficient in this language. They may also have studied in English-speaking countries, and their exposure to English has been more extensive than that of previous generations. As a result, their use of English is often more nuanced and refined.

English seems to gain ground in the fields of international economic life, business, oil industry, research and higher education, where there is often a lack of terminology in Norwegian, which favours the use of English. However, although Norwegian has undergone significant changes over the past years, the language is not threatened to die out. It is still the mother tongue of the majority and is still predominant in society. Moreover, the school system in Norway gives importance to the mother tongue education.

So as to research the current situation of the English language in Norway, we have used articles published in the daily newspaper *Aftenposten* after 2005. We consider that its long-standing reputation for quality and broad readership make it a useful information source for those who want to understand how Norwegian language-related issues are perceived and debated.

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JAN ERIK VOLD'S CONCRETE POEMS: A WAY TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' CREATIVITY AND GRAMMAR SKILLS IN NORWEGIAN

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ABSTRACT. *Jan Erik Vold's Concrete Poems: A Way to Enhance Students' Creativity and Grammar Skills in Norwegian.* The current paper aims to present the didactic use of the Norwegian concrete poems. The concept of concrete poetry will be approached through Jan Erik Vold's literary perspective as the promoter of concretism in Norway. In order to prove the effectiveness of these poems in the teaching process, a survey was conducted including a questionnaire with closed-ended and open-ended questions. The respondents were 1st- and 2nd-year students of BA in Norwegian language and literature and a group of 3rd-year students from The Centre for Language Industries, enrolled at the Faculty of Letters, at Babeş-Bolyai University. This research aimed at the effectiveness of using Vold's concrete poems when teaching specific language structures in Norwegian. Thus, a survey was done at the end of one semester of experiment when I used Jan Erik Vold's concrete poems for my students during my Norwegian language courses and seminars. The results showed that especially during these seminars students read, analyse and design concrete poems in Norwegian, including grammatical and typographical poems, ready-mades, tongue twisters and nursery-rhymes-like poems, in order to better understand and to revise a specific grammatical, syntactic or lexical structure in Norwegian.

Keywords: *Norwegian language, concrete poems, Jan Erik Vold, visual poem, grammatical poem*

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REZUMAT. Poeziile concretiste ale lui Jan Erik Vold: O modalitate de a îmbunătăți creativitatea și competențele gramaticale ale studenților în limba norvegiană. Lucrarea de față își propune să prezinte folosirea în scop didactic a poeziilor concretiste norvegiene. Conceptul de poezie concretistă va fi prezentat prin prisma perspectivei literare pe care o are Jan Erik Vold ca promotor al concretismului în Norvegia. Pentru a dovedi eficacitatea acestor poezii în procesul de predare, am realizat un chestionar format din întrebări cu răspunsuri închise și deschise. Respondenții sunt studenți din anul I și anul al II-lea de studiu, de la Specializarea de limbă și literatură norvegiană, nivel licență și studenți din anul al III-lea de studiu de la Centru pentru Industriile Limbii înscrisi la Facultatea de Litere din cadrul Universității Babeș-Bolyai. Scopul acestui studiu este de a sublinia eficacitatea folosirii poeziilor concretiste ale lui Vold în procesul predării limbii norvegiene. Astfel, la finalul semestrului în care am folosit poeziile concretiste ale lui Jan Erik Vold la nivel de experiment, am realizat un chestionar pentru studenții mei de la cursurile și seminarele de limbă norvegiană. Rezultatele au arătat că cel mai adesea în timpul acestor seminare studenții citesc, analizează și compun poezii concretiste în limba norvegiană, de tipul poeziilor tipografice și gramaticale, *ready-made*, *tongue twiters* și versuri cu caracter ludic pentru a aprofunda și a recapitula o anumită structură gramaticală, sintactică sau lexicală în limba norvegiană.

Cuvinte-cheie: *limba norvegiană, poezii concretiste, Jan Erik Vold, poezia vizuală, poezia gramaticală*

Introduction

The use of poetry can be of great importance for the students who learn a foreign language. The present paper aims to underline the didactic use of Jan Erik Vold's concrete poems during the Norwegian language courses and seminars and the students' motivation and willingness to use these poems as a learning tool in order to better understand specific grammatical, lexical and syntactic Norwegian structures. I used these poems during the Morphology and Lexicology seminars as an experiment aiming to provide support for our students to practise and to better understand the grammatical and lexical structures and to underline that Vold's poems are an important material in teaching grammar not only literature. In this sense, his grammatical and visual poems, along with tongue twisters, were very often used by the students as models in the process of creating themselves such poems related to specific grammatical structures taught during the Morphology seminar (see the Appendix).

The present paper consists of two main parts which begin with a theoretical background related to the concept of concrete poetry as it is

presented by Jan Erik Vold (b. 1939), the Norwegian contemporary poet, essayist and performer. The second section of this paper presents an in-depth interpretation of the results from a survey which aimed to underline the effectiveness of using concrete poems as a didactic resource in the process of teaching Norwegian as a second language. The respondents were first-year and second-year students who studied Norwegian language and literature at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, the Faculty of Letters of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and a small group of third-year students who studied Norwegian as D Language within The Centre for Language Industries² at the same faculty. The idea of this survey came to my mind after I taught the seminar of Norwegian Morphology to my first-year students.

It is worth mentioning that Jan Erik Vold's poems are part of the syllabus for all the students who study Norwegian language and literature at our department. For instance, first-year students are taught about Jan Erik Vold during their course of Scandinavian Culture and Civilisation, while second-year students translate Vold's poems during their Literary Translations course and seminar and our third-year students translate and analyse poems at their course and seminar of Semantic Analysis and Translation. One of the reasons why Vold is included in the curriculum is because he, along with other writers, is part of the Norwegian literary canon, being a representative poet for the Norwegian lyric Modernism of the 1960s. While reading his poems, built upon the two concepts, *konkretisme* (*concretism*) and *nyenkelheten* (*the new simplicity*), often set to jazz and blues, the reader has a better understanding of the world. In other words, his poems "turn towards the real world, and it wants us to enjoy the happiness given by things around us" (Wærp 2008, 304)³. Thus, with respect to the syllabus, Vold's poems are used as a didactic resource in teaching literary translations and Norwegian Modern literature.

According to Stephen Dunning, "teaching poetry is that poetry tends to be richer, linguistically, than any other genre. Verse may help students see something of the possibilities of language" (1966, 158). Asking students to create grammatical concrete poems as a practical exercise to revise the pronoun and the adjective, was at the same time useful and engaging. The fact that the students became an active part in the teaching process is significant and the students "learn language through the expansion of [their] experience with a large human reality" (Hess 2003, 20). On the other hand, the active implication

² The students enrolled at the Centre for Language Industries study 6 hours per week of Norwegian language for six semesters. These students are enrolled at the Department of Applied Modern Languages, at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University.

³ "vender seg mot det foreliggende, og vil ha oss med på denne gleden over tingene rundt oss" (Wærp 2008, 304, my translation).

of the reader, imagination and life experience are three crucial elements “to complement the text and to give it shape” (Spooner 1986, 272). In addition, it is not always an easy task to read and analyse a poem, especially when it comes to concrete poems. It is also a difficult task for students to make grammatical poems when referring especially to the correctness of the parts of speech used (Ainy 2008).

There has always been a strong connection between literature and language. For instance, when translating different Norwegian literary texts (e.g. novels, short stories, poems etc.), the students develop both their literary and language competences. In this sense, the students must possess detailed knowledge of certain rules and grammar aspects in the target language, in our case, Norwegian. For instance, Collie & Slater in their volume *Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities* stated that “from the teacher’s point of view, literature, which speaks to the heart as much as to the mind, provides material with some emotional colour, that can make fuller contact with the learner’s own life, [...]” (1987, 2). In other words, a literary text might be used in order to put into practice students’ knowledge of the foreign language, thus enriching “the context in which individual lexical or syntactic items are made more memorable” (5). Therefore, in the process of a second language acquisition, the role of the literary texts can be of great importance and language learning process can be effective “because of the personal involvement it fosters in readers” (5).

On the one hand, learning a foreign language through literature can become a pleasant process especially if the students identify themselves with the feelings the poems transmit. On the other hand, Duff and Maley (1990, 8-10) emphasise the idea that when analysing a poem, the language learners are given the possibility to interpret it from various perspectives, thus giving their own version. “Students of literature will, we hope, become more creative and adventurous as they begin to appreciate the richness and variety of the language they are trying to master and begin to use some of that potential themselves” (Collie and Slater 1987, 5).

In the volume entitled *Literature and Language Learning in the EFL [English for Foreign Learners] Classroom*, in the essay entitled “Translation of Japanese Poems into English: Literature in the First Language as a Motive to Communicate in a Second Language” signed by Kiyoko Sakamoto, it is stated that “the literary texts in L1 can stimulate students to communicate in L2. [...] The students also became more aware of both the Japanese and English languages, realizing the challenge and fun of bridging the linguistic and cultural differences” (2015, 209). Speaking skills along with reading skills can be also developed through literary texts. This idea is also emphasised in the article “The

Role of Literature in Foreign Language Learning”, where the author stated that by reading literature the students can achieve the higher level of foreign language proficiency and “promote cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly globalized society” (Nasu 2015, 245). In the article “Teaching Language Through Literature: *The Waste Land* in the ESL Classroom”, Lach Agustín Pilar strengthened the idea that the study of poems has as target a foreign language acquisition and “not only literary competences can be developed, but also lexical, morphosyntactic and social- communicative competence” (2007, 16). In this sense, Jan Erik Vold’s poems encapsulate emotions, feelings, memories with friends, irony, playful thoughts, in other words, the simplicity and the beauty of Norwegian life.

The present paper is based on the following research questions:

1. To what extent can Jan Erik Vold’s concrete poems (grammatical/ typographical/nursery rhymes/ tongue twisters etc.) enhance students’ Norwegian language skills and knowledge?
2. How do the students utter their motivation and engagement about using and creating their own concrete poems made of specific grammatical/ lexical/ syntactic structures during Norwegian language seminars?

Jan Erik Vold’s Concrete Poems

The concept of concretism (*konkretisme*) came to Norway through Jan Erik Vold’s experimental poems from the 1960s. He wrote grammatical and typographical concrete poems, tongue twisters, ready-mades and nursery-rhymes-like poems. He made his literary debut in 1965 with the volume *mellom speil og speil* (*Between Mirror and Mirror*) where he also published several typographical poems having different forms (e.g., an hourglass, a square, yin and yang, a cross etc.). Volume *blikket* (*The Gaze*) published in 1966 represents his breakthrough in the matter of Norwegian experimental literature, being made of only five words, (*blikket* – the gaze, *du* – you, *fanger* – catch, *ikke* – no, *meg* – me) arranged in different order, most of the times without preserving a logic and syntactic structure. This volume is rather related to music, in this case, the rhythmical dimension being a prominent feature. “The change of tempo that resembles the changing of musical volume, sometimes higher, sometimes lower, may be also associated with the sound of drums and the drumbeat manner of the drummer” (Răduț 2018, 141). However, The English Professor Herman Rapaport stated that “the sound poem, therefore, is very much like a foreign language whose sense we grasp through its sounds, even though we

would be at loss if someone actually required us to denote what was being communicated” (125). Moreover, in the beginning of one of the articles entitled “Om kunst og konkret poesi. Tre fragmenter” (“About Art and Concrete Poetry. Three Paragraphs”), Vold states the idea that a concrete poetry is made of sounds and visual features: “A spade is a spade and chair is chair but not only chair. *Chair* is also the word *chair*, composed of sounds that make the word pronunciation and letters that give the word spelling” (71, own translation)⁴. This idea is also strengthened by Mary Ellen Solt in her book entitled *Concrete Poetry: A World View*: “it is certain that words are symbols, but there is no reason why poetry couldn’t be experienced and created on the basis of language as concrete material” (75). *Kykelipi*, published in 1969, is another emblematic volume of concrete poems which consists of figurative poems, grammatical poems, nursery rhymes, tongue twisters and ready-mades. Poem “Bølge” can be of great use for our students during the Morphology seminar, since it is made of adverbs, adjectives, pronouns and verbs. “The reader can easily see that the poet attempted to create a wave-shape poem by unfolding the words on the page. In a manner reminiscent of traditional romantic poems, the point the poet wants to make relative to this poem is to bring before the readers the idea of the passage of time” (147). Another poem which can be used as a teaching resource for our students is the one entitled “Uselvstendige verb” (“Copulative Verbs”): “be/ become/ be called/ think/ and be called”⁵ (Vold 1969, 74). “Consequently, the poet wants to emphasise the idea that grammar can be taught through poetry, and thus become more interesting and sometimes funny” (Solt 1970, 157).

Therefore, by using these concrete poems during my grammar seminar I discovered that these three volumes consist of representative concrete poems which can be used as didactic materials for Norwegian practical courses and even for Norwegian literature and language courses and seminars. Moreover, they enhance students’ creativity, together with their grammar and vocabulary skills in Norwegian. By studying and analysing Vold’s poems, our students use these poems as a tool to enrich their vocabulary and learn Norwegian language.

Research methodology and participants

With respect to the methodology, the present study is based on a quantitative and qualitative research. From a total number of 14 questions

⁴ “En spade er en spade og stol er stol, men ikke bare stol. Stol er også ordet stol”. sammensatt av lyder som gir ordets uttale og av bokstaver som gir ordets staving (Vold 1976, 71, my translation).

⁵ “være/bli/hete/synes/og kalles” (Vold 1969, 74, my translation).

(hereafter referred to as items), 12 form the quantitative research, the answers gathered offer an objective overview together with a series of percentages. The data obtained through the students' answers to items no. 7 and no. 14, which are two open-ended questions, is part of the qualitative research.

The aim of the present study is to show that Jan Erik Vold's poems used within various writing activities during Norwegian language courses and seminars can help students to revise and to learn new specific grammar, lexical, syntactic structures and to enrich their vocabulary and their creative writing abilities. The idea of using Jan Erik Vold's poems during the language courses and seminars taught to my students came to my mind while I was working on my doctoral thesis about Vold's concrete and *new simple* poems. This idea was strengthened from the moment Vold's became part of my students' curriculum regarding a few literature courses and seminars which I mentioned in the introductory part of this study. Thus, I decided to encourage my students to use Jan Erik Vold's poems more often during various activities in the course of the Norwegian language seminars.

The main purpose of this survey is to emphasise the didactic use of Jan Erik Vold's concrete poems in the process of teaching Norwegian language to undergraduate students. The survey consisted of 12 close-ended questions (including multiple choice and check boxes) and 2 open-ended questions (item no. 7 and no. 14), aiming to gather useful data regarding the effectiveness of using concrete poems as a teaching tool for Norwegian language courses and especially seminars (e.g., Morphology, Lexicology, Syntax, Semantic Analysis and Translation). The questionnaire began with a set of general questions about students' specialisation (item no. 1), year of study (item no. 2) and their level in Norwegian language and literature (items no. 3 and no. 4). It has to be mentioned that the results make reference to items 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 analysed through the quantitative method, while items 7 and 14 are analysed through the qualitative method.

The questions of the survey were formulated to observe to what extent students are willing to use concrete poems during Norwegian language courses and seminars and if these poems are useful in their process of learning Norwegian as a foreign language at the university. Thus, the survey's main objectives are:

1. to find out if students prefer to read concrete poems during Norwegian courses and seminars and what type (grammatical, nursery rhymes, tongue twisters etc.) (5, 6).
2. to identify the extent to which the students have composed a concrete poem in order to better understand a specific grammatical/lexical/syntactic structure, to improve their vocabulary or to enrich their creativity (7, 8, 9, 10).

3. to identify if the form of a concrete typographical poem should be preserved when the students translate it or when they analyse it to better understand the message of the poem (11, 12).
4. to identify if the students are motivated and willing to use concrete poems during their Norwegian language courses and seminars as an important teaching tool (13, 14).

As regards the role of Jan Erik Vold's concrete poems in the teaching process and especially in the activities performed with the students during my language courses and seminars, it was of a great importance since I asked the students to write their own concrete poems in order to revise different parts of speech in Norwegian (e.g., pronouns, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions etc.). Thus, for instance, at the end of each seminar of Morphology, I invited them to read and to present their concrete poems to their colleagues. I realised that it was a very useful exercise for them because, besides reading their own poems, they also explained to their colleagues why they used a specific part of speech and what is its role in a sentence. Teaching grammar through this inductive method I asked students to compose concrete poems in Norwegian and I encouraged them to make use of the theory. A few examples of grammatical concrete poems written by the students are appended.

Last but not least, the students suggested that it would be of great interest for them to create a poetry club. Their desire was accomplished because in the spring semester, in 2022 I started and coordinated the poetry club, *DiktLek*, at our Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature. The literary workshops that take place within this poetry club have in focus the study and the translation of Norwegian poetry. We had special quests, among prominent teachers and researchers from Romania and Norway (e.g., Professor Henning Howlid Wærp from UiT – The Arctic University of Norway), and also students and alumni who write and love poetry. This year in April, *DiktLek* organised an important cultural arrangement about poetry and music, having a special quest, the Norwegian poet Jan Erik Vold, “Scandinavian’s major reader of poetry to a jazz accompaniment” (Wærp 2004, 347), who recited his concrete and *new simple* poems over music. Moreover, it was a memorable and important event for *DiktLek* to have at our Department two important guests, the emblematic Norwegian poet Jan Erik Vold and the professor and the poet Henning Howlid Wærp.⁶

⁶ While Jan Erik Vold read poems from the first anthology of concrete poems which I translated into Romanian, entitled *Briskeby blues* (2023), professor Henning Howlid Wærp read poems from two of his volumes of poetry, Sofia. *Halifax* (2012) and *En avhandling kanskje, om noe vakkert. Gyldenlær (Maybe a Thesis About Something Beautiful. Gilt Leather, 2011).*

Participants

The survey made of 14 questions was filled in online through a link sent to the first (42.1% of the respondents) and second (51.6% of the respondents) year students who study Norwegian language and literature within the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University. In addition, this questionnaire was also sent to 3rd (6.3% of the respondents) year students who study Norwegian as D Language at The Centre for Language Industries (CIL).

With respect to the undergraduate students who participated in this study, in the academic year 2020-2021, there were 90 first-year students who were minoring in Norwegian and 40 students majoring in Norwegian. As for the second-year students, 25 students were majoring in Norwegian, while 50 students were minoring in Norwegian. The third-year students from CIL were 11. A total number of 126 respondents included in this study provided answers on a voluntary basis within three weeks after they were told the useful information about this research. From 126 students, 74.6% were minoring in Norwegian, 14.3% were majoring in Norwegian, while 11.1% studied Norwegian as D Language.

Regarding their language acquisition of Norwegian as a foreign language, 32.5% of the respondents evaluated themselves as having a B1 level, 42.9% an A2 level, 19.8% mentioned an A1 level, while 4.8% answered B2 level. With respect to their competences in Norwegian literature, the gathered data indicated that 36.5% had an A1 level, while most of them, 46.8%, chose an A2 level. Only 14.3% answered B1 level, and quite a few, 2.4%, indicated B2 level, while C1 and C2 levels were not mentioned by any respondent. Thus, these answers indicate that most of the respondents self-evaluated their language and literature competences as having an A2 level. This is an expected result, since most of the respondents, namely (51.6%) are 2nd-year students, after 3 semesters of Norwegian. Their A2 level is widely opened towards the next level, namely intermediate Norwegian (B1 level).

The analysis of the responses and discussion

Regarding which kind of concrete poems the students want to read (e.g., grammatical, nursery rhymes, tongue twisters etc.) during Norwegian courses and seminars, item no. 5 (Figure 1) in the questionnaire indicates that the respondents prefer to study modern poetry without rhyme and rhythm, which emphasises the idea that the students consider that it encourages them to use their imagination and creativity. A modern poem with no rhyme and rhythm

might get closer to the reader's expectation, thus, having no boundaries between understanding, analysing and the creative process. An amount of 55,6% of the respondents want to read and study modern poetry. However, there are also a few students who prefer traditional poetry with rhyme and rhythm during Norwegian courses and seminars. For instance, during the Morphology seminar I have used the modern poem "The Wave" ("Bølge") by Jan Erik Vold, without rhyme and rhythm. It is a visual poem made of adverbs, nouns, pronouns and verbs: "[...]/ thus/ glides/ your hair/ out of my/ hands like/ the wave facing/ and gliding/ in/ the ocean and/ the light is diminished/ along these beaches/ while the sand slips through my fingers/ like days nights years"⁷ (Vold 1969, 45). I used this poem as an activity where students had to identify and analyse the nouns from a morphological perspective, making reference to the number (e.g., singular, plural), the article (e.g., definite, indefinite) and the gender (masculine, feminine and neuter).

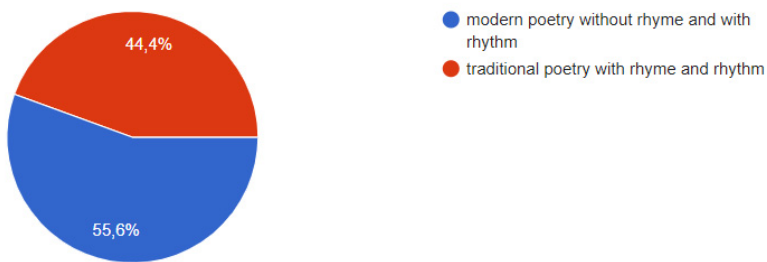


Figure 1. What kind of poetry do you prefer to study during the Norwegian courses and seminars?

In addition, the respondents were asked to indicate their preference in the matter of concrete poetry: item no. 6 (Figure 2). The results for this item indicate that the majority, 68.3%, said that typographical poems were of great interest for them, 33.3% mentioned grammatical poems, while 25.4% of the participants preferred nursery rhymes, and 23.8% ready-mades. In this case, I used Jan Erik Vold's typographical poems selected from the volume *mellom speil og speil* (*Between Mirror and Mirror*) shaped by the poet in different forms (e.g., a cross, an hourglass, a yin-yang figure, a square etc.). In other words, most of the students consider it important and, at the same time, interesting to read visual poetry in different forms, thus, becoming an active part of the creative

⁷ "[...] så / glir/ ditt hår/ ut av mine/ hender slik/ bølgen vender/ og glir/ i / hav og/ lyset svinner/ langs disse strender/ mens sanden glir gjennom mine fingre/ som dager netter år" (Vold 1969, 45, my translation).

process together with the poet. This reading activity is useful for the students in the sense that it develops learners' creativity and their ability to write their own poems, making use of different grammatical structures (e.g., the noun, the pronoun, the verb etc.), as a warm-up or a revision activity in the beginning of the Morphology seminar. In other words, "concrete poem may be seen as a highly serious linguistic game in which the reader (or perceiver) is required to participate actively with his imaginative faculties to complete the poem" (Solt 1970, 423).

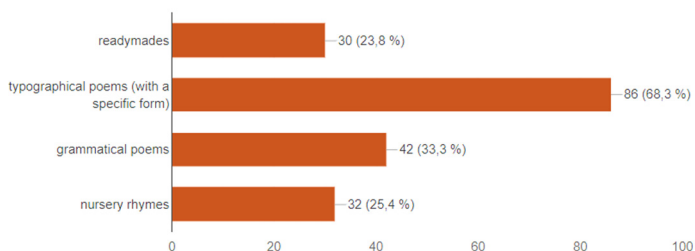


Figure 2. What type of concrete poem do you like to read?

The results for item no. 7 (*Have you written a concrete poem e.g., grammatical/ typographical/ nursery rhymes etc. so far? For what purpose?*), which is an open-ended question, emphasise the idea that these concrete poems can be used as teaching materials for literature and language courses, as well as seminars, and even for practical courses, as an interactive resource for students, in order to better approach what they have learned so far. A total number of 106 students of 126 gave answer to this question and most of them said that they wrote concrete poems for the Morphology seminar (first-year students), for the Lexicology seminar, for the seminar of Literary Translations and for the course of Literary Genres (second -year students), but also for practical courses in Norwegian (*Ny i Norge* and *Stein på Stein* 3rd-year students CIL). Most of the answers provided to this question underlined the idea that creating a specific concrete poem (e.g., grammatical concrete poem) helped students to better understand what they were taught, as one of the respondents wrote: "[...] they helped me to better understand the theory". Another respondent outlined the idea that the purpose of writing a grammatical concrete poem was "to learn specific Norwegian grammatical structures". One of the students pointed out that the purpose of writing a grammatical concrete poem was "to improve vocabulary and language skills in a different way, combining visual images with linguistic elements". One of the answers was that these concrete poems "improve my vocabulary and enrich my creativity", while most of the students

agreed with the fact that these poems helped them to practise what they have learned in theory, being also an interesting and creative task.

For item no. 8 (Figure 3) the results indicate that 54.8% of the respondents agree that a grammatical and typographical concrete poem can help them to understand a specific grammatical or lexical structure, while 27.8% strongly agree with this idea.

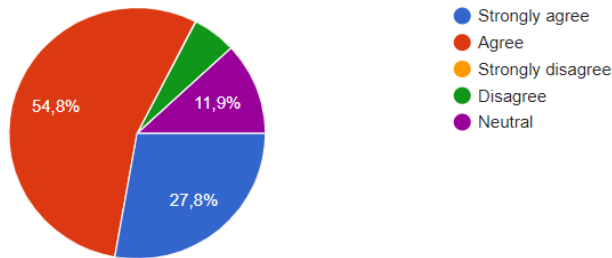


Figure 3. Would you evaluate that the writing of grammatical and typographical concrete poems provides you a better understanding of a specific grammatical/ lexical structure?

Thus, the gathered data indicate that concrete poems are of great use for the students, as they become self-confident and most ambitious in learning new grammatical and lexical structures. Additionally, writing their own concrete poem is also part of students' self-evaluation process regarding their language acquisition.

An amount of 56.3% of the respondents (item no. 9 – Figure 4) consider reading and creating concrete poems an important method to learn new words, thus, enriching their vocabulary in Norwegian. In this sense, the concrete poems of Jan Erik Vold are proved to be efficient, being full of common words and expressions used in everyday life. I have noticed this aspect while studying his poems for my doctoral thesis which was published in a book format in 2018, with the title *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s*. 31.7% of the respondents strongly agree with this idea, while 11.1% are neutral. Thus, “poetry is the art of using words, lines, and stanzas charged with their utmost meaning. Those concerned with language and intellectual life should be committed to keeping poetry in society’s literary repertoire” (Certo et al. 2012, 104).

As regards the way in which these concrete poems develop students' creativity, 89.7% of the respondents (item no. 10 – Figure 5) (strongly agree and agree) with the statement, while 9.5% did not state their opinion. It is worth mentioning that, while reading Jan Erik Vold's concrete poems, the student or

the reader in general is indirectly invited to be an active part of the writing process. In this sense, “[...], writing is a great way for many to deal with difficulties in their lives and gain helpful insight into their emotions and experiences” (Leahy 2005, 4).

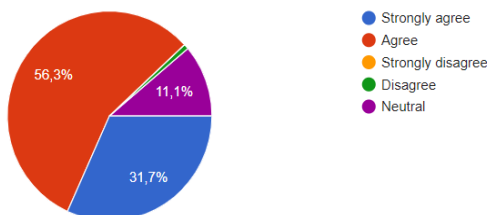


Figure 4. The use of concrete poems in teaching and learning a specific Norwegian vocabulary is very useful.

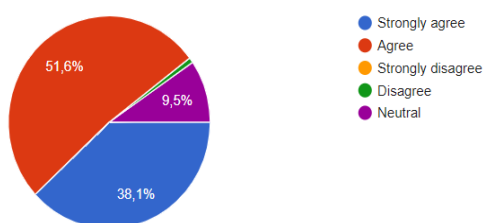


Figure 5. The process of creating grammatical/ typographical concrete poems increases my creativity.

The gathered data for item no. 11 (“*Is it useful to preserve the form of a typographical concrete poem when we translate it?*”) indicated that 77.8% of the respondents consider that the translator has to preserve the form of the poem because its form is just as important as its content. However, 19% of the respondents chose the following answer: *Its content is more useful than its form*. Jan Erik Vold himself stated in an interview, which I conducted in Tromsø, during a five-month scholarship at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, with support from EEA grants, in 2015: “Poetry is stylistic work: it is not just a multitude of thoughts that comes out of my mouth; the graphic image becomes, in my opinion, prettier when it is organised in two quatrains with a blank line between them. It is a pretty, graphic image, which you see as a whole, while probably reading the letters verse by verse. Poetry is sound but language is also graphic” (Vold, in Răduț 2018, 342).

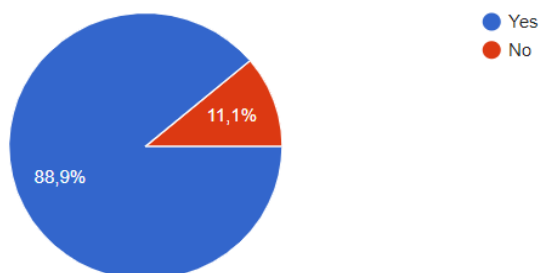


Figure 6. The visual impact of a concrete poem helps you to better understand the message of the poem?

Regarding the visual dimension of a concrete poem, it helps students to better understand the message of the poem (item no. 12 – Figure 6). Thus, 88.9% of the respondents agree with this statement, while 11.1% disagree. With respect to the concrete poems in particular, their visual impact is of great importance, because the reader can look at such a poem as a work of art. Fiona McMahon, in her article “Concrete/ Visual Poetry” stated that: “from the very start, concrete poetry has enjoyed the sensory ‘sympathy’ (‘between the ear and the eye, and between tunes and colours’) that is historically associated with poetry” (331). Moreover, “the visual poem is a word design in a designed world. It can’t be a mere coincidence that the founders of the concrete poetry movement in both Europe and Brazil were involved not only with the world of contemporary avant-garde poetry, painting and music but with the world of graphic design as well” (Solt 1970, 60-61). Walt Jackson and Lew Musil emphasise the idea that a concrete poetry cannot be called as such if it has not its visual representation: “concrete poetry joins the shape of a word with its meaning, creating a poem that must be seen as well as read. Its appeal to the eye is similar to the language of poster art, billboards, street signs, and television advertisements” (290).

Item no. 13 (Figure 8) reflects that the vast majority of the respondents, 85.7%, agreed that concrete poems can be used in teaching specific Norwegian vocabulary, while 67.5% stated that concrete poetry can be used in teaching grammatical structures. An amount of 60.3% indicated that lexical structures can be presented by creating concrete poems with specific lexical elements used in theory. 59.5% of the respondents agreed that these poems can be included in teaching literary translations, trying to translate them by preserving their visual aspect. Furthermore, the act of translation can be challenging for students especially when it comes to translating a tongue twister poem. In this case, the translator also takes part in the writing process of the poem, because he/she has to figure it out and to find suitable words in the target language. For instance, the poem “1-2-3-4” written by Jan Erik Vold and published in the volume *kykelipi*, needs an adaptation depending on the target language. In other words, the translator may either preserve part of the words in Norwegian and continue with others in the target language, or to use other words. The poem in Norwegian is as follows: “1-2-3-4/kykelipire/5-6-7-8/kykelipätte/9-10-11-12/kykelipoll/12-11-10-9/kykelipi” (Vold 1969, 27).

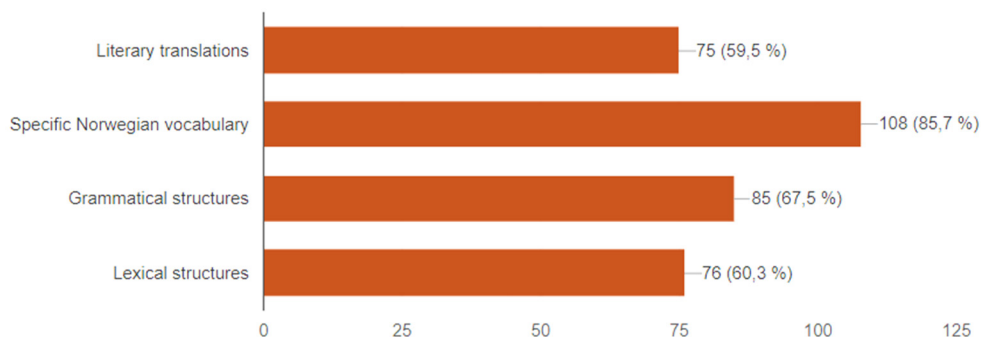


Figure 8. Concrete poems can be used in teaching

The answers to item no. 14, the open-ended statement, (*“Consider some other situations in which you could use concrete poems as a teaching method”*), indicate that these poems can be a very good practical exercise especially for the 1st- year students. Since most of these poems do not have rhyme or rhythm, it is easier for the students to translate or even make their own version. Moreover, concrete poems improve students’ creation process, as an exercise of imagination that helps them to improve skills in Norwegian and inspire students to come up with new ideas, being an innovative way to learn new things in Norwegian. Some of the students stated that these poems can be a source of inspiration in the seminars of creative writing, while the others pointed out that they “could be useful in practical courses as listening exercises”. Besides, concrete poems can be used in teaching phonology using tongue twisters and wordplay, and also specific morphological structures. Concrete poetry can be used by students who want to continue and improve their studies in the field of poetry. Most of the respondents agree that the purpose of the concrete poems is strongly related “to the vocabulary acquisition, being very useful in learning new words and expressions in Norwegian both in teaching basic and academic vocabulary”. Another student stated that through these concrete poems “we learn not only specific Norwegian vocabulary, but also useful words taken from daily life”. Other students stated that concrete poems may be a suitable resource for literature and literary translations: “they can be used as a warm-up activity or as a way of explaining the relationship between its content and the form of the poem”. In addition, “these kinds of poems can be a way to present a new concept, an idea or the theoretical part of a course in Norwegian language and literature”. Concrete poetry could also be used as a memory exercise, being “a method in order to memorise better new words from

a lesson taught during a practical course in Norwegian”, by transforming a grammar rule into a concrete poem made only of the key concepts that have to be memorised and understood. These poems also improve students’ writing skills. Thus, according to what students have stated, as I have already mentioned, I used concrete poems as an engaging warm-up exercise, as an introductory activity in the beginning of the Morphology seminar. Moreover, by constantly creating concrete poems, as an assignment, or as a warm-up exercise in the beginning of a language or literature course or seminar in Norwegian, the students improve their writing, grammar and vocabulary skills. I came up to this aspect being influenced by students’ responses to the open-ended question: “These kinds of poems are a way to introduce a new grammatical structure, a new concept, an idea, in a more relaxed way”; “They are a very good teaching tool for students”; “For instance, the use of concrete poems as a warm-up exercise during our Morphology seminar was very useful for us to better understand grammatical structures that were about to be taught”. Thus, when asked to write concrete poems in Norwegian, using different parts of speech (e.g., personal pronouns, adjectives), this task helped students to become an active part of the teaching process along with the teacher. They were able to work in groups and to explain to each other what specific grammar structures they used and why.

Concrete poems can be used, as mentioned by one of the students, in “teaching grammar, encouraging creativity and practising writing skills”; “concrete poems can be used to teach almost anything. We could use these poems to teach (e.g., a grammar rule, thus helping students to remember it creating a concrete poem). These poems can be used for both language and literature courses and seminars”.

As mentioned before, the research questions of the survey were analysed quantitatively, gathered data being statistically illustrated through the figures with relevant percentages, as well as qualitatively through the students’ answers to the open-ended questions. After this experimental use of Jan Erik Vold’s concrete poems for one semester, in the academic year 2020-2021, as a teaching tool, during my Norwegian language classes for my 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-year students, the results of this survey show that they were very effective, the students being pleased to have them as a language learning material. The findings of this study are based on the analysis of the 126 answers, being sufficient enough to show that the students are willing to use concrete poems during the Norwegian language courses and seminars, either as warm-up exercises or as an important teaching tool in different activities to help students improve their language knowledge and skills. The fact that 55,6% of the respondents want to study modern poetry without rhyme, and 68,3% of them

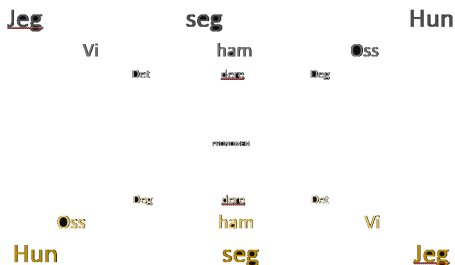
are willing to read Jan Erik Vold's visual concrete poems, emphasise that these poems can also become part of the syllabus regarding some of the Norwegian language courses and seminars (e.g., Morphology, Lexicology, Syntax, Semantic Analysis and Translation) along with the Norwegian literature courses and seminars where these poems are already part of the students' syllabus. The analysis of the results and the respondents' answers show that the use of Vold's concrete poems develop their language, morphological, lexical and syntactic competences, enrich their vocabulary in Norwegian and enhance their creativity.

Conclusions

Jan Erik Vold's concrete poems constitute an important link between literature and language in the teaching process of Norwegian for Romanian students at Babeş-Bolyai University. The use of these poems for the first time as a teaching tool and as an experiment for my students, during their Norwegian language courses and seminars, proved to be efficient according to the gathered data, including the students' responses. By reading and studying this kind of poetry, the students became familiar with this literary genre with a vast applicability to different disciplines (e.g., Morphology, Phonology, Lexicology etc.). Thus, they are able to practise their grammar knowledge in Norwegian by creating their own grammatical concrete poems, using Vold as a source of inspiration. Moreover, this research provided an overview of how useful poetry can be in acquiring and developing competences in Norwegian. As mentioned before, by constantly creating concrete poems, as an assignment, or as a warm-up exercise in the beginning of a language or literature course or seminar in Norwegian, the students improve their writing, grammar and vocabulary skills. Moreover, these poems can be often used in teaching Norwegian language for beginners, for instance, for the first-year students. The gathered data show that 85.7% of the respondents agreed that concrete poetry can be also used in teaching different grammatical structures. Creating concrete poems by using different parts of speech (e.g., pronoun, verb, adverb etc.) encourages students to become creative and more confident in approaching and learning different grammatical rules. In addition, through this inductive teaching method, the students become an active part of the teaching process, being motivated to further develop their literature and language competences in Norwegian.

APPENDIX NO. 1

Norwegian Concrete Poems Written by Students During the Morphology Seminar



*Verdigheten min - din.
 Søpmennene mine - dere.
 Levset mitt - ditt.*

Jeg skal ut, du er inne
 Jeg løper hjem, du er allerede
 hjemme
 Tiden går fort for oss
 Og livet blir kortere og kortere

Forandret jeg meg
 Forandret du deg
 Forandret han seg
 Forandret hun seg
 Forandret den seg
 Forandret det seg
 Forandret vi oss
 Forandret dere dere
 Forandret de seg.

Bilene

Bilen min er rød.
 Bilen din er oransje.
 Bilen hans er gul.
 Bilen hennes er grønn.
 Bilen vår er blå.
 Bilen deres er indigo.
 Bilen deres er lilla.

LIV

skal være
 er
 å være
 ikke vær!
 har vært

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SIRÈNES ET AUTRES ONDINES : REPRÉSENTATIONS MÉDIÉVALES DES FIGURES AQUATIQUES SCANDINAVES

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ABSTRACT. *Mermaids and Other Undines: Medieval Representations of Scandinavian Aquatic Figures.* Without claiming to be exhaustive, this article compares the different aquatic figures of Scandinavian imagination, and the representations relating to Scandinavia, taking into account their cosmic aspect. This paper highlights the close connection of these creatures with time, weather and music, and the evolution of the representation of sea creatures that embody geography and climate, real or fantasized. These representations evolve, especially because of the important Christianization process that they undergo. With Christianization, these sea creatures tend towards demonization, and they're influenced by Occidental representations, especially with those of the sirens of the *Nibelungenlied*. Scandinavian aquatic figures represent different dangers according to the type of water in which they live: salty, soft or marshy. According to their gender, the marine creatures which embody different risks are put in perspective in a comparative approach that links the *Eddas* and the stories reported by Xavier Marmier, especially Danish and Swedish. Thanks to the privileged bond these figures, emerging from the Edda, sagas and ballads, maintain with speech and music, their evolutions and their representations survive in the collective imagination related to Scandinavia.

Keywords: *Middle Age, Scandinavian literature, hybrid representations, mermaid, imaginary of the sea.*

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REZUMAT. Sirene și alte ondine: reprezentări medievale ale figurilor acvatice scandinave. Fără a pretinde a fi exhaustiv, acest articol compară diferitele figuri acvatice ale imaginarului scandinav și reprezentările referitoare la Scandinavia, ținând cont de aspectul lor cosmic. Lucrarea de față evidențiază legătura strânsă a acestor creaturi cu timpul, vremea și muzica, precum și evoluția reprezentării creaturilor marine, reale sau imaginare, care întruchipează geografia și clima. Odată cu creștinizarea, aceste creaturi marine tind spre demonizare și sunt influențate de reprezentările occidentale, mai ales de cele ale sirenelor din *Cântecul Nibelungilor*. Figurile acvatice scandinave se disting după pericolul pe care îl reprezintă și după tipul de apă în care trăiesc: sărată, dulce sau mlăstinoasă. Creaturile marine care întruchipează diferite riscuri sunt analizate în funcție de tipologiile enunțate, printr-o abordare comparativă care leagă *Edda* și poveștile transmise de Xavier Marmier (în special de origine daneză și suedeză). Datorită legăturilor lor privilegiate cu limbajul și muzica, aceste figuri din *Edda*, saga și balade supraviețuiesc în imaginarul colectiv scandinav.

Cuvinte-cheie : Evul mediu, literatură scandinavă, reprezentări hibride, sirenă, imaginarul apei

Il n'est plus à démontrer que l'eau détient un rôle prépondérant dans les pays du nord, tant du fait des géographies de ces territoires que de leurs climatologies favorisant les différents états aquatiques (pluies, neiges, glaces). De fait, comme le soulignait Xavier Marmier, les terres scandinaves sont propices à l'émergence de légendes et de littératures autour de la mer et plus généralement, de l'eau². Elles provoquent très facilement l'imagination telle que Gaston Bachelard la définit, à savoir, la « faculté de former des images qui dépassent la réalité, qui *chantent* la réalité » (Bachelard 1942, 23)³. L'imaginaire aquatique associé à ces territoires est largement véhiculé par les légendes et les récits des vikings, peuple de navigateurs par excellence, mais il est également nourri par d'autres peuples qui ont écrit à partir de légendes scandinaves.

Cette étude comprend donc l'« imaginaire scandinave » à la fois comme l'ensemble des figures imaginées par les peuples scandinaves, mais aussi comme la manière dont d'autres peuples imaginent la Scandinavie et ce qui s'y rapporte, notamment à travers l'exemple d'un texte médiéval germanique, qui développe et propage des légendes à propos des pays du nord.

Les *Eddas* et les sagas islandaises, *islendingasögur*, qui connaissent leur âge d'or au tournant du XII^e et du XIII^e siècle, notamment en Norvège, constituent

² Sur ce point cf. Marmier 1842, introd.

³ « Ability to form images that go beyond reality, that *sing* reality ». (Bachelard 1942, 23, notre traduction).

les origines de l'imaginaire scandinave. Il en va de même des chants populaires du Nord, que Régis Boyer définit comme ballade, *folkeviser* en danois et en norvégien, particulièrement prisés à la fin du XIII^e siècle (Boyer 1996, 61). Les ballades mentionnées dans cet article sont datées d'entre le XI^e et le XIV^e siècle, et ont été traduites du norrois en français par Xavier Marmier en 1842 ou, plus récemment, par Régis Boyer. Depuis, une partie des textes primaires sont soit perdus, soit très difficilement accessibles en langue originale. S'ajoute à cela la rareté des traductions anglophones de certaines de ces anciennes légendes. C'est pourquoi nous nous appuyons sur les traductions françaises de Xavier Marmier et Régis Boyer, éminents traducteurs et spécialistes reconnus de la littérature comparée scandinave, afin d'analyser ce qu'il nous est parvenu de l'imaginaire scandinave médiéval, et d'en étudier les représentations.

Si, en France, les figures aquatiques des *Eddas* ont été particulièrement étudiées par la critique (Régis Boyer, Félix Wagner), certaines sagas scandinaves ont suscité moins d'engouement. Des chants populaires danois tels « La puissance de la harpe », « L'Homme des eaux », ou les deux versions d'« Agnete » ainsi que les chants suédois comme « La femme de mer » et « Le Neck » n'ont, à notre connaissance, pas été retraduits depuis 1842, et les figures aquatiques qui s'y trouvent, si elles sont souvent invoquées de manière générale, n'ont que rarement fait l'objet d'études approfondies. Pour cette première raison nous avons souhaité porter notre analyse sur ces chants populaires autant que sur les *Eddas* déjà reconnus. Mis en relation, les textes fondateurs eddiques et scaldiques constituant le principal objet d'étude de cet article, permettent d'établir une image de la Scandinavie, que nous avons désiré confronter à l'image fantasmée qui apparaît dans d'autres textes, notamment dans le *Nibelungenlied*, afin de mettre en lumière les différences entre les représentations occidentales de la Scandinavie et les représentations traditionnelles nordiques.

Contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait imaginer, les figures aquatiques ne sont pas légion dans les écrits de peuples pourtant entourés par les eaux. Cela tient vraisemblablement au fait que celles-ci rebutaient « des mentalités trop réalistes [...] peu portées au délire de l'imagination » (Boyer 1996, 60)⁴. Lorsqu'elles surgissent dans la littérature nordique médiévale, ces figures y siègent donc avec d'autant plus d'importance. Elles constituent un objet d'étude privilégié dans l'analyse de l'imaginaire scandinave, auquel l'Occident doit, au moins en partie, ses représentations actuelles de la sirène à moitié poisson – influencées notamment par *Le Miroir royal*, *Konungs skuggsjá*, composé au XIII^e siècle. Les récits étudiés, détenant une importante dimension orale et musicale, ont également été choisis parce qu'ils témoignent de l'évolution des représentations des figures aquatiques

⁴ « Too realistic mentalities, not focused on the delirium of imagination ». (Boyer 1996, 60, notre traduction).

lors de la christianisation de la Scandinavie, et qu'ils rendent compte d'une voix scandinave particulière qu'il s'agira pour nous de dégager.

Pour ce faire, il convient d'abord, de manière non exhaustive, de confronter les différentes représentations des êtres des eaux, d'étudier la manière dont certaines s'ancrent dans des réalités géographiques et météorologiques réelles ou imaginaires, et d'en dégager différentes symboliques. Les dites symboliques seront également confrontées aux représentations occidentales afin de mettre en lumière la manière dont ces dernières ont pu influencer les traditions scandinaves. Nous nous interrogerons ensuite sur la manière dont s'effectue, du point de vue littéraire, la diabolisation de ces figures sous l'influence du christianisme occidental qui fait de la sirène une Ève infernale, et sur le rôle que détiennent les questions de genres dans ce processus de diabolisation. Lorsque cela semblait indispensable, nous avons tenté, autant que faire se peut, de combiner à notre analyse thématique une analyse étymologique afin d'aborder la place du langage, en tant que motif littéraire, mais aussi en tant que principe structurant de ces textes, notamment dans les sagas où l'être aquatique, lorsqu'il apparaît, permet de faire émerger la parole musicale scandinave.

1. Espace-temps des figures siréniennes

Contrairement à la tradition occidentale, dominée par des figures aquatiques féminines, l'imaginaire scandinave médiéval répertorie un nombre assez égal d'hommes et de femmes des eaux. De façon générale, les figures féminines sont omniprésentes dans la poésie eddique, dans les chants nordiques et dans les sagas, comme dans celle de Gísli Sursson, où ce dernier rêve de femmes venant lui annoncer sa destinée (Boyer 1987). Souvent les femmes détiennent des dons prophétiques, qui dévoilent aux héros leur destin. Elles cherchent à découvrir les secrets du temps et façonnent l'avenir ; d'ailleurs, les dogmes mythologiques scandinaves véhiculent l'idée que des femmes président aux destinées humaines (les Nornes) et qu'elles emmènent les morts dans la demeure d'Odin (les Walkyries). Qu'elle se nomme femme des eaux, Walkyrie, déesse ou Norne, la femme est donc l'agent d'un certain savoir.

Savoirs et temporalités

Les femmes détiennent ce rôle de guide funèbre en Scandinavie comme en Occident, à l'exemple des sirènes psychopompes de l'Antiquité, notamment celles de *l'Odyssée*. Elles possèdent le don de la divination et ont connaissance de toutes les choses du passé, du présent et du futur, comme les trois Nornes des *Eddas*, gardiennes de la source d'Urd au pied de l'arbre de vie Yggdrasil,

nommées Urd (passé), Verdandi (présent) et Skuld (avenir). Cette dernière est également une Walkyrie dans la *Völuspá*, et par conséquent, elle est étroitement liée à la mort et au temps. Le savoir féminin est donc relatif à ce temps, à la mort. D'ailleurs, dans une version latine composée de chroniques scandinaves anciennes traduites en Danois au XVI^e siècle, Hagen rencontre une jolie femme de mer étendue sur le sable, à laquelle il demande s'il survivra à son aventure au pays d'Hvenild. C'est sans doute cette chronique qui influencera la représentation des ondines savantes dans le *Nibelungenlied* dont il sera ensuite question. La sirène danoise prédit la mort du héros avant que celui-ci, de rage, ne lui tranche la tête. Ce dernier saisit ensuite la tête sanglante de la jeune fille, « la jette dans les flots, et y jette ensuite le corps » (Marmier 1842, 98)⁵. Si la réponse déplaît au jeune homme, elle se révèle néanmoins exacte. La femme de mer surgit donc dans la narration comme symbole de l'inattendu, de l'imprévisible, de l'inconnu vers lesquels s'avance le héros. En détenant les secrets des choses passées, présentes et à venir, elle semble atemporelle et intemporelle ; pourtant, elle n'échappe pas complètement à une certaine temporalité puisque, même si elle ne meurt pas de vieillesse, elle peut être tuée. Sa mort surprend d'ailleurs le lecteur autant que sa présence surprend le héros. La femme de mer surgit donc de manière imprévisible au sein de la narration, de même que les intempéries qu'elle symbolise depuis la tradition eddique.

Les figures aquatiques : des représentations météorologiques ?

Dans les *Eddas*, la déesse de la mer, Rán, signifiant « la ravisseuse », et son frère Ægir signifiant « océan » sont des *jotun*, des entités intermédiaires entre les Dieux et les autres figures fantastiques, notamment les géants (Boyer 1997, 11). Personnifications de la mer et de ses dangers, ils ont neuf filles prénommées en référence aux différents états de l'eau. Ainsi Himinglaeva est « celle qui scintille vers le ciel » ; Kolga, mentionnée dans le premier chant de Helgi est « la froide, la mer déchaînée » ; et Blodughadda est surnommée « la chevelure sanglante » (Wagner 1936, 18)⁶. Les tempêtes peuvent être la manifestation de leur colère, comme c'est le cas lors du voyage de Helgi, « [q]uand l'effroyable fille d'Ægir voulut chavirer les chevaux à rênes d'étai » (Boyer 1992, 273)⁷. Souvent, cette dernière faculté est attribuée à leur mère. Rán avait en effet la réputation d'attirer les marins dans ses filets vers les rochers dangereux, puis de les entraîner dans

⁵ « Throws it into the waves, and then throws the body there ». (Marmier 1842, 98, notre traduction).

⁶ « The one that shine over the sky », « the cold, the raging sea », « the one with the bloody hair ». (Wagner 1936, 18, notre traduction).

⁷ « When Ægir's terrible daughter wanted to capsize the stay-bridled wave-horse » (Larrington 2014, 114).

son palais marin décrit comme très riche et fait d'or. Ainsi lorsque Atli chante : « Les hommes du chef, tu voulais les donner à Rán »⁸ ; il affirme que la géante Hrímgendr à laquelle il s'adresse voulait noyer les hommes (286). Comme l'écrit Patrick Guelpa, Rán est donc une *heiti*, une appellation pour désigner conventionnellement la mer dans la poésie eddique et scaldique (Guelpa 2008, 72). Associée à la tempête dévastatrice, Rán est, selon Félix Wagner, l'emblème de la mer perfide réclamant des victimes et représente les principales peurs liées à l'imaginaire de la mer (Wagner 1936, 35).

Son époux Ægir est, dans l'*Edda poétique*, un géant, frère de celui des vents. Expert en magie, il symbolise les flots apaisés, opulents. Aussi organise-t-il un banquet somptueux comportant nombre de chaudrons et brasse la bière afin que les Ases fêtent la paix dans son palais luxuriant : « on avait de l'or luisant en guise de lumière. La bière se servait d'elle-même » (Boyer 1992, 473)⁹. Contrairement à Rán il bénéficie donc d'une image positive liée à la paix et à la richesse. Il symbolise la mer calme et nourricière. Parce qu'ils incarnent à eux seuls les aspects les plus contradictoires de l'eau, les époux ne se présentent pas ensemble et n'occupent jamais le même espace maritime. En outre, cet espace aquatique est encore différemment investi par les sirènes du *Nibelungenlied*.

Un imaginaire scandinave déformé dans le *Nibelungenlied* ?

Le *Nibelungenlied* est un poème autrichien du XIII^e siècle. Régis Boyer établit qu'il n'y a pas lieu d'assimiler les personnages du *Nibelungenlied* à ceux de la tradition scandinave ; néanmoins, le poème connaît une version norroise médiévale et reprend les légendes nordiques de la *Völsungasaga* et des *Eddas* (Wagner 1936, introd.). Ces dernières retracent les aventures du héros danois Sigurd, meurtrier du dragon Fáfnir, qui est trahi et assassiné par l'un de ses proches. La version germanique de la légende narre les aventures des personnages après l'assassinat de Siegfried, héros inspiré de Sigurd, par Hagen. Alors que le traître se rend à la cour du roi Etzel (Attila), il surprend trois femmes des eaux en train de se baigner dans le Rhin. Ces ondines n'apparaissent pas dans les *Eddas* et constituent donc des ajouts germaniques à la matière littéraire scandinave ; en outre, même si une femme des eaux – à laquelle Hagen tranche la tête – apparaît dans la chronique scandinave mentionnée précédemment, elle est remplacée dans le *Nibelungenlied* par plusieurs sirènes « semblables à des oiseaux ». En effet leur description correspond à celles des sirènes antiques

⁸ « The king's men you were going to give to Ran » (123).

⁹ « Gleaming gold was used there instead of candlelight. The ale served itself there » (Dronke 1997, 433).

occidentales, à demi volatile : « Semblables à des oiseaux, elles planaient autour de lui sur les flots » (de Laveleye 2000, 89)¹⁰. L'imaginaire scandinave relatif aux femmes des eaux est donc contaminé par l'imaginaire occidental. Comme les Nornes, ces sirènes forment une communauté féminine aux savoirs magiques puisqu'elles assurent connaître les choses à venir et sont nommées *wísiu wíp* (de Boor 1959, 448) signifiant, « femme de savoir » (« *wise women* ») dans le texte en Haut-Allemand. Elles sont ensuite appelées *merewîp*, littéralement, « femme de la mer » (« *water-sprites*¹¹ ») puis *Nixe* et *Meerfrau*, (*mermaid*), appellations qui désignent les ondines et sirènes germaniques. Ces sirènes dévoilent à Hagen sa mort au pays des Huns¹². Situées au carrefour des éléments aérien et aquatique, elles apparaissent alors que le Rhin déborde, créant une inondation. Elles sont donc liées à un élément aquatique indomptable et allégorisent la perturbation des phénomènes climatiques, la catastrophe naturelle. La météorologie reflète alors les événements fatals qui surviendront au-delà du fleuve. Ces ondines symbolisent bien les risques (météorologiques ou non) qui effraient, tout en excitant l'imagination. Elles incarnent un territoire aussi redouté que fantasmé, situé à la croisée des représentations scandinaves, occidentales et orientales, puisque Hagen se rend au royaume des Huns. À la fois aériennes et aquatiques, ces sirènes, aussi insaisissables que le territoire qu'elles peuplent, témoignent d'un dérèglement du temps, de la météorologie qui accompagne leurs funestes prédictions. Avec l'inondation, c'est la géographie même du territoire qui est changée. Le Rhin constitue une limite naturelle entre les pays, une frontière physique et symbolique : il sépare les héros des terres lointaines, et les sirènes, parfaite incarnation de l'Autre, se situent donc à cette frontière. Agents du destin, elles se tiennent sur le seuil d'une terre à une autre. En prédisant l'avenir d'Hagen, elles lui offrent la possibilité de choisir sa voix, celle de l'aventure, et de ce fait, elles participent à faire de celui-ci un véritable héros. Elles concourent donc à la formation héroïque très occidentale d'Hagen¹³. Imaginaires occidental et scandinave se mêlent de nouveau parfaitement dans cette épopée qui ajoute à la

¹⁰ Passage originel : « Si swebten sam die vogela vor im ûf der fluot », (de Boor 1959, 448). « They were floating in front of him like birds on the waves » (Edwards 2010, 140).

¹¹ Passage originel : « er hôrte wazzer giezen (losen er began) in einem schoenen brunnen: daz tâten wísiu wíp » (de Boor 1959, 448). « He heard water plashing in a fair spring. He listened – it was wise women, who wanted to cool themselves there and were bashing » (Edwards 2010, 141).

¹² Passage originel : « Dô sprach die eine merewîp, Hadebruc was si gênant : « edel ritter Hagene, wir tuon iu hie bekant, swenne ir uns, degen küene, gebet wider unser wât, wie iu zuo den Hiunen disiu hovereise ergât » (de Boor 1959, 448). « Then one of the water-sprites – she was called Hadeburc – said: 'Hagen, noble knight, if you, bold warrior, gives us back our clothes, we will tell you here how this journey of yours to the court of the Huns will turn out' » (Edwards 2010, 141).

¹³ Sur la formation héroïque occidentale du personnage, cf. Boyer 1996.

matière nordique des thèmes littéraires occidentaux comme ceux de la chevalerie et de la courtoisie, qui se développent à partir du XII^e siècle. Grâce à cette rencontre avec les sirènes, le héros approche des limites physiques et spirituelles qui sont les siennes (Vial 2014, introd.). Entre les mondes mythologique, terrestre et céleste, la sirène constitue une figure poreuse : elle incarne à la fois les représentations de la mer et celles de la femme, projetées sur une terre située aux confins du monde d'un point de vue occidental. Les femmes des eaux sont la conjonction des différents espaces : ceux de la marge et de la civilisation (les *merewîp* sont nues mais détiennent un grand savoir), et celle de la vie et de la mort. Par cette position ambivalente qu'elles occupent, leurs représentations sont assez ambiguës et oscillent entre le bien et le mal.

2. Des représentations ambiguës

En effet, les sirènes nordiques sont dangereuses autant que bénéfiques. Elles sont d'abord les agents de la mort comme le rappelle Édouard Brasseley : « les froides et périlleuses mers du Nord étaient le refuge des redoutables dieux scandinaves Ægir et Rán, qui attiraient les corps des noyés dans leurs royaumes sous-marins et dévoraient leurs âmes » (Brasseley 1999, 25)¹⁴.

L'eau : royaume des morts et des peurs humaines

Ainsi dans le chant populaire danois « L'Homme des eaux », un fils et sa mère résident sous les eaux, comme le laisse deviner le titre du poème ainsi que la requête du fils à sa mère : « Je ne sais comment je pourrais m'unir à la fille de Marskig. C'est chose difficile de chevaucher hors d'ici » (Marmier 1842, 119)¹⁵. La mère crée alors un cheval à partir d'une eau limpide et transforme le prétendant en chevalier grâce à la magie. Une fois le titre usurpé, le faux chevalier épouse la fille de Marskig. Mais alors que les jeunes gens s'en vont au large sur un bateau fabriqué par l'imposteur, « la jeune fille tomba dans l'eau [...] on l'entendit crier dans l'eau » (119)¹⁶. La noyade constitue le seul moyen (involontaire) de la jeune fille pour respecter ses vœux et suivre son époux : le royaume aquatique est bel et bien le royaume des morts. L'homme des eaux ne

¹⁴ « The cold and perilous northern seas were home to the fearsome Norse gods Ægir and Rán, who drew the bodies of the drowned into their undersea realms and devoured their souls ». (Brasseley 1999, 25, notre traduction).

¹⁵ « I don't know how I'm going to be able to unite with Marskig's daughter. It's hard to ride out here ». (Marmier 1842, 119, notre traduction).

¹⁶ « The young girl fell into the water [...] she was heard screaming in the water ». (119, notre traduction).

remonte à la surface que sous une fausse image et une identité usurpée, afin de s'unir à une mortelle et de l'entraîner vers une mort certaine. L'union est consommée non dans l'amour mais dans la mort : *eros* et *thanatos* se mêlent au royaume des eaux.

Un chant suédois propose une variante encore plus cruelle de ce chant. Effectivement, dans « Le Neck », l'homme qui affirme : « Je suis né dans les eaux »¹⁷ se métamorphose également en homme afin de tromper une jeune fille et de la noyer (192). C'est grâce à ses richesses, à un bracelet en or qu'il lui offre, qu'il parvient à obtenir la main de sa victime. Ensuite, « [le] Neck prend la jeune fille par ses cheveux blonds et l'attache au pommeau de sa selle » et, lorsque les gens du roi, ayant entendu le cri de cette dernière, accourent sur le pont pour lui venir en aide, « on ne trouve que ses souliers à boucle d'or. On la cherche d'un côté, on la cherche de l'autre, et l'on trouve un corps inanimé » (192)¹⁸. Si plusieurs créatures des eaux tuent et noient leurs victimes, seul ce chant décrit le moment de l'agression, et met en scène la violence de la créature. Cependant, l'être aquatique scandinave n'est pas seulement redoutable. Depuis saint Jérôme, qui traduit le terme *tannîm* par *sirenae* dans sa *Vulgate*, le catholicisme exacerbe l'aspect terrible de la sirène, et l'imaginaire nordique est frappé de cette diabolisation durant la christianisation de la Scandinavie (du XI^e au XVI^e siècle).

Féminin et masculin : quelles perspectives d'évolutions avec la christianisation ?

Bien que rares, certaines créatures féminines aquatiques jouent un rôle protecteur. C'est le cas de la *fylgjukona* d'Hallfredr dans la saga d'*Hallfredr le scalde difficile*, qui représente l'équivalent de l'ange-gardien païen auquel les anciens Scandinaves croyaient, selon Régis Boyer (Boyer 1998, note 132, 147). Elle apparaît derrière le bateau, « elle marchait sur les vagues comme sur la terre » (119)¹⁹. Cependant, l'apparition n'est pas à proprement parler une femme des eaux et, même si elle tient le rôle positif de gardienne, le héros christianisé la congédie, signe de sa conversion. Les différents aspects des eaux semblent donc principalement symbolisés selon la répartition suivante : les aspects positifs tels l'abondance sont attribués à Ægir, hôte des dieux reconnu pour ses banquets, et à ses équivalents masculins ; tandis que ses aspects négatifs sont l'apanage du féminin dans la lignée de Rán, cruelle tueuse au filet dans lequel elle saisit tous ceux qui viennent en mer. Gylfi le « roi de mer »

¹⁷ « I was born in the waters ». (192, notre traduction).

¹⁸ « The Neck takes the young girl by her blond hair and ties her to the pommel of her saddle [...] we only find her gold-buckle shoes. We look for her on one side, we look for her on the other, and we find an inanimate body ». (192, notre traduction).

¹⁹ « She walked on the waves as on the earth ». (119, notre traduction).

(« *King of the sea* », dont l'origine du prénom *gjálfr* signifie vague), témoigne de cette répartition en tant que roi suédois apprécié qui aurait transmis le pouvoir sur la Scandinavie aux Ases, et qui apparaît dans l'*Edda* de Snorri Sturluson²⁰.

Si les figures féminines aquatiques semblent plus négatives que leurs homonymes masculins, c'est vraisemblablement à cause de la christianisation que connaissent les pays scandinaves au Moyen Âge, christianisation qui réemploie à son compte ces figures païennes, tout en chargeant particulièrement celles qui sont féminines. Il existe par exemple un récit sur la « femme de mer » en Suède, qui narre la manière dont celle-ci enlève de force Christine, sœur de Pierre, afin d'en faire une de ses suivantes dans une demeure que nous devinons aquatique, regorgeant d'or et de richesses, et au sein de laquelle le soleil ne paraît jamais. Sirène séductrice, cette femme de mer est présentée comme la plus belle femme du monde. Si, après quinze années de séquestration, la ravisseuse laisse repartir la jeune Christine avec beaucoup de richesses lorsque son frère vient la chercher, elle finit par regretter cette libération : « La femme de mer attend cinq ans, la petite servante ne revient pas. – Si j'avais pensé que tu fusses si fausse, tu n'aurais jamais revu la terre verte de Dieu »²¹ (Marmier 1842, 190). Cette dernière remarque indique que la femme aquatique, même si elle n'appartient pas au monde des humains, reconnaît la toute-puissance de Dieu, et lui est soumise. Elle devient une image de la femme païenne, hérétique détournée de Dieu, mais s'inscrit dans la création divine. Sa nature mauvaise se dévoile également, puisqu'elle apparaît comme celle qui ravit les créatures de Dieu. Elle n'hésite pas non plus à exposer ses grandes richesses en parant Christine luxueusement. Elle incarne donc la tentation des richesses matérielles dont le chrétien doit se défier.

Néanmoins la partition morale binaire genrée des créatures aquatiques que le christianisme impose à l'imaginaire scandinave ne semble pas totalement figée. En effet, la créature aquatique la plus dangereuse de l'imaginaire scandinave est le Neck masculin susmentionné. Régis Boyer mentionne aussi le *nissen*, *nixe* ou *näcken* « qui hante les eaux où il attire de préférence les belles jeunes filles, et tous les *rån* féeriques » (Boyer 1996, 60)²². L'historien en fait des avatars affadis de la figure de Rán, à l'exemple du *Wasserman* danois « qui habitait des grottes de cristal et attirait sur le rivage les jeunes filles pour les entraîner dans sa demeure »²³ (Marmier 1842, 119). Toutes ces créatures constituent finalement des variantes des elfes et des trolls suédois. Cette dernière hypothèse se vérifie dans le chant suédois « Farling », dans lequel le héros éponyme doit affronter « un

²⁰ Sur ce point cf. Boyer 1997, introd.

²¹ « The sea woman waits five years, the little servant doesn't return. – If I had thought you were so false, you would never have seen the green earth of God again ». (Marmier 1842, 190, notre traduction).

²² « Who haunts the waters where he preferentially attracts beautiful young women, and all fairy *rån* ». (Boyer 1996, 60, notre traduction).

²³ « In the sea was the Wasserman who lived in the crystal caves and lured the young women to the shore to bring them into his dwelling ». (Marmier 1842, 119, notre traduction).

trolle de mer qui dévore les femmes et les filles » (210)²⁴. Le rapt n'est donc pas qu'une affaire de femmes dans la littérature scandinave. Dans le récit danois « L'Homme des eaux », c'est encore un homme qui enlève la fille de Marskig (Marmier 1842, 120). Cependant, la magie est pratiquée par sa mère, figure féminine. C'est à elle qu'incombe la pratique magique et le pouvoir de changer l'apparence de la nature. Le savoir trompeur et la connaissance des choses magiques semblent donc plutôt réservés aux femmes. Ce savoir reste néanmoins illusoire car personne ne saurait changer l'essence de ce qui est œuvre de Dieu dans ces récits christianisés. La femme de mer se rapproche alors dangereusement de la sorcière sous l'influence du christianisme. De fait, c'est bien parce qu'il manque une femme des eaux capable d'exercices magiques que le récit d'« Agnete » se termine différemment de celui de « L'Homme des eaux ». En effet dans ce chant danois, Agnete est abordée par un homme des eaux qui sort de l'abîme et lui demande sa main (274). Agnete le suit dans sa demeure sous-marine et enfante sept fils. Pourtant, alors qu'elle entend sonner les cloches de l'Église, elle émet le souhait de remonter à la surface et l'homme des eaux y consent à condition qu'elle n'y demeure pas. Or Agnete ne respecte pas cette condition, préférant ainsi une vie chrétienne symbolisée par le son des cloches à son ancienne vie païenne, incarnée par l'homme des eaux et leurs enfants. Aussi ce chant témoigne-t-il de la christianisation des légendes danoises durant l'époque médiévale. Avec cette christianisation, c'est tout l'imaginaire scandinave qui est remodelé. De ce fait, la deuxième version du chant, datée du début du XVI^e siècle, reflète l'évolution péjorative des figures imaginaires aquatiques, notamment de celle de l'homme des eaux.

Si la première version du récit met en scène l'homme des eaux aux cheveux couleur or, signe de ses nombreuses richesses, dans la seconde, il devient un troll, portant une cuirasse d'écailles qui reluit au soleil tel l'argent, une rame, un bouclier en écailles de tortues et une coquille d'escargot en guise de casque. Ses cheveux sont verts, et sa voix semblable au chant de la mouette. La figure est donc animalisée, fortement dévalorisée dans la traduction danoise tout juste postérieure au Moyen Âge. Les différentes figures imaginaires scandinaves (trolls, tritons, sirènes) semblent avoir été entremêlées durant les siècles écoulés entre les deux versions. En revanche, ce qui subsiste du mythe originel, c'est la richesse des habitants des mers car l'homme des eaux possède un grand palais sous-marin dont les murailles sont de cristal. Aussi, plusieurs sirènes sont à la disposition de ce triton : « À mon service j'ai sept cents jeunes filles moitié femme, moitié poisson » (129)²⁵. On peut même penser que, dans les deux versions, c'est cet argument de la richesse qui convainc Agnete d'épouser l'homme de la mer et de le suivre. Néanmoins, cette richesse est

²⁴ « A sea troll that devours women and girls ». (210, notre traduction).

²⁵ « In my service I have seven hundred young girls half woman, half fish ». (129, notre traduction).

condamnée dans la deuxième version du texte puisque Agnete, qui revient sur terre et se rend à l'église, est traitée de « trolle » à son tour, et que les figures religieuses des vitraux la fuient. Elle meurt dans cette deuxième version, après avoir supplié Dieu, et son corps est rejeté sur la terre où elle est finalement enterrée. Le récit conclut sur le fait que la tombe est toujours mouillée car « le trolle des mers y vient pleurer » (276)²⁶. Aussi l'homme des eaux apparaît-il capable d'aimer, et surtout capable de se repentir, ce qui soulève la question d'une possibilité de Salut pour les êtres aquatiques. Dans l'esprit ouvertement chrétien de cette dernière version, l'hypothèse du repentir n'est envisageable que parce que la créature est masculine. Cela démontre que les figures masculines et féminines scandinaves conservent malgré tout une part d'ambivalence. Tantôt l'homme des eaux apparaît comme un menteur se jouant de la jeune fille qu'il séduit, tantôt il est un sauveur ramenant les noyés (en vie ou non) et parfois même, ramenant les morts à la vie comme dans « La puissance de la harpe » (133). Dans ce chant danois, Pierre appelle l'homme des eaux en jouant de la harpe afin de sauver sa fiancée qui a chuté dans un fleuve profond. La créature ramène cette dernière, accompagnée de ses cinq sœurs, qui s'étaient noyées précédemment. L'échange verbal entre Pierre et l'homme des eaux se distingue des conversations entre êtres humains et aquatiques dans les autres chants nordiques. Cela s'explique en partie par le fait que la parole, tout comme la musique, semble exercer un pouvoir puissant qui est mis en avant dans des formes particulières de narrations scandinaves.

3. De la parole à la musique

La forme même des chants, des ballades et des sagas scandinaves induit un rapport particulier à la parole. Le terme *saga* par exemple provient du verbe islandais *segja*, qui signifie « dire, raconter »²⁷.

Un rapport à la parole privilégié ?

Dans la saga de *Hallfredr le scalde difficile*, la parole tient un rôle particulièrement important puisque, comme le titre l'indique, le héros est un scalde, un poète chanteur scandinave. Celui-ci s'exprime en *vísa*, strophe de la poésie scaldique, et la plupart d'entre-elles prennent pour sujet des femmes. Par exemple, Rán et la Walkyrie Gunnr sont évoquées dans les *vísa* 18 et 19 à titre comparatif. La première est désignée par la périphrase « la Rán de l'oreiller » (Boyer 1998, 190)²⁸, et, pareillement à un cygne dans un détroit,

²⁶ « The sea troll comes there to cry ». (276, notre traduction).

²⁷ Sur ce point cf. Boyer 1996, introd.

²⁸ « The pillow Rán ». (Boyer 1998, 190, notre traduction).

baisse sinistrement la tête auprès de Gríss, tandis que la seconde est qualifiée de « Gunnr à la dentelle » (190)²⁹. Ces comparaisons désignent Kolfinna, épouse de Gríss. Hallfredr valorise Kolfinna en la comparant aux femmes mythologiques puissantes. Rán est renvoyée à son statut d'épouse exemplaire. Dans l'imaginaire scandinave, selon Régis Boyer, la Walkyrie représente l'esprit tutélaire d'un homme et, en tant que messagère du Destin et de la Mort, elle vient chercher les âmes des guerriers tombés sur le champ de bataille (Boyer 1997, 164). D'ailleurs *Gunnr* signifie « bataille / *battle* » (164-165). Ce nom symbolise alors la lutte amoureuse qu'Hallfredr engage contre Gríss, qu'il provoque en duel pour l'amour de Kolfinna. La comparaison de Kolfinna avec un cygne annonce la suivante avec la Walkyrie, puisque, selon Régis Boyer, cette dernière messagère est assimilée au cygne dans la poésie scandinave médiévale³⁰. Déesse de la mer et Walkyrie sont de nouveau réunies, par le biais de l'image poétique. La parole, plus précisément la parole poétique, recourt donc aux figures imaginaires de la mer, qu'elle érige en véritables métaphores de l'amour et de la mort.

Pourtant force est de constater que, si elles font beaucoup parler d'elles, les figures aquatiques ne prennent que rarement la parole, et encore, cette dernière est limitée, parfois même régie par la musique à laquelle elle cède la place.

La musique, (lan)gage d'éternité ?

Nous l'avons montré, les figures imaginaires aquatiques scandinaves sont associées à la connaissance, à la mort et à la parole, mais elles entretiennent aussi un rapport étroit avec la musique, notamment par le biais de la harpe et de la lyre. De nombreux récits scandinaves traitent de personnages dont les destins se déroulent comme de véritables partitions de musique. Récits rapportés et péripéties sont souvent narrés lors de chants accompagnés de musique à la harpe. Parfois même, l'instrument est un objet déterminant le destin des personnages. C'est le cas par exemple dans la saga de Ragnarr, débutant sur l'évocation d'une harpe gigantesque et merveilleuse dans laquelle se cache Aslaug : la harpe absorbe littéralement la jeune fille pour ne former qu'une seule image symbolique avec elle, celle du trésor³¹.

Dans « La puissance de la harpe », on suppose que c'est la musique de l'instrument qui, non seulement appelle l'homme des eaux, mais l'oblige à rendre les vies que ce dernier avait ravies. En effet, lorsque la fiancée de Pierre tombe à l'eau, ce dernier demande sa harpe d'or à ses compagnons et joue : « Il touche les cordes de sa harpe d'or, et tous les oiseaux se mettent à chanter.

²⁹ « Gunnr at lace ». (190, notre traduction).

³⁰ Sur ce point cf. Boyer 1997, 164.

³¹ Sur ce point cf. Renaud 2017.

L'homme des eaux quitte sa retraite profonde et monte à la surface du fleuve, tenant par la main la jeune fiancée » (Marmier 1842, 133)³². Il est intéressant de relever que l'homme des eaux, lorsqu'il prend la parole, demande à Pierre de cesser de jouer : « Pierre, [...] ne jouez pas plus longtemps, voici votre fiancée » (133)³³. Il réitère ce propos lorsque Pierre, lui réclamant ensuite les cinq sœurs noyées, reprend son jeu. La musique provenant de la harpe semble donc constituer le seul moyen d'appeler et de contrôler l'homme des eaux. En effet la musique magique de l'instrument en or est un thème récurrent dans les littératures nordiques. Le chant du « Chevalier Tynne » donne l'origine de cette magie : les runes. Le son de la harpe d'Ulfra, fille du nain dans ce chant suédois, provoque l'arrêt du cours naturel du monde : les animaux se figent, les plaines fleurissent et les arbres reverdissent. C'est donc bien le son de l'instrument qui confère à Pierre son pouvoir sur l'homme des eaux, et surtout, sur la vie et la mort. Symboliquement, la musique est donnée comme seul moyen de braver la mort. Puisque cette réflexion s'insère dans le cadre d'une histoire chantée, on peut penser que le chant populaire scandinave lui-même vise à déjouer la mort et le temps. Implicitement, la musique permet à la tradition populaire et orale de s'ériger comme le moyen le plus sûr de survivre dans les mémoires et les imaginaires.

