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Book Review

Cristina NICOLAE

Muguraș Constantinescu, Daniel Dejica, Titela Vîlceanu (Eds), *O istorie a traducerilor în limba română secolul al XX-lea*

Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2021, 1416 pp. 203



Mother-in-Law–Daughter-in-Law Relationship in the Current Korean Society

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Give the easy task to your daughter and the hard task to your daughter-in-law.

(Korean proverb)

Abstract. One of the prevailing themes in Korean novels and dramas is the fractured relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, caused to a great extent by Confucianism, which preaches submissiveness of women to their parents, husbands, and in-laws. Given the tremendous economic, technological, and cultural development of South Korea in the last fifty years, the question that arises is whether family ties have undergone an equal progress. This study aims at identifying whether the matriarch in the Korean household, i.e. the mother-in-law, still holds the reins or whether there is a shift towards more freedom and independence of the daughters-in-law. The data employed to this aim are Cho Nam-Joo's (2018) novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, which follows the life of a married woman in her thirties and a K-drama titled *Marriage Clinic: Love and War* that depicts the problems of married couples, among which the bad treatment daughters-in-law receive from their husbands' mothers. The theoretical framework for the analysis is a combination of critical discourse analysis (Wodak & Mayer 2001, Fairclough 2010), which is employed for "investigating language in relation to power and ideology" (Wodak 2001: 2) and Foucault's (1983) theory related to power and the subject. The findings indicate various manners in which Korean mothers-in-law in twenty-first-century South Korea exercise power over their daughters-in-law and also ingenious ways in which the latter manage to counteract this dominance.

Keywords: power, literature, K-drama, Confucianism, critical discourse analysis

1. Introduction

The Korean society has changed radically in the past century, moving from a predominantly agrarian country to a highly industrialized one, nowadays the Republic of Korea (ROK) standing out as “one of the wealthiest, high-tech, industrialized nations of Asia, one of the ‘Four Asian Tigers’ (next to Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong)” (Rahm 2020: 5). These economic changes brought along social changes, especially in the sphere of the family, in that the family size decreased (with the decrease of the birth rate among Korean women) and the traditional patterns of cohabitation have also changed, nowadays more and more couples preferring the nuclear family over the extended one. Higher levels of education, especially among women, also favoured these changes. Nevertheless, even if nowadays South Korea boasts with highly educated and skilled female workers, the society does not fully accept working women, and this seems to be related to the century-old traditional Confucian practices, which have had a strong impact on the development of the people’s mindsets and lifestyles. Park (2006: 33), quoting Moon (1998), states, “[i]n contemporary Korea, the family-centred Confucian ideology has done more to obscure women’s identity and development of self-consciousness than any other system of thought”. Despite the introduction of Christianity in the peninsula at the end of the nineteenth century, which tried to enlighten Korean women and give them more rights, Confucianism continues to be the single most influential force that shapes family structure, gender roles, and marital relations. Thus, Korean women, in particular, are the victims of the clash between Confucian tradition and modernization, as nowadays they perform more roles in society than ever before.

The conflicts between work and family commitments seem to have affected the lives of many married women. According to Kim (1996) and Cho (2002) (cited in Nelson & Cho 2016: 1274), “married women were expected to perform the principle caretaking roles for their husbands’ parents, including frequent telephone contacts and visits, preparation of foods, and arranging for health care”. Even at present, many young married women have to struggle with expectations coming from various directions: they have to look after their in-laws (be they the elderly parents or the younger siblings of their spouses), to care for their own parents, to ensure a peaceful environment at home so that their husbands could be freed of any concerns in their work, to bring up children and to supervise their education, as well as to succeed in their own workplaces should they choose to work after marriage. Having so many tasks that are both time-consuming and demanding, it comes as no surprise that many mothers-in-law relentlessly torment their daughters-in-law on grounds of their lack of homemaking skills but would not say a word of praise or encouragement with respect to their daughters-in-law’s accomplishments in the workplace. On the other hand, they might not

recognize their sons' spouses as daughters-in-law until they produce a son/male heir even if the couple has been married for a long time (Pak, 2006), not to mention that very often they look down on or even humiliate the parents of their daughters-in-law, as "[u]nder traditional family structure, the wife's family was considered much less important than the husband's" (Tudor 2012: 228 epub).

The relationship between mother- and daughter-in-law is not perfect in any culture, but in the South Korean one, even at present, many mothers-in-law try to make the lives of their son's spouses as difficult as possible, sometimes even with the risk of having the son's family destroyed. They make recourse to all kinds of mean scenarios, lies, and devilish acts only to show who holds the reins in the family and to benefit from various favours. Thus, living under the same roof with such a person who treats daughter(s)-in-law as their slave(s) is not something to be happy about.

The goal of this study is to seek an in-depth understanding of the mother-in-law–daughter-in-law relationships in the current South Korean society. To this aim, I have employed fragments from a contemporary novel and a couple of episodes from a cinematographic production, "for literature and cinema are cultural products of particular socio-cultural circumstances inextricably linked to history" (Jeong 2011: 6). Thus, I have tried to connect my analysis with the social and cultural context of the past three decades in South Korea's history, when the country experienced more than ever modernity and changing notions of masculinity, gender and family relations. This endeavour is based on a qualitative approach. The roadmap of the paper is as follows: section two presents the research procedure employed to conduct the study. The first part touches upon the case study as a research method. The second part will focus on highlighting the relevance of the *Critical Discourse Analysis* (Fairclough 2010, Wodak and Meyer 2001) and of Foucault's (1983) stance on power as analytical frameworks. In part three, I will include a short presentation of the book and the K-drama episodes that have been used as data. Section two also comprises the hypothesis and research questions that guided the study. The major part of the paper (section 3) is dedicated to the analysis of the fragments excerpted from Cho Nam-Joo's *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982* and from three episodes of the K-drama *Marriage Clinic: Love and War*. This is followed by conclusions.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Case study

As mentioned previously, the goal of the current study is to seek an understanding of a phenomenon anchored in real-life situations. Thus, I have opted for a

qualitative approach; more specifically, I have used the case study method to examine human relationships in four mother-/daughter-in-law dyads. The rationale behind this choice is that “the case study method (...) offers an in-depth way to examine the context and complexity of the phenomena under investigation” (Pak 2006: 44). This approach can be employed when the researcher wants to gain a better understanding of a certain problem and when s/he has access to cases rich in information. As Patton (1990) (quoted in Pak 2006: 44) contends, “a *case* is considered rich when a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in questions” (emphasis in the original). Thus, the number of informants is less important when the amount of data the researcher has access to is quite rich.

The case study, unlike other qualitative research methods, aims at a thorough description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 1998). It presupposes collecting “information about particular persons, social setting, events in which they interact, in order to permit the researcher to effectively understand” how the subjects operate or function (Berg 1998: 225). A major benefit of this research method is its generalizability or replicability: if the research is undertaken properly, its results should not only fit the specific subjects or relation studied but should provide a general understanding about similar individuals, relations, or events. Consequently, as in my research I investigate the relationship between two members of Korean families in different settings (at home, at a restaurant, at hospital, etc.) on the basis of a consistent database, I believe that this study could be representative for a large majority of the Korean female population who experience injustices and humiliations from their mothers-in-law.

2.2. Critical discourse analysis and Foucault’s theory on power

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) emerged as a theoretical framework aiming at the study of “the relation between language and power” (Wodak 2001: 2). More specifically, “CDA may be defined as fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse)” (Wodak 2001: 2).

This framework seems to have stemmed out of the need to compensate the lack of any tools for studying power relations, as expressed by Foucault (1983).

Unlike Wodak, for whom discourse is equated to language use, Fairclough (2010: 6) opines that the concept of *discourse* should be extended to also “include semiotic practice in other semiotic modalities such as photography and non-verbal (e.g. gestural) communication”. For both scholars, “language use as

discourse (...) is a form of social practice” (ibid.), and both are in agreement with respect to three concepts that represent the basis of CDA, i.e. *power* (discourse reflects dominance), *history* (any discourse is produced in a particular spatial and temporal context), and *ideology* (“dominance structures are legitimated by ideologies of powerful groups” – Wodak 2001: 3). And, to my knowledge, the power exercised verbally and nonverbally by Korean mothers-in-law over their daughters-in-law is legitimized by the Confucian ideology, as I will show in section 3 of the paper.

As mentioned previously, Fairclough (1989: 22) considers discourse to be social practice. This means “first, that language is a part of society (...). Secondly, that language is a social process. And thirdly, that language is a socially conditioned process, conditioned, that is, by other (non-linguistic) parts of society.” Thus, the verbal (and non-verbal) exchanges between Korean mothers- and daughters-in-law are legitimized by the Confucian ideology, which preaches total submissiveness of young women to their in-laws and gives mothers-in-law free hand to treat and speak to their daughters-in-law whichever way they like. It seems that there is a strong connection between language and ideology, these, together, serving the process of power building. Thus, the “main task of CDA is to untangle the relationship between language, ideology, and power” (Fairclough 1989: 22).

On the other hand, Foucault (1983) is of the opinion that power relationships can be identified within social institutions, including the family. He also put forward the idea that power is exerted on human subjects through action and that power relations could be understood only if one would also consider the forms of resistance.

While CDA has been employed especially in the analysis of “police interviews, courtroom exchanges, and political speeches” (O’Regan & Betzel 2016: 282), so far, to my knowledge, it has not been applied in investigating the asymmetrical power relations in the Korean family institution. Consequently, by combining some elements of CDA with Foucault’s theory related to power, I hope to be able to offer some explanations related to the behaviours of both mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in the current Korean society.

2.3. The data

In order to offer a comprehensive picture of the strained mother-in-law–daughter-in-law relationship in current South Korea, I have selected three episodes from a K-drama entitled *Marriage Clinic: Love and War*, a drama created by reconstructing the problems married couples are confronted with. This KBS production had two seasons: Season 1 (479 episodes, broadcast between 1999 and 2009) and Season 2 (124 episodes, aired between November 2011 and August 2014) (according to https://wiki.d-addicts.com/Couple_Clinic:_Love_and_War

and <https://mydramalist.com/8134-the-clinic-for-married-couples-love-and-war-2>). The episodes I have employed are available on YouTube and focus exactly on the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship: *The gigolo husband*, *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance*, and *I'm the mother-in-law*. Each episode ends with a panel of “experts” in family problems, who judge the problem presented and provide advice that should help couples rediscover the meaning of marriage. The second data source is represented by Cho Nam-Joo’s (2018) novel *Kim Jiyoung, Born 1982*, which offers an insight into women’s lives in current South Korea. It is a conventional narrative of womanhood that many women are expected to follow in a country characterized by deep-rooted gender inequality. Only the beginning of the novel has been used in this study, the part in which in the autumn of 2015, Kim Jiyoung, aged 33, a stay-at-home mother, starts showing signs of abnormal behaviour, mimicking other women (dead or alive) she knows. It is exactly in this part of the book that we find out something about her relationship with her mother-in-law.

From these two types of data, I have extracted the fragments depicting the interactions between mothers- and daughters-in-law and their attitude towards each other in order to find out how power is exerted and by whom.

2.4. Hypothesis and research questions

The hypothesis at the basis of this research study is that the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship is a complicated one in many cultures, including the Korean one, which requires a lot of effort, understanding, patience, and determination on the part of the daughter-in-law and the support of her husband to make it work. Derived from it, the following research questions have been formulated:

- (1) By what means do Korean mothers-in-law exercise power over their daughters-in-law?
- (2) How do modern women react to their mothers-in-law’s treatment?
- (3) Could Korean men mitigate the fractured relationship between their mothers and wives? / Who do Korean husbands side with?
- (4) Is there any chance for a shift to a horizontal relation between mother- and daughter-in-law, rather than a hierarchical one, based on dominance?

3. Data analysis

The aim of my analysis is to show how Korean mothers-in-law in contemporary South Korea exercise power over their daughters-in-law and if the latter attempt to resist this exertion of power or counteract it, as “in order to understand what

power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance” (Foucault 1983: 329). The analysis will start by setting the *ideological background* against which this power relation is depicted in both the novel and the K-drama selected as data.

According to Fairclough (2010: 46), ideology “involves the representation of ‘the world’ from the perspective of a particular interest (...)”. And the ethical interests/ideals of Confucianism, one of the prevailing ideologies in current South Korea, are social and age hierarchy (in various institutions) and order. All relationships were hierarchical, which involved the existence of a higher (powerful) and a lower (subject) partner. Thus, dyads such as king–subjects, parents–children, and husband–wife emerged, which perpetuated the dominance of males over females on the one hand and of the old over the young on the other hand. From this perspective, it seems that Confucianism, despite its original tenet of treating everyone in a humane way, came to be associated with a “tool” of female oppression throughout many Asian countries, including Korea. The current Korean society is still very much hierarchically structured, which makes mothers-in-law feel entitled to request full subordination and obedience of their daughters-in-law, even nowadays, when the country claims to be a modern one. As Lee (2006: 24) points out, “the Confucian tradition has often stood in opposition to the movement towards modern forms and institutions”, the family institution making no exception.

The second important element of CDA is *historical context*, for “we need a historical awareness for our present circumstance”, as highlighted by Foucault (1983: 327). The historical context chosen as a background for the current investigation is represented by the period following the turn of the millennium, i.e. the beginning of the twenty-first century, a period in which many Korean women, unlike their mothers, try to juggle a lot of responsibilities: jobs, nuclear families, parents, and in-laws. If in the early 1980s many women, especially those working in the industrial sector, chose to leave their jobs on marriage (according to Kim (1997: 79), 90% of married women decided to quit their jobs and dedicate their lives to being good wives and good mothers), twenty years later the trend changed, in that more and more women, especially those who had received higher education, want to have a job, even after marriage and even if they are aware of the wage gap between men and women. According to the Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS – <https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do>), at the beginning of 2024, the labour force participation by gender was 63.2% for women aged between 20 and 29 and 67.2% for those between 30 and 39 years of age, while the percentages for men, for the same age intervals were 59.5% and 89.3% respectively. At the same time, labour force participation for women with a university degree or beyond was 69.1%, while for men it was 85.8%. These figures indicated that more and more educated women want to have a job besides a family.

The third important category in CDA is *power*. According to Fairclough (2010) and Foucault (1983), power occurs within social institutions, the family being one of them. In his terms, “we may regard an institution as a sort of ‘speech community’, with its own repertoire of speech events, describable in terms of the sorts of ‘components’ (...) – settings, participants (their identities and relationships), goals, topics, etc.” (Fairclough 2010: 40). Within this social institution (i.e. family), one may encounter status-symmetrical and status-asymmetrical interactions, an example of the latter being those between mother-and daughter-in-law, the status asymmetry being determined by the Confucian ideology. Let us now take a look at some ways in which mothers-in-law exercise their power over their daughters-in-law both by means of discourse (Fairclough 2010) and by means of actions¹ (Foucault 1983).

One way in which mothers-in-law “exploit” their daughters-in-law is to turn them into “slaves” for the important holidays of the year such as *Chuseok* and *Seollal*.² According to tradition, the wife of the eldest son of a Korean family is supposed to give a helping hand to her mother-in-law in preparing the dishes, but frequently she is left on her own to do the entire cooking. In Cho’s novel, the heroine, Jiyoung, was requested by her mother-in-law to help her with the shopping of the ingredients for the dishes and also with the cooking for *Chuseok* despite the fact that the young woman was exhausted after a long drive (from Seoul to Busan,³ where her in-laws resided). When Jiyoung’s sister-in-law mentions that her mother should not have cooked so much food, especially because they were not holding ancestral rites any longer and also because she is too old and weak, which means an additional effort on Jiyoung’s part, the old lady turns to her daughter-in-law and asks sarcastically:

(1) *Was it too much for you?* (Cho 2018: 9)

Jiyoung, who had lately been suffering from a post-partum depression enhanced by a number of other traumas in her life (such as her parents’ favouring her brother when they were children, giving up the job she so much loved in order to raise her daughter, or her husband’s not keeping his promise to help her with the house chores and be involved in his child’s rearing), replies:

1 Foucault was of the opinion that “power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action” (1983: 340).

2 *Chuseok* is the harvest celebration (similar to the American *Thanksgiving*), which takes place sometime in mid- to end of September. This is accompanied by a memorial to the deceased. *Seollal* is the Lunar New Year, celebrated not only in South Korea but also in other Asian countries.

3 Busan (also Romanized *Pusan*) is the second largest city in South Korea, situated in the southern part of the peninsula.

- (2) *Oh, Mrs. Jung. To tell you the truth, my poor Jiyoung gets sick from exhaustion every holiday!* (Cho 2018: 9)

By impersonating her own mother, Jiyoung indirectly pointed out to her mother-in-law that every visit to Busan drains all energy out of her. In the guise of a different person, she gathers the courage to reveal what to her seems unfair in modern Korea – to exhaust yourself to the point of not being able to enjoy spending quality time with your family. Such a retort on Jiyoung's behalf is a slap in the face of filial piety, which takes her in-laws by surprise.

- (3) *“What is this nonsense?” Daehyun’s⁴ father thundered. “Is this how you behave in front of your elders?”* (Cho 2018: 10)

In twenty-first century Korea, one would expect Confucian subordination of women to have lost its power, but apparently it still has a strong hold, as in the reply Jiyoung provides to her father-in-law, sensing that she had somewhat pushed her luck, she prefaces it with the syntagm “with all due respect”, indicating that she is trying to be submissive. But once again, mimicking her mother, Jiyoung's intervention highlights another inequality in the Korean society.

- (4) *“Mr. Jung, **with all due respect**, I must say my piece,” Jiyoung said in a cool tone (...). “As you know, the holidays are a time for families to gather. But they’re not just for your family. They’re for my family, too. Everyone’s so busy nowadays and it’s hard for my children to get together, too, if not for the holidays. You should at least let our daughter come home when your daughter comes to visit you.”* (Cho 2018: 11; my emphasis)

The fragment reveals the different importance attributed to the husband's and the wife's families, in that the husband's one is considered to be more important (or higher up in the social hierarchy) than the wife's. What Jiyoung would like is to equally divide the little spare time she and her husband have with both her in-laws and her own family, if not to reserve it for her husband and daughter. She is trying to navigate her life path through meeting the expectations of both pairs of parents, as well as to have a life of her own. Under normal circumstances, she would not have had the courage to express her desire so bluntly, but all the gender and social inequalities she had experienced since childhood and which had been bottled up so far burst open. In Jiyoung's case, resistance to the power dominance of her in-laws takes the form of retorting under the guise of another person or of “insanity”. According to Foucault, power is exercised by the dominant member of a family for various reasons, in the case of the Korean in-laws in the novel this

4 Daehyun is Jiyoung's husband.

being “the exercise of statutory authority” (Foucault 1983: 344). On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that resistance to domination is an essential element of power relations, where the subject upon whom power is exercised can react or respond in many ways.

If Jiyoung, the main character in Cho’s novel, was a modern woman, in the sense that she lived with her nuclear family, far away from her husband’s parents, the daughters-in-law in the K-drama *Marriage Clinic* live under the same roof with their mothers-in-law, being constantly watched by them and having to please them all the time, even if their demands are sometimes absurd. As Ableman (2002: 45) describes the situation, “[i]f she (i.e. the mother-in-law) says an apple is rotten and you taste it and find it isn’t, you still have to declare the apple rotten”. All three mothers-in-law that appear in the investigated episodes of the above-mentioned K-drama share the desire for their daughters-in-law to be slaving them. Despite the fact that the young wives have a job and a husband to take care of, they are ordered to do the laundry (sometimes by hand), to cook all the meals for their mothers-in-law, and to clean their premises. Additionally, these elderly women feel entitled to impose pregnancy on their daughters-in-law and scold or even deny their status as wives of their sons if they happen to give birth to a daughter. But when daughters-in-law become pregnant, mothers-in-law have the nerve to accuse them of wanting to have a stronger grip on their husbands.



Figure 1. *Mother-in-law exercising power over daughter-in-law*
(Episode 57: I’m the mother-in-law)

In episode 57/Season 2 of the drama, entitled *I’m the mother-in-law*, the treatments the oldest daughter-in-law has received while living under the same roof with her mother-in-law will be the cause of her stomach cancer. In order to survive, she decides to divorce her husband, a move that could be interpreted as a form of rebellion, since as a divorcee she is not supposed to comply with her mother-in-law’s demands any longer. But this makes the mother-in-law move

with her other son and his wife. On one occasion, when the two sisters-in-law meet, the oldest one tells the youngest:

(5) *I couldn't live with mother⁵ even if I was dead, so I had to leave.* (min. 6:36)

On this occasion, she also tells her younger sister-in-law (named Yoonju) that she had stage 4 stomach cancer. When the younger daughter-in-law returns home, she finds an outraged mother-in-law.

(6) M.I.L.⁶ (shouting): *Are you going to let your mother-in-law starve to death? What were you doing to come home that late?* (min. 6:36). Yoonju: *Sister-in-law has cancer. Do you know why she got cancer?*

M.I.L.: *She's got cancer because she is going to die. How should I know that?*

Yoonju: *She's got cancer because of you!* (min. 11:13–34)

The dialogue shows that the matriarch, who does not do anything in the house but watches TV all day long, expects to have food prepared and served to her by the young woman who went to work and afterwards dared spend a couple of minutes with her sister-in-law. On the other hand, it also reveals the lack of sympathy of mother-in-law for her oldest daughter in-law. She only cares about herself. By throwing into her mother-in-law's face the fact that her sister-in-law became ill because the former had made the latter's life a living hell, Yoonju starts showing the first signs of resistance against the matriarch. But not long after the mother-in-law gets established into her younger son's house, Yoonju faints at the office and is rushed to hospital, where she is diagnosed with thyroid cancer. On arriving home, after being discharged from hospital, she is received by her mother-in-law, who was watching TV, her favourite time-pass, as follows:

(7) M.I.L. *Is your act of being sick all healed now? I'm hungry. Prepare the meal!*

Yoonju: *Get out of this house! (to her husband) Why do I have to be treated like a maid by her and get sick?*

M.I.L. (ironically) *Thyroid cancer? It's not even a disease. All my friends are alive and well after surgery.*

Yoonju (shouting): *Please stop! Please! Are you going to kill me, too?*

M.I.L. *How dare you scream at me?* (min. 16:12–40)

5 Koreans address their in-laws with “mother” and “father”.

6 M.I.L. stands for “mother-in-law”. This abbreviation will be used for the sake of simplicity in all examples.

This fragment reinforces the mother-in-law's lack of sympathy for other persons' suffering and her desire to be the centre of the universe in her son's house by no means. Not even when her ailing daughter-in-law returns from hospital does she spare her from preparing the food for her. Moreover, she treats with contempt her illness, by saying that it was only an act, but when she realizes that it is genuine, she tries to downplay its seriousness by saying that thyroid cancer is not even a disease. This time, Yoonju does not care about filial piety any longer and shouts at her mother-in-law to leave their house. As Fairclough (2010: 44) points out, "it is quite possible for a social subject to occupy (...) a subject position which is incompatible with her (...) social beliefs and affiliations without being aware of any contradiction". What this means is that in Yoonju's situation, she is not aware that her desire to lead a life without the constant supervision of her mother-in-law is incompatible with the matriarch's opinion fed by long years of tradition.

The mother-in-law is taken aback for a couple of seconds by Yoonju's lack of manners when addressing her and attacks her anew:

- (8) M.I.L. *She can't even get pregnant, so **she** should leave the house.* (min. 17:05)

This evil woman tries to take advantage of the fact that Yoonju cannot get pregnant because of her thyroid cancer and kick her out of the house. What confers the matriarch the power in this respect is the Confucian ideology, according to which young women are supposed to give birth to sons who should carry the family lineage. Failure to produce a son may constitute a reason for the wife to be divorced or expelled from home (Lee 1995). At the same time, she also tries to turn her son against his wife, an attitude encountered in another episode of the K-drama, titled *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance*. But while in *I am the mother-in-law* the matriarch pulled the strings of power very bluntly, by shouting orders at her daughter-in-law, in the latter episode, the mother-in-law is an extremely sly fox, who exercises her power indirectly, through sugar-coated utterances, soft voice, and lies.

The episode opens with a proposal the mother-in-law makes to her daughter-in-law, named Misuk:

- (9) M.I.L.: *Misuk, let's not be like other mothers and daughters-in-law. I think of you as my own daughter.* (min. 0:12)

But immediately her tone changes when she starts ordering Misuk:

- (10) M.I.L.: *Wash the blankets! Wash them by hand to get the dirt out. Do not use the washing machine! And cook some bean paste soup with clams for dinner!* (min. 0:22–29)

In such a technologically advanced country like South Korea, every family owns a washing machine that is big enough to wash blankets, too, so the mother-in-law's request that the family blankets should be washed by hand might look absurd. But considering that the matriarch's request is actually an order by which she exercises her power over Misuk, the latter complies with it. When dinner is served, Misuk is very eager to find out if her mother-in-law (i.e. Lady Vengeance – henceforth as L. V.) appreciates her cooking effort, but the latter starts coughing and making a whole fuss about the soup, as she is (apparently) allergic to clam. Her son is worried she might die and shouts at Misuk, not knowing that she has actually followed the order of her mother-in-law. The sly woman manipulates her son by telling him:

- (11) L. V.: *Don't be harsh to your wife! I told her I was allergic to clams, but I guess she heard me wrong.* (min. 0:45)

When Misuk swore to her husband that it was his mother who ordered her to cook clam, he would not believe her. Instead, he believed his mother. And this was not the only incident when Lady Vengeance plotted against Misuk. When Misuk and her husband went to visit her father, Lady Vengeance felt jealous and faked an accident that led to a leg injury. This meant that from that moment onwards all the house chores were Misuk's responsibility. But one evening, as Misuk went into the kitchen to fetch a glass of water, she found her mother-in-law walking without crutches or a limp. Surprised, she asks her:

- (12) Misuk: *Didn't you hurt your leg?*

L. V.: *Why? Do you wish that I'd be disabled?*

Misuk: *You don't like me?*

L. V.: *Ha, ha, ha! It took you so long to figure out? So, just do as I say, if you want to stay married to him.* (min. 2:40–48)

The double-faced mother-in-law is not only mocking Misuk but also lets her know that she does not like her (despite the confession she made at the beginning of the episode that she considered her like her own daughter) and blackmails her to show her who the most powerful person in the house is. The goal of her blackmail as a form of power is to maintain her privileges (Foucault 1983) as the matriarch.

Like in the previous episode, the problem of babies is also brought into discussion. In this episode, Misuk is pregnant, and probably this is the reason why she is not considering the option of divorce as a way of getting out of the sphere of dominance of her mother-in-law. Misuk's condition does not stop Lady Vengeance from spitting venom when she tells her daughter-in-law that "being pregnant isn't anything special" (min. 3:48). Consequently, she asks Misuk to replace a bulb that has burnt out. While complying with Lady Vengeance's order, Misuk loses balance, falls, and suffers a miscarriage. When her husband and mother-in-law visit her at the hospital, the latter plays the role of a bereaved grandmother:

(13) L. V.: *Oh, my poor grandchild (crying)* (min. 4:07)

Misuk's first sign of rebellion is to accuse her mother-in-law of the death of her baby. In doing this, she hopes to be supported by her sister-in-law, who witnessed the mishap, but blood is thicker than water: the latter says that there is some misunderstanding and that her mother is one of the nicest persons in the world. Her act of confronting the mother-in-law comes as a result of the latter's verbal action of making Misuk change the burnt-out bulb, which eventually led to her miscarriage. The power relationship between the two women is a mode of action upon action, as described by Foucault (1983). But Misuk's action is the first in a series of reactions to everything she has endured from her domineering mother-in-law.

Being discharged from hospital, Misuk is visited by her father, who was worried about her condition. When he reaches his daughter's place, he is talked down to by Lady Vengeance, an additional proof that the wife's family is considered to be of less value than that of the husband:

(14) L. V.: *Since you had your daughter married off without teaching her properly at home, you must be worried about her. After having a miscarriage that was her own fault, she blamed the death of the baby on me. Is that even possible? She talks back to me all the time.* (min. 4:51–5:02)

Lady Vengeance's words were a strong offence brought to the elderly father: she accuses him of not having brought up Misuk properly and because of lack of education she misbehaves when she interacts with her mother-in-law. This time, Lady Vengeance exercises her power on the poor man, who feels guilty for what happened to his daughter and for the fact that her conduct brings shame upon him, making him lose face. What he, as the subject on whom power is exercised, does is to apologize continuously. The traditional difference of status permits Lady Vengeance to exercise her power over Misuk's father, and she does so by

the effect of her insulting words. This leads to loss of face, which the old parent could not stand, and which, eventually, leads to his death.

The death of Misuk's father determines a change in her attitude and tactics when it comes to her mother-in-law. What she does is to treat Lady Vengeance the same way she has treated her. The first step was to cook the meals she enjoyed, not those preferred by her mother-in-law:

(15) L. V.: *Does she expect me to eat this?*

Misuk: *It suits my taste.*

L. V.: *Ah, you're very evil.*

Misuk: *Mother, I am having a hard time because of you.*

L. V.: *Why don't you leave?*

Misuk: ***I want to be like a real daughter to you*** (my emphasis). (min. 5:43–57)

Just like in the previously analysed episode of the drama, here again we witness the power that mothers-in-law have to ask their daughters-in-law to leave the house (which sometimes may have been partially bought with money contributed to by the daughter-in-law or gifted by her parents). But Misuk is not willing to give her mother-in-law any satisfaction by leaving; instead, she pretends to want to be a good daughter, as Lady Vengeance promised to treat her at the beginning of the episode.

Not only did Misuk ignore her mother-in-law's food preferences, but she also started eating alone, before the latter joined the meals, this being another gesture of insubordination, as in the Korean culture young people are not supposed to eat before their elderly relatives:

(16) L. V.: *Are you eating alone without asking me to join you?*

Misuk: (cleaning the table and taking away the food, which she throws in the bin; she responds very calmly). *You can make your own dish!*

L. V.: *Are you forgetting who I am?* (min. 6:20–25)

The mother-in-law feels offended by Misuk's behaviour and reminds her that she should be respected because she has a privileged position in the family (a domineering matriarch), but apparently Misuk is so determined to take her revenge on her that she does not feel threatened by Lady Vengeance at all. Moreover, she adopts the same tactics like her, namely playing innocent in front of her husband. When Songgyu, Misuk's husband returns home, Lady Vengeance complains about not having been given any food, as her daughter-in-law threw it to the bin. When Misuk is confronted on this topic by her husband, who, of course, believed his mother, she replies:

- (17) Misuk: (to her husband) *Mother didn't like my side dishes.* (to her mother-in-law): *It's ok to scold me, but don't throw the food away.* (min. 6:56–7:06)

All these fragments show Misuk's insubordination to her mother-in-law. As Foucault (1983: 346) put it, "at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy. (...) There is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight."

Seeing that she loses ground, Lady Vengeance physically attacks Misuk, pulls at her hair and tries to knock her down, only that Songgyu (Misuk's husband) jumps to her aid. As Lady Vengeance realizes that her son does care for his wife and that she cannot separate them, and also because she has no other place to go to, she seeks a way to a compromise with her daughter-in-law:

- (18) L. V.: *I'm just sick of fighting. Let's just be frank and talk. When Songgyu is around, you are the nicest daughter-in-law. But when he is gone, you don't even **cook for me, you don't do laundry, or clean my room.*** (my emphasis). *How long will this continue?*

Misuk: *There is an order for things to be compromised.*

L. V.: *Is it an apology that you want to hear?*

Misuk: *I want you to apologise to my dead child and father.* (min. 8:33–53)

One way of counteracting her mother-in-law's power is to refuse to do the menial things for her like cooking, cleaning, and washing the clothes. But more important than that is that she wants her to admit that Misuk lost her baby and her father because of Lady Vengeance: had she not asked Misuk to replace the bulb, the latter would not have suffered the miscarriage; and if Lady Vengeance had not offended Misuk's father, he would have still been alive. But probably Misuk's grief is too deep to be erased by a mere apology.

In the third episode subjected to analysis, *The gigolo husband*, everything revolved around a large sum of money that a hard-working wife, Jinhee, has inherited from her father, who owned some land. At the time of the good news, she was sharing the house with her husband (Jungi), mother-in-law, and sister-in-law (Minji), who all made plans about how they were going to spend Jinhee's money. As life with the in-laws, as we have seen, is not very pleasant, Jinhee decides to buy a house for her nuclear family, so she and her husband move out. But Jungi, without informing Jinhee, buys his mother a new house out of his wife's inheritance money. When she moves into the new house, his mother wanted an ornamental wall made with mother of pearl, which was also bought from the same source of money. Moreover, Jinhee was also asked to invest money in a hospital built by the parents of the boy Minji was supposed to marry. When

Jinhee opposed this investment, her mother-in-law accused her of compromising her daughter's future:

(19) M.I.L.: *Are you going to be so stingy on this?*

Jinhee: *Why must I pay for Minji's dowry?*

M.I.L.: *We are one family: your money is our money. If this marriage does not happen, I will not forgive you.* (min. 3:02–13)

According to the Korean Civil Code (1977) – Provisions for Family Law, any unclear title of property acquired after marriage is considered to be the property of the husband; in case of divorce, it is divided equally between the spouses (Putnam Epstein, 2007). It is on the basis of this law that Jungi, his mother, and sister felt entitled to spend Jinhee's inheritance without consulting her in advance. The goal of the mother-in-law in exercising power over her daughter-in-law in this case was both "maintenance of privileges and accumulation of profits" (Foucault 1983: 344), as neither she nor any of her children had any means of earning money.

Like many Korean men who have money (in this particular case from the wife's inheritance) and a lot of spare time, Jungi finds himself a mistress, who is easily accepted by his mother. As Jinhee finds out about her husband's mistress, she kicks him out of the newly bought house. And where should the good-for-nothing Jungi go but to his mother's place, also bought with his wife's inheritance money. When Jinhee confronts her mother-in-law about her husband's adventure, she retorts:

(20) M.I.L. *If you had been a good wife, he wouldn't have cheated on You.*
(min. 5:15)

Spending most of her money on her husband and in-laws, running a clothes shop to earn money for the family, doing everything her mother-in-law ordered her was not enough to be considered a good wife. Encouraged by his mistress and mother, who kept instilling in the young man's mind that he was not respected by his wife, Jungi asks for a divorce, which eventually Jinhee agrees with. But after the divorce is pronounced, Jungi finds out that inherited wealth cannot be divided upon divorce, as it was not "unclear title of property": Jinhee inherited the money from her father, and as such, upon divorce, she was entitled to the whole amount. When Jungi realized that without his wife's money he cannot survive and neither can his mother, he decided to go back to Jinhee and beg her to forgive him and his mother, telling her that he would not cheat on her again. Meanwhile, Jungi's dumped mistress informs Jinhee why her husband returned to her: he could not have half of her assets at the divorce, as he had expected.

This is the moment when Jinhee starts planning her revenge on her husband and his family. She sends them on a short holiday, to celebrate the reconciliation. On their departure, she pretends that all her money was in deposits and asks her husband to pay for the vacation from his bank account, to be reimbursed upon his return.

While her family is away, Jinhee sells both her mother-in-law's house and her own. And when Jungi, his mother, and his sister return from the short but luxurious holiday, they suffer a shock seeing that they have no place to go to. When Jinhee meets them, she tells her mother-in-law:

(21) Jinhee: *Just think of the recent past as a great dream. You can go back to your old house and support your spendthrift son by going frugal.* (min. 9:42)

In this episode, like in the other two, what happens is that the exercise of power is reversed: if originally mothers-in-law considered themselves entitled to treat their daughters-in-law as dirt, humiliating them and their parents, by becoming less and less submissive, daughters-in-law managed to escape their dominance and to become more powerful than the matriarchs.

4. Conclusions

Despite the economic, technological, and cultural progress made by South Korea, it seems that there is still a long way to go before the women in this country manage to step away from the attitudes the society as a whole and their upbringing have instilled in them. From an early age, they face gender injustices (being rejected at birth, suffering discrimination first in the family, then at school, and later in the work place) to which the dominance of their mothers-in-law adds up, providing an image of what it means to be a woman in South Korea nowadays. As Fairclough (2010: 40) contends, “social institutions are determined by social formation, and social action is determined by social institutions”. The Korean family as a social institution is determined by the stage of the development of the Korean state in the twenty-first century, and the interactions (verbal or physical) that take place between people are determined by factors that pertain to the family institution. What this means is that the Korean social structures allow such behaviours/actions on the part of mothers-in-law without condemning them. Moreover, we have to be aware of the fact that the interactions presented in the analysis should not be interpreted as having a local significance only, but they could reflect a general trend in South Korea or contribute “to the reproduction of ‘macro’ structures” (Fairclough 2010: 38).

It is true that, compared to the previous generations of women, whose roles were solely to clean, cook, look after their children, and having to deal with the constant demands of their mothers-in-law, who depended financially on their husbands and, later on, on their sons, wives in current South Korea are better off in the sense that if they have a job, at least they spend less time under the direct surveillance and dominance of their mothers-in-law. Tudor (2012: 228 epub) points out, “[t]hese days, most Korean wives only have to spend *Chuseok* and *Seollal* slaving away for their in-laws. Those who go away on holiday do not even have to do that. Korean women may not yet have equality, but they have a much better deal than their mothers and grandmothers ever did.”

As we have seen, even in the twenty-first century, mothers-in-law seem to have a domineering attitude towards their daughters-in-law despite the fact that many of the latter have a much higher degree of education and also jobs. Still, they are commanded by the matriarch to prepare food for and serve them, to clean their homes, to wash the dishes and clothes, and to provide them with monthly allowances. Very often, mothers-in-law make recourse to blackmail (“Just do as I say if you want to stay married to him.”) and trick their sons into believing that their wives are evil, disrespectful, and mean to them. Sometimes mothers-in-law can attack their daughters-in-law even physically if they feel their privileges are in danger.

The answer to the second research question is that modern Korean women prove to be more and more insubordinate, counteracting the power exercised by their mothers-in-law. Their resistance takes many forms: disclosing perceived injustice in the guise of another person, as was the case of Jiyoung, Cho Nam-Joo’s heroine, or by bluntly refusing to cook, clean, do the laundry for their mothers-in-law, as was expected. Moreover, Misuk, the daughter-in-law in *Lady Vengeance*, adopted the same behaviour to her mother-in-law as that the latter used towards her, i.e. she cooked and ate only what she liked and before her mother-in-law (which is an indication of lack of filial piety), and she also adopted a double-faced behaviour: she was polite to her mother-in-law when her husband was at home, but when the two women were on their own, Misuk did not spare the matriarch. The power balance turned 180 degrees in the case of Jinhee, the heroine of the episode *The gigolo husband*, who under the mask of forgiveness and generosity sends her husband with his mother and sister on a trip, and while they are having their dream holiday (which they assumed was paid for by Jinhee), she recuperates the inheritance from her father, leaving the ones who had humiliated her homeless and penniless. As Foucault pointed out, “[t]he victory over the adversary replaces the exercise of power” (1983: 347).

As regards research question number three, the answer would be that Korean mothers still have a strong hold on their sons and manipulate them in their own interests. Consequently, sons are expected to show their loyalty first to their

mothers. In the four families that made the object of this analysis, two husbands sided with their mothers (Jungi and Songgyu), while the other two (Daehyun's and Yoonju's husband) seem to be torn between the loyalty to their mothers and that to their wives. Such husbands "call themselves the 'sandwich generation'" (Cho 2002: 174). At the end of episode 57 of the K-drama, when both the wife and the mother ask the head of the family to decide which of the women should leave the house, he utters, "I'll leave! I'll just leave!" (min. 17:40, stress on the pronoun). Probably, if more husbands realized that once they are married, it is their wives that would take care of them and not their mothers, if they came to appreciate more their wives' hard work both at home and in their work place, and if they were to be on their wives' side in the conflicts these have with their mothers, then probably the Korean mothers-in-law's grip on their daughters-in-law would weaken and the atmosphere in the family would be more pleasant. But given the century-old ideology governing the Korean society, it will take some time until "wifely power gains a foothold over motherly power" (Cho 2002: 174).

As far as the last research question is concerned, i.e. whether the hierarchical relationship between mother- and daughter-in-law based on dominance has any chance to change into a horizontal one, based on cooperation, the answer depends very much on a number of factors. First, the men's attitude seems to be of great importance: if they side with their wives in domestic conflicts, they will diminish in this way the power exerted by their mothers. At the same time, if they also accept to become more involved in family life, to share the house chores and the child rearing with their wives, then these will feel more equal to their spouses. Secondly, a milder adherence to the Confucian ideology will also liberate young women from many constraints. Thirdly, the Korean society should also become more open-minded with respect to women who want to have both a family and a job by increasing the number of childcare facilities and by providing women with better working conditions (Kim Choe 2006). But to my mind, the most important factor in this respect is the level of education of the daughters-in-law. Quite often, many young, educated Korean wives do not show the same respect as before towards their uneducated mothers-in-law, not to mention the fact that some even refuse to live with them under the same roof for fear that the latter's ignorance might have a negative impact on the children's education. According to Cho (2002: 174), "concern for children's well-being is a weapon that these modern women frequently wield".

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The Marriage Status of Women in the Belarusian Literary Language and Northeastern Dialects

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Abstract. The article compares the semantics of the lexical group “the names of women by marital status” in the Belarusian literary language and in the northeastern dialect, the distribution area of which is the Vitebsk region and part of the Mogilev region. Of the 24 names extracted from the general language and regional dictionaries, the overwhelming majority (two-thirds, i.e. 66.66%) are literary words. This is natural, since the literary language as the core of the national language has a more extensive vocabulary. The names of women were divided according to marital status, i.e. in relation to marriage, into four subgroups: premarital, marital, postmarital, and extramarital. The words for women in marriage have the same number in the literary language and in the dialect. Literary names of women of illegitimate status have a significant numerical advantage – 4 to 1 dialect word. Although there are fewer dialect names, they differ, firstly, in greater expressiveness and figurativeness, and, secondly, in a variety of word formation means – suffixes. The analysis also showed that the evaluative connotations of units in this lexico-semantic group (LSG) are influenced by sociocultural gender stereotypes. Words denoting women in premarital and marital status have a positive connotation, the names of women in extramarital status have a negative connotation, and the names of divorced women have a negative connotation as well.

Keywords: Belarusian literary language, northeastern dialect, names of women, marital status, categorical seme, marker, distinguisher

Introduction

The Belarusian dialect language is represented by “the main group of dialects” and the dialects of Western Polissya. The first one is divided into northeastern, southwestern, and intermediate central dialects (Koryakov 2002: 114). The relationship between the Belarusian literary language and its dialects, primarily in terms of social and areal stratification, has become the object of study by many scientists (cf. Vakar 1956, Dingley 1989, Wexler 1992, Mechkovskaya 1994, Koryakov 2002, Lukashanets 2009, etc.). J. Getka writes about the special role of the northeastern dialect in the codification of the Belarusian literary language: “Along with the normalization of the literary language and the subsequent orthographic reform (1933), the most popular dialect in this historical and cultural period (the Belarusian dialect) is the language of the texts of this period” (Getka 2018: 186). The range of this dialect is located in the northeastern part of Belarus on the territory of the Vitebsk region and the central and eastern parts of the Mogilev region (cf. *Dyjaliiektalahičny atlas bielaruskaj movy* 1963). The linguists have explored individual features of the northeastern dialect. At present, the main phonetic features of the literary and dialect pronunciation are described, and the phonetic marking of various functional and territorial varieties of the Belarusian language – literary and dialect – has been established (Rusak & Getsevich 2018: 87–88). N. V. Sivitskaya (2017) establishes the factors that influence the choice of a northeastern dialect or literary national language by a speaker in a certain sociocultural situation. The scientists conduct a comparative description of individual groups of dialect and literary vocabulary. The work of L. I. Zlobin and Ya. N. Marozava is close for our study, as they analyse the dialect–literary oppositions in the vocabulary system that arise as a result of the use of different word formation means (Zlobin & Marozava 2010). Vitebsk scientists have carried out a large lexicographic work on compiling a two-volume regional dialect dictionary: *Rehijanaŭny sloŭnik Viciebščyny* [Regional Dictionary of the Vitebsk Area] (2012–2014). This dialect dictionary, edited by L. I. Zlobin and A. S. Dzyadova, became the source of dialect vocabulary in this article. The purpose of our study is to compare the northeastern dialect lexical units that name women depending on marital status with similar names in the literary Belarusian language. As a result, we will try to establish the similarities and differences between the northeastern dialect and literary units, to identify factors that affect the semantics of literary and dialect words.

Z. Farkas writes that in the sociological literature the term “social status” is used to denote socioeconomic status, social status by role, and social status by prestige (Farkas 2022: 425). He suggests relying on the understanding of social status by role, which was formulated by T. Parsons: “The social status defined in connection with the role is a position in the social system to which specified

rights and duties, specified expectations or norms, and the roles made up by them apply” (Parsons 1951: 25). In this article, we also use the term “status” as understood by Parsons.

Marriage, family rites and rituals in Belarusian culture have traditionally been studied from ethnographic, cultural, and historical points of view (cf. Nikol’skiy 1956, Varfolomeeva 1988, Kazakova 2007, etc.). Marriage and wedding vocabulary were considered by P. Michajlaŭ (2005, 2009), S. Faciejeva (2005), and K. L. Khazanava (2012). The names of women in terms of their marital status have not been studied either in the Belarusian literary language or in its dialects; therefore, our article is a contribution to the linguistic study of the named vocabulary group.

1. Material and research methods

The material for the study is the names of women in the Belarusian literary language and in the northeastern (Vitebsk) dialect, related to their position in relation to marriage. Lexicographic sources of material for the study are the dictionaries of the literary Belarusian language: *Tlumachal’ny sloŭnik belaruskaj movy* [Explanatory Dictionary of the Belarusian Language] in 5 volumes (1977–1984) (hereinafter referred to as TSBM),¹ *Frazealagichny sloŭnik belaruskaj movy* [Phraseological Dictionary of the Belarusian Language] I. Ya. Lepeshaŭ in 2 volumes (1993) (hereinafter FSBM), *Russko-bielorusskij slovaŭ* [Russian–Belarusian Dictionary] in 2 volumes 1991 (hereinafter RBD), and the regional dialect dictionary *Rehijanal’ny sloŭnik Viciebščyny* [Regional Dictionary of the Vitebsk Region] in 2 volumes (2012 and 2014) (hereinafter RSV). We selected 24 names of women related to their marital status.

The work uses the method of component analysis of dictionary meanings of lexical units. Using it, we have identified the main semantic features of the names of women of a particular marital status in the literary language and in Vitebsk dialects. The method of component analysis was first applied to a vocabulary that included kinship terms among different tribes (cf. Goodenough 1956, Lounsbury 1956).

Developing the ideas of W. H. Goodenough and F. G. Lounsbury, E. Nida analysed semantic fields in the language of shamans (Nida 1962: 45–71). I. V. Arnol’d proposes to use a component analysis of non-closed lexical groups based on dictionary definitions (Arnol’d 1991: 51). In our study, we rely on the classification of semes by D. Bolinger, who distinguishes categorical semes, markers, and distinguishers (Bolinger 1981: 200–234). Categorical semes contain

1 A number indicating the volume number is added to the abbreviation; if necessary, the issue number is indicated through a hyphen, and the abbreviation looks, for example, like this: TSBM1-4. This also applies to other abbreviations denoting dictionaries.

an indication of generalized properties, markers indicate features common to a certain class of lexical units, and distinguishers individualize the denotation. The largest components of meaning are categorical semes – the seme of objectivity for nouns, the seme of indicativeness for adjectives, etc. R. S. Ginzburg claims there are hidden and potential semes in the meaning of a word (Ginzburg 1978). Potential semes are not included in the mandatory set of semes, they are among the properties known to native speakers or attributed to this denotation. By hidden components, Ginzburg understands the semes, which are manifested in the possibilities of the word compatibility. Implications materialize in comparisons, metaphors, idioms, certain types of syntactic constructions. Implicit, additional meanings, superimposed on explicit meanings, are capable of conveying large amounts of information.

The meanings of a polysemantic word do not remain unchanged. The appearance of a new meaning in one word inevitably entails changes in other words associated with it, since everything is interconnected in the lexico-semantic system (Nikolaenko 2019: 203). As a result, the relationship between the meanings of a word changes: primary meanings are replaced by figurative ones, the meanings of individual words, which are currently perceived as figurative, may turn out to be primary from a historical point of view.

