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# Reading the *Post-migrant*: Reinterpreting Migration Literature in Scandinavia

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**Introduction**

1. The Age of Migration: a Hot Topic

      Throughout history, migration has always represented a pivotal factor in the transformation of societies. The pace at which migratory flows move around the world has maintained a steady trend since the end of the Second World War, making it a defining characteristic of the 20th and 21st centuries. The last two centuries have witnessed the impact that migration had on people's life, convincing many to label our time as 'The Age of Migration'.[1] Moreover, the consolidation of both globalized ideology and infrastructural connections has led to the blurring of geographic borders, leaving more space for the development of a freer market, and encouraging the movement of human, economic and cultural capital. By virtue of their close interdependence, globalization and migration seem to be linked by a directly proportional bond, whereby the former feeds the latter and vice versa.[2]

      'Movement' and 'migration' have now become common terms that do not exclusively belong to specific categories of people, but that, in one way or another, affect societies' transcultural and transnational dimensions in many ways. Migration reflects its presence in an endless series of actions that condition people's lives, therefore turning into a productive lens through which it narrates the world we live in. Foreign-born, second generations, as well as refugees, asylum seekers, students, and entrepreneurs from every corner of the planet represent the variety of facets through which migration manifests itself, renegotiating canonical discourses on cultural, social, and national belonging.

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[1] See Thun Hien Dao – Frédéric Docquier – Mathilde Maurel – Pierre Schaus, *Global migration in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: the unstoppable force of demography*, in «Review of World Economics», 157, (2021), pp. 417-449. See also Manfred Max Bergman, *The Century of Migration and the Contribution of Mixed Methods Research*, in «Journal of Mixed Methods Research», 12 (2018), 4, pp. 371-373.
In 2019, the percentage rose to 3.5%, reaching a record. See Stephen Castles, *Understanding Global Migration: A Social Transformation Perspective*, in «Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies», 36 (2010), 4, pp. 1565-1586. See also *World Migration Report*, International Organization for Migration, Geneva 2020.
[2] Michael Samers identifies four key interconnective aspects: «first, in terms of the 'ease of movement' (mobility); second, in terms of the 'form' of movement (migrant workers, family reunification, asylum-seekers, students, etc.); third, with respect to governance or the rescaling of political decision making (what I have referred to here as 'geopolitical economy'), and fourth, in terms of the transnationalization of culture and politics» (Michael Samers, *'Globalization', the Geopolitical Economy of Migration and the 'Spatial Vent'*, in «Review of International Political Economy», 6 (1999), 2, pp. 166-199: 169).

The phenomenon of migration has generated a great number of social, economic, and cultural transformations in a relatively short span of time, challenging many of the certainties to which a large portion of Western world has been bound to for decades. However, the burden which people tend to correlate to the image of migrants and migration makes this a complex issue to resolve from a political and a cultural standpoint, so this is an authentic 'hot topic'.[3] While the global network ideally aspires to open channels across borders in order to facilitate the passage of capitals, such as skilled workers, many of its drawbacks are not necessarily welcomed with the same enthusiasm by the public opinion: «Globalization essentially means flows across borders: flows of capital, commodities, ideas and people. States welcome the first two types but are suspicious of the others».[4] Historical events such as 9/11 have caused a politicization of this topic, turning it into a source of continuous discussion, rifts, and contrasts. Migratory flows are still treated with great skepticism, and considered as a possible threat to the stability of a nation's identity. This prejudice finds fertile ground in populist ideologies and ensures growing enthusiasm for far-right political parties all over the world. Hein de Haas, however, emphasizes the centrality of migration in social development processes not as an independent variable but as an endogenous one, that arise from within society's core:

> we need to study these migration-development interactions in the development context of which they are an intrinsic part. Migration is not an independent variable 'causing' development (or the reverse), but is an endogenous variable, an integral part of change itself and a factor that may enable further change.[5]

The intricate network of interconnections between people with different cultures, stories and experiences have inevitably altered the role of migratory movements in the era of globalization, rooting them into the social dynamics of host countries in ways that are both significant and, above all, hard to reverse.

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[3] See Christoffer Green-Pedersen – Simon Otjes, *A hot topic? Immigration on the agenda in Western Europe*, in «Party Politics», 25 (2019), 3, pp. 424-434. See also Edgar Grande – Tobias Schwarzbözl – Matthias Fatke, *Politicizing immigration in Western Europe*, in «Journal of European Public Policy», 26 (2019), 10, pp. 1444-1463.
[4] See Stephen Castles, *Why migration policies fail*, in «Ethnic and Racial Studies», 27 (2004), 2, pp. 205-227: 211.
[5] See Hein de Haas, *Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective*, in «International Migration Review», 44 (2010), 1, pp. 227-264: 253 [italics in original].

## 2. New Horizons in Migration Studies

Migration studies have always offered different conceptual tools to frame the phenomena of migration. Over time, scientific research about this topic has shown considerable prospects for application in an equal number of disciplines. As Hein De Haas, Mark Miller and Stephen Castles argue, research on migration «is interdisciplinary: sociology, anthropology, political science, history, economics, demography, psychology, cultural studies, law, archaeology and the humanities are all relevant».[6] Due to the level of interdisciplinarity that defines this research field, providing adequate definitions, or universally endorsed theories, to summarize its scope has proven to be a challenging task.[7]

Recent scholarship on migration could have taken a step forward. It is no coincidence that a current increase of scientific studies speak of 'post-migration', adopting a theoretical framework that on one hand shows respect and awareness for the intrinsic diversity of contemporary societies, and on the other, invites an epistemological overturn with respect to the canonical production of knowledge about migration.[8] Although mostly used as an analytical lens to investigate and frame cultural, artistic, and literary representations, as in the case of this thesis, post-migration emphasises the necessity to

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[6] Hein de Haas – Stephen Castles – Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration 6th Edition*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London 2022: 44.

[7] Given the high degree of interdisciplinarity that characterizes this research field, presenting sufficiently precise definitions or universally accepted theories to encapsulate its breadth is indeed a formidable challenge. See Douglas Massey – Joaquìn Arango – Graeme Hugo – Ali Kouaouci – Adela Pellegrino – Edward Taylor, *Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal*, in «Population and Development Review», 19 (1993), 3, pp. 431-466. According to Nathan Levy, Asya Pisarevskaya and Peter Scholten: «migration studies encompass research on all types of international and internal migration, migrants, and migration-related diversities» (Nathan Levy – Asya Pisarevskaya – Peter Scholten, *Between fragmentation and institutionalisation: the rise of migration studies as a research field*, in «Comparative Migration Studies», 8 (2020), 24, pp. 1-24: 2).

[8] Research on the theoretical applications of post-migration has experienced exponential growth over the past two decades. The vast majority of studies have been conducted in German and English. Below is a list of the primary contributions in this field.
In German: Erol Yildiz – Mark Hill, *Nach der Migration. Postmigrantische Perspektiven jenseits der Parallelgesellschaft*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2015. Marc Hill – Erol Yildiz, *Postmigrantische Visionen. Erfahrungen – Ideen – Reflexionen*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2018. Naika Foroutan – Juliane Karakayali – Riem Spielhaus, *Postmigrantische Perspektiven. Ordnungssysteme, Repräsentationen, Kritik*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt-New York 2018. Alexander Böttcher – Marc Hill – Anita Rotter – Frauke Schacht – Maria A. Wolf – Erol Yildiz, *Migration bewegt und bildet. Kontrapunktische Betrachtungen*, Innsbruck university press, Innsbruck 2019.
In English: Moritz Schramm – Sten Pultz Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Mirjam Gebauer – Hans Christian Post – Sabrina Vitting-Seerup – Frauke Wiegand, *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts: The Postmigrant Condition*, Routledge, London-New York 2019; Anna Meera Gaonkar – Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen – Hans Christian Post – Moritz Schramm, *Postmigration. Art, Culture, and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2021.

adopt alternative tools to observe contemporary societies in their current transitory condition in order to renegotiate beliefs and certainties against the backdrop of ever-growing diversity.

A post-migrant perspective allows the phenomenon of migration to be investigated in a holistic way, refusing essentialist perspectives which tends to construct individual categories, such as migrants, in stereotypical and negative tones. In order to mark the step that differentiates post-migration from other frames of reading, Regina Römhild speaks of 'migrantologies', meaning that «migration research is often understood merely as 'research about migrants', producing a 'migrantology' that is capable of little more than repeatedly illustrating and reproducing itself».[9] Post-migration, in contrary, locates migration, its effects, and its aesthetics as a pivotal factor in social, cultural, economic and political dynamics, becoming a new point of reference. In other words, compared to other theoretical framings that have been considering the very same topic throughout the years, this concept adopts a stance that embodies both continuity with and a critical perspective on the preceding tradition. As further detailed in the following chapters, post-migration presents itself as a new research phase for migration studies that corrects and changes the premises upon which the phenomenon of migration has traditionally been approached: a social phenomenon that must be read according to its impact on the whole society, and not only in relation to the biographical traits of migrants or their descendants'.

In the European context, for instance, Scandinavian countries have been representing an interesting case study on this matter for over 50 years.[10] The multicultural and post-migrant nature of the Scandinavian society is the result of the sedimentation of migratory flows and the indelible mark they left on the territory. The pace with which this transformation takes place invites a detailed study of the complex dynamics, practices and

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[9] See Regina Römhild, *Beyond the bounds of the ethnic: for postmigrant cultural and social research*, in «Journal of Aesthetics and Culture», 9 (2017), 2, pp. 69-75: 70. According to Kerilyn Schewel, one could even refer to a 'mobility bias' within migration studies, indicating that research in migration tends to primarily focus on the 'drivers' of migration. Even though Schewel employs this term to address the lack of investigation into the reasons that deter individuals from moving, whether due to inability or unwillingness, the concept of 'mobility bias' aligns well with the idea of post-migration. If the figure of the migrant is etymologically associated with the idea of movement, the societies that host migrants are, on the contrary, often portrayed as ideologically, culturally, and linguistically immobile rather than recognizing their mobile and transitory nature. See Kerilyn Schewel, *Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies*, in «International Migration Review», 54 (2019), 2, pp. 328-355.

[10] The term Scandinavia generally implies a geographical area that encompasses several countries, including Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, as well as the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and even Finland. However, in this thesis, 'Scandinavia' will only be used to refer to the first three countries.

realities that emerge from such transformative processes. Contemporary art, and notably literary production, offers valuable material for rediscovering to which extent migration renegotiates many of those fundamental assumptions that Western culture has been relying on for so long. The Scandinavian literary reservoir represents an extremely useful source in this sense. Furthermore, migration infiltrates the discursive constructions and practices that encompass themes such as identity and belonging in Scandinavian countries, on the one hand rejecting the systematic exclusion that keeps this phenomenon apart from social narratives, and on the other leaving an aesthetic, yet often ignored, imprint on everyday life.

Before outlining in detail the methodological part, the body of works, and the research questions, it is right and proper to add one final premise. This thesis, which undoubtedly takes its point of departure from a methodological framework of German, Anglophone, and Nordic origin, is closely and variously connected to a specific interest that is also beginning to surface in Italy. In recent years, in fact, Italian academic research on Scandinavian studies has developed a particular enthusiasm for this literary branch. This network has created a deep synergy and fruitful exchange of ideas and opinions among professors, researchers, and students. Numerous contributions examining this new literary phenomenon have been produced, representing an extremely valuable source of inspiration for the conduct of this work. Many of these contributions will also be cited and used in the following chapters.

First of all, it is paramount to mention *Storia delle letterature scandinave: dalle origini a oggi*. This book is a recent and extensive work that is the result of the collaboration of a large group of Italian scholars and covers about a millennium of history and literature in Scandinavian countries.[11] Notably, the chapter entitled *Letteratura e migrazioni* (Literature and Migration) accurately describes the path of this type of literature and how it has progressively affected the countries of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.[12] In addition, the publications in Italian and English by Massimo Ciaravolo, who

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[11] Massimo Ciaravolo (ed.), *Storia delle letterature scandinave: dalle origini a oggi*, Iperborea, Milano 2019.

[12] The chapter is divided into three sections – one for each of country – plus an introduction. The first (Sweden), as well as the introduction, was written by Massimo Ciaravolo, the second (Denmark) by Bruno Berni, and the third (Norway) by Sara Culeddu. Each section follows chronologically the development of this new type of literature and describes in parallel the changes in Scandinavian societies. The names of the main authors and their respective works are also accurately provided. See Massimo Ciaravolo – Bruno

has been devoted to exploring this new literary facet for years, as well as the significant translation efforts of Bruno Berni, Alessandro Bassini, and Katia De Marco, have introduced new voices from the Scandinavian literary scene to the attention of the Italian public.[13]

Furthermore, this topic has also found considerable interest among young Italian doctoral students in Scandinavian Studies, including the author of this thesis. Luca Gendolavigna's dissertation, published in 2023 under the title *Storie di identità. La Svezia postmigrante*, contains a thorough analysis of some of the most important works composed by Swedish authors of foreign descent, with particular reference to the use of multilingual practices, the search for a new sense of belonging, and alternative declinations for the ethnic-based idea of *svenskhet* (Swedishness) within the new generations of Swedes.[14] Edoardo Checcucci's dissertation, at the time of writing still a work in progress, focuses mainly on the literary productions of Norwegian authors of diverse cultural and ethnic background. Checcucci too dedicates great attention to the topics of multilingualism, belonging, and, similarly to Gendolavigna, to the different renegotiation processes that are slowly modifying the idea of *norskhet* (Norwegianness) within the Norwegian post-migrant context.

This network has been extremely important for the young scholars on the path they have taken. The present thesis not only aligns in its research focus akin to these two works but also presents similar choices as far as primary and secondary literature are concerned. Furthermore, they all employ a similar a close reading methodology with the aim of analysing the Scandinavian post-migrant landscape through the respective selected bodies

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Berni – Sara Culeddu, *Letteratura e migrazione*, in Massimo Ciaravolo (ed.), *Storia delle letterature scandinave: dalle origini a oggi*, Iperborea, Milano 2019, pp. 884-911.

[13] See Massimo Ciaravolo, *La narrativa di Marjaneh Bakhtiari tra Malmö e Teheran: multiculturalità e memoria intergenerazionale*, in «A.I.O.N. Sezione Germanica. Studi Tedeschi, Filologia Germanica, Studi Nordici, Studi Nederlandesi», 27 (2017), 1/2, pp. 41-59; Massimo Ciaravolo, *Mitizzare il quotidiano. Halim "sultano del pensiero" in* Ett öga rött *di Jonas Hassen Khemiri*, in Andrea Binelli – Alessandro Fambrini (eds.), *Mitologi, mitografi e mitomani. Tracce del mito attraverso i secoli. Scritti per i 65 anni di Fulvio Ferrari*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2020, pp. 217-229; Massimo Ciaravolo, *Collaborative Authorship and Postmigration in Jonas Hassen Khemiri's Novel* Montecore, in «European Journal of Scandinavian Studies», 51 (2021), 2, pp. 199-219. See also Yahya Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, italian trans. by Bruno Berni, Rizzoli, Milano 2014; Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Tutto quello che non ricordo*, italian trans. by Alessandro Bassini, Iperborea, Milano 2017; Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Una tigre molto speciale (Montecore)*, italian trans. by Alessandro Bassini, Guanda, Modena 2009; Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *La clausola del padre*, italian trans. by Katia de Marco, Einaudi, Torino 2022; Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Chiamo i miei fratelli*, italian trans. by Katia de Marco, Einaudi, Torino 2022.

[14] Luca Gendolavigna, *Storie di identità: la Svezia postmigrante*, Aracne, Roma 2023.

of works. This dissertation, however, is the first to approach the topic of post-migration by applying it to the literature of all three Scandinavian countries, providing a comprehensive and comparative analysis within this culturally, linguistically, and historically interconnected geopolitical area.

3. Body of Works and Methodology

The aim of this thesis is considering how the perspective of post-migration can indeed affect society and change its narrow view over the phenomenon of migration itself. When it comes to applying a post-migrant perspective for the analysis of literary works, however, it is hard to define a specific theoretical line, since such point of view is still in its early development phases. There are therefore limited universally acknowledged models to depart from. As Sten Moslund and Anne Ring Petersen claim:

> the postmigrant perspective is invariably curved by the academic disciplines within which the perspective is employed (such as the various methodologies and analytical practices particular to, for instance, the study of performance art, literary studies and film studies, respectively).[15]

According to Moslund and Petersen, the elaboration of analytical methods in the various artistic fields has certainly been affected by the influences of earlier traditions offering interesting insights that can resonate well with a post-migrant theoretical frame. A post-migrant perspective does not consider the theoretical approaches that have been framing migration over time as erroneous but brings them back to investigate how encounter with diversity leaves indelible traces in present-day Scandinavia. A post-migrant perspective, then, turns towards different theoretical frameworks in order to explore the multi-faceted networks that form a post-migrant society «from within the very interaction between society, theory and the spheres of the arts».[16] Therefore, it is also necessary to understand why such perspective can help us develop a different understanding of migration and distinguish it from earlier 'migrantologies'.

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[15] See Sten Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen, *Introduction: Towards a Postmigrant Frame of Reading*, in Moritz Schramm – Sten Pultz Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Mirjam Gebauer – Christian Post – Sabrina Vitting-Serup – Frauke Wiegand (eds.), *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts – The Postmigrant Condition*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, pp. 67-75: 68.
[16] Moslund – Ring Petersen, *Introduction: Towards a Postmigrant Frame of Reading*, cit.: 68.

Building on this assumption, the aim of the next chapter will be to draw the historical path that has led migration studies scholars to explore the concept of post-migration. Although it will not exhaust the entire amount of theories that have been carried out during the past century, the first chapter will nonetheless help the reader trace a line that connects the past to a more recent scholarship. Consequently, after having outlined the main features of the post-migrant analytical tool, the analysis of the selected body of works will follow.

The method of analysis will be characterized by a close contact with the texts. The body of works are all composed after the beginning of the 21st century, so to directly adhere to a current representation of Scandinavian societies. The empirical analysis will seek to capture the traces left by migration, bringing out the socio-political and aesthetical burden of their message. Moreover, such reflections will allow highlights of the subversive message of the works against the backdrop of binary social structures, in order to propose a new normative, social view. To do that, support will be provided by the coordinates outlined by Anne Ring Petersen, Moritz Schramm and Frauke Wiegand, designed to investigate the 'migratory' in artistic and cultural representation both as an aesthetic manifestation and as a socio-political issue.[17] According to the scholars, it is possible to distinguish three different 'spaces', turning literary representation into a social arena where migration reproduces and rethinks social dynamics. Post-migration orients the analysis towards a space of claim, in which the focus shifts onto those conflictual negotiations unfolding in society which allow migration to use its own voice; a space of clearing, where migration appears as a pivotal role around which negotiating new strategies of identification; and as a space of creation allowing migration to present itself in new guises. By aesthetically reproducing a social reality that is embodied in the perpetual, 'migratory' movement of identity, language, and culture, such movement can emerge as locally bound in the very structure of contemporary societies, thus deconstructing their immobile self-image.

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[17] Anne Ring Petersen – Moritz Schramm – Frauke Wiegand, *Criticism and Perspectives*, in Moritz Schramm –Sten Pultz Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Mirjam Gebauer – Christian Post – Sabrina Vitting-Serup – Frauke Wiegand (eds.), *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts – The Postmigrant Condition*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, pp. 50-65.

3.1 Space-claiming

As a space of claim, the post-migrant perspective will focus on the processes of reappropriation, through which migration manages to regain control over different aspects of societies and to describe them from its point of view. It implies «taking something (back) and therefore necessitates struggles and conflict, i.e. engaging with the ambiguities and contradictions that arise along the demarcation line of those who embrace plurality and those who do not».[18] Language might provide interesting cues to depart from in order to explore how migration claims back its right to speak for itself in the new social condition. Many authors adopt a multilingual style to take a stand against the backdrop of monolingual identity parameters, that seek to enclose different linguistic manifestations in a hierarchical ladder. In order to better frame the discussion on the interrelationship between migration, language and society, critical considerations about the liminal space making the borderline between monolingualism and multilingualism are crucial. In this sense, Yasemin Yildiz's studies on 'post-monolingualism' heavily challenges the way the former and the latter are perceived as separated units. According to the Yildiz, today's world is still built around a categorical separation of territories and languages, which are reflected in the categories of nation-states and mother tongues. Nonetheless, as the scholar argues, many societies find themselves is a 'post-monolingual condition'.[19] This means that the conception of an unambiguous association between one single culture and one single national language is denying the role of multilingual practices in people's daily encounter with the 'Other'. Migration has played throughout history a fundamental part in the formation of national languages and continues to this day to exert its influence in Scandinavian countries, especially in the evolution of linguistic strategies and sociolinguistic contexts. The tension between the two linguistic dimensions expresses conflicting and often incompatible positions on a particularly sensitive issue. Contrarily, such tension is aesthetically displayed in a fluent, dynamic exchange that cuts across linguistic boundaries, and constantly create new ones. To further explore these considerations, two authors have been selected  who show a clear attempt to reappropriate a language that can represent the change induced by migration. The first is Jonas Hassen Khemiri (Stockholm, 1978), a Swedish writer born to a Tunisian

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[18] Ring Petersen – Schramm – Wiegand, *Criticism and Perspectives*, cit.: 60.
[19] Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, Fordham University Press, New York 2012.

father and a Swedish mother. Khemiri's works are often praised for the playful linguistic style that characterizes the author's prose. For him, language becomes the main tool with which the author reveals to the reader the post-migrant features of the world in which he grew up. The second author is Yahya Hassan (Aarhus, 1995 – Aarhus, 2020), a Dane born to Palestinian immigrants who identifies language as a gateway to present himself in a world that does not seem to truly understand him. Tragically, Hassan was found dead in his apartment in Aarhus in 2020. The literary works chosen for this chapter are Khemiri's novel *Montecore: en unik tiger*, published in 2006, and Yahya Hassan's collection of poetry *Yahya Hassan*, in 2013. The two books are written respectively in Swedish and Danish.

Following Yildiz's thesis, the analysis of these two works will allow the deconstruction of the prominent role assigned to the mother tongue as the sole authentic vehicle for self-representation, demonstrating how identity construction can follow multiple linguistic trajectories and different choices that reflect the social, linguistic, and cultural dynamics taking place in such condition.

## 3.2 Space-clearing

This specific space orients the analysis of the texts towards the overcoming of categorical binary distinctions between migrants and non-migrants, mobility, and sedentariness, belonging and unbelonging. Consequently, a 'space-clearing' «prompts us to turn away from obsolete methodologies, outworn institutional habits and essentialist concepts».[20] This focuses primarily on elements that reverses such dichotomies, by presenting the encounter with the 'Other' as potential moment for deconstructing structural binary thinking. In order to compensate for the lack of a cosmopolitan culture, the considerations of Stuart Hall, Ulrich Beck and Marsha Meskimmon regarding cosmopolitanism as a relational process of identification will provide useful theoretical points of reference for describing how identity could, or should, be conceived in the post-migrant condition. A vernacular cosmopolitanism, as defined by Hall, returns the concept of cosmopolitanism to its relational, social dimension, deconstructing the contradictory hyper-individualization of the term.[21] Eventually, this results in the formation of a

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[20] Ring Petersen – Schramm – Wiegand, *Criticism and Perspectives*, cit.: 60.
[21] Stuart Hall, *Cosmopolitanism – Conversation with Stuart Hall*, in *Apollo – University of Cambridge Repository*, 27 September 2006, http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/183653, [video file, Last

cosmopolitan mindset, as well as individually developed cosmopolitan competences, that define different processes of adaptation while contradicting at the same time a binary thinking methodology. The chapter will also accentuate the urge to rethink, and perhaps expand, the notion of 'belonging' as well as the way different people express their sense of national loyalty in a historical period of constant cross-bordering.[22]

This is the case presented by Argentinean-Norwegian writer Veronica Salinas (Buenos Aires, 1977) in her book *Og – en argentinsk aupairs ordbok*, published in 2016, and by Norwegian writer Aasne Linnestå (Rjukan, 1963) in her collection of poetry *Morsmål*, which came out in 2012. Both works are written in Norwegian. The analysis of these two authors, characterized by completely different experiences and backgrounds – the former was born in Argentina and moved to Norway at a later stage, whereas the latter is the only ethnically Scandinavian writer analysed in this thesis – will seek to bring out the aesthetics of migration by describing the strategies they adopt to cope with a reality made of spatio-temporal overlaps, multicultural memory, cosmopolitan imagination, and a reversal of national-based identifying parameters.

## 3.3 Space-creating

This space, which will be explored in the final chapter, shows how a post-migrant perspective on literature can also work towards a creative dimension, opening a window to explore new tendencies in literature that deals with the topic of migration. For example, an alternative interpretative key can be the in-depth study of different literary genres that do not straightforwardly tackle migration-related topics, but nonetheless provide interesting cues about the post-migrant condition. This leads to an 'ease of presence', as Sara Upstone and Sten Moslund describe it, which seems to signal an increasingly blurred representation of issues connected to the racialization of migrants' descendants, the multicultural and conflictual context of Scandinavian suburbs, along with the construction of hybrid identities. The gradual adaptation of society to the presence of migration invites to experiment with the theme itself, providing new insights to observe its influence. Norwegian writer of Chilean descent Maria Navarro-Skaranger (Oslo, 1994) wrote *Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner*, published in 2015. Navarro-Skaranger's book

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accessed 23 October 2023].
[22] See Emilio Calvani, *BeHeimatung – Riconfigurare il Concetto di Heimat nella Scandinavia della Post-migrazione*, in «NuBE. Nuova Biblioteca Europea» (2021), 2, pp. 179-209.

is a diary account of a teenager that seems to point exactly towards the direction traced by Upstone and Moslund. In this work, written in an 'unconventional' Norwegian, the effects of migration almost turn the phenomenon into a trivial reality of everyday life, in which multiculturalism and heterogeneity are perceived as the actual norm, and completely assimilated in daily social dynamics.

Moreover, exploring the way paraliterary elements frame issues related to migration may represent an active challenge to and a concrete form of deconstruction of ethnic-based artificial fabrications such as 'immigrant literature'. Exploring the 'post-migrant' in literary works that combine topics such as discrimination and racism with features connected to different narrative strategies can incentivize a different reception, without weakening the text's deconstructive reversal of binary representations. If literary genres are constructions, as Tzvetan Todorov and Jacques Derrida claim, in the sense that they function «as 'horizons of expectation'», transgressing the boundaries between different literary genres may prove decisive in supporting post-migration epistemological change.[23] Notably, filtering the topic of migration through the prism of dystopian sci-fi literature may provide important and unexplored aspects for this type of research. As advocated by French philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy, observing in retrospective the world's current state of things from the position of a dystopian scenario constitute the basis for a concrete preventive action against the possible dangers that the future holds. For this type of analysis, cues and insights will be drawn from a dystopic, sci-fi novel written by Swedish writer of Ugandan descent Johannes Anyuru (Borås, 1979), *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar*, published in 2017. Anyuru's novel is written in Swedish.

In conclusion, it should be underlined that the three points mentioned above do not represent a strict categorization, nor do they intend to draw boundaries between the different works. Instead, the spaces that a post-migrant perspective opens up represent subversive coordinates that will dialogue and intertwine with each other. The topics of language and identity formation, for instance, reverberate, in different ways, in all the selected body of works selected, as well as a certain degree of creativity can be traced in

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[23] Tzvetan Todorov – Richard Berrong, *The Origin of Genres*, in «New Literary History», 8 (1976), 1, pp. 159-170: 163. See also Jacques Derrida, *The Law of Genre*, translated by Avital Ronell, in «Critical Inquiry», 7 (1980), 1, pp. 55-81.

all of them. In conclusion, the analysis will always be oriented to the role played by migration in reshaping the meta-narratives of contemporary Scandinavian societies.

4. Hypotheses and Research Questions

To summarize, this dissertation will orient the scope of the research towards three key points that strongly align with the concept of post-migration within contemporary Scandinavian literary landscape: the post-monolingual condition, the concept of cosmopolitanism, and the detection of innovative tendencies within this kind of literary production. These three aspects could represent a crucial point of departure to reveal new, unexplored realities within the Scandinavian countries, challenging the commonly held perceptions that tend to restrict the presence of migration to a negative, and ignored, issue.

The reconsideration of the role played by migration plays in the selected body of works will then allow to formulate several research questions that will frame the current face of Scandinavian contemporary societies from a different perspective. The first question is about the balancing potential of the concept itself, which allows to identify migration as a possibility for overcoming ethnic-based identity patterns: Can a post-migrant perspective represent a benchmark to embrace a new form of social balance in contemporary societies? The second one moves toward the way the concept of post-migration emerge in the works selected: In which ways does a post-migrant perspective redefine our positioning toward migration? Eventually, the analysis will allow for the advancement of reflections relating to the transitional phase that characterizes Scandinavian societies. Having considered the concept of post-migration and its possible applications in the Scandinavian context, the question arises almost spontaneously: What is the image of Scandinavian countries that emerges from this perspective, from a sociolinguistic, cultural, and literary standpoint?

## 1. Migration Studies – an Overview

1.1 Migration Studies: Economics, Sociology, and Politics

The first theories about the phenomenon of migration in the modern era, developed between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, studied migrant flows with great curiosity. Scientific interest was perhaps less addressed towards the social and cultural consequences determined by the movement of people, and more inclined to provide definitions of anthropological interest. The goal was to identify precise and universal patterns that could ontologically frame migration in its categorical aspects.

One of the first theoretical models was designed by British geographer Ernst Ravenstein as early as the end of the 19th century, in an attempt to synthesize the so-called 'Laws of migration'.[1] Based on empirical analysis, he drew up a series of laws in order to individuate the main defining patterns as far as motivations, routes and needs of migrant groups were concerned. His conclusions showed that most of the migratory movements took place over short distances, whereas long-distance movements converged almost exclusively into the largest and most developed urban areas. Furthermore, the migratory destinations continuously negotiated their attractiveness over time. In the United States, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, two exponents of the Chicago school from the early 20th century, focused more on the conflictual nature of migratory flows, comparing this phenomenon to the spread of infesting plants. According to scholars, the arrival of new communities within an urban ecology, already structured according to the needs of a particular people, would necessarily give rise to a contact between two or more groups. Such contact would, in turn, set in motion a series of processes of competition for dominance which would converge into a conflict, and eventually structure a fixed hierarchy.[2]

The subsequent research during the second half of the 20th century connected the topic of migration to the radical transformations which occurred after the Second World War. As Joaquín Arango states, this period saw migration research skyrocket, inviting an integrative approach that involved several scientific disciplines, including the fields of

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[1] Ernst Georg Ravenstein, *'The Laws of Migration'*, in «Journal of the Statistical Society of London», 48 (1885), 2, pp. 167-235.
[2] See Robert Park – Ernest Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2021.

economics, sociology, and geography.[3] With the breakthrough of new globalized economic systems, several other studies attempted to provide useful models to understand which kind of factors would influence the choice to migrate. In this regard, De Haas has recently proposed a helpful paradigm to divide the amount of theories into two categories: functionalist theories and structural-historical theories. Amongst the functionalist theories one may place, for instance, the push/pull model developed by Everett Lee. In Lee's opinion, pushing and pulling factors would represent the true driving force that motivated migrants' choices in terms of mobility, destination, and timing.[4] Another model was developed by John Harris and Michael Todaro, according to whom the decision to migrate was always preceded by an accurate calculation on the difference in income between areas with a weaker economy (such as rural areas) and stronger economy (such as urban areas).[5] The main problem, as appointed by De Haas, was again the excessively generalizing nature with which these theories tried to frame migration: «Functionalist migration theories have inherent difficulties explaining the socially and geographically differentiated nature of migration processes».[6]

Among the most influential historical-structuralist theories, De Haas places Immanuel Wallerstein's 'World System Theory'. The American economist had theorized the existence of a world capitalist economic system subdivided into highly unbalanced groups with an equally unbalanced division of labour in which each member of society found its own location.[7] Andre Frank, one of the main exponents of the 'Dependency Theory', argued that migration was one of the many consequences of the exploitation between developed and underdeveloped countries. Even this type of approach to migration would not be spared with criticism. As de Haas himself explains: «the central

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[3] See Joaquìn Arango, *Explaining Migration: A Critical View*, in «International Social Science Journal», 165 (2000), 52, pp. 283-296. For a brief outline of the main theories of migration during the 20th century see also De Haas – Castles – Miller, *The Age of Migration 6th Edition*, cit.: 42-75.

[4] Pull factors include higher standards of living, better school education, and job opportunities. Push factors include harsh living conditions such as famine and drought, low living standards, and few job opportunities. See Everett Lee, *A Theory of Migration*, in «Demography», 3 (1966), 1, pp. 47-57.

[5] See John Harris – Michael Todaro, *Migration, Unemployment and Development: A Two-Sector Analysis*, in *The American Economic Review*, 60 (1970), 1, pp. 126-142.

[6] De Haas, *A Theory of Migration*, cit.: 6.

[7] Therefore, migration was viewed as an outcome of the capitalist global interconnectedness that had been shaping the modern world since the 16th century, according to Wallerstein. In his research, the scholar introduced a hierarchical classification of societies worldwide into three categories: core, periphery, and semi-periphery. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis*, in «Comparative Studies in Society and History», 16 (1974), 4, pp. 387-415.

problem of such historical-structural views is that they leave hardly any room for human agency. They tend to depict migrants as pawns […] or as victims of capitalism who have no choice but to migrate in order to survive».[8]

## 1.2 Assimilation vs. Integration

Much research is also dedicated to the adoption of measures designed to manage the encounter of individuals from different countries and cultures. With the exponential increase in international migratory flows, Western countries began to develop solutions to manage growing demographic and cultural diversity, leading to a paranoid politicization of the topic. The declinations of such processes were accurately labelled after the degree of adaptation. Analytical terms such as 'integration', 'assimilation', 'inclusion', and 'acculturation' became key within the field of social and migration studies.[9] In the 1960s, American sociologist Milton Gordon's research resulted in the formulation of a conceptual framework strongly connected to the process of cultural, linguistic, and social assimilation. According to him, assimilation was the best suited strategy to deal with multicultural diversity, especially on the grounds that the great majority of migrants would often settle permanently overseas.[10] Psychologist John Berry proposed a multi-layered model of acculturation. For the scholar, acculturation meant that migrants' adaptation strategies depended to a certain extent on their attitude towards the new cultural milieu, and to another, on their willingness to negotiate the loss or maintenance of their own cultural values.[11]

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[8] De Haas, *A Theory of Migration*, cit.: 8.

[9] See David Sam – John Berry, *Acculturation: When Individuals and Groups of Different Cultural Backgrounds Meet*, in «Perspective on Sociological Science», 5 (2010), 4, pp. 472-481.

[10] According to Gordon's model, there are seven stages that constitute the assimilation process: cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identificational assimilation, attitude receptional assimilation, behavior receptional assimilation, and civic assimilation. See Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in America: Theory and Reality*, in «Daedalus», 90 (1961), 2, pp. 263-285. See also Richard Alba – Victor Nee, *Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration*, in «The International Migration Review», 31 (1997), 4, pp. 826-874. An alternative model of assimilation, 'segmented assimilation', was proposed by Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou. According to the two scholars, traditional models of assimilation were overly confined to the experiences of the first generation of migrants. The intergenerational perspective thus began to be considered in the study of migrants' integrative dynamics as early as the early 1990s. See Alejandro Portes – Min Zhou, *The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants*, in «The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science», 530 (1993), pp. 74-96: 81-82.

[11] Berry identifies four possible scenarios: Assimilation (adoption of the target culture); Integration (combined adoption of the target and source cultures); Separation (retention of the target culture and rejection of the target culture); Marginalization (rejection of the target culture and rejection of the source

Migration studies soon found their way into different political orientations, that would influence the development of a migratory policy in different countries.[12] As an alternative to the strictness of the American assimilationist approach, a European integration policy could seem, at first sight, better suited to frame diversity in a more respectful way.[13] In the European context, migration debates have usually preferred to focus on integration as the ideal roadmap in order to discuss the growing ethnic and cultural diversity that was slowly becoming a distinctive feature of many European countries. As spelled out in the 2004 *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU*, integration would differ from assimilation, and would instead be intended as «a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents».[14] Unfortunately, the supposedly morality of a European commitment to the integration of foreigners proved to solely be a more inclusive alternative in theory.

## 1.3 The Multicultural Backlash in European Countries

During the 1950s, the prosperous European economic development initially opened the gates for cheap labour, such as guest-workers and diasporic groups. At a later stage,

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culture). See John Berry, *Cross-cultural Psychology: Research and Application*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, pp. 271-292. See also John Berry, *Immigration, Acculturation, Adaptation*, in «Applied Psychology: An International Review», 46 (1997), 1, pp. 5-68. Although fit to describe a historical period of enormous transformation, these theories did not lie beyond possible criticism. See Christopher Houtkamp, *Beyond Assimilation and Integration: The Shift to 'National' and 'Transnational' Inclusion*, in «Acta Universitatis Sapientiae. European and Regional Studies», 8 (2015), 1, pp. 73-87: 75-76.

[12] For instance, the idea of a 'melting pot', based on an ideal, peaceful existence between different ethnic groups, was intended to narrate and consolidate a purely American collective feeling, imposing over time absolute cultural and identity uniformity. See Sebahattin Ziyanak, *Critically Assessing Classic Assimilation Theory and Alternative Perspectives for Immigrants and the Second Generation in the United States*, in «Race, Gender & Class», 22 (2015), 1/2, pp. 143-149: 148.

[13] «The discussion about assimilation as an academic concept was received quite differently in Europe than in the United States. American scholars commonly used and still use it, while integration is the more popular concept in European immigration countries» (See Anna Xymena Wieczorek, *Migration and (Im)mobility – Biographical Experiences of Polish Migrants in Germany and Canada*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2018: 31).

[14] See European Commission, *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU*, 19 November 2004, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/common-basic-principles-immigrant-integration-policy-eu_en, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]. The difference between the two notions, according to Hoffman-Nowotny, is in the type of participation: assimilation represents 'participation in the culture of a social system', while integration means 'participation in the structure of a social system'. See Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny, *Sociological Approach toward a General Theory of Migration*, in «International Migration Review», 15 (1981), 1, pp. 64-83. According to Hartmut Esser, assimilation and integration differ theoretically but empirically converge into an assimilation process that almost exclusively engages with migrants. Hartmut Esser, *Inklusion, Integration und ethnische Schichtung*, in «Journal für Konflikt-und Gewaltforschung» 1 (1999), 1, pp. 5-34.

an end was put to the entry of workers while the borders remained opened for refugees and asylum seekers from some of the more at-risk areas of the globe. As Rita Chin argues, the period that runs from the end of the war to the end of the 20th century is crucial to understand the current socio-political condition of many European states. According to the scholar, 1945 was often described by great European powers' mediatic networks as a watershed year from which the whole continent would begin to present itself in its new guise of diversity, acceptance, and openness. This assumption was simply meant to conceal the colonial history and the aggressive policies adopted by many states from the public debate.[15]

This situation led several states, including Sweden, to adopt political and management strategies, such as 'multiculturalism'. A multiculturalist ideology began to gain greater attention starting in the late 1970s. The adoption of social-political principles designed to implement a multicultural society in Canada and Australia had a significant backlash on European countries in the following decades.[16] Unfortunately, such a project proved to be quite ineffective and limited to politically correct rhetoric. Many scholars even began to speak of the 'death of multiculturalism'.[17] The attempt to impose a political project based on a multicultural reciprocal respect achieved the opposite result: giving priority to the respect for plurality at the expense of individual rights proved to be a counterproductive move. The emancipation of ethno-cultural groups as distinct elements coexisting within the same social space, induces the reification of each specific cultural content as an indicative parameter for the identity construction of a particular group,

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[15] As Chin argues: «In most of press coverage, however, these longer historical connections (and entitlements) were largely obscured», replacing it with an alternative narrative cleansed of the stains of the past. Many states tried to keep a low profile as far as migration management was concerned. However, the significant number of guest workers who did not return to their home countries made it necessary to acknowledge migration's impact on the European continent. See Rita Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2017, pp. 29.

[16] Canada officially adopted multiculturalism in 1971. Australia was declared a multicultural nation by Prime Minister Whitlam two years later. In Europe, this policy has mainly united northern European countries such as Britain, Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden. See Pasi Saukkonen, *Multiculturalism and Cultural Policy in Northern Europe*, in «Nordisk kulturpolitisk tidsskrift», 16 (2014), 2, pp. 178-200.

[17] Many scholars have even gone so far as to metaphorically theorize the 'death' of a multicultural political project. See Steven Vertovec – Susanne Wessendorf, *Introduction – Assessing the Backlash against multiculturalism in Europe*, in Steven Vertovec – Susanne Wessendorf (eds.), *The Multiculturalism Backlash – European discourses, policies and practices*, Routledge, London 2010, pp. 1-32. While acknowledging the failure of such a political project, Tariq Modood sees proposals such as multiculturalism as a potential example of a post-immigration space. See Tariq Modood, *Understanding 'Death of Multiculturalism' discourse is understanding multiculturalism*, in «Journal of Multicultural Discourses», 9 (2014), 3, pp. 201-211.

consequently creating rifts between parallel societies.[18] The attempts to implement a multicultural policy, as Rita Chin continues, were unsuccessful and had significant consequences on the socio-political level:

> The overriding desire to avoid potentially explosive national debates […] ultimately set the scenes for a major backlash, as a more conservative and far-right political forces propelled the problem of how to deal with new forms of social diversity onto center stage during the 1980s. Broader questions of 'race' and national identity were about to explode across the continent.[19]

As aforementioned, towards the end of 20th century many European countries devoted considerable attention to the implementation of integrative strategies for citizens of foreign descent, enacting in a short span of time reforms to manage the increasingly heterogeneous character of societies.

This process, unfortunately, occurred side to side with a great economic recess during the 1980s that provoked inflation and unemployment, as well as nostalgia and discontent in public opinion, opening the gates to an exponential growth of xenophobic sentiments. As Christian Joppke argues, what he defines as the civic turn in migration management strategies starting from the mid-1980s «reflects a seismic shift [...] in all European societies».[20] The gradual reopening of a political debate regarding the integration processes took shape in the adoption of particular procedures, such as challenging language or history tests, designed to carry out a process of cultural assimilation.[21] It is therefore not surprising that a convergence in the policies adopted by European states can be identified during that period as follows:

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[18] See Teresa Buczkowska, *Integration Must Really Be a Two-way Process*, in *Dublin InQuirer*, 14 April 2021, https://www.dublininquirer.com/2021/04/14/teresa-integration-must-really-be-a-two-way-process, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).

[19] Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism*, cit.: 137.

[20] Christian Joppke, *The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State*, in «The British Journal of Sociology», 55 (2004), 2, pp. 237-257: 249.

[21] Christian Joppke confronts the cases of Germany, France, and the Netherlands. According to the scholar, the Netherlands was among the first countries to introduce structural solutions for migrant integration. They were followed by Finland, Denmark, Austria, Germany and France. See Christian Joppke, *Beyond national models: Civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe*, in «West European Politics», 30 (2007), 1, pp. 1-22. Karl Borevi explores this topic with reference to the Scandinavian countries. See Karin Borevi – Kristian Jensen – Per Mouritsen, *The civic turn of immigrant integration policies in the Scandinavian welfare states*, in «Comparative Migration Studies», 5 (2017), 9, pp. 1-14.

Since the mid-to-late 1990s, a broad liberalizing trend toward *jus soli*, dual citizenship and less administrative discretion has been qualified by an equally widespread trend toward conditioning access to residence and citizenship. Increasingly, access to legal entry, permanent residence and citizenship requires speaking the language of the host country, knowledge of liberal principles and the country's history, culture and institutions, and/or economic self-sufficiency-and states use instruments such as tests, courses and contracts to promote these goals.[22]

## 1.4 Evolution of Migration Studies: Diaspora and Post-Colonial Studies

Western societies' self-appointed right to remark their identity upon the existence of a deviant, external object is one of the leading points that inspired many scholars.[23] New globalized networks, however, would push exactly towards the opposite direction. During this time, academic research began to investigate the nature of global practices and to contextually renegotiate the cultural foundations of the western world. This type of transitory phase implemented critical awareness towards the image of the West «not as a subject of history but as a historically determined narrative articulated by individuals and social groups with often opposing material interests and world views».[24] Benedict Anderson problematizes the idea of nationhood by defining it as a social construction resulting from a collective imaginary in which a community recognizes itself.[25] Similarly, Erik Hobsbawm judges the concept of a nation as an invented tradition:

one specific interest of 'invented traditions' for, at all events, modern and contemporary historians ought to be singled out. They are highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the 'nation', with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest.[26]

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[22] Per Mouritsen – Kristian Kriegbaum Jensen – Stephen J. Larin, *Introduction: Theorizing the civic turn in European integration policies*, in «Ethnicities», 19 (2019), 4, pp. 595-613: 596.

[23] Edward Said, in his famous essay 'Orientalism', transmitted one of the most elaborate active reactions concerning the systematic division perpetuated by Western culture against anything symbolizing otherness: «The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire. [...] Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, peoples, and localities. [...] during the nineteenth century [...] every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric» (Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage books, New York 1979, pp. 202-204).

[24] See Lorenzo Casini, *The deconstruction of the West: an unaccomplished task. Towards 'the politics of imagining the West'*, in «Journal of the Social Imaginary», 4 (2015), 6, pp. 185-201: 188.

[25] Anderson defines the concepts of nation, nationality, and nationalism as cultural artifacts that arose spontaneously during the late 18th century as the result of a series of historical, political, and cultural forces that gave rise to a political community based on imagination. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso Books, London-New York 1983.

[26] See Eric Hobsbawm, *Introduction: Inventing Traditions*, in Eric Hobsbawm – Terence Ranger (eds.) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983, pp. 1-15: 13-14.

Wolfgang Welsch, with his studies on 'transculturality', critiqued the concept of discrete, mutually diverse cultures, with a direct attack to the school of thought of Johann Gottfried Herder, who represented the co-existence of different cultures through the image of closed spheres or separate islands.[27]

The general weakening of western nationalistic identity parameters opened the door to the new voices from the margin. Moreover, the growing interest in the study of the phenomenon of diaspora, produced a rich critical literature that shook old conceptions of notions such as homeland or national belonging. The dispersal of entire groups of people from their place of origin, due to ethnic or religious reasons, has over time resulted in displaced communities, gathered around a shared memory, an idealized place of origin and a group consciousness based on a common history. Originating in the 1970s, the traditional notion of diaspora, specifically tied to Jewish and Armenian experiences, began to establish itself as an umbrella term for any kind of dispersion. Whether those realities that emerged from the (post-)colonial period or those related to the masses of migrants scattered around the globe, a shared diasporic consciousness embodied, as Lily Cho states, a «condition of subjectivity», determined by a common sense of «unhomeliness».[28]

The rewriting of Eurocentric historiography from a different perspective would also seek to overturn the analytical categories. Among the major exponents of this critical current we find Homi Bhabha's much-cited work, *The Location of Culture*.[29] His notions of 'Hybridity', 'In-betweenness' and 'Third Space' have undoubtedly represented important reading cues in post-colonial studies. Such definitions became pivotal conceptual tools to frame the coexistence between migrants and non-migrants, colonizers and colonized, Europeans and non-Europeans, and the neo-colonial relationship between the global North and South. In his work, the author proposes an anthropological reflection

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[27] Welsch proposed alternatively that: «The concept of transculturality aims for a multi-meshed and inclusive, not separatist and exclusive understanding of culture. It intends a culture and society whose pragmatic feats exist not in delimitation, but in the ability to link and undergo transition». Wolfgang Welsch, *Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today*, in Mike Featherstone – Scott Lash (eds.), *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, Sage, London 1999, pp. 194-213: 200. See also Wolfgang Welsch, *Transculturality: The Changing Form of Cultures Today*, in «Aesthetics and Philosophy of Culture», 22 (2001), 2, pp. 59-86.

[28] See Lily Cho, *The Turn of Diaspora*, in «Topia» 17 (2018), 11, pp. 11-30. The comparison between a diasporic consciousness and the construction of a myth around the concept of 'homeland' is addressed by William Safran in the comparison of different diasporic communities from different cultures and geographical areas. See William Safran, *Diaspora in Modern Society: Myths of Homeland and Return*, in «Diaspora. A Journal of Transnational Studies» 1 (2011), 1, pp. 83-99.

[29] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London-New York 1994.

on the stand individuals are forced to take within the new post-modern and post-colonial space, thus exposing the transnational, and not fixed, nature of identity construction processes.

1.4.1 Transnational Turn in Migration Studies

The deconstruction of Western metaphysics led to the conceptualization of different theoretical frames in migration studies. According to Stephen Castles, the downfall of European migration policy was exactly due to the fact that migration studies had failed in presenting the phenomenon as «*a long-term social process with its own dynamics* starting from the migration decision in the country of origin right through to settlement, community formation and birth of new generations in the immigration country».[30]

As Peggy Levitt and Nina Nyberg-Sørensen state, the underlying problem with previous migration research tradition resided in the fact that it was completely overshadowed by the unchallenged conceptual idealization of the nation-state: «traditional migration theory, informed by and developed in service of the nation-state […], treated migrants as individuals who either departed (emigrants) or arrived (immigrants)».[31] Such definition represented a fundamental parameter until the 1990s. To further problematize the relation between migratory movement and an immobile nation, Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller coined the term 'methodological nationalism. The fears that «the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world»,[32] were so deeply rooted in people's consciousness as a normative aspect of social belonging «that they vanished from sight».[33] Wimmer's and Glick Schiller's urge for a different angle of interpretation shifted the focus of the research towards the transnational nature of migratory ties.

Much of traditional migration theories limited the scope of inquiry to an essential distinction, breaking down the migratory experience into smaller components. The place

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[30] See Castles, *Why migration policies fail*, cit.: 207 [italics in original].
[31] Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), *The Transnational Turn in Migration Studies*, October 2004, Global Migration Perspectives, No. 6, https://www.refworld.org/docid/42ce48754.html, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].
[32] Andreas Wimmer – Nina Glick Schiller, *Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-state Building, Migration and the Social Science*, in «Global Networks», 2 (2002), 4, pp. 301-334: 302.
[33] Andreas Wimmer – Nina Glick Schiller, *Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology*, in «The International Migration Review», 37 (2003), 3, pp. 576-610: 579.

of origin and place of arrival were treated as two different poles: a starting point and an arrival point. Very little attention, on the other hand, was dedicated to how these two poles existed in a dialogical relationship. The epistemological alternative offered by a transnational perspective put more emphasis on how migrants' social dynamics and cultural practices kept the country of origin and the country of arrival in a tight, invisible, bond.[34] Greater interest towards the formation of transnational connections was stimulated by the exponential development in transportation and telecommunications that linked together culturally and economically distant societies.[35] As a result, the boundaries of the social networks across which migrants could move and act did not remain confined in one single spot on the map.

Migratory interactions instead formed spaces beyond the very idea of nation-state units. Although the phenomenon of migration has always been defined by different transnational connections, many scholars have only recently contributed to the definition and critical analysis of a transnational consciousness.[36]

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[34] See Nina Glick Schiller – Linda Basch – Cristina Blanc-Szanton, *Towards a Definition of Transnationalism,* in «Annals of the New York Academy of Science», 645 (1992), 1, pp. ix-xiv. See also Nina Glick Schiller – Linda Basch – Cristina Blanc-Szanton, *Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration*, in «Annals of the New York Academy of Science», 645 (1992), 1, pp. 1-24. According to Saskia Sassen, economic activities with a global reach have gradually defined the parameters of what she refers to as the 'Global City'. This dual local/global nature has posed significant challenges to the political authority of national territories, thereby giving rise to an inherent paradox. See Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: Introducing a Concept*, in «Brown Journal of World Affairs», 11 (2005), 2, pp. 27-43. James F. Hollifield described the paradoxical condition in which Western countries find themselves through what he calls the 'liberal paradox': «Transnationalismus, in Form von Handel, grenzüberschreitende Investitionen und Migration kann die Souveränität und die Unabhängigkeit eines Staates jedoch herausfordern. Migration stellt in diesem Sinne eine besondere Herausforderung dar» (See James Hollifield, *Offene Weltwirtschaft und nationales Bürgerrecht: das liberale Paradox*, in Dietrich Thränhardt – Uwe Hunger (eds.), *Migration im Spannungsfeld von Globalisierung und Nationalstaat*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Wiesbaden 2003, pp. 35-57: 36: «However, transnationalism, in the form of trade, cross-border investment and migration, can challenge a state's sovereignty and independence. Migration poses a particular challenge in this regard»).

[35] Such practices take shape precisely in the transnational spaces that connect the country of arrival and the country of origin. See Alejandro Portes – Luis Guarnizo – Patricia Landolt, *The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field*, in «Ethnic and Racial Studies», 22 (1999), 2, pp. 217-237.

[36] Levitt argues that a transnational consciousness is found in the circulation of ideas and life practices. See Peggy Levitt, *Transnational Migration: Taking Stock and Future Direction*, in «Global Networks», 1 (2001), 3, pp. 195-216. Steven Vertovec, one of the main proponents of transnational theory states that: «ongoing transnational ties are, for a broad span of the non-migrant population, now coming to be regarded as unsurprising or nothing special, commonplace and unquestioned – in many contexts, expected» (Stephen Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, Routledge, London-New York 2009: 158). Focusing on the case of Great Britain, the scholar identifies the concept of 'Super-diversity' as a condition of unprecedented demographic, cultural and social multiplicity. See Stephen Vertovec, *Super-diversity and its implications*, in «Ethnic and Racial Studies», 30 (2007), 6, pp. 1024-1054: 1024.

Taking into account such transnational channels demonstrate not only the reciprocal impact at an economic, political, and social level, but also the cultural repercussions of such interconnections.

1.4.2 Transnationalism – A Literary Perspective

Literary transnational interconnections have also recently received significant attention. The new frontiers of migrant literature were greeted with enthusiasm, but the results of its reception soon manifested their inner ambivalence. On one hand, scientific interest invoked the need for a renewal of the critical approach towards this type of art in order to transform it into a collective tool and to create an interconnection with the new globalized reality. On the other hand, a growing taste for the exoticism and the need to reify foreign cultural content as different took shape in the commodification of 'immigrant literature': «The immigrant novel introduces […] a new pluricultural world view and this world view, which is strictly related to the collective consciousness of immigrant groups, is […] originally and dialectically responsible for the genesis of the genre's form».[37] As Saša Stanišić argues, the canonization of the migrant novel as a literary genre with its own structure and characteristics was represented as a «philological category of its own and [...] a fruitful anomaly in relation to national literatures».[38]

Furthermore, transnational literature does therefore not entail only judging the thematic and aesthetic changes in the literary content, but rather includes the manner in which the reception of literary works about migration needs to change, the ways in which they circulate, and what can be learned from their ability to move across national borders.[39] In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, increased attention was redirected towards the concept of 'World Literature'. The migratory nature of World literature problematized the role of translation, circulation, and market logic in the globalized context. According to David Damrosch, the purest manifestation of world literature occurs

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[37] See William Boelhower, *The Immigrant Novel as Genre*, in «Melus», 8 (1981), 1, pp. 3-13: 9-10.

[38] See Saša Stanišić, *Three Myths of Immigrant Writing: A View from Germany*, in *Words Without Borders*, 3 November 2008, https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/three-myths-of-immigrant-writing-a-view-from-germany, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]. Oana Sabo enriches the discussion by providing interesting details about editorial choices and marketing motivations that underlie the publication of works produced by migrants or descendants of migrants. See Oana Sabo, *The Migrant Canon in Twenty-first Century France*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2018.

[39] According to Morgan: «'Literary' or 'critical' 'transnationalism' identifies the particular conflict between the 'national' and the 'global' in literature» (Peter Morgan, *Literary transnationalism: A Europeanist's perspective*, in «Journal of European Studies», 47 (2017), 1, pp. 3-20: 3).

in a literature that moves beyond its culture of origin through the mediation of a translator, thus resulting in a mode of reading that creates through an invisible thread transnational interconnections between different parts of the globe. It would not be possible to think of world literature as «an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading», as readers will always be led to apply their values and their cultural traits in the reading process.[40] Doris Bachmann Medick re-proposes the question of translation too. According to her, translation is not only to be understood as a mere passage from one language to another but as a cultural transfer, an effective tool to downsize the presumed authority of the Western canon and move toward a new conception of literary history, new cartographies and perspectives that cross the limits of a Eurocentric vision.[41] Goethe's original *Weltliteratur* project, moved by the urge to push ourselves beyond the idea of national literary canons as closed systems, thus returns to the present world globalized system. Rebecca Walkowitz explores the complex relationship between transnationalism, migration, and literature within the larger global literary system. Walkowitz problematizes the troublesome usage of the canonical expression 'migration literature', generally pointing to literature produced by migrants, by contrasting the advent of the 'transnational book' both as a normative concept, which includes translation, circulation, and reception, and as an aesthetic program, which studies its tropes, themes, and issues related to movement, border crossing, and belonging:

> the political and social processes of immigration shape the whole literary system, the relationships among all of the works in a literary culture, and not simply the part of that system that involves books generated by immigrant populations. This means that 'the literature of migration', to use Leslie Adelson's term of art, would have to include all works that are produced in a time of migration or that can be said to reflect on migration. Whether one privileges social contexts or literary content, it is no longer principally a matter of distinguishing immigrant from non- immigrant authors. 'The literature of migration', Adelson argues, 'is not written by migrants alone'.[42]

However, other authors, such as Pascale Casanova and Franco Moretti, provide a more conflictual and inequitable reading of the concept of world literature, applying those

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[40] David Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2003: 5.
[41] Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Is there a Literary History of World Literature?*, in Herbert Grabes, *Literary History/Cultural History: Force-Fields and Tensions*, Gunter Narr, Tübingen 2001, pp. 359-373.
[42] See Rebecca Walkowitz, *The Location of Literature: The Transnational Book and the Migrant Writer*, in «Contemporary Literature», 47 (2006), 4, pp. 527-545: 533.

very same capitalist logics that benefit from the notions of centre and periphery to the publishing market. As Moretti argues:

> international capitalism is a system that is simultaneously one, and unequal: with a core, and a periphery (and a semiperiphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality. One, and unequal: one literature (Weltliteratur, singular, as in Goethe and Marx), or perhaps, better, one literary system (of inter-related literatures); but a system which is different from what Goethe and Marx had hoped for, because it's profoundly unequal.[43]

In her book, *La République mondiale des lettres* (*The World Republic of Letters*), Pascale Casanova also shifts the focus onto the conflicts that emerge between the notions of center and periphery. The French scholar does not see in the notion of world literature a harmonious and balanced coexistence of literary works, but rather a system, a highly unequal and hierarchical space endowed with its own laws, economy, and history, in which literatures from all over the world converge and clash in order to gain recognition and prestige.[44]

In short, the transnational turn in migration studies can be read as a strong reaction to the nationalistic backlash that sought to politicize migration during the 1990s. By shifting the focus from the stages of adaptation of the migrant in the society of arrival to the interstitial space that connect two or more migratory poles allows us to examine how migration and globalization dialogically coexist. Yet, while constructing a dimension that exists beyond the boundaries of nation-state entities, transnationalism fails to include its role, preventing us from observing how migration affects contemporary societies from within:

> Typically, transnational research aims to provide insights into the cross-border, networked, mobile lives of migrants and thus, by doing so, to expose the idea of the culturally homogeneous, sedentary nation as fiction. Despite those critical intentions, however, it did not really question the inner boundary between potentially mobile migration and a fixed nation. Rather, this distinction is further strengthened by situating people in the transnational space of migration even after generations and, resultantly, leaving them permanently marginalised and still to be integrated, both academically and politically.[45]

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[43] Franco Moretti, *Conjectures on World Literature*, in «New Left Review», 54 (2000), 1, pp. 54-68: 54-55.

[44] Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des Lettres*, Seuil, Paris 1999.

[45] Regina Römhild, *Postmigrant Europe: Discoveries beyond ethnic, national and colonial boundaries*, in Anna Meera Gaonkar – Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen – Hans Christian Post – Moritz Schramm, *Postmigration.*

1.5 Post-migration: Origin of the Concept

This thesis has thus far been observing different ways in which scholarship has framed the phenomenon of migration and its effect. The way the topic has been approached over the years has perhaps contributed to standardize a binary perspective, reiterating «the perception of migration as an exception to the norm»[46]. The next paragraphs aim to outline the theoretical framework upon which the content of this thesis is built. How can one describe the way migration affects social spaces without necessarily detaching it from the very context in which it manifests most vividly? How can one find a non-essentialist theoretical framework that permits migration to speak for itself without falling to the same stereotypes that remark its mobile condition as opposed to a supposedly immobile society?

