

# STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS Babeş-Bolyai

**言語変化といふ問題**  
長崎洋、高橋洋、藤本  
藤本 俊彦 著

「言語変化は諸言語の歴史におけることばの断絶の源である」として、この問題の重要性を論じている。また、変化することばが諸言語の本質であり、変化することばによって諸言語は断絶であるという主張も論じている。フランス語を中心に諸言語の断絶の「断絶の源」によって断絶した言語学を断絶に導く断絶の源。断絶の源。断絶の源。断絶の源。

**Textlinguistik**

Eugenio Coseriu  
**Lateinisch - Romanisch**  
Vorlesungen und Abhandlungen zum sogenannten Vulgarlatein und zur Entstehung der romanischen Sprachen  
Bearbeitet und herausgegeben von Herbert Bartsch

Eugenio Coseriu  
**Introduction à la linguistique**

**STORIA DELLA FILOSOFIA DEL LINGUAGGIO**  
Eugenio Coseriu  
Edizione italiana a cura di Donatella Di Cesare

**Lecciones de Lingüística General**  
EUGENIO COSERIU

**Einführung in die Phonetik für Romanisten**  
Bearbeitet von

**Sprachkompetenz**  
Grundzüge der Theorie des Sprechens

Eugenio Coseriu  
**エウジェニオ・コセリウ うつりゆくこそことはなれ**  
サンクローニエ・デア・アタロニエ・ヒストリア  
田中克彦・かめい、たかし 共訳

**CURRENT PERSPECTIVES IN COSERIAN SCHOLARSHIP**

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**PHILOLOGIA**  
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## INTRODUCTION

Eugenio Coseriu is recognized as a central figure in 20th-century linguistics and is widely regarded as the most prominent linguist of Romanian origin. His work was at the forefront of the discipline, contributing to the development of the science of language through his exploration of all areas of theoretical linguistics.

Eugenio Coseriu established himself as a leading figure in international linguistics during his time in Uruguay (1951-1963), with several fundamental and pioneering studies. Thus, in *Sistema, norma y habla* (1952) and *Sincronía, diacronía e historia* (1958), he advanced viable theoretical solutions for overcoming F. de Saussure's dichotomies. In *Determinación y entorno* (1956), which "contributed to Coseriu's worldwide fame" (Kabatek 2020, 75), he defined the three levels of language and their related disciplines: a linguistics of speech in general, a linguistics of particular languages, and a linguistics of texts. On the other hand, Coseriu did not limit himself to criticizing and amplifying the structuralist conception. In fact, he elaborated what would later be called Integral Linguistics: "a linguistics whose first task was to configure its own identity by first establishing fundamental distinctions in order to circumscribe, within this edifice, the place that each particular linguistic problem should hold" (cf. Kabatek 2020, 75). Much later, Coseriu would acknowledge that the distinction between the three levels of language organization (the universal level of speech in general, the historical level of languages, and the individual level of texts), in its three aspects (activity, competence and product) represents his most important contribution to the field of international linguistics (Coseriu 1985, xxv-xxxv). After moving to Germany, Coseriu would further develop the conceptual coordinates of his theory in landmark studies (2006, 2007, 2015a, 2015b), thus firmly laying out the foundations of Integral Linguistics.

Coseriu's contribution to the field of linguistics and cultural sciences can be outlined, in Mircea Borcilă's view, on three main dimensions. Coseriu (1) validated the need for a process of theoretical reconstruction of linguistics in relation to the specificity of its own object of study; (2) demonstrated, by exploring a central area of language study, that this process requires a theoretical foundation different from the one derived from the epistemology of natural sciences under



the influence of positivistic and neopositivistic trends; (3) proposed an overall historical and theoretical delineation of the epistemological framework appropriate to linguistics and cultural sciences in general (Borcilă 2016: 19-20).

In an interview from 2017, Johannes Kabatek sums up his outlook on the future of Eugenio Coseriu's linguistic theory on an optimistic note. Although some scholars suggest that Coseriu's manuscripts should be published as soon as possible, "or else his ideas might lose their topicality", he himself believes that preparing Coseriu's writings for printing even two or three decades from now will not diminish the relevance of his work: "E. Coseriu is already a classic. (...) his work is a collection of classic works in which many important concepts and an overall outlook on language can be found, a coherently designed architecture which also allows for many interesting aspects to be developed" (Robu&Kabatek 2017, 144).

These statements circumscribe the purport of exegeses, manuscript retrieval and conceptual follow-up approaches that linguists concerned with the work of Eugenio Coseriu (1921-2002) are currently deploying. The classification and digitization of 1,200 Coserian manuscripts within the framework of the project *Eugenio Coseriu – Erfassung und Publikationen unveröffentlichter Manuskripte* (1998-2004) funded by the DFG led to the creation of the "Eugenio Coseriu Archive" (<https://coseriu.ch/>) at the University of Tübingen in 2005. Several important manuscripts have subsequently been published. These include Coseriu 2003, 2008, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021a, 2021b and 2022. In parallel, since 2007, several international congresses have been organized under the general heading *Linguistica Coseriana* (Aix en Provence - 2007, Cluj-Napoca - 2009, Almeria - 2011; Udine - 2013, Potsdam - 2015, Lima - 2017, Cadiz - 2020, Zürich - 2021, Cluj-Napoca - 2025), and Eugenio Coseriu Chairs of Human Studies have been established at the Universities of Montevideo (Uruguay), Cordoba (Argentina) and Santiago de Chile (Chile).

The most recent major project related to Coseriu – „Über den Strukturalismus hinaus“ – *Briefe an Eugenio Coseriu und die Geschichte der Linguistik im 20. Jahrhundert* – was undertaken at the University of Zürich in 2020-2024, with financial support from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

The current volume continues the series of studies exploring the field of integral linguistics, and focuses on theoretical aspects and practical applications within the framework of Coserian theory. It comprises a wide range of studies related to each of the three levels of language proposed by E. Coseriu.

The volume opens with Eugenia Bojoga's contribution titled *La créativité dans la continuité: Johannes Kabatek sur la théorie linguistique d'Eugenio Coseriu* (*Creativity in Continuity: Johannes Kabatek on Eugenio Coseriu's Linguistic Theory*).

Starting from the premise that scholars of E. Coseriu's work consider that the Romanian linguist not only revolutionized several fields of linguistics but also integrated all of them into a comprehensive and unified conception of language, known as Integral Linguistics, Eugenia Bojoga emphasizes the importance that Coseriu scholars attach to the epistemological foundations of linguistic disciplines and highlights J. Kabatek's contribution in this context.

Like other exegetes, J. Kabatek asserts that Coseriu's epistemological principles underpin his entire scholarly work and provide the key to understanding why his oeuvre, which is so vast, is at the same time so coherent. Unlike his predecessors, Kabatek focuses in particular on two essential texts of Coseriu: *Principiile lingvisticii ca știință a culturii* (Coseriu 1992) and *Dix thèses à propos de l'essence du langage et du signifié* (Coseriu 2001).

In the article *Eugênio Coseriu e a problemática da identidade entre linguagem e literatura*, Maria Hozanete Lima and João Artur Rodrigues Fernandes base their argument on Eugenio Coseriu's idea that literature is the ideal setting for the full and comprehensive functioning of the tripartite structure of language, or, in other words, of language as a creative activity.

Within this context, literary texts function as models for analysis and description in both the linguistics of language / idiomatic competence and textual linguistics / expressive competence. This "interference" between the different levels of language can be explained by the fact that literary texts reveal the infinite possibilities for structuring and restructuring the system of any language and, consequently, the linguistic resources necessary for communication. At the same time, this is also manifested in the way concrete linguistic signs function within a complex structure of interrelationships, which is based on a set of interdependent semantic functions (Coseriu 1977).

Building on the same premise of the trichotomy of language levels postulated by E. Coseriu, Mateus Parducci sets out to define the concept of a universal level of language in the article *Ecos do legado coseriano: explorando o conceito de nível universal da linguagem*. To this end, he analyzes the relevant literature, selecting five studies which he considers particularly important in this respect: Faur 2009; Willems 2016; Schrott 2021; Ruiz and Alegría 2021; and Vucheva 2012.

The paper shows that the universal level of language, with the specific competence associated with the discipline of the linguistics of speech ("elocutional linguistics"), masterfully outlined by E. Coseriu, continues to serve as a source of theoretical inspiration for forging new conceptual frameworks. The author aims to gather, systematize and coherently organize the still fragmented information regarding the universal level of language, thus setting the stage for the development of a "Linguistics of speech in general".

A significant contribution entitled *Polyvalence and polymorphy. Multifunctionality in grammar from a language-specific functional perspective* comes from Klass Willems, who focuses on the level of historical languages and idiomatic competence. More specifically, he addresses Coseriu's theory of "functional syntax" (or "functional grammar").

Taking as a starting point E. Coseriu's distinctions in this field, such as the types of signifieds, the author examines polyvalence and polymorphism (or "grammatical synonymy") from a functional perspective (an idiomatic-specific approach to grammar). Klass Willems explores the functional status of syntactic structures viewed as complex constructions and illustrates the concept of polymorphism through a case study, namely that of ditransitive (or "dative") alternation in contemporary German.

Emma Tămâianu-Morita's paper *Textual Functions of "Expression Gaps" from the Perspective of Integral Linguistics* provides a critical-constructive examination of the role played by "gaps in expression" in the constitution and articulation of textual meaning, starting from Eugenio Coseriu's study "Die Ausdruckslücke als Ausdrucksverfahren (Textlinguistische Übung zu einem Gedicht von Kavafis) ['Gaps in expression as an expressive device (A text-linguistic exercise on a poem by Kavafis)'].

Emma Tămâianu-Morita frames this procedure within a set of text-constitutive devices, alongside evocative sign relations, textual functions (including metaphorical ones), and forms of suspending incongruence and incorrectness on the basis of adequacy, and then proposes a reconsideration of expression gaps drawing on the perspective of textual typology, both from a functional and a historical standpoint. The wider applicability of Coseriu's notion of 'expression gap' thus reinterpreted is illustrated by the analysis of the Zen-inspired story "The Ghoulish Priest" by Donald Richie, designed to showcase how expression gaps function on multiple layers of meaning and delineate strategies for the articulation of the text's overall sense.

The article of Clemilton Lopes Pinheiro and José Rubens Pereira, *Conceitos de amor em Amoris Laetitia: especificação da noção de universo de discurso*, explores the concept of 'universe of discourse' as a universe of knowledge and as a specific discursive modality. Out of the four universes of discourse theorized by E. Coseriu, the authors focus on the universe of faith. Within this context, they illustrate Coseriu's ideas through the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, published by Pope Francis in 2016, and identify, within the text of the exhortation, the concept of unconditional (divine) love expressed through several instances: patient, compassionate, altruistic, just, kind, balanced, forgiving, authentic, trusting, hopeful, and resilient.

Furthermore, the authors state that the methodological "autonomy" of the universe of discourse of faith determines/justifies the multiple concepts of love postulated in Christianity, given the nature of the text type (Apostolic Exhortation) and the domain of knowledge to which it belongs (religious). In addition, two other universes of discourse—that of shared experience (practical/daily life) and that of science (philosophical, legal, psychological, and genetic knowledge)—contribute to defining and contextualizing the specific character of the universe of faith.

Taking as a starting point the three levels of language and their associated competencies, in their article *Japanese Product Names Involving "Contradiction": An Integral Linguistic View on Their Sense-Creating Mechanism* Keita Ikarashi and Akihiko Sakamoto adopt expressive competence as their main theoretical and methodological focus, in order to unravel how a specific sense emerges: *<the designated product is an innovative and attractive offering for consumers>*. The examples discussed (such as *nomu-purin* [drinkable pudding], a pudding-based product that is consumed by drinking), appear at first glance to be incongruous expressions, as they contradict elocutionary competence (usually, pudding is eaten, not drunk). However, incongruence is suspended by designation, and the naming device is shown to highlight the innovative characteristics of the product itself. The analysis of numerous similar examples using Coseriu's threefold model of the competencies and evaluations of speech, as well as the notion of suspending incongruence, leads to the conclusion that this particular naming strategy has already been integrated into the Japanese idiomatic competence, and its existing instances can serve, by association, as a basis for interpreting new names of similarly innovative products.

Applying Coseriu's theoretical framework to some of the most prominent trends in the field today — namely, chatbots and generative artificial intelligence — Cristina Varga, in *Assessing the Limits of Ai-Based Translation: A Coserian Perspective*, analyzes how AI-based conversational assistants such as ChatGPT can be effectively employed in the field of translation. Based on Coseriu's framework, which defines translation as: «...un tipo particular de hablar: es hablar con un contenido dado de antemano, por medio de otra lengua» (Coseriu, 1997, 168), the main focus of the article is to examine the "limits" of translation, in order to analyze the extent to which generative artificial intelligence addresses translation problems, when compared to human translation. Thus, this study outlines the translation strategies that generative AI employs in translating comic strips. Of particular interest are the limits of translation and the extent to which they are consistent with the limits of AI-based translation.

The same thematic area of addressing translation issues within the Coserian framework is reflected in Lucia Horea's article *King James Bible as Norm-Maker — Coserian and Translational Perspectives*. The article relates to the historical level of languages and builds on E. Coseriu's theory of the linguistic norm. Lucia Horea combines Coseriu's view with Gideon Toury's theory of translation and with Lawrence Venuti's approach to translation as a productive practice from a cultural perspective. Within this context, the focus of the analysis is the *King James Bible*, interpreted as "a central space for the creation and negotiation of linguistic norms in the history of the English language" in the context of 17th-century England - a case in point demonstrating that translation is not a mere act of reproduction, but rather an activity with the potential to crystallize and institutionalize certain linguistic norms. It should be noted that emphasis is placed on Coseriu's theoretical contributions regarding linguistic competence and normativity.

Each of the contributions selected for this issue brings more than a mere application of Coserian ideas and concepts: the authors aim to propose original developments on Coserian bases, which in turn can serve to inspire further explorations and open up new directions for engaging in a fruitful dialogue with other contemporary theoretical frameworks.

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## LA CRÉATIVITÉ DANS LA CONTINUITÉ : JOHANNES KABATEK SUR LA THÉORIE LINGUISTIQUE D'EUGENIO COSERIU

Eugenia BOJOGA<sup>1</sup> 

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**ABSTRACT.** *Creativity in Continuity: Johannes Kabatek on Eugenio Coseriu's Linguistic Theory.* In this text we aim to analyze the way in which J. Kabatek interprets the epistemological foundations of E. Coseriu's theory, based in particular on his volume *Eugenio Coseriu. Beyond Structuralism* (2023) which contains a chapter on "Coseriu's epistemological principles and the essence of language". Exegetes consider that E. Coseriu not only revolutionized several fields of linguistics, such as linguistic typology, lexical semantics, text linguistics, etc., but also included them all in a broad and unitary conception of language, called integral linguistics, because he integrates – in the trichotomy of language planes – absolutely all aspects of historical languages, of discourse/text and of language/speech in general. In this context, J. Kabatek shows that "Coseriu's epistemological principles underlie his entire scientific activity and allow us to understand why his work, which is so vast, is also so coherent." His approach particularly capitalizes on two emblematic Coserian texts: *Principles of Linguistics as a Science of Culture* (Coseriu 1992) and *Dix thèses a propos de l'essence du langage et du signifié* (Coseriu 2001).

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**Keywords:** *Eugenio Coseriu, integral linguistics, epistemological principles, "Beyond Structuralism", creativity, continuity*

**REZUMAT. Creativitate în continuitate: Johannes Kabatek despre teoria lingvistică a lui Eugenio Coseriu.** În textul de față ne propunem să analizăm modul în care J. Kabatek interpretează fundamentele epistemologice ale teoriei lui E. Coseriu, bazându-ne pe volumul său *Eugenio Coseriu. Beyond Structuralism* (2023) care conține capitolul "Coseriu's epistemological principles and the essence of language", dar și pe alte studii, scrise anterior. Exegeții consideră că E. Coșeriu nu doar a revoluționat mai multe domenii ale lingvisticii, cum ar fi tipologia lingvistică, semantica lexicală, lingvistica textului ș.a., ci le-a inclus pe toate într-o concepție amplă și unitară asupra limbajului, denumită *lingvistică integrală*, deoarece el a integrat – în trihotomia planurilor limbajului – absolut toate aspectele limbilor istorice, ale discursului / textului și ale limbajului / vorbirii în general. În acest context, J. Kabatek subliniază ferm că principiile epistemologice ale lui Coșeriu stau la baza întregii sale activități științifice și constituie cheia de acces pentru a înțelege de ce opera sa care este atât de vastă, este în același timp și atât de coerentă. Demersul său valorifică în special două texte coșerieni emblematic: *Principiile lingvisticii ca știință a culturii* (Coseriu 1992) și *Dix thèses a propos de l'essence du langage et du signifié* (Coseriu 2001).

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Eugenio Coseriu, lingvistica integrală, principii epistemologice, „mai departe de structuralism”, creativitate, continuitate*

Coseriu's body of work is a "classic"; it offers a coherent and profound view on language which should not only be considered a monumental achievement in the history of linguistics, but is also surprisingly relevant and challenging in the context of current linguistic research and thought. (Johannes Kabatek 2023)

## 1. Argument

Pour paraphraser Johannes Kabatek, l'œuvre d'Eugenio Coseriu représente non seulement une contribution majeure à l'histoire de la linguistique, mais elle demeure d'une pertinence et d'une force stimulante et qui surprend dans le contexte actuel de la linguistique. Son ouvrage de 2023, intitulé de manière suggestive *Eugenio Coseriu. Beyond structuralism*, en est une preuve éloquent. Considéré comme l'un des linguistes les plus importants de la seconde moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, E. Coseriu (1921-2002) est principalement connu comme structuraliste et spécialiste des langues romanes, précise l'auteur. Mais son

œuvre va bien au-delà, offrant une théorie linguistique exhaustive, avec des écrits couvrant un large éventail de domaines de recherche, de la sémantique, la syntaxe, la typologie, la linguistique variationnelle, l'évolution des langues, la pragmatique et la linguistique textuelle, à des domaines spécifiques tels que le latin vulgaire, l'histoire de la philosophie du langage, l'histoire de la linguistique romane, etc. Dans ce contexte, J. Kabatek reconnaît que sa monographie « offre une vue d'ensemble des contributions essentielles d'E. Coseriu à la linguistique (et à d'autres disciplines) et retrace les principales étapes de sa vie », s'adressant à un public anglophone, car la pensée de Coseriu est encore peu connue dans le monde anglo-américain.

Quant au titre, il découle de la volonté de montrer que la pensée de Coseriu, même si elle est fondée sur l'étude systématique de la structure du langage (ou des langues), dépasse largement le structuralisme et illustre à la fois ses apports et ses limites. Ce syntagme n'est pas nouveau : Coseriu l'a utilisé lui-même et on le retrouve dans « plusieurs publications en allemand, en espagnol et en roumain ». Le choix de ce titre générique pour cet ouvrage tient au fait qu'il résume, en deux mots – *Au-delà du structuralisme* –, l'idée que l'œuvre de Coseriu recèle bien d'autres aspects que ceux qu'on pourrait découvrir en le considérant, de manière réductionniste, comme un simple représentant d'une branche du structuralisme européen. Dans la tentative de J. Kabatek d'exposer, d'expliquer et de promouvoir les fondements épistémologiques de la théorie d'Eugenio Coseriu, deux grandes orientations se dégagent. D'une part, on trouve des études où l'exégète développe des aspects de la linguistique intégrale et applique le système conceptuel de Coseriu à l'interprétation des faits linguistiques. Cette catégorie comprend des études telles que : *Einheitlichkeit der Bedeutung, Designat und Integrale Linguistik* (Kabatek 2000), *Die unveröffentlichten Manuskripte Eugenio Coserius – eine Projektskizze* (Kabatek 2002), *Tradiții discursive* (Kabatek 2018a). *Norm in the Linguistic Theory of Eugenio Coseriu* (Kabatek 2019) etc. D'autre part, certaines études soulignent la pertinence des idées d'Eugenio Coseriu et les confrontent aux postulats théoriques des courants actuels, démontrant ainsi la supériorité conceptuelle de la linguistique intégrale et la priorité des fondements épistémologiques de Coseriu. Cette seconde orientation se retrouve dans *Intuición y empirismo* (Kabatek 2012), *Eugenio Coseriu, las tesis de Estrasburgo y el postulado de una lingüística lingüística* (Kabatek 2013), *Tradición e innovación: La lingüística moderna desde Saussure hasta el siglo XXI* (2015), *Determinación y entorno: 60 años después* (Kabatek 2017), etc.<sup>2</sup>

À cela s'ajoutent le recueil d'entretiens en allemand (Kabatek, Murguía 1997)<sup>3</sup>, ainsi que les livres *Lingüística coseriana, lingüística histórica, tradiciones*

<sup>2</sup> Une autre catégorie d'études de J. Kabatek sur ce sujet porte plutôt sur l'évocation de la personnalité d'E. Coseriu et de la relation entre le maître et le disciple. Sur ces aspects, voir Bojoga (2021).

<sup>3</sup> Voir notre compte rendu de cet ouvrage publié dans la revue *Studia* (Bojoga 2001).

*discursivas* (Kabatek 2018b), *Eugeniu Coșeriu. Pagini de exegeză și de reconstrucție biografică* (Kabatek 2020) et *Eugenio Coseriu. Beyond Structuralism* (Kabatek 2023). Par ailleurs, concernant ses propres textes, J. Kabatek confie qu'ils reflètent un dialogue constant avec son Eugenio Coseriu, un dialogue qui a marqué une grande partie de son activité académique. Évoquant la relation humaine et professionnelle qu'il entretenait avec son maître, le professeur de Zürich écrit :

Je n'ai jamais cessé d'être son disciple, il n'a jamais cessé d'être mon maître, mais la confiance et l'amitié n'ont cessé de croître (...). Lorsque Coseriu nous a quittés pour l'éternité, j'ai alors commencé à dialoguer avec lui en son absence : en effet, à travers ses œuvres, son enseignement, en développant des idées et en me souvenant de lui, en parlant à des personnes qui l'ont connu bien avant moi, comme cet anthropologue Olaf Blixen, qui reconstitue sa période féconde à Montevideo<sup>4</sup> (Kabatek 2020, 11).

La relation humaine qu'il entretenait avec son maître et la relation scientifique se déroulaient toujours en parallèle, influençant souvent la démarche herméneutique de l'auteur. De fait, ces deux aspects impliquent une approche identique en profondeur. Cet objectif commun ressort clairement une affinité profonde, qui se reflète sur le plan scientifique :

Ce sont des contributions qui expriment mon respect pour le langage humain, pour les langues et les textes historiques (en général), mais plus particulièrement pour le linguiste Eugenio Coseriu qui, comme nul autre, a su élucider avec cohérence les fondements de ces trois dimensions<sup>5</sup> (Kabatek 2020, 11).

Dans cet article, nous nous référerons à la perspective à partir de laquelle J. Kabatek interprète l'approche scientifique d'E. Coseriu dans son ensemble, autrement dit, à la manière dont le professeur de linguistique romane à l'Université de Zürich interprète les fondements épistémologiques de la conception linguistique de Coseriu.

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<sup>4</sup> « Nu am încetat niciodată să fiu discipol, nu a încetat niciodată să fie Maestrul meu, dar de fiecare dată exista tot mai multă încredere și prietenie (...). Când Coșeriu a plecat dintre noi la cele veșnice, atunci am început să vorbesc cu el în absența lui: de fapt, cu lucrările sale, cu învățătura sa, dezvoltând idei și aducându-mi aminte de el, vorbind cu persoane care l-au cunoscut cu mult înaintea mea, cum ar fi acel antropolog Olaf Blixen, care reconstituie perioada sa fertilă de la Montevideo » (notre traduction).

<sup>5</sup> « Acestea sunt contribuții care exprimă respectul meu pentru limbajul uman, pentru limbile istorice și texte (în general), dar mai ales pentru lingvistul Eugenio Coseriu care, ca nimeni altul dintre cei pe care eu i-am cunoscut vreodată, a fost în stare să elucideze în mod coerent esențialul acestor trei dimensiuni » (notre traduction).

## 2. L'importance des fondements épistémologiques coserieni

Nous devons souligner que d'autres exégètes de l'œuvre de Coseriu ont également abordé ces aspects. Mircea Borcilă (2016, 2021), Jürgen Trabant (1990, 2015), Donatella di Cesare (1998), Cornel Vilcu (2010, 2019), Gerda Haßler (2016), Dina Vilcu (2019), Aracelli Lopez Serena (2019) ne sont que quelques noms parmi une liste beaucoup plus longue. Le premier exégète, notre professeur à l'Université Babeş-Bolyai de Cluj, estime que la contribution essentielle d'Eugenio Coseriu à la fondation épistémologique de la linguistique en tant que science de la culture consiste en trois axes principaux :

Eugenio Coseriu (1) a légitimé la nécessité d'un processus de refondation théorique de la linguistique (en relation avec les spécificités de son propre objet d'étude) ; (2) a démontré, en explorant un domaine problématique central de l'étude du langage, que ce processus exige le recours à un fondement théorique différent de celui de l'épistémologie des sciences naturelles ; (3) a proposé une délimitation globale, historique et théorique du cadre épistémologique approprié à la linguistique et aux sciences de la culture en général<sup>6</sup> (Borcilă 2016, 19-20).

Preuve de l'importance que J. Kabatek accorde également à ces aspects, sa monographie s'ouvre sur un chapitre intitulé de manière emblématique : *Coseriu's epistemological principles and the essence of language*. (« Les principes épistémologiques de Coseriu et l'essence du langage »). Certes, il a déjà abordé ces aspects dans d'autres travaux (voir notamment Kabatek 2013 et 2015). Cette fois-ci, cependant, il synthétise brillamment les principes qui ont guidé Coseriu tout au long de son activité afin de les présenter et de les expliquer au public anglophone. Il a choisi de partir « des principes épistémologiques de Coseriu, car ils sous-tendent l'ensemble de son activité scientifique et permettent d'expliquer, au moins en partie, pourquoi son œuvre, si vaste, est à la fois si cohérente » (Kabatek 2023, 6).

Pour comprendre Coseriu, il est indispensable, bien entendu, de lire ses textes et études linguistiques, puis de prendre connaissance de ses réflexions sur son œuvre. Or, ce qui caractérise Coseriu dans le contexte général de notre science, selon Kabatek, et lui confère une importance durable, peut-être plus encore que ses contributions spécifiques à la linguistique, c'est sa vision

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<sup>6</sup> « Eugenio Coseriu (1) a legitimat necesitatea procesului de reînțemeiere teoretică a lingvisticii (în raport cu specificul propriului obiect de studiu); (2) a demonstrat, prin explorarea unei zone problematice centrale a studiului limbii, că acest proces impune recursul la un fundament teoretic diferit de cel din epistemologia științelor naturii, *sub influența curentelor pozitivistice și neopozitivistice*; (3) a propus o circumscriere de ansamblu, istorică și teoretică, a cadrului epistemologic adecvat lingvisticii și științelor culturii în general » (notre traduction).

critique de la linguistique (et de la science en général). Chez Coseriu, nous avons affaire à une sorte de méta-perspective qui a eu un impact considérable sur ses disciples et continue d'influencer ses lecteurs actuels. L'exigence fondamentale du scientifique – valable par essence pour tous les domaines – est d'avoir une conscience parfaite de son activité, sans se perdre dans l'immensité des faits. Cette « méta-pensée », précise l'exégète, requiert non seulement une solide formation empirique, mais aussi une conviction théorique inébranlable. Durant les dernières décennies de sa vie, Coseriu n'a cessé de souligner la constance de sa théorie. À plusieurs reprises, il a affirmé que sa conception linguistique avait déjà été développée dans les années 50-60 du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, c'est-à-dire à l'époque de Montevideo, et qu'il avait consacré le reste de sa vie au déploiement, à l'amplification et à l'approfondissement de ce cadre de pensée qui existait depuis le tout début. Ce n'est pas un hasard si Kabatek aborde en détail la conception épistémologique de Coseriu, notamment ses affirmations concernant l'essence du langage et la science du langage, qu'il commente et développe dans les chapitres suivants de sa monographie. « Cette approche particulière est pertinente pour un linguiste qui se réfère explicitement à ces principes et les oppose à d'autres » (Kabatek 2023, 8). Depuis les années 1970, Coseriu a été fréquemment sollicité pour présenter sa vision globale du langage, et les nombreuses cérémonies de remise du titre de Doctor honoris causa dans des universités du monde entier lui ont permis de revenir sur ces aspects et de s'exprimer longuement sur les fondements épistémologiques de son œuvre. Ainsi, lors de son discours prononcé à l'occasion de sa nomination comme Doctor honoris causa à l'Université de Grenade en 1991, il a exposé les cinq principes épistémologiques, méthodologiques et éthiques fondamentaux pour toutes les sciences de la culture.

### 3. Les cinq principes épistémologiques

Les disciples et exégètes de Coseriu ont souligné l'irréprochable cohérence logique avec laquelle il a formulé et développé sa théorie linguistique. Dans notre discipline, note R. Meisterfeld, une telle qualité est extrêmement rare. Rares sont les linguistes à avoir une conception qui leur soit propre ! Mais même dans ces cas, la plupart des théories se réfèrent généralement à un domaine précis de la linguistique. Coseriu a non seulement révolutionné plusieurs domaines de notre discipline, tels que la typologie linguistique, la sémantique lexicale, la linguistique textuelle, etc., mais il les a tous intégrés dans une conception unitaire du langage. Ce n'est pas un hasard si certains exégètes ont qualifié sa théorie de *linguistique intégrale*, car elle intègre – dans la trichotomie des plans linguistiques – absolument tous les aspects des langues historiques, du

discours/texte et du langage/parole en général. De plus, on sait qu'E. Coseriu, durant plus d'un demi-siècle d'activité scientifique, n'a jamais été contraint de se rétracter ni de modifier aucune de ses affirmations substantielles (Mesterfeld, Bojoga 2022, 40). Cette cohérence conceptuelle s'explique par les cinq principes qui ont guidé toute sa démarche scientifique, principes qu'il s'est efforcé d'appliquer dans tout ce qu'il a entrepris (cf. Coseriu 1992, 11).

L'œuvre entière de Coseriu illustre ces principes, formulés pour la première fois dans le discours qu'il a prononcé en 1977, à l'occasion de sa nomination comme membre de l'Académie de Heidelberg (Allemagne), et qui constituent, en quelque sorte, la preuve de la cohérence et de la profondeur dont nous parlions. Avec le recul, on peut en effet affirmer que ces principes se retrouvent dès ses premiers travaux, publiés à Montevideo. Ces principes sont les suivants : le principe de réalisme ou de l'objectivité scientifique, du moins comme norme idéale ; le principe de l'humanisme ou de la connaissance originelle – autrement dit, « la connaissance que l'être humain a de lui-même et de ses propres activités libres » – qui constitue le fondement des sciences de la culture ; le principe de la tradition, le principe de l'antidogmatisme qui « renvoie à la pluralité et à la variété des conceptions et des orientations en linguistique (et dans d'autres sciences de la culture), chacune devant être appréciée du point de vue de sa cohérence interne » ; et le principe de bien public ou de la responsabilité sociale. (Ibidem, 40-41).

*Le principe de l'objectivité scientifique* se résume dans sa devise platonicienne τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν λέγειν, « dire les choses telles qu'elles sont ». J. Kabatek estime que ce principe suggère l'existence d'objets scientifiques non seulement dans les sciences naturelles, mais aussi dans les sciences humaines, et donc la possibilité de les décrire objectivement. Cela n'implique pas, ajoutait-il, que les objets se prêtent à une perspective unique, mais cela réfute l'idée que l'existence d'objets culturels serait une construction arbitraire de la description, et que la seule « objectivité » devrait être recherchée dans la description ou dans la construction elle-même. Selon lui, Coseriu reconnaît que dire les choses telles qu'elles sont semble une tâche facile, mais en réalité, c'est la plus difficile, et admet qu'il est souvent impossible d'atteindre cet objectif, ce qui n'annule pas cependant la validité générale du principe. Il insiste même sur un autre type d'objectivité, qui concerne non seulement les objets eux-mêmes, mais aussi la manière dont ils doivent être traités : la « norme intrinsèque de l'objet ». Cette norme est imposée par la tâche elle-même : l'artiste sait ce qu'est la sculpture parfaite, et même si le résultat n'est pas parfait, le principe de perfection demeure. De même, le linguiste sait quel est le traitement idéal d'un problème, et l'impossibilité de la perfection n'invalide pas l'existence de la norme intrinsèque (cf. Kabatek 2023, 10). De plus, « la linguistique de Coseriu ne se fonde pas exclusivement sur l'analyse du langage ou des langues, mais il

fait fréquemment référence à la philosophie »<sup>7</sup>, ce qui implique de prendre en compte le contexte classique et philosophique de sa pensée.

Concernant *le principe de l'humanisme ou de la connaissance originelle/intuitive*, l'idée cosérienne fondamentale, comme le mentionne Kabatek, repose sur une différence épistémologique essentielle entre les sciences de la nature et les sciences de la culture. Ce serait une grave erreur pour les humanistes d'adopter les principes et les méthodes élaborés dans les sciences de la nature ou les sciences exactes, compte tenu de la nature fondamentalement différente de leurs objets d'étude. L'exégète note que si « le premier principe prône l'exactitude et s'oppose clairement à toute forme d'impressionnisme subjectif », le second « introduit une distinction entre deux types d'objets scientifiques : ceux qui nous sont extérieurs et ceux que nous produisons nous-mêmes en tant qu'objets de culture ». De plus, la description des langues peut se fonder sur notre connaissance intuitive, propre aux créateurs de langage, mais cette connaissance devient caduque face à un minéral, une substance chimique ou tout autre objet naturel. Comme le soutient Coseriu, les individus, en tant que « producteurs » d'activité discursive, savent intuitivement ce qu'est une langue, une syllabe, un mot ou une phrase, et perçoivent les particularités d'un dialecte. Cependant, tout cela relève du savoir « intuitif » ou « originel », scientifiquement injustifiable, des locuteurs. Par conséquent, dans les sciences de la culture, nous n'avons pas besoin d'hypothèses concernant l'universalité ou l'essence des faits, car nous disposons de « notre savoir originel et intuitif » (Urwissen).

De ce point de vue, les sciences de la culture et les sciences de la nature sont radicalement différentes, car la culture et la nature sont également différentes. Se référant à Hegel, Coseriu montre qu'il convient de distinguer le « connu » (« das Bekannte ») du « reconnu » (« das Erkannte ») (Ibidem, 13). Appliquée à la connaissance linguistique, cette distinction hégélienne permet de différencier la connaissance des locuteurs, qui ne sont pas tenus d'expliquer ou d'analyser leurs actes de parole, de celle des linguistes, qui se situe à un autre niveau. De plus, en linguistique, comme dans toutes les sciences de la culture, « la description et l'explication reposent sur la connaissance que le locuteur a de sa propre activité créatrice, telle qu'elle se manifeste dans l'activité de parole »<sup>8</sup> (Tămâianu 2001, 18). Cette connaissance est claire et certaine, mais réflexivement

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<sup>7</sup> « The third aspect refers to the classical and philosophical background of Coseriu's thought. As we will see throughout this book, his linguistics is not based solely on the analysis of language or languages, but also frequently refers to philosophy. This is not simply an ornament or an intellectual game, but there is a solid and ever-present foundation ». (Kabatek 2023, 9-10).

<sup>8</sup> « În lingvistică, precum și în toate științele culturii descrierea și explicația se bazează pe cunoașterea vorbitorului despre propria sa activitate creatoare, așa cum se manifestă ea chiar în activitatea de vorbire » (notre traduction).

injustifiable : *cognitio clara confusa*, respectivement *cognitio clara distincta inadaequata*, selon les termes de Leibniz. « La réalité des faits linguistiques (leur objectivité) ne peut être conçue en dehors de cette connaissance, de sorte que rendre la linguistique „réaliste” signifie refléter les faits tels qu'ils se présentent dans l'intuition du sujet parlant, mais organisés au niveau de la connaissance épistémique par l'explicitation, la justification et l'explication systématique » (Coseriu 1981/2000, 40-43 ; 1987, 11 ; 1992, 11).

Par conséquent, conclut J. Kabatek, la compétence linguistique se situe au niveau de la *cognitio clara confusa* et de la *cognitio clara distincta inadaequata* (les locuteurs savent parler et peuvent argumenter sur ce qu'ils font, mais leur argumentation reste généralement subjective et n'atteint pas le niveau de l'argumentation scientifique, même si les résultats peuvent coïncider). Les linguistes, quant à eux, appliquent des méthodes systématiques pour atteindre le niveau ultime, celui de l'objectivité scientifique : la *cognitio clara distincta adaequata*. Le principe de la connaissance intuitive ne doit pas être confondu avec une conception mentaliste générale, attire l'attention Kabatek. Coseriu est mentaliste en ce sens qu'il considère que la linguistique doit partir de la connaissance du locuteur individuel, mais il s'oppose fermement à l'adoption d'une méthodologie scientifique dérivée des sciences de la nature et défend une conception radicalement différente du mentalisme de Chomsky, par exemple (cf. Kabatek 2023, 15).

*Le troisième principe concerne l'attitude d'E. Coseriu envers la tradition.* Avec une pointe d'exagération, il déclare : « si le fondement de l'étude linguistique réside toujours dans ce savoir originel, cela signifie que d'autres peuvent aussi être – en un sens – linguistes, du moins linguistes débutants ; ceci, bien sûr, s'ils souhaitent passer de l'intuition à la réflexivité »<sup>9</sup> (Coseriu 1992, 12). La position de Coseriu est ferme : « Je ne fais aucune distinction entre la “linguistique moderne” et la linguistique “traditionnelle” ou “ancienne”, “pré-scientifique”, comme cela a été dit à maintes reprises. Tout au long de la tradition, on retrouve ces passages de l'intuition à la réflexivité, qui ont sans aucun doute leurs limites historiques et, souvent, méthodologiques, mais cela ne signifie pas que nous devions les rejeter comme idées, comme propositions de solutions, s'ils sont, en ce sens, authentiques »<sup>10</sup>. En revanche, le linguiste roumain insiste sur le fait

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<sup>9</sup> « Dacă baza studiului lingvistic rezidă de fiecare dată în acest știut originar, în această cunoaștere originară, aceasta înseamnă că și alți oameni, că toți oamenii pot fi – într-un sens – lingviști, cel puțin lingviști începători; aceasta, desigur, dacă vor să treacă de la intuiție la reflexivitate » (notre traduction).

<sup>10</sup> « Eu nu fac nicio deosebire între „lingvistica modernă” și „lingvistica tradițională”, „veche”, „preștiințifică” (...). În toată tradiția găsim aceste treceri de la intuiție la reflexivitate, care fără îndoială au neajunsurile lor istorice și, de multe ori, metodologice, dar asta nu înseamnă că trebuie să le respingem și ca idei, ca propuneri de soluții, dacă sunt într-adevăr, în acest sens, autentice » (Coseriu 1992, 11) (notre traduction).

que le principe de la tradition s'applique à l'objet et, simultanément, à la science de cet objet, et donc à l'histoire de la linguistique. Donc, son intérêt constant pour l'histoire de la linguistique s'explique par sa ferme conviction de percevoir, dans chaque cas, « l'intuition de la vérité objective et ce qui a pu être développé ultérieurement, d'Aristote à Humboldt et au-delà » (Ibidem, 12).

Kabatek note que l'importance accordée à la tradition transparait dans toute l'œuvre de Coseriu, parce qu'il a fondé sa propre théorie du langage sur une tradition qui remonte aux écrits classiques grecs de Platon et d'Aristote : « Nous avons vu que le premier principe est platonicien ; la conception générale du langage comme activité, comme *enérgeia*, est empruntée à Aristote, en passant par Humboldt. Coseriu est un traditionaliste convaincu, même si sa théorie est originale et novatrice. Il témoigne de son respect pour ceux qui lui ont transmis, à travers leurs textes, la pensée linguistique et philosophique. » C'est pourquoi il n'hésite pas à les mentionner explicitement :

Je suis prêt à admettre que tout ce qui a de la valeur dans mes écrits, dans mes conceptions et dans les méthodes que je suis est le fruit d'une réélaboration dialectique de réflexions et du développement d'idées que l'on peut trouver chez d'autres linguistes et philosophes du langage (Coseriu 1995, 187-188).

En effet, comme le rappelle Kabatek, l'œuvre de Coseriu comprend de nombreuses publications en histoire de la linguistique, parmi lesquelles figurent les origines de la pensée linguistique européenne dans la Grèce antique, l'histoire des concepts linguistiques (notamment son chef-d'œuvre de reconstruction de la tradition concernant l'origine de la notion d'arbitraire du signe linguistique<sup>11</sup>), et les contributions individuelles dans le domaine de la linguistique (telles que les travaux de Fernão de Oliveira, Andrés de Poza, Lorenzo Hervás, Hieronymus Megiser, Wilhelm von Humboldt et bien d'autres). Ce champ thématique inclut également son traité monumental, *Geschichte der romanischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Histoire de la linguistique romane) (Coseriu 2003 ; 2020 ; 2021 ; 2022), qui représente « une perspective unique sur les traditions linguistiques des langues romanes » (Kabatek 2023, 17).

*Le quatrième principe, celui de l'antidogmatisme*, signifie que toute la tradition de la pensée linguistique est envisagée à travers le prisme d'un rationalisme critique. Kabatek souligne que Coseriu postule à plusieurs reprises une approche « sympathétique », en ce sens qu'il convient d'apprécier les conceptions d'autrui de manière holistique et de tenter de comprendre leur

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<sup>11</sup> Kabatek fait référence à l'étude d'E. Coseriu sur l'arbitraire du signe linguistique (Coseriu 1967, 81-112). Concernant d'autres études de Coseriu consacrées à certains précurseurs de la linguistique moderne, cf. Meisterfeld, Bojoga (2022, 44-46).

pensée à l'aune de notre propre système. Parallèlement, cette approche « sympathétique » comporte deux aspects : d'une part, comprendre la pensée d'un auteur, et d'autre part, prolonger de manière créative ce qu'il aurait dit d'un problème donné s'il l'avait traité. Au cours des dernières décennies de sa vie, Coseriu a abordé ce principe à plusieurs reprises, tant à l'oral qu'à l'écrit, démontrant qu'il est tout à fait possible de poursuivre sa réflexion par une « identification » empathique. Il a publié plusieurs articles sur « ses » linguistes (« Mon Saussure », « My Pagliaro », etc.) dans lequel il explique comment sa propre pensée a été influencée par ces chercheurs, tout en soulignant les différences conceptuelles entre leurs théories. Kabatek note que, concernant Saussure, la plupart des écrits de Coseriu des années 1960 s'appuient sur son « Cours de linguistique générale ». La doctrine de Saussure (ou celle de ses éditeurs) n'est qu'un point de départ et sert également à établir les limites de la pensée saussurienne. Cependant, Coseriu ne se considérait nullement comme un anti-saussurien, mais plutôt comme son véritable défenseur, démontrant toute l'étendue des possibilités de la linguistique structurale.

*Le cinquième principe, celui de « l'utilité publique », découle du fait que lorsque nous parlons de langage et de langues, nous parlons de ce que tous les locuteurs connaissent intuitivement, nous nous référons à une activité humaine permanente qui les intéresse directement.*

J. Kabatek reconnaît que ce principe a toujours été présent dans l'œuvre de Coseriu, dès les années 1950, ce qui démontre son refus d'une stricte séparation entre le monde de la linguistique et le « monde extérieur ». Les linguistes ne vivent pas isolés, mais travaillent sur un objet commun à tous et dans l'intérêt de l'humanité entière. Autrement dit, cela implique une responsabilité pour les linguistes envers la société : ils doivent mettre leur expertise au service de la société et ne pas considérer les locuteurs comme ignorants. Bien sûr, il existe une différence entre les linguistes, qui sont experts, et les non-linguistes ou profanes, qui ne le sont pas. Mais ce fossé ne doit pas être maintenu : les linguistes ne doivent pas être arrogants et retrancher leur travail dans leur tour d'ivoire. Cela signifie que tous les problèmes pour lesquels la société sollicite l'aide des linguistes doivent être pris au sérieux. Par exemple, lorsqu'on interroge les linguistes sur la différence entre langue et dialecte, ils ne devraient pas répondre « vous ne comprendrez pas » ou « il n'y a pas de réponse cohérente », mais plutôt s'efforcer de transmettre leurs connaissances scientifiques au grand public, aux non-linguistes. Par conséquent, les linguistes devraient considérer l'enseignement des langues étrangères, la traduction, les politiques linguistiques, l'organisation des langues dans la société, les liens entre langue et communication, et la didactique des langues comme des approches linguistiques à part entière, au même titre que les autres disciplines. Pour preuve, souligne Kabatek, une partie de l'œuvre de Coseriu est effectivement consacrée à ces questions. Durant son

séjour à Montevideo, il a rédigé un manuel exhaustif sur la correction linguistique, destiné aux professeurs de langues étrangères ; plusieurs études sur la théorie de la traduction, et d'autres encore sur les liens entre langue et politique (le langage politique et les politiques linguistiques, tant en général que dans des situations spécifiques), ainsi que sur la didactique des langues.

En conclusion, J. Kabatek s'interroge sur l'utilité et la visibilité de ces principes épistémologiques actuellement. « La formulation de tels principes n'est-elle pas "dogmatique" et, par conséquent, contradictoire ? », à quoi il répond : « La conception que Coseriu avait de lui-même justifiait probablement la formulation explicite de tels principes – non seulement pour lui-même, mais aussi comme modèle pour les autres, et avant tout pour ses disciples. » (Kabatek 2018, 27-29).

#### **4. Dix thèses à propos de l'essence du langage et du signifié**

Pour mettre en lumière les composantes essentielles de la conception du langage chez Coseriu, J. Kabatek utilise un texte cosérien emblématique, en apportant d'autres détails sur la genèse de ce texte. En octobre 1999, Coseriu a participé à un séminaire organisé à l'Université de Strasbourg, intitulé « Perception du monde et perception du langage ». Probablement pour clarifier son point de vue auprès des participants, quelques jours après l'atelier, il a envoyé aux organisateurs quelques pages manuscrites, en leur demandant de les distribuer aux étudiants. Ces thèses, rédigées en français, ont été publiées en 2001, puis traduites en plusieurs langues. On peut constater que chaque thèse aborde un aspect essentiel de la théorie cosérienne.

Ainsi, *Priorité absolue du langage*, la première thèse, traite de la valeur globale du langage :

Le langage – et c'est Hegel qui l'a bien vu – est l'une des deux dimensions essentielles de l'être de l'homme ; l'autre, c'est le travail. L'homme est le seul être qui travaille et qui parle (...). Par le travail, l'homme se construit constamment un monde approprié à son être physique. Par le langage, il se construit un monde approprié à son être spirituel : un monde pensable (le monde de l'expérience sensible est bien représentable, mais il n'est pas pensable). Le langage est, par-là, « l'ouverture » de toutes les possibilités culturelles de l'homme (y compris la pensée discursive, la science, la philosophie, la poésie) (Coseriu 2001, 79-80).

Bien que certaines tendances et théories linguistiques actuelles réduisent le langage à l'une de ses fonctions – soit il est considéré comme un support de la pensée rationnelle, soit comme un outil de communication dans la vie

pratique, soit il est identifié à l'art ou à la poésie —, Coseriu montre qu'en réalité, « le langage ne peut être réduit à "autre chose", il est une symbiose de toutes ces fonctions »<sup>12</sup>.

La seconde thèse – *Langage et culture* – postule le lien étroit entre langue et culture et établit, dans la lignée de la tradition de Humboldt, sa nature dynamique : « le langage est activité créatrice et, par-là, activité "culturelle" infinie ; mais il est en même temps une forme de la culture et la base de la culture, en particulier, en tant que tradition culturelle. (cf. Kabatek 2023, 26).

Dans sa troisième thèse, *Les universaux du langage*, Coseriu résume l'ensemble des discussions qu'il a menées dans les années 1970 sur le sujet des universaux linguistiques. Dans son article *Los universales del lenguaje*, il démontre que des universaux peuvent être établis à chacun des trois niveaux du langage. Par conséquent, les universaux des langues historiques ne coïncident pas avec ceux du langage en général :

Le langage est caractérisé par cinq universaux – trois universaux primaires : créativité, sémantité, altérité, et deux universaux secondaires ou dérivés : historicité et matérialité. La créativité (*enérgeia*) caractérise toutes les formes de la culture. Parmi ces formes, le langage est activité qui crée des signifiés, des signes avec des significations ; et c'est sa sémantité. Mais ces signes sont toujours créés « pour autrui » ou, mieux : comme étant d'avance aussi d'autrui ; et c'est leur altérité. *Dans ce sens, le langage est la manifestation primaire de l'altérité : de l'être avec autrui, caractéristique de l'homme*. L'historicité résulte de la créativité et de l'altérité ; et elle signifie que la technique de l'activité linguistique se présente toujours sous la forme de systèmes traditionnels propres à des communautés historiques, systèmes qu'on appelle langues ; même ce qui se crée dans le langage, se crée toujours dans une langue. La matérialité résulte de la sémantité et de l'altérité ; en effet, la sémantité est un fait de conscience et ne sort pas de la conscience : pour qu'elle soit « pour un autre », elle doit être représentée dans le monde sensible par des signifiants matériels (Ibidem, 80).

Dans sa quatrième thèse, *Communication et communauté*, il aborde la fonction communicative du langage. Coseriu souligne la différence entre deux

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<sup>12</sup> Dans une étude précédente, Coseriu a examiné les définitions proposées pour circonscrire le langage – « le langage est un outil de communication », « le langage est un système de signes », « le langage est une fonction sociale », « le langage est une institution sociale », « le langage est une faculté symbolique », « le langage est une activité de l'esprit », « le langage est une création perpétuelle » –, en précisant que ces définitions, « au lieu de le définir dans son intégralité, se limitent chacune à décrire le langage sous un certain aspect, en mettant en lumière l'un de ses attributs ; en réalité, elles ne sont pas antithétiques et irréconciliables, comme on le considère souvent, mais complémentaires et interdépendantes » (Coseriu 2000-2001, 11).

types de communication : la communication de quelque chose et la communication avec quelqu'un. Si la première, essentiellement pratique, peut manquer, la seconde est fondamentale car « elle correspond à l'altérité foncière du langage » (Coseriu 2001, 81).

La cinquième thèse – *Nommer et dire* – met en évidence les deux fonctions essentielles du langage : *l'onomázein* et le *légein* (Platon), nommer et dire, ce qui correspond approximativement à la distinction entre lexique et grammaire. Le « nommer », correspondant à la structuration linguistique du monde est entièrement linguistique. En revanche, le « dire » est « langage par la forme « sémantique » des relations au monde et par sa « substance » il est également « science, activité pratique, sentiment, art (poésie), etc. » (Coseriu 2001, 80).

La sixième thèse – *Contenu du « dire »* – cible les trois types de contenu linguistique, désignation, signifié et sens, et établit les différences entre eux :

La *désignation* est la référence aux "choses" ("états de choses", "événements", "procès") extralinguistiques (ou mieux, extérieures aux signes). Le *signifié* est la possibilité objective de désignation en tant que donnée dans les signes d'une langue. Et le *sens*, c'est la finalité de chaque "dire", le contenu propre à un discours en tant que tel (ou à un fragment de discours) (Ibidem, 81).

La septième thèse – *Langage et poésie* – explique les similitudes et les différences entre le langage et la poésie. Coseriu reconnaît la pertinence de l'identité établie par certains philosophes entre la poésie et le langage en ce qu'ils représentent tous les deux un « acte de connaissance ». Cependant, il précise tout de suite ce qui les distingue : le langage est créé par un sujet doté d'altérité et n'a qu'une fonction significative « le langage en tant que tel n'est que signifié (lexical, catégoriel, grammatical, "ontique") » ; la poésie, quant à elle, est l'œuvre d'un sujet absolu, mais aussi « un "dire" avec sa substance propre » (Ibidem, 82).

Dans sa huitième thèse – *Signifié et être* –, Coseriu affirme que le signifié est une délimitation d'un contenu, et par conséquent, une constitution d'une modalité (toujours virtuelle) de l'être. Le signifié est ainsi toujours primaire et toute désignation part des signifiés et est subordonnée à ceux-ci.

Dans la neuvième thèse – *Signifié, vérité, existence* – Coseriu souligne que les signifiés (comme « inventaire lexical » ou contenu d'une langue historique) structurent et ordonnent le monde en le nommant, sans se référer à la distinction entre vrai et faux qui est une distinction ultérieure (ce qui est dit du signifié dans une phrase). Coseriu reprend à ce propos et réinterprète la distinction établie par Aristote entre le langage en tant que fonction significative (*logos semantikós*) et le langage en tant que « dire » qui affirme ou nie quelque chose, en tant que proposition donc au sens logique du terme (*lógos apophantikós*).

Dans sa dixième thèse – *Langage et « choses »* –, Coseriu semble récapituler ce qui a été dit jusqu'ici : le langage est ce qui donne existence aux choses ; il n'est pas une nomenclature pour des classes de choses préalablement reconnues comme telles, mais la délimitation de « modalités d'être » : « le langage ne crée pas les étants, mais il crée leur être : il les fait être ceci ou cela. Ainsi, le langage ne crée pas les arbres mais il crée leur à « être arbres » (et non pas, par ex., plantes en général ou une autre espèce quelconque). Mais, par-là, le langage nous conduit vers un monde ordonné de choses. » (Ibidem, 83). Cependant le langage ouvre la possibilité de nouvelles « délimitations dans le monde » des étants qui correspondent à ces modalités de l'être délimitées dans le langage, délimitations qui sont, de ce fait, « objectives » et qui aboutissent à l'élaboration d'une terminologie scientifique et technique.

Les conséquences des thèses de Strasbourg sont multiples, affirme J. Kabatek, mais au moins deux d'entre elles définissent la position de principe de son maître : « Coseriu rejette l'idée de considérer les langues particulières comme de simples instances d'une grammaire universelle, biologiquement déterminée » ; « il rejette l'idée d'une priorité des principes logiques et considère la logique plutôt comme une réalisation qui présuppose l'existence du langage » (Kabatek 2023, 31). Les commentaires du professeur zurichois sur ces thèses apparaissent dans plusieurs de ses études. Avant de leur consacrer une large place dans sa monographie de 2023, il a écrit une étude volumineuse intitulée *Eugenio Coseriu, Las tesis de Estraburgo y el postulado de una lingüística lingüística* (Kabatek 2013, 35-56), republiée dans une nouvelle version en 2018 (Kabatek 2018, 27-47). Il décrypte les spécificités de chaque thèse et retrace leur impact global sur la linguistique contemporaine. Ses commentaires sont souvent laconiques et concis, à l'image des thèses elles-mêmes, comme en témoigne la première thèse qui, selon lui, sous-entend la vision logocentrique de Coseriu : « le langage n'est pas perçu comme un simple résultat de l'évolution continue du savoir, mais comme quelque chose de qualitativement différent. L'être humain est caractérisé par le langage, et le langage précède toutes les autres manifestations de la culture » (Kabatek 2023, 30).

Parfois, les annotations de Kabatek apparaissent comme des clarifications bienvenues ou des ajouts nécessaires. Par exemple, l'idée que le langage précède toutes les autres manifestations de la culture (thèse 2) trouve son origine dans la philosophie idéaliste allemande, Herder et Humboldt étant deux figures de référence à cet égard. Quant à la thèse 3, « Coseriu identifie les universaux du langage, non pas au sens de principes grammaticaux universels », mais plutôt comme des coordonnées fondamentales qui les sous-tendent. Les universaux « nous permettent de distinguer le langage des autres activités culturelles humaines : seul le langage est caractérisé par la combinaison particulière des trois universaux essentiels : la créativité, la sémantité et

l'altérité ». La thèse 4 considère le fondement linguistique de la communauté humaine : l'être humain est un *zoon politikon* au sens aristotélicien précisément en raison du logos. Le langage n'est pas simplement quelque chose qui émerge de l'activité sociale : « le langage est le fondement de toute vie sociale ; sans langage, il n'y aurait pas de communauté humaine » (Kabatek 2023, 31).

Concernant les thèses 5 et 6, Kabatek affirme qu'elles précisent et approfondissent la différence entre langage et parole ; le langage étant envisagé comme un système abstrait et sa « matérialisation » dans des discours concrets. On retrouve ici le schéma des trois niveaux du langage et l'importance de la distinction entre désignation, signifié et sens. Le niveau du discours ou du texte est le niveau individuel ; et le sens est déterminé non seulement par l'usage concret des signes linguistiques, mais aussi par l'acte concret de désignation et par les « entours » ou le « décor » du discours.

La thèse 7 met en garde contre la confusion entre langage et poésie, précisant que la poésie est le langage dans toute sa plénitude fonctionnelle ; elle est la manifestation de la créativité fondée sur les potentialités/virtualités offertes par le système d'une langue particulière. La thèse 8 indique la priorité du signe linguistique dans les actes de désignation : le langage n'est pas un reflet des choses, mais plutôt un chemin vers une vision du monde modélisée linguistiquement, non pas au sens de Sapir-Whorf, mais plutôt dans un sens qui découle de la liberté et de la créativité. La thèse 9 se réfère à la discussion sur la vérité du langage, telle qu'exposée chez Aristote. Coseriu reprend cette idée en expliquant que le signifié ne peut être ni vrai ni faux. Ce n'est que dans un discours concret que la question de la vérité ou de la fausseté d'une assertion se pose. Enfin, la thèse 10 insiste également, à l'instar de la thèse 8, sur la priorité du langage et postule cette priorité également en ce qui concerne la science et la terminologie scientifique. (Ibidem, 32).

En conclusion des commentaires, J. Kabatek écrit que bien que la théorie d'Eugenio Coseriu ait démontré « une cohérence et une unité absolues de sa conception fondamentale dans les années 1950 », dans ses dernières années de vie, Coseriu a présenté, à diverses occasions, des textes synthétiques dans lesquels il propose des principes ou des thèses qui recèlent l'essence de sa vision sur le langage. Dans ce contexte,

Las diez tesis resumen algunas de las ideas fundamentales del pensamiento coseriano : en la línea del estructuralismo y prácticamente en contra de todas las corrientes lingüísticas modernas, postula un logocentrismo radical, una lingüística lingüística cuyo centro es la lengua particular : no vamos, según Coseriu, de las cosas a la lengua sino de la lengua a las cosas (Kabatek 2018, 36).

## 5. En guise de conclusion : La créativité dans la continuité

Dans *Tradición e innovación: La lingüística moderna desde Saussure hasta el siglo XXI*, J. Kabatek offre un large panorama de la situation actuelle de notre discipline, dans la pure / bonne tradition cosérienne (cf. *Die Lage in der Linguistik* de Coseriu). Analysant en profondeur les orientations et tendances actuelles, l'auteur estime qu'un « nouveau tournant linguistique » est nécessaire en sciences humaines, car « la linguistique du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle doit se définir » à partir de son propre objet d'étude, sans être subordonnée aux sciences de la nature et, par conséquent, à leurs principes théoriques et méthodologiques. Passant brièvement en revue l'histoire de la linguistique moderne – de F. de Saussure à nos jours –, l'auteur postule cinq principes directeurs : deux principes « problématiques » ou négatifs et trois principes « positifs », qui devraient orienter nos travaux.

Étant donné que la linguistique contemporaine privilégie une vision unificatrice des sciences, sans distinction entre réalités culturelles et naturelles, le premier principe problématique, celui de la transversalité discursive, signifie que « les sciences humaines s'approprient pleinement les concepts des sciences de la nature ». Or, il convient d'adopter une attitude critique face à de tels discours, car les objets des sciences de la culture ne sont pas identiques à ceux des sciences de la nature ; l'idée d'une science unitaire, aux méthodes d'étude comparables, constitue une grave erreur.

Le second principe, celui de l'exclusion, qui attire l'attention de J. Kabatek, est également un principe « nuisible », car il est lié aux « lois du marché scientifique et aux stratégies de positionnement des nouveaux produits » : « la nouveauté se vend mieux lorsqu'elle est absolue et qu'elle s'accompagne d'un discours condamnant comme obsolète tout ce qui l'a précédée » (Kabatek 2016, 39). Mais ce postulat, fondé sur l'ignorance, est contraire à l'éthique académique, à l'ouverture et à la liberté de pensée. Au contraire, les trois principes positifs – *le principe de la parole, le principe de l'historicité et le principe de la traditionnalité discursive* – sont fondamentaux pour la science du langage en tant que science de la culture. Rappelons que F. de Saussure, fondateur de la linguistique moderne, proposait une science qui se construit à partir de son propre objet d'étude, et non à partir d'une transversalité discursive, c'est-à-dire en adoptant une approche créée dans d'autres disciplines (cf. Kabatek 2016, 40).

J. Kabatek reconnaît que c'est Eugenio Coseriu et sa « linguistique intégrale » qui l'ont déterminé à préserver et à justifier ces principes aujourd'hui. Expliquant ce terme, il précise qu'il n'est pas exclusif, bien au contraire. Il ne sert pas seulement à définir la théorie du langage de Coseriu, mais apparaît comme un programme de linguistique en général. Par conséquent, il n'entend pas faire référence à une exclusion stratégique : son objectif n'est pas de postuler comme absolue une opinion personnelle et partielle. Intégrale, cette approche découle d'une éthique profonde qui s'exprime par l'expression « dire les choses telles

qu'elles sont », une légère modification d'une formule platonicienne. Et pour pouvoir dire les choses telles qu'elles sont, insiste l'exégète, il faut d'abord savoir ce qui se fait dans le domaine de la linguistique. La linguistique intégrale est un fondement qui nous permet de situer chaque action dans un édifice universel. Coseriu conçoit cet édifice universel, c'est vrai, mais il ne l'achève pas : il le met à la disposition de tous :

La linguistique intégrale n'est ni un dogme, ni une limitation, mais une invitation à découvrir le monde des phénomènes dans toute leur richesse : toutes les dimensions possibles du langage humain, des langues et des textes. Elle ne change pas lorsque son maître décide que ses propos, tenus jusqu'à une certaine date, ne sont plus valides, et que ses disciples le suivent. La linguistique intégrale offre un cadre général et essentiel de principes fondamentaux qui puisent leurs racines dans une lignée historique millénaire, avec une base aristotélicienne, modernisée par la vision de Humboldt et enrichie par toute la pensée de l'idéalisme allemand, de Herder à Humboldt, en passant par Schelling, Schleiermacher et Hegel. C'est une linguistique ayant un fondement historique profond, qui prend en compte l'histoire de la linguistique et de la philosophie du langage sans réinventer la roue ni renier une bibliographie de plus de dix ans (Ibidem, 43).

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## EUGENIO COSERIU E A QUESTÃO DA IDENTIDADE ENTRE LINGUAGEM E LITERATURA

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**ABSTRACT.** *Eugenio Coseriu and the Issue of the Identity between Language and Literature.* Eugenio Coseriu (2007) assumes that literature is a privileged place for the full functioning of language as a creative activity, so literary texts, as works of language, should serve as models for both the linguistics of language and textual linguistics. Through literature, as Coseriu maintains, it is possible to appreciate the infinite possibilities of structuring and restructuring linguistic resources in the service of communicative activity and to demonstrate how the concrete linguistic sign operates within a complex structure of interrelations, which is based on an equally elaborate set of interdependent semantic functions (Coseriu 1977). If literature highlights in potential what is observed in everyday language, although it may not seem so, everything in language is poetry. Considering, therefore, Eugenio Coseriu's keen interest in demonstrating that literature can be read as a measure to understand linguistic functioning, this paper aims to accompany the construction of Coserian theoretical and methodological arguments to defend the necessity of evidencing that there is an identity between language and literature, beyond a mere supposed relationship.

**Keywords:** *Coseriu, language, literature, creation, meaning*

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**REZUMAT. Eugenio Coseriu și problematica identității dintre limbaj și literatură.** Eugenio Coseriu (2007) susține că literatura este un loc privilegiat pentru funcționarea deplină a limbajului ca activitate creatoare, astfel încât textele literare, ca opere ale limbajului, ar trebui să servească drept modele atât pentru lingvistica limbii, cât și pentru lingvistica textuală. Prin literatură, așa cum afirmă Coseriu, este posibil să se aprecieze posibilitățile infinite de structurare și restructurare a resurselor lingvistice în slujba activității comunicative și să se demonstreze modul în care semnul lingvistic concret funcționează într-o structură complexă de interrelații, bazată pe un set la fel de elaborat de funcții semantice interdependente (Coseriu 1977). Dacă literatura scoate în evidență în potențial ceea ce se observă în limbajul cotidian, chiar dacă acest lucru nu pare așa, totul în limbaj este poezie. Având în vedere, așadar, interesul profund al lui Eugenio Coseriu de a demonstra că literatura poate fi citită ca o măsură pentru a înțelege funcționarea limbajului, această lucrare își propune să însoțească construcția argumentelor teoretice și metodologice coserieni pentru a apăra necesitatea evidențierii faptului că există o identitate între limbaj și literatură, dincolo de o simplă relație presupusă.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Coseriu, limbaj, literatură, creație, sens*

## 1. Coseriu in contexto

Considerar a poesia como um fundamento epistemológico é uma perspectiva que se delineia já nos primeiros textos de Coseriu, durante sua trajetória acadêmica na década de 1950, principalmente no Uruguai, onde iniciou sua carreira científica. Nesse período, Coseriu formulou e desenvolveu suas primeiras teorias linguísticas voltadas à compreensão do funcionamento da linguagem como atividade criadora e sistêmica, as quais rapidamente se tornaram influentes.

A década de 1950 configura-se como um momento crucial na elaboração teórica de Coseriu. Nessa época, o linguista publica textos fundamentais, como *Sistema, norma e habla* (1952a), *La creación metafórica en el lenguaje* (1952b) e *Determinación y entorno. Dos problemas de una lingüística del hablar* (1955-1956). Essas publicações desempenham papel preponderante no desenvolvimento de sua concepção da linguagem como atividade humana complexa, exercendo impacto significativo no campo da linguística ao enfatizar a dialética entre sistema, norma e uso na manifestação concreta da fala<sup>3</sup>. Nesses textos, já podemos

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<sup>3</sup> A importância desses textos se reflete nas republicações em revistas, coletâneas e livros que reúnem as ideias coserianas.

observar a gênese e a construção de argumentos teóricos e metodológicos para defender que, mais que uma simples relação, há uma identidade intrínseca entre língua e literatura, na qual a literatura não é apenas um uso da língua, mas uma manifestação essencial da linguagem.

Eugenio Coseriu (2007) assume que a literatura é um espaço privilegiado para o pleno funcionamento da linguagem como atividade criadora, motivo pelo qual os textos literários, como obra da linguagem, deveriam servir de modelo para a linguística da língua e para a linguística textual. Por meio da literatura, é possível perceber as infinitas possibilidades de estruturar e reestruturar os recursos linguísticos a serviço da atividade comunicativa e demonstrar como “o signo linguístico concreto” funciona por meio de uma complexa rede de relações, sob a qual há “um conjunto igualmente complexo de funções semânticas” (Coseriu 1977, 181). Se a literatura potencializa aquilo que se observa na linguagem cotidiana, ainda que isso não pareça evidente, tudo é poesia na linguagem.

Ao assumir que todo ato de fala é poesia – e quando problematiza a questão da identidade entre linguagem e poesia –, Coseriu não se refere à “poesia” como gênero literário, mas ao ato poético de realização exemplar da linguagem como atividade criadora. Esse ato poético não se restringe à forma versificada, à diversidade de gêneros (poema, romance, teatro, conto etc.) ou à classificação formal dos textos (épico, lírico, narrativo), mas compreende o modo como o sujeito falante mobiliza criativamente os recursos da língua histórica para instaurar novos sentidos. Trata-se, antes, da dimensão criadora que pode emergir em qualquer manifestação linguística, já que o uso da língua se funde numa liberdade expressiva enraizada no sistema. Como afirma Coseriu, falar é sempre, em certo sentido, criar linguagem, e não simplesmente usá-la mecanicamente, o que mostra que o ato poético é, em última instância, uma intensificação do próprio gesto humano de dizer.

Se, do ponto de vista institucional, reconhece-se que o espaço tradicional da expressividade máxima da linguagem é o campo literário, a literatura, no pensamento de Coseriu, não ocupa um lugar meramente ilustrativo, mas constitui um fundamento teórico. Não se trata de tomar a literatura como simples exemplo do uso criativo da língua, mas de compreendê-la como campo privilegiado para a observação da linguagem em sua forma mais livre e significativa. Nesse sentido, Coseriu valoriza não apenas o ato poético ou o estilo individual de um escritor, mas a produção metalinguística construída pela teoria literária e pela estilística, pois ela faz parte do esforço humano de compreender a linguagem como atividade criadora, histórica e situada.

Considerando, assim, o notável interesse de Eugenio Coseriu em demonstrar que a literatura pode ser concebida como um parâmetro privilegiado para a compreensão do funcionamento linguístico, este trabalho propõe-se a acompanhar,

nos textos do autor, a construção de argumentos teóricos e analíticos que fundamentam a tese de que língua e literatura constituem uma forma conjunta e unitária de cultura (Coseriu 1987). Seguimos, especialmente, o percurso trilhado por Coseriu (1977) em “Tesis sobre el tema ‘lenguaje y poesía’”.

Esta pesquisa se inscreve na esteira dos estudos já desenvolvidos por especialistas da obra de Coseriu, especialmente aqueles que investigam a proposição coseriana relativa à relação entre linguagem e literatura, com destaque para os trabalhos de Tămăianu-Morita (2006, 2012, 2015, dentre outros).

### ***1.1. Coseriu e a linguagem poética de Ion Barbu***

A relação de Coseriu com a linguagem poética antecede os anos 1950. Em 1944, Coseriu recebe a láurea em Letras, na Universidade de Roma, com a tese intitulada “Sobre as influências da poesia épica francesa medieval na poesia épica popular dos eslavos do sul” (no original, em italiano, “Sugli influssi della poesia epica francese medievale sulla poesia epica popolare degli Slavi meridionali”), movido por profundo interesse pela poesia épica. Uma de suas primeiras publicações, “La lingua di Ion Barbu (con alcune considerazioni sulla semantica delle lingue ‘imparate’”<sup>4</sup> (1948), destaca o fato de que a linguagem literária ultrapassa a dimensão puramente estética, mas constitui um espaço privilegiado de exploração e revelação do funcionamento da linguagem em sua totalidade. Sobre a poética do escritor romeno Ion Barbu<sup>5</sup>, Coseriu afirma:

A obra poética de Ion Barbu apresenta um notável interesse linguístico, tanto do ponto de vista “estilístico” (linguagem afetiva) quanto do ponto de vista “lógico”, já que, de fato, as numerosas inovações do poeta são, sobretudo, de caráter “lógico”, ou seja, referem-se principalmente à inteligibilidade (Coseriu 1948, 3 – tradução nossa)<sup>6</sup>.

Sublinha-se aqui o duplo interesse linguístico proporcionado pela obra poética de Ion Barbu. Por um lado, sua dimensão “estilística”, associada à “linguagem afetiva”, e, por outro, sua dimensão “lógica”, considerada prioritária. No plano estilístico,

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<sup>4</sup> O termo “lingue ‘imparate’” refere-se às línguas concretas que os falantes aprendem em seu meio social. Diferem-se do sistema abstrato da língua e dos atos individuais de fala, pois correspondem à norma linguística, isto é, os hábitos compartilhados que orientam como se fala em uma comunidade.

<sup>5</sup> Ion Barbu foi o pseudônimo literário de Dan Barbilian (1895-1961), uma figura notável da cultura romena que se destacou tanto como matemático quanto como poeta.

<sup>6</sup> “La obra poética de Ion Barbu presenta un notable interés lingüístico, tanto desde el punto de vista ‘estilístico’ (lenguaje afectivo) como desde el punto de vista ‘lógico’, ya que, de hecho, las numerosas innovaciones del poeta son, sobre todo, de carácter ‘lógico’, es decir, se refieren sobre todo a la inteligibilidad” (Coseriu 1948, 3).

destaca-se o uso expressivo da língua, por meio da exploração sensível dos recursos formais e sonoros do texto poético. No plano lógico, ressalta-se a originalidade das inovações de ordem lógica, ou seja, a maneira como o poeta reconfigura os mecanismos internos da linguagem em função da inteligibilidade. Ainda para Coseriu (1948),

De outro modo, a língua de I. B. – embora seja uma “língua literária” – parece-me capaz de nos fazer descobrir algumas características funcionais do sistema linguístico romeno e de esclarecer certas questões de linguística geral. Isto porque as inovações de I. B. – especialmente as sintáticas e lexicais – são normalmente extensões de usos normais no sistema linguístico romeno e não são, geralmente, aberrantes, isto é, não constituem “erros” em relação à convenção lógica comum, considerada como uma “regra” (Coseriu 1948, 3 – tradução nossa)<sup>7</sup>.

Nesse sentido, a dificuldade de compreensão da poesia de Barbu não se deve à criação de uma “linguagem pessoal” ou à invenção de um código fechado, mas, sim, ao fato de que Barbu explora profundamente os recursos lógicos e semânticos da linguagem para produzir um discurso que exige do leitor uma atenção interpretativa especial. Essa complexidade é fruto de um uso extremo, mas legítimo, das potencialidades internas da própria linguagem. As inovações operadas por Barbu não representam um desrespeito às regras da língua, mas, ao contrário, estão enraizadas nas possibilidades do próprio sistema linguístico, de modo que suas criações, tanto no nível sintático quanto no lexical, não são aberrações, mas extensões de mecanismos já presentes na língua romena (Coseriu 1948).

Uma das estratégias recorrentes nas inovações semânticas de Ion Barbu consiste na extensão do significado particular de uma palavra para toda a sua esfera semântica. Por exemplo, o termo *casto* é utilizado como sinônimo de *nepătat* (imaculado). Embora possuam significados distintos (*casto* indica pureza moral ou sexual, e *nepătat* significa literalmente “imaculado”), suas esferas semânticas se cruzam em certos contextos, permitindo a Barbu qualificar nuvens como “castas”, isto é, “imaculadas”.

Para Coseriu (1948), essa inovação não representa uma ruptura arbitrária, mas uma extensão lógica, legitimada pelo funcionamento interno do sistema da

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<sup>7</sup> “D'altra parte, la lingua di I. B. – pur trattandosi di una 'lingua letteraria' – mi sembra atta a farci scoprire alcune caratteristiche funzionali del sistema linguistico romeno e a chiarire certe questioni di linguistica generale. Ciò perché le innovazioni di I. B. – soprattutto sintattiche e lessicali – sono normalmente estensioni di usi normali nel sistema linguistico romeno e non sono, generalmente aberranti, cioè non costituiscono 'errori' rispetto alla convenzione logica comune, considerata come 'regola'” (Coseriu 1948, 3).

língua romena e que se desenvolve a partir das possibilidades estruturais da língua. Ela mostra que a criação poética não ocorre fora da linguagem, mas opera a partir de suas virtualidades, respeitando, mesmo em sua ousadia, a lógica do sistema linguístico.

Ao explorar os limites semânticos com rigor e originalidade, o poeta realiza possibilidades implícitas na norma linguística, articulando variação e regularidade de forma inovadora. Assim, a análise dessas inovações semânticas contribui diretamente para a tese da identidade entre linguagem e poesia, pois demonstra como o dizer poético participa da própria estrutura e da dinâmica interna da linguagem, e não de um campo separado ou meramente ornamental.

Em tais constatações, Coseriu (1948) defende que a obra de Barbu, para além de seu valor estético, desempenha uma função reveladora do próprio funcionamento da língua. É nesse ponto que a análise estilística se expande para uma perspectiva epistemológica, uma vez que a linguagem literária, em sua dimensão criativa, torna-se um instrumento para compreender a estrutura e o funcionamento do sistema linguístico romeno e para refletir sobre questões mais amplas da linguística geral, como, por exemplo, a relação entre norma, uso e criatividade linguística. A literatura, para Coseriu (1948), tensiona os limites do sistema linguístico, iluminando aspectos fundamentais como suas possibilidades estruturais, a apropriação criativa por parte dos sujeitos falantes, a relação entre forma e sentido, bem como os mecanismos que sustentam a inteligibilidade do discurso.

É por essa razão que Coseriu se concentra na questão da “identidade”, e não exatamente da “relação” entre linguagem e poesia, como um problema central e decisivo. Como assegura, “[...] não se trata das chamadas «relações» entre a linguagem e a poesia, mas do problema da *identidade* entre linguagem e poesia” (Coseriu 1977, 181 – tradução nossa)<sup>8</sup>. E a essa questão se chega por múltiplos planos ou caminhos complementares, dos quais ele descreve três vias principais:

- 1) pelo caminho da determinação das funções do signo linguístico concreto;
- 2) pelo caminho da análise estilística e da teoria literária; e
- 3) pelo caminho da filosofia, ou seja, da determinação da essência da linguagem (Coseriu 1977, 181).

Essas três direções convergem para uma mesma tese: a poesia não é um uso marginal ou decorativo da linguagem, mas a realização plena de suas possibilidades essenciais. Descrever cada um desses planos e situá-los analiticamente mostra-se, portanto, um caminho produtivo para compreender em profundidade a questão da identidade entre linguagem e poesia e os alcances desse entendimento.

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<sup>8</sup> “[...] no se trata de las llamadas «relaciones» entre el lenguaje y la poesía, sino del problema de la *identidad* entre lenguaje y poesía” (Coseriu 1977, 181).

## 2. Identidade entre linguagem e poesia: três caminhos

### 2.1. Plano da determinação e das funções do signo linguístico concreto

No primeiro plano ou caminho delineado por Coseriu, considera-se o signo linguístico concreto em sua realização efetiva nos textos. Inserido em uma rede de relações semânticas complexas, o signo não possui uma função única e fixa, mas participa de múltiplas funções complementares e interdependentes. Para o linguista, “o signo linguístico concreto [...] funciona ao mesmo tempo por meio de uma rede complementar e muito complexa de relações, da qual resulta um conjunto igualmente complexo de funções semânticas” (Coseriu 1977, 181)<sup>9</sup>. Essa formulação evidencia que o signo, tal como se realiza na fala concreta, não opera isoladamente, mas ativa simultaneamente múltiplas dimensões do significado linguístico: a dimensão designativa (referente ao objeto ou à realidade extralinguística), a significativa (relativa ao conteúdo que o signo adquire dentro do sistema da língua) e a expressiva (ligada à subjetividade do falante). Tais dimensões são complementares e interdependentes, ou seja, realizam-se em conjunto em cada ato de fala, sem que nenhuma possa ser plenamente dissociada das demais.

A poesia não opera à margem do sistema linguístico, mas o mobiliza em sua totalidade, revelando sua capacidade de gerar sentidos, além de referenciais simbólicos, expressivos e estéticos. Por isso, “a linguagem poética revela-se não como um uso linguístico entre outros, mas simplesmente como linguagem (sem adjetivos): realização de todas as possibilidades da linguagem como tal” (Coseriu 1977, 203 – tradução nossa)<sup>10</sup>. Nesse quadro, a linguagem poética não aparece como uma função particular, mas como a realização integral do funcionamento da linguagem. A poesia é paradigma do funcionamento linguístico, não é exceção.

O texto em que explora a linguagem poética de Barbu, como apresentamos, é uma defesa metodológica de que, para compreender a linguagem poética, é preciso ultrapassar tanto a análise puramente literária quanto a perspectiva descritiva da linguística tradicional. O que está em jogo é a compreensão da poesia como atualização criadora da língua histórica, em que o poeta opera sobre a norma comum para instaurar uma norma individual, criadora de estilo. O poeta cria *não fora* da língua, mas *a partir* dela, tornando-se ele mesmo um criador de formas e significados historicamente fundados.

<sup>9</sup> “El signo lingüístico concreto [...] funciona al mismo tiempo en y por una red complementaria y muy compleja de relaciones, con lo que surge un conjunto igualmente complejo de funciones semánticas” (Coseriu 1977, 181).

<sup>10</sup> “El lenguaje poético resulta ser, no un uso lingüístico entre otros, sino lenguaje simplemente (sin adjetivos): realización de todas las posibilidades del lenguaje como tal” (Coseriu 1977, 203).

Assim como o poeta, o falante ordinário também é responsável pela produtividade de formas e sentidos, como mostra Coseriu (1986). Entre os diversos exemplos analisados por ele para discutir a natureza e as causas da mudança linguística, destacamos as formações *haiga* (em lugar de *haya*) e *andé* (em vez da forma normativa *anduve*), no espanhol falado. Esses casos revelam que a criatividade do falante não é arbitrária, mas orientada por analogias estruturais legítimas no interior do sistema da língua. A forma *haiga*, por exemplo, corresponde à analogia com formas verbais terminadas em *-ga* como *tenga*, *venga*, *haga*; do mesmo modo, *hablé* e *corté* servem de modelo para a criação de *andé* (Coseriu 1986, 95). Essas produções, embora muitas vezes consideradas “erradas”, revelam que a norma linguística não é um conjunto fixo de prescrições, mas um domínio de possibilidades modeladas pelas regularidades percebidas no próprio sistema.

As formas *haiga* e *andé* demonstram que o sujeito falante age criativamente dentro da língua, ativando suas estruturas internas para produzir formas coerentes com o sistema, ainda que diferentes da norma culta. É uma manifestação clara da tese de que a fala é um processo dinâmico e criador, que ultrapassa a reprodução mecânica da norma linguística. Além disso, esse tipo de uso mostra como o sistema da fala (nível individual e funcional) pode gerar novas regularidades que se distanciam da norma coletiva, sem deixar de serem linguísticas e cognitivamente legítimas. A importância de exemplos dessa natureza reside em mostrar que a criação linguística não está restrita à esfera erudita ou artística da poesia, mas se manifesta também no cotidiano, mesmo nas formas que a norma oficial rejeita. Considerando-se, evidentemente, que, enquanto no uso comum a criação se dá na produção e na reconfiguração espontânea de formas linguísticas, como *haiga* e *andé*, na linguagem poética, essa criatividade se eleva a outro nível de consciência e sistematização, configurando um estilo individual e historicamente situado.

Um exemplo paradigmático da ampliação do significado lexical pode ser ilustrado pela trajetória histórica da palavra *grève*, cujo sentido evoluiu ao longo do tempo (Coseriu 1991). Essa trajetória configura uma manifestação clara da mudança semântica, evidenciando o processo de ampliação e reconfiguração dos significados lexicais. A palavra *grève*, nos séculos XVIII e XIX na França, designava um espaço plano de areia ou cascalho junto ao rio, especialmente à margem do Sena. Esse local, conhecido como *Place de Grève*, onde hoje está o Hôtel de Ville em Paris, era onde trabalhadores desempregados se reuniam esperando por contratação. Era um ponto de encontro entre patrões e trabalhadores eventuais – estivadores, marinheiros e operários. No contexto marítimo, a palavra também foi usada para designar o convés plano de certas embarcações. E, quando os marinheiros estavam insatisfeitos com as condições

de trabalho, reivindicavam melhorias ou se recusavam a zarpar, eles permaneciam ali, na parte chamada *grève* do navio, em protesto. Esse permanecer era simbólico. Eles não abandonavam o navio, mas também não executavam suas funções, suspendendo a atividade como forma de pressão.

