

Thesis Summary

The subject of this doctoral thesis is contemporary Scandinavian literature, specifically from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The analysis has been conducted on a selected body of works produced by authors who focus on the subject of migration and its pervasive role in the new image of Scandinavian societies. The aim has been exploring how migration, and its associated effects, impact the so-called 'post-migrant' societies. The thesis comprises an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, and a bibliography.

The introduction presents concisely the recent conceptualization, which is further detailed in the first chapter, of 'post-migration' as a new analytical perspective for works of art related to the topic of migration. The need of a new perspective has been significantly prompted by Regina Römhild's criticism against traditional migration theory, defined by the scholar as a 'migrantology'. According to Römhild, 'migrantology' refers to a 'research about migrants' and their life-experiences as a distinct category, which seems to have no effect at all on its counterpart: the white, immobile 'majority society'. According to the author, this polarization simply widened the gap between the categories of migrants and non-migrants.

The introduction subsequently presents the body of works, the methodology and the research questions, which converge toward the exploration of the current image of Scandinavian countries and the changes currently taking place after migration has occurred. The analysis of the body of works is conducted through a close reading supported by different theoretical frameworks which align with the perspective of post-migration. Notably, as Danish scholars Anne Ring Petersen and Sten Moslund suggest, the post-migrant perspective operates by opening numerous spaces of subversion. Firstly, it represents a 'space-claiming moment', where authors assert their need to speak for themselves and write their experiences, claiming back their right to narrate new sides of Scandinavian post-migrant societies. Secondly, it serves as a 'space-clearing moment', dismantling dichotomies between ascribed categories and offering alternative conceptualizations of post-national identity and belonging. Lastly, it acts as a 'space-creating moment', exploring new trajectories for describing the post-migrant social condition in the selected texts and offering possible alternative views on migration its crucial role in present-day Scandinavia.

The first chapter can be divided into three sections. The initial part elaborates on the state of the art of migration studies, tracing the key developments within this field from the late 19th century to the more recent post-migrant theories. The aim is to explore more closely those

‘migrantologies’, which Römheld accuses to have simply reinforced the constructed categories of migrants and non-migrants.

The second section explores the theoretical framework upon which the thesis is based upon: ‘Post-migration’. Post-migration represents a new theoretical foundation for migration studies and presents as a valuable analytical tool for artistic works related to migration. The emergence of this concept can be traced to Berlin, where theater director Shermin Langhoff began to label her theatre philosophy ‘Post-migrantisches Theater’ (Post-migrant Theater). In the early 2000s, Langhoff provided a platform for the new generation of Germans with a migratory background and let them express their stories about German society. Soon thereafter, numerous Berlin-based scholars, including Erol Yildiz and Naika Foroutan, recognized the concept’s potential and started applying it to the transformations occurring in post-migrant Germany. Over time, the concept has evolved from being a mere social descriptor for individuals with a migratory background – an interpretation that has rapidly been discarded – to an analytical perspective for observing how the phenomenon of migration has transformed every layer of society. The primary goal of this perspective was to deconstruct binary distinctions, challenge fixed categories, and de-essentialize the polarization between social groups based on ethnocentric and nationalistic parameters. By applying this perspective to society as a whole, and not just the category of migrants, ‘post-migration’ can also be seen as a social, transitory condition in which society finds itself. Such a condition is characterized by conflict and negotiations of cultural values, but also by new and unexpected alliances.

The third section of the first chapter explores how a post-migrant perspective can serve as a valuable theoretical framework not only in its country of origin, Germany, but also in the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. These nations present a similar history of immigration dating back to the 1950s. Like many other European countries, these countries have witnessed the effects of a populist backlash over the past decades, motivated by economic recession, crisis of the Scandinavian welfare state, and a pervasive nostalgia of a more ethnically and culturally homogeneous past proven by the successful rise of right-wing parties. Unfortunately, such a xenophobic backlash has also gradually contributed to a marginalization of the voices that began to emerge from a new, multiethnic social fabric. Even in artistic and literary discourses, this social landscape has perpetuated divisions between different constructed categories of authors. The rapid increase in literary works produced by second- and third-generation writers has often prompted the same ‘migrantized’ approach. For instance, labels such as ‘immigrant writer’ and ‘immigrant literature’, frequently used by Scandinavian critics to label these new narratives, have reinforced the negative perception

associated with migration, simultaneously nourishing the exotic expectations of authenticity for the new multicultural face of their countries. In contrary, efforts to deconstruct this nationalistic paradigm have been made. Many Swedish scholars and writers, such as Magnus Nilsson and Astrid Trotzig, have criticized the reception of so-called immigrant literature as xenophobic and racist. However, the deconstruction of ethnocentric categorizations seemed to contextually overshadow the role that migration has exerted in such works. A post-migrant perspective, on the other hand, aims to emphasize the role of migration in the meta-narrative of contemporary Scandinavian societies, rather than erasing or marginalizing its presence.