The origin of this new conceptual horizon saw its dawn in Berlin, where the new generations of Germans have been growing in an ethnically and culturally diverse environment for an extended period of time. The initial input for the new direction of study emerged, in this case, from the context of theatrical art. Shermin Langhoff, a German theatre producer of Turkish descent coined the term in the early 2000s. Her career, initially devoted to the film industry, took a sharp turn when, between 2006 and 2007, her *Beyond Belonging* project sought to find a space for young German artists with a migratory family background where they could freely tell their stories «linked to Berlin's vibrant migrant culture: families' everyday reality, children's desire for a future, street life, being foreign in Berlin».[47] As artistic director, she helped to fund a new theatre at *Ballhaus Naunynstrasse*, and then took over as director of the *Maxim Gorki*, also in Berlin,

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*Art, Culture, and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2021, pp. 45-57: 46. According to Kai Wiegand, transnationalism implicitly underscores the relevance of the nation-state, acknowledging the existence of a world outside of that political entity: «Regardless of whether the term 'transnational' is used to refer to the identity and consciousness of authors and characters, the themes and the formal qualities of texts, the reception and marketing of texts, or a critical approach to them, the term acknowledges the nation by indicating that someone or something moves beyond it» (Kai Wiegand, *Introduction: The Concept of The Transnational in Literary Studies*, in Kai Wiegand (ed.), *The Transnational in Literary Studies: Potential and Limitations of a Concept*, De Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2020, pp. 1-21: 7).

[46] Sten Moslund, *Postmigrant Revisions of Hybridity, Belonging, and Race in Gautam Malkani's* Londonstani, in «Ariel: A Review of International English Literature», 50 (2019), 2/3, pp. 105-136: 111.

[47] In this context *Post-migrantische Theater* was used for the first time. See Lizzie Stewart, *'The cultural capital of postmigrants is enormous', Postmigration in theatre as label and lens*, in Anna Meera Gaonkar – Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen – Hans Christian Post – Moritz Schramm, *Postmigration. Art, Culture, and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2021, pp. 87-109. See also Christel Weiler, *Theater and Diversity in the Berlin Republique*, eng. trans. by Maud Capelle, in Sarah Colvin (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Politics & Culture*, Routledge, London-New York 2015, pp. 218-230: 225.

in 2013. At the beginning of her collaboration with the *Ballhaus*, Langhoff gave a strong signal to the entire German artistic scene by labelling the idea she had conceived with the name *Postmigrantisches Theater* (Postmigrant Theater).[48] As Langhoff states, the reality of post-migration has never been allowed to speak its truth from within the borders of the German nation-state, even though migration has been recognized as a distinctive feature of the country.

The much-vaunted openness and universal accessibility of German theatre promised at the end of the war showed a completely different reality.[49] At an artistic level, Langhoff continues, the representation of migrants and migrants' descendants have always exploited clichés of diasporic trauma and loss: «Die Figur des Migranten oder der Migrantin wird quasi bauchrednerisch von weißen, bio-deutschen Sprechern geführt und höchstens durch Verwendung von Darstellern mit dem 'richtigen' Hintergrund authentifiziert».[50] According to her, mainstream artistic canon has thus ignored the attempt of young foreign-born Germans to narrate their stories as a means of representative renegotiation of identity parameters. A clear discrepancy in the degree and type of representation assigned to new generations tends to place them in an outer position, at the margin of what is commonly identified as canonical German literature.

The purpose with Berlin's post-migrant theatre was precisely to recount the stories of those who retain the historical memory of their parents' experiences as a fundamental feature of their identity. In this sense, Langhoff founded her theatre as the basis for an artistic-identity empowerment strategy and as a recognition of their contribution to the enrichment of German culture, while simultaneously seeking to subvert all forms of

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[48] The urge to grant a space to young second- or third-generation German artists resulted in an act of self-labeling: «the term 'postmigrant theatre' is a 'Kampfbegriff', a linguistic tool with which to fight or make a point, rather than a term which aims to essentially define or delimit the work of particular artists» (Neco Çelik, *Postmigrant Theater*, https://www.blogs.hss.ed.ac.uk/neco-celik/postmigrant-theatre/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).

[49] «Germany after the war and theatre after the war both attempted to open up and be accessible to everyone. They did not exactly succeed. It much rather turned into the opposite: In education as well as in theatre we have somewhat regressed» (See Gast Arbeiterin, *Shermin Langhoff, It's Stories that make History*, 9 June 2017, https://renk-magazin.de/en/shermin-langhoff-stories-make-history/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).

[50] «The figure of the migrant is conducted almost like ventriloquists by white and bio-German speakers and authenticated to the fullest by the use of actors with the 'right' background» (Shermin Langhoff, *Die Herkunft spielt keine Rolle – 'Postmigrantisches' Theater im Ballhaus Naunynstraße*, in *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 10 March 2011, https://www.bpb.de/lernen/kulturelle-bildung/60135/die-herkunft-spielt-keine-rolle-postmigrantisches-theater-im-ballhaus-naunynstrasse/?p=0, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]). Translations in this thesis are mine unless otherwise specified.

clichés about migration. The theatre thus became a space in which new perspectives, contradictions, and reactions converged, through which politics were reflected in art, and performers could rightfully reappropriate their spot in the German artistic community: «Das postmigrantische Theater wird zu einem Ort des Möglichen und der Irritation».[51]

### 1.5.1 Post-migration Studies

It has been just over a decade since Shermin Langhoff began her personal challenge to the artistic segregation suffered by the new ethnically mixed generations. Within a very limited time span, post-migration has revealed to be an essential tool to frame the way migration has shaped contemporary society.

The first steps toward this new phase of migration studies have once again been taken in the German academic context. The wide range of possible applications for this concept led scholars to use the term post-migration with a singular purpose: exposing the contradictions associated with a system overly influenced by a binary methodology that still today continues to mark a clear line between immigrants and natives. From its origins in the theatrical space, post-migration found its place in scientific research as a socio-historical post-migrant space permeated with discourses:

> that testify to the fact that issues of 'migration' and 'diversity' are predominant in public discourses, and that the profound cultural and social processes of transformation that characterize the post-migrant condition engender both progressive and defensive reactions that clash with each other.[52]

Over time, the term 'post-migration' has been taking on different meanings and methodological applications.

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[51] «In a word, post-migratory theater becomes a place of possibility and irritation» (Erol Yildiz, *Postmigrantische Perspektiven. Aufbruch in eine neue Geschichtlichkeit*, in Erol Yildiz – Mark Hill, *Nach der Migration. Postmigrantische Perspektiven jenseits der Parallelgesellschaft*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2015, pp. 19-48: 33).

[52] Anne Ring Petersen – Moritz Schramm – Frauke Wiegand, *Introduction: From Artistic Intervention to Academic Discussion*, in Moritz Schramm – Sten Pultz Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen –Mirjam Gebauer – Hans Christian Post – Sabrina Vitting-Seerup – Frauke Wiegand (eds.), *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts – The Postmigrant Condition*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, pp. 3-11: 7.

### 1.5.2 'Post-migrant' as a Social Descriptor

Some of the early studies that have been carried out by German researchers interpreted 'post-migration' as a social descriptor for a distinct segment of the population; namely individuals with a migratory family background.

Erol Yildiz and Naika Foroutan, pioneers of German post-migration research, emphasize the importance of the perception through which the so-called 'post-migrant generation' perceives the world. The way new generations mix up multiple layers of sociability reflects the dual conceptual dimension of globalization: one deeply rooted in a local dimension, which often corresponds to the place where they grow up, study, and engage in everyday social relations, and one strongly influenced by a transnational consciousness. Growing up in a liminal space that intertwines cultural features from different parts of the world into one single social space, these individuals have become, as mentioned previously, the living symbol of the radical transformations currently occurring in Western countries. Their biographies, cultural resources, learning and adaptation strategies represent a valuable mix of factors that rewrite a sense of national belonging against the backdrop of nationalistic and chauvinistic discourses:

> Das Postmigrantische, um das es hier vor allem geht, zeigt […] wie die zweite und dritte MigrantInnengeneration, die selbst nicht über Migrationserfahrungen verfügt, auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise neue Lern- bzw. Überlebensstrategien in der globalen Welt entwickelt. In der Auseinandersetzung mit der Migrationsgeschichte ihrer Eltern und den gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen, unter denen sie leben, schaffen diese Jugendlichen ihre eigenen (Lern-) Räume, die verschiedene Bedeutungen integrieren und neue Zugehörigkeiten und Lebensentwürfe hervorbringen. Diese kulturelle Praxis ist ein kreativer Akt.[53]

The creative acts carried out by the post-migrant generations that Erol Yildiz speaks of provoke an irritating delocalization of the nation-state perception that is often embodied in new linguistic forms and culturally loaded symbols from distant cultures.[54]

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[53] «Post-migration, which is the main focus point here, shows [...] how second and third generation migrants, who do not have firsthand migration experiences, develop new strategies for learning or surviving in the global world in different ways. In dealing with their parents' migration history and the social conditions in which they live, these young people create their own (learning) spaces that integrate different meanings and produce new affiliations and ways of living. This cultural practice is a creative act» (Erol Yildiz, *Die Öffnung der Orte zur Welt und postmigrantische Lebensentwürfe*, in «SWS-Rundschau», 50 (2010), 3, pp. 318-339: 319).

[54] In Germany, as well as in several other European countries, the echoes of migratory manifestations reverberate not only in artistic expressions, such as literature or cinema, but also in other sociological

Yildiz's considerations about the 'living spaces' draw new coordinates for, and give new meaning to, second- and third-generation's life experiences. However, speaking of a 'post-migrant generation', with direct reference to the biographical aspect of individuals risks bringing down the condition of migrants' and migrants' descendants to one single common denominator that encompasses a specific category of people.[55]

As aforementioned, Regina Römhild claims that the way in which the issue of migration has been examined over the years shares a fundamental problem that «Relativ schnell kristallisierte sich».[56] The critical load of this term covers most of traditional research, which has been considering the figure of the migrant as the sole object of inquiry. According to Römhild: «this narrative of alternative, transnational, hybrid migrant worlds leads inadvertently into a dead end».[57] Fundamentally, this approach lacks coherence, as it tends to reduce migration to a problematic issue neglecting all other facets related to the phenomenon and, in particular, its involvement in the social dynamics that affect non-migrants: «Während die Mobilität der einen als Migration kontrolliert und reguliert wird, gilt die Mobilität der anderen als Ausweis flexiblen Selbstunternehmertums, das als kosmopolitisches Kapital in ganz Europa angerufen und gefördert wird».[58] Scholars have therefore begun to interpret the concept of post-migration in an alternative manner, that enables us to blur the supposed 'mobility' of migrants and 'immobility' of non-migrants.

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contexts, such as urban planning. See Erol Yildiz, *Vorwort*, in Erol Yildiz (ed.), *Die weltoffene Stadt Wie Migration Globalisierung zum urbanen Alltag macht*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2013, pp. 7-9.

[55] As Manuel Liebig states, adopting state-national logic reduces the figure of the migrant to a social *nebenprodukt* (by-product). See Manuel Liebig, *Das Postmigrantische. Ein neues Konzept für eine Kritische Migrationsforschung?*, Labor Migration, Institut für Europäische Ethnologie, Berlin 2015: 11. Naika Foroutan argues that the obsession with the topic of migration has fossilized a metanarrative self-image precisely due to its migratory counterpart. Consequently, post-migration offers an opportunity to include the phenomenon of migration in the history of contemporary Germany. See Naika Foroutan – Coşkun Canan – Benjamin Schwarze – Steffen Beigang – Dorina Kalkum, *Deutschland Postmigrantisch II, Einstellungen von Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen zu Gesellschaft, Religion und Identität*, Berliner Institut für empirische Integrations- und Migrationsforschung, Berlin 2015: 14.

[56] «Crystallized relatively quickly» (Manuela Bojadžijev – Regina Römhild, *Was kommt nach dem »transnational turn? Perspektiven für eine kritische Migrationsforschung*, in Labor Migration (ed.), *Vom Rand ins Zentrum: Perspektiven einer kritischen Migrationsforschung*, Panama Verlag, Berlin 2014, pp. 10-24: 10).

[57] See Römhild, *Beyond the bounds of the ethnic*, cit.: 70.

[58] «While the mobility of some is controlled and regulated as migration, the mobility of others is seen as a badge of flexible self-entrepreneurship, invoked and promoted as cosmopolitan capital throughout Europe» (Regina Römhild, *Jenseits ethnischer Grenzen. Für eine postmigrantische Kultur- und Gesellschaftsforschung*, in Erol Yildiz – Mark Hill, *Nach der Migration. Postmigrantische Perspektiven jenseits der Parallelgesellschaft*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2015, pp. 37-48: 43).

1.5.3 Post-migration as Analytical Perspective

A second kind of interpretation that has been applied to the concept of post-migration takes shape in an analytical perspective that can be successfully used to frame the migratory, multicultural, and multilinguistic essence of contemporary societies. A perspective that emerges from migration itself embraces a different epistemological approach that is based on two assumptions.[59] According to the critical remarks made by Regina Römhild, to circumvent the limitations of canonical research methods, it is imperative to 'de-migrantize' research about migration. This means that migration research should stop being concerned about the figure of the migrant and on the contrary frame its presence in a broader context. Second, Römhild calls for a 'migrantization' of social research, meaning a «migration-based perspective to generate new insights into the contested arenas of 'society' and 'culture'».[60]

Although this aspect has yet to be further explored, contributions concerning this issue have increased exponentially during the last ten years. In essence, a post-migrant perspective seeks to irritate normative knowledge production and to deconstruct ethnic and cultural categorizations, opening new spaces for analysis:

> Die postmigrantische bzw. kontrapunktische Deutung gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse suspendiert soziale Sortierungen, die auf kategorialen Klassifikationen basieren und rückt dafür hybride, mehrdeutige und postmigrantische Vielheiten ins Blickfeld, ohne jedoch Dominanzverhältnisse und strukturelle Barrieren zu übersehen, eine Denkart, die den Fokus auf gesellschaftliche Überlappungen, Überschneidungen und Verflechtungen richtet und gesellschaftliche Phänomene zusammendenkt, die gewöhnlich isoliert betrachtet wurden. Postmigrantische Lebensentwürfe und alternative Räume […] öffnen den Blick für gesellschaftliche Vielheit und regen zu kritischem Denken an. Als wissenschaftliche oder künstlerische Ausdruckformen

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[59] See Römhild, *Beyond the Bounds of the ethnic*, cit.; See Roger Bromley, *Bricolage of Identifications: Storying Postmigrant Belonging*, in «Journal of Aesthetics & Culture», 9 (2017), 2, pp. 36-44; See Florian Ohnmacht – Erol Yildiz, *The postmigrant generation between racial discrimination and new orientation: from hegemony to convivial everyday practice*, in «Ethnic and Racial Studies», 44 (2021), 16, pp. 149-169; See Erol Yildiz, *Postmigrantische Lebensentwürfe jenseits der Parallelgesellschaft*, in Alexander Böttcher Alexander Böttcher – Marc Hill – Anita Rotter – Frauke Schacht – Maria A. Wolf – Erol Yildiz (eds.), *Migration bewegt und bildet. Kontrapunktische Betrachtungen*, Innsbruck university press, Innsbruck 2019, pp. 13-29.

[60] Römhild, *Beyond the Bounds of the ethnic*, cit.: 70. In this way, migration shifts from being regarded as an anomaly to becoming a pivotal element in social discussion. As Sten Moslund states: «founding and permanent circumstance in shaping the nation and its collective 'we'» (Sten Moslund, *When Migration Turns from the Spectacular to the Ordinary. Postmigrant Inflections of Analytical Categories and Concepts of Migration*, in Burcu Dogramaci – Brigitte Mersmann (eds.), *Handbook of Art and Global Migration: Theories, Practices, and Challenges*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2019, pp. 351–365: 351).

inspirieren sie durch neue, überraschende Sichtweisen und eröffnen kreative Möglichkeitsräume.[61]

Adopting a post-migrant perspective means taking account of all the social and cultural manifestations that are usually associated to one single category as an encompassing phenomenon that affects the whole community: but how can one define it?

According to Naika Foroutan, some patterns can orient the way such perspective perceives society. The scholar orients the operation of this perspective in three directions, which, if taken together, can successfully draw the contours of what she calls 'post-migrant society'. First, a post-migrant perspective must be considered in its empirical-analytical dimension, in order to answer a fundamental question: how does society change after migration has occurred? An empirical approach can be very useful in this phase in order to understand how far societies have changed after migration has occurred. The changes are mainly reflected in linguistic, cultural, and ethnic pluralities, religions and new socio-historical narratives that shape the new condition. Second, a socio-political dimension, that allows us to expose distinct social positionings that revolve around the topic of migration, that represent «der dynamische Konfliktkern in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft».[62] A post-migrant society is not uniquely composed by groups who accept and support migration processes as inevitable, and even beneficial, and groups who reject it and consider it detrimental for social balance. The liminal space that marks the border between these two poles represents the crossroad where a series of negotiation processes, legitimized by the irreversible presence of migration, condense and clash for greater dominance, representation, and recognition. As Naika Foroutan argues: «in-groups and out-groups are no longer defined predominantly by ethnicity, but rather by attitudes and

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[61] «The post-migratory or contrapuntal interpretation of social relations suspends social orderings based on categorical classifications and instead brings hybrid, ambiguous, and post-migrant multiplicities into the field of vision without neglecting relations of domination and structural barriers, a way of thinking that focuses on social overlaps, intersections, and interconnections and thinks together social phenomena that were usually considered in isolation. Postmigrant lifestyles and alternative spaces [...] open the gaze to social multiplicity and stimulate critical thinking. Like scientific or artistic forms of expression, they inspire with new and surprising perspectives and open creative spaces of possibility» (Erol Yildiz, *Ideen zum Postmigrantischen*, in Naika Foroutan – Juliane Karakayali – Riem Spielhaus (eds.), *Postmigrantische Perspektiven. Ordnungssysteme, Repräsentationen, Kritik*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt-New York 2018, pp. 19-35: 33).

[62] «the dynamic, conflictual core in post-migratory society» (Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Perspektive: Aushandlungsprozesse in pluralen Gesellschaften*, in Marc Hill – Erol Yildiz (eds.), *Postmigrantische Visionen. Erfahrungen – Ideen – Reflexionen*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2018, pp. 15-29: 18).

ideologies towards migration, plurality, heterogeneity and diversity».[63] In this way, it is possible to derive useful insights to consider the role of migration in society from a different point of view. To summarize, a post-migrant perspective identifies the direct or indirect, active, or passive experience of migration as an analytical, as well as aesthetical, cipher through which collectively experiencing and representing diversity.

Finally, the post-migrant perspective also claims a normative, teleological dimension. In this sense, the prefix 'post-' does not imply simply overcoming migration as a social phenomenon, which would entail its hypothetical, albeit impossible, end. Instead, the prefix calls for the need of a critical rethinking of discursive constructions which frame the canonical narrative of migration as negative, or as a marker of otherness. As Sten Moslund states:

> By rejecting identity markers such as 'foreigner', 'migrant' or 'second' or 'third generation immigrant', the term discontinues the discursive repetition in migration studies of migration as an exceptional matter of otherness and minority politics.[64]

The semantic ambiguity caused by the presence of the prefix 'post' is given by its double spatial and chronological meaning: 'after' and 'behind'.[65] Problematic interpretations associated with the word post-migration have emerged as a response to the inherent ambiguity of the term. The two meanings associated to the word 'post' are not mutually exclusive. In contrary, they must cooperate in defining the morpheme to which the suffix attaches, while simultaneously adhering to and rebelling against it in a continuous dialectic of 'fidelity' and 'infidelity'. It is only in the ambiguity of the word and its multiple readings that its goals can be understood.[66] As Sten Moslund puts it, post-

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[63] Naika Foroutan, *The Post-migrant Paradigm*, in Jan Jonathan Bock – Sharon Macdonald (eds.), *Refugees Welcome?: Difference and Diversity in a Changing Germany*, Berghahn, New York-Oxford 2019, pp. 142-171: 144.

[64] See Moslund, *When Migration Turns From the Spectacular to the Ordinary*, cit.: 352. See also Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Perspektive*, cit.: 18-23.

[65] «Warum aber soll diese Gesellschaft 'post'-migrantisch heißen, wenn es doch scheinbar die ganze Zeit um Migration geht? Die zentrale Annahme ist, dass es nicht um Migration selbst geht, sondern um gesellschaftspolitische Aushandlungen, die nach der Migration erfolgen, die hinter der Migrationsfrage verdeckt werden und die über die Migration hinaus weisen» (Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft. Ein Versprechen der pluralen Demokratie*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2019, pp. 11-25: 19: «But why should this society be called 'post-migrant' when it seems to always be focused on migration? The central assumption is that it is not migration in itself, but the socio-political negotiations that take place after migration, that hide behind the issue of migration and that point beyond migration»).

[66] See Arindam Nandi, *The 'Post-' as Prefix in Popular Culture and the Social Sciences: Or the Coming of the 'Derridean Undecidables'*, Grin Verlag, Munich 2020. To further frame the problem, it may be useful

migration «marks an end to the exceptionalization of migration […] crossing of an empirical, social, epistemological, and theoretical threshold after which migration is no longer seen as a historical, social, cultural, or political exception to a presumed non-migratory norm».[67]

Exploring the morphological and semantic implications of the term itself would also require an in-depth analysis. Here, it will be sufficient to say that that this ambiguity has been received with attention by several scholars, who have questioned the actual validity of the term, giving rise to an engaging debate.[68]

## 1.5.4 Post-migrant Society/ Condition

The ambiguity of a post-migrant perspective is mirrored in the dynamics of life that characterize the contradictory and conflictual nature of a post-migrant society. Post-migrant society, or a post-migrant condition, describes a social space of constant conflict and in constant transition in which communities with different backgrounds renegotiate beliefs and values after migration has occurred.

The irreversible impact of migratory flows has played a crucial role in redefining the new post-migrant social contours, meaning that everyone, and not only migrant

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to make a parallel analysis with the concept of post-colonialism. As Said argues: «In the term 'post-colonial', it is the prefix 'post' that carries an ambigous spatiotemporality, while the substantive suffix 'colonial' […] remains a more or less agreed upon significance and frame of reference» (Edward Said, *Paradoxical Citizenship*, Lexington Books, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Oxford 2006: 34).

[67] See Moslund, *Postmigrant Revisions of Hybridity, Belonging, and Race*, cit.: 110.

[68] Just to name a few examples of constructive criticism. According to Paul Mecheril, there are two different semantic loads that can be assigned to it: one has empirical value, and the other one has a political/normative value. The former indicates a moment of transformation and proximity with respect to the morpheme to which the prefix is attached. In its political/normative meaning, on the other hand, 'post' implies a distancing from the morpheme: in this sense, to be 'post' migration is to erase that whole set of parameters, dynamics, and situations that are based on a binary conception between those who have migrated (or descend from migrants) and those who have not. Therefore, Mecheril criticizes the use of the morpheme 'migration', considered by the author to be the erroneous object of discussion to take distance from. See Paul Mecheril, *Was ist das X im Postmigrantischen?*, in «Suburban Zeitschrift für Kritische Stadtforschung», 2 (2014), 3, pp. 107-112. Also, Janina Kehr dwells on the far-fetched and utopian value of the concept of post-migration. This time, however, it is not the morpheme 'migration' that sounds problematic as much as the prefix 'post'. Kehr wonders what category of migrants set off a turning point that determined the passage from migration to post-migration. She argues that while this concept can indeed rationalize the transformation in the relationship between society and migration, particularly concerning the first generation of migrants who arrived in Northern Europe in the latter half of the 20th century, it cannot establish a straightforward and unequivocal narrative that connects the past to the present situation. See Janina Kehr, *Sind wir je postmigrantisch gewesen? Eine Aufforderung zur Debatte*, in *geschichte der gegenwart*, 12 May 2016, https://geschichtedergegenwart.ch/sind-wir-je-postmigrantisch-gewesen/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

groups, need to slowly re-adapt their position after the new reality.[69] According to Naika Foroutan, the omnipresence of migration-related topics within public debates, or as Riem Spielhaus would phrase it, the obsessive reactions to the issue of migration, which is addressed on a daily basis by any type of media or body of information, has reached such peaks that «die deutsche Gesellschaft scheint sich vor dem Hintergrund der Migrationsdebatten identitär neu zu ordnen».[70] Danish scholars Anne Ring Petersen and Moritz Schramm describe post-migrant societies of «forandringer, der dermed angår alle borgere, uanset om de har 'migrationsbaggrund' eller ej. Det er [...] ikke subjekter i samfundet, men derimod samfundet selv, der anskues som postmigrantisk».[71]

The point of friction generated by the presence of a different element in a national context becomes the true essence in which the post-migrant condition manifests its effects. The collective and universalistic nature of this concept confirms a very important point: negotiating one's position against the backdrop of migratory flows' sedimentation does not necessarily overcome negative sentiments or nationalist ideologies that fuel social plagues such as racism and marginalization. Instead, it allows to investigate how individuals structure their identity under different assumptions from sedentariness and binary thinking. Although achieving a peaceful balance among the constituent parts of society remains a priority, the core of a post-migrant society lies not only in contrasts and antagonisms, but also in new forms of unexpected alliances, stratifications, and loyalties. The positionings and the attitudes toward migration no longer seem to respond to the logic that separates the native population from the migrant population:

> Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft ist eben eine vermischte Gesellschaft. Da sind nicht mehr die klaren Trennlinien erkennbar. Da sind Migrant*innen auf rassistischen rechten Position, Juden in der AfD oder Feminist*innen radikal feindselig gegen

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[69] Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft*, in *Bundeszentrale für politische*, 20 April 2015, https://www.bpb.de/themen/migration-integration/kurzdossiers/205190/die-postmigrantische-gesellschaft/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[70] «German society seems to be rearranging itself in terms of identity against the backdrop of immigration debates» (Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft. Ein Versprechen der pluralen Demokratie*, cit.: 13). Riem Spielhaus frames this social debate by underscoring the obsessive relationship with the topic of immigration. See Riem Spielhaus, *Studien in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft: Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung*, in *Kongressdokumentation 4. Bundesfachkongress Interkultur 2012*, Hamburg 2012, pp. 96-101.

[71] «changes that thus affect all citizens, regardless of whether they have a 'migration background' or not. In other words, it is not the subjects of society, but society itself that is considered post-migratory» (Anne Ring Petersen – Moritz Schramm, *Postmigration Mod et nyt kritisk perspektiv på migration og kultur*, in «Kultur & Klasse» 122 (2016), pp. 181-200: 184).

gläubige Muslima. Und auf der anderen Seite sind alte, weiße katholische Priester in der Willkommenskultur aktiv und conservative Bayern in der Geflüchteten-Arbeit.[72]

The ground difference between a post-migrant society and a post-migrant condition is the recognition of the democratic and political validity of migration as a foundational pillar in a society. Such recognition is, according to Naika Foroutan, a necessary and sufficient condition for speaking of post-migrant society.[73]

The inclusion of a political constraint which determines a threshold for a society to be acknowledged as 'post-migrant' has been widely discussed by Anne Ring Petersen and Sten Moslund, who, in fact, lean toward the more general conceptualization of 'post-migrant condition'.[74] According to Schramm, Denmark, like many other countries, has not produced an official statement regarding the role of migration as a social marker, but the same changes that occurred within the German context can be identified in the Scandinavian land.[75] The need to move from political recognition in order to mark such

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[72] «The post-migrant society is a mixed society. Clear dividing lines are no longer recognizable. There are migrants on right-wing racist positions, Jews in the AfD [Alternative für Deutschland] or feminists radically hostile to devout Muslims. And on the other hand, old white Catholic priests are active in the welcoming culture and conservative Bavarians in working with refugees» (Naika Foroutan in Lisa Seelig, *Naika Foroutan: 'Die Gleichheitsfrage ist eine der radikalsten Fragen unserer Menschheitsgeschichte'*, in *Edition F*, 3 August 2021, https://editionf.com/naika-foroutan-interview-postmigrantische-gesellschaft/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]). See also Anne Ring Petersen – Moritz Schramm, *(Post-)Migration in the age of globalisation: new challenges to imagination and representation*, in «Journal of Aesthetics and Culture», 9 (2017), 2, pp. 1-12.

[73] According to Naika Foroutan, the Bundesrepublik officially declared Germany a country of immigration in 2001 after a series of reforms, a new model designed for issues such as professional recruitment and residence, and a political recognition of migration «als konstituierendem Baustein der gesellschaflichen Selbstbeschreibung» (Naika Foroutan, *Postmigrantische Gesellschaft*, in Heinz Ulrich Brinkmann – Martina Saue (eds.), *Einwanderungsgesellschaft Deutschland: Entwicklung und Stand der Integration*, Springer VS, Wiesbaden 2016, pp. 227-255: 239: «as a constituent of social self-description»). The official recognition of migration as a constituent element of German society was stated in the 2001 official report, which was compiled by the *Unabhängige Kommission Zuwanderung* ('Independent Commission on Immigration') also known as the Süssmuth Commission – after the name of the chief of the commission, Rita Süssmuth.

[74] To define the Danish current social situation, Moritz Schramm uses the words: «Samfundstilstand under forandring» (See Sten Moslund in Klaus Rothstein, *Det handler om en samfundstilstand under forandring*, in *Atlas*, 20 November 2015, https://atlasmag.dk/kultur/det-handler-om-en-hel-samfundstilstand-under-forandring, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]: «Society's changing state»).

[75] Moreover, as Regina Römhild, Dirk Rupnow, and Kijan Espahangizi rightly observe, countries like Germany, Austria, and Switzerland have found themselves in a post-migrant condition for a long time, even before the political establishment would formally acknowledge the impact of migration. See Römhild, *Jenseits ethnischer Grenzen*, cit.: 37. See Dirk Rupnow, *Wann war »die Post-Migration«? Denken über Zeiten und Grenzen*, in Marc Hill – Erol Yildiz (eds.), *Postmigrantische Visionen. Erfahrungen – Ideen – Reflexionen*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2018, pp. 29-43. See Kijan Malte Espahangizi, *Ab wann sind Gesellschaften postmigrantisch?*, in Naika Foroutan – Juliane Karakayali – Riem Spielhaus (eds.), *Postmigrantische Perspektiven. Ordnungssysteme, Repräsentationen, Kritik*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt-New York 2018, pp. 35-57. Once again, drawing parallels between the post-migrant discourse and post-

changes traps socio-historical processes the evolve naturally. Considering post-migration as a social condition that unfolds before our eyes allows one to have a broader view over the evolution of society.

1.5.5 A (Post-)Migrant Aesthetic

Detecting the multiple dynamics that unfold in a post-migrant society does not only present a political significance, but instead also allows the capture of the aesthetic dimension of migration. In this sense, literary representations, as well as other artistic forms, represent a valuable starting point to inspire an epistemological change. Applying a perspective on artistic representations and literary works can provide useful material to observe, at close-range, the conflictual reality of the post-migration condition and to «trace a [...] shift in literature reflecting migration, cultural plurality and changing forms of belonging, identity and subjectivity».[76]

In the literary landscape, an epistemological turn in knowledge production about migration can pave the way for the overcoming of all those barriers built upon preconceptions based on ethnicity and exoticism, freeing the cultural and artistic value of such literature from its alienating labels, and turning it into a defining aspect of the collective consciousness. However, for the same reason that led to the careful assessment of the validity of post-migration as a social descriptor in the previous paragraphs, it may be counterproductive to target a specific group of artists by categorizing them as 'post-migrant writers'.

Such a label can easily lend itself to possible misunderstandings and repropose negative and ethic-based connotations.[77] It would therefore most likely be better to assert that any artistic representation which seeks to offer an authentic account of society through the lens of migration, can be rightfully defined as the product of «active narrative

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colonial research proves to be a valuable approach for gaining a deeper understanding of how a post-migrant perspective encompasses both past and present reactions to migratory presence. Stuart Hall identified the post-colonial debate as an intrinsic aspect of colonialism itself: «colonisation was never simply external to the societies of the imperial metropolis. It was always inscribed deeply within them – as it became indelibly inscribed in the cultures of the colonised» (See Stuart Hall, *When was the 'post-colonial'?*, in Iain Chambers – Lidia Curti (eds.), *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, Routledge, London-New York 1996, pp. 242-261: 246).
[76] See Moslund – Ring Petersen, *Introduction: Towards a Postmigrant Frame of Reading*, cit.: 70.
[77] Sten Moslund and Anne Ring Petersen claim that: «some researchers try to define a corpus of 'postmigrant literature and art', and, by doing so, risk defining 'postmigration' as something reserved (in this regard) to cultural productions by migrants and descendants». See Moslund – Ring Petersen, *Introduction: Towards a Postmigrant Frame of Reading*, cit.: 68.

agents of a society of 'multiplicity' that goes across border politics and against integration policies that are built on a linear narrative from departure (cultural origin) to arrival (host culture)».[78] Notwithstanding, attempts to establish specific aesthetic characteristics to define the features of the post-migrant writer are also problematic. Stuck in considerations of non-literary nature «questions of beauty, formal features and sensuous qualities may seem of secondary importance, to say the least».[79] However, as Moslund continues, by observing the world from the point of view of migration, the ideas of movement and place come to embody a sensory aesthetic that emerges in a strong and decisive manner. The downsides of such assumption inhibit the aesthetic potential of post-migrant artistic expressions because they simply underline the political urgency of maintaining control over the concern of migration, excluding it from the domain of art itself.

Mieke Bal's studies, for instance, provide relevant insights on how contemporary art reveals itself to the public through an aesthetic of migration, or rather, a 'migratory aesthetic', a concept that Bal herself developed in the early 2000s.[80] According to Bal, aesthetic becomes «a *condition of sentient engagement*», that is to say; the capacity to experience the migratory through the senses. Migratory aesthetics implies therefore a condition which establishes a sense-based connection with the phenomenon of migration and its effects.[81]

The migratory aesthetic manifests itself in «traces, equally sense, of the movements of migration that characterize contemporary culture». Traces which, in turn, are formed in a migratory space «whether one is a migrant oneself or not. This is visible in, but not

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[78] See Markus Hallensheben, *Towards an aesthetics of postmigrant narratives, Moving beyond the politics of territorial belonging in Ilija Trojanow's Nach der Flucht*, in Anna Meera Gaonkar Anna Meera Gaonkar – Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen – Hans Christian Post – Moritz Schramm (eds.), *Postmigration. Art, Culture, and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2021, pp. 197-221: 208.

[79] Sten Moslund, *A Migrant Aesthetics through the Phenomenality of Place*, in Sten Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Moritz Schramm, *The Culture of Migration: Politics, Aesthetics and Histories*, I.B. Taurus, London-New York, 2015, pp. 223-243: 223-224.

[80] The type of aestheticism studied by Bal refers in particular to the conception of aesthetics developed by Alexander Baumgarten, i.e., an aesthetic that harks back to the etymological origin of the word, from the Greek *aesthesis*. See Mieke Bal, *Migratory Aesthetics: Double Movement*, in «Exit», 32 (2008), pp. 150–161.

[81] The descriptor 'migratory', however, is not intended as a reference to the category of migrants per se. Rather, it refers to a cultural awareness that creates a bond with migration as a universally shared cultural practice. Mieke Bal, *Lost in Space, Lost in the Library*, in Sam Durrant – Catherine M. Lord (eds.), *Essays in Migratory Aesthetics: Cultural Practices Between Migration and Art Making*, Rodopi, New York, 2007, pp. 21-35: 23 [italics in original]. See also Mieke Bal, *Documenting What? Auto-Theory and Migratory Aesthetics*, in Alexandra Juhasz – Alisa Lebow (eds.), *A Companion to Contemporary Documentary Film*, Wiley Blackwell, Oxford 2015, pp. 124-144.

limited to, public spaces, while the degrees and forms of visibility also vary greatly».[82] As Bal states, the phenomenon of globalization has decentralized, from different points of view, the fundamental pivot of Western identity by renegotiating the concepts of provenance and belonging under a different light. As a result, if «[g]lobalization appears to suggest that the centre is no longer in the West; the centre is nowhere». At the same time, Bal continues: «[g]lobalized art [...] is not an art from nowhere, for such an art, I contend, does not exist», meaning that «it only takes one space, a small, graphic gap, to turn that half-way statement into something more liveable: the centre is *now-here*».[83] As she finally concludes:

> If aesthetics is primarily an encounter in which the subject, body included, is engaged, that aesthetic encounter is migratory if it takes place in the space of, on the basis of, and on the interface with, the mobility of people as a given, as central, and as at the heart of what matters in the contemporary, that is, 'globalized' world.[84]

A post-migrant aesthetic claims its rightful place in the consciousness of individuals, tells its own truth and transforms itself into an artful filter, capable of. The aesthetic, migratory manifestations taking place in contemporary societies influence people's imagination, diminishing the boundaries between mobility and immobility, between migration and sedentarism, and, consequently, between migrants and non-migrants. By placing migration in an apparently sedentary and motionless world, the 'migratory' regains power over its productive dimension, moving away from the margins of society to embrace its role of social pillar within the national metanarrative context.[85]

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[82] Bal, *Documenting What?*, cit.: 131-132.
[83] Bal, *Lost in Space*, cit.: 25-34.
[84] See Bal, *Lost in Space*, cit.: 23-24.
[85] According to Sten Moslund, Anne-Ring Petersen, and Eszter Pabis, this encounter can elucidate the dual aesthetic-sensory and political essence of post-migration. The various artistic expressions linked to migration position themselves within a realm of conflict and resistance against the prevailing status quo. Simultaneously, our daily interactions with these 'migratory' traces «transport spectators out of the narrow politico-historical context of contemporary Europe and make them see migration in a broader, transhistorical perspective and recognize that they are themselves historical subjects of migratory movements» (See Anne Ring Petersen, *Migratory Aesthetics and the Politics of Irregular Migration: A Case Study of Isaac Julien's Western Union: Small Boats*, in Sten Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Moritz Schramm, *The Culture of Migration: Politics, Aesthetics and Histories*, I.B. Taurus, London-New York, 2015, pp. 205-223: 220). See also Moslund, *A Migrant Aesthetics through the Phenomenality of Place*, cit.; Eszter Pabis, *Towards an aesthetics of migration*, in Anna Meera Gaonkar – Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen – Hans Christian Post – Moritz Schramm (eds.), *Postmigration. Art, Culture, and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, pp. 181-195.

As we have seen, the study of migration has followed a clear transformation over the last century. The first stages of research, while observing correctly certain aspects of migratory mechanisms, tried to read universally valid models in a historically centred perspective. The politicization of the phenomenon, in the recent past, has brought migration closer to the everyday life, creating contrasting positions, splits in the social fabric and significant consequences for most European states. However, as outlined in the first part of the chapter, some conceptual limitations have emerged. Considering the 'migratory' as an exclusive descriptive feature for the migrant links the idea of displacement and the centre-periphery dichotomy to a single constructed category, preventing migration from being aesthetically perceived and appreciated within the (apparent) static nature of contemporary societies. An analytical approach that emerges directly from the point of view of migration can break down the ideological barrier that keeps this phenomenon at a distance through alienating labels, and let it emerge as a legitimate artistic form. The concept of post-migration decentralizes the focal point from the present time, along with the vicissitudes which characterize it, and returns it to history as a magnifying glass through which to observe reality. Post-migration helps exemplify the actions and reactions induced by the migratory phenomenon, and to perceive the aesthetic essence of global images even in current local sedentariness.

1.6 Post-migrant Scandinavia

Thus far, this thesis has been exploring a post-migrant conceptual framework by defining its theoretical contours, interpretations, and possible applicability to present-day society. In order to do that, the primary benchmark has inevitably been the German context, from which the term was first conceived and developed. The post-migrant epistemological turn, at least from an academic point of view, had its breakthrough in a country whose recent history is firmly linked to the phenomenon of migration. Germany has seen its entire demographic structure change over time, resulting in an increasingly diverse social fabric. German multicultural urban areas, however, are not the only ones that have been going through a process of profound diversification during the second half of the 20th century. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Scandinavian countries are also experiencing the peak of their post-migrant transition.

1.6.1 Scandinavian Welfare State

Scandinavia is an extremely homogeneous geopolitical area in many aspects. The countries that form this region share a common history; they are linguistically close to each other, and their historical lineage is very much intertwined. Denmark, Norway and Sweden, are, in fact, united by, among other things, a highly advanced socio-political system characterized by high standards in public services, and a sound economy. Such systems, firmly rooted in Scandinavian cultural heritage, are the result of a long process of social emancipation and political democratization that involved the active participation of the lowest social classes in each of the three countries.

Between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, farmer and labour movements, religious revivals, women rights' movements, and, in Norway, the long path towards political and cultural autonomy,[86] represented the start of a revolutionary struggle that would slowly lead to the consolidation of the modern Scandinavian states.[87] In the end, the struggle between different social classes turned into a catalyst for cohesion, so much so that «For decades, public has seen these countries as the 'quintessential tolerance and human right-based'».[88] The fundamental principles upon

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[86] Modern Norwegian cultural construction began to emerge only at the beginning of the 19th century. It owes very much to the tension that arose between the oral Norwegian tradition and a set of cultural and linguistic impositions from the Danish enemy, ruler of the Norwegian province until 1814. See Eric Einhorn – Sherrill Harbison – Markus Huss, *Introduction*, in Eric Einhorn – Scherrill Harbison – Markus Huss (eds.), *Migration and Multiculturalism in Scandinavia*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 2022, pp. 3-31.

[87] Einhorn – Harbison – Huss, *Introduction*, cit.: 10-12. It is hard to precisely pinpoint when Scandinavian countries entered modernity. Instead, it would be better to speak of a process, a continuous thread connecting the two centuries, during which movements 'from below' played a significant role. In Denmark and Norway, the journey towards modernity was supported by a strong *bonderadikalism* ('peasant radicalism'). This philosophical approach, while capable of paving the way toward the democratization of the countries «created a resistance towards other forms of modernization such as industrial reforms» (Bækker Simonsen, *Political approaches to immigration in Scandinavia since 1995*, cit.). The Danish people were greatly inspired by the religious revival movements, which stood in sharp contrast to the principles of the state church. This movement was led by figures like Nikolaj Fredrick Grundtvig, a Danish pastor, whose teachings, in line with the thinking of German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, established the nation and its language as the expression of the spirit of a people. Sweden was also influenced by religious revivals and farmer's movements, but the primary revolutionary impetus came from the working class. Because of its rapid industrialization, labor movements, pointed toward a different kind of modernity than Denmark. See Håkan Arvidsson, *Skandinavisk modernisering – särdrag och likheter*, in Gunnar Alsmark – Tina Kallehave – Bolette Moldenhawer (eds.), *Migration och tillhörighet: inklusions-och exklusionsprocesser i Skandinavien*, Makadam, Göteborg 2007, pp. 23-53: 51.

[88] See Olga Iakimova, *Exploring the Dynamics of Xenophobia in the Nordic Countries*, in «Changing Societies & Personalities» 2 (2018), 1, pp. 18-29: 23. See also Grete Brochmann, *Governing Immigration in Advanced Welfare States*, in James F. Hollifield – Philip L. Martin – Pia M. Orrenius (eds.), *Controlling Immigration : A Global Perspective, Third Edition*, Standford University Press, Standford 2014, pp. 281-301.

which Scandinavian welfare politics are built have been universalism, equality and individual freedom. The Scandinavian welfare project, a middle way between a liberalistic economic approach and collective socialism, has united under its banner a strong consensus, further reinforcing the idea of a united and homogeneous people under the flag of common socio-cultural values. The history of Sweden's welfare state policy provides perhaps one of the most concrete images to convey a message of homogeneity. The idea of *Folkhem* ('House of the People') harks back to the political concept introduced in 1928 by the leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, Per Albin Hansson, and put into practice during the 1930s. In 1928 Hansson gave a famous speech to present his new social model to the Swedish parliament. A speech in which he reiterated some key concepts concerning socio-political model philosophy, such as the need for a more economically and socially egalitarian Sweden.[89] However, it must be stressed that behind the roots of such homogeneity, dark secrets are concealed. Brutal and inhumane practices such as the science of eugenics, in addition to an anti-Semitic sentiment, particularly pronounced in Sweden, also have a long, rooted history in Scandinavian countries, which until Second World War had been pursuing a project of purification for the maintenance of a Nordic ethnicity.[90]

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[89] Hansson introduced his speech by stressing four major characteristics of the *Folkhem*: «I det goda hemmet råder likhet, omtanke, samarbete, hjälpsamhet» (Quoted in Henrik Arnstad, *Skåpa inte ut nationalismen*, in *Aftonbladet*, 15 July 2016, https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/a/ddjQ4B/skapa-inte-ut-nationalismen, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]: «In the good home there is equality, concern, cooperation, helpfulness»). Henrik Berggren and Lars Trägårdh, for instance, define with the neologism *statsindividualism* (state individualism) the social contract that binds the Swedish citizen to the state and guarantees equality and independence. The individual maintains his or her independence from different forms of social aggregation, delegating that same independence to the state through a pact of trust. See Henrik Berggren – Lars Trägårdh, *Är svensken människa? : gemenskap och oberoende i det moderna Sverige*, Nordstedts, Stoccolma 2006; see also Henrik Berggren – Lars Trägårdh, *Social Trust and Radical Individualism: The Paradox at the Heart of Nordic Capitalism*, in Annika Rembe – Kristina Persson (eds.), *The Nordic way : equality, individuality and social trust*, Swedish Institute, Stockholm 2012, pp. 13-29.
Over the years, however, it must be stressed that this speech has undergone a radical historical reevaluation. Critics have argued that the concept of a welcoming 'people's house' primarily served as a refuge for individuals of Swedish ethnicity. See Devrim Mavi, *Det goda hemmet var stängt*, in *Svenska Dagbladet*, 12 June 2007, https://www.svd.se/a/37aace34-3bb9-3da4-a1f8-51acbaa6de98/det-goda-hemmet-var-stangt, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].
[90] Luca Dotti's phd dissertation on eugenics programme in Sweden is seminal in this case. According to Dotti, many factors contributed to the spread of this practice in Sweden. One level of influence was exerted by the subdivision and classification of races by Linnaeus. This subdivision was based on biological differences related to the place of origin, geographical characteristics, and also skin color. The religious revival movements that affected Sweden between the 19th and 20th centuries, which were themselves marked by a self-purification dogma, may have indirectly influenced political thinking towards such decisions. Swedish social engineering itself also played a key role, albeit its pivotal role in building Swedish society. Strongly based on positivist thinking, the purpose of this science was, among other things, to create a society aimed at cleanliness, hygiene, at the cost of transcending ethical and moral limits. A further

The very idea of an extremely efficient superordinate national system has consolidated a strong connection between the individual and the state, as well as reinforced an idea of identity and culture. As to be seen in detail in the next paragraph, such consensus began to wane in the second half of 20th century. A deep unease caused by the economic crises shook the western world along with an exponential increase in migration flows: «In societies that to such an extent defined their success in terms of the absence of social inequalities, immigration thus represented a threat to the very identities of the national communities».[91]

1.6.2 Welfare State and Migration

In fact, the percentage of individuals with a migratory family background residing in Scandinavia has been exponentially increasing during the past decades.[92] In the Scandinavian region, therefore, the concept of nation-state has re-emerged through direct confrontation with a deviant element; something perceived as coming from beyond a border.[93]

The historical phases during which the reception and management of migrant groups committed the Scandinavian political landscape to a quick response have roughly followed similar stages, although some differences can be identified. During the period

decisive factor was the birth rate crisis that hit Sweden in the early 20th century, making the preservation and continuation of the Swedish people an absolute priority. See Luca Dotti, *L'utopia eugenetica del welfare state svedese (1934-1975). Il programma socialdemocratico di sterilizzazione, aborto e castrazione*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 2004. See also Gunnar Broberg – Nils Roll-Hansen, *Eugenics and the welfare state: sterilization policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland*, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing 1966.

[91] See Grete Brochmann – Annike Hagelund, *Migrants in the Scandinavian Welfare State*, in «Nordic Journal of Migration Research», 1 (2011), 1, pp. 13-24: 16.

[92] See Lars Østby – Vebjørn Aalandslid, *Innvandring og innvandrere i Norden. En komparativ analyse*, Statistisk sentralbyrå, Oslo-Kongsvinger 2020.

[93] As Anders Linde-Hansen states, taking a cue from the Danish context, this assumption gave rise to a contrast between migrants and non-migrants, but even between different North-European countries: «Danskhed er frem for noget defineret i forhold til to andre nationale identiteter: tyskhed og svenskhed» (See Anders Linde-Hansen, *Er Sverige interessant...? Om modernitet og hundrede års danskhed*, in Anders Linde-Hansen – Jan Olof Nilsson (eds.), *Nationella identiteter i Norden: Ett fullbordat projekt?*, Nordiska Rådet, Copenaghen 1991, pp. 39-59: 39: «Above all, Danishness is defined in relation to two other national identities: Germanness and Swedishness»). Towards the end of the 20th century, Sweden and Denmark built their image through mutual confrontation, often engaging in polemical discussions. The exchange of views between Pia Kjærsgaard and the Swedish parliament has already been described. Linde-Hansen provides a further example by speaking of a book published in 1983 by Danish journalist Mogens Berendt, a best-seller at the time, in which the author accused Swedish social democracy of excessive authoritarianism. He described it as a form of totalitarian regime, using his argumentation to highlight the merits of his own country. See Mogens Berendt, *Tilfældet Sverige*, Holkenfeldt, Copenaghen 1983.

following the Second World War, the economies of Sweden, Denmark and Norway flourished at a rapid pace. Between the 1950's and the 1960's, Scandinavian countries opened the borders to a large number of migrant groups from the poorest areas of Europe – Finland (in Sweden), former Yugoslavian states and other southern European countries – and, from Asian countries such as India and Pakistan. The goal was to inflate the Scandinavian industrial sector with fresh forces by incentivizing low-cost labour to relocate for better job opportunities and wage prospects.

Sweden was the first country to set migratory policy in motion in the early 1950s. Norway and Denmark, on the other hand, began to welcome guest workers in the 1960s.[94] Initially, the issue of migration was not openly addressed within the public debate, as was the case for many other European nations. The governments of the three countries were not interested in making a political topic out of it. A certain level of discretion was essential since guest workers represented a temporary issue and would promptly leave the country. The first migratory flows phase, in facts, saw their conclusion between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, when Scandinavian governments decided to put a stop to low-skilled immigration. Need for labour had considerably diminished, but, contrary to expectations «many migrants had no intention of leaving and instead wanted to bring family members to their new homeland; to keep their native culture, religion, and customs; and, in many cases, to live together with similar migrants».[95]

A second migratory phase during the 1970s and 1980s committed mostly Sweden and Denmark to organize safe channels for political refugees, asylum seekers, refugees fleeing humanitarian crises and civil wars in countries such as Chile, Iran, the Kurdish

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[94] During that period, rapid industrialization and subsequent economic growth in Norway played a significant role in shaping the country's identity based on the idea of the nation. By the mid-1980s, Norway had achieved greater economic independence and social cohesion compared to Sweden, which was grappling with a severe economic crisis. Several factors contributed to Norway's success, including a substantial increase in oil production and the decision not to join the European Union. See Knud Knudsen, *Scandinavian Neighbours with Different Character? Attitudes toward Immigrants and National Identity in Norway and Sweden*, in «Acta Sociologica», 40 (1997), 3. pp. 223-243: 226-227. This is further confirmed by the ritual practice of the oath to the nation made by migrants who obtain citizenship, although today this practice is not mandatory anymore. See Grete Brochmann, *Til Dovre faller: Å bli norsk - å være norsk - troskapsløfte og statsborgerskap i den foranderlige nasjonen*, in Gunnar Alsmark – Tina Kallehave – Bolette Moldenhawer (eds.), *Migration och tillhörighet: Inklusions- och exklusionsprocesser i Skandinavien*, Makadam, Göteborg 2007, pp. 99-126: 99.

[95] Einhorn – Harbison – Huss, *Introduction*, cit.: 14.
See also Karen Nielsen Breidahl, *Når staten lærer – En historisk og komparativ analyse af statslig policy læring og betydningen heraf for udviklingen i den arbejdsmarkedsrettede del af indvandrerpolitikken i Sverige, Norge og Danmark fra 1970 til 2011*, Institut for Statskundskab Aalborg Universitet, Aalborg 2012, pp. 13.

region, and many North-African countries. This act of solidarity can be considered part of the universal and sympathetic philosophy of the Scandinavian welfare state. As Grete Brochmann argues: «Apart from economic redistribution, the welfare state was a moral construct, an entity for institutionalized solidarity and part of the nation building that took place after the Second World War».[96] This second phase of openness saw Sweden and its charismatic leader, Olof Palme, the champions of the social-democratic ideals. Palme was the Swedish prime minister from 1969 to 1976 and from 1982 to 1986, when he was murdered in circumstances that are still not entirely clear. During his mandate, as Peter Leonard states, Sweden assumed the role of a true 'moral superpower',[97] driven by a 'moral migration' policy as opposed to the oppressive dictatorships and anti-democratic absolutisms around the world. Again, as Leonard continues, this openness put Sweden on the European map as a protector of the oppressed, fulfilling the multicultural project while simultaneously causing a certain degree of uncertainty: «the tight linkage between ethnicity, state, and citizen was set on the long path toward dissolution. The imagined homogeneity of the nation would be replaced, slowly but surely, with a heterogeneity that some feared—and others celebrated».[98]

Danish migration policy, however, initially proved to be as opened as Sweden's, if not even more. In 1983, although the leadership of the country had been entrusted to the *Konservative Folkeparti* (Conservative People's Party), Danish government reduced most of the restrictions by enacting some reforms that turned out to be amongst the most liberal in the world, even beyond the mandates formally defined by the United Nations.[99] Norway, on the other hand, had already implemented restrictions during the 1970s, inhibiting incoming migration in 1975. Although initially conceived as a one-year exception, this stop lasted for about 15 years. However, when several Eastern European

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[96] Brochmann, *Governing Immigration in Advanced Welfare States*, cit.: 283.
[97] See Peter Leonard, *Imagining Themselves: Voice, Text, and Reception in Anyuru, Khemiri and Wenger*, University of Washington, Department of Scandinavian Studies, Seattle 2006, pp. 6.
[98] See Peter Leonard, *Swedish Identity and the Literary Imaginery*, in Eric Einhorn – Sherrill Harbison – Markus Huss (eds.), *Migration and Multiculturalism in Scandinavia*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 2022, pp. 191-205: 194. Cfr. Lars Trägårdh, *Scaling up solidarity from the national to the global Sweden as welfare state and moral superpower*, in Nina Witoszek – Atle Midttun (eds.), *Sustainable Modernity – The Nordic Model and Beyond*, Routledge, London-New York 2018, pp. 79-102.
[99] See Niels Wium Olesen – Astrid Elkjær Sørensen – Thorsten Borring Olesen – Rosanna Farbøl, *Danish immigration policy, 1970-1992*, in *Nordics.info*, 7 November 2019, https://nordics.info/show/artikel/danish-immigration-policy-1970-1992-1, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

countries were offered the chance to join the European Union in 2004, new waves of migrants reached Norway.[100]

As previously stated, Scandinavian governments shared some similarities in their migration policy. Due to the increasing presence of foreigners in the area, they implemented similar interventions to encourage social inclusion mechanisms over the years. From an urbanistic point of view, for instance, Swedish government financed an enormous social housing project that would fill in a relatively short time the suburbs of the cities with houses and apartments, guaranteeing everyone an equally dignified lifestyle. This ambitious project, called *Miljonprogram* (Million Program), found also in Denmark and Norway correspondent housing plans. Initially conceived as a project aimed at securing housing for Sweden's working class, during the 1980s the program began to house more and more migrants moving to the suburbs of large urban areas. However, due to the phenomenon of gentrification and the lack of funding, many suburbs populated by migrants soon turned into rundown neighbourhoods. From an educational point of view, specific school courses were introduced in order to guarantee migrants' children specific rights and respect their cultural backgrounds. The Scandinavian school system offered the possibility to enrich students' language learning by supporting them with native speaker teachers that would help them learn their parents' native language.[101]

### 1.6.3 Populistic Backlash in Scandinavian Countries

However, it did not take long before the presence of migrants turned into a problematic social issue. Between the 1980s and the 1990s, the oil crisis, the radical privatization of industries, the enlargement of the European Union, the European single currency – not accepted by Denmark, Sweden, and Norway – represented all factors that

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[100] Up until the early 2000s, the foreign-born population was concentrated in the suburbs of Oslo, but after 2004 migrants' spatial distribution changed considerably, spreading throughout urban and rural areas. See Lars Østby, *Arbeidsinnvandrere – fra hovedstadsfenomen til vanlig syn i hele landet*, in *Statistics sentralbyrå*, 18 September 2017, https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/arbeidsinnvandrere-fra-hovedstadsfenomen-til-vanlig-syn-i-hele-landet, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[101] Further information on the Million Program in Grete Brochmann – Bent Jensen – Bodil Nielsen Wullum – Jan Rose Skaksen, *Velfærdsstat og Befolkning i Skandinavien*, Gyldendal, Copenaghen 2020, pp. 57-69. Further information on home-language teaching in Danish and Swedish schools, see Linus Salö – Natalia Ganuza – Christina Hedman – Martha Sif Karrebæk, *Mother tongue instruction in Sweden and Denmark Language policy, cross-field effects, and linguistic exchange rates*, in «Language policy», 17 (2018), pp. 591-610. Over time, this service began to be removed from educational programs, and the decision was left to the discretion of individual municipalities.

contributed to the widespread nationalistic backlash in Scandinavian countries.[102] This pointedly multifaceted period of time pushed many layers of the public opinion to the direction of a solid ethnocentrism, which looked back at an identity tied to one land, one people, and one culture. A deep and sincere sense of nostalgia, or 'Retrotopian Longing', as Andreas Önnerfors describes the Swedish socio-political environment, pictures very well the tense atmosphere at the turn of the century in all three Scandinavian countries. Nostalgia for the past, idealized in a national-romantic image of homogeneity, union, and happiness, has fuelled the rampant wave of xenophobia and hate towards immigrants.[103] Reimagining a nation lost in time, has become a key point in the welfare-state crisis debate, that «is actively used to evoke symbolically charged memories of an uncorrupted golden age».[104]

During the 1990s, Scandinavian countries began to take more restrictive decisions in terms of migration policies and to rethink choices taken in the past with growing skepticism. The discontent prompted by the increasing presence of foreigners, combined with the economic recession on the one hand and a general sense of uncertainty brought about by the new global condition on the other, caused the emergence of increasingly xenophobic sentiments which infiltrated the Scandinavian social and political scene. The main reason for this was the fear that an excessively liberal attitude in migration policy could create parallel groups, dividing society into smaller pieces. Another risk was that the cultural distance and lack of strict rules would soon turn into a widespread demotivation in committing to an integrative process to get acquainted with the culture of the host country.

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[102] Kjell Östberg, *The decline of Nordic Social Democracy*, in Anu Koivunen – Jari Ojala – Janne Holmén (eds.), *The Nordic Economic, Social and Political Model: Challenges in the 21st Century*, Routledge, London 2021, pp. 124-137.

[103] See Andreas Önnerfors, *'Retrotopia' as a Retrogressive Force in the German PEGIDA-Movement*, in Ov Cristian Norocel – Anders Hellström – Martin Bak Jørgensen (eds.), *Nostalgia and Hope: Intersections between Politics of Culture, Welfare, and Migration in Europe*, Springer Open, London 2020, pp. 135-153. The most shocking events of that period, however, remain those related to the figure of John Ausonius, also known as *Lasermannen* ('The Laser Man'), a Swedish bank robber and potential serial killer, who shot eleven people of foreign origin with weapons equipped with laser sights in Stockholm between August 1991 and January 1992. The events of the Laser Man were recounted by Gellert Tamas in his work *Lasermannen*. Tamas' book is an exhaustive reportage of Jon Ausonius' life and crimes, as well as a recount of the efforts of Stockholm's police department in seeking Ausonius out. However, Tamas inserts novelistic traits to his book pertaining to the so-called police procedural. See Gellert Tamas, *Lasermannen – en berättelse om Sverige*, Ordfront, Stockholm 2003. Another shocking event has been the infamous attack carried out in Utøya by Anders Breivik in 2011.

[104] Einhorn – Harbison – Huss, *Introduction*, cit.: 19.

Not surprisingly, far-right political parties have been growing in numbers and consent thanks to their agendas ever since the 1980s, determined to express their specific anti-migratory orientation in parliament.[105] Denmark and Norway witnessed the rise of right-wing policy as early as the 1970s, even though the topic of migration turned into a major issue only a decade thereafter. The *Dansk Folkeparti* ('Danish People's Party'), formed in 1995 after the split of *Fremskridtsparti* ('Danish Progress Party'), and the *Fremskrittspartiet* ('Progress Party'), both destined to express a large the discontent of a large part of the population from the 1990s. The former has been an extremely popular political force between the early 2000s and 2019. Their political agenda was manifestly anti-immigration and promoted anti-Islamic policies. The second, founded by Anders Lange in 1973, has included anti-immigrant policies only during the 1980s.[106] It joined the majority coalition led by the Conservative Party in 2013. According to Lise Bjånesøy, two wings coexist within the same party, one more libertarian and one more populist. However, the success among voters is almost exclusively due the direct association between the 'Progress Party' and a strict policy for migration control, supported by a growing Islamophobic sentiment that, as Edoardo Checcucci explains, has been spreading throughout the Norwegian country for almost 50 years.[107] In Sweden, a conservative drift only began to emerge, albeit less convincingly, in the same period. After the failure of the political project carried out by *Ny Demokrati* ('New Democracy') in 1994, not three years after its foundation, a new party, *Sverigedemokraterna* ('Sweden Democrats'), currently

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[105] As Mansfield, Milner, and Rudra argue, the impact of globalization has triggered a counter-response that has resulted in the formation of far-right, anti-European, and conservative political parties. See Edward Mansfield – Helen Milner – Nita Rudra, *The Globalization Backlash: Exploring New Perspectives*, in «Comparative Political Studies», 54 (2021), 13, pp. 2267-2285. For further studies about the right-wing political backlash in Scandinavia, see Anders Widfeldt, *Extreme Right Parties in Scandinavia*, Routledge, London-New York 2015.