Assim, com o tempo, o termo *greve* passou a designar não apenas o local físico, mas também o ato coletivo de suspensão do trabalho como forma de protesto. Esse desdobramento é um exemplo clássico de criação metafórica na linguagem. Um termo que designava um espaço físico passa a representar uma situação social, o local de espera transforma-se no símbolo da paralisação do trabalho. No caso de *greve*, o significado original, ligado a um espaço concreto, não desaparece, mas se mantém coexistindo com um novo sentido social e abstrato. Essa coexistência evidencia que os sentidos linguísticos se acumulam e se reconfiguram historicamente, em função das necessidades comunicativas e contextuais dos falantes<sup>11</sup>.

A palavra *greve* é, ainda, um exemplo eloquente de como a linguagem reflete processos sociais e culturais e de como a criação metafórica é essencial para a vida dinâmica da língua. O exemplo ilustra como o sentido das palavras é dinâmico e como a criação metafórica é um mecanismo fundamental para a expansão do significado linguístico e o alicerçamento de mudanças na língua. O pressuposto da criação contínua da linguagem sustenta outro princípio fundamental: o de que a linguagem só funciona mudando, recriando-se. Ao que defende Coseriu:

As palavras mudam continuamente; não apenas do ponto de vista fônico, mas também do ponto de vista semântico – uma palavra nunca é exatamente a mesma. Poderíamos dizer, mais precisamente, que uma palavra, considerada em dois momentos sucessivos de sua continuidade de uso em uma comunidade, não é 'nem totalmente outra, nem totalmente a mesma'. Em cada momento há algo que já existia e algo que nunca existiu antes: uma inovação na forma da palavra, em seu uso, em seu sistema de associações (Coseriu 1991, 101 – tradução nossa)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> No caso de *grève*, ocorre uma mudança semântica histórica por extensão metafórica, em que um sentido concreto (lugar físico) transfere-se para um sentido abstrato (paralisação do trabalho). Esse processo envolve ampliação do significado e, por vezes, dessemantização e ressemantização, mantendo vínculo com o sentido original. Segundo Coseriu, essa dinâmica reflete a linguagem como atividade criadora, na qual os significados se acumulam e se reorganizam conforme as necessidades dos falantes.

<sup>12</sup> “Las palabras cambian continuamente; no sólo desde el punto de vista fónico, sino también desde el punto de vista semántico, una palabra no es nunca exactamente la misma; diríamos mejor que una palabra, considerada en dos momentos sucesivos de su continuidad de empleo en una comunidad, no es «ni tout à fait une autre, ni tout à fait la même». En cada momento

### Em continuação, Coseriu defende que

Essa mudança contínua, esse desejo ininterrupto de criação e recriação, no qual, como em um tecido ondulante de milhares de tons ou na superfície cintilante do mar sob o sol, um sistema estático concreto não pode ser fixado em nenhum momento, porque a cada momento o sistema se desfaz para ser reconstituído e desfeito novamente nos momentos imediatamente seguintes – essa mudança contínua é precisamente o que chamamos de realidade da linguagem (Coseriu 1991, 101-102 – tradução nossa)<sup>13</sup>.

A fala não é, nesse sentido, a repetição de formas ou sentidos, mas uma atualização viva, orientada por possibilidades inerentes ao funcionamento linguístico. Essa perspectiva permite sustentar a ideia de uma identidade profunda entre linguagem e poesia. Ambas não apenas compartilham os mesmos meios expressivos, mas também o mesmo princípio constitutivo, que é a criação significativa a partir das virtualidades oferecidas pelo sistema linguístico.

O uso cotidiano e o uso literário da linguagem diferem apenas pelo grau de elaboração e de consciência com que mobilizam tais possibilidades. Se o falante comum cria dentro da norma coletiva por meio de analogias produtivas e variações regulares, o poeta, por sua vez, instaura normas próprias que realizam a língua em sua máxima potência expressiva. Em ambos os casos, a linguagem não é simplesmente usada; é realizada. A distinção estaria no grau de elaboração e no nível de consciência da atividade criadora, mas o fundamento é o mesmo: falar é criar.

Coseriu propõe, assim, uma concepção unificada da linguagem como atividade criadora, que se manifesta em diferentes planos, do cotidiano ao literário. A norma, longe de ser uma barreira à liberdade de expressão, constitui precisamente o campo em que essa liberdade se exerce com rigor. Nesse sentido, tanto o poeta quanto o falante comum são realizadores da língua, pois, ao falar, criam mundos de sentido. A fala, em sua dimensão mais ampla, é sempre invenção, e é nesse gesto fundamental que linguagem e poesia se reencontram como expressões de uma mesma realidade: a linguagem como criação.

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hay algo que ya existía y algo que nunca existió antes: una innovación en la forma de la palabra, en su empleo, en su sistema de asociaciones” (Coseriu 1991, 101).

<sup>13</sup> “Este cambio continuo, este afán ininterrumpido de creación y recreación, en el que, como en un paño ondulante de miles de matices o en la superficie chispeante del mar bajo el sol, en ningún momento se puede fijar un sistema estático concreto, porque en cada momento el sistema se quiebra para reconstituirse y romperse nuevamente en los momentos inmediatamente sucesivos – ese cambio continuo es, precisamente, lo que llamamos la realidad del lenguaje” (Coseriu 1991, 101-102).

## ***2.2. Plano da análise estilística e da teoria literária***

Para considerar o caminho da Estilística, é fundamental compreender a posição coseriana relativa à disciplina Estilística e sua distinção das chamadas “estilísticas”. Enquanto a Estilística é concebida como uma disciplina científica, que busca operacionalizar uma noção rigorosa e ampla de estilo articulando os três níveis da linguagem – sistema, norma e fala –, as “estilísticas” referem-se às variações históricas e concretas dos estilos manifestados em diferentes épocas, gêneros e comunidades. Essa distinção é essencial para evitar confusões entre o estudo dos estilos particulares e a busca por princípios gerais que regem o fenômeno estilístico.

Coseriu (1991) valoriza e reconhece os ensinamentos das diferentes abordagens estilísticas existentes. Das estilísticas idealistas, representadas por Benedetto Croce (1902) e Karl Vossler (1950, 1977), ele destaca a ênfase na criatividade individual e na originalidade do sujeito falante ou escritor, concebendo o estilo como uma expressão singular carregada de significado e liberdade criadora. Croce (1902), por exemplo, vinculava o estilo à intuição estética individual; já Vossler (1950, 1977) defendia o estilo como manifestação do “espírito do povo”, buscando compreender a língua como expressão cultural. Embora essa dimensão subjetiva seja fundamental para entender o estilo como algo vivo e dinâmico, Coseriu adverte para o risco de um subjetivismo extremo que desconsidera o sistema linguístico e suas condições, enfraquecendo o rigor científico.

Por outro lado, das estilísticas impressionistas ou subjetivas, como as propostas por Leo Spitzer, pioneiro da estilística moderna, Coseriu reconhece a importância da sensibilidade estética e do detalhamento das variações expressivas para a análise do estilo. Spitzer destacou a atenção à forma, aos efeitos estilísticos e à análise minuciosa dos fenômenos linguísticos presentes nos textos literários. Contudo, Coseriu (1991) critica que essas abordagens, por sua dependência excessiva de juízos pessoais e da impressão estética, carecem de método rigoroso, o que compromete a cientificidade da disciplina. Para ele, a estilística não pode limitar-se a descrever as impressões subjetivas provocadas pelo texto, mas deve fundamentar-se em bases linguísticas sólidas que expliquem os mecanismos subjacentes.

No plano metodológico, o modelo coseriano requer procedimentos rigorosos para a coleta, a análise e a interpretação dos dados estilísticos, assegurando que as observações ultrapassem o subjetivismo e se tornem empíricas e sistemáticas. Essa sistematicidade implica a articulação coerente entre teoria e método, considerando as dimensões estruturais, sociais e individuais do estilo, possibilitando análises comparáveis em diferentes contextos. Tal modelo visa à replicabilidade e à sustentação empírica dos resultados, consolidando a estilística

como ciência integrada à linguística, apta a produzir conhecimento geral e válido sobre o fenômeno estilístico. O estilo é um fenômeno complexo que articula liberdade criadora e condicionamentos estruturais, de modo que a Estilística deve identificar leis e princípios que expliquem essa articulação dinâmica, sem se limitar à descrição de estilos particulares.

Para Coseriu, o termo *estilo* é uma noção operativa para compreender a expressividade linguística, presente tanto na literatura quanto na fala comum. Ele não é restrito à arte, mas constitui um aspecto da linguagem que revela a singularidade do falante em cada ato comunicativo, por isso o estilo pode ser compreendido como a realização individual do falante ou do escritor, inscrita no sistema e na norma, mas transcendendo-os, conferindo singularidade e vitalidade à linguagem do sujeito. A noção de estilo, nesse sentido, está vinculada ao conceito de fala, entendida como “realização individual concreta da norma, que contém a própria norma e, além disso, a originalidade expressiva dos indivíduos falantes” (Coseriu 1967, 98).

Mesmo reconhecendo o progresso das diferentes abordagens estilísticas, Coseriu destaca a necessidade de superar limitações metodológicas e teóricas remanescentes, propondo um modelo de estilística plenamente sistemático e científico. Essa proposta permanece um desafio atual para os estudos linguísticos e literários.

Tanto a Estilística, com seu foco na análise da expressão individual e criadora da linguagem, quanto a Teoria Literária, que reflete criticamente sobre a literatura como realização da linguagem, são caminhos simultâneos e complementares para compreender a identidade profunda entre linguagem e literatura. Assim, não se trata de fundir ou confundir essas áreas, mas de reconhecer que ambas são necessárias e convergem para revelar a linguagem literária em sua complexidade, cada uma a partir de seu enfoque específico e método próprio.

A teoria literária, no pensamento de Coseriu, não é uma disciplina concorrente à linguística, mas um prolongamento natural da reflexão sobre a linguagem como criação. A literatura, para ele, é a forma elevada da realização da linguagem, e a teoria literária é o campo em que essa realização é pensada, descrita e analisada. Enquanto a teoria literária reflete sobre o que o texto literário faz com a linguagem, a estilística mostra como essa linguagem funciona na construção do estilo individual e na produção de sentido. Dessa forma, embora distintas, estilística e teoria literária convergem para revelar a identidade entre linguagem e literatura, pois ambas apontam para a linguagem como uma atividade criadora, na qual o sujeito falante mobiliza os recursos do sistema linguístico para instaurar sentidos novos e expressivos.

### **2.3. Plano da filosofia da linguagem**

A concepção coseriana da linguagem como criação de sentido se fundamenta em um diálogo profundo com a tradição filosófica. Coseriu retoma e reelabora reflexões de autores centrais da filosofia da linguagem ocidental. De Platão, herda a interrogação sobre a “justeza dos nomes”, tema tratado no *Crátilo*, em que se discute se as palavras se ligam às coisas naturalmente ou por convenção. De Aristóteles, adota a distinção entre nomear e dizer, entre *onomázein* e *légein*, destacando que a verdade não está na nomeação, mas no juízo, e reconhece que todo o discurso linguístico se organiza em torno do sentido. Giambattista Vico, filósofo italiano do século XVII, também é uma referência importante para Coseriu, especialmente na distinção entre *verum* e *certum*, e na ideia de que só conhecemos verdadeiramente aquilo que somos capazes de criar – ideia que fundamenta a concepção da linguagem como criação e não como cópia do real.

Coseriu também valoriza a contribuição de Wilhelm von Humboldt, para quem a linguagem não é produto acabado (*ergon*), mas atividade permanente (*energeia*), ou seja, uma ação criadora que estrutura o pensamento e a cultura. Essa ideia, herdada de Aristóteles, aparece em Coseriu (2010) como fundamento para entender a linguagem como liberdade: o ser humano cria significados ao falar, do mesmo modo que cria valores e mundos possíveis. Além disso, Hegel é mencionado como aquele que insere o trabalho e a linguagem como as duas dimensões essenciais do espírito humano, capazes de transformar o mundo e dar-lhe forma cultural.

Ao integrar essas tradições filosóficas, Coseriu defende que a filosofia da linguagem é um campo que ultrapassa a lógica, a representação e a comunicação, colocando no centro a atividade simbólica, criadora e cultural do sujeito humano. Em sua formulação mais radical, essa filosofia reconhece que a linguagem é a forma originária de construção do sentido, sendo, por isso mesmo, inseparável da poesia, que, como ele afirma, é linguagem em absoluto.

Assim, no pensamento de Eugenio Coseriu, a identidade essencial entre linguagem e poesia pode ser fundamentada filosoficamente. Essa perspectiva não se limita a uma analogia entre duas formas de expressão, mas revela uma estrutura ontológica comum. Linguagem e poesia são, em sua origem, atividades criadoras de sentido. A filosofia, especialmente em sua tradição ocidental, busca o universal, o necessário e o essencial. Para isso, opera por meio da lógica discursiva, da argumentação racional e da elaboração de conceitos, estabelecendo distinções fundamentais como verdadeiro/falso, ser/não ser, existência/inexistência.

Nesse contexto, a linguagem é frequentemente concebida como instrumento da razão, meio pelo qual o sujeito representa o mundo e organiza o pensamento.

Contudo, a filosofia da linguagem também permite vislumbrar a compreensão de que a linguagem não é apenas um veículo do pensamento, mas sua própria condição de possibilidade. Ao falar, o sujeito não se limita a descrever o mundo; ele o constitui. A linguagem é, assim, criação de significados, anterior a qualquer distinção lógica ou conceitual.

Essa capacidade de criar sentido sem se submeter à lógica formal é também o que permite à poesia realizar o universal no individual. Enquanto a filosofia busca o universal por meio de conceitos e definições, a poesia o revela por meio da singularidade expressiva. Um verso, uma imagem ou um gesto poético encarna o universal no concreto, sem precisar abstraí-lo.

Com isso, compreende-se o sentido da afirmação mais radical de Coseriu: “a linguagem absoluta é, portanto, poesia” (Coseriu 1977, 185 – tradução nossa)<sup>14</sup>. A linguagem, quando despojada de suas funções utilitárias, manifesta-se como criação de sentido puro. A poesia é, pois, sua forma mais elevada e consciente, em que o sentido é produzido não por mediação lógica, mas por expressão direta da experiência.

Esse entendimento implica uma crítica às concepções logicistas da linguagem, que a subordinam à representação objetiva e ao julgamento conceitual. Para Coseriu, a linguagem não é apenas expressão de conteúdos dados, mas atividade simbólica que cria e objetiva o conhecimento. Assim, a linguagem é, ao mesmo tempo, criação de significados e forma de conhecimento.

Na poesia, essa capacidade criadora se realiza de modo exemplar. A linguagem se volta sobre si mesma e manifesta sua força originária de constituição do mundo. A poesia não narra o que é factual, mas o que é possível; sua verdade é a da coerência expressiva e da plenitude simbólica. Nesse sentido, a literatura é o espaço em que fato, discurso e conhecimento coincidem. Na visão de Coseriu, a poesia não é ornamento da linguagem, é sua culminância, sua verdade mais profunda.

É precisamente nesse ponto que se estabelece, segundo Coseriu, a identidade entre linguagem e poesia:

Esta identidade essencial pode ser sustentada com bons argumentos também no plano da filosofia da linguagem. De fato, como unidade de intuição e expressão, como pura criação de significados [...], a linguagem é equiparável à poesia, pois a poesia também corresponde, precisamente, à apreensão intuitiva do ser (Coseriu 1977, 185 – tradução nossa)<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> “El lenguaje absoluto es, por tanto, poesía” (Coseriu 1977, 185).

<sup>15</sup> “Esta identidad esencial puede sostenerse con buenas razones también en el plano de la filosofía del lenguaje. En efecto, como unidad de intuición y expresión, como pura creación de

Essa afirmação se apoia na noção de sujeito criador como absoluto, isto é, a linguagem não se limita a reproduzir o mundo, mas opera como uma atividade que cria mundos de significado. O sujeito humano é criador não por dominar tudo, mas porque sua linguagem não depende de condições empíricas exteriores para significar. Ela instaura realidades possíveis. Nessa concepção, herdeira da estética de Croce e da tradição idealista, linguagem e poesia se equivalem como formas originárias de constituição do real.

Esse estatuto criador da linguagem e da poesia se manifesta também em sua anterioridade ao juízo lógico. Coseriu afirma que ambas ignoram as distinções entre verdadeiro e falso, entre ser e não ser, pois operam num plano intuitivo e expressivo que antecede tais categorizações. Por isso, linguagem e poesia não representam o mundo empírico, mas criam uma realidade outra, um mundo poético. Daí vem o entendimento de que a finalidade e os sentidos da *Divina Comédia* são e estão na própria *Divina Comédia*, os da *Odisséia* são a própria *Odisséia*. A poesia, nesse sentido, é criação absoluta, haja vista que não visa descrever o mundo, mas instaurar um universo simbólico próprio, sustentado na expressividade da linguagem.

Ao percorrer esses três planos ou caminhos, é necessário entender o percurso coseriano, pois Eugenio Coseriu (1990) propõe uma reflexão sobre a linguagem poética a partir de sua concepção da essência do falar como atividade criadora. Ao afirmar que a poesia é um “dizer absoluto”, refere-se ao fato de que aí a linguagem se realiza plenamente em si mesma, independentemente de uma situação comunicativa concreta ou da presença de um destinatário. Isso é possível porque, em sua raiz, o falar é criação de sentido, e a poesia, ao objetivar uma intuição singular por meio de formas linguísticas, exemplifica esse caráter criativo da linguagem em grau máximo.

Contudo, Coseriu (1990) deixa claro que essa identificação entre linguagem e poesia não pode ser levada ao limite, pois a linguagem, em sua totalidade, não é absoluta. O ato de linguagem não se reduz à expressão individual, pois envolve também a dimensão da *alteridade*. A consciência que cria o dizer é sempre uma consciência aberta a outras consciências. Isso significa que o falar, mesmo quando se apresenta como criação primária – como no caso da poesia –, pressupõe estruturalmente a presença do outro. É necessário, então, distinguir entre duas formas de comunicação. Por um lado, a comunicação como participação efetiva no outro, isto é, o aspecto prático de partilhar algo com alguém, que pode ou não ocorrer. Por outro lado, a comunicação como pressuposição do outro,

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significados [...], el lenguaje es equiparable a la poesía, puesto que también la poesía corresponde, precisamente, a la aprehensión intuitiva del ser” (Coseriu 1977, 185).

que está presente em todo ato linguístico. Mesmo que o poema não seja lido por ninguém, ele é construído de modo que possa, em princípio, ser retomado, interpretado, compreendido, pois a linguagem é sempre voltada ao outro.

Além disso, Coseriu reconhece que mesmo a linguagem poética envolve informação e comunicação, embora em sentidos distintos dos que se aplicam à linguagem cotidiana. A poesia informa, ao dar forma a uma experiência sensível ou a uma intuição original, e comunica, como evocação de sentido, como abertura de um mundo possível ao interlocutor, mesmo que este seja ideal ou apenas potencial.

Por fim, é importante acrescentar que, para que qualquer forma de linguagem seja minimamente compreensível, inclusive a mais criativa, é necessário que haja algo de repetível, de compartilhável. O falar só é possível porque se ancora em um sistema histórico de formas linguísticas reconhecíveis, que permitem que os sujeitos se entendam, ainda que imperfeitamente. Mesmo a criação mais original da linguagem poética depende de elementos do sistema comum, da norma compartilhada, que tornam possível sua retomada e sua interpretação por outros. Portanto, mesmo o “dizer absoluto” da poesia não está fora da linguagem, mas realiza, de maneira intensa e particular, suas dimensões essenciais: a criação, a alteridade, a informação, a comunicação e a repetibilidade.

### 3. Conclusão

A partir da reflexão de Eugenio Coseriu, vimos que a literatura – e, mais radicalmente, a poesia – constitui uma das mais altas manifestações da linguagem como atividade humana criadora, e que só pode ser compreendida plenamente se for situada em dois eixos fundamentais: a dimensão textual (o texto como realização concreta e singular da linguagem) e a dimensão histórica (a língua como tradição cultural e sistema de possibilidades expressivas).

A literatura revela seu estatuto ontológico particular, pois ela não apenas *diz* algo, mas *faz ser* aquilo que diz. Como afirmou Coseriu, o texto poético não representa a realidade empírica, ele constitui uma realidade outra, simbólica e autônoma. Em vez de apenas descrever o mundo, a poesia o instaura como mundo possível. Isso significa que a literatura participa da lógica da criação e não da simples reprodução. É no texto que a linguagem atinge sua máxima densidade expressiva, mobilizando som, forma, ritmo, imagem e sentido em uma totalidade indivisível. A poesia, portanto, não é um uso periférico da linguagem, mas, segundo Coseriu, é linguagem “sem adjetivos”, isto é, linguagem em estado absoluto.

No contexto das línguas, a literatura só pode existir em línguas naturais concretas (espanhol, francês, romeno, português) e atua sobre essas línguas de

forma dinâmica, criadora e histórica. O poeta, ao escrever, não abandona a norma da língua, ele a prolonga, reinterpretando-a e reinventando-a por meio de escolhas estilísticas que revelam as potencialidades internas da tradição linguística a que pertence. Nesse sentido, como defende Coseriu, a língua dos grandes poetas não se opõe à língua histórica, mas coincide com ela em sua máxima realização. A literatura, assim, é um testemunho da vitalidade das línguas e, ao mesmo tempo, um lugar privilegiado de transformação histórica do dizer humano.

A literatura permite superar visões reducionistas, tanto aquelas que a encaram apenas como arte subjetiva quanto aquelas que a aprisionam em molduras exclusivamente formais. O texto literário é criação simbólica, mas é também fato linguístico, e o seu sentido só emerge plenamente quando se compreende sua enunciação como parte de uma tradição cultural e comunicativa. Nesse ponto, a literatura se revela como território de intersecção entre a atividade individual e os sistemas históricos.

Ao enfatizar a identidade entre linguagem e poesia, Coseriu não só atribui um estatuto filosófico à criação literária, como também recoloca a literatura no centro das ciências da linguagem. Com isso, ele nos convida a compreender o fenômeno literário como manifestação exemplar do que é falar – criar sentido, compartilhar mundos, configurar simbolicamente a experiência. E é precisamente isso que justifica pensar a identidade entre a poesia e a linguagem porque, só nesse entrelaçamento entre criação singular e forma histórica, a literatura e a língua podem ser compreendidas em sua profundidade humana e linguística.

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## ECOS DO LEGADO COSERIANO: EXPLORANDO O CONCEITO DE NÍVEL UNIVERSAL DA LINGUAGEM

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**ABSTRACT.** *Echoes of the Coserian Legacy: Exploring the Concept of Universal Level of Language.* This article investigates the mobilization of Eugenio Coseriu's concept of the universal level of language in a sample of five academic studies (Faur, 2009; Willems, 2016; Schrott, 2021; Ruiz and Alegria, 2021; and Vucheva, 2012), taking into account the incomplete state of the discipline of general speaking, as repeatedly acknowledged by Coseriu himself. These works resort to the notion of the universal level in two main ways: as a “universality thermometer” — employed to assess the generality of certain linguistic phenomena — and as a theoretical source of inspiration for the formulation of new conceptual frameworks. It is observed, however, that these mobilizations are accompanied by an involuntary suppression of the underlying issue regarding the absence of a fully constituted linguistic discipline capable of addressing general speaking. I conclude that the appropriation of the notion of the universal level of language without reference to Coseriu's unfinished project contributes to the perpetuation of this epistemological gap. I thus advocate for the task of revisiting Coseriu's legacy in order to gather and systematize the scattered information on the universal level of language, thereby laying the groundwork for the constitution of a Linguistics of General Speaking.

**Keywords:** *Coserian legacy, universal level of language, general speaking linguistics, integral linguistics, linguistics activity*

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**REZUMAT. *Ecouri ale moștenirii coșeriene: explorarea conceptului de nivel universal al limbajului.*** Acest articol investighează circumscrierea conceptului coserian de nivel universal al limbajului într-un eșantion de cinci studii academice (Faur, 2009; Willems, 2016; Schrott, 2021; Ruiz și Alegría, 2021; și Vucheva, 2012), având în vedere starea de incompletitudine a disciplinei lingvisticii în general, așa cum a fost ea reiterată de Eugenio Coseriu însuși. Aceste lucrări recurg la noțiunea de nivel universal al limbajului în două moduri principale: ca „barometru al universalității” — utilizat pentru a evalua generalitatea anumitor fenomene lingvistice — și ca sursă de inspirație teoretică pentru formularea unor noi cadre conceptuale. Se constată, însă, că aceste explorări sunt însoțite de o suprimare involuntară a problematicii absenței unei discipline lingvistice pe deplin constituite, capabile să dea seama de vorbirea în general. Conchid că această apropiere a noțiunii de nivel universal al limbajului, fără referire la proiectul trasat de către E. Coseriu, contribuie la perpetuarea acestui gol epistemologic. Susțin, așadar, necesitatea de a reevalua moștenirea coșeriană în scopul de a aduna și de a sistematiza informațiile dispersate despre nivelul universal al limbajului, pregătind astfel terenul pentru constituirea unei Lingvistici a Vorbirii în General.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *moștenirea coșeriană, nivelul universal al limbajului, lingvistica vorbirii în general, lingvistica integrală, activitatea lingvistică*

## 1. Introdução

A noção de níveis<sup>2</sup> da linguagem aparece pela primeira vez na obra de Eugenio Coseriu em *Determinación y Entorno: dos problemas de una lingüística del hablar*. Nesse trabalho, Coseriu (1975 [1955]) concebe a linguagem verbal humana como o *hablar*, uma atividade heterogênea e complexa que pode ser distinguida (i) num falar textos, o falar conforme um entorno contextual particular e criar, a partir disso, um produto (texto), uma atividade individual; (ii) num falar línguas o falar conforme a tradição linguística de uma comunidade específica, uma atividade histórica (falar português, espanhol, italiano, francês, romeno); e (iii) num falar em geral, o ato linguageiro *per se*, uma atividade universal. A partir dessa distinção, Coseriu (1975 [1995]) sugere os três níveis da linguagem, um para cada dimensão do *hablar*: o individual, o histórico e o universal.

Essa perspectiva de olhar para a linguagem reaparece nas bases daquilo que, em trabalhos posteriores, Coseriu chama de Linguística Integral (LI), o

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<sup>2</sup> Ao largo de sua obra, E. Coseriu varia no uso dos termos “plano” e “níveis” para falar das distinções do *hablar*. Neste trabalho, optamos por, daqui em diante, usar o termo “níveis”, a título de padronização.

marco homogêneo e unitário cujo objetivo é dar conta do saber que o falante mobiliza quando fala (Coseriu 1984). O marco da LI representa um dos principais pontos de interesse do corpo de pesquisadores que se propõe a dar continuidade à herança deixada pelo mestre romeno. Por meio do presente trabalho, pretendo somar às contribuições geradas por esse grupo.

A parte do legado coseriano a que me detenho é a noção de nível universal da linguagem – o que inclui os objetos que a orbitam (falar em geral, saber elocucional, designação, entre outros). Coseriu assume, em vários de seus trabalhos, que o falar em geral é o objeto de estudo de uma disciplina que precisa ser desenvolvida, isto é, sempre marcou a constituição dessa disciplina como uma tarefa pendente. Proponho-me neste trabalho a investigar algumas das posturas que têm sido assumidas por aqueles que se propõem a mobilizar essa noção, levando em conta esse estado de incompletude.

O cumprimento dessa tarefa presume a realização de uma incursão num amplo conjunto de teses, dissertações e artigos e, a partir disso, a constituição de um levantamento exaustivo dos estudos que se encaixam no escopo delimitado. No âmbito deste trabalho, no entanto, não foi possível realizar essa busca pormenorizada, inclusive em razão de limites linguísticos. Em função disso, proponho-me a conduzir uma investigação de caráter exploratório a respeito do tratamento que é dado à noção de nível universal em uma amostragem específica, constituída com base no meu próprio conhecimento sobre trabalhos atinentes a esse tema. Compõem essa amostragem os trabalhos de Faur (2009), Willems (2016), Schrott (2021), Ruíz e Alegria (2021) e Vucheva (2012).

Na seção 2, apresento o modo como esses autores e autoras recorrem à noção de nível universal da linguagem. Na seção 3, agrupo esses trabalhos conformes a finalidade subjacente ao uso dado ao conceito focalizado, na intenção de situá-los no bojo do desenvolvimento do legado coseriano. Na seção 4, apresento conclusões e encaminhamentos.

## **2. A mobilização da noção de nível universal da linguagem: termômetro de “universalidade” e objeto de inspiração**

O trabalho de Faur (2009), intitulado *Integral Semantics and Conceptual Metaphor: Rethinking Conceptual Metaphor Within an Integral Semantics Framework*, recorre à LI para importar algumas de suas categorias no gesto de discutir os alcances e os limites da Semântica Cognitiva (SC) e, no vácuo disso, pensar ajustes teóricos para essa abordagem. A SC é um quadro que opera com a noção de metáfora como uma estrutura conceitual subjacente ao pensamento e com o princípio do *embodiment* (corporificação), segundo o qual os significados

linguísticos derivam de esquemas imagéticos corporais pré-linguísticos, projetados de domínios concretos para domínios abstratos (Faur 2009). Em *A VIDA É UMA JORNADA*, por exemplo, há o mapeamento conceitual de um domínio fonte (JORNADA) para um domínio alvo (VIDA), logo, pressupõe-se que o indivíduo organiza e constrói aspectos abstratos da experiência de viver por meio de elementos concretos e familiares da experiência de viajar ou caminhar.

Desde a sua consolidação no cenário dos estudos linguísticos, esse modelo tem sido alvo de críticas e, para Faur (2009), a longevidade da SC como proposta teórica depende de respondê-las. As críticas que populam o trabalho de Faur (2009) – que, por sua vez, populam um corpo de trabalhos de outros pesquisadores – direcionam-se principalmente (mas não apenas) à própria concepção de metáfora conceitual e o caminho que a autora toma frente às limitações que apresenta é recorrer à noção coseriana de saber elocucional e sugerir a metáfora conceitual como componente desse saber.

Para Coseriu (1980 [1973]), os três níveis da linguagem podem ser relacionados com três pontos de vista da tradição aristotélica, de modo a perspectivar a atividade languageira como *energéia* (a atividade propriamente dita, tomada em si mesma), como *dýnamis* (o conhecimento, o saber fazer, a técnica potencial) e como *érgon* (a atividade realizada em seus produtos). No entrecruzamento do nível universal da linguagem com o *dýnamis*, há o saber elocucional, a técnica do saber falar em geral, que se distingue do saber idiomático (no nível histórico) e do saber expressivo (no nível individual).

Na leitura de Faur (2009), integrar a metáfora ao saber elocucional implica aloca-la no nível universal da linguagem e, por consequência, separá-la dos níveis histórico e individual. Dessa forma, a metáfora seria um *saber expressar um conteúdo abstrato às vias de um concreto*, uma técnica que é “universal” no sentido em que não é própria de uma língua específica e que não é circunstanciada numa situação específica. Como o saber elocucional dos falantes ancora-se num conhecimento compartilhado sobre o mundo – fundo de experiência culturalmente sedimentado que permite aos falantes julgar a pertinência, a propriedade e a inteligibilidade das expressões linguísticas – o conceito de metáfora passaria por uma reconfiguração: além de ser produto de estruturas corporais universais internalizadas nos estágios iniciais da vida, a metáfora seria consequência do conhecimento sobre as “coisas”, dos eventos, dos princípios que regem a realidade.

Outra distinção que Faur (2009) importa do marco teórico coseriano é a dos níveis de funcionalidade (ou de conteúdo). Coseriu (1980 [1973]) postula que a cada nível da linguagem corresponde um nível de funcionalidade, “três estratos do significar ou tipos de ‘conteúdo’ linguístico” (99). A designação, no nível universal, é a referência à “realidade”, a relação cada vez determinada

entre uma expressão linguística e um “estado de coisas”; o significado, no nível histórico, é o conteúdo de um signo ou de uma expressão enquanto dado numa determinada língua e exclusivamente através dessa mesma língua; e o sentido, no nível individual, é o conteúdo de um texto, isto é, a intenção comunicativa subjacente à atitude languageira de um indivíduo, numa circunstância específica. A autora resgata esse corpo de conceitos para situar a metáfora conceitual no plano da designação, sugerindo-a como uma atualização semântica situada, condicionada pelo conhecimento enciclopédico do falante (o saber elocucional) e pelos esquemas imagético-corporais.

O trabalho de Willems (2016), intitulado *The universality of categories and meaning: a Coserian perspective*, também recorre à tríplice distinção de níveis de funcionalidade e aos três saberes, mas para explorar questões que se situam no campo dos estudos em tipologia linguística, uma área que se dedica a comparar as línguas do mundo, a identificar as diferenças estruturais e funcionais das línguas, bem como analisá-las em termos de padrões que se repetem e que se evitam. O autor explora o particularismo categorial, uma visada de estudo tipológico para a qual a descrição das línguas deve ser realizada em seus próprios termos, postura que se distancia da prática de análise tipológica de estabelecer categorias universais *a priori* (nome, verbo, sujeito, predicado, passiva) para, em seguida, buscá-las nas línguas existentes. Frente a isso, Willems (2016, 111) levanta duas questões:

- (1) Como identificamos os significados que se pressupõem como comensuráveis em diferentes línguas e com os quais nos situamos no domínio da “substância” geral, e não de significados específicos de uma língua?
- (2) Qual é a relação entre as categorias particulares de uma língua e os conceitos comparativos, chamados de translinguísticos, que são comumente usados na tipologia linguística?<sup>3</sup>

Para responder à questão (1), Willems (2016) sugere reconhecer os significados comensuráveis – o termo “significado” é usado no valor de *meaning*, como conteúdo e não como *funcionalidade do nível histórico* – como conceitos elocucionais, no nível universal da linguagem. Os significados comensuráveis são aqueles que, mesmo expressos de maneiras diferentes em diferentes línguas, podem ser colocados numa relação de comparação funcional porque

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<sup>3</sup> Trecho original: “(1) How do we identify the meanings that are assumed to be crosslinguistically commensurable and with which we find ourselves in the realm of general “substance” rather than language-specific meanings? (2) What is the relationship between language-particular categories and comparative, so-called crosslinguistic concepts that are commonly used in linguistic typology?”.

fazem referência a coisas, eventos, entidades, princípios ou experiências relativamente universais. A noção de posse, por exemplo, seria um significado comensurável e, portanto, um conceito elocucional. Na esteira desse raciocínio, a resposta à questão (1) encaminha a um procedimento para a identificação desse conceito elocucional numa determinada língua: é preciso saber se a posse é formalmente codificada nessa língua ou não e, se sim, determina-se a qual conhecimento idiomático esse conceito corresponde naquela língua específica. Essa parte do procedimento coloca o analista no terreno do nível histórico, afinal, passa-se à procura do conjunto de significados (oposições funcionais do sistema linguístico interno) que representa a posse na língua alvo, de modo a reconhecer, por exemplo, se a posse é marcada lexical ou gramaticalmente e se há distinção de graus de especificidade (alienável e não-alienável).

Se a posse não é idiomáticamente codificada, Willems (2016) sugere a possibilidade de ela ser elocucionalmente inferida. Na língua inglesa, a estrutura gramatical tradicionalmente reconhecida como genitivo ('s) e a construção com *of* são utilizadas para marcar posse, mas não somente. Em *the table's leg* e em *the leg of the table* ambos os elementos expressam posse, mas não em *tuesday's lecture*, *Rome's destruction*, e em *a piece of cake*. O fato de as mesmas estruturas 's e *of* repetem-se em todos os casos, mas expressam relações distintas é a pedra angular na qual Willems (2016) sustenta a afirmação de que o falante de língua inglesa recorre ao saber elocucional para designar a relação de posse – nesse caso, recorre-se ao conhecimento de que uma mesa é um objeto com estruturas cujas partes se assimilam a pernas.

Para responder à questão (2), Willems (2016) faz recurso a um outro valor teórico de “universal” que povoa a obra coseriana, ou seja, recorre não à concepção de nível da linguagem, mas à distinção entre universais essenciais, empíricos e possíveis. Como a noção de universais não passa pelo conceito de nível universal da linguagem, a questão (2) não é pertinente para a discussão.

Dito isso, o papel da noção de nível universal, no trabalho de Willems (2016), é acomodar o conceito de significados comensuráveis numa proposta de estudos tipológicos que segue a vertente do particularismo categorial. Para fazer isso, o autor sugere reconhecer os significados comensuráveis, os quais podem aparecer elocucionalmente inferidos numa língua que porventura não os codifica idiomáticamente.

Assim como Faur (2009), Willems (2016) lança mão da proposta coseriana na intenção de discutir os limites e de expandir os alcances dos quadros teóricos sobre os quais se debruçam. Ambos, quando recorrem à noção de nível universal da linguagem, a tomam como uma espécie de termômetro, cuja serventia é mensurar o grau de “universalidade” (no sentido coseriano de nível) do fenômeno que subjaz ao construto teórico com o qual estão lidando. Enquanto

Faur (2009) mede a “universalidade” da metáfora conceitual, Willems (2016) mede a “universalidade” dos significados comensuráveis.

O trabalho de Schrott (2021), intitulado *Eugenio Coseriu and Pragmatics* se distancia dos trabalhos resenhados anteriormente, afinal, ela vê na distinção tríplice do *hablar* uma estrutura conceitual que se pode aproveitar no empreendimento de criar uma teoria integrada da pragmalinguística. A autora argumenta que a pragmalinguística opera com um corpo heterogêneo de fenômenos (cognitivos, semióticos, linguísticos, históricos, culturais) e que a noção de níveis da linguagem oferece um caminho para distingui-los de forma coerente, ao mesmo tempo que conserva uma postura integralista de investigação.

Com isso em mente, Schrott (2021) sugere que, para cada nível da linguagem, haveria um campo de estudos pragmático específico, isto é, uma pragmática universal, uma pragmática da língua e uma pragmática das tradições discursivas. Atenho-me àquilo que Schrott (2021) preconiza para a pragmática universal.

Os princípios e regras universais constituem o objeto central de investigação da pragmática universal, que se concentra em habilidades cognitivas e comunicativo-semióticas fundamentais, e busca explorar regras e unidades universais da fala. A perspectiva sobre o falar é universal; o objetivo é encontrar regras, unidades e categorias universais do falar que sejam válidas em todas as línguas e culturas [...] A pragmática universal ocupa-se de regras e princípios que assumem forma em línguas particulares, mas que não fazem parte dessas línguas.<sup>4</sup> (Schrott 2021, 216-217).

Os chamados princípios e regras universais, que, por sua vez, incluem habilidades cognitivas e comunicativo-semióticas fundamentais, são, segundo Schrott (2021), elementos que compõem o saber elocucional. Além disso, a autora aponta que a noção de atos de fala e o princípio de cooperação – conceitos vinculados, respectivamente, a J. R. Searle e a H. P. Grice – são frutos de estudos que se aproximam de uma abordagem pragmática universal, afirmação que permite inferir que os fenômenos subjacentes a essas noções teóricas seriam de ordem universal. Com base nesses dados, é possível afirmar que a autora toma a distinção coseriana como objeto de inspiração para o

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<sup>4</sup> Trecho original: “The universal principles and rules form the central object of investigation of universal pragmatics, which focuses on fundamental cognitive and communicative-semiotic abilities and aims to explore universal rules and units of speech. The perspective on speaking is universal; the aim is to find universal rules, units and categories of speaking that are valid in all languages and cultures [...] Universal pragmatics is thus concerned with rules and principles that take shape in particular languages, but are not part of these languages [...]”

redirecionamento de um programa de investigação científica específico, e a noção de nível universal é, nesse sentido, uma das referências teórico-epistemológicas que entram em jogo nesse processo de estabelecimento de relações entre um quadro teórico fonte, o marco coseriano, e um quadro teórico alvo, a pragmalinguística.

O mesmo ocorre em Vucheva (2012), contudo, nesse caso, o quadro teórico alvo é um de postulação própria, um que a autora chama de marco global da linguística do falar. No artigo intitulado *Tesis sobre la lingüística del hablar*, propõe-se um marco teórico que, apesar de lembrar o marco coseriano em vista do nome que recebe, opera com categorias próprias que lhe conferem uma identidade, ao mesmo tempo em que se ancora em alguns postulados da LI. Em linhas gerais, ao passo que se aproxima da LI por se inspirar nos três níveis da linguagem (ela usa o termo “planos”) e nos três níveis de funcionalidade, o marco de Vucheva (2012) toma distância quando baliza os objetos que populam o modelo em aspectos languageiros de ordem cognitiva e psicossocial.

Por um lado, como o marco de Vucheva (2012) é outro, seria incongruente verticalizar aquilo que ela propõe como plano universal alegando tratar-se de uma mobilização – às vias de, por exemplo, uma reconfiguração – da noção coseriana de nível universal da linguagem. Por outro, o gesto de apresentar as categorias que a autora sugere para esse plano serve para ilustrar a distância com a qual se mantém do marco da LI.

Vucheva (2012) afirma que a designação (tal qual postulada por Coseriu) corresponde a uma competência cognitiva que, por sua vez, envolve processos mentais de conhecimento e de categorização. Por definir esse paradigma do marco recorrendo a aspectos de natureza cognitiva, os quais não estão acomodados no quadro teórico fonte (a LI), a própria noção de competência cognitiva é uma das forças que empurra a proposta de Vucheva (2012) para longe do marco coseriano. Nesse mesmo sentido, afirma-se que as unidades correspondentes à designação, o conceito e o juízo, são as operações mentais que organizam o mundo do ponto vista lógico e, por isso, não são próprias de uma língua específica. As categorias vinculadas a essas unidades, por sua vez, são estruturas de natureza lógica e mental, que refletem os critérios racionais que regulam a estruturação de proposições válidas sobre o mundo. É notória, portanto, a orientação de corte cognitivista incutida na noção de plano universal da linguagem de Vucheva (2012). Afirmar que o plano universal é de caráter lógico-mental serve, por fim, para reiterar que a postura de Vucheva (2012) frente ao marco teórico coseriano não é uma de continuidade, mas, no máximo, de inspiração.

Em Vucheva (2012), Faur (2009), Willems (2016) e Schrott (2021), há um traço transversal, que existe à despeito das diferenças que os trabalhos

conservam entre si: no processo de cumprir seus respectivos objetivos, estabelece-se uma relação entre um quadro teórico fonte, a estrutura conceitual à qual se recorre para resgatar conceitos, e um quadro teórico alvo, a estrutura conceitual que sofre alterações em função da chegada do conceito resgatado. Nos trabalhos resenhados até aqui, o quadro teórico fonte sempre é o marco teórico coseriano.

O trabalho de Ruiz e Alegría (2021) segue um caminho diferente, pois objetivam caracterizar “[...] o objeto e os objetivos da disciplina encarregada das regras e procedimentos dos quais dispõem a língua para construir textos: a gramática do texto.” (17)<sup>5</sup>. Como os autores operam com a noção de gramática de texto como o nível de estruturação da língua, no nível histórico da linguagem, é possível afirmar que, diferentemente dos demais trabalhos, Ruiz e Alegría (2021) tomam o marco coseriano como quadro teórico alvo.

A dêixis fórica é, segundo os autores, uma das manifestações linguísticas que integram o objeto de estudo da gramática do texto. Há, no entanto, um conjunto específico de fenômenos relativos à dêixis fórica que fogem ao escopo dessa disciplina e, para demonstrar isso, Ruiz e Alegría (2021) recorrem à Teoria da Acessibilidade, tal qual postulada por Mira Ariel. Essa teoria opera com o princípio de que as expressões referenciais (as estruturas linguísticas usadas para manter, recuperar ou estabelecer as referências, eventos ou partes da própria instância de linguagem que já foram mencionados ou que já foram introduzidos no discurso) funcionam como indicadores de quanto está ativa a representação mental do referente na memória do interlocutor, ou seja, o quanto “acessível” ela está. A teoria organiza-se em dois conjuntos de princípios, os que regulam as variáveis para calcular o grau de acessibilidade e os que regulam as características das expressões que indicam o grau de acessibilidade.

Ruiz e Alegría (2021) argumentam que a escolha por uma ou por outra expressão inferencial é fruto de um cálculo que o falante executa para ajustar o grau de acessibilidade do referente e que os conjuntos de princípios representam os critérios que se entrecruzam nesse cálculo. Segundo os autores, tais critérios podem ser mobilizados para uma descrição das expressões referenciais de forma independente da língua na qual são codificadas. Com base nisso, Ruiz e Alegría (2021) argumentam que os princípios do cálculo de acessibilidade formam parte do nível universal da linguagem, especificamente, no âmbito do saber elocucional.

Em síntese, o processo de situar o conjunto de fenômenos sobre o qual se debruça a Teoria da Acessibilidade no nível universal da linguagem é um gesto necessário para distinguir os fenômenos que constituem e os que não constituem o objeto de estudo imediato da gramática do texto. Nesse sentido, o

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<sup>5</sup> Trecho original: “[...] el objeto y objetivos de la disciplina encargada de las reglas y procedimientos de los que disponen las lenguas para construir textos: la gramática del texto.”

a noção de nível universal da linguagem em Ruiz e Alegria (2021) é, também, usada como termômetro de “universalidade”, mas não da mesma forma como em Faur (2009) e Willems (2016), afinal, nesses dois casos, a finalidade não é rever um aspecto do quadro teórico coseriano.

### **3. A disciplinarização da Linguística do Falar em Geral: tarefa pendente**

Com base no que foi levantado na seção anterior, os cinco trabalhos podem ser organizados em dois grupos, cujo critério de composição é a finalidade subjacente ao uso da noção de nível universal. Faur (2009), Willems (2016) e Ruíz e Alegría (2021) formam um grupo, com base no fato de que recorrem a esse conceito coseriano para reconhecer o que há de universal no corpo de conceitos sobre o qual se debruçam e, em função disso, rever os alcances dos quadros teóricos que lhe interessam. O que os diferencia são os quadros teóricos que são alvo de contribuição: a SC para Faur (2009), os estudos tipológicos para Willems (2016) e a gramática do texto para Ruíz e Alegría (2021).

Schrott (2021) e Vucheva (2012) formam outro grupo. O que as une é o recurso à noção de nível universal como um aporte teórico de referência, de inspiração para a constituição de uma outra proposta, no caso de Schrott (2021), uma disciplina universal da pragmalinguística e, no caso de Vucheva (2012), um marco global da linguística do falar que leva em consideração aspectos de natureza cognitiva e psicossocial.

Independentemente das diferenças, todos esses trabalhos assumem a noção de nível universal (e os conceitos que a orbitam) no estado em que se encontra nos trabalhos de Coseriu, sem tomar em consideração a incompletude desse estado, inclusive, assumida pelo próprio linguista. No *Determinación y Entorno*, por exemplo, Coseriu (1979 [1955]) reivindica que a linguística de meados da década de 50 deve levar em conta a distinção tríplice da atividade languageira, de modo a reconhecer que para cada um dos três níveis da linguagem deve haver uma disciplina específica: uma linguística das línguas, uma do texto e uma do falar em geral. Para Coseriu (1975 [1955]), já estava consolidada uma linguística das línguas (na forma, sobretudo, do estruturalismo europeu) e já havia práticas de estudos linguísticos que encaminhavam a uma pretensa linguística do texto, mas não havia, de nenhuma forma, uma linguística do falar em geral, no nível universal da linguagem.

De fato, existe, e está solidamente constituída, a linguística das línguas, isto é, do falar no nível histórico. Existe, desse modo, uma linguística do texto, ou seja, do falar no nível particular (que é também estudo do

‘discurso’ e do respectivo ‘saber’). A chamada ‘estilística da fala’ é, justamente, uma linguística do texto. Por outro lado, não existe como disciplina constituída a linguística do falar Κατ’ἐνέργειαν [a atividade como tal] no nível universal [...]<sup>6</sup> (Coseriu 1979 [1955], 214).

Já no *Determinación y Entorno*, há o esforço de Coseriu em dar uma resposta a esse problema. O autor esboça uma *Gramática do Falar*, a disciplina que se ocupa da técnica geral do falar e cujo objetivo é determinar-lhe suas funções e seus instrumentos (Coseriu 1975 [1955]). Dentro dos limites em que opera, a proposta desenhada de Coseriu (1975 [1955]) assume um caráter embrionário e não chega a ser retomada para ser desdobrada.

30 anos após *Determinación y Entorno*, num curso ministrado na *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, Coseriu novamente recorre aos níveis da linguagem para examinar a linguística e sua época e, novamente, o problema da ausência de uma disciplina para o nível universal marca presença. *Hacia la Lingüística Integral* é o título que Coseriu deu à transcrição<sup>7</sup> desse curso, onde apesar de avançar na caracterização dos fenômenos que compõem o nível universal, deixa várias questões em aberto. Por exemplo, ao empreender na especificação das funções próprias a cada um dos níveis, o autor assume o estado preliminar no qual se encontram as ferramentas necessárias à descrição das funções próprias do nível universal: “Infelizmente, não temos, ainda, nem mesmo os termos para distinguir, em cada caso, as funções do falar. Essas funções são provavelmente como as espécies lógicas de Leibniz das quais já falamos, na realidade, infinitas.” (Coseriu 1975, parte VII, 13).

Um último material em que se reitera o inacabamento do empreendimento disciplinar para os fenômenos do nível universal da linguagem é em *Decir las cosas como son: Conversaciones con Eugenio Coseriu* (Kabatek e Murguía, 2021 [1997]), especificamente, na entrevista intitulada *La lingüística integral*.

Tratava-se, portanto, de desenvolver uma linguística integral do falar, já fora do saussurianismo [...]. Tratava-se, em primeiro lugar, de uma linguística do falar em geral e do uso linguístico, uma linguística cujos fundamentos se apresentam em *Determinação e entorno*. (Kabatek e Murguía 2021 [1997], 236)

Independentemente do estado da linguística que examinava – a de meados da década de 50, a de meados da década de 70 ou a do fim da década de

<sup>6</sup> Trecho da edição brasileira do *Teoría del lenguaje y lingüística general: cinco estudios*, pela editora Madrid. Essa obra é uma coleção de cinco trabalhos, dentre os quais está o *Determinación y Entorno: dos problemas de una lingüística del hablar*, que, por sua vez, foi originalmente publicado no número VII da *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, em 1955.

<sup>7</sup> Manuscrito acessível no *Coseriu-Archiv*, site hospedado pela *Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen*.

90 – Coseriu nunca deixou de apontar à necessidade de uma linguística do falar em geral, isto é, sempre marcou a constituição dessa disciplina como uma tarefa pendente. Na esteira desse raciocínio, o fato de que Faur (2009), Willems (2016), Schrott (2021), Ruiz e Alegria (2021) e Vucheva (2012) recorrem à noção de nível universal sem passar por perto da problemática que lhe é intrínseca, por um lado, não é uma postura que invalida as pesquisas nas quais empreendem, mas, por outro, assumi-la (mesmo que não intencionalmente) é jogar para debaixo do tapete (ainda mais) um encargo que já espera mais de 60 anos espera para ser finalizado.

#### 4. Conclusão

Neste trabalho, conduzi um sobrevoo acerca da mobilização da noção coseriana de nível universal da linguagem numa amostra de trabalhos específica. No exame em que empreendi, atestei que a noção de nível universal da linguagem povoa os trabalhos para desempenhar duas funções: a de termômetro de “universalidade” (recorre-se àquilo que Coseriu preconiza para esse nível para caracterizar um fenômeno que poderia povoá-lo); e a de objeto de inspiração (recorre-se ao objeto observacional, ao fenômeno empírico que subjaz ao conceito de nível universal para servir de referência para um postulado teórico distinto).

Também atestei que o resgate ao conceito de nível universal da linguagem não é acompanhado pelo resgate da tarefa pendente de constituição de uma disciplina do falar em geral, recorrentemente marcada pelo próprio Eugenio Coseriu ao largo de sua obra. Mesmo sabendo que essa tarefa não é um objetivo em nenhum dos trabalhos que resenhei e que a ausência da remissão a esse encargo não finalizado não diminui as suas contribuições, argumento que o recurso ao nível universal da linguagem, uma vez acompanhado da supressão involuntária da problemática que lhe é intrínseca, é um fator que pode contribuir para mantê-la no estado de esboço.

Dito isso, faz-se necessário revisitar o legado coseriano na intenção de realizar uma sistematização das informações sobre o nível universal da linguagem. A obra coseriana não conta com um trabalho que sirva ao nível universal da linguagem, por exemplo, do mesmo modo que o *Linguística del texto: introducción a la hermenéutica del sentido* (Coseriu 2007) serve ao nível individual. Em Coseriu (2007), quem procura os fundamentos da Linguística do Texto encontrará um objeto (texto), os princípios que regem o seu funcionamento e uma heurística que guia a sua análise. Em contrapartida, quem procura os fundamentos da Linguística do Falar em Geral (objeto, princípios e heurística)

um trabalho no mesmo paradigma, mas um conjunto de pressupostos dispostos de forma esparsa em diferentes obras. Essa realidade conduz, portanto, a resgatar essas informações esparsas, na intenção de dá-las uma organização e, principalmente, uma sistematicidade.

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## POLYVALENCE AND POLYMORPHY. MULTIFUNCTIONALITY IN GRAMMAR FROM A LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT.** *Polyvalence and Polymorphy. Multifunctionality in Grammar from a Language-Specific Functional Perspective.* Eugenio Coseriu is widely recognized for his contributions to the theory of language, particularly in areas such as linguistic creativity, language change, the stratificational “architecture” and the layered “structure” of language, lexical structures, universals, and text linguistics. Less attention, however, has been given to his outlines of a theory of “functional syntax” (or “functional grammar”), which highlights complementary perspectives and distinguishes between different types of meaning (Coseriu 1973, 1989, 1996). Building on these distinctions, this article examines

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multifunctionality – specifically, polyvalence and polymorphy (or “grammatical synonymy”) – from a language-specific functional approach to grammar. While the polyvalence of grammatical elements parallels lexical polyvalence, polymorphy is far less common. To assess its significance, the article explores the functional status of syntactic patterns conceived as full-fledged constructions and illustrates the concept of polymorphy through a case study of the ditransitive (or “dative”) alternation in present-day German.

**Keywords:** *language-specific functional grammar (Coseriu), polyvalence, polymorphy (grammatical synonymy), multifunctionality, isomorphism, grammatical alternation, construction meaning, encoded meaning (signified) and designation, normal language use*

**REZUMAT. Polivalență și polimorfie. Multifuncționalitatea în gramatică, din perspectivă idiomatice-funcțională.** Eugenio Coseriu este larg recunoscut pentru contribuțiile sale la teoria limbajului, în special în domeniul precum creativitatea lingvistică, schimbarea lingvistică, „arhitectura” stratificată și „structura” nivelelor limbajului, structurile lexicale, universalitățile, lingvistica textului. S-a acordat însă mai puțină atenție propunerilor sale privind teoria „sintaxei funcționale” (sau a „gramaticii funcționale”), care evidențiază perspective complementare și distinge diferitele tipuri de semnificate (Coseriu 1973, 1989, 1996). Plecând de la aceste distincții coserieni, articolul examinează multifuncționalitatea – în mod concret polivalența și polimorfia (sau „sinonimia gramaticală”) – dintr-o perspectivă funcțională idiomatice-specifică asupra gramaticii. Dacă polivalența elementelor gramaticale se situează în paralelism cu polivalența lexicală, constatăm că polimorfia este mult mai puțin frecventă. Pentru a evalua semnificația acesteia din urmă, articolul explorează statutul funcțional al structurilor sintactice privite drept construcții complexe și ilustrează conceptul de polimorfie printr-un studiu de caz al alternanței ditransitive (sau „dative”) în limba germană contemporană.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *gramatică funcțională idiomatică (Coseriu), polivalență, polimorfie (sinonimie gramaticală), multifuncționalitate, izomorfism, alternanță gramaticală, sens construcțional, sens codificat (semnificat) și designare, norma lingvistică*

## 1. Introduction

The multifunctionality of grammatical morphemes such as articles, prepositions, conjunctions, cases, verb tenses, verb aspects, pronouns, etc. has always been a theoretical as well as empirical challenge in modern linguistic research. Within the various approaches that have been developed in the 20<sup>th</sup>

and 21<sup>st</sup> century to accommodate multifunctionality, by and large three basic perspectives can be distinguished. Accounts in the structuralist vein assume that a grammatical morpheme has a general meaning which licenses its various uses from which the general meaning can at best be abstracted for analytic purposes. This approach is exemplified in Jakobson's and Hjelmslev's famous accounts of case systems in particular languages (Jakobson 1933; Hjelmslev 1935-1937). At the other end of the spectrum are accounts that assume wide-ranging structured polysemy, with the various senses of grammatical morphemes reflecting cognitive principles such as figure and ground (Brugman 1988; Brugman and Lakoff 1988) or semantic networks organized around prototypes and mirroring conceptual structures, as a rule based on the alleged cognitive primacy of spatial representations (Tyler and Evans 2003). A third strand of research provides the possibility to sidestep the question whether a multifunctional grammatical morpheme has a general meaning or several related meanings (or senses). The focus is rather on charting the "geometry" of the functions of morphemes in "conceptual space" based on cross-linguistic comparison. The aim of this third approach is to draw putative "semantic maps" which are believed to capture universal networks of grammatical functions by means of two- or three-dimensional representations in which related functions are linked by connecting lines (e.g., Haspelmath 2003). Of course, the abovementioned perspectives are often less clear-cut than presented here and various combinations of perspectives can be observed, e.g. when the model of semantic maps is combined with the cognitive theory of polysemy, metaphor and metonymy (e.g. Malchukov and Narrog 2009; Luraghi 2014).

What has received less attention in the literature on multifunctionality is whether a single grammatical meaning, or function, can have more than one expression within one and the same language. One of the main reasons is undoubtedly the peculiar turn the discussion about "synonymy" took in the heydays of generative grammar, when it was claimed, for instance, that active and passive sentences had the same so-called "deep structure" but different surface structures. Authors such as Bolinger (1968; 1977) were among the first to oppose such a point of view (which, by the way, has often been presented in an overly simplified way, see Kopf and Weber 2023: 3-5). Bolinger stresses that "in syntax there is no such thing as two different surface structures with the same deep structure (that is, with the same meaning)" (1977, 4). This has since been the underpinning of most research in functional approaches (cf. Givón 1985, Haiman 1985, among others) and also in cognitive linguistics. For instance, cognitive construction grammar adheres to the "Principle of No Synonymy of Grammatical Forms", which says that "if two constructions are syntactically distinct, they must be semantically or pragmatically distinct" (Goldberg 1995, 67).

The point of view according to which a difference in expression (“form” in current parlance) implies a difference in meaning, is nowadays commonly referred to as “isomorphism”.<sup>2</sup> While isomorphism is embraced by most linguists across different frameworks, the further specification in the above quotation that the difference in meaning can either be semantic or pragmatic is – as will be shown in Section 3 – important. However, in present-day functional and cognitive approaches, pragmatics is either restricted to matters of information structure, illocution and register (e.g., Goldberg 1995, 68) or the distinction between semantics and pragmatics is altogether eliminated (“To the extent that we focus only on utterances, pragmatics is fully subsumed into a semantic characterization”, Taylor 2002, 104; cf. also Taylor 1999, 25-32, Kay and Fillmore 1999, 4, Langacker 2008, 40, Capelle 2017, 117, Hilpert 2019, 103, among others).

In this article, I outline how Eugenio Coseriu’s framework of a language-specific “functional syntax” (Coseriu 1984, 1989, 1996) accommodates not only the ubiquitous polyvalence of grammatical morphemes but also grammatical synonymy, or what Coseriu also terms “polymorphy” (Coseriu 1996, 18). Coseriu’s approach is particularly worthwhile because the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, broadly construed (see Section 2.2), is at the core of the approach. Already in the 1960s, Coseriu pinpointed the fallacy underlying the generative assumption that different syntactic structures have identical meanings. The identification of “deep structure” and “meaning” disregards the difference between the content that is systematically “given” in the grammar of a particular language (“Bedeutung”, i.e. signified) and the designationally and pragmatically enriched content in acts of discourse, texts and language use in general (“Bezeichnung”, i.e. designation) (Coseriu 1970c; 1975). Crucially, speakers always express and interpret more than what they “say” (Coseriu 1955-1956, § 3.1.1; 2007 [1980], 124; 1987, 182). This distinction is not only of central importance with regard to lexical items but also grammatical items.<sup>3</sup> While the distinction between “encoded” (or “coded”) and “inferred” meaning is commonly acknowledged in Neo-Gricean approaches to pragmatics (cf. Belligh and Willems 2021; 2022), the distinction has remained a point of tension in many other frameworks. The holistic perspective on semantics and pragmatics has been the source of considerable confusion in the past decades. Not only is such

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<sup>2</sup> The term “isomorphic” initially referred to the structuralist hypothesis that the expression and meaning of linguistic signs show “structural parallelisms” (Kuryłowicz 1949). The more recent use of the term “isomorphism” to designate the one-to-one correspondence between expression and meaning stems from the 1970s (see Willems 2013).

<sup>3</sup> This also explains its general importance for the theory of translation (Coseriu 1978), which has been succinctly captured by Jakobson (1959, 236) as follows: “Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey” (italics in the original, KW). Compare, with almost identical wordings, Coseriu (1992, 74; 1999 [1981], 83).

a perspective found in earlier approaches to discourse such as van Dijk (1977), who identifies semantics with truth-functional semantics, but it has also been characteristic of recent cognitive-linguistic research, even though the cognitive approach – like most functional approaches, including Coseriu’s – rejects a truth-functional account of meaning (cf. Willems 2011 for discussion).

From a Coserian perspective, both polyvalence and polymorphy attest to the pervasive multifunctionality of grammatical morphemes. Whereas polyvalence is the common phenomenon in the lexicon and grammar alike, polymorphy is restricted to grammar. It stands to reason that the instruments of grammar serve multiple though related purposes in a range of syntactic constructions (polyvalence), yet it is less clear how to approach two expressions that encode one and the same grammatical meaning (polymorphy). I will argue in this article that Coseriu’s framework provides a coherent basis for the principled, unitary analysis of both polyvalence and polymorphy in grammar. This is particularly relevant regarding polymorphy because Coseriu already takes into account the constructionist assumption that constructions are schematic pairings of an expression and a meaning in which slots may be underspecified with respect to their expression. At the same time, it is important to note that Coseriu’s framework is at odds with the holistic perspective on semantics and pragmatics in current functional and cognitive approaches and instead observes a clear distinction between that which is encoded, as “signified”, in the grammar of a particular language and what is conventionally inferred in normal language use (see Willems and Belligh 2022 for a brief presentation of Coseriu’s concept of normal language use).

At this point, a brief note on terminology is called for. First of all, some authors use “encode” in a rather loose way, largely identifying “encode” with “refer”. For instance, it is maintained that a concept or an idea referred to is being “encoded” by means of a word or a sentence on a particular occasion. By contrast, I here use “encoded” as a term in the specific sense of being “given” as a signified in a particular language system (which encompasses both the lexicon and the grammar; see Belligh and Willems 2021, 3). Being encoded, in this sense, hinges on the delimitation of the signified on the basis of language-specific paradigmatic oppositions, which are to be distinguished from broader associative relations (Coseriu 1992, 139-141; 2001, 221-230) and which presuppose a clear distinction between semantics and pragmatics (cf. Belligh and Willems 2021 for further explication). Secondly, I use the term “pragmatics” in a broad, basically pre-theoretical, sense and within a perspective on discourse and texts, i.e. as referring to those factors of language use that pertain to concrete utterances rather than to the language-specific knowledge of the lexicon and grammar (cf. Levinson 2000, § 1.2). However, the focus of the article will be on the relation between the level of language-specific signifieds and the general,

non-language-specific level of designation (or “reference”), disregarding aspects pertaining to register, genre and interpersonal variation (or “social meaning”).

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 zooms in on the commonly acknowledged form of multifunctionality in grammar, which in Coseriu’s theoretical framework is just another instance of polyvalence, i.e. the semantic flexibility and pragmatic variability of lexical and grammatical items in natural language. Polyvalence in grammar is discussed against the backdrop of two important theoretical distinctions in Coseriu’s outline of a language-specific functional grammar, viz. three complementary types of grammar and five interrelated types of signified. In addition, the difference between polyvalence and polysemy is explained. Section 3 turns to polymorphy or grammatical synonymy. In comparison to polyvalence, polymorphy is a less common instance of multifunctionality in grammar. The section focuses on a case study of polymorphy in the context of alternating constructions, viz. the ditransitive (or “dative”) alternation in present-day German. It is shown that a coherent account of polymorphy requires a layered approach to meaning in grammar in addition to a corpus-based analysis of variation between syntactic structures, with a focus on the pivotal distinction between the encoded signified of a syntactic structure and its designationally and pragmatically enriched content in a body of texts and discourse. Section 4 concludes the article with some general observations about the difference as well as the complementarity between a language-specific functional approach and a constructionist account of syntactic constructions.

## 2. Multifunctionality: polyvalence

To understand Coseriu’s point of view regarding the multifunctionality in general, and of grammatical morphemes in particular, it is appropriate to first consider in more detail two of the cornerstones of his framework for a language-specific functional grammar as laid out in “Principes de syntaxe fonctionnelle” (1989).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The article was first published in German translation (“Grundzüge der funktionellen Syntax”) as the penultimate chapter in *Formen und Funktionen. Studien zur Grammatik* (Coseriu 1987). The book contains nine chapters (mostly previously published articles), several of which for the first time published in this book in German translation. The original French article “Principes de syntaxe fonctionnelle” was published in 1989 and then again as a chapter in *L’Homme et son langage* (Coseriu 2001, 165-211). The article has been translated into Spanish and Romanian but unfortunately not (yet) into English. Much of the article is based, apart from a number of earlier studies that partly reach back to the 1950’s (e.g. on word categories and types of meaning), on a course Coseriu delivered in Tübingen in the summer term of 1983. Coseriu (1984) is an unpublished transcript of this course by Heinrich Weber, whom I here thank for generously providing me with a copy of the transcript. Several parts of the 1989 article are reprised by Coseriu in a later article (Coseriu 1996).

### **2.1. Three types of grammar**

Coseriu outlines the contours of a theory of grammar which emphasizes the importance of three complementary perspectives depending on the object of enquiry (Coseriu 1989, 16-8; cf. also Coseriu 1973, 79-80). Formational grammar (“grammaire constitutionnelle”) is concerned with the expression side (signifiers, Fr. “signifiants”) of grammatical structures, on all levels of language (morphemes, words, phrases, clauses and even texts); relational grammar (“grammaire relationnelle”) investigates the multiple ways grammatical structures are used to refer to specific grammatical designations (also cross-linguistically, like in the “semantic map” approach); finally, functional grammar (“grammaire fonctionnelle”) is the study of the language-specific meanings or functions (signifieds, Fr. “signifiés de langues”, “Bedeutungen”) involved in a particular language’s grammar and as such the core and primary object of Coseriu’s functional grammar (Coseriu 1989, 16).

For the sake of clarity, I adopt in the remainder of this article the Saussurean term “signified” (“signifié”), which Coseriu himself also favours in many of his writings, in particular when dealing with the principle of “functionality” in language in general (Coseriu 1992, ch. 7) and syntax in particular (Coseriu 1987; 1989). “Signified” is the Saussurean term for what Coseriu consistently terms “Bedeutung” in his German publications and what in accordance with Neo-Gricean pragmatics has been termed “encoded” content (as opposed to “inferred” content; s. Belligh and Willems 2021). In the German translation of the “Principes”, too, the Saussurean term “signifié” is explicitly retained for the sake of clarity to refer to the content that is “given” in the grammar of a specific language (Coseriu 1987, 133, 145 etc.). This terminological choice is of particular interest because the common English term “meaning” is too broad and unspecific for the issues that interest us here and therefore bound to cause confusion (see Willems and Munteanu 2021, 42-44).

Coseriu underscores the importance of the abovementioned threefold distinction by pointing out that it is firmly based in the original grammatical knowledge of speakers. Firstly, competent speakers of, e.g., French know classes of expressions such as the so-called possessive pronouns along with their formal variation according to functional differentiations, e.g., gender and number as well as nominalisation (Fr. *mon, son, mes, la mienne* etc.). These are hence instances of speakers’ formational grammatical knowledge. Secondly, speakers are intuitively cognizant of what such classes of expressions encode as language-specific signifieds, including – and this is particularly important from the perspective of a theory of meaning that does not define signifieds in psychologicistic terms as “representations” – the functional remit these signifieds

delimit and specify. Consider the following examples in French (based on the discussion in Coseriu 1989, 17):

- (1) a. *ta maison*  
 b. *mon livre*  
 c. *son livre*  
 d. *son école*  
 e. *le livre de Jean*  
 f. *ce livre est à moi*  
 g. *ce livre m'appartient*

Speakers' knowledge of the grammatical signifieds encoded in these syntagms entails the following: the knowledge that *ta* in (1a) is a female form, whereas *mon* and *son* in (1b-d) are not simply masculine forms but forms that are either masculine or feminine (the latter before words that begin with a vowel, e.g. *école*); the knowledge that the relation between *son* and *livre* expressed in (1c) and the relation between *Jean* and *le livre* encoded by the preposition *de* in (1e) is the same, viz. a generic relation of dependency, which can be – but does not have to be – interpreted in terms of 'possession' or 'belonging to' someone;<sup>5</sup> the knowledge that this relation is not simply a matter of interpretation (designation and/or pragmatic specification in context) but is actually encoded as slightly differing signifieds in the predicative structures (1f) and (1g). These aspects of the knowledge about signifieds fall within the purview of speakers' functional grammatical knowledge.

And thirdly, speakers know that there is a specific relation between the nominal paradigm exemplified in (1a-e) and the predicative paradigm exemplified in (1f-g) regarding equivalence in designation: speakers are able to switch between alternative ways of speaking that encode different signifieds but can coincide with respect to their designation (an object, a situation, an event, etc.) (Coseriu 1989, 18). This third type of knowledge falls within the scope of speakers' relational grammatical knowledge.

It may be added that this third section of grammar is also pivotal for translation studies and contrastive linguistics. For instance, German *mein Buch*, *das Buch ist von mir* and *das Buch gehört mir* are relationally equivalent to (1b), (1f) and (1g), but functionally partly different, given that G. *von mir* and Fr. *à moi* and G. *gehören* and Fr. *appartenir* do not have identical signifieds (see in

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<sup>5</sup> The exact semantic paraphrase of the signified runs as follows: "(a peu près) 'relation de dépendance générique entre deux entités, dans le cas où l'entité présentée comme régissante est pensée comme nommée par un pronom personnel'" (Coseriu 1989, 17).

particular Coseriu 1970a, b; 1978; 1981 for extensive discussions of this kind of difference).

## **2.2. Five types of signified**

In addition to three types of grammar, Coseriu introduces a distinction between five types of signified that are involved in grammar (syntactic constructions) (Coseriu 1973, 82-3; 1989, 19-21). Grammatical content is by definition of a complex, “combinatorial”, nature. Distinguishing between different content types is therefore necessary in order to delimit the object of analysis, in particular when focusing on functional grammatical knowledge in contrast to relational grammatical knowledge. In subsequent sections, we will see that this contrast is of major importance for assessing the difference between polyvalence and polymorphy. I briefly discuss the five types of signifieds below.

- (i) Primary words of a language have ‘lexical’ signifieds as parts of lexical paradigms. They are language-specific and form the semantic basis for the innumerable instantiations of words in texts and discourse. Lexical signifieds are not simply “abstractions” from specific instantiations, which would be circular from a Humboldtian perspective on language as a “creative” activity (cf. Coseriu 2001, 333–354 and Coseriu 2015, II, 274–275, 372–379, 389–394; see also Willems 2023).
- (ii) ‘Categorial’ signifieds are the signifieds of parts of speech: verb, noun, adjective and adverb (Coseriu 1989, 20). Categorial signifieds are universal, not language-specific, even though it is a language-specific semantic fact what parts of speech a particular language possesses as encoded categories (Coseriu 1974: 2004 [1972]). Whereas lexical signifieds pertain to the “substance” of words and hence represent semantic classes, categorial signifieds concern their “form” and do not constitute classes but “categories” in the strict sense of the term. For example, a single lexical signified ‘white’ is realised as an adjective in *white* but as a verb in *whiten*. Pronouns (*she, it, they* etc.) and other pro-forms (e.g. the pro-verb *do*) typically represent categorial signifieds as they express parts of speech functions with only generic lexical content such as ‘person’, ‘activity or state’ etc.
- (iii) Prepositions, conjunctions, articles, affixes, word order, intonation rules etc. are functional elements and procedures that are not semantically independent, i.e., their ‘instrumental’ signifieds are dependent on other signifieds such as lexical and/or categorial signifieds (cf. Coseriu 2004 [1972] for extensive illustration). Functional elements and procedures

do not by themselves form paradigms. It is only when an instrumental signified is combined with another signified that paradigmatic relations are established (“oppositions”, Coseriu 1989, 21).

- (iv) Combining an instrumental signified with a lexical signified (*book* > *the book, a book*; *sea* > *in the sea, into the sea, on the sea, at the sea, from the sea* etc.) or with a categorial signified (*stone* > *a black stone, a stone wall, to stone a police car*) produces a new level of combinatorial content, which Coseriu calls the ‘syntactic’ signified. The instrumental signifieds of syntactic procedures such as diathesis (e.g., constructional patterns or “schemas” such active and passive voice), mood (e.g., indicative and subjunctive), tense (e.g. present tense and past tense) etc. also rely on lexical and/or categorial signifieds in order to get instantiated, and the resulting combinations are also syntactic signifieds (for a discussion of Coseriu’s views on schematic patterns, or constructions, in syntax and construction-like templates in word-formation, see Willems 2023).
- (v) Finally, ‘ontic’ signifieds constitute the ultimate level in the realm of grammatical content. Ontic signifieds are the existential functions of sentences or sentence-like structures that have propositional values such as assertion (*I agree with you*), question (*Is that a good idea?*), wish or desire (*Let’s take a walk!*) etc. Such values are commonly treated under the heading of “speech acts” in the pragmatic literature, but in Coseriu’s framework they are approached from the other end, viz. from the end of signifieds. This also explains why ontic signifieds are rather general.

The importance of the distinctions between three types of grammar and five types of signified lies in their contribution to a coherent clarification of the nature of multifunctionality. Like lexical signifieds, which are the encoded contents in the lexicon of a particular language, grammatical signifieds, too, are encoded contents in the grammatical system of a particular language. Moreover, again like lexical items, grammatical morphemes are realized as functional variants (“variants fonctionnels”, Coseriu 1989, 17): grammatical signifieds are never found in a pure state (“in reiner Form”, 1987, 185; cf. also 1981, 191) in concrete utterances. Functional variants are always based on the signifieds *and* the designations and pragmatic specifications in particular instances of language use (texts and discourse):

Die Bedeutung ist im strengen Sinne ein Faktum der Einzelsprache, des idiomatischen Wissens, und erscheint nicht als solche im Sprechen. Im Sprechen bedingt sie nur die jeweilige Gestaltung der Bezeichnung und

des Sinnes sowie die Verwendung der ihr entsprechenden materiellen Zeichen und Konstruktionen. (Coseriu 1987, 181; emphasis in the original)<sup>6</sup>

This is tantamount to acknowledging that grammatical morphemes (articles, prepositions, conjunctions, cases, pronouns, etc.) are by definition multifunctional, or, to use the term favoured by Coseriu with regard to the multifunctionality of lexical items, “polyvalent” (Coseriu 1979c, 435-6; see also Dietrich 1997). Polyvalence is the term I here adopt with regard to grammatical morphemes as well (cf. Coseriu 1970a, 105 and 1992, ch. 7).

Polyvalence is the standard situation with regard to lexical items (Dietrich 1997), but it also undergirds the functioning of grammatical elements. Coseriu’s stock example is G. *mit X* and Fr. *avec x* (Coseriu 1970a, 117-8, 1989, 9-10). Prepositions have unitary, underspecified instrumental signifieds as elements of the grammatical systems to which they belong (i.e., the grammatical knowledge of the speakers), but they are realized in language use in a range of functional variants, e.g. *mit dem Messer schneiden, mit Mehl und Zucker backen, mit Ingrid spazieren fahren; couper le pain avec le couteau, faire un gâteau avec du sucre et de la farine, se promener avec Marie*, etc. With respect to the French construction *avec X*, Coseriu explains:

nous sommes très souvent portés à introduire dans nos grammaires ce qui, en réalité, n’y est pas. [...] Si l’on considère tous les types d’emploi de cette construction en français et qu’on s’efforce d’identifier ce que ces emplois ont en commun et ce qui les oppose aux emplois de *sans x*, on constate qu’elle ne signifie que “concomitance” ou “coprésence de *x*”. La langue française en tant que système grammatical ne dit que: “*x* participe à l’événement (désigné par le verbe)”, “*x y* est coprésent”, mais elle ne spécifie pas le type de coprésence propre de tel ou tel emploi. Bien sûr, dans la parole le type de coprésence est presque toujours clairement déterminé en tant que coprésence d’un instrument, d’une matière, d’un agent, d’une attitude ou circonstance simultanée, etc.; ceci, pourtant, non pas grâce à la construction *avec x* telle quelle, mais à l’aide de la connaissance des choses, de la situation et du contexte. (Coseriu 1989, 9)

The reference to the role of encyclopaedic knowledge, situation and context in the pragmatic specification of the general underspecified signified of

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<sup>6</sup> Coseriu here pursues a line of argument already developed by Wilhelm von Humboldt in his *Akademierede* “Über das Entstehen der grammatischen Formen, und ihren Einfluss auf die Ideenentwicklung” (1822), which for Coseriu represents a “Wendepunkt in der Grammatiktheorie schlechthin” (Coseriu 2015, II, 364). According to Humboldt, “alles durch Rede Gewirkte” ist “immer ein zusammengesetztes Erzeugniss des Geistes und der Sprache” (Humboldt, *Gesammelte Schriften* IV, 288).

the preposition is particularly important (Coseriu 1987, 177-86). At first sight, it might seem plausible to maintain that reference to a person by means of a proper name such as *mit Ingrid* or *avec Marie* yields the specification of a 'co-agent', but while this is arguably a likely interpretation in many instances of language use, it is by no means an encoded trait of the general signified 'concomitance' or 'copresence'. The signifieds of *mit X* and *avec x* do not rule out other possible specifications, and it would be fallacious to assume that there are systematic grammatical constraints that prevent a person from being conceived as, e.g., an instrument. One can refer to idiomatic expressions such as *G. mit jemandem den Boden wischen* 'demoralize someone, wear someone down', but more important as a matter of principle is that syntagms such as *mit Ingrid* and *avec Marie* do not entail, on the basis of their signifieds, that Ingrid or Marie are construed as co-agents. Likewise, in languages like German, French, English etc. the subject of a sentence that refers to a person does not encode the thematic role 'agent'. The thematic role 'agent' is a universal of designation, but there is no encoded semantic role 'agentive' corresponding to the subject of a sentence in these languages, as Coseriu has shown in his illuminating critical analysis of Ch. Fillmore's well-known example sentences *John broke the window* and *A hammer broke the window* (Coseriu 1970a, 109-112; cf. also 1979b, 44-5 and 1987, 179-83). The correlation of the thematic role 'agent' with the designation of a person as subject of a sentence (by means of a proper name, a common noun or a pronoun) is thus a matter of normal language use but not of grammar (cf. also Höllein 2021).

Importantly, a Coserian perspective on polyvalence does not preclude the possibility that a specific item's multifunctionality is structured in a way that allows for specific taxonomic conclusions such as those envisaged, e.g., in the framework of semantic maps (Haspelmath 2003), albeit without the focus on contrastive linguistics and cross-linguistic comparison typical of this latter approach. For instance, an example regularly mentioned by Coseriu is the polyvalence of the Spanish so-called "reflexive" construction with the pronoun *se*, which evinces a structured pattern of variation (Coseriu 1999 [1981], 207; see also Coseriu 1987, 183 and 1992, 192). While the different functional variants are hierarchically ordered in accordance to more specific constructional features, it is clear that 'reflexivity' is not the unitary general signified of *se*, which turns out to be more general and underspecified: 'reversal (or negation) of transitivity'. The expression of reflexivity is but a variant, albeit a highly ranked and frequent one, given that it typically involves an agentive subject (*Juan se lava*). Likewise, the reciprocal reading of *se* (*Juan y María se quieren*) is not encoded but inferred, hence not a signified (nor part of the underspecified signified), but a functional variant. Further down the hierarchy, other variants emerge which lack an

agentive subject: the passive-like medial construction (*La puerta se abre*) and the impersonal construction (*Se abre a los cinco*).

### **2.3. Polyvalence and “polysemy”**

Unlike the term polyvalence, which is not very common in current semantic research (but see Widoff 2022), polysemy has had popular currency in modern linguistics at least since the advent of functional and cognitive semantic research. Polysemy is often contrasted with homonymy, even though it may occasionally prove difficult to distinguish between the two. While polysemy means that one lexical or grammatical item has several “senses” (or “meanings”, if no distinction is made between “meaning” and “sense”)<sup>7</sup>, homonymy means that a single expression – usually of a lexical item but possibly also, albeit less common, of a grammatical item – corresponds to different but unrelated meanings (see Nerlich and Clarke 2003). This current use of the term polysemy in present-day linguistics largely corresponds to its traditional use since it was introduced by Joseph Halévy and subsequently consolidated and made popular by Michel Bréal in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the intuition that words have multiple, related senses is, of course, much older; cf. Courbon 2020 for a brief historical overview).

Coseriu’s use of the term polysemy varies. He occasionally uses the term in accordance with the linguistic tradition, i.e. as an alternative term for polyvalence (e.g. in Coseriu 1976, 11; Fr. translation: Coseriu 2001, 338). However, in most of his publications, Coseriu’s use of the term differs from the common usage. “Polysemy” is then just another term for “homonymy” (e.g., Coseriu 1970a, 105; 1992, 174). The rationale behind this terminological decision is straightforward: if taken literally, polysemy means that several signifieds are paired with a single expression, which is what homonymy stands for if it is conceded that a signified is a unitary content such as it is encoded in a particular language (Coseriu 1992, 173; cf. also Coseriu 2001, 96-7, 250-1, 257, 358-9). By contrast, Coseriu’s concept of polyvalence accommodates the multifunctionality of a lexical or grammatical item (including constructions and construction-like templates, see Section 2.2) in accordance with different contexts of usage and conventionalized text and discourse practices in normal language use.

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, in cognitive studies the distinction between “meaning” and “sense” is usually either rejected, as e.g. in Cuyckens and Zawada (2001) and Taylor (2002, ch. 6; 2009, ch.s 6–10), or all senses of an item taken together are considered an open-ended “flexible meaning”, as in Nerlich and Clarke (2003). By contrast, the distinction between “meaning” and “sense” is of paramount importance in psycholinguistic studies such as Frisson (2009; 2015) and Neo-Gricean accounts such as Levinson (2000).