The second, third, and fourth chapters are where the analysis of the text is carried out.

The second chapter focuses on the linguistic features of two works: Jonas Hassen Khemiri's second novel, *Montecore: en unik tiger* (*Montecore: The Silence of the Tiger*, 2006), and Yahya Hassan's poetry collection, *Yahya Hassan* (Yahya Hassan, 2013). The former is born to a Tunisian father and a Swedish mother, and the latter to Palestinian parents who sought asylum in Denmark during the 1980s. The analysis proposed in this chapter was strongly influenced by Yasemin Yildiz's idea of 'post-monolingualism', which served as a theoretical framework for a diffuse condition that characterizes Scandinavian languages, as well as many other Western European countries. According to Yildiz, post-monolingualism is a phenomenon closely linked to that of migration. Through the steady influence that it exerts on language development, migration is currently debunking the role of standard mono-languages as nation-tied identity markers. The evolving linguistic landscape in Sweden and Denmark exemplifies how a post-migrant society is also experiencing a process of linguistic transition. This shift is exemplified by the trend among young Scandinavians to integrate elements from various linguistic sources, most of which are derived from English, but also from Arabic, Farsi, Serbian, and Turkish. This linguistic fusion is observable in young peoples' language behaviors, that emerge primarily in informal settings, resulting in the rise of new modes of socialization.

The works of Khemiri and Hassan framed the concept of post-migration as a space where an act of linguistic claiming is articulated. The analysis of the two works highlights the distinct ways in which Khemiri and Hassan employ linguistic freedom to distance themselves from degrading labels such as those mentioned in the first chapter. As a matter of facts, the authors mix different registers as a subversive strategy, challenging dogmatic views about language and belonging and at the same time illustrating the development of Swedish and Danish. Furthermore, the authors' act of control over language compels readers, regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, to confront a reality that is becoming increasingly pervasive and affects them in various ways. Khemiri's work narrates the story of Abbas, a Tunisian who

migrated to Sweden in the 1970s, and Jonas, his son, born and raised in Stockholm. The story is told from the perspective of Kadir, an old friend of Abbas from Tunisia, and Jonas himself. Many years after the events described in the book, Jonas receives an email from Kadir with a proposal to work together on Abbas' biography. The dual narrative level interweaves not only multiple perspectives over the life of Jonas' father, but also of different linguistic styles. While recalling the memories of his childhood and adolescence, the author retraces a piece of Swedish history marked by growing hostility towards migrants and multiculturalism. The constant attempts by Abbas to integrate in Swedish society and his unjustified admiration for Swedish people clashes with Jonas' growing criticism of a racist and intolerant society. As mentioned before, this difference is reflected in the diverse linguistic strategies of the two narrators. 'Khemirish', for instance, is the idiom that Khemiri invents to display the linguistic difficulties typical of first-generation 'migrants' like Abbas, who borrow from other languages to gain easier access to a new one – in this case mostly from French and English. However, Khemirish ironically recalls an old-fashioned form of Swedish, connecting the migrant voice to the language's very historical roots. In contrast, the Swedish of Abbas' son, Jonas, born to a foreign father and a Swedish mother, presents a steady evolution, shifting away from impeccable standard language to the slang spoken by new generations, that incorporates terms from Arabic, English, and other languages in their speech. This transformation reflects his disappointment in a society that discriminates against him, and people like him.

Yahya Hassan's poetry collection narrates the author's childhood and adolescence spent in the ghetto of Aarhus, the prison and his criminal life, his passion for literature, and his incredible success as writer in Denmark. Hassan shares with the reader many episodes from his life, marked by his father's violence, a religious fundamentalism he does not recognize as his own, and a society that considers him an outsider. In the poetry collection, the Danish used by the poet is correct for most of the work. However, in the concluding section, *Langdigt* (Long Poem), the author adopts a Danish that is more reminiscent of the language spoken in the ghetto of Aarhus, where he spent his childhood and part of his adolescence. Here, Hassan incorporates Arabic words and expressions typical of slang language used by younger generations without providing any translation assistance to the reader. Consequently, the reader finds themselves dealing with a language that is to a certain extent both familiar and foreign. His double image simultaneously reflects the new multicultural face of contemporary Denmark, being celebrated by the whole country for his cultural contribution, and the one of the problematic immigrant. The analysis of Hassan's poems shows the author's intention is to challenge prejudice and instrumentalization by claiming control over language.