A conference held in Brussels on April 2022 dedicated a panel to the Scandinavian political situation, in order to take stock of the evolution of right-wing policy in Scandinavia. See Gaeda Grueso Mendez – Julide Sezer, *Mapping European Populism: Panel 3 – Scandinavia Under Magnifier: Populist Radical Right Parties and the End of Nordic Exceptionalism?*, in *European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS)*, 17 June 2022, https://www.populismstudies.org/mapping-european-populism-panel-3-scandinavia-under-magnifier-populist-radical-right-parties-and-the-end-of-nordic-exceptionalism/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[106] The Progress Party became one of the most influential political forces in parliament: «Over the years, the party went from being an outsider to the second largest party in the parliament after the elections of 1997, 2005 and 2009, and the third largest in 2001 and most recently in 2013» (See Johan Bjerkem, *The Norwegian Progress Party: an established populist party*, in «European View», 15 (2016), 2, pp. 233–243: 235). See also Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Immigration and National Identity in Norway*, Migration Policy Institute, Washington DC 2013.

[107] See Edoardo Checcucci, *L'islamofobia nella letteratura della postmigrazione in Norvegia*, in «Lea» 11 (2022), pp. 301-316.

led by the young and charismatic Jimmy Åkensson, began a campaign that would lead it to become one of Sweden's leading political forces within a few years. As the party's popularity grew, in 2010 the threshold of 4% was exceeded for obtaining seats in parliament and in the 2018 elections it even reached 17.5% of the votes.[108] The 'Swedish exceptionalism', meaning the zero tolerance attitude shown by the left, that refused to come to terms with this new political force, has been replaced in recent years, as Anders Hellström puts it, by a 'mainstreaming of extremism', which is slowly blurring down the borderlines between populism and the conventional right.[109]

Among the main points common to the various parties is a manifested politicization of migration, tax cuts, a reduction in state bureaucracy, a strenuous defence of the values of Scandinavian social welfare policies and a general Euroscepticism.[110] In the early 2000s, Denmark and Norway increased restrictions to stem incoming migratory flows, delegating increased control on integrative strategies to individual municipalities, which could act at their own discretion. A few years after the reforms of 1983, the Danish government showed manifest dissatisfaction with the poor results of the process of migrants' integration, which was judged to be 'unsystematic and hesitant'.[111] In 1986, both Danish forces of majority and opposition agreed to implement the restrictions, making it much more difficult for migrants to enter the two countries. Citizenship and language tests were introduced as well as stricter regulations on marriage between native and migrants. In Sweden, heightened levels of unemployment and the end of the 20th century forced the government to revise their positions. In 1994, also the Swedish

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[108] See Brochmann – Hagelund, *Migrants in the Scandinavian Welfare State*, cit.; see also Christoffer Green-Pedersen – Jesper Krogstrup, *Immigration as a political issue in Denmark and Sweden*, in «European Journal of Political Research», 47 (2008), 5, pp. 610-634. Homepages of the three political parties: https://www.frp.no/ (*Fremskrittspartiet*); https://danskfolkeparti.dk/ (*Dansk Folkeparti*); https://sd.se/ (*Sverigedemokraterna*) [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[109] See Anders Hellström, *How anti-immigration views were articulated in Sweden during and after 2015*, in MIM Working Paper Series, Malmö Universitet*, Malmö 2021, http://mau.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1556231/FULLTEXT02.pdf.

[110] See Anders Widfeldt, *Populism and the growth of the radical right in the Nordic countries*, in *Nordics.info*, 17 May 2023, https://nordics.info/show/artikel/populism-and-the-growth-of-the-radical-right-in-the-nordic-countries, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[111] The Danish Progress Party began to discuss the possibility of introducing ad hoc referendums to allow individual municipalities to choose whether or not to let in other people. See Olesen – Sørensen– Olesen – Farbøl., *Danish immigration policy*, cit.

Something similar occurred in Sweden. In 1988, the municipality of Sjöbo, in southern Scania, held a referendum to prevent the state from sending more refugees. The 'Yes' won by a large margin, with over 65% of the votes. See Olle Råde, *Sjöbo folkomröstade om flyktingar på 80-talet*, in *Svt nyheter*, 29 August 2018, https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/skane/sjobo-folkomrostade-om-flyktingar-pa-80-talet, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

government introduced a series of supplementary programmes, without requiring obligatory participation.[112]

The policies adopted by the northern countries concerning migration have over time drawn a rather precise scenario, which outlines a certain, albeit not marked, difference in the relationship with migration: «In 2018, Denmark was amongst the most restrictive countries in Western Europe, Sweden the most liberal and Norway somewhere in-between».[113] This categorization, however, only partially tells the truth. The three countries are slowly converging towards a single ideology.[114]

1.6.4 Scandinavian 'Immigrant Literature'

Within this intricate socio-political context, which still seems to be struggling with finding the appropriate answers to dilemmas such as segregation, structural racism, and binary categorization, migration has slowly begun to emerge in artistic representations under a new light to frame the on-going social dynamics that describe the new condition of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The first-generation of migrants have settled into the Scandinavian cultural landscape, bringing new stories and perspectives from the sidelines. Within a few years, their descendants have found themselves without a proper position in the new social and post-migrant landscape. Besides reproducing the intergenerational memory they share with their parents, their individual formation takes place autonomously in the Scandinavian context.[115] Negotiating their own identity within

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[112] Further information on the political phases that followed Sweden's adoption of multiculturalism, see Karin Borevi, *The Political Dynamics of Multiculturalism in Sweden*, in Raymond Taras (ed.), *Challenging Multiculturalism – European Models of Diversity*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2012, pp. 138-160.

[113] Kristina Bækker Simonsen, *Political approaches to immigration in Scandinavia since 1995*, in *Nordics.info*, 18 February 2019, https://nordics.info/show/artikel/political-approaches-to-immigration-in-scandinavia-since-1995/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[114] Sweden, a beacon of morality in the Scandinavian context, openly criticized the decisions taken by the Danish government for years, defining them as inhumane and racist. Denmark, on the other side, rejected such allegations, stressing a: «diskrepans mellem 'praktisk konvergens' på den ene side og 'diskursiv divergens' på den anden» (See Nielsen Breidahl, *Når staten lærer*, cit.: 13: «discrepancy between a 'practical convergence' on the one hand and a 'discursive divergence' on the other»). A harsh ideological clash, as already described, took place between members of the political establishment, intellectuals, and journalists, with direct attacks on the former leader of the Danish People party, Pia Kjærsgaard. Kjærsgaard replied by showing the great support she had received from Swedish citizens and by accusing Sweden of vulgar hypocrisy. See Gunnar Alsmark, *Integrationspolitik på svenska*, Gunnar Alsmark Gunnar Alsmark – Tina Kallehave – Bolette Moldenhawer (eds.), *Migration och tillhörighet: Inklusions- och exklusionsprocesser i Skandinavien*, Makadam, Göteborg 2007, pp. 53-99.

[115] See Massimo Ciaravolo, *La narrativa di Marjaneh Bakhtiari tra Malmö e Teheran: multiculturalità e memoria intergenerazionale*, in «A.I.O.N. Sezione Germanica. Studi Tedeschi, Filologia Germanica, Studi Nordici, Studi Nederlandesi», 27 (2017), 1/2, pp. 41-59.

a system, that seems to depend on their political instrumentalization in order to construct its identity, has been over time overturned into a subversive exercise of self-awareness and self-understanding. Issues such as racism, marginalization and migration are always, to a greater or a lesser extent, visible in the background of their stories.

However, the artistic value of their works did not prevent them from falling into prejudices related to extra-textual factors. Labels such as *invandrarlitteratur* (migrant literature) and *invandrarförfattare* (migrant writer) – here in Swedish – entered reviewers' vocabulary as an analytical parameter to describe works produced by foreign-born authors ever since the 1970's. Still today, labels such as those mentioned above constitute a notion that triggers instant mental associations with these categories of authors. This is certainly the case for Sweden, where their success was partly driven by the need to celebrate the multiethnic and multicultural degree achieved by Swedish society. As Peter Leonard argues: «the novelty of multicultural themes in 'high' literary forms such as poetry and novels triggered market forces that sought out and rewarded 'the new' in contexts such as bookstores, newspaper reviews, and television interviews».[116] This suggests that the publishing market began to take interest in migration literature during the 1970s, notably thanks to the work of Greek-Swedish writer Theodor Kallifatides.[117]

At a later stage, a large group of second-generation authors began to gain increasing popularity between the late 1990s and the early 2000s.[118] Critics enthusiastically received

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[116] See Leonard, *Swedish Identity and the Literary Imaginery*, cit.: 192.

[117] Theodor Kallifatides is a Greek-born Swedish writer. In 1964, when he was twenty-six years old, Kallifatides left Greece to emigrate to Sweden. In a very short time he managed to learn the language, and after only five years after his arrival his first book, a collection of poems written in Swedish, was published. Since the 1970s, Kallifatides has written more than thirty books. In his novels, the author addresses several issues related to the experience of migration, such as the sense of identity fragmentation and the condition of otherness. For this reason, much Swedish criticism has always seen Kallifatides as the most important first-generation 'immigrant writer'.

[118] Obviously, this is not an issue exclusively related to Scandinavian literature. Authors of foreign descent, such as British historian Kobena Mercer and German writer Feridun Zaimoglu, have also written important pages on this matter. Zaimoglu and Mercer expressed their displeasure in different ways. The former, in his essay *Gastarbeiterliteratur. Ali macht Männchen*, attacks in equal measure the German artistic establishment, guilty of having constructed their supposedly dominant, 'white' image, but also the first generation of migrants, who, in Zaimoglu's view, was guilty of having helped to establish such social division by doing nothing. See Feridun Zaimoglu, *Gastarbeiterliteratur. Ali macht Männchen,* in Ruth Mayer – Mark Terkessidis (eds.), *Globalkolorit. Multikulturalismus und Populärkultur*, St Andrä-Wördern Hannibal, Wördern 1998, pp. 85-97. Mercer sharply criticizes the tendency to expect from ethnic artists an exotically authentic representation by the artists themselves. See Kobena Mercer, *Black Art and the Burden of Representation*, in «Third Text», 4 (1990), 10, pp. 61-78. In the Swedish context, Astrid Trotzig provided valuable insights into the construction of literary categories that relied not on the quality of works but rather on the biographies and expectations of authors with migrant family backgrounds. See Astrid Trotzig,

their work while synchronously praising the image of an open-minded country with a high degree of diversity. Immigrant literature, an expression of the new face of Swedish society, was considered a valuable source of information for catering to the curiosity of a multicultural environment. Norway and Denmark subsequently developed their own taste for this kind of literature, between the mid-1980s and early 1990s.[119] The latter's interest for this literary phenomenon grew after 2006, when a project was promoted by Danish publishing house *Gyldendal* and by the newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*. The goal was to gather authors with non-Danish roots who could contextualize with their own voices the new social and cultural phase in which Denmark had entered.[120]

Scholars such as Magnus Nilsson, Astrid Trotzig, Wolfgang Beschnitt and Thomas Mohnike strongly criticize the exoticizing filter through which critics have been speaking of literature produced by second-generation authors.[121] Notably, Nilsson stressed the discursive constructions that sought to identify literary works produced by 'immigrant' writers as a cultural and identity expression of the various ethnic groups that had settled in Sweden. Defining 'immigrant literature' as a literary category in its own right is strictly

*Makten över prefixen*, in Moa Matthis (ed.), *Orientalism på svenska*, Ordfront, Stockholm 2005, pp. 104-126.

[119] Several critics have explored this literary phenomenon in the three Scandinavian countries by cataloging the names, works, and themes contributed by these writers. Notably, the research of Lars Wendelius has meticulously traced the evolution of this phenomenon in Sweden from its inception to the early 2000s. Lars Wendelius, *Den dubbla identiteten: immigrant- och minoritetslitteratur på svenska 1970-2000*, Centrum för multietnisk forskning Uppsala, Uppsala 2002. See also Ingeborg Kongslien, *Migrant or Multicultural Literature in the Nordic Countries*, in *Eurozin*, 3 August 2008, http://www.eurozine.com/migrant-or-multicultural-literature-in-the-nordic-countries/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]. See also Satu Gröndahl, *Invandrar- och minoritetslitteraturer i Sverige. Från förutsättningar till framtidsutsikter*, in Satu Gröndahl (ed.), *Litteraturens gränsland: Invandrar- och minoritetslitteratur i nordiskt perspektiv*, Centrum för multietnisk forskning Uppsala, Uppsala 2002, pp. 35-71.

[120] The release of the project *Nye Stemmer* (New Voices) took place in a highly tense situation that followed the publication of satirical cartoons depicting the image of Muhammad in the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*. See Aydin Soei, *Indvandrerforfattere: Dansk indvandrer-litteratur – har vi det?*, in *Information*, 23 February 2006, https://www.information.dk/2007/07/dansk-indvandrer-litteratur, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]. See also Dörthe Gaettens, *New Voices Wanted: The Search for a Danish Multicultural Literature*, in Wolfgang Behschnitt – Sarah De Mul – Liesbeth Minnaard (eds.), *Literature, Language, and Multiculturalism in Scandinavia and the Low Countries*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2013, pp. 63-96.

[121] Magnus Nilsson, *Literature in Multicultural and Multilingual Sweden: The Birth and Death of the Immigrant Writer*, in Wolfgang Behschnitt – Sarah De Mul – Liesbeth Minnaard (eds.), *Literature, Language, and Multiculturalism in Scandinavia and the Low Countries*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2013, pp. 41-61; See also Magnus Nilsson, *Den föreställda mångkulturen: klass och etnicitet i svensk samtidsprosa*, Gidlunds förlag, Örlinge 2010; See also Trotzig, *Makten över prefixen*, cit.; See also Wolfgang Beschnitt – Thomas Mohnike, *Interkulturelle Authentizität? : Überlegungen zur 'anderen' Ästhetik der schwedischen 'invandrarlitteratur'*, in Wolfgang Behschnitt – Elisabeth Hermann (eds.), *Über Grenzen. Grenzgänge der Skandinavistik. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Heinrich Anz* (Identität und Alteritäten 26), Ergon, Würzburg 2007, pp. 79-100.

connected to the problem of a 'migrantized' perspective on literature.[122] On one hand, interest for multiculturality satisfied the western public's taste for the paradoxical exotic 'domestic' element. According to Lars Wendelius, geographical and cultural distance embodied particularly interesting aspects and were therefore seen as essential points for critical reflection. The 'immigrant' author «blir intressant därför att han eller hon kommer från en viss miljö och i sin text tematiserar denna eller – mer eller mindre direkt – reflekterar över innebörden i sitt ursprung».[123] On the other hand, such taste for the exotic would only reinforce the identity of a socio-culturally homogeneous nation.[124]

In these two aspects, the 'mobility' of migrant groups symbolically emerges as opposed to the 'immobility' of the rest of society. The fact that the migrant is attributed the duty to bring something from the margin to the center fails in taking into account how much the role of migration is shaping the cultural, linguistic, and social Scandinavian landscape.

1.7 A New Frame of Reading?

In fact, labels and portraits that further split society in smaller pieces were hardly met with favour. Scandinavian writers with a migratory background have always tried to ward off such associations, choosing instead to narrate from their point of view qualities

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[122] See Magnus Nilsson, *Litteratur, etnicitet och föreställningen om det mångkulturella samhället*, in «Samlaren: tidskrift för svensk litteraturvetenskaplig forskning», 129 (2008), pp. 270-304.
[123] «becomes interesting because he or she comes from a certain environment and thematizes it in his or her text or reflects – more or less directly – on the meaning of his or her origin» (Wendelius, *Den dubbla identiteten*, cit.: 41). Natia Gokieli speaks of the explosion of the phenomenon of immigrant literature in Scandinavia as a 'marketable commodity'. See Natia Gokieli, *The Iconicity of an 'Immigrant Writer': Jonas Hassen Khemiri and Yahya Hassan*, in «Academic Quarter Akademisk Kvarter», 10 (2015), pp. 208-221.
[124] A rather striking example in this regard is the description of 'immigrant literature' offered by Hans Hauge: «indvandrerlitteratur i de nordiske lande er litteratur skrevet af arabere, som er mere eller mindre kulturmuslimske. [...] Det særlige ved migrantlitteratur er, at den er en for majoriteten lukket kategori. Jeg kan som indfødt dansker ikke skrive den» (Hans Hauge, *Kan indvandrere skrive litteratur?*, in *Berlingske*, 22 February 2014, https://www.berlingske.dk/kronikker/kan-indvandrere-skrive-litteratur, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]: «the literature of immigrants in the countries of the north is literature produced by Arabs, which more or less markedly are of Muslim culture [...] The most particular aspect of immigrant literature is that it remains a category inaccessible to most people. I, as a Danish native, cannot produce it»).

and defects of their world, without necessarily neglecting the value of migration from the economies of this social condition.[125]

As a result, much effort has been devoted to deconstructing this post-colonial, post-racist make-believe by manifestly excluding the theme of migration from any analytical process. As aforementioned, Swedish scholar Magnus Nilsson claimed that a strong exoticist component guided the thinking of critics «thereby emphasizing the exoticism in relation to a Swedish norm», in order to substantiate the Swedish 'imagined multiculturalism' and at the same time keep power positions between different ethnic groups well defined.[126] Nonetheless, the idea of the 'death of the immigrant writer', proposed by Nilsson as a new way of framing the new generation of artists with a migratory background, also neglects some aspects that are crucial to describe a more authentic representation of Scandinavian societies. As Massimo Ciaravolo argues:

> La critica decostruzionista svedese farebbe bene a considerare anche questi aspetti per evitare che il dibattito, per quanto interessante e teoricamente raffinato, si rigiri su se stesso o finisca per negare del tutto la realtà delle odierne migrazioni come un costrutto puramente testuale e impalpabile, senza nessi con la storia e con la vita vissuta.[127]

Ciaravolo's comment emerges as seminal within this deeply polarized context since it emphasizes the pressing need for an alternative, more balanced perspective over migration and literature. Why, on the one hand, considering literature as a self-contained system, that focuses only on the authors' biographical background, and consequently on their ethnic origins? And why, on the other, dismiss all migration-related facets as mere discriminatory markers of Scandinavian structural racism without taking into account

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[125] Furthermore, the themes of division, estrangement, as well as multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and multilingualism, follow a similar trajectory to that of some of the most significant pillars of Scandinavian literature, including Strindberg, Ibsen, and Andersen. Indeed, it's impossible to recount, let alone comprehend, the works of these authors without considering their transnational dimension, their cosmopolitan aspirations, and even their experiences with migration. See also Wang Ning, *Ibsen and Cosmopolitanism: A Chinese and Cross-Cultural Perspective*, in «A Review of International English Literature», 48 (2017), 1, pp. 123-136; Olsson, *Observation on Strindberg*, cit.; See also Helena Březinová, *Andersen Ibsen and Strindberg as Migrant Writers*, in Helena Březinová – Martin Humpál, *Northern Europe, Migration and the Questions of Identity*, Karolinum, Prague 2021.
[126] Nilsson, *Literature in Multicultural and Multilingual Sweden: The Birth and Death of the Immigrant Writer*, cit.: 44.
[127] «Swedish deconstructionist criticism should better consider these aspects in order to avoid that the debate, however interesting and theoretically refined, turns against itself or ends up denying altogether the reality of today's migrations as a purely textual and intangible construct with no connection to history and lived life» (See Ciaravolo, *La narrativa di Marjaneh Bakhtiari tra Malmö e Teheran*, cit.: 56).

their actual effects on society? Such proposition underlines a central problem in literary analysis discourses, namely the intrinsic significance of the role that literature should be playing in relation to the world. As Tzvetan Todorov argued in his 'autobiographical' booklet published in 2007, *La littérature en peril* (Literature in Danger),[128] the very concept of literature, as well as the microcosmic realities it seeks to create, must not be examined as a separate system, but in direct connection with its macrocosmic counterpart: the outside world. According to the philosopher, literary productions should move away from the overly formal structures and claustrophobic labels that challenge the link between these two realms. Instead, such productions should be visualized in their direct connection with history, which in turn is reproduced in books by imagining new stories and exploring human experiences. In line with this school of thought, the application of a post-migrant perspective should neither address works produced by authors with a migratory background or focus solely on their view of things exclusively by means of their biographical status.[129] It should, however, provide some form of balance between these opposed visions: the construction and the deconstruction of the image of the migrant. On the contrary, a post-migrant perspective could be intended as a strategical 'mode of reading', as David Damrosch would say, which would allow to consider migration both as a fundamental, all-encompassing social practice of contemporary societies and at the same time an intrinsic feature of literary works.

In conclusion, art plays, as always, a key role in providing a different perspective. Different forms of artistic representations have the potential to bring about significant change in the way society and migration interact. The voices of these authors have had the strength to drive a breakthrough in the production of knowledge regarding the post-migrant Scandinavian condition, combining with critical authenticity biography, memory, and language, and thus lending the reader new filters through which to observe the world around them. It is precisely thanks to the voice of these writers that a change in

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[128] Tzvetan Todorov, *La littérature en peril*, Éditions Flammarion, Paris 2007.

[129] Danish scholar Søren Frank, for instance, was one of the first to propose a different way of understanding the role of migration in Scandinavian academic research. Frank introduced the concept of 'migration literature' as an umbrella term in order to encompass all literature concerned with the theme of migration. As he claims: «a general transformation is taking place in the way much literature is written, both as a result of the influence migrant authors exert on nonmigrant authors and as a consequence of the intensified mobility and extraterritoriality in our globalized world. […] Consequently, 'migration literature' refers to all literary works that are written in an age of migration – or at least to those works that can be said to reflect upon migration» (Søren Frank, *Migration and Literature – Günter Grass, Milan Kundera, Salman Rushdie and Jan Kjærstad*, Palgrave Mac Millan, New York 2008: 3).

the way migration is perceived has found a new and powerful source, revealing the need for a new theoretical frame to describe their narratives, along with the other types of narrative concerned with the topic of migration.

## 2. Post-migration and Post-monolingualism

Post-migrant Scandinavia can be first and foremost described as a vibrant linguistic social arena. Consequently, the influence that migration exerts on the entire region seems to be steadily decreasing the distance between the many languages currently spoken there. However, the long-lasting linguistic homogeneity continues to re-propose a sharp separation between different forms of communication, often applying labels that seek to emphasize the distinction between what can be generally categorized as the norm and what cannot. As a matter of fact, the post-migrant condition is increasingly characterized by the presence of hybrid forms and communication practices. Such practices shape the contours of a sociolinguistic context that exists along the border between monolingualism and multilingualism.[1]

### 2.1 Monolingualism and Multilingualism: Comparing Practices and Paradigms

The juxtaposition of the words 'Mother' and 'Language' represents a semantic *unicum* of great value for the description of national cultural units. The coexistence of multiple languages in the same socio-political space, however, presents ancient roots. As Rita Franceschini notes, the coexistence of multilingual practices was equally perceived as a normative social practice in different historical times. In her article *History of Multilingualism*, Franceschini traces a spatiotemporal thread that connects different civilizations and their multilingual realities, claiming that:

> [f]or centuries, multilingual abilities were not highlighted because they were simply normal for doing a job well […]. Nor was perfect command of a language an issue, as it is in contemporary discourse. We can assume that functional multilingualism was seen as the norm, and that non-ideological, pragmatic attitudes prevailed.[2]

A similar argumentation is presented by Curt Woolhiser, who describes the dichotomy between these two linguistic dimensions through the metaphor of the border. The political role of language changed enormously, according to the scholar, in the late

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[1] See Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Post-monolingual Condition*, cit.

[2] See Rita Franceschini, *The History of Multilingualism*, in Carol Chapelle (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken 2013, pp. 2526-2534: 2529-2530. See also Kurt Braunmüller – Gisella Ferraresi, *Introduction*, in Kurt Braunmüller – Gisella Ferraresi (ed.), *Aspects of Multilingualism in European Language History*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam-Philadelphia 2003, pp. 1-14.

18th century, when the new borders enclosed languages as culturally discrete units that belonged to each nation-state. Prior to this time, Woolhiser continues, the situation appeared to be far less rigid: «the norm in Europe, as in other parts of the world, appears to have been the presence […] of frontiers that were highly permeable both culturally and linguistically».[3] The sovereignty in European nation-states was marked by a widespread romantic-nationalist revival. The romantic approach to life, according to Miroslav Hroch, was deeply characterized by a sense of loneliness, alienation, and insecurity. Looking back with nostalgia to a set of shared principles brought back classical iconographies as a «vehicle of elementary, universally human, national values».[4]

In this sense, philosophers, and intellectuals of German tradition such as Johan Gottfried Herder, Alexander von Humboldt, and Friedrich Schleiermacher, based much of their critical thinking upon the link between language, culture and nation. This idealized the 'Mother Tongue' as the fundamental support for an authentic and sincere expression of people's intellectual faculties.[5] As Yasemin Yildiz states: «This new perspective not only drew attention to each language's specificity, but also to the individual's relationship to his or her – presumably singular – primary language».[6] Romantic myths and a diffuse nationalistic pride have therefore supported the creation of mono-languages.[7]

2.1.1 Language, Nationalism and New Horizons – The Scandinavian Region

Similar currents of thought played an important role in the processes of structural, political, and cultural formation of Scandinavian modern nations. Considerable effort was

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[3] Curt Woolhiser, *Border Effects in European Dialect Continua: Dialect Divergence and Convergence*, in Bernd Kortmann – Johan van der Auwera (eds.), *The Languages and Linguistics of Europe: A Comprehensive Guide*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2011, pp. 501–523: 506.

[4] See Miroslav Hroch, *National Romanticism*, in Balázs Trencsényi – Michal Kopeček (eds.), *National Romanticism: the Formation of National Movements. Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945, volume II*, Central European University Press, Budapest 2007, pp. 4-18: 6.

[5] The origins of the compound 'mother-tongue' in Germanic languages can be traced back to the late Middle Ages. As Thomas Paul Bonfiglio states: «It was nationalist ideologies that generated the first instances of the combination of 'mother' and 'tongue' or 'language', as follows: Icelandic *modurmal* ca. 1350, Swedish *modhor male* 1370, English *modyr tonge* 1380, Low German *modersprake* 1424, High German *Muttersprache*» (See Thomas Bonfiglio, *Language, Racism and Ethnicity*, in Marlis Hellinger – Anne Pauwels (eds.), *Handbook of Language and Communication: Diversity and Change*, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin 2007, pp. 619-650: 627 [italics in original]).

[6] See Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Post-monolingual Condition*, cit.: 8.

[7] In this context, Thomas Bonfiglio discusses 'ethnolinguistic nationalism', a phenomenon that emerged alongside the development of nation-state political ideologies, suggesting that «the confluence of folkloric notions of ethnicity, nativity, maternality, and exclusive ownership in the discourse of the national language» (See Thomas Bonfiglio, *Mother Tongues and Nations: The Invention of the Native Speaker*, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin 2010: 6).

devoted to the differentiation, the definition and the protection of each of the Scandinavian languages,[8] consolidating a strong national identity and mirroring the need to recognize a single national language as «genstand for en energisk genskabelsespolitik».[9] In Denmark and in Sweden the codification of modern languages had already begun its course over the previous two centuries.[10] The voices of the great artists of the time proved to be a crucial point of reference in this regard. Early nineteenth-century poetic productions manifest genuine love and respect for the values and to the beauty of language.[11] In Norway, the formation of a standard idiom would not occur until independence from the

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[8] Multilingualism has played a significant role in the development of Scandinavian languages. One of the most interesting periods of Swedish language development is conventionally referred to as *nysvenska* (Modern Swedish), which can be divided into *äldre nysvenska* (Early Modern Swedish, 1526-1750) and *yngre nysvenska* (Late Modern Swedish, 1750-1880). During this historical period, especially under the enlightened reigns of Queen Christina (1626-1689) and King Gustav III (1746-1792), Sweden underwent a cultural transformation where the influence of German and French played a pivotal role in shaping the language. Gösta Bergman notes that these two languages, along with Danish and English (to a lesser extent), significantly enriched the Swedish vocabulary. The impact of French on Swedish was evident across various domains, including furniture, fashion, culinary arts, theater, literature, military terminology, and financial dealings. Meanwhile, German contributed through terms related to geology, minerals, tools used in various trades, animal names, and advancements in military sciences. See Gösta Bergman, *Kortfattad svensk språkhistoria*, Studentlitteratur, Lund 2013: 86-156. For further information on linguistic contact between German and Swedish, see Elias Wessén, *Om det tyska inflytandet på svenskt språk under medeltiden*, Svenska Bokförlaget, Stockholm 1970. For further information on the influence of French in Swedish language, see Karin Hallén, *Franskt i svensk tappning, studier över franska lånord i svenska dialekter*, Uppsala Universitet, Uppsala 2001. Denmark has also maintained close linguistic contact with Germany. See Elin Fredsted, *Language Contact and Bilingualism in Flensburg in the Middle of 19th Century*, in *Braunmüller* – Ferraresi (eds.), *Aspects of Multilingualism in European Language History*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam-Philadelphia 2003, pp. 35-61. See also Mikaela Björklund – Siv Björklund – Kaj Sjöholm, *Multilingual Policies and Multilingual Education in the Nordic Countries*, in «International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education», 6 (2013), 1, pp. 1-22: 5-6. In Norway, Low German linguistic traits can still be traced in some local dialects, such as the one spoken in the city of Bergen. See Agnete Nesse, *Written and Spoken Languages in Bergen in the Hansa Era*, in Kurt *Braunmüller* – Gisella Ferraresi (eds.), *Aspects of Multilingualism in European Language History*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam-Philadelphia 2003, pp. 61-85.
[9] «subject of a vigorous restoration policy» (See Anne Knudsen, *Mikronationalismens dannelsehistorie*, in Anders Linde-Hansen – Jan Olof Nilsson (eds.), *Nationella identiteter i Norden: ett fullbordat projekt?*, Nordiska Rådet, Copenaghen 1991, pp. 19-39: 30).
[10] The establishment of the first scientific academies responsible for publishing the initial national dictionaries can be traced back to the latter half of the 18th century. The *Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab* ('Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters'), and the *Svenska Akademien* ('Swedish Academy'), were respectively founded in 1742 by Christian VI of Denmark and in 1786 by King Gustav III. See *Svenska Akademiens ordböcker webbplats* ('Swedish Academy's Dictionaries website'), https://www.svenskaakademien.se/svenska-akademien/historisk-oversikt, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]. See also the website of the *Det Konglige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab* ('Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters'), http://publ.royalacademy.dk/page?lang=en, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].
[11] Nicolai Grundtvig and Esaias Tegnér, prominent figures in Danish and Swedish Romanticism, composed poems about their respective mother tongues. The former wrote the poem *Modersmaalet* ('Mother Tongue') in 1837, a tribute to the Danish language, celebrated as «vort hjertesprog» ('the language of our heart'). In 1817, the former wrote *Språken* (The Languages), where he defines Swedish «ärans och hjältarnas språk» ('the language of glory and heroes').

Kingdom of Denmark in 1814. After gaining its freedom, intellectuals and artists started to immediately work on the codification of a national language, which had been dependent on their previous rulers' cultural influence for too long.[12] Further evidence of a tendency towards linguistic preservation can be connected to the emergence of an encompassing linguistic ideology; *Skandinavism* (Scandinavism). The establishment of modern nation states as separate entities gave rise to cultural and socio-political discourses in favour of linguistic openness in the whole region ever since the second half of the eighteenth century. This current of thought identified in the convergence of Scandinavian languages a strategic move to emphasize a pan-Scandinavian proximity.[13] Today, Scandinavian linguistic homogeneity deserves to be analysed in a new light. Multilingual traits define Scandinavian languages at different levels and in different forms. Firstly, English language proficiency standards are among the highest in the world.[14] Several minority languages are officially recognized in Sweden and Norway, such as Finnish, Sami, or Yiddish.[15] Furthermore, Lars Vikør emphasizes the mutual intelligibility between the three major languages which, aside from different degrees of understanding, makes inter-Scandinavian communication quite easy.[16]

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[12] Two languages that were codified and standardized between 1830 and 1860 are now two officially recognized versions of Norwegian. The first one is the *Riksmål* (from 1929 *Bokmål*). The credit for the formation of *Riksmål* can be attributed to the efforts of schoolteacher Knud Knudsen, who blended Danish grammatical elements with linguistic traits used by Norwegian upper-middle class in the capital. The second one was *Landsmål* (from 1929 *Nynorsk*), created by philologist Ivar Aasen. This variant came into existence through meticulous research of the various Norwegian rural dialects. Aasen's intention was to cleanse Norwegian of Danish influences. See Lars Vikør, *The Nordic Languages: Their Status and Interrelations*, Novus Press, Oslo 2001: 55.

[13] See Bengt Loman, *Idéer och motiveringar i nordisk språkplanering under de senaste hundra åren*, in «Sprog i Norden», 13 (1982), 1, pp. 45-76. See also Oscar Bandle – Kurt Braunmüller – Ernst Hakon Jahr – Allan Karker – Hans-Peter Naumann – Ulf Telemann – Lennart Elmevik – Gun Widmark (eds.), *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, De Gruyter, Berlin – New York 2005, pp. 1453-1468. The unifying project of Scandinavism faded towards the end of the 19th century. See Kari Haarder Ekman, *'Mitt hems gränser vidgades': En studie i den kulturella skandinavismen under 1800-talet*, Makadam, Göteborg 2010.

[14] See Benny Lewis, *Why are Scandinavians so Damn Good at speaking English*, in *Fluent in 3 Months*, 6 June 2020, https://www.fluentin3months.com/scandinavian/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[15] Linguistic minorities have long posed significant challenges in Scandinavia throughout history. An illustrative case is the Swedish government's imposition of the Swedish language on minority groups, like the Finns and the Sami. See Jarmo Lainio, *Tvåspråkighet och språkkontexter i Sverige*, in Eva Sundgren (ed.), *Sociolingvistik*, Liber AB, Solna 2013, pp. 274-312. See also Francis M. Hult, *Planning for Multilingualism and Minority Language Rights in Sweden*, in «Language Policy», 3 (2004), pp. 181-201. The effects of such linguistic imposition are partially recounted by the writer Mikael Niemi (*Populär musik från Vittula*, Norstedts, Stockholm 2001). The Danish government also implemented comparable linguistic policies for the people of Greenland and the Faroe Islands. See Adam Koči – Vladimír Baar, *Greenland and the Faroe Islands: Denmark's autonomous territories from postcolonial perspectives*, in «Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift – Norwegian Journal of Geography», 75 (2021), 4, pp. 189-202.

[16] See Vikør, *The Nordic Languages: Their Status and Interrelations*, cit.

Migration is currently playing a major role from this point of view. Urban areas in which migratory flows settled down have become large multilingual poles in which different registers, sociolects, and other linguistic variations constantly negotiate their existence within a cultural system that tends to relegate them beyond a normative conception of language. Linguistic styles that deviate from the structure of standard languages had begun to emerge around the 1990s, mostly in urban areas inhabited by families with a migratory background. The peripheral areas of the major urban spaces soon turned in multicultural and multilingual areas where the local language mixed up with traces of Arabic, Kurdish, Serbo-Croatian, Greek, Persian and several other foreign languages.

One of the first Scandinavian scholars to describe suburban linguistic variants was Swedish linguist Ulla-Britt Kotsinas, who raised academic interest for the linguistic habits of young generations with different ethnic backgrounds. Kotsinas studied the alternative speech strategies adopted by migrants and their descendants. The Swedish of the first generations of immigrants was characterized by an oversimplification of syntactic, grammatical, morphological, and prosodic norms. The second and third generations, instead, used deviant linguistic strategies as a way of expressing emotional, social, and political belonging.[17] Over time, several other scholars from Denmark, Sweden and Norway tried to refine the contours of the new linguistic suburban landscape, since similar deviations had been occurring in all of the three countries. In Denmark, studies were carried out by Danish scholar Pia Quist in her analysis of the Danish suburban linguistic variant, negatively labeled by the media as *Perkerdansk* ('Perker Danish').[18] In Norway, studies on *Kebabnorsk* ('Kebab Norwegian') have been carried out by Bente Ailin

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[17] As early as the mid-1980s, Kotsinas began to study the Swedish variant in the periphery of Stockholm, which she named *Rinkebysvenska* ('Rinkeby Swedish', from the name of the multicultural neighborhood on the outskirts of Stockholm). See Ulla-Britt Kotsinas, *Rinkebysvenska – en dialekt?*, in «Svenskans Beskrivning», 16 (1988), 1, pp. 264-278. See also Ulla-Britt Kotsinas, *'Språkets Uppkomlingar'*, in «Språkvård» 3 (2003), pp. 4-10. Other Swedish scholars that dealt with this topic: Anna Grönberg Gunnarsdotter, *Ungdomsspråk*, in Eva Sundgren (ed.), *Sociolingvistik*, Liber AB, Solna 2013, pp. 236-275; Ellen Bijvoet – Kari Fraurud, *'Rinkebysvenska' och andra konstruktioner av språklig variation i dagens flerspråkiga Sverige*, in Kenneth Hyltenstam – Inger Lindberg (eds.) *Svenska som andraspråk : i forskning, undervisning och samhälle*, Studentlitteratur AB, Lund 2013.

[18] Perker is a contraction of the words *Perser* (Persian) and *Tyrker* (Turkish), a derogatory term used to address Danish citizens of Middle Eastern descent. See Pia Quist, *Ny københavnsk 'multietnolekt'. Om sprogbrug blandt unge i sprogligt og kulturelt heterogene miljøer*, in «Danske talesprog», 1 (2000), pp. 143-211; Pia Quist, *Sociolinguistic approaches to multiethnolect: Language variety and stylistic practice*, in «International Journal of Bilingualism», 12 (2008), 1-2, pp. 43-61.

Svendsen and Unn Røyneland, among the others.[19] These variations were assigned the status of 'sociolects', a term implying a social-based form of dialect used in particular situations, by specific speakers, and characterized by varying degrees of formality.[20] Scandinavian sociolects were also to be framed as a new form of symbolic resistance to a normative definition of national identity: a new identification defined by multiethnicity and multilingualism, that would connect an inter-generational memory to an international horizon, with influences from American hip-hop culture and rap music.[21]

Recent studies have further determined that such forms of communication have begun to be indistinctly adopted by the new generations, independently from their ethnic origin. Due to its extreme diffusion, the spread of such linguistic sociolects has also been defined as a 'multiethnolect'.[22] Multiethnolect is a term coined by Pia Quist in the early 2000s to frame a communication system «which has developed in multiethnic urban communities and which is associated with speakers of mixed ethnic groups». It is predominantly used by younger segments of the population with different ethnic backgrounds, making it extremely hard to distinguish it «as a marker of ethnic identity in contrast to a majority identity, but rather ought to be seen as integrated in the local linguistic and social landscape».[23] The term implies a high degree of linguistic awareness,

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[19] Bente Ailin Svendsen – Unn Røyneland, *Multiethnolectal facts and functions in Oslo, Norway*, in «International Journal of Bilingualism», 12 (2008), 1-2, pp. 63-83. See also Bente Ailin Svendsen, *Kebabnorsk og retten til det norske*, in *NRK, Norsk rikskringkasting*, 8 december 2013, https://www.nrk.no/ytring/kebabnorsk-og-retten-til-det-norske-1.11401618, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[20] See Roger Källström – Inger Lindberg, *Young Urban Swedish. Variation and change in multilingual settings*, in «Göteborgsstudier i Nordisk Språkvetenskap» 14 (2011); See also Grönberg Gunnarsdotter, *Ungdomsspråk*, cit.; See also Quist, *Sociolinguistic approaches to multiethnolect*, cit.; See also Svendsen – Røyneland, *Multiethnolectal facts and functions in Oslo, Norway*, cit.

[21] As Ulla-Britt Kotsinas suggests, such linguistic variant can reflect speakers' sense of identity, sometimes linked to pride, but also intertwined with feelings of inferiority. See Kotsinas, *Rinkebysvenska – en dialekt?*, cit.: 275. Younger groups' language is often perceived as having lower prestige due to the incorporation of slang-derived terms. This form of communication has always faced criticism, even in the past. Nevertheless, standard languages have benefited significantly from what used to be considered as deviant slang-sounding language, as many words have been completely assimilated into Swedish vocabulary. See Kotsinas, *Språkets Uppkomlingar*, cit.: 4-5

[22] See Pia Quist – Bente A. Svendsen, *Multilingual Urban Scandinavia: New Linguistics Practices*, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Bristol 2010. Similar sociolinguistic phenomena have marked language development in other Northern European countries such as Germany and the Netherlands. See Jacomine Nortier – Margret Dorleijn, *Multi-ethnolects: Kebabnorsk, Perkerdansk, Verlan, Kanakensprache, Straattaal, etc,* in Peter Bakker – Yaron Matras (eds.), *Contact Languages: A Comprehensive Guide*, De Gruyter Mouton, Berlin 2013, pp. 229-273.

[23] Quist, *Sociolinguistic approaches to multiethnolect*, cit.: 44-46.

which drives the choices of speakers on the base of various factors: age of the interlocutor, degree of formality of the conversation, topic, etc.[24]

## 2.1.2 Jonas Hassen Khemiri and Yahya Hassan: Critical Reception

The search for an alternative sense of belonging that breaks the norm of a standard linguistic form is often represented in the multilingual style that characterizes the narratives of second-generation writers in Scandinavian countries.[25] However, displaying these languages in post-migrant literary representations had to face a certain degree of segregation: «The Nordic countries are thought of as linguistically unified polities. Despite widespread multilingualism, the linguistic market of each country is dominated by a national standard language, which permeates all tiers of society».[26]

The authors of this chapter represent two emblematic figures in contemporary Scandinavian literature. Jonas Hassen Khemiri and Yahya Hassan have contributed to raise the attention of the public towards the topic of migration, providing an alternative perspective on the matter. The former was born in Stockholm to a Tunisian father and Swedish mother. He published his first book *Ett öga rött* (One Eye Red) in 2003, achieving enormous success as a writer both in Sweden and abroad.[27] He has written novels, plays, and articles. In 2015, his novel *Allt jag inte minns* (*Everything I Don't*

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[24] Bijvoet, *Förortssvenska i grindvakters öron*, cit.: 144. For instance, younger generations may signal a sense of affiliation to youth culture, express a form of rebellion against an idealized external authority, or even mock a cultural feature that has become, in a way or another, part of the Scandinavian socio-linguistic scenario. See also Hannah Botsis – Mari Kronlund Rimfors – Rickard Jonsson, *Speaking Ortensvenska in Prestigious Spaces: Contemporary Urban Vernacular and Social Positioning at an Inner-city Stockholm School*, in «Journal of Language, Identity & Education», 21 (2022), 2, pp. 67-82.

[25] See Kongslien, *Migrant or Multicultural Literature in the Nordic Countries*, cit. See also Satu Gröndahl, *Litteraturens gränsland: invandrar- och minoritetslitteratur i nordiskt perspektiv*, Centrum för multietnisk forskning, Uppsala 2002. See also Wolfgang Behschnitt – Sarah De Mul – Liesbeth Minnaard (eds.*), Literature, Language, and Multiculturalism in Scandinavia and the Low Countries*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2013. See also Christian Refsum, *Multilingualism in Contemporary Nordic Literature: Jonas Hassen Khemiri*, in Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen – Kristin Ørjasäter (eds.), *Globalizing Art. Negotiating Place, Identity and Nation in Contemporary Nordic Art*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus 2011, pp. 163-181.

[26] See Linus Salö – David Karlander – Sirpa Leppänen – Elina Westinen – Janus Spindler Møller, *Introduction: spaces of upset in the Nordic region*, in «International Journal of the Sociology of Language», 275 (2022), pp. 1-19: 5. See also Fanny Fransson, *Vad är högerpopulism?: En jämförande idéanalys mellan Sverigedemokraterna, Dansk Folkeparti och Fremskrittspartiet*, Linnéuniversitetet, Fakulteten för samhällsvetenskap, Växjö 2015 [Bachelor thesis]. Recently, Sweden Democrats' leader Jimmy Åkesson has proposed that *Sveriges Radio* ('Sweden's Radio'), the principal national radio broadcaster, should stop publishing news in Arabic, Somalian, and Kurdish. See Knut Kainz Rognerud, *SD vill slopa radiosändningar på tre språk: Måste lära sig svenska*, in *Svt nyheter*, 7 May 2022, https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sd-vill-slopa-radiosandningar-pa-tre-sprak, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[27] Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Ett öga rött*, Norstedts, Stockholm 2003.

*Remember*) won the prestigious literary award *Augustpriset* ('August Prize').[28] Khemiri has also played an important role in the political debate on Swedish migration, with a direct attack on the political establishment for ignoring the issues related to racism and social marginalization.[29] The latter was born on the outskirts of Aarhus to Palestinian refugees who arrived in Denmark in the 1980s. His childhood was marked by his father's violent attitude and the harsh conditions of the Danish ghetto environment. In 2013, at the age of 17, his first collection of poems was published with the title *Yahya Hassan*. He wrote a second collection of poems while also approaching a political career. Hassan was found dead in his apartment in April 2020, at the age of 24. In the two works here to be examined, Khemiri's second novel *Montecore: en unik tiger* (*Montecore: The Silence of The Tiger*), and Yahya Hassan's first collection of poems, *Yahya Hassan* (Yahya Hassan),[30] the authors rewrite the contours of their languages, in an attempt to destabilize preestablished power relationships.

In his work, Khemiri recounts the tortuous life of Abbas, a Tunisian man who landed in Sweden during the 1970s, and his son, Jonas. Their stories are told through the perspective of multiple characters. In order to do that, the author impersonates the voices of Kadir, Abbas' childhood friend, and of Jonas himself. In his collection of poems, Hassan recounts disparate episodes from his life starting from his childhood in the ghetto of Aarhus, until the years after the publication of his work. Hassan writes about the difficulties he was forced to deal with in the Danish suburban environment, opening a window to a violent world including the abuse suffered from his father, the hypocrisy of religious fundamentalism, the social marginalization, as well the author's illegal activities.

Khemiri and Hassan seem to share a similar view on the role that language plays for them. The subversion of standard rules and the exploration of different linguistic registers represent a vehicle for self-determination. The two authors stage a linguistic performance,

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[28] Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Allt jag inte minns*, Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm 2015; Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Everything I Don't Remember*, eng. trans. by Rachel Willson-Broyles, Atria Books, New York 2016.

[29] In 2013, he wrote an article directed at the minister of justice, Beatrice Ask, in which he ironically proposed to exchange each other's lives for a day. The purpose was to make her realize what it feels like to be a foreigner in one's homeland. See Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Bästa Beatrice Ask*, in *Dagens Nyheter*, 13 March 2013, https://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/basta-beatrice-ask/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[30] Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Montecore: en unik tiger*, Norstedts, Stockholm 2006; Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, eng. trans. by Rachel Willson-Broyles, Alfred Knopf, New York 2011; Yahya Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, Gyldendal, Copenaghen 2013.

deliberately choosing to modify their respective languages according to their needs.[31] In many interviews, both express the desire to experiment with language as a fundamental source of inspiration for their works.[32] The type of multilingualism that these works enact combines both intra-linguistic variations that characterize contemporary Swedish and Danish multietnholects, and inter-linguistic variations that put together different idioms. However, as previously mentioned, this aspect has been treated as a sort of cultural discriminator, clashing with a linguistic ideology still unprepared to positively respond to a different perspective on the topic of language. Critics tended to ostentatiously emphasize the ethnic-cultural origins of the authors. Comparing reviews and comments reserved by Danish and Swedish critics, the general tendency of public reception «showed the iconic function of Khemiri and Hassan as complex cultural signifiers, which serve as a repository of self-images and stereotypes of 'Swedishness'/'Danishness' and 'Otherness'»,[33] resulting in a manipulative distortion of their works. The frequent references to 'Rinkeby Swedish' for Khemiri or the 'Perker Danish' for Hassan turned them into ideal bearers of an authentic voice from the suburbs, reinforcing the idea, as Astrid Trotzig claims, of a linguistic separate group that would encompass migrants and their descendants.[34]

Studies by Jenne Maes, Susanne Allard Lerøy, Johanna Svarstad and Antonia Rojas have documented the critical reception of Khemiri's first two works and Hassan's poetry

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[31] Huss and Tidigs define this process as 'bordering', a perpetual movement of reconstruction of linguistic borders. This dynamic process is marked by circulation, translation, and reception of multilingual works, contributing to reshaping the borders that exist between text and readers. See Julia Tidigs – Markus Huss, *The Noise of Multilingualism: Reader Diversity, Linguistic Borders and Literary Multimodality*, in «Critical Multilingualism Studies», 5 (2017), 1, pp. 208–235: 217. See also Julia Tidigs, *Multilingualism and the Work of Readers – Processes of Linguistic Bordering in Three Cases of Contemporary Swedish-Language Literature*, in Heidi Grönstrand – Markus Huss – Ralf Kauranen (eds.) *The Aesthetics and Politics of Linguistic Borders Multilingualism in Northern European Literature*, Routledge, New York 2019, pp. 225-241.

[32] See Martin Wright, *Yahya Hassan: – Knausgård ga meg et spark bak*, in *Fædrelandsvennen*, 10 January 2014, https://www.fvn.no/kultur/i/P2na5/yahya-hassan-knausgaard-ga-meg-et-spark-bak, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]; Kaja Korsvold, *Yahya Hassan: Jeg kunne ikke skrevet diktene mine på arabisk*, in *Aftenposten*, 21 February 2014, https://www.aftenposten.no/kultur/i/qWBg/yahya-hassan-jeg-kunne-ikke-skrevet-diktene-mine-paa-arabisk, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]; Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Jonas Hassen Khemiri Interview: Reading Has to Be Dangerous*, 6 April 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPN3qBbg_A8&t=362s, [oral source, Last accessed 23 October 2023]; Matilda Ohlsson, *Jonas Hassen Khemiri om språkets makt*, in *Sydöstran*, 13 October 2011, https://www.sydostran.se/karlshamn/jonas-hassen-khemiri-om-sprakets-makt/?stopredirect, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[33] See Nadia Gokieli, *The Iconicity of an 'Immigrant Writer'. Jonas Hassen Khemiri and Yahya Hassan*, in «Akademisk Kvarter», 10 (2015), pp. 208-221: 218.

[34] Trotzig, *Makten över prefixen*, cit.

collection, comparing articles, reviews, blogs, and textbooks.[35] Maes observes how Khemiri's debut novel represented, for many critics, a source of genuine linguistic-cultural authenticity from Sweden's multiethnic suburbs. In the novel, the search for his cultural roots pushes the protagonist, Halim, to explore the limits of language by using a deviant form of Swedish. One of the definitions with which the novel was initially presented has almost turned into a catchphrase to label this matter with: «'den första romanen skriven på tvättäkta Rinkebysvenska'».[36] The way Khemiri's language was addressed to the attention of the reader's tended to present Swedish suburban areas as a mysterious and exotic place to discover: «på senare år [...] börjar vi så smått ana vilken drivbänk för litteraturen de invandrartäta förorterna egentligen är»,[37] tickling the expectations of an audience eager to see the authentic face of the new Sweden through literature, instead of other, perhaps more popular, forms of media.[38] In general, it was intended to assign the character of Halim the role of Khemiri's alter-ego.[39] Such treatment from the critics triggered a reaction from the side of the author, whose reply took shape in the realization of *Montecore*: «Jag ville ha en röst som var uppenbart artificiell just för att många hyllat språket i Ett öga rött för dess autenticitet. Och så ville jag visa att det finns miljarders

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[35] See Jenne Maes, *Vadå Invandrare?! Hur har värderingen av multietnisk slang i den svenska skönlitteraturen förändrat sig under det gångna decenniet? En receptionsundersökning baserad på prosa av Alejandro Leiva Wenger, Jonas Hassen Khemiri och Jens Lapidus*, Universiteit Gent, Gent 2011. See Susanne Allard Lerøy, *'Den arabiske prins' Resepsjon av Yahya Hassans dikt i norske lærebøker. En komparativ analyse av lærebøker og offentlig mottakelse*, Universitet i Bergen, Bergen 2017. See Johanna Svarstad, *Brutale debutanterfaringer, En analyse av debuten YAHYA HASSAN*, Universitet i Oslo, Oslo 2016. See Antonia Rojas, *Etnicitet på det svenska litterära fältet*, Institutionen för kulturvetenskaper, Lund 2021. For further information on the criticism, reception, and reviews of these two authors. See An Willems – Wolfgang Behschnitt, *Jonas Khemiri and the Post-monolingual Condition – Or, the Camel with Two Humps*, in «Multiethnica», 34 (2012), pp. 10-14.
[36] «'the first novel written in authentic Rinkeby Swedish'» (Jenny Tunedal, *Briljant, nattsvart*, in *Aftonbladet*, 6 February 2006, https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/bokrecensioner/a/0EVl4E/briljant-nattsvart, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).
[37] «in recent years [...] we are beginning to realize what a driving force for literature the immigrant-dense suburbs really are» (Erik Löfvendahl, *Hjälp, jag heter Zbigniew Debutant med utanförskapets dubbla blick*, in *Svenska Dagbladet*, 12 August 2005, https://www.svd.se/debutant-med-utanforskapets-dubbla-blick, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).
[38] «Jag har länge väntat att den andra generationens invandrarungdomar skulle börja skriva och inte bara rappa och filma» (Maija Niittymäki, quoted in Nilsson, *Litteratur, etnicitet och föreställningen om det mångkulturella samhället*, cit.: 287: «I have long been waiting for the second generation of immigrant youth to start writing and not just rapping and filming»).
[39] See Maria Edström, *Jonas Hassen Khemiri: medveten känsla för språk, stil och form*, in *Sverigesradio*, 31 October 2014, https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/6003970, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]. See also Jonas Hassen Khemiri quoted in Peter Leonard, *Imagining Themselves: Voice, Text, and Reception in Anyuru, Khemiri and Wenger*, University of Washington, Washington DC 2005: 24.

miljarder sätt att bryta på».[40] As Maes notices with a touch of irony, the reception of Khemiri's second novel pointed towards the opposite direction: «Det som också är påfallande är att nästan ingen vågar lägga länken mellan Khemiri och hans invandrarbakgrund och att ingen betraktar den som en autobiografisk roman».[41]

The reception of Yahya Hassan's collection of poetry followed roughly the same steps as Khemiri's first novel. His work «mottogs som ett välbehövt inslag i en allt för homogen litteraturoffentlighet men exotiserades i den samma».[42] Svarstad points at similar problems, asserting that critics had a tendency to overemphasize the lyrical manifestation of the Danish multiethnolect. The scholar cites Lilian Munk Rösing's review, that came out in 2013, in particular, in which she happily admits «at nogen udvandt poetisk potensiale af perkerdansk», reporting almost in verbatim the comments made about Khemiri's work.[43] As Felix Rothstein states: «han formår at kombinere et meget karakteristisk århusiansk [...] med det man i mangel af bedre kalder 'perkerdansk'».[44] In another review, Niels Lyngsø criticizes the media and political instrumentalization against the Danish poet:

> jeg synes det er utroligt irriterende og meget respektløst over for forfatteren at han i hele den flodbølge af blogposter, debatindlæg og lyninterviews der er fulgt med denne bogudgivelse, stort set hele tiden bliver fremstillet som den autentiske perker, hvis stemme som en naturkraft er brudt frem af betonen.[45]

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[40] «I wanted a voice that was obviously artificial precisely because so many people have praised the language in 'One eye red' for its authenticity. And I wanted to show that there are billions and billions of ways to break up language» (Cecilia Nelson, *Han närmar sig ämnet som en haj*, in *Göteborgs-posten*, 15 February 2006, https://www.gp.se/kultur/kultur/han-n%C3%A4rmar-sig-%C3%A4mnet-som-en-haj-1.1192893, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).

[41] «What is also striking is that almost no one dares to make the link between Khemiri and his immigrant background and no one considers it an autobiographical novel» (Maes, *Vadå Invandrare?!*, cit.: 98). In his review of the book, Björn af Kleen states that Khemiri's linguistic constructions were created by someone who knows the language far too well to be considered 'immigrant Swedish', but at the same time marks a persistent structural discrimination in other reviewers. Björn af Kleen, *Hassen Khemiri vill uppfinna sig själv*, in *Sydsvenskan*, 4 February 2006, https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2006-02-04/hassen-khemiri-vill-uppfinna-sig-sjalv, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]). See also Hjorth, *Förtvivlade läsningar*, cit.: 151-152.

[42] «was welcomed as a much-needed addition to an all-too-homogeneous literary public sphere but was exoticized in the same» (See Rojas, *Etnicitet på det svenska litterära fältet*, cit.: 26).

[43] «that someone extracted poetic potential from *perkerdansk*» (Svarstad, *Brutale debutanterfaringer*, cit.: 70-71 [italics added by the author]).

[44] «he manages to combine a very characteristic Aarhusian [...] with what is, for lack of a better term, called 'perkerdansk'» (Felix Rothstein, *Hissa, hussa, Hassasan – Yahya Hassan*, in *Litteraturnu*, 4 November 2013, https://litteraturnu.dk/hissa-hussa-hassasan-yahya-hassan-yahya-hassan/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).

[45] «I find it incredibly annoying and very disrespectful to the author that in the entire flood of blog posts, opinion pieces and quickfire interviews that have followed this book release, he is almost always portrayed as the authentic pervert, whose voice has broken out of the concrete like a force of nature» (Niels Lyngsø,

Such contrastive positions clearly lacked unitary coordinates that could serve as a collective framework. How, then, does the theme of multilingualism fit into the post-migrant Scandinavian narrative? And how can a different theoretical framing for representing the relationship between monolingualism and multilingualism give new coordinates to the debate?

### 2.1.3 A Post-monolingual Frame of Reading

The analysis of the reception shows that the very concept of multilingualism continues to be trapped in a paradigm of thought derived from a national-romantic cultural legacy, and is therefore implicitly labelled as something that does not follow more canonical linguistic parameters of Swedish and Danish identification.[46] Reducing multilingualism to the sum of separate entities ignores the agency of individuals in their everyday language choice as well as the effects caused by them: «multilingualism means that individuals and groups are seen as agents who constantly make linguistic choices between a wide range of varieties: styles, dialects, languages. The choices are influenced by personal as well as societal, domestic or trans-national contexts».[47] In this regard, Julia Tidigs applies the same concept or languages as Benedict Anderson does on nations, seeing them as 'imagined communities': «inte något som finns utan något som *görs*»,[48] meaning that language choices produce language actions creating a constant,

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[46] François Grosjean highlights the concept of 'monolingual bias', which has significantly impacted the study of bilingual and multilingual behavior. Such bias keeps determining how subjects, communities, and sense of belonging are conceived. See François Grosjean, *Studying Bilingual*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008. Andreas Krogull challenges the validity of such biases by examining the role of multilingualism that has naturally emerged 'from below', in the border regions between Germany and the Netherlands. See Andreas Krogull, *Rethinking Historical Multilingualism and Language Contact 'from Below'. Evidence from the Dutch-German Borderlands in the Long Nineteenth Century*, in «Journal of Low Countries Studies», 45 (2021), 2, pp. 147-170. Even the policies designed by European Union countries regarding multilingualism appear problematic in this sense. As Ulrike Vogl claims: «decisions to promote multilingualism, e.g. on a EU level, imply the promotion of individuals who are proficient in clearly separate (prestigious) standard languages, ideally on a near-native level. […] what is being promoted is […] 'monolingual multilingualism'» (See Ulrike Vogl, *Preface*, in Matthias Hüning – Ulrike Vogl – Olivier Moliner (eds.), *Standard Languages and Multilingualism in European History*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam-Philadelphia 2012, pp. vii-ix: vii).

[47] Reetta Toivanen – Anneli Sarhimaa – Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, *Introduction*, in Johanna Laakso – Anneli Sarhimaa – Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark – Reetta Johanna Toivanen (eds.), *Towards Openly Multilingual Policies and Practices: Assessing Minority*, Multilingual Matters, Bristol-Buffalo-Toronto 2016, pp.1-33: 30.

