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Names and Naming Verbs

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Abstract An analysis of naming verbs like 'to be called' is presented, which assumes that names act as predicates or arguments according to the syntactic structure in which they appear. In isolation, names are claimed to be linguistic expressions identifying an abstract category of type *e*. When they denote a name-bearer, they are embedded in a DP and the individual denoted by the DP is associated with the abstract category they identify. This makes it possible to structurally interpret naming verbs as complex copular constructions, which relate a discourse referent to the abstract category named by the name-expression.

Keywords Names. Naming. Naming verbs. Nouns. Kinds.

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1 Introduction

Names mostly appear as arguments, as in *Alice snores*, where the name *Alice* denotes a person with that name; but uses like *I know three Alice's*, where the object means 'three persons called Alice', suggest that names are in fact predicates, and that when they act as arguments they are definite descriptions loosely paraphraseable as 'the one existing person called Alice'.[1] This simple contrast obviously does not exhaust the empirical evidence bearing on the issue, but it suffices to point to a fundamental analytical divergence between those who hold that the semantic value of names amounts to the individuals they denote, and those for whom names, despite their undeniable peculiarities, are fundamentally akin to common nouns and provide the predicative core of a definite description. The debate between these approaches to the semantics of names has now a long history.[2] The following sections do not aim to directly contribute to this major line of philosophical and linguistic inquiry, but to bring into sharp analytic focus an immediately related linguistic phenomenon: naming verbs. Expressions with the content of 'being called *Alice*' or 'calling someone *Alice*' are important because the name in them does not, to all appearances, denote an argument and does not pick out a referent; therefore, they could contribute decisive evidence for a view of names as fundamentally predicational expressions. But this conclusion would still require a precise analysis (if *Alice* is not an argument in *being called Alice*, what exactly is its semantic content there?). *A fortiori*, a precise account would be required for an alternative view of names as non-predicational expressions.

Naming verbs, then, have an intrinsic interest for the analysis of names, which in turn is central for our understanding of linguistic reference. This is the theoretical context of the present contribution. It aims at justifying a novel analysis of naming verbs and naming constructions where names are part of a predicative expression but are not themselves predicates.

The most important new empirical evidence is presented in sections 2.3, 4, and 5 below: there, it will be shown that naming verbs involve one specific construal of 'being named as' (not just 'being known / called as'); that the name *N* in *to call someone N* behaves in the same way as a predicative 'as' phrase (like in *I like you [as a friend]*), and not as a predicate itself (like *green*) as has been claimed; and that the fact that names referring to the same individual may be

1 I would like to thank two reviewers for helpful critical comments, which led to some significant improvements. All faults are my own.

2 See Burge 1973; Elbourne 2005; Bach 2002; Leckie 2013; Fara 2015; Jeshion 2015; Hinzen 2016; Predelli 2017; Saab, Lo Guercio 2020, among many others.

both simple (*Nixon*, *Dick*) and complex (*Richard Nixon*, *Dick Nixon*) is a problem for the one full-fledged analysis offered so far, which overgenerates structures like # *Dick Richard*. Addressing these open questions in a principled and unified way represents the minimal empirical contribution of this analysis.

At the same time, a proper understanding of expressions meaning 'to be called' requires both a reasonably precise hypothesis on what naming means, and a worked-out analysis of how this meaning is integrated in the verb's lexical interpretation. What is proposed here is a novel syntactic analysis decomposing naming verbs into two heads, paired to a compositional semantic interpretation based on a minority philosophical stance which views names as typed open variables (Castañeda 1985; Cumming 2008; Schoubye 2016). This is crucial in the present attempt to reconcile evidence for the predicative nature of names in naming verbs, with the evidence that they do not behave like other predicates. The solution offered here is that the relation between an expression like *Alice* and the person thus named is not direct but mediated. The expression *Alice* denotes first of all a *sort*, an abstract category: the type which individuals named *Alice* are tokens of. Being called *Alice* means being name-related to this sort, and this is what naming verbs do. 'Being called Alice' parallels 'being called silly' or 'being called a liar', but not because *Alice* is semantically a predicate (it is not resumed by the usual pro-predicate forms, as we will see); rather, what is a predicate is being related to this sort, and naming verbs assert this relation by characterizing it as a naming one. 'Being called Alice' behaves syntactically like 'being called as Alice' because this is exactly their structure, with a complex copular construction 'being - as' and relating an individual name-bearer to a nominal sort. There is no need to claim that a name X means having the property of being called X (which circularly explicates name semantics in terms of bearing a name, and in addition fails to distinguish between the different senses of 'bearing a name' or 'being known'). In addition, this avoids the difficulty of having to precisely define a name as a linguistic form. Traditional approaches link directly individuals to names as linguistic expressions, and face unexpected difficulties in defining the latter (written types? phonological matrices? No one representation seems to fit the bill, as we will see in section 5), and ultimately in converging on identity criteria for a name (are *Richard*, *Dick*, *Nixon*, and *Richard Nixon* all varieties of the same name?). The approach proposed here reverses the terms of the question: a name is first of all a label as an abstract type, whose realizations may differ even substantially (like in the pronunciation of a place-name like *Odense* in Danish and in English); conversely, even purely orthographic differences like that between the surnames *Smyth* and *Smith* may be related to different abstract name-labels, depending on social conventions. *Richard* and

Richard Nixon are separate names, and separate abstract sorts; it is a matter of onomastic convention (the system of what we call given- and family names) that relates one to the other. This will be briefly discussed in section 5.

In short, the syntactic analysis of naming verbs here presented rests on a much broader hypothesis about names as abstract sorts, which in turn lies in the context of a global view of nouns and names as linguistic encapsulations of entity types, or sorts (see the brief remarks in section 7). Every aspect of this whole approach would deserve an in-depth discussion; but the following sections just aim at articulating a concrete proposal about naming verbs, pointing at the many ramifications but without delving into them. This goal is facilitated by the presence of an important precursor, namely the analysis of Matushansky (2008), which will be referenced repeatedly. Section 2 outlines the proposal and highlights its most innovative aspects. Then, section 3 spells out the semantic details. Section 4 bolsters the empirical case for treating naming verbs as complex copular constructions, while section 5 refines the analysis fine-tuning it to account for complex names. Section 6 makes explicit what is constant across possible worlds and what is viewed as variable. Finally, section 7 concludes the discussion and relates it to the issues of what counts as identity criterion for names, and to common nouns as names of kinds.

2 Outline of the Proposal

2.1 The Structure of Naming Constructions

Naming verbs seem to provide strong support for viewing names as predicates. *Alice* has unambiguously the status of a predicate in structures like (1), and this is how it was analysed in the best worked-out analysis of naming verbs so far, that of Matushansky (2008), which is the basis for the alternative treatment proposed here:

(1) a. They baptized her Alice.
b. She is called Alice.

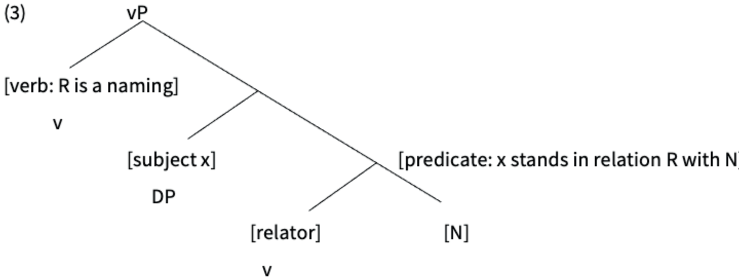
One of the central pieces of evidence confirming this view is the fact that languages which admit an expletive definite determiner for nouns in argument positions, as in (2a), do not tolerate it in naming constructions, as in (2b).

(2) a. Ich habe den Karl gesehen (regional German; Matushansky 2008, 580)
I have the.M.ACC K. seen
'I saw Karl'.
b. Ich habe ihn (*den) Karl genannt.
I have him.M.ACC the.M.ACC K. called
'I called him Karl'.

I propose instead that names act as predicates in (1) and (2b) because of the structure in which they appear, not because of what they mean as linguistic expressions taken by themselves. The words *Alice* and *Karl*, as they are inserted in these contexts, are not predicates. By themselves they denote entities (logical type *e*) corresponding to non-logical constants. These entities are not the persons named 'Alice' and 'Karl', but abstract objects corresponding to 'sorts', or categories of entities. Intuitively, if simplistically, the claim is that speakers' knowledge of names is semantically best modelled by treating names as identifiers for abstract sorts, rather than as predicates true of the entities they name, or as linguistic expressions somehow directly referring to one among their possible referents.

Verbs like French *s'appeler* or German *heissen* (unlike the English *to be called*) are syntactically represented as a construction which predicates the property of standing in a naming relation with the abstract sort identified by a name. This amounts to a complex copular structure where the verb meaning is distributed over two nodes: a copula-like 'relator' (after Den Dikken 2006) which determines a predicational structure, and a higher head expressing lexically encoded information –in our case, the information that this relation is one of naming, not generically equivalent to 'being known as' but as a rigid, world-invariant connection between an individual and an abstract identifier whose only content lies in being distinct from other identifiers. The lower head (the relator) turns the identifier (the sort-denoting name) into the property of being in a relation with that identifier, and the higher head specifies this relation to be a naming one.

(3)



Two questions immediately arise: what is more precisely the 'abstract entity' that appears in argument position as *[N]*, and what does it mean to say that relation R is a naming?

2.2 What is N?

When we speak of the name *Alice*, we may mean the word itself, which can be used to name individuals, or the word understood as referring to a particular entity (Van Langedonck 2007 refers to the former as 'proprial lemma'). Names in this second sense therefore involve a relation between names in the first sense and their respective bearers. This insight was made explicit by Geurts (1997) and especially by Matushansky (2008), who formalized it as a relation R between an individual name-bearer (type *e*) and a name type (type <*n,t*>, a property of names *n*).

In contrast, here a use of a name relates an individual name-bearer to an entity (notated as [N] above) which is not a linguistic representation: when *Alice* is used to refer to Alice, the corresponding linguistic structure does not relate the person Alice to a phonological string /ˈælɪs/, as in Matushansky's analysis. What is related to the name-bearer is instead an abstract category, accessible and identifiable as an entity in a speaker's mental ontology, but void of descriptive content, and only meaningful insofar as it contrasts with other such abstract entities. The 'proprial lemma' (here, the word) *Alice* differs from another like *Jim*, and speakers leverage this linguistic opposition to use the words as identifiers (not predicates, but labels) of abstract sorts. The abstract object labelled *Alice* is not the set of Alice-named people, nor the kind of them, nor is it a word (the *n* type of names posited by Matushansky 2008). It is just an abstract entity with the key property of being distinct from other such entities, identified by different names. Individuals given in the domain of discourse may be interpreted as instances of this abstract sort: they are, then, bearers of this name (the sort label), belonging to the *Alice* type of entities.

Importantly, the expressions (proprial lemmata) that can label such abstract entities are not intrinsically defined as names; they *become* names by being part of a linguistic structure, but in principle, any expression can act in this function. The peculiar nature of naming as a relation is stated as part of the lexical content of naming verbs (see directly below); but we don't need a prior definition (intensional or extensional) of names in order to determine which expressions can label an abstract category.

This amounts to treating a name-expression as a *sortal*, or a linguistic term that identifies a type of entities (Frend, Grandy 2023 make it clear that both the word and the concept have been used in rather different senses). Kinds, as they are generally understood, are also abstract categories which can be referred to directly, independently of their instances (as in *water* in *the formula of water*), and it is no accident that kinds in this sense may be expressed through names like *Ursus Arctos* or *Homo Sapiens*. There is an important difference, however. While natural kinds, and in particular names for biological classes like species or genera, are naturally construed as higher-level concepts arising through generalization over their instances, a name construed as a sortal is simply a way to partition individuals into classes, or 'nominal sorts', following the terminology and the general approach of Castañeda (1985, 110):

> The sentence 'Vladimir loves Tatiana' is, therefore, merely the formulation of a propositional form *x loves y*, where the variables 'x' and 'y' are governed by the rule that their instances or *values* come, respectively, from the nominal sorts being named "Vladimir" and "Tatiana". Such values are individual slices in the worlds of the different parties in the act of communication [.]

Numbers too are abstract notions whose content is given by their opposition with other numbers; but unlike numbers, whose ordering defines a set of precise relations, names (in this sense as sortals identifying sorts) lack any relation between each other beyond identity and difference. They are a language-internal way to define a subset of a speaker's ontology, organizing the broader ontology constituted by all potential discourse referents.

It should be emphasized that this construal is a theory-internal one. In non-technical speech, a name is generally understood as a linguistic representation, identified phonologically or by spelling, or not at all (see the remarks in the concluding section). In linguistic and philosophical theorizing, a name corresponds to a linguistic representation (as in *the name 'Jim'*), or to a *use* of such a representation interpreted as denoting one particular individual (*Jim is here*), or, as noted, as a predicate true of individuals so named (*three Jims*). The abstract entity, or sort, posited here as an entity identified by a name-expression does not coincide with either of these senses.

2.3 What is a 'naming relation R'?

In this view, to say that someone is called *Alice* means that she stands in a relation R with the abstract sort we label by the word *Alice*, and that this R is the relation of naming. The relation is not one-to-one, because one entity may be identified by means of multiple labels (as in *Cicero is Tully*), and the same name-expression, and the same sort, can of course be related to different discourse referents (there are many people called *Jim*). How is this different from simply repeating that someone is called *Alice*?

The main consideration is that the naming relation R in our analysis is more specific than being known, or identifiable, under a linguistic label.

To see why, consider the antecedent on which this notion is modelled, the relation R as defined by Matushansky (2008). In that analysis, R was a relation "between individuals and proper names (phonological strings, properly speaking)", and it was one of the two arguments of a name predicate (2008, 595). Naming verbs would then assert the existence of such a relation by existentially binding the R variable, while when names appear as arguments, the variable would be contextually bound as "the contextually salient *naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer*" (2008, 592; emphasis in the original):

(4) [[Alice]] (R_0) = R_0 holds between x and the phonological string (/ælɪs/)
where R_0 is the contextually salient naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer (Matushansky's (59))

This formulation proves too loose, however. Unsurprisingly for a concept expressed in natural language, a 'naming convention' can be understood in more than one way: a person may bear name *X* for legal purposes, while going under the name of *Y* for all non-legal purposes, and being generally known under yet another name or soubriquet *Z*. The problem is that language seems to care about whether the relation is strictly that of bearing a name or that or being known under a linguistic guise in a social context. The predicate *to be known as* exemplifies the latter; it can be followed not just by a nickname like *Scarface*, but also by a common noun (a whole noun phrase), which may be a definite description. This includes cases of a definite description metalinguistically quoted, as in (5d).

(5) a. He was known as Scarface.
b. He was known as a safe pair of hands.
c. He was known as the terror of Southgate.
d. He was known as 'that bloody idiot'.

But this broader sense of 'naming convention' does not fit naming verbs. This emerges clearly in languages where, as noted above, a name may carry a definite article as an argument but not as a complement to naming verbs:

(2) a. Ich habe den Karl gesehen (regional German; Matushansky 2008, 580)
I have the.M.ACC K. seen
'I saw Karl'.
b. Ich habe ihn (*den) Karl genannt.
I have him.M.ACC the.M.ACC K. called
'I called him Karl'.

(6) a. Arriva (la) Maria. (regional Italian)
'There comes (the) Maria.'
b. Si chiama (*la) Maria.
'She is.called (*the) Maria.'

(7) a. Era generalmente nota come (?la) Maria. (regional Italian)
'She was generally known as (the) Maria.'
b. Era generalmente nota come la Callas. (Italian)
'She was generally known as (the) Callas.'

(8) a. Si chiamava (*la) Maria. (Italian)
'She was.called (the) Maria'.
b. Si chiamava (*la) Callas.
'She was.called (the) Callas.

It is only the strictest sense of naming that appears to be operative in naming verbs.

This empirical evidence, then, shows that we cannot reduce what it means to be a name to an intuitive notion of being known by a (linguistic) label. My suggestion is that naming is a stronger concept, because it involves not just labelling but also a definition of identity: a name is not just a tool of identification, but a proxy identity. A referent individuated as *Alice* truly 'is' Alice in the sense that the name sums up, unifies, and distinguishes from others our experiences of that referent. It seems natural to express denomination by means of copular constructions like *I am Alice*, *for me she was just Alice*, or *from now on you will be Alice* (suggested by a reviewer) – and also *this is water*, in the sense 'this is called water'.[3] The idea of analysing naming verbs as copular constructions pursues the intuition behind this usage, whereby 'being called Alice' is akin to 'being under the guise of Alice'. I believe this sense of equivalence between a name-bearer and a 'guise' lies at the heart of the very notion of 'name'. Here, this approach is reflected in the fact that naming does not

3 Carlson (1980) developed this insight by analysing the content of, for instance, *Nixon* as the kind of stages of one particular referent, just as *water* can express the kind subsuming and unifying our experiences of the same element; see 7.3 for some further brief comments.

directly relate a name-bearer to a linguistic representation, but involves an equivalence between two entities, a bearer and a sort; it is the latter which gets linguistically labelled. In short, naming is not just labelling, but also categorizing.

Having noted how easy and natural it is to express ‘I am called Alice’ as ‘I am Alice’, we should still distinguish the reading ‘my name is Alice’ from the reading ‘I am one and the same person as Alice’. This becomes crucial in connection with sentences like (9) (Bach 2002, 81):

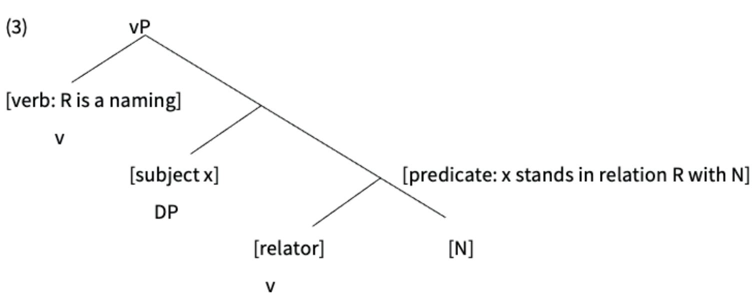
(9) If his parents had named him ‘Aristocrates’, Aristotle would have been Aristocrates instead of Aristotle. (Bach’s (23))

This example is certainly pertinent, but only if understood as meaning that Aristotle in that scenario would have been called differently (and so everything we may say and know about him would have applied to an individual named Aristocrates), not that he would have been another person. The question of semantic ‘rigidity’, that is, the claim that names refer to their name-bearers in all possible worlds (in which the bearers exist), clearly must be considered, although the analysis of naming verbs does not necessarily hinge on it. It will be taken up in section 6 below. In connection with the nature of the naming relation, it is important to make explicit here that the rigidity thesis (no one but Aristotle could have been Aristotle, nothing but water can be water) should not imply that establishing a naming relation is also fixed across worlds: anybody could have been named differently, and consequently bear a different name in non-actual worlds.

3 Semantic Analysis

In the structure summarized in (3), repeated here, the expression notated *[N]* has a denotation of type *e*, interpreted as an abstract object which we may understand as a ‘sort’, as explained in the previous section:

(3)



[N] cannot be syntactically a DP, given that determiners must be absent in naming constructions (see (2b), (6b), and (8b)). Therefore, it must be a smaller type of constituent, capable of denoting an abstract entity. I will assume that it is a kind-denoting expression, a bare noun when spelled out as *Alice* or *Sherlock Holmes*, or a larger phrase for 'descriptive names' like *Black Kettle* or *Jumping Badger*. This relies on a well-established if non-mainstream theoretical position, according to which a noun denotes primarily a kind and becomes a predicate through additional grammatical specifications (Krifka 1995; Zamparelli 2000; Mueller-Reichau 2006). The necessity of a determinerless noun in contexts requiring an interpretation as an abstract is illustrated by examples like (10) (see Zamparelli 2000, 131-5, 166-7):

(10) a. Gianni funge da (*un) dottore. (Italian; Zamparelli's (350))
‘Gianni functions as %(a) doctor.’
b. Gianni si è travestito da (*un) barbone.
‘Gianni dressed-up as *(a) tramp.’

A kind-level interpretation seems appropriate for the denotation of an abstract sort, insofar as kinds are not understood exclusively as generalizations over particulars (as in Chierchia 1998) but as primary semantic notions, as categories which particulars can instantiate.

The notation *ALICE*, then, does not stand for the person Alice (the name-bearer), nor for the class of people called Alice, nor for a linguistic representation corresponding to the name *Alice*. It stands for an abstract category of beings, or sort, semantically kind-level, which we may call the Alice-sort, after Castañeda.

The abstract object [[ALICE]], of type *e*, composes with the content of the relator and provides one of its three arguments: an abstract object, a subject, and a two-place relation R. This is shown in (11), where ‘x ∈ D^k’ means that the variable x ranges over the domain of kinds.

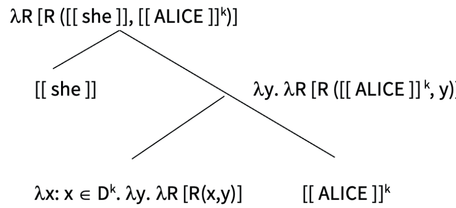
(11) $\lambda y.\ \lambda R\ [R\ ([[\ ALICE\ ]]^k, y)]$

$\lambda x{:}\ x \in D^k.\ \lambda y.\ \lambda R\ [R(x,y)]$ [[ALICE]]

The structure is now interpreted as a formula with two open variables: an individual y and a relation R, where y stands in the relation R with the kind denoted by *ALICE*. The introduction of the subject (here *she*) provides the second individual argument (the name-bearer).[4]

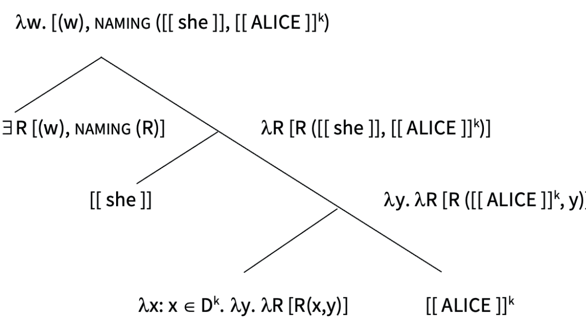
Before composition with the higher verbal head, the VP has the following form.

(12)



The higher verbal head turns the copular relator into a lexically contentful predicate. It existentially binds the R variable and specifies R as a naming relation, in the sense elucidated in the previous section. In addition, it introduces a world variable *w*.

(13)



Notice that a world variable accompanies the higher verbal head, but neither the lower relator nor the kind-level sort N with which the name-bearer is related. This reflects the idea that calling someone one name or another may vary across worlds, but the identity of the sort itself is fixed.

The VP now denotes a function that for each world *w* returns 'true' if the denotation of *she* is named Alice, i.e. is name-related to the abstract sort labelled *Alice*. The event argument may be introduced at this level or higher up.

4 The subject will have to raise to the preverbal case position leaving behind a variable, so we should add an extra level which lambda-abstracts over the predicate formed so far and re-introduces the subject variable, to be closed only at clause level.

4 Evidence for Copular Structure

This complex-copula approach interprets transitive verbs like *to call / baptize* or intransitive ones like the German *heissen* or the French *s'appeler* 'to be called' as involving a predication loosely paraphraseable as 'to be in a naming relation with the sort [X]'. The formal representation that results is very similar to Adger and Ramchand's (2003) semantics for the 'substantive', non-defective copula of Scottish Gaelic, apart from the role of R and the restriction of the first argument to kind-denoting terms. Scottish and Irish 'substantive' copulas have been analyzed respectively by Adger and Ramchand (2003) and by Doherty (1996) as a stage-level predication. Unsurprisingly, Irish uses precisely the substantive copula to express a naming predication.

(14)	a.	Bríd	atá	orm		(Irish)
		B.	REL.is	on.1SG		
		'My name is Bríd'. (literally: 'Bríd is on me'.)				
	b.	Cén	t-ainm	atá	air?	
		what	name	REL.is	on.3SG.M	
		'What is his name?' (literally: 'what name is on him?')				

The stage-level copula of Scottish and Irish is known to parallel the Slavonic copular construction where the predicate has instrumental case, as argued by Citko (2008). This tallies with the use of instrumental name *Ninoj* in the Russian construction exemplified in (15), with in the instrumental.

(15)	Moju	sestru	zavut	Nina / Ninoj.	(Russian; Matushansky's (37a))
	my.F.GEN	sister.F.GEN	call.3PL	N.nom / N.instr	
	'My sister is called Nina'.				

In Russian, the instrumental appears also in (16), which instead parallels (10b) and lacks a copula (and correlatively also lacks the possibility of marking the predicate as nominative).

(16)	On	prjehal	zamaskirovannij	*zhenshina / zhenshinoj.	(Russian)
	he	come.PST	disguised	woman.NOM / woman.INSTR	
	'He came disguised as a woman'.				

There are empirical reasons, then, for analyzing naming verbs as akin to copular constructions of a particular type, identified across different languages by a specific morphosyntax and by a stage-level reading. This accords with Matushansky's (2008) evidence for a predicative and not argumental nature of the name is naming constructions.

However, there is evidence calling for an important qualification, which brings us beyond existing approaches to naming verbs. Languages that have pro-predicate pronouns cannot use them to resume a name in a naming construction:

(17)	a.	Elle	s'appelle	Louise	(French)
		she	REFL=calls	L.	
		'Her name is Louise'.			
	b.*	Elle	se l'appelle		
		she	REFL=IT=calls		
		'She is called so'.			

(18)	a.	Sie	heisst	Anne	(German)
		she	is.called	A.	
		'Her name is Anne'.			
	b.*	Sie	heisst	es	
		she	is.called	it	
		'She is called so'.			

Here the name patterns like the manner argument of *behave*-type verbs:

(19)	a.	Mi chiamo	così			(Italian)
		REFL.1SG=call.1SG	so			
		'I am called like that'.				
	b.	Come	ti chiami?			
		how	REFL. 2SG=call.2SG			
		'What's your name?'				
	c.	Mi chiamo	in	questo	modo	(Italian)
		REFL.1SG=call.1SG	in	this	way	
		'I am called like that'.				

These facts follow if the complement of the verb is akin to a manner adverbial headed by *as*. In Den Dikken's analysis (2006, 62-4), this preposition is the spell out of a relator in verbless predications. The previous section argues for the same structural analysis, with the difference that the predication is lexicalized by naming verbs and not by a preposition like *as*.

5 Complex and Meaningful Names

Names are not just simplex like *Alice*; they can be complex, like *Alice Smith*, and their complexity may be that of compositionally interpreted linguistic structures, like *Jumping Badger*.

The issue of names with descriptive content should be clarified first, as it is immediately accommodated within our approach. Since a name in isolation denotes not its bearer but an abstract category, nothing bars the label of this category from having descriptive content. This includes names like *Jumping Badger*, *Big Jim*, *Inge daughter-of-Anna*, and names constructing according to systems very different from Western European ones, like the Hoocąk Siouan *haas-hónį-wį-ga* 'berry-seek-FEM-PROPER.NAME' (Helmbrecht 2015), which is a verb phrase followed by a suffix indicating name status. What matters is that these descriptions are *used* as names, and so they just act as labels for a sort (and, once placed in a syntactic frame, they denote a name-bearer) independently of their descriptive content. The man called *Big Jim* might be small, *Jumping Badger* is the English version of the Sioux name used to refer to a man (otherwise known as Sitting Bull) and not to a badger, and *berry-seek* refers to a person and not to an activity. The lack of descriptive content of most modern Western names is a historical accident.

Internal complexity is a distinct issue, which highlights an important difference between the present approach and its precursor analysis by Matushansky (2008). The analytical problem is how to derive the entailment that someone called *Sherlock Holmes* is also called *Sherlock* and is also called *Holmes*. Matushansky (2008, 604) assumed that in a complex name, each subpart bears the same relation R to a single name-bearer. But this has an undesired consequence: *all* segments of a complex name, including those that are in mutually complementary paradigmatic relation, are on the same level and should be able to co-occur. So not only *Nixon*, *Richard*, *Richard Nixon*, and *Richard Millhous Nixon*, but also *Richard* and *Dick* and *Richard Dick* (and *Dick Millhous*).

The alternative made available by our approach is sharply different. We can take each self-standing name, simplex or complex, to be a different label, for a different sort. This is possible because the sort is a purely abstract notion, something of which we only know that it is different from the sorts corresponding to other labels; it is not the extension of the various names (the same person who was 37th president of the USA). It is a matter of world knowledge, not a semantic entailment, that *Nixon* is the same person as *Richard Nixon*; or in other words, that the two sorts are regularly paired to the same discourse referent. Indeed, many referents are paired to the sort *Richard*, and many also to the sort *Nixon* (but probably only one to the distinct sort *Richard Millhous Nixon*). The fact that we cannot refer to the former president as *Richard Dick* is historically contingent. Likewise, given that in this account *Alexander* and *Alex* are distinct names labelling distinct sorts, it is not a linguistic fact that calling someone *Alex Alexander* is odd. It is true that names consisting of the full and the truncated form, like *Richard Dick* or *Patricia Pat*, seem to be regularly impossible; but while this might have an independent pragmatic explanation (as suggested by a reviewer, pointing to Alber, Lappe 2023), the existence of 'redundant' (nick-)names like *John John* suggests that the internal composition of names is governed more by social convention than by pragmatic principles.

Single cases are obviously susceptible of discussion, and possibly of alternative explanations. But overall, the empirical point is that linking the R relation to a definition of names faces unexpectedly serious difficulties with names that are inside names. The alternative here proposed removes the problem by simply treating as names those expressions that are effectively used as such, without making it a semantic entailment that *Sherlock Holmes* should refer to the same individual as *Holmes*. This seems like a correct way to delineate knowledge of language and knowledge of the world.

6 Rigidity

Given that Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great, the name *Aristotle* and the definite description *the teacher of Alexander the Great* refer to the same entity. Yet, the intuition seems very clear that a different entity could have been Alexander's teacher in an alternative state of affairs, but only the person we mean by 'Aristotle' could have been Aristotle. Since Kripke (1980) diagnosed this phenomenon in terms of rigidity of designation across possible worlds, it has represented an important benchmark of empirical adequacy for semantic theories of names – if indeed it is a defining property of names. The question is particularly relevant in our context because views that deny that names are necessarily rigid designators (see for example Elbourne 2005) typically do so on the basis of examples with naming verbs, as in the example by Bach introduced above in 2.3:

(9) If his parents had named him 'Aristocrates', Aristotle would have been Aristocrates instead of Aristotle. (Bach's (23))

Scenarios with counterfactual naming highlight an important fact: the naming relation by itself has at least the appearance of rigid designation (no one but Aristotle could have been Aristotle), but whether the relation holds is contingent (a person could bear one name or another).[5] Even though an analysis of naming verbs, by itself, does not have to provide an account of the rigidity of name reference, we should make explicit how our analysis does justice to these facts.

The first step towards that consists in recognizing the ambiguous use of *be* in (9), as we did in 2.3 above: in an alternative world, Aristotle would have been a person called Aristocrates, but he would not have been the same person as Aristocrates. This point too is open to debate, as it ultimately depends on what one assumes about the identity of individuals across different worlds. But this is a much broader question with no bearing on the issue of naming verbs, so we can put it aside and assume that we can identify individuals *a* and *b* as self-identical and distinct from each other in the world of evaluation and in other hypothetical worlds.

Since a name-bearer, thus identified independently of his or her name, may bear different names at different worlds, the R naming relation in (3) must be variable across worlds. This is why the higher segment of the copula, beside existentially binding the R variable and qualifying it as a naming, introduces a world variable *w*. On the other hand, the abstract category, or sort, which is the second arguments of R, is not relativized to situations or worlds. Just like individuals *a* and *b*, it has the status of a non-logical constant in the model. This means that, while the identity of the sort N is world-invariant, the link between a discourse referent (the name-bearer) and N is world-contingent. Across different worlds, the relation between one and the same individual and one and the same abstract sort (say, the one identified as *Alice*, or *Aristotle*) may or may not hold.

The intuition that no one but Aristotle could have been (the person we call) Aristotle, and that Aristotle could not have been any other than (the person we call) Aristotle is independent of this. A full-fledged theory of names cannot and should not be attempted in this brief examination of our analysis *vis-à-vis* rigidity, so I will simply assume that a name in argument function differs from a name in a naming construction because it does not link a name-bearer to a sort N as distinct arguments – descriptively, a very safe assumption. In *Aristotle spoke Greek*, the argument in subject position denotes a discourse referent identified as an instance of the *Aristotle* sort,

5 Cf. Kripke 1980, 49: “Although the man (Nixon) might not have been the President, it is not the case that he might not have been Nixon (though he might not have been *called* Nixon)” (emphasis in the original). And even more to the point: “Sloppy, colloquial speech, which often confuses use and mention, may, of course, express the fact that someone might have been called, or not have been called, ‘Aristotle’ by saying that he might have been, or not have been, Aristotle.” (Kripke 1980, 62 note 25). In connection with statements of identity, we may add that *if I were you* is perfectly normal in natural speech, although few individuals could be more clearly distinct than the speaker (self) and an addressee.

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which is one and the same across worlds. No naming relation R is part of the semantic representation (in contrast with Matushansky's 2008 analysis), so there is no basis for the same sort identifying different name-bearing referents across worlds, even though it remains true that different people could have been name-related to that sort, and that the same person could have been related to a different sort. This seems to correctly reflect, if not explain, the fact that purported evidence that names are not rigid designators regularly involves alternative counterfactual naming relations.

7 Conclusions and Related Issues

7.1 Theoretical Summary

In a few respects, the analysis here proposed does not differ substantially from previous approaches. Names only denote specific individuals when they appear as a subpart of an interpreted DP; naming constructions involve a predicative substructure, such that *to call x N* attributes the property of having the name *N* to the argument *x*; more specifically, this involves a naming relation R acting as an argument in the semantic interpretation, as in Matushanky's (2008) analysis which is the basis of the present one. In other respects, our analysis breaks from past approaches. Most obviously, the name which is related to its bearer is not a phonological representation, or any form of 'predicate of names', but an abstract category of beings. It would be misguided to ask for a prior characterization of what kind of entity this is. Insofar as speaker categorize entities, they represent types in their mental ontology; indeed, as Carlson (1980) pointed out, even basic examples of individuals, like you and me, can be understood as generalizations over stages. The leading idea is that we use different names to model different categories, or sorts, or entity types, and then we associate independently-defined discourse referents to those entity types. Using a name to identify and re-identify one and the same element in the domain of discourse amounts to categorizing it, by subsuming our experiences of it under one single type.

Other novel features descend from this main idea: the characterization of these 'name-labelled sorts' as independent of a world or a situation, with the consequence that categorizing a discourse referent under a name means identifying it as a token of that type independently of possible worlds. At the same time, room must be made for counterfactual scenarios where this relation has a different domain; this is made possible by the main syntactic innovation, namely, that of interpreting naming verbs not just as a predicative structure (involving a small clause), but as a more complex double copular structure, involving a relator head and a separate higher head encapsulating the lexical content (naming) of this relation. The predicate, then, is not the name itself, but the property of being in a relation with it. In so doing, we can capture the fact that the predicates introduced by naming verbs are resumed not generically by pro-predicative forms, but by pro-forms standing for manner adverbials, which in Den Dikken's (2006) analysis involve precisely a predication mediated by a relator head.

7.2 Criteria of Identity for Names

It would certainly be more intuitive to take naming to involve a relation between an individual and a linguistic expression, giving back to the word *name* the meaning it has in everyday language. But to precisely identify a name as a linguistic form proves surprisingly difficult. Obviously we cannot consider written representations, if only because many languages have never been written. Matushansky (2008) resorted to phonological representations; but even extending 'phonological' to the sense of 'available to sensory perception', to include signing, more careful scrutiny suggests that what we understand as a name is in fact something more abstract than a perceivable representation. A written form, we have agreed, does not provide a reliable and plausible criterion of identity for a name; but homophonous variants that only differ in spelling like *Smith*, *Smyth*, and *Smythe*, or *Joe* and *Jo*, are for all intents and purposes (including legally) different names. Conversely, there is a sense in which the name we write *Boris* is the same name whether it is used (and, irrelevantly, written) in Russian or in English; but its pronunciation is sharply different in the two cases (/ba'ris/ vs. /'bɔrɪs/). One could insist that they are indeed unrelated forms, of course, but at the price of having to say that Boris Eltsin and Boris Johnson are not both called 'Boris'.[6] It seems much more respectful of intuitions to admit that the two pronunciations correspond to two linguistic versions of the same name. But then, if the identity criterion cannot be a phonological representation, what are they a version of? Conceptualizing a name as an abstract object does not look so implausible, when one gives these facts careful consideration.[7]

6 Jeshion (2015) considers this issue briefly in his note 26.

7 The whole discussion in this paper concerns proper person names, but a theory of names should not limit itself to them. And once we extend our examination beyond person names, the case against taking linguistic representations as identity criteria for names gets stronger. This is because names also include names of computer files, of stars and other astronomical objects, industrial models of artefacts and al of these routinely include numbers or letters (see Geurts 1997, 327 and Predelli 2017, 42). But there is no 'correct' linguistic interpretation of, for example, the celestial object standardly known by astronomers by the name of *NGC1952*, or the Crab Nebula.

7.3 Names and Common Nouns

As noted, Kripke (1980, 134-40) extended to natural kind terms like *heat*, *water*, or *tiger* his treatment of names as rigid designators, arguing that they too cannot fail to denote the same things across possible worlds. Carlson (1980, 60, crediting Postal 1969) developed this line of thought and interpreted not only bare nouns like *bear*, but also morphosyntactically complex forms like the bare plural *bears* as names for kinds. A reason for this is the observed parallelism between names and kind terms with respect to the predicate *is so-called*: this selects names and terms which can refer to a kind, namely definite singulars and bare plurals, but not other types of noun phrases:

(20) a. Slim is so-called because of his slender build.
b. The cardinal is so-called because of its colour.
c. Cardinals are so-called because of their colour.
d.* Some / All / Most cardinals are so-called because of their colour.

In addition, we should note that a substance noun like *water* behaves like a personal name also with respect to the availability of instrumental case after a naming verb in Russian:

(15)	Moju	sestru	zavut	Nina / Ninoj.	(Russian; Matushansky's (37a))
	my.F.GEN	sister.F.GEN	call.3PL	N.nom / N.instr	
	'My sister is called Nina'.				

(21)	Eto	veshchestvo	nazyvajut	voda / vodoj.	(Russian)
	this	substance	name.3PL	water.NOM / water.INSTR	
	'This substance is called water'.				

Viewing kind terms as names is a long-standing philosophical thesis (Putnam 1975, Kripke 1980; cf. Braun 2006), which however is not the main focus of this discussion (see Acquaviva 2024).[8] It should

8 A reviewer objects that kinds are most fundamentally the expression of generalizations, and wonders what common properties could possibly be shared by a kind *ALICE*. The most direct answer is that it would express the unity behind different re-identifying instances of a name-bearer, much like *Ursus Arctos* and *bears* both do (in different ways) with respect to a kind of animals (cf. Carlson's 1980 view of named individuals as kind-level abstractions over stages of them). We can, of course, restrict the term 'kind' to a sense requiring a generalization over multiple instances, which would be close to the non-technical content of the term. This is how Chierchia (1998) characterized them. As a theoretical construct, a kind can be understood in various ways (see McNally 2017), whose merit depends on how effective they are as analytical tools. Here, the semantic object that categorizes a sort like *ALICE* should be a type admitting instance tokens, distinct from other such types, identified by a linguistic be noted, however, that treating a term like *water* as the name of a kind-level entity (as distinct from a predicate true of things which are water) is conceptually very close to treating *Alice* as a name for a category of entities (as distinct from a label for a set of individuals, or a predicate true of individuals thus named).[9] These abstract sorts are what we attribute properties to when we learn something about a named individual like *Jim* or a nominal category like *dog*. Abstract sorts thus provide the basis for categorization and inductive learning (Millikan 1998). This is also naturally consonant with analyses of names in terms of 'mental files' which organize information (see Recanati 2012 and Jeshion 2014, 82-4).

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expression (no matter how realized), and sharing with natural kind terms like *bears* or *water* the grammatical behaviour discussed in the text.

9 One might object that common nouns are descriptive while names need not be (as we saw in section 5, many names are in fact descriptive, although the descriptive content does not determine the properties of the referent). But this is not true. For speakers who cannot tell an elm from a beech, the two labels are not descriptive, even though they remain distinct common nouns – and this is a very common circumstance indeed. The analogy between name-labels and noun-labels is clearest when considering nouns like *cranberry* and *loganberry*: the sub-categories of what one understand by *berry* are distinguished by morphemes with no descriptive content (indeed, *Logan* was a family name); they only express identity and difference.

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From Theory to Practice
Drawing on VanPatten's Input Processing Theory to Address Grammatical Challenges in L2 French

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Abstract VanPatten's Input Processing Theory (IPT) explains why second language (L2) learners often struggle to process grammatical forms from input – an essential step in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Drawing on IPT, Processing Instruction (PI) has been shown to enhance grammar acquisition across various L2s, including French. Yet, IPT and PI have made limited inroads into L2 French pedagogical practices. To help bridge this gap between SLA research and L2 instruction, this article illustrates IPT's principles with French examples and demonstrates how they can inform the teaching of grammatical structures in L2 French.

Keywords Second Language Acquisition. L2 Input Processing. Focus-on-Form. Processing Instruction. L2 Grammar Acquisition. L2 French.

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1 Introduction

A prevailing assumption in French grammar teaching materials and classroom practices is that second language (L2) grammar instruction should consist of inductive or deductive rule presentation, followed by production-oriented activities. However, research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) indicates that acquisition is primarily driven by exposure to meaningful and comprehensible input. Only those linguistic forms that learners detect in the input and map to meaning during L2 comprehension – a process referred to as *input processing* – can potentially be acquired (VanPatten 1996; 2020). From this perspective, asking learners to produce grammatical forms before they have had sufficient opportunities to process them during comprehension may be both premature and ineffective for developing a mental representation of language. How, then, can we better support L2 French learners as they face challenges such as the *imparfait/passé-composé* distinction or the use of the subjunctive mood?

This article argues that VanPatten's Input Processing Theory (IPT; 1996; 2020) offers a useful explanatory framework for understanding learners' difficulties in processing grammatical forms in L2 French at the initial stages of SLA. It also shows how these difficulties can be addressed through a pedagogical intervention known as Processing Instruction (PI), which is grounded in IPT. By doing so, the article seeks to bridge a gap between SLA research and classroom practice, and to advocate for a more research-informed approach to grammar instruction in L2 French.

The article opens by revisiting key SLA constructs and situating IPT within the broader theoretical landscape. It then outlines the core principles of IPT, illustrated with examples from French. This is followed by a discussion of the main components of Processing Instruction (PI) and the presentation of sample activities targeting the subjunctive in expressions of necessity. The article concludes with an overview of empirical research on PI and its effectiveness.

2 Defining Key Constructs in SLA and Situating IPT

Researchers across most major theoretical perspectives agree that SLA relies on four major constructs, as illustrated by the general model of SLA represented in Figure 1.

Although the operationalization of these constructs varies across SLA theories, there is a general agreement that *Input* refers to the meaning-bearing language that learners hear, read, or see in a communicative context, and which is thereby available for acquisition. Through the years, it has become widely accepted across theoretical frameworks that input is fundamental for SLA to occur. There is also a consensus that a distinction must be made between the input learners are exposed to and the portion of that input they can actually use for acquisition. Learners simply cannot attend to all the linguistic features of the input. Therefore, they need to filter the information available to them through the act of comprehension. Only this filtered data, known as *Intake* (Corder 1967, 165) can potentially be processed further and eventually stored under the form of an implicit mental representation of language in learners' *Internal system*. *Output*, finally, refers to the language that learners can produce by drawing on the linguistic knowledge they have internalized and stored in memory. Simply put, output is the end-product of SLA, and it can only occur once input has been processed and stored as a mental representation.

Input → Intake → Internal System → Ouput

Figure 1 Leow, R. A General Model of SLA. 2015

Building on these foundational distinctions between Input, Intake, Internal System, and Output, Krashen's Monitor theory (e.g. Krashen 1985) was among the first frameworks developed specifically to account for SLA. By positing that acquisition follows a natural progression that cannot be altered by instruction, and by asserting that language is acquired through the understanding of messages in the L2 – or "by receiving comprehensible input" (Krashen 1985, 2) – Monitor Theory provided a theoretical account of how SLA occurs. It also prompted renewed reflection on the potential role of instruction in SLA.