The insistence on the invariance of the signifieds of lexical and grammatical items in natural language vis-à-vis their multifunctionality in creative language use arises from the requirement to establish, and justify, the original linguistic knowledge mentioned in Section 2.1: speakers intuitively know that a lexical item (a word) or a grammatical item (grammatical morpheme) is applicable to a multitude of instances in designation with different pragmatic purposes, while at the same time recognizing that it is in a basic sense *the same item* in all these instantiations by virtue of pairing a signified with a signifier (Coseriu 1992, 175-194).<sup>8</sup> Unlike the terms of specialised or technical terminologies and nomenclatures, the items of natural languages vary with regard to designation and pragmatics in language use, which necessarily entails, according to Coseriu, their invariance as linguistic signs understood as elements of a specific language system (Coseriu 2001, 343). It should be noted that the semantic invariance of a linguistic sign is perfectly compatible with the view that speakers' linguistic knowledge also includes specific individual senses which are to various extents conventionalized in language use. As a matter of fact, this is why Coseriu consistently attached great importance to a comprehensive and sufficiently detailed account of linguistic content, which carefully differentiates between that which is encoded in the language and that which is traditionally known as part of "normal" language use (Coseriu 1952; 1979a; 2001: 244-250; cf. also Kabatek 2020).

### 3. Multifunctionality: polymorphy

I now turn to a discussion of an altogether different kind of multifunctionality, viz. polymorphy or grammatical synonymy. Whereas polyvalence instantiates the common multifunctionality of a bilateral lexical or grammatical resource in discourse and texts, polymorphy reflects a less common, special kind of multifunctionality, as it involves variation on the expression side of a grammatical morpheme. Like polyvalence, polymorphy should be accounted for in its own terms and according to its proper place in a coherent language-specific functional approach to grammar.

In this section, I first present Coseriu's stance on synonymy in general, which departs in important respects from mainstream approaches. I will then

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<sup>8</sup> Coseriu draws on Aristotle, F. Hegel, W. von Humboldt, among others, to further substantiate this position in the philosophy of language (see Coseriu 2015, I, ch. 6 and II, ch.s 11-12). Coseriu (p.c.) found additional support in the work of the Dutch scholars Anton Reichling and Cornelis Stutterheim, in particular Reichling (1935, ch. 8) and Stutterheim (1949, ch.s 6-9) (see also Willems 2016).

explain the notion of polymorphy in syntax and discuss the few examples Coseriu provides to support his approach. I will go on to illustrate polymorphy with a more elaborate example based on corpus research and show why the very concept of polymorphy is particularly appealing when it is integrated into an approach that considers constructions as pairings in their own right of a content and an expression, which however are both underspecified at the language-specific level of grammatical encoding.

### **3.1. Coseriu's stance on synonymy**

In the narrow sense, "synonymy" designates a relation of complete semantic identity of lexical items, yet there is a long tradition in the language sciences of considering words with similar but not identical meanings as "synonyms" (cf. Gauger 1973; Bally 1963, vol. 1). In present-day linguistics, too, the term is customarily used in a broad sense and stands for "near-synonymy" (s. Lyons 1995, 60-5), mainly under the assumption that complete semantic identity does not exist anyway. The nowadays common usage of the term "synonymy" to refer to "near-synonymy" also arises from the more general assumption, currently shared by many linguists, that words do not "have" meaning on their own but rather serve to "create" meaning in communication, i.e. texts and discourse, and as part of general cognitive processes. On this account, even the slightest difference in expression at least potentially spells a difference in content in terms of pragmatics, broadly construed, viz. including differences in language variety, register, style, formality, expressiveness, affect, the use of loanwords, etc. (for discussion and illustration, see Murphy 2009; 2010, ch. 6).

Once again, Coseriu sees things differently. The observation that two near-synonymous linguistic signs may differ with regard to language variety, register, expressiveness etc. is not in dispute. However, it is important not to mix up a full-fledged bilateral linguistic sign ("signified + signifier") and the mere expression ("signifier") of a linguistic sign. Except for instances of "suppositio materialis", which abstract away from the signified (as, e.g., in *'Okay' has four letters* or *How do you spell 'okay'?*), designation in actual language use is always done on the basis of bilateral linguistic signs. From a Coserian point of view, which gives pride of place to the bilateralness of linguistic signs in the system ("langue") of any one particular language, there is no apriori reason why synonymy could not exist, both in the lexicon and the grammar. Homonymy – or, better still, homophony (Coseriu 1976, 17; 2001, 345; 1992, 182) – is universally accepted as a genuine phenomenon in natural languages, with its relative uncommonness primarily due to motivations of transparency. The

reverse situation, with one expression and more than one signified, is theoretically equally possible. However, approaching synonymy with regard to the bilateral linguistic sign requires a focus on the potential identity of content at the level of the lexical and instrumental signified (“Bedeutung”), i.e. language-specific semantics, under the exclusion of considerations pertaining to pragmatics, including register, style, expressiveness etc. as well as designation (“Bezeichnung”). From this perspective, synonymy can only apply to what is semantically encoded (the signified), not to the various aspects of language use based not merely on signifieds but on linguistic signs as bilateral entities, each of which consists of a signified and a signifier.

If one takes into account the differentiation between the five types of signified outlined in Section 2.2, then it is possible to distinguish between two main types of synonymy, viz. lexical synonymy and grammatical synonymy. Lexical synonymy stems from the fact that one and the same lexical signified can be combined with different instrumental signifieds. Suppletive grammatical paradigms of one lexical item are a case in point; compare the paradigm of the French verb *aller* ‘go’ (Coseriu 1992, 174):

- (2) a. *(je) vais*  
 b. *(nous) allons*  
 c. *(j’)irai*

The example is taken from Bally (1965, 144).<sup>9</sup> The identity of the lexical signified ‘go’ throughout (2a-c) is not affected by the variation in the expression form. (2a-c) are therefore synonymous in terms of one of the signifieds (viz. the lexical signified) involved in the compound semantics of the words. Other well-known examples of suppletive allomorphy are Engl. *good–better–best*, *bad–worse–worst* etc., whereas alternations such as Fr. *détruire* – *destruct-ion*, *construire* – *construc-tion* are cases of transparent allomorphy.

This type of lexical synonymy with regard to a single lexical item is the counterpart of homonymy/homophony (or “polysemy” in Coseriu’s terminology). Whereas lexical synonymy means that one identical lexical signified is instantiated in more than one signifier, homonymy/homophony obtains when one expression (signifier) corresponds to more than one signified. Within inflectional paradigms, homonymy/homophony is common and traditionally

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<sup>9</sup> This is not the place to compare Coseriu’s account of polyvalence and polymorphy with Bally’s extensive discussion of “plurivalence” and “plurivocité” under the heading of “polysémie” (Bally 1965, 171-190). Despite a number of correspondences, Coseriu’s focus on the distinction between signifieds and designation redresses several points in Bally’s account, not only regarding lexical semantics (cf. Coseriu 2001, 215-252) but also with regard to grammar.

referred to as syncretism, as in the case of Sp. *cantaba* (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person imperfect indicative forms of the verb *cantar* ‘sing’, Coseriu 1992, 174; cf. Bally 1965, 172-4). It is worth mentioning that homonymy/homophony in inflectional paradigms does not constitute an instance of “polysemy” in the currently common understanding of the term, nor is it to be equated with neutralization. A desinence such as Sp. *-ba* is the expression form of two different signifieds, which are maintained as different encoded contents despite the fact that in one particular section of the inflectional paradigm the difference is not formally expressed. In other sections of the paradigm, the signifieds are expressed differently, compare, e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person present indicative *canto* ‘sing’ and *canta* ‘sings’ (Coseriu 1992, 226-7).

Note that the combination of a so-called “basic” lexical signified with different categorial signifieds – cf. type (ii) in Section 2.2 – does not count as an instance of synonymy. For instance, series of words such as Sp. *blanco*, *blancura* and *blanquear*, Engl. *white*, *whiteness* and *whiten* differ primarily in categorial signifieds, yet the lexical signified cannot be said to be the same in the adjective, noun and verb, respectively, because the lexical base is already categorially specified in these languages, namely as an adjective (*blanco*, *white*) (Coseriu 1974, 61-2; 2001, 90-91). A limiting case occurs in languages in which there is no lexicalization of categorial signifieds. For instance, according to Sapir (1921, 133-4), lexical signifieds in Nootka can be categorially unspecified:

The radical element *inikw-* “fire” is really as much of a verbal as of a nominal term; it may be rendered now by “fire,” now by “burn,” according to the syntactic exigencies of the sentence. The derivational element *-ihl* “in the house” does not mitigate this vagueness or generality; *inikw-ihl* is still “fire in the house” or “burn in the house.” It may be definitely nominalized or verbalized by the affixing of elements that are exclusively nominal or verbal in force. [...] It is not an unambiguous verb until it is given a form that excludes every other possibility, as in the indicative *inikwihl-minih’isit-a* “several small fires were burning in the house”.

Sapir’s description entails, strictly speaking, that all verbs and nouns with *inikw-* ‘fire’ in Nootka are lexically “synonymous”, given that the basic lexical signified is, unlike in Indo-European languages, neither specified as a verb nor as a noun in the lexicon. In Nootka, then, lexical and categorial signifieds are entirely separate levels of signified in the language system.

I now turn to the second type of synonymy in Coseriu’s framework. Grammatical synonymy obtains when one and the same syntactic signified can

be expressed by means of more than one signifier. This is what Coseriu also refers to as “polymorphy” (Coseriu 1996, 18). On a basic level, polymorphy is already found on the layer of instrumental signifieds. For instance, in many languages the grammatical morpheme that turns the singular of nouns into a plural, is polymorphous. Thus, in German, *-e*, *-en*, *-er*, *-s*, *Umlaut*,  $\emptyset$  etc. are all among the plural allomorphs (variants) for nouns; similarly, the past tense of verbs is realized by a range of allomorphs. This allomorphy is the rule rather than the exception in inflectional paradigms cross-linguistically, and it proves that synonymy at the innerlinguistic level of signifieds is in fact not uncommon.

At the level of syntactic signifieds, synonymy is undoubtedly far less common. We already encountered an example in French in Section 2.1: the semantic relation between the pronoun *son* and the noun *livre* expressed in (1c) *son livre* and the relation between *Jean* and *le livre* expressed by the preposition *de* in (1e) *le livre de Jean* are the same. As pointed out, the encoded relation is a generic relation of dependency. It is on the basis of this general signified that functional variants which further specify the relationship, e.g. in terms of ‘possession’, ‘membership’ or ‘belonging to’, are established.

Polymorphy entails that a language-specific difference between different structures or procedures on one grammatical level is suspended on the next higher grammatical level. The preposition *de* in French and the paradigm of the (confusingly) so-called “possessive” pronoun (*mon/ma/mes*, *ton/ta/tes*, *son/sa/ses* etc.) are two different structures in French grammar with different instrumental signifieds. However, in the grammatical combinations of the type *son livre* and *le livre de Jean*, they contribute to the same syntactic signified, with the encoded semantic relation of generic dependency that ensues.

### **3.2. Polymorphy, semantic encoding and normal language use**

Although polymorphy entails that a language-specific functional difference on one grammatical level is suspended, i.e. rendered inactive, on a higher grammatical level, the difference is normally used to differentiate a message on the level of discourse or text. In this section, I first present an illustration Coseriu provides in his *Textlinguistik* (Coseriu 2007 [1980]). I then discuss a more elaborate example based on corpus evidence and illustrating the importance of a layered approach to syntactic structures along the lines of Coseriu’s account of polymorphy.

#### *3.2.1. Sp. en lo que sigue and en lo siguiente*

The two syntagms *Sp. en lo que sigue* ‘in what follows’ and *en lo siguiente* ‘in the following, next’ are obviously not identical in terms of instrumental

signifieds: *que* and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present indicative form of the verb *sequir* contrast with the nominalized adjective (old present participle) *siquiente*. However, according to Coseriu (2007 [1980]), the two syntagms are systematically synonymous as grammatical structures which pair lexical with instrumental signifieds into two higher level syntactic constructions with one and the same syntactic signified (roughly ‘in that which follows’), hence there is polymorphy. But we saw that on the level of discourse and texts, syntactic constructions fulfil specific functions in communicative interactions that go beyond the resources of signifieds provided by the language system. Speakers additionally rely on world knowledge, context and situation in acts of languaging, i.e. when they produce discourse or texts. On this level of concrete language use, the two syntagms can be shown to customarily serve slightly different purposes: whereas *en lo siguiente* is normally used, according to Coseriu, to designate that which immediately follows in the discourse or the text, *en lo que sigue* is normally used to refer to what follows irrespective of whether it follows immediately or later (Coseriu 2007 [1980], 234).

The layered underpinning of Coseriu’s account of polymorphy, which takes into account the difference between the systematic encoding of a structure and its conventional realisations in normal language use, is particularly noteworthy because it constitutes an avenue to avoid a seemingly subtle but impactful confusion. As laudable as a principle of no synonymy of grammatical forms may be, as long as it is not established against the backdrop of the distinction between an invariant language-specific grammatical signified and a designationally and pragmatically enriched functional variant, such a principle runs the risk of circularity. To substantiate this claim, I conclude this article with a more extensive discussion of the so-called ditransitive alternation, a subject that has received a lot of attention in recent scholarship, in particular since it became a major topic in research on alternating constructions in English (cf. Goldberg 1992, 1995 and 2006, Rappaport Hovav and Levin 2008, Bresnan and Ford 2010, among others).

### 3.2.2. *The ditransitive alternation in German*

Many studies have been devoted to the ditransitive (or “dative”) alternation in English (in the older literature also called ‘dative shift’) illustrated below:

- (3) a. *Phebe gave her boyfriend a guitar.*
- b. *Phebe gave a guitar to her boyfriend.*

Verbs that in English alternatively occur in the double-object construction (3a)<sup>10</sup> and the prepositional “*to*-dative” construction (3b) include trivalent verbs such as *give*, *send*, *throw* and *sell*. In the currently influential construction grammar approach it is generally assumed that the two alternative structures are full-fledged argument structure constructions in their own right. This entails that the differences on the expression side (i.e., the lack or presence of the preposition *to* and different orderings of the arguments) are paired with a difference in “meaning”. Whereas (3a) is said to express a ‘caused possession meaning’ (‘X CAUSES Y to RECEIVE Z’), (3b) is taken to express a ‘caused motion meaning’ (‘X CAUSES Y to MOVE Z’) (Goldberg 1995, ch.s 6 and 7; 2006, 31-3). Furthermore, the double-object construction can host bivalent verbs such as *bake*, which then is said to be coerced into an intended caused possession meaning:

(3) c. *Sally baked her sister a cake.*

The ditransitive alternation has in the meantime been studied in many languages. The contrast between a ‘caused possession meaning’ and a ‘caused motion meaning’ has been widely adopted with regard to the ditransitive alternation in these languages as well, including German (cf., e.g., Proost 2015 and Welke 2019). However, in a large-scale corpus-based synchronic investigation of the ditransitive alternation in written German standard language, De Vaere (2023) showed that it is important to study the alternation from a language-specific perspective, in line with the basic principles of Coseriu’s functional approach to syntax.<sup>11</sup> Specifically, one has to be aware of potentially fallacious assumptions regarding the expression and the content of the two alternants in German based on findings about the English alternation (see De Vaere et al. 2018, Willems et al. 2019 and Willems 2020 for discussion). The main differences between English and German concern instrumental signifieds: prepositions, case and word order. From a Coserian point of view, this raises the question whether the two alternative structures in German actually differ with regard to their syntactic signified or whether differences in content are due to variable

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<sup>10</sup> Confusingly, some authors (Goldberg 1992, 1995, 2006, Hilpert 2019, among others) only call the double-object construction “ditransitive”, but not the variant with the prepositional object. I here use the term “ditransitive” as a cover term for both alternants, in line with typological practice (Haspelmath 2007, Malchukov, Haspelmath and Comrie 2010); see also Willems (2020) and De Vaere (2023) with regard to German.

<sup>11</sup> Van Damme (2025) is a follow-up diachronic corpus study of German based on data from 1650 until the present. For an overview of the main findings of the two studies and a theoretical discussion of their implications for a language-specific functional perspective on syntax, see Willems et al. (2025).

interpretations of designationally and pragmatically enriched instantiations of the alternants in discourse and texts, including normal language use. To answer these questions in an empirically valid manner, De Vaere (2023) conducted a corpus-based investigation of a representative dataset of sentences with various verbs drawn from a diasystematically relatively homogeneous corpus (i.e. restricted to written standard language and disregarding the potential role of regional variation). In what follows, I first consider the main findings of the study regarding the expression side of the alternation in German and subsequently those that regard its content side.

Firstly, the variant in German corresponding to (3a) is not, as often assumed, a double-object construction like in English but a construction with a case-marked dative object (Indirect Object) that differs in case from the Direct Object in the accusative (4a). Only the variant with a prepositional object in German (4b) is structurally equivalent to the English structure with the preposition *to*, albeit with the additional difference that in German the prepositional phrase (PP) has accusative case-marking.

- (4) a. *Der Kassierer gab dem Räuber das Geld aus der Kasse.*  
b. *Leider muss sie das schwarze Pulver an den Bösewicht geben.*

Secondly, with verbs such as *senden* and *schicken* (both 'send'), the dative case (5a) regularly alternates not only with the preposition *an* (5b) but also with the preposition *zu* (5c), whereas in English only the preposition *to* is found in the ditransitive alternation.

- (5) a. *Der Verband soll uns bitte öfter mal eine Frau schicken.*  
b. *Kommt es zur Einigung, schickt Pfandy den Vertrag an beide Parteien.*  
c. *Indien schickte Unterhändler zu Airbus-Entführern.*

Thirdly, German has relatively free word order. To be sure, both alternants have distinctly preferred word orders, the Indirect Object in the dative case mostly precedes the Direct Object, while the reverse ordering is standard with a prepositional Indirect Object; the variant with the prepositional object is only occasionally found with the Indirect Object preceding the Direct Object in the clause. Still, both alternants are attested with variable orderings of the objects in the corpus, compare (6a) with the relatively infrequent Direct Object–Indirect Object order in the variant with a dative NP and (6b) with the even less frequent Indirect Object–Direct Object order in the variant with a PP (corpus examples taken from De Vaere 2023).

- (6) a. *So beabsichtigt zum Beispiel die Stadt Boppard, eine CD-ROM-Version ihrer Partnerstadt Ome in Japan zu schicken.*  
 b. *Sie schicken an die NÖN eine Kopie des Jahresabschluss-Zeugnisses.*

Apart from the above findings regarding the variability on the expression side, the corpus analysis reveals that the contrast between a ‘caused possession meaning’ of the double-object construction and the ‘caused motion meaning’ of the prepositional object construction, which has been widely adopted with regard to the ditransitive alternation in English, misconstrues the German data. First of all, particular readings (the functional variants with their particular “Redebedeutungen”, see Coseriu 1970b, 10; 1992, 74) of trivalent verbs found in both alternants cut across the differentiation between ‘possession’ and ‘motion’. Consider, e.g., the distribution of a handful of readings of the three complex verbs *übergeben*, *weitergeben* and *preisgeben* over the two alternants shown in Table 1 (data drawn from De Vaere 2023).

**Table 1.** Distribution of readings of three verbs over the alternants in a sample dataset

Verb	reading	sentences with dative NP	sentences with <i>an</i> + N
<i>übergeben</i>	‘confide’	34	73
	‘hand over’	79	70
	‘deliver’	19	3
<i>weitergeben</i>	‘(re)tell’	13	65
	‘pass on’	1	16
	‘transmit’	9	66
	‘delegate’	–	27
<i>preisgeben</i>	‘disclose’	16	16
	‘condemn to’	62	–

Furthermore, in line with previous multivariate statistical investigations of the ditransitive alternation in English (Bresnan 2007, Bresnan et al. 2007 and Bresnan and Ford 2010, among others), a range of variables also appear to play a role in the occurrence of one or the other alternant, including animacy of the two objects, the difference between nominal and pronominal objects, diathesis and the information-structural factor of the relative length of the two objects (De Vaere 2023, ch. 6).

These findings point to the conclusion that in German the variant with a case-marked dative object and the variant with a prepositional object are, in Coseriu’s terminology, functional variants of a single construction. The basic ditransitive construction turns out to be underspecified both regarding its

signified and its expression. As regards the level of expression, there is polymorphy between the case-marked dative object and the prepositional object. The analysis runs as follows.

The instrumental signifieds that undergird *an + N[accusative case]* and *N[dative case]* are by definition different. This is reflected in the different distributions of the two corresponding syntagmatic structures, compare, e.g.:

- (7) a. Er denkt an die alten Zeiten (Er denkt \*den alten Zeiten).  
 b. Er trauert den alten Zeiten nach (Er trauert \*an die alten Zeiten nach).

However, on the next higher – and, in constructionist parlance, more “schematic”<sup>12</sup> – level of the ditransitive construction, the two structures *an + N[accusative case]* and *N[dative case]* are synonymous as components within the syntactic signified of the ditransitive construction. This leaves us with two important conclusions.

Firstly, as part of the prepositional variant of the ditransitive construction the preposition *an* no longer constitutes the two-way preposition that alternatively governs the accusative or the dative case according to its function in ordinary prepositional syntagms. Traditionally, accusative entails that a relationship to an object is being established (e.g., motion, as in *an die Wand hängen*), whereas dative is chosen when the relationship is conceived of as already established (e.g., *an der Wand hängen*) (cf. Willems 2011). However, in the prepositional variant of the ditransitive construction, *an* is a one-way preposition that exclusively governs the accusative. There is no possibility of case variation. Recall that functional elements and procedures with instrumental signifieds such as prepositions and cases do not form paradigms by themselves (Section 2.2). The function of the preposition has changed in the transition from the PP as a syntagm to its role as an integral part of the ditransitive construction at the higher level of the syntax. The signifieds involved differ accordingly: whereas *an + N* forms paradigmatic relations with other PPs, in particular those with other two-way prepositions such as *in + N*, *auf + N*, *unter + N*, etc., no such paradigmatic oppositions obtain at the level of the three-place ditransitive

<sup>12</sup> Here I adopt the concept of “schema” with regard to syntactic structures, i.e. in the sense of a schematic signified, as it is found in Coseriu’s seminal study “Sistema, norma y habla” (Coseriu 1962 [1952], § 5.2). For this concept, Coseriu draws on several authors, including I. Kant, W. von Humboldt, E. Cassirer and L. Hjelmslev (see Willems 2023, 22-27 for further explication). By contrast, in current cognitive and construction grammar approaches, “schematic” refers to a level of abstraction in conceptualization and cognitive experience that represents information in the holistic sense. This entails that pragmatics is merged with semantics as described in Section 1, but at a coarser level of detail (s. Tuggy 2007).

construction. In addition, *an + N[accusative case]* of the prepositional alternant does not contrast paradigmatically with *N[dative case]* of the other alternant, but the ditransitive construction as a whole contrasts with other syntactic constructions such as the monotransitive construction and the extended type of applicative construction found in sentences such as *Kinder mit Geschenken beschenken* and *Geschäfte mit Lebensmitteln beliefern*, which also signify a transfer.

Secondly, the common understanding that the dative NP encodes the semantic role RECIPIENT, whereas the *an*-PP encodes a (spatial) DESTINATION cannot be maintained. The assumption of such a contrast is based on traditional introspective accounts of the corresponding structures of the English ditransitive alternation. The corpus analysis of the German data reveals that at least in this language both variants of the ditransitive construction can be used to designate either a RECIPIENT or a DESTINATION. There is no one-to-one-matching between dative NP and RECIPIENT or *an*-PP and DESTINATION; compare:

- (8) So müssen alle Aktiengesellschaften [...] ihre wirtschaftlich Berechtigten an das Transparenzregister mitgeteilt haben.  
 (9) Die Medikamente werden der Klinik per Kurier geschickt.

Whereas (8) invites an interpretation of the PP in terms of a RECIPIENT by virtue of the verb *mitteilen*, the verb *schicken* in (9) profiles *Klinik* as a DESTINATION despite being marked as a dative NP (and not, as one would perhaps expect, a PP *an die Klinik*, which would be synonymous). Hence the conclusion that the ditransitive construction in German encodes neither a RECIPIENT nor a DESTINATION, which are not part of the syntactic signified of the construction. Instead, the syntactic signified of the construction is host to a general encoded argument slot that is best labelled, also in accordance with typological research (e.g., Bickel 2011), as an overarching GOAL argument. Importantly, “GOAL” is here used without any spatial connotation but in the sense of Gr. “telos”, i.e. as a cognitive reference point that is the target of a (positive or negative) transfer involving, apart from the GOAL object, an AGENT-like subject and a THEME-like object (cf. Willems 2020, 153-7; for critical analyses of the “spatial bias” in prepositional semantics, cf. Van der Gucht et al. 2007 and De Cuypere 2013).

Finally, the corpus analysis provides evidence that there are tendencies of conventionalized preferences in normal language use which differentiate the two alternants in their occurrences in texts and discourse. Some of these tendencies are fairly general, others verb-specific. For instance, generally speaking the prepositional variant strongly correlates with the information-structural factor of relative length of the PP. This tendency reflects a cross-linguistically

well-established preferred word order principle, viz. Behaghel's law according to which shorter constituents tend to precede longer ones (cf. Behaghel 1909), in this case shorter Direct Objects preceding longer Indirect Objects. With regard to specific verbs, the correlations between one or the other alternant and a specific verb reading as illustrated in Table 1 are revealing. They are strong evidence that the general, underspecified syntactic signified of the ditransitive construction cannot be specified on the level of the two alternating functional variants but only when these variants are further specified by means of the lexical signifieds of the instantiating verb and the arguments. Much of what is easily considered part of the "meaning" of constructions turns out to be conventionalized usages which however are not encoded in the construction itself (cf. Coene and Willems 2006). For instance, whereas the concrete reading 'deliver' of the verb *übergeben* favours the ditransitive variant with a dative NP, the concrete reading 'pass on' of the verb *weitergeben* favours the variant with a PP. By contrast, in the concrete reading 'hand over' of the verb *übergeben*, both variants appear to be equally frequent. The latter also holds for the verb *preisgeben* when the reading 'disclose' applies, but in the reading 'condemn to' (as, e.g., in *dem Hungertod preisgeben*, De Vaere 2023, 166), the same verb is only found in the variant with dative NP. Tendencies of habitualized readings such as these reflect the variable frequencies of specific instantiations of the alternants in normal language use, which therefore must be carefully distinguished from the ("encoded") signified of the construction as part of the grammatical system.

In this context, it is also important to point out that the prepositional variant with *zu* instead of *an* (an alternation found with verbs such as *senden* and *schicken* and their complex counterparts like *weitschicken*, *zurücksenden* etc.) typically emphasizes the preference of the prepositional variant for spatial designations, as the inherently directional signified of *zu + N* (in the dative) is retained in the instantiation of the ditransitive alternant with a PP, compare:

- (10) a. Das Hormon Insulin sendet dem Gehirn Sättigungssignale.  
 b. Der König ermordete seinen Sohn und sandte ihn in Stücken an seine Mutter zurück.  
 c. Experten begannen damit, Signale zu dem Vehikel zu senden.

Examples such as (10b-c) show that the variation in prepositions found within the variant with a PP adds to the further specification of one of the two alternants, in line with the status of functional variants in normal language use as conceived in Coseriu's language-specific functional approach to grammatical paradigms.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

In this article, I presented Coseriu's multifaceted perspective on multifunctionality in grammar. After outlining two of Coseriu's basic distinctions, one regarding complementary types of grammatical analysis and another regarding the types of signified that interact in grammatical combinations, I considered both polyvalence and polymorphy in grammar in more detail against the backdrop of Coseriu's outline of a language-specific functional approach to grammar.

Both polyvalence and polymorphy are grounded in the creativity of the speaker understood as 'enéргеia', i.e. the creative activity of speaking as a historically-based cultural practice (Coseriu 2007 [1988], § 2.2). Whereas polyvalence instantiates the common creativity of a bilateral lexical or grammatical resource in discourse and texts, polymorphy reflects a special kind of creativity, as it involves variation on the expression side of a grammatical resource with regard to different "idiomatic" levels of language (Coseriu 2007 [1988], ch. 2). Like polyvalence, polymorphy should therefore be accounted for in its own terms and according to its proper place in a coherent functional approach to grammar that takes a focus on the language-specificity of grammar as its starting point. In this article, I concentrated on one instance of polymorphy in particular, the ditransitive alternation in present-day German, in order to illustrate the concept in the framework of a corpus study (the details of the corpus annotation, the methodology and the quantitative analysis could not be provided in detail due to limitations of space, cf. De Vaere 2023 for exhaustive information).

In German, like in any other language in which it occurs, the ditransitive construction is a syntactic (hence "combinatorial", Coseriu 1989, 21) pattern with language-specific syntagmatic features that are paradigmatically anchored in the grammatical system. Thus, from a Coserian point of view, similarities and differences of the ditransitive construction between different languages can only be established coherently against the background of the language-specific features. When approached from this perspective, the German ditransitive construction is underspecified both regarding its expression and its signified at the level of the grammatical system. It undergirds two functional variants which possess more specific features both on the expression side (either dative NP or PP, and either *an*-PP or *zu*-PP with a number of verbs) and the content side (types of transfer understood as different designations in relation to the lexical material that instantiate the constructional pattern). The empirical findings presented in Section 3.2.2 underpin the importance of presenting data in a way that not only pays attention to the language-specific features of the ditransitive

alternation but also takes into account different types of signified and the difference between the grammatical system of a particular language and its continuous creative instantiation in texts and discourse.

If integrated with a constructionist approach, it is possible to adopt the differentiation between an overarching schematic “constructeme” and two more specific “allostructions” to further clarify the hierarchical distinction that emerges from the analysis. This terminological differentiation was introduced in the construction grammar framework by Cappelle (2006; 2009) and in the meantime found its way into a number of studies, including Perek (2015), Zehentner and Traugott (2020), De Vaere et al. (2020), Belligh and Willems (2022), De Vaere (2023), Zehentner (2023), among others. To the extent that the differentiation parallels that between morphemes and allomorphs (and, albeit only regarding the expression side of linguistic signs, the difference between phonemes and allophones), it fits well into a Coserian functional framework, yet with an important qualification. The encoded content (signified) of a constructeme is the object of a “functional grammar” in the sense outlined in Section 2.1, whereas the possible variation of allostructions in language use goes beyond the constructeme’s signified and manifests itself as an object of “relational grammar” with regard to designation. The allostructions moreover do not simply share the constructeme’s encoded features, it is equally important to emphasize that only allostructions are found as functional variants of the constructeme in actual language use. On one hand, the constructeme’s underspecified signified is dependent on the allostructions in order to be instantiated. On the other hand, allostructions are designationally and pragmatically enriched in accordance with the context and situation of the text or discourse. As De Vaere (2023, 81) notes,

Perek (2015:153) defines a constructeme as “a formally underspecified higher-level construction [...] associated with the meaning shared by the variants of the alternation”. In Cappelle’s and Perek’s approach, a constructeme encapsulates the different formal uses of a construction in one underspecified form, and the meaning is shared with the allostructions. However, given the single-layered approach adopted in Construction Grammar, the constructeme and the allostructions have meanings that are not further differentiated in qualitative terms.

The layered account that emerges from the analysis presented in Section 3.2.2 is able to further differentiate the types of content involved in the alternation and therefore particularly important for the theory of “functional grammar”. The position in most present-day accounts of synonymy, according to which there is no such thing as strict synonymy but only near-synonymy, is in large part a consequence of the decision to dismiss the distinction between signifieds (“Bedeutung”) and designationally and pragmatically enriched interpretations (“Bezeichnung”) in

favour of a holistic approach to semantics-*cum*-pragmatics (see Section 1). Whereas usage-based approaches in grammatical analysis try to merge “functional grammar” and “relational grammar” into one unified account, Coseriu’s altogether different functional vantage point pays particular attention precisely to the language-specific signifieds of grammatical structures, which are distinguished from their enriched realizations in language use. This focus on language-specific features opens up a new perspective not only on polyvalence but also on polymorphy without falling into the pitfall of either reducing “meaning” to designation (as in early generative grammar) or “reducing” – actually “expanding” – it to a combination of signifieds and designation (as in many current functional strands of research: “Meaning reduces to conceptualization (mental experience)”, Langacker 1988, 49).

In the account presented in this article, polymorphy is the counterpart of homonymy (homophony) on the level of syntax, compare: one expression/ different signifieds (homonymy) vs. different expressions/one signified (polymorphy). Whereas homonymy is universally acknowledged in all linguistic frameworks, polymorphy is not. The fact that the analysis not only takes into account homonymy but also polymorphy, shows that a language-specific functional approach to grammar is geared towards overcoming traditional dichotomies with a view to establishing an innovative theoretical basis for investigating complex and variable empirical data in different languages. Moreover, given that polymorphy necessarily involves the formal and semantic properties of “constructions” (i.e., the patterned combinations of elements, which in turn form linguistic paradigms, Coseriu 1989, § 3), a layered approach along the lines of Coseriu’s language-specific functional grammar constitutes an avenue for research that is theoretically and observationally both consistent and complementary to current constructionist approaches to variation and optionality in grammar.

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## TEXTUAL FUNCTIONS OF “EXPRESSION GAPS” FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTEGRAL LINGUISTICS

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**ABSTRACT.** *Textual Functions of “Expression Gaps” from the Perspective of Integral Linguistics.* This contribution proposes a critical-constructive examination of Eugenio Coseriu’s study “Die Ausdruckslücke als Ausdrucksverfahren (Textlinguistische Übung zu einem Gedicht von Kavafis) [‘Expression gaps as means of expression (Text-linguistic exercise on a poem by Cavafy)’]”, which focuses on the role played by “expression gaps” in the constitution and articulation of textual sense. Of particular interest is a type of “objective omission” highlighted by Coseriu in his analysis of C.P. Cavafy’s “IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR”, which prompts the recovery and poetic exploitation of sequences posited as missing parts of a prior original text. The 1987 study is one of Coseriu’s detailed text analyses which, along with similar interpretive sketches from *Textlinguistik* (1981), provide significant clues for elaborating the conceptual framework of “text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense” envisaged in Coseriu’s work. In this case, we will argue that expression gaps in the definition proposed in 1987 can be included in a set of text-constitutive procedures, along with evocative sign relations, textual (including metaphorical) functions, and the forms of suspending incongruence and incorrectness on the basis of adequacy. Moving on to a more specific level of analysis, the role of triggering

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multiple layers of “de-subjectivation” or “objectivation” played by expression gaps, identified by Coseriu in his interpretation of Cavafy’s poem, can also be viewed as a device for the hierarchical articulation of sense-units in genuine texts considered as global signs. This warrants a reconsideration of expression gaps in the broader perspective of text typology, both from a functional and from a historical angle. The case is made by way of a parallel analysis of the Zen-inspired short story “The Ghoul-Priest” by Donald Richie, which evidences similar functions of expression gaps as devices for sense construction, thus attesting to the wider hermeneutic relevance of Coseriu’s (1987) interpretive suggestions.

**Keywords:** *Eugenio Coseriu, Integral Linguistics, Text linguistics, Hermeneutics of sense, Textual meaning, Expression gaps, Textual lacunae, Evocation*

**REZUMAT.** *Funcții textuale ale lacunelor de expresie din perspectiva lingvisticii integrale.* Prezenta contribuție propune o examinare critic-constructivă a studiului lui Eugenio Coseriu „Die Ausdrucksücke als Ausdrucksverfahren (Textlinguistische Übung zu einem Gedicht von Kavafis) [‘Lacunele de expresie ca procedeu expresiv (Exercițiu textual-lingvistic pe marginea unui poem de Kavafis)’]”, focalizat asupra rolului jucat de „lacunele de expresie” în constituirea și articularea sensului textual. Un interes deosebit îl prezintă „omisiunea obiectivă” evidențiată de Coseriu în analiza poemului lui C.P. Cavafy „ IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR”, procedeu ce reclamă recuperarea și exploatarea poetică a unor secvențe postulate ca fragmente absente dintr-un text original anterior. Studiul din 1987 este una dintre analizele de text detaliate ale lui Coseriu care, împreună cu schițele interpretative din *Textlinguistik* (1981), oferă importante indicii pentru detalierea cadrului conceptual al „lingvisticii textului ca hermeneutică a sensului” prefigurată în opera lui Coseriu. În cazul de față, vom susține că „lacunele de expresie” în definiția din 1987 pot fi încadrate într-un set de procedee constitutive ale textului, alături de relațiile semnifice evocative, funcțiile textuale (inclusiv metaforice) și formele de suspendare a incongruenței și incorectitudinii pe baza adecvării. La nivelul mai determinat al analizei textuale, rolul de activare a unor multiple straturi de „de-subiectivare” sau „obiectivare” îndeplinit de lacunele de expresie, identificat de Coseriu în interpretarea poemului lui Cavafy, poate fi privit și ca un mecanism de articulare ierarhică a unităților de sens în textele autentice considerate ca semne globale. Se justifică astfel o reconsiderare a lacunelor de expresie din perspectiva mai cuprinzătoare a tipologiei textuale, atât din punct de vedere funcțional, cât și din punct de vedere istoric. Aceasta idee este probată prin analiza paralelă a povestirii de inspirație Zen „The Ghoul-Priest” [‘Preotul-vampir’] de Donald Richie, care prezintă funcții similare ale lacunelor de expresie în calitate de procedee pentru construcția sensului, atestând astfel relevanța hermeneutică mai largă a sugestiilor interpretative din Coseriu (1987).

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Eugenio Coseriu, lingvistică integrală, lingvistica textului, hermeneutica sensului, sens textual, lacune textuale, evocare*

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This contribution proposes a critical-constructive examination of Eugenio Coseriu’s study “Die Ausdruckslücke als Ausdrucksverfahren (Textlinguistische Übung zu einem Gedicht von Kavafis) [‘Expression gaps as means of expression (Text-linguistic exercise on a poem by Cavafy)’]” (1987), which focuses on the role played by “expression gaps” in the constitution and articulation of textual sense. In a minute analysis of C.P. Cavafy’s poem “IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR”, Coseriu highlights a type of “objective omission” from the text’s surface which prompts the recovery and poetic exploitation of sequences posited as missing parts of a prior original text. Recovering these missing parts, in the manner of a philological *restitutio*, becomes a rationally preliminary step to the interpretation of the text, and at the same time affects the way in which the global sense of the text is construed.

The purpose of our examination is twofold. On the one hand, Coseriu (1987) offers an impressively intricate text analysis which, along with similar interpretive sketches from *Textlinguistik* (1981), provides important clues for fleshing out the conceptual framework of “text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense” envisaged in Coseriu’s work. In this context, it will be argued that “expression gaps” in the definition proposed in 1987 can be understood as part of a set of *text-constitutive procedures*, along with evocative sign relations, textual (including metaphorical) functions, and the forms of suspending incongruence and incorrectness on the basis of adequacy.

On the other hand, the role of triggering multiple layers of “de-subjectivation” or “objectivation” identified by Coseriu in his analysis on Cavafy’s poem supports the claim that expression gaps can also be viewed as a specific device for the *hierarchical articulation of sense-units*. This standpoint warrants a reconsideration of the status of expression gaps in the broader perspective of text typology: (a) from a functional angle, as an over-arching principle of sense construction at the level of the individual text, and (b) from a historical angle, for unraveling how expression gaps correlate with the affiliation of an individual text to a given discourse genre, or trigger evocations of certain discourse traditions<sup>2</sup>. This point will be underpinned by the parallel analysis of a Zen-inspired short story, “The Ghoulish Priest” by Donald Richie (1991 [1982]), which evidences similar functions of expression gaps as devices for sense construction, and thus attests to the wider hermeneutic relevance of Coseriu’s (1987) interpretive suggestions.

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<sup>2</sup> For the distinction between the functional and historical dimensions in an integral-linguistic text typology, see Tămăianu(-Morita) 2001, 57-60 and 92-102, 2012a, 14-27.

1.2. The object of Coseriu's analysis is C.P. Cavafy's poem "IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR" (1917), one of several epitaphs for fictional ancient Alexandrians, in this case the funerary inscription for a certain Lefkios (Leucius). Among the poems pertaining to this genre, only "IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR" relies heavily on typographical layout to visually signal the fact that the ancient inscription has undecipherable parts. As Peter Mackridge points out in his *Introduction* to Cavafy (2008, xxx), this text is thus configured as a poem that "can't be read aloud" – the exception that proves the rule that most of the others are "oral" in nature, emphasizing "musicality, rhythm, melody and harmony". Coseriu analyzes the Greek original in parallel with his own German version, based on a published 1983 translation by W. Josing, adapted in order to follow more accurately the constitution of the source text (cf. Coseriu 1987, 376, footnote 6).

For the purposes of the present discussion, we examined two English translations (Cavafy 1992 and 2008). Both versions faithfully convey the cultural and historical evocations anchored in the culturally-loaded words and phrases "Lord Jesus Christ", "the month of Athyr [Hathor]" (October or November, the third month of the Egyptian calendar), "Kappa Zeta" (the number 27, indicating Leucius' age at death) and "Alexandrian". In Cavafy (1992) the character's name is maintained in the Greek form ("Lefkios"), whereas the 2008 version uses the Latinized form "Leucius".

We finally decided to give precedence here to the 2008 version (see Figure 1), which keeps closer to the linguistic constitution and visual layout of the original Greek text, in a way similar to the German version used by Coseriu for his own demonstration.

ΕΝ ΤΩΙ ΜΗΝΙ ΑΘΥΡ		IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR	
Μὲ δυσκολία διαβάζω	στην πέτρα τὴν ἀρχαία.	With difficulty I read	upon the ancient stone:
«Κύ[ρι]ε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ».	Ἔνα «Ψυ[χ]ήν» διακρίνω.	'LO[R]D JESUS CHRIST.'	I discern a 'so[U]L'
«Ἐν τῷ μηνί [νι] Ἀθύρ»	«Ὁ Λεύκιος[ς] ἐ[κοιμ]ήθη».	'IN THE MON[TH] OF ATHYR'	'LEUCIUS WAS LAID TO SL[EE]P.'
Στὴ μνεία τῆς ἡλικίας	«Ἐβ[ί]ωσ]εν ἐτῶν»,	Where age is mentioned	'HE LI[VE]D TO THE AGE OF'
τὸ Κάππα Ζήτα δείχνει	ποῦ νέος ἐκοιμήθη.	the Kappa Zeta* shows	he was laid to sleep so young.
Μὲς στὰ φθαρμένα βλέπω	«Αὐτὸ[ν] . . . Ἀλεξανδρέα».	In the abraded part I see	'H[IM] . . . ALEXANDRIAN.'
Μετὰ ἔχει τρεῖς γραμμὲς	πολὺ ἀκρωτηριασμένες:	There follow three lines	quite mutilated;
μὰ κάτω λέξεις βγάζω—	σὰν «δ[ί]α]κρυα ἡμῶν», «ὀδύνην»,	but I make out some words	like 'OUR T[EA]RS' and 'SUFFERING'
κατόπιν πάλι «δάκρυα»,	καὶ «[ἡμ]ῖν τοῖς [φ]ίλοις πένθος».	and then once more 'TEARS',	and 'TO [U]S HIS FRIENDS BEREAVEMENT.'
Μὲ φαίνεται ποῦ ὁ Λεύκιος	μεγάλως θ' ἀγαπήθη.	It seems to me the love	for Leucius was deep.
Ἐν τῷ μηνί Ἀθύρ	ὁ Λεύκιος ἐκοιμήθη.	During the month of Athyr	Leucius was laid to sleep.

Figure 1. Greek original and English version by E. Sachperoglou (in Cavafy 2008, 92-93)

It must be noted, however, that from a methodological point of view the choice of translated version is of secondary importance for the issue at hand, because it mainly serves the instrumental purpose of more readily making the

relevant textual material accessible to the English-speaking reader. As will be detailed below (2.1.), the text-constitutive role of expression gaps does not derive directly from idiomatic significations or from their associated designations. In terms of Coseriu’s (1962 [1955-1956], 1981, 1988) threefold model of language, unraveling the functions of expression gaps on Level III (Text / Discourse) only makes *indirect use* of units from Level II (language-specific organization), as indices to the nature of the absent textual sequences.

## 2. Coseriu’s notion of “expression gap”

**2.1.** Coseriu sets the spotlight of his analysis upon “Das Nicht-Sagen”, the ‘Not-saying’, or also “das Verschweigen”, ‘keeping silent’ (1987: 373), starting from the observation that ‘keeping silent’, as a non-linguistic act, *does not have any idiomatic signified* (Level II), but can obviously contribute to a great extent to the constitution of textual sense (Level III)<sup>3</sup>.

Such textual fragments, missing from the surface of the text’s verbal constitution, are perceived as necessary for effecting the overall semantic articulation of the text, and therefore need to be retrieved on the basis of expression clues actually present in the text, or by establishing meaningful connections (correlation, opposition, etc.) with sense-units that do have a material expression in the text (Coseriu 1987, 376 and 381).

The recovery and poetic exploitation of absent parts of a prior original text, possibly a fictional hypotext, is an invitation or request to the reader to join in as the respective gaps are being explored and then filled out. Recovering the missing parts proceeds in a way similar to a philological *restitutio*, and it is only after this preliminary step that *interpretation* can genuinely begin, because the manner and results of the ‘reconstruction’ decisively affect the construal of the text’s global sense.

Coseriu insists that this procedure must be distinguished from the well-known device defined in ancient rhetoric as *aposiopesis* (Lat. *reticentia*, ‘the willing suspension of speech’), pointing out that the latter should be more properly called “subjective aposiopesis” (Coseriu 1987, 373). By contrast, the focus in Cavafy’s poem is on a strategy that can aptly be considered an “*objective* aposiopesis”. In other words, although the expression gaps which appear in a poetic text are obviously motivated by the text’s overall expressive intention, they are presented as *separated from this subjective purport* and projected into/onto the “things”

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<sup>3</sup> “Das Schweigen als nichteinzelnsprachliche Erscheinung hat zwar keine bestimmte *Bedeutung*, es kann aber in beträchtlichem Ausmass zum *Sinn* der Texte beitragen” (emphasis in the original). (All English equivalents and translations from Coseriu 1987 are mine – E.T.-M.)

themselves, in a process that Coseriu calls “Entsubjektivierung” (‘de-subjectivation’), i.e. “das Objektiv-Machen” (‘rendering objective’) (374). This procedure, typical of literary classicism, not only links Cavafy to the respective textual and aesthetic tradition, but is in fact, Coseriu maintains, *the* poetic device *par excellence* in Cavafy’s oeuvre (374-375). In other words, with Cavafy, de-subjectivation functions as a fundamental principle of sense-construction which coherently justifies diverse individual text-constitutive units, as well as diverse text-constitutive procedures applied for their articulation, and therefore can be held to represent a *typological principle* of his body of poetic work considered as a global text<sup>4</sup>.

Coseriu discerns several progressive steps or layers of de-subjectivation (“Stufen der Objektivierung”, 375). The first step is achieved by projecting feelings and emotional contents onto worldly facts and states of things, by separating them from their original empirical context and presenting them as “memories” of another self – reminiscences from either individual or collective-historical destinies. A second layer is achieved by taking up events and persons depicted by other writers and historians, and placing them in the spotlight by “isolating them, reducing them to their essence, and making them into universal instances of human existence” (375)<sup>5</sup>.

A third, even higher, level is delineated if the ‘object’ of the poem is not simply and directly a character or event from the past, but another previous text, either entirely fictional or partly borrowed from existing sources. If this initial object-text presents itself as lacunary, then a further layer of de-subjectivation is achieved, because the poetic ‘I’ will also assume a metalinguistic stance and try to reconstruct the gaps before engaging in an exegesis or commentary upon it (375-376).

As far as the third and fourth layers are concerned, we would like to suggest that a fruitful connection can be established between Coseriu’s interpretive outlook on the process of pinpointing and recovering expression gaps, and one subtype of hypertextual practice defined in G. Genette’s (1997 [1982], 254) model of transtextual relations, namely with “extension” (augmentation by “addition”)<sup>6</sup>. To this perspective we can further associate an observation Genette

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<sup>4</sup> In the framework of our text-typological model, this pertains to the “textual form of the third degree”, which is configured by “the homogeneous principles that govern the sense-construction process in each ‘real’ text, a far-reaching unity that explains coherently all the different constitutional units, procedures and strategies at work in each individual text” (Tămăianu-Morita 2012a, 19).

<sup>5</sup> See also a convergent comment by Mackridge (*Introduction to Cavafy* 2008, xxvi): “In his mature poetry Cavafy looks at the human predicament with the detachment of the historian who takes a long-term view”.

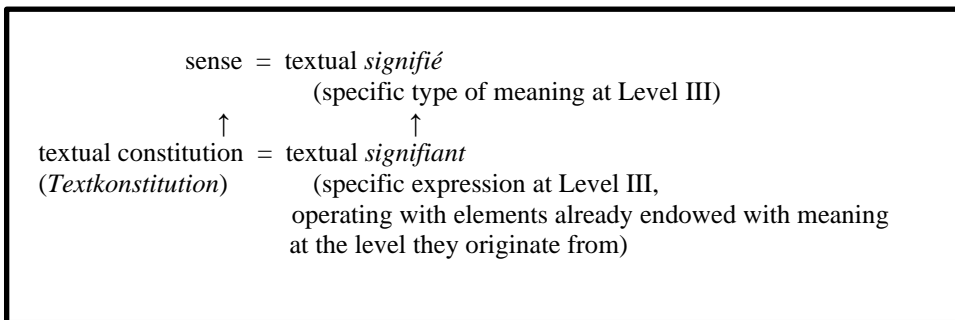
<sup>6</sup> Materially, this is one form of the quantitative transformation of “augmentation”: elaborating a textual version whose component parts are arranged in a “more or less symmetrical order” with the original, but at a different scale (Genette 1997 [1982], 228-229).

makes regarding “supplements”: even some hypertexts which present themselves as “simple interpolations”, and therefore *complementary* to their hypotext from the standpoint of form, can in fact prove to be “*substitutive* by their content, because by means of this interpolation they bring about a *transmutation of meaning and value in their hypotexts*” (205; emphasis mine – E.T.-M).

**2.2.** Coseriu (1987) is a predominantly analytic undertaking, as the subtitle suitably conveys (“Textlinguistische Übung zu einem Gedicht von Kavafis”, ‘A text-linguistic exercise on a poem by Cavafy’). “IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR” is chosen as an exemplary case in which the functions of expression gaps can be found in a salient and complex configuration. But where exactly does this textual analysis fit in the theoretical edifice of Integral Text Linguistics<sup>7</sup> (“text linguistics as the hermeneutics of sense”)?

We have argued elsewhere that the foundational principles of Integral Text Linguistics are (a) the double semiotic relation in texts (Coseriu 1981, 48-50) and (b) the articulation of textual sense (“die Gliederung des Sinns”, Coseriu 1981, 123-132)<sup>8</sup>.

Starting from the schematic representation put forward in Coseriu (1981, 48) for the double semiotic relation at the level of TEXT as an autonomous level of speech (Level III in his threefold matrix), we have proposed a clarifying representation of the double semiotic relation as a *mechanism of sense-construction* (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The double semiotic relation as a semiotic mechanism of sense-construction (Tămăianu-Morita 2012a, 10)

<sup>7</sup> Some methodological and terminological aspects of the discipline proposed by Coseriu are reviewed in Tămăianu-Morita (2012b, 188-189 and 205-206).

<sup>8</sup> A multi-faceted discussion on these two principles and comprehensive references to other Coserian sources can be found in Tămăianu-Morita (2012b, 189-193).

The arrows in this conventional representation stand for what we have called “textual procedures (devices)”. It is our contention (Tămâianu[-Morita] 2001, 124-133; 2012a, 10; 2014, 136-138) that expression gaps can be included in a set of text-constitutive procedures, along with evocative sign relations, textual (including metaphorical) functions, and the forms of suspending incongruence and incoherence on the basis of adequacy. In the following sections, this view will be adopted for ascertaining the theoretical and methodological relevance of Coseriu (1987).

### 3. Coseriu’s analysis on Cavafy. A meta-analysis

**3.1.** Coseriu (1987, 377) identifies three levels of de-subjectivation in Cavafy’s poem. In other words, three ‘texts’ coexist within the same text, each one embedded in the next. If we interpret this claim through the lens of the notion of “sense articulation”, it would be more accurate to say that three levels of sense-constitution are hierarchically articulated through the symbolic ‘hinges’ represented by expression gaps. Coseriu’s stance is summarized in the following synopsis (*Table 1*):

**Table 1.** Synopsis of Coseriu’s analysis of the levels of “de-subjectivation” in Cavafy’s poem

Text-constitutive levels	Explication
‘Text 1’	‘The object’ that the poem ostensibly refers to: a funerary inscription on an “ancient stone”, <i>as is</i> , with lacunae, a text linked to its own “situation” (the historical-cultural context of Hellenistic Alexandria)
‘Text 2’	The (partly) reconstructed funerary inscription, posited as the genuine ‘original’ text
‘Text 3’	The poem itself (whose ‘I’ effects the philological reconstruction and takes an interpretive stance towards it, in a metatextual key)

The *material* expression gaps appear in ‘Text 1’. They are partly recovered *as text-constitutive units* in ‘Text 2’, where they are duly marked typographically (“SO[U]L”, “MON[TH]”, “HI[M]” etc.). Finally, they function *as units of sense* in ‘Text 3’, at which level the poetic I’s decision as to which gaps are reconstructed and which are not is also, in itself, a component of the sense construal process (377)<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> It is on this point (the hierarchical linkage “Text 3” à “Text 2” à “Text 1”) that a view through the lens of Genette’s model can enrich the paths of interpretation, by showcasing the meaning transmutations brought about by the “additions” and “supplements”.

Accessible on the surface of the text, the units with actual linguistic expression (“das sprachlich Gesagten”, Coseriu 1987, 378-379), through their signifieds and designations, convey ‘facts’ about Leucius: the time of his death (month of Athyr, year unknown), aged 27, (maybe) Alexandrian. Although the type of text is not overtly mentioned, the form and content schemata of these actualized units place ‘Text 1’ in the genre of funerary inscriptions.

Other units function as explicit markers of the shift between text-constitutive levels: “With difficulty I read”, “I see”, “I make out some words”.

On the other hand, the final section of the poem breaks the chain of objective and emotionally restrained philological / archaeological reconstruction acts, by an unexpected subjective stance-taking: the poetic I’s conjecture that the dead youth *seemed* to have been well loved by many friends (“It seems to me the love for Leucius was deep”) <sup>10</sup>. This is placed in a direct opposition with the abrupt return to a cold factual tone in the last line, which rounds up the answer to the implicit question raised by the title (‘What happened in the month of Athyr?’): “Leucius was laid to sleep”.

3.2. Coseriu (1987, 379) emphasizes that all the elements described above pertain to the “level of signification and designation”. This statement must be understood through the lens of the principle of the double articulation of sense, as referring not merely to the signifieds and designations of lexical and grammatical units, but to the level of *textual constitution* (the signifier of the text as a global sign) (cf. *supra*, Figure 2).

Proceeding towards the level of *sense* requires the further step of taking into account the *evocations* that several key constitutive units trigger: the month expressed according to the Egyptian calendar connects with Athyr (Hathor), the goddess of sensual love and tombs, while the reference to the “soul” of the departed in close vicinity to “Lord Jesus Christ” blends in a Christian background, establishing the text’s chronotope as Alexandria in a time of cultural symbiosis of Egyptian, Hellenic and Christian elements<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, the fragmentary inscription

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<sup>10</sup> In this context, Coseriu (1987, 381) points out that the text maintains intact the ambivalence between hetero- and homosexual love: in the configuration of the textual world, what matters is *Love* pure and simple, without further determinations. We believe that this interpretation is fully consistent with the general strategy of “de-subjectivation” that permeates the text with its embedded semantic layers.

<sup>11</sup> Mackridge describes this cultural-historical background as follows: “In those of Cavafy’s poems that are set in ancient Alexandria, the various characters from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds are united by the Greek language and Greek culture. Some characters are Coptic Christians, while others are Jewish. Yet the peaceful coexistence of two polytheistic religions (Egyptian and Greek) allowed great freedom of choice to the inhabitants of Hellenistic Egypt” (*Introduction* to Cavafy 2008, xxiv).

does not allow for depicting Leucius as a specific individual, since none of the contingent details that build up a person's destiny have survived the implacable passage of time. Therefore, the "Leucius" of 'Text 1' and 'Text 2' functions, rather, as symbolic of his time-and-place. Consequently, Coseriu maintains, his death is not just the death of a man, but the dissolution of a whole era (279-380).

Another strand of sense is configured by the poetic I's stance in 'Text 3' towards 'Text 2'. The sudden shift from 'objective' philological *restitutio* to a 'subjective' impression in the final section of the poem ("It seems to me the love for Leucius was deep"), captures the underlying theme of Love-and-Death in a *sarcastic* tonality: the love for Leucius and the sadness at his passing away may have been genuine, but they may also simply reflect the conventions of the genre 'epitaph' (383). When all is said and done, 'Love' is a supposition, and only 'Death' is an undeniable 'fact'.

Referring to other poems than the one under discussion here, Peter Mackridge points out, in the *Introduction* to Cavafy (2008, xxxviii), that "Cavafian irony emerges from a discrepancy between different degrees of knowledge", be it "the irony of fate (or the disparity between a belief or attitude and the 'truth')", or "a disparity between attitudes (of the same or different characters)". As the protagonist of "IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR" no longer has a chance to speak for himself, it is the faint traces of what might have been the voices of "his friends", recorded in the words "OUR T[E]ARS", "SUFFERING", "once more 'TEARS', and "BEREAVEMENT" from the inscription, that lend themselves for use in a disparity with the knowledge of the poetic I. This is the source of the type of "sarcasm" Coseriu identifies in the poem, more akin to another mechanism of Cavafian irony described by Mackridge: "The character who speaks in the poem is often situated at the time of the action in the past, and his limited perspective contrasts with the omniscience brought to the poet-historian by hindsight" (xxxviii).

Notwithstanding this partial homology, "IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR" displays a much more complex configuration of *sarcasm* as a unit of sense. Poignantly, Coseriu (1987, 383) concludes his interpretation of the poem with the comment that the *sarcastic perspective* spans over the three constitutive layers of the text. To begin with, in 'Text 1', the badly damaged funerary inscription evidences the frailty of human existence, and of all the perishable objects that may be expected to attest to its reality. Further on, in 'Text 2', the duality of the goddess Hathor reveals itself to be, in fact, a stark *asymmetry*: love is fleeting, whereas death and graves are forever.

At this point in the discussion one could make the case that Coseriu's sweeping stance on the issue of "sarcasm" may need to be mitigated or toned down. If a simple, synthetic formulation is sought for, it can indeed be stated that the goddess Hathor combines the opposing aspects of love and death

(“Liebe-und-Tod”, cf. Coseriu 1987, 380). Upon closer look, however, a more complex and coherent (non-contradictory) picture emerges: Hathor is the “House of Horus” and the protective “Eye of Ra”, governing over maternity, sensual love, music and dance, *and also* guiding souls into the afterlife and towards resurrection. If this nuanced evocation is taken into account, then Leucius’ death in the month of Hathor is meant to hint at the possibility that he himself and “his friends”, as inhabitants of their own world(view), might have found in this timing a soothing glimpse of hope (maternal protection alleviating the pain of death, and the goddess’ guidance towards resurrection). Interestingly, however, if this is the case, Coseriu’s own interpretation is not refuted, but enhanced: the “sarcastic” tonality of the text only gains in tragic depth. A youth died, and those close to him rationalized his death by resorting to their belief in resurrection, supported by their own cultural constructs – but then all that remains now is the badly damaged funerary inscription on the cold gravestone, read by a detached outsider, centuries after their whole civilization died out.

Finally, in ‘Text 3’, the poetic I’s sarcasm is self-directed in a meta-textual key: the last line of the poem hints at the futility of the philological strife to reconstruct the gaps only to find something that ultimately amounts to what was known from the very beginning (‘In the month of Athyr a young man died’).

Let us sum up the main points we aimed to demonstrate in Section 3. Judged in the broader framework of Coseriu’s “text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense” in conjunction with a text-typological model we developed within its premises, Coseriu (1987) can be held to bear out that, in C.P. Cavafy’s poem “IN THE MONTH OF ATHYR”, the strategy of recovering the missing content of “expression gaps” represents a specific *superordinated procedure for the hierarchical articulation of sense-units*. This strategy engenders multiple layers of “de-subjectivation” or “objectivation”, which delineate corresponding levels in the text’s constitution. In turn, other text-constitutive devices (in this particular case, various instances of evocative sign relations) are subsumed to this principal procedure. Other strands of sense, such as the poetic I’s stance (here, the multi-layered sarcastic attitude) reinforce the paths of interpretation in minute detail. As far as we can discern, “Die Ausdruckslücke als Ausdrucksverfahren” is the only published Coserian paper that unfolds in a fully concrete manner and exemplifies with crystal-clear clarity the otherwise abstract notion of *sense articulation* (without, however, explicitly mentioning the concept).

#### 4. A parallel textual illustration

**4.1.** If the textual role of expression gaps identified by Coseriu in Cavafy’s poem is indeed valid as a general procedure of sense construction, we should be able to find it instantiated in other texts as well.

In our own experience as a reader of literary works from various linguistic-cultural areas, we chanced upon a text that seems to be well-suited for a parallel (analogical) examination: Donald Richie's short story "The Ghoul-Priest. A Commentary" (Richie 1991 [1982]).

Included in a collection entitled *Zen Inklings. Some Stories, Fables, Parables, and Sermons*, "The Ghoul-Priest" consists of a basic narrative line representing the faithful English translation of a Japanese original, Ueda Akinari's "Aozukin", 'The Blue Hood' [1776], interspersed with para- and metatextual segments ostensibly meant to restore and clarify Ueda's original for the benefit of the contemporary Western reader. "Aozukin" belongs to the literary genre *kaidan* (lit. 'stories of strange things', tales of ghosts and other supernatural creatures), very popular with commoners in the Edo Era (1603-1868) – horror stories with an entertaining as well as a moralizing purpose.

"Aozukin" recounts the feats of the virtuous Zen master Kaian, who travels to the northern part of Japan, and, having reached the village of Tonda in Shimotsuke Province, asks for a night's lodging at a large, well-to-do household. At the sight of the sage wearing his blue-hooded mantle, the villagers flee in panic, shouting that the 'mountain ogre' has once again turned up. The master of the house welcomes Kaian and explains the cause of the commotion. At a nearby mountain temple there lived a high-ranking priest who had been revered for his wisdom and good deeds, but one year before everything had changed. The priest had taken a boy servant of outstanding beauty, some thirteen years of age, and had fallen in love with him. However, sometime later, the boy fell ill and died. Not being able to let go of his passion, the priest kept the dead body close to himself for days, and finally took to eating the corpse's flesh and licking the bones. The priest had become a ghoul. To satisfy his craving, he then began to dig up the village graves, terrifying the locals. That is why, when Kaian showed up, head and shoulders covered in his dark blue hood, people thought the ghoul-priest had once again descended upon the village.

Hearing this account, Kaian decides to release the priest from his obsession and help him to achieve Buddhahood. Climbing up to the mountain temple, Kaian spends the night there, sitting in the same room and even offering his own flesh to the mad priest. However, the latter is unable to find Kaian in the room, despite a crazed search all night long. Kaian's holiness had made him invisible to the priest's obsessive desire. This experience determines the priest to accept Kaian's guidance back towards righteousness. Placing his own blue hood on the priest head, Kaian gives him two verses of Chinese poetry to ponder on: salvation would come when the meaning of the verses is understood<sup>12</sup>. Back in the village,

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<sup>12</sup> The interaction between Kaian and the priest takes the form of a Zen *mondō* (a dialogue between master and disciple) meant to lead the disciple towards *satori* (illumination). The

Kaian tells the locals they would not be bothered by the ghouls any more. One year later, Kaian returns to Tonda and learns that indeed the ghouls had never come down to the village again.

In order to ascertain what actually happened to the priest, Kaian goes back to the temple, finding it totally deserted and decayed, only to hear a faint voice endlessly repeating the verses: the priest's hooded figure is still sitting on the temple stone, trapped in a never-ending search for meaning. Shouting the question “Answer now! What is the meaning of this?” (“somasan! nan-no shoi zo!”, in this context, approx. ‘answer! what are you still doing in this world?’, Ueda 1955 [1776], 105), Kaian strikes the priest with his staff. The priest's body instantly melts away, leaving only the bones under the blue hood that had covered his head. Kaian receives the full gratitude of the locals and becomes the abbot of the temple, which still flourishes to this day.

**4.2.** In Richie's text “The Ghouls-Priest. A Commentary”, the flow of the faithfully translated narrative of “Aozukin” is interrupted four times by long interpolated segments, each of them organized in a two-fold structure. A first sub-section narrates alternative events put forward as “perhaps” untold parts of Ueda's original. Recovering these lacunae thus helps to reconstruct a more authentic ‘original’, which is offered to the reader as the genuine object of interpretation. A second sub-section follows, in which Richie's narrator provides guidance for this process of interpretation, in the style of Zen commentaries (*teishō*), by reformulations from various angles, illuminating analogies and hints for intuitively grasping the universally-human psychological significance and moral bearing of the events described.

One more such twofold segment is added after the end of the translated story, separated from it both typographically and through an explicit metatextual formulation:

Thus Ueda concludes his tale.

\* \* \*

But perhaps there was more to the story (Richie 1991 [1982], 89).

Using Genette's term, this is a “supplement” which dramatically modifies the sense construed up to that point in the text.

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master first gives the disciple a *kōan* (a classic ‘case’ formulated as an insoluble paradox), and the disciple sits in meditation until a solution reveals itself to the mind. The answer is then presented to the master, who judges whether it is a true realization or just a rational speculation. During *zazen* (sitting meditation), the revelation can sometimes be precipitated by the master's well-timed sudden shout and/or blow of the staff.

The hierarchical articulation of text-constitutive layers in “The Ghoul-Priest” evidences three embedded ‘texts’ parallel to those from Cavafy’s poem, as shown in the synopsis below (*Table 2*).

**Table 2.** Embedded text-constitutive levels in “The Ghoul-Priest”

Text-constitutive levels	Explication
‘Text 1’	Events that are said to have happened 500 years ago, recounted 200 years ago by Ueda’s omniscient narrator, with an embedded secondary narrator (the master of the house): “Aozukin”, the Japanese original
‘Text 2’	The reconstructed and translated text. Instead of the ‘philological’ wrestling showcased in Cavafy’s poem, we see here the <i>translation process</i> , with faithful parts and added segments, some in complete form, others expedited in brief summaries <sup>13</sup> (e.g. “In the original story, a long conversation continues [...]”, “The master made many a suitable remark to this [...]”, 83)
‘Text 3’	The final text entitled “The Ghoul-Priest”, whose ‘I’ restores the missing parts from “Aozukin”, makes the English translation, and takes an interpretive stance towards ‘Text 1’ and ‘Text 2’ through ‘commentaries’ and an added new ending

As with Cavafy’s poem, “The Ghoul-Priest” displays explicit markers of the shift between constitutive levels (‘Texts’ 1, 2, 3):

Thus, nearly two hundred years ago, the storyteller Ueda Akinari begins his account of something that had happened three hundred years before that. He was writing a ghost story [...] and he set out to frighten. There is more to his story than this, however (Richie 1991 [1982], 79).

Thus did the master describe the love of the priest, and thus did Ueda invent the words he used. There are, however, other words (81).

Here Ueda pauses. A holy man has cured one who is unholy. When the story is continued, salvation is assured. This is the level of the story that interested Ueda’s readers, and it is for them that he wrote. There could, however, have been more (85-86).

One could take a step back here and note that, at first sight, it might seem that the missing parts have been left out *intentionally* by the original narrator, in

<sup>13</sup> This parallels the poetic I’s decision, in Cavafy’s poem, as to which expression gaps to recover and which to expedite by mentioning only the most salient units: “There follow three lines quite mutilated / but I make out some words [...]” (cf. *supra*, 3.1).

Ueda’s text: “This is the level of the story that interested Ueda’s readers, and it is for them that he wrote” (85-86). Are we dealing then with *subjective* lacunae, rather than *objective* ones?

Upon closer examination, however, these expression gaps reveal themselves to be instruments in a step-by-step *de-subjectivation* process akin to the one at work in Cavafy’s poem. ‘Text 1’ presents itself as the second-hand account of a much older text, glimpsed through, and to some extent retrieved from the oral traditions of centuries past. ‘Text 2’ further distances itself from the original events by translating “Aozukin” into English for a contemporary Western audience, and by restoring the gaps in hindsight, with the benefit of a higher, philosophical, viewpoint that separates the characters and events from their contingent context and discusses them as instantiations of the human condition in general. Finally, ‘Text 3’ undermines the whole edifice of textual meaning hitherto construed, by placing the whole story under a *sarcastic tonality*: “the level of the story that interested Ueda’s readers”, with its naïve promise of facile salvation, is, at best, a mere possibility or a supposition. The ‘reality’ of what actually happened between Kaian and the ghoulish priest only transpires from the alternative interpolated ending, with several *forms of death* at its core, as will be discussed in the next section.

4.3. Moving on towards the level of *sense*, the first device that needs to be taken into account, as with Cavafy’s poem, is the *evocation* of the cultural and historical context.

Kaian’s tale is clearly set in space and time: the temple in question is Daichū-ji Temple in Shimotsuke Province (present-day Tochigi Prefecture), and the story of madness and salvation is a ‘founding legend’ of sorts, which survived intact after Ueda Akinari made it famous in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Present-day visitors learn about the temple, advertised as a “power spot”, and its famous pair of characters from official publicity materials, and on the temple precincts the tourist can fittingly find, side by side, the graves of Kaian and the ghoulish priest<sup>14</sup>. This contextual element is crucial for interpreting the function of the added ending in the overall process of sense construction, as will be demonstrated further on.

The overt theme of the story is the dynamics of *Love & Death*. Though the catalyst of the abbot’s madness is homosexual love and the irreplaceable loss of its object caused by the boy’s death, the reconstructed gaps and the commentaries make it clear that the real theme is *love pure and simple*. Love as possession is “the most common and the most human” of all “shades of love” (Richie 1991 [1982], 81); insatiable lust is just a more noticeable manifestation

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the corresponding description on the website of the tourist agency Japan Travel <https://en.japantravel.com/tochigi/tochigi-daichu-ji-temple/5196> (accessed July 3, 2025).

of the ultimate obstacle to enlightenment – attachment to worldly desires. The frailty of the human psyche is such that “love carried to the extreme” is transformed into madness (82).

With the life of the loved one vanished, *love* conjoins with *death* and is taken to a grotesque extreme: it becomes necrophilia and necrophagia. The sarcastic view on the destiny of us humans is evident in the stance taken in ‘Text 3’ towards ‘Text 2’ and ‘Text 1’:

A priest might have known this, but priests, too, are human. While this lover knew of the snares of the world and allowed himself no possessions or attachments, this love of his was too perfect, too unique a thing to relinquish (81).

At the level of ‘Text 2’, in the reconstructed alternative episodes, Kaian is made to express *a sarcastic view* towards the oversimplified moralizing focus on just the perils of homosexual love<sup>15</sup>, apparent in the villagers’ take on the fate of the priest turned ogre in ‘Text 1’.

– It is not only you I seek to help, said Kaian. I wish also to help the villagers. [...] You had, they told me, become an animal. And that, they thought, was a hard fate.  
He stopped and smiled: A hard fate? Is it not what we have all desired? To become the simple beast we also feel ourselves to be? It is but our attempt to lose our troubled selves [...]. It represents, perhaps, the only peace that many of us know. But it is a limited peace. A true and abiding peace is more difficult, if more lasting (87).

In ‘Text 3’ the *sarcastic tone* also appears in a metalinguistic register. Let me explain.

Key to the ghoulish priest’s salvation is the task of understanding “the true import” of a verse (in the original, two verses) from a Chinese anthology, *Shōdōka*” (approx. 7-8 c.):

A luminous moon, the wind in the pine,  
A long evening, a transcendent view –  
But what is the meaning of this? (Richie 1991 [1982], 85)

In Ueda’s original, the verse (*kōan*) appears twice: once when it is given to the priest by Kaian, and once when it is heard by Kaian one year later, in the echoing voice of the priest’s entrapped mind, to be instantly cut off with a swift blow of the staff. Since ‘Text 2’ reconstructs the gaps from ‘Text 1’, in “The Ghoulish Priest”

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<sup>15</sup> “And how excellent he [the priest] might have been had he not taken up with that boy” (Richie 1991 [1982], 83).

the verse has four occurrences: each of the two above is doubled in the interpolated segments.

At face value, it might seem that the repetition vouches for the importance of decoding the poem’s meaning. And the ghoulish priest follows precisely that path, dutifully turning around the words in his mind for a year, unmoved from the temple stone, just as Kaian had instructed. But that strife only leads to entrapment. By the time Kaian returns, the priest must already have been physically dead<sup>16</sup>, and only his obsessive desire and attachment had remained – a vagrant soul lost in delusion, a voice “faint as that of a mosquito” (Richie 1991 [1982], 89), ensnared in an endless repetition of the poem. After all, redemption does not come from understanding, and the interpreted meaning of the verse is utterly unimportant. It is only the final blow by Kaian’s staff, only the *action* itself, and above all its timing, together with the reprimanding tone of voice of the question “somasan! nan-no shoi zo!” (‘Answer now! What are you still doing here? / What is this situation?’), that matter. The commentary in ‘Text 3’ unwraps:

The shock of a thought completed, the jolt of form apprehended, the sound of a loud voice after months of silence, the perception of familiar pain – the blow to the shoulder – after years of unfeeling – all of this conspired: *the priest awoke and died*. (Richie 1991 [1982], 90; emphasis mine – E.T.-M.)

The awakening of the lost soul (and the resolution of the priest’s obsessive love) is simultaneous with *death* in its absolute form, of dissolving into non-being pure and simple.

It will be noted, in this context, that the narrator’s “commentary” in the added ending of ‘Text 3’ does not elucidate ‘Text 1’<sup>17</sup>, but disassembles and undermines it, and thereby authenticates the sense of ‘Text 3’ as more true to the spirit of Zen than the didactic or moralizing conclusion which rounds up the sense at the level of ‘Text 1’. The commentary in the final section ends with a

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<sup>16</sup> This is suggested by the description of the scene as a ‘fading away’ of the priest’s figure: “like frost before the early sun, the figure melted away” (Richie 1991 [1982], 89 – faithful rendering of the Japanese original, Ueda 1955 [1976], 105).

<sup>17</sup> A genuinely elucidatory commentary is, for example, the explanation of the verses in the editorial notes of the quoted edition (Ueda 1955, 106, footnote 2). To summarize: It is in the nature of the moon to shine, and it is in the nature of the wind to blow, but the moon does not shine purposefully or for itself, nor does the wind blow for its own benefit. It is the viewer of those tranquil scenes that feels happiness and peace of mind. Enlightenment (*satori*) is the same: it does not come from intentional pursuit, but follows naturally from actions performed with a pure mind and detachment from any contingencies, actions which will then turn out to be beneficial to others. There is no reason or actual meaning in what the moon and the wind do; it is the very absence of reasons and meaning that the mind must come to terms with.

re-statement of the decisive action: “Kaian finished the quatrain [the verse] and brought down the staff”. Predictably, “Text 3’ should also end upon these words. However, in a last twist of textual sense construal<sup>18</sup>, two more sentences follow, typographically arranged on the page as if they constituted another poem to be ... ‘understood’; this time it is a verse given by the narrator ‘Text 3’ directly to the reader:

[...] Kaian finished the quatrain and brought down the staff.  
There he stood.  
There he stands still (90).

In all probability, “he” designates Kaian. There remains, however, a grammatical ambiguity that allows for positing the ghoulish priest as the pronoun’s referent, as he is also mentioned several times in the respective long sentence. Be that as it may, the timeline of the story is suddenly warped from 500 years ago and 200 years ago into the present – *the reader’s present*<sup>19</sup>. The reader cannot know for sure if redemption is forever, or even if the soul is forever, but, from corroborating the cultural and historical evocations, the reader knows for sure that Kaian and the priest are still there, at Daichū-ji Temple, forever housed in their graves side by side. Or so the story goes.

## 5. Final thoughts

By revisiting Eugenio Coseriu’s concept of “expression gap” in conjunction with the in-depth interpretive suggestions put forward in the 1987 study “Die Ausdruckslücke als Ausdrucksverfahren (Textlinguistische Übung zu einem Gedicht von Kavafis)”, the present investigation has shown that the recovery of expression gaps can function as an overarching text-constitutive strategy, and even underpin analogous hierarchical configurations of sense units in a poem (Cavafy) and a short story (Richie) – two texts pertaining to different literary genres, constituted with different linguistic-idiomatic units (Greek / English) and evoking different cultural backgrounds (Alexandria in the Hellenistic period of Egypt / Zen Buddhism in Japan). Despite these obvious constitutive differences, it can thus be stated

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<sup>18</sup> The general typological features of Zen discourse genres evoked in Richie’s volume *Zen Inklings*, such as self-undermining textual layers, the use of insoluble paradoxes, the continuous relativization of word meanings etc., are discussed and illustrated in detail in Tămăianu-Morita (2002, 130-150).

<sup>19</sup> Although an all-encompassing *eternal* present can also be proposed as a variant of interpretation, we believe that the adverb “still” emphasizes the duration starting with a past moment (the time when the narrated events occurred), from the vantage point of a ‘here-and-now’ defined by the reader’s action of reading the text.

that the two texts instantiate the same modality of sense-construction<sup>20</sup>, and can be subsumed to the same *functional text type*, in the definition proposed in Tămăianu(-Morita) (2001 and 2012a). This expansion of Coseriu’s “text-linguistic exercise” highlights one of the possible functional roles of expression gaps, understood as text-constitutive devices concatenated with, subordinated to, or, as is the case with the illustrations discussed here, superordinated to other text-constitutive devices at the level of individual texts.

On the other hand, regarded from a *historical text-typological standpoint*, expression gaps may correlate with the affiliation of the individual text to a given discourse genre, or may trigger the evocation of certain discourse traditions. In Cavafy’s poem, we note the evocation of philological reconstruction and archaeological exploration; in Richie’s story, the evocation of the discourse traditions of Zen commentary on famous public cases, aimed at relativizing accepted meanings and undermining common-sense patterns of thought. In turn, these evocations mediate the construal of the textual chronotope in each case, with its associated cultural and historical contexts.

Each of the functions highlighted above opens up avenues for further exploration<sup>21</sup>, apt to clarify, refine and flesh out the conceptual scaffolding of Integral Text Linguistics, whose general blueprint and a wealth of hints for development are available in Coseriu’s published work. With this mindset, probing into the functions of expression gaps requires a systematic reading of Coseriu *via* Coseriu: “Die Ausdruckslücke...” (1987) has to be read by way of *Textlinguistik. Eine Einführung [Text Linguistics. An Introduction]* (1981), *Sprachkompetenz. Grundzüge der Theorie des Sprechens [Linguistic Competence. Fundamentals of a Theory of Speaking]* (1988), “Determinación y entorno. Dos problemas de una lingüística del hablar” [Determination and surrounding field. Two issues pertaining to a linguistics of speaking] (1962 [1955-1956]), “Lo erróneo y lo acertado en la teoría de la traducción” [Correct and erroneous questions in translation theory] (1977) – and many more.

Viewed through this metatheoretical lens, “die Ausdruckslücken”, lit. “expression gaps”, reveal themselves to be *expressive gaps*: in the framework of text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense, these two terms can rightly be regarded as interchangeable.

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<sup>20</sup> This result in keeping with the basic tenet of Integral Linguistics that expressive competence (Level III), with its specific nature and content, is functionally autonomous from idiomatic competence (Level II), as well as from elocutional competence (Level I).

<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in the framework of text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense it will also be relevant and important to delve into the sense-constitutive roles that expression gaps may play in texts pertaining to other discourse types and textual genres than the poetic (literary) ones dealt with in Coseriu (1987) and in the present paper.

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## CONCEITOS DE AMOR EM *AMORIS LAETITIA*: ESPECIFICAÇÃO DA NOÇÃO DE UNIVERSO DE DISCURSO

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**ABSTRACT.** *Concepts of Love in the Exhortation Amoris Laetitia: Specification of the Concept of Universe of Discourse.* In this paper, we aim to revisit the concept of universe of discourse as proposed by Eugenio Coseriu, considering its specification and scope. To that end, we focus on the theme of love, the central topic addressed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, published by Pope Francis in 2016. This study seeks to identify the concepts of love presented in the Exhortation and to contextualize them across different universes of discourse. We first propose textual procedures based on which we identify the universes of discourse, drawing on principles introduced by Coseriu himself. Then, we identify various concepts of love: patient, compassionate, servile, fair, amiable, balanced, indulgent, genuine, devoted, hopeful, and resilient. Ultimately, we show that the universe of discourse of faith predominates in determining the validity of these concepts, given the nature of the text type (Apostolic Exhortation) and the field of knowledge to which it is linked (religious). However, common experience and science (philosophical, legal, psychological, and genetic knowledge) are also universes of discourse that contextualize those concepts. The result points to the proposal of an analytical tool for the universe of discourse, which may complement Coseriu's framework.

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**REZUMAT. Conceptele iubirii în Exortăția Amoris Laetitia: specificarea conceptului de univers de discurs.** În această lucrare, ne propunem să reluăm conceptul de univers de discurs, așa cum a fost propus de Eugenio Coseriu, luând în considerare specificarea și sfera sa de aplicare. În acest scop, ne concentrăm asupra temei iubirii, subiectul central abordat în Exortăția Apostolică *Amoris Laetitia*, publicată de Papa Francisc în 2016. Studiul urmărește să identifice, în cadrul exortăției, conceptele de iubire și să le contextualizeze în diferite universuri ale discursului. Mai întâi, propunem proceduri textuale pe baza cărora identificăm universurile discursului, inspirându-ne din principiile formulate chiar de Coseriu. Apoi, identificăm diverse ipostaze ale iubirii: răbdătoare, compasivă, altruistă, dreaptă, amabilă, echilibrată, indulgentă, autentică, plină de încredere, plină de speranță și rezilientă. În cele din urmă, demonstrăm că universul discursului religios (al credinței) predomină în determinarea valabilității acestor concepte, având în vedere natura tipului de text (Exortăție Apostolică) și domeniul de cunoaștere căruia îi aparține (religios). Cu toate acestea, experiența comună și știința (cunoștințele filosofice, juridice, psihologice și genetice) sunt, de asemenea, universuri ale discursului care contextualizează aceste concepte. Rezultatul indică o propunere de instrument analitic pentru universul discursului, care poate completa cadrul teoretic al lui Coseriu.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *lingvistică coseriană, contexte, sens, discurs religios, text, univers de discurs*

## Considerações iniciais

Uma das muitas questões que estão na base das ideias de Eugenio Coseriu sobre a linguagem é o fato de que o conteúdo (o sentido) de um enunciado não corresponde necessariamente à sua expressão, assim como não corresponde sempre ao que se compreende, o que de fato é dito não carrega necessariamente o que o falar significa. Para responder a essa questão, Coseriu constata que não há discurso sem circunstância (sem um entorno). Desse modo, ele propõe a noção de entorno como as circunstâncias que orientam o discurso, seja para a atribuição de sentido, seja para a determinação do valor de verdade dos enunciados.