Finalement, l'évolution des figures aquatiques scandinaves qui nous sont parvenues semble suivre la courbe de la christianisation des pays scandinaves au Moyen Âge. Les dieux marins des *Eddas* cèdent peu à peu leur place à des êtres trompeurs, aux richesses luxuriantes symbolisant les biens terrestres et éphémères desquels il importe de se détourner. Espace du danger au Moyen Âge, la mer devient le miroir du monde terrestre, et la demeure du monde des morts. Les créatures marines symbolisent non seulement le passage d'un lieu à un autre, mais aussi celui d'un temps à un autre. S'ajoute le passage de littératures scaldique, eddique et orale vers une nouvelle forme littéraire écrite influencée par les représentations occidentales. Les êtres des eaux incarnent le voyage et l'aventure de l'humanité dans une acception christianisée du temps. Mieux encore : ces créatures marquent la transition entre un temps païen dont elles sont les ambassadrices, et une époque marquée par la chrétienté. En tant que figures imaginaires majeures issues du folklore scandinave, les êtres de l'eau survivent à cette transition, et sont chargés de nouvelles symboliques. Avec la christianisation, l'être de la mer est déchu de son statut divin et du rôle de sauveteur qu'il pouvait parfois endosser, et devient l'incarnation du diable, des tentations terrestres dangereuses pour le corps et pour l'âme du chrétien. Ainsi, comme le diable proposant des pactes à ses futures

³² « He touches the strings of his golden harp, and all the birds begin to sing. The man of the waters leaves his deep retreat, rises to the surface of the river, holding the young bride by the hand ». (Marmier 1842, 133, notre traduction).

³³ « Don't play any longer, here is your bride ». (133, notre traduction).

victimes, dans les chants populaires du Nord les êtres marins scandinaves s'unissent aux êtres humains par le biais d'un accord mutuel contracté le plus souvent par un mariage, ou une promesse. Ils obéissent au schéma de l'ondine que Françoise Ferlan dresse, lequel présente trois grandes composantes³⁴. La première est que les ondines n'ont pas d'âme et cherchent à en acquérir une en épousant un humain ; la deuxième, que cette union est liée à un interdit dont la violation entraîne la mort du coupable, comme d'ailleurs dans plusieurs récits danois ; la dernière consiste en ce que l'ondine cherche à établir une connexion avec le monde des humains. Sirènes, ondines et autres êtres imaginaires de la mer sont donc bien souvent des figures en perdition à la recherche d'une humanité. À partir du milieu du Moyen Âge, l'influence de la religion catholique peut expliquer la multiplication des figures aquatiques féminines, plus promptes à incarner les vices humains que leurs homologues masculins du fait qu'Ève, pécheresse originelle, fait planer son ombre sur elles. Il apparaît que ce processus de christianisation tente de priver les figures aquatiques scandinaves notamment féminines de leurs voix. À leur parole païenne divinatoire se substitue une idéologie chrétienne, qui prône les règles du mariage par exemple. Pourtant l'homme des eaux est vaincu par Pierre grâce à la harpe incarnant le langage ancien de la tradition scandinave : la musique se donne comme le moyen le plus efficace de résister à cette christianisation puisque, en ressuscitant son aimée et ses sœurs, Pierre transgresse les règles de la nature et de la mort, qui sont celles de Dieu. Si la parole et les récits scandinaves tels « L'Homme des eaux » ou « Agnete » évoluent sous l'influence de cette christianisation qui impose ses stéréotypes (comme celui de la femme magicienne, infernale), l'identité scandinave survit grâce à une poésie et une musicalité bien particulière et omniprésente. Mêlant *eros* et *thanatos*, la sirène, sous ses différentes formes, obtient une place privilégiée dans les chants, les ballades. Le fait que le *Nibelungenlied* octroie une place aussi importante aux femmes de l'eau témoigne bien de la perméabilité de cette figure, allégorisant tout à la fois l'aventure, le territoire lointain à conquérir et l'*Autre*. Dans le texte allemand, les sirènes représentent les terres nordiques, leurs dangers, et surtout, les peurs que les Occidentaux projettent sur ces territoires éloignés aux climats et à la géographie aussi redoutés que fantasmés. Or, cet imaginaire aquatique relatif à la Scandinavie n'a cessé de s'accroître à travers les arts et les littératures après le Moyen Âge. Le conte écrit par Hans Andersen *La Petite sirène*, et le succès de ce dernier, encore d'actualité à ce jour, est probablement l'exemple le plus frappant de la pérennité des figures aquatiques scandinaves qui ne cessent d'alimenter l'imagination.

³⁴ Sur ce point cf. Harf-Lancner 2003, 202.

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“THEY WERE SUCH SKILLED CRAFTSMEN”. HOW TO MANIPULATE A DWARF

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ABSTRACT. *“They Were Such Skilled Craftsmen”. How to Manipulate a Dwarf.*

In Old Norse literature, dwarfs are first and foremost known as remarkable smiths and producers of weapons and other valuable, magic objects. Both gods and human protagonists need those products. However, dwarfs do not usually sell their products, neither to gods nor to humans. The closest thing to a sale contract is found in *Sǫrla þáttur eða Heðins saga ok Högna*, a short narrative found in the *Flateyjarbók* manuscript. Here, Freyja intended to buy an exceptionally beautiful necklace, from the dwarfs, and offered them gold and silver in exchange for it. However, the dwarfs would only sell it to her in exchange for one night spent together and Freyja accepted the trade. But how can you make sure you get what you need from a dwarf if you do not happen to be Freyja? In this paper, I provide some case studies that seem to indicate a pattern. The most powerful gods, such as Óðinn, may issue a direct order, while less powerful beings, as Loki or Freyja, need to manipulate the dwarf into *wanting* to provide them the desired item. Human protagonists are able to manipulate dwarfs by exploiting the fact that the dwarfs reciprocate help and generosity. However, if someone attempts to treat dwarfs as servants, when, in reality, they do not have the same power over them as the mighty gods do, they risk severe retribution from the dwarf.

Keywords: *Old Norse, dwarfs, humans, gods, manipulation, reciprocity*

REZUMAT. *„Erau meșteșugari atât de iscusiți”. Cum să manipulezi un dvergr.*

În literatura nordică veche, *dvergar* sunt cunoscuți în primul rând ca fierari remarcabili și făuritori de arme și alte obiecte magice de valoare. Atât zeii, cât și oamenii au nevoie de aceste obiecte. Cu toate acestea, *dvergar* nu își vând de

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obicei comorile nici zeilor și nici oamenilor. Cel mai apropiat lucru care seamănă cu un contract de vânzare se găsește în *Sǫrla þáttr eða Heðins saga ok Hǫgna*, o scurtă povestire găsită în manuscrisul Flateyjarbók. În această povestire, Freyja intenționa să cumpere un colier excepțional de frumos, de la *dvergar*, oferindu-le în schimbul lui aur și argint. *Dvergar* i l-ar vinde doar dacă fiecare dintre ei ar petrece câte o noapte cu ea, lucru cu care Freyja a fost de acord. Dar cum poți să obții lucrurile de care ai nevoie de la un *dvergr* dacă nu ești Freyja? În această lucrare, prezint câteva studii de caz care par să indice un șablon. Cei mai puternici zei, cum ar fi Óðinn, pot da un ordin direct, în timp ce ființele care nu dețin o putere la fel de mare, precum Loki sau Freyja, trebuie să-l manipuleze pe *dvergr* pentru ca acesta să dorească să le ofere produsul cerut. Alți protagoniști din rândul oamenilor sunt capabili să-i manipuleze pe *dvergar* folosindu-se de faptul că le oferă în schimb ajutor și generozitate. Totuși, dacă cineva încearcă să-i trateze ca pe niște slujitori, când ei în realitate nu au aceeași putere asupra lor precum zeii puternici, aceștia riscă o răzbunare de proporții.

Cuvinte cheie: *literatura norvegiană veche, dvergar, oameni, zei, manipulare, reciprocitate*

INTRODUCTION

Dwarfs are known from various Old Norse sources, such as skaldic poetry, the *Poetic Edda*, the *Prose Edda* and saga literature, legendary sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) and chivalric sagas (*riddarasögur*) in particular. In many instances dwarfs are depicted as remarkable smiths and producers of weapons and other valuable, magic objects. Some of the most famous objects produced by dwarfs include the mead of poetry, Gleipnir (the chain with which Fenrir the Wolf was chained), Draupnir (Óðinn's magical ring), Mjöllnir (Þórr's hammer), Gungnir (Óðinn's spear), Skíðblaðnir (Freyr's ship), Brísingamen (Freyja's necklace), and Tyrvingr and Dáinsleif (swords that are notorious for causing someone's death every time they are drawn from the sheath). John Lindow (2021) speculates that verses 8–9 of *Völuspá* indicate that the gods created dwarfs specifically for the purpose of producing objects that the gods themselves were not able to produce.

Dwarfs [...] produce precious objects for the gods. If the difficult lines in *Völuspá* st. 9 tells us that the gods created dwarfs at this point [i.e., when three *þursa meyjar* 'maidens of giants' arrived from Jötunheimar, UVM], it might be because their own ability to smith precious things had been compromised. (Lindow 2021, 28)

Admittedly, the relevant passage is rather obscure and hard to access:

8. They [i.e., the gods, UVM] played at tables in the meadow, were merry,
there was for them no whit of a want of gold;
until three maidens of giants came,
immensely mighty, from Jötunheimar.
9. Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
who should devise the lord of dwarves
from Brimir’s blood and from blue limbs.

(“The Prophecy of the Seeress” 2023, trans. Pettit, 39–41)

For the purpose of this research, I will confine myself to the dwarfs’ role as producers and suppliers of such special artefacts, although this role is not the only one that dwarfs play in Old Norse sources. In some sagas they are capable healers (for example, in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana* and *Göngu-Hrólfs saga*) or powerful helpers in combat (e.g., in *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar*). Furthermore, one can even raise the question of whether all dwarfs who are referred to as *dvergar* in various Old Norse sources are actually beings of the same sort, cf. Mikučionis (2020, 140–141). Researchers have expressed conflicting views on that matter. On the one hand, Kevin J. Wanner claims that dwarfs “appear in the sagas as they do in the myths, with almost no perceptible alteration in their race’s essential characteristics, motivations, or powers” (Wanner 2001, 204) and describes “the uniformity which these figures exhibit across the range of Norse literary genres” as “striking” (ibid.). Paul Battles states that “the general traits of dwarfs in Norse literature remain remarkably stable from the earliest sources to the later ones. On some points [...] the sources do contradict each other, but by and large they paint a consistent picture” (Battles 2005, 36). On the other hand, Werner Schäfke-Zell draws the opposite conclusion: “literary dwarves, i.e., saga dwarves, have little in common with the mythic dwarves that feature in Eddic lays and the *Prose Edda*, and do not show any resemblance to ancient Nordic dwarves” (Schäfke 2015, 366). My aim, however, is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of all aspects connected to dwarfs, but rather to discuss how various Old Norse texts describe possible ways of manipulating dwarfs into providing objects they have produced, or into producing specific quest items. My point is that dwarfs are often depicted as producers of wondrous, magic objects both in the *Prose Edda* and in saga literature, and I will focus on such episodes – without speculating about their possible relation to the original pre-Christian Old Norse religion or belief system and without attempting to reconstruct an image of an “*Ur-dwarf*” (a term I have borrowed from Ármann Jakobsson’s publications). Both gods and human protagonists often need – or, at least, desire – dwarf-made products, and in some cases the protagonist’s subsequent success or even survival depends

on having and using them, cf. “without the tools (treasures) that the dwarfs produced the gods would have been powerless and destitute” (Lieberman 2016, 306) and “[t]he dwarf’s help is decisive for the human actant’s later success” (Schäfke 2012, 173). It has to be noted that the dwarfs do not usually *sell* their products. Perhaps, the explanation to this reluctance to sell is that dwarf-crafted objects *must* be hard to acquire so that the audience (the listeners and/or the readers) of the Old Norse texts is in no doubt that these items are extraordinarily valuable. If anyone with a sufficient amount of gold could buy anything they wanted from the dwarfs, their products would only be expensive – but not extraordinary (supernatural and magic) as they are.² Consequently, the protagonist, be it a god, another supernatural being or a human hero, needs to manipulate the dwarf(s) in one way or another to make sure they get what they need (or desire).

The dwarfs have been characterized as “subservient to [the gods]” (Lieberman 2016, 314) and “indispensable servants” (Lieberman 2002, 261), which implies that the gods can demand what they need (or want) from the dwarfs – and expect that the latter will obey. But the dwarfs have also been described as “reluctant donors” (e.g., Ármann Jakobsson 2005, 58; Hafstein 2003, 33; Acker 2002, 216), so the question of how they can be manipulated is to the highest degree relevant. My point of departure is the assumption that the balance of power between gods and dwarfs is different from the balance of power between, say, human beings and dwarfs. The dwarfs may, perhaps, be characterized as servants in some episodes, but definitely not in all of them. This distinction will potentially lead to differences regarding the degree of success of certain manipulation techniques, depending on *who* performs the manipulation. In his study on the motive of the ‘extorted dwarf’, Werner Schäfke-Zell distinguished between a) vengeful, unrewarded dwarfs, b) non-vengeful, rewarded dwarfs, and

² Dwarfs may, however, sell their services. For example, in *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, the giant Vaði pays the dwarfs to teach his son, Velent (Völundr), the secrets of smithing:

Vaði the giant met the dwarfs and spoke with them. He said that he had his son Velent there, and he wanted them to take him in for twelve months and teach him all kinds of smithing, and he would give them as much gold as they desired. The two dwarfs said that they would take the boy and teach him all sorts of skills, if Vaði the giant would give them a mark of gold. He agreed and put it immediately into their hands. They agreed [...], and this bargain was fulfilled. (*The Saga of Thidrek of Bern* 1988, trans. Haymes, 40)

In this case, the dwarfs’ services – even though they are bought and paid for with gold – are hard to get, foremost because the dwarfs are hard to find. They live in a mountain across Grónasund, where no ships are available, so that Vaði has to wade across the sound with Velent on his shoulders. Furthermore, the dwarfs won’t release Velent after the period they had agreed upon. Rather, they pay back the money in order to keep Velent for additional twelve months and to teach him more – but if Vaði does not come for him on the appointed day after this extended period, they will have his head cut off (*The Saga of Thidrek of Bern* 1988, trans. Haymes, 40–41).

c) non-vengeful, unrewarded dwarfs. He thinks that the dwarf's response to the human character's actions correlates with the protagonistic or antagonistic nature of the character and with the primary or secondary role the protagonist plays (Schäfke 2012, 176). Lotte Motz defined dwarfs as beings "whose position before gods or heroes may be described by one or more of the following adjectives: helpful, deprived, insulted, vengeful" (Motz 1977, 49). I argue, by contrast, that the position of a dwarf before a powerful god is *different* to the position of a dwarf before a less powerful supernatural being or a human character. Consequently, a dwarf's reaction to the manipulation will depend on the balance of power between the manipulator and the one being manipulated (the manipulatee, i.e., in our case the dwarf). The research questions addressed in this article refer to how different characters manipulate dwarfs in Old Norse sources, how the dwarfs respond to the manipulation in the different situations, how the dwarfs' reactions are related to the balance of power between the manipulator and the manipulatee, and to what extent different manipulation techniques prove to be successful. To answer these questions, I will provide seven case studies, involving gods, a jötunn, and human beings. I start however with defining what I mean by manipulation.

MANIPULATION: A DEFINITION AND SOME EXAMPLES

I have chosen to look at manipulation in a semiotic perspective. Semioticians define the term *manipulation* as 'an action of humans upon other humans with the goal of having them carry out a given program' (Greimas and Courtés 1982, 184). It is worth noting that the term *manipulation* in semiotics has no pejorative connotation in and of itself (Hébert 2020, 135). For the purposes of this research, I will use the term *manipulation* discussing a manipulator's (e.g., a god's, another supernatural being's, or a human being's) actions with the goal of having a manipulatee to provide him with a product or a service. Given the research questions in this study, the manipulatee will, as a rule, be a dwarf, although, in certain episodes, two characters may attempt to manipulate each other, so that they assume the roles of the manipulator and of the manipulatee in turns or even simultaneously.

One can, thus, paraphrase *manipulation* as 'causing-to-do'. When projected upon the Greimasian semiotic square, this gives four possibilities or four kinds of manipulation: 1) causing-to-do, also labelled as "inducing" by Hébert (2020, 136) and as "intervention" by Greimas and Courtés (1982, 184), 2) causing-not-to-do (labelled, respectively, as "preventing" by Hébert and as "hindrance" by Greimas and Courtés), (3) not-causing-to-do ("non-inducing" / "non-intervention"), and (4) not-causing-not-to-do ("leaving be").

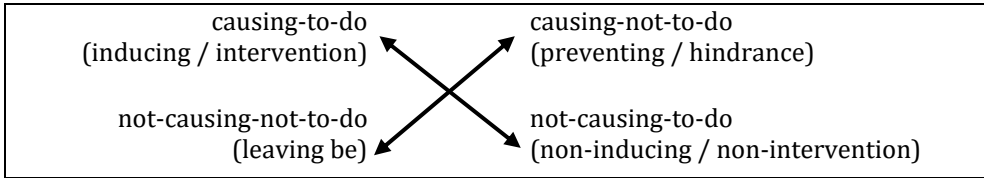


Figure 1. The four kinds of manipulation, based on Greimas and Courtés (1982, 184)

I will mainly be focusing on the first kind, causing-to-do, i.e., causing the dwarf (making the dwarf want to or have to) provide the manipulator with a certain product (e.g., a piece of jewellery, a tool, or a weapon). In some episodes it may also be relevant to look at the second kind, causing-not-to-do, e.g., making sure the dwarf does not attempt to harm the manipulator.

The manipulator seeks to change the manipulatee's wanting-to-do and/or having-to-do by proposing an object of retribution. Greimas and Courtés (1982, 184–185) suggested a distinction between a pragmatic and a cognitive side of manipulation, based on the nature of the object of retribution. On the pragmatic side, manipulation plays on temptation (proposing positive objects of retribution, e.g., promising a money reward) and/or intimidation (proposing negative objects, e.g., threatening). On the cognitive side, manipulation plays on seduction (manifesting a positive judgement of the manipulatee's modal competence by the manipulator) or provocation (manifesting a negative judgement of the same competence: "You are incapable of ..."). Hébert (2020, 135) draws a distinction between positive and negative manipulation. Positive manipulation aims to produce, increase or maintain at an adequate level the manipulatee's wanting-to-do and/or having-to-do, and the purpose of positive manipulation is causing-to-do. Negative manipulation, by contrast, aims to eliminate or decrease the manipulatee's wanting-to-do and/or having-to-do, and the purpose of negative manipulation is causing-not-to-do. To illustrate the various kinds of manipulation in an actual situation, Hébert (2020, 135–136) describes two opposing armies, each commanded by a general. The generals may use positive manipulation (encouragement, the prospect of earning medals, threats, etc.) to induce their own soldiers to advance or, at least, not to retreat, and negative manipulation (threats, explosions, etc.) to induce the soldiers of the enemy not to advance or even to retreat. I would like to add to this example that a general has the authority to command his own soldiers. A general's order is in and of itself sufficient to produce a soldier's having-to-do. Another thing is that manipulation does not necessarily lead to action (Hébert 2020, 136), but the point is that a general does not need to propose any (positive or negative) retribution in order to create a soldier's having-to-do.

For our purposes, positive manipulation means that a manipulator seeks to increase a dwarf's wanting to, or having to, provide the manipulator

with a certain product. In cases the manipulator (a powerful god, such as Óðinn) has the power to command a dwarf, manipulation does not need to include any retribution. In other cases, manipulation will typically include promising a positive retribution, such as a repayment or a reward (in the pragmatic domain) or a positive judgement (praise) of the dwarf's competence (in the cognitive domain), or a negative retribution, such as threats (in the pragmatic domain) or a negative judgement of the dwarf's competence in order to provoke or challenge the dwarf (in the cognitive domain). Given our focus in this study, negative manipulation is to a lesser degree relevant, but it could turn out that it is nevertheless relevant in cases where the dwarf appears to intend to harm the manipulator, so that – in the manipulator's view – the dwarf's wanting-to-do needs to be decreased or eliminated.

We turn now to case studies, where we analyse some particular episodes, involving manipulation, with special attention being paid to the balance of power between the manipulator (gods, a *jötunn*, and human beings) and the manipulatee (the dwarfs).

SEVEN CASE STUDIES

CASE 1. GLEIPNIR, SÍF'S GOLDEN HAIR, SKÍÐBLADNIR, AND GUNGNIR

That the gods have the power to command dwarfs, seems clear from the fact that, in the early stages of world creation, Borr's sons set a dwarf under each of the four corners of the sky (which they had made out of Ymir's skull): “They also took his skull and made out of it the sky and set it up over the earth with four points, and under each corner they set a dwarf. Their names are Austri, Vestri, Nordri, Sudri” (Snorri Sturluson 1987, trans. Faulkes, 12).

In my interpretation, the gods did not need to use any advanced manipulation strategies or sophisticated schemes. They could simply command the dwarfs – not unlike generals who can command their soldiers – and, in so doing, produce the dwarfs' having-to-do. In such cases the dwarfs involved can indeed be characterized as servants to gods.

Further in the *Prose Edda*, we find two episodes where the dwarfs are told by a messenger that the gods need the dwarfs to produce a specific product for them. In the first case, Óðinn sends Skírnir to tell the dwarfs that they are required to make Gleipnir: “Then All-father sent some one called Skirnir, Freyr's messenger, down into the world of black-elves to some dwarfs and had a fetter called Gleipnir made” (ibid., 28).

In the second episode, Loki goes to the dwarfs, and, in my interpretation, Loki told them it was the gods (or, perhaps, Þórr specifically) who required that they produce not only a replacement for Síf's hair, but also two other objects for the Æsir.

Loki Laufeyarson had done this for love of mischief: he had cut off all Sif's hair. And when Thor found out, he caught Loki and was going to break every one of his bones until he swore that he would get black-elves to make Sif a head of hair out of gold that would grow like any other hair. After this Loki went to some dwarfs called Ivaldi's sons, and they made the head of hair and Skidbladnir and the spear belonging to Odin called Gungnir. (ibid., 96)

Admittedly, the text of the *Prose Edda* does not elaborate on what exactly Skírnir and Loki told the dwarfs. One could hypothesize that both Skírnir and Loki had to manipulate the dwarfs in one way or another to produce their wanting-to-do or having-to-do, e.g., by promising a reward, by threatening to harm the dwarfs if they do not obey, or by pointing out the negative consequences for the whole world if the gods do not receive the objects they demand. Especially the communication between Loki and the dwarfs may have been full of drama, given what we know about Loki's personality; even the above quotation mentions his "love of mischief". Also, Skírnir – Freyr's messenger – is known for his manipulation strategy in *Skírnismál* (or *För Skírnis*), where he manipulated Gerðr first by proposing positive retribution (golden apples and the magic ring Draupnir) and then negative retribution (threats) in order to make her promise to meet Freyr. However, the most straightforward assumption seems to me that, in the two episodes mentioned above, it was sufficient to tell the dwarfs that the messenger (viz., Skírnir and Loki) brings the gods' orders, which in and of itself produced the dwarfs' having-to-do. Therefore, I cannot agree with Hafstein who wrote that the dwarfs "are reluctant donors, [...] and the gods generally obtain the goods [from the dwarfs, UVM] through deceit, threats, or bribery" (Hafstein 2003, 33). In cases the manipulator has the authority to command the dwarfs, a command (even when transmitted through a messenger) is sufficient – just as it was sufficient when Borr's sons set Austri, Vestri, Norðri, and Suðri under the four corners of the sky.

CASE 2. DRAUPNIR, GULLINBURSTI, AND MJÖLLNIR

When Loki acts on his own initiative, he has no power to command the dwarfs but needs to manipulate them in other ways. Right after having ensured that Ivaldi's sons produce the golden hair, Skíðblaðnir, and Gungnir on gods' orders, Loki proceeded to make other dwarfs produce some other products. To create the dwarfs' wanting-to-do he offered a wager: "Then Loki wagered his head with a dwarf called Brokk on whether his brother Eitri would succeed in making three precious things as good as these were" (Snorri Sturluson 1987, trans. Faulkes, 96). The result of this wager episode was Gullinbursti (the golden-bristled boar that was given to Freyr), Draupnir (the magical ring that

was given to Óðinn), and Mjöllnir (the powerful hammer that became Þórr's most important weapon and main attribute), while Loki got his lips stitched together as he had lost the wager. To relate this episode to the definitions and distinctions presented above, this wager was a manipulation of the cognitive kind, playing on provocation by challenging Eitri the dwarf's modal competence. Additionally, one could speculate to what extent the prize Loki offered – his own head – was attractive to the dwarfs and whether it also might have contributed to producing the dwarfs' wanting-to-do so that the manipulation worked both in the cognitive and the pragmatic domain. When it turned out that Brokkr had actually won the wager, "Loki offered to redeem his head; the dwarf said there was no chance of that" (ibid., 97). Does it mean that Brokkr had accepted the wager because he desired the prize? Loki saved his life thanks to his quick thinking and smartness: "Then the dwarf was going to cut off Loki's head, but Loki said that the head was his but not the neck" (ibid.), and – as already has been mentioned – Brokkr eventually stitched up Loki's mouth. However, I do not think that this blood-thirsty episode shows that the original reason for the dwarf to agree to this wager could have been that he wanted to have Loki's head cut off. Admittedly, some other dwarfs – apparently, for no particular reason – killed Kvasir, caused Gillingr's drowning, and killed Gillingr's widow just because she wept too loudly when she got the news about her husband's death. Therefore, one may wonder whether the wish to kill was generally characteristic of dwarfs, including Brokkr. However, I find it more likely that Brokkr grew extremely angry with Loki in the process of producing Gullinbursti, Draupnir, and Mjöllnir because he understood that the fly which repeatedly bit him while he was working the bellows, – and nearly caused him to lose the wager, – was no ordinary fly but Loki himself, in disguise. My conclusion is that challenging the dwarf's competence was what made the manipulation successful in this case.

CASE 3. FREYJA'S NECKLACE

The closest thing to a sale contract – besides the episode discussed in footnote 2 – is found in *Sprla þáttur eða Heðins saga ok Högna*, a short narrative in the *Flateyjarbók* manuscript from around 1390 AD. The story starts with introducing the Æsir, the people who lived in Ásía and whose chief town was called Ásgarðr. Their king was Óðinn, and his concubine was Freyja, the daughter of Njorðr. Not far from the king's hall lived Alfrigg, Dvalinn, Berlingr and Grerr, the four smiths with extraordinary talents or powers: "There were some men in Asia, one called Alfrigg, the next Dvalin, then Berling and Grer. [...] They were such skilled craftsmen they could turn their hand to anything and do well. Men such as these were called dwarves. They lived in a certain stone"

(*Sorli's Tale* 2005, trans. Tunstal). One day, when Freyja was walking past the dwarfs' stone, she saw that they were forging a golden necklace, and she liked the looks of it. The text says that the dwarfs liked the looks of Freyja as well, which is a hint about what might be efficiently used as a positive retribution in the process of manipulation.

She asked to buy the necklace, offered gold and silver for it, and good treasures besides. They said they weren't short of money, but each would sell his share of the necklace for one thing, and they didn't want anything else, except for her to lie a night with each of them. And, whether this was gladly done on her part or otherwise, that's the deal they struck. And four nights later, when these conditions had been met, they handed over the necklace to Freyja. (ibid.)

It may seem that Freyja managed to buy a necklace from the dwarf smiths. At the same time, it is not obvious that Freyja actually was buying anything – it may equally well be argued that in reality it was the dwarfs who bought certain services from her, and that the necklace in question was the means of payment rather than the purchased product. Only when the means of payment is money is it obvious what is the object (or the service) that is being purchased, and what is the payment. But when a product (or a service) is being exchanged for another product or a service, the distinction between selling and buying is blurred out, and it may be difficult if not impossible to tell which party of the transaction is the seller, and which is the buyer.

In a modern legal system, a bilateral sale contract “arises from the exchange of mutual, reciprocal promises (the offer and the acceptance) between two persons (the offeror and the offeree)” (Sileno, Boer, and van Engers 2014, 5), i.e., the buyer and the seller. Either the seller or the buyer may be the offeror, depending on whether the whole transaction starts with the seller offering a product or a service (in exchange for a payment) or the buyer offering money or some other means of payment (in exchange for the product or service).



Figure 2. The sale transaction, as a bilateral contract (quoted from Sileno, Boer, and van Engers 2014, 5)

A sale contract may be described as a special case of manipulation where the offeror is the manipulator who seeks the offeree (the manipulatee) to agree to part either with money (in exchange for a product) or with a product (in exchange for money). Both parties are often from start interested in a successful fulfilment of the contract. In the above episode, Freyja and the four dwarfs switch roles as the offeror resp. offeree. At first, Freyja is the offeror; it is she who offers silver and gold in exchange for the necklace she desires to acquire. However, her offer is not accepted, and thus there is no contract and no transaction. The reason why Freyja's offer was turned down, has hardly anything to do with the dwarfs' richness or lack of interest in gold and silver. Their own statement that they were not short of money seems to function as an excuse which came in handy in that particular situation rather than as a general rule describing what dwarfs would, or would not, accept. In a number of Old Norse sagas, such as *Nítíða saga*, *Þorsteins saga Víkingssonar*, *Egils saga einhenda og Ásmundar berserkjabana* or *Áns saga bógsveigis*, dwarfs readily accept gold and silver (which may be given either directly to the dwarf or to the dwarf's child) – but this readiness notwithstanding, they do not exactly *sell* their products. Cf. also the episode in *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, where the dwarfs accept gold from Vaði for teaching his son Velent thereby selling their services (see footnote 2). After having denied selling the necklace to Freyja, the dwarfs take the role as offerors and offer it in exchange for something *they* want. This time the offer is accepted by the offeree (Freyja), and the contract is successfully carried out. As pointed out above, the distinction between selling and buying in this transaction is blurred out, so that the necklace may both be described as the payment for what the dwarfs bought from Freyja, and as the object that Freyja bought from the dwarfs. Thus, it does not really matter whether it was Freyja who bought the beautiful necklace from the dwarfs, or the dwarfs who bought something else from Freyja. What is germane to this study, is whether Freyja manipulated the dwarfs in this episode. In my interpretation, Freyja did not succeed in manipulating the dwarfs into selling the necklace to her (although she attempted), but rather she was herself manipulated by the dwarfs because the dwarfs willingly took the role as offerors while Freyja (the offeree) accepted their offer.

CASE 4. THE MEAD OF POETRY

Now we turn to the episode in the *Prose Edda* which already has been mentioned, namely, the story of the mead of poetry. It has been interpreted as a story of blood feud where gods, dwarfs and giants were involved (see Lindow 1994 [1995]). Given the focus of this research, the part where Suttungr the jötunn acquires the mead and especially whether he manipulates the dwarfs and how exactly, will be paid special attention to.

Two dwarf brothers, Fjalarr and Galarr, produced the mead by mixing honey with the blood of Kvasir, whom they had killed. As if one murder were not

enough, they invited Gillingr (a *ǫtunn*) and his wife to stay with them. Then they invited Gillingr to go out to sea in a boat, where Gillingr was drowned. When his wife – now a widow – learned about his death, “she was greatly distressed and wept loudly” (Snorri Sturluson 1987, trans. Faulkes, 62). The dwarfs killed her too. Now we arrive at the part where Suttungr acquires the mead.

When Gilling’s son Suttung found out about this, he went there and seized the dwarfs and took them out to sea and put them on a skerry below high-water level. They begged Suttung for quarter and offered him as atonement in compensation for his father the precious mead, and they were reconciled on these terms. Suttung took the mead home with him [...]. (ibid.)

This reminds us a little bit of the episode where four dwarf smiths “sold” the necklace to Freyja – or, rather, bought a night with her, using the necklace as payment. Here the two dwarfs use the mead of poetry as payment for their own lives. The similarity lies thus in that the dwarfs in both cases use a product of theirs as payment for something. The main difference from the Freyja episode is here that Fjalarr and Galarr paid for the chance to elude the certain death by drowning, which would have been the revenge for having caused the deaths of Suttungr’s parents. Another difference is that Fjalarr and Galarr could only hope – but not know with certainty – that Suttungr would find the mead valuable enough to accept it as payment. By contrast, Alfrigg, Dvalinn, Berlingr, and Grerr knew that Freyja did find the necklace of great value, as she was prepared to offer a generous payment for it. Luckily for Fjalarr and Galarr, their offer was accepted by Suttungr. Again, this episode shows that Suttungr did not manipulate the dwarfs in order to get the mead of poetry. It was not for the mead he threatened the dwarfs with killing them by drowning, but as revenge for their evil doings. Suttungr probably did not even know about the existence of the mead of poetry until he put the dwarfs on the skerry which was to disappear under water during high-water. Rather, it was the dwarfs who manipulated Suttungr and produced his wanting-to-do (willingness to let them go unharmed) – or, rather, eliminated his wanting-to-do (intention to kill them) – by proposing a positive retribution, i.e., the mead. Therefore, I argue that statements such as “[Suttungr] extracts from them the mead as compensation for his father” (Lindow 1994 [1995], 61) lack precision. My conclusion is that, although the dwarfs do not sell their products, they may use them as means of payment – or ransom – when they need something that is important to themselves.

CASE 5. TYRVINGR

We turn now to one of the most notorious dwarf-produced weapons that was ever owned by a human being (even though this particular person was Óðinn’s own grandchild): king Svafrlami’s sword Tyrvingr. The story of how

Svafrlami came to acquire it is told in some versions of *Saga konungs Heiðreks ins vitra* (*The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*). The reader is not only informed about Svafrlami's descent from Óðinn, but also about his father's death in a battle where the latter fought against Þjazi the giant: “Ódin [...] had many sons, all great men and mighty. One of his sons was called Sigrlami [...]. Sigrlami [...] had a son, who was named Svafrlami. Sigrlami fell in battle, fighting against the giant Thjazi” (*The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise* 1960, trans. Tolkien, 67–68). This piece of information is important for our discussion as it gives a hint about why Svafrlami would need, or desire, a magical weapon. It was necessary to be able to avenge the death of his father, whose killer, Þjazi, was no ordinary opponent, but a supernatural being, a jötunn. Additionally, possessing such a weapon would undoubtedly increase its owner's chances to achieve power and glory.

We turn now back to the question of how Svafrlami got this weapon, and what sort of manipulation was involved. One day when he was out in the woods hunting, king Svafrlami encountered two dwarfs, Durinn and Dvalinn, whose exceptional skills must have been renowned – at least, in certain circles – since Svafrlami appears to have heard of them. Moreover, both Svafrlami and the audience of the saga knew that such an encounter meant an opportunity to acquire a magical, dwarf-crafted sword.

At sunset he saw a great stone, and beside it two dwarfs. The king drew his graven sword over them, and with that sign held them outside the stone. They begged him to spare their lives, and Svafrlami asked them what their names were. One said he was called Durin, and the other, Dvalin. Svafrlami knew that these were the most skilful of all dwarfs, and he laid this charge upon them, that they should make a sword for him, the best their skill could devise [...] (*The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise* 1960, trans. Tolkien, 68)

Svafrlami as well as the audience of the saga knew that dwarfs could be coerced into obeying by depriving them of the possibility to get into the stone which was their home (i.e., by offering them negative retribution). The saga text did not need to explicate this. Werner Schäfke-Zell has convincingly demonstrated that the motif of the extorted dwarf was conventionalized and well-known for the readers (and listeners) of the sagas.

The reasons for [denying the dwarf entry to his boulder] are usually not provided by the text itself. [...] [T]he motif of the extorted dwarf is already known from other texts as *literary knowledge* or by reconstructing the motif of the hero through his later clearly goal-oriented interaction with the dwarf. The motif of the extorted dwarf thus appears highly conventionalized since the narrative does not need to explicitly state the reasons for the human actant's actions. They belong to the *horizon of expectation* (*Erwartungshorizont*) of the genre of *Fornaldarsögur* and Late Medieval Icelandic Romances. (Schäfke 2012, 181)

Cf. also “the conventionality of the *dvergar* motifs in the sagas attests to audience familiarity with them” (Mayburd 2018, 203).

As pointed out above, one important reason for Svafrlami to coerce the dwarfs into providing him with such a magical sword may have been his intention to kill Þjazi the giant. At any rate, the saga text mentions that Svafrlami subsequently “bore it in battles and in single combats, and with it he slew the giant Thjazi” (*The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise* 1960, trans. Tolkien, 68). Whether the motif behind this intention was to avenge the death of his father, the desire to marry Þjazi’s daughter (which Þjazi perhaps would not have allowed), a combination of both or something else, is unclear. In any case, Svafrlami “took Thjazi’s daughter Fríd, and they had a daughter named Eyfura” (ibid.). Edward Pettit notes this episode as well, particularly pointing out that Þjazi was responsible for killing Svafrlami’s father: “He used it to kill the giant Þjazi, his father’s killer, before taking the giant’s daughter, *Fríðr* ‘Peace’” (Pettit 2020, 325). Returning to Svafrlami’s encounter with the dwarfs, he decided to exploit the situation to the maximum, and demanded the sword not only to be victorious, but also luxurious and expensive.

[I]ts hilts were to be of gold and its grip also, and they were to make its scabbard and baldrick of gold. He said that this sword must never fail and never rust, must bite into iron and stone as if into cloth, and that victory must always come to him who carried it in battles and single combats; this was the price of their lives. On the appointed day Svafrlami returned to the stone, and the dwarfs delivered over to him the sword; it was very beautiful. (ibid.)

So far, it seems that the manipulation has proven successful. Svafrlami received exactly the kind of sword he had demanded. However, it turned out soon that the dwarfs wouldn’t tolerate such violent and arrogant behaviour from a human being, even if he was a king – and Óðinn’s own grandson.

But when Dvalin stood in the doors of the stone he said, ‘May your sword, Svafrlami, be the death of a man every time it is drawn, and with it may three of the most hateful deeds be done; may it also bring you your death!’ Then Svafrlami struck at the dwarf with the sword, and the ridges of the blade were hidden in the stone; but the dwarf leapt back into it. [...] (ibid.)

And indeed, Svarflami was killed by Arngrím the berserk who slew him using this very sword – and married his daughter Eyfura.

[Arngrím the berserk] harried the kingdom of Svafrlami and fought with him, and they had a close fight together; Svafrlami struck off a part of Arngrím’s shield, and the sword plunged into the earth. Then Arngrím swung his sword against Svafrlami’s hand and struck it off; and he took

Tyrving himself and fought with it, and with it he slew Svafrlami. Then Arngrím took great plunder, and carried off with him Eyfura, Svafrlami's daughter; he went home to Bólm and wedded Eyfura. (ibid.)

Thus, Svafrlami's end in this version of the saga bears clear parallels to Þjazi the giant's fate. Could it be the case that Tyrvingr had the ability to choose how to act and whom to “obey”? Could the sword have been able to remember how its previous owners had used it, to learn from its own experience? In her study on Old Norse magic swords, Miriam Mayburd writes that Heiðrekr – one of those who in due course inherited Tyrvingr – “is not wielding Tyrvingr: it appears to be quite expertly wielding *him*” (Mayburd 2020, 55).

What exactly the three *níðingsverk in mestu* (‘most evil/despicable deeds’) mentioned in Dvalinn's curse are will depend on how one interprets the saga, which version of the saga one examines, and also on whether one takes into account other texts where Tyrvingr is mentioned, such as *Orvar-Odds saga*. At any rate, the dwarfs' curse is highly important for the events of the story about Svafrlami and his descendants. Jackson Crawford says even that “[e]xcept for its final two, extraneous chapters, [the saga] is virtually a saga of the sword Tyrvingr” (*Two Sagas of Mythical Heroes* 2021, trans. Crawford, ix).

The story of Svafrlami and his fatal attempt at manipulating the dwarfs is not the only instance in saga literature where the manipulator is punished in one way or another by the dwarf (or the dwarfs). Werner Schäfke-Zell classifies the producers of Tyrvingr as “vengeful, unrewarded dwarfs” (Schäfke 2012, 176). In addition to these two dwarfs, the category of vengeful, unrewarded dwarfs includes Andvari in *Völsunga saga* and, although his vengefulness comes to expression in a different way, Alfrigg in *Þiðreks saga* (ibid., 176–177). According to Schäfke-Zell the dwarfs “only curse the protagonistic secondary characters Svafrlami in *Hervarar saga* and Loki in *Völsunga saga*” – and “there are different kinds of curses” (ibid., 177). While Andvari places a curse on the treasure which Loki violently has taken from him, and while Durinn and Dvalinn curse the sword they have produced for Svafrlami, Alfrigg contents himself with declaring that Þiðrekr shall never have him under his control again: “And never shall you again get me in your power as long as I live, even if you live two men's lifetimes” (*The Saga of Thidrek of Bern* 1988, trans. Haymes, 17–18). Thus, this declaration is analysed as a special, non-lethal kind of curse – but nevertheless a curse – by Schäfke-Zell (Schäfke 2012, 176–177). Presumably, the dwarf in the longer redaction of *Mágus saga* would also have been included in the category of vengeful, unrewarded dwarfs if Schäfke-Zell had taken this redaction into account in his study, as he declares the same kind of promise to Ubbi: “nú munum vit skilja, ok lifi ek aldri svo lengi, at þú skulir fá vald á mèt (sic)” (*Bragða-Mágus saga* 1858, 81, “now we shall part, and as long as I live you will not have power over me”, my translation). This would have required Schäfke-Zell to expand the

category of vengeful, unrewarded dwarfs to also include dwarfs in episodes where the manipulator is an antagonistic character. In my view, this would have made perfect sense. Why should a dwarf's reaction be determined by whether the manipulator is a protagonist or an antagonist?

My analysis of the dwarfs' response to manipulation in such cases is different to that by Schäfke-Zell in two more regards. First, I find it important that, strictly speaking, it is not Svafrlami and Loki themselves who are being cursed, but rather the *objects* that have been forcefully taken from the dwarfs (the sword Tyrvingr and Andvari's treasure, respectively) so that the curse follows the object and *all* its subsequent owners.³ This aspect may be explained in terms of narrative structure. A cursed object which passes down from one generation to the next, suits better as the core of an exciting story than a cursed *individual* character. Second, the manipulators in all the three episodes (i.e., Svafrlami, Loki, and Þiðrekr) – four episodes when we add Ubbi in the longer redaction of *Mágus saga*, – have no legitimate power to command dwarfs in the same way as gods have but coerce the dwarfs into providing them with certain objects by force. It is this combination of the balance of power between the dwarfs and those who manipulate them on the one hand, and the brutal force used as negative retribution as manipulation strategy on the other, which results in the dwarfs responding the way they do.

CASE 6. A DWARF-MADE BOW

Another similar episode is found in the *Áns saga bogsveigis* (*Saga of An Bow-Bender*). Very much like Svafrlami, Án accidentally meets a dwarf in a forest beside a large stone, which Án realizes is the dwarf's home. Similar to what Svafrlami did, Án does not let the dwarf come back inside his stone unless he produces a weapon with specific magic powers. It appears that Án knows – or, at least, assumes – that the possibility to get back into his home is vital to the dwarf. Perhaps even the dwarf's life depends on it, cf. the previous case where the dwarfs beg to spare their lives in a similar situation. Thus, Án creates the dwarf's having-to-do (i.e., his having to comply with Án's requests) by offering negative retribution in the pragmatic domain. Unlike Svafrlami, however, Án gives the dwarf some silver coins as payment, – arguably, not as much for the bow and the arrows as such, but first and foremost to make sure the dwarf does not curse them.

[Án] saw a single large stone, and a man standing next to a stream. He had heard mention of dwarves, and he'd also heard that they were more skilful than other men. [He] got between the stone and the dwarf, and cast a spell [...]. He said that the dwarf would never be able to get back inside

³ Cf. “when delivering the weapon, Dvalinn cursed it” (Pettit 2020, 325) and “[f]urious about Loki's robbery, Andvari cursed the treasure and all its owners” (Dillinger 2012, 29).

unless he crafted a bow for him, as large and strong as he could wield, and five arrows to go with it. [...] The dwarf complied with these terms, without placing any curses on the weapons. [...] [Án] gave him some silver coins [...]. ("The Saga of An Bow-Bender" 2012, trans. Waggoner, p. 161)

One could speculate whether this particular dwarf was not as rich as Alfrigg, Dvalinn, Berlingr, and Grerr who wouldn't sell the necklace to Freyja for money, and whether his relative poorness could have been the reason why he accepted the silver coins from Án. However, it is more likely that richness or poverty of the dwarf has nothing to do with the matter. Án did not offer any money until he had received the bow and the arrows. Thus, this episode supports the claim that dwarfs do not sell their products. The silver coins serve more as a sign that Án wants to compensate for having been rude towards the dwarf, and also to ensure that the dwarf does not curse the weapons retroactively. As Werner Schäfke-Zell notes, "[i]f the reader does not know about the potential threat of the dwarf cursing the human actant, it seems arbitrary that the human actant usually endows the dwarf with valuables such as [...] silver (*Áns saga*), since the dwarf is absolutely in the power of the human actant" (Schäfke 2012, 177). It appears, thus, that the knowledge about the risk of the dwarfs placing a curse on the object they have been forcefully coerced into producing by someone who does not have legitimate power over them, was a part of the "dwarf-lore".

CASE 7. THE GRATEFUL AND INDEBTED DWARF

Finally, we briefly discuss an episode in *Þorsteins þáttr bójarmagns* where the human protagonist is given magical objects by a dwarf as a token of gratitude for having saved the dwarf's son. I have elsewhere analysed several sagas where human heroes manipulate dwarfs by showing generosity towards dwarf-children and by exploiting the fact that dwarfs are loving and devoted fathers, see Mikučionis (2014). Therefore, this last case-study is rather short before we turn to conclusions.

Besides a huge boulder, Þorsteinn sees a crying dwarf and asks why he is acting like a madman and screaming so loudly. The dwarf explains that an eagle – who, the dwarf says, must be a devil sent by Óðinn himself, – has caught his son and that he will die from grief if he loses him. Þorsteinn rescues the dwarf's boy by shooting the eagle. The dwarf offers a reward on his son's and his own behalf: "My son and I owe you a great debt for saving his life, and now I'd like you to choose your own reward in gold and silver" ("Thorstein Mansion-Might" 1985, trans. Pálsson & Edwards, 261). At first, Þorsteinn refuses, saying: "I'm not in the habit of taking money just for showing my talents" (ibid.). "That doesn't make my duty to repay you any the less", the dwarf responds (ibid.), and offers a wool shirt, a ring, a flint, a marble, and a steel point as a reward instead. When the dwarf explains what magical features all these objects

possess, Þorsteinn gladly accepts them. This episode shows that reciprocity and repayment are essential for dwarfs. Even when the dwarf is not being deliberately manipulated, generosity and help create the dwarf's wanting to (or even having to, – the dwarf uses expressions “my *duty*” and “my son and I owe you”) reward the human, while ungenerous and brutal behaviour may be punished by placing a curse on the object that has been taken from the dwarf.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that the dwarfs may be manipulated in more ways than one. The gods such as Óðinn have the power to command the dwarfs. Even when their command is transmitted via a messenger, the dwarfs obey. Less powerful deities, such as Freyja or Loki, may get what they want from dwarfs by offering positive retribution or by offering a wager and, thus, challenging the dwarfs' modal competence. Also, dwarfs may voluntarily offer their products as ransom, as payment for something they need or desire, or as a token of gratitude. Dwarfs won't tolerate being treated as servants by anyone else than the most powerful gods. Admittedly, this statement is only true with respect to dwarfs of the kind that has been discussed in this article – free dwarfs, famous for their capacities as smiths with magic powers. In chivalric sagas, by contrast, there are dwarfs who are servants to knights, and who are *not* associated with smith-work or craftsmanship. Dwarfs of this kind are left outside the scope of this study. If a human – even if he is a king and Óðinn's grandson – or another being, such as Loki, coerces dwarfs into producing certain objects for them or into handing over their possessions by threats and brutal force, the dwarfs may place a curse upon those objects. It appears that the dwarfs curse the *object*, – not the *individual* in question. Durinn and Dvalinn did not curse Svafrlami so that he would die, but the sword Tyrvingr so that it would bring Svafrlami his death. This explains why Grélant the dwarf did not curse Kvintalín in the *Samsons saga fagra* and why Mǫndull the dwarf did not curse Hrolfr in the *Gǫngu-Hrolfs saga*, even though in both sagas the dwarfs were threatened with physical violence and even killing. In these two cases there was no object to curse since the dwarfs were forced *to do something* rather than *to produce* or *to hand over something* to the manipulator. Alfrigg the dwarf did not exactly curse king Þiðrekr either, even though he was forced to provide him with certain objects; but he at least declared that Þiðrekr would never again have control over him. The same kind of declaration was pronounced by the dwarf in the longer redaction of *Mágus saga* regarding Ubbi, once more supporting the claim that dwarfs won't tolerate being treated as servants by anyone else than the most powerful gods.

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REVISITING NORSE MYTHOLOGY: THE CASE OF A.S. BYATT'S *RAGNARÖK*

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ABSTRACT. *Revisiting Norse Mythology: The Case of A.S. Byatt's Ragnarök.*

In 2011, British author and Booker-prize winner A. S. Byatt publishes *Ragnarök*, her rewriting of the Norse myth about the death of the gods. Seen through the eyes of a thin child who is forced to witness the terrors of World War II, the story and characters of the Norse myth are reinterpreted and retold in accordance with the child's vision, imagination and feelings. The paper here focuses on the association of the Scandinavian imaginary with specific moments in A. S. Byatt's personal history, and highlights the use of certain patterns and ideas that are present in both, trying to pinpoint the elements that make possible the transformation of the mythical into the actual. The aim of this study is to explore the evolution of the mythological events as they are rewritten in Byatt's 21st century book, in close connection with the main character's personal development. To that end, the paper will also dwell upon the comparison drawn by Byatt herself between the Norse and the Christian mythological imaginary – a vision filtered through the eyes and thoughts of the focalizer of the text, the thin child.

Keywords: *Ragnarök, A. S. Byatt, reinterpretation, Norse myths, death of the gods*

REZUMAT. *Explorarea mitologiei nordice: cazul cărții Ragnarök, de A.S. Byatt.*

În 2011, autoarea britanică A. S. Byatt, câștigătoare a Premiului Booker, publică *Ragnarök*, o rescriere a mitului scandinav în care se vorbește despre moartea zeilor. Privite prin ochii unui copil slăbuț care e forțat să fie martorul

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ororilor celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, povestea și personajele din mitologia nordică sunt reinterpretate și repovestite prin filtrul viziunii, imaginației și sentimentelor copilului. Articolul de față se concentrează pe asocierea imaginarului scandinav cu momente specifice din istoria personală a lui A. S. Byatt, și evidențiază anumite tipare și idei care sunt prezente în ambele cazuri, încercând să identifice acele elemente care fac posibilă transformarea miticului în real. Obiectivul acestui studiu este acela de a explora evoluția întâmplărilor mitologice așa cum sunt ele rescrise în cartea din secolul al 21-lea a lui Byatt, în strânsă legătură cu dezvoltarea personală a personajului ei principal. În acest scop, lucrarea va insista și asupra comparației făcute de Byatt însăși între imaginarul mitologic nordic și cel creștin – viziune filtrată prin ochii și gândurile focalizatorului textului, copilul cel slăbuț.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Ragnarök*, A. S. Byatt, reinterpretare, mituri nordice, moartea zeilor

Throughout the history of humanities and arts, Norse mythology has proven to be an invaluable source of inspiration for creators and artists of all types, from musicians such as Richard Wagner to 21st century writers and filmmakers. All those artists have explored the Scandinavian imaginary in an attempt to search for lost or half-revealed stories, images, emblematic figures and, eventually, restore, reconstruct or reinvent a space and a culture that have fascinated both themselves and their audience, starting from the various bits and pieces they did find. Norse gods and goddesses, giants, magical trees and animals, all converge to the zero point that defines Scandinavian imaginary as challenging and unique – the moment the whole world (irrespective of their status, mortals and gods alike) comes to an end, or *Ragnarök*.

Byatt's *Ragnarök* is one of her least examined texts, with studies that have focused either on motif differences between *Ragnarök* and the Christian *Book of Revelations* (Wijianto 2020, 50-63), or on ecopoetics (Cheira 2020, 44-67). Since this paper intends to analyse A. S. Byatt's intertextual lines drawn in the 21st text as a postmodern and personal(ized) interpretation of the old myth, a clarification of the terms *rewrite*, *revisit*, *reinterpret* used in association with it may be in order. Although, in most contexts, they may be considered interchangeable, the terms above could imply nuances in meaning², which is

² The Cambridge dictionary defines *to rewrite* as "to write something such as a book or speech again, in order to improve it or change it", which is almost identical to *revisit*, defined as "to talk about or think about something again, with the intention of improving it or changing it", whereas the Oxford dictionary defines *to rewrite* as "to write something again in a different way, usually in order to improve it or because there is some new information", and *to revisit* as "to return to an idea or a subject and discuss it again". *To reinterpret* is defined in the former dictionary as having

why the paper tries to carefully juggle them, while still admitting to favour the term *reinterpretation*, which is a core concept in postmodern literature and criticism. The paper inspects Byatt's *Ragnarök* from a narratological and cultural perspective, in relation to ideas and themes that have contributed to the shaping of the Norse myth into a 21st century manifest against pollution, while, at the same time, discussing women's emancipation issues. Starting from Barthes' view³ of the reader as both the receiver and the decoder/(re)interpreter of the text, this paper is trying to determine whether Byatt's *Ragnarök* may qualify as a valid text in its own right, and, at the same time, to identify the details that turn it into a personal, almost autobiographical text.

The original piece of writing about the end/judgement of the gods is traced back to a 12th century text, as Schjødt explains: "The most important work belonging to this group concerning Ragnarök, however, was written by the Icelandic chieftain and historian, Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241). The work is called *Edda* and consists of four parts, among which the relevant part for information about Ragnarök is called *Gylfaginning*." (Schjødt 2019, 367). The first part of the *Edda*, devoted to the creation of the Norse world, introduces the reader to the mythical beings that are central to the Scandinavian imaginary; thus, the primordial entity, and the ancestor of all *jötnar*⁴, Ymir, born from the icy drops of the ocean, is killed by the god brothers Odin, Vili and Vé, who, then, create the whole world from dead Ymir's body, with his skull forming what we would call the heavens, and with Midgard (the middle garden or the realm of mankind) formed from his eyebrows. The god Odin also creates Ask (the first man) from an ash and Embla (the first woman) from an elm, as well as the mythical tree of life (or the tree of the universe), Yggdrasil.

For British author and critic A. S. Byatt, who may well claim to have been introduced to Norse mythology from an early childhood, the opportunity presented to her by Canongate⁵ – to write a book for the series on myths they

two meanings – "to *change* what you think the meaning of something is", and "to perform a play, piece of music, etc. in a way that expresses *your own new ideas about it, or to create something again using new ideas*" – which apply beautifully in the case of the text we are discussing.

³ Barthes expressed his idea that "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader" (Barthes 1977, 148).

⁴ Giants, the enemies of the gods.

⁵ The whole collection of rewritten myths published by the Scottish publishing firm Canongate Books includes 18 titles, from which, apart from A.S. Byatt's *Ragnarök*, one may distinguish, among others, Karen Armstrong's *A Short History of Myth*, Jeanette Winterson's *Weight*, Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, Philip Pullman's *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, David Grossman's *Lion's Honey*, Ali Smith's *Girl Meets Boy*, and Alexandre McCall Smith's *Dream Angus*.

intended to publish – represented the fulfilment of a dream. Byatt’s fascination with the Scandinavian imaginary started the moment her mother came home with what would become Byatt’s favourite book, *Asgard and the Gods*, which, the writer remembers, her mother “had used as a crib in her studies of ancient Norse” (Byatt qtd. in Tatar 2012, xvii). In the very same *Introduction*, Byatt confesses her propensity for “the more than real” that Norse mythology seemed to promise to the young voracious reader that she was at the time: “I never really liked stories about children doing what children do – quarrelling and cooking and camping. I liked magic, the unreal, the more than real. I learned from the *Asgard* book that even the gods can be defeated by evil.” (xvii). The refusal to accept the standard child’s attitude is, with Byatt, translated into the quest for magic, which is, later in life, re-imagined and fully exploited in novels like *Possession*⁶, *The Children’s Book*, or in the reinterpreted myth under scrutiny here, *Ragnarök*.

From the very first reading of A. S. Byatt’s text *Ragnarök*, which ends with the author’s *Thoughts on Myths* in the last chapter, one may notice that the book becomes even easier to comprehend and to absorb, since all mysteries are so eloquently unravelled by the author herself in that last part of the book. That habit of explaining her own literary creation to her readers, instead of letting them struggle to get to the root of her creative choices, may well be considered one of the British author’s trademarks, with Byatt’s authorial writing hand being doubled by her critical voice. A possible explanation for Byatt’s propensity to carefully guide her readers on the right path to follow in their quest for the meaning of her texts might come from her own personal history, as the eldest daughter of two people who used words as their daily tools in their professions: her father, John Frederick Drabble, was a barrister, and her mother, Kathleen Marie Bloor, was a schoolteacher. In appreciation of her mother’s efforts to educate her daughters in the spirit of becoming independent, voracious readers, and also as a sign of acknowledgement of her difficult life as a thinking woman, A. S. Byatt dedicates *Ragnarök* to the former, writing, at the beginning of the book, “For my mother, K.M. Drabble, who gave me *Asgard and the Gods*” (Byatt 2011, 14).

To further emphasize the complex connection between life, war, myth, the thin child’s evolution and gender inequity⁷ at the time World War II started,

⁶ In *Possession*, one of the characters, Victorian poet Randolph Henry Ash, is depicted as being fascinated by Norse mythology and writing an epic poem entitled *Ragnarök*, which represents Byatt’s first published version of the famous Scandinavian myth, produced and presented in a ventriloquist’s voice.

⁷ The idea will be reinforced in the final part of the book, in the chapter “The Thin Child in Peacetime”.

in the first chapter of the book, Byatt sets the stage with a few simple sentences; thus, the thin child, who was a sickly, asthmatic child, only lived because, since "Life was a state in which a war was on" (Byatt 2011, 20), her family had to take refuge "in the ordinary paradise of the English countryside" (20).

In the same vein, the thin child's mother shared that paradoxical life, in the sense that the state of war liberated women from their social/occupational bonds and allowed them to work and think for themselves: "Because there was a war on, it was legally possible for her to live in the mind, to teach bright boys, which before the war had been forbidden to married women" (Byatt 2011, 21), which led the thin child to the discovery of her mother as an interesting and challenging new person: "Her mother was more real, and kinder, when it was a question of grouped letters on the page." (21).

As Nicholson remarks in her 2018 article in *The Guardian*, "Britain's wartime women gained a new sense of power" – and Byatt's setting the stage for her rewritten version of *Ragnarök* at that exact time is relevant for the point she is trying to make, connecting the evolution of things and people at all levels – imaginary and real –, still, without being able to escape her own fate in real life. Educated at a Quaker school in York and at Newnham College, Cambridge, where she read English between 1954 and 1957, A. S. Drabble⁸ began her studies as a postgraduate at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, and Somerville College, Oxford, in 1957, but, since she was a woman, she had to give up her studies and scholarship in 1959, when she got married to Ian Charles Rayner Byatt. Not long after she became A. S. Byatt, she realized that her life mission was to think and write, not to function as a mere housewife, and she eventually got the divorce⁹ from her first husband, but kept the name "Byatt" as her professional name even after she got married to her second husband, Peter John Duffy.

In his study *Language, Counter-Memory*, Michel Foucault states that "A name can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others. A name also establishes different forms of relationships among texts." (Foucault 1977, 123), which in the case of Byatt's *Ragnarök* raises a number of questions in relation to the originality and the credibility of the literary version of the Norse myth as it is rewritten in this writer's text. In other words, one might easily consider the literary work produced by the British author under the title of *Ragnarök* as mere pastiche of the story of the end of the world recounted in the *Völuspá*¹⁰, had it not been for the personal details and

⁸ Byatt's maiden name.

⁹ The divorce was described as Byatt's own personal war, exquisitely mirrored in her 1996 novel, *Babel Tower*.

¹⁰ *Völuspá*, which is translated from the Old Norse as "Vala's Prophecy" or "Sibyl's Prophecy", is a poem consisting of about 65 short stanzas on Norse cosmogony, the history of the world of gods, men, and monsters from its beginning until the Ragnarök.

incursions in Byatt's personal life that have made her text ring true and valuable. The author confesses in *Thoughts on Myths* that the Norse story of the end of the gods was her first and only choice when Canongate invited her to (re)write a myth for their series: "I knew immediately which myth I wanted to write. It should be *Ragnarök*, the myth to end all myths, the myth in which the gods themselves were all destroyed." (Byatt 2011, 182).

The process of rewriting a text, in general, and a well-known myth, in particular, as it is the case here, requires a careful process of re-imagining and re-wording the respective text, as well as an equally careful selection from the writer's previous reading of other literary or scientific texts. In this respect, Barthes's famous *The Death of the Author* (1968) suggests that an author's words do not originate from their own unique consciousness, but from a permanent process of reading and re-writing, with the author placed in the role of a compiler or arranger of pre-existent possibilities within the language system. In Barthes's opinion, there are a number of intertextual codes that help and inform one's reading (Barthes 1970), contributing to the author's finding their personal, unique way of expressing their view.

In search for the best voice and perspective that she may use in expressing her creative vision, Byatt tried "to find a way of telling the myth that preserved its distance and difference" (Byatt 2011, 182), only to realize that her narratee was her "childhood self, and the way [she] had found the myths and thought about the world when [she] first read *Asgard and the Gods*" (182). Considering that narrative stand – to write about and for an instance of herself at some point in life (a position which Byatt has taken in many books she has authored) –, one may perceive *Ragnarök* as a story in which the narrator's orientation towards herself, and her telling a story that concerns herself suggest the existence of a function that reflects on the narrator as a character in those chapters that describe the thin child's actions, thoughts and evolution. The events and the characters in the book on Norse mythology, which the thin child reads and cherishes, help her understand and accept her own life as being finite: "The thin child knew, and did not know that she knew, that her elders lived in provisional fear of imminent destruction. They faced the end of the world they knew." (21).

In *Ragnarök*, the book analysed here, although Byatt does not write the text in the 1st person but pretends to keep her distance from that young innocent self by recounting facts, feelings and thoughts in the 3rd person, the view taken by "the thin child" makes the reader think about what Gerard Genette calls "the function of attestation". In his study *Narrative Discourse*, in the chapter in which he defines and discusses autodiegetic narratives, narratologist Gerard Genette remarks on the importance of the emotional and intellectual relationship

between a narrator who is also the hero of the story and the events recounted by that narrator. Genette defines that function as “the one accounting for the part the narrator as such takes in the story he tells, the relationship he maintains with it – an affective relationship, of course, but also a moral or intellectual one.” (Genette 1980, 256). In that regard, since the narrator recounts a story of something that she experienced or witnessed as a child, “we have here something which could be called *testimonial function*, or function of *attestation*” (256).

Considering the case of Byatt's *Ragnarök*, one may remark on the technique employed by the writer in finding the best way to obtain that testimonial function that establishes the relationship between her “thin child” heroine and the events recounted, while, at the same time, rewriting the Norse myth in its 21st century postmodern version. Byatt's comments on the introduction of “the thin child” character as a focalizer of the narrative shed more light both on its role and on the general concept of the rewritten myth:

This is not a story about this thin child – she is thin partly because she was thin, but also because what is described of her world is thin and bright, the inside of her reading and thinking head, and the ways in which she related the worlds of *Asgard* and *Pilgrim's Progress* to the world and the life she inhabited. (Byatt 2011, 184).

From the very beginning, the narrator establishes a very special, personal link between the Norse mythical world that is encapsulated in the book that is revered by the thin child, *Asgard and the Gods*, and the child herself, who learns from the description of the book that she herself, as a member of a family that came from the North of England, may call the stories her own: “The book also said that these stories belonged to ‘Nordic’ peoples, Norwegians, Danes and Icelanders. The thin child was, in England, a northerner. The family came from land invaded and settled by Vikings. These were her stories.”, and, because of all that, “The book became a passion.” (Byatt 2011, 24).

In Byatt's *Ragnarök*, fragments taken from the *Eddas*, culminating with the Norse myth of the destruction of the gods, are told and interspersed with bits from the story of the thin child, who, in her turn, reads over and over again *Asgard and the Gods* in parallel with John Bunyan's Christian story *Pilgrim's Progress*. The thin child considers the plot and the narrative thread of the Norse myth she is so keen on in parallel with her Christian readings and the events in her own life, and forms her own opinion as to what ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ may mean to her. The idea of sin (or even the Old Norse word for it) appears as irrelevant in Scandinavian mythology: “The deities of those early Scandinavians were not

ethical beings. Ethics was the province of man, and the law. The Christian idea of sin [...] would only have struck them as absurd.” (Ferguson 2018, 8-9).

Comparing Norse and Christian views on the end of the world, in a study that analysed both *Ragnarök* and the Book of Revelation in the *Bible*, Agung Wijianto remarks that “one work conveys that death is an achievement and the other work gives the message that death is a horrifying event” (Wijianto 2020, 61) – a difference that becomes more emphatic once another distinction is made clear: in the pagan myth, all gods die, “which is crucial to their belief of fatalism” (Winterbourne 2004, 187) whilst in the Christian story, all people die as they receive their just punishment for their sins from God Almighty, an entity that cannot die, and that will resurrect the faithful ones.

A similar comparison is drawn, inside the story told in Byatt’s book, by the thin child, who comes to the conclusion that the end, “A Real End. The end” (Byatt 2011, 26) sounds perfect, since it makes sense, and is both logical and believable. The imagined/imaginary past – with its mythological wonders and crises, and with its inevitable end – is deliberately granted more intensity, which transfers in part to the present, where a war is on and things are uncertain, but which become, by association, valuable, unique and worth remembering by the thin child. In a way, what Byatt artfully constructs here is an instance of intertextuality which Matei Călinescu calls “textual haunting” (Călinescu 1993, xi), with the character of the thin child focalizing and making sense of her world and the war that she and the people around her are going through with the help of the Norse stories and characters: “The war might well have destroyed the thin child’s world. She built her own contrary myth in her head. Even if – indeed when – she herself came to an end the earth would go on renewing itself.” (Byatt 2011, 184).

In the Scandinavian imagery, the thin child discovers characters and symbols that she may believe in, which, although they may be described in many different ways, as either beautiful and peaceful (Baldr), powerful and all-knowing (Odin – from Proto-Germanic **Wōðanaz*), kind (Freyja), cruel and greedy (Jörmungandr), violent and menacing (Fenrir, Hel, the Jötnar or Frost Giants) or brilliant and sly (Loki, the trickster), they all share a trait that makes the thin child favour them over the Christian ones: they are human-like, ergo they may all die – and that makes them irreplaceable, unique and extremely valuable. The thin child reads with awe about the end of the fantastic world of the Norse; the final battle, happening on doomsday, annihilates all life in Asgard and in the world that inhabits Ymir’s dead skull¹¹. She learns that, once Loki and

¹¹ After the three god brothers Odin, Vili and Vé defeat their enemy, the primeval being the jötunn (frost giant) Ymir, they create the whole universe from his body, and the skull is populated by the gods themselves, who live at the center of Midgard.

his monstrous children Jörmungander, or the Midgardsormr, and the Fenris-Wolf, set out in front of the hosts¹² of Muspelheim, that are armed with white-hot weapons and slings of flame, to march and fight against the Asgard gods, the beautiful world comes to an end. The sun and the moon are devoured by the wolves that kept chasing them since the beginning of time, Odin is killed by the Fenris-Wolf, which, in his turn, finds his end at the hand of Odin's son Vidar, Thor and the Midgard Serpent kill each other, Tyr and the hell-hound Garm die exhausted by their strenuous fighting efforts, Loki and Heimdall fight to the death against each other, and, in the end, Surtr sets the whole world on fire with his flaming sword. As the thin child finds out, "After a long time, the fire too died. All there was a flat surface of black liquid glinting in the small pale points of light that still came through the starholes." (Byatt 2011, 162).

The same inescapable destiny – death – seems to be the fate of the thin child's father, since, in the beginning of the book, the reader learns that the father "had red-gold hair and clear blue eyes, like a god" (Byatt 2011, 21,) and seems most likely to be doomed to an imminent death: "In her [the thin child's] soul she knew her bright father would not come back" (*idem*) – an idea that is repeated at the end of the book, in the chapter *The Thin Child in Peacetime*: "She had stored Ragnarök against the time when it would become clear that her father would not come back." (167). The father's eventual survival, which turns him into a real person, an RAF hero who returns to his family unscathed, comes to contradict the child's scenario, without actually erasing the strong impression of the Norse myth on her mind and soul: "Walls of defence against disaster crumbled in the thin child's head, but the knowledge of Ragnarök, the black disk, held its place." (167)

In actual fact, to keep things in balance, Byatt explains to her readers that the father's survival triggers, in the thin child's new reality which was peacetime, the mother's "fall into the quotidian" (Byatt 2011, 168), or her symbolic death: "The long-awaited return took the life out of the thin child's mother, the thin child decided many years later. Dailiness defeated her." (170). As Byatt herself came to discover during her first marriage, a thinking, ambitious woman who gradually and unwillingly turns into a housewife for the sake of her family, will most likely die inside, and perceive her own home as a suffocating space from which there is no escape¹³. In presenting the case of the thin child's disillusioned mother, in the book, Byatt describes the situation of the majority of the British women who did their bit during World War II: they supported the war effort by taking up the jobs that men had to leave behind

¹² An archaic word for *army*.

¹³ A similar view of disappointment with gender roles was also expressed clearly in Byatt's *Introduction* to her own book *The Shadow of the Sun*, reprinted in 1991.

when they joined the army, and were encouraged to better themselves in the process only to find out that, on the return of their men, they were to be given the sack, and told to return to their traditional roles – to cook, raise their children, and look after their heroic husbands. The idea of the post-war home as a cage or a dungeon for the British women is depicted in Byatt's *Ragnarök* in the fragment where the child-focalizer compares the status of her parents in peacetime, and comes to a conclusion: "The thin child came to identify the word 'housewife' with the word 'prisoner'. Fear of imprisonment haunted the thin child, although she did not quite acknowledge this." (170).

Determined not to lose her father's love or his good opinion of her, the thin child does nothing to prevent him from chopping down the wild ash-tree that planted itself on the sill of the urban garden shed in the family's steel city house: "The child loved the tree, and loved her father, who had been restored to her against all her grim expectations." (Byatt 2011, 171). Despite that conviction and effort imposed on herself "to live in dailiness" (idem), the thin child suffers from a loss of the magic that she had experienced in war time, when she lived roaming freely in the great outdoors of the English village, whilst in the mind she was witnessing the world ending in her fantastic world, the Norse mythical time of the gods, "A gate closed in her head." (172). The ash tree that her father considers to be out of place in an urban garden and that he makes it his job to cut down and chop into logs for fire is similar to the Scandinavian imaginary tree of life that supports the universe, Yggdrasil, which is similarly destroyed during Ragnarök. The ash tree in the real world comes down as a symbol of the child's loss of that kind of freedom that she was used to having during the war, when there was not enough food for one's belly, but there was plenty of food for one's mind and soul: "But on the other side of the closed gate was the bright black world into which she had walked in the time of her evacuation. The World-Ash and the rainbow bridge, seeming everlasting, destroyed in a twinkling of an eye. [...] the black undifferentiated surface, under a black undifferentiated sky, at the end of things." (172-3)

As readers are informed by the writer herself, the end of the Norse mythological world, with its gods, people, and their whole ecosystem supporting life – the Ash-tree Yggdrasil – is reinterpreted in Byatt's *Ragnarök* with the aim of raising the alarm about the dangers of pollution, deforestation, aggressive agriculture, plundering the ocean through industrial fishing etc. Transforming the Scandinavian myth of the end of the world into a 21st century book about the current world unwittingly causing its own end to draw nearer and nearer registers the level of involvement and concern for the fate of humankind that is typical of Byatt. As it happens, the reinterpretation of the myth comes with a twist, which the writer herself explains in *Thoughts on Myths*, at the end of the book:

If you write a version of Ragnarök in the twenty-first century, it is haunted by the imagining of a different end of things. We are a species of animal which is bringing about the end of the world we were born into. Not out of evil or malice, or not mainly, but because of a lopsided mixture of extraordinary cleverness, extraordinary greed, extraordinary proliferation of our own kind, and a biologically built-in short-sightedness. (Byatt 2011, 186-7)

Coming in support of this view, in an article devoted to (proto-)ecocriticism in A.S. Byatt's fictional and critical work entitled "I Have This Kind of Grief for the Earth", Alexandra Cheira argues that "Byatt can be said to participate in this affective crusade for the planet by calling attention to its progressive destruction due to human action as opposed to blooming natural life when left untouched." (Cheira 2020, 46). Indeed, in real life as well as in Byatt's fictional world, the death of the planet is foreseen and deplored, but, apparently, it cannot be prevented, the same way the Norse gods themselves cannot escape their own death, but march valiantly to face and embrace it. In Byatt's view, the lives of the Scandinavian gods are ruled by a mixture of ignorance and fatalism, which has also been one of the foundation stones placed at the creation of that world. Willing to make a point, the British author may choose to exaggerate the flaws of the Asgardians, in order to achieve a more striking resemblance between the situation created by those gods and the contemporary ecological disaster caused and amplified by humankind. She remarks that "the Norse gods are peculiarly human [...] because they are limited and stupid, [...] greedy, [...] cruel and enjoy hunting and jokes. They know Ragnarök is coming but are incapable of imagining any way to fend it off, or change the story. They know how to die gallantly but not how to make a better world." (Byatt 2011, 188).

It is a view as fatalistic as the gods', and it may not give justice to them, but the point the author tries to make may get to the audience more easily that way. Going beyond the pages of the book, Byatt sadly concludes that, due to our human nature that is neglectful, ignorant and greedy, there is limited scope for the saving of our planet, the world that we currently inhabit, "Almost all the scientists I know think we are bringing about our own extinction, more and more rapidly." (186). As for the indomitable fate of the Asgard gods in the Scandinavian myth of the end of the world, although she confesses – both in the voice of the thin child and in her own, authorial and critical voice – to sympathise with the brilliant, ingenious and curious Loki, in whom she identifies the "detached scientific intelligence which could either save the earth or contribute to its rapid disintegration" (188), Byatt comes with a definitive judgement: "As it is, the world ends because neither the all too human gods, with their armies and quarrels, nor the fiery thinker know how to save it." (188-9).

Conclusions

In this paper, the focus on Byatt's *Ragnarök* has intended to demonstrate that the rewriting of the Scandinavian myth of the death/judgement of the Norse gods does take on a contemporary tone, which resounds with warnings concerning the destruction of the world through pollution, neglect, disrespect for other people's passions or interests. The analysis was aimed at pointing out the association of the Scandinavian imaginary with specific moments in A. S. Byatt's personal history, while highlighting the use of certain patterns and ideas that are present in both.

In the voice of one of her characters, the British author remarked that "A book is a passionate thing [...], it is more immediate than reality. [...] I think if most people were honest, they would admit that imaginary experiences are more real than the actual ones." (Byatt 1996, 574) – and that expresses, in a nutshell, the main idea of the book under discussion here, as well as the point that the paper is trying to make. By exploring the evolution of the mythological events as they are rewritten in Byatt's 21st century book, in close connection with the main character's personal development, the study shows that the imaginary – the Scandinavian myth recounting the death of the gods – sheds light on the real – the events taking place during World War II. To that end, the paper has also made use of the comparison drawn by Byatt herself between the Norse and the Christian mythical imaginary.

In the part discussing what is currently called ecocriticism, the paper has shown that the two parallel universes – one of the mythical events and the other imagined by Byatt as taking place during WWII – revolve around the same fragmented axis, and they both end in the same disastrous way – with the world coming to an end. The conclusion to be drawn is disconcerting: humans are incapable of learning their lesson and the Western, linear thinking, based on chronology and historization, is invalidated from the start here. As the book states, and the paper here underlines, the main idea is that proof has shown that humankind follows the ancient, mythical thinking process, based on cyclic movements¹⁴, with the Biblical statement in the Ecclesiastes: "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun." (Holy Bible 1989, 614, v9). The thin child is forced to witness the terrors of World War II, but is rescued in part with the help of the story and characters of the Norse myth, which she herself reinterprets and understands in accordance with her own vision, imagination and feelings. The pity is that, in spite of the repeated warnings in the book(s), the fatalistic conclusion ruling

¹⁴An idea mentioned, among others, by Freeman (1998).

supreme in the Scandinavian way of thinking prevails: destiny is all, nothing improves. Even if it all comes to a tragic end.