However, the notion that input alone is a sufficient condition for acquisition has been challenged. Krashen's claims lacked robust empirical support and were met with scepticism, particularly in light of studies conducted in French immersion programs in Canada (e.g. Swain 1985), which suggested that learners may require additional support to convert grammatical input into intake. In response, Long (1991) advocated for a Focus on Form approach to L2 instruction, which integrates brief, reactive attention to a problematic grammatical feature into otherwise meaning-focused interaction, when such grammatical form disrupts communication.

VanPatten further advanced the field by offering a psycholinguistically grounded model of how learners process L2 input. His Input Processing Theory (IPT, 1996; 2020) identified the cognitive constraints and strategies involved in converting input into intake. Drawing on this theoretical foundation, VanPatten proposed

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a pedagogical intervention designed to help learners attend to and process grammatical forms during input comprehension.

The following sections outline the core principles of IPT, with an emphasis on their implications for the processing of grammatical features in L2 French.

3 VanPatten's Input Processing Theory

While reaffirming the essential role of meaning-bearing L2 input in SLA, VanPatten acknowledges that not all input is attended to or acquired. He conceives input processing as an online phenomenon that occurs in working memory and involves two sub-processes: *parsing* and *making form-meaning connections* from input during L2 comprehension. *Parsing* refers to "the moment-by-moment computation of sentence structure in real time" (VanPatten 2015, 92), that is, the syntactic projections learners make as they engage with input. *Making form-meaning connections* refers to the "moment-by-moment connection of surface formal features/formatives with meaning" (92): the connection of forms detected in the input to their corresponding meanings.

Drawing on insights from research in first language (L1) acquisition and SLA, the researcher (VanPatten 2020, 115) makes four major claims about these two sub-processes (parsing and making form-meaning connections) which can be summarized as follows:

1. When processing L2 input, learners tend to prioritize the extraction of meaning. As a result, they often overlook grammatical words and instead focus on deriving meaning from content words (e.g. Færch, Kasper 1986; Klein 1986; Sharwood-Smith 1986; Wong Fillmore 1976).
2. Because comprehension is initially quite effortful in terms of cognitive processing and working memory, there are limits to what the input processing mechanisms can attend to (see, e.g. Wickens 1984 for a review).
3. The capacity of working memory further constrains comprehension. As learners process input in real time, they are limited in how much information they can hold simultaneously (Just, Carpenter 1993, 332).
4. When processing L2 input, learners may draw on both universal processing strategies (e.g. Bever 1970; Ervin-Tripp 1994; LoCoco 1982) and those derived from their L1. Distinguishing between these two types of strategies can be challenging, as they often influence L2 processing in similar ways (VanPatten 2015).

Based on these claims, IPT outlines a set of principles that characterize the processing strategies learners typically adopt during the initial stages of SLA.

3.1 The Primacy of Meaning and Related Principles

The first claim presented above – that learners are primarily driven by a search for meaning when interacting with L2 input – led to the formulation the Primacy of Meaning Principle: "learners process input for meaning before they process it for form" (VanPatten 2004, 14), as demonstrated in studies by Lee (e.g. Lee 2003). Several sub-principles stem from the Primacy of Meaning Principle, beginning with the Primacy of Content Words.

3.1.1 The Primacy of Content Words

VanPatten (2020) explains that, since learners approach SLA knowing that languages have words and that there is a difference between lexical and non-lexical items, they tend to look first for lexical items to make form-meaning connections. This is known as the Primacy of Content Words Principle, which posits that "learners process content words in the input before anything else" (115). An important implication of this principle is that, because learners cannot allocate their attention to all the forms in the input, they will most likely attempt to extract meaning from lexical words before they pay attention to grammatical forms (if at all). To illustrate, consider the case of L2 French learners encountering the sentences in (1) or (2).

(1) *La dame sourit.*
'The lady is smiling.'

(2) *Elle a envie de chanter.*
'She wants to sing.'

According to the Primacy of Content Words Principle, learners will primarily focus on lexical forms that carry meaning, such as the noun *dame* (lady), and the verb *souri-* (smil-) in (1). In contrast, grammatical forms such as the determiner *la* and the third-person present marker *-t* may initially go unnoticed. Similarly, in (2), learners might skip over the preposition *de* (to) and instead focus on the noun *envie* (want) and the infinitive *chanter* (sing)to infer meaning. Evidence supporting learners' tendency to prioritize content words in L2 processing can be found in studies including Bernhardt (1992).

3.1.2 The Lexical Preference Principle

IPT makes another claim regarding grammatical markers: if the meaning of a grammatical marker is redundant with that of a lexical item, then the grammatical marker may not be processed (VanPatten 2020, 116). This implies that when presented with a sentence such as (3), learners will derive tense from the adverb *bientôt* (soon), which encodes futurity lexically, rather than from the verbal inflection -*ra*, which encodes the same meaning grammatically.

(3) *Elle sortira bientôt*.
'She will be leaving soon.'

Likewise, learners might not process the imperfective aspect of the French *imparfait* inflection if they can rely on an adverb such as *régulièrement* (regularly), as in (4).

(4) *Elle prenait le métro régulièrement.*
'She used to take the metro regularly.'

According to VanPatten (2020), this preference for lexical items has two major consequences. First, redundant grammatical forms will be processed only after the corresponding lexical forms have been processed and incorporated into the learners' developing linguistic system. In the case of (3) and (4), this means that the markers -*ra* and -*ait* will not be processed or incorporated until the lexical indicators of futurity and imperfective aspect, respectively, have been.

The second implication is that, as long as comprehension remains effortful, learners may completely overlook grammatical forms, focusing only on lexical items in their search for meaning.

These considerations led to the formulation of the Lexical Preference Principle as follows: "If grammatical forms express a meaning that can also be encoded lexically (i.e., that grammatical marker is redundant), then learners will not initially process those grammatical forms until they have lexical forms to which they can match them" (VanPatten 2020, 116). Empirical evidence for this strategy has been provided in Musumeci (1989) and Rossomondo (2007), among others.

This presentation of IPT will next address two additional implications of the Preference for Meaning Principle, both grounded in the idea that, from a learner's perspective, not all grammatical markers encode meaning.

3.1.3 The Preference for Nonredundancy Principle

VanPatten (2020) notes that not all grammatical markers are redundant. To illustrate this, consider the sentences in (5) and (6) in contrast with those in (3) and (4):

(5) *Elle sortira son chien.*
‘She will walk the dog.’

(6) *Elle prenait le métro à République*.
‘She used to take the metro at République.’

In (5), the verbal inflection *-ra* is the sole indicator of futurity. In (6), *-ait* is the only aspectual marker. The inflections *-ra* and *-ait* are thus nonredundant and carry high communicative value (i.e. they contribute to the referential meaning of the sentence).

IPT posits that, since learners always look for cues to meaning, when meaning is not encoded lexically, then (and only then) will they attend to grammatical markers (117). This implies that nonredundant forms are processed earlier than redundant ones. This principle is known as the Preference for Nonredundancy Principle: “learners are more likely to process nonredundant meaningful grammatical markers before they process redundant meaningful markers” (116).

3.1.4 The Meaning Before Nonmeaning Principle

While some grammatical forms may be redundant, others lack any communicative value altogether. Consider, for instance, sentences (7-9).

(7) *Il a une voiture verte.*
‘He has a green car.’

(8) *Elle trouve que c’est dommage.*
‘She thinks that it’s a shame.’

(9) *Il n’a pas de chien.*
‘He has no dog.’

The feminine marker *-e* in *un**e*** (a), *voitur**e*** (car), and *vert**e*** (green) in (7) does not encode any real-world semantic information. It simply reflects a grammatical convention that assigns feminine gender to *voiture* (car), thereby requiring agreement across related elements. In other words, there is no real-world form-meaning connection to be drawn from that *-e*, and failure to process it does not hinder the interpretation of the sentence. (8) provides another example of a form lacking inherent communicative value: the subordinating conjunction *que*, whose processing is not essential for accessing the utterance's meaning. Similarly, the negative article *de* in (9) lacks inherent meaning; it merely reiterates information already present in the adverbial locution *ne…pas* (not). As such, it is redundant and carries low communicative value.

IPT posits that such grammatical features, which do not encode meaning, are processed after those for which "true form-meaning connections can be made" (VanPatten 2020, 117). This observation is formalized as the Meaning Before Nonmeaning Principle: "learners are more likely to process meaningful grammatical markers before non-meaningful grammatical markers" (117). Early empirical support for the Preference for Nonredundancy and the Meaning before Nonmeaning principles was found in studies such as Bransdorfer (1991).

Whereas all the principles discussed so far focus on how L2 learners make form-meaning connections, recall that IPT also accounts for how learners parse sentences in real time when their L2 grammatical system is still developing. The following sections describe the unconscious strategies that learners use in sentence parsing, captured under the First Noun Principle (FNP) and related principles.

3.2 The First Noun Principle (FNP) and Related Principles

Building on extensive research in both L1 and L2 acquisition showing that learners rely on sentence structure to interpret grammatical roles (e.g. Bever 1970; Ervin-Tripp 1994; LoCoco 1982), and that learners of a wide variety of L2s tend to assign the subject role to the first noun they encounter, irrespective of other cues such as object markers (e.g. Allen 2000), VanPatten formulated the FNP: "learners tend to process the first noun or pronoun they encounter in a sentence as the subject" (2020, 120). According to this principle, when presented with a sentence as (10),

(10) *Sophie est conduite à l'école par Marie.*
'Sophie is driven to school by Marie.'

a learner of L2 French is likely to interpret the proper noun *Sophie* as the subject, as if the sentence meant *Sophie a conduit Marie à l'école* (Sophie drove Marie to school). The FNP also explains, among others, difficulties in correctly interpreting subject and object roles in causative sentences (11) or in cleft sentences (12).

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(11) *Inès fait faire ses devoirs à Enzo.*
'Inès makes Enzo do his homework.'

(12) *C'est Jasmine que Thomas soigne.*
'It is Jasmine that Thomas is treating.'

Because it remains unclear whether learners' parsing strategies are universal or due to a transfer of L1 processing strategies, IPT proposes an alternative captured by the L1 Transfer Principle.

3.2.1 The L1 Transfer Principle

This principle accounts for cases in which learners have difficulty interpreting meaning due to mismatches between the processing strategies employed in their L1 and those required by the L2. In this view, one of the reasons why learners of French might misinterpret sentences (10), (11), and (12) could be that their L1 parser is not equipped to handle passive, causative, or cleft constructions.

Another factor that may influence the way L2 learners parse sentences is the degree of likelihood that an event would happen in real life.

3.2.2 The Event Probability Principle

Consider a learner of French presented with sentences (13-15) instead of (10-12):

(13) *Sophie est conduite à l'école par sa mère.*
'Sophie is driven to school by her **mother**.'

(14) *Inès fait faire ses devoirs au petit garçon.*
'Inès makes the little boy do his **homework**.'

(15) *C'est Jasmine que le docteur soigne.*
'It is Jasmine that the **doctor** is treating.'

While the FNP predicts that learners tend to assign the agent role to the first noun in a sentence, real-world knowledge would suggest that the person referred to by the second noun in these sentences is more likely to have performed the action of driving/doing their homework/treating. This tendency to override the FNP with logical expectations is captured in the *Event Probability Principle*: "Learners may rely on event probabilities, where possible, instead of the FNP to interpret sentences" (VanPatten 2020, 121).

In a similar vein, VanPatten (2020) notes that learners bring to sentence processing an understanding that verbs typically involve actions and that nouns may refer to animate or inanimate entities. These expectations are addressed in the Lexical Semantics Principle.

3.2.3 The Lexical Semantics Principle

Learner's understanding of verbs and nouns makes it unlikely that a sentence such as (16) would be misinterpreted:

(16) *Le sac est ramassé par Rita.*
'The bag is grabbed by Rita.'

This phenomenon is formalized under the *Lexical Semantics Principle*, which posits that "Learners may rely on lexical semantics, where possible, instead of the FNP (or an L1 parsing procedure), to interpret sentences" (VanPatten 2020, 121). Empirical support for this principle has been found in studies such as Jackson (2007). Another factor that may influence how learners parse sentences is context.

3.2.4 The Contextual Constraints Principle

Research on L2 input processing has shown that learners use contextual elements to parse sentences, and that the presence of context, while not obliterating the use of the first-noun strategy, "attenuates it" (Houston 1997, 66). For instance, learners of L2 French are less likely to misinterpret sentence (10) *Sophie est conduite à l'école par Marie*, if it is preceded by contextualizing sentences such as *Sophie est en CP. Son père, Patrick, et sa mère, Marie travaillent tous les deux.* (Sophie is in First grade. Her father, Patrick, and her mother, Marie, both work.) This phenomenon is formalized in IPT as *the Contextual Constraints Principle*: "learners may rely less on the FNP (or L1 transfer) if preceding context constrains the possible interpretation of a clause or sentence" (VanPatten 2020, 121).

The principles reviewed thus far address how learners establish form-meaning connections and how they parse sentences in real time. IPT also accounts for another aspect of input processing: the position within the sentence at which certain elements are more likely to be processed.

3.3 The Sentence Location Principle

Drawing on research showing that elements in initial sentence position are easier to process, followed by those in final position, with medial elements being the most difficult to process (e.g. Barcroft, VanPatten 1997), VanPatten formulated the Sentence Location Principle. This principle predicts that "learners tend to process items in sentence initial position before those in final position and those in medial position" (VanPatten 2020, 122). From this perspective, learners of French encountering the sentence in (17) are likely to process *demain* (tomorrow) first, then *cinéma* (movies), skipping over medial elements.

(17) *Demain, il se peut que nous allions au cinema*.
'It is possible that we will go to the movies tomorrow.'

The Sentence Location Principle also contributes explain learners' difficulties in processing relative pronouns, clitic object pronouns, and conjunctions, among other grammatical forms.

3.4 Concluding Remarks on IPT

The principles of IPT outlined in the previous sections of this article constitute a unique attempt to explain how learners process or fail to process grammatical features in L2 input. As it stands, VanPatten's IPT represents the most complete account of how learners come to process L2 input. In essence, the theory predicts that learners filter incoming information to extract data relevant for building mental representations of language. It also posits that, driven by a search for meaning and influenced by a strong tendency to assign the agent role to the first noun encountered, learners sometimes fail to attend to grammatical forms; to map meaning and function to these forms, and to establish syntactic relationship as they perform the effortful and cognitively taxing activity of interpreting input in real time. Successful processing of forms and sentence structure thus depends upon learners' ability to overcome their default, inefficient processing strategies, which are captured by the series of principles detailed in the previous sections and summarized in Table 1.

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Table 1 Principles of Input Processing Theory (based on VanPatten 2020)

1 The Primacy of Meaning Principle: Learners process input for meaning before they process it for form.
1.1 The Primacy of the Content Words Principle: Learners process content words in the input before anything else.
1.2 The Lexical Preference Principle: If grammatical forms express a meaning that can also be encoded lexically (i.e., that grammatical marker is redundant), then learners will not initially process those grammatical forms until they have lexical forms to which they can match them.
1.3 The Preference for Nonredundancy Principle: Learners are more likely to process nonredundant meaningful grammatical markers before they process redundant meaningful markers.
1.4 The Meaning Before Nonmeaning Principle: Learners are more likely to process meaningful grammatical markers before nonmeaningful grammatical markers.
2 The First Noun Principle: Learners tend to process the first noun or pronoun they encounter in a sentence as the subject.
2.1 The L1 Transfer Principle: Learners begin acquisition with L1 parsing procedures.
2.2 The Event Probabilities Principle: Learners may rely on event probabilities, where possible, instead of the FNP to interpret sentences.
2.3 The Lexical Semantics Principle: Learners may rely on lexical semantics, where possible, instead of the FNP (or an L1 parsing procedure) to interpret sentences.
2.4 The Contextual Constraint Principle: Learners may rely less on the FNP (or L1 transfer) if preceding context constrains the possible interpretation of a clause or sentence.
3 The Sentence Location Principle: Learners tend to process items in sentence initial position before those in final position and those in medial position.

Recognizing that learners often rely on inefficient strategies when interpreting input in real time, researchers began exploring ways to help them overcome these default strategies and adopt more efficient ones. It was with this objective in mind that VanPatten developed Processing Instruction (PI).

4 Processing Instruction (PI)

PI is a form-focused pedagogical intervention that accounts for the fundamental role of input in SLA and the necessity that learners make appropriate form-meaning connections from input to develop their mental representation of language. Directly informed by the processing principles outlined in VanPatten's IPT, it guides learners away from their default, inefficient processing strategies and toward more effective ones, thereby increasing the chance that they will make proper form-meaning connections and parse sentences appropriately as they interpret L2 input. PI, as originally conceptualized, consists of

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two major components: Explicit Information (EI) and activities called Structured Input (SI) activities.

4.1 Explicit Information (EI)

In PI, EI about a target form or structure must address the specific processing problem(s) associated with it. To do so, the EI first explains what the form is called, why it is used, and what kind of meaning it conveys. Then, crucially, it warns learners against a commonly used but inefficient processing strategy.

To illustrate, consider the development of EI for the French subjunctive of necessity, as in the following examples where the expression of necessity in the main clause triggers the use of the subjunctive in the subordinate clause:

(18) [*Il est nécessaire*] [*que nous agissions maintenant.*]
‘[It is necessary] [that we act now.]’

(19) [*Nous exigeons*] [*qu’on prenne des mesures.*]
‘[We demand] [that measures be taken.]’

In these examples, the lexical elements *nécessaire* and *exigeons* in the main clause are both content words encoding the meaning of ‘necessity’. As a result, the subjunctive inflections on *agissions* and *prenne* are redundant and of low communicative value. According to the Preference for Meaning Principle and its subprinciples (see Table 1), learners are therefore likely to overlook the subjunctive inflection when attempting to comprehend sentences. Furthermore, because the subjunctive form often appears in the middle of the sentence, it is less likely to be processed, as predicted by the Sentence Location Principle.

EI on the French subjunctive of necessity should therefore highlight the meaning conveyed by the subjunctive inflection and warn learners against the Preference for Meaning Principle and subprinciples, as well as the Sentence Location Principle. This can be achieved by:

1. Presenting learners with examples of the present subjunctive in context;
2. Explaining what the present subjunctive looks like, how it is used, and the meaning it conveys;
3. Warning learners against the misleading strategy of skipping over the subjunctive inflection because of its redundancy and mid-sentence position.

One way to achieve this is to present EI as illustrated in Figure 2.

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Expressing Necessity With the Present Subjunctive

To raise awareness about the need to take action, activists use statements such as:

1. *Il est nécessaire que nous agissions maintenant.*
   'It is necessary that we act now.'
2. *Nous exigeons qu'on prenne des mesures.*
   'We demand that measures be taken.'

In these sentences, *agissions* and *prenne* are in the present subjunctive form.

What the present subjunctive looks like:
The French present subjunctive is formed by taking the **stem** of the **third person plural** (*ils/elles*) form of the **present indicative**, removing the *-ent* ending, and adding the following **subjunctive endings**: -e, -es, -e, -ions, -iez, -ent

- Example with *agir*:
  Ils agiss~~ent~~ → agiss- → (que) j'agisse | (que) nous agissions
  (que) tu agisses | (que) vous agissiez
  (qu') il/elle/on agisse | (qu') ils/ellse agissent

A few common irregular verbs include:

Être: (que) je sois | (que) nous soyons
Avoir: (que) j'aie | (que) nous ayons
Aller: (que) j'aille | (que) nous allions
Faire: (que) je fasse | (que) nous fassions

When to use the subjunctive:

- The subjunctive is used in sentences that consist of **a main clause and a subordinate clause** introduced by *que/qu'*, where each clause has a different grammatical subject.
- When the main clause (e.g. *Il est nécessaire*) expresses that the action depicted by the verb in the subordinate clause (*agir*) is **necessary**, then that action must be expressed in the **subjunctive**, as in *que nous agissions maintenant*. The subjunctive thus serves to reiterate the idea of necessity in the subordinate clause.

Be careful!
Because **the subjunctive verb form reflects an idea already introduced at the beginning of the sentence**, students tend to focus only on expressions like *Il est nécessaire/ Nous exigeons* to infer meaning when reading or listening. As a result, they often overlook the subjunctive form in the second part of the sentence. **Don't overlook the subjunctive form in the second part of the sentence!**

Figure 2 Sample EI on the French subjunctive of necessity

4.2 Structured Input (SI) Activities

The second component of PI is structured SI activities. These activities aim at altering the way learners process L2 input in real time. In SI activities, learners are exposed to input that has been carefully manipulated – or *structured* – so that learners must rely on the target form to extract the meaning it encodes.

In the case of the French subjunctive of necessity, then, the input should be structured in a way that (1) prevents learners from relying on the Preference for Meaning and related strategies as well as the Sentence Location strategy, and (2) prompts them to process the subjunctive inflection to understand that a sense of necessity is being conveyed. This can be achieved by removing the main clause that expresses necessity lexically, thereby isolating the subordinate clause, and positioning it at the beginning of the input as in the following examples:

(20) *que nous agissions maintenant*
‘that we act now’

(21) *qu’on prenne des mesures*
‘that measures be taken’

A sequence of SI activities includes SI in two types of activities: referential activities and affective activities.

4.2.1 Referential Activities

Designed to promote the initial processing of the target grammatical feature, these activities can take various forms, such as sentence-picture matching or multiple-choice questions, and always have a right or wrong answer. This allows instructors to verify whether learners have made the proper form-meaning connections. Figure 3 shows an example of a referential SI activity focusing on the French subjunctive of necessity for students at the B1 level. In this activity, learners are asked to determine whether given statements are presented as facts or as necessities. It is assumed that the vocabulary used is either known by the participants or sufficiently transparent for comprehension.

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Agir Pour la Protection de l'Environnement

Un groupe d'étudiants se réunit pour discuter d'initiatives européennes pour la protection de l'environnement. Voici leurs notes.

Étape 1. Indiquez pour chacun des éléments (a) à (b) s'il s'agit pour ces étudiants d'un **constat** (Il est vrai ...) ou d'une **nécessité** (il faut ...).

Il est vrai ...	Il faut ...	
✓		(a) qu'on **fait** des recherches.
✓		(b) qu'on **promeut** l'écotourisme.
	✓	(c) qu'on **choisisse** des énergies propres.
	✓	(d) qu'on **soutienne** l'agriculture biologique.
	✓	(e) qu'on **agisse** contre la surconsommation.
	✓	(f) qu'on **mette** l'accent sur la biodiversité.
✓		(g) qu'on **interdit** certains pesticides chimiques.
	✓	(h) qu'on **investisse** dans les transports durables.

Étape 2. Discutez en binôme. Faites-vous les mêmes constats ? Ces initiatives sont-elles des priorités pour vous ?

Figure 3 An example of a referential SI activity focused on the subjunctive of necessity

Notice that the input in this activity is structured so that the only cue enabling learners to make their decision is the subjunctive inflection. Learners cannot rely on the lexical items in the main clause or on their world knowledge to determine whether the actions are presented as facts or as necessities. Furthermore, the statements are short and limited to the third person singular, which helps reduce cognitive load and promote more efficient processing.

To maintain a focus on meaning and to make the activity communicative, learners are asked, in *Étape 2* (Step 2), to return to the statements and react to them by telling partners whether they consider the actions to be priorities. Only brief responses (e.g. *Pour moi, non* (Not to me)) would be required, ensuring that learners are not asked to produce sentences involving the indicative/subjunctive distinction before having sufficient practice processing the subjunctive of necessity in sentence comprehension.

Once learners have had the opportunity to practice processing the target form through several referential activities, affective activities can be introduced.

4.2.2 Affective Activities

Affective activities encourage learners to express a belief, opinion, or emotional response to a message. Therefore, these activities do not have right or wrong answers. The main goal of affective activities is to engage learners in processing input for meaning and offer them an opportunity to reinforce the form-meaning connections established during the referential activities. For this reason, affective activities always follow referential activities. Figure 4 shows an example of an affective SI activity where learners are asked to rate the necessity of different initiatives that could be taken for a greener campus.

Pour un Campus Plus Vert

Étape 1. Lisez ces propositions d'initiatives pour un campus plus écoresponsable. Pour chacune, indiquez si vous les considérez (1) inutiles, (2) plutôt importantes, ou (3) nécessaires.

(a) que nous **venions** en bus ou à vélo plutôt qu'en voiture.
(b) que nous **recueillions** l'eau de pluie pour la réutiliser.
(c) que nous **limitions** le nombre de photocopies autorisées.
(d) que nous **interdisions** la distribution de flyers sur le campus.
(e) que nous **chauffions** les bâtiments grâce à des panneaux solaires.
(f) que nous **triions** les déchets sur le campus pour ensuite les recycler.
(g) que nous **évitions** la vente de produits dans des emballages plastiques.
(h) que nous **conservions** les équipements informatiques le plus longtemps possible.

Étape 2. En petits groupes, comparez vos réponses. Quelle initiative est la plus populaire dans votre groupe ?

Figure 4 An example of an affective SI activity focused on the subjunctive of necessity

Notice that the affective activity still provides learners with SI that addresses the relevant processing principles. Now, the focus has shifted to the first-person plural form, and the statements are slightly longer while remaining meaningful. Learners continue to respond to the input, but their answers may vary based on personal opinion. In *Étape 2* (Step 2), learners are encouraged to revisit the statements and share their opinions with partners in a communicative context.

It is important to note that once affective activities have enabled learners to strengthen the necessary form-meaning connections, the class may gradually move toward output practice. A more detailed discussion of output practice, however, falls beyond the scope of this article.

Finally, both referential and affective activities must follow the guidelines outlined and explained in Table 2.

Table 2 Guidelines for Creating SI Activities (adapted from Lee, VanPatten 2003)

a) Present one thing at a time. This guideline means that paradigms should be broken down so that only **one form** (e.g. in Figure 3, the third person singular inflection of the present subjunctive) and **one function** (e.g. expressing necessity) are the focus in any given activity. This way, learners are more likely to direct their attention toward the targeted item. They can be made aware of the rest of the paradigm in subsequent activities.
b) Keep meaning in focus at all times. Activities should lead learners to process (1) the form (e.g. the present subjunctive inflection) or (2) the propositional content of the sentence and the form (e.g. the expression of a necessity and the verbal inflection that carries this meaning). In contrast, learners should not engage in mechanical activities, such as declensions of verbs or adjectives, as these do not require a focus on meaning.
c) Move from sentences to connected discourse. This guideline emphasizes the importance of starting with short sentences. The cognitive demands of processing meaning in narrative or descriptive discourse from the outset may be too overwhelming for learners. For instance, the statements in Figure 3 are shorter than those in Figure 4, which would typically have followed after completing several more referential activities.
d) Use both oral and written input. Activities should include both oral and written input, either across the activities or within each one. This approach not only adds variation to the activities but also addresses learners' individual differences. While all learners can benefit from oral input, visually oriented learners will particularly benefit from written materials to enhance their learning.
e) Learners must do something with the input. Learners should actively engage with the input rather than passively listening to the instructor or simply reading. As illustrated in the sample activities in this article, they must be encouraged to process forms and given opportunities to demonstrate that they are paying attention to what they hear or see.
f) Keep the learner's processing strategies in mind. This guideline suggests that each activity and each input sentence must be designed to steer learners away from their natural, often inefficient processing strategies and direct them toward more efficient ones. Any cues that would allow learners to access meaning without paying attention to the target form must be removed. For example, in the sample activities presented, the subjunctive is separated from expressions such as *Il est nécessaire* (It is necessary).

In sum, what distinguishes PI from other types of form-focused instruction is that it directly addresses what learners need to do to process grammatical L2 input: detecting grammatical forms in communicative language and linking them to meaning so that a mental representation of this form can eventually be created. The key component of PI is input, but not any input. This input is carefully manipulated to steer learners away from inefficient processing strategies and toward more effective ones. By structuring input in this way, PI increases the likelihood that learners will attend to and properly process target forms.

To date, PI remains the only pedagogical intervention grounded in a theory of input processing, that is, it is based on what learners actually do when attempting to process L2 input and provides them with practice using more efficient strategies. As such, PI has attracted considerable research attention. The following section offers a brief overview of studies that have investigated its effectiveness.

4.3 An Overview of PI Research

VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) conducted the first study to investigate the effects of PI by comparing it to Traditional Instruction (TI), which focused on rule learning and production practice through drills. In their study, learners of L2 Spanish received either PI or TI focusing on direct object pronouns and word order. The results revealed that only the PI group showed significant improvements on an aural interpretation task, and both groups made significant improvements on a written production task, even though the PI group never practiced producing the target form. This finding, which suggests that PI was more beneficial than TI, has been replicated in various studies, including VanPatten and Wong (2004) on the French causative structure with *faire*.

Since then, research has provided evidence of the effectiveness of PI and its superiority over other types of grammar instruction for promoting accurate and efficient input processing of various target forms across languages such as Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Turkish, and Japanese. These findings hold regardless of individual factors such as age, gender, motivation, L2 aptitude, prior knowledge, and working memory capacity (see, e.g. Lee, Benati 2023 for a review).

Extensive research has also allowed to identify SI as the driving force in PI. After a seminal study by VanPatten and Oikkenon's (1996) provided evidence that EI is not a necessary component in PI, Wong (2004) compared the performance of learners receiving PI with or without EI on the use of the negative *de* replace indefinite articles in French. The results revealed that EI was not necessary for qualitative changes in processing to occur, establishing SI as the essential component of PI. These findings have been reproduced in numerous partial replication studies. Over the years, more elaborate research designs have revealed that EI can, under certain circumstances, accelerate the onset of accurate processing of specific target forms in particular languages during SI activities (e.g. VanPatten et al. 2013).

Another line of inquiry in PI research has investigated potential transfer-of-training effects, that is, whether PI on one structure can improve learners' processing of structures they have not yet been taught. For instance, Benati et al. (2008) found that PI on the

French imperfect morphology – which is affected by the Lexical Preference principle – not only yielded significant improvements in the interpretation and production of imperfect inflections but also enhanced processing of two untrained structures: (1) French subjunctive verbal morphology, also affected by the Lexical Preference Principle, and (2) the French causative structure with *faire*, which is governed by the FNP. Benati et al. (2008) concluded that the benefits of PI extend to transfer-of-training effects. Comparable findings have been reported in several studies (see, e.g. Wong et al. 2021 for a review on this topic, along with a study presenting differing outcomes).

More recently, researchers have emphasized the importance of online methods for capturing real-time processing and comprehension strategies to better assess the effects of PI (e.g. Benati 2020). Wong and Ito (2018) were the first to innovate in this area by using eye-tracking to examine whether instruction in the form of PI and TI – with and without EI – would lead to differences in how learners processed the French causative structure with *faire*. Data collected during a sentence-picture matching task administered at pre- and posttest revealed that only PI was associated with a change in eye-movement pattern, and EI brought about a benefit in TI, but not in PI. Further evidence that SI activities do alter L2 learners' strategies in real-time has also been provided through self-paced reading tasks, where text is revealed one word at a time (e.g. Chiuchiù, Benati 2020). Though still in its early stages, online research is beginning to offer a clearer picture of how SI helps learners process L2 input more accurately and efficiently.

5 Conclusions

By revisiting IPT and its pedagogical implementation, PI, this paper sought to demonstrate how grounding grammar instruction in SLA theory and research can enhance the teaching of grammatical forms in L2 French. Therefore, the discussion moved from a reminder of the crucial role of input in SLA to a detailed and illustrated description of IPT, followed by a walkthrough of how PI can be designed.

As suggested by the brief review of PI research presented in the final section, thirty years of empirical work have built a robust body of evidence supporting PI's effectiveness, with more fine-grained insights now emerging with online methods. In light of this growing evidence and considering the important role of grammar in many L2 French textbooks, it is surprising to find PI so rarely represented in teaching materials. To my knowledge, PI is implemented in only one textbook, *Liaisons: An Introduction to French* (Wong et al. 2019), primarily used in North America.

It is my hope that this article will encourage L2 French curriculum developers and language teachers to draw on IPT to better understand learners' difficulties with grammatical forms and, when appropriate, to experiment with the development of SI activities tailored to their specific instructional contexts.

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When Numbers Surface as Verbs: A Qualia-Oriented Analysis of Denumeral Verbs

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Abstract This work puts forth a preliminary analysis of the semantics of English 'denumeral verbs', i.e., verbs resulting from the conversion of numbers into verbs, as in the case of *to 747* 'to fly on a 747 Boeing aircraft' or *to 991* 'to call the police dialing 911'. After retrieving 296 instances of denumeral verbs from the *EnTenTen15* corpus that were traced back to the same 47 denumeral verb lemmas, these were divided into ten categories based on their semantics and community of use. We adopted Generative Lexicon Theory – specifically Qualia roles – to investigate the contribution of the semantics of the base (i.e., the number) to the semantics of the converted verb. We were able to identify 21 denumeral verbs exploiting the Telic quale of their underlying number, 17 verbs exploiting the Agentive quale and 4 verbs exploiting the Constitutive quale. These findings suggest that Qualia values may not be all on the same level in terms of exploitability and that – at least for what concerns the verbs in our sample – accessing information concerning the goal (Telic quale) or origin (Agentive quale) of an entity is easier than accessing information on its internal composition (Constitutive quale) or ontological nature (Formal quale).

Keywords Denumeral verbs. Conversion. Qualia values. Generative Lexicon. Verb semantics.

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1 Introduction

In this work, we propose a preliminary analysis of the semantics of a fascinating, albeit underexplored, category of English denominal verbs consisting (in part or entirely) of numbers, which will henceforth be called 'denumeral verbs'. This is the case of verbs like *to 991* 'to call the police dialing 911', *to 747* 'to fly on a 747 Boeing aircraft' or *to high 5* 'to greet someone giving them a high 5'.[1]

After an overview on the different stances in the linguistic community concerning conversion in denominal verbs in Section 2, the focus is brought on the contribution that Generative Lexicon Theory, and especially Qualia values (Pustejovsky 1995), can provide to the analysis of denominal verb semantics starting from the semantics of their underlying base nouns, in this case numbers. To our knowledge, a previous Qualia-oriented analysis of denominal verbs was made by Fabrizio (2013) for Italian, but no similar study has been carried out for English nor for denumeral verbs.

Section 3 includes a first section devoted to the methodology that was followed to retrieve corpus examples containing instances of denumeral verbs from the *EnTenTen15* corpus (Jakubíček et al. 2013), and a second section revolving around the 10-class working classification that we adopted after cleaning our data and tracing back all corpus instances to 47 denumeral verb lemmas. In this section, denumeral verbs are grouped based on verb semantics and community of practice and their meanings are explained to facilitate the analysis which is carried out in Section 4. Section 5 is devoted to the Conclusions.

Despite the pervasiveness of the phenomenon, as attested by the nearly 300 retrieved corpus instances of denumeral verbs, this work only scratches the surface of the topic.

2 Theoretical Background

When it comes to word formation processes, the English language is able to form new lexemes not only by affixation or compounding, but also by merely shifting the part of speech of an already existing lexeme. This type of word formation has been referred to as 'conversion' (Lieber 1980; Don 1993; Beard 1995) and it is what happens when new verbs are created from nouns, as in the case of *to hammer* 'to hit with a hammer', *to fish* 'to take fish from a body of water', or *to summer* 'to spend the summer'. It is only the syntactic

1 We would like to thank the two reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

context which allows to disambiguate the value of the lexeme. Valera defines conversion as “a word-formation process that changes the word class of existing words but not their form, for example *water* versus *to water something* [Italics in the original work]” (2006, 172). While also Ježek and Ramat agree with this definition, they prefer the term ‘transcategorization’ to ‘conversion’, as the latter “does not make clear that one is referring to the notion of category” (2009, 394).

Regardless of the choice of label, the range of meanings of the resulting denominal verbs is extremely large, which has always sparked debate on how to deal with conversion. Some argue that it should be treated as a specific type of affixation, which requires a phonologically null affix, and that it should therefore be called ‘zero-affixation’. However, this interpretation has been criticized by those who believe that the variety of meanings and related argument structures exhibited by converted verbs is beyond the semantic potential of a zero-affix, since no other overt affix shows a similar behaviour (Lieber 2005).

On the other hand, others – like Lieber herself – argue that conversion should be treated as a change of category requiring a ‘relisting’ or ‘recategorization’ in our mental lexicons (1980; 1992; 2004; 2005). As a matter of fact, her analysis considers conversion not as a morphological process, but as the result of a creative process called ‘coinage’, which belongs to the domain of language use and incorporates pragmatic information. Her approach has been criticized by Don (2005), according to whom the semantics of English denominal verbs is actually best described taking into account the semantics of the nouns (or adjectives) acting as the base of the conversion[2], rather than by means of her relisting hypothesis. To do this, he relies, *inter alia*, on the verb groupings identified by Clark and Clark (1979), the first to analyse English denominal verbs systematically in their seminal paper “When Nouns Surface as Verbs”.

In their analysis, Clark and Clark (1979) identify nine categories of denominal verbs, based on the different roles parent nouns can take within the tailor-made argument structures that they created to paraphrase the denominal verbs they were working with. For instance, in the paraphrases of *locatum* verbs such as *to blanket* ‘to cover something with a blanket’, parent nouns become objects and locations become subjects, as you can see in example (1) and its paraphrase (1.a):

2 Depending on the framework, the nouns at the base of the conversion may be called *parent nouns* (Clark, Clark 1979), *base nouns* (Gottfurcht 2008), *source nouns* (Michaelis, Hsiao 2021) or *corresponding nouns* (Suozzi, Cardinaletti 2024).

(1) Jane **blanketed** the bed.

(1.a) Jane did something to cause it to come about that [the bed had one or more **blankets** on it].

Several other attempts at classifying denominal verbs based on the role played by the *denotata* of their base nouns in the events they denote have been carried out – *inter alia* by Marchand (1960), Gottfurcht (2008), Rimell (2012) and more recently by Michaelis and Hsiao (2021) – in line with the need identified by the likes of Aronoff (1980) and Kelly (1988) to focus on the semantic regularities of these verbs, i.e., the need to investigate "if and how [the] meaning [of a noun converted into a verb] 'works' in derivational processes" (Fabrizio 2013, 176).

However, despite these attempts, most denominal verb meanings remain not fully predictable, especially if compared to those of denominal suffixed verbs. Indeed, Clark and Clark themselves stress the often context-dependent nature of the semantics of innovative denominal verbs, whose interpretation must rely on the cooperation between speaker and hearer (1979, 787) – in line with Grice's cooperative principle (1975) – and a similar stance is adopted by Michaelis and Hsiao (2021), who rely on the application of both Pustejovsky's Principle of Co-composition (1995), Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995), Frame semantics (Fillmore 2006) and Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier, Turner 2002) to partially make up for the unpredictability of denominal verb meanings.

In this work, we will attempt to provide an analysis of the semantics of a peculiar category of English denominal verbs, namely 'denumeral verbs' – a label of our own making that we use to refer to those verbs resulting from the conversion of numbers into nouns and subsequently the conversion of said denumeral nouns into verbs. This is the case of *to 991* 'to call the police dialing the 911', but also of *to 4x4* 'to drive a 4x4 vehicle'.

Our analysis will rely on Generative Lexicon Theory (GLT) and specifically Qualia roles. The notion that lexical items can store information relating to hidden events and activities associated with the word is a useful device for helping in the interpretation of linguistic expressions. In Pustejovsky (1991), a more elaborated set of relations is proposed, in addition to the hidden event, to represent the meaning of nominals. These relations are called Qualia, and the system of relations defining a single concept is called Qualia structure. A Qualia structure consists of four basic roles:

- Formal: encoding taxonomic information about the lexical item (the 'is-a' relation)
- Constitutive: encoding information on the parts and constitution of an object ('part-of' or 'made-of' relation)

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- Telic: encoding information on purpose or function ('used-for' or 'functions-as' relation)
- Agentive: encoding information about the origin of the object (the 'created-by' relation).

Each Quale can be seen as answering a specific question about the object it is associated with:
- Formal: What kind of thing is it? What is its nature?
- Constitutive: What is it made of? What are its constituents?
- Telic: What is it for? How does it function?
- Agentive: How did it come into being? What brought it about?

Taken together, the answers to these questions can help elucidate the in-context meanings of words in the language. To provide an example, let us look at sentences (2) and (2.a).

(2) Sarah finished eating her sandwich.

(2.a) Sarah finished her sandwich.

The two sentences appear to convey the same meaning and differ only because the second sentence does not explicitly express the fact that the sandwich was eaten.

According to GLT, the process at play in sentence (2.a) could be seen as Qualia exploitation (Pustejovsky, Ježek 2008, 195), i.e., the verb 'to finish' forces the noun 'sandwich' into an event denotation by exploiting the value of the Telic Quale associated with it, namely 'eating'.

Interestingly, in a different context, sentence (2.a) could have also been interpreted as 'Sarah finished making her sandwich', allowing us to see that indeed also the Agentive Quale associated with sandwich is accessible for the phase verb 'to finish'.

Going back to sentence (1), we believe that a lighter paraphrase could be offered by sentence (1.b):

(1) Jane **blanketed** the bed.

(1.b) Jane [covered] the bed [with a] **blanket**.

From a GLT perspective, such a paraphrase could be traced back to the exploitation of the Telic Quale of blanket, i.e., 'to cover'. As for the morpho-syntactic category shift from noun to verb, we postulate that it is indeed the very availability and ease of access to the semantic information offered by the Qualia roles of the noun that allows for such an expedite shift via exploitation.

Our view is in line with that proposed by Fabrizio (2013), who suggests that the meanings of Italian converted denominal verbs are Qualia-oriented. For example, in the case of the verb *martellare* 'to hit with a hammer', it is the Telic Quale 'to hit' of the underlying noun *martello* 'hammer' that is activated in the verb meaning. This is also in line with Joh (2001, 219), who states that "the basic information for the new sense of denominal verbs is not from an infinite set of generic knowledge but from the structure itself in which the verbs are defined".

When it comes to denumeral verbs, the same applies, with the only addition that the noun whose Qualia structure is contextually exploited is at least partially expressed by numbers. A clear-cut example is that of the verb *to 747* 'to fly on a Boeing 747 aircraft', which is already quoted by Clark and Clark's (1979). Let us consider example (3) and its paraphrasis (3.a).

(3) Connie **747'd** to London

(3.a) Connie [flew] on a **747** to London.

Obviously, such a sentence could not be decoded if one did not know that a 747 is an airplane, more specifically a Boeing aircraft whose model is 747. The fact that the model number 747 can be used to refer to the airplane is a metonymy by itself. However, once we accept 747 as a noun, we can easily agree that its Telic Quale is 'to fly', which gives rise to the paraphrasis in (3.a).

The same goes for verbs like *to 4x4* 'to drive a 4x4', as in the case of example (4).

(4) The next day our itinerary consisted of **4x4ing** through the desert and riding camels.

(4.a) The next day our itinerary consisted of [driving] a **4x4** through the desert and riding camels.

According to our Qualia-based analysis, the paraphrasis in (4.a) is possible thanks to the exploitation of the Telic Quale 'to drive' of the noun 4x4, which we can assume to be valid also for any other type of road vehicle.

3 Corpus Analysis

3.1 Methodology

The corpus that was used for this analysis is the *English Web Corpus 2015* (*EnTenTen15*, Jakubíček et al. 2013), a 15-billion English corpus containing texts from the web, which can be accessed through the *Sketch Engine* platform (Kilgarriff et al. 2014). The query that was built to retrieve instances of denumeral verbs is: [word="[0-9]+(ing|ed)"]. In this way, all the numerical strings ending with either '-ing' or '-ed' were identified. The verb endings '-s' and the zero morpheme '-Ø' were discarded since they were not as verbally distinctive.

It should be noted that, despite some denumeral verbs also have an alphabetic spelling (e.g., to zero), in this study we chose to focus only on figure-based verb forms, since the corpus is a web corpus, and numbers are usually preferred for their economy.

After a manual scrutiny of the hits, all retrieved verb occurrences were traced back to their corresponding lemmas, which were divided into ten categories. Before carrying out a Qualia-based linguistic analysis (see § 4), it was necessary to ascertain the meaning of most of the identified lemmas, often idiomatic and belonging to the specific lexicon of restricted communities of use.

When it was not possible to resort to standard resources, forums, websites and online dictionaries were consulted, first of all *Urban Dictionary*[3], a well-known online slang dictionary based on the spontaneous contribution of its users.

The following section offers a detailed overview of the denumeral verbs attested in the *EnTenTen15* corpus.

3.2 Working Classification

Having manually cleaned the inevitable noise from the initial 1598 hits of the query (frequency normalized to 0.09 per million), a total of 296 occurrences of denumeral verbs were identified (frequency normalized to 0.02 per million) and traced back to 47 lemmas.

Table 1 offers an overview of the 10 groups into which the identified lemmas were divided. For a complete list, see the Appendix.

3 `https://www.urbandictionary.com`.