In essence, the second chapter illustrates how the post-migrant condition is gradually reshaping the Scandinavian linguistic scenario. Given the adaptation of Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish, to the linguistic influences brought by migratory flows and the growing multiethnicity in the population of these three countries, it gets harder and harder to draw clear lines between what is considered pure, standard language and what is simply associated as an authentic representation of migrant groups' language. Many studies demonstrate how new generations, independently from their different ethnic origins, recognize multilingual practices as symbols of homogeneity and as strategies of socialization.

The third chapter leads the analysis in a complementary direction, drawing the concept of post-migration as a clearing-space; that is to say, a space of renegotiation of identity and belonging parameters. Basing on the research of scholars such as Stuart Hall and Marsha Meskimmon about cosmopolitanism, this chapter explored the cosmopolitan traits of two works. Therefore, cosmopolitanism becomes here a conceptual framework that enters the post-migrant debate by providing an interrelational-based and multidirectional conceptualization of identity. The chapter focuses on two works written in Norwegian. Furthermore, the works analyzed in this chapter were also taken into account as possible examples of a new generation of coming-of-age literature, showcasing the experiences of different characters engaging with a new social space tied to globalized connections, and adapting themselves accordingly. The first is *Og – en argentinsk aupairs ordbok* (*And – an Argentinian Au-pair's Dictionary*, 2016), the debut novel of Argentinean-born writer Veronica Salinas who moved to Norway to study in her twenties. The second one is from Aasne Linnestå, who is the only 'ethnically' Scandinavian writer in the group of authors. Linnestå's selected work is her first collection of poems *Morsmål* (*Mother Tongue*, 2012). Such a confrontation allows to understand the intricacies of the post-migrant condition and their impact in the daily lives of diverse individuals, including both migrants and non-migrants.

An aspect that unites these two pieces of literature is the exploration of alternative approaches to narrate the process of individual formation. Veronica Salinas' work analysis reveals how the concept of cosmopolitanism plays a crucial role. To escape the economic crisis that struck Argentina between the 1990s and the 2000s, the protagonist, a girl whose name is not specified, moves from Buenos Aires to Fredrikstad to work as an au pair for a Norwegian family. The girl is deeply convinced that the only way to carry out a correct integration process is to embrace Norwegian culture and, at the same time, forgetting everything she knows from her previous life. However, it is only through the memories of her past life in Latin America that she finds the key to dealing with the difficulties and the prejudices that she is subjected to in Norway.

This enables her to develop resilience and self-determination, allowing the protagonist to transcend discursive constructions that exclusively associate a sense of belonging to the world to predetermined nation-tied symbols. Becoming a cosmopolitan can therefore be framed as a process of skill acquisition that contributes to the formation of a new sense of post-national patriotism, which extends beyond the borders of Argentina and Norway.

The analysis then shifts to Aasne Linnestå's collection of poems. Unlike Salinas, whose perspective reflects the vicissitudes of a young girl forced to confront with a new country, culture, and language, Linnestå provides a completely different point of view. Observing the effects of migration from the position of an individual who is not a migrant, per se, but nonetheless experiences the effects of migration in her daily life, provides valuable insights that broaden the post-migrant perspective. The author explores how migration's impact can reshape one's relationship with the nation and the world, even if one is not actively involved in the dynamics connected to movement and displacement. Once more, the concept of cosmopolitanism provides a valuable framework for analysis, especially when considering Marsha Meskimmon's definition of cosmopolitanism as a 'precarious ecology'. This definition captures the various bonds and connections that are shaped in situations where encounters with others occur in a culturally and linguistically precarious balance.

The lyrical *I*, that reproduces the voice of the author, shares with the reader a journey in which Meskimmon describes the encounter with the character of the 'refugee', a girl who seeks asylum in Norway in order to escape violence and poverty. The author's perspective over national belonging undergoes a transformation as she starts to perceive her world, language, and culture through the 'outsider': the refugee. This shift enables her to rediscover values that transcend the mere national social space, including freedom of choice, self-determination over her body, relationships with the opposite sex, and a newfound appreciation for Norway.