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GIRLHOOD AND GIRL FRIENDSHIP IN THE NARRATIVES OF BJØRG VIK AND KARIN SVEEN

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ABSTRACT. *Girlhood and Girl Friendship in the Narratives of Bjørg Vik and Karin Sveen.* The article is an account of girls growing up, based on two of Bjørg Vik's short stories and a novel by Karin Sveen. After introducing the notion of female friendship and girlhood, it places the two authors against the background of Norwegian female authors writing about women and adolescent girls. It goes on to point out the importance of the environment for the girl friendships in the chosen works, and the power hierarchies based on looks that determine the girls' allegiances. Finally, it comments on the girls' shifting beliefs in freedom and solidarity as they grow older.

Keywords: *women's literature, female friendship, girlhood, coming-of-age narrative, solidarity.*

REZUMAT. *Adolescența și prietenia între adolescente în narațiunile scriitoarelor Bjørg Vik și Karin Sveen.* Articolul analizează poveștile inițiatice ale eroinelor adolescente, având ca punct de pornire două nuvele de Bjørg Vik și unul dintre romanele scrise de Karin Sveen. După ce introduce ideile de prietenie feminină și adolescență feminină, articolul prezintă locul celor două autoare în peisajul literar norvegian, alături de alte autoare care scriu despre femei și adolescente. Mai departe, acesta evidențiază rolul mediului familial și social în cazul prietenii adolescentine din lucrările alese, precum și relațiile de putere, bazate pe aspectul exterior, ce determină loialitatea adolescentelor. La final, articolul oferă un comentariu referitor la felul în care încrederea protagonistelor în libertate și solidaritate suferă schimbări pe măsură ce acestea se maturizează.

Cuvinte-cheie: *literatura feminină, prietenia feminină, adolescența feminină, narațiune inițiativă, solidaritate.*

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Introduction

Philosophy has a long tradition of discussing the notion of friendship, albeit as an exclusively male connection. With Socrates, Cicero or Seneca, classical philosophy sees the first influential examples and ideas about friendship exposed in dialogues and letters, these personal forms of communication appropriately complementing the intimate nature of the subject. Thoughts on friendship, be it secular or inspired by religious faith, continued to be relegated to personal letters, sermons and essays right to the end of the eighteenth century. At this point, fiction seems to have taken over as the locus of more complex – and public – debates on the topic and with it, the notion of female friendship as described by female authors such as Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell and Luisa M. Alcott (Caine 2014, 215, 221)². If Cicero noted that women usually seek friendship for what he identified as the wrong kind of reason,³ the relationships among these writers' women characters dared suggest, for the first time, that women's capacity for friendship might be more robust than that of men.⁴ Moreover, the idea of female friendship as a strong interpersonal bond with collective overtones („sisterhood") went on to inform the kind of political activism central to the successive waves of feminism from the nineteenth century onwards (Caine 2014, 221; Peel et al. 2014, 333) to such an extent as to be considered instrumental to it (Peel et al. 2014, 334). Consciously emphasizing a kind of relationship that went beyond friendliness by evoking strong, organic kinship ties, the term “sisterhood” connotes a solidarity of feeling, of experience and of concerns that has stayed relevant to this day (Yalom 2015, 207).

Related to the subject of female friendship and equally central to the focus of the present study is also the idea of girl friendship, implying the notion of “girlhood” associated with modern female adolescence.⁵ Considering the increased visibility of feminine adolescents in the western cultures of the

² Female friendships went mostly undocumented until the fifteenth century, when we have the first written evidence of letter exchanges between women friends recorded in the French cultural space (Yalom 2015, 12). In the English-speaking world, a significant body of letters, diaries, poetry and plays documents female friendship connections from the seventeenth century onward (Yalom 2015, 68).

³ “[...] for the sake of assistance [...] and not at all from motives of feeling and affection” (Cicero 2001, 15).

⁴ The “unique [...] ability to connect deeply in friendship” (Brizendine 2006, 8), which has now been shown by neuroscience to be a central feature of the female brain, and indispensable to the evolution of the species.

⁵ As Driscoll points out, there are many ways to understand the term. Here I will use it in one of its more evident meanings, as “a stage to be passed through on the way to [...] being a woman” (Driscoll 2002, 2).

twentieth century, it becomes important to note, in analysing the works proposed, the way in which “girls experience their own position in the world in relation to diverse ways of talking about and understanding girls” (Driscoll 2002, 4).⁶ Besides the idea of female friendship mentioned above, fiction seems to have also captured the emergence of public discourses on girlhood. Thus, while previous-age novels about “young women” were predominantly romance novels, by the end of the Victorian age the conventions of the realist *bildungsroman* in the development of female adolescent characters take precedence. For the first time, female adolescents no longer appear “in many respects, never to be anything else than children” (Rousseau 1979, 211) but acquire a sense of self that is no longer exclusively “made by love” (Driscoll 2002, 51).

By considering these aspects, the article aims to shed light on the take each of the Norwegian writers in the title has on female adolescent friendship. The questions it raises and attempts to answer, by considering textual evidence, are: to what extent their environment determines the girls’ experiences and choices of friends; to what extent they conform or reject the stereotypical gender roles attributed to them, and the way in which this latter aspect challenges the solidity of their connection. A discussion of girl friendship and girl solidarity in these coming-of-age narratives by Vik and Sveen points out an aspect of their work which has not been submitted to a comparative analysis before. As such, it may shed new light not only on their respective works but also on the relevance of these works today, in an age when human solidarity and gender solidarity are questioned once again.

The article provides a close analysis⁷ of two of the stories in Vik’s collection from 1975 *Fortellinger om frihet* (Tales of Freedom)⁸ and of Sveen’s novel from 1984 *Den reddende engelen* (The Saving Angel)⁹, providing ample textual evidence for the claims it makes. It begins by presenting Vik’s and Sveen’s relevant works as far as subjects related to women and the women’s cause. Subsequently it considers the living circumstances that determine the different and differentiated friendship bonds formed among the characters in the chosen works, then the essential ingredients that make or break a successful

⁶ Driscoll sees this as one of the functions of a “genealogy of girlhood” – an alternative history of female adolescence shaped by cultural studies, looking into the way in which each century’s discourse on female adolescents has shaped the meaning of girlhood (Driscoll 2002, 3).

⁷ Critics have pointed out the benefits of this “lento” (Nietzsche 1881, 14) kind of criticism to cognition, and implicitly to a deeper understanding of the intertextuality of literary themes and motives (Eagleton 2013; J.W. Phelan 2021).

⁸ *Fisken i garnet* (The Fish in the Net) and *Perleporten* (The Pearly Gates). They are the only ones in the volume that highlight the problems of female adolescent friendships we are interested in here.

⁹ For the purpose of this article, the original Norwegian editions have been used. The author of the article is responsible for the translated version of the quoted extracts from both works analysed.

relationship of this kind. Finally, the value of solidarity and the significant consequences of its corrosion are commented on.

Bjørg Vik, Karin Sveen and female authorship in Norway

Women figures play as prominent a role in the Norwegian cultural imaginary as they do in the public life of the country. From the *Poetic Edda*, where a sorceress reveals to Odin the origins and demise of gods and the world, to Snorri's *Prose Edda*¹⁰ with its vast pantheon of respected goddesses,¹¹ giantesses, Valkyries and avenging human heroines (Jochens 1996, 132), from the medieval sagas depicting strong-willed female characters whose wrath, if provoked, can prove fatal (Ferguson 2016, 337), to Ibsen's memorable heroines such as Hedda Gabler, animated by the same haughty energy as her pagan ancestors (Ferguson 2016, 338), Norwegian literature boasts a rich legacy of powerful female figures. With the birth and growing influence of the women's movement in Norway, literature written by women about women finds its first literary expression in the works of Camilla Collett. Since her mid-nineteenth century debut, women's literature has kept growing (Amalie Skram, Nini Roll Anker), with the second wave of feminism in the 1970s marking a period of unprecedented wealth of poetry and prose written by female authors here.

Born just fourteen years apart, Bjørg Vik and Karin Sveen belong to two successive generations of Norwegian women writers who exemplify changes in attitude and writing freedom considered revolutionary at the time. Apart from the difference in the level of literary notoriety and influence attached to their names and works, especially outside Norway, the similarities between the two authors seem to reside in their personal circumstances and level of engagement with gender and social-related topics. After the success of her second story collection *Nødrop fra en myk sofa* (Cries for Help from a Soft Sofa, 1966), she was awarded a stipend that allowed her to literally abide by Virginia Woolf's advice and rent a room of her own to keep writing undisturbed. It is an evolution pattern characterised by daily struggle that seems to have become familiar in the case of women writers.¹²

¹⁰ The Eddas are actually part of a common Icelandic-Norwegian cultural heritage. This "cultural settlement of Iceland" seems to have begun with the real settlement of the island in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. by some four hundred colonisers, the majority of which are identified as Norwegians from the western coast (Fetveit et al. 1972, 11).

¹¹ As many as twenty-seven goddesses are identified by Snorri in the Norse mythological universe (Jochens 1996, 55).

¹² Another example in Norwegian literature is that of Annie Riis, also a housewife and mother of three whose poetry was first published in the 1970s when she was forty-eight (*The History of Nordic Women's Literature*, 1998).

Sveen's choice of a writing career sees her make her debut as a poet and later on as a short-story writer, novelist and essayist. Over the years, she has become one of the most respected authority figures in the Norwegian writerly community.

The social, moral and political *Zeitgeist* of the 1960s and early 1970s allowed Vik to publish the most emblematic of her short story collections. Her very first one, *Søndag ettermiddag* (Sunday Afternoon, 1963), written while still juggling other duties at home and at work, already contained many of her staple topics, from the triviality of everyday life to tangled love affairs and the bitterness of disillusion, while the typical voices of her female characters here grew stronger with each subsequent book. It was not by chance or lack of time, but by deliberate choice that the short story form proved best-suited for her topics. By her own admission, the short story's undiluted form, linguistic rigor and narrative sharpness matched her temperament, while its characteristic tip-of-the-iceberg construction, which relegated most of the meaning to the subtext, gave her a chance to skip offering an easy solution. The despair of the protagonists comes through in the details (objects sounds, smells) of their stale repetitive lives (Garton 1993, 190-91) reminiscent of those of the female characters in the short stories of Cora Sandel, the writerly forerunner whose influence on Vik was defining (Rønning 2012, 2) not only from a literary point of view but also from that of an encouraging mentor's.¹³

However, as it became increasingly clear in the author's subsequent short story collections spanning the following decade (*Nødrop fra en myk sofa* (Cries for Help from a Soft Sofa, 1966), *Kvinneakvariet* (The Aquarium of Women, 1972), *Fortellinger om frihet* (Tales of Freedom, 1975), as well as in the novel and the play she produced over the same period (*Gråt elskede mann* (Cry, Beloved Man, 1970), *To akter for fem kvinner* (Two Acts for Five Women, 1974), her female characters also break with the inexorable fate of Cora Sandel's women, seen as either unreliable or unable to act, becoming women who experience a (sometimes gradual, sometimes violent) form of personal or political awakening. Vik's unwavering engagement with the women's cause (*kvinnesaken*) is apparent not only in her journalistic work, as a co-founder and prime contributor to the women's journal *Sirene* (Siren, 1973), but throughout her fiction, her characters' thoughts about feminism actually precede by a whole decade the real, politically-engaged wave of the women's liberation movement in Norway (Garton 1993, 189).

By the time Karin Sveen made her short story debut in 1980, the Norwegian writers' interest in experimentation had moved them away from such a strong engagement with social and political topics and, once again,

¹³ Having read Vik's first story collections, Sandel wrote back to acknowledge the young author's voice and talent (Vik 2018, par. 14).

towards works of the imagination, abundant in what would later be called “the decade of fantasy” (Garton 1993, 184). Following the same trend, the topics in women’s literature gradually shifted to inward analyses or accounts of fantastic worlds, without entirely abandoning the politically-committed subjects of the previous years. Once again ahead of her times, Vik herself had already moved on from her works of feminist campaigning at the beginning of the seventies to a softer, more individual focus on the lives of her women figures at the end of the decade (Garton 1993, 203). In turn, Sveen’s own short stories and novels of this period are typical of the co-existence of the Norwegian literary tradition of social realism with that of magical realism and oral story-telling.¹⁴ The title of her first short story collection, *Døtre* (Daughters, 1980), clearly indicates her focus on female characters in stories otherwise entirely rooted in imagination. Her next best-known novel seems to reverse that double focus. *Utbryterdronninga* (The Queen of Escapologists, 1982) combines a realistic background with biblical references to the story of Moses, in a parable whose main character is meant to strongly remind one of a female Saviour. Her later novels and short stories also focus heavily on women characters: *Den reddende engelen* (The Saving Angel, 1984), *Kvinnen som forsvant* (The Woman Who Disappeared, 1987), *Maria Waters verden* (The World of Maria Waters, 1993), with the tone and background of the earlier works acquiring increasingly darker shades as the heroines are removed from their lively authentic village world and placed in the anonymous lonely world of the big city (Bakke, Granaas, and Rønning, 2012). At the same time, whatever literary trend her writing may follow over the years, Sveen’s main focus, like that of Vik’s, is also freedom, albeit understood as the freedom to embrace one’s own identity.

Considered at the outset as little more than variations on the topic of women in love (Jan. I. Sjøvik 1993, 314), probably due to the characters’ quiet and unassuming outer lives, Vik’s stories’ bold depictions of female sexuality¹⁵ were to shock some of her readers into understanding that despite their training as little women, these characters were rebelling against a patriarchal upbringing, either individually or collectively, determined to make the women’s cause into a human cause (Garton 1996, 348).¹⁶ Vik herself wished to be identified not as a feminist writer – a reference she thought of as little more

¹⁴ “Social modernism” was the name coined by Kjartan Fløgstad to describe the Norwegian literature of the seventies and early eighties, with its focus on social realities presented by employing modernistic means of expression (Stegane 1996, 603).

¹⁵ Even though Scandinavian countries tend to be perceived as more open about sexuality than many others, Norway has never been part of that revolutionary trend (Ferguson 2016, 329).

¹⁶ *Kvinner sak er menneskesak*, the title of one of the stories in her story collection *Fortellinger om frihet* (Tales of Freedom, 1975).

than a label over the years - but as one whose interest expanded beyond that topic, into the wider, fundamental subject of human freedom: “the lack of freedom, the dream of and yearning for freedom, and then the awareness of the difficulty of freedom”.¹⁷ However, when she uses the word in the title of her third story collection, *Fortellinger om frihet* (Tales of Freedom, 1975), the critics note its ambiguity, while they seem to disagree as to whether she employs it ironically or not. A comparison with the previous collection suggests that the female characters here are no longer aquarium fish on display (a reference to the title of her previous volume) but actively seeking a way out of their dire circumstances (Stegane 1996, 627). Others see the freedom of the characters as an illusion, and the title as bitterly ironic (Garton 1993, 201): no matter how much they strive, the characters remain trapped in their small pre-ordered lives, like fish in a net (the title of one of the stories here).

The world of children and adolescents features prominently in both authors’ works, and it’s girls in the process of growing up that the two authors specifically focus on. Already in her second collection of short stories (*Nødrop fra en myk sofa* - Cries for Help from a Soft Sofa, 1966), Vik employs the viewpoint of a young girl to describe her ambiguous relationship with her best friend, at the same time her closest confidante and her fiercest rival (*Innerst i det mørke skapet* - At the Back of the Dark Cupboard) (Garton 1993, 191), a topic she takes up again in some of the stories featured in *Fortellinger om frihet* (Tales of Freedom, 1975). Many of the themes of *Kvinneakvariet* (The Aquarium of Women) are revisited in the same later volume, among them girl friendships and teenage angst, the dawning awareness of a girl’s limited life and work options, and the difficult relationships between mothers and daughters (Garton 1993, 202). Sveen also focuses at length on adolescent realities, but the universe of her young female characters, especially in her novel *Den reddende engelen* (The Saving Angel, 1984), is discernibly lighter, livelier and more sensuous than the one imagined by Vik. This may also be due to the fact that, unlike Vik, she places her girls in a small-town setting, allowing them greater freedom, including that of using their native dialect.

Girlhood and neighbourhood

There is no actual time or space setting in the two coming-of-age stories by Bjørg Vik chosen for this study. Anonymised and abstracted in this way, the neighbourhood acquires the qualities of an all-encompassing metaphor for authority. Its perimeter is so well defined that it can act as an oppressive

¹⁷ “Mangelen på frihet, drømmen og lengselen etter frihet og etterhvert vissheten om den vanskelige friheten” (Vik 2018, par. 7).

confinement space. For instance, in *Fisken in garnet* (The Fish in the Net), the neighbourhood seems to be the net itself, keeping the girls contained inside its four corners:

On two of the streetcorners were tram stops, one for trams going up the street to yellow barracks-like tenement buildings [...], one going downtown to the cinemas, the large shopping centres, the market, the funeral parlour, the bird shop, the churches, the theatres, the lit commercials, the cafes. On the third corner was the urinal, on the fourth the [summer] kiosk.¹⁸

For the girl adolescents living in this world, the tram lines going both ways can be construed as either escape routes into the wide world of pleasure, of spiritual experience but also of death, or as indicative of their condition. Returning home means returning to the barracks, but also to a space of protective familiarity. The unique metaphor of the urinal indicates the cardinal paternal authority, sharply opposed to the feminine metaphor of the summer kiosk, its cheap assortments of ice cream, chocolate and hot-dogs understood as small and temporary means of escape from this authority.

Sometimes the house yard itself becomes a character in the stories, a figure of motherhood in turn warm and complicit (“The grey-green tenement building embraced us, kept our secrets in the basement storage rooms”)¹⁹, but increasingly watchful and suspicious as the girls grow up (“The house yard watched them with a thousand eyes behind the kitchen curtains. Watched their play, their hatred, their love. Watched their tears, their fights and their embraces”)²⁰. The fact that these circumstances are inescapable is suggested by the same statement being repeated at the end of the story. The slight change in the word order indicates that no matter what happens inside this space, the yard and the women in the yard will always remain the same, an amorphous hidden mass, perhaps an ominous sign of the girls’ own future (“The house yard watched tears, fights and embraces with a thousand eyes behind kitchen windows. In dark bathroom windows stood immovable women shapes”)²¹. Escape from such constant surveillance is perceived as a necessary betrayal associated with growing up. It takes an act of courage and a good friend (“The

¹⁸ “På to av gatehjørnene var trikkeholdeplasser, en for oppadgående, oppover gaten til gule kaserne-gårder [...], nedgående til byen, til kinoene, de store magasinene, torget, begravelsesbyråene, fuglebutikken, kirkene, teatrene, lysreklamene, kafeene” (Vik, *Fortellinger om frihet*, 10-11).

¹⁹ “Den grågrønne leiegården tok oss i favn, bevarte våre hemmeligheter i kjellerbodene,” (Vik, 9).

²⁰ “Gården vokter dem med tusen øyne bak kjøkkengardiner. Vokter leken, hatet, kjærligheten. Vokter tårer, slag og kjærtegn” (Vik, 18).

²¹ “Gården vokter tårer, slag og kjærtegn med tusen øyne bak kjøkkengardiner. I mørke baderomsvinduer sto urørlige kvinneskikkelser” (Vik, 41).

first time they betrayed the yard, they did it together”)²². On the other hand, their street is something the girls know intimately, a corner of the world whose familiarity is so comforting that they sometimes do not even wish to leave. Ultimately, much like their mothers, they come to believe this is the only place they will ever know, inhabited by the only people they will ever get to know (“This is her street. She will never move away from it” [...]; “She knows what the street looks like under rain and snow, under sun and wind [...]”; “the people she knew anything about, all those who she could guess anything about”)²³.

That freedom from this environment and their gender-conditioned upbringing is illusory and it is also hinted at in *Perleporten* (The Pearly Gates) with its ambiguous title borrowed from the eponymous song symbolic of the girls’ pledge to eternal friendship. Anxiously longing for independence, the girls here find out that crossing the threshold into adulthood does not land them in heaven, as the world outside their familiar neighbourhood inevitably destroys both their naïve innocence and their adolescent friendships. By leaving behind this familiar ground, they actually leave behind their experience of a paradoxically carefree enclosure. Tightly built, barracks-looking blocks of flats with names such as The Backyard, the Red Yard, the New Buildings, mark the perimeter of this earthly heaven. In the girls’ imagination, these are arranged in a hierarchy, with the New Buildings higher up than the Red Yard, so that one has to be special to be allowed to play here: (“She [Lita] was the only one of the girls in the Red Yard to advance into playing in the New Buildings, probably because she was so pretty”)²⁴. Besides, the girls and adults in the story all inhabit The Yard (*Gården*), a recognizable place of origin that identifies them, setting them apart from outsiders, sometimes also in a negative way, as they often find out.

By contrast, in Sveen’s fictional universe the friendly pair Marje and Nina live in the actual town of Hamar on the shores of lake Mjøsa. Although there is only one direct mention of the location in the book, the setting is easy to gauge, as the novel is written in the dialect of the region. This element of stylistic idiosyncrasy contributes significantly to the authenticity of characters and setting. Dialect is part of the girls’ identity and by refusing to give up speaking it at school, they set themselves apart, albeit negatively, as dialect is frowned upon by some of the teachers. So strong is this mark of linguistic solidarity that Marje urges her brother to defy the teacher’s authority rather

²² “Første gangen de sviktet gården, gjorde de det sammen” (Vik, 16).

²³ “Dette er gaten hennes. Hun vil aldri flytte fra den” [...]; “Hun vet hvordan gaten er i regn og sne, i sol og vind”; “de hun visste noe om, alle hun gjettest noe om” (Vik, 24).

²⁴ “Hun [Lita] var den eneste av pikene i Rødgårdene som avanserte til å leke i Nybyggene, det var nok fordi hun var så pen” (Vik, 108).

than comply with the norm (“[...] if he could not understand what my brother said, then he could just give up talking to him”)²⁵.

Apart from this significant linguistic particularity, Sveen’s girl characters share the same modest living conditions as Vik’s, even though, timewise, the story is likely set no more than a decade later. There is little about Marje’s multi-storied house and courtyard in Brugata that differentiates it from a shabby farmyard. In spring, the dirty melting snow floods the sloping grounds. In the sweltering summer, the rooms are filled with dust, noise and exhaust fumes from the passing trucks and heavy trailers that make the house shake. At night, drunkards returning home from the downtown restaurants raise hell outside the low windows, banging on the walls and sometimes urinating on the windowpanes. Unlike some of their colleagues at school, they have no fridge and no phone. The first time Marje gets to hold a telephone piece is an epiphany (“I had not been more nervous if I had stayed there with a pistol in my hand. [...] It is exactly like being connected to the world!”)²⁶. However, the girls in Sveen’s novel are neither brought up in isolation, nor constantly supervised, like Vik’s. With parents at work and mothers either absent or too tired to care, Marje and Nina are free to roam the town, most often taking turns pushing the pram of Nina’s younger sister. Holidays in the countryside or long biking trips to the coast also allow them temporary escapes from life in the shabby yard.

In the looking glass

For Vik’s adolescent girl characters, appearance is all-important. The girls themselves are well aware of the fact that looks can determine their chances of marrying well. Understanding that beauty is a currency, they measure each other up, classifying each other according to this yardstick only. In fact, every girl is identified by name, clothing, living quarters, parents’ status or job and physical appearance, as if to suggest that their chances in life are pre-determined and unchangeable. Physical beauty is seen as a heavenly gift, rendering beautiful girls almost angelic in their power to cleanse the world (“When Edel appeared in her yellow dress, a light illuminated the building walls, shined in the windowpanes, glowed in the polished staircase doors. Wasn’t it almost as if the crass inscriptions on the walls faded?”)²⁷. As beauty is a natural companion of power in Vik’s fiction, untainted beauty is a prerequisite for marriage to a rich

²⁵ “[...] hvis han ikke skjønnte hva broren min sa, så kunne han bare la vara å snakke til’n” (Sveen, 13).

²⁶ “Jeg hadde ikke vøri mer nervøs om jeg hadde stått med en pistol i handa. [...] Det er akkurat som å vara kobla inn på verden!” (Sveen, 114).

²⁷ “Da Edel kom i gul kjole lyste det mellom murveggene, skinte i vindusruter, glødet i blankslitte oppgangsdører. Var det nesten ikke så puleordene på veggen bleknet?” (Vik, *Fortellinger*, 9).

man and thereby a chance of escape from poverty and constant supervision (“If they are pretty enough, they can also become rich, the rich men marry the beautiful girls”)²⁸. That is why the event of losing one’s beauty is also the first sign of having fallen from grace (“Lovely Gunvor failed [...]. Gunvor was no longer lovely, Gunvor was pale and unkempt [...]”)²⁹. It is not only age that can cause such a dangerous loss, but also failure to protect one’s virginity well enough before marriage, in which case a girl is considered damaged goods (“It was especially pretty girls who had to be careful so that they wouldn’t be damaged”)³⁰. It is a lesson they all learn both from their constantly worried mothers and from witnessing it first-hand (“The girls listened to the mothers’ lamentations, they looked frightened at the young girls that failed, in this way they learned to watch out”)³¹.

Given its value, physical beauty is also the first and fundamental cause of jealousy and bickering between friends (“I am prettier than Edel, thought Ingvil, but Edel is beautiful, she must not find out”; “Ingvil ... wishes herself inside Edel’s [golden and fruit-like] skin”)³² and the yardstick by which they measure each other’s worth. For instance, being invited to dance in the first round of the dancing class becomes an indicator of desirability: “Usually Torunn and Lita got to dance in the second round, Lita sometimes in the first, while Aud always sat through to the last one. That way they got to know who was the worthiest.”³³ The dancing class can be a humiliating, discriminating experience in other ways, too. In *Perleporten* (The Pearly Gates), the girls constantly compare themselves, and are compared to by the boys, to their richer counterparts, learning that if one lives in the eastern part of the city, one is already discriminated and labelled (“The beautiful, cold west-side girls, they always danced, they were unhurttable, haughty.” [...] “East-side girls! cried the boys [...]. East-side whores!”)³⁴.

The girls are thus educated to recognise and accept the ubiquitous divisions between men and women, boys and girls, middle class and working

²⁸ “Hvis de er pene nok kan de også bli rike, de rike mennene gifter seg med de pene pikene” (Vik, 13).

²⁹ “Nydelige Gunvor gikk det galt med [...]. Gunvor var ikke nydelig lenger, Gunvor var blek og pjuskete [...]” (Vik, 21- 22).

³⁰ “Særlig måtte pene piker passe seg så de ikke ble «ødelagt»” (Vik, 22).

³¹ “Pikene lyttet til mødrenes klagesang, de så skremt på de unge pikene det gikk galt med, på den måten lærte de å passe seg” (Vik, 22).

³² “Jeg er penere enn Edel, tenkte Ingvil, men Edel er vakker, hun må ikke få vite det”; “Ingvil ... ønsker seg inn bak Edels [gyllen og fruktaktig] hud” (Vik, 9, 12).

³³ “Vannligvis fikk Torunn og Lita danse i annen runde, Lita av og til i første, mens Aud alltid ble sittende til siste. På den måten fikk de vite hvem av dem som var mest verd” (Vik, 114).

³⁴ “De vakre kalde vestkantpikene, de danset alltid, var usårlige, overlegne. [...] Østkantjenter! Ropte guttene [...]. Østkanthorer!” (Vik, 37).

class, beautiful and less beautiful as natural. Neither in Vik's stories, nor in Sveen's novel do they oppose the idea of participating in church-organised activities teaching them meekness and gender role conformity ("[...] something called 'The little doves' [...] they sing, have guessing contests, embroider doilies and a lady speaks about God [...]; "[...] nuns who teach handcraft in a room behind the Catholic church, right next to the prison")³⁵. School itself, in Vik's *Fisken i garnet* (The Fish in the Net), is imagined as a prison with all its classic features ("[...] a hostile fortress with gloomy towers and sharp iron fencing [...], long corridors and many small windows overlooking the asphalted yard")³⁶, where an invisible line divides the boys' side from the girls' side. The girls who dare trespass are quickly spotted and punished by general opprobrium, meaning not only by the boys but also by the other girls and by the teachers, in a self-perpetuating system that ensures any "traitors" are psychologically coerced back into the fold ("The defectors were soon accused or punished, by their own or by the enemy, often also by the teachers")³⁷. The author's barely disguised ironic social comment also comes through in *Perleporten* (The Pearly Gates), where a school banner urges adolescent girls to be true to themselves, which they are – by knowing everything there is to know about beauty products and the latest fashion.

Physical appearance and intelligence provide positions of authority that further divide the classroom girls into a four-tier hierarchy, all the more cynical as it is devised by the girls themselves: the Pretty, the Smart, the Stupid and the Ugly. The most popular are the pretty ones, who are also rich and tend to befriend members of the same exclusive group ("Elisabeth had long fairy-tale hair and a red coat with rabbit fur, Siv had both curls and dimples. [...] They were Unapproachable")³⁸. Their popularity is presented as self-explanatory: a pretty face trumps intelligence or excuses lack of it. By contrast therefore, the ugly find themselves hopelessly excluded, however smart they may be ("For the ugly all hope was lost, even though they were among the smartest")³⁹. Moreover, good looks again prove so important that without some degree of beauty, even the girls in the smart category cannot maintain their status ("The smart had a

³⁵ "[...] noe som heter De små duer [...]. De synger, har gjettekonkuranser, broderer brikker og en dame snakker om Gud[...]" (Vik, 18); "[pikemøte] det er nonner som driver og lærer jenter håndarbeid i et rom bak den katolske kjerka, like ved fengslet." (Sveen, *Den reddende engelen*, 96).

³⁶ "[...] en fientlig festning med dystre tårn og spisst jernstakitt [...], lange korridorer og mange små vinduer mot skolegårdens asfalt" (Vik, *Fortellinger*, 25).

³⁷ "Overløpere ble straks tiltalt eller straffet, av sine egne eller av fienden, ofte også av lærerne" (Vik, 25).

³⁸ "Elisabeth hadde lang eventyrhår og rød kåpe med hvitt kaninskinn på, Siv hadde både krøller og smilehull. [...] De var Uoppnåelige" (Vik, 26).

³⁹ "For de Stygge var alt håp ute, selv om de var blant de flinkeste" (Vik, 25).

certain position, but unless their intelligence was also supported by a certain measure of prettiness, it did not hold”⁴⁰. With the exception of the pretty, members of the other groups can move into another, albeit only an inferior one, either because they do not live in the right neighbourhood or because they simply stand out by refusing to obey, which suddenly makes them “ugly”. Consequently, despite their obvious talents, they end up completely isolated (“[Runa] got so ugly when she stood there, gradually she moved over into the Ugly category. There was a ring around Runa, a lonely circle.”)⁴¹.

The opposite is the case in Sveen’s novel, where it is the pretty, rich girl that is left out. A newcomer from the capital city, she is a spectacular figure (“[Class] Five B almost fell on their butts when Cecilie Frank Glad came into the classroom [...]”)⁴² whose miniature-lady looks, manners and behaviour set her apart in the provincial children’s school community (“She stood before the class in a sort of lady’s suit [...] and a gold chain around her neck! In the one hand she holds what is almost a little suitcase [...] and with the other she greets the teacher and curtsies both before her and before the class. Here I am!”)⁴³. Like the typical members of Vik’s league of the Pretty, she seems unapproachable and distant (“[...] the girl looked as if she did not have any human blood in her veins at all”)⁴⁴. Taken to and from school in a car with a chauffeur, she looks down on girls like Marje and Nina with a mixture of interest and disdain (“[...] the girl [...] stared steadily at the strange insect on two legs and looked as if she wanted to take me with a pair of tweezers and set me in a pin in her insect collection”; “[...] It must have looked as though she was out walking her dogs”)⁴⁵. Her superiority seems to stem from an awareness of status she has been inculcated with (“Anyway, I have money to burn”; “Mom says that people can be nice to deal with even though they are labour party”)⁴⁶. In strong contrast with the carefree, childish manner of the local girls, Cecilie already looks and

⁴⁰ “De Flinke hadde en viss posisjon, men ble ikke flinkheten samtidig styrket av en viss porsjon penhet, holdt det ikke” (Vik, 25).

⁴¹ “[Runa] ble så stygg når hun stod der, gradvis gikk hun over i kategorien De Stygge. Det ble en ring rundt Runa, en ensom sirkel” (Vik, 27).

⁴² “Fem B holdt på å detta på rævva da Cecilie Frank Glad kom inn i klasserommet [...]” (Sveen, *Den reddende engelen*, 94).

⁴³ “Ja, hun stod foran klassa i ei slags damedrakt [...] og gullkjede rundt halsen! I den ene handa bar hu nærmest på en slags liten koffert [...] og med den andre hilste hu på frøken og neide både for henner og klassa. Vær så god då!” (Sveen, 94).

⁴⁴ “[...] jenta så jo ut som hu ikke hadde no mannsblod i årene sine i det hele tatt” (*Ibidem*).

⁴⁵ “[...] jenta [...] stirra stadig på det snodige insektet på to ben og så ut til å villa ta meg med en pinsett og setta meg på ei nål i insektsamlinga si”; “[...] Det må ha sett ut som hu var ute og lufta bikkjene sine” (Sveen, 82; 119).

⁴⁶ “Forresten har jeg penger til gorsj”; “Mamma sier at folk kan værere greie å ha med å gjøre selv om de er arbeiderpartifolk” (Sveen, 119; 118).

behaves like a much older woman (“But it was impossible to advance on the stony beach in pumps with heels”; “Then she took us by the arm as if we were a sort of old ladies from the retirement home on a visit among the youngsters”)⁴⁷. In Sveen’s fictional world, as well as in Vik’s, women’s beauty and propriety have to match their husbands’ financial power, which explains why Cecilie is presented as the younger mirror image of her mother, the pretty, bored wife of a company director. Also like her mother, she is unhappy, longing for the freedom that girls her age seem to enjoy. Being allowed to dress in jeans, to throw away her antique dolls and to speak like Marje and Nina are some of her wildest rebellion dreams. Despite her material advantages, she is portrayed as a lonely child, spoilt, cruel towards those she sees as inferiors and, despite her own and the girls’ efforts, unable to relate to them.

Their experience with Cecilie, whom they don’t understand and whose language (both literal and social) they do not speak, bring Marje and Nina even closer as friends. Besides sharing living quarters, they participate completely and intensely in each other’s life experiences, no matter how morally questionable (“The fact that she stole apples was not so bad, but that she did it alone. It sounded nasty”)⁴⁸ or intimate, such as their first period. While Marje dreams of her absent mother but gets along well with her loving twin brother and her father, Nina’s only dream is to escape her own loud, bragging and swindling, careless family. Growing up parentless without being an orphan like Marje (“[Marje] You have both a mother and a father. [Nina] Yeah. But I don’t really notice it”; “It’s as if they weren’t my mother and father”)⁴⁹, the tenderness she displays towards her grandmother appears to be a sign of the love she herself is hungry for, a longing for affection she has learnt to hide for fear of appearing weak (“Nina stood there so pale you could have thought she had been announced that her mother was dead. The muscles under one of her eyes twitched intensely”; “I saw that Nina started to cry. I saw it on her belly muscles”)⁵⁰. Under the circumstances, it is she, more than Marje, who needs to grow up faster and who displays the scepticism and resistance to adult pressure Marje is spared having to learn (“[...] now and then even youngsters need a little privacy too, as Nina said when the teachers were too persistent and wanted to interrogate her about how

⁴⁷ “Men det var jo grusomt umulig å åkle seg fram på den stenete stranda med skor med snellehæl”; “Så tok’a oss under arma som vi skulle ha vøri noen slags gamlehjemsdamer som var på omvisning blant unger” (Sveen 118; 109).

⁴⁸ “At hu stal epler var ikke så fært, men at hu hadde gjort det alene. Det hørtes kjedt ut” (Sveen, 124).

⁴⁹ “[Marje] Du har både far og mor, du. [Nina] Joa. Merker ikke så mye tel det, men.”; “Skulle ikke tru dom var mora og faren min” (Sveen, 116; 95).

⁵⁰ “Nina stod der så blek at en skulle tru at hu hadde fått beskjed om at mora hennes var død. Det rykka intenst i muskla under det ene øyet hennes.”; “Jeg så at Nina begynte å grine. Jeg så det på magamuskla hennes” (Sveen, 35; 123).

things were at home”)⁵¹. Her intelligence comes through in her flawless reasoning skill (“I didn’t say that, and what I said was exactly the word that was appropriate. It’s the right word which is appropriate, not the appropriate word which is the right one”⁵²) and biting irony (“[Cecilie] What do you want to be when you grow up? A helping lady on the garbage truck, Nina grinned”)⁵³.

Just as Vik’s girls are anxious to escape their neighbourhood and its conventional constraints, Nina desperately longs to leave behind both her callous family and small-town provincialism (“I wish [...] I would get to a large city”)⁵⁴. In turn, Marje’s absolute loyalty to her friend proves their strong bond. Not only does she miss Nina whenever the latter is away, and is ready to accompany her in her adventurous exploits, but she is also her confidante and protector – for example by offering her a safe haven in her family’s apartment, or by sparing Nina the humiliation of finding out her father is imprisoned. Despite her teenage years, Marje’s way of thinking seems quite mature, not least in the profound way she understands her friendship with Nina (“I felt grateful that Nina had come into the world at the same time I did, and that she did it so close by”)⁵⁵.

Female freedom and solidarity in the narratives of Vik and Sveen

In the fictional worlds drawn up by Vik and Sveen, girl characters are expected to comply with family and societal expectations, which most of them do. Lured by an idealized form of love and marriage, they shed their childhood souls way too early, only to discover that the path to freedom and adulthood they had blindly followed leads into a trap. Not that they are not forewarned – they do wonder about the lack of love they see in the adult couples surrounding them, and about the mysterious warnings of their fathers (“Let the girl dance, [...] soon enough she’ll dance another kind of dance”)⁵⁶, but they are conditioned not to heed these warning signs. Others, however, prove wise enough to see beyond this pattern. To Marje and Nina, for instance, compliance means obedience, and obedience means having been trained to keep silent (“Compliance, said Nina. It means that there are no sounds coming from you. That you are completely silent. You could have thought it was the other way round, that you made

⁵¹ “[...] av og til kan unger trenge litt privatliv og, som Nina sa når lærera var innpåslitne og skulle spørre henne ut om åssen det sto til hjemme” (Sveen, 107).

⁵² “Ikke sa jeg det, og det jeg sa, var akkurat det ordet som passa. Det er det riktige ordet som passer, det er ikke det passende ordet som er det riktige” (Sveen, 96).

⁵³ “[Cecilie] Hva skal dere bli når dere blir store? Hjelpedame på søplebil, flirte Nina” (Sveen, 119).

⁵⁴ “Skulle ønske det var meg, sa Nina. Så skulle jeg dra tel en stor by” (Sveen, 116).

⁵⁵ “Jeg følte meg takknemlig for at Nina hadde kømme til verden i den samme tida som jeg, og at hu hadde gjort det så like ved” (Sveen, 117).

⁵⁶ “La jenta få danse [...], det blir tidsnok en annen dans” (Vik, *Fortellinger*, 114).

sounds. [...] Just like a dog who obeys its master. It should have been called obedience, in my opinion, [...]”⁵⁷. The girls’ comments are in fact based on their speculation about the Norwegian words for “compliance” (*lydighet*) and “obedience” (*adlydighet*), both compounded from the nuclear word *lyd* (sound). Despite that, they discover that neither action implies voicing one’s thoughts. That is why it is especially significant that Marje’s freedom, as announced by the angel-mother mentioned in the title of Sveen’s novel, is meant to mark her saving from a life of silence and passivity (“You can do anything, you know. [...] You can also say anything, too. Absolutely anything”)⁵⁸.

The future seems bright for Sveen’s girl characters, as the author appears to underline when, at the end of the novel, even Cecilie gets her freedom wish realised. Wearing jeans and cycling wildly through the city she seems to be able to finally express her authentic, teenage-girl self (“[...] she cycled with hands off the handlebars and arms in the air and eyes fixed on the road ahead”)⁵⁹. On the other hand, in the dispirited world of Vik’s stories, hope of freedom, though ardent to begin with, thins out as the girls grow older. Here, freedom comes at a price, as Ingvil and Torunn find out. By preserving her moral integrity and teaming up with like-minded people, Ingvil stays true to herself and her dreams. She is the chosen one (“My God, something is written on your forehead, little girl”)⁶⁰ or, in the telling metaphor devised by Vik, the fish that gets away. The price to pay is her isolation and humiliation (“They [the boys] said that Ingvil was cold. The fish, screamed the boys after her. Fishblood, they muttered”)⁶¹. Torunn’s freedom, on the other hand, comes much later, in adulthood, with the realisation that the existence she has agreed to, apparently safe in its imposed roles and enforced rules, has been a kind of death. In her case, freedom means independence and self-awareness, and her joining the women’s rights movement is an attempt to learn both, as she realises that her personal experience is shared by all women and therefore a political issue (Irigaray 1985, 164).

What all the girl characters in Vik’s stories and in Sveen’s novel share is some fundamental honesty: about their family environments, about their friendships, about their aspirations, about their sexuality. Vik’s sparse poetic style featuring strong metaphors evokes a kind of desperate longing for the seemingly unattainable freedom in the title of her collection, while Sveen’s use

⁵⁷ “Lydighet, sa Nina. Det betyr at det ikke kommer lyder fra deg. At du er helt stille. En skulle tru det var omvendt, at du lagde lyder. [...] Akkurat som ei bikkje som adlyder herren sin. Det skulle hett adlydighet, synes jeg, sa jeg” (Sveen, *Den reddende*, 49).

⁵⁸ “Du kæn ælt, du vettu. [...] Du kæn si ælt, og. Ælt kæn du si” (Sveen, 196).

⁵⁹ “Og ikke bare det, heller, hu sykla uten henda på styret og med arma løfta i været og blikket stivt festa på vegen foran seg” (Sveen, 193).

⁶⁰ “Mein Gott, noe står i din panne, lille pike” (Vik, *Fortellinger*, 41).

⁶¹ “De sa at Ingvil var kald. Fisken, slengte guttene etter henne. Fishblood, mumlet de” (Vik, 40).

of dialect is in itself a measure of freedom that allows her girl characters to bond and stick together. The solidity of female friendship, and female solidarity in general, are called into question in the two authors' works. In Vik's stories, this is a childhood promise never to be fulfilled. Womanhood turns out to be a lonely, competitive experience. Girls are expected to be the passive objects in a bargaining process. In their only assigned roles as daughters and future wives, they "have value only in that they serve as the possibility of, and potential benefit in, relations among men" (Irigaray 1985, 171). By contrast, the two friends in Sveen's novel are not portrayed as helpless victims, but as astute observers with the energy to change their circumstances. Unlike Vik, Sveen does not follow their lives up into adulthood, but the optimistic dénouement of her narrative implies that, for her heroines, freedom is all the more valuable when it is shared ("But we saw her [Cecilie], and it was a beautiful and lonely sight"⁶²). Either as a deeply felt absence or as an affirmed possibility, the issue of "joining together among themselves" as showcased in the works of Vik and Sveen concords and confirms Irigaray's emphasis on it as the only way for women to "escape from the spaces, roles, and gestures that they have been assigned and taught by the society of men" by "loving each other, even though men have organized a de facto rivalry among women", by "discovering a form of 'social existence' other than the one that has always been imposed upon them" (Irigaray 1985, 164). However, the girls in the works of Vik and Sveen do not yet realise the value of this cross-class and cross-age kind of bonding. The complicity they share is exclusive, rather than inclusive, and that is probably one of the causes of the fragility of their solidarity. It is a type of solidarity unlikely to withstand the conventions and choices imposed by mature age, such as marriage (Yalom 2015, 65) or a career, despite their wholehearted belief in it. That is why the girls' friendship chant at the end of Vik's *Perleporten* (The Pearly Gates) works as a disillusioned echo of connections felt to be irredeemably lost.

Conclusion

As coming-of-age narratives written by women authors about women characters, Vik and Sveen's works are part of a valuable, growing worldwide tradition. For the past century and a half, from *Little Women* (Louisa May Alcott, 1868-1869) to *How to Build a Girl* (Caitlin Moran, 2014), these works document personal experiences that are incontrovertibly feminine. Judging by the historical circumstances that allowed this kind of literature to begin and flourish, it is obvious that successive waves of feminist campaigning have played a significant role in promoting feminine voices like these onto the public,

⁶² "Men vi så hener, og det var et pent og ensomt syn" (Sveen, *Den reddende engelen*, 192).

and publishing, stage. It is hardly by accident that the feminist ideas in Vik's stories at the beginning of the 1970s bear a notable resemblance to those displayed by Alice Munro in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971). Besides, there is no denying the impact of the authors' lived experience on their character's stories. To some degree, Vik and Sveen seem to recount their own circumstances growing up, at different times and in different parts of Norway, as if affirming the urgency of disclosing such experiences, often left concealed and sometimes even considered tabu by societal norms. As we step further into the twenty-first century and the definitions of human, and gender, friendship and solidarity change with the social media and AI, this kind of girlhood genealogy⁶³ may become even more relevant and necessary. With its deep-rooted tradition of female presence in their public and cultural life, and given the sensitivity of their public to political, social and cultural debates, the Scandinavian countries are expected to be among the first in Europe to record and reflect these changes in their literary output.

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⁶³ See note 5.

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I BLODHAGER, DANSEHUS OG SØVNSLETTER. ELLEN EINANS FIKSJONSDANNELSE

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ABSTRACT. *In Blood Gardens, Dance Halls and Sleep Plains. Ellen Einan's Creation of Fiction.* Ellen Einan (1931–2013) is a Norwegian poet known for her frequent use of innovative language that forms fixed expressions, codes or references to both religious and mythical rituals and symbols. She builds her imagery on folk beliefs, Eastern religions and old ancient myths and she weaves all this together into a fantastic poetic universe with its own mythology. In the present paper, I examine the possibility of reading her poems as an expression of the creation of fiction in lyric poetry. I consider the creation of fiction to be an extension of the creation of images (connected to the term “the imaginary”), where we acquire images and their interconnections with a fiction-constitutive power. In this view, Einan not only constructs images (or symbols), but also a new, fictional existence in her poems. My approach to Einan's work is closely linked to the fictional world theory and its use within the discourse of lyric poetry, as it is presented in the theoretical work of Miroslav Červenka. He assumes that the lyrical subject is at the centre of the fictional world of the poem and assigns a character-like position to it. Furthermore, I read Einan's complete oeuvre as an interconnected universe, as the thematic criticism proposes, and focus on how the recurring motifs and themes can enable us to identify Einan's fictional world.

Keywords: *Ellen Einan, Norwegian poetry of 20th century, fictional worlds, lyrical subject, fictionality in lyric poetry*

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REZUMAT. *În grădini de sânge, săli de dans și câmpii de somn. Crearea ficțiunii la Ellen Einan.* Ellen Einan (1931–2013) este o poetă norvegiană cunoscută pentru utilizarea frecventă a unui limbaj inovator care include expresii fixe, coduri sau trimiteri atât la ritualuri și simboluri religioase, cât și la mituri. Scriitoarea își construiește imaginile pe credințe populare, religii orientale și mituri antice și le împletește cu propria sa mitologie, creând un univers poetic fantastic. În lucrarea de față, examinez posibilitatea de a citi poeziile scriitoarei ca expresie a ficțiunii în lirică. Consider că crearea ficțiunii este o extensie a creării imaginilor (legată de termenul „imaginar”). Din această perspectivă, Einan nu construiește în poemele ei doar imagini (sau simboluri), ci și o nouă existență fictivă. Abordarea mea față de opera lui Einan este strâns legată de teoria lumilor ficționale și de utilizarea acesteia în discursul poeziei lirice, așa cum este prezentat în opera teoretică a lui Miroslav Červenka. Criticul presupune că subiectul liric se află în centrul lumii ficționale a poemului și îi atribuie o poziție asemănătoare unui personaj. În plus, consider opera lui Einan ca un univers interconectat și mă concentrez asupra modului în care motivele și temele recurente ne pot permite să identificăm lumea fictivă a lui Einan.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Ellen Einan, poezia norvegiană a secolului al XX-lea, lumi ficționale, subiect liric, ficțiune în poezia lirică*

Introduksjon – fra bildedannelse til fiksjonsdannelse

I denne artikkelen vil jeg reflektere over den norske poeten Ellen Einans litterære produksjon som et uttrykk for «fiksjonsdannelse».² Ordet knytter an til begrepet «biledannelse», som er en fornorskert versjon av det engelske «imaginary», og en teoretisk sammentenkning av begge perspektiver.³ Lyrikken er den sjangeren som konvensjonelt er minst knyttet til fiksjon og fiksjonalitet, men dette er noe som gir rom for problematisering. I denne artikkelen går jeg ut fra at lyrikken også kan leses som fiksjon og at nettopp Ellen Einans lyrikk er

² Denne teksten er bygget på min doktoravhandling «*Jeg skaper meg en ny klode.*» *Fiktive verdener og Ellen Einans lyrikk* (2023). Her oppsummerer jeg noen teoretiske grunntanker, samt videreutvikler noen argumenter fra avhandlingens analysedel.

³ I min forståelse av bildedannelsen støtter jeg meg til Gilbert Durands utforskning av «l'imaginaire». Synet på Einans forfatterproduksjon som denne artikkelen presenterer, er på mange måter beslektet med Durands påpeking av indre imaginasjonsstrukturer i vår kultur; Durands forsøk på å kartlegge de vanligste imaginasjonsstrukturene har noe til felles med mitt forsøk på å kartlegge de underliggende strukturene i Einans lyrikk, som etter min mening kommer fram gjennom en mer fiktiv lesning. Samtidig tar jeg denne henvisningen bare som et springbrett for min egen selvstendig forskning, uavhengig av Durands eller andre antropologiske teorier.

velegnet for en slik fiktiv lesning. Artikkelen vil gi en introduksjon til Einans diktning, drøfte den polariserende debatten om lyrikkens fiksjonalitet og demonstrere en lesning av det fiktive gjennom et begrenset diktutvalg.

Til å begynne med vil jeg se nærmere på begrepene og den overordnede problematikken som artikkelen tar for seg. I sentrum av interessen står utforskning av fiktive verdener i lyrikken. Dette er en forskyving fra den vanlige praksisen der fokuset ligger på granskingen av fiktive verdener i en narrativ litteratur. Fiktive verdener⁴ er definert som spesifikke semiotiske strukturer som skapes i fiktive tekster, og her er det viktig å påpeke at med fiksjon mener jeg ikke en sjangerbetegnelse som brukes om romaner og annen episk litteratur, men den delen av tekstens mening som er oppdiktet og ikke kan defineres som en dokumentarlitteratur. Den er ikke forbeholdt en bestemt sjanger, selv om den er mest tilknyttet epikken.⁵ Teorien om fiktive verdener er i stor grad tilknyttet filosofi og modal logikk (hvor det snakkes om mulige verdener), men takket være forskere som Thomas Pavel (1986), Umberto Eco (1994a, 1994b), Marie-Laure Ryan (1991, 2015) og Lubomír Doležel (1998) har det teoretiske grunnlaget blitt tilpasset litteraturvitenskapen. Alle de ovennevnte teoretikerne har ulike syn på etableringen av fiktive verdener i litterære tekster, men vi kan snakke om en slags generell teoretisk base som deres arbeid utgjør. En av grunntankene er at fiktive verdener er semiotiske systemer som er produsert av estetiske aktiviteter (skrivning) og gjenskapt som mentale bilder ved lesning (Doležel 1998, 14–15, 21)⁶.

Noen av de fundamentale egenskapene ved litterære fiktive verdener har Ruth Ronen samlet i sin innføringsbok *Possible worlds in literary theory*. Hun identifiserer tre premisser som er karakteristiske for den fiktive diskursen: Fiksjon kan skape og konstruere objekter; den kan konstruere enkelte objekter i dybden, selv om de er ufullstendige fra andre synspunkter; og den kan konstruere umulige objekter (Ronen 1994, 45). Alle tre premissene stemmer med verdensframstillingen i Einans lyrikk og ifølge dem kan vi også oppfatte den lyriske diktningen som en mulig fiksjonskilde. Beskrivelsene Ronen bruker, strider iallfall ikke mot diktene som sådan. Spørsmål om lyrikkens fiksjonalitet kan skape en opphetet diskusjon der motpolene går fra en tydelig fornektelse av

⁴ Noen snakker om «mulige verdener i litteratur», men jeg foretrekker begrepet «fiktive verdener». Se også Fořt (2016).

⁵ Fiksjon er heller ikke forstått som en imitasjon, noe som f.eks. Tzvetan Todorov (1990) og Barbara Herrnstein-Smith (1971) antyder. Mimetisk syn på fiktive verdener er i dagens fiksjonsforskning ansett som altfor reduktiv – vi kan snarere snakke om et analogisk forhold mellom fiksjon og virkelighet, som også kan være brutt takket være poetisk imaginasjon (Doležel, 1998, 2019).

⁶ Både Pavel og Doležel vier videre en del av forskningen sin til ulike hybride, fantastiske eller overnaturlige verdener som ikke er styrt av samme regler og lover som vår aktuelle verden. I samme gruppe kan vi også plassere Einans lyriske fiktive verden.

lyrikkens fiksjonalitet, gjennom bevisst nedtoning av de fiktive innslagene i lyrikken, til en tydelig narrativisering av lyrikken, og sist, men ikke minst en teori som viser at all lyrikk i bunn og grunn er fiktiv, eller inneholder fiksjon i seg selv, men at denne fiktive biten kan spille ulike roller i fortolkningsprosessen.⁷ Denne artikkelen posisjonerer seg i den ytterste kanten som også anser lyrikken som en fiktiv sjanger. Dette perspektivet betyr ikke at all lyrikk må leses fiktivt, eller at den fiktive lesningen alltid er den mest passende, men av flere grunner, som jeg kommer til å drøfte videre, er det fiktive synet på lyrikken relevant for Einans forfatterskap.

Utgangspunktet for fiksjonalisering av lyrikken finner jeg i Miroslav Červenkas teoretiske arbeid. I artikkelen «"Discovering" the Fictional Worlds of Lyric Poetry» (2006) leverer han premisser for identifisering av fiktive verdener i lyrikken. Hans tolkning av problematikken er ikke knyttet til narratologien, men den har utviklet seg som en blanding av Doležels og Ryans framstilling av fiktive verdener og den Praha-strukturalistiske arven som understreker kunstverkets ulike funksjoner. For Praha-strukturalistene, og særlig for Jan Mukařovský, er kunstverket dannet av ulike funksjoner og verdier. Mukařovský hevder at kunstverket både har sin indre og ytre form – og forholder seg til sin indre virkelighet og virkeligheten utenfor verket på samme tid (Mukařovský, 1978, 213-232). For Červenkas anvendelse av fiktive verdener-begrepet på lyrikken blir nettopp denne tvetydigheten avgjørende. Etter hans mening inngår både den fiktive og den formelle dimensjonen av diktet i vår fortolkningsprosess, og de interagerer (Červenka, 246). Videre i teksten vil jeg særlig vektlegge lyrikkens fiktive side og dens betydning for tolkningen.

Červenka diskuterer lyrikkens fiksjonskonstituerende kraft i en mer alminnelig forstand, som et undervurdert lag av denne litterære sjangeren. Lyrikkens fiksjonalitet definerer han som en spesifikk ontologisk situasjon som oppstår i diktet, og som ikke nødvendigvis må være et uttrykk for en handling satt i en spatial og temporal ramme (240). Vi kan iallfall se at grensene for denne rammen er veldig løse og at mye av det temporale og romlige er underforstått. Videre setter han seg som mål å drøfte muligheter uttrykt i følgende påstand: «the fictional world of a lyric poem, or its central part, is represented by a subject» (240), og deretter definerer han et lyrisk subjekt eller et lyrisk jeg som den viktigste størrelsen for diktets fiktive verden. Dette innebærer at hvilket som helst syn på den lyriske fiktive verdenen vil innlemme det lyriske jeget som både verdenens aspekt og dens formidler.

I den fiksjonsforankrede forskningen er det lyriske subjektet dessuten forstått mer kroppslig enn i det poststrukturelle synet på lyrikken – subjektet

⁷ I denne artikkelen vil jeg ikke gå inn i dybden på denne debatten, for ulike synspunkter se Culler (2016, 2017a), Hühn (2010, 2014), McHale (2009), Semino (2014).

er ikke bare en stemme eller en form for språkets vokalisasjon, men det er snarere et talende jeg på identitetssøken (Červenka, 240).⁸ En lignende nyansering av det lyriske subjektet presenterer også Eva Zettelmann ved hjelp av begrepene «leggemliggjøring» («embodiedness») og «lyrisk perspektiv». Hun påpeker likheter mellom det subjektive blikket i lyrikken og fokaliseringen som en narrativ teknikk (Zettelmann 2017, 198). Videre argumenterer hun for at leseren automatisk projiserer en kropp som diktets stemme og følelser hører til, og som står i sentrum av diktets perspektiv (198). Červenka viser også tendens til å skildre det lyriske subjektet på samme måte, men hans tilnærming fokuserer ikke på leserens kognitive operasjoner slik som Zettelmanns gjør. Ikke desto mindre er de enige om at det lyriske jegets rolle er fundamental for skapning av fiktive verdener i lyrikken.

Dette kan ses i forhold til «billedannelse» slik som denne utgaven har presentert den: som en utforskning av «selvet i forhold til de andre»⁹; som en individuell forestillingsevne i relasjon til vår kultur, estetikk, imaginasjon og mytologi. Billedannelsen kan da også forstås som den enkeltes egen strategi eller skapning av teksten. Einans forfatterskap presenterer en sammensatt helhet, med mange henvisninger til arkaiske samfunn, verdensreligioner og arketypiske strukturer, som samtidig er veldig original og uten direkte mytologiske eller religiøse referanser (kanskje bortsett fra «Vår Herre»). Også av denne grunn blir diktene hennes ofte oppfattet som kryptiske og ugjennomtrengelige, noe som fører til at man tyr til en mer helhetlig tolkning av hennes forfatterproduksjon istedenfor å tolke enkelte, separate dikt. Slike vurderinger kan ha i fokus hennes skrivestil og dens formelle kvaliteter (Andersen 2012, 636-38), metaforbygging (Gujord 1996) eller diktenes forsøk på å forme et uferdig og fragmentert narrativ. Dette antyder Charles I. Armstrong med sin utpeking av små fragmenter av ulike versjoner og avledninger som forsøker, men aldri klarer å fange en helhetlig fortelling (Armstrong 1997, 235).

Min tilnærming til Einans forfatterproduksjon er tett forbundet med det helhetlige synet på forfatterskapet, og her vil jeg nettopp knytte an til Armstrongs synspunkter og fokusere på noen konkrete motiver eller temaer som er felles for hele forfatterskapet. Dette er en idé som ikke ligger så langt fra den tematiske kritikken tradisjon, men jeg vil heller nærme meg disse motivene gjennom det fiktive. Mitt perspektiv på Einans forfatterskap er altså ikke begrenset til de

⁸ I original: «a speaker who is articulated in the process of this [search of identity] quest». Červenka siterer her Karlheinz Stierle. Den ovennevnte artikkelen fra 2006 er en forkortet og delvis moderert versjon av Červenkas tsjekkiske bok *Fikční světy lyriky* (2003). I denne teksten går jeg særlig ut fra den engelske artikkelen, men den tsjekkiske boka gir mye mer utdypende innblikk i Červenkas argumentering, også for å forstå nyanser i subjekt-framstillingen.

⁹ Tatt fra *Call for papers* for denne utgaven.

bildene hun skaper, men jeg ser hovedsakelig etter sammenhengen mellom bildene og deres kraft til å konstruere og konstituere fiksjon. Derfor vil jeg heller snakke om fiksjonsdannelse enn om bildedannelse. Fiksjonsdannelsen anser jeg følgelig som en utvidelse av bildedannelsen, hvor vi tilegner bilder og deres forhold en fiksjonskonstituerende kraft, en evne til å skape en ny, fiktiv eksistens.

Dette er ikke noe spesifikt kun for denne forfatteren og hennes dikt; innenfor fiksjonsteorien er dette trolig noe underforstått, men denne vrien på begrepet, forskyvningen fra bilder til fiksjon, kan fungere som en brobygger mellom lyrikkens ukuelige bilderikdom og et mer narrativt syn på tekst som fiksjon. Einan med sin lyriske diktning skaper en fiktiv verden bebodd av det navnløse lyriske jeg og andre fiktive vesener. Den tydelig jeg-sentrerte lyrikken hun skriver, gir et godt grunnlag for utforskning av diktens fiktive verden. Det lyriske jeget er perspektivgivende og et viktig skjæringspunkt mellom den lyriske diktningen og diktets fiktive dimensjon. Dette kan illustreres gjennom de korte narrative fragmentene, men i jakten etter Einans fiksjonsdannelse, er det den verdenen som jeget skaper og samtidig vitner om, som er det egentlige formålet med analysen.

Avsløringen og rekonstrueringen av denne verdensstrukturen påvirker også vår lesning av Einans forfatterskap. Den foreslåtte fiktive lesningen er en gjensidig prosess hvor leseren leter etter de underliggende mønstrene og strukturene og gjennom dem rekonstruerer diktens fiktive verden. Etter å ha tegnet et slags bilde av denne verdenen, tolker leseren strukturenes betydning for den samme fiktive verdenen. Samtidig er alt i diktene filtrert gjennom det lyriske jegets blikk – vi kan si i samsvar med Červenkas påstander at den fiktive verdenen projiseres i det lyriske jeget. Likevel er jeget ikke dens skaper, men snarere dens gjenspeiling. Så det som jeget presenterer for oss, er også bare et symptom på hvordan verdenen fungerer – og leserens rolle ved en slik fiksjonsforankret diktanalyse er å se på denne relasjonen mellom verdenen og det lyriske jeget. Så hvordan kan vi tolke det fiktive diktuniverset, eller den fiktive verdenen som Einan har skapt gjennom sin skriving? Hvordan kan vi tegne konturene av dette universet og hvilke bildedannelser finnes vevd inn i det?

Å forstå Einans tegn

For å forstå Einans underlige forfatterskap er det viktig å se litt nærmere på hennes liv og skapervirksomhet. Ellen Einan (1931-2013) var en ganske lite omtalt dikter fra Nord-Norge som hadde en produktiv karriere utover 1980- og 90-tallet. I denne perioden publiserte hun 11 diktsamlinger og

to andre fulgte i det neste tiår.¹⁰ Hun ble oversatt til svensk og dansk og ble tildelt ulike priser som Aschehougprisen (2002) og Doblougprisen (2012). Til tross for dette virker diktningen hennes veldig fjern og ubegripelig på både lesere og anmeldere, og måten hun skaper de poetiske bildene på, har alltid vært et av de største temaene i forfatterskapets resepsjon. «Felles for diktsamlingene til Ellen Einan er et dunkelt og sakralt bildespråk, som, nedskrevet på et høytidsstemt riksmål, maner fram bildet av et landskap vi ikke kjenner igjen fra denne verden, et landskap som er originalt i ordets egentlige betydning», skriver Heming Gujord i innledningen til sin artikkel om Einans poetiske montasjer (Gujord 1996, 178). Vi finner både blodhager, søvnsletter, vannsøstre, lystfugler, morgenfanger, kornsjeler og nattbarn i diktene. Einans kreative arbeid med nyskapninger og deres inkorporering i diktene kan oppfattes om et av de viktigste trekkene ved dette forfatterskapet.

La oss illustrere disse påstandene med et dikt. Diktet «I natt bøyer jeg av» (1982, 48)¹¹ bærer preg av mange av de typiske Einanske egenskapene:

Som du var løs og fin med vannet,
 og som du forstod mine tegn,
 du var ørn og var blodhage,
 og jeg løste dine onde
 huleboerbånd.
 Dersom du farges om og blir en
 torghage for dørselgeren,
 er jeg hos deg med nyttehagehender.
 Dersom du vil, tar jeg deg med til
 musikkhagen.

Diktet med det repeterende hagemotivet virker som en bisarr botanisk allegori over et kjærlighetsforhold eller et nært vennskap. Videre er diktet en skildring med flere narrative elementer med både spatial og temporal utvikling. Duet skal forvandles fra en blodhage til en torghage, men jeget med sine nyttehagehender tar dem begge til musikkhagen – hager er helt essensielle elementer i diktets univers. Vi kan anta at diktet er en monologisk uttalelse eller en tiltale av et mer

¹⁰ Einans diktsamlinger er følgende: *Den gode engsøster* (1982), *Muldsøstre* (1983), *Jorden har hvasket* (1984), *Søster Natt* (1985), *Nattbarn* (1986), *Sene rop mellom bronsebergene* (1987), *Hestene våker i duggtoneengen* (1989), *Døgnfargene er mørke* (1991), *De syv nattstegene* (1992), *Jade for min engel* (1994), *Innenfor og utenfor er ett* (1999), *Dagen får min uro* (2004) og *Noen venter på bud* (2009). *Samlede dikt* fra 2011 inneholder i tillegg diktene fra en privatutgave fra 1978 og noen dikt utgitt i tidsskriftet *POESI*.

¹¹ Ved sitering av Einans dikt bruker jeg sidehenvisningen til den reviderte versjonen av *Samlede dikt*, men jeg nevner også årstallet diktet kommer fra.

eller mindre menneskelig «jeg», det lyriske subjektet, til et beslektet «du». Forholdet mellom jeget og duet virker preget av dyp forståelse og sympati, men kan også deles i to tidslinjer. Den første linjen kjennetegnes av den store fortroligheten, og antakelig også intimiteten, fra tida før jeget har dratt, og mot dette står den andre linjen hvor begge kan gjenforenes i en mulig framtid – kanskje i hagearbeid, eller i musikk og dans. Det er en oppfordring til eller et tilbud om felles liv.

Jeget er på vei ut, svinger vekk, «bøyer av» fra forholdet. Først var duet «løs og fin», forståelsesfullt og både «ørn» og «blodhage». Jeget har gjort ham (eller henne) friere og trolig mindre avhengig av sin opprinnelse, kanskje fra en mørk slektshistorie. Diktet kretser rundt temaer som farvel og mulig gjenforening, en uendelig bevegelse presentert både som fysisk mosjon og vilje til endring, men alt dette skjer under visse betingelser. Jeget gjentar flere ganger «dersom» og setter veldig konkrete begrensinger foran duet – deres gjenforening er mulig kun under en forutsetning – altså at duet «farges om». Omfarging som en spesiell prosess oscillerer mellom en ytre, overfladisk endring (som bare skjer gjennom en ny maling) og en dypsindig indre trang til forandring (å bli en annen type hage er ikke bare en overfladisk forandring, men snarere en komplisert prosess med både utgraving av de gamle sporene og ny utplanting). Jeget lover å bli hjelpsomt med sine «nyttehagehender» og ta duet videre til musikkhagen som virker som et sted for nytelser eller en endelig destinasjon.

Den innholdsmessige siden av diktet er forenklet til en rekke påfølgende aktiviteter og påpeker visse punkter når situasjonen må endres og noe er i ferd med å skje. Det mest fengende ved diktet er det spesielle ordvalget, som unnviker både den hverdagslige og den metaforiske måten å snakke på. Enkelte uttrykk er uten motstykke og må ofte bli utelatt ved dikttolkningen. De kan virke nesten intetsigende ved nærlesningen og kan ofte forenkles til bare stemningsskapende elementer eller en utsmykking av diktet. Henvisningen til for eksempel en hage kan være såpass alminnelig og altomfattende at det blir helt umulig å avgrense hagens betydning i diktets univers. Samtidig kan leseren også prøve å dechiffrere hvert eneste uttrykk og betrakte diktet som en pur metaforisk ytring. Å overse og å oversette er to aktiviteter som ofte bidrar til tolkning av Einans dikt.

Generelt sett kan vi se at Einans diktning er full av motsigelser og bisarre hendelser, og den er kledd i (eller basert på) et ekstraordinært, både stivt og nytenkende, språk. Ordsammensetningene, oftest med funksjon som nominale eller adverbiale ledd, er kjernen av diktenes tvetydighet og former for leseren et vanskelig tilgjengelig diktlandskap. Einan utnytter mulighetene i det norske språket til det ytterste i enkelte verselinjer ved å sette sammen ord i uvanlige sammensetninger, og som står i forhold til andre uvanlige

sammensetninger. Det er ofte steder som hager, sletter, hus, men også levende vesener og andre naturelementer og til og med adjektiver som inngår i ulike kombinasjoner. Disse sammensetningene gjentas enten flere ganger (f.eks. «blodhage» eller «vannsøster»), eller vi møter ulike variasjoner av enkelte uttrykk på tvers av hele forfatterskapet (jf. «søvnsløtte» vs. «søvnhage»). Gjennom sin repeterende forekomst danner de spesielle faste uttrykk, koder eller henvisninger til ulike arketyper eller mytologiske innslag.

Einan har bygget de dikteriske bildene sine på folketro, østlige religioner og gamle antikke myter, og alt dette har hun vevet sammen til et fantasifullt diktunivers med sin egen, oppdiktede mytologi. Vi finner imidlertid overraskende lite av det spesifikt norske i diktenes innhold. Landskapet som diktene hennes tegner, er mest av alt et imaginært, inderlig landskap hvor de ytre og de indre avgrensningene utviskes, slik vi kunne se i det vekslende, ustabile og utolkbare hagemotivet i diktet «I natt bøyer jeg av». Diktenes imaginære univers virker fremmedartet, men vi kan kjenne igjen mange av de fantasifulle objektene fordi de gjentas flere ganger – dette universet er eklektisk og syntetiserende. Også mytologiske og religiøse henvisninger, som virker som små narrative innskudd, danner sammen gjennomgående tematiske og motiviske helheter.

Det at ens forfatterskap er bygget opp som et poetisk univers med visse gjentakende bilder, er ikke noe uvanlig og det kan i seg selv være et godt utgangspunkt for identifisering av diktenes fiktive verden. I Einans tilfelle er dette enda mer merkbart siden mange av de gjentakende motivene eller bildene er språklige nyskapninger, som for eksempel «blodhage» eller «huleboerbånd». Den repetitive kjeden av like eller lignende ord og uttrykk kan peke mot den tematiske kritikkenes utforskning av symboler og metaforer og deres mening for et forfatterskap. Det helhetlige synet på imaginasjon som Jean-Pierre Richard, en av de viktigste teoretikerne innenfor den tematiske kritikken, har gjennomført i sine analyser av franske symbolister, er også anvendbart i Einans tilfelle (Richard 1992, 2003). Men Einans diktning stiller leseren foran flere spørsmål og tankekors, og hennes metaforiske språk kan ikke så lett oversettes eller transponeres til det konvensjonelle språket.

Metaforens rolle i Einans forfatterskap er et omdiskutert tema (Gujord 1996, Pitronová 2017). Den virker først og fremst utilgjengelig og helt ugjennomtrengelig. Multipliseringen av mange metaforiske uttrykk i diktene kan føre til en viss skeptisisme og problematisering av det metaforiske i det hele tatt. Det kan være vanskelig å sammenligne eller kontrastere den omtalte situasjonen i diktet med en kjent virkelighetserfaring. «Blodhager», «huleboerbånd», mennesker som «farges om» eller har «nyttehagehender», alt dette og mye annet er såpass kryptiske uttrykksmåter at det til tider kan virke som en helt meningsløs babling. En lignende oppfatning antydet også Stig

Sæterbakken i sin anmeldelse av *Sene rop mellom bronsebergene*, en diktsamling Einan publiserte i 1987 (Sæterbakken 1987). Han beskriver Einans dikt som en veksling mellom «det kryptisk fascinerende» og «det kryptisk uvesentlige». Det er bare en smakssak å kalle noen av Einans dikt for «ikke forplantningsdyktige» og tvile på om de klarer å «sette i gang prosesser hos leseren», men denne litt mindre sjenerøse anmeldelsen viser hvordan det overfylte språket som Einan bruker, kan virke mot sin hensikt. I Einans tilfelle er metaforene ofte såpass usammenlignbare og uten en kjent kulturell kontekst, som ellers ville føre oss til den skjulte betydningen, at deres avkoding noen ganger bare fører til mye frustrasjon.

Min lesning av Einans forfatterskap er derfor et eksperiment hvor fokuset ligger på diktenes fiktive side. Målet er ikke å avskrive lyrikkens metaforisitet, men først og fremst å se på den andre, mer neglisjerte siden ved diktene hennes. Istedenfor å forsøke å komme til bunns i Einans metaforiske språk, kan oppmerksomheten vår nettopp rettes mot diktenes språkkapasitet til å skape en fiktiv verden. Einans fiktive narrativ ligger som et bakteppe under det metaforiske laget i diktene, og samtidig produserer det selv sine egne meninger og utfyller metaforene. Diktene framstiller både entiteter, miljøer og hele historier som er lenket sammen og de kan leses som korte fragmenter fra et stort og altomfattende narrativ som framstår oppstykket og segmentert i det enkelte diktet. Det indre narrative som diktene samskaper, har ikke de samme egenskapene som andre narrative tekster, men til tross for den lyriske basisen bærer diktene en samlende historie med flere fiktive kvaliteter. Diktenes indre struktur blir slik definert gjennom små narrative innslag som gjentas, og gjennom noen fiksjonskonstruerende elementer som skaper et inntrykk av en fantasifull helhet. Å se på Einans fiksjonsdannelse og identifisere hennes fiktive verden kan derfor utvide tolkningen der den metaforiske avkodingen ikke fungerer.

Det fiktive diktuniverset

Einans fiktive verden er svært antimimetisk – den ligner bare i liten grad på vår aktuelle verden. Ja, den virker unnnvikende og til tider ulogisk. Her er det uklart hvor grensen mellom mennesker og steder går, verdenen er full av overnaturlige eksistenser og fenomener, og betingelsene for liv og død virker også forvridde. Diktenes fiktive verden eier ikke den samme rasjonalitet som vi ville forvente, og derfor er også vår tilnærming til den annerledes enn til realistisk litteratur. Vi kan snarere snakke om en overnaturlig, myte- og eventyrlignende verden med mange fantasifulle preg. Dette er et språklig univers, men navn og betegnelser er av og til helt paradoksale, og til og med

preposisjoner og konjunksjoner kan vekke oppsikt. Dette er ikke en verden vi kan tilegne oss med en gang, men ved å sette sammen mange biter og fragmenter hvor enkelte situasjoner repeteres, kan vi skaffe oss en slags oversikt over verdenen. Samtidig tenderer forfatterskapet til framstillingen av kun én verden – og dermed også ett subjekt som snakker til oss. Verdenen belyses gjennom enkelte dikt – små fragmenter som setter fokus på små episoder av den store helheten som vi kan kalle for et slags overordnet narrativ.

For å identifisere det fiktive diktuniverset er det ikke så viktig å finne en presis mening bak enkelte uttrykk, men mitt hovedpoeng er snarere å tolke valgte uttrykk i sammenheng med Einans andre dikt og se på de spesifikke strukturene som oppstår i lesningen gjennom gjentakelse, bygging og utvikling av enkelte motiver. Dette skjer ofte gjennom en viss narrativisering, men også gjennom henvisning til jegets omgivelser og vektlegging av diktets romlige og temporale koordinater (som tidsforskyvning, bevegelse og stedforankring). I det ovennevnte diktet «I natt bøyer jeg av» møter vi flere entiteter («jeg» og «du»), steder («vannet» og «hager»), tidsavgrensninger («i natt») og situasjoner som er symptomatiske for Einans øvrige verk. For eksempel er vi konfrontert med det problematiske hagemotivet, som gjennomsyrrer alt og som for det første er et karaktertrekk, en slags metonymisk sammenligning med noen menneskesider eller en framstilling av et menneske, for det andre en tilstand som man kan oppnå eller en posisjon man kan få, for det tredje et særpreg av menneskekroppen, trolig knyttet til en eller annen aktivitet, og for det fjerde et utfluktssted eller en destinasjon (i en materiell eller en mer spirituell forstand). Hagen virker da neppe som et enkelt symbol eller kun et fiktivt sted, men snarere som en form for eksistens eller en egenskap ved noens eksistens.