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Group	Denumeral verbs
I	to 0 something, to 0 something out, to 000000 a mobile
II	to 403, to 404, to 500, to 301 an URL to somewhere
III	to 19.5 somebody, to 21 somebody, to 36 somebody, to 50 somebody, to 5/5, to 1 for 2 somebody
IV	to 45 something, to 180 something, to 270, to 360, to 3/4
V	to 212 somebody, to 302 somebody, to 602 somebody/something, to 5150 somebody
VI	to 14, to 10:10, to 420, to deep 6 something
VII	to top 8 a tournament, to top 32 a tournament, to top 50 a tournament, to top 64 a tournament
VIII	to Call of Duty 4, to Grand Theft Auto 4, to iOS7, to Channel 9
IX	to *69 somebody, to 911
X	to high 5 somebody, to +1 something, to 4x4, to 69, to 64, to 1080 something, to rule 34 something, to 49, to 86 somebody, to 123, to 2

Table 1 The 10 groups of denumeral verbs identified in the *EnTenTen15 corpus*

The first group includes *to 0 something, to 0 something out* and *to 000000 a mobile,* all verbs that have something to do with zero.

(5) But as this instruction (or the original instruction, if line #5 is **0ed**) is executed before the code handler, it seems a bit limited.

(6) If Rockstar wanted to remove it, they could very well have **0ed** Hot Coffee **out**.

(7) It's questionable what for you want to use such a **000000ed** phone anyway.

In particular, in line with the definition provided by the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary,*[4] *to 0 something* means 'to turn an instrument, control, etc. to zero'[5], as in the case of sentence (5), where it is the value of a line of code ('line #5') that may be set to zero. On the other hand, according to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* the verb *to 0 something out* means 'to reduce the amount of (something) to zero' or 'to remove (something) completely'[6], as in sentence (6), which says that if the videogame company Rockstar Games wanted to remove the hidden code of the minigame *Hot Coffee* from their videogame *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas,* they could have[7]. The fact that they did not, means they wanted to let players play it. Finally, *to 000000*

4 https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/.

5 https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/zero_2.

6 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/zero%20out.

7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot_Coffee_(minigame).

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means 'resetting the IMEI (International Mobile Equipment Identity[8]) of a mobile phone to 000000', thus unregistering it from the network.

The verbs that make up the second group are *to 403*, *to 404*, *to 500* and *to 301 an URL*.

(8) 12 hours later, it's still **403ing**.

(9) If you have pages that are **404ing**, try redirecting them.

(10) Well, it's **500ing** now, I might have to eat my words here.

(11) Out of interest, what are the issues of **301ing** all non-existent URLs to the homepage?

All these verbs are related to the IT field and can only be understood with a basic knowledge of HTTP response status codes. Looking at the official page of the *World Wide Web Consortium*,[9] we discover that the afore-mentioned codes mean: access denied (error 403), page not found (error 404), inability to connect to a website due to internal server problems (error 500) and need for redirection to an alternative URL because the one we are searching for was moved permanently (301 error). Therefore, their corresponding verbs respectively mean: 'to display a 403 status code', 'to display a 404 status code', 'to display a 500 status code' and 'to display a 301 status code and redirect a non-existent URL to another website'.

In the third group, we can find *to 19.5 somebody*, *to 21 somebody*, *to 36 somebody*, *to 50 somebody*, *to 5/5* and *to 1 for 2 somebody*, all verbs used in the Role-Playing Games (RPGs)[10] community to express 'how many points are used' to inflict damage on an opponent (12) or to invest on the skills of a character (13).

(12) I didn't expect on him coming out of nowhere and **36ing** me in one turn.

(13) Easily worth **5/5ing** and focusing on pumping up your Mind save.

The fourth group includes *to 45 something*, *to 180 something*, *to 270*, *to 360* and *to 3/4*, all verbs in which the number refers to the width of an angle.

(14) First, he cut the baseboard to size and **45ed** the angles.

8 https://www.imei.info/.

9 https://www.w3.org/.

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role-playing_game.

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(15) Rowell **270ed** on and off almost all of the rails and boxes throughout the competition.

(16) Still if you get Anderson **3/4ing**, the Knicks now have guards that can deal with that.

In sentence (14), it is the corners of a surfboard that must be 'made at a 45° angle', while the verbs *to 180 something*, *to 270* and *to 360* all refer to 'making rotations of a certain angle', such as those made by skateboarders jumping on an off rails and boxes (15). Finally, *to 3/4* is used in basketball to describe 'making a three-quarter play'[11] in which the shoulders of the player are not completely turned towards the basket but form an angle of 120° with the latter (16).

The fifth group includes the verbs *to 212 somebody*, *to 302 somebody*, *to 602 somebody or something* and *to 5150 somebody*.

(17) I **was** soon **212ed** out of the service for having a behavioral disorder.

(18) That night I remember him texting me at work saying, "I'm going to kill myself", so I did the logical thing that any nurse would do – I called the police and had him **302ed**.

(19) I **602ed** it and was told that the problem will be fixed but it hasn't as of yet.

(20) The next month, young Latarian was back in the news – for beating up the same grandmother in Wal-Mart because she wouldn't buy him chicken wings. He was subsequently **5150ed**.

In the above-mentioned examples, denumeral verbs refer to the application of laws or decrees which are usually to the detriment of the person referred to by the direct object. Note that, especially in the police force and penitentiary system, these numbers are to all effects used as nouns, as in the case of "I'm going to need assistance with a 5150 on 12th street" (*Urban Dictionary*). The verb *to 212 somebody* in (17) refers to 'enacting the *212 Board Elimination Policy*', a directive that regulates the discharge process from the American Army (*Muhammad Speaks*, 26 March 1971[12]), thus relieving a soldier from duty. On the other hand, *to 302 somebody* means 'to enact section 302 of the *Mental Health Procedures Act* of 1976', a law issued by the Supreme Court of the State of Pennsylvania and still in force in several American States, which regulates the forced hospitalization of psychotic patients. According to the act, anyone who is found to

11 https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0100/1682/Coaching_Basketball_-_Defense.pdf.

12 https://issuu.com/muhammadspeaks/docs/3-26-1971/11.

be severely mentally disabled and in need of immediate treatment, may be made subject to involuntary emergency examination and treatment, as in example (18). The verb *to 602 somebody/something* (19), on the other hand, refers to 'enacting the 602 appeal process of the penitentiary system of the State of California', an option available to those inmates who decide to use form 602 and report a problem (*California Code of Regulations*, Title 15, section 3084). Finally, *to 5150 somebody* means 'to enact section 5150 of Article 1 of the *California Welfare and Institutions Code*', which establishes a 72-hour detention for anyone who appears "gravely disabled by their mental illness" to allow a psychiatric evaluation of the subject (20).

Group six includes verbs tied to measures of depth, height and time, namely *to 14*, *to 10:10*, *to deep 6 something* and *to 420*.

(21) Last month, Alex and his friend took us on a family adventure to practice winter **14ing**.

(22) A big thank you to everyone […] for top **10:10ing** prize Flemmich Webb.

(23) There are the threads that get axed, 404ed or **deep 6ed.**

(24) We are going to meet at 4:20 on 4/20 for **420ing** in Marin County at the Bolinas Ridge.

To 14 means 'to climb a 14er' – that is to say, a mountain of at least 14,000 feet[13] – an activity especially widespread in Colorado according to *Urban Dictionary* (21). On the other hand, *to 10:10* simply means 'to be born on October 10th' (22).[14] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*,[15] *to deep 6 something* means 'to submerge it in water; also figurative, to reject, abandon, conceal' (23) and originates from the minimum depth at which one is allowed to celebrate a funeral at sea, namely 6 fathoms (about 11 metres). Finally, as for *to 420* (US, informal 'the action of smoking marijuana' *Oxford English Dictionary*), its etymology dates back to the early '70s, when a group of high school students from San Rafael, California, began to use it to refer to 4.20 p.m., the time at which they regularly met to try to locate an unattended plot of cannabis plants. Subsequently, as pointed out on *Urban Dictionary* by Brandy,[16] whose 2003 definition is supported by 34,448 likes, "its use spread among members of an entire generation" (24).

13 `https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=14er`.

14 `https://www.imdb.com/list/ls009438612/`.

15 `https://www.oed.com/`.

16 `https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=420`.

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In the seventh group, we find four verbs which differ from those of the previous groupings in as much as they not only contain numbers, but also additional lexical material, which contributes to their meaning.[17] These verbs are *to top 8 a tournament*, *to top 32 a tournament*, *to top 50 a tournament* and *to top 64 a tournament*. They are mainly used in Trading Card Games[18] tournaments, such as Final Fantasy or Magic and mean 'to become part of the top 8, top 32, top 50, top 64' of a Pro Tour (PT). In the case of the top 8, this is equivalent to reaching the quarterfinals of any elimination tournament, where you compete against the top 8 players in the rankings (25). The same goes for the other verbs, which however refer to the previous phases of the tournament.

(25) Patrick has **Top 8ed** 4 PTs over his career and is the first **to Top 8** in 3 different decades.

The eighth group includes the verbs *to Call of Duty 4*, *to Grand Theft Auto 4*, *to iOS7* and *to Channel 9*. Also in this case, the verbs include lexical material preceding the numbers, which once again contributes to the overall verb semantics. The first two verbs refer 'to playing the fourth edition of the videogames *Grand Theft Auto* and *Call of Duty*' (26), *to iOS7* (27) means 'using the seventh release of the iOS operating system', while *to Channel 9* means 'watching the homonymous television channel' (28).

(26) There's been a lot of **Grand Theft Auto 4ing** and **Call of Duty 4ing** going on lately.

(27) Happy **iOS7ing!**

(28) Plenty of time is being spent **Channel 9ing.**

The ninth group includes the two verbs *to *69 somebody* and *to 911*, both referring to telephone operations that can be performed in the States by 'dialing the respective numbers'. As explained by *Urban Dictionary*[19], *69 is the service that allows you to call back the last number that called you (29), while 911 is the toll-free number for any kind of emergency (30).

17 In regard to this type of verbs, which include additional lexical material besides the number, one reviewer wondered whether they can indeed be analysed as denumeral. While we recognize this is a pertinent question, for our current purposes, we have decided to include them in our preliminary study and leave this consideration open for further investigations.

18 `https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectible_card_game`.

19 `https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=*69`.

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(29) I told him off, and **star69ed** him (we don't have caller ID).

(30) Guys, when can we expect the official thread, you know, the one without all the **911ing**?

Finally, the tenth grouping groups together the remaining verbs, which do not have much in common in terms of semantics, namely: *to high 5 somebody, to +1 something, to 4x4, to 69, to 64, to 1080 something, to rule 34 something, to 49, to 86 somebody, to 123* and *to 2*.

(31) With all the laughing, yelling and **high 5ing** […]

(32) It's not G+, so I **can't +1** this, but here I am, **+ 1ing** this anyway.

(33) The next day our itinerary consisted of **4x4ing** through the desert and riding camels.

(34) I love **69ing** with my man.

(35) There will be Guitar Heroing and […] **64ing** and Wiing and XBoxing.

(36) We shot two deer on DoC lands (that haven't been **1080ed** recently).

(37) People **rule 34ing** all of your characters in every possible situation, including space.

(38) They sing these songs after the powwow. They are **49ing**.

(39) This guy was forever getting **86ed** out of everywhere we went.

(40) She said that he was ABCing and **123ing** after watching the videos.

(41) This monthly bulletin on all things Web 2.0 listens in to consumption as consumers themselves see and tell it online when '**2ing**'.

Despite being denumeral, the first four verbs are commonly used in everyday colloquial English: the verb in (31) refers to the act of 'giving somebody a high five', the one in (32) to the act of 'assigning a +1 to somebody's social media in sign of appreciation', the verb *to 4x4* in (33) refers to 'driving a four by four car', while *to 69* in (34) means 'to practice the 69th position of the Kamasutra'. On the other hand, *to 64* – as revealed by the hashtag #64ing on X – means 'drinking a Miller 64', a light American beer with just 64 calories[20] (35). *To*

20 `https://www.millerextralight.com`.

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1080 something (36) refers to a disinfestation practice, which involves 'using sodium fluoroacetate, a powerful pesticide colloquially called 1080' (*Urban Dictionary*, definition by Sir. B December 12, 2022[21]). *To rule 34 something* (37) refers to the *100 Rules of the Internet*, a set of rules created by the *4chan Image Board* forum community with humorous intent and also available on *Urban Dictionary*[22]. Rule 34 establishes that – regardless of the type of content we are looking for on the web – "there is porn of it. No exceptions". From this perspective, therefore, 'enacting rule 34' is equivalent to 'transforming whatever we are talking about into pornographic content'. For what concerns the verb *to 49* in example (38), the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*[23] comes to our aid with an article on the 'Forty-nine dance'[24] in its Native American Culture section. Among the verbs of debated etymology, we also find *to 86 somebody* (North American, informal 'to throw out, get rid of or refuse service to' *Merriam Webster*)[25] (39). *Urban Dictionary* offers two alternative etymologies:

> Chumley's, a famous and OLD New York speakeasy, is located at 86 Bedford St. During Prohibition, an entrance through an interior adjoining courtyard was used, as it provided privacy and discretion for customers. As was (and is) a New York tradition, the cops were on the payroll of the bar and would give a ring to the bar that they were coming for a raid. The bartender would then give the command "86 everybody!", which meant that everyone should hightail it out the 86 Bedford entrance because the cops were coming in through the courtyard door.
>
> Baz, 17 February 2005

21 `https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=1080&page=2`.

22 `https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Rule%2034`.

23 `https://www.britannica.com`.

24 Many have linked the name forty-nine dance to the traveling festivals, or carnivals, of the American Southwest in the early 1900s. Such festivals typically included a '49 dance hall', a '49 camp', or a similarly named '49' event that was intended to evoke the spirit of the California Gold Rush of 1849. According to one origin story, a group of Native American youths wanted to enter a sideshow – billed as either *Days of Forty-nine* or *Girls of Forty-nine* – at the Caddo County Fair in Anadarko, Oklahoma (the centre of the Kiowa and Comanche populations since the mid-19th century). When they were unable to come up with the price of admission, one young man reportedly said, "Let's have our own forty-nine", and so the dance acquired its name. Another version of the name's etymology dates its use to 1924, when the movie *In the Days of 49* was particularly popular in the Anadarko area. A separate origin story presents the name 'forty-nine dance' as a commemorative reference to a group of 50 warriors who went to battle with only 49 returning or, conversely, with only one returning and 49 killed.

25 `https://www.merriam-webster.com/wordplay/eighty-six-meaning-origin`.

> The phrase '80 miles out and 6 feet under' was reserved for someone who had to dig their own grave 80 miles from civilization and then get shot execution-style. All terms for 86'd originated from this, be it alcohol or eliminating.
>
> Carlos Diaz, 5 October 2007

Finally, we have *to 123* and *to 2*, two verbs that can be considered an integral part of the stable lexicon of the diastratic variety of spoken English used with children. *To 123* means 'to count, to utter the 123', as in example (40), while *to 2* derives from the expression 'number 2' and means 'to have a bowel movement' (41).

In the following section, we will attempt an analysis of these verb classes using Qualia roles.

4 Qualia-Oriented Analysis

For what concerns the meanings of the verbs of the first group, we believe that *to 0 something* and *to 000000 a mobile* can be traced back to the exploitation of the Agentive Quale of the underlying zero-related nouns, because in both cases existing values are 'set' to 0 (5.a) and 000000 (7.a), i.e., the values '0' and '000000' are created. The Qualia values are expressed between square brackets in the different paraphrases following the afore-mentioned examples. In the case of *to 0 out*, the meaning is better paraphrased in a less Qualia-adhering way (6.a).

(5) But as this instruction (or the original instruction, if line #5 is **0ed**) is executed before the code handler, it seems a bit limited.

(5.a) But as this instruction (or the original instruction, if line #5 is [set to] **0**) is executed before the code handler, it seems a bit limited.

(7) It's questionable what for you want to use such a **000000ed** phone anyway.

(7.a) It's questionable what for you want to use a phone [whose IMEI has been set to] **000000** anyway.

(6) If Rockstar wanted to remove it, they could very well have **0ed** Hot Coffee **out**.

(6.a) If Rockstar wanted to remove it, they could very well [removed] Hot Coffee.

The same goes for the verbs of the second group (*to 403*, *to 404*, *to 500* and *to 301*), whose meanings we believe can be traced back to the exploitation of the Agentive Qualia of the underlying nouns expressing HTTP status codes. Indeed, an HTTP status code comes about and therefore exists (for the user) the moment it is 'being displayed' on a web page, regardless of the message it conveys.

(8) 12 hours later, it's still **403ing**.

(8.a) 12 hours later, it's still [displaying] a **403**.

(9) If you have pages that are **404ing**, try redirecting them.

(9.a) If you have pages that are [displaying] a **404**, try redirecting them.

(10) Well, it's **500ing** now, I might have to eat my words here.

(10.a) Well, it's [displaying] a **500** now, I might have to eat my words here.

(11) Out of interest, what are the issues of **301ing** all non-existent URLs to the homepage?

(11.a) Out of interest, what are the issues of [displaying] a **301** [and redirect] all non-existent URLs to the homepage?

As shown in (8.a), (9.a) and (10.a), the paraphrases including the Agentive Qualia value 'displaying' are able to properly convey the meanings of the first three verbs of the group, while the paraphrasis (11.a) needs additional information since the verb *to 301* is transitive and needs a URL as its direct object.

All the verbs belonging to the third group (*to 19.5 somebody, to 21 somebody, to 36 somebody, to 50 somebody, to 5/5*) except one (*to 1 for 2 somebody*) can be paraphrased exploiting the Telic Qualia value 'to use' of their underlying nouns denoting the number of points players use in the context of the game: 'a 19.5', 'a 36', 'a 21', 'a 50'.

(12) I didn't expect him coming out of nowhere and **36ing** me in one turn.

(12.a) I didn't expect him coming out of nowhere and [using] a **36** [against] me in one turn.

(13) Easily worth **5/5ing** and focusing on pumping up your Mind save.

(13.a) Easily worth [using] **5/5** [points] and focusing on pumping up your Mind save.

The only exception is *to 1 for 2 somebody*, which means 'to trade two cards for one' with someone we are playing with. The multi-word expression '1 for 2' underlying the verb can be seen as a trading card move and since moves are 'made', we believe its Agentive Qualia value is 'to make'.

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(42) Basically, you are **1 for 2ing** yourself.

(42.a) Basically, you are [making] a **1 for 2** [on] yourself.

In the fourth group, all verb meanings can be paraphrased using verbs that refer to the creation of angles or rotations, such as ‘make’ or ‘change by’. We believe these are Agentive Qualia values given that an angle or a rotation come into being when they are ‘made’.

(14) First, he cut the baseboard to size and **45ed** the angles.

(14.a) First, he cut the baseboard to size and [made] **45°** angles.

(15) Rowell **270ed** on and off almost all of the rails and boxes throughout the competition.

(15.a) Rowell [made] a **270** on and off almost all of the rails and boxes throughout the competition.

(16) Still if you get Anderson **3/4ing**, the Knicks now have guards that can deal with that.

(16.a) Still if you get Anderson [making] a **3/4**, the Knicks now have guards that can deal with that.

(43) This time the orientation in the tent **was 180ed** from the usual

(43.a) This time the orientation in the tent was [changed by] **180°** from the usual.

On the other hand, all the verbs of the fifth group (i.e., *to 212 somebody*, *to 302 somebody*, *to 602 something* and *to 5150 somebody*) rely on the exploitation of the Telic Quale of the different policies and laws these figures refer to. If we agree that the purpose of a law, section or policy is ‘to be enacted’, then the paraphrases of these verbs will read as follows:

(17) I was soon **212ed** out of the service for having a behavioral disorder.

(17.a) They soon [enacted] a **212** [and discharged me] out of the service for having a behavioral disorder.

(18) That night I remember him texting me at work saying, “I’m going to kill myself”, so I did the logical thing that any nurse would do – I called the police and had him **302ed**.

(18.a) […] – I called the police and had [them enact] a **302** [on him].

(19) I **602ed** it and was told that the problem will be fixed but it hasn't as of yet.

(19.a) I [enacted] a **602** [on] it and was told that the problem will be fixed but it hasn't as of yet.

(20) The next month, young Latarian was back in the news – for beating up the same grandmother in Wal-Mart because she wouldn't buy him chicken wings. He was subsequently **5150ed**.

(20.a) […] A **5150** was subsequently [enacted against] him.

The verbs in group six do not fit the same pattern as the previous groups. Only the verb *to 14* does seem to allow for the exploitation of 'to climb', which can be seen as the Natural Telic value (cf. Pustejovsky and Jezek 2012, 32-4) of a *14er*, 'a mountain of at least 14,000 feet'.

(21) Last month, Alex and his friend took us on a family adventure to practice winter **14ing**.

(21.a) Last month, Alex and his friend took us on a family adventure to [climb] a **14er.**

(24) We are going to meet at 4:20 on 4/20 for **420ing** in Marin County at the Bolinas Ridge.

(24.a) We are going to meet at 4:20 on 4/20 for [doing what we usually do at] **4:20** in Marin County at the Bolinas Ridge.

(24.b) We are going to meet at 4:20 on 4/20 for [smoking pot] in Marin County at the Bolinas Ridge

As for *to deep 6 something*, *to 10:10* and *to 420*, we believe the idiomaticity of these verbs prevents the direct exploitation of the Qualia structure of their underlying base numbers. For instance, even assuming that the information between square brackets in (24.a) ('doing what we usually do at') may be included in the Qualia structure of a time expression like 4:20 p.m., the specific activity associated to said time – in this case 'smoking pot' – would still be missing from the structure.[26]

On the other hand, the verbs of the seventh group (*to top 8 a tournament*, *to top 32 a tournament*, *to top 50 a tournament*, *to top 64*

26 That being said, it is well-known that idiomatic meanings constitute a bottleneck for semantic theories, and we believe this not to subtract anything from the interpretative potential of our framework.

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a tournament) all exploit the Constitutive Qualia values of the group entities they refer to, as we can see in the paraphrasis in (25.a).

(25) Patrick has **Top 8ed** 4 PTs over his career and is the first **to Top 8** in 3 different decades.

(25.a) Patrick has [become part of the] **Top 8** of 4 PTs over his career and is the first to [become part of a] **Top 8** in 3 different decades.

Moving on to the verbs of the eighth group (*to Call of Duty 4*, *to Grand Theft Auto 4*, *to iOS7* and *to Channel 9*), these offer very clear-cut cases of exploitation of the Telic Qualia values of the video games, operative systems and tv channels they refer to, since these are all man-made products with a clear goal: 'being played, used or watched'.

(26) There's been a lot of **Grand Theft Auto 4ing** and **Call of Duty 4ing** going on lately.

(26.a) There's been a lot of [playing] **Grand Theft Auto 4** and **Call of Duty 4** lately.

(27) Happy **iOS7ing!**

(27.a) Happy [using] **iOS7!**

(28) Plenty of time is being spent **Channel 9ing.**

(28.a) Plenty of time is being spent [watching] **Channel 9.**

The same goes for the two verbs in the ninth group (*to *69 somebody* and *to 911*), which both refer to telephone numbers, whose aim – and therefore Telic Qualia value – is 'to be dialed'.

(29) I told him off and **star69ed** him (we don't have caller ID).

(29.a) I told him off and [dialed] **star69** [on] him (we don't have caller ID).

(30) Guys, when can we expect the official thread, you know, the one without all the **911ing**?

(30.a) Guys, when can we expect the official thread, you know, the one without all the [dialing] **911**?

Finally, for what concerns the verbs of the tenth group, no common analysis applies since the group is miscellaneous. Certain verb meanings can be explained using the exploitation of the Telic Qualia role of their underlying nouns, as in the case of *to 4x4*, *to 64*, *to rule 34 something*, and *to 1080 something*. Indeed, the aim of a vehicle is

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clearly ‘to be driven’ as in (33.a), that of a beer is ‘to be drunk’ as in (35.a), that of a pesticide is ‘to be used’ as in (36.a), and that of a rule is ‘to be applied’ as in (37.a).

(33) The next day our itinerary consisted of **4x4ing** through the desert and riding camels.

(33.a) The next day our itinerary consisted of [driving] a **4x4** through the desert and riding camels.

(35) There will be Guitar Heroing and **64ing** and Wiing and XBoxing.

(35.a) There will be Guitar Heroing and [drinking] **64s** and Wiing and XBoxing.

(36) We shot two deer on DoC lands (that haven’t been **1080ed** recently).

(36.a) We shot two deer on DoC lands ([on which] **1080** [hasn’t been used] recently).

(37) People **rule 34ing** all of your characters in every possible situation, including space.

(37.a) People [applying] **rule 34** to all of your characters in every possible situation, including space.

Also the meaning of the verb *to 2*, which refers to the act of expelling feces from one’s body, can be explained using the exploitation of the Natural Telic of ‘a number 2’, namely that of ‘being expelled’.

(41) This monthly bulletin on all things Web 2.0 listens in to consumption as consumers themselves see and tell it online when ‘**2ing**’.

(41.a) This monthly bulletin on all things Web 2.0 listens in to consumption as consumers themselves see and tell it online when [expelling] a [number] ‘**2**’.

Another subgroup of this miscellaneous grouping clearly exploits the Agentive Qualia values of their linked noun entities, namely the subgroup made up of *to high 5 somebody*, *to +1 something*, *to 69*, *to 49* and *to 123.* Indeed, a high 5 (as a form of greeting) takes place when it is ‘given’, as in (31.a); the same goes for a +1 (as a sign of support on social media platforms), as in (32.a); a 69 only happens when two people ‘perform’ that specific Kamasutra position, as in (34.a); a 49 dance happens only if a group of people ‘performs’ it, as in (38.a); and children are 123ing only when they start ‘uttering’ that specific sequence of numbers, as in (40.a).

(31) With all the laughing, yelling and **high 5ing** […]

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(31.a) With all the laughing, yelling and [giving of] **high 5s** […]

(32) It's not G+, so I **can't +1** this, but here I am, **+ 1ing** this anyway.

(32.a) It's not G+, so I can't [give] **a +1** to this, but here I am, [giving] a **+ 1** to this anyway.

(34) I love **69ing** with my man.

(34.a) I love [performing] a **69** with my man.

(38) They sing these songs after the powwow. They are **49ing**.

(38.a) They sing these songs after the powwow. They are [performing] a **49**.

(40) She said that he was ABCing and **123ing** after watching the videos.

(40.a) She said that he was ABCing and [uttering] the **123** after watching the videos.

We leave out the expression *to 86 somebody* for the same reasons as *to zero out*, *to deep 6 something*, *to 10:10* and *to 420*.

5 Conclusions

In this work, we have attempted to dive into the semantics of a peculiar category of English denominal verbs, i.e., 'denumeral verbs' – verbs resulting from the conversion of numbers into verbs, as in the case of *to 991* 'to call the police dialing 911' or *to 4x4* 'to drive a 4x4 vehicle'.

After providing an overview of the different interpretations of conversion in denominal verbs, the focus was brought on the contribution of base noun semantics to denominal verb semantics. In line with Fabrizio (2013), our analysis embraces Generative Lexicon Theory (Pustejovsky 1991) and Qualia structure, i.e., a system of four relations able to define a lexical item by virtue of the fact it encodes information about the essence, composition, purpose and origin of its referent.

In order to analyse denumeral verbs using our reference framework, an *ad hoc* query was built to retrieve corpus examples from the *EnTenTen15* corpus. Overall, 296 instances were identified, manually scrutinized and traced back to a total of 47 denumeral verb lemmas, which were then divided into ten working categories. A section of the paper was devoted to explaining the meaning of the identified lemmas, since most of them belong to the specific lexicon of restricted communities of use. After an initial assessment, the verbs from groups seven and eight were identified as not strictly denumeral

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due to the prominence of the semantics of the lexical material they include. Nonetheless, considering the preliminary nature of the study and the absence of previous research on this topic, they were not excluded from the Qualia-oriented analysis.

Overall, we were able to identify 21 verbs exploiting the Telic quale of their underlying noun, 17 verbs exploiting the Agentive quale, 4 verbs exploiting the Constitutive quale and 5 verbs whose idiomatic meaning inhibits the direct access to the Qualia structure of their underlying base numbers. We believe this finding to be of interest since it suggests a hierarchy of exploitability when it comes to the different facets of information encoded in the base. It would seem that, at least for what concerns the denumeral verbs in our sample, it is more common – and possibly more useful for communicative purposes – to extract information concerning the goal and origin of an entity rather than its internal composition and ontological nature.

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Abbreviations

EnTenTen15, English Web Corpus 2015
GLT, Generative Lexicon Theory
HTTP, HyperText Transfer Protocol
IMEI, International Mobile Equipment Identity
PT, Pro Tour
RPG, Role Playing Game

Appendix

Number	Verb	Example	Hits
0	to 0	But as this instruction (or the original instruction, if line #5 is **0ed**) is executed before the code handler, it seems a bit limited.	6
	to 0 out	If Rockstar wanted to remove it, they could very well have **0ed** Hot Coffee **out**.	2
	to 000000	It's questionable what for you want to use such a **000000ed** phone anyway.	1
1	to +1	It's not G+, so I **can't +1** this, but here I am, **+1ing** this anyway.	24
1 for 2	to 1 for 2	Basically, you are **1 for 2ing** yourself.	1
2	to 2	This monthly bulletin on all things Web 2.0 listens in to consumption as consumers themselves see and tell it online when '**2ing**'.	1
4	to 4 x 4	The next day our itinerary consisted of **4x4ing** through the desert and riding camels.	2
	to Call of Duty 4	There's been a lot of Grand Theft Auto 4ing and **Call of Duty 4ing** going on lately.	1
	to Grand Theft Auto 4	There's been a lot of **Grand Theft Auto 4ing** and Call of Duty 4ing going on lately.	1
3/4	to 3/4	Still if you get Anderson fronting or **3/4ing**, the Knicks now have guards that can deal with that.	1
5	to high 5	With all the laughing, yelling and **high 5ing** […]	14
	to 5/5	Easily worth **5/5ing** and focusing on pumping up your Mind save.	1
6	to deep 6	There is the threads that get axed, 404ed or **deep 6ed**.	1
7	to iOS7	Happy **iOS7ing**!	2

8	to top 8	Patrick has **Top 8ed** 4 PTs over his career and is the first **to Top 8** in 3 different decades.	26
9	to Channel 9	Plenty of time is being spent **Channel 9ing**.	1
10:10	to top 10:10	A big thank you to everyone […] for top **10:10ing** prize Flemmich Webb	1
14	to 14	Last month, Alex and his friend took us on a family adventure to practice winter **14ing**.	2
19.5	to 19.5	Are you **19.5ing** the Denali?	1
21	to 21	I was running Kemba for a while but I decided that **21ing** someone is just better.	1
32	to top 32	Hanging out with new and old friends, Grinding into worlds, and **Top 32ing** my first ever Worlds.	1
34	to rule 34	People **rule 34ing** all of your characters in every possible situation, including space.	2
36	to 36	I didn't expect on him coming out of nowhere and **36ing** me in one turn.	1
45	to 45	First, he cut the baseboard to size and **45ed** the angles.	3
49	to 49	They sing these songs after the powwow. They **are 49ing**.	1
50	to top 50	When you stop **top 50ing** them, you might have to go back to the PTQ grind.	1
	to 50	[…] **having not 50ed** any Villains.	1
64	to top 64	[…] people who have **top 64ed** GPs.	1
	to 64	There will be Guitar Heroing and […] **64ing** and Wiing and XBoxing.	1
69	to 69	I love **69ing** with my man.	117
	to *69	I told him off, and **star69ed** him (we don't have caller ID).	3
86	to 86	This guy was forever getting **86ed** out of everywhere we went.	24
180	to 180	This time the orientation in the tent was **180ed** from the usual.	4
212	to 212	I **was** soon **212ed** out of the service for having a behavioral disorder.	1
270	to 270	Rowell **270ed** on and off almost all of the rails and boxes throughout the competition.	1
301	to 301	Out of interest, what are the issues of **301ing** all non-existent URLs to the homepage?	3

302	to 302	That night I remember him texting me at work saying, “I’m going to kill myself”, so I did the logical thing that any nurse would do – I called the police and had him **302ed**.	3
360	to 360	Vehicles stuck in medians after **360ing**.	1
403	to 403	12 hours later, it’s still **403ing**.	1
404	to 404	If you have pages that are **404ing**, try redirecting them.	24
420	to 420	We are going to meet at 4:20 on 4/20 for **420ing** in Marin County.	1
500	to 500	Well, it’s **500ing** now, I might have to eat my words here.	1
602	to 602	I **602ed** it and was told that the problem will be fixed but it hasn’t as of yet.	6
911	to 911	Guys, when can we expect the official thread, you know, the one without all the **911ing**?	1
1080	to 1080	We shot two deer on DoC lands (that haven’t been **1080ed** recently) and that is about as organic as you get!	1
5150	to 5150	The next month, young Latarian was back in the news – for beating up the same grandmother in Wal-Mart because she wouldn’t buy him chicken wings. He was subsequently **5150ed**.	1
123	to 123	She said that he was ABCing and **123ing** after watching the videos.	1
Total			296

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A Diachronic Perspective on Evaluative Adverbs in German: The Case of *leider*

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Abstract This article presents a corpus-based study of the syntactic and semantic development of the German evaluative adverb *leider* 'unfortunately'. The analysis identifies syntactic and interpretative ambiguity as key factors in the reanalysis of *leider* as a sentence adverb, providing further empirical support for existing accounts of the development of such elements. In addition, the paper proposes a general developmental path for evaluative adverbs in German, highlighting the interplay between syntactic reanalysis and subjectification in their development.

Keywords Evaluative adverbs. Sentence adverbs. Syntactic reanalysis. Metonymic shift. Subjectification.

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1 Introduction

Sentence adverbs[1] represent a class of adverbial elements typically assumed to operate at the sentential level, modifying the propositional content of the sentence in which they occur.[2] Consider the following examples:

(1) a. **Wisely**, he didn't answer my letter.
b. He didn't answer my letter **wisely**. (Ramat, Ricca 1998, 189, ex. 5)

The adverb *wisely* is polyfunctional and can be used either as a sentence-level modifier (1a) or as a predicate-level modifier (1b). As Ramat and Ricca (1998, 189) observe, in (1a) *wisely* functions as a sentence adverb, affecting the content of the sentence in which it appears and taking the whole proposition (including the negation) in its scope. (1a) can be paraphrased as 'He was wise not to answer my letter'. Conversely, in (1b) *wisely* modifies only the predicate, its scope does not extend to the whole proposition. (1b) can be paraphrased as 'He answered my letter, but not in a wise manner'.

Given the internal heterogeneity of the class of sentence adverbs, various classification proposals have been suggested in the literature at different stages of research.[3] In the present paper, I adopt a tripartite classification into evidential, epistemic, and evaluative subcategories – which has gradually become established in the literature –, following in part the terminology and layered model proposed by Ramat and Ricca (1998, 192). So-called 'speech-act adverbs' such as *frankly*, *briefly*, and *honestly* – called 'pragmatic adverbs' in Bellert (1977) and 'discourse-oriented adverbs' in Ernst (2009) – are excluded from consideration here. Sentence adverbs are thus classified in this paper into the following three classes (since

1 I would like to thank the audiences at the workshop "The Role of Semantic Extension and Pragmatics in Synchronic Language Change, Language Development and Language Variation" (47. DGfS Tagung in Mainz) and at the Kolloquium der Germanistischen Linguistik of the University of Göttingen, where parts of this paper were presented, as well as two anonymous reviewers for their useful comments. I am also grateful to Marco Coniglio for invaluable discussions and for suggestions on an earlier version of this paper, and to Rishabh Suresh and Zeming Xu for helpful feedback. All remaining shortcomings are, of course, my own.

2 Cf. Jackendoff 1972; Bellert 1977; Helbig 1984; Ramat, Ricca 1998; a.o. For further references on sentence adverbs in German linguistic research, see Hetland 1992; Zifonun, Ludger, Strecker 1997; Helbig, Buscha 2001; Eroms 2006; 2010; Schäfer 2008; Duden-Grammatik 2009; Duffner 2010; Müller 2022.

3 See Jackendoff 1972; Bellert 1977; Helbig 1984; Swan 1988; Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker 1997, 1125-6; Helbig, Buscha 2001, 435; Eroms 2006; Duden-Grammatik 2009, 586-7.

the focus of this article are evaluative adverbs in German, examples from German will be discussed below):[4]

- evidential adverbs (e.g., *anscheinend* 'apparently', *offenbar* 'evidently', *angeblich* 'allegedly'), which express the speaker's stance towards the source or epistemic status of the information, as illustrated in (2). Here, by using *anscheinend*, the speaker signals that the information presented – namely that the fox killed a few hares – comes from some indirect evidence no further specified:

(2) Der Fuchs hat **anscheinend** auch schon ein paar Hasen gerissen und sorgt damit für Unmut bei den Anrainern. (DeReKo: Tiroler Tageszeitung, 17 May 2008)
'The fox has apparently already killed a few hares, causing annoyance among the neighbours.'

- epistemic adverbs (e.g., *möglicherweise* 'possibly', *wahrscheinlich* 'probably', *sicher* 'certainly'), which encode the speaker's degree of commitment to the truth of the proposition, as exemplified in (3). In this example, the speaker, by using the adverb *möglicherweise*, presents the proposition as possible:

(3) Wer im Moment viel niest, muss nicht unbedingt erkältet sein. **Möglicherweise** ist auch eine Allergie schuld an den Niesattacken. (DeReKo: Saale-Zeitung, 24 January 2011)
'If you're sneezing a lot right now, it doesn't necessarily mean you have a cold. Possibly, an allergy is also responsible for the sneezing attacks.'

- evaluative adverbs (e.g., *bedauerlicherweise* 'regrettably', *glücklicherweise* 'fortunately', *leichtsinnigerweise* 'carelessly'), which indicate the speaker's evaluation of the proposition, as shown in (4). Here, by using *bedauerlicherweise*, the speaker expresses regret at the weather conditions affecting the market:

(4) "Für die Besucher ist diese Kombination aus Bauern- und Antik-Markt natürlich sehr gut […]. Das Wetter ist **bedauerlicherweise** nicht optimal." (DeReKo: Saarbrücker Zeitung, 16 October 2002)
'"For the visitors, this combination of farmer's market and antiques market is of course very good […]. Regrettably, the weather is not ideal."'

In recent years, the diachronic development of sentence adverbs has gained interest in German linguistic research from both

4 I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting more precise formulations for defining the classes of sentence adverbs.

semanto-pragmatic and syntactic perspectives.[5] However, the subclass of evaluative adverbs has not received as much attention as epistemic and evidential adverbs, despite some studies on speaker-oriented adverbs (to which also evaluative adverbs belong) and on -*erweise* formations (which represent most of the evaluative sentence adverbs) in the synchronic literature (see below). In diachronic investigation of sentence adverbs, evaluative adverbs have been discussed more briefly, notably in Axel-Tober (2016, 29-30) and in Müller, Axel-Tober (2025, 16-17).

This paper investigates the developmental path of the evaluative sentence adverb *leider* ('unfortunately, regrettably'), pursuing two aims: primarily an empirical one, and secondarily a theoretical one. Empirically, the contribution seeks to examine the diachronic development of *leider* across different historical stages. In particular, it aims to investigate its morphosyntactic and semantic development in light of existing analyses proposed in the literature for both evaluative and other sentence adverbs. In fact, *leider* represents a particularly interesting case of sentence adverb from a morphological point of view, as it derives from the adverbial comparative form of the Old High German (henceforth OHG) adjective *leid* ('hateful, repulsive, shameful, disgraceful'), rather than from an -*erweise* formation with adjectival base like most (if not all) German evaluative adverbs, as will be shown below. On the theoretical side, the paper aims to offer insights into the interaction between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, and the role of subjectification in the emergence of evaluative adverbs. This analysis aligns the syntactic development of evaluative adverbs with that proposed for other classes of sentence adverbs, suggesting a common developmental pathway independent of specific semantic subtypes.

At this stage, it is important to define the terminological and theoretical assumptions that will be adopted in this paper to describe and refer to the clausal syntax of OHG, Middle High German (henceforth MHG), and present-day German (henceforth PDG). As observed by Axel (2007, ch. 1), a.o., and in the literature cited therein, OHG prose already displays two core properties characteristic of a verb-second (V2) grammar: verb movement and XP-fronting to the left sentence periphery, corresponding to the C-domain. At the same time, as she points out, OHG prose texts also show quite frequently verb-third (V3) configurations (ch. 4) and declarative clauses with verb-first (V1) order (ch. 3), which occur with fewer restrictions than in PDG. Following standard assumptions for German, this paper adopts the view that V2 word order results from movement of the finite verb

5 See Axel-Tober 2016; Axel-Tober, Müller 2017; Müller 2021, ch. 5; Axel-Tober et al. 2025; Müller, Axel-Tober 2025.

from its base position to the head of the CP, and from movement of some XP to Spec, CP. For the purposes of the study presented here, I will use the terms CP, C-domain and left sentence periphery synonymously, without distinguishing between further projections within this area. Building on the recent analysis by Catasso and De Bastiani (2024), I assume that sentence adverbs occurring in V3 clauses in an utterance-initial position (followed by an XP preceding the finite verb) in OHG and MHG are based-generated in a clause-external position. Furthermore, Axel (2007) observes that in OHG, XPs can be quite freely extraposed to positions beyond the verbal complex (ch. 2.6.1). In the present study, this area is referred to as the right sentence periphery. Descriptive terms from the *topologisches Satzmodell* are also occasionally employed: in particular, the so-called 'prefield', which corresponds to Spec, CP, and the 'middle field', consisting of all material which is linearly between the head of the CP (so-called 'left sentence bracket') and the head of the VP ('right sentence bracket'). Within this area, the present paper distinguishes between an I-domain, where so-called 'high adverbs' such as the sentence adverbs described above operating at the sentential level are adjoined, and a V-domain, which hosts event-related adverbs such as manner adverbs.

The article is structured as follows. § 2 provides an overview of evaluative adverbs in German as a distinct subclass, focusing on their syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic properties. § 3 reviews previous research on the development of (evaluative) sentence adverbs in German. § 4 presents the corpus-based study of the diachronic development of *leider*. § 5 concludes.

2 Evaluative Adverbs as a Class in its Own Right

As previously mentioned, evaluative sentence adverbs have often been treated more generally within the broader distinction between speaker-oriented and subject-oriented adverbs (see Ernst 2009; Liu 2009), or within the context of morphological processes such as English *-ly* formations and German -(*er*)*weise* formations (see Elsner 2015; Pittner 2015; Lewis 2020). Only few studies have focused specifically on evaluative adverbs (see Bonami, Godard 2008; Liu 2012). The aim of this section is not to provide a comprehensive synchronic analysis of evaluative adverbs in German, but rather to outline their core properties and to situate them within the larger category of sentence adverbs, without offering a detailed explanatory account of their synchronic behaviour.

Sentence adverbs are generally assumed to take scope over the proposition without being part of it, building a sort of condensed modal (meaning epistemic and evidential) or evaluative proposition over the main one.[6] In German, several operational tests have been developed to differentiate sentence adverbs from manner adverbs and modal particles (see Helbig 1984, 108-9 and the cited literature therein; Helbig, Buscha 2001, 430-9; Axel-Tober 2016, 24-6). For instance, according to these tests, sentence adverbs can often be paraphrased as matrix (5a) or parenthetical clauses (5b):[7]

(5) a. Er kommt **vermutlich**. ← Man vermutet (Es wird vermutet, es ist vermutlich so), dass er kommt. (Helbig, Buscha 2001, 430)
'He is probably coming.' ← 'We assume (It is assumed, it is probably so) that he is coming.'
b. Er hat den Zug **vermutlich** nicht erreicht. ← Er hat den Zug – wie ich vermute (so vermute ich) – nicht erreicht. (430)
'He probably didn't catch the train.' ← 'He didn't catch the train – as I assume (so I assume).'

Furthermore, although they can be expanded into full clauses, they cannot be pronominalised (6), questioned via wh-questions (nor through yes/no-questions) (7), nor can they be negated (8b):

(6) Er kommt **vermutlich**. → *Er kommt so. (431)
'He is probably coming.' → 'He is coming so.'

(7) Wie kommt er? ***Vermutlich**. (431)
'How is he coming? Presumably.'

(8) a. Er kommt **vermutlich** nicht. (431)
'He is probably not coming.'
b. *Er kommt nicht **vermutlich**. (431)
'He is not probably coming.'

Following the same operational tests, sentence adverbs generally do not occur in interrogative (9a), imperative (9b), or optative constructions (9c).