Um dos tipos de entornos são os universos de discursos (UD), que compreendem quatro tipos: o universo da experiência comum, o universo da ciência e da técnica científica, o universo da fantasia e da arte e o universo da fé. Assim como ocorre com muitas outras proposições teóricas de Coseriu, na

esteira do que atestam outros pesquisadores, reconhecemos que é possível aprofundar teoricamente a noção de UD assim como propor um desenho analítico com o qual se possa operar em textos concretos.

Inspirados no trabalho de Pascalău (2010), que põe em foco as relações entre os UD da fé, da ciência e da filosofia e o conceito de Deus, chegamos à Exortação apostólica pós-sinodal *Amoris Laetitia* (EAP-AL), texto produzido pelo Papa Francisco, tornado público em 2016. Como o principal tema desse texto é o amor, tal qual retratado no título (*Amoris Laetitia* - A alegria do Amor), pensamos em explorar o conceito de amor e sua relação com os UD. Supomos, por razões óbvias, que o UD da fé é o marco essencial dos conceitos teológicos adotados pela Igreja Católica Romana, firmado no cânone da Bíblia Sagrada. Entretanto, como a Igreja tem redesenhado seus fundamentos, processo evidenciado no Concílio Vaticano II<sup>3</sup> (Mendes, 2012), é possível que haja um movimento de saída desse UD e que outros UD passem a circunstanciar seus conceitos. Tendo essa possibilidade em mente na busca de especificações, acabamos por revisitar a própria noção de UD em algum grau.

### A concepção coseriana de universo de discurso

A noção de UD compõe uma perspectiva mais ampla proposta inicialmente por Coseriu no célebre trabalho intitulado “Determinación y entorno” (Coseriu, 1967) para dar conta das circunstâncias do falar (o que constitui a teoria dos entornos). O UD é, portanto, um tipo de entorno, definido como “o sistema universal de significações a que pertence um discurso (ou um enunciado)”<sup>4</sup> (Coseriu 1967, 318).

A fim de elucidar tal noção, Coseriu (1967, 318) propõe o seguinte exemplo.

O valor de verdade de uma afirmação acerca de “Ulisses” não se verifica na história grega, mas na Odisseia, e na tradição correspondente, onde “Ulisses é o marido de Penélope” é uma proposição verdadeira, enquanto “Ulisses era o marido de Helena” é falsa; e as afirmações acerca dos

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<sup>3</sup> O Concílio Vaticano II foi uma assembleia ecumênica da Igreja Católica Romana convocada pelo Papa João XXIII e realizada entre os anos de 1962 e 1965, no Vaticano, em Roma. Um dos eventos mais significativos na história da Igreja Católica Romana do século XX, o principal objetivo do Concílio era renovar e atualizar a vida da Igreja para enfrentar os desafios e as oportunidades do mundo moderno.

<sup>4</sup> El sistema universal de significaciones al que pertenece un discurso (o un enunciado) y que determina su validez y su sentido.

“centauros” são verificáveis na mitologia, onde a proposição “o centauro era um sacrifício de cem touros” é falsa, enquanto “o centauro era um ser metade homem e metade cavalo é verdadeira”.<sup>5</sup>

Ainda que Coseriu não apresente uma lista de tipos de UD, é perceptível que os enunciados têm funcionamentos distintos e, portanto, são regulados por UD específicos. Não se pode, por exemplo, verificar a validade do enunciado “um ser metade homem, metade cavalo” com base em fatos da história, dado que não há registros ou estudos científicos que comprovem a existência de um ser que é metade homem, metade cavalo. A verdade ou falsidade desse enunciado é objetivada pelo universo a que pertence, ou seja, o conhecimento da mitologia grega (Coseriu 1967).

Coseriu (1967) se reporta à crítica feita pelos lógicos positivistas a esse entendimento com base no argumento de que não existe outro mundo além do natural e conhecido empiricamente. Consequentemente, o enunciado “um ser metade homem e metade cavalo” seria falso, já que não pode ser verificado no mundo natural. Como contra-argumento, Coseriu declara o seguinte:

Não há mais de um mundo, é certo, mas as críticas aludidas, longe de invalidar o conceito de universo de discurso, revelam uma radical incompreensão do problema. Não se trata de outros “universos”, de outros “mundo de coisas”, mas de outros “universos de discurso”, de outros sistemas de significações (Coseriu 1967, 319).<sup>6</sup>

De fato, de acordo com a perspectiva de que não existem outros mundos naturais perceptíveis, mas outros universos de significações, o que determina o sentido e a validade de um discurso não é a sua verificabilidade científica ou empírica, mas o sistema de significados que o rege. Pode-se afirmar, por exemplo, que Ulisses é o marido de Penélope na obra da *Iliada* e se reconhecer que essa proposição é verdadeira, considerando os UD que circunstanciam a narrativa. Negar tal afirmação implicaria em uma perda de credibilidade, pois a história

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<sup>5</sup> El valor de verdad de una afirmación acerca de ‘Ulises’ no se verifica en la historia griega, sino en la *Odisea*, y en la tradición correspondiente, donde *Ulises era el marido de Penélope* es una proposición verdadera, mientras que *Ulises era el marido de Helena* es falsa; y las afirmaciones acerca de los ‘centauros’ son verificables en la mitología, donde la proposición *el centauro era un sacrificio de cien toros* es falsa, mientras que *el centauro era un ser mitad hombre y mitad caballo* es verdadera.

<sup>6</sup> No hay más que *un* mundo, es cierto; pero las críticas aludidas, lejos de invalidar el concepto de ‘universo de discurso’, revelan una radical incompreensión del problema. No se trata de otros ‘universos’, de otros ‘mundos de cosas’, sino de otros ‘universos de *discurso*’, de otros *sistemas de significaciones*.

da *Ilíada* constitui-se como uma abstração ficcional, cuja veracidade deve ser compreendida no âmbito da tradição literária e simbólica que a sustenta e não nos domínios da ciência ou do mundo empírico.

O quadro sobre os entornos é retomado na obra “Textlinguistik. Eine Einführung” (Coseriu 1980) e “Lingüística del texto” (Coseriu 2007) com outro propósito, no contexto da discussão sobre o funcionamento do signo linguístico no texto. Nessa perspectiva, os entornos são mobilizados para dar conta dos diferentes tipos de relações do signo que explicam seu funcionamento textual. Para Coseriu (1980; 2007), o texto só pode significar e ser interpretado fora do que ele diz, para além da materialidade linguística, graças às atividades expressivas complementares, que são atividades não-verbais, entre as quais se encontram, principalmente, os entornos.

Seguindo a mesma linha de raciocínio anterior, Coseriu mantém a ideia de condição de verdade que os UD carregam: “os valores de verdade se estabelecem essencialmente dentro do universo de discurso a que pertence cada proposição”<sup>7</sup> (Coseriu 2007, 106). Nesse trabalho, é igualmente retomada a definição de UD como um “sistema universal de significações a que pertence o discurso (ou um enunciado) e que determina sua validade e seu sentido”<sup>8</sup> (Coseriu 2007, 100). Todavia, ele acrescenta que “os universos de discurso não são ‘mundos’, mas sistemas de significações aos quais se poderia dar o nome – já um pouco conotado – de ‘concepções de mundo’”<sup>9</sup> (Coseriu 2007, 106).

Quando argumenta que UD não são mundos, Coseriu (2007) está igualmente refutando as críticas que buscam deslegitimar essa perspectiva com base na defesa de que só existe um mundo real e cognoscível. Mais uma vez, Coseriu concorda com essa premissa, porém sinaliza que a sua perspectiva se mantém válida, na medida em que os UD se referem a concepções de mundo específicas de cada sistema de significações e não de outros mundos reconhecidos. Acreditar que só existe uma concepção de mundo é reduzir todo pensamento a um único mundo real, em outros termos, ao mundo empiricamente cognoscível. Coseriu defende que “toda forma de interpretação do mundo, isto é, toda modalidade coerente de falar sobre o mundo representa um sistema dessa classe”<sup>10</sup> (Coseriu 2007, 105). Esses sistemas, com efeito, representam concepções de mundo variadas.

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<sup>7</sup> Os valores de verdad [...] se establecen esencialmente dentro del universo de discurso al que pertenece cada proposición [...].”

<sup>8</sup> Sistema universal de significaciones al que pertenece un discurso (o un enunciado) y que determina su validez y su sentido.

<sup>9</sup> Los universos de discurso no son ‘mundos’, sino sistemas de significaciones, algo a lo que podría darse el nombre – ya un poco connotado – de ‘concepciones del mundo’.

<sup>10</sup> Toda forma de interpretación del mundo, esto es, toda modalidad coerente de hablar sobre el mundo representa un sistema de esta clase.

Além dessa discussão, Coseriu (2007) acrescenta que existem tipos de UD, apesar de não especificar quantos e quais são esses tipos: “o universo de discurso é, no entanto, distinto segundo se fale no marco da mitologia, da ciência ou da história” (Coseriu 2007, 42)<sup>11</sup>. A história, a mitologia e a ciência se assentam ou formam UD particulares.

O tema do UD é novamente tratado por Coseriu no trabalho “Orationis fundamenta. La plegaria como texto” (Coseriu 2003), tradução póstuma de uma comunicação feita no “Congresso Intenzdzionale Orationis Millennium”, que ocorreu em Aquila no ano 2000. Nesse trabalho, Coseriu faz um detalhamento teórico sobre a noção de UD, que ele afirma ter amadurecida. Esse amadurecimento passa pelo estabelecimento de uma distinção entre UD e mundos do conhecimento: “os universos de discurso referem-se às modalidades do conhecimento; entretanto, os ‘mundos’ correspondem aos ‘objetos’ do conhecer e do saber” (Coseriu 2003, 16). Além dessa distinção, são apresentados 4 tipos de UD (experiência comum, ciência, fantasia e fé) e 3 tipos de mundo do conhecimento (necessidade e causalidade, liberdade e finalidade e fé).

O contato do ser humano com o mundo gera conhecimento, e a linguagem funciona como meio fundamental para significar e expressar essa realidade. A linguagem é um dos meios pelos quais a realidade é significada e expressa e torna-se conhecimento no contato do ser humano com o mundo. Esse conhecimento constitui diferentes âmbitos do saber que, a partir de processos internos, autônomos e subjetivos, desdobram-se em distintos modos de significação. Para Coseriu, os diferentes âmbitos correspondem a mundos do conhecimento, e os modos de significação são os UD.

Nesse sentido, os UD funcionam como formas de sistematização dos conhecimentos que se originam nos distintos âmbitos do conhecer, expressando modos autônomos de conhecimento. O mundo do conhecimento da necessidade e da causalidade configuram o modo de significação do UD das experiências comuns; o mundo da liberdade e da finalidade, no UD da ciência e da fantasia/arte; e o mundo da fé, ao UD da fé. Além disso, os UD organizam-se de acordo com sua natureza constitutiva: a empiria (UD das experiências comuns), a livre expressão humana (liberdade/finalidade, ciência, fantasia/arte), e subjetivação teológica (fé) (Coseriu 2003).

Cada um dos UD apresenta uma objetividade própria que caracteriza a sua natureza:

A objetividade do universo de discurso empírico é a que se dá pela experiência corrente; a objetividade da ciência é a que se estabelece a cada vez na investigação científica; a objetividade própria do universo

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<sup>11</sup> El universo de discurso es, sin embargo, distinto según se hable en el marco de la mitología, de la ciencia o de la historia.

poético é a do mundo que se cria pela fantasia; e a objetividade específica do universo da fé é a objetividade do mundo próprio da fé (que não nega nem exclui os outros tipos de objetividade nos âmbitos correspondentes) (Coseriu 2003, 18).<sup>12</sup>

Podemos ilustrar esse raciocínio considerando a concepção do “perdão” no seguinte enunciado que compõe um texto religioso: “O perdão pressupõe a experiência de já ter sido perdoado por Deus, justificado gratuitamente, e não pelos nossos méritos”. A ideia de que o perdão decorre do amor que o cristão, consciente de sua condição pecaminosa, experimenta com Deus só pode ser validada no âmbito do UD da fé, isto é, no sistema de significação em que o mundo e a humanidade são concebidos como obras de um ser divino. Essa concepção não se sustenta no UD da ciência, cujo princípio de objetivação exige metodologias empíricas e verificáveis. Como a existência de deus não pode ser comprovada por métodos empíricos no mundo natural, não é possível afirmar, nesse âmbito, que o ato de perdoar dependa da experiência do perdão divino.

### Os universos de discurso e os conceitos de amor

A EAP-AL é um documento de 118 páginas, composto por 9 capítulos. Tendo em vista nosso interesse nos conceitos de amor, fizemos um primeiro recorte e nos debruçamos sobre o capítulo IV (O amor no matrimônio), porque como diz o próprio Papa Francisco, trata-se de um dos capítulos centrais dedicados ao amor. Nesse capítulo, operamos um segundo recorte e chegamos a 19 porções textuais em que se estabelecem pontualmente diferentes conceitos de amor. Nesses recortes, com base em relações léxico-semânticas, identificamos os conceitos de amor e aplicamos uma expressão delimitadora para nomear esses conceitos. No trecho 1, por exemplo, a reiteração do termo “paciência” nos permitiu identificar e nomear “amor paciente” como um conceito de amor.

#### 1

[...] não se deixa levar pelos impulsos interiores e evita agredir. A paciência é uma qualidade do Deus da Aliança, que convida a imitá-lo também na vida familiar. [...]. A paciência de Deus é exercício da misericórdia de Deus para com o pecador e manifesta o verdadeiro poder (EAP-AL, 91-2).

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<sup>12</sup> La objetividad del universo de discurso empírico es la que se da por la experiencia corriente; la objetividad de la ciencia es la que se establece cada vez en la investigación científica; la objetividad propia del universo poético es la del mundo que se crea por la fantasía; y la objetividad específica del universo de la fe es la objetividad del mundo propio de la fe (que ni niega ni excluye los otros tipos de objetividad en los ámbitos que les corresponden).

Para a identificação dos UD, utilizamos um conjunto de seis operações linguísticas as quais desenvolvemos com base em Coseriu (1979): (a) nomeação, (b) realização, (c) delimitação, (d) quantificação, (e) situação e (f) associação. A operação de nomeação identifica entes ou objetos denotados e atua como agentes ou participantes, que são expressos por nomes, grupos nominais, substitutos de nome ou grupos nominais. A realização identifica os processos ou as ações realizadas pelos entes ou os objetos denotados. A delimitação é a operação por meio da qual se destaca ou se acentua uma característica inerente ao ente ou ao objeto denotado. A quantificação opera o estabelecimento de uma quantidade ou intensidade dos objetos denotados, podendo ser definida ou indefinida. A situação é a operação mediante a qual os entes denotados se vinculam e se localizam em relação às circunstâncias enunciativas (pessoa, espaço, tempo). Por fim, a associação opera os diferentes tipos de conexão entre enunciados que se organizam em torno dos entes ou objetos.

Ainda tomando como exemplo o trecho 1, podemos identificar que o ente “Deus” se conecta ao ente “aliança” por meio da operação de associação (expressa por “da”), que indica posse, ou seja, o Deus que possui uma aliança. Ao longo da Bíblia, vários tipos de aliança são narrados, como a que Deus firmou com Noé e a que Moisés, a encargo desse mesmo Deus, estabeleceu com Israel. Contudo, a maior de todas as alianças é a firmada com o derramamento do sangue de Jesus para fins de salvação dos cristãos. A operação de realização (marcada por “é exercida”) indica que o ente “paciência” é realizado em virtude do ente “misericórdia”. Em outras palavras, a paciência é uma qualidade do Deus da aliança, que perdoa os seres humanos, apesar de suas falhas e limitações (os pecados). Com base nessas operações, temos uma base material para a identificação de um mundo de conhecimento específico ao qual está atrelado um sistema de significação, ou seja, o UD da fé.

Por outro lado, o ente “vida familiar” denota uma perspectiva genuína de família, não abstrata, um núcleo em que se compartilha comportamentos mundanos, ou seja, uma realidade factual. Na EAP-AL, Francisco não trata de relacionamentos ideais. Nesse caso, é mobilizado um mundo de conhecimento atrelado ao UD das experiências comuns. O valor de verdade do conceito de amor paciente está circunscrito no elo estabelecido entre a realidade do comportamento humano (UD das experiências comuns) e a expressão da misericórdia divina (UD da fé).

Portanto, tomando como base as relações léxico-semânticas, nos trechos recortados da EAP-AL, identificamos um total de 11 conceitos: (1) amor paciente, (2) amor compassivo, (3) amor servil, (4) amor justo, (5) amor amável, (6) amor equilibrado, (7) amor indulgente, (8) amor genuíno, (9) amor confiante, (10) amor esperançoso e (11) amor resiliente. Os onze conceitos de amor são

validados pelos UD da fé, da experiência comum e da ciência. No caso do UD da ciência, operamos uma subdivisão com base no domínio do conhecimento: filosófico, jurídico, psicológico, genético. O quadro 1 resume essa relação.

**Quadro 1.** Conceitos de amor e UD

<b>Conceitos de amor</b>	<b>Universos de discurso</b>
(1) amor paciente	UD da fé/UD da experiência comum
(2) amor compassivo	UD da fé/UD da experiência comum
(3) amor servil	UD da ciência (subtipo filosófico)
(4) amor justo	UD da ciência (subtipo jurídico)
(5) amor amável	UD da fé/UD da experiência comum
(6) amor equilibrado	UD da fé/UD da experiência comum/UD da ciência (subtipo psicológico)
(7) amor indulgente	UD da fé/UD da experiência comum
(8) amor genuíno	UD da fé
(9) amor confiante	UD da experiência comum/UD da ciência (subtipo genético)
(10) amor esperançoso	UD da fé/UD da experiência comum
(11) amor resiliente	UD da fé/UD da experiência comum

Conforme se constata no quadro 1, o UD da fé é dominante. Trata-se, de fato, de uma constatação previsível dada a natureza do texto (Exortação apostólica) e do campo do conhecimento ao qual está vinculado (discurso religioso). O discurso de Francisco é sobremaneira circunstanciado pelo UD da fé em virtude de seu ofício como profeta de Deus e chefe máximo da Igreja Católica Apostólica Romana, que, como tal, atende aos dogmas e aos princípios que regem a instituição de que faz parte, com base no cânone central da fé cristã, a Bíblia sagrada.

Dada a prevalência do UD da Fé, podemos pensar em propor uma expansão da caracterização desse UD tal como feita por Coseriu. O autor reconhece que o UD da fé tem como princípio a relação assimétrica de subjetivação do homem a uma divindade. Isso diz respeito ao processo pelo qual um indivíduo internaliza, assimila e se submete aos valores, às crenças e às normas associados a uma divindade ou a uma entidade religiosa. A subjetivação do homem a uma divindade é parte fundamental da identidade cristã e da sua experiência espiritual. A fé subjacente a esse princípio molda suas atitudes, seus comportamentos e suas perspectivas sobre o mundo, conferindo-lhe um sentido de propósito, de pertencimento.

O UD da fé sobre o qual falamos aqui é particular ao documento religioso papal (a EAP-AL), circunscrito ao domínio da religião Católica Apostólica Romana. A perspectiva de mundo do UD da fé que se desdobra nesse contexto possui, é claro, suas particularidades, que, certamente, se diferem, por exemplo, da perspectiva de mundo de outra religião, como o Islamismo, o Protestantismo, o Candomblé, por exemplo.

Com base no que aponta Coseriu (2003), já dissemos que os UD são maneiras de conhecer o mundo, que funcionam como lentes que atuam na construção de conceitos. Cada conceito é, por conseguinte, validado na medida em que se troca a lente, mas essa troca de lente (o tipo de UD) se mostrou um processo complexo que envolve a intersecção e a justaposição entre UD. No caso do (1) Amor paciente, por exemplo, demonstramos a intersecção entre o UD da fé e o UD da experiência comum na validação desse conceito. Já o conceito (6) Amor equilibrado tem sua validação operada na intersecção da fé e da experiência comum, que, por sua vez, se justapõe ao UD da ciência (subtipo psicológico).

O conceito de amor equilibrado foi identificado no trecho 2, com base nas relações semânticas e lexicais em torno de expressão “evitar dar prioridade”.

## 2

Como se diz muitas vezes, para amar os outros, é preciso primeiro amar-se a si mesmo. [...] deve evitar de dar prioridade ao amor a si mesmo, como se fosse mais nobre do que o dom de si aos outros. Uma certa prioridade do amor a si mesmo só se pode entender como condição psicológica, pois uma pessoa que seja incapaz de se amar a si mesma sente dificuldade em amar os outros [...] (EAP-AL, 82).

Operações como a de associação estabelecida pelo “como”, a de realização, estabelecida por “se diz”, e a de quantificação, estabelecida por “muitas vezes”, apontam para o conhecimento repercutido popularmente de que o amor aos outros só é possível quando primeiro se ama a si próprio. Trata-se de um conhecimento relacionado a crenças compartilhadas por uma determinada cultura ou sociedade, que congrega percepções e opiniões amplamente aceitas e aplicadas no dia a dia (sem necessariamente se basear em conhecimento científico ou análise crítica), segundo o qual o amor a si mesmo é uma condição para o cultivo do amor ao outro. Esse mundo de conhecimento específico configura o UD das experiências comuns.

Por outro lado, as operações de nomeação (denotação do ente “dom”), de realização (“deve evitar”) e delimitação (“nobre” atribuído ao ente amor) estabelece princípios da identidade do cristão católico (o princípio segundo o qual é mais importante considerar o bem-estar dos outros do que o de si mesmo, por exemplo). Nesse caso, estabelece-se um outro mundo de conhecimento, configurando um distinto sistema de significação: o da fé.

Igualmente, outras operações (associação, expressa por “como”, nomeação, expressa por “condição”, e delimitação, expressa “psicológica”) desenharam uma terceira circunstância do discurso, em que se mobiliza um outro mundo de conhecimento e, conseqüentemente, outro UD, no caso, o da ciência (subtipo psicológico). Nesse sistema de significação, reconhece-se uma condição –

mental ou emocional – experimentada por uma pessoa, que afeta seu estado psicológico. No entanto, o UD da ciência não está em intersecção com os UD da fé e da experiência comum, mas se justapõe a essa intersecção.

Assim, o conceito de amor equilibrado é validado na intersecção de dois UD (o das experiências comuns e o da fé) e na justaposição do UD da ciência – subtipo psicológico. Se for considerado somente o UD da fé na validação desse conceito, é impossível a admissão do amor-próprio contrariamente ao interesse do amor aos outros, uma vez que os princípios da valoração e da subjetivação do homem à divindade são essenciais e intransponíveis nesse modo de conhecer o mundo. Nessa lógica, há uma nuance de perspectiva de mundo que perpassa os três UD na qual o amor-próprio é essencial (UD das experiências comuns), mas não é prioridade em detrimento do amor ao próximo (UD da fé), ao mesmo tempo que é condição psicológica, pois a incapacidade de amar a si interfere na capacidade de amar o outro (UD da ciência psicológica).

Essa análise demonstra que não é possível a relação entre UD da fé e UD da ciência. Nos conceitos em que o UD da fé e o UD da ciência entram como sistemas de significação, o UD da experiência comum atua como uma espécie de mediador para que a validação do conceito seja operada pelos três UD e, assim, configura-se um certo modo de funcionamento: o UD da ciência se aproxima do UD da experiência comum no que se refere ao aprofundamento e a testagem do conhecimento adquirido pela empiria, e se afasta do UD da fé, pois não há como se associar a causalidade do mundo da ciência à subjetivação do homem a uma divindade, princípio do UD da fé. Os modos de conhecer e de organizar o mundo dos UD da ciência e da fé são tão díspares que, para haver uma justaposição de valores e de princípios do modo de conhecer, é preciso que exista um outro tipo de UD no entremeio (o UD da experiência comum). Isso ocorre, por exemplo, com os conceitos amor equilibrado e amor confiante.

Como forma de conhecer, baseada no método sistemático de investigação, na experimentação e na análise de evidências empíricas, a ciência se concentra na compreensão natural do mundo e na explicação dos fenômenos observáveis, por meio de leis naturais. Enquanto a ciência busca explicar o "como" e o "porquê" dos fenômenos, a fé pode fornecer respostas para questões relacionadas ao propósito, ao significado ou à moralidade da existência humana, subjetivada a uma figura divina. Embora a ciência não negue a existência de uma divindade, também não a confirma. A existência de divindades continua sendo uma questão pessoal, que não pode ser investigada sistematicamente e empiricamente, portanto, não passível de intersecção com a visão de mundo da ciência.

Ao contrário da intersecção entre ciência e fé, a intersecção entre ciência e experiência comum é factível. A ciência questiona a experiência comum e oferece explicações alternativas para fenômenos que são percebidos de forma

diferente pela empiria assistemática. A ciência com seus diferentes métodos contribui para *insights* mais precisos do que a simples percepção humana direta. Por exemplo, a experiência comum pode sugerir que a Terra é plana, pois parece plana quando olhamos ao nosso redor. No entanto, a ciência nega essa visão com base em evidências científicas, como observações astronômicas, experimentos físicos e cálculos matemáticos.

### **Considerações finais**

A tarefa que empreendemos, ao tomar a noção de UD para operar a análise de um texto concreto, pareceu-nos um movimento de especificação dessa noção – um dos nossos propósitos com este trabalho. Como dissemos, a noção de UD é apenas um aspecto que compõe uma outra noção, mais geral, a de entorno, proposta por Coseriu para explicar as condições de produção do falar. No entanto, isoladamente, os UD podem ser mobilizados para finalidades mais específicas e pontuais, como é o caso da explicação que empreendemos sobre a validade dos conceitos de amor na EAP-AL, um documento histórico no contexto do catolicismo apostólico romano.

Ao explicarmos a validade dos conceitos de amor na EAP-AL, indicamos direcionamentos acerca da maneira como a Igreja Católica tem redesenhado seus fundamentos, sugerindo a possibilidade de um movimento que permita o circunstanciamento desses conceitos em modos de conhecimento distintos, não restritos exclusivamente ao da fé. Trata-se também de uma perspectiva mais ampla de abertura para a utilização de categorias postuladas pelos estudos da linguagem para a reflexão de temas mais gerais da vida em sociedade.

A identificação dos UD se apresentou como um limite para a análise, pois não há na obra do próprio Coseriu, nem na obra de seus seguidores interessados no tema, alguma proposição a esse respeito. Para dar conta desse limite, propomos as sete operações – nomeação, realização, delimitação, quantificação, situação e associação –, por meio das quais foi possível operar uma identificação mais objetiva dos UD. Trata-se de uma especificação do ponto de vista teórico, que podemos agregar à noção de UD. Certamente, o procedimento de identificação dos UD, pela via de operações, pode ser refinado.

Igualmente, do ponto de vista teórico, agregamos outra especificação. O desenho proposto por Coseriu prevê quatro tipos de UD: experiência comum, ciência, fantasia e fé. Para dar conta da particularidade do texto que analisamos, surgiu a necessidade de propor subtipos para o UD da ciência, considerando a diversidade do conhecimento científico: o filosófico, o jurídico, o psicológico, o genético (nos trechos analisados). Da mesma forma, a ideia de criação de

subtipos dentro de cada UD pode ser desenvolvida. Pensamos, por exemplo, que o UD da fé pode incorporar subtipos em função das perspectivas de fé das diferentes religiões.

Nossa análise também revelou que o processo de validação dos conceitos circunstanciados por diferentes UD é complexo, pois os UD não constituem circunstâncias isoladas; enquanto mundos de significação vinculados a mundos de conhecimento, mantêm entre si diversos tipos de relações. Parece haver, por exemplo, uma intersecção mais fácil entre o UD da fé e o UD da experiência comum, em razão da possibilidade cambiável de visão de mundo entre esses UD, ao passo que uma intersecção entre o da fé e o da ciência é bem menos provável, dada a impossibilidade de conexão direta entre os dois modos de significar e conhecer. Estabelece-se também, nesse caso, outro ponto que merece desdobramento. Há de se pensar sobre o domínio do texto (que não seja o religioso) e os processos de validação de conceitos nos diferentes UD. No caso da EAP-AL, não ocorre nenhum conceito de amor validado pelo UD da fantasia, logo, se abre a perspectiva de pensar sobre o vínculo entre esse UD e os demais.

Para concluir, assinalamos que a tarefa de refletir sobre os conceitos de amor EAP-AL, em última instância, é parte do nosso intento de ecoar os princípios da proposta de Coseriu e abrir caminhos metodológicos à sua aplicação em fatos de linguagem diversos.

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## JAPANESE PRODUCT NAMES INVOLVING ‘CONTRADICTION’: AN INTEGRAL LINGUISTIC VIEW ON THEIR SENSE-CREATING MECHANISM

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**ABSTRACT.** *Japanese Product Names Involving ‘Contradiction’: An Integral Linguistic View on Their Sense-Creating Mechanism.* In Japanese, there is a certain group of product names that cause a feeling of ‘contradiction’. By analyzing them, this paper aims to uncover a type of expressive knowledge that can be referenced to create the sense <the product designated is an innovative and attractive offering for consumers>. For instance, *nomu-purin* (drink-pudding), a pudding product consumed by drinking, appears to contradict, or be incongruent with, the empirical elocutional knowledge of pudding being eaten with a spoon. However, the expression immediately turns out to be congruent through its designation; the pudding designated is in a tube-like, rather than a conventional plastic or glass, container, enabling it to be consumed by drinking, so that the incongruence is suspended. This suspension characterizes the product as having the innovative feature of drinking rather than eating. This eaten-without-a-spoon

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feature in turn suggests ease of consumption, which is attractive to consumers: the sense of the product name *nomu-purin*. Furthermore, some of these product names, e.g., *taberu-rāyu* (eat-chili oil), have become part of the Japanese idiomatic knowledge and can, via evocation, serve as a basis for interpreting similar product names, e.g., *taberu-dashi jōyu* (eat-broth soy sauce) and *taberu, sukiyaki* (eat, sukiyaki).

**Keywords:** *suspension, sense, designation, evocation, expressive knowledge*

**REZUMAT.** *O perspectivă lingvistic-integrală asupra mecanismului de creare a sensului în cazul unor denumiri de produse japoneze care implică o 'contradicție'.* În japoneză există o categorie de denumiri de produse care provoacă o impresie de 'contradicție'. Prin analiza acestora, lucrarea de față își propune să circumscrie un tip de cunoaștere expresivă care poate fi utilizată pentru a crea sensul <produsul desemnat este o ofertă inovatoare și atractivă pentru consumatori>. De exemplu, *nomu-purin* (budincă de băut), un produs pe bază de budincă dar consumat prin băut, este o expresie incongruentă, întrucât pare să se afle în contradicție cu cunoașterea elocuțională (în mod obișnuit, budinca se mănâncă, nu se bea). Cu toate acestea, expresia se dovedește a fi congruentă prin designația sa; budinca respectivă este ambalată într-un recipient tubular, nu într-unul convențional din plastic sau sticlă, ceea ce permite consumarea ei prin băut, astfel încât incongruența este suspendată. Această suspendare caracterizează produsul ca având caracteristica inovatoare de a fi băut, mai degrabă decât mâncat. Această caracteristică sugerează, la rândul său, ușurința consumului, ceea ce este atractiv pentru consumatori, generând astfel sensul asociat denumirii produsului *nomu-purin*. În plus, studiul nostru evidențiază faptul că unele dintre aceste denumiri de produse, de exemplu *taberu-rāyu* (lit. a mânca - ulei de ardei iute), au intrat în cunoașterea idiomatică japoneză și pot servi, prin evocare, ca bază pentru interpretarea unor noi denumiri de produse similare, de exemplu *taberu-dashi jōyu* (lit. a mânca - sos de soia pentru supă) și *taberu, sukiyaki* (lit. a mânca, sukiyaki).

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *suspendare, sens, designație, evocare, cunoaștere expresivă*

## 1. Introduction

In Japanese, there is a certain group of product names that cause a feeling of 'contradiction'. One such example is *nomu-purin* (drink-pudding).<sup>3</sup> *Purin* is a noun modified by the prenominal form of the verb *nomu* (to drink), which,

<sup>3</sup> See the following website for the product information:  
<https://frozen24.com/products/%E3%83%97%E3%83%AA%E3%83%B3%E5%B0%82%E9%96%80%E5%BA%97%E6%98%A5%E5%A4%8F%E7%A7%8B%E5%86%AC%E9%A3%B2%E3%82%80%E3%83%97%E3%83%AA%E3%83%B3-2%E6%9C%AC%E5%85%A5%E3%82%8A>, (available as of April 26, 2025)

although it is the same as its dictionary form, functions as a noun modifier. *Nomu-purin* as a whole means 'pudding [that one] drinks', which at first glance contradicts our empirical knowledge that pudding is eaten with a spoon. This contradiction, within the Integral Linguistic framework of E. Coseriu, is characterized as "incongruence".

A product name of this sort, because of its incongruent nature, might seem likely to be refused as nonsense. However, the actual situation is otherwise: consumers are likely to find out a way to accept it in a "congruent" manner. Turning our attention back to *nomu-purin*, its consumers can immediately understand it as congruent through its reference, or "designation" (Coseriu 1985). The pudding referred to (or designated) is in a tube-like, rather than a conventional plastic or glass, container, enabling it to be consumed by drinking.

There is a wide range of similar examples in the Japanese community, such as *taberu-rāyu* (eat-chili oil), *kiru-mōfu* (wear-blanket), and *haru-tansan* (apply-carbonic acid), which share a morphological structure in which the right-hand noun is modified by a left-hand prenominal verbal form. This suggests that the practice of naming products using such contradiction is integrated into "expressive knowledge": "a knowledge about how certain discourses should be constructed in certain situations" (Coseriu 1985, xxix).

It might be said that product names such as *nomu-purin* sound unique because of their counter-intuitive, and therefore attention-grabbing, nature (which can potentially lead to increased sales). However, is such an attention-grabbing function really the ultimate purpose of this naming? There are other simpler yet congruent ways to make products eye-catching. In the case of pudding, simply giving the product a name with exaggeratedly admiring phrases—such as *kizetsu suru hodo oishii purin* 'a pudding so delicious it could make you faint'—is sufficient for it to stand out. This leads us to assume that the expressive knowledge involved in the creation of product names under discussion is also oriented toward something beyond merely attracting attention, which this paper will identify as a certain text-specific content, or "sense" (Coseriu 1985, 2007 [1980]). More specifically, we will argue that the sense of product names involving contradiction (henceforth, PNCs) is <the product designated is an innovative and attractive offering for consumers>. <sup>4</sup> PNCs sound unique not only because of their incongruent, thus eye-catching titles, but because of this very sense.

After introducing some theoretical notions necessary for the upcoming discussion, Section 3 explains how incongruence leads to the sense of PNCs, using *nomu-purin* as an example. This section also provides further examples to

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<sup>4</sup> To indicate the sense of PNCs, angle brackets are used.

help gain a better understanding of the sense-creation mechanism of PNCs. These product names, however, do not always remain limited to ad hoc usage. Some can enter the Japanese lexicon, or idiomatic knowledge. Once they become part of idiomatic knowledge, they can be referenced to create other product names, sometimes by adding further deviations to the base product name. Section 4 demonstrates such phenomena with the famous product name *taberu-rāyu* (eat-chili oil) ‘chili oil [that one] eats’. PNCs can also make theoretical contributions. The phenomenon where incongruence (and incorrectness) is accepted in a specific context is termed “suspension” (sublation, *Aufhebung*) (Coseriu 2001[1976], 2007[1980], 2007[1988]). Coseriu (2001[1976], 2007[1988]) distinguishes three types of suspension in discourse, but Section 5 points out that the suspension involved in PNCs does not seem to correspond to any of these three types. Thus, it might be regarded as a fourth type of suspension in discourse. Once PNCs are classified as a new type of suspension, they can be clearly distinguished from superficially similar yet crucially different product names, such as *nomu-masuku* (drink-mask) (Chika and Sumide 2025). Section 6 concludes the discussion.

## 2. Some Theoretical Notions

### 2.1. Linguistic Knowledge (Competence)

For Coseriu, language is, first and foremost, an activity (Coseriu 1978), and this activity can be captured from three different points of view: activity as such, “the knowledge that underlines the activity”, and “the product that is created by the activity” (Coseriu 2007[1988], 71, trans. ours).<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Coseriu posits that “language is a *universal* human activity that is carried out *individually*, but always according to *historically* determined techniques («languages»)” (Coseriu 1981, 269, trans. ours).<sup>6</sup> This means that linguistic activity can be divided into three different levels: universal, historical, and individual. Combining these three points of view and three levels produces the following table:

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<sup>5</sup> “das Wissen, das der Tätigkeit zugrundeliegt”, “das Produkt, das durch die Tätigkeit geschaffen wird” (Coseriu 2007[1988], 71)

<sup>6</sup> “[e]l lenguaje es una actividad humana *universal* que se realiza *individualmente*, pero siempre según técnicas *históricamente* determinadas («lenguas»)” (Coseriu 1981, 269)

**Table 1.** The Integral Linguistic View toward Language  
(Coseriu 1985, xxix, with slight modifications)

Levels	Points of view		
	Activity	Knowledge	Product
Universal	Speaking in general	Elocutional knowledge	Totality of utterances
Historical	Concrete particular language	Idiomatic knowledge	(Abstracted particular language)
Individual	Discourse	Expressive knowledge	Text

Within this framework, linguistic knowledge (competence) is of particular importance for our discussion. Idiomatic knowledge is a good starting point for distinguishing the three levels of knowledge. This knowledge is “to know how to speak according to the linguistic tradition of a community” (Coseriu 1998, 13, trans. ours).<sup>7</sup> Thus, English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation constitute idiomatic knowledge.

Elocutional knowledge “comprises everything that applies in principle to all languages independently of their respective linguistic structuring” (Coseriu 1985, xxix). Specifically, it is concerned with “how one speaks congruently and coherently” (Coseriu 2007[1988], 224, trans. ours),<sup>8</sup> according to principles of thought and the general knowledge of the world (Coseriu 1985, xxix). The existence of this knowledge can be demonstrated by observing deviations. For example, “The five continents are four: Europe, Asia and Africa” (Coseriu 1985, xxvii) normally sounds strange because the numerals are inconsistent: the speaker claims five is four and lists only three continents. This negative judgment is based on our principles of thought. It should be noted that the negative judgment persists regardless of language: in Japanese, too, five is not four, and four is not three. Thus, elocutional knowledge goes beyond the historical level.

Finally, expressive knowledge is “a knowledge about how certain discourse should be constructed in certain situations” (Coseriu 1985, xxix). For example, in Japan (and many other communities), formal business emails are generally expected to begin with the recipient’s name (and their title). Thus, if an email starts directly with the main body without mentioning the recipient’s name, the recipient will assume that the sender lacks proper expressive knowledge relevant to email writing.

<sup>7</sup> “saber hablar de acuerdo con la tradición lingüística de una comunidad” (Coseriu 1998, 13)

<sup>8</sup> “wie man kongruent und kohärent spricht” (Coseriu 2007[1988], 224)

## 2.2. Linguistic Judgments

As noted above, expressions can be evaluated from the viewpoint of all three types of knowledge (Coseriu 1985, 1998, 2007[1988]). The continent example above is judged negatively because it deviates from elocutional knowledge. The strangeness rooted in elocutional knowledge is termed “incongruence”. On the other hand, utterances that accord with this knowledge are called “congruent”. For instance, “I boiled the piano” (Coseriu 1985, xxx) is more likely to be regarded as incongruent, while examples that align with our empirical knowledge like “I boiled eggs for breakfast” are fully acceptable, or congruent. At the historical level, expressions can be judged in two ways as well. Sentences such as “He likes reading books” are “correct” manifestations of idiomatic knowledge, whereas “He like reading books” is regarded as “incorrect”, as the absence of the third person singular *-s* is a deviation from standard English grammar. The individual level also has its own judgment. The above email example is judged negatively for lacking the recipient’s name. Expressions deviating from expressive knowledge are “inappropriate”. On the other hand, a business email which includes the recipient’s name as well as a subject line, the main body, a closing phrase such as “Best regards”, and the sender’s name will normally be regarded as “appropriate”.

What is important here is that judgments at different levels are independent of each other. The sentence “The five continents are four: Europe, Asia and Africa”, for instance, is grammatically correct, but nevertheless incongruent at the universal level. The email message without the recipient’s name is inappropriate even if it is written logically and coherently (i.e., congruently) in correct English.

## 2.3. Linguistic Contents

The three-level distinction also serves to categorize linguistic content: designation (or reference) at the universal level, signification (language-specific meaning) at the historical level, and sense at the individual level (Coseriu 1985, 2007[1988]).

Designation “is the relation to extra-linguistic objects or to the extra-linguistic reality itself, be it a state of affairs or the corresponding content of thought” (Coseriu 1985, xxx). Signification, on the other hand, “is the linguistically-given content in a particular language, the particular form of the possibilities of designation in a given language” (Coseriu 1985, xxx). In discourse, the designation and the signification function as a “textual sign (*Textzeichen*)” (Coseriu 2007[1980], 65), which expresses the text-specific content, or sense: sense is “the particular linguistic content which is expressed by means of designation and meaning [=signification] and which goes beyond

designation and meaning [=signification] in a particular discourse, such as a speaker's attitude, intention, or assumption" (Coseriu 1985, xxx). However, this is a simplified view of sense creation (Tămăianu-Morita 2014). Sense is manufactured not only through a textual sign (designation and signification) but also through other factors like suspension. In fact, Coseriu mentions that one must consider "what the 'building blocks' of the complex unity of sense are and how these building blocks can be put together to form a higher unity of sense" (Coseriu 2007[1980], 165, trans. ours).<sup>9</sup> Thus, sense must be identified by considering a complex unity of suspension, evocation (Coseriu 2007[1980]), etc. as well as designation and signification (see Tămăianu-Morita (2014) for details).

The following table summarizes the key theoretical notions introduced in this section:

**Table 2.** A summary of key theoretical notions

Levels	Knowledge (Competence)	Judgments	Content
Universal	elocutional knowledge	congruent/incongruent	designation
Historical	idiomatic knowledge	correct/incorrect	signification
Individual	expressive knowledge	appropriate/inappropriate	sense

### 3. Proposal

As discussed earlier, product names involving contradiction, or PNCs, sound unique. This uniqueness clearly arises from their incongruence, as deviations from norms tend to be conspicuous in a negative way (cf. Coseriu 2007[1988]). However, closer observation shows that PNCs do not merely serve to grab consumers' attention. The following subsections demonstrate that their uniqueness is also derived from the sense shared among them: <the product designated is an innovative and attractive offering for consumers>.

#### 3.1. The Sense-Creating Mechanism Based on Contradiction

Let us take *nomu-purin* (drink-pudding)<sup>10</sup> as an example to illustrate how the sense of PNCs is related to incongruence. *Nomu-purin* signifies

<sup>9</sup> "welches die 'Bausteine' komplexer Sinneinheiten sind und wie sich diese Bausteine zu höheren Sinneinheiten zusammenfügen lassen" (Coseriu 2007[1980], 165)

<sup>10</sup> This product was developed by *Purin Senmonten Haru Natsu Aki Fuyu*. However, it now appears to be sold as *tenshi-no-nomu-purin* (angel-genitive-drink-pudding) 'Angel's pudding [that one] drinks', where the element *tenshi-no* (angel's) is added in the left-most position to modify *nomu-purin* (<http://www.purin-shop.com/?pid=109554691> (available as of July 6, 2025)). This modification does not affect our discussion, as the contradictory combination between *nomu* and *purin* remains intact.

‘pudding [that one] drinks’. This signification is in contradiction to our elocutional knowledge that pudding is eaten with a spoon, leading to an incongruent judgment.<sup>11</sup> In spite of this incongruence, the expression is immediately accepted once consumers understand its designation. The pudding designated is in a tube-like, not a conventional plastic or glass, container. This unusual form enables it to be consumed by drinking, so that the incongruence is “suspended”, a phenomenon where incongruence (or incorrectness) is accepted in a specific context (Coseriu 2001[1976], 2007[1980], 2007[1988]; for details, see Section 5).<sup>12, 13</sup>

However, the incongruent product name is not merely accepted through its designation; one can also intuit the creator’s intention to give the product such an unusual name, as seen in Coseriu’s assertion that “[t]he essential in the suspension in text lies in recognizing an intentionality, a purpose” (Coseriu 2007[1988], 125, trans. ours).<sup>14</sup> In judging some expression as (in)congruent, one refers to general knowledge of the world. Upon encountering *nomu-purin*, one judges it as incongruent due to its inconsistency with the image of ordinary pudding eaten with a spoon (although this incongruence is suspended, as seen above). In other words, based on Coseriu (2007[1980]), *nomu-purin* “evokes” the conventional way of consuming pudding. This evocation leads consumers to contrast the product’s feature described by the left-hand element (i.e., drinking) with the evoked convention (i.e., eating), which in turn allows them

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<sup>11</sup> What is interesting with respect to incongruence observed in PNCs is the product name *kezura-nai-kakushitsu-kea?* (“scrub-not-keratin-care?”) by Liberta Co., Ltd., meaning ‘keratin care [in which one] does not scrub’. This name includes a question mark, which seems to signal a feeling of contradiction. Typically, keratin care involves removing dead skin cells or hardened areas using a foot file, pumice stone, or exfoliating scrub. The process often includes soaking the skin in warm water to soften it, followed by gentle scrubbing or filing to slough off excess keratin. Given this, keratin care without scrubbing, as suggested by the product name, sounds contradictory. This contradiction is likely represented by the question mark. Incidentally, the product is now sold without the question mark (the version with the question mark can be seen on the following website introducing the exfoliating product: <https://www.dreamnews.jp/press/0000017472/>, (available as of July 9, 2025)). It would be interesting to explore why the question mark was removed from the product name, but it is left for future research.

<sup>12</sup> Notice that the incongruence is not entirely eliminated from the product name, but rather is accepted through appropriateness (cf. Coseriu 2007[1980]). If the incongruence were completely removed, *nomu-purin* would no longer be eye-catching, nor would the sense derived from the incongruence be perceived. The incongruence, though accepted, remains present in the expression and contributes to the sense creation.

<sup>13</sup> Incongruence can also be suspended through correctness. This type of suspension, however, is not relevant to the present analysis and will therefore not be discussed further. For more details, see Coseriu (2007[1988]).

<sup>14</sup> “Das Wesentliche bei der Aufhebung im Text liegt darin, daß man eine Intentionalität, eine Absicht erkennt” (Coseriu 2007[1988], 125).

to notice that drinking is an innovative feature of the product. In fact, a company promoting this product explains on its website (provided in Footnote 3) that it was developed as a new kind of pudding.

However, being innovative is only one aspect of the product in question. The drinking feature would also strike consumers as attractive. In contrast to eating, drinking requires neither a spoon nor any analogous utensil. As the pudding can be consumed directly from the tube with one hand, it can be enjoyed more easily. Some may even imagine that if these tools are not used, the washing process can also be dispensed with. In this way, *nomu-purin* conveys a subtle yet tangible message of ease of consumption, which is likely to appeal to consumers. Indeed, this product is promoted with the description “[...] easy to drink, no spoon needed”.<sup>15, 16</sup>

The discussion thus far shows that the incongruence observed in *nomu-purin* makes a significant contribution to the creation of the sense: <the product designated is an innovative and attractive offering for consumers>. Note that this is a generalized sense shared by all PNCs, and thus the concrete sense of each product name is further specified. In our pudding example, the product is innovative and attractive with respect to its drinkable feature and ease of consumption, respectively.

### 3.2. Additional Examples for the Understanding of the General Property of the PNC Sense

As mentioned in Section 1, PNCs similar to *nomu-purin* are common in Japan. Interestingly, the product naming under discussion targets not only commercial products, but, for instance, recipe names and promotional phrases (thus, PNCs will be used below as a cover term). This fact indicates that the practice of employing contradiction against elocutional knowledge in product naming represents a form of expressive knowledge in Japanese society. Below, we gain a deeper understanding of this expressive knowledge by analyzing further examples of PNCs.

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<sup>15</sup> The original Japanese is “[...] 手軽に飲めて、スプーンもいらない”. The example is cited from the website referenced in Footnote 3.

<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the linguistic contrast between *nomu* and *taberu* may evoke the absence of a mastication process. For instance, rice is normally paired with the verb *taberu* (*Gohan-o taberu* ‘[I] eat rice’). If one says *Gohan-o nomu* ‘[I] drink rice’, the utterance conveys that the person swallows rice without chewing. When contrasted with *taberu*, the verb with which *purin* normally collocates, *nomu* would imply that the pudding product in question can be consumed easily without the need for mastication. We are grateful to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out the possible linguistic contrast between these two verbs discussed here.

**(i) *Taberu-rāyu* (eat-chili oil)**

*Taberu-rāyu* (e.g., by Moheji) is another, but even more famous, example of food products. This name literally means ‘chili oil [that one] eats’. *Rāyu* is a liquid condiment typically mixed with soy sauce and vinegar and used as a sauce for dumplings (*gyōza*). Since one can never eat ordinary *rāyu*, which is incompatible with the act of mastication evoked by *taberu*, *taberu-rāyu* leads to an incongruent judgment.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, unlike ordinary *rāyu*, *taberu-rāyu*, sold in a small jar, contains various ingredients such as fried garlic, fried onion, etc., which enables it to be eaten directly, for example, as a topping on rice (a typical way of eating it). In this way, referring to the real product results in suspension of the incongruence.

As with *nomu-purin*, the incongruence of *taberu-rāyu* helps convey the PNC sense: <the product designated is an innovative and attractive offering for consumers>. The following quotation from an online news article (especially the underlined part) describes the product’s innovative and attractive features:

[...] Traditionally, ordinary *rāyu* (chili oil) has been a staple condiment used to add an accent to soy sauce or dipping sauces, particularly when eating *gyōza* (dumplings).

By contrast, “*taberu-rāyu*” contains ingredients such as fried garlic and fried onion, and is enjoyed by pouring it over rice or tofu. In addition to the ease with which one can enjoy the spiciness of chili oil, its unexpected feature of “chili oil as a side dish” is thought to have attracted attention and have contributed to its popularity. (emphasis ours)<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to the evoked normal way of using *rāyu*—typically as a condiment eaten with dishes like *gyōza*—*taberu-rāyu* is innovative in that it can be enjoyed on its own, as a side dish with rice. In other words, it allows consumers to easily experience the spiciness of *rāyu* without needing to prepare other foods to go with it.

<sup>17</sup> However, *taberu-rāyu* has already been so popular in Japan that the name seems to have been incorporated into Japanese tradition and it may no longer sound contradictory, a point to which this paper returns in Section 4.

<sup>18</sup> <https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/469274?display=b> (available as of July 2, 2025). The original Japanese text is as follows:

“[...]もともとラー油と言えば、ギョウザなどを食べるときにアクセントとして、しょうゆやタレに垂らして食べるのが定番の調味料でした。一方の「食べるラー油」には、フライドガーリックやフライドオニオンなどの具材が入っており、ごはんや豆腐にかけて食べるという楽しみ方です。ラー油の刺激を手軽に味わえることに加え、「ラー油がおかずになる」という意外性も話題となり、人気になったと考えられます。”

**(ii) *Kiru-mōfu* (wear-blanket)**

An item classified into living wares can also be named with reference to the expressive knowledge concerning PNCs. Take as an instance *kiru-mōfu* (by Nitori Co., Ltd.),<sup>19</sup> whose right-hand element *mōfu* is modified by the prenominal form of the verb *kiru*. This item means 'a blanket [that one] wears', which deviates from our experience, as a blanket, especially Japanese *mōfu*, is normally used to cover oneself while sleeping, not to be worn like clothes. For this reason, *kiru-mōfu* is judged incongruent, but it is suspended through its designation: one can actually wear the blanket designated because its form is like a full-length coat.

Extracting the incongruent judgment from consumers, the name evokes the conventional way of using blankets, emphasizing its innovative feature: wearing. This innovative feature also appeals to consumers. In fact, the company promoting *kiru-mōfu* advertises it as follows: "The appeal [of this product] is that [it] lets you move around freely while staying wrapped in the warmth of a blanket" (trans. ours).<sup>20</sup> The sensation of being enveloped in a warm blanket while sleeping is truly exceptional. Allowing consumers to experience the same feeling while awake—and, moreover, to move around freely while wearing it—can justifiably be described as both innovative and attractive.

**(iii) *Haru-tansan* (apply-carbonic acid)**

This product is a cold compress that is applied to the legs. The foaming agent contained in the compress releases carbonic acid, which is said to provide a refreshing sensation to the legs.

Its official name is *haru-tansan-jieru-pakku* (apply-carbonic acid-gel-patch) 'gel patch with carbonic acid' (by Kao Corporation),<sup>21</sup> but on its package, *haru-tansan*, literally meaning 'carbonic acid [which one] applies', is emphasized with much larger letters, so that consumers are likely to notice this phrase first. Of particular interest is that this product was once sold under a different name: *tansan-de yawaraka ashi-pakku* (carbonic acid-with flexible foot-patch) 'a foot patch [that makes your foot] flexible with carbonic acid'.<sup>22</sup> The original name

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<sup>19</sup> See the following website for the product information:

[https://www.nitori-net.jp/ec/cat/Roomwear/BlanketWears/1/?srsltid=AfmBOop0ssbllRAbfxR6xHP5PiTIzudWMdb6B7BVZdBiqiEdEPLDYFN\\_](https://www.nitori-net.jp/ec/cat/Roomwear/BlanketWears/1/?srsltid=AfmBOop0ssbllRAbfxR6xHP5PiTIzudWMdb6B7BVZdBiqiEdEPLDYFN_) (available as of May 5, 2025)

<sup>20</sup> "毛布にくるまった暖かさのまま、自由に動き回れるのが魅力です。" (cited from the website referenced in Footnote 19)

<sup>21</sup> The English translation is taken from the company's website:  
<https://www.kao-kirei.com/jp/en/item/khg/megrhythm/4901301376954/?tw=khg>  
(available as of June 12, 2025).

<sup>22</sup> The former version can be accessed on the website cited in Footnote 21.

gives the product a descriptive characterization which makes it easier to understand, if not perfectly congruent (because one might wonder how carbonic acid is used as an ingredient in a compress).

The name *haru-tansan* may be somewhat more confusing than the former version. For Japanese people, the noun *tansan* most often brings to mind a carbonated beverage, such as sparkling water or soda. Given this, the name *haru-tansan* should feel strange to consumers: how can *tansan* be applied to their legs? However, once they see the rest of the name, i.e., *jieru-pakku* ‘gel patch’, and the product designated, consumers find that carbonic acid is a significant ingredient of gel patch and can thus be applied to the legs in the form of cold compress. As a result, the incongruence is suspended.

Given the conventional images evoked by *tansan*, the name *haru-tansan* reminds consumers of the refreshing sensation of drinking a carbonated beverage (in fact, the package depicts bubbles reminiscent of a fizzy drink), as described on the company’s website: “The only one in Japan! Gel patch with cooling sensation packed with plenty of carbonic acid (foaming agent). Once applied, the refreshing feel lasts for about 6 hours. The comfortable feel spreads gently. Feel refreshed and light even after walking a lot. [...]”.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the application of carbonic acid to the legs is confirmed as the product’s innovative and attractive features.

#### (iv) *Kone-nai-hanbāgu* (knead-not-Hamburg steak)

The expressive knowledge under discussion can be referenced, as mentioned above, not only in naming commercial products, but also, for instance, in recipes (although these, especially those published online or in books, can be considered commercial, as they are expected to attract a large audience). Such recipe names also demonstrate the PNC sense. Let us consider *kone-nai-hanbāgu*, meaning ‘Hamburg steak (which is made) without kneading’.<sup>24</sup> The Japanese *hanbāgu* refers to a seasoned ground beef patty in which kneading is a key cooking step. This empirical knowledge tells us that *hanbāgu* made without kneading sounds blatantly contradictory. Despite this, people recognize the congruency of the recipe name if they see, on the website, how the Hamburg steak is cooked without kneading.

The incongruent recipe name evokes the conventional cooking process, and those with cooking experience may find that making a seasoned ground beef patty from scratch requires some effort, particularly when it comes to mixing. Thus, the recipe’s hassle-free feature (i.e., without kneading) appears innovative and appealing to those planning meals. The attractive feature is emphasized on

<sup>23</sup> This citation is from the website cited in Footnote 21.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.nhk.jp/p/asaichi/ts/KV93JMQR8/recipe/te/779N2277Z1/rp/100002319/> (available as of May 7, 2025)

the website featuring the recipe: “You can make a juicy, meaty hamburger steak without the hassle of kneading!” (trans. ours).<sup>25</sup>

**(v) *Yomu-bunpōsho* (read-grammar book)**

*Yomu-bunpōsho* serves not as a product name itself, but as a promotional phrase (catchy tagline) for a book, specifically, *Chūkyū Doitsugo-no Shikumi* (The Mechanism of German: Intermediate) (T. Seino, 2008, Hakusuisha). In Japan, books often have a paper band (called *obi*) wrapped around the book cover, containing promotional phrases. *Yomu-bunpōsho* functions as such a phrase for this German grammar book. This phrase is printed on the spine side of the paper band, helping to attract readers’ attention, especially when the book is displayed upright on a bookstore shelf.

According to our world knowledge, a grammar book is divided into grammatical topics, and users typically consult on a specific topic, although some may read through the entire book. In this sense, *yomu-bunpōsho*, meaning ‘[a] grammar book [that one] reads’, is not fully compatible with our elocutional knowledge. However, when looking into the book, readers will notice that a wide range of topics are covered, such as subject and predicate, gender and number, the function of the genitive case, the usage of *in*, etc.; each topic is given a brief but useful explanation in two pages. This organization leads one to *read* these two pages to understand one topic. Thus, the seemingly contradictory phrase *yomu-bunpōsho* turns out to be congruent.

As with the previous examples, this contradiction triggers the PNC sense. Specifically, *yomu-bunpōsho*, printed on the spine side of the paper band, evokes the conventional way of using a grammar book, namely, *hiku* (consult, look up) or *sanshō suru* (refer to). Contrary to simply referring, reading encourages users to gain a more comprehensive understanding. The innovative character of this grammar book (i.e., reading) suggests its appeal in that it helps users deepen their understanding of German. This book’s innovative and appealing quality is highlighted on the front of the band: “[...] for those who want to go further [in their understanding of German], [this book] reveals thought patterns in German that ordinary grammar books rarely touch upon”.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “こねる手間いらずで、肉感たっぷりのジューシーなハンバーグに仕上がります！” (cited from the website referenced in Footnote 24)

<sup>26</sup> The original Japanese is as follows: “[...]さらなる一歩を目指す人のために、ふつうの文法書では触れられないドイツ語の考え方を伝授します”.

## 4. *Taberu-rāyu* as a Basis for Similar PNCs

### 4.1. *Simple Evocation of Taberu-rāyu*

As discussed in the previous section, the expressive knowledge underlying PNCs (including recipe names and taglines) is often referenced in Japanese society. Some of these names remain unique to individual products, but others move beyond ad hoc usage. As Coseriu (1985, xxviii) notes, “what is produced within a particular language as such either remains a unique ‘text fragment’ (hapax) or is taken over as part of the linguistic knowledge of a community to be continued as a new tradition”. It is possible that product names, too, are adopted by speakers and become part of the Japanese lexicon, or idiomatic knowledge (probably as “norm”, not “system” (Coseriu 1973a)). In this respect, *taberu-rāyu* is particularly noteworthy.

*Taberu-rāyu* became a nationwide sensation around 2010 and has since become common in Japan (see the website referenced in footnote 18 for the product’s history). This product has had a notable impact on subsequent products, such as *taberu-orību oiru* (eat-olive oil) ‘olive oil [that one] eats’ (by Odawaraya) and *taberu-dashi jōyu* (eat-dashi soy sauce) ‘soy sauce with dashi broth [that one] eats’ (by Shinmarusho Corporation), to name a few. These product names are likely to evoke *taberu-rāyu*, giving the impression that they were created by replacing *rāyu* (the right-hand element of the original name) with *orību oiru* or *dashi jōyu*. In fact, they share similar innovative and appealing features with *taberu-rāyu*: *taberu-orību oiru* (eat-olive oil) and *taberu-dashi jōyu* (eat-dashi soy sauce), both sold in small jars, are innovative in that, although olive oil and soy sauce are typically liquid seasonings, they can be eaten exactly because of the generous inclusion of solid ingredients, and they are attractive for their ease of use as toppings or side dishes. This strongly suggests that *taberu-rāyu* has been incorporated into Japanese tradition, or idiomatic knowledge, at times serving as “idiomatic context” (Coseriu 1973b) for the creation and interpretation of other PNCs.

### 4.2. *Evocation of Taberu-rāyu with Another Type of Incongruence*

While some product names like those given above can be readily interpreted by simple analogy with *taberu-rāyu*, others require greater effort to interpret and accept. For example, *taberu, sukiyaki* (eat, sukiyaki) (by Kuze Fuku & Co.) depends entirely on knowledge of *taberu-rāyu* (see below for discussion of the comma between *taberu* and *sukiyaki*). Without awareness of the *rāyu* product, it would be difficult to suspend the incongruence of *taberu, sukiyai*.

*Taberu, sukiyaki* sounds odd, but for a reason different from *taberu-rāyu*. In contrast to *taberu-rāyu* and other PNCs, this product name causes no feeling of contradiction. *Sukiyaki* is a Japanese dish of beef and vegetables cooked in a pot; it is too obvious that one eats *sukiyaki*. This obviousness produces another form of incongruence: being less informative. As Coseriu (2007[1988], 96) puts it, we do not usually state what is already known from our general knowledge of things. From an elocutional perspective, the modification of *sukiyaki* with *taberu* (eat) should be avoided. That is why *taberu, sukiyaki* is incongruent.

However, this incongruence can be suspended if (and perhaps only if) one notices the evocative connection with *taberu-rāyu*. The *taberu, sukiyaki* product is sold in a jar. Unlike ordinary *sukiyaki*, its ingredients are finely chopped and simmered until they are soft and melty, allowing the product to be eaten over rice or other dishes. These characteristics and the product name strongly evoke *taberu-rāyu*. Although *taberu, sukiyaki* itself is not contradictory, this evocation becomes a cue to the innovativeness and appeal of PNCs like *taberu-rāyu*: the suggestion that the innovative form of *taberu, sukiyaki* allows consumers to enjoy *sukiyaki* without the need to cook the ingredients in a pot over a heat, thus making it more convenient and appealing.

Furthermore, unlike the previous PNCs, this product name includes a comma between *taberu* and *sukiyaki*. While the comma may serve multiple functions, we assume that it helps highlight the evocative link of *taberu, sukiyaki* with *taberu-rāyu*. As noted above, certain products appear to be named by replacing *rāyu* in *taberu-rāyu* with other elements, as in *taberu-orību oiru* and *taberu-dashi jōyu*. This replaceable feature of *rāyu* may be signaled by the comma: it breaks the morphological bond between *taberu* and the presumed right-hand element *rāyu*, thereby making the latter element replaceable with another element. In other words, the comma may imply—especially to those familiar with product names like *taberu-orību oiru*—that *taberu, sukiyaki* was created by replacing *rāyu*.

If one notices this evocative association with *taberu-rāyu* based on such clues as argued above, the incongruence is suspended, and the intended sense becomes interpretable; otherwise, *taberu, sukiyaki* may remain opaque or confusing.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, one can find a similar *sukiyaki* product named in a contradictory way: *kakeru-sukiyaki* ('pour-sukiyaki')—that is, 'sukiyaki [that one] pours' (by Shinmarusho Corporation). *Sukiyaki* is not typically eaten by pouring it over rice; rather, it is cooked in a pot and eaten directly from it, or divided onto individual plates before eating. Thus, the name diverges from common culinary expectations. However, this deviation in *kakeru-sukiyaki* is 'more' easily accepted than that of *taberu, sukiyaki*, because the expressive knowledge concerning PNCs

### 4.3. Strengthening of the PNC Sense by Means of Incorrectness

It can be assumed that, as a PNC becomes established in Japanese, it gradually loses its feeling of contradiction and, consequently, its innovative and attractive qualities. As argued above, *taberu-rāyu* is now highly recognized and is a regular part of the Japanese lexicon, so that even people familiar with ordinary *rāyu* (i.e., a liquid condiment drizzled on foods) are less likely to pay attention to the product's innovative and attractive features (although, as discussed in Section 3, careful thought can revive the contrast with a normal usage of *rāyu*). In this situation, however, some seek to revive the weakened impact by introducing another expressive strategy that creates unnaturalness. Examples include *meccha-taberu-rāyu* (a lot-eat-chili oil) (by Kenchan Farm) and *taberu-rāyu-to-kakinotane* (eat-chili oil and kakinotane snack) (by Niigataken Kanko Bussan).<sup>28</sup>

Both products feature *taberu-rāyu* in their names and contain various ingredients, just as regular *taberu-rāyu* does. In this respect, they preserve the original sense of *taberu-rāyu* (i.e., an innovative *rāyu* product with ease of consumption). On the other hand, they are supplemented with extra elements which serve to make their names novel: *meccha* (a lot) and *to-kakinotane* (and kakinotane snack).

Japanese has a morpho-syntactic rule called the *Lexical Integrity Principle* (LIP) (see Kageyama 2016), which can be regarded as part of idiomatic knowledge. The LIP forbids syntactic operations within a lexical unit (cf. Anderson 1992). For example, *kōkyū-hoteru* (high class-hotel) is a compound constituting a lexical unit. Modifying only *kōkyū* with *taihen* (very) from outside the lexical unit creates the incorrect compound \**taihen [kōkyū-hoteru]* (very [high class-hotel]) (Kageyama 2016, 491), where the bracketed portion is intended to function as a compound word.

*Taberu-rāyu* is a compound in which *rāyu* is modified by the prenominal form of the verb *taberu* (Chika and Sumide 2025). Being a fixed lexical unit, it should not undergo any syntactic operations. Thus, *meccha-taberu-rāyu* (a lot-eat-chili oil), meaning ‘chili oil [that one] eats a lot’, violates the LIP, as the adverb *meccha* modifies *taberu* (i.e., *meccha [taberu-rāyu]*). Similarly, *taberu-rāyu-to-kakinotane* (eat-chili oil-and-kakinotane snack), meaning ‘chili oil and kakinotane snack [that one] eats’ (in other words, the *taberu-rāyu* product

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helps us interpret the former, whereas the latter requires not only such knowledge but also the evocation of *taberu-rāyu*.

<sup>28</sup> *Kakinotane* is a Japanese snack that has a slightly spicy soy sauce flavor and is shaped like persimmon seeds.

which contains *kakinotane* snacks as its main ingredient), includes the conjunction *to* coordinating *rāyu* and *kakinotane* (i.e., [*taberu-rāyu*]-*to-kakinotane*), violating the LIP again. Why, then, can these product names exist despite their incorrectness?

Ikarashi and Naya (2021), though focusing on Japanese noun-noun compounds, show that LIP violations are permitted if contextually justified (the suspension of incorrectness). Their analysis predicts that reasonable motivations should exist for these *rāyu* compounds as well if their strangeness is accepted.

The incorrect phrase *meccha-taberu* 'eats a lot (of this product)' is motivated by the intention that this *taberu-rāyu* is so delicious that one ends up eating a lot and just cannot stop. To put it differently, the incorrect modification is justified by appealing to its extremely pleasant taste, which enhances the product's attractiveness. The incorrect coordination observed in *taberu-rāyu-to-kakinotane* is justified by its heightened sense of innovativeness. *Kakinotane* snacks are not a typical ingredient: *rāyu* and *kakinotane* form an unexpected combination. The incorrect coordination (i.e., *rāyu-to-kakinotane*) draws attention to this innovative ingredient. In this way, both incorrect product names are motivated by the intention to strengthen the PNC sense, which in turn revives the weakened impact of the original product name, accompanied by a new attractive or innovative feature.

## 5. Suspension in Discourse: A Fourth Type

### 5.1. Suspension through Designation

As noted in the first section, Coseriu (2001 [1976], 2007 [1988]) distinguishes three types of suspension in discourse: metaphorical, metalinguistic, and extravagant. Metaphorical suspension takes place, for example, when someone says *Kare-wa sakana da* 'He is a fish' upon seeing a person swim very fast. Since he is not literally a fish, the sentence is incongruent. Nevertheless, it can be accepted as a metaphor: *sakana* 'fish' symbolically expresses very high speed; thus, the utterance conveys a metaphorically congruent message 'he swims too fast'.

Metalinguistic suspension, on the other hand, typically occurs when quoting someone's incongruent utterance. Suppose Person A says, "One minute is 70 seconds". According to our general knowledge, one minute is 60 seconds, so the utterance is incongruent. However, when reporting this to someone else, the reporter must maintain the incongruence; otherwise, the report will fail. In other words, incongruence is metalinguistically suspended in quotation.

Lastly, extravagant suspension is observed, for example, in jokes and puns, such as *Kondoru-ga* (condor-nominative) *jimen-ni* (ground-dative) *merikondoru*

(get buried) ‘A condor slams into the ground and is buried half-way’, where the bird *kondoru* ‘condor’ sounds like the underlined part of *merikondoru* ‘to get buried’, signaling a joke. In this Japanese joke, the absurdity is intentionally asserted for humorous effect.

On the other hand, the PNCs addressed in this paper do not seem to fit into any of these three types of suspension. *Nomu-purin*, for example, refers to a kind of pudding, and thus, no metaphors are involved (see also Section 5.2). Nor is it a metalinguistic quotation. Absurdity is not relevant to *nomu-purin*, as the pudding it designates is actually drinkable. Rather, upon encountering *nomu-purin*, one is presented with a new reality: the pudding can be consumed without a spoon. This is an unexpected reality from the perspective of our existing world knowledge. However, the designation of such a product name is directed toward altering our elocutional knowledge, that is, consumers’ assumptions regarding how pudding is consumed; they see that the pudding is packaged in a tube-like container, which allows it to be drunk. The incongruence is accordingly suspended, even though the new reality still contradicts our normal understanding of the world (i.e., pudding is eaten with a spoon). If this analysis is valid, PNCs could be classified under a fourth type of suspension in discourse.

### 5.2. Distinction from Product Names Superficially Similar to PNCs

Our insight into the type of suspension involved in PNCs allows us to distinguish them from other types of contradictory product names. Consider *nomu-masuku* (drink-mask) ‘a mask [that one] drinks’ (Chika and Sumide 2025) as an example.<sup>29</sup> *Nomu-masuku* does not refer to a kind of mask, but to plant extracts that are expected to work like films which help prevent viruses from multiplying in the throat by covering the throat surface. *Nomu-masuku* is similar to examples like *nomu-purin* (drink-pudding) in that it causes a feeling of contradiction: nobody drinks a mask, which is used to cover the mouth and nose. Thus, one might assume that *nomu-masuku* is a PNC with the same sense as *nomu-purin*. In fact, Chika and Sumide (2025) classify *taberu-rāyu* and *nomu-masuku* in the same category of compounds (although they note that *taberu-rāyu* and *nomu-masuku* may show different characteristics (Chika and Sumide 2025, fn. 5)).

However, considering the types of suspension, the similarity turns out to be superficial. *Nomu-masuku* is not a name of a mask product, but of plant extracts. *Masuku*, as Chika and Sumide (2025) point out, metaphorically refers

<sup>29</sup> Chika and Sumide (2025) introduce and analyze a number of similar examples. The original example cited in the text is from the following website:

<https://www.medicalherb.or.jp/archives/164864> (available as of June 17, 2025)

to plant extracts believed to protect against viruses, like a mask. In other words, *nomu-masuku* involves metaphorical suspension. Its sense is naturally dependent on the symbolic value of the mask, namely something like <if you drink this plant extract, it works like a mask which protects against viruses> (cf. Chika and Sumide 2025). By contrast, *nomu-purin* is a kind of pudding; no metaphor is involved. *Nomu-purin*, as previously discussed, leads consumers to discover an innovative pudding product, and to associate its innovation with the attractive feature of being easy to consume without a spoon.

As clarified in this section, identifying the suspension involved in PNCs as a fourth type provides a principled account for distinguishing them from product names that, though superficially similar, differ fundamentally in their sense-creation process.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has proposed, through an analysis of product names that cause a feeling of contradiction, that there exists a type of expressive knowledge in the Japanese community that can be referenced to create the sense <the product designated is an innovative and attractive offering for consumers>. It has also shown that, once such a product name becomes established in the language as part of idiomatic knowledge, it can work as a basis for naming other products. Moreover, the analysis has suggested that these product names could be classified as a fourth type of suspension in discourse, which represents a theoretical contribution arising from this analysis.

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## ASSESSING THE LIMITS OF AI-BASED TRANSLATION: A COSERIAN PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT.** *Assessing the Limits of AI-Based Translation: A Coserian Perspective.* The purpose of this paper is to analyse the way in which AI-based conversational assistants such as ChatGPT, designed to be suitable for use in the field of translation, deal with a translation problem described and analyzed by Eugenio Coseriu in his study *Alcances y límites de la traducción* (1997). Based on the theoretical framework established by Eugenio Coseriu, who defines translation as: “...a particular type of speech: it is speech with a given content, through another language” (Coseriu 1997, 168), the main objective of our research is to review the “limits” of translation from Eugenio Coseriu’s perspective in order to analyse the degree to which generative artificial intelligence deals with translation difficulties, compared to human translators. To this end, we aim to investigate which translation strategies are used for the linguistic transfer of comics by generative AI. We are particularly interested in observing whether the limits of translation stated by Coseriu correlate with the limits of AI-based translation.

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**REZUMAT. Evaluarea limitelor traducerii bazate pe IA. O perspectivă coșeriană.** Scopul prezentului articol este acela de a analiza modul în care asistenții conversaționali bazați pe IA generativă precum ChatGPT gestionează aspectele problematice ale traducerii descrise și analizate de către Eugenio Coseriu în studiul său *Alcances y límites de la traducción* (1997). Având ca punct de plecare cadrul teoretic stabilit de către Eugeniu Coșeriu, care definește traducerea ca: «...un tipo particular de hablar: es hablar con un contenido dado de antemano, por medio de otra lengua» (Coseriu 1997, 168), principalul obiectiv al cercetării noastre este acela de a trece în revistă „limitele” traducerii din perspectiva coșeriană pentru a pune în evidență modul în care IA generativă rezolvă problemele de traducere față de traducătorul uman. Pentru aceasta, dorim să punem în evidență strategiile de traducere utilizare în traducerea benzilor desenate de către IA generativă. Ne vom concentra mai ales asupra observării limitelor traducerii cu care se confruntă IA generativă.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Eugeniu Coșeriu, limitele traducerii, traducerea bazată pe IA, IA generativă, ChatGPT, benzi desenate*

## 1. Introduction

Generalised use of LLM and GenAI has a major impact in many fields. Within these, one of the areas most affected by the impact of rapid technological development is translation and its various related fields. Highly appreciated by both the general public and specialists for their ability to summarize, generate, and translate texts, LLMs such as Gemini, ChatGPT, and Pilot are often used for their ability to generate text into different languages. Therefore, various research perspectives have focused on studying GenAI-based translation such as: Deilen *et al.* (2023), Gao *et al.* (2023); Jiao *et al.* (2023), Sahari *et al.* (2023). These authors scrutinise ChatGPT's translation capabilities in comparison with other MT tools available online, such as Google Translate, DeepL, and Tencent. In the same line of research, Hendy *et al.* (2023) quantitatively and qualitatively analyse the translation performed by GPT and Neural Machine Translation (NMT) tools in different fields, in/from 18 language pairs, concluding that: “...GPT systems can produce highly fluent and competitive translation outputs...”.

A different line of research, which we will focus on in this article, compares human translation with GenAI-based translation. Thus, studies such as Fu & Liu (2024), Lee (2024), Altakhaineh *et al.* (2025), and Tengler &

Brandhofer (2025) focus on the ability of LLM to generate human-like texts and translations. The authors distinguish between different aspects of human translation and GenAI-based translation in order to highlight the benefits and limitations of using LLM in the field of translation.

There are also studies that claim that LLMs can generate texts, summaries, responses, conversations, and translations that are virtually human-like. Thus, in the conclusions of their study, Rahman & Watanobe (2023, 18) state that "ChatGPT is a revolutionary LLM that can maintain human-like conversations and generate human-like texts for any natural language query that is nearly indistinguishable." Similarly, He *et al.* (2024), starting from the idea that LLMs based on deep learning can imitate human translators, propose that instead of using the specific MT working methodology, GPT models should follow the working method of human translators. With the aim of improving the quality of GenAI-based translation.

The studies comparing human translation with GenAI-based translation are all within the field of NLP, and even though research on translation (Baker 2018, Hatim and Munday 2004) is mentioned in some of them (He *et al.* 2024), the focus of the investigation is technological rather than linguistic. In this paper, we want to test the extent to which a GenAI-based platform such as ChatGPT 5.0 translates in a human-like manner. To this end, we consider Eugenio Coseriu's study *Alcances y límites de la traducción* (1997) to be a suitable theoretical framework for evaluating human translation. Based on the parallel drawn between human translation and GenAI translation, we believe that Eugenio Coseriu provides a suitable framework for the optimal evaluation of conversational assistants such as ChatGPT. One argument in this regard is the author's perspective on translation: «...un tipo particular de hablar: es hablar con un contenido dado de antemano, por medio de otra lengua» (a specific form of speech: it is speaking with a predetermined content, by means of another language – our translation) (Coseriu 1997, 168).

The main objective of this research is to test GenAI-based translation using the translation limitations mentioned in Coserian studies. This test will allow us to observe the extent to which Gen AI translation can be compared to human translation. Considering that comics are the most suitable texts for evaluating translation limits, we will test ChatGPT 5.0 using a corpus consisting of the French Asterix albums and their translation into Romanian. Having identified situations in which translation becomes problematic and the translator is pushed to their limits, we want to observe the behavior of ChatGPT 5.0 in similar situations. We believe that this evaluation can highlight situations that are problematic for LLM.

This article is intended for professional translators, researchers, teachers, and students interested in the Coserian perspective on translation and GenAI translation.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. *Eugenio Coseriu and the limits of translation*

In his study *Alcances y límites de la traducción* (1997), the author defines translation as: “... un tipo particular de hablar: es hablar con un contenido dado de antemano, por medio de otra lengua.” (Coseriu 1997, 168), and underlines several limits of translation, concerning problematic situations that human translators face. We believe that this study provides the theoretical framework necessary to confirm/refute the claim that GPT-type systems such as ChatGPT can generate human-like translations.

To demonstrate this, we will observe how ChatGPT 5.0 performs in translation, evaluating aspects of translation described in Coseriu (1997), which we organize according to two different levels of difficulty. Thus, for the simplest level, we will refer to what Coseriu calls transposition and version. Transposition is a technique that establishes interidiomatic equivalences for the content of a text, while version creates strictly textual, non-interidiomatic correspondences (Coseriu 1997, 173).

For a more complex level of ChatGPT evaluation, we will use “*non-canonical uses of languages*” (Coserio 1997, 180), which refers to six cases where the use of linguistic signs in communication becomes problematic in translation and, therefore, also problematic for GenAI-based translation. These are as follows:

- a). the use of linguistic signs with reduced semantics (advertising discourse);
- b). the metalinguistic use of linguistic signs.
- c). the use of linguistic signs with a direct icastic function (imitation, evocation);
- d). the use of linguistic signs with an icastic and metalinguistic function, e.g., imitation of foreign languages. (San Antonio, Asterix – proper names and imitative phraseology);
- e). the non-canonical use of linguistic signs (wordplay);
- f). the use of linguistic signs with diatopic, diastratic, or diaphasic features. (Coserio 1997, 181)

The author debates the limits of translation and proposes solutions for human translators to overcome them. Starting from the working hypothesis

that conversational assistants such as ChatGPT treat translation as a type of text that must be generated in another language, using a conversational model based on LLM, a parallel can be drawn with Coseriu's definition of translation.

## 2.2. Asterix in translation research

Asterix albums are not only enjoyable reading for the general public, but their textual complexity has also been the focus of attention for researchers. As a result, these albums have been studied from different theoretical perspectives, and a substantial number of studies addressing the issue of their translation have been published, such as: d'Oria & Conenna (1979), Touillier-Feyrabend (1998), Richet (2004), Manolache (2007), Richet (2009), Varga (2010), Cros (2011), Grammenidis (2011), Lipani-Vaissade (2011), Richet (2011), Sinagra (2011), Keromnes (2013), Silva (2017), Rendón & Dueñas (2019), Varga (2022), Cazalbou (2023), and Mateiu (2024).

Thus, Asterix albums are studied from a semiotic perspective in terms of their translation into Italian and Spanish (d'Oria & Conenna 1979, 19-38; (Silva 2017, 71-81), also raising the issue of their translatability (Touillier-Feyrabend 1998, 375-377). Issues surrounding the difficulties of translating the songs featured in Asterix comics are addressed in Richet (2004, 151-179) and Varga (2022, 247-262), studies that examine their humorous mechanisms and the culturemes they contain.

There is a whole volume dedicated to the Asterix series (Delesse & Richet 2009) that explores the English translation of the Asterix albums in detail. More diverse translation studies on these albums can be found in the monograph (Richet 2011). These range from the analysis of Latin quotations (Gallego 2011, 111-129) to national stereotypes (Meyer 2011, 169-180), the study of female characters in Asterix (Lipani-Vaissade 2011, 131-148), the translation of culturemes into Greek (Grammenidis 2011, 219-233), and the analysis of the translation of visual and graphic codes used in the Asterix volumes (Sinagra 2011, 181-191).

More recently, translation studies have been published that analyze idiomatic expressions in Asterix (Keromnes 2013, 147-163) and strategies for rendering character names in Mexican Spanish (Carrillo Rendón & Mendoza Dueñas 2019).

Romanian research also includes studies that prove interest in studying the Romanian translation of Asterix comic books. Among these, we mention the interest in translating humor in the volume *Le combat de chefs/Bătălia dintre șefi* (Manolache 2007, 265-276), studies dealing with the limits of translation from a Coserian perspective (Varga 2010, 2022), and a study on the translation of proper names in the Asterix albums (Mateiu 2024, 275-304).

### **3. Methodology and Corpus**

In order to assess ChatGPT 5.0's translation capabilities, a translation quality analysis protocol was employed, comprising two levels of difficulty. It should be noted that this analysis assesses the capabilities of the platform without prior training, using only the LLM model, which already entails access to vast volumes of linguistic data.

The first step, which was considered the basic level of difficulty for a translation, involved evaluating the transposition and version (Coseriu 1997, 180). Thus, ChatGPT 5.0 was asked to translate a series of texts ranging from 1 to 5 words in length, representing the titles of the Asterix comic books. The results were analysed in terms of spelling, punctuation, morphology, syntax, equivalence, adaptation, accuracy, and fidelity.

A more complex stage of analysis consists of evaluating the limits of translation according to Coseriu's theoretical framework using ChatCPT 5.0. (see 2.1). For this purpose, a corpus was selected that could provide the desired levels of difficulty, namely the Asterix comic books. Coseriu (1997) mentions these albums as an example in his article, without going into detail.

The results of translation were analysed in terms of spelling, punctuation, morphology, syntax, equivalence, adaptation, accuracy, and fidelity. On a punctual basis, in order to explain the errors encountered, a comparison was made with the Romanian translations of the Asterix albums, considered in our analysis as samples of human translation, carried out by professionals and representing the benchmark for what LLM aims to achieve.

Translation analysis was performed using human analysis, and translation was performed both quantitatively and qualitatively. We believe that this protocol will allow us to draw relevant conclusions about how GenAI copes with the limitations of translation.