Både jeget og duet kan i dette diktet tolkes som karakterer, som konkretiserte fiktive entiteter som står i forhold til hverandre. Også i den lesningen som jeg har framlagt, er diktet beskrevet som det lyriske jegets monolog til et du og ikke til leseren. Jeget er ikke bare en talende stemme, men det er også – og i hovedsak – den viktigste fiktive entiteten i dette universet. I tråd med Eva Zettermanns resonnement kan vi forestille oss at denne stemmen har en fiktiv kropp som finnes i et fiktivt rom. Det lyriske jeget er da en personalisert entitet som tilhører diktets romtid, og gjennom å fortelle sin veldig konkrete historie, skaper den en slags verdensfølelse. I mange av Einans dikt er jeget et kvinnelig vesen med høyst kvinnelige erfaringer som både elskerinne, datter og mor, så vi kan anta at vi også i dette diktet møter et kvinnelig jeg. Den vanligste posisjonen av jeget er faktisk som sin mors datter. Dette er et forhold som i stor grad definerer jegets selvforståelse og skaper spenning i diktene – jegets relasjon til moren er mest av alt preget av

morens død – som hun forventer, opplever eller har opplevd¹². Moren er samtidig en udødelig kraft eller guddom som står overfor alle skapningene. Hun kan være både Rosa eller Grå Mor, øverste Mor eller en begravd mor som står på dødens side.

I andre dikt kan jeget sette seg i dyrets posisjon, eller det kan innlemme flere ting og identiteter i seg selv og presentere en amøbisk struktur. Einan bygger og former et arkaisk, førmoderne, førindividuell, nærmest animistisk jeg som er hovedkarakter i mange lignende historier. I diktet «Jeg er deg» (1987, 256) er framstillingen av ens individualitet nærmest helt panteistisk – jeget er overalt, gjennomtrenger alt og inkorporerer alt i seg: «Jeg er deg. / Jeg er frøkapselen. / Se på mørket som er om meg.» Jeget er både den andre og den absolutte begynnelsen – frøkapselen med mørket rundt omkring. Den første linjen kan forstås som en speiling av det lyriske jeg og det tiltenkte du som står imot hverandre og samtidig er ett, og slik sier diktet noe viktig om Einans poetiske drøfting av ens individualitet – den finnes ikke. Ens individualitet er ubegrenset og fullstendig innvevd i de andre. Det lyriske jeget er ikke bare «jeg» og «deg», men også alt som omkranser jegets eksistens. Dette er ikke et så uvanlig poetisk grep, men i dette tilfellet er denne egenskapen ved Einans diktning helt grunnleggende og kan gjenkjennes i forfatterskapet på et mer overordnet nivå.

I «I natt bøyer jeg av» er det tiltalte duet derimot tydelig avgrenset og presenterer en annen individualitet: Det er løst og fint, forstår jegets tegn og har sin egen fortid. Duet relateres samtidig til «dørselgeren», som den skal være «torghage» for – er det ment at duet skal innta rollen som dørselgeren? Det lyriske jeget henvender seg ofte til menn som er beskrevet som dørselgere eller dansere, så vi kan nesten plassere duet på den maskuline siden. Men diktene kan også være ganske upersonlige, som diktet «Bunnen av hagen full av blod» (1983, 72): «Syng, munn, ha fangen fri! / Ha mandelhuden glatt, / sov i mønsterhusets dødsrom, / hagens eneste lyst kom halt og mutt forbi.» Diktet er en oppfordring eller en sang som innenfor den fiktive diskursen kan forstås som jegets tale, men jeget må heller ikke være den talende – det er nok når vi bare tenker oss et observerende jeg som står bak diktet.¹³

Det er også mange merkelige uttrykk som ved sin gjentakelse skaper inntrykk av noe helhetlig og sammenhengende, som tilhører en spesifikk verden. Blodhagen er en slik betegnelse som finnes i en rekke dikt og kan gi oss flere assosiasjoner, men den virker utvilsomt som et overskridende element. «Eier du ingen blodhage?» (1989, 287) spør en av stemmene i et dikt med

¹² Morens begravelse står i fokus i Armstrongs artikkel «'Jeg er en hugget gren.' Fra tap til fravær i Ellen Einans forfatterskap.» (2017).

¹³ For denne påstanden finner vi også støtte i den norske lyrikkteorien. Se Kittang og Aarseth, 1998, 32–34.

samme tittel. «Nei, bare sår og vann.» sier den andre stemmen. I «Høye rom» (1992, 325) var jeget «forførende nær din blodhage». Men her er «[p]ortene låst. Engelen slaktet.» Blodhagen er muligens et sted for kjærlighet, en betegnelse for hjerte, muligens en hemmelig skuff vi har inne i oss, kanskje er det et slags emblem for kjærlighet. Det ovennevnte «[d]u var ørn og var blodhage» peker imidlertid snarere mot en metonymisk betegnelse på en egenskap som duet har vist i forholdet. I «Bunnen av hagen full av blod» har hele hagen blitt til en blodhage, blødende eller drepene. Er vi nå nær døden? Er det hagen som skal blø i hjel, eller er det hagens eier? Et annet spørsmål er om dødens nærhet i det hele tatt er grusom, eller om den bare er forløsende og befriende, når munnen kan sette sine fanger fri.

Det vanskelige vokabularet med den mystiske symbolikken underbygger diktenes virkning og kan nesten posisjonere den som en hemmelig lære som åpenbares for leseren. Blodhagen virker som en ubegripelig metafor eller et mystisk symbol som mangler en stabil betydning, men den kretser hele tida rundt noen lignende temaer og fasetter. Etter mitt syn skaper disse gjentakende referansene et verdensbyggende nettverk, og alt det imaginære miljøet forstår jeg først og fremst som uttrykk for en annerledes, fiktiv ontologi. Et aspekt ved denne ontologien er kanskje nettopp det at ingen entitet, ingen bestemmelse er absolutt.

Er denne vei til dansen? ¹⁴

Den siste delen av artikkelen vil jeg vie til en tanke om en «nymytologisk», syntetisk og gjennomtrengende tendens i Einans forfatterskap som i stor grad preger hennes fiksjonsdannelsen. Et av temaene som opptar mye plass i hennes dikt, er dans som en overskridende aktivitet. Den Einanske dansen kan både være et tidspunkt, et sted og en entitet i seg selv – og den er i hvert fall en prosess det lyriske jeget gjennomgår. Dans er et flerkulturelt fenomen som finnes i mange religioner og er et viktig element i flere mytiske samfunn. Her får Einans fantasi leke fritt og samle referanser fra ulike kulturer, religioner, kulturer og deres ritualer – det er særlig antikken som stimulerer (Armstrong 1997, 2017).¹⁵ Blant de andre kildene Einan ofte tyr til, finner vi også kristendom, sjelevandring som et mer helhetlig fenomen, gnostisisme og dybde-

¹⁴ Dansen som et spesielt motiv i Einans forfatterskap drøfter jeg nærmere i underkapitlet «Dans, døren og døden. Det narrative-rituelle i Einans fiktive verden» i Pitronová, 2023, 244-276.

¹⁵ En utstrakt oppmerksomhet har blitt viet til Einans vri på myten om Demeter og Persefone i Armstrong (2017, 35-36).

og transpersonell psykologi.¹⁶ Mange av disse fenomenene er reflektert i dans som en begivenhet i diktene, og dansemotivet er sammensatt av flere kulturhistoriske tradisjoner og samtidig typisk Einansk.

Dansemotivet er også det punktet hvor den mer tradisjonelle lyrikkteorien kan støtte den fiktive lesningen. Dansen kan forstås som et ritual, og ifølge Jonathan Culler er nettopp lyrikkens rituelle dimensjon det kjennetegnet som definerer sjangeren.¹⁷ I forbindelse med denne ritualiseringen av diktens narrativ vil jeg gjerne kalle Einans dikt for «rituelt narrative», som er en sammenslåing av Cullers (2017b, 16) og Roland Greenes (1991, 5) definisjon av det rituelle (evt. performative) og det narrative (evt. fiktive). Disse diktene er ofte narrative beskrivelser av noen merkelige ritualer, og det rituell-performative er ofte et emne for diktets midtpunkt. Diktets rituelle dimensjon blir da framfor alt et tema for diktet istedenfor en modus eller en måte diktet henvender seg til leseren på, slik som Culler antyder.

Dansen er da et ritual eller en prosess med sin egen kronologi. Vi finner dikt om det som skjer før dansen (forberedelser eller veien til dansestedet), så finner vi dikt hvor dansen nettopp foregår, og til slutt finnes det dikt om tiden etter dansen. Dansen er i tillegg ofte knyttet til prosesjoner, offerbål, brenning eller graving. Både beskrivelsen av og deltakelsen i dansen impliserer tilstedeværelse av noen spesifikke entiteter som er vitner til, assistenter eller ofre for den rituelle dansen. I tillegg kan dansen være knyttet til kunnskap og visdom, men også til fødsel og død. Einan utpeker dessuten en spesifikk karaktertype i diktene – danseren, som ofte sammenfaller med elskeren, og danserinnen som både kan være en ny skikkelse og en del av jegets selvidentifisering. Dansen knyttes også til noen spesifikke steder, slik som danseplassen, dansehuset eller bare en slette. Vi kan også anta at dansen er den begivenheten som samler hele verdenen og alle dens innvånere på tvers av ulike hierarkiske grupper (om vi kan finne hierarki der i det hele tatt).

Diktet «Glemsel» (1992, 352) er et eksempel på akkurat en slik fragmentarisk avbildning av dansen. Gjennom diktet får vi et mikroblick på den store rituelle dimensjonen av den fiktive verdenen, hvor mange aktiviteter nettopp er framstilt som spesielle ritualer. I «Glemsel» er vi vitner til en slags rituell forglemmelse:

¹⁶ Vedrørende alle de nevnte inspirasjonskildene finnes det bekreftelser på at Einan har lest om dem og interessert seg for dem – for det meste er det Einans egne uttalelser, men artikkelens forfatter har også hatt mulighet til å granske rester av Einans private bibliotek og funnet noen av referansene der.

¹⁷ Som rituell forstår Culler den retoriske siden av lyrikken, og følgelig karakteriserer han lyrikken som en form for artikulering eller uttalelse, dvs. at lyrikken i hans øyne først og fremst er en muntlig sjanger som burde leses høyt, gjentatte ganger og er ment som en tiltale til lytterens du. Når vi derimot vil lese diktene som fiksjon, blir dette duet en del av en fiktiv virkelighet som diktet representerer. Jf. Culler, 2017a, 35, 2017b, 105–108.

Meg har de ikke,
men min blodhage er tung av søstre,
og min lette bror ånder fordekt et sted.

Jeg kjenner dansen,
vet om trinnene.

Eier duftbarnet og hagen,
men i slukket lampes øye lyser mørke syner.

Jeg bor i dansehuset med dører til stille rom.

Det skaffes frem solvarm far.
Det ormen sa, glemt,
det de milde lysånder sa,
stille, – til meg: også glemt.

Den rituelle dimensjonen av «Glemsel» ligger både i et språk med mange underlige sammensatte ord og pregende anaforer i den siste strofen, men den er også til stede i diktets innhold. Hele diktet kretser rundt hemmelig kunnskap, kjennskap, visdom, syn og forglemmelse. Dansen presenterer her en hemmelighetsfull handling, eller en slags høytidelig, seremoniell kunnskap kun for de innvidde. Selv om jeget kjenner dansens hemmelige trinn, resulterer diktet i en pur forglemmelse når ingen av de hellige ordene blir nedskrevet og husket.¹⁸ Den hemmelige kunnskapen er tidsbegrenset, glemt i framtiden som har blitt fortiden på slutten av diktet.

Også ankomsten til den solvarme faren kan henge sammen med forglemmelsen. Einans farsskikkelse, akkurat som morsskikkelsen, er ganske tvetydig og kan betegne både en jordisk far og en gudommelig far, en hybrid mellom en hedensk overordnet guddom og Vår Herre. Farsskikkelsen bryter imidlertid inn i jegets verden i mye mindre grad enn den mangefasetterte moren, men tross det virker han som en garant for nye ankomster.¹⁹ Når en solvarm far dukker opp, er det som en begynnelse på en ny dag, et nytt liv – og alt det gamle kan bli glemt. Her kommer også Einans opptatthet av sjelevandring inn og markerer et syklisk syn på menneskelig eksistens. Alt kan bli glemt for at en ny begynnelse med ny ervervelse av kunnskap kommer.

¹⁸ I avhandlingen setter jeg opp den trykte versjonen av diktet med tidligere manuskripter. Dette viser at diktet kan forstås helt omvendt, og hele framstillingen og distribueringen av hemmelig kunnskap kan da bli omvurdert.

¹⁹ En lignende historiekurve finner vi også i den upubliserte versjonen av diktet «Janar har vært hos oss» (370, 94): «Da sender vår far solrom. / [...] bærer oss litt / og setter oss tilbake til vannet.» Begynnelsen av diktet utspiller seg i vannet og så er jeget satt tilbake dit av faren på slutten.

Samtidig har vi igjen støtt på uttrykket «blodhage». Hun har en blodhage «tung av søstre». Som i de andre diktene ser vi også her at jeget er definert gjennom sitt forhold til de andre – slekten, storfamilien eller trossamfunnet. «Min blodhage tung av søstre» kan være et metaforisk uttrykk for jegets søskenlengsel, men den er kun rettet til søstrene, ikke til broren. Han er i motsetning til den tyngden som tanken på søstrene innebærer, «lett» og fjern. En visjon om et søsterskap, en rent kvinnelig forening, er et viktig tema for Einan og gir diktingen hennes et tydelig feministisk preg. Nesten alle kvinnelige individer som nevnes i diktene, er enten i foreldre- eller søskenforhold (eller begge to samtidig), og søstrenes bånd nevnes i ulike sammenhenger. Samtidig kan den utstrakte bruken av «søstre» peke på at dette er en titulering eller et uttrykk for sosial identitet og ikke en betegnelse på familieforhold.²⁰ I tillegg reiser den rare bruken av «men» i diktets andre verselinje flere spørsmål om forholdet mellom jeget og søstrene. Det merkelige og utpregede «men» setter to tilsynelatende helt uavhengige ting i opposisjon eller kontrast til hverandre og tilskriver nye egenskaper til de kjente uttrykkene – og slike urelaterte avgrensninger finnes i mange flere dikt. «Meg har de ikke» sier jeget først, men så er blodhagen hennes «tung av søstre». Er det snakk om døde søstre som har blitt myrdet, mens jeget har rømt fra morderen? Eller er dette et uttrykk for atskillelse fra sine nærmeste, eller et ujevnt forhold blant søstrene? Jeget har blitt uavhengig av søstrene, avbrutt kontakt med dem og har etablert seg med sitt duftbarn og sin hage.

Men «mørke syner» fra lampen kommer som et forvarsel. Dansehuset har paradoksalt nok stille rom, eller er tilknyttet dem, og huset er bare en gjennomgang til de stille rommene. Gjennom dansen kommer man trolig til det ultimate – til utslettelsen.²¹ Denne forventningen er ikke helt tilfeldig og ubegrunnet, for vi finner mange henvisninger til dansens tilknytning til døden. Danseplassen sammenstilles med døden i diktet «Nektelsesdans» (1992, 346), det er et sted som er overvåket av de døde, som i «Jeg går til danseplassen» (1992, 328), hvor jeget møter de døde på veien. Vi kunne også lese om at syngende munn nærmer seg et dødsrom – noe som vi kan parallellføre med dansen og de stille rommene. Det kan også skje vanvittige ting ved dansen, brutale forbrytelser og karnevalistiske forvandlinger, som i «Graven er tom» (1987, 243). Diktet avsluttes med denne passasjen:

[...]
 Vil du bli med, nattbror?
 Kom, dansen er begynt.

²⁰ Vi kan identifisere mandelsøstre, muldsøstre, engsøstre, vannsøstre, søster Natt, søster Alene og flere andre. Men dette søsterskapet er imidlertid komplisert og til tider litt brutalt.

²¹ Se også drøftelsen av dans i Armstrong (1997, 219–227).

Alvene tungt lastet med svaleegg,
vaktene drept,
søvnbarn ånder ut,
mor Grå forført,
snefangen tapt,
men lys kold nattsøster ventende.

Et påfallende aspekt ved Einans fiktive verden er vaktene som bevokter verdenens innvånere og deres handlinger²². Når vaktene er drept, er en viktig kontrollmekanisme i verdenen ødelagt og deaktivert. Også den arketypiske morsskikkelsen, som ofte er nærmest guddommeliggjort, blir forført og på den måten dratt ned fra sin pidestall. Dansen med sin overskridende essens presenterer et kollisjonspunkt eller et høydepunkt av de rituelle handlingene i diktens samlende narrativ. Den hyppige forekomsten av dansemotivet understreker også en syklisk framstilling av tid – alt kolliderer i dansens galskap, men deretter erstattes den av en ny dans med et nytt ritual. La oss til slutt se på det dialogiske diktet «Er denne vei til dansen?» (1989, 270). Diktets struktur understreker Einans tendens til å skrive dikt som kan leses fiktivt – her kan vi nærmest følge en kort dramatisk dialog hvor en kvinne snakker til en reisende eller en veiviser og spør om veien:

Er denne vei til dansen?
Ja, frue, ja.
Er dette huset der Jesus bor?
Ja, søster, ja.

Er dette bleke skinn fra offerbålet?
Ja, søster.
Jeg ser en gold egn.
Ja.
En søvnsllette?

Ja.

Diktet virker som et sammensurium av ulike lærer og tradisjoner (Armstrong 1997, 231). Her møtes Jesus med offerbålet, kristendommen med hedenske riter og en nesten eventyrlignende skildring av landskapet. Men møtepunktene er også hierarkisk oppstilt – på veien til dansen passerer jeget huset hvor Jesus

²² Vi kan lese om en dørens vokter («Svarene er hos oss», 1986, 199), en lekens vokter («Valmuen», 1986, 206), en hagens vakt («Velt bort hagens annet ansikt», 1989, 275–76) og en sledens vakt («Jeg er en anger fra slettene», 1989, 295).

bor for å fortsette videre til den gule egnen som dessuten er søvnsletten – og som trolig er endestinasjonen for jegets vandring og også en danseplass. Sammenstillingen mellom søvn og død er et velkjent fenomen, særlig takket være myten om Hypnos og Thanatos. Dette er en tosidighet som har resonert mye blant kunstnere fra alle epoker, og hos Einan finner vi også flere henvisninger til nettopp denne søvns dualitet og tvetydighet. Dansens søvnslette kan fungere som pendant til dansehusets stille rom – det er en avslutning, en fortsettelse eller en overskridelse av dansen. Samtidig kommer jeget alltid tilbake til dansen, dette motivet er som en rød tråd i hele Einans forfatterskap, tilbakevendende og uten at det bruker opp sin kraft og røper noe om den hemmelige læren som setter preg på hele det fiktive kosmoset i diktene. Det eneste vi får vite om dansen, er den forventningen den bringer, som i «Ordløsheten» (1992, 334): «Danser i ordløsheten, / venter»²³.

Konklusjon

I denne artikkelen har jeg demonstrert en fiktiv lesning av noen av Einans dikt og påvist hvordan den lyriske fiktive verdenen kan identifiseres gjennom visse immanente strukturer. Ellen Einans diktning, med en tydelig jegerperspektivering, mange dialogiske passasjer og narrative skildringer, er meget egnet for en fiksjonaliserende tilnærming. Den fiktive lesningen gir ikke svar på alt, men den tydeliggjør ellers usynlige strukturer som finnes innbakt i diktene.

Med tanke på fiksjonsdannelsen, som en sammenslåing av fiksjon og bildedannelse, kan vi se at diktene i resultatet er styrt av noen underliggende mekanismer som former den fiktive verdenskonstruksjonen. På den måten er det ikke bare bilder som Einan skaper i sine dikt, men en hel fiktiv verden. Som en helhet kan den enklest identifiseres takket være noen gjentakende motiver og motiviske kretser. Selv om enkelte motiver mangler faste betydninger, markerer de visse gjennomgående tendenser i diktets struktur eller innhold, og er dermed ikke helt tilfeldige påfunn. Sammen med diktets prosodi og metaforikk bidrar også den fiktive dimensjonen til meningskapning i diktet.

Som jeg har vist, er en fiksjonsforankret lyrikkanalyse mulig særlig gjennom sammenstilling og sammenligning av flere dikt fra ulike diktsamlinger og fra forfatterens ulike skriveperioder. På denne måten kan vi tydeligst oppfatte motivenes sammenkobling og få oversikt over det helhetlige bildet. Oppmerksomhet mot den fiksjonsdannende siden ved lyrisk diktning er ikke den eneste gyldige tilnæringsmåten, men en fiksjonsforankret lesning av

²³ Vi kan også følge den rytmikken som svarene i «Er denne vei til dansen?» skaper, som går fra «ja, frue, ja» til bare «ja». Jo kortere svar, desto sterkere virkning – det er som om søvnslettens grusomhet ikke tåler flere ord, og intensivering av talen forsterkes ved deres kortfattethet.

visse forfatterskap (særlig slike som Einan sitt) kan bli givende og gi rom for å undersøke undervurderte nyanser av lyrisk diktning.

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SUMMER STORMS, FOOD, AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN BRIT BILDØEN'S *SJU DAGAR I AUGUST* AND AGNAR LIRHUS'S *LITEN KOKEBOK*

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ABSTRACT. *Summer Storms, Food, and Representations of the Climate Crisis in Brit Bildøen's Sju dagar i august and Agnar Lirhus's Liten kokebok.* This article discusses representations of climate change in contemporary realistic fiction from Norway. I first focus my attention on the depiction of extreme weather and "risk society" in Brit Bildøen's *Sju dagar i august* (*Seven days in august*, 2014) and then explore the concept of "ecological masculinities" and expressions of care in Agnar Lirhus's *Liten kokebok* (*Little cookbook*, 2016). Although the two novels I discuss thematise climatic disruptions in different ways, they are similarly intertwining characters' experiences of the natural world with personal feelings of loss and grief. I thus suggest that climate change imagery in Norwegian realistic fiction is often interwoven with an affective dimension. Finally, the aim of this article is to illustrate how the climate crisis has pervaded Norwegian literature, while providing some examples of how texts that lay outside of what is typically considered the cli-fi novel have the potential to engage with this theme.

Keywords: *climate change narratives, contemporary Norwegian fiction, risk society, extreme weather, ecological masculinities, care, Brit Bildøen, Agnar Lirhus*

REZUMAT. *Furtuni de Vară, Mâncare și Reprezentări ale Crizei Climatice în Sju dagar i august de Brit Bildøen și Liten kokebok de Agnar Lirhus.* Acest articol discută reprezentări ale schimbărilor climatice în ficțiunea realistă

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contemporană din Norvegia. Îmi îndrept atenția mai întâi asupra portretizării fenomenelor meteorologice extreme și a „societății riscului” în romanul *Sju dagar i august* (*Șapte zile din august*, 2014) de Brit Bildøen, iar apoi examinez conceptul de „masculinități ecologice” și formele de manifestare a grijii în romanul *Liten kokebok* (*Mica cartea de bucate*, 2016) de Agnar Lirhus. Deși cele două romane discutate tematizează perturbările climatice în moduri diferite, ele sunt similare prin felul în care experiența lumii naturale e asociată cu sentimentele de doliu și durere cu care se confruntă personajele. În felul acesta, sugerez că imaginarul schimbărilor climatice în ficțiunea realistă norvegiană se împletește cu o dimensiune afectivă. În final, scopul acestui articol este de a ilustra cum tematica crizei climatice a pătruns în literatura norvegiană, oferind exemple care arată cum texte care nu sunt considerate în mod tipic ca aparținând genului cli-fi au potențialul de a aborda această tematică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *narațiuni despre schimbări climatice, ficțiune norvegiană contemporană, societatea riscului, fenomene meteorologice extreme, masculinități ecologice, grijă, Brit Bildøen, Agnar Lirhus*

Introduction

In *The Great Derangement. Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), Amitav Ghosh argues that global warming defies rules of representation in contemporary realistic fiction. Underlining the idea that the modern novel was born “through the banishing of the improbable and the insertion of the everyday” (2016, 17), Ghosh suggests that phenomena related to climatic disruptions such as storms, floods, and tornados are uncanny, improbable events that resist the modern novel’s endeavour to create the illusion of realism. Thus, it becomes difficult to evoke such strange phenomena without entering the realm of fantasy, horror, or science fiction (24). Understanding cli-fi as “a new genre of science fiction”, Ghosh indicates that the problem with this genre is that it is “made up mostly of disaster stories set in the future”. As he explains, “[t]he future is but one aspect of the age of human-induced global warming: it also includes the recent past, and, most significantly, the present” (72). Therefore, if stories that thematise global warming are typically set in a temporally distant dimension, Ghosh suggests that the challenge in contemporary fiction is to depict climate change in a world that is not separated from ours, a challenge that few writers have undertaken.

When it comes to the Norwegian literary landscape, cli-fi writers such as Maja Lunde have prominently popularised the topic of climate change as a

literary theme. However, Lunde is not an isolated case. A series of studies that examine depictions of climate change in Norwegian literary texts outline the emergence of a rich literature that addresses the environmental crisis in a variety of narrative forms (Norheim 2017; Jakobsen 2020; Furuseth et al 2020).

In this article, I aim to explore how Norwegian fiction has been engaging with this topic outside the confines of what is typically considered the cli-fi genre, focusing on two recent novels, namely Brit Bildøen's *Sju dagar i august* (2014, translated as *Seven days in august* in 2016) and Agnar Lirhus's *Liten kokebok* ("Little cookbook", 2016). A similar endeavour was undertaken by Thorunn Gullaksen Endreson, Kristian Bjørkdahl, and Karen Lyke Syse (2017), who, taking as a point of departure Ghosh's thesis that global warming lacks visibility in "serious" fiction, sought to expound how the climate crisis is in fact present in Norwegian literature. In their study of four novels, among which *Liten kokebok* and *Sju dagar i august*, Endreson, Bjørkdahl, and Syse contend that these texts only throw a pessimistic outlook on the relationship between humans and nature in the context of climate change. They conclude that these books "do not [...] accomplish the potential that ecocritical scholars see in literature" (174).² In this article I take a different standpoint and, reading Bildøen's and Lirhus's novels through conceptual lenses that ecocriticism borrows from fields such as sociology or ecofeminism, one of my aims is to show that realistic literary renderings of climate change do show their potentiality to challenge readers' understanding of the Anthropocene.

On the other hand, while Endreson, Bjørkdahl, and Syse (2017) see these texts as literary fiction, other scholars might refer to them as climate fiction. This is also the case in Rebecca Bærvahr's master thesis, where *Sju dagar i august* is analysed as a climate change novel (2021). While it is difficult to define it as a genre, cli-fi is generally understood as "fiction concerned with anthropogenic climate change or global warming" (Johns-Putra 2016, 267). However, probably due to the analogy with sci-fi, cli-fi is typically considered to describe those narratives about anthropogenic climate change that are set in a distant future. This is, at least, how Ghosh refers to cli-fi when arguing that global warming lacks visibility in mainstream literary fiction (2016, 72). Therefore, I argue that cli-fi is a confusing term and a loose label to describe these novels. To narrow down my perspective, I rather consider them as illustrations of what Adam Trexler (2015) names 'Anthropocene realism', as the effects of climate change are not imagined as apocalyptic scenarios of the end of the world but are entwined with the characters' everyday life and with their

² "disse bøkene [realiserer ikke] potensialet som økokritikerne mener ligger i skjønnlitteraturen" (Endreson, Bjørkdahl, and Syse 2017, 174, my translation).

emotions. As Trexler suggests, contemporary fiction about the Anthropocene illustrates “a wider transformation of human culture”, that no longer perceives climate change as “a final disaster that could be endlessly deferred” (2015, 233). In reality, the environmental crisis unfolds on a larger, global scale and has many-sided implications. In this way, “[t]he creation of Anthropocene realism marks a profound shift in the understanding of climate change itself, from something that ought not to exist to something that already does” (233).

Otherwise, it might be useful to make a distinction between dystopian cli-fi and more realistic climate change narratives. To underline how literary texts can engage with the topic of the ecological crisis in diverse ways, Juha Raipola (2019) also distinguishes between realistic and speculative climate narratives. As he explains,

these two modes of cli-fi differ in their basic narrative orientation. For instance, in realistic climate novels, the theme of climate change is usually examined in a rather subdued manner. To support the illusion of literary realism, these narratives are set in relatively familiar surroundings of the present day or a very-near-future world, where recognisable human characters ponder the effects of global warming. Questions relating to climate change are usually brought up by the narrator or the characters in their dialogue, while the fictional world itself remains mostly quotidian (2019, 8).

Besides the construction of a familiar, recognisable storyworld, realistic cli-fi also differs in the manner it thematises the climate crisis. Raipola underlines that speculative texts represent climate change as a social-material process and portray the negative effects of environmental disasters on both human and non-human lives. In contrast, realistic climate fiction lays emphasis on “the various affective and cognitive responses – such as eco-anxiety, climate sorrow, or climate change denial – evoked by the global environmental situation” (2019, 8). The texts I discuss in this article depict realistic scenarios while invoking such affective responses as those mentioned by Raipola.

As such, the aim of this paper is to investigate how the climate crisis is addressed in two contemporary Norwegian novels: Bildøen’s *Sju dagar i august* and Lirhus’s *Liten kokebok*. I analyse the two books separately, using different conceptual frameworks in order to show how diverse literary responses to climate change can be. Despite these different approaches, I ultimately seek to show how this topic looms in Norwegian realistic fiction in close association with other themes, such as trauma, grief, and family relationships. In the next section, drawing on Ulrich Beck’s “risk society” (1986), I cast light on the representation and perception of risk in *Sju dagar i august*, a novel which thematises climate change under the form of extreme weather. Afterwards,

taking into consideration the concept of “ecological masculinities”, proposed by Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé (2018), I analyse how the protagonist in *Liten kokebok* explores forms of care towards nature and human others through the act of cooking. In the fourth section of this article, I cast light on the similarities between these novels, emphasising how their characters’ perceptions of the environmental crisis are shaped by feelings and emotions, but also by their social identity. I thus finally suggest that climate change imagery in Norwegian realistic fiction is often interwoven with an affective dimension, that brings to light how individual experiences and emotions influence perceptions of climate change.

Extreme Weather and Risk in *Sju dagar i august*

In his book *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in ein andere Moderne*, originally published in 1986 and translated into English as *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity* in 1992, German sociologist Ulrich Beck outlines the emergence of a risk society, defining risk as “a systematic way of dealing with hazard and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (1992, 21). Risk society is understood as a ‘break with modernity’, because, as Beck explains, “[j]ust as modernization dissolved the structure of feudal society in the nineteenth century and produced the industrial society, modernization today is dissolving industrial society and another modernity is coming into being” (10). As such, a new, reflexive modernity takes birth, which “is compelled to respond to the forces of modernization, to the ‘unforeseen consequences’ or ‘side-effects’ of the scientific and technological successes of an earlier, industrial modernity” (Mayer 2016, 497). Thus, if industrial society is characterised by technological and economic development, the emerging risk society is rather defined by the production of risk (Beck 1992, 13). Beck refers to those humanly fabricated risks that, as a result of globalisation, move beyond national borders and become global risks. In this way, ‘world risk society’ would be a better term to refer to the new phase of modernity (23). In a more recent study, *World at risk* (2009), Beck indicates that we are currently facing three major forms of global risks, namely economic threats, terrorism, and risks provoked by environmental crises (13).

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that “[r]isk always exists in the context of uncertainty” (Garland 2003, 52). Showing that risk is the anticipation of a catastrophe and not the catastrophe itself (Beck 2009, 9), Beck underlines that staging or mediating global dangers in order to render them more perceptible is essential for impending potential disastrous effects (10). Beck understands risk as “the perceptual and cognitive schema in accordance with which a society mobilises itself when it is confronted with the openness,

uncertainties and obstructions of a self-created future” (2009, 4). Thus, the sense of uncertainty generated by risk “involves perceptual, affective, evaluative, and imaginative processes”, as Alexa Weik von Mossner and Sylvia Mayer underline (2014, 7). In this context, literature plays an important role, because fiction has the potential to “explore the complexity of *individual* risk experiences” (12). Staging extreme weather as an impeding environmental risk, Bildøen’s *Sju dager i august* illustrates such personal perceptions of climate change threats.

The novel depicts Sofie and Otto’s marriage eight years after losing Sofie’s daughter, Marie, in the terrorist attack on the Utøya island on 22 July 2011. Published in 2014, the story is thus set in 2019, a near, recognisable future for its contemporary readers. Sofie occupies a leading position at the Munch Museum in Oslo, while Otto is leader at the Foundation for the Romani people. In the span of one week, a series of accidents and unfortunate events menace to disturb their lives: Sofie is bitten by a tick, a violent summer storm ravages the country and damages their cabin, Otto gets injured after falling on the stairs, his son living in Australia has problems with his health insurance, and the two birch trees on their street are cut down.

After its publication, the novel was mostly read with a focus on the Utøya theme and the depiction of trauma (Langås 2016; Gjelsvik 2020). Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, scholars have also identified climate change as a central theme of the novel. Endreson, Bjørkdahl, and Syse draw attention to the apocalyptic discourse of the novel (2017, 166). Bærvahr argues that, despite the gloomy scenario, *Sju dager i august* has the ability to incite readers to find solutions towards mitigating the effects of the impending climate crisis, by engaging readers’ emotions (2021, 48). Importantly, employing perspectives from affective ecocriticism, her study of the novel illuminates how the Utøya theme and the climate change theme are related. Building upon Bærvahr’s valuable insight, I intend to add a new perspective upon the understanding of the novel and explore its portrayal of risk society. Thus, I seek to show that the materialisation of the climate crisis as extreme weather is rather a depiction of risk and not a doomsday portrayal of climate change, as it has been suggested by Endreson, Bjørkdahl, and Syse (2017). The characters of the novel are not so much directly affected by the hazards generated by the environmental crisis that frames the narrative, but perceive the climatic instability as a risk that may or may not affect their lives.

The first lines of the novel illustrate a mundane scene in Sofie and Otto’s life, who are discussing their plans for the evening while setting the table and having lunch together. They chat about the opening of an exhibition at the Munch Museum which they are going to attend later that day, while the narrator’s voice offers insight into their life. They had moved from the west side of Oslo, the rich part of the city, to Tøyen, a central residential area that is

referred to as a 'multicultural' neighbourhood. With a comfortable financial situation and attuned to Oslo's cultural and artistic world, their problems seemingly turn around social events and their relationships with friends and colleagues. But an underlying sense of disquietude evoked by the unusual weather discreetly enters their home from the beginning: "The veranda door was cracked open, allowing air and noise to filter in. Dust from the street accompanied the air, leaving behind a thin, grey film on top of picture frames and books" (Bildøen 2016, 4).³ When she leaves the house that evening, Sofie observes how the birch leaves have started to wither, wondering whether it is not too soon for the trees to lose their leaves at that time of the year, but acknowledging that "the late summer had been dry" (24).⁴ Besides, Sofie has a tick bite on her arm, that Otto first observes during lunch, when he tells her she should get it checked by a doctor. Sofie, however, does not seem to take it seriously, not even when she wakes up during the night due to the swallowing inflammation on her arm. Ignoring what potential dangers she might be exposed to, she instead starts wishing for the materialisation of a change, as a foreshadow of the events that would unfold throughout the following days: "What was it that she hoped would materialize outside? Something unusual. That was what she wanted. A surprise. Change" (28).⁵

The next day, a more acute feeling of insecurity pervades the life of the characters. When Sofie reads the newspaper in the evening, she starts feeling uneasy about the forecasted rainstorm, although there has been a lack of rain for the last months:

There had been talk throughout the week of an early autumnal storm expected to come over the southern part of the country, bringing an exceptional amount of precipitation. It had been so dry in the last months, so there were many who would welcome the rain. But these storms were unpredictable. Sofie was uneasy about what was coming (62).⁶

Sofie's bad feeling about the announced rain institutes a sense of insecurity that finally comes true when, the next morning, she and Otto wake

³ "Verandadøra stod på gløtt og sleppte inn luft og lyd. Saman med lufta kom gatestøvet, som la seg som ein tynn, grå film på bilderammer og bøker" (Bildøen 2014, 8).

⁴ "seinsommaren hadde vore tørr" (Bildøen 2014, 25).

⁵ "Kva var det ho ville skulle openberre seg der ute? Eit uvanleg syn. Det var det ho ønskte seg. Ei overrasking. Forandring" (Bildøen 2014, 27).

⁶ "Heile veka hadde det vore snakk om at ein tidleg hauststorm var venta inn over den sørlege delen av landet, med usedvanleg mykje nedbør. Så tørt som det hadde vore den siste månaden, var det mange som ønskte regnet velkommen. Men desse stormane var uføreseielege. Ho var uroleg for det som var på veg" (Bildøen 2014, 57).

up to the news of the damage done by the severe weather during the night. The TV broadcasting shows how the eastern part of the country had been ravaged by the heavy rainfall, causing floods that wreaked havoc on bridges and houses, while many people are missing or thought to be dead. Eating their breakfast in front of the TV, memories of the Utøya terrorist attack resurface as the tragedy caused by the extreme weather unfurls before their eyes:

They could stay sitting like this for the entire day, as they had done during similar televised catastrophes. [...] [Sofie] stared at the screen but seemed to be somewhere else. It's been eight years, he thought. Eight years and nearly one month since they sat on the same sofa, but in a different house, on the other side of the city, taking in another catastrophe on the screen, the start of the catastrophe that would envelop and take over their lives (76).⁷

Interestingly, both the attacks on Utøya where Sofie's daughter was murdered and the rainstorm are perceived as catastrophes. But the storm has not directly and catastrophically affected their personal life. Instead, the risk is rendered perceptible by television. The disastrous effects of the rainstorm are presented, almost with insistency, as a series of images unfolding on a screen: "On the screen, the water continued sweeping through buildings and towns, grinding anything it encountered to smithereens" (80), "On the screen, a report of a rural village where an entire mountainside had slid down" (82).⁸

Moreover, Sofie observes that the staging of risk in mass media has become an ordinary practice: "Words that at one time had characterized extremes had now become everyday speech. The experts could just as well have been discussing cheese and crackers" (74).⁹ In one way, this suggests that the discourse about extreme weather becomes so normalised that it is no longer shocking. Beck shows that "[g]lobal risk, through its omnipresence in the media, normalises death and suffering, not just as an individual fate but also as a collective one, even though for most people suffering is synonymous with images of the suffering of others" (Beck 2009, 12). Dismayed and compassionate

⁷ "Slik kunne dei bli sitjande heile dagen, som dei hadde gjort under liknande tv-dekte katastrofar. [...] [Sofie] stirte mot skjermen, men det verka som om ho var ein annan stad. Åtte år sidan, tenkte han. Åtte år og om lag ein månad sidan dei sat i same sofaen, men i et anna hus, på ein annan kant av byen, da fekk dei også ein katastrofe inn på skjermen, starten på den katastrofen som skulle vekse inn i og ta over livet deira" (Bildøen 2014, 69).

⁸ "På skjermen rasa vatnet vidare gjennom bygder og byar og mol alt det kom over, til pinneved" (Bildøen 2014, 73), "På skjermen var det eit innslag frå ei innlandsbygd der ei heil fjellside hadde glidd ut" (75).

⁹ "Orda som ein gong hadde karakterisert det ekstreme, var blitt daglegtale. Ekspertane kunne like gjerne ha snakka om brunost og grovbrød" (Bildøen 2014, 68).

towards the victims of the rainfall, Sofie is still able to enjoy the comfort of her own home, watching the news wrapped in a blanket and eating her breakfast in the sofa. Therefore, it might seem that actual experience of the catastrophe is confused here with empathy.

Nonetheless, in spite of television's alarmist discourse, global threats, including climate change risks, do not become less real, as Beck also underlines (2009, 13). The novel ingeniously alludes to this by projecting the risk of climate change in the shadow of the terrorist attack. On 22 July 2011, the attack starts in Oslo, when a bomb is set off outside a block in the government quarter. When this happens, Sofie and Otto follow the news in dread, but they are relieved that all of their acquaintances are safe, only to soon find out that a massacre had started on Utøya, where their daughter was taking part in a youth camp. This time, although the catastrophe unleashed by extreme weather unfolds outside their reach, the characters are aware that, eventually, no one is fully protected from its consequences, just like eight years before the risk of terrorism became real when least expected.

A key point in Beck's understanding of risk society is that, although threats posed by global phenomena such as global warming affect all people regardless of their social status, these risks do nonetheless reinforce social inequalities. As he states, "[s]ome people are more affected than others by the distribution and growth of risks, that is, *social risk positions* spring up" (1992, 23). As Otto works with the Romani minorities in Oslo, the novel hints at the existence of these social risk positions by pointing towards Otto and Sofie's privileged status compared to the Romani people living in tents, directly exposed to the dangers of extreme weather.

Their privilege is best illustrated by the dinner party organised by some of their friends the evening after the rainstorm. They still attend the event, despite Sofie expressing her opinion that the dinner should have been cancelled. She wears a Chanel dress denoting their financial comfort, while the other guests, psychologists, lawyers or journalists, are presented as rich and educated people, informed about political issues and human rights. As such, they inevitably start a discussion on the disaster provoked by the weather, debating on human responsibility in the context of climate change. Ironically, however, they have the privilege of doing this while enjoying a fancy dinner: "This evening the conversation veered naturally towards the bad weather deep into the main course. The large platter was sent around the table, light veal, artfully arranged vegetables" (Bildøen 2016, 88).¹⁰ The way they allow themselves to comment on the unfolding catastrophe in such a context exposes how risks affect people in different social positions unevenly.

¹⁰ "Denne kvelden dreidde samtalen seg naturleg nok om uvêret, til langt inn i hovudretten. Eit stor fat vandra rundt bordet, lyst kalvekjøtt, kunstferdig danderte grønsaker" (Bildøen 2014, 80).

It is important to note that the tick bite on Sofie's arm adds to the sense of risk induced by the storm. Bærvahr interprets the rainstorm and the tick bite as literary motifs that generate the feeling of "Anthropocene horror" (2021, 30), a term used by Timothy Clark to describe "a sense of horror about the changing environment globally, usually as mediated by news reports and expert predictions, giving a sense of threats that need not be anchored to any particular place, but which are both everywhere and anywhere" (2020, 61). As this definition indicates, the concept of Anthropocene horror encompasses the same idea of threat, and I would therefore add that the tick bite is another example of climate change risk, although much more subtly represented, because Sofie is the only one affected by it in the novel. She and Otto observe that there had been more ticks than usual around their cabin, which could be a consequence of climatic disruptions. Bærvahr also notes that, although this is not explicitly presented in the novel, the tick bite can be seen as a side effect of climate change. She refers to a report presented by the Norwegian Directorate of Health in 2010, which underlines that consequences of climate change include an increase in the number of diseases spread for instance by mosquitos or ticks (2021, 32). The tick bite on Sofie's arm finally suggests that global dangers can materialise as personal risks, even though we do not always acknowledge environmental issues as the underlying causes of these risks. While extreme weather can be more directly linked to climate change, I would argue that, seeing the tick bite as an illustration of environmental risk, the demarcation line between personal risk and global dangers become blurred.

Otherwise, the only place where Sofie and Otto more directly experience the consequences of extreme weather is at their cabin. When they drive there at the end of the week, they find the entrance door open, and the inside ravaged by the storm. For them, and especially for Sofie, the cabin is a place of freedom where she can enjoy nature. Therefore, the storm looms as a threat to their own sense of stability and security. Another unfortunate event, albeit not necessarily related to climate change, but which similarly affects Sofie's feeling of stability is when the birch trees on their street are cut down. Showing how the cabin and the birches are symbols of nature, which are both menaced by extreme weather and human activity, Bærvahr suggests that Sofie's grief for the disappearing nature can be understood as solastalgia (2021, 40). Solastalgia is namely a term used by Albrecht Glenn to describe the feeling of melancholia or distress "caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of isolation connected to the present state of one's home and territory" (2005, 48). This concept thus illuminates how mental distress is illustrated in the novel as a negative effect of the environmental crisis. Considering Sofie's nervous breakdown when she witnesses the stripped tree trunks, the distress provoked by the loss of nature juxtaposes against her personal trauma.

It thus seems that, to deal with her emotions, Sofie needs more security and stability in her life. At the end of the novel, she and Otto decide to buy a house where Sofie could finally have her own garden, a decision which can be understood as a need to anchor themselves in nature's concrete presence and stability. As I have implied throughout my analysis, Sofie's perception and experiences of nature's disruptions cannot be separated from her privileged social status, that in a way diminishes risk or makes it seem it can be deferred. In my understanding, having the possibility to enjoy a retreat in nature at one's own cabin, affording to buy a house or even postponing to see a doctor, when one's life is in danger and has all the means to do so, are all symbols of privilege, that may give Sofie and her husband the illusion that they can keep control of possible risks that spring up in their lives. The novel's open ending suggests however that extreme weather, as an impending materialisation of global warming, menaces all lives, including their own. As such, when a new rainstorm is about to begin, the looming risk of climate change envelops the novel's ending and the characters' future in a sense of acute uncertainty.

The idea of finding solace in nature as a way of coming to terms with personal loss is also developed in *Liten kokebok*, which further explores forms of care towards nature as a way of mitigating the effects of the environmental crisis. Published two years after *Sju dagar i august*, Lirhus's novel interestingly depicts a different side of what it means to live in a climate changed world.

Food and Care in Agnar Lirhus's *Liten kokebok*

Liten kokebok tells the story of a man and a woman's separation, focusing on the unnamed male character's relationship with his two daughters. The novel renders the protagonist's exploration of the natural processes occurring in his environment and his attempt to become part of nature's cycle by cultivating his own food or cooking with ingredients he can find in the surroundings of his home and composting organic matter. His efforts to live sustainably and ecologically are linked to the larger context of global warming, as the novel suggests, for instance, when the main character observes that "[l]ast year it was two degrees warmer than the average. It was written in the newspaper that it is both an exception and a trend" (Lirhus 2016, 44).¹¹ Along the novel, the main character explores and questions his role and place in nature, while cultivating his relationship with his daughters and coming to terms with the separation from his wife.

¹¹ "Fjoråret var to grader varmere enn gjennomsnittet. Det er både et unntak og en trend, sto det i avisa" (Lirhus 2016, 44, my translation).

Liten kokebok has been read as a romantic depiction of the relationship between man and nature (Endreson, Bjørkdahl, and Syse 2017). In this way, as a reaction to the personal crisis provoked by the end of his marriage, the protagonist chooses to withdraw in nature, while food and cooking allow him to contribute in a certain way in the cycle of nature. While it is certainly true that his views on the environment are rather traditional and romantic, I argue that the story essentially shows how care for nature and care for children are fundamentally entwined. Bearing in mind that the novel's main character is a man, this double manifestation of care is all the more interesting to investigate if we take into account the question of gender. Because gender is considered to influence individual attitudes towards nature, I argue that this perspective offers a better understanding of the novel's potential to illuminate some of the most important challenges when dealing with the environmental crisis.

An important strand in ecocriticism, ecofeminism introduced the discussion about gender in the relationship between humans and nature towards the end of the twentieth century. Early studies in ecofeminism revealed how, in Western tradition, women are associated with nature, emotions and the unconscious, while men are associated with culture and reason, in a way that allowed men throughout history to dominate and exploit both women and the environment (Griffin 1978; Merchant 1980). To fight against this "logic of domination" (Warren 1990), the position embraced by the first ecofeminists was "to attack the hierarchy by reversing the terms, exalting nature, irrationality, emotion and the human or non-human body as against culture, reason and the mind" (Garrard 2004, 24). This standpoint thus suggests that women are the ones endowed with the ability to protect and take care of the environment. However, this "motherhood environmentalism", as Catriona Sandilands calls it, is in fact a dangerous discourse for both women and nature, as its neoconservative nuances entail a return to patriarchal family values (1999, xiii). In the meantime, other scholars, such as Mark Allister (2004), have tried to move beyond socially constructed ideas of masculinity and, joining together ecocriticism and men's studies, attempted at exploring the multiple relationships between men and nature.

A notable contribution to this discussion is Martin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé's study titled *Ecological Masculinities. Theoretical Foundations and Practical Guidance* (2018), where the authors essentially argue that masculine identities are plural and have the capacity to align with environmental goals. In this sense, they propose the concept of 'ecological masculinities', in the attempt to define a set of attitudes and values that pair male identities with ecological perspectives. Feminist care theory is one stream of thought that inspired their model of ecological masculinities as an alternative to the industrial/breadwinner

masculinities. In my analysis, I also focus primarily on the idea of care, which, as Teresa Requena-Pelegrí explains, “has historically been antagonized from normative definitions of masculinity” (2017, 143) because it is “[t]raditionally coded as feminine and thus relegated to the undervalued realm of emotions” (143). Arguing that, in fact, “men possess ethics of care, but how that care manifests is defined by gender identity, relationships and individual lived experiences”, Hultman and Pulé advocate the need to embrace expressions of care that move beyond the preservation of male domination (2018, 166). In their conceptualisation of ecological masculinities, they thus contend that “*all masculinities have infinite capacities to care, which can be expressed towards Earth, human others and ourselves – simultaneously*” (2018, 228). In my reading of *Liten kokebok*, I am concerned with the concept of care, because I believe it illuminates best the way in which the main character uses food to explore his relationship with nature in a climate changed world. In what follows, I thus seek to shed light on how this novel depicts expressions of masculine care both towards human beings and towards the Earth.

The value of care in Lirhus’s novel is notably illustrated by the act of cooking, which carries paramount significance in this context. While providing cooked food is traditionally considered to be an expression of feminine, motherly nurture (Szabo 2020, 408), in *Liten kokebok*, it is the male protagonist who takes responsibility over the preparation of food for his family. He cooks healthy meals for his daughters, while his wife, who is struggling with the rebound effects of a mental condition, is mostly isolated from her family, and decides to live with her parents for a period, until she and her husband finally decide to end their marriage. However, this does not imply that his wife’s situation is the only reason that made the protagonist assume the role of the caregiver and, certainly, depicting a man in such a role is not necessarily surprising, especially when reading the novel in a Scandinavian context. As Michelle Szabo underlines, while in most of the countries around the world it is generally women who are responsible for food preparation in the family, “[m]en in Scandinavia in particular seem to have embraced home cooking” (2020, 407–408). Moreover, in *Liten kokebok*, meal preparation, along with other household chores, such as washing dishes, sweeping, and vacuuming, are everyday activities performed by the protagonist.

Importantly, however, cooking understood as caregiving carries a two-fold meaning, because it is a manifestation of care both towards children and family and towards the environment. Paying heed to what nature has to offer, the protagonist grows his own vegetables and fruits or makes use of what he finds in his surroundings, such as mushrooms, berries, nettles, or seafood. Concerned to find sustainable solutions, he stores food in his freezer for the winter and composts food waste, which he later uses as a fertiliser for his

garden and trees. His daughters often take part in these activities. They pick berries or nettles together with their father and help him in the work with the compost bin: “The older one helps him turn the compost bin upside down, they dig out the darkest material and strain it through a mesh frame, into the wheelbarrow” (Lirhus 2016, 48).¹² Involving his children in his work in the garden and in the process of food preparation is also a way of caring. In this way, the character builds a relationship with his daughters, while passing on knowledge about the environment and cultivating their respect for nature, as a way of ensuring that the earth will be taken care of by future generations.

From another angle, creating a relationship with the natural world also helps the protagonist cope with the feeling of loss caused by the separation from his wife. As a way of coming to terms with this personal crisis, the act of cooking and cultivating plants brings a sense of stability in his life, because it creates a connection with the concrete presence of nature. For instance, the day after his wife tells him she wants to buy an apartment for herself, he goes and plants a cherry tree in the garden. Besides, the rhythms in nature, the changing seasons which he pays great attention to impose a certain routine and balance in the character’s life. Although unexpected changes occur both in his personal life and in the physical world, he is concerned with the ways one can best respond to these changes, without provoking more harm:

Any change must be rooted in love, for change without love is to destroy. The farmer who ploughs the land must be loving. The hiker who walks over hyphae and root nets must be good. Those who lie together, with closed eyes and clenched fists, must be full of consideration. The forester who cuts down a tree, must plant a tree. The one who picks blueberries must be careful and not take the roots with them (Lirhus 2016, 74).¹³

In this paragraph, care for Earth is clearly intertwined with care for human others. Treating both nature and humans with love and kindness can be understood as an intentional act of overcoming negative emotions related to the separation from his wife and loss of nature. Requena-Pelegri explains that “defining care for the environment as intertwined with the construction of an identity as a father and as a man, caregiving becomes an essential category in

¹² “Den store hjelper han med å endevende kompostbingen, de graver ut den mørkeste materien og siler den gjennom en nettingramme, over i trillebåra” (Lirhus 2016, 48, my translation).

¹³ “Enhver forandring må være tuftet på kjærlighet, for å forandre uten kjærlighet er å ødelegge. Bonden som pløyer jorda må være kjærlig. Turgåeren som trekker over hyfer og rotnett, må være god. De som ligger sammen, med lukkede øyne og knyttede never, må være fulle av omtanke. Skogvokteren som feller et tre, må plante et tre. Den som plukker blåveis, må være forsiktig og ikke ta med røttene” (Lirhus 2016, 74, my translation).

formulating non-dominant definitions of masculinity" (2017, 149). As a father, the protagonist already finds himself in a position where he must care for his children. Aware of the Earth's vulnerability in a climate changed world, fostering love and nurture towards nature becomes part of the process of understanding the need to find means of living and providing for the family in ways that do not harm the environment. As such, a form of ecological masculinity emerges from his attempt to act caringly.

Although the protagonist does not conform to the image of the traditional, patriarchal Western figure of the man, the novel does not illustrate a "perfect" character, but lays bare some symptoms of malestream norms (Hultman and Pulé 2018, 231). For instance, the tendency to associate nature with femininity becomes evident when he states that "the buds on trees and shreds resemble the first hints of breasts" (Lirhus 2016, 53)¹⁴ and his intention to take the hunting licence divulges the tendency to dominate nature through violence. However, manifesting violence is clearly not his intention, and I would argue that these are socially constructed ideas of hegemonic masculinity that he has yet to overcome in the process of building his identity.¹⁵ This process also presumes becoming aware of certain ideas, behaviours or attitudes that are not always easy to identify as gendered socialisations. This paradox is best illustrated in the ending scene of the novel, when the protagonist hits a murre with his car, which is highly suggestive for the idea that men living in the structures of today's Western society often have to confront the causes that essentially lead to climate change as a result of a tradition imposed by malestream norms. The car is a strong symbol of ideals of masculinity in the Western world. Cara Daggett uses the term "petro-masculinity" to conceptualise "the historic relationship between fossil fuels and white patriarchal rule" (2018, 29) as a way of understanding "the authoritarian desires and anxieties aroused by the Anthropocene" (29). When the protagonist realises he had hit a murre, he gets out of his car, checks the bird and then takes it to the seashore where he sets it free. In a way, the scene is ironic, because the character's intention to take care of the animal, and to generally act with care towards the Earth, is overshadowed by the larger societal structures that are at the roots of the ecological crisis, which fossil-fuel industry has largely contributed to. Therefore, it remains a question of how petro-masculinities, and ultimately all forms of masculinities that place men in positions of authority and domination, can be countered to redress the negative impact of human activity. On a more positive note, this scene also suggests that

¹⁴ "knoppene på trær og busker ligner de første antydningene til bryster" (Lirhus 2016, 53, my translation).

¹⁵ For the concept of hegemonic masculinities, see Raewyn W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt (2005).

caregiving can be a good starting point to begin repairing the damage done towards the earth.

Affective Responses to the Climate Crisis

In *Liten kokebok*, care for children and nature ultimately becomes an expression of care towards oneself, because acting caringly is part of the process of overcoming negative emotions like grief, sadness, and anxiety. Likewise, Sofie in *Sju dagar i august* constantly tries to find solace in nature as a way of coping with the trauma caused by the death of her daughter. But the reality of climate change becomes more perceptible in Bildøen's novel, as the characters are confronted with the impending risk of extreme weather.

However, natural disruptions, although smaller in scale, also occur in Lirhus's novel. After their separation, when asked by his wife if he needs help with anything, the protagonist avoids the question and would rather prefer talking about the oak tree "that fell during the first winter storm" and is now lying "across the path, over the meadow covered in snow, like a wounded mammoth" (Lirhus 2016, 38).¹⁶ Similarly to Sofie's attachment for the birch trees in *Sju dagar i august*, the protagonist in *Liten kokebok* is also visibly affected by the loss of nature. But feelings of solastalgia and eco-anxiety – understood as "a mash up of negative emotions like worry, guilt, and sadness" (Kurt and Pihkala 2022) give birth to care as a response to both the personal crisis and the environmental crisis. As I have tried to show through my analysis, this manifestation of care is expressed through food and cooking.

Interestingly, food also appears as a symbol of care in Bildøen's novel. For instance, when a woman comes to ask for Otto at his office at the Foundation for the Romani people, Sofie offers her money to buy herself and her child some food. Otto also expresses his concern for Sofie's health when he notices she looks thin and gives her his portion of food. In the numerous scenes where the two are eating together, sharing food is symbolically associated with love and care for each other. However, in *Sju dagar i august*, food does not become a symbol of care towards the environment as it happens in Lirhus's book. In fact, there is one particular episode that suggests the contrary. When Sofie and Karin meet at a restaurant, they decide to order wild salmon, despite Sofie's comment that wild fish colonies are menaced with extinction: "But should we really polish off the remaining salmon colonies?" (Bildøen 2016, 199).¹⁷ Moreover, Karin does not even eat up all her food, leaving leftovers on her plate, which are later

¹⁶ "eika som falt i den første vinterstormen", "ligger tvers over stien, utøver den snødekte enga, som en såret mammut" (Lirhus 2016, 38, my translation).

¹⁷ "Men skal vi verkeleg ete opp den vesle laksestammen som er att?" (Bildøen 2014, 172).

simply thrown away. The dinner party discussed in an earlier section also indicates that food can be a symbol of privilege, especially in a context of crisis, as the one provoked by the rainstorm. As such, taking a closer look at the way food is represented in *Sju dagar i august* emphasises how eating habits in *Liten kokebok* are seen as a way of taking care of the environment.

Finally, these two novels remind us that the climate crisis, unfolding as a large scale, global phenomenon, affects our lives in the most intimate ways, questioning our relationships to the environments we inhabit, as well as our relationships to other human beings. My readings of these texts have brought up questions of social roles and identity. In the analysis of Bildøen's novel, I have underlined how economic privilege influences perceptions of risk. Despite the sense of control that social status might create, it is not less true that Sofie goes through a process of grief that is related both to the loss of her daughter and loss of nature. In this way, the novel thus shows that the climate crisis can provoke strong emotional responses, and casts light upon mental distress as an effect of climate change. On the other hand, Lirhus's novel explores masculine relationships to nature. Similarly to Sofie, the protagonist in *Liten kokebok* also deals with loss in his personal life, while he is deeply concerned with the destruction of nature. Caregiving as a response to these crises thus emerges as a form of ecological masculinity. It therefore seems that the reality of climate change is shaped by social identity and is strongly influenced by individual emotional experiences.

Conclusions

The two novels analysed in this article illustrate examples of what Raipola (2019) defines as realistic narratives of climate change, as they explore affective and cognitive responses to the ecological crisis. Using the concepts of risk society and ecological masculinities, I have tried to unveil the potential of realistic fiction to engage with the topic of climate change. My analysis thus shows how literary explorations of affective responses to climate change can reveal important questions about the many individual ways of dealing with the unfolding ecological crisis.

This article also tried to illustrate some examples of how climate change has pervaded recent Norwegian literature. On the one hand, texts engaging with themes related to ecological issues reinforce the value of nature in Norwegian literature, showing how writers are concerned to bring attention to the problems at stake for the environment. On the other hand, bearing in mind Ghosh's observation that climate change resists the modern novel, these texts show how realistic fiction has the potential to portray global warming. However,

it is true that none of these novels directly depicts those uncanny events Ghosh refers to, but both allude to them, almost as a commentary on the realist novel's incapacity to represent strange events related to climate disruptions. The severe effects of the rainstorm in *Sju dagar i august* are not perceived directly by the characters, but are mostly mediated by television and presented as an impending risk. And just as Sofie longs for the materialisation of a change out in nature, a similar wish, albeit more extreme, is expressed by the protagonist in *Liten kokebok*: "what he wishes most of all is a massive catastrophe. Land sinking. Mountains collapsing" (Lirhus 2016, 27).¹⁸ This makes one wonder whether Norwegian writers' strategies to depict climate change is not so much addressing it directly, but rather disguising it under the mask of more common tropes, such as trauma or family. This is not to say that realistic climate fiction is not a legitimate response to the challenge of representing the environmental crisis. Instead, I would argue that the ways they reveal how the implications of climate change are extremely intricate and often subtle is precisely why this type of literary texts are worth further exploring with greater attention to the nuances they evince.

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¹⁸ "det han ønsker seg mest av alt, er en diger katastrofe. Land som synkes. Fjell som kollapses" (Lirhus 2016, 27, my translation).

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FLUID LANDSCAPES AND THE INSULAR IMAGINARY IN ROY JACOBSEN'S BARRØY-SERIES

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ABSTRACT. *Fluid Landscapes and the Insular Imaginary in Roy Jacobsen's Barrøy-series.* The paper aims to investigate, through the perspective of the recent new materialist turn in the humanities, the island imaginary in Northern Norway. The research will revolve around Roy Jacobsen's *Barrøy-serien*, a series of four books which depict the islands of Northern Norway. The whole world of the islanders seems to be encircled and ultimately enclosed by water. The title of the first volume in the series (*The Unseen*) points directly toward the socio- and geopolitical invisibility of the inhabitants of the little island, who seem to be outside any social system, living their life off the grid. Islands have been often portrayed in literature as such isolated microcosms, objects of colonial gaze and desire, powerless and inert. However, in *Barrøy-serien*, Roy Jacobsen seems to break this pattern, by ascribing agency to nonhuman (and more-than-human) systems like the island or the ocean. The story of the protagonist Ingrid seems to slowly become the story of the Barrøy island itself, which is never just the backdrop of human action and intention, but a force that has the power to shape human destinies. I argue that these narratives allow nonhuman entities like the island and the ocean independence and autonomy, acknowledging their enmeshment in human life.

Keywords: *blue ecocriticism, island studies, nonhuman studies, new materialisms, landscape, ocean studies*

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REZUMAT. *Peisaje fluide și imaginarul insular în seria de romane Barrøy de Roy Jacobsen.* Lucrarea de față își propune să investigheze, prin prisma teoriilor noilor materialisme, un așa numit „imaginar insular” al Norvegiei (de nord). Studiul se concentrează asupra *Barrøy-serien* de Roy Jacobsen, o serie de patru romane care prezintă realitățile unei insule din nordul Norvegiei. Întreaga lume a locuitorilor insulei pare să fie înconjurată și îngrădită de apă. Titlul primului volum din serie (*Cei Nevăzuți*) trimite direct la invizibilitatea socio- și geopolitica a locuitorilor insulei, care par să își trăiască viața în afara oricărui sistem. Insulele au fost adesea portretizate în literatura ca astfel de microcosmosuri izolate, inerte, obiecte ale dorinței și privirii coloniale intrusiv. Cu toate acestea, seria de romane scrisă de Roy Jacobsen pare să destabilizeze această structură, atribuind unor sisteme sau entități nonumane (și mai-mult-decât-umane) precum oceanul sau insula Barrøy abilitatea de a se auto-guverna și de a fi autosuficiente. Povestea protagonistei Ingrid pare să devină pe parcursul celor patru volume chiar povestea insulei în sine, care nu este niciodată doar background-ul activității umane, ci o forță care are puterea să modeleze destine umane. Aceste narațiuni recunosc autonomia și independența unor entități nonumane ca insula sau oceanul, cât și rolul pe care acestea îl au în viața umană.

Cuvinte-cheie: *ecocritică, insula, studii nonumane, noi materialisme, peisaj, studii despre ocean*

Introduction and theoretical background

Islands have oftentimes been depicted as places of secludedness and isolation in literature. From Shakespeare’s “The Tempest” to *Robinson Crusoe*, islands have been described as spaces of otherness and seclusion, inaccessible and exotic, “a geographically, economically, historically autonomous *terra nullus*” (Sreenan 2017, 270). This is especially true in the context of colonialism. Island studies scholars such as Pete Hay or Godfrey Baldacchino view these literary representations of islands as defective and faulty, since they obscure “real islandness” in favour of clichéd tropes and metaphors which dismiss “the physical reality of islands whilst promoting the relevance of metaphorical abstractions” (Hay 2006, 29). Literary representations of islands often enforce dangerous dualistic thinking which can dim the real, material experience of islandness. Nevertheless, how can we maintain a connection between the materiality of islands and their cultural representations, and how can we rise above such dualistic thinking when it comes to them? Recent approaches in the field of environmental humanities and nonhuman studies such as new materialist

theories and material ecocriticism blur the division between biological and political, between natural and cultural. Material ecocriticism “investigates the capacity for material objects to act with effectivity – to have agency or even a «voice» (or several voices) of their own” (Raipola 2020, 279). Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann use the term “storied matter” (2014) to underline the fact that, just like humans, nonhuman actants have the capacity of telling and creating stories, participating in the construction of narrative. Reading (literary) islands through the lens of material ecocriticism means that we do not have to read them as either cultural or natural/material, but as an interplay between these two dimensions, an assemblage of forces and identities, and therefore as a fluid landscape. Literary (or cultural) islands become actants imbued with agency, independent entities which directly engage with materiality.

Theorists of island studies have developed several concepts which comprise this poli-existence and fluidity of islands. Some of these concepts are “tidalectics” (Kamau Brathwaite), “aquapelago” (Philip Hayward), “archipelagraphy” (Elizabeth DeLoughrey). Kamau Brathwaite’s “tidalectics” (tidal dialectics) “resists the synthesizing telos of Hegel’s dialectic by drawing from a cyclical model, invoking the continual movement and rhythm of the ocean” (DeLoughrey 2007, 3). The ocean is never static and inert, but in a constant movement, a constant becoming. The island appropriates this movement; the tide becomes the pulse of the ocean, a pulse that affects not just water, but land as well. The island is to be thought not in terms of stagnation, of fixed territory, but in terms of fluidity and polyvalence. This tidalectics which characterises the insular imagination is “a to-and-fro movement, a hither and thither, between continents and the island, between the island and the world of islands” (Vergès and Marimoutou 2005, 15). When it comes to Philip Hayward’s “aquapelago”, the author defines the term as “an assemblage of the marine and land spaces of a group of islands and their adjacent waters” (Hayward 2012, 3), while Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s “archipelagraphy” can be defined as “a historiography that considers chains of islands in fluctuating relationship to their surrounding seas, islands and continents” (DeLoughrey 2001, 23). Both these two approaches emphasize the significant role that water has in insular thinking. The island is always a “symbiosis between land and sea” (Pearson 2006, 354), an assemblage of these forces. It is important to think of islands as part of a global assemblage. They dissolve the tension between global and local, because they are porous aggregations that bring these two approaches together. Islands are connected with the rest of the world through the global water assemblage but are nonetheless maintaining their locality/regionalty:

Islands, therefore, despite appearances, are never either separate or deserted, but are continuous with and penetrated by the earthly materiality of geological duration, by humanly indiscernible processes of differentiation, emergence, and derivation. They are constituted by the constant interchange between earth and water and in this way embody a differential, unstable ontology (Sreenan 2017, 270).

This paper is an attempt to think of literary islands as real, material entities. My research is a close reading of Roy Jacobsen's Barrøy-series, through the lens of new materialist theories and ecocriticism. I argue that these novels move beyond a straightforward, dualistic thinking of islandness, and portray the island of Barrøy as a fluid landscape, adaptable and unstable, impossible to conquer and control. This approach resonates with Hay's ambition of "rescuing the real" island (Hay 2006, 26), as it implies understanding the island as an independent and autonomous system, and not only as a human-made and human-centred trope. Moreover, I claim that there is an "island imagination" or a "insular imaginary" which plays a significant role "in the negotiation and imaging of the human place in the world" (Marland 2016, 17). This insular imaginary which one can pinpoint in Jacobsen's novels is characterised by aspects such as liminality and fluidity, and a general interlacing of human and nonhuman identities. Jacobsen's islanders are deeply connected with the world around them; the cyclical rhythm of (so-called) "nature" corresponds with the rhythm of the human. There is a strong link between humans and nonhumans, and also between humans and place. As it is to be seen in Roy Jacobsen's Barrøy-series, "islands are not only passive backdrops for the actions of characters, but actively drive the narrative and produce meaning" (Crane and Fletcher 2016, 645). The island of Barrøy is deeply influencing the way in which the islanders see and understand the world, becoming a *locus* "in which the human and the nonhuman are more integrally intertwined" (Marland 2016, 14).

The island as fluid landscape and the island imaginary in Jacobsen's Barrøy-series

Roy Jacobsen's "The Barrøy Chronicles" revolve around the Barrøy family's and especially Ingrid Barrøy's life on an island in Northern Norway. The first volume of the series, *The Unseen*, is a coming-of-age story, a *bildungsroman* which follows Ingrid from early childhood into early adulthood. The members of the Barrøy family (composed of Hans and Maria, along with daughter Ingrid, Hans' father Martin and sister Barbro) live on their own remote island in Northern Norway, in the proximity of the Lofoten Islands (in what could be

called an *aquapelago*, in Philip Hayward's words; the water that connects the islands is more important and sometimes more reliable than land itself). The characters of the first volume "exist on the margins of Norwegian life in the early decades of the twentieth century—on the economic, cultural and geographical periphery of the Norway that became a wealthy global nation in the latter half of the century" (Ritson 2020a, 129). The story of the human characters is entangled with recounts of other nonhuman or more-than-human entities or phenomena, like the island itself, the sheep they own, the ocean, a storm. The second volume, *White Shadow*, is set during Norway's World War II occupation by Germany and it revolves around Ingrid's life as a solitary woman in a country (and ultimately a world) in crisis. During her alone days on the island of Barrøy, Ingrid rescues a Russian soldier and helps him get back on his feet, while hiding him from the Nazis. They find peace and safety in each other's arms, until the Russian soldier, Alexander, has to flee to neutral Sweden. Their story is continued in the third volume of the series, *The Eyes of the Rigel*, in which Ingrid sets out on a journey to find the young Russian man, the father of her daughter, Kaja. She finds out that Alexander is back in Russia, together with his wife and child. Although Ingrid does not actually find and meet him, her journey helps her make peace with the past and future that is to come. The fourth volume, *Just a Mother*, brings Ingrid back to Barrøy after her quest around the country. Life seems to have settled down on Barrøy. The reader encounters here characters from the previous three novels in the series, but is also introduced to a few new characters, among whom the skipper of the milk run, Johannes Hartvigsen, and his young son Mathias. One day, Johannes leaves his son on Barrøy, until he finishes work, but Ingrid feels that something is not quite right; her fears become true when the skipper's boat is later found, without any trace of the man. Mathias is adopted by Ingrid, who becomes therefore the mother of two. She and her family buy the Salthammer, a whaling ship which they use to fish. The end of the novel is rather dramatic: while being out on the sea, the Salthammer is destroyed in a storm, and all the boys and the men in the family (except for Mathias) die in the shipwreck. These narratives offer an alternative account to classical stories of human dominion over the nonhuman, destabilising the anthropocentric view we have on islands and the ocean. This paper is an attempt to take a step back and move aside from the fate of human characters and human-centred accounts on the environment. Instead, I try to read the island as a character in itself.

Nevertheless, as Lisbeth Wærp observes in an article from 2022 ("«En øy går aldri under»: Roy Jacobsens Barrøy-romaner i et øylitterært perspektiv") environmental change is not a deliberate theme in the novel: "Miljøendringer

med konsekvenser for jordas geologi (klimaendringer, forurensning, surhetsnivå i havet, utryddelse av biologisk mangfold og så videre) tematiseres ikke, verken i seg selv eller som årsaker til den prekære eksistensen”² (Wærp 2022, 169). The novels cannot therefore be framed within the genre of climate fiction (*cli-fi*) or eco-fiction. However, there are many episodes in which the author alludes to the strong bond between humans and nature, episodes that will be analysed in this article. As Jacobsen himself states in an interview, the Barrøy-series explores the dichotomy “man versus nature. And of [The characters] live by nature, they live versus nature, they live in nature, they also enjoy the comfort of nature” (Jacobsen 2018).

Katie Ritson defines islands as spaces “with indeterminate and often contested borders. Littoral spaces can be read as heterotopias in the Foucauldian sense margins where social norms are suspended or non-existent; in the literary imagination, they can provide a space for alternative ways of life and worldviews that are missing or obscured in inland society” (Ritson 2018, 67). On Barrøy, the worldview that is constantly contested is the anthropocentric perspective that so well characterizes the Western world. The islanders do not live *on* an island, they live *together with* the island, becoming “creatures of the edge, mentally as well as physically” (Gillis 2012, 8). However, on Barrøy, this liminality does not necessarily mean isolation or confinement, but a chance to rethink identity and selfhood. Living on the edge, in places which challenge traditional, long-established modes of thinking, means exploring alternative ways of understanding the world. This liminality can therefore be understood as essentially fluid: the islander is not a creature of the land, neither one of the sea, but a constant conversation between these two dimensions. Another aspect of this liminality is the islander’s identity understood as an interplay, a flow between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. The inhabitants of the islands are both a product of socio-cultural and political factors, and beings whose lives are deeply influenced by and connected to the nonhuman world. They experience war, go to school and to church, have a job; even though they find themselves on the margins of society, they are, however, a part of it. On the other hand, they are also a part of Barrøy’s ‘natural’ ecosystem, depending on nonhuman factors (like the sea, the animals, the land) for food, shelter, water.

This fluidity finds its way into the islander’s imagination and sense of self, because “not only do we live on coasts but we think with them. They are a part of our mythical as well as physical geography” (Gillis 2012, 8). The inhabitants

² “Environmental change with consequences for the earth’s geology (climate change, pollution, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss and so on) are not discussed, neither directly nor as reasons for the precarious existence” (Wærp 2022, 169, my translation).

of Barrøy are constantly questioning their place in the world, pondering over their liminality. The island becomes this “immensely rich imaginative locus in which dualisms can be disturbed and human identity explored” (Marland 2016, 12). The islanders understand the world in terms of flowing, fluidity, and movement. As Marte Viken observes, the novels “viser på flere måter hvordan det fysiske miljøet er en prosess og ikke et statisk system”³ (Viken 2019, 37).

When Ingrid ponders upon the *aquapelago* of which her home is a part, she envisions a network of vectors that move and link these places: “She imagined the currents in the sea and the winds and all the islands and skerries between the islands of Rosøy and Barrøy” (Jacobsen 2019, 66). The currents of the sea correspond to the winds in the sky, both representing movement and a general feeling of interconnectedness between elements, planes, and places. A significant part of the island imagination is precisely this fluidity as central metaphor for making sense of the world. Ingrid “challenges opposites such as solid and liquid and interweaves seemingly absolute categories like land, water and air; objects are multiplied, borders are frayed, distances become uncertain” (Riquet 2016, 148). For an islander, water is never just an empty space, a barren surface. Living surrounded by the sea does certainly influence the way in which an islander sees and understands the world, because water invades our human-only narratives and deeply shapes us as individuals. Aquatic spaces shape our language and the way we see and understand everything around us, “just as we are shaped by the ocean, materially and ontologically” (DeLoughrey 2022, 147).

As aforementioned, life on Barrøy encompasses the experiences of both humans and nonhumans, which seem to be interconnected, following the same rules and patterns:

On the very rare occasions the rain or snow falls vertically, a dry circle forms in the grass beneath every nest in the Old Rowan. Then the sheep huddle together there. Especially the lambs dislike the rain, and they relieve themselves as animals do, so there is a black, muddy circle of life beneath every nest, everything is interconnected, just as humans do not divide into two separate parts even though they bend forward. This is how it is on the thousand other islands in the archipelago as well. The ten thousand islands. (Jacobsen 2016, 23).

On the one hand, human life is compared to the life of nonhuman animals, which behave more or less in the same way as the islanders do. On the other hand, life on Barrøy is paralleled with life on other islands of the *aquapelago*.

³ [The novels] “show in several ways how the physical environment is a process and not a static system” (Viken 2019, 37, my translation).