(9) a. *Kommt er **vermutlich** (**leider**)? (431)
'Is he probably (unfortunately) coming?'
b. *Kommt **vermutlich** (**leider**)! (431)
'Come probably (unfortunately)!'
c. *Käme er doch **vermutlich** (**leider**)! (431)
'If only he probably (unfortunately) came!'

6 Cf. Jackendoff 1972; Bellert 1977; Helbig 1984; Ramat, Ricca 1998. Also see Frey, Pittner 1998; Cinque 1999.

7 Their parenthetical nature is sometimes reflected orthographically through parentheses or dashes (cf. Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker 1997, 895).

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Typically, they also cannot be compared (10a), coordinated (10b), or modified by degree particles (10c):[8]

(10) a. *Er kommt **vermutlicher** (**sicherer**). (432)
'He is more probably (definitely) coming.'
b. *Er kommt **vermutlich und leider**. (432)
'He is probably and unfortunately coming.'
c. *Maria ist **sehr erstaunlicherweise** schon fertig. (Axel-Tober 2016, 25, ex. 2c)
'Maria is very astonishingly already finished.'

In addition, they are excluded from performative utterances, cf. (11):

(11) *Ich frage dich (hiermit) **vermutlich** (**leider**), wann du kommst. (Helbig, Buscha 2001, 432)
'(Hereby), I am probably (unfortunately) asking you when you are coming.'

These properties, which are generally attributed to sentence adverbs and which in part derive from the fact that sentence adverbs operate at the propositional level, are also shared by evaluative sentence adverbs, as partly suggested by the examples above containing *leider*.

A key aspect in the distinction between the evaluative subgroup and other types of sentence adverbs concerns their position in the sentence. Various proposals have been put forward to account for adverbial ordering, reflecting either primarily semantic or primarily syntactic approaches.[9] Semantically based approaches, exemplified by Ernst (2002), argue that the ordering of adverbials is primarily determined by lexical properties and satisfies inherent semantic requirements. In contrast, syntactically oriented approaches, such as the one proposed by Cinque (1999), emphasise the role of syntax, claiming that each type of adverb is hosted in the specifier of a dedicated functional projection within a hierarchical structure of projections. Within this hierarchy, evaluative adverbs occupy a structurally very high position, just below speech-act adverbs and above evidential and epistemic ones as well as event-related adverbs:

8 Empirical observation (based, for example, on corpus data) reveals that counterexamples can indeed be found (see, for instance, Axel-Tober 2016, 25). In these paragraphs, I focus only on presenting the properties commonly attributed to sentence adverbs in the literature, from a purely descriptive perspective. I do not aim here to explore or account for the underlying reasons why sentence adverbs occasionally occur in interrogative contexts or can be coordinated with other sentence adverbs. These questions will be addressed in part later in this section, drawing on Liu's (2009) analysis of speaker-oriented adverbs.

9 For a review of different approaches applied to German, see Möhrstädt 2021. For a discussion about the adverbial ordering and the interaction between syntax and semantics, see Pittner 2004; Ernst 2007.

(12) [*frankly* $\text{Mood}_{\text{speech act}}$ [*fortunately* **$\textbf{Mood}_{\textbf{evaluative}}$** [*allegedly* $\text{Mood}_{\text{evidential}}$ [*probably* $\text{Mod}_{\text{epistemic}}$ [*once* T(Past) [*then* T(Future) [*perhaps* $\text{Mood}_{\text{irrealis}}$ [*necessarily* $\text{Mod}_{\text{necessity}}$ [*possibly* $\text{Mod}_{\text{possibility}}$ …]]]]]]]]]
(adapted from Cinque 1999, 106, ex. 92)

A third perspective, which combines syntactic and semantic factors and is based on c-command relations, can be found in the work of Frey and Pittner (1998) on the ordering of German adverbials. They argue that the base position of sentence adverbials c-commands the finite verb and the base positions of adverbial adjuncts and verbal arguments (see also Pittner 1999; 2004), without further differentiating among the various sentence adverbial subtypes. Despite their differences, these accounts converge on the idea that evaluative adverbs precede evidential and epistemic adverbs (cf. Cinque 1999; see also Pittner 1999) as well as event-related adverbs, including manner adverbs (cf. Frey, Pittner 1998), suggesting a consistent ordering preference across both semantic and syntactic analyses.

From a morphological point of view, most German evaluative adverbs are derived from adjectival bases through the highly productive suffix -*erweise* (e.g., *dummerweise* ‘stupidly’).[10] In this respect, *leider* represents a sort of morphological exception, as it does not exhibit this type of derivation (see below). However, it should be noted that there is no morphological element uniquely characterising the evaluative subgroup – although most evaluative adverbs are derived via the suffix -*erweise* and the prototypical use of -*erweise* involves its combination with adjectives to derive sentence adverbs (cf. Elsner 2015, 105). For instance, the adverb *lesenderweise* ‘while reading’ combines a present participle (*lesend*) with the same suffix -*erweise*, yet functions as a manner adverb rather than as an evaluative one (120-8).

Moving from morphosyntactic to semanto-pragmatic properties, one key feature of evaluative sentence adverbs is their factivity.[11] Paraphrasing Bellert (1977, 342), any sentence containing an evaluative adverb implies the same sentence without the adverb, as the truth conditions of the sentence without the adverb correspond to the truth conditions of the entire sentence, as (13) exemplifies:

10 Cf. Motsch 1999, 191-2; Elsner 2015; Pittner 2015; Müller 2022, 217. For an overview of works dealing with -(*er*)*weise*-formations, see the literature cited in Elsner 2015, 101-3.

11 The factive character of evaluative adverbs is mentioned in Helbig (1984, 125-6); Zifonun, Hoffmann, Strecker (1997, 1125); Bonami, Godard (2008, 275); a.o.

(13) a. **Fortunately** John has come. → John has come.
b. **Fortunately** John has not come. → John has not come. (Bellert 1977, 342, ex. 13)

As already mentioned above, evaluative adverbs tend not to occur in nonveridical contexts, that is, contexts where the truth value of the proposition is not entailed, such as questions (14a), hypotheticals (14b), imperatives (14c), and performative utterances (14d) (cf. Liu 2009, 334-5):[12]

(14) a. Hat die Vorschule ***glücklicherweise** einen tollen Spielplatz?
'Does the preschool fortunately [have] a great playground?' (335, ex. 5a)
b. Wenn die Schule ***glücklicherweise** einen tollen Spielplatz hätte, könnten die Kinder ***erfreulicherweise** mehr Sport treiben.
'If the preschool fortunately had a great playground, the kids could luckily do more sports.' (335, ex. 4b)
c. Stirb ***unglücklicherweise**!
'Die unfortunately!' (335, ex. 7)
d. *Ich befehle **glücklicherweise**, dass Du sofort losfährst.
'I order fortunately that you set off immediately.' (335, ex. 6)

Liu (2009, 334-6) provides an overview of the distributional properties of speaker-oriented adverbs and observes that since in the contexts mentioned above the speaker does not assert the proposition, the use of speaker-oriented adverbs, which predicate over an asserted proposition, would be pragmatically infelicitous (342-3). On the contrary, in veridical contexts, such as antecedents of indicative conditionals (15a) and unreal (echo and tag) questions (15b-c), the use of evaluative adverbs appears to be felicitous because these constructions are associated with an implicit assertion of the proposition (343).[13] This behaviour extends to embedded declarative clauses introduced by factive predicates (e.g., *wissen* 'to know', as

12 Here, the notion of (non)veridicality provided by Giannakidou (2013) is adopted.

13 Empirical data show that evaluative adverbs can be found also in antecedents of counterfactual conditionals and rhetorical questions, as shown in the examples below:

(i) Meinen Sie, heißt es in Emilia Galotti, dass Raffael nicht das größte malerische Genie gewesen wäre, wenn er **unglücklicherweise** ohne Hände wäre geboren worden? (DeReKo: Südkurier, 11 February 2005)
'Do you mean, as it is said in *Emilia Galotti*, that Raphael wouldn't have been the greatest painterly genius if he had unfortunately been born without hands?'

(ii) Und was ist **leider** herausgekommen? Erstens einmal sind die Förderwerte geringer geworden. (DeReKo: Sitzungsbericht der 34. Sitzung der Tagung 2010/11 der XVII. Gesetzgebungsperiode des Landtages von Niederösterreich. Donnerstag, den 24. Februar 2011. Plenarprotokoll, Sankt Pölten (AT), 2011)
'And what has unfortunately resulted from this? Firstly, the subsidy levels have been reduced.'

in 16a) or reportives verbs (e.g., *sagen* 'to say', as in 16b), which are veridical (336):

(15) a. Wenn die Vorschule ?**glücklicherweise** einen tollen Spielplatz hat, können die Kinder ***erfreulicherweise** mehr Sport treiben.
'If the preschool fortunately has a great playground, the kids can luckily do more sports.' (335, ex. 4a)
b. Wer ist **unglücklicherweise** in einen Unfall verwickelt worden?
'Who (again) unfortunately got into an accident?' (335, ex. 5b)
c. Tom ist **unglücklicherweise** in der Prüfung durchgefallen, gell?
'Tom unfortunately failed in the exam, right?' (335, ex. 5c)

(16) a. Maria weiß (nicht) dass Peter **unglücklicherweise** gestorben ist.
'Maria does (not) know that Peter unfortunately died.' (336, ex. 9a)
b. Maria sagte (nicht) dass Peter **unglücklicherweise** gestorben war.
'Maria did (not) say that Peter unfortunately died.' (336, ex. 9b)

Furthermore, Liu (2009, 338-9) states that the speaker, by using speaker-oriented adverbs, performs two speech acts simultaneously: an assertive act (stating the proposition) and an expressive act (conveying the speaker's stance), with the former being independent from the latter and the latter presupposing the former. In this view, the speaker presents a situation and simultaneously expresses an evaluation of it.

Regarding their lexical semantics, building on Averina's (2022) classification, evaluative adverbs can be further divided into two subgroups: those expressing the speaker's evaluation of the proposition (e.g., *leichtsinnigerweise* 'carelessly', *klugerweise* 'sensibly') and those expressing the speaker's emotion towards the proposition (e.g., *erfreulicherweise* 'fortunately', *leider* 'unfortunately'). This distinction corresponds to the categories *Bewertungsindikatoren* ('indicators of evaluation') and *Emotionsindikatoren* ('indicators of emotion') proposed by Helbig and Buscha (2001, 435). According to Averina (2022, 182-3), the meaning difference between the two types is also reflected in their paraphrasing: in the case of evaluative adverbs expressing emotion, the paraphrase explicitly includes a reference to the speaker by employing a first-person pronoun (*mir* in (17b)):

(17) a. Er hat **klugerweise** geschwiegen. → Es ist klug, dass er geschwiegen hat.
'Sensibly, he kept quiet.' → 'It is sensible, that he kept quiet.'
b. Ich kann dir **leider** nicht helfen. → Es tut *mir* leid, dass ich dir nicht helfen kann.
'Unfortunately, I cannot help you.' → '*I* am sorry that I cannot help you.'

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3 Existing Accounts for the Development of Evaluative Adverbs in German

Although the diachronic development of sentence adverbs has recently gained interest also in German linguistic research, the subclass of evaluative adverbs has not received the same attention as epistemic and evidential adverbs. While some observations on the grammaticalization of evaluative adverbs can be found in Axel-Tober (2016) and in Axel-Tober et al. (2025) – both of which address the issue of the development of sentence adverb(ial)s (and modal particles) –, the evaluative subclass has rarely been treated as a distinct category – also synchronically and beyond German, as already mentioned. Additional remarks on the diachronic development of evaluative adverbs are provided in the studies by Paraschkewoff (1976), Elsner (2015), and Pittner (2015). However, these works focus on the suffix -(*er*)*weise* and consider the broader class of sentence adverbs formed with this suffix, without specifically examining the evaluative subgroup (for example, adverbs such as *möglicherweise* 'probably' and *notwendigerweise* 'necessarily' also feature the suffix -*erweise*, but they are not classified as evaluative adverbs).

In what follows, I will summarise the main claims found in Paraschkewoff (1976), Elsner (2015), and Pittner (2015) regarding the development of the suffix -*erweise*. Furthermore, I will mention the account(s) proposed by Axel-Tober (2016), Axel-Tober and Müller (2017), and Axel-Tober et al. (2025) concerning the diachronic development of sentence adverbs in general, in order to provide an overview of recent German scholarship on the topic.[14]

Most lexemes classified as evaluative sentence adverbs in German are morphologically derived using the suffix -*erweise*, which is assumed to be the most productive adverbial suffix in PDG (cf. Pittner 2015, 149). The origin of this suffix goes back to nominal phrases in the genitive case consisting of the noun *Weise* ('manner') combined with an adjective preceding it, for instance *merkwürdiger Weise* ('in a strange manner'; -*er* corresponding to the genitive marker). In MHG, such constructions functioned only as manner adverbials. The suffix -*erweise* is considered to be the result of a process of univerbation of the adjective and the noun, and the subsequent reanalysis of the genitive marker -*er* as part of a new adverbial suffix, i.e. -*erweise* (cf. Paraschkewoff 1976, 171-6; Pittner 2015, 149-50). This process can be illustrated as follows:

(18) [ADJ-*er Weise*]$_{NP}$ univerbation → [ADJ*er-weise*]$_{ADV}$ reanalysis → [ADJ-*erweise*]$_{ADV}$
(adapted from Pittner 2015, 149, ex. 7)

14 For English see, e.g., Swan 1988; van Gelderen 2011.

As Elsner (2015, 105) explains, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the productivity of *-erweise* formations increased, and it is likely that *-erweise* constructions were no longer built via univerbation of adjective and noun, but rather by adding *-erweise* to an adjectival base via suffixal derivation. Starting from the nineteenth century, the suffix *-erweise* developed the function of marking sentence adverbs (cf. Paraschkewoff 1976; Pittner 2015, 150). Pittner (2015, 150) interprets this development from manner adverbs to sentence adverbs as an instance of subjectification (see also Traugott 1989). In the view of Axel-Tober (2016), interpretative ambiguity played a crucial role in this process.

According to Axel-Tober (2016), Axel-Tober and Müller (2017), and Axel-Tober et al. (2025), the emergence of sentence adverbs in German can be attributed to a morphosyntactic reanalysis, in which surface ambiguity played a pivotal role. Axel-Tober (2016) investigates the development of various sentence adverbials from two kinds of sources: manner adverbials and parenthetical clauses. She argues that these expressions originally had no sentence adverbial reading and illustrates ambiguity, a key concept in her analysis, as follows:

(19) Peter hat die Prüfung **sicher** bestanden.
interpretation A: 'Peter certainly passed the exam.' *epistemic reading*
interpretation B: 'Peter passed the exam comfortably.' *manner reading*
(adapted from Axel-Tober 2016, 26, ex. 9)

In (19), the adverb *sicher* is ambiguous: it can be interpreted either as an epistemic sentence adverb (interpretation A) or as a manner adverb (interpretation B). These two readings correspond to different syntactic structures: in the interpretation A, *sicher* is adjoined at the IP level, whereas in the interpretation B, it is adjoined at the VP level, as illustrated in (20). These two underlying structures, however, cannot be distinguished at the surface level.[15]

(20) interpretation A: [$_{CP}$ Peter [$_{C'}$ hat [$_{TopP}$ die Prüfung [$_{IP}$ **sicher** [$_{IP}$ ~~Peter~~ [$_{I'}$ [$_{VP}$ ~~Peter~~ [$_{V'}$ [$_{VP}$ [$_{V'}$ ~~die Prüfung~~ bestanden]]]] ~~hat~~]]]]]]
interpretation B: [$_{CP}$ Peter [$_{C'}$ hat [$_{TopP}$ die Prüfung [$_{IP}$ ~~Peter~~ [$_{I'}$ [$_{VP}$ ~~Peter~~ [$_{V'}$ [$_{VP}$ **sicher** [$_{VP}$ [$_{V'}$ ~~die Prüfung~~ bestanden]]]]] ~~hat~~]]]]]

According to Axel-Tober (2016), it is precisely this type of ambiguity, which in some cases persists to this day, which led to the reanalysis of such expressions from manner adverbs to sentence adverbs.

15 The 'low' surface position of the IP-related *sicher* is due to the fact that the phrasal constituent *die Prüfung* ('the exam') is scrambled out of the VP to a Topic position above the IP (also see Frey 2004).

Building on this, in a subsequent study, Axel-Tober and Müller (2017) explore the semantic and morphosyntactic development of the evidential sentence adverbs *offensichtlich* 'obviously', *offenbar* 'evidently', *anscheinend* 'apparently', and *scheinbar* 'seemingly'. They argue that all four expressions originated from adjectives (with *anscheinend* derived from a participle) and that the sentence adverbial reading emerged at a later stage as a secondary development. From a syntactic perspective, they interpret this shift as the result of an upward reanalysis from a VP-related to an IP-related adverbial (cf. Axel-Tober, Müller 2017, 25; also see Roberts, Roussou 2003). This syntactic reanalysis led to a recategorisation: alongside the original lexical entry, a second lexical entry emerged for the corresponding sentence adverbial reading, both entries being homonymous (Axel-Tober, Müller 2017, 23, 26).[16]

Axel-Tober et al. (2025) further develop Axel-Tober's (2016) observations as well as the account by Axel-Tober and Müller (2017) presented above, extending it also to modal particles. They suggest that sentence adverbs and modal particles share common grammaticalization paths and identify two main pathways for their development: one from lower event-related adverbs via upward reanalysis and the other from parenthetical constructions via syntactic integration.

In general terms, it can be said that although the single sentence adverbs discussed in the literature presented here originated at different times and from different sources, a common underlying factor can be identified: their reanalysis is rooted in surface ambiguity.

4 *Leider* as a Case Study

This section is divided as follows: § 4.1 outlines the etymological origin and present-day use of *leider*. § 4.2 describes the methodology and presents the results of the study. In §§ 4.3 and 4.4 the syntactic and semantic analyses, respectively, are discussed. § 4.5 draws the interim conclusions and situates the development of *leider* within broader grammaticalization patterns identified for sentence adverbs in German.

16 While *offensichtlich*, *scheinbar*, and *offenbar* still retain both lexical entries in PDG, *anscheinend* seems to be used only as a sentence adverb by most speakers (cf. Axel-Tober, Müller 2017, 26) or, as an anonymous reviewer points out, there are possibly fewer contexts in which *anscheinend* can be used as an adjective.

4.1 *Leider*: Etymological Origin and Present-Day Use

The adverb *leider* is assumed to derive from OHG *leid-ōr* (MHG *leid-er*) as the comparative form of the adverb *leid-o* (MHG *leid-e*), which in turn stems from the adjective *leid* (MHG *leit*, PDG *leid*).[17] According to the EWA s.v. "leid", the OHG adjective *leid* had the following meanings: 'verhasst' ('hateful'), 'widerwärtig' ('despicable'), 'lästig' ('disagreeable'), 'unlieb' ('unpleasant'), 'garstig' ('nasty'), 'schändlich' ('shameful'), 'abscheulich' ('disgraceful'), 'böse' ('evil'), 'unheilvoll' ('harmful'), 'schmerzlich' ('painful').[18] The origin of *leid* can be traced back to the Germanic adjective _*lai̯þa-_ (< _*$h_2$lói̯t-o-_), meaning 'schädigend' ('harmful'), 'kränkend' ('hurtful'), 'widerwärtig' ('despicable'), 'unangenehm' ('unpleasant') and deriving from the Indo-European verbal root _*$h_2$lei̯t-_, with the meaning of 'verabscheuen' ('to detest'), 'freveln' ('to commit sacrilege'), 'Böses tun' ('to do evil') (cf. EtymWB s.v. "leid"; EWA s.v. "leid").

According to the EtymWB s.v. "leider", OHG *leidor*, as a comparative form, had an intensifying function and was used to express regret or lament. Klein, Solms, and Wegera (2017, 332) provide following translation for MHG *leider*: "schmerzlicher; im Übermaße schmerzlich; bedauerlicherweise" ('more painful, excessively painful, regrettably'). They argue that over time, MHG *leider* acquired an independent meaning and that it was also used as an interjection. A similar observation is found in the AWB s.v. "leidôr", where this element is defined both as an adverb and as an interjection used to express regret over sins. Grimm (1890, § 596) claims that OHG *leidor* served as an interjection. Similarly, Wilmanns (1899, § 476) includes *leidor* in the section addressing interjections. More generally, OHG *leidor* and its MHG counterpart *leider* are associated with the meanings 'bedauerlicherweise' ('regrettably'), 'leider' ('unfortunately'), 'ach!' ('oh!'), and 'wehe (mir)!' ('alas!') (cf. AWB s.v. "leidôr"; EWA s.v. "leidlîh-leidôr").

In PDG, *leider* can be used in any linguistic context to express regret, sorrow, and remorse over an eventuality. Following Averina's (2022) classification of sentence adverbs, *leider* can be thus categorised as an evaluative adverb of emotion. From both a functional and a syntactic perspective, *leider* represents a prototypical example of sentence adverb in German, displaying the characteristic features

17 Cf. EWA s.v. "leidlîh-leidôr"; EtymWb s.v. "leider"; Kluge [1883] 2011, 570; Klein, Solms, Wegera 2017, 332; a.o.

18 Cognate words of the adjective *leid* are found in every Germanic language except for Gothic (cf. EWA s.v. "leid").

of the evaluative class discussed above.[19] Typically it occurs in the left sentence periphery in a specifier position (21a) or in the middle field, adjoined within the I-domain (21b). Occasionally, *leider* appears in the right periphery beyond the verbal complex (21c):

(21) a. **Leider** bemächtigt sich das Museum nicht anderer Sprachen als Französisch und Flämisch. (DeReKo: Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, 29 October 2011)
'Unfortunately, the museum does not make use of any languages other than French and Flemish.'
b. Ich kann **leider** nicht Schwäbisch sprechen, aber ich verstehe jedes Wort, das Raff von sich gibt. (DeReKo: Stuttgarter Zeitung, 9 September 2008)
'Unfortunately, I can't speak Swabian, but I understand every word Raff says.'
c. Ich habe den Kollegen nie wieder gesehen, **leider**. (DeReKo: Saarbrücker Zeitung, 1 February 2003)
'I never saw the colleague again, unfortunately.'

Moreover, *leider* can be accompanied by an overt prepositional phrase (PP), as illustrated below:[20]

(22) Ich bekomme keine Provision, **leider für mich**, gut für Sie. (DeReKo: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 23 May 2013)
'I don't receive a commission – unfortunately for me, fortunately for you.'

(23) Steiners Kritiker, von denen es nicht wenige gibt, hätten das «Sennentuntschi» lieber anders gehabt: **Leider für sie** ist der Film ein brillantes Stück Schweizer Filmkunst. (DeReKo: St. Galler Tagblatt, 24 September 2010)
'Steiner's critics, of whom there are quite a few, would have preferred «Sennentuntschi» to be different: unfortunately for them, the film is a brilliant piece of Swiss cinematography.'

The overt PP can refer either to the speaker, as in (22), or to another entity, as in (23). Nevertheless, in both cases, *leider* expresses the speaker's stance, meaning that the negative evaluation or rather emotion originates from the speaker. The crucial distinction is between the attitude-holder and the subject of evaluation. The speaker can be considered as attitude-holder in both cases, presenting the eventuality as negative. What varies is the subject of evaluation: in (22) the speaker themselves is construed as the subject of the emotion, while in (23) it is the critics (the speaker assesses the situation as

19 Nevertheless, counterexamples can be found also in the case of *leider*. For instance, when contrastive focus is applied, *leider* can fall within the scope of negation, as shown in the example below:

(iii) aber ein guter Roman ist zunächst mal **nicht leider, sondern zum Glück** zeitlos. (DeReKo: Berliner Zeitung, 17 May 2021).
'But a good novel is, first and foremost, not unfortunately, but fortunately timeless.'

20 Similar constructions involving an overt prepositional phrase are also attested in other languages such as English (*unfortunately for me*), French (*malheureusement pour moi*), and Italian (*purtroppo per me*).

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unfortunate *for them*). The speaker thus remains the source of the emotion in (23), while the critics are construed as negatively affected by the eventuality. This becomes evident if we imagine a possible felicitous reply from the critics or the hearer, rejecting the speaker's evaluation (by saying, for instance, 'Well, no, actually it was good for us/them after all'). Such a response shows that the negativity is anchored in the speaker's stance.[21]

4.2 The Study: Methodological Premises and Results

In order to investigate the diachronic development of *leider*, a corpus-based study was carried out using the the Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch (version 1.0,[22] henceforth ReA; Donhauser et al. 2015) for OHG (750-1050) and the Referenzkorpus Mittelhochdeutsch (henceforth ReM; Klein et al. 2016) for MHG (1050-1350). For both periods, all occurrences of *leider* were systematically collected and analysed.[23] For later historical stages, no comprehensive corpus study was conducted.

Before presenting the results, a methodological note is necessary: the ReA and the ReM differ not only in terms of annotation levels and corpus size, but also with respect to the text genres they contain – a difference that stems not from the corpus architecture itself, but from the nature of the available textual materials. In particular, the OHG corpus primarily consists of religious, theological, and spiritual texts, whereas the MHG corpus also includes a broader range of genres, such as poetry, chronicles, heroic epics, and love songs. These differences impose certain limitations on the conclusions that can be drawn regarding the use, meaning, and development of *leider* over time. In particular, they limit direct comparisons between the corpora in terms of genre distribution and word frequency. Moreover, the OHG texts contained in the ReA are predominantly written in Alemannic, Frankish, and Bavarian dialects, which further restricts the representativeness of the data.

Against this background, the results from the ReA and the ReM will be presented below.

21 I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out. In a brief section on embedded evaluatives, Bonami and Godard (2008, 292) suggest that "the agent responsible for the evaluative may be different from the speaker". See Bonami, Godard 2008, 291-2 and the cited literature therein for some examples and debate.

22 The study presented here was conducted using version 1.0 of the ReA and the searching tool ANNIS3. At present (2025), version 1.2 of the corpus is available and can be searched using ANNIS4.

23 The OHG occurrences of *leider* in the ReA were retrieved through the query: lemma = "leidor". The MHG occurrences in the ReM were retrieved through the query: lemma = "lèider".

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4.2.1 Results from the ReA

In the ReA, *leider* has 18 occurrences across five texts: Otfrid's *Evangelienbuch* (5 occurrences), *Ludwigslied* (1), *Memento Mori* (1), *Bamberger Glaube und Beichte* (6), and *Erster Wessobrunner Glaube und Beichte* (5),[24] that is, texts predominantly of religious nature. It is worth noting that the *Bamberger Glaube und Beichte* and the *Erster Wessobrunner Glaube und Beichte* are two versions of the same creed and homiletic text and thus exhibit substantial overlap. Nevertheless, some divergences can be observed, including variations in the usage of *leider* (see below). Given that the ReA consists almost exclusively of religious, theological, and spiritual texts, the distribution of *leider* across the corpus likely reflects the corpus composition itself rather than an inherent distributional restriction of this lexeme due to genre-based constraints.[25] A closer examination of the contexts in which *leider* occurs reveals that its use is restricted to sentences in which the speaker experiences inner suffering because either they themselves, humankind in general, or Adam and Eve have sinned by transgressing God's precepts (15 out of 18 attestations). These instances consistently involve moral wrongdoing from a Christian perspective, where the violation of divine commandments leads to a sense of shame and disgrace. Consequently, *leider* can be interpreted as an element that either conveys the speaker's lament over such moral failings (sentence adverbial reading) or describes the manner in which the actions were conducted – namely, in a shameful (and thus regrettable) manner (manner adverbial reading).

The following instances illustrate the use of *leider* in various contexts. In the examples below, the speaker themselves (24-5) and humanity at large (26) are portrayed as sinners because they violated God's precepts by engaging in morally wrong behaviour:

(24) (ReA: BGuB)

Ích	hábe	**leidir**	uirbrôchen	ioh	firsûmit	alliu	diniu
I	have	*leider*	broken	and	neglected	all	your
gibót	ioh	dîna	êwa	in	sunthafton	wíllôn	
rule	and	your	law	in	sinful	will	

'Shamefully/Despicably, I have broken and negligently followed all your commandments and your law in sinful (impulses of) will.' *sentence adverbial reading*
'I have broken and negligently followed all your commandments and your law in a (very) shameful/despicable manner, in sinful (impulses of) will.' *manner adverbial reading*

24 In addition, *leider* appears at least once in Notker III's translation of the *Psalms*, although this occurrence is not present in the version 1.0 of the ReA.

25 I thank an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this point.

(25) (ReA: BGuB)

wande	mîner	súndôn,	unde	mîner	meindatône	der	ist
because	my	sins	and	my	misdeeds	of.them	is
disiu	wérlt	uól,	die	sint	**leidir**	úber	méz,
this	world	full	they	are	*leider*	over	measure
uber	alla	dúsent	zala,	[…]			
over	all	thousand	amount				

‘Because my sins and my misdeeds, of which this world is full, – shamefully, they are beyond measure, in excess […].’

(26) (ReA: EB 5.23)

Wir	fúarun	**leidor**	thánana	fon	páradises	hénti	in
we	went	*leider*	from.there	from	of.paradise	area	in
suaraz	élilenti;	Fon	hímilriches	súazi	in	jámarlichaz	wízi
sad	misery	from	of.heaven	sweetness	in	wretched	pain

‘Shamefully/Despicably/Regrettably, we went from the realm of paradise into dangerous misery, from the loveliness of Heaven into wretched pain.’ *sentence adverbial reading*
‘We went from the realm of paradise into dangerous misery, from the loveliness of Heaven into wretched pain in a (very) shameful/despicable manner.’ *manner adverbial reading*

In (27), the narrative recounts the original sin, which, according to Christian belief, has condemned all of humanity to a state of sin and suffering:

(27) (ReA: EB 2.6)

Ér	gistuant	uns	méron	then	mánagfaltan	wéwon,	bálo	ther
he	stood	us	increase	the	manifold	woe	suffering	that
uns	klíbit,	joh	**léidor**	nu	ni	líbit		
us	clings	and	*leider*	now	not	spares		

‘He increased our manifold woes, the suffering that clings to us and shamefully/unfortunately no longer spares us.’

At this stage, the meaning of *leider* appears to remain closely tied to the meaning of the OHG adjective *leid*. Specifically, *leider* seems to convey an attitude of regret and sorrow arising from sinful and thus repugnant, disgraceful, or detestable behaviour – which reflects the core meaning of the OHG adjective *leid*. However, *leider* is never used as the comparative form of the adverb *leido* in the corpus. Rather, it expresses the speaker’s evaluation of the narrated event, or it might be ambiguous between a sentence adverbial and a manner adverbial reading. This will be discussed in § 4.3.

From a syntactic perspective, *leider* predominantly occurs in the middle field, with 15 out of 18 attestations found there. In the examples (24) and (26), *leider* appears in a high surface position, which is nonetheless compatible with both an adjunction in the I-domain and in the V-domain, as the element(s) linearly following *leider* can be assumed to occupy linear positions after a potential adjunction within the VP. In two instances,[26] *leider* occurs in a clause-external position to the left of the XP preceding the finite verb:

(28) (ReA: Ludwigslied)

Leidhor,	thes	ingald	iz.
leider	of.it	paid	it

'Alas!/Unfortunately, they atoned for it [their sins].' (see also ex. (51))

(29) (ReA: EB 2.6)

léidor,	thaz	ni	scólta	sin.
leider	this	not	should	be

'Alas!/Unfortunately, that [God taking pity on Adam] was not meant to be.'

Lastly, in one attestation, *leider* occurs in a linear position in the right periphery of the clause beyond the verbal complex:

(30) (ReA: EB 4.31)

[…]	thio	unso	míssodati;	Tház	wir	ofto	wórahtun	joh	súslih
	the	our	misdeeds	that	we	often	cause	and	such
er	ni	fórahtun,	**leidor**,	íh	inti	thú			
earlier	not	feared	*leider*	I	and	you			

'[…] our misdeeds, which we often commit and once did not fear – woe is us! – you and I.'

In three instances from the *Bamberger Glaube und Beichte* and three from the *Erster Wessobrunner Glaube und Beichte*, *leider* is directly followed by the dative first person pronoun *mir*. This is exemplified in (31a) and (32b). Interestingly, in a passage where the scribe of the *Bamberger* version wrote *leider mir*, the scribe of the *Wessobrunner* version recorded only *leider*, omitting the personal pronoun *mir* (31). Conversely, in another passage, the *Bamberger* version shows only *leider*, while the *Wessobrunner* version has *leider mir*, as shown below (32):

26 One example comes from the *Ludwigslied* and the other from the *Evangelienbuch*, both composed in a Rhine Frankish dialect.

(31) (ReA: BGuB)

a. *Bamberger* version

unde	wile	gérno	minna	unde	hóltscaft	giwínnen,	[…]	umbe	álle
and	want	gladly	love	and	goodwill	gain		for	all
wider	die	íh	sie	**leidir**	**mir**	uirwórht	habe		
against	whom	I	them	*leider*	to.me	forfeited	habe		

b. *Wessobrunner* version

unde	uuilo	gerno	minna	unde	holtscaft	geuuinnen,	[…]	umba
and	want	gladly	love	and	goodwill	gain		for
alla	die	ih	si	**leider**	feruuorht	han		
all	who	I	them	*leider*	forfeited	habe		

'and I gladly wish to regain affection and goodwill […] from all those with whom I have, shamefully/despicably/– woe is me! –, forfeited them.' *sentence adverbial reading*
'and I gladly wish to regain affection and goodwill […] from all those with whom I have forfeited them shamefully/despicably.' *manner adverbial reading*

(32) (ReA: BGuB)

a. *Bamberger* version (see also ex. 24)

Ích	hábe	**leidir**	uirbrôchen	ioh	firsûmit	alliu	diniu	gibót	[…]
I	have	*leider*	broken	and	neglected	all	your	rule	

b. *Wessobrunner* version

Ih	han	**leidir**	**mir**	ferbrochen	ioh	fersumet	elliu	diniu	gebot	[…]
I	have	*leider*	*to.me*	broken	and	neglected	all	your	rule	

'Shamefully/Despicably, I have broken and negligently followed all your commandments […].' *sentence adverbial reading*
'I have broken and negligently followed all your commandments […] in a (very) shameful/despicable manner.' *manner adverbial reading*

It is, however, difficult to determine whether these variations result from intentional changes or accidental omissions. One reason for this uncertainty is that there is no evidence of erasure, overwriting, or later additions in the manuscripts that transmit these texts. The construction *leider mir* seems to emphasise that the feeling of regret or sorrow is affecting negatively the speaker, or it might be a fixed or formulaic expression.[27] *Leider mir* could have a similar internal structure as *leider für mich* in PDG, with *leider* occupying the head of a XP and *mir*/*für mich* the complement position as a NP/PP.

27 A comparable usage is documented in Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, where an example from the MHG work *Iwein* is cited (*leider uns*) (cf. DWB s.v. "leider").

4.2.2 Results from the ReM

In the ReM, a total of 261 attestations of leider across 91 texts were analysed.[28] *Leider* appears most frequently in *Kaiserchronik* (17 instances), Hugo von Trimberg's *Der Renner* (17), *Speculum ecclesiae* (11), *Rolandslied* (9), *Der Sünden Widerstreit* (7), *König Rother* (7), *Wiener Genesis* (6), and *Dietrichs Flucht* (6). Geographically, *leider* is attested across almost the entire High German area: it appears in texts written, according to the ReM metadata, in Alemannic, Swabian, Bavarian, East Franconian, Ripuarian, Moselle Franconian, Rhine Franconian, Hessian, and Hessian-Thuringian dialects.

In the Early MHG period, attestations of *leider* are mostly found in religious and spiritual works, including hagiographies, biblical poetry, sermons, and allegories. As in the OHG period, in these texts *leider* frequently appears in contexts where the Christian speaker laments his own wretched condition or sinful behaviour, or the sinful state of humankind, or where the original sin and its consequences are described. Throughout the MHG period, the use of *leider* extends to religious contexts unrelated to sinfulness as well as to other domains, such as heroic epics and various kinds of narratives, simply describing events that the speaker considers regrettable or sad, such as loss, death, or other unfortunate events. *Leider* thus begins to convey a more general sense of sorrow and regret, independent of association with religious or moral concerns. In the occurrences from the ReM, *leider* mostly has a sentence adverbial reading. It is used in contexts where the speaker expresses an evaluative attitude towards the proposition. The ambiguous occurrences are very few. The following examples illustrate the use of *leider* in the MHG sources. In (33-4) *leider* refers explicitly to the violation of God's precepts, while (35-6) are cases where sinfulness is not directly mentioned:

(33) (ReM: Speculum ecclesiae)

Leidir	do	uolgte	er	dem	leidigim	tiefil.
Leider	then	followed	he	the	wretched	devil

'Shamefully/Unfortunately, he [Adam] followed the wretched devil.'

28 In the ReM, *leider* appears 274 times across 95 texts. However, 13 occurrences (from four texts) have been excluded from the analysis for the following reasons: the texts *Bamberger Glaube und Beichte*, *Erster Wessobrunner Glaube und Beichte*, and *Memento Mori* are included and annotated in both the ReA and the ReM, and I have chosen to treat these texts as works of Late OHG and to include the corresponding instances of *leider* in the ReA results, excluding them from the ReM data. Additionally, one instance from the text *St. Trudperter Hohelied* has been excluded, as it represents the comparative form of *leid* in the construction *jdm. ist etw. leid* ('sb can't stand sth'; cf. DWB s.v. "leid").

(34) (ReM: Predigten, Krakauer Frag.)

Disiv	wart	[…]	div	ze	allen	liuten	sint	gesprochen.	werdent	doh	uon	allen
these	words		that	to	all	people	are	said	are	thou	by	all

laider	niht	wol	behalten
leider	not	well	followed

‘These words […], which are said to everyone, are shamefully/unfortunately not carefully followed by everyone.’

(35) (ReM: Wiener Physiologus)

Vnser	trehtin	giscuof	unsich	duo	wir	ne	waren.	**leider**	dare	widere	sluogen
our	Lord	created	us	then	we	not	were	*leider*	there	repulsed	

wir	in	unter	siniu	ougen
we	him	under	his	eyes

‘Our Lord created us when we did not yet exist. Shamefully/Unfortunately/Alas! We rejected Him before His eyes.’ (reference to the crucifixion of Jesus)

(36) (ReM: St. Pauler Pred.)

waenet	ir	daz	er	do	fvnde	triwe	vnd	warheit	vf	der	erde	**leider**
think	you	that	he	then	found	loyalty	and	truth	on	the	earth	*leider*

des	ne	was	niht
of.it	not	was	nothing

‘Do you believe that He found loyalty and truth on Earth? Unfortunately/Alas! None of it was there.’

The examples (37-9) are clearly unrelated to the religious or spiritual sphere:

(37) (ReM: Rolandslied (P))

Liebiu	libiu	alda.	ich	ne	tar	nicht		liegin.	**laider** […]
dear	dear	Alda	I	not	dare	not		lie	*leider*
du	ne	gesest	in	niemir.	er	lit	**laider**	toter	begra==bin.
you	not	see	him	never	he	lies	*leider*	dead	buried

‘Dear, dear Alda, I do not dare to lie: Alas!/Unfortunately, you will never see him again […]. Unfortunately, he lies buried, dead.’

(38) (ReM: König Rother)

lieder	sie	ne	heten	uro=wede	nicht.	wene	vrost	vnd	naz
leider	they	not	had	joy	not	only	frost	and	wet

‘Unfortunately, they had no joy. There was only cold and dampness.’

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(39) (ReM: Kaiserchronik A)

Nu	ist	**leider**	in	disen	ziten	ein	gewoneheit	witen	manege	erdenchent
now	is	*leider*	in	these	times	a	habit	widespread	many	devise

in	luge	vnd	v.=gen	si	zesamen.	mit	scophelichen	worten
them	lies	and	fit	them	together	with	creative	words

‘Shamefully/Unfortunately, there is a widespread habit nowadays: many invent webs of lies and weave them together with poetic words.’

In addition, *leider* occurs evidently as an interjection in a total of four instances out of 99 in the thirteenth century and seven out of 90 in the fourteenth century. (40) is an example of *leider* used as an interjection:

(40) (ReM: Karl und Galie)

O	wi	**leider**	inde	o	wach.	Wie	we	deit	mir	der	arm	min
oh	woe	*leider*	and	oh	woe	how	hurt	does	to.me	the	arm	my

‘Oh woe! Alas! Oh! How much my arm hurts!’

Regarding the syntactic distribution of *leider*, in nearly four-fifths of its occurrences it appears in the middle field, cf. (34) and (39), as well as the second occurrence of *leider* in (37). The word order observed in (39), for instance, is incompatible with a structural position of *leider* in the V-domain. Similarly, in (34), it seems plausible to assume that *leider* is adjoined within the I-domain if we analyse the phrasal constituent *uon allen* ‘by everyone’ as occupying a Topic position immediately above IP (as in the structure proposed in (20), interpretation A). In the second occurrence of *leider* in (37), nothing excludes a structural position within the VP, although from an interpretative perspective *leider* here seems to function as a sentence adverb rather than as a manner adverb. Particularly noteworthy is the presence, in twelfth-century manuscripts, of instances where *leider* occupies an utterance-initial position preceding the left periphery of the clause (linearly, it appears before the XP preceding the finite verb), thereby giving rise to V3 word orders. The frequence of this usage pattern, illustrated in the examples (33), (35), (36), (38), and in the first instance of (37), decreases in the manuscripts from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (from 33% of total occurrences in the twelfth century to 16% in the thirteenth century to 13% in the fourteenth century). Overall, in the ReM *leider* is attested in V3 configurations in an utterance-initial position in 52 out of 261 instances. Apart from a few cases where *leider* linearly precedes a NP or PP, the element following *leider* in these V3 clauses is typically either a personal pronoun, an indefinite pronoun such as *niemand* ‘nobody’ or *man* ‘one’, or an adverb like *da* ‘there, then, so' or *nun* 'now'. In these attestations *leider* seems to function as a sentence adverbial. Building on the analysis proposed by Catasso and De Bastiani (2024), *leider* can be assumed to be generated clause-externally in these constructions. Referring to elements such as markers of relevance, markers of textual-narrative coherence, and sentence adverbs occupying this position, Catasso and De Bastiani (2024, 30) argue that these items "perform a purely textual-pragmatic function" and that "their occurrence does not seem to be related to the functions generally associated with clause-internal ForceP, but rather to establishing a relation between the clause they linearly introduce and the (pre-)context and/or the speaker's dimension". The occurrence of *leider* in utterance-initial position in V3 clauses, together with the quantitative distribution of this word order across the ReM outlined above, raises the question of whether this pattern (*leider* followed by an XP preceding the finite verb) triggered, or conversely resulted from, the broadening of its semantic scope, or whether these phenomena are related in some other way or totally unrelated. This question will be addressed in the following subsection.

4.3 Syntactic Analysis

As already mentioned, *leider* is never attested in the ReA and ReM as the comparative form of the adverb *leido* (nor as the comparative form of the adjective *leid*). Although the sources cited in § 4.1, as well as older works such as Graff (1836, 171) and Grimm (1890, § 596), trace the etymology of *leider* back to a comparative origin, no actual example is provided in the cited literature to support this derivation. The etymological dictionaries and historical grammars consulted for this study that state or assume such an origin do not cite any clear textual source or corpus evidence to substantiate this claim, which, nonetheless, appears to be standardly accepted today.[29] Outside the corpora examined here, this etymology might be supported by what historical grammars of German describe about the formation of comparative forms in OHG.[30] The regular way to derive adverbs (sometimes called *Adjektivadverbia* 'adjective adverbs')[31] from adjectives in OHG is by adding the suffix -*o* (e.g., OHG *ubil* 'bad' >

29 I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising the issue of why it is standardly assumed that *leider* derives from a comparative form.

30 Ramat and Ricca (1998, 240), in a small section on the words meaning 'unfortunately' in the languages of Europe, list two examples, which also appear to show a comparative origin: Danish *desværre* and Swedish *tyvärr*, "from 'worse than that' and 'because worse' respectively" (240).

31 See Paul, Coniglio, forthcoming for a recent (diachronic) analysis of these elements.

ubilo 'badly'; cf. Sonderegger 2003, 303). The comparative form is then built with the suffix -*ōr* (analogously to the formation of the comparative grade of adjectives, cf. Braune 2004, 232) (e.g., *langōr* 'longer'; cf. Sonderegger 2003, 303).[32] Based on this morphological derivation, the following paradigm can be posited:

(41)

base adjective	*leid*	'shameful, despicable, painful'
adverb	*leido*	'shamefully, despicably, painfully'
comparative adverb	*leidōr*	'in a more/very shameful/despicable/painful manner'

However, as noted above, in its actual attestations from the corpora *leider* does not function as a comparative. Rather, it may be interpreted either as a manner adverb adjoined at the VP level (taking scope over the event) and/or as a sentence adverb(ial) adjoined at the IP level (taking scope over the entire proposition) (cf., for instance, examples (24-7) from the ReA and (33-9) from the ReM). In both ReA and ReM, no co-occurring instances of *leider* in the I-domain and *leider* in the V-domain are attested. Additionally, uses of *leider* as interjection are recorded, cf. (40). In PDG, *leider* does not convey a manner reading and can only be used as a sentence adverb, suggesting that, synchronically, only one lexical entry exists for this element.