[48] «not something that exists but something that is *done*» (Tidigs, *Att skriva sig*, cit.: 30 [italics in original]).

deterritorializaing moment of rupture and re-composition in those who produce it and those who receive it.[49]

Yasemin Yildiz has given attention to the contrastive relationship between a monolingual political ideology and multilingual manifestations. More and more people travel across linguistic boundaries, in the media, in social interactions, in their workplace. In opposition to a binary understanding of language, Yildiz introduces the term 'post-monolingualism'. Post-monolingualism is an all-encompassing concept to describe the line of tension between a sociolinguistic structure strongly devoted to the prominent role assigned to (mono-)languages and the increasing manifestation of multilingual practices that subvert such paradigm.[50] According to the scholar, post-monolingualism provides an effective theoretical basis for turning around the cognitive strategies with which we perceive language in the post-migrant social context. Besides representing a useful parameter of analysis, a post-monolingual theoretical framework also bears an important critical function, whereby:

> it refers to the opposition to the term that it qualifies and to a potential break with it
> […] 'postmonolingual' highlights the struggle against the monolingual paradigm.
> […] a field of tension in which the monolingual paradigm continues to assert itself
> and multilingual practices persist or reemerge.[51]

From a post-monolingual perspective, an individual's existence cannot be regulated solely by their mother tongue. Instead, linguistic boundaries appear to be more permeable and subject to external influences, turning into nodes «of a constant transformative give-and-take between and within them». Thus, as the scholar continues, the usage of «Words of foreign derivation […] open up the possibility that foreign is lodged right in the mother

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[49] «Texternas flerspråkighet [som] understöder utformningen av territorier, utforskandet av ämnen som modersmål och modersmålslöshet, är delaktig i konstruktionen av ras, klass och kön. Pa samma gång utgör den ett störningsmoment och fungerar splittrande av samma territorier, ämnen och kategorier» (See Tidigs, *Att skriva sig*, cit.: 309: «The multilingualism of texts [which] supports the construction of territories, the exploration of topics such as mother tongue and mother-tonguelessness, is involved in the construction of race, class and gender. At the same time, it constitutes a disruptive element and acts to divide the same territories, subjects and categories»).

[50] As already seen, words like 'Post-monolingualism' or 'Post-migration' present an ambivalent nature due to the semantic ambiguity of the prefix 'post'. Post-monolingualism depicts on the one hand a sense of continuity with the paradigm of monolingualism in that it studies its effects, and on the other hand a moment of rupture, which attempts to expose monolingualism's flaws. Questioning a linguistic paradigm that assumes the cultural homogeneity of the mother tongue can be a crucial exercise for framing a linguistically diverse landscape. See Nandi, *The 'Post-' as Prefix in Popular Culture and the Social Sciences*, cit.

[51] See Yildiz, *Beyond the mother tongue*, cit.: 4-5.

tongue. […] Employing such words […] amounts to a provocative assertion of multilingualism».[52] Besides depicting a social landscape in which the coexistence of multiple languages can be empirically observed, post-monolingualism also recovers its critical function towards the monolingual paradigm, making «the complex flows of the linguascape palpable».[53]

The concept developed by Yildiz is extremely relevant to further broaden the post-migrant theoretical framework, providing useful tools for the analysis.[54] The tension triggered by the contrasting stances individuals take toward multilinguistic manifestations renegotiates many of the assumptions through which we perceive linguistic change, moving our attention towards those «spaces of upset» that break down and reconstruct linguistic norms.[55] If such negotiations, as Christian Refsum states, can be seen «both as aesthetic and linguistic experiments on a micro-level and as performative actions in a broader political perspective»,[56] then the concept expressed by Yildiz might better frame the context, the essence and the purposes of such practices. The subversive linguistic tension that characterizes a post-monolingual dimension reproduces the conflictual nature of the post-migrant condition: they both replicate opposing and conflictual positions that fight for greater representation. Therefore, the post-monolingual essence of the two works seeks to frame the idea of separate languages as «historical artefacts and not transhistorical constants».[57]

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[52] See Yildiz, *Beyond the mother tongue*, cit.: 67.

[53] See Yildiz, *Beyond the mother tongue*, cit.: 171. As Mirjam Gebauer argues: «As the purpose of social institutions is to contribute towards resolving problems in society, the question arises as to how the changes observed in language use in the postmigrant condition should be interpreted. Should these changes be seen as a threat to social life, a problem, as some see it? […] Or should the changes in language be seen as effects, reactions and adaptations to the social and cultural changes which are taking place everywhere in this globalized society? If the latter is true, then language change in the postmigrant condition could be regarded as a contribution to the solution of issues in present societies» (Mirjam Gebauer, *Postmonolingual Struggles and the Poetry of Uljana Wolf*, in Moritz Schramm – Sten Pultz Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Mirjam Gebauer – Hans Christian Post – Sabrina Vitting-Seerup – Frauke Wiegand (eds.), *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts – The Postmigrant Condition*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, pp. 170-193: 176).

[54] «The position of the postmigrant reveals once again that the monolingual paradigm does not simply assert that a subject can only have one true language but also that this language has to correspond to particular ethnic properties. The link between language and ethnicity, in other words, is always shadowed by racialization» (Yildiz, *Beyond the mother tongue*, cit.: 171).

[55] See Salö – Karlander – Leppänen – Westinen – Janus Spindler Møller, *Introduction: spaces of upset*, cit.: 1.

[56] Refsum, *Multilingualism in Contemporary Nordic Literature*, cit.: 176.

[57] See Yildiz, *Beyond the mother tongue*, cit.: 10.

Following the traces of a post-monolingual condition in the works of Khemiri and Hassan, ruptures of linguistic norms and conventions will constitute the main categories of analysis to investigate alternative processes of linguistic self-determination.[58]

## 2.2 Jonas Hassen Khemiri: *Montecore – en unik tiger*

The title of the work makes a clear reference to the story of the white tiger, named *Montecore*, that belonged to the circus duo Siegfried Fischbacher and Roy Horn. The latter was attacked by the tiger during one of their shows in Las Vegas. In his novel, Khemiri continues to explore the edges of Swedish, further developing the first linguistic 'experiments' of his first work. The frequent deviations from linguistic norms pervade the plot of the novel from beginning to end in order to elaborate on one, specific question: «What happens if you deliberately break down language?».[59] Khemiri nuances his Swedish to such an extent that he gives the reader the impression of dealing with several languages, even though the source remains Swedish. The multilingualism depicted in *Montecore*, therefore, is not strictly conventional since it does not combine multiple idioms. Nonetheless, the voices that narrate the story interact with each other, interweaving different variants of Swedish which culminate into a fascinating polyphonic structure. In nuancing Swedish language, Khemiri's narrative takes place within the liminal space which draws the borders between codified and uncodified forms of communications. Such representation of language appears more as an independent, rhizomatic organism that constantly needs to 'migrate' and adapt.

In the first pages of the novel, the reader reads Kadir's proposal to Jonas to collaborate in the creation of a biography of Abbas. Kadir addresses Jonas with affection, underlining his fame as an established writer. Khemiri takes thus advantage of Kadir's voice to metafictionally reconstruct the tortuous stages following the release of his debut novel. In his opening lines, Kadir congratulates himself for the success of the publication of Jonas' book, but at the same time he blames him for the language he uses. Kadir even defends the position of critics, whom he believes were unfairly accused by Jonas for their narrow views.[60] Kadir's voice takes the lead in the first half of the novel, where he recounts

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[58] The concept introduced by Yasemin Yildiz will also reappear in the subsequent chapters, notably in Linnestå's and Navarro-Skaranger's works' analysis.

[59] Elisabeth Hjorth, quoted in Leonard, *Swedish Identity and the Literary Imaginery*, cit.: 196.

[60] This is one of the many metafictional references that characterize Khemiri's style. For further information on Khemiri's 'autofictional' and 'metafictional' features see Massimo Ciaravolo, *Mitizzare il quotidiano.*

Abbas' story, from the time they met in Tunisia. The pages he writes are sent to Jonas to be transposed into the biography. In the sections where he is not the narrating voice, Kadir's opinions recur in the emails he writes to his interlocutor, proposing which episodes to recount and how to structure them. He also intervenes in about fifty footnotes that interrupt Jonas' narration with corrections, doubts, and clarifications. From his end, Jonas reluctantly accepts the proposal of this double-authorial collaboration. His style, more introspective and intimate than his co-author's, seems to place greater interest in giving an order to the fragments of his memory rather than imposing his version of the facts. In this case, Jonas addresses himself, the child Jonas, as a second-person narrator, in an attempt to find the answers to some pending issues about his past and his relationship with his father. Finally, though rarely, Abbas takes a small part in this narration too, especially in the letters that he used to send to his friend Kadir in Tunisia. This chaotic mix of voices overlaps each other creating a confusing, albeit comic, aesthetic effect of language in motion, that moves over from one person to another, enriching and contaminating, constantly recreating itself through inter-linguistic and intra-linguistic exchanges. As Jonas notices, such confusion affects his writing style: «Och du har precis skrivit klart meningen när du inser att 'injcera' är Kadirs ord och inte ditt, att det är hans språk som har börjat influera dig och då växer sig tvivlen ännu starkare».[61]

However, a constant sense of indeterminacy runs throughout the novel, leaving few points of reference to rely on. As Elisabeth Hjorth claims: «i mellanrummet mellan Kadir och Jonas öppnas också en möjlighet att läsarpositionen osäkras».[62] The perspectives of the two narrators are often in conflict with one another. Abbas, of course, represents the

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*Halim 'sultano del pensiero' in* Ett öga rött *di Jonas Hassen Khemiri*, in Andrea Binelli – Alessandro Fambrini (eds.), *Mitologi, mitografi e mitomani. Tracce del mito attraverso i secoli. Scritti per i 65 anni di Fulvio Ferrari*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2020, pp. 217-229. See also Massimo Ciaravolo, *Collaborative Authorship and Postmigration in Jonas Hassen Khemiri's Novel* Montecore, in «European Journal of Scandinavian Studies», 51 (2021), 2, pp. 199-219.

[61] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 127; «And you have just finished writing the sentence when you realize that 'inject' is Kadir's word and not yours, that it's his language that has started to influence you, and then your doubt gets even stronger» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 105).

[62] «in the space between Kadir and Jonas also the possibility that the reader's position gets insecure is opened»; (Elisabeth Hjorth, *Förtvivlade läsningar – Litteratur som motstånd & läsning som etik*, Glänta produktion, Göteborg 2015: 100). Such indeterminacy, however, serves as a recurring theme in the novel, and encourages active engagement from the reader. As Khemiri himself states: «Om man leker med osäkerheten ställer det krav på vaksamhet hos läsaren» (Linda Skugge, *Alla författare bara ljuger och ljuger*, in *Expressen*, 4 February 2006, https://www.expressen.se/kronikorer/linda-skugge-alla-forfattare-bara-ljuger-och-ljuger/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]: «Playing with uncertainty requires the reader to be vigilant»).

pivotal centre around which their memories clash against each other. Kadir is a faithful admirer of Abbas, and he tends to hyperbolically describe his qualities as a man, a cosmopolitan, an artist and a womanizer, whereas Jonas seems to disagree with almost everything that comes out of Kadir's mouth. None of them, however, turns out to be reliable for several reasons. For one thing, Kadir's attitude often appears as suspicious and hard to believe. His assiduous need to remind Jonas that he is the only holder of truth casts doubt on everything he claims:

> Allt jag begär i utbyte för att korrespondera dig mina samlade data om din far är att vår boks ärlighet ska vara kryddad till max. Denna garanti är mig vital, eftersom falska rykten svärmar din fars liv. SANNINGEN och inget utom SANNINGEN måste bli vårt fyrtorn i skapandet av ett litterärt mästeropus. […] Tillfogat finner du sanningen om din far.[63]

Similarly, the recount provided by Jonas can be also considered somehow implausible. Throughout the course of the novel, Kadir emphasizes more than once Jonas' struggle to distinguish between reality and fantasy. The boy indeed finds a shelter in his vivid imagination, where he spends a great deal of time talking to imaginary friends and playing with his fantasies. The impossibility of determining who is telling the truth and who is lying reaches its climax towards the end of the book when Kadir's identity is questioned by Jonas, who suspects that his father had been writing all along under the guise of Kadir in a desperate attempt to reconnect with his son.

Khemiri's novel, therefore, depicts first and foremost a conflictual relationship on several levels: a conflict between two generations, between fathers and sons, and between two authors who seek to tell the same story from two different positions.[64] As previously

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[63] See Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 27; «All I ask for corresponding you my collected data about your father is that our book's honesty should be maximally spiced. This guarantee is vital to me, because false rumors swarm your father's life. THE TRUTH and nothing but THE TRUTH must be our lighthouse in the shaping of a literary master opus […] Attached you will find the truth about your father» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 15-19). At the same time, Kadir also suggests concealing certain details, not only to withhold certain aspects of the story but also to enhance the novel's marketability as a literary product: «Jag håller också med om att vissa personers behov av anonymitet kan skadas om vi brukar deras riktiga namn. Låt oss således kalla boken fiktion och modifiera vissa namn» (See Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 27-30); «I also agree that certain people's need for anonymity could be damaged if we employ their real names. So let us call the book 'fiction' and modify certain names» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 18).

[64] Further information on this aspect in Ciaravolo, *Collaborative Authorship and Postmigration*, cit.

mentioned, such contrasting dialogue aesthetically flows into different linguistic forms specifically designed to express different feelings, thoughts, and purposes.[65]

### 2.2.1 Multilingualism in *Montecore*

Khemiri's novel, divided into six parts, begins with the story of Abbas and Kadir, two children raised in an orphanage in the town of Jendouba, during the time of the French protectorate in Tunisia. From there, the two boys move to Tabarka, a well-known seaside tourist destination. Here, Abbas falls in love with Pernilla, a Swedish flight attendant on vacation in Tunisia, and moves to Sweden to be with her. The encounter with Jonas' parents is told from the perspective of Kadir, whose style makes the language of the novel incredibly fascinating. Kadir's and Abbas' Swedish is also given a name by Jonas «Khemiriska».[66] Khemiri's act of self-labeling allows the author to claim control over his own language and to decide how to define it. In dealing with Kadir's Swedish for the first time, the reader is likely taken by surprise not only due to the particularity of the unusual lexical choices, which resemble the result of a process of creolization, but also by the volcanic and direct style; the informal use of punctuation and frequent use of capital letters. It is precisely with an e-mail from Kadir that the fictional dialogue between the two sets off:

> Devinera vem som skriver dig dessa fraser? Det är KADIR som knappar tangenterna!!! Din fars mest antika vän! [...] Också jag har haft litterära drömmar. En längre tid projekterade jag en biografi vigd åt din far. Tyvärr handikappades min ambition av kunskapsgap och blaserade publikationshus. Inför skrivandet av detta meddelande radierades min hjärna plötsligt av en genial idé: Vad anses om att i din sekundära bok gestalta din fars magiska liv?
> Låt oss kollidera våra kloka huvuden i ambitionen att kreera en biografi värdig din prominente far! Låt oss kollaborera i skapandet av ett litterärt mästeropus

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[65] Growing up in a multilingual household, Khemiri has always shown a particular sensitivity to this aspect. The author even links his perception of the effects of multilingualism to a purely physical level. In his eyes, people would shrink when forced to speak a language they do not feel comfortable with, and to grow in the opposite case. See Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Open Letter Goes Viral*, 8 October 2015, https://vimeo.com/138607536 [Oral source, Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[66] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 108; «Khemirish» (Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 88). Ingalill Mosander defined Khemirish as «en mycket underhållande, hemmagjord fransk-arabisk-svenska som visar vilket perfekt gehör Jonas Hassen Khemiri har för språknyanser» (Ingalill Mosander, *Han leker med sanningen*, in *Aftonbladet*, 30 January 2006, https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/bokrecensioner/a/1kMzeX/han-leker-med-sanningen, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]: «A very funny homemade French-Arabic-Swedish, showing Khemiri's sublime ear for linguistic nuance»). In the same interview, the author emphasizes his struggle to reconcile past and present in Khemirish. For this purpose, he studied Swedish and French Romanticism, and the works of the Swedish poet Carl Jonas Love Almqvist, mixing them with modern expressions.

som attraherar global publik, nombrösa Nobelpris och kanske till och med en invitation till Oprah Winfreys tv-studio!

Korrespondera mig snarast din positiva respons. Du kommer INTE kondolera dig.[67]

Looking at the particularities of the lexicon in the opening paragraph can help us better frame the writer's choices. Abbas and Kadir, born in Francophone Tunisia, are evidently fluent in French, which is the main linguistic source from which they borrow to make up for their 'broken' Swedish, as well as Arabic, the language they both use to occasionally talk to each other. Furthermore, Abbas knows the basics of several other languages, acquired through his daily contact with tourists from all around the world. Attempting to make some money by taking pictures of the tourists on the beach, Abbas uses his language skills as a form of entertainment to attract people's attention.[68] This mixing language habit comically reflects the way he struggles to express himself in Swedish. Usually, learning a foreign language in adulthood involves greater effort than during childhood. It is not uncommon for who acquires a new language later on in life to rely on cognitive strategies, in order to facilitate as much as possible the language learning process.[69] By building bridges between their new language skills and those already possessed, Kadir and Abbas borrow from languages such as French or English to approach Swedish as quickly as possible.

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[67] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 13-15; «Divinate who is writing to you these phrases? It is KADIR is snapping the keys!!!! Your father's most antique friend! [...] I, too, have had literary dreams. For some time I projected a biography devoted to your father. Unfortunately, my ambition was handicapped by gaps in knowledge and blasé houses of publishing. Before the writing of this message, my brain was suddenly radiated with an ingenious idea: How would you consider forming your father's magical life in your secondary book. Let us collide our clever heads in the ambition of creating a biography worthy of your prominent father! Let us collaborate in the production of a literary master opus that attracts a global audience, numberous Nobel prizes, and possibly even an invitation to Oprah Winfrey's TV studio. Correspond me very soon your positive response. You will not condole yourself» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 3-4).

[68] «Med guideböcker till olika länder perfektionerade hans tunga vitala fotofraser på engelska, tyska, spanska, italienska och ryska. […] Franskans perfektion var förstås redan min fars privata ägodel» (Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 63-64); «With guidebooks for different countries his tongue perfectioned vital photo phrases in English, German, Spanish, Italian, and Russian. […] The perfection of French was of course already my father's private property» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 48).

[69] English or French proficiency is often used by learners as a means to facilitate the acquisition of words that reappear, albeit with differences, in many European and non-European languages. See Saadat Karimi, *Påverkan av inlärningsstrategier vid ordinlärning En studie om ordinlärning i svenska som andraspråk av ungdomar på Språkintroduktionsprogrammet*, Göteborgs Universitet – Institutionen för svenska språket, Göteborg 2018. See also Ingererd Enström, *Ordförråd och ordinlärning – med särskilt fokus på avancerade inlärare. I*, in Kenneth Hyltenstam – Inger Lindberg (eds.), *Svenska som andraspråk. I forskning, undervisning och samhälle*, Studentlitteratur, Lund 2013, pp. 171-195.

The particular traits of Khemirish, far from the usual representations of immigrant Swedish, lie, as mentioned before, in funny lexical choices, in norm-deviating morphological strategies, and in original idiomatic constructions. As Peter Leonard states, Khemiri «narrates most events with a bracing admixture of improbable French loanwords—some no doubt last heard in the eighteenth-century court of Gustav III—and Arabic portmanteaus».[70] In the previous quotation, we encountered a number of words that can help us frame the characters' linguistic choices. Some of the verbs that Kadir uses in his first e-mail such as *kreera* (create), *attrahera* (attract) or *korrespondera* (correspond) are proofs of partial control over the language.[71] These three examples of Swedish Latin-derived terms are easier for Abbas and Kadir to learn and use thanks to their knowledge of French. However, although these terms belong to the Swedish lexicon, their use is quite uncommon. Precisely due to their origin, such words might also present a slightly different meaning from the one that the context would require, which makes them only partially suitable alternatives. Germanic-derived lemmas, respectively *skapa*, *locka* and *svara*, are, for instance, considerably more frequent both in spoken and written Swedish.[72] Along with this specific lexical deviation, which is often present in the sections where Kadir takes the floor, neologisms and calques (especially from French and English),[73] antiquated language forms, made-up words enrich the language of these characters. By entering the new language with his previously acquired skills, the way Kadir and Abbas express themselves depicts a majestic and hyperbolic style, filled with metaphoric expressions, solemn descriptions, and a lyrical tone that lend an Arabic-Frenchified sounding slant to their language.[74] Such international features open also the

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[70] See Leonard, *Swedish Identity and the Literary Imaginery*, cit.: 200.

[71] The English translation, however, sometimes must negotiate the presence of old-fashioned, more formal terms, as in this case, because they do not create the same effect.

[72] For further information on the use of Latin- and Germanic- derived vocabulary, see Agneta Hebbe, *Bygg upp ert ordförråd*, Natur & Kultur, Stockholm 1999. It is also interesting to notice that many of the words of French origin used by Abbas and Kadir resemble the equally Frenchified writing style displayed in some of Queen Christina's letters. See Bergman, *Kortfattad svensk språkhistoria*, cit.: 125-126.

[73] The expression: «Jag har 54 år» (Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 29), that Kadir uses at the beginning of the novel is a direct translation from the French 'J'ai 54'; «I am 54 years old» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 18). The correct use in Swedish would be more similar to the English expression '*Jag är 54 år gammal*' ('I am 54 years old'). Another example could be the way Kadir turns the adjective *deciderat* into a verb: «Vi har deciderat följande» (Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 100); «We have decided the following» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 48). In both cases, the English translation in reproducing Khemiri's linguistic deviations.

[74] Some examples of words that are not formally acknowledged in the Swedish vocabulary can be provided: «Nombrösa» [from French *nombreux*]; «ordisk»; «detesterade» [from French *detester*]; «menacera» [from French *menacer*] (Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 14; 95; 182; 358; «nomberous»;  «wordly»; «detested»;

door to a series of cultural references that point towards different parts of the globe, symbolizing the 'cosmopolitan' spirit that Jonas' father claims to represent. At the same time, as Massimo Ciaravolo notices, Khemirish also exerts a divergent and destabilizing effect on the reader, as it highlights, from a diachronically standpoint, the multilingual features of the Swedish language system, which has always been absorbing external influences from different idioms. The consequence of this lies in the fact that Swedish: «proves to be historically far less pure than the hegemonic, ethnocentric point of view, obsessed with "Swedishness", would like to think».[75]

Jonas' narrative, on the other hand, is characterized for the most part of the book by a total adherence to the standard language. Having been born and raised in Sweden as a native speaker, the narrator masters the national language much more naturally than his father and Kadir. However, he does not remain linguistically loyal to a normative form of Swedish throughout the story but gradually modifies its structure. Jonas's language change occurs at the same time as his father's. It is no coincidence, in fact, that some bad blood between them occurs as Abbas takes the decision to give up his Khemirish, a language Jonas is very fond of, to focus on learning a more standard version of Swedish. The boy perceives his father's deviant language as a symbolic form of resistance: a desire not to imitate a more formal version of Swedish. From this moment on, Jonas' way of expressing himself signals a shift in his identity construction. The boy begins to construct his own Swedish linguistic identity by embracing a form of suburban multiethnolectal slang, mostly connected to American English hip-hop culture, leaving behind the impeccable standard version of Swedish. Such opposite linguistic positions put father against son. The former is blamed by Jonas for corrupting his free-spirited nature and passively accepting a process of linguistic assimilation that, in his eyes, is pathetic and pointless. Vice versa the latter accuses his son of the exact opposite. Jonas is guilty of setting aside too lightly his Swedish identity, choosing instead a path of ignorance and

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«menace» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 4; 77; 152; 310). Massimo Ciaravolo's work is seminal in this context. By cross-checking Kadir's and Abbas' language with the *Svenska Akademiens ordbok* (Swedish Academy's Dictionary), he found out that the vast majority of the lexicon used by the two characters indeed belongs to Swedish vocabulary. See Ciaravolo, *Collaborative Authorship and Postmigration*, cit.: 208-214. Another analysis that covers the lexical, syntactical, and idiomatic deviations employed by Khemiri is Martina Skowronska, *Khemiriskans knasiga kreativitet – en kartläggning av Jonas Hassen Khemiris artificiella språk i boken Montecore: en unik tiger*, Södertörns högskola. Institutionen för svenska, retorik och journalistik, Huddinge 2006.

[75] Ciaravolo, *Collaborative Authorship and Postmigration*, cit.: 211.

sub-culture that will not guarantee him a proper future. Behind these conflictual positions, the author thus gives way to a linguistic performance that develops in multiple directions.

### 2.2.2 Kadir and Abbas

Through the letters Abbas sends to Kadir, the former recounts his new life following his arrival in Sweden. After settling down at Pernilla's place, Abbas is immediately forced to face the harsh, discriminating reality. For instance, Pernilla does not receive any support from her parents, who blatantly disapprove of their daughter's decision.[76] Pernilla's friends too, in their ostentatiously open attitude toward cultural diversity, happily manifest their curiosity for her new lover, the exotic symbol of a multicultural Sweden. Their blind admiration seems to be connected to an idea built on stereotypes, which projects some type of burden on Abbas' shoulders just to satisfy their own ego. Her friends would like to engage him in discourses on political oppression, postcolonial nonfiction and other topics that do not catch Abbas' interest. Despite the initial struggles, he remains firmly convinced that he will soon become a successful and acknowledged individual in Sweden thanks to his artistic talent. His ambition to establish himself as a famous photographer goes hand in hand with a strong desire to integrate himself into the new environment: «Min mentalitet ska bli mer svensk än deras tänkbara ideal».[77] Unfortunately, his confidence in his own abilities turns out to be a mere disillusionment, often confirmed by Jonas' counter-perspective. Unlike his co-author, Jonas provides a less encouraging vision of his father's success, whose lazy and indolent attitude in learning Swedish does not allow him to enter the labor market. The birth of Jonas does little to improve Abbas' indolence, despite Pernilla's desperate begging to put aside dreams of glory and focus on learning the language.

Indeed, it is not uncommon that the contemporary Scandinavian literary representation of households with migratory backgrounds often portray the inter-

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[76] The opinion of Abbas' mother-in-law, in particular, is quite firm in this regard: «hon repeterar mig ofta att hon kommer från en adlisk historia i Danmark med starka kristna värderingar och att hon minsann inte motsäger sig invandrare i Sverige bara så länge som de sköter sig och lär sig svenska och inte cementerar sina traditioner» (Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 96-97); «she often repeats me that she comes from a noblish history in Denmark with strong Christian values and that she certainly doesn't oppose immigrants in Sweden just as long as they conduct themselves properly and learn Swedish and do not cement their traditions» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 78).

[77] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 86; «My mentality will be more Swedish than their imaginable ideal» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 69).

generational conflict regarding the obsessive need to speak properly in order to be adequately included in the society of arrival. Speaking the local language represents, in the eyes of those who have left their country to start a new life elsewhere, a crucial step in breaking out of an otherwise inevitable condition of otherness. Although a good proficiency in the family cultural roots equally represents a fundamental aspect in the education of the new generations, a correct use of the language constitutes one of the keys to social integration. However, second generations often consider this essentialist view over language as an imposition. The homologation to cultural and linguistic habits widens, in their eyes, the gap between those who are entitled to belong and those who are not.[78] This dichotomy constitutes a characteristic feature in the Swedish author's early productive phase. In Khemiri's debut novel, *Ett öga rött*, the protagonist Halim despises the subservient attitude his father Otman takes toward the Swedish people and culture, a path the latter would like his son to embrace as well. Halim's refusal to bow to his father's logic appears, as mentioned earlier, in the language he uses to write his diary. His version of Swedish, just as Jonas and Abbas' Khemirish does, breaks with the syntactic-lexical norms of the standard language.[79] The main motivation for his deviant language practices, as stated by Luca Gendolavigna, derives from the fact that Halim «ha bisogno di un linguaggio consono alla sua identità rivoluzionaria».[80] The boy's behavior arouses the wrath of the father. Otman, in fact, becomes extremely frustrated when he finds out that his son refuses to adopt correct Swedish language norms, and attempts to scare him by emphasizing the terrible consequences of such behavior.

In Khemiri's second novel, *Montecore*, the same kind of dichotomy occurs, in a sense, in reverse. In his early years in Sweden, Abbas alternates between precarious job

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[78] The absence of perfect language proficiency is often represented in literary works as leading to an inevitable sense of social alienation in the eyes of the first generation of migrants. See Nilsson, *Den föreställda mångkulturen, klass och etnicitet i svensk samtidsprosa*, cit.: 82-83. In *Ett öga rött*, and in *Kalla det vad fan du vill*, a novel written by Marjaneh Bakhtiari (Ordfront, Stockholm 2006), this contradiction often emerges between the parental figures and their children. However, Theodor Kallifatides writes in one of his most famous works, *Ett nytt land utanför mitt fönster* (Bonnier, Stockholm 2001), that even his proper use of the language could not entirely dispel the oppressive sense of otherness bestowed upon him from the outside. Kallifatides confesses his fear of passing the sense of otherness on to his children, who were born and raised in Sweden, making it a permanent label for them as well.

[79] While not assigning an actual name to the language used by Halim in the novel, the author suggested in an interview the possible use of the term *Halimska* (Halimish), thus bypassing the obnoxious tendency to identify in the protagonist's language a reflection of the *Rinkebysvenska*. See Gert Svensson, *Språket – identitetsskapare och maktmedel*, in *Dagens Nyheter*, 2 August 2004, https://www.dn.se/insidan/spraket-identitetsskapare-och-maktmedel/, [Last accessed 30 October 2023].

[80] «needs a language better fit for his revolutionary identity» (Gendolavigna, *Storie di identità*, cit.: 196).

positions in the hope that his photography project would take off. Convinced that his success is solely a matter of time, Abbas does not feel the urge to learn Swedish properly. Jonas, who got used to a language so playful and different from the Swedish spoken by everyone else, feels a satisfying sense of pride and admiration for him:

> för vanliga föräldrar pratar antingen svenska eller intesvenska, men bara pappor har sitt eget språk, bara pappor pratar Khemiriska. Ett språk som är alla språk blandade, ett språk som är extra allt med glidningar och sammanslagna egenord, specialregler och dagliga undantag. Ett språk som är arabiska svordomar, spanska frågeord, franska kärleksförklaringar, engelska fotografcitat och svenska ordvitsar.[81]

Khemirish represents a defining trait of their relationship as well as an important piece of Jonas' identity. Although the linguistic confusion that dwells in Jonas' home environment negatively affects him, causing both a delay in language learning – the child develops some speech defects – and a tendency to seek a shelter in his own vivid imagination,[82] the relationship between father and son grows in solidity. The two of them often spend their days together without a specific purpose, collecting plastic bottles to recycle, looking for subjects to photograph, or just killing time at the train station café. The bond Jonas builds with his father is mostly motivated by the unique, post-monolingual status he associates with Khemirish. His refusal to conform, in the pursuit of his own dreams locates in this language an essential feature of his personality. As much as the language seems to associate the figure of Abbas with an anti-conformist role, he actually remains extremely concerned with his son's inclusion.

After the death of his father-in-law, the small family's emporium is adapted to a photo studio. Despite Abbas' expectations, the idea turns out to be a total fiasco, as debts pile up and disappointment grows. The problem, according to Abbas, lies precisely in his

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[81] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 107-108; «because normal parents either speak Swedish or Not Swedish, but only Dads have their own language, only Dads speak Kemirish. A language that is all languages combined, a language that is extra everything with changes in meaning and strange words put together, special rules and daily exceptions. A language that is Arabic swearwords, Spanish question words, French declarations of love, English photography quotations and Swedish puns» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 88).

[82] «Talpedagogen […] säger bekymrat att din försenade talutveckling antagligen beror på en språkligt förvirrad hemmiljö och mammor och pappor håller varandras händer och tittar snabbt på varandra, ingen säger något» (See Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 137); «The speech therapist […] says with concern that your delayed speech development is presumably due to a linguistic confused home environment and Moms and Dads hold each other's hands and look quickly at each other; noone says anything» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 113).

lack of knowledge of the language. Therefore, despite Jonas's protests, he solemnly pledges to abandon his Khemirish:

> Sen över middagsmaten tittar pappor på mammor och säger: Jag har bestämt mig. Nu är det slut på icke-svenska. Du har rätt. Från och med nu ska vi BARA tala svenska. […] Nu är det slut på franska, slut på arabiska. Jag måste göra min svenska seriöst impeccable för att garantera min studios fortsatta överlevnad! […] Pappor växlar språk. Pappor krymper en aning.[83]

Together with Kadir, who had previously joined his friend in Sweden to collaborate on the photographic studio, Abbas asks his son to teach Swedish to both of them. In his role of mentor, Jonas wears the guise of a passive and silent observer of his own language, which gives him the opportunity to carry out a process of critical analysis from a different perspective, and under different circumstances he would not have been able to do: «det är i formulerandet av språkreglerna som du för första gången ser svenska språket utifrån».[84]

A small notebook full of annotations is the final product of their collaboration. In this part of the novel, the overlap between the voices of the different narrators reaches its climax. Through the notions passed over by Jonas, Khemiri offers a sort of metalinguistic reflection by comparing two diametrically opposed positions on language. Throughout his lessons, Jonas enjoys formalizing made-up rules to simplify the learning process of his students. These rules are interspersed with Kadir/Abbas' reflections, which set off a series of dialogical repartees. The introductory sentence of the rules, for instance, mirrors the reproposition of a monolingual bias: «Svenskan är svenskarnas språk. Svenskars mentalitet bär stora intressen för olika fenomen. Mentaliteten reflekteras i svenskarnas

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[83] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 199-200; «Then over dinner Dads look at Moms and say: I have made up my mind. No more not-Swedish. You are right. Starting now we will ONLY speak Swedish […] No more French, no more Arabic. I must make my Swedish seriously impeccable in order to guarantee my studio's continued survival! […] Dads change language. Dads shrink a little» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 113). As soon as his father communicates the decision to his family, Jonas immediately perceives a physical change in his father. This aligns with Khemiri's perspective on multilingualism, namely how various modes of self-expression can alter our identity and influence one's outward appearance. As the author states: «A lot of people around me were kind of growing and shrinking with the change of language. People in my vicinity, if they were speaking their mother tongue, I got the feeling that they *grew*, that they became bigger and more powerful and if they were speaking in a language they were not totally secure in, they would kind of *shrink*» (Khemiri, *Open Letter goes Viral*, cit. [italics in original]).
[84] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 200-201; «it is in the formulating of the rules of grammar that you se Swedish from the outside in for the first time» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 169).

språk».[85] Jonas seems here to substantiate a form of ownership over language by one people on the basis of the deep connection between it and the culture it expresses.[86] The introductory rule is promptly contradicted by Jonas himself, who immediately provides a different perspective. The first rule defines 'Swedish' in a very different way, which reflects its inherent multilingual core, and the permeability of its linguistic boundaries:

> Svenskan är lånets språk. När i tvivel på ett svenskt ord – välj franskans ekvivalent. Eller engelskans. Detta sparar mycket tid i lärandet av vokabulär. Svenskar är ett folk med snabba influenser från omvärlden.[87]

Such a definition shows how useful it is for Abbas and his friend to rely on previously acquired language skills to approach Swedish from a side-door. The channels that open Swedish to French and to English demonstrate how easily languages lend themselves to influences from outside. French, more than other romance languages, had in fact represented during the 17th century a considerable source of lexical and cultural enrichment for the Swedish empire, whereas English, due to its status of lingua franca, has for more than fifty years been the symbol of an international communicative globalization. Jonas piles up a large number of words derived from those languages to help them expand their vocabulary. In addition, the rules identify invisible threads that connect certain idiomatic expressions with many typical elements of Swedish culture, such as nature, wildlife, and food, but also other aspects such as music and singing. The bizarre expedients used to teach his students Swedish causes his father's annoyed reaction. Instead of giving clear rules and a precise structure, or in other words, instead of teaching them proper standard Swedish, as Abbas would like, Jonas loses himself in a stream of thoughts about the characteristics of the language and its concatenations with the outside

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[85] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 202-203; «Swedish is the language of the Swedes. The Swedish mentality bears a great interest for different phenomena. This mentality is reflected in the Swedes' language» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 171)

[86] As Christopher Hutton states, it is hard to reduce language to an inalienable ownership: «Language is private in the same sense that it is public: i.e. it is neither owned by the state, nor by any corporate or collective body, group, or set of individuals. It is analogous to an imperial (as opposed to a national) political space, in that participation or membership arises through falling under its jurisdiction, rather than through an organic connection in virtue of some feature of identity» (Christopher Hutton, *Who owns language? Mother tongues as intellectual property and the conceptualization of human linguistic diversity*, in «Language Sciences», 32 (2010), 6, pp. 638-647: 640).

[87] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 203; «Swedish is the language of loans. When in doubt about a Swedish word – choose the French equivalent. Or English. This saves a lot of time in the learning of vocabulary. Swedes are a people with quick influences from the world around them» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 171).

world. The fantasy with which Jonas experiences his relationship with Swedish is punished by Abbas instead of being seen in the innocence of a child's playfulness. This is especially seen when Jonas describes Swedish as a racist language:

> Du samlar alltfler regler med maxat många exempel. Ända tills dagen då pappor plötsligt tar skrivboken ifrån dig, gömmer den i minneskåpet och förbjuder dig att fortsätta regelsamlandet […] Och bara en gång försöker du övertala pappor att svenska faktiskt är värsta arabhatarspråk […] Och pappor flyger runt och örfilen bränner din kind till rodnad och pappor väser: Du är ju svensk, din förbannade jävla idiot![88]

From this episode on, Jonas and Abbas relationship enters its conflictual phase. The latter, who wishes to learn the language correctly in order to increase his chances of assimilating in Swedish society, hardly tolerates his son's attitude. The former, on the other hand, stubbornly rebels against the choices of his father. Jonas slowly sees his father giving up on his ability to construct his own language. The post-monolingual nature of Khemirish, defined by its inner multiplicity, thus gives way to a monolinguistic conception, which conversely reifies the existence of a non-Swedish as opposed to a pure Swedish.

2.2.3 Jonas

In light of the chaotic situation that disrupts the family balance, the last sections of the novel depict a darker scenario. The second half of the book gains, as stated earlier, a documentary and historical perspective. According to Elia Rantonen, Khemiri's book reaches a point where it almost turns into «a perceptive study of Swedish society with its increasing number of immigrants and hostility towards them in the 1980s and 1990s».[89] Khemiri recounts the discriminatory drift that took place in Sweden during that period, escalating from small sporadic events to extremely well-detailed manifestations of racism. Notably, the terror spread throughout the streets of Stockholm by hand of the

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[88] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 201-202; «You collect more and more rules with a huge amount of examples. Until the day when Dads suddenly take the notebook from you, hide it in the *mémoire*, and forbid you to continue collecting rules […] And just one time, right before Kadir returns home, you try to convince Dads that Swedish is actually a total Arab-hating language […] And Dads whip around and the cuff on your ear burns your cheek red and Dads hiss: *You're* Swedish, you goddamn bloody idiot!» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 169-170 [italics in original]).
[89] See Elia Rantonen, *Cultural Hybridity and Humour in Jonas Hassen Khemiri's Montecore*, in Svante Lindberg (ed.), *The Migrant Novel in Quebec and Scandinavia. Performativity, Meaningful Conflicts and Creolization*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2013, pp. 141-160: 144.

murderer *Laserman* ('Laser man') is narrated from the perspective of Kadir and Jonas. The hostile social climate further increases the relational issues between father and son. After much effort, Abbas negotiates his way up in the photographic market. To attract more clients, he decides to change the name of his store into 'Krister Holmström Abbas Khemiri', where previously only his African name appeared. A more Swedish-sounding name turns out to be an optimal marketing strategy, whereas for Jonas it just turns out to be a cheap sell-off.

Once again, language comes up as an element of discord in the relationship between the two. If the constant discriminatory profiling that his Swedish pronunciation, and his dark skin, invokes in other people does not seem to bother Abbas, his attempts to mimic standard language, from the perspective of Jonas, always end up underlying his otherness in the eyes of Swedish people. In his father's willingness to accept the logic of racism, or, to put it in the words of Sara Ahmed, to embrace the migrant's 'happiness duty', Jonas perceives Abbas' need to describe his life in Sweden as happy and satisfactory. Therefore, any mention of racism and discrimination is not allowed from Abbas' side.[90] Listening to his father struggling to adjust his pronunciation in order to sound as authentically Swedish as possible, Jonas is afraid that such behaviour will only validate the power hierarchies between native and migrant:

> För någon anledning är det svårt att höra pappor som har lämnat sin vackra khemiriska där alla språk blandades med alla tills ingen utomstående förstod. För att istället börja snubbla sig över konsonanter, misshandla prepositioner och tämja sin tunga till att närma sig svenskans melodi. […] Men ändå. En enda felaktig preposition är allt som behövs. Ett enda 'ett' som borde varit ett 'en'. Sen deras sekundlång paus, pausen som dom älskar, pausen som visar att hur mycket du än försöker kommer vi alltid, ALLTID, att genomskåda dig.[91]

As Jonas observes, his father's language has been 'tamed' like a tiger in a cage, making him renounce his own distinctiveness to embrace a normative identity and linguistic ideal, from which he is systematically excluded despite his best efforts. The

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[90] See Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, Duke University Press, Durham 2010: 158.
[91] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 238-239; «For some reason it's hard to hear Dads, who have given up his beautiful Khemirish where all the languages were blended with all the others until no outsider could understand. In order to instead stumbling over consonants, abusing prepositions, and taming his tongue to approach the melody of Swedish […] But still. One single wrong preposition is all it takes. A single *en* word that should be an *ett*. Then their second-long pause, the pause they love, the pause that shows that no matter how much you try, we will always, ALWAYS see through you» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 202-203).

redundant racist occurrences trigger a sense of anger and frustration in Jonas from which he tries to run seeking a shelter away from his family environment. Together with his new friends, also second-generation migrants, he finds a new position and a new purpose in an unconventional lifestyle. While Abbas shrinks in the eyes of Jonas, the boy feels empowered by taking control over his language. As Elisabeth Hjorth states: «Jonas i Montecore har å ena sidan liten makt i ett rasistiskt system, å andra sidan ger makten över språket och orden honom rörelseutrymme».[92]

His speech, in fact, begins to incorporate some linguistic deviations that replace his impeccable syntax and lexical choice. Even Kadir notices this sudden change, and, like Jonas, provides a metalinguistic reflection by commenting on his co-author's new style: «Skriv mig… Visst får du formulera dig fritt men… Svenskan i sektionerna ovan tycks mig mer oslipad än i föregående delar. Är detta din intention eller ditt slarv?».[93] The linguistic deviations that Kadir seems to dislike become for Jonas the symbol of such subversive behaviour. Once more, words' semantic shifts frequently recur in words such as the adjective *värst* (superlative for *dålig*, 'bad') that implies fascination, admiration, and a sense of superiority rather than describing something as negative; *svenne* (pejorative term for *svensk*, 'swedish'), a term created to mock an individual, or more in general, Swedish ethnicity; *suédis* (Persian word for 'Swedish'); *blatte*, designation for a person whose physical features, such as skin or hair color, are identified as non-North European, becomes a self-referential label used to underly their distancing from normative culture and a sign of respect.[94] His identity, and the ones of his friends, emerges precisely from a sense of pride in his being an outcast, a child of migrants, and in his Arabic origins. All this is expressed through an anti-normative language that breaks syntactic rules and combines American English and Swedish slang, which are often used to reproduce a

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[92] «Jonas of Montecore has little power in a racist system on the one hand; on the other, having power over language and words gives him room to maneuver» (Hjorth, *Förtvivlade läsningar*, cit.: 18).

[93] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 277; «Write me…You may certainly formulate yourself freely, but… the Swedish in the above sections seems me more unpolished than in the previous parts. Is it your intention or your carelessness?» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 236).

[94] The last word has a special meaning for Jonas. *Blatte* is, for instance, the term he uses to address the victims of the Laser Man. Reversing the negative connotation of the word, Jonas and his friends romanticize Swedish suburban culture, distancing themselves from the dominant one. Jonas' musical preference for American black rappers is a wake-up call for Abbas, even though, as Jonas ironically notices, his father's favorite artists are also black: «Varför lyssnar du bara på negermusik? Va? Varför lyssnar du bara på massa yo yo nigga bitch? Vill du vara neger?» (Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 257); «Why are you just listening to black music? Huh? Why are you listening to a bunch of yo yo nigga bitch? Do you want to be black?» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 219).

stereotypical, rapper-like figure. Such linguistic features can be especially noted in the episode when Jonas and his friends spend their time making jokes in a 'dissing' battle, a form of rapped song where two contestants challenge each other.[95] The difference between Jonas' slang preferences and Abbas' way of speaking Swedish lies in the possibility of choice. Abbas cannot choose not to sound like a foreigner, whereas Jonas performs with his own language using it in certain situations, and with certain interlocutors.

Precisely due to the pejorative status generally attributed to slang, Jonas' choices are not welcomed with enthusiasm by his father. The latter, who experiences, in turn, his son's attitude as a sort of betrayal, condemns his stubbornness in pursuing a lifestyle that does not fit the Swedish norm, or at least what he idealizes as the Swedish norm: «Han envisas med att passera sin tid med invandrares barn. Hans kropp spelar basket och vägrar mina erbjudanden om tennis. Hans öron lyssnar på negermusikens hiphop och smutsar sitt svenska språk med slangens pinsamheter».[96] Abbas' comments about Jonas' linguistic choices clearly confirm his low level of tolerance for this kind of Swedish, because he considers it «a stigmatizing indicator of social and economic inferiority as opposed to a lingual resource».[97] Although Abbas himself constructs his own Swedish by condensing French and English-derived lexicon, he considers his efforts a cosmopolitan, proud, and prestigious act. Whereas Jonas, who is accused of betraying his own mother tongue by staining it with lowbrow, rap-sounding motives, is the exact opposite: «en sorglig figure som saknar kultur. Han är inte svensk, han är inte tunisier, han är INGENTING. Han är ett kostant hålrum som varierar sig med sin kontext som ett fullfjärdad kamaleont».[98] The alienating status that Abbas attributes to this form of language becomes, for his son, a source of self-confidence and gives him power over his own choices. Jonas shapes his own identity thriving in a marginal position and defends it with a language that exists

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[95] Hip-hop culture began to take root in Sweden during the early 1990s. 'The Latin Kings', a band composed of Swedish artists of Latin American descent, are credited as one of the pioneering groups to use rap music in Sweden as a means to address themes related to suburbs and ghetto, and to proudly express their alternative, critical idea of belonging.

[96] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 309; «He persists in spending his time with the children of other immigrants. His body plays basketball and refuses my offers of tennis. His ears listen to the hip-hop of nigger music and he dirties his Swedish language with the embarrassment of slang» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 265).

[97] See Helle Egendal, *Multilingual Autofiction: Mobilizing Language(s)?*, in Alexandra Effe – Hannie Lawlor, *The Autofictional. Approaches, Affordances, Forms*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2022, pp. 141-146: 147.

[98] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 340; «a sad figure who lacks culture. He is not Swedish, not Tunisian, he is NOTHING. He is a constant cavity who varies himself by his context like a full-fledged chameleon» (J Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 292).

along the border between different linguistic sources. In a way, Jonas' monologue prophesizes the consolidation of a new, strong, Swedish identity that will soon assert its rights. The boy supports such an argumentation by using the first-person plural «vi» (we), thus subverting, in threatening tones, the power positions established by a normative representation of Swedishness:

> Vi är dom som tar ert äckliga språk och krokar till det. Vi är dom som aldrig kommer att acceptera ett språk som är konstruerat för att sålla ut oss […] Vi är dom som *gittar* istället för att gå, vi *äger* istället för att triumfera, vi *bazar* istället för att älska, vi säger *five O* när ni säger konstapel, vi *skinar* medan ni *röstar*, vi skjuter i höjden medan ni tar sankmark, vi sitter på bänkars ryggstöd och spottar sjöar på trottoarrutor medan ni sitter där man ska och suckar, vi är dom som fattar att det egentligen heter *en* basketlinne och att *mecka* inte är nåt att göra med moppar och att en *fin katt* är snygga *boudies* och verkligen ingen päls eller stamtabla. Vi är framtiden![99]

In his outburst, Jonas shares with the reader a twofold reflection. On the one hand, the narrator provides an example on how slang lexicon enters Swedish standard speech within the same text. On the other one, the post-monolingual features of his monologue convey a socio-political message in which Jonas and his friends accuse the same world by which they feel treated as outsiders. Quite often, however, the excessive confidence that language empowers him with results in mere imagination, which does not allow them to remember clearly how certain events took place. In the same way Kadir hyperbolically exalts Abbas, Jonas too tends to overestimate his actions and to spice up his version of the truth. The activities carried out by Jonas' group appear far less glorious than the narrator would want the reader to believe.

The intervention of Kadir contradicts his co-author. After witnessing his father's umpteenth abuse – he is racially profiled by the security staff of a clothing store – Jonas proudly recalls his reaction. However, the account is hardly credible. Jonas narrates the sequence of events as if he were engaging a rap battle against an invisible enemy: «Fuck tha police coming straight from the underground a young blatte got it bad cause I'm

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[99] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 292-293; «We are the ones who take your disgusting language and turn it around. We are the ones who will never accept a language that's designed to screen us out […] We are the ones who *jet* instead of leaving, we *own* instead of triumphing, we *bang*, instead of making love, we say *five-o* when you say police, we *shine* while you rust, we soar while you land in the marsch, we sit on the back of benches and spit seas onto squares of sidewalk while you sit where you're supposed to and sigh, we're the ones who get that it's actually called *an* assist in basketball and that *mecca* has nothing to do with bingo and that *fine cat* has nice *boudies* and definitely no fur or pedigree. We are the future!» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 250-251).

brown, du matar med kombinationer och boxar dom till medvetenlöshet, du är en orkan, du är deras värsta mardröm».[100] The presence of English words and the rhyme between 'underground' and 'brown' help create a musical, rap-sounding vibe that enables him to tell his side of the story allows Jonas to «mytologisera vardagen».[101] The round-up of self-celebrating epithets keeps up for about half a page, only to be interrupted by Kadir's correction: «Detta är ju en lögn! Jag vet av säkra fakta att allt du gjorde var att visa din erigerade tunga och ditt uppsträckta långfinger mot vakten. Och han såg det inte ens! Vem försöker du dupera?».[102] A similar episode recurs toward the end of the novel. After having abandoned Sweden and his family due to the unstable social tension that was tearing apart his life, Abbas returns to his friend Kadir in Tunisia. When he comes back to Stockholm in a desperate attempt to reunite with his loved ones, everything has changed. His old studio, for instance, has now become a gathering spot for his son and his friends. The perspectives of the two narrators find themselves in conflict once more. Jonas describes himself as the leader of a 'guerrilla' cell that can count on a large number of affiliates that despite their origins manage to get along thanks to Jonas' ideals. Once again, the narrator fantasizes in his colourful Swedish an image that might just be a figment of his imagination:

> Det är här alla kopplas samman, förortsfolk möter innerstadskids, feminister hookar med dreadsaktivister, homos med heteros, anarkister med zapatister, niglows med swedlows, blattar med blekansikten, tjetjenis med ruskies, kurdish med turkish (!) iranis med arabis med jewish (!!).[103]

[100] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 260; «Fuck tha police coming straight from the underground a young *blatte* got it bad cause I'm brown, you feed them combinations and box them into unconsciousness, you are a hurricane, you are their worst nightmare» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 221).

[101] «mythologizing the everyday» (See Soledad Cartagena, *För Jonas Hassen Khemiri är det viktigt att vara ärlig*, in *Fria Tidningen*, 16 October 2015, https://www.fria.nu/artikel/119651#:~:text=%E2%80%93%20Det%20%C3%A4r%20snarare%20viktigt%20att,enkelt%20svar%20p%C3%A5%20n%C3%A5gonting%20egentligen, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]). Language and myth in Khemiri's literary production is a topic covered by Massimo Ciaravolo in his article. See Ciaravolo, *Mitizzare il quotidiano*, cit.

[102] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 260-261; «This is a lie! I know for certain fact that all you did was show your erected tongue and your stretched-up middle finger to the guard. And he did not even see you! Who are you trying to dupe?» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 222).

[103] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 322; «It's here everything joins together, people from the suburbs meet inner-city kids, feminists hook up with dread activists, homos with heteros, anarchists with Zapatists, niglows with Swedelows, *blattar* with palefaces, Chechenies with Russkies, Kurdish with Turkish (!), Iranis with Arabis with Jewish (!!)» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 275).

Abbas sees instead a group of young teenagers sitting in a circle smoking weed and later follows them only to see his son committing some pathetic acts of vandalism. Again, the clash of views between father and son represents an element of continuity with the author's first novel. In *Ett öga rött*, after the tragic death of Halim's mother, Otman makes it a top priority for himself and his son to blend in among the Swedes in order to integrate properly into society. However, his attempts seem reduced to a series of superficial actions, useless for his purpose. In fact, as Luca Gendolavigna observes, Otman «si limita a fare un uso corretto della lingua, preferire programmi televisivi e frequentare amicizie svedesi», resulting in a poor imitation of a supposedly ideal of Swedishness.[104] Halim, contrary to his father's vision, thus finds himself alone facing «un'eredità da risemantizzare».[105] As Massimo Ciaravolo writes, his refusal «sia di assimilarsi in modo acritico e servile agli svedesi (*svennar*), sia di attuare una sterile protesta da teppista (*ligist*)»[106] compels the boy to create a different identity for himself. By mythologizing his Arab ethnic-cultural origins, despite never having had any genuine contact with them, Halim begins to identify with a figure of his own invention, the *tankesultan* (Sultan of Thoughts). According to his perspective, this status embodies profound intellectual depth, propelled by a fervent revolutionary spirit, particularly evident in its linguistic endeavors aimed at thwarting supposed Swedish cultural assimilation agendas. However, in practice, his efforts to reclaim Arab culture mirror the futility of Otman's imitation of the Swedes.

Language thus returns as a double-edged sword. Similar to Jonas' situation, the use of a broken language actually emphasizes Halim's need to rebel against his father figure and to rediscover himself, rather than pursuing an authentic revolutionary struggle. At the same time, Otman's and Abbas' urge to master language proficiency is actually based on a stereotype, rather than pursuing an authentic process of identity formation.

### 2.2.4 Multiple Languages and Multiple Identities

As we have seen, the degree of tension between monolingualism and multilingualism increases more and more as the story goes on, problematizing the complex relationship between language and identity. Khemiri, however, does not merely

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[104] «merely makes proper use of the language, prefers TV programs and cultivate Swedish friendships» (Gendolavigna, *Storie di identità*, cit.: 200).
[105] «a legacy to be resemantized» (Gendolavigna, *Storie di identità*, cit.: 202).
[106] «both to uncritically and slavishly assimilate to the Swedes (*svennar*), and to enact sterile thug protest (*ligist*)» (Ciaravolo, *Mitizzare il quotidiano*, cit.: 225).

vary the linguistic strategies of his characters. He seeks to highlight through them how monolingualism, the unbreakable bond between language, nation, and identity, has actually lost much of its compelling strength and is forced to renegotiate many of its assumptions.[107] Furthermore, the lack of clear points of reference in the Swedish that Khemiri invents in his work causes a sense of estrangement both for the protagonists and for the reader.

The linguistic clash between Abbas and Jonas also puts into perspective the post-migrant condition and the conflicting nature of its dynamics, opposing different experiences that stem from incompatible positions concerning the linguistic sphere. The two characters, whose background is connected to migration by origin or kinship, access Swedish language in a different way, drawing a much more fragmented social scenario than any simplistic binary categorization. As discussed above, Kadir's and Abbas' learning process represents a stunted attempt by two migrants to acquire a new language by relying on their previously acquired set of linguistic skills. However, Jonas finds an anchor in the language he uses during his adolescence. His new linguistic identity instills in him strength and confidence but ends up distorting his view of reality. The 'gangster-wannabe' ideal, suburban life, and outsider pride actually mask a portrait of a disappointed, angry young man with a vivid imagination. Despite their constant adaptations to make up for their gaps, Kadir and Abbas look with annoyance at Jonas' equally colorful choices. They try to curb his attitude by pointing out how 'abnormal' his Swedish is, even though their own presents a similar degree of abnormality.

While representing an unsuccessful attempt to mimic standard Swedish, the author still manages to mock the way the protection of codified language sacrifices linguistic features that are often defined as a form of non-language. Regardless of the formal and structural aspects, father and son construct their identities through variants of Swedish, which fosters the infiltration of global cultural material into the language. By replacing the idea of a broken, immigrant Swedish, or an authentic representation of the suburban culture, with a playful mix that constantly moves from one edge to another, Khemiri reclaims control over his language. As a matter of fact, from the second half of the novel

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[107] «In our post-monolingual times, even mother tongues can be the subject of strategic choices in the heteronomous field of social and linguistic power relations: between public and private conversations, between city centres and the suburbs, and between fathers and sons» (Willems – Behschnitt, *Jonas Khemiri and the Post-monolingual Condition, Or, the Camel with Two Humps*, cit.).

onward, none of the characters respect the normative traits of Swedish, yet they all remain simultaneously anchored to it.

In addition to each inherent specificity, the different linguistic shades of the co-authors acquire fundamental value as a single entity embodied in one single author. It is Jonas Khemiri who writes the novel, and he does it, with a few rare exceptions, in one single language. He is the one who determines how to modulate it, and how to build each character's personality through different idioms. In the totality of its parts, the Swedish we read in the novel can indeed be interpreted as the result of a deep study. His mastery of Swedish, of its lexicon, and of its many registers, testifies not only to the ease with which the author switches from one style to another based on the situation, but also to a deep commitment to rediscovering all the hidden spots and shaded areas that Swedish can offer.

Therefore, the post-monolingual nature of the novel emerges both in the way the author de-codifies his mother tongue by navigating the borders between actual or invented registers, and in the way those de-codified Swedish variants play a role in constructing or deconstructing the social relationships between the characters, and between the characters and the reader. The language used by Kadir and Abbas does not jeopardize the effectiveness of the reader's understanding, but at the same time it might exert an alienating and comic effect. The dense presence of old-fashioned, almost unfamiliar, terms paradoxically elevate the linguistic status of Kadir's speech.[108] Jonas, instead, communicates first in a correct Swedish form and then, as a teenager, he breaks its conventions, displaying the language of the future, of the new generation and the new Sweden. None, however, dominate over the other, as none seem to be trustworthy. Nevertheless, all of them can be equally recognized for their intrinsic peculiarities. Such contradictory linguistic features interweaving with each other represent the new social norm: «The disruption of stereotypes and the deconstruction of language give voice to a new concept of Swedishness and new words to address the growing mosaic of identity both in Sweden and beyond».[109] Curving a post-monolingual analysis into Swedish post-migrant condition opens up several reflections. Khemiri empirically shows the possibility

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[108] An analysis of the difference in formality between Swedish words of Latin and Germanic origin has been conducted by Birger Bergh. See Birger Bergh, *Latinet som Europas Modersmål*, in Jerker Blomqvist – Ulf Teleman (eds.), *Språk i Världen. Broar och Barriärer*, Studentlitteratur, Lund 1993.

[109] See Anne Christine Bahow, *Counter-narratives and Jonas Hassen Khemiri's play Invasion!: storytelling that fractures the orientalist narrative*, DePaul University, Chicago 2018: 12.

of shaping and playing with language in many different ways. Language, as well as identity, expresses its loyalty beyond superordinate parameters, as Yasemin Yildiz puts it, de-essentializing the borders that separate different languages and presenting it as a new form of space of claiming within a post-migratory society. Thus, Khemiri brings back to the scene of his novel the normative role of multilingual practices in shaping inter-relational dynamics within the post-migrant condition.[110]

The author also shows the different functions that can be extrapolated from the ways in which the characters express themselves. For Kadir and Abbas, access to language is subject to the limits of their skills. This means that their Swedish will be more open to a discriminatory attitude. Paradoxically, Khemirish also builds a bridge towards the origins: to the origins of Swedish, in that their language resembles an antiquated form of the Scandinavian language, but also to the origins of the two characters, in that they both owe much to their prior language skills through which they borrow their way to the new idiom. Jonas's Swedish, whose skills allow him to modify his style more easily, presents a much more critical function, that allows the boy to range between different languages, different registers, and to educate the reader to a more contemporary perspective on the development of the language.

2.3 Yahya Hassan: *Yahya Hassan*

Yahya Hassan's collection of poems, which is entitled after the author's name, is the first work written by the Palestinian-born Danish writer. As similarly depicted in Khemiri's novel, Hassan's collection of poetry also sees the link between language and identity as an unbreakable bond. The construction of the self moves first and foremost from a process of identification with his own linguistic choices, which the author freely and creatively expresses within the poetic text. Like many of the authors who come from ethno-culturally mixed backgrounds, Hassan develops a deep relationship with language to send a message. It is paramount to think of his work as a concrete linguistic act that emerges from within a post-monolingual space, where Hassan claims the right to speak the Danish he feels most close to his identity. As the author himself claims:

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[110] This point also reflects the thoughts of Alessandro Bassini, who states that the socio-political significance attributed to language gives shape to a space in which authors like Khemiri can successfully make their voices heard. See Alessandro Bassini, *'Chiamalo come diavolo vuoi' – l'affermazione della lingua degli immigrati nella letteratura svedese contemporanea*, in «Linguistica e Filologia», 28 (2009), pp. 111-139.

Jeg vet ikke om jeg betrakter mitt danske språk som mitt morsmål. Det er fordi jeg ikke identifiserer meg med Danmark som mitt hjemland. Det er ikke kritikk av Danmark og dansker, men for meg som person identifiserer jeg meg mer mest med språk og ikke så mye med nasjonalsanger eller folkedans.**[111]**

Language, he continues, takes on the appearance of a platform where different influences, languages and registers converge and dialogue together. Hassan's unconstrained relationship with language also faithfully reflects his idea of citizenship. He would not describe himself as a Danish citizen, nor would he feel like one, just as he does not consider himself a Danish speaker.