### **4. Translation analysis**

#### ***4.1. Version and transposition***

To analyse the most basic level of translation performed by ChatGPT, transposition and versioning were taken into account (see 2.1). Thus, in order to test ChatGPT's performance in simple translations at the content level (transposition) and at the textual level (version), the titles of all the Asterix albums (1961-2025) were selected, as they do not raise any translation issues for human translators. ChatGPT 5.0 was asked to translate the titles of the 41 albums and identify the type of text.

In terms of interlingual transfer, the translation generated by ChatGPT 5.0 presents multiple issues, only 10 of the 41 translated titles being considered correct, thus only 24.39% of the total. The types of errors identified consist of *spelling errors* and *translation errors*.

Source Text	ChatGPT Translation	Corrections
Astérix gladiateur - 1964	Asterix gladiatorul	Gladiator
Le Tour de Gaule d'Astérix - 1965	Călătoria lui Asterix prin Gaulă	Galia
Astérix aux Jeux olympiques - 1968	Asterix la jocurile olimpice	Jocurile olimpice
Le Combat des chefs - 1966	Lupta șefilor	Bătălia
Astérix légionnaire - 1967	Asterix legionarul	Legionar
Astérix et le chaudron - 1969	Asterix și butoiul	Ceaunul
La Zizanie - 1970	Cearța	
Les Lauriers de César - 1972	Laurelurile lui Cezar	Laurii
Le Devin - 1972	Vrajiitorul	Ghicitorul
Astérix chez les Belges - 1979	Asterix în Belgia	la belgi
Astérix chez Rahâzade - 1987	Asterix la Rahâzade	Șeherezada
Astérix et Latraviata - 2001	Asterix și Latraviata	Traviata
Le ciel lui tombe sur la tête - 2005	Cerul îi cade pe cap	le cade/vine în cap
Astérix chez les Pictes - 2013	Asterix la picti	picti
Astérix et le Griffon - 2021	Asterix și griffonul	grifonul

With regard to the spelling errors detected in the translation of the titles of the Asterix albums, we note ChatGPT 5.0's incapacity to adapt the names of the main characters to Romanian spelling. Even though the program was asked three times to generate a translation, the spelling of the proper names remained consistently French: *Astérix* (24) and *Obélix* (2). Their Romanian names are *Asterix* and *Obelix*.

Other spelling mistakes in Romanian can be found in the translation of the following titles: *Astérix le Gaulois* (*Astérix, galiul*), *Astérix et la rentrée gauloise* (*Astérix și reîntoarcerea la școala galiilor*), *Le Papyrus de César* (*Papirosul lui Cezar*), and *Astérix et la Transitalique* (*Astérix și transitalica*). The errors consist of misspelled words: *galiul* instead of *galul*, *galiilor* instead of *galilor*, *papirosul* instead of *papyrusul*, *transitalica* instead of *Transitalica*, and *școala* instead of *școală*.

As for translation issues, it can be noticed that ChatGPT 5.0 generates a literal translation in the case of the titles: *Le Tour de Gaule d'Astérix* (*Turul Galiei al lui Astérix*), *Astérix chez les Bretons* (*Astérix la bretoni*), *Astérix chez les Helvètes* (*Astérix la helveți*), *Le Ciel lui tombe sur la tête* (*Cerul îi cade în cap*), *Astérix chez les Pictes* (*Astérix la picti*). These translations are rather *gauche* in terms of both expression and content. Thus, in the case of the first title, *Turul Galiei al lui Astérix*, a translation could be *Asterix și / la Turul Galiei* in order to designate participation in a sporting event. With regard to the use of the

preposition 'la' in the titles mentioned above, we consider that it does not fully convey the semantic content of the source text. Thus, to convey the idea that the character travels through different countries, goes on a series of adventures, and comes into contact with local cultures, we would suggest translating the title as *Asterix și bretonii / helveții / picții*, a structure already used in the titles of these comic books, or *Asterix printre bretoni / helveți / picți*.

Literal translation is also used in the case of the title *Le Ciel lui tombe sur la tête (Cerul îi cade în cap)*. This title, which is rather unclear to Romanian readers, could be translated using adaptation as a strategy and referring to the content of the album. A possible translation in this sense would be *Asterix și extratereștrii*, which is much more explicit for the readers and, at the same time, reminiscent of the title of a film well known to the Romanian public, *Jandarmul și extratereștrii* (FR 1979).

It can be noticed in the translation of the Asterix album titles that ChatGPT 5.0 has difficulty choosing the appropriate equivalent. This is the case for the following titles: *La Serpe d'or (Secera de aur)*, *Le Combat des chefs (Lupta căpeteniilor)*, *Astérix et le chaudron (Astérix și cazanul)*, *Obélix et Compagnie (Obélix și Compania)*, *Astérix chez les Belges (Astérix la belgieni)*, and *Le Grand Fossé (Marea prăpastie)*. For the first two titles, it would be expected that, based on LLM and the online sources it can consult, ChatGPT 5.0 would identify the official Romanian translation of the titles, something the application fails to do. The titles of these albums in Romanian are: *Cosorul de aur*, not *secera*, and *Bătălia dintre șefi*, not *Lupta căpeteniilor*. We consider the title *Astérix et le chaudron (Astérix și cazanul)* to be a mistranslation because, in the comic books, *le chaudron* refers to a graphically represented object which, in Romanian, is equivalent to the noun *ceaun*, not *cazan*. The noun *cazan* can be associated with the world of technology, while *ceaun* (DEX 2016) is a noun associated, in Romanian culture, with the domestic world of the kitchen, which is much more appropriate for the context of the albums.

The translation of the title *Obélix et Compagnie (Obélix și Compania)* is ambiguous and does not clearly convey the meaning of the source text (ST). According to DEX (2016), *companie* can have the following meanings in Romanian: "military subunit, group of people who spend time together, association of individuals and legal entities". The last meaning is the one intended by the authors of the album, so a correct translation would be: *Firma lui Obelix, Obelix și firma*, or *Obelix S.R.L.*

In *Asterix chez les Belges (Astérix la belgieni)*, the translation mistake consists of using the modern name of the inhabitants, *Belgians*, for the noun *Belgae*. According to the narrative topos, the story is set in Antiquity, so the translation should use the ancient name of the inhabitants, namely the *Belgae*.

According to DEX 2016, the Belgae are "a union of Celtic tribes populating, in ancient times, the territory between the Seine and the Rhine, subjugated by the Romans in the 1st century BC."

In the last spot on the list of mistranslated titles is *Le Grand Fossé* (*Marea prăpastie*), which is a redundant translation since *prăpastie* is, by definition, vast. Moreover, ChatGPT 5.0 does not contextualize the translation, even though, via LLM, it has access to information from the source language and other language translations of this title. Thus, the choice of the equivalent *prăpastie* is incorrect because the concept designated by the noun *fossé* is represented graphically in the album, and for the Romanian reader, the element designated graphically is *șanț*. Therefore, given that the noun *șanț* (DEX 2016) can also refer to a type of fortification, a possible translation of the title would be *Marele Șanț*, a humorous translation with a double meaning in Romanian, as it does in French. Other possible translation strategies include adaptation, in which case the title could be translated as *Marea Dezbinare*, a title that is correctly adapted to the context of the album.

At the simplest level of translation, therefore, ChatGPT 5.0 renders translations with spelling and translation errors. We believe that an accuracy rate of 24.39% is insufficient to claim that GenAI translates as well as humans.

#### 4.2. Non-canonical use of linguistic signs

Among the linguistic signs that can be recognized in the Asterix albums and whose translation has been studied previously (Varga 2010, 2022), mainly those used with icastic (imitative) function have been identified. Hence, it has been noticed that the humour in these comics is based on a game of imitation carried out on several levels: *lexical, phraseological and imitative syntax, diatopic elements, wordplays, imitative onomastics, and imitative songs*. All these levels were translated with ChatGPT 5.0 and constitute the most difficult level in translation, namely, in Coserian terms, the limits of translation.

##### 4.2.1. Imitative syntax

Concerning the testing of ChatGPT 5.0 in translating fragments that imitate characteristics of a language such as English in French, it can be noticed that, even if the application is instructed to keep the inversion in translation, it produces incorrect translations. The examples were taken from the album *Asterix chez les Bretons*:

- (1) – Quelle force! Elle vous vient de la magique potion?  
– Justement cousin Astérix, il nous faut de la magique potion pour combattre les romaines armées. (Jolitorax p 9)

- RO:** – Ce forță. Vă vine ea din *magica poțiune*?  
– Tocmai, verișorule Astérix, nouă ne trebuie *magica poțiune* ca să luptăm cu *romane armate*.
- (2) – Allons-y dans la romaine galère ! (Obélix p. 12)  
**RO:** – Hai! Să urcăm în *romană galera*!
- (3) Votre magique potion est formidable ! Voyez ce que je fais de ce romain légionnaire ! (Jolitorax p 13)  
**RO:** – *Magica voastră poțiune* e formidabilă! Vedeți ce fac eu din acest *roman legionar*! (Jolitorax)
- (4) – [...] où vous prendrez votre premier breton repas.. – Enfin ! Je commençais à avoir un appétit gros. (Jolitorax 15)  
**RO:** – [...] unde veți lua întâia voastră *bretonă masă*.  
– În sfârșit! Începeam să am o *poftă mare*.
- (5) – Une romaine patrouille ! – Allez ! On fonce à travers la romaine patrouille ! – Je dis ! Une autre romaine patrouille ! (Jolitorax et Obélix p. 17)  
**RO:** – O *romană patrulă*!  
– Hai! Dăm năvală prin *romană patrula*!  
– *Eu zic!* Încă o *romană patrulă*!

These examples show that ChatGPT 5.0 translates while preserving the inversion of the source text in the target text. However, in two situations, (3) and (4), the inversion fails to create humor because in Romanian, "*Magica voastră poțiune...*" and "*...să am o poftă mare*" sound natural. In other examples such as: *romane armate* (1), *romană galera* (2), and *romană patrula* (5), the application fails to correctly inflect the inverted words. Also, in example (3), translation faults are noticed: "*Vedeți ce fac eu din acest roman legionar!*" (See what I do with this Legionary novel!). Thus, the translation is literal ("Vedeți") and hypercorrect, as the presence of the personal pronoun "eu" (I) is unusual in a familiar register in this context. Furthermore, the use of the preposition "from" changes the meaning of the sentence; here it would be correct to use the preposition "with." Therefore, the correct translation of example (3) is: "Uite ce fac cu acest roman legionar!"

#### 4.2.2. Imitative lexis and phraseology

Throughout Asterix's albums, imitative vocabulary and phrasing are used in order to suggest that the characters speak other languages. Thus, the barbarian characters in the album *La serpe d'or* are distinguished by a specifically

Germanic pronunciation of words: “*Fous trouvez za gorrekt fous?*” (*Vous trouvez ça correct vous?*) or “*Apzolutent bas*” (*Absolument pas*), while the Breton and Belgae characters use calqued phraseology: “*Je dis: ceci est choquant, n’est-il pas?*” (“*I say, this is shocking, isn’t it?*”), “*Dis*”, “*une fois*”, “*Mangez ces herbes s il te plaît*”, and “*Dites ... à ton légionnaire...*”.

Lexical diatopic variations can be observed in the album *Le bouclier arverne* (1968), which reproduces a regional pronunciation in which the structure “c+vowel” is pronounced “ch” in French such as: “*Cha ch’est chûr cha che perd. (Ça c’est sur ça se perd.)*” or “*Dans quelques chiècles, il n’y aura plus perchonne en pays Arverne pour prononcher les eches à notre fathon, hélache!*” (Dans quelques siècles, il n’y aura plus personne en pays Arverne pour prononcer les es à notre façon, hélas!). ChatGPT 5.0 correctly identifies the Arvern dialect, then proposes the following translation into Romanian: „*Șa-i șigur, șa șe piarde.*” and „*Peste câteva șecole, n-o șă mai fie nime în țara Arvernelor șă pronunșe ș-urile ca noi, vai, șilăș!*”. Regrettably, translation completely fails to convey the meaning in Romanian or the humor of the source text.

These examples pose difficulties for human translators (Varga 2022) and are important benchmarks in evaluating the translation capabilities of ChatGPT 5.0. Thus, the translations generated are of varying quality. For phonetically altered phrases with a Germanic pronunciation, the phonetic alteration is reproduced exactly in Romanian: *Foi gășiți ța corect foi?* (*Fous trouvez za gorrekt fous? / Voi gășiți asta corect voi?*), *Apzolut nimic* (*Apzolutent bas / Absolut deloc*). This phonetic distortion makes the text unintelligible, does not produce the expected humorous effect, and the word *nimic* does not accurately translate the source text. A broken speech or a regional accent in Romanian would have been an appropriate translation solution that would have preserved both the formal aspect and the humor of the text. An appropriate solution for a translation that preserves both the formal aspect and the humor of the source text would have been to use broken speech or a regional pronunciation regarded as being funny by Romanian speakers.

In terms of phraseology, it can be noticed that the phrase calqued from English: *Eu zic: aceasta e șocantă, nu-i așa ea?* (*Je dis: ceci est choquant, n’est-il pas? / I say, this is shocking, isn’t it?*) is translated both literally and inaccurately. The error consists of the change of gender, when the phrase is impersonal, and in the use of the pronominal adjective *aceasta* instead of the neutral *asta*. Other feminine forms such as the adjective “*șocantă*” and the personal pronoun *ea* further emphasize the error. Furthermore, the translation of *n’est-il pas?* is erroneous in Romanian: *nu-i așa ea?* instead of *nu-i așa?*.

Errors also exist in the translation of specific linguistic features of the Belgae characters: “*dis*” and “*une fois*” are translated literally without being

contextualized, and therefore both the meaning and the humor they produce in the source text are lost. The translation into Romanian as "Eu zic" and "o dată" is flat and meaningless in the text.

At the phraseological level, Belgae speech is distinguished by the use of verbs in the second person singular and plural in the same sentence or by the lack of agreement between the indirect object and the predicate in sentences such as: Eat these herbs, please (*Mangez ces herbes s'il te plaît / Mănâncă aceste ierburi, te rog*) or (*Dites ... à ton légionnaire... / Spuneți ... la legionarul tău...*). While the first example is translated correctly without preserving the humor of the source text, the second example is a more successful translation, with the humor conveyed through the use of the polite form of the verb "say," the familiar use of the possessive adjective "your," and the use of the preposition "to."

In this aspect of the translation evaluation, it can be noticed that, of all the lexical and phraseological elements analyzed, ChatGPT 5.0 managed to translate correctly only one.

#### 4.2.3. Puns and wordplay

Also at the phraseological level, the following examples show the use of double-meaning phrases as a humorous approach:

- (6) Ta vie ne tient qu'à un fil, Téléféric ! (Astérix et les Goths)
- (7) Je vais être général ! Le général Électric ! (Astérix et les Goths)
- (8) Il ne faut pas parler sèchement à un Numide! (Le Domaine des Dieux)
- (9) -Je suis, mon cher ami, très heureux de te voir.  
-C'est un alexandrin. (Astérix et Cléopâtre)

ChatGPT 5.0 translates wordplay quite easily in examples (6) and (7). Although example (7) is a little forced, both examples are translated correctly, preserving the fidelity and humor of the source text. Indeed, the fact that Romanian is a Romance language greatly facilitated the process in the case of these expressions, as the message was relatively easy to render: *Viața ta atârână de un fir, Teleferic!* and *O să ajung general! General Electric!* Example (8) proved more difficult to translate, requiring a series of queries and even a suggestion from the user for the first part of the translation, resulting in an inappropriate response from ChatGPT 5.0. After persistent efforts on the part of the human user, the following version was achieved: *Nu vorbi sec cu un Numid, că dă în clocot.*

Example (9) is also a challenge for ChatGPT 5.0. It correctly identifies the double meaning of the word "alexandrin", meaning both a resident of Alexandria and a 12-syllable verse. However, the first translation was erroneous as it did not translate using the required number of syllables.

In order to achieve an alexandrine in Romanian, numerous prompts were required, many of which were semantically and grammatically incorrect translations. The final form considered correct is: *Sunt foarte fericit, prietene, să te văd*. Even though this translation is natural, it lacks the poetic thrill conveyed by poetry.

Also in this case, it can be noticed that ChatGPT 5.0 copes only with the simplest translation situations, translating correctly and without human intervention only 2 of the 4 examples.

#### 4.2.4. Imitative onomastics

The most noticeable non-canonical linguistic features used in the Asterix albums are those with an icastic and metalinguistic function, namely the names of the characters. Imitating the names of various ancient peoples and having a humorous semantic content, they become a real problem for the professional translator who has to adapt them to the target culture. When faced with the task of translating, ChatGPT faces major issues when it has to translate the characters' names into Romanian while also preserving the form of the name. Thus, in a previous study (Varga 2022), four categories were identified that illustrate how names were transposed into the target culture: a) names are retained without modification, b) word agglutination, c) adaptation, d) recreation in the target culture. This illustrates how adaptable a professional translator must be in translating and how difficult language transfer can be.

This was required of ChatGPT 5.0, using a set of 50 names belonging to characters of so-called Gallic, Roman, Gothic, Belgic, and Cushitic origin. However, ChatGPT 5.0 was unable to achieve a satisfactory transfer in terms of quality, as it simply translated each name without applying any linguistic strategy. For instance, despite multiple attempts, the application provided unsatisfactory equivalents for the Roman names:

- (10) Caligula Minus → Caligulus Minimus
- (11) Tullius Octopus → Tullius Octopus
- (12) Plexus → Plexus
- (13) Radius → Radius
- (14) Motus → Motulus
- (15) Marcus Sacapus → Marcus Saccapus
- (16) Caius Marchéopus → Caius Mercatus
- (17) Tikedbus → Tucidabus
- (18) Milexcus → Milexus
- (19) Petilarus → Petilarus

Some of the names, (11), (12), and (13), keep their original form and are not translated, but inexplicably there are some examples (10), (14) where ChatGPT 5.0 translates even though the same strategy could be applied. In the case of examples (15)-(19), in which names are formed by agglutination and have semantic content, ChatGPT 5.0 does not seem able to provide a valid linguistic transfer of them. Thus, in the Romanian translation of ChatGPT 5.0, the semantic content of the names Marcus Sacapus (Marcus Saccapus), Tikedbus (Ticidabus), and Milexcus (Milexus) is completely lost.

A similar translation challenge arises when adapting linguistic signs with iconic and metalinguistic functions to another language, as seen in the translation of proper names specific to other peoples, such as the *Goths: Théoric (Teoretic), Pasdefric (Fărăfric), Coudetric (Bățutric), and Casseurdebric (Spartdebric)*. Only the first example, Teoretic, can be considered a correct translation solution. The other names are semi-translated, as ChatGPT 5.0 only translates the first lexical element, with the following ones preserving their original form. Thus, the names lose their semantic content in the target language, and therefore also their humorous meaning.

The names of the *Belgae* and the *Kushites* are minimally adapted. In the case of the name *Nonantesix*, the translation provided by ChatGPT 5.0 “*Nouăzecișisix*” presents a solution in which half of the name is translated, while the second part remains as in the original, which makes the name opaque and results in the loss of its humorous content. For the Kushite names *Toutuneaffer* and *Nifphéniafer*, the adaptation of the name is done phonetically and orthographically as *Totunafer* and *Nificinafer*, with the names losing their semantic content of the expressions ‘*toute une affaire*’ and ‘*ni fait ni à faire*’ respectively.

As far as can be noticed, ChatGPT 5.0 cannot correctly handle and make appropriate translation decisions in the case of translating linguistic signs used with an icastic and metalinguistic function.

#### 4.2.5. *Imitative songs*

In addition to the narrative, intertextuality and visual dimension specific to comic books, Asterix albums also feature a musical dimension represented by songs occasionally sung by the characters. Most of these are used with an icastic function, being songs from French cultural heritage adapted to the narrative topos. The translation of these songs stands out as a further limit of translation (Varga 2022) and, therefore, a benchmark in the assessment of the translation performed by ChatGPT 5.0.

This assessment is limited to six songs, the first attempts already showing that ChatGPT 5.0 generates a very high level of hallucinations. A first problem consists of the fact that, even if there is only one verse of a song to translate, ChatGPT 5.0 invents at least one additional verse:

- (20) *Menhir montant, mais oui Madame... (Menhir urcând, dar vai, madam, / E greu ca-un bou, dar eu îl car!)*  
 (21) *Nuits latines, nuits calines, nuits d'... (Nopti latine, nopti divine, / Și barbarii sunt vecine!)*

In order to avoid hallucinations, ChatGPT 5.0 must be asked to remain faithful to the translated text. Even so, the linguistic transfer is not performed correctly, with problems arising in spelling (25), morphology (23), and lexical equivalence (22), (26), (27), which affects the quality of the text. Among the spelling mistakes, we note that proper names were left with their original spelling in French (24), (26) *Lutèce* instead of *Luteția* (DEX 2016). Also, in one case (25), an accent that does not exist in Romanian was added to a Romanian word, namely *plăcuuît*.

A morphological error can be noticed in example (23), where “*Dulce Galia...*” should appear in vocative form, not nominative/accusative form. Therefore, the correct variant should be *Dulce Galie*.

The issues noticed in lexical equivalence refer to the translation of *barbichette* as *bărbișoară* (22), this noun referring in Romanian to a plant, *Alyssum minimum* (DEX2016). In the case of the lyric “*Revoir Lutèce...*” translated as “*Să văd Lutèce...*” the translation is incorrect because “*revoir*” in French does not have the same referent as “*a vedea*” in Romanian, the correct equivalent being “*a revedea*”. In example (27), the word *Madame* is not translated into Romanian, and not even the French loanword *madam* (DEX 2016) is used. In fact, the entire lyric is calqued, and the cultural reference and humor of the text are lost.

- (22) Je te tiens par la barbichette. (Te țin bine de bărbișoară)  
 (23) Douce Gaule... (Dulce Galia...)  
 (24) Lutèceèce c'est une bloooooonde (Lutèceèce e-o blondăăă fruumoasă)  
 (25) Boire une petite cervoise c'est agréaaaaaable (Să bei o bere mică e plăcuuît)  
 (26) Revoir Lutèce... (Să văd Lutèce...)  
 (27) Menhir montant, mais oui Madame... (Menhir urcaat, dar da, Madame...)

Based on these observations, it can be argued that ChatGPT 5.0 and GenAI-based applications do not have the required expressive capacity to translate literary texts into prose and verse.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on this research, we conclude that as long as GenAI-based translation compares with human translation, the Cosserian theoretical framework related to

the limits of translation can be applied in assessing the ‘human-like’ abilities of ChatGPT-type applications to translate.

Even though the attitude towards GenAI is mostly positive, currently, in research, LLM-based conversational assistants cannot yet generate translations that approach human translation. Generated translations display issues both at the basic level of translation and at a complex level, related to how to manage the limitations of translation.

As a result of translation analysis, it can be strongly stated that applications such as ChatGPT 5.0 generate mistranslations, which can be noticed at all levels of language: spelling, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and even at the textual level. In the case of Romanian, the analysis shows that ChatGPT 5.0 generates in particular a large number of spelling and morphological errors. Many common nouns are spelled incorrectly, and the use of prepositions in translation is highly problematic. In terms of semantic equivalence in the linguistic transfer from French to Romanian, numerous inaccuracies and changes in meaning can be noticed, making translation qualitatively poor.

The most difficult translation issues raised in the present analysis consist of the limits of translation, cases in which the human translator must make decisions regarding how to translate. ChatGPT 5.0 is not capable of handling such situations and, most notably, cannot translate humorous texts. Recreating humor, intertextuality, and transferring cultural elements into a target culture are virtually insurmountable challenges for GenAI-based translation.

All of these factors lead us to conclude that, despite claims to the contrary, LLM-based conversational assistants are not yet able to translate as effectively as human translators, particularly in the case of low-resource languages like Romanian.

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## THE KING JAMES BIBLE AS NORM-MAKER: COSERIAN AND TRANSLATION THEORY PERSPECTIVES

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**ABSTRACT.** *The King James Bible as Norm-Maker: Coserian and Translation Theory Perspectives.* This paper analyses the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible as a central site for the creation and negotiation of linguistic norms in the history of English, foregrounding the theoretical insights of Eugeniu Coşeriu on linguistic competence and normativity. By integrating his framework with Gideon Toury's norm theory from Descriptive Translation Studies and Lawrence Venuti's account of translation as a culturally productive practice, the article contends that the KJV operated simultaneously as both a transmitter of biblical content and a generative force for new idiomatic and stylistic patterns in English. The analysis situates the KJV within its seventeenth-century English context and demonstrates that translation is an activity capable of forming and institutionalising linguistic norms, rather than a simple reproductive act. Through three case studies of idiomatic expressions and the additional analysis of syntactic and stylistic features, the present work shows how the KJV's legacy is best understood as the result of creative, institutionally mediated processes that continue to inform English linguistic conventions. Coşeriu's concept of normativity is shown to be helpful for understanding how translation practices can lead to the emergence and codification of new language patterns. The article concludes that the KJV exemplifies the productive, norm-generating potential of translation and affirms the continued relevance of Coşeriu's theoretical perspective in the study of linguistic and translational phenomena.

**Keywords:** *King James Version, Coşeriu, linguistic norms, translation theory, English standardisation*

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**REZUMAT.** *Biblia King James, forță creatoare de norme: Perspective coșeriene și perspective traductologice.* Acest articol analizează Biblia King James ca spațiu central al creării și negocierii normelor lingvistice în istoria limbii engleze, punând accent pe contribuțiile teoretice ale lui Eugeniu Coșeriu privind competența lingvistică și normativitatea. Prin integrarea cadrului coșerian cu teoria normei din Descriptive Translation Studies (Studii traductologice descriptive) propusă de Gideon Toury și cu abordarea lui Lawrence Venuti privind traducerea ca practică productivă din punct de vedere cultural, articolul susține că Biblia King James a funcționat atât ca mijloc de transmitere al conținutului biblic, cât și ca forță generatoare de noi modele idiomatice și stilistice în limba engleză. Analiza plasează Biblia King James în contextul Angliei secolului al XVII-lea și arată că traducerea nu este un simplu act reproductiv, fiind mai degrabă o activitate capabilă să cristalizeze și instituționalizeze norme lingvistice. Prin analiza a trei studii de caz referitoare la expresii idiomatiche, precum și a unor trăsături sintactice și stilistice, lucrarea de față demonstrează că moștenirea Bibliei King James trebuie înțeleasă ca rezultatul unor procese creative și instituționale care încă influențează convențiile lingvistice ale limbii engleze. Conceptul de normativitate, în accepțiunea coșeriană, se dovedește a fi util pentru înțelegerea modului în care practicile de traducere pot genera și codifica noi modele de limbaj. Articolul concluzionează că Biblia King James exemplifică potențialul productiv și normativ al traducerii și afirmă relevanța continuă a perspectivei teoretice coșeriene în studiul fenomenelor lingvistice și traductologice.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Biblia King James, Coșeriu, norme lingvistice, teoria traducerii, standardizarea limbii engleze*

## 1. Introduction

The translation of the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible occupies a foundational position in the linguistic, literary, and overall cultural history of the English-speaking world, functioning as a primary locus for the manifestation and transmission of linguistic norms. Since it was published in 1611, the KJV has been widely acknowledged as both a religious and linguistic artefact, due to its influence on the expressive repertoire of English through its idiomatic innovations, syntactic formalisation, and distinctive stylistic register. This article undertakes an examination of the KJV as a site for the negotiation and consolidation of linguistic norms, positioning its analysis at the juncture of three principal theoretical frameworks: Eugeniu Coșeriu's tripartite model of linguistic competence, Gideon Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies and norm theory, and Lawrence Venuti's theories of domestication and cultural politics in translation.

The significance of the KJV within the tradition of English Bible translation is, beyond the function of its religious or doctrinal content, grounded in its singular role in standardising forms of English idiomaticity, lexical choice, and subsequent stylistic canonisation. The present article, therefore, focuses on the question of how translation participates in the productive formation, rather than just the reproduction, of linguistic and cultural norms. Coşeriu's model, as elaborated by Kabatek and others, distinguishes between universal elocutional competence, language-specific idiomatic competence, and the creative, textually realised expressive competence of individual speakers or writers. In Coserian terms, competence operates alongside norm, understood as the socially shared and conventional realisation of manners of speaking which mediate between the abstract system and concrete discourse. This is important for translation because many target choices instantiate norm-regulated usage, including both canonical routines and non-canonical, idiomatic turns, indicating speaker attitude or style (Coşeriu 1997).

These distinctions provide an analytical framework for surveying the KJV's double movement: its transmission of inherited biblical content and its transformative role in generating new forms of idiomatic and stylistic usage within English. As section 2.1 demonstrates, this stratification of linguistic knowledge allows for a rigorous differentiation between features of biblical translation that are universally intelligible, those that are proper to English as a linguistic system, and those that emerge through certain textual or discursive practices.

Coşeriu's theory of *norma*, developed in *Sistema, norma y habla* (1952), defines the norm as a socially constituted regularity, an objectively observable pattern that speakers follow by virtue of belonging to a linguistic community, rather than a codified rule of "correct" usage. It thus describes how people *actually* speak, not how they should, with "normal" and "abnormal" as its operative poles rather than "correct" and "incorrect." This living, traditional usage precedes and informs later codification, mediating between system and discourse. Within Coşeriu's tripartite model of competence, the norm anchors idiomatic competence, guides expressive performance, and operates under the universal conditions of elocutional competence. In translation, this means that equivalences are above all equivalences of discourse, being guided not by abstract system constraints, but by the norm of idiomatic, stylistically appropriate expression. Therefore, translators work through two types of operations: *transposición*, when a ready, norm-congruent equivalent exists, and *versión*, when creative reformulation is required to preserve function or effect (Coşeriu 1997). These textual operations reveal how translation can itself become normative, and how renderings like

those of the King James Version eventually enter the expressive repertoire of a language and redefine what counts as idiomatic within it.

In addition to the Coserian frame, the present paper adopts Toury's model of translation as a norm-governed and norm-generating activity, which attends closely to the regularities and conventionalities emerging within specific translational contexts. Toury's theory, as detailed in section 2.2, conceptualises translation as a form of cultural intervention that is always integrated within a dynamic field of operational, preliminary, and initial norms. Of particular relevance is Toury's argument that translation tends, over time, to become more standardised within the target language, producing what he terms "growing standardisation" and "interference", and in so doing further engraining specific idiomatic and syntactic forms within the receiving culture. Venuti's theoretical contribution is employed to accentuate the political and institutional dimensions of these processes: translation is conceived as a site of negotiation between the pressures of domestication, whereby foreign elements are made to conform to target language norms, and the potential for creative resistance or foreignisation.

The historical and institutional context of the KJV, presented in section 3, grounds the subsequent analysis in the material realities of early seventeenth-century England: a translation produced by a committee, under royal commission, and intended as a revisionary rather than an entirely original text. The KJV's status as both a religious document and a commercially driven publication is foregrounded, alongside its dual function in consolidating both doctrinal authority and linguistic prestige. This institutional backdrop provides the foundation for the article's methodological focus on idiomatic and lexical norms, as explored in section 4. Through case studies of phrases such as "the powers that be", "by the skin of my teeth", and "the writing on the wall", the article demonstrates how the KJV's translational strategies naturalised, domesticated, and finally canonised previously foreign or opaque linguistic forms.

Ultimately, the argument advanced throughout this paper is that the KJV stands as a paradigmatic example of translation as a productive, norm-creating activity. Its legacy, it is contended, can be rigorously understood through the convergence of Coşeriu's competence model, Toury's norm theory, and Venuti's account of domestication. The article aims to show that it is precisely through translation, when conceived not as passive transmission but as a generative, institutionally mediated intervention, that linguistic, idiomatic, and stylistic norms are continually formed, contested, as well as transmitted within the evolving history of English.

## 2. Theoretical Framing

### 2.1. Coşeriu's Threefold Model of Linguistic Competence

Coşeriu's linguistic theory is constructed upon a critical departure from the Saussurean dichotomy of *langue* and *parole*, elaborating a triadic structure of linguistic knowledge grounded in the productive and dialogic realities of actual speech (*enérgeia*). Kabatek emphasises that for Coşeriu, "we must depart from the spoken word and look at the language not from the point of view of the system, but from the point of view of the production, of the *enérgeia*, from the real dialogic and spoken activity of the speaker" (Robu and Kabatek 2017, 141). This orientation is situated within a broader stratification of linguistic phenomena, articulated at universal, historical, and individual levels, each hosting distinct manifestations of linguistic competence. It is important to note that Coşeriu (1992) initially uses "linguistic knowledge" and subsequently "linguistic competence" in his theory of speaking. Thus, linguistic competence is conceived as multidimensional: there are universal pragmatic features, historically developed grammatical realisations, and particular textual traditions, as demonstrated by phenomena such as politeness, which traverse all three domains (Robu and Kabatek 2017, 148; Coşeriu 1992).

Coşeriu's model specifically identifies three primary kinds of linguistic knowledge, each corresponding to a different level of language activity. Firstly, elocutional knowledge (elocutional competence) is described as "everything that applies in principle to all languages independently of their respective linguistic structures, that is, a number of principles of thought and the general knowledge of the world". For instance, the deviance of an utterance such as "The five continents are four" is not rooted in language-specific rules, but in universal cognitive principles. Similarly, statements that defy empirical reality ("This tree sings" or "I boiled the piano") are excluded by elocutional competence, not by the internal system of a particular language (Coşeriu 1985, xxix–xxx; Coşeriu 1992).

Secondly, idiomatic knowledge (idiomatic competence) refers to the mastery of rules and conventions proper to a particular language. This competence encompasses both grammatical and lexical regularities, as well as accepted patterns of expression. For example, while "to go by train" is standard in English, German requires a different construction with the verb "*fahren*"; grammaticality, collocation, and idiomaticity are thereby grounded in language-specific systems (Coşeriu 1985, xxx; Coşeriu 1992).

Thirdly, expressive knowledge (expressive competence) is the capacity to produce meaning at the individual, discursive level, realised in the deployment of language in particular texts and contexts. This level is not restricted to systemic or conventional rules but is oriented towards the creative, context-dependent

construction of meaning. Thus, the appropriateness or deviance of forms such as the French “*Bon matin*” for “good morning” is determined not by language-wide grammatical rules but by textual norms and traditions of discourse within the speech community (Coşeriu 1985, xxx; Coşeriu 1992). Coşeriu summarises this tripartition as involving the universal capacities of language (“elocutională” – elocutional), community-specific linguistic competence (“idomatică” – idiomatic), and the creative, individual realisation of meaning in texts or discourse (“expresivă” – expressive) (Coşeriu 2009, 13–15).

Willems and Munteanu (2021) distil Coşeriu’s framework as one that distinguishes between (1) universal, non-language-specific knowledge (elocutional), (2) historical, language-specific knowledge (idiomatic), and (3) individual, discourse-specific competence (expressive) (Willems and Munteanu 2021, 7–8). These map onto three kinds of meaning: designation (universal), signified (language-specific), and text meaning (individual or discourse-specific) (Willems and Munteanu 2021, 8). Later Coserian work and recent systematisations have shown that this tripartite architecture can be applied to a broad range of linguistic phenomena, including translation understood as a textual activity and linguistic change described as renewal in functioning (see Coşeriu 1985; Coşeriu 1991; Coşeriu 1992; Coşeriu 1997; Willems and Munteanu 2021; Varga 2021).

Coşeriu’s concept of norm, developed in *Sistema, norma y habla* (1952, 53–54), departs from both prescriptive and evaluative approaches to grammar by defining norma as a social reality rather than a set of imposed rules. For him, the norm is an objectively observable pattern within a linguistic community, one that speakers follow by virtue of belonging to that community, not because it has been codified as a rule of “correct” speech. Coşeriu stresses that the norm describes how speakers *actually* use language, not how they should use it; its oppositional values are “normal” and “abnormal,” not “correct” and “incorrect”. Notably, he posits that while normative and prescriptive forms may coincide, they often diverge, since the collectively practised norm typically anticipates later codification. In this sense, the norm represents the living, traditional usage that precedes formal regulation and functions as a stabilising yet evolving intermediary between the linguistic system and individual expression. Kabatek (2020, 132–139) later also points out this generative aspect, arguing that such collectively maintained regularities support the diachronic consolidation of linguistic tradition. In Coşeriu’s architecture, the norm is the historically shared regularity that anchors idiomatic competence, constrains and guides expressive competence in discourse, and operates under the universal conditions of elocutional competence, thereby mediating between system and individual speech.

In translation, many target solutions are *equivalencias de traducción* (equivalences of translation), which, as Coşeriu explains, are above all equivalences of discourse. That is, equivalences in the actual use of languages rather than at

the level of their abstract systems. For Coşeriu, the translator's guiding question is not what the system allows, but rather *how one would say this in the same situation*, namely, what the norm of the language authorises as idiomatic or stylistically appropriate. Hence the centrality of norm-regulated usage in explaining the effectiveness and later conventionalisation of certain renderings (Coşeriu 1997, 171–172). He also distinguishes two families of operations: *transposición* (transposition), when an idiomatic, norm-congruent target language unit exists, and *versión* (version), when the translator must reformulate beyond ready-made idioms to preserve sense, function, or effect. Both are fully textual operations, and their assessment is inherently discursive (Coşeriu 1997, 173). This model predicts that a translation like the KJV can become a norm-maker: once its solutions are conventionalised as idiomatic routines, later speakers and writers treat them as the way English just says things.

Recent scholarship confirms that Coşeriu's framework remains highly relevant within contemporary translation studies. Varga (2021) documents a sustained increase in references to Coşeriu across major linguistic and cultural traditions between 2017 and 2021, identifying 45 research outputs and over 230 citations engaging explicitly with his theory. The most frequently cited concepts include the meaning–designation–sense triad, the assertion that languages cannot be translated, only texts can, and the principle of translation as a textual, discursive act grounded in the distinction between system, norm, and speech. Varga concludes that Coşeriu's ideas continue to inform current debates on equivalence, translatability, and the epistemological status of translation as a meaning-making practice.

## ***2.2. Descriptive Translation Studies and Norm Theory***

Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) provides a foundational framework for understanding translation as a norm-governed, culturally situated activity. He asserts that translational behaviour is regulated by socially determined expectations: "The claim that, being a culturally-determined kind of activity, translation is basically norm-governed, is closely related to the observation that this activity is inherently (that is, non-arbitrarily) characterised by immense variability, both across cultures (in space or time) as well as within single ones" (Toury 2012, 61). Toury's descriptive norms and Coşeriu's norm are not coextensive, but they do meet in practice: both track socially shared regularities in realised discourse. Coşeriu's focus on discursive equivalence explains why "idiomatic" target language forms recur and sediment, while Toury's historical-descriptive programme shows how recurrences of this type stabilise as translational norms. This combined view helps to clarify how KJV solutions passed from committee choices to conventional English phraseology.

Regarding translation norms, Toury elaborates three main types: initial, preliminary, and operational. The initial norm concerns the translator's macro-level orientation, whether to favour adequacy (source-text orientation) or acceptability (target-culture orientation) (Toury 2012, 79–80). Preliminary norms pertain to selection and policy, addressing what texts are chosen for translation and whether indirect or mediated translation is tolerated (Toury 2012, 82). Operational norms direct the concrete decisions within the translation process, governing issues of completeness, segmentation (matricial norms), and the selection or replacement of linguistic material (textual-linguistic norms) (Toury 2012, 83). Toury also focuses on the inherent instability and contextual specificity of norms, allowing for multiple, even competing, norm systems (Toury 2012, 86–87).

Toury further introduces two empirical “laws” of translational behaviour: the law of growing standardisation, according to which “in translation, source-text textemes tend to be converted into target-language (or target-culture) repertoremes” (Toury 2012, 303). This reflects a tendency for translated texts to become more standardised, privileging habitual, institutionalised options in the target language. The law of interference states that “phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to force themselves on the translators and be transferred to the target text, whether they manifest themselves in the form of negative transfer (i.e., deviations from normal, codified practices of the target system), or in the form of positive transfer (i.e., an increase in the frequency of features which do exist in the target system and can be used anyway)” (Toury 2012, 310–311). Both laws are theorised as tendencies, modulated by cognitive and socio-cultural factors.

Venuti's conceptual dichotomy of domestication and foreignisation frames the ethics and politics of translation. Domestication is an “ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to [target] cultural values”, while foreignisation registers difference and resists dominant norms (Venuti 2008, 15–16). The history of Bible translation, for example, demonstrates how religious and institutional norms have influenced what is considered “accurate”, and how institutional validation can override strict adherence to the source text (Venuti 2021, 15). Venuti's model positions translation as a site of negotiation between institutional, cultural and, evidently, linguistic values. On a Coserian reading, Venuti's opposition between domestication and foreignisation can be reinterpreted in terms of norm-regulated usage: domestication aligns with transpositions that conform to the target language's established norms, while foreignisation corresponds to versions that stretch or remodel those norms to accommodate the source text's discourse. Both processes are therefore discursive, not systemic, and reveal how cultural and linguistic norms jointly determine what later becomes accepted or conventionalised (Coşeriu 1997).

In this respect, the King James Version, as an institutional translation, is paradigmatic. Its operational and stylistic norms are deeply embedded in the cultural and religious context, affecting both the material realisation and the authority of the translation itself.

### **3. Historical-linguistic Background of the KJV**

The historical and linguistic circumstances of the King James Version (KJV) point to a translation motivated by political, ecclesiastical, and cultural forces. Commissioned in 1604 by King James I, it aimed to address dissatisfaction with earlier translations, notably the Geneva Bible, which was perceived as politically subversive due to marginal notes critical of monarchical authority (McGrath 2001, 141; Campbell 2010, 32–36). The translation emerged from the Hampton Court Conference, convened to mediate between reformist Puritans and advocates of a hierarchical Church of England, revealing its political and religious significance (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 6).

Roughly fifty scholars, grouped into six committees based in Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge, undertook the translation (McGrath 2001, 178–182; Norton 2005, 5–9; Hamlin and Jones 2010, 7). These scholars included both bishops and moderate Puritans, supervised by prominent academics such as Lancelot Andrewes (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 7; Campbell 2010, 33–36). Rather than producing an entirely new work, their task was explicitly revisionary: to improve upon the Bishops' Bible while consulting multiple sources, including Tyndale's translations, the Geneva Bible, Coverdale's work, and even the Catholic Rheims New Testament (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 7; Norton 2005, 9; McGrath 2001, 176). In Coserian (1997) terms, the committees' pursuit of idiomatic dignity positioned their renderings to enter English as norm-regulated usage, which later writers and speakers could reproduce as the idiomatic way to say things.

Significantly, the KJV was not funded directly by the Crown. Instead, financial responsibility fell to Robert Barker, the King's Printer, who was granted exclusive printing rights, thereby bearing the considerable cost of approximately £3,500 with support from private partners John Bill, Bonham Norton, and John Norton (McGrath 2001, 198–199; Norton 2005, 12–15). The translation thus existed simultaneously as an officially sanctioned religious document and a commercially viable publication dependent on market dynamics rather than direct state patronage.

This duality as a religious and linguistic-cultural artifact is consistently emphasised across accounts. The KJV was indeed a foundational scriptural text for English Protestantism, but it also significantly influenced English linguistic

identity and cultural heritage, determining literary style and vernacular expression for centuries (McGrath 2001, 260–261; Campbell 2010, 1–3; Hamlin and Jones 2010, 1–2, 12–13).

Translation choices within the KJV were methodically governed by stylistic, doctrinal, and rhetorical aims. The translators were explicitly instructed to preserve traditional ecclesiastical vocabulary, such as using “church” instead of the Puritan-preferred “congregation”, which reflected a doctrinal alignment with established Anglican practice (Campbell 2010, 14, 35–36). Moreover, marginal notes were strictly limited to clarifying the original Hebrew or Greek terms in the source text without doctrinal commentary, directly countering the Geneva Bible’s interpretative annotations (Norton 2005, 8, 37–38; Campbell 2010, 37).

The translators aimed for solemnity and rhetorical clarity, not colloquial immediacy, balancing fidelity to original texts with established ecclesiastical tradition (McGrath 2001, 176). The translation’s preface explicitly states their goal as enhancing existing translations rather than creating an entirely new one, captured in the phrase: “to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one” (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 7; Campbell 2010, 35). This approach shows an awareness of the translation’s position within a continuous tradition of English Bible-making. The translators’ instructions also reveal the doctrinal priorities of the Anglican Church. For example, they were guided by notions favouring meanings endorsed by early church fathers and doctrinal conformity, which directly opposed Puritan preferences for scriptural primacy over ecclesiastical tradition (Campbell 2010, 36). Furthermore, practical constraints such as retaining the established chapter and verse divisions introduced by Robert Estienne, first incorporated into English in the Geneva Bible of 1560, drew attention to how traditional textual organisation was preserved, encouraging memorisation and public reading (Campbell 2010, 36).

The KJV drew extensively on earlier translations, especially Tyndale’s, from which substantial sections were adopted verbatim, reflecting continuity in textual and doctrinal traditions. Estimates indicate that in certain portions, Tyndale’s influence comprises approximately ninety percent of the text (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 3). The Geneva Bible also had substantial influence through its Roman typography and chapter and verse structure, although its doctrinal notes provoked official disapproval (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 4–5).

Ultimately, the KJV’s institutional endorsement and its strategic doctrinal neutrality allowed it to replace previous translations gradually, solidifying its position by the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Its extensive adoption was driven not merely by authoritative decree but significantly by economic and

practical considerations linked to Bible production and distribution (Norton 2005, 47; Hamlin and Jones 2010, 8). Thus, the KJV's translation choices, governed by stylistic clarity, doctrinal orthodoxy, and rhetorical force, consolidated its status as a foundational religious text and a cornerstone of English cultural and linguistic tradition.

#### 4. Idiomatic and Lexical Norms in the KJV

##### 4.1. Case Study: “The powers that be” (Romans 13:1)

The phrase “the powers that be”, originating from Romans 13:1, is noted by McGrath (2001, 264) as a distinctive coinage popularised by the King James Version (KJV). However, Crystal clarifies that its linguistic roots actually trace back to Tyndale’s New Testament and were subsequently maintained by the Geneva and Bishops’ Bibles — specifically, Crystal contends “those things that be” in Wycliffe’s translation, as well as Douai-Rheims’s “those that are” were both “bland”. The idiom’s endurance in English usage can be attributed to its grammatical uniqueness, particularly the archaic subjunctive form “be”, which lends it a degree of stylistic compactness and resonance resistant to morphological alteration. Consequently, humorous parodies such as “the flowers that be” emphasise the idiom’s fixed linguistic structure and its iconic status within English idiomatic usage. According to Crystal, the idiom has also evolved to adopt ironic and subversive undertones, often employed in contemporary discourse as a means to critique established authority. Its semantic ambiguity, especially regarding the multifaceted concept of “powers”, facilitates this adaptability across diverse contexts, from political commentary to literary satire (Crystal 2010, 165).

This phrase is a *transposition*, in Coserian (1997) terms, as English has a ready idiomatic template that the KJV fortifies; its afterlife shows the solution functioning as norm-regulated usage rather than an ad-hoc coinage. Further, in relation to Coşeriu’s theory of idiomatic competence, this expression exemplifies how translation can integrate originally foreign syntactic structures into the receiving language’s idiomatic inventory. Venuti’s (2008, 15–16) notion of domestication further explains this phenomenon, describing it as a translation strategy through which culturally and linguistically foreign elements are reconfigured to conform with target-language norms. In this respect, “the powers that be” is a clear instance of domestication, transforming a foreign Semitic syntactic construction into a distinctly English idiom, seamlessly absorbed into everyday language.

#### **4.2. Case Study: “By the skin of my teeth” (Job 19:20)**

McGrath (2001, 263) identifies “by the skin of my teeth” as a Hebraic idiom naturalised through the KJV, notable for its poetic ambiguity and expressive force. Crystal (2010, 84–85) explores the interpretive complexity of this phrase, emphasising the literal translation of the original Hebrew metaphor despite its anatomical implausibility, as teeth possess no skin. The expression’s enigmatic imagery has elicited extensive speculation about its intended meaning, ranging from survival by the narrowest margin to hypothetical references to gums or other oral features. Crystal (2010, 84) further attributes the phrase’s lasting impact to its metaphorical opacity, whereby semantic ambiguity reinforces affective resonance. Its prosodic rhythm, particularly the fluent construction “of my teeth” enhances its memorability, distinguishing the KJV rendering from less fluid predecessors such as Coverdale’s and the Bishops’ Bibles.

This expression is, in Coseriu (1997) terms, a *version*, since there is no pre-given target language routine to slot in, so the KJV’s creative reformulation becomes the idiom that later English conventionalises, moving from non-canonical markedness into norm. This case can also be interpreted as an example of Coşeriu’s (1985, xxx) concept of expressive competence, defined as the ability to generate affectively meanings extending beyond literal semantic content. Similarly, Kabatek (2020, 132) discusses how expressive meanings tend to surpass lexical semantics, evoking emotional and figurative depth. Consequently, “by the skin of my teeth” embodies expressive competence, transforming a perplexing Hebrew image into an idiomatic formulation that powerfully conveys existential precariousness and emotional intensity.

#### **4.3. Case Study: “The writing on the wall” (Daniel 5)**

The idiom “the writing on the wall”, originating from Daniel 5, is a practical lens for examining the distinction between idiomatic and expressive competence as delineated in Coşeriu’s theoretical framework discussed in section two of this paper. As McGrath (2001, 264) note, this idiom embodies the metaphorical power and lasting figurative appeal that biblical language can achieve in English. However, Crystal (2010, 126–127) clarifies that the precise wording familiar to contemporary speakers, “the writing on the wall”, does not appear verbatim in the KJV or earlier biblical translations. Instead, it evolved from interpretative traditions concerning the episode of Belshazzar witnessing a supernatural hand inscribing a divine warning upon the palace wall. From the perspective of idiomatic competence, the phrase has become a stable linguistic element with a fixed semantic role. It has developed an autonomous meaning detached from its scriptural origins, commonly deployed in English to signify

an omen of impending failure or catastrophe. This idiomatic dimension reflects its full integration into English usage, such that its historical and textual references have faded from general consciousness (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 271). Expressive competence, on the other hand, relates specifically to the idiom's ability to evoke emotional intensity and rhetorical effect beyond mere semantic clarity. The dramatic imagery inherent in the original biblical context of an enigmatic hand inscribing doom imbues the phrase with emotional resonance and symbolic potency. Crystal (2010, 127) points to its expressive efficacy in contemporary discourse, especially in rhetorical questions intended to transmit a sense of urgency or inevitable decline, whether referencing political contexts or institutional viability.

Therefore, in line with Coşeriu's distinctions, the idiom "the writing on the wall" simultaneously exemplifies idiomatic competence through its stable, independent meaning within the linguistic system, and expressive competence through its potent metaphorical and affective resonance, retained vividly in modern usage despite the obscurity of its biblical origin. Furthermore, in this case, the textual effect relies on shared cultural knowledge, so in Coserian (1997) terms, the KJV delivers a *version* whose success resides in discourse: the phrase's uptake then normalises it as an idiomatic warning within the target language norm.

#### **4.4. Normative Implications**

The gradual naturalisation of idiomatic expressions originating from the KJV, as outlined by McGrath (2001, 259), exemplifies Toury's concept of operational norms (Toury 2012, 63), highlighting how repeated usage within public and private domains promoted the absorption of initially foreign linguistic structures into accepted language conventions. Kabatek (2020, 132) supports this process, emphasising how lexical restrictions and collocations become established through habitual community usage, strengthening the translation's normative impact.

Venuti's (2008, 1–6, 12–16) domestication theory further clarifies this phenomenon, describing how translations produce norms by seamlessly integrating foreign lexical and syntactic elements into familiar linguistic forms. Domestication creates an illusion of transparency, reducing perceived textual foreignness and reinforcing dominant target-culture values. The idiomatic stability achieved by phrases such as "the powers that be", "by the skin of my teeth", and "the writing on the wall" demonstrates precisely this process, wherein initially expressive or foreign source language elements become normative features of the receiving language through sustained exposure and acceptance. Hamlin and Jones (2010, 3) reinforce this analysis, observing how

KJV idioms have become central to English literary and cultural tradition, frequently losing explicit biblical associations and obtaining independent semantic status. Their continued use across diverse literary genres shows how translations can effectively rewrite linguistic norms, integrating expressive biblical idioms within the English idiomatic repertoire.

## 5. Syntactic Patterns and Stylistic Formalisation

### 5.1. Use of Inversion, Parallelism, and Archaisms

The King James Version (KJV) is widely acknowledged for its distinctive syntactic and rhetorical features, especially its consistent use of inversion, parallelism, and archaisms. These elements, as McGrath (2001, 264) argues, are integral to the translation's literary dignity and its ability to communicate theological gravity. The KJV's translators frequently chose to preserve Hebraic syntactic structures, often at the expense of idiomatic English fluency. In this way, fidelity to the source's rhythm and phrasing was held above the norms of vernacular English, resulting in a scriptural register that carries a substantial amount of solemnity.

From the perspective of linguistic theory, such strategies can be understood through Coşeriu's concept of elocutional competence, which denotes the realisation of universal grammatical and stylistic capacities within a specific textual tradition (Coşeriu 1985). The translators of the KJV exemplify this competence, as noted by McGrath (2001, 262–264), by closely adhering to the syntax and imagery of the Hebrew original, often maintaining the literal word order or semantic nuance of the source even when it produced what McGrath termed the “harsh dignity” of biblical diction. In Psalm 84:7, for instance, the phrasing “every one of them in Zion appeareth before God” shows much more structural fidelity toward the Hebrew original than the Geneva Bible's “till every one appeareth before God in Zion”, displaying the KJV translators' partiality towards cadence and solemnity over idiomatic fluency. Similarly, in Isaiah 53:7, the KJV's “He is brought as a *lamb* to the slaughter, and as a *sheep* before her shearers is dumb” refines the Geneva Bible's “He is brought as a *sheep* to the slaughter, and as a *sheep* before her shearer is dumb” by introducing more lexical precision. Specifically, the Geneva translators rendered both Hebrew nouns (*seh*, meaning “lamb”, and *rachel*, meaning “sheep”) as “sheep”, which created some degree of lexical uniformity, but limited nuance and Christological and sacrificial connotation, not to mention fidelity. Further, in Psalm 62:8, the KJV's singularisation “pour out your *heart* before him” replaced the Geneva

Bible's plural form in "pour out your *hearts* before him", therefore transforming a more literal rendering from the Hebrew original into a universalised idiom. The formalisation of phrase structure and cadence, as evident in Psalms, Proverbs, and the Gospels, exemplifies how the KJV elevated the English scriptural register by instantiating stylistically marked forms. McGrath (2001, 262–64) observes that the deliberate arrangement of language in the KJV produced not only theological clarity, but also a heightened sense of textual gravitas.

Crystal (2010, 196) draws attention to the unique syntactic and rhetorical structure of the Beatitudes, which are rendered in the KJV as "Blessed are..." followed by a noun or adjectival phrase and a theological consequence. This construction is marked by inversion, with the verb preceding the subject, a choice that lends a distinctive rhythm and authority to the clause. While earlier English translations also retained this structure, Crystal contends that the KJV canonised the form, establishing a paradigm of biblical parallelism that has endured in both religious and secular contexts. The repeated phrasing, as in "Blessed are they that mourn... the meek... the pure in heart...", introduced a model of balance and symmetry that transcended its theological origins to become a widely recognisable template for praise, satire, as well as cultural commentary (Crystal 2010, 196–97). Because this wording was received and circulated as the very wording of Scripture, it was repeated in preaching, public reading, and catechetical transmission, which transformed a marked Hebraic pattern into a socially shared, liturgically reinforced norm of English biblical style. The persistence of this syntactic model across versions and languages (including Romanian and Italian) may also reflect an early theological conviction that sacred phrasing should be preserved as faithfully as possible, lest one "add to or take away from" the word of God. In this sense, the Beatitudes' phrasing functioned as a normative template from its inception (the "word of God" itself), later sustained through institutional authority and collective habit. This process exemplifies Toury's observation that particular translations may come to occupy authoritative, law-generating positions within their host cultures.

The rhetorical cadence of the KJV has inspired both imitation and adaptation in modern English. Crystal (2010, 197) notes that contemporary headlines and cultural artefacts, such as Joan Baez's lyrics and medical articles titled "Blessed are the pacemakers", reflect the enduring influence of the original biblical structure. These adaptations reveal the capacity of the KJV's syntactic forms to inspire both reverence and parody, underlining their now embedded place in English expressive culture.

These developments can be best conceptualised as manifestations of elocutional competence: the patterned realisation of universal linguistic capacities in a culturally marked and stylistically elevated register. The KJV's deliberate

stylistic inversion, repetition, and parallelism established a register that was doctrinally authoritative, as well as aesthetically resonant and enduringly influential within the English language.

Campbell (2010, 2) further characterises the KJV's prose as "resonant", frequently achieving the rhythm and compactness of poetry. The translation's syntax is "elevated", contributing to the memorability and authority of scriptural utterance. Adam's words in Genesis 3:12, "she gave me of the tree, and I did eat", are cited as an example of iambic pentameter, which shows the translators' sensitivity to poetic cadence (Campbell 2010, 2). Campbell (2010, 13) also identifies the "studied simplicity" of the KJV, an intentional emulation of Tyndale's accessible, yet dignified language, as a major factor in its continued cultural authority.

On a broader theoretical level, Kabatek (2023) situates such stylistic phenomena within the context of textual tradition. For Kabatek, archaism and formalisation are not incidental, but central to the authority and recognisability of religious texts. Therefore, the persistent use of inversion, archaism, and parallelism in the KJV is emblematic of a textual tradition that confers meaning through stylistic continuity and markedness.

In turn, Hamlin and Jones (2010, 9–10) add that the KJV translators sought "formal equivalence", maintaining the original structure of Hebrew and Greek as closely as possible. This resulted in features such as parataxis (repeated use of "and"), genitive constructions ("the face of the deep"), and retention of Hebraic vocabulary. The poetic features of Hebrew, especially parallelism, are evident in the Psalms and have shaped the language of later English literature and hymnody (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 4, 17). Inversion and archaisms, alongside biblical diction and rhythm, have since become characteristic of a recognisable biblical style in English (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 11–12, 17).

### ***5.2. Impact on English Stylistic Norms***

The enduring influence of the KJV on English stylistic conventions is manifest in a broad range of registers, from religious rhetoric to literary prose. McGrath (2001, 259) asserts that the language of the KJV, together with Shakespearean English, acquired cultural legitimacy and became foundational to the codification of literary English. Its idioms, rhythms, and formulae have contributed to the establishment of stylistic norms, especially in religious, ceremonial, and other similarly formal contexts.

A significant factor in the KJV's rhetorical impact is its lexical base, with ninety-three percent of its vocabulary deriving from native English (McGrath 2001, 262). This decision ensured that the translation remained accessible and

rhetorically potent, reinforcing its status as a linguistic and literary point of reference. Crystal (2010, 2) provides quantitative and qualitative analysis supporting the Bible's pervasive stylistic influence. He notes, with epistemic caution, that the KJV has contributed more idiomatic and quasi-proverbial expressions to English than any other literary source. Among the rhetorical devices influenced by the KJV is the balanced reversal or chiasmic structure, as in "the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:16), which is frequently adopted in contemporary journalism and cultural commentary (Crystal 2010, 164). Although Crystal limits the number of idioms directly attributable to the KJV to 257, he maintains that "the Bible reigns definitely supreme" in the domain of idiomatic expression (Crystal 2010, 258). The malleability of biblical constructions is further evident in secular adaptations, where phrases like "Blessed are the meek" are repurposed for parody or social commentary while retaining their original solemnity (Crystal 2010, 196–97). Further, Campbell (2010, 1) describes the KJV as "the most celebrated book in the English-speaking world", adding to its foundational role in informing the literary and rhetorical repository of English. Its stylistic authority is further attested by its use in state ceremonies and its reverence across denominational boundaries (Campbell 2010, 204, 274).

From a theoretical perspective, Coşeriu's conception of norm includes phonological and lexical realisations, as well as syntactic and stylistic features. Kabatek (2020, 132) similarly holds that norms are relevant at all linguistic levels, encompassing the traditional realisation of patterns in syntax and register. The stylistic influence of the KJV thus lies not in prescriptive codification, but in its repeated and adaptive citation across domains.

Venuti (2008, 4–6, 12–13) contributes a further dimension by linking the stylistic impact of translation to processes of domestication and the "regime of fluency". He contends that the stylistic registers of English prose and journalism, influenced in part by biblical translation, now privilege "plain styles" and "neutral transparent prose". Such preferences, reinforced by the KJV's stylistic models, have become dominant through the wider processes of standardisation and commodification in English publishing and mass communication.

Hamlin and Jones (2010, 11–17) confirm that the KJV's linguistic features have influenced the rhetoric, prose, and poetry of English writers across centuries, often valued for their aesthetic and authoritative resonance. The translation's style has been, and continues to be, imitated by later authors, thereby contributing to the codification of a literary English indelibly associated with biblical authority (Hamlin and Jones 2010, 12–13).

## 6. Translation as Norm-Creating Activity

In examining the translation of the King James Version (KJV) as a source of linguistic normativity, it is essential to foreground the theoretical convergence of Coşeriu's model of linguistic competence, Toury's theory of translation norms, and Venuti's account of translation as a creative, canon-forming practice, as explained in the theoretical section of this paper. This theoretical triangulation shows that translation, as exemplified by the KJV, functions as a generative rather than a reproductive process. More specifically, as one by which the expressive resources and regularities of a language are actively generated, stabilised, and finally crystallised.

Coşeriu's competence model positions linguistic activity as creative, socially shared, and norm-generating (1952, 1992). The threefold structure of system, norm, and speech frames translation as an operation situated not in the abstract linguistic system but in discourse, where norms are formed through collective use. In *Alcances y límites de la traducción* (1997, 172), Coşeriu extends this framework to translation itself, defining it as a textual operation in which the translator moves from *desidiomatización* (deverbalisation) to *idiomatización* (reverbalisation), thereby reconstituting sense within the idiomatic possibilities sanctioned by the target language's norm. Translation thus becomes an act of re-creation through which discursive equivalences are established, and new idiomatic conventions may emerge.

As Varga (2021) demonstrates, Coşeriu's conceptual method continues to inform contemporary translation studies, particularly through its influence on theories of equivalence, translatability, and textuality. She notes that the triadic model of meaning, designation, and sense, together with the principle that "languages cannot be translated, texts have to be translated", remains relevant to current research (Varga 2021, 106). Coşeriu's view of translation as a historically situated, norm-regulated act therefore bridges descriptive and functionalist paradigms: it situates creativity not outside linguistic constraint but within the evolving system of discourse-based norms that translation itself helps to generate. The history of the KJV, as traced by McGrath (2001, 260–63), supports this theoretical stance, as his analysis demonstrates that the KJV's authority was achieved not by imitatively reproducing original Hebrew and Greek, but by forging a distinctively English idiom and syntax. In his words, the KJV "gave peculiar connotations to many words and sanctioned strange constructions", thus instituting and stabilising novel linguistic forms within English (McGrath 2001, 263). This process entailed a balance between literalism and readability, the retention of Semitic idioms, and the creation of dignified and memorable phraseology. As a result, the outcome was the productive

enrichment and transformation of the English literary and idiomatic repertoire and not simply the transmission of biblical content.

Crystal's observations are also pertinent here. He notes that the expressions and idioms of the KJV have become so thoroughly integrated into English that their biblical provenance is frequently unrecognised, and that they function as naturalised elements of everyday language. The idioms presented in the three case studies discussed above, i.e. "the powers that be" (Romans 13:1), "by the skin of my teeth" (Job 19:20), and "the writing on the wall" (Daniel 5), now occur freely in secular discourse, in journalism and political commentary, and even in colloquial speech, and are often used by speakers who tend to be unaware of their biblical origin. Each has undergone semantic and stylistic generalisation: "the powers that be" now denotes authority in any institutional sense; "by the skin of my teeth" is used to express a narrow escape; and "the writing on the wall" indicates impending failure or decline. Moreover, the syntactic pattern particular to the Beatitudes ("Blessed are the meek...") has transcended its religious context, reappearing in headlines and popular culture ("Blessed are the geeks", "Blessed are the pacemakers") as both homage and parody (Crystal 2010, 196–97).

Crystal advances a critical distinction between idioms and quotations, stressing that idioms are absorbed into secular usage and ultimately become stylistically productive, whereas quotations preserve their religious framing (Crystal 2010, 89, 131–132). He concludes, "No other single source has provided the language with so many idiomatic expressions... when it comes to idioms, the Bible reigns definitely supreme" (Crystal 2010, 258), and attributes to the KJV the role of fixing these expressions in the collective memory of English speakers (Crystal 2010, 262). Although he does not explicitly invoke the concept of "norm creation", the empirical claims he advances support the assertion that translation, in the case of the KJV, produced enduring conventions of idiomatic usage.

The institutional and editorial dimensions of norm creation are also discussed by Norton (2005, 85–112), who presents the KJV as the product of ongoing standardisation through the agency of translators, printers, and editors. The "normalisation" of spelling, punctuation, and certain wordings, together with the continual adaptation of the text, establishes that the crystallisation of stylistic and lexical norms is a cumulative process involving multiple actors across time rather than a static or singular achievement.

Coşeriu's reflections on translation, while brief, are consistent with this picture. He contends that translation is directly concerned with the level of discourse rather than the particular language as such, and that its objective is not the reproduction of identical meanings, an impossibility given the language-bound character of meaning, but rather the expression of the same designation

and sense by means of different linguistic forms (Coseriu 1985, xxxiv). Translation, then, is productive in that it fosters new conventions at the level of discourse and register.

Toury (2012, 8, 64, 295, 300) advances the notion that translation is inherently norm-governed and, in practice, norm-creating. For Toury, the objective of descriptive studies is to reveal how particular translations assume positions of authority and regularity within the host culture, resulting in the formulation of probabilistic “laws” of translational behaviour. Such “regularities of behaviour in recurrent situations” confirm the generative role of translation in deeply affecting cultural and linguistic expectations.

Venuti repeatedly characterises translation as a productive activity that creates and stabilises linguistic and cultural norms (Venuti 2008, 14–19; 2021, 4–7, 18–19). He posits that translation constitutes an interpretive act, whereby a new chain of signifiers is constructed in the target language, replacing, rather than duplicating, the signifiers of the source. The KJV’s status as a domesticating, canon-forming translation is interpreted by Venuti as paradigmatic of how translations form idiomatic and syntactic norms through institutional endorsement and widespread reception. The process is ongoing, involving a continual negotiation between the demands of fluency, readability, and the “visibility” or “invisibility” of the translator.

This orientation is further supported by the work of Willems and Munteanu (2021), who, following Humboldt, stress that linguistic activity, including translation, is fundamentally creative (*enérgeia*) and always exceeds prior knowledge or technique (*dýnamis*). The product (*érgon*) of this creative process is the emergence of new linguistic forms and conventions. Translation is, in this sense, an exemplary locus of norm-generation, producing, and not merely reproducing, linguistic resources.

Campbell (2010, 13–14) reinforces this argument through a detailed discussion of the transmission and transformation effected by the KJV. He documents how the KJV preserved the phraseology and style of Tyndale’s New Testament and subsequently established these choices as the dominant idiom for subsequent translations. The language “lives on, preserved by the KJV”, with particular expressions becoming embedded in English, their biblical origins forgotten, but their normative force intact.

Finally, Hamlin and Jones (2010, 1–2, 7–14) identify the KJV as the outcome of collaborative and cumulative translation processes that stabilised linguistic and stylistic norms. The ongoing adaptation and reception of the KJV, both in literary allusion and cultural practice, are examples of the productive and norm-creating nature of translation in the history of English.

## 7. Conclusion

The conclusion must return to the central thesis advanced throughout: that the translational activity embodied by the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible is most appropriately conceptualised not as a passive or reproductive transmission of pre-existing forms, but as a generative and creative process that is instrumental in the formation, transmission, and eventual consolidation of linguistic norms within English. As the analysis has demonstrated, the KJV's enduring legacy is inseparable from its dual function as a religious and linguistic artefact. Institutional endorsement and historical continuity have ensured that the translation's idiomatic innovations, syntactic choices, as well as stylistic registers have exerted a substantial influence on the expressive repertoire of English, with particular effect in the naturalisation and canonisation of distinctive biblical phraseologies.

Through the methodological prism of Coşeriu's tripartite model of linguistic competence, the article has sought to explicate the universal (elocutional), language-specific (idiomatic), and textually creative (expressive) dimensions of linguistic knowledge that underwrite both the process and the products of translation. The KJV, in this account, emerges as a site in which the abstract potentials of linguistic structure are selectively realised, mediated by the translators' engagement with historical conventions and the creative possibilities of English. The idiomatic competence of English is demonstrably expanded through the absorption and naturalisation of Hebraic and Greek elements; what were once "foreign" or non-native forms have, through the idiomatising and expressive procedures of translation, become integral components of the English linguistic system. This paper's analysis of such phrases as "the powers that be", "by the skin of my teeth", and "the writing on the wall" has explained the mechanisms by which translation introduces new forms and confers upon them a durable normative status. As a result, their biblical provenance is often disregarded in contemporary usage.

In Coserian terms, the KJV's impact is best explained as the discursive success of certain renderings, which translate texts rather than systems, and thereby consolidate norm-regulated usage. Some solutions are *transpositions* (ready idioms that the KJV fortifies), others are *versions* whose creative reformulation later becomes idiomatic; in both cases, equivalence is of discourse. This explains both the KJV's historical role as a norm-maker and the continued quotability of its English today (Coşeriu 1997). The approach is consistent with recent receptions that treat Coşeriu as a currently relevant framework for translation analysis (Varga 2021).

In reflecting on the application and limitations of the theoretical paradigms deployed, it is clear that Coşeriu's competence model provides a particularly useful analytic vocabulary for capturing the stratified processes involved in translation, especially in its attention to the intersection of system, norm, and textual practice. Nevertheless, as the analysis has shown, the phenomenon of norm-formation is not adequately understood without Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies and the notion of translation as a norm-governed and norm-generating practice. Toury's account of the initial, preliminary, and operational norms that structure translational behaviour, together with his formulation of the "laws" of growing standardisation and interference, constitute a pertinent empirical framework for tracing the ways in which the KJV's linguistic choices were regularised, transmitted, and then fixed within the conventions of English usage.

Venuti's theorisation of domestication and the politics of translation further expands on this account by insisting on the cultural and institutional character of translation. The processes of domestication, through which foreign forms are rendered familiar and institutionally legitimated, are presented as integral to the KJV's continuing impact. The creative aspect of translation, as discussed by both Venuti and recent work in linguistic norm theory, reframes the translator's agency as productive rather than merely reproductive: the translator participates actively in the formation and reorganisation of the receiving language and culture, generating new norms and expanding the expressive possibilities available to subsequent generations of speakers and writers.

The detailed examination of the article's case studies ("the powers that be", "by the skin of my teeth", and "the writing on the wall") demonstrates how each represents a distinctive process within this broader dynamic. The analysis has shown how the KJV, through acts of selective domestication, semantic revaluation, and stylistic canonisation, participates in the ongoing stratification of linguistic norms. These findings have broader methodological implications for the study of translation and linguistic change, indicating the need for a multidimensional and theoretically integrated approach that attends closely to the ways in which textual, institutional, and cultural forces relate.

In essence, the KJV is a paradigmatic instance of translation as a creative, institutionally mediated, and historically transformative activity. Its legacy is best understood through the merging of competence-based, descriptive, and cultural-political frameworks as articulated by Coşeriu, Toury, and Venuti. The continuing significance of the KJV in the development of English linguistic and cultural identity suggests that the study of translation-mediated normativity remains an open, dynamic, and contested field, in which the boundaries between transmission and innovation, reproduction and creativity, are themselves constantly subject to renegotiation.

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## “THE ECSTASY OF SANCTIMONY”: AMERICAN CULTURE WARS OF THE 1990s IN PHILIP ROTH’S *THE HUMAN STAIN*

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**ABSTRACT.** *“The Ecstasy of Sanctimony”*: American Culture Wars of the 1990s in Philip Roth’s *The Human Stain*. Published last in Philip Roth’s notorious and appraised *American Trilogy*, *The Human Stain* (2000) marks the transition to a new century by a critical analysis of the present. After navigating the troubled waters of the Vietnam War-haunted 1960s in *American Pastoral* and diving into the 1940s postwar Red Scare in *I Married a Communist*, Roth turns from the openly violent and traumatic to the complacent, ideologically conflictual, and cliché-ridden atmosphere of his immediate reality. Campus life in 1990s New England is a fierce battleground, particularly when satirically observed against the backdrop of the 1998 Presidential impeachment. The unsettling confrontation of social stereotypes, the vexatious quarrels of identity politics, the intransigence of what the American academia’s sententious rhetoric embraces as ‘political correctness’ are all foregrounded as pillars of private and public, individual and communal self-invention and self-delusion at the turn of the millennium. Coleman Silk’s life, career, and relationships are inextricably linked to and determined by the sociohistorical constraints of the Nation’s old, new, and imagined struggles with itself. This article aims to examine Roth’s provocative

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exploration of contemporary consciousness, its underlying moral quandaries and conformities, in a work of fiction that has become a classic of social commentary.

**Keywords:** *(political) correctness, criticism, identity, ideology, (American) society*

**REZUMAT. "Extazul fățărniciei"<sup>2</sup>: Războaie culturale ale anilor 1990 în Pata Umană de Philip Roth.** Ultima publicată în pe cât de notoria, pe atât de apreciată *Trilogie americană* a lui Philip Roth, *Pata umană* (2000) marchează tranziția către un nou secol printr-o analiză critică a prezentului. După navigarea prin apele zbruciumate ale unor ani 1960 bântuiți de războiul din Vietnam, în *Pastorala americană*, și scufundarea în Panica Roșie postbelică a anilor 1940, în *M-am măritat cu un comunist*, Roth revine dinspre violența și trauma nedisimulate către atmosfera de autosuficiență, dominată de clișee și conflicte ideologice, a realității sale imediate. Viața de campus din New England în anii 1990 este un câmp de bătaie feroce, mai ales atunci când e observată satiric, pe fundalul suspendării din 1998 a Președintelui. Neliniștitoarea confruntare cu stereotipurile sociale, disputele supărătoare ale politicii identitare, intransigența a ceea ce retorica sentențioasă a mediului academic american îmbrățișează drept 'corectitudine politică' sunt aduse în prim-plan drept piloni ai inventării și iluzionării de sine (privată și publică, individuală și comunitară) la trecerea dintre milenii. Viața, cariera și relațiile lui Coleman Silk sunt inextricabil legate și determinate de constrângerile socio-istorice ale vechilor, noilor și imaginarelor lupte ale Națiunii cu sine însăși. Acest articol își propune să examineze modul provocator în care Roth explorează conștiința contemporană, dilemele și conformismele sale morale intrinseci, într-o ficțiune devenită un clasic al comentariului social.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *corectitudine (politică), critică, identitate, ideologie, societate (americană)*

## 1. Introduction

Narrated by Nathan Zuckerman, Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* has probably been one of his most discussed works by critics, the public's equal fascination with the novel making it a bestseller and the inspiration for Robert Benton's 2003 dramatic movie version. It drew impressive accolades in the literary world, among which the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction (2001), Prix Médicis Étranger (Meilleur livre de l'année 2002), the National Jewish Book Award (2001), the WH Smith Literary Award (2001) or *The New York Times* Editor's Choice (2000). As part of Roth's larger, unquestionably serious discussion

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<sup>2</sup> See Cornelia Bucur's translation of this phrase, in Roth (2015, 9).

of American (im)morality and its (dis)contents, it illustrates, assesses, and provides a timely warning about the uses and abuses of the categorical rhetoric of righteousness in an inherently flawed media. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, United States individuals, families, social and professional communities, the nation itself are placed under the magnifying glass of fiction. By close contextual readings of what I find particularly relevant passages and scenes, I will scrutinize how this judicious approach allows the author to create situations that are meant to function as cautionary tales against extremism and Pharisaism (even when allegedly driven by the best intentions).

The majority of high profile studies, treatises, dissertations on Roth and his work devote ample chapters to *The Human Stain* and its ingenious parallelism between public and private history, the fate of a president on the edge of impeachment (Bill Clinton) and that of a protagonist (Coleman Silk) who is subjected to harsh judgment and retribution in his own university circles, on account of what appear as capital sins to the academic congregation of the principled and virtuous. From among many influential scholarly works which focus primarily on these topics, I have selected a few examples whose carefully chosen titles reflect their systematic consideration of this novel (independently and/or as part of the *American Trilogy*), in terms of its narrative and stylistic strategies, as well as of its almost clinical observation of America's mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century socio-cultural, historical, and intellectual evolution.

For instance, Elaine B. Safer's 2006 *Mocking the Age. The Later Novels of Philip Roth* highlights "Comic Irony and Lives of Coleman Silk" (Safer 2006, 117-132), while David Gooblar's 2011 *The Major Phases of Philip Roth* looks at "The American Experience: *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*" (Gooblar 2011, 131-152) in connection to each other and the Rothian oeuvre. Michael Kimmage's 2012 *In History's Grip. Philip Roth's Newark Trilogy* deliberately entitles the chapter dedicated to *The Human Stain* "At History's Mercy" (Kimmage 2012, 97-132). Chapter 5 of Brett Ashley Kaplan's 2015 *Jewish Anxiety and the Novels of Philip Roth* focuses on "Playing It Any Way You Like: *The Human Stain*" (Kaplan 2015, 103-144). Against the background of these broad, penetrating, often cross-disciplinary analyses, my specific claim is that Roth uses the protagonists and circumstances he creates to methodically deconstruct self-serving, indignant – institutional, communal, or individual - discourses, thus taking his examination of human nature to new depths.

In addition to the Roth monographs, guidebooks and companions to the writer's fictional and nonfictional body of work have paid constant attention to *The Human Stain* as well. To quote but a few, Mark Shechner includes an astute reading of "*The American Trilogy*" in the 2007 *Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth* (Parrish ed. 2007, 142-157), Ira Nadel features a structured presentation

and commentary on *The Human Stain* in his seminal 2011 *Philip Roth. A Literary Reference to His Life and Works* (Nadel 2011, 112-122), and the recent 2024 *Bloomsbury Handbook to Philip Roth* comprises Aimee Pozorski's apt take on "Slipping the Punch': Philip Roth and Racial Passing" (Pozorski 2024, 181-190). My article will draw primarily on *The Human Stain*-related critical articles published in *Philip Roth Studies*, the main Roth scholarship publication venue, as I believe they encapsulate theoretical concerns and standpoints that efficiently inform my proposed investigation of this novel as sagacious social commentary and critique of polarization and ideologization. I will foreground such stimulating contributions in the following subchapters, wherein my main point of observation is Roth's committed stand on the intense and emotional struggle to subject individuality to normativity, and its oftentimes unfortunate side-effects.

## 2. The "Purity Binge" vs. The Impure Society

*The Human Stain* metaphorically captures a world on fire amidst the U.S. culture wars<sup>3</sup> of the 1990s. The plot is built on divisiveness, accusation, and aggravation. The former Dean of Athena College, Coleman Silk, resigns after imputations of racism by two ever-absent African American students, whom he has never met in class. Wondering aloud whether the truants might be 'spooks' (in the sense of 'ghosts'), the professor causes an uproar about allegedly employing the term as a racial slur, despite being unaware of the students' color. When he summons neighbor Nathan Zuckerman to professionally write his version of the story, little does either of them seem to realize what other secrets might surface: most prominently, 71-year-old Silk's passing as Jewish to build an academic career, in spite of his African American ancestry, and his affair with Faunia Farley, 34, janitor, believed to be illiterate.

The context in which the story is placed is crucial to understanding its underlying messages. America's constant tensions had long entailed disputes between tradition and modernity, rural and urban environments, conservative and liberal values. The 1990s, however, saw the explosive rise of culture wars, which designated the polarization of culture and politics along ideological lines

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<sup>3</sup> The term was coined by American sociologist James Davison Hunter in his 1991 book, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, to refer to what he then identified as the increasing cultural shifts, ideological polarization, and societal division of the United States. At the core of the nation's struggle to redefine its fundamental moral and cultural values lay, among others, identity politics and political correctness (particularly in education and campus life), the ongoing debates affecting both public and private, institutional and personal spheres.

(including, but not limited to race, gender, class, religion, education - all circumscribed, to certain degrees, by the afore-summarized plot). While such analysts as James Davison Hunter (Hunter 1991), Alan Wolfe (Wolfe 1998), Morris P. Fiorina (Fiorina 2005) attempt to observe, explain, and theorize the phenomenon, Andrew Hartman's 2015 *A War for the Soul of America* traces the 1980s and 1990s' constant quarrels back to the 1960s, which he describes as the cradle of a different nation, open to "new, if conflicting, articulations of America itself... In the wake of the sixties the national culture grew more divided than it had been in any period since the Civil War. Americans split over how to think about this new America." (2015, 2).

The major coordinates of this national reconsideration that he identifies are explored in chapters that range from "The Sixties as Liberation", "The Color Line", "The Trouble with Gender", to "God, State, and the Curriculum", "The Battle for the American Mind", or "The Contested American Past". Philip Roth's works participate significantly in the discussion created around these topics. Seeing how, throughout his career, Roth increasingly echoed the often-contentious evolution of U.S. mentalities and actions in his writings, many have asked themselves what might be learnt from the dense Americana of the trilogy in general, and *The Human Stain*, in particular. Among them, Claudia Roth Pierpont, whose 2013 *Roth Unbound. A Writer and His Books* remains an exquisite examination of recurrent themes and opinions in conversations with the author himself.