As shown in the previous section, throughout the historical stages of German, *leider* appears in various surface positions, including the middle field, an utterance-initial position preceding the left periphery of the clause, and, more rarely, the right periphery of the clause. Based on the assumptions regarding the ordering of adverb(ial)s in PDG outlined above in § 2 and following the analysis proposed by Axel-Tober et al. (2025), two possible developmental paths can be hypothesised for *leider*: one from a manner adverb and one from a parenthetical. No strong evidence favours one analysis over the other. The common point between the two scenarios is that the evaluative sentence adverbial use of *leider* is a secondary development that emerged in contexts of surface ambiguity within the middle field.

4.3.1 Development from a Manner Adverb

One potential developmental path involves contexts of surface ambiguity, where both a manner and a sentence adverbial reading are possible. Since diachronically there are occurrences that are either ambiguous between a manner and a sentence adverbial

32 See also Ramat 1986, 159-61; Sonderegger 2003, 278, 302-4; Braune 2004, 231-3; Fulk 2018, 239; a.o.

interpretation or show a clear sentence adverbial reading, it is plausible that, over time, the manner reading disappeared, and the sentence adverbial reading prevailed. Such ambiguous contexts can be identified in the middle field of the German sentence. As outlined in the previous sections, sentence adverbs are assumed to occupy positions in the I-domain, right above event-related adverbs (in the V-domain). There is no evidence against the assumption that such an ordering was possible – or even required or preferred – already in the earlier stages of German. In this scenario, *leider* as a manner adverb could have been reinterpreted as a sentence adverb in contexts where the two structural positions (one corresponding to adjunction to VP for the manner reading and the other to adjunction to IP for the sentence adverbial reading) were indistinguishable at the surface level. In other words, ambiguous surface sequences made possible the syntactic reanalysis of *leider* as a sentence adverb:

(42) $[_{CP} \dots [_{IP} [_{VP}\ \text{leider}\ [_{VP} \dots]\ ] \dots]\ ] \rightarrow [_{CP} \dots [_{IP}\ \text{leider}\ [_{IP} [_{VP} \dots]\ ] \dots]\ ]$

This ambiguity is illustrated, for example, by (31b), which is repeated below as (43) for the reader's convenience:

(43) (ReA: WGuB)

unde	uuilo	gerno	minna	unde	holtscaft	geuuinnen,	[…]	umba	alla	die
and	want	gladly	love	and	goodwill	gain		for	all	who

ih	si	**leider**	feruuorht	han
I	them	*leider*	forfeited	habe

'and I gladly wish to regain affection and goodwill […] from all those with whom I have, shamefully/despicably, forfeited them.' *sentence adverbial reading*
'and I gladly wish to regain affection and goodwill […] from all those with whom I have forfeited them shamefully/despicably.' *manner adverbial reading*

In this example, *leider* could be adjoined either at the IP-level (immediately below *si* 'them') or at the VP-level (above the head of the VP hosting the past participle *feruuorht* 'forfeited'). Both analyses are compatible with the surface position of *leider* observed in (43).

Based on Axel-Tober and Müller's (2017) analysis, we can postulate for *leider* an upward reanalysis within the middle field from a VP-related adverb to an IP-related adverb, and its consequent recategorisation as a sentence adverb, from which a new lexical entry would have emerged (see Roberts, Roussou 2003). If this analysis holds, the attestations of *leider* as the first element in V3 word orders would be a consequence, rather than the cause, of its development into a sentence adverb. However, the reason why *leider* appears in utterance-initial position cannot easily be accounted for if we assume a developmental path from a manner adverb. Unlike other sentence adverbs such as *giwisso* ('certainly'), *leider* is attested within the left sentence periphery only from the Early New High German period onwards, with a very few occurrences in MHG. Thus, it remains unclear within the present analysis why and how *leider* should have been realised in a clause-external position preceding the left periphery.

4.3.2 Development from a Parenthetical

An alternative developmental pathway is from a parenthetical construction. As a parenthetical, *leider* would have been able to adjoin freely at various syntactic levels. However, since surface ambiguity is assumed to be a necessary condition for reanalysis in the account under consideration, and given that the position outside the CP where *leider* is historically attested is not typically associated with sentence adverbs, we assume in this scenario that the reanalysis from a parenthetical into a sentence adverb took place within the middle field. In this area, both parentheticals and sentence adverbs can occur, and thus the necessary surface ambiguity for reanalysis could potentially have been available. If this analysis is correct, the sentence adverbial use of *leider* would have developed from its parenthetical use in the middle field via syntactic integration of the parenthetical construction (cf. Axel-Tober et al. 2025). In a small section on the different words meaning 'unfortunately' in the languages of Europe, Ramat and Ricca (1998, 240) point out that "many instances [of 'unfortunately' in different languages] originate from interjections and formulaic expressions of complaint which got integrated in the sentence". In their view, however, *leider* is not included in this group: "[o]f course, many formations occur with words meaning 'sorrow': these are not necessarily of interjectional origin. Cf. […] Grm. *leider*, originally the comparative of the adjective *leid*" (240). (44) illustrates the reanalysis of *leider* from a parenthetical:

(44) $[_{CP}\ [_{IP}\ [_{XP}$ leider $]$ … $]\ ] \rightarrow [_{CP}\ [_{IP}$ leider … $]\ ]$

The internal structure of the parenthetical *leider* remains unclear. The exact source structure of this parenthetical construction can only be speculated upon, since from its earliest attestations *leider* consistently appears in the corpora only in the form *leider* (or *leider mir*). It is possible that this form is a relic of a main clause such as *es/das ist leider* ('it is *leider*'), or that it has always consisted of *leider* alone.[33]

33 Across the ReM, four instances of *leider, dass …* ('unfortunately that …') are attested. Assuming that *leider* is originally and formally a relic of a clause such as *es/das ist leider* could account for such instances.

In the developmental scenario under discussion, in the attestations in the middle field *leider* can be interpreted either as a parenthetical or as a sentence adverb (reanalysed from the original parenthetical construction). By contrast, *leider* occurring in V3 configurations would correspond to the parenthetical in its original form. Nevertheless, both the parenthetical *leider* and the sentence adverbial *leider* would express the speaker's stance towards the proposition, since the parenthetical too seems to feature a speaker-oriented dimension and to operate at the sentence level. For instance, consider once again example (37), repeated below as (45):

(45) (ReM: Rolandslied (P))

Liebiu	libiu	alda.	ich	ne	tar	nicht	liegin.	**laider**	du	ne	gesest	in	niemir.
dear	dear	Alda	I	not	dare	not	lie	*leider*	you	not	see	him	never

[…]	er	lit	**laider**	toter	begra==bin.
	he	lies	*leider*	dead	buried

'Dear, dear Alda, I do not dare to lie: Alas!/Unfortunately, you will never see him again […]. Unfortunately, he lies buried, dead.'

Here, the first occurrence of *leider* might correspond to the original parenthetical construction, while the second instance is ambiguous between a parenthetical and a sentence adverb.

Parentheticals are ruled out from the prefield of the modern German sentence (cf. Axel-Tober 2016, 30). Assuming that a similar restriction also applied in historical German, the hypothesis that *leider* was originally used as a parenthetical would explain why it is not attested in the left periphery in the ReA nor in the ReM (in the ReM there are just very few occurrences). Furthermore, this origin would not only account for the occurrences of *leider* as the first element in V3 word orders, but it would also explain why such orders are very frequent in twelfth-century manuscripts and then show a quantitative decrease. This decrease can be attributed to the reanalysis of *leider*: as a sentence adverb, it became subject to syntactic restrictions that prevented it from occupying an utterance-initial position in V3 configurations.

4.4 Semantic Analysis

The contrast between the original meaning of the OHG adjective *leid* and the current meaning of the adverb *leider* raises questions not only about the evolution of its lexical semantics but also about the development of its evaluative and speaker-oriented components, which characterise its current meaning and support its classification as an evaluative sentence adverb.

Based on the results presented above, I argue that *leider* underwent a semantic change process best described as semantic extension.[34] The data indicate an expansion in the range of linguistic contexts in which *leider* could be employed: OHG *leider* is primarily attested in passages where the speaker, the humanity, or Adam and Eve are portrayed as sinners because they violated God's precepts or had a morally wrong behaviour from a Christian perspective. In the MHG period, *leider* also started to be used to comment on sad or unfortunate situations not necessarily associated with shameful actions or an immoral conduct. I suggest that this extension was initially pragmatically motivated by the lexicalisation of a conversational implicature:[35] in Christian thought, a sinful behaviour might have been viewed as repugnant, disgraceful, detestable, or shameful, causing regret and sorrow to the Christian speaker. It is thus possible that the meaning 'regrettably, unfortunately' emerged as a secondary development from the gradual lexicalisation of the conversational implicature 'shamefully, despicably' +> 'regrettably'.

The OHG and Early MHG attestations of *leider* are indeed primarily found in religious and theological texts, and it could therefore be argued that the semantic extension posited here is only apparent and does not reflect a genuine broadening of meaning, but rather the limitations of the available texts. In other words, it could be proposed that *leider* always had a broader potential range of uses, but that the extant sources simply do not fully capture this. However, two observations should be considered. The first concerns the expressions of sorrow, lament, and pain in Otfrid's *Evangelienbuch*. Here, two expressions have a function similar to that of *leider*: *lê(we) s* 'alas! unfortunately!' and *(bi) dia meina* 'unfortunately, in truth'.[36] According to the EWA s.v. "lê(we)s" and the AWB s.v. "lê(uue)s", *lê(we)s* functions as an interjection expressing (a) joy or surprise, (b) lament, pain, and regret ('alas! unfortunately!'), and (c) a call to action. The EWA s.v. "lê(we)s" and the BMZ s.v. "lê" report that *lê(we)s* and *leider* can be considered as synonyms in OHG and MHG sources. The ReA (version 1.0) records a total of 18 instances of *lê(we)s* that are compatible with the expression of lament, regret, or pain. These

34 On the topic of semantic extension, see Bloomfield 1933, 425-7; Campbell 2013, 223; Koch 2016, 26, 31-6; Bechmann 2016, 241-9; a.o. For mechanisms of semantic change and related issues in general see Bloomfield 1933; Blank 1997; Traugott, Dasher 2002; Hopper, Traugott 2003; Keller, Kirschbaum 2003; Koch 2016; a.o.

35 For discussion of (lexicalisation of) conversational implicatures, see Traugott 1988, 411-12; Grice 1989, 39; Traugott 1989, 50; Hopper, Traugott 2003, 82.

36 Both expressions were retrieved through the query: translation = /.*leider.*/.

attestations are found in Otfrid’s *Evangelienbuch* (15 occurrences) and in the Notker III’s translations (3 occurrences), specifically one instance in his translation of the *Psalms* and two in his translation of Boethius’ *De consolatione philosophiae*. In the *Evangelienbuch*, *lê(we)s* primarily conveys emotional pain and lament, often in contexts involving physical or spiritual suffering, as illustrated in the following examples (46-8). It seems likely that *lê(we)s* was used to lend the passages greater expressivity.

(46) (ReA: EB 4.19)

Tho	spíun	sie	óuh	ubar tház	in	ánnuzzi	sínaz,	síh	ouh
then	spat	they	also	moreover	in	face	his	REFL.3.SING	also

thes	ni	mídun,	**lés**,	sines	hálsslagonnes!
it	not	refrain	*lewes*	his	hit

‘They also spat in his face. Alas! They did not even refrain from hitting him in the face.’

(47) (ReA: EB 4.26)

wánu	sie	ouh	thaz	rúzin	waz	síe	imo	**lewes**	wízzin;	Sie
assume	they	also	it	wailed	what	they	him	*lewes*	accused	they

wéinotun	tho	lúto	joh	scrírun	filu	thráto
cried	then	loudly	and	screamed	very	intensely

‘I think they [the women of Jerusalem] also wailed over what he [Jesus] – alas! – was accused of. They cried out loudly and screamed with great intensity.’

(48) (ReA: EB 5.7)

“Mág	mih”,	quad	si	zi	in	tho,	"**lés**!	gilusten	wéinonnes,
can	REFL.1.SING	said	she	to	them	then	*lewes*	desire	cry

sér	joh	léid	ubar	wan	ist	mir	hárto	gidan;	Háben	ih	zi
pain	and	sorrow	over	imagination	is	to.me	strongly	done	have	I	to

klágonne	joh	léidalih	zi	ságenne,	ni	wéiz
complain	and	any grief	to	say	not	know

hi	**les**!	in	gáhe,	war	ih	iz	ánafahe.
I	*lewes*	in	haste	where	I	it	begin

‘Alas! – she said to them – I wish to lament. Terrible pain and sorrow have been inflicted upon me. I must complain and tell of any grief, yet – woe is me! – in my haste I do not even know where to begin.’

While the regret expressed by OHG *leider* primarily originates in sinful behaviours (as in the examples (24-7), (30-1) and (51) below), *lê(we)s* seems to convey sorrow arising especially from distressing and physically painful events. In particular, *leider* is mostly associated with regret over wrongful behaviour, namely the violation of God’s precepts (in 4 out of the 5 occurrences of *leider* in the *Evangelienbuch*), whereas *lê(we)s* appears alongside words such as ‘bitter/bitterness, dead/death, painful/pain/woe, tribulation, misfortune, to endure, to strike, to weep/to mourn’ and expresses pain and regret arising from witnessing or experiencing a hurtful event (in 11 out of the 15 instances found in the *Evangelienbuch*). In two attestations, however, the words ‘sins’ and ‘sinful’ do appear in the linguistic context around *lê(we)s*.[37] Although no strict binary distinction can be drawn between these interpretative categories (i.e., *leider* expressing regret over sinfulness vs. *lê(we)s* conveying sorrow over other kinds of suffering), certain tendencies can nonetheless be identified, at least in Otfrid’s *Evangelienbuch*: it seems likely that Otfrid consciously reserved *leider* for contexts involving sin and the transgression of God’s commandments, while using *lê(we)s* to express lament over other forms of suffering, especially physical pain or sorrow caused by the sight or experience of some painful events.

In Notker III’s translation of *De consolatione philosophiae*, which dates to the Late OHG period, *lê(we)s* is used to translate the Latin interjections *oh* and *heu* (PDG ‘ach! o weh!’). In his translation of the *Psalms*, *lê(we)s* is freely inserted, as illustrated in (49):

(49)

Latin: Propter quid irritauit impius deum?
OHG: Ziû **lêuues** crámda got der ubelo? (ReA: Psalter)
‘Oh! Why did the Evil anger God?’

In the ReM, *lê(we)s* appears once in a Late OHG/Early MHG version of Notker III’s translation of the *Psalms* preserved in an Early MHG manuscript (the so-called *Wiener Notker*, dated to the end of the eleventh century), and once each in Frau Ava’s *Leben Jesu* and the *Wiener Physiologus* (Early MHG, twelfth century). Interestingly, in the *Millstätter Physiologus*, which is a later adaptation of the *Wiener Physiologus* (cf. Maurer 1964, 169; Zapf 2011, 561; Stricker 2013, 366), *lê(we)s* is replaced by *leider*. This replacement might suggest that *lê(we)s* and *leider* were perceived as equivalent or closely related, or at least that *leider* was regarded as the more appropriate expression for the replacement. Moreover, this supports the hypothesis that *leider* expanded its range of usage.

(Bi) dia meina and its variants *dem meinom*, *io meinu*, *den meinom*, *in dia meina* occur 14 times in the ReA (version 1.0), exclusively in the *Evangelienbuch*, where it appears to have a partly evaluative (‘unfortunately’) and partly modal function (‘truly, verily’):

37 I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

(50) (ReA: EB 1.20)

Ira	férah	bot	thaz	wíb,	thaz	iz	múasi	haben	líb;	ni
of.her	life	offered	the	woman	that	it	can	have	life	not

funtun	**thía meina**	ginâda	niheina.
found	*dia meina*	mercy	not any

‘The woman offered her own life to save that of her child. Alas!/Sadly, they had no mercy on her.’

The second observation comes from the *Ludwigslied*. Although the *Ludwiglied* is clearly a Christian text, it is also a poem celebrating King Louis III’s victory over the Northmen. In this work, *leider* appears exactly in the passage that links the sinfulness of the Frankish people to God’s punishment:

(51) (ReA: Ludwigslied)

[…]	Thiot	Urancono	Manon	sundiono	[…]	Uuas	erbolgan	krist
	folk	of.Franks	remind	of.sins		was	got angry	Christ
	Leidhor,	thes	ingald	iz.				
	leider	of.it	paid	it				

‘[…] to remind the Franks of their sins […]. Christ raged. Alas! They atoned for it.’

This example provides further evidence for the view that, at this stage, the use of *leider* is still contextually restricted to the expression of sorrow over reprehensible actions in Christian perspective.

If we assume a developmental path from a parenthetical, no further semantic change would need to be postulated for *leider*. In this case, we would have to assume that the speaker-oriented (subjective) component of the meaning of *leider* was already present in its parenthetical use. However, if the hypothesis of a syntactic development from a manner adverb is adopted, an additional semantic change must be posited to account for the shift from a manner adverbial to a sentence adverbial interpretation. This further semantic development may be defined as a metonymic shift from the lexical subdomain [EXTERNAL ACTION] to the subdomain [INTERNAL PERCEPTION] within the conceptual domain of [SHAMEFUL/UNFORTUNATE SITUATION/BEHAVIOUR].[38] In other words, *leider* shifted from describing an external quality of an action or behaviour (i.e., how the action was performed) to conveying the speaker’s internal perception of the action itself. I propose that this conceptual shift represents a case of subjectification in the sense proposed by Traugott: “[m]eanings

38 For metonymic shift in particular, see Croft 2002, 178; Traugott, Dasher 2002, 27-34; Hopper, Traugott 2003, 87-93; Campbell 2013, 225-6; Koch 2016, 38-46.

tend to become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition" (1989, 35).[39] This is also consistent with Visconti's definition of subjectification: "an item undergoing subjectification will tend to shift from being an element participating compositionally to the building of the proposition, thus operandum (or part thereof), to an operator, binding an individual to an evaluation" (2013, 16). At this stage, *leider* developed its speaker-oriented component.

4.5 Interim Conclusions: A Separate Developmental Path for Evaluative Adverbs?

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the morphosyntactic and semantic development of *leider*. The findings suggest that the emergence of *leider* as a sentence adverb can be traced back to the earliest stages of German.[40] It seems plausible that a separate lexical entry for the sentence adverb already existed in the (Early) MHG period. No evidence of a use of *leider* as the comparative form of the OHG adverb *leido* was found in the examined corpora. The study identified two possible developmental pathways:

- Development from a manner adverb: In this scenario, *leider* developed into a sentence adverb in contexts within the middle field characterised by syntactic and interpretative ambiguity, where both a manner and a sentential reading were available at the surface level. In such contexts, *leider* was reanalysed and subsequently recategorised as a sentence adverb. This led to the emergence of a distinct lexical entry for the sentence adverb. Semantically, *leider* first underwent a process of semantic extension via the lexicalisation of a conversational implicature: while still functioning as a manner adverb, it developed a more abstract, secondary meaning associated with the expression of regret (in addition to meanings related to something repugnant, disgraceful, or detestable). Later, it underwent a process of metonymic shift, through which it developed a speaker-oriented component. In this account, syntactic reanalysis and metonymic shift are understood as simultaneous and interrelated processes. The frequent occurrence of *leider* in utterance-initial position

39 See also Traugott 1995; 2010 for additional insights on this topic.

40 As an anonymous reviewer rightly points out, it should be noted that the OHG translation of the Latin text *De fide catholica contra Iudaeos*, originally written by Isidore of Seville and translated into German around the year 800 (cf. Krotz 2013), does not feature *leider*, despite being one of the earliest texts in OHG and dealing with religious and moral themes.

in V3 configurations during the twelfth century cannot be fully accounted for within this scenario.

- Development from a parenthetical: According to this alternative pathway, *leider* developed into a sentence adverb through the syntactic integration of a parenthetical construction in contexts of syntactic and interpretative ambiguity in the middle field. The attestations of *leider* in V3 word orders are regarded as instances of its original parenthetical use. A process of semantic extension is also postulated. This analysis offers a more satisfactory explanation for the presence of *leider* in V3 configurations. However, it does not account for the emergence of the speaker-oriented component of *leider*. Moreover, it remains unclear what the exact configuration of the parenthetical structure was and whether *leider* represents a reduction from a broader and more complex construction.

Both analyses summarised here share a common element: they posit a reanalysis of *leider* in the middle field due to syntactic and interpretative ambiguity, providing further empirical support for the account proposed by Axel-Tober et. al (2025). While the first developmental path better integrates the syntactic account with the lexical-semantic evolution and the etymological origin of *leider*, the second pathway offers a stronger explanation for the occurrence of *leider* in positions outside the middle field.

Building on the studies of *-erweise* formations presented above in § 3 and considering the case of *leider*, the paper will discuss here whether a specific developmental path can be identified for the class of evaluative sentence adverbs in German. On the semantic level, the process of subjectification, which was hypothesised for *leider* in the previous section (assuming a reanalysis from a manner adverb), does not exclusively characterise the development of *leider* or that of the evaluative subgroup. A general tendency towards subjectification can indeed be observed across all subgroups of sentence adverbs (see Swan 1988, 159-62; Ramat, Ricca 1998, 243-4; Axel-Tober, Müller 2017, 39-41 for evidential adverbs). Ramat and Ricca (1998, 243) note that "[t]he semantic development [of sentence adverbs] usually goes from the world being talked about to the views on that world uttered by the speaker in her/his act of speaking". However, for evaluative sentence adverbs that developed from manner adverbs, I suggest that a specific mechanism underlies the process of subjectification. This mechanism consists of a metonymic shift from the subdomain [EXTERNAL ACTION] to the subdomain [INTERNAL PERCEPTION] within the domain of [Adj. EVENT/SITUATION], where *Adj*. stands, for example, for *dumm* 'stupid' in *dummerweise* 'stupidly' or *bedauerlich* 'regrettable' in *bedauerlicherweise* 'regrettably'. Through this specific metonymic shift from an action-related to a speaker-oriented meaning, evaluative adverbs developed the subjective component that characterises their meaning. From a syntactic and functional perspective, evaluative adverbs do not appear to have undergone a developmental process that is different or unique compared to that of other subtypes examined by Axel-Tober (2016), Axel-Tober and Müller (2017), and Axel-Tober et al. (2025). Instead, it can be assumed that evaluative adverbs were subject to the same processes of upward reanalysis and syntactic integration observed for other subclasses of sentence adverbs. For the diachronic syntactic development of the *-erweise* formations, I assume a mechanism of upward reanalysis similar to that described for *leider* in § 4.3.1.

In summary, no unique syntactic process appears to characterise the development of evaluative adverbs. Instead, they seem to follow the same mechanisms of syntactic change affecting other categories of sentence adverbs. Semantically, however, a distinct pattern does emerge (at least for evaluative adverbs originating from manner adverbs), as the specific mechanism of semantic change they exhibit, namely metonymic shift, is not shared by other types of sentence adverbs.

5 Conclusions

This contribution has presented a diachronic, corpus-based study of the development of *leider* from its earliest attestations in OHG through MHG. Two developmental pathways can be hypothesised: one from a manner adverb and one from a parenthetical. Regardless of which specific analysis one adopts, the case of *leider* highlights surface ambiguity in the middle field as a central factor in its development. This provides further empirical support for the account put forward by Axel-Tober et al. (2025). Furthermore, it shows that the unique morphological origin of *leider* does not set it apart from other sentence adverbs in terms of diachronic development.

The paper has also aimed to offer insights into the interaction between syntactic reanalysis and semantic change in the development of evaluative sentence adverbs. Building on existing observations in the literature on *-erweise* formations and the analysis provided by Axel-Tober et al. (2025), as well as in light of the study of *leider*, the diachronic development of evaluative adverbs in German can be situated within broader developmental pathways shared across adverbial subtypes. What distinguishes evaluative sentence adverbs from other sentence adverbs is their distinctive process of subjectification through metonymic shift.

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The Interplay Between Iconicity and Arbitrariness in Italian Sign Language (LIS) Idioms: A Theoretical Proposal for the Analysis of Signed Idioms

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Abstract This paper investigates the relationship between iconicity and arbitrariness in the comprehension of idioms in Italian Sign Language (LIS). Unlike spoken language research on this topic, this study includes monomorphemic signs, offering a broader perspective on the phenomenon. The research explores how LIS idioms convey meaning through the visual-manual modality: the central proposal is that iconic features aid in the literal interpretation of signs, whereas arbitrary features facilitate the comprehension of idiomatic or figurative meanings – emphasizing the inherently simultaneous and visual-spatial nature of sign language expression.

Keywords Idioms. Idiomatic expressions. Italian Sign Language (LIS). Iconicity. Arbitrariness.

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1 Introduction

Idioms, or idiomatic expressions (i.e.), are linguistic elements that have generated considerable interest within the scientific community.[1] While extensive research has been developed in the understanding of i.e. in spoken languages, the domain of sign languages has not been deeply explored yet. Only a few studies have been conducted on the topic in some sign languages (for British Sign Language, Sutton-Spence, Woll 1999; for American Sign Language, Wilcox 2001; Taub 2001; for Australian Sign Language, Johnston, Schembri 2010; Johnston, Ferrara 2012; for French Sign Language, Pierrot 2020).

Generally speaking, i.e. appear to be extremely complex to describe in all languages (Čermák 2001), and their definition is still a matter of debate, regardless of their spoken or signed nature. Among various reasons, this is due to their inherently complex and multidimensional nature. Traditionally, i.e. have been described as semantically non-compositional expressions. However, some scholars pointed out a gradient of transparency (Nunberg et al. 1994), which can be related to the *Pattern of Figuration* proposed by Langlotz (2006). Further complicating the picture is their syntactic behavior: idioms were once thought to be fixed and frozen, but numerous examples show they can undergo some syntactic transformations while retaining their idiomatic meaning (Fernando, Flavell 1981). This (semi)flexibility poses challenges for formal syntactic theories to account for such variability. Additionally, the analysis of sign languages may suggest reconsidering the definition and the parameters of i.e., broadening the research and the concept of idiom, since signed idioms appear to differ in some respect form spoken i.e.

In particular, this article aims to enhance the ongoing discourse by investigating the nature and the interplay of iconicity and arbitrariness in signed idioms, with a specific attention to LIS. Nonetheless, this contribution is intended to extend the current understanding and stimulate additional research in this field and topic.

At first, reconstructing the descriptive definition of idioms is necessary. However, it is important to change standpoint and avoid a purely word-centered perspective.[2] When studying idioms in sign languages, such as LIS, some distinctions emerge from the observations made in spoken languages.

1 Burger et al. 1982; Cacciari 1989; Nunberg et al. 1994; Casadei 1994; 1995; 1996; Moon 1998; Langlotz 2006.

2 In other terms, when studying sign languages, it is important not to always compare them to spoken languages. Also, the focus should not be the word, cf. the wordhood concept (Zingler 2020). See also Volterra et al. 2019 for a further comparison of the structures of spoken and sign languages.

Traditionally, for example, one distinctive feature is the number of elements in an i.e., which is connected to the concept of non-compositionality.[3] In this article, I will present the possibility of idioms to display this feature in a different way, since it is easy to find monorematic idioms in LIS (meaning only one sign is produced). Unlike their counterparts in spoken languages, signed i.e. can present an internal non-compositionality referred to the parameters. This concept will be further explained in the forthcoming sections.

Understanding the broader context of i.e. involves recognizing the defining parameters and the concept of *Pattern of Figuration* (Langlotz 2006). These parameters, presented in §2, collectively shape the idiomatic nature in a simultaneous and synthetic manner, referring to sign languages.

Significantly, in these languages, idioms may be composed of a variable number of signs, challenging the conventional notion of idioms as polirematic expressions seen in spoken languages.

Upon delineating all the parameters and exploring the definitional aspects of these elements in LIS, this contribution will discuss the role of iconicity and arbitrariness in the formation and comprehension of i.e. in this language. Finally, it will be considered the relation between level of interpretation of idioms and their manual-visual nature.

2 The Definition of Idioms

Traditionally, in spoken languages, i.e. are described as semantically opaque and structurally fixed polysemous units (Squillante 2014; Langlotz 2006). Specifically, the defining parameters of i.e. are illustrated in Table 1, whose structure is based on the subdivision proposed by Langlotz (2006, 3) and expanded by combining the theories of the aforementioned studies.

Table 1 Parameters for a definition of idiom

Semiotic dimension	Feature	Term
Grammatical status	Degree of conventionalization or familiarity	*institutionalization*
Form	Formal complexity of construction	*compositeness*
	Degree of invariability	*frozenness*
Use	Recognition and use in a community	*conventionality*
Meaning	Meaning cannot be derived from constituent words; it is extended to a figurative interpretation	*non-compositionality*

3 This concept will be explained in §2.

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In previous studies, it was observed and suggested that idioms and i.e. are informal and typically used in colloquial settings (Schweigert, Moates 1988; Nunberg et al. 1994). However, several pieces of evidence suggest their widespread presence even in formal or official settings and registers, such as political speeches and academic writing (Squarcione 1995; Simpson, Mendis 2003; Miller 2020). It is crucial to note the diverse nature of i.e., spanning the whole spectrum of (in)formality. Hence, it is important not to generalize and categorize the idiomatic class as solely informal.

Another noteworthy characteristic, which is not further analyzed in this contribution, is the so-called affect, signifying the emotional or evaluative undertones conveyed by an idiom towards its referents (Nunberg et al. 1994, 249). Determining and standardizing this parameter pose challenges, as acknowledged by the authors themselves.

2.1 Properties of Idioms

As mentioned above, there is a set of parameters that can indicate the idiomatic nature of an expression or element.

The characteristics outlined in Table 1 are further presented.

Institutionalization indicates the degree of familiarization and formalization of an idiom within a given linguistic community (Fernando 1996). Langlotz (2006, 3) considers this feature as the grammatical status: the expression is institutionalized because it is part of the grammar of a language as a single complex unit, rather than a set of independent words. In other terms, since idioms are institutionalized expressions, their meaning is fixed in the lexicon of a given language. The sociolinguistic concept of institutionalization is strictly linked to the linguistic concept of lexicalization, since the grammatical behavior of an e.i. becomes idiosyncratic (99).

Compositeness refers to the polirematic nature of i.e., consisting of at least two lexical elements, if we focus only on spoken languages.[4] For instance, ‘bite the bullet’ consists of the verb ‘bite’, the definite article ‘the’ and the noun ‘bullet’.

The notion of compositeness is closely related to the concept of *frozenness*, or fixity, introduced by Fraser (1970), which defines the lexicogrammatical restrictions of i.e. For this reason, they are both classified under the semiotic dimension of form. In particular, referring to the degree of frozenness, an idiomatic production cannot be modified. Casadei (1995) defines four types of fixity: *i)* fixity in

4 In §3 I will present the possibility of sign language idioms to be a one-sign expression, in contrast to the notion of idioms as multi-word expressions (MWEs).

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the order of constituents; *ii)* transformational fixity for a certain structure; *iii)* fixity of grammatical categories; *iv)* fixity in the inventory of components.[5] Since types *i)* and *iii)* appear controversial and have been largely discussed by Langlotz (2006) in his second chapter, they will not be further presented in this article.

On the other hand, an example for *ii)* is provided below:

(1)	To kick the bucket	
a.	*the bucket has been kicked by *NP*	(English, adapted from Langlotz 2006, 28)
b.	*the bucket, *NP* kicked	(English, adapted from Langlotz 2006, 31)

The syntactic structure of an i.e., like the English idiom in (1), cannot change, as in (1a) where it is passivized or in (1b) where the NP 'the bucket' has been moved in a marked position. These operations result in the loss of the idiomatic meaning associated with the given expression.

In the case of *iv)*, the same phenomenon occurs, wherein an internal lexical element is not susceptible to substitution with an alternative or different term, as exemplified in the following from Inzerillo (2011, 40) for Italian:

(2)	avere	la coda	di paglia
	to have	the tail	of straw
	'to have a guilty conscience'		
a.	**avere*	la coda	di fieno
	to have	the tail	of hay'

In (2) the idiom is presented in its institutionalized and frozen form, whereas in (2a) the term *paglia* has been replaced by *fieno*. The substitution of a word with another term results in the loss of the idiomatic-figurative meaning and the expression can only be interpreted as literal.

Another property of i.e. is *conventionality*, which is related to institutionalization and indicates the association between the particular configuration or order of words and a specific idiomatic meaning (Titone, Connine 1999). In other words, speakers or signers of a certain language recognize idioms as typical expressions, even though idioms contrast with ordinary speech or signing. Hence, a linguistic community recognizes and collectively agrees upon the idiomatic meaning while, at the same time, can interpret each element in isolation with a different meaning, the literal one (Casadei 1995).

5 As translated in Marabini and Mezzina (2020) from the Italian.

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Non-compositionality denotes the impossibility of deriving the meaning of the entire expression through the simple understanding of its individual constituents (Katz, Postal 1963). Hence, idioms violate the Principle of Semantic Compositionality, also known as Frege's Principle.[6] Traditionally, this feature has been the primary property to identify or define an idiom. For example, the English idiom in (1) 'to kick the bucket' does not mean to physically hit a pail but has an idiomatic-figurative reading as the concept of dying.

Related to this feature, the connection established between the overall meaning of an idiomatic construction and the set of meanings of its constituents is defined as Pattern of Figuration (Langlotz 2006, 4). This principle is presented in §2.2.

In general, therefore, the defining parameters presented in Table 1 and discussed above can be applied to any element to analyze its idiomatic nature. However, studying such forms can be challenging as the defining parameters lack clear boundaries (Langlotz 2006, 5), making the classification and the definition of idioms complex to determine (Barkema 1996; Skandera 2004).

2.2 Pattern of Figuration

Since idioms are institutionalized expressions, their idiomatic meaning is fixed in the lexicon of a given language (Burger 1989; Langlotz 2006). Considering the non-compositionality feature, an idiom has an idiomatic-figurative reading and a literal one:

Table 2 Pattern of Figuration scheme

Compositional interpretation (the sum of the meaning of each component)	*Pattern of figuration* ↔	**Non-compositional interpretation** (the specific lexicalized mewaning of the expression)
Literal meaning		Idiomatic-figurative meaning

Each idiom can be approached with a dual interpretation: one that interprets the idiomatic meaning, and another dedicated to the literal sense of the elements composing it. For example, the idiom 'to break the ice' has a dual reading: primarily, this idiom should evoke an idiomatic-figurative interpretation (as to ease the tension), but it can also be read as the literal act of shattering a block of ice.

6 "The meaning of a sentence is determined by the meaning of its components and the manner in which they are arranged in syntactic structure" (O'Grady et al. 1997, 260).

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Studies suggest that processing idioms is not uniform across all users and for all kinds of expressions, in any language (Ding 2020). There seems to be a correlation between the level of linguistic proficiency and the activation of one interpretation over the other. A speaker's or signer's linguistic competence appears to influence the likelihood of the activation of the idiomatic-figurative interpretation.[7]

After defining the characteristic properties of i.e. in spoken languages in section 2, it becomes important to consider and analyze how idioms present themselves in languages that utilize a different channel from the acoustic-vocal one. The next part will focus on idioms in sign languages, presenting the differences between the two linguistic modalities. For example, the aspect of multi-word compositeness seems to be missing in some cases in languages that exploit the manual-visual channel. These languages, in fact, might also admit monorematic idioms.

3 Idioms in Sign Languages

The literature reviewed to understand and define the meaning of i.e., as discussed in the previous section, is mostly based on spoken languages.

Before presenting the concept of iconicity and arbitrariness in signed idioms, this article aims to discuss some issues about the definition and the properties of i.e. in sign languages. Primarily, for example, the compositeness feature seems not to appear obligatory in sign languages (Johnston, Schembri 2010; Johnston, Ferrara 2012; Pierrot 2020). Before delving into this topic, however, it is necessary to define how idioms are formed. I.e. can originate from tropes such as metaphors and metonymy (Gibbs 1994; Kövecses 2002). In cognitive linguistics, metaphors are considered fundamental mechanism for conceptualizing abstract experiences through more concrete domains (Lakoff, Johnson 1980), and this process is particularly evident in sign languages due to their visual-manual modality. Hence, in sign languages, metaphors are constructed depending on the visualization of the represented object, so that the form of signs varies according to lexical choices and the use of signing space (Amorini 2008, 118). These tropes are the core of several figurative expressions in both sign and spoken languages. The phenomenon has been widely known and observed since the 1990s, with the publication of the first LIS

7 There are several factors that can influence the understanding of an idiom, like sociolinguistic variables (age, gender, education), familiar vs unfamiliar expressions, real time vs retrospective processing (Ding 2020). These elements will not be further investigated though.

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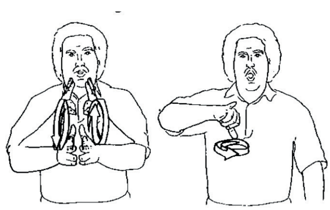
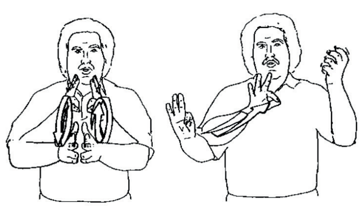
grammar by Romeo (1997), which provides a number of expressions identified as idiomatic, either typical of the Deaf culture or influenced by spoken Italian. Below are images taken from the aforementioned grammar. Examples (3) and (4) illustrate polirematic i.e. such as SEGNARE OLIO and SEGNARE VIOLINO, used respectively to refer to a person who signs particularly well and fluently, and to someone who, through their signing, seeks to persuade or flatter another person.



(3)

SEGNARE OLIO
(to) sign oil
'to sign fluently'



(4)

SEGNARE VIOLINO
(to) sign violin
'to persuade/to flatter'

(Romeo 1997, 38)

The example in (5) is a monorematic sign typical of LIS and widely used. CHIODO_IN_TESTA is a sign that refer to an event firmly fixed in one's memory, something that will never be forgotten. The metaphoric image evoked is that of 'nailing' a memory into the mind.

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(5)

CHIODO_IN_TESTA
nail on head
‘burned into one’s memory

(Romeo 1997, 38)

In addition, the manual-visual channel allows conveying a greater amount of information at the same time, thanks to the simultaneous combination of different formational parameters[8] (a.o. Klima, Bellugi 1979), as demonstrated in the example (5). Through the vocal-auditory channel, on the other hand, phonemes can only be pronounced sequentially, one after the other.

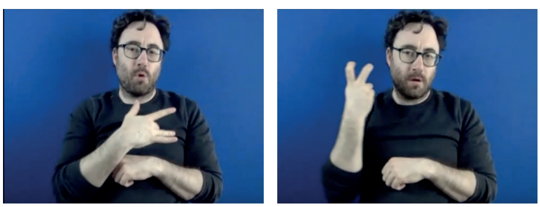
As previously mentioned, traditionally the literature concerning i.e. (and more in general, phraseology) has focused, almost exclusively, on polirematic expressions. Only few scholars have shown interest in idiomatic compounds and monorematic idioms. Among them, Čhemák (2007), Johnston and Ferrara (2012), Vašku (2019), and Pierrot (2020) analyze the possibility of extending the definition of idioms to monorematic complex elements. In a similar vein, Quer et al. (2017) suggest that sign languages rarely have any fixed idiomatic expression consisting of multiple signs. In particular, Johnston and Ferrara (2012) propose that, in Australian Sign Language (Auslan), monorematic idiomatic signs exist and they analyze their properties. Pierrot’s hypothesis for French Sign Language (LSF), on the other hand, is that compositeness presents itself differently in signed languages: an idiomatic sign (like any lexical sign) is constituted by various formational parameters, which contribute simultaneously and, oftentimes, synthetically to the formation of the idiomatic meaning as a whole.

In other words, as we saw i.e. in spoken languages are composed of multiple words that, when taken together, have an idiomatic meaning

8 Parameters in sign languages are: handshape (the configuration of the hand during the production), place of articulation (where the sign is produced), orientation (the direction of the palm during the sign), movement (the action of the sign) and non-manual components (such as facial expressions and torso or head movements).

derived from interpreting the entire sentence as a whole; on the other hand, if read compositionally, these elements have an entirely different meaning. In sign languages, however, the parameters contribute to the formation of a specific idiomatic interpretation only when they appear in specific (institutionalized) distributions. Moreover, just like frozenness in spoken language's idiom, if a parameter is modified, it is likely to lose the idiomatic-figurative meaning.

Therefore, i.e. in sign languages can be formed by a variable number of signs, often even just one. Examples of multi-sign i.e. in LIS are CUORE NERO in (6), used to describe a cruel person, TESTA DURA, meaning stubborn, or MISURA FUORI, indicating something exaggerated and/or indescribable. As interesting as these expressions may be, when analyzing i.e. in LIS (generally, in all sign languages), monorematic idioms can be spotted, such as MANICA_LARGA, MANI_IN_TASCA, or ZERO_IN_FRONTE, proposed in the next sections. A characteristic of sign languages is the low number of multi-sign i.e. that are not actually calques from the spoken language used in the same territory (Johnston and Schembri 2010).



(6)

CUORE	NERO
heart	black
'cruel'	

(Rigo 2022, 91)

At this point, it is essential to reflect on the simultaneous nature of signed languages: these languages are characterized by the possibility to convey more information synchronously, unlike spoken languages, which are sequential (Vermeerbergen et al. 2007; Branchini, Mantovan 2022). As mentioned above, some studies (Čhemák 2007; Vašku 2019; Johnston, Ferrara 2012; Pierrot 2020; Rigo 2022; Pasin 2023) suggest that all articulators contribute synchronously to convey a more complex meaning, in a sort of simultaneous compositeness.

An example of this feature is represented by the sign CAPELLI_DRITTI in (7), another i.e. in LIS composed of a single sign, with a meaning similar to the English expression 'hair-raising', literally meaning 'my hair stands on end'. In this case, all the information is produced simultaneously, while it would be presented sequentially in a spoken language. In other words, in this specific example, the handshape indicates the hair, the movement represents the action of raising and standing, the place of articulation is clearly related to the body part where the hair is.

(7)

CAPELLI_DRITTI
hair raised
'having someone's hair raised on their head'

(Branchini, Mantovan 2022, 846)

Furthermore, in sign language idioms, the idiomatic feature could reside in the iconic meaning that formational parameters can recall: if analyzed compositionally, the literal meaning conveyed by these parameters may not result in the overall idiomatic reading of the sign. This complexity might be one of the reasons why i.e. in sign language literature are still understudied: this type of signs could be simultaneously analyzed from different perspectives, depending on the adopted approach (Johnston, Ferrara 2012), resulting in a complex field, always open to several analyses.

Regardless, there seems to be a connection between the iconicity that some parameters can acquire and the arbitrariness of the non-compositional meaning. Before exploring this concept, though, in the next section the types of signed i.e. will be presented, to better understand what kind of idioms are detectable in sign languages.

3.1 Types of i.e. in Sign Languages

The few studies carried out on sign language idioms have identified three main types of i.e. in these languages (Sutton-Spence, Woll 1999; Clauss 2010; Johnston, Schembri 2010; Pierrot 2020; Rigo 2022; Pasin 2023):

1. Calques from the surrounding spoken language: i.e. derived from the spoken language used in the same area as the sign

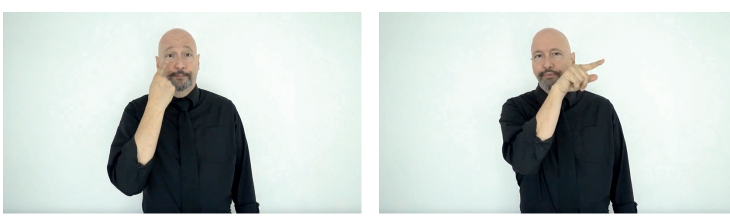
language. An example of this is the LIS i.e. LUPO IN_BOCCA in (8), which is a way to wish good luck;[9]

2. loan with cultural adaptation: i.e. derived from the spoken language but are modified and adapted to the Deaf culture and community; for example, the ASL idiom IN_ONE_EYE_OUT_THE_OTHER in (9), from the English expression '(go) in one ear and out the other';
3. typical of sign language: i.e. of a specific sign language, which are not detectable in the spoken language used in the same territory. For this category, an example is ZERO_IN_FRONTE in LIS (but also found in German Sign Language) idiom that means to not know a thing about something, in (10).