In addition, the definitional analysis makes it possible to compare the meanings of the main verbal representatives – the names of women by marital status in the Belarusian literary language and in the Vitebsk dialect, to identify their core and peripheral features and to determine their similarities and differences. Peripheral features appear in metaphorical, metonymic usage, in idioms, and in context (Rakhimzhanov, Akosheva et al. 2022: 139–140).

2. Results and discussion

The lexico-semantic group (LSG) is united by a categorical seme denoting the gender of a person – ‘female’. Marriage status markers act as differentiators for subgroups within LSG: names of women in the premarital period; names of women in marriage; names of women in the postmarital period and names of women of extramarital status (Temirgazina, Luczyk et al. 2022: 279).

Within each of the subgroups, markers and, to a greater extent, distinguishers are more essential for establishing the semantic features of names (see, for example, Bakhtikireeva, Sinyachkin et al. 2016: 1387–1388). The premarital period is the time when a girl generally prepares for marriage as such, i.e. is married or is already on the verge of marriage – betrothed or engaged, i.e. has a fiancé. Thus, the seme ‘attainment of marriageable age’, which unites a subgroup, acts as a marker of names. Distinguishers that mark words within the subgroup

include the semes ‘engaged’, ‘having a groom’, or ‘not having a groom’. The marriage period is the period when a woman is ‘married’, ‘has a husband’ and, accordingly, the names of women have these markers. Within the subgroup are found, as we show below, various distinguishers. The postmarital stage includes the status of a divorced woman and the status of a widow. The names combine the markers ‘after marriage’ and ‘no husband’ and differentiate some distinguishers. We found it necessary to isolate the “out-of-wedlock” status of women who have crossed the marriageable age but have never been married.

A component analysis of the meanings of words naming women in the premarital period is shown in *Table 1*.

Table 1. *The component analysis of the names of women in the premarital period*

	Literary language	Vitebsk dialect
1	VYDÁNNICA ‘a marriageable girl’ 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: premarital period 3. Distinguisher: of marriageable age	NIVÉSTUL’KA ‘a marriageable girl’ 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: premarital period 3. Distinguisher: of marriageable age affectionate attitude
2		MALADÉLYA ‘a marriageable girl’ 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: premarital period 3. Distinguisher: of marriageable age
3	NYAVESTA ‘a bride’ 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: before marriage of marriageable age 3. Distinguisher: betrothed having a fiancé before the wedding	KINYAGÍNYA ‘a bride’ 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: before marriage of marriageable age 3. Distinguisher: betrothed having a fiancé

	Literary language	Vitebsk dialect
4	NARACHONAYA 'betrothed' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: premarital period of marriageable age 3. Distinguisher: engaged / betrothed having a fiancé	MALADÓVACHKA 'a bride' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: premarital period of marriageable age 3. Distinguisher: having a fiancé before the wedding
5	MALADÁYA 'a bride during wedding' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: premarital period of marriageable age 3. Distinguisher: having a fiancé during the wedding	

The marker 'age of marriage' is relevant for our analysis; it characterizes a woman's readiness for marriage and is especially significant for the names of women in premarital status. The 'marriageable age' marker is determined not only by a woman's physiological readiness for marriage but also by sociocultural traditions and stereotypes (Rakhimzhanov, Akosheva et al. 2020: 263–264). In traditional Belarusian culture, the age of marriage for a woman was set at sixteen to eighteen years. "In general, Belarusians started thinking about creating a family already at the age of 16–17. Girls of marriageable age began to whiten and blush, changed their hairstyle – they made a wreath of hair with an open top, wore jewelry – from beads to feathers and flowers on their heads".²

The names of women of premarital status should be divided into subgroups, which are distinguished by the marker 'marriageable', i.e. 'not betrothed' and 'betrothed', 'having a groom'. Girls who have reached the age of marriage, are 'marriageable' are called in the Belarusian literary language *vydannicej*; in the Vitebsk dialect, there are more names for this category of girls: *nivéstul'ka* 'a bride', *maladelya* 'a bride'.

The literary name *vydánica* means "a girl who has reached a marriageable age", and it is associated with the phraseological unit *dzyaŭchyna na vydánni*, as the dictionary indicates (RSV1: 530). In the meaning of the dialect word *nivéstul'ka* 'a bride' (RSV1: 63), there is a potential connotative seme of an emotional-evaluative nature – affectionately approvingly, which is formally expressed in the suffix *-ulk* and is denoted by the diminutive mark. A semantic

2 www.belarus.kp.ru.

feature – an indication of age –, the girl's youth is leading in the word *maladelya* (from the adjective *malad-aya* + *-el-ya*): “MALADÉLYA fem. Young unmarried girl. *A maladelya genaya nichoga sama rabic' ne ýmee* ('And this young woman can't do anything on her own). Ivansk Chash” (RSV2: 16).

The second subgroup has the distinguishers ‘betrothed’ and ‘having a fiancé’: in the literary language, *nyavesta* ‘a bride’, *narachonaya* ‘betrothed’, *maladaya* ‘a young woman’; in the Vitebsk dialect, *kinyaginya*, *maladóvachka*. *Narachonaya*, *maladaya* are substantiated participles and adjectives; the first name is associated with the rite of matchmaking, betrothal, and the second with the age of the girl, her youth. The rite of matchmaking, naming is one of the obligatory rituals for Belarusians before marriage. The noun *kinyaginya* in the Vitebsk dialect has two meanings: “1. A marriageable girl. *Dachka tvaya ýzhe kinyaginya – kali bylo* ('Your daughter is already a marriageable girl – when was that'). Kazlovichy Gar. 2. Bride, betrothed. *I ya glidzela, yak kinyaginyu vykupyali* ('And I looked as if I was redeeming the bride'). Kanashy Gar” (RSV1: 250). The word in the first meaning is included in the first subgroup and denotes a girl of a marriageable age. The second meaning includes distinguishers ‘betrothed/engaged’ and ‘having a specific fiancé’.

The peculiarity of the semantics of this dialect word is created by potential associative semes (according to R. Ginzburg) arising from the traditional metaphorical comparison of the position of the bride with the high position of the princess, the wife of the ruler-prince. Belarusian words *kinyaginya*, *knyaz'* of Proto-Slavic origin: **kǫnędzь* (*k”nędz'*) is an ancient common Slavic borrowing and goes back to the ancient Germanic root **kun-ing*. The Germanic words *König*, *king* is of the same origin, the Scandinavian *konung* (a king) is a term for the elder of a clan (Trubachev 1987: 200). Initially, the king was a tribal leader who headed the organs of military democracy. The most ancient position of the king as the elder of the clan was deposited in the East Slavic wedding vocabulary, where the newlyweds (the nominal founders of the clan) are poetically called ‘prince’ *knyaz* and ‘princess’ *knyaginya* (Froyanov 1980: 17). As S. Lyubimova writes, “Semantically motivated nomina of sociocultural stereotypes are formed according to logical, allusive, and figurative strategies” (Lyubimova 2022: 116). The word *maladovachka*, like the word *maladelya*, is word-formatively connected with the adjective *maladaya*, indicating the young age of the girl. It is important to note that in the Vitebsk dialect we observe a variety of word formation models and means – suffixes (*-el*, *-ovachk*) with an endearing meaning for the formation of the names of women in the premarital status. They convey the approving positive attitude of society towards girls in the premarital status.

For some names, a specific chronological moment of being in the status is important: ‘right before the wedding’ – this seme is contained in the literary word *nyavesta* (TSBM3: 423) and the dialect *maladovachka* (RSV2: 16), ‘during the

wedding' – in the literary word *maladaya* 'a bride after engagement and during wedding' (TSBM3: 91).

A subgroup of names of women who are married will be considered further in Table 2.

Table 2. *The component analysis of the names of married women*

	Belarusian literary language	Vitebsk dialect
1	ZHÓNKA 'a wife' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: married 3. Distinguisher: having a husband affectionate attitude	
2	BÁBA 'a wife' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: married 3. Distinguisher: having a husband colloquial disparaging connotation	
3	ZAMÚZHNYAYA 'married' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: married 3. Distinguisher: having a husband	ZAMÚZHNICA 'a wife' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: married 3. Distinguisher: having a husband
4	MALADZÍCA 'a young wife' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: married 3. Distinguisher: short time young	
5	MALADÚHA 'a young wife' Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: married 3. Distinguisher: short time young	

There are five literary names in this LSG subgroup. The literary name of the *zhónka* has an endearingly approving connotation, expressed by the suffix *-k*, the word *bába* – with the mark colloquial and is stylistically reduced: “Coll. A married woman. *Shnuruyuc’ baby i dzyaŭchaty I kantralyuyuc’ moh uznyaty* (‘Women and girls lace up and control the raised moss’). Kolas” (TSBM1: 318). In the substantivized adjective *zamužhnyaya*, the seme of ‘being married’ *zamuzham* is brought into focus of meaning; the word is formed from the same adverb (*zamuzh-n-yaya*): “Who is married. *Zamuzhnyaya dachka* (‘A married daughter’)” (TSBM2: 350). It is interesting to note that the dialect noun *zamuzhnica* also emphasizes the position of a married woman, but a noun with the suffix *-nic* is formed from the adverb, and not from an adjective (*zamuzh-nic-a*): “A married woman. *I malodshaya maya ŷzho zamuzhnicaj stala* (‘And my youngest is already a married woman’). Zaazer’e Paul” (RSV1: 202). Two literary words, *maladzíca* (TSBM3: 90) and *maladuha* (TSBM3: 90–91), convey a woman’s short stay in marital status, indicating her youth. They are formed with the help of various suffixes *-ic*, *-uh*: *maladzíca* < *malad(-aya) + -íc(-a) i maladuha* < *malad(-aya) + -uh(-a)*. Such detailing and emphasis on youth, the young age of a married woman suggests that in Belarusian culture a lot of attention was paid to a woman in the initial period of marriage. Perhaps this is due to the difficulties of adapting a girl to a new status and new responsibilities. The hard lot of a young married woman is mentioned in many Belarusian proverbs and sayings: “Yak ya byla ŷ bacen’ka, to ya byla chubacen’ka; dastalasya da svyakruhi, to ab’eli chubok muhi” [When I was with my father, I was with a forelock; when got to the mother-in-law, then the flies ate a forelock] (Prykazki i prymaŷki 1976: 246).

Table 3 below presents a component analysis of the names of women in the postmarital period.

Table 3. *The component analysis of the names of women in the postmarital period*

	Belarusian literary language	Vitebsk dialect
1	RAZVYADZYONKA ‘a divorced woman’ 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: after marriage 3. Distinguisher: divorced	RAZZHANIHA ‘a divorced woman’ 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: after marriage 3. Distinguisher: divorced stopped being married

Belarusian literary language	Vitebsk dialect
2	PAKIDÁŃKA 'a divorced woman' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: after marriage 3. Distinguisher: divorced abandoned
3 UDAVA' 'a widow' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: after marriage 3. Distinguisher: husband passed away	
4 UDAVÍCA 'a widow' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: after marriage 3. Distinguisher: husband passed away	
5 SALAMYÁNAYA ŹDAVA' 'a grass widow' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: married having a husband 3. Distinguisher: long absence of a husband	

In the dictionary of the Belarusian literary language, one name for a divorced woman, *razvyadzyonka*, is recorded, formed from the verb *razvadzicca* with the suffix *-yonk-*: *razvyadz-yonk-(a)*. More expressive figurative expressions function in the Vitebsk dialect: *razzhaniha* and *pakidanka*. *Razzhaniha* is formed from the verb *razzhanicca* (*raz-zhan-ih-a*), the meaning of which includes the seme 'cease to be what is named in the generating stem' *zhanicca*, i.e. stop being married. In the word *pakidanka*, formed from the verb *pakida-c'* + *nk-(a)*, the distinguisher 'abandoned' is actualized: "A wife abandoned by her husband. *Yana pakidánka, adna dzyacej gaduec*" ('She was left alone, raising children alone'). Shodziki Shum" (RSV1: 99). The word has a potential negative implication 'a woman is a thing that can be thrown'.

In general, this subgroup of female names is characterized by negative axiological connotations arising from gender stereotypes that still exist in society (Temirgazina, Albekova et al. 2021: 462–463). The Belarusian journalists write about this: “For a woman, this is a change in status from a married lady to a “divorced woman”, and although society today treats divorced women loyally, there is still negative connotation connected to this status” (Ronina 2021).³ The degree of negativity gradually increases – from less in the literary word *razvyadzyonka* to high in the dialect words *razzhaniha* and *pakidanka*.

A woman whose husband has died is called in the literary language *ŷdava*, *ŷdavica*. The word *ŷdava* is of Indo-European origin: “Ukr. udova, udovitsya, st.-glory. widova χήρα (Zogr., Assem., Savv., etc.), Bulg. widow, Serbohorv. Udova, udov ‘widowed’, Slovenian. vdava, Czech. vdova, slvts. vdova, Polish. wdowa, v.-luzh. wudowa, n.-luzh. hudowa. || Praslav. *vydova primordially related to another Prussian. widdewū (from *vidavā), OE Ind. vidhāvā ‘widow’, vidhūs ‘widowed’, Avest. viḍava w. ‘widow’, Greek ἡθεος ‘single, unmarried’, lat. vidua ‘widow’, viduus ‘widow’, Goth. widuwō ‘widow’, D.H.N. wituwa; see Uhlenbeck, Aind. wb. 286 et seq.; Trautman, BSW 357; Bartolome, Air. wb. 1443” (Fasmer).

The semantics of the word *ŷdava* is axiologically neutral. The word “*ŷdavica* (*ŷdav-ic-a*)” derived from it has a slightly reduced meaning and is used mainly in colloquial speech: “ŷDAVÍCA, -y, f. *Coll.* The same as ŷ d a v a. *Hoc’ yoj bylo ŷzho dalyoka za sorak i ŷdavica dobra-taki razdalasya ŷ stane, yana yashche maladzilasya i paglyadala na muzhchyn.* (‘Although she was already well into her forties and the widow was in a good state, she was still getting younger and looked at men’). Mashara” (TSBM5–1: 614). The dictionary also contains the phraseological unit *salamyánaya ŷdavá*, which is used to refer to a woman who is married and has a husband, but he has been absent for a long time. This idiom has the mark *zhart* ‘humorous’ in the dictionary: “woman temporarily separated from her husband (transl. from German *Strohwitwe*)” (TSBM5–1: 614). It is indicated that this is a calque from the German expression *Strohvitwe* ‘a grass widow’.

We would like to emphasize that in the Vitebsk dialect there are no special names for this category of women. This suggests that the speakers of the dialect in this regard completely manage with literary words. The researchers also write about this: most of those who speak Belarusian are native speakers of dialectal speech; most of them, to some extent, also own the literary norm⁴ (Koryakov 2002: 51).

Table 4 below shows a component analysis of the names of women of extramarital status in the literary language and dialect.

3 *Zviazda* – newspaper. 02.09.2021. <https://zviazda.by/>.

4 The excerpts from the scholarly literature were translated by the author.

Table 4. *The component analysis of the names of women in the extramarital period*

	Belarusian literary language	Vitebsk dialect
1	ADZINÓCHKA 'a single woman' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: was not married 3. Distinguisher: a significant excess of marriageable age	BABYLÍHA 'a single woman' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: was not married 3. Distinguisher: a significant excess of marriageable age compassionate disdain
2	VEKAVUHA 'a single woman' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: was not married 3. Distinguisher: a significant excess of marriageable age	
3	STARAYA DZEVA (DZEŬKA) 'a spinster' 1. Categorical seme: female 2. Marker: was not married 3. Distinguisher: a significant excess of marriageable age	

In literary names, the emphasis in semantics is on the loneliness of *adzinochka*: “Who is alone, without a family, is not a couple. *Use nastajnicy i nastajniki-adzinochki harchavalisya ŭ stalovaj. Duboŭka*” (TSBM1: 137) or the woman’s age, which is significantly older than marriage. So, for example, *vekavuha* is formed from the word *vekavoj*, i.e. ‘centennial’ (TSBM1: 475); in the idiom *staraya dzeva* (*dzeŭka*), the adjective *staraya* ‘old’ indicates a significant age of a woman.

The dialect name *babyl-ih(-a)*, formed from the word *babyl’*, has a colloquial character, expressed by the suffix *-ih* with colloquial semantics. *Bobyl’* (Russian), *babyl’* (Belarusian) is a “landless peasant, day laborer” (Fasmer). M. Fasmer also notes that the etymology of the word is unclear. In the dictionary of V. I. Dal’, the meaning of the word *bobyl’* expands: “lonely, homeless; the *bobyl’* lives with people as a backbone or a laborer, a watchman, a shepherd” (Dal’ 1989: 101). Thus, the word *babyliha* is accompanied by a stable connotation of pity, neglect:

“A poor lonely woman. *U babylya nichoga nyama i ŷ babylihi tozha*. Plisa Glyb” (RSV1: 59).

A subgroup of literary and dialectal names of women of extramarital status is characterized by the same axiological character – emotionally negative, differing only in the degree of intensity of individual lexemes. One of the likely reasons for such a negative assessment is, in our opinion, the rootedness in the minds of the native speakers of the Belarusian language and culture of gender stereotypes, one of which reads “a woman should get married”.

Conclusions

Thus, the quantitative ratio of the names of women in accordance with their marital status in the literary Belarusian language and the northeastern Vitebsk dialect can be presented in the following table.

Table 5. *The number of names of women according to the marital status in the literary version and the northeastern dialect of the Belarusian language*

	Variety of language	Premarital period	Marriage period	Postmarriage period	Extramarital period	Total
1	Belarusian literary language	4	5	4	3	16 / 66.66%
2	Northeastern dialect	4	1	2	1	8 / 33.33%
	Total	8	6	6	4	24 / 100%

The table shows that the literary language has a numerical superiority in this group of words in the ratio of 16 to 8. This is natural, since the literary language, as the core of the national language, has a more extensive vocabulary. Parity is observed only in a subgroup of words denoting the premarital status of a woman – 4:4. In the remaining subgroups, there is a predominance, sometimes significant, of literary names. Nevertheless, it should be noted that dialect names are more expressive, which are expressed in potential semes based on associations and figurative comparisons from the general fund of knowledge of native speakers of the Belarusian language. O. I. Blinova believes that figurative nominations constitute the core zone of folk speech culture, reflected in regional dictionaries (Blinova 2002: 234). Dialect words are also characterized by a more diverse arsenal of word-building means – suffixes *-el*, *-ul’k*, *-ovachk*, *-ih*, *-ank*, *-uh*, *-ic*, in which various emotional and evaluative connotations of speakers are realized. Zlobin and Marozava write about this phenomenon in the dialect system of word

formation: “[...] Dasledavanne dydalektna-litaraturnyh varyyantnyh radoŭ dae magchymasc’ kanstatavac’ bol’shuyu raznastajnasc’ slovaŭtvaral’nyh farmantaŭ u sisteme dydalektnyh naminacyj u paraŭnanni z litaraturnymi adpavednikami, shto dazvalyae gavaryc’ pra pradyktyŭnasc’ unutyrdydalektnyh slovaŭtvaral’nyh varyyantaŭ” (Zlobin, Marozava 2010: 20). [... The study of dialect-literary variant series allows us to state a greater variety of word formants in the system of dialect nominations in comparison with their literary counterparts, which allows us to speak about the productivity of intra-dialect word-forming variants]. In literary and dialect derivative words, the frequency (five words) of the word-formation connection with the word *malad(-aya)* is noted. This indicates the relevance of young age for the nomination of marital status, especially premarital – three words (*maladelya*, *maladovachka*, *maladaya*) and marriageable – two words (*maladzica*, *maladuha*). Some of the words under consideration (three words) are semantically related to marriage rituals and ceremonies: *vydannica*, *narachonaya*, *razvyadzyonka*; part of the names (five words) conveys the figurative-metaphorical perception of a particular marital status by native speakers – *kinyaginya*, *babyliha*, *adzinochka*, *vekavuha*, *pakidanka*.

The axiological and emotionally expressive characteristics of lexical groups depend on the socio-cultural stereotypes that exist in society, regardless of the language stratum. Thus, the literary and dialectal names of the extramarital status of women are distinguished by a negative evaluative connotation due to the influence of the gender stereotype that a woman’s destiny is to marry and create a family. The names of divorced women have a similar axiological connotation, since divorce is not approved in society. Names of women who are married are characterized by axiological neutrality or positivity, since they correspond to the sociocultural stereotypes. The literary and dialect names of women with premarital status have the most positive axiological potential, while the dialect names of *nivestul’ka*, *maladelya*, *maladovachka*, *kinyaginya* are characterized by emotionally expressive caressing and approving connotations.

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The Etymology and Semantics of the Ethnic Name *Csángó*

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Abstract. In this study, we approach the ethnonym *Csángó*, used to refer to the Hungarians living in Moldavia. We highlight the most important aspects of Hungarian linguists' approach to the semantics of the name *Csángó*, and we take a look at the Romanian specialized literature in the field. We aim to offer some innovative semantic and etymological pathways, though we are aware that the etymology and the meaning of the name itself will still stay a disputed and open question of the research. We do not intend to cover the history of the *Csángó* community, nevertheless we attempt to recover some aspects of the semantics of their name, taking into account its etymology and performing a semantic feature analysis to help bring to the foreground semantic aspects not captured so far.

Keywords: *Csángó*, Hungarian, Romanian, etymology, semantics

1. Introduction

Ethnonyms, or *ethnic names* can be defined as the names people use to refer to different ethnic groups. Ethnonyms are classified in two categories, i.e. there are the external ethnonyms, or exonyms, which are used by others for the given group of people, and the internal ethnonyms, or endonyms, that people use to refer to themselves. Today, *Csángó* is usually defined as both an exonym and an endonym. *Csángó* has also been used as an ethnic slur or a pejorative name (cf. Péntek 2014, Pávai 1999, Tánczos 2011); the pejoration process intensified in the last couple of decades, and if we consider the Romanian dictionary definitions of the term (see later in this study), the pejorative potential of *Csángó* is not once mentioned. As the number of Hungarians in Moldavia decreased,¹ the stigma

1 For information regarding the demographic changes the *Csángó* community has undergone, see Tánczos (2001b).

allotment process towards the Hungarian Csángó community intensified.² The terms ‘Csángó’, ‘Hungarian from Moldavia’, and ‘Catholic community from Moldavia’ are synonymous with each other though today there are Romanian Roman Catholics as well.

Nevertheless, Pávai (1999), Tánczos (2001a), Péntek (2005), and Iancu (2023) highlight the fact that ‘Hungarian’ and ‘Catholic’, ‘Csángó’ and ‘Catholic’ have become synonymous with each other. István Pávai (1999: 69–82) makes a complete inventory of ethnonyms, endonyms, and exonyms alike, with regard to the Csángó community. His research suggests that the Csángó call themselves ‘Hungarian’ and ‘Catholic’ mainly, while the exonyms they are referred to by Romanian are ‘Csángó’, ‘Hungarian’, ‘bozgor’, and ‘bandin’ (see also Nagy 2023). Lately, the name Csángó has been replaced by ‘Hungarian from Moldavia’ *moldvai magyar*, especially in the scientific discourse.

2. Research methods and aims of the study

The purpose of the study is to try to identify the etymology of the lexeme Csángó, by applying the method of indirect attestation of word meaning and/or form through an approach that takes into account phonetic and lexico-semantic aspects as well. The method of indirect attestation is briefly described by Béla Kelemen (1976), who uses it to track the emergence of certain Romanian words borrowed by the Hungarian language, to identify the date of their first (indirect) attestation. As Kelemen (1976) puts it, one of the most important factors for studying the history of a language is gaining knowledge regarding the first attestations of words. There is no doubt that the most authentic attestations are those directly taken from old texts and documents, but research on the history of words is enriched by finding the traces words leave in texts written in other languages.

As Philip Durkin highlights, “the more deeply interested we are in the history of words and the history of the lexicon, the more detail we want available to us, even when that pushes us into areas that are necessarily interdisciplinary” (Durkin 2022: 89). We approach the method of indirect attestation of words as a tool with the help of which we track semantic or formal aspects of word evolution by relying not only on direct but also on indirect evidence. We can reconstruct information about forms and/or meanings not only from the direct information available but also from indirect information, i.e. we make inferences about the form and/or the meaning of a word by analysing the traces it has left in other lexemes it has generated or in other languages which have borrowed the word subjected to analysis. Thus, we prove the existence of phonetic, morphological,

2 It is interesting to see the reflection of the Csángó issue in the novel *Született Moldovában* [Born in Moldavia] by the Hungarian novelist Rózsa Ignác.

or semantic aspects of words through evidence we find in other lexemes from the same lexico-semantic field, word family, or in other languages.

We assume that the word Csángó can be traced back earlier than its first attestation, and, what is more, its meaning can be identified by analysing evidence that we find in Hungarian and Romanian sources as well. We do know that Csángó is used as an adjective, usually in the combination *Csángó magyar* ‘Csángó Hungarian’, but hitherto the meaning of the adjective has not been established unequivocally. Therefore, we attempt to apply the method of indirect attestation of word meaning and form by taking the following steps:

- We establish the semantic field of the lexeme Csángó by relying on Hungarian and Romanian sources as well in order to be able to find its semantic features.

- We gather all the phonetically relevant forms (considered or neglected by previous research) and make a semantic feature analysis (in order to find whether there is a common denominator of meaning with Csángó).

- We take these relevant lexemes one by one and try to find them in old texts or glossaries that are not necessarily or exclusively related to the concept of Csángó. We mainly use such semantically independent sources in order to avoid being trapped by circular analysis.

- We establish the meaning these words carry in those sources, and we try to see whether any of them could be connected with elements of semantic features from the semantic field of Csángó.

3. Research on the Csángó issue in a nutshell

Hungarian research on the topic of the Csángó community’s history, dialect, music, lifestyle, traditions, and culture is tremendous. A lot of historians, linguists, priests, ethnographers, etc. have researched, analysed, described this community of Hungarians who speak the most archaic form of Hungarian and have preserved some of the Hungarian traditions. The limitations of this study do not make it possible for us to make a list of the most important contributors from Elek Gegő’s *A moldvai magyar telepekről* (1838) [On the Hungarian Settlements in Moldavia] to Laura Iancu’s *Miért csángó, ha Magyar* [Why Csángó if Hungarian] (2022).³

3 For further information see also the works and writings of Marco Bandini and his *Codex Bandinus* from 1646, Péter Zöld’s 1781 *Notitia de rebus Hungarorum, qui in Moldavia et ultra degant*, or the studies of János Jerney, Gábor Szarvas, Bernát Munkácsi, Mózes Rubinyi, Domokos Pál Péter, János Melich, Antal Horger, János Karácsonyi, Árpád Bitay, Bálint Csűry, Gábor Lükő, László Mikecs, Endre Veress, Gyula Márton, Attila Szabó T., János Péntek, Ferenc Pozsony, Vilmos Táncos, Vilmos Keszeg, Lehel Peti, Csanád Bodó, Laura Iancu, and many others. <https://kriterion.ro/glossary/csango-irodalom/>; <https://www.csangomuzeum.ro/264/>; <https://digiteka.ro/publikacio/csango-bibliografia-a-kivalogatas-szempontjai>; <http://www.kjnt.ro/csangobibliografia>.

Romanian historians have addressed mainly aspects of the Csángó community's history. While the position of Hungarian historiography on the issue of Csángó origins and that of Romanian historiography on the same issue are broadly in line until the interbellum period (see Rosetti 1905, Năstase 1935, Iorga 1915) – namely that this is a Hungarian community –, during and after the Second World War, the situation completely changed. Ideological slanting⁴ can be spotted in the writings of Dumitru Mărtinaş (1985), Iosif Petru M. Pal (1942),⁵ and Petru Râmneanţu (1946), who all stated that the Csángós were originally Romanians from Transylvania who were converted to Catholicism and were later forced to adopt the Hungarian language.

The latter two used the methods of eugenics and blood tests to prove that the Csángós were Romanian. They did so in the context of the 1940s when eugenics methods were applied by the Nazi and used as a justification for their abominable racial politics, which makes their contribution even more suspicious. Dumitru Mărtinaş's theory is based on these eugenic, therefore unscientific theories. His ideas regarding the origin of the Csángó are still very popular in Romania (Siarl 2016), but the number of non-biased approaches is growing (see Diaconescu 2002, 2008). Some earlier writings of Romanian scientists are still to be assessed such as Eliade's *De la Zamolxis la Genghis-Han, Studii comparative despre religiile şi folclorul Daciei şi Europei Orientale* [From Zamolxis to Genghis-Khan, Comparative Studies on the Religions and Folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe] (Eliade 1995), where he describes the shamanic practices of the Csángó community.

Apart from Hungarian and Romanian researchers, we must mention other contributors such as Yrjö Wichmann, the Finnish linguist who collected in 1906 a number of Hungarian north-Csángó proverbs and phrases, published in 1936 in Helsinki by Bálint Csűry and Artturi Kannisto, as the 4th volume of the series *Lexica Societatis Fenno-Ugricae*, Robin Baker's *On the Origin of the Moldavian Changos*, Meinolf Arens's *An Ethnic Group on the Pressure Field of Totalitarian Population Policies. The Moldavian Hungarians/Csángós in the Romanian—Hungarian—German Relations* (1944), Agnieszka Barszczewska's *The Moldavian Csángó Identity (1860–1916): Social and Political Factors*, but also the Turkish linguist, Hakan Aydemir (2002: 198–210) or R. Chris Davis's *Hungarian Religion, Romanian Blood: A Minority's Struggle for National Belonging, 1920–1945* (2019).

4 Ideological slanting or bias refers to the way they approached the issue of the Csángó origin and to the fact that their discourse was based less on historical or social evidence or scientifically verifiable, objective data but rather on “implicit values and assumptions embedded within texts, discourse, or social practices, e.g. loaded language”. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095956714>.

5 This Csángó-born, Romanian-speaking Catholic priest is mentioned in Rózsa Ignác's novel *Született Moldován* [Born in Moldavia], where the Csángó villagers call him a *janicsár pap*, i.e. a ‘janissary priest’, ‘traitor’, ‘deserter’, ‘renegade’.

4. Moldavian Hungarian dialects and groups

Without detailing the linguistic peculiarities of the Csángó dialect, we briefly present the two major positions regarding the geographical expansion and distribution of Csángó groups in Moldavia. The traditional view speaks about three major groups: 1. Northern Csángó dialects spoken around the town Románvásár (Roman): Szabófalva (Săbăoani), Kelgyest (Pildești), Balusest (Bălușești), Ploszkucény (Ploscuțeni); 2. Southern Csángó dialects spoken around the municipal town Bákó (Bacău): Bogdánfalva (Valea Seacă), Nagypatak (Valea Mare), Trunk (Galbeni), Szeketura (Pădureni), Gyoszény (Gioseni); 3. Székely Csángó dialects spoken along the Szeret (Siret), Tatros (Trotuș), and Tázló (Tazlău) rivers (Szabó T. 1959).

A more recent and innovative approach is the one proposed by researchers in the 2000s, who implemented the method of dialectometry, which leads to a new type of classification of Hungarian dialects in Moldavia based on isoglosses. Thus, four areas emerge: 1. Northern; 2. valley of the River Szeret (Siret); 3. valley of the brook Tázló (Tazlău); 4. valley of the River Tatros (Trotuș) (cf. Bodó 2006, Heltai 2014). A comprehensive outlook on this topic is also made by Benő (2012: 13–30).

Nonetheless, the time and geographical space from which the Csángó communities reached Moldavia is still debated by scientific circles, for all that the traces of the first Hungarian Catholics can be found as early as 1222 (Domokos 1987: 20). Gökhan Dilbaş (2014) states that the Csángó were living in Moldavia long before the founding of the Moldavian state by Dragoș, as by the time the first Mongol invasion of Hungary they had already settled in those areas. Though we do not intend to explore these aspects in the current study, we cannot but cite one of the most prominent experts of the Csángó studies, János Péntek, who declares:

The mainly phonetic but also geolinguistic data prove that the Moldavian Hungarian dialect is *mezősegi* and Szekler in its type. Its division – mainly because of its mixed nature and the continuous amalgamation – is geographically problematic: the stripe near the Szeret (Siret) River (east) is the more archaic one, showing distinct *mezősegi* features (the “Northern” near Románvásár – Roman, and partly the “southern”, near Bákó – Bacău), while the one which can be localized in the larger area neighbouring the Szekler dialect, near the Tatros (Trotuș), Tázló (Tazlău), and Aranyos-Beszterce (Bistrița Aurie) rivers, is “Szekler type”. Based on type and settlement, one can deduce information on origins as well. The Hungarians in Moldavia have all arrived from areas of historical Transylvania: the more archaic ones inhabiting the banks of the Szeret (Siret) River at a very early period, from the comitatus regions of Transylvania, from the Mezőség, most probably due to a distinct purpose and conscious relocation, while the

others in later periods, for different reasons; as a result of direct geographical contact by spontaneous migration as well, almost continuously from *Székelyföld* (Szeklerland). (Péntek 2012: 121–122)

5. The first records of the word *Csángó* (Chango, Czanko, Sanga, Canko) and positions regarding its etymology and meaning

5.1. Occurrences in old texts

The first written source of the word *Csángó* in Hungarian that we know of today is the letter of parish priest Péter Zöld in the 18th century, who fled to Moldavia in 1764 because of the bloodshed which took place in Madéfalva (Siculeni), an event which came to be known as Siculicidium.⁶ He went to Moldavia twice, first he spent there two months, and the second time he stayed for five years (Iancu 2023). In this intriguing study, Iancu (2023) makes a synthesis of the 18th-century emergences of the term, starting from the letter written by Péter Zöld to Vince Blahó in 1781, translated and published in Hungarian in 1783, in which he uses the lexeme *Csángó* as an endonym (*Hungaris in Lonka residentibus, Csángó dictis*).

Another occurrence is the one belonging to István Sándor's publication *Sokféle 'Varia'*, in which he identifies the name *tsángó*, defined as 'Moldavo Hungarus', with the name used by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus to refer to the Pechenegs, i.e. *tsangár* (*Bello autem inter Turcos et Pancinacitas, tunc temporis Cangar dictos*).⁷

However, we must also mention *The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253–55*, published in London in 1900 (edited by Woodville Rockhill), in which the pilgrim offers the first accurate information on the identity of the Cumans with the Kipchaks, Turks, and *Cangle*, as he uses the variants *Cangle*, *Cangitae*, and *Kangali* to refer to a branch of the Cuman people. Due to the phonetic resemblance of the above-mentioned forms with *Csángó*, the names have been perceived as etymologically related despite the fact that there is a level of uncertainty related to the referent of the lexemes *Cangle*, *Canglae*, *Cangali*, and *Kangali*. The idea of the sameness of the *Csángó* with the Pechenegs is provided by a quite recent study by Enikő Hoppa (2020), who considers that the ethnonym we are analysing was borrowed from the old Slavs and followed the pathway *ka ngar>*kogar>*kogaъ>*kegaъ>*čegaъ, which changed in Hungarian as *čegaъ>*čę

6 <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-a-pallas-nagy-lexikona-2/s-16BBE/siculicidium-17799/>.

7 Sokféle 1–2. (Győr, 1791. 7). Első darab / 2. A' Kunokról, Jászokról, és Székelyekről. https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/view/Sokfele_01/?pg=4&layout=s.

gaŋ>*csengāŋ>*csāngāŋ>*csāngoŋ>*csāngó>csángó. She also states that the name Csángó may have evolved from the word *Kangar*, which, according to 6th–8th-century sources, denoted a group of Iranian people. The Iranian-speaking Kangar people in the 8th century mingled with the Middle-Turkic-speaking Pechenegs, and together they formed the Pecheneg tribal confederation described by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus; they later settled in Moldavia and were Hungarized by the Hungarians, who went there up to the 13th century (Hoppa 2020: 62–64).⁸

In the travel report of Domokos Teleki (1796) *Egynehány hazai utazások' leírása Tót és Horváth Országoknak rövid esmértetésével egygyütt* [The Description of Some Domestic Journeys Together with the Presentation of the Land of Croats and Slovaks], the *Tsángó* are the Hungarians inhabiting the Gyímes (Ghimes) region, and the word itself stands for 'wanderer', 'pilgrim'.⁹ Iancu (2023: 161) highlights that the word Csángó started to spread in the 18th century, with the help of the printed press, as well as its first semantic identification as 'wandering people' – though contemporary Moldavian Romanian sources do not use the term, and letters, reports written in Hungarian do not use it either. We add that the name *Cangar* is also mentioned as the synonym of Pecheneg in Lukácsy (1870), but, more importantly, Roger Bacon in his *Opus Majus* (1267), says that *Cangali/Canglae* is the name of the Cumans:

"Tota vero haec Tartarorum a Tanau usque ad Ethiliam fuit Cumanorum qui vocabantur Canglae, qui omnes sunt delete per Tartaros. Et tota ista vocabatur Albania antiquitas." 'But the whole of these Tartars, from Tanau to Ethilia, belonged to the Cumans, who were called Canglae, who were all destroyed by the Tartars.'¹⁰

"Deinde ultra Ethiliam est tertius prinoipatus Tartarorum et destructae sulit gentes indigenae al eis, et fuerunt Cumani Canglae, sicut prius." 'Then, beyond Ethilia, there is a third principality of the Tartars, and the tribes native to them were destroyed, and the Cumans were Canglas, as before.'¹¹

Thus, many sources link the etymology of Csángó to phonetically related forms (Veress 1934 considers the Csángós the descendants of the Cumans) that come from very old texts but that clearly refer to either the Cumans or to the Pechenegs.

8 She also quotes in this respect the ideas we can find in Endre Czeizel (1990), where the researcher states that the Csángó are genetically related to the Finns and the Iranians, which makes him consider that this group is the carrier of the genetic legacy of conquering Hungarian tribes.

9 „Ezeket az említett Gyímes-lunkai Lakosokat a Tsikiak Tsángóknak nevezik: lehet hogy ez a' Nevezet onnan jön , mivel ők vándorló Emberek és Lak helyeket gyakran el hagyták; az a' -Szó Tsángó pedig, olyan értelemben vétetik mint »' kóborló, vándorló.” 'These dwellers of the Gyimes-lunka are called Tsángó by those living in Tsik, i.e. Csik/Ciuc: this name may stem from the fact that they are wandering people who often leave their places, so the word Tsángó, in a similar sense, is "wandering", "roaming".'

10 The *Opus Majus* of Roger Bacon, ed. J. A. Bridges, Oxford, 1897, I, 366. <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ey4shp6s/items?canvas=565>.

11 Ibid.

Iancu (2023: 164) states that the word Csángó could have been in use in everyday communication in the 18th century, and, what is more, Péter Zöld might have known it prior to going to Moldavia. One of the most provocative things for Iancu is the lack of the word Csángó in non-Hungarian ecclesiastical or military, economic, etc. sources. Even in *Codex Bandinus* (with the original Latin title *Visitatio generalis omnium ecclesiarum catholicarum romani ritus in Provincia Moldaviae*), the report written in 1648 by Marco Bandini to be sent to Rome, to Pope Innocent X and to the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, the author talks about Hungarians and Catholics only. Therefore, the emergence and spread of the term is still under debate.

5.2. Some occurrences in Hungarian sources

The lexeme Csángó seems to be, in the sources and texts in which it was attested, an anthroponym and an ethnonym alike; morphologically, it functions as an adjective in most of the contexts. István András Duma makes a list of the earliest occurrences of the term.¹² According to Duma, to Zolnai Gyula's 1902–1906 *Magyar oklevél szótár. Pótlék a Magyar nyelvtörténeti szótárhoz* [Hungarian Dictionary of Diplomas. Supplement to the Hungarian Historical Dictionary]) and to Iancu (2022, 2023) and based on some research we have conducted on the volumes of *Székely Oklevéltár/ Szekler Archives*, the term emerges as an anthroponym:

- in 1400: Georgium Chango (Zichy Okm. V 233)
- in 1424: Petro Chanko (Muz. Forgach)
- in 1443: Ilias Sanga (*uric*/deed of donation issued by Stefan cel Mare)
- in 1584 Canko Thamas (see Zolnai 1902: 82)
- in 1602 Cziango Miklos/Csángó Miklós (Székely Okl. IV 67)
- in 1604 Chango Istuan (Székely Okl. IV 185) and Chiango Istuan (Székely Okl. IV 189)
- in 1614 Chiango Balint (Székely Okl. IV 459)
- in 1619 relicto Pauli Chiango (Székely Okl. IV 587)
- in 1635 Cziango Palne (Székely Okl. V 136).

As an ethnonym, before Péter Zöld's letters, the term is used in 1556 in Maksa (Moacşa), Covasna County, where 'andreas chango' and 'Michael csángó' are mentioned¹³ though the two items appear in a list of proper names, and therefore these could also be surnames wrongly spelled with lower-case letters.

The lexeme is used in many dictionaries and, naturally, in a lot of volumes dedicated to the Csángó community. For instance, in Baróti Szabó's 1792

12 <https://www.csangok.ro/Etelkoz%20%20es%20a%20csangok.pdf>.

13 *Item hereditatem in qua desident franciscus kws, fabianus teka, georgius seteth et andreas chango, valentinus sar, et Michael chango, proprijs laboribus et expensis quesui et nobilitaui.* Székely Okl. III. 1890: 313. https://adatbank.ro/html/alcim_pdf5296.pdf.

Dictionary, we have found *Tsángó* carrying two meanings: 1. ‘bell with a non-flat sound’, 2. ‘Hungarians born in Moldavia’. In the same source, we have identified *Tzanga*, meaning ‘a sheep or a flock of sheep who have lost their lambs’, and *Tzankó* meaning ‘the remains of beer, palinka or wine’. In Simai Kristóf’s 1809 Dictionary, the word is not listed, but we have found only *Tzanga* (‘ewe which lost its lamb’) and *Tzankó* (‘remains of beer making’). In Kriza (1863), *Csángó* is not listed – we have found only *csángat* meaning ‘ringing the bell loudly’ and *csángó* carrying the meaning ‘the remains of palinka making’ (aspects to which we will come back later).

According to Mikecs (1941),¹⁴ *Csángó* is the collective name of the ethnic groups that separated from the Szeklers. The word is probably a derivative of a now extinct verb meaning ‘to wander away’, ‘to break away’. *Csángó* is the name given primarily to the Moldavian Hungarians. It is also the name given to the Hungarians who moved from the Ciuc region to the nearby Trotuş River valley (*Gyimesi Csángók*), to the Hungarians living in Hétfalú (Şapte Sate) near Braşov, and to other inhabitants of Hungarian villages in Barcaság (Țara Bârsei) (*hétfalusi Csángók*). It is also often incorrectly used to refer to the Bukovina Szeklers and the Al-Duna Szeklers who split off from them. The name ‘*Csángó*’ is usually used as a term of derision. It is not used by the *Csángó* themselves but by the Szeklers living in their surroundings or further away. An exception are the Deva *Csángós*, also of Bukovina origin, who do not feel offended by the name, states Mikecs (1941).

In the most recent etymological dictionary of the Hungarian language, *Csángó* and its phonetic versions *Chango*, *Czanko*, *uanza* / *shanga*, *Csángó Hungari csángó-magyarok* *czángó sangó csangó* stand for a person belonging to the Hungarian ethnic group called *Csángó*.¹⁵ The word is derived from the verb *csáng* and is probably linked to *csángó* ‘unpleasantly, ear-piercingly ringing bell’, ‘irregularly, irregularly sounding bell’. *Csáng*, on the other hand, attested in 1795 as *Tsangó* and in 1796 as *Tsángó*, means ‘to roam, to stray, to wander’. The word root of *csáng* is also related to the following:

– *cammog* (attested in 1588 as *chammogni*, in 1589 as *czammag*, in 1774 as *tsammag*, and in 1785 as *tzommogtan*) meaning ‘to stroll’;

– *cankózik* (and its versions *czankozék* attested in 1660, *cankózni* attested in 1835, *Camkózik* attested in 1844, and *cangózik*) meaning ‘to start off’.¹⁶

In Gombocz and Melich (1914: 843), we can find a piece of information according to which the first written emergence of the lexeme in the form *Csangó* can be found in a Latin text from 1533, as published in Lajos Abafi’s *Figyelő* [Monitor] in 1878 (p. 148) and in the pages of *Magyar Nyelvőr* (1912: 245), where

14 <https://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/1-1203.html>.

15 <https://uesz.nyttud.hu/index.html>.

16 <https://uesz.nyttud.hu/index.html?displaymode=web&searchmode=exact&searchstr=cank%C3%B3zik&hom=>.

we can find a short note signed by Mihály Alföldi, stating that in a letter written by György Aranka to Márton György Kovachich on 6 November 1796 the writer mentions a Latin text written in 1533 he had found, in which the following lexical items can be spotted: *Turci*, *Hungari*, *Csángó Hungari*, and *Siculi* and *Terra Turcorum*, *Blacorum*, *Csangorum*, *Siculorum*, *Ultrasilvania*, and *Terra Alpium septem Silvarum*.

According to our findings, the Latin text and its Hungarian translation have been published several times, the last one being the version edited by Biró (2010). Nevertheless, we have found the text in Kilyéni Székely (1818) as well, the text being entitled *A' Székelyek eredetéről, és több Csik, Gyergyó, és Kászon Széki Fő Emberek vitéz tetteikről Jegyzések* [On the Origins of the Szeklers and on the Valiant Deeds of Several Important Men from the Ciuc, Gheorgheni, and Casin Areas]. We did find the lexeme Csángó in the following forms: *Csangour*, *Csangur*. However, the authenticity of this text has been questioned several times, even by Aranka himself, as Bíró (2010) states, and establishing the authenticity of this source is far beyond the scope of this study.

5.3. Some occurrences in Romanian sources

We have also searched for the term in the earliest but also more recent Romanian dictionaries, where the term emerges as follows:

- in Barițiu (1869), Csángó appears as *ceangau magiaru moldovenu sau barsanu* ‘Hungarian from Moldavia or Țara Bârsei’;
- in Alexics (1888), Csángó appears as *Cangău*, *csango igy nevesik a magyarokat Moldaban* ‘this is how they call the Hungarians in Moldavia’;
- in Cihac (1879), Csángó appears as *Ceangău*, *Hongrois*; *Ungurii numiți și Ceangai* ‘Hungarians also called Ceangai’; and *csango sonnant mal* ‘sounding bad’;
- Hodoș (1929) defines the Csángó as *Ceangau colonist ungur* ‘Hungarian settler’;
- Scriban (1939) mentions the linguistic units: *ceanga* in *Lovi-te-ar ceanga*, *lua-te-ar boala*, *dracu* ‘go to hell’, *ceanga* being a synonym of ‘hell’, ‘devil’, ‘evil’, ‘sickness’; *ceangăi*, *șalgăi Ungur din Moldova* ‘Hungarian from Moldavia’, *sărar*, *Negustor de sare* ‘salt merchant’ (this idea that the Csángó in the form Sângó means ‘salt mine worker’ or ‘salt merchant’ had been launched by Iorga 1915);
- Stati (2011) lists *ceangău* as *maghiar din Moldova* ‘Hungarian from Moldavia’;
- Stef (2021: 84–85) mentions the meanings: *ceangău*, *ceangăi* (*ceangă* 1. *clopoțel care se pune la gâtul animalelor* ‘a bell to put around the neck of animals’; 2. *clopot care anunță plecarea trenului din gară* ‘bell announcing the departure of the train from the station’; 3. *nume dat populației de etnie maghiară stabilită*

în Moldova, în timpul domnitorului Alexandru cel Bun ‘name given to the ethnic Hungarian population settled in Moldavia during the reign of Alexander I’.¹⁷

Nevertheless, we have found the first known attestation of the word in Romanian in a list written during a census, carried out in Moldavia in 1591. In the list called *Lista țăranilor, curtenilor, vătașilor, nemeșilor și popilor din Moldova* [List of peasants, courtiers, bailiffs, noblemen, and priests from Moldavia], among the data referring to Tatros/Trotuș area, we find that 120 *șagăi* [*șangăi*], i.e. Csángós, were recorded there (Hurmuzachi 1900: 219–220). Another early attestation belongs to Miron Costin, as he uses the lexeme under the form *Șangăi* (meaning Hungarians from Aknavásár / Târgu Ocna in his *Chronicle* written in 1645 (Costin 1901: 102–103).¹⁸

6. Semantic and etymological analysis of Csángó

6.1. Semantic feature analysis of the word Csángó

Based on the previously mentioned dictionary definitions of the word Csángó, a semantic feature or componential analysis would provide the following semantic features or denominators of meaning:

Csángó = [+HUNGARIAN], [+CATHOLIC], [+MOLDAVIA], [+OUT (OF BORDERS)], [+SEPARATED].