The following passage is essential to the present exploration:

"The fantasy of purity" ... is appalling. "But that's the great American blessing," Roth tells me when I ask how this phrase applies to the country. "It's a radically impure society." Coleman Silk's genealogical history ... includes runaway slaves, Lenape Indians who married Swedish settlers, and mulatto brothers ... And still, like most of the others, he made himself up. And still he was hounded and murdered for what he was and for what he wasn't. It's an unusually peaceful vision that concludes the trilogy: an arcadian landscape and the word America. And fear and danger and no sign of justice. (Roth 2005, 258)

Besides its overarching irrefutable tone, I argue that this account also offers a proper introduction to the world, expectations, and failures exposed by *The Human Stain*. Speaking about 1998 in New England as "the summer of an enormous piety binge, a purity binge" (Roth 2005, 2), which overflows against the background of Clinton's notorious Oval Office affair<sup>4</sup>, Roth invokes from the

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<sup>4</sup> Bill Clinton, President of the United States, and Monica Lewinsky, a White House intern's 1995-1997 sexual relationship, which triggered the 1998 public exposure and ensuing political scandal, leading to Clinton's impeachment by the House of Representatives.

very first pages the axis around which the entire book will revolve: “America’s oldest communal passion, historically perhaps its most treacherous and subversive pleasure: the ecstasy of sanctimony” (Roth 2005, 2). Amusement and offence, speculation and exaggeration, shame and envy suddenly inhabit everybody’s imagination. This alternation helps the author use the nuances of the preposterous presidential case to set the ground for a scrutiny of public (dis)illusion(ment) and affectation that goes beyond iconic American exemplariness: “It was the summer when—for the billionth time—the jumble, the mayhem, the mess proved itself more subtle than this one’s ideology and that one’s morality.” (Roth 2005, 3)

Roth places the plight of his protagonist, classicist Coleman Silk, in the context of growing suspiciousness and resentment in the public arena, fed by moralistic, presumably noble convictions about right and wrong in a rather utopian society. While debates over curricula were frequent in end-of-the-millennium U.S., the ivory tower of the academia is depicted as besieged by an agora that succumbs to the radical version of the writer’s object of satire: (political) correctness against all odds. Elaine Safer points out the comparability of Coleman’s home university - rendered judgmental and uncompromising by what many members believe to be the ultimate truth-and-justice system of the late 1990s - to the sermonic American nation, scandalized by the inappropriate White House episode. From the mediatized Clinton-Lewinsky affair to Athena professor’s downfall on account of racial bias, she emphasizes that

there are parallels between the frenetic rush to purify the White House of Clinton and the frantic pressures to get Coleman Silk to resign ... between labeling Clinton a misogynist because of his affair with Lewinsky - who was less than half his age - and using the same allegations against the seventy-one-year-old Coleman Silk because of his relationship with thirty-four-year-old Faunia Farley. (Safer 2013, 241)

The indicated parallelism, which I find indisputable, makes it quite evident that *The Human Stain* revolves around a rather unconventional type of combat. Silk’s trajectory is presented as a dystopian digression from American perfectionism, if measured against the unrealistic standards of the Puritan Dream. Suitability, appropriateness, decorum stand out as misleading key terms of a new authoritarianism, prone to cause strife and struggle in end-of-the-millennium United States, rather than the harmony and tolerance it claims to promote. The protagonist’s conundrum is to accept or, rather, deliberately resist what he perceives as a way of brushing off meritocracy, to the benefit of innocuous mediocrity. “Appropriate. The current code word for reining in most any deviation from the wholesome guidelines and thereby making everybody ‘comfortable’.” (Roth 2005, 152). Roth employs the aggrieved professor’s lens to filter and present

the pitfalls of the “tyranny of propriety” (Roth 2005, 153). It is important to note that the dangers he sees in the inordinate imposition of political correctness on campus and in real life alike do not only lie in the often-specious nature of the presented arguments, but also in the relativization of professional quality or of the intensity and gravity of socio-historical events.

### 3. I, We, They: The Pronominal Tyranny

It may come as a surprise that the novel foregrounds the issue of passing, since many may associate it with the distant past. Under this impression, the density of the book’s highly relevant critical commentaries might have gone less noticed. Nevertheless, 20<sup>th</sup> century America, caught in the binary opposition between conservatism and progressivism, never falls out of Roth’s sight or mind: it determines and encompasses its major and minor characters’ decisions and courses of action. My research has shown that quite frequently in his writings, side notes and apparently fleeting remarks contain the essence of individual and communal predicaments. For instance, the following relevant passage captures Coleman’s astonishment at the frailty of human nature and memory, alongside Roth’s own long-standing disbelief:

A century of destruction unlike any other in its extremity befalls and blights the human race—scores of millions of ordinary people condemned to suffer deprivation upon deprivation, atrocity upon atrocity, evil upon evil, half the world or more subjected to pathological sadism as social policy, whole societies organized and fettered by the fear of violent persecution, the degradation of individual life engineered on a scale unknown throughout history, nations broken and enslaved by ideological criminals . . . all the terrible touchstones presented by this century, and here they are up in arms about Faunia Farley. (Roth 2005, 153-4)

The irrationality and incoherence of public opinion and the major role they play in the mock Greek tragedy that Roth stages around the classics professor are central to an enlightening article by Jose Carlos del Ama. He realizes that Coleman Silk, the individualist, who is hardly a conformist, yet aware of the normative nature of society and its institutions, is alternately shaped and oppressed by the collective ‘we’ (del Ama 2009, 95). To render that comprehensible, del Ama convincingly discusses the authority of public opinion as a network of unwritten social rules, enacted by tacit agreement rather than by legislative procedures. His article draws on Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s seminal study, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion – Our Social Skin*, which, like much of *The Human Stain*, proves increasingly relevant as time passes and

admonitory tales of bygone ages find renewed expression in the present. Pointing out the researcher's use of the word 'tyranny' to designate the leveling impact of public opinion, del Ama notes that it

is also used by Roth to describe the relentless harassing endured by the hero ... It is a matter of pronominal tyranny ... There is no way to escape ... because any social group, at any cultural or economic level, develops its own formulas of propriety: "... propriety is protean, a dominatrix in a thousand disguises, infiltrating, if need be, as civil responsibility, WASP dignity, women's rights, black pride, ethnic allegiance, or emotion-laden Jewish ethical sensitivity" (153). Submission to any of these sets of rules is the fee charged by the we to accept the individual. (del Ama 2009, 100)

In overt or oblique statements concerning the academia or the society at large, *The Human Stain* abounds in passages that faithfully illustrate the 'I' versus 'we' confrontation. Roth demonstrates repeatedly that the hypnotizing power of his writings does not solely reside in plot and character construction. The expressive vocabulary and the punch lines induce laughter as well as anger, frustration, or unease. Moreover, labeling his protagonist "the greatest of the great pioneers of the I" (Roth 2005, 108) and placing him in the tradition of American individualism represented by Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, Roth makes Silk a figure of active, even subversive resistance: "Never for him the tyranny of the we that is dying to suck you in, the coercive, inclusive, historical, inescapable moral we with its insidious *E pluribus unum*" (Roth 2005, 108). Coleman's ideals do not overlap the society's and the nation's. As he evolves from a naïve young man to a minted intellectual, he grows aware of this dissociation. By his almost obstinate passion for singularity and authenticity, he becomes the ultimate self-made man: he chooses his race, his path, his future. The high costs will become apparent late(r) in his life.

Instinctively defying the U.S.' resonant motto of unity in diversity, he quickly realizes that his creed is "neither the they of Woolworth's nor the we of Howard" (Roth 2005, 108). He refuses to identify with the business-oriented ideals of his youth or comply with the racially defined trajectories of targeted education. Since Howard is a historically black university, he feels his options and acknowledgements are limited, no matter how remarkable the accomplishments. He rejects herd mentalities and expectations. It is relevant to note that free indirect speech originally captures his traumatic mental and experiential journey towards personal achievement, which he equates with the inherently American desiderates of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Free to pursue the hugest aim, the confidence right in his bones to be his particular I. Free on a scale unimaginable to his father. As free as his father had been unfree. Free now not only of his father but of all that his father had ever had to endure. The impositions. The humiliations. The obstructions. The wound and the pain and the posturing and the shame - all the inward agonies of failure and defeat. Free instead on the big stage ... Free to enact the boundless, self-defining drama of the pronouns we, they, and I. (Roth 2005, 108-9)

This incessant battle of the pronouns circumscribes the tragedy of the loner’s fight against the society that aims to restrain his agency via collective authority and to control his right to self-expression and personal choice. Freedom of the ‘I’ is Coleman’s true American Dream. The latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its search for communal atonement for past sins move in the opposite direction. Affiliation, association, group activism, common goals are favored by a society which, in the name of inclusiveness and tolerance, minimizes and marginalizes the once-applauded self-made man. His individualism – academic, racial, familial - triggers a painful downfall. Once more, I feel compelled to emphasize how Roth foregrounds issues of representation. He complicates his argument about the complexity of human nature by the need to transcend clichés and strive for human righteousness, rather than sometimes-debilitating political correctness. Coleman’s is a case study on the effects of moral suffering: his universe is on and under fire, from various sides. On the one hand, Silk consciously opts for the initial advantages of a fabricated racial identity. On the other hand, he ironically ends up subjected to the paradoxical judgment of his peers, suspicious of the very flaw he cannot have: racism.

#### **4. *Beware the Ides of March: Athena versus Classical Education***

The professor’s humiliation by his colleagues, many recruited and promoted by himself, his loss of prestige and his ensuing rage occur, not accidentally, at the sarcastically named Athena College. Roth showcases the controversies of academic prudishness versus ethical behavior against the background of a mythologically-resonant institution, via a literal and symbolical assault against classical education. In the ever-evolving national and international context, I contend that today’s attempts to redefine academic freedom can be discussed in connection with the 1990s radicalization of culture wars, even though Roth’s 2000 novel does not directly address issues that have intensified meanwhile (such as climate change, for instance). My assertion is that the disenfranchisement of the humanities, which had, in fact, always advocated pluralism and critical thinking, lies at the heart of *The Human Stain*’s argument for merit-based inclusiveness, alongside its questioning of ideology as identity.

To initiate solid intellectual rumination upon the dilemmas of social and scholarly equality and populism, as they shapeshift through the ages, the erudite Roth calls upon intertextuality. Coleman's semblance to the heroic, yet vulnerable Achilles is transparent. The author also summons the vengeful Medea and Electra and the altruistic Prometheus, who literally steals the fire from the gods to bestow advancement upon humankind. They are meaningfully present in Silk's meditation on his predicament in the context of revisionist civilization. One of the novel's most telling episodes in terms of crucial disagreements is student Elena Mitnick's complaint against the syllabus' inclusion of two plays by Euripides, which she considers degrading to women.

Dean Delphine Roux, Coleman's mentee turned detractor, challenges him to a discussion. He defends his selection and teaching practices as informed by a disinterested literary perspective, not by the latest theoretical trends. Moreover, he warns his rather inexperienced successor about encouraging classroom ideologization: "Elena's not learning. She's parroting" (Roth 2005, 192). He questions the young woman's feminism and points to the teachers' influence on the minds they shape, hence their moral responsibility. Delphine callously reproaches his "fossilized pedagogy" and "the so-called humanist approach to Greek tragedy you've been taking since the 1950s" (Roth 2005, 193). This reaction encapsulates the essence of the conflict my article identifies: not merely a generation gap, but one in comprehending and relating to cultural products. Looking at Silk's demise and the gloomy future of Athena, Sanchez-Canales competently explains:

*The Human Stain* raises an awareness of the devastating consequences of politically correct education and denounces the new trends of literary criticism that have helped create and foster this kind of education. The superficial study of the classics and their possible disappearance from the college syllabi will ultimately bring about the denial of a significant part of contemporary humankind's history. The shallow approach to the classics at Athena College is partly responsible for the sad end of Coleman's career and clearly points to the failure of the American education system of the 1990s. (Sanchez-Canales 2009, 112)

One can easily notice Roth's exercise of an applied critical stance vis-à-vis demonization and incipient post-truth in 1990s U.S. university environments. Despite their intention to avoid offense or disadvantage to certain community members or groups, PC policies increasingly gained pejorative connotations in public and media discourses because of their excessiveness and unforeseen side-effects. Presenting a few case studies of characters who are subjected to social bias, peer pressure and discrimination, superficial judgement and othering (among which Silk's stands out as the most prominent), *The Human Stain* proposes

a subtle, nuanced approach to a decisive decade in America’s fierce battles over defining its core values, reshaped and reexamined in polarizing ways, particularly in what family, morality, and Americanness itself were concerned. Roth’s panoramic view in Silk’s convoluted story stirs the audience’s interest via plots twists and suspense, then decisively captures it by anticipating debates still topical nowadays. Consequently, my consolidated belief is that the novel’s core conversation applies beyond its timeframe and (intellectual) niche, potentially shedding light upon contemporary events, their roots and implications as well.

After Coleman Silk resigns from Athena, the emotional impact of the institutional policies he has been subjected to is carefully explored by Zuckerman’s retrospective narrative. His resentment grows towards his colleagues’ obtuseness. Once emboldened by his revered institutional support for a ‘revolution of quality’, they have betrayed him out of weakness, ambition, the desire to follow the times despite any consequences. To him, the attitude of people whom he had believed uncompromising and principled is incongruous: their actions appear guided by the opposite of what had driven them forward. Ira Nadel looks at *The Human Stain* as part of a thematically coherent trilogy, which astutely captures the disorientation of an American nation whose mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century history has eroded its confidence in and dedication to its democratic foundations:

The ... virtual inquisition of Coleman for his use of the word spooks exposes the moral bankruptcy not only of New England but also the country. Community censorship ... is repugnant and wrong, and just as he did in *I Married a Communist*, with its taint of McCarthyism, or exposed the harmful radicalism that destroyed lives in *American Pastoral*, Roth reveals the weaknesses in the American fabric. For Roth, the rules are not the most important thing ... but the individual. Resistance to coercion is the theme that overrides the fate of sex, academic life, or even personal happiness. (Nadel 2011, 120)

Thus, it becomes apparent that Roth’s writing proves far from merely entertaining or experimental. At the beginning of a challenging new millennium, he offers yet another cautionary tale. This justifies my focus on how he seeks to expose the nation’s and the individuals’ abandonment of the pursuit of happiness based on personal agency, and to present circumstances that emphasize the alienating effect of collective authoritarianism infiltrating public life.

## 5. The Humanities between Reinterpretation and Indoctrination

Coleman Silk is living proof that identity cannot be prescriptively circumscribed: an example of racial in-betweenness and a multiple-self freedom fighter who will not relent to external pressures, at the eventual cost of his own life. In academic terms, Athena College embodies the 1990s' purity fever. Coleman's only option is to resist perilous transformations in the humanistic nature of education. Sanchez Canales offers an in-depth analysis of how the political correctness that had already started permeating American education sabotaged the curriculum by restructured programs and restrictive speech codes, meant to increase multiculturalism, but progressively resulting in indoctrination. The researcher points out that attempts to transform the U.S. society into a more egalitarian one breed "cultural relativism in the students' minds. With the rise of political correctness, the two pillars that have sustained the liberal arts—academic freedom and freedom of speech—are bound to collapse. Without the possibility of writing and speaking freely, academic rigor cannot be maintained." (Sanchez Canales 2009, 120) This instils Coleman's indignation, as he can hardly be suspected of bigotry or reactionary tendencies. In addition to his subjective, distressed view, Roth resorts to the authority of characters who know exactly the plight of discrimination and marginalization, to explain the absurdity of extreme PC behavior. Ernestine is Silk's African American sister, whom he has left behind - along with his entire family - to build a suitable career for himself. Theoretically, she could resent him, yet she is baffled by the injustice done to her brother.

As a woman of color, she ranks among the main beneficiaries of the amendments proposed by PC activism, yet she wonders: "One has to be so terribly frightened of every word one uses? What ever happened to the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America?" (Roth 2005, 329) Ernestine indirectly invokes the freedom of speech and manifests her impatience with hyperbolic reparations such as Black History Month, which she perceives as disingenuous: "Youngsters were coming to me the year I retired, telling me that for Black History Month they would only read a biography of a black by a black. What difference, I would ask them, if it's a black author or it's a white author?" (Roth 2005, 329) Handling matters of appropriation with care, Roth employs an openly African American voice (unlike her brother's) to comment upon the disbalance that may be created by magnifying, instead of smoothening difference (in gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality a.o.)

As she stands outside the education system, but has experienced it from within, she can voice her discontent without being suspected of *parti pris*. This is a recurrent practice throughout the Rothian oeuvre: although she is a minor character by comparison with the narrator and the protagonist(s), Ernestine's voice fully denounces the collapse of quality, professionalism, or objective fact

checking, clear predecessors of today's quasi-generalized post-truth assault. Pondering the unpleasant situation that has harmed her brother, she delivers a disheartening analysis:

What happened to Coleman with that word 'spooks' is all a part of the same enormous failure. In my parents' day and well into yours and mine, it used to be the person who fell short. Now it's the discipline. Reading the classics is too difficult, therefore it's the classics that are to blame. Today the student asserts his incapacity as a privilege. I can't learn it, so there is something wrong with it. And there is something especially wrong with the bad teacher who wants to teach it. There are no more criteria, Mr. Zuckerman, only opinions. (Roth 2005, 330-31)

Thus, in Roth's emblematic 2000 novel, Ernestine candidly anticipates Third Millennium debates on the general confusion created by unregulated social media, for instance. Evidence-based argumentation is replaced by a multitude of subjective, oftentimes malicious opinions and self-serving, even conspiracist theories. Entitlement in the name of group values displaces personal merit, lack of accomplishment is not critically assessed, but justified by the denunciation of evaluation tools. Consequently, vulnerability, frustration, and inequities grow, rather than diminish, and radical divisions follow. All these burning issues are easily recognizable 25 years later. In Roth's rather dark prophecy, Coleman Silk's professional reputation is restored only after his physical expiration. At his funeral, Herbert Keble, senior African American chairman of the Political Science Department, admits his mistake: he did not support his friend and mentor when everyone failed him. Deeming what had ousted Silk an incident, a misunderstanding, he belatedly calls out "the grievous, the contemptible wrong, that was done to him by Athena College." (Roth 2005, 309)

The irony of the entire case is Keble's and the community's ignorance of Silk's actual identity, as he had long chosen to cross the color line and artificially affiliate with the Jewish community. As Miriam Jaffe-Foger notes, while apologizing, Keble still believes that he defends a Jew. It is unclear whether, had he known that Silk was an African American who passed and engaged in dubious relationships, he would have been as compassionate. "It is precisely the cross-ethnic justification of the other's position that makes it so powerful. If Keble had been a Jew defending a fellow Jew, it would have seemed like a self-defense. By extension, if Roth had defended himself against charges that he was a "self-hating Jew" using a Jewish double, it would have seemed too obviously a self-defense" (Jaffe-Foger 2008, 51-52). The critic, thus, appreciates the writer's ingeniousness in projecting fictional alter-egos that are both perceptive and plausible to the reader.

## 6. Conclusion

*The Human Stain* conflates ethical issues concerning the private and the public spheres and presents Coleman Silk as a problematic nature, a rebel vis-à-vis social, institutional, and ideological norms, which he questions or simply decides to flaunt. Thus, Roth appears to create a new sort of personal duplicate, different from his various narrators, who observe, analyze, comment, and take part in his plots. On the one hand, the insightful toying with racial bias in the novel has already been amply considered in the existing readings of the novel. My article, on the other hand, proposes a reexamination of the fictionally illustrated roots of ideological quarrels and unbridgeable gaps in contemporary American social performance and representation. In the present post-truth era, dominated by national and international conflict and crisis, I believe that such a rereading was necessary, as it may contribute to illuminating turbulent exchanges, disquieting interactions and notions that appear to have not yet been entirely grasped.

Elaine Safer pinpoints the essence of the author and his (anti)hero's struggle for (self)-representation in a world of concentric, often concentrationary circles.

Coleman is in a society of shallow people who are prejudiced against the "Other" and yet advocate political correctness . . . The politically correct academicians at Athena College may have assembled to call Coleman Silk a racist so as to cover up their own unacknowledged racial prejudice; their inclination to see African Americans as the Other; their desire to see Jews ... or people of lower economic status ... as the Other... The underlying message is that the zealots of the left and of the right are tainted by exactly the same disease: incurable smugness and self-righteousness. (Safer 2013, 245)

Roth's disappointment with the equal flaws of the major competing trends of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American mind has fueled this article's primary concern with the author's illustration of 1990s culture wars in the U.S. academia, rather than with Coleman's much-discussed struggle with the alleged moral obligation towards the collective 'we' of his racial community. However, I consider it important to mention that his resistance against a system that he watched grow unjust is also informed by his choice of belonging to a group that provides him with the advantages of having a successful career path and a resonant voice. The length of a journal article implicitly limits the complexity of this exploration. More could be added regarding the novel's treatment of tragic flaws and pragmatic innocence, mass hysteria, or the ineffaceability of Americanness as a multifarious, burdensome

identity. However, Roth's sagacity, his rhetorical, analytical, and evocative skills, alongside the relevance of his discerning novel published at the turn of a new millennium of deplorable divisiveness, extremism, indoctrination, ineptitude, perplexity have been eloquently exemplified. My analytical rereading could, therefore, serve as a starting point for further research along the aforementioned lines.

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## CZECHS AND SLOVAKS IN TRANSYLVANIA AND THE BANAT BETWEEN THE 18TH AND 21ST CENTURIES: A SOCIO-ONOMASTIC PERSPECTIVE

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**ABSTRACT.** *Czechs and Slovaks in Transylvania and the Banat between the 18th and 21st Centuries: A Socio-Onomastic Perspective.* The paper proposes an analysis of the presence of the Czech and Slovak minorities in Transylvania and the Banat from the modern period until the present day, from the viewpoint of socio-onomastics. The authors specifically look at how micro-toponyms (names of streets and institutions) and macro-toponyms (settlement names) related to the Czechs and Slovaks play a twofold sociocultural role: 1) they confirm the importance of these communities in Romanian public space across the centuries; 2) they guarantee that the minorities are well-represented in Romania even after the emigration of certain members of the respective ethnic groups to their home countries (after WW2) or to Western Europe (beginning with 1990). The examples were collected from books/online sources documenting the history of Czechs and Slovaks in Romania and from Google Maps. Although the history of the contacts between the Czechs and Slovaks, on the one hand, and the Romanians, on the other, is centuries-long, the paper

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focuses on the period spanning the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries. At the 2021 census, less than 12,000 Czechs and Slovaks declared their belonging to these ethnic groups. Nevertheless, the legacy of the two ethnic minorities endures in names of settlements (*Bigăr, Gernik, Svatá Helena*), street names (*Bratislava Street, Jan Hus Street*) and names of institutions (*„Jozef Gregor Tajovsky” Theoretical High School*). These occur throughout Romania, even in parts of the country where Czechs and Slovaks did not establish significant communities. The presence of multi-ethnic names reveals the openness of the majority population and local authorities towards diversity, and their respect for cultural and scientific values, regardless of ethnic belonging.

**Keywords:** *socio-onomastics, ethnic minority, community, micro-toponym, macro-toponym*

**REZUMAT. Cehi și slovaci în Transilvania și Banat între veacul al XVIII-lea și secolul XXI: o perspectivă socioonomastică.** Lucrarea de față propune o analiză socioonomastică a prezenței, din perioada modernă până în contemporaneitate, a minorităților cehe și slovace în arealul transilvănean și bănățean. Concret, autorii urmăresc să evidențieze funcția socioculturală dublă îndeplinită de microtoponimele (nume de străzi și de instituții) și macrotoponimele (nume de localități) care au legătură cu minoritatea ceah și slovacă. Pe de o parte, numele analizate atestă importanța comunității cehe/slovace în spațiul public românesc de-a lungul secolelor. Pe de altă parte, acestea dovedesc faptul că minoritățile investigate continuă să fie bine reprezentate în peisajul românesc, în ciuda repatrierii unor etnici după Al Doilea Război Mondial sau a emigrării în Occident, după 1990. Exemplele au fost culese din cărți/surse online care documentează istoria cehilor și a slovacilor din România și din platforma Google Maps. Deși contactele dintre cehi/slovaci și români datează de mai multe veacuri, în lucrarea de față ne-am oprit doar asupra perioadei cuprinse între secolele al XVIII-lea și XXI. La recensământul din 2021, sub 12.000 de persoane și-au declarat apartenența la aceste etnii. Totuși, moștenirea celor două minorități se păstrează în nume de localități (*Bigăr, Gernik, Svatá Helena*), străzi (*Strada Bratislava, Strada Jan Hus*) și instituții (*Liceul Teoretic „Jozef Gregor Tajovsky”*), care apar pe tot teritoriul românesc, chiar și în regiuni unde nu au existat comunități semnificative de cehi și slovaci. Prezența numelor multietnice demonstrează deschiderea către diversitate a populației majoritare și a autorităților locale, dar și respectul acestora pentru valori științifice și culturale, indiferent de apartenența etnică.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *socioonomastică, minoritate etnică, comunitate, microtoponim, macrotoponim*

## 1. Introduction and methodology

Transylvania and the Banat are multi-ethnic areas where the long-standing co-existence of diverse ethnic groups and the local majority is mirrored by all the dimensions of human identity, language included. Since names are language elements that function as indices of personal and social identity, they can be considered to reflect the connections between different ethnicities by drawing attention to various cultural, religious, political, and economic values that are treasured by the members of the respective ethnic minorities and promoted by the majority as a token of the latter's respect and appreciation of the former. Thus, the study of the vast array of names related to ethnic minorities in Transylvania and the Banat provides further insight into the dynamic of minority-majority relations in the regions under investigation.

The analysis of ethnic minorities in Romania, in general, and in Transylvania, the Banat and Maramureş, in particular, from the viewpoint of onomastics has been a frequent concern in the specialised bibliography published in the country and abroad over the last 16 years. Previous research endeavours have focused on aspects regarding the first/family names of members of various ethnic minorities (see Felecan 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2014, 2025 and Felecan and Mihali 2023 for explorations of Hungarian, Rroma, Ukrainian, and Italian anthroponyms; Ruff 2013 on Zipser Germans' family names) and names of streets and institutions related to those minorities (for an overview of ethnic identities reflected in Transylvanian hodonymy, see Felecan 2013, whereas for a religious approach to Hungarian names of settlements in Transylvania see Bárh 2017; see also Felecan 2024 on hodonyms and chrematonyms linked to the Polish minority). However, the connections between the Czech and Slovak minorities and the Romanians, as reflected in onomastics, have not been approached yet. This article aims to fill this gap by looking at how macro-toponymy (names of settlements) and micro-toponymy (names of streets and institutions) play a twofold sociocultural role in relation to the Czech and Slovak minorities in Romania: 1) they confirm the importance of the two minorities in Romanian public space across the centuries; 2) they guarantee that the minorities are well-represented in Romania even after the return of certain members of the minority communities to their countries of origin (sometimes fuelled by a longing for the ancestral homelands) or their migration to Western European countries in search of better lives.

From the centuries-old contacts between the Czechs/Slovaks and the Romanians (see Dan 1944, 11–13), this paper focuses on the period spanning the eighteenth and twenty-first centuries. The aim is to illustrate the changes recorded on the level of macro- and micro-toponymy once the relations between the two minorities and the local population became more stable, as a

result of the settlements established by the minorities or their integration in the local communities. Despite growing smaller over the centuries, the Czech and Slovak minorities are still salient in the present-day public space in Transylvania and the Banat. To support these arguments, the research makes use of onomastic data collected from printed and online sources documenting the history of Czechs and Slovaks in Romania and from Google Maps (to help visualise the multi-ethnic configuration of contemporary urban linguistic landscape in the areas under investigation). The examples are analysed within the theoretical framework provided by socio-onomastics. This approach is supported by the fact that the paper provides a qualitative insight into the presence of Czech and Slovak names in the areas investigated, instead of a quantitatively exhaustive presentation of their distribution.

## **2. Czechs and Slovaks in the Romanian territories: A historical overview**

Czechs, Slovaks, and Romanians have been in contact since the Middle Ages (and even earlier – see Dan 1944, 13; Kamusella 2009, 64), but their first interactions were intermittent and occurred especially in the context of conflicts in Central and Southeastern Europe between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries. As Mihail P. Dan (1944, 227–46) has shown, the Czechs and Slovaks fought alongside the Romanians against the Turks, under the leading command of John Hunyadi and Stephen the Great. The Czechs and Slovaks also joined Matthias I Corvinus against the Moldavians, who were led by Stephen the Great and Petru Rareș. Their alliance was determined, in the former case, by the Turks’ plans to expand their dominance in Europe and, in the latter, by the interests of the Hungarian monarchs.

At the same time, historical documents note the presence of Transylvanian students at the Universities of Olomouc and Trnava. Worth mentioning in this respect is Nicolaus Olahus, the renowned Romanian-born humanist, historian, and Catholic prelate, who is considered a “precursor of Slovakian higher education” (Dan 1944, 266).

As regards religion, Dan (1944, 275–83) reviews numerous historical sources and points out that there are records of Hussites in Moldavia, “almost all of Hungarian ethnicity” (Dan 1944, 283), who reconverted to Catholicism and returned to their countries of origin during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, interactions of this kind are not comparable to the systematic migration of the nineteenth century. In the following sections, our attention focuses on the latter period.

## 2.1. *Waves of Czech migration*

The constant presence of Czechs in Romanian space is recorded particularly after the Austrian empire occupied Bohemia in the year 1804 and began applying the *migratio colonorum* policy. This implied that inhabitants from overpopulated areas were displaced to sparsely populated territories to work in forestry and agriculture, and to guard the borders (see Gecse and Gecse 2018, 42). By virtue of the enforcement of the aforementioned policy, Czechs were relocated to the Banat in three main waves: 1823, 1827, and 1862. The first settlements that they founded were called *Svatá Alžbeta* (*Elisabethfeld* ‘Elizabeth’s field’, 1823; it was abandoned by 1847 due to lack of drinking water) and *Svatá Helena* (*Sânta Elena* ‘Saint Helena’, 1824). The two oikonyms are religiously and politically relevant: they are indicative of the religion of the settlers coming from Klatovy and Plzeň, and of the Habsburg policy of strengthening the Catholic presence in the lands under the empire’s rule. It is worth mentioning that it was common practice for the Catholic Church to use saints’ names in all the areas that it ruled over and especially in all the lands that it colonised. The distinctiveness of oikonyms was derived from hagianyms: “in Transylvania and the Banat, where Catholicism (also through the Greek Catholic Church) is followed more closely, these oikonyms are far more numerous” (Felecan and Felecan 2013, 90–91) than in Muntenia and Moldova.

The second wave of Czech settlers (1827–1828) was more organised. It resulted in the establishment of seven villages: Bígr (Bigăr, in Berzasca commune<sup>4</sup>, Caraş-Severin county), Rovensko (Ravensca, Şopotu Nou commune, Caraş-Severin county), Šumice (Şumiţa, Lăpuşnicel commune, Caraş-Severin county), Gernik (Gârnic, Caraş-Severin county), Schontal (Poneasca, Bozovici commune, Caraş-Severin county), Elibenthal (Mehedinţi county) and Frauenwiese (Frauvîzn – Ogradena; the settlement no longer exists, but the name is still used to designate a neighbourhood in the village of Eşelniţa, near Orşova, Mehedinţi county). Some of the immigrants settled in multi-ethnic towns like Moldova Nouă, Orşova, Arad, and Timişoara, alongside Romanians, Germans, Serbians, and Hungarians. The names of the founded villages reflect the co-existence of several ethnic groups, which was a common occurrence in the Austrian Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century. Not only Czech families were colonised from Bohemia, but also families of German origin.

Between 1846 and 1858, the authorities brought groups of settlers from Bohemia and Slovakia for the mining projects carried out at Anina-Steindorf (Gecse and Gecse 2018, 46). Two of the new settlements were named *Böhmische*

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<sup>4</sup> The names of the communes correspond to the present-day local administrative organisation of the Romanian territory.

*Kolonie* ('the Bohemian colony'). Some immigrants returned to their home country within a short time span, after their contracts ended, but most of them stayed, as they enjoyed numerous advantages. In connection with the German oikonym (which highlights the inhabitants' ethnicity by means of the German ethnonymic adjective *Böhmische* 'Bohemian'), the dwellers were called *pemi* < *boemi* 'Bohemians', from German *Böhmen*, a name used by the Germans in the Banat to refer to all the people from Bohemia (Gecse and Gecse 2018, 48). Following the same ethnic principle, the Slovaks were called *tăuți* < Hungarian *Tóth* (or one of the variants *Tót, Tot, Toth*), "derived from the Hungarian ethnonym *tót* meaning 'a Slavic person living in Hungary, mainly Slavonic, Slovene, Slovak' (old spelling) and refers to a similarity or a connection (descendance or other) with the people or the area they inhabit" (DFNVC 2024, s.v. *Tóth*).

The third wave of the Czech migration to the Banat took place between 1862 and 1863. It was less significant than then other stages. About 450 Czechs were colonised in the Banat plain, particularly in the Romanian settlements Clopodia (Klopotin, Timiș county) and Peregul Mare (Velký Pereg, Arad county). Their occupations were mainly related to agriculture and farming.

## **2.2. The Slovaks' settlements in the Romanian lands**

There are numerous reasons underlying the Slovaks' migration. Among these, one can mention economic insecurity (tax increases), ongoing external conflicts (with the Ottomans) and internal struggles (numerous uprisings), epidemics, obligations towards the Habsburg and Hungarian authorities, and the reconversion of Protestants to Catholicism (see Kukucska 2018a, 13–19; 2018b, 43). Initially, most Slovaks were Evangelical, while Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic families arrived later on, from eastern Slovakia (see Colta 2018, 278–84). They were "poor inhabitants from rural areas, [who] were given property rights" (Gecse and Gecse 2018, 45, orig. Romanian) and migrated of their own free will, with the state or the landed gentry sometimes acting as mediators. Also subjected to displacement were skilled workers in various fields: glassmakers, steelworkers, charcoal burners, woodcutters, cart makers, and miners (Kukucska 2018c, 64). The authorities did not object to the workers' relocation but supported it to capitalise on the property that they owned in the deserted or uninhabited areas in the lowlands.

More than 40,000 Slovak families (about 200,000 people) settled in the Romanian Lowlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Slovaks first got to the Banat in 1747, when they settled in Mocrea (Apatelek) and subsequently in the German Stamura (1783), Nădlac (1803), Butin (1813), Vucova and Brestovăț (1827), Peregul Mare (1853), and Țipari (1883). Slovaks also settled in Partium (present-day Bihor and Sălaj counties), between 1830

and 1918, and in Bukovina, near Cernăuți, between 1799 and 1803. They came from the counties of Orava (Árva) and Trenčín (Kukucska 2018c, 68). Among the newly founded settlements one can mention Valea Ungurului (Gemelčíčka<sup>5</sup>, Mureș county), Valea Târnei (Židáreň, Bihor county), Șinteu (Nová Huta, Bihor county), Huta Voivozi (Stará Huta, Bihor county), and Socet (Sočet, Hunedoara county). The Slovaks also settled in neighbouring villages with Romanian or Hungarian majorities: e.g., Peștiș (Bihor county). The naturalisation of the Slovaks may be considered complete once they begin building churches and schools, which conveyed their desire to stay indefinitely.

### *2.3. Demographic records*

The number of Czech and Slovak immigrants in Romania has varied over time. Some members of these ethnic groups did not dwell long because they could not adjust to the climate, the poor living conditions (lack of access to drinking water), and the authorities' wavering support. Nevertheless, most settlers became rooted and developed compact Czech and Slovak communities, or they integrated into multi-ethnic settlements. After the creation of the Romanian unitary state in 1918, official records indicate the steady decrease of the Czech and Slovak communities. Various reasons can be pointed out: the world wars, the immigrants' repatriation after WW2 at the call of Czechoslovak authorities, the emigration to more favourable places in Romania or abroad, the abandonment of ethnically compact villages (especially due to the rise in the water level of the Danube after the Iron Gates Dam was built), and the identity loss resulting from mixed marriages.

As Table 1 shows, the most significant decrease in the overall population occurred after the Revolution of 1989, when freedom was obtained and many Romanians emigrated in search of a better life. Members of minority groups behaved similarly and, by comparison with the Romanian majority, left the country in larger numbers. The effect was dramatic. Villages suffered from massive depopulation (some settlements disappeared: e.g., Lindenfeld, Caraș-Severin county), and the population aged. A similar situation can be noticed with other ethnic groups, such as the Poles (see Felecan 2024, 247–64).

According to the data of the latest population census (carried out in 2021), the most numerous Slovak communities are in the counties of Bihor (4,860 people), Arad (3,310 people), and Sălaj (760 people). Most Czechs are located in the southwestern part of Romania, in the counties of Caraș-Severin (909 people), Mehedinți (303 people), and Timiș (141 people) (see INS 2021).

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<sup>5</sup> According to Pavel Štěpán (2018, 114), the suffix *-ka* "is mostly used for creation of names of residences, yards or farms, including vineyards".

**Table 1.** Evolution of the number of Czechs and Slovaks relative to the overall population of Romania

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population of Romania</b>	<b>Czech</b>	<b>Slovaks</b>
1930 <sup>6</sup>	14,280,729	50,772	
1956	17,489,450	11,821	23,331
1966	19,103,163	9,978	22,221
1977	21,559,910	7,683	21,286
1992	22,810,035	5,797	19,594
2002	21,680,974	3,941	17,226
2011	20,121,641	2,477	13,654
2021	19,053,815	1,576	10,232

### 3. Political, educational, and cultural aspects

Although the population decreased steadily after 1989, ethnic minorities won the right to establish organisations and to become active in Romanian public space. The Czechs and the Slovaks gained full recognition in March 1990, when the Democratic Union of the Slovaks and Czechs in Romania (Demokratický Zváz Slovákov a Čechov v Rumunsku/Demokratický Svaz Slováků a Čechů v Rumunsku, DUSCR) was founded. According to the Union's Charter, the organisation "represents the national interests of the Romanian citizens of Slovak and Czech nationalities, irrespective of political affiliation and religious beliefs" (ISPMN 2025a, orig. Romanian). The main objective is to ensure full cultural, educational, and political rights for the members of the Slovak and Czech communities. A significant accomplishment was recorded in 2014, when the Romanian Parliament voted that Slovak Language Day would be celebrated on May 25 and Czech Language Day on September 28, to promote the cultural values and representative figures of the two ethnic groups (ISPMN 2025d).

Since its establishment, the DUSCR has been involved in all local elections, and its members have been in office as mayors and local councillors in the settlements and counties in which the Czech and Slovak minorities are more numerous. Thus, educational initiatives that were to the benefit of the minorities received much needed support. Despite the waves of emigration and the decline and aging of the population after 1990, Czech- and Slovak-language schools continued to exist, albeit markedly fewer. The year 2005 may be considered a milestone in this respect. At that point, there were "17 Slovak-language educational institutions, which encompassed 11 kindergartens, 15 primary schools, 5 secondary

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<sup>6</sup> In the 1930 census, the Czechs were recorded as Slovaks.

schools, and two high schools. In total, there were 1,026 students and 118 teachers. There were 7 Czech-language institutions, with 118 students and 36 teachers in total” (ISPMN 2025c, orig. Romanian).

The names of the teaching institutions testify to their connection with the corresponding minorities. For instance, *Liceul Teoretic Jozef Kozaček* (‘Jozef Kozaček Theoretical High School’) in Budoii, Bihor county, bears the name of a bishop, “one of the first presidents of the ‘Matica Slovenska’ Society” (ISPMN 2025b, orig. Romanian). The first Slovak-language school was founded in Nădlac in 1945: *Gimnaziul cehoslovac de stat din România (Ștătne českoslovenké gymnázium v Rumunsku, ‘Czechoslovak State Secondary School of Romania’)*. Over the years, the institution bore different names: *Școala pedagogică slovacă (Slovenská pedagogická škola ‘Slovak Pedagogical School’)* – 1948, *Școala medie nr. 2 din Nădlac* (‘Middle School No. 2 of Nădlac’) – 1960. By the Revolution of 1989, the educational institution was called *Liceul „George Coșbuc” Nădlac* (‘George Coșbuc High School of Nădlac’). Following the terminology used by Pedersen (2017, 55), who cites Greenwald (2005, 26) and Helander (2009), this can be qualified as an instance of *micro-toponymic silence*: under communism, the ethnically motivated micro-toponym is removed “to create a new understanding in the population with regard to the cultural situation in the area” (Pedersen 2017, 55). After the Revolution of 1989, when freedom was regained, the name was changed to *Liceul Teoretic „Jozef Gregor Tajovský”* (‘Jozef Gregor Tajovský Theoretical High School’), a designation that is reminiscent of the Slovak writer, teacher, and politician who lived between 1874 and 1940. The motivation behind the name choice lies in the fact that in 1907, in Nădlac (Nagytlak), Tajovský married Hana Lilgová (1885–1958), known by her literary pseudonym, *Hana Gregorová*.

The cultural life of Czechs and Slovaks developed steadily after 1990. Ivan Krasko Publishing House, founded in Nădlac, published the newspapers *Naše snahy*, *Rovnoběžné zrkadlá*, the journal *Dolnozemský Slovak* (co-edited with Slovaks from Serbia and Hungary), and the children’s magazines *Gernický zvonček*, *Helenské sluníčko*, and *Prameň* (see Kukucska 2018d, 133–4). Moreover, the publisher ensured the printing of literature written by Czech and Slovak authors<sup>7</sup>, as well as non-literary works on various topics about the two minorities: e.g., *Aspectele lingvistice ale folclorului slovacilor bihoreni/Jazykovedecké aspekty folklóru bihorských Slovákov* (‘Linguistic aspects of the folklore of the Slovaks in Bihor county’) by Benedek Morong, *Evoluția demografică a slovacilor din România/Demografický vývoj Slovákov v Rumunsku* (‘Demographic evolution of

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<sup>7</sup> Several Slovak writers became members of the Writers’ Union of Romania, among whom one can mention Ivan Miroslav Ambruš, Dagmar Mária Anoca, Adam Suchanský, and Štefan Dovál (ISPMN 2025a).

Slovaks in Romania') by Pavel Hlásnik, and *Retrospectiva slovacilor din Poiana Micului/Retrospektíva Slovákov z Poiana Micului* ('Retrospective of Slovaks in Poiana Micului') by Jozef Jurašek.

There are cultural centres in most villages with Czech and Slovak residents. The names of these institutions are straightforward, as they serve a practical purpose. Thus, the chrematonyms consist of the Romanian definite appellative phrase *Centrul cultural* ('the cultural centre') and an oikonym (the name of the village/town where the centre is found): *Aleșd, Borumlaca, Budoii, Butin, Derna, Eibenthal, Fegernic, Gârnici, Liubcova, Mădăras, Nădlac, Oradea, Ravensca, Sfânta Elena, Șinteu, Șumița, Vărzari, Zăuan-Băi*.

There are numerous folk ensembles affiliated with the aforementioned cultural centres, which promote the music, dances, and traditions of Czechs and Slovaks in Romania: *Ansamblul Folcloric "Cerovina" din Valea Cerului (Čerpotok), Ansamblul Folcloric "Ďatelinka" din Vărzari, Ansamblul Folcloric Mladost din Sacalasașul Nou (Šastelek), Ansamblul Folcloric "Lipka" din Budoii, Ansamblul Folcloric "Poleanka" Aleșd, Ansamblul Folcloric "Pramienok" Șinteu, Ansamblul Folcloric "Sálašan" Arad, Grupul Vocal "Fialka" Mădăras, Grupul Vocal "Srdiecko" Borumlaca, Grupul Vocal "Varadan" Oradea* (see Furicova 2018a, 119, 122; Gubani 2018, 205–9).

As the examples above show, the names of the groups (which may be considered instances of "social chrematonyms", according to Gałkowski 2022, 62) usually consist of three types of elements:

1) a Romanian definite appellative phrase, *ansamblul folcloric* ('the folk ensemble') or *grupul vocal* ('the vocal group');

2) the actual name of the group, whose onomastic function is highlighted by the presence of the quotation marks. This element may be derived from another proper name (e.g., a toponym – *Lipka*<sup>8</sup>, *Varadan*<sup>9</sup>) or from an appellative (e.g., *Cerovina* < *cerovina* 'oak grove'<sup>10</sup>, *Ďatelinka* < *d'atelinka*, a diminutive form of *d'atelina* 'clover'; *Fialka* < *fialka* 'violet'; *mladost* 'youth'; *Poleanka* < *polianka* 'meadow'; *Pramienok* < *pramienok* 'small stream', a diminutive form of *prameň*

<sup>8</sup> "*Lipka* translates as *Teiuș* [< Romanian *tei* 'lime tree' + diminutive suffix *-uș*], the name of a geographical area where many lime trees grow" (Furicova 2018a, 119, orig. Romanian).

<sup>9</sup> "The name of the vocal group is related to the Slovak name of the city of Oradea – *Veľký Varadín* (possibly *Varad* as well), and it means 'a man from Oradea/an inhabitant of Oradea' [Romanian *orădean*]" (Gubani 2018, 208, orig. Romanian).

<sup>10</sup> See *Slovníkový portál Jazykovedného ústavu Ľ. Štúra SAV* (2025, s.v. *cerovina*). The name of the folklore ensemble may also be related to the oikonym *Valea Cerului* (see Furicova 2018b, 138). The motivation for the onomastic choice lies in the geographical location of the settlement, which is surrounded by oak forests to the south and east. Romanian *cer* (see DELR 2021–, s.v. *cer*<sup>2</sup>) designates a certain variety of oak, commonly known in English as *Turkey oak* (see de Rigo et al. 2016, 148).

‘stream’; *Sálašan* < *sálašan* ‘landed peasant’ – see Kukucska 2018d, 95<sup>11</sup>; *Srdiečko* < *srdiečko* ‘little heart’, a diminutive form of *srdce* ‘heart’);

3) an oikonym (the name of the settlement – a village or a town – where the folk ensemble/vocal group is established or where it was founded), which may be linked to the other components by means of a preposition showing origin/belonging (*din* ‘from, of’).

The folk ensembles and vocal groups are involved in the organisation of festivals (Czech Folklore Festival, Slovak Folklore Festival, Romanian Festival of the Slovak Folk Song, Folk Festival for Children and Youth, Festival of the Ethnic Communities in the Banat), creative activities, and the Days of Slovak Culture.

The revitalisation of the isolated settlements of the Czechs in the Semenic Mountains – Gărâna (Wolfsberg), Brebu Nou (Weidenthal), Poiana Lupului (Wolfwise), Sadova Veche (Altsadowa) (see Both 2022) – has been achieved by means of sustainable activities, especially in the field of tourism<sup>12</sup>, to compensate for the lack of traditional workforce. As Both (2013, orig. Romanian) noted, “after 1990, the Czech lands in the Banat received significant support from the Czech government, by means of numerous economic, cultural, social, and educational community development programmes”. From a linguistic viewpoint, an old language was preserved in the Banat Highlands, albeit extinct in Czechia. This situation is fittingly described by Coulmas’s (2005, 6) claim that “When a substantial body of population moves out of one territory and into another, [...] it will take its language with it, but after some time this language ceases to be the same as that spoken in its original territory”.

The sociocultural dimension of the Czechs’ presence in Romanian public space is reinforced by means of Czech brands. The most famous example in this respect is the car brand Škoda. Especially after the merger with the German automobile manufacturer Volkswagen in 1991, Škoda benefited from major investments and promotion. Nowadays, more than a million Škoda vehicles (representing various models made in Europe and Asia) are exported to over 100 countries worldwide (see Škoda 2025). In Romania, Škoda sold 10,612 cars in 2024, coming in third place after Dacia (44,430) and Toyota (12,818) in the top 10 best-selling automobiles in the country, while Škoda Octavia was the foreign car model which was the most appreciated by the Romanian customers, with 4,225 units sold (see Cebia 2025).

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<sup>11</sup> *Sálašan* could also be derived from *Salašan* (masculine noun, a variant of *Novosalašan*), designating a man from/an inhabitant of Nový Salaš (a village in the Košice-okolie district, Košice Region, eastern Slovakia) (see *Slovníkový portál Jazykovedného ústavu L. Štúra SAV* 2025, s.v. *salašan*).

<sup>12</sup> “Every summer, in August, in Eibenthal and Gărnic, a great ‘open air’ festival is held, in which well-known bands from Czechia take part. The roads in the Banat are swarming with buses, vans, and cars whose licence plates read ‘CZ’” (Both 2013, orig. Romanian). One can also mention the music festivals held in Gărâna, Gărâna Jazz Festival and Gărâna Folk Festival.

#### 4. Socio-toponymic aspects

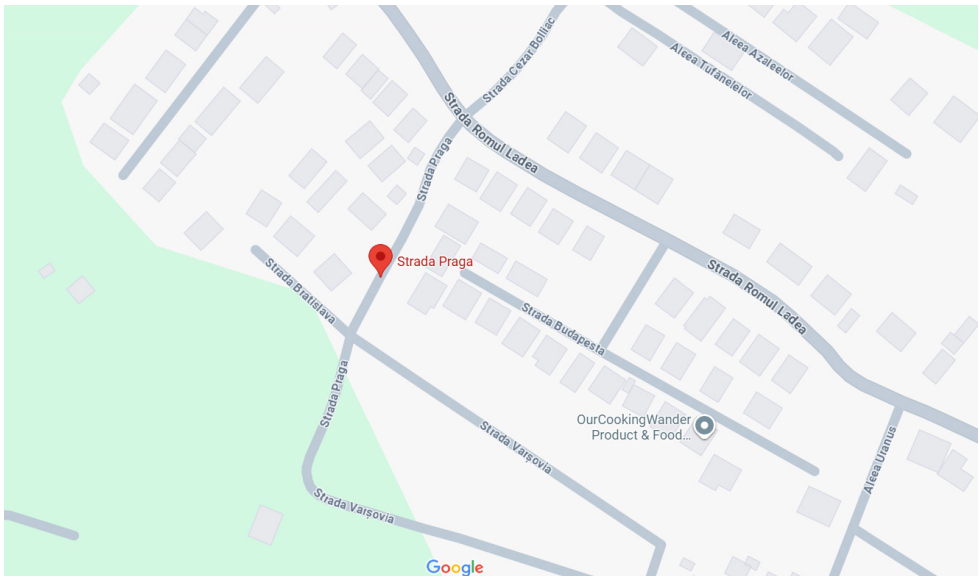
Names are “acts of identity in a multi-dimensional space” (Hudson 2001, 12). In relation to minorities, proper names (anthroponyms and toponyms alike) “can represent deeper kinds of identity, act as objects of attachment and dependence, and reflect community mores and social customs, while functioning as powerful determinants of inclusion and exclusion. [...] Names are not merely symbols of their referents but also manifestations of cultural, linguistic and social heritage in their own right” (Kostanski and Puzey 2016, xiii). Anthroponyms and toponyms are irrefutable indicators of the preservation of ethnic identity for minorities (see Pedersen 2017, 21) and serve as “active *identity* management employing the social *indexicality* associated with alternative language forms” (Schneider 2013, 399). They prove that “language both expresses and creates categories of thought that are shared by members of a social group and that language is, in part, responsible for the attitudes and beliefs that constitute what we call ‘culture’” (Kramsch 2004, 235). Thus, every name, as a part of language, “invariably carries social meaning. Every [name] choice has a motivation and hence can be explained” (Wardhaugh 1994, 109).

The settlement names, names of institutions, cultural centres and cultural groups described above, as well as street names related to the Czech and Slovak minorities in Romania behave as “instruments of socialization” (Hudson 2001, 105). For instance, there are Czech and Slovak figures commemorated in Romanian hodonymy, as a token of the respect and appreciation that they enjoy in Romanian space. The examples are numerous in the settlements with a significant number of Czechs and Slovaks, and as such, they “contribute to the feeling of belonging to a social group in a particular area” (Helleland 2009, 506). In Arad county (*orasul.biz* 2012–2025), one can find *Strada Jozef Gregor Tajovský* (‘Jozef Gregor Tajovský Street’, Slovak writer and politician who was married in Nădlac), *Strada Ivan Bujna*, and *Str. Ludovit Boor* (‘Ivan Bujna Street’, ‘Ludovit Boor Street’ – both were Evangelical priests in Nădlac). In the same town there is *Str. Martin Luther* (‘Martin Luther Street’). Although he is not related to the Slovak ethnicity, Martin Luther is the religious “patron” of the Slovaks in Nădlac. Thus, his presence in the hodonymy of this settlement is not random. In Cluj-Napoca, a street bears the name of the Czech theologian and philosopher Jan Hus (1370–1415), the first Church reformer. As a key predecessor to Protestantism, Jan Hus also appears in the name of a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Huși, Iași county. It is not the ethnicity of the initial name bearer that is important, but his religious role as rector at Charles University in Prague between 1409 and 1410. As Jaroslav David (2011, 215) emphasised, “place names are not only linguistic signs; they also represent social and historical values” and aim at honouring or commemorating the legacy of figures from various fields.





**Figure 2.** Hodonymic configuration of Sibiu – Prague Street (source: Google Maps, <https://tinyurl.com/2kt8dr9t>)



**Figure 3.** Hodonymic configuration of Cluj-Napoca – Prague Street and Bratislava Street (source: Google Maps, <https://tinyurl.com/mwwyndc8>)

The use of Romanian and foreign oikonyms in Romanian hodonymy is a widespread practice. Local authorities that are legally entitled to name roads and squares are free to choose well- or lesser-known geographical landmarks. While national landmarks are motivated, foreign ones are underpinned by subjective reasons, such as the respect one has for a country, a people, the values promoted by that country/people, their glorious past, as well as their relationship with Romania, in general, and the settlement in which the hodonym is recorded, in particular. Most of the settlements that chose to have a *Prague Street* and a *Bratislava Street* do not have Czech and Slovak minorities who could advocate for the employment of such hodonyms. They “are not mere geographical labels, but carry an emotional load that evokes admiration” (Felecan 2024, 258–9). The presence of such urban names in Romanian hodonymic landscape can be interpreted symbolically as signs of solidarity stemming from sharing a similar destiny, which “implies crucial national, cultural, sentimental and historical ideological values” (Felecan 2022, 328).

## 5. Concluding remarks

The history of the Romanians, Czechs, and Slovaks displays several common features, from the fate of the three peoples in the Habsburg Empire, subsequently the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to their trajectory in twentieth century, between the years 1918 and 1939, when the three nations shared a common border along the Tisza river, between Maramureş and Ruthenia. Following their migration to Romania, the Czech and Slovak minorities integrated well into the multicultural landscape of Transylvania and the Banat. The members of these communities contributed to the socio-economic and cultural development of the areas in which they settled. All the categories of place names that may be linked to the Czech and Slovak ethnic groups “[...] transform the sheer physical and geographical into something that is historically and socially experienced. [...] In a fundamental way names create landscapes” (Tilley 1994, 18). From the perspective of socio-onomastics, the preservation of proper names testifies to the steadfastness of the respective minorities, on the one hand, and the tolerance of the Romanian majority, on the other. Names are symbolic witnesses of multi-ethnic communities. The adoption by the Romanian majority of oikonyms, hodonyms and other proper names representative of various minorities is indicative of a “social consensus” (Helleland 2009, 507) which proves that the minorities are accepted, respected and completely integrated into the landscape of Transylvania and the Banat.

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## CHAOS VS. ORDER: THE DEGREE OF INDECISION IN CONDITIONAL COMPLEX CLAUSES

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**ABSTRACT.** *Chaos vs. Order: the Degree of Indecision in Conditional Complex Clauses.* This study examines the temporal and aspectual behaviour of the Romanian conditional mood in complex clauses, using the Davidsonian event variable as a structural foundation. Building on Reichenbach’s temporal architecture and Vendler’s aspectual typology, the analysis investigates how conditional predicates shift between indecision and partial determination once additional events or adverbials intervene. I argue that the culmination point – typically a property of a single event – undergoes systematic reinterpretation in conditional complex clauses, where event dependency and modal subordination reshape aspectual values. To account for these patterns, the paper introduces the representation  $E(hX)$ , a hidden event variable that preserves the conditional’s inherent uncertainty while allowing dependent events to impose aspectual or temporal constraints. The model captures how the conditional mood becomes less indecisive when interacting with achievement-type predicates, adverbial scope, or narrator-induced perspective. Three guiding questions structure the investigation: how delimitation points are established, how the conditional can be represented without eliminating its uncertainty, and how Reference Time and Event Time influence syntactic labelling. The findings suggest that conditional indecision is not a fixed semantic property but an emergent effect shaped by event structure and aspectual hierarchy.

**Keywords:** *conditional, aspect, label,  $E(hX)$ , culmination point*

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**REZUMAT. *Haos vs. ordine: gradul de indecizie în frazele condiționale.*** Acest studiu analizează comportamentul temporal și aspectual al modului condițional în propozițiile complexe din română, având ca fundament variabila de eveniment davidsoniană. Pe baza arhitecturii temporale a lui Reichenbach și a tipologiei aspectuale elaborată de Vendler, lucrarea investighează modul în care predicatul condițional oscilează între indecizie și delimitare parțială atunci când intervin evenimente sau adverbiale suplimentare. Susțin că punctul culminant – de regulă o proprietate a unui singur eveniment – este reinterpretat sistematic în frazele condiționale, unde dependența evenimentială și subordonarea modală modifică valorile aspectuale. Pentru a explica aceste fenomene, articolul introduce reprezentarea  $E(hX)$ , o variabilă de eveniment ascunsă care păstrează incertitudinea inerentă a condiționalului, permițând totodată evenimentelor dependente să impună constrângeri aspectuale sau temporale. Modelul arată că indecizia condiționalului se reduce în prezența predicatelor de tip realizare, a suprasolicitării adverbiale sau a perspectivei naratoriale. Investigația este ghidată de trei întrebări: cum se stabilesc punctele de delimitare, cum poate fi reprezentat condiționalul fără a-i elimina incertitudinea și cum influențează Timpul de Referință și Timpul Evenimentului procesul de etichetare sintactică. Rezultatele sugerează că indecizia condiționalului nu este o proprietate fixă, ci un efect emergent al structurii evenimentiale și al ierarhiei aspectuale.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *condițional, aspect, etichetare lingvistică,  $E(hX)$ , punctul culminant*

## 1. Introduction

When we examine a simple clause such as *aș citi o carte* ('I would like to read a book'), the construction straightforwardly conveys an indecisive or non-committal event. The same holds for clause-level irony. However, once additional events are introduced – each carrying its own variable in the Davidsonian (1967) sense – the initial indecision may, might, or even should disappear, depending on the behaviour of both syntactically dependent and non-dependent events. Simple clauses therefore fail to capture the way we typically structure thoughts, since natural discourse overwhelmingly relies on complex clauses. The degree of indecision associated with the conditional cannot be properly explained in simple clauses, but only within complex sentences, where the relations between predicates impose aspectual and temporal constraints. This creates the possibility for an event X to depend on an event Y, even when Y operates along a temporal or aspectual axis that differs from that of X.

## 2. Literature review

My analysis begins with the Davidsonian (1967) event variable. Davidson proposed a logical-form representation of sentences that incorporates an event variable, motivated by contrasts such as those in (1):

- (1) a *Landon stabbed Ana*  
 b *Landon stabbed Ana in the back with a knife.*  
 c *Landon stabbed Ana in the back.*

In the basic predicate system, the representation of (1) is  $\text{Stab}(l,a)^2$ , where *stab* is the predicate and (l, a) are its arguments – the subject and the object, respectively. Davidson identifies two major limitations of this system: it cannot represent how adverbials modify the predicate, and it fails to capture entailment relations. For instance, (1b) entails (1c), but not vice versa, yet this asymmetry is invisible in the traditional predicate-argument structure. Davidson resolves these issues by introducing an event variable – now standardly represented as *e* – associated with the entire clause:

- (2)  $\exists e [\text{Stab}(l, a, e) \ \& \ \text{in-the-back}(e)]$

I also draw on Reichenbach's (1947) temporal framework, which distinguishes Speech Time (ST), Reference Time (RT), and Event Time (ET). Without providing a full exposition of his system, I illustrate the core relations through example (3):

- (3) a *Ion a vizitat muzeul ieri.*  
 'John visited the museum yesterday.'  
 b ST = now, RT = ET, ET < ST  
 (where ST, RT, and ET are related by markers of anteriority, posteriority, or simultaneity)

Hornstein's (1993) notions of Basic Tense Structure (BTS) and Derived Tense Structure (DTS) also play a role in the analysis. These are integrated with Dowty's (1979) more abstract realis-irrealis temporal representations, involving intervals [I, I'] and worlds [w, w']. For example, a clause such as *Landon is walking* can be represented as [I, w] to mark the actual, ongoing temporal profile of the event, while [I', w'] captures its possible, non-final continuation. Dowty formalizes this as follows: [Prog  $\emptyset$ ] is true at  $\langle I, w \rangle$  iff there exists an

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<sup>2</sup> In predicate logic, we mark the arguments with lowercase letters, so "l" marks Landon, while "a" stands for Ana.

interval  $I'$  such that  $I \subset I'$  and  $I$  is not the final subinterval of  $I'$ , and there exists a world  $w'$  in which  $\emptyset$  is true at  $\langle I', w' \rangle$ , with  $w$  identical to  $w'$  at all times up to and including  $I$  (Dowty 1979: 146). The analysis further relies on Vendler's (1967) situational-aspectual classification, according to which predicates subcategorize into four major categories; Smith (1991) adds a fifth category:

- (a) activity: *to walk*
- (b) accomplishment: *to build a house*
- (c) achievement: *to reach the summit*
- (d) state: *to be*
- (e) semelfactive: *to knock*, etc.

In addition to these general theoretical frameworks, the analysis also relies on Dobrovie-Sorin's (1994) foundational work on Romanian clause architecture, which provides an essential comparative background for understanding the behaviour of conditional constructions in this language.

Finally, I make limited use of Ramchand's (2008) First Phase Syntax, which classifies events according to their syntactic-semantic decomposition. Her system distinguishes initiation-process verbs and initiation-process-result verbs, further subdivided into transitive vs. intransitive structures and roles such as DP initiator, DP undergoer, and DP path. In examples such as *John bakes a cake* vs. *John bakes the potato* (Ramchand 2008: 69), the result phrase is not projected, yet an internal result can still be identified (DP path vs. DP undergoer).

### 3. Methodology

This section introduces the conceptual and methodological tools that will be used throughout the analysis, focusing on hidden event variables, aspectual classifications, and the mechanisms of aspectual donation. The first is the notion of a hidden event variable, an abstract construct parallel to the Davidsonian (1967) event variable. This concept allows me to account for the aspectual and temporal relations that arise within complex clauses. Building on this variable, I adapt Newton's First Law<sup>3</sup> of Inertia to the linguistic domain in order to illustrate how an event  $x$  may alter the aspectual or temporal value of another event  $y$ . Newton's formulation – “an object at rest remains at rest, and an object in motion remains in motion at constant speed and in a straight line unless acted on by an unbalanced force” – is reinterpreted here such that inertia (or unbalanced force) corresponds to the temporal or aspectual state of event  $x$  being affected by another event.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www1.grc.nasa.gov/beginners-guide-to-aeronautics/newtons-laws-of-motion/>

I also employ a set of aspectual classifications that I have developed: internal, external, local, and distant aspectual expressions. Typically, internal aspect marks the necessary aspectual grammaticality within a complex clause (CC), while external aspect identifies the dominant aspect of the CC – whether it is coindexed with other events sharing the same value or dependent on another event. Local and distant aspect relate to truth conditions and to the aspectual-temporal axis, distinguishing between “what is” and “what could be” (Hegedus 2024). Another key term is aspect donation, which describes the linguistic circumstances under which the aspect of one event may, can, or should be verified in another event through dependency. Such dependency may be syntactic or logical. I also briefly refer to the notion of an aspectual bridge, which captures aspectual dependency between events, though this concept is not central to the present paper and will be developed in a forthcoming study.

To illustrate aspectual and temporal transformations, I use a schematic representation that captures how a sequence of events may shift when the hidden event variable acquires a figure<sup>4</sup> value. A representative example is the following:  $E1(\text{Gr}) \rightarrow E2(\text{Gr}) \rightarrow E3(\text{Gr}) [\dots] E(\text{hX})(\text{Fig})$ . This notation captures the shift from a purely ground-valued sequence to a configuration in which the hidden event variable  $E(\text{hX})$  acquires a figure value (pfv), thereby influencing the aspectual interpretation of the surrounding events. For instance, in (4a), the conditional clause [...] *ca și când o muscă ar fi supărat-o* (‘as if a fly had upset her’) remains morphologically non-perfective and surface-labelled as ground, yet the hidden event variable  $E(\text{hX})$  acquires a figure value because the narrator presents it as the causal source of  $E2$ .

In some examples, I also employ Dowty’s (1979) notation  $[I, w]$  vs.  $[I', w']$ , where  $I$  and  $I'$  refer to intervals in the realis and irrealis worlds, respectively. The corpus used for the analysis consists of conditional complex clauses extracted from Călinescu’s *Enigma Otiliei* (EO). The (b)-type examples are typically modified versions of the (a)-type originals. The corpus is processed in Sketch Engine, using guided searches to identify conditional CCs.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. The $E(\text{hX})$ and the changed culmination point

Since the behaviour of the culmination point is central to the interpretation of conditional complex clauses, the analysis begins with the interaction between perfective marking and hidden event variables. This subsection initiates the analysis by introducing a specialized labelling framework wherein a figure-

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<sup>4</sup> Figure vs. ground are notions from cognitive semantics Talmy (1978) or Croft & Cruse (2004), I adapted their functional relevance into my analysis.

labelled event (related to a perfective past tense) may have a ground reading. This phenomenon is intrinsically linked to the culmination point: while this point affects a single event in a simple clause, its function shifts significantly within a Complex Clause (CC). To refine this analysis, the research introduces E(hX) - a hidden event variable which is frequently required in conditional CCs to bypass the limitations of the “simple transformation method.” Furthermore, the subsection examines a predicate that involves both the inchoative and the lexical indecision with adverbial scope overtaking<sup>5</sup>, analysing how shifts in scope influence event interpretation and aspectual / temporal hierarchy.

Example (4) illustrates how a past-tense event, typically labelled as a figure, may receive a ground interpretation when narrator-induced perspective and event-type variables intervene. The example also shows how tense-driven shifts in culmination point interact with modal subordination and adverbial compatibility, revealing the aspectual instability of conditional predicates.

- (4) a *Aurelia*      *rămase*                      *indiferentă*,    *de-o*      *indiferență*  
*Aurelia.nom*    *remain.ind.ps.pfv.3sg*    *indifferent*    *of-an*    *indifference.acc*  
*făcută, 1/*      *însă*                      *Aglae*      *dădu*  
*made.ptcp*      *but*                      *Aglae.nom*    *show.ind.ps.pfv.3sg*  
*dovezi*      *de*                      *impaciență, 2/*      *ca*  
*proof.acc*      *of*                      *impatience.acc*      *as*  
*și*      *când*                      *o*      *muscă*    *ar*  
*and*      *when*                      *a*      *fly.nom*    *aux.cond.3sg*  
  
*fi*      *supărat-o. 3/*  
*be.inf*      *upset.ptcp-cl.acc*  
‘Aurelia remained indifferent, an induced indifference, but Aglae showed signs of impatience, as if a fly had upset her.’ (EO, 43)
- b *Aurelia*      *rămase*    *indiferentă*,    *făcută, 1/*    *însă*    *Aglae*    *dădu*  
*dovezi*      *de*      *impaciență, 2/*      *ca*      *și*      *când*  
*o*      *muscă*    *ar*      *supăra-o*      *[#mâine]*  
                                         *aux.cond.3sg*    *upset.inf-cl.acc.f.3sg*      *[tomorrow]*  
*[#astăzi]*    *[#în*      *acea*      *vreme]. 3/*  
*[today]*      *[#in*      *that*      *time]*
- ‘Aurelia remained indifferent, an induced indifference, but Aglae showed signs of impatience, as if a fly would upset her [#tomorrow] [#today] [#in that time].’

<sup>5</sup> When an adverbial can modify how the CC’s temporality is perceived.

Consider (4a), in which all events belong to the narrator's voice; none of them must be uttered by the characters. E1 and E2 are in the past simple, and the adversative conjunction may also function as a temporal connector, since there is no cognitive pressure to prioritize one event over the other. E3 is not a true conditional but has a modal value. The scheme is: E1(Gr)(npfv) → E2(Gr)(npfv) → E3(Fig). Both E1 and E2 appear as ground events, which seems to contradict the claim in chapter 6 that events in a CC must differ in temporal and aspectual duration when they are not truly simultaneous. However, without the narrator we cannot access the characters' [I' and w'], so the apparent ground value is narrator-induced. Even if E1 and E2 occur simultaneously, their event-type variables differentiate them: E1 suggests a stative reading, E2 an activity one.

A major issue must be clarified here. A past event typically becomes a figure event in the presence of a present-tense event, but here E1 and E2 are marked as ground. I do this for two reasons. First, marking them as figure events would create an aspectual conflict with E3. Although E3 is most likely an unhappened event, the narrator presents it as the reason for E2. If we assume a non-ironic reading, E3 may be endowed with a true value; in that case, it is a happened event, and the reason precedes the effect. Second, general events (such as boiling point readings) with general value are treated as ground events.

E3 in (4b) conveys the same informational content as E3 in (4a), but temporally they differ. In (4a), the past participle implies a true reason for E2, so E3 is an event whose culmination point has ended. In (4b), the conditional form suggests the opposite: the culmination point has not been reached. This affects the interpretation of E2 as well, since [(∃e)-VP-*dădu dovezi* ('gave signs')] PP-*de impăciență* ('of impatience')] cannot share the same culmination point as in (4a). Thus, witnessing (4a) and (4b) would yield different temporal/aspectual interpretations. Even if E2 in (4b) were simultaneous with E1, E2 would still be perceived as a ground event relative to E1, due to its dependency on E3. In this case, the adversative conjunction would not function as a true temporal connector. The shared aspectual bridge<sup>6</sup> becomes visible in (4b), where [(∃e)-AdvP-*tomorrow*] is incompatible with E2. Since E2's culmination point depends on E3's state, E3 cannot donate<sup>7</sup> its aspectual value; if it did, it would be verified at E2's time. Conversely, E2 might donate its aspect to E3, making linear order decisive.

<sup>6</sup> My term which refers to a special type of aspectual verification: aspect is verified also in another dependent (logically or syntactically) event.

<sup>7</sup> When the aspectual result is donated to another dependent event (this dependency is not mandatorily a syntactic one, it can be based on temporality etc.)

I consider that both true and modal conditionals may cause interpretational difficulties. It is therefore preferable to keep the original conditional while allowing a hidden event variable  $E(hX)$  to check its presumptive nature. When the conditional functions as epistemic modality (as a non-dependent event), the hidden event variable may not bypass [I' and w'] without a checking event. Thus, in cases like (4a-b),  $E(hX)$  cannot verify E3's presupposition. Additional adverbials in (4b) further clarify the structure. In a simple present conditional (not a dependent CC), *tomorrow* would be compatible with the tense. Here, however, neither *today* nor *at that time* is contextually compatible with E3, which shows that E3's time cannot bypass E2's. This is due not only to E2's past reference but also to its achievement-type reading, which does not allow adverbial extension or adverbial uncertainty (lexical indecision).<sup>8</sup> One might ask why *at that time* is incompatible with E2's achievement type. The reason is temporal: the adverbial may refer to a time preceding E2's achievement, thereby adding another [PST] operator. I refer to this phenomenon as the synchronised label of the achievement predicate in a shared bridge.

In this section, I have introduced the  $E(hX)$ , whose role is to illustrate a proper transformation: an indecisive event can be validated by a "yes/no"-type answer while retaining its original uncertainty value. I examined different approaches to the culmination point and how they may affect aspectual bridges. I also showed that achievement-type events do not permit adverbial extension through adverbial uncertainty, and that a past tense may receive a ground interpretation. These findings motivate the need for a more articulated model of conditional indecision, one that the next section develops through the interaction of dependent events and adverbial scope.

#### ***4.2. SOT-like behaviour and adverbial scope in Romanian conditional clauses***

This subsection examines how Romanian conditional complex clauses may exhibit SOT-like behaviour when tense and aspect are checked through dependent events. The focus is on cases where adverbial scope overtaking forces a hierarchical ordering between Reference Time (RT) and Event Time (ET), and where the hidden event variable  $E(hX)$  becomes necessary to avoid temporal or aspectual conflict. The examples illustrate how tense interpretation in conditional clauses depends not only on grammatical tense, but also on the interaction between adverbials, aspectual class, and event dependency.

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<sup>8</sup> The shifted culmination point creates a derived telic boundary that blocks aspectual donation: the donated viewpoint cannot override a structurally encoded culmination. Because achievement predicates lack internal temporal development, they cannot host adverbial extension, which explains the incompatibility in (4b).

Example (5) illustrates the consequences of eliminating a mandatory aspectual bridge, showing how hidden event variables, adverbial scope interactions, and tense-checking constraints jointly determine whether aspectual donation is possible. The example also highlights how c-command and SOT-like effects can block otherwise available bridge configurations.

- (5) a
- |                       |                 |                      |                              |               |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Putem</i> 1/       | <i>să</i>       | <i>rugăm</i>         | <i>pe</i>                    | <i>domnul</i> |
| can.ind.prs.1pl       | sjv             | ask.sjv.1pl          | dom                          | sir.def.acc   |
| <i>Felix,</i>         | <i>mamă,</i> 2/ | <i>cred</i> 3/       | <i>că</i>                    | <i>nu</i>     |
| Felix.acc             | mother.voc      | believe.ind.prs.1sg  | that                         | not           |
| <i>are</i>            | <i>(de/</i>     | <i>ce)</i> 4/        | <i>să</i>                    | <i>ne</i>     |
| have.ind.prs.3sg      | (of             | what)                | sjv                          | cl.acc.1pl    |
| <i>refuze!</i> 5/...- | <i>chiar</i>    | <i>că</i>            | <i>s-ar</i>                  |               |
| refuse.sjv.3sg        | even            | that                 | cl.refl.acc.3sg-aux.cond.3sg |               |
| <i>putea</i> 6/       | <i>să</i>       | <i>ne</i>            | <i>refuze</i> 7/,            | <i>dacă</i>   |
| can.inf               | sjv             | cl.acc.1pl           | refuse.sjv.3sg               | if            |
| <i>ar</i>             | <i>vrea</i>     | <i>dumnealui.</i> 8/ |                              |               |
| aux.cond.3sg          | want.inf        | him.def.dat          |                              |               |
- 'Mother, we may ask Mr. Felix, I think that he has no reason to refuse us! But I have to admit that he might refuse us, if he wants to.' (EO, 44)

- b
- |              |             |                               |                      |
|--------------|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Chiar</i> | <i>că</i>   | <i>[*s-ar</i>                 | <i>putut]</i> /      |
|              |             | [cl.refl.acc.3sg-aux.cond.3sg | can.ptcp]            |
|              |             | <i>[ar</i>                    | <i>fi</i>            |
|              |             | [aux.cond.3sg                 | be.inf               |
| <i>să</i>    | <i>ne</i>   | <i>refuze</i>                 | <i>putut]</i> 6/     |
| <i>[în</i>   | <i>acea</i> | <i>vreme]</i>                 | can.ptcp]            |
| [in          | that        | time]                         | [?ieri] 7/,          |
| <i>dacă</i>  |             | <i>[ar</i>                    | [yesterday]          |
| if           |             | [aux.cond.3sg                 | <i>fi</i>            |
|              |             | [#vrusese]                    | <i>vrut]</i>         |
|              |             | [want.ind.pst.pfv.3sg]        | can.ptcp]            |
|              |             |                               | <i>dumnealui.</i> 8/ |
|              |             |                               | him.def.dat          |

'Even though he [#someone<sup>9</sup> could have] [could have] refuse us [in that time] [?yesterday], if [he wanted to] [#had wanted to].'

<sup>9</sup> Romanian past impersonal, which has no direct English equivalent because English requires an overt subject (EPP), so I render it with 'someone'.

- c [În acea vreme] [săptămâna trecută] chiar că  
 [in that time.acc] [week.def.acc last.ptcp]  
 [#s-ar fi putut] [ar fi putut] 6/  
 să ne refuze [#în acea vreme]  
 [până acea perioadă] (indicată  
 until that period (indicated  
 de noi (înainte de RT)  
 by us (before of RT)  
 [#până săptămâna trecută] [?ieri]  
 [until week.def.acc last.ptcp] [yesterday]  
 [până ieri / vineri] 7/, dacă  
 [until yesterday/ Friday]  
 [#ieri] [ar fi vrut] [vrusese] dumnealui.8/  
 ‘[In that time [last week] even though he [#someone could have] [could have] refuse us  
 [#in that time] [until that time (indicated by us, before RT)] [#until the last week]  
 [?yesterday] [until yesterday / Friday], if [#yesterday] he [would have wanted to] [had  
 wanted to].’ (constructed example)
- d [Ieri] chiar că [#s-ar fi putut] [ar fi putut] 6/ să ne refuze  
 [#astăzi] [până la ora 10] [#până vineri]  
 [until to hour 10]  
 [#ieri] 7/, dacă [ar fi vrut] [vrusese]  
 dumnealui.8/  
 ‘[Yesterday] he even though [#someone could have] [could have] refuse us [#today]  
 [until 10 AM] [#until Friday] [#yesterday], if he [would have wanted to] [had wanted to].’

Consider (5b) with the changed tenses. The past tense in E6 suspends the impersonal value, making the phrase ungrammatical: E6 in the past conditional suggests a positive value, implying that the act of refusing did not happen. What is crucial here is how tense is checked. E7 remains in the present subjunctive, but its temporal axis is located in the past due to its dependency, so individual tense checking would yield a false result. The same applies to E8. The past conditional in E8 requires the event equalizer to avoid temporal/aspectual conflict with E6, suggesting that checking the CC's tense only once is insufficient unless aspect becomes decisive.

I marked E8's past perfect as semantically anomalous because its aspectual structure conflicts with E6 and E7. In the past perfect, the volitional act of E8 precedes E6 and E7, which would imply either that the referent was forced to

believe his volitional property or that he has no access to E6 and E7 (being outside his [I and w]).<sup>10</sup> However, if a temporal event variable is added to E7, [( $\exists e$ )-AdvP-*în acea vreme* ('at that time')], the construction becomes acceptable: the past perfect's T<sup>0</sup> can be linked to another past event whose reference licenses the past perfect label. This shows that labelling is crucial in a CC and that T<sup>0</sup> can be linked to an adverbial phrase, confirming the relevance of the Davidsonian event variable. Since this adverbial implies an undetermined past reference, we must also test a determined one such as [( $\exists e$ )-AdvP-*ieri* ('yesterday')]. 'Yesterday' normally implies a past simple reading, but in rare cases it may be compatible with a past perfect label<sup>11</sup>.

Consider (5c) with added adverbials. First, read the CC with [( $\exists e$ )-AdvP-*în acea vreme* ('in that time')], followed by the past conditional, combined with [( $\exists e$ )-AdvP-*ieri* ('yesterday')]. Here the first adverbial marks RT, while the second marks ET. RT-'in that time' is incompatible with ET-'yesterday'. One might attribute this to the undetermined nature of RT, but eliminating ET-'yesterday' shows that RT-'in that time' does not imply a past perfect. E(hX) may be present if the agent refers to a past perfect, but decoding this requires extralinguistic knowledge. The RT [( $\exists e$ )-AdvP-*săptămâna trecută* ('last week')] removes this requirement, yet the construction remains semantically anomalous with ET-'yesterday'. I assume this is an aspectual conflict, not a temporal one, since both past conditionals and the present subjunctive are compatible with past adverbials.

This hypothesis is supported if we read (5c) with RT-'in that time' and ET-'until that time', followed by E6 and E7. The undetermined RT gains a past perfect reference through ET, forcing a past perfect value for the present subjunctive. With two similar adverbials, the construction is slightly odd, since ET is marginally saved by a prepositional variable.<sup>12</sup> If RT follows ET, the CC becomes semantically anomalous because ET's bridge or label is excluded from checking, leaving only a ground label with an unchecked figure label.

Consider RT-'last week' with ET-'until that time'. RT implies a past simple context, valid for the past conditional, so the derivation is valid only if ET does

<sup>10</sup> In Dowty's framework, such 'forced volition' corresponds to the irrealis interval [I', w'], since the agent's volitional state cannot be evaluated within the temporal history of the actual world. The volitional property is therefore interpreted in a world whose past does not coincide with the realis world up to RT, which is why the agent is described as being "outside" his [I, w].

<sup>11</sup> If 'yesterday' is internally segmented, a past perfect label may exceptionally pair with it. For instance, if the relevant subinterval (8-10 AM) becomes pure past when a later segment is checked, its label shifts from past simple to past perfect. In such rare cases, the past perfect is not semantically anomalous, since its label can still unify with 'yesterday'. This shows that even a past simple adverbial may accommodate a past perfect reading when event labelling forces it.

<sup>12</sup> The preposition contributes a minimal interval boundary that allows ET to be weakly included under RT, preventing a crash but not fully licensing the temporal axis. This is why the rescue is only marginal.

not precede RT. ET-‘until that time’ cannot precede RT-‘last week’. The logical implication is that ET cannot be later than the following week’s Sunday 23:59; the minimal RT-ET difference can be one minute, the maximal seven days.

Consider also RT-‘last week’ with ET-‘until yesterday’. The minimal requirement for RT remains, and ET-‘until yesterday’ implies that both RT and ET occur within week 1. E7 lacks truth value, but its hypothetical value is indexed in this period.

The next question is how figure vs. ground interacts with these adverbials. In a simple CC, ‘yesterday’ can appear clause-initially as RT, and most events are compatible with this. However, if RT-‘yesterday’ is followed by ET-‘last week’, both logical and aspectual conflicts arise. ‘Yesterday’ is closer to ST than ‘last week’, so its temporality excludes ET’s temporality. ET-‘last week’ becomes the figure event, RT-‘yesterday’ the ground. In the acceptable version of (5c), the ground precedes the figure, showing that in non-simultaneous CCs aspectual/temporal checking must differ to avoid derivational crash.

In constructions with multiple adverbials, order may matter, but the key issue is inclusion vs. exclusion. A ground event closer to the present cannot label a variable whose temporal/aspectual axis does not include it. This is not Hornstein’s (1993) BTS: if the CC is read as an individual event, ‘last week’ can follow E7. From a labelling perspective, ‘yesterday’ cannot access the RT’s [I’ and w’], and this appears mandatory in constructions like (5c).

I previously noted that Romanian future simple shows restrictions with multiple adverbials marking RT and ET; here I illustrate that RT itself may impose combinatory restrictions (5d). In (5d), RT-‘yesterday’ can be followed by an ET whose [I’ and w’] are included in RT’s. RT-‘yesterday’ cannot include ET-‘today’, so ‘today’ creates its own label, rejected by the CP temporal/aspectual operator. In E7, the present subjunctive’s grammatical tense is subordinate to the CC’s dominant tense, since its variable ‘until 10 AM’ must refer to the previous day. ET-‘until Friday’ is semantically anomalous not because of the preposition but because the noun introduces a misleading 24-hour shift.<sup>13</sup> Event position also affects variable labelling: in (5c), ‘yesterday’ is the ground event (relative to the hidden RT of E6), while in (5d) it becomes the figure if accompanied by ET-‘until 10 AM’. RT-‘yesterday’ cannot be accompanied by ET-‘yesterday’; a temporal/aspectual difference is required.

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<sup>13</sup> The ‘24-hour shift’ refers to the fact that Friday introduces a temporal axis that cannot be included in RT-‘yesterday’. The noun denotes a full-day interval whose endpoint lies outside the temporal domain established by the RT. As a result, ET-‘until Friday’ forces the derivation to evaluate an interval that begins within the RT-domain but ends in a later temporal segment, creating a discontinuity that the CP-level temporal/aspectual operator cannot license.

(6)	<i>Noi,</i>	<i>familia,</i>	<i>dacă</i>	<i>am</i>
	we.nom	family.def.nom	if	aux.cond.1pl
	<i>fi</i>	<i>mai</i>	<i>energici, 1/</i>	<i>am</i>
	be.inf	more	energetic	aux.cond.1pl
	<i>putea</i>	<i>lua</i>	<i>măsuri, 2/</i>	<i>știi, 3/</i>
	can.inf	take.inf	measures.acc	know.ind.prs.2sg
	<i>sunt</i>	<i>destule,</i>	<i>debilitate</i>	<i>mentală</i>
	be.ind.prs.3pl	enough	retard.nom	mentally
	<i>etcetera, 4/</i>	<i>dar</i>	<i>moșul</i>	<i>e</i>
	etc	but	old.man def.nom	be.ind.prs.3sg
	<i>pezevenghi, 5/</i>	<i>îl</i>	<i>învață</i>	<i>Otilia 6/</i>
	slick	cl.acc.m.3sg	learn.ind.prs.3sg	Otilia.nom
	<i>și-l</i>	<i>ajută</i>	<i>Pascalopol. 7/</i>	
	and-cl.acc.m.3sg	help.ind.prs.3sg	Pascalopol.nom	

'We, as a family, if we were more energetic, we would be able to change things; you know there are many people with mental disabilities, etc., but the old man is slick, Otilia teaches him and Pascalopol helps him.' (EO, 111-112)

Example (6) illustrates one of the most intricate forms of indecision in conditional complex clauses, where lexical and structural factors jointly destabilize the aspectual configuration. It shows how a real conditional pair interacts with a sequence of present-tense clauses, generating multiple competing bridges whose interpretation depends on hidden event variables, event labelling, and the availability of aspectual donation.