Salinas and Linnestå break down the traditional boundaries that separate the local from the global. Furthermore, they both acknowledge the importance of embracing the social challenge presented by cosmopolitanism. By emphasizing the importance of this challenge, a deeper understanding of the evolving face of post-migrant society can be achieved comprehensively. The narratives of the authors highlight an ongoing exchange of various cultural expressions, underscoring the importance of shaping one's identity according to a cosmopolitan way of being in the world. Linnestå's work, moreover, serves as an inspirational example for other 'ethnically' Scandinavian authors who may offer their perspectives over the nature of the post-migrant condition. This expansion of the scope through which post-migration is explored within the contemporary social landscape of Scandinavian countries could provide crucial

insights into a research area that often restricts its examination to foreign-born authors and artists.

The fourth and final chapter lays the foundation for potential new trajectories within post-migrant Scandinavian literature. The objective is to develop an analysis aimed at exploring fresh perspectives, moving away from more conventional themes such as hybridity, the search for a lost identity, and inter-generational conflicts. This space-creating moment, which aims to portray the post-migrant condition in a new light, underscores the significance of establishing a more robust presence for the new generations of authors with migratory backgrounds in the Scandinavian literary landscape. In order to do that, the works selected for this chapter are the novel written by Norwegian-Chilean writer Maria Navarro-Skaranger *Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner* (All Foreigners Keep Their Curtains Closed, 2015) and the novel by Johannes Anyuru, *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar* (*They Are Going to Drown in Their Mothers' Tears*, 2017).

Typically, foreign-born authors raised in Scandinavian countries recall their parents' diasporic experiences by blending them with their own perspectives, a fusion that is often expressed through (auto)biography or autofiction. However, Anyuru takes a different path by accessing the topic of post-migration through a dystopian science fiction novel, incorporating typical elements of this type of narrative, such as inter-dimensional travels, loops, and space-time paradoxes. The Swedish author establishes a dialogue between a fictional present and a catastrophic future, where a terroristic attack has transformed Sweden from a beacon of democracy to a totalitarian, anti-Islamic state. The two separate time-dimensions are respectively represented by the characters of the 'journalist', who lives in the present, and the 'girl', who claims to have travelled from another dimension to warn the former of the imminent catastrophe. The novel is largely built upon the revelations of the girl about her life in the Sweden of the 'future', and the journalist's investigations, which lead him to reflect on the problems and shortcomings of the society in which he lives.

The concept of the time loop is particularly significant in the analysis of this work because it aptly frames certain unresolved issues characterizing the post-migrant condition in Sweden. Notably, the persistent contradictions enveloping the notion of Swedish identity, frequently embodied in the term 'Swedishness', necessitate defining this identity through an element that exists outside of it, such as the migrant. These questions and dilemmas persistently resurface like a loop in the post-migrant condition, endlessly spinning without reaching a definitive resolution. To face this problem, the author explicitly calls for a collective effort through the voice of the journalist, and especially from writers who, like Anyuru himself, present multiple

cultural and ethnic connections, to break this sense of uncertainty and fear for the entire Swedish society.

The originality Navarro-Skaranger's novel, on the other hand, is not directly linked to the choice of genre but rather to the content and message the author tries to conceive. In fact, her novel displays a more classical autofictional structure. In multiple occasions, Navarro-Skaranger has openly shared that the creation of her book drew significant inspiration from her adolescence, that she spent in the multi-ethnic neighborhoods of Romsås, a satellite city located near Oslo. However, while many authors usually tend to put significant emphasis on the social challenges that the post-migrant condition compels people of foreign descent to face, such as racism and xenophobia, this work offers a different perspective on the subject. This novel encapsulates the Norwegian post-migrant condition in a dimension of triviality and lightness. Life in a multiethnic environment is presented through the perspective of someone who has been experiencing cultural diversity as something ordinary since childhood. Crucial for the analysis of Navarro-Skaranger's novel was Sara Upstone's work, which elaborates on the characteristics of contemporary British migration literature. According to Upstone, one of the main features of this literary production is represented by what she defines as 'ease of presence'. This means that complex issues like those mentioned above are not denied, but instead blur in light of an increasing confidence developed by new generations regarding topics such as identity and belonging. The same 'ease of presence' as well as the confidence it inspires in young Scandinavians of foreign descent has been used in the fourth chapter to frame Navarro-Skaranger's novel. The analysis conducted in the fourth chapter represents an exploration of new trajectories through which presenting the concept of post-migration to the public.

In conclusion, the final remarks in this thesis retrace the central themes that unify the core argument. The Scandinavian post-migrant condition permeates various facets of daily life, and a growing number of writers and artists, at large, provide the public with an alternative perspective, enabling the reader to explore the dynamics, the contradiction, and the development of current society. With a focus on urgent social matter, these authors illuminate a world in transition, in which migration takes on a new role while currently establishing a more prominent one in the narrative of contemporary Scandinavian society.