The process of sheep gathering together under the nests of magpies is compared to a human being “bending forward”. Just like the human body does not divide into two separate parts when it does this, the sheep and the magpie nests seem to be in a sort of symbiosis, depending on each other. They cannot be separated. The comparison between this symbiosis and the human body shows us that sheep, magpies, rain and nests all become an assemblage of forces and agencies that function like an organism, which is the island ecosystem itself. All the elements within the ecosystem have their own roles, constantly interacting with other elements (be them living things or inanimate matter). The role of the human in this assemblage is at least questionable; humans are a part of it, but they do not possess any power to alter the outcome. The assemblage is a complex system, a *mesh*, to use Marco Caracciolo’s terminology from *Narrating the Mesh* (2021). It does not have a centre, a privileged, vanguard viewpoint, but rather works as a decentralized system which “is directly opposed to linear and hierarchical ways of understanding humanity’s position vis-à-vis the nonhuman, where linearity is culturally bound up with notions of human mastery and exploitation” (Caracciolo 2021, 31).

In *Just a Mother*, the fourth volume of the series, while out at sea on the Salthammer (the whaling ship the family has bought), Felix and Ingrid witness something extraordinary: they see six finback whales swimming in the ocean, and what they experience is something close to an epiphany, a revelation:

[Ingrid] sees three gigantic finback whales frolicking around the boat, all bigger than the Salthammer, [...] blue planets twisting and turning, as smoothly and soundlessly as birds in the air. [...] Ingrid's gaze caresses these wonderful creatures, six of them now, she feels the boat rise and hover, the chilling sensation and the tears, for she will never see this again, life is too short, she knows this, as she also knows that she won't be able to keep anything for ever, nothing. She sees the disaster before it strikes, she sees the end of all things, life's fragility. (Jacobsen 2022, 136)

The awe-inspiring animals create a feeling of both fondness and fear inside Ingrid, as she begins to cry at their sight. They are compared with “blue planets twisting and turning” (136), a metaphor that calls for an ecocentric rethinking of our world; finback whales are depicted therefore as self-sufficient, autonomous individuals, who carry a whole universe, a whole cosmos within them, a cosmos that seems rather inaccessible and elusive to humans. Moreover, the narrator draws a parallel between the whales and the “birds in the sky”, associating two different (and maybe even opposed) planes: the ocean and the sky. This interlacing of aquatic and aerial is challenging a linear understanding of the world. Ingrid realizes that this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, that human

life is way too fragile and short, and rather insignificant when one sees the grand scheme of things. This epiphany further underlines her enmeshment with the natural world. This powerful connection seems to give her the ability to “see the disaster before it strikes”, because she recognizes the patterns and the cycles of the nonhuman environment that she is so embedded into. In *White Shadow*, the second volume of the series, the islanders can even predict animal deaths or children stumbling, only by observing slight changes in the environment:

To survive on an island you have to search. Ingrid had been searching since she was born, for berries, eggs, down, fish, shells, [...] twigs... an islander's eyes are always searching [...] restless glances across islands and the sea which fasten onto the slightest change, register the most insignificant signs, see spring before it arrives and snow before it daubs ditches and hollows with strokes of white, they see the signs before animals die and before children stumble and they spot the invisible fish in the sea beneath flocks of white wings, sight is the beating heart of the islander. (Jacobsen 2019, 23)

This episode reveals Ingrid's strong bond with the island, with the bodies with whom she comes in contact inside the mesh. She knows things before they happen because she has a strong connection with her human and nonhuman counterparts from the ecosystem. Their destinies are ultimately interwoven, and her life is attuned to the rhythm of the nonhuman environment. Living on an island means always looking for and at something, always searching and paying attention to all the beings, things, and phenomena around you. Ingrid builds strong relationships with all these elements, syncing her life with theirs. She is even described as having the capacity to predict the weather, only by observing specific signs and changes on the island, as in these two episodes: “They'd had a rainy, windy summer, but this last week the weather had been fine, hay-drying, potato-growing, clothes on the rack, calm sea, tomorrow it would rain, Ingrid could feel it in her bones.” (Jacobsen 2022, 34) and “[Ingrid] sees the closest skerries and Oterholmen as usual, she notices the dark two lines in the dew on the grass outside the Karvika boathouse, but pays no heed, just registers that the weather today is going to be calm. (Jacobsen 2022, 53)”. What is striking here is that not only does Ingrid look for signs or changes outside, on the island, sea, and sky, but also within herself. She can feel the changes in weather “in her bones” (34).

Marta Louise Markussen observes in Jacobsen's novels another way in which the characters are linked to their environment: through their work. Discussing the first novel of the series, *The Unseen*, Markussen states that “karakterene [blir] nært knyttet til naturen gjennom det arbeidet de utfører.

Slik blir arbeidet i romanen ikke bare en virkelighetseffekt gjennom detaljerte skildringer, men også en del av karakterenes identitet”⁴ (Markussen 2019, 20). In *Just a Mother*, the narrator himself pinpoints to the way in which the life of the characters is built around their work: “There are two reasons on an island for getting up, first to put an end to the night's thoughts with work, and second because this work needs to be done” (Jacobsen 2022, 116). As we can see from this quote, work is a crucial and fundamental aspect of the islanders’ identity, and much of their life is built around work. Lennart J. Johansen (2001, 31) is also discussing the way in which, in a place such as the islands of Northern Norway, work has the capacity to create bridges between individuals and the environment. Fishing, taking care of animals, cultivating the land and other vital chores that must be done on the island in order to secure the survival of the islanders, are actions that imply that humans directly cooperate with nonhuman others and with the nonhuman environment.

As previously mentioned, the island can be defined as a symbiosis between land and sea. Aside from the life lived on dry land, the inhabitants of Barrøy do also live a life at sea, and their fate is deeply connected to it and to its waters. This happens not just on a metaphorical, conceptual level, but also on a physical, material one. They commute and travel using their boat, go fishing for food, swim, row, and clean themselves in the sea. Addressing the issue of transportation and travel, Elżbieta Żurawska states that all the means of transportation used by the islanders are “ways of travelling that do not separate [the traveller] from the environment, but, on the contrary, mean active participation in it” (Żurawska 2021, 336). Swimming or rowing especially mean that the human body has to move together with the body of water in order to advance, thus creating a collaboration of forces which enable the movement. Żurawska talks about Ingrid’s “immersion in time and space” (Żurawska 2021, 340), which is specifically engendered by the way in which Ingrid experiences the landscape (and generally, nature) through her senses, directly and in an unmediated manner. The author proceeds to state that “the inhabitants of Barrøy are primarily physical beings”, whose understanding of the landscape is “embodied” (342). This implies that the characters’ identity is profoundly connected to the landscape. Vanja Louise Markussen calls this process “den kronotopiske identiteten”⁵ (Markussen 2019, 20), an identity which is always dependent on and created by a time and space organization of factors. The historical context does, of

⁴ “The characters [become] closely connected to nature through the work they do. In this way, the work in the novel does not only become an effect of reality through detailed descriptions, but is also a part of the characters' identity” (Markussen 2019, 20, my translation).

⁵ “the chronotopic identity” (Markussen 2019, 20, my translation).

course, shape the way in which the characters think and behave, but so does space, the landscape.

At times, Ingrid becomes so deeply influenced by the sea that she experiences her own body as fluid. Water transgresses borders, finds crevices and fissures in the materiality of her porous body: "Ingrid had a feeling of water. It ran into her ears and filled her thoughts – with words. She felt the weight of eider down and her own body heat; her hands no longer ached, they weren't even red, her throat was dry, she said nothing and the foreign words continued to stream upwards from down below through the hatch in the floor" (Jacobsen 2019, 34). Ingrid's body becomes one with water. It becomes a liquid, fluid body, permeated by water. It flows into her ears, and words "stream upwards" (34). The woman understands her own identity in terms of fluidity.

This material, bodily experience of the island began for Ingrid in her young childhood. As a child, Ingrid was afraid of storms, and sailing in stormy weather did often make her quiver. Seeing this, Hans, her father, decides one day to guide her and teach her how to stop being afraid of such weather conditions: "He screams that she has to feel with her body that the island is immovable, even though it trembles and both the heavens and the sea are in tumult, an island can never go under, although it may quake, it is rock solid and eternal, it is fixed to the earth itself" (Jacobsen 2016, 42). Hans urges his daughter to "feel with her body" (42) the materiality of the island, the fact that it is solid and immovable, even though everything around them is movement and fluidity. A connection is created between feeling and thinking, between mind and body, between thought and matter, and the borders between these dualisms seem to fade away in favour of a network where everything is interconnected. Ingrid must feel the Earth beneath her feet and connect with it; she has to grasp the materiality of the island through the materiality of her own body. She uses her whole body as a source of perception, not just her eyes. This experience represents "the confluence of culture (knowledge) and nature (the body)" (Filipova 2022, 151).

Another important aspect of living with water is the necessity of being able to swim. When she first goes to school, in one of her first days there, Ingrid is required to learn how to swim by her teacher, who argues that, for an islander, the ability to swim is essential and compulsory: "«You're going to learn too, today» the teacher says in a strange dialect, because they are islanders and for islanders swimming is as important as being able to sail and row and pray" (Jacobsen 2016, 78). Swimming, being in water, moving along with water, become vital skills for an islander. The ability to swim is compared to praying, as if it would be a sacred activity, a rite of passage, a ritual which creates a bridge

between Ingrid and a higher power, or, in this case, between Ingrid and the rest of the mesh. She experiences the ocean through movement, through her own body, since “our ability to process space is constituted by our movement through it” (DeLoughrey 2020, 6). Since the islanders are creatures of both land and sea, they need to be able to move in water as well as they can move on dry land.

The sea is oftentimes described as an alive organism in itself, or, in Jane Bennet’s words, as “vibrant matter” (2010). It changes consistency, colour, it transforms and renews itself every second, in a constant state of becoming, in the sense that it never reaches a final conclusive stage, just like its waters never reach a final destination inside the assemblage:

In February the sea is sometimes a turquoise mirror. Snow-covered Barrøy resembles a cloud in the sky. It is the frost that makes the sea green, and clearer, and calm and viscous, like jelly. Then it can completely congeal with a translucent film on the surface and change from one state to another. The island has acquired a rim of ice, which also surrounds the closest islets, it has increased in size. (Jacobsen 2016, 47).

The sea is a lively nonhuman actant not only because it flows around the world, connecting disjointed places and spaces, but mostly because it flows inside and throughout itself. It is a giant organism whose body is an intricate network of moving forces that flow in an incessant flux. It is continually moving and pouring in, through and between bodies, but it is also continually flowing within itself. The sea “is indisputably voluminous, stubbornly material, and unmistakably undergoing continual re-formation” (Steinberg and Peters 2015, 5). The vectors that create this type of movement and vibrancy inside the ocean are actants like waves, currents, or the tide, actants that create courses and trajectories within the ocean itself, deeming it an intricate system of nerves and forces. If the ocean is a giant organism, then the tide is its pulse, its breathing. There is a certain rhythm of the tide, a throb that manifests itself through rhythmical pulsations, through consistent and systematic rises and falls. It is a movement that never ceases, these are no intermissions between tidal episodes. In *The Unseen*, the tide is compared to the breathing of human beings:

A silence like this is rare. What is special about it is that it occurs on an island. [...]. It is mystical, it borders on the thrilling, it is a faceless stranger in a black cloak wandering across the island with inaudible footsteps. The duration depends on the time of year, silence can last longer in the winter, with ice on the ground, while in summer there is always a slight pause between one wind and the next, between high and low tide or the

miracle that takes place in humans as they change from breathing in to breathing out. (Jacobsen 2016, 73)

The breathing of humans is here compared to the breathing of the sea (the tide), with the blowing of the wind, with the succession of seasons. They all imply movement and fluidity, and even cyclicity: the seasons follow one another, year after year, the tide rises and falls, day after day, living things breathe in and out. There is a certain synchronicity between the rhythm of the island, the rhythm of the sea, and that of the human. They all follow the same pattern. Islanders are deeply connected to the cycles of nature, which they appropriate and adopt. The time of the inhabitants of Barrøy is mostly divided into day and night, high and low tide, summer and winter. Measuring the time in hours, minutes, or using a clock is not a very common occurrence. Ingrid receives a watch at some point while searching for Alexander, but she needs to be reminded by other people to wind it every morning. She is not accustomed to such cultural understandings of time, but rather lives her days according to the natural rhythm of the island.

These synchronized patterns form an assemblage of forces and agencies. The elements of the mesh communicate with each other in a fluid symbiosis. Human agency is set aside in such a network, where the flow of everything precedes human intention. Another relevant episode that touches on this is the following: after one of the most dangerous storms the island of Barrøy has ever seen, the inhabitants of the island notice that the currents, the waves, the rain and storm (therefore, the assemblage) have carried a huge tree close to their home, on the beach, a tree that has never grown around these parts of the world, on the Northern Norwegian coastline: “[...] one autumn morning Hans Barry finds a whole tree that the storm has torn up and deposited on the southern tip of the island. An enormous tree” (Jacobsen 2016, 18). However, human agency plays no role in this. The episode is narrated in the following way:

It is a Russian larch which through the centuries has grown strong and mighty on the banks of the Yenisei in the wilds south of Krasnoyarsk, where the winds that rage across the taiga have left their mark like a comb in greasy hair, until the time when a spring flood with teeth of ice toppled the tree into the river and transported it three or four thousand kilometres north to the Kara Sea and left it in the clutches of its briny currents [...]. (18)

The Russian river Yenisei, a spring flood caused by another storm perhaps, currents that are both ice-cold and warm, and even icebergs contributed to this conclusion of the mighty tree reaching the Norwegian coastline:

[The currents] carried it north to the edge of the ice and then west past Novaya Zemlya and Spitsbergen and all the way up to the coasts of Greenland and Iceland, where warmer currents wrested it from their grip and drove it north-west again, in a mighty arc halfway around the earth, taking in all a decade or two, until a final storm swept it onto an island on the Norwegian coast. (18)

The ocean is the final point of all the processes that have taken place so that the tree could end up on Barrøy, the final destination of all the water particles that have travelled the globe across its Northern hemisphere. At the same time, the ocean is also the place from where these particles will rise again in the form of mist and vapour, travelling back again to the very same place from where they came, or to other, faraway places, they have never experienced before. The ocean is therefore neither end nor beginning, just like any other element of the assemblage. The assemblage does not have a central point or an origin, it is a rhizomatic structure which begins and ends over and over again, or, perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that it never begins and never ends, it just is. Another important aspect of the tree episode recounted above would be the way in which the assemblage works as a system that creates planetary connections and interconnections. The tree's journey started in Russia, on the banks of the river Yenisei. It has travelled along the Northern borders of Russia until it reached the Western part of Scandinavia, that is, Norway. The assemblage is a global system which connects water bodies from all around the world on a geopolitical level, creating a planetary network of nonhuman actants that put everything into motion. This global assemblage that links everything and creates these planetary associations does not care about boundaries and man-made frontiers, as "fluids [...] breach borders and invite the confluence and collaboration of things; they challenge an ordering of the world according to a logic of separation" (Neimanis 2017, 186).

The tree episode ends with the remark that Hans Barrøy has never seen such a tree before, because they do not have this exact species in Norway, especially on their (almost) barren, faraway island. If it was not for the water carrying the tree here, Hans Barrøy would have never known such a tree existed in the first place. Water, and here the ocean especially, through its constant flowing, has the power to create networks and pathways that otherwise would have never been created, to link spaces and places that could never have been linked if it was not for this global system.

The "bodies" of saltwater that cover the planet are connected, or, more accurately, are a singular aquatic body divided only by human cartography and discourse for the sake of conveniences like navigational communication,

the ability to identify location, political claims to sovereign rights, and the identification of ecological distinctions. However, such convenience invades our thought, our cultural imaginaries, and our cultural memories, contributing to centuries of understanding the oceans as independent bodies confined with separate, though connected containers or basins. Instead, we must now think not of the world's oceans, but of the world's ocean – singular – [...]. (Dobrin 2021, 1)

This episode is relevant especially because it questions the role humans play in the ecosystem. As Marte Viken states, “Her blir det rettet en oppmerksomhet mot treets ferd gjennom verden. Treet får således en bakgrunn og en historie. En slik fremstilling av natur stemmer overens med et økosentrisk verdisyn. Naturen blir her ilagt en mening med tilværelsen som går utover det som virker nyttig og relevant for mennesket”⁶ (Viken 2019, 50).

Living on an island, encircled by the constant presence of nonhuman actants (such as the ocean or extreme weather conditions) means giving yourself up to circumstances you cannot control. Here, the ocean engenders a “generative interconnectivity of human and nonhuman forces, thereby displacing human agency from its central position within the world” (Why 2017, 20). The islanders know and understand that their fate is dependent on and connected with nonhuman phenomena. When Hans Barrøy ruminates on how the tree was carried to his island, he ascribes agency to elements such as the wind, floods, ocean currents, which are “inherently efficacious and productive in ways that can unsettle human agency” (Caracciolo 2021, 28). He is aware of their power to act as subjects: Hans describes the winds as raging and leaving their mark on the taiga, the floods as having “teeth of ice” which “toppled the tree into the river and transported it” (Jacobsen 2016, 18), the currents as wresting the tree from the grip of the floods and driving it north-west. All these nonhuman elements become actants in the islander's view; Hans understands that the forces which brought the tree to Barrøy are autonomous and compelling, and that his human ambitions cannot interfere with them.

Conclusive remarks

Roy Jacobsen's narrative disrupts long-established assumptions on islands. Throughout the books, the island of Barrøy is depicted as a fluid landscape,

⁶ Here attention is directed to the tree's journey throughout the world. The tree thus gets a background and a history. Such a representation of nature is evocative of an ecocentric worldview. Nature is here given a meaning that goes beyond what seems useful and relevant to man (Viken 2019, 50, my translation).

belonging to both land and sea, humans and nonhumans. The insular imaginary and the identity of the islander is a negotiation between these dualisms, never truly belonging to one or to the other, but always flowing between edges and transgressing borders. Moreover, even though Barrøy is ultimately a literary island, it is depicted as a real, material place: “the island is prominent as a geographic or real space. The description of the harsh weather, the challenging conditions of living, the dangerous cliffs, [...] counteract the paradisiac imaginary often associated with islands” (Schällibaum 2017, 294). The characters engage directly with the materiality of the island of Barrøy. These narratives move beyond a straightforward, dualistic thinking of islandness, and portray the island of Barrøy as a fluid landscape, in which human and nonhuman destinies are interwoven, “a place that is inherently unstable and not under human control” (Ritson and Smalen 2021, 296). The island and the sea are both a material reality and a force, being able to directly influence the life and the identities of the islanders. Last but not least, “Jacobsen’s descriptions of the generations of people who live on Barrøy engage with Norway’s perception of itself as a nation founded on closeness to nature and a simple, rural life in a largely egalitarian society” (Ritson 2020b, 136). Most of the characters in Jacobsen’s Barrøy’s-series have grown up surrounded and enveloped by water, water bodies and waterscapes. Water writes stories and it even writes us, humans. The nonhuman has the power to influence the human, to shape our identity: “We come to identify with, or are touched and moved in different ways, by the waters that we experience” (Chen, MacLeod and Neimanis 2013, 28). Water bodies become engaged actors in the development of our lives, especially if we live in a place like Barrøy, encircled by the constant presence of them. Water narratives flow into our storytelling processes and help us make sense of the world.

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ET FORSTYRRET KROPPSBILDE: VURDERING OG KATEGORISERING AV KROPPEN I LINNÉA MYHRES ROMAN *EVIG SØNDAG*

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ABSTRACT. *A Distorted Body Image: Valuation and Categorization of the Human Body in Linnéa Myhre's Novel Evig søndag (Eternal Sunday).* The purpose of this article is to analyse the autobiographical novel *Eternal Sunday* by Linnéa Myhre in order to present the way in which the language reflects the valuation and categorization of the human body. The novel conveys the perspective of a person who suffers from an eating disorder. The way she is describing the human body is affected by the illness, and subconsciously associated with a particular distorted body image, beauty standards and expectations. The theoretical basis is rooted in cognitive linguistics and linguistic categories as proposed by George Lakoff. Cultural and psychological concepts are also taken into the account.

Keywords: *cognitive linguistics, body image, eating disorders, categorization, Norwegian literature*

REZUMAT. *O imagine corporală distorsionată: Valorizarea și clasificarea corpului uman în romanul Evig søndag (Duminica eternă) al lui Linnéa Myhre.* Scopul acestui articol este de a analiza romanul autobiografic *Duminica eternă* de Linnéa Myhre și de a prezenta modul în care limbajul reflectă valorizarea și categorizarea corpului uman. Romanul transmite perspectiva unei persoane care suferă de o tulburare de alimentație. Modul în care ea

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descrie corpul uman este afectat de boală și asociat subconștient cu o anumită imagine corporală distorsionată, cu anumite standarde de frumusețe sau așteptări privind corpul. Baza teoretică este înrădăcinată în lingvistica cognitivă și categoriile lingvistice propuse de George Lakoff. Sunt luate în considerare și concepte culturale sau psihologice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *lingvistică cognitivă, imagine corporală, tulburări de alimentație, categorizare, literatura norvegiană*

Innledning

Kroppsbildet er en betydelig del av både ens identitet og virkelighetsoppfatning. I psykologi betraktes det som «et mentalt bilde vi har av størrelsen, figuren og formen på egen kropp, og evalueringene vi gjør av våre kroppslige egenskaper» (Greene, 2011). Det er umulig å eksistere i verden uten å ta utgangspunkt i sin egen kropp. Kroppen er likevel ikke bare et verktøy, den er et element i hvordan man presenterer seg i verden. Derfor står den i fokus også utseendesmessig. Kroppsbildet blir påvirket av eksterne faktorer, som for eksempel nåværende skjønnhetsidealer, kroppspress eller forhold til andre mennesker. På grunn av en bestemt narrasjon kan dette bildet bli svært forstyrret. Det kan skje når presset blir så sterkt at det føres til ulike problemer, blant annet psykiske lidelser. I denne artikkelen ønsker jeg å fokusere på en sykdom som er direkte knyttet til både kroppens funksjon og utseende, nemlig spiseforstyrrelser. Et forstyrret kroppsbilde manifesterer seg på mange måter i denne sykdommen, men jeg skal konsentrere meg om språkbruket til en person som lider av en spiseforstyrrelse.

Denne artikkelen er en skildring av måten den syke personen snakker om sin kropp på, det vil si hvordan hen vurderer og kategoriserer med utgangspunkt i den perfekte kroppen som hen stadig forholder seg til. Jeg skal analysere en autobiografisk roman *Evig søndag*, skrevet av Linnéa Myhre. Boken ble utgitt i 2012 og fremstiller ett år i forfatterens liv. Myhre beskriver sin hverdag og deler sine tanker og følelser knyttet til kroppen sin. Hennes spiseforstyrrelse er hovedtemaet i boken, og alle hendelser er direkte forbundet med sykdommen. I perioden som er beskrevet i romanen, blir hovedpersonen sykere, men det er ikke tiden da hun er på sitt sykeste. Den verste tiden, det vil si øyeblikket når Myhre veier minst og må bli innlagt på sykehus, blir nevnt kun i minner. Romanen fremstiller stort sett bare henne; hun kommer sjelden i kontakt med andre mennesker. De er hovedsakelig presentert ved å beskrive Myhres forhold til dem, eller hennes tolkning av hvordan de oppfatter henne.

Boken er dermed en innsikt i en veldig personlig betraktning av verden. Derfor tilbyr den en mulighet til å analysere perspektivet til en syk person svært nøyaktig.

Det er vanskelig å tegne en grense mellom hovedpersonen av boken og forfatteren. Romanen representerer nemlig en gren av litteratur som dominerte litteraturen etter årsskifteårtusenskiftet?, og kalles for «faksjon» eller «virkelighetslitteratur». Denne typen litteratur blander fakta og fiktive elementer. Et spørsmål som stilles ofte i debatten om slik litteratur, er virkelighetsproblemet, det vil si: hva som er sant og hva som er oppdiktet (Borker og Brøndgaard 1990). I de siste årene har dette spørsmålet ofte blitt diskutert, spesielt når det gjelder norske forfattere som Karl Ove Knausgård eller Vigdis Hjort. Forfattere som velger å skrive om livet sitt, kan presentere virkelige hendelser, men de bruker fortsatt ulike litterære virkemidler som kan modifisere fortellingen, slik at det nesten er umulig å avgrense fakta og fiksjon. Per Thomas Andersen mener, på samme måte som Jon Helt Haarder, at «performativ biografisme» er knyttet til det private og at det opptre på kunstens betingelser (Andersen, 2010). Det betyr altså at forfatterne blander fakta og fiksjon, men samtidig prøver å forsvare seg mot all kritikk ved å påstå at de selv kan bestemme over hvilke deler av livet som blottlegges i litteraturen. Det gjelder også romanen *Evig søndag*. Ved første øyekast er hovedpersonen og forfatteren den samme personen, men leseren er ikke i stand til å vurdere om historien stemmer, og om forfatteren ikke har tilsatt elementer for å enten skjule virkelige hendelser, eller dramatisere historien. Dermed begrepene «hovedperson» og «forteller» brukes i analysen utvekslende. Forfatterens etternavn er imidlertid nevnt med hensyn til teksten som et kunstverk.

Vurdering og kategorisering i kognitiv lingvistik

Det er viktig å nevne tre poeng når det gjelder vurdering i språkvitenskap. For det første mener kognitive lingvister at verdier er en del av språkssystemet, noe som i seg selv ikke er nøytralt. For det andre er de knyttet til det språklige bildet av verden, og dermed er tilskrevet til bestemte begreper og fenomener som blir ubevisst vurdert av en språkbruker. Sist, men ikke minst, er vurdering individuell, det vil si at den er knyttet til kroppen og skiller seg fra person til person (Bartmiński 2003). Det betyr at språket er preget av verdier, og bestemte ord og uttrykk bærer visse assosiasjoner. En språkbruker er en del av språkssystemet og derfor blir hen påvirket av verdier som eksisterer i dette systemet. Samtidig kan de være forskjellige hos ulike personer innenfor det samme systemet fordi hver person tilpasser språk til sine egne behov basert på

sine erfaringer og evner. Kategorisering er et lignende fenomen. Kategorier brukes til å dele begreper, fenomener eller gjenstander på grunn av at de eier bestemte egenskaper. Lakoff påpeker likevel at sinnet ikke er en direkte gjenspeiling av den ytre verden (Lakoff 1987). Det betyr at, i likhet med vurdering, avhenger kategorisering av personen som kategoriserer. Kategorier er ikke faste, men språkbrukere innenfor det samme språkssystemet kategoriserer på en lignende måte. Slik som vurdering er kategorisering imidlertid knyttet til den kroppslige erfaringen (Lakoff 1987). Disse to begrepene er veldig nære. Det viktigste er at begge to blir samtidig forutsatt av et språkssystem og påvirket av en individuell språkbruker og hans opplevelse av verden. Et viktig utgangspunkt for vurdering og kategorisering er andre teorier av Lakoff and Johnson, det vil si metaforer og kroppslig situert kognisjon. Disse forskerne påpeker at kroppen, nærmere bestemt «direkte fysisk erfaring», spiller en viktig rolle i dannelsen av metaforer. Det som er viktig ifølge disse forskerne, er at «Vårt vanlige konseptuelle system, som vi både tenker og forholder oss til, er metaforisk grunnleggende i naturen»² (Lakoff og Johnson 1988, 3, min oversettelse). På den måten påviser de at metaforer er en del av hverdagspråket, slik de forstår begrepet: «Selve systemet som tillater oss å forstå ett aspekt av et konsept knyttet til et annet [...] vil nødvendigvis skjule andre aspekter av konseptet» (Lakoff og Johnson 1988, 3, min oversettelse)³. I tillegg rotfestes de metaforiske konseptene i kroppen, som står sentralt for ens oppfatning av verden, siden virkeligheten blir opplevd ved bruk av blant annet sansene. Metaforer har også sin kilde i kroppens posisjon: det gjelder først og fremst orienteringsmetaforer, som beskriver verdenen i forhold til den menneskelige kroppens stilling.

Alle disse konseptene – metafor, vurdering og kategorisering – har altså et felles punkt, det vil si den kroppslige erfaringen av verden.

Kriteriene for anoreksi

Før man stiller en diagnose av anoreksi, må det identifiseres en rekke kriterier hos pasienter. De mest grunnleggende, som definert av Den amerikanske psykiaterforening, er følgende:

² «Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature».

³ «The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in term of another [...] will necessarily hide other aspect of the concept».

- Restriksjon av energiinntak i et slikt omfang at det leder til undervekt.
 - Intens frykt for å gå opp i vekt eller for fedme, eller alltid ha et fokus på og utvise atferd som har som formål å forhindre vektøkning, selv om en er undervektig.
 - Forstyrret kroppsbilde, det vil si en opplevelse av kroppsvekt eller kroppsform som ikke samsvarer med virkeligheten.
 - Mangel på anerkjennelse av konsekvensene av den lave kroppsvekten.
- (Vandvik og Moen)

Kriteriene gir et grunnlag til å forstå perspektivet til en syk person. For å forstå det fullstendig må man altså være klar over at hens kategorisering og vurdering står i strid til et «vanlig» synspunkt, det vil si den friske personens oppfatning. En pasient som lider av anoreksi, har et negativt forhold til mat og vektøkning, samt et forstyrret kroppsbilde. Derfor tar jeg utgangspunkt i at kroppsbildet i Myhres roman stort sett baserer seg på omvendte verdier.

Analyse av Linnéa Myhres *Evig søndag*

Romanen har tidligere blitt undersøkt av blant annet Marte Josefine Nilsen, som analyserte relasjonene mellom hovedpersonen og andre personer samt gjenstander. Vilde H. Engen så imidlertid på *Evig søndag* som et litterært eksempel på norsk livsmestring. En annen forsker, Kjersti H. Reinshorn, analyserte romanen med fokus på selvkonstruksjon, altså fra et virkelighetslitterært perspektiv. Alle tre forfatterne tar opp anoreksi, som er hovedtemaet i boken. I min artikkel omtaler jeg også dette temaet, denne gangen fra en lingvistisk synsvinkel. Analysen av romanen er delt i to hoveddeler. Først skal jeg se nærmere på språket som vurderer kroppen, kroppsdelene og andre kroppslige fenomener. Jeg skal ta i betraktning både positive og negative vurderinger. Deretter skal jeg fokusere på kategorier knyttet til kroppen som Myhre oftest viser til, for eksempel mat og klærstørrelse. Til slutt skal jeg presentere konklusjoner om begge deler og det generelle kroppsbildet i romanen.

Positiv vurdering – synonyme til ordet «vakker»

Hovedpersonen i romanen *Evig søndag* er opptatt av å streve etter å oppnå en bestemt skjønnhetsideal. Hun har en forestilling om hvordan kroppen hennes burde se ut og sjekker ofte kroppstilstanden foran speilet: «Jeg observerer magen som trekkes inn og hoftene som buler ut. De tynne armene

henslengt rundt kroppen. De litt søte, små knoklene rundt skuldre og albuer» (Myhre 2012, 16). Beskrivelser gjelder forskjellige kroppsdelene og deres kjennetegn. Det representerer den ønskede kroppen: hoftebena skal «bule ut», armene skal være tynne. Når hun beskriver enkelte bein, bruker hun ordet «små» og «søte» ved siden av hverandre. Kroppen ser ut som den burde når den er tynn og liten, og beina er godt synlige. Da er det mulig for hovedpersonen å betrakte kroppen nesten med ømhet og bruke ord som er svært positive («søt»). En tilsvarende situasjon er fremstilt i følgende sitatet: «Hvor var det blitt av det lille ansiktet mitt? Eller knoklene rundt skulderpartiet? Kragebena? Kinnbena? De tynne armene som pleide å slite hver gang de møtte en skyvedør?» (154). På dette tidspunktet savner hun den tynnere kroppen. I tillegg nevner hun at hennes tynne armer samtidig var svake, noe som også var en egenskap hun likte. Det kan være vanskelig å forestille seg for en frisk person. Vanligvis ønsker folk å ha mer kraft og en sterkere kropp. Derimot vil hovedpersonen heller slite med å åpne dører fordi «svak» bærer den samme verdien for henne som «tynn». Vurderinger i romanen har altså et individuelt karakter (Bartmiński 2003) og avhenger av hovedpersonens forestillinger. Et motiv som går igjen i boken er hennes spesielt forhold til beina: «Hendene går videre nedover til hoftebena, som jeg må tilstå at jeg holder en knapp på som favorittbena mine, da de står ut fra hoftene som spisse spyd når jeg ligger på ryggen» (14). Hun har favoritter blant beina sine, og det viser at hun tilbringer mye tid på å betrakte og tenke på dem. Dessuten sammenligner hun hoftebeina med spyd – en form som hun synes er pen og tiltrekkende. I lys av Lakoffs og Johnsons teorier om metafor tegner hun en forbindelseslinje mellom formene til begge to objekter. Hun tilføyer også adjektivet «spiss», et annet synonym for «vakker» med hensyn til bein. Hovedpersonen har sine forestillinger om den perfekte kroppsformen og bestemmer selv om hennes kropp oppfyller kravene eller ikke, men hun leter etter bekræftelser fra andre personer. Det er tydelig når hun beskriver et vanlig møte med moren sin:

Vi klemmer hverandre litt for lenge, og hun stryker hendene over ryggen min og klemmer ekstra hardt for å kjenne om jeg er blitt tynnere. Noen ganger hvisker hun inn i øret mitt. 'Tynn' – sier hun, før hun legger en hånd på hver skulder og ser meg inn i øynene. Hver gang hun har påpekt det, har jeg følt en enorm tilfredsstillelse (31).

Moren er en viktig person i fortellerens liv. Derfor er hennes mening avgjørende for hovedpersonen. Det korte ordet «tynn» er betraktet som en ros. Hovedpersonen finner en tilfredsstillelse i morens uttalelse, nesten som om hun var stolt av hennes tilstand. Samtidig er hovedpersonen klar over at det ikke er riktig. Moren er egentlig skuffet over at datteren er så tynn, og hun

prøver å formidle det. Ordet «tynn» har dermed helt ulike betydninger for begge to som viser to forskjellige verdisystemer. For moren – som her representerer en frisk person med vanlige oppfatninger av kroppen – betyr «tynn» at det skjer noe galt med datteren. Hovedpersonen, derimot, er veldig glad i å være tynn; det er hennes mål. Dette sitatet viser altså en sterk kontrast mellom måten som den syke og den friske personen betrakter kroppen på. Verdier er omvendt hos en som lider fra en spiseforstyrrelse. Adjektiver som blir vanligvis brukt i nedsettende beskrivelser blir for hen til ordene med positiv belastning. En vakker kropp i hovedpersonens oppfatning må være tynn og liten, beina burde være synlige og spisse, og mangel på kreftene er en ønsket egenskap. Bare en slik kropp kan vurderes positivt. Ifølge Bartmiński er perspektivet til en frisk person det som man kaller verdier som finnes i kulturen og dermed også i språket. Verdisystemet til den syke personen representerer imidlertid et individuelt syn på verden.

Negativ vurdering – synonymer til ordet «stygg»

På en tilsvarende måte kan man analysere den andre polen i verdisystemet, altså den negative vurderingen. Myhre finner ulike måter å beskrive kroppen og kroppsdelene som stygge på, uten å bruke dette ordet. Først må man imidlertid forstå hva hun mener med adjektivet «stygg», og hvilke konnotasjoner bærer det for henne. Forklaringen finnes for eksempel i følgende sitatet:

Jeg stirret på en lubben ungdom iført en formløs silkedress, som uten tvil gjorde de allerede stygge beina enda styggere og enda bredere. Armene var ikke like tynne som tidligere, og knoklene i skulderpartiet var ikke like markerte som de hadde pleid å være. Jeg kikket ned i gulvet i skam (72).

Det finnes spor av positiv vurdering som ble analysert i det forrige underkapitlet. Likevel beskriver nå hovedpersonen kroppsdelene med benektelser. Armene er stygge fordi de *ikke* er tynne, og tilsvarende er knoklene *ikke* markerte. Negasjon er en måte å skifte fokus til hva kroppen mangler og hva den ikke er. Dermed mener fortelleren at kroppen ikke oppfyller kravene som hun stiller, altså er den ikke en verdifull og pen kropp. Når det gjelder negativ vurdering og synonymer til ordet «stygg» som ikke er benektelser, handler det om en rekke adjektiver. Hovedpersonen beskriver hele sin kropp som lubben og beina som brede. Disse ordene viser til kroppsform og kunne bli erstattet med adjektivet «tykk». Dessuten er de verdiladete og er en del av fortellerens oppfatning av en stygg kropp. Denne gangen er hennes perspektiv ikke så

avvikende fra den populære kulturen. Nåværende skjønnhetsidealer har påvirket konnotasjonene som knyttes til bestemte kroppsegenskaper. For eksempel er ordet *tykk* ansett som negativt, og man unngår vanligvis å bruke dette ordet i beskrivelser av andre personer for å ikke fornærme dem. Hovedpersonens verdisystem ligner altså på verdisystemet i språket (og kultur), men det er mer ekstremt. Kroppsbildet er så viktig for henne at hun skammer seg over å ha den kroppen hun har. Denne følelsen er en av mange som er knyttet til måten hun vurderer kroppen på. Videre nevner hun en som er enda sterkere: «Bena mine er fortsatt de samme stygge. De utrente armene. Det runde ansiktet. De kvinnelige hoftene. De brede knærne. Jeg hater kvinnekroppen, og jeg skulle ønske jeg slapp å se den på denne måten» (16). Her bruker hun også adjektivet «bred», denne gangen i forhold til knærne. I tillegg finnes det eksempler på flere negative adjektiver: utrent, rund, kvinnelig. Fortelleren mener at hun hater den kvinnelige kroppen som tradisjonelt er forbundet med en bestemt kroppsform, det vil si brede hofter, store bryster og andre trekk man ofte beskriver som «kroppskurver». Dessuten kan kvinnekroppen forandre seg mye i løpet av graviditet, og bli større (se Fürst 1998). Hovedpersonen føler avsky mot den kvinnelige kroppen på grunn av disse egenskapene. Det tradisjonelle bildet av kvinnekroppen står i motstand til hennes perfekte kropp. Spørsmålet er likevel om hva som forårsaker hva: hater hun kvinnekroppen på grunn av den ikke er tynn, eller forsøker hun å bli tynn fordi hun hater kvinnekroppen og alt som den innebærer? Svaret er ikke tydelig, siden hovedpersonen er fokusert på å ta kroppsdelene fra hverandre og beskrive dem en etter en. Begge de to begrepene ligger likevel nært hverandre.

Adjektivet «tykk» har også andre assosiasjoner for hovedpersonen. Hun forbinder det med en frisk kropp: «For ingen skal fortelle meg hvor bra jeg ser ut. Bra er synonymt med frisk, og frisk er synonymt med tykk, og forstår de ikke dette, burde de sette fyr på seg selv» (147). Sitatet viser at hovedpersonen har et omvendt verdisystem. I en viss grad er hun klar over dette – hun er negativt innstilt til personer som sier at hun ser «bra» ut. Som det står i sitatet, betyr «bra» det samme som «tykk», og for en anorektiker er betydningen av adjektivet «tykk» hugget i stein. Her forbinder hun det med å være frisk som er en ønsket tilstand for de fleste mennesker. Likevel står hennes tankegang i motsetning til denne betraktningen av friskhet. Hun er bevisst på at friske mennesker ikke oppfatter fett på samme måte som hun gjør, men mener også at de tar feil. For den syke personen er vurderingen ganske enkel: hun deler verden i bare to kategorier som blir kalt med forskjellige ord, avhengig av situasjonen (tynn/tykk, syk/frisk, bra/dårlig). Dikotomien tynn/tykk er overordnet, og alt blir tilpasset denne inndelingen. Språket blir også ganske forenklet. Ordene

«tynn» og «tykk», samt alle synonymer og assosiasjoner, brukes til å beskrive verden og mennesker. Hvis noe tilhører kategorien «tynn» er det bra (i den syke personens forstand), verdifull, rosverdig. Tilsvarende står kategorien «tykk» for alt som er motsatt. Den omfatter egenskaper og tilstander som er skamfulle, kritikkverdige eller som på en eller annen måte demper verdien til den som blir beskrevet.

Normal – nøytral eller negativ?

Bartmiński mener at verdiene i språket er underordnet dikotomien god – ond, som er like viktig som orienteringsmetaforene (Bartmiński 2003). Som nevnt før blir virkeligheten til den syke personen delt tydelig inn i to kategorier. Det finnes imidlertid en overgang mellom dem. Når man tenker på verdisystemet i språket, kan en kropp være tynn eller tykk, men den kan også være normalvektig, vanlig. Tilsynelatende viser det til en tredje, nøytral kategori. For å analysere dette må man se på noen eksempler: «Jeg vil gjerne påstå at jeg ser mye tynnere ut når jeg svømmer i plaggene. Realiteten er selvsagt en annen, under klærne er jeg bare et helt vanlig og normalvektig menneske» (17). I dette sitatet står en tynn kropp i motsetning til en normalvektig kropp. Derfor kan man påstå at både «tykk» og «normalvektig» tilhører samme kategori. Hovedpersonen avviser alt som ikke kan beskrives med ordene som er knyttet til kategorien «tynn». Verden er dermed ikke delt i to like store deler. Den positive kategorien er veldig trang og konkret, det finnes ikke rom for faktiske overgangsområder eller gråsoner. Fortellerens innstilling er tydelig: «I sidesynet observerer jeg en normalvektig, blond jente i speilet. Det kunne ha vært hvem som helst» (141). Her kan leseren forstå bedre hvorfor hun er så opptatt av tynnhet. For henne representerer den unikhhet, en fascinerende egenskap som skiller henne fra andre. I stedet for å vise sine personlighetstrekk prøver hun å gjøre sitt utseende om til det mest spennende ved seg selv. Hun knytter utseendet til både helsetilstanden sin og verdien som hun har som et menneske. Adjektivet «normalvektig» blir sidestilt også med ordene som ble nevnt før, nemlig «frisk» og «bra». Fortelleren siterer et hypotetisk kommentar fra sine bekjente: «Nå er Linnea frisk igjen, nå ser hun normalvektig ut igjen. Så bra for henne, så bra for familien» (147). Her vurderes normal vekt på samme måte som en tykk kropp: den vekker negative assosiasjoner. Hovedpersonen oppfatter det å være normalvektig som et nederlag og et svik mot sine verdier. Betegnelsen «normal» er negativ på grunn av at den benekter hennes unikhhet og hele personligheten som er bygd opp på å ha en liten kropp. Derfor, når hun hører slike ord fra folk rundt seg, oppfatter hun dem som fornærmelser, selv om de betyr noe helt motsatt.

Kroppen utenfor de kroppslige kategoriene

Utenom de to enkle kategoriene tynn og tykk som blir brukt til å kategorisere verden og mennesker på bruker Myhre også en rekke andre underkategorier. De beskriver hennes forhold til bestemte kroppsegenskaper enda nærmere. Kategoriene gjelder ikke kroppen direkte, men er formidlet gjennom konseptuelle metaforer. (Lakoff og Johnson 1988) I romanen finnes det tre slike kategorier: size 0, fett og mat kursiv?. Som sagt før, jo mindre kroppen er, jo mer verdifull oppfattes den. For å måle kroppsstørrelsen bruker hovedpersonen en konkret kategori: size 0: «Jeg heftet av merkelappen som hadde påtrykt skriften 'size 0' - noe jeg ikke forstå - den så ikke size 0 ut» (71). Såkalte «size 0» er den minste størrelsen som finnes i klesbutikker. Den representerer målet som en syk person forsøker å oppnå. Klær i en bestemt størrelse blir til en metafor for en liten kropp. Det som er spennende i dette sitatet er også hvor forstyrret kroppsbildet er. Selv om klesplagget er i den minste av alle størrelser, kan hovedpersonen ikke tro på at hun har en så liten kropp at dressen passer. Utdraget fortsetter:

Jeg skrittet ut i gangen og åpnet forventningsfullt opp døren til leilighetens eneste helfigurspeil.

Speilbildet som møtte meg, fikk imidlertid det oppglødde ansiktsuttrykket til å falle sammen. Tilbake stirret et alvorlig og trill rundt ansikt. Jeg hadde åpenbart glemt hvordan jeg så ut (71-72).

Hun finner fortsatt ufullkommenheter i sitt utseende. Kategorien «size 0» er en ideell tilstand som hovedpersonen strever etter. Når målet blir oppnådd, er kategorien ikke lenger tilstrekkelig. Myhre beskriver det selv:

Jeg innser at man aldri blir tynn nok. Selv ikke når man får vondt i skjelettet av å sitte i en stol. Selv ikke når man ligger i sykesengen og kjenner sine egne ben gnage mot madrassen. [...] Jeg har tenkt en del på akkurat det, og dette med at det er de døde eller på randen til døde jentene som er tynnest. Men de får selvfølgelig aldri oppleve en glede ved det, så lenge de er syke eller døde (55).

«Size 0» står altså for en kunstig, idealistisk kategori. Den er et mål som forandres så snart som det blir oppnådd. En syk person finner alltid en ny, mer passende kategori som kan erstatte den forrige. Kategoriene representerer måten en anorektiker opplever verden på. Eget kroppsbilde er alltid forstyrret og aldri bra nok. Til tross for dette er hen ikke klar over det, og kategoriserer fortsatt alle handlinger med utgangspunkt i hvordan de hjelper eller forhindrer hen på vei til målet.

En annen viktig kategori nevnt av Myhre er fett. Det er beskrevet som både en ingrediens i maten og en del av den menneskelige kroppen. Fett er egentlig en metafor for store mengder (usunn) mat, eller latskap av et menneske som tar ikke vare på formen sin. Fett er en fiende: «Jeg tror at fett er farlig. Jeg tror at karbohydrater er farlig. Og lager jeg ikke maten min selv, tror jeg at noen andre kommer til å putte usunne ingredienser i den bare for å fete meg opp» (28). Det vekker sterk avsky hos hovedpersonen. For henne har fett bare en funksjon: å forstørre kroppen hennes. Hun mener ikke at det har en næringsverdi eller at det er viktig for at kroppen fungerer godt. Hun bruker også uttrykket «fete opp» som i lys av fettets betydning vurderes også negativt. Verbet er brukt til å beskrive en handling som etter hennes mening er vendt mot henne. Motviljen mot fett er tydelig i flere fragmenter: «Fett var fett, enda jeg visste at ikke alt fett var fett, det var likevel fett, og jeg ville ikke ha det på kroppen min» (157). Denne kategorien er altså ikke gradert. Selv om hun forstår forskjeller på ulike typer fett, nekter hun å innse at fettets verdi er relativ for kroppen. Alt som tilhører denne kategorien er åpenbart knyttet til et dårlig kroppsbilde og negative opplevelser. Hovedpersonen stiller seg klart mot fett: «Jeg hater meg selv, jeg hater kroppen min, jeg hater fett på beina, jeg hater fett i ansiktet, og mest av alt hater jeg at jeg er nødt til å hate alt dette» (46). En stor del av hennes forstyrrede kroppsbilde er fett på hennes kropp. Det er grunnen til at hun er misfornøyd med kroppen sin. Kroppsdeler utgjør også den omfattende kategorien «fett» og hatet mot dem er utenfor hovedpersonens kontroll.

For en person som lider av en spiseforstyrrelse, er mat også en grunnkategori. Den omfatter også mange andre komponenter, blant annet fett. I *Evig søndag* blir den oppfattet som noe unødvendig, nesten som en lune. Fortelleren påstår:

Jeg er blitt nødt til å slutte å spise igjen. Jeg har sluttet å trene, og kan dermed ikke tillate meg all denne spisingen. I lengden ble det altfor dyrt med alle disse måltidene også, og tynn av treningen ble jeg heller ikke (55).

Det anorektiske verdenssynet innebærer at maten er en luksusvare. Det er noe man må fortjene enten ved å være tynn nok eller å trene mye. På en måte snakker fortelleren om maten slik som rusmidler blir fremstilt: hun er avhengig av den, hun ønsker å ha den, men i hennes forestillinger er den en farlig ting som fører til dårlige konsekvenser. Hun snakker om maten ved å bruke uttrykkene som «all denne spisingen» eller «alle disse måltidene». Slike formuleringer impliserer at hun spiser mye, egentlig for mye, bare fordi hun har lyst til det, ikke fordi hun virkelig trenger det. Maten deles dessuten i to underkategorier etter dikotomien sunn/usunn. I dette tilfellet betyr «sunn» at

maten ikke inneholder fett, og dermed kan man ikke bli tykkere ved å spise den. Sunn mat er altså kategorisert som bedre enn usunn mat som tilsvarende inneholder fett og fører til at man legger på seg. Kategoriseringen illustreres godt i det følgende sitatet:

Tidligere brukte jeg å ta med meg hjem alle kvitteringer jeg kunne finne rundt kassen, hvorpå jeg sorterte dem i en sunn og en usunn bunke, før jeg bare kastet dem. Jeg vet ikke hvorfor jeg sluttet med det, jeg pleide jo å føle meg bedre av det, siden den usunne bunken kvitteringer alltid var høyere enn den sunne. Det betydde at majoriteten av befolkningen var fete, mens jeg var tynn, og dette frydet meg (160).

Her kan man observere inkonsekvens i hovedpersonens tankegang. Hun forbinder sunn mat med tynne mennesker, men ikke knytter «tynn» til frisk. Det viser altså at maten ikke kategoriseres positivt og negativt, men heller som dårlig og mindre dårlig. Maten er fortsatt en uungåelig nødvendighet, men sunn mat kan hjelpe hovedpersonen med å forbli tynn. Fortelleren overfører sine forestillinger til hvordan hun oppfatter andre mennesker. Hun tilskriver verdi til bestemte kroppstilstander. Boken fremstiller først og fremst hennes eget kroppsbilde, og hvordan hun strever etter å være tynn fordi det er verdifullt for henne. Her vises det likevel at denne forestillingen omfatter også andre mennesker. Selv om hun aldri har sett mennesker som kjøpte produkter fra kvitteringer, ser hun for seg selv at de er tynne eller fete. Verdenssynet til en anorektiker er altså veldig enkelt og sett i svart og hvitt. Det hjelper også til å kategorisere seg selv: hvis man spiser sunt, tilhører man tynne mennesker. Fortelleren understreker at denne kategorien er svært mindre enn den andre, dermed er hun en del av en unik gruppe. Adjektiver «unik» og «spesiell» er også nært knyttet til å være et tynn og verdifullt menneske.

Konklusjoner

For å oppsummere er vurdering og kategorisering i den selvbiografiske romanen *Evig søndag* knyttet til kroppen og gjenspeiler hovedpersonens kroppsbilde. Oppfatningen av kroppen stammer fra en psykisk lidelse, nemlig en spiseforstyrrelse. En syk person har et forstyrret bilde av kroppen. Hun deler verden i tydelige kategorier – positive og negative fenomener – og er sterkt overbevisst over bestemte verdier. Positiv vurdering er forbundet med et bilde av en perfekt kropp. En slik kropp kan beskrives med ordene som tynn, liten, smal. Disse adjektivene er samtidig synonyme til verdifull, god eller vakker. På den andre siden blir alt som faller utenfor disse beskrivelsene, oppfattet som dårlig, mindreverdig og avskyvekkende. Kroppen som er tykk – eller engang

normalvektig – blir betraktet på en svært negativ måte. Språket brukt av hovedpersonen fremstiller et omvendt verdisystem. Friskhet er knyttet til fett og en tykk kropp. Hun strever etter det motsatte: sykdom og en tynn kropp.

Tilsynelatende finnes det overgangsområder. Kategoriene «tynn» og «tykk» står på to motsatte sider av en akse. Innimellom står det en kategori som i romanen beskrives med ordet «normalvektig». For hovedpersonen er den likevel ikke et nøytralt sted, men hun vurderer den også negativt. Adjektivet «normal» betyr for henne «ikke unik». Tilstanden som hun ønsker å oppnå er unikhet, som ifølge henne kan skaffes bare på en måte, altså ved å ha en tynn kropp. Tilsvarende oppfatter hun sunn mat. Hvis hun er nødt til å spise, velger hun det som skal ha den minste effekten på hennes kroppsform. Begge forestillinger viser altså til gråsoner som er fortsatt mindreverdige for hovedpersonen.

Språket til en person som lider av en spiseforstyrrelse er svært forstyrret. Det baserer seg på tydelige kategorier og karakteriseres hovedsakelig av negativ vurdering. Områder som kan beskrives med positive ord og uttrykk, er betydelig mindre, og tillater ingen plass for tolkningen eller feil. I romanen *Evig søndag* blir negative adjektiver og beskrivelser brukt mye oftere enn de positive. Assosiasjoner og vurderinger står dessuten i motsetning til de vanlige. En anorektiker har også et ganske begrenset verdenssyn, siden hun ikke hen? er fokusert på kroppsbildet og maten. Forestillinger av alt som ikke er knyttet til disse kategoriene er ikke relevante.

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DEITTICO, ARTICOLO 'ARTICOLOIDE'. MULTIFUNZIONALITÀ DEI DIMOSTRATIVI NEL *CHRONICON VULTURNENSE*

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ABSTRACT. *Deictic, Article, 'Articoloide'. Multifunctionality of Demonstratives in the Chronicon Vulturnense.* The study of Latin demonstratives in early medieval texts has mainly focused on the diachronic reconstruction of the formation of the article from the demonstrative. The studies have therefore focused exclusively on *ille* and *ipse* as precursors of the definite articles of the Romance varieties and on the search for late Latin and early medieval Latin texts in which demonstratives could have had an article or 'articoloid' function. The loss of the deictic trait has often been associated with its high frequency in these texts. A fine-grained analysis of the values of all Latin demonstratives in a "roborated" chronicle, i.e., a chronicle composed of properly historiographical and documentary parts, written around 1115, reveals an interesting semantic stratification in which the same linguistic element can have traits belonging to different phases of its history or specialise as a distinctive element of a specific textual typology.

Keywords: *Latin-romance transition, medieval chronicles, medieval latin, ancient Italian, demonstratives, article, deixis*

REZUMAT. *Deictic, articol, 'articoloid'. Multifuncționalitatea demonstrativelor în Chronicon Vulturnense.* Studiul demonstrativelor latine în textele medievale timpurii s-a concentrat în principal asupra reconstrucției diacronice a formării articolului din demonstrativ. Studiile s-au concentrat, prin urmare, exclusiv asupra lui *ille* și *ipse* ca precursori ai articolelor hotărâte din varietățile romanice și asupra căutării în textele latine târzii și medievale timpurii demonstrativele ar fi putut avea o funcție de articol sau "articoloid". Pierderea trăsăturii deictice a fost

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adesea asociată cu frecvența ridicată a acesteia în aceste texte. O analiză fină a valorilor tuturor demonstrativelor latinești dintr-o cronică «roborata», adică o cronică alcătuită din părți propriu-zis istoriografice și documentare, scrisă în jurul anului 1115, relevă o stratificare semantică interesantă, în care același element lingvistic poate avea trăsături aparținând unor faze diferite ale istoriei sale sau se poate specializa ca element distinctiv al unei anumite tipologie textuale.

Cuvinte-cheie. *Tranziție latino-romantică, cronici medievale, latină medievală, italiană antică, demonstrative, articol, deixis.*

1. Introduzione

Con questo lavoro intendo proporre un'analisi delle funzioni dei dimostrativi latini e della loro stratificazione semantica nel *Chronicon Vulturense*, un'opera scritta nella prima metà del XII secolo da un monaco dell'abbazia di San Vincenzo al Volturno di nome Giovanni, eletto abate nel 1139 con il nome di Giovanni VI². Nello studio dei dimostrativi nel passaggio dal latino alle lingue romanze, l'attenzione degli studiosi si è focalizzata sull'analisi, in documenti scritti tra l'VIII e il X secolo, di *ille* e *ipse* (Aebischer 1948, Sabatini 1996, Renzi 2000) in quanto precursori dell'articolo romanzo e in particolare su quelle attestazioni in cui poteva essere visibile il cambiamento categoriale. Si pensi, per esempio, al noto studio di Aebischer, in cui lo studioso arriva a concludere che «la moitié septentrionale de l'Italie usait, dès la seconde moitié du VIII siècle en tout cas, de *ille* comme article ou mieux comme articoloïde», mentre «dans la moitié meridionale de l'Italie, on a connu l'article dérivé de *ipse*», come proverebbero non solo, nel presente, gli articoli *su* e *sa* del logudorese e del campidanese, ma anche la forma aferetica in «*sa festara*» in un documento del 964 del *Codex diplomaticus Cajetanus*, oltre che le centinaia di attestazioni di *ipse* nelle carte di area centro-meridionale (Aebischer 1948, 198). Lo statuto di articolo di *ipse* nel *Codex Cavensis* è ipotizzato anche dallo studio di Renzi (2000).

In questo lavoro, che estende l'analisi a tutti i dimostrativi latini, si intende mostrare che l'alta frequenza degli elementi anaforici all'interno del testo può essere legata alla molteplicità di funzioni che alcuni determinanti hanno all'interno del testo piuttosto che a un indebolimento semantico e che l'individuazione della discontinuità categoriale nei testi non è priva di criticità. I dimostrativi, in effetti, sembrano avere un ampio spettro di funzioni legate sia

² Si tratta del manoscritto Barb. Lat. 2724 conservato nella Biblioteca Vaticana che ha visto una prima edizione a stampa nel XVIII secolo grazie ad Antonio Muratori e una prima (e finora unica) edizione critica nella prima metà del Novecento per opera di Vincenzo Federici.

al contesto sia alla tradizione giuridica di riferimento. Da questo punto di vista un testo cronachistico, al cui interno sono contenuti (con variabili margini di attendibilità) documenti scritti anche secoli prima, e spesso ampiamente rimaneggiati dal cronista, si rivela un luogo di osservazione privilegiato per l'individuazione di quel "campo di tensione" (Sornicola 2017) attivo nei testi di quei secoli tra latino e volgare. Eppure, ancora pochi sono gli studi sulla lingua della produzione storiografica altomedievale³.

In particolare, il *Chronicon Vulturnense* apre questioni interessanti relative alla sintassi e alla testualità della cosiddetta fase di transizione latino-romanza, come si è potuto notare anche dall'analisi dell'ordine delle parole fatta da Ciccarelli (2022).

In questo studio si proporrà un'analisi di tutti i dimostrativi latini, sia quelli che in latino avevano valore propriamente deittico come *hic*, *iste* e *ille*, sia quelli con valore testuale e anaforico come *is*, *idem* e *ipse* e si cercherà di leggere il dato in rapporto agli elementi cotestuali e contestuali e ai valori che i dimostrativi hanno nella loro lunga storia dal latino alle lingue romanze.

2. La diacronia dei dimostrativi latini

Quando si parla di dimostrativi nella lingua latina si fa riferimento in genere sia a quelli propriamente deittici come *hic*, *iste* e *ille*, sia a quelli con valore testuale e anaforico come *is*, *idem* e *ipse*. Tra i dimostrativi con valore deittico, *hic* aveva il tratto [+io] e avrebbe indicato dunque ciò che era vicino o nella sfera di pertinenza del locutore (LHS 2.1, 180), *iste* il tratto [+tu], e si sarebbe riferito a ciò che era vicino o nella sfera di pertinenza dell'interlocutore (LHS 2.1, 183), e *ille* sarebbe stato caratterizzato dai valori semantici di [-io] [-tu], indicando quindi ciò che era lontano sia dal locutore sia dall'ascoltatore (LHS 2.1, Ernout / Thomas [1951] 1972, Anderson / Keenan 1985). Si tratta, chiaramente, di una tendenza: non mancano contesti, soprattutto in Plauto, in cui *hic* e *iste* sono usati per indicare lo stesso *denotatum* (Pieroni 2004).

Nella storia della lingua latina, i dimostrativi con valore anaforico (*is*, *idem* e *ipse*) e quelli con valore propriamente deittico (*hic*, *iste*, *ille*) subiscono una ristrutturazione a partire dalla progressiva scomparsa (forse per vie della sua debolezza fonologica) di *is*, che già nel latino tardo resta solo in sintagmi come *id est*, *is qui* ed *eo quod* (LHS 2.1, 186) o nelle forme del genitivo *eius* ed *eorum* (HLSMA 2, 126), anche se continua ad essere vitale in *sermone iuris* (Stotz

³ In effetti «la scrittura storiografica prodotta in Italia meridionale nei secoli XI-XIV non si sottrae alla regola generale, per cui le opere storiografiche del Medioevo, intensamente studiate e sfruttate ai fini delle diverse tipologie di ricostruzione 'storica', vengono molto meno analizzate 'in sé' in quanto cioè prodotti specifici della letteratura mediolatina» (D'Angelo 2003, 1). Tra i lavori sulle cronache medievali segnalò Molinelli (2005), Greco (2012) e Ciccarelli (2022).

1996: 126)⁴. Il ruolo di *is* viene assunto da *hic* che comincia a perdere gradualmente il suo tratto deittico fino ad essere usato quasi esclusivamente nella forma neutra *hoc* in costruzioni con valore connettivo come *hoc est* o in combinazione con una preposizione o un avverbio (da cui i pochi relitti romanzi: it. *però*, sp. *pero* e fr. *avec*). La funzione di deittico di vicinanza viene assunta sempre più da *iste*, che comincia a ricorrere in sintagmi come *iste meus* o *iste noster* (Trager 1932: 171-172; LHS 2.1, 181; Väänänen 1981: 120-121). Ciononostante, ancora tra il IV e il V secolo *iste* viene usato in alcune opere con un chiaro riferimento alla seconda persona (Trager 1932: 102-109; Risselada 2013: 292). *Ille* comincia a perdere il suo tratto deittico e ad essere sempre più frequente (Trager 1932: 185): nella *Peregrinatio Aetheriae* raggiunge una concentrazione «che sarebbe stata inammissibile nel latino classico» (Nocentini 1990: 142). È probabile che a quest'altezza cronologica *ille* abbia cominciato il suo percorso di grammaticalizzazione o, per dirla nei termini di Renzi (1997: 104) «una discesa» non ancora conclusa in cui il dimostrativo ha cominciato a perdere gradualmente i suoi tratti semantici (cfr. Trager 1932, Abel 1971). Il passaggio di *ille* da dimostrativo ad articolo sarebbe stato una conseguenza della perdita del tratto deittico e quindi di informatività del dimostrativo, che a un certo punto si sarebbe limitato a esprimere soltanto la definitezza di un referente noto (Renzi 1976). L'indebolimento semantico e la rifunzionalizzazione del dimostrativo di *ille*, probabilmente da associarsi al collasso della flessione nominale e alla riorganizzazione della struttura della frase (Calboli 1990) vengono poi compensati dall'aggiunta dei presentativi *ecce* o *eccum* (*eccille* ed *ecciste* sono presenti già in Plauto), da cui si sono formati i dimostrativi di molte lingue romanze (Wartburg 1971: 197-200). Eppure le tappe di questa “discesa” di *ille* non sono facilmente individuabili nei testi: se alcuni studiosi ritengono di poter individuare “una rapida riduzione del dimostrativo ad articolo già nel latino di età imperiale”, altri nutrono dubbi sulla “piena disponibilità dell'articolo ai primi albori delle lingue romanze, dubbi notoriamente alimentati dalla mancanza dell'articolo nei primissimi testi romanzi (oltre che nell'*Indovinello veronese*, nei *Giuramenti di Strasburgo* e nei placiti campani)”⁵. Dallo studio delle carte notarili altomedievali, Aebischer (1948: 187) ha potuto rinvenire qualche testimonianza più convincente rispetto all'uso dell'articolo: si tratta di un documento lucchese del 779, in cui si legge: “alio capite in la Cercle” e “rio qui dicitur la Cercle”. Agli esempi mostrati dallo studioso svizzero, Sabatini (1996:80) aggiunge altre tre attestazioni contenute in una parodia della *Lex Salica*, scritta in Francia nella seconda metà dell'ottavo secolo (*lo cabo, lis potionis, la tercià*), in cui la forma aferetica esclude qualsiasi sfumatura di valore dimostrativo. Questi esempi, secondo Sabatini, autorizzano a datare la formazione

⁴ Cfr. *ThLL* 7.2, 475, 63ss.

⁵ Sabatini (1996: 79).

dell'articolo almeno un secolo prima, soprattutto se si considera la somiglianza tra il passo della parodia della *Lex Salica* "cum senior bibit duas vicis, sui vassalli la tercia" con uno delle *Formulae Andecavenses* (anteriore al 676) in cui si legge: "tris porcionis de omne corpore facultatis mei [...] tibi transcribo [...] illa quarta". A proposito del valore di *ille* in questo passo, Avalle (1965: 13) fa notare che

il valore dimostrativo di tali particelle è confermato dalla sintassi arcaica italiana, dove esse si ritrovano frequentemente sempre in contesti enumerativi. [...] L'aspetto esteriore di tali particelle è l'articolo, ma, come dimostrato dalla storia della lingua italiana, dove sono poi scomparse quando usate coi numerali cardinali, la funzione loro, almeno in tale sede, è ancora quella mediolatina di dimostrativi.

Esempi più sicuri dell'uso dell'articolo sono invece, secondo Avalle, quelli attestati in un documento toscano del 774, in cui si legge:

vindedisse [...] sex sellos [...] de olibis[...] Tamen, ubi sunt positi illi quinque sellos di olibos [...] et illa sexta sella di olibos est exseparatos de illos quinque⁶.

Anche nel graffito della catacomba di Commodilla, databile alla prima metà del nono secolo, in cui si legge la frase *non dicere ille secreta a bboce, ille* può essere interpretato sia come pienamente deittico ('non dire quei segreti a voce alta') sia come articolo ('non dire i segreti a voce'), come evidenzia l'approfondita analisi di Calaresu (2022).

Più controverso è il percorso di *ipse*, che da elemento con funzione eminentemente focalizzante e contrastiva, già dal primo secolo aveva cominciato a essere usato spesso come anaforico, al posto di *idem*, *is* e *hic* (Väänänen 1981: 120), e successivamente anche come deittico di seconda. Come scrive Trager (1932: 57), *ipse* «with its greater variety of connotations, lends itself to new developments more easily than does *ille* [...] the conditions exhibited in Caesar precede these developments, but show in several cases the possibility of their coming about». È probabile che proprio la molteplicità di funzioni sia stata alla base sia della sua alta frequenza nei testi scritti (nella *Peregrinatio Aetheriae*, *ipse* raggiunge una frequenza del 40%, come nota Nocentini 1987: 143) sia della diversità delle sue continuazioni romanze: come Pron. pers. di 3sg (it. *esso*); deittico (sp. *ese*, piem. e lig. *so*, *sso*, oltre alle forme rafforzate con *eccum* di alcuni dialetti dell'Italia centro-meridionale: *quissu*, *quisso*); pronome cataforico (sic. *so* (*tso*) *cchi* da *ipsum quod*; cfr. Sornicola 2011a: 231); pronome di identità 'stesso' (la forma rum. *îns* in combinazione con un nome, un pronome personale, riflessivo, possessivo o dimostrativo); articolo (sardo, cat. *so*).

⁶ Citato in Sabatini (1965: 80).

Negli studi sulla diacronia dei dimostrativi latini ci si è concentrati prevalentemente sulla nascita della nuova categoria grammaticale dell'articolo a partire da *ille* e *ipse*, sul loro percorso di grammaticalizzazione e sull'individuazione nei testi del latino tardo e del latino altomedievale di quei contesti in cui fosse possibile scorgere il cambiamento di funzione (Aebischer 1948, Sabatini 1996, Renzi 1997 e 2000, Sornicola 2007 e 2008). A mio avviso nei testi mediolatini è interessante indagare anche le diverse funzioni di tutti i dimostrativi latini e il loro rapporto con gli altri elementi funzionali alla coesione testuale (come le forme partecipiali *iamdictus*, *predictus*, *suprascriptus*).

3. Il *Chronicon Vulturense*

La tipologia testuale a cui appartiene il *Chronicon Vulturense* è quella che viene definita "cronaca roborata", un tipo di testo storiografico, piuttosto diffuso nell'Italia meridionale dell'XI secolo, in cui alla narrazione delle vicende relative ai monasteri in cui venivano prodotte fa seguito una serie di atti notarili pubblici e privati che avevano l'obiettivo «di ricostruire la storia del chiostro e di sostanziarne le rivendicazioni territoriali e patrimoniali» (D'Angelo 2004: 26). Dal momento che l'opera viene iniziata in concomitanza con l'abbandono della vecchia sede del monastero e il trasferimento nella sede costruita sulla riva opposta del Volturno, è probabile che la cronaca servisse anche a creare un documento di collegamento tra il nuovo monastero e quello antico (Marazzi 2010: XXXIII). Si può ipotizzare che la finalità e le condizioni contestuali in cui l'opera viene iniziata abbiano determinato la particolare struttura compositiva e la scelta delle vicende narrate nel *Chronicon Vulturense*, dove i documenti non sono inseriti in appendice alla fine della narrazione come nelle altre cronache del tempo (per esempio quelle di Farfa, di Casauria e di Subiaco), ma si alternano continuamente al racconto, presumibilmente per fornire rapidamente al lettore la prova delle informazioni narrate (Marazzi 2010: XX)⁷.

⁷ Nel primo volume sono presenti, oltre alle aggiunte dei secoli XII e XIII i libri I-III della Cronaca di Giovanni, che comprendono i documenti 1-73, le vicende del monastero dalla sua origine alla distruzione ad opera dei Saraceni il 10 ottobre 881. Nel secondo volume è contenuto il libro IV, che comprende i documenti 74-183 che vanno dal 10 ottobre 881 al 30 novembre 1011. Del terzo volume, che all'epoca della presentazione dell'opera era ancora in lavorazione, si anticipava che avrebbe contenuto il libro quinto e i documenti 184-207, che vanno dal 1011 alla metà del XII secolo e le aggiunte dell'abate commendatario Cesare Costa (XVI secolo) che aveva intenzione di completare l'opera di Giovanni. Di fatto, l'ultimo documento dell'edizione del *Chronicon Vulturense* di Vincenzo Federici è il documento 208, datato 1383. Seguono nel terzo volume le pagine contenenti quei documenti «perduti o che non furono trascritti nella Cronaca, perché il cronista Giovanni i suoi collaboratori non li conobbero, o, se trascritti in fine, andarono poi perduti con le ultime carte dell'originale manoscritto» (Federici 1938: 125). I documenti aggiunti sono datati dal 686 al 1239.

Tuttavia, non è semplice stabilire con certezza l'attendibilità dei 204 documenti (che vanno dall'inizio dell'VIII secolo al 1115) inseriti nella cronaca: soprattutto per quanto riguarda quelli che sono datati prima del sacco saraceno dell'881 (circa una novantina) e in particolare i documenti pubblici (di duchi longobardi, re e imperatori franchi, e pontefici) sono molto probabilmente totalmente falsi o rimaneggiati, come si può evincere sia da evidenze storiche sia da un'analisi linguistica: talvolta, se si esclude la formula incipitaria *In nomine domini Dei et salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi*, il documento riportato risulta avere le stesse scelte sintattiche e stilistiche della sezione narrativa che lo introduce (alta frequenza di subordinate con *cum* e il congiuntivo; costruzioni in ablativo assoluto; complete costruite con accusativo e infinito). L'opera risulta, quindi, non soltanto un alternarsi ma un intrecciarsi di parti cronachistiche e parti documentarie, in cui un ruolo importante è giocato dall'impatto che le tradizioni scritte di riferimento dovevano avere sulla scrittura del cronista (Ciccarelli 2022). La diversità stilistica tra le parti cronachistiche e le parti documentarie emerge piuttosto chiaramente dall'analisi dei dimostrativi. È quanto si mostrerà nel prossimo paragrafo.

4. L'uso dei dimostrativi

Dallo spoglio della cronaca del monaco Giovanni ciò che emerge in modo interessante è un uso dei dimostrativi che sembra ricapitolare le diverse sequenze illustrate in §2. Va detto preliminarmente che nel testo non sono mai presenti forme aferetiche (né tra i derivati di *ipse* né tra quelli di *ille*) che possano essere ricondotte più immediatamente alla funzione di articolo⁸: non ci sono, per esempio, né forme del tipo *su / sa* né forme come *lo / la*. *Ille* e *ipse*, così come gli altri dimostrativi, conservano intatto il loro materiale fonologico. Eppure, il mantenimento della forma fonologica non impedisce di ravvisare sia in *ipse* sia in *ille* caratteri semantici e testuali assimilabili a quelli dell'articolo accanto a valori che, invece, sono riconducibili ai valori riscontrati nella latinità arcaica e classica, come quello di deittico di distanza per *ille* o di intensivo, contrastivo e focalizzante di *ipse*. Si nota in generale una tendenza a bandire usi che sarebbero stati definiti di "articoloidi", usando un noto conio di Aebischer nelle parti cronachistiche del testo. È probabile che nelle parti del testo in cui si registra uno stile più sorvegliato, l'uso dell'articolo venisse percepito come elemento "antilatino" e per questo bandito (Rajna 1891, 393, Ciccarelli 2017, 200).

In particolare, per quanto riguarda *ille*, un primo valore riscontrabile è quello classico di deittico di distanza, attestato in misura maggiore nelle parti

⁸ Il rapporto tra forma fonologica e funzione sintattico-semantica non è privo di criticità, ma non è questa la sede per tale discussione. Rinvio alle riflessioni di Renzi (1976), Sabatini (1996, 80) e Avalor (1965, 13).

cronachistiche del testo. In questi contesti, *ille*, sia pronominale sia adnominale, indica ciò che è lontano nello spazio o nel tempo e si trova quindi generalmente associato a tempi al passato o al futuro, come si può vedere dagli esempi riportati di seguito. È interessante notare che nelle parti cronachistiche *ille* in funzione adnominale si trova generalmente posposto al nome (come si vede in 2 e in 3, dove il dimostrativo oltre ad avere il valore di deittico distale ha anche la funzione di introdurre una frase relativa, e in 3) o separato dal nome tramite l'interposizione di altri elementi (1). La scelta di non usare *ille* immediatamente prima del nome potrebbe essere legata proprio all'intento di non sovrapporre l'uso latino e l'uso "volgare", cioè quello di articolo, del dimostrativo.

- (1) quod si in illo quoque adhuc seculo aliquid in me vindicandum reservas, petone me potestati demonum tradas, dum scelus purgatoria pena examinas (Ch.V., I, 13);
- (2) nunquam, Deus meus, oblivioni iradenda dies illa de quo dicit patens Propheta: «Dies», inquit, «ire dies illa, dies tribulacionis et angustie, dies calamitatis et miserie, dies tenebarum et caliginis, dies nebule et turbinis, dies tube et clangoris» (Ch.V., I, 13);
- (3) «Credite michi, fratres, quia monachus ille, qui in hoc monasterio persistens usque in tñem permanserit, anima eius eterna supplicia nequaquam sustinebit sed vitam eternam possidebit et hoc sancte congregacionis monasterium usque ad finem seculi ad lucrandas animas permanebit» (Ch.V., I, 114);
- (4) ibi prefuit dux Eneas. gens illa nimis valida in certaminibus, semper inquieta et sibi finitima debellantes. surrexerunt autem reges Grecorum adversus Eneam et gentem illam, et reges Troianorum cum exercitu magno pugnaverunt invicem, et facta est ab utrisque cedes magna (Ch.V., I, 173).

La posposizione di *ille* al nome, come si diceva, è più frequente nelle sezioni cronachistiche. All'interno dei documenti, invece, *ille* si trova prevalentemente prima del nome e, anche nei casi in cui ha la funzione di introdurre una frase relativa, sembra conservare un valore di deittico distale⁹, come si può notare in 5 e in 6:

⁹ La funzione pienamente deittica di *ille* può risultare, del resto, anche dal confronto tra la formula testimoniale in latino contenuta in un documento riportato nel Ch.V. e quelle ben note in volgare dei placiti campani (*sao cco kelle terre...*). Nel giudicato del giudice Maraldo si legge, infatti, la formula "Scio ille terre et monte [...] que vobis demonstravi, triginta annos possedit parte Sancti Martini" (Ch.V., II, 237), dove *ille* è il corrispettivo del volgare *kelle* e ha valore pienamente deittico. Cfr. Castellani (1976, 62).

(5) in Pesano ecclesia Sancti Andree, et cum omnibus que dici aut nominari possunt. Concedimus eciam ut illi homines, qui super terram ipsius ecclesie ordinati fuerint ad laborandum, nullum publicum servicium facere alicui nisi eidem sacro monasterio; (*Ch.V., I, 163*);

(6) ego qui supra Berardo et meis heredibus adversus prefatum monasterium et ad eius rectoribus componere obligamus, vel illius hominis qui hanc cartulam nobis in caucione ostenderit pro pars eiusdem ecclesie, et in antea omni tempore exinde adversus prefatam ecclesiam et ad eius rectoribus taciti et quieti maneamus (*Ch.V., I., 16-17*).