Some semantic features, or rather nuances, components of semantic feature that should be considered, after studying some Romanian sources, are:

- that of *freeholder* (*răzeș/részes* = freeholder, cf. Preda 2021, Poni, 1921), as most of the Catholic (i.e. Csángó) villages in Moldavia were freeholder villages;
- the idea of *connectedness and consanguinity* or family relations (*neamuri de răzeși*);
- that of *swarming out* (*roirea satelor de răzeși*, cf. Tufescu 1934).

What is more, most of the above lexemes are of Hungarian origin in Romanian (*răzeș/részes* ‘freeholder’,¹⁹ *a se răzeși* meaning ‘to become neighbours’ and having as a synonym *a se megieși*, also of Hungarian origin, *mezsgye*).²⁰

17 Whose wife erected one of the earliest Catholic churches in Moldavia, in the town of Baia.

18 Nu să c’ade sa trecem poticala Nemtilor de Șangăii țerei noastre la munti pre Oituz. [We cannot pass over the fiasco the Germans suffered from the Șanga/Csángó from our country in the mountains before Oituz.]

19 <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/r%C4%83ze%C8%99>.

20 <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/megie%C8%99>. Although two etymologies are given, it is well-known that for a word to penetrate another language and become an etymon for a new word in the other language, direct or at least indirect contact is needed: in Moldavia, especially in its Northern part, where the word *răzeși* emerged and spread, Romanians did not truly have any linguistic vicinity with the Croats or the Serbs, but they were in direct, unmediated contact with the Hungarians. Therefore, the Hungarian etymology is much more realistic.

Tufescu (1934: 15) points out that the most frequent mechanism of spreading in the case of freeholders' villages was that of *roire* 'swarming out', 'clustering': through a natural process of multiplication of the population, some freeholder villages became unable to support a certain number of inhabitants, their subsistence possibilities being exceeded. Part of them left and founded a new village not far from the central, *beehive* village, through a phenomenon similar to bee swarming, in such a way that the new village did not stray too far from the archaic village. *Swarming out* means this way 'emigrating together from a place in company with a leader to start a new colony elsewhere, to form a crowd, and depart from a place to find another place of living'.

6.2. Csángó: Etymologies explored

We have gathered all the phonetically relevant forms (considered or neglected by previous research) and have made a semantic feature analysis (in order to find whether there is a common denominator of meaning with Csángó). We have taken these relevant lexemes one by one and have tried to find them in old texts or glossaries that are not necessarily or exclusively related to the concept of Csángó. We have used such semantically "independent", i.e. not solely Csángó-related sources in order to avoid being trapped by circular analysis. We have established the meaning these words carry in those sources, and we have tried to see whether any of them could be connected with elements of semantic features from the semantic field of Csángó.

6.2.1. *Canga, czanga, tzanga, tsanga, csanga*

In Baróti Szabó's 1792 dictionary *Kisdéd szótár* [Small Dictionary], we can find the version *tzanga*, which carries the meaning 'sheep and/or flock whose lambs have been lost' (Baróti Szabó 1792). The same meaning is associated with *tzanga* in Simai (1809): *Tzanga Ovis mater deperd.* In Szinnyei's *Magyar tájszótár* [Hungarian Dictionary of Regionalisms] (1893), we find the lexeme with two, slightly different forms: *canga* (*csanga* [?]), standing for 'a milk sheep whose lambs have died or were separated from it' (Szinnyei 1893: 218). The question mark which follows the second phonetic instantiation signals perhaps the fact that the author was rather uncertain about the proper form: *canga* or *csanga*.

In Hermán (1914: 507), we have found the form *czanga*, indicating 'a ewe which lost its lamb'. What is interesting is that Hermán (1914) also provides a lexeme purporting 'Hungarian from Moldavia' or 'Csángó from Moldavia', i.e. *Czárán – moldvai csángó*, meaning that the two concepts were named with two totally different words. In Csűry's 1935 dictionary, we can find *canga* with the meaning 'old ewe' (Csűry 1935: 122).

In a volume edited by Tinta Publishing House, *A Magyar tájszavak és népies lexikai elemek adatbázisa* [Database of Hungarian Dialectal and Folk Lexemes] (2012), *canga* conveys the meaning ‘a milk sheep whose lambs have died or been separated from it’. In a volume dedicated to Hungarian ethnography, we can find *canga* standing for ‘a flock of infecund and/or milk sheep, separated from the others and sent to outer pastures’.²¹

6.2.2. *Csáng, csángó, csángat, cángat, csangó, tsángó*

In Baróti Szabó’s 1792 dictionary, we have spotted the forms *Tsángó*, standing for ‘a bell with an unpleasant sounding’, but also for ‘Hungarians born in Moldavia’ (Baróti Szabó 1792: 239), this early dictionary treating this unit as a polysemic word rather than two homonyms. In Simai (1809), *Tsángó* carries only the first meaning listed by Baróti Szabó: *Campana malum fundens sonum*. In Ballagi (1867: 163), we can find *Csangó* signifying ‘bad sounding’, ‘muffled tone’; *Csángat* ‘ringing noisily’, ‘ringing the bell’; *Csángó* ‘Hungarian resident in Moldavia’; *Csángó* indicating ‘vinegary sour wine’, ‘mash left at the bottom of the cauldron when making palinka’, ‘acidified, stale food’. This latter meaning in the case of *csángó* is registered by Kriza (1926) as well, while Oláh (1906: 17) lists the meaning ‘clumsy little child’, obviously linked rather to *cíngár*, standing for ‘very slim child’.

We have also considered Czuczor and Fogarasi’s 1862 dictionary (1862: 1109), the first volume of which displays the following forms: *czanqó*, *csángó*, *czankó*, and *sankó*, conveying the meaning ‘walk slowly’, ‘lurk’, ‘cover’, or ‘hide’, but *csángó* also means ‘Hungarians expelled from Transylvania and living in Moldavia or Wallachia’ (*Így nevezik az Erdélyből kibujdosott moldva- és oláhországi magyarokat.*) (Czuczor & Fogarasi 1862: 1110).

Csang and *csanog* are two phonetic variants of a word with two values: it is a verb of Turkic origin standing for ‘speak in a bad voice’, ‘make a bad sound’, but it is also the root or regressive derivative element of the adjective *csángó* meaning ‘making a bad sound’ (Czuczor & Fogarasi 1862: 1110).

In the same source, we can find that *Csángó* is a lexeme that also signifies ‘a person who wanders, walks around’, and it is an antonym of *székely*, *székelő*, i.e. ‘a person who resides or stays in a permanent place’. The authors of this dictionary also add another phonetic version to *Csángó*, namely *Czangó magyarok*, designating ‘Hungarians living in or moving to Moldavia’. They explain this phonetic variant with the whistling speech of the *Csángó* Hungarians, who cannot articulate the voiced consonants *s* [ʃ] and *cs* [tʃ] (Czuczor & Fogarasi 1862: 1196).

21 <https://www.arcanum.com/hu/online-kiadvanyok/MagyarNeprajz-magyar-neprajz-2/ii-gazdalkodas-4/allattartas-pasztorokodas-A52/juhtartas-C41/legelok-es-legeltetes-C5A/>.

In Zaicz's etymological dictionary (2006: 117), *Csángó* is listed with the meaning 'Hungarian from Moldavia', derived from the archaic verb *csáng* meaning 'going back and forth'. However, we must note that this archaic verb *csáng*, though cited as the root of *csángó*, has not been listed in any of the sources we have seen, be they mentioned or not in this study.²²

In the first volume of the dictionary of the Moldavian Hungarian dialect (Péntek 2016: 132), we find *Csángó* and its phonetic versions *cángó*, *cangalëu*, and *sángó* designating an ethnic slur used for ethnic Hungarians in Moldavia, opposed to the ethnic name *madzsar* ('Hungarian'). A verb derived from the name or adjective *Csángó* is *csángódik*, meaning *csángóvá lesz* 'become *Csángó*'. This means indubitably that the verb has been derived from the adjective and is not its source. In Szabó T. (1975 II. 22), *Csángó* is defined as 'Hungarian from Moldavia'. The lexeme is described as an adjective which means 'wanderer'; the attestation Szabó T. uses belongs to Zöld (1781) though the source quoted is Teleki (1796). Sántha (2018: 111) lists the following forms: *cángat* as a verb meaning 'to make loud noise', *csáng*, *csángál*, or *csángat* standing for 'ringing the bell loudly', 'making unbearable noise with the bells', *csángá* as an adjective used to describe people who go sideways, *csángó* as an ethnonym for Moldavian Hungarians but also a noun referring to 'the remains of palinka making', and the adjective *csángós* signifying 'sounding bad or unpleasant'.

The situation of the verb *csángál* is still a pathway to be followed in order to be spotted in old texts, as it is seldom listed in dictionaries or glossaries, but it is still used in rural areas in Transylvania. Its connection to *csámborog* 'stroll' is probable, as the *New Etymological Dictionary of Hungarian*²³ mentions among its variants and/or related items *csángurdi* 'kóborló, csavargó; félbolond' meaning 'wanderer, vagabond, fool',²⁴ *csángódik* 'ide-oda üzött, hajtott, nyugalmat nem találó' meaning 'driven to and fro, restless, finding no rest',²⁵ *csángál* 'ide-oda lóbál; terel, hajt' meaning 'swaying to and fro; herding, driving',²⁶ and *csángál* 'félrebillent' meaning 'tilted to one side'.²⁷ Horger (1905) points out that *Csángó* comes from **csángani*, and it means 'to become Romanian', another, most probably earlier version of the lexeme being *Csangó*. In Gombocz and Melich (1914), *csángál* is a verb attested in Csík/Ciuc County and in Szekszárd, which is also used with the inflection *-áz*, i.e. *csángáz*, and it means 'swinging something', 'divert something into a direction', 'to hit' or 'to target something' (Gombocz & Melich 1914: 845). A parallel version is *csánkál*, attested in the areas around

22 Though we heard it used by villagers in the Eastern border of the Transylvanian Plain.

23 <https://uesz.nyttud.hu/index.html>.

24 Attested in *Magyar Nyelvőr*. Pest, 1872.

25 Attested in the archive files of *A magyar nyelv nagyszótára* [The Great Dictionary of the Hungarian Language].

26 Attested in *Magyar Nyelv*. Budapest, 1905.

27 Attested in *Magyar Nyelvőr*. Pest, 1872.

Pest and Szatmár/Satu-Mare, and it means ‘wander’, ‘jump’, ‘move’ (Gombocz & Melich 1914: 845).

6.2.3. *Csán*

In *A moldvai magyar tájnyelv szótára* [The Dictionary of the Hungarian Dialect from Moldavia] edited by János Péntek, we find the following definition of *csán*, which is, according to Péntek, the etymon of *csángó*: *csán* = *csinál* ‘to make’, ‘to do’ (Péntek 2014: 412, 2016: 133), obviously the root of *becsánul*, synonym of *becsukódik*, ‘to close’, ‘to shut’ (Péntek 2016: 68). Judging by the diverging meanings delivered by the two etymologically and phonetically related lexemes, we say that *csán* seems rather a maximal hyperonym, meaning a lot of things, not only ‘to do’ or ‘to make’.

What is more, the emergence of *csángó* from *csán*, however appealing, seems rather odd phonetically, as syncope would have led to **csil* whereas apocope to **csin*, rather than to *csán*, and the paragoge of *-(g)ó* would be even more difficult to explain.

6.2.4. *Cankó, czankó*

In Baróti Szabó’s dictionary (1792), *cankó* has the phonetic version *csángó*, but only with the meaning of ‘rest, remainder of wine making’, whereas the lexeme for Hungarian ethnic from Moldavia is *tsangó*. In Szinnyei (1893: 218), *cankó* is listed with the following phonetic and semantic variants: *cankó*, *cangó*, *canko*, *Csángó*, meaning ‘sour wine’, ‘acidified beer’, and ‘the part of palinka which remained at the bottom of the cauldron during distillation’.

The verb *cankózik*, *cankozik* stands for the following: 1. ‘wonder’, ‘roam’, ‘stroll’; 2. ‘follow in the footsteps of somebody’ (Szinnyei 1893: 218). The same two meanings of *cankózik* are listed in the *Database of Hungarian Dialectal and Folk Lexemes* (Tinta Könyvkiadó 2012): ‘to drink sour wine’, ‘to wander’, ‘to roam’, ‘to stroll’, and ‘to follow somebody’. Szabó T. (1975 I: 1131) defines *cankózik* as ‘to wander’, ‘to roam’, and the adjective *cankózó* as ‘wanderer’, as lexemes attested in the 1830s.

7. A new solution?

Taking into account all the above-mentioned forms and meanings, we have continued to search for a lexeme which is close in point of phonetics to the one we are analysing and which shares some of its semantic features: *Hungarian*, *Catholic*, *Moldavia*, *out*, and *separated* or connected with the ideas of *freeholder*,

swarming, consanguinity, as the above-mentioned versions with their meanings do not have these semantic features (perhaps with the exception of *canga*, which displays the features +out, +separated). We have found such a form with a weak or minor phonetic or sound shift and which has at least one common semantic feature listed above.

Wass György, in his volume, *Zselyk. Egy magyar falu Beszterce-Naszód megyében* [Jeica. A Hungarian Village in Bistrița-Năsăud County], a monograph of a village from the Transylvanian Plain region (where the Csángó are supposed to have come from, according to Péntek (2005)), includes in the glossary of terms that are specific for the sociolect of that area, the lexemes *csankó*, *csankázás* (Wass 1990: 140). *Csankó* means ‘a group or swarm (of bees) similar to a cluster’, while ‘the swarming of bees’, i.e. the ‘cluster-like moving of a group to a new territory’ is called *csankázás* (Wass 1990: 140), which is obviously a common semantic link that *csankó* shares with Csángó. That is why we believe that *csankó* used to mean ‘swarming of bees’, but, most probably, through semantic contamination and extension of meaning, ‘swarming of people out of one place to another, in a group, in a cluster to find and occupy new territories’, semantic aspects which are present in Csángó as well. This means that the two lexemes are connected – not only phonetically but, above all, semantically. Therefore, *Csángó (magyar)*, as an adjective, most probably means *kirajzott magyar* ‘swarmed out Hungarians’, *külső területre távozott magyar* ‘Hungarians who were relocated to or beyond the indago regions’, *külhoni magyar* ‘cluster of Hungarians displaced/sent beyond the borders’.

If we accept that Csángó delivers this meaning of *rajzani* ‘swarm out’, ‘cluster’, ‘move away’, ‘drive beyond/to the indago region or border’, it becomes obvious that the meanings of ‘wander’, ‘stroll’, ‘roam’, ‘get separated’ also attach to this semantic attribute. The connection between the verb delivering the meaning of movement for bees and the verb of movement used for groups of humans is obvious: in Hungarian, it is the verb *rajzani* and in Romanian the verb *a roi* ‘swarm’ with the derived noun *roire* ‘swarming’. However, we must notice that in Romanian *roire* also has a synonym, *bejenie*, used for bees and humans alike, which equally means ‘swarming’ but also ‘fleeing’, ‘wandering’, ‘becoming a fugitive’, ‘migrating’ (Hodoș 1929) and also ‘enemy’.²⁸

Conclusions

We have performed a semantic feature analysis of Csángó and all the lexemes that have been proposed as its etymons or are phonetically close to the word we are analysing. Our findings suggest that the only semantic feature the word *canga*

28 Cf. <https://dexonline.ro/text/bejenie>: *elenșug sn* [At: ALR I, h. 1429/231 / V: *eleșug* / Pl: ~uri / E: mg *ellenség*] (Mgm; reg) 1 Jaf. 2 (If *eleșug*) Bejenie.

shares with Csángó are [+out, outer pastures], [+ separated]. *Csáng* seems to be rather a regressive derivation of Csángó and not its etymon, while the verbal form *csán* seems very unlikely to have fostered the emergence of Csángó. The only solution which shares several common denominators of meaning with Csángó is *csankó* (and possibly its versions *cankó*, *czankó*), which have the following list of features: [+out], [+ separated], [+swarming to find new territories] [+family]. Therefore, we believe that the etymology of the ethnic name Csángó can be solved by considering this lexeme which has today a limited, regional circulation, but it has been spotted in the geographical region which has been proposed as the source of Csángó migrations, i.e. the Transylvanian Plain: *csankó*. *Csángó* therefore most probably means *kirajzott* ‘swarmed out in a cluster’, *kitelepült* ‘expatriated’, ‘displaced’, *csoportosan, családdal külhonba távozott* ‘moved out, in groups, with families’.²⁹ Another argument in favour of our theory is the spread of the family name *Tankó* in the csángó communities, a phonetic version of *czankó*, *csankó*.³⁰ What is more, Hermán (1914: 656) lists *czankó csirke* and *tankó csirke* as phonetic variants of the same bird, formerly *Totanus totanus*, now *Tringa*, also called *cankómadár*, *lilimadár* in Hungarian, *fluierar* in Romanian and wader in English, a species of peregrine, migratory bird which makes a whistling sound.³¹

It is to be checked whether the forms *czankó*, *cankó*, and *csankó* are connected to the verb forms *cancikál*, *cancukál*, and *cancékol* (Sántha 2018: 93), standing for ‘walk’, ‘wander’, ‘roam’ and attested in Szeklerland but also in the areas belonging to the Transylvanian Plain. According to the new etymological dictionary of Hungarian, *cancékol*, *cancikál*, *cankászik*, and *csánkál* are variants of *cankózik*, attested in the 17th century and meaning ‘walk’, ‘wander’.³² The fact that the phenomenon of swarming, clustering has always been a basic component of Csángó rural areas is proven by the map in Iancu (2022: 17), showing the distribution of Csángó villages on the map of Moldavia, villages that typically show the outline of swarms or clusters. What is more, swarming was possible only in freeholder villages (Ghinoiu 1981: 8).³³

29 There are numerous Romanian old texts which prove that the oldest villages inhabited by freeholders, i.e. Hungarian Catholics, have names that derive from the name of the patriarch who founded the village, and all these villages had names of Hungarian origin, an aspect to which we will come back in a forthcoming study.

30 Horger (1924 151) considers that ‘Tankó’ is the diminutive of ‘Tamás’.

31 It is still to be studied why the semantic feature analysis of *cankó* ‘waders’ and *csángó* shows that they share at least two common denominators of meaning, that of [+migrate/peregrinate or swarm] and that of [+whistling sound].

32 <https://uesz.nyud.hu/index.html?displaymode=web&searchmode=exact&searchstr=cank%C3%B3&hom=>.

33 *Roirea satelor a fost însă posibilă numai în satele libere (moşneni, răzeşi, nemeşi)* ‘However, village swarming was only possible in the free villages (the “moşneni”, the “răzeşi”/freeholders, the “nemeşi”).’

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Translating Culture-Specific Terms. The Case of *Peaky Blinders*

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Abstract. The purpose of this paper is to delve into a few intriguing aspects of rendering culture-specific terms in audiovisual translation. With the mass consumption of media, the rise of binge watching and historical dramas filled with cultural richness, it might be interesting to look at the translation choices in Season 1 of *Peaky Blinders*. The paper aims to present specific categories such as names, idioms, and slang terms while comparing the original English versions with their Hungarian subtitle and dubbed version. As there are various differences between subtitling and dubbing, different renditions may be expected.

Keywords: culture-specific terms, translation, idiom, slang, British

1. Introduction

The rapid development of human technology has brought about massive changes worldwide, affecting the lives of all of us through globalization. At present, the entertainment industry also makes use of globalization, enabling millions to access audiovisual content via the Internet, and modern TV shows are in fact the “product of the financial times of the twenty-first century” (Sorlin 2016: 38).

A direct consequence of the appearance of these TV shows is a growing phenomenon called binge watching, referring to the countless hours glued to screens mesmerized by the episodes of multiple seasons. Highly popular video-

content-streaming services in the United States invested considerable effort in being able to access their content online all over the globe, often relying on localization, which is the counterpart of globalization. Both dubbing and subtitling belong to the localization industry, and they may be viewed as “by-products” (Imre 2021b: 104) of a particular movie, documentary, cartoon, or TV show. However, these by-products considerably enlarge the circle of media consumers, so it seems logical to invest extra time, effort, and energy in creating them. The most popular streaming services¹ know this, and they typically offer their content in multiple languages (both dubbed and subtitled versions) tailored to the target country speakers. However, little attention is given to the work invested in translating the content of audiovisual material, which is expected to be available very soon after the official English version (transcript) is born. Due to this “last-minute” work, translators and subtitlers are prone to commit various translation errors with painstaking parts of translation, often including lyrics, jokes, puns, metaphors, abbreviations, or culture-related terms.

Our aim is to analyse a collection of culture-related terms from a highly popular American TV show, *Peaky Blinders*, whose use is justified in the context of the original audiovisual material, but their rendition may constitute real challenge, having in mind that the phenomenon of binge watching has led to binge translation (Imre 2021a: 84) as well, inevitably leaving room for possible improvement. In order to discuss these specific terms deriving from local cultures, it is worth checking how the term culture is defined, leading to the next section.

2. Culture, communication, language, and translation

As Katan explains, “even though we all know to which culture we belong, definition of the word has been notoriously difficult” (Katan 1999: 16). While *culture* represents “one of the frames through which we experience the world” (Jourdan 2006: 142), the term may refer to a multiplicity of external and internal concepts (Robinson 1988: 7–13): behaviours (language, gesture, customs/habits), products (literature, folklore, art, music, artefacts), or ideas (beliefs, values, institutions).

However, there are further approaches to describing *culture*, which is “the unwritten book with rules of the social game that is passed on to newcomers by its members, nesting itself in their minds” (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010:

1 The ten most popular streaming services as of 9 May 2024 are: Netflix (270 million subscribers), Amazon Prime Video (200+ million), Disney+ (154 million), Max (100 million), Paramount (71 million), Hulu (50 million), Peacock (34 million), Apple TV+ (25 million, estimated), ESPN+ (25 million), and Starz (16 million). Source: <https://www.digitaltrends.com/home-theater/most-popular-streaming-services-by-subscribers/> [accessed on 10 May 2024].

26). We agree that culture is “unwritten”, as it is “not inherited from parents and peers, but the product of social relationship in which individuals are both actors and participants, and also recipients and transmitters”, and “it is always changing (Jourdan 2006: 140).

Nevertheless, other scholars involve memory (history) or communication when defining culture. As Lotman explains, the broadest sense of culture is “a system of collective memory and collective consciousness” containing “prohibitions and prescriptions” (Lotman 2020: 94) as well, and this collective memory offers the advantage of not being affected by the “natural flow of time”, so “it does not vanish” (id.: 122). We tend to think that Lotman explains this with the help of communication between the members of this particular group or community, concluding that there is an “organic connection between culture and communication” (id.: 3).

Naturally, language is a prominent means of communication, which is why Newmark states that culture is “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression” (Newmark 1988: 94). A further idea is that “the brain, language, and culture have coevolved in close interaction with each other” (Chiu 2011: 3), because “language provides a shared tool for encoding and sharing collective experiences” (Chiu 2011: 13), and Taylor states that “language, thought, and culture are deeply interlocked, so that each language might be claimed to have associated with it a distinctive world-view” (Taylor 2006: 35).

The connection between culture and language has been discussed by a number of scholars, for instance David Malouf, who considers that “culture and language have been shaped by history” (quoted in Wierzbicka 2006: 300); furthermore, “language depends on culture; language organizes culture” (Jourdan and Tuite 2006: 5); then “[l]anguage is an expression of culture and culture is expressed through language” (Pettit 2009: 44), and “[n]o language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture” (Lotman, Uspensky & Mihaychuk 1978: 212). More than that, Friedrich mentions the term *linguaculture*, as “culture is a part of language just as language is a part of culture” (Friedrich 2006: 219), stemming from the linguistic relativity (hallmarked by the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis), according to which “language, thought, and culture are deeply interlocked, so that each language might be claimed to have associated with it a distinctive world-view” (Gumperz and Levinson 1996: 2).

Once we accept these approaches, it is obvious that a certain language typically connects the individuals of a nation (Tellinger 2005: 124), differentiating “us” from the rest of the world. Thus, we return to Lotman, who is convinced that culture actually starts when the division between us and them appears: “Any culture begins by dividing the world into inner (‘one’s own’) and outer (‘their’) space” (Lotman 2020: 34). The distinction between the inner and outer world is

also labelled as *ethnocentrism*, which is “the belief that the worldview of one’s own culture is central to all reality” (as Bennett explains, presented in Katan 1999: 18), leading to the belief that there is an “intrinsic superiority of the culture to which one belongs, and is often accompanied by feelings of dislike and contempt for other cultures”, and people are inevitably “culture-bound”.

Similarly, a functionalist approach discusses the distinction between “us” and “them” by stating that culture is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede et al. 2010: 6), adding that culture is “learned, not innate”, so it is “influenced far more by our experiences than by our genes” (Hofstede et al. 2010: 26). If this is the case, it makes sense to communicate in a way which is characteristic to a particular group, including language as well, containing elements which are hardly understood – if at all – by others, an aspect we soon have to return to.

Thus, the term *culture* encapsulates the history, attitudes, behaviour, way of life, and communication of people in various ways, including language, during which they preserve certain community values (memory of events happened, prescriptions, and prohibitions) in order to maintain differences (distinguishable features) between them and others, ultimately leading to self-preservation by passing down from generation to generation in a “closed circuit”.

Now it is obvious that translating words or phrases characteristic to a particular group will always constitute a challenge for translators. This is because the act of translating is “an act of inter-cultural and inter-temporal communication” (Bassnett 2002: 10). Translators are ultimately “bilingual mediators” mediating “not only between languages but also between cultures” (Simigné Fenyő 2005: 71), and in the most fortunate cases “the purpose of the translation is to give a flavour of the source culture” (Baker 2018: 15). Nevertheless, there is a warning that translation is “linguistically and mathematically impossible and that any success even when it borders on the miraculous, remains a matter of degree” (Friedrich 2006: 211), because cultural translation or interpretation “involve[s] recreation ... an appropriation of meaning, and a re-casting of meaning in different terms, and with different labels” (Jourdan 2006: 154).

Finally, the translator is a “traveller” who “straddles the happy or unhappy borderline between cultures and languages” (Cronin 2009: 22), and this traveller is “no longer an observer but part of what is observed” (Cronin 2009: 67), which is why we consider it important to analyse certain culturally loaded words and phrases, starting with their definition.

3. Defining and rendering culture-specific terms

Having seen the difficulty to define *culture*, our attention should turn to the possibility of rendering it, realizing that some of its aspects are easier to do, such as the visual elements (clothes, food, everyday objects). However, when it comes to language, the situation might be different, especially when specific words and phrases are not included in dictionaries.

When items not found in dictionaries have to be explained in another language, time-tested methods such as explication or addition may work in case there are no constraints of time and space (e.g. printed book with footnotes, side-notes, or endnotes). However, when it comes to dubbing or subtitling, constraints of lip-synch or character count constitute a further challenge. Nevertheless, scholars mention a prior challenge, which is the skill of translators to identify the words or expressions which are culture-related, mentioning that successful translators “must ... be at home in two cultures” (Snell-Hornby 1995: 42) if they want to mediate between two cultures.

We may identify certain linguistic gaps at the level of words (lexical), sentence (syntactical), or meaning (semantics), any of which may easily lead to “translation errors” (Lungu-Badea 2012: 79), the author offering the examples of “culturemes, specific terms”. As there are many alternative terms, we offer a list of how various scholars refer to them:

- *cultural words* (Newmark 1988: 94);
- *culture-bound terms* (Chesterman 1997: 73);
- *realia* (Klaudy 2003: 205, Tellinger 2005: 123);
- *culturemes* (Lungu-Badea 2004: 21);
- *culture-bound elements* (Mujzer-Varga 2007: 57);
- *cultural references* (Lungu-Badea 2012: 118);
- *culture-specific items* (Ulvydiene 2013: 1889);
- *culture-specific concepts/words/items/collocations* (Baker 2018: 19);
- *culture-specific elements* (Tuominen 2018: 74).

Whatever the term, they are in fact “the smallest units containing cultural information” (Lungu-Badea 2012: 54), either signs or words “referring to specific objects of a local culture” (id.: 118). A critical approach to these terms will reveal that, on the one hand, they are not only words but expressions as well, while on the other hand, they are less and less *bound* to a specific culture. Furthermore, terms like *items* or *elements* may be misleading when having in mind words and expressions in a language, whereas the meaning of *realia* and *culturemes* may not be so obvious in common use. Hence, we would opt for *culture-specific terms*, which describes in a rather straightforward way what they refer to.

Culture-specific terms might range from very easy to rather challenging, depending on how familiar the translator is with the source culture. Accepting that it is highly important to spot them, it is commonly believed this is only possible with a solid background or education, as these terms are one of the touchstones of the translators (Lungu-Badea 2004: 81). A complementary skill is to recognize whether a term is culture-specific for a native speaker and not for another, or the meaning of the term may be dependent on the context (id.: 115). This also entails the effective understanding of the source term and its importance in the source culture, which is followed by the successful search for a similar term with similar cultural implications or importance in the target culture, knowing that preserving or recreating the particular context is at stake. This is why translators should be regarded as “cultural mediators” who rely on various strategies in order to “bridge the gaps between different cultures” (Klaudy 2003: 175), and it is worth highlighting the fact that the researcher accepts that there are always gaps between two different cultures.

These context-dependent gaps will “lead to translation issues” (Lungu-Badea 2004: 21) – as discussed above –, or at least difficulties during cultural transfer, cultural translation, adaptation or equivalence of terms (id.: 10). In order to deal with them, translation methods² are needed, as we cannot fully accept that some scholars list them in the category of “untranslatables”. Instead, it is worth considering their recreation in the target culture environment (Lungu-Badea 2004: 157) with well-established strategies, having in mind the following major ones:

- *pure borrowing* – while this method may be regarded as no translation whatsoever, there are justified cases requiring this strategy, such as names or terms known worldwide (e.g. *OK*), not to mention stylistic reasons; this leads us to the “foreignizing method ... sending the reader abroad” (Venuti 2004: 20), hence it is “ethnodeviant”; interestingly, somewhat in the defence of pure borrowing, Friedrich concludes that “the more generally accessible and acceptable the translation, the farther it tends to be from the linguacultural reality of the original”, and “the truer the translation is to the linguistic and cultural reality of the original, the more difficult and obscure it may seem to the speaker in the target language” (Friedrich 2006: 212);

- *partial borrowing* – as the name suggests, it is partially tailored to the target language (e.g. spelling), hence it is “naturalized” (Molina & Hurtado Albir 2002: 511);

- *addition* – this is a highly favoured strategy, as it offers extra information regarding the term; for instance, the acronym *BST* is commonly known to refer

2 Due to the limits of the present paper, we cannot detail the literature discussing *strategies, methods, procedures, transfer operations*, etc., but Molina and Hurtado Albir’s article (2002) is relevant in this respect.

to *British Summer Time*, while the translation may contain both the original acronym, and its extended and translated version;

- *explicitation* – this has been characterized as *linguistic amplification*, as the source term is made more explicit, and cultural translation often relies on this strategy (Lungu-Badea 2012: 156); a common example is *the Bard*, which makes sense in British English, but it is typically explained in renditions as referring to *William Shakespeare*;

- *generalization* – this strategy is used when specific source terms have no equivalent in the target language and a more general term is used instead; the British *Union Jack* is actually the UK's flag; however, this type of translation is “often hazardous” (Taylor 2006: 29), as certain distinctions between similar terms may disappear;

- *established equivalent* – specific source terms may be rendered with a target term which is equally accepted in the particular context; this is typically the case of proverbs, idiomatic expressions, or various terms referring to culture-specific terms (e.g. food and drinks); *functional equivalent* terms may also belong here, although less commonly widespread, while *temporary equivalence* is “totally unpredictable out of context” (Molina & Hurtado Albir 2002: 510);

- *total transformation* is mostly needed when the source term “is tied to time, place or culture” (Klaudy 2003: 300), which is in fact *replacement*, *naturalization*, or *domestication* (cf. Schleiermacher's explanation presented in Venuti 2004: 20), as the translator aims at “faithfulness” which is “functional” (Popović 2011: 80).

Further methods may often contain various errors, such as *literal* (word-for-word) translation³ (Molina & Hurtado Albir 2002: 510), especially when it is used to render idiomatic expressions and culture-specific terms (Lungu-Badea 2012: 163–164). Similarly, the method of *generalization* may also be frowned upon, as it may reduce the specific atmosphere of the original, although the presented cases will contain a few examples of this type.

Omission is a final method in the case of culture-specific terms, which typically appears when it is considered “untranslatable” (Klaudy 2003: 302). Another scholar explains that “[i]n so far as language is the primary modelling system within a culture, cultural untranslatability must be de facto implied in any process of translation” (Bassnett 2002: 41). This means that they are not “untranslatable”, and the lack of lexical correspondents for culture-specific terms often leads to creative renditions, as explained (Lungu-Badea 2004: 197), mentioning that they resist both linguistic and cultural transfer (id.: 21), as cultures try to block the “invasion” of other cultures (id.: 126). Ultimately, Lungu-Badea concludes that true culturemes are typically “monocultural” (id.: 31). More than that, culture-

3 The literal translation of a foreign word or expression is also referred to as *calque* (see Molina & Hurtado Albir 2002: 510).

specific terms are “relative” (id.: 161), so their special meaning depends on the context and target audience.

Although further methods do exist, these are not viable in the case of dubbing and subtitling, as they are applied in printed documents such as *footnotes*, *endnotes*, or *side-notes*.

4. Categorizing culture-specific terms

Categorizing these terms has been a constant preoccupation of scholars, and the forerunners are Sergey Vlahov and Seader Florin (as early as 1969, then 1980, amply presented in Klaudy 2003). Since their initial attempt, there have been many other approaches.

For instance, culture-specific terms may belong to the fields of history, culture, or literature (Lungu-Badea 2012: 55), while more elaborate versions include ecology, material culture (food, clothes, houses/towns, transport), social culture (work and leisure), organizations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts (political/administrative, religious, artistic), gestures and habits (Newmark 1988: 95). Another source completes these ones with geographical, ethnographic (furniture, pots, vehicles, holidays, games, etc.), ethnic terms (names and nicknames) or socio-political terms such as territorial units, currency, ranks, or military realia (Tellinger 2003: 58). However extensive, new sub-categories may be added anytime, depending on the cultural background of a particular text.

While these categories are based on words and expressions referring to various objects of everyday life, specific linguistic examples also form a special category, having in mind proverbs, saying, puns, metaphors, or similes, realizing that at a certain point these may overlap, making it more difficult to render them in other languages. Some of these categories are:

- slang/taboo words, characteristic to any language (*chav*, *Limey*, *Fuzz*);
- geography – countries (*Cymru*), relief (*tarn*), topography, places (*Albion*), informal reference to areas (*Black Country*, *Beds*);
- political parties (*Tory*) and political/administrative terms (*constituency*);
- culture – food/drink (*ale*, *Jelly*, *pigs in blankets*, *tippie*, *toad in the hole*), clothes (*Wellies*), sports (*baseball*), measurement units (*inch*, *ell*, *dram*), coinage/banknote (*quid*, *tenner*);
- religion confessional groups of people (*Quakers*, *Cajun*);
- history events (*War of the Roses*), groups of people (*BAME* – *British*, *Black*, *Asian*, and *minority ethnic*), informal reference to public figures (*Ike* for *Dwight Eisenhower*), famous people (*the Bard*), the press of the time, various products;
- army – various ranks, branches (*Red Devils*), units (*ETO*), ethnonyms (*Glaswegian*, *Geordie*) and (derogative) names/nicknames (*Numpty*), propaganda,

wartime events (*Blitz*), army gear, tools, health (types of wounds), and, most notably, specific abbreviations and acronyms (*C of E* – *Church of England*).

The list proves that culture-specific terms may vary considerably depending on the topic, which is often hardly understood by “outsiders”, that is people not sharing the same culture, reminding us of the previously discussed “otherness”.

However, as society constantly changes, former groups may dissolve and new ones take shape, and the dividing line between groups and communities might also be blurred. Avid fans of army life may dress like soldiers and immerse in the use of army language or take part in survival camps. Furthermore, the recent pandemic has led to the popularization of certain medical terms, millions of people trying to obtain background information on health issues. While technically speaking they are still “outsiders”, the age of globalization enables them to offer and share opinion on topics formerly discussed only by experts in medicine.

In our view, present-day translators can remain reliable experts in the field of translation even in the age of automated translation or various content-generating AI-solutions in case they can offer original and high-quality solutions based on their cultural, linguistic background, relying on technical skills as well, thus bridging the gap more than any machine. While a certain shift is to be observed from proofreading to post-editing, the time when the introductory statement “The present document has been created by human effort”, may become once again very appreciated. For the time being, we check certain culture-specific terms and their Hungarian renditions in *Peaky Blinders*.

5. Challenges of *Peaky Blinders*

Historical events typically highlight certain aspects, and the ones not recorded or mentioned are “subject to oblivion” (Lotman 2020: 82), knowing that cultures establish their own “paradigm of what ought to be remembered” (ibid.). However, distance in time typically constitutes an extra challenge for cultural mediators, as much less information is available on the topic. Katan observes, “geography and contemporary social and political history ... form the backbone of a culture’s cognitive environment”, including “the popular culture (the culture’s heroes, TV, films, personalities” as well (Katan 1999: 10), an observation we can fully support. The globalized movie industry inevitably revives long-forgotten people irrespective of their importance, be them heroes, villains, or common people with stories considered binge-worthy. Among others, this will involve the use of certain historically relevant culture-specific terms, and translators cannot but agree, “[a]bbreviations and acronyms are culturemes par excellence” (Lungu-

Badea 2004: 145). This entails that rendering them is context-dependent (cf. id.: 146), and initiating the audience into this world may be carried out step-by-step.

Our project focusing on *Peaky Blinders* (PB) meant that while watching the first season, all terms considered to be related to culture were collected in an Excel spreadsheet file, totalling 6 episodes of 55 to 60 minutes each, leading to 368 terms in the first stage.

The collected terms were filtered in the next stage, based on what translation method had been used, and this article presents terms related to institutions, groups of people, drinks, expressions, also differentiating real names from fictive ones. These categories seem justified, having in mind that *Peaky Blinders* (2013–2022) is a British historical/crime drama television show written by Steven Knight and produced by the BBC. The show consists of six seasons, set between 1919 and the 1930s, presenting the life and activities of the Shelby Family, the main character being Thomas Shelby played by Academy Award winner Cillian Murphy. It is inspired by the real-life *Peaky Blinders* gang, who operated in the late 19th-to-early-20th-century Birmingham, offering a unique setting with many culture-specific terms. As such, we tend to think that delving into the comparison of the original English and its Hungarian dubbed and subtitled version may lead to an intriguing task.

The original English version and its Hungarian subtitle are available on *Netflix*, while the Hungarian dubbed version belongs to Laborfilm Szinkronstúdió, translated by László Szojka. It is also worth mentioning that only the first two seasons of the show were dubbed in Hungarian, while Seasons three to six have only subtitles in Hungarian. As specified, all the examples presented below come from Season 1.

6. Culture-specific terms in *Peaky Blinders*

Categorizing the examples proved to be a challenging task because of the fine shades of meaning between categories such as slang, idioms, or names. We found that the culture-specific terms were often rich enough in meaning so as not to fit into a single category. However, we would like to present certain terms related to everyday life, including names, slang terms, idioms, and drinks.

6.1. Anthroponyms and toponyms

There are numerous examples of anthroponyms and toponyms in the show, starting from the very title, *Peaky Blinders*. It refers to a real-life gang from Midlands in the late 19th century, mostly consisting of young boys who chose a life of violence because of the poverty in the region. While the exact origin is

unknown, there are some theories. *Peaky* refers to their distinct peak caps (also called *newsboy caps*), while *Blinder* stands for the razor blades hidden inside the caps, although this seems unlikely. However, *blinder* is also a slang word referring to “someone looking particularly striking in appearance”.⁴ Whatever the case, the events and timeframe shown in the series are mostly fictional and have no relation to the original *Peaky Blinders* gang. Giving the title of the show, we consider it particularly important to have it rendered properly in Hungarian, creating a special atmosphere by being back in time and the setting being rather distant from Hungary.

The Hungarian subtitle (S) preserves the term, thus few viewers can understand its richness in meaning, while the dubbing (D) has two renditions:

- (1) *By order of the **Peaky Blinders**.* (S1E1, 46:45:00)
*Ez a **Peaky Blinders** parancsa.* (S)
*A **Pengesapkájúak** parancsa.* [‘blade’ + ‘cap’ + possessive + plural suffix] (D)
- (2) *By order of the **Peaky Blinders**.* (S1E3, 45:15:00)
*A **Peaky Blinders** nevében.* (S)
*A **Pengesapkás banda** parancsára.* [‘blade’ + ‘cap’ + possessive + ‘gang’] (D)

While we cannot agree with the pure borrowing in the subtitle, the dubbed version is adequate. The first version is closer in meaning to the original, while the latter relies on addition (‘gang’). Although *penge* (‘blade’) is a general term, while watching the show, the viewers will soon understand that it refers to razor blades. A few further proper names are also listed below:

- (3) *There won’t be just the **Garrison** that’ll bet on the horse.* (S1E1, 53:36:00)
*Nemcsak a **Garrison** népe fog rá fogadni.* (S)
*Nemcsak a **Garrison** fogad a lóra.* (D)
- (4) *That pub there is called the **Garrison**.* (S1E6, 30:43:00)
*Az a kocsmá ott a **Garrison**.* (S)
*Azt a kocsmát **Helyőrségnek** hívják.* [‘garrison’] (D)
- (5) *I received a wire communication from the editor of **The Birmingham Evening Dispatch**.* (S1E2, 15:40:00)
*Kaptam egy értesítést a **Birmingham Evening Dispatch** szerkesztőjétől.* (S)
*Sürgönyben fordult hozzám a **Birmingham Estilap** szerkesztője.* [‘evening paper’] (D)

4 <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Peaky-Blinders/> [accessed on 27 April 2024].

Garrison is used to refer to a place where troops are stationed, so “a military post”.⁵ In the context of PB, *Garrison* refers to the pub, the favourite drinking place of the gang. There are not many references about its background, but it is very likely that its name derives from a garrison. Obviously, it bears a symbolic meaning, as it may be interpreted as the “fortress” of the gang where they can discuss things securely and meet with other people of great importance, as seen throughout the show. Furthermore, it actually becomes the property of Shelby Brothers Ltd. by the end of Season 1. While the Hungarian subtitle relies on pure borrowing, the dubbed version switches between the original and the established equivalent terms.

The Birmingham Evening Dispatch is a real-life newspaper mentioned in the show. In 1963, it merged with the *Birmingham Daily Mail*, changing its name to the *Birmingham Evening Mail and Despatch*.⁶ Another newspaper, still active today, is *The Dispatch*. Once again, the subtitle preserves the name, while we have the established equivalent in the dubbing, making it obvious that it is a newspaper.

We have mentioned that acronyms are often problematic to render in another language. Scholars make the distinction between *acronyms* and *initialisms* (Mattiello 2013: 83, Scarpa 2020: 66), mentioning that *acronyms* are pronounced as words, while *initialisms* are pronounced letter by letter. Two initialisms are presented below:

- (6) *He's been clearing the IRA out of Belfast.* (S1E1, 16:25:00)
Ő tisztította meg Belfastot IRA-tól. (S)
Kiűzte az IRA-t Belfastból. (D)
- (7) *Yeah, but we ain't IRA.* (S1E1, 17:05:00)
Na jó, de mi nem az IRA vagyunk. (S)
Jó, de mi nem vagyunk felkelők. [rebel] (D)
- (8) *There's been all these strikes at the BSA.* (S1E1, 16:38:00)
Mert sok sztrájk van a BSA körül. (S)
Most lesz a nagy sztrájk BSA-ban. (D)
- (9) *Who works in the telegraph office at the BSA.* (S1E1, 11:23:00)
Aki a BSA fegyvergyár távirati irodájában dolgozik. ['arms' + 'factory'] (S)
Aki a gyár távírhivatalában dolgozik. ['factory'] (D)

5 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/garrison> [accessed on 27 April 2024].

6 <https://www.birminghamdispatch.co.uk/about> [accessed on 27 April 2024].

(10) Today, some rabble-rouser Union man brought the **BSA** out on strike.
(S1E3, 24:42:00)

Ma egy demagóg felbújtó a szakszervezettől sztrájkra bírta a **BSA**-t. (S)
Reggel valami bajkeverő szakszervezetis sztrájkba hívta az **üzemet**.
[‘plant’] (D)

Seemingly, both the subtitler and the dubber consider that the initialism for the *Irish Republican Army* is known in Hungary, so they preserve it, probably knowing that it has been in the news on a number of occasions, as it was the official army of the Irish Revolution between 1919 and 1921 during which the Irish gained independence from Great Britain.⁷ As the events in Season 1 take place in 1919, the presence of the IRA and its supporters in the political landscape of the show is very much warranted. It causes no issues in the subtitle, as the displayed version may be read as the viewer wishes, but the pronunciation in the dubbing turns it into an acronym, and younger viewers might not be familiar with the term. On a number of occasions, it is translated into *felkelők* ‘rebels’, which may be considered a partial explicitation of the term.

BSA is an initialism referring to the real-life *Birmingham Small Arms Company Factory*, which produced all kinds of artillery and vehicles.⁸ As scholarly literature had shown, there are multiple variants for the initialism; the subtitle alternates between pure borrowing, explicitation (initialism preserved and addition), and generalization (‘arms factory’), while the dubbing mostly relies on borrowing the initialism, occasionally resorting to two most general terms (‘factory’ and ‘plant’). We tend to believe that acronyms are often so culture-specific that their rendition is impossible (the translation of the extended versions are offered), unless there are established equivalents, reminding us that “language can be so saturated in the culture to which it refers as to rule out any kind of literal translation” (Armstrong 2005: 33).

6.2. Ethnonyms

By definition, ethnonyms are names used to refer to a specific ethnic group or people.⁹ However, this includes rather pejorative terms, often used for the neighbouring nations or in case of conflicts such as the wartime terms for the Germans (*Fritz, Jerry, Kraut*), often used in authentic wartime movies or TV shows as well. While few entries may be found in our show, they are frequently

7 <https://www.britannica.com/event/Irish-War-of-Independence> [accessed on 27 April 2024].

8 <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/educational-images/birmingham-small-arms-company-birmingham-11484> [accessed on 27 April 2024].

9 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnonym#:~:text=noun,ethnic%20group%2C%20tribe%2C%20or%20people> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

used due to the Irish-Romani origin of the Shelby Family and the presence of Irish people in the show as opposed to the British:

- (11) *What do you know about France, you war-shy, **gypsy** bastard?* (S1E2, 01:23:00)
*Mit tudsz te Franciaországról, te beszari **cigány** seggfej?* ['gypsy'] (S)
*Mit tudhatsz te a frontról, te gyáva **cigus** féreg?* ['gypsy' + derogative diminutive] (D)
- (12) *Then I did hear of you, some little **Didicoy** razor gang.* (S1E2, 53:23:00)
*Aztán hallottam. Valami piti **félcigány** pengés banda.* ['half-Gypsy'] (S)
Aztán meg hallottam, hogy ez valami pengés banda. (D)
- (13) *You thought **Fenians**, Communists, low people, they're all the same.* (S1E6, 26:40:00)
*Azt gondoltad, hogy a **feniániak**, a kommunisták és a pór nép mind ugyanolyanok.* ['Fenians'] (S)
*Neked a **hazafiak**, a kommunisták, az útonállók mind egyfélék.* ['patriots'] (D)

Gypsy is a generic term used to refer to Roma(ni) people, although it has gained a negative connotation worldwide over the years. Hence, now it is considered an offensive term.¹⁰ Being a historical TV show, it may be argued that in the early 20th century this was a common term to refer to the Roma people this way, reflected in both Hungarian translations, where the established equivalent is used. The pejorative overtone is also clear in the show and is often used when questioning the British origin of the family or discrediting them because of their Roma origin.

Didicoy is a further offensive term referring to a group of caravan-travelling people, living a lifestyle like Romani people, but who are not true Gypsies.¹¹ This is well reflected in the subtitle, where 'half-Gypsy' is used, while the dubbing disregards the term. It may be argued that this omission is not justified since it is connected to the family history of the Shelbys. The term is rather offensive – looking from both sides, a British person questions the true British origin of the addressee, while a Roma person doubts the true Roma heritage of the person referred to.

