

*PhD Studies in Norwegian Literature*, eds. Sanda Tomescu Baciu, Fartein Th. Øverland, Roxana-Ema Dreve, Raluca-Daniela Răduț, Raluca Pop, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2020, 188 pp.

Published in 2020 in the series *Nordica*, edited by Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu, the volume *PhD Studies in Norwegian Literature* is in essence a doctoral compendium as it encompasses all the theses from the first Norwegian Literature PhD circle at the Babeș-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca). As Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu writes in the introductory note, this compendium is a collection of research work from the PhD students she tutored and mentored for ten years (2010–2020), edited by lecturers from the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at BBU, founded in 2001. In this way, the volume reunites the Norwegian academic circle of Cluj-Napoca. Their research was made possible through academic cooperation programmes with “Norwegian universities where former and present doctoral students have enjoyed the benefit of SIU/DIKU (The Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education) or EEA mobility programmes” (p. 8). The volume was published by Casa Cărții de Știință, a publishing house in Cluj-Napoca.

As mentioned above, previous and current PhD students revisit their theses, each devoted to a certain topic pertaining to Norwegian literature, such as *A Study of The City in Lars Saabye Christensen’s Beatles Trilogy* by Andra Rus; *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s* by Raluca-Daniela Răduț; *Jon Fosse and the New Theatre* by Anamaria Babiaș-Ciobanu; *The Reception of Knut Hamsun in the Romanian Cultural Printed Press from 1895 until 2016: National and International Perspectives* by Diana Lățug; *Rewriting Norse Mythology in Contemporary Norwegian Literature: The Search for Identity in a Multicultural World* by Cristina Vișovan. The aforementioned researchers have already received their PhD degrees. To these, we now add Gianina Druță’s thesis entitled *Ibsen at the Theatrical Crossroads of Europe: A Performance History of Henrik Ibsen’s Plays on the Romanian Stages (1894–1947)*; Ioana-Andreea Mureșan’s *The Quest for Identity in Norwegian-American Immigrant Narratives: Correspondences with the Romanian Immigrant Experience in America*; and Ovio Olaru’s *The Internationalization of Scandinavian Noir*. Moreover, Ștefana Popa tackles the topic of *The Father Figure in the Novel My Struggle by Karl Ove Knausgård*.

The doctoral compendium opens with Andra Rus revisiting her PhD thesis with the study “Memory and Senses in *Beatles* by Lars Saabye Christensen.” Rus starts by making an analogy between rain and the exacerbation of the senses that recurs in the trilogy. The discovery of the city happens simultaneously with assigning memory to it. Quoting Peter Turchi, Rus links the mental maps we create to our subjective and selective memory of the places we experience. A particular sensory

experience which recurs throughout the novels is the smell of apples. Kim, the main protagonist, associates apples with Nina, the girl he falls in love with, and with the orchard in Nesodden, where he stays for the summer. The city of Oslo thus becomes either a protective place, when the boys play in their neighbourhood, or an alienating place, when Kim, for example, visits the city during summer time.

The following contribution is “*Nyenkle (New-Simple) Poems in Jan Erik Vold’s Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja (Mother Goodhearted’s Happy Version. Yes)*,” where Raluca-Daniela Răduț investigates how the concept of *nyenkelhet*, or new simplicity, articulates in a volume of poetry by one of the most renowned Norwegian poets of the 1960s. We find out how the concept originates from Sweden and how it is used on Norwegian soil, especially by the literary circle around the magazine *Profil*. Then the so-called urban poetry by Vold is investigated; Răduț mentions how Vold refers to the street as “a playing field” and to the tram as “the animal of our childhood.” In this sense, we are given an indirect definition of the concept of new simplicity as theorised by Daniel Haakonsen: a simple and naïve way of writing, but only on the surface. All in all, Vold details his life experiences in an extroverted way, while also tackling social issues in his poetry.

The next study is “Aspects of Knut Hamsun’s Reception in the Romanian Cultural Printed Press Compared to His National and International Reception” by Diana Lățug, focusing on a few key points: the Nobel Prize (1920), the interwar period, his 70th and 80th birthday anniversaries (1929 and 1939, respectively) and his death (1952). One key conclusion is that the wave of diffusion (as theorised by Franco Moretti) made “the Romanian reception of the 1920s dependent on contact cultures, such as German and French” (p. 50). Comparative dynamics arise between the Romanian reception and those from core European cultures (in the case of Russia, Britain, Germany and France) and other peripheral cultures (Hungary and former Yugoslavia).

Anamaria Babiș-Ciobanu, in turn, offers “A Close Reading of *And We’ll Never Be Parted (Og aldri skal vi skiljast)*.” Applying her own concept of space-time, she analyses how the Fosse’an characters become entangled, and explains the principles of the Fosse’an play by quantum entanglement. The Fosse’an style is emphasised by space and time and the positioning (ceremonies) of the characters. There is a time of entanglement and an inward time of the characters, which can only be seen when close reading the play as it “challenges the reader’s logical and common sense of reality. It exhibits the uncertainty, instability and chaos in the universe and inside each individual” (p. 93).