Meno frequenti, infine, i casi in cui *ille* conserva soltanto il tratto [+definito] e il suo uso può essere assimilabile a quello dell'articolo:

(7) unde nec omni merito bestia que cum agnis desudat septem dicitur habere capita, cui inherens et quasi semper inhabitans superbia, dum ad liquidum inspicitur, sepcies septena repperitur. huius primum caput est inanis gloria que non est simplex sed septenaria. oritur enim de illa inhobediencia, iactancia, simulacio, contencio, pertinacia atque discordia.

È interessante notare la presenza nella stessa frase di dimostrativi diversi per poter comprendere meglio il significato di ciascuno, soprattutto nei contesti in cui *ille* è usato in funzione pronominale. Si veda per esempio come in (8) *ille* abbia un valore anaforico di ripresa pronominale di un'entità già nominata nel testo (la stessa funzione che ha in italiano il pronome *egli*) e *ipse* ha il valore intensivo/focalizzante che potrebbe essere reso con l'italiano 'lui stesso'.

(8) «Qui », inquit Iohannes, «dicit se in Christo manere, debet sicut ille ambulavit et ipse ambulare» (*Ch.V., I, 103*).

Diversamente, nel brano che segue si può notare la differenza semantica di *ille* e di *iste*, usati come deittici rispettivamente di lontananza e di vicinanza:

(9) tanta denique ex tunc inter utriusque congregacionis patres caritas esse cepit, ut eciam per annos singulos, diebus sancte quadragesime, fervore precipue religionis, et isti illos et illi istos invicem se visitarent (*Ch.V., I, 152*).

Nei casi in cui *ille* pronominale è usato al genitivo singolare o plurale ha un valore anaforico di possessivo non diverso da quello che in altri contesti possono avere le forme genitivali di *is* (*eius / eorum*) o di *hic* (*huius / horum*) o anche di *idem* (che ha nel testo solo la forma singolare *eiusdem*). Le forme genitivali di *ipse* (*ipsius e ipsorum / ipsarum*) si contraddistinguono, invece, per

il valore focalizzante che *ipse* in questi contesti tende a conservare. Ma non mancano casi in cui l'uso di un dimostrativo al posto di un altro sembra essere dettato soltanto da ragioni stilistiche di *variatio*:

- (10) qui bona huius ecclesie diripuit vel invasit et, vocatus ad penitentiam, redire noluit [...] sit maledictus fructus terre illius et fructus ventris ipsius; sint maledicta omnia opera illius, maledicta domus, orrea et cellaria illius, maledicta frumenta et omnia cibaria illius, maledicta indumenta, calciamenta et omnia vestimenta ipsius. descendant super illum grando, ignis et sulphur a Deo; fiant vermes in corpore eius et ulcera in carne illius (*Ch.V., I, 18*).

Lo stesso può dirsi per il brano che segue in cui, oltre a *ille* e *ipse*, il rinvio anaforico è affidato anche a *is*, usato nella forma all'ablativo in dipendenza da *cum* (*cum eis*) e quella in accusativo (*eos* vidit, salutavit *eos*):

- (11) Verum, ut dicere ceperam, cum illorum sacre fama religionis longe lateque fraglaret, ad aures Gysolphii ducis ipsorum opinio Beneventi a pluribus relata est. Dei autem nutu factum est, ut predictus dux per semetipsum cum illorum parentibus ad visendum hoc idem, monasterium et Dei famulos visitandos veniret, a quibus ut decebat honorifice susceptus cum eis triduo perseveravit, et illorum vitam sedulo contemplatus admodum mirabatur. Sequenti die cum more solito opus Dei finissent, venerabiles Christi famuli ad eundem ducem pervenerunt, qui mox ut eos vidit de solio suo se erigens et obviam illis procedens honorifice salutavit eos.

Per quanto riguarda *ipse*, va detto anzitutto che nell'opera non si registra mai quella "vera pioggia di ipse" (Rajna 1891, 394) che si ha in gran parte della documentazione notarile altomedievale di area meridionale e che ha fatto ipotizzare che in una certa fase della lingua ci sia stato un articolo o un "articoloide" (Aebischer 1948, 186) derivato da *ipse* in una zona della Romania molto più estesa di quella in cui si registra attualmente (De Bartholomeis 1901, Wartburg 1920)¹⁰. Al contrario, già a una prima lettura si può notare che nelle parti cronachistiche *ipse* è pressoché assente, sostituito da altri elementi anaforici (in particolare *prefatus*, *is*, *idem*, *hic*). Anche all'interno dei documenti l'uso di *ipse* non risulta molto frequente, fatta eccezione per quelle parti del testo in cui vengono elencati i confini del bene che costituisce l'oggetto del negozio giuridico. Anche questo può essere l'indizio di un rimaneggiamento da

¹⁰ In proposito Wartburg (1920 : 421) scrive: "tout le littoral du bassin occidental de la Méditerranée semble donc avoir eu pour article *ipse*, et *ille*, s'appuyant sur les langues littéraires, ne l'a vaincu qu'après de longues luttes".

parte degli autori anche dei documenti riportati in adesione a ciò che veniva sentito maggiormente aderente alla norma latina e, tuttavia, nel rispetto di alcuni elementi che dovevano essere caratteristici della tradizione giuridica medievale. Di seguito riporto un brano costituito da una sezione cronachistica e dal documento che segue, in cui si può vedere come *ipse* conservi il suo valore intensivo nella sezione cronachistiche e un valore indebolito che si potrebbe definire, nei termini di Sornicola (2008, 539) come un segnale di orientamento nel testo:

(12) tunc *ipse dux* nimis illorum vitam et Christo amicam paupertatem cepit laudare et suppliciter *eos* exorare cum suis omnibus ut quecumque sibi necessaria fuissent ab *eo* petere dignarentur. at *illi*, ut fuerunt mitissimi et mundi gloriam pro nichilo ducentes, *hoc* solum obnixè ab *eo* petierunt, ut per sue magnifice potestatis preceptum concederet *eidem monasterio*, tam presentibus Dei servis quam et semper futuris, terras vel montes adjacentes undique aut imminentes, per fines quos *ipse* decerneret; ecclesias quoque que longe lateque ignibus combuste et a cunctis habitatoribus derelictè videbantur sub iurisdicione monasterii constitueret, quatenus ab *eis* restaurate, sibi proficerent in salutem. Quorum petitionibus dux clementissimus libenter annuens *eundem monasterium* plurimis rebus et possessionibus ditavit, et de quibus poposcerant preceptum faciens, anulo suo roboravit, quod omnipotenti Domino et *eius* martiri Vincencio ac predictis Dei famulis devotissime cum multis aliis optulit donariis; cuius precepti textus *iste* habetur:

In nomine dornini Dei et salvatoris nostri Iesu Christi. Concessimus nos domnus vir gloriosus Gisolfus, summus dux gentis Longobardorum in monasterio Sancti Vincencii [...] terras et possessiones, per designatos fines: primum (*de ipsa Zianula* quomodo ascendit *per ipsum Sangrum* usque in montem Malum, et quomodo coniungit cum monte Azze, et revolvente *eodem monte Azze*, usque in fluvio Melfa, et quemadmodum decurrit *ipsa Melfa* usque ubi coniungit cum parvo fluvio, qui dicitur Mellarinus, et ab hinc in verticem montis qui est super urbem, et *mons ipse* appellatur Barbola, et super cilium *eiusdem montis* usque in montem Archanum et montem Marahe montemque Casalem, eosque videlicet montes extrinsecus circumdantes, in ortum usque riaginis, que nominatur Ravennola), et quemadmodum decurrit *ipsa Ravennola* usque in fluvio Vulturno¹¹.

Come si può notare dal brano appena allegato, i rinvii anaforici e la coesione testuale sono affidati soprattutto alle forme di *is* (*eos, eo, eis, eius*). Si può notare anche l'uso di *idem* per indicare identità (*eidem monasterio*), l'uso di *ipse* con funzione intensiva (*ipse dux* 'lo stesso duca, il duca in persona'; ci si riferisce a Gisulfo); l'uso prolettico di *hoc* per introdurre una completiva; l'uso

¹¹ *Ch.V.*, I, 132-133.

di *illi* con valore anaforico e, probabilmente anche di deittico distale; l'uso di *iste* (*textus iste*) come deittico testuale di prossimità per introdurre il testo del documento che segue (il documento che dovrebbe avvalorare quanto viene raccontato precedentemente nel testo cronachistico). Diverso è, invece, quanto accade nel documento che segue (subito dopo alla frase *cuius precepti textus iste habetur*), in cui si ha una maggiore frequenza di *ipse*, sostituito soltanto in due casi dalle forme di *idem* (*eodem monte Azze, eiusdem montis*). L'uso di *ipse* in progressioni testuali particolarizzanti che descrivono analiticamente le parti della proprietà è particolarmente diffuso nei documenti altomedievali: se ne possono trovare esempi tanto nei documenti amalfitani quanto in quelli di area provenzale. La funzione del dimostrativo in tali contesti può essere considerata come un segnale di orientamento nel testo legale, che determina una sorta di rubricazione delle parti di proprietà descritte nel contratto (Sornicola 2011: 290). Sono usi, del resto, attestati in diverse fasi della lingua latina¹². Esempi come questo appena mostrato si ritrovano disseminati in diversi documenti della cronaca di San Vincenzo al Volturno:

- (13) prima parte est via antiqua, que de Ducenta venit, et sicut descendit via ipsa et intrat in ipsum Pantanum, et silvam, et paludem coniuncta Laneo (*Ch.V., I, 135*);
- (14) et qualiter revolvit circa *ipsam terram* de eodem vualdo, et iam dictam terram, que dicitur de Tortora, et vadit ad ipsum Pantanum, et qualiter exit super ipsum Pantanum et silvam et paludem, usque in ipsum Frigidum, a quarta autem parte usque in iam dictum Frigidum et predictum Laneum (*Ch.V., I, 136*);
- (15) et quomodo decernit ipsa via terras et vualdum (*Ch.V., I, 136*).

Interessanti, infine, sono i valori di *iste*, che nel testo è usato molto frequentemente, talvolta come anaforico, ma nella maggior parte dei casi come deittico testuale e spaziale di prossimità. Questo dato differenzia la cronaca dalla documentazione notarile altomedievale, dove *iste* è poco frequente e attestato perlopiù nelle cosiddette “parti libere” e in particolare in quelle sezioni narrative in cui ci si discostava maggiormente dal formulario (Ciccarelli 2017). D'altra parte, la predilezione di *iste* nei contesti narrativi (oltre a quelli dialogici) è stata osservata tanto nel latino degli autori classici (Pieroni 2004) quanto in quello della *Peregrinatio Aetheriae* (Nocentini 2000, 146) o delle *Leggi Longobarde* (Löfstedt 1961, 257). Nel testo preso in esame, i valori di *iste*

¹² Si pensi a un passo come: «Tityre maxime» duo sunt dactyli [...], sed ipsi pedes finiunt ipsam elocutionem quae appellatur colon (Pomp., *GL V*, 133, 28).

sono perlopiù quelli di deittico di vicinanza, come si può vedere dagli esempi seguenti, dove *iste* viene usato in associazione alla prima persona (*nos* in 16, *dixerim* in 17 e *volebam* in 18) e in riferimento a elementi vicini nello spazio fisico (in 19, dove i *beati pauperes* cui si fa riferimento sono presenti nel monastero, come si evince dalla frase di poco precedente *audivi quod hic peregrini venissent*, e in 20, dove con *sanctus iste locus* ci si riferisce al monastero di San Vincenzo al Volturno) e nello spazio testuale (21):

- (16) «Ne fone aliquis nos agnoscat aut latrones spoliare possint, ipsi nos exuamus et, ista speciosa vestimenta pauperibus tribuentes, vetusta eorum vestimenta nos induamus» (*Ch.V.*, I, 126);
- (17) Vere angusta est via que ducit ad vitam, quam isti fideliter aggredientes, ita feliciter ceperunt, vere viros istos martires dixerim, qui vanam gloriam seculi et honorem ita calcare potuerunt (*Ch.V.*, I, 126);
- (18) «Putas, qui sunt isti tam vetusta et rupta vestimenta induti pulchri facie et speciosa corporis forma compositi? Dissimiles apparent ceteris peregrinis: *volebam* scire quid ista talis simulacio sit» (*Ch.V.*, I, 126);
- (19) tunc isti beati pauperes in crastino ex eo refocilati sunt gracias agentes Deo (*Ch.V.*, I, 129);
- (20) taliter ut diximus sanctus iste locus sancteque congregacionis cenobium Christo adiuvante per predictos Dei famulos plantatum de die in diem florebat (*Ch.V.*, I, 130);
- (21) Viri eciam duo, germani fratres [...] cum servis et ancillis ibidem residentibus. Omnes isti supradicti viri (*Ch.V.*, I, 242).

5. Conclusioni

L'analisi dei dimostrativi latini all'interno del *Chronicon Vulturnense* ha messo in evidenza alcune questioni che riguardano da un lato le potenzialità informative dei testi scritti in latino dopo le prime attestazioni volgari e dall'altro la necessità, quando ci si confronta con questi testi, di estendere lo sguardo non solo alla diacronia e all'individuazione del discrimine tra latino e volgare ma anche a quegli elementi di continuità e di dialogo tra le tradizioni discorsive attive nelle scritture di quei secoli. In effetti, se oltre a considerare i valori di *ille* e *ipse* si prendono in considerazione anche altri elementi funzionali alla coesione testuale, ci si rende conto che i dimostrativi latini hanno in questa fase della scrittura una interessante polisemia che va letta in rapporto agli elementi del testo, del contesto e della tradizione scrittoria di riferimento.

Nel *Chronicon Vulturnense*, caratterizzato da un continuo intrecciarsi di parti cronachistiche e parti documentarie, un ruolo di primo piano è giocato certamente dalle tradizioni religiose e giuridiche. Se nelle parti cronachistiche il cronista tende a usare l'ampia gamma di dimostrativi, sia esoforici sia endoforici, presenti nella lingua latina, nelle parti documentarie il ventaglio delle possibilità si riduce in particolare a quei dimostrativi che dovevano essere maggiormente vitali e che si sono poi conservati nelle lingue romanze come *ipse*, *ille* e *iste*. In particolare, *ipse*, che non ha nel testo una frequenza tale da poter far pensare a una funzione di articolo, conserva nelle parti cronachistiche quel valore intensivo-focalizzante che aveva nel latino classico mentre ha un valore anaforico nelle parti documentarie. All'interno dei documenti, poi, è usato generalmente in quei luoghi in cui si elencano i confini e serve, così come in gran parte della documentazione notarile altomedievale (non solo meridionale), come segnale di orientamento nel testo nella rubricazione delle parti. Questi usi, che hanno fatto ipotizzare che per un certo tempo l'Italia meridionale avesse avuto *ipse* come articolo, dovevano essere legati non tanto alla lingua parlata quanto alla tradizione giuridica. Diversamente, *ille*, che mantiene in molti contesti il suo valore di deittico di distanza, ha in altri contesti una funzione anaforica o quella di marcatura di definitezza che è propria dell'articolo definito. Infine è interessante l'uso di *iste* che, generalmente bandito nei testi notarili altomedievali, dove ricorre solo nelle sezioni più libere del documento, ha, invece, nella cronaca del monaco Giovanni un'alta frequenza e la funzione di deittico di prossimità spaziale e testuale che è alla base dei suoi continuatori romanzi.

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VIȘNIEC'S HISTORY OF COMMUNISM: THE "PSYCHOPATHOLOGY" AND THE POLITICAL "TRAUMA" IN SOCIALIST HETEROTOPIES AND ATOPIES

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ABSTRACT. *Vișniec's History of Communism: the "Psychopathology" and the Political "Trauma" in Socialist Heterotopies and Atopies.*² This contribution is focused on the famous and interesting drama written by the playwright Matei Vișniec and especially on the peculiarities of the communist psychiatric clinics. By the means of anthropology, this contribution hopes to shed a light on the hidden movements that concerns the management of these institutions, and on how the patients/prisoners were able to resist to some of the most disturbing hardships that were common in that period and in those places. This analysis has been conducted scene by scene, and presents therefore some in depth personal observations, accompanied by studies of great solidity directly regarding the drama but also analysing the general situation (like, for instance, some essays of Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman) that allow a bird-eye observation of the anthropological dynamics on stage. The analysis may as well result in new ways of thought on this pièce and maybe even in some interesting debates, although the drama itself is not so recent. The primary goal is to demonstrate how the

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² Unless stated otherwise, all the in-text quotations have been translated by me from Italian and French. In the Works Cited section the original texts are in their original language.

primigenial vein of the Absurd, present in Vișniec, has become much more bounded to history itself, and to stress out the strong ethicality of the drama.

Keywords: communism, psychiatric clinics, Pan-anopticon, alienation, mental resistance, wooden language, anomic patients.

REZUMAT. Istoria comunismului lui Vișniec: „psihopatologia” și „trauma” politică în heterotopiile și atopiile socialiste. Această contribuție este axată pe celebra dramă scrisă de către dramaturgul Matei Vișniec și mai ales pe particularitățile clinicilor de psihiatrie comuniste. Prin intermediul antropologiei, articolul acesta speră să pună în lumină mișcările ascunse care privesc conducerea acestor instituții și asupra modului în care pacienții/deținuții au reușit să reziste la unele dintre cele mai tulburătoare greutăți care erau comune în acea perioadă și în acele locuri. Această analiză a fost realizată scenă după scenă și prezintă, prin urmare, câteva observații personale aprofundate, însoțite de studii importante care au legătură directă cu drama dar și de înțelepți care analizează situația generală (ca, de pildă, câteva eseuri de Michel Foucault și Erving Goffman) care permit actualizarea unui punct de vedere general despre dinamicele antropologice puse pe scena. Analiza poate duce, de asemenea, la noi modalități de discuție despre drama această și, poate, la unele dezbateri interesante, deși drama în sine nu este atât de recentă. Totuși, scopul principal al acestui articol este demonstrarea modului în care filonul primordial al Absurdului, prezent în Vișniec, a devenit mult mai legat de istoria însăși, iar scopul ulterior este de a sublinia etica puternică a dramei.

Cuvinte-cheie: comunism, clinici psihiatrice, Pan-anopticon, alienare, rezistență mentală, limbă de lemn, pacienți anomici.

1. Introduction

Matei Vișniec's *L'histoire du communisme racontée aux malades mentaux* [*How to Explain the History of Communism to Mental Patients*] (1998), to which Gerardo Guccini adds the subtitle *Qualche grido nella città ideale* [*A Few Cries in the Ideal City*]³, is a play that vaguely echoes Peter Weiss's *Marat-Sade*, and is set in 1953 in Moscow, a few days before Stalin's death, in a psychiatric hospital that hides inside him a political prison. Formally the play readapts "the liturgies of questions and answers of the workers shows of the Twenties and Thirties" (Guccini 2009, 34), therefore "the dialogic schemes of the Agit-Prop [...] (short and extremely simple lines that follow one another with accentuated rhythmic scan)" (Guccini 2018, 18), but through caustic and fulminant syntheses.

³ This subtitle is present in my sources only in Gerardo Guccini, specifically in Guccini 2009, 34 and Guccini 2018, 17. I have decided to maintain it because it appears to be significant and consistent with the drama's intent.

The drama, which – as Gianpiero Borgia noted – has no moralistic tendencies but only narrative ones (cf. Borgia 2009, p. 30), is part of the authorial ethical-political vein composed by *Spectatorul condamnat la moarte* [*The Spectator Sentenced to Death*], *Caii la fereastră* [*The Horses at the Window*], *Richard III n'aura pas lieu ou scènes de la vie de Meyerhold* [*Richard III is not Going to be Played or Scenes of Meyerhold's Life*], *Le retour à la maison* [*The Coming Home*] and *De la sensation d'élasticité lorsqu'on marche sur des cadavres* [*About the Sensation of Elasticity when We Step on Corpses*] (cf. David 2018, 95). In this regard, inside this work, the public readings of the Russian writer Yuri Petrovski (who imposes himself on the scene as the author's alter ego) will aim to provoke in the prisoners/spectators some outbursts of terror, created for therapeutic purposes, to allow them to understand why they have been locked up, to understand their condition and to suffer for it. Petrovski on this note operates an 'exorcism' of the subjects indoctrinated daily by the staff. Therefore, the text implements both, as Emilia David writes, a scanning of communist utopia and an invective towards those who still do not condemn this form of dictatorship and its crimes, unlike what happened with Nazi-fascism (cf. David 2014, 197-198). The play ultimately shows postmodernist aspirations to eliminate the differences between literature and life as stated, much more in-depth than me, by Peter Bürger in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*:

The avant-gardiste protest, whose aim it is to reintegrate art into the praxis of life, reveals the nexus between autonomy and the absence of any consequences [...]. Only after art has in fact wholly detached itself from everything that is the praxis of life can two things be seen [...]: the progressive detachment of art from real life contexts, and the correlative crystallization of a distinctive sphere of experience, i.e., the aesthetic [...]. The apartness from the praxis of life that had always constituted the institutional status of art in bourgeois society now becomes the content of works. (Bürger 1984, 22-27).

This presupposition is the basis of the performance of the *Histoire du communisme*. In fact, as Borgia writes:

Visniec creates a possible world, grotesque, deformed and paradoxical, because paradoxical and grotesque are the forms of delirium into which the community of men falls when it falls too much in love with an idea [...]. The intent is to recreate with this show the possible world described by Visniec; to investigate, with authenticity and without judgment, the reasons for the faith of its characters in Stalinist ideology, reconstructing the system of values, beliefs and fears of that world, the life of that community of men [...]. Without expressing any a priori condemnation and no hindsight easy morality. (Borgia 2009, 30)

A scenic representation that must be underlined is precisely the one of Borgia himself, firstly held at Teatro Stabile of Catania in 2008 and then at Teatro Valle of Rome in May 2010. Giuseppe Andolfo's scenography includes a very special hexagonal cage formed by movable walls that the actors move from time to time to transform their prison. Borgia exploits the surrealism present in the play to underline the irony of the staging through a performance reminiscent of musicals but with a strong Soviet imprint, which unfortunately disappears as the story continues (cf. Pocosgnich 2010).

The peculiarities of this scenic representation are interesting firstly because the dramatist was not very known in Italy at the time (and, unfortunately, only in recent years we have started to really discover him; until now his representations are quite scarce) and secondly because the liberty of representation that the author grants to all of his directors is used in this particular case to create an out-of-boundaries kind of theatre, with laughter, music and drama, resembling vaguely – in my opinion – the ancient Greek one. Whilst the critical reception in my Country is very good, the public reception remains relegated to a niche; the general spectators mostly remain oblivious of the existence of the author's dramas. The same cannot be told in France, where the author's pieces are adapted on a yearly basis at the Festival of Avignon, section OFF.

Talking about Borgia's 2008 adaptation, the spectator finds himself immersed in the scene:

The audience enters the hall [...] passing on the proscenium, on which lie several straitjackets, an immediate reference to the title of the play. A gloomy place, illuminated by glacial light, forms three small scenic spaces [...]. At the center lies a fundamental device to the entire play: some mobile bars, symbol of the asylum-prison but, above all, of the mental and psychological imprisonment of an entire society [...]. It will be precisely these mobile bars [...] to provide the viewer with the impulse to 'peek' through the grates, creating a 'fourth wall' effect. (Ferrauto 2008)

Even if the action is chronologically and geographically placed, Vişniec has written this drama as an act of rebellion against all forms of tyranny that the communist ideology (and others) has perpetrated. The key to his mindset is that through the particularity it is possible to analyse the bigger picture. The author has encountered, in his stay in France, a certainly different opinion on communism than the one in his homeland because, of course, Western Europe has never suffered a leftist dictatorship. This forced him to reevaluate the modalities in which he could denounce the horrors of the Soviet dictatorships. Alongside the analysis of the particular that mirrors History, he finds extremely useful the presence of some comical *boutades* that help us Westerners to "adopt a naïf point of view on the works, much more wary to what is said than to the

poeticized knowledge, to perceive what experience of Sovietism is transpired by these works" (Boursier 2015, 200).

The story is roughly this: a writer awarded the Stalin Prize, Yuri Petrovski, visits – invited by the Director – an important nursing home, the Central Hospital for Mental Diseases in Moscow, to reside there for a certain period and write the 'great' history of the Communist Revolution in a way that can also be understood by patients. These, divided by a true "hierarchy of alienation" (Lungu Badea 2013, 39), are suffering from mild, medium, and 'deep' madness (another way of calling political opponents, as the author himself specifies in the Supplementary Notes), interned with what seems to be the intent, desired by the direction of the asylum, to cure them (or eliminate them in case they are 'reactionary criminals', which is equivalent). This seems to recall something Emil Cioran, an author whom Vișniec knows very well, wrote in his *Précis de décomposition* [*Essay of Decomposition*]: "The real criminals are those who establish an orthodoxy on the religious or political level, who distinguish between the faithful and the schismatic" (Cioran 2011, 4).

The insane, the partially crazy and the pseudo-crazy, the three categories of 'hospitalized' patients, are towered by Yuri Petrovski's character, a manipulated manipulator wearing a conflicting mask. He is a mediocre and disengaged writer: "he is nothing but a 'median insane' who, in the Moscow hospice, finds himself at home (as the Director announces to him, scene 4)" (Lungu Badea 2013, 40). But Lungu Badea also recognizes that a clear conscience cannot resist in a situation of such indoctrination and that the author does not give answers, even at the end, on the possible cultural resistance of the writer. The 'reactionary madness' slowly infects Petrovski, who begins to disagree with the members of the institute after encountering some patients (especially the 'deeply maddened' ones, who invite him to the so-called free zone to glorify the true Revolution through a very strong incisiveness and allegory). The staff in turn no longer trusts him because in his narrative sessions the writer does not stay silent about the various injustices of the regime such as the purges and the forced collectivization of the land.

It is by the means of anthropology that I'll try to extend the reader's point of view behind the text to help him recognize some dynamics that pertains directly to clinical anthropology and to underline that the author has not invented any of the psychological mechanisms of the play: all of them are also present in the essays of Michel Foucault and other scholars. The main discoveries that this article will present are the apolitical and non-historical boundaries of the clinics/prisons, that do not pertain (as Vișniec knows) only to the USSR, and a new figure bounded with Bentham's Panopticon that mirrors the general perception of espionage in the Fifties that is present in a certain scene of the drama.

Such as the drama by the same author *Du sexe de la femme comme champ de bataille dans la guerre en Bosnie* [*The Body of a Woman as a Battlefield in the*

Bosnian War], in this play appears the theme of the, as Guccini calls it, “therapy-that-does-not-cure” (Guccini 2009, 34); in the first play this failing therapy takes place in a Western country, while in this drama the cure happens in the Soviet world. Petrovski’s ‘therapeutic’ readings, which seem to address not only the patients on stage, but also us readers/spectators, are used to force the recollection of the past and the examination of the present without alienating the listener (cf. David 2012, 21).

Matei Vişniec proposes a lucid and grotesque representation of Soviet indoctrination through the metaphor of madness, which afflicts not only patients but also the absurdly idolatrous staff (as it is clearly seen in the figure of Katia Ezova). Stylistically, as David noted, the hypertrophy of repetitions translates both pathological obsessiveness and ideological coercion (cf. David 2012, 14).

Among the various characters, towards the end of the drama, Stalin himself appears. His appearance on stage indicates a turning point in the author’s dramaturgy: together with the Visnechians Cioran and Meyerhold, Stalin is a theatrical-historical character, a symbol of the abandonment – by the French-Romanian author – of the rejection of mimetic realism, which was widespread under Ceauşescu. The author then comes to elaborate an integrated language, where allegories and metaphors blend with historical characters and realities. Often these real references were removed from the text because they undermined the timelessness of it, as happened in the second version of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett (cf. Guccini 2009, 35).

The play aims to recall, through this historically delineated placement, that communism, unlike Nazi-fascism, never had a global condemnation despite the similarities and the weight of “millions of deaths”, as the author says:

What interested me for my play was not so much a historical denunciation, such as an... emotional one [...]. The civilized nations of Europe have not even made the effort to draw inspiration from the process of Nazism to better understand how it is possible that an ideology that led to the death of a hundred million people remains in some countries on the list of doctrines not subject to judgment and public condemnation.⁴ (David 2012, 21)

Michael Parenti reconsider the speculative number of victims, but recognises that a certain degree of ethnic ‘reshuffle’ happened under Stalin (the victims were reactionaries but also Cossacks, Crimean Tartars, and ethnic Germans). The gulag, despite harsh and inhospitable, was not a death camp in the real sense of the word. Despite the large number of deaths, these were ascribed to the hard life in Siberian weather (cf. Parenti 1997, 77-80). The author, however,

⁴ Vişniec’s note to the program of the performance at the National Theatre in Bucharest, directed by Florin Fătulescu, 2007.

is right in stating that in Europe we haven't perceived the injustices of communism like we've done with fascism. He doesn't want to assimilate completely gulags with lagers, but recognises an ethically unjustifiable difference of general opinion in Western Europeans, at least in the past.

The Visniechian theatre aims to make up for the inadequacies of the mass media, to make the news more personal and therefore, consequently, to provide a broader awareness of modern problems. The *histoire du communisme* is therefore an "atypical narrative, in close proximity to the informative functions of narrative theatre" (David 2012, 21). The internal narrator therefore becomes, as already mentioned, an alter ego of the author, whose intention is to build a collective memory through a narration that deviates from the 'official' and 'unofficial' version of History as described by the media. The restitution of truth passes through a – if I can call it that – 'drama-reportage'. This resembles, of course, Berthold Brecht's theatre, that used the same methods although in a different political light (the reader must remember that the German dramatist was of communist ideology).

The *histoire du communisme's* form produces a scenario in which Yuri Petrovski, narrating of Stalin's concept of 'New Man' in an ironic and caustic way, awakens in the patients the traumas of the ideology that condemns them to socially disappear. Petrovski is therefore therapist, author and director who also experiments phonically (in the case of the value of the word '*utopia*') with the aim of exorcising the sick by performing the brainwashing technique that they have undergone. In fact, when the patients participate in Yuri's workshop (a term derived from post-20th century theatre) they attend, intervene, and create a sort of metatheatre that exposes the horrors of communism (cf. David 2012, 22-23).

Vișniec exploits in this drama, as Lungu Badea (cf. Lungu Badea 2013, 37) rightly points out, the need for human utopias; two different forms of utopias, endemic to contemporary theatre, appear on stage: heterotopia⁵ and atopy⁶. As the scholar illustrates:

In Visniec's heterotopias, of invented but rebuildable places, of imagined but recognizable situations, is laughter really a solution to save oneself? [...] The heterotopia, a place of experimentation of the heterogeneous, of the hybrid, of the refractory, allows Visniec to juxtapose in the same play more genres, more spaces, more protagonists, whether they are incompatible, and to generate his composite theatre [...]. In Visniec, history is always

⁵ Lungu Badea explains the term in this regard by quoting Foucault 1994, 755: "places which are outside all places but are nevertheless actually locatable" (*des lieux qui sont hors tous les lieux bien que pourtant ils soient effectivement localisables*). My translation.

⁶ The scholar illustrates by quoting here Barthes 1995, 53: "[an] habitat that is not assigned to any specific place" (*[un] habitat qui n'est assigné à aucun lieu précis*). My translation.

'halfway', between the past that tells, related, a theoretically fixed system and the future that it prepares, anticipates, an open system also covered by utopia. (Lungu Badea 2013, 37)

This Visniecian use of heterotopia and atopy is hidden under the precise chronological and geographical collocation of the text; behind this localised environment the author wants us to perceive his intention of speaking about an entire class of events that happened in a lengthy period of time during the Twentieth Century (and, in some cases, still today) and in Eastern Europe (but not only there). It coincides yet again with his will of talking about the general state of the world with the use of 'daily stories'.

In order to conclude this somewhat hefty introduction, this article is interconnected, mainly because similar points of view are expressed, with the one written by Sylwia Kucharuk in 2021 about the same drama. I would like to point out again that my analysis is mainly anthropological rather than being focused entirely on the scenes and theatrical mechanisms of the drama, although they are analysed in order to sustain my reasons. Differently from Kucharuk, I've tried to include an in-depth analysis, with the help of studies by Erving Goffman, Michel Foucault, Luigigiovanni Quarta and Helen Lavrestky, of the mechanism of psychiatric clinics, both in the Western world and in the Soviet Union. This action is being taken to stress out an intrinsic similarity (as also Foucault pointed out) between two different societies (cf. Boursier 2015, 204) and to anthropologically contextualize the play in his habitat.

Also, this article presents a personal vision of Bentham's Panopticon mixed with Umberto Eco's Anopticon, that mirrors extremely well, in my opinion, the dynamics of the Cold War that are present deep inside the text. These scenic movements are explicit and have also been noted by many scholars that have studied the play, but it seems that they never associated them with this theory.

2. An anthropological collocation/explanation of the events of the drama

It is certainly useful to analyse, with the help of studies on prisons/psychiatric clinics by scholars such as Foucault, Goffman and Quarta, what pertains to the peritext of this play, namely the phenomenon of psychiatric hospitals, which have as their first impulse to remove subjects considered different or dangerous for society but not directly considered criminals. This will serve to place and make more evident some behaviours of the protagonists of the drama, which otherwise could remain in the shadows. It must be said that all of the aforementioned studies are about institutions placed in modern Western Europe and in the USA; I decided to apply these studies to this drama

because they point out the global connections of violence's mechanisms (very subtle), that do not pertain just to one side or another of ideology.

The origin of this institution, which has many similarities with the gulag and the lager, seems paradoxically rooted in the progress of the Enlightenment. As Heiner Müller writes, speaking indirectly of the extermination/labor camps in their literary response:

Kafka [for Müller in *The Condemnation*, for me also in *The Trial* and *In the Penal Colony*] and Faulkner [in his hypertrophied and obscuring style] continued Dostoevsky's work [*Crime and Punishment*]. The underlying theme of the Dostoevsky-Kafka-Faulkner line is selection: Auschwitz as the last stage of the Enlightenment. Towards the end of the Eighteenth Century, a congress of theologians and jurists took place in Petersburg. The problem they faced was knowing what to do with the criminals, because they could no longer finance prisons. The Jacobin French delegation made the proposal to establish labor camps [...]. The Russians alone would never have gotten there because it is not in the Bible [...]. Gulags have existed ever since. (Müller-Raddatz 1991, 5)

It all started with the *cahiers de doléances* of the second half of the Eighteenth Century, in which strong protests were expressed against tortures, which betrayed the tyranny of the prince and the desperation of the victim. The main fear was that the people, becoming accustomed to violence, ran the risk of learning to take revenge with it, merging the excess of armed justice with popular anger (cf. Foucault 2018, 79-80). After the period of Terror arising from the French Revolution, a radical change in the system of punishment begins; from physical it becomes psychological and strongly regulated. Foucault shows how daytime is rigidly marked in the House of Young Detainees in Paris, according to the intentions of Léon Faucher (cf. Faucher 1838, 274-282). The tortures that were in vogue at least until the Revolution disappear within a few years. But only to the sight of the ordinary citizen. Between the end of the Eighteenth Century and the beginning of the Nineteenth Century the public spectacle of the execution disappears. As Foucault writes:

The punishment ceases, little by little, to be a spectacle. And all that could be exhibition will be marked by a negative index. As if the functions of the penal ceremony gradually ceased to be comprehensible, that rite which 'concluded' the crime is suspected of maintaining with this a shady kinship, [...] of making the executioner resemble a criminal and the judge murderers, [...] of making the tortured an object of piety or admiration. (Foucault 2018, 11)

The effectiveness of punishment also changes; instead of arising from its publicity, it arises from the certainty of punishment. This is no longer

glorified violence, but an intrinsic obligation that passes over in silence and under bureaucratic dissimulation. Physical control over the body of the condemned is also relaxed, even if penalties such as imprisonment, forced labor, penal bathing and deportation remain; but here the body is only an intermediary: the real object that is struck is personal freedom. From a physical punishment we pass to one composed of suspended rights, while maintaining in some cases an additional physical suffering (cf. Foucault 2018, 10-18). The essence of this penal revolution can be summarized by De Mably's formula: "Let the punishment, if I may say so, strike the soul, not the body" (De Mably 1789, 326).

These are the basics of the prison/asylum⁷; is thus created, as Goffman calls it, a total institution, "the place of residence and work of groups of people who – cut off from society for a considerable period of time – find themselves sharing a common situation [...] in a closed and formally administered regime" (Goffman 2019, 29). Of course, Goffman has in mind Western institutions and especially the American ones; at first glance, therefore, there can be no connection between an asylum system valid in the USA with one valid in the USSR. And yet it turns out to be just like that: since the institution of the prison-asylum-lager is the perverted fruit of the Enlightenment, it is not surprising that such a well-tested control mechanism is used by anyone who wants to maintain order, be it a capitalist or a communist government.

For Goffman, total institutions – which are "a social experiment in what can be made of the *self*" (Goffman 2019, 42) – can be divided into five categories:

1. Institutions that protect non-dangerous unable (orphans, blind, old or indigents).
2. Institutions that protect unintentionally dangerous people (tuberculous, mentally ill and lepers).
3. Institutions of imprisonment of subjects dangerous to society (prisons, penitentiaries, lagers/gulags).
4. Institutions that find justification on the instrumental level (colleges, labor camps, colonial plantations).
5. Religious institutions (abbeys, convents, monasteries).

As the scholar always recognizes, this classification is approximative, but allows to point out that each total institution has many elements in common with the others. The main characteristic of total institutions is that they provide for a social life that takes place in the same location and under the same authority; daily activities, rigidly schematized and rhythmic, always concern a large indistinct mass of people forced to do the same things. Crucial is therefore

⁷ The Central Hospital of Moscow in which the play unfolds respects all the requirements of the judicial asylum, which blends penal knowledge, which is punitive, with positive science, the cure. For a confirmation of my observation, see Fabio Dei's preface to *Quarta* (2019, 9).

the manipulation of everyday life and self-concept through bureaucracy, or, in the worst case, through mortification and physical or psychological *contamination* (cf. Goffman 2019, 34-57).

Luigigiovanni Quarta cites, naturally with an eye pointed to Italian psychiatric hospitals, an essay by Ugo Fornari who, while addressing a historical-political situation clearly different from that narrated in the play, can give us important common notions about the prisoner and about the moment of his entry into the total institution:

Unfortunately, the expertise [...] is a tool at the service of psychiatric prognosis (i.e., the existence or otherwise of the social dangerousness deriving from mental illness and its persistence) and not for the care of the mentally ill in need of social and health interventions [...]. The prognostic judgment is determined by ethical, regulatory, and economic value reference parameters, and [...] the expert replaces the judge [...]; all more or less explicitly or consciously and aimed at identifying the 'socially dangerous'. (Fornari 1993, 170 et seq.)⁸

It is obvious, therefore, that the signs of mental illness are sought in the body while the symptoms manifest themselves in the offense of a certain morality; This interference of the regime in the patient's body leads to a distance between the beholder and the one who is looked at (cf. Quarta 2019, 26-27).

Within the play we find all of this implied, but we notice also – very realistically – a confirmation of the distinction and distrust between the two fundamental groups that populate the institution: the staff, socially integrated with the outside world, and the internees, who can only receive limited contacts from the society that excluded them. Matei Vișniec expertly leaked how “each group tends to imagine the other according to limited and hostile stereotypes: the staff often judges internees malevolent, distrustful and untrustworthy; while internees often believe that personnel concede from above, that they are lean and despicable” (Goffman 2019, 37). Just as communication between the two groups of the institution fails, the same happens for the passage of information concerning the decisions of the staff towards the patients. This is why in the Central Hospital for Mental Illnesses in Moscow is implemented a sort of information network aimed at countering – or at least knowing – the decisions that in this case do not come from within the structure but from national bodies, and which is part of a relationship of espionage/counter espionage that sees the staff in the field against the internees.

Another (very subtle) form of personal violence that Vișniec inserts into the drama is the familiarity and the lack of respect with which the staff and the

⁸ Excerpt from Quarta 2019, 25.

internees themselves treat a patient: “this inhibits, in a bourgeois, the right to distance himself from others, by the means of a type of formal relationship” (Goffman 2019, 59-60). We know very well that in a communist dictatorship nothing is worse than a bourgeois; therefore, it can be postulated that this action was even favored by the regime, both on the scene and in the reality. The forms of oppression of the self, however, leave to the internee a certain margin of rebellion which, however (to avoid the staff retaliation), often occurs in situations where submissiveness is not necessary (cf. Goffman 2019, 64). In the play we can see that these forms of rebellion occur during public readings⁹ of the history of communism by Yuri Petrovski, where are strengthened by the presence of other internees who create chaos together. This seems to make the immediate punishment avoidable... But staff resentment that results in corporal punishment is only postponed, and perhaps happens offstage. Again, another form of degradation of the adult individual occurs in the obligation to ask permission, as if he were an infant: in the play this is visible, always in the context of public readings, in Ivan’s questions: “Does it mean that we will be able to piss standing?” (Vişniec 2012, 110) and Sasha: “Yuri Petrovski, can I ask you a question?” (Vişniec 2012, 110).

In the institutions, however, there are also forms of fraternization, with the creation of more or less extensive groups (as in the cases of the clandestine gambling den in the basement at scenes 9, 15 and 22, and of the so-called free zone of the Soviet Union in scene 18), which, however, often do not lead to high levels of cohesion because, in the patient now anomic, remains always the doubt that the companion is a spy sent by the staff (cf. Goffman 2019, 87). This does not mean that it is a useless phenomenon: the possibility of being able to make bets (or sentence to death, in the case of Gamarovski and company) is equivalent to an autonomous decision-making capacity applied to what the psychiatric hospital offers patients (in the case of the gambling den, this amounts to a few kopecks): the simple gambling or the life and death decision about an exponent of the regime is therefore converted into a resistance to the uniformalising and depersonalizing action of the clinic and of the ideology that carries as a banner.¹⁰

The study of Helen Lavretsky called *The Russian Concept of Schizophrenia: A Review of the Literature* has also been very useful for an analysis directly bounded to the psychiatric situation in USSR. The 1917 Revolution had seen in

⁹ These readings are also part of a scheme provided by total institutions: that of institutional ceremonies, which is often attended by an exponent representing the institution, playing a fraternal and friendly, paternalistic role with the internees. For an in-depth discussion of the phenomenon see Goffman 2019, 134-138.

¹⁰ Regarding the underground (or, as Dei defines it, “interstitial”) life in psychiatric hospitals, also observed by Erving Goffman, I refer to Goffman 2019, 230-320, and to Dei’s preface in Quarta 2019, 11.

the psychiatrists one of the first groups of support. Not long after, the regime started to control and convey ideological diversity in the field operating, of course, a meticulous cleansing of anyone who thought differently from Ivan Pavlov. In October 1951 took place the joint session of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR and the Board of the All-Union Neurologic and Psychiatric Association. That session started a tighter political rule in this scientific branch, unleashing a feeling of paranoia and fear among psychologists and psychiatrist (cf. Lavretsky 1998, 539-540). From that point onward, the classification of mental illness had become much more political and much less detailed. As Višniec let us observe in his drama:

Treatment is administered on an inpatient and outpatient basis. Psychotherapy in the broadest sense is widely practiced through the established relationships between the regional psychiatrists and nurses and their patients. It is mostly supportive in nature [...]. The most frequently used psychotherapeutic techniques include short-term and directive psychotherapy. Collective or group therapy has been used since the second half of the 19th century. Its goals include providing support and education about the illness and improving social and relationship skills. Groups are usually heterogeneous by age, sex, and diagnosis [...]. (Lavretsky 1998, 548)

The organization of the treatment of severely mentally ill patients was defined by three stages (cf. Lavretsky 1998, 549):

- 1) A primary care psychiatrist present in the patient's workplace or in the psychoneurological dispensary serving the district where the patient lives.
- 2) In case of a new exacerbation, patients were hospitalized at the local psychiatric hospital or inside a psychiatric unit of a general hospital. Sometimes partial hospitalization programs were utilized (in general for the treatment of subacute psychosis). After stabilization, the patient could return to his primary psychiatrist to follow rehabilitative programs.
- 3) Tertiary referral centres were in medical schools and research institutes who treated resistant cases.

But of course, Lavretsky recognises that in USSR not every patient was effectively ill. The fallacious classification of the disease provided a certain degree of abuse that was present even in capitalistic Countries. As Lavretsky tells us: "Some issues involved in the discussion of abuse of psychiatry include patients' rights violations, criminal concepts of social dangerousness, [...] hospitalizing people who are not mentally ill for their expression of political and religious beliefs, and punitive use of psychotropic medications" (Lavretsky 1998, 550).

3. Espionage and counter-intelligence: a psychiatric clinic mirror of the Cold War

Within this drama we can find some dynamics that pertain to the geopolitical situation of those years, namely those of espionage and counter-intelligence, as well as those of censorship (sometimes even self-imposed) and Soviet propaganda aimed to indoctrinate and 'purify' those who escaped it. I will therefore analyse from now on all the scenes in which you can see all of this.

In scene 2, we find a speech by the director of the 'nursing home', who exploits, as Steiciuc rightly denotes, the *langue de bois* (cf. Steiciuc 2020, 278) of the USSR to hide the cynical hypocrisy of the rehabilitation project:

THE DIRECTOR: [...] Our scientific conception of society tells us that the man is the centre of the Party's attention [...]. Socialism is not achievable without the transformation of man. And Art and Literature have a fundamental role in the transformation of man [...]. What about the mentally ill? Aren't they, too, human beings? Shouldn't we transform them too? Should they not also benefit from the privileges of art and literature? As far as possible, of course... (Vişniec 2012, 101)

Also, in this scene we can notice the strong link between identity and social (collective) empathy. In totalitarian regimes, art has always been fundamental in countering ideological alienation; the author knows this better than anyone, having lived to the age of thirty under Ceauşescu. In the drama's case, however, the cultural resistance is distorted in favor of a propaganda aimed at creating the new socialist Man (cf. Lungu Badea 2013, 37).

Already from scene 4 is inserted, in an apparently friendly and normal dialogue, what can be understood as a veiled threat, or at best a warning; when the Director shows Yuri Petrovski his room, he tells him: "We have prepared the room with the best view on the garden, because we know that writers love nature [...]. We know, dear Yuri Petrovski... we know what a writer's soul is made of, we know everything" (Vişniec 2012, 103).

In scene 6, the writer rehearses in his room the speech to be given in front of the mentally ill:

YURI: Open your mouth well. Say "u". Breathe. Fill your lungs with air. Stronger. Again. Fill your lungs with air. Again. Say "utopia". One more time. "Utopia". Focus, it is a word that makes an upward curve. It's like a horse that rears up. "Utopia". Do you hear how the sounds go up? They rise and dissolve in the air. Everything starts in your mouth and ends nowhere. "Utopiiii". Jolly good. [...] (*He opens a bottle of rum, pours some into a cup of tea, takes a sip of rum straight from the bottle, then drinks the tea*). (Vişniec 2012, 107)

It is remarkable in my opinion how the phrase "Everything is born in your mouth and ends nowhere" is indicative of utopian uselessness, and how it is subsequently changed to "It is born in your mouth and stops at the stars" (Vișniec 2012, 108, scene 7), a much more poetic and self-censored expression able to, hopefully, get the message across. The scenic note in parentheses disturbingly takes up the questions that Katia had asked the writer (in scene 5): if he wanted a tea, a tea with rum or just a little bit of rum. It is the clear demonstration, in my opinion, that the staff of the clinic knows Petrovski down to the smallest personal tastes and daily details even before he arrived.

After presenting the speech (scene 7) before the 'censorship commission' composed of the staff of the facility, and receiving their approval (but only after the positive reaction of the Director), Petrovski can finally (in scene 8) talk to the inmates; their response to the reading will be "aimed at destabilizing the government theory with concrete and childish subversive actions: 'I want to piss standing!', will say Ivan, one of the hospitalized" (Marinai 2020, 271). Petrovski, knowing that he is controlled, acts according to a conformist logic, and masks reality under the necessary veil of textual infantilism and under the fake and comic sublimation of the key figures of communism, telling in the meantime the most uncomfortable truths about the regime. Steiciuc notes that, in the eighth scene:

in front of the slightly mentally ill, guarded by Katia, the writer evokes Felix Dzerjinski's 'scientific method' to identify those who did not want to "go all the way" and the methods through which Stalin and his acolytes practiced the purge, with a very simple conclusion, quintessence of totalitarian practices: "And those who did not want to go all the way were sent to the camp". (Steiciuc 2020, 279)

Thus, we witness the story, narrated by Petrovski, of those who had abandoned themselves unreservedly to socialist utopia discovering, however – because of the scientific method devised by Felix Dzerjinski (founder of the ČEKA) –, that they did not really want to go all the way for it. So, a friend of Felix and Stalin asked to be shot but was answered by Dzerjinski himself: "Wait, you will be shot later, when, with all your heart, you will want to go all the way, because then you will be much more dangerous" (Vișniec 2012, 113).

In scene 10 takes place what can be called the first contact between the writer and the members of the 'free zone', through the mediation of Timofei, an average mentally retarded, who hides inside a gift the invitation of the rebels that are hidden in the medium retarded ward. Emblematic is, when Timofei asks Yuri the time of his future visit, the phrase: "We have been waiting for you for four years" (Vișniec 2012, 116), which seems to be the result of the delirium of a madman, as indeed it is thought to be normal in a psychiatric institution. But the hidden and disturbing meaning of the phrase will be revealed later in

the play. In the end, Timofei leaves the gift to the writer, a pledge of esteem, which is accepted. The package contains a book by Henri Barbusse, as will be discovered in scene 12 after Katia Ezova asks the writer what the average retarded gave him, sign that even at that moment, late at night, Yuri was controlled.

In scene 11 Katia, sneaked into Yuri's room to hear the new chapter of his history of communism, ends up making love to him. We can see how a particular phenomenon occurs. A Pan-anopticon, if I may use the neologism, is developed: while the staff believes to observe (and until now has undoubtedly spied), it is mirrored in turn by the mentally ill, as we read in the stage note: "Thanks to a play of light, one of the walls becomes transparent. You see the chorus of the mentally ill. One gets the impression that the sick observes the scene, that for them the walls do not exist [...]" (Vişniec 2012, 119).

This term that I just used, which is a fusion of the concept of Panopticon (a single overseer can control a plurality of internees without being seen and thus leaving them in doubt of being supervised or not) – postulated by Jeremy Bentham and taken up by Michel Foucault – with that of Umberto Eco's Anopticon (which provides, in its conception expressed in *Secondo diario minimo* [*Second minimal diary*], that conceive that the overseer is the only one who can be controlled without being able to see the detainees himself), seems to me more than suitable to indicate the complex system of espionage and counterespionage that unfolds within the psychiatric hospital, which would also seem to reflect the general situation of the Cold War.

The Panopticon is also a fruit of the Enlightenment, as is the prison/nursing home. Foucault, using the example of city organization in case of plague, taken from the *Archives militaires de Vicennes*, A-I-516-91, sc. Pièce, tells us about the development of the conception of panoptism. Lepers were subject to exile-enclosure by society while plague victims were captured in a very precise pigeonholing. Social separation and jurisdictional division are the sides of the same coin since the Nineteenth Century: the psychiatric asylum, the corrective houses and part of the hospitals work on this double scheme: the 'waste' of society is welcomed within it (this mirrored division is operated according to the crazy-normal, dangerous-harmless categorization) and a rigid pigeonholing coercion is applied to them: "All the mechanisms of power that [...] are arranged around the abnormal, to mark it as to modify it, have been composed those two forms from which they derive from afar" (Foucault 2018, 218). The Panopticon is in practice an inverted dungeon, which allows to avoid the massing of prisons, that lead to multiple exchanges; but the prisoners, divided from each other and unable to know if at that particular moment they are supervised, allow – self-forced to behave – the automatic functioning of power, visible but unverifiable, which can act in a corrective way towards the patient but also towards its employees (cf. Foucault 2018, 213-226).

Returning to the play, the twelfth scene shows a dialogue between Katia and Yuri, where the girl says she is afraid of and for Yuri, afraid of the "dangerous madmen", afraid that sometimes Petrovski's words "will drift away and..." (Vișniec 2012, 120). It therefore shows all its concern for the orthodoxy of the history of communism in the making and the possible behavior of reactionaries.

In scene 13 Petrovski narrates to the seriously ill the chapter concerning the forced collectivization of land imposed by the regime; Steiciuc also notes how "the collectivization of agriculture, [...] had generated three types of attitude in the peasants: namely obedient, mitigated, revolting, which correspond in fact to the three categories of 'fools' in the hospital, who – says the caption – 'react and scream like a herd of animals'" (Steiciuc 2020, 279).

In this scene is presented the narration (always childishly simplified) of how Stalin conceived the kolkhozes. As Lungu Badea notes, the three stages of acceptance of the peasantry correspond to their infantilization, with which the paternalistic Stalin becomes psychologist and guardian of the whole country. For the scholar are recognizable important Nietzschean parallels (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Book I, 40, Of the absence of noble forms), which are also reflected in the pièce *La machine Tchékov*:

("The masses are ready for slavery in all of its forms, provided that he who is above them ceaselessly affirms his superiority, which legitimizes the fact that he was born to rule – for the nobility of form!" [...]), we perceive it in the forms [...]:

- 1) I understand and I'm happy to be able to do what I must do [...].
- 2) I do not understand, but I am happy to be able to do what I must do; [...].
- 3) I do not understand [...] and [...] I do not go to the kolkhoz. [...]

(*La Machine Tchékov*, scene 3)¹¹

In scene 14 the writer seems to run a big risk when Stepan Rozanov, deputy director of the hospital, visits Yuri late at night and under the pretext of a friendly chat begins to carry out an interrogation, also exploiting the classic 'tongue-twister' alcohol card, accusing him of writing anti-revolutionary and subversive stories but fortunately misrepresenting, believing that his is a tactic to bring out the hidden reactionary elements in the hospital. Rozanov also tells him that he was the first to inform the state organs (the term in the text of the play appears in capital letters) of the potentially subversive elements in the clinic, and after waiting for four years, the writer finally arrived (here is revealed the meaning of Timofei's sibylline phrase: it is a further confirmation that the mentally ill spy on the staff).

¹¹ The text of the quotation can be found in Lungu Badea 2013, 40. For reasons of form, I avoid inserting the French version in the footnote. My translation.

In scene 16 the themes of the Dreamlike and the Absurd, dear to the first Vişniec, finally transpire; until now they had been ‘flattened’ in the historical and daily reality of the psychiatric hospital. At Yuri’s window appears the ghost of Nadejda Alliluyeva – Stalin’s wife who committed suicide because of her husband’s brutality – who throws oak leaves into his room and tells the writer that she still loves the dictator, and begs to tell him that she is there and that she will watch over him, but that she does not want him to come and visit her (in the afterlife, presumably), and that he must stop drinking (Stalin died of a stroke, due to arterial hypertension whose main cause was, perhaps, alcoholism).

Stalin’s mother appears after her, making recommendations to Yuri, because her child “is tired, he no longer kills, he is not well” (Vişniec 2012, 129). Then a third woman appears, who continues to proclaim endlessly the innocence of a certain Sasha (who is one of the ill in the facility). A fourth woman claims that Maria Spiridonova, the first woman sent to a psychiatric hospital under the directives of the regime, does not like piroshki (Russian calzones stuffed with meat). The fifth woman lists the savings of communism due to the efficiency of the deportation of Caucasians to Siberia (from November 1943 to June 1944) thanks to the brilliant idea of amassing 45 people instead of 40 in each wagon: “a considerable number of wagons, or in total 37.548 linear meters of boards, 11.834 buckets and 3.400 wood stoves!” (Vişniec 2012, 130).

In scene 18, the writer reaches the free territory of the Soviet Union inside the clinic and is given an honorary straitjacket: in this scene the word pertains mostly to the ‘sick’, who, under the leadership of Ivan Mikadoi Gamarovski, are trying the traitors of the truth, from the condemned to death (and already deceased for decades) Maxim Gorki, to the not yet deceased Semion Babaievski, Mikhail Bubienov and Vassilij Ajaiev: in short, all those who received the Stalin Prize. Afterwards, two mentally ill patients speak about how they knew the dictator: the first, a soldier under Sergo Ordjonikidze (one of the organizers/executors of the carnage in Georgia in 1921), recounts the atrocities against the kulaks and Stalin’s anger due not to the killing of innocents, but because they had been crucified, an unacceptable and anti-revolutionary ecclesiastical method. The second patient was Stalin’s official photographer, who had erased from official photos those who had fallen from the dictator’s good graces. Still below Kukin, an actor, recites the chapter, written very comically, on Operation Barbarossa. He then recites Stalin’s words, which Petrovski wrote in his history of communism, and which sanctioned the socialist agricultural disaster in favor of terror:

KUKIN [...]: And then, a great friend and comrade of Stalin, whose name was Molotov, said to Stalin: “Comrade Joseph Vissarionovich, are the peasants who do not want to be in kolkhozes those who do not want to go all the way?” And Stalin replied: “No, Comrade Molotov, the peasants

who do not want to be in kolkhozes are people who believe that they do not want to go all the way, but deep in their hearts, in fact, they do. It is in their open hearts that we will make the socialist collectivization of agriculture [...]" (Vișniec 2012, 138-139)

Two very interesting characters are the stranger and the professor; the first continues to say incessantly "Ribbentrop-Molotov", the name of the pact that sanctioned the bloody and criminal partition of Poland in 1939 between Nazis and Communists. The second uses the metaphor/onomatopoeia of the plane that makes the sounds *clac, clac, pluf* to explain the communist utopia, where everything seems perfect and then it fails and it is not clear who is to blame, if the plane or the ones who pilots it; also because all those who had come on board are dead. At the end of the scene, the spectator learns that Dekanozov is relentlessly searching for Petrovski, and Gamarovski tries to dissuade him from going back, because the deputy director is a man of Beria, head of the Stalinist secret service.

In scene 19 we have further confirmation of Katia's nymphomaniac madness when the Director reveals that the girl sleeps with anyone who claims to have met Stalin. Katia's advances to the writer (scenes 5, 11 and 12) are therefore dictated only by her mad idolatry for the regime, and the objects of her sexual desire – be they the writer or the sick who claim to have known Stalin – become only substitute fetishes of the dictator.

Scene 20 sees the staff's burst of hysteria at the news of Stalin's death. Once again, we can see how Katia's control is relentless, even reaching the territory of the dreamlike; picking up the dry oak leaves scattered on the ground that Alliluyeva's ghost had thrown, she desperately asks Petrovski: "Yuri... Yuri... Why did you burn her leaves? Why did you do it?" (Vișniec 2012, 144). Meanwhile, Rozanov asks Petrovski to tell the patients to calm down, to tell them that Stalin is not dead, which the writer will eventually do. The thematic chaos of the finale carries within itself the impossibility of judging who is the real traitor of revolutionary ideals (cf. David 2012, 20).

In scene 22, the ghost of Stalin appears in front of the basement grate where the mentally ill bet, and "before disappearing from sight, [...] he turns and looks at the sick with the expression of a serene and generous father" (Vișniec 2012, 148). In this ending, in my opinion, two possible positions can be understood: one, more optimistic and unlikely, is that death makes innocent even the one who was in life a monster; the other is that Stalin looks benevolently at the mentally ill to symbolize that his death has not destroyed at all the hypocritical humanitarianism of Soviet clinics, a vision also supported by Steiciuc (Steiciuc 2020, 281), and is also sanctioned by Petrovski's final triple cry in scene 21: "Stalin is not dead! Stalin is not dead! Stalin is not dead!" (Vișniec 2012, 145).

4. Conclusions

In this article I wanted to stress out the peculiarities of Vişniec's point of view about Soviet clinics; this must be intended not only as a private story, but also as a public *'j'accuse'* against all forms of political oppression and limitation of free speech masquerading as legal institutions by the means of heterotopia and atopy. In this idea lies the focal point of his thought: by narrating a story precisely defined in time and space, he can still talk about a generic situation that, in some cases, still happens today. This kind of clinics – in fact – functioned in the same way on both sides of the Iron Curtain, and the hidden movements that happens on stage can be recognised quite easily in many essays that do not depict a pinpoint view of psychiatric clinics in USSR (just like the essays of Foucault, Goffman and Quarta) but also, of course, in the ones that do so (like the extremely interesting article of the psychiatrist Helen Lavretsky).

By analysing a wide range of phenomena bounded in various degrees to philosophy, but also to anthropology and psychology, I wanted to define and underline the importance, like I said, of heterotopies and atopies in Visniechian speech. I also tried to analyse the Italian reception of the play; unfortunately, only a few Italian representations that were made at least 13 years ago are of some importance, and the public reception of the drama (and of dramas in general) is, in Italy, scarce to use a euphemism. On the contrary, the life of the play in France is still active and object of interest all throughout the Country.

Finally, I have conducted my study with the obvious help of a consistent corpus of articles directly imputable to the play, that formed a solid background for my anthropological and philosophical speech (strongly inspired by Foucault and Goffman alike) to be supported by critical evidence.

The results of this article are an anthropological reading of the text that underlines the hidden movements that are present on the scene but that maybe are not quite obvious to an untrained eye. This has taken me to conclude that the psychiatric institution as a sort of prison is not a communist invention, but a fruit of the Enlightenment perfected in modern Western Europe, an interesting conclusion that brings up the idea of freedom's sanitary limitation as global and not circumscribed in time nor space. A vision that is totally coherent with Vişniec's perception of history.

Maybe the most original conclusion that I've drawn is the scenic application of both of the 'Opticon' ideas (Bentham's and Eco's), which has led to the creation of an hybrid: the Pan-anopticon. This is naturally intertwined with the perception of espionage and counter espionage endemic of that historical period and that is mirrored by the attempts of the staff and the one's of the 'sick' to spy on each other.

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UNE ANALYSE ZOOPOÉTIQUE DU RÉCIT DE VOYAGE *LA PANTHÈRE DES NEIGES* DE SYLVAIN TESSON

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ABSTRACT. *A zoopoetic approach to the travelogue La panthère des neiges by Sylvain Tesson.* The present article aims to explore in broad lines the evolution of French zoopoetics thought and its main directions of research. Unlike the anglophone *animal studies*, the French zoopoetics is offering a slightly different methodology, much more focused on thematic and narratological aspects. In order to exemplify the paradigm shift produced by the zoopoetic approach in France, we will focus our article on Sylvain Tesson's travelogue *La panthère des neiges* (2019). The travelogue, through its referential dimension, marks a transition from the generalizing perspective of the animal world to a specific, local and individual approach.

Keywords: *animal studies, French zoopoetics, travel writing, Sylvain Tesson.*

REZUMAT. *O analiză zoopoetică a jurnalului de călătorie La panthère des neiges de Sylvain Tesson.* Prezentul articol își propune să exploreze în linii mari evoluția gândirii zoopetice franceze și principalele sale direcții de cercetare. Spre deosebire de *animal studies* din lumea anglofonă, zoopeticea franceză oferă o metodologie ușor diferită, mult mai focalizată pe aspecte tematic și naratologice. Pentru a exemplifica schimbarea de paradigmă produsă de abordarea zoopoetică din Franța, vom lua drept studiu de caz jurnalul de călătorie *La panthère des neiges* (2019) al lui Sylvain Tesson. Mult mai apropiat apropiat de real, acest jurnal marchează o trecere de la perspectiva generalizantă a lumii animale la o abordare specifică, locală și individuală.

Cuvinte-cheie: *animal studies, zoopoetica franceză, literatura de călătorii, Sylvain Tesson.*

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Introduction

Longtemps, le destin des animaux a très peu préoccupé l'humain qui n'y voyait qu'une ressource, un moyen, un outil dont on pouvait profiter à son gré. De nos jours, nous assistons à une augmentation assez importante de l'engouement pour les fictions animales et les photo-documentaires animaliers et d'une certaine curiosité vis-à-vis du monde naturel en général.

La question animale anime actuellement un grand nombre de chercheurs et chercheuses et traverse les domaines les plus variés. Les *animal studies*, terme générique à ramifications multiples, se sont imposées comme domaine de recherche émergent dans le monde anglo-saxon dès les dernières décennies du XX^e siècle. Bien que ce soit encore difficile de délimiter une généalogie de cette sphère d'étude, ce sont le texte de Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (1975), les mouvements antispécistes², ainsi que les premiers travaux philosophiques sur les droits des animaux³ de cette période qui semblent marquer le début d'une préoccupation plus importante au niveau académique pour la cause animale. C'est ici qu'on voit que les études animales représentent une forme hybride entre recherche scientifique et militantisme (la plupart de ces chercheurs sont végétariens, abolitionnistes, et participent à des mobilisations pro-animaux, contre la chasse ou les expérimentations scientifiques, etc.). Depuis, les études animales ont développé des approches pluridisciplinaires réunissant des chercheurs zoologues, géographes, anthropologues, éthologues, sociologues, historiens, philosophes, juristes, cinéastes et littéraires. Leur objectif serait de se focaliser sur la manière dont l'humain interagit avec les vivants et de remettre en cause les représentations culturelles, le plus souvent occidentales, qu'on s'est faites des animaux. Ainsi, des études⁴ ont pu déjà démontrer que les animaux possèdent des capacités émotionnelles et sémiotiques, ce qui a profondément ébranlé le sentiment de supériorité de l'homme et a immédiatement provoqué des débats intenses d'ordre éthique et juridique.

² Conformément au Larousse, l'antispécisme est une « vision du monde qui récuse, la notion de hiérarchie entre les espèces animales et, particulièrement, la supériorité de l'être humain sur les animaux. (Accordant à tous les individus, indépendamment de l'espèce à laquelle ils appartiennent, un même statut moral, l'antispécisme combat toutes les formes de maltraitance et d'exploitation animales.) » sur www.larousse.fr consulté le 10.12.2022.

³ Je citerais les volumes traduits en français signés par Gary Francione, *Introduction aux droits des animaux* (2015) et Tom Regan, *Les droits des animaux* (2013).

⁴ Pour ne citer que le dossier réalisé par la revue *Itinéraires* dédié au discours animal : Laura Goudet, Marie-Anne Paveau et Catherine Ruchon, « Écouter les animaux parler. Présentation du numéro », *Itinéraires*, no. 2 « Discours animal. Langages, interactions, représentations », 2020. DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/itineraires.8756>.

L'intérêt porté par plusieurs disciplines à la cause animale semble avoir son origine dans un questionnement éthique sur les formes de violences subies par les animaux (chasse, corrida, extinction, expérimentations scientifiques, maltraitance, élevage intensif, consommation des produits d'origine animale, etc.) que chaque discipline essaie d'aborder avec ses propres outils. En effet, Singer remet en question la légitimité morale de l'humain à perpétuer ce genre de relations qui sont la cause d'une souffrance physique et psychique chez les animaux. En ce sens, les chercheurs en études animales partent d'une déconstruction d'un certain anthropocentrisme qui privilégie les humains au détriment des autres formes du vivant. Nous pouvons voir que la démarche antispéciste, qui dénonce la discrimination ayant pour base l'espèce, se structure de la même manière que les approches féministes, marxistes, les études du genre, postcoloniales, écologiques, etc., à travers lesquelles on essaie justement de démanteler les mécanismes d'une forme de domination et de pouvoir exercée à l'encontre des figures minoritaires et minorisées⁵. Mais si, depuis plusieurs décennies, des efforts ont été mis en place pour créer l'espace institutionnel où ces minorités peuvent être rendues visibles et revalorisées, le cas des *animal studies* pose le problème de l'impossibilité d'autoreprésentation dans le cas des animaux.

En effet, le fil rouge de toutes ces recherches sera donc concentré autour d'un processus de subjectivisation de la figure animale, les chercheurs se donnant la tâche de créer une visibilité, de combler les trous et de repenser toutes ces représentations animalières. Cela passe par des débats où les questions juridiques et morales s'imbriquent à celles scientifiques, chacun essayant de réévaluer les rapports entre les humains et les animaux⁶. Est-ce pourtant possible d'approcher la question animale sans tomber dans l'anthropomorphisme et sans fixer aux animaux de nouvelles significations purement humaines ? En effet, le monde animal, si multiple et varié, pose le problème de ce que Derrida appelle l'« altérité absolue » (Derrida 2006, 28), on constate donc la difficulté de mettre en place une sorte de « zoocentrisme », c'est-à-dire une manière de penser les rapports humains-animaux en partant des intérêts de ces derniers tout en leur créant l'espace d'un passage du statut d'objet à celui de sujet. Le

⁵ D'ailleurs, des études intersectionnelles cherchent à aborder les croisements entre toutes ces figures minorisées. C'est le cas du zooféminisme où on s'intéresse au rapport entre le genre et l'animal, ainsi que des études postcoloniales qui travaillent sur les représentations péjoratives entre la race et l'animalité (Graham Huggan, Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism : Literature, Animals, Environment*, Londres, Routledge, 2010.)

⁶ Nous notons ici les études de Donna J. Haraway, *When species meet*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008., Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film*, New York City, Columbia University Press, 2011., Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and affection: the making of pets*. New Haven, Yale Univ Press, 1984.

discours littéraire, parmi d'autres, a démontré quand même, à plusieurs reprises, qu'il peut se charger de parler à voix haute pour ceux qui en sont dépourvus. On pourrait donner ici l'exemple de la prosopopée, figure de style à travers laquelle un écrivain fait parler des êtres inanimés ou démunis d'un discours comme les absents, les morts, les exclus, les fous, y compris les animaux.

Nous nous proposons dans cet article de suivre en grandes lignes l'évolution de la pensée zoopoétique française et d'explorer ses principales directions de recherche. Nous allons voir qu'elle se distingue des études animales anglophones proposant une autre méthodologie, beaucoup plus focalisée sur les aspects thématiques et narratologiques. En même temps, nous allons prendre comme étude de cas le récit de voyage *La panthère des neiges* (2019) de Sylvain Tesson afin d'examiner en quelle mesure le genre viatique peut rendre compte d'une nouvelle approche du texte littéraire via la figure animale. Nous allons évoquer quelle a été la place des bêtes au fil du temps dans la littérature de voyage afin de comprendre le changement de paradigme produit dans le récit tessonien qui se rapproche beaucoup plus d'une démarche zoopoétique de l'écriture littéraire.

La zoopoétique française

Si des mouvements pro-animaux existaient en France depuis le XX^e siècle, voire XIX^e, la recherche académique dans le domaine ne s'est institutionnalisée qu'au début du XXI^e. Il faut noter que dans le monde francophone la réflexion sur l'animalité a été tout d'abord l'objet d'étude des philosophes comme Giorgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze (le concept de *devenir-animal* traverse d'ailleurs plusieurs de ses textes), Jacques Derrida, Elisabeth de Fontenay qui ont ouvert la porte aux anthropologues (Bruno Latour, Phillippe Descola, Florence Burgat), aux historiens (Éric Baratay), aux littéraires (Anne Simon, Pierre Schoentjes) ainsi qu'à des recherches interdisciplinaires⁷ dont les parutions sont assez récentes. Ils ont tous en commun le souci pour ce processus de subjectivation dont on parlait plus haut afin de mettre fin à « l'exception humaine » (Schaeffer 2007) sans toutefois négliger le fait que la figure animale arrive à nous échapper et que la rencontre de l'homme avec la bête se passe le plus souvent sous le signe de l'esquive.

⁷ Comme par exemple : Jean-Paul Engelibert (éd.), *La question animale : entre science, littérature et philosophie*, PU de Rennes, 2011. Christophe Traïni, *La cause animale. Essai de sociologie historique (1820-1980)*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2011. Aurélie Choné, Isabelle Iribarren, Marie Pelé et al., *Les études animales sont-elles bonnes à penser ? : Repenser les sciences, reconfigurer les disciplines*, Paris, L'Harmattan, coll. « Sciences et Société », 2020.

Dans l'espace francophone, il est difficile de regrouper ces chercheurs sous une seule direction d'étude comme cela se passe dans le monde anglophone pour les *animal studies* ; le terme a d'ailleurs des problèmes à être transposé en français, on le retrouve traduit soit comme « études animales » (selon la formule d'« études du genre ») qui semble s'imposer (Dardenne 2022), soit comme « études animalistes » ou « animalières ». Cette réticence terminologique peut être symptomatique d'une certaine méfiance française quant à l'emprunt via le monde nord-américain de telles approches plutôt thématiques que méthodiques. Certes, la zoopoétique française ne correspond pas aux *animal studies* du monde anglophone, restant beaucoup plus focalisée sur le domaine littéraire privilégiant les analyses formelles et narratologiques :

Aux niveaux narratologique et stylistique sont interrogés les procédés par lesquels certains auteurs, quittant le terrain de l'anthropocentrisme, tentent de mettre en mots des « subjectivités animales » (Jean-Marie Schaeffer) ou des consciences animales, de restituer des langages (souffles, rythmes, mouvements signifiants...) et des « milieux » non-humains, ou de rendre compte d'« actions » et de « styles » animaux. (Simon 2014)

Dans le domaine littéraire, qui nous intéresse ici, la critique littéraire avait abordé l'animalité plutôt dans le cas des genres littéraires mineurs (comme les contes, la littérature de jeunesse, les fables, le roman du terroir) se limitant à la ramener toujours à l'humain. Nous pouvons dire qu'après les années 1960-1970 où l'attention était portée aux jeux de langage, au formalisme et à l'autoréférentialité des textes et les années 1980-2010 où la focalisation tombait sur les « écritures de soi » et la question de l'autofiction, la figure animale, fortement marginalisée jusque-là, s'impose de nos jours dans sa valeur intrinsèque surtout grâce à un intérêt du monde littéraire pour l'environnement et le vivant. Les discours de plus en plus alarmants sur la crise climatique et l'anthropocène imposent de nouveaux rapports au monde, exposés par l'intermédiaire de l'imaginaire littéraire, afin de retisser les affinités déchirées entre les vivants et d'apprendre à l'humain à se décentrer dans sa manière d'habiter le monde. La zoopoétique devient alors une zoopolitique qui se charge de confronter son lecteur aux violences contre les animaux misant justement sur cette individualité de l'animal, créée à travers différents effets narratologiques. Dans la même mesure, en dénonçant ces abus à l'encontre des animaux, l'homme y trouve son reflet dans son image déshumanisée et bestiale.

À partir de la moitié des années 2010, dans la littérature, on assiste à ce qu'on appelle un « tournant animal » qui relève « d'un vaste mouvement de visibilité des animaux dans la fiction. » (Milcent-Lawson 2019) On

remarque une augmentation de l'intérêt pour des « fictions animales » (Correard 2021) ainsi que des recherches littéraires groupées sous l'étiquette d'études « zoopoétiques ». Parmi les manifestations et programmes, nous pouvons signaler « Animalittérature » dirigé toujours par Anne Simon, le colloque « Humain/animal-Human/animal » déroulé à San Francisco en 2011, « Zoopoétique/Zoopoetics » en 2014 à Princeton, ainsi que les programmes de recherches dirigés par Gisèle Séginger : « Littérature et savoirs du vivant – XIX^e-XX^e siècles » et « Penser le vivant : les échanges entre littérature et sciences de la vie (de la fin du XVIII^e siècle à l'époque contemporaine » qui ont consolidé l'institutionnalisation de cette nouvelle sphère de recherche en littérature.⁸

Le terme de « zoopoétique » a été utilisé pour la première fois par Derrida par rapport à l'œuvre de Kafka (Derrida 2006, 20) et, étymologiquement parlant, il est formé par les notions grecques *zōon*, qui fait référence « aux vivants en mouvement, à l'animé, aux bêtes »⁹, et *poiēsis* qui désigne la création et, dans son sens le plus large, les caractéristiques du discours littéraire. La zoopoétique étudierait donc la manière dans laquelle le langage poétique rend compte de la question animale et des rapports de l'homme au monde des vivants. L'objectif de la zoopoétique, selon Kari Driscoll et Eva Hoffman, « involves not only seeing but also precisely this attentive listening—a practice of “listening otherwise”. »¹⁰ (Driscoll et Hoffman 2018, 3) Afin d'adopter ce point de vue non-humain, au début, tout écrivain passe par une remise en cause de ses préjugés humanocentristes. Ce n'est pas pour rien que les premiers à s'intéresser à la question animale en France étaient les philosophes des années 1970, car la zoopoétique implique une déterritorialisation de l'attention portée au vivant, une déconstruction de l'anthropocentrisme et un dépassement de ses catégories rigides qui séparent l'humain et l'animal, outils philosophiques imposés par les penseurs de l'époque.