(8)

LUPO IN_BOCCA
wolf in mouth
'good luck'

(Rigo 2022, 92)



(9)

IN_ONE_EYE_OUT_THE_OTHER
go in one eye and out the other
'to go in one ear and out the other'

(ASL, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddXRp5XAhwQ, 2018)

9 In spoken Italian '*in bocca al lupo*', literally 'in the wolf's mouth', is an i.e. that means 'good luck!'.

(10)

ZERO_IN_FRONTE
zero on forehead
'to have no idea about something'

(DGS, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIO1FyGo9mI, 2016)

4 Iconicity and Arbitrariness in Sign Languages

All languages, spoken or signed, have examples of iconic and arbitrary forms. A symbol is considered arbitrary when there is no inherent or perceptible connection between its form and the concept, object or action it denotes (Valli et al. 2011, 5). In contrast, an iconic symbol reflects some aspects of the entity or action it symbolizes. In the realm of sign languages, the role of iconicity seems to become markedly significant in the formational processes of signs. Iconicity can reveal the derivative origin of a sign and the physical characteristics to which it refers in expressing a specific subject, action, or object. As demonstrated by numerous studies in phonology and lexicon,[10] often the formal features of signs can be iconically associated with precise semantic domains. Specifically, attention is drawn to the iconic traits of the formational parameters that comprise signs, particularly the chereme (minimal unit of the sign), which determines the iconic representation of the parameter. These are often selected to visually allude to a specific characteristic linked to the meaning of the sign, establishing shared traits among signs belonging to the same semantic field. For example, concepts related to cognitive activities are typically produced near the signer's head.

It is essential to note that sign languages may employ different formal properties to indicate the same referent. The intrinsic iconic characteristics of signs are influenced by linguistic and cultural elements (Klima, Bellugi 1979; Boyes-Braem 1981), making them

10 Russo 2004; Volterra 2004; Bertone 2011; Lerose 2012; Volterra et al. 2019; Branchini, Mantovan 2022.

also arbitrary. In other words, although iconic representations are widespread in the lexicon of sign languages, some studies (see Pietrandrea 2002 for LIS) argue that arbitrariness remains a fundamental feature of sign formation. One key argument in support of this view concerns the phonological status of iconic elements: the iconic aspcets of a sign must conform to the phonological rules of the language and can only be realized through the phonological parameters permitted by that system. Furthermore, the articulatory features of a sign that are considered linguistically salient are selected arbitrarily, regardless of any potential iconic motivation. Consequently, understanding the manual form of a sign is generally insufficient as a cue to its interpretation, posing challenges for individuals learning a sign language as a second language, particularly in interpreting the meaning of a sign. Conversely, proficient signers of different sign languages often find better mutual understanding compared to speakers of different spoken languages (Corazza, Volterra 1988).

This role of iconicity in sign languages extends to figurative expressions, which are conveyed through a different channel from the acoustic-vocal, making them intriguing subjects for research. Before delving into the role of iconicity in idioms, it is useful to define iconicity in sign languages. Russo (2004, 18) characterizes it as the "depictive power of words concerning the things signified", where the depictive trait corresponds to the alignment between the form and the meaning of the sign.

The formational parameters of a sign, as previously presented, may be linked to visual metaphors that collectively invoke identifiable (and iconic) features of one or more characteristics linked to the meaning. However, again, the transparency of a sign depends on linguistic and cultural factors as well. There is no universal iconicity; in other words, access to the meaning of a sign and the culturally determined criteria for selecting its iconic aspects might help to better understand a language, but only that specific language. The selected parameters can assume different iconic meanings based on the culture and linguistic conventions within the language itself (Russo 2004).

The theory presented above demonstrates how in sign language using visually iconic elements is natural. These elements can be tied to the iconic or partial iconic traits of the meaning. Studies on this subject are hereby crucial, not only for revealing the pervasive presence of visual metaphor and iconicity in sign languages, but also for comprehending the underlying process of idiom creation. This understanding allows for the recognition and comprehension of the semantic (and pragmatic) core of idioms.

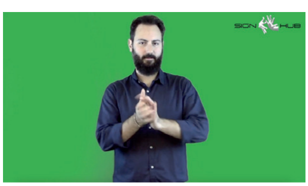
So, to summarize, the general key concept is that in the manual-visual channel it is possible to map abstract concepts into concrete ones (Calderone in Branchini, Mantovan 2022, 841). In sign creation, the selection of parameters and features is not universal, and each sign language can convey a concept differently (Pietrandrea 2002). The crucial aspect is the relationship established between the standardized form and meaning (Valli, Lucas 1998).

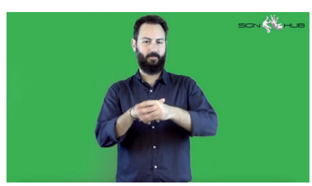
Iconicity in sign languages can refer to the frequent possibility of recognizing the elements that signs represent. The hypothesis is that iconicity could be significant in the creation and in the literal interpretation of idiomatic signs as well: the relationship between what is being presented and the sign can, therefore, be clearer through the visual transmission of meanings (Pierrot 2020 for LSF), as seen in MANICA_LARGA in (11) and LAVARSI_MANI in (12).

(11)

MANICA_LARGA
sleeve wide
'to be generous/indulgent'

(Romeo 1997, 38)





(12)

LAVARSI_MANI
wash hands
'to wash one's hands of'

(Branchini, Mantovan 2022, 282)

Regarding arbitrariness, different sign languages arbitrarily select certain distinctive traits. However, there are also intrinsic cultural aspects specific to each language in the selection and creation of idioms, components that are entirely arbitrary (Pierrot 2020), as in MANI_IN_TASCA (13).

While the parameters forming an idiom in LIS might be easily comprehended in a compositional reading, as seen for (11) and (12), the interpretation might not result in the overall idiomatic meaning of the sign, especially for those unfamiliar with LIS linguistic and cultural conventions.

(13)

MANI_IN_TASCA
hands in pockets
'to shut up/to stop signing'

(Rigo 2022, 92)

To conclude, with regard to Langlotz's Pattern of Figuration, iconic traits appear to help in the interpretation of the literal meaning, facilitating the compositional reading of the idiom. Meanwhile, arbitrary traits may come into play in interpreting the idiomatic-figurative meaning, fostering the non-compositional reading. In any case, both can contribute to the formation and understanding of idioms; the transfer of meanings occurs through the selection of iconic elements, while the total meaning of the idiom is conventional (and institutionalized).

5 Conclusion

As presented in this brief article, although sign languages can feature monorematic i.e., the idiomatic-figurative comprehension of these in LIS cannot derive from the individual elements that compose them. The creation and understanding of idiomatic signs depend on both iconic and arbitrary aspects.

The traditional understanding of idioms in spoken languages, marked by a dual interpretation (literal vs idiomatic-figurative) and polirematicity, becomes complex when applied to sign languages. Unique features of sign languages, such as their simultaneous nature, challenges the conventional view of idioms as polirematic expressions found in spoken languages.

This article also addressed the role of iconicity and arbitrariness in sign languages, emphasizing the significance of visual metaphors in conveying idiomatic meanings.

The compositional reading seems to be linked to the iconic and visual nature of signs. The literal meaning is more easily interpretable thanks to the visual metaphors underlying the formational parameters (Boyes-Braem 1981; Volterra et al. 2019). Although there may be an iconic motivation at the origin, the selection of certain formational parameters is the result of negotiations within the community, namely arbitrary choices. For this reason, knowledge of linguistic and cultural aspects allows for non-compositional reading, which requires a specific understanding of the Deaf culture in a given territory.

The lack of in-depth studies on idioms in sign languages makes research complicated and raises numerous unanswered questions and issues. For this reason, it is interesting to better understand these elements and expand the analysis further.

This preliminary study tries to delineate the complexities of i.e., particularly within the context of sign languages, with a specific focus on LIS. The study of idioms in sign languages is still an underestimated area, and this contribution sought to improve the discussion by exploring the interplay of iconicity and arbitrariness in signed idioms.

Moreover, this theoretical study encourages further research in this field, recognizing the need for continued investigation into the linguistic and cultural richness of idioms in LIS.

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What Makes an Agent an Agent? Comparing the Semantic Properties of Instruments and Prototypical Agents in Subject Position

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Abstract This study investigates the defining properties of Agents and the interplay of syntax and semantics in semantic inferences, based on Dowty’s Proto-Role Hypothesis. Five properties from Dowty’s list were selected, and 39 Italian sentence pairs showing the Instrument-subject Alternation were created. 93 participants rated how much Agents, Instrument-subjects, Instrument-PPs and Patients exhibit each property. Results show that while some properties are sensitive to syntactic realization, others are linked to lexical semantics and world knowledge, supporting the view that semantic inferences arise from an interaction between syntax and semantics.

Keywords Proto-Role Hypothesis. Inferences. Thematic roles. Semantics-syntax interface. Proto-Agent. Proto-Patient. Instruments.

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1 Introduction

This study investigates how Italian speakers make inferences about thematic roles, drawing on Dowty's (1991) Proto-Role Hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, there are two fundamental proto-roles – Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient – each defined by a set of core semantic properties. Traditional thematic roles can be understood as varying degrees of similarity to these proto-roles. Moreover, the hypothesis predicts that the greater the presence of Proto-Agent properties in a role, the more likely it is to function as the subject of a sentence; conversely, roles exhibiting more Proto-Patient properties are more likely to appear as objects.

Previous psycholinguistic studies (Kako 2006; Reisinger et al. 2015) have demonstrated that semantic Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient properties are inferred by speakers from the syntactic roles of subject and object, as outlined by Dowty (1991), even in the absence of known words (i.e. with nonce words).

Building on these findings, our current research investigates the Instrument role in Italian. Instruments are known to exhibit the [+ cause] and [+ motion] Proto-Agent properties, while also being causally affected like Proto-Patients (Dowty 1991), thus occupying an intermediate position between the two. Furthermore, they can undergo the Instrument-Subject Alternation, i.e. they can appear as either prepositional phrases or subjects when the Agent is left unexpressed (e.g. *John opened the door with the key* / *The key opened the door*). For these reasons, Instrument roles are central to our investigation, as they allow us to disentangle the respective contributions of semantics and syntax in shaping speakers' semantic inferences. Our study addresses two main research questions: (RQ1) Are different properties attributed to Instruments when they occur as subjects, compared to subjects expressing prototypical Proto-Agents, assuming that semantic properties are inferred from syntactic roles? (RQ2) Does the Instrument role align more closely with the Proto-Agent or the Proto-Patient, depending on its syntactic realization (i.e. as a prepositional phrase versus as the subject of the sentence)?

Building on Kako (2006), we selected five properties from Dowty's (1991) inventory, namely VOLITIONAL INVOLVEMENT, SENTIENCE, CAUSES A CHANGE, UNDERGOES A CHANGE OF STATE, and INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE, and designed an online experiment using minimal pairs of sentences. In each pair, one sentence featured an Instrument realized as a prepositional phrase (e.g. *Il pescatore ha catturato il pesce con una rete* 'The fisherman caught the fish with a net'), while the other featured the same Instrument in subject position (e.g. *La rete ha catturato il pesce* 'The net caught the fish'). A sample of Italian speakers was then asked to rate the extent to which each participant exhibited each of the five target properties. The participant under evaluation included the prototypical Agent (in our example, *the fisherman*), the Instrument in subject position (*the net*), the Instrumental PP (*the net*), and the Patient (*the fish*), exhibited each of the five target properties. Our results indicate that Volition and Sentience are core characteristics of prototypical Agents, while Causality is also attributed to Instruments when they occur in subject position. Moreover, the findings underscore the interaction between semantic content and syntactic realization in shaping speakers' inferences about thematic roles.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 outlines the main tenets of Dowty's (1991) Proto-Role Hypothesis (2.1) and introduces the role of Instruments within this framework (2.2). Section 3 reviews psycholinguistic studies that have investigated the psychological validity of the Proto-Role Hypothesis. Section 4 presents our experimental study, beginning with the research questions (4.1) and concluding with a discussion of the results (Sections 4.4 and 4.5). Finally, Section 5 offers some general conclusions.

2 From Semantics to Syntax and Back: Proto-Roles and Argument Selection

2.1 Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient

Thematic roles, their number, nature, and how they map onto syntax, are central concerns in many linguistic theories. Over time, they have been conceived either as semantic primitives (e.g. Fillmore 1968; Chomsky 1981) or as relational concepts (e.g. Jackendoff 1990; Grimshaw 1990). Despite differences in how their nature is defined, traditional approaches generally conceptualize thematic roles as more or less fine-grained discrete categories with clear-cut boundaries. This perspective, however, faces a major challenge: if the inventory of roles is kept small and general, it becomes difficult to clearly distinguish one role from another. Conversely, adopting a more fine-grained, detailed list of highly specific roles undermines the ability to capture broader generalizations, an issue Dowty (1991) referred to as *role fragmentation*.

The Proto-Roles Hypothesis (PRH) (Dowty 1991) is precisely aimed at overcoming these shortcomings and marks a shift from traditional approaches to thematic roles. This hypothesis, indeed, postulates only two roles: Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient. The two are characterized as sets "of entailments of a group of predicates with respect to one of the arguments of each" (522). In other words, considering two-place predicates ($x\ V_1\ y$, $x\ V_2\ y$, etc., where $V_{1,2,\ldots,n}$ are transitive predicates, x occupies the subject position and y the object one), the relevant properties of the Proto-Agent role entailed by the predicates are those concerning the subjects of such predicates, whilst for the Proto-Patient are those concerning the objects. For example, regarding the Proto-Agent entailments,

> consider the subject argument of the two-place predicates *x murders y*, *x nominates y*, and *x interrogates y*: entailments they all share include that *x* does a volitional act, that *x* moreover intends this to be the kind of act named by the verb, that *x* causes some event to take place involving *v* (*y* dies, *y* acquires a nomination, *y* answers questions-or at least hears them), and that *x* moves or changes externally (i.e. not just mentally). (552)

Dowty (1991) proposes a set of entailments, or properties, that enable generalization from lexical entailments, i.e. entailments that apply to a specific predicate, to role entailments, which are properties broadly characterizing the Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient role types and that hold across classes of predicates.

Table 1 Properties of Proto-Agent and properties of Proto-Patient.

Properties of Proto-Agent		Properties of Proto-Patient	
a.	Volitional involvement in the event or state	a.	Undergoes change of state
b.	Sentience (and/or perception)	b.	Incremental theme
c.	Causing an event or change of state in another participant	c.	Causally affected by another participant
d.	Movement (relative to the position of another participant)	d.	Stationary relative to movement of another participant
(e.	Exists independently of the event named by the verb)	(e.	Does not exist independently of the event, or not at all)

Dowty (1991) also specifies that the two proto-roles should not be understood as discrete categories with clear-cut boundaries, but rather as cluster concepts or prototypes in the sense of Rosch (Rosch, Mervis 1975; Rosch 1978). Accordingly, membership in a given role type can vary in degree. That is, each subject or object NP may exhibit all, some, or none of the Proto-Agent or Proto-Patient properties. A subject NP that displays all the Proto-Agent properties (e.g. the subject of the predicate *to build*) corresponds to the role traditionally referred to as Agent. A subject NP that does not exhibit volitional involvement (e.g. in the case of the predicate *to fall*) would align with the traditional role of Patient, and so on. This approach eliminates the need to posit additional role types, as each traditional role can be defined in terms of the number and type of Proto-Agent or

Proto-Patient properties it exhibits – or, in other words, by its degree of similarity to either prototype.

Under PRH, the number of properties an argument shares with either of the proto-roles is also an influencing factor in its syntactic realization. In general, the presence of at least one Proto-Agent entailment, when Proto-Patient entailments are absent, tends to qualify an argument for subject status; conversely, the presence of Proto-Patient entailments supports object status. This is articulated by the *Argument Selection Principle*, which stipulates that

> In predicates with grammatical subject and object, the argument for which the predicate entails the greatest number of Proto-Agent properties will be lexicalized as the subject of the predicate; the argument having the greatest number of Proto-Patient entailments will be lexicalized as the direct object. (Dowty 1991, 576)

The proto-roles and the *Argument Selection Principle* give rise to the hierarchy of traditional thematic roles shown in (1), where the ranking reflects each role's likelihood of occurring in subject position (578).

(1) Agent > Instrument/Experiencer > Patient > Source/Goal

In such a hierarchy, the Instrument occupies an intermediate position between the traditional roles of Agent and Patient. This means that Instruments are more likely candidates for the subject position than prototypical Patients. This is particularly relevant, as the possibility of (certain kinds of) Instruments to occur as subjects is leveraged in this work.

2.2 The Instrument Role

The Instrument role has traditionally been defined in causal terms.[1] Specifically, it has been characterized as the "intermediary between agent and patient in a causal chain" (Goldberg 2002, 340). For example, in a breaking event (2), the boy causes the rock (Instrument) to come into contact with the window, and the rock, in turn, causes the window to become broken. These subevents are understood as

1 For instance, see Talmy 1976; Jackendoff 1990; Croft 1991; Goldberg 2002.

sequential and causally linked, forming a causal chain initiated by the (Proto-)Agent and that ends with the (Proto-)Patient.[2]

(2) The boy broke the glass with the rock

It has been observed that Instruments do not always play a causal role in the event denoted by the predicate and additional instrumental subroles that do not function as causal intermediaries have also been proposed.[3,4] Nonetheless, this work focuses exclusively on *intermediary* Instruments. Only these Instruments are indeed characterized by Dowty (1991), as having the Proto-Agent properties of CAUSATION (*Causing an event or change of state in another participant*) and MOVEMENT (*Movement relative to the position of another participant*), but not VOLITION (*Volitional involvement in the event or state*) nor SENTIENCE. They also have a Proto-Patient property, in that they are causally affected by another participant (i.e. the Agent).

Since they exhibit two Proto-Agent properties, CAUSATION and MOVEMENT, they occupy an intermediate position between Agents and Patients in the hierarchy in (1) above, which makes them more likely to appear in subject position than typical Patients. In particular, the CAUSATION property appears to be crucial, as only intermediary Instruments participate in the Instrument-Subject Alternation (ISA), the construction in which the constituent that semantically is the Instrument is realized as the subject of the verb, whilst the Agent is omitted, as in (3).[5]

(3) a. The boy broke the glass with the rock
b. The rock broke the glass

Unsurprisingly, this property of intermediary Instruments is attested across several languages (Van Hooste 2018), including Italian, which

2 Fillmore 1968; Schlesinger 1989; Jackendoff 1990; Croft 1991; Talmy 2000; Koenig et al. 2003; 2008.

3 Marantz 1984; Ono 1992; Schütze 1995; Schlesinger 1995; Koenig et al. 2003; 2008.

4 For instance, *the key* in *The boy enters the room with the key* is a necessary precondition for the boy to enter the room, but it does not itself cause the action; no causal chain is established. This type of Instrument is referred to as *enabling*. Similarly, *helping* Instruments – such as *the spoon* in *The boy eats the ice-cream with the spoon* – merely facilitate the event denoted by the verb. The act of eating could be carried out by the boy even in the absence of the spoon, making the Instrument a merely helping entity.

5 Enabling Instruments do not participate in the Instrument-Subject Alternation (*The boy enters the room with the key / * The key enters the room),* nor do helping ones (*The boy eats the ice-cream with the spoon / * The spoon eats the ice-cream*).

is the target language of the present study. An example of ISA in Italian is provided in (4), where Instruments are typically expressed as prepositional phrases (PPs) headed by the preposition *con* 'with' (4a), but may also appear as subjects when the Agent is omitted (4b).

(4) a. Il bambino ha rotto il vetro con la pietra
'The boy broke the glass with the rock'
b. La pietra ha rotto il vetro
'The rock broke the glass'

While the Proto-Agent causation property is a necessary condition for an Instrument to participate in the ISA, the absence of volition is a blocking factor for ISA with certain predicates. Consider the contrast between (5b) and (6b).

(5) a. Gianni ha assassinato Carlo con il veleno
'Gianni murdered Carlo with poison'
b. *Il veleno ha assassinato Carlo
'*Poison murdered Carlo'

(6) a. Gianni ha ucciso Carlo con il veleno
'Gianni killed Carlo with poison'
b. Il veleno ha ucciso Carlo
'Poison killed Carlo'

The predicate *assassinare* 'to murder' entails that its subject acts volitionally (5a), but the same does not hold for the predicate *uccidere* 'to kill' (6a); the fact that the Instrument does not share this Proto-Agent property prevents it from occurring as subject of the former (hence the ungrammaticality of (5b)), but not of the latter (6b).

3 Semantic Properties are Inferred from Syntactic Roles: Psycholinguistic Studies on PRH

Building on the extensive body of evidence showing that speakers – both adults and children – are able to "make inferences about the semantic properties of nouns solely based" (Kako 2006, 3) on their syntactic position,[6] and on Dowty's (1991) claim that subjects display more Proto-Agent properties whilst objects more Proto-Patient ones, Kako (2006, 6) designed a set of five experiments aimed at "assessing the psychological validity of Dowty's hypothesis". In other words, he expected that speakers would perceive subjects as being more similar

6 Cf. Johnson 1967; Clark, Begun, 1971; Gleitman et al. 1996; Fisher 1996, a.o.

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to Agents than to Patients, whereas the opposite pattern would hold for objects, relative to Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient properties.

To this end, he adapted Dowty's (1991) proto-role properties [tab. 1] into ten questions designed to be accessible to individuals without any formal linguistic training. The complete list of questions is reported in Table 2.

Table 2 Questions used by Kako (2006) in his experiment, implementing Dowty's (1991) Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient properties, and their shorthand label

Proto Role	Questions	Shorthand label
Proto-Agent	***How likely is it that the [subject]…***	
	… chose to be involved in [verbing]?	Chose
	… was aware of being involved in [verbing]?	Aware
	… caused a change in the [object]?	Caused change
	… caused the [object] to do something?	Caused do
	… moved?	Moved
	… existed before [verbing] took place?	Existed
Proto-Patient	How likely is it that the [patient]…	
	… was changed in some way as a result of [verbing]?	Changed
	… was created as a result of [verbing]?	Created
	… was stationary?	Stationary

In all of the experiments, participants were presented with a series of sentences and asked to rate how likely a given noun phrase (subject or object) was to have the properties listed in Table 2 on a 7-point Likert scale.

The structure of the sentences (stimuli) differs across the experiments. In Experiment 1, the stimuli contain actual English verbs, all transitive, whilst subjects and objects are nonce words. The aim is to ascertain that Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient properties are inferred from the subject/object syntactic position thanks to the entailments of the predicate. To determine whether the inferences are consistent across different classes of verbs, the semantics of verbs is systematically varied across the stimuli in Experiment 2. In Experiment 3, both predicates and subject-object pairs are nonce words, in order to eliminate entirely any semantic factor, and determine that speakers make inferences only based on syntactic positions. Experiment 5 is specifically designed to determine whether the inferences are made based on verbs or on subject/object syntactic positions. In Experiments 1 to 3, verbs were either transitive or non-existent: in the first case, transitivity could have helped the inferences about the object; in the second case, nonce words could have been interpreted as being transitive, again fostering the inferences about the object. Therefore, in Experiment 5 stimuli only contain actual English intransitive verbs used transitively. This way, the inferences about the properties of the object could only be based on the object syntactic position, without any additional cue coming from the verb. Finally, in Experiment 4, participants were asked to evaluate subject and object nouns on grammatically irrelevant properties such as, for instance, *How likely is it that the [subject] is bigger than a shoe/can be photographed/can make noise?*

The results are consistent across the experiments and overall confirm the psychological validity of Dowty's PRH. First, subjects are significantly perceived as more Agent-like than objects, whereas objects are significantly perceived as more Patient-like than subjects with respect Dowty's (1991) properties [tab. 2]. Crucially, grammatically irrelevant properties (Experiment 4) do not distinguish between subjects and objects. That is, they do not receive different ratings with respect to these properties. Second, the inferences speakers make about subjects and objects are based on their syntactic positions.

Kako's (2006) methodology has been used for a larger-scale study by Reisinger and colleagues (2015), who conducted two experiments. Experiment 1 conceptually replicated both the methodology and the findings of Kako (2006). In their second experiment, Reisinger and colleagues (2015) sought to determine if their initial results could be replicated on a larger scale using corpus data. They utilized data from PropBank (Palmer et al. 2005), which annotates predicate/argument structures in the English portion of the Penn Treebank (Marcus et al. 1993). Human annotators were presented with sentences, with predicates and arguments highlighted, and asked the same questions as in the first experiment. The results of this larger-scale experiment were overall consistent with both Kako's (2006) findings and their first experiment: Proto-Agent properties predicted subjecthood, and Proto-Patient properties predicted objecthood. The results reported by Reisinger and colleagues (2015) diverge from those of Kako (2006) only with respect to specific individual properties. We elaborate on this point in Section 4.2.

4 Exploring the Boundaries of Prototypes: Our Experiment

4.1 Aim of the Study and Research Questions

The works reviewed in the previous section, which consistently support the psychological validity of PRH, serve as the starting point for the present study. While these studies have shown that subjects are generally perceived as more Agent-like and objects as more Patient-like, and that semantic inferences regarding proto-roles are derived from syntactic position, no previous work has investigated the inferences made about a proto-role when its typical syntactic position is occupied by a non-prototypical element.

Specifically, given that semantic inferences are position-sensitive, this study aims to compare the inferences speakers draw when the subject position is filled by a prototypical Agent, i.e. one that exhibits all the Proto-Agent properties, with those they draw when the subject position is occupied by a non-prototypical Agent, i.e. one that exhibits only a subset of such properties.

The Instrument role is particularly well-suited for this investigation. As previously noted, it possesses two Proto-Agent properties (CAUSATION and MOVEMENT) yet lacks SENTIENCE and VOLITION. Moreover, although existing literature often emphasizes a strong conceptual link between the Instrument and Agent roles (e.g. Schlesinger 1989; DeLancey 1991; Rissman et al. 2015), the fact that Instruments also display one Proto-Patient property (BEING CAUSALLY AFFECTED) is frequently overlooked. Not only does the Instrument occupy an intermediate position between Agent and Patient in Dowty's (1991) hierarchy of traditional roles (see (1)), but it can also appear in two distinct syntactic positions, as either a prepositional phrase headed by *con* 'with' or a noun phrase being the subject of the sentence (via ISA).

These properties make the Instrument role an ideal test case for addressing our two research questions, which are:

RQ1: Are different properties attributed to Instruments occurring as subjects compared to subjects expressing prototypical Agents?

RQ2: Does the Instrument role align more closely with the Proto-Agent or the Proto-Patient, depending on its syntactic realization (PP *versus* subject DP)?

RQ1 specifically investigates the defining properties of the Agent role, aiming to explore the boundaries of this prototype. RQ1 and RQ2, taken together, shed light on the respective contributions of syntax and semantics to the inferences made by speakers. In particular, if Italian speakers attribute the same properties to both prototypical and non-prototypical Agents occurring in subject position (RQ1), this suggests that their semantic inferences are driven solely by syntactic structure. The same conclusion would follow if the properties attributed to Instruments realized as prepositional phrases (PPs) differ entirely from those attributed to Instruments realized as subjects (RQ2). Conversely, if a common set of properties characterizes only prototypical Agent subjects (RQ1), or both instrumental PPs and instrumental subject DPs (RQ2), this would indicate that semantic content also plays a role in shaping speakers' inferences.

4.2 Materials

To answer our research questions, we created an online questionnaire containing 39 minimal pairs of sentences. Each pair contains a sentence in which the Instrument is realized via a *con*-PP 'with-PP' (7a) and a sentence in which it is the subject DP, under ISA (7b). All sentences have an animate human subject, a transitive verb, and an inanimate object.

The syntactic structure of each minimal pair is given in (7).

(7) a. X ha V-to Y con Z
'X V-ed Y with Z'
b. Z ha V-to Y
'Z V-ed Y'

Following the approach by Kako (2006), our participants are asked to evaluate how much a constituent in the sentence exhibits each of the properties. Departing slightly from Kako's method, however, we instructed participants to provide their judgments using a continuous scale.

The verbs used in the sentences were selected from *Il Nuovo Vocabolario di Base della Lingua Italiana* (De Mauro 2016). This source was chosen to ensure that verbs are high-frequency in Italian, so that all participants would know their meaning. All verbs that do not allow an intermediary Instrument were discarded, as non-intermediary ones cannot undergo ISA. Some of the selected verbs are, for example, *abbattere* 'to cut down', *bloccare* 'to block', *rompere* 'to break', *travolgere* 'to run over something', *curare* 'to cure', *fondere* 'to melt', *accecare* 'to blind', *accendere* 'to turn on', *allagare* 'to flood', *ammaccare* 'to dent'.

Before conducting the actual experiment, all sentences of the type illustrated in (7b) were evaluated in a pilot study by 10 native Italian speakers with no background in linguistics. The aim of the pilot was to assess the acceptability and naturalness of these sentences in Italian. Participants rated each sentence using a 6-point pseudo-Likert scale, selecting from the following options: *completamente inaccettabile* 'totally unacceptable', *inacettabile* 'unacceptable', *leggermente inaccettabile* 'slightly unacceptable', *leggermente accettabile* 'slightly acceptable', *accettabile* 'acceptable', *completamente accettabile* 'completely acceptable'. Sentences that were not rated as acceptable by at least 60% of the participants were discarded. Three examples of minimal pairs that were maintained are reported in (8). The complete list of minimal pairs is provided in the Appendix.

(8) a. Il pescatore ha catturato il pesce con una rete
'The fisherman caught the fish with a net'

a'. La rete ha catturato il pesce
'The net caught the fish'

b. L'automobilista ha travolto il cartello con l'auto
'The driver ran over the sign with the car'

B'. L'auto ha travolto il cartello
'The car ran over the sign'

c. Il meccanico ha ammaccato l'auto con una chiave inglese
'The mechanic dented the car with a wrench'

C'. La chiave inglese ha ammaccato l'auto
'The wrench dented the car'

The minimal pairs like those illustrated in (8) were used to evaluate all the elements under investigation, i.e. the Agent-subject, the Patient, the prepositional-Instrument and the subject-Instrument. Our study indeed comprised two conditions: the Agent-Instrument condition and the Patient-Instrument condition. In the Agent-Instrument condition, in the first sentence, e.g. (8a), the Agent-subject constituent is underlined (i.e. *il pescatore* 'the fisherman)'. In the second sentence, e.g. (8a'), the underlined constituent is the Instrument-subject (i.e. *la rete* 'the net'). In this condition, participants were asked to evaluate the prototypical Agent-subject (underlined constituent) in the first sentence and the Instrument-subject (underlined constituent) in the second sentence, with respect to each of the five properties. In the Patient-Instrument condition, in the first sentence, e.g. (8a), the underlined constituent is the prepositional-Instrument (i.e. *con la rete* 'with the net'), whilst in the second, e.g. (8a'), the prototypical Patient is the underlined constituent (i.e. *il pesce* 'the fish'). In this condition, participants were asked to evaluate the prepositional-Instrument (underlined constituent) in the first sentence and the Patient (underlined constituent) in the second sentence, with respect to each of the five properties. Furthermore, to avoid making a task excessively long and/or demanding, we further divided the list of stimuli of each condition into two balanced lists, resulting in two lists for the Agent-Instrument condition, and two for the Patient-Instrument condition.

Let us now turn to the questions we asked the participants, which are adapted from Kako (2006) and based on Dowty's (1991) Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient properties. The questions, Kako's (2006) shorthand labels and the corresponding Dowty's (1991) properties are reported in Table 3.

Table 3 Questions used for our study, along with our shorthand labels (and the corresponding Kako's (2006) labels in parentheses), and their associated Dowty's (1991) properties

Question		Short-hand label	Property
1.	Quanto [parola target] ha scelto di essere coinvolta nell'evento di [verbo della frase]? 'How much [target word] chose to be involved in the event of [verb of the sentence]?'	Volition (Kako: CHOSE)	Volitional Involvement
2.	Quanto [parola target] è consapevole di star partecipando all'evento di [verbo della frase]? 'How much [target word] is aware of participating in the event of [verb of the sentence]?'	Sentience (Kako: AWARE)	Sentience
3.	Quanto [parola target] provoca un cambiamento in [paziente della frase]? 'How much [target word] provokes a change in [patient of the sentence]?'	Causes a Change (Kako: CAUSED CHANGE)	Caused A Change
4.	Quanto [parola target] viene cambiata dall'azione dell'evento di [verbo della frase]? 'How much [target word] is changed by the action of the event of [verb of the sentence]?'	Was changed (Kako: CHANGED)	Undergoes A Change Of State
5.	Quanto l'esistenza di [parola target] dipende dall'evento di verbo della frase? 'How much does the existence of [target word] depends on the event of verb of the sentence?'	Existed (Kako: EXISTED)	Independent Existence

The questions (1-3) target Proto-Agent properties, the fourth is based on the negation of a proto-Agent property, hence targeting a Proto-Patient one, the fifth addresses a property that can be applied to both Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient.

Following Kako (2006), we excluded the INCREMENTAL THEME property (cf. Table 1) because conceptually it would only apply to a subset of the verbs used in our experiment and would be relevant solely to the Agent-Instrument condition. Nevertheless, the concept of incremental theme is implicitly captured by the properties CAUSED A CHANGE and UNDERGOES A CHANGE OF STATE. Additionally, we omitted Dowty's (1991) property CAUSALLY AFFECTED as it is already encompassed by our fourth question (short-hand label: CHANGED). Since the question pertains to how much an entity is altered by another, the notion of being causally affected is inherent.

We merged Kako's (2006) properties Caused Do and Caused Change because, in the second condition of our experiment (Patient-Instrument condition), the property Caused Do would not apply independently (as a patient in a transitive sentence would not cause another entity to perform an action). However, the Caused Change property was useful for analysing the instrument role in subject position.

Furthermore, we removed the properties Moved, Stationary, and Created as our sentences always imply movement, and the Instrument could not have been created either before or as a result of the action described by the verb, given the causal nature of the sentences. We also revised the property Existence since Kako's (2006) version referred to the entity's existence prior to the action expressed by the verb. Our fifth question, instead, focuses on the entity's existence in relation to the verb of the sentence.

Finally, the third question (*Quanto la parola sottolineata provoca un cambiamento nel paziente della frase?* 'How much does the underlined word cause a change in the patient of the sentence?') was modified to *Quanto la parola sottolineata provoca un cambiamento nella frase?* 'How much does the underlined word cause a change in the sentence?' in the Patient-Instrument condition. Since in this context the Patient itself is the underlined word being analyzed, the question would have otherwise been nonsensical. For example, in the case of sentence (8f), the question would have been **Quanto l'auto provoca un cambiamento nell'auto?* '*How much does the car cause a change in the car?'. By having modified the question, the resulting one is the acceptable *Quanto l'auto provoca un cambiamento nella frase?* 'How much does the car cause a change in the sentence?'.

4.3 Participants and Procedure

Our experimental sample consisted of 93 native Italian-speaking participants (49 F, 44 M).

The experiment was conducted online, using Gorilla Experiment Builder[7] (Anwyl-Irvine et al. 2018) to create and host our experiment. Participants were recruited sharing the experiment link on social networks and with acquaintances. Participants had no time limit for completing the task and did not receive any compensation.

Before starting the experiment, each prospective participant read and accepted an informed consent, in compliance with the

7 https://www.gorilla.sc/.

regulation (EU) 2016/679. After having accepted the consent form, they completed a demographic questionnaire, where we collected information on their age, gender, education level, and first language.

Concerning gender, 53% of participants were female (no. = 49), and 47% were male (no. = 44).

The age ranges of participants is reported in Table 4, while Table 5 summarizes the educational background of the sample.

Table 4 Age ranges of participants (Participants' age was collected via a multiple-choice question, in which participants had to select the age range that applied to them)

Age Range			
18-25	26-50	More than 50	Total
16.13% (no. = 15)	30.11% (no. = 28)	53.76% (no. = 50)	100% (no. = 93)

Table 5 Educational background of participants (Data about participants' educational background were collected via a multiple-choice question, in which participants had to select the educational qualification that applied to them)

Educational Qualification					
Middle School Diploma	High School Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Master's /Old System Degree	Phd	Total
3.23% (no. = 3)	44% (no. = 41)	12% (no. = 11)	18.67% (no. = 17)	4% (no. = 4)	100% (no. = 93)

After completing the demographic questionnaire, participants were automatically directed from the online platform to one of the four experimental lists. 24 participants saw the first list of sentences for the Agent-Instrument condition, and 23 participants saw the second list of sentences for the same condition. For the Patient-Instrument condition, 22 participants saw the first list of sentences, while 25 participants saw the second list of sentences.

Each participant was presented with a minimal pair each time. They had to answer five questions [tab. 3] with respect to one constituent (e.g. Agent-subject) and the same five questions for the other constituent (e.g. Instrument-subject), for a total of 10 questions. Answers were provided by moving the slider placed under each question. If a participant believed that the underlined constituent did not exhibit the specified property at all, they were to move the slider towards *per nulla* 'not at all' (that correspond to 0). Conversely, if they thought that the syntagm fully embodied the given property, they were to move the slider towards *completamente* 'completely' (that corresponds to 100). They could place the slider at any point along the continuum between these two extremes. Figure 1 illustrates the layout of the questionnaire as viewed by participants.

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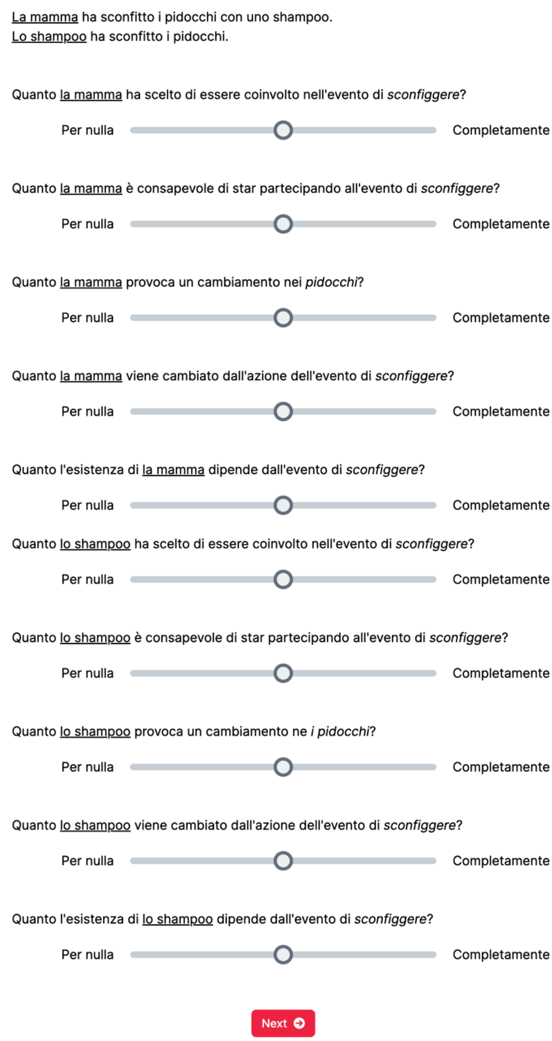

Figure 1 Screenshot of the layout of our questionnaire, as implemented on Gorilla Experiment Builder

The example sentences shown in Figure 1 are: (a) *La mamma ha sconfitto i pidocchi con uno shampoo* ‘The mother defeated the lice with a shampoo’ and (b) *Lo shampoo ha sconfitto i pidocchi* ‘The shampoo defeated the lice’. The questions that follow, each accompanied by a slider, pertain to the subjects of sentences (a) and (b), namely *la mamma* ‘the mother’ and *lo shampoo* ‘the shampoo’, respectively.

4.4 Results

Table 6 reports the ratings (mean ± SD) for each constituent under investigation (Agent-subject, Instrument-subject, prepositional-Instrument, and Patient) received with respect to each property [tab. 3] on a 1-100 scale.

Table 6 Mean (±SD) rating received by each constituent with respect to each property (on a 1-100 scale)

	Agent-subject	**Instrument-subject**	**Prepositional-Instrument**	**Patient**
Volition	80.96 (±15.72)	9.17 (±17.88)	10.43 (±19.73)	14.91 (±19.60)
Sentience	84.58 (±15.87)	8.66 (±16.75)	12.07 (±21.03)	20.78 (±19.28)
Causes A Change	84.97 (±9.52)	81.53 (±17.24)	67.44 (±29.05)	54.90 (±33.27)
Was Changed	35.77 (±21.25)	25.55 (±19.30)	30.15 (±21.45)	70.27 (±20.34)
Existed	42.92 (±22.59)	46.68 (±25.30)	48.85 (±26.21)	46.97 (±29.07)

Agent-subjects receive the highest ratings with respect to the proto-Agent properties (Volition, Sentience, and Causes A Change), while Patients receive the highest rating for the proto-Patient property, i.e. Was Changed.

The lowest ratings for Volition and Sentience are received by Instrument-subjects, which, on the other hand, receive the second highest ratings for the property Causes A Change. A similar pattern holds for prepositional-Instruments, which are perceived as being scarcely volitional and sentient, but receive a higher rating for the property Causes A Change. Agent-subjects, Instrument-subjects and prepositional-Instruments are similarly perceived as not being really changed by the action denoted by the verb. Patients receive low ratings for the proto-Agent properties Volition and Sentience, yet slightly higher than Instruments (both subjects and prepositional), but lower ratings for the property Causes a Change. All constituents receive similar ratings for the property Existed.

The collected data were analyzed using a linear mixed-effects model. All analyses were carried out using the *lme4* (Bates et al. 2015) and *emmeans* (Lenth 2023) packages in the R computing environment (R Core Team 2023). Constituent and property are treated as fixed effects, while items (i.e. minimal pairs of sentences) and participants are treated as random effects. In this analysis, whose model formula is reported below, the dependent variable (score) is modelled as a function of (denoted by "~"): (a) constituent and property (fixed effects), and their interaction (denoted by "*");

and (b) random intercepts/effects for both participant and pair (to account for repeated measures).

lmer(score ~ constituent * property + (1 | participant) + (1 | pair))

This analysis revealed significant main effects of both constituent ($p < .001$) and property ($p < .001$) on the ratings; furthermore, significant interactions are found between the fixed effects. In particular, concerning Patients, the properties Was Changed and Existed were the most strongly endorsed properties (β = 109.49 and 75.15, $p < .001$), i.e. Patients receive significantly higher ratings with respect to these properties. Regarding prepositional-Instruments and Instrument-subjects, Causes a Change was highly endorsed (β = 54.22 and 76.21, $p_s < .001$), as were Was changed and Existed (all $p_s < .001$), compared to Sentience and Volition.

The estimated marginal means (EMMs) calculated from the model, visually displayed in Figure 1, were used to conduct post hoc pairwise comparisons with Tukey correction, allowing for precise comparisons between each constituent-property pair.

Post hoc pairwise comparisons reveal that Agent-subjects are perceived as significantly more volitional than Instrument-subjects ($p < .001$), prepositional-Instruments ($p < .001$) and Patients ($p < .001$). The same holds for the Sentience property, with respect to which Agent-subjects are rated significantly higher than Instrument-subjects ($p < .001$), prepositional-Instruments ($p < .001$) and Patients ($p < .001$).

The third proto-Agent property, Causes A Change, yields different results: with respect to it, Instrument-subjects receive significantly higher ratings than prepositional-Instruments ($p < .001$). Instruments – in both syntactic positions – receive significantly higher ratings than Patients ($p < .001$). On the contrary, only prepositional-Instruments receive significantly lower ratings than Agent-subjects ($p < .001$), while Instrument-subjects do not differ from Agent-subjects with respect to this property ($p = .89$).

Turning to the only proto-Patient property, i.e. Was Changed, Patients receive significantly higher ratings than Agent-subjects ($p < .001$), Instrument-subjects ($p < .001$), and prepositional-Instruments ($p < .001$).

Finally, all constituents receive similar ratings for the property Existed, for which no significant difference is found through pairwise comparisons.