In the poetic space, Hassan finds a place where he can speak, often in a critical tone, about various issues such as family, religion, but also the nation itself: that Denmark that polarizes his image presenting him simultaneously as an immigrant, a criminal, and an outcast but also as the poet, the symbol of multicultural progress. Not surprisingly, the need for freedom and self-identification is expressed with bitter anger by the poet. The typographic style of the work reflects this aspect quite clearly. In addition to the absence of punctuation marks, the poems are entirely written in capital letters, which act as a sounding board for the contrasting emotions that torment his mind.[112]

The episodes proposed to the reader do not follow a direct chronological thread, but span randomly in-between the author's childhood and adolescence. This pattern seems to force upon him a condition of constant search, insecurity about his own life, and bewilderment caused by the impossibility of defining himself. The moment when the young man discovers his love for literature constitutes, however, a turning point. Hassan manages to evade his dramatic condition by exploring a new space beyond the limits of the suffocating, structural linguistic vision that instrumentalize his language for political purposes. Like Khemiri, Hassan shows a deep knowledge of the Danish language, and he

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[111] «I don't know if I consider my Danish language to be my mother tongue. That is because I don't identify with Denmark as my home country. It is not a criticism of Denmark and Danes, but for me as a person, I identify more with language and not so much with national anthems or folk dance» (See Kaja Korsvold, *Yahya Hassan: Jeg kunne ikke skrevet diktene mine på arabisk*, in *Aftenposten*, 21 February 2014, https://www.aftenposten.no/kultur/i/qWBg/yahya-hassan-jeg-kunne-ikke-skrevet-diktene-mine-paa-arabisk, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).

[112] These two characteristics imply an abrupt and instinctive writing style, similar to the communication style commonly found in social media and used to express feelings of frustration. See Sara Brovall, *Da Yahya Hassan blev digter*, in *Politiken*, 28 December 2013, https://politiken.dk/kultur/boger/art5566232/Da-Yahya-Hassan-blev-digter [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

can display it in its different nuances and registers. His style, however, features perhaps a more conventional multilingualism than the one offered by the Swedish writer. If the latter uses almost exclusively vocabulary belonging to the Swedish language, Hassan uses more frequently the strategy of code-switching, drawing mainly from languages such as English and Arabic. However, the poet's style is not to be reduced to the sum of its parts, i.e., the sum of the languages that he incorporates in his work. The way these elements dialogue with each other proves a linguistic awareness that allows him to send a clear message about the relationship between language, nation, and identity. The impossibility of determining precisely where the poet's loyalty leans toward is emblematic of the post-migrant condition. His rejection of his family's cultural heritage and his harsh attack on the Danish social system resulted in completely different, often conflicting interpretations, bringing back to the surface the complex web of irrational positions triggered by the radical obsession with the topic of migration. Hassan's poems have created a deep rift in Scandinavian public opinion. Numerous debates arose around this figure, often in a grotesque and contradictory manner, making it impossible to draw precise lines of interpretation on the topic of migration, which varies depending on the perspective through which the phenomenon is read. Precisely due to his attack on Muslim culture, and in particular his intolerance for religious hypocrisy, Hassan's work has paradoxically been received with enthusiasm by the Danish far-right political forces.[113] As Susanne Allard Lerøy states, the Swedish reception of the work has, on the other hand, focused more on the anti-Islamic aspect of Hassan's work: «I Sverige har samlingen fått mest oppmerksomhet knyttet til innholdet og har blitt kritisert som islamkritisk, og at den forsterker fordommer og øker fremmedfiendtligheten i samfunnet».[114]

Generally speaking, the linguistic structure of the collection opts for a standard linguistic form, which not only appears grammatically and syntactically correct but even

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[113] See Mikael Rømer, *DF bruger ung digter som politisk løftestang*, in *DR*, 12 novembre 2013, https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/df-bruger-ung-digter-som-politisk-loeftestang, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[114] «In Sweden, the collection has received the most attention for its content and has been criticized as being critical of Islam, reinforcing prejudice and increasing xenophobia in society» (See Allard Lerøy, *'Den arabiske prins'*, cit.: 46). Athena Farrokhzad, Swedish writer, playwright and translator, judged Hassan's work as dangerous as a potential foment of hatred and further conflict. See Athena Farrokhzad, *Hans raseri hyllas av danska rasister*, in *Aftonbladet*, 17 Mars 2014, https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/bokrecensioner/a/1kWGjB/hans-raseri-hyllas-av-danska-rasister, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

raffinate in some parts.[115] The author calls it «MANIPULERENDE GODT DANSK».[116] Speaking of his personal Danish, Hassan's Danish, as a kind of deception, a linguistic manipulation, the author manifestly mocks its formality, considered perhaps an exclusive prerogative of an elite class.[117] However, this act of mockery is not limited to a proper, normative form of Danish, and the final part of the collection demonstrates it: it is entitled *LANGDIGT* (LONG POEM). In this conclusive section, of about 30 pages, Hassan gives way to a ruthless stream of consciousness, in which he sums up his life experiences. Upsetting episodes from the young man's criminal life alternate frantically with Hassan's other face, the VIP-like figure in Denmark. Here, the poet blurs down the boundaries between the artist and the migrant:


> MIG JEG ER ALLEREDE PÅ VEJ TIL PUSHER
> PÅ VEJ TIL FÆTTER
> PÅ VEJ TIL INDBRUD
> [...]
> JA MIG JEG ER ALLEREDE PÅ VEJ TIL INTELLEKTUEL
> PÅ VEJ TIL JOURNALISTER
> PÅ VEJ TIL KUNSTNER[118]


Throughout this section, the author reiterates a language much closer to a broken speech, typical of the peripheral areas in which he grew up, where syntactical and lexical deviations abruptly replace Danish standard form. However, precisely like Khemiri, Hassan deliberately chooses to insert grammatical errors, foreign words, and slang idioms in this section, emphasizing the linguistic shift that occurs between the long poem and the rest of the collection. In fact, the poet does not recognize himself in the sociolect that flows from that label, *perkerdansk*. Rather, he performs such language in order to

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[115] As Maïmouna Jagne-Soreau states, Hassan also employs idiomatic expressions that have fallen out of common use. Yet, they sound odd not only because they are outdated but also because they come from an individual who ideally does not belong to a conventional Danish cultural context. See Maïmouna Jagne-Soreau, *Finland 100 år, och sedan? Litteratur och postinvandring*, in Ville Hänninen (ed.), *Kriittinen piste. Tekstejä kritiikistä 2018*, Suomen arvostelijain liitto, Helsinki 2018, pp. 100-108.
[116] «MANIPULATIVE GOOD DANISH» (Yahya Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, Gyldendal, Copenaghen 2013: 139).
[117] Vedi Jagne-Soreau, *'I don't write about me, I write about you'*, cit.: 175.
[118] «ME I AM ALREADY ON MY WAY TO THE DRUG DEALER/ ON THE WAY TO COUSIN / ON MY WAY TO BURGLARY […] YES ME I AM ALREADY ON MY WAY TO INTELLECTUALS / ON MY WAY TO JOURNALISTS / ON MY WAY TO THE ARTIST» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 159).

deconstruct all kinds of labels:

> MIG JEG KOKSER I MIN ORDSTILLING
> OG JEG SIGER WALLAH[119]

By calling his Danish a manipulation and by admitting to breaking standard linguistic norms, Hassan confesses to the reader that he is fully aware of the linguistic act he is producing. Performing this linguistic style in the long poem is a way of deconstructing all kinds of labels about his identity as an immigrant, which is negatively associated with the ghetto, a squalid world that encapsulates a squalid language, but also as a well-integrated prominent figure of the literary scene. In any case, the frantic and repeated use of norms' deviation seems to be overemphasized. Such language diminishes its authenticity by being so straightforwardly represented in so many ways. In a post-monolingual horizon, the autonomous choice to write in a certain way conceals an edgy sarcastic intent, a performative use of language. Just as his manipulated correct Danish, the language of the long poem will turn out to be equally manipulated, in order to satisfy the stereotype of the *perker*, of which part of the public opinion identifies in him. Although the final section occupies a privileged place in the collection, critical analyses of Hassan's work are often excessively focused on it. It is more fruitful to take into account the work in its entirety, while paying particular attention to the various ways in which the poet modulates language.

In short, Hassan offers new points of reference to speak about his identity and his belonging through language. Here, too, a post-monolingual analysis can help us to frame the relationship between the poet and his mother tongues as a space of claiming, in which different languages not only share the same space but also unmask the contradictory image of a country that perceives him exclusively as the sum of his parts.

### 2.3.1 Multilingualism in *Yahya Hassan*

Beginning with an account of his childhood, Hassan manifests from the very first pages a deep unease regarding the linguistic opposition between Danish and Arabic he is forced to experience at school and in the home environment. In both contexts, the role of

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[119] «ME I MESS UP MY WORD ORDER / AND I SAY WALLAH» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 149)

the mother tongue as a fundamental identity trait is presented as a categorical, coercive imposition determined by external authorities. Due to his dual condition, Hassan finds himself caught amidst contradictory rules, that prevent him from the possibility of choosing in which language to express. In the first poem, he writes:

> I SKOLEN MÅ VI IKKE TALE ARABISK
> DERHJEMME MÅ VI IKKE TALE DANSK [120]

The family context is extremely devoted to its Islamic cultural heritage, and it is the site of continuous abuse for Yahya and his siblings. Their father, careless of his children's pain, seems to be able to show affection toward them only on certain occasions, such as when they gather all together for prayer at the mosque. Even school is a place of discomfort and embarrassment for Yahya. The anticipation of the Christmas party, that his classmates look forward to with joy and excitement, turns for little Yahya into a macabre omen of his father's punishments. In summary, the poet shows his unpleasant awareness regarding the inevitability of his condition: identity is subordinated to one and only one language, or in this case two – Arabic at home and Danish at school. Hassan, of course, does not perceive the unifying role in either of his two languages. If mother tongue «is traditionally seen as the preferred medium for expressing authentic subjectivity and even artistic originality»,[121] Hassan conveys a diametrically opposed message: a sense of entrapment, of fear, that re-proposes the problem we have already addressed in Khemiri. This is the assumption that a single language is given the power to define the identity of a person, which loses its symbolic value in a post-monolingual horizon, where it is instead the individual who has the power to live multiple languages as a defining feature of their identity.

The situation, however, is slightly different from Khemiri's novel. Jonas' childhood is cheerfully stimulated by the multilingual environment thanks to his father, and he only finds himself dealing with a completely different reality at a later stage of his life. A disharmonious linguistic condition creates rifts in their relationship and pushes him to criticize Abbas' choices. Hassan, on the other hand, has been trapped in a similar linguistic

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[120] «AT SCHOOL WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK ARABIC / AT HOME WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK DANISH» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 6).
[121] See Gebauer, *Postmonolingual Struggles and the Poetry of Uljana Wolf*, cit.: 175.

dichotomy ever since his birth, forcing him to experience two separate monolingual environments at the same time. Being confined the barrier that keeps the languages apart gives the Danish poet a different sensibility than the Swedish writer. The urge to make that barrier slightly more permeable translates into a fierce battle to take back his right over language. However, like Khemiri, Hassan contributes to the deconstruction of the monolingual paradigm by using a Danish that is constantly readjusted after the needs of the poet. He understands that he does not have to show loyalty to either Danish or Arabic, dissolving that sense of entrapment which stems from the impossibility of synthesis.[122]

Unsurprisingly, the word 'Dane', as well as other references to the Danish world,[123] is often expressed with contempt by Hassan. His peers, and his own family, in turn, mock him by calling him a 'Dane', since they consider him a traitor to his origins:

IGEN JEG KOMMER HJEM FOR OG SKIDE
MÅSKE DE TÆNKER
VORES BRORS LORT LUGTER DANSK [124]

On the other side, he repeatedly calls himself a *perker* defiantly embracing a term created specifically to degrade a certain type of individual from an ethnical standpoint:

DEN ENE DAG
JEG ER EN SUND OG VELINTEGRERET DIGTER
MIG JEG SKRIVER MAIL TIL LARS SKINNEBACH
TIL PABLO LLAMBIAS TIL SIMON PASTERNAK
DEN NÆSTE JEG ER SIGTET FOR BILTYVERI
OG GADERØVERI OG INDBRUD

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[122] Thomas Harder departs from Yahya Hassan's poems in order to elaborate on the subject of bilingualism. According to him, on the one hand, a bilingual individual who incorporates English into his or her communicative repertoire is often ascribed a socially elevated status. On the other hand, when bilingualism encompasses less widely spoken languages, it mutates into a socially problematic aspect. See Thomas Harder, *Engelsk er nødvendigt, men ikke nok*, in *Politiken*, 16 febbraio 2008, https://politiken.dk/debat/art5421784/Engelsk-er-n%C3%B8dvendigt-men-ikke-nok [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[123] In another episode, Hassan is ironically called *Gyldendal*, which is the name of the Copenhagen publishing house that published the poetry collection in 2013.

[124] «I AGAIN COME HOME TO TAKE A SHIT / THEY MAYBE THINK / OUR BROTHER'S SHIT SMELLS DANISH» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 152).

The above-mentioned verse constitutes the beginning of the long poem and present quite peculiar linguistic traits that deviate from the rest of the poems. The expression «MIG JEG», for instance, is anaphorically repeated in most of the verses of the concluding section. This coupling represents a manifest grammatical mistake. The personal pronoun *jeg* (I), the subject, is always preceded by *mig* (me), which instead is the accusative form of the same pronoun and functions both as a direct or an indirect object. At the same time, the juxtaposition of two subjects can be interpreted not necessarily as a mistake but as a symbol of the identity splitting attributed to it.

Another marked linguistic deviation displayed in this section is the sentence syntax. Modern Scandinavian languages share common feature from a syntactic standpoint. In main clauses the verb always takes the second place, while in subordinate clauses, it follows both the subject and any other sentence adverbial, if present. Both Hassan and Khemiri break this ground rule. The right order appears here in an inversed form, because sometimes such rule is not properly assimilated by those who approach Scandinavian languages during adulthood. The incorrect word order has, over time, flowed into Danish ghetto oral speech as a peculiar feature of the multiethnolect.

## 2.3.2 Limits and Languages

Considering different languages as separate islands imposes an adoption of separate thinking strategies for each language. The multilingual style adopted by Hassan contradicts many of the assumptions with which the mother tongue is usually represented as a major parameter in identity definition. It is not possible, for the poet, to make literature by separating the Danish language from the Arabic language or even the hybrid language he is used to dealing with in the suburbs of Aarhus. On the contrary, Yahya places himself and his poetry along the liminal zones that separate all these languages. The writer is in fact a Danish speaker, he knows Arabic, but he also grew up in a socially and linguistically peculiar environment. Moreover, like many of his second or third-generation peers, he

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[125] «ONE DAY / I AM A HEALTHY AND WELL-INTEGRATED POET / ME I WRITE EMAILS TO LARS SKINNEBACH / TO PABLO LLAMBIAS TO SIMON PASTERNAK / THE NEXT I AM CHARGED WITH CAR THEFT / AND STREET ROBBERY AND BURGLARY / ME I AM BEING INTERROGATED FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 135).

represents the living bearer of a cultural-historical memory linked to other realities, such as his parents' migration and diaspora. Together, all these elements become part of his cultural background.

The limits of Danish, as Bruno Berni claims, are not a problem for the poet, but only the basis on which he can display his multilingual skills.[126] This occurs predominantly, as we have already mentioned, in the final part of the work, and to a lesser extent in the rest of the collection. Hassan embeds Arabic words in his pages, without following specific patterns on how or why to switch between language. For instance, we find them when Danish proves inadequate to express certain concepts, or when the poet simply wishes to use a word in a different language, or out of a matter of mere personal habit. The poet is not concerned with whether the words he chooses are understood by the reader. Some of them are intelligible and present a proper Danish morphological structure because they have been internalized by most European languages. Such words may therefore sound familiar, they may refer to known terms, even when tied to foreign languages – such as «IMAMEN» and «RAMADANEN» –[127] or may have been included into Danish vocabulary. The interjection «HALAL», «HABIBI», and «WALLAH», for instance, are well-known expressions in Danish multiethnolects.[128] On the other hand other words would simply sound as foreign words to the ears of the monolingual reader. Translating, or even graphically signaling, a word in a multilingual text brand the word itself as 'foreign' and puts some distance between that word and the context. Only on one occasion a translation is provided by the poet:

MASJID SALSABIL BEDER NATTEBØNNER (QIYAM ALLAYL)
CA. KL 01:40

[126] See Bruno Berni, *L'identità, la finzione e la sofferenza produttiva della lingua: tradurre Yahya Hassan*, in «Testo a Fronte», 27 (2016), 54, pp. 109-118: 114. See also Bruno Berni, *«Un poeta sano e ben integrato» Yahya Hassan, apolide danese*, in Manuel Boschiero – Marika Piva (eds.), *Maschere sulla lingua Negoziazioni e performance identitarie di migranti nell'Europa contemporanea*, I libri di Emil, Città di Castello 2015, pp. 71-81.
[127] Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 13; 18. As proved by the suffix -EN, functioning as a determinative article in enclitic position, the two words 'Imam' and 'Ramadan' have become part of the Danish vocabulary. See *Den Danske Ordbog*, https://ordnet.dk/ddo, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].
[128] «PERMITED»; «FRIEND»; «I SWEAR ON GOD» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 14; 17; 149). These expressions have entered the spoken language of the younger generation, yet they may not be officially recognized as standard Danish vocabulary. As Pia Quist claims, their usage is sometimes portrayed as parody by Danish media broadcasters. See Pia Quist, *Representations of multiethnic youth styles in Danish broadcast media*, in Nikolas Coupland – Jakob Thøgersen – Janus Mortensen (eds.), *Style, Media and Language Ideologies*, Novus Forlag, Sofiemyr 2016, pp. 217-234.

DER ER MULIGHED FOR SOHUUR (MORGENMAD)
I HELE RAMADANEN FOR 200 KR. [129]

However, even translating becomes a subversive act that seems to ironically reverse the hierarchies that separate different languages. Which is the language in need of translation in Hassan's poem? Is it the Arabic that needs to be reported in Danish or the Danish that needs to be reported in the poet's perception of language?

Most of the time the reader is not given any support to decipher the content. Many of these words are often used in suburban sociolects. Hassan simply considers them worthy of the same collocation in the text as the Danish ones. He does not signal the presence of deviant terms through different graphic choices, unlike Jonas' monologue in *Montecore*. The author translates the foreign words into a recognizable alphabetic code, the Latin one, allowing us to observe and pronounce them, but not necessarily understand them. The same happens with much of the drug-related vocabulary, which uses specific codes that are also only partially understandable. Terms like «SKIVE», «SKUNK», «ROMAL», «DOL», belong to a language related to the sphere of drugs and drug dealing, not necessarily acquired by the reader.[130] Nonetheless, they do tell a part of Hassan's identity, as they constitute a particular aspect of his everyday life. The supposedly deviant element is thus deceived, mixed up within the text without standing out in a particular way. Yasemin Yildiz further delves into the specific symbolism of foreign-derived words in different texts. Yildiz refers to the thought of Theodor Adorno who defines such words as «sites of *nonidentity* that testify to the resistance of the particular to the universal».[131] The effect on the reader may therefore vary in nature and open to multiple responses. On the one hand, he or she will have to acknowledge the influence multilingualism exerts on Danish language users. The reader, as we have said, will not find it hard to understand some of the expressions used by Hassan, be they nouns, forms of interjection, or even broken syntactic rules. This entails that the reader will have to acknowledge that the influence of foreign idioms exerts an impact both on migrants, but also, perhaps especially,

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[129] «MASJID SALSABIL PRAYs NIGHT PRAYERS (QIYAM ALLAYL) / (QIYAM AL-LAYL) / AROUND 01:40 AM / SOHUUR (BREAKFAST) IS POSSIBLE / THROUGHOUT RAMADAN FOR 200 CROWNS» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 18).

[130] «SLICE»; «SKUNK»; «ROMAL»; «HASHISH» (Yahya Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 55; 67; 100; 130).

[131] See Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, cit.: 70 [italics in original].

on native people. This represents an empirical demonstration of the consequences of post-migration.

On the other hand, the reader may be confronted with words to which he or she does not have access. Therefore he or she could perhaps try to replicate their sound, or look for their meaning, contextualize them within the poetic text or assign them a particular symbolic value, or even ignore them. Furthermore, he or she may, for example, show an attitude of openness, or closure, or even visualize in it a provocation, a threat, or the reflection of a language in perpetual evolution: «it is the readers who draw the borders between languages (and, by extension, between language and mere 'noise')».[132] What is certain is that the monolingual reader will not be able to completely overcome the language barrier without the help of a translation:

DER ER ELSKEDE MORFAR OG ELSKEDE MORMOR
OG ELSKEDE MOSTER OG ELSKEDE MORBROR
DER ER ASALAMU ALAYKUM
DER ER ALHAMDULILAH SUBHANALLAH
MASHA'ALLAH INSHA'ALLAH OG DER ER BYE[133]

In this sense, post-migration is presented in its critical guise as a reversal, or even a rupture, of the norm. Hassan's multilingualism causes a temporary reversal of fixed social positions. Lacking access to the entire vocabulary of the work, the reader will be forced to deprive himself of the certainty of having total control over their own language and to instead adapt to a different linguistic situation. An initial condition of insecurity, however, may be replaced by a different aesthetic reaction. As Doris Sommer states, the impact of multilingual practices tends to branch off into different directions:

> we could register the initially unpleasant surprise of losing linguistic control in a conversation […] as only the first stage of an aesthetic response. […] But at a next moment, there can be a pleasing aftereffect of having survived unpleasantness; it returns us to our senses through the operation of the everyday sublime. Until now, people have mostly resented the moments of exclusion from conversations and the

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[132] See Tidigs, *Multilingualism and the work*, cit.: 228.
[133] «THERE ARE BELOVED GRANDPA AND BELOVED GRANDMA / AND BELOVED AUNT AND BELOVED UNCLE / THERE IS ASALAMU ALAYKUM / THERE IS ALHAMDULILAH SUBHANALLAH / MASHA'ALLAH INSHA'ALLAH AND THERE IS BYE» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 137).

suspicions that they are the butt of some jokes. But alternatives to resentment do exist. At least they are imaginable and worth pursuing in countries that are learning to live with unstoppable migration and ambivalence about assimilation.[134]

In the post-monolingual tension highlighted by the poet, multilingual practices may also represent a didactic purpose for the reader. To understand the different nuances we perceive the manifestation of multilingual practices with means to gain a more mature awareness regarding the complexity of the post-monolingual condition. In this sense, Hassan's collection also reclaims language as an instrument of negotiation. The inter-linguistic dimension reflects how different communicative registers alternate in an attitude of irony and defiance. Moreover, it is also important to stress the interdisciplinary dimension of the text. The poet gives his lyrical content a rhythm that closely resembles the tone of rap music, a style that implies artistic as well as physical confrontation. The use of enjambment combined with an essential structure, typical of hip-hop culture, and the total absence of punctuation makes listening to him a special experience.[135] The restlessness with which he declaims his poems to the audience seems to reflect an attitude of angry resignation toward topics such as language, identity and belonging. Being extremely aware of the role reserved for the linguistic variation of the ghetto, Hassan 'agrees' to perform this language almost to please the image of the immigrant poet, while revealing his provocative act of challenge. Thus, the poet reveals the contradictions he lives with on a daily basis, but at times his voice seems to confess a kind of sad disappointment due to the stereotypes constructed upon people like him. On the one hand, Hassan recounts in impeccable Danish a violent and criminal everyday life of fights, drugs, and ghetto life. On the other, his multilingual strategies provide an equally subversive frame of reading, as a performed deviation from the norm imposed by others. Furthermore, the use of the first-person singular and the preponderant presence of the present tense form cause the narrator's voice to 'disappear' behind the pages of the text, giving the impression of immediacy that forces the reader to get lost in the flow of words. Such unconventional typographic pattern has also a critical function, in that it arouses a

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[134] See Doris Sommer, *Bilingual Aesthetics – A New Sentimental Education*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 2004: 28.
[135] In a video performance, the author almost sounds like he is singing his own poetry a cappella, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87SHkbA6wKI&t=41s, 7 October 2013 [Last accessed 23 October 2023]. Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen spoke of the mixture of music and poetry in Hassan's work. See Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen, *Yahya Hassan, Stemmen og Fænomenet*, in Peter Stein Larsen – Louise Mønster (eds.), *Dansk Samtidslyrik*, Aalborg Universitetsforlag, Aalborg 2015, pp. 187-205.

«sense of disorientation», while at the same time compelling the reader «to locate themselves vis-a-vis normal versus transcendental 'reality'».[136]

As aforementioned, the poet does not recognize himself in either category that a system of cultural representation constructs on the 'Other' in order to maintain strict hierarchies of power between what defines the essence of Danishness and lies beyond such categorization. Thus, the dividing lines between the poet and the criminal, the Dane and the *perker*, language and non-language are faded by the figure of the stateless person. Hassan defines himself as such: a connotation that denotes both a legal and metaphorical aspect. In the former case, Hassan can be rightfully defined a stateless person as he is of Palestinian origin, while in the latter, the author plays with the meaning of the word to emphasize his diversity in Denmark. However, the term stateless also seems to conceal a sense of pride, as the author also labels himself as stateless on the back cover of the book:

MEN DEM DER DE SIGER

AT MIG JEG TALER MED ACCENT

OG MIG JEG SIGER

AT MIG JEG TALER IK MED ACCENT

MIG JEG TALER MED AARHUSIANSK

SELVOM JEG ER PALÆSTINENSER UDEN STAT

JA MIG JEG ER FRA MELLEMØSTENS LANGELAND!

OG ALLE OS FRA MELLEMØSTENS LANGELAND

BLIVER TRØSTET MED EN CIVILISERET SPROG

OG EN MANGEFARVET PAS FRA EN CIVILISERET LAND[137]

The poet's irony here combines themes of citizenship, geographical and linguistic belonging, degrading the value he attributes to a supposedly 'civilized' object such as his passport. The languages that shape the different facets of his identity are many. But since none of these seems to play a preponderant role over the others, as in the case of Khemiri's

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[136] See Reuven Tsur, *The poetic function and aesthetic qualities: cognitive poetics and the Jakobsonian model*, in «Acta Linguistica Hafniensia», 42 (2010), 1, pp. 2-19: 18.

[137] «BUT THOSE THEY SAY / THAT ME I SPEAK WITH AN ACCENT / AND ME I SAY / THAT ME I DON'T SPEAK WITH AN ACCENT / ME I SPEAK WITH AN AARHUSIAN ACCENT / EVEN THOUGH I AM A PALESTINIAN WITHOUT A STATE / YES ME I AM FROM MIDDLE EASTERN'S LANGELAND! / AND ALL OF US FROM MIDDLE EASTERN LANGELAND / ARE COMFORTED WITH A CIVILIZED LANGUAGE / AND A MULTICOLORED PASSPORT FROM A CIVILIZED COUNTRY» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 160).

novel, they all converge toward an unlocatable identity, which a mere passport cannot bridge. The destabilization of preordained balances thus rises as a new normative feature for post-migrant society.

2.3.2 Post-monolingual Freedom

The language developed by Hassan is also deeply rooted in his relationship with literature. Indeed, his poetic style owes much to his encounter with writers such as Karl Ove Knausgård and especially Michael Strunge.[138] As he continues to devote his days to criminal activities of various kinds, Hassan becomes an avid reader, very attached to his books. This bond is specifically highlighted in one episode, in which he invites two police officers, speaking in an obvious tone of defiance, to confiscate all the goods he stole, but not to touch his collection.[139] Poetry and literature take on the contours of a space in which Hassan is enabled to speak for himself. Through the poetic device, his expressive freedom transcends structural and linguistic limits. Thus Hassan claims back power over language with a renewed spirit, free of constraints. Rather than something granted by the nation-state cultural ideology to the individual as an instrument of cultural identification to be preserved and protected in its uniqueness, Hassan recaptures his language, blurring the boundaries between mother tongue and his polyphonic style. By performing the character Hassan, the post-monolingual tension between different idioms becomes the space from which he can counterattack a discriminatory and racist system. In the last lines, he discovers in his words a powerful tool with which to attack the generation of his parents and Denmark:

MIG JEG BEKRIGER ER MED ORD
OG JER I VIL SVARE TILBAGE MED ILD
MIG JEG ER KAFIR MIG JEG ER MUNAFIQ
MIG JEG ER HUND

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[138] Reading Karl Ove Knausgård, Hassan gained an awareness that enabled him to transform his harsh life experiences into art. Knausgård, in fact, is known to Scandinavian and international audiences for the publication of a six-volume work, distinguished by its highly metafictional aesthetic. Knausgård reworked his own experience by subverting the characteristics of the more canonical autobiography. Michael Strunge's influence on Hassan, on the other hand, impacted the latter's style. The use of capital letters derives primarily from Strunge's poems. See Wright, *Yahya Hassan: – Knausgård ga meg et spark bak*, cit.
[139] Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 72.

MIG JEG ER BESKIDT MIN SJÆL ER FATTIG [140]

Hassan blatantly provokes the audience: his words become the fire with which to burn down the hypocrisy of the society in which he lives. Not only is his intention to fight with words but also to do so by embracing those words that represent him as a deviation from the linguistic norm. He calls himself *kafir* (nonbeliever) and *munafiq* (hypocrite) in Arabic, whereas in Danish he defines himself as a dog or a poor, dirty soul. Employing the linguistic terms of the poetic text himself, Hassan narrates his resentment toward the two worlds that raised him. His accusation extends primarily toward the hypocritical ideology of his parents' generation, which on the one hand takes pride in honouring Muslim doctrine and on the other steals welfare from the state and beats its children:

JEG ELSKER JER IKKE FORÆLDRE JEG HADER JERES ULYKKE
JEG HADER JERES TØRKLÆDER OG JERES KORANER
OG JERES ANALFABETISKE PROFETER
JERES INDOKTRINEREDE FORÆLDRE
OG JERES INDOKTRINEREDE BØRN
JERES SKAVANKER OG JERES BØNNER OG JERES BISTAND
JEG HADER DET LAND SOM VAR JERES
OG DET LAND SOM BLEV VORES
DET LAND SOM ALDRIG BLIVER JERES
OG DET LAND SOM ALDRIG BLIVER VORES[141]

The accusation also touches upon the world in which he grew up. While exhibiting

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[140] «ME I FIGHT WITH WORDS / AND YOU WILL ANSWER BACK WITH FIRE / ME I AM KAFIR ME I AM MUNAFIQ / ME I AM DOG / ME I AM DIRTY MY SOUL IS POOR» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 169).

[141] «I DON'T LOVE YOU PARENTS, I HATE YOUR UNHAPPINESS / I HATE YOUR HEADSCARVES AND YOUR KORANS / AND YOUR ILLITERATE PROPHETS / YOUR INDOCTRINATED PARENTS / AND YOUR INDOCTRINATED CHILDREN / YOUR FLAWS AND YOUR PRAYERS AND YOUR SUBSIDY / I HATE THE LAND THAT WAS YOURS / AND THE COUNTRY THAT BECAME OURS / THE LAND THAT WILL NEVER BE YOURS / AND THE LAND THAT WILL NEVER BE OURS» (Hassan, *Yahya Hassan*, cit.: 104). Shortly after the release of the collection of poems, Hassan publicly expressed his disagreement with the first generation of Muslim immigrants, accusing them of contributing to denying the possibility of integration into Danish society for individuals like himself. See Tarek Omar, *Jeg er fucking vred på mine forældres generation*, in *Politiken*, 5 October 2013, https://politiken.dk/debat/art5589226/%C2%BBJeg-er-fucking-vred-p%C3%A5-mine-for%C3%A6ldres-generation%C2%AB [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

noble intentions regarding integration policies in daylight, Denmark secretly turns social service and schoolteachers into persecutors.

In this work, too, then, the post-monolingual condition represents a subversive space of claim, self-representation, and conflict. Such a condition reflects first and foremost the effects of migration, which can be observed in the language proposed by the author. Hassan draws the new linguistic scenario of present-day, post-migrant Denmark, which has become like Sweden and Norway a multilingual and multicultural reservoir, in which foreign words enter the everyday speech strategies of different speakers, which had been something unconceivable until a few decades ago. Secondly, Hassan's multilingual style reveals a fundamental part of the poet's identity construction. To understand Hassan is to understand his language, to understand the way he plays and performs with it, to perceive when his intent is to deceive or, on the contrary, to tell a truthful story. Finally, his linguistic shifts also play a role of agency, strategically used to bring the whole country face to face with its responsibilities and its contradictions. The search for linguistic authenticity in the final section is an illusory attempt at instrumentalization, which seeks to find a way to connect the poet's text to his exotic, suburban world. However, as Julia Tidigs states: «Bakom förväntningarna på autenticitet återfinns en naiv tro på att litterärt språk över huvud taget kan vara inklippt verklighet, något som inte stämmer ens för enspråkig litteratur […] Dess effekt, som alltså förutsätter läsaren, är ett *sken* av autenticitet».[142]

Hassan, therefore, reverses the need for authenticity by using it to ridicule the way his figure has been presented, simply by giving the impression of authenticity on his language. Therefore, like Khemiri, the poet's mastery of Danish is blatantly contrived in many parts of the collection, with the express purpose of deconstructing stereotypes and linguistic parameters that keep categories such as migrant and non-migrant, Dane and *perker* apart and in this way establishes or, owing the preaching tone of his poems, spells out the post monolingual situation in language.

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[142] «Behind the expectation of authenticity is a naïve belief that literary language can be generally inserted in reality, something that is not true even for monolingual literature [...] Its effect, which thus presupposes the reader, is a *resemblance* of authenticity» (Tidigs, *Att skriva sig*, cit.: 85-86 [italics in original]).

2.4 A Post-migrant Perspective Over Language

If migration is slowly changing the face of contemporary societies, it is paramount to examine how such changes influence language use. In this chapter, Jonas Khemiri's and Yahya Hassan's works have been taken into account as examples of post-monolingual writing practice in order to investigate how multilingual practices of different kinds do not simply aim to reproduce the factual coexistence of multiple languages within Scandinavian countries, but substantiate a critical stance against ethnic-based categorizations. This means that by locating themselves along the line of demarcation that ideally separates one language from another, such practices act as a subversive strategy that depicts the contours of a linguistic culture in constant transformation. By underlying the conflictual struggles that arise from the influence that migration exerts on the traditional conceptualization of a mother tongue, post-monolingualism constitutes a concrete aspect of the post-migrant condition. The intricate amount of linguistic variation, in the form of dialects, sociolects and multiethnolects are steadily enlarging and globalizing Danish and Swedish vocabulary. However, rather than focusing on structural differences, establishing the idea of discrete linguistic units in the same social space, it is certainly more fruitful to investigate the effects of their interaction. A condition defined by its inherent diversity builds bridges between different idioms, deconstructing, comparatively, the idea that languages exist as closed systems.[143]

Khemiri and Hassan represent two ideal examples to further problematize the normative concept of mother tongue in Scandinavia. Khemiri proposes an extremely original use of Swedish. Its multilingualism is conceived, in a sense, within the text itself and the different voices that animate it, creating an irresistible comic effect that counterbalances the dramatic nature of the tale. Although the language used by the author remains almost always the same, his Swedish is constantly reshaped through the language

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[143] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari employed the metaphor of the rhizome to explore this concept. Through the botanical metaphor of the rhizome, the philosophers offered a clear image for grasping the intricate essence of global phenomena as a unified network, beyond the boundaries of single dots on a map. The rhizome, characterized by a diffusive, horizontal structure can establish connections with the external world at every single point of junction, in a perpetual dialectical motion of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This concept represented an alternative to the principle of verticality – idealized by the two philosophers in the image of the tree – which, in turn, was based on a methodological thinking deeply rooted in the hierarchical and categorical system that structured the metaphysics of Western thought: «il n'y a pas de langue en soi, ni d'universalité du langage, mais un concours de dialectes, de patois, d'argots, de langues spéciales» (Gilles Deleuze – Felix Guattari, *Mille Plateaux, Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1980: 14: «there is no language per se, no universality of language, but a contest of dialects, patois, slang and special languages»).

used by Kadir, Abbas and Jonas. Moreover, the characters' languages influence each other, mixing, and commenting on the strategies deployed by each narrator in a perpetual conflicting metalinguistic dynamism that ironically aestheticizes the novel's post-migrant traits. Hassan is perhaps more openly critic and direct in his approach. The Danish poet shows full awareness over the form, structure and vocabulary that make up his language. Likewise, he is equally aware of the status that such language holds in the dichotomies between social categories. Hassan does not hide behind play and invention, but brutally bends language to his will, challenging the reader to respond to his provocations. The reader, in fact, is overwhelmed by the linguistic flow with which Hassan carries out his lyric.

The space of claim that these two authors open with their works changes the perspective with which to view the role of language within the cultural-historical narrative of Sweden and Denmark. However, both of them describe the Scandinavian post-migrant condition not only as a conflictual act, but also as a creative space, giving shape to a new form of languages that testify for the complexity of present post-migrant societies. The antagonisms generated by the different positions on the topic of migration are fuelled by the creative linguistic strategies of the two authors, proving how the Scandinavian territory has embarked on a path of radical transformation in all its aspects. Precisely because of its fluidity and mutability, the issue of post-monolingualism can therefore represent a uniting factor for certain social groups and a reason for collision for others. As Kauranen, Huss, and Grönstrand state, this sense of instability is reflected specifically in the varied types of readers who are confronted with multilingual literature: «The 'ideal reader' or 'target reader' can no longer easily refer to a community of readers with shared language and nationality, but rather to different groups of readers with various backgrounds».[144] What is certain is that the contribution of the reader within this process is crucial: «Whatever freedoms we attribute to readers in this process, it is certain that those readers […] are an indispensable part of making the languages of these texts happen».[145]

In conclusion, the post-monolingual condition enables the authors to create cohesion, disunite, construct categories, expose processes of otherness, and claim to

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[144] See Heidi Grönstrand – Markus Huss – Ralf Kauranen, *Introduction*, in Heidi Grönstrand – Markus Huss – Ralf Kauranen (eds.), *The Aesthetics and Politics of Linguistic Borders: Multilingualism in Northern European Literature*, Routledge, New York 2019, pp. 3-23: 17.
[145] See Tidigs, *Multilingualism and the work*, cit.: 238.

belong but also to create conditions for new strategies of thinking. The need to establish a bi-univocal relationship between a single language and a single identity consequently ignores the latter's social and dynamic dimensions. Language is constantly recreating itself through its use over time and space, and this use is determined by social interactions between different people with different skills, different perspectives, and different cultures. Scandinavian countries, in their post-migrant condition, are likely to witness continuous transformative processes of this kind, in a steady dialectics of reactions and counter-reactions.

## 3. Cosmopolitan 'Post-migrant' Narratives

The previous chapter observed how migration affects language from a structural standpoint and how it represents the complex social network that characterizes the Scandinavian post-migrant condition. Khemiri's and Hassan's employment of language shows one of the most easily perceived consequences of migration in everyday Scandinavian society.

However, it is perhaps unproductive to limit the post-migrant discourse to situations that frame migration as a space of linguistic claiming. Both authors' acts of control over language offer an authentic reading of the post-migrant condition, opening up interesting reflections on its conflicted nature, but also leaving many other questions unsolved.

3.1 Post-migrant 'Narratives of Bildung'

In this chapter, the selected texts will bring the analysis towards a slightly new direction. The analysis will focus on the interactive nature of the processes of individual identification and the way different social actors position themselves in the post-migrant context. The aim is to explore a number of questions: What kind of scenario does the interaction, however conflictual, between the groups that animate Scandinavian post-migrant society give rise to? And how can these sorts of interactions offer an alternative point of view as far as the issue of individual identity is concerned that can reconcile the metanarrative of Scandinavian nation-state with that of a post-migrant society?

The two works chosen for this purpose will allow to confront distinct life experiences and accommodating strategies of the protagonists. The first novel is *Og – en argentisnk aupairs ordbok* (And – the Dictionary of an Argentine Au-pair), a work composed in 2015 by Veronica Salinas, an Argentine writer, playwright, and translator born in Buenos Aires, who moved to Norway in her early twenties. She has published a series of books for children that focus on the subject of bullying: *Reisen* (The Voyage), *Sulten* (The Hunger), *Skyggen* (The Shadow), and *Slem* (Bad).[1] The second work is a collection of poems *Morsmål* (Mother Tongue), written in 2012 by Aasne Linnestå, who

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[1] Veronica Salinas, *Og – En argentinsk au pairs ordbok*, Cappelen Damm, Oslo 2016. See also Veronica Salinas, *Reisen*, Magikon forlag, Kolbotn 2012; Veronica Salinas, *Sulten*, Magikon forlag, Kolbotn 2015; Veronica Salinas, *Skyggen*, Magikon forlag, Kolbotn 2018; Veronica Salinas, *Slem*, Magikon forlag, Kolbotn 2021.

is a Norwegian author, critic, and playwright. She has published both poetry collections, such as *Døgnbok* (Diary) and *HU* (HU), and novels, *Opphold* (Stay), and *Mamma er et annet sted* (Mom is Somewhere Else).[2]

As one can guess from these brief autobiographical notes, the chapter will cover a heterogeneous social and anthropological spectrum. The presence of an author like Linnestå, in this sense, is particularly significant. Applying a post-migrant perspective to the analysis of a work composed by an ethnically Scandinavian author offers the possibility of scrutinizing how the topic of migration can infiltrate even the supposedly sedentariness of non-migrants. The works, in which individual identity formation occurs through contact with diversity, narrate an interesting side of the post-migrant condition. To better understand how Salinas and Linnestå can enrich the debate, it is perhaps worth dedicating a few words on how the canonical genre of Bildungsroman rediscovers a new function today in a very different context from the one framed by the genre's archetypes.

The multiplicity of forms by which such literary movement has presented itself to the public over the past few centuries has fostered a marked discrepancy in the way this genre has been received by audiences and critics. According to Tobias Boes, until the end of the 20th century, critical studies of the Bildungsroman novel were based on a fundamental distinction, that sought to separate a specific German case, and its champion Goethe, from the tradition of literary works produced in countries such as France and England.[3] Boes describes the origin and purpose of the Bildungsroman as two aspects organically and temporally linked to the German socio-cultural context and its entry into the modern era. In the reader's expectations, the hero was to create a solid bond with the new Germany, becoming one with the country's renewed political and economic reality after a long and tortuous, lifelong journey. In the view of critics, this characteristic defined much of the German literary project, whose formative ideal in a sense represented «the German answer to 'decadent' French and English 'novels of society'».[4] Thus, the aim was

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[2] Aasne Linnestå, *Morsmål*, Aschehoug, Oslo 2012. See also Aasne Linnestå, *Opphold*, Aschehoug, Oslo 2014; See also Aasne Linnestå, *Mamma er et annet sted*, Aschehoug, Oslo 2015; Aasne Linnestå, *Døgnbok*, H//O//F forlag, Moss 2017; Aasne Linnestå, *HU*, Aschehoug, Oslo 2018.

[3] Franco Moretti draws a distinction between opposing paths: «the classical *Bildungsroman* plot posits 'happiness' as the highest value, but only to the detriment and eventual annulment of 'freedom' […] whereas in England, the centrality of the latter value generates an equally inevitable repugnance to change». See Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, eng. trans. by Albert Sbragia, Verso, London-New York 2000: 8 [italics in original].

[4] See Tobias Boes, *Modernist Studies and the Bildungsroman: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends*, in «Literature Compass», 3/2 (2006), pp. 230-243: 232.

to create cohesion, give coordinates, and find a long-lasting balance in the new social order. Such a Germanocentric view circumscribed criticism of formation literature until the end of the first half of the 20th century.[5] A renewed interpretation of the genre saw its dawn at the beginning of the 1980s, when new frontiers, such as postcolonial studies, feminist studies, or gender studies, began to frame this genre from a comparative perspective, placing different historical, cultural, and social frames under the same analytical lens.[6] New declinations of the genre were to emerge in conjunction with the recognition of a historically massive change. Therefore, the realization of the hero could only take place if the protagonist's path, as Bakhtin argues: «emerges *along with the world*».[7] Macro and microcosm, world and individual would negotiate simultaneously their respective transitional stages. In this way, the upcoming of new theoretical perspectives of postcolonial and migration studies faded the contours of the Bildungsroman, as canonized by the German literary tradition, making them no longer subject to «formal dictates but also to transformations that come in themselves to trouble the normativity of this idealised form and promote instead the instability of the key terms and concepts it wishes to centre».[8]

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[5] «German scholars occupied themselves with differentiating between ever finer gradations of Bildung and with honing the thesis that the novel of formation possesses an inherent national particularity. During the Wilhelmine Empire, the Weimar Republic and the Nazi reign, this was often done in an expressly chauvinist fashion». See Boes, *Modernist Studies and the Bildungsroman*, cit.: 232.

[6] Ericka Hoagland thoroughly discussed what she calls the 'Postcolonial Bildungsroman', in which the process of maturation and personal fulfilment and the need to find a balance with the surrounding social space become even more conflicting due to «the shadow of colonialism, the brutality of civil war, widespread disenfranchisement, and fractured family politics». In short, Hoagland continues, the main characteristic of this genre can be summarized as «the ongoing remediation of colonialism's traumatic legacy throughout the self-maturation process». See Ericka A. Hoagland, *The Postocolonial Bildungsroman*, in Sarah Graham (by), *A History of Bildungsroman*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2019, pp. 217-239: 219-220. See also Ericka A. Hoagland, *Postcolonializing the Bildungsroman – A Study of The Evolution of the Genre*, Purdue University, Lafayette 2006.

[7] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, eng. transl. by Vern W. McGee, University of Texas Press, Austin 1986: 23 [italics in original].

[8] See John Frow – Melissa Hardie – Vanessa Smith, *The Bildungsroman: form and transformations*, in «Textual Practice», 34 (2006), 12, pp. 1905-1910: 1906. The shift undertaken by critics in their efforts to contextualize the analysis of the educational novel in contemporary times has had a retroactive effect. Scholars have also sought to reexamine classic German novels that initiated this genre. Tobias Boes suggests a complete reversal of perspective on this genre, liberating it from its traditional normative and subservient role of upholding the nation-state's order. Instead, Boes frames it as a precursor to vernacular cosmopolitanism. See Tobias Boes, *Formative Fictions – Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Bildungsroman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca-New York 2012. Todd Kontje rejects such an interpretation of the classic German coming-of-age novel. He argues, for example, that border-crossing processes are a recurring theme «of a genre that has been used since its inception in the late eighteenth century to reflect on the exigencies of national identity in a land marked by shifting boundaries and moving people» (See Kontje, *The German Tradition of Bildungsroman*, in Sarah Graham (ed.), *A History of Bildungsroman*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2019, pp. 10-33: 32).

Nowadays, as Mélissa Gélinas states, processes of individual formation still represent a crucial core in those stories that recount the effects of diversity and multiplicity in contemporary Western societies. Gélinas identifies in what she calls 'narratives of Bildung', alternative declinations of the genre that can narrate the reality of contemporaneity in its many globalizing, post-colonial, and post-migrant facets without worrying about devising an ending that individuates a precise role for the individual in the nation-state context:

> *Bildung* stories now portray identity formation from a diversity of positionalities [sic] and as a contingent, performative, and layered process that is influenced by existing and emerging categories, norms, and power relations […] Building on this expanding scholarship […] multicultural, post-migration, and minority contexts of contemporary narratives of *Bildung* call for critical attention to the poetics of plurality and difference.[9]

If during the 19th century, the Bildungsroman outlined the image of a continent unprepared to enter a new historical phase, with its lack of a culture of modernity, a post-migrant perspective instead denotes the need to develop a culture of diversity. Finding new educational pathways in a multicultural social horizon may prove to be a useful exercise for a clearer definition of the contours of Scandinavian post-migrant condition.

### 3.1.1 Post-migration – a Cosmopolitan Outlook

The ethical and philosophical dimension that sees in the 'citizen of the world' a way of existing and thinking at once locally and globally, must today clash with a widespread isolationist tendency by assigning a normative and hierarchical value to different cultures. Such an approach to diversity «has been considered an obstacle to moral universalism, which is the foundation of cosmopolitanism».[10] As seen in the first chapter, while opening up to the logic of globalization, international markets and the flow of goods, people and ideas, the nation-state tends to pursue an process of closure when migration is at stake. The contrast between these two dimensions, closure and openness, has over time corrupted the nature of the term itself, essentially reducing it to a slogan «for expressing

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[9] See Mélissa Gélinas, *Contemporary Narratives of Bildung: New Directions*, in «Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures», 73 (2019), 3, pp. 137-141: 137-138 [italics in original].

[10] Yusef Waghid et. al., *The Challenge of Culture in Cosmopolitanism*, in Yusef Waghid – Chikumbutso Herbert Manthalu – Judith Terblanche – Faiq Waghid – Zayd Waghid (eds.), *Cosmopolitan Education and Inclusion, Human Engagement and the Self*, Palgrave MacMillan, London-New York 2020, pp. 41-52: 42.

the 'duty' to live with all the other people in this world, and the moral challenge that humanity should rise up to».[11] As Queensland, Griffith and Skrbis point out, the concept of cosmopolitanism shows limits in its interpretative scope: «while it commonly represents a tool for radical social imagination through projections of cosmopolitan democracy, law and citizenship […] it is also in danger of being an almost meaningless and glib catchphrase».[12]

The debate around such a concept has regained importance since the late 20th century. The lack of an authentic 'cosmopolitan outlook', that is, a culture of diversity that can ensure «a social and political response to a globalizing world»,[13] allows only trivial and superficial manifestations of cosmopolitanism to emerge. On the contrary, its authentic, inter-relational nature remains overshadowed by the persistence of a state-nationalistic fetishism. In a cynical reversal of the term, the adjective 'cosmopolitan' has prevalently been used to describe the subject and his/her status in relation to the logic of a globalized world, thus omitting the fundamental social component that defines the term. A negative connotation of cosmopolitanism can be linked to rootlessness and a lack of territorial loyalty, which are considered as deviant and degenerative traits of the human condition itself. That is the case, for instance, of Jewish diaspora. Or conversely, to indicate a positive and remarkable status, when referring to an elite class of Western entrepreneurs, travellers, and intellectuals.[14]

Recent scholarship has attempted to frame the concept differently. Many studies treated cosmopolitanism as a set of skills needed to live in a world defined by diversity. Ulf Hannerz defines it as a cultural orientation that involves «a stance toward diversity itself […] an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experience, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity». As the scholar continues, the

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[11] See Nikos Papastergiadis, *Art from Asia: Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism and the World in Art*, in Sten Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Moritz Schramm, *The Culture of Migration: Politics, Aesthetics and Histories*, I.B. Taurus, London-New York, 2015, pp. 127-147: 128.
[12] Gavin Kendall – Ian Woodward – Zlatko Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism, Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2009: 12.
[13] See Lisette Josephides, *Introduction: We the Cosmopolitans: Framing the Debate*, in Lisette Josephides – Alexandra Hall (eds.), *We the Cosmopolitans: Moral and Existential Conditions of Being Human*, Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford 2014: 4. This process, termed cosmopolitanization by Ulrich Beck, delineates how a cosmopolitan culture gradually and subtly infiltrates the consciousness of individuals. See Ulrich Beck, *Der Kosmopolitische Blick, oder: Krieg ist Frieden*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2004: 31 [italics added by the author]. An example of trivial cosmopolitanism, says Beck, is, for example, the presence of foreign professional footballers playing for Bayern Munich.
[14] See Steven Vertovec, *Cosmopolitanism*, in Kim Knott – Seán McLoughlin (eds.), *Diasporas Concepts, intersections, identities*, Zed Books, London 2010, pp. 63-68.

cosmopolitan individual should be able to master a set of skills that will make it easier for him/her to access other cultures. By channeling cognitive strategies toward this purpose, individuals must develop the ability to «manoeuvering with a particular system of meanings and meaningful forms».[15] The studies carried out by Stuart Hall, also echoed by Étienne Balibar, Fuyuki Kurasawa and Arjun Appadurai, have been of crucial importance in this sense.[16] In a similar way, these scholars emphasizes the importance of a cosmopolitanism that emerges 'from below', embodying in the life-practices of those people who, out of necessity, are forced to embark on a journey that extends beyond the boundaries of their birthplace. Although their socioeconomic status may represent, at least initially, a condition of disadvantage, this factor does not prevent such individuals from acquiring the same set of skills that qualifies them as cosmopolitan. By comparing Hall's alternative conceptualization of cosmopolitanism to a privileged group of businessmen and intellectuals, the scholar deconstructs the idea of a global lifestyle «as a reward for status, education or wealth, but […] as one of the necessities imposed by the disjunctures of modern globalisation».[17] A need that translates primarily into a sense of post-national 'togetherness' that can redefine the contours of the concept of nationhood from within the nation itself.

Post-migrant narratives can thus represent an effective analytical tool for the observation of new processes of identity formation, as they seek to emphasize how the encounter between different cultures and people should not be reduced solely to a conflict paradox but can also help to create the right preconditions for assimilating cosmopolitan competences. Reversely, engaging in daily interaction with multiple identities, cultures and languages, cosmopolitanism can find in such narratives a setting where to express its

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[15] Ulf Hannerz, *Cosmopolitans and locals in world culture*, in «Theory, Culture & Society», 7 (1990), 2/3, pp. 237–251: 239.

[16] For more on the concept of 'cosmopolitanism from below', see Clément Petitjean, *Étienne Balibar: War, racism and nationalism*, in *Verso Book Blog*, 17 November 2015, https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/1559-etienne-balibar-war-racism-and-nationalism, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]; Fuyuki Kurasawa, *A Cosmopolitanism from Below: Alternative Globalization and the Creation of a Solidarity without Bounds*, in «European Journal of Sociology», 45 (2004), 2, pp. 233-255; Arjun Appadurai, *Cosmopolitanism from below: Some ethical lessons from the slums of Mumbai*, in «The Johannesburg Salon», 4 (2011), pp. 32-44.

[17] Stuart Hall – Pnina Werbner, *Cosmopolitanism, Globalisation and Diaspora: Stuart Hall in Conversation with Pnina Werbner, March 2006*, in Pnina Werbner (ed.), *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives*, Routledge, London 2008, pp. 345-360: 347. As Steven Vertovec suggests: «studies concerning diasporas and transnational communities have increasingly drawn attention to characteristics of 'working class cosmopolitans' such as labour migrants and other non-elites spread throughout global diasporas» (See Vertovec, *Cosmopolitanism*, cit.: 63).

true potential. As Anne Ring Petersen states: «a contemporary grounded cosmopolitanism […] resonates particularly well with the concept of postmigration, which likewise emphasises local anchoring and struggles, materially situated processes and embodied intersubjective exchanges across differences».[18] Catalyst of diversity and resources on the one hand, and producer of «dispersal, fluidity and movement» on the other hand, post-migrant societies offers new insights into how to conceive of our sense of belonging and identity in relation to migration, identifying in the dynamic relationship between local and global not opposition but two «intimate interlocutors».[19]

In order to gain analytical value in post-migrant space, the concept of cosmopolitanism thus needs to be framed in its social, interactive, and imaginative dimensions. Notably, the ability to imagine different types of belonging becomes a strategy of interaction and self-empowerment. Through the act of 'folding', that connects together distant images from diverse times and space, Arjun Appadurai also emphasized the importance of the role of imagination as a social practice that recognizes in the global flows of media and people sensitive points of 'disjuncture', places where people can locate themselves beyond the mere geographic boundaries.[20]

This chapter aims to observe how the encounter with the 'Other' can trigger a process of cosmopolitan identity formation, that is, the capacity to «create the connection between self and other».[21] The post-migrant condition appears thus as a space for negotiating new forms of alliance and loyalties. Bringing the concept of cosmopolitanism back to the center of the relational dynamics characterizing the post-migrant space will provide the reader with a different view of Scandinavian countries, highlighting different strategies of adaptation and negotiation within a context defined by diversity. In the case of Salinas' and Linnestå's works, the focus will be addressed towards the adaptive systems by which their characters, in their daily interaction with multiple, extra-ordinary

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[18] Ring Petersen –Schramm, *(Post-)Migration in the age of globalisation*, cit.: 9.

[19] Marsha Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, Routledge, London 2010: 13-16.

[20] According to Appadurai, the intricate web of political, economic, and cultural interconnections that binds the whole world together must be conceptualized in a different way. The points of disjuncture that characterize this interconnection are delineated by the scholar through five distinct dimensions, which he defines (land)-*scapes*. See Arjun Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, in «Theory Culture and Society», 7 (1990), 2/3, 295-310, 296-299.

[21] Shannan Spisak, *The Evolution of a Cosmopolitan Identity: Transforming Culture*, in «Current Issues in Comparative Education», 12 (2009), 1, pp. 86-91: 88.

situations, cut across seemingly opposing dimensions such as local/global, national/supranational, migrant/non-migrant.

## 3.2 Veronica Salinas: *Og – en argentinsk aupairs ordbok*

In her novel, Salinas re-lives the journey that led her to leave Argentina and move to Norway. Through an autofictional key, the author re-interprets her own biographical material: the author recounts the story of a young Argentinean forced to flee a country torn apart by economic and social problems and to settle in the town of Fredrikstad, south of Oslo.[22] The voice of a first-person narrator translates the girl's thoughts and dialogues, which takes shape in a series of episodes of varying length, written in short, easy-to-understand free verse.[23] The syntactic and linguistic simplicity with which the author leads her narrative, however, should not be seen as a *diminutio*. On the contrary, this trait could also indicate a pedagogical and educational feature of the novel, upholding a tradition that perhaps distinguishes Norwegian migration literature from that of other Scandinavian countries.[24]

The various episodes are subdivided according to the heading at the top of the page, which indicates a particular event in either Norway or Argentina. The former constitutes

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[22] Since the whole novel is presented as a first-person narrative, it is grammatically impossible to determine the gender of the protagonist until the end of the book. It is only at the end that the narrator refers to herself in the third person singular, revealing that she is indeed a woman. As Alison James states: «autofictional texts present us not with autonomous fictional worlds, but with sites of fictionalization where the referential ground of the *I* is maintained to a greater or lesser extent» (See Alison James, *The Fictional in Autofiction*, in Alexandra Effe – Hannie Lawlor (eds.), *The Autofictional – Approaches, Affordances, Forms*, Palgrave MacMillan, London 2022, pp. 41-60: 56 [italics in original]). Since the narrator does not have a name, henceforth it will be referred to as 'Veronica'.

[23] As Elisabeth Oxfeldt states: «Og is […] conceived as an easy-to-read book, financed by Leser-søker-bok, and is part of The White Ravens International Youth Library. Hence, it is an easy read, linguistically as well as narratologically» (See Elisabeth Oxfeldt, *Dulce de Leche: Translingualism, Laughter and Sweet Stickiness in Veronica Salinas's Og– En argentinsk au pairs ordbok*, in Martin Humpál – Helena Březinová (eds.), *Migration and Identity in Nordic Literature*, Karolinum Press, Prague 2022, pp. 112-129: 112).

[24] This characteristic, in fact, can be found in other works as well. Khalid Hussein, a Norwegian writer born in Pakistan and generally identified as the initiator of migration literature tradition in Norway, made his debut in 1986 with the novel *Pakkis* (Pakkis is a Norwegian derogatory term used to address people of Pakistani descent). In this novel, the author recounts the life of Sajjad, a Pakistani boy raised in Oslo and born to Pakistani immigrants. Sajjad struggles with the intricate challenge of forging an identity that reconcile his cultural heritage with the societal norms of Norway. See Khalid Hussain, *Pakkis*, Tiden, Oslo 1986. In the introduction to the Italian edition of the novel, the translator, Edoardo Checcucci, writes that Hussain's work still represents an important reference point for young Norwegians with a migrant family background. *Pakkis*, as Checcucci continues, has often been included in Norwegian school curricula, with the aim of raising students' awareness about the issue of racism and segregation through a straightforward narrative structure and a simple linguistic style. See Khalid Hussain, *Paki*, Italian transl. by Edoardo Checcucci, Edizioni Forme Libere, Trento 2022.

the principal geographical reference scenario in which the author sets the story, since the number of episodes about Fredrikstad is much higher than the ones about Argentina. However, this does not necessarily place the former in a privileged position with respect to the latter. Cutting between the spatial and temporal dimensions transversally interweaves different places and times through the protagonist's memory. Memory constitutes the omnipresent reflection that the girl's past life exerts on the present. Thus, Salinas transcends the geographical sedentariness of her condition by bending spatio-temporal continuity, which is configured both as an aesthetic trace through which migration manifests itself.

On the opening page of Salinas' work, the narrator introduces herself to the reader with three sentences: «Jeg er fra Argentina. Jeg snakker spansk. Jeg bor i Fredrikstad nå».[25] In their apparent naivety, the statement allows for some reflections right from the onset. Despite the correct use of language and the geographical reference to the Scandinavian context, the protagonist traces a much vaster ellipsis, extending beyond the boundaries of Fredrikstad. The narrator recognises itself not only in the two languages of Spanish and Norwegian, but also in two distinct geographical places, Argentina and Norway. Settings and languages do not stand in opposition to each other but overlap different worlds that together shape a trajectory. In three simple sentences, the author anticipates a fundamental theme of the work, tracing the path towards a supranational, dynamic, and cosmopolitan identity consciousness.