As for the term *Fenian*, it is a strong culture-specific term, referring to "a member of an Irish revolutionary organization founded in the US in the 19th century to fight for an independent Ireland".¹² However, while it formally refers to this specific organization, it is also used derogatorily for any Irish revolutionary or

10 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Gypsy> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

11 <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/didicoy> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

12 <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/fenian> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

Catholic. The word derives from Fianna, which denotes a band of fierce warriors in Irish mythology.¹³ Thus, the term constitutes a real challenge for translators, so the subtitler uses a simple option, namely transliteration, which is in fact partial borrowing of the word that is spelled as it is pronounced in Hungarian. Interestingly, the dubbing uses a functional equivalent from the Irish perspective by equalling the term with “patriot”. Given the context, this is justified.

6.3. Drinks

Garrison pub has already been mentioned, which is an important setting in the show, being the informal “headquarters” of the Shelbys. Various drinks are consumed here, and their rendition may be challenging:

- (14) *I'll take a **Mild**.* (S1E1, 10:30:00)

*Egy **sört** kérek.* ['beer'] (S)

*Egy **korsóval**.* ['pint'] (D)

- (15) *You have a **pint** and a chaser. No more.* (S1E6, 21:40:00)

*Egy **pohár** és egy semmi több.* ['pint'] (S)

*Csak egy **sör** meg egy **feles**. Nem több.* ['beer'] (D)

- (16) *You have a pint and a **chaser**. No more.* (S1E6, 21:40:00)

Egy pohár és egy semmi több. (S)

*Csak egy sör meg egy **feles**. Nem több.* ['half of', referring to 0.5dl] (D)

- (17) *There's a still inside the factory, makes **tram-line gin**.* (S1E1, 19:58:00)

*Van egy desztilláló a gyárban, ahol **gint** készítenek.* ['gin'] (S)

*Van bent egy lepárló, ami ontja a **pálinkát**.* ['brandy,' mostly plum] (D)

- (18) *Would you like some water and **cordial**?* (S1E1, 14:48:00)

*Kér **szörpöt**?* ['syrup'] (S)

*Szeretne egy kis **gyümölcsös vizet**, uram?* ['fruity water'] (D)

- (19) *As a **teetotal man**, I find that amusing.* (S1E1, 14:40:00)

***Antialkoholistaként** ezt nagyon szórakoztatónak találom.* ['anti-alcoholic'] (S)

***Bornemisszaként** ez szórakoztató.* ['the one who does not drink wine'] (D)

The translation of these terms may seem less challenging, but we have collected those cases when there are certain differences between the two Hungarian renditions. *Mild* is a descriptive term, as it refers to a type of beer or ale, which is

13 <https://www.theirishroadtrip.com/the-fianna/> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

relatively low in alcohol percentage, often having a fruity taste, originating from Britain. According to a report, Mild was considered to be the most popular drink in the early 20th century, accounting for more than three-quarters of Britain's brewed beers.¹⁴ It was a popular choice for the working class because of its cheaper price. The subtitle opts for the generic term, while the dubbing chooses a metonymic version, as the most typical unit for beer in the UK is *pint*. The established Hungarian equivalent for the English pint is *korsó*. Replacing *Mild* with *pint* is a good solution, as being in a pub, people may easily ask for “one”, without specifying the drink or the type of beer, as in those times there was a limited variety to choose from.

Chaser is “a small alcoholic drink that is drunk after a weaker alcoholic drink”.¹⁵ Considering the full sentence, it seems logical that this is the order of drinking these two drinks, which is why it is strange that the subtitle makes use of omission. More than that, a considerable number of beer drinkers order a stronger drink, although this is typically consumed before beer (usually 0.5 dl). The dubbed version includes this drink although there is no established order which to ask for first. However, Hungarians will have it before the beer.

Cordial is basically syrup, a non-alcoholic “sweet drink made from fruit to which water is usually added” – due to its high concentration.¹⁶ The Hungarian subtitle uses an equivalent term, but the dubbing relies on explication, explaining the content (fruity water).

A rather interesting term is *tram-line gin*. At first, this may seem to be a fictive term, as the pub is not near any tramline (it is inside the BSA factory). No mention of this kind of gin has been found except for this occurrence in Episode 1, thus our next idea was that a “straight” gin is intended and nothing else. However, this is hardly tenable, so a further idea was to check what gin is made of. As it turned out, gin comes from wheat or barley,¹⁷ and harvesting machines create so-called “tramlines” in the fields of crop.¹⁸ Whatever the case, the subtitler relies on simple borrowing, knowing that *gin* has become an international drink containing juniper berries. The dubbing replaces it with a strong and highly popular alcoholic drink among Hungarians, *pálinka*, which is a rather resistant term to translation. And, obviously, Hungarians are far more familiar with the process of producing *pálinka* than that of making gin.

Our final term to present is *teetotal*, which is an adjective referring to a lifestyle or a person opposing the consumption of alcohol.¹⁹ It originates from the 1830s

14 <https://beerandbrewing.com/dictionary/wS5SaHLNHP/> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

15 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/chaser> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

16 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cordial> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

17 <https://home.binwise.com/blog/what-is-gin-made-from> [accessed on 16 May 2024].

18 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWF-vG7ObW4&ab_channel=ClarkeFarms [accessed on 16 May 2024].

19 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/teetotal> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

with the creation of the American Temperance Society. The word comes from *total*, meaning the total abstinence of alcohol, and the *tee* is more likely a duplication of the letter *T* in *total*, emphasizing the commitment to this non-alcoholic lifestyle.²⁰ The subtitle uses a formal, established equivalent, but the dubbing this time excels in choosing a specific term, which is well known in Hungarian culture. First, it sounds funny, and while its meaning is restrictive to wine (some Hungarian vineyards are world-famous, such as Tokaj), it is a term accepted for all sorts of alcoholic drinks. Moreover, the term gained considerable sympathy among Hungarians rather early, since Géza Gárdonyi published his highly popular historical novel *Egri csillagok* (*Eclipse of the Crescent Moon*, 1899), whose protagonist is Gergely Bornemissza. He is a character inspired by a real-life historical figure bearing this name, who was a Hungarian soldier and hero, known most notably for his efforts during the Siege of Eger by the Ottoman Empire in 1552. It goes without saying that the term resonates in the hearts of Hungarian viewers.

6.4. Idioms

Another category filled with culture-bound meaning is idiomatic expressions. These are characteristic to particular languages, which is why they are predominantly generalized or replaced by a target-culture-specific term, requiring extra effort.

We would like to discuss four instances:

- (20) *So why don't you maybe **tend to your mangle or your scuttle**?* (S1E5, 05:10:00)

*Szóval miért nem **foglalkozol a saját dolgoddal**?* ['Mind your own business.'] (S)

*Szóval **jobb lenne, ha befognád a szád vagy lekopnál**.* ['You'd better shut up or get lost.'] (D)

- (21) "What's wrong with him?" "If I knew I'd **buy the cure from Compton's chemists**." (S1E1, 37:28:00)

– *Mi van vele?* – *Ha tudnám, már **megvettem volna az orvosságot**.* ['would have bought the medicine'] (S)

– *Mi van veled?* – *Ha tudnám, már **beadnám az ellenszerét**.* ['administer the antidote'] (D)

- (22) *He's **got the Flanders Blues** again.* (S1E3, 19:45:00)

*Megint **rájött a depresszió**.* ['be overwhelmed by depression'] (S)

*Megint **rájött a hacacaré**.* [~ 'get cranky'] (D)

20 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/teetotaler> [accessed on 14 May 2024].

(23) Chapman **has snow on his boots**. (S1E4, 16:25:00)

Chapmannek **orosz hó van a csizmáján**. [‘have Russian snow on one’s boots’] (S)

Chapman megásta a sírját. [‘dug one’s own grave’] (D)

The translators must have relied on various sources to decipher the meaning of these idiomatic expressions, which are mostly explained in various online sources, including specialized ones where fans of the show can open discussions about these specific terms.

The first expression is used in a man and woman conversation typical of those times. More precisely, the father of the Shelby siblings (Arthur Shelby Sr) returns to the house of the Shelys after years of not being present in their life. Aunt Polly expresses her negative attitude towards him clearly when saying, “Finish your sandwich and sling your hook.” Arthur’s blunt response is “Why don’t you maybe *tend to your mangle or your scuttle?*” – implying that she should leave the men alone and do some work around the house. *Mangle* can mean “a machine for ironing laundry by passing it between heated rollers”²¹ and *scuttle* is either “a shallow open basket for carrying something (such as grain or garden produce)” or “a metal pail that usually has a bail and a sloped lip and is used especially for carrying coal”.²² In either sense, both words refer to household appliances used in chores around the house, for example, laundry, cooking, or gardening. The Hungarian versions are not so explicit, as they only reflect that the woman should not interfere when men talk, although the dubbed version is much ruder and contains the impolite suggestion of leaving the room.

Buying the cure from Compton’s chemists in Episode 1 seemed to be a challenging expression reflecting the specific time of the action, although no conclusive evidence was found. It may refer to a regular shop named Compton’s Chemists or owned by the Compton family or in Compton Street. There is a theory, however, that there was indeed a popular medicine shop in Compton Street in London. While it is an interesting thought, it must have been unlikely in those times to know about these chemists in Birmingham,²³ let alone travel from Birmingham (where PB is set) to London for medicine. Whatever the case, both Hungarian versions omit the name reference, offering generalized versions again. However, we tend to think that this is justified here, as there is no clear evidence of the exact location. But the dubbed version actually goes further, probably aiming for a functional equivalent by explaining that the antidote is

21 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mangle> [accessed on 10 May 2024].

22 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scuttle> [accessed on 10 May 2024].

23 <https://forum.wordreference.com/threads/comptons-chemists.2702655/> [accessed on 10 May 2024].

administered. However, this is slightly misleading, as the antidote suggests a previous poisoning, which is not the case.

Much more history is involved in the following two cases. First, *the Flanders Blues* refers to the trauma caused by the combat experience in the First World War, including symptoms like depression, psychosis, and mood swings.²⁴ The name derives from the Flanders Fields, a major battle theatre (1914–1918), where a million soldiers from more than 50 countries were wounded, went missing, or got killed in those years.²⁵ Knowing these, it may be argued that *Flanders Blues* is similar to the commonly post-traumatic stress disorder, mostly abbreviated as *PTSD*, which is “a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event”.²⁶ As the translations reflect, both Hungarian versions disregard its historical aspect, one of them generalizing it (although the reasons for becoming depressed are relevant), while the dubbing uses an onomatopoeic slang term. This is particularly disturbing, as the word reflects a personal whimsical behaviour, while going to war as a regular soldier can hardly be considered a whim.

A final expression comes from Episode 4. In the opening months of the First World War, a rumour spread across the United Kingdom that Russian soldiers – identified by the “snow on their boots” – had landed in Scotland heading towards the Western Front. However, this proved to be a myth, and it served a greater purpose for the British, namely reassuring their fellow citizens that help was on its way. This was important, as ever since the first couple of months after the First World War started, the British population had been shocked and scared of what was to come, needing a “pipe dream” (Pennell 2014), a sort of safety plan, in our case, the Russian army. The quick help is visible in *the snow on their boots*, the Russians being so fast that the snow had no time to melt off their boots. This idea is used in a conversation during which Thomas is giving information to Inspector Campbell on a person receiving money from the Communist Party of the Russian Government. Thomas makes it clear that he has “snow on his boots” and all the inspector needs is “a shovel”, implying that he can arrest this man based on communist activity. The Hungarian subtitle offers a word-for-word translation, possibly misleading the viewers (he might have travelled to Russia), while the dubbing completely omits this part of the conversation.

24 <https://www.quora.com/What-is-The-Flanders-Blues-as-mentioned-in-The-Peaky-Blinders> [accessed on 10 May 2024].

25 <https://www.visitflanders.com/en/discover-flanders/arts-and-heritage/flanders-fields> [accessed on 10 May 2024].

26 [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd#:~:text=Post%2Dtraumatic%20stress%20disorder%20\(PTSD\)%20is%20a%20disorder%20that,or%20respond%20to%20potential%20danger](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd#:~:text=Post%2Dtraumatic%20stress%20disorder%20(PTSD)%20is%20a%20disorder%20that,or%20respond%20to%20potential%20danger) [accessed on 10 May 2024].

6.5. Slang terms

Slang terms are rather universal, so the typical challenge is to find the closest equivalent in the target languages among multiple synonymous terms. A few examples are discussed below:

- (24) *What do you know about France, you **war-shy**, gypsy bastard?* (S1E2, 01:23:00)
*Mit tudsz te Franciaországról, te **beszari** cigány seggfej?* ['wimp'] (S)
*Mit tudhatsz te a frontról, te **gyáva** cigus féreg?* ['coward'] (D)
- (25) *Today, some **rabble-rouser** Union man brought the BSA out on strike.* (S1E3, 24:42:00)
*Ma egy **demagóg felbújtó** a szakszervezettől sztrájkra bírta a BSA-t.* ['demagogue instigator'] (S)
*Reggel valami **bajkeverő** szakszervezetis sztrájkba hívta az üzemet.* ['troublemaker'] (D)
- (26) *Before the **Specials** get here, raise your hands all those who want to strike.* (S1E3, 18:46:00)
*Mielőtt a **kópók** ideérnének, emeljék fel a kezüket, akik sztrájkot akarnak!* ['sleuth/copper'] (S)
*Mielőtt ideérnek a **rendőrök**, emelje fel a kezét az, aki sztrájkot akar!* ['police officer'] (D)
- (27) *I don't care what kind of **half-arsed tinker** operation you have going here.* (S1E5, 17:03:00)
*Nem érdekel miféle **együgyű** műveletet hajt itt végre.* ['simpleton/silly'] (S)
*Hidegen hagy miféle **nyomorult** üzelmeket hoz itt tető alá.* ['miserable/wretched/ wicked'] (D)

As most members of the Shelby family served in the First World War, it is no surprise that their vocabulary was influenced by this event. The term *war-shy* is a slang term used in the show, although there is no other mention of it on the Internet. A close idiom would be *fight shy of* something, which means avoiding something.²⁷ The gang members are proud of having served in the army, and Thomas is convinced that those who did not serve are shy of war. The subtitle version reflects this in the form of a swear word, while the dubbing uses generalization, getting rid of both the slangish use and the historical background.

27 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fight-shy-of> [accessed on 10 May 2024].

Rabble-rouser is a person skilled at stirring up masses of people, mostly for hatred and violent acts.²⁸ To put it simply, this is a demagogue or agitator, and “demagogue” is used in the subtitle version, which is the formal way of referring to these people, which is nevertheless a loan word. However, the subtitler completed it with a much simpler synonym, which basically doubles the term (addition, explicitation). Consequently, having in mind character economy in subtitling, this is not a solution we can agree with. On the other hand, a very general term is found in the dubbed version, referring to any kind of activity to be frowned upon.

A very frequently used term is *Special*. This is in fact the ellipted form of *Special Police*, whose members have special duties or assignments. In the show, the *Specials* are the ones investigating the suspected criminal activity of Thomas Shelby’s gang and the strikes going on in the BSA factory. The subtitle version offers an equivalent slang term, while the dubbing once again relies on the standard form, eliminating the slang version.

A final slang term bears a specific swear word overtone, referring to a body part. Furthermore, this is followed by a pejorative ethnonym, *tinker*, which is used for “any traveller or gipsy, especially one who is Irish, as a tinker” in British slang (Hrdinová 2023: 54). This is a direct reference to the Shelby Family and their business, connected to their Irish-Romani family origin and criminal activities.

The Hungarian subtitle is hardly offensive, as the term is used for dumb, foolish, or half-witted people, intended to render *half-arsed*, while *tinker* is not translated at all. The dubbed version is somewhat puzzling, as its meaning may refer to somebody worth feeling sorry for, to somebody who is evil or mean, and a much larger context is needed to understand what the speaker refers to. Interestingly, the translation of *tinker* is also absent from the dubbing.

7. Conclusions

Due to the constraints of the present paper, not all culture-specific terms found in *Peaky Blinders* have been discussed. Nevertheless, the examples prove that translators have creative solutions to handle culture-specific terms, often adjusted to the type of rendition, which is subtitle or dubbing.

The Hungarian subtitle of *Peaky Blinders* seems to be more faithful to the original without hindering the storyline, while the dubbed version offers either more creative solutions or opting for omission. A tentative explanation might be that creating the subtitle takes less time, hence the translators cannot spend too much time on searching for best alternatives (providing word-for-word translation), whereas creating the dubbing may dedicate some extra time for

28 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rabble-rouser> [accessed on 10 May 2024].

linguistic creativity. However, it is also worth mentioning that cultural challenges seem to “behave” rather subjectively. There are cases when translators excel in rendering them, while at other times translation blunders or omissions are difficult to explain. The presented cases show that the Hungarian versions often rely on borrowing, generalization, functional equivalents, or omission.

We agree that transferring culture-specific terms is neither unique nor the most serious issue (cf. Lungu-Badea 2004: 12), but in the age of globalization these terms are expected to be present in more and more audiovisual creations. As such, it is our firm belief that professional translators should aim at recreating the proper cultural background in which culture-specific terms acquire their specific meaning (id.: 142). In order to do that, translators should build a large collection of available resources in the specific field(s), often resulting in concurrent terms. Expertise will make them able to select the best possible option under the circumstances, considering the target viewers’ background knowledge. Naturally, finding the best-fitting equivalent does require extra time, money, and energy, and the lack of any of them easily leads to poor renditions.

After all, translators (dubbers and subtitlers alike) must bear in mind that globalized binge watching brings millions of viewers in front of the screens, so “[t]he subtitlers ... have nowhere to hide. They present their translated rendition of whatever is spoken at the precise moment when it is said, and any viewer with a grasp of the original language is able to make an instant comparison” (Skuggevik 2009: 197). The presented cases seem to suggest that the subtitler was much more aware of that, compared to the dubbed version, enabling the viewers of *Peaky Blinders* to immerse in the plot developing in and around historical Birmingham.

While we discussed the relationship between culture, language, and translation, it is also worth remembering, “[c]ulturally adequate translation is an undervalued art” (Hofstede et al. 2010: 394). At its best, it is a form of art because the “traveler–translator will try to correlate sounds, gestures, facial expressions with emotions that are familiar to him or her such as fear, joy, concern, menace or apathy” (Cronin 2009: 113), and that isolating the text from its cultural background is perilous (Bassnett 2002: 23).

We can only hope that the true value of adequate translations will be appreciated by the viewers or readers, and we are optimistic that although it is “never evident”, “[t]ranslation is always possible” (Leavitt 2006: 73).

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Aspects of Multilingualism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract. When examining the topic of multilingualism, Nigeria emerges as a captivating subject due to its renowned linguistic diversity. Authors who have a bicultural background encompassing African and European-language cultures consistently exhibited a type of hybridity in their use of the colonial language. Consequently, a unique European linguistic variation emerged as a result of this. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie demonstrates a strong inclination to transcend the extensive language debates prevalent in the history of African literature. What is more, she asserts her use of English and her interjections in Igbo as normative rather than confrontational. Adichie frequently incorporates Igbo vocabulary, phrases, and proverbial expressions into her predominantly English writing, demonstrating a profound understanding of the enduring influence of English colonialism. However, Adichie also embraces and skilfully uses English as a universal language, transcending its postcolonial connotations. Consequently, she possesses the ability to access and engage with a broader spectrum of global literary traditions and contemporary movements. The primary focus of this study has been the elucidation of the manifestation of multilingualism in the fiction of the Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The motivational elements of code-switching, which Adichie uses to express various aspects of oppression and cultural hybridity, have received a great deal of attention.

Keywords: multilingualism, Adichie, oppression, cultural hybridity

1. General overview

“Languages are so deeply intertwined and fused into each other that the level of fluidity renders it difficult to determine any boundaries that may indicate that there are different languages involved” (Makoni & Pennycook 2007: 447).

Linguistic diversity originates in close proximity, specifically within one's own household and even inside an individual. Every person represents a battleground where various linguistic varieties and habits clash while simultaneously serving as a constant generator of verbal interference. According to Crystal (1997: 42), multilingualism is a phenomenon characterized by the use of two or more languages within a given speech group. The ubiquity and intricacy of this phenomenon have been emphasized by sociolinguists. On the one hand, it is rare to find speech communities that only use a single language. Conversely, the exhibited multilingual competencies may vary in terms of skill levels, presenting a range of political, educational, and social complexities. Altogether, multilingualism serves as a representation of diversity, exemplifying the multitude of cultural heritages, the accumulation of knowledge across generations, and the capacity to cultivate harmonious coexistence among individuals from diverse or interconnected cultures through ongoing cross-linguistic interactions (Bokamba 2014: 41)

At the individual level, an individual's ability to maintain their daily routines and develop a cohesive identity within a society that uses many languages primarily depends on their competency in effectively communicating with other members of the community in the necessary languages. Bamgbose (1991) posits that individuals have certain difficulties while attempting to function only within a single language in stable multilingual cultures, as opposed to largely monolingual civilizations. The ability to communicate effectively in the languages spoken by these societies confers several benefits and plays a pivotal role in accessing diverse opportunities in various aspects of life, including education, employment, professional growth, social networking, and stimulating innovation within one's chosen domain. The absence of fluency in many languages, particularly in a community that lacks a widely spoken language, can lead to a range of negative consequences. These encompass emotions of societal seclusion, obstacles in forming significant and long-lasting bonds, difficulties in efficiently manoeuvring interactions involving these languages, and restricted availability of job prospects or opportunities for progression that necessitate proficiency in them (Bokamba 2014: 41).

2. Multilingualism in Africa

In numerous African communities, languages exhibit a layered or nested structure organized in concentric circles. Frequently, the primary language spoken by an individual, sometimes referred to as their mother tongue, is typically limited in usage and known exclusively within a restricted community. Generally, the language in question lacks a written form, is not incorporated into educational curricula, and remains unfamiliar and unused beyond the confines of the local

community. In certain cases, particularly when a community of speakers is dispersed or intermixed, the language may not even be employed by neighbouring families. Such mother tongues exhibit signs of being at a significant risk of endangerment (Zsiga et al. 2015: 1).

A national or vehicular language, which is an indigenous tongue with wider usage and probably spoken by the majority in the particular country, complements the home and community languages. Illustrative examples comprise the following: Akan, spoken in Ghana; Swahili, used in Kenya; Hausa, dominant in Nigeria; Setswana, prevalent in Botswana. The language in question is characterized by its documented literary tradition and significant representation in many forms of media. Additionally, it may hold official status within a particular context and find use in educational settings, particularly at the lower levels of education (Zsiga et al. 2015: 2).

An international language, like English or French, coexists with the national tongue as a result of colonialism. International languages are highly esteemed and serve as the primary medium of teaching in higher education. They are widely perceived as pathways to enhanced social and economic prospects. However, a significant portion of the population lacks proficiency in these languages (Zsiga et al. 2015: 2).

According to Zsiga et al. (2015: 2), we can identify the following layers of language: small, medium, and large; my language, our language, and their language; and language that expresses my ethnic identity, language that expresses my national identity, and language that expresses my connection to the world. In both colonial and postcolonial contexts, the primary driving forces have been control and manipulation. Postcolonial Africa has been trying to reach national consensus based on certain indigenous languages that are seen as more authentic and deeply rooted in both pre- and post-imperial contexts (Ndhlovu 2021: 29). This has led to linguistic homogenization and cultural uniformity.

2.1. Multilingualism in Nigeria

When examining the topic of multilingualism, Nigeria emerges as a captivating subject due to its renowned linguistic diversity. According to the findings presented by Simons and Fennig (2018), the total number of languages spoken in Nigeria amounts to 526, among which Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba have significant prominence. These languages are widely recognized as important languages; nonetheless, they do not possess mutual intelligibility.

The process of choosing a singular language to serve as a national or official language has presented significant difficulties, mostly due to the potential consequences of such a decision, including the risk of fostering national instability and generating enmity towards the selected language. In order to address these

biases, the selection of English as the official language in Nigeria was based on its neutral character, devoid of any ethnic affiliations. The aforementioned decision has significantly contributed to the advancement of peace and the cultivation of harmony within the nation's diverse linguistic landscape (Agbo & Plag 2020: 353).

In addition to the wide variety of local languages, the dynamic interplay between English and the several indigenous languages in Nigeria has given rise to the development of Nigerian English. Nigerian English derives from “English which has become ‘nativized’, ‘domesticated’, ‘indigenized’ and it has taken on distinctively Nigerian quality” (Jowitt 2019: 26 in Agbo & Plag 2020: 355). Furthermore, “the rules of English typical in native situations have been influenced and modified under pressure from cultural practices of the Nigerian environment” (Aboh & Uduk 2016: 8). There has been much controversy surrounding the acceptability and prevalence of Nigerian English. At present, a universally accepted norm for Nigerian English has yet to be created; however, researchers unanimously agree that it is a discernible and unique variant of the English language.

Nigerian Pidgin is a creole language that has evolved from English and serves as a medium of communication within Nigeria. Nigerian Pidgin, like most Pidgins, displays a superstrate, primarily English, in conjunction with multiple substrate languages, particularly the indigenous Nigerian languages. The vocabulary of Nigerian Pidgin primarily comprises English terms, with additional lexical borrowings from indigenous languages and Portuguese. Based on multiple scholarly references (Faraclas 2004: 828, 2008: 340; Ihemere 2006: 207), it has been reported that Nigerian Pidgin is widely employed by more than half of the Nigerian population. Moreover, it is noteworthy that this language is recognized as the most extensively used language in Nigeria (Jibril 1995, Faraclas 2008).

In contrast to English, Nigerian Pidgin is not acquired through formal schooling and lacks a regular orthography. Until a very recent timeframe, it held a position of diminished prestige within the Nigerian context, primarily linked to persons with lesser educational attainment. The adoption of this approach has observed an increasing tendency among those with advanced levels of education, notably those in tertiary educational environments. The observable growth of Nigerian Pidgin in terms of its intended function and societal status is apparent, as it increasingly rivals English, even within formal settings (Agbo & Plag 2020: 355). All in all, the languages listed above display distinct differentiation based on discourse conditions. In formal contexts, the more esteemed forms are used, while the informal variety is employed in less formal settings (Agbo & Plag 2020: 356).

2.2. Multilingualism in African fiction

The use of languages, cultures, and identities in colonial contexts was primarily driven by the objectives and agendas of “the colonial archive of

western knowledges about Africa and African identities, as well as indigenous knowledges that were to be suppressed, erased, or lost under colonial rule” (Ndhlovu & Kamusella 2018: 348). This, according to Makoni (1998), diminishes African languages into colonial scripts in the formation of European communal memory. Such were the socio-political and ideological conditions from which mainstream discourses on multilingualism emerged in the present day.

In current discussions, the concept of multilingualism has been predominantly employed in a manner that emphasizes emancipation. It is presented as a unilateral commitment to unrestricted, liberating, and occasionally redemptive cultural and political diversity, as well as equality. The phenomenon of multilingualism is often seen as advantageous and valuable, particularly due to its potential for metalinguistic abilities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not all manifestations of multilingualism inherently contribute to productivity or empowerment. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize that not every literary composition that incorporates multiple languages is inherently superior or more innovative compared to its monolingual equivalent. According to Makoni and Pennycook (2012: 439), the mere substitution of monolingualism with multilingualism in models falls short given that both ideas originate from a shared intellectual framework (Guldin 2020: 3).

When discussing multilingualism in Africa, it is important to avoid idealizing or romanticizing the concept of plurality, as highlighted by Makoni and Pennycook (2007: 16). Instead of solely highlighting the benefits of multilingualism, it is crucial to acknowledge its limitations and complexities. Therefore, the focus should be on recognizing and understanding the ambivalent nature of this concept. Indeed, multilingualism possesses a degree of complexity that surpasses its initial impression of innocence (Holquist 2014: 7). The concept of “multilingualism”, as well as its precursor, “bilingualism”, is inherently linked to the concept of “monolingualism”. In this context, as Guldin (2020) states, it is imperative to recognize that contemporary multilingualism cannot be examined in isolation but rather necessitates an examination in tandem with monolingualism, as well as the interconnected concepts of mother tongue, national language, and native speaker. The aforementioned conceptions are integral to a historical narrative that primarily focuses on Europe and traces its origins back to the Renaissance. In conclusion, as Moore concludes (2015), it is important for portrayals of multilingualism to refrain from simplistic idealizations that just link diversity with a democratic perspective and unity with a conservative political goal. The presence of multilingualism does not inherently guarantee the development of a more tolerant society or automatically facilitate an increase in creative output (Guldin 2020: 5).

African writers, originating from historically marginalized cultures, have a compelling need to employ the language of the dominant power structures in

order to achieve liberation and gain acknowledgement within the global arena. The inherent nature of this situation necessitates a state of bilingualism, hence prompting dominant writers to employ translation as a writing approach. When presented with the choice of using a local language without literary prestige or a global language, these writers choose to employ the colonial language due to its extensive worldwide influence. However, they endeavour to adapt the language to accommodate local modes of literary representation (Bandia 2023: 806).

The authors, who have a bicultural background encompassing African- and European-language cultures, consistently exhibited a type of hybridity in their use of the colonial language. Consequently, a unique European linguistic variation emerged as a result of this. Some researchers, including Bill Ashcroft, wholeheartedly welcomed these innovative prospects, viewing them as the impetus for a burgeoning array of English literature crafted in various manifestations of the English language. There is a notable tendency among African writers to employ the language of the colonizers in a manner that is firmly grounded in the tradition of oral storytelling, thus diverging from established Western literary traditions (Bandia 2023: 806).

3. Multilingualism in Adichie's fiction

Adichie establishes a literary approach that acknowledges and draws inspiration from prominent Nigerian writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Flora Nwapa, and Buchi Emecheta, while also asserting her own distinctiveness. The author demonstrates a strong inclination to transcend the extensive language debates prevalent in the history of African literature.

Furthermore, she asserts her use of English and her interjections in Igbo as normative rather than confrontational. Similar to Achebe, Adichie frequently incorporates Igbo vocabulary, phrases, and proverbial expressions into her predominantly English writing, demonstrating a profound understanding of the enduring influence of English colonialism. However, Adichie also embraces and skilfully uses English as a universal language, transcending its postcolonial connotations. Consequently, she possesses the ability to access and engage with a broader spectrum of global literary traditions and contemporary movements (Bandia 2023: 807).

In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe employs the use of italics and translations to highlight and elucidate the Igbo, or “Ibo” asides. This is done either through direct translation inside the text or by providing contextual understanding. Furthermore, Achebe includes a glossary at the conclusion of the novel to provide definitions for recurring Igbo vocabulary. However, it is worth noting that Adichie's incorporation of Igbo language exhibits greater diversity

and typically lacks accompanying paratextual elements. J. Roger Kurtz (2012: 37) discusses the concept of “polyvocality” in his analysis of Adichie’s novel *Purple Hibiscus*.

In her novels *Americanah* and *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie effectively portrays the pervasive presence of translation and code-switching in the daily lives of her characters. She demonstrates a deep appreciation for the languages of Igbo and English, recognizing them as integral components of her characters’ national language. The use of a writerly language by Adichie to depict the diverse speech patterns of her characters and the translational adaptability of her featured protagonists in order to represent “orality” presents an intriguing irony that is rather delightful. Adichie demonstrates a natural ability to convey linguistic nuances in her writing, whether it is through her meticulous representation of the Igbo language, the phonetic portrayal of different accents, or her keen ear for the cadence of speech. This skill allows her to effortlessly depict what might have otherwise been a challenging task (Esplin 2018: 78).

Adichie creates a chance to showcase African languages in the global literary sphere by focusing on the ongoing language negotiations her main characters are involved in. Historically, the global literary sphere has been hesitant to include African languages in mostly English writings, even in a limited way. At a formal and discursive level, Adichie demonstrates the benefits of embracing and normalizing their own comprehensive literary language while also rejecting the artificial and neutralized ‘translations’ of standard US or British English (Esplin 2018: 85).

In what follows, Adichie’s portrayal of multilingualism will be examined in detail. Adichie’s motivation for code-switching comprises the description of ordinary life, illustrating oppression, and resistance against linguistic imperialism, empowerment, and identity, as well as highlighting the distinctions between cultural authenticity and hybridity through emphasizing cultural nuances, enhancing the depth of the narrative, and engaging multiple audiences, and raising awareness.

3.1. Cultural authenticity versus cultural hybridity

The incorporation of multiple languages in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s work serves as a crucial element in depicting cultural authenticity. Adichie adeptly conveys the intricate and abundant nature of Nigerian society by including a range of languages spoken in Nigeria, such as Igbo, Pidgin English, and Nigerian English. The integration of a number of languages in her work not only enhances the complexity of her characters and locations but also mirrors the varied linguistic environment of the nation. Adichie’s use of multiple languages allows her to

accurately depict the cultural subtleties and individualities of her characters, enhancing the realism and immersion of her literature.

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* explores the cultural fusion that occurs when the traditional African and European cultures intersect. The strategic placement of the most important events in *Purple Hibiscus* around significant Christian holidays is not a coincidence. The actions occurring in Papa Eugene's family revolve around the cycle of Christian events. The main chapters of the narrative, namely Palm Sunday, Before Palm Sunday, and After Palm Sunday, explicitly highlight this reality. Oddly enough, each chapter contains a second title that is unrelated to the monotheistic Christian realm. Conversely, it is likely that the second set of titles, Breaking Gods, Speaking with Our Spirits, and, ultimately, The Pieces of Gods, contain references to the ancient Igbo creed. From the very beginning, the narrative establishes the discord between African and Western values and principles at the level of titles.

Furthermore, the use of two names for the characters implies a blending of cultural contexts. Chukwuka is Jaja's Igbo name. Similarly, Kambili is referred to as Kedu. Father Amadi, although christened "Michael", prefers to be known by his Igbo name. His rejection of his Christian name indicates his support for using his mother tongue. Nevertheless, the most adamant about upholding her Igbo name is Amaka, Kambili's cousin. She refuses to select an English name prior to her confirmation, saying, "When the missionaries first came", she replied, "they didn't think Igbo names were good enough. They insisted that people take English names to be baptised. Shouldn't we be moving ahead?" (Adichie 2003: 272).

The main characters exhibit contrasting attitudes towards adhering to the vernacular traditions of their ancestors and practising their native language. Eugene forbids his children from publicly speaking Igbo. It is the language of the inferior in his estimation. In contrast to Eugene, his father, Nnukwu, speaks Igbo without any trace of an English accent, "[h]is dialect was ancient; his speech had none of the anglicized inflection that ours had" (Adichie 2003: 64).

Papa Nnukwu and his son Eugene embody conflicting cultural backgrounds: Papa Nnukwu embraces his Igbo heritage, while Eugene adheres to Christian orthodoxy, unquestioningly following the principles of Christian religious doctrines. According to his free-spirited daughter, "Papa-Nnukwu was not a heathen but a traditionalist, that sometimes what was different was just as good as what was familiar, that when Papa-Nnukwu did his *itu-nzu*, his declaration of innocence, in the morning, it was the same as our saying the rosary" (Adichie 2003: 166).

Adichie highlights the significant issue associated with mimicry through the portrayal of the character Eugene. Eugene is covertly involved in imitating the British. Conversely, he expresses esteem for the colonial language and harbours a profound aversion towards his native tongue. As Kambili declares,

He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English. Papa's sister, Auntie Ifeoma, said once that Papa was too much of a colonial product. She had said this about Papa in a mild, forgiving way, as if it were not Papa's fault, as one would talk about a person who was shouting gibberish from a severe case of malaria. (Adichie 2003: 13)

Ironically, the "colonial product", Papa Eugene, is unable to employ his mimicry with efficacy. Kambili narrates, "He spoke English with an Igbo accent so strong that it decorated even the shortest words with extra vowels. Papa liked it when the villagers made an effort to speak English around him. He said it showed they had good sense" (Adichie 2003: 60). In other words, Eugene deceives himself and his family by being complicit in the European mindset. He is a "yes-man" who wants to prove to Pope Benedict (the white priest) at all costs the so-called richness of thought and the equal value of the intellect. "The black skin of the Eugene is masked by complicity with the values of the white colonial powers" (Kafle 2013: 59).

His strong religious fundamentalism is most evident in his intense resistance to his father's paganism. His mimicry exemplifies a fundamentalist mindset. He restricts his children to a mere fifteen-minute annual meeting with their grandfather Nnukwu, imposing strict control over the duration: "Do not touch any food, don't drink anything. And as usual, you will stay no longer than fifteen minutes . . . I don't want to send you to the home of a heathen, but God will protect you" (Adichie 2003: 61–62).

To conclude, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* explores the cultural amalgamation that occurs when traditional Igbo culture and Western Christian Catholic culture, as symbolized by the West, are brought together. This transitional zone represents hybridity, potential, and, above all, defiance. This rich hybrid space exposes the youth to power dynamics, social communication, and its physical manifestations, encouraging them to consistently engage in negotiation, inquiry, and even opposition towards these cultural constructs, often due to their own creation. The emergence of a hybrid culture that does not align with either side of society leads to the development of multiculturalism, which effectively addresses cultural discrimination (Kafle 2013: 59).

3.2. Reflecting everyday life, social commentary

The reader gains access to the private and public spheres of a prosperous Nigerian family through Kambili's observant character. According to Duran, "Kambili is the artist and intellectual – she is someone who stands apart, and her ruminations on

what goes on around her provide us with a great deal of insight into the structure of her Igbo society” (2017: 46).

The narrative revolves around the Achike family and takes place primarily in the Nigerian city of Enugu before transitioning to Nsukka, a quaint university town, which is characterized by the aunt of the main character as it follows: “There is Odim Hill. The view from the top is breathtaking, when you stand there, you see just how God laid out the hills and valleys, *ezi okwu*” (Adichie 2003: 131).

Furthermore, the remote town of Abba provides a temporary residence for families who migrate owing to spending Christmas there. Abba is a multicultural hub where several languages are spoken, highlighting the dynamic interaction between different linguistic and cultural backgrounds: “*Nno nu! Nno nu!* Have you come back? (Adichie 2003: 55). “*Gudu morni*. Did the people of your house rise well, oh?” (Adichie 2003: 58).

The Achike family’s mansion boasts immense dimensions: “Our yard was wide enough to hold a hundred people dancing *atilogu*, spacious enough for each dancer to do the usual somersaults and land on the next dancer’s shoulders. The compound walls, topped by coiled electric wires, were so high I could not see the cars driving by on our street” (Adichie 2003: 9). In addition, the enormous family residence in Abba also possesses opulent characteristics such as wide passages like in a hotel and numerous rooms but with an impersonal smell.

Unlike the previously mentioned places, Amaka describes the university town as follows: “There’s no happening place in Nsukka, in case you haven’t realized that already. Nsukka has no Genesis or Nike Lake” (Adichie 2003: 117); however, the time spent there functions as a catalyst for the main characters and completely alters the progression of the events in the novel.

By adopting Kambili’s point of view, we are able to navigate through the various rooms of the residences and witness the daily routines of the family. The following examples vividly and descriptively illustrate the wide range of Nigerian food:

“Sisi and I are cooking *moi-moi* for the sisters. Are we not content with the *anara* we are offered in other sisters’ homes? (Adichie 2003: 21)

“I’ll make *ofe nsala* for dinner.” (Adichie 2003: 152)

“They ate pure *cassava*. *Garri* is for you, modern ones. It does not even have the flavour of pure *cassava*.” (Adichie 2003: 156)

The kitchen in Nsukka, albeit lacking most culinary appliances, serves as a space for free-spirited conversations, laughter, and harmony. In stark contrast, the dining room in Enugu is dominated by the autocratic Papa Eugene, who creates an almost insupportable atmosphere with his tyrannical temperament and his everlasting religious formalities. Each of these locations serves an authentic rendition of the traditional Igbo cuisine, boiled yam and peppery greens are prepared;

slippery, light green *orah* leaves with fibrous stalks are cooked; plantains are sliced and fried; and *okpa* is consumed for breakfast.

In addition to the private matters of the Achike family, we can gain an understanding of the everyday activities of public institutions such as schools, street markets, and, most notably, churches and parishes. The broader the range of institutions displayed, the more comprehensive the picture becomes. The depiction of street markets with “half-naked mad people near the rubbish dumps and women who seemed to be haggling loudly with mounds of green vegetables” (Adichie 2003: 43) provides insight into the segment of society that experiences poverty. On the other hand, Kambili’s school, surrounded by imposing walls topped with jagged pieces of green glass that have sharp edges protruding, is exclusively reserved for the upper class, and education of the highest possible standard is provided by it.

Purple Hibiscus, set during the military dictatorships of the 1990s, portrays the family unit as a miniature version of the nation. As Egbunike posits, “Adichie examines the intersections of the public and the private in an exploration of the permeation of state-sponsored oppression and violence into the family sphere during a period of intense military rule” (2013: 26).

Adichie portrays the mass exodus of people from the country as a result of the military coup, which has led to a lack of economic prosperity and freedom, and a very poor standard of living: “*Ifukwa*, people are leaving the country” (Adichie 2003: 76). To endure the circumstances, some individuals seek solace in religion, leading to a rise in the number of pilgrimage sites where miraculous events are said to occur: “least people flocked there, like they are flocking to Aokpe now. *O bugodi*, like migrating locusts” (Adichie 2003: 138).

All in all, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie underscores the intricacies of power dynamics and identity in postcolonial Nigeria through the use of multilingualism in *Purple Hibiscus*. Through the integration of various languages, including Igbo, Nigerian Pidgin, and English, Adichie effectively illustrates the cultural heterogeneity and power struggle that existed between the language of the colonizers and the indigenous tongues. The aforementioned utilization of multilingualism functions as a commentary on the enduring tension between modernity and tradition in Nigerian society, in addition to the effects of colonialism on language and identity.

3.3. Oppression

Oppression is a pivotal motif in *Purple Hibiscus*, and it is investigated through the experiences of the main protagonists of the novel. Adichie employs several stylistic and linguistic techniques to portray the experience of oppression in the novel. The central character, Kambili, and her family endure a multitude of forms

of subjugation, most notably at the hands of her authoritarian and abusive father, Eugene. Eugene's authoritarian behaviour towards his family, which includes his spouse and children, fills their home with tension and suffocation. Kambili's narrative explores the effects of oppression on individuals in the novel, as well as their strategies for evading and opposing it.

Papa Eugene is a multifaceted dictatorial character. He is an authoritarian and devout individual who enforces his convictions on his family, frequently resorting to physical force to uphold his dominance. He disavows the customs, heritage, and dialect of his ancestors, considering them "the remnants of ungodly traditions" (Adichie 2003: 73), deeming his ancient faith as pagan, and as a consequence, having embraced Catholicism. His reliance on English is consistent, but while speaking to a white man, he tries to adopt a version of English that lacks the distinctive Nigerian characteristics: "Papa changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British, just as he did when he spoke to Father Benedict. He was gracious, in the eager-to-please way that he always assumed with the religious, especially the white religious" (Adichie 2003: 46).

Furthermore, his use of Igbo is limited to foretelling punitive measures, as illustrated in the following example: "... he asked, entirely in Igbo. A bad sign. He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English" (Adichie 2003: 13).

The following passage portrays Eugene's intense outrage when his family members deviate from the required path: "The Igbo words burst out of Papa's mouth. 'Has the devil built a tent in my house?' He turned to Mama. 'You sit there and watch her desecrate the Eucharistic fast, *maka unidi?*'" (Adichie 2003: 102). He blames his wife for allowing an unprecedented and malicious deed to occur. Eugene is incapable of handling the common health concerns that his family members face. From his perspective, his daughter's menstrual cramps are also a violation of faith, and he considers her to have committed an irredeemable transgression by breaking the Eucharist fast due to some cramps; as such, she deserves appropriate punishment. We might interpret Kambili's menstruation and her journey into adulthood as a challenge to Eugene's power. Eugene is subconsciously cognizant of the fact that Kambili will ultimately emancipate herself from his dominion (Nabutanyi 2017: 78).

Igbo is being employed as a substandard medium for conveying actual punishment, as demonstrated in the subsequent passage, which epitomizes the clash that arises once the daughter rejects the oppressive validity of her father's rule: "He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked nonstop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English, like soft meat and thorny bones" (Adichie 2003: 210–211). In order to endure such overwhelming agony, Kambili creates a mental sanctuary that is

impenetrable to both Papa Eugene and the suffering. The contrasting analysis of the languages, Igbo and English, highlights the perception of the protagonist about them: Igbo is characterized as fluent and melodious, whereas English is portrayed as strange and uncomfortably awkward.

His religious fanaticism is revealed when a young Catholic priest of Nigerian descent incorporates an Igbo song into the lecture, an act that he deems to be a very disrespectful violation of sanctity: “And halfway through his sermon, he broke into an Igbo song: *Bunie ya enu...* ‘That young priest, singing in the sermon like a godless leader of one of these Pentecostal churches that spring up everywhere like mushrooms. People like him bring trouble to the church. We must remember to pray for him’” (Adichie 2003: 28–29).

The next fragment describes the events that occurred before Eugene’s highly formalized tea ceremony, which involved the ritualized mistreatment of his daughter: “‘*Nne, ngwa*. Go and change,’ Mama said to me, startling me, although her Igbo words were low and calming. In the same breath, without pausing, she said to Papa, ‘Your tea is getting cold,’ and to Jaja, ‘Come and help me, *biko*’” (Adichie 2003: 8).

During this customary family practice, his children are invited to take small sips of the scalding hot tea. Eugene’s gesture of lifting the cup and sharing it reflects Christ’s affectionate and selfless behaviour towards his disciples during the Last Supper. The mother is cognizant of the impending events but chooses to stay inert, refraining from any proactive measures. She uses different languages to address her family members according to the occasion and her relationship with each individual family member.

4. Conclusions

The findings of this study clearly show that Adichie’s primary concern lies not in the ethical implications of employing colonial languages but rather in the ways in which language itself reflects and perpetuates the complexities of cultural identity. Furthermore, she is intrigued by the exploration of novel approaches to language deployment. Similar to how Eugene’s oppressive authority is most exquisitely expressed through language and how *Purple Hibiscus* delves into an array of reactions to that language, Adichie seeks not only novel expressions but also linguistic registers and a broader lexicon to convey them. As Kurtz states, “Achebe and Adichie both may tell the tale of why the tortoise has a cracked shell, but the more recent version will have new twists, new contexts, and something new in its retelling” (Kurtz 2012: 36).

The intrinsic interplay of various linguistic interactions weaves through every segment of the novel. According to Arhire, Adichie employs sociolinguistic

variants of indexical nature in her characters' spoken interactions as a crucial subtle device when addressing these sensitive subjects. This process allows the reader to associate themselves with specific social groups in a hierarchical society, where each group exclusively uses a particular variant of language or may switch between variations depending on the people they are talking to, their needs, interests, emotions, and social situation (Arhire 2023: 2).

All in all, although the challenges surrounding cultural identity and expression may not have entirely vanished, they have acquired an entirely new level of intricacy. Third-generation African writers, including Adichie, are liberated from the constraint of finding the right words to express themselves. They are capable of exploring novel approaches to articulating and structuring their personal experiences, even to the extent of scrutinizing and challenging the narrative techniques employed by the pioneers of the Nigerian novel.

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Defining Love According to the Teachings of Saint Porphyrios Kafsokalyvitis: Terms, Concept, Content

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Abstract. This study delves into the profound conceptualization of love as depicted in Christian theology, particularly through the teachings of Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalyvia. It explores the evolution of the term “love” from its origins in the Greek language and early Christian writings to the intricate theological expositions by the Church Fathers, with a focus on the contemporary insights of Saint Porphyrios. Despite his lack of formal education, Saint Porphyrios brought a refreshing and experiential perspective to the theological understanding of love. His teachings, characterized by a profound understanding and personal experience of divine love, offer insightful reflections on its transformative power. Saint Porphyrios articulates love not merely as an ethical imperative but as the essence of Christian life, embodying the union with God and theosis. Through a comparative analysis, this study aims to delineate how Saint Porphyrios’s theology of love aligns with, and expands upon, the traditional Christian understanding of love, offering both a continuity with and a deepening of this central theological concept.¹

Keywords: Orthodox Christian theology, Saint Porphyrios Kafsokalyvitis, theology of love, Church Fathers

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1. Introduction

The exploration of love within the Christian theological tradition reveals a profound journey through the ages, from the earliest New Testament writings to the rich expositions of the Holy Fathers and to the nuanced interpretations of contemporary theologians like Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalyvia. Love, as a divine virtue, forms the bedrock of Christian life and spirituality, embodying the highest call to believers and reflecting the very nature of God. This study aims to delve into the complex and layered understanding of love, tracing its evolution and expression within Christian theology, with a particular focus on the contributions of Saint Porphyrios Kafsokalyvitis.