⁸ En témoigne aussi un des plus importants projets de recherche sur la question animale, *Animots*, dirigé par Anne Simon et qui se présente ainsi : « au croisement des Sciences humaines et des Sciences du vivant, le programme *Animots* souhaite fédérer la recherche en zoopoétique et proposer une veille sur l'actualité littéraire, artistique et scientifique sur l'animalité et les interactions entre les vivants et le monde. » <https://animots.hypotheses.org/>

Un autre projet tout aussi important est *Vivanlit*, qui coordonné par Gisèle Séginger et Christine Maillard et qui s'organise à son tour aux carrefours de disciplines associant des spécialistes des domaines les plus variés. <https://www.fmsh.fr/projets/vivanlit>

⁹ Conformément à la définition donnée dans « La zoopoétique: un engagement proprement poétique en études animales. Entretien avec Anne Simon » par Alain Schaffner dans *ELFe XX–XXI* no. 5 « *Approches de l'animal* », ed. Alain Romestaing et Alain Schaffner, 2015, p. 219.

¹⁰ « implique non seulement le fait de voir, mais aussi précisément celui d'écouter attentivement – une pratique d' « écouter autrement » (notre traduction)

Le récit viatique animalier

En littérature, on retrouve cette démarche zoopoétique chez Sylvain Tesson dans *La panthère des neiges* (2019) qui, à l'invitation du photographe animalier, Vincent Munier, se rend dans les vallées tibétaines à la recherche de la panthère des neiges, espèce de félins très vulnérable, de plus en plus rare, victime également de braconnage. De tous les récits de voyage signés par Tesson, celui-ci se distingue par son immobilité. Pour le *wanderer* de la littérature viatique française¹¹, le défi de se tenir immobile pendant des heures dans l'attente d'une possible irruption de la bête semble venir à l'encontre de ses fuites classiques. Ainsi, l'écrivain-voyageur doit s'initier à l'affût, technique des photographes et des réalisateurs animaliers qui consiste à se tenir caché longtemps dans l'attente du surgissement de l'animal afin de le « capturer » sur la pellicule.

Pour ce qui est de la présence animalière dans la littérature viatique, il serait très difficile de l'imaginer sans faire une brève mention des animaux. Que ce soit sous la forme des rencontres inattendues avec les bêtes ou juste comme moyen de locomotion, les animaux ont toujours fait partie de l'imaginaire viatique. On les retrouve dans les odyssées antiques sous leurs formes parfois monstrueuses, comme c'est le cas des satyres (des figures mi-humaines/mi-animales) ou des animaux à plusieurs têtes dans l'épopée homérique. Au Moyen-âge, on note par exemple la présence des livres de chasse où la figure animale occupe la place centrale.¹² Plus tard, Cyrano de Bergerac, ainsi que Swift d'ailleurs, donnent à lire les voyages d'animaux surhumains. Dans les récits plus modernes, on s'y intéresse de manière encyclopédique, cherchant à catégoriser la faune de manière la plus scientifique possible¹³.

Elizabeth Leane essaye d'illustrer une possible typologie des rôles des animaux dans les narrations viatiques. Elle parle de trois cas de figure : « the animal as quest-object, the animal as instrument of travel, and the animal as companion. »¹⁴ (Leane 2019, 306) Dans le premier cas, « l'animal comme

¹¹ Nous notons : *La Marche dans le ciel : 5 000 km à pied à travers l'Himalaya*, avec Alexandre Poussin, Éditions Robert Laffont, 1998. *L'Axe du loup : de la Sibérie à l'Inde sur les pas des évadés du Goulag*, Éditions Robert Laffont, 2004. *Éloge de l'énergie vagabonde*, Éditions Pocket, 2009. *Sur les chemins noirs*, Éditions Gallimard, 2016.

¹² Pour citer un exemple : *De arte venandi cum avibus* de l'empereur Frédéric II de Hohenstaufen (1194-1250).

¹³ Voir les exemples du Français Louis-Antoine de Bougainville (1729-1811) et de l'Anglais James Cook (1728-1779), mais aussi le récit d'Adèle Toussaint-Samson, *Une Parisienne au Brésil*, (1883).

¹⁴ « l'animal comme objet-quête, l'animal comme moyen de voyager, et l'animal comme compagnon » (notre traduction).

objet-quête », se situent les récits de voyage ayant comme motivation de déplacement la recherche de l'animal en question. Cela pourrait être un récit de chasse, de domestication, d'exploration scientifique, ainsi que des récits des photographes et des réalisateurs des documentaires animaliers. Le récit se soumet dans ce cas aux règles du genre qui se présente comme l'histoire d'une conquête ou d'une capture dont le texte d'Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, représente le paradigme. Dans ce cas, l'animal est toujours objectivable et, une fois capturé, il réassure la supériorité, ainsi que la virilité, de l'homme sur le vivant.

Dans la deuxième catégorie, « l'animal comme moyen de voyager », on retrouve une grande partie des récits de voyage où le transport se fait par l'animal, le plus souvent il s'agit des récits d'avant l'époque industrialisée lorsqu'on se déplaçait à cheval, avec un âne ou un chameau, etc. Elizabeth Leane y inclut également les récits où l'animal procure de la nourriture (lait, viande), de l'habillement ou de la protection, car dans tous ces cas l'animal reste une forme de ressource pour l'homme qui se montre le plus souvent indifférent aux souffrances de la bête.

Dans la dernière catégorie, l'animal est un compagnon pour l'homme et a un statut beaucoup plus important ; Leane parle ici d'une certaine réciprocité qui s'établit entre le voyageur et l'animal, tandis que ce dernier remplit le rôle de témoin silencieux des exploits du premier. Il y a également une prise en compte du « caractère » de l'animal, de ses possibles souffrances ou perspectives sur le voyage.

Cette classification laisse de côté le grand nombre de récits où les animaux font irruption de manière spontanée et l'interaction avec le voyageur est extrêmement brève. Elle ignore également les récits des voyages « racontés » par les animaux¹⁵. Cependant, la typologie de Leane offre de bonnes bases pour une réflexion sur la manière dans laquelle les animaux ont été représentés au fil du temps dans la littérature viatique. Nous y pouvons déceler que, dans la grande majorité des textes, la figure de l'animal est enfermée dans des représentations stéréotypiques et que la focalisation ne tombe que rarement sur une relation intersubjective entre l'humain et le vivant. D'un point de vue intersectionnel, Jopi Nyman invoque, à partir du texte signé par Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa* (1935), une lecture en grille colonialiste de la présence animale dans la littérature de voyage où l'altérité de l'animal est appréhendée à travers des généralisations, des objectivisations et des discours qui trahissent le désir de domination et de pouvoir.

¹⁵ La littérature de jeunesse abonde en ce sens d'exemples des récits viatiques animaliers, les enfants portant sur le monde une vision animiste qui ne pose pas de problèmes quant à leur compréhension des scènes d'animaux à comportement humain.

À notre avis et selon la grille d'Elizabeth Leane, le début du récit nous laisse supposer que l'animal est présent dans le récit de Tesson comme objet-quête. Sa rareté contribue à lui conférer une certaine aura : « la panthère était la régente et son invisibilité confirmait son statut. Elle régnait et n'avait donc pas besoin de se montrer » (Tesson 2019, 100), tandis que les difficultés de l'apercevoir héroïsent les deux protagonistes qui doivent affronter le plein hiver et les altitudes de quatre et cinq mille mètres tout en assumant le risque de ne pas la rencontrer¹⁶. Nous remarquons également l'utilisation de l'article défini « la » dans le cas de la panthère ainsi que l'insistance sur des formes morphologiques au singulier ce qui a un fort effet d'individualisation de la bête : « Il y a *une* bête au Tibet que je poursuis depuis six ans [...] *elle* vit sur les plateaux. » (18) Nous observons donc que la figure de l'animal est centrale dans ce récit. Elle donne le titre du texte et hante tout le processus créateur qui trouve son prétexte dans la recherche de la panthère.

Dès les premières pages, le voyageur se place sous le signe de l'animalité rappelant que son nom, Tesson, signifie « blaireau » en vieux français. En dressant le profil de cet animal, il nous semble que l'écrivain y décèle une affinité entre lui et la bête :

le blaireau était haï dans les campagnes et irrémédiablement détruit. On l'accusait de fuir le sol, de percer les haies. [...] C'était un être taciturne, une bête de la nuit et de la solitude. Il demandait une vie dissimulée, régnait sur l'ombre, ne souffrait pas les visites. Il savait que la paix se défend. Il sortait de ses retraites à la nuit pour rentrer à l'aube. Comment l'homme aurait-il supporté l'existence d'un totem de la discrétion érigeant la distance en vertu et se faisant un honneur du silence ? (Tesson 2019, 18)

Le besoin de solitude, de silence, de paix est le leitmotiv de tout récit de voyage tessonien. Nous ne pouvons pas lire ces lignes sur le blaireau sans se rappeler *Dans les forêts de Sibérie* (2011) ou *Sur les chemins noirs* (2016), des textes-manifestes pour la vie érémitique. À travers ce portrait en miroir, Tesson arrive à rendre visible la subjectivité de l'animal en rompant avec les visions classiques sur celui-ci. Pourtant, il ne se détache pas complètement de l'anthropomorphisme, privilégiant seulement les traits de la bête qui semblent correspondre à son profil intime.

D'autres apparitions animalières feront irruption dans le récit de voyage, comme le yack sauvage, animal totem de Munier, le renard, le loup, la chèvre, l'antilope, la gazelle, l'âne sauvage, tous se plaçant sous le signe de l'éphémère et de la fragilité que parfois seul l'œil avisé est capable de découvrir dans le

¹⁶ Comme cela s'est passé dans *Le léopard des neiges* (1978) de Peter Matthiessen.

paysage. Ces présences ouvrent la voie à des interrogations portant sur le monde animal et sur le rapport de l'homme aux bêtes.

Croisements et hybridités

Traditionnellement interdisciplinaires, les études animales sont très ouvertes aux croisements des disciplines qui visent les rapports humain/animal. La zoopoétique propose des pistes des plus innovantes analyses nourries par les avancées récentes en éthologie qui minent subversivement la vision allégorisante et métaphorique de l'animal:

Au niveau thématique sont tout particulièrement abordés les interactions et les partages de sens entre hommes et animaux, les motifs du monstrueux et de l'hybridité qui permettent au lecteur de pénétrer des corporalités et des psychismes autres, les mutations dans les représentations d'une nature de moins en moins « animée » (la mort nietzschéenne du Grand Pan), la question de l'animalité native – darwinienne, phénoménologique, psychique... – du rapport humain au monde, les représentations et autoportraits d'écrivains en animaux, de Proust (hibou, poule ou guêpe) à Chevillard (hérisson, crabe) en passant par Darrieussecq (truite) ou Tristan Garcia (singe). (Simon 2014)

Présents depuis longtemps dans nos mythes, nos contes et nos textes littéraires, les animaux hantent en sourdine l'imaginaire collectif. Un symptôme ancien de cette recherche d'explorer l'altérité absolue de l'animal a été peut-être ce parasitage des frontières entre les espèces par des figures mi-animales/mi-humaines, métamorphosées ou hybrides (sirène, centaure, loup-garou, mais aussi des dieux égyptiens etc.) qui témoigne d'une vieille croyance dans la perméabilité des règnes, mais aussi d'une angoisse quant à cela.

Ce n'est que récemment qu'on a commencé à envisager de plus près le pouvoir des textes à rendre compte de ces « subjectivités animales », non seulement dans les récits où la cause animale représente l'enjeu principal du projet littéraire de l'auteur, mais également dans un corpus varié où les écrivains s'occupent très peu de la présence des animaux, comme c'est le cas de Proust¹⁷, par exemple. Plus que les discours scientifiques ou philosophiques, c'est l'immersion fictionnelle qui, misant sur l'empathie de son lecteur, déclenche une réflexion sur les affects produits à la rencontre-révélation avec le vivant. Cela se passe le plus souvent par des tâtonnements, par des hypothèses, comme

¹⁷ Voir les travaux de Jean-Pierre Richard, *Proust et le monde sensible*, Paris, Seuil, 1974 et d'Anne Simon, « Portrait de l'artiste en hibou : de l'usage anthropologique de la zoologie chez Proust », *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, n° spécial Proust, vol. 9, n° 2, avril 2005, pp. 139-150.

c'est le cas de Sylvain Tesson qui élabore ses pensées dans un autre récit de voyage, *Dans les forêts de Sibérie*, sous formes d'interrogations et d'étonnements :

Quelle volonté avait ordonné l'invention de ces formes monstrueusement sophistiquées, toujours plus ingénieuses et toujours plus distantes à mesure que les millions d'années passaient ? La spirale, la mandibule, la plume et l'écaille, la ventouse et le pouce préhensile étaient les trésors du cabinet de curiosités de cette puissance géniale et déréglée qui avait triomphé de l'unité et orchestré l'efflorescence. (Tesson 2011, 56)

Le langage ici est intentionnellement créatif immergeant son lecteur au mystère et à la complexité des animaux. Ce type d'interrogations montre également à quel point l'humain peut développer une sensibilité à part envers le monde animal qu'il arrive à rejoindre au niveau de l'imaginaire. Pourtant, pour y parvenir, il faudrait travailler cette nouvelle attention déplaçant les lieux communs à travers de nouvelles expérimentations esthétiques et une « [re]définition du regard artistique : voir les fauves cachés derrière les paravents banals » (Tesson 124).

Une question de langage

L'enjeu des approches zoopoétiques tourne autour de ce décentrement de la vision humanocentriste inaugurée par Aristote, continuée par Descartes, Kant, Heidegger et autres, où l'animal est défini à partir des différences et des manques, privé de *logos*, de discours, de raison, donc objectivable. Au contraire, comme Anne Simon le note, la zoopoétique est une approche de l'altérité qui part « d'un éblouissement devant l'inventivité du vivant » (Simon 2021, 30) et qui est loin de se placer « hors-langage ». En tant que grille de lecture, la zoopoétique explore l'imbrication entre le matériel – le monde, les vivants, les bêtes – et le langage. Elle est attentive à ce dialogue des regards entre l'humain et l'animal, à comment les écrivains et les écrivaines se représentent le monde de ce dernier¹⁸, déterritorialisant leurs styles, leurs rythmes et leurs langages, mais aussi à ce devenir-sujet des animaux qui postule une poétique propre (ici la zoopoétique s'approche des autres recherches comme la zoosémiotique ou la zoolinguistique¹⁹).

¹⁸ Des auteurs et des autrices comme Jean-Christophe Bailly, Éric Chevillard, Marie Darrieussecq, Sylvie Germain, Maylis de Kerangal, pour n'en citer que quelques-uns, ouvrent en ce sens de nouveaux territoires fictionnels en intégrant le point de vue animal dans sa singularité.

¹⁹ On note la présence de la *Société française de zoosémiotique* qui souhaite mettre en relation les linguistes autour de plusieurs axes de recherches : les langages intraspécifiques, interspécifiques et métagénériques ; la sémiotique des cultures animales non-humaines ainsi que la sémiotique des cultures animales humaines en lien avec les cultures non-humaines. <https://societefrancaisedezeosemiotique.fr/> Leurs publications sont publiées chez L'Harmattan dans la collection « Zoosémiotique » qui compte déjà deux titres à ce jour (23.04.2023).

Dans *La panthère des neiges*, il y a une attention particulière portée à cet échange inter-spéciste. Les protagonistes déchiffrent les traces des bêtes dans les paysages et « lisent » le comportement animal à travers ces indices laissés derrière. Ce type de dialogue impose la prise en compte de la subjectivité animale, un des plus beaux passages du récit est probablement la « conversation » entre le photographe et le loup :

Munier poussa un hurlement. Au bout de dix minutes, un loup répondit. [...] Munier chantait. Un loup répondait. Munier se taisait, le loup reprenait. Et soudain l'un d'eux apparut sur le col le plus haut. Munier chanta une dernière fois et le loup galopa dans le versant vers notre position. (Tesson 2019, 38)

Cet échange particulier et intime se place au-delà de toute forme culturelle ou romanesque de la rencontre avec l'animal, elle se fonde sur une sorte d'authenticité du vécu et sur une confiance réciproque qui élimine la distance et rapproche les deux acteurs de la scène suspendant pour un instant les frontières entre les espèces. De nos jours, les animaux restent dans la plupart des cas étrangers aux humains, ce mouvement de rapprochement du loup sauvage vers l'homme est d'autant plus précieux qu'il est extrêmement rare.

Une question du regard

Plusieurs essais parmi lesquels celui d'Anne Simon, place l'origine de la zoopoétique dans la pensée derridienne élaborée dans *L'Animal que donc je suis* où, dès le titre, Derrida pose le problème de l'animal dans son « irremplaçable singularité » (Derrida 2006, 26) du sujet regardant :

Depuis le temps, peut-on dire que l'animal nous regarde ?

Quel animal ? L'autre.

Souvent je me demande, moi, pour voir, qui je suis — et qui je suis au moment où, surpris nu, en silence, par le regard d'un animal, par exemple les yeux d'un chat, j'ai du mal, oui, du mal à surmonter une gêne. (Derrida 2006, 18)

La pensée zoopoétique consiste justement dans cette mise à nu de tout ce qui culturellement nous est propre et de se laisser regarder par les autres vivants : « il a son point de vue sur moi » (Derrida 2006, 28). Le regard de l'animal, dans son altérité absolue, peut entrer en dialogue et interroger l'humain dans tout ce que la philosophie occidentale tenait jusque-là comme acquis.

Dans toute réflexion zoopoétique sur « l'animot »²⁰, l'enjeu est de dépasser la vision dévalorisante sur l'abîme lié au langage et de prendre conscience de la rencontre entre deux-mondes qui communiquent et qui ont des choses à se dire. Toute rencontre animale est un commencement : « L'animal nous regarde, et nous sommes nus devant lui. Et penser commence peut-être là. » (Derrida 2006, 50)

Dans *La panthère des neiges*, le regard a une importance cruciale. L'affût est une technique assez ambivalente. Sylvain Tesson tente de l'idéaliser parlant du « plaisir de l'attente » (Tesson 2019, 23), de l'affût comme « une prière » (56), comme « un exercice de l'Asie » (143) jusqu'à en faire une pratique de tous les jours : « on gagne toujours à augmenter les réglages de sa propre fréquence de réception. » (164) Moins invasive dans le cas des photographes, elle a longtemps été utilisée par les chasseurs comme étape qui précède la capture de l'animal servant à déchiffrer des traces afin de comprendre l'identité et le comportement de la bête. Elle relève d'une relation empathique du chasseur/photographe avec « sa proie » afin de déduire sa localisation. Basée fondamentalement sur une géographie des sens, elle impose surtout une éducation du regard. En ce sens, Tesson se distingue de Vincent Munier qui, à ses yeux, est beaucoup plus initié à cette technique :

partout où son regard se posait, il voyait des bêtes ou devinait leur présence. En ce don, comparable à l'éducation du passant raffiné qui, déambulant dans la ville, vous signale une colonnade classique, un fronton baroque, un rajout néo-gothique, offrait à Munier de se déplacer dans une géographie sans cesse enluminée et toujours généreuse, palpitant d'habitants dont un œil profane ne soupçonnait pas l'existence. (Tesson 2019, 148)

La complicité du photographe avec le monde des bêtes est fondée dans cet acte herméneutique du monde animal, tandis que Tesson semble être en dehors des codes de ce langage organique et éphémère. Afin d'approcher les bêtes, Munier doit rendre sa présence la moins visible, il se cache, il se tait, il reste immobile longtemps, des gestes étrangers au citoyen de tous les jours qui, à l'époque des réseaux sociaux, cherche toujours à se montrer, à faire du bruit autour de sa personne. Ce n'est que cette abolition de tout orgueil humain qui rend possible la rencontre animale : « Munier, bien que fort charitable, ne se prétendait pas humaniste. Il préférerait la bête en l'œilleton de sa jumelle à l'homme en son miroir et ne plaçait pas l'être humain au sommet de la pyramide

²⁰ Néologisme introduit par Derrida pour « donner à entendre le pluriel des animaux » en forme de protestation contre l'étiquette généralisante « l'animal ». (Derrida 2006, 73)

du vivant. » (87) Ce n'est pas juste un dépassement de l'anthropocentrisme, mais de l'égo-centrisme en premier. Cette leçon d'humilité remet également en question la position centrale de l'écrivain-voyageur :

Je m'acquittais de mon ancienne indifférence par le double exercice de l'attention et de la patience. Appelons cela l'amour. / Je venais de le comprendre : le jardin de l'homme est peuplé de présences. Elles ne nous veulent pas de mal, mais elles nous tiennent à l'œil. Rien de ce que nous accomplirons n'échappera à leur vigilance. Les bêtes sont des gardiens de square, l'homme y joue au cerceau en se croyant le roi. C'était une découverte. Elle n'était pas désagréable. Je savais désormais que je n'étais pas seul. (Tesson 2019, 48)

Tesson fait la même découverte que Derrida, l'animal le regarde. Il place l'animal dans la position cartésienne de celui qui a son point de vue sur le monde. Le regard n'est plus instrument de domination, mais de communication. Il s'agit d'un déplacement de paradigme qui passe véritablement d'un récit humano-centré à un zoo-centré. Dans la plupart des récits tessonniens, il y a des animaux qui font irruption sur le trajet, mais jamais ils ne sont considérés dans leur valeur intrinsèque. Le récit de voyage est une écriture profondément autobiographique qui, depuis le romantisme, place l'accent sur l'intériorité du voyageur à la rencontre du monde. L'animal sauvage n'y est qu'un obstacle que le héros devrait surmonter dans son passage. En ce sens, le récit de voyage contemporain pourrait trouver dans la démarche zoopoétique une source de déconstruction, mais aussi d'innovation.

Le désir de contact avec la bête se poursuit dans la troisième partie de *La panthère des neiges* où la féline fait finalement plusieurs apparitions. La description se fait par tâtonnements, les deux protagonistes échangent les longues-vues pour mieux la repérer « dissimulée », « camouflée » dans le paysage. La rencontre est mise sous le signe de la magie, d'une « apparition religieuse » à caractère « sacré » (Tesson 2019, 106). Cela est dû à l'effet de surprise, rien n'anticipe le surgissement de la bête et le hasard de la scène rend la rencontre d'autant plus spéciale.

Munier me passa la lunette la plus puissante. Je scrutai la bête jusqu'à ce que mon œil se dessèche dans le froid. Les traits de la face convergeaient vers le museau, en lignes de force. Elle tourna la tête, pleine face. Les yeux me fixèrent. C'étaient deux cristaux de mépris, brûlants, glacials. Elle se leva, tendit l'encolure vers nous. 'Elle nous a repérés, pensai-je. Que va-t-elle faire ? Bondir ?'

Elle bâilla.

Voilà l'effet de l'homme sur la panthère du Tibet.

Elle nous tourna le dos, s'étira, disparut. (Tesson 2019, 103)

Comme le note Pierre Schoentjes, « la scène des yeux dans les yeux isole l'animal et le rend unique [...] la rencontre leur rend une individualité. » (Schoentjes 2022, 25) Si pour les protagonistes cette rencontre relève du miracle, la bête ne se laisse pas impressionner par la présence des humains se montrant indifférente.

Dès le titre, la panthère hante l'imaginaire de l'écrivain et du lecteur, la scène du regard qui s'échange entre les protagonistes et la féline semble être le cœur central du récit et sa raison d'être. Comme dans le récit de chasse, le fait de la voir enfin et de la capturer dans des photographies marque la réussite, mais aussi la fin de la quête. Si pour Munier le but du voyage était de photographier la panthère, pour Tesson le mobile du voyage est beaucoup plus ambigu. La quête de l'animal est, bien sûr, importante, mais dans le cas de l'écrivain-voyageur elle est doublée d'une quête intérieure et artistique. L'animal ne devient alors qu'une métaphore pour la pratique d'un autre style de vie, l'affût, le savoir-disparaître, mais aussi pour un exercice d'écriture. Sylvain Tesson s'inscrit ainsi dans la lignée de très peu d'écrivains francophones qui dédient entièrement leurs textes à la figure animale.

Conclusion

Jusqu'à récemment les rapports humains aux animaux fonctionnaient sur la structure de capturer-assimiler, c'est ce que Derrida résume par le « carnophallogocentrisme », forme de violence « faite à l'animal [...] d'essence du moins à prédominance mâle, et, comme la dominance même de la prédominance, guerrière, stratégique, chasseresse, viriloïde. » (Derrida 2006, 144) Plusieurs discours contemporains ont commencé à alerter pourtant sur l'éradication du divers animal et se proposent de sensibiliser son public sur le sujet par tous les moyens. La littérature témoigne d'une préoccupation de plus en plus urgente quant à la cause animale et se laisse infiltrer par les débats d'ordre éthique afin de rendre compte d'un monde en perpétuel changement. Les récits s'emparent de la figure animale afin de remettre en cause les rapports questionnables entre les humains et les vivants. L'animal nous met ainsi devant une forme d'altérité absolue que la littérature se propose d'explorer.

Dans son récit, *La panthère des neiges*, Sylvain Tesson met en avant la figure de cette bête en voie de disparition tout en essayant de la découvrir dans sa subjectivité. Si au début du texte la figure animale nous laisse croire qu'il s'agit d'un objet-quête, jusqu'à la fin du récit elle sera approchée dans sa valeur intrinsèque grâce à l'initiation au langage des bêtes et au regard porté sur celles-ci. Les protagonistes suivent les traces de l'animal, s'adaptent à son rythme, pratiquent l'affût, disparaissent à leur tour dans le paysage afin de rendre possible la rencontre. Le texte de Tesson relève d'un décentrement de

la position supérieure de l'humain face à l'animal, cela se concrétise dans la figure du photographe Munier qui semble s'oublier au profit de la diversité animale. Le récit s'écrit via la figure animale, au début dans son absence qui hante les protagonistes, ensuite à travers ses brèves apparitions. C'est la panthère qui mène le récit et il ne s'arrête que lorsqu'elle est photographiée ou décrite. Les scènes de rencontres avec les bêtes sont de courtes révélations qui nous amènent devant ce qu'était jusque-là un angle mort de la littérature. Ces deux altérités extrêmes arrivent quand même à se parler et le récit de Tesson témoigne de cette expérience de la porosité entre les frontières des deux mondes ainsi que de la flexibilité de l'humain à s'adapter à l'expressivité de l'animal.

Le récit viatique, par sa dimension référentielle, marque cette transition entre la perspective généralisante quant au monde animal vers une approche plus spécifique, locale et individuelle. Enfin, nous pouvons proposer une nouvelle catégorie dans la classification d'Elisabeth Leane que nous appellerions « l'animal en tant que tel » et qui se proposerait justement de désobjectiver la posture animale la plaçant au centre de l'expérience littéraire. Cela pousserait le lecteur de dépasser à son tour la vision « par catégories » du vivant vers une expérience beaucoup plus significative de ces rencontres inter-spécistes.

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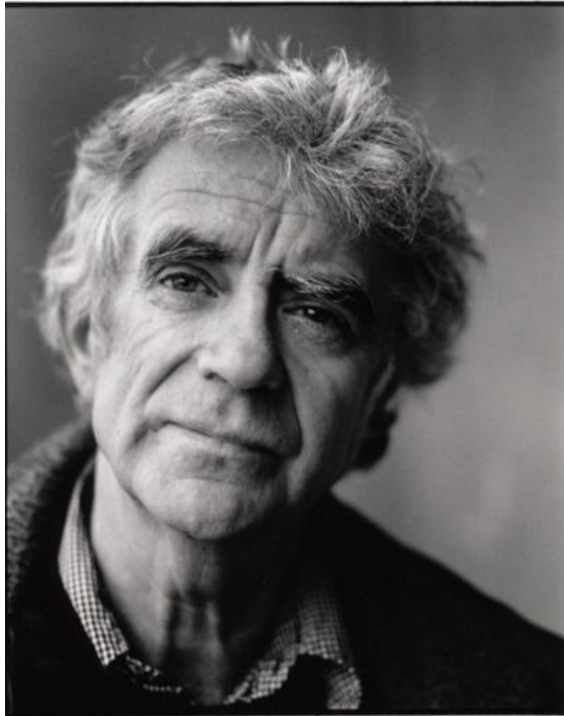
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JAN ERIK VOLD – The Renowned Norwegian Word Architect and Performer

Raluca-Daniela DUINEA¹



Jan Erik Vold
Foto: Ulla Montan
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Jan Erik VOLD (b. 1939) is a prominent literary and public figure of the Norwegian literary and cultural space of the 1960s. And he is “still at work. [...] Because if I didn’t, there would be one voice missing”, as the poet himself stated in the introduction of the first Norwegian-Romanian bilingual anthology of

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poetry entitled *Briskeby blues*, published at Casa Cărții de Știință Publishing House, in 2023, with the financial support of Norwegian Literature Abroad (NORLA).

The impressive contribution to the Modern Norwegian literature of the 1960s consists of his innovative and valuable concrete and *new simple* (*nyenkle*²) poems often read over jazz and blues chords, together with his active implication as editor and key member of the Literary Circle *Profil* and of the eponymous literary magazine. The literary direction of *Profil* was drawn by a group of young students whose aim was the renewal of the Norwegian literature through publications based on everyday life experience.

In 1965 Vold made his literary debut with the volume *mellom speil og speil* (*Between Mirror and Mirror*), consisting of typographic poems, followed by the experimental volume *blikket* (*The Gaze*, 1966) where the rhythmic dimension of the poem made by only five words (*blikket, du – you, fanger – catch, meg – me, ikke – no*) is the note of novelty introduced by Vold in the Norwegian poetry of the 60s. *HEKT* (*Grab*) was published in 1966, followed by the volume of prose poems entitled *fra rom til rom SAD & CRAZY* (*From Room to Room SAD & CRAZY*) from 1967. In 1968, the volume *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes*) had a great contribution to the renewal of the Norwegian poetry, through its funny and *new simple* (*nyenkle*) poems with impact on Norwegian society, used for the first time in Norwegian literature. These poems underline the fact that there is no clear limit between life and poetry. Their poetic message approached themes like friendship, love, Briskeby, everyday life, the Blue Tram, or the city of Oslo. They get directly to the reader because Vold gave them a special and unique dimension, reading them in the tram or on the stage being often accompanied by jazz musicians. There are also other volumes of poetry, namely *kykelipi* from 1969, where the concrete poems are classified into grammatical, ready-mades, ekphrastic and figurative poems, tongue twisters and even nursery-rhymes like poems. *spor, snø* (*Traces, Snow*) are special *new simple* haiku, followed by meditative poems in *Bok 8: LIV* (*Book 8: Life*, 1973) and *S*, 1978. Jan Erik Vold published also political poems *Elg* from 1989, *IKKE: Skillingstrykk fra nittitallet* (*NOT: Broad-sides from the Nineties*, 1993), and the most recent volume of poetry was published 2011, entitled *Store hvite bok å se* (*The Great White Book to See*). The poems in this volume are wintry and resemble a memory book, being also about winter sports practised by the author together with his friends.

² A simple and common poem which illustrates everyday life situations, even personal experiences, thus getting closer to the reader who, in this case, becomes, an important part of the creative process.

Besides being an innovative poet, Vold is also essayist, editing a series of anthologies about the literary work of well-known Norwegian writers, as well as a prominent translator of William Carlos Williams, Samuel Becket, Frank O'Hara, Bob Dylan, Robert Creeley, and a jazz journalist and editor for the literary magazines *Vinduet* (*The Window*) and *BASAR*.

In addition, he became a popular poet also due to the fact that he used to read his poems together with a jazz or blues orchestra. In this sense, he released an impressive number of recordings together with jazz and blues musicians, Jan Garbarek, Egil Kapstad, Kåre Virud, Chet Baker, Red Mitchell and many others. His discography includes *Briskeby blues*, with poems read by Vold, accompanied by Jan Garbarek Quartet, in 1969, *HAV (SEA)*, read by Vold and accompanied by the same quartet, in 1970, Bob Dylan, *Stein. Regn*, with poems translated and read by Vold, accompanied by Kåre Virud, 1981, Frank O'Hara, *Den dagen Lady døde*, translated and read by the Norwegian poet together with Egil Kapstad, Red Mitchell and Nisse Sandström, 1986, *Blåmann! Blåmann!* with poems recited by Vold, accompanied by Egil Kaptad, Chet Baker, Philip Catherine and Terje Venaas, from 1988. In 2009 it was released a single collection of recordings called *Jan Erik Vold – The Complete Recordings 1966-1977* (*Jan Erik Vold: Vocalist – The Complete Recordings 1966-1977*).

He was awarded a series of literary and cultural prizes, *Tarjei Vesaas' Award for Debut* (*Tarjei Vesaas' debutantpris*), in 1966, *Aschehougprisen*, in 1981. In 1992 he was awarded The Arts Council's *Translator's Prize*, *Brageprisen*, in 1993, *Brageprisen Honorary Award* (*Brageprisen hederspris*), in 1997 and *Gyldendalprisen*, in 2000. In 2001 he received the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* from the University of Oslo.

On the 15th of February 2015, in Tromsø, during my doctoral scholarship at UiT - The Arctic University of Norway, being coordinated by Professor Henning Howlid Wærp, I conducted an interview with Jan Erik Vold, for my PhD thesis, published in 2018 in a book format as *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism of the 1960s*, at Casa Cărții de Știință Publishing House, in the *Nordica* Collection. With reference to what poetry means to Vold, he states the following: "Poetry is stylistic work: it is not just a multitude of thoughts that comes out of my mouth; the graphic image becomes, in my opinion, prettier when it is organised in two quatrains with a blank line between them. It is a pretty, graphic image, which you see as a whole, while probably reading the letters line by line. Poetry is sound but language is also graphic"³.

³ Det er noe stilisert over dikt. Det er ikke bare at det kommer masse pratebobler ut av munnen min. Det grafiske bildet blir, synes jeg, penere når det er fire linjer og blank linje, fire linjer og

Raluca-Daniela Duinea: Thank you for this interview! In April this year you were invited to Cluj-Napoca as a special guest to the launch of the first Norwegian – Romanian bilingual anthology of poetry – *Briskeby blues*, with 320 poems translated for the first time into Romanian, selected from 11 volumes, from your debut in 1965, to 2011. How could you describe this anthology in a few words?

Jan Erik Vold: The anthology is nicely done and gives a rich picture of my poetry. The foreword and the interview at the end of the book make a solid background for an interested reader.

R.D.D.: What about the first PhD thesis about your literary work published in 2018, in a book format as *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s*, launched together with the above-mentioned anthology? Do you think this book presents the main stages of your writing? Is it representative for the Norwegian and Romanian readers alike? Are there other PhD theses written about your literary work?

J.E.V.: The PhD is useful, presenting the main stages of my poetry production. There is no PhD on my poetry written in Norway, but the Czech poet Ondrej Buddeus made one in Prague 2017: *Fiktive verdener i Jan Erik Volds verk 1965-1995* (written in Czech).

R.D.D.: Besides the two book launches, the interview for Radio Cluj and the poetry recital, you had an interesting lecture, *Thoughts about Poetry*, for our students who study Norwegian at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature. What was the lecture about and how can you describe your meeting with our students who analysed and translated your poems during courses and seminars and wrote essays and bachelor theses about your literary work?

J.E.V.: What I did was to discuss poems by some outstanding Norwegian poets -- Henrik Wergeland (1807-1845) being the most important one. His love poems and death poems are among the best we have. He wrote in free verse before Walt Whitman and Charles Baudelaire.

R.D.D.: What does this visit to Cluj mean to you? How can you describe your experience in this beautiful city also called the heart of Transylvania?

blank linje. Det blir et pent grafisk bilde som du tar inn i et syn mens bokstavene der må du lese antakelig linje for linje. Dikt er lyd, altså språk er lyd, men språk er også grafisk (Jan Erik Vold, 15 February 2015, p. 342, my translation).

J.E.V.: It was great to experience the keen information the students in Cluj had about Norwegian literature and my poetry in particular. I do hope I can come back some day.

R.D.D.: Did you ride the purple tram of Cluj? Have you thought of writing a poem about trams in Cluj?

J.E.V.: I was happy to watch the streetcars of Cluj. Unfortunately, I never got to have a ride with them. So, there was no tram poem written, I'm sorry to say.

R.D.D.: You have been the editor of three important Norwegian literary magazines, *Profil*, *Vinduet* and *BASAR*, and a prominent member of the Literary Circle *Profil*. What changes has this Literary Circle brought to Norwegian literature? How did *Profil* influenced your life and your literary career?

J.E.V.: I worked with the literary magazines *Profil*, *Vinduet*, *BASAR* for 16 years: 1966-1981. The discussions I had with my editorial friends were very stimulating.

R.D.D.: Do you and the former members of the Literary Circle *Profil* still meet each other? Do you still have common activities?

J.E.V.: I still see some of these writer friends, when I am in Oslo. Most of the time, though, I live in Stockholm.

R.D.D.: Besides being a famous poet you are also an artist. You often read your poems being accompanied by a jazz or blues orchestra. You have released a series of CDs that combine in such an amazing way your poems with jazz. Among the vinyl albums released, there are *Briskeby blues* 1969, *HAV* 1971, *ingetings bjeller* 1977, *Blåmann! Blåmann!* 1988, *Pytt Pytt Blues* 1992. How can you describe the relation between poetry and music?

J.E.V.: There is music in poetry. I was in the happy position to get in touch with some of the finest jazz musicians in Norway – and also some abroad. I have no difficulties communicating with the players. My “background” was that I started listening to jazz when I was very young.

R.D.D.: You have released these recordings with well-known Norwegian and American musicians such as Jan Garbarek, Bobo Stenson, Chet Baker, Palle Danielsson and many others. In 1988, together with Chet Baker, Egil Kapstad, Philip Catherine and Terje Venaas, you have released the vinyl album *Blåmann! Blåmann*. The English version of this album, *Telemark Blue*, was released as a

CD in 2009. I would like to ask you in what circumstances did you meet the American trumpeter Chet Baker?

J.E.V.: Chet Baker did many concerts in Norway, often playing with Norwegian musicians. Randi Hultin was a jazz journalist that knew Chet Baker very well. She was the one that helped me to get in touch with him. Chet Baker was in Stockholm 1987, when I had a chance to meet him. Jon Larsen, with his Oslo record company Hot Club Records, got hold of a studio in Paris. At Studio Sysmo we did the *Blåmann* CD in February 1988, with my piano player Egil Kapstad in front of the studio sessions.

R.D.D.: What can you tell us about the vinyl album *Briskeby blues* (1969), released as a CD in 1995 accompanied by Jan Garbarek Quartet. How did you meet each other?

J.E.V.: My work with Jan Garbarek was initiated by the radio commentator Svein Erik Børja, who heard the Garbarek band and some poetry readings at the Molde jazz festival 1968. He saw the “similarities” in jazz and my kind of poetry and informed a record company about this.

R.D.D.: Why did you start writing poetry? Could you imagine yourself doing something else?

J.E.V.: Why shouldn't I start writing poetry, when it came to me? Of course, I write prose articles as well, for Oslo newspapers.

R.D.D.: You have a great contribution to the renewal of the Norwegian poetry from the 1960s through your concrete and *new simple* poems. *Kykelipi* is a volume made of humour and irony reflected in grammatical concrete poems, tongue twisters, nursery rhymes and ready-made poems. There are many poems which cannot be translated. This is also the case of “Ønskediktet” (“My Favourite Poem”) and “kulturuke”. What is the message of these poems?

J.E.V.: With language you can be serious, but you can also be playful. In regular poetry, the serious part often dominates. Therefore, I'm happy to make “funny” poems, as they say. People like them.

R.D.D.: How did the Eastern inspiration with its Japanese Zen Buddhist philosophy become a rich source of inspiration for your poems in *spor, snø* (*Track, Snow*, 1970), *Bok 8: LIV* (*Book 8: Life*, 1973), *S* (1978), *sirkel, sirkel*, 1979 and *Sorgen. Sangen. Veien* (*The Pain. The Song. The Road*, 1987)?

J.E.V.: I got to know about Zen Buddhism from some paperback books I picked up around 1960. What I read made great sense to me. R.H. Blyth's books on Haiku poetry were an inspiration.

R.D.D.: The volume of prose poems *fra rom til rom: SAD & CRAZY (From Room to Room: SAD & CRAZY, 1967)* has an interesting structure. "The Colours" alternates with "the fairy tales". What is the role of the colours and how can you define the fairy tales in this volume?

J.E.V.: The colours of SAD & CRAZY, starting with blue and ending with green – well, from the blue sky to the green grass.

R.D.D.: Who is Abel Ek in *En som het Abel Ek (One Named Abel Ek)* from 1988?

J.E.V.: Abel Ek is the main character in the book -- Omega being his sweetheart. What I know about them is what is written in the book, which of course is a love story.

R.D.D.: The volume *Store hvite bok å se (The Great White Book to See, 2011)* presents another aspect of your literary work with winter poems built upon vivid memories with dear friends. Could you tell us the story behind this volume?

J.E.V.: *Store hvite bok å se (2008)* is the third of my "meditation books", after *Tolv meditasjoner (2002)* og *Drømmemakeren sa (2004)*. Different from my earlier works, here are three poetry books with a similar structure.

R.D.D.: What can you tell us about *Voldposten*? Is it a literary magazine? What is *Voldposten* about? How many issues are published per year?

J.E.V.: *Voldposten* is a summary of what I find interesting in the newspaper stories I read, during one year. It started in 2005, the latest covered the year 2021. Right now, I'm working on *Voldposten 2022*.

R.D.D.: Besides writing poetry you also write essays about other writers and their literary works. *Poesi ad lib* from 2013 and *Kánon/Kannon/Kanón* published in 2016 are two of your most recent publications. What can you tell us about these books?

J.E.V.: I do write about poetry and poets I find interesting. Once in a while I gather what I have written since the previous essay book – and make a new one.

R.D.D.: You were always engaged in debates regarding the Norwegian society with a special focus on the social problems of Oslo (e.g., the blue tram, the old wooden houses from Briskeby etc.). What are the challenges the city of Oslo is getting through nowadays?

J.E.V.: Don't ask me about Oslo. There are so many stupid things going on in my home town now – the building of the ugly Edvard Munch Museum being one of the more recent ones. I live in Stockholm. As for my criticism of Oslo, I have not been listened to very often.

R.D.D.: What are your writing plans for the near future? Do you still write poetry?

J.E.V.: I keep on working. There is a lot of editorial work to be done. I just published a collection of the political newspaper writings of my father Ragnar Vold: *Klar tale* (2023). He was the most ardent anti-Nazism-writer in Norway during the thirties. An earlier volume was called *Motstand* (2006).

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Samtale Med Jon Fosse

Diana CIOT-MONDA¹



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Jon FOSSE, born in 1959 in Strandebarm in the Hardanger region, is a Norwegian dramatist, prose writer and poet and is considered one of the most important contemporary writers. In 2015 he won the *Nordic Council for Literature Grand Prize* and in 2022 he was shortlisted for the *Booker Prize*. He writes in Nynorsk, one of Norway's official written languages, and his works have been translated into more than 50 languages, including Romanian. Internationally known especially for his plays, Jon Fosse and some of his writings are also studied at the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca, Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature.

Fosse's literary career began in the late 1980s with his debut novel, *Raudt, svart* (Red, Black), an introspective and intense work, where he balances the tension between mind and reality. His works as a playwright started in 1993

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and gave him widespread recognition and critical acclaim. One of Fosse's most notable works is the *Himmelrike* (Heaven Trilogy), consisting of three plays: *Naustet* (The Boat House), *Nokon kjem til å komme* (Someone Is Going to Come), and *Eg er vinden* (I Am the Wind). This trilogy, along with other plays such as *Vinter* (Winter) and *Natta syng sine songar* (Night Sings Its Songs), solidified Fosse's reputation as a leading figure in contemporary European literature. He made significant contributions to other areas of literature. In addition to his drama, Fosse has written novels, poetry, and short stories, but also non-fiction. One notable non-fiction work is *Kaptein Nemos bibliotek* (Captain Nemo's Library), published in 2008 – a compilation of essays where he reflects upon subjects such as literature, art and philosophy. He expresses personal insights, thoughts and reflections.

His atmospheric works are influenced by landscape and imagery, but also unveil a strong psychological voice, an alternative way of shaping thoughts. Jon Fosse's writing is immersive due to its waviness. His prose is like a flow of poetry, like a river or the fjord from where he grew up – peaceful, connecting, wavy, yet steady. His novel *Det er Ales* was one of the three main texts discussed in my bachelor's thesis, which is a comparative analysis of the reconstruction and rewriting of the Old Norse myths. This interview is vital in demonstrating how these popularized external mythical creatures are internalized and inherited in contemporary Norwegian literature at a deeper level.

This interview focuses on showing the connection between the Nordic landscape, the past, and artistic inspiration as observed in Jon Fosse's works, especially in his contemplative novel, *Det er Ales*. Jon Fosse talks about literature, myths, the past, loneliness, life, and death in this dialogue. He genuinely explains how the sensation of being close to the natural elements can be conveyed through literature and how the most intimate feelings can transform, on a larger scale, into something general. A myth, if experienced in the appropriate and unique landscape, can trigger a new connection between the past and the present – a specific and primordial melancholy. At least, this is what this interview and Jon Fosse's answers express. Through rewriting, *gjengangere*, as well as other mythological creatures, become feelings, sensations, embodiments and visions of both past and future at the same time. The aim of this interview is to showcase how a myth can connect several timelines and generations through a perpetual and secluded landscape.

Diana Ciot-Monda: Jeg vil begynne med å takke deg for at du har gitt meg muligheten til å intervju deg. Du er en forfatter som er kjent og lest i Romania. Nylig ble boka *Det andre namnet – Septologien I-II* oversatt til rumensk. I tillegg har flere av skuespillene dine også blitt oversatt og satt opp på de rumenske nasjonalteatrene.

Jon Fosse: Takk for gode ord!

D.C.M: Myter gjennomgår hele tiden endringer, de får hele tiden en ny form avhengig av den litterære og kulturelle konteksten som forandrer dem. For eksempel har *gjenferdet*² gjennomgått en rekke omdannelser³. Nå er gjenferdene noe personlig, internalisert⁴. Hvorfor tror du at folk alltid vender seg til myter, tolker dem på nytt og omskriver dem i en form som tilpasses deres kontekst?

J.F: Det er nok slik du seier. Det finst heilt sikkert nokre basale forteljingar, eller brokker av forteljingar, som menneska har med seg gjennom tusen- og hundreår, og som blir forvandla slik og slik ut frå førestillingar som blir endra av historiske føresetnader. Gjenferdet, spøkelset eller skrømtet (med det gamle nynorskordet) – dei døde som på ein eller annan måte framleis er mellom dei levande, slik eller slik – er vel eit slikt mytisk bilete, ofte knytt opp til mytar, eller forteljingar.

Eg har aldri når dei levande og døde går mellom kvarandre tenkt at eg tolkar mytar på ein ny måte. Eg har rett og slett berre freista skriva, freista dikta, så godt og så sant eg kan. Og eg har nok vanskar med å definera den opphevinga av skillet mellom levande og døde som at det er snakk om levande menneske som møter spøkelse.

Eg har nok heller ei slags katoslk forestilling, kanskje prega av helgentrua, om at avstanden mellom dei døde og dei levande er mindre enn ein kanskje trur. Og at det kanskje også er kontakt mellom levande og døde på måtar vi ikkje kjenner til.

D.C.M: Synes du at landskapet kan være en utløser for kunstnerisk inspirasjon? Er det et element du alltid kommer tilbake til, uansett hvor du er?

J.F: Ja. Eg voks opp i eit lite bygdesamfunn ved Hardangerfjorden, i bygda Strandebarm. Det var eitt og eitt hus langs fjorden, somme av dei på små gardar, somme berre med ein hagefleck, og mellom dei, langsmed fjorden, gjekk ein smal bygdeveg. Alltid kunne bølgiene som slo mot fjøra høyrast, sterkare, svakare, langsame rørsler, raskare rørsler. Og så lys døgnet rundt om sommaren, og mørkt nesten heile døgnet om vinteren då berre lys kunne sjåast frå det eine huset

² skikkelse av en avdød som viser seg, spøkelse - «gjenferd». I: Bokmålsordboka. Språkrådet og Universitetet i Bergen. <https://ordbokene.no/bm/19762> (22.01.2023).

³ N. K. Chadwick analyserer i *Norse Ghosts (A Study in the Draugr and the Haugbúi)* hvordan den spesielle egenskapen til det nordiske gjenferdet er at det er eksterne, har sin egen kropp, men samtidig oppfattes det forskjellig fra region til region og fra ett verk til et annet (Chadwick 1946, 50-53).

⁴ Per Thomas Andersen forklarer i *Norsk Litteraturhistorie* hvordan mytologiske skapningene i norrøn litteratur er eksterne og uavhengige, sammenlignet med samtidslitteraturen (Andersen 2001, 11-71).

etter det andre. Og alt dette i eit mektig fjordlandskap med av høge fjell, det eine etter det andre. Og der på den andre sida av fjorden var fonna, Folgefonna, med sin evige is og snø.

I dette landskapet møtte eg språket, møtte eg verda. Det har prega meg og skrivinga mi fundamentalt. På ein måte skriv eg alltid frå dette landskapet sjølv om det aktuelle landskapet kan det vera annleis, til dømes kan vera ei gate i ein by. Bølgjenes rytme, lyset, mørkret. Stilla. Dei overveldande fjella.

D.C.M: Boka Det er Ales handler blant annet om visjoner om fortida, om å gjenoppleve og omtolke fortida (Fosse 2004, 5-75). Hvor kom idéen til denne boka fra?

J.F: Eg tenkjer aldri noko ut før eg byrjar skriva. Eg set meg berre ned og byrjar. Og er det ei god byrjing, så er på ein måte resten av teksten der alt. Eg skriv meg vidare, lyttar meg vidare med å lytta til det eg alt har skrive, men sjølv sagt òg gjennom så å seia lytta til det eg nett der og då skriv. Diktinga mi skriv seg sjølv, om eg skriv godt, så å seia. Eg har ei kjensle av at det eg skriv kjem til meg utanfrå, ikkje innanfrå. Og på eit visst stadium i skrivinga får eg ei kjensle av at teksten alt er ferdigskriven der ute ein eller annan stad, det gjeld berre for meg å skriva han ned før den forsvinn.

Det er altså ikkje slik at eg får idear til å skriva noko, og at eg så «skriv ut» desse ideane. I den mon det er idear i diktinga mi, så må dei syna seg etterpå. Ein kan heilt sikkert lesa idear ut frå Det er Ales. Men dei er ikkje uttenkte av meg. Og eg har nok også vanskar med å gjera greie for kva idear det kan vera.

D.C.M: Hele boka har en underlig melankoli. Asle ser alltid på fjorden, men det er aldri klart hva mysteriet bak landskapet er: “Og han ser mot Fjorden og den er ganskestille [...] og nå må han snu, gå heim att [...] han vil ikkje sjå mot henne, der ho star [...] han ser mot Fjøra.” (Fosse, utg. 2004: 24). Dette landskapet skaper også en bestemt melankoli, en nordisk melankoli⁵. Hvordan synes du at disse følelsene – melankoli og ensomhet, sammen med det spesifikke landskapet, gir opphav til et nytt begrep – nordisk melankoli?

J.F: Det er jo snakk om ein nordisk melankoli, men den er nok lettare å leggja merke til for ein som sjølv ikkje kjem frå Norden. For meg er det berre slik det er, om det no kan seiast slik. Det låg vel ei einsemd både i landskapet, og i relasjonane mellom menneska, i den bygda der eg voks opp. Og eg har nok både

⁵ I følge Anne Marit Waade i *Melancholy in Nordic noir: Characters, landscapes, light and music* blir begrepet *nordisk melankoli* i litteraturen like mye knyttet til landskapet og atmosfæren som beskrives, som det blir til forfatterens liv og stedet hvor hun\han vokste opp (Waade 2017, 4-7).

ei god og ei vond einsemd i meg. Slik eg også vel har ein både god og vond melankoli i meg.

Det er godt mogeleg både melankolien og einsemda har med både nordisk kultur og landskapet å gjera, det må det jo nesten ha. Men eg har vanskar med å seia så mykje om det.

Det er jo òg snakk om det nordiske lyset, og det er jo lettare å leggja merke til, å sjå korleis det for eksempel er ulikt lyset i Sentral-Europa.

D.C.M: Fortida⁶ har egenskapen å være spøkelsesaktig, å hemsøke. I *Det er Ales* blir man hemsøkt også av landskapet, ikke bare av fortida. Kan fjorden faktisk være en måte å kommunisere med fortida på, med forfedrene, en tunnel som forbinder fortid og nåtid?

J.F: Det stemmer nok det du der skriv. I diktinga mi er alltid fortida nær, så å seia ein del av noet, utan at eg opplever at det er noko «spøkelsesaktig» ved dette. Eg trur faktisk det er slik det er, at fortida er nær oss heile tida, både på måtar som kan merkast, og på umerkande måtar. I alle fall er det slik i diktinga mi.

Menneska er jo knytte til landskap, for eksempel til eit fjordlandskap, og landskapet blir på ein måte også berar av røynslar. Eg har ei hytte ved munningen av Sognefjorden, der det jo er eit historisk faktum at vikingskip ofte segla, og det kan av og til kjennast som om det er eit dirrande samband mellom landskapet slik eg ser det, Sognesjøen, og dei som gjennom hundre- og tusenår har ferdast der på sjøen.

D.C.M: Med tanke på leserne fra utenfor de skandinaviske landene, tror du at de kan forstå verkene dine på en annerledes måte?

J.F: Vanskeleg å seia noko om. All god litteratur kan tolkast og forståast på mange måtar, samstundes som det er noko definitivt og unikt som ufråkomeleg er i han. Det som er eit enkelt faktum er at diktinga mi blir forstått, og blir forstått svært djupt, i heilt ulike kulturar – i Tokyo og i Shanghai, i Paris og i Berlin og så vidare. Eg har sett produksjonar av eigne stykke så å seia over heile verda, og det er påfallande kor djupt det eg skriv kan forståast på heilt ulike stader. Stundom opplever eg det som om ein lengst borte skjønar det eg har skrive aller best.

⁶ Fjorden er et sentralt element i *Det er Ales*. Synnøve Vindheim Svardal fremhever i *Et rom som er skriftens eget: Gjentaelse og variasjon i Jon Fosses Det er Ales* at dette er et ledemotiv. Det er også et grunnleggende element som ligger i sentrum av hendelsene og atmosfære. Tida "tar og gir liv" rundt fjorden dom skapes rytmen til denne boka (Svardal 2008, 40-41).

D.C.M: Hvordan føler du deg når du leser oversettelser av bøkene dine? Synes du at stemningen er annerledes enn det du ønsket å formidle? I hvilken grad kan en oversettelse gjengi betydningen av en bok?

J.F: Eg les sjeldan og aldri omsetjingar, men eg har sett stykka mine spelte på mange språk, og eg har ofte vorte nesten forundra, som sagt, over kor djupt folk frå heilt andre kulturar kan forstå diktinga mi. Kanskje er det slik at det som er mest lokalt på eit vis også blir mest universelt?

Korleis det er med prosaen min er vanskeleg å seia noko om. Men eg vil tru at ein god omsetjar klarer å skriva det eg diktar på sitt språk, på den måte det er mogeleg å skriva det på i hans eller hennar kulturelle kontekst. Sjølv sagt lukkast det ikkje alltid, eg har også sett dårlege og misforståtte teaterproduksjonar, og eg er overtydd om at det finst dårlege omsetjingar av prosa og dikta mine, men det er noko anna.

D.C.M: Har du et favorittsted som du bruker for kreative prosessen din?

J.F: Eigentleg ikkje. Eg kan skriva kvar som helst. Det eg treng er ro og fred, og høve til minst ei veker samanhengande skriving. Men eg er nok, som sagt innleiane, alltid på eit vis til stades i det landskapet der eg voks opp, og som forma meg og språket mitt på grunnleggjande vis.

Diana CIOT-MONDA (August 2000, Bistrița) is a graduate of the Faculty of Letters specializing in Norwegian and English language and literature. Currently, she is a student at the European Master in Translation Studies and Terminology. She has written fiction and participated in the Literary Creation Camp "Lucian Blaga" from Arcalia in 2019. She was part of the "George Coșbuc" Literary Club, in Bistrița in 2021. A number of her short stories were published in the local journal "Anuarul Bârgăuan" (2019), as well as "Răsunetul Bistrița" (2021) newspaper. In 2022, she was awarded the 2nd prize in the Scientific Communication Session of Students. Email: dianaciotmonda03@gmail.com

Siri Pettersen - Subverting Reality through Fantasy

Cristina VIȘOVAN¹



Siri Pettersen

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<https://www.siripettersen.com/pressphotos>

Siri PETTERSEN (born 1971) is an acclaimed Norwegian fantasy writer who has managed to challenge the Norwegian Publishing Houses' perception about this genre.

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Endowed with a vivid imagination, she developed from early on a sense for creating stories which allowed her to experience fantastic realms as a means of escaping an injudicious reality whose rules Pettersen constantly broke as part of a role-play group of fantasy enthusiasts.

These intense and meaningful experiences of impersonation helped Pettersen find her identity which seems to be built around the idea of fighting injustice and empathising with others. In fact, she won her first awards in 2002 and 2004 as an illustrator and cartoonist of a comics series entitled *Anti-Klimaks* (*Anti-Climax*) which focuses on a group of youngsters who defy modern society.

However, it was not until 2013 that she made her literary debut in the fantasy genre with the novel *Odinsbarn* (*Odin's Child*), the first book in the *Raven Rings* (*Ravneringene*) series. Its publication represented not only a breakthrough for fantasy literature on the Norwegian market, but also a break away from some of the established conventions of this type of literature. In her book, Pettersen uses the Norse myths to create a totally new universe filled with relatable characters, managing at the same time to engage the reader with contemporary discourses on ethnicity/ race, otherness, the fear of the unknown and blind faith among others. The novel was an instant sensation and it got nominated for the Norwegian Bookseller's Prize (2013), the Book Blogger's Prize (2013) and the Ministry of Culture's Debut Award (2014), while in 2014 it won the prestigious *Fabelprisen*; in 2016, *Odinsbarn* was included on the IBBY (The International Board on Books for Young People) Honour List, a biennial selection of outstanding books which have been published recently.

The next books in the trilogy, *Råta* (*The Rot*, 2014) and *Evna* (*The Might*, 2015) continue Hirka's story (a 15-year-old girl with no special powers, the main character of *Odinsbarn*) exploring themes like greed, the thirst for revenge, the fear of death, power and arrogance and have earned Pettersen further prizes: the ARK Bookchain's "Book of the Year" Award 2015, *Havmannprisen* (Havmann Award) 2015, *Sørlandets litteraturpris* (Norwegian South Literary Award) 2016.

The mythic universe of the *Raven Rings* series is further explored by Siri Pettersen in her next fantasy novel *Jernulven* (*The Iron Wolf*, 2020), the intricate and engaging series opener of the Vardari trilogy, which builds around another young and strong girl, Juva, taking into discussion impactful topics such as blood, desire and addiction.

In her novels, Pettersen exploits the Nordic culture, climate and mythology to create unique worlds, she recombines familiar elements of our world and reinvents the classic elements of fantasy literature, allowing young girls to become protagonists in an attempt to highlight certain contemporary prejudices and attitudes. This aligns with her belief in the power of books to help us embrace different perspectives by relating to other people's experiences, imagining their alienation and grasping the suffering derived from it:

... The world is formed through books ... When we read a book or watch a movie, it is easy to let go of the defence mechanisms. We allow us to be swept away and be emotionally manipulated. Our opinions are formed in this way. Our culture. The politics ... What you mean about current issues can be traced back to the stories you have heard. The one who owns the stories owns the world. For better or for worse. We all have a responsibility for the world's collective storytelling (Florvaag 2013, my translation)².

CRISTINA VIȘOVAN: First of all, thank you Siri for agreeing to have this interview! You are an award-winning and best-selling author from Norway and your books have been translated to more than 10 languages so far, but the Romanian readership still has to wait before it can discover the worlds that you create in your novels. If you were to introduce yourself to the Romanian readers, how would you describe yourself and your authorship?

SIRI PETTERSEN: I am a fantasy writer from the far north of Norway and I build my stories on a Norse foundation, which I believe gives them character and a strong sense of place and history. I am also very passionate about the genre! Fantasy serves a far greater purpose than many give it credit for.

C.V.: Why would one choose to read and write fantasy nowadays when the reality is right 'here'? And what was it that actually drove YOU to start writing in this genre?

S.P.: I am so glad you asked! For me, it was not a conscious choice to write fantasy, it was a given. I have always loved the genre and never questioned if I should write something else. Why fantasy? Well, let us look at the way you frame that question. "Why fantasy when reality is right here?" Fantasy IS about reality! It is a brilliant tool to write about real things and real people because it allows you to start from a blank slate in the reader's mind. If I decided to write about, say, war in a realistic novel, everyone would have an opinion about the conflict already. But with fantasy, I can actually bypass any previous knowledge and prejudice. It is a fresh start! And yes, fantasy is excellent for escapism, but it is so much more important. These are our new myths, the heritage of folktales, the stories we learned from. Today, they give us motivation and lessons in self-

² 'Verden formes av bøker. Underholdningsindustrien lever av at vi elsker historier ... Når vi leser en bok eller ser en film, er det lett å slippe tak i forsvarsmekanismene. Vi lar oss rive med, og blir følelsesmessig manipulert. Slik formes meningene våre. Kulturen vår. Politikken ... Det du mener om aktuelle problemstillinger kan spores tilbake til historiene du har hørt. Den som eier historiene, eier verden. På godt og vondt. Vi har alle et ansvar for verdens kollektive historiefortelling'.

discovery. The unreal will inspire new generations to tackle our biggest and very real problems.

C.V.: You have sold over 250.000 books around the world by now. Still, in the beginning, people did not believe that writing in the fantasy genre would catch to the Norwegian readership or that Norwegian fantasy could turn into such a success abroad. Would you say that these have been, to a certain extent, motivating factors in your authorship?

S.P.: We have now rounded 400 000 sold, actually, so that is quite surreal. And to tell you the truth, I did not really care much about what was said, I just really wanted to write these books. It was not until I had finished the first one that I realised just how incredibly unlikely it was to succeed. But today, the heart-warming generosity from readers around the world is fuel for me. It makes me a better writer because I would hate to disappoint them.

C.V.: Your books have been included in the category of Young Adult fiction but fewer and fewer young people seem to be willing to engage in the activity of reading nowadays due to various distractions. How do you think that the genre of fantasy could benefit them and motivate them to read more?

S.P.: I see this all the time, that fewer young people read, but believe it or not, I am not sure that is true! What is changing is *what* we are reading, for how long and on what devices, but I believe that young people today read far more than I did myself when I was their age. Just think about it: we had to actively choose to sit down with a paper or a book and read, but now you can read everywhere you go and youth are exposed to far more content than we ever were. Bombarded with it. It teaches them to be critical thinkers to a bigger degree than before, so I have faith! But yes, we are struggling with a real challenge here: The lack of focus and deep concentration – for everyone, not just young people - and this is where fantasy makes a difference. It is a remarkable genre that sparks fandoms and genuine passion. There is fan art and cosplay and tattoos and endless proof of how deeply fantasy moves readers. They do not just *read* fantasy, they immerse themselves in it, they *live* it and when they are hooked there is no such thing as a too thick book!

C.V.: So far you have published one internationally acclaimed trilogy, the Raven Rings, and the first book of the Vardari trilogy, The Iron Wolf. Please tell us a few words about them, their plots and their relationship.

S.P.: Well, they are set in the same universe, but in different worlds, so they are independent. Still, there is a connection, and the premise of travel between worlds is present in all of them, even the one that is set in *our* world. For the plot, there is a lot to find on my website: <https://www.siripettersen.com/theravenrings>.

C.V.: Two of the main themes of these books are xenophobia and the fear of the unknown. Could you comment a bit more on them and why they play such a big role in the development of your novels?

S.P.: Fear of the other has always been in our nature, and just imagine how the world would be different if we learned to rise above that. So many lives are lost, so much politics made and so many limitations arise simply out of fear. In *Odin's Child*, the most feared person is hated simply for being human and that was a situation everyone could empathise with because *we are all human*. Suddenly, hating someone for what they are becomes outrageous. Like I said earlier, it turned out to be an effective way to bypass prejudice.

C.V.: Another important element in the storyline of your books is the idea of power and control and how certain people 'inherit' them and abuse them, while others just believe in the existing authority without ever questioning it. How important is it for real people to understand this relationship and why is it relevant in our daily lives?

S.P.: I am deeply fascinated with leaders and leadership! Who has it, why, and how do they use it or earn it? The will to take and abuse power has always been present, but the risks are higher than ever before because so much damage can be done now. We can no longer afford to sit back and hope or wait, it is incredibly important that we learn to defend our common rights, our planet and to recognise when we are led astray.

C.V.: The Vardari trilogy is set in the same universe as *The Raven Rings*, a universe built on Norse mythology. In what way does this mythology shape the realms you create and what is the connection between Norse myths, gods and your characters? In your previous interviews you also linked your novels with the Nordic and Norwegian culture and the contemporary socio-political context. Could your rewriting of the original myths be interpreted as an attempt to critique the contemporary tendencies of using culture as a distinctive marker in the encounter with the 'Other'? How significant is in this situation the fact that your main characters are females?

S.P.: Really interesting question, I love that you ask! My books are not *about* Norse mythology as such, but they build on a Norse foundation. Enthusiasts and scholars will find countless elements that can be seen as mythological. For instance, the Might, which is the flow of energy between worlds, has been interpreted as Yggdrasil and the stone circles as the bridge Bifrost. My intention - which touches upon your question - was to create a world where everything was new but *still familiar*. Readers might even think that Ymslanda was the origin of our own mythology. And when I move between worlds it becomes clear that there is always something older, something more original and it is all a result of continuous cultural exchange. In the end, there is no yours or mine, there is just us. When it comes to female characters, I did not even consider why or how when I started writing. All characters are equal to me and they should be complex and interesting, regardless of their age, race, gender, faith or sexual orientation. In fact, some people think that the spectrum of characters *had* to be a conscious choice, but it really was not. I started writing *Odin's Child* a long time ago, before diversity was a common subject in the book business. I just thought it would be weird to have a world *without* different types of characters. Some people ask if I decided to write 'strong female characters' but strength can be many things. I have heard that Hirka as a main character is loved for being strong in a 'softer' sense. Her strength comes from love, generosity and integrity, rather than her ability to swing a sword.

C.V.: If we dare to hope that your books will be translated to Romanian in the near future, is there a message you would like to send to Romanian fantasy enthusiasts?

S.P.: Oh, that would be wonderful and I cannot wait to see what magic Romanian readers will bring to social media! A warm welcome to you all and thank you for reading fantasy! Whatever they say, always trust that this is the genre that will save the world and keep reading what you love to read.

Cristina VIȘOVAN is an English and Norwegian, PhD teacher at "Mihai Eminescu" National College, Baia Mare. She has published a series of articles on the influence of Norse mythology on contemporary Norwegian literature and a book entitled 'Rewriting Norse Mythology in Contemporary Norwegian Literature. The Search for Identity in a Multicultural World' in 2021 at Casa Cărții de Știință Publishing House, in the Nordica Collection. Email: cristina.visovan@eminescubm.ro

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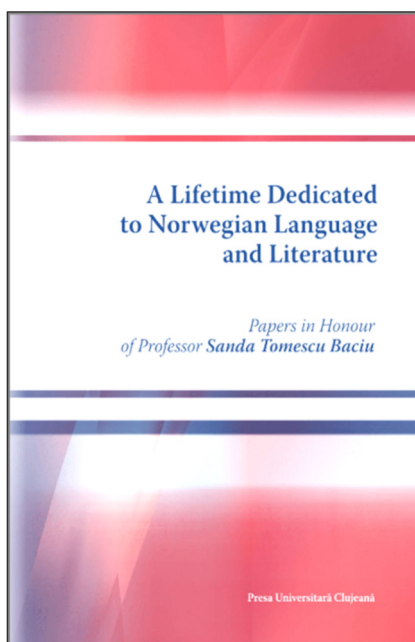
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BOOKS

Roxana-Ema Dreve, Raluca-Daniela Duinea, Raluca Pop, Fartein Th. Øverland (eds.), *A Lifetime Dedicated to Norwegian Language and Literature — Papers in Honour of Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021, 317 p.

Published in 2021 by Presa Universitară Clujeană, "*A Lifetime Dedicated to Norwegian Language and Literature*" is a celebratory scholarly work compiled and edited by the members of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature at the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in honour of Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu, founder of The Norwegian Language and Literature BA program (1991), of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature (2001) and disseminator of Norwegian culture, language and literature for over thirty years. Throughout her entire career, Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu has never ceased to raise interest in Norwegian studies, and strive to offer her students the best academic resources, a warm and welcoming learning environment and also countless scholarship opportunities. Her contribution to



the popularization and the increasing fascination with the North is immeasurably valuable to the academic community, not only in Romania, but also internationally. Her colleagues and editors of this volume have carefully selected and arranged a collection of congratulatory messages and academic essays from various fields encompassed in the Scandinavian studies.

The volume consists of 317 pages and it is structured into twelve parts. At the beginning of the volume, there is a foreword written by the editors, along with the *tabula gratulatoria*. These two are followed by four sections designated for: messages from Babeş-Bolyai University (10-17), messages from former Norwegian ambassadors to Ms. Sanda Tomescu Baciu (18-25), messages from foreign institutions (26-32), and messages from Norwegian writers and translators (34-39).

The next sections of the volume appear in the following order: analysis and different perspectives on the works of Henrik Ibsen (41-75), 17th to 20th century literature in Romania, Norway and England (80-125), Norse studies, arctic literature, tradition and history (129-186).

The next part is allocated for personal messages from foreign collaborators (193-199), followed by a new section concentrating on today's cinema and literature (200-256).

Respecting the same structural symmetry, the following section is dedicated to messages from colleagues and former students (264-279). The last two parts of the volume are focused on methods of teaching Norwegian (280-303) and messages from the editors (309-317).

The foreword is written by all four editors and highlights some of the most notable moments in Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu's career – the inauguration of the Norwegian Language and Literature Specialization at Babeş-Bolyai University in 1991, the defence of her doctoral dissertation, *“Nordic Mythology and its Reflections in Norwegian Literature”*, in 1999; founding and becoming head of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature in 2001, creating the Library of Nordic Studies, and being awarded the Norwegian Royal Order of Merit with the rank of Knight. Some of her critical volumes are also presented, but also translations from the Scandinavian languages into Romanian. The editors then offer information about Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu's activity over the years as translator, partnerships with publishing houses, awards won by her and a brief summary of the subchapters which are going to be introduced. The *tabula gratulatoria* reveals many remarkable, distinguished

names showing their gratitude for Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu and congratulating her on her achievements: former ambassadors, colleagues, former students, scholars and professors, writers and collaborators.

The first messages for Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu are sent by the current and former rector of Babeş-Bolyai University, Professor Daniel David and, respectively, Professor Andrei Marga. The Faculty of Letters also praises Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu for her great contributions to the development and internationalization of the faculty through Associate Professor and Dean Rareş Moldovan. The next section is dedicated to messages written by former Norwegian ambassadors in Romania. There are also messages sent by Norwegian institutions with which Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu has collaborated with throughout the years, such as Diku, SNU, International Summer Schools in Norway (representatives from both Oslo and Bergen) and NORLA. Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu also receives messages from famous names in Norwegian literature, namely writers Lars Saabye Christensen, who has visited Cluj-Napoca on several occasions, Hanne Ørstavik, Kari Fredrikke Brænne, and Norwegian translator Steinar Lone.

The next section presents a series of academic essays and articles belonging to the sphere of Ibsen studies which tackle various cultural and literary themes along with contemporary perspectives on the works of renowned Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. The articles are written by Astrid Margrethe Sæther (theme: new digital opportunities of discovering and studying the works of Ibsen), Helge Rønning (dispute and issues of power in Ibsen's works), Lisbeth P.

Wærp (Shakespearian elements in Ibsen's plays), and other papers written by Sven Arntzen, Errol Durbach, and Gianina Druță. The next subchapter concentrates on 17th to 20th century literature in Romania, Norway and England, and includes thematics such as criticism in the Norwegian literature of 1890, an essay on the complexity of the poet Petter Dass by Nils Magne Knutsen, the Old Norse mythological influences on Mihai Eminescu's poetry presented by Ioana Bot, an in-depth analysis of G. M. Hopkins' *"Rhetoric of verse"* by Adrian Radu, and other essays concentrating on the individual's connection with the Self, the balance between the physical body and the spiritual existence, and also man in relation to the divinity.

The next section is dedicated to Norse studies, arctic literature, tradition and history, and includes titles such as *"Stavkyrkjepreika i gammalnorsk homiliebok"* by Odd Einar Haugen (who presents Norwegian architecture of the Dark Ages), a brief immersion into arctic literature by Henning Howlid Wærp, and the role of tradition and folktales in creating a national identity by Gudleiv Bø.

A new part integrates personal gratulatory messages from foreign Scandinavian collaborators, such as Svetla Kovatcheva (lecturer for Oslo's International Summer School), Lennart Grape, Björn Apelkvist and Åsa Apelkvist (former Swedish lecturers in Bucharest).

The following subchapter introduces today's cinema and literature with thematics such as Jon Fosse's dramatic works by Drude von Der Fehr, the experi-

ences of the Jewish people during the Second World War by Unni Langås and the role and impact of the father on his children's lives by Ștefana Popa.

The next section brings together messages from important public figures, colleagues and former students of Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu, among which Virgil Stanciu, Ivona Berceanu, Cristina Vișovan and Ioana-Andreea Mureșan.

Then, there is another collection of articles focused on methods of teaching Norwegian by Marthe Berg Andresen Reffhaug and Crina Leon, which tackle subjects such as language teaching through contemporary literature, the close relationship between pedagogy and language, and useful methods of learning Norwegian.

The last part of the volume includes messages sent by the editors of the book, and, at the same time, colleagues and close friends of Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu: Roxana-Ema Dreve (now head of the department), Raluca-Daniela Duinea, Raluca Pop and Norwegian lecturer Fartein Thorsen Øverland.

Needless to say, *"A Lifetime Dedicated to Norwegian Language and Literature"* is a compendium of gratitude. Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu has indeed dedicated all of her life to discovering the North, inspiring others to walk on this path under her guidance, revealing the true beauty of the Nordic civilization to our culture. The complexity and length of this volume, written by so many people who find a role model and an inspiration in her, mirror exactly the greatness of Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu's career and, last but not least, her solar aura and personality.

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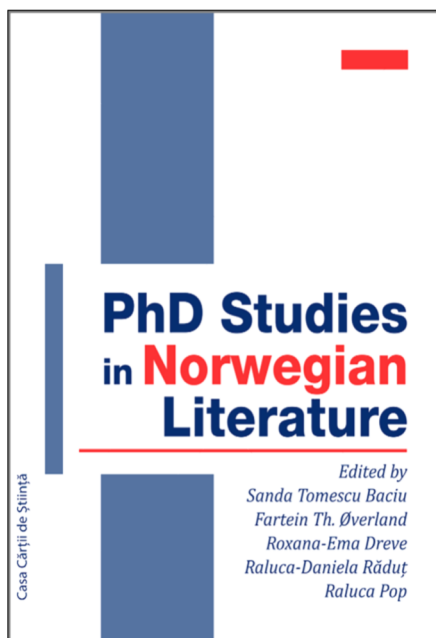
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BOOKS

Sanda Tomescu-Baciu, Fartein Th. Øverland, Roxana-Ema Dreve, Raluca-Daniela Răduț, Raluca Pop (eds.), *PhD Studies In Norwegian Literature*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2020, 190 p.

The present book is a collection of articles which summarises the doctoral papers conducted by Sanda Tomescu Baciu at the Doctoral School of Linguistic and Literary Studies of the Faculty of Letters and the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature during the ten years which preceded the book's release (the period between 2010 and 2020). The expressed intention of this compendium was "to reunite [...] the Norwegian academic community established in Romania, in Cluj-Napoca: both doctoral students and the present team of teaching staff at the department" (7). The compendium shows how much the interest in Norwegian philology has increased in the Romanian humanities' sphere in a relatively short period of time and, also, what a wide range of subjects it did manage to discuss in the process.



The literary topics range from the reception and reinterpretation of the Norwegian classics which have transcended the realm of national literature, having entered the universal canon, such as the books written by Ibsen or Hamsun, to the various meanings that can be found in ultra-contemporary literature, in the works of writers like Lars Saabye Christensen or Stieg Larsson. We can

therefore see that not only the soon-to-be-canonised fiction is analysed by the Romanian PhD researchers: the most popular Scandinavian books in today's Norway and in the rest of the world belong to the Scandinavian Noir genre, which is Ovio Olaru's study topic, the researcher being interested in an ideological reading.