### 3.2.1 Towards a Cosmopolitan Identification?

The representation of individual identity in artistic productions has always been a much-debated topic, especially from a post-colonial perspective. In the essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, Stuart Hall draws on the new strands of Caribbean film production that emerged during the 1990s to elaborate on the identifying power of art in the post-modern context. For the scholar, identity cannot be thought of as a final consequence, but rather «a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation».[26] The representation of an individual's traits or cultural specificities to which the individual refers does not converge solely on a shared

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[25] «I am from Argentina. I speak Spanish. I live in Fredrikstad now» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 5).
[26] Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, in Jonathan Ruthenford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Lawrence and Wishart, London 1990, pp. 222-237: 222.

culture, history and past. Conversely, it branches off in different directions, which Hall summarises in two notions: «*being*, shared historical experience and cultural practices and *becoming*, present interaction jointly contributes in formation of cultural identity».[27] The deterritorialising and cosmopolitan sense that describes the novel's incipit thins the boundaries between global and local, which formally 'are' made up of two distinct parts, but at the same time, 'become' more than their sum. However, the transnational dimension of the first page turns out to be a deception. The author's words are immediately recontextualised, throwing the reader back into the tangible circumstances provoking them: Veronica's language class. The exercise proposed by the teacher, which consists of the repetition of fixed forms and basic expressions to improve the assimilation of pronunciation, turns into a sense of discouragement for the protagonist, as the words she reproduces sound hollow and meaningless in her mind. Her frustration focuses on the sound of the conjunction 'and', which proves conceptually more problematic than its apparent simplicity might suggest. The sense of incompleteness and bewilderment does not allow her to apply to her condition a balance inherent in the coordinating conjunction: «Jeg må si 'o' og 'g' etterpå. OG. Det er ikke så mye jeg kan si med 'OG'».[28]

The incipit opens a window into the complex everyday life of the young au pair. Throughout the narration of her new Norwegian life flows a disturbing sense of melancholy attached to the past. In the first pages, Veronica recalls the moment she separated from her native country, providing valuable insight into the dramatic economic and social situation in Buenos Aires. In the early 2000s, the stagnant labour market had disastrous effects for a large part of the population. Riots emerged in conjunction with soaring unemployment, economic crisis, and inflation, filling the streets with protesters for weeks. These factors prompted many Argentinians to leave the country, further

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[27] See Nagendra Bahadur Bhandari, *Diaspora and Cultural Identity: A Conceptual Review*, in «Journal of Political Science», 21 (2021), pp. 100-108: 101. In the field of social and cultural studies, the term 'identification' has in recent years gained prominence over the more commonly used 'identity'. In general, many scholars believe that some of the terms that people use on a daily basis to understand how we represent ourselves have, over time, distorted their meaning. Not surprisingly, Stuart Hall rejects a canonical interpretation of concepts like identity and belonging, which are often difficult to interpret. This is because such concepts are frequently filtered through specific ideological, political, and cultural positions. As Rogers Brubacker and Frederick Cooper state: «Conceptualizing all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion, all self-understandings and self-identification in the idiom of 'identity' saddles us with a blunt, flat, undifferentiated vocabulary» (See Rogers Brubacker – Frederick Cooper, *Beyond 'Identity'*, in «Theory and Society», 29 (2000), 1, pp. 1-47: 2).
[28] «I have to say 'an' and 'd' afterwards. AND. There's not much I can say with 'AND'» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 13).

exacerbating the significant movement from South America towards Europe and the United States. Veronica's au pair status, which is usually considered as an experience of growth and a desire to see the world is perceived as a coercive necessity by the narrator: «Jeg bestemde meg for å dra. Fordi jeg måtte dra, ikke fordi jeg ville».[29]

The complexity of acclimatization is not only connected to the language and cultural barriers it faces. Indeed, one of the most problematic aspects of Veronica's arrival in Fredriskstad is the complicated relationship she establishes with her employers. Due to an extremely formal and tense environment, Veronica is unable to create an authentic bond with them: «Jeg trives ikke hos familien. Jeg arbeider lange dager. Fra tidlig om morgenen til sent på kvelden. De tar det som en selvfølge at jeg er hos dem, at jeg hjelper dem hele tiden».[30] The family she works for, namely the father and the mother of the children she has to take care of, treat her with indifference and even with obnoxious authority, although she diligently carries out her duties. For example, the mother is perfectly aware of her position and does not miss an opportunity to exert her power over the young woman. On the other hand, Veronica's position does not allow her to make any complaint, forcing her to lower her head in many circumstances. Symptomatic of this tension is an episode in which the mother, full of resentment and dissatisfaction with the girl, makes it clear that their work relationship is about to be resolved: «Vi snakker i morgen? Er det greit? Hun ser ikke på meg engang. Jeg ser at de ser på hverandre, moren og faren. Jeg har lyst til å spørre hva det er. Men de ser allerede på TV-en igjen».[31] Such condition of marginality and helplessness hits her even harder when a group of passengers violently forces her off a bus for carrying a kebab on board, accompanying their frustration with canonical racist phrases: «– Dra tillbake til landet ditt, sier en annen dame […] De holder meg rundt armene og får meg ut av bussen».[32] These episodes obviously

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[29] «I decided to leave. Because I had to go, not because I wanted to» (See Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 38). Adela Pellegrino has composed a well-detailed account that examines the directions and dimensions of migration from South America to Europe. Salinas' book, in this sense, is particularly relevant because, as Elisabeth Oxfeldt states: «The Argentinian literary perspective on Norway is rare. As of 2019, 1071 Argentinian immigrants lived in Norway, out of a total 765 108 immigrants» (See Oxfeldt, *Dulce de Leche*, cit.: 112).

[30] «I don't feel comfortable with my family. I work long days. From early in the morning until late at night. They take it for granted that I am with them, that I help them all the time» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 86).

[31] «We'll talk tomorrow? Is that okay? She doesn't even look at me. I see them looking at each other, the mother and the father. I want to ask what it is. But they're already looking at the TV again» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 142).

[32] «– Go back to your country, says another lady [...] They hold me by the arms and get me out of the bus» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 139).

bring to light different forms of racism: the latter one, more overt, explicit and angry, and the former structural, more devious and hypocritical.[33]

For her part, however, Veronica seems to want to hide her migrant status. In her search for stability on Norwegian soil, she determines that putting the past behind her is the best way to get back on track and turn her life around. This decision involves drastic changes that completely modify her relationship to her culture and mother tongue: «Jeg vil bytte ut alt jeg vet på spansk mot alt jeg ikke vet på norsk. Men da ville jeg jo glemme alt jeg vet på spansk».[34] Even though she is deeply attached to Argentina, replacing her cultural heritage with a Norwegian identity seems to be the most effective strategy for blending into the new country.[35] In support of this choice, Veronica recalls the last piece of advice given to her by her yoga teacher shortly before leaving Buenos Aires: «Den natta husket jeg noe yogainstruktøren hadde sagt: En gang må du være villig til å miste alt. Var jeg det?».[36] This revelation, which has an almost prophetic character, is perhaps misinterpreted by the protagonist, as her goal becomes to reconstruct her identity. A rather unmistakable omen is the moment of her landing at the house in Fredrikstad. After unpacking her suitcase, Veronica must throw away almost all her belongings into the garbage due to the spillage of some *dulce de leche*, a typical Argentinean dessert with a milky substance, from the glasses she had packed for the trip: «Jeg hadde med meg litt klær, boken *Paradiset* av Julio Cortázar, toalettsaker, bilder av familie og venner. Og jeg hadde med meg dulce de leche […] Jeg kastet bildene, selv om jeg ikke ville [...] Jeg kastet ikke boken, men en del av klærne gikk rett i søpla».[37] Finally, her decision not to

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[33] The issue of racism affects post-migrant societies in various forms. Even in the presence of a political correctness that hides behind a 'color blindness', which systematically denies the scourge of crude and violent racism, it often manifests itself in a more subtle way. Structural racism, for instance, «forbliver upåagtet *Og*ukommenteret som en naturliggjort *Og*bredt accepteret del af hverdagen» (See Ring Petersen – Schramm, *Postmigration*, cit.: 195: «remain unnoticed and uncommented upon as a naturalized and widely accepted part of everyday life»).

[34] «I want to exchange everything I know in Spanish for everything I don't know in Norwegian. But then I wanted to forget everything I know in Spanish» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 49).

[35] Vertovec describes such assimilative approach by using the metaphor of the 'wolf-in-sheep's clothing': «whose implementation entails a conscious act, based on specific knowledge of the right thing to do in the right circumstances and undertaken purposefully for some kind of advantage» (Vertovec, *Cosmopolitanism*, cit.: 64)

[36] «That night I remembered something the yoga instructor had said: At some point you must be willing to lose everything. Was I?» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 45).

[37] «I brought some clothes, the book *Paradiset* by Julio Cortázar, toiletries, photos of family and friends. And I brought dulce de leche [...] I threw away the photos, even though I didn't want to [...] I didn't throw away the book, but some of the clothes went straight into the trash» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 40-45 [italics in original]).

throw away a small portion of the suitcase's contents substantiates the melancholic state that oppresses the young woman, a condition that Elisabeth Oxfeldt describes as the irrepressible need «of holding on to the lost object».[38] Most objects related to memory, the past and family represent material traces of migration, which nevertheless turn happy memories into painful ones that she prefers to dispose of. The stains reverse the symbolic value it habitually attaches to them, giving a new meaning.

Setting aside a fundamental aspect of her identity to secure a stable place in the new social context, the narrator finds herself trapped in a self-image she is unable to recognize. The need to constantly prove her usefulness is an exhausting and depressing exercise for her: «Så skriver jeg: Jeg presterer, jeg må hele tiden vise at jeg er noe, eller at jeg kan noe. Jeg blir sliten av det. Jeg vil så gerne le av alt dette her».[39] However, the eagerness to demonstrate her assimilative abilities actually boils down to mere imitation. The repetition of the forced phrases she exchanges with her father does not further develop the relationship between herself and her family. Similarly, the hours spent studying Norwegian are diluted in the assiduous repetition of fixed sentences without really understanding their meaning.

The desire to laugh off her new condition paradoxically exhumes a deep connection to the past, which, although in its nostalgic and melancholic form, never really leaves the protagonist. The memories of Argentina remain closely tied to her consciousness and prevent her from leaving her old self behind. On the contrary, they make the young girl reimagine the role of that self in her present social interactions. By recalling her memories from a different position, in fact, the past does not exclusively reverberate into the present as a comfort zone in which she can contemplate a safe and serene reflection of her authentic image, but it reproduces itself within it. By combining the perspective of past and present, the young woman rethinks from a different position, such themes as

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[38] See Oxfeldt, *Dulce de Leche*, cit.: 123. In speaking of migration and melancholia, Oxfeldt in turn refers to Sara Ahmed's study, where the scholar criticises the concept of happiness and collective well-being as perceived by Western culture, which is often confined within the traditional boundaries of culture, family, and homeland. In contrast to this notion, the scholar presents figures that invert the flow of such happiness. Amongst these figures, Ahmed includes the melancholic migrant, caught between a sense of melancholy towards the past and the moral obligation to recount his or her migratory experience as positive and to omit any reference to potential instances of discrimination or racial bias. See Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, cit.

[39] «Then I write: I perform, I have to constantly show that I am something, or that I can do something. I get tired of it. I want to laugh at all this» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 132).

migration and otherness. Memories of past experiences intervene cyclically as a kind of filter through which she elaborates new adaptation mechanisms in the place of arrival.

The intimate interface with the past integrates into her identity as the baggage of life experiences, convertible into valuable skills in the new context. They become a piece of her, like any other body part: «Vi er blod, kjøtt, organer, celler og bein av fortellinger».[40] Veronica's identity never appears faithful to a single normative cultural ideal, whether Argentine or Norwegian, but constantly changes points of reference.[41] Immersed in a context increasingly defined by diversity, the protagonist does not avail herself of fixed structures. Imagining Argentina and Norway as two distinct entities becomes impossible for her.[42] Since they are not opposed to each other, but only as the result of a mutual folding, it is through their dialogical coexistence that the story develops. Infiltrating Veronica's daily occupations, the memory of Argentina offers the possibility of identifying spaces of negotiation between different places in time and space, between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar. By juxtaposing the dimension of recollection with the sensitive experiences of everyday life, the author aestheticizes a continuous movement, in perpetual construction, creating a flow devoid of friction and splits. Some episodes begin in Norway and end in Argentina, and vice versa, fading the boundaries that separate the one from the other. Past and present, then, overlay each other to form together a new sense of belonging.[43]

### 3.2.2 Cosmopolitan competences

The aesthetic aspect flows into a pedagogical reflection, which helps the protagonist develop the necessary competences for living harmoniously within a context marked by diversity. The family she lives with represents one of the most complex situations to face.

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[40] «We are blood, flesh, organs, cells and bones of stories» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 65).

[41] «Modern societies are therefore by definition societies of constant, rapid and permanent change» (See Stuart Hall, *The Questions of Cultural Identity*, in Hall Stuart – Held David – Hubert Don – Thompson Kenneth (eds.), *Modernity – An Introduction to Modern Societies*, Blackwell Publishers, Hoboken 1996, pp. 595-634: 599).

[42] In the first chapter, it was noted how the ways individuals position themselves in a post-migrant society no longer respond to binary logics but according to their stance towards the phenomenon of migration: «the lines of division and conflict are no longer structured by the previously established distinctions between right and left, migrants and non-migrants, upper class and lower class. Citing examples from contemporary German society, she [Shermin Langhoff] observes a range of actions and unexpected reactions that do not fit neatly into the outdated categories and clear-cut distinctions between liberals and conservatives» (See Ring Petersen – Schramm, *(Post-)Migration in the age of globalisation*, cit.: 2).

[43] «Belonging, then, from the cosmopolitan point of view, comes to be seen as something based on multiple and overlapping levels» (See Kendall – Woodward – Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism*, cit.: 38).

Their unpleasant behavior, aggravated by the unpleasant episode on the bus, are discriminatory experiences that catch the protagonist unprepared. To quote the words of Étienne Balibar, the core of these two situations can be described as an example of 'inverse cosmopolitanism'. Inverse cosmopolitanism is, according to him:

> the representation of the variety of groups of humans on the Earth's surface in terms of a competition between masters and slaves, or simply between incompatible civilisations. This representation, which was considerably developed by colonialism, has also been reproduced in the post-colonial period, in the world of the new global relations of force. We could call it a sort of inverse cosmopolitanism, in opposition to the cosmopolitanism that emerged from the tradition of the Enlightenment.[44]

The same episodes, however, do not remain circumscribed within the Norwegian context, but let Veronica further explore the topic of discrimination that brings her back to Argentina. The ability to transcend the level of the local, that is, the time and place in which the discrimination takes place, and to imagine the same feeling in a broader perspective reproduces the folding movement between distant worlds. The reflection of the creative process that Salinas imprints in her text bends time and space by condensing and harnessing different images within the world conceived in the text.

Specifically, the studies carried out by Linda Brimm attempt to frame some basic criteria for describing the specific skills and abilities that can be defined as cosmopolitan. A mindset formed in a cosmopolitan horizon seeks to learn from the situations and dynamics that globalization confronts us with.[45] Such correlation between past and present, as Brimm states, represents a crucial strategy through which a cosmopolitan state of mind constructs and negotiates the relationship with others. The discrimination suffered in Norway awakens in Veronica an awareness of her own diversity, an identity

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[44] See Petitjean, *Étienne Balibar: War, racism and nationalism*, cit.

[45] In her book, Brimm immortalises the figure of the so-called 'Global cosmopolitans', a category of people united, according to the author, «by the common bond of global experience that has significantly changed their lives» (See Linda Brimm, *The Global Cosmopolitan Mindset: Lessons from the New Global Leaders*, Palgrave MacMillan, London 2018: 3). Elaborating on the specific cognitive abilities and subsequent production of skills that characterize these individuals through a series of interviews, Brimm attempts to synthesize the strategies by which these individuals define their reality: «it became clear […] that there was something magic about the combination of the need to learn […] and the desire to understand the world from both a global and local point of view» (Brimm, *The Global Cosmopolitan Mindset*, cit.: vii). The scholar's attention is specifically directed towards a mindset deeply influenced by the emerging global culture and its expression in local contexts. This mindset is characterized by the scholar as the 'Global Cosmopolitan Mindset': «that contributes to the way they [Global Cosmopolitans] see the challenges and opportunities of a global life and develop an equally distinctive skill set that evolves as they learn from experience» (Brimm, *The Global Cosmopolitan Mindset*, cit.: 48).

trait familiar to her even before she moves to Fredrikstad. Born to parents of indigenous ethnicity, Veronica and her sister experience a childhood marked by a sense of otherness.[46] In Buenos Aires, their somatic features, combined with an unstable economic situation, are two factors that make their adaptation problematic, especially in the school environment: «Vi hadde ikke riktige sko eller riktige klær, dessuten var vi mørkere enn de andre. Vi så ut som indianere».[47] The private school in Buenos Aires, paid for by their father and mother in the hope of giving their daughters a better future, becomes instead a place symbolic of their marginalization. Their dark complexion deviates from the great majority of white students, preventing the two girls from belonging in the same way as their peers. Even during the summer spent in the tropical jungle in the home of Lola, their maternal grandmother, their relationship with children raised in indigenous villages only changes the perspective with which such otherness is perceived. Their clothing, especially Veronica's orthopedic shoes, their inaptitude to the spartan life of the jungle, and the way they speak are seen as an indelible trait of civilized culture, which appears to indigenous eyes as strange and comical: «Guttene lo av oss [...] De gjorde selvfølgelig narr av oss. – Ouerekó sapatú? spurte de og pekte på skoene våre».[48] In addition to prior knowledge of discrimination, Veronica's memories are also an opportunity to recall the positive attitude of her parents and grandmother, characters always ready to help others and support each other in the face of difficulties. In a context as rancorous for minorities of color as that of late 20th century Argentina, the memory of her family acquires a symbolic value of great importance, embodied in the courage of their sacrifices, the work ethic imparted to her and her sister, and the spirit of sharing: «Jeg skal bli sterk, tenkte jeg.

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[46] As Veronica recalls, her parents decided to raise their family in a challenging context – Buenos Aires during the 1990s. Both her father and mother, of Indian descent, belonged to an ethnic-linguistic minority that faced opposition from the political leadership. The Argentinean government adhered to an ethnocentric and pro-American ideology that had its roots in the ideals of ethnic purity promoted by the President Sarmiento, prime minister from 1869 to 1874, who had initiated an ethnic cleansing policy, *blanqueiamento* (whitening), in Argentina. For more on ethnic policies in Latin America see Tanya Katerí Hernández, *Racial Subordination in Latin America: The Role of the State, Customary Law, and the New Civil Rights Response*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2013.

[47] «We didn't have proper shoes or proper clothes, and we were darker than the others. We looked like Indians» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 52).

[48] «The kids laughed at us [...] Of course they made fun of us – Ouerekó sapatú? They asked, pointing at our shoes» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 96-101).

Triste ting kan gjøre deg sterk, sa jeg til meg selv. Som et ekko av min mor da vi tok farvel».[49]

Veronica's memories also intervene to explore the difficulties presented by the advanced language skills. The frustration due to the language barrier prevents her from experiencing the use of Norwegian in a fulfilling way. The limited number of words acquired leads the protagonist to focus solely on what she cannot produce linguistically, making her progresses a perpetual condition of waiting: «Å lære ett annet språk, er det å lære å leve på nytt? Det er ikke som om jeg lever nå. Jeg bare venter og venter».[50] Even this aspect, however, is portrayed as a productive moment. Again, Veronica transcends the space-time dimension to elaborate on her personal relationship with foreign languages. In her walks with Monika, an au pair from Poland and her classmate, the two manage to exchange brief but meaningful information through the use of the dictionary, although their limited knowledge of Norwegian allows only partial communication. By pointing to one or more words often filled with pathos and nostalgia, a genuine conversation equally takes place: «Så peker hun på 'hvorfor' og 'Norge'. – Hvorfor Norge, leser jeg høyt. […] Jeg vil fortelle henne noe annet, men har ikke ord. Ikke ennå. [...] Jeg vil fortelle Monika hvordan jeg kom til Norge».[51] Few lemmas manage to produce a dialogic relationship that deterritorializes the geographic context in which the two women find themselves. The exchange of information, while essential, opens a broader scenario that frames the experience of migration and diaspora in its nostalgic essence, as well as the need for sharing and empathy.[52] Again, nostalgia opens to the dimension of memory. The vetoes her parents had imposed on her and her sister regarding the use of certain foreign languages returned to her mind as a counterweight to better assess her situation. For her father, a Falkland Island war veteran, the use of English was absolutely

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[49] Even following the outbreak of the crisis in Buenos Aires, Veronica's mother remains a source of security for her family. Her reproach to Veronica, who dropped out of school can in fact be read as an attempt to instill in her daughter a sense of confidence in the future. See Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 43.

[50] «Learning another language, is it learning to live again? It's not like I'm living now. I just wait and wait» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 16).

[51] «Then she points to 'why' and 'Norway' – Why Norway, I read out loud. [...] I want to tell her something else, but I don't have the words. Not yet. [...] I want to tell Monika how I came to Norway» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 22-24).

[52] The protagonist not only comforts herself by thinking back to her own past but also deeply empathizes with the situation of her friend Monika, whose words and feelings are understood: «Monika ser langt bort, som om hun prøver å finne de viktige ordene. Ord som skal pekes på i ordboken. Jeg forstår at livet hjemme i Polen er vanskelig. Jeg forstår det» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 31: «Monika looks far away, as if trying to find the important words. Words to be pointed to in the dictionary. I understand that life at home in Poland is difficult. I understand»).

forbidden in the households: «– How are you? sa jeg til pappa. – Hva? svarte pappa med strengt blikk. – How are you? gjentok jeg. – Vi snakker ikke fiendens språk, sa pappa. – Ikke her hjemme. […] når jeg snakket engelsk, tenkte han på militæret, på England, på 2. juni 1982, på Falklandskrigen».[53] Similarly, the reluctance on the part of both parents to teach their daughters *Guaranì*, a South American minority language handed down from indigenous groups predominantly settled between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, is motivated by fear of the consequences this might have caused for their daughters, as a further tangible sign of their discrimination:

> Både mamma och pappa er halvt indian og halvt spansk. Mamma er fra Corrientes i Nord-Argentina. Hun prater guaraní og spansk […] Pappa er tobaindianer, ikke guaraní som mamma. Han forstår guaraní, men han kan ikke snakke språket. Mamma snakket guaraní til pappa, men bare når Sisi og jeg ikke skulle forstå. Da snakket de veldig lavt, som om ordene skulle skjules i vinden. Vi fikk ikke lære guaraní. Det ville være enda en grunn til å diskriminere oss.[54]

Veronica finds a way to draw some useful teaching from her past. Spanish, initially disowned by the protagonist herself, echoes in her mind in the songs of her childhood that she sings, for example, to calm and lull the children.[55] Her slow learning of Norwegian, on the contrary, emerges as a process of personal empowerment and cultural growth, rather than as obsessive fear for linguistic inaccuracy, reversing this time the fearful impositions of her parents.

Her daily commitment, underlined by her teacher, and the desire to complete a task prove to be far more important qualities than the sense of frustration and the inability to express herself properly: «Jeg liker å lære nye ting. Jeg liker norskkurset mitt. Jeg gjør det. Jeg leser til eksamen i norsk. Jeg ønsker å gjøre en bra eksamen».[56] The memories

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[53] «– How are you? I said to Dad, – What? Dad replied with a stern look, – How are you? I repeated, – We don't speak the enemy's language, Dad said. – Not here at home. [...] when I spoke English, he thought of the military, of England, of June 2, 1982, of the Falklands War» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 20-21).

[54] «Both mom and dad are half Indian and half Spanish. Mom is from Corrientes in northern Argentina. She speaks Guaraní and Spanish [...] Dad is Toba Indian, not Guaraní like Mom. He understands Guaraní, but he can't speak the language. My mom spoke Guaraní to my dad, but only when Sisi and I couldn't understand. Then they would speak very low, as if the words would be hidden in the wind. We weren't allowed to learn Guaraní. That would be another reason to discriminate against us» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 66-67).

[55] In a specific episode, Veronica contradicts the mother's instructions, as she brusquely instructs Veronica to keep the children awake. Nonetheless, Veronica, by softly singing a lullaby in Spanish, allows the children to sleep a bit longer, a short 'siesta'.

[56] «I like to learn new things. I like my Norwegian course. I am doing it. I am studying for the exam in Norwegian. I want to do a good exam» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 149).

reveal, on the one hand, the possibility of replicating the same courage as her parents in the face of the contradictions of a discriminatory system, and on the other one, the opportunity to overcome their fear of opening a window on a new world, without betraying the past. In the imaginary representation of worlds that cut across the contiguity of space and time, Veronica assimilates two important gifts: patience and resilience. Thus, the traces of migration do not remain merely stains that tarnish the memory of the past but are grafted into the present with a new purpose. Whether they are material objects, such as family photos, a book, dulce de leche, or cultural traces imprinted in memory, memories of the past become mirrors through which the present is reinterpreted.

Toward the end of the novel, these two features prove crucial in overcoming the disappointments of an oppressive condition. Determined to return to Argentina for good after having endured yet another humiliation from the children's mother, the protagonist manages to calm her anger by focusing solely on the positive aspects of her experience. Perceiving a state of well-being in the Scandinavian country means finding a balance between the two worlds: «Jeg prøver å finne ting som kan holde meg oppe. Akkurat som dulce de leche i Argentina. Jeg prøver å finne mitt norske melkesyltetøy».[57] Veronica's attitude resonates well with what Linda Brimm identifies as the first structural competence of a global mindset. Brimm defines this competence as a time of growth and self-empowerment in the face of challenges, criticism, and the success of others. This character trait applies particularly well to those who lead a life similar to Veronica. Perseverance, patience, which emerge from a direct confrontation with her own past, enable her to turn difficulties into a moment of meditative reflection from which to benefit: «Given the additional complexity of living globally and having to make life choices that sometimes require difficult trade-offs, the belief that a global life presents an opportunity to learn and to grow becomes fundamental to their success».[58]

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[57] «I try to find things to keep me going. Just like dulce de leche in Argentina. I'm trying to find my Norwegian milk jam» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 149). The search for a balance in between the two lives that are so distant and so connected at the same time is metaphorically described by the protagonist through the (in)translatability of a word with strong and exclusive cultural connotations, such as 'dulce de leche'. Oxfeldt also returns to this point, stating that: «Elaborating on the dulce de leche metaphor, she decides she has to find a Norwegian equivalent» (See Oxfeldt, *Dulce de Leche*, cit.: 125).
[58] Brimm, *The Global Cosmopolitan Mindset*, cit.: 18.

### 3.2.3 Cosmopolitan patriotism

Veronica's experience is not only configured as a means of narrating the daily challenge against injustice and discrimination, but also allows for a further deconstruction of the idea of migration as a discriminator in the economies of belonging and non-belonging in the Norwegian context. The way society reacts to the presence of migration does not follow a unique and coherent process, but is itself realized in diversity, revealing, as Anja Tröger states: «a complex and intricate entanglement of […] self-attributions and ascriptions by others».[59]

Dordi, Veronica's Norwegian teacher, remains for large stretches a neutral component, almost a voice-over, whose interventions mostly help contextualize the scene within the classroom setting. At an initial glance, one might even call her teaching methods, by the way they are described, slightly obsolete. Her presence resonates in the phrases she asks his students to repeat assiduously to record their pronunciation. While the public organizations offering language courses specifically for foreign newcomers stand as a cornerstone of Norwegian (and Scandinavian) welfare state's integrative policies, the author critically examines their efficacy, at least in the first half of the novel. When the teacher begins to show a more empathetic and inclusive version of herself, Dordi becomes more than just a neutral interface to learn the language. This side especially emerges during the final interview between her and Veronica, in which the two of them draw conclusions about the schooling they have just completed. After warmly complimenting her student's progress, Dordi shows genuine interest in her situation, which allows the protagonist to confide her hopes: «Og jeg tror på alt hun sier. Dordi prater til meg. Måten hun prater på, gjør at alt virker lettere, og så tenker jeg at jeg kan klare dette».[60] Faced with impatience towards the family with whom she resides, Dordi expresses her desire to help her student find a new family by offering to place an ad in the newspaper.

Another moment of empathy for the protagonist can also be detected in another episode. Due to a small accident that occurred in the park, for which Veronica is not

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[59] See Anja Tröger, *Postmigrant remembering in mnemonic affective spaces. Senthuran Varatharajah's Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen and Pooneh Rohi's Araben*, in Gaonkar – Øst Hansen – Post – Schramm (eds.), *Postmigration. Art, Culture, and Politics in Contemporary Europe*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2021, pp. 145-159: 148.
[60] «And I believe everything she says. Dordi talks to me. The way she talks makes everything seem easier, and then I think I can do this» (Salinas, *OG*, cit.: 151).

responsible – one of the two children falls down and gets hurt – she agrees to rush with the mother to the hospital to make sure that the baby is fine. After the visit, the doctor meets with the two women to reassure them about the child's condition. Sensing the mother's resentment toward her employee, the doctor tries to ease up the situation by deviating the attention of the mother from Veronica: «– Små barn tåler ganske mye, sier legen. – De er nesten lagd for å slå seg. Sånt skjer, sier han og ser på meg og på moren. Han vet at jeg er au pair. Han merker sikkert spenningen mellom oss».[61] The way the doctor expresses himself denotes a certain familiarity with similar situations. Seeing Veronica both frightened and concerned about the child's condition, he chooses to take her side, avoiding fomenting the mother's resentment unnecessarily.

Finally, it is likewise interesting to note how even the protagonist herself does not maintain an unambiguous stance toward her status of 'immigrant' throughout the novel. Veronica's formation emerges within a complex network of inter-subjective interactions that daily renegotiate her role depending on the context in which she finds herself. While aware of her marginality, the protagonist herself presents ambivalent conduct, deviating several times from the subdued and obedient image with which she is accustomed to seeing herself: for example, the previously mentioned affinity that the protagonist establishes with Monika, a person with whom she can share the same sense of longing. In contrast to the classroom environment, where students actually share a condition of loss and nostalgia that should place them on the same level, Veronica does not necessarily show the same type of solidarity with all her classmates. Although she shares similar life experiences with them, this commonality does not prevent her from externalizing her irritation toward other 'migrants'. Even in situations where she is directly asked to show empathy, Veronica distances herself, so to speak, from the category to which she is normally associated: «Ahmad kommer alltid seint. Læreren sier han må lære å følge klokken [...] – Vi klarer ikke å komme til tiden, sier Ahmad og setter seg. Vi? Tenker jeg. Hva mener han med vi? Jeg merker jeg blir irritert [...] Jeg klarer ikke å føle empati».[62] The group *vi* (we) within which Ahmad would like to include the protagonist can be

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[61] «Little kids can take quite a lot, says the doctor, – They're almost built to fall. These things happen, he says, looking at me and at his mother. He knows I'm an au pair. He probably senses the tension between us» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 137).
[62] «Ahmad is always late. The teacher says he has to learn to tell the time [...] – We can't be on time, says Ahmad and sits down. We? I think. What does he mean by we? I find myself getting annoyed [...] I can't empathize» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 83).

interpreted as a kind of common front against the figure of the teacher, who is judged to be excessively authoritarian. The statement is rebutted by Veronica in an annoyed manner. She immediately takes distance from her classmate's comment and from the category within which she feels dragged. The aforementioned episodes define different perspectives on the topic of migration. Veronica shows an ambivalent attitude toward those who experience the same condition as herself, just as the doctor and her teacher contradict the more difficult situations she is forced to deal with. In Brimm's studies, her behavior could be linked back to the second competence that forms a global mindset. The author defines this second competence as:

> the ability to see and understand the world from multiple perspectives […] their ability to understand and manage cultural diversity […] knowing who to trust in their networks and demonstrating cognitive flexibility when they attempt to reconcile local and cosmopolitan perspectives and the complex challenges of an ever-changing environment.[63]

In her work, then, Salinas delineates different perspectives on diversity, that give rise to entirely different positions. In fact, the migrant condition continually reshuffles Veronica's loyalties, provoking in her conflicting feelings not only toward the people with whom she interacts but also toward the motherland, that Argentina with which she associates both sorrow and joy, and toward the country of arrival, that Norway which repeatedly attempts to crush her spirit but in which she continues to hold out hope. Indeed, it is not possible to identify a specific group, context, nation or individual to which Veronica shows blind loyalty. Thus, the author proposes an alternative reading to a more obvious binary reading between social groups related or unrelated to migration, in some ways resolving that «representational deficit in respect of refugees and migrants», in which Roger Bromley identifies one of the great aporias of the globalizing landscape of Western countries.[64]

The protagonist's final monologue summarizes a moment of full awareness, which is built around that same word, the copulative conjunction 'and' stressing the possibility of coexistence – and not the disjunctive conjunction 'or' indicating exclusion. The protagonist's final monologue summarizes a moment of full awareness, which is built

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[63] Brimm, *The Global Cosmopolitan Mindset*, cit.: 19-20.
[64] Roger Bromley, *Narratives of Forced Mobility and Displacement in Contemporary Literature and Culture*, Palgrave MacMillan, London 2021: 10.

around that same word, the copulative conjunction 'and' stressing the possibility of coexistence – and not the disjunctive conjunction 'or' indicating exclusion. «Jeg elsker å tygge på OG. […] Jeg er fra provinsen og fra byen. Jeg er fattig og rik. Jeg er herfra og derfra. Jeg liker havet og fjellet! [...] Hele min historie er reisen til et ord: OG».[65] The fluid nature of her renewed self allows Veronica to cut through categories defined by a normative narrative, opposing them with a creative and curious look at the new context: «Jeg ser at det snør. Jeg har ingen minner med snø. Det gjør ikke noe. Jeg kan lage minner idag».[66] The protagonist's past, immersed in the colors of the jungle and the touch of sand, stands seemingly in contrast to her present, submerged by an unknown phenomenon to her, the snow. However, this comparison does not emphasize the lack of a 'memory of snow', and thus of an element culturally linked to the Scandinavian country, but rather the possibility of creating a new memory from it. Making memories becomes making an identity.

It is not, therefore, a matter of which of the two Veronicas, the Argentine or the Norwegian, has or does not have the right to establish a sense of belonging. Instead, it is a matter of which memories, past, present or future, will define her identity and how these will guide her actions. No longer fragmented between different cultures, Salinas rather represents «many fragments of cultures coexisting in the life of one single person».[67] Indeed, the enthusiastic response to her announcement grants the protagonist the opportunity to orient her gaze toward the future. The spatiotemporal folding, then, does not only take the form of an overlap between past and present but further crushes temporal synchrony by bending her new, familiar images of Norway into the future. In the last pages, as it had been at the time of her arrival, Veronica imagines a different world still to be discovered. This moment of renewed awareness can be associated with the last skill Brimm mentions, that is characterized «by attitudes and behaviors that include curiosity, the ability to suspend judgment, tolerance of ambiguity, childlike wonder, and a persisting belief in one's ability to find creative solutions».[68] The good things from her journey in

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[65] «I love to chew on OG. [...] I am from the province and from the city. I am poor and rich. I am from here and from there. I like the sea and the mountains! [...] My whole story is the journey of a word: AND» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 170-171).
[66] «I see that it is snowing. I have no memories of snow. It doesn't matter. I can make memories today» (Salinas, *Og*, cit.: 155).
[67] See Jeremy Waldron, *What is Cosmopolitan?*, in «Journal of Political Philosophy», 8 (2000), 2, pp. 227-244: 231.
[68] Brimm, *The Global Cosmopolitan Mindset*, cit.: 23-24.

Norway, the new friendships, the pleasure of discovering the language and culture, and the affection felt for the children, are assimilated by Veronica as new memories and concretized into new skills. The acquisition of cosmopolitan skills is thus not related to her lack of solid identity roots but appears as a process of identity formation in the post-migrant space. While totally aware of the conflicting and contradictory nature, but also capable of making new connections, Veronica builds her cosmopolitanism in an extremely multifaceted relational network. In the post-migrant context described by Salinas, then, cosmopolitanism is not configured as a behavioral strategy opposed to the isolationist tendency of the nation-state, but rather takes shape within it, negotiating with its terms, that include racism and marginalization as well as empathy and comprehension.[69] Living in such a space, the protagonist accepts the compromise, the challenge that cosmopolitanism throws at her, allowing her to disprove «the idea of belonging to or devotion to or immersion in a particular culture».[70]

Closure can be seen as the productive moment of identity. Indeed, in her solemn and passionate monologue, the protagonist seems to identify with a new form of patriotism that is loyal to a cosmopolitan ideal of self-determination, synthesizing the local with the global. The concept is expressed simply and concisely. From a graphic point of view, the use of capitalization and the exclamation mark emphasizes her firm conviction. Even though her whole life seems to revolve around the word 'or', an *aut aut* that keeps her lingering in a limbo of uncertainty, Veronica manages to transform such a culture of opposites into a plural identity.

In this idea of patriotism, Salinas subverts the dichotomy between local and global by showing the reader «the possibility of cosmopolitanism embracing a concept that is often viewed as conflicting with it».[71] The narrator loudly exclaims the need to define its existence by embracing the meaning of *og*, encompassing the past, the present, the future, the role of migrant, au pair, Norway, Argentina. Veronica chooses the totality of a guise that allows her to transcend the mere sum of the parts by becoming something more. In conclusion, by embracing the dynamic action, as described by Stuart Hall, that branches off into the dimensions of being and becoming, of local and global, Veronica's

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[69] «We do not believe that cosmopolitanism is a replacement for the nation state; it is, rather, a development of some of the principles of the nation state that must live alongside it» (Kendall – Woodward – Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism*, cit.: 29).
[70] See Waldron, *What is Cosmopolitan?*, cit.: 227.
[71] See Spisak, *The Evolution of a Cosmopolitan Identity*, cit.: 90.

cosmopolitan gaze undoubtedly represents a useful critical exercise in a society that is still trying to come to terms with a culture of diversity.

Veronica Salinas effectively frames the post-migrant condition from the perspective of a person who, out of necessity, is forced to move from the place of origin. However, not only does the novel describe a social condition characterized by those conflicts and alliances typically associated with the issue of migration, but it also succeeds in proposing a point of view that fixes such condition as an opportunity for individual, and possibly collective, growth.

### 3.3 Aasne Linnestå: *Morsmål*

From a post-migrant perspective, Salinas provides a non-binary understanding through which individuals can establish relationships with different places by proposing an alternative, and cosmopolitan, frame for the concept of patriotism. The sense of belonging in which the protagonist recognizes herself is characterized by conflicts and contrasts, but also by new productive horizons.[72] By folding distant places back on themselves in the same textual space, the author mixes past and present, Argentina and Norway. On the one hand, this act reverberates aesthetically in the creation of a space that exists beyond nation and national identity. On the other hand, the work becomes a mirror for observing, and potentially deconstructing, the socio-political impact of migration in the Norwegian context.

An interesting comparison, therefore, can be proposed in relation to the work created by Aasne Linnestå. Being an author born and raised in Norway, Linnestå differs from the rest of the writers presented in this thesis in that she does not incorporate the discriminatory meaning with which nation-state terminology negatively remarks the very term 'migrant' or 'second-generation writer'. However, as already specified, the purpose of this thesis is not to place a literary subcategory that brings together authors who share non-Scandinavian ethnic-cultural origins under a magnifying glass. Therefore, the choice to place this work alongside a group of authors characterized by transnational cultural memory is particularly important. Exploring the effects that emerge from contact with a foreigner through the perspective of a 'native' person broadens our perspective on Scandinavian post-migrant societies since it still largely depends on the work produced

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[72] See Tröger, *Postmigrant remembering in mnemonic affective spaces*, cit.: 157.

by writers with a migratory family background. As explained in the first chapter, Søren Frank was one of the first scholars to elaborate on the possible benefits of a more encompassing definition for speaking about literature and migration in the Scandinavian context. His definition of 'migration literature' encompasses literary production that, regardless of the biographical background of the author, moves from and explores the theme of migration. While pointing out that native Scandinavian writers dealing with this topic are still exceptions – the scholar discusses only one case in his study – Frank invites a closer look to the possible developments of a literature of migration in its new guise. Specifically, Frank takes into account the work of Norwegian author Jan Kjærstad, arguing that:

> on the one hand he exemplifies the phenomenon (and fascination with) migration permeating the contemporary literary system as a whole – hence he can and should be read as an author writing transnational literature from *within* the nation; on the other hand Kjærstad is a unique phenomenon in Scandinavia.[73]

Likewise, Rebecca Walkowitz stresses the same concept when she argues that «nonimmigrant writers who are engaged intellectually with the movement of people and objects across geographies and cultures, and who articulate in their work a 'cosmopolitan, transnational, and hybrid vision of social life,' could be producers of immigrant fiction».[74]

Therefore, Linnestå can fill the shoes of an 'agent of multiplicity' as much as the rest of the authors chosen for this thesis. The author elaborates on the effects of migration from her own perspective, offering equally useful insights into the contours of a dynamic, cosmopolitan, post-migrant reality. The inspiration for *Morsmål*, as stated by the author herself, comes from her charity work at the Norwegian Red Cross, which allowed her to encounter many refugees from all over the world.[75] Her poetry collection, divided into ten sections, is defined by the information sheets with a description that denotes its hybrid nature, making it difficult to tie its characteristics to a specific genre: «'Morsmål' er en

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[73] See Frank, *Migration and Literature*, cit.: 9.
[74] See Walkowitz, *The Location of Literature*, cit.: 534.
[75] Linnestå's work work is not the only example of a native writer dealing with the topic of migration in the Scandinavian literary landscape. Apart from Jan Kjærstad, mentioned by Frank, another example is Norwegian writer Tove Nilsen's novel, *Øyets sult* (Hunger of the Eye). In her book, Nilsen imagines to be a first-person narrator and protagonist as the Indian immigrant Shabaz in Norway. See Tove Nilsen, *Øyets sult*, Forlaget Oktober, Oslo 1993. However, the autobiographical features that Linnestå imprints on her poetry collection perhaps presupposes even greater emotional and intellectual involvement.

diktbok som også kan leses som en roman».[76] The author uses free verse, almost entirely free of punctuation and precise order. A continuous stream of consciousness ties the poems together. The interweaving of the storyline, which while remaining essential maintains a certain degree of complexity, and the prosaic style that tells such a story instead show the text in its more novelistic nature. The lyrical subject guides the reader as a first-person narrator into the discovery of a profound relationship that stems from the urge to see, to know, and to share the story of the 'Other', which in this case is embodied in a refugee «som kommer utenfra, bortenfor Europas grenser».[77] The narrator, in this case, shows how the encounter with the refugee does not necessarily give rise to a contrast between two irreconcilable entities, destined to travel in parallel on two opposite tracks, but also makes it possible to share in stories that at first glance seem completely unrelated. The author establishes an intimate and profound dialogue with the refugee, who is configured both as a material subject, in the body, and as a cultural point of reference, in the transmission of memory, pain and trauma.

Differently from Salinas, Linnestå attempts to capture the story of another person, who recently arrived in the Scandinavian country, while the former reports her own experience as a migrant in Norway. In both cases, however, acting in an unstable and unknown situation allows both to acquire the competencies and the skills to find a new balance in diversity. The tension between the dimensions of local and global, known and unknown, occurs for Salinas at the level of memories, whereas for Linnestå such tension is directly embodied in the physical encounter between two individuals. The author shows the path along which this encounter evolves by revealing the meaning it takes on in the lives of the two women. The purpose of the work, in fact, is to reveal the reciprocal outcome of such encounter: «Det blir et møte som utfordrer begge, språklig, kulturelt, emosjonelt».[78] *Morsmål* is thus first and foremost a journey of growth, that takes into

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[76] «'Morsmål' is a poetry collection that can be read as a novel». See Aasne Linnestå – official website, https://aasnelinnestaa.com/om/ [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[77] «coming from outside, beyond Europe's borders». See the work's editorial sheet in *Aschehoug* publishing house's official website, https://aschehoug.no/morsmal-1.

[78] «It is a meeting that challenges both, linguistically, culturally, emotionally». This phrase often recurs in the editorial sheets that describe the work. See the official website of *Aschehoug* publishing house, https://aschehoug.no/morsmal-1. In Elisabeth Oxfeldt's in-depth analysis of the work, the scholar voices these points precisely, emphasizing the linguistic consequences, the feminist and anti-patriarchal drift and the role of trauma that unite and separate the two characters at the same time. See Elisabeth Oxfeldt, *Global Sistersolidaritet*, in *The History of Nordic Women's Literature*, 13 October 2016, https://nordicwomensliterature.net/se/2016/10/13/global-systersolidaritet/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

account the refugee's adaptation process in the new country, but also guides the author's consciousness towards new horizons, from where to perceive different ways of looking at her own language, land, and identity.

### 3.3.1 The Precarious Ecologies of 'Post-migration'

As Nelson Goodman states: «Worlds are made by making such versions with words, numerals, pictures, sounds, or other symbols of any kind in any medium».[79] The construction of worlds using different symbols reconfigures the perspective from which to observe the making of such worlds. Expanding on Todorov's discourse regarding fictional literature's capacity to mirror human experiences and the world's history, the act of creatively envisioning new realities through artistic expression could also be visualized as a form of cosmopolitanism. According to Marsha Meskimmon, art offers the possibility of contemplating the creation of new worlds through a sensitive encounter between elements, subjects, or objects that at first glance seem to belong to different worlds, thus deviating from the ordinary flow that regulates human life. Contemplating the rupture of such 'ordinariness', in the scholar's opinion, means to witness an authentic manifestation of cosmopolitanism, which in the language of the scholar, is configured as a «precarious ecology, a state of dynamic exchange between selves and others, and a corporeal interplay between subjects, objects and ideas in the world». Cosmopolitanism, as the scholar continues, does not appear as «a finished product, but rather a delicate balance reached during the mutual making of subjects and worlds, when that making welcomes difference and encourages ethical encounters with others».[80]

On the other hand, those very dynamics that allow any form of community to build its foundations pass primarily «in and through affective, inter-subjective processes».[81] As an inter-relational system between living beings and the environments they inhabit, ecologies shape the image of coexistence between different elements that despite their differences tend towards a common balance. Despite its precarious essence, a cosmopolitan horizon presents the same unifying qualities, capable of shaping union, belonging, and community. The function of art, the scholar continues, is fundamental in

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[79] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis 1978: 94.
[80] Marsha Meskimmon, *The Precarious Ecologies of Cosmopolitanism*, in «Open Arts Journal», 1 (2013), 1, pp. 15-25: 15.
[81] Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, cit.: 30.

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conveying this kind of transition. As Meskimmon continues: «Pausing, lingering and taking pleasure in our encounter with the unfamiliar we participate in the wondrous, precarious ecologies offered by worldmaking in art».[82] The loss of equilibrium and certainty caused by the encounter with a stranger places Linnestå in a state of doubt, of precariousness, but also opens up the possibility for a potential confrontation with the extra-ordinary. Such a condition of instability, in Linnestå's work, is moreover reported in its immediacy. The author tries to minimise the temporal discrepancy between the moment of writing and that of perception. By using the present tense and the first person singular, she embodies the dual role of narrator and spectator of her work. The wondrous contemplation of precariousness, therefore, takes place at the very moment in which it is fixed on the page, giving the illusion of a co-participation in which both the narrator and the narrated characters take part.

The mobile and dynamic condition that characterises the precariousness of a post-migrant ecology is materialised in this work as a «threshold state».[83] The first section, which, as a matter of fact, is named «Terskel», which translates into 'Threshold', introduces the encounter between the two women, separated by the presence of the front door.[84] The mistrust they both feel towards each other transforms the door into a shelter behind which to hide. Exceeding the threshold, in these early phases, seems to represent a violent and invasive point of passage. From the author's side, the only safe anchor that keeps her confidence intact lies, in fact, in the intercession of the state:

Staten

sa

ja

så

hva

sier

jeg?[85]

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[82] Meskimmon, *The Precarious Ecologies of Cosmopolitanism*, cit.: 17-18.
[83] Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, cit.: 35.
[84] Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 9.
[85] «The state/ said/ yes/ so/ what/ do/ I/ say?» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 19). As Oxfeldt states, the author thus shows migration in its double dimension, public and private. In addition to being a public phenomenon, with rules set by a state body, migration can also take on a concrete role in people's private lives. See Oxfeldt, *Global Sistersolidaritet*, cit.

The words, written in a vertical sequence one below the other, visually form a column that recalls the shape of a pre-established hierarchy: at the top there is the state apparatus, at the bottom, the author, whereas the figure of the refugee is excluded from such hierarchical relation. This structure visually influences the reading of the verse, reflecting, as Sten Moslund says: «a highly migratized [sic] approach […] preoccupied with feelings about distant homelands and mytho-poetic [sic] images of rootedness [sic], uprooting, and re-rooting (national, ethnic, and racial)».[86] The approach Moslund speaks of is reflected in a post-Enlightenment subjectivity, as Meskimmon puts it, which frames the encounter with the other a priori as «a threshold crossed by violence».[87]

Watching the refugee settle into her home, get acquainted with the narrator's belongings, and cook her food foments a paranoid attitude in the poet, who begins to perceive her presence as a potential threat to her daily ordinariness:

hun kan legge ned arbeidet mitt, skru av

den fabelaktige musikken, rote alt til, sette på nye

alarmer, ta meg vekk fra alt jeg er så inderlig hjemme i[88]

Such an invasive approach also seems to manifest itself in the opposite direction, in the way the poet thinks she can cross the linguistic threshold. Searching for a language she can use to tell the story of her host, Linnestå's initial approach reveals a bipolar attitude towards the refugee, mainly due to the impossibility of communicating on the same level. Language barriers and lack of trust make the author insecure, forcing her to adopt a cautious approach. The narrator is naively convinced that she can capture the refugee's story by establishing herself the terms of the language they can use:

språket jeg tenker blir vårt

gjør meg til den nye biografen […]

kanskje legger jeg ordene mine i hennes munn

jeg legger ordene mine

[86] See Sten Moslund, *Postmigrant Revisions of Hybridity, Belonging, and Race in Gautam Malkani's Londonstani*, in «Ariel: A Review of International English Literature», 50 (2019), 2/3, pp. 105-136: 116.
[87] Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, cit.: 35.
[88] «she can shut down my work, turn off / the fabulous music the fabulous music, / mess everything up, set new / alarms, take me away from everything I'm so deeply at home in» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 30).

i munnen din[89]

The poet's privileged social position makes her think she can put her own language into the mouth of the refugee. As Tanja Thomas, Merle-Marie Kruse, and Miriam Stehling argue, participating in the construction of an alternative narrative in the post-migrant context can be a tricky exercise, since the very act of participation «can reproduce power structures even while it promises to destabilize them».[90]

As Elisabeth Oxfeldt states in her analysis of Linnestå's work, the privileged position guaranteed by its status nevertheless generates in the author «postcolonial misgivings about representing the Other».[91] Taking advantage of her position to build a dialogue with the refugee provokes an opposite reaction in the narrator, forcing her to appear morally supportive, free of prejudice, and forcibly well-disposed towards diversity. Her political correctness emerges, therefore, along with her prejudice. By saying that she does not want her interlocutor to feel like a victim, the poet sounds self-righteous and contrived. The statement is linked on the one hand to the media's stereotypical and victimising image of the refugees, reduced to a kind of sub-human, and on the other to the author's need to emphasise her distancing from certain ways of reasoning. This schizophrenic behavior, on the borderline between caution and respect, in a way cancels out all the emotional, traumatic, and cultural bearing of the migratory experience, which is put to the fore or in the background depending on what the circumstances require. The refugee's cold, almost annoyed response shows her impatience with labels that try to define her in one way or another. The straight answer seems to be an attempt to regain the right to define herself:

hva er galt med offeret?[92]

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[89] «the language I think will be ours / makes me the new cinema [...] maybe I put my words in her mouth / I put my words in your mouth» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 20-22).
[90] See Tanja Thomas – Merle-Marie Kruse – Miriam Stehling, *Media, Participation and Collaboration in Post-migrant Societies*, in Tanja Thomas – Merle-Marie Kruse – Miriam Stehling (eds.), *Media and Participation in Post-Migrant Societies*, Rowman & Littlefield International, London 2019, pp. 3-17: 8.
[91] Elisabeth Oxfeldt, *'Gebrokken' Refugees, Trauma, and Poetry in Aasne Linnestå's* Morsmål, in «Samlaren Tidskrift för forskning om svensk och annan nordisk litteratur», 138 (2017), pp. 5-22: 15.
[92] «what is wrong with being the victim?» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 28).

The narrator prefers to remain safe, confined within her «space free of self-critique and conflict».[93] Although they have formally come into contact, therefore, the encounter is mainly a source of suspicion and mistrust. However, the refugee is expected to tell her story. The 'Other' is thus brought into the author's world to bring something new, in a way underlining the distance between the two women. But in order to be able to tell it, Linnestå has to demigrantize the perspective that she observes the ecology of this encounter from. As Roger Bromley states, the way a post-migrant perspective challenges canonical notions of belonging and identity is by posing a simple question: how and when does an individual cease to be perceived as a 'migrant' or defined by his or her ethnic origins? Linnestå's work seeks an answer to the question posed by the scholar by elaborating on the very concept of threshold, by perceiving it as «a transformative state, a process of liminal engagement or a segue, […] a locus of possibility rather than a dead marker between two irrevocably opposed forms».[94]

### 3.3.2 Beyond the 'Morsmål'

Such possibility is offered at the level of inter-communication. Language, as already mentioned, prevents the women from having a proper exchange of information. Once again, as in the case of Veronica, the need to circumvent language barriers brings the author to reflect on the very role of the mother tongue. In Salinas' work, the strategy used by the protagonist to improve her interactions with Monika relied on a physical object such as a dictionary, a bridge between two different languages. Linnestå's poems depict the absence of language as a means to establish a more profound connection. Even though

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[93] Ayata Bilgin describes with this definition the semantic shift of the German concept of 'Heimat', a German word that is generally translated in English as 'Homeland'. While at the beginning of the 20th century, the term still designated the home and the domestic household and therefore was untied from nationalistic implications, within a century it took on a more nationalistic nuance, acquiring the meaning of homeland and nation. See Ayata Bilgin, *De-heimatize Belonging Konferenz 25.10.*, 25 October 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtQkdQT4IgE&t=2219s, [oral source, Last accessed 23 October 2023].
Balibar also emphasizes the role played by the state as an intermediary entity to which the responsibility of organizing the structures of everyday social interactions among different individuals is assigned. Due to the normative approach based on nation-state ideologies, this task often leads, as the scholar continues, to structural racism: «In essence, modern racism is never simply a 'relationship to the Other' based upon a perversion of cultural or sociological difference; it is a relationship to the Other mediated by the intervention of the state. Better still—and it is here that a fundamentally unconscious dimension needs to be conceptualized—it is a conflictual relationship to the state which is 'lived' distortedly and 'projected' as a relationship to the Other» (See Étienne Balibar, *Es Gibt Keinen Staat in Europa: Racism and Politics in Europe Today*, in «New Left Review», 186 (1991), pp. 5-19: 15).
[94] Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, cit.: 35.

the refugee slowly begins to assimilate a few words and some basic expressions in Norwegian, the author finds it difficult to establish a proper dialogue.

The second section opens with some fragments of memory that the refugee reveals to her interlocutor. Behind the simple sentences that the refugee tries to produce, however, the author manages to glimpse some blurred images from her past, which only reveal scatterings of the truth. The refugee's participation in the composition of her own story takes on enigmatic traits that are difficult to interpret. Linnestå participates to this moment of introspection, in an attempt to make up for the lack of adequate linguistic tools. The sensitive encounter with the refugee's testimony takes the form of confused, fragmentary images. Small bits of history emerge in the form of a list of words, which are metaphorically represented by the author as phallic forms:

og jeg drar ut hender
og pikker
hakker[95]

Participating in the recomposition of these memories, however, is not an exercise without consequences for either of them. The refugee's attitude, shy, traumatized, and closed, recalls a history of repeated sexual violence and brutality in her homeland:

i det nye tungemålet
mener jeg å høre
om han som styrer i ribbeina
hver eneste natt
[...] og når han sager ned et av de aller siste beina
stapper han det rakt inn i kroppen igjen[96]

By choosing to tell the story of the refugee, the author chooses indirectly to take on the burden of her confession. The sharing of pain provokes consequences, leading the narrator to live out the refugee's experience on her own body. The imaginative power of

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[95] «and I pull out hands/ and cocks/ hammers» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 40).
[96] «in the new language / I mean to hear / about him who steers in the ribs / every single night […] and when he saws down one of the very last bones / he stuffs it straight back into the body» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 38).

such connection reverberates in the dreams of the author. Unlike Salinas, who finds in memories a bridge to gain control over the present, Linnestå explores the dimension of a dream as a connection point to share emotional and traumatic experiences, breaking the ordinariness of her everyday life:

> drøm kommer
> forhud, staker, kjøttsverd,
> det som skal inn[97]

At the same time, visualizing the horrors and violence allows her to construct her own relationship with the refugee in a different way. It is symptomatic that this happens precisely at the exact moment the intercession and the support of the state seem to fail. The lyrical subject, left alone with her visitor, feels compelled to take on her own shoulders the responsibility of communicating with the young lady:

> det er meg hun spør
> når staten slutter
> å svare[98]

The three verses overturn once more the previously established order, where the state was placed at the top of the hierarchical ladder. The lyrical I and the refugee suddenly share the same position, while the state seems to lose its role of prominence. Once again the welfare state, responsible for the protection and the social integration of people like the refugee, fails in its duties. In such a climate of uncertainty, the traumatic memory of the violence returns more forcefully to the refugee's mind. Her memories recall a fertile and peaceful homeland, where herds of calves, symbols of prosperity, used to live in harmony with humans. The arrival of a second herd, a herd of men eager for conquest, destroys the land making it infertile and uninhabitable:

> det tok litt tid før mennene kom
> men da de kom

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[97] «dream comes / foreskin, stakes, meat sword, / what's going in» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 42).
[98] «it's me she asks / when the state stops / to answer» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 45).

tok de sin tid

hun hvisker at kalvene forsvant i tørken som satte inn

at det ble hardt overalt[99]


The disappearance of the calves, a symbol of life and prosperity, metaphorizes the image of a land violently defaced by men. The arrival of the men is an omen of malicious intent. Crossing the threshold of the refugee's hometown without permission and with the aim of conquering brings the very concept of threshold back into its traumatic and violent dimension. Reliving the emotional and physical trauma forces the refugee into a state of muteness from which she does not seem to recover. However, such a state of apparent incommunicability turns right into the 'locus of possibility' described by Meskimmon.[100] It is not through a codified linguistic usage, a correct form of Norwegian, that the two manage to initiate emotional and empathic communication, but through its exact opposite. As Elisabeth Oxfeldt states, the women manage to bring about a form of mutual understanding, which is realised «through the unspoken and through silence».[101] Thus, the author opens the possibility of an alternative, transcendental level of communication, one that reveals something that interrupts the continuity with her ordinary relationship to language. Rather than visualising the inability to speak as a threshold to be crossed in order to hear her voice, the author experiences such a threshold as the very space where communication occurs. If, at first, this non-language appears empty and without access points, it suddenly takes on a different form. Silence constitutes a much more sincere point of contact, the necessary precondition for the meaning to come to the fore. What before used to be «det ensidige blir en åpenbaring».[102] Simultaneously precarious and meaningful, the author sees in the absence of language a place of opportunity where an authentic exchange can happen, even though in a different way. Silence gives shape to different and unexplored scenarios, in which «utsiktløse rom»,[103] create a space from which the narrator proceeds in telling the story of the refugee. Here, too, imagination becomes the driving force that allows the creativity that arises from the encounter with

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[99] «it took a while for the men to arrive/ but when they came/ they took their time/ she whispers that the calves disappeared in the drought that set in/ that it became hard everywhere» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 85-86).

[100] Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, cit.: 35.

[101] See Oxfeldt, *'Gebrokken'*, cit.: 10.

[102] «the one-sided becomes an opening» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 63).