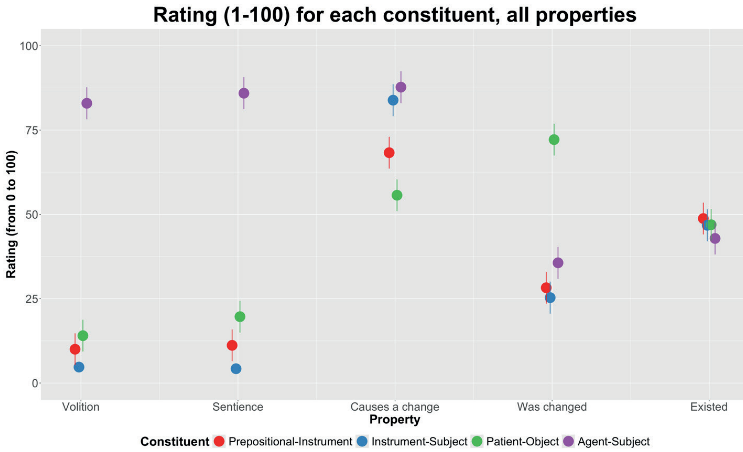

Figure 2 Estimated marginal means of ratings for all constituents with respect to all properties

4.5 Discussion

The data reveal distinct perception patterns for the different constituents. Agent-subjects are consistently perceived as more volitional and sentient than both Instrument constituents – regardless of syntactic position – and Patients. Instrument-subjects are perceived as stronger causes of the action compared to prepositional Instruments and Patients, and they align closely with Agent-subjects on this property. Conversely, Patients are perceived as being more affected by the action than all other constituents. Regarding this property, both types of Instruments – prepositional and subject – are perceived similarly to Agent-subjects. Finally, the property Existed does not differentiate among the constituents, as all are perceived similarly in this regard, and receive ratings around 50, meaning that their existence is perceived as neither being dependent nor independent from the action denoted by the verb. Notably, the property Existed was useful in distinguishing subjects from objects in Kako's (2006) study, but – crucially – not in that of Reisinger et al. (2015), who further subdivided the original property into three different ones: Existed before the event, Existed during the event, Existed after the event. As Dowty (1991) originally pointed out, this property is only relevant for differentiating subjects and objects within certain verb classes, specifically creation or destruction verbs, since only in these cases the object is brought into being or destroyed. For other predicates, both subjects and objects exist independently of the predicate. Since in our verb sample no such classes of verbs are included, this may explain why this property is completely irrelevant in our analysis.

Overall, when considering only Agent-subjects and Patients, the data indicate that Agent-subjects exhibit the Proto-Agent properties – volition, sentience, and the ability to cause a change in other participants – to a greater extent. In contrast, Patients are primarily characterized by the Proto-Patient property investigated in this study, namely their being causally affected by the action denoted by the verb and, indirectly, by other participants. Furthermore, Patients are not perceived as exhibiting the characteristic proto-Agent properties, and vice versa. These findings are consistent with both Dowty's (1991) PRH and with the findings of previous studies on Proto-Roles (Kako 2006; Reisinger et al. 2015).

Let us now turn to our research questions, which specifically concern the comparison between proto-Agents and Instruments. Beginning with RQ1 (Are different properties attributed to Instruments occurring as subjects compared to subjects expressing prototypical Agents?), our results show that Instruments are not perceived as more volitional or more sentient when they occur in subject position. On the one hand, this finding reinforces the idea that Volition and Sentience are core properties of prototypical Agents, animate (often human) participants who act volitionally (cf. Jackendoff 1996).

Moreover, the results suggest that semantic role inferences are not solely determined by syntactic position. Indeed, whether Instruments are realized as subject noun phrases or as prepositional phrases, they remain inanimate and non-sentient tools, incapable of volitional action. This intrinsic lack of agency appears to constrain how speakers attribute Proto-Agent properties such as Volition and Sentience, regardless of syntactic configuration.

On the other hand, the third Proto-Agent property, namely Causes a Change, appears to be sensitive to the syntactic position occupied by Instruments: they are perceived as more effective "causers" when they occur as subjects than when they are realized as prepositional phrases. This finding leads us to our second research question (RQ2: Does the Instrument role align more closely with the Proto-Agent or the Proto-Patient, depending on its syntactic realization?).

The data indicate that Instruments consistently align more closely with the Proto-Patient in terms of Volition and Sentience, regardless of their syntactic position.[8] However, in terms of causality, they align

8 Instrument-subjects are indeed perceived as less volitional and sentient than prepositional-Instruments and Patients, although the difference in ratings is not statistically significant. We explain this finding as a byproduct of our experimental with the Proto-Agent only when they appear in subject position. In other words, the perception of their ability to cause a change in other participants is modulated by syntax: Instruments are perceived as more agentive, or more like "causers", when they are syntactic subjects than when they are expressed as PPs.

Taken together, our results indicate that speakers do not rely solely on syntactic cues when making inferences about semantic roles, particularly when real lexical items are used (as opposed to nonce words, as in Kako's (2006) study).

Specifically, speakers' world knowledge – for example, the understanding that Instruments are typically tools – influences the semantic representation of instrumental lexical items. This, in turn, shapes how speakers evaluate constituents realizing the Instrument role, particularly with regard to the properties of Volition and Sentience. Put differently, we adopt a view that does not posit a strict dichotomy between lexico-semantic knowledge and world knowledge, as the two are deeply interconnected: the latter informs and shapes the former (cf. Schank 1975; Wilks 1975; Cappelli 2022). With respect to the issue at hand, speakers' world knowledge makes them aware that Instruments are typically tools manipulated by an Agent. This understanding is projected onto the semantic representation of instrumental lexical items, which are therefore perceived as non-volitional and non-sentient. As a result, the properties of Volition and Sentience appear to be grounded more in lexical semantics than in syntactic position. In other words, since tools are inherently non-volitional and non-sentient, these properties are not inferred solely from syntactic structure but emerge from the semantic nature of the role or referent itself.

By contrast, the property of causality appears to be more sensitive to syntactic structure: Instruments are perceived as more likely to cause change when they occur in subject position than when they are realized as prepositional phrases.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that semantic and syntactic information interact dynamically in shaping speakers' role-related inferences. Importantly, some Proto-Role properties, such as Volition and Sentience, are more strongly tied to lexical semantics, while others, like causality, are more influenced by syntactic realization. We can finally turn to the main question, which is *what makes an Agent an Agent*?: our results show that there are two distinct kinds of Proto-Agent properties. On the one hand, if Proto-Roles are understood as sets of entailments inferred from syntactic positions, causality

design: in the Agent-Instrument condition, Instrument-subjects are explicitly compared to prototypical Agents. This, in our opinion, causes the low ratings they receive in terms of Volition and Sentience.

emerges as the most relevant Agent-defining property (consistently with Reisinger et al.'s (2015) findings). Indeed, it remains applicable to non-prototypical Agents that occur in subject position with transitive predicates (such as Instrument-subjects in our case, but also natural forces in similar constructions), it can be inherited by such subjects when the Agent is syntactically implicit, and it appears to be determined primarily by syntax.

In contrast, Volition and Sentience are only true of prototypical Agents – namely, humans who act volitionally. These properties depend more heavily on the (interaction of the) lexical semantics of the sentence elements, they cannot be inherited by non-prototypical Agents occurring as subjects and they are not inferred from syntactic position.

5 Conclusions

In this study, we built on Dowty's (1991) Proto-Role Hypothesis and on previous experimental investigations supporting its psychological plausibility (Kako 2006; Reisinger et al. 2015) to examine the inferences Italian speakers make about the roles of Agents, Patients, and Instruments. Specifically, starting from the assumption that semantic role inferences are influenced by syntactic position, we leveraged the distinctive behavior of Instruments, which can surface both as subjects and as PPs, to identify the defining properties of prototypical Agents and to disentangle the respective contributions of semantics and syntax in shaping speaker judgments.

To this end, we selected five properties from Dowty's (1991) inventory of Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient entailments and created 39 minimal sentence pairs, each featuring an Instrument both as a PP and in subject position. A total of 93 native Italian speakers were then asked to rate, on a 1-100 continuous scale, the degree to which Agent-subjects, Instrument-subjects, prepositional-Instruments, and Patients exhibited each of the five properties.

The results revealed that Volition and Sentience are core properties of prototypical Agents (i.e. Agent-subjects). Consistent with Dowty's PRH, Patients were perceived as non-volitional, non-sentient, and non-causing, but as highly causally affected by the verb's action.

Importantly, the property Causes a Change was attributed to both Agent-subjects and Instrument-subjects, but not to prepositional-Instruments, indicating that only Instruments in subject position align with Agents in this respect. In contrast, Instruments consistently aligned more closely with Patients regarding Volition and Sentience, regardless of syntactic position.

In conclusion, these findings show that while some properties, such as causality, are sensitive to syntactic realization, others, namely

VOLITION and SENTIENCE, are more tightly linked to lexical semantics and world knowledge. This suggests that semantic role attribution emerges from an interaction between syntax and semantics, with different proto-role properties showing differing degrees of sensitivity to syntactic cues.

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Appendix

Complete list of experimental stimuli and their English translation.

1. Il boscaiolo ha abbattuto l'albero con l'ascia. / L'ascia ha abbattuto l'albero.
 'The lumberjack cut down the tree with the axe'. / 'The axe cut down the tree'.
2. Il bambino ha rotto il vaso con la palla. / La palla ha rotto il vaso.
 'The boy broke the vase with the ball'. / 'The ball broke the vase'.
3. L'automobilista ha travolto il cartello con l'auto. / L'auto ha travolto il cartello.
 'The driver ran over the sign with the car'. / 'The car ran over the sign'.
4. Il fabbro ha fuso il metallo con il fuoco. / Il fuoco ha fuso il metallo.
 'The blacksmith melted the metal with fire'. / 'The fire melted the metal'.
5. Il bambino ha bagnato l'orsacchiotto con l'acqua. / L'acqua ha bagnato l'orsacchiotto.
 'The child soaked the teddy bear with water'. / 'The water soaked the teddy bear'.
6. L'operaio ha bucato il muro con il trapano. / Il trapano ha bucato il muro.
 'The worker pierced the wall with the drill'. / 'The drill pierced the wall'.
7. La donna ha bruciato la lettera con una candela. / La candela ha bruciato la lettera.
 'The woman burnt the letter with a candle'. / 'The candle burnt the letter'.
8. Il pescatore ha catturato il pesce con una rete. / La rete ha catturato il pesce.
 'The fisherman caught the fish with a net'. / 'The net caught the fish'.
9. Il carpentiere ha colpito il chiodo con un martello. / Il martello ha colpito il chiodo.
 'The carpenter hit the nail with a hammer'. / 'The hammer hit the nail'.
 L'investigatore ha contaminato la scena con un capello. / Un capello ha contaminato la scena.
 'The detective contaminated the scene with a hair'. / 'A hair contaminated the scene'.
10. Il muratore ha coperto il buco con lo stucco. / Lo stucco ha coperto il buco.
 'The bricklayer covered the hole with putty'. / 'The putty covered the hole'.
11. Il dentista ha estratto il dente con le pinze. / Le pinze hanno estratto il dente.
 'The dentist extracted the tooth with pliers'. / 'The pliers extracted the tooth'.
12. Il medico ha guarito la ferita con delle bende. / Le bende hanno guarito la ferita.
 'The doctor healed the wound with bandages'. / 'The bandages healed the wound'.
13. Il chirurgo ha inciso la pelle con il bisturi. / Il bisturi ha inciso la pelle.
 'The surgeon cut the skin with a scalpel'. / 'The scalpel cut the skin'.
14. Il tecnico ha interrotto la corrente con l'interruttore. / L'interruttore ha interrotto la corrente.
 'The technician cut the power with the switch'. / 'The switch cut the power'.

15. Il grafico ha modificato l'immagine con il computer. / Il computer ha modificato l'immagine.
    'The graphic artist changed the picture with the computer'. / 'The computer changed the picture'.

16. Il magazziniere ha mosso le scatole con il montacarichi. / Il montacarichi ha mosso le scatole.
    'The warehouse worker moved the boxes with the freight elevator'. / 'The freight elevator moved the boxes'.

17. Il custode ha rimosso la neve con la pala. / La pala ha rimosso la neve.
    'The caretaker removed the snow with the shovel'. / 'The shovel removed the snow'.

18. La mamma ha sconfitto i pidocchi con uno shampoo. / Lo shampoo ha sconfitto i pidocchi.
    'The mother has defeated the lice with shampoo'. / 'The shampoo has defeated the lice'.

19. Il carpentiere ha sollevato la trave con una fune. / La fune ha sollevato la trave.
    'The carpenter lifted the beam with a rope'. / 'The rope lifted the beam'.

20. Il pompiere ha spento l'incendio con l'estintore. / L'estintore ha spento l'incendio.
    'The fireman put out the fire with the fire extinguisher'. / 'The fire extinguisher put out the fire'.

21. Il bambino ha sporcato il vestito con la penna. / La penna ha sporcato il vestito.
    'The child soiled her dress with the pen'. / 'The pen soiled her dress'.

22. Il traslocatore ha spostato il mobile con un carrello. / Il carrello ha spostato il mobile.
    'The mover moved the furniture with a cart'. / 'The cart moved the furniture'.

23. Il cuoco ha tagliato la verdura con il coltello. / Il coltello ha tagliato la verdura.
    'The cook cut the vegetables with the knife'. / 'The knife cut the vegetables'.

24. L'autista ha trainato l'auto con il camion. / Il camion ha trainato il rimorchio.
    'The driver towed the car with the truck. / The truck towed the trailer'.

25. L'uomo ha tamponato il furgone con l'auto. / L'auto ha tamponato il furgone.
    'The man rear-ended the truck with the car. / The car rear-ended the truck'.

26. Il conducente ha urtato il guardrail con l'auto. / L'auto ha urtato il guardrail.
    'The driver hit the guardrail with the car'. / 'The car hit the guardrail'.

27. L'agricoltore ha voltato la terra con la vanga. / La vanga ha voltato la terra.
    'The farmer turned the soil with the spade'. / 'The spade turned the soil'.

28. L'arredatrice ha staccato la carta da parati con il vaporizzatore./ Il vaporizzatore ha staccato la carta da parati.
    'The decorator peeled off the wallpaper with the steamer'. / 'The steamer peeled off the wallpaper'.

29. Il muratore ha scavato una buca con l'escavatrice. / L'escavatrice ha scavato una buca.
    'The bricklayer dug a hole with the excavator'. / 'The excavator dug a hole'.

30. Il ricercatore ha ritrovato il tesoro con il metal detector. / Il metal detector ha ritrovato il tesoro.
    'The searcher found the treasure with the metal detector'. / 'The metal detector found the treasure'.
31. Il conducente ha rallentato l'auto con il freno. / Il freno ha rallentato l'auto.
    'The driver slowed down the car with the brake. / The brake slowed down the car'.
32. Il ragazzo ha provocato un incendio con un accendino. / L'accendino ha provocato un incendio.
    'The boy started a fire with a lighter'. / 'The lighter started a fire'.
33. Il tecnico ha girato i bulloni con la chiave. / La chiave ha girato i bulloni.
    'The technician turned the bolts with the spanner'. / 'The spanner turned the bolts'.
34. Il contadino ha disperso i semi con il seminatore. / Il seminatore ha disperso i semi.
    'The farmer scattered the seeds with the sower'. / 'The sower scattered the seeds'.
35. Il piromane ha devastato il bosco con un lanciafiamme. / Il lanciafiamme ha devastato il bosco.
    'The arsonist devastated the forest with a flamethrower'. / 'The flamethrower devastated the forest'.
36. Il manifestante ha ostacolato la strada con uno striscione. / Lo striscione ha ostacolato la strada.
    'The protester obstructed the road with a banner'. / 'The banner obstructed the road'.
37. L'alunno ha ritagliato la carta con le forbici. / Le forbici hanno ritagliato la carta.
    'The pupil cut out the paper with scissors'. / 'The scissors cut out the paper'.
38. Lo scultore ha scolpito il marmo con lo scalpello. / Lo scalpello ha scolpito il marmo.
    'The sculptor carved the marble with the chisel'. / 'The chisel carved the marble'.

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Gricean Theories of Reference

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Abstract Gricean theories of reference define what it is for a speaker to refer to an item in terms of the speaker meaning something about that item. This raises a question posed by Stephen Schiffer. "What could be the point of trading in facts about meaning for facts about the content of beliefs if one ends up with nothing to say about the latter?" In the case of reference in particular, what do we gain when we explain a speaker's referring to a particular thing by appealing to beliefs that in some unexplained way refer to that thing? Building on the work of Stephen Neale and Schiffer, I offer a Gricean account of reference and then show what the account explains, even though it assumes referential beliefs.

Keywords Speaker reference. Speaker meaning. Grice. Schiffer. Neale. Common knowledge. Pragmatics.

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1 Introduction

As we are standing together at a party, I ask whether your brother, whom I do not know, is present. You respond by pointing in the direction of a man while uttering, 'The man with the martini in his hand is my brother'.[1] In uttering the sentence, you refer to your brother. As Neale and Schiffer emphasize, what a speaker refers to "on a particular occasion of use is determined by the speaker's referential intentions" (Neale, Schiffer 2020). Referential intentions are intentions to produce beliefs that uniquely designate items. They note that the link between intentions and reference "isn't new, but it's insufficiently appreciated" (Neale, Schiffer 2020), and they increase appreciation by offering a Gricean account of what it is for a speaker to refer. They do not, however, address a question that Schiffer raises elsewhere. "What could be the point of trading in facts about meaning for facts about the content of beliefs if one ends up with nothing to say about the latter?" (Schiffer 1989, 2). This is not a criticism of Neale and Schiffer. They had other theoretical axes to grind. The question is however well worth asking, especially for Gricean theories of reference. What do we gain when we explain a speaker's referring to a particular thing by appealing to beliefs that in some unexplained way refer to that thing? My answer begins with speaker meaning since, following Neale and Schiffer, I define speaker reference as a species of speaker meaning. From there, I turn to common knowledge, and then to the fact that in communication we may reveal ourselves as occupying various social roles. I argue that an important explanatory gain of a Gricean account of reference is that it highlights how our interactions in social roles generate the common knowledge critical to successful communication.

2 Speaker Meaning and Speaker Reference

I divide the account of speaker meaning into two parts. The first is a definition of M-intending, which characterizes the intention a speaker must have to qualify as meaning that p. The reason for separately defining M-intending is that I use the notion later to characterize a key speaker meaning pattern that conforms to Grice's Cooperative Principle. The exact characterization of M-intending is controversial. A definition adapted from Grice's early work on meaning serves our purposes even though the definition is only appropriate for cases of asserting that p. Later work refines the analysis to meet a variety

1 The example is adapted from Donnellan 1968, 287.

of counterexamples, and it extends the analysis to the full range of speech acts.

> A speaker S *M-intends that p* for an audience A by uttering U if and only if S utters U intending (1) that A believe that p; (2) that A recognize S's intention (1); (3) that this recognition be part of A's reason for believing p.[2]

Griceans differ on what the exact account should be, but, as Neale and Schiffer note, they typically require, as the above definition does, that the speaker intend to produce a belief in the audience (in the case of assertion, and an appropriate psychological attitude in the case of other speech acts). All of the discussion that follows concerns that condition. Departing from Grice and following Schiffer (Schiffer 1973), I define speaker meaning by adding a common knowledge requirement to the definition of M-intending:

> A speaker S means that p by uttering U for an audience A if and only if uttering U ensures that it is *common knowledge* between S and A that S M-intends that p by uttering U.

Schiffer appeals to common knowledge to rule out counterexamples he raises to Grice's definition of speaker meaning. Explanatory demands provide a second reason. As illustrated below in the discussion of Assurance Games, common knowledge plays a critical role in explaining speaker-meaning interactions.

Following Neale and Schiffer, I define initially speaker reference as follows. I offer two refinements below.

> S refers to x in uttering U if and only if in uttering U, S meant an x-dependent proposition.[3]

2 Adapted from Grice 1957, 337. Compare Neale, Schiffer 2020: "For any person S, proposition p, and utterance u, S meant p in uttering u iff for some person A and feature φ, S intended it to be common ground between S and A that u has φ and at least partly on that basis that S uttered u intending her utterance of u to result in A's actively believing p". I appeal to common *knowledge* instead of common *belief*. We commonly believe that p when and only when we believe that p, believe that we believe we believe, and so on. In a more detailed treatment development of Gricean approaches to meaning, appealing to common belief would be more useful. For our purposes, however, talk of common knowledge is sufficient and has the virtue of being consistent with Grice and Schiffer's 1960-70s discussions of meaning.

3 Compare Neale and Schiffer: "We take the foundational case of speaker reference, which we'll call primary speaker reference (speaker reference$_p$) to be a species of speaker meaning: (F) S referred$_p$ to x in (the course of) uttering u iff in uttering u, S meant an x-dependent proposition". Neale and Schiffer, "How Demonstratives and Indexicals Really Work". (Neale, Schiffer 2020). I dropped the reference to a *primary* speaker reference. Neale and Schiffer explain the idea using the following example.

Neale and Schiffer explain that an “x-dependent proposition is a proposition that is individuated partly in terms of x and that wouldn’t exist if x didn’t exist” (Neale, Schiffer 2020). To illustrate, suppose we are looking at the racehorses in the paddock. I know you want to bet on the longshot, so, pointing at a particular horse, I refer to that horse when I utter, “The longshot is wearing number six”. The proposition that I speaker-mean is individuated partly in terms of that particular horse and would not exist if the horse did not. Compare Alice, who believes – truly, let us suppose – that there are spies, and she infers on general principles about the distribution of heights, that one of them is shorter than the rest. Assume her inference is correct: there is a shortest spy.[4] Alice, who happens to believe that short people generally have good posture, utters ‘The shortest spy has good posture’ to mean for Bob that the shortest spy has good posture. There is no particular person in terms of which the proposition she means is individuated. Indeed, she could have uttered ‘‘The shortest spy – whoever that is – has good posture” without essentially changing what she means. The proposition she means is that there is a unique person who is a spy and shorter than all other spies, and that person has good posture.

The appeal to x-dependent propositions in the account of reference makes a “reference version” of Schiffer’s “What do we gain?” question particularly pressing. What could be the point of trading in facts about how speakers refer for facts about how beliefs refer if one ends if one ends up with nothing to say about the latter?

At a general, abstract level, we know the outline of the account of how beliefs refer. I take it for granted that, in some yet unexplained way, information processing in the brain combines semantically interpreted lexical representations into complex structures in ways that underlie thought and language. We can distinguish two types of components in those structures. Contextually invariant components, and components whose full specification is contextually dependent,

Suppose Alice says “That woman next to that boy patting that dog is French” referring to the woman to mean that she is French. They claim that Alice does not mean anything of the boy (or the dog). They contend that “In primary speaker reference, S refers to a thing in order to mean something about it. In non-primary speaker reference S refers to a thing not in order to mean something about it, but in order to identify the thing to which S is making a primary reference”. But surely Alice does mean something about the boy: namely, that he is next to the woman and is petting a dog. She M-intends that, and her utterance makes that intention common knowledge. One can mean this without meaning that the boy has the property specified by the verb phrase ‘is French’.

4 If one is worried about ensuring the definite description applies uniquely, assume some tie-breaking procedure if two or more spies are shorter than all the rest. For example, sort the spies’ names alphabetically and designate the alphabetically first spy as the shortest, or some more elaborate procedure (if, for example, one is worried about ties in the alphabetical ranking).

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such as the mental counterparts of indexicals, proper names, definite descriptions like "The [contextually definite] boy", grammatical mood, and tense. We can identify those structures, or some subset of them, with propositions. Some propositions contain no contextually invariant components, e.g., the proposition that snow is (timelessly) white, while others contain contextually specified components, e.g., the proposition that the-contextually-specified-item belongs in the contextually-specified place. In identifying and explaining how the components of propositions work, the theory would explain how beliefs and other psychological attitudes refer to things. Our current talk of propositions is a promissory note drawn on such a theory.[5]

The initial definition of speaker reference needs refinement. To see why, suppose Bob utters 'The woman next to the boy petting the dog is French' to refer thereby to a certain woman, boy, and dog. What woman-boy-dog proposition does Bob mean?[6] To answer, we

5 This is not to deny that there has been a great deal of insightful work on propositions. See, for example, Schiffer 2003 and Jaszczolt 2023.

6 Neale and Schiffer address this issue in their definition of referring in (referring$_n$). A key point of the definition is to accommodate Neale and Schiffer's claim that, for example, that a speaker can use a belief *about* Ralph to enable reference to Roger, without thereby referring to Ralph. 'S referred$_n$ to x' in uttering u iff for some person A, thing x and relation R, S utters u intending it to be common ground between S and A that R(x', x) and primarily on that basis common ground between them that S referred$_p$ to x in uttering u'. I note in passing that there appear to be counterexamples. Suppose Roger and Ralph are nearly identical twins except for Roger being four inches taller than Ralph. Bob utters 'The twin is drinking white wine'. He intends it to be common ground between them that Roger is four inches taller than Ralph and primarily on that basis that he refers$_p$ to Roger. It follows from the definition that Bob refers$_n$ to Ralph in uttering 'The twin is drinking white wine', but surely this is not the case. The common ground background belief about an individual – in this case about Ralph's being shorter that Roger – can enable reference without involving reference to that individual.

The problem relevant to the text is that it is not clear how to fill out the definition in particular cases. To begin, simplify what Bob utters. Suppose he utters 'The woman next to the boy is French' to refer thereby to a certain woman and boy. Then Bob intends it to be common ground between him and Alice that the boy stands in the relation *next-to* to the woman, and primarily on that basis common ground between them that Bob referred$_p$ to the woman in uttering u. But how do you handle Bob's uttering 'The woman next to the boy petting the dog is French' to refer thereby to a certain woman, boy, and dog? The natural idea is to see the boy as identified by standing in the relation *petting* to the dog and then see the woman as identified by standing in the relation *next-to* to the boy. But it is not possible to fill the definition out this way since it requires separate instances for each referred$_n$ item. Thus, for the boy: 'Bob intends it to be common ground between him and Alice that the boy stands in the relation *next-to while petting a certain dog* to the woman, and primarily on that basis for it to be common ground between them that Bob referred$_p$ to the woman in uttering u'.

And for the dog: 'Bob intends it to be common ground between him and Alice that the dog stands in the relation *being petted by a boy next-to* the woman and primarily that basis for it to be common ground between them that Bob referred$_p$ to the woman in uttering u'.

It is implausible however that Bob intends the common ground about the boy and the common ground about the dog to both *primarily* be the basis for it being common

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need a sufficiently perspicuous way to describe the propositions that figure in the account of speaker reference. To the end, begin with an example in which there is a single item of reference. Pointing at a particular horse, I refer to that horse when I utter, "The longshot is wearing number six". Given the context, my utterance uniquely identifies the horse and represents it as an item to which I ascribe the property *being the longshot*. I will express this by saying that I believe, of the horse, under the property *being the longshot*, that it is number six.[7] For our purposes, we need to extend this form of description to beliefs about multiple items, for example, your belief that the long shot is taller than the favorite. We can express this by saying that you believe, of the long shot, and the favorite, under respectively, *being the long shot*, and *being the favorite*, that the one is taller than other. Generally, given a belief about $x_1,..., x_n$, items, I assume we can represent it as a belief of $x_1,..., x_n$, under some relevant sequence of features $F_1,..., F_n$, and some appropriate relation R, that $R(x_1,..., x_n)$. I leave open the question of whether there will always be a relevant feature F for each item of reference x.[8] (For example, if I believe that I think, do we represent me as believing, of me, under some feature F, that I think? Or do we drop the "under F"?).

We can now define the notion of speaker reference as follows:

> A speaker S refers to items $x_1,..., x_n$ in uttering U if and only if producing U ensures that, for some relation R, and for some features $F_1,..., F_n$, it is common knowledge between S and A that S M-intends of $x_1,..., x_n$, under $F_1,..., F_n$, that $R(x_1,..., x_n)$.

In the examples, I read off the "under F" features from the speaker's utterance – *being the longshot* from 'the longshot', and *being the favorite* from 'the favorite'. Expressions and properties need not always match in this way. When you refer to your brother by uttering 'The man with the martini in his hand', your brother need not have a martini in his hand. As you know, but your audience does not, it is water in a martini glass. Your audience, believing it is a martini,

ground that Bob referred$_p$ to the woman. One could try seeing the sentence uttered as specifying a relation on all the items of reference. Thus, where y is the primary item of reference and $x_1,..., x_n$ are the "referred to in uttering" items: 'S referred$_n$ to $x_1,..., x_n$ in uttering u iff for some person A, thing y S utters u intending it to be common ground between S and A that $R(y, x_1,... x_n)$ and primarily on that basis common ground between them that S referred$_p$ to y in uttering u'.

7 More technically, I adopt the following Quinean convention. Where '[' and ']' are the left and right Quinean corner quotes, a singular term [t] may be substituted *salva veritate* for a term [t'] in the context [… believes, of t, that…] given the true identity [t = t'].

8 See, for example Jaszczolt 2023.

readily identifies your brother. There is an apparent problem, however. The above definition requires that you make it *common knowledge* between you and your audience that you M-intend of the individual in question, under some appropriate F, that he is your brother. What is F? It cannot be *holding a martini* since you know that your brother is not holding one. The relevant F is *holding a drink that looks like a martini*. Both you and your audience know that is true of your brother. Your audience just does not realize that it *only looks* like a martini.

Neale and Schiffer also offer a definition of referring *by an expression*. For example, I refer to a certain horse by the expression 'the longshot'. The above definition does not match expressions to items of reference. Neale and Schiffer's insightful idea is that an expression refers to an item when the expression makes a certain sort of contribution to common knowledge. Adapting their suggestion, I propose:

> For x_i in $x_1,\ldots, x_n$, in uttering U, S referred to with e to x_i if and only if for some audience A and property φ, S intended it to be common knowledge between S and A that the occurrence of e in U has φ and, at least partly on that basis, that it is common knowledge between S and A, for some features $F_1,\ldots, F_n$, and relation R, that S M-intends of $x_1,\ldots, x_n$, under $F_1,\ldots, F_n$, that $R(x_1,\ldots, x_n)$.[9]

One comment suffices for our purposes. Recall Bob uttering 'The woman next to the boy patting the dog is French' to refer by 'The woman next to the boy patting the dog' to a particular woman. What is the relevant property φ that he relies on in part to generate the common knowledge that he referring to the woman in question? Typically, it will be a competent English speaker's grasp of the fact that, on the occasion of utterance, 'The woman next to the boy patting the dog' is associated with a contextually semantically interpreted structure where that structure assigns to the phrase the property of being a contextually definite woman next to a contextually definite boy who is petting a contextually definite dog.

The account of referring by an expression is a striking illustration of how a Gricean explanation of reference depends on an account of beliefs referring. So, what is the explanatory gain of explaining a speaker reference in terms of beliefs that, in a yet to be explained way, refer to things? The answer lies ultimately in the part social roles play in generating the common knowledge speaker meaning requires. The first step is to explain how common knowledge arises.

9 Compare Neale and Schiffer: "In uttering u, S referred$_p$ to x with e, relative to its i-th occurrence in u, if for some person A and property φ, S intended it to be common ground between S and A that the i-th occurrence of e in u has φ and, at least partly on that basis, that S referred$_p$ to x in uttering u".

3 Common Knowledge

Common knowledge among members of a group is the recursive belief state of members knowing, knowing that they know, knowing that they know that they know, and so on potentially ad infinitum. Having common knowledge does not require an infinite number of beliefs.[10] As explained below, common knowledge in a group that p requires the capacity to generate (under ideal conditions) the following finite sequence for any number *n* (using subscripts to track knowledge levels): group members know$_n$ that group members know$_{n-1}$ that… group members know$_1$ that p. The "ideal conditions only" matters. Practical limitations of memory, time, and concentration will ensure that the number *n* is relatively small in practice.[11]

How does a group acquire common knowledge? Consider the following example. During a baseball game in 1996

> baseball fans at Cleveland's Jacobs Field [looked] up to see an airplane pulling a banner advertising anonymous HIV testing… [The underlying purpose is that] I would be more likely to get an HIV test if I knew that doing so was not unusual, but I wouldn't find this out through everyday conversation; at the ballpark, looking up at the plane, however, it is obvious to all that everyone is seeing the same thing. (Chwe 2013, 41)

The display of the banner creates common knowledge that anonymous testing is available. It does so because the display meets two conditions. *First*: Anyone (anyone with normal perceptual and intellectual abilities) who sees the banner knows$_1$ that anonymous testing is available. *Second*: Anyone who sees the banner knows$_2$ that anyone who sees the banner knows$_1$ that anonymous testing is available. Those conditions ensure that anyone in the group who sees the banner can – ideally – generate the following finite sequence for any number *n*: group members know$_n$ that… group members know$_1$ that anonymous testing is available (Warner 2019). To generalize, let us say that a *common knowledge generator* in a group G for the proposition that p is a process meeting these two conditions: (1) the process results in all members of G knowing that p, and (2) the process ensures that all members of G know (1). It is common knowledge that p in G if and only if there is a common knowledge generator in G for the proposition that p.

10 Some object that having common knowledge requires that one have an infinite number of beliefs, as in Jankovic, 2020, 186.

11 But not as small as one might think. See the remarkable examples of iterated attitudes in Laing 1970.

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Common knowledge facilitates speaker-meaning interactions. To illustrate this, I borrow the notion of an Assurance Game from game theory to model a significant subset of those interactions. The choice of model reflects Grice's focus on "the rationality or irrationality of conversational conduct", which, as he notes, he has "been concerned to track down rather than any more general characterization of conversational adequacy" (Grice 1991, 369). When used as a model of speaker meaning interactions, the Assurance Game model exhibits a key pattern of rationality or irrationality of conversational conduct.[12]

The Assurance Game gets its name from the fact that its outcome depends on what each player thinks the other will do, which depends on what each thinks that the other thinks that the other will do, which depends… and so on. To illustrate the game, suppose that Victor and Victoria are discussing by cell phone whether to meet at the opera later in the evening or whether each will stay home alone. Their batteries run out before they decide, and they have no other way to communicate. They both have, and know they both have, the following preferences in the following order. (1) Attend the opera together. There is a benefit they hope to achieve thereby: namely, the pleasure of each other's company. (2) Stay home alone when the other does too. (3) Stay home alone when the other goes to the opera. (4) Go to the opera when the other does not. What Victor or Victoria does depends on what each thinks the other will do, and that depends on what each thinks that the other thinks that the other will do, and so on. Focus on Victor. Similar remarks hold for Victoria. Victor will go to the opera if he thinks Victoria will go. She will go if she thinks Victor will go, so he will go if he thinks Victoria thinks he will go, and so on. An Assurance Game consists of two players with some version of the preferences (1) – (4).[13]

Let us say that Victor and Victoria solve their Assurance game if they coordinate by each going to the opera, or each staying home. Common knowledge is not *necessary* to solve Assurance Games (Sloan, Warner 2020), but it greatly facilitates doing so by making the parties' preferences *transparent* to them. It eliminates misunderstanding, misinterpretation, doubt, or deception. Imagine that Victor and Victoria have a standing agreement that they will

12 Assurance Games are two-player games, so the use to model speaker-meaning interactions ultimately requires generalization to multi-party situations. One possibility is to think of parties as the speaker and a group of individuals comprising the audience. One problem is that Assurance Games are built around the assumption that each party reasons about what the other party thinks, and there may be no clear sense in which a group has a collective expectation about another party. One can generalize to multi-party coordination games.

13 In addition, the parties are unable to communicate, and each chooses without observing or otherwise learning about the choice of the other. These assumptions, and the joint knowledge of one another's preferences, are the classic assumptions of game theory. See, for example, Leyton-Brown 2008.

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go to the opera if, when, during the discussion whether to do so, communication is cut off before they reach a decision. When their batteries die, it is common knowledge that they will both go to the opera and hence they coordinate by both going.

Common knowledge created by acts of speaker meaning facilitates coordination in a type of Assurance Game that models a central form of speaker meaning interactions. The interactions are those conforming to Grice's Cooperative Principle. He introduces the principle as follows:

> Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. This purpose or direction may be fixed from the start (e.g., by an initial proposal of a question for discussion), or it may evolve during the exchange; it may be fairly definite, or it may be so indefinite as to leave very considerable latitude to the participants (as in a casual conversation). But at each stage, some possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable. We might then formulate a rough general principle which participants will be expected (ceteris paribus) to observe, namely: Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the Cooperative Principle. (Grice 1991, 26)

Conversational partners who adhere to the Cooperative Principle have Assurance Game preferences. I characterize the Assurance Game in terms of preferences about M-intentions.[14] It is solved by speaker meaning, that is, by ensuring *common knowledge* of an M-intention.

Suppose that Alice's car, in which Stan is a passenger, is low on gas. Alice says that she is very low on gas and afraid she will run out. The following is common knowledge between them: they share the goal of not running out of gas; there are gas stations nearby; Alice does not know exactly where they are; Stan does know the location of at least one. Stan and Alice have the following preferences.

> Stan's M-intends that there is a gas station at a certain location, and Alice believes that he so M-intends.

14 The attribution of such preferences is an idealization. Conversing partners may only have a disposition to form such preferences on reflection.

This is the most preferred option since it realizes the shared goal of not running out of gas. Alice responds to Stan's M-intention by believing there is a gas station in a certain place and driving to it.

> Stan does not M-intend that there is a gas station at a certain location, and Alice does not think Stan does.

Note that (2) ranks above (3) and (4) because it avoids the costs of trying but failing to coordinate as will happen in (3) and (4).

> Stan M-intends that there is a gas station in a certain location, but Alice does not realize that.

When Alice expresses concern about being low on gas, Stan utters ‘Bob’s Hardware is nearby’ to M-intend that the gas station, Bob’s Hardware and Gas, is nearby. Contrary to what Stan assumed, Alice has never heard of Bob’s Hardware and Gas. When Stan utters ‘Bob’s Hardware is nearby’, she thinks Stan did not hear what she said and is just expressing a desire to go to Bob’s Hardware.

> Stan does not M-intend that there is a gas station in a certain location, but Alice thinks S does.

As above, Alice expresses concern about being low on gas, and Stan utters ‘Bob’s Hardware is nearby’. This time Stan does *not* M-intend that there is a gas station near Bob’s. He did not hear what Alice said and is just expressing his desire to go to Bob’s. Alice, however, believes he M-intends that there is a gas station near Bob’s. She heads in there and eventually runs out of gas.

Speaker meaning solves the Assurance Game by ensuring *common knowledge* of an M-intention. In the “gas on the corner” example, Stan and Alice will coordinate easily as long as Stan’s utterance makes it common knowledge between them that Stan M-intends that Alice can get gas nearby at Bob’s. The role of common knowledge in facilitating coordination provides a strong rationale for defining speaker meaning in terms of common knowledge of M-intentions.

Call Assurance Games with versions of the preferences (1) – (4) *Communication* Assurance Games, and let us say that parties *solve* the game when, they achieve what they most prefer: namely that, for some relevant proposition p, the speaker M-intends that p and the audience believes that they so M-intend.

4 An Explanatory Benefit

Consider an example of a Communication Assurance Game that explicitly involves speaker reference. The example raises a question about reference. It helps by raising a question about reference that a Gricean theory can answer, even though the theory assumes without explanation that beliefs can refer. The answer illustrates a distinctive explanatory benefit of Gricean theories of reference.

The example concerns Frank Close's book, *Elusive: How Peter Higgs Solved the Mystery of Mass*. The first mention of the Higgs Field is on page 14: "Higgs bosons condense to produce a weird substance—today known as the Higgs field—that fills the universe" (Higgs 2023). Can we subsume Close and his readers under the explanatory model of a Communication Assurance Game? Describing the game raises the question about reference. To describe the game, assume Close and his readers share the goal of the readers acquiring at least a basic understanding of what the Higgs field is. Given this goal, Close and the audience have the following Communication Assurance Game preferences: (1) Close M-intends, of the Higgs field, under *condensed bosons*, that it fills the universe, and the audience believes that he so M-intends. (2) Close does not M-intend, of the Higgs field, under *condensed bosons*, that it fills the universe, and the audience does not believe that he does. (3) Close M-intends, of the Higgs field, under *condensed bosons*, that it fills the universe, but the audience does not believe that he does. (4) Close does not M-intend, of the Higgs field, under *condensed bosons*, that it fills the universe, but the audience believes that he does.

To see the problem, focus on Rachel, who has just read 'Higgs bosons condense to produce a weird substance—today known as the Higgs field—that fills the universe'. All that Rachel knows about the Higgs field is captured by that sentence plus her knowing that Close wrote a book about the field. Can we see Close as solving the Communication Assurance Game by speaker meaning, of the Higgs field, under *condensed bosons*, that it fills the universe? To speaker mean that is, in part, for his utterance to make it common knowledge between him and Rachel that he intends her to believe, of the Higgs field, under *condensed bosons*, that it fills the universe. The problem is to explain how Rachel counts as having that belief. Why isn't her belief like Alice's belief that the shortest spy has good posture? Alice knows that there are spies and that among them there is a shortest, but her belief does not refer to a particular individual. Instead, she believes that there is a unique person (whoever it is) who is a spy and shorter than all other spies, and that person has good posture. Why is Rachel's knowing there is a unique something called the Higgs field sufficient for her belief to refer to that entity?

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The answer lies in social roles – in particular, in the fact that communicating parties create common knowledge essential to speaker meaning by presenting themselves in social roles. To understand their function as common knowledge generators some preliminary comments about social roles generally are in order. After a brief consideration, I return to the Higgs field example.

Social roles are socially recognized patterns of thought and action associated with standards of permitted, expected, or required behavior (Parsons 2012). As the sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann note "[i]n the common stock of knowledge there are standards of role performance that are accessible to all members of a society, or at least to those who are potential performers of the roles in question" (Berger, Luckmann 1966, 73). They add, "not only are the standards of role X generally known, but it is known that these standards are known" (Berger, Luckmann 1966, 73). To put the point in our terms, social roles are common knowledge generators. The process of acquiring a social role through instruction and acculturation meets the conditions for a common knowledge generator: (1) the process of acquiring a social role through instruction and acculturation ensures that people who undergo or are aware of the process know the associated standards of proper performance, and (2) the process ensures that those people know that those people know the standards.

As the author of *Elusive: How Peter Higgs Solved the Mystery of Mass*, the particle physicist Frank Close presents himself in the social role of a recognized expert. When Rachel reads "Higgs bosons condense to produce a weird substance—today known as the Higgs field—that fills the universe", it is common knowledge between her (as a reader) and Close that Close is qualified to make assertions about particle physics, and that gives Rachel something Alice does not have – a connection to someone who knows a great deal about the Higgs field including how to experimentally verify its existence. This is sufficient to give her the ability to have a referential belief about the Higgs field. She inherits that ability from Close.

More generally, I also take it for granted that – at least for speakers and audiences coordinating in regard to speaker meaning – proper performance requires observing the Cooperative Principle. To illustrate the relevance to reference, consider the following variant of the Stan and Alice example. When Alice expresses her concern about running out of gas, Stan utters 'Bob's Gas and Hardware is nearest'. Alice has never heard of Bob's Gas and Hardware, but, like Rachel from Close, she inherits from Stan the ability to have a referential belief about it. Alice reasons (could on reflection reason) as follows. "It is common knowledge between us that Stan adheres to the Cooperative Principle, so the best explanation of his utterance is that he is trying to make it common knowledge that he M-intends, of a particular gas station, under *Bob's Gas and Hardware*, that it is nearby.

For a non-inherited-reference example, imagine, for example, the five-years olds Alice and Jake at the airport meeting their respective grandmothers – call them Abby (for Alice) and Joyce (for Jake) (Capone 2023). Alice and Jake are not biologically related and do not know each other. When they simultaneously see their grandmothers, each calls out, "Grandma!" Alice succeeds in referring to Abby and Jake, to Joyce in part because each speaks in the social role of grandchild. The reference in each case is to the grandmother associated with that role.

5 Conclusion

Gricean theories of reference provide the framework of a rich field of investigation about how social roles create common-knowledge-mediated reference.[15] As the psychologists Thomas et al. (2014) note, given that "much of social life is affected by common-knowledge generators, [it is] surprising that the psychology of common knowledge has apparently had so little visibility either in psychology or in everyday life" (Thomas 2014, 671). They urge that "an acknowledgement of the role of common knowledge in enabling coordination can unify and explain a variety of seemingly unrelated and puzzling phenomena", (Thomas 2014, 671) and they note that

> In recent decades, psychologists have recognized that cooperation is one of the hallmarks of the human species, and that its game-theoretic demands have shaped our emotions, our morality, our social relationships, and our language. Much has been learned about these domains of psychology from a focus on the problem of altruistic cooperation and the mechanisms of reciprocity. We hope that comparable insights are waiting to be discovered by psychologists as they investigate the problem of mutualistic cooperation, and the mechanisms of common knowledge are – as we might say – put out there. (Thomas 2014, 657)

I hope for the same with regard to reference.

15 A linguistic division of labor has long been recognized. See Putnam 1973. The role of common knowledge has not, however, been adequately investigated.