Besides the above mentioned, subjects like "Multicultural Rewritings of

the Norse Mythology in Contemporary Norwegian Literature”, an analysis of the staging of Ibsen’s plays in Romanian theatres, or an exploration of immigrant identity represent topics that are interesting and thought-provoking for researchers of literature, beyond the borders that are represented by the subjects’ affiliations to a national language and culture. Because of this, the articles contained in this book are relevant to both researchers of Scandinavian literary subjects and philologists coming from different backgrounds, who desire to expand their cultural horizon.

Andra Rus comes with an analysis of the sensorial images associated with the concept of place in Lars Saabye Christensen’s novel *Beatles*, putting emphasis on the olfactory sense. The memory and the meaning of the external urban elements given by the *flâneur* walking around Oslo are important aspects of this researcher’s paper. The research follows, therefore, the trail created by memory and the senses in an almost Proustian way, in which the past and the present merge into each other and create new *senses* (the word with a double meaning in English perfectly captures this).

Ștefana Popa contributes to the book with an article about the representations of the father figure in Norwegian contemporary prose, studying the way in which the father-son/daughter relationship has evolved after 2000 in the works of writers Karl Ove Knausgård, Nikolaj Frobenius, Thomas Espedal, and Vigis Hjorth. The researcher analyses this tendency under the name „father literature”, defines "to what extent this goes hand in hand with another tendency of the past decades, namely that of writing autobiographical fiction" (p. 147) and looks

for interferences in the aforementioned prose writers, trying to see how much their novels communicate with each other regarding the theme of paternity.

Ovio Olaru is interested in another tendency in Norwegian contemporary fiction: the emergence of the Scandinavian Noir and its international success, comparing Scandinavian crime fiction with previous subgenres within global crime fiction.

Anamaria Babiaș-Ciobanu presents a close reading of Jon Fosse’s "Og aldri skal vi skiljast" ("And We’ll Never Be Parted"), a play written in 1993, focusing on time, space, and the communication between the figures of the play.

Cristina Vișovan presents the very complex topic of multicultural rewritings after the turn of the century of the Norse mythology in contemporary Norwegian Literature, and is interested to show how this tendency has come to light under the present social circumstances, wanting "to present reality from a different perspective, that of the often misunderstood and misjudges Other" (p. 97). The authors she is basing her study on are Andreas-Bull Hansen and Siri Pettersen.

Ioana-Andreea Mureșan explores in her paper the contradictory sense of belonging that is felt by immigrants. The researcher analyses the complex identity that results from the clash between cultures following the person’s process of acculturation. The study also reflects on the feeling of rootlessness experienced by the migrants.

Raluca-Daniela Răduț studies the way in which the concept of *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*) is reflected in Jan Erik Vold’s poem "Bo på Briskeby Blues", selected from his popular volume *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted’s Happy Version. Yes*), from 1968.

The paper explores how Norwegian poetry changed between the 1950s and the 1960s, the latter being a decade of lyrical innovation, and how Jan Erik Vold fits within this context, with his tendency towards simplicity and everyday realism.

The next two papers innovate the field of literary and theatre studies, respectively, due to the fact that their authors are interested in showing how the books written by canonical Norwegian novelists or dramatists have been re-accepted in the Romanian cultural sphere, up until the contemporary period. Diana Lățug analyses Knut Hamsun's reception in the Romanian Cultural Printed Press from 1895 until 2016, with its fluctuations and its intermediations with the help of other languages, finding the inter-war period prolific in this sense. Gianina Druță studies the ways in which the stag-

ing of Henrik Ibsen's plays at the National Theatre of Iași, in the period 1870-1920, contributed to the modernization of the Romanian theatre. Druță "employs a theatre historiographical approach framed by a Digital Humanities approach displayed in the use of the IbsenStage Performance Database" (p. 119). Plays like *An Enemy of the People*, *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House*, and *Pillars of Society* helped to change the acting style, in the sense that they introduced "a new perspective based on a strong philosophical insight into the roles" (p. 119).

The compendium is, therefore, a reference title for the researchers interested in Scandinavian or, more precisely, Norwegian literature, but also for the large academic public, should they want to familiarise themselves with the themes and tendencies of the Nordic literature, be it canonical or contemporary.

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BOOKS

Lars Saabye Christensen, *Bunica mea chinezoaică* (Min kinesiske farmor/My Chinese Grandmother), traducere din limbile norvegiană și daneză cu note de Sanda Tomescu Baciu, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2022, 232 p.

The aged photo of a ship would normally not determine you to return to the first pages of a text and read it again and again. But if you are the reader of Lars Saabye Christensen's new book, *Min kinesiske farmor* [My Chinese Grandmother], it does. Because Lars Saabye Christensen's text is not only a book about the journey to China that the narrator's grandmother took in 1906, but it is in fact a journey in itself. It takes the reader from the present to the near and far past, from Norway to Denmark and China, as it renders the power of memory and love and the changes that come along with the passing of time. *Bunica mea chinezoaică* [My Chinese Grandmother] is admirably translated from Norwegian and Danish by Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu, with the financial support of NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad) and appeared in 2022 at Casa Cărții de Știință publishing house. It brings a flood of memories revolving around *S/S Protector*, whose picture we can see on the cover of the Romanian



translation of the novel, thanks to Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu and M/S Maritime Museum of Denmark.

S/S Protector is the ship Jørgen Christensen, the grandfather of the writer, takes to Hong Kong, in 1906. He is followed, a few months later by Hulda Christensen and their story becomes the plot of Lars Saabye Christensen's text. Not a fictional novel *per se*, since we have all these names that are connected to the writer's past, but not an autobiography either, *Bunica mea chinezoaică* [My Chinese Grandmother] is the novel that Lars Saabye Christensen confessed to have always wanted to write (23), because he no longer wants to find himself, but to find others and most specifically, his grandmother (91).

What the critics named a "non-fictional book" is in our opinion one of the best fictional books Lars Saabye Christensen has written so far. The writer is one of

the most important voices in contemporary Norwegian literature and a well-known name in Romania, as several of his texts are already translated, for example, *Beatles*, *Vizionare (Visning)* or *Frați pe jumătate (Halvbroren)*.

Bunica mea chinezoaică [My Chinese Grandmother] is structured in thirteen chapters and one epilogue where the writer alternates the references to the letters kept from his grandparents with fragments from his own journal, historical documents, obituaries, memorials and photos, outlining the love that his grandparents shared, but also the love for his family and especially for his grandmother. This very intense book, with multiple historical testimonials keeps you alert at all times, as the pages seem to be interconnected and jump from one story to another. There might be a slight confusion while reading about all these elements occurring at the same time. But *Bunica mea chinezoaică* [My Chinese Grandmother] is an exceptional and in depth bitter-sweet text, a tribute to the close relationship between language and memories. It suggests the fact that you cannot really know somebody, and that we don't remember what we experience in our everyday life, but only the exceptions, the absences, the static part of life's dynamics. Cristensen's talent to blend literature, history and philosophy is definitely mirrored by an experienced translator whose ability to recreate the atmosphere in the text with such acuity is the expression of a job well done. Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu, founder of the Norwegian Language and Literature Bachelor Programme at the Faculty of Letters from Babeș-Bolyai University, creates cultural frameworks and helps the

reader comprehend the complexity of the original text, by adding explanatory notes. And they are indeed useful, as the book rests on metaphors and visual images.

But even if the stories describe several centuries and characters, they always refer in one way or another to two pillars: on the one hand the father – whose ageing makes him write a list with names of guests he wants at the celebration of his 90th birthday, comprising both living and deceased family members (176), because they all have a place in his memory and because time is relative – and his grandmother. Several phrases related to time are important in *Bunica mea chinezoaică* [My Chinese Grandmother]. In the first pages we find out that there is a discrepancy in the writer's and his father's perception of time (8), and that writing, death and clocks are sometimes synonyms for Lars Saabye Christensen. Then we read about the notebook that the young Lars receives from his grandmother, where he writes the names of the streets he delivers flowers to and blends them with his first poems. We also find out about H.C. Andersen's fairy tales or about the postcards sent by Hulda Christensen. As the father reconnects to the world, in his last journey through the city, stopping on Kirkeveien, Briskeby, Skovveien, Bygdøy allé before arriving at Gabels gate 19 for his anniversary, one cannot stop wondering if this book isn't a sort of journey that Lars Saabye Christensen takes himself within the frames of his memory and past, and if the boy his grandmother sees in the last scene of the text, *in a shadow on the stairs*, is not actually him, the writer that *[we] will always remember*, even if *[he] will soon forget us* (230).

Roxana-Ema DREVE

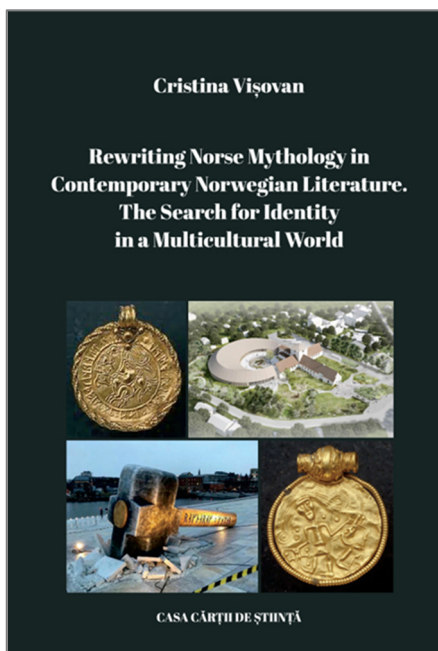
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BOOKS

Cristina Vișovan, *Rewriting Norse Mythology in Contemporary Norwegian Literature. The Search for Identity in a Multicultural World*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2021, 307 p.

The volume *Rewriting Norse Mythology in Contemporary Norwegian Literature. The Search for Identity in a Multicultural World* by Cristina Vișovan appeared at the publishing house Casa Cărții de Știință from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in the collection "Nordica", the only one of its kind dedicated entirely to Nordic literature at a national level, and has at its basis Mrs. Vișovan's doctoral thesis that was successfully defended in 2019 at Babeș-Bolyai University under the supervision of the esteemed Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu. Mrs. Vișovan is a graduate of the program English language and literature and Norwegian language and literature from the same university. Later, she continued her studies at the University of Oslo, where Mrs. Vișovan is a graduate of Viking and Medieval Studies.

Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu explains in the preface to the volume that



Mrs. Vișovan does not focus on the literary form, but rather "on those aspects of the rewriting of Nordic myths that focus on current aspects of the polyethnic Norwegian society in a broader socio-political context of globalization and immigration" (11). In doing so, Mrs. Vișovan proposes her term, "multicultural rewriting", when analyzing novels, such as *Gudenes fall* (*The Fall of the Gods*) by Cornelius Jakhelln, *Jotnens hjem-*

komst (*The Return of the Jotun*, with references to the other novels from the trilogy about the god Tyr) by Andreas Bull-Hansen, and *Odinsbarn* (*Odin's Child*) by Siri Pettersen. From the twentieth century onwards, our contemporary period shifts its focus from postcolonialism to multiculturalism due to immigration and globalization.

The introduction offers concise explanations of the theoretical underpinnings that Mrs. Vișovan works with

within her study. The author gives an account of life as an immigrant in Norway and underlines the challenges faced by the current Norwegian society. While some feel fortunate to live in a multicultural place, others are more reluctant. This sheer duality mirrors the Norwegian socio-political life.

As Višován points out, the writing down of old myths is also a retelling. Each iteration can be seen as postmodern no matter the time period when these types of texts were created, as can be the case with the Greek tradition and Homer. In her own words, “a multicultural rewriting could be another term that can be associated with critical revisionism” (23), namely a critical reinterpretation of a canonical story.

In the first part, entitled *Decoding Rewriting*, Višován tackles the meaning behind a concept like ‘identity narrative’ interwoven with the idea of rewriting. Intertextuality is thus one of the main theories and Julia Kristeva’s take on Bakhtin is carefully detailed, Višován adding that the author is not entirely responsible for how a literary work is perceived, but that the reader is also the creator of meaning: “The reader becomes the one who must discover the intertextual connections of the open text, so that what really matters is the text’s destinations and its origins.” (43). Likewise, Gerard Genette’s hyper-textual practices of simple transformation and indirect transformation (labeled imitation) with their respective denominations like playful, satirical, and serious are key when understanding the tradition of retelling or rewriting. Of highest importance is transposition, or serious transformation, due to its ‘aesthetic accomplishment’ and/or ‘ideological ambition’ (45). Another key theoretical denomination is between ‘formal transformations’

(which affect meaning) and ‘thematic transformations’ (that transform meaning).

Reading can be a mental exercise before rewriting myths and can serve as a catalyst for textual production. In this regard, as Višován eloquently points out, “The resulted text often emerges from a desire to adapt the original text to the poetics and ideology of the time, and to make it accessible to readers with similar backgrounds and ideologies” (47).

Another term that pertains to this discussion is adaptation. Seen as an ‘act of re-vision’, the practice of adapting canonical texts can go beyond ‘appropriation’ by creating a stand-alone text with no intertextual awareness needed from the part of the reader. In this way, myths become more familiar to the general public by being creatively recontextualized and reformed.

Under the umbrella term of rewriting, there is a spectrum of textual transformations, such as translation, parody, pastiche, adaptation, imitation, and burlesque. To these, we add ‘homorewriting’ (a rewriting of the original text by the same author), ‘hetero-rewriting’ (a rewriting by a different author), ‘iso-rewriting’ (a rewriting for a different public or medium, such as cinema or dramaturgy), and ‘microtextual rewriting’ (an internal reduplication of the text). In this sense, “Rewriting becomes then not only a secondary process to writing but also a second-degree repetition” (53).

In the conclusion to part one, the purpose of the book is clearly stated: “In this book, it will be argued that the contemporary rewriting of Norse mythology is linked with the idea of sharing a cultural memory and an identity.” (61).

The second part, *Rewriting Norse Mythology*, offers a concise history of how the Norse myths have been distributed

and rewritten from the Middle Ages and up to the twentieth-first century. The advent of writing was introduced with the coming of Christianity, something that made possible the recording of the Norse myths. It is well-known that Snorri's *Edda* is both a writing and a rewriting of Norse mythology. Some of the activities that are linked with the process of writing in that age are copying, translating, illustrating, rubricating, commenting, and glossing. In this way, we have access to "the ground stone of human culture" (80).

The reason behind this choice of topic for many Norwegian writers nowadays, namely the rewriting of Norse myths, is also the prestige their books benefit from. Generally speaking, myths are stories that are common for all (according to Mircea Eliade) and thus underline their usefulness in a multicultural setting. However, myths are also part of the so-called 'common' consciousness of a nation, where the 'we' is opposed to the 'Others'. In this case, the re-emergence of Norse myths in Norwegian literature is explained by the need to preserve the legacy of the nation for the younger generations.

The third part, entitled *Rewriting Norse Mythology in Contemporary Norwegian Literature*, deals with the socio-political climate in Norway and then analyses the proposed literary corpus.

Even though Norway can be considered multicultural for a long time (given the unions with Denmark and Sweden and the presence of the Sami ethnic minority), it has only recently been described as multicultural and multi-ethnic as more and more immigrants have moved to Western Europe. Their growing number has left its mark on the Norwegian socio-political scene, as far-right political discourses have flourished. This

culminated in the 2011 Norway terrorist attacks by neo-Nazi Anders Behring Breivik.

In the chapter dedicated to Cornelius Jakhelln entitled *The Distorting Mirror or the 'Imagined' Minority*, Vişovan points out the close relationship between authorship and life experience when it comes to Jakhelln. Indeed, the Norwegian author and musician has coined the term 'selfbiosophy' for his collection of essays with autobiographic content. Jakhelln has identified with Breivik's ideas regarding the new Norway and with the feelings of "fear, despair, rage, fury, exasperation, jealousy, greed, malicious pleasure" (154). He wishes for a revival of Norse mythology, wanting a Norse Renaissance. The presence of the other leads to Jakhelln feeling a loss of power and privilege, something that is mirrored in the construction of the god Odin. The fall of Odin is thus a reinvention of the white man, seen here as weak and thus fallen from grace: "Appropriating the image of the weak white man, Jakhelln re-contextualizes the Norse god Óðinn placing him together with the rest of the Norse pantheon in Underheimen, a location which is situated literally under the ground." (160-1). This paints a picture of a profane Odin as a decadent man, an echo of Jakhelln's own feelings towards the official policies put forward by the Norwegian state, which, in his mind, go further away from the nation's roots. Even if our Odin blends eastern Oslo urban dialect with a form of Norwegianized English, the god depicted in *Gudenes fall (The Fall of the Gods)* has more common traits with a "melancholic nationalist white man" (188) who goes from passive acceptance to aggression or radicalization. But probably the key to understanding this reinterpretation of Odin is the loss of honor, so valuable for the Norse gods. Subsequently, Jakhelln's Odin

undertakes a 'trans-formation' from the centre and into the periphery.

The next chapter, entitled *In the Name of Justice*, focuses on the Norwegian writer Andreas Bull-Hansen, a modern-day Viking, abiding by the old Norse ways of being. His novel, *Jotnens hjemkomst* (*The Return of the Jotun*) is a postmodern depiction of the god Tyr, an answer to globalization by going back to pre-modern pagan traditions. When dealing with questions such as racism, Bull-Hansen opts for a 'medial' position. In one of his blog posts, he argues that Vikings had no idea of the concept of racism and that Norse society was not as mono-ethnic as previously believed. The devaluation of the concept of honor is seen as a painful experience by Bull-Hansen: "As long as the modern man is weak, lacks integrity and is scared of living a life outside the mainstream, the Norse ideal has become a far better option for the Norwegian novelist" (208). According to him, living by the Viking philosophy implies self-reliance, perseverance, and individuality.

The novel *Jotnens hjemkomst* (*The Return of the Jotun*) presents a dystopic Oslo, of 2042, where Norwegians as an ethnic group are barely visible in the multicultural composition. This is thus reflected in the police brigade that fights criminality in the region. The police superintendent and investigator, Petter Tyrar, is "no other than the Norse god of war and justice who was sent to Midgard as a result of a pact with Odin" (211). The demystification of the Norse god can be traced back to the end of the pagan times when it seems that he lost some of the previous importance. But in the novel, Tyrar keeps some of his original attributes, being hard-working and dutiful. However, these traits serve more for making

money and accumulating wealth, indicators of the shallowness of human life.

Tyrar is an anarchist, thus not abiding by the social rules, as he does not declare his Muslim ethnicity when entering the Police Academy, even though it represents the majority now. However, Bull-Hansen distinguishes between 'criminal Muslims' and 'ordinary honourable Muslims', a sign that the Norwegian author takes the *aurea mediocritas* when portraying minority groups, thus adding nuances to his oeuvre. By rewriting the Vanir of Norse mythology, Bull-Hansen bestows them with a negative connotation, sharing characteristics with the Muslim criminals. This is reflected in the depiction of Tyrar, who is used as a double symbol in the trilogy. On the one hand, he represents the modern man as a slave of work, and, on the other hand, he is seen as a fighter, dying an honourable death and awakening in Asgard as his former self, Tyr. Criticizing the present society and the political practices of contemporary Norway, Bull-Hansen offers a depiction of a dystopic future as a direct result of globalization by reinterpreting Norse mythology.

The last chapter, *The 'Other' in Me*, offers a close reading of the fantastic novel *Odinsbarn* (*Odin's Child*) by Siri Pettersen. The main theme is the relationship between the outsider and the insider, between order ('we') and disorder ('they'). This theme resulted from a feeling of exclusion on the part of the novelist, due to her interest in the escapist fantasy genre. Later on, she finally felt included in her own group, with the same interests and common identity, based on "cooperation, mutual understanding, and acceptance" (240). Her own inkling is that there is no real dichotomy, an 'us' and a 'they', and that we all should learn how to empathize more.

Even though fantasy was perceived as a secluded genre (especially in Norway), this situation changed due to increased readership and scholarship in this area. The fantasy genre is based on the distinction between a real world and an imaginary one, and, in this way, there is a subtle 'interconnection' between the 'Other' and 'evil', as the novel also indicates. Fantasy also becomes an attractive medium for telling a story that would otherwise be perceived with skepticism.

The publication of *Odinsbarn* (*Odin's Child*) in 2013, the first novel in the *Raven Rings* (*Ravneringene*) trilogy, broke the conventions of the fantasy genre that previously existed in Norway. It "plays on the anthropogenic myth of the creation of humans in Norse mythology" (249). The Eddic poem *Völuspá* references 'an unfinished pair of humans': Ash and Embla, Odin being the one who gave them breath. An innovative element in Pettersen's account is that the existence of humankind is only a myth in the imaginary world of Ymslanda created in the novel. What triggers the story is the existence of a little girl called Hirka who is a *menskr* (a human) without her knowing.

When the truth is revealed, she is perceived as being abominable. In actuality, the representatives of the ruling families propagate this myth by holding onto power and constantly twisting the laws. By creating this world, Pettersen puts the mirror on us, the humans, and holds it back to our society, with all its hidden truths – a commentary on multiculturalism by means of rewriting.

In conclusion, the present volume deals with rewritings of Norse mythology in contemporary Norwegian literature by highlighting some key traits of the present political discourses on immigration, multiculturalism, and ethnicity, and how these types of discourses create imaginary worlds on Norwegian soil. By depicting three portraits of Norwegian literary figures on different sides of the spectrum, whether ideological (Cornelius Jakhelln), moderate (Andreas Bull-Hansen), or humanist(ic) (Siri Pettersen), and by offering a close reading of novels from the aforementioned writers, Cristina Vişovan succeeds in rendering a global picture of contemporary Norwegian society as transformed by globalization.

Paul-Daniel GOLBAN

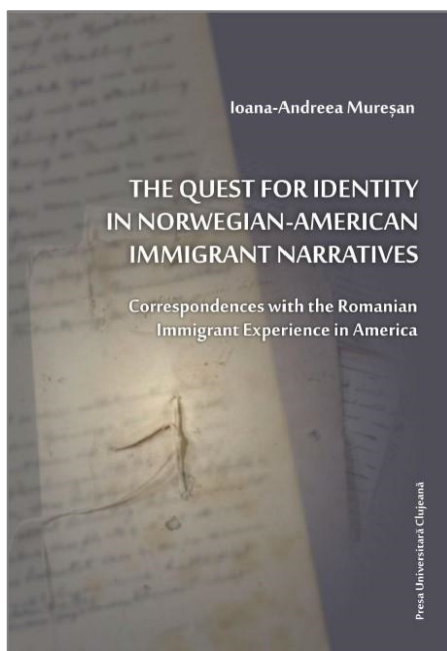
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BOOKS

Ioana-Andreea Mureșan, *The Quest for Identity in Norwegian-American Immigrant Narratives. Correspondences with the Romanian Immigrant Experience in America*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021, 296 p.

Migration is a natural phenomenon that has had a tremendous impact on humanity throughout world history and has become even more relevant in the last decades due to increasing mobility and changes at societal level that have brought multiculturalism to the forefront. The complexity of migration could greatly benefit from in-depth analyses that focus on its intricate implications, as well as on questions of belonging and identity, as revealed by migration literature. Narratives of displacement come to complete the socio-historical perspective on migration as they concentrate on individual experiences.

This is the underlying idea of an innovative research on the individual experiences of migration that compares the stories of migration of two seemingly very different peoples, Norwegians and



Romanians, who emigrated to America in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, namely the volume *The Quest for Identity in Norwegian-American Immigrant Narratives*.

Correspondences with the Romanian Immigrant Experience in America. Ioana-Andreea Mureșan, the author of the e-book, which is her doctoral thesis conducted at Babeș-Bolyai University, portrays the twofold identity of Norwegians and Ro-

manians who crossed the Atlantic Ocean in search of a better life, focusing on questions of belonging and identity. This book is of particular interest due to the unique perspective provided by an analysis of three different authors, two Norwegian authors and a Romanian one, in an attempt to achieve “a more comprehensive understanding of what it feels like to be an immigrant in America” (11). Hence,

the exploration of Norwegian and Romanian immigrants' quest for identity reveals the difficulty of assimilation and acculturation, phenomena which occur naturally when two different cultures collide, when immigrants try to adapt to a new culture while trying to preserve their homeland culture. By analysing the immigrant narratives of Ole Edvart Rølvaag and Knut Hamsun, Norwegian writers, and of the Romanian writer Anișoara Stan, Mureșan reveals the complex picture of the individual stories of migration, the inner conflicts experienced by these immigrant writers, as well as the fact that the stories of migration were rather similar, despite the different homeland cultures.

The theoretical framework of the book relies on an interdisciplinary approach that discusses the concepts of identity and belonging from a sociological point of view, providing a historical perspective on migration that constitutes the backbone of a complex analysis of immigrant narratives. The result is "a mosaic picture of the immigrant experience stemming from a Norwegian-American and a Romanian-American perspective" (14). When it comes to the choice of the selected authors and texts, Mureșan proposes three different perspectives: that of Ole Edvart Rølvaag, who writes for his fellow Norwegian-Americans in Norway, depicting the struggles of Norwegian immigrants on their way to becoming Americans while trying to preserve their cultural legacy; Knut Hamsun's perspective, who has had two unsuccessful attempts in America and writes a bitter and highly subjective negative account of the American society for the Norwegian public. In addition, the perspective provided by the Romanian author, Anișoara Stan, comes to complete the analysis of the immigrant narratives

with her autobiography, written in English. This autobiography illustrates her love for Romanian traditions and folklore, as well as her faith that knowledge and understanding of other cultures is essential for achieving cohesion and world peace.

The Quest for Identity in Norwegian-American Immigrant Narratives is structured in order to reflect the double perspective proposed by the author, namely the historical overview on migration and the various perceptions of the immigrant experience as emerging from the selected narratives of migration. Mureșan discusses identity and its manifold valences and interpretations in connection to migration literature in the first chapter of her book, while focusing on the concept of cultural identity and the immigrants' sense of belonging, which succeeds to highlight the twofold identity of immigrants, highly relevant for this research. Furthermore, she then discusses these concepts in relation to migration literature, providing a personal perspective on the process of migration.

The second chapter of the book conveys a complex and consistent historical overview of the Norwegian and the Romanian emigration to America, as well as a highly interesting comparison of the two migration stories. The European context of mass migration to America is the starting point of the historical analysis that comes to identify correspondences between the two countries at the margins of Europe (15). Each emigration is discussed based on the same pattern, namely their evolution, starting with the causes that generated the emigration, and the emergence of the immigrant communities of the two ethnic groups. A very interesting and commendable approach in this book is the choice to focus on America letters, the letters the immigrants sent to

their families and friends in the homelands, which represent first-hand accounts on the immigrant experience (16). The author argues these letters have had a significant role in the evolution of the mass migration, particularly from Norway, as they were more likely to be taken seriously by the family members of the immigrants, who were eventually persuaded to emigrate themselves. Thus, the analysis of these immigrant letters conveys even more strength to this research on the personal stories of migration.

Mureşan analyses in the third chapter the narratives of Ole Edvart Rølvaag, who emigrated from Northern Norway and succeeded in becoming the iconic representative of the Norwegian-Americans, as he wrote about the Norwegian experience. His lines on the immigrant experience have been chosen as the motto for the book: "We have become strangers; strangers to those we left and strangers to those we came to" (Rølvaag, *The Third Life of Per Smevik*, 1971, 126). Again, Mureşan's endeavour is all the more commendable due to the fact that she quoted both the original Norwegian version of the selected novels, as well as their translation into English. Moreover, the complexity of the endeavour is revealed also by the volume of work, namely the two novels – *Giants in the Earth* (1924-1925), *Concerning Our Heritage* (1922) and the fictive/fictitious volume of letters *The Third Life of Per Smevik* (1912), which all provide a comprehensive perspective on Rølvaag's perception of the immigrant experience and on his struggle to preserve the cultural heritage of his homeland (17, 163).

The fourth chapter illustrates Hamsun's perception on immigration, which is beneficial for a more compre-

hensive overview of the immigrant experience emerging from immigrant narratives. Thus, Mureşan focuses on the volume *The Cultural Life of Modern America* (1889), but also on two sketches, "Fear" and "On the Prairie" (1903), that illustrate the years Hamsun has spent in the American prairie. She also discusses some letters and the article "Festina lente" (1928), which reveal his view on the American culture (17, 196, 215).

A novel analysis of the Romanian writer Anișoara Stan's autobiography, *They Crossed Mountains and Oceans* (1947), renders the multicultural perspective over the immigrants' quest of identity complete. The Romanian perspective of an author who had been hardly known in her homeland before this research was written has been called by Mureşan "the autobiography of a dreamer" (17, 38, 231). It illustrates Stan's belief that cultural heritage needs to be preserved and treasured by the immigrants, who should not break ties with the past. Moreover, Anișoara Stan can be considered a visionary, given her thoughts that "the reminiscences of the Old World culture, as well as the preservation of the cultural heritage can bring cohesion within an immigrant community, making it distinct and appreciated in the larger American culture" (17-18).

The book also contains an interview with the Norwegian contemporary author Edvard Hoem, who published four novels between 2014 and 2017, in which he recreates his Norwegian-American family saga, revealing, at the same time "the tremendous amount of interest regarding the immigrant experience and migration literature that has become almost universal during the last decades" (38). Hoem's insight into migration and

immigrant narratives renders a contemporary perspective on the personal stories of migration illustrated by Mureșan in her book.

The Quest for Identity in Norwegian-American Immigrant Narratives is a book that invites both scholars, those passionate about the migration literature, and all readers to immerse themselves in the personal stories of migration. The immigrant experience can be regarded not only as a success story in pursuit of achieving the American dream, but also as a story of displacement, uprootedness, that generated questions of belonging and identity. Mureșan proposes an analysis of (be)longing of several Norwegian and Romanian-American immigrant narratives that are as relevant today as ever.

Her research on immigrant narratives comes to complete the historical perspective on migration, which focuses on statistics and numbers, rather than on people and their stories. Her conclusion is representative for the manifold perspective on migration illustrated in her book: "The immigrants are bound to possess a double consciousness, as they were shaped by the Old World and ventured to face the challenges of the New World, trying all this time not to forget who they were and where they came from, struggling to preserve their identity. Their ambivalent nature makes them resemble Janus, the god of beginnings, with one face looking at their past, and the other at their new beginnings" (255).

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BOOKS

Jan Erik Vold, *Briskeby blues – Antologie bilingvă de poezie norvegiană-română (Tospråklig norsk-rumensk diktantologi)*, traducere din limba norvegiană de Raluca-Daniela Duinea, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023, 432 p.

In the spring of 2023, the first bilingual Norwegian-Romanian anthology of poems, *Briskeby blues*, was published at Casa Cărții de Știință Pub-

lishing House in Cluj-Napoca, in the *Nordica* collection, coordinated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu and financially supported by Norwegian Literature Abroad (NORLA). The selection of the poems was made from the literary work of the Norwegian contemporary poet Jan Erik Vold (b. 1939) beginning with his debut volume in 1965, until 2011. This translation is a continuation of the translator's PhD thesis published in 2018, namely *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s*.

The publication of this anthology marked a special cultural event at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at the Faculty of Letters,



Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, in the sense that Jan Erik Vold was present at the launch of this anthology. Vold also took part in other two

events, including his lecture for the students who study Norwegian, entitled "Thoughts on Poetry", and a poetry recital on a jazz accompaniment within the Nordic Poetry Circle – *DiktLek*, another project of the department.

It is worth mentioning that Jan Erik Vold is one of the most prominent Norwegian writers who had an important contribution to the renewal of the Norwegian literature. Besides being a highly appreciated poet, he is also an essayist, translator, artist and performer. He often read his poems accompanied by great jazz and blues musicians such as Jan Garbarek, Egil Kapstad, Chet Baker, and many others.

The translator of this anthology, Raluca-Daniela Duinea is university lecturer of Norwegian at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She is the author of several articles in the field of contemporary poetry, being specialised in Jan Erik Vold's concrete and *new simple* poems. Besides her didactic and research activities, she is also a translator of Norwegian literature, *Briskeby blues* being her first translation of Norwegian poetry.

The impressive 432 pages-long Norwegian-Romanian anthology contains 320 poems selected from eleven volumes disposed in chronological order: *mellom speil og speil* (*Between Mirror and Mirror*, 1965), *blikket* (*The Gaze*, 1966), *HEKT* (*Grab*, 1966), *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes*, 1968), *kykelipi* (1969), *spor, snø* (*Traces, Snow*, 1970), *Bok 8: LIV* (*Book 8: LIFE*, 1973), *S* (1978), *Sorgen. Sangen. Veien* (*The Pain. The Song. The Road*, 1987), *En som het Abel Ek* (*One Named Abel Ek*, 1988), *Store hvite bok å se* (*The Great White Book to See*, 2011).

As Raluca Duinea states in her foreword, "the title of this anthology, *Briskeby blues*, combines two essential concepts of Vold's literary work, concreteness and the *new simplicity*. The latter presents the poet's preferences for simple, concrete things and everyday life events, getting directly to the reader" (16). *Briskeby blues* is also the title of the first jazz and poetry recording, featuring Jan Erik Vold's voice accompanied by Jan Garbarek Quartet, released in 1969. The book cover is also suggestive, with two wooden houses illustrated with talent by the icon painter Codruța Melania Călușer (born Vasian), two representative buildings situated in the Briskeby neighbourhood, in Oslo, Norway. In his poem "Bo på

Briskeby blues" ("Living in Briskeby blues"), Vold writes about his struggle regarding the massive modernization of the city of Oslo, being against the demolition of several emblematic wooden houses from Briskeby.

The anthology opens with the portrait of the Norwegian poet conveyed with artistry by the same Codruța Melania Călușer, followed by Jan Erik Vold's text entitled "Not One Voice Missing" and two consistent contributions, those of professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu's, "Jan Erik Vold's Poetry in Romania", and of professor Henning Howlid Wærp's "Jan Erik Vold – den store fornyeren av norsk lyrikk" ("Jan Erik Vold – the Great Innovator of the Norwegian Poetry").

The bilingual Foreword (pp. 16-34 in English, and pp. 17-35 in Romanian) signed by Raluca Duinea is very well-structured. It provides an in-depth presentation of Jan Erik Vold and offers a comprehensive analysis of each of Vold's volumes of poetry, together with a few aspects related to the process of translation. Each volume opens with a suggestive illustration in pencil which completes the poetic message, drawn by Codruța Melania Călușer and by Raluca Duinea's childhood friend, Mihaela Maria Coman. In addition, the former Norwegian lecturer at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, Fartein Thorsen Øverland, arranged the typographical poems in different forms. At the end of the anthology there is also a bilingual interview, conducted with Vold by Raluca Duinea, during her five-month doctoral research scholarship at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, in 2015. The anthology ends with several photographs of the translator together with the poet in Tromsø and in Frankfurt during the international

book fair, where Norway was the Guest of Honour, in 2019.

Raluca Duinea has successfully accomplished this fruitful project also by adapting the translation of the poems to Vold's various approaches for each of his volumes. Almost every volume brings something new, a different perspective when referring to Vold's writing style. Thus, R. Duinea had the possibility to rediscover Vold's poems also as a translator, not only as a researcher. Besides, as she stated in the beginning of this anthology, "tongue twister poetry, in particular, allowed me to take part in the creative process. Here I am thinking, [...], to a series of poems from *kykelipi*, namely "Om kriveligheten", the word *kriveligheten* being one invented by the poet, [...]. In the case of the poem "kulturuke", I chose the word "culturalia", thus forming twenty-three other variants of words, most of them invented and meaningless" (30). The ludic aspect of the poems, with their ironic, simple, democratic, humorous and

Zen Buddhist – meditative dimension, together with "the oral tone" mainly present in the well-known volume *Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes*, turned this anthology into a work of art with Vold as a word architect.

Briskeby blues "aims to recognize the value of Jan Erik Vold's poetry within the Romanian cultural space as well" (34). These poems are a source of inspiration for everyone who wants to learn and to read Norwegian. The typographical poems, disposed in different forms, the meditative ones teeming with Eastern influence, the city poems resembling the map of Oslo, as well as those about friends and dear memories, all bring together the two concepts, *new simplicity* and *concretism* as two unique poetic features which invite the reader to discover the Norwegian culture from Vold's perspective, "since [his] poems are part of the surrounding world, containing plenty of common words and daily life expressions" (34).

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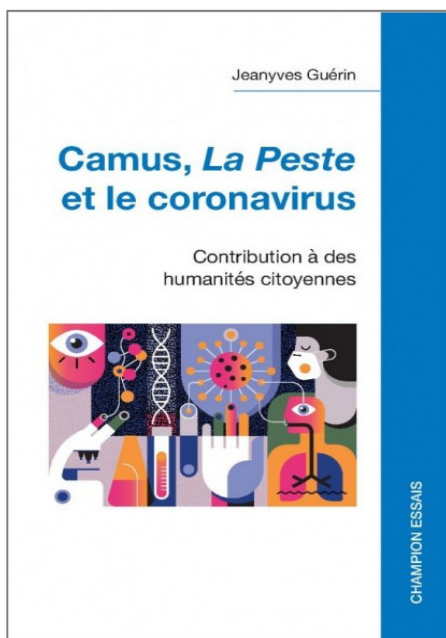
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BOOKS

Jeanyves Guérin, *Camus, La Peste et le coronavirus. Contribution à des humanités citoyennes*. Paris, Honoré Champion, 2022, 202 p.

Nous sommes en 2022, une année profondément marquée par la souffrance et le désespoir des populations face à la pandémie de coronavirus : le nouveau virus qui nous a envahi il y a deux ans et qui ne semble pas vouloir nous quitter de sitôt. Pour donner un sens à cette nouvelle maladie « venue d'ailleurs », source de peur et de terreur, les lecteurs du monde entier se lancent dans la (re)lecture de *La Peste* d'Albert Camus. Le livre présente le même scénario : une étrange maladie qui frappe soudain la communauté. Ce chef d'œuvre camusien devient, entre 2020 et 2022, l'un des livres les plus vendus et les plus lus au monde. Mais qu'est-ce qui donne au roman de Camus une telle actualité ? Pourquoi cette (re)lecture en masse de *La Peste* ? Y a-t-il un message politique, voire sanitaire, caché dans les pages du roman qui nous permettrait de mieux comprendre la situation actuelle ?

La réponse à toutes ces questions et l'émergence d'une réflexion politique-littéraire sur *La Peste* et le coronavirus



se trouvent dans le nouvel ouvrage de Jeanyves Guérin, *La Peste et le coronavirus* paru en 2022 dans la collection « Champion essais » des Éditions Honoré Champion. Partie d'une série qui reflète et analyse la nature politique voire littéraire de l'œuvre camusienne comme : *Albert Camus – Littérature et politique* (2013), *Camus. Portrait de l'artiste en citoyen* (1993), *Camus et le premier*

« Combat » (1944-1947) *Camus et la politique*, (1985), la nouvelle publication de Jeanyves Guérin ne se borne pas à analyser simplement le travail de Camus, mais au contraire, elle présente plutôt une première comparaison subtile et acerbe entre la politique actuelle et la politique décrite dans *La Peste*.

Riche en références littéraires, sociologiques, journalistiques et politiques, ce livre permet de comprendre et de réfléchir sur l'idée d'épidémie et de pandémie d'un point de vue politique : l'avènement d'une dictature à allure démocratique qui nous surveille et qui nous punit.

Toutefois, avec ce nouvel ouvrage, Jeanyves Guérin insiste sur l'importance de lire et de connaître l'œuvre de Camus, car les événements qui nous arrivent aujourd'hui constituent une mise en abîme de la peste sanitaire et politique camusienne ; la pandémie de coronavirus fait à peu près référence à l'occupation et au siège de *La Peste*.

En d'autres termes, le livre *La Peste et le coronavirus* met en scène une sorte de décortilage érudit de tout ce qui implique une épidémie (l'installation, l'annonce, les mesures sanitaires/économiques/ politiques/ prophylactiques, le couvre-feu, les vaccins, la recrudescence, le retour à la vie normale) en se rapportant toujours à la politique entreprise par les autorités oranaises, françaises et même mondiales. En ce qui concerne la structure du livre, il est composé d'un préambule, d'une bibliographie et d'une vingtaine de chapitres non numérotés et dont les titres font référence à des domaines sociologiques, statistiques, politiques, religieux, littéraires, et tout aussi bien à des parties de *La Peste*.

Dans le « Préambule », l'auteur dresse le tableau général du COVID-19, insistant d'une part sur l'émergence du virus au sein de la Chine et d'autre part sur la situation actuelle de la pandémie dans le monde. Aucune référence ou mention de Camus ici, l'analyse et l'importance de *La Peste* étant envisagées dans le premier chapitre : « Relire Camus ». Il y est question de la peste perçue comme un « grand livre du coronavirus » (p. 12) et de la présentation biographique de cette « icône » de la littérature française moderne. Tout cela pour mettre de côté le caractère épidémique de *La Peste* et pour faire ressortir son versant politique afin de nous rendre conscients des problèmes rencontrés dans chaque société tels que :

les défis terroristes, les tendances extrémistes, populistes et surtout cette nouvelle maladie qui menace la société.

La pensée politique dominera le chapitre suivant « Le roman de la révolte » où celle-ci est identifiée chez Camus comme une nécessité humaine d'affirmer ses valeurs (la liberté et la solidarité) et de faire face à des situations intolérables. Accompagnée par le caractère allégorique et métaphorique du roman (la peste brune et la guerre comme synonyme de la maladie), cette triade transforme l'œuvre camusienne en une épée à double tranchant : le roman sur le politique et « l'œuvre littéraire [qui] aide à réfléchir » (p. 18).

Contrairement à la révolte, le chapitre suivant « Les connaissances médicales de Camus » traite plutôt de la documentation et du procédé démiurgique de la peste oranaise. Deux similarités entre la peste et le coronavirus sont pointées : le contact avec les virus (par la mer pour la peste et par la terre, l'air et la mer pour le covid) et les docteurs qui annoncent la maladie que tout le monde ignore (Rieux et Li Wienlang). De même, les conséquences de ces deux maladies sont abordées dans « Des chiffres et des hommes » où l'auteur s'intéresse aux statistiques qui ne sont pas présentes dans le roman (le pic, le déclin, les taux d'infections, les morts) et à l'existence des variants, Delta et Omicron pour le coronavirus, la peste pulmonaire pour *pestis*.

Hors du champ médical et statistique, dans « Dieu et les hommes » on entre dans la partie spirituelle, de nature religieuse, de la peste et du coronavirus. Le chapitre est fondé sur deux constructions antithétiques qui opposent les deux fléaux : la religiosité de la peste vs. laïcisation du covid, ainsi que la contagion

commune (la peste qui contamine tout le monde) vs. la contagion sélective (les personnes vieilles et ceux qui souffrent déjà d'une maladie). Il existe quand même un trait commun entre ces deux calamités : l'impossibilité d'accompagner le défunt et de faire ses obsèques.

Dans « L'urgence et la prudence » il s'agit d'une critique de l'État qui, à la fois dans le roman de Camus et dans notre monde contemporain, agit d'une manière indolente pour résoudre les crises de la société. La pression exercée par le domaine médical sur le politique, afin de sauver la vie des malades, constitue le tour de force dans cette critique de l'insensibilité politique : « Les experts émettent des recommandations. Ce sont les politiques qui prennent les décisions » (p. 58).

Les deux chapitres suivants « Administraphobie » et « Tarrou et les formations sanitaires » aborderont à tour de rôle l'idée de confinement qui a eu un impact majeur dans le monde du coronavirus et qui chez Camus n'existe pas. On y retrouve aussi des discussions sur l'absurdité de la bureaucratie médicale vue comme « un despotisme doux » (Tocqueville), la critique de la mauvaise organisation du système sanitaire dans *La Peste* et lors du coronavirus, la création des formations sanitaires et leur caractère dangereux, ainsi que la reconnaissance de la figure du médecin comme sauveur de l'humanité.

Comme son titre le suggère, « Le rôle de la presse », ce chapitre porte sur l'emploi de l'épidémie chez Camus comme moyen de propagande, ainsi que sur le rôle informatif et désinformatif de la presse au temps de la pandémie. C'est aussi une critique de la médiatisation en boucle du coronavirus et des *fake news* qui suscitent la réticence et l'effolement public.

Les chapitres suivants, « Des vaccins » et « De la guerre contre les virus » sont très actuels parce qu'il y est question de la vaccination au choix, chez Camus et de la vaccination obligatoire au temps du coronavirus. L'apparition de l'antivaccinisme qui considère que le vaccin sera plus dangereux que la maladie, donne naissance à une guerre souterraine contre l'État et le COVID-19. À noter c'est que le mot « guerre » a été utilisé par Camus et par Emmanuel Macron pour faire référence au fléau et pour inciter au combat contre la peste qui vient de l'extérieur et contre le coronavirus qui provient de Chine.

L'idée directrice du chapitre suivant, « Le grand renfermement » est constituée par « l'exile chez soi » qui a affecté tout le monde ; la séquestration oranaise et les restrictions de voyage lors de notre pandémie suscitent les deux la peur et l'effolement public.

Dans « Selon que vous serez puissant ou misérable » et « De l'économie au temps de la pandémie » on assiste à une description de la ville d'Oran qui donne lieu à une plaidoirie pour les métiers socialement dévalorisés qui représentent les piliers de la société. L'auteur aborde aussi des sujets tels que la commercialisation de l'industrie pharmaceutique au temps du coronavirus et fait une analyse du système d'enseignement, négligé et affecté aussi par des contaminations qui ont précipité le passage en ligne, et par la fraude. Côté économie, l'auteur observe que lorsque celle-ci augmente, c'est la culture qui perd ses valeurs.

Le couple antagonique « espoir » / « peur », omniprésent dans le discours camusien, se retrouve dans le chapitre intitulé « Le retour à la vie normale ». La question principale concerne la vie normale qui, chez Camus est perçue comme

la fin d'un combat et la préparation pour un autre, ainsi que le synonyme du retour aux vieilles habitudes des citoyens lors du coronavirus. Si dans *La Peste* il s'agit d'une extermination du virus, en pandémie il est question d'un compromis : vivre avec le virus pour le reste de notre vie.

L'idée fondamentale de la partie suivante, « La tentation autoritaire et la régression de la démocratie » est représentée par la naissance de la dictature sanitaire sous le prétexte de lutte contre le virus. Cette dictature favorise le contrôle de la population pour éviter les fraudes, l'instauration de l'état de siège dans lequel tout le monde est suspect et l'existence des camps sanitaire en France sous le coronavirus, ce qui renvoie à l'idée d'occupation totalitaire. Cela se reflète aussi dans le chapitre prochain, « Ce qu'on apprend au milieu des fléaux », une interrogation sur la reproduction et la recrudescence d'un fléau pathologiquement politique qui ne peut pas être éliminé. Ce combat interminable avec les fléaux correspond au travail éternel de Sisyphé : une maladie qui s'éteint est précédée par l'émergence d'une autre.

Le vécu de la maladie qui prend la forme d'un témoignage, pour ne pas faire oublier les pestiférés, devient le noyau du chapitre « Memorandum est ». Il y a un rapport entre la mémoire et le témoignage qui représente une sorte d'assurance au cas où le fléau reviendrait. L'auteur insiste sur le verbe « témoigner », qui chez Camus, représente le synonyme du mot « combattre », donc une partie importante de la révolte.

Dans le chapitre « La Peste au théâtre » on change de domaine et d'œuvre, Jeanyves Guérin s'intéressant plutôt à la pièce de théâtre *L'État de siège* de Camus. Du point de vue politique il est

question d'une opposition entre le despotisme doux de Tocqueville et le totalitarisme destructeur qui est envisagé comme une nuisance pour une communauté. La peste devient, dans cette pièce de théâtre, un personnage humain qui tue les victimes par stigmatisation, le bubon pestueux étant remplacé par l'étoile juive.

L'avant-dernier chapitre, « Le fait épidémique après *La Peste* » évoque l'apparition du virus sociopolitique chez Camus. Il se constitue comme un avertissement pour les gens qui ignorent la limite et la mesure et qui font du mal à la nature.

Le dernier chapitre, « Un monde commun ou le sacre de l'individu », se concentre sur une analyse détaillée des essais *Ni victimes ni bourreaux* de Camus où il est question de la terreur comme fondement des régimes totalitaires ; de la réflexion sur le meurtre et sa légitimation dans l'histoire ; de l'idée utopique d'une démocratie mondiale ; de la collectivisation des espaces communs et du multilatéralisme comme arme contre les fléaux. Il s'agit aussi du clivage qui s'établit entre l'hyperindividualisme et la solidarité tant désirée par Camus, qui n'existe point au temps du coronavirus. Jeanyves Guérin achève son ouvrage avec une réflexion sur la politique sanitaire de la France et du monde après la pandémie de coronavirus, suivie d'une prédiction sombre sur l'avenir politique du monde, un avenir où l'autoritarisme favorise le retour au monde ancien, si les gens ne deviendraient pas, comme Camus le désirait, responsables et solidaires.

Enfin, *La Peste et le coronavirus* de Jeanyves Guérin nous montre que notre monde démocratique, tend peu à peu à se transformer dans un monde totalitaire au temps de la pandémie et au temps de la négligence des gens. Même si l'analyse de

la peste et celle du covid sont très érudites et parfois sophistiquées, en raison des digressions, l'intention de l'auteur est claire : il essaie de nous montrer que les similarités et les différences entre la peste et le coronavirus ne représentent qu'une preuve : le système politique et médical n'a presque pas du tout évolué depuis le XX^e siècle.

C'est pourquoi cet ouvrage de Jean-Yves Guérin devrait inciter à une réflexion humanitaire sur notre avenir politique et sociologique afin de nous permettre de mieux réagir face à un fléau, soit-il politique ou sanitaire, méconnu.

Ciprian ONOFREI

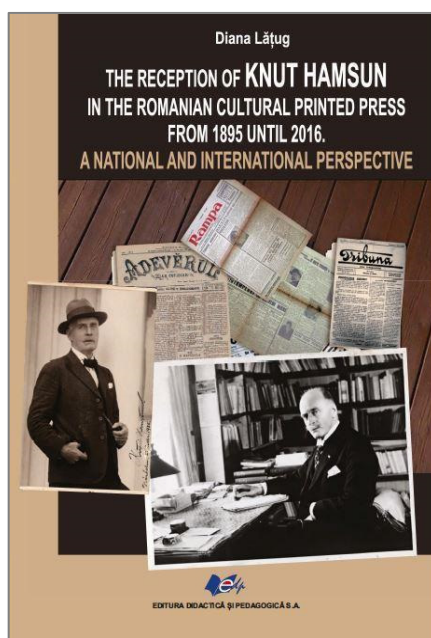
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BOOKS

Diana Lățug, *The Reception of Knut Hamsun in the Romanian Cultural Printed Press from 1895 until 2016. A National and International Perspective*, București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 2020, 448 p.

Encompassing both national and international points of view, this volume is the first in-depth analysis of how Hamsun's work was received in the Romanian cultural printed press during 1895 and 2016. The author shows progressively how Hamsun's work was perceived by his countrymen and later on by readers in European core cultures (Russian, French, German and British) and by those in peripheral cultures such as Hungarian and former Yugoslavia. The most extensive part of the work makes use of no less than 283 articles to provide a rigorous analysis on how Hamsun's work was received by the Romanian cultural printed press. The volume, representing Diana Lățug's PhD thesis with the same title, was coordinated by Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu, was publicly defended in 2017 and then published at Editura Didactică și Pedagogică in 2020.

Holding a BA (2009) and a MA (2012) from Babeș-Bolyai University in



Cluj-Napoca, Diana Lățug (b. 1987) currently serves as an assistant professor at the aforementioned university, teaching Norwegian language and literature at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, Faculty of Letters. She has published a series of articles on Knut Hamsun's life and authorship, but especially on his reception in the Romanian cultural printed press, and has shared the results of her re-

search at various international conferences and seminars, both in Romania and in Norway.

In an attempt to widen the reception spectrum on Romanian territory, the book also presents data regarding the translations of Hamsun's work, especially the initial ones, so as to give the reader a better understanding of the contact culture. Both qualitative and quantitative data analyses are used to process the bulk of articles. The author makes various ref-

erences to Hamsun's national and international receptions in an attempt to set the Romanian press reception phenomenon in a wider context. Thus, the work contributes to the already existing international research on Knut Hamsun's reception. Furthermore, it makes comparisons between the Romanian reception and the Norwegian one, respectively the international reception in both core and peripheral European cultures.

The book is comprised of four main chapters. The first one focuses on theoretical considerations and the ways in which they relate to a reception study. The volume's key concept, theorised by Franco Moretti in *Distant Reading* (London: Verso), is the *wave of diffusion* (2013, 54-57). With this in mind, the author states that the reception of Hamsun in the Romanian cultural printed press underwent several waves of diffusion, from Norwegian via German into French or Russian and finally to Romanian. Lățug gives particular attention to the way the press received Hamsun's most well-known novels, namely *Hunger*, *Pan* and *Victoria*. Next, Lățug analyses how the winning of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920 by Hamsun was perceived by the Norwegian cultural printed press. The author focuses on the Norwegian reception of Hamsun's three biographical events which have received worldwide attention: the celebration of his 70th birthday (1929), that of his 80th birthday (1939), and the day of his death (February 19, 1952).

The second chapter emphasizes how Hamsun's work was received in peripheral European cultures and how well informed the Romanian reception has been, as compared to that of neighbouring countries. The author concludes that the main culture mediating the reception

in both core and peripheral cultures, including the Romanian one, was the German culture.

The third chapter represents the milestone of Lățug's research by investigating Hamsun's reception in the Romanian cultural printed press and its subsequent fluctuations. The author points out that the first significant dialogues took place during the interwar age comprising 154 articles (from 1919 until 1939). During the same timeframe, readers gained access to the first translations of Hamsun's novels: *Pan*, *Hunger*, *Victoria*, and *The Growth of the Soil*. After the notorious Osietzky case, the public became familiar with the first echoes of Hamsun's controversial political views which became more visible during the 1940s. Lățug indicates that after 1945, due to the sociopolitical context in Romania Hamsun's work reached a point of no return in the Romanian cultural printed press which openly calls Hamsun a traitor of his homeland. Consequently, Hamsun's authorship is reduced to a minimum during the Communist era. Between 1936 and 1944 only 61 articles are published about Hamsun and his work and most of them bear negative connotations. However, between 1945 and 1947 only 11 articles on Hamsun are published, while between 1947 and 1963 there is no record of Knut Hamsun being mentioned in the Romanian cultural printed press. According to Lățug, these findings indicate the censorship Hamsun had to face in the new political context underwent by many countries. Despite the scarce publication of articles between 1963-1988, Lățug indicates that the translations were quite numerous and satisfactory. According to her, the most significant achievement regarding Knut Hamsun's reception in Communist Romania is that some of his novels

were translated directly from Norwegian into Romanian by either Valeriu Munteanu or Sanda Tomescu Baciu. After the fall of the Communist regime in 1989, Hamsun's work was revived and his works began to be translated, analysed, and promoted. Last but not least, Lăţug places special emphasis on the way in which Knut Hamsun's work has been received in the Romanian cultural press in recent years (1995-2016).

Another merit of this book is that it overviews the dynamics of Romanian translations. In the 1920s Hamsun's books *Pan*, *Hunger*, *Victoria*, *Growth of the Soil*, as well as parts of *In Wonderland* were first translated for the Romanian public. By the time these novels were published in Romanian, Hamsun was already a renowned writer. During the 1960s, Hamsun's works were reprinted in Romanian. The most significant aspect is that all of those works were translated directly from Norwegian.

The final chapter compares the way Hamsun's work was received in Romania to previous receptions, namely the one in the Norwegian press and the one in the core and peripheral cultures. The author concludes that the Romanian reception, although slower paced, follows the same outline as the Norwegian reception.

Lăţug's research ends with Appendices which ease the readability of the quantitative data. Appendix XI covers articles related to Knut Hamsun (both the ones the author directly refers to in her work and the ones mentioned only in the section titled *Statistical Data*) and published in the Romanian cultural printed press between 1895-1947.

Though ample, the book is well organised and carefully documented. The research has the advantage of direct access to primary sources (articles regarding Hamsun's reception from various library archives), in both Norwegian, which the author masters, and Romanian. It thus follows closely the fundamental hypothesis according to which in the Romanian culture there was a delayed reaction to Knut Hamsun's work. The author argues that the degree of exposure and knowledge of Hamsun's work in Romania is quite low today.

Overall, Lăţug's research proves that Knut Hamsun's reception in the Romanian cultural press had not followed a smooth path. Due to its complexity, the book is a major contribution to the European Hamsun scholarship.

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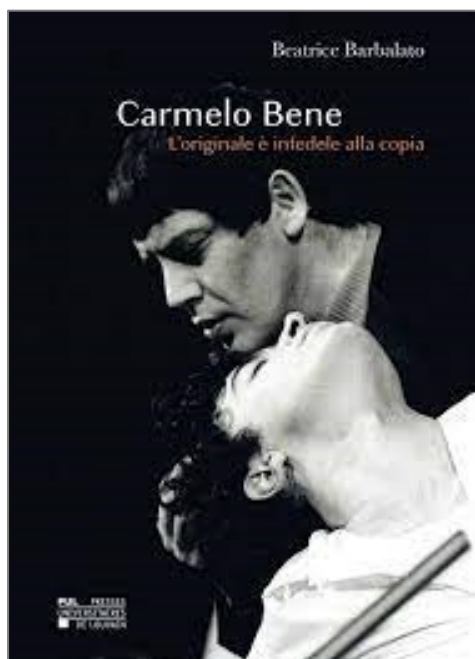
BOOKS

Beatrice Barbalato, *Carmelo Bene. L'originale è infedele alla copia*, Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2022, 360 p.

Il libro di Beatrice Barbalato sul teatro di Carmelo Bene ovvero sul sistema etico ed estetico di rapportarsi a pièce famose, dalla loro origine alla forma messa in scena dal drammaturgo italiano, sembra essere rivolto non soltanto agli studiosi, epigoni o critici di CB, ma all'intero pubblico amante del teatro, che arriva non solo a scoprire, conoscere e addirittura a capire l'autore, ma a essere iniziato nella filosofia e

nella storia del teatro, percorrendo le interpretazioni e le analogie sull'argomento, sul male e sul trascendentale di Lacan, Foucault e Deleuze nei confronti dei lavori beniani analizzati dall'autrice.

Senza intenzione di organizzare i capitoli cronologicamente, l'autrice parte in maniera organica dall'ispirazione di origine antica, avendo come punto centrale le rappresentazioni drammatiche di Pentecosta e Achille di CB, secondo Eschilo e Stazio come fonte classica, ma anche la versione



di von Kleist, che, secondo l'autrice, sorprende in maniera indiretta il movimento dal matriarcato al patriarcato, e persino i due tipi di femminilità compresse nell'immagine di Achille, rimanendo però un aedo considerato minore da CB stesso. L'adattamento del regista propone allora l'interpretazione da fine a capo, omettendo di segnalare chi parla nella variante scritta, lasciando così lo spettatore a

dedurre l'appartenenza delle voci, procedimento che mette in evidenza il contrasto tra la determinazione autonoma e la fatalità degli eventi.

Il colloquio sul maschile e femminile si estende nel secondo capitolo, uno dei più ampi, dove viene inserito anche l'elemento politico, rispettivamente

ecclesiastico, sottolineando l'impatto di Sant'Agostino sulla figura di Salomè, dimostrando come per CB, il maestro delle ripetizioni e del replicare, conta

di più l'impronta personale che la continuità della storia. Nella sua opera si manifesta una pratica di mescolanza di generi, che porta alla creazione di un'esperienza mistica. Egli, mettendo tutte le interpretazioni sullo stesso livello, ha individuato alcune fessure che sono state modificate in tale maniera da diventare straniere dal loro contesto originale, togliendo a Salomè le varie identità acquisite durante la storia. Beatrice Barbalato giustifica l'intenzione di CB attraverso la figura di Battista, visto come un primitivo implacabile, ma anche di Erode, di Cristo vampiro e di Salomè stessa, che viene fortemente maschilizzata, non essendo più danzatrice, permettendo una nuova visione sui protagonisti, aggiungendo scintille di creazione drammaturgica alle opere, pur sostenendo che all'artista non resta altro che scomporre e ricomporre, in quanto tutto è stato già detto. Per arrivare al suo originale, l'autore si sofferma sulla variante di Oscar Wilde, considerata eponima, diventa però infedele alla copia scelta, in quanto si allontana dall'identità drammatica del soggetto, creando una pratica intertestuale specifica per lo stile beniano, tentando di trovare la sua identità nel ciò che viene ripetuto, differenziandosi dalle altre copie attraverso le modalità di rinviare agli stessi doppi, attraverso le differenze stesse, che mette in dubbio l'esistenza dell'opera primordiale. In modo paradossale, l'autrice vuole e riesce abilmente a documentare come ha conseguito CB ad arrivare al nucleo delle opere interpretate, identificando e rinunciando a tutto ciò che ritiene a essere in più, pur non essendo d'accordo con una parte delle interpretazioni del drammaturgo stesso. L'identità non è mai quella tradizionale, infatti non ci si può individuare più, negando il supplizio di Battista,

che non ha modo di essere un martirio nel giorno d'oggi, CB trasforma l'opera stessa in un martire, al quale gli sono stati tolti i tratti specifici oppure gli sono stati alterati in modo impensabile. Il principio di individualizzazione viene rovesciato, l'assenza diventa il tema centrale della performance teatrale, il corpo dell'attore non si identifica mai con il personaggio.

Nel terzo capitolo si dedica al significato di provvidenza, per spiegare il rapporto effetto-causa per CB, per il quale sembra cambiasse frequentemente il criterio di giudizio, negando l'interpretazione convergente degli avvenimenti, motivando che è allora l'effetto che prevale sulla causa, questo ultimo avendo come stimolo l'esito ambito. Questo cambiamento spinge verso un'intenzione di agire in modo opposto alle idee o alle norme esistenti, sovrapponendo elementi di fonti diverse come in una *mise en abyme*. Lo stesso procedimento fa possibile l'intento beniano di esporre finalmente la visione sul concetto di tempo, attraverso la volontà nata dal presente, delimitata dalla posterità o dell'alterità, cioè un'eco dell'aiôn degli stoici.

Con la figura di don Giovanni, in rapporto al testo, CB è altalenante, mischiando i tratti drammatici dei personaggi shakespeariani con la vacuità calderoniana, liberando il personaggio dal suo destino, ma anche dalle interpretazioni critiche. In questa parte viene inserito il concetto chiave del libro, cioè l'originalità del falso, idea presa da Wilde, ma sviluppata e personalizzata da CB, in quanto per lui non conta più l'autenticità della prassi o la distinzione originale e copia, autore ed epigone. Dall'altra parte, con la sezione dedicata a Faust, l'autrice comporta una visione d'insieme sui protagonisti oppure sulle tipologie di personaggi, in quanto il drammaturgo si avvicina di più all'animo

umano, dando ai personaggi tratti burleschi, facendoli passare come maligni, tratto prevalente per i personaggi messi in scena da CB, com'è anche il dandismo spesso evocato dall'autrice, che è quasi sempre uno dei numerosi volti, soprattutto dei protagonisti, in realtà maschera per i limiti umani, per l'inerzia dell'essere e nondimeno per la morte, anche perché il personaggio viene paradossalmente privato dall'accidia, ma anche dalla salvezza, inserendolo nel registro sarcastico o pure cinico.

In ottica esegetica, Barbalato conclude sulla cainità grottesca, sulla prospettiva draconiana di Sade, e sull'incapacità

della società contemporanea di accettare il male smisurato, secondo CB, definendo il suo teatro come privo di spettacolo, non avendo bisogno del pubblico. Gli attori prendono atteggiamenti da Hamlet, Achille o Faust in modo equivoco, nel tentativo di cambiare il loro destino. Il testo della studiosa del grande drammaturgo punta sulla legittimità di copiare, prassi rivendicata da CB, e documenta magistralmente le tecniche che hanno trasformato i lavori di CB in un approccio innovativo, ma anche provocatorio di fare teatro.

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BOOKS

Vincent Jacques, Claire Pagès (dir.), *Hervé Guibert, l'envers du visible*, Paris, Créaphis Éditions, 2022, 286 p.

Personnalité complète et complexe, Hervé Guibert est plus connu pour son œuvre littéraire que pour son œuvre photographique. Le volume présente essentiellement les communications de la journée d'étude « Hervé Guibert, l'envers du visible. Image et photographie », organisée en avril 2019 par le Collège international de philosophie, sous la direction de Vincent Jacques et Claire Pagès.

Cet ouvrage collectif propose une réflexion en quatre parties : *Photographie et écritures*, *Objets, lieux et images*, *Désir, corps et aveuglement* et *Cinémas*, ayant comme objectif majeur l'analyse transversale de la démarche guibertienne où littérature, photographie et cinéma se côtoient.

Dans la première partie (*Photographie et écritures*), Arnaud Genon, Jean-Pierre Boulé et Pierre Gaudin s'arrêtent sur les livres où « Partant de l'image, il [Hervé Guibert] tend vers l'écriture, partant de l'écriture, il tend vers l'image. » (p. 29) Les trois articles n'oublient pas le



détail le plus important de l'œuvre d'Hervé Guibert, celui du lien qui a toujours existé entre les photos d'*avant* et d'*après* la découverte de sa séropositivité.

La deuxième partie (*Objets, lieux et images*) regroupe les contributions d'Adèle Cassagnol et Anne-Cécile Guilbard, qui s'intéressent à la disparition du texte, à la page blanche, vierge, à l'absence et aux corps masculins monstrueux comme si Guibert annonçait sa

propre disparition provoquée par la maladie. Pénétrer dans le cabinet de curiosités de l'auteur-collectionneur ou dans l'intimité des auscultations dans le cabinet médical pourraient à la fois choquer et fasciner les lecteurs. Mais ce qui attire l'attention, c'est le principe gouvernant son écriture à suivre Anne-Cécile Guilbard : « Vous imaginerez tout ce que vous voudrez mais vous ne verrez pas. » (p.135)

Encore trois articles continuent le périple à travers l'univers de l'œuvre photographique d'Hervé Guibert, ceux d'Andrei Lazar, de Benjamin Gagnon-

Chainey et Alexandra Roy-Côté et de Claire Pagès. *L'image fantôme* et *Les Aveugles* sont les livres qui suscitent l'intérêt des auteurs de ces travaux où le visible et l'invisible, l'art et la littérature reviennent.

Dans « Figures du désir et pulsion figurale dans l'Image fantôme », Andrei Lazar explore l'écriture *ekphrastique* de la photo et se pose la question du désir comme concept théorique. (p. 158) Benjamin Gagnon-Chainey et Alexandra Roy-Côté font l'analyse du roman *Les Aveugles* en tant que „fable heuristique” (p. 169) tandis que Claire Pagès s'arrête sur la frontière entre le visible et l'invisible et aboutit à un commentaire qui n'est pas à négliger : « Pour Hervé Guibert, c'est plutôt l'écriture qui fait voir. » (p. 202)

La dernière partie appelée tout simplement *Cinéma*s (il faut remarquer le pluriel !) clôt le volume avec deux études sur le travail cinématographique d'Hervé Guibert, notamment les films *La Pudeur* et *l'Impudeur* et *l'Homme blessé*.

Dans « *La Pudeur* ou *L'impudeur* : filmer avec son sang, malgré son sang », Vincent Jacques suit la chronologie du

travail guibertien qui est parti de l'écriture et de la photo pour arriver à la vidéo, une méthode complexe réunissant la photo, l'écriture et le cinéma, car la vidéo est, selon Guibert, la façon la plus douce de montrer le corps malade. C'est le choix de l'écrivain de prendre la mort à la légère et de dépasser le tabou de l'époque, en transformant l'idée d'une mort événement privé en une mort publique.

Le volume s'achève par une interview avec Pierre Eugène à propos du film *L'Homme blessé* dont le scénario a été une co-écriture de Guibert et Chéreau et qui reçoit une critique peu favorable à cause du penchant de Chéreau vers une mise en scène orientée plutôt vers les corps.

Les apports des auteurs de ce volume sur l'œuvre photographique d'Hervé Guibert rendent la critique littéraire plus riche encore, sans aucun doute. Les approches d'une extraordinaire diversité invitent les lecteurs à faire une analyse approfondie et transversale d'un écrivain qui ne cessera de surprendre par son jeu *dévoiler / cacher*.

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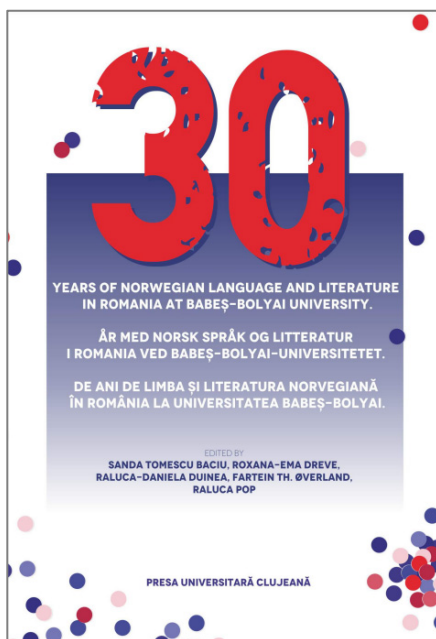
BOOKS

Sanda Tomescu Baciu, Roxana-Ema Dreve, Raluca-Daniela Duinea, Fartein Th. Øverland, Raluca Pop (eds.), *30 Years of Norwegian Language and Literature in Romania at Babeş-Bolyai University*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021, 255 p.

Published in 2021 with a trilingual title, the collective volume *30 Years of Norwegian Language and Literature in Romania at Babeş-Bolyai University* serves as a celebration of three decades of Norwegian studies at BBU's Faculty of Letters. It incorporates official anniversary greetings from several Norwegian and Romanian institutions, personal messages from collaborators and alumni, as well as academic papers on a variety of topics revolving around Scandinavian linguistic and literary studies.

The volume is divided into six chapters, to which a foreword written by the editors and a gallery of pictures are added.

The first chapter comprises messages from the rector of BBU, the dean of the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca, the Norwegian Ambassador to Romania,



Direktoratet for høyre utdanning og kompetanse, NORLA, Senter for norskstudier i utlandet, and, last but not least, the Norwegian Summer Schools the Department has collaborated with over the years.

The second chapter, "Institutional Construction", consists of an in-depth description of the formation of the Norwegian Language and Literature Bachelor Programme and its development, starting from 1991, the year when the first group of students had the possibility to choose Norwegian as a minor specialization for their bachelor's degree. Sanda Tomescu Baciu, founder of the Bachelor Programme and – until recently – head of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, reminisces the beginnings and the ongoing process of further developing the specialization, whose number of students grew con-

stantly from just twelve in 1991, to hundreds in recent years, as the possibility to choose it as both a major and a minor was introduced. The spread of the Norwegian culture and literature was achieved through numerous projects, study or research mobilities for students, and translations done by the members of the department and by outstanding alumni – all of this with help from Norwegian institutions like NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad) or Diku, the Norwegian Embassy in Romania, the Center for Ibsen studies and BBU. Gratitude is expressed for their support and collaboration in projects like the *Henrik Ibsen Centenary* (2006) or the *Knut Hamsun Conference* (2009), when important academic figures like film critic Jan Erik Holst, the late literary historian and critic Asbjørn Aarseth or the Ambassador Leif Arne Ulland were present. Book launches of the Romanian translations of Norwegian literary works were often done in the presence of the authors and with the support of NORLA, for example Lars Saabye Christensen, who came to Cluj-Napoca in 1996 for the release of *Beatles* and in 2014 for the novels *Halvbroren* (*The Half Brother*) and *Visning*. Moreover, the *Nordica* collection, established and coordinated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu since 2015, at the Casa Cărții de Știință publishing house, has welcomed translations and PhD studies on Scandinavian subjects from the department's professors and alumni.

The third chapter comprises studies on canonical Norwegian literature written by both Norwegian and Romanian researchers. Eivind Tjønneland and Adriana Diana Urian both contribute with two studies about Henrik Ibsen. The first sets out a chronological synthesis of the reception of French symbolism in Norway in the late 19th century and how its

unclear understanding affected critics' perception of Ibsen's *Lille Eyolf*, as they could not agree on whether the work was symbolistic or not. The other examines the main character of Ibsen's best-known play, *A Doll's House*, from the personal point of view of an author who strives to understand how Nora's various identities – mother, wife, woman, and doll – are connected. Lisbeth P. Wærp and Diana Lățug choose to examine the famous, but controversial Knut Hamsun from two different perspectives: in the first contribution his attitude is debated with the help of references to *Marken's grøde* and Johan Turi's *En bog om lappernes liv i Verdens Gang*, while the other article focuses on explaining the epilogue of *Pan*. Steinar Gimnes tackles Tarjei Vesaas's *Fuglane* in a dichotomous analysis (biocentrism vs. anthropocentrism), while Ioana Hodârău talks about the reception of Scandinavian culture and literature in France in the first half of the 20th century.

In the fourth section the thematics vary from linguistic and philological aspects to more practical aspects like translations, pedagogy and didactic methods. Gudleiv Bø writes about the creation of Nynorsk and Ivar Aasen's poetry; while an interesting article by Ingmar Söhrman presents the Norwegian characteristics that were preserved in the Swedish dialect spoken in the Bohusän region; Cristina Vișovan focuses her research on how virtual and interactive didactic methods and tools can be used in teaching Norwegian, while also presenting their limitations; Roxana-Ema Dreve examines the reception of Johan Bojer in Romania from a double perspective by analysing both the author's presence in press articles between 1935 and 1993 and the quality of the translations of his work. Another

quantitative contribution comes from Raluca Duinea, whose paper's focal point is the amount of translations of Norwegian and Danish children's literature in the 20th century. Fartein Th. Øverland presents an introduction to dependency analysis of Old Norwegian as it is used in the Menotec project, with the aim of employing it as a practical didactic tool and Raluca Pop debates the traits of an ideal translator while also providing an overview of the challenges and implications of culturally appropriate translations.

In the fifth chapter the articles revolve around contemporary Norwegian literature and films. Unni Langås contributes with an analysis of the terror motive in *Due og Drone*, with references to Anders Breivik's terrorist attack from 2011 and World War II. Henning H. Wærp questions whether *Dinas bok* is an emancipatory novel or a depiction of a monstrous woman and Jan Erik Holst presents a collection of biographical films about several Norwegian cultural icons, arguing that biographical works have undergone a surge in popularity over the past decade. The following article, written by Ioana-Andreea Mureşan, highlights how the childhood stories of Hoem integrate in the migration literature, which is often more focused on statistics than on personal histories. Studies on ecocriticism are present as well in this volume: Georgiana Bozîntan analyses Maja Lunde's *The End of The Ocean*, while Călina-Maria Moldovan writes about the portrayal of impending ecological and geological disasters in films and TV series, as well as about how the "eco-anxiety" felt by the characters is conveyed to the viewers in an attempt to create awareness. Ecaterina-Miruna Dumitraşcu brings a geocritical study on the relation between place and

social belonging (or social alienation – as the conclusions suggest) in Per Pettersson's bildungsromane, while Paul-Daniel Golban introduces the reader to the concept of Neo-Naivism and an unprecedented representation of men and masculinity in Erlend Loe's writings. Adriana-Narcisa Bărlădean puts forth an article that dives into the crossover phenomenon in literature, exemplified through Simon Stranger's trilogy, which presents thought-provoking subjects. The last academic article of this section, written by Ana Suărăşan, examines Lotta Elstad's novel, *I Refuse to Think*, in relation to the portrayal of the concept of happiness in contemporary Norwegian literature.

The wide variety of topics addressed in the three parts dedicated to research papers and their complexity emphasizes not only the superior education and guidance offered to the students and graduates of the Norwegian specialization, but also the exceptional partnerships with competent foreign researchers and their expertise – which adds value not only to this volume, but also the Department in general, which is able to keep up with the international academic environment and offer its students the opportunity to be part of it.

The next section of the book comprises personal greetings and congratulatory messages from Sven Hakon Rossel from the University of Vienna, author and biographer Robert Ferguson, Maria Sibińska from the University of Gdańsk, Marthe Berg Andresen Reffhaug, the first Norwegian foreign lector at BBU, as well as a group of alumni.

Finally, the last pages are filled with pictures from different conferences, ceremonies, extracurricular activities, book launches, translation seminars and other

events that the department has coordinated or participated in from 1991 until now.

To sum up, this anniversary volume offers a synthetization of the history of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature and its huge contribution to the dissemination and popularization of the Norwegian culture in Romania. It shows the collaborations and international network the department has, in addition to the diversity of topics which the alumni of the Norwegian Language and Literature specialization are prepared to research and write about:

canonical and contemporary Norwegian literature, Old Norse philology, linguistics, translations and methods of teaching Norwegian. The number of greetings and congratulatory messages from the representatives of important Norwegian institutions highlights the appreciation the department receives for its work in further strengthening the intercultural relations between Norway and Romania.

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