[103] «viewless rooms» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 53).

diversity to be explored. The author, deprived of her control over language, equally succeeds in forming spaces of sharing. Witnessing the authenticity of a dialogue that goes beyond the codified forms of language allows the author to «disrupt this ideological claim to 'continuity' and introduce new levels of diversity», and to «expose the contingency and emptiness of nationalist signifiers, to go beyond the nation to formulate other, perhaps global, but not necessarily territorial, allegiances».[104]

Even from an aesthetic point of view, silence is visually brought onto the page, allowing the reader to feel its presence. The poetic structure displays a more diffuse, more open textual arrangement, capable of punctuating moments of pause, of reflection in the broad spaces that are left between stanzas, verses, and single words. Thus, the author overturns the immediate and banal interpretation that identifies in silence and the unspoken absence of sound or a simple lack of effectiveness as a communicative strategy. Instead, it manifests itself in its symbolic nature as a precarious bond, a way of connecting people:

Stillheten skiller ut en tone hørselen nesten forstår[105]

The same kind of precariousness is manifested when she decides to take the refugee to her grandmother's house, the episode that concludes the third section of the work. By observing from the outside the encounter between two people coming from completely different places, cultures, but also times, the author once again has the possibility of contemplating an epiphanic moment, that breaks once more her ordinariness. The invitation to cross the threshold, therefore, constitutes for the lyrical I/spectator a feeling of wonder and amazement, which, according to Meskimmon, act as moments of ordinariness rupture: «emerging through the everyday, arresting our attention, opening us to the pleasures of difference and changing us forever».[106] The grandmother and the refugee, in fact, immediately seem to establish a sincere connection that materialises in an act of recognition:

den nye søstra mi forteller

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[104] See Bromley, *A Bricolage of Identifications*, cit.: 38.
[105] «Silence emits a tone that hearing can almost understand» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 55).
[106] Meskimmon, *The Precarious Ecologies*, cit.: 24.

til en hun gjenkjenner på en eller annen måte

forteller små ord på mormors språk […]

mormor har fang to hender en mild eim

av garn og krig og strikkepinner, enkesorg[107]

Despite not possessing adequate tools to communicate properly in one or another language, the refugee seems to perceive something familiar in the grandmother and vice versa. Sharing a sense of trauma and violence with her guest, the grandmother mirrors herself in her interlocutor, demigrantizing the quality of their encounter. The fragility of the grandmother, whose voice and hands are described as broken, full of cracks and scars, bears the marks of war and the pain of losing loved ones. At the same time, they aesthetically symbolise the openings, the glimmers that allow looking beyond a normative conceptualization of language. The author cannot but stop contemplating from her position the unfolding of this encounter and participate at the same time in the consolidation of a new kind of bond with the refugee. The act of walking through the door depicts the threshold as a place of sharing instead of trauma, as the grandmother kindly invites her in. The loving and maternal attitude with which she simultaneously cares for the refugee and her granddaughter creates an indelible connection between the three of them. From this point on, the author begins to identify the refugee as her new sister. The grandmother's episode once again balances the ecological precariousness of the encounter, allowing her to change her perspective on the canonical role generally associated with language:

og jeg finner en tone

den flyter opp fra morsmålet

vi kan dele denne, sier jeg[108]

As Elisabeth Oxfeldt states, the author emphasises the substantial difference between a mother tongue and a mother's language in this way:

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[107] «my new sister tells/ to someone she recognizes in some way/ tells little words in grandma's language [...] grandma has caught two hands a gentle whiff/ of yarn and war and knitting needles, widow's mourning» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 99-100).

[108] «and I find a tone / it flows up from the mother tongue / we can share this, I say» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 102).

> Mormors sprog er ikke bare et norsk nationalsprog, men et sprog med sprækker istemmen og med en bestemt genkendelig tone, der kan tænkes at reflektere moderlig omsorg og nærhed. Et morsmål (modersmål) behøver altså ikke at være et bestemt nationalsprog, men kan også være et transcenderende moders sprog.[109]

It is no coincidence that the fourth section, in which the author describes this encounter, is called «Søstre», meaning 'Sisters'.[110] This section represents a watershed in the collection. The question of a broken language, for instance, loses its value as a social marker that can be used to describe the way a native belongs to a nation and a culture and a migrant, on the contrary, does not belong in the same space. Instead, a broken language is proposed again as a contrastive feature between the categories of masculine and feminine. Wondering whether she will ever be able to assimilate Norwegian correctly, the refugee suddenly realises that:

> mennenes språk da de tok henne [...]
> *den* aksenten er det knekte språket[111]

Such metalinguistic reflection provides a new perspective from which framing the nature of their relationship: the share of trauma between two women. Picking up on the question posed by Roger Bromley, the migrant thus ceases to be labeled as such to be instead recognised as a different kind of subject, in this case as a family member. Going beyond normative patterns of belonging traces exactly the path undertaken by the author. Ever since the epiphanic encounter with the grandmother, the relationship between the lyrical subject and the refugee changes considerably. In the rest of the collection, in fact, the opposition that acquires greater prominence is no longer substantiated by the

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[109] «Grandma's language is not just a Norwegian national language, but a language with cracks in the voice and a certain recognizable tone that can be thought of as reflecting maternal care and closeness. A *language of the mother* does not have to be a specific national language, but can also be a transcendent language». See Elisabeth Oxfeldt, *Skandinaviske fortellinger om skyld og privilegier i en globaliseringstid*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 2016: 248 [italics added].

[110] Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 91.

[111] «the language of men when they took her [...] / *that* accent is the broken language» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 111 [italics in original]).

Oxfeldt also identifies in the language of the men a tendency toward closure and rigidity, echoing the phallocentric vocabulary that the author employs to describe them. In contrast, female language is described by the scholar as an expression of openness and creativity. See Oxfeldt, *'Gebrokken'*, cit.: 12.

categories of migrants and natives but by those of men and women, setting off a harsh critique against patriarchal structures. Notably, there are two images provided by the author that most vividly shape this contrast. The first is undoubtedly represented by the black frame in which the phrase «boys will be boys», written in white, is embedded.[112] The same sentence is repeated over and over for about three pages, to reverse the apparent innocence of such words and present it with contempt. The second is the reference to Bibi Aisha, the young Iranian girl who was mutilated and disfigured by a group of men, including her father and husband, for trying to flee from an abusive marriage.

### 3.3.3 The Cosmopolitan 'Wondrous'

With the arrival of the warmer season, the author's gaze begins to focus more on the ways in which the refugee adapts to her new surroundings. The solitude of winter gives way to a world populated by men and women. Hatred and mistrust towards the opposite gender slowly give way to the refugee's urge to open to the outside world, to rediscover her own sexuality, and to get closer to other human beings. Watching the refugee regain control over her life has an effect on the poet as well. While narrating the story from the place where she was born and raised, the perspective of another person allows her to rethink her own relationship with the surrounding space.

In such a perspective shift, once again it is possible to appreciate the post-migrant nature of the work. Initially driven only by the desire to record on a piece of paper her guest's story, the author finds in it a new point of reference to question herself and her own beliefs about Norway. This variation brings us back again to the considerations offered by Linda Brimm and Steven Vertovec: one of the most important qualities that characterise a cosmopolitan mindset originates in part from the ability to observe oneself through multiple perspectives. The bond that she establishes with her native country, for instance, is firmly rooted in the author's consciousness on an affective level, but it is also the result of an educational process that shaped and gave precise coordinates to her culture. To quote a line that has already been discussed:

> det er friere der
> har oppdragelsen lært meg

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[112] Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 125-127.

her nord[113]

Nature itself is described as a symbol of freedom as such. The fact that her upbringing and her education have transmitted to the poet cultural notions concerning the relationship between people and nature, a cultural trait typical of Scandinavian countries, makes this relationship almost taken for granted. On the other hand, the author observes the refugee crossing the threshold of the same world with an enthusiasm that she seems to draw inspiration from. The author experiences a form of displacement by breaking her ordinary view of things, showing a new way of «making oneself at home in the world» through art.[114]

Thus, Linnestå can experience, through the eyes of another person, a moment of wonder and happiness:

den første skjønnhet som et barn[115]

There are several passages in which the 'wondrous' effect affects the way the poet observes how the refugee feels and constructs step by step her own space of belonging in Norway. A space that testifies to the tension of the refugee towards a new form of liberation, of healing from the wounds of the past. The image of the sea, for instance, continues to remain, in the narrator's dreams, a dangerous and violent place where evil men lurk, ready to do her and her host harm. Phallic images burst into the scene in a crude and brutal manner. In contrast, the way the refugee enjoys her freedom is perceived as a possibility of reconciliation. It is precisely in the sea that the refugee seems to regain control over her own body. Half-naked and unconcerned about the gazes directed towards her, she bathes in the ocean:

hun kjøper en bikini
for det norske havet
vasser halvnaken
i den norske fjorden

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[113] «it's freer there/ has my education taught me/ here in the north» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 34).
[114] Ring Petersen – Schramm*, (Post-)Migration in the age of globalisation*, cit.: 8.
[115] «the first beauty like a child» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 203).

våger seg ut på veiene[116]

Entering the water represents once more an act of crossing another threshold that belongs to the world of the poet. However, this time it is not perceived as an act of violation that causes fear and resentment. The refugee's bodily presence in the sea creates a new moment of wondrous pleasure for the narrator: the sea calms down, the smell of saltiness spreads around her, and the horizon appears «alminnelig».[117] The untouched Norwegian nature, a place where the author and the refugee often visit, is also a setting in which a connection becomes possible. The stillness of the forest becomes another place of openness. Fear gives way to the freedom to act, be able to dispose of one's body, express sensuality in the choice of new clothes and a new hairstyle, and finally feel safe, at home. In the love they both loudly exclaim for the Scandinavian country, the two women recognise themselves in similar feelings, albeit developed through different histories and experiences:

og det nye landet for henne er landet mitt for meg
på en annen måte[118]

Symbolic places connected to the author's cultural background manifest a new meaning for her in a global dimension, showing the way cosmopolitanism manifests itself in the local: «Cosmopolitan belonging, then, is built on top of local belonging».[119]

The refugee lets loose in a cry of blessing towards the country that has welcomed her, and in a sincere openness towards the gender of men, towards which she returns to a feeling of affection:

vi må elske dem, skriker hun
må elske mennene også[120]

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[116] «she buys a bikini/ for the Norwegian sea/ wades half-naked/ in the Norwegian fjord/ ventures out on the roads» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 183).

[117] «ordinary» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 185).

[118] «and the new country for her is my country for me / in a different way» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 188).

[119] Kendall – Woodward – Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism*, cit.: 39.

[120] «we must love them, she screams / must love the men too» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 188).

For her part, the author describes her own change of perspective by elaborating on the concrete and recurring image of the hand. Throughout the collection, in fact, hands symbolically mark the differences between the actions connected, on one side, to female trauma and, on the other, to the domination of patriarchal structures. In the first half of the work, men use their hands to grasp, break, conquer, while women present broken, trembling, stained hands, that nonetheless coexist in harmony with nature, and are able to create and protect. In the second half, however, male hands are represented in simple daily acts. The innocence of manual labour performed by a man, for instance, attracts the interest of the refugee, who approaches to watch the scene more closely. Again, the perspective of the 'Other' intervenes in reshaping the beliefs that the the lyrical subject constructs her identity upon. In one of her final verses, she seems to change her opinion with regard to the opposite sex:

> hender kan stryke og glede
> og hender kan ikke alltid krige med uvillige kropper[121]

The reciprocal influence of the encounter is, therefore, a major topic of the collection of poetry and accounts for a further consideration of the post-migrant condition and the importance that inter-relational cosmopolitanism can assume in offering epistemological alternatives as far as identity and belonging are concerned. The indissolubility of the bond she established with the refugee emphasises both the latter's rebirth in the Scandinavian land and the former's perception of her own world:

> det ene øyet ditt skinner litt mer
> i dag
> kan jeg si
> men du løfter fram natta
> i det andre øyet […]
> det ene øyet mitt skinner litt mer
> i dag

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[121] «hands can stroke and delight / and hands cannot always fight with unwilling bodies» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 202).

for du løftet fram natta i det andre øyet[122]

The chiastic structure of the verses underlines a sense of perfect balance, which resolves the precariousness of the ecological system in which the two characters lived at the beginning of their journey. The refugee discovers the light, a sense of freedom and control, but retains within herself the darkness of her past. The author too, on the other side, experiences a new awareness, because she has known the darkness and the traumatic past of her friend. The refugee comes into contact, through the author, with a new language, a new nature, and a new sense of freedom, whereas the author renegotiates, through the perspective of the refugee, her perception of language, nature, and freedom. Experiencing a sense of dispersion deterritorializes the narrator's perception of the other, of herself and her own land, and reterritorializes into a different conception of belonging. By contemplating the reflection of alternative worlds in the moment of encounter, Linnestå aesthetically displays a movement of entry and exit, of place and non-place, of local and global.

Left with nothing but the words she has written in the collection, she ends her work by drawing some conclusions. The refugee's presence remains imprinted in the pages written by the lyrical subject. The former continues her journey, crossing for the last time the threshold of the front door, while the latter fixes the memory of the experience by materialising it within the poetic space:

men du er her
nå[123]

## 3.4 Cosmopolitanism as a 'Social Challenge'

Veronica Salinas and Aasne Linnestå stage a similar journey that seeks to include a culture of diversity as an integral part of post-migrant societies. The encounter with the other is constructed along a complex and painful, but also cathartic, path. By breaking certain fixed demarcation lines, both authors contemplate new possibilities of belonging

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[122] «one of your eyes shines a little more / today / I can say / but you bring out the night / in the other eye / [...] one of my eyes shines a little more / today / because you brought out the night in the other eye» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 242-243).
[123] «but you are here / now» (Linnestå, *Morsmål*, cit.: 248).

in their artistic productions. The two works intersect transversally concerning mythical constructions that define the nation as a fundamental identity parameter, inducing change to the post-migrant perspective of the 'Other'. Salinas' novel elaborates mainly on those skills that a life in dispersion imposes to assimilate. Linnestå, on the other hand, shows how dispersion can be shared, through the rupture of ordinariness, not only by those who are forced to flee. The migrant, therefore, does not appear in his alienated and deviant form. Rather, the multifaceted and conflicting ecology created by the presence of migration can produce a cosmopolitan sense of belonging. Such belonging is realised in the formation of an identity that contemplates global manifestations in the local dimension, replacing the image of the root with that of the rhizome. Thus, Aasne Linnestå shows a key aspect in understanding how the subject can renegotiate its position within the post-migrant condition from a cosmopolitan perspective, placing individuals and the world in a dynamic relationship.

Compared to the two works analysed in the previous chapter, some differences can undoubtedly be identified. The highly introspective character with which Salinas and Linnestå pursue their respective stories does not reflect the conflictual atmosphere that leads authors such as Khemiri and Hassan to recount their condition. The conflictual conditions seen in Khemiri's and Hassan's works are indeed key features here, but they also describe the possibility of new alliances, showing post-migration as «a new set of emergent spaces of plurality».[124] The two Norwegian authors offer the possibility of reasoning about alternative methods to narrate the formative process. Engaging with a post-migrant social space, both Salinas and Linnestå encourage the reader to untie the tight knot that holds together canonical national symbols and individual identity formation, and instead to consider the crucial role played by different parameters, strategies, and patterns of identification in such space. The contours of a precarious ecological system tend towards a balance with the world. The two chapters, however, dialogue with each other within a parallel path. After claiming a space in which the post-migratory expresses itself through its own language, it can proceed to shape an alternative position in such space.

The analysis of these two works allows us to take the concept of cosmopolitanism back to its inter-subjective and relational dimensions. A community that recognises itself

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[124] See Bromley, *A Bricolage of Identifications*, cit.: 39.

as culturally cosmopolitan must accept the very challenge posed by cosmopolitanism. If the encounter with diversity has nowadays become a dynamic that defines people's life from different points of view, it is also necessary that modern civilizations learn to confront such challenges, contradictions, and injustices. Developing different strategies through which to recognise the other, as in the case of Linnestå, or enduring in the face of difficulties, as in the case of Salinas, frames cosmopolitanism from two different but complementary positions. Returning to Mélissa Gélinas' definition, the works analyzed in this chapter may represent two examples of contemporary 'narratives of Bildung'. The journey of the two main protagonists begins and develops in a particular context, that on the one hand highlights dynamics and values indeed very different from those of the Bildungsroman, but on the other equally leads to a reconciliation with the new post-migrant social space.

## 4. Creative Tendencies in Scandinavian Post-migrant Literature

In the two previous chapters, the concept of post-migration has been explored from several points of view. In the second one, the post-migrant condition was presented as a space where the authors claimed the right to narrate their critical positions through creative linguistic strategies. In the third chapter, migration was interpreted as a space of exchange and negotiation. In the works of Salinas and Linnestå, processes of identity formation through the encounters with the other showed alternative, cosmopolitan possibilities for promoting a non-binary sense of belonging. As a matter of fact, their works can rightfully be grouped into a narrative strand capable of recounting several aspects of contemporaneity. Khemiri, Hassan, Salinas, and Linnestå convey, in different ways, a sense of awareness that brings migration back where it belongs, to the centre of the post-migrant society.

The works addressed so far have had the merit of foregrounding the consequences of migration. Racism, segregation, and belonging are crucial factors for understanding the post-migrant condition. But what would happen if the topic of migration was to be represented in a different way? The final chapter will seek to find an answer to this question by visualizing the concept of post-migration as a creative space for alternative narrative trajectories. As a creative space, post-migration «opens for new analytical perspectives and creates sites of negotiation such as new cultural institutions, languages and approaches in cultural expressions».[1] In order to provide new literary coordinates to frame such concept, this analysis focused on two novels. The first one is *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar* (*They Will Drown in Their Mothers' Tears*), the latest novel written by Johannes Anyuru.[2] The second one is a book by Maria Navarro Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner* (All Foreigners Keep Their Curtains Close).[3] The features that unite these two works differentiate the two authors from the rest of the corpus.

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[1] Mirjam Gebauer – Sabrina Vitting-Seerup – Frauke Wiegand, *Introduction: Reinventing Identities, Languages and Institutions*, in Moritz Schramm Moritz Schramm – Sten Pultz Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Mirjam Gebauer – Hans Christian Post – Sabrina Vitting-Seerup – Frauke Wiegand (eds.), *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts – The Postmigrant Condition*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, pp. 135-140: 136.

[2] Johannes Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar*, Norstedts, Stockholm 2017; Johannes Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, eng. transl. by Saskia Vogel, Two Lines Press, San Francisco 2019.

[3] Maria Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, Forlaget Oktober, Oslo 2016.

### 4.1 Johannes Anyuru: *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar*

Johannes Anyuru is a Swedish writer born to a Ugandan father and a Swedish mother. Among the most popular writers of his generation, he debuted in 2003 with his collection of poems, *Det är bara gudarna som är nya* (Only the Gods Are New). As for many other authors who observe contemporary society from the perspective of migration, the theme of intergenerational memory has been a point of utmost importance for his artistic production. This concept is especially true with regard to his novel, *En storm kom från paradiset* (*A Storm Blew In From Paradise*), in which the author interweaves his own biography with that of his father, a military pilot fleeing Uganda and the dictatorial regime of Idi Amin.[4] In 2017, his latest novel won the *Augustpriset*.

While the analyses of the previous works have revealed a clear preponderance for the autobiographical genre and its variants, such as autofiction, Anyuru's last work mixes elements that belong to different literary genres, proposing an alternative, cross-cutting but equally effective reading of the Swedish post-migrant condition. Notably, the author offers in his latest book a dystopic sci-fi narrative that puts the spotlight on urgent social themes such as racism and segregation. Through the dystopian depiction of a future Sweden, mixed with features more typically linked to the genre of science fiction, the work overturns the positive image with which the Swedish socio-political model tends to be represented and narrated.

The principles of the *folkhem* were designed to emphasize the importance of equality and freedom within society. The aspirations of prominent political figures such as Olof Palme was to make Sweden a 'moral superpower', a beacon of light and security in the Western political landscape. Today, however, these premises appear increasingly faded, further and further distant from those ideals of equality and freedom that have characterized the country's recent history. The populist rhetoric of radical right parties, such as the one of Sweden's Democrats, has long been making use of a terminology that frames the issue of migration in tones that can be reconnected to dystopia.[5] At the same

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[4] Johannes Anyuru, *Det är bara gudarna som är nya*, Wahlström & Widstrand, Stockholm 2003; Johannes Anyuru, *En storm kom från paradiset*, Nordstedts, Stockholm 2012; Johannes Anyuru, *A Storm Blew In From Paradise*, eng. trans. by Rachel Wilson-Broyles, World Editions, Amsterdam-New York-London 2015.

[5] «– Vi står inför den största katastrof som det svenska samhället befunnit sig i under modern tid» (Jimmie Åkesson quoted in Johan Juhlin, *SD-kampanj ska avskräcka flyktingar*, in *Svt Nyheter*, 15 October 2015, https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sd-kampanj-ska-avskracka-flyktingar [Last accessed 23 October 2023]: «We are facing the biggest catastrophy that Swedish society has faced in modern times»). As Josefine Wall

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time, the party's political agenda draws inspiration from a nostalgic vision of the country and its history, making the memory of a homogeneous Sweden free of the migration issue not just a faded memory, but an authentic goal to be pursued. Such an attitude can indeed be considered a 'retrotopia', a term that has already been applied in the first chapter to describe the populist and extremist tendencies in the Scandinavian political scenario.

Since such discursive constructions place migration at the epicentre of the dystopian reality in which Sweden would find itself, the same problem's reinterpretation from a post-migrant perspective would seek to utilize the same tools to respond to this ethnocentric rhetoric.

4.1.1 Dystopian Sci-fi – A Critical Function

In recent decades, dystopian representations within the science fiction genre have gained considerable popularity in literature, movies, and even in the video games market. The reason for such bursting popularity, especially among younger readers, would be related to the fact that the dystopian novel «doesn't need to be so close to our reality in order to provide a meaningful exploration of significant topics».[6] Anyuru, however, does not limit the critical potential of his novel to the description of a fictional reality, removed from the perception of the world, but employs it as an analytical key to put under scrutiny the dynamics affecting the Swedish post-migrant context, as well as the crisis of the welfare state dream. The critical function of dystopia, in fact, represents a topic that has led many scholars to question the boundary that keeps it separate from its natural counterpart, utopia. Recent research has produced numerous theoretical frameworks to describe such literary tendencies. Among these definitions is 'critical dystopia' a concept theorized by Lyman Tower Sargent in 1994.[7] This interpretation examines the utopian drift exhibited in late 20th century dystopian narratives, which dilutes the opposition that

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Scherer state, the 'Million Programm' is nowadays perceived as a dystopic version of the utopic Swedish model dream. See Josefine Wall Scherer, *Folkhemnostalgi och gängvåldsdystopi. Ett genus- och kritiskt vithetsperspektiv på SVT:s framställning av gängvåldet som en nationell kris*, Institutionen för etnologi, religionshistoria och genusvetenskap, Stockholm 2022: 50-51.

[6] See Justin Scholes – Jon Ostenson, *Understanding the Appeal of Dystopian Young Adult Fiction*, in «The ALAN review», 40 (2013), 2, pp. 11-20: 10. See also Laura Miller, *Fresh Hell. What's behind the boom in dystopian fiction for young readers?*, in *The New Yorker*, 7 June 2010, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/06/14/fresh-hell-laura-miller.

[7] See Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited*, in «Utopian Studies», 5 (1994), 1, pp. 1-37.

exists between the two concepts.[8] As Tom Moylan states, the very transgression of the border that separates utopia and non-utopia would constitute an inalienable feature of dystopia itself, thus offering a space of margin «for those groups – whose subject position is not contemplated by hegemonic discourse – for whom subject status has yet to be attained».[9]

As a work of science fiction that sets out to elaborate a critique of the Swedish social balance through a dystopian depiction, Anyuru's novel is not merely a brutal representation of a collapsed society; it also offers important insights into the current Swedish post-migrant condition while at the same time sending a message of hope for the future.[10] Thus, the author fulfills the purpose of entertaining the reader as well as producing «a more successful contribution to slowly but surely changing the image of migration in society».[11]

To definitively deconstruct degrading labels such as 'immigrant writer' and to place the utopian vision of Swedish society under close examination, the author expresses his thoughts by exploiting a literary genre characterized by a wide-ranging sounding board, in which dilemmas related to the migration issue can emerge under a creative and critical light. Anyuru's novel plays on themes that characterize the science fiction genre, such as

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[8] Etymologically, both words refer to a 'non-place', a place that does not exist. Sarah Ljungqvist, for example, has elaborated on the contrast between the literary genres of utopia and dystopia in Swedish literature, stating that the former does not actually set itself against the latter, but both appear as «en fiktionell ideal värld eller en mardörmsvärld» (Sarah Ljungqvist, *Den litterära utopin och dystopin i Sverige 1734-1940*, Gidlunds förlag, Örlinge 2001: 21: «a fictional ideal world or a nightmare world»).

[9] Raffaella Baccolini, *The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction*, in «PMLA», 119 (2004), 3, pp. 518-521: 520. See also Tom Moylan – Raffaella Baccolini, *Introduction. Dystopia and Histories*, in Tom Moylan – Raffaella Baccolini (eds.) *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, Routledge, London-New York, pp. 1-13: 7. See also Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia. Dystopia*, Westview Press, Boulder 2000: 188.

[10] As Ulrika Minnes states in her review of Anyuru's novel: «**Dystopiska science fiction-romaner** kan frilägga smärtområden i ett samhälle och suga in oss i en thrillerspänning» (See Ulrika Minnes, *Recension: 'Bättre politiska romaner skrivs inte om vår tid'*, in *SVT Nyheter*, 18 March 2017, https://www.svt.se/kultur/bok/recension-battre-politiska-romaner-skrivs-inte-om-var-tid [bold in original]: «**Dystopian science fiction novels** can expose painful areas in a society and suck us into a thrilling suspense»). Kjell Goldmann describes the critical function of the dystopian genre as a 'constructive fantasy', because it fairly combines fantasy and likelihood. See Kjell Goldmann, *Förändrad men sig lik: Internationell politik på 2000-talet*, Books on Demand, Norderstedt 2020: 131-132.

[11] See Rachel Godsil – Jessica MacFarlane – Brian Sheppard, *Pop Culture, Perception, and Social Change*, in *#PopJustice: Volume 3*, February 2016, https://perception.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/PopJustice-Volume-3_Research-Review.pdf, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]. Regina Römhild proposed that instead of focusing on how «migrants get along in the societal enclaves and cultural ghettos to which they are assigned, the point of this new approach would be to illuminate the institutions, milieus and contexts of the (majority) society from the perspective of migration [...] Migrant reinterpretations [...] generate subversive effects precisely because they plant their flag at the heart of – rather than outside – the pop culture mainstream» (See Römhild, *Beyond the Bounds*, cit.: 72).

the space-time paradox, the contact between parallel dimensions, and the concept of time loops. Building on this premise, the following paragraphs will analyse the work exactly on the concept of loop and its many declinations. In order to do so, the first part of this chapter will focus on what French philosopher Jean Pierre-Dupuy defines as the 'enlightened doomsaying', an ethical-philosophical approach that fixes the idea of a time loop as a preventive strategy in response to possible a future catastrophic scenario.[12] Therefore, the analysis of Anyuru's work will take into account how the author combines the critical function of dystopia with the typical devices of the sci-fi genre, contributing to the expansion of debate about Swedish post-migration as well as exposing (and, perhaps, contributing to obstacle) the possible future outcomes of Swedish retrotopian discursive constructions.

### 4.1.2 Plot

The novel is set in the city of Gothenburg, although the author takes the liberty of adding some details of his own invention. The story opens with a terrorist attack planned against Christian Hondo, owner of the homonymous comic bookstore (a place that exists only in Anyuru's fiction), and Göran Loberg, a cartoonist who has been invited for the occasion to take part in a lecture about freedom of speech.[13] Loberg shows the public the work for which he has gained popularity: a series of cartoons that mock the image of the prophet Muhammad. The three terrorists, Hamad, Amin and his wife Nour – named by the latter in memory of his late sister, but whose real name remains unknown – take over the store to execute the cartoonist and record their act of demonstration in the name of *Daesh*, the Islamic State. The intervention of the police, which manages to neutralize Hamad, leave Nour and Amin alone with the hostages. Unexpectedly, Nour also prevents the attack from being carried out, as she kills Amin with a gun before he executes the cartoonist.

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[12] Jean-Pierre Dupuy described for the first time the concept of 'enlightened doomsaying' in his book *Pour un catastrophisme éclairé*, Seuil, Paris 2002.

[13] The reference to the attack on the headquarters of the French satirical newspaper 'Charlie Hebdo' is evident. See Jenny Aschenbrenner, *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar. 'Svenska värderingar' blir en mardröm*, in *Svenska Dagbladet*, 18 March 2017, https://www.svd.se/a/qoE2o/svenska-varderingar-blir-en-mardrom [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

The narrative shifts to two years later, when 'Nour', confined to an out-of-town mental hospital, «Tundra» (another location invented by the author),[14] is granted permission to speak with one person in particular, a Muslim journalist and writer from Gothenburg,[15] who accepts the request intrigued by the case about which he has read so much. Their encounter is cause of deep bewilderment for the latter. Firstly, passports and documents held by Swedish authorities certify that the girl's real name is Annika Isagel, a Belgian citizen captured years earlier by the VSEE, the Department of National Security's special forces, for her suspected proximity to an Islamic terrorist cell. From there, the authorities allegedly sent her to a maximum-security prison, named «al-Mima»,[16] in Jordan, for interrogation. There, she is also subject to various kinds of experiments. Identified the location in Jordan and returned to Belgium by her family, Annika shows signs of detachment from reality. Her escape to Sweden, driven by a mysterious force, would eventually lead her to Amin in person. Indeed, the girl's story is fascinating and frightening at the same time. Even from the first interactions, she provides absurd revelations that motivate her intervention. The girl swears to the journalist that she is not the person everyone else thinks she is, nor does she have any memory of Annika's life. Other inexplicable evidence supporting her account is her inability to speak either French or Flemish. On the contrary, she expresses herself perfectly in Swedish. She affirms to be a Swedish citizen from «Kaningården», the same neighborhood – also fictional – where the journalist lives, and that she arrived there from a future Sweden.[17] Her consciousness and memories were grafted somehow onto Annika's mind as the final outcome of her horrible experience in the Jordanian prison.

From these disconcerting premises, she tells her interlocutor about the place from which she claims to have come, a reality where the terror attack was tragically successful: «Jag kommer från en plats där Amin dödade den där konstnären […] jag kommer från en

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[14] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 49; Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 41.

[15] The main character, henceforth referred to as 'the journalist', shares some commonalities with Anyuru himself. One of the biographical discrepancies that, on the contrary, widens the gap between the two characters is the origin of the former, who unlike Anyuru is son to a Gambian mother and a Swedish father.

[16] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 53; Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 44.

[17] «flickan hade sagt att hon kom ifrån Kaningården, det miljonprogram i Göteborg som jag själv vuxit upp i» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 57); «the girl had said she came from the Rabbit Yard, the same public housing development in Gothenburg I had grown up in» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 49).

plats femton år in i framtiden».[18] The catastrophic consequences of this action transformed Sweden into a totalitarian regime, where any form of resistance and opposition to the new order, especially that related to the Muslim religion, is violently suppressed. Indeed, the attack carried out in the parallel dimension established the conditions for the creation of a new, despotic form of society. The very film of the comic bookstore attack is systematically played on every public and private device as a reminder of what Sweden's overly generous migration policies would eventually lead to. The girl's narrative covers several aspects that describe the structure and functioning of this society, providing a great deal of details. Traits of political dystopia, embodied in the totalitarianism of the new Swedish state, the fierce propaganda, and the violence with which such control is executed, are combined with elements more relatable to a technological dystopia. Special devices, drones, and cameras enable the state to maintain order and block all forms of rebellion.

It is on two narrative planes, therefore, that the author builds his novel. On the one hand, the girl delivers by hand the pages she wrote containing her own story to the journalist. On the other, the journalist's vicissitudes are built exactly around her bizarre version. Therefore, while confronting the dystopian account presented by the girl, the reader also receives an additional perspective, closer to their reality, which takes on the task of critically assessing the content of her testimony.

## 4.2 A Retrotopian Future

The heavenly image of Sweden is thus replaced by a catastrophic condition that completely overturns the utopian status generally assigned to the Scandinavian country. The very concept of citizenship has undergone a twisted deformation, replaced by the so-called «Medborgarkontraktet».[19] The contract not only regulates the rights and duties of the citizen, but also certifies a kind of oath of allegiance, or rather submission, to the laws of the new regime. The citizens themselves, in fact, become personally involved in the

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[18] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 62; «I come from a place where Amin did kill that artist […] I must come from somewhere fifteen years in the future» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 53).

[19] As the girl recounts: «Medborgarkontraktet […] var ett elektroniskt dokument som alla vuxna på platsen jag kommer ifrån måste signera när de betalade skatt på våren och sen en gång på hösten också» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 62); «'citizen contract': an electronic document that every adult in the place I'm from had to sign when they filed their taxes each spring and then again in the fall» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 52-53).

control and execution of these rules.[20] The terms to be compulsorily accepted appear to be, among other things, an attempt to keep Sweden's image intact as a free, open, and inclusive country, while casting a veil over the darker stains that define this new society.[21] People who refuse to sign the contract are automatically registered as «Sverigefiender», individuals whose bank accounts get frozen and personal freedoms curtailed before they are captured and sent to a place of confinement.[22] Moreover, a clear, and poorly concealed, Islamophobic policy dominates the future society, in which skin color and religious faith are once again shown to be a crucial discriminator in terms of belonging: «Vissa vägrade signera det och blev till något som hette sverigefiender – yani, muslimer och judar och såna, typ extrema – och hamnade på en plats som hette Kaningården».[23]

In the future, *Kaningården* has been re-adapted from a simple residential area into a full-fledged ghetto-like prison, where state enemies are confined to be re-instructed in the new doctrine. The sections in the neighbourhood house prisoners according to their state-determined threat level. Many different circumstances that occur in the *Kaningården* facility contradict the idea of a Swedish utopia.[24] The teachers, more appropriately jailers, are specifically labelled to perpetuate the image of a country still devoted to freedom. No longer simply teachers, then, but «demokrati-entreprenörer och yttrandefrihetscoacher och samtalsaktivister»,[25] whose task is to inculcate counterfeit and humiliating notions

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[20] By downloading simple apps on the phone, anyone is empowered to scan and report individuals considered enemies of the state. This results in a series of power abuses carried out by groups of violent activists that operate without any oversight. In particular, the girl describes squadrons patrolling the streets of Gothenburg, the so-called «Riddarhjärtan» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 82); «Crusading Hearts» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 72).

[21] The citizens themselves must acknowledge that Sweden is a unique country because it is the only one in the world where racism does not exist. Even the images of the cartoonist Loberg must be praised for their intrinsic social, sacred value, as some sort of iconographies.

[22] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 62; «Enemy of Sweden» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 53).

[23] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 62; «Some people refused to sign and they became something called an 'Enemy of Sweden' – yani, Muslims and Jews and other, like, extremists – and ended up in a place called the Rabbit Yard» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 53). Practicing the Muslim religion is a highly risky activity that involves a series of forced adaptations to comply with the new security measures. The Koran has been radically modified in a new edition approved by the Swedish government, complete with a yellow-blue cover.

[24] The threat level is established by a set of criteria that determine the prisoners' level of obedience. The girl, imprisoned with her father, describes how the detention system operates: «det hände till exempel om du bar religiösa kläder, var i fel zon, inte samarbetade på lektionerna i Hus K eller hade vissa sorters skägg» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 154); «which could happen if you wore religious clothing, were caught in the wrong zone, didn't cooperate in class at Building K, or had a certain style of beard» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 140).

[25] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 152; «'democracy entrepeneurs' and 'free speech coaches' and 'dialogue activists'» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 138).

«om kolonialismens positiva effekter i tredje världen, om varför det var rätt med dödsstraff i en demokrati som Sverige men inte i diktaturer, om att man måste sköta sin intimhygien».[26] From inside the facility, the girl describes the horrific environment of the prison, in which the inhumane treatment of the prisoners recalls scenes from the Holocaust.[27] Her reclusion in the «Hus T»,[28] a place where prisoners are experimented on and tortured constitutes the point that, as she claims, would have transferred her to the reality of the journalist.

### 4.2.1 Anyuru's Dystopia as 'Enlightened Doomsaying'

As already discussed, the author does not simply draw the contours of a dystopian scenario set in an uncertain and distant future. Instead, the dystopic future described in Anyuru's fiction serves as an analytical reference for observing the journalist's reality, which, despite being permeated with fictional elements, evidently resembles current Swedish society. In order to understand how the work fulfills its critical function, an aspect of fundamental importance emerges not only from the confrontation between the two characters, but also from the fact that the author places two different space-time dimensions in communication with each other. Although the terrorist attack failed in the journalist's dimension, the girl's intervention does not necessarily mean that the catastrophe of which she speaks will remain impossible: «Jag skriver till dig som jag ännu kan rädda» as she begins one of her texts.[29] The way she carries out her narrative denotes the need to warn the journalist so as to prevent scenarios similar to that of the future, catastrophic Sweden.

As mentioned before, Anyuru's novel finds perhaps in the ethical-philosophical approach developed by Jean-Pierre Dupuy, the 'enlightened doomsaying'. Dupuy's concept seems a suitable theoretical framework to explore the novel and, in general, the Swedish post-migrant condition. According to the French philosopher, even though

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[26] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 163; «about the positive effects of colonialism in the Third World, why the death penalty was justified in a democracy like Sweden but not in a dictatorship, and the importance of personal hygiene» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 149).
[27] Upon arrival in *Kaningården*, all detainees must undergo a humiliating medical examination. The girl's father is undressed and searched right in front of his daughter.
[28] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 164; «Building T» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 150).
[29] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 161; «I'm writing to you because you can still be saved» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 147).

modern-era scientific progress has long accustomed mankind to the imminence of various global dangers such as climate, weapons of mass destruction and, considering recent history, pandemics, the metaphysics with which the Western world observes and contemplates the passage of time turns out to be ineffective in providing concrete answers in the face of the inevitability of such catastrophes. In this metaphysical horizon, time generally takes the form of a line destined to move perpetually forward – a perspective capable of establishing as factual only two points, the past and the present. The future, and, particularly, the future of catastrophe, is, instead, relegated to the dimension of uncertainty, or rather, to one of the many uncertainties into which the future might branch as it continues its path.[30] Dupuy strongly criticizes this approach. Closely linked to the idea of constant capitalist progress, the perception of risk has considerably changed since the beginning of the modern era. The reason, as Ulrich Beck states, is that society itself is both a source of well-being and potential catastrophes.[31] From these premises, as Dupuy continues, a fundamental problem related to the preventive strategies that should respond to such metaphysics emerges. The impossibility of believing in the certainty ofthea catastrophe determines that «not only does one not believe it will occur even though one has every reason to know it will occur, but once it has occurred it seems to be part of the normal order of things».[32]

A genuine preventive act, therefore, can only take place by virtue of an epistemological change as far as the temporality of catastrophe is concerned. To increase its ontological force in the future, Dupuy attempts to attribute to it the same degree of certainty assigned to the present and past. Prevention, for the French philosopher,

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[30] Dupuy defines this approach as 'occurring time'. It is visually represented as a tree scheme, where a catastrophe is just one of the many potential uncertainties in which the timeline can diverge. Catastrophe, given its unpredictable nature, can be acknowledged as real only in the moment of its concrete and abrupt manifestation in the present.

[31] The idea of a 'Risk Society' was coined by German sociologist Ulrich Beck. Beck defines modern society as a risk-giver, driven by the contradictions, imbalances, and casualties of the modern era. See Ulrich Beck, *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*, Suhrkamp Verlag AG, Frankfurt-Berlin 1986.

[32] Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The precautionary principle and enlightened doomsaying*, in «Revue de métaphysique et de morale», 76 (2012), 4, pp. 577-592: 587. It is not possible, therefore, to ensure real prevention, but only to apply a precautionary strategy, since Dupuy's metaphysical perspective places the emphasis on the limits of scientific uncertainty, and consequently on the boundaries of epistemic knowledge. Therefore, a cognitive barrier «misconstrues the nature of the obstacle that keeps us from acting in the face of the catastrophe» (Jean-Pierre Dupuy – Alexei Grinbaum, *Living with uncertainty: from the precautionary principle to the methodology of ongoing normative assessment*, in «Comptes Rendus Geosciences», 337 (2005), 4, pp. 457–474: 468).

«consists in taking action to ensure that an unwanted action is relegated to the ontological realm of non-actualized possibilities […]; in other words, an event must be possible in order for us to have a reason to act to prevent it».[33] Enlightened doomsaying thus proposes to think of a catastrophic event as a certainty, integrating «our knowledge about looming disaster into our lifeworld and our definition of reality».[34] In the metaphysics proposed by Dupuy, living according to a 'memory of the future' means observing, considering and studying catastrophe as if it has already happened.[35] Therefore, time cannot take the form of a line, but rather a loop that connects in a mutual causality a predetermined point in the future and the actions carried out in the present. In doing so, the direction of the present stands in a direct dialectical relationship with these two moments. Embracing the awareness of living within this privileged point of view grants greater margin for movement, as it permits looking at today and tomorrow as a whole, and to act accordingly with greater control.

As Frédéric Claisse and Pierre Delvenne claim, dystopia usually reflects the sort of attitude that the 'enlightened catastrophism' proposes. According to the scholars, dystopian writers: «use fiction as a detour to make a threat more tangible for the reader».[36] As a matter of fact, the perception of time and the possible benefits that come from an alternative perception of time constitute a fundamental aspect of Anyuru's dystopia. Dupuy believes that the 'loop' form changes our ethics by reversing the direction of the temporality of catastrophe; this concept is embodied precisely in the dialogue between the girl and the journalist, which unites the present and future dimensions in a complementary relationship.

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[33] Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Enlightened Doomsaying and the Concern for the Future*, in «Ritsumeikan Studies in Language and Culture», 24 (2013), 4, pp. 7-13: 12.

[34] Eva Horn, *The Future as Catastrophe. Imagining Disaster in Modern Age*, trans. by Valentine Pakis, Columbia University Press, New York 2018, pp. 237.

[35] Dupuy therefore proposes an irrational metaphysics of time, or rather, the urge to «rationally adopting a posture of irrationality regarding possible dark futures» (See Peter Appelbaum – Charoula Stathopoulou – Constantinos Xenofontos, *Mathematics Education as Dystopia: A Future Beyond Mathematics*, in «Journal of Humanistic Mathematics», 12 (2022), 2, pp. 519-538: 527). The irrationality proposed by Dupuy consists in imagining a fixed picture that outlines the features of a post-catastrophic scenario even before the catastrophe has occurred. The anticipation of such a scenario allows for the retrospective observation of the catastrophe as necessary, for at that point it will represent something that has already been.

[36] See Frédéric Claisse – Pierre Delvenne, *Building on anticipation: Dystopia as empowerment*, in «Current Sociology Monograph», 63 (2015), 2, pp. 155-169: 158.

4.2.3 Precaution vs. Prevention

Right before the story's beginning, the author offers interesting insights about the temporality of the catastrophe by quoting two excerpts from two separate pieces of literature. The first is a poem by a former convict held at Guantanamo Bay, the prison known for its inhumane treatment of inmates:

> Det finns ingen historia i Guantanamo.
> Det finns ingen framtid i Guantanamo
> Det finns ingen tid där överhuvudtaget,
> eftersom det inte finns någon gräns för vad
> som kan hända.

The second is taken from the sixty-seventh song of Harry Martinson's epic work, *Aniara*, which is also a dystopian tale and a piece of science fiction. In Martinson's work, a group of people fleeing an Earth near to destruction find refuge in a spaceship, called Aniara:

> Vad hände ini husen.
> Så gott som ingenting.
> Allt gick för hastigt för att riktigt hända.[37]

The intertextual incipit explores the fine line between possible catastrophic futures and an equally problematic present, while emphasizing the impossibility of controlling time in the face of the occurrence of catastrophe.

In the novel, Anyuru again proposes compelling reflections on the possible ways through which to perceive time. Exploiting the sci-fi device of the temporal paradox, the author converges the two dimensions toward the same point, projecting the one into the present and the other into the future.[38] The girl is perfectly aware of what a lack of

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[37] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: [unnumbered]; «There is no such thing as Guantanamo in the past / or Guantanamo in the future. / There is no time, / because there is no limit to / what they can do […] What occurred inside the houses? / Practically nothing. / It went too rapidly to really happen» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: [unnumbered]). The intertextual dialogue that links Anyuru's and Martinsson's work continues throughout the novel. One of the most evident examples are the name of the bookstore, *Hondo*, which is also the name of the asteroid that forces the ship *Aniara* to an emergency maneuver. Another example is *Mima*, which, in Martinsson's work, refers to the super-computer capable of reproducing comforting images from different worlds and times in the minds of the passengers. In contrast, the prison of *al-Mima*, the facility where Annika is confined, employs the same procedure, but as a form of torture. See further information in Carita Backström, *Anyuru och Aniara*, in «Nya Argus», 2/3 (2018), pp. 51-54.
[38] Not surprisingly, Dupuy speaks of 'projected future' to describe his alternative idea for a metaphysics of time.

preventive strategy can cause, and tries to warn the journalist of the risk of experiencing the possibility of catastrophe with passive, helpless acceptance. She recounts that the faults of the future society, even in their evidence, are perceived as something simultaneously close to and far from people's lives. Only with the capture of her and her father does the catastrophic event reify its presence in her present as the sudden and brutal inscription of catastrophe enters their everyday lives. The catastrophic event, in short, becomes part of the normality.[39] The girl's warning, therefore, represents not only a shocking testimony, but also an opportunity; it proposes an irrational approach through which to consider time in order to observe the catastrophe from a different perspective: «Jag tror inte längre att tiden är en rak linje. Jag tror inte att den här historien, eller någon historia som en människa kan berätta, har en enda början, utan flera. Och ingenting tar egentligen slut».[40] Thus, it is not the future that opens up possible ramifications, but the present itself that presents multiple opportunities for action.

As previously discussed, the journalist initially attempts to find a rational explanation because he does not consider the content of her message as truthful or even desirable. The most logical solution, therefore, is to dismiss the possibility that what she writes is true, thus relegating her testimony to the sphere of impossibility. Indeed, the protagonist judges the girl's version as a sort of scam and, in a second moment, as pure «vanföreställningar»: the result of a psychotic condition that causes her schizophrenic detachment from reality.[41] Throughout his investigations, which lead him to discuss the incident with various characters, including the cartoonist Göran Loberg himself, the families of Hamad and Amin, and even other former inmates from the prison of al-Mima, the journalist's aim always seems to be to find a rational explanation to avoid a significant confrontation with the dystopian image of Sweden.[42]

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[39] «nåt avlägset som inte hade med mitt liv att göra, nåt som hörde till världen som vi lärde oss om i skolan […] och ändå var det ibland som om det fanns mitt i allting, mitt i varje vardaglig stund» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 65); «something faraway that had nothing to do with my life, something that belonged to the world we learned about in school […] but still, sometimes it was like central to everything, central to each ordinary moment» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 55).

[40] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 79; «I no longer think time is a straight line. I don't think this story or any other story a person can tell has one single beginning, but several. And nothing ever really ends» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 70).

[41] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 116; «misconceptions» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 103).

[42] A former prisoner from *al-Mima* reveals to the journalist that the aim of the experiments was to implant false memories of future terroristic attacks. This was done in an attempt to identify other potentially dangerous individuals and provide their information to the authorities before the act could be executed:

However, the girl's pages cannot help but have a 'performative' effect on the protagonist. This concept means that through the very act of telling the future, she reifies that prospect into the existence of the latter.[43] Regardless of the journalist's initial emotional response, the girl's story involves a closing of the loop between present and future, as it forces the journalist to make choices based on what she tells him. Through the projection of a parallel universe, in which laws and logic appear completely unrelated to those that define his world, the journalist disillusions his «pretese 'antropocentriche'» on its own reality.[44] The idea of having no control whatsoever over the flow of events and the possibility of jeopardizing the safety of his family – he has a wife, Isra, and a young daughter whose name remains unknown – leads the journalist to put his present, its dynamics and contradictions, under serious analysis. While averting the catastrophic event, the girl's intervention does not actually entail, as already discussed, a final solution to the problems envisaged in the future but merely creates new preconditions on which to build that same future. Indeed, the situation before the journalist's eyes seems to take a less encouraging turn. Although he never admits the truthfulness of the girl's story, such a conflictual scenario provokes in him doubts and perplexity: «jag undrade om vi i själva verket också var indragna i ett krig. Ett krig som var en hastighetsmätning, ett krig där huden eller något mer diffust, något som kunde kallas för svenskhet, var uniformen».[45] The confession to his wife that: «'Det hon skrev skrämde mig'»,[46] demonstrates a condition of bewilderment in the face of the projected future. Once again, the solution proposed by the journalist is drastic. He decides to flee Sweden with his wife and daughter

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«'Jag kände inte igen någon', sa han till mig. 'Men jag pekade ändå, ibland' […] 'Jag gjorde det för att jag fattade att jag var där, i öknen, för att någon annan hade suttit i samma stol, före mig, och tittat på samma skärm. En annan muslim hade sett mitt ansikte, och pekat på det'» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 177-178); «'I didn't recognize anybody,' he told me. 'But I pointed sometimes.' […] 'I did it because I knew I was in the desert because someone else had been there before me, sitting in that same chair and looking at the same screen. Some other Muslim had seen my face and pointed at it» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 162). The journalist supports the hypothesis that the story of the girl is actually the result of artificial manipulation, or brainwashing, or even an illusion.

[43] Dupuy, *The precautionary principle*, cit.: 540.

[44] «'anthropocentric' claims» (See Francesco Muzzioli, *Scritture della catastrofe*, Meltemi editore, Sesto San Giovanni 2007: 17).

[45] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 87; «I was wondering if we too had been drawn into a war. A war that was a measure of speed, a war where skin – or something more diffuse, something called 'Swedishness' – was the uniform» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 77). In the journalist's world, Swedish media seem interested in reproposing the video of the attack to promote a new anti-Islamic propaganda, which results in acts of violence against Swedish Muslim citizens.

[46] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 287; «'What she wrote frightened me'» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 265).

and move in with his sister in Canada, where he hopes his family has a better future. The plan to leave, based on the uncertain future, constitutes an irrational reaction in response to what we refuse to take for granted.[47]

4.2.4 Breaking the Loop

The image of the loop that gives substance to Dupuy's theory recurs consistently throughout Anyuru's work. In both the world of the girl and the journalist, for example, the manipulation of the media assiduously exploits the cyclical nature of the loop to produce propagandist action. As already specified, the video of Amin's bombing is continuously replayed to send a loud and clear message. The quote that follows the end of the video: «*Allting kunde ha varit annorlunda*»,[48] hyperbolizes the sense of nostalgia by concretely showing the possible catastrophic effects of Swedish retrotopias.

The same strategy seems also to be applied, however, in the reality of the latter. According to the journalist's collection of testimonies, the experiments taking place in al-Mima employ the same technique of repeatedly projecting images into the prisoner's minds.[49] The goal is to implant in their memories glimpses of the future to identify other potential terrorists. Therefore, the experiments performed on Annika shape a frantic search for the next victim to blame. Loop closure also recurs in the anaphoric structure that begins the letters delivered to the reporter. Almost every new section by the girl commences with the same expression. The fact that 'she writes to the journalist' draws a link between the realities of the two characters.[50] But such closure manifests its effects in other forms as well. In addition to the many coincidences that seem to unite their lives –

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[47] According to the metaphysics of 'occurring time', Dupuy states that the absence of information is one of the primary factors that hinder the completion of a decision-making process. Such condition compels the individual to act based on the limited information at hand. As a result, the individual will tend to adopt a precautionary measure «that is not rational […] but which escapes to the largest degree the situation of not having information» (Dupuy – Grinbaum, *Living with uncertainty*, cit.: 469).

[48] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 62; «*It all could have been different*» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 52).

[49] The effects of media manipulation force prisoners to identify terrorists in a screen. This metaphorical image appears in the works of other authors of Anyuru's generation too, such as Jonas Hassen Khemiri's play *Jag ringer mina bröder* or even Athena Farrokhzad's poetry collection *Vitsvit*. See Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Jag ringer mina bröder*, Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm 2012. See Athena Farrokhzad, *Vitsvit*, Albert Bonniers Förlag, Stockholm 2013.

[50] On one occasion, the opening phrase seems to coney a clear and well-defined connection between their existential levels: «Jag skriver till dig som ännu har ord för det som händer dig, och vars hela värld alltså ligger innesluten i min» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 131); «I'm writing to those of you who still have words for what's happening to you and whose entire world is wrapped up in mine» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 117).

the girl's mother is of Algerian descent, as is the journalist's wife; both of them are from the same neighborhood; both are Muslim – Anyuru attempts to foreground an additional form of loop. Through the journalist's perspective, the author emphasizes the widespread grip of fear poisoning the Scandinavian country and the eventual consequences arising from it.[51]

In recalling his mother's fate, who fled Gambia to find refuge in Sweden, the journalist's memories return to her perpetual state of unease towards the outside world: authorities, banks, and neighbors. The same dynamic seems to influence the way the narrator thinks. While speaking to his daughter about the possibility of moving to Canada, he becomes aware of the risk of implanting fear in younger generations. Conveying the same emotion that he and his mother had to cope with, the journalist himself becomes part of a mechanism that allows the loop to endlessly repeat itself: «'Vi ska resa med flygplan till ett annat land. Min syster bor där.' […] 'Är det för att vi är muslimer?' Jag nickade kort, och visste att jag i det ögonblicket lämnade mammas rädsla i arv till henne».[52]

Fear thus appears as the only legacy that Sweden seems to be able to pass on to its children, fueling a condition of paranoia potentially capable of causing a series of catastrophic consequences. Fear represents the same psychological condition that the girl perceives in the journalist's books: «Jag tyckte om dina böcker, de liknade människor som gick på lina, högt upp i luften. De var vackra av rädsla».[53] The same fear that pushes

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[51] The author himself confessed that most of his life has been marked by the absence of peace: «Politically, I don't think I've ever experienced peace. Only conflicts, speed, friction. My understanding of myself was forged in a postcolonial, capitalist environment of violence, in places where what body you had fully determined the conditions of your life» (Sara Nelsson – Johannes Anyuru, *Alhambra*, eng. transl. by Kira Josefsson, in *Words Without Borders. The Home for International Literature*, 5 March 2019, https://wordswithoutborders.org/read/article/2019-03/march-2019-swedish-alhambra-johannes-anyuru-kira-josefsson/# [Last accessed 23 October 2023]). Moreover, as the author continues, his father often recommended him to always keep ready to leave Sweden in case circumstances took a turn for the worse for immigrants and their descendants. Anyuru *Interview: My Way to Become A Writer*, 29 August 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQA2tyR5-gs [oral source, Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[52] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 231-232; «'We're going to take an airplane to another country. Where my sister lives' […] 'Is it because we're Muslims?' I noded curtly. Then I realized I was letting her inherit my mother's fear» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 211).

[53] The girl quotes a passage from a book supposedly written by the journalist: «Jag skriver till dig som en gång skrev att rädslan var ett stoft som svävade i luften när du växte upp, att den satte sig i håret och ögonen och att ni andades in den» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 81); «I'm writing to you who once wrote that fear was like powder in the air when you were growing up, it got in your hair and eyes and you breathed it in» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 71-72). This sentence, however, is taken from a poem written by the author, *Aska* (Ashes) and published in Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet*. Anyuru, *Aska – Ny dikt av Johannes Anyuru*, in *Aftonbladet*, 15 November 2015,

two promising young students like Amin and Hamad toward the ideals of a violent Islamic revolution,[54] fomenting their hatred against other Swedish Muslims, guilty of bowing their head in the face of the injustices of a society that does not accept them. Fear also translates into the rise of xenophobia. In his interviews with Christian Hondo and Göran Loberg, this theme is brought to the fore. The journalist learns from the former of his newly developed fear of open spaces, which in his mind have become susceptible targets to possible terrorist attacks. Göran Loberg, on the other hand, confesses to the protagonist his irrepressible satisfaction from the sight of images of torture and ill-treatment of Muslim prisoners.[55] If the post-migrant condition collectively imposes fear upon people, the consequences will necessarily affect both sides: migrants, and non-migrants. Such reflections lead the journalist to ask his friend Mido the following question: «'Tittar du aldrig på dina barn […] och undrar om de kommer att kunna leva sina liv här?' sa jag. 'För att de är muslimer?' 'För att människor är rädda, och för att de till slut kommer att göra vadsomhelst för att slippa vara det'».[56]

As one of the main consequences, the author also points to the impossibility of finding an unambiguous definition to frame the concept of *svenskhet* (Swedishness). In this novel, the use of this term also seems to be stuck in an impasse, in an endless loop. Anyuru provides a new, rather critical definition, offering an image capable of reproducing the impossibility of an unambiguous representation of the concept:

> Du var svensk om svenskarna tyckte att du var svensk […] Men vem var egentligen den första svensken, som hade bestämt att de andra var svenskar? Han fanns inte, och där han borde stå fanns ett hålrum, ett hål inne i ordet svensk […].
>     En tomhet.[57]

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https://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/a/7lxv39/aska--ny-dikt-av-johannes-anyuru [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[54] During the conversation between the journalist and Hamad's mother, the same topic recurs. By looking at the gaze of her daughter, the latter states that: «'Hon försöker gömma det men jag ser att hon har ärvt den av oss. Rädslan.' […] 'Du har den också i dig, inte sant? Från dina föräldrar?'» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 265); «'She's trying to hide it, but I can see she's inherited it from us. The fear.' […] 'You have it in you, too, don't you? From your parents?'» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 244).

[55] Loberg makes an explicit reference here to the images broadcast by CNN of the events in Abu Grahib prison during the Iraq war.

[56] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 129-130; «'Do you ever look at your children […] and wonder if they're going to be able to live their lives here?' I said. 'Because they're Muslims?' 'Because people are scared, and because in the end they'll do anything to not feel that way'» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 116).

[57] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 75; «You were Swedish if the Swedes thought you were Swedish […] But I mean, who was the first Swede anyway – the one who'd decided who got to be Swedish? He

By referring to Swedishness as 'emptiness', the author repurposes an image considered in the previous analysis of Khemiri's novel. From Abbas' perspective, his son Jonas is described as a 'cavity', while conversely his father for Jonas is «gasform»,[58] an inscrutable void that vanished from the boy's existence. Such deconstruction of the two characters' personalities in based on their opposing opinions about what being Swedish actually entails. Anyuru, on the other hand, carries out an opposite process, starting with the absence of substance, which, from his point of view describes the concept at its root. It is thus the *svenskhet* itself that takes on an empty and unknowable form, a place of oblivion that forces anyone who looks in its direction into a state of insecurity, but which, for that very reason, needs to be deepened and observed with a different approach: «Vi lärde oss ingenting om tomheten».[59]

4.3 Writing as Preventive Action

How, then, to prevent a catastrophic scenario toward which the spread of fear seems destined to lead inevitably? Moving to another country sounds more like a precautionary decision since it acts directly according to the logic of the catastrophe itself. Relocation to a country like Canada, which like Sweden, is often idealized perhaps too lightly as a social utopia, appears only as an attempt to avoid the obstacle in the hope that nothing will happen. To defeat, and keep catastrophe at a distance, in the background of the future horizon, the girl's prophetic revelation needs to be prevented.

Within this context, the very act of writing appears as the element substantiating the critical function of Anyuru's dystopia. In it, the author holds out the hope of facing a possible catastrophe. If Dupuy's enlightened doomsaying needs the «coordination of all decision-makers on the same image of the future»[60] to operate effectively, Anyuru does not; he calls for coordinated action on behalf of the writers who, like him, have been

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didn't exist, and there was a hole where he was supposed to be, a hole inside the word 'Swedish' […]. An emptiness» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 66).

[58] Khemiri, *Montecore*, cit.: 317; «gas» (Khemiri, *Montecore. The Silence of the Tiger*, cit.: 271).

[59] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 260; «We learned nothing about emptiness» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 239). The problems related to a precise definition of the term *svenskhet* are also one of the subjects of Luca Gendolavigna's doctoral thesis, which asserts that the construction of Swedish identity unfortunately continues to require an external object that exists at its margins to define itself. See Gendolavigna, *Storie di identità*, cit.

[60] Dupuy – Grinbaum, *Living with uncertainty*, cit.: 472.

forced to accept fear as a condition of normality and, consequently, as a legacy for the next generations. Indeed, the novel proudly shows the willingness of the different characters to leave a testimony to posterity: the girl, her father, and even the journalist. Together with them, Anyuru invites participation in a non-violent struggle, driven by the need to «berätta våra historier för svenskarna».[61]

In this sense, the girl's narrative lays the groundwork to take a critical look at the perfect Swedish social utopia, or, in other words, at a society that continues to be pictured as utopian. The very act of writing reveals the structural racism inherent beneath it, as it represents a subversive action that violates the norms of the society in which she lives.[62] The girl's often satirical-sounding narrative allows the author to challenge xenophobic, anti-Islamic, and anti-immigrant extremism through the depiction of a reality in which their voice managed to prevail. Through her perspective, Anyuru deforms the values that were the basis for *folkhem* was based by transforming them into «totalitära sanningar».[63]

Writing also returns as a sacred practice with strong religious connotations, that offer a philosophical alternative to the consequences of Islamic radicalism. As seen beforehand, in the frustrating search for a world in which to regain a sense of self-determination, two boys, like Amin and Hamad find shelter in the teachings of *Daesh*. In response to this behavior, Anyuru opposes a more mystical and spiritual religious dimension, Sufism, which echoes the words that the girl's mother tries to pass on to her daughter. Sufism, a doctrine of personal refinement and self-discipline is opposed to an excessive hardening of religious faith and promotes ideals of peace through metaphorical and poetic language. While often speaking in enigmatic terms,[64] the girl's mother's voice

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[61] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 129; «'We have to fight, brother,' he said. 'We have to tell the Swedes our stories'» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 239).

[62] In the new order, censorship is a legal precautionary measure. Writing represents a clandestine practice. After the death of his wife, the girl's father resumes writing, fully aware of the consequences of his choice.

[63] «totalitaristic truths» (See Aschenbrenner, *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar*, cit.)