Another seminal study in the volume is that of Cristina Vișovan: “Multicultural Rewritings’ of the Norse Mythology in Contemporary Norwegian Literature.” As the title suggests, she presents how the Nordic mythology ends up being recontextualised and re-written so that it can “embody contemporary feelings and concerns” (p. 110). The theoretical underpinnings Vișovan works with are terms such as ‘adaptation’, ‘recycling’ and ‘re-vision’. Contrary to intertextuality,

rewriting “focuses on a particular pre-text and presupposes a subject who intervenes in the original text in order to transform it” (p. 98). The first novel analysed here is *Gudenes fall* [The Fall of the Gods] by Cornelius Jakhelln, where Odin has been reduced to the status of a spectator, a bystander. It is also “the symbolic fall of the white man (understood as ethnic Norwegian) in a marginal position of the contemporary Norwegian society where he feels discriminated and treated as a minority” (p. 111). Tyr, another Old Norse god, is the protagonist of the trilogy by Andreas-Bull Hansen. In it, Tyr also loses his status of the god of war. Siri Pettersen, in turn, reiterates the myth of creation in *Odinsbarn (Odin’s Child)*; she draws a link between the fear of unknown and the encounter of ‘the Other,’ be it other peoples and cultures. In this way, ‘multicultural’ rewritings help shape the way we interact with others, and they drive the desire of some Norwegian authors to criticise the socio-political situation in their country.

“State Dragomir and the Staging of Henrik Ibsen’s Plays at the National Theatre of Iași” by Gianina Druță is another contribution on an original research topic. Basing on statistics gathered from *IbsenStage* and on her own research in Romania and abroad, she presents a portrait of State Dragomir (1870–1920), who was the main Ibsen promoter in Iași, and who helped modernise the local stage. A Renaissance man, both professor of history and philosophy and of dramatic art, he was also an artist at the National Theatre of Iași. State Dragomir was a dear friend of the actress Aglae Pruteanu, but Druță considers their friendship “a hindrance to their evolution” (p. 126). Dragomir helped create the university’s curriculum by introducing plays only occasionally performed in Bucharest, such as *Ghosts*, *A Doll’s House*, *An Enemy of the People* and *Pillars of Society*. In doing so, he ensured the modernisation of not only the local stage but also of the Romanian theatre in general.

In the next study, “Exploring Immigrant Identity: A Sense of Belonging,” Ioana-Andreea Mureșan looks into the immigrant experience and offers diverse and concise definitions and perceptions on identity, identity crisis, personal and cultural identity, the sense of belonging, vertical and horizontal heritage, all seen through a critical lens. She considers belonging as a complementary dimension in relation to the self. A glimpse into the history of the word American showcases that there is no country called ‘America’ and that the adjective ‘American’ was appropriated by people living in the country, as Michael Walzer pinpoints. In Mureșan’s own words, the immigrant experience is both enriching and painful, especially if we consider the entrapment between two worlds.

Another compelling topic of research is “Representations of the Father Figure in Norwegian Contemporary Prose” by Ștefana Popa. Starting from the novel *Min kamp (My Struggle)* by Karl Ove Knausgård, where the figure of the father is seen as a negative role model, Popa traces back and identifies other Norwegian authors where the father figure plays a central role. These portraits of the father are linked by what is now called ‘reality literature’ or reality-oriented literature. Unlike *Min*

*kamp*, where the child has “different emotional positions with regards to his father” (p. 151), Nikolaj Frobenius’ *Teori og praksis* [Theory and Practice] offers a positive example of the father figure. However, a certain transformation and identification between father and son can be observed. In Tomas Espedal’s novels, the father figure always plays a fundamental role, where the protagonist lives with the fear of losing his father, becoming despaired and helpless. The “imposing presence, strong and active” (p. 163) of the father dissipates as the son becomes “more resigned with the immanence of death” (p. 164). A portrait of the father-daughter dyad can be found in Vigdis Hjorth’s *Arv og miljø* (*Wills and Testaments*). Here the father is “constructed by the processes of recollection” (p. 165) and, as we shall see, is related to a traumatic event that the protagonist suffered during childhood. However, the novel has an open ending that leaves conclusions to the reader. As Popa points out, the novels make us think of the “father figure as a generator for emotions as well as a therapeutic device for dealing with grief and sorrow” (p. 170).

Last but not least, Ovio Olaru proposes the topic “Scandinavian Noir: An Ideological Reading.” His study points out that the Scandinavian noir has its origins in the hardboiled crime fiction genre promoted in America, and the police procedural that corresponds to the British tradition. As Olaru states, the Scandinavian noir sits at the border between the two and can be considered their local variation. The development of Scandinavian noir is seen as a development of *Folkhemsnostalgien* (nostalgia for the welfare state) and of the *Realpolitik* cultivated by Sjöwall and Wahlöö. The international dissemination of Scandinavian noir goes back to the 1990s, when many Scandinavian authors found success both in their countries and abroad. With regard to the distribution of gender roles, Olaru observes that “the dismantling of traditional gender roles typical to the hardboiled crime-fiction tradition was unsurprising in Scandinavian noir” (p. 177). We could say that in essence the main features of Scandinavian noir are “heavily reliant on the political consciousness of Scandinavian literature” (p. 181).

It is worth noting that, in the afterword, Raluca-Daniela Răduț touches upon the experiences that the PhD students had while writing their theses, but also when researching their topics abroad. Some of the theses have been published as books, as is the case of those authored by Raluca-Daniela Răduț, Diana Lățug, Gianina Druță, Ioana Andreea Mureșan and Cristina Vișovan. All of these testify to the academic spirit that developed in the first Norwegian Literature PhD circle at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, under the guidance and mentorship of Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu. They also speak volumes of the high academic excellence of the aforementioned researchers.

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