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Constraints on Distributive Coordination

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Abstract The paper argues that the *distributive conjunction construction* formed in English by *both XP and XP* and in Italian by *sia XP che XP* is best analyzed as a sentential conjunction reduced by a combination of fronting operations and across-the-board raising. The distribution of this type of conjunction has a number of peculiar restrictions, compared to ‘plain’ coordination. The analysis accounts for these restrictions by showing a strong correlation between constituents that may appear in *both/and* or *sia/che* and constituents that may undergo A-bar fronting, including independently motivated interlinguistic variations. The paper puts forth a novel proposal to extend the analysis to non-final positions – a major stumbling block for analogous theories in the past.

Keywords Both. Conjunction. Coordination. Distributivity. Italian. Sia. Syntax-semantics interface

1 Introduction

This paper presents an analysis of the distributive conjunction given by the Italian *sia/che* correlative construction in (1), contrasted with its English counterpart, the *both/and* construction in the translation of (1).

(1)	Maria	ha visto	**sia**	Carlo	**che**	Marco.
	Maria	has seen	IS$_{subj}$	Carlo	THAT	Marco
	‘Maria has seen **both** Carlo **and** Marco’					

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Etymologically, *sia* is the 3rd Person Singular subjunctive form of the verb *essere* 'be',[1] *che* is the complementizer "that", used as subordination with declarative verbs and relative clauses, but also as a 'coordinative' pivot (cf. *than*) in comparative constructions where constituents of the same type are compared (2) (Donati 1998).

(2)	Gianni	ha	più	nemici	che	amici
	Gianni	has	more	foes	than	friends
	'Gianni has more foes than friends'					

Sia/che is distributive in the sense that it blocks cumulative predicates like those in (3), which crucially apply to semantic *pluralities* (Lasersohn 1995; Schwarzschild 1996, a.o.). In object position, the use of *sia/che* strongly suggests that Carlo and Marta were each married to someone else, possibly in different occasions.

(3)	*Sia	Carlo	che	Marta	{sono una coppia /	formano	un team /
	Is	Carlo	THAT	Marta	{are a couple /	form	a team
	vivono	insieme /	hanno	gusti	diversi	tra	loro
	live	together /	have	tastes	different	among	them

(4)	Il prete	unì	**sia**	Carlo	**che**	Maria in matrimonio.
	The priest	has joined	$\text{IS}_{\textit{subj}}$	Carlo	THAT	Maria in marriage
	'The priest married both Carlo and Marta' (not: to each other)					

Building on Bianchi and Zamparelli (2004), I will propose that when these constructions appear clause-finally their distributive meaning is the result of a syntactic derivation that starts as the coordination of two sentences, as in (5), followed by raising of the elements to be coordinated to Focus positions within each clause, followed by rearrangement of the shared remnants.

(5)	Sia che	[$_{TP}$ Maria ha visto Carlo]	[$_{TP}$ Maria ha visto Mario]
	IS THAT	[$_{TP}$ Maria has seen Carlo]	[$_{TP}$ Maria has seen Mario]

1 The subjunctive form *sia* was used in older Italian as an existence statement ("let X be"), a usage that persists in the language of mathematics (i). The form agrees in number with the DPs afterward (ia vs. b).

(i) a. Sia *f*: una funzione con domino e codominio R…
$\text{IS}_{\textit{subj:3p.sg}}$ *f*: a function with domain and range R…
'Let *f*: be a function with domain and range R… '
b. Siano *f*: e *g*: due funzioni totali…
'Let *f*: and *g*: be two total functions… '
$\text{ARE}_{\textit{subj:3p.pl}}$ *f*: and *g*: two functions total…

roughly: 'Let it be the case that Maria has seen Carlo and Maria has seen Mario'

This analysis, a member of the *conjunction reduction* family,[2] predicts an intricate set of restrictions in the distribution of *sia/che* and *both/and*, which reduce to whether the conjoined elements are able to move to an edge position. Independently motivated differences between Italian and English account for cases where the two constructions diverge. Given the high parallelism of the two constructions, *sia* and *che* will henceforth be glossed BOTH and AND, respectively, except when their lexical nature becomes relevant (as in Sec. 1.1 and 6 below). Distributive conjunction will be abbreviated as **D-Conj** in what follows. Translations will be omitted when glossae are transparent.

The structure of the paper is as follows: After introducing in Sec. 1.1 a previous proposal on the ambiguity of English *both*, Sec. 2 gives the basic D-Conj paradigm, dividing it in cases where the construction is acceptable in both English and Italian (Sec. 2.1); cases where it is out in both (while plain conjunction is possible) (Sec. 2.2) and cases where the two languages diverge (Sec. 2.3). The key points of the analysis for Italian are laid out in Sec. 3, with English *both/and* in Sec. 3.1 and Sec. 3.2 devoted to the process that factors the common portions of the conjuncts using ATB-raising. Sec. 4 discusses some differences in scope between plain coordination and D-Conj. Sec. 5 illustrates in four subsections how the theory proposed can account for the data presented, also discussing the role of ellipsis. Sec. 6 illustrates other correlative uses of *sia* and *che* and suggests some possible structures. Finally, Sec. 7 and 8 discuss the critical problems raised by the appearance of D-Conj in non-final positions, and offer a radical solution: the non-final cases should be seen as a lexical process molded by analogy with the final cases, and inheriting all their semantic properties and constraints. Section 9 concludes.

1.1 Two "Both"

Schwarzschild (1996, Ch. 7) proposed that English *both* is ambiguous between two forms, tagged *both*$_{DP}$ and *both*$_{and}$. *Both*$_{DP}$ is a pre-determiner which can precede definite/bare DPs and coordinations thereof, and can 'float' (6); *both*$_{and}$ precedes the conjunction of many categories (as described in this paper) including quantificational and indefinite DPs, but cannot float (7):

(6) a. Both$_{DP}$ the boys were tired.
b. The boys were bothDP tired.

2 Oirsouw 1987; Wilder 1997; Camacho 2004; Wilder 2018.

(7) a. Both$_{and}$ [every boy] and [many of the adults] were sleepy.
b. *[Every boy] and [many of the adults] were both$_{and}$ sleepy

In (7) picking the coordination of two quantificational DPs ensures that we are in the presence of *both*$_{and}$, not *both*$_{DP}$, which cannot be associated with quantificational DPs (see **both {some/exactly two} boys*). Despite these differences, Schwartzschild's two *both*s share the property of distributivity: in (8a), *play chess* applies individually to each boy, but predicates with cumulative readings degrade the sentence; in (8b), the meaning in which each screw is connected to its nut does not call for the use of *both*.

(8) a. Both boys {played chess / ?played together / *were a couple}.
b. Both every screw and every nut {got rusty / ??were screwed in together tightly}.

In Italian, the two *both*s are rendered with different expressions: *both*$_{DP}$ is *entrambi*, followed by a definite DP, while *both*$_{and}$ is our *sia/che*. *Che* is obligatory and cannot be replaced by the regular coordinator *e* 'and', though it can be replaced by another *sia*, as in (9c).[3]

(9) a. Entrambi {i ragazzi / ? Gianni e Maria} erano soli.
both$_{DP}$ {the boys / Gianni and Maria} were alone
b. Sia Gianni che/sia Maria sono soli.
IS Gianni THAT/IS Maria are alone.
'Both$_{and}$ John and Mary are alone'
c. Ho visto sia Gianni che/sia Maria.
I_have seen IS Gianni THAT/IS Maria.
'I have seen both John and Mary'

Unlike *entrambi*, which like *both*$_{DP}$ has a strict presupposition of duality, the *sia/che*-constituent (and its variant with just *sia*) may also be iterated (10), with constraints schematized in (11): a sequence of *sia* (no *che*), but also a sequence of *che*, with *sia* obligatory as the first element.[4]

(10) a. Sia Gianni che Carlo che Marco votarono "sì".
BE Gianni THAT Carlo THAT Marco voted "yes"
'Gianni, Carlo and Marco all voted in favor'
b. Per passare il tempo, Gianni ha sia pescato che letto che scritto lettere
to kill the time, Gianni has BE fished THAT read THAT written letters
che camminato.
THAT walked.

3 Note that the verb is plural both in (9a) and (9b): distributively conjoined preverbal subjects still require plural verb agreement. This aspect will be picked up in Sec. 7.

4 This pattern was confirmed via corpus searches on the huge ITWAC3 corpus (Ferraresi et al, 2008).

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'To kill time, John fished, wrote letters and walked.'

(11) a. sia A_1 … sia A_n (*che A_{n+1})
b. *(sia) A_1 che A_2 … che A_n

As Schwartzschild observes, *both*$_{and}$ does not have a presupposition of duality either. Examples like (12) can be found in abundance in the UKWAC corpus. Note that other 'floated quantifiers' (*all*, *each*) do not have the distribution of *both*. For instance, they cannot replace *both* in (12).

(12) a. It makes both personal, legal and business sense for managers…
b. government at both local, national and EU levels

I will return to these cases in Sec. 6, after dealing with the binary D-Conj cases.

2 The Distribution of *sia/che* and *both/and*

As is well known, *and* and *or* coordinations can be applied to many and perhaps all syntactic categories. The null hypothesis is that the D-Conj with *both/and* and *sia/che* shouldn't show any difference in this respect. In actual fact, D-Conj has many restrictions which are unknown to plain *and*, and which turn out to be mostly syntactic, not semantic in nature. Let's first consider cases where D-Conj does not differ from plain conjunction, in Italian as in English.

2.1 Acceptable Distributive Conjuncts

A. FULL ARGUMENTAL DPS (subject, object and indirect object):

(13) a. Sia Gianni che Maria sono qui.
BOTH John AND Mary are here
b. Ho visto sia Gianni che Maria
I have seen BOTH John AND Mary

(14) I sent both John and Mary a wonderful book.[5]

B. ARGUMENTAL PPS:[6]

(15) Carlo ha parlato sia [con sua moglie] che [con il bambino].
Carl has spoken BOTH [with his wife] AND [with the kid]

5 Indirect object DPs are unavailable in Italian, which uses [V DO to-PP].

6 Note that here and elsewhere *entrambi* "both$_{DP}$" is completely ungrammatical: **Gianni ha parlato entrambi [con sua moglie] e [con il bambino]*. *Entrambi* is only compatible with the conjunction of *nominal* elements.

C. POST-COPULAR PREDICATES

(16) Gianni è sia alto che magro
John is BOTH tall AND slim

(17) Mario è sia [un linguista] che [un romanziere].
Mario is BOTH [a linguist] AND [a novelist]

(18) Maria era sia [senza soldi] che [senza documenti].
Mary was BOTH [without money] AND [without ID card]

D. NON-FINITE VPS: (possibly omitting the object, as in (20))

(19) Maria voleva sia [vedere Carlo] che [salutare Paula].
Mary wanted BOTH [to see Carl] AND [to greet Paula]

(20) Maria aveva sia visto che riconosciuto il suo amico.
Mary had BOTH spotted AND recognized her friend

E. EMBEDDED CPS:

(21)	So	sia	[{che/se} Gianni è qui]	che [{che / se} Maria
	I-know	BOTH	[{that/whether} John is here]	AND [{that/whether} Mary
	lo nasconde].			
	him hides]			

‘I know both that/whether John is here and that/whether Mary is hiding him.’

The sequence . . . *che che*. . . ‘that that’ is stylistically cumbersome, but removing one *che* leads to ungrammaticality.

(22)	*So	sia	che Gianni è qui	che Maria lo nasconde
	I-know	BOTH	that John is here	THAT Mary him hides

F. ADJUNCTS: (AdvP and PPs in (23a); *when*-clauses in (23b), *because*-clauses in (23c))

(23) a.	Gianni lavorava	sia [velocemente]	che [con attenzione].
	John worked	BOTH [quickly]	AND [with care]
b.	Maria ride	sia [quando è nervosa]	che [quando è calma]
	Mary laughs	BOTH [when she is nervous]	AND [when she is calm]
c.	Maria ride	Sia [perché è nervosa]	che [perché è divertita]
	Mary laughs	BOTH [because she is nervous]	AND [because she is amused]

G. DETERMINERS (24) AND POSSESSIVES (25) (in English, including the genitive marker)

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(24) Sia [troppa] che [troppo poca] acqua fa male alle piante.
BOTH [too much] AND [too little] water does damage to-the plants

(25) a. Both [John's] and [Mary's] fingers were dirty.
b. Both [men's] and [women's] expectations decrease as the years go by.

Note that in all cases except A, distributivity can be difficult to test. This does not mean that the *sia/che* variant is identical in meaning to plain *and*: the natural use of these forms is to deny that only one of the conjuncts is true (in other words, to deny the implicit claim of an exclusive *or*):

(26) Carlo non è solo bello, o solo ricco: è sia bello che ricco!
Carlo not is just handsome, or just rich: he-is BOTH handsome AND rich!

2.2 Categories that Cannot be Joined by D-Conj

In English and Italian, it is impossible to distributively conjoin root clauses:

(27) a. *Sia [Maria è qui] che [Gianni sarà in ufficio].
BOTH [Mary is here] AND [John will_ be in the office]
'*Both Mary is here and John is going to be in the office.'
b. * Sia [Carlo partì] che [Maria tornò].
BOTH [Carl left] AND [Mary returned]
'*Both [Carl left] and [Mary returned]'

The ability of D-Conj to apply to root clauses is subject to considerable cross-linguistics variation, examined in Johannessen (2005). Exclusive disjunction on root clauses seems to be more common that distributive conjunction (see Johannessen 2005, ex. (87); Larson 1985b; Schwartz 1999), and is possible both in English and Italian (28a).[7] Even what seems to be the negation of D-Conj, the *neither/nor* construction, allows matrix conjunction (28b).

(28) a. O [Gianni è partito presto] o [non è venuto affatto].
either [John has left early] or [not he_is come at all]
'either John left early, or he didn't come at all'
b. Nè [ho letto il libro] nè [lo leggerò mai].
Neither [I_have read the book] nor [it I_will_read ever]
'Neither have I read the book nor will I ever read it'

7 Several Germanic languages place the *either/both* adverb in the V1 position, forcing Johannessen to an analysis that moves this adverb out of the left conjunct at LF, onto the Spec of a CoordP containing *and*.

In the languages under consideration, TPs embedded under C are also out (cf. (27))[8]

(29) a. *So che sia [Marco è qui] che [Maria è in ufficio].
I_know that BOTH [Marco is here] AND [Maria is in office]
'*I know that both Marc is here, and Mary is in the office'
b. *Mi domando se sia [Marco arrivi oggi] che [Carla lo ospiti].
I wonder if BOTH [Marco arrives$_{subj}$ today] AND [Carla him puts_up$_{subj}$]
'*I wonder if both Marco arrives today and Carla puts him up'

The group formed by an auxiliary plus a VP is impossible (30) (see, however, (43) below).

(30) a. *Maria sia [è partita] che [ha viaggiato a lungo].
Maria BOTH [is left] AND [has travelled for long]
'*Mary both has left and has traveled a long time.'
b. *Maria sia [è arrivata] che [sta vestendosi].
Mary BOTH [is arrived] AND [is getting-dressed]
'*Mary both has arrived and is getting dressed'

Small clauses selected by epistemic and elective verbs (31) are degraded, but those selected by verbs of perception (32a) or prepositions (32b) are perfect.[9]

(31) a. ??Considero sia [Gianni intelligente] che [Maria simpatica].
I consider BOTH [John intelligent] AND [Mary nice]
'??I consider both John intelligent and Mary nice'
b. ??Abbiamo nominato sia [Gianni presidente] che [suo figlio ministro].
we-have appointed BOTH [John president] AND [his son minister]
'??We appointed both John president and his son a minister'

(32) a. Ho appena visto sia [Carla in giardino] che [Marco in soggiorno].
I-have just seen BOTH [Carla in garden] AND [Marco in living-room]
'I just saw both Carla in the garden and Marc in the living troom.'
b. Con sia [Gianni espulso] che [Marco infortunato], la partita sarà un disastro
with BOTH [John out] AND [Marc injured], the match will be a disaster
'With both John out and Marc injured, the match will be a disaster'

8 One reviewer finds other cases of TP coordination more or less acceptable (one example provided is *Non dubito affatto che sia gli studenti abbiano lavorato che i docenti siano stati esigenti* 'I have no doubt that both the students have worked, and the teachers have been demanding') and worries about the coverage of Generalization (68) below for the case of TPs. While I do not find the reviewer's examples completely acceptable, they are better than the examples in (29). However, removing the initial negation makes it worse, suggesting that association with focus might be part of the explanation. In any case, the contrast between e.g. (29b) and the CP coordination in (21) appears quite solid.

9 (31) is not simply due to the fact that the small clause must be adjacent to the element selecting it: in Italian, sentence-level adverbs like *certamente* 'certainly' can be be inserted between the verb and the small clause, but not between the preposition *con* 'with' and the small clause.

D-Conj of (DP-internal) NPs and AdjPs is impossible (33), as are prenominal attributive adjectives (34).[10]

(33) a. *Il mio sia amico che collega è Gianni.
* My BOTH friend AND colleague is John.
b. *Maria è molto sia alta che snella.
*Mary is very BOTH tall AND slim.

(34) *Un sia famoso che nobile guerriero sfidò Orlando.
*A BOTH famous AND noble warrior challenged Orlando.

Relative CPs are out:

(35) *Un uomo sia [che conosco bene] che [con il quale parlo spesso].
*A man BOTH [that I know well] AND [with the which I_talk often]
'*A man both that I know well and with whom I often talk'

WH-DPs in direct questions are out (36), but they improve when embedded (37).

(36) a. *Sia chi che cosa hai visto?
BOTH who AND what you have seen?
'*BOTH who AND what did you see?'
b. *Sia quando che dove l'hai vista?
BOTH when AND where her you.have seen?
'*BOTH when AND where did he see her?'
c. *Sia quale ragazzo che quale ragazza hai salutato?
BOTH which boy AND which girl you.have greeted?
'*BOTH which boy AND which girl have you greeted?'

(37) Mi domando sia quando che dove l' abbia vista.
I.wonder BOTH when AND where her he.has seen
'I wonder both when and where he saw her.'

Stump (1985) discusses "absolute constructions" like the bracketed constituents in (38), distinguishing those built on Individual-Level predicates (38a) from those containing Stage-Level predicates (38b).

(38)	a.	[Being a linguist], Karl was immediately hired.	*IL predicate*
	b.	[Standing on a chair], Karl can touch the ceiling.	*SL predicate*

10 One reviewer finds examples like (33a) and (34) not as degraded, and gives them one question mark. We were unable to find a single example of DET (POSS) *sia* NOUN/ADJ *che* NOUN/ADJ in all of ITWAC3, while we found many thousands of post-nominal adjectives connected by *sia/che* (e.g. *ricerca sia teorica che sperimentale* 'research both theoretical and experimental'). If post-nominal attribute adjectives are (optionally) analyzed as reduced relatives, these cases reduce to the post-copular examples in (16), which are also quite common.

D-Conj is only possible with the latter (39). Normal *and* coordination is of course possible with both.

(39) a. *Sia essendo un linguista che conoscendo Python, Carlo è stato assunto.
*BOTH being a linguist AND knowing Python, Carl has been hired.
b. Sia stando su una sedia che saltando Carlo può raggiungere il soffitto.
BOTH standing on a chair AND jumping, Carl can reach the ceiling.

(39b) has the expected distributive semantics (that is, *standing on a chair, Carl can touch the ceiling; jumping, Carl can touch the ceiling*).

2.3 Cross-Linguistic Differences

In the examples above, Italian *sia/che* and English *both/and* give rise to parallel judgments. In yet other cases, the two languages differ. D-Conjs of finite verbs, with or without an object, are out in Italian but fine in English:

(40) a. *Gianni sia lavorava che chiacchierava.
John BOTH worked AND chatted.
b. *Maria sia vide (Gianni) che salutò Eva
Mary BOTH saw (John) AND greeted Eva

DPs under a preposition selected by a verb are out in Italian but fine in English:

(41) a. ??Gianni ha parlato con sia Maria che Eva.
John has spoken with BOTH Mary AND Eva
b. *Vado a sia Roma che Bologna
I-will go to BOTH Roma AND Bologna
c. *Roma ha combattuto contro sia i Visigoti che i Vandali
Rome has fought against BOTH the Visigoths AND the Vandals

However, at least for some speakers *sia/che* under *con* 'with' improves when the PP modifies nouns (42). The (b) case is from ITWAC.

(42) a. Voglio un auto con sia l' autopilota che il climatizzatore di serie
I-want a car with BOTH the autopilot AND the air-conditioner as standard
b. l' oceano con sia scogliere che lunghissime distese di sabbia
the ocean with BOTH cliffs AND very-long stretches of sand

Finally, in contrast with (30a) above, native speakers report that D-Conj of contrastively focused modals is fairly acceptable.

(43) John both CAN and SHOULD speak out.

3 The Analysis: Focus and ATB Factorization

My proposal is that 'native' distributive coordination is the result of the coordination of two full sentences – in most cases, root clauses – which get 'reduced' by meaning-preserving syntactic operations. The distributive semantics falls out automatically from a full clause coordination structure, without having to stipulate the existence of a special, distributive type of conjunction, and so does the ungrammaticality of e.g. (44a) (in the reading *different from that of the other*), which would be derived from **I gave a different book to John and I gave a different book to Mary*.

(44) *I gave a different book to both John and Mary.

In this section, I will only discuss final or near-final cases like (44) (as opposed to, e.g., **Both John and Mary read a different book*). The special challenges raised by other D-Conj positions (including the fact that pre-verbal D-Conj of *singular* subjects triggers *plural* verb agreement) will have to await till Sec. 7 and 8.

The Italian *sia/che* form of D-Conj reveals an underlying *biclausal structure* much more openly than the English form, since it contains the complementizer *che* 'that' (a Force head, in the sense of Rizzi 1997), which canonically selects sentences, and the verb above it.[11] English *both/and* does not have the same transparent relation to the Comp area, but I believe the distributional similarities noted above hint at a parallel analysis.

In Italian, we start by assuming that *sia* selects a 'coordinative CP' ($C_{\&}$), presumably the same one used in comparatives (2) (Donati 1998), which takes two FocPs, one in Specifier, the other in Complement position:

(45) *sia* $[_{CP} [_{FocP} \text{Foc}^0 [_{TP} \text{T} [_{VP} \text{Subj Pred}]]]$ $che_{\&}$ $[_{FocP} \text{Foc}^0 [_{TP} \text{T} [_{VP} \text{Subj Pred}]]]]$

The reduction of the two initial FocPs to their pronounceable form is done by two operations: one, which raises two FocP-internal constituents of the same type to the [Spec,Foc^0] of each conjunct; the second, which targets the remnants and extracts them in an Across-the-Board fashion to a position above *sia*. The constituents moved by the first operation are those that appear to be conjoined in overt syntax.

11 *Sia/che* is in fact not the only structure Italian uses to express D-Conj. The same meaning can be expressed using the pairs *tanto/quanto* "much/how-much" and (at a higher stylistic register) *così/come* "so/how". In both structures, the conjunction is focused. These variants will be discussed in forthcoming work, but the fact that they use Wh elements like *quanto* 'how much' or *come* 'how' confirms that the Comp area is crucially involved.

To get the semantics of distributivity, the predicate must combine with its subject within each conjunct in (45), yielding two distinct propositions, which are then combined by sentential conjunction. Suppose that this semantic process is completed by FocP, if not earlier. I will assume that the CP in (45) is selected by *sia* "is$_{SUBJ}$" (46), which I will place in V, not T, on account of the fact that this form has an existential meaning and – unlike the *sia* in ft. 1 – takes no external subjects and does not vary in number.

This analysis has many points in common with Donati's (1998) analysis of Italian *che* comparatives (though Donati uses ellipsis, not ATB for sentence reduction), Kayne's (1998) treatment of *only* and other structures, Bianchi and Zamparelli's (2004) analysis of Italian *non solo X ma anche Y* 'not only X but also Y' and Vicente (2010) for Spanish *X sino Y* cases. Merchant's (2005) raising account of ellipsis also contains similar observations.

3.1 The English Case

For English *both/and*, we could assume that *both* is adjoined to the conjunction of two or more CPs, which are remapped onto DPs (CP routinely appear as subjects, either alone or as an apposition to the noun *fact*). If this is the case, a CP conjunction would become the sort of object that the pre-determiner *both* (i.e. *both*$_{DP}$) could directly modify. The structure would then become:

(46) … both$_{DP}$ [$_{\&P}$ [$_{CP}$ C0 [$_{FocP}$ Foc [$_{TP}$ Subj [$_{VP}$ Pred]]]] [$_{\&'}$ and [$_{CP}$ C0 [$_{Foc}$ Foc [$_{TP}$ I [$_{VP}$ Subj Pred]]]]]]

This would reduce *both*$_{and}$ to *both*$_{DP}$, arguably a positive result, but one which runs into problems with the possibility of more than two conjuncts, as we saw in (12) (*both local, national and EU levels*). The solution is to assume that, while distributive CP coordination is born binary, this fact is hidden by recursion (a second *both* in the second conjunct of the first) and ellipsis (deletion of *and*, much as it happens in *Marc, Luke and Sara*, plus deletion of the second *both* under identity) (47).[12]

(47) [$_{CP}$ both [$_{CP}$ … local] ~~and~~ [$_{CP}$ ~~both~~ [$_{CP}$ … national] and [$_{CP}$ …EU levels]]]

With the basic multi-sentential structure in place, we turn to the reduction process.

Following Bianchi and Zamparelli (2004), I will assume that the elements that are contrasted move to [Spec,FocP]. This generates

12 This raises interesting questions about the strength of the presuppositions of *semantic* duality, (*Both John and his sons* appears to be fairly acceptable; again, see Schwarzschild 1996, Sec. 7.2), which I won't address here.

one set of alternatives per conjunct. With *John saw both Mary and Lucy*, we have (48):

(48) a. "John saw Mary" is true, and every statement "John saw x", x a (contextually salient) individual alternative to Mary, is false.
b. "John saw Lucy" is true and every statement "John saw x", x a (contextually salient) individual alternative to Lucy, is false.

These conjuncts can be jointly true only if *John saw Lucy* is not among the alternatives of (48a) and *John saw Mary* not among the alternatives of (48b). This effect of excluding each conjunct from the alternatives of the other is, I propose, the core semantic effect of *sia/che* and *both/end*.

3.2 Factoring the Conjunction

The rest of the derivation factors the remnant containing the traces of the elements moved to FocP, which may be thought of as the shared background of the coordination. In Bianchi and Zamparelli (2004) (which deals with a different correlative structure: *not only X but also Y*) the shared material was raised across the board to a Ground Phrase within the same clause, above FocP (49).

(49) $[_{\text{GroundP}}$ $[_{\text{TP}}$ Shared_Remnant $t_{i/j}$ $]_k$ …[&P $[_{\text{FocP}}$ Coord_1$_i$ Foc0 t_k] & $[_{\&\text{P}}$ $[_{\text{FocP}}$ Coord_2$_j$ Foc^0 t_k]]]]

This analysis is not viable for the *sia/che* construction: the fact that the shared material is higher than *sia* 'is' and the Force complementizer *che* (Rizzi 1997) implies that it has been placed in a higher clause. Moreover, Ground should be understood as the locus for old or presupposed information (see Poletto, Pollock 2000; Poletto 2010), but there is no problem in having new information in the remnant, in the form of clefts or contrastive focus (50).[13]

(50) a. Era Carlo che ha visto sia Marco che Maria.
It-was Carlo that has seen BOTH Marco AND Maria.
b. CARLO ha visto sia Marco che Maria, non Luigi, che ha visto solo Marco.
CARLO ha seen BOTH Marco AND Maria, not Luigi, who has seen only Marco.

Moving the shared remnant to different left-peripheral positions in the upper clause (Ground, Focus or Topic positions) would not solve the problem of e.g. (50b), where only a subpart of the remnant is focused. A more interesting option is to capitalize on the defective status of the matrix clause (which has, remember, a frozen existential *sia* with no over subject possible). Suppose that matrix clauses cannot

13 This criticism is also raised in Toosarvandani 2013.

be constituted by a bare VP: once a VP is projected, some functional projection (at least the TP) must also be projected. In turn, the T^0 head requires some form of licensing, perhaps "identification" in the sense of Rizzi (1986). But the verb, a frozen form, cannot provide it.

In Zamparelli (2000) a different way for licensing was proposed for heads lacking phonological or identificational features: a X^0 is licensed if a fully identified phrase of the same category, a XP, is moved or generated in [Spec,X^0] ("Spec-Head licensing") (51).

(51) $[_{XP1}\ [_{XP2}\ X^2 \ldots]\ [_{X'}\ X^0\ YP]]$

The rationale is that empty heads can inherit features and semantic content from their specifiers. This approach dovetails with the view of C-command specified in Kayne (1994):16, according to which an element can C-command out from a specifier position.

My proposal is then that the reduction process which yields the final word order in D-Conj is driven by the need to move material to the defective upper clause, thus licensing the TP projection above *sia*.[14] Note that we want to leave open the possibility that the various parts of the remnant move further and get the desired discourse effects in the left periphery of the upper clause, to derive e.g. Wh- questions (52).

(52) {Perché / Con quale motivazione} hai escluso sia Maria che Marta?
{Why / For which reason} you.have excluded BOTH Maria AND Marta?
'{Why / For which reason} have you excluded both Maria and Marta?'

In other term, the movement to the higher TP must *not* have the 'freezing' effect that has been proposed for other types of movement, e.g. scrambling.

The tree in (53b) illustrates the situation after raising of the lower TP to the Spec of the higher one, using (53a) (where the optional forward ellipsis of the second V gives rise to an apparently asymmetric conjunction, see Sec. 5.4).[15]

(53) a. Gianni ha sia mangiato la mela che (mangiato) la pera.

14 Not much would change if *sia* was realized in T, as a defective verb in need of identification, though (51) would need to be extended to phonologically overt cases, when they are defective.

15 In this case, *sia* and *both* take up the role of scope markers. Without elements marking the left edge of coordination, the possibility of left-peripheral deletion (i.e. elision) to apply multiple times in the right conjunct would make it impossible to understand from the string $X_0\,X_1\,X_2\ \&\ X_2$ in (i) what is actually being conjoined.

(i) a. $[_{X0P}\ X_0\ [_{\&P}\ [_{X1P}\ X_1\ [_{X2P}\ X_2\ ]]]\ \&\ [_{X1P}\ \cancel{X}_1\ [_{X2P}\ X_2\ ]]]]$
b. $[_{X0P}\ X_0\ [_{X1P}\ X_1\ [_{\&P}\ [_{X2P}\ X_2\ ]]\ \&\ [_{X2P}\ X_2]]]$

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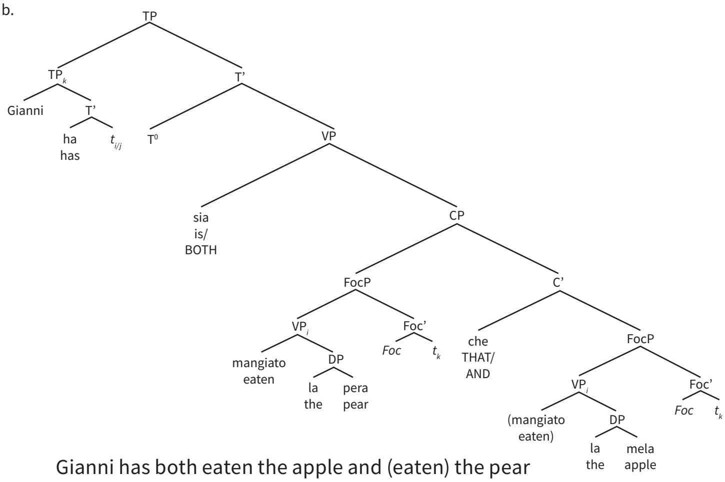
b.



Gianni has both eaten the apple and (eaten) the pear

The V/C evidence of Italian *sia/che* is missing in English *both/and*, and in the cases cited in Johannessen (2005) where the initial scope marker seems to be a part of what moves to focus. The way I read these differences is that the core requirement of D-Conj is the creation of sets of alternatives, generated by each conjunct, that are mutually compatible. This is normally obtained by raising the conjuncts to separate FocPs, plus the requirement of marking the scope of the coordination (see ft. 14). The rest – the exact position of the marker and the factorization obtained by remnant movement – may be solved differently in different languages. (54) gives a tentative derivation for *both/and*, assuming the base structure in (46) and a movement to [Spec,TP] like in Italian.

(54) a. $[_{TP}$ T^0 both $[_{\&P}$ $[_{CP}$ C^0 $[_{FocP}$ Foc^0 $[_{TP}$ I saw Mary]]] and $[_{CP}$ C0 $[_{FocP}$ Foc^0 $[_{TP}$ I saw John]]]]]
b. $[_{TP}$ T^0 both $[_{\&P}$ $[_{CP}$ C^0 $[_{FocP}$ Mary$_i$ Foc^0 $[_{TP}$ I saw t_i]]] and $[_{CP}$ C^0 $[_{FocP}$ John$_j$ Foc^0 $[_{TP}$ I saw t_j]]]]]
c. $[_{TP}$ $[_{TP}$ I saw *t*] $[_{T'}$ T0 both $[_{CP}$ C^0 $[_{FocP}$ Mary$_i$ Foc^0 t_k]] and $[_{CP}$ C^0 $[_{FocP}$ John$_j$ Foc^0 t_k]]]]

Alternatives are certainly possible, including analyses where *both* is actually part of the first conjunct. This fits with the fact that a *both*-like word may count as the 1rst-position constituent in Norwegian V2 (Johannessen 2005, ex. (15)) and that the scope markers *either* (Larson 1985a, 235) (55) and even *both* (56) (Caroline Heycock and Graham Katz, p.c.) can appear at VP level. However, this option is problematic with non-verbal conjuncts, like *both John and Mary*. In what follows I will continue to mark *both* externally, but nothing of importance hinges on this point.

(55) [Mary either is driving to the airport] or [she is taking a cab]].

(56) a. Who [has both been singing] and [has played the flute].
b. I know [that both John left] and [that he will return].

Note, finally, that the movement of the non-shared lexical elements to a FocP position selected by a complementizer accounts for a curious property of D-Conj, its reluctance to accept adverbial modifiers (e.g. *then* or *possibly*) which may be inserted in normal coordinations. Contrast (57) with the Italian distributive examples in (58):

(57) a. I will call John and then Mary.
b. John, Karl and possibly Mary will come along.

(58) a. Chiamerò sia Gianni che (*{poi / anche}) Maria.
I will call BOTH John AND (*{then / also}) Mary
b. Sia Gianni che Carlo che (*forse) Maria saranno presenti.
BOTH Gianni AND Carlo AND (maybe) Maria will be present

If adverbs are hosted in functional projections of their own, below Focus, (Cinque 1999), the structure in (45) simply leaves no room to insert them.

4 Scope Facts

Conjunction reduction has a long history as a possible strategy to explain 'plain' coordination.[16] Obviously, the analysis of D-Conj as sentential conjunction, together with its restricted distribution raises intriguing questions also for the treatment of plain conjunction. If the latter is also clause-level, how come it doesn't show any of the limitations discussed in Sec. 2.2 and 2.3? Could it be that the reduction of a plain clausal-level *and* does not involve movement? Or that plain *and* is just ambiguous between a restricted, clause-level form, to be reduced, and a small-constituent form, unrestricted? If so, how could a child learn this state of affairs?

These are bigger questions than this paper can address, but we can start by comparing the *scope* of two operators, plain and D-Conj *and*, keeping in mind that in the analysis proposed for D-Conj 'scope' can be translated as 'amount of reconstruction' of the ATB-extracted element. Assuming that the Xs and Ys in *both X and Y* or *sia X che Y* are capable of transmitting their features to the whole construction, if nothing is reconstructed D-Conj would have exactly the meaning of plain *and*; full reconstruction, on the other hand, would give us the semantics of a biclausal construction. Anaphoric examples such as (59) show that at least in non-argumental ATB extraction cases

16 See Chomsky 1957; Gleitman 1965; Oirsouw 1987; Camacho 2004 on the syntax side; Partee, Rooth 1983 and Schein 1997 pursue more semantic approaches, but very much in the same spirit.

some syntactic reconstruction must be possible, to bring the reflexive within the conjuncts.

(59) Which portraits of himself do you think Rembrandt has painted and Piranesi drawn?

Determining scope can be a tricky empirical enterprise, ideally requiring a pool of speakers and a range of cases. In Italian, reconstruction of *modals* seems to be at least a solid possibility: (60a) and (61a) (where the wide scope of the modal, 'It is possible that a destroyed car is given as a gift' is blocked by pragmatic considerations) can be easily interpreted as the sentential conjunctions in (60b) and (61b).[17]

(60) a. Mario potrebbe sia distruggere la macchina che regalarla.
Mario might both destroy the car and give it away as a gift
b. Mario might destroy the car and (then again) he might give it away as a gift.

(61) a. Mario potrebbe sia vendere che non vendere la macchina – non sappiamo
Mario might both sell and not sell the car – not we.know
ancora cosa farà.
yet what he.will.do
b. Mario might sell the car and (then again) he might not sell it – we don't know yet what he will end up doing.

This contrasts with a normal conjunction, for which it is extremely difficult to take scope over the modal; (62) have nearly only pragmatically contradictory readings.

(62) a. Mario potrebbe distruggere la macchina e regalarla.
Mario might destroy the car and give it away as a gift.
b. Mario potrebbe vendere e non vendere la macchina.
Mario might sell and not sell the car

Indefinite subjects, too, seem capable of being interpreted in the scope of distributively conjoined object. In (63a), Paula and her daughter may have been married by the same or by different millionaires, a reading difficult to obtain with plain *e/and*. The same applies to *someone* in (63b).

(63) a. Pensa: un milionario ha sposato sia Paula che sua figlia!
Imagine: a millionaire has married BOTH Paula AND her daughter!
b. Pare incredibile, ma qualcuno deve pur esser nato sia in quella capanna
it_seems incredible, but someone must indeed be born BOTH in that shed

17 In English scoping *both/and* over the modal seems more difficult than in Italian. However, all the speakers I have asked agreed that plain conjunction cases in (62) are worse at wide-scoping. It is worth noticing that a certain disagreement exists in the literature on whether plain *and* can take scope over other operators, cf. Clark 1992 vs. Larson 1985b.

che in quella grotta.
AND in that caves

The scopes of D-Conj are notably affected by negation. In contrast with the natural wide-scope of coordination in e.g. (60) and with at least the possibility of clausal scope in (63), (64) does not have a reading in which the coordination takes wide overt the whole clause, past negation, yielding the meanings in (65).

(64) a. Un milionario non ha sposato sia Carla che sua figlia.
a millionaire not has married BOTH Carla AND her daughter
b. Qualcuno non ha vissuto sia in quella capanna che in quella grotta.
someone not has lived BOTH in that hut AND in that cave

(65) a. One millionaire didn't marry Carla and (another) one didn't marry her daughter.
b. No-one lived in that hut, and no-one lived in that cave.

The effect is likely due to the tendency of negation to associate with focus elements, like *sia* or *both*, keeping in its scope. The obligatory wide scope of negation in these cases nicely accounts for the impossibility of negative polarity items (*alcuno/nessuno* 'any$_{negpol}$' in object position) inside D-Conj:

(66) *Carlo non ha visto sia {alcun ragazzo che Maria / Maria che alcun ragazzo /
John not has seen BOTH {any boy AND Mary / Mary AND any boy /
alcun ragazzo che alcuna ragazza / nessun ragazzo che nessuna ragazza}.
any boy AND any girl / no boy AND no girl}
'*John did not see both {any boy and Mary / Mary and any boy / any boy and any girl}'

Since *not* negates the conjunction, *John did not see both any boy and Mary* entails the disjunction of (67a) and (67b); in the first member, the negative polarity item is not in the scope of negation, leading to ungrammaticality.[18]

(67) a. *John saw any boy but he didn't see Mary
b. John didn't see any boy but he saw Mary

Taking stock: when not anchored down by negation, D-Conj takes wide scope much more readily than plain conjunction. While the scope data for plain *e/and* are not completely clear, this seems to rule out the idea that plain *and* might have all the scope options of D-Conj and more. However, this could also be a pragmatic effect: *and* could be felt to have narrow scope precisely because, if wide(r) scope was intended, the speaker could have used D-Conj.

18 A reviewer points out the interesting minimal pair **Conosco sia Maria che nessun altro* 'I know both Maria and nobody else' vs. *Conosco Maria e nessun altro* 'I know Maria and nobody else'.

5 Explaining the Data

We are now in a position to return to the data in Sec. 2 and state their not-so-hidden generalization:

(68) Generalization:
Constituents which cannot undergo movement to FocP cannot be conjoined by D-Conj.

The conjoined categories (argumental DPs, predicates, VPs, embedded CPs, adjuncts) in 2.1 are all cases where focus or topic movement is independently attested. Quantifiers and possessors cannot move alone to a clausal Focus position, but their NP part may be extracted. I will return to these cases in Sec. 5.1.

The impossible cases in Sec. 2.2 are due to a number of reasons: the constituent's X′ status, its position, the presence of elements which block raising (see the PP-internal conjunctions), etc. To start, consider the ban on distributive coordination of full TPs seen in (27), regardless of whether the sentence contains further material that selects the TP (29) (or modifies it, see (69), modeled after (27b)).

(69) *Sia [Carlo partì] che [Maria tornò] (ieri / quando eri piccolo)
BOTH [Carl left] AND [Mary returned] (yesterday / when you.were young)
'*Both [Carl left] and [Mary returned] (yesterday / when you were young)'

In principle, these cases could be derived by moving the two TPs as wholes to their respective Focus positions, stranding modifiers in the remnant; alternatively, they could be obtained by leaving the two TP structures in (45) or (46) in place. The first option is ruled out by that fact that bare TPs cannot be left dislocated (see the cleft in (70)).[19]

(70) *It's [Mary left] that John refuses to believe (that)

The second strategy – leaving the two TPs *in situ* – could be successful insofar it is possible to create alternatives by assigning focus *in situ*. The typological variability in the possibility of applying *both/and*-equivalents to root clauses reported in Johannessen (2005) could thus reduce to the extent to which languages can carry out this operation successfully.

Embedded CPs, on the other hand, may be moved to the [Spec,FocP] of the clause selecting them, so they are predicted to be possible as distributive conjuncts (see Sec. 2.2, ex. (21)), unless their movement

19 Unless, that is, the TP is a quotation, in which case D-Conj also improves:
(i) Gianni ha detto sia "Marco è un bastardo!" che "Gliela farò pagare!", vostro onore.
Gianni has said BOTH "Marco is a bastard!" AND "Him I_will_make pay", your honor
'Gianni said both "Marco is a bastard" and "I will make him pay", Your Honor.'

is independently blocked, as is the case with relative CP (35), which can famously undergo right dislocation in English (*I spoke with a man yesterday [who gave me sound advice]*), but not left dislocation (see the cleft in (71)).

(71) *It's [that/who gave me sound advice] that I spoke with a man.

Similarly, small clauses ('PredPs' in Bowers's (1993) terminology) under *consider* or *appoint* verbs cannot be extracted (72), and are correctly predicted to be out as distributive conjuncts (31).

(72) a. *[GIANNI UBRIACO], Mario considera (non Luigi malato)
[Gianni drank], Mario considers (not Luigi ill)
cf. '*it's John drunk that Mario considers'
b. *E' [Gianni capo divisione] che {considero / nomino}.
It's [Gianni head of division] that {I.consider / I.appoint}

5.1 X′-Extraction Cases

Neither Italian or English can distributively coordinate constituents introduced by a finite auxiliary (30a) (again, unlike plain coordination). This follows from the structure in (73) (simplified).

(73) sia/both [$_{FocP}$ Foc^0 [$_{TP}$ Maria [$_{T}$' ha/has [$_{VP}$ dormito/slept]]]] che/and [$_{FocP}$ Foc^0 [$_{TP}$ Maria [$_{T}$' ha/has [$_{VP}$ sognato/dreamed]]]]

Moving the *has slept / has dreamed* to Focus stranding *Maria* would cut at the T′ joint, arguably an illecit operation (cf. **It's has slept what Mary (did)*). Moving *Maria* across-the-board out of the conjunction, e.g. to the Spec of the highest TP, focusing the remnant TPs, then reconstructing the order would incur in the same problems with TP movement seen above, plus the unmotivated extraction of the subject *Maria*.

Recall that English and Italian contrast with respect to main verbs ((40) above). This now follows from the well-known fact that English finite main verbs remain lower than TP at PF, as shown by adverb positions (Pollock 1989). In English, a derivation along the lines of (53b) is possible, while in Italian, where Vfin is in T, (74) reduces to the impossible auxiliary conjunction seen above.

(74) *Maria sia vide Mario che salutò Eva
Mary BOTH saw Mario AND greeted Eva

The impossibility of extracting at X′ could also be at the heart of the English contrast in (75). In the latter, the genitive *-'s* remains attached to each possessor phrase, and it is not subject to ATB