The term “love”, as presented in the New Testament, provides the foundational framework for Christian ethics and spirituality, highlighting its sacrificial and unconditional nature. This paper begins by examining the term “love” in Greek language and culture. Then it will unfold the early scriptural references to love, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of its significance within the Christian tradition. Moving through the centuries, the teachings of the Church Fathers will be presented through the eyes of one of the most influential Saint, Dionysius the Areopagite, that managed to differentiate between the terms used to describe the concept of “love”, emphasizing its central role in the believer’s life and the path to union with God.

At the heart of this investigation lies the figure of Saint Porphyrios Kafsokalyvitis, a contemporary beacon of divine love, whose theological vision offers a unique perspective on this eternal virtue. Known for his profound experience and understanding of love, Saint Porphyrios articulates it not just as an ethical directive but as the essence of Christian existence. His reflections on love’s transformative power, its capacity to unite the soul with God, and its role in theosis (deification) present a compelling vision that both aligns with and deepens the Christian understanding of love.

It is important to clarify that Saint Porphyrios’s perspectives on the concept of love were not formulated through deliberate scholarly inquiry or philosophical speculation. He was not primarily a scholar or a thinker in the traditional sense, and he did not actively engage in writing; rather, the writings that we have are due to the love of his spiritual children that published them from their own notes or audio recordings.

Saint Porphyrios was born into a poor Greek family during the turbulent early twentieth century in Greece, where circumstances did not allow him to receive formal education. Nevertheless, his lack of formal schooling did not diminish his profound love for learning, because his fervent aspiration to embrace monastic life granted him divine wisdom. He entered monastic life in Aghion Oros (Holy Mountain) at the age of twelve, took monastic vows by fourteen, was ordained

a priest at twenty, and became a confessor at twenty-one years old. Over thirty-three years, he served as a spiritual father at the Polyclinic of Omonia in central Athens, dedicating more than seventy years to serving Christ and humanity, guiding many towards a life filled with love and devotion to Christ.

That such a person, of humble origin and simple character, offers a boldly outspoken account on divine love is a paradox challenging the human reason. Most of his teachings come directly from his experience of living according to the word of Christ – fulfilling the divine commandments, overpassing the passions, and reaching purification, enlightenment from above and theosis (deification) due to his humble, obedient, and loving heart.

2. The term “love” in Greek language

In exploring the linguistic richness of the term “love” within the Greek lexicon, we encounter a complex tapestry of meanings that reveal the cultural and philosophical depths from which Christian theological concepts of love later emerged. Ancient Greek provides several words for “love”, each conveying distinct nuances and aspects of this multifaceted concept, enabling a profound comprehension of its usage in both classical and Christian texts.

The primary term, *ἀγάπη* (agápi),² denotes a form of love that transcends the personal to encompass a universal, unconditional quality, often associated with the divine love of God for humanity (qtd in Romanidis 2012: 80). This love is selfless and sacrificial, extending beyond mere emotional affection to the wilful and deliberate choice to seek the good of others. In the Christian doctrinal context, *ἀγάπη* is pivotal, embodying the highest form of love that believers are called to emulate.

Another significant term is *ἔρως* (éros), which traditionally refers to a passionate, intense form of love that can be directed towards another person, but it can also express the soul and spiritual bond between two people, especially when one of them takes the other as a model of spiritual perfection, considering them superior to oneself (qtd in Romanidis 2012: 80). While often associated with romantic or sexual love, *ἔρως* in philosophical terms also encompasses a yearning for beauty and truth, a longing that motivates the soul’s ascent to the divine.

Στοργή (storgí), a third term, expresses a natural affection typically found within the family between parents and children. It connotes a deep-seated bond characterized by familiarity and deep emotional connection, highlighting the innate aspect of love that fosters familial and communal relationships (qtd in Romanidis 2012: 80).

2 For transliteration, we used the Koine Greek pronunciation.

Lastly, *φιλία* (*philía*) represents a broad category of love that includes friendship and brotherly love. This form of love is based on mutual respect, shared values, and a reciprocal relationship. In philosophical discourse, *φιλία* is often considered essential for the social and ethical bonds that underpin community and society (qtd in Romanidis 2012: 80).

By examining these terms, we gain insights into the multifaceted nature of love as conceived by the Greek philosophical and later Christian tradition. This exploration not only enriches our understanding of the term's lexical heritage but also frames the subsequent theological discussions that seek to integrate these ancient insights with Christian ethical teachings. The nuanced understanding of these Greek terms for love provides a foundational framework for examining their influence on the theological elaborations of love by the Church Fathers and their interpretation and adaptation by the contemporary theologians like Saint Porphyrios Kafsokalyvitis.

3. The term “love” in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the concept of love evolves significantly from its classical Greek roots, adopting a distinctly Christian theological dimension that shapes the ethos of the early Church and its teachings. The Greek term most prominently featured is *ἀγάπη* (*agápi*), which becomes central in the scriptural narratives and epistles, reflecting the divine, unconditional love that God has for mankind and that Christians are urged to emulate towards one another.

Αγάπη is described in various passages throughout the New Testament, not only as a moral virtue but as the very essence of God's nature (Dogaru & Dorneanu 2000: 126). John 4:8 succinctly states, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love [*ἀγάπη*].” This encapsulation directly ties the ability to love with the knowledge and relationship with God, elevating love from a simple human emotion to a divine attribute that believers are called to participate in. The Gospel of John particularly emphasizes the sacrificial nature of love, summarizing this in the famous verse, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Here, *ἀγάπη* is not merely an emotional affection but a profound willingness to sacrifice for the good of others, a hallmark of Christian ethical practice (Lampe 1961: 8).

The practical implications of *ἀγάπη* are extensively articulated in the teachings of the Gospels, most specifically in the Great Commandments – to love God and one's neighbour as oneself (Matthew 22:37–9), which summarizes the law and the prophets. This commandment is not merely an emotional disposition but an active choice to will the good of the other as an expression of one's love for God. Saint Paul the Apostle further expands on the concept of *ἀγάπη* in his

epistles, most notably in 1 Corinthians 13, describing love in its most ideal form: patient, kind, without envy, and not proud. He asserts that love is the greatest of all virtues and that without it other spiritual gifts are devoid of value. The Holy Apostle Paul not only defines love but also places it at the centre of Christian life as the fullest expression of a lived faith.

The second term used in the New Testament to describe love is the word *φιλία* (*philía*), typically translated as ‘friendship’ or ‘affection’. Most commonly, the word *φιλία* is utilized to express a form of love characterized by deep mutual respect, shared values, and common goals among believers (Dogaru & Dorneanu 2000: 120). This term underscores a relational warmth and loyalty akin to that found among close friends or family members.

The usage of *φιλία* in the New Testament is reflective of a broader, communal bond that Christians are encouraged to cultivate. It emphasizes the importance of supportive, caring relationships within the Christian community, relationships that are integral to the believers’ spiritual growth and resilience (Lampe 1961: 1478). This is particularly evident in texts such as John 15:13–15: “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

Here, Christ elevates *φιλία* to a spiritual partnership, far beyond conventional friendships, characterized by transparency, mutual engagement, and a shared mission. This deepens the understanding of *φιλία*, associating it with a willingness to sacrifice for each other, mirroring the sacrificial love (*αγάπη*) of Christ Himself. However, the less frequent occurrence of the term *φιλία* suggests that while this form of love is important, the New Testament places a greater emphasis on *αγάπη* as the ultimate form of love that Christians are called to emulate.

Last but not least, the concept of *ἔρως* (*éros*) is notably absent in the explicit language of the New Testament, likely due to its associations with physical desire and passion, which could conflict with the New Testament’s emphasis on spiritual purity and divine love. However, the transformative power of love that elevates the soul towards the divine, a key aspect of *ἔρως* in Platonic philosophy, can be seen in the way Christians are called to seek a deeper union with Christ.

Related to the Greek term *στοργή* (*storgí*), representing familial affection, we observed that it is not found independently in the New Testament but in the compound term *φιλόστοργοι* (*philóstorgi*), as seen in Romans 12:10. This unique instance highlights a directive for believers to exhibit a profound brotherly love, welded with the loyalty and affection typical of family bonds.

The New Testament enriches the classical understanding of love with a divine dimension, presenting *αγάπη* as a sacrificial and transcendent virtue essential to Christian life and doctrine, while *φιλία* enriches community bonds, and *στοργή*,

though less pronounced, subtly underscores the importance of familial devotion within the faith community.

4. The term “love” according to the tradition of the Church Fathers

In exploring the term “love” within the tradition of the Church Fathers, significant attention must be given to Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, whose profound integration of Christian doctrine with philosophical insights from his era marks a pivotal moment in theological history. This study does not attempt to resolve the scholarly debate concerning his exact historical placement – whether in the first few centuries of the early Church or as late as the sixth century influenced by Neoplatonism. Instead, it acknowledges his pivotal role in shaping the theological perspectives of subsequent theologians’ figures.³

Saint Dionysius is particularly noted for his nuanced distinction between the terms *ἔρως* (éros) and *ἀγάπη* (agápi). Unlike the conventional understanding of *ἔρως* as mere erotic or romantic love, the Areopagite saint reinterprets this term to encompass a profound form of spiritual love – a dynamic, self-transcending desire directed towards the ultimate goodness and beauty of God. He eloquently describes this concept in his theological writings, illustrating how *ἔρως* transcends mere human affection to become a vector towards divine union. That is why, according to him, love, in its highest form, is not merely an emotional state but a movement of the soul towards its Creator (Dionisie 2018: 111).

Furthermore, Saint Dionysius elaborates on the nature of divine love, or *Θεῖος ἔρως* (Theíος éros), which he argues is the foundational motive behind God’s creative and redemptive actions in the world. According to him, God’s love is not static but abundant and expansive, flowing from Himself into the cosmos and drawing creation back to Himself in a perpetual cycle of divine fullness:

Through the transcendence of His goodness, the cause of all loves all [the term used here is *ἔρα* – éra], produces all, perfects all, contains all, just as divine love itself [*Θεῖος ἔρως*] is a good love, of the good for the good. For this beneficent love [*ἔρως*] for all beings, which exists transcendentally in the good itself, did not allow itself to remain unproductive within itself, but was moved to act according to the transcendence that produces all things. (Dionisie 2018: 115)⁴

3 Such as Saint John of Damascus, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint Symeon the New Theologian, Saint Gregory Palamas, even contemporary saints such as Saint Porphyrios the Kavsokalyvite.

4 Throughout the article, the English translations from Romanian belong to us.

The distinction between *ἔρως* and *ἀγάπη* is also reflected in his discussion of God's relationship with humanity. While *ἔρως* involves a reaching upward towards God's perfection and beauty, *ἀγάπη* is characterized by its downward movement, seen in God's condescension to humanity and the sacrificial love demonstrated in Christ's incarnation and crucifixion (Dionisie 2018: 121). This dual movement of love encapsulates the Christian narrative of salvation, where divine love bridges the infinite distance between God and man.

In his writings, Saint Dionysius the Areopagite offers an insightful explanation for the absence of the term *ἔρως* in the New Testament, a concept that was central in ancient Greek. He points out that the early Church Fathers were cautious in their use of language that could carry ambiguous or potentially misleading connotations. While *ἔρως* was often associated with a passionate form of love, its implications of desire and physical affection might not align clearly with the spiritual and sacrificial love emphasized in Christian teachings. The Righteous Saint clarifies that although *ἔρως* was used in older scriptural texts – such as Proverbs 4:6, Wisdom of Solomon 8:2 – and by some early Christian writers to signify a profound form of love, it carried the risk of being misunderstood as merely sensual or romantic (2018: 117–119). Thus, the New Testament writers chose to focus on *ἀγάπη* as the primary term for love, which better conveyed the notions of unconditional, divine love that were central to Jesus's teachings and Christian life.

Saint Dionysius argues that this choice was not a denial of the depth or significance of *ἔρως* but a strategic decision to guide the faithful towards a purer, more spiritual interpretation of love. According to him, both *ἀγάπη* and *ἔρως* share a common divine quality in their deepest sense; however, to avoid confusion and maintain theological clarity, *ἔρως* was largely omitted from the canonical texts of the New Testament. This careful linguistic selection by the Church Fathers was meant to foster a clearer understanding of love as a foundational Christian virtue, transcending the physical to embrace the metaphysical.

The Areopagite Saint offers a profound theological framework where *ἔρως* and *ἀγάπη* are not opposing forces but complementary manifestations of the divine reality that animates the cosmos and guides the soul towards ultimate truth and goodness. His teachings remain a cornerstone in the study of Christian love theology, providing a robust model for understanding the multifaceted nature of love as both a personal experience and a universal, theological reality.

5. The term “love” according to Saint Porphyrios Kafsokalyvitis

Saint Porphyrios's life was a testament to the power of love, which he held as the cornerstone of spiritual life and the pathway to God. His emphasis on the

transformative power of love shaped his guidance to his spiritual children, urging them to cultivate love not only as an ethical or theological concept but as a living, breathing dynamic in their daily interactions and personal growth in faith. His approach to pastoral care and spiritual guidance was deeply rooted in these principles; he lived as a testament to the power of love, often going beyond mere words to demonstrate a practical, lived love towards his neighbours and spiritual children. His entire pastoral care highlighted love as the greatest spiritual pathway, one that leads to God through the service and love of those around us. Thus, for Saint Porphyrios, to love was to see the face of Christ in every individual, making his teachings on love not only a doctrinal stance but a daily, practical reality.

Following the tradition of the Holy Fathers, Saint Porphyrios articulates the concept of love primarily through two Greek terms: *αγάπη* (agápi) and *ἔρως* (éros). The term *αγάπη* is extensively used to denote a universal form of love, towards either God or one's neighbour, embodying a broad, encompassing benevolence. On the other hand, *ἔρως*, which we previously encountered in the teachings of Saint Dionysius, is often reserved for expressing a profound divine love or a deep-seated passion directed towards a specific object or beloved individual: "The connection with Christ is love [*αγάπη*], it is love [*έρωτας*], it is fervor, it is a burning desire for the divine. Christ is everything. He is our love [*αγάπη*], He is our love [*έρωτας*]. The love [*έρωτας*] of Christ is a love [*έρωτας*] that cannot be lost. [...] The whole mystery is the love [*αγάπη*], the love [*έρωτας*] for Christ; the dedication to the things of the spiritual world" (Porfirie 2005: 165, 188).

It is important to mention that Saint Porphyrios does not bring anything new or different from the Holy Fathers or the words of the Gospel; however, his teaching on love bears a remarkable striking affinity with Saint Dionysius. What can be confirmed throughout his teaching on love is that his source is – precisely as for the Areopagite – the Scripture. Nonetheless, in his teaching, it can be observed that through his own experience, Saint Porphyrios presents various nuances of the term love, nuances that are adapted and suitable to our times. In what follows, we will present some of these nuances found in the theology of Saint Porphyrios regarding the term love.

5.1. The difference between divine love and worldly love

Through his rich spiritual experience, Saint Porphyrios observed that there is an important difference between divine love and worldly love. Due to human weakness and passion, worldly love often consumes itself, has an end, and then jealousy, envy, boredom, and dissatisfaction with the loved one may appear. In contrast, further highlights Saint Porphyrios, those who dedicate themselves to divine love, although not devoid of troubles or difficult moments in life, realize that the love for Christ, for God has no end, is insatiable:

Christ is the highest thing that can be desired. There is nothing higher. All the things that we feel lead to satiation, only God does not. He is everything. [...] Love for Christ is something else. It has no end, is without satiation. [...] While human love can spoil a person, can drive them mad. When we love Christ, all other loves remain in the shadow. Other loves have satiation, only the love of Christ does not. Carnal love reaches this satiety. Then jealousy, dissatisfaction, even murder can begin. It can turn into hate. The love of Christ does not change. Worldly love lasts a little and gradually fades, while divine love increases and deepens. Any other love can bring a person to despair. Divine love, however, lifts us to the realm of God, gives us peace, joy, fullness. Other pleasures exhaust, while this one is never satiated. It is a pleasure without satiety, which a man never wearies of. It is the highest thing that can be desired. (2005: 173)

5.2. The love for God brings eternal joy and happiness

Saint Porphyrios sates that the first thing God asks for our joy, for our happiness, is to love Him. The Holy Father shows the greatness and richness offered by fulfilling the “first and greatest” commandment; however, seen from this perspective, the commandment is no longer a commandment but becomes an encouragement for obtaining eternal happiness and joy. Notably, the Athonite Father spoke from his own spiritual experience. He did not quote from certain books when presenting this but shared the effect that devotion to the love of Christ had on him:

The feast and core of all joy is the Person of Christ. When we acquire holy humbleness, then we see and live everything; we live God manifestly, fully, and we feel His mysteries. Then we begin to love Him. And this is something He Himself asks for. It is the first thing He asks for our happiness. [...] The entire mystery is love, the love for Christ; dedication to the things of the spiritual world. The person no longer feels loneliness or anything else. They live in another world. Where the soul rejoices, is happy and is never satiated. (2005: 190, 188)

5.3. Love for one's neighbour cultivates love for God

Saint Porphyrios guided his spiritual children to cultivate love for their brethren. Similar to Saint Evangelist John, the Righteous Saint emphasizes the importance of loving our neighbour because as we cultivate this love, our love for God also grows:

Love for the brother cultivates love for God. We are happy when we secretly love all people. Then we will feel that everyone loves us. No one can reach God if they do not pass through people. Let us love, let us sacrifice for everyone selflessly, without seeking reward. [...] Above all is love. What we need to care for, my children, is love for the other, for his soul. Everything we do – prayer, advice, scolding – should be done with love. Without love, prayer is useless, advice hurts, the scolding harms and destroys the other, who feels whether we love him or not, and responds accordingly. Love, love, love! Love for our brother prepares us to love Christ more. (2005: 304)

Furthermore, Saint Porphyrios loved all people. He made no distinction between religious or atheists, Christians or of another religion, educated or uneducated, poor or rich, etc. His theology was not just theoretical but practical; he welcomed everyone, regardless of confession or sexual orientation, receiving them all with love and respect. Therefore, he advised through his words that our love should extend to all people by forgiving and loving everyone: “Love for Christ has no boundaries, nor does love for our neighbour. Let it spread everywhere, to the far ends of the earth. Everywhere, to all people. I wanted to go and live with the hippies at Matala, of course, without sin, to show them Christ’s love, how great it is and how it can transform and transfigure them. Love is above all” (2005: 315).

5.4. The love for all creation makes us love God

Saint Porphyrios urged us to pour out our love not only on our neighbour but also on all creation. One of the particularities of his teaching is that through God’s creation, by contemplating the beauty and greatness of His creation, we come to know Him, to appreciate Him, and thus to love our Creator (Sava 2012: 84).

Seeing the nature, the trees, the flowers, the birds, the bees, the sea, the fish, the stars, the moon, the sun, and the other wonderful creations of His, we turn our minds to God, and by praising Him through these, we try to understand how beautiful and wonderful they are, and we strive to love them. When we will love all these, then our love will ascend to our Creator, and, in this way, we will truly love Him. A necessary condition is the love of His creatures, but even more powerful must be our love for our fellow human beings. Therefore, we must make visits to hospitals, prisons, orphanages, homes for the elderly, etc. Then our love is sincere. (Tzavaras 2002: 83; our translation)

5.5. The relationship between us and God should be based on love

In the light of contemporary society, marked by secularism and concerned with technological progress and consumerism, Saint Porphyrios's teachings highlighted an Orthodox moral approach that counteracts these trends. Facing a culture of pleasure and exacerbated moral laxity, his moral theology represents an adequate antidote to these deviations. Thus, he brought a fresh and updated perspective on Christian morals, considering the moral and spiritual context of his time.

The Kafsokalyvite Saint explained that there are two ways to reach God: one difficult and exhausting, involving the struggle against passions or the evil one, and an easier one, based on the love of God, fulfilling the commandments, and cultivating virtues. The Athonite Father emphasized the importance of dedicating oneself to loving God, thus offering an approach updated to the needs and aspirations of contemporary society: "There are two paths that lead to God: the difficult and tiring path, with fierce assaults against evil, and the easy path, with love. Many choose the arduous path and shed blood to receive the Spirit until they reach virtue. In my opinion, the shorter and surer way is that of love. This is the path you should also follow" (Porfirie 2016: 74).

Therefore, the blessed hieromonk observed that a gentle and loving approach to the soteriological message, in accordance with the Gospel teaching and the particularities of his theology, can positively influence modern man, prompting him to give up unnatural concerns in search of love and joy. By presenting a perspective of life lived in harmony with Christian teaching, Saint Porphyrios managed to attract the attention of contemporary man and guide him towards divine love and true joy. He set aside threats of hell's torments and eternal soul death or the struggle with passions and presented the path to Christ through the perspective of love and eternal joy:

I find the shortest and surest way is this, through love. [...] Instead of worrying about the devil and his wiles, instead of worrying about passions, turn to the love of Christ. [...] Fighting your enemy is a struggle with pushing and straining. In the love of Christ, however, there is no pushing and straining. Here the soul's power is transformed without toil. [...] Confronting evil through the grace of God is done bloodlessly and effortlessly. Through divine grace, all become painless. Serve in this gentle way. [...] Do not fight to drive out darkness or evil. You achieve nothing by hitting the darkness. [...] This is the perfect way: not to fight directly with evil but to love Christ, His light, and evil will dissipate. (Porfirie 2005: 248–252)

5.6. Through God's Love, we overcome fear, death, and our enemies

Saint Porphyrios teaches that the Church represents the beginning of a new life in Christ, an existence where death and suffering are abolished by following Christ's commandments. This allows us to live from this life in Paradise, anticipating eternity. He also emphasizes that, through the love for Christ, we live His life, an existence where fear, death, and evil have no power over us because the true concern for the spiritual person becomes the love and service of Christ and our neighbour:

The Church is new life in Christ. In the Church, there is no death, there is no hell. [...] Christ abolishes death. [...] He who follows Christ's commandments never dies. Dies according to the flesh, according to passions, but is worthy to live from this life in Paradise, in our Church, and then in eternity. With Christ, death becomes the bridge we must cross at some point to continue living in the uncreated light. [...] When we love Christ, we live the life of Christ. As soon as we achieve this, by the grace of God, we live another state. [...] For us, there is no fear. No death, no devil, no damnation; all these exist for people who are far from Christ [...] for us, who do His will, these things do not exist. [...] What concerns us is love, the service of Christ and his neighbour. (Porfirie 2005: 170, 288)

5.7. Cultivating the Virtue of Love

Among all the virtues Saint Porphyrios spoke about, he dedicated himself most and spoke most about the virtue of love. This was his main activity, goal, desire, and mission, as Saint Porphyrios's disciple, Abbess Ekaterini, says, "he lived to love and loved to live" (Ecaterina 2012: 111; our translation). He wanted to speak to everyone about love, wanting everyone to know God, true love, to become one with divine love. Therefore, he guided all his disciples, by his own example, to place the love of Christ and the love of neighbour above any ascetic or spiritual endeavour: "Our goal is one – the love of Christ, of the Church, of our neighbour. Love, the service of God, fervent longing, union with Christ and the Church is earthly Paradise. The love of Christ is the love of our neighbour, of all, of enemies" (Porfirie 2005: 167).

Through love, commandments are no longer prohibitions or obligations that a Christian must strive to fulfil, but they become natural, *sine qua non*, for every lover of God. Christ is clothing the Old Testament commandments with divine love and love of neighbour, and He transforms them into beatitudes, into blessings: "If Christ enters your heart, He will fill it with His love. Then nothing will be prohibited to you... Only love... Above all will be love. Prohibition did not exist

before Christ. He, however, has nullified this state of affairs. Christ brought love. Life in Christ, obedience, and humility are a true paradise” (Agapie 2005: 56; our translation). “Living within God’s love, you will live in freedom, for where there is love, there is freedom. Move only within divine love” (Porfirie 2005: 268).

6. Conclusions

The journey through the conceptual landscape of love within Christian theology, as traced in this study, shades light on a profound and transformative understanding that transcends mere sentimentality to touch the very essence of divine communion. From the rich lexical heritage of the Greek language and the foundational expositions of love in the New Testament to the nuanced articulations of the Holy Fathers and the deeply personal and experiential teachings of Saint Porphyrios Kafsokalyvitis, love emerges not only as a central tenet of Christian life but as its very heartbeat.

Saint Porphyrios, with his unique blend of simplicity and depth, reminds us that love is the ultimate criterion of authentic Christian life, a transformative power that aligns the soul with God’s will, leading to theosis. His teachings, grounded in the lived experience of divine love, offer a refreshing and compelling vision that speaks directly to the heart of contemporary seekers. By emphasizing the capacity of love to overcome fear, transcend death, and unite us with the divine, Saint Porphyrios underscores the timeless relevance of this virtue in navigating the complexities of modern existence.

Furthermore, his emphasis on cultivating love for God, for one’s neighbour, and for the entire creation serves as a powerful antidote to the prevailing currents of secularism and moral relativism. In a world often characterized by fragmentation and alienation, the theology of love as articulated by the Athonite saint offers a path to wholeness and sanctity, inviting us to a life marked by joy, peace, and deep fulfilment.

Lastly, examining the concept of love according to the teachings of Saint Porphyrios Kafsokalyvitis enriches our understanding of this fundamental virtue, bridging the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary challenges. It reaffirms that at the heart of Christian theology and praxis lies a call to embody love in its most authentic and expansive form. As we navigate the complexities of the twenty-first century, the insights gleaned from this study invite us to rediscover love’s transformative potential, encouraging us to live out the simplicity and profound depth of divine love in our daily lives.

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About Interpretation within the Interplay of Singularity and Duality in Psalm 62:12

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Abstract. Psalm 62:12, a poetic expression in the Hebrew Bible, serves as an eloquent locus for deepening into the interplay of major concepts dealt with in Judaism such as singularity and duality. Through a lens that integrates traditional exegesis (especially the mystical insights of Sefer Yetzirah upon these concepts), the verse unfolds as a tapestry of layers, although a vast majority of its translations might overshadow some particularities of the original text. The investigation begins with the singularity of God's utterance, symbolized by the phrase "One – God has spoken." This could be seen as a reference to the primordial utterance, to the idea that God's speech is not confined to a specific moment in time but encompasses the eternal and ongoing act of creation. The duality encapsulated in "Two – have I heard", which embodies the perspective of the psalmist, invites reflection on the dynamic of revelation and interpretation – a binary dance of divine disclosure and human receptivity, as well as its edges. What role does the idea of interpretation play within the singularity vs duality interplay? Additionally, what perspectives or lenses are implied by the translations predominantly chosen for this verse?¹

Keywords: singularity, duality, interpretation, translation

About translation and (con)text

"One" and "two" may be construed as numerical figures, linguistic expressions, symbolic representations, conceptual constructs, units, factors, and beyond. This paper invites the examination of the two terms through the lenses provided

¹ A substantial portion of the section *About interpretation* comprises excerpts from the chapter *Compromisul interpretării* (pp. 102, 104) from my doctoral dissertation titled *אֵלֶף – Despre secvența consonantică Alef-Lamed în Biblia Ebraică* [On the Alef-Lamed Consonant Sequence in the Hebrew Bible] (translated by me), currently pending publication by Bucharest University Press.

by *Jewish thought*, allowing interpretations from a theological and a mystical point of view.

Psalm 62:12 represents an interesting case study in the diversity of translations and interpretations found within the English versions of the Bible and not only. In most translations, this is the 11th verse, but in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, edited by Rudolf Kittel and published by the German Bible Society of Stuttgart after the Leningrad Codex B19A – which serves as the primary textual reference for this paper –, it is designated as the 12th verse.

One notable difference among translations of Psalm 62:12 is the perspective upon the phrase *יְתַעֲמֹשׁ וְיִמְיָתֵשׁ מִיְהוָה רִבְּדָה תָּת* (*ahat dibber Elohim shtaim-zu shamati*). This phrase is translated in various ways across different versions, leading to nuanced differences in meaning and emphasis. We will examine a few instances, including also the first part of the 13th verse,² which appears to continue the phrase and the thought initiated in the 12th one.³ For example, the King James Version (KJV):

God hath spoken once ; Twice have	אחת דבר אלהים שתימיםיו שמעתי כי עז לאלהים:
I heard this; That power belongeth	ולך-אדני חסד
unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord,	
belongeth mercy.	

... emphasizes the importance of divine message that requires enhanced attention on the part of the psalmist. It could also address the proper or appropriate behaviour of the righteous in perceiving the divine message. Following the interpretation of Catherine Petrany, “This is not a prayer speech addressed to God, but rather one that asks its plural human audience to reflect on a particular reality and adopt certain empirical behaviours” (deClaissé-Walford 2014: 90).

Contemporary English Version (CEV) translates it as:

I heard God say two things : “I am	אחת דבר אלהים שתימיםיו שמעתי כי עז לאלהים:
powerful, and I am very kind.”	ולך-אדני חסד

This translation offers more of a condensed or summarized version of the Hebrew verse. The polarity of one–two cannot be perceived here. As opposed, the *New International Version* (NIV) emphasizes the contrast:

One thing God has said; two things I	אחת דבר אלהים שתימיםיו שמעתי כי עז לאלהים:
have heard: Strength belongs to God;	ולך-אדני חסד
so too, my Lord, does mercy.	

This version is more precise and literal, being devoted to the Hebrew meaning of the two problematic words, even though it adds the term “thing”, which

2 12th verse in other translations.

3 13th verse in other translations.

does not appear in Hebrew. The last translation that we will consult is Jewish Publication Society (JPS), which renders the verse as:

G-d hath spoken **once, twice** have I heard this: that strength belongeth unto G-d; also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.

אחת דבר אלהים שמי-זו שמעתי כי עז לאלהים:
ולך-אדני חסד

This one is a lot more similar to the KJV. In fact, most translators preferred the terms “once” and “twice” for *אחת* (*ahat*) and *שמי-זו* (*shtaim*), even though the equivalent or the correspondent Hebrew term for ‘once’ is *פעם* (*pa’am*) and for ‘twice’ is *פעמים* (*pa’amaim*). The temporal nuances brought by the terms ‘once’ and ‘twice’ highlight the receptive and responsive nature of the psalmist, symbolizing the open-heartedness of the righteous individual, who is ready to receive the one message with twofold attention, but the question here is what the two cardinal numerals, these two abstract numbers, can address in this context.

Acknowledging the difference in nuance of the two terms, I will offer a more literal translation, which will support a Hebrew-centric interpretation of the text. For that matter, I will keep also in a transliterated form the theonyms as they appear in Hebrew. In most translations, *אלהים* (*Elohim*) appears as ‘God’ and *אדני* (*Adonai*) as ‘Lord’.

One – has spoken *Elohim*. **Two** – have I heard this. Because power [belongs] to *Elohim*, and to you, *Adonai*, love [belongs]!

אחת דבר אלהים שמי-זו שמעתי כי עז לאלהים:
ולך-אדני חסד

To what do the terms ‘one’ and ‘two’ allude here? Considering the context of the verse, ‘one’ is associated with *Elohim* (to divinity), while ‘two’ is linked to the author of the Psalm.

The entire psalm reflects on the unwavering support and the assurance of divine protection. The psalmist seeks refuge in God’s strength, acknowledging divinity as the source of security and deliverance. The 9th verse of the psalm concludes with the word *סלה* (*Selah*), which has an uncertain etymology and appears preponderantly in the Book of Psalms, serving as a cue for the reader or singer to pause. After *Selah*, the next three verses adopt a different tone – reminiscent of ecclesiastical literature –, reflecting on the notion of futility and weightlessness by using the word *הבל* (*hevel*),⁴ which is one of the central concepts in the philosophical Book of Koheleth.

4 Lit. ‘vapour’, ‘breath’, ‘vanity’.

Men of low degree are **vanity**, and אָדוּ הַבָּל בְּגִי־אָדָם כְּזָב בְּנִי אִישׁ בְּמֵאֲנָנִים לַעֲלֹת הֶמָּה
 men of high degree are a lie; if they מִהֶבֶל יָחִיד:
 be laid in the balances, they are
 together lighter than **vanity**. Psalm
 62:9 (JPS)

Vanity of **vanities**, saith Koheleth; הַבָּל הַבָּלִים אֶמֶר קֹהֵלֶת הַבָּל הַבָּלִים הַכֹּל הַבָּל:
vanity of **vanities**, all is **vanity**.
 Ecclesiastes 1:2 (JPS)

The 12th verse, the one that represents the interest of this paper, has its correspondent or counterpart in Job 33:14. I will offer also for this verse a literal translation, the theonym here being אֵל (*El*), which appears as ‘God’ in other translations.

For *El* speaks (in) **one**, and (in) **two** כִּי־בִאֲתָת יְדַבֵּר־אֵל וּבִשְׁתֵּי אֵל יְשׁוּרָנָה:
 the man perceives it not.

A first layer in the comparison of the two very similar verses could be the affirmation versus negation, the mastery, or the lack of an appropriate reception of the receiver. The similar themes that we find both in Psalm 62:12 and in Job 33:14 are “one”, “two”, and “divine speech”. How are these concepts perceived in the Jewish traditional exegesis and especially in the mystical perspective?

About singularity

Elliot Wolfson, one of the few scholars who have endeavoured to apply the methods and frameworks of contemporary literary criticism to the study of rabbinic and overall Jewish thought, emphasizes, for example, the contrast between Greek and Jewish theophany, that of the depiction of God through visual imagery versus verbal expression (Wolfson 1994: 13). In the Jewish perspective, the portrayal of the divine through visual representation is forbidden, as it is considered a violation of religious law. This stance is either reinforced by or reinforces the notion of God’s singularity and differentiation from all existing entities or phenomena.

The concept of singularity is linked, in Judaism overall, to divinity. If there is one phrase that encapsulates the Jewish faith, it is the שְׁמָע (*Shema*),⁵ the verse recited by a Jew every morning and evening of their lives, and the last words to issue from their dying lips. “He [the Jew] is required to stand still, directing his heart heavenward in trepidation and fear, in trembling and reverence, while proclaiming the **oneness** of God: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is **One**!” (Midrash Tanchuma, Lech Lecha 1:1; emphasis mine).

5 Lit. ‘hear’.

This is a traditional theological perspective, and it uncovers the supreme attribute of the divine. In the same manner, Moses Maimonides explains in “The Guide of The Perplexed” the notion of “one” and “oneness” when attributed to divinity. “God’s being **One** by virtue of a true **Oneness**, so that no composition is to be found in Him and **no possibility of division** in any way” (Maimonides I – 50; emphasis mine). Maimonides also elucidates that the attribute of oneness pertains exclusively to divinity.

For there is no **oneness** at all except in believing that there is **one simple essence** in which there is no complexity or multiplication of notions, but one notion only; so that from whatever angle you regard it and from whatever point of view you consider it, you will find that it is one, **not divided** in any way and by any cause into **two notions**; and you will not find therein any multiplicity either in the thing as it is outside of the mind or as it is in the mind, as shall be demonstrated in this Treatise. (Maimonides I: 51; emphasis mine)

Psalm 62:12 elucidates this entire concept through only a few words and extends further, revealing the inherent limitation of the senses to apprehend the notion of unity in any conceivable manner.

One of the distinctive traits of Judaism is the meticulous attention to every aspect of daily life. In this context, language holds significant importance, as it is believed that God created the world through words. If words are the fundamental building blocks of creation, then letters serve as the elemental imprints that underpin existence and form the essence of all things. The mystical perspectives place greater emphasis on the interpretation of letters and their significance. “Sefer Yeşira”, among the earliest foundational texts of Jewish mysticism, delves into the correlation between the mystery of the act of creation named *ma’ase bereshit* and the Hebrew alphabet. “By means of **thirty-two wondrous paths** of wisdom, Yah, the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, the Living God, God Almighty, holy and terrible is his name, dwelling for ever, carved out. He created his universe with three types of things (whose names derive from the same root letters – s-p-r): with (*seper*) and numbers (*s^epar*) and speech (*sippur*)” (Sefer Yeşira 1: 1; emphasis mine).

The twenty-two wondrous paths correspond to the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, while the remaining ten paths are associated with the ten *sefirot*⁶ (Sefer Yeşira 1: 2). Gershom Scholem provides, in his book *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbols* a succinct and comprehensive explanation of the mystical understanding of creation, the notion of plurality inherent in the *sefirotic* system, and its connection to the notion of unity.

6 The ten *sefirot* symbolize the ten divine emanations that form the basis of the created world.

This Kabbalistic world of the *sefiroth* encompasses what philosophers and theologians called the world of the divine attributes. But to the mystics it was divine life itself, insofar as it moves toward Creation. The hidden dynamic of this life fascinated the Kabbalists, who found it reflected in every realm of Creation. But this life as such is not separate from, or subordinate to, the Godhead, rather, it is the revelation of the hidden root, concerning which, since it is never manifested, not even in symbols, nothing can be said, and which the Kabbalists called *en-sof*, the infinite. But this hidden root and the divine emanations are one. (Gershom Scholem 1969: 35; emphasis in the original)

In “Sefer Yeşira”, and not only, the letter associated to divinity is the first letter of the alphabet, א *Aleph*, being also the origin of all the other letters. “He hewed, as it were, immense columns or colossal pillars, out of the intangible air, and from the empty space. And this is the impress of the whole, twenty-one letters, all from one the **Aleph**” (Sefer Yeşira 3: 2). However, the creation does not begin with *Aleph* but with *Bet*, which is the second letter of the alphabet. Here we encounter the paradox of origin versus beginning, which is entwined to *Bereshit* ‘Genesis’.

About duality

“Everything is a **duality** except for the creator of all.”
(Abraham Ibn Ezra on Deuteronomy 32: 4–3)

The concept of duality, and we could overlap here also the concept of plurality, is associated to creation. Maimonides calls it multiplicity – where not in its entirety and not even one part of it is in any way similar to the oneness that is the divine. “God’s being One by virtue of a true Oneness, so that no composition whatever is to be found in Him and no possibility of division in any way whatever – then you must know that He, may He be exalted, has in no way and in no mode any essential attribute, and that just as it is impossible that He should be a body, it is also impossible that He should possess an essential attribute” (Maimonides I – 50).

In Judaism, creation emerges from words – God created the world through speech. The entire creation is carved in and carved by the principle of separation of division, as noted by Wolfson in his exploration of the mystical interpretation with focus on the creation narrative found in another fundamental text for Jewish mysticism – “Sefer HaBahir”. “In the beginning is the splitting of the waters, a rupture in the beginning. Thus the beginning is *Beit*, signifying the duplicity brought about through division of the one before all division. Where do we see this divide most wholly? In time, in the beginning, at the beginning—for to

begin, the beginning must have begun, otherwise it is no beginning. What begins, therefore, can only be what has already been what is yet to come” (Wolfson 2006: 131; emphasis in the original).

If divinity is inherently associated with the notion or the attribute of oneness, can there be perceived any connection between divinity and the notion of duality, to which every element of the creation is a subject of? When it comes to the divine, Maimonides views everything that is observed and observable, named or perceived as the manifestation of divine actions. Maimonides divides the attributes of God into positive and negative categories, the first one listing other five subcategories, of which only one is void of any idolatrous aspect: the one relating, as I mentioned earlier, to divine action (Maimonides I: 52).

From this point of view, every divine name is an indicator to divine action, except for the tetragrammaton (YHWH), which uniquely denotes divine essence. *Elohim*, in this regard, the theonym that appears in Psalm 62:12, is the name of God associated to creation, to existence: “YHWH”, whose true pronunciation is unknown, consisting as it does of the ‘pure, so-called silent letters’, is the ‘name of the essence’ that is ‘pure breath’, ‘pure spirit’, or ‘pure will without actual conation’, whereas ‘Elohim’ is the ‘name of the divine effects’, the multifaceted manifestation of that essence, spirit, and will (Wolfson 2006: 36–37).

Every manifestation is plural in its unfolding, being subject to time-space – this means that every manifestation has a beginning. If *Aleph* is the source of all the other letters, and implicitly of all the creation, *Bet* is the beginning of them all. “The letter **Bet** entered and said to Him: ‘Master of the Universe, may it please You to create the world with me? Because by me You are blessed in the upper and lower worlds.’ The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: ‘But, of course, I shall certainly create the world with you. And you shall appear in the beginning of the Creation of the world’” (Zohar 6: 37; emphasis mine).

“Beginning” and “origin” are not interchangeable in this context. “Origin” is associated with oneness, while on the other side we face the insurmountable duality of “beginnings”. The concept of duality here is distinct from dualism, which suggests polarity and antinomy, whereas duality implies distinctiveness and separateness.

The idea of unity or singularity is the forever elusive or unattainable concept; where even though the world might have had its beginning in only one letter, *Bet*, the “name” of the letter is composed of three other letters: *Bet*, *Yud*, and *Tav*. The process continues recursively, with each component containing further components: the first *Bet* is composed of another *Bet* and another *Yud* and another *Tav*, and the *Yud* is made of another *Yud* and a *Waw* and a *Daleth*, and *Tav* is made of another *Tav* and another *Yud* and another *Waw*, and so on and so forth. This imagery illustrates multiplicity without implying the notion of antinomy.

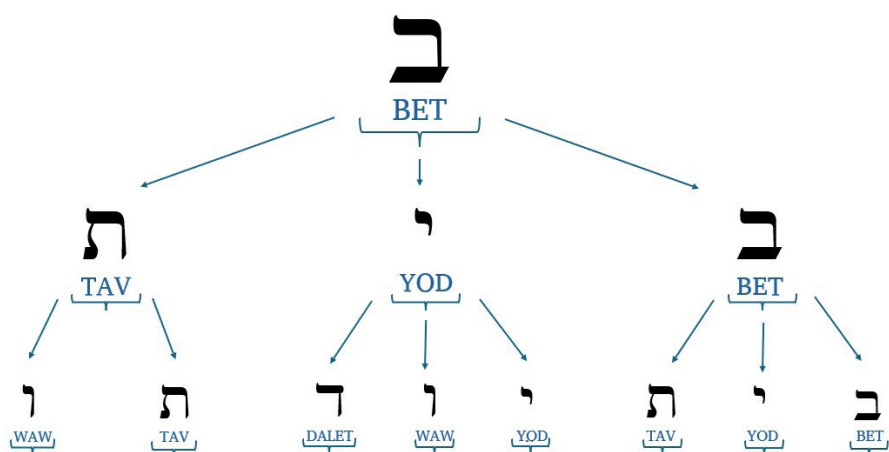


Figure 1. *The components of BET*

A paradox emerges here: the more we engage into division or separation, the more alluring the notion of unity becomes, but the same outcome might be anticipated in the unifying process. Yet, these seemingly opposite processes paradoxically mirror each other, yielding the same effect – plurality. Consider the example of language: every combination of words, although numerous, comprises no more than 22 letters (in Hebrew). However, as we unify these letters, the result is not a reduction but rather an amplification of multiplicity and diversity in meaning and significance. The principle of separation along with the unifying principle both apply in this context to either plurality or duality; the idea of “one” cannot be the subject of either of these two principles.

About interpretation

“Creation belongs to the realm of the semiological.
The Universe, as well as the things and events
crisscrossing history, **signify**.”

(Faur 2010: 37)

Following the narrative of the Genesis and its subsequent manifold commentaries, everything in existence has been created through speech. Therefore, everything that is called and has a name signifies and is subject to interpretation. The only one that cannot be interpreted is the divinity here; the only possibility of calling forth divinity is akin to summoning its manifestation.

In Hebrew, the verb ‘to name (something or someone)’ does not exist, there is only the noun *שֵׁם* (*shem*) ‘name’. The action of naming is expressed by the verb

קָרָא (*qara*), and depending on the preposition preceding the verb, it can express two different meanings: when used with the preposition לְ (*le...*) – ‘to’/‘for’, which precedes verbs of motion, קָרָא (*qara*) means ‘to call’, ‘to name’. If used with the preposition בְּ (*be...*) ‘in’, it means ‘to read’. Everything has a name, but it is not named, but called or read. These two senses of the verb קָרָא (*qara*) imply an interpretative faculty of the one who performs the action, the meaning not being “given”. “The term *qore* in Hebrew stands for both ‘reading’ and ‘calling forth’ for signification of the consonantal text. As it were, the reader ‘calls forth the signification’” (José Faur 2010: 19; emphasis in the original).

What does interpretation mean? Let us look together at the term פֶּשֶׁר (*pesher*), which means ‘interpretation’, as Jose Faur helps us understand the depth of its multifaceted meanings.

Significance is the function of **interpretation**. The Hebrew term for interpretation, *peter* (*pitaron*)/ *pesher*, implies the notion of **compromise**. Interpretation involves the integration of various elements. In Hebrew, it also means “lukewarm.” In a sense, “interpretation” may be conceived as blending different elements, as when mixing hot and cold water. Thus “to interpret” is to integrate two or more signs and make a “compromise” which contains them all but is identical with none of them, just as lukewarm water is neither hot nor cold.” (José Faur 1986: 28; emphasis mine)

Interpretation implies the notion of compromise, as *beginning* implies the notion of duality, and they both imply the notion of relation. At the same time, interpretation is a notion encompassed within the concept of language, which functions not as a reflection of the created world, the relationship being antipodal. Here, the structure of the created world is a mirror, the reflection of the structure of language through which it is created. “From the standpoint of Jewish thought [...] language is not a phenomenon within being; rather, being is a phenomenon within language” (Patterson 2005: 173).

The inevitability of interpretation is rendered within multiplicity, where by “multiplicity” we understand “the created world”; it is also rendered within the inevitability of interconnection and within the ratio between those that are parts of the multiplicity. Meaning continues to be a function of relation, which in the given context is revealing *something* through diverse manifestations. Compromise exists here by virtue of being of “the parts” and does not exist by virtue of being of “the whole”.

Words, as well as things – *hadavarim*⁷ – are vessels of meaning; they can be defined or interpreted as bearing sense, but only together or in relation with other

7 In Hebrew, the term דָּבָר (*davar*) carries double meaning: ‘word’ and ‘thing’; here the term is articulated in its plural form, הַדְּבָרִים (*hadavarim*).

words/things, while the meaning, as essence, is (like a mirror) intangible, the ineffable metaphor that each carries within itself and hidden from itself. This, the self, *is* - אַני (ani), and it *is not* - אֵין (ein), receiving meaning only in relation to אַתָּא (ata), 'you', where אַני (ani), 'I' becomes אַתָּא (ata), 'you' in order to be (when called – *gore*) and אֵין (ein) in order not to be (when not called), where אֵין (ein) means 'not to be', 'to not exist'. The two words, אַני (ani) and אֵין (ein), are composed of the same three letters, but the order of the last two changes from אַני (ani): *Aleph – Nun – Yud* to אֵין (ein): *Aleph – Yud – Nun-sofit*. The letter *Nun* has a different form when placed at the end of a word, called *Nun-sofit* 'final *Nun*', a prolonged, "in-finite" form. The idea of singularity or unity rendered by the first-person singular – אַני (ani) – exists only through its potential to become the second-person singular – אַתָּא (ata) or אַת (at)⁸ – through the potential to be subjected to the compromise of interpretation.

It is similar to the way Martin Buber perceives "presentness", where presence exists solely within the realm of relationship – the existence of everything, the existence of unity only through the in-betweens of the dialogical I and Thou. Buber perceives the concept of oneness that is through twoness – a presentness which cannot be re-presented, where "nothing individual is real in itself" (Martin Buber 1964: 72; cf. Wolfson 1989: 430).

Compromise is manifested through interpretation, it exists through the interdependent valence of the dual play between homogeneous versus heterogeneous, where neither of the two elements reaches an absolute state. In the context of multiplicity, the notion of the absolute exists only at the ideational level, and through the fact of *being* of interpretation, the world is a compromise in itself.

The meaning resides solely through and from the duality of the beginning; hence, the world signifies under the sign of *Bet*, of 'two'. *Aleph*, representing the idea of 'one', it both *is* and *is not* within creation. It can be clothed in a vowel but lacks its own manifestation (its sound), differing from the other letters, except for *Ayin*, which behaves similarly, although it also used to have a sound. What remains unspoken remains in relation to essence, while what is spoken exists in relation to existence, where speech manifests towards perpetuity, being subject to interpretation.

Conclusions

Psalm 62:12 could be interpreted in a multifaceted manner, as evidenced by the various versions of its translations. The majority of translators preferred to add a temporal valence to the verse, translating the terms for אַחַת (*ahat*) and שְׁתַּיִם (*shtaim*) as 'once' and 'twice'. A more literal translation of the verse might reveal a more

8 אַתָּא (ata) means 'you' (second person singular, masculine), and אַת (at) means 'you' (second person singular, feminine).

elliptical meaning, reverberating a different level of intricacy in comprehending and interpreting the verse.