(6) consists of seven events: E1 and E2 are real conditional events, while the remaining events appear in the present simple. Several of these are not introduced by subordinating conjunctions but occur as independent clauses separated by commas. This is particularly relevant for the relation between E3 and E4: despite the absence of an overt conjunction, E3 is syntactically dependent on E4 due to its transitivity. The comma also isolates E5 from the subsequent events, shaping the internal architecture of the CC's aspectual bridge. In this configuration, punctuation becomes a structural cue, signalling how temporal and aspectual segmentation is distributed across the clause.

E1 and E2: real conditionals and the role of E(hX). E1 and E2 form a genuine conditional pair: the failure of X leads to the failure of Y. Their linear order

corresponds to their temporal order, so a bridge between them is obligatory. I assume a hidden event variable  $E(hX)$  for both conditionals. A first hypothesis is that  $E1$ 's local aspect is checked by  $E(hX1)$ , and that this result could be donated to  $E2$ . However, this would lead to excessively late checking at S-structure, which risks a derivational crash. Although the conditional conjunction in  $E1$  carries the "yes/no" result of  $E(hX1)$ , which could in principle rescue the derivation, the X-bar representation of the CC must begin with  $E2$  (as the main clause). If  $E1$  were structurally higher, the conditional conjunction would be positioned below  $E(hX1)$ , blocking raising and allowing only lowering. Since temporal and aspectual checking occurs at the CP-type operator (as I hypothesized above), raising would no longer be motivated after lowering (cf. Harwood 2014).

Aspectual sharing is another theoretical option, but the temporal gap between the two conditionals prevents the sharing of relevant components.  $E1$  cannot donate its distant aspect to  $E2$ : even if  $E(hX1)$ 's result is interpreted as distant,  $E2$ 's Aktionsart  $E(hX2)$  only allows local aspect to be checked. This yields two ground-labelled events with different  $[I', w']$  values. Sharing or donation becomes possible only if the temporal distance between these two reference points is reduced. This reduction can be achieved in two ways:

- (i) ST-based equalization: removing a hidden past operator from  $E1$  so that  $E1$  and  $E2$  temporarily share the same temporal axis.
- (ii) Temporal inertia: allowing  $E(hX1)$ 's local aspect to influence  $E(hX2)$  once the temporal gap is minimized. However, this method depends on the truth value of  $E(hX1)$ , which introduces instability. The most precise solution is therefore individual aspect checking for  $E1$  with an inserted breakpoint, ensuring that  $E2$ 's evaluation does not depend exclusively on  $E1$ .

The temporal gap: The minimal or maximal temporal gap cannot be measured in absolute duration, since CCs differ widely in their temporal structure. The decisive factor is labelling: the correct assignment of  $[I, w]$  or  $[I', w']$  determines when the two conditionals can be evaluated together. Initially,  $E1$  and  $E2$  share the same label, which blocks truth-result-based analysis. This bridge also shows that individual aspect checking (without a breakpoint) is not superior to sharing or donation, because  $E1$  and  $E2$  are mutually dependent.  $E2$  alone would be present/future-oriented, but with  $E1$  added, an implicit past operator appears, expressing present inability as a past-based consequence.  $E3$  and the two possible bridges:  $E3$  is not introduced by a conjunction, so it can be interpreted in two ways: (i)  $E3$  as part of the first bridge ( $E1$ - $E2$ - $E3$ )

In this case,  $E3$ 's local aspect is checked together with  $E2$ 's local aspect. Since  $E3$  expresses a reproach, local aspect checking is appropriate.  $E3$ 's temporal axis cannot exceed  $E2$ 's Aktionsart; its minimal endpoint is tied to  $E(hX1)$ 's local

aspect. (ii) E3 as part of the second bridge (E3-E4-E5). Here, E3's temporal axis expands significantly. Together with E4, E3 expresses a general value and receives a ground label with [I, w]. E3's distant aspect can be donated to E4 because no final-state labelling is required; internal aspect (decoding) is sufficient. In a general-value bridge, E3 may even lack a local aspect. E4 and E5: general vs. individual: E5 belongs to the same second bridge but refers to an individual, so it carries a local aspect. The adversative conjunction does not create a temporal relation; therefore, no aspectual donation occurs between E4 and E5, and both events undergo individual checking. Why E6 cannot follow E3 directly: One might propose that E6 follows E3, but several factors rule this out:

- (i) E6 is linearly preceded by E5, whose clitic reference must be preserved.
- (ii) If E6 followed E3, it would occupy a higher X-bar position than E5, disrupting the clitic-noun relation.
- (iii) This would require affix lowering without a corresponding raising step, which is derivationally unmotivated.

If we nevertheless hypothesize an E3→E6 sequence, the second bridge would fall temporally between the first (E1-E2) and the third (E4-E5), giving it a shorter duration than the third bridge. This interpretation would only be accessible to speakers without prior access to the hypothetical E3+E6 configuration; otherwise, the derivation would crash.

The analysis in this subsection shows that temporal and aspectual delimitation in Romanian conditional complex clauses depends not on a fixed SOT system, but on operator-driven interactions between events, adverbials, and hidden variables. The behaviour of RT and ET demonstrates that aspectual donation is highly constrained, and that even minimal changes in adverbial scope or c-command may alter the entire configuration of the clause. The examples also confirm that individual tense checking is insufficient in dependent structures: only operator-based aspectual verification can prevent derivational crash and ensure a coherent interpretation.

## 5. Conclusions

Example (4) shows how narrator-induced ground values allow two past events (E1-E2) to remain aspectually distinct while avoiding conflict with the modal conditional E3. The contrast between (4a) and (4b) demonstrates how a shifted culmination point and the achievement-type reading of E2 block aspectual donation, making adverbial incompatibility the key diagnostic for identifying

the shared bridge. In (5), eliminating a mandatory bridge forces tense and aspect to be checked through RT–ET interactions, revealing that E(hX) is superior to simple transformation because it preserves uncertainty and allows label synchronisation across clauses. The example also shows that individual aspectual checking is insufficient in the presence of multiple adverbials: polarity, achievement-type readings, and RT–ET ordering jointly determine whether a past simple adverbial can be reinterpreted as past perfect or whether the derivation crashes. In (6), lexical indecision (via E(hX) and the shifted culmination point) interacts with ST and labelling to determine which of the two possible aspectual bridges becomes available. The example also illustrates how improper c-command configurations and scope-based constraints block certain derivations (e.g., E3→E6), ensuring that only the structurally coherent temporal/aspectual bridge survives.

The detailed examples above show that conditional CCs remain interpretable only when aspectual verification is carried out at the operator level; the following conclusion synthesizes the main implications of this system.

The data discussed in this section illustrate that Romanian conditional complex clauses require a multi-layered aspectual architecture, in which hidden event variables, operator interactions, and adverbial scope jointly determine the final interpretation. The conditional mood's inherent indecision is not eliminated but re-distributed across the clause, depending on whether events receive local or distant aspect, and whether their labels align with the temporal axis established by RT and ET, a structure that also lends itself to computational implementation through explicit event-variable synchronisation. The analysis further shows that aspectual bridges are not freely available: their formation is restricted by syntactic configuration, Aktionsart compatibility, and the presence or absence of a critical event capable of licensing a shared label. When these conditions fail, the derivation either becomes ungrammatical or yields an unintended or semantically anomalous reading.

Overall, the paper demonstrates that conditional CCs cannot be evaluated through tense alone. Instead, they require a label-based, operator-sensitive system, in which aspectual verification, event dependency, and structural position jointly regulate the interpretive space of the clause.

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## (DIS)CONTINUIDAD EN LOS DIMINUTIVOS DE LOS ADVERBIOS DE LUGAR EN EL ESPAÑOL DE AMÉRICA

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**ABSTRACT.** *(Dis)continuity in the Diminutives of the Adverbs of Place in American Spanish.* The diminutive is a widely used resource in American Spanish even in grammatical categories such as the adverb, while in European Spanish it is less used in the aforementioned category. This article will focus on the diminutive forms of adverbs of place which were created in the Spanish spoken in Latin America. We consulted *El corpus del diccionario histórico de la lengua española* in order to identify when these diminutives were first documented. Likewise, we consulted the CREA, CORDE, CORPES XXI and CORDIAM corpora to compile examples in order to find out whether these are forms of general and continuous use in all Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America or whether their use is limited to certain areas.

**Keywords:** *Spanish, diminutive, adverb of place, corpus*

**REZUMAT.** *Cazuri de (dis)continuitate ale adverbelor de loc în spaniola din America Latină.* Diminutivul este foarte răspândit în spaniola din America Latină, inclusiv în cazul adverbului, însă în spaniola peninsulară este mai puțin folosit în cazul acestei categorii gramaticale. În acest articol ne ocupăm de formele de diminutiv ale adverbelor de loc create în spaniola din America Latină. S-a consultat *El corpus del diccionario histórico de la lengua española* pentru a identifica data apariției acestor forme. S-au consultat și CREA, CORDE, CORPES XXI și CORDIAM, cu scopul de a analiza exemple și a cerceta dacă este

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vorba despre forme folosite în mod general și continuu în toate țările vorbitoare de spaniolă din America Latină sau folosirea lor este restrânsă la anumite zone.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *spaniolă, diminutiv, adverb de loc, corpus*

## 1. Introducción

La bibliografía relacionada con el estudio del adverbio en español es muy extensa, pero para este artículo nos limitamos a consultar distintas versiones de la gramática de la lengua española publicadas o reeditadas en los siglos XX y XXI: Alarcos Llorach (1990; 1995), Alcina y Blecua (1991), Alonso del Río (1963), Bello (1984)<sup>2</sup>, *Gramática y ortografía básicas de la lengua española* (2019), Hernández (1992), Roca Pons (1972), M. Seco, (2000), *Nueva gramática de la lengua española* (2010), R. Seco (1989), algunos estudios relevantes centrados exclusivamente en el adverbio: Álvarez Martínez (1994), Hue Fanost (1993), Lupu (1984); asimismo, se consultaron libros relacionados con la formación de palabras en español: Alvar Ezquerro (1995), González Ollé (1962), Varela Ortega (2005) y algunos estudios sobre el español de América: Alvar (2013) y Lipski (2007).

Consideramos que es oportuno pasar revista algunas de las definiciones de esta categoría gramatical que se incluyen en los estudios mencionados previamente, a fin de notar las similitudes y las diferencias en cuanto a la visión de los gramáticos.

En palabras de Alonso del Río, los adverbios:

[...] son palabras invariables que acompañan al verbo, unas veces para calificar el hecho verbal, como en *vives bien*; otras veces para determinarlo, como en *vives lejos*.

También acompañan y modifican al adjetivo, como en *bien educado*, o en *muy oscuro*, y aun a veces otro adverbio, como en *muy bien educado* o en *vives demasiado lejos*.

Puede modificar asimismo a las frases complementarias de índole adjetiva o adverbial. Ejs: *muy de nuestro gusto*; *más hacia Oriente*; *demasiado a la ligera*. (Alonso del Río 1963, 94-95)

Roca Pons propone la siguiente definición: “Bajo la denominación de adverbio se han incluido tradicionalmente, elementos heterogéneos. De acuerdo

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<sup>2</sup> La primera edición de esta gramática se publicó en 1847.

con la definición tradicional, adverbio es una parte de la oración que modifica al verbo, al adjetivo o a otro adverbio” (Roca Pons 1972, 313).

En la reedición de 1984 de la gramática de Andrés Bello publicada por primera vez a mediados del siglo XIX, encontramos el siguiente enfoque: “Como el adjetivo modifica al sustantivo y al verbo, el adverbio modifica al verbo y al adjetivo [...]. Sucede también que un adverbio modifica a otro” (Bello 1984, 49).

Rafael Seco especifica que: “Adverbio es [...] la palabra que califica o determina al verbo o a las palabras atributivas” (R. Seco 1989, 132).

En *Estudios de gramática funcional del español*, Alarcos Llorach, ofrece la siguiente explicación: “Si se mantiene el término adverbio como designación de una clase funcional de unidades, sólo podrá aplicarse a aquéllas que cumplan estas condiciones: ser signos mínimos y cumplir sin la adjudicación de índices funcionales la función que hemos llamado de aditamento” (Alarcos Llorach 1990, 308).

Alcina y Blecua exponen que: “La clase de los adverbios tiene justificada su existencia funcionalmente por estar constituida por palabras que actúan como términos terciarios con relación a verbos o adjetivos (términos secundarios) y a otros adverbios [...]” (Alcina y Blecua 1991, 700).

Después de hacer un resumen de las definiciones de los gramáticos, Hue Fanost propone la suya: “Si se considera el adverbio desde el punto de vista de su forma léxica originaria, se puede decir que estamos en presencia de una unidad mínima en función terciaria: puede calificar, determinar al verbo, al adjetivo o a otro adverbio” (Hue Fanost 1993, 14).

Según la opinión de Álvarez Martínez:

El adverbio es una “parte de la oración”, es decir, desempeña una función sintáctica en ella; no manifiesta variación de género, ni de número, por lo que no puede ir acompañado por el artículo. Sí admite, sin embargo, diferentes grados (gradación). Su función característica es la de complemento circunstancial o aditamento, aunque también puede encontrarse como complemento de un adjetivo o de otro adverbio, y como elemento nuclear o central de una frase nominal. En cuanto al significado, el adverbio sitúa en el tiempo, en el lugar, e indica el modo o la cantidad. Además, permite expresar la conformidad, la duda o la no conformidad con lo enunciado. (Álvarez Martínez 1994, 11)

Manuel Seco menciona que: “El adverbio es [...] una palabra destinada a actuar como adjunto de verbos o de adjetivos: *Trabaja bien; Es muy bueno*. También puede actuar como adjunto de otro adverbio: *Trabaja muy bien*” (M. Seco 2000, 293).

En su *Gramática de la lengua española*, Alarcos Llorach opina que: “[...], adverbio designa una clase de palabras invariables en su significante y a menudo indescomponibles en signos menores, destinadas en principio a cumplir por sí solas el papel de adyacente circunstancial del verbo” (Alarcos Llorach 1995, 160).

En la versión de la gramática del español del 2010, *Nueva gramática de la lengua española* (en adelante, NGLE), el adverbio se define como: “[...] una clase de palabras invariable que se caracteriza por dos factores: uno morfológico, la ausencia de flexión, y otro sintáctico, la capacidad de establecer una relación de modificación con grupos sintácticos correspondientes a distintas categorías” (NGLE 2010, 575).

En suma, los elementos comunes de las definiciones anteriores son que el adverbio es una categoría gramatical que carece de flexión, que modifica un verbo, un adjetivo o un adverbio y cumple la función sintáctica de complemento circunstancial de diverso tipo.

Para este estudio, nos atuvimos a la clasificación ofrecida por la NGLE. De acuerdo con la estructura morfológica, los adverbios se dividen en: simples “*bien, mal, cerca, lejos, siempre, sí, quizá(s), acaso, aquí, allí, entonces, luego*” (NGLE 2010, 576) y los que se forman por algún recurso morfológico, a saber, los adverbios acabados en *-mente*, o los emparentados con las preposiciones: *debajo* con *bajo* (NGLE 2010, 576).

Al referirse a la capacidad de los adverbios de aceptar sufijos, lo que es un rasgo identificativo del español de América más que del peninsular, en la obra citada se menciona que: “En la lengua coloquial de muchos países hispanohablantes aceptan afijos apreciativos un buen número de adverbios: *ahorita, aquicito, allacito, cerquita, despuesito, lejitos, lejotes, lueguito, poquito*” (NGLE 2010, 577). Asimismo, se agrega que el español de América “suele extender los diminutivos a adverbios [...] que no los llevan en el europeo, como *acacito, [...] ahicito, ahorita, allacito, alrededorcito, antesito, apenitas, aquicito, [...], despuesito, detrasito, nomasito, suavecitamente [...]*” (NGLE, 2010, 165).

Según su significado, los adverbios se dividen en:

- a. “adverbios de cantidad: *mucho, demasiado, cuando* etc.
- b. adverbios lugar: *allí, aquí, arriba, detrás, encima* etc.
- c. adverbios tiempo: *ayer, siempre, después, frecuentemente* etc.
- d. adverbios de manera: *bien, así, peor, cuidadosamente* etc.
- e. adverbios de afirmación: *sí, claro, obviamente*
- f. adverbios de negación: *no, nada, apenas, nunca, jamás, tampoco*
- g. adverbios de duda: *quizá, a lo mejor, acaso, tal vez* etc.” (NGLE 2010, 577)

Teniendo en cuenta su naturaleza gramatical, los adverbios se clasifican en léxicos (*adrede, bien, deprisa, regular, temprano* etc. y los adverbios en *-mente*) (NGLE 2010, 577) y gramaticales: “demostrativos, identificativos/referenciales, cuantificativos, relativos, interrogativos, exclamativos y focales” (NGLE 2010, 577).

Los demostrativos (*aquí, allá*) y los identificativos/referenciales (*delante/detrás, encima/debajo*) comparten con los pronombres la deixis.

De acuerdo con la incidencia sintáctica, los adverbios son argumentales, atributivos y adjuntos (NGLE 2010, 578).

Los adverbios de lugar son: demostrativos (*aquí, ahí, allí, acá, allá, acullá*) (NGLE 2010, 581) y de relación locativa, que se dividen en pares de sinónimos (NGLE 2010, 581). Estos se agrupan, a su turno, en: adverbios de ubicación (*delante/detrás, encima/debajo, dentro/fuera*) y direccionales o de orientación (*adelante/atrás, arriba/abajo, adentro/afuera*).

En la *NGLE* se menciona que el valor de los sustantivos y adjetivos que se usan en diminutivo es de indicar tamaño reducido o atenuación (NGLE 2010, 168-169), pero en el caso de los adjetivos, adverbios o locuciones adverbiales, “los diminutivos implican intensificación: *calentito* “*muy caliente*”, *grandecito* “*relativamente grande*”, *cerquita* “*muy cerca*”, *de mañana* “*muy temprano*”. (NGLE 2010, 169). En cuanto a las formas “*ahicito, allacito, igualito, mismito* la intensificación se traduce en matices cercanos a los que expresan los adverbios *justamente o exactamente*” (NGLE 2010, 169).

## 2. Metodología

Con vistas a indagar los casos de (dis)continuidad en las formas de diminutivo de los adverbios de lugar, se buscaron informaciones para cada entrada léxica, refinando la búsqueda según la categoría gramatical *adverbio*, en los siguientes bancos de datos: CDH (Corpus del Diccionario histórico de la lengua española), que abarca textos escritos a partir del siglo XII hasta 2000 (s. XII-1975; 1975-2000); CORDE (Corpus diacrónico del español), que contiene textos hasta 1974, por consiguiente, se solapa en gran medida con CDH; CREA (Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual), con textos de diversa procedencia, tanto escritos como orales (1975-2004); su versión CREA anotado, que es una variante provisional de los años 2000 y que no incluye producciones orales; CORPES XXI (Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI), que incorpora textos escritos y orales (2001-2012; 2015-2023) y CORDIAM (Corpus diacrónico y diatópico del español de América), en el cual existen textos publicados exclusivamente en los países latinoamericanos desde 1494 hasta 1905. No se ha consultado todavía el CREA oral.

El objetivo de este artículo es investigar cuál es la fecha de aparición de las formas de diminutivo de los adverbios de lugar con el propósito de averiguar si los primeros testimonios se hallan en textos de España o no, si tuvieron continuidad en las variedades de los países latinoamericanos o si son creaciones de las respectivas variedades; asimismo, nos interesa cuáles son las zonas en las que se emplean con preponderancia o el uso es más extendido y general, qué zonas tienen esta clase de diminutivo adverbial y cuáles no y las desinencias que identifican a determinados países y/o zonas geográficas.

Los 33 adverbios recopilados son: *abajito, acacito, acasito, adelantito, afuerita, ahicito, ahisito, allacito, allasito, allicito, allisito, alrededorcito, aquicingo, aquicito, aquisito, arribita, atrasito, cerquina, cerquita, cerquitica, cerquitilla, cerquitita, debajito, delantito, detrasito, dondecito, encimita, enfrentito, juntito, lejecitos, lejillos, lejitos y lejuelos*. Según se puede notar, el sufijo más productivo es *-(c)/(s)ito(s)/-ita*, al que se añaden *-cingo/-cinga, -illa, -ina, -illos, -itita, -uelos*.

Si bien en español el sufijo diminutivo más extendido es *-ito/-ita*, en América existen algunas formas como “[...] *-ejo/-eja* en zonas de la Argentina y del español andino; *-ingo/-inga* en la parte oriental de Bolivia; *-ico/-ica*, sobre todo en el Caribe, con la variante *-itico/-itica*” (NGLE 2010, 166). En México, “el sufijo diminutivo *-ito* es el más habitual. En algunas regiones del sudeste, especialmente en Chiapas, es más frecuente *-illo* (pronunciado [íol])” (Lipski 2007, 304).

Dado que existe una gran cantidad de ocurrencias y dada la extensión de este trabajo, los ejemplos de este estudio se extrajeron del CDH, pero se menciona el número de ocurrencias de cada corpus a fin de ofrecer una visión completa sobre el uso de estos adverbios.

### 3. Casos de discontinuidad

*Cerquina* y *lejillos* se mencionan en un estudio contrastivo español-rumano de Lupu (1980), *Los diminutivos adverbiales en español y rumano*. De los corpus analizados por el autor se concluye que son formas usadas solamente en España.

En CDH, *cerquina* se documentó en España, en un texto en asturiano, *Canciones populares de Asturias* de Manuel del Fresco y Pérez del Villar:

- (1) Yo toda llorosa, / fui a casa mio suegra, / que *cerquina* está; [...] (del Fresno y Pérez del Villar 1936, 11)

En CDH y CORDE hay 2 ocurrencias. No aparece en los demás corpus.

*Lejillos* se menciona por primera vez en el sainete *Los alcaldes de Novés* de Ramón de la Cruz:

(2) Eusebio: *Lejillos* está la iglesia, madama. (de la Cruz 1768, 14)

En los demás corpus no se encontró.

#### 4. Casos de continuidad

El adverbio *abajito* cuenta con 28 ocurrencias en 22 documentos, que se distribuyen por país del modo siguiente: en México (9), Argentina (5), Colombia (4), España (3), Guatemala (3), Perú (3) y El Salvador (1).

La primera forma se registró en España en una obra del siglo XVIII, *Virtud al uso y mística a la moda* de Fulgencio Afán de Ribera:

(3) Por la calle *abajito* / Va el niño Jesús Con la bola en la mano, / Y arriba la cruz. [...] (Afán De Ribera 1729, 14)

En Latinoamérica se encontró en un poema de Argentina del siglo XIX, *Paulino Lucero* de Hilario Ascasubi:

(4) [...] Entretanto, nos clama por cuanto santo / tiene el cielo; / pero hay no más por consuelo / a su queja; / *abajito* de la oreja, / con un puñal bien templao y afilao, / que se llama el quita penas, le atravesamos las venas del pescuezo. [...] (Ascasubi 1853, 132)

En CORDE se recopilaron 18 casos de 12 textos de: Argentina (5), México (4), Colombia (3), España (3), Guatemala (2) y El Salvador (1); en CREA, 19 ocurrencias de 18 documentos de: Venezuela (8), México (6), Perú (3), Colombia (1) y Guatemala (1); en CREA anotado, 13 casos de 11 obras de: México (7), Perú (3), Colombia (2) y Guatemala (1); en CORPES XXI, se incluyeron 50 casos de 38 documentos de: México (16), Perú (10), Colombia (7), Chile (2), España (2), Guatemala (2), Honduras, (2), Nicaragua (2), Venezuela (2), Bolivia (1), El Salvador (1) y 2 formas no identificadas a nivel oral; se añade una ocurrencia en un texto de Estados Unidos; en CORDIAM hay una sola forma en Argentina.

Para la voz *arribita* existen 35 casos en 24 documentos de: España (15), Colombia (6), México (6), Argentina (2), Guatemala (2), El Salvador (1), Honduras (1), Perú (1) y Venezuela (1).

Se atestiguó en España en una obra en verso del siglo XVI, *Égloga nuevamente compuesta* de Juan de París:

- (5) Cre. Anda, señora; pardios, que te miente, que no esta tan lexos de vos el hermita; / mas ves aquel cerro de allí *arribita*? / oteas la casa que esta alli de frente? / aquella es la hermita. (de París 1536, 673)

Del otro lado del Atlántico se localizó en una novela de Colombia del siglo XIX, *Frutos de mi tierra* de Tomás Carrasquilla:

- (6) [...] El rostro, pintoresco en sumo grado: de la papada al remate de la frente, y de oreja a oreja, capa heroica de polvos; en cada moflete encendido parche de vinagre rojo; *arribita* del labio superior y a la izquierda, un lunar de relieve con pelos; cejas abundantes y muy bien engrasadas; ojos ígneos, negros y rasgados, llenos de juventud, que lo mismo se humedecían que chispeaban a la menor causa; nariz chata y bronca; labios gruesos, hendido el superior, [...] (Carrasquilla 1896, 10)

En CORDE se recopilaron 25 casos de 17 documentos de: España (13), Colombia (5), Guatemala (2), Argentina (1), El Salvador, (1), México (1), Perú (1) y Venezuela (1); en CREA hay 13 formas en 10 obras de: México (5), Venezuela (5), Argentina (1), Honduras (1) y Paraguay (1); en la versión anotada de CREA aparecen 7 ocurrencias en 5 documentos de: México (5), Argentina (1) y Honduras (1); en CORPES XXI se encuentran 31 formas en 30 textos de: Colombia (9), México (8), España (3), Chile (2), Costa Rica (2), Perú (2), Bolivia (1), Guatemala (1), Honduras (1), Nicaragua (1) y República Dominicana (1); en CORDIAM se recopila una forma de un texto de México.

El diminutivo *cerquita* cuenta con 276 casos en 165 documentos de: España (98), Argentina (49), México (26), Colombia (25), Venezuela (21), Perú (16), Uruguay (10), Chile (8), Cuba (6), Puerto Rico (4), Guatemala (3), Paraguay (3), Panamá (2), Bolivia (1), El Salvador (1), Honduras (1) y República Dominicana (1); se agrega también una forma de Filipinas y otra del español de Estados Unidos.

Se identificó en España en una obra histórica del siglo XVI, *Cartas de relación* de Hernán Cortés:

- (7) [...] Y estando algo perplejo en esto, a la lengua que yo tengo, que es una india de esta tierra, que hube en Potonchán, que es el río grande que ya en la primera relación a vuestra majestad hice memoria, le dijo otra natural de esta ciudad cómo muy *cerquita* de allí estaba mucha gente de Mutezuma junta y que los de la ciudad tenían fuera sus mujeres e hijos y toda su ropa y que había de dar sobre nosotros para matarnos a todos y si ella se quería salvar que se fuese con ella, que ella la guarecería; [...] (Cortés 1519-1529, 104)

En Perú es donde se documentó también en un volumen de tema histórico, del mismo siglo, cuyo autor es Francisco López de Gómara, *La primera parte de la Historia natural de las Indias*:

- (8) [...] Vaca de Castro, que supo su determinación y camino, dexó a Guamanga, por ser áspera para los cavallos, que tenía muchos más que don Diego, y púsose en un llano alto, que llamavan Chupas, a quinze de setiembre, año de mil y quinientos y quarenta y dos. Estavan los exércitos *cerquita* y los coraçones lexos, ca los de don Diego desseavan la batalla y los otros la temian, y assí dezian que Fernando Piçarro estava preso porque dio la batalla de las Salinas y que venia él a castigar los demás. [...] (López de Gómara 1554, 268)

Se hallaron 176 casos en 88 documentos en CORDE, que se desglosan así: en España (69), Argentina (38), Colombia (17), Venezuela (11), Perú (10), México (9), Chile (6), Uruguay (6), Paraguay (3) y 7 en otros países; en CREA, 177 ocurrencias en 141 textos de: España (56), Venezuela (40), México (19), Argentina (13), Uruguay (11), Colombia (7), Cuba (5), Paraguay (5), Perú (4) y 14 en otros países; la versión anotada contiene 92 casos descubiertos en 72 obras de: España (28), México (16), Argentina (11), Venezuela (9), Colombia (7), Puerto Rico (4), Perú (3), Uruguay (3), Chile (2), Cuba (2), Honduras (2), Bolivia (1), Guatemala (1), Nicaragua (1) y República Dominicana (1); a estas formas se suma una en un texto de Estados Unidos; CORPES XXI contiene 545 casos en 440 documentos de: España (155), México (91), Argentina (70), Colombia, (57), Venezuela (31), Chile (29), Perú (21), Paraguay (17), Uruguay (15), Honduras (10), Cuba (8), Ecuador (6), Guatemala (5), Puerto Rico (5), República Dominicana (5), Costa Rica (4), Bolivia (4), El Salvador (3), Nicaragua (3) y Panamá (3); se añaden también 2 formas de textos de Estados Unidos y una de Guinea Ecuatorial; en CORDIAM existen 10 casos en 8 textos de: Argentina (3), Uruguay (2), República Dominicana (2), Colombia (1) y Perú (1).

En el caso de la forma *delantito* se registran 3 ocurrencias en: España (2) y México (1).

Se documentó en España en una importante obra del siglo XIX, *Fortunata y Jacinta* de Benito Pérez Galdós:

- (9) — Pues... tan dulce que... Después vino andando, andando hacia acá y se puso allí, *delantito*. Pasó por entre vosotras, y vosotras no la veáis. Yo sola la veía... [...] (Galdós 1885-1887, 540)

Este diminutivo de lugar se descubrió en México, en una novela del siglo XX, *Los de abajo* de Mariano Azuela:

- (10) — No estaban aquí más que doce; pero anoche traiban mucho miedo y por telégrafo llamaron a los de *delantito*. ¡Quién sabe los que serán!... [...] (Azuela 1916, 24)

Existen en CORDE 4 ocurrencias en sendos documentos de: España (2), México (1) y Perú (1); en CREA y CREA anotado, no hay ninguna forma; en CORPES XXI se hallan 4 casos en 3 textos de: México (2) y Perú (2).

La palabra *enfrentito* aparece en 13 casos en 11 documentos de: México (8) y España (5).

El primer testimonio es de España; se localiza en un sainete del siglo XX, *Los ambiciosos* de Carlos Arniches:

- (11) [...] Pero como es así, me ha dicho: «A ver si me compras un sombrero, chacha», y estábamos ahí *enfrentito* cuando ha dao usté la luz, y yo le he dicho: «Pos mira qué a punto... Pa luego es tarde», y nos hemos entrao, y ahora..., él dirá. (Arniches 1917)

En México se halló en una novela del mismo siglo, *Al filo del agua* de Agustín Yáñez:

- (12) [...] Y luego los tranvías, tanto edificio nuevo: en la calle de San Francisco hicieron uno de cinco pisos, que le dicen el Mósler, estilo americano; automóviles, hay muchos: ¡un ruidazo! ¿Usted se acuerda dónde está la estación de tranvías? Pues mero *enfrentito*, sobre la calzada, están acabando el monumento de la Independencia, que dicen que va a ser el más bonito que tenga Guadalajara. [...] (Yáñez 1947, 236)

En CORDE hay 4 formas en sendos textos de: España (3) y México (1); en CREA 9 casos en 8 documentos de: México (6) y España (3); en la versión anotada de CREA se documentan 6 ocurrencias en 5 textos de: México (5) y España (1); en CORPES XXI se encuentran 7 casos en sendas obras de: México (6) y España (1).

Para el término *juntito* hay 22 formas en 21 trabajos de: España (8), México (4), Uruguay, (4), Argentina (3), Perú (2) y Cuba (1).

Se registró en España, en una obra de del siglo XVI, *Diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana* de Juan de Pineda:

- (13) forma de escuadrones, los vírgines por sí, y los continentes por sí, y los doctores por sí, y los confesores por sí, y los mártires por sí, y los Apóstoles por sí, y la Virgen, Madre del gran Rey, por sí, y el Baptista y padrino de Dios muy *juntito* al Señor infinito, aunque más la Virgen, su Madre? (de Pineda 1589)

Cuba es el país donde se documentó en una novela del siglo XIX, *Cecilia Valdés o La loma del ángel* de Cirilo Villaverde:

- (14) — Es lo mismo. Pues en el palmito de esta nieta está el enemigo del reposo de la casera. No hay mozo que no se perezca por los buenos palmitos. El demongo me lleve si esta madrugada mesma no vide por aquí un lindo D. Diego. Ahora no me atrevo a decir si estaba *juntito* a la puerta o a la ventana... Pero de que lo vide lo vide. (Villaverde 1839-1882, XI)

Se localizaron 11 formas en CORDE en sendos documentos de: España (5), Argentina (2), Perú (2) y Uruguay (2); en CREA, 9 casos en sendos textos de: México (7), Chile (1) y España (1); CREA anotado abarca 6 ocurrencias en sendas obras de: México (5) y España (1); en CORPES XXI hay 13 formas en 12 documentos de: México (7), Perú (3), Chile (1), El Salvador (1) y Honduras (1); en CORDIAM se encuentran 2 casos en sendos documentos en Argentina.

## 5. Formas creadas en las variedades del español americano

El adverbio *acacito* se descubrió en 2 documentos, que cuentan con 3 casos que se distribuyen del siguiente modo: en Ecuador (2) y Chile (1).

Se documentó en una novela de Ecuador, del siglo XX, *Huasipungo* de Jorge Icaza:

- (15) — Más *acacito*. (Icaza 1934-1961, 153)

En CORDE existe 1 ejemplo en un texto de Ecuador; en CREA, también, pero en uno de Chile; en la versión anotada del CREA hay también una forma encontrada en una obra de Chile; CORPES XXI contiene 2 formas en sendos documentos de: Colombia (1) y México (1).

El diminutivo *acasito*, que es la variante seseante de *acacito*, se localizó en 2 documentos, en 3 ocurrencias en: Argentina (2) y Venezuela (1).

Se identificó en Argentina, en una novela del siglo XX, *Don Segundo Sombra* de Ricardo Güiraldes:

- (16) — *Acasito* no más. (Güiraldes 1926, 263)

En CORDE aparece en 2 casos en sendos documentos: en Argentina (1) y Venezuela (1); en CREA y CREA anotado no se recopiló ninguna forma; CORPES XXI integra 4 casos en sendas obras de: Bolivia (3) y Perú (1).

Las siete formas del vocablo *adelantito*, identificadas en sendos documentos, se dividen por países del siguiente modo: en México (2), Guatemala (1) y Perú (1).

Se registró en Guatemala, en una importante obra del siglo XX, *Hombres de maíz* de Miguel Ángel Asturias:

- (17) — Por aquí es por lo de Suasnávar —informó Revolorio—, quiere decir que ya estamos llegando a Santa Cruz. *Adelantito* vamos a vistearla dende en la cumbre. Y estos Suasnávar son gente del tiempo del Rey, y por mero aquí, puta que los parió, dejaron un tesoro sepulto. Puro oro en barras y joyas preciosas. [...] (Asturias 1949, 133)

En CORDE se identificó una sola forma en un texto en México; en CREA, dos ocurrencias en sendos documentos: uno de México y otro de Perú, y en la versión anotada 3 casos en 3 documentos en México; CORPES XXI incorpora 15 ocurrencias en 14 obras: en México (9), Nicaragua (2), Bolivia (1), Chile (1), Colombia (1) y Perú (1).

Para la estructura diminutiva *afuerita* hay 21 casos en 19 documentos, que se reparten de la siguiente manera: en México (10), Colombia (5), Perú (3), Argentina (1), Bolivia (1) y Costa Rica (1).

Se documentó en Colombia, en una novela del siglo XIX, *María* de Jorge Isaacs:

- (18) — Aquí canta la verrugosa, compae —dijo Laureán a Cortico luego que hubimos navegado un corto trecho—: saque *afuerita*, no vaya a tá armaa. (Isaacs 1867, 213)

En CORDE existen 12 ocurrencias en 10 documentos repartidos así: en México (5), Colombia (4), Perú (2) y Argentina (1); en CREA, 7 casos en sendos documentos de: México (4), Bolivia (1), Colombia (1) y Costa Rica (1); en CREA anotado, 8 formas en sendas obras de: México (4), Bolivia (1), Colombia (1), Costa Rica (1) y Perú (1); CORPES XXI comprende 22 formas en 18 documentos de: México (9), Colombia (5), Nicaragua (3), Bolivia (1), Guatemala (1) y Perú (1); CORDIAM abarca dos formas en sendos documentos: uno de Uruguay y otro de Colombia.

En el caso del sintagma *ahicito* se identificaron 3 ocurrencias en sendos textos de: Argentina (2) y Perú (1).

Se documentó en Perú, en una obra del siglo XX, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* de José María Arguedas:

- (19) — El «Che», *ahicito* está con el Señor Cristo —dijo Bazalar—. ¡Curioso, señores! Hey visto a jovencitos y jovencitas guardar en so bolsillo u cartera postales del «Che». Así será... (Arguedas 1969, 223)

Existe una forma en CORDE, en un escrito de Perú; en CREA, 2 casos en sendos documentos en Argentina; el mismo número de ocurrencias en el mismo número de textos se incluye en la versión anotada; en CORPES XXI hay 4 casos en sendas obras de: Argentina (2) y Bolivia (2).

La versión seseante de *ahicito*, *ahisito* se menciona solamente en CORPES XXI, donde hay 2 casos documentados en Perú en un texto del siglo XXI, *Moby Dick en Cabo Blanco* de Irma del Águila:

- (20) Para qué le voy a mentir, nos forramos los bolsillos. Bastaba seguir el vuelo del alcastraz y *ahisito* nomás, dar con los bancos de anchovetas que se derramaban por kilómetros de mar, engordando y reproduciéndose. (del Águila, 2009)

El vocablo *allacito* cuenta con 13 casos recuperados de 10 documentos, que se distribuyen del siguiente modo: Chile (4), México (3), Colombia (2), Ecuador (2), Argentina (1) y Guatemala (1).

Se registró en Ecuador, en una novela del siglo XX, *Huasipungo* de Jorge Icaza:

- (21) —Más *allacito*. (Icaza 1936, 153)

Aparecen 7 ocurrencias en 6 textos en CORDE: en Chile (3), Argentina (1), Colombia (1), Ecuador (1) y Guatemala (1); en CREA, 5 casos en 4 documentos de: México (3), Chile (1) y Colombia (1); en CREA anotado, se halla la misma información; CORPES XXI abarca 16 casos en 13 documentos de: Perú (6), Colombia (4), México (3), Bolivia (1), Costa Rica (1) y El Salvador (1).

*Allasito*, la versión seseante de *allacito*, cuenta con dos casos: Argentina (1) y España (1). Se identificó en Argentina en una obra del siglo XIX, *Aniceto el Gallo* de Hilario Ascasubi:

- (22) Se suena de que, como el Diretor anda hoy por Palermo, olfatiando para los barcos de guerra uropeos, la Comendencia General de Marina está atariada haciéndole poner, con los mismos barcos que fueron de Vuecelencia, tapones por todos laos, desde Patagónica hasta San Nicolás y más *allasito*, y que los barcos van cargaos de choclos para los empleos de las duanas del Diretor, y llevándoles memorias del bocleo. (Ascasubi 1872, 94)

En España se menciona en una novela del siglo XX, *Diario de un emigrante* de Miguel Delibes:

- (23) «Esto cual» y luego decía: «Lindo ¿no?» y la Anita y yo que muy lindo, aunque no veíamos ni papa. Cuando se detuvo, en una calle ancha de casas de un solo piso, nos dijo que era la Recoleta y que era un sitio tranquilo y que más *allasito* estaba el negocio y, a dos cuabras, el cementerio. [...] (Delibes 1958)

La misma información se recopila en CORDE y no existe mención alguna en los demás corpus.

Para el diminutivo adverbial *allicito*, las 5 formas encontradas en 4 textos se desglosan del siguiente modo: Argentina (2), Perú (2) y Bolivia (1).

La primera referencia es de Argentina, en una obra del siglo XIX, *Una excursión a los indios Ranqueles* de Lucio Victorio Mansilla:

- (24) — Señor, cuando íbamos llegando a un charco que está *allicito* no más, cerca del médano de la Verde, me salió un indio malazo, con cuatro más, diciéndome: (Mansilla 1870, 199)

Se identifican 4 formas en 3 documentos en CORDE: en Argentina (2) y Perú (2); en CREA y en CREA anotado hay una ocurrencia en Bolivia; en CORPES XXI no se incluyó ninguna forma.

La variante seseante de *allicito*, *allisito*, cuenta con una sola forma en un texto de Argentina, que aparece también en CORDE, en la obra de Hilario Ascasubi, *Aniceto el Gallo*:

- (25) — Vengo de *allisito*, mi general. (Ascasubi 1872, 133)

En los demás corpus no se recopila.

El resultado del contacto entre el tupí-guaraní y el español es una forma tan sorprendente como *aquicingo*, que aparece solamente en CORPES XXI, en un texto de Bolivia, del siglo XXI, *Los últimos días del Che* de Juan Ignacio Siles del Valle:

- (26) [...] ¿Quién los envía?, ¿qué es lo que andan buscando? Somos de por *aquicingo* nomá'. Mentira, nadie los conoce que comercien. Los han mandado a averiguar, ¿no es cierto? Yo hubiera jurado que era el jefe. Ni qué hacer, alguien nos había acusado. Sancocharlo pue' quería yo. Lo cortaba en pedacings. [...] (Siles del Valle 2007)

La desinencia *-ingo* se usa para formar el diminutivo en el norte y este de Bolivia: “[...] los diminutivos se forman con las partículas *-ingo*, *-inga*, sufijo extraño a la morfología castellana, porque proviene, presumiblemente de las lenguas tupí-guaraníes” (Alvar 2013, 179).

Existen 5 casos de la forma *aquicito* en un texto de Perú, del siglo XX, *Crónicas político-doméstico-aurinas* de Juan Apapucio Corrales:

- (27) — *Aquicito*, no mas, taitai, jonto a Atuncolla a la vuelta de Pono.  
(Apapucio Corrales c1908-1930)

En CORDE se hallan 4 ocurrencias encontradas en el mismo texto, en Perú, mientras que en CREA y en su versión anotada no hay ninguna forma; CORPES XXI integra 9 casos en 8 documentos de: Perú (6), Argentina (1), Chile (1) y Ecuador (1).

*Aquisito*, la variante seseante de *aquicito*, se documenta en dos textos, uno de Perú y otro de Argentina. Se menciona por primera vez en Perú en una novela del siglo XX, *Crónicas político-doméstico-aurinas* de Juan Apapucio Corrales:

- (28) — Oh, muchas gracias, mister, de todos modos, para no molestar durante el paseo sería bueno que fuera a comprar *aquisito* no más... (Apapucio Corrales, c1908-1930)

Se registran una forma en Perú en CORDE y 3 en CORPES XXI: Perú (2) y Uruguay (1). No se menciona en CREA, ni en CORDIAM.

La estructura *atrasito* cuenta con 10 formas localizadas en 8 documentos, que se detallan del modo siguiente: Argentina (5), Chile (1), Guatemala (1), México (1), Perú (1) y Venezuela (1).

Se identificó en Argentina, en un poema del siglo XIX, *Paulino Lucero* de Hilario Ascasubi:

- (29) Me dice más *atrasito* de que han leído mi papel / muy a gusto en el cuartel, / porque se explica clarito. [...] (Ascasubi 1872, 143)

En CORDE existen 7 casos en 5 textos desglosados de la siguiente manera: en Argentina (5), Chile (1) y Venezuela (1); en CREA, 10 ocurrencias en 8 documentos de: México (7), Chile (1), Guatemala (1) y Perú (1); en la versión anotada, 9 casos en 7 obras de: México (7), Chile (1) y Guatemala (1); CORPES XXI engloba 18 formas en 16 documentos de: México (7), Perú (6), Chile (1), Guatemala (1), Honduras (1), Nicaragua (1) y Venezuela (1); en CORDIAM se halla una forma en Argentina.

*Cerquitica* cuenta con 3 casos: en Cuba (1), España (1) y Colombia (1). Se documenta en Cuba en una novela del siglo XIX, *Cecilia Valdés o La loma del ángel* de Cirilo Villaverde:

- (30) — En los cañaverales de La Begoña, *cerquitica* de las sierras. (Villaverde 1839-1882, V)

En España se menciona por primera vez en una obra del siglo XX, *El Supremísimo* de Luis Ricardo Alonso:

- (31) — ¡Ah!, caramba, si se referirá usted al gringo de las yerbitas... Así lo llamamos por aquí; siempre recogiendo bejucos y cazando arañas peludas. La última vez que lo vi fue aquí *cerquitica*, quince o veinte metros de donde estamos platicando. Junto al río. [...] (Alonso 1981)

En CREA hay 5 ocurrencias en sendos textos: Venezuela (2), Colombia (1), Cuba (1) y España (1); en CREA anotado: 1 forma en España y otra en Colombia; en CORPES XXI, en 5 documentos: Colombia (4) y Venezuela (1). En CORDE y CORDIAM no se registra.

Hay 5 casos del diminutivo *cerquitita* que se descubrieron en 4 documentos y se reparten de este modo: en México (2), Guatemala (1), Honduras (1) y Puerto Rico (1).

Se registró en Honduras en un texto del siglo XX, *Cuentos completos* de Ramón Amaya Amador:

- (32) [...] ¡Y nayde le jalaba! Güevos teníamos los "cheles" y güevos se cargaban los "azules". Llegamos astar *cerquitita*. ¡Ay compañeros, allí jue lo arrecho! El jefecito quiva diaquí pa ya en un caballo retinto, dio l'orden de tocar "adegiello". ¡Me se paran los pelos de punta al solo acordarme diaquel toque de corneta! Si parecía que lloraba. [...] (Amaya Amador c1940-1966)

En CORDE se recopila una forma en Guatemala; en CREA y la versión anotada, la información es idéntica, por consiguiente, se insertan 3 casos de 2 documentos de: México (2) y Puerto Rico (1); en CORPES XXI, hay 2 formas en un texto de México.

Para el término *debajito* se descubrieron 10 formas en 9 textos de: España (4), Chile (2), México (2), Perú (1) y Venezuela (1).

Se localizó en una obra de Perú, del siglo XIX, *Tradiciones peruanas, cuarta serie* de Ricardo Palma:

- (33) [...] De más está decir que las limeñas sostuvieron con bizarría el honor del pabellón, y que siempre fueron derrotados los virreyes; que para esto de legislar sobre cosas femeninas se requiere más ñeque que para asaltar una barricada. Es verdad también que nosotros, los del sexo feo, por *debajito* y a lo somorgujo dábamos ayuda y brazo fuerte a las limeñas, alentándolas para que hicieran papillotas y cucuruchos de papel en que se imprimían los calamitosos bandos. (Palma 1877, 231)

En España aparece pocos años más tarde, en una novela del mismo siglo, *La Tribuna* de Emilia Pardo Bazán:

- (34) — El que está debajo, mujer, *debajito* se queda. (Pardo Bazán 1883, 407)

Se encuentran en CORDE 7 casos en 6 textos de: España (4), Chile (2) y Perú (1); en CREA, 5 ocurrencias en sendas obras de: Venezuela (3) y México (2); en CREA anotado, 4 casos también en sendos textos de: México (2), España (1) y Venezuela (1); en CORPES XXI aparecen 5 formas en tres documentos de Colombia.

La voz *detrasito* cuenta con 9 ocurrencias en 7 textos de: México (7), Chile (1) y Perú (1).

Se documentó en una obra de un escritor peruano del siglo XX, *Matalaché* de Enrique López Albújar:

- (35) — Dejuero, niña. Contimás que hay tardes que la modorra vence. Cuando no, me siento *detrasito* de la celosía a tejer y ver pasar a los caminantes. Es un entretenimiento. (López Albújar 1928, 32)

En CORDE hay 6 formas descubiertas en 5 documentos de: México (4), Chile (1) y Perú (1); en CREA y en la versión anotada, una forma en México; en CORPES XXI se localizan 10 ocurrencias en 7 textos de: México (7), Chile (1), Colombia (1) y Venezuela (1).

En el caso de la estructura *dondecito* existe solamente una forma localizada en Perú, donde apareció en un texto del siglo XX, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* de José María Arguedas:

- (36) — De noche puja en el suelo, el Estebán —dijo doña Jesusa con voz más resonante—. En el suelo revuelca. Tiene fuerza entonces. ¡Que con el Hermano confiese! ¿De *dondecito* le viene ese pulso pa'pujar, retuercer papeles, muerder mi pecho? Dispués, frío queda. Con el Hermano que hable. Va salvar... (Arguedas 1969, 192)

En CORDE se halla una forma, en una obra literaria de Perú, pero en CREA y en CREA anotado no se recopila ninguna; en CORPES XXI se documenta un caso en Bolivia.

El adverbio *encimita* aparece en 20 documentos, a saber, se trata de 22 ocurrencias en: México (6), España (5), Colombia (2), Cuba (2), Venezuela (2), Argentina (1), Guatemala (1), Honduras (1), Perú (1) y Puerto Rico (1).

Se identificó en Argentina en un poema del siglo XIX, *Aniceto el Gallo* de Hilario Ascasubi:

- (37) Bueno pues: para fundirlo del todo al Directudo, / si los provincianos no nos quieren ayudar, / por *encimita* aunque sea, no tienen que forcejear mucho, / sino dejarse andar trajinando allá en sus pagos, / mientras nosotros, los porteños solitos, / ya que don Usebio Urquiza nos viene sacando cuchillo, / veremos si le trajinamos la presidencia, las vacas y la rocinada que ha arrejuntao, / descamisando y degollando por diez y seis años. (Ascasubi 1872, 185)

En España se menciona en una novela del siglo XIX, *Gerona* de Benito Pérez Galdós:

- (38) [...] ¿Qué crees que era? Pues nada más sino que un gigante empezó a dar patadas en la casa, *encimita* de aquí, y desde esta misma bodega sentí caer las paredes. Allí habías de ver cómo corrían estos bichos, llenos de miedo por los golpes que dio el gigante mandado por la Virgen y San Narciso para salvarme. Me parece que le estoy oyendo. (Pérez Galdós 1874, 149)

En CORDE se hallan 14 casos localizados en 13 textos de: España (5), Colombia (2), Cuba (2), Venezuela (2), Argentina (1), Guatemala (1) y Honduras (1); en CREA, 15 formas que aparecen en 14 obras de: México (6), Venezuela (5), España (1), Honduras (1), Perú (1) y Puerto Rico (1); CREA anotado abarca 7 casos en 6 documentos de: México (5), Perú (1) y Puerto Rico (1); en CORPES XXI aparecen 36 formas en sendos textos de: México (13), Colombia (6), Venezuela (5), España (3), Ecuador (2), Honduras (2), Argentina (1), Chile (1), Nicaragua (1), Panamá (1) y Puerto Rico (1).

*Lejecitos* es una forma atestiguada bastante recientemente, ya que se atestiguó en México en una novela del siglo XX, *Por la calle de los anhelos* de Jenny E. Hayden. Hay 6 casos en 4 documentos de: México (5) y Argentina (1):

- (39) Otros muchos parados a medio patio, los miran de *lejecitos*, quesque escondiéndose. Sobre todo los que deben, no quieren que Tirso los descubra, no vaya a ser el diablo... y se le ocurra. (Hayen 1993)

En CORDE no aparece ninguna forma, pero sí en CREA y la versión anotada, 6 casos en 4 documentos de: México (5) y Argentina (1); en CORPES XXI se localizaron 11 formas en 8 documentos de México.

Para el sintagma *lejitos* se registraron 26 casos de 20 documentos de: España (7), Perú (5), Chile (4), Colombia (4), Venezuela (2), Bolivia (1), Guatemala (1), República Dominicana (1) y Uruguay (1).

Se documentó en Chile en una obra del siglo XIX, *Recuerdos del pasado* de Vicente Pérez Rosales:

- (40) — Llévenlo, pues, por allá *lejitos*, donde el amigo don Vicente ni yo oigamos nada, y después al río, que ni cristiano es siquiera. (Pérez Rosales 1814-1860, 181)

En España aparece en una novela del mismo siglo, *Insolación* de Emilia Pardo Bazán:

- (41) — ¿Cómo está mi niña? Tres veces he venido y siempre te negaron... Lo que es una de ellas juro que estabas en casa... Si no quieres verme, dímelo a mí, que no vendré... Te miraré de *lejitos* en el paseo o en el teatro... Pero no me despidas con una criada, que se ríe de mí al darme con la puerta en las narices. (Pardo Bazán 1889, 59)

Se insertaron en CORDE 15 casos de 11 documentos de: Colombia (4), España (4), Chile (3), Perú (3) y Uruguay (1); en CREA se incluyeron 16 formas de 12 obras de: Venezuela (8), España (2), Perú (2), Bolivia (1), Chile (1), Guatemala (1) y República Dominicana (1); en CREA anotado, 9 ocurrencias de 7 textos de: España (2), Perú (2), Venezuela (2), Chile (1), Guatemala (1) y República Dominicana (1); en CORPES XXI se identifican 38 formas en 32 obras de: México (10), Colombia (10), Guatemala (3), Perú (3), Chile (2), República Dominicana (2), Venezuela (2), Bolivia (1), El Salvador (1), España (1), Puerto Rico (1), Uruguay (1), a las que se agrega una forma de Estados Unidos.

## 6. Casos especiales

Un caso especial lo constituye el diminutivo adverbial *lejuelos*, que, si bien se menciona en la obra de González Ollé, *Los sufijos diminutivos en castellano*

*medieval*, no se encontraron documentos recopilados en los corpus que lo contuvieran. Falta por consultar el CREA oral con el propósito de investigar si se encontró en textos orales. “A propósito de los diminutivos adverbiales *lejuelos*, *cerquina* [...], afirma Spitzer que habría que hablar de infijos mejor que de sufijos ...” (González Ollé 1962, 209).

Asimismo, se recopila la estructura *cerquitilla* en Honduras (Alvar 2013, 109), pero en los corpus no se identificaron ejemplos. En la *NGLE* se incluye *alrededorcito*, sin que se mencione la zona, pero no se hallaron ejemplos en los corpus. Consecuentemente, suponemos que son creaciones del español de América.

## 7. Conclusiones

En esta breve presentación se pusieron de manifiesto tres categorías de diminutivos adverbiales de lugar: una que contiene dos casos de discontinuidad, a saber, formas empleadas exclusivamente en el territorio español; la segunda que abarca seis formas de continuidad del español peninsular al americano y la tercera en la que se incluyen 22 estructuras que se formaron en las variedades del español hablado en los países latinoamericanos. Los diminutivos *lejuelos*, *cerquitilla* y *alrededorcito* no se documentan en los corpus analizados.

Se puede afirmar que el uso de los diminutivos adverbiales es extendido, general y continuo en el español de América y que la única forma que es común a todos los países de habla hispana es *cerquita*, que es, asimismo, la más usada. El resto de los sintagmas existe de manera puntual en distintos países.

Ateniéndonos a la clasificación usada en CDH por zonas, encontramos el siguiente panorama en cuanto a los diminutivos adverbiales de lugar:

- a- Zona andina: abajito, acacito, adelantito, afuerita, ahicito, ahisito, allacito, allicito, aquicingo, aquicito, aquisito, arribita, atrasito, cerquita, debajito, detrasito, dondecito, encimita, juntito, lejitos – 20 formas;
- b- México y Centroamérica: abajito, adelantito, afuerita, allacito, arribita, atrasito, cerquita, cerquitilla, cerquitita, debajito, adelantito, detrasito, encimita, enfrentito, juntito, lejecitos, lejitos – 17 formas;
- c- Río de la Plata: abajito, acasito, adelantito, afuerita, ahicito, allacito, allasito, allicito, allisito, aquisito, arribita, atrasito, cerquita, encimita, juntito, lejecitos, lejitos – 17 formas;
- d- España: abajito, allasito, arribita, cerquina, cerquita, cerquitica, debajito, adelantito, encimita, enfrentito, juntito, lejillos, lejitos, lejuelos – 14 formas;

- e- Caribe continental: abajito, acasito, afuerita, allacito, arribita, atrasito, cerquita, cerquitica, debajito, encimita, lejitos – 11 formas;
- f- Chile: acacito, allacito, atrasito, cerquita, debajito, detrasito, lejitos – 7 formas;
- g- Antillas: cerquita, cerquitica, cerquitita, encimita, juntito, lejitos – 6 formas;
- h- EEUU: cerquita – 1 forma;
- i- Filipinas: cerquita – 1 forma.

En resumidas cuentas, todas las zonas tienen formas de diminutivo en mayor o menor medida; el uso es más extendido en la zona andina, en México y Centroamérica, en la zona del Río de la Plata, pero en Chile y las Antillas es menos extendido.

Se trata de una presentación parcial de las ocurrencias de formas de adverbios de lugar en diminutivo, por consiguiente, la investigación se puede ampliar con una investigación sobre la existencia de formas diminutivas adverbiales de lugar terminadas en *-ico/-ica*, con un análisis de todos los ejemplos recopilados de los bancos de datos consultados, pese a la gran cantidad de información que existe. Es necesario hacer también un análisis semántico. Asimismo, se tendrá que consultar el CREA oral. Otra posible investigación se puede centrar en un enfoque contrastivo actualizado entre todas las clases de diminutivos adverbiales del español y del rumano.

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## WORKING GIRLS AND WORKINGWOMEN IN SATA INEKO'S PROLETARIAN STORIES<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.** *Working Girls and Workingwomen in Sata Ineko's Proletarian Stories.* Sata Ineko (1904-1998) is one of the Japanese female writers who, throughout her long literary career, experienced crucial moments of Japan's modern history. After coming into artistic consciousness as a proletarian writer in the late 1920s, just as her country was slipping into authoritarianism, military dictatorship and imperialism, Sata was forced by the political environment to renounce her political adherence to communism, "convert" and join forces with Japan's imperial war machine, as a propaganda writer. Then, in the wake of Japan's defeat in World War II, she tried twice to rejoin the ranks of the Japan Communist Party, only to be expelled each time. She spent the last third of her relatively long life reflecting on her literature and life in memoirs and continuing to write semi-autobiographical fiction and leading feminist organizations, as well as a peace activist. The present research aims to provide an analysis of the evolution of Sata's female protagonists in some of her main proletarian literature

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<sup>1</sup> The present research is partially based on research pursued for and included in my doctoral dissertation, *The Literature of Political Conversion (Tenkō) of Japan*, University of Chicago, 2013, and it has not been published elsewhere.

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stories, and their evolution from characters based largely on the author's own experience to fictional personas struggling to deal with the challenges of political commitment and renunciation, while questioning the category of gender and its place in Sata's prewar proletarian works.

**Keywords:** *gender, political conversion, proletarian literature, Sata Ineko, tenkō*

**REZUMAT. Fete și femei din clasa muncitoare în povestirile proletare ale lui Sata Ineko.** Sata Ineko (1904–1998) este una dintre scriitoarele japoneze care, de-a lungul îndelungatei sale cariere literare, a traversat momente cruciale ale istoriei moderne a Japoniei. După ce s-a afirmat ca scriitoare proletară la sfârșitul anilor 1920, în perioada în care Japonia aluneca spre autoritarism, dictatură militară și imperialism, Sata a fost constrânsă de mediul politic să renunțe la adeziunea sa la comunism, să se „convertească” și să se alăture mașinii de război imperiale a Japoniei, ca scriitoare de propagandă. Apoi, în urma înfrângerii Japoniei în cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial, a încercat de două ori să reintre în rândurile Partidului Comunist Japonez, însă de fiecare dată a fost exclusă. Ultima parte a vieții sale relativ lungi și-a petrecut-o reflectând asupra literaturii și vieții sale în memorii, continuând totodată să scrie ficțiune semi-autobiografică și să conducă organizații feministe, precum și implicându-se ca activistă pentru pace. Prezenta cercetare își propune să ofere o analiză a evoluției protagonistelor feminine ale lui Sata în câteva dintre principalele sale povestiri de literatură proletară, urmărind transformarea acestora din personaje bazate în mare măsură pe propria experiență a autoarei în personaje ficționale care se confruntă cu provocările angajamentului politic și ale renunțării la acesta, punând totodată sub semnul întrebării categoria de gender și locul acesteia în operele proletare antebelice ale lui Sata.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *convertire politică, gender, literatură proletară, Sata Ineko, tenkō*

## 1. Introduction: The Arrest

When they arrested Sata Ineko (1904-1998) on May 11, 1935, the detectives from the Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu (Special Higher Police), Japan's prewar secret police, had no information about her membership in the Japan Communist Party. As such, they did not see much reason to keep her imprisoned for too long. She was, however, charged with being the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Hataraku fujin* (Workingwomen) and a member of several revolutionary organizations.

(Satsuma 1998, 137 fn.)<sup>3</sup> She also did not seem to them as important an actor in the movement as male proletarian writers, who were also leaders of the communist party. Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933), Nakano Shigeharu (1902-1979), Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901-1977), Kubokawa Tsurujirō (1903-1974), among others, were considered dangerous and were the ones who had to be made to commit *tenkō* (coerced political conversion)<sup>4</sup> publicly. Besides, once Sata's husband, Kubokawa, had already committed *tenkō*, the expectation of the interrogators was that she would follow suit. They were not wrong, but Sata's reasons for *tenkō* were not those that they had envisioned.

Moreover, according to her memoir, *Nenpu no gyōkan* (Between the Lines of My Chronology, 1983), the police at the Totsuka station where she was held were very sympathetic toward her plight. Sata was not physically abused during her incarceration, except for one slap on the face from the detective assigned to her case, Kimura. (Sata 1983, 172). Even the prison guard was apparently calling Sata "a model Japanese woman." It might have helped that she made a point of invoking her children and the hardships she endured to be with them. (In one of the most touching scenes of the novella *Kurenai* (Crimson) (Sata 1977-79, 2:7-104), written in the semi-autobiographical literary convention of the *shishōsetsu*<sup>5</sup>. Later retold in *Between the Lines...*, the protagonist, Akiko, pretended

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<sup>3</sup> The full list of trial summons included the following charges: membership in *Nihon puroretaria geijutsu renmei* (Japan Proletarian Arts League), *Kaihō undo giseisha kyūenkai* (Relief Organization for the Victims of the Movement), *Zen-Nihon musansha geijutsu dantai kyōgikai* (All-Japan Council of Proletarian Arts Associations), *Nihon puroretaria sakka dōmei* (Japan Proletarian Writers League), and *Nihon puroretaria bunka renmei* (Japan Proletarian Culture League); leadership in *Fujin iinkai* (Women's Committee); editorship of *Hataraku fujin* (Workingwomen), together with fellow female writer and friend Miyamoto Yuriko (1899-1951); membership in the editorial committee of *Senki* (Battle Flag), the official publication of the All-Japan Proletarian Arts League.

<sup>4</sup> *Tenkō* (lit. "change of direction"), often rendered as "conversion", albeit the proper translation would be "coerced political conversion", is a defining moment of Japan's prewar intellectual history and has been often analyzed within the context of the failure of modern ideology. It describes the coerced political conversion of Japanese leftist and democratic activists who were imprisoned and forced to publicly renounce their political beliefs. The *tenkō* phenomenon has been widely studied, although it remains largely misunderstood. For more recent research on *tenkō* in English, see Max M. Ward, *Thought Crime: Ideology & State Power in Interwar Japan* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2019) and Irena Hayter, George T. Sipos, and Mark Williams, eds., *Tenkō: Cultures of Political Conversion in Transwar Japan* (London & New York: Routledge, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> *Shishōsetsu* (lit. "I-fiction"), often rendered as "I-novel", with the additional comment that it ought not be confused with the German *Ich Roman*, is a Japanese literary category that originated at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from a naturalist tradition. The convention is that the narrator or protagonist is identified by readers as the author's alter ego, and that the story is a verisimilar account of the author's personal life. In reality, significant parts of the text are fictional. Major

to be very strong and to show no emotions toward her children when they visited her in prison. (Sata 1977-79, 2:27-30; Sata 1983, 172-3) During her short incarceration (she was released after 38 days on June 17), Sata could even focus on writing and finished the story *Hashira* (Pillar), which was published in the July issue of the magazine *Fujin no tomo* (Women's Friend). (Sata 1977-79, 2:201-224)

Little did detective Kimura and the other investigators in Sata's case know that, for about a year, in 1932-1933, when most of the male leaders of the JCP and the proletarian literary movement were in prison, Sata was one of the key liaisons between underground activists, such as writer and activist Kobayashi Takiji, and the outside world, and that she was at the same time a writer, a propagandist, a party activist, a carrier of secret documents, an agitator, mother of one, expecting another, and a wife whose husband was in prison. For brief moments during the long agony of the leftist and communist movement in Japan between 1928 and 1935, the survival of the organization rested on her shoulders, as well as those of other female communists and sympathizers.

By 1934, however, after the major wave of *tenkō* (see Sipos 2013, 22-102; Ward 2019; Hayter, Sipos, and Williams 2021) among proletarian writers, Sata saw her role diminished as organization after organization ceased activity. Faced with the decision to return to a domestic life of subservience to her husband and to raising children, Sata realized she could no longer do so. Her most important declaration of *tenkō* was done through the protagonist of the novella *Kurenai* (Crimson, 1936) and the *shishōsetsu* literary conventions. Sata thus used her own literature to state her estrangement from communist ideals, unlike most male writers, who were required to issue *tenkō seimei* (political conversion declarations) from prison. In *Crimson*, Akiko, the protagonist, reflected on the issue of the return to domesticity: "While he was away [in prison] for those two years, she had savored to the full the freedom of living alone. That was the true tragedy: this contradiction of loving one's husband yet wanting the freedom to live alone" (Sata 1977-79, 2:22; Satsuma 1998, 137).

The present research focuses on Sata Ineko and her political development and literary output as a proletarian artist with the aim of exploring the way in which class rather than gender defined the protagonists of her early work. Gender will only become a relevant category in Sata's work with her texts announcing in fictional form her separation from the proletarian literary ideals and the communist activism, in the second half of the 1930s.

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writers who employed the *shishōsetsu* conventions in prewar Japan are Shimazaki Tōson, Shiga Naoya, Kasai Zenzō and Dazai Osamu. Several former proletarian writers who were forced to convert in the 1930s also relied on *shishōsetsu* to convey either adherence to or resistance to the prescribed official militarist/imperialist discourse.

## 2. Sata Ineko, Proletarian and “Converted” Writer

During her long literary career, Sata reflected on her life on numerous occasions. Her most important truly autobiographical works are *Aru onna no koseki* (A Woman's Family Register, 1946-1947), *Watashi no Nagasaki chizu* (My Map of Nagasaki, 1948), (Sata 1977-79, 4:155-212) *Watashi no Tōkyō chizu* (My Map of Tōkyō, 1949), *Toki ni tatsu* (Standing in Time, 1975), and *Between the Lines...* As with *Crimson*, Sata employed either biographical elements or *shishōsetsu* conventions in her fiction, and some of her proletarian works were, in fact, based on her own experience as a working child and woman.

Born on June 1, 1904, in Nagasaki, where her parents found refuge from their families' wrath over their illicit love affair, Sata was adopted by her paternal grandmother's younger brother, Tanaka Umetarō, and renamed Tanaka. Thus, her legal name was Tanaka Ine, which she occasionally used as her pen name (Tanaka Ineko), before settling on Kubokawa Ineko after her second husband, the proletarian writer Kubokawa Tsurujirō, and ultimately choosing Sata Ineko. After her natural parents were legally married, Sata was adopted into their family in 1908 and grew up in Nagasaki until 1915 (Sata 1983, 9-10).

In 1911, her mother died of tuberculosis, which led to a series of disastrous relations for her father. Young Ine was raised mostly by her paternal grandmother. In 1915, the father moved the family to Tōkyō but was unable to secure employment, and they were forced to live in dire poverty. Since no one in the family had a full-time job, the responsibility to provide for the family fell on young Ine, only a fifth grader at the time. She had to take a job at a caramel factory in Kanda, where she started working in December 1915. These events would later inspire her first major contribution to proletarian literature, the story *Kyarameru kōba kara* (From the Caramel Factory, 1928). Later in life, she remembered that time as one full of suffering due to her father's lack of responsibility. (Sata 1983, 36)

Over the following years, Sata held various jobs, which later inspired some of her proletarian literary works. Around the time she became a store clerk at Maruzen, in 1921, she started writing poetry and published a few works. Through one of her co-workers, she was introduced to leftist ideas and socialism. In one of her later stories, *Mohan ten'in* (Model Store Clerk, 1930), she fictionalized that time in her life:

Asae began to realize that the prestige of being the model store clerk held no meaning for her.

She stared at the rattling ceiling boards of the corner tenement house where both she and her mother lived and started to think about socialism. She did not understand anything. She thought about socialism as a swirl of confusion. She thought about the system of class distinctions. (Sata 1977-79, 1:196; Satsuma 1998, 32)

In 1924, she entered an arranged marriage and gave birth to a girl the following year. The husband, one Kobori Enzō, turned out to be a weak and jealous character. Torn by pessimism and despair, and without a clear direction in life, Sata attempted suicide in 1925 during her first pregnancy. Another attempt at a double suicide with Kobori followed, but both survived. Their marriage, however, fell apart soon after, and Sata and her parents returned to Tōkyō.

In 1926, she started working as a waitress in a small coffee shop, where the young editorial team of the literary coterie magazine *Roba* (Donkey) was among the regulars. The core editorial group of *Donkey* consisted of four young writers, Nakano Shigeharu, Kubokawa Tsurujirō, Hori Tatsuo (1904-1953), and Nishizawa Ryūji (1903-1976), under the artistic and financial patronage of established and respected writer Murō Saisei (1889-1962). Young and beautiful Sata became the protégée of the all-male team, and they took care of her education and encouraged her to write and publish. She felt most attracted to Kubokawa, who would later become her lover and husband, while Nakano stayed a close friend of the couple. Under their influence and encouragement, Sata began writing and publishing more consistently. Between 1927 and 1928, she published short prose and poetry works in *Donkey*. (Tsukamoto 1987, 151-155)

The 1928 *From the Caramel Factory* was followed by other stories inspired by the author's experiences as a member of the working class. Some of the most representative works from this period are *Kyūkanchō* (The Mynah Bird, 1928), *Omemie* (Live-In Servant, 1928), *Tsutomejin* (Office Clerk, 1929), *Jiko shōkai* (Self Introduction, 1929), *Hankō* (Resistance, 1930), *Model Store Clerk*, *Rōdōsha no ie* (The Worker's House, 1930), *Kitō* (The Prayer, 1931), *Kanbujokō no namida* (Tears of the Female Factory Cadre, 1931), *Hajimete no keiken kara* (From Her First Experience, 1931), *Shōkanbu* (Lower Union Cadre, 1931), to name a few.

As Sata Ineko was enhancing her abilities as a proletarian writer, the couple Sata-Kubokawa was undergoing a period of extreme financial and political hardship. Around the time of Kubokawa's first arrest in 1928, Sata decided to submit a short story to the most influential commercial cultural magazine of the time, *Bungei shunjū* (The Annals of Arts and Culture), edited by the influential writer Kikuchi Kan (1888-1948), and one that, naturally, paid much better. In 1929, *Resutoran Rakuyō* (Restaurant Rakuyō) was published and received a lot of attention from major literary names, with Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) and Uno Chiyo (1897-1996) publishing praising reviews (Satsuma 1998, 88-9). The proletarian camp, however, including Nakano Shigeharu and Kobayashi Takiji, was not at all pleased with the work, and accused it of lacking in proletarian consciousness despite the fact that the main character was a *jokyū*, a coffee shop hostess, hence a member of the working class.

That was not the first time for Kobayashi Takiji to dismiss the relevance of Sata's work, calling it non-political, fragmented, thematically narrow and trivial

in content. (Kobayashi 1958, 8:278; Kusakabe 2011, 75 et passim). Sata engaged in debates with Kobayashi and Nakano, mostly over the role of women in the proletarian literary movement (Sata 1977-79, 16:45-6),<sup>6</sup> but she continued to respect and admire Kobayashi and she might have even been one of the last people to see him alive, since they met only three days before his arrest and ensuing murder at the hands of the Special Police (Sata 1977-79, 17:76).<sup>7</sup> After Kobayashi's murder, Sata started a public crusade over the fact that he had been killed by the police, rather than dying from heart failure, as the authorities had declared.<sup>8</sup> Sata and Kobayashi's complicated relationship has been discussed by Madoka Kusakabe in her doctoral dissertation (Kusakabe 2011, 66-7).

Paradoxically, Sata's relationship with *The Annals of Arts and Culture*, a publication rejected by other proletarian writers, allowed her to contribute essays about the theory of proletarian arts, thus introducing it to the larger public. Her 1931 short essay, *Puroretaria bungaku no sekai* (The World of Proletarian Literature) is such an example. Sata expressed her firm belief in the ideas of movement theorist Kurahara Korehito, according to which the movement's arts and literature would develop alongside the proletarian class. Moreover, she rejected the claims that proletarian literature was inflexible and that the author's individual creativity was limited by organizational and ideological pressure. On the contrary, she argued, creativity can only flourish within the precepts of the organization, and the author's artistic freedom is best expressed when writing class-consciousness-driven stories.

Like other comrades, Sata and Kubokawa suffered greatly under the oppression unleashed by the Japanese government against the leftist movement immediately after the February 1928 elections. The massive arrests of March 15, 1928, were followed by the first wave of *tenkō* culminating in Kobayashi Takiji's arrest and murder by torture in February 1933. The second and most damaging *tenkō* wave began in June 1933, with JCP leading cadre Sano Manabu

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<sup>6</sup> One of the harshest rebuttals coming from Sata was the article "Puroretaria fujin sakka no mondai" (On the Issue of Female Proletarian Writers), published in 1931 in direct response to Kobayashi Takiji's criticism.

<sup>7</sup> This biographical detail appears in Sata's article "Kobayashi Takiji no bungaku" (The Literature of Kobayashi Takiji), published in 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Between February and May 1933, in utter disregard of the danger to which they were exposing themselves, Sata and Miyamoto Yuriko published several articles about Kobayashi's death, describing in detail the condition of his body when it had been returned to his mother's house. Some of Sata's most provocative articles were: "Nigatsu hatsuka no koto" (What Happened on February 20<sup>th</sup>, in *Taishū no tomo*, February 1933); "Shikabane no ue ni" (Over the Corpse, in *Taishū no tomo*, March 1933); "Aru hi no dōshi Kobayashi Takiji" (One day, Comrade Kobayashi Takiji, in *Mita shinbun*, March 28, 1933); "Kobayashi Takiji no shi wa gyakusatsu de atta" (Kobayashi Takiji's Death was an Atrocity, in *Hataraku fujin*, April 1933).

(1892-1953) and Nabeyama Sadachika (1901-1979). Kubokawa was first arrested shortly after March 15 and released at the end of the year on account of his weak constitution and health problems.

When Kubokawa was arrested again in March 1932 and incarcerated for eighteen months, Sata took over many of the activities that could no longer be managed by the imprisoned communist leaders. She secretly joined the Japan Communist Party, became the editor-in-chief, together with Miyamoto Yuriko, of both *Workingwomen* and *Women's Friend*, and maintained communication with the underground members of the Japan Proletarian Culture League and of the party (Kobayashi 1994, 242). Moreover, by that time she and Kubokawa already had one child, and she was pregnant with their second at the time of his arrest.

Upon her husband's release from prison after committing *tenkō*, their relationship started to deteriorate, leading to separation in 1938 and a final legal divorce in 1945. Sata would, in turn, be arrested in 1935, and although her JCP membership remained a secret, she was still detained for about two months. She was released from prison only after she promised to cease all political activities and focus on her children, thus technically committing *tenkō* for personal reasons, but without issuing a public declaration. As opposed to Kubokawa or Nakano, who committed *tenkō* and were released from prison, only to keep acting upon their political ideas, Sata truly ceased all political involvement in 1935 and continued to write and publish semi-autobiographical pieces, in *shishōsetsu* vein, until 1940, when she went the extra mile and joined the ranks of the Japanese writers who were sent to Japan's newly-acquired colonies in Asia and the Pacific to send back reportage and dispatches for newspapers at home.

Albeit understated and literary rather than public through a declaration, Sata Ineko's *tenkō* was not atypical. Overall, women's *tenkō* was not considered of equal importance with that of men. Most women *tenkōsha* (converted) were considered secondary targets by the authorities. Even in the 1950s, a groundbreaking study on the phenomenon, the view that women's *tenkō* was determined by "domestic forces" was prevalent, as exemplified by the study's leader, Tsurumi Shunsuke.

It is a failing that we have done almost no research on women. For women, *tenkō* took a feminine course, involving problems unique to women. To be a history of the people's thought, *tenkō* research must of course consider female *tenkō*, not as something done under the direct compulsion of the state authorities but as a process within the confrontation of various domestic forces. (Shisō no Kagaku 1978, 1:25; Cullen 2010, 67)

Paradoxically, the statement above both validates female *tenkō* and dismisses it in the same paragraph. In Jennifer Cullen's opinion, "Tsurumi seems to swallow whole the logic behind the methods of the Ministry of Justice when it comes to women but takes a more nuanced approach when studying male *tenkō*." (Cullen 2010, 67-8).

In her 2010 comparative study of Miyamoto Yuriko and Sata Ineko's *tenkō* processes,<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Cullen challenged the idea that women's *tenkō* is to be dismissed with one overarching sweep under a generalizing definition and showed how two of the most influential female writers of the Japanese proletarian literary movement took completely different paths in dealing with the coercion of the authorities: on one hand, Miyamoto Yuriko, who had only committed to communism after almost three years spent in the Soviet Union (1927-1930), and who was driven to demonstrate her dedication to the cause, and on the other, Sata Ineko, whose husband's *tenkō* and ensuing writing dry spell left her the sole breadwinner of the family.

Miyamoto Kenji, Miyamoto Yuriko's husband, was one of the very few JCP leaders who remained a staunch *hitenkōsha* (non-converted) and resisted in prison for 12 years until the end of World War II, while Kubokawa committed *tenkō* within a year, although he maintained his political views. Comparing the two cases, Cullen concludes: "For Miyamoto, class identity seems to have played a primary role and largely determined how gender and authorial identities were lived out, while Sata struggled with an unresolvable tension between public and private identities." (Cullen 2010, 68).

Sata's initial attitude toward *tenkō* was rejection and criticism of those who had caved under the pressure of the authorities. In a 1932 article about fellow proletarian writer Kataoka Teppei (1894-1944)'s *tenkō* after one year spent in prison, she showed herself intransigent and unsympathetic: "It is unimaginable at least to us that Teppei, who believed in the advancement in history of the proletariat as an artist and author, could abandon his belief within a single year" (Sata, 1977-79, 16:49; Cullen 2010, 78).

One year later, Kubokawa was in the same situation, and Sata's conviction in the priority of class identity over individual convictions was beginning to shake. Two years after her husband's *tenkō*, and after two months spent in prison, she too renounced communism and pursued an entirely different path. Looking back on that period of her life in 1977, Sata dated her first doubts about the proletarian movement to 1934, around the time of the KOPF's dissolution, so one year before her own *tenkō*.

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<sup>9</sup> Miyamoto Yuriko did not, in fact, commit *tenkō*. Cullen compared the two cases, one of *tenkō*, the other of *hitenkō*.

I consciously untied what had been binding me to my material until then. . . From around that time I began to grope painfully for my own position through my relation to everyday life. Having lost the organization, the site of conflict disappeared aside from my own writing and my days flowed along as a so-called petit bourgeois. (Sata 1977-79, 2:417; Cullen 2010, 79)

After the war and official divorce from Kubokawa, Sata rejoined the Japan Communist Party in 1946, only to be expelled in 1951 for her wartime collaboration with the imperial authorities. Between 1941 and 1943 (for more see Sipos 2010), she had indeed been traveling on numerous occasions to China, Manchuria, or Southeast Asia as a member of the *Shōsetsuka imon butai* (Pen Squadrons), writers dispatched to Japan's colonies to keep up the soldiers' spirits on the battlefield and write uplifting articles for the public back home. (Keene 1998, 1156). Her writings from that period were gathered in the volume *Kō ni niou* (The Scent of Incense, 1942).

She was also one of the co-founders of the *Fujin minshu kurabu* (Women's Democratic Club), alongside other leaders of the postwar feminist movement, such as her longtime friend, Miyamoto Yuriko and feminist activist Katō Shizue (1897-2001), who would become one of the first women to be elected in both chambers of the Japanese Diet.

Sata was later unconditionally reinstated to the JCP in 1955, only to be expelled again in 1964 for criticism of party policies (Keene 1998, 1158). During the 1960s, she started her activism on behalf of the victims of the atomic bombings, and generated several literary works focused on the topic, including the novel *Juei* (The Shade of Trees, 1972) whose characters are Japanese and Chinese residents of Nagasaki in the post-bomb period. *The Shade of Trees* earned Sata the prestigious Noma Literary Prize. In fact, she was awarded several other literary distinctions, such as Women's Literature Award for the story *Onna no yado* (Women's Lodgings, 1963), Kawabata Yasunari Literature Prize in 1976, and the Asahi Prize and the Mainichi Art Award for her entire career and her memoir about her old friend Nakano Shigeharu, *Natsu no shiori: Nakano Shigeharu o okuru* (Summer Bookmark: Sending Nakano Shigeharu, 1983).

Until her death in 1998, Sata enjoyed a long artistic career and remained a well-known, prolific, and respected writer, constantly surrounded by readers and admirers. She wrote consistently about her prewar activities, trying to make sense, in retrospect, of the role of her writing and her struggle for the proletarian movement. Upon her death, she was hailed as a pioneer of women's liberation in Japan.

### 3. Proletarian and “Converted” Protagonists

Sata's female protagonists evolved almost alongside her, and while *shishōsetsu* conventions won't be fully evident in her work until the writing of *Crimson*, a text outside the scope of the current research, the autobiographical and semi-autobiographical tendencies are evident throughout her work.

Around the time when they worked together at *Donkey*, Kubokawa introduced Sata to the works of Engels and Lenin, with the latter's influence evident in her poems of the period (Tsukamoto 1987, 155). In *Between the Lines...*, the writer recalled her coming into political and class consciousness:

My view of society changed, and I recognized it as a construction of capitalist society.

There was a sandal craftsman who lived on the second floor. Although he worked day after day from morning to night pounding on clog thongs, why wasn't he able to eat? Why was he poor? I [finally] could understand why. It felt as if a veil, which had been covering my eyes until then, had been taken away. (Sata 1983, 138-9; Satsuma 1998, 58-9)

Under Nakano and Kubokawa's guidance, Sata wrote an essay about her experience working in the caramel factory, which was later reworked into the proletarian story *From the Caramel Factory*, mentioned above. Published in the magazine *Puroretaria geijutsu* (Proletarian Arts) in February 1928, it marked her official debut as a proletarian writer.