Satire in this case serves the purpose of juxtaposing an ideally perfect social and political condition with its inherent contradictions by introducing an external perspective. In this regard, Lyman Tower Sargent defines 'utopian satire' as «a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of that contemporary society» (See Tower Sargent, *The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited*, cit.: 9). See also Zsolt Czigányik, *Satire and Dystopia: Two Genres?*, in Tamás Bényei (ed.) *HUSSE Papers 2003: (Literature and Culture): Proceedings of the 6th Biennial Conference of the Hungarian Society for the Study of English*, KLTE, university of Debrecén 2004, pp. 305-309.

[64] The girl provides a slightly simplistic, yet engaging, definition of Sufism: «Hon var sufi, yani mystiker, och jag minns att det hände att hon satt vaken hela natten och mediterade genom att gång på gång viska Guds nittionio namn. Wallah jediriddare» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 64); «She was Sufi, yani

always sounds like a source of wisdom from which to draw significant lessons. Once more, writing is a crucial element in the exploration of human existence and the meaning of time: «'Vi är en kärleksdikt […] Allting är Guds kärleksdikt till Profeten'».[65] Writing becomes a way to reconnect with one's spirituality:

> 'Det första Gud skapade var en penna.' […] 'Det var alltings början. En penna som beskrev det här. Att jag finns, och du, och att vi rör vid varandra. Sandkornen som skiftar i färg när solen går ner över stränderna i Algeriet. Historien och framtiden.'[66]

Toward the end of the novel, after regaining possession of her consciousness and body, there is a transformation in Annika; she can no longer recognize the journalist or express herself in Swedish anymore. All that remains is a story to be transmitted and written: a 'memory of the future', which exists only in the journalist's mind.[67] Acting on that memory, the memory of the girl, whether it happened or not, the journalist and his wife both feel compelled not to leave for Canada and resolve to stay in Sweden.[68] On the one hand, Isra speaks of a debt they both owe to the girl and remaining in Sweden is an honor for her sacrifice. On the other one, her husband feels an authentic sense of mourning, but has a new hope he wishes to condense into a new book project.[69]

In the final pages, the author concludes the story with an evocative and moving image, leaving it up to the reader to interpret the novel's ending. The journalist, facing

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a mystic, and I remember her sitting awake all night meditating by whispering God's ninety-nine names again and again. Wallah, a Jedi knight» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 55).

[65] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 109; «'We're a love poem […] Everything is God's love poem to the Prophet» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 97).

[66] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 81; «'The first thing God created was a pen.' […] 'That was the beginning of everything. A pen, describing this. Me being here, and you, and us touching each other. The grains of sand changing color as the sun moves across the beaches in Algeria. The past and the future.'» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 71).

[67] «Ett minne av en annan värld, av en möjlig framtid» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 287); «A memory of another world, a possible future» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 265).

[68] As Dupuy states, it is the deaths of the future, rather than those of the past, that people should mourn. See Dupuy, *Enlightened Doomsaying and the Concern for the Future*, cit.: 11.

[69] «Vi stannade för att vi var skyldiga flickan på kliniken att känna hopp. För att allting var annorlunda på grund av henne. Vi stannade […] hos våra levande och döda […] Jag kände en oerhörd förtvivlan, över det hon hade råkat ut för i en annan värld, men också hopp – det hopp som fanns i att ha stannat, och som var syskon till det hopp som hade fått min mamma att korsa ett hav […] Jag stannar för att ge min dotter ett annat arv än vansinnet» (Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 297-300); «We stayed because we owed that girl in the asylum a feeling of hope. Because everything was different because of her. We stayed […] with our living and our dead […] I felt an incredible despair over what she'd experienced in another world, but also hope – the hope in having stayed, a sibling of the hope that had made my mother cross the sea […] I stay to give my daughter an inheritance other than madness» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 274-277).

the window over his home's garden, watches his daughter playing with her new friend, Liat, who has the same name as the girl's best friend in the future. The temporal paradox thus finds a final closure, which does not entirely discard the hypothesis that behind Annika's voice was always the protagonist's daughter trying to warn her father. In the face of this image that instills hope, salvation replaces fear. The author aesthetically contrasts the Swedish word *rädd* (afraid)  with the verb *rädda* (to save): «Hon är borta nu. Borta. Min dotter, som räddade mig. Mötet var ett av våra sista. 'När jag försvinner kanske jag hamnar på en plats där jag inte är rädd längre'».[70]

In conclusion, Anyuru's work constitutes an essential contribution in the further exploration of the Swedish post-migrant condition. The author simultaneously performs an act of creativity and claiming, placing the theme of migration at the center of a different literary space that opens up critical digressions on modern time. In his depiction of a dystopian scenario, the author inverts the temporality on which retrotopian and anti-migratory ambitions structure their discursive constructions. Instead of considering the past as a model for building a new future, the author performs an inverse process, which projects the future into the present so that the former can be averted. With his dystopian narrative, the author recounts the possible catastrophic effects of a totalitarian Sweden from the perspective of those who suffer the consequences of the projected future. Anyuru subverts the discursive constructions of the radical right by transforming them into something monstrous and aberrant, but by doing so, he also paves the way toward a new, possible form of balance in the Swedish post-migrant condition. The novel, in facts, exerts an 'exorcistic' power that evokes «ciò che più ci atterrisce allo scopo di scacciarlo, per ridurlo alla nostra misura e metterlo sotto controllo. Per vederlo, alla fine, come superabile».[71]


4.4 Maria Navarro Skaranger: *Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner*

While Anyuru employs games with genre strategies to narrate the Swedish post-migrant condition, distancing his work from the majority of the literary works about the issue, Maria Navarro-Skaranger reappropriates the more canonical technique of

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[70] Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna*, cit.: 297-300; «She's gone now. Gone. My daughter, who saved me. This meeting was one of our last. 'When I disappear maybe I'll end up in a place where I'm not afraid anymore'» (Anyuru, *They Will Drown in their Mothers' Tears*, cit.: 277).
[71] «that which most terrifies us for the purpose of driving it out, to reduce it to our measure and bring it under control. To see it, in the end, as surmountable» (Muzzioli, *Scritture della catastrofe*, cit.: 14).

autofiction in her debut novel, although her narrative presents an innovative, alternative edge. Navarro-Skaranger is a Norwegian author born to a Chilean father and a Norwegian mother, who published her first novel in 2015.[72] In 2020, Ingvild Søderlind directed a film adaptation inspired by Navarro-Skaranger's work. After the release of her debut novel, the author published two others, one in 2018 and the other in 2021.[73]

The novel is set in the outskirts of Oslo, more specifically in the city of Romsås, one of the many satellite towns surrounding the capital, where the migrant presence has significantly increased during the past decades.[74] The work does not present a definite plot, but weaves together a series of episodes that recount scenes of everyday life from the perspective of the narrator, Mariana. The book is written in diaristic form, in which she narrates in first person her days between school, friends, and family. Mariana is an eighth-grade student at Romsås School. The rest of the family, besides her father and mother, consists of her little brother Matias, a shy and easily impressed child, and Alvaro, her older brother, who ended up in jail for some trouble with the law, although the reason for his arrest remains unclear.

4.4.1 Reception of the Book

Before considering how this Norwegian author's novel created a new trajectory within Scandinavian migration literature, the critical reception of the novel is fundamental to consider. Once again, the postmonolingual features characterizing Navarro-Skaranger's work play a crucial role in this respect. Following the publication of her debut novel, the author has earned a place of absolute privilege in the Norwegian literary scene. As in the case of Khemiri and Hassan, the enthusiasm for the new, young face of Norwegian migration literature had an essential impact at the mediatic level, so much that it almost immediately invited a comparison with *Ett öga rött*, a book the author herself claims to have drawn inspiration from.[75] The parallelism between the two authors is

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[72] See Bernt Erik Pedersen, *Skal møte internasjonale forlag*, in *Dagsavisen*, 26 May 2015, https://www.dagsavisen.no/kultur/boker/2015/05/26/skal-mote-internasjonale-forlag/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

[73] Maria Navarro-Skaranger, *Bok om sorg (Fortellingen om Nils i skogen)*, Forlaget Oktober, Oslo 2018. Maria Navarro-Skaranger, *Emily forever*, Forlaget Oktober, Oslo 2021.

[74] See Terje Wessel, *Det todelte Oslo – etniske minoriteter i øst og vest*, in Jørn Ljunggren (ed.), *Oslo – ulikhetenes by*, Cappelen Damm Akademisk, Oslo 2017, pp. 79-102.

[75] Brynjulf Jung Tjønn, *Bokanmeldelse: Maria Navarro-Skaranger «Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner»*, in *VG*, 23 January 2015, https://www.vg.no/rampelys/bok/i/MK6nm/bokanmeldelse-maria-navarro-skaranger-alle-utlendinger-har-lukka-gardiner, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].

evident: both works are diaries written in first-person narrator and display a particular linguistic form. Similarly to the language employed by Khemiri and Hassan, Navarro-Skaranger's Norwegian deviates from the syntactic and lexical structure of the standard form, which many critics almost immediately labeled after the linguistic variant *Kebabnorsk*. Just as in Sweden and Denmark, the status generally attributed to this variant often tends to highlight the character of authenticity of the cultural content of the periphery, implicitly emphasizing its degree of inferiority compared to the official language.

For instance, in a review of Navarro-Skaranger's work, Bernt Erik Pedersen defined it as «Første roman på drabantby-norsk», almost giving the impression of having caught up with the successes achieved in the other Scandinavian countries.[76] In another interview, Skaranger was asked if she could be considered as the Norwegian Yahya Hassan, perhaps to establish a connection with the star of Danish migration literature. Nevertheless, the author replied in the same interview, Hassan has lived stories and experiences quite apart from hers, and aside from the fact that both present a migratory family background, she does not believe that such a comparison is appropriate.[77]

On the other hand, the author attempted to describe the language she uses as an artificial construction, reproducing both the communicative strategies typical of the environment in which she grew up and her personal interpretation of language. Features attributable to *Kebabnorsk* enhance the Norwegian used by Mariana. However, her language displays some new characteristics at the same time.[78] Norwegian author Tove Nilsen also supported Navarro-Skarager's position by sending a clear message regarding

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[76] «First novel in Drabantby-norwegian» (Bernt Erik Pedersen, *Første roman på drabantby-norsk*, in *Dagsavisen*, 20 January 2015, https://www.dagsavisen.no/kultur/2015/01/20/forste-roman-pa-drabantby-norsk/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]). Drabantby is a word that refers to the satellite cities that surround the urban area of larger towns such as Oslo.
[77] See Tonje Egedius, *Blokkbokstaver*, in *A-magasinet*, 28 January 2015, https://www.aftenposten.no/amagasinet/i/AkyE/blokkbokstaver, [Last accessed 23 October 2023].
[78] Navarro-Skaranger's language has been described as an attempt to depict how a new generation identifies with language by showcasing new types of culturally and linguistically post-national references. See Edoardo Checcucci, *Linguaggio e identità ai confini di Oslo: «Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner» di Maria Navarro-Skaranger e «Tante Ulrikkes vei» di Zeshan Shakar*, in «NuBE, Nuova Biblioteca Europea», 1 (2020), pp. 55-81: 68-70. See also Maïmouna Jagne-Soreau, *Halvt norsk, äkta utlänning Maria Navarro-Skaranger ur ett postnationellt perspektiv*, in «Edda», 105 (2018), 1, pp. 9-29. From a gender studies' standpoint, the novel has also been interpreted as a means to contextualize the life of a young girl facing the challenges of adolescence in a context such as the one of Romsås. See Elisabeth Oxfeldt, *Vingeskutt "innvandrerroman"? Kjønn og sjanger i Maria Navarro-Skarangers* Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner, in «Nordica – Tidsskrift for nordisk teksthistorie og æstetik», 39 (2022), pp. 205-233.

this issue: «Og til alle: Vær så snill, glem ordet kebab-norsk, det er så kleint og røper nesten klinisk avstand».[79]

## 4.4.2 Post-monolingual Features in Navarro-Skaranger's Book

Even though an analysis oriented toward the role played by post-monolingualism in the post-migrant context has already been carried out in the second chapter, it is important to begin the analysis of Navarro-Skaranger's book by sketching a quick overview of the linguistic traits that make this novel so distinctive. Like Hassan and Khemiri, the young author also lends a post-monolingual nuance to her Norwegian, breaking its norms. The medium of the diary allows Mariana to compose her narrative in an intimate and personal way, reproducing in written form the oral language used by her generation.[80] From a syntactic point of view, which follows a precise sequence in Norwegian too, the work gives way to a freer structure that systematically shuffles the position of the various syntagms within the sentence without following an order. The use of ellipsis is also common, especially with regard to syntactic elements including, for example, hypotactic conjunctions introducing subordinate clauses.[81] Another peculiarity lies in the fact that personal pronouns are often retained in their nominative form, even when the sentence requires a dative or accusative one. These aspects are common indicators of the language associated with younger generations with a migratory background.[82]

The post-monolinguistic character of the work naturally weaves together different idioms. Curiously enough, Spanish is rarely included in Mariana's speech, although it emerges quite clearly that the protagonist masters it as a native speaker. The influence of English, however, is certainly more pronounced. Using code-switching, for instance, is

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[79] «And to everyone: Please forget the word kebab Norwegian, it's so awkward and betrays almost clinical distance» (Tove Nilsen, *Tove Nilsen om Maria Navarro-Skaranger «En egen kraft»*, in *Oktober Journal, litteratur magasinet fra forlaget Oktober*, 5 June 2020, https://oktoberjournal.no/forfatterportretter/tove-nilsen-om-maria-navarro-skaranger-en-egen-kraft/, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).

[80] In the episodes where Mariana recounts her conversations on social media chats, the language appears even more minimal and unstructured than in the rest of the text. See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 85.

[81] «Jeg sverger jeg sa ingenting» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 7: «I swear I didn't say anything»). In this case, for example, the author omitted the coordinating conjunction *at* ('that'). The correct form would therefore be: 'Jeg sverger at jeg sa ingenting' ('I swear that I didn't say anything').

[82] «jeg kasta sko på *han*» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 97: «I threw shoes at *he*» [italics added by the author]). The correct form of the sentence, in standard Norwegian, would be: 'jeg kasta sko på *ham*' ('I threw shoes at *him*').

particularly frequent: the narrator switches from Norwegian to English and back to Norwegian within the same sentence.[83] At the morphological level, however, the author often exploits the technique of calque to create neologisms. Indeed, it is possible to appreciate how Mariana adapts English words according to Norwegian morphological norms, such as «snitcha»; «cheeta»; or «freaka».[84] The protagonist thus again emphasizes the typical morphological strategies by which new generations play with and readjust their 'multiethnolects' according to outside influences. In addition, the narrator enriches her slang with references to celebrities, especially American pop music stars such as Jay-Z, Rihanna, and Beyoncé, but also TV series – notably the popular show produced by Warner Bros. *One Tree Hill* – and movies such as *The Lord of The Rings*. Besides English, numerous words of Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Urdu origin recur frequently, especially in the form of intensifiers.[85] During discussions and retorts that Mariana exchanges with her classmates she uses foreign words like «lagela», «wollah» or «la», interjections that belong to Norwegian slang vocabulary.[86] On several occasions, Mariana even exclaims the name of «Allah» to emphasize a concept she is expressing.[87] Other foreign words also recur frequently. The verb «bæde», derived from the English adjective 'bad' and translatable as 'getting angry', replaces the more common *klikke*.[88] The verb «tæsje», presumably of Berber origin and translatable as 'stealing', is routinely used instead of the more common, Germanic-derived word *stjele*.[89] All of these linguistic, cultural traits contribute to increase the sense of glocality that characterizes Mariana's place of birth, but which can also be found in other suburban areas in all three Scandinavian countries.[90]

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[83] «kirken er for meg et sted hjernen er fri og kan den gjøre whatever it want» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 53: «church is for me a place where the brain is free and can do whatever it wants»).

[84] «to snitch»; «to cheat»; «to freak out» (Maria Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 7; 55; 59).

[85] See Anne Grydehøj, *New Scandinavians, New Narratives*, in Annika Lindskog – Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen (eds.), *Introduction to Nordic Cultures*, UCL Press, London 2020, pp. 146-163: 153.

[86] Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 10; 12; 39.

[87] Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 10.

[88] Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 14.

[89] Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 17.

[90] Edoardo Checcucci delves into the concept of 'glocalism' within Maria Navarro-Skaranger's novel, highlighting how Mariana's depicted practices and habits intricately blend both local and global dimensions. The language used by her generation is indeed localized in the neighborhood but reconnects directly to faraway places. Pop music and hip-hop culture unites young people from all over the world. Both dimensions, however, constitute fundamental characteristics of Romsås and its inhabitants, forming a strong sense of belonging. See Edoardo Checcucci, *Rappresentazioni di realtà ai margini di Oslo in* Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner *di Maria Navarro Skaranger e* Tante Ulrikkes vei *di Zeshan Shakar: kebabnorsk, glocalità e gangster 'wannabe'*, in «Altre Modernità», September 2022, pp. 195-206.

Naturally, the narrator performs a language designed to present the reader the social and identifying function of Scandinavian sociolects mentioned in chapter two.[91] Her language does not mirror a supposedly authentic language used by migrants in the suburbs but reproduces the way people of her age talk and act in an informal environment. Furthermore, many clues point to the fact that Mariana knows perfectly well the standard language. The girl often notices small mistakes in her father's Norwegian or that of her classmates' parents.[92] Moreover, when the subject of discussion and the interlocutors invite a more serious and formal tone of expression, her Norwegian exhibits a structure closer to the standard form. Finally, the narrator demonstrates not only that she is perfectly capable of speaking Norwegian, but also that she is familiar with some traditional folkloristic figures from Norwegian fairy-tales.[93]

## 4.5 Ease of Presence

Thus, the postmonolingual dimension constitutes a key identification parameter for the protagonist. However, Navarro-Skaranger's work also offers alternative angles of interpretation that can further enrich the Scandinavian post-migrant debate. Although some of the harsh realities characterizing post-migrant societies, such as racism, are depicted in the novel, the author manages to wrap her whole narrative with a veil of lightness and simplicity in order to frame her daily life of a Norwegian foreign-born teenager under its guise of 'normality'. Navarro-Skaranger's work is, therefore, significantly less tied to existential dilemmas or the assiduous search for alternative social and identity points of reference. In contrast, the post-migrant condition presented by the narrator is so ordinary that it almost evokes a sense of triviality in the reader's mind.

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[91] With the aim of putting some distance from a normative ideal of Norwegian, this is often described as something snobbish and pathetic. The sound of standard Norwegian, for example, is described as «sossestemme» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 50: «snob voice»).

[92] «Butikken til faren til Esra heter Konya Grønt og Frukt [...] de har skrivet grønt og frukt og ikke frukt og grønt, lagela, noen fikk ikke godkjent i norskeksamen» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 15: «Esra's father's shop is called Konya Grønt og Frukt [...] they have written vegetables and fruit and not fruit and vegetables, lagela, somebody did not pass the Norwegian exam»).

[93] During a school project, Mariana mentions two key figures of Scandinavian folklore, *Askeladden* and *Reve-enka*. They are two key characters in the Norwegian fairy tale tradition created by the writer duo Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Engebretsen Moe in the mid-nineteenth century (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 29).

Expanding on this subject from an article by Darcus Howe,[94] Sara Upstone focuses on the new narrative expressions produced by British writers of Asian descent, elaborating on the concept of 'ease of presence' in particular. According to Upstone, the 21st century literary representations that deal with the theme of migration seem to increasingly stress how the issue of multiethnicity is becoming a 'minor concern' with regard to social integration. On the contrary, the scholar identifies in the artistic productions of the younger generation a solid confidence about their 'hybrid' identity that represents «the most tangible evidence of an ease of presence».[95] Sten Moslund has further considered the concept developed by Howe and Upstone as a crucial analytical parameter for exploring the post-migrant condition. The scholar also states that a general reduction in existential tension «about difference and unbelonging» offers an explanation about the same sense of confidence.[96] The awareness of living in a social environment increasingly marked by diversity unites new generations with and without a migratory family background, changing the way society itself can be interpreted, experienced, and conceived, and reducing, at the same time, the heavy burden of otherness. The scholar continues by saying that the effects of this transition show how the characterization of identity and cultural hybridity is slowly disappearing. The very concept of 'hybridity', which ever since the studies of Homi Bhabha has represented an indispensable theoretical frame of reading for migration and diaspora «does not create a unique and separate 'third space' of signification». On the contrary, it seems to lose its value as a descriptive term «to the point of being trivial and unremarkable».[97] Thus, while emphasizing a reality strongly influenced by multiethnicity, a transnational sense of belonging, and a language that mixes symbols from different cultures, migration merges «with the fleeting inconspicuousness of the commonplace».[98]

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[94] In an article from 2010 published on *The Guardian*, Darcus Howe coined the term in reference to the new ethnic minorities in Great Britain in the early 2000s. According to Howe: «The myth of white superiority and its engaging partner has taken a huge beating» (See Darcus Howe, *We are the future*, in *The Guardian*, 10 September 2000, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/10/race.uk1, [Last accessed 23 October 2023]).

[95] See also Sara Upstone, *British Asian fiction: Twenty-first-century voices*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 2010: 88-90.

[96] Moslund, *Postmigrant Revisions of Hybridity, Belonging, and Race in Gautam Malkani's Londonstani*, cit.: 107.

[97] Moslund, *Postmigrant Revisions of Hybridity, Belonging, and Race in Gautam Malkani's Londonstani*, cit.: 114.

[98] See Sten Moslund, *Towards a Postmigrant Reading of Literature: An Analysis of Zadie Smith's NW*, in Moritz Schramm – Sten Pultz Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Mirjam Gebauer – Hans Christian Post –

Moslund's and Upstone's thesis finds a good match in British writers with a migratory background, however the same confidence and the same 'ease of presence' can indeed constitute an equally valid theoretical framework for discussing new tendencies in Scandinavian migration literature. The adjective trivial, therefore, does not need to lend a negative connotation to Navarro-Skaranger's work, but, paradoxically, it represents a new way of narrating the dynamics of post-migrant Scandinavia. Whether the main topic the narrator writes about deals with a school trip, a neighborhood soccer tournament, her first menstrual period, or instead demonic prophecies described in the Koran, how multiethnic families decorate and furnish their homes, or a writing assignment explaining something typically Norwegian, it is all indistinctly filtered through the perspective of a teenager who identifies these experiences as an integral part of her life.

4.5.1 Confidence in Family Environment

The same sense of confidence seems to substantiate how Mariana experiences and perceives the heterogeneity of her world in both her household and the class environment. Born and raised in a home defined by cultural and linguistic multiplicity, Mariana's narrative recognizes the heterogeneous reality of Romsås as an inescapable feature upon which she built her Norwegian identity. Unlike what emerges from the analysis of other characters that were previously nominated in the second as well as in this chapter, such as Jonas from *Montecore*, but also Halim, the boy protagonist of Khemiri's first novel, *Ett öga rött*, the language used by Mariana does not seem to be motivated by a refusal of ethnocentric parameters that attempts to arbitrarily establish what it means to be, or to speak, Swedish or Norwegian. While deviating in much the same way from the standard language, Mariana's use of multiethnolectal Norwegian does not have the same symbolic significance as it did for Khemiri's characters. Her linguistic choices do not represent an attempt to underline a contrast between a language that matches normative standards and one that opposes such status.

As previously mentioned, while undoubtedly reflecting a communicative strategy that seeks to determine the protagonist's linguistic identity, Mariana's style faithfully reproduces the typical oral speech of boys and girls of her age. However, if Khemiri's

Sabrina Vitting-Seerup – Frauke Wiegand (eds.), *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts – The Postmigrant Condition*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, pp. 94-112: 98.

characters' goal was to deconstruct an ethnocentric idea of Swedishness by seeking an intense connection to their cultural origins, this concept does not apply in the same way to the case of Mariana. Although her father often recalls images of his past in Chile, which he remembers alternately with joy and sorrow,[99] the Latino legacy does not attract Mariana's interest in the same way. She does not yearn to rediscover her own cultural roots, which remain mostly confined to the little information discerned about her father's past, stories, and customs, nor does she need to negotiate her Norwegian identity by reinterpreting it through her Chilean background. Indeed, the occasions when Mariana reveals some connection to South America are quite rare. In one episode, two police officers appear at Mariana's apartment to communicate further news about her brother, Alvaro. As the authorities make some routine questions, Mariana answers, almost automatically, that her family comes «fra Norge og Chile», perhaps caught unprepared.[100] A further reference is the catchy email address she uses to access the MSN platform: «Chica_chile_norge@hotmail.com», followed by a description in English and Norwegian.[101] The only characteristic linked to that distant world that seems to catch Mariana's interest is a physical feature that the narrator associates directly with the Latin American world, and that she regrets not having: «selv om er jeg halvt latin-amerikaner rumpa mi er ikke stor nok for å shake ordentlig».[102]

On the other hand, the protagonist tends to adapt her language to the multicultural and post-monolingual condition of Romsås by including in her diegesis expressions from languages other than Spanish. As already noticed, this choice is partly dictated by a collectively shared form of the slang of younger groups but also by more personal reasons. Mariana's passion for the Muslim religion and its theology – she often names the so-called *Jinn*, malignant entities mentioned in the Koran – seems more motivated by her feelings for her crush, Mohammed – renamed *Mu2* by Mariana, in reference to the famous Pokémon fantasy universe, due to the abundance of Mohammeds at school. Her manifest

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[99] The father shows a contradictory relationship with Chile. His claim of giving up his Catholic faith contradicts Mariana's secret knowledge that he prays when he thinks everyone is asleep. The memory of the political and social instability of Chile – he himself confesses that he was imprisoned, probably during the dictatorship of Pinochet – also remains a painful aspect of his past. On the other hand, his happiness in preparing traditional Chilean recipes and his enjoyment of watching soap operas create a positive bridge with the past and reduce the gap that unites his previous life in Chile and his present in Norway.
[100] «from Norway and Chile» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 47).
[101] See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 18.
[102] «although I am half Latin-american my backside is not big enough to shake properly» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 39).

interest in the Islamic cultural heritage is naturally a matter of discussion among the family members. Especially her father, who still maintains a closed distrust towards the outside world. While her mother appears to enjoy listening to Mariana fantasizing about her future conversion to Islam, the father has a much more concerned reaction:

> Jeg finner mamma på stua som chillern i sofaen og så jeg sier til mamma jeg vil sønnen min skal hete Muhammed, og prøver å være helt seriøs, men hun ler av meg […] etterpå jeg går i kjøkkenet og sier til pappa jeg vil konvertere til islam. Han først ikke reagerer ordentlig [...] så da jeg sier jeg er forelska i Mu2, og nå pappa bæder helt og begynner å snakke spansk og stokke på orda.[103]

Even this episode, however, does not result in a harsh confrontation between father and daughter, but, instead, shows the triviality of this situation as a normal part of the narrator's everyday life. At times, it almost seems that the real intent of the girl is to upset him for entertainment rather than claiming her right to choose for herself. Although Mariana's confession of her feelings is not good news to her father, these little squabbles are often ironically and genuinely represented, pushing away the conflictual tension caused by prejudices against diversity. Disputes of this type are quite frequent. Her father's populist statements on topics such as migration flows in Norway, his preference for conservative politics and his diffidence towards Islamic culture in general are rarely shared by his daughter or wife.[104] However, Mariana seems quite accustomed to this type of discussion and does not pay much attention to what her father says: «På vei hjem mamma og pappa selvfølgelig skulle diskutere politikk og til slutt mamma klikka og ikke gadd mer for pappa er esel uansett».[105] Despite his occasional unfortunate utterances, in fact, the father is generally depicted as a positive and funny figure: a good man, sometimes a little rough and clumsy, but remarkably attached to his family.

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[103] «I find my mom in the living room chilling on the couch and so I tell my mom I want my son to be called Muhammad, and try to be completely serious, but she laughs at me [...] afterwards I go to the kitchen and tell my dad I want to convert to Islam. He doesn't react properly at first […] so then I say I'm in love with Mu2, and now my dad totally snaps and starts talking in Spanish and shuffling the words» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 30).

[104] His pride makes him view himself as a fully integrated citizen in the Norwegian context, unlike other immigrants. This is very much reminiscent of Abbas' proud attitude. However, Mariana's father sometimes contradicts himself and his opinions. In one episode, he affirms that immigration to Norway should be halted permanently, and that he votes for the 'Progress Party'. In another one, he admits that he wishes for polygamy to be legalized.

[105] «On the way home mom and dad were of course going to discuss politics and in the end mom freaked out and didn't bother anymore because dad is a donkey anyway» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 53).

This observation is not to say that there are no genuine moments of conflict between family members. The clash of views between Mariana and her parents loses its veil of triviality when the topic of discussion turns to her brother Alvaro and his delicate situation. Besides adding a dramatic *leitmotiv* in a book that connects mostly disparate episodes, this trait underlines how Mariana's lifestyle does not constitute a serious issue in the family context.

4.5.2 Confidence in School Environment

The school environment, on the other hand, is a setting in which diversity in terms of ethnicity and cultural overlapping define the social dynamics of students; therefore, it is where Mariana and her classmates recognize each other as a group. Her double Chilean and Norwegian background is not acknowledged as an exception or an anomaly. It neither puts Mariana in front of a dramatic existential dilemma about her own identity nor does it configure a condition of hybridism as a synthesis of her features as a Norwegian of foreign descent. Rather, Romsås' post-migrant, multicultural, and multilingual nature simply represents where her life takes place, and her identity is shaped accordingly. Therefore, Mariana's sense of belonging is not influenced by a normative idea of Norwegian identity. She cannot think of herself as a subject belonging to a marginal social context or as an individual divided between contrasting dimensions. Navarro-Skaranger's novel dissolves that conflicting aura with which other works tend to describe the exhausting search for alternative cultural and identity points of reference.

However, the triviality that frames such a condition is not synonymous with naivety. In fact, Mariana and her classmates are fully aware of the problems related to the migratory issue and the status generally attributed to individuals like them. Likewise, such awareness has no control over their lives. In one of the first episodes, for example, Mariana's class goes downtown to attend an electoral propaganda event in which several parties present their programs to the public. Ibra, one of Mariana's classmates, almost provokes an altercation with some of the representatives of what the narrator defines as «mongo partier», the right-wing parties.[106] The controlled reaction of the other members of the class and of Mariana herself, who instead blames Ibra for his inappropriate

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[106] «mongol parties» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 15). Perhaps with the aim of strengthening the seriousness of the situation, the author places in this event also Erna Solberg, Norwegian Prime Minister from 2013 to 2021 and leader of the *Høyre*, the Norwegian Conservative Party.

behavior, demonstrates an awareness and a maturity that aims to exorcise similar events by ignoring them, rather than giving in to those provocations. This episode is a clear example of what it means to read Navarro-Skaranger's novel in terms of 'ease of presence'. As Sten Moslund states, the consequences of otherness, such as racism, displacement, and unbelonging, «appear to be disappearing, or, at least, to have lost the power over the subject they once had».[107] Moreover, traditional national symbols do not define how Mariana feels attached to the nation. Speaking of herself and her friends, the narrator emphasizes the authenticity of their Norwegian identity. The satellite city, 'abandoned' to itself by welfare state policies, begins to establish its own parameters to define an alternative conception of Norwegianness. As Anne Grydehøj states: «age and place (being young in Romsås) are more significant markers of identity than individual ethnic and cultural origins».[108] Showing confidence in such new identity parameters allows Mariana to establish who can be assigned or not the status of 'Norwegian'. The protagonist describes this type of label from a different point of view: an authentic Norwegian recognizes himself or herself in the diversity of Romsås and does not try to imitate false idols in order to look and sound like a Norwegian. During a school event, for instance, Mariana sorts through the different types of parents according to her personal assessment: «Alle foreldra til oss norskingene kom, og så noen afrikanere for de også er mer norske, og noen utlendinger som prøver å bli potet».[109] The protagonist makes a distinction between who can be considered a *norsking*, who simply tries to emulate the behavior of white Norwegians, and the so-called «potet», a term used by Mariana to emphasize, in a mocking way, the stereotypical image of the Norwegian white middle-class, characterized by a sense of inadequacy and boring immobility.[110] This distinction, however, is not arbitrary, nor is it necessarily meant to create a rift between different categories. Ruben, for instance, a boy whom the narrator defines as an «ekte potet», is one of her best friends.[111]

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[107] See Moslund, *When Migration Turns From the Spectacular to the Ordinary*, cit.: 356.
[108] See Grydehøj, *New Scandinavians, New Narratives*, cit.: 153. According to the Norwegian Academy dictionary, *Norsking* is a term that emphasizes an authentic sense of belonging to Norwegian culture, even more than the more neutral term *Norsk* ('Norwegian'). See *NAOB. Det norske akademis ordbok*, https://naob.no/.
[109] «All the parents of us Norwegians came, and then some Africans because they are also more Norwegian, and some foreigners who are trying to become potatoes» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 41).
[110] «potato» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 15).
[111] «authentic potato» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 34).

Living in a place defined by different cultures represents the starting point from which all the dynamics connected to school, friendship, and contrasts arise. Diversity offers different cues and opportunities to kill time, create games and challenges, to tease, or to compliment, each other. Mariana challenges two of her classmates to a game: who has got more blood ties with more parts of the world: «det ble om å gjøre å være fra mest land».[112] In another episode, the protagonist discusses with her friend, Isa, to determine who can recognize the ethnic origin of Jennifer, another girl from their class: «JEG OG ISA hadde stor diskusjon i dag også for Isa mener Jennifer er etiopier og jeg bare: dude, Jennifer er fra Trinidad».[113] When boys and girls tease each other, there are references to diversity and multi-ethnicity. Even in these cases, hybridism and multiplicity are used as a dissing practice: «Ibra bare til Isa […]: morra di knuller kurderelevene sine, og så Isa bæda totalt […]: kjeften din Ibra, morra mi lærte morra di norsk».[114] Although such dynamics occur occasionally in hostile and offensive tones, the altercations between classmates hardly lead to severe consequences. On the contrary, they often remain limited to situations when tensions are running high, in typical adolescent style.[115] Similarly, Mariana ironically elaborates on the space she shares with other people. Despite her interest in Islamic culture, for instance, Mariana seems to regret this passion of hers during the period of Ramadan. Her position, however, does not bring to the table any political or xenophobic connotation, but simply stems from the fact that none of her Muslim friends is allowed to brush their teeth before coming to school. *Eid* (Eid), the traditional feast day marking the end of Ramadan is ironically celebrated with joy by

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[112] «we played who comes from most countries» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 31).

[113] «ISA AND I had a big discussion today too because Isa thinks Jennifer is Ethiopian and I'm like: dude, Jennifer is from Trinidad» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 38).

[114] «Ibra just like that to Isa [...]: your mom fucks her Kurdish students, and then Isa totally lost her shit […]: shut up Ibra, my mom taught your mom Norwegian» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 10).

[115] On the contrary, taking offense in such situations is actually perceived as something unusual and strange: «Ibra bare: [...] feite jævler, morraknuller […], og Esra ble heftig pissed, jeg kunne se, for alltid det kommer rynke i panna huns, og hun bare: når du møter flodhestene i Somalia Ibra, de synger 'we are family'!!! og Ibra ble helt stille, nesten det så ut som han ble såra, for ikke han svarte, wollah det aldri har skjedd før» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 36-37: «Ibra went like: [...] fat fuckers, mother fuckers […] and Ezra got violently pissed, I could see, because she always gets wrinkles in her forehead, and she went like: when you meet the hippos in Somalia Ibra, they sing 'we are family'!!! and Ibra got all quiet, almost it looked like he was hurt, because he didn't answer, wollah it has never happened before»).

Mariana for this very reason: «I DAG DET var Eid (ENDELIG SLUTT PÅ ÅNDENE)».[116]

### 4.5.3 Confidence with Taboos

The work treats the theme of migration with confidence, which allows the author to recover the usage of certain words often perceived as taboos, albeit in a more ironic and colloquial guise. Words that can be related to the domain of migration, in fact, often present different meanings depending on the context. On several occasions, the protagonist defines the school as «asylmottaket».[117] This metaphor refers to a social atmosphere that is sometimes particularly chaotic and highlights that the individuals in the whole neighborhood are prevalently from different ethnic backgrounds. Mariana uses this term on two occasions, first when she remembers a heated argument between two of her classmates, and on another occasion to describe the mix of screams and excitement that precedes the brawl between Ibra and Mu2, both determined to fight to win the protagonist's heart.

Also, the word *tyrk* (Turkish), a term often used to emphasize with hostility a distance from those who are characterized by physical traits reminiscent of African or Middle eastern descent,[118] changes according to the context. In one episode, the whole school is defined as a «tyrkisk bryllup», another metaphor that seeks to capture the excitement that lingers in the school corridors following the official announcement of a new couple.[119] Mariana also uses 'Turkish' as an adjective to describe the physical features of Mu2, both with a positive and negative connotation. If his 'Turk eyes' indicate a trait of beauty and depth in the gaze of the boy, his 'Turk beard' does not seem to satisfy the aesthetic taste of the narrator: «Mu2 lenet seg mot meg, med litt skjegg på haka som var ikke tatt vekk for han sikkert skal gro tyrkerskjegg, og med de svarteste og mest skinnende tyrkerøynene sine som stirra på mine øyne».[120]

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[116] «TODAY IT was Eid (FINALLY NO MORE BREATHS)» (See Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 20).

[117] «centre for asylum seekers» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 29).

[118] When used in certain contexts, the Norwegian Academy dictionary describes the lemma *tyrk* as derogatory and offensive. See *NAOB. Det norske akademis ordbok*, https://naob.no/.

[119] «turkish wedding» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 94).

[120] «Mu2 leaned towards me, with a little beard on his chin that hadn't been removed because he's probably growing a Turk beard, and with his blackest and most shiny Turk eyes staring at my eyes» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 95).

Even the word *utlending* (foreigner) has different shades of meaning. Mariana uses the word to qualify the rude attitude of some of her classmates who constantly disturb the lesson by making inappropriate comments: «i dag også utlendingene viste seg igjen for Solveig sa vi skulle rekke opp hånda om visste vi noe om Munch, og Dardan rekket opp hånda og bare: Edvard Mønsj er han som malte dama med orgasme på brua».[121] Paradoxically, the adjective also seems to refer to an ignorant person. Ibra is called a 'foreigner' because he does not know where the Norwegian royal family holds court: «På vei hjem, Ibra jævla utlendingen, Allah han eier ikke skam, peka på festninga og trodde kongen bodde der».[122] Alternative uses of this word recur in reference to the narrator's parents' generation. As previously discussed, according to Mariana's perspective, *utlending* talks about those foreign people who pathetically try to imitate as much as possible the white, middle-class Norwegian way of doing things. At times, being a foreigner also takes on a positive meaning. During a classroom discussion on the concept of nationality, one of the students, Johnny, uses the word *utlending* with pride: «alle som er halvt norsk og halvt utlending også kan regnes som ekte utlendinger».[123]

Finally, in one of the last episodes, Mariana contextualizes the word 'foreigner' in a discussion that quotes the title of her work. In recalling a day when she is walking back home with her brother Alvaro, the latter shares with his sister his thought on the matter: «se, alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner [...] Jeg bare: hvem bor der, og broren min bare: afrikanere, hvem ellers, og jeg bare: hvorfor har de lukka gardiner, og broren min [...]: fordi de ikke vil noen skal vite hva som skjer hjemme i huset vel».[124] The term therefore also includes a nuance of suspicion, of mystery and of diffidence about the reputation of particular categories of immigrants, in this case of African origin. Although it is not entirely clear what Alvaro is trying to express, this passage shows how certain stereotypes manage to keep their influence even in an environment such as Romsås.

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[121] «today the foreigners showed up again for Solveig said we should raise our hands if we knew anything about Munch, and Dardan raised his hand and just: Edvard Mønsj is the guy who painted the woman having an orgasm on the bridge» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 91).

[122] «On the way home, Ibra fucking foreigner, Allah he has no shame, pointed to the fortress and thought the king lived there» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 15).

[123] «anyone who is half Norwegian and half foreign can also be considered an authentic foreigner» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 22).

[124] «see, all foreigners keep their curtains closed [...] I just: who lives there, and my brother just: Africans, who else, and I just: why do they have their curtains closed, and my brother [...]: because they don't want anyone to know what's going on in the house well» (Navarro-Skaranger, *Alle utlendiger har lukka gardiner*, cit.: 102).

Mariana's diary offers an alternative perspective for consideration of the Norwegian post-migrant condition. The narrator reveals a world that looks toward the present with a different awareness from the other works analyzed in this thesis. The world where Mariana lives acts in the function of diversity instead of using it as an offensive instrument. Moreover, her confidence when talking about her everyday life allows to approach some issues with a different spirit. Mariana does not need to negotiate her Norwegian identity in contrast to an external reference because she is accustomed to a context where feeling Norwegian implies relying on different parameters. Being Norwegian in Romsås is not presented as a matter related to ethnicity or origin, nor does it pose a clear-cut separation between those who belong or do not belong to Norwegian society. From a post-migrant perspective, the way Mariana frames the concept of Norwegianness is rather a matter of attitude, adaptability, and, above all, awareness of the new society. Navarro-Skaranger manages to normalize those dynamics that appear extremely heavy and confrontational at first glance. Migration does not appear to be an unresolved issue or a subject that triggers conflictual situations. Instead, the opposite is true as its effects represent a constant, an omnipresent element that marks her days, guides her choices, and gives a form to her identity.

In conclusion, Anyuru's and Navarro-Skaranger's works indeed represent possible new trajectories for literature that aims to study the effects of a society increasingly defined by diversity. On the one hand, the originality of these works broadens the perspective on the Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish post-migrant condition; on the other one, it further consolidates the position of writers with a migratory family background in the Scandinavian art scene. Thus the two authors propose new angles of consideration for migration and its manifestation. Anyuru experiments with literary genres that are particularly popular among younger readerships. The use of dystopian sci-fi devices is not a very usual choice among Scandinavian post-migration writers, as shown in the previous chapters. The plot is gripping and engaging, and the girl's mysterious story maintains considerable suspense. However, the novel equally succeeds in conveying a forceful stance on a thorny issue such as migration by transforming the Swedish utopian social model into a dystopian nightmare. The Swedish author's work, therefore, represents an effective way to capture the attention of the audience of readers, and to raise awareness on a topic by offering a different perspective. Likewise, with her novel, Maria

Navarro-Skaranger proves to be something of an innovator in this respect. The author demonstrates that the representation of the dynamics of post-migrant societies can also occur without overemphasizing the most unpleasant aspects arising from the consolidation of stereotypes and categorizations. Compared to the other authors considered in the previous chapters, whose frequent use of irony perhaps mitigates a certain unease related to problems such as racism and marginality, Navarro-Skaranger's innovation lies precisely in her capacity to show the reader the ordinariness of a world considered unfairly 'alien' by those who do not experience it firsthand.

**Conclusions**

This thesis has explored the concept of 'post-migration' as a theoretical framework for observing the current social and cultural condition that characterizes Scandinavian countries, as it is one of the European areas most affected by migration. In order to perform this examination, the analysis has focused on a selection of literary works produced by Danish, Swedish and Norwegian writers.

Before turning to such analysis, it was necessary to clarify the use and potentialities of the term 'post-migration' on a theoretical and conceptual level. To do that, the first chapter has traced the evolution of 'migration studies' over time. Beginning from the studies that arose in the late 19th century to the post-colonial and transnational theories in the latter half of the 20th century, the focus has ultimately shifted to the more recent post-migrant theoretical framework. Over the past years, this concept has been highlighting a fundamental contradiction in how migration studies pursue their objective. Examining an incredibly complex phenomenon by circumscribing it to a single anthropological category such as migrants – that is, researching 'migrants' – may have paradoxically contributed to widening the gap between various ethnic groups coexisting in the same social space.

As the analysis of major post-migration studies has shown, one of the consequences that has been caused due to such polarization is that Western societies' narratives shape their self-perception based on the presence of an external element within them. The certainties that are justified by the ethnographic supremacy of one people over other minority groups rigidify the identity and cultural traits used by a nation-state to define itself. Moreover, over time, the same kind of discrimination has included the new generations with a migratory background, whose representation remains anchored in an ideal based on separation between different ethnic groups. Consequently, such a discriminatory approach has crystallized a sense of otherness and non-belonging not only for first-generation migrants but also for their descendants. As shown in the first chapter, the concept of post-migration has pointed out how the effects of migration manifest in people's everyday lives and define the current condition of societies with higher migratory rates. The background of the new generations represents the living evidence of such a change. Yet, these groups have always lacked the opportunity to play a defined

role in the narratives of the collective social condition due to the absolute marginality of many migration-related dynamics.

The chapter has also sought to explain how artistic productions produced by the younger generation represented evidence of this contradiction. Labels such as 'immigrant literature' or 'immigrant writer', used in Scandinavian countries to define the work of authors with a foreign background, often attempted to draw a clear line between the constructed categories such as migrants and non-migrants, even though many of these individuals were born or, at least, raised in Scandinavian countries. In contrast, the concept of post-migration proposes a different point of view. In the various studies cited to discuss the validity of the term, post-migration describes an analytical perspective that seeks to encompass the effects and consequences of migration, thereby contributing to making the meta-narrative of Western societies more inclusive. Furthermore, post-migration has also served as an umbrella term to define a temporary socio-historical condition that distinguishes societies after migration has occurred.

Undoubtedly, there is an ultimate goal in a post-migrant perspective to shift attention to some pressing migration-related social issues. As shown in the first chapter, this concept does not imply that it represents a definitive solution to societal issues such as racism and xenophobia. As Anne Ring Petersen, Moritz Schramm and Frauke Wiegand state: «Postmigrant societies are not 'post-racial' societies».[1] While a perspective that focuses on migration-related issues may not be able to give rise in the immediate future to establish more solid stability among society's various components, it undeniably provides a more balanced representation of a reality that is too often marginalized or simply ignored. Therefore, it is more accurate to say that a different point of view can move the readers' gaze toward the changes and the dynamics related to migration and uncover fresh perspectives within the contemporary narrative of Scandinavian societies.

To meet this need, the body of works selected has presented a diverse spectrum of authors whose biographies connect to the phenomenon of migration in various ways. This thesis includes authors born in Sweden, Denmark or Norway to one Scandinavian parent and one of foreign origin (Jonas Hassen Khemiri, Johannes Anyuru and Maria Navarro

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[1] Anne Ring Petersen – Moritz Schramm – Frauke Wiegand, *Academic Reception*, in Moritz Schramm – Sten Pultz Moslund – Anne Ring Petersen – Mirjam Gebauer – Hans Christian Post – Sabrina Vitting-Seerup – Frauke Wiegand (eds.), *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts The Postmigrant Condition*, Routledge, London-New York 2019, pp. 11-25: 19.

Skaranger); one author born in Denmark to Palestinian parents (Yahya Hassan); an author who was born and raised in Argentina and moved to Norway once she reached the age of majority (Veronica Salinas); and finally, an author of Scandinavian origin, whose work is nevertheless closely linked to the topic of migration (Aasne Linnestå). Presenting multiple perspectives on the subject has allowed elaboration on the various facets of the Scandinavian post-migrant condition as depicted in the selected texts. As one of the many mediums well-suited for conveying diverse perspectives, literature can profoundly influence one's position on migration and its repercussions..

The second chapter has examined the novel *Montecore: en unik tiger* by Jonas Hassen Khemiri and the poetry collection *Yahya Hassan* by Yahya Hassan. Notably, this chapter has shifted the analysis to a linguistic one. Yasemin Yildiz's concept of post-monolingualism has strongly influenced the analysis of these two literary works, which served as a reference point for describing the condition of not only Scandinavian languages, but also many languages worldwide. In some places, especially in Western Europe, such a condition is strongly linked to the migration phenomenon which is gradually diminishing the pivotal role once assigned to national mono-languages as a fundamental and exclusive identity parameter. Increasingly influenced by external linguistic factors, language change is a clear indication of a post-migrant society undergoing its globalizing transition. The globalizing nature of this shift is exemplified by the growing trend among young Scandinavians to regularly integrate linguistic elements from diverse sources, including Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, and, notably, English. This linguistic fusion is reflected in evolving language customs and behaviours, primarily, but not solely, in informal settings, and it results in the emergence of sociolects and multiethnolects. Consequently, these dynamics foster a heightened awareness among the younger generations regarding language and cultural diversity. The works of Khemiri and Hassan served to frame the concept of post-migration as a space of postmonolingual claim, which simultaneously triggers a creative approach through which to present language itself.

The comparison of the two works has showed how the stylistic freedom claimed by Khemiri and Hassan serves in different ways. How the two authors mix different linguistic registers has been read here as a subversive strategy, as opposed to a dogmatic view that does not put into question the role of the standard language. Furthermore, by varying the

linguistic styles in their works, the two authors empirically demonstrated the evolving trajectory of language in the post-migrant context of Sweden and Denmark.

Such a state of uncertainty and lack of linguistic control compels readers, irrespective of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, to confront a reality that is becoming more and more pervasive in Scandinavian societies. In Khemiri's work, the dual narrative level intricately weaves together the various characters' perspectives, each with their distinct language styles. 'Khemirish', the idiom that the author invents to give a voice to two first generation 'migrants' like Kadir and Abbas, paradoxically recalls an old-fashioned form of Swedish, capable of creating a kind of bridge with the roots of the language. Jonas' Swedish, on the contrary, shows a steadier evolution, leading him to abandon his impeccable Swedish to take a form closer to the language spoken by the new generations, with evident references from Arabic and English. The employment of this form expresses disappointment in a society that discriminates against him and a father who betrays his trust while also serving as a means to seek refuge and construct a new identity as a Swede.

The analysis of Hassan's collection of poems, however, has revealed that the Danish used by the poet appears grammatically and syntactically correct for most of the work. However, in the conclusive section, *LANGDIGT*, the author displays Danish more resembling the language of the Aarhus 'ghetto'. Here, Hassan incorporates Arabic words and expressions typical of slang language without providing any translation assistance to the reader. As a result, the reader will encounter a language that is both familiar and foreign. Although the Danish in Hassan's work may evoke the oral traits associated with the so-called *Perkerdansk*, the author consciously manipulates the language. The analysis of his poems demonstrates that the author's objective is to challenge the prejudice and instrumentalization directed against him. The duality that is forced upon the Danish poet is evident, representing the new multicultural face of contemporary Denmark and the immigrant criminal, who becomes the mirror of a more wide-ranging social issue. Hence, Hassan is never fully assimilated into society but also never entirely excluded.

Such a linguistic transformative process compels society to renegotiate certain assumptions from this point of view. Considering the speed with which the Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish languages are adapting to the influences brought by migratory flows, mainly at the lexical level, it will hardly be possible to establish sharp distinctions

that separate standard language from a language labeled as the prerogative of social groups with foreign ethnic roots. As shown by the studies of Pia Quist, who first coined the term 'multiethnolect', new generations, growing up in contact with one another, will increasingly determine independently the linguistic strategies to be adopted, recognizing in them a symbol capable of forming greater homogeneity.

In addition to a 'space-claiming', the post-migrant perspective suggests that the encounter with the Other can be presented as an opportunity for openness and identity reformulation. In order to present this possibility, the third chapter has focused on two authors with very different backgrounds. The objects of analysis in this section were Veronica Salinas, a writer born in Argentina and transplanted to Norway in her early twenties, and her work *Og - en argentisk aupairs ordbok* and Aasne Linnestå, an ethnically Norwegian author, and her work *Morsmål*. In this case, the definition of post-migration is a clearing-space; that is, a space capable of offering possible epistemological alternatives to the construction of individual identity and a sense of belonging to the nation. The examination of the two writers' works as possible examples of a new type of formation literature or coming-of-age literature, which, like the more canonical cornerstones of traditional German Bildungsroman, push the protagonists to enter a changing social space in order to establish a new identity balance with it. In particular, alternative approaches to narrating the process of individual formation have surfaced. The primary interpretive key for both works lies in the emergence of a new post-national and post-migrant confidence rooted in cosmopolitan identity awareness.

In the case of Salinas' analysis, cosmopolitanism is a process of skills acquisition that contributes to developing a new sense of post-national patriotism. Initially, the protagonist's aspiration to immerse herself in Norwegian culture while distancing herself from her Argentine background reflects an assimilationist approach, ultimately resulting in a loss of identity. Only through revisiting her Latin American life does she discover the right key to analyze and understand the experiences and choices she goes through in Norway. As noted, this reconsideration enables her to develop skills in resilience and self-determination, allowing her to live beyond the constraints of discursive constructions that associate a sense of nationhood with a set of predetermined symbols. Indeed, the words expressed in the finale by the protagonist have showed that this form of patriotism does

not guarantee an unbreakable loyalty to the history and culture of a single nation, Argentina or Norway, but extends beyond the borders of the two countries.

The chapter continues with an analysis of Aasne Linnestå's collection of poems. The comparison between the two works has proved to be crucial not only for this section but also for the overall thesis. Contrasting the perspective of a young girl forced to confront a new country, a new culture, and a new language at an older age with that of an author whose perspective observes the effects of migration from an external position, was a valuable exercise that further broadened the scope of the post-migrant perspective. Linnestå's collection of poems also delves into the impact of migration on reconfiguring the relationship with the nation. Again, the concept of cosmopolitanism has provided a beneficial framework for this analysis. Notably, Marsha Meskimmon's definition of cosmopolitanism as a 'precarious ecology' was extremely useful in describing the bond created between the two characters in the work. The author positions herself in the first person, imagining a journey that allows herself to directly empathize with the figure of the 'refugee', a girl who escaped violence and poverty to seek asylum in Norway. The author's lyrical perspective, mirroring her own experiences, evolves as she begins to understand her own world, language, and culture through the refugee's 'outsider' eyes. Overcoming her initial mistrust and fear over personal safety due to the presence of a foreign element in her home, Linnestå rediscovers values such as freedom of choice, self-determination over the body, relationships with the opposite sex, and the love for Norway, thanks to the refugee.

Both authors dissolve the boundaries that traditionally separate the local from the global, creating new spaces for dialogue that position migration as a fundamental element in comprehending the intricacies of the post-migrant condition and its reflection in the daily lives of diverse individuals, including migrants and non-migrants. The third chapter explores the necessity to embrace the social challenge of cosmopolitanism. The manner Salinas and Linnestå narrate the post-migrant condition highlights a continuous exchange of various cultural expressions, underscoring the significance of shaping identity formation according to a cosmopolitan way of being in the world. Linnestå's work in particular, though paradoxically a 'minority' within the chosen body of works, stands as an inspiring beacon. *Morsmål*'s post-migrant perspective could serve as a model, inviting other 'ethnically' Scandinavian authors to lend their unique voice and insight on this

subject matter.[2] Different points of view such as the one offered by the Norwegian author are needed to expand the scope through which the subject of post-migration can be explored, in order to provide alternative insights into a research area that, while aiming to deconstruct ethnic-based categorizations, often restricts its examination to foreign-born authors and artists. Placing emphasis on an ethical-philosophical approach like cosmopolitanism can contribute to a more profound understanding of the evolving face of post-migrant society in a comprehensive manner. This approach does not necessarily entail undermining the foundational pillars of the nation-state but rather it suggests the possibility of coexisting with it.

The fourth chapter addresses similar issues; however, the primary objective of this section was to identify new potential trajectories for presenting Scandinavian post-migrant literature in a different guise, paving the way for a fresh contextualization of the theme of migration. For this reason, the fourth chapter has framed the concept of post-migration as space-creating, while simultaneously emphasizing, as seen in the works analyzed in the second chapter, the importance of claiming a more solid form of representation for the new generations of authors with migratory backgrounds. The works analyzed in this last section were Johannes Anyuru's novel, *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar* and Maria-Navarro Skaranger's novel, *Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner*. The analysis has showed how both authors, with their works, represented the theme of post-migration originally and innovatively.

Anyuru's novel slightly deviates from conventional Scandinavian post-migrant literature as far as the choice of genre is concerned. Typically, foreign-born authors raised in Scandinavian countries pay homage to their parents' diasporic experiences by blending them with their own perspectives on society as second- or third-generation Scandinavians. This fusion transpires through literary genres such as (auto)biography or more imaginative reinterpretations of their own life experiences, such as autofiction. However, Anyuru takes a different path by exploring the theme of post-migration within the realm of dystopian science fiction, a genre extremely popular among diverse readers. Through a dystopic portrayal of a totalitarian Sweden, the author establishes a dialogue between

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[2] An example of this is the popular tv-show *Skam*, a Norwegian production directed by Julie Andem that was broadcasted between 2015 and 2017, which centers around a group of teen friends in Oslo and their respective issues. One of these characters, Sana Bakkoush, is a Muslim girl whose strong religious faith often conflicts with her desires and decisions.

the present and a potentially catastrophic future, in the characters of the 'journalist' and the 'girl'. The author incorporates typical elements of science fiction narratives, including inter-dimensional travels and space-time paradoxes. The concept of the time loop is a crucial theme for the analysis of Anyuru's work. There are enduring contradictions in the Swedish post-migrant condition surrounding the concept of identity, often encapsulated in the term 'Swedishness'. These questions and dilemmas persistently resurface like a loop, endlessly spinning without finding a definitive answer. The author instead calls for a collective effort to break this loop, a source of uncertainty and fear for the entire Swedish society.

Navarro-Skaranger's novel's innovative nature, on the other hand, has not been identified in the choice of the genre. Instead, the Norwegian author employed a more classical autofictional approach inspired by her adolescence spent in the multi-ethnic neighborhood of Romsås, near Oslo. The uniqueness of her work lies more in the content it conveys. While many authors emphasize the conflicting and challenging social dynamics that characterize post-migrant conditions by recounting the dramas and consequences of racism, xenophobia, and hatred towards migrants, Skaranger's work offers a different perspective. The novel frames the same condition in a dimension of triviality and lightness. These two traits reflect a desire to alleviate the weight of the representation of the theme of migration. The author's novel seeks to show life in Norway's multiethnic suburbs through the perspective of someone who is accustomed since childhood to living immersed in diversity and recognizes it as a normal part of their existence. This inclination connects to Sara Upstone's thesis, suggesting that British migration literature currently manifests a distinct 'ease of presence' regarding complex issues like those mentioned above. The same 'ease of presence' has been employed to frame Navarro-Skaranger's novel in order to describe a similar trend in Scandinavian migration literature.

The analysis in the fourth chapter represents an effort to seek new ways through which to present post-migration to the public. In particular, Navarro-Skaranger's work serves as a precursor to a new kind of post-migrant representations in literary productions that do not seek to overemphasize the previously mentioned issues. In contrast, it could pave the way for a more nuanced exploration of the subject. Other authors, such as Jonas Hassen Khemiri, have perhaps already embarked on a similar trajectory. Khemiri's latest

novel, *Pappaklausulen* (*The Family Clause*),[3] places the events of a young father and his complicated relationship with his family members as the novel's the focal point. Again, although some references to the sphere of migration are present – the protagonist's father emigrated to Sweden many years earlier – they just remain part of the background of Khemiri's work.

In conclusion, the post-migrant perspective paints a consistent picture of Scandinavia, reflecting shared traits among the three countries examined in this thesis. The migration flows in this geopolitical zone in recent decades are similar. Migration flows have led to an increasing number of families of foreign origin settling in Scandinavia. Despite efforts to manage this phenomenon, as explored in the first chapter, migration will likely continue to impact Scandinavian societies in the coming years. This results in Sweden, Denmark and Norway now facing a socio-historical phase of post-migrant transition, which is slowly renegotiating the certainties that all three countries used to build their social identities over time. Indeed, one can discern the exploration of themes such as multilingualism, identity formation, and a noticeable elevation in the confidence with which migration-related topics are portrayed to the public across various post-migrant literary representations worldwide. However, the utopistic welfare state dream that has characterised Scandinavian social policies' narrative for decades constitutes a crucial, and unique factor to understand the body of works analysed in this thesis. The crisis of such a social model has generated various effects, ranging from conflictual situations, as evident in the staunch opposition of Scandinavia's radical right-wing parties, to new opportunities for reconciliation. New generations blend their identities as Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes with symbols from their cultural origins, creating new spaces for critique and engagement with a society that takes so much pride in its inclusive virtues, self-righteousness, and openness, but that at the same time seeks to reaffirm more conservative values.

Contextually, many of these writers have had a significant following. They have become public figures acclaimed by critics and the public, who recognize themselves in their writing. Post-migration literature may still be considered a secondary door to delve into the recent history of Scandinavian countries. However, its potential impact on the

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[3] Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Pappaklausulen*, Albert Bonniers förlag, Stockholm 2018; Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *The Family Clause*, eng. trans. by Alice Menzies, Harvill Secker, London 2020.

literary landscape may likely expand over the years, becoming a cornerstone of Northern literature. Through their narratives, authors who center their stories on the theme of migration and recognize the importance of exploring the dynamics of the post-migrant condition can open new spaces for societal discourse, cultural enrichment and renegotiation of values related to nation and ethnicity, which gradually change their role in such an inexperienced condition. Thus, the post-migrant perspective shifts the focus from the migrant as an anthropological and literary category to migration as an encompassing phenomenon that affects the evolution of a society and, consequently, of an entire community. The growing inclusion of diverse perspectives on the transformation of Scandinavian societies must necessarily consider the voices of those marginalized within society, thereby reversing the trend that separates migrants from non-migrants or the periphery from the center.

As a result, research on Scandinavian post-migration, as well as that of other countries, must continue to evolve, offering deeper insights and uncovering more truths about the profound changes migration brings to societies worldwide.

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