The notion of “one”, being associated in Judaism with divinity, represents the source of everything, the origin, while the notion of “two” represents the beginning of everything, being the primordial elemental imprint of creation.

The act of interpretation in this context is inevitable within the essential framework of duality, and, as such, it is inevitably delineated by its (co)incidence with the notion of compromise.

While the psalmist could emphasize, in Psalm 62:12, the importance of divine message, or the appropriate behaviour of the righteous in the revelatory state, he may also refer to the inability of “two” to apprehend “one” or to the precondition of אַחַת (ahat) being perceived only through the two lenses of שְׁתַּיִם (shtaim).

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In the Quest for the Face of YHWH / The Lord: About the Meanings of *Biqqesh Panim*

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Abstract. In Psalm 27:8 from the Hebrew Bible,¹ the syntagm *biqqesh panim* appears twice, with reference to the quest of the Face of YHWH / The Lord. Since the sphere of meaning of both terms reaches at a certain moment a point of convergence, the phrase acquires a strong significance. Is this a simple construction or can it be considered an idiom, whose meaning surpasses the cumulation of meanings of its term, acquiring the connotation of “striving for the divine Presence” or “intense desire to meet YHWH / The Lord face to face”? Our paper begins with the above question and aims to analyse the syntagm and its meanings in different contexts, to identify and to give possible arguments that would support its status of idiom and would open new research perspectives on it.

Keywords: *biqqesh panim*, quest, face to face, Hebrew Bible

Motto:

əkha amar libbi baqqəshu fanay

et-panekha yhwh (adonay) avvaqqesh

Təhilim/Psalm 27:8

Biblical poetry represents one of the most challenging fields for a translator because they must face the difficulty of rendering the original meanings after centuries or even millennia. As part of the team working on translating the Psalms from the Hebrew Bible, I learned a lot about the rich nuances that terms and phrases have in biblical Hebrew. If a translator has to choose one meaning among many, he can sometimes have the feeling that the saying *traduttore, traditore* is in some respect true. But he has a solution: to do ever more research, always thriving to explain the meaning from the time the book was written, and

1 Hebrew Bible represents the name of the Hebrew text used in my research, the text established in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), editio quinta emendata, Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1997.

to render as much as possible this meaning into the target language. This is my approach. Here is why the current work aims at investigating in depth one of the expressions which appears twice in Psalm 27:8, the phrase *biqqesh panim*, which is difficult to translate and requires deeper reflection on its multifaceted significance. Since both terms have a strong significant load, with theological impact, the question we are raising is whether this is a simple construction that combines the meanings of the two terms or it is an idiom, an expression that exceeds the cumulation of meanings of this term.

Starting from the question above, we try to analyse the syntagm and its meanings within the context it appears, to identify and to give possible arguments that would support its status as an idiom and, why not, to open new research perspectives on Biblical Hebrew phraseology.

With the development of linguistics, Biblical Hebrew phraseology has increasingly become an area of interest for researchers of biblical studies. The main challenge the researchers are facing concerns the difficulty of identifying the meanings that some idiomatic expressions had in biblical times.

In his research on the Biblical phraseology, Jean-Marc Babut considers that biblical phrases which have a transparent meaning or which are understandable by deducing their meaning from the particular meanings of their terms do not constitute idiomatic expressions and that idioms are represented only by those expressions that present a semantic unity. From the need to clearly identify and delimit the scope of idiomatic expressions, he proposes three essential criteria: exocentric meaning – the meaning of the phraseological unit is not a summation of the meanings of its constituents, but it is global, unpredictable, and opaque (Babut 1995: 20); stereotyping – the phraseological unit has a fixed structure, which does not admit formal or topical changes of its terms, nor intrusions upon other terms (Babut 1995: 21); monosemy – the phraseological unit has only one meaning (Babut 1995: 26). Babut considers monosemy as the essential feature of the idiom. Although it represents a notable theoretical approach to defining and classifying biblical expressions, the three criteria stated by Babut are not always supported in the case of the biblical text. Babut himself admits that there is a discontinuity between the endocentric, transparent, composite meaning and the exocentric, opaque, global meaning (Babut 1995: 18).

Despite the challenges the researchers in the field of biblical phraseology are confronted with, looking at the meanings of the phrases that have not been researched until now can bring important clarifications and nuances for a better understanding of the biblical text. Due to the contribution of related fields, i.e. research of the biblical man, about his society and culture, Biblical Hebrew idioms can be less opaque, and their meanings more precise or nuanced.

Our research efforts can be rendered significantly easier thanks to the specificity of the Hebrew language to form words starting from a verbal root

carrying a generic meaning, which allows the identification of the meanings by referring to a common semantic field. Our main research method is based on the etymological study, by analysing the terms derived from a common verbal root. As Alexander Militarev pointed out, “the etymology of classical Hebrew words shed additional light upon the semantics of even well-known terms, enrich their comprehension, and, for some of the rare words, provide the sole source of interpretation. The etymological aspect also assists with context analysis laying bare the underestimated and, quite likely, exceptional role in creating the notions, episodes, narratives, ideas, and concepts” (Militarev 2007: 290).

In our attempt to elucidate the meanings of the formula *biqqesh panim* and the occurrences and semantics of the syntagm *biqqesh panim*, we will start with the analysis of the term *panim* and the construction *pāney yhwh/adonay*, followed by the investigation of the verb *biqqesh* and of other Hebrew verbs with similar meaning.

The phrase we would like to investigate brings together two terms with a strong and meaningful load. The term *panim* (BDB 2014: 815–819), normally translated as ‘face’, has in Hebrew a more complex meaning. Used with reference to the divine, which does not have corporeality in Judaism, the term *panim* includes meanings that deserve to be highlighted. In turn, the verb *biqqesh* (BDB 2014: 134–135) indicates by its etymology and paradigm a core of meanings that add nuances to the general signification of ‘to seek’, ‘to search for’. In this context, the phrase *biqqesh panim* presents specific occurrences and semantic particularities.

Usually translated as ‘face’ or ‘faces’, the Hebrew term *panim* comes from the triconsonantal verbal root *pnh* (coming from the proto-semitic biconsonantal root **pn*),² which has the generic meaning of ‘turn towards what constitutes the centre of interest, towards what is in the centre of attention, in order to see and know’. This shows that the Hebrew *panim* refers not so much to the exteriority, to appearance, like in Indo-European languages, but to the attitude and dynamism of the living person, who turns his attention to what represents the centre of their interest. The term *panim* is a *pluralia tantum* noun, indicating that the human being has many “faces”, many orientations of their attention, a dynamism joining the interiority and the exteriority of a person. From this perspective, *panim* is like a threshold, a link between the inner part of a person (its volition, emotions, thoughts) and the exterior expression of his inner resources. That explains the use of *panim* in the Hebrew Bible with the meaning of ‘whole person’ and the translation in many modern languages, in some contexts, by a personal pronoun.

It is not arbitrary that the main sense and communication organs are situated in the area of the face: eyes (for sight), ears (for hearing), nose (for smell), mouth (for taste for speech), and all these dynamic elements, by mimics, express the inner

2 For the analysis of *panim*, many etymological references were used, listed in the References section.

state of the person: the face represents at the same time a medium of knowledge and of communication or life itself, not only a static image of a moment in life but the flow of continuous life, the multiple facets of being, and the capacity of a human being to turn their attention to different subjects and objects of interest. But we must emphasize that, from among over two thousand occurrences of the term in the Hebrew Bible, only a small part has the actual meaning of 'face'. In these cases, the term refers to the external reflection, through glances or gestures, of the human interiority, the face representing the medium of communication of thought, will, and emotions.

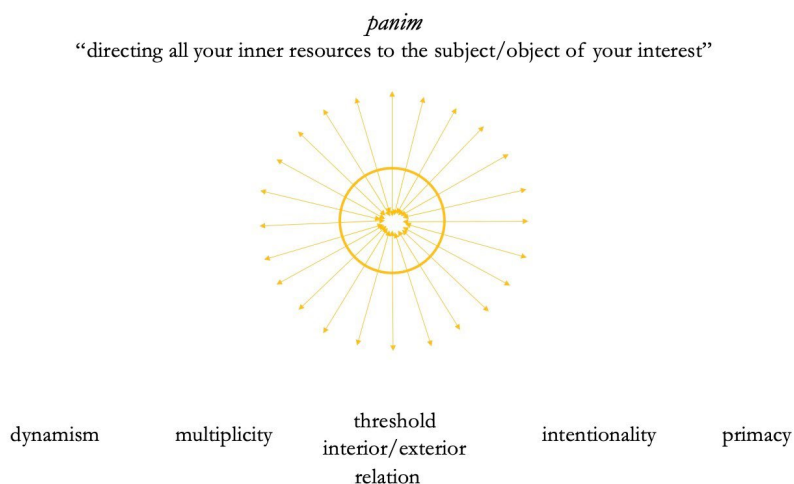


Figure 1. *Semantic units of panim and a graphical representation of its behaviour*

That explains why the term *panim* in the Hebrew Bible has meanings referring to the orientation of attention towards what constitutes the point of interest. Therefore, the term mainly refers to presence, and not to corporeality. Thus, speaking about the Divine Face does not represent anthropomorphizing, and the apparent conflict between the prohibition of seeing the Face of the Lord and the exhortation to seek His Face is resolved.

Biblical scholars have shown that the Hebrew phrase *pney yhwh* ‘the Face of the Lord’ has a theological signification, referring to divine orientation, attention, benevolence, and love towards human beings.

A schematic representation of the ramifications of *panim*’s meaning, based on the meanings highlighted by its occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, sheds light on the centrality of the meaning of ‘presence’ and prepares a secondary place for the bodily meaning of ‘face’, the latter having connotations with respect to partiality, exteriority, and spatiality.

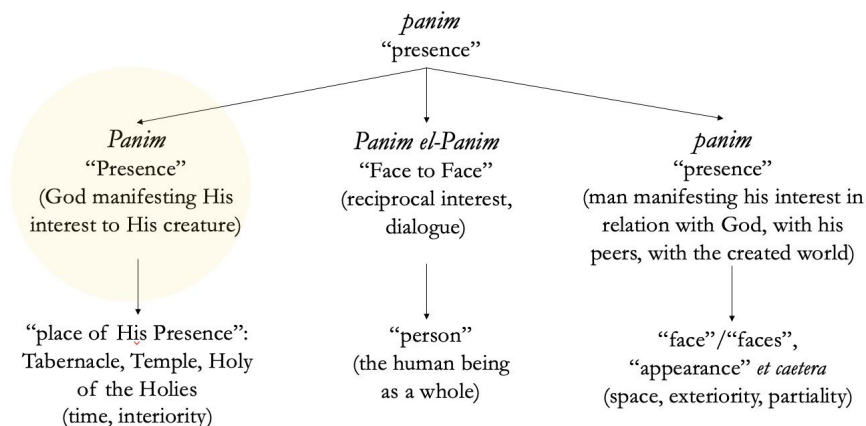


Figure 2. Meaning ramifications of *panim*

Regarding the verbal component of the expression *biqqesh panim*, it is necessary to underline that in Biblical Hebrew its meaning, ‘to seek’, is expressed through a series of verbs such as: *ba’a* (BDB 2014: 126), *baqar* (BDB 2014: 133), *biqqesh*, *darash* (BDB 2014: 205), *shachar* (BDB 2014: 1007), or *tur* (BDB 2014: 1064). The translation into modern languages of these Hebrew verbs as ‘to seek’ led to the impression of an equalizing synonymy and, consequently, to an impoverishment of their different nuances. In Biblical Hebrew, this general idea was expressed by at least six different verbs, each one used in well-defined contexts, with a well-defined meaning.

Their precise nuances refer to either the idea of ‘examination’ or ‘search’ or the idea of ‘urgency’, of ‘internalizing the search’, ‘reflection’, ‘contemplation’, of a ritual act, or ‘frequenting a sacred place and resorting to religious practice such as prayer or worship’.



Figure 3. Comparative approach of the Hebrew verbs for ‘to seek’

The phrase *biqqesh panim* has only eleven occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, eight of them with reference to God's Face/Presence and three with reference to the face or to the presence of the ruler / of King Solomon, in relation to what God has given him – the wisdom to make justice with love, as God does, which emphasizes the special status of this expression:

I will return to My place until they will be guilty and they will **seek (*biqqesh*) My Face**, in affliction they will earnestly seek (*shachar*) Me! (Hosea 5:15)³

Seek (*darash*) YHWH/The Lord and his strength, **seek (*biqqesh*) His Face** evermore! (1 Chronicles 16:11 = Psalm 105:4)

And if they will humble themselves, My people, who are called (by) My Name upon them, and will pray and **seek (*biqqesh*) My Face**, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heavens and I will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

And there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year, and David **sought (*biqqesh*) the Face** of YHWH/The Lord, and the Lord said: Because of Saul and his house [is this], the blood upon him, that he killed the Gibeonites. (2 Samuel 21:1)

This is the lineage of those who seek (*darash*) Him, of those who **seek (*biqqesh*) Your Face** – [the lineage of] Jakob! (Psalm 24:6)

To you says My heart: **Seek My Face! Your Face**, YHWH/Lord, **I will seek!**" (Psalm 27:8)

And the whole earth **sought the presence** of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his heart. (1 Kings 10:22, 2 Chronicles 9:23)

Many **seek the face** of a ruler, but from YHWH/The Lord is the justice of man. (Proverbs 29:26)

We will focus on the contexts in which the expression refers to the search for the Lord's Face. It can be noted sometimes in the same contexts that combinations of two different verbs for 'to seek', like *biqqesh* and *shachar* (in Hosea 5:15), *biqqesh*

3 The translation from Biblical Hebrew to English of the verses cited in this paper belongs to the author. We chose not to use the established translations in order to render the meanings as close as possible to those in the original text.

and *darash* (in Chronicles 16:11, in Psalm 105:4, and in Psalm 24:6), or *darash* and *shachar* (in Psalm 78:34) appear, and this allows the reader to differentiate between their meanings, to perceive their semantic nuances. For example, the verses containing both *biqqesh* and *darash* indicate that *biqqesh panim* does not refer to a meaning concerning a ritual act like ‘going to a sacred place for praying or offerings’ because this meaning belongs to the verb *darash*, already present in this context. Also, in verse 1 from 2 Samuel 21, the verb *biqqesh* seems to have referred to a dialogical encounter, ‘face to face’, between David and the Lord, and not to the request for meditation or prayer, meanings expressed by other verbs, like *baqar* and *darash*, not used in this context.

The elucidation of the semantic nuances of the verb *biqqesh* requires an in-depth analysis of the specificities of this verb. First of all, it should be emphasized that this Hebrew verb is used exclusively in *piel* stem, which expresses an intensive action, a causative action, a resultative action, or a specific kind of action, in active voice, and adds these semantic units to the core meaning of the term.

The Biblical Hebrew dictionaries and lexicons give the term *biqqesh* the following general meanings: ‘seek after’, ‘desire to find, to obtain or to achieve something’, ‘ask for something from someone’, ‘beg’, ‘demand’, ‘inquire’, ‘plead’, ‘search or look for’, ‘try to find’, ‘pursue’, ‘investigate’, ‘strive for’. These translations do not seem to cover the meanings of the expression *biqqesh panim*, which we are researching here. Therefore, in what follows, we will try to identify possible meanings of this expression, by analysing the semantic sphere of the verb *biqqesh*, starting from the verbal root around which we can identify a wide series of terms.

Concerning the original core meaning of *biqqesh*, it can be revealed by referring to the related terms that share the same biconsonantal proto-semitic root, *bq*, which is the bearer of their generic meaning. In Biblical Hebrew, we can find terms coming from the root *bq* such as: *baqa*, ‘cleave’, ‘break open or through’, ‘to split’, ‘to divide’, ‘to open’, ‘to drill’ (BDB 2014: 131), *beqa*, ‘half of shekel’ (BDB 2014: 132), *biq’a*, ‘field’, ‘valley’ (BDB 2014: 132), *baqia* or *beqia*, ‘fissure’, ‘breach’ (BDB 2014: 132), *baqaq*, ‘to be empty’ (BDB 2014: 132) – from which comes the term *iabboq*, designating the name of the river Jakob passes before wrestling with God, *baqbuq* (word obtained by the duplication of the root *bq*), ‘container’, ‘vessel’, ‘empty’, ‘two parts’ (BDB 2014: 132), *baqar*, ‘to seek’, ‘to search’, ‘to meditate’, ‘to contemplate’, ‘to examine’, ‘to inspect’, ‘to distinguish’, ‘to take care’, ‘to evaluate’, ‘to ask’ (BDB 2014: 133), *boqer*, ‘sunrise’, ‘morning’, ‘the moment that separates night and day’, ‘the moment of the day when the sun appears, become present’ (BDB 2014: 133–134), *baqqara*, ‘seeking’ (BDB 2014: 134), *biqqesh*. The meanings of the terms above reconstruct the general sense of the root *bq*, which is related with the idea of ‘opening’ or ‘being empty’, like a ‘vessel’, even ‘concavity’.

Connections with this meaning appear also in the Hebrew terms having the sequence *bq* inversed, the biconsonantal root *qb*, related symmetrically with the idea of ‘being empty’, with meanings as ‘convexity’, or ‘being full’, like in terms such as: *qavav*, ‘arch’, ‘dome’, ‘vaulted tent’ (BDB 2014: 866), *qav*, ‘volume’ (BDB 2014: 866), *qubba*, ‘large vaulted tent’ (BDB 2014: 866), *qeva*, ‘belly’, ‘womb’ (BDB 2014: 866), *iaaqov* – the Hebrew name of Jakob – from *aqev*, ‘heel’, ‘footprint’ (BDB 2014: 784), *aqov*, ‘steep’, ‘hilly’ (BDB 2014: 784).

From an etymological point of view, it seems that *biqqesh* is more related with *baqar*, as it shares the same biconsonantal root *bq*, a root that refers to the idea of ‘being empty’. As both verbs express the idea of searching, it is obvious that they would be redundant if each one of them did not have a very precise meaning. Starting from this core general meaning of ‘being empty’ or ‘opening’, the *piel* stem is adding the nuances of intensity or causative action, and the specific meaning of the verb *biqqesh* seems to relate to the ideas of “internalization”, “emptying himself of all preconceived ideas and representations”, “opening himself for making something or someone to be present”.

It becomes obvious that both terms from the phrase *biqqesh panim* have meanings whose spheres intersect and are convergent: both of them refer to the idea of “presence”, one as “attitude”, the other as “action”, and together they express the total involvement (not only the intention but also the action) of the human being in order to focus his inner resources on the target of his interest, in this case, to encounter the divine.

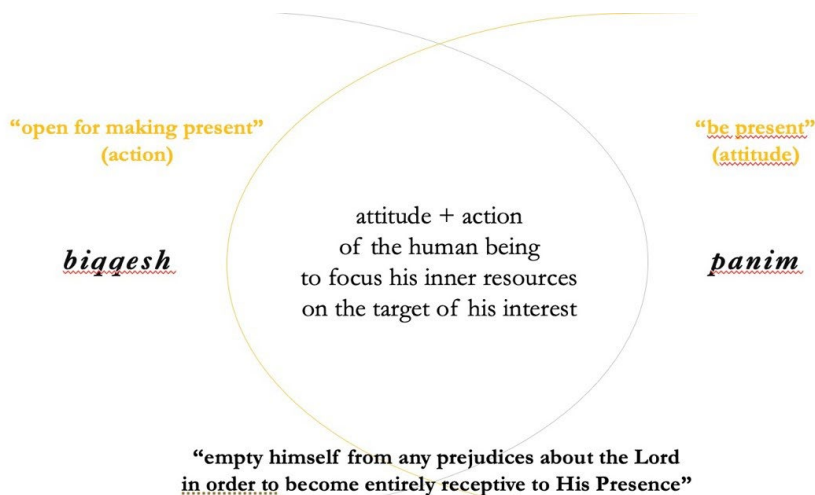


Figure 4. *Meaning spheres convergence in biqqesh panim*

Given all these arguments, both grammatical and semantic, it can be considered that the expression *biqqesh panim* could have meanings such as ‘seek intensely

God's Presence', "intense quest for the Face of God', 'long for God's Presence', 'desire strongly to meet YHWH / The Lord Face to Face', 'desire and prepare oneself to meet God Face to Face', 'have the attitude and do what's needed to focus one's inner resources on finding God and on acquiring the status that could allow one to stay in the Presence/before the Face of God', 'open/empty/free oneself from any prejudices about the Lord in order to become entirely receptive to His overwhelming Presence'. The fact that the phrase *biqqesh panim* requires a complex, nuanced explanation, impossible to render synthetically in modern languages, constitutes an argument for assigning it the status of an idiom.

As the perfect prophet needs to empty himself from any prejudices and representations about the Lord in order to become entirely receptive to His Presence, so does it appear as God's exhortation to the Psalmist, in Psalm 27:8. That is the complex meaning that we recognize in the expression *biqqesh panim*.

Table 1. Transliteration and pronunciation of Hebrew letters

Consonant		Transliteration and pronunciation
א	<i>aleph</i>	- (glottal stop)
ב	<i>bet</i>	B
ב	<i>vet</i>	V
ג	<i>gimel</i>	G
ד	<i>dalet</i>	D
ה	<i>he</i>	h
ו	<i>waw</i>	w, v, u
ז	<i>zayin</i>	Z
ח	<i>het</i>	ḥ (h)
ט	<i>tet</i>	T
י	<i>yod</i>	y, i
כ	<i>kaf</i>	K
כ	<i>khaf</i>	kh (h)
ך	<i>khaf sofit</i>	kh (h)
ל	<i>lamed</i>	L
מ	<i>mem</i>	M
ם	<i>mem sofit</i>	M
נ	<i>nun</i>	N
ן	<i>nun sofit</i>	N
ס	<i>samekh</i>	S
ע	<i>ayin</i>	-
פ	<i>pe</i>	P
פ	<i>phe</i>	F
ף	<i>phe sofit</i>	F

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Cosmic Imagery in Psalm 72 עַד-בְּלִי יָרֵחַ [*ad bli yareaḥ*]¹

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Abstract. Psalm 72, usually identified as a “royal psalm”, vividly portrays the profound connection between God and Creation. The psalm employs carefully crafted language to suggest a multi-faceted portrayal of the universe, encompassing both temporal and physical dimensions. The paper aims to analyse this language, with a peculiar focus on the Hebrew text. When necessary, parallels with translations in English will be employed. Special attention will be given to the semantic range of celestial or natural elements, which are used to evoke a sense of the seemingly endless or boundless extent of time or space. This is especially evident in v. 5 (“as long as the sun and as long as the moon”), v. 7 (“till the moon is no more”), v. 8 (“from the River to the ends of the earth”), and v. 17 (“as long as the sun”) of the psalm.

Keywords: biblical commentary, translation challenges, psalms, Hebrew

Introduction

The history of Hebrew Bible translation represents an extensive topic within the sphere of translation studies and reflects a continuous engagement with theological, cultural, and linguistic dimensions. The first translations of the Masoretic Text, Septuagint (Greek translation; completed around the third and second centuries BCE) and Vulgate (Latin translation; completed by St Jerome around the fourth century CE), already gained a significant reputation as

¹ Throughout this paper, I use a simplified transliteration system for Hebrew, which follows the conventions found in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (second edition), with the following exceptions: I do not mark the distinction in transliteration between ג/ג, ת/ת, ד/ד; I transliterate the labiodental fricative פ with *f*, the sibilants ש with *s*, and צ/צ with *ṣ*; I transliterate all vowels using their Latin counterparts *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* without making any distinction between short or long vowels.

authoritative texts throughout centuries, particularly within the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Moreover, worth mentioning is the German translation of the New Testament rendered by Martin Luther in 1522, which had a great influence on subsequent Bible translations into vernacular languages. In his famous “An Open Letter on Translating”, Luther articulated an important principle in translation, emphasizing the importance of making translations accessible and relatable to common people: “Rather we must ask the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common person in the market about this [how we are to speak German]. We must be guided by their tongue, and the manner of their speech, and do our translating accordingly. Then they will understand it and recognize that we are speaking German to them” (Luther 1909: n. p.; addition mine).

Luther’s translation and his interest in translation techniques are particularly notable, especially because they paved the way for other similar endeavours. For example, William Tyndale, a fervent advocate of Protestant beliefs within the British sphere, being inspired by Luther’s translation, decided to undertake a similar project. Therefore, in 1526, he completed an English translation of the New Testament, being driven by the same core of the Protestant Reform and critically directed towards ecclesiastic authorities who took advantage of the text for their benefit:

But our malicious and wily hypocrites which are so stubborn and hard hearted in their wicked abominations [...] say, some of them that it is impossible to translate the scripture into English, some that it is not lawful for the lay people to have it in their mother tongue, some that it would make them all heretics, as it would no doubt from many things which they of long time have falsely taught, and that it is the whole cause wherefore they forbid it, though they other cloaks pretend. (Bray 2004: 33)

Tyndale will become a reputed figure for Biblical translation studies and will profoundly influence the completion of other English translations, including the well-known King James Version of the Bible (first published in 1611).

However, delving into the history of Bible translation falls outside the scope of the current paper. Thus, I will only briefly acknowledge Robert Alter’s most recent translation in English of the Bible, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (Alter 2018), which was preceded by the publication of the translation of the Book of Psalms. As we read in the introduction, Alter emphasizes the difficulties faced by the translators: “It is a constant challenge to turn ancient Hebrew poetry into English verse that is reasonably faithful to the original and yet readable as poetry. Perhaps the most pervasive problem is the intrinsic structural compactness of Biblical Hebrew, a feature that the poets constantly exploit musically and otherwise” (Alter 2007: xxviii–xxix).

The genesis of the current paper can be attributed to my involvement in a similar endeavour: translating the Book of Psalms from Hebrew into Romanian. The project *Biblia Hebraica: Cartea Psalmilor*, coordinated by Prof. Madeea Axinciuc, brings together a group of professors and scholars from the University of Bucharest, alongside alumni of the Jewish Studies and Religious Studies: Texts and Traditions programme of the University of Bucharest. It aims to offer the first academic, non-confessional translation of the Book of Psalms from the original Hebrew (Masoretic) Text into Romanian.² Although a plethora of authoritative Romanian translations exists, each with its legacy and significance, the project does not aim to reject or overlook the already existing editions but to complement them.

In the light of the above, Psalm 72, an exemplar of themes encompassing justice, righteousness, and divine sovereignty, serves as the focal point of the current paper. Through a systematic analysis, I aim to examine the nuances of the Hebrew text, with a particular emphasis on the language used to denote the ideas of infinity in time and space. The paper is divided into three sections as follows: firstly, I introduce the structure of Psalm 72 within the large corpus of the Book of Psalms. My investigation primarily targets staying close to the Masoretic Text and offering additional insights into the peculiarities of the Hebrew language which cannot be always rendered in translation. Then, I narrow the focal point of my analysis to the exploration of certain verses (vv. 5, 7–8, 17) that employ suggestive language to express celestial or natural elements to convey notions of infinite time and space. Lastly, particular attention will be given to the thought-provoking implications inferred by the translation of the Hebrew phrase part of my title, *ad bli yareaḥ* [*ad bli yareaḥ*] (commonly translated as ‘till the moon is no more’).

1. Central themes and the structure of Psalm 72

Psalm 72 falls within the category known as the royal psalms, being considered a “coronation hymn” (Tanner 2014: 573). The heading of the text לְשִׁלֹמֹה [li-šlomoh] sparks curiosity regarding the author of the psalm, taking into consideration that the Hebrew phrase could mean either ‘of Solomon’ or ‘for/to Solomon’ (Human 2002: 667, Alter 2007: 252–253).

In terms of structure, the psalm comprises twenty verses. The author (whether David or Solomon remains uncertain) prays for God’s gift of justice to descend on the king: “God, grant Your judgments to the king/ and Your righteousness to the king’s son” (v. 1). It is hoped that if the king applies divine justice in his rule, the kingdom will have peace and abundance. However, the key point is that the king has to administer God’s justice and righteousness, not his own. Note the

2 One volume, containing the translation of the first 50 Psalms, has already been published at Polirom Publishing House (Iași) in 2020.

repetition of the two roots ט.פ.ח [š.f.t] and ק.ד.צ [t.d.k] (for their precise meaning, see BDB 8199 and BDB 6664 respectively), especially throughout the first four verses of the psalm: מִשְׁפָּטֶיִךָ [mišpateikha] ‘your judgments’, וְצִדְקָתְךָ [ve-ṭidekha] ‘your righteousness’, צִדְקָה [ve-ṭedek] ‘righteously’, וּמִשְׁפָּט [ve-mišpat] ‘in justice’, בִּצְדָקָה [bi-ṭdaka] ‘righteousness’, יַשְׁפֹּט [yišpot] (‘may he bring justice’). Concerning this matter, Robert Murray observes that “[t]his psalm reflects the ideal world-order of the cosmic covenant. Hebrew lacked one regular word for cosmic order [...]; but this order is included in the semantic range of the words *mišpat* and *sedeq/šēdaqah* which dominate the psalm” (Murray 2007: 42).

As the psalm goes on, it transitions into the king’s rule, with particular emphasis on the poor and the ones oppressed within society: “May he judge Your people righteously/ and Your lowly ones in justice” (v. 2), “May he bring justice to the lowly of the people,/ may he rescue the sons of the needy/ and crush the oppressor” (v. 4), “For he saves the needy man pleading,/ and the lowly who has none to help him./ He pities the poor and the needy,/ and the lives of the needy he rescues” (vv. 12–13). Furthermore, the psalm beautifully describes the entire creation rejoicing in the rule of the king; observe, especially in vv. 3, 5–6, 8, and 16, the presence of natural elements depicting the mountains, the hills, the grass, the earth (terrestrial), the sea and the river (aquatic), the Sun and the Moon (celestial). Moreover, words part of the lexical field of “abundance” can be noticed in v. 6 (“May he come down like rain on new-mown grass,/ like showers that moisten the earth”) and in v. 7 (“May the just man *flourish* in his days –/ and *abundant* peace till the moon is no more”) (emphasis mine). The Hebrew noun גֶּזֶל [gez], translated here as ‘new-mown grass’, speaks of “shearing, mowing” and is usually used in the Hebrew Bible in reference to fleece or wool; this marks the only instance where the word is employed in reference to “land to be mown”. The Hebrew term for “showers” from v. 6, רִבִּיבִם [revivim], is highly suggestive and conveys the idea of “copious showers causing fertility”. Towards the end of the psalm, the same image is reiterated, cyclical, in v. 16: “May there be abundance of grain in the land,/ on the mountaintops./ May his fruit rustle like Lebanon,/ and may they sprout from the town like grass of the land.”

The depiction of flourishing and abundance is completed, on the terrestrial level, by the victory against the enemies granted to the king and by the favourable political relations regarding the other nations, as we read in vv. 9–11:

Before him may the desert-folk kneel,
and his enemies lick the dust.
May kings of Tarshish and the islands
bring tribute,
may kings of Sheba and Siba
offer vassal-gifts.

And may all kings bow to him,
all nations serve him.

In v. 11, note the presence of the verbal form וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ [ve-yiṣṭahavū] ‘and [they] will bow down’, which comes from an uncertain Hebrew root – either ש.ח.ו [š.h.h] or ח.ו.ח [h.v.h] –, employed predominantly in the Hebrew Bible with the meaning of ‘to bow down, to prostrate oneself’ (see also Bujor 2020: 77–79).

The psalm ends in a traditional liturgical manner, praising the name of the king throughout eternity.³ This idea is expressed by the use of phrases such as לְעוֹלָם [le-olām] ‘forever’ (in vv. 17 and 19) and לִפְנֵי־שֶׁמֶשׁ [lifnei šemeš] ‘in front of the sun’ (in v. 17), as we have already observed from the subtle use of adverbs skilfully integrated throughout the text: דּוֹר דּוֹרִים [dor dorim] (v. 5), עַד־בְּלִי יָרֵם [ad bli yareah] (v. 7), תָּמִיד [tamid], and כָּל־הַיּוֹם [kol ha-yom] (v. 15).

2. Navigating time and space in Hebrew

Within this section of the paper, I narrow the focus of the discussion to vv. 5, 7–8, and 17 of Psalm 72, as they contain some Hebrew phrases that pose a translation challenge, expressing ideas of “forever” in time and “infinity” in space. Beforehand, I will provide some preliminary explanations regarding the structural aspects of this section. First, I cite the Hebrew verse as it appears in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (which offers the standard scholarly edition of the Masoretic Text), parallel to its transliteration in Latin script. Then, I supply one English translation (Alter 2007). In addition, some clarifications regarding the use of capitalization are required before proceeding. Note that in Hebrew there is no distinction between uppercase and lowercase letters. Therefore, the pronoun “he” (and its derivative grammatical forms) can refer either to the (mundane) king or to God, which can influence the reading and might add a layer of depth to the interpretation: “The *he* in the preserved words of the poem is no doubt the king, but now the *he* is anyone who chooses to live as part of God’s kingdom” (Tanner 2014: 574).⁴

In the light of the above, in v. 5 of Psalm 72, we read:

May they fear you as long as the sun	יִירָאוּךָ עַם־שֶׁמֶשׁ וְלִפְנֵי יְרֵם דּוֹרִים:
and as long as the moon, generations	yiraukha im šameš
untold.	velifnei yareah dor dorim

The Hebrew phrases that are of interest for the current discussion are עַם־שֶׁמֶשׁ [im šameš] and וְלִפְנֵי יָרֵם [ve-lifnei yareah]. The first one combines the preposition

3 Tanner considers the later stanza of the Psalm (vv. 18–20) to be a later editorial addition (Tanner 2014: 574).

4 Note that Robert Alter rejects the messianic reading of the Psalm (Alter 2007: 252).

עִם [im] ‘(together) with’ and the noun שֶׁמֶשׁ [šemeš; here, in pausal form] ‘sun’; the second one results from pairing the coordinating conjunction וְ [ve] ‘and’, the preposition לְפָנַי [lifnei] ‘in front of’, and the noun יָרֵחַ [yareah] ‘moon’. Therefore, a technical translation of the verse would be ‘they will fear you/ may they fear you (together) with the Sun and in front of the Moon, generation after generation(s)’. As charming as the image rendered in the Hebrew text may be, it is equally difficult to translate it into modern languages. The general idea suggested by the psalmist is that the (foreign) nations should fear the king forever and ever. As seen from the translation above, the translator has resorted to rephrasing or compensation to convey the intended meaning more effectively.⁵ Both of these phrases are very lyrical in Hebrew, employing two timekeeping devices – the Sun and the Moon – to suggest the idea of eternity.

Given the presence of a similar expression in v. 17, I will address it here:

May his name be forever. As long	יְהִי שְׁמוֹ לְעוֹלָם לְפָנֵי-שֶׁמֶשׁ יִנִּיז שְׁמוֹ וַיְתַבָּרְכוּ בּוֹ
as the sun may his name bear seed.	כָּל-גּוֹיִם יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ:
And may all nations be blessed	<i>yehi šemo le-olam lifnei šemeš yinin</i>
through him, call him happy.	<i>šemo ve-yitbarekhu vo kol goim</i>
	<i>yeašeruhu</i>

We find in this verse the phrase לְפָנֵי-שֶׁמֶשׁ [lifnei šemeš], comprised of the words we have already seen in v. 5, לְפָנַי [lifnei] ‘in front of’ and שֶׁמֶשׁ [šemeš; here having its usual vocalization] ‘sun’. In a parallel manner, this metaphorical language, translated literally as ‘in front of the Sun’, conveys the same idea of eternity mentioned earlier in v. 5 (‘in front of the Moon’); at the same time, it echoes the idea expressed by the phrase לְעוֹלָם [le-olam] ‘for eternity, forever’ within v. 17. The verse appears to be both a blessing and an invocation of the name of the king, which should endure throughout eternity and be praised through future generations, this idea being put forward by the continuous cycle of life and growth symbolized by the Sun.⁶

Probably one of the most intriguing phrases that expresses the idea of eternity can be found in v. 7, where the fate of the king’s dominion is described:

- 5 Other English translations render: “They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations” (King James Version); “In the sight of the sun and the moon he will endure, age after age” (New Jerusalem Bible); “People will fear you as long as the sun and moon remain in the sky, for generation after generation” (New English Translation).
- 6 The Hebrew text allows the reading with uppercase letters. In this case, the name of the King could refer directly to God. Compare the meaning in other English translations of this verse: “His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed” (King James Version); “May his name be blessed for ever, and endure in the sight of the sun. In him shall be blessed every race in the world, and all nations call him blessed” (New Jerusalem Bible); “May his fame endure! May his dynasty last as long as the sun remains in the sky! May they use his name when they formulate their blessings! May all nations consider him to be favored by God!” (New English Translation).

May the just man flourish in his days
and abundant peace till the moon is
no more.

יִפְרַח-בְּיָמָיו צַדִּיק וְרַב שָׁלוֹם עַד-בְּלִי יָרֵחַ:
yifrah be-yamav ṭadik
ve-rov šalom ad bli yareah

The psalmist foresees the rise of the just man and predicts abundant peace that will last, as the Hebrew puts it, “until without the Moon”. Literally, the phrase combines the preposition *עַד* [ad] ‘until’, the particle of negation *בְּלִי* [bli] ‘without, lack of, wearing out’, together with the noun *יָרֵחַ* [yareah] ‘moon’.⁷ Noteworthy is that, generally, in Hebrew, we find an abundance of adverbs denoting the eternal duration of time, which are frequently employed in the psalms. I briefly mention here only a few examples: *לְעוֹלָם* [le-olam], *לְעוֹלָם וָעַד* [le-olam va-ed], *לְנֶצַח* [la-neṭaḥ], *לְדוֹר וָדוֹר* [le-dor va-dor], *תָּמִיד* [tamid]. This precise language used in v. 7 to convey ‘forever’ diverges from the conventional Hebrew. More than this interesting choice of words is the fact that this specific phrase, in identical form, cannot be found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

However, these two particles, *עַד-בְּלִי* [ad bli] ‘until not, until without’, are joined together to express the idea of “until [there is] no [more of]” in other two instances. In the book of Job, we find the following verse: “but a man lies down and will not arise, *till the sky is no more* he will not awake and will not rouse from his sleep” (Job 14:12; emphasis mine). The Hebrew text renders *עַד-בְּלִי שָׁמַיִם* [ad bilti šamayim] for ‘till the sky is no more’. The word *בְּלִי* [bilti] is an adverb of negation, comparable in usage and meaning to *בְּלִי* [bli], and it encompasses the idea of “not, except, without”. Both of these words are used chiefly poetic for the common ways of expressing negation in Hebrew: *לֹא* [lo] ‘no’ and *אֵין* [ein] ‘there is not’. Moreover, in the book of Malachi, the prophet says, “I will surely open for you the casements of the heavens and shower upon you blessings *without end*” (Malachi 3:10; emphasis mine). The last part of this verse is of interest for the current paper since it uses the following language: *עַד-בְּלִי דַי* [ad bli dai], where the word *דַּי* [dai] is a noun meaning ‘sufficiency, enough’. Hence, the Hebrew phrase conveys the idea that abundance will continue until there is no more of it left (until there is not sufficiency/ until there is not enough/ until my abundance will be exhausted).⁸

Even though it does not explicitly convey the notion of eternity, I include v. 8 of Psalm 72 in my analysis because it poetically expresses the concept of infinity in space through a suggestive parallelism.

7 Please compare: “In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth” (King James Version); “In his days uprightness shall flourish, and peace in plenty till the moon is no more” (New Jerusalem Bible); “During his days the godly will flourish; peace will prevail as long as the moon remains in the sky” (New English Translation).

8 Although not used to express the idea of “forever” or “eternity”, a more common expression (that employs a similar word-structure) in the Hebrew Bible is the following: *עַד-בְּלִי הַשְׂעִיר-לֹא שָׂרִיד* [ad bilti ha-šeir-lo sarid] ‘until there is no one/no remnant left’. See Numbers 21:35, Deuteronomy 3:3, Joshua 8:22, Joshua 10:33, Joshua 11:8, 2 Kings 10:11.

And may he hold sway from sea to
sea, from the River to the ends of the
earth.

וַיִּרְדּוּ מִיָּם עַד-יָם וּמִנְהַר עַד-אַפְסֵי-אֲרָץ:
ve-iered mi-yam ad yam
u-minahar ad afsei areṭ

The phrase “to the ends of the earth” is depicted in Hebrew as follows: the preposition *עַד* [*ad*] ‘until’, the nouns *אֲפֵס* [*efes*; here, in plural construct form] ‘end, extremity, non-existence, cessation’, and *אֲרָץ* [*ereṭ*; here, in pausal form] ‘earth, land’. In an attempt to clarify this expression, Abraham Ibn Ezra, in his commentary on the Book of Psalms, states:

If the psalm speaks of Solomon then the meaning of *from sea to sea* is, from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of the Philistines. *The river* refers to the Euphrates and *the ends of the earth* to the wilderness. Scripture mentions the width and breadth of the Land of Israel. If the psalm speaks of the Messiah then the “sea” refers to the Southern Sea that is known as the Red Sea. [*From sea to sea* means from the Red Sea] to the North Sea, that is, the ocean. *And from the river* refers to the river that comes out of Eden. This river is located where east begins. *The ends of the world* are located at the end of the west. (Ibn Ezra 2009: 192)

Note that Ibn Ezra highlights the double reading of the psalm: one reading that refers to a mundane king and kingdom (of Solomon) and another one that might refer to a divine king (here, Messiah). Both readings are allowed by the Hebrew text, and they convey a complex layer of interpretation.

3. Final remarks and further research

As illustrated in this paper, a closer analysis of the peculiar choice of words in Hebrew and the difficulty of rendering it in translation opens the door to several paths for future exploration. From here, I believe some research questions can be formulated such as: can these particular phrases (which express the idea of everlastingness) offer insights into the psalm’s authorship or the historical context in which the psalm was written? Can similar expressions be found in later developments of the Hebrew languages (such as Mishnaic Hebrew or other sources in poetry)? Do other Semitic languages (Aramaic, Ugaritic, Akkadian) have similar ways to express the idea of eternity? By extending the scope of this investigation in future research, I aim to contribute additional insights to the scholarly discourse surrounding this topic.

In the interim, as regards the poetic Hebrew phrases that are challenging to render in other languages, in the absence of finding a perfect equivalent, one

should accept the loss when trying to translate the *untranslatable*, as Ricoeur puts it, “[i]n translation too, work is advanced with some salvaging and some acceptance of loss” (Ricoeur 2006: 3). I believe the same attitude applies when translating the psalms: the translator is compelled, eventually, to experience *mourning* (Ricoeur 2006) and to give up to the ideal of the perfect translation, which might be, actually, the source of happiness in the process of translation.

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The Psalmist and His Adversaries: An Overview of Body-Related Metaphor in Psalm 73

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If metaphor is a lens through which we see truth or reality, we must credit the poet with having made the lens, realizing at the same time that he made it out of existing materials. (Ryken 1982: 25)

Abstract. Metaphorical language is one of the central features of the Book of Psalms, providing a wide range of imagery and symbolism. The body and its various internal and external parts represent elements employed by metaphorical language in order to underline experiences, emotions, moral traits, and closeness to God. The purpose of this article is to examine the narrative of Psalm 73, in which the narrator employs a rich tapestry of bodily imagery to describe himself and his adversaries. The psalmist constructs a dichotomy of “righteous” versus “wicked”, spotlighting specific body parts that epitomize the distinct moral traits defining each group. The “wicked” are depicted as indulging in gluttony and speaking oppressively, their faces serving as the focal point of their characterization. On the other hand, the “righteous”, represented by the psalmist himself, strives to maintain the purity of his entire body. This vivid portrayal underscores the stark contrast between the two groups, offering a compelling exploration of morality and identity.

Keywords: Psalm 73, body, Biblical Hebrew, morality, metaphor

Metaphorical language in the Book of Psalms has received substantial investigation in the recent years (Creach 1996, Brown 2002, Gillmayr-Bucher 2004, Grohmann 2019, van Wolde 2020 i.a.),¹ especially because of its widespread popularity and abundancy in figurative language. Various metaphor theories have been applied, but two authors are significant for this article, as a result of their approach and topic: van Wolde (2020) for applying an early version of Deliberate Metaphor

1 For a more detailed survey, see Lancaster (2021).

Theory (DMT) and Gillmayr-Bucher (2004) for approaching body-related metaphors in the Book of Psalms in general.

In analysing the narrative of Psalm 73, in which the narrator employs a rich tapestry of bodily imagery to describe himself and his adversaries, the present article will adopt the updated Deliberate Metaphor Theory (DMT), as presented by Steen (2023), and will follow the “obligations” that metaphors impose on the reader of the Psalms, as formulated by Ryken (1982). The paper will be concerned only with *deliberate metaphors*, which will be comprehensively delineated in the subsequent chapter, setting the groundwork for the detailed analysis that follows.

1. Novel vs conventional metaphors: Deliberate Metaphor Theory (DMT)

At the heart of the Deliberate Metaphor Theory (DMT) lies the distinction between *deliberate* and *non-deliberate* metaphors: “DMT claims that language users somehow decide whether a metaphor is intended as a metaphor in communication, that is, counting as a genuine metaphor between language users, or not” (Steen 2023: 07). Moreover, “DMT claims that deliberate metaphor use always requires processing by analogy (or its more extended manifestation of cross-domain mapping) and therefore also involves comparison. This is live understanding of one thing in terms of something else” (Steen 2023: 07).

Earlier versions of DMT had been formulated by Steen (2008, 2017) before he reached its finest form, crystallized in 2023. The main question Steen asks is “How do we know whether an utterance is meant to be deliberately metaphorical?” The answer lies in the structure of the metaphor: “signalled metaphors, novel metaphors and direct metaphors are all metaphor structures that promote deliberate metaphor use” (2023: 08). Signalled metaphors are metaphors constructed using the preposition *like* (simile); novel metaphors lack a conventionalized target domain, therefore the analogy has to have a novel target domain; direct metaphors “present a direct expression of one or more elements of some source domain, and these need to be integrated within the surrounding target domain by means of analogy, too” (2023: 08). On the other hand, “non-signalled, conventional, and indirect metaphors do not promote deliberate metaphor use. They are more associated with non-deliberate metaphor use” (2023: 08).

When it comes to the difference between conventional and novel metaphors, Philip (2016) defines a conventional metaphor as frequent and familiar. It also has “predictable contextual and phraseological constraints which signal not only semantic meaning, but pragmatic intentions too” (Philip 2016: 224). A novel metaphor occurs when words are used metaphorically in ways they have not been used before. Although novel metaphors are unfamiliar, they have “to be

close enough to existing ways of speaking or thinking about a topic in order to achieve successful communication” but also “different enough for the speaker to have to put some cognitive effort to fully comprehend it” (Philip 2016: 224–225).

DMT posits that non-deliberate metaphors do not have discursive purposes because they do not count as metaphors in the communicative dimension of language use, and therefore not in the discourse. They essentially disappear from the mental representations of situation model and context model during the integration stage of comprehension. Deliberate metaphors, by contrast, can also have discourse purposes: their construction of an intended local or more extended comparison is often clearly done for a purpose, which can be related to several aspects of a discourse event (Steen 2023: 10).

2. Metaphor in the Book of Psalms

An earlier version of DMT was utilized by Van Wolde (2020) in her paper about Psalm 22. Nevertheless, her applying the theory was an inspiration for this study, even if the author discusses both conventional and novel (deliberate) metaphors. Talking about DMT in the context of the Book of Psalms, van Wolde states that deliberate metaphors could be signalled by a simile (constructed with the preposition כִּי) or “by a combination of linguistic signalling and a new conceptual content, or by a peculiar (peculiar in the sense of attention seeking) usage of a conventional metaphor that in combination with other textual units develops a new meaning dimension” (van Wolde 2020: 645–646).

When we consider metaphors in the Book of Psalms, all metaphors might seem as conventional and the readers might overlook the novelty of some metaphors, “partly because of our familiarity with the Psalms conceals from our consciousness that we are reading a metaphorical statement” (Ryken 1982: 9).

Ryken states that the metaphor imposes some obligations to the reader of the Psalms. Firstly, the reader has the responsibility of *identifying* “the literal reference, or the vehicle of the metaphor [...]. The necessity of correctly identifying the literal meaning of the metaphor becomes apparent if we look, not at the metaphors that are familiar to us, but the ones outside our own experience” (1982: 14). In other words, Ryken suggest that if we want to understand a novel metaphor, we have to firstly understand the literal meaning of the words constituting the metaphor, both alone and together.

The second obligation of the reader is “to *interpret* the metaphor”. And, in this respect, “to undertake such an interpretation is to accept the poet’s implied invitation to discovery” (1982: 18). When it comes to the meaning of metaphors, Ryken points out that “we should be aware that the meanings transferred from

vehicle to referent are only partially intellectual or ideational. Some of the meanings are affective or intuitive, and some are extra verbal” (1982: 19).

Metaphor, states Ryken, creates a vivid and concrete image that resonates with the readers’ experiences and emotions. It also enhances the ordinary language, and it captures the audience’s attention, rendering specific verses unforgettable and prompting deep reflection and analysis. “Poets also use metaphors for the sake of precision. The common assumption that scientific or expository discourse is precise while metaphor is vague is most inaccurate. Metaphor is a precise mathematical equation. It uses one area of human experience to shed light on another area. The Psalmists hate the approximate” (1982: 21).

3. Body-related metaphors in the Book of Psalms

Gillmayr-Bucher investigated body images in the Book of Psalms and concludes, “With more than a thousand explicit references to the body and its parts and a distribution that shows occurrences within 143 psalms, the semantic domain of the body is one of the most widespread and frequently used semantic domains of the Psalter” (2004: 301–302). The author is the first one to notice that in Psalm 73 the dichotomy “righteous” and “wicked” is created by using body images: “While the image of the evil doers (vv. 4–9) centres on their face (eyes, mouth, tongue) and heart, the outline of the lyrical speaker includes parts from all over the body” (Gillmayr-Bucher 2004: 314). She further concludes that the body becomes a vessel for the physical perception of the situation of the wicked: they prosper while the psalmist is miserable and makes an effort to remain pure. However, Gillmayr-Bucher does not investigate the metaphors associated with the two groups: the righteous (represented by the psalmist) and the wicked (the psalmist’s adversaries), which is the main focus of the current paper.

4. An overview of Psalm 73

Psalm 73 opens the Third Book of Psalms on a sombre note, as the Psalmist tries to reconcile the prosperity of his adversaries with his own suffering. In this respect, the Psalm could be compared with the Book of Job (Weiser 1962: 507) yet keeping the balance between the tribulations of the two: “In the psalm this battle does not indeed attain the gigantic proportions and wide range of background, the artistic greatness and dramatic force of the poem of Job; the structure of the psalm is simpler than that of the Book of Job, but its thoughts are for this reason no less penetrating and profound” (Weiser 1962: 507).

The reflective form of Psalm 73 posed a challenge for researchers in terms of determining its genre. Westermann argues that the Psalms cannot be exactly delimited: “Transition is the real theme of the Psalms discussed here. *They are no longer mere petitions, but petition that has been heard. They are no longer mere lament, but lament that has been heard*” (1981: 80). Tate also poignantly notices the difficulty of fitting Psalm 73 into a fixed framework and categorizes the Psalm as “reflective testimony”, which is “not directly instructional but certainly intended to function in that mode” (1991: 232). Boadt considers the Psalm didactic in nature, teaching the reader a moral lesson (2004: 538).

As for the structure of the Psalms, DeClaisse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner notice that Psalm 73 is “unusually symmetrical”, as the word $\gamma\alpha$ marks three major divisions of the Psalm at vv. 1, 13, and 18: “The psalm might speak of confusion and doubt, but it does so in a very orderly way” (2014: 584), summarizing the outline of the Psalm as it follows (2014: 585):

Surely God is good! (v. 1)
 My problem (vv. 2–3)
 The wicked are well off (vv. 4–12)
 Surely I have been good for nothing (vv. 13–16)
 Until I came into God’s presence (v. 17)
 Surely I see the fate of the wicked (vv. 18–20)
 My problem resolved (vv. 21–27)
 God is good (v. 28)

Body-related metaphors in Psalm 73

In analysing body-related metaphors in Psalm 73, we will look at *deliberate metaphors*, meaning signalled metaphors, novel metaphors, and direct metaphors. After identifying them, I will apply the two “obligations” stated by Ryken (1982): I will look first at the literal meaning of the words of the metaphor and afterwards offer an interpretation of their meaning.

As stated above, when it comes to the wicked, their body-related metaphors concentrate on the face area (eyes, mouth, tongue). They also have a visibly fat body, probably as a result of gluttony (so, it could also be face-related). Moreover, their description also concentrates in a cluster of verses (vv. 4–9). In contrast, when it comes to the psalmist, parts from all over the body (inside and outside) are mentioned and “scattered” all over the Psalm (vv. 2, 13, 16, 21, 23, 26), stating his suffering over and over again. Hence, we will talk about metaphors in a number of the verses mentioned above, more precisely the ones that contain *deliberate* metaphors and not conventional ones: 2, 6, 7, 9, 21.

In verse 2,² the psalmist's doubt and *almost* loss of faith are pictured by the use of two deliberate metaphors:

But for me, my feet have almost stumbled
My steps nearly slipped

וְאֲנִי בְמַעַט נִטְיִי רַגְלִי
לֵאמֹן שִׁפְכוּ אֲשָׁרִי

The two metaphors are parallel both semantically and syntactically: רַגְלִי 'my feet' and אֲשָׁרִי 'my steps' align in form and meaning – plural nouns with pronominal suffix, the same as the verbs which are both in the *qal* paradigm and have similar meaning.

The root נטה means 'to stretch out', 'to spread out', 'to extend', 'to incline', 'to bend', and only in Psalm 73:2 is used in connection with the foot (feet). There are two more similar occurrences, when the verb is used in connection to step (steps): Job 31:7 and Psalm 44:19.

The metaphor is understood also by contrast with the metaphors found in other Psalms: 17:5, 37:31, 40:3, and 44:19, where the psalmist boasts about having his steps firm on God's path.

The root שפך means 'to pour', 'to pour out', and this is the only occurrence where the verb is used together with "steps". DeClaisse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner note that אשר appears 8 times in the Hebrew Bible and only in poetic texts, "and the meaning seems as much metaphorical as literal" (2014: 589, footnote 33).

Focusing on the adversaries, verse 6 describes metaphorically the way they are dressed:

Therefore their necklace is pride
Violence covers them as a garment

לָבוֹן עֲנָקְתָמוּ גָאוֹן
וְעֶטְף־שִׁית הָמָס לָמוֹ

We can see that the metaphors are deliberate and novel, as they only appear here. The root ענק appears twice as a verb in the Hebrew Bible and only here in the *qal* paradigm and has the meaning 'to put/serve as a necklace'. It is constructed with a 3rd-person plural pronominal suffix, doubled in the second part of the verse by the preposition למו. Therefore, they set as a "necklace their pride", meaning probably that they walk everywhere with a straight, proud neck. Pride and violence – גָאוֹן and הָמָס – are parallel here, as two negative qualities that follow the adversaries everywhere. The comparison between violence and garment – הָמָס and שִׁית – is unique in the Psalms, and the root עטף 'to envelop/cover oneself' also appears predominantly. The adversaries are not only proud but also violent, as violence accompanies them everywhere they go, as a garment they wear.

Verse 7 depicts the adversaries' wealth, which is visible also physically, on their body:

2 The English translation of the Hebrew verses belongs to DeClaisse-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner (2014).

Their eyes bulge out with fatness
 Their hearts overflow with delusions

יֵצֵא מִחֶלֶב עֵינֵיהֶם
 יִצְבְּרוּ מִשְׁכָּזוֹת לִבָּב

The first metaphor poses trouble to researchers, as Tate notices and points out that “we are dealing with an ancient metaphor here, and fair equivalence is all that is necessary” (1991: 228, footnote 7a). The verb יֵצֵא has the meaning ‘to go out’, ‘to come out’, ‘to come forth’ and is in *qal* perfect, masculine, singular. Interestingly, עֵין ‘eye’ here agrees with the verb in the masculine, which is very seldom the case,³ as the noun is usually feminine – maybe that is why LXX and Syriac amend the text to be read עֵינֵיהֶם ‘their inequity’. Maybe the metaphor is better understood when read together with verse 4, as the Psalmist states that ‘their body is fat’.

The second metaphor is intriguing, as מִשְׁכִּית is, which means ‘carved figure’, is only here associated with the heart, לִבָּב. The root עָבַר has the meaning ‘to pass by/over’, ‘to pass on’, ‘to go/pass through’, ‘to cross’, ‘to go beyond’. Probably the metaphor implies that the wealthy things go beyond the imaginations of the heart, meaning that they have more than the heart wishes for. DeClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner mention that the two metaphors are difficult to understand (2014: 589), maybe because they are archaic (or novel).

Verse 9, the last one referring to the adversaries, depicts further their negative moral qualities:

They set their mouths in the heavens
 As their tongues walk in the earth

שִׁתּוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם פִּיהֶם
 וְלִשְׁוֹנָם תְּהַלֵּךְ בָּאָרֶץ

The two metaphors show parallelism by employing synonymous and complementary concepts: פִּיהֶם ‘their mouth’ and לִשְׁוֹנָם ‘their tongue’ are clearly synonymous and both nouns have 3rd person, masculine, plural pronominal suffix. בַּשָּׁמַיִם and בָּאָרֶץ are complementary concepts, as heavens and earth are, depicting a complete picture/world. Both nouns are used with the preposition בְּ ‘in’. The root שָׁתַּת means ‘to set’, ‘to appoint’, and it is parallel with the root שִׁיַּת, which has a similar meaning, ‘to put’, ‘to set’, ‘to appoint’, ‘send for’. The form תְּהַלֵּךְ is very interesting, as it seems to be a late *qal* verbal form, from the root הָלַךְ ‘to walk’, ‘to go’, ‘to come’, ‘to follow’. Common translations of the first metaphor “they have set their mouths against the heavens” imply that the adversaries speak evil of God, but, as de Boer suggests, this interpretation is excessive, the verse does not speak “of blasphemy but of mighty words whose speakers know how to enforce obedience far and wide” (1968: 263–264). This explanation is supported by the second metaphor, which tells us that their tongue (words, utterances) reaches everywhere. Therefore, read together with verse 6, we can conclude that

3 See, for example, Song 4:9b, 6:5; Job 21:20; Zech 4:10.

the adversaries are proud and exercise their influence both in heaven and on earth by means of violence and intimidation.

Considering all the aforementioned details, and the fact that the adversaries are not punished by God, verse 21 contains maybe the two most beautiful metaphors of the Psalm, as the psalmist describes the lowest point he reached in his relationship with God:

For my heart was embittered

רִי יִתְחַמֵּץ לִדְבִי

And in my inward parts I was pierced

וְכִלְיוֹתַי אֶשְׁתַּוְּנוּ

The beauty of the metaphors lies in the parallelism between the two important organs representing the immaterial side of man: לבב and כליית ‘heart’ and ‘kidneys’ (i.e. inward parts in the translation), both particularized by the 1st person pronominal suffix. The heart is usually a symbol for the inner man (Jo 2:3, La 3:21, 1Sa 16:7 i.a.), the mind (Dt 8:2, 1Sa 9:19, 2K 10:30, Jb 34:10 i.a.), the will (2Ch 20:33, Ezr 7:10, 1Sa 7:10, i.a.), while the kidneys are thought to be the most sensitive and vital part of a person, and in that respect they are generally used in parallel with the heart (Jr 12:2, Ps 139:13, Jb 16:13, Jb 19:27, Pr 23:16, Lam 3:13).

Not only are the nouns parallel but also the verbs יתחמץ and אשתונן, as they appear only here and are conjugated in similar paradigms – *hitpael* and *hitpolel*. The root חמצ, which has the meaning ‘to be sour’, ‘to be leavened’, is usually associated with dough and bread. Here the heart “became sour” by itself (i.e. ‘embittered’ in the translation). The root שנה, which has the meaning ‘to whet’, ‘to sharpen’, in *hitpael* has the meaning of ‘feeling stabbed’, ‘being pierced’, as it seems, in the kidneys. By using these metaphors and associations, the Psalmist tells the reader that the pain and “deep, internal anguish” (Tate 1991: 230, footnote 21a) can be experienced as physical symptoms.

Conclusions

Throughout the paper, we examined a number of five verses belonging to Psalm 73. The verses were selected according to two criteria: firstly, the verses containing body-related metaphors were taken into account. Secondly, we considered the criteria of *deliberate metaphor* usage, as defined by Steen (2023), meaning that the metaphors were novel and not used anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, a number of verses were excluded if they contained conventional, well-known, and commonly used metaphors (e.g. vv. 23, 26). The verses were examined according to the two principles stated by Ryken (1982); hence, the literal meaning of the words was examined when interpreting the metaphors.

This analysis showed the reader the dichotomy between the Psalmist and his adversaries: while the adversaries are wealthy, gluttonous, and influential (vv. 6,

7, 9), the Psalmist cannot comprehend their wellbeing, and almost loses his faith (v. 2); he is also jealous, all these negative emotions manifesting as a physical pain (v. 21). The end of the Psalm concludes that this dichotomy is apparent, as the Psalmist realizes that God was always present, holding his hand and being his rock (vv. 23, 26).

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The Chariot and the Horses: Reappraising Psalm 20:8 Glimpses into the Hebrew Text

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Abstract. The study will focus on the different modes of translating and interpreting the Hebrew verse 20:8 from *The Book of Psalms*, highlighting the richness of textual and contextual significances, in order to convey its appropriate, attentively delineated content in Biblical Hebrew while preserving (and defending in translation) its quality of hiding and deploying countless layers of interpretation.

How then could its translation be at the same time precise and capable of recalling a similar horizon, meant to actuate and evoke unlimited significances? The translation needs to be technical and accurate on the one hand and suggestive, without allowing the emergence of a different inner landscape within the translated text on the other hand. The new linguistic garments should be able to adapt in order to convey, as much as possible, the same message in distinct situations.

Correspondences will be traced between Psalm 20:8 and 2 Kings 2 (Elijah's Ascension to Heaven). For hermeneutical purposes, Moses Maimonides's approach, in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, regarding the Account of the Divine Chariot (*Merkavah*) will be brought into discussion.

Keywords: Psalms, Hebrew, translation, Divine Chariot, horses

The study intends to present the unvoiced, non-explicit layers supposed by the act of translating from Biblical Hebrew.¹ The complex balancing process between the accurate translation and the manifold interpretation of the Hebrew

¹ The paper is meant to introduce to scholars and researchers in the fields of translation studies, literary studies, Semitic philology, or biblical studies the encounter with the Hebrew text of the Psalms, as part of a broader Bible translation project carried out at the University of Bucharest, the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, under my coordination. A first volume comprising the first 50 Psalms, translated from Hebrew into Romanian, was published by Polirom Press in 2020. A second volume will be finalized by spring 2025.

words, phrases, and sentences will be illustrated by analysing and interpreting verse 20:8 from *The Book of Psalms*.

The translation from Biblical Hebrew into an Indo-European language should be able to transfer, together with the form and the explicit content of a verse, the possibility to uncover through interpretation the hidden layers supposed by the same verse. The endeavour is difficult, and it requires linguistic, literary, and hermeneutical abilities.

The study will concentrate on indicating the plain meaning and the deeper significances embedded in the Hebrew verse. At the same time, intratextual and intertextual connections or correspondences will be traced in order to delineate, whenever necessary, the precise content, horizon, and boundaries of Psalm 20:8.

1. Plain meaning and deeper significances: Translation challenges

The first part of our study lays emphasis upon the translation difficulties and risks while translating verse 20:8, given, on the one hand, the peculiarities of Hebrew language as a Semitic language and its poetic expression in *The Book of Psalms*, and, on the other hand, the narrow possibilities of an Indo-European language to accommodate the many different significances and dimensions developed by the Hebrew text in a suggestive literary garment.

In fact, it is both difficult to express the plain meaning and to evoke the deeper significances.

Here is Psalm 20:8 as made available in the BHS edition:

אֱלֹהֵי בָרֶכֶב וְאֱלֹהֵי בַסּוּסִים וְאֶנְחֵנוּ בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ נִזְכִּיר:

And here are a few translations into English of the same verse:

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will make mention of the name of the Lord our God.” (Ps. 20:7 JPS, 1917)

“Some call on chariots, some on horses, but we on the name of Yahweh our God.” (Ps. 20:7 NJB, 1985)

“Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” (Ps. 20:7 KJV, 1769)

“Some through chariots, and some through horses, But we – in the Name of HASHEM, our God, call out.” (Ps. XX:8 *Tehillim*, 1995)

“They – the chariots, and they – the horses, but we – the name of the Lord our God invoke.” (Ps. 20:8 Alter 2007)

Biblical Hebrew is highly eloquent through its simplicity. Words may be interconnected in various ways, and there are only a few connectors, each one performing several functions.

This is why rendering the plain meaning of a poetic verse might be quite difficult, as the poetic terminology and syntax are even simpler than the prosaic ones.

I will offer in the following two detailed translation versions for rendering as accurate as possible the Hebrew plain meaning of Psalm 20:8:

“Some of the chariot, and some of the horses, but we of the name of YHWH our God (will) remember.”

“Some in/through/by means of the chariot, and some in/through/by means of the horses, but we in/through/by means of the name of YHWH our God will [make (us)] remember.”

I would draw attention to at least three problematic issues:

A first problem is raised by the use of the preposition *beth*, which can be translated either as ‘of’, introducing the indirect object of the verb, or instrumentally as ‘in/through/by means’, indicating how the action of the verb is fulfilled.

The second problem derives from the impossibility of rendering adequately into an Indo-European language the Tetragrammaton, i.e. the ineffable, unutterable Name composed of four letters, the only proper Name when referring to the divine (essence).

The four letters, usually transliterated by *Y, H, W, H*, are consonants in Hebrew, and they are not marked with vowel signs. The vowels are not letters in Hebrew. Most of the translations into Indo-European languages prefer the term “Lord” for the Tetragrammaton (YHWH)² and “God” for the Hebrew *Elohim*. The option is confusing for the reader who would equate the terms as being both divine names endowed with the same status and having the same rank, which is inappropriate. Even if the name “Lord” is understood as a higher divine name, it still remains as a speakable word reflecting the attributes of the mundane common names. In the Hebrew text, the presence of the Tetragrammaton is extremely important and implies a certain rigour in approaching and understanding the divine.

In the Romanian translation of the Hebrew *Book of Psalms*, we introduced the Tetragrammaton in a different manner in order to clearly signal the presence of the Tetragrammaton. E.g. this is verse 20:8 in the Romanian edition (Axinciuc 2020: 49):

2 In this way, the translators resort to the Hebrew divine name *Adonai* ‘the Lord’ or *Ha-Shem* ‘the Name’, used in the Masoretic Text to suggest the impossibility of uttering the Tetragrammaton, and to recommend instead (for reading purposes) the name *Adonai* or *Ha-Shem*, written under the four-letter Name.

8. Unii de car, alții de cai, dar noi de Numele ^{YHWH}DOMNULUI Dumnezeuului nostru aducem aminte!¹⁴²

“YHWH” is the four-letter Name transliterated, whereas “Domnul” is the translation of the Hebrew term *Adonai* into Romanian (i.e. ‘the Lord’). For the first time, the essential difference between the Tetragrammaton and the divine name *Elohim* is clearly indicated in a Romanian translation from the Hebrew Bible.

A third problem is related to the predicate at the end of the verse. The Hebrew *nazkir* is a causative form in *Hiphil* (the active-causative verbal paradigm). It may be translated either as ‘we (will) make (them or others) remember’ or as ‘we (will) remember’ implying that “we (will) make us/ourselves remember”. At the same time, the verb may or not be used here with the preposition *beth*, as we have explained above.

If we turn towards discussing the deeper significances hidden within verse 20:8, we are faced with the need to refine our understanding by renouncing the garments of lower materiality and to uncover the inner meanings which privilege the strengthening of the connection with the divine. Intratextual and intertextual correspondences are now a requisite.

I will first point out the possible translation changes supposed by a deeper understanding of Psalm 20:8. Afterwards, I will pass on to highlighting some of the correspondences that illustrate or ground the deeper meanings veiled by the literal, objectual reading of the biblical verse.

The more internalized interpretation refers to an approach that is more detached from matter and turned to make the “body” of the verse and the “bodies” of the mundane realm communicate intensely with the formless divine realm. The more internalized is the understanding, the closer are the two realms till they are united in the one endowed with perfection.

In this perspective, the Hebrew term *rekhev* would also refer to the Divine Chariot, and the Hebrew word *shem* would anticipate the most important and evocative divine Name, the Tetragrammaton, followed by the mundane name *Eloheinu* ‘our God’.

These are the possible versions to be offered in translation for verse 8 in the light of our discussion:

“Some of the Chariot, and some of the horses, but we of the Name *YHWH our God* (will) remember.”

“Some in/through/by means of the Chariot, and some in/through/by means of the horses, but we in/through/by means of the Name *YHWH our God* will [make (us)] remember.”

All versions (and more) are contained in the Hebrew verse. There is no uppercase or lowercase in Hebrew script. Therefore, the translator will opt, in Indo-European languages, for capital letters or lowercase letters according to the more literal or more figurative *strata* he wants to underline and privilege in the act of translation.

Two important hermeneutical aspects need to be taken into consideration when translating (and interpreting) a biblical Hebrew verse:

a. The infinite text

From a Jewish (and Christian)³ traditional point of view, the Hebrew Bible is a divine revelation, being inspired. For traditional Jewish practitioners, the Hebrew Bible (in Hebrew, *TaNaKh*) instantiates on the textual level the divine utterances and teachings meant to guide the human being towards perfection. The text reflects the divine wisdom and, in its resemblance to God, is infinite. It answers each and every reader according to their spiritual development. Moreover, the verses address different situations and issues, offering solutions to various problems and questions related to particular mundane contexts or to higher modes of knowledge and perception.

This is why in the Jewish tradition the text allows infinite meanings and interpretations, being able to speak to anyone approaching it, within their specific context.

b. The harmony and simultaneity of all layers of significance

The second hermeneutical aspect derived from the quality of being an inspired text (or a Scripture) is its harmony in spite of, or rather due to, the infinite number of possible or actual interpretations: the co-existence of all the layers of significance does not refer to a specific period of time or to a specific place but to all times and all places together. Consequently, we can infer the simultaneity of all *strata* of significances.

This is why translating from Biblical Hebrew allows and requires more versions. The complexity of the text is given by its boundless depth and countless nuances, but also by its linguistic abilities to differently combine the words in a sentence by making use of a dynamic syntax which spontaneously adapts to different layers of understanding, producing different interpretations and renderings in translation.

3 The text is considered inspired by both religious traditions. The Christian canon varies in some respects from the Hebrew canon; it also presents differences according to particular denominations.

How could then a translation into an Indo-European language (whose syntax is much more rigid and whose ways of expression are different) be able to transfer not only the plain meaning and some figurative significances but the deep infinite horizon comprised in the Hebrew text? The Hebrew text remains unique and comprehensive. A translation, no matter how good, can partially communicate the content of a verse. The endeavour to comprehend and faithfully translate the text is priceless for the translator's academic and/or spiritual advancement and valuable in terms of intercession for a reader who does not know the Hebrew language. For such a reader, the more translated versions they consult, the more they are able to better understand, to continuously adapt and to rigorously delimit in time the sphere of significance. In the end, as a final step of the translation path, any strong reader or genuine researcher would convince themselves to learn the Hebrew language.

2. Intratextual and intertextual correspondences

In order to illustrate two layers of significance, on the plain level of understanding and on the figurative one, for the terms *rekhev* 'chariot' and *susim* 'horses', both present in Psalm 20:8, I will discuss below two intratextual references: Isaiah 31:1 and 2 Kings 2:11.

The first verse exploits the plain meaning of the above-mentioned Hebrew terms, by referring to concrete chariots and tangible horses used in battle:

הוֹי הַיִּדְרָדִים מִצָּרִים לְעֹנָה עַל־סוּסִים יִשְׁעֻנוּ וַיִּבְטְחוּ עַל־רֶכֶב כִּי רַב וְעַל פָּרָשִׁים כִּי־עֲצָמוּ מֵאֵד וְלֹא שָׁעַר
עַל־קִדּוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־יְהוָה לֹא דָרַשׁ׃

Here is the English rendering of the Jewish Publication Society edition (1917):

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are exceeding mighty; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!”

The verse uses the image of the horses and of the chariots in order to point to the mistake of the faithless one in trusting the mundane power of the horses and chariots during the battle. The non-believer puts their trust in material things, in the strength of the animals, in their quantity, and in their ability to use them, as if victory would depend on these elements. We are actually shown how man's will can decay by turning towards mundane aspects as guiding reference points on their path.

The chariot and the horses are used here for indicating the lower material realm (apparently the most reliable and trustworthy, due to its bold corporeality) that rivals and replaces, in the eyes of the unfaithful one, the divine realm.

The second intratextual reference is verse 2:11 from 2 Kings:

וַיְהִי תַמָּה הַלָּכִים הָלוֹךְ וְנִדְבָר וְהִנֵּה רֶכֶב-אֵשׁ וְסוּסֵי אֵשׁ וַיִּפְרְדּוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיַּעַל אֵלֵיהֶם בְּסַעֲרָה הַשָּׁמַיִם:

The Jewish Publication Society edition (1917) translates the verse as follows:

“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”

We are told in the same scene that Elisha would receive what he requested from the prophet Elijah if and only if he would perceive the prophet while leaving. It also becomes clear by the end of the fragment that none of the other prophets who remained on the bank of River Jordan saw Elijah ascend to heaven. It is obvious that this chariot and these horses are not to be perceived with the common bodily eyes. Their perception is different. The element of fire in this context is also different from the commonly burning fire.

Far from being an image illustrating the lack of faith, the chariot and the horses have in this biblical scene a reversed function: they are sent by the divine to take Elijah to the heavenly realm.

The two opposite significances ascribed to the attributes and roles of the chariot and the horses are in fact complementary: the chariot and the horses are to be uncovered in Psalm 20:8 as referring either to the mundane human strength (as opposite to the divine will) or to the heavenly vehicles sent by the divine to make us ascend.

According to the level of knowledge and apprehension of the reader in relation to the divine, the chariot and the horses will be ascribed different meanings and functions in the same text.

The inner hidden meaning of verse 20:8 from the *Book of Psalms* becomes more evident when we engage in intertextual approaches.

Let us consider, for example, the vision and explanations of the Medieval Rabbi and philosopher Moses Maimonides in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, with respect to the in-depth understanding of the Hebrew word *merkavah*, rendered in English as ‘divine Chariot’ or ‘divine Throne’. The word derives from the same triconsonant root (*r.k.v.*) as *rekhev*, rendered as ‘chariot’ or ‘Chariot’.

In rabbinic literature, *Maaseh Merkavah* ‘the Account of the Divine Chariot/Throne’ represents one of the mysteries of the Torah, the second one being *Maaseh Bereshit*, translated as ‘the Account of the Beginning’. The term *Merkavah* is used with reference to any biblical passage employing the root *r.k.v.*, whose meaning is ‘to ride (a vehicle)’, ‘to mount’, ‘to be mounted on’, ‘to sit on’. It alludes to any vehicle sent by the divine to make us ascend, i.e. to make us advance on the path. The essential attributes of such a vehicle are mysterious: 1. the vehicle refers to any material form addressing us by divine will in order to make us see

or understand the deeper connection to the divine – it may be a person, an object, a situation, etc.; 2. the vehicle, once it is perceived or recognized, takes the one prepared to ascend to higher levels of understanding the divine; 3. the one taken by the divine vehicle has no will to control it, but they may ride it as long as they fully surrender to the divine will driving the vehicle; 4. *Merkavah* is to be uncovered in the biblical text mainly under the images of the chariot or those of the throne, both representing vehicles towards the higher apprehension of the divine.

Here we have a fragment from the *Introduction* of Maimonides to the third part of his *Guide of the Perplexed*:

We have already made it clear several times that the chief aim of this Treatise is to explain what can be explained of the *Account of the Beginning* and the *Account of the Chariot*, with a view to him for whom this Treatise has been composed. We have already made it clear that these matters belong to *the mysteries of the Torah*, and you know that [the Sages], *may their memory be blessed*, blame those who divulge *the mysteries of the Torah*. They, *may their memory be blessed*, have already made it clear that the reward of him who conceals *the mysteries of the Torah*, which are clear and manifest to the men of speculation, is very great. (Maimonides 1963: 415)

We understand the importance of discussing and interpreting the Hebrew verses referring to *Maaseh Merkavah*. The difficulty does not consist in understanding intellectually the *Account of the Chariot* but in the very fact that this highest teaching is unique and personalized. It cannot be transferred by the common ways we transfer or transmit knowledge. The Chariot is different for each and every one, and it takes its rider only to heaven. In order to preserve the purity, the uniqueness, and the spontaneity of this high teaching offered to human beings by the divine, the Rabbis refuse to speak about it or to petrify it in particular intelligible forms. This would lead in most cases to idolatry, i.e. to identifying the divine with the image of the Chariot which is thus destroyed in its very purpose and meaning: that of being a vehicle to the formless divine realm.

The risk is dangerous, and speaking in human words about *Merkavah* could make the listener deviate from the path. While paying attention to words, images, or concepts, the listener might miss perceiving the vehicle. He might also think that by mentally understanding the explanations, he reached the highest level of accomplishment, and instead of achieving perfection, he would achieve arrogance.

Mistaking the vehicle meant to take you to the divine, as being the divine itself closes the path for the charioteer. He wants to control the vehicle and to force it to surrender to his will. But there is only one Charioteer: the divine. And this is a mystery.

Maimonides explains it beautifully:

See accordingly how they [the Sages] have made it quite clear to us that *the likeness of a man that was on the throne* and that was divided, is not a parable referring to Him, who is exalted above all composition, but to a created thing. Accordingly, the *prophet* himself says: *This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*. Now *the glory of the Lord* is not the *Lord*, as we have made clear several times. Accordingly everything to which the parables contained in these apprehensions refer is only *the glory of the Lord*, I mean to say the *Chariot*, not the *Rider*, as He, may He be exalted, may not be presented in a likeness in a parable. Understand this. (Maimonides 1963: 430)

Following the explanations of Maimonides and the teachings of the Talmudic Sages, we can now reappraise the significance of Psalm 20:8 in a different horizon of understanding: not even the Chariot and the horses are to be trustworthy. Only the divine in itself, i.e. YHWH, the formless divine creating all the forms. The teaching is expressed in ironical shades: one should not trust the vehicle sent to them. The Chariot remains a Chariot only if it takes the Rider to the divine, not to the victory on a battlefield.

At the end, I want to draw attention to an exquisite interpretation of the verse, belonging to the medieval commentator Rashi:

אלה ברכב. יש מן האומות שבוטחים ברכב ברזל שלהם ויש שבוטחים בסוסיהם אבל אנחנו בשם ה' נזכיר כי לו הישועה נזכיר לשון הקטרה ותפלה כמו (ישעיהו ס"ו:ג') מזכיר לבונה את אזכרתה (ויקרא א') ולפי' המה יכרעו ויפולו:

“These trust in chariots. Some nations trust in their iron chariots, and some trust in horses, but we pray in the name of the Lord, because the salvation is His. נזכיר is an expression of burning sacrifices and of prayer, as (in Isa. 66:3): *he who burns* (מזכיר) *frankincense*, (and in Lev. 2:2): *its memorial part* (אזכרתה). Therefore, they kneel and fall...” (Rashi 1998)

The predicate *nazkir*, commonly translated as ‘we (will) make remember’, may also refer (in Rashi’s vision) to the incense offering. He mentions that the verb is being used with this meaning in Isa. 66:3 and Lev. 2:2, where it appears in the specific context of offering frankincense.

Therefore, we might add more translation versions for Psalm 20:8. Here is an attempt at another possible translation:

“Some [trust] in the chariots, and some [trust] in the horses, but we in the name of YHWH our God will bring incense offerings.”

3. Concluding remarks

It is clearer now why translating a Hebrew verse by mere looking at its components, by combining them according to grammatical rules, and by interpreting it in relation to neighbouring verses is not an adequate approach. To attentively investigate the available intratextual connections and the intertextual interpretations is a prerequisite for translating from Biblical Hebrew. Therefore, a translation team made up of specialists combining more areas of expertise, ranging from Hebrew grammar and Hebrew literature to Rabbinic literature, Jewish thought, Jewish mysticism, and hermeneutics on the one hand and the corresponding fields in the hosting culture on the other hand, would be capable of offering a reasonable translation.

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Translation and Easy-to-Read Language Skills in the Context of Professional Competence in Tourism

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Abstract. The article is a theoretical study of the role of translation/interpreting/mediation as the 5th foreign language learning skill (along with the four traditional ones: speaking, listening, reading, writing) in tourism industry studies, taking into account the knowledge of easy-to-read language text production. In today's globalized world and in the context of European mobility, interdisciplinary education is gaining increasing attention.

Although the profession of an interpreter and translator is taught in separate study programmes in Europe and worldwide, the tourism sector is one of the areas where both interpretation and translation skills and the presentation of information in plain/easy-to-read language are essential.

The aim of the author's theoretical research is to outline the place of these skills in the structure of professional competence in tourism. To this end, the types of translation required in the tourism sector as well as the techniques of simplified text production are analysed in the context of translatology. The author also gives a brief overview of easy and plain language, its role in language use and also in foreign language learning in general, highlighting the tourism sector.

Keywords: methods of translation, mediation, professional competence, plain/easy-to-read language

1. Introduction

In the context of today's complex and globalized world events, Latvia, and the whole of Europe, are increasingly visited by people with poor (foreign) language skills. These people also usually take advantage of offers from the tourism industry. In order to provide them with a complete service, the specific needs

of each tourist group must be identified, with a particular role for different communication skills, including mediation and language bridging, both in the mother tongue and in a foreign language. Accordingly, the role of these elements should also be highlighted in the structure of tourism professional competences.

Although these are not easy times for the tourism industry, tourism continues to develop and improve. The ability to communicate effectively in both their mother tongue and in foreign languages is one of the most important skills for those working in this field. This is where translation and easy-to-read language skills play a key role in helping tourism professionals effectively engage with a diverse range of customers and clients. The author has been involved in both the guide's and interpreter's/translator's professions for years and has found that the boundaries between the two are often very fuzzy, with many skills in common. Although the profession of interpreter and translator is taught in separate study programmes in Europe and worldwide, the tourism sector is one of the areas where both interpretation and translation skills (or basic skills in the foreign language learning process – the so-called language mediation) and the presentation of information in plain/easy-to-read language are essential. Thus, over many years working at a university and as a guide, interpreter, and translator, the author of this paper started gathering insights on deliberately simplifying communication to improve intelligibility.

The aim of this theoretical research is to outline the place of these skills in the structure of professional competence in tourism. The types and methods of communication and translation required in the tourism industry are analysed in the context of translatology, suggesting methods for creating simplified texts.

The theoretical study below gives a brief overview of professional competence in tourism. Elements of professional competence in tourism are compared with the interpreter and/or translation competency models, taking into account (foreign) language and language mediation skills according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR). As the usage of the term “competence” differs in various sources, it can be used in the present article in a narrower sense than skills, which is supported by the cited sources. The next section “The role of easy-to-read language in tourism”, gives a brief overview of the classification of simplified language (simple/easy-to-read and plain language), its role in language use in the tourism sector (for future tourism managers, guides, etc.) and also in communication/learning in foreign language (German as a foreign language – DaF), highlighting the tourism sector, and it outlines its place in the structure of professional competences in the tourism sector (e.g. guides). Finally, the last section, “Language mediation and tourism – Reflection on the skills needed”, was developed on the basis of functional theories of translatology (Nord, Schreiber, etc.) and research on easy and plain languages (Bock, Maas, etc.).

The specificity of the easy language was explored with students in the context of pedagogy, translation, and language learning. A bachelor thesis on easy language

was supervised, 20 websites of different organizations on easy and simple language were analysed, and conferences were attended (e.g. the 1st International Easy Language Day Conference (IELD on 27–28 May 2021). The comparative analysis and generalization were also carried out based on data collected over a period of 20 years that comprised oral and written translations/translation exercises of students (on average 500 students with B1–C1 levels of German language proficiency according to CEFR) of the Master of Translation programme, the Master of German Studies programme, and the Master of Pedagogy foreign language programme at the University of Latvia, in which different translation techniques were used to simplify different types of texts (a standard exercise in translation and language learning) into German and/or Latvian for different target audiences. Personal professional experience in translation, interpreting, and guiding was also taken into account.

The article is a theoretical study of the role of translation/interpreting/ language mediation/ as the 5th foreign language learning skill (along with the four traditional ones: speaking, listening, reading, writing) or as one of the four modes of communication – reception, production, interaction, and mediation (in tourism industry studies, simultaneously considering all relevant factors of easy-to-read language text production). While many studies have been carried out on the competences needed in specific sectors or professions, including tourism, interdisciplinary perspectives and solutions are becoming increasingly important in the context of education.

2. Professional competence in tourism

“Competences are understood to be all the skills, knowledge and thought patterns that a person acquires and exercises in their life” (Weinberg 1996: 3). Hansen (1999: 341) describes competence as “the combination of abilities, skills and knowledge (including specialised knowledge) that are demonstrated in an action situation”.¹

Professional competence in the tourism sector and the skills required for it are analysed on the basis of Ineta Lūka and Agita Doniņa’s definitions of this competence: “tourism specialists’ professional competence is an individual combination of gained experience, attitude and abilities developed on the basis of learning, which allows a specialist to think strategically, untraditionally implement knowledge, responsibly develop tourism industry and creatively work in tourism profession observing traditions and peculiarities of different cultures” (Lūka 2007: 15) and the “complementary co-existence of knowledge, specialised and employability skills, as well as values and attitudes required for a purposeful and meaningful performance of a particular job and professional development of

1 Translated by the author from German.

a person. The significance of employability skills has been stressed based on the needs of the industry labour market” (Doniņa 2020: 11).²

The occupational standard in the Latvian tourism sector was defined at the Meeting of the Tripartite Sub-Council for Vocational Education and Employment of 7 June 2023, Minutes No 3 and published on the website of the National Centre for Education (VISC) – Professional qualification requirements for tourism managers. This document enumerates a range of knowledge and skills required, including: “... professional terminology in foreign languages, including English. [...] Build effective communication at work and process management stages. [...] Evaluate processes to ensure communication. [...] Human resource management. [...] Communication routes and flows. [...] Teamwork” – and many others. It is clear that the tourism sector is interdisciplinary, and its professional competence will be linked to intercultural competence and the professional competence of translation and the CEFR language mediation skills, which are closely linked to translation skills and the translation competence model, especially when it comes to community interpreting/translating, the form of translation, which is a daily reality in the tourism sector.

Cultural differences in verbal and non-verbal communication styles may be a cause for intercultural communication conflicts. In a multicultural work environment, such as tourism and hospitality, intercultural conflicts are inevitable. [...] It is evident that business communication, including that in the tourism and hospitality industry, does not refer only to business etiquette but is strongly rooted in culture. Culture comprises values, traditions, beliefs, including religious beliefs, attitudes, perception, behaviour, and other components, and all of them influence people’s interaction and their way of speaking. (Lūka 2023: 16–18)

The term translation/interpreting competence has been known in science since the early 1980s. Translatology is a relatively young discipline, so the interdisciplinary role of translation as well as language mediation has not yet been fully explored. This paper does not analyse the types of translation in detail, but, according to their classification, the tourism sector would need language mediation skills and community interpreting as basic foreign language skills. Translation and interpreting are also not specifically separated from each other, as working in the tourism sector requires both these kinds (skills/competences) at the same time. Even without a very detailed analysis of the two competency models (*figures 1–2*), it is clear that a number of competences overlap and are integrated into the structure of the third competency model (*Figure 3*).

The tourism sector needs professionals who are able to work in an interdisciplinary and intercultural context.

2 Translated from Latvian by Ineta Lūka and Agita Doniņa.

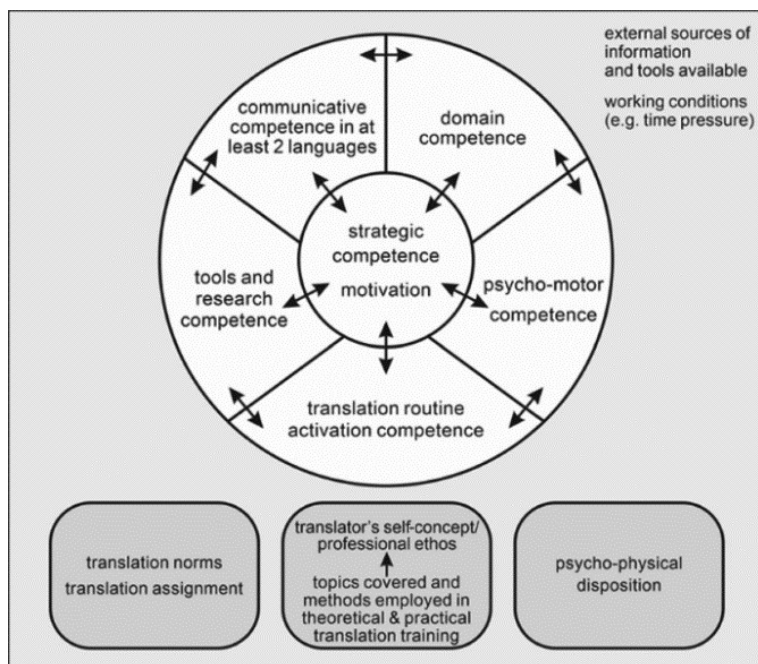


Figure 1. Göpferich's translation competence model
(<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285868048>)

The 5 Components of Intercultural Competence

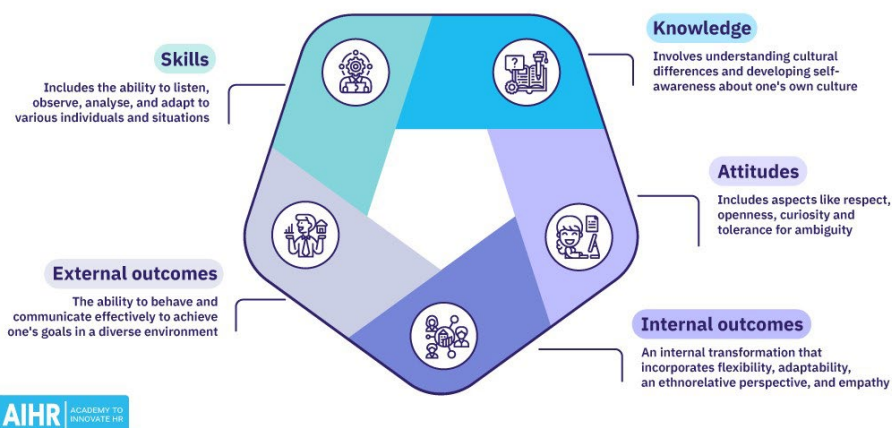


Figure 2. Model of intercultural competence
(<https://www.aihr.com/hr-glossary/intercultural-competence/>)



Figure 3. *Some of the common competences/sub-competences/skills required for professional competence in the tourism sector, as identified in the competency models in figures 1 and 2*

“Cultural conceptualizations can be found at different language levels and in extralinguistic phenomena, including rituals, emotions, nonverbal behaviour, and other instances where verbal and nonverbal representations coexist harmoniously” (Baranyiné Kóczy 2023: 137). Analysing these competency models in the context of the skills required in the tourism sector (effective communication, intercultural communication, language mediation, as outlined in the aforementioned professional standard), it can be seen that they are intercultural competence, communication competence in general, and elements of translation competence (one of the translation methods/ways/types is community interpreting).³ Skills such as effective communication, intercultural communication, and language mediation are essential components (see “Occupational Standard” above). Tourism students should therefore definitely acquire these common interdisciplinary skills. “If additional elements are included in the design of the study programme and they are developed and implemented using the developed continuous improvement approach, the diverse development of students’ professional competences in line with the requirements of the tourism labour market is promoted” (Doniņa 2020).

3 For more details on this type of translation, see e.g. Pöschhacker (1999).

3. The role of easy/easy-to-read/plain language in tourism

“Denn man muß nicht die Buchstaben in der lateinischen Sprache fragen, wie man soll deutsch reden, wie diese Esel tun; sondern man muß die Mutter im Hause, die Kinder auf der Gassen, den gemeinen Mann auf dem Markt drum fragen und denselbigen auf das Maul sehen, wie sie reden, und darnach dolmetschen; so verstehen sie es denn und merken, daß man deutsch mit ihnen redet” (Luther 1530) ‘We do not have to ask the literal Latin how we are to speak German, as these donkeys do. Rather we must ask the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace. We must be guided by their language, by the way they speak, and do our translating accordingly. Then they will understand it and recognise that we are speaking German to them.’⁴ This “open letter” is considered a characteristic testimony to Luther’s view of the translator’s task and an important source for the history of Lutheran Bible translation in the field of biblical and linguistic studies. Luther’s “Open Letter on Translating” is an appeal for the promotion of comprehensible language and a meaningful rendering and interpretation of texts. Today, we are still facing the same problem: complex language is used in all spheres of life – both in spoken and written communication.

In today’s digital age, where travellers rely heavily on online platforms and mobile apps for trip planning, the use of plain and therefore easily understandable language is especially important. By providing user-friendly and accessible content, tourism businesses can attract and retain customers, as well as maintain a positive online reputation. Tourism customers who need plain language can represent different target groups. There is a large part of society that can access information only with the help of special support. Society is aware of this, and in many aspects of life, the term “inclusiveness” is frequently brought to attention. The goal and tasks of easy language nowadays are generally viewed in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 2 of the Convention gives a general definition of communication that “includes languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology”, and “4. Persons with disabilities shall be entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.” Latvia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 1 March 2010 (coming into force on 31 March 2010), but

4 English translation from: *Luther the translator*/European studies blog/British Library: <https://blogs.bl.uk/european/2017/10/luther-the-translator.html>.

Latvia's Easy Language Agency had been founded ten years before that, in 2000. There is still an overwhelming number of people who are bad at reading or have a poor knowledge/understanding of the language for various reasons. The number of people in need of inclusion is growing in the context of current world events. Over the last two years, Latvia has seen a significant positive change in attitudes towards the use and scientific study of easy and plain language: within the framework of the international project Promoting Easy-to-Read Language for Social Inclusion (PERLSI), several institutions have worked together to develop an Easy Language Handbook specifically for the Latvian language. The State Education Centre (*Skola2030* project) has developed teaching resources in plain language, and the University of Latvia and Riga Stradiņš University also offer easy language as an elective course in their study programmes. Sub-objective 1 of the Ministry of Education and Science's National Language Policy Guidelines 2021–2027 provides for the development of easy language resources.

While the concept of easy/plain language is well known in pedagogical and interpreter/translator study programmes, knowledge of easy/plain language use and text production is not sufficiently addressed in the tourism sector in Latvia. In order to draw conclusions on whether and why easy language skills should be required in professional competence, it is first necessary to identify the types and target groups of easy/plain language. Different organizations and linguists are divided on the classification.

Leichte Sprache “Easy Language” is conceived as a firmly rule-based variety with clear outlines [...], whereas [...] “Simple Language” is seen as a continuum reaching from somewhat enriched forms of Easy Language to forms somewhat below average standard German or languages for special purposes (like legal or medical communication). The adjectives “easy/plain” and “*leicht/einfach*” as in “Easy/Plain Language” or “*Leichte/Einfache Sprache*”, respectively, are not without their burdensome connotations; the same is true for “simple” (Maas 2020: 50).

Table 1. Overview of the German and English terminology (Maas 2020: 51)

Maximum comprehensibility level	Intermediary comprehensibility level	Standard level	Elaborate level
Leichte Sprache / Easy(-to-read) language	Einfache Sprache / Plain Language	Standardsprache/ Standard Language	Fachsprachen / Languages for Special Purposes (LSP)

Easy language corresponds approximately to A1 language proficiency level in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages,

but plain language approximately to the B1 level. Easy language, as emphasized by Maas and also by various easy language organizations, generally has a strict regulation. Nevertheless, Bock in *“Leichte Sprache” – Kein Regelwerk* [“Easy language” – No Set of Rules] (2019) opposes Maas on the unreasonably strict rules for easy language. The Latvian Easy Language Handbook (Liepa 2022) takes various opinions into account and based on them develops recommendations that are tailored to Latvian grammar. You need to know the customer, i.e. their cultural specificities (including language) and needs in order to identify in which language (easy, plain, etc.) you have to communicate with them in the tourism sector so that the communication is understood. A brief and concise description of the target groups and the use of the language (English) was already given by the Centre for Inclusive Design in 2000 (excerpts, p. 12).

Table 2. *Summary of Easy English versus Plain English*

	Easy English	Plain English
Other names	Easy Read, Easy Write, Easy Info, Easy Access, easy-to-read, aphasia-friendly	Plain language, plain writing, layman terms, layperson terms
What is it?	Easy English is an accessible and alternative form of communication. It has a distinct format that is simple to read.	Plain English is a direct style of writing which is easy and quick to understand. Its goal is to make sure the audience can understand the information the first time they read or hear it.
Who is it for?	For people who have difficulties reading and understanding English. It helps people with: – low literacy, – intellectual disabilities, – English as a second language.	For everyone. It assumes reasonable literacy skills, around the year-7-to-9 level.
Who else does it work for?	It is also helpful for people who: experience a high cognitive load such as a CEO. – those who want quick and summarized information.	It should be your baseline style for all information-based material, as it is direct and to the point.

The Latvian Handbook of Easy Language (Liepa 2020: 63–73) identifies seven target groups: people with intellectual disabilities, people with psychosocial disabilities, people with dyslexia, people after stroke and head trauma, deaf and hard-of-hearing people, seniors, and immigrants. In our view, the 8th target group

– children – would also be necessary. To summarize the importance of easy/plain language in the context of professional competence in the tourism sector, it can be concluded that easy/plain language is essential because it helps to provide clear and simple information to tourists.

This is very important given that tourists:

- come from different countries and cultures,
- have different levels of language proficiency,
- are different age groups,
- may have physical and mental disabilities (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, articles 1 and 2).

By using easy-to-read language, tourism businesses can ensure that tourists can easily understand important information such as directions, rules and regulations, safety guidelines, and specific information on attractions and activities.

In addition, easy-to-read/simple language – i.e. language that is easy to understand – can improve the overall tourist experience by simplifying the communication process and reducing misunderstandings. This can increase tourist satisfaction levels, ultimately leading to positive feedback and recommendations. In addition, the use of easy-to-understand language can also help to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for tourists of different backgrounds and abilities.

Overall, the inclusion of easy-to-understand language in tourism communication is essential to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience for tourists, as well as to promote positive interactions and strengthen the relationship between the tourism industry and its customers.

These conclusions can be applied almost equally back to tourism professionals themselves. Unlike tourists, they not only need to understand information and communication in simple and understandable language but must also be able to consciously and purposefully build on their (foreign) language skills. The aim of a foreign language learning and/or communication in general is the communicative competence, which is related to communication and learning strategies. Strategies are used (both consciously and intuitively) to convey or mediate the information at the level of linguistic proficiency that the speaker's knowledge allows. There are many different communication strategies which, due to limitations of scope, are not analysed in detail here. Today, strategies are mainly analysed with regard to their compensatory character, as so-called communication strategies/compensatory strategies whose task is to prevent the breakdown of communication between native speakers and foreign language learners or to reverse such breakdowns (CEFR 2020: Chapter 3). These strategies are used to summarize information – to say the main idea of a passage of a text. These strategies are also implemented in easy and simple language. The difference between learning a foreign language and speaking to tourists is that the aims

and reasons are different – simplification of language due to insufficient foreign language skills or adapting the language to the needs of the target audience. Similarly, in a translation or language mediation assignment, a complex text is prepared for the needs of the client/target group.

4. Language mediation and tourism – Reflection on the skills needed

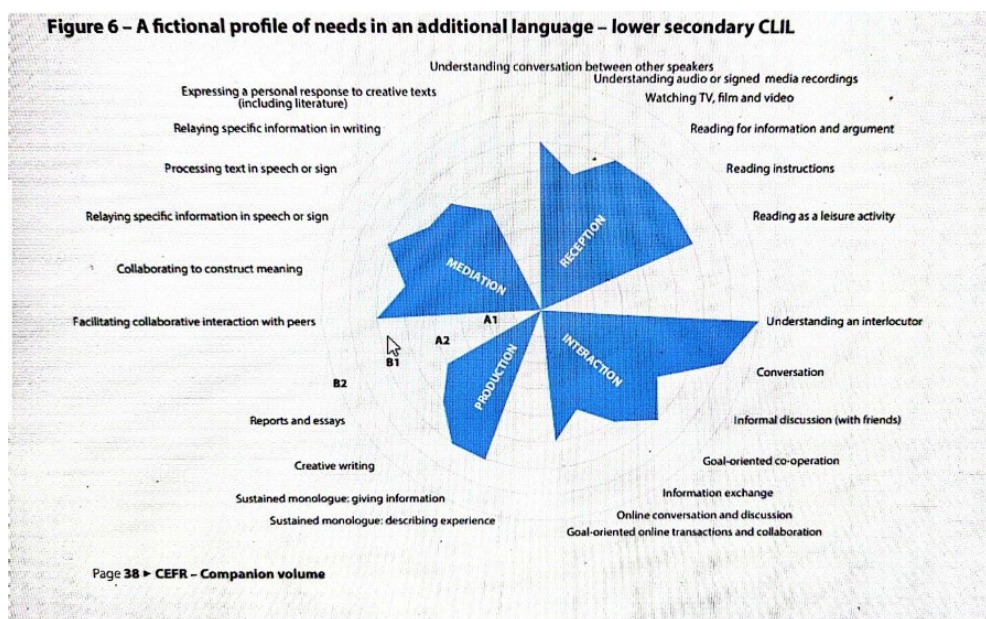


Figure 4. *A fictional profile of needs in an additional language – lower secondary CLIL⁵*

CEFR introduces mediation as one of the four modes of communication – reception, production, interaction, and mediation – and moves away from the traditional four skills – speaking, listening, reading, and writing. “Also, in many cases, when we use language, it is not just to communicate a message, but rather to develop an idea through what is often called ‘*linguaging*’⁶ or to facilitate understanding and communication” (CEFR 2020: 35). This is fully in line with the functional translation approach, which focuses on applying information to the needs of the target group: “The text itself does not have a function, but it

5 CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning.

6 Linguaging – “talking the idea through and hence articulating the thoughts” (CEFR 2020: 35).

“receives” a function in the reception situation” (Nord 1993: 9).⁷ The same is true for texts in easy-to-read/plain language. This finding is supported by the CEFR’s illustrative explanation of mediation in a foreign language in relation to the learner’s/user’s language level (see *Figure 4*). This figure is about communicating in a foreign language using the communication strategies mentioned above. CEFR distinguishes between avoidance strategies and problem-solving strategies in communication (e.g. guess meanings from linguistic clues, deduce meanings from context, inventing words, using “thing”-words, use of paraphrases and synonyms, overcoming bottlenecks when writing and speaking, e.g. by changing language, using facial expressions and gestures). These strategies can be used not only in a foreign language but also by simplifying the native language and adapting it to the target group but in a different context.

The term translation is commonly used for the application or adaptation of information to a target group in the easy/plain language because the information is “translated” into other words, and this is called intralingual translation (e.g. a scientific text into a popular one). Roman Jakobson outlines three kinds of translation: intralingual translation, or *rewording* – interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language –, inter-lingual translation, or *translation proper* – interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language –, and inter-semiotic translation, or *transmutation* – interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems ([1959] 2006: 21). For the purposes of easy/plain language, all of them are needed in the tourism sector, depending on the client and the tourism specialist. For example, a guide should speak at least B2 level with tourists who understand the language well and use as simple a vocabulary as possible with tourists who have a poor command of the language. This requires translation skills and an understanding of plain/simple language principles.

These kinds of translation, in turn, can be divided into techniques. In translatology, there is no common opinion on the use of such terms as, for example, kinds of translation, techniques, types, or methods. There are a lot of different classifications of translation techniques and criteria for these techniques. Michael Schreiber’s (1999) translation techniques (*Verfahren*) seem to be universally applicable in the context of all three above-mentioned kinds of translation, also in the production of easy/plain language texts. With the aim of identifying common characteristics of all translations, Schreiber defines interlinguality as a change of language in the broader sense, be it the individual language, the language level, or the functional language. His approach thus also defines intralingual or, as he calls it, inner-single-language translation as inter-lingual in its essence. Schreiber has developed a typology of text-level approaches (lexis (L), grammar (G), syntax

7 Translated from German by the author of this article.

(S), help techniques (H)) in which “translation techniques” are subordinated to language levels and language kinds and types (*Übersetzungstypen*).

A detailed analysis of Schreiber’s translation techniques for the production of easy language / plain language texts would go beyond the scope of this article and would be worthy of a separate study, so for the sake of example we will name just a few techniques suitable for the production of easy/plain language texts.

(L2) Substitution (*lexikalische Ersetzung*) – replaces an element with the same structural function as the substituted element.

(L3) Lexical structure change – change in the area of word formation (*lexikalischer Strukturwechsel*).

(G3) Increase/decrease in the number of words (*Expansion/Reduktion*).

(G5) Intra-categorical change of grammatical function within the word type (*intrakategorialer Wechsel*).

(G6) Changing the word type (*Änderung der Wortart*).

(G7) Transformation – changing the syntactic construction (*Transformation*).

(S2) Modulation – change of perspective through the verbalization of other content features (*Modulation*).

(H) Help techniques – adding words, phrases, clauses, or sentences with the purpose of clarifying the expressions (*Hilfsverfahren*).

5. Conclusions

Language mediation / community interpreting plays a crucial role in the tourism industry, as it facilitates communication between tourists and locals who do not necessarily speak a common language.

A tourism specialist familiar with the text translation and production techniques in easy/plain language will find it easier to communicate (both in writing and orally) in a variety of situations, such as medical descriptions, legal documents, scientific papers, etc., with different groups of tourists.

Language mediators – representatives of the tourism industry – help to bridge this gap by offering customer- / (tourist-)orientated communication that enables the expected interaction and understanding on both sides.

According to the CEFR language proficiency levels, a tourism professional needs to have a very good command of at least two languages, at least at B2 level, in order to communicate effectively with clients.

Moreover, technology skills are becoming increasingly important in language mediation within the tourism sector. With the rise of digital communication platforms and tools, language mediators must be proficient in using technology to facilitate communication between different language groups, whether through interpreting apps or online translation services.

Overall, language mediation in tourism requires a combination of language proficiency, interpersonal skills, cultural competence, and technological know-how. By honing these skills, language mediators can play a vital role in enhancing the tourism experience for both tourists and locals, fostering greater understanding and connection between different countries.

Language mediation / community interpreting and language facilitation skills should be considered as interdisciplinary, or 'soft' skills. They are needed in the tourism sector, in teaching (especially in (foreign) language teaching and learning), translation, journalism, etc.

Comparing and analysing the competence models, it is concluded that in the professional competence structure of the tourism sector, skills such as mediation / community interpreting and the production of easy/plain language texts occupy an important place and can be learned in a common context.

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The Light as a Central Symbol in V. Voiculescu's *Zahei orbul / Zahei the Blind*

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Abstract. Our paper discusses the way in which one of the Orthodox symbols present in Vasile Voiculescu's novel, *Zahei Orbul / Zahei the Blind*, the light, reflects the others and helps the reader to see the depths of the author's work. In order to do that, we see the symbol of light's meaning as *anagogical*, as it was seen by the Hesychasts, especially Saint Gregory Palamas. In addition, we are using Jean-Claude Marion's concept of *intuitively saturated phenomenon*, as the novel could be perceived as an icon by the reader who is able to contemplate it through its symbols. Seeing the novel as an icon could also happen because, according to Constantin Jinga, Voiculescu's style of writing, on some levels, is similar to that of the authors of the Midrash.

Keywords: light, Orthodox symbols, icon, double saturated phenomenon, Romanian literature

1. Introduction

As underlined in a previous paper (Suciu 2020), Vasile Voiculescu's one and only novel reveals its deep meanings through a rich texture sustained by a sum of intertwined Christian symbols. The vivid picture drawn by the Romanian author on a multi-layered canvas hides in plain sight a delicate Orthodox icon, crafted to be seen only by those who are able to activate their inner sight. Therefore, we try to reveal the *icon* (εἰκόν) of Voiculescu's writing in order to access the core of his creativity. We consider that the main symbol in the author's works is the inner light as part of God's Light, and thus we see the light as Saint Gregory Palamas saw it, following Saint Maximus the Confessor's teachings. In this view, the light's meaning is *anagogical*: it reveals a superior level in a being which only exists until its purpose is fulfilled. Therefore, the light is the symbol without real subsistence, created by providence, a symbol that exists only in the moment when

it serves as a symbol. It does not exist, neither before nor after that, disappearing in the moment of its completeness (Stăniloae 2006: 99). Thus, we also use the concept of *intuitively saturated phenomenon*, walking on the footsteps of Jean-Luc Marion and his companions, Paul Ricœur, Jean-Louis Chrétien, and Michel Henry, who tried to establish a phenomenology of religion.

In order to broaden the view, we must say that Voiculescu was a deeply religious person. Being asked by students of the Faculty of Theology about his religiosity, the author described himself as “a long-distance swimmer in the ocean of Faith” (1935: 400). Among others, Roxana Sorescu, the editor of Voiculescu’s most recent complete works edition, pointed out the fact that he does not only use biblical figures and motifs but has a religious feeling, which “is a constitutive characteristic, an essential given of his being”. In this way, “religiosity is not just a literary theme for Voiculescu (...). Voiculescu is a religious writer through his inner structure, and he would be like that even if he, by absurd, did not write a single text related to the biblical figures or motifs (Sorescu in Voiculescu 2004: 7).¹

Therefore, Voiculescu’s works are born from his mind, a mind descended into his heart, as the Hesychast way of living teaches us. As “God is Love”, according to Saint John the Apostle, Voiculescu’s heart is naturally and deeply in love. His love is the ascending flight of *eros* into the light of *agape*.² Thus, Voiculescu’s novel rests on a texture strengthened by a number of Christian symbols and aspires to ascend into the Light.

2. Terminology and methodology

The first steps of our journey are made starting from Constantin Jinga’s vision, a Romanian theologian with certain abilities in understanding literature. He is the one who observes that Voiculescu’s way of writing is, in some areas, similar to the authors of the Midrash,³ as it is clearly visible in some of his short stories such as *Lupta cu îngerul* [The Fight with the Angel] (Voiculescu 1932a: 26–27) or *Buna Vestire* [The Annunciation] (1932b: 156). In Jinga’s view, Voiculescu’s text “must function as an icon: meaning that it has to stylize the significant forms of the century on a frame of biblical origin until the stage of a symbol and to offer them as a support, not for meditation but for contemplation. And the forms of

1 The translations of the Romanian authors cited in this paper belongs to the author of this article.

2 See also one of our papers (Ștefănescu & Suciu 2012: 16–25) written on the subject of the author’s *Ultimele sonete închipuite ale lui Shakespeare în traducere imaginară de V. Voiculescu* [Shakespeare’s Last Imagined Sonnets in V. Voiculescu’s Imaginary Translation].

3 “The term Midrash (‘exposition’ or ‘investigation’; plural, Midrashim) is also used in two senses. On the one hand, it refers to a mode of biblical interpretation prominent in the Talmudic literature; on the other, it refers to a separate body of commentaries on Scripture using this interpretative mode” (Silberman & Dimitrowski 2024).

the century cannot be brought to the stage of a symbol in other way than through contact, by painting them onto a canvas discretely impregnated with elements already consecrated" (Jinga 2001: 61).

Therefore, we identified four main Orthodox symbols in the novel, one of them, the Church, being actually the keeper of all the others, namely the Cross, the Water, the Serpent, and the Light, the latter being in all of them and keeping all of them together. As an artistic work, Voiculescu's novel represents the laic way through which the sacred truth, concentrated in symbols, aspires to get into the light in a world where the sacred struggles for new ways of manifestation.⁴ Many thinkers debated on the subject, but one of them, the author of the *intentio operae* concept, seems to complete the aforementioned idea:

The gods speak (today we would say: Being is speaking) through hieroglyphic and enigmatic messages. By the way, if the search for a different truth is born of a mistrust of the classical Greek heritage, then any true knowledge will have to be more archaic. It lies among the remains of civilizations that the fathers of Greek rationalism had ignored. Truth is something we have been living with from the beginning of time, except that we have forgotten it. If we have forgotten it, then someone must have saved it for us and it must be someone whose words we are no longer capable of understanding. So this knowledge must be exotic. Carl Jung has explained how it is that once any divine image has become too familiar to us and has lost its mystery, we then need to turn to images of other civilizations, because only exotic symbols are capable of maintaining an "aura" of sacredness. (Eco 1992: 150)

In this regard, one of the exotic symbols used by Voiculescu in his novel's core in order to revive the others is that of the *pangvandhavān*, a blind man guided by a cripple, which is supposed to be borrowed from Indian folklore.

Going further on our path to discover the core of Voiculescu's writing, we point out its iconic character, because, as in his poetry, the novel reveals the author's ego as deprived of the self-sufficiency of its intentionality, if it is to discuss it in the terms of pragmatics. In this case, we deal with a blinding overthrow of perspective, and not just as a deepening of the reflection. Classifying the phenomena according to their level of donation, Marion puts the *icon* in the category of revelation phenomena, which are intuitively saturated:

Let us repeat that by revelation we understand here a strictly phenomenological concept: an apparition in a pure mode of itself and starting from itself which does not challenge its possibility with any a priori determination. This

⁴ See Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane*.

kind of revealed phenomena mainly occur in three areas. First, there is the painting as a spectacle which cannot be made from an excess of intuition but still seeable (idol). Then, a particular face which I love, becoming invisible not just because it blinds me but especially because I do not want and I cannot see in it anything but the invisible regard which presses onto mine (icon). (Marion in Chrétien et al. 1996: 126)

In addition, we underline Dorin Ștefănescu's view on the matter of "interpretative sight", when he is commenting Andrei Scrima's *Comentariu la Evanghelia după Ioan* [Commentary to the Gospel of John]:

The "theological" sight opens towards the paradox of the iconic appearance of the invisible in the visible, revealing in reality – as a radical phenomenological exercise – "the mode in which the immediate-visible has to be prolonged by the sight of the one who knows how to see, so that, finally, this immediate-visible to deliver its true image". Not the gaze is that which pierces the visible in order to reach the invisible; the invisible itself – the unpredicted un(more)seeable – offers itself to the sight, lets itself be seen in its self-revelation, calls the sight onto the marks of what appears and reveals itself. (Ștefănescu 2012a: 234)

As for the Light representing the central symbol in the novel, our paper tries to reveal it in the view of Saint Maximus the Confessor, explained by Saint Gregory Palamas when he discusses Christianity's focal event, the Transfiguration of Christ, the event which prefigures the Resurrection. In the explanations given in the argue with Barlaam, and later Akindynos, those who represented the frontline in the attack against the Hesychast⁵ movement, he points out the meaning of those "symbols" so poorly understood by the members of the scholastic community. He makes the distinction between

a symbol which belongs to the nature of the symbolized thing and a symbol of a different nature. [...] The natural symbol is always with and in the nature from which it takes its existence. The symbol of another nature and subsisting by itself cannot always be with the symbolized thing but can also exist before and after the moment in which it is being considered as a symbol. Finally, the symbol without real subsistence, made by providence, only exists in the moment when it serves as symbol. It does not exist,

5 One should know that the Church's intestine battle between the Hesychasts and the scholastics represented a level of the devastating civil war which drastically undermined the Byzantine Empire, being a major source of its falling.

neither before, nor after that moment, disappearing at the moment of its perfection. (Stăniloae 2006: 99)

This “symbol” – which could be equivalent to the phenomenon of revelation, a saturated phenomenon⁶ – reveals a transcendent and a transcendental reality at the same time because the horizons are opening inwards as well. This unseen reality is what Voiculescu's writings aim to elicit in the mind of the reader, a mind which should come home from going astray in order to be embraced by the heart: “It is only in the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye” (Saint-Exupéry 1996: 60). But the poetry is limited by the linguistic barriers, as Hermogène's word seems to prevail over Cratylos's. This limitation was probably one of the reasons for Voiculescu's archaic vocabulary, especially in the writings from the beginning of his career. He was constantly training his thoughts in a battle against the word's rocky matter in his never-ending pursue of the Light. Thus, we will try to reveal the way in which Voiculescu's poetic symbols are working together under the Light as a “theological symbol”,⁷ as it is pointed out by Saint Gregory Palamas in his polemical writings addressed to Barlaam and Akindynos. In our case, this revelation would be consecutive to the contemplation of an icon insofar as the reader could be enabled to see it, to perceive and to cover the *distance* revealed by the possible fulfilment of *Zahei's* destiny.

3. The Light: A symbol in “a book as simple as a prayer”

We entitled the main chapter of our paper being inspired by Ioan Petru Culianu's way of saluting the publishing of Voiculescu's novel. In his exile, Culianu writes a short study in one of the Romanian magazines from the Federal Republic of Germany, a study which begins like this: “Voiculescu's novel, *Zahei orbul*, appeared in 1970, at Dacia Publishing House in Cluj. The message of the dead still creeps towards the living, troubling the blockheads” (Culianu 1973: 164). Now, we try to avoid the blockheads and focus on the message from the dead, a message enveloped in a narration which contains the aforementioned symbols.

6 The other intuitively saturated phenomenon is the pure historical phenomenon, in Marion's vision.

7 It is not in our intention to portrait Voiculescu as a theologian, because he was not. We only try to underline the presence of his theological sight, which he certainly had. On the other hand, as the reviewers asked about the reason for naming the Light an Orthodox symbol and not simply a Christian one, we must say that the reader would understand it if they went deeper into the matter of the light as uncreated energy, which was the basis for the dispute between the representatives of the Orthodox Church such as Saint Gregory Palamas, who was the most important one (a Father and Doctor of the Orthodox Church), and a large number of scholastic theologians such as Barlaam the Calabrian (who was the first on a relatively long list). For a brief intro, see Amadio (2024).

Briefly said, *Zahei orbul* [Zahei the Blind] was published in 1970, two decades after the conceiving of the narration which represents its core and which became the novel's last chapter, *În codrii Cervoifului* [In the Stag's Forest]. From here, Voiculescu goes backwards "constructing a symbolic biography for this symbolic destiny", as Culianu sees it. The small temporal inadvertences which could make a nitpicker's day were underlined by Roxana Sorescu in one of her studies (in Voiculescu 2010: 29–30). As for the story itself, we are using again Culianu's view when he writes that Voiculescu:

follows a destiny, simply and naturally, in a way in which one realizes only later that it is projected on two levels, that the destiny of the Blind from the Brăila's sloughs is a symbol in a book as natural as a prayer. He dashed into the world's sludge, which is "filthy love, poisoned spirits, cursed tobacco", and was blinded by an innkeeper's alcohol. He is seeking all the possible paths for his redemption until he reaches Father Fulga, a priest who was a horse thief but repented through a long illness and became crippled in both feet (lame would be a better word for it), although his hidden powers were concentrated in the upper part of his body. He could heal ill people, his hand put on Zahei's head makes the blind to see as through a dense fog. The blind orders for a saddle and carries the cripple on his back, in this way completing a new creature. (Culianu 2000: 9)

As we stated before, the central symbol of the novel is the Light, Zahei's redemption. The Light is being sought by a profoundly human hero, handsome as a Greek god, with a big and warm soul, but hooked on and devoured by alcohol consumption, ultimately the source of his physical blindness. He is destined to complete a saint's figure which originates from an intelligent, cultivated but at the same time vicious man as Father Fulga, a man touched by the divine Grace not before he was symbolically relieved by the author from the temptation of the flesh through crippling, a lame, actually. The failure of the newly created being, a cripple guiding and being carried by a blind, an exotic symbol, actually, as Eco pointed out, comes from the fact that the priest could not let aside the Luciferian temptation of trying to demonstrate his spiritual superiority. He baptizes his rival's child guided not only by Christian mercy but mainly by pride, in order to humiliate the representative of the new clergy. This proves to be a fatal mistake which would block the redemption and the symbolical rebirth of a sickened world, a rebirth which is postponed until the second coming of Christ.

It is not difficult to see that the main symbol in *Zahei Orbul* is the Light. Edifying for perceiving the way in which Voiculescu sought the light, at a certain moment, are the verses from one of his poems, *Prometheus*. Here, the ardent desire of his ego, which is not yet fully deprived of its own intentionality, is to reignite God's

spark remained within us after the fall: "I'd want the spark, the ardent gleam,/ When springs, arising from my soul,/ Not to become a burning stubble./ I'd want, within, to carry flare and ember/ But not to be consumed by them/ To lighten all of me, inside and out"⁸ (Voiculescu 2004: 173–174). Here, The Burning Bush is also to be seen. On the other hand, as Vladimir Streinu points out, Voiculescu's Prometheus has some Luciferian accents, and the critic links it to one of the final poems from the volume *Pângă, Urează-mi* [Wish Me]: "Wish me battle, don't wish me win,/ The bounds of life I do not want to move/... But as I see myself a hungry flame,/ I'm all in turmoil and I throw myself.../ (...) If is for me to fall, let's haste it:/ Not like a leaf, like rocket wish I fall" (Voiculescu 2004: 207). As for Hesychast's light and its relation with Voiculescu's works, we discussed it in a previous study (Suciu in Ștefănescu 2012b), but it helps to remember here some other verses (*Noul mag* [The New Magus]) which are relevant in revealing the author's struggle from the moment of the aforementioned volume: "That morning star, which meant to rise to me it was/ So much it tarried/ That I don't want to know if faded,/ Or if I blinded.../ I wait no more for outside light:/ Another one inside me lighted/ And burning deep its ardent fire/ A flame at night, at day a smoking tower/ With eyes towards it I start my longest haul" (Voiculescu 2004: 204). We could object to Streinu's remarks because, as a true Christian believer, Voiculescu's revolt from *Prometeu* [Prometheus] seems to be more like an attempt to provoke God to a fight, similar to Jacob's, than a Luciferian rebellion. Therefore, we underline Șerban Cioculescu's opinion when he discusses the poet's suffering near his wife's deathbed:

Here is the source of the inward turning in order to find not the pitch darkness of the abyss but, on the contrary, the sublime enlightenment. A thirst for too much light turns the haze white, and it is not by accident that on a manuscript page the hand reveals "White Thoughts", which became this book's title. In this context, the poet brings back characters and deeds from the Byzantine iconography, mining for them in the deepest layers of Romanian traditional spirituality, in the very spirit of a universal humanism, nurtured from his vast cultural background accumulated as a physician and philosopher. (Cioculescu in Voiculescu 1986: VIII)

Mentioning the fact that the critics' view on Voiculescu's light seeking is very much applicable to his narrations as well, we move on to the symbolism of his novel's hero. Therefore, the best view on this name's signification, in our opinion, is to be found at Culianu, again:

⁸ The translation of the verses from the various poems by Voiculescu also belongs to us.

In this way, the name Zahei (Zacharias), being randomly similar and almost homophonous to its Greek counterpart, is not a name without a particular “meaning”, at least inside the borders of that oneiric-aesthetic “game” which defines Voiculescu’s prose. In Greek, “Zahreies” means ‘violent’, and “zahreios” means ‘the one in need for (something)’. This is exactly the case of the violent Zahei from the novel, blinded by his addiction to alcohol, and then always in the pursue of the light which was being taken from him and which becomes more and more a seek for internal redemption. Allegory for the soul’s “obscure night”? Pilgrimage through history and world, a world against which he develops a radical negation (the world is: “filthy love, poisoned spirits, cursed tobacco”? Maybe that too, but the novel’s value resides precisely in the overtaking the allegory in the symbolic meaning of the “natural” changes. (Culianu 2000: 21–22)

Taking the thought to another level, Sorescu points out the fact that the biblical character Zaheu/Zacchaeus, the customs officer who climbs the sycamore tree, greeted the poet from the mural picture at the gates of Antim Monastery every time he visited it. However, according to the editor, the author modifies “some of the biblical prototype’s characteristics”, since Zahei the Blind⁹ is not a small man but a real colossus with the allure of a Greek divinity.

“The fact that Voiculescu alters the appearance of the biblical model gives to the literary character an extra symbolic dimension: Zahei, a Greek god unleashed in a Dionysian, pagan existence, tends to become a Christian saint, just as the pagan magician in *The Last Berivoi* will only be able to reactivate good in the world by assuming Christ’s sacrifice” (Sorescu in Voiculescu 2010: 29).

This potential of the hero to become a Christian saint is also underlined by Nicolae Balotă, who names one of the sections of his study dedicated to Voiculescu, “The hagiographic model”. Although it may seem a little far-fetched, we can place this fusion of the Greek model (representing the essence of Western culture, a culture assimilated from the extremely wide range of his readings) with a symbolic New Testament’s character (whose name is borrowed from a hero who

9 Constantin Jinga also underlines the biblical origins of the name of Voiculescu’s hero: “Saint Luke the Evangelist presents him as the greatest of the tax collectors in the area of Jericho and says that when Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jericho, Zacchaeus, short in stature, climbs to the top of a sycamore tree to see him better. Later, he invites Jesus to his house for dinner. On this occasion, he repents of all the misdeeds he has committed and promises to make amends without delay. The Son of God absolves him, and Zacchaeus thus becomes an example of repentance (Luke 19:2 ff.). The Gospel text in no way suggests that Zacchaeus was blind or that he was subsequently blinded. It is possible that V. Voiculescu may have synthesised here the image of two characters who meet Jesus Christ at the entrance to Jericho: Zacchaeus the tax collector and blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52, Matthew 20:29–34, Luke 18:35–43) – both symbolizing the power of prayer and the value of repentance. Zacchaeus, the novel’s character, is no stranger to these meanings” (Jinga 2001: 57).

embodies in the text the pilgrim of the Hesychast tradition, a pilgrim deprived, however, of the guidance of a spiritual father precisely because of the need to emphasize the importance of this aspect) in the line of descendants of Stephen the Great, the “last Basileus”, an approach intended to reconcile the two branches of Christianity, separated with irreparable – but ameliorable – consequences in terms of European spirituality. Moreover, referring to the valorization of popular culture in Voiculescu’s writings, George Muntean points out this particular ability to combine apparently irreconcilable phenomena and states: “Always interested in ‘lighting the light on the new altars’, he will serve the old ones with the same devotion, revealing their vigour and unquenched flame, their role of guide, sometimes. It is a way of being contemporary with the age – illuminating intensely and naturally its dimensions and roots in a history that surpasses itself, flourishing in human eternity itself (Muntean in Papadima, ed. 1970: 309).

Completing the previous thought in another register, we recall Al. Cistelean, who, in his characteristic style, i.e. ironically shooting several rabbits at once, proposes an interesting research theme by reproaching to Nicolae Oprea – author of a monograph dedicated to Voiculescu, where he downplays the poet in favour of the prose writer – for “not insisting on this separation of mentality between the poet and the prose writer, on this subterranean conflict between the poetry of Christian enlightenment and the prose of pagan rites. For, looked at more closely, Vasile Voiculescu also shows himself to be a *homo duplex*; and not only through the intra-poetic opposition between sensuality and prayer” (Cistelean 2007).

If we take into account Micheline Tenace’s puzzlement about Soloviov from the “almost theological” interview with the same Al. Cistelean, we could indeed see the author of *The Last Sonnets...* as *homo quadruplex*, even. And this is because the theologian, in the sense of *o theos logos*, fuses with the mystic and adds to the physician, to the philosopher, and to the poet. He is a *homo quadruplex*, but just apparently because our man aspires to the *theandric* way of being, thus to be one.

The other element of the character’s name is related to light, more precisely to the lack of it. The numerous healings of the blind performed by Jesus are mentioned in the studies cited so far. It should be noted only that healing from blindness involves two components, not necessarily complementary: the acquisition of physical and spiritual light. Zahei the Blind sets out on the path of the former with vengeance as his battle flag and comes close to acquiring the latter, which is the essential one, but which is not allowed to him because of the inappropriate motives underlying the base of his spiritual quest. Besides, in one of his poems, Voiculescu shows us what kind of light he seeks: “Blindness had set a gleam in me/ And I was fumbling in my flooded grottoes/ With hunches and bright visions/ As you can feel the flowers from their scents./ As you opened my clay eyes again,/ I can see things, but there’s no light./ How useful is that you restored my sight,/ I sought no sight, I was salvation seeking” (Voiculescu

2004: 281–282). But salvation is in us because God is in us from the beginning. In one of his articles, *White Light*, Joseph Tetlow (1982: 241) links Newton's optical experiment to the Divine Light. He compares the Divine Light descending into each of us, the divine love, with the white light before refraction. Like the refracted spectrum of the prism, man emits a range of types of love, from the selfish love that penetrates everywhere, like infrared radiation, to the royal blue of self-giving, depending on one's ability to perceive the Light. The simplistic analogy between the spectrum of refracted visible light and the range of love types of which each of us is capable does not take into account (coming from a Jesuit prelate) the fact that the laws of physics cannot explain *the uncreated light*. Not even in the subtle way in which Pavel Florenski opens the door of metaphysics to Orthodoxy. If it is to remain in the realm of colours, the light is not alterable and remains white, and it is amplified as the divine spark in man is reactivated, the "royal blue of self-giving" representing no physical barrier. The divine light, the uncreated energy is not transformed but only amplified, enhanced by the extent to which we respond to God's call. In our opinion, the necessary condition for approaching the royal part of the spectrum of Light within us, the God who is Love, is blindness to the *Vanity Fair's* attractions.

On the other hand, Barbara Weightman generalizes the role of light as a defining phenomenon of religious landscapes:

The presence of light as a manifestation of the divine is a characteristic of many religions. Light, by its presence or absence, separates the sacred from the profane and, in its cognitive, aesthetic or symbolic forms, reveals and delineates the world, develops emotional and sentient awareness, literally giving meaning and purpose to life. (...) Color, as an affirmation of light, reveals and defines a relative purity, holiness and supremacy (...). Pervading both religious movements and landscapes, light is fundamental to religious experience, evoking varied responses and representations both among and within various particular belief systems. (Weightman 1996: 59)

The fact that Zacchaeus begins to see as if through a mist, under the influence of the shred of divine grace descended from the hand of the priest returned to the holy after the banishment, reveals his approach to truth under the guidance of the astonished Fulga, the priest, who is amazed and even frightened sometimes by the visions of the blind man who, for example, sees the eyes of the cherubim, a luminous sight difficult to imagine, unbearable for ordinary people.

Zahei the Blind establishes contact with his inner world, a world of whose existence he was unaware, only when, following his stubborn efforts to draw a shred of light from his surroundings, he realizes a fundamental truth:

(...) the light wanders outside, plays in the scales of the waves stirred by the wind, circles the shores, now on the one where he stands, then on the other, nestles in the tangle of budding branches. He sought it, felt it near him, pursued it fiercely, ready to feel it, but unable to catch it. Then a bitter pang of conscience came over him. What? Are eyes the only thing in the world? And, again he strove, so blind, to find out. But he could only imagine it. He hadn't forgotten the sky. He lifted and rolled his white eyes to it, and could only catch a faint, faint touch, like a caress. It was sweeter, thinner, other than the tingling tremor that tingled his skin. And he was astonished that he could thus distinguish light from heat, hitherto one and the same. He was on this thread of skill that led him deep down. He felt he had reached another realm, a world of inner light, where there was no need for eyes. He first stepped, astonished, into his own land, where no one had ever been before. (Voiculescu 2010: 72)

This brief connection with the Self (the spark that has always been waiting to become a flame and that will blow the hero's Ego away when the path is reopened), initiated empirically in the shack of Paraipan (out of the need to adapt to his new condition) and grown through meditation, in the light of spring, on the water's edge, will be resumed at the end of the third chapter:

From that moment on, he put no more brandy nor tobacco in his mouth. And nothing more could be done with him. The quiet fellow from within, who had been waiting in a corner of the stinking blackness of drunkenness, came out, beat the fool who had taken the helm and threw him out. In an instant, Zahei returned to the soul with which he had entered the pit. It was the first miracle, and not the least. The next day, with a boy by his hand, the blind man set off over seven hillocks to Fulga, the priest, in the village of Cervoi. (Voiculescu 2010: 222)

Note the symbolic number, specific to the fairy tales, but also to the Bible. The seven hillocks can represent, in a way, the seven days of the World, over which each of us will have to pass in order to reach the eighth day, the Monday. In the darkness of this long "Sunday of History", in which we are confined to rest because we live within the letter of the Law, or even outside it, we shall prepare ourselves, each according to their own strength, for a Monday, the true day of the Resurrection, which will be revealed only to those who have come to penetrate the Spirit of the Law.

4. Conclusions

All in all, the idea that emerges from the novel *Zahei orbul* [Zahei the Blind] is related to the acquisition of the true “sight”, a sight that requires to ignore the mess of vanities and to concentrate on the spiritual side, on “looking” inside the being in order to find the One who gave us life, an approach in which Voiculescu’s hero fails because a lack of culture in the sense of Nikolai Berdiaev, a culture which comes from cult, from the roots of the Church. The value of the novel is also given by the plethora of images, *Theatrum Mundi*, a world into which access is being denied for the blind man. Thus, the romantic antithesis between the exuberance of worldly life and Zahei’s impossibility of participating fully in a world where the visual predominates is a well-chosen procedure of this literary work, as Nicolae Balotă points out. In this sense, Zaharia-Filipaș, highlighting the moral theme (which exists but, in our opinion, is not the defining theme of the novel), states, “Voiculescu intuits that his character is truly fascinating, especially when seen from the outside and concentrates particularly in the description of the world that concerns Zahei and in the images of Zahei himself. A succession of portraits of the hero that bear no resemblance to one another punctuates the text of the novel, from the beginning to the end, revealing the gaze as the essential axis” (Zaharia Filipaș 1980: 195).

However, it is not advisable to dwell only on the exuberance of imagery used to portray this fairground of vanities which is the world, because we would be manifesting *catholitis*,¹⁰ one of the “diseases” of the contemporary spirit, theorized by Constantin Noica (2012: 51), which is also manifested through the “plethora of images”. Moreover, the etymology of the word *world* brings us back to Light, the central symbol of this novel. Father Dumitru Stăniloae,¹¹ referring to Romanians, said, “There is luminosity in our people, goodness, gentleness, kindness, generosity, warmth, purity, there are virtues... We speak a lot about

10 “Using the Aristotelian terms for general, individual and determination (*katholou*, *tode ti* and *horos*), Noica, half seriously as he himself admits, coins six pseudo-medical terms for these maladies of the spirit: *catholitis*, *todetitis* and *horetitis* for pathological excess, and *acatholia*, *atodetia* and *ahoretia* for pathological deficiency of one or more of the terms of Being as they manifest themselves through the spirit” (Honeywill 2009). According to Noica, *catholitis* consists in “the abnormalities produced by the lack of the general in humans and things”. Therefore, in the matter of Being, the things’ placidity comes from the fact that they cannot have “another general” by themselves. On the other hand, man’s suffering comes from the fact that humans *could have* another general, but they cannot truly obtain it. These “maladies” are not necessarily a bad thing, as they have positive sides as well, like creativity, for example. In Noica’s view, culture is the cure for them (Noica 2012: 33–34).

11 Recently sanctified by the Romanian Orthodox Church, Dumitru Stăniloae was one of the most influential Romanian Orthodox theologians. See more at: https://orthodoxwiki.org/Dumitru_Stanolae.

light, we also say light to the world;¹² world from light... we have very clear depths, luminous depths, light is our depth... fairy tales, again; there is so much goodness, so much light in them... we have carols, *doinel*e, and *dorul* – words without equivalence in other people's languages" (Stăniloae 2008: 3).

The uncreated light, the emanation of Love, is the base note of fragrance, the divine grace that blesses the choicest of men with its unmistakable fragrance. The failure of *Zahei*'s quest is determined by the lack of love, a lack that is, in a subsidiary way, the essence of this novel. "Love never fails", and "if there's no love, there's nothing".

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12 The Romanian word for 'world' is *lume*, which comes from the Latin word *lumen*, meaning 'light'.

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Initiated by Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, *O istorie a traducerilor în limba română* [A History of Translations into the Romanian Language] (hereinafter also as ITLR [HTLR]) has proved a highly ambitious and complex project aiming to cover the history of translations into Romanian from the 16th to the 20th century and thus to contribute to the effort of bringing to attention the role of translations in both world and national cultural and intellectual heritage. As stipulated on the project webpage,¹ the ITLR [HTLR] research focuses on Romanian translations published within the Romanian provinces (Moldavia, Wallachia, Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina) or outside the Romanian borders, within other Romanian-speaking cultural areas. The research is supervised by the project coordinators, Prof. Muguraș Constantinescu and Prof. Rodica Nagy.

The complexity of the project resides in both qualitative and quantitative aims which should address the need for such a history in the Romanian culture. Setting to cover a history of translations into the Romanian language, the project itself promises to diachronically dive into a history of their contexts (social, cultural, political, diplomatic), of translators and translators' perspectives on the very process of translation, as well as into a history of mentalities, of the Romanian literature (genres and sub-genres), of the evolution of the Romanian literary and scientific language, culture, and civilization. In the preface to the first volume, Prof. Mircea Martin (2021: 32–33) calls HTLR an integrated history, approaching its objective from multiple perspectives, while going beyond a linguistic and

¹ <https://itlr.usv.ro/>.

literary approach, offering sociological and statistical tools, methodological criteria, theoretical and terminological references.

The far-reaching project research should “fill in a gap in Romanian culture” (2021: 1349) and concretize in the publication of four volumes, spanning 7-8 years, bringing together an impressive number – over 200 – of researchers from Romania, Spain, Germany, Greece, and France: two volumes cover the 20th century, one volume deals with the 19th century, and one covers the 16th–18th centuries, the series to be published by the beginning of 2026 at the latest.

The first volume – *O istorie a traducerilor în limba română în secolul al XX-lea* [A History of Translations into the Romanian Language in the Twentieth Century] – was published in 2021 by Editura Academiei Române and was coordinated by Prof. Muguraș Constantinescu, Prof. Titela Vâlceanu, and Prof. Daniel Dejica. It is built on a six-chapter structure which follows translations as grouped by time blocks, literary and non-literary fields. Each chapter includes an introductory section followed by theoretical considerations, a section titled *Exempla*, and selected bibliography; the last part of the volume offers a multilingual presentation of the ITLR [HTLR] project, a list of publishing houses and collections, indices of translators and translated authors.

In its six large sections, the first chapter concentrates on contextualizing 20th-century translations into Romanian from a linguistic, literary, historical, sociocultural, and geopolitical perspective, zooming in on the impact of external circumstances on the translators’ activity and the way in which the translator’s status and role have been viewed throughout the century (Morar 2021: 47). The chapter also traces the complex relation between translation and censorship, translation and ethnic, political, and linguistic minorities, and it focuses on the dynamics of mentalities and translations, on the tools the researcher operates with.

The section on censorship, for instance, offers a multifaceted approach, examining, among others, the constraints imposed on the translated text or the impact of ideology and censorship on translations during the communist period; political regimes are presented as limiting the freedom of expression, impacting the availability of source texts, or even influencing/prioritizing the choice of source language texts.

The researcher’s working tools are dealt with in the last section of the first chapter. The reader learns about the work of the Romanian Academy members to catalogue materials and the challenges they needed to face in the absence of basic bibliographic tools. The section includes individual studies which dwell on works translated from exotic languages, such as Korean, Afghan, Latvian, etc., or on chronological dictionaries of novels translated in Romania up to 1989 and between 1990 and 2000 respectively.

The second chapter examines the translator’s social and professional status, with the information organized in various sections, out of which we enumerate:

“The Translator in the Romanian society”, “Bilingualism and biculturalism. Self-translators – Bilingual writers”, “Cultural institutions supporting translations into Romanian”, “The translator’s tools”. In the first pages of the chapter, reference is made to the vague distinction between the translator and the interpreter within the Romanian 20th-century landscape, to the precariousness of their status within the legal framework, to relevant associations and the need for increased efforts to gain well-deserved recognition.

In “Bilingualism and biculturalism. Self-translators – Bilingual writers”, further emphasis is placed on self-translation as having a paradoxical status within the literary field, as well as the field of translation studies, with no traditional hierarchy between “the sacred original and the translation” (Eiben & Hetriuc 2021: 283).

The next two studies integrated in the second chapter of the book list a number of specialized courses and degrees at universities in Timișoara, Cluj, Iași, and Bucharest, as well as cultural institutions which have supported translations into Romanian, consequently increasing the visibility of writers and their cultures of origin, strengthening relations between countries and enriching target cultures (Brânzică 2021: 304).

The study on the translator’s tools dwells upon dictionaries, glossaries, and lexicographic reference works (some of them authored by translators themselves) that translators working from English, French, and Spanish into Romanian could make use of. The second chapter also lists a generous number of detailed individual portrayals of translators, revolving around the very idea that their work needs to be understood as contributing to the preservation, revitalization, (inter)national visibility, and impact of languages and literatures.

The key institutions responsible for disseminating translations through publication represent the topic of the third chapter. Publishing houses are brought to the foreground, initially presented from a historical perspective (the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the interwar period, the communist and post-communist periods). Focus is thus laid on the contexts that supported the flourishing of publishing houses and their activity (Crăciun 2021: 509), on cultural journals (two case studies: “Secolul 20”, “Romanian Review”), collections (“Biblioteca pentru toți”, “Opere fundamentale”), bilingual editions, translation anthologies, which functioned as tools “necessary for the accessible presentation of literatures, of literary themes or for authors’ portrayals, in the absence of extensive translations in the respective space” (510).

In the fourth chapter of the ITLR [HTRL] volume, translation is once again brought to the forefront as part of the national heritage, defining the dialogic potential of a culture, as Muguraș Constantinescu asserts (2021: 649). Detailed studies look at the theory and practice of literary and non-literary translation throughout the 20th century from the perspective of Romanian translators,

terminologists, linguists, researchers, literary historians, and critics, with the stated purpose of revealing the complexity of the multifaceted process of translation, its identity as both art and science.

The process of translation as a complex cultural phenomenon is thoroughly framed in the first study of this chapter, where one follows the beginnings of translation studies and the “adventure” of earning the status of a fundamental well-established branch, with the translator perceived as “a vehicle of values, meanings, and ideas” from source to target languages/cultures/heritages, “a negotiator” of meanings, “a promoter” of words which become bridges that connect individuals/communities/cultures, “a mediator” between intercultural communication contexts or situations (Boldea 2021: 651–652). A further study concentrates on comparative literature and translation / translation studies, underlining the complicated yet constructive dynamics of their coexistence. The studies included in this chapter trace back the evolution or the development of translation from “a Romanian translational discourse” (1900–1945), as Petraru labels it (2021: 672), to translation studies (the latter half of the 20th century), which became a cardinal (academic) field of research. References to theoretical frameworks, translational norms, specialized terminology, translation typology and requirements, re-translation, translator’s voice (intertextual, paratextual, extratextual levels) and status, even self-translation and audiovisual translation are included and expanded on, offering the readers a complex choice of research(ed) paths to follow while witnessing the continuous process of (re)defining translation.

With the theoretical aspects having been insisted on in the previous chapters, the fifth and the sixth chapters concentrate more on important contributions, significant translators and their work, on a chronological “factual exploration of the history of translation since Antiquity and through the Middle Ages” (Cotrău in Constantinescu et al. 2021: 1352) to modernity.

Antiquity is approached in its two cardinal facets – Greek and Latin –, whereas the Middle Ages analysis provides literary translations from French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, English, and German. The exempla section of the fifth chapter offers its readers portrayals of important Romanian translators whose contributions are highly relevant and impactful within the Romanian cultural landscape: George Coșbuc, Eugen Tănase, Virgil Tempeanu, Romulus Vulpescu.

The sixth chapter (with two subsections) is dedicated to poetry. In its subchapters, it tackles aspects of interest from the dialogue between poetry and translation / translation studies within the Romanian cultural landscape and the given period (1901–2000): “Translations and re-translations in the poetry of previous centuries”, “Translations of contemporary poetry”, “Poetry anthologies”, “Translator-poets” (Lucian Blaga, Aurel Rău, Eta Boeriu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș), “Contemporary ideas on translating poetry”. As Bican and

Duinea (2021: 1052) assert, the furthered case studies mirror and are relevant for the coexistence through translation of the Romanian culture with other cultures, as well as for the elements which encumbered translational cultural transfers.

The volume *O istorie a traducerilor în limba română în secolul al XX-lea* [A History of Translations into the Romanian Language in the Twentieth Century] is a valuable tool for the specialized readers, but also for the curious ones who need to contextualize translation accurately, become fully aware of its complexity and crucial importance in the process of identity construction, be it individual and/or collective, social and/or cultural.

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