Looking back at that time and her beginnings as a proletarian writer under the guidance of her friends and mentors from *Roba*, Sata wrote in 1950:

[...] the motivation to write is directly related to proletarian literary theory. I was surrounded by people such as Nakano Shigeharu, Kubokawa Tsurujirō, [...] and from the time I was a child I liked literature. If these people had not entered the proletarian literary movement, I would have probably spent my life as a housewife. [...] I... did not think that I especially wanted to become a writer. Nakano encouraged me to write. Kubokawa assisted me. [...]

Nakano encouraged me to write because I had experienced the life of a worker in a factory and in society. [...] (Sata 1977-79, 17:80-81; Satsuma 1998, 67)

She seemed almost genuinely surprised by the fact that she was becoming a writer:

I, a woman, uneducated and lacking talent, wrote. It was an adventure. I did not think it possible for an uneducated woman to depict and add something new to literature [...]. Proletarian literary theory eliminated this hesitation. A new structure had to be born from among the workers. A new consciousness, a new feeling, a new sense was to be discovered among the workers who are supported by class consciousness. Even though I did not think that my work would be good enough, I was prepared to write. (Sata 1977-79, 17:81; Satsuma 1998, 67)

The quote above is remarkable for its ability to sublimate something Sata captured throughout her literary career without difficulty: the *female* experience without falling into gender stereotypes. For, as the characters analyzed below make evident, Sata's girls and women are neither necessarily defined nor limited by their femaleness. They engage on equal footing as working girls, party cadre, clerks, or laborers, unaware that their gender needs to be stated. It was only with *Crimson* and its *shishōsetsu* conventions that gender makes its appearance declaratively in Sata's work, despite its being present throughout.

Between 1928 and 1932, Sata combined active political involvement in the proletarian artistic and literary movement and, as of 1932, in the Japan Communist Party, with the writing of numerous poems and stories. Most of the stories of this period have a female protagonist who is involved, either directly or indirectly, in the socialist movement or in workers' activities: strikes, party organization, factory boycotts.

*From the Caramel Factory* is such an example. As seen above, the story is based on Sata's childhood experience as a candy wrapper in a caramel factory in the Kanda neighborhood of Tōkyō. Sata's working background gave credence to the text, a quality that many writers of the proletarian literary movement could not claim. That experience made Nakano trust Sata's writing and encouraged her to make it public.

The main character of the story is Hiroko, a thirteen-year-old girl who is forced by her father to work in a caramel factory to earn money for the family. The father is unemployed and shows poor judgment regarding family finances. The factory is so far from their home that her earnings barely cover the streetcar fare to the other end of the city. She must also quit school to work for the family. While the father figure could easily be perceived as a symbol of patriarchy, Sata's description makes him a rather pathetic character, oppressed by an unequal system rather than an abusive male figure.

He drank sake, ranted and raved, and pitted himself against his family. His younger brother had been adopted into another household, and the only money he had was for his own schooling. The older brother expropriated

this money, letting his younger brother fend for himself. Unaccustomed to physical labor, he fell ill and never got up from his bed. (Sata 1977-79, 1:19; Sata 2003, 4)

At the same time, Hiroko, while younger and smaller than other workers, displays a sense of equal belonging to the class: "Hiroko wedged herself between the legs of the adults. Like them, she was a laborer. But she was a weak and small laborer—similar to a blade of grass that a horse would eat", and is recognized as one of them, "All at once the eyes of those around her looked away. Hiroko was one of their own, since she shared the fate of their own children." (Sata 1977-79, 1:18; Sata 2003, 3)

The story details the working conditions in the candy factory. While it seemed that for some older, more experienced workers, caramel wrapping was an easy task, meeting the daily quota was nearly impossible for young Hiroko. Factory policy required that the names of the top and bottom three workers be posted daily for everyone to see. Hiroko's name invariably appeared on the bottom list, which reminded her that she had always been at the top of the list in school.

Hiroko wanted desperately to quicken her pace. While other girls could complete five cartons, she could only do two and a half. Even when she thought she had done more than usual, by the day's end, she had only filled two and a half cartons.

Hiroko was eager to succeed. She struggled to remove herself from the bottom list.

Competition drove everyone to work frenetically. The girls pushed themselves to their limits in order to earn a spot on the top list. (Sata 1977-79, 1:25-26; Sata 2003, 8)

Everyone in the family pitied Hiroko for having to work at her age. The father, however, maintained a callous attitude about it. In the end, the only way to convince him to allow her to quit her job was a sudden change in remuneration that cut Hiroko's already meager earnings in half. Quitting the job at the caramel factory did not mean that Hiroko's troubles were over, or that she could resume her studies. She was still expected to work to provide for the family, and she became an in-house waitress at a Chinese restaurant, which was at least closer to home. The story ends with Hiroko crying in the bathroom over a letter from her former schoolteacher, who is trying to convince her father to send her back to school.

As Sata's narrative abilities develop, her stories move beyond the exclusive realm of her lived experience into literary reportage and fiction. The 1931 story *The Prayer* is such an example. The story follows Tomiyo, a Christian working-

class girl, whose colleagues go on strike to protest the firing of 360 workers. As their church is on the side of management, the Christian workers do not participate in the strike, which brings about the non-Christian workers' antipathy. The story opens with Tomiyo's internal struggle to come to terms with her status as a bystander:

As Tomiyo prayed, a hushed sadness welled up once more. Tomiyo endured the rising sadness, holding it back with the clenched fist made by her clasped palms. She felt she somehow cut a sorry and pitiful figure. She remembered how, just now, someone had looked into the room, and though she had been sitting right there, the other girl had left without saying a word. Tomiyo, too, had deliberately ignored her. Since the strike began, she had become reluctant to look people in the face other than her fellow churchgoers. (Sata 1977-79, 1:247; Sata 2016, 77)

The workers' ousting of the Christians led the latter to take refuge in a church community. Tomiyo, however, could not relate to the other members of the church community and chose to return to the factory, even if it meant facing their wrath.

[...] she still prayed to and depended on this God. Tomiyo was in anguish. The anger of those workers involved in the strike toward her and the other Christians: they had been knocked down, hoisted in the air, then dropped in a way that made them feel like all the blood had drained from them. Then there were the accusations  $\frac{3}{4}$  *traitors, company tools*. Tomiyo was trying to determine the right and the wrong of her actions that had made everybody so angry. What was happening with that struggle being carried out by the people who were so angry with her? (Sata 1977-79, 1:258; Sata 2016, 88)

The protagonist's internal struggle is masterfully balanced by powerfully animated group scenes of the strike and the riots, alternating with calm, quiet prayer scenes of the Christian group. The artistry demonstrated in the descriptions of group actions is comparable to that in contemporary works deemed novelistic masterpieces of proletarian literature, such as Tokunaga Sunao's *Taiyō no nai machi* (Sunless Streets, 1929) and Kobayashi Takiji's *Kani kōsen* (The Crab Cannery Ship, 1929).

They came pushing from behind with a roar. With that momentum the factory girls up front were shoved into the Christian factory girls.  
*Help!*  
[...]  
*Hoist them up!*

The anonymous shout drove the crowd. The limbs of the Christian girls, lifted into the air, floundered helplessly. The sea of people formed rapid swirls here and there. The cheers of the factory girls muffled the Christians' cries.

[...] Shoved by those around her, Tomiyo staggered. Tomiyo twisted her body and tried to escape. Suddenly, her feet were lifted up and her body was suspended in the air. [...] (Sata 1977-79, 1:253, Sata 2016, 82)

Tomiyo and the other Christian girls (although she can't quite identify with them), are part of the laborers, members of the same class, although separated by their faith. As such, the crowd of striking workingwomen perceive their faith-based reluctance to join the struggle as an obstacle and treat them like enemies. Once again, there is no gender solidarity or differential treatment in Sata's story, the union workers aiming to punish and eliminate those who don't join their fight.

Together with other stories she wrote inspired by the same event, the 1930 strike of hundreds of Tōyō Muslin Factory workers was her first attempt to write based on participatory investigative research. The ease with which Sata related to the plight of the laborers by going among them became an important element in Sata's literature, and its later loss became a clear indication of her estrangement from the movement and its ideals. The protagonist of *Crimson*, for instance, is depicted trying to find, yet again, that connection with the working class by moving to one of its neighborhoods, only to realize it is no longer there, thereby metaphorically hinting at her political conversion.

Throughout this stream of proletarian stories, the protagonists' gender is assumed rather than stated, and it is neither an obstacle nor an advantage in their character development. It is rather their social class, their poverty, and their oppression at the hands of abusive parents, abusive factory supervisors or owners, and the system itself that is the origin of the characters' hardships. And amidst these hardships, they become aware of their class and of their oppression, as members of the working-class first and foremost rather than as women.

Sata's fears and doubts about the loss of an organized administrative and theoretical structure within which to anchor her creativity in the early 1930s found literary expression in a June 1934 story regarded as Sata's first piece of *tenkō* literature, although *Crimson* is now viewed as her best-known work of the category. *Botan no aru ie* (The House with Peonies) is a bleak description of the gloomy life of poor farmers stuck in perpetual misery materially and emotionally, without an end in sight. The only burst of color in the story is a beautiful peony bush, renowned throughout the region for its luscious flowers, but that is far from enough to counter the prevailing atmosphere of decay and disease.

As a piece of *tenkō* literature, *The House with Peonies* is a narrative experiment coming from a well-known writer of the proletarian literary movement who had not yet undergone the *tenkō* process. Nevertheless, the narration has all the thematic elements of what Honda Shūgo called “the first period of *tenkō* literature” in which the *tenkō* experience is addressed directly and analyzed through psychological realism and *shishōsetsu* convention elements. Nakano Shigeharu’s *The House in the Village*, Tokunaga Sunao’s *Fuyugare* (Winter Wither, 1934), Murayama Tomoyoshi’s *Byakuya* (Midnight Sun, 1934) and others are just some of the works classified by Honda under this category. (Honda 1964, 192 et passim)

Kogiku, the story’s protagonist, returns to her native village in an attempt to cure her TB, which is eating her life away from the inside. The movement from urban to rural is shared with *tenkōsha* characters from *The House in the Village* and *Winter Wither*. Sata’s character, however, is not identified as a *tenkōsha*. The only metaphor at work here is the disease associated with the urban space and the healing assumed to be available in the traditional space of the village.

Sata is employing here one of the motifs of the *Nihon e no kaiki* (lit. “return to Japan”) nationalist discourse, where the tension urban-rural, and, by extension, modernity-tradition, is solved in favor of the latter. Very similar to the characters in *The House in the Village* and *Winter Wither*, Sata’s character cannot be cured in the traditional space of the village, but for completely different reasons. Like Nakano’s character, Benji, and Tokunaga’s Washio, Kogiku, in Sata’s story, eventually returns to the city. Kogiku cannot possibly continue to live at the farm where her brother is barely able to make a living, where babies are still born due to malnutrition and lack of basic health and sanitation, and where marriages are doomed to fail in dire poverty. She realizes that the beautiful peonies in front of the house are only a romanticized idea of the *furusato* (native village), of a traditional lifestyle, and that urban, modern life with all its shortcomings is where she belongs now rather than in the traditional setting. The dilemma is expressed through the metaphor of her illness:

We have a peony bush that is so rare in its beauty that it enjoys a reputation in the neighboring villages. In fact, I used to think of my house solely in terms of this peony plant. [...] I tend to be willful, and try to push away the pain, but I suppose the longer I remain here, the more difficult it will become. [...] What should I do? Thinking it over, I took pride in my home, but I discovered that even here I could not find a place to rest my broken body. (Sata 1977-79, 2:155-6; Satsuma 1998, 116)

Just like in her proletarian stories, Sata’s character is not defined by her gender. Her “failure” to find solace in the country is *en par* with that of the male protagonists in Nakano or Tokunaga’s stories.

Sata borrowed the mechanics of the “return to Japan” discourse, in part, to demonstrate its futility and ineffectiveness in addressing modern identity crises. *The House with Peonies* announced Sata’s engagement with the motifs of family and landscape, which she will invest with political meaning and employ more actively in *Crimson*, and in her postwar autobiographical works *My Nagasaki Map* and *My Tōkyō Map*.

Sata’s characters will only assume their gender with her first true *shishōsetsu* piece, the novella *Crimson*. The tension between Akiko and her husband, her desire to put an end to his abusive and dismissive attitude towards her as the wife and the woman of the house, the burden and joys of motherhood are all present and palpable issues there. Moreover, femaleness and motherhood will become central issues in her wartime writings (see Sipos 2010).

Sata later claimed that her *tenkō* was motivated exclusively by personal needs, and not by loss of political conviction. Her literary activity after 1940, however, seems to indicate otherwise. Kitagawa Akio noted that her attitude toward Japan’s imperialist war shifted from a clear rejection at the beginning of the 1930s to identification with the colonizer’s gaze in her dispatches from Indonesia and other Southeast Asian colonies (Kitagawa 1993, 254; Cullen 2010, 77). Commenting on this period, Cullen pointed out:

As the structure of the communist party in Japan crumbled under political oppression, Sata was forced to question her own identity and her priorities in life, reflected not only in her subject matter but in her literary style as well. [...] beginning in the 1930s her fiction became much more personal in nature, centering on the internal thoughts of her protagonists. (Cullen 2010, 77-8)

Cullen went on to conclude that the evolution of Sata’s thought process was neither the result of a change in her political beliefs and allegiance, nor of practical considerations alone. In her opinion, her *tenkō* and the ensuing collaboration with the imperial project were “both the cause and effect of her gradual liberation from paternalistic relationships within the party and her marriage.” (2010, 78)

#### 4. Conclusion

Sata Ineko’s prewar proletarian literary work, briefly analyzed above through several of her major stories, reveals a range of protagonists who develop political consciousness and become active participants in the class struggle of the working masses. From the working girl Hiroko in *From the Caramel Factory* to Kogiku in the literary *tenkō* piece *The House with Peonies*, the female characters are driven and defined by their working-class rather than by their gender identity

as women. In other words, for Sata, in her proletarian literature period, the class weighed more heavily than the gender. Her female characters are laborers, and in that, they are equal to their male counterparts. They suffer the same oppression from a system that subjugates all the poor regardless of gender.

Among the other streetcar riders, Hiroko feels almost a sense of pride to be one of the workers, albeit the smallest of them all, while Tomiyo is tormented by her desire to identify where her allegiance should lie (with her faith, or with her comrades), not by gender considerations. Finally, Kogiku is shocked by the utter misery and poverty her brother's family is experiencing in the countryside, where the beauty of the landscape (i.e., the peony bush) cannot possibly compensate for the benefits of modern life in urban areas.

It can be argued that during the years of her work as a proletarian writer, Sata was less inclined to observe the inherent gender inequality that permeated even the proletarian and communist movement—later identified by Hirano Ken in his 1946 article “Seiji to bungaku” (Politics and Literature), and his articulation of the *jochū mondai* (the housemaid problem) as a blind spot in proletarian literature when it comes to female gendered invisibility in Japanese proletarian literature (see Hirano 1946).

From this perspective, Sata's feminism and gender awareness make their presence in her literary work later than in the works of other proletarian female writers such as Hirabayashi Taiko (1905-1972) or Sata's longtime friend Miyamoto Yuriko (1899-1951), with class awareness taking precedence over gender issues, which makes her a very interesting case in Japan's prewar leftist literary landscape. In essence, her female characters are first workers, and only then working women. As such, it can be argued that her *tenkō* is also expressed through the emergence of the gender category in her literature, starting in 1936.

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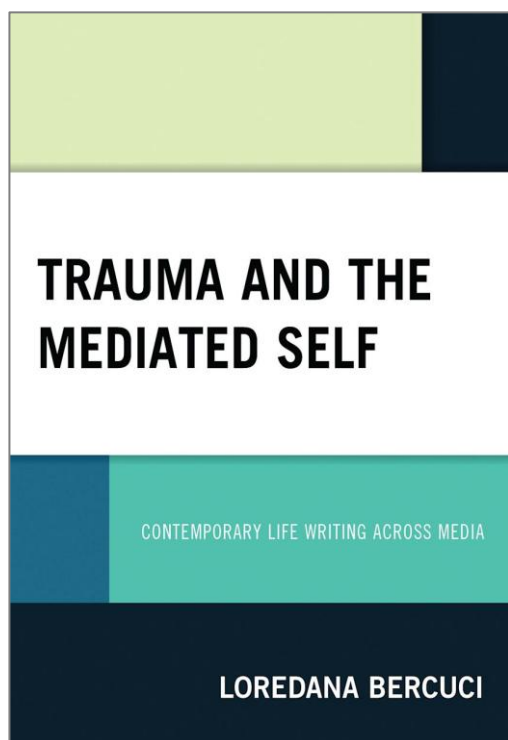


## BOOKS

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**Loredana Bercuci, *Trauma and the Mediated Self: Contemporary Life Writing Across Media*, London: Lexington Books, 2024, 205 p.**

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It is more than enough for an individual to wake up in the morning, pick up the phone – as many do –, or turn on the TV, as others do, gasp and tremble at yet another tragedy. An accident, a murder, another suicide. Genocides, war, and killing sprees. As we scroll down and button up, the distance between us grows, until we can breathe again, speak again, and shout, “It is not me! It is not me!” It could never be us. But trauma has a daily routine. It awaits. It waits beside the crib, under the classroom table, around the corner, in the arms of the loved one. It lurks in trenches, shops, and open fields. It consumes.

Much as it absorbs us, trauma is also present in the things that we like to consume ourselves, be they books, movies, or other types of entertainment. In her book, *Trauma and the Mediated Self: Contemporary Life Writing Across Media*, Loredana Bercuci dives exactly into this topic. She explores the various means of trauma representation in contemporary media, by bringing together autobiographical works and including printed-word memoirs, graphic memoirs, autodocumentaries, and autobiographical video games. She analyses the particularities of each representation, fostering a complex conversation between the notion of memory and the implications of



trauma. Moreover, the author observes and disseminates the creation of a new type of aesthetics, as a result of different media foregrounding various representations of trauma. She emphasizes the extent to which customization of each category ends up generating distinct representations of trauma, which result in multiple trauma aesthetics.

Divided into four chapters, *Trauma and the Mediated Self* provides a comprehensive view of how trauma and memory have been perceived throughout time, up until the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An important part of the text is dedicated to the analysis of contemporary written and visual works. It is not just the author's investigation as a researcher that forms the nucleus of the book. The chosen ways and the style in which she conveys the information make the book not only informative, but also genuinely enjoyable. She manages to create an eclectic illustration of events, as the research work per se is framed and introduced by recalling some of the best-known events embedded in collective memory. Thus, Bercuci creates a space wherein events such as the Monica Lewinsky case, the Holocaust, or 9/11 provide both the background and the foundation for the analyses that follow.

The first chapter, "Trauma, Memory, Life Writing, and the Mediated Self in Contemporary Culture", brings together some of the most prominent theories on memory and its relationship to traumatic events and individual experiences. Drawing on illustrious theorists of memory and trauma, the author offers vivid illustration of the changes these concepts have undergone throughout time. To construct this timeline, she starts from Plato and the metaphor of the clay tablet, highlighting the evolution of the topic of trauma up to the present, when this notion has become quintessential to popular public discourse. The chapter opens as follows: "The workings of culture are often best revealed in its most popular forms" (13). This explains the standpoint from which the researcher constructs her arguments, while acting as a constant reminder. Throughout the book, the reader is shown that what represents human beings does not lie in novelty or rarity, but rather in the common, the enjoyable, and the accessible.

The remaining chapters propose case studies of four distinct types of media that enjoy popularity in the autobiographical writing market. In the second part, "Trauma and the Memoir Boom", Bercuci discusses three printed-word memoirs, *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2005) and *Blue Nights* (2011) by Joan Didion, accompanied by Jesmyn Ward's *Men We Reaped* (2013). While each chapter dives into a different medium, the first analysis also illustrates the more traditional approach to autobiographical trauma writing, which will be challenged in the chapters to follow. The strategic corpus choice supports the author's plan to highlight the complexities of trauma dissemination via the written word.

Besides the intricacies of the trauma-related content itself, Bercuci also discusses the recent "memoir boom", opening a broader discussion as to the spectrum of autobiographical writing. Thus, among others, she mentions texts such as the bestseller *The Glass Castle* (2005) by Jeannette Walls, while also tracing the popular genre of Middle Eastern memoirs, with notable examples such as *Reading Lolita in*

*Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003) by Azar Nafisi, or the graphic memoir, *Persepolis* (2007), by Marjane Satrapi. Apart from them, she includes a comprehensive list of other popular movements in autobiographical writing, such as celebrity memoirs (54), feminist writings (55), or AIDS/HIV memoirs (55-56).

In the third chapter, "Trauma in Graphic Memoirs", the author analyzes four popular graphic memoirs, namely *Maus* (1986,1991) by Art Spiegelman, *Fun Home* (2006) by Alison Bechdel, *Stitches* (2010) by David Small and, last but not least, *Vietnamerica* (2011) by GB Tran. If the previous chapter focuses primarily on printed-word memoirs, this one brings forth the challenges and outcomes of visually transmitting traumatic events, environments, or experiences. As they capture both personal and collective traumas, the selected titles generate a complex survey of traumatic representations. Bercuci expertly creates a parallel between pioneering graphic novels, Spiegelman's *Maus* and Bechdel's *Fun Home*, and their successors, *Stitches* and *Vietnamerica*. If the former have been embedded in collective memory as epitomes of the genre, constructing an ideal medium for collective and personal trauma alike, the reader now discovers how David Small and BG Tran's approaches are innovative, as "each brings strategies of their own to represent the particular type of trauma they approach" (117).

The fourth chapter, "Trauma in Autobiographical Documentaries", references three autodocumentaries, Sarah Polley's *Stories We Tell* (2012), Chantal Akerman's *No Home Movie* (2015), and Val Kilmer's *A24 Val* (2021). They shift the focus to a different medium, as the printed word is left behind and replaced with an entirely visual approach to memory and trauma. The three documentaries' different director approaches and Bercuci's layered analysis thereof construe a broad picture of the various techniques that may be adopted in the field. For instance, the author describes Sarah Polley's *Stories We Tell* as "taking a completely different form from the trauma narratives discussed in the previous chapters" (10), whereas the others bring their own contribution through visual metaphors or explorations of symptomatology.

In "Trauma in Autobiographical Video Games", the fifth and final chapter, the focus is on two video games: *Father and I* (2012), designed by Vander Cabarello as a retelling of his childhood memories of abuse within his family, and *That Dragon, Cancer* (2017), by Amy and Ryan Green, in which the family environment becomes a place of struggle following the cancer diagnosis of the one-year-old son. This innovative approach to trauma and memory transforms representation into a dynamic and interactive experience. The challenge of recalling trauma in an experimental format generates a new perspective, which distances itself from previous approaches while also reinforcing the relationship between trauma, memory, and media.

In *Trauma and the Mediated Self: Contemporary Life Writing Across Media*, Loredana Bercuci manages to reunite different environments in which trauma and its outcomes can be explored. From printed-word and graphic memoirs to autodocumentaries and videogames, the author provides a comprehensive perspective on how popular entertainment can express such a sensitive and pervasive topic of the

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21<sup>st</sup> century as trauma. Focusing on this widely discussed subject in and of itself, and placing it in the context of multiple theories on social media emerging from both experts and individuals, this book sheds light to how trauma functions in the collective mind and how popular culture can serve as a tool for both coping with and understanding trauma.

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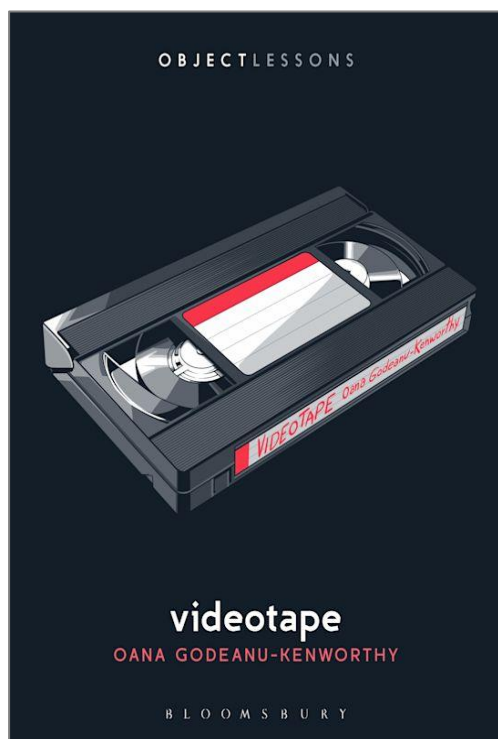
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## BOOKS

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### Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy, *Videotape*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025, 160 p.

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Material culture has never been denied its due share of attention within philosophical discourse. From Plato's Theory of Forms to Martin Heidegger's concept of *Zuhandenheit*, and from Jean Baudrillard's semiotic migration of objects from the area of utility to the realm of social theory to Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology, the utility, ephemerality, and symbolic function of objects have undergone significant conceptual scrutiny and empirical analysis. When, in the mid-1960s, Baudrillard asked whether "we could classify the luxuriant growth of objects as we do a flora or fauna" (*The System of Objects* 1996:1), little did he imagine that an answer would come from a book series that developed a systematic taxonomy of artifacts. The fundamental duality in ontology lies between objects and the relationships between them, but what endows objects with ontological value is how humans employ them. It is this

anthropological dimension that frames the Bloomsbury Academic book series Object Lessons as a celebration of the union between humanity and materiality. As Heidegger argues, our understanding of objects occurs after appropriately interacting with them; once their function is known, we can meaningfully engage with and use them. Complementing this, Heidegger and other existential phenomenologists consider humans perceive and experience the world emotionally and interactively, and this



emotional engagement with the world is the core of human existence. *Ergo*, only by an emotional connection with our memories can we trigger bonds that link personal experience, cultural semiotics, and tangible heritage. It is at this juncture that Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy's volume, *Videotape*, dives into the secret life and adventures of an object that had an immense cultural impact on individual and collective mentalities in the twentieth century, though ideological landscapes and geographical contexts responded to it in different ways. Easy to use and widely available to everyday consumers, the medium changed the relationship between television and home video technologies, as well as the interaction between audiences and the public sphere.

Following the six-chapter progress of the videotape from a broadcast-recording device to a valuable commodity within the domestic sphere, Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy uses a holistic approach to uncover the hidden life of an ordinary medium, which was truly extraordinary upon its emotional debut in the author's life. It would be more accurate to say that the historical advent of the videotape and its affective premiere in the author's life are two distinct moments that not only separate their occurrence temporally, but also geographically and culturally. Videotape technology was introduced in the 1950s in the United States by Ampex Corporation and the first VHS format was developed in Japan by JVC in the 1970s. However, the author explored its global presence in the embodiment of a shared viewing experience in Romania, by the Black Sea, before the fall of the Berlin Wall, when she watched her first movie on videotape, *Return of the Jedi*, in a historical context fundamentally different from the one that hosted the film's aura of fantasy. The writer argues that viewers found it difficult to unpack the cinematic message, a lucid explanation given the repressive communist regime that accommodated the experience, curtailing free access to Western media and restricting daily broadcast to two hours of monotonous propaganda. Watching a movie on videotape was thus not only a cultural experience, but mostly a sensorial one: the cassette "was still warm, felt heavy and solid, and gave off a faint chemical smell" (2). The physicality of the object is still there, in the author's mind, persisting beyond the course of her experience of it, which is visible in how she translates the affective imprint of this short-lived encounter with the unknown into a tangible form anyone can get their hands – and eyes – on: a documented life account of the videotape, whose first chapter, "A Star is Born," is essential in decoding the semiotic approach.

Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy adopts the methodological approach proposed by Marianne Hirsch, who strongly supports the idea that in humanistic studies "personal experience can be the laboratory for research." This interdisciplinary concise volume activates an object-centred approach to examine a set of entanglements between personal experience and collective memory, embedding individual life stories within broader cultural history and narratives. Addressing a rich range of cultural shifts that occurred in the final decade of the Cold War as a result of new home video technologies, the volume journeys through the expansion of Western consumer culture, heralding the videotape as "the tangible phase in the history of entertainment" (7), which, like other transformative inventions that changed the course of human history, "worried everyone" (21). Unauthorized copies of media content jeopardized revenues; videotape technology enabled viewers to take control of programming, skipping over ads at will, which diminished lines of

revenue; for fear of piracy, film studios sometimes limited their own profits in the process. All these concerns proved right in the long run and “humans were irreversibly changed by new communication technologies” (22). By manipulating the VHS cassette and the VCR, viewers had more control and autonomy over their privacy, which changed the balance of power from broadcasters to audiences.

Video producing and distributing takes place in a world where debates over media content brush up against controversies over various forms of control. From cinema to broadcast and from one competing format to another, from controlled content to alternative methods of media consumption, the invention of the videotape and the capacity of the VCR to record, multiply and play back any performance at any desired time enabled old forms of media to unwillingly leverage their power into creating a more participatory medium. The new format subverted Hollywood’s autocratic stance and challenged copyright laws, which exposed “the tension between private profit and public interest” (28) and signalled the industry’s loss of control over distribution of its product. In the second chapter, “Owning the Story,” the author’s great merit is to remind us that disrupting dominant economic arrangements through diversity in everyday media practices fundamentally transformed the living room into a private cinema, which permanently integrated audiovisual systems into the home and away from public spaces: “The videotape was giving consumers a freedom they were not supposed to have” (31). What counted as fair use of intellectual property? To what extent was Hollywood’s security threatened? Were Hollywood majors really deprived of revenue? Godeanu-Kenworthy skilfully studies the intersection of global copyright protections for content recorded on videotape and “the capitalist logic of the times” (39), where creativity was a form of capital in an age dominated by the tyranny of corporate interests.

The third chapter, “Video Nasties behind the Green Door in the US and Britain,” reveals the “legal and political battles around the videotape in Britain and the United States” (21). As a progressive bridge between the age of controlled broadcast content and that of contemporary digital streaming, video culture reshaped cultures in ways specific to each national context, as seen in the circulation of “video nasties” in Britain and the United States. Godeanu-Kenworthy examines these battles via the public reactions to “the astounding success of horror and exploitation films in Britain” (65) and to “the rise of *porn chic* as a cultural trend that mainstreamed pornography” (51-2) in the United States. In the early 1980s, the rise of VHS created a moral panic in Britain over horror films that were outside censorship control. The first point the author makes is the criticism against these visual representations of sex and graphic violence that portrayed women as vulnerable to attack, “a dominant narrative through the first half of 1983” (66). The second argument in favour of censoring the videotapes nasties came from class-based stereotypical ideas about parental responsibility and conservative positions regarding childhood education. The third claim contended that horror films imported from the US and elsewhere threatened British cultural values and led to the creation of strict government regulatory policies over entertainment. The controversy belied not merely the latent tensions – and national differences – between ideas of public morality and private consumption, but also between the pursuit of immediate profit and changes in the entertainment market in the context of cultural dominance, also due to “larger

anxieties about the dominance of US entertainment on British markets" (67). At the same time, precisely because the consumption of erotic films such as *Last Tango in Paris* (1972) or horror movies like *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* transformed viewing habits, home video profoundly altered a wide range of movie cultures, from exploitation to art cinema, and from production to exhibition.

This study's theoretical frameworks have been inspired by the work of materialist thinkers such as Jean Baudrillard and Marshall McLuhan, as well as Memory Studies scholars Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer. The juxtaposition implied in the title of the fourth chapter, "Viewing Parties and the Party" reminds former tenants of the Eastern bloc that an Orwellian Big Brother was watching everybody, including those watching videotapes. Informal social gatherings were thus continuously stalked by ideological surveillance. Since this book was sparked by a recollection, we all remember that VCRs were too expensive in Eastern Europe to be affordable to its citizens: "the equivalent of twenty months' average salary in Bulgaria, between five and thirteen months in Czechoslovakia and nine months in Hungary" (74-5). In communist Romania "officially VCRs did not exist" (75), but from 1983 to 1985 the phenomenon of *vidéothèque* culture became widespread and turned someone's apartment into a public cinema, where the cost of a ticket could be up to three times higher than that of regular cinema screenings. The author remarks that the cultural responses to social practices around videotapes behind the Iron Curtain were not homogenous. USSR, Romania, Bulgaria, and East Germany had stricter regulatory policies than Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary, which "had a more relaxed relationship with the West" (73). At the same time, across the region, the video culture gave access to educational resources and opened the door to new professions: "the need for translators increased" (92). In Eastern Europe subtitling was preferred to dubbing as it was a cheaper, less complex, and faster way of language conversion.

The greatest contribution of Godeanu-Kenworthy's admirable "object lesson" on videotape is to introduce us to a topic that reveals a nuanced understanding of material culture, which expanded differently in the United States than abroad. The same fear pervaded Eastern and Western countries: independent video culture threatened to unsettle audiences through exposure to transgressive content: "fears of the negative impact that mass consumption of porn and horror could have on the population" (72). However, the fear was motivated by different ideological concerns. While video culture was criticized for violating moral codes in America, it was considered a subversive factor in Eastern Europe, videorecorders being denounced as "tools of imperialist propaganda" (74). The fifth chapter, "Business Models," considers how propaganda influenced, and was influenced by, the economic side of the entertainment industry. The emergence of the video rental store in the US and the UK was successful even during the economic recession of the 1970s and early 1980s. *In breve*, video has become a term for an experience, an empirical interaction with the pause, rewind, and fast-forward functions, while its semantic adaptability proves its autonomy as a medium distinct from cinema. One potential criticism of the book is that its theoretical background is rooted primarily in the Anglo-American tradition, which may introduce a degree of bias in its perspective. However, the book is well aware of its cultural and geographical parameters, since it

considers not only the US and Japan as the foreparents of videotape technology, but also consumers of this mode of entertainment from as various backgrounds as Eastern and Western Europe, Russia and Iran, which makes the book a key reference that could be adopted in university curricula worldwide.

Instead of a conclusion, the sixth chapter, "Nostalgia and the VHS Aesthetic," comes full circle, returning to the initial emotional and personal connection with the medium that once activated a Proustian madeleine effect on the author's memory, sparking the germination of a book about an object that stimulates a form of *prosthetic nostalgia* for a bygone era. Not only do we miss our childhood, our tangible connection with Walter Benjamin's age of mechanical reproduction, or our ability to replicate memories of past events through physical recording media, but we are also reminiscent of "a lost sense for solidarity and resilience" (120). In her vast memoir of experiences with analogue technology, Oana Godeanu-Kenworthy takes on a Scheherazade-like role, crafting a cabinet of curiosities in which the videotape weaves together audiences, media industries, collective experiences, and a human presence within material forms. Acting as a *pharmakon*, the videotape both healed and poisoned the twentieth-century media landscape by giving access to a medium regarded as undermining morals, ideologies, and the revenue structures of the broadcast sector.

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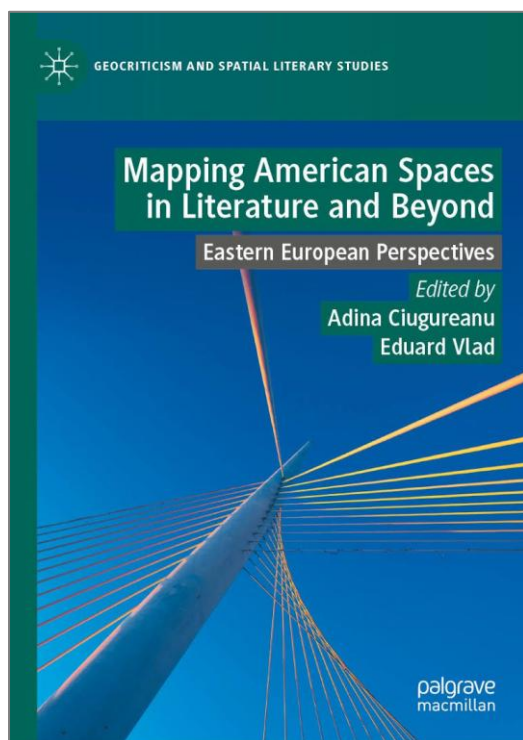
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## BOOKS

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**Adina Ciugureanu and Eduard Vlad (eds.), *Mapping American Spaces in Literature and Beyond: Eastern European Perspectives*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025, 254 p.**

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The editors and contributors to this ambitious volume explore critical spatial thinking in American literature and culture as well as digital humanities through what they call an “Eastern European perspective.” This perspective – Robert T. Tally Jr. clarifies in his “Foreword” – points to “a literal but also critical distance from the United States and its cultures that is extraordinarily productive,” since the authors come mostly from Romania and Turkey, a space “allowing them to excavate and illuminate sites of cultural fecundity with an acute awareness of the distinctiveness of the spaces surveyed” (vi).

Different real and imaginary spaces, including those represented in literature, art, architecture, cartography, and digital media are analysed through methods pertaining to spatial and geocritical studies that focus on the “spatial turn” in academic thought.

Structured in three sections and sixteen chapters, the volume first maps spaces (with contributions by Meldan Tanrisal, Adina Ciugureanu, Emerald Anne St Clair Drysdale, Alina Bottez, Florian Andrei Vlad and Ileana Marin), then imagines geographies (with contributions by Ana Cristina Băniceru, Gabriela Tucan, Eduard Vlad and Anca Dobrinescu) and, finally, it engages with space in literary works (with contributions by



Buket Boz, Ștefan Ionescu-Ambrosie, Elena Ciobanu, Michaela Praisler and Oana-Celia Gheorghiu, as well as Roxana-Elisabeta Marinescu).

In their Introduction, the editors, Adina Ciugureanu and Eduard Vlad, explain that their volume grew from the “fascination with space in literature, including directions like ‘literary cartography’ and ‘literary geography’” (1). Starting from Michel Foucault’s “other spaces” (1986) and concept of “heterotopias,” which, unlike utopias, are real places, Edward Soja’s *Thirdspace* (1989, 2000), Frederic Jameson’s *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) and moving on to Bertrand Westphal’s geocritical approaches (2011) as well as Robert Tally Jr.’s *Spatiality* (2013) and *Topophrenia: Place, Narrative, and the Spatial Imagination* (2019), the editors have gathered contributions based on the theoretical works that foreground the importance of space and mapping in literary imagination. All authors are interested in the work of various thinkers who endeavoured to define a poetics of space, from Bachelard’s eponymous volume to Foucault’s “Of Other Spaces” which developed the notion of heterotopias, those tangible locations which have different rules and meanings and which can be libraries, museums, prisons, cemeteries, as well as Henri Lefebvre’s Marxist critique of “the production of space” and his notions of Perceived Space, Conceived Space, and Lived Space (2). The approach is also focused on gender studies, deriving from Lefebvre’s equating the modern city to “a masculine will-to-power,” and “a symbol of power and fecundity” (2). Moreover, the authors start from the spatial turn marked by Robert T. Tally Jr.’s *Spatiality* (2013), since when interpreting literary texts, one should see them as constructions that make us understand and visualize space (4).

The first part navigates from the Natives’ real and lived-in space to the spatial configurations under biased and/or life-boosting propaganda and from the real and imaginary space of a poet’s mind to the digital space of virtual reality. Tanrisal explores the value systems of Native Americans inhabiting the New World who regarded nature and land as divine gifts and held dear “an environmental ethic among the Great Lakes” (22) before the white Europeans colonized their space. Ciugureanu, who studied the archives of *The Los Angeles Times* from the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, investigates the way in which Los Angeles immigrants of Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican origin and the space they occupied in town were discriminated in the pages of this major newspaper through double-standard narratives. Based on Lefebvre’s right to the city concept, David Harvey’s territorial justice, and Soja’s understanding of spatial rights as the possibility “to participate openly and fairly in all the processes producing urban space, [...] to avoid all forms of imposed spatial segregation and confinement” (Soja 2010, 99-100), Ciugureanu discusses the “racialization” and the “criminalizing” of space, which produced the “Yellow Peril” and the “Brown Peril” that discriminated the inhabitants of China and Japanese towns and the Mexican barrios against the white Americans. As the author claims, both the space and the people living it “have [...] gone through the process of becoming illegal, unwanted, criminal” according to the interests of the local white administration (31).

The way Norman Rockwell framed space in his paintings and illustrations published in the weekly *Saturday Evening Post* during and after World War II is the main topic of Drysdale’s chapter which attempts to look beyond the propaganda that

followed “the official ideologies which were meant to win the war and to re-establish the family roles and institution when the war was over,” since the various ironical touches that the author identifies reveal “a personal reading of the official discourse” (46). For Bottez, Frank Lloyd Wright’s architectural designs in the 1940s and 1950s harmonized public and private spaces, since he believed in unity that became the “dominant principle” of his work, which had an intrinsic “Edenic dimension” (63). For Florian Andrei Vlad, John Quinn’s collection *The Wolf Last Seen* is not only a geographic space but a map of human history, wildlife, and geological stories; the chapter examines “Quinn’s poetic journeys and their attending poetic cartographies sketched in various places across America and abroad” as traces of “memorable markers of both sameness and difference” (86).

Marin endeavours to assess readers’ responses to digital writing: electronic texts and hypertexts engaging with digital spaces that became the space of communication in the twenty-first century. Starting from Merleau-Ponty’s intentionality which “is fundamentally related to the body and its senses” (92), she analyses Laura Okkema’s Digital Archive of Traumatic Spaces, *The Deserters*, and Serge Bouchardon’s *Loss of Grasp*. Marin reads Okkema’s “heavily symbolic space” (94) as a critique of the Nazi past and the communist era of the former East Germany, as well as an emotional engagement with a dark heritage that the creator still carries with her although she crossed the Atlantic. Bouchardon’s work on haptic perception generates a meta-critical multimedial narrative (101), whose digital space records and deforms the image of the computer user with each movement on the haptic device (103-4).

Băniceru explores Nathaniel Hawthorne’s real and imaginary spaces as representations of the untamed natural world, consistent with an ecophobic and female trans-corporeal perspective that she reads through the theoretical lens of geocriticism and ecocriticism, especially the EcoGothic and ecofeminism. Băniceru demonstrates how the female body was regarded as an untamed territory that the Puritans thought of controlling as they controlled wild nature. Tucan offers a new perspective on Humbert Humbert, the narrator of Nabokov’s *Lolita*, whose “travels zigzagging America with his pubescent stepdaughter, from motel to motel” (127) she follows in order to analyse how disheartened he was by what he imagined to be America’s highway journey and roadside culture. Agreeing with Castronovo (2002, 36), who demystified Humbert’s sustained fight against America as “a country of wonders and curiosities,” Tucan shows that Humbert’s “paranoia and obsession with controlling and isolating Lolita from others” prevented him from admiring “the beauty America had to offer throughout their entire journey” (138).

Eduard Vlad focuses on Cormac McCarthy’s mapmaking in his novel *The Orchard Keeper* that builds an imaginary geography of the author’s native Tennessee rural Appalachian settings in the same way that Faulkner created the Yoknapatawpha County, “his famous literary cartographic venture” (143). Eduard Vlad endeavours to find the “Faulknerian skeleton in McCarthy’s closet,” and investigates how “the imaginary map” of McCarthy’s debut novel “features an Appalachian spatial contrast and a group of interwoven subplots linked to the central characters” (145-6). For Dobrinescu, America is a real and imaginary space inhabited by real and imaginary

people, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's fiction reveals through its treatment of the way in which Nigerian immigrants pendulate between coping with their adopted country's culture, while conserving the distinctiveness of their own identities. Dobrinescu's conclusion is that Adichie's novels and short stories "are about the US and us, contemporary migrants, travellers across frontiers" (172).

Using Marc Augé's concept of "non-place" and Gil Doron's definitions of "dead zones," Boz deals with Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*. The author invites the reader for a night walk through marginalized city districts where one fears to go after darkness. Ionescu-Ambrosie examines David Foster Wallace's encyclopaedic novel *Infinite Jest* as a narrative labyrinth in which the reader gets lost to find his way back through open-endedness. Ionescu-Ambrosie mentions briefly Thomas Pynchon's, John Barth's, and Don DeLillo's labyrinth as a key visual metaphor, "where the notion of narrative closure is questioned and a center is nowhere to be found" (193). In fact, from all these, Pynchon's case is even more fascinating for the topic of space, since his books are set specifically in Southern California. A chapter on Pynchon would have probably completed the set of American literary spaces from this section, since "in Pynchon's imagination Southern California is the place where the nation impinges upon the characters of his novels, the place in which his characters begin to think about their lives within the framework of the nation, as Oedipa does near the end of [*The Crying of*] *Lot 49* when she walks down a 'stretch of railroad track' and realizes 'she might have found The Tristero anywhere in her Republic,' that America itself is 'coded in Inverarity's testament'" (Schaub 2012, 30).

Ciobanu, who starts from the controversial case of Sylvia Plath, focuses on the neo-confessional poetry of Sharon Olds, Yusef Komunyakaa, and Olena Kalaytiak Davis which is tied to Affect, and "becomes a stage for nonpolemical expression of political statements of speakers who have learnt how to live with their traumas through a deeper understanding of past and present circumstances" (219). Ciobanu's tools to explore the space of confessional poetry are psychoanalytic in nature, since "the 'lyric I' is usually used as a form of self-expression, describing the most intimate and personal experiences" (Yunusoğlu 2020, 125). Ciobanu admits that analysing this type of poetry "can rarely make do without the help of psychoanalytical and psychiatric approaches" (209). These poets either exposed personal psychotic spaces of mental illness, family dysfunctions, and suicide provoked by unresolved past dramas, making their readers empathize with the Other. Praisler and Gheorghiu analyse Michael Cunningham's gendered space in *The Hours* through a comparison with Virginia Woolf's "bustling city [that] stimulates the mind and instils life in her and her writing" (222). The authors are interested in how, for Woolf, "London sets in motion thought processes oriented towards the pressure of capturing the essence of experience and the possibilities of rendering that experience in language" (223) and how Cunningham transfers these processes into the space of New York City. They investigate *The Hours* as "oriented towards the time-space paradigm, bringing forth the mapping of (third)spaces inhabited by Others, with an accentuated gendered vein" (224). They see the novel as a heterotopia, since it is both "part of the institutionalized literary tradition and outside it," and it features "real women who inhabit the world and imagined women who

inhabit the book,” constructing gendering discourses. Marinescu builds her analysis of Salman Rushdie’s novel *Victory City* by establishing firm grounds of genre and authorship (mapping the empire, the world, the Other and gender, which is a new element that Rushdie introduced in his novel after having been criticized for his phallocentrism).

The volume fulfils its promise, navigating through different kinds of mapping: from virtual, bodily, labyrinthic and mental dimensions to real and imaginary spaces. The book is a refreshing read, captivating the readers with a multifarious, open-minded vision of the multicultural, multi-ethnic traditions of the United States, as well as a reliably balanced perspective, a highly inclusive 21<sup>st</sup>-century guide to the rich diversity of American spaces. *Mapping American Spaces in Literature and Beyond* proves to be a valuable reference tool for those students and scholars with an interest in American representation of spaces (including peripheral, marginalized and digital texts) as well as in critical and cultural theory and literary criticism. At the same time, due to its broad comparative span, it can be an excellent resource for those who teach American literature and culture, urban studies, as well as comparative literature.

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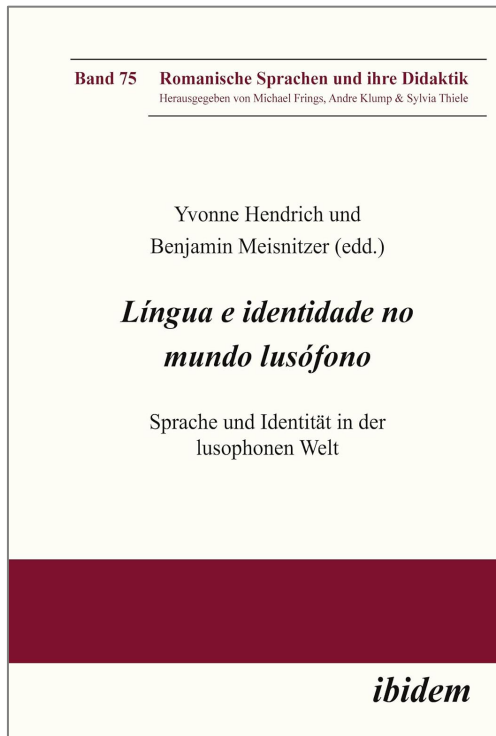
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## BOOKS

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### Yvonne Hendrich und Benjamin Meisnitzer (edd.) *Língua e identidade no mundo lusófono. Sprache und Identität in der lusophonen Welt*, Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2022, 296 p.

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O volume editado por Yvonne Hendrich (Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz) e Benjamin Meisnitzer (Universität Leipzig) contém dezassete trabalhos redigidos em português e em alemão, que propõem reflexões em torno de um tema abrangente e atual, a relação entre a língua e identidade no espaço lusófono. De acordo com os editores, “[o]s autores lançam luz sobre esta relação por vezes conflituosa, a questão da construção da própria identidade, mas também a questão da unidade que a língua dá aos países da lusofonia” (22-23).

No primeiro artigo do volume, intitulado “*Ist eine portugiesische Kollektividentität möglich? As Naus von António Lobo Antunes und die Narrative Psychologie*” [É possível uma identidade coletiva portuguesa? *As Naus* de António Lobo Antunes e a Psicologia Narrativa] (25-36), Alexander Altevoigt apresenta uma análise interessante da construção narrativa de identidade

pelas personagens do romance caracterizando-a como polífona, sem que nenhuma voz tenha o monopólio de interpretação da identidade coletiva portuguesa, desconstruindo, desta maneira, a identidade coletiva propagada antes do 25 de abril. Nesta polifonia, o autor vê uma correspondência com a polifonia de opiniões na sociedade democrática.



Teresa Bagão (37-56) propõe um estudo exploratório em torno da identidade portuguesa em contextos de migração, destacando como a mesma se manifesta nos média convencionais (*Visão*, *RDP* etc.), chegando à conclusão de que no âmbito das comunidades emigrantes portuguesas são prevalentes as isotopias positivas, sendo a língua a marca identitária mais profunda. Outros elementos de identificação, como a bandeira, a culinária, o galo de Barcelos e a saudade são igualmente prevalentes, pois têm ocorrências significativas no *corpus* analisado.

O próximo estudo, da autoria de Martin Becker (57-74) é de cunho epistemológico e debruça-se sobre a *Grammatica Philosophica da Lingua Portuguesa* de Jerónimo Soares Barbosa, um importante filólogo português do século XVII. O autor tenta identificar as correntes linguísticas que exerceram influência na obra de Soares Barbosa, destacando uma relação direta com a tradição de Port-Royal e um claro afastamento do pensamento linguístico português da época, que apostava sobretudo nos métodos descritivos. Na opinião de Becker, Soares Barbosa “conseguiu uma brecha importante – brecha paradigmática importante que se abria entre a tradição gramaticográfica do seu país e a teoria linguística mais avançada ao nível europeu” (73), sendo o seu contributo marcante para os avanços da filologia e da linguística portuguesas.

A contribuição de Isabel Araújo Branco (75-83) evidencia a linguagem e as filiações literárias na obra de Dinis Machado (e do seu pseudónimo Dennis McShade), identificando o autor argentino Jorge Luis Borges como influência incontornável. A ideia é interessante e a autora consegue estabelecer algumas pontes entre os dois autores, mas a análise se limita em apenas algumas citações da obra de Machado comentadas de forma genérica. O tema mereceria uma análise mais aprofundada.

Verena Dolle dedica-se no seu artigo (82-102) do romance *Estive em Lisboa e lembrei de você* de Luiz Ruffato (2009) e analisa o sonho europeu nas biografias dos protagonistas do romance, migrados de ex-colónias portuguesas para Portugal (que substituiu o sonho americano dos ancestrais emigrados da Europa ao Brasil). A autora analisa também a dura realidade de uma sociedade que hierarquiza os seus migrantes, entre outros, segundo a sua variedade falada do português. Neste contexto, Verena Dolle interpreta o fato da edição portuguesa do romance ter um título adaptado ao português europeu (*Estive em Lisboa e lembrei-me de ti*) como “apropriação neocolonial de diferença” (98) e como um sinal de uma atitude hegemónica na lusofonia.

Claudia Fernandes faz uma análise do “antiportuguesismo” (105-115) ou, segundo a autora, da cultura “em negativo” (105). O antiportuguesismo é definido como “forma específica de antipatriotismo dirigida a Portugal, em que se critica hábitos, costumes, valores, maneiras de ser e formas de estar e de sentir” e é analisado em cartazes, cartoons e em alguns textos literários ou ensaísticos. O propósito da autora não é de analisar um *corpus* abrangente, mas sim de destacar mecanismos que determinam as manifestações externas e internas do antiportuguesismo. Consideramos que análises mais aprofundadas, com base em *corpora* de textos mediáticos seriam uma continuação oportuna desta reflexão preponderantemente teórica.

*O infinitivo conjugado* em galego (117-137) é o tema do artigo de David Paul Gerards. Trata-se de uma análise de *corpus* abrangente (com mais de 1500 ocorrências)

e muito pormenorizada, que tenta dar conta do uso deste mecanismo gramatical – existente apenas em galego e em português –, em contextos formais, em função de opções ideológicas relativas à língua galega (autonomismo vs. reintegracionismo) e das possíveis questões identitárias envolvidas no processo. O estudo mostra que no caso de falantes reintegracionistas se verifica um número mais elevado de ocorrências de *infinitivo conxugado*, uma forma de “hiper-uso” deste elemento gramatical, que corrobora com o posicionamento ideológico do grupo que defende uma reintegração do galego no diassistema português.

A contribuição de António Martins Gomes, intitulada “*A língua portuguesa: a expressão de um projeto político e religioso*” (139-149) é um ensaio sem referências bibliográficas, que pretende descortinar a continuidade do “projeto linguístico” como componente identitária portuguesa. O autor tece considerações pessoais sobre o assunto, faz referências a obras literárias e a factos históricos para sustentar a sua argumentação, mas não parece tentar respeitar as normas de redação académica. Consideramos que esta contribuição ensaística seria mais adequada numa revista cultural ou de divulgação.

O artigo intitulado “*Japaner in Brasilien und Brasilianer in Japan und ihre Identität(en) im Kontext von Arbeitsmigration: Chancen und Herausforderung für die romanistische Forschung*” [Japoneses no Brasil e Brasileiros no Japão e sua(s) identidades no contexto da emigração de trabalho: Oportunidades e desafios da pesquisa romanística] (151-166) da autoria de Anja Hennemann declara como objetivo de traçar as linhas principais do contato entre o Brasil e o Japão e formular as lacunas de investigação, alegando que o tema foi abordado apenas de maneira marginal na investigação romanística. A autora, porém, não cita nenhum dos numerosos estudos publicados no Brasil em português e nenhum estudo do Japão. Consequentemente cabe concluir que, *ou*, para a autora, os estudos publicados em língua portuguesa por linguistas brasileiros não fazem parte da pesquisa romanística, *ou* a autora não se deu ao trabalho de realizar uma pesquisa bibliográfica séria. A última hipótese é apoiada pela superficialidade das análises apresentadas. Este artigo (superficial em todos os aspetos abordados) focaliza menos o contato linguístico entre o português e o japonês no Brasil, mas predominantemente a questão de Português Língua de Herança no Japão. Contudo, essa abordagem é baseada apenas em relatos anedóticos de jornais em língua inglesa como *Japan Times* e *New York Times*, em vez de considerar os estudos linguísticos existentes sobre o tema ou apresentar um estudo empírico próprio. Por razões de espaço, aqui não é possível analisar todos os erros, incoerências e contradições internas do artigo.

Fabienne Loureiro-Galmbacher (167-182) abre uma pista de investigação na área da antropologia linguística e analisa o papel da(s) língua(s) na construção identitária – a autora prefere o termo reconstrução para falantes que se integram na sociedade de acolhimento com uma idade mais avançada – da diáspora angolana que vive na Alemanha. Apesar de se basear num corpus de apenas quinze entrevistas, a contribuição revela aspetos importantes, como a falta de lealdade em relação ao português e a outras línguas nacionais angolanas, em detrimento do alemão e uma fraca

conscientização das importâncias das línguas nacionais, como consequência das ideologias veiculadas durante o período colonial. A autoria identifica uma “atitude pragmática” (180) junto dos informantes, que consideram a língua do país de acolhimento essencial para a sua integração.

No seu artigo, intitulado „*Sprache und Identität: eine vergleichende Betrachtung des angolischen und mosambikanischen Portugiesisch*“ [Língua e identidade: considerações comparativas entre o Português Angolano e o Português Moçambicano] (183-193), Benjamin Meisnitzer apresenta um estudo contrastivo do Português Angolano (PA) e do Português Moçambicano (PM) questionando a classificação usual, mas pouco diferenciada de Português Africano. Analisando exemplos das áreas de fonética, do léxico e da sintaxe das duas variedades do português, e considerando as diferentes situações de contato linguístico e outros parâmetros sociolinguísticos, o autor chega a conclusão que – devido ao número maior de falantes de português L1, o processo de formação de uma norma endógena é mais avançado no português angolano. A língua portuguesa, o autor considera como um elemento de uma identidade comum entre os dois países, as normas endógenas divergentes, porém, como elementos de uma identidade própria.

Sílvia Melo-Pfeifer debruça-se no seu artigo (195-208) sobre o plurilinguismo de crianças portuguesas que vivem na Alemanha e apresenta uma parte dos resultados do projeto “Imagens do (ensino) português no estrangeiro” da Coordenação do Ensino do Português na Alemanha e pela Embaixada de Portugal em Berlim. O estudo destaca três tipos de interações: a seleção monolíngue dos idiomas, a intercompreensão plurilingue e o uso do *translanguaging*. Uma das conclusões da autora é que em contexto de plurilinguismo, a noção de língua deixa de ser relevante, sendo necessário tomar em consideração as “dinâmicas do plurilinguismo” e a “geometria variável” de sistemas semióticos (204) prevalentes na comunicação. Outros conceitos, entre os quais a ideia de que um indivíduo tem uma única língua materna, devem ser igualmente relativizados, uma vez que não são suficientes para descrever a complexidade linguística das realidades plurilingues atuais.

Telmo Mória tece no seu artigo (209-226) algumas reflexões sobre o A090, mostrando que se trata de medidas em sintonia com as mudanças ortográficas anteriores e que algumas questões ficam em aberto como desafios para o futuro (as formas do PPS *cantámos* vs *cantamos*), o uso de *k* em vez que *qu* para palavras de origem africana, o uso de *k*, *w* e *y* em topónimos e gentílicos, a grafia de palavras de origem inglesa, etc. Trata-se de uma posição equilibrada, que destaca vantagens e desvantagens do A090, salientando que não há soluções ortográficas perfeitas. Consideramos que este tipo de análise se torna muito útil, sobretudo no contexto de vários debates sobre o A090 (ver também a contribuição de Raquel Vieira Raggi deste volume), debates esses que nem sempre contam com contribuições de especialistas capazes fazer análises *sine ira et studio*.

Lukas Müller apresenta no seu artigo intitulado: „*Reflexivität im Spannungsfeld von Sprache und Identität: Reflexivformen im europäischen und brasilianischen Portugiesisch*“ [Reflexividade entre língua e identidade: formas reflexivas no Português Europeu e no Português do Brasil] (228-240) uma análise semântica muito convincente das construções

reflexivas e não-reflexivas com verbos como *esquecer(-se) de*, usando como fundamento teórico a Gramática de Papel Semântico e Referência de Van Valin e LaPolla (1997). Mostra detalhadamente que, tanto no Português Europeu quanto no Português do Brasil, a construção não-reflexiva implica uma maior agentividade do sujeito sintático do verbo. Portanto, a construção reflexiva pode ser usada para atenuar o grau de agentividade do sujeito e com isso sua responsabilidade. Contudo, o autor chega a conclusão que a semântica da construção não é o único fator relevante pelo seu uso, mas também a variação diassistemática. A maior frequência da construção não-reflexiva no Português do Brasil, o autor tenta explicar de maneira menos convincente com uma diferença cultural, caracterizando a cultura brasileira como uma *cultura de high-context* segundo a abordagem de Hall (1976).

No seu artigo (241-252), Raquel Vieira Raggi debruça-se sobre alguns posicionamentos contra o AO90 na imprensa portuguesa e brasileira, usando na sua análise a teoria da metáfora concetual da linguística cognitiva, de forma a identificar os elementos culturais subjacentes às estratégias argumentativas. A autora identifica, numa análise muito detalhada algumas metáforas prevalentes, que dão conta do tom por vezes violento do debate público sobre o AO90: AO É PERIGO, AO É DOMINAÇÃO. Se a concetualização do AO invoca noções como “perigo” e “dominação”, não são surpreendentes as reações de “defesa da língua portuguesa” de alguns dos locutores. Mais trabalhos como o de Telmo Mória, publicados nos média generalistas poderiam, achamos nós, contribuir para uma compreensão mais adequada o papel do AO90 e da ortografia, em geral.

Carsten Sinner analisa no seu artigo, intitulado: „*Sprachliche Varietäten und normative Konflikte: Exame Nacional de Ensino Médio und Gramáticas de Concurso*“ [Variedades linguísticas e conflitos normativos: o *Exame Nacional de Ensino Médio* e as gramáticas de concurso] (253-268), as atitudes normativas perante as variações diassistemáticas, particularmente das variedades orais de proximidade dos materiais do ENEM e das gramáticas que pretendem preparar para concursos públicos no Brasil. O autor chega a conclusão que os materiais, apesar de alguns avanços, continuam sendo puristas e conservadores, dispensando pouca atenção às variedades orais.

Por fim, o artigo de Doris Wieser analisa a poesia de José Craveirinha (267-285) do ponto da vista da construção da moçambicanidade, tentando aproximá-la à poesia de combate. Apesar de inegáveis convergências temáticas e estilísticas, a poesia de José Craveirinha afasta-se, na ótica da autora, da poesia de combate, uma vez que dá espaço de manifestação à diversidade étnica, valorizada como elemento essencial da identidade moçambicana. A autora destaca também a “estética cuidadosa” (284) da poesia de Craveirinha, que faz do poeta um clássico, que ultrapassa a leitura militante e política da sua época.

O volume editado por Yvonne Hendrich e Benjamin Meisnitzer junta trabalhos de índole diferente em torno de um tema muito atual e muito relevante para o espaço lusófono, a relação complicada entre a língua e a identidade. Os artigos (embora desiguais em termos de mérito científico) destacam problemáticas como as identidades diaspóricas, os filtros ideológicos e / ou culturais na receção da normatividade,

manifestações identitárias em literaturas lusófonas. Consideramos que é um recurso útil para investigadores, professores e estudantes que se interessam pelos aspetos identitários no uso da língua portuguesa ou em relação à língua portuguesa.

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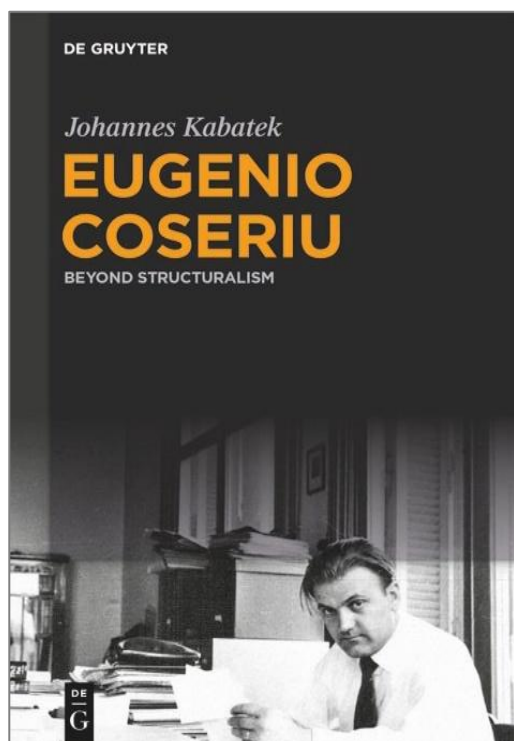
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## BOOKS

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### Johannes Kabatek, *Eugenio Coseriu. Beyond Structuralism*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2023, XVIII + 325 p.

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The volume *Eugenio Coseriu. Beyond Structuralism*, signed by Johannes Kabatek and published by Walter de Gruyter Publishing House, Berlin, 2023, marks an exceptional event, from multiple standpoints: 1) it is written by one of the last direct disciples of Eugenio Coseriu and one of the best connoisseurs of his oeuvre; 2) it is the first “comprehensive” monograph dedicated to Eugenio Coseriu’s monumental work – as the author himself states (Kabatek 2023, 1); 3) and last but not least, it is written in English, therefore dedicated to the whole world, not only to the speakers of the languages in which Eugenio Coseriu wrote or the languages into which his books were translated.

Johannes Kabatek is a renowned linguist and Romance language specialist, former professor at the University of Tübingen (after the death of Brigitte Schlieben-Lange, Eugenio Coseriu’s direct successor to the chair of Romance linguistics), and currently professor at the University of Zurich. This book represents a part of the tribute paid by the disciple to his master, namely: the creation of the Eugenio Coseriu Archive at the University of Tübingen, inaugurated in 2005; the digitization of Coseriu’s work and its dissemination on the Internet ([www.coseriu.com](http://www.coseriu.com) and [www.coseriu.ch](http://www.coseriu.ch)); the founding of the online magazine *Energeia*, in 2009; the organization of numerous scientific events



dedicated to Eugenio Coseriu; the coordination of scientific projects on Coseriu themes; the editing of multiple manuscripts signed by Eugenio Coseriu; the publishing of remarkable works based on Eugenio Coseriu's linguistic theory (Kabatek 2023, XIV).

The explicit objective of the book is to give "an introduction to the vast Coserian oeuvre, an overview that will offer, chapter by chapter, basic insights into his work and thought" (Kabatek 2023, 1), providing "an overview of his main contributions to linguistics (and to other disciplines), as well as tracing the main periods of his life" (XIII). In essence, Kabatek's book represents a metatextual reconstruction of Coseriu's work, a hermeneutics of fundamental Coserian texts, a re-actualization of the major Coserian themes, and an account of the evolution of his thought. In the attempt to highlight Coseriu's contributions to the development of linguistics and to retrieve his thought for current linguistics, Kabatek wrote a book that is exemplary in every respect.

The volume aims, in the first instance, to show that Coseriu's thought goes far "beyond structuralism", as the title of the book suggests, and that he should be considered, in the history of linguistics, as more than simply one of the European structuralists (Kabatek 2023, XIII). In Chapter 6 of this volume, entitled "Structuralism" (125-156), Kabatek states that Coseriu's entire scientific activity bears the imprint of structuralism, that he recognized the importance of structuralism in the history of linguistics, but that he tried to show its limits, his linguistics configuring, in this sense, "a way to go beyond Structuralism by retaining some of its principles and limiting them to the restricted area of systemic aspects of language" (126-127). In the same chapter, the author presents Coseriu's conception of the principles of "analytical structuralism", the two facets of structural analysis from Coseriu's standpoint, the relationship between Coseriu and Louis Hjelmslev, Coseriu's contribution to structural semantics, as well as his reaction to semantics beyond structuralism, Coseriu's contributions to the development of structural syntax and to the application of functional-structuralist principles to the Romance verbal system (125-153).

The most significant aspects of Eugeniu Coseriu's linguistic theory are explored in the other chapters of the volume: Chapter 1 – "Coseriu's epistemological principles and the essence of language" (6-33); Chapter 2 – "Norm and correctness" (34-58); Chapter 3 – "On proper names, pragmatics and text linguistics" (59-84); Chapter 4 – "Language change" (85-103); Chapter 5 – "Varieties and variational linguistics" (104-124); Chapter 7 – "'Tradition and innovation': the History of Linguistics" (157-174); Chapter 8 – "Philosophy of Language" (175-197); Chapter 9 – "Romance languages and linguistic typology" (198-214); Chapter 10 – "Coseriu and Chomsky" (215-231); Chapter 11 – "Aesthetics" (232-252).

The order of the topics addressed in this book derives from a partial chronology of Coserian thought, as the author himself states (Kabatek 2023, 4). Thus, he suggests a linear reading of the volume due to this order and to the system of cross-references used throughout the text (4). The volume is thematically structured into chapters that unfold according to a predefined pattern, with small variations derived from the nature of the targeted Coserian topic, namely: an introduction; the presentation of the theory itself across several subchapters, which vary in number and size depending on the specifics of the theory; outlook; criticism; conclusions or final

remarks, if necessary; Coserian biography cited in the chapter, but also further reading and the works cited in the chapter. This type of structured textual approach configures one of the dominant features of the volume, i.e. polyphony. In addition, parallel to the authorial text, an illustrated volume is being configured, containing pictures of Eugenio Coseriu and his colleagues, disciples and friends, manuscripts, letters and other documents that evoke his memory, or tables and diagrams that support some of the ideas expressed in the text.

Kabatek's book offers an overview of Coseriu's contributions to the development of linguistics, providing, at the same time, relevant data on the period and context in which Coserian theories were formulated, as well as a perspective on their reception. The author thus documents certain biographical moments of Coseriu, in direct relation to the creation of Coserian theory, even if this is not one of the aims of the volume. The actual approach consists of a step-by-step commented presentation of Coseriu's linguistic theory, coupled with detailed analyses of the most important aspects of this theory, explanatory forays and solid arguments in a Coserian sense, as well as the correction of some errors, confusions and misunderstandings made by interpreters of Coseriu's work. In this latter sense, it can be stated that this book represents not only a re-reading of Coseriu's work, but a profound exegesis, and a repositioning at the very conceptual core of Coseriu's theoretical edifice, often distorted from its original meaning, in other words a *restitutio in integrum*. The volume thus becomes a space for virtual dialogue between Coseriu's texts and the exegesis and lays the groundwork for subsequent research on his oeuvre.

The book begins with a brief presentation, followed by a critical assessment, of Coseriu's epistemological principles which, according to Kabatek, represent the foundation of the entire scientific activity of Coseriu and justify its aim and coherence (Kabatek 2023, 6). In the same first chapter, "the general Coserian conception of language" is presented "in a nutshell", as are the "ten theses on the essence of language and meaning" that Coseriu introduced at a seminar held at the University of Strasbourg, in 1999 (22-31).

The second chapter of the volume explores a fundamental concept of Coseriu's linguistic theory, namely the concept of norm, as well as some related aspects. The author emphasizes that in Eugenio Coseriu's theory the concept of norm, as part of the trichotomy system, norm, speech, is not prescriptive, but purely descriptive (*Sistema, norma y habla*, Montevideo, 1952), stating: "At the centre of a language, there is its systematic organisation. On its base, the norm adds conventions of regular realisation, and beyond these regularities, the concrete materialisation of language in individual speech adds further details." (Kabatek 2023, 42). In the same chapter, Kabatek also presents the problem of "linguistic correction", as well as the relationship between norm and discourse traditions (44-51).

The third chapter of the book focuses on Eugenio Coseriu's fundamental contributions to the linguistic theory of "proper names, pragmatics and text linguistics". Because Coseriu saw translation as essentially a problem of text linguistics, the same chapter also describes, in broad outlines, the theory of translation Coseriu developed.

The fourth chapter explores the problem of linguistic change, as it was conceived by Eugenio Coseriu in the book *Sincronía, diacronía e historia. El problema del cambio lingüístico*, published in Montevideo, in 1958, but also in subsequent extensions: *Sincronía, diacronía y tipología* (Madrid, 1968), as well as *Linguistic change does not exist* (Galatina, 1983).

The fifth chapter explores “one of Coseriu’s successful trichotomies”, namely, “the distinction between diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic varieties”, the first two terms of which were adopted by Coseriu from the Norwegian linguist Leiv Flydal (Kabatek 2023, 105). In the author’s view, Coseriu “has made important theoretical and empirical contributions to variational linguistics, and especially in the field of Romance linguistics” (104). In this context, Kabatek presents, on the one hand, the “debate” between Eugenio Coseriu and Uriel Weinreich, on the topic of the existence of structural dialectology, and, on the other hand, one of the successful developments of Coseriu’s conception of varieties, namely the one elaborated by Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher (113-118).

The seventh chapter describes Eugenio Coseriu’s research in the area of linguistic history and the history of Romance linguistics. In this context, Kabatek uses as a starting point one of Coseriu’s epistemological principles, namely that of “tradition and innovation” (Kabatek 2023, 157).

The eighth chapter presents, as the author states, “Coseriu’s explicit work on the philosophy of language” (Kabatek 2023, 175). In Kabatek’s view, Coseriu had a strong philosophical background, and, in addition, he was permanently concerned with understanding the essence of language and defining other fundamental linguistic concepts (175-176). A substantial part of this chapter addresses the history of the philosophy of language elaborated by Coseriu (177-187).

In the ninth chapter, certain aspects of Romance linguistics and Romance typology are outlined. A sequence of this chapter is dedicated to the relationship, especially in the context of linguistic typology, between Coseriu and Wilhelm von Humbolt, whom Coseriu admired and whom he considered the founder of general linguistics (Kabatek 2023, 203-207).

The tenth chapter is dedicated to the relationship between Eugenio Coseriu and Noam Chomsky and the latter’s work, an “asymmetrical” and “very problematic” relationship, as the author mentions (Kabatek 2023, 215, 229). According to Kabatek, Coseriu manifested “a hostile attitude”, albeit a solidly “argued” one, towards generativism (228-229).

The eleventh chapter addresses one of Coseriu’s major areas of interest, namely aesthetics. In this sense, the author presents Coseriu’s contact with this field and his dissertation in the field of aesthetics held in Italy in 1949, the problem of art in Coseriu’s vision, as well as the relationship between language and poetry, from Coseriu’s perspective. This theme was placed at the end of the volume given that Coseriu was, in the first instance, a linguist and not an aesthetician, although aesthetics represented a constant aspect of Coseriu’s work, from the very beginning (Kabatek 2023, 4).

In the epilogue or twelfth chapter of the book, Kabatek recounts some personal experiences from the relationship with Eugenio Coseriu, such as the first meeting with Coseriu and conceiving a book of interviews with Eugenio Coseriu, together with Adolfo

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Murguía, which later materialized in the volume *Die Sachen sagen, wie sie sind* (Tübingen, 1997) (Kabatek 2023, 253, 258-260).

The book ends with a brief chapter of biographical data (Chapter 13, *Biographical Data*) (269) and a chapter containing references used throughout the book (Chapter 14, *References*) (270-320). The volume concludes on a pessimistic note regarding Eugenio Coseriu's place in the context of current linguistics, which is primarily "an experimental, quantitative, computational linguistics": "Linguistics in the 21st century is going in new directions, and Coseriu's work definitely seems to have passed into the realms of the history of linguistics: what remains is a name, some concepts and terms, and a couple of labels." (Kabatek 2023, 266). This book offers, in the author's view, three reasons "for not forgetting Eugenio Coseriu and his work": 1) "a general claim for a historical consciousness"; 2) "the openness of Coseriu's thought"; 3) "the appealing nature of Coseriu's voice" (266-268).

Finally, we would like to express our belief that Eugeniu Coseriu "will not stand only in name" and that "his is more than a bare name" (cf. Bernard of Cluny). Beyond his name, there is a fascinating universe to discover, which is constantly expanding and becoming multiverse-like.

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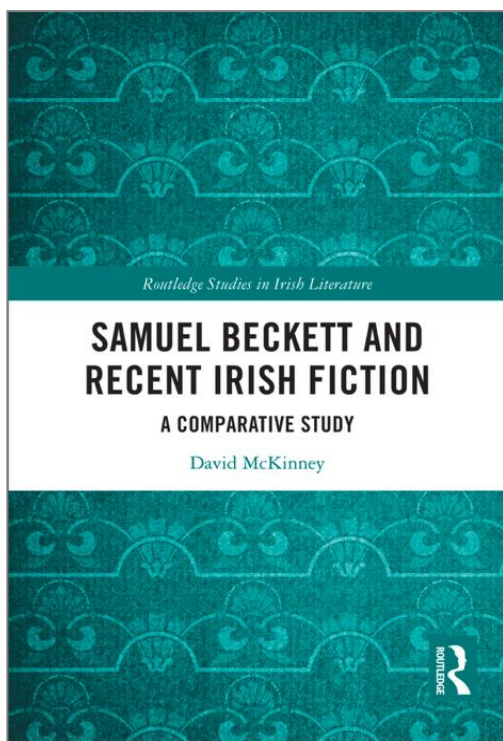
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**David McKinney, *Samuel Beckett and Recent Irish Fiction: A Comparative Study*, New York: Routledge, 2025, 201 p.**

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David McKinney's study of contemporary Irish fiction represents a timely contribution to two topical and interconnected strands of scholarship: the growing body of research concerned with the aftermath of Ireland's post-2008 financial collapse and the broader critical debates surrounding the global crises ascribed to late capitalism. More precisely, McKinney examines the post-crash turn towards literary experimentation, arguing that Irish writers "consciously or unconsciously" draw on Beckettian tropes to tackle the unspeakable in their works, as well as to register and convey the emotional depths of structural disempowerment (1). In developing his claim, he builds on Mary M. McGlynn's argument that recent Irish fiction exhibits traits of "irrealism," a term borrowed from the Warwick Research Collective to describe the formal strategies of the semi-periphery within the world-literary system (2-3). Yet, McKinney extends

McGlynn's argument by tracing the roots of this aesthetic tendency among Irish writers back to the conceptual, non-representational techniques of Samuel Beckett.

His claim is premised on the assertion that the two historical events – the post-war and post-Celtic Tiger periods – have had analogous traumatic consequences due to the breakdown of trust in official establishments (5). However, besides context, there is a distinction between Beckett and the selected contemporary writers that McKinney



neither acknowledges nor explores. Specifically, while Beckett's art was marked by the oppressive historical circumstances he inhabited, with a few exceptions<sup>1</sup>, he persistently refrained from explicit messages or ideological commitments in his works. In contrast, the female writers McKinney chose assume a political agenda<sup>2</sup>, both in the articulation of their artistic vision and in their reworking of Beckettian tropes. Even apart from questions of gender, if any contemporary text adopts Beckettian elements to portray difficult experiences with the aim of actively addressing social issues, the aesthetic acquires a political dimension that may alter its meaning. Nonetheless, this aspect remains untouched. Another potential limitation is that, while McKinney differentiates Samuel Beckett's approach from that of James Joyce, he does not clarify what distinguishes Beckett from other Irish and non-Irish European modernist writers who grappled with questions of truth, meaning, and knowledge (i.e., Joseph Conrad, Flann O'Brien, Ford Madox Ford). This insight could have strengthened or refined McKinney's central argument about the present-day resurgence of Beckett's aesthetic and the singularity of its impact.

The first chapter reads Emma Donoghue's *Room* (2010) alongside Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* (1951). It brings to the fore the novels' depiction of unequal power dynamics as intrinsic to conditions of confinement, scarcity, and alienation, effectively showcasing how Donoghue's deployment of the Beckettian disoriented "childlike gaze" (180) can evoke the exposure and helplessness induced by financial crises. As such, employing a psychoanalytic theory of child development, McKinney interprets Jack and Molloy's engagement with the outside world as predefined by a search for the "confining comfort" of the prenatal state (28). For instance, their attachments to material objects (e.g., Molloy's sucking stones and Jack's decaying tooth) serve as substitutes that mediate this separation (45). In this sense, their struggles are not merely matters of self-preservation but self-formation. Since mother-child dyads are constituted through their co-emergence, this intersubjectivity confers a continuity that stabilises the selves as much as it restricts them. When this relation is suspended, uncertainty follows; yet it is precisely through "the resolution of [this] tension" – the integration or rejection of this absence – that the characters can achieve growth (59-60).

Identity likewise takes centre stage in the second chapter. Continuing with Beckett's trilogy, it compares *Malone Dies* (1951) with Kevin Barry's 2015 novel *Beatlebone*. The chapter mobilizes Derrida's concept of trace, propounding that both texts confront the impossibility of recuperating and aggregating a stable self through artistic creation (61). The wanderings of Malone and John thus unfold as inward journeys, charting their "deferred" attempts at "self-realization" (61), whether as accomplished artists and/or unified subjects. From this perspective, McKinney suggests that the Beckettian indeterminacy underpinning the narrative of Barry's novel reflects the climate of austerity that permeated Irish society after the economic collapse, when long-term,

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<sup>1</sup> Written in 1982 for an event organized by A.I.D.A. (Association Internationale de Défense des Artistes), *Catastrophe* was dedicated to the Czech playwright Vaclav Havel, who was at the time imprisoned for his political beliefs.

<sup>2</sup> See Emma Donoghue's 2014 and Eimear McBride's 2021 interviews in the Guardian, in which they openly discuss how their political beliefs inform their work.

future-oriented commitments, such as home ownership or even higher education, seemed increasingly unreachable (75).

The third chapter juxtaposes Keith Ridgway's *Hawthorn and Child* (2012) with an earlier novel from Beckett, *Mercier and Camier* (1946), highlighting the latter's fundamental interest in Arnold Geulincx's post-Cartesian philosophy. Once again, both narratives reveal the elusive quality of truth, as their characters are unable to reconcile "their minds with their bodies," resulting in an immobilizing disconnection that renders action futile and meaningless (103). This "Geulingian" epistemological instability is conveyed via the "restless fragmentation" of narrative, encompassing erratic shifts of perspective and ambivalent narrators, disruptive elements that undermine conventional plot designs sustaining the teleological illusion of progress (103). Thus, both Beckett and Ridgway's subversion of the detective form relies on a language that is at once alienating and alienated, a technique that estranges readers from the characters, "characters from their narrators, characters from their bodies, and authors from their characters" (138). As McKinney ultimately points out, if Ridgway creates out of an "exhausted" form (136), he does not merely inherit Beckett's legacy but engages with the current disillusionment regarding neoliberalism and global capitalism through his aesthetic of indeterminacy.

Probably among the study's most original insights, the last chapter turns to Beckett's late-middle drama, placing Eimear McBride's 2013 novel *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing* in dialogue with *Happy Days* (1961) and *Not I* (1971). McKinney is particularly interested in expounding a "feminized Beckettian aesthetic," embodied in the writer's female characters, whose condition of "stasis and entrapment" exceeds that of their male counterparts by virtue of their "partial disembodiment" (148). Importantly, as Beckett's characters become progressively more helpless, their worlds correspondingly recede into abstraction: discourse disintegrates and setting disappears. Therefore, McKinney notes that McBride harnesses this distinctly Beckettian paralyzed language and reversed Christian imagination to depict a tormented consciousness fractured by the suppressed trauma of sexual abuse. In doing so, she manages to "recover" the voices otherwise silenced or devoured by Ireland's "patriarchal discourse" (177-178).

Samuel Beckett's receipt of the Nobel Prize in 1969 was met with resistance from the author himself and later with disagreement from many of his critics, who regarded the Swedish Academy's decision as a misguided reading fraught with parochial idealism. The honor arguably imposed, and even celebrated, clarity in a body of work operating on ambiguity. At the same time, David McKinney's proposed "Beckettian model of influence" (179) may invite a reconsideration of this judgement, one that entertains the possibility that the award may not have recognized mastery in Beckett's oeuvre but rather his methodical obliqueness. Overall, the book succeeds in demonstrating the enduring influence and heightened relevance of the Beckettian aesthetic during turbulent times – such as the ones contemporary (Irish) writers have to work with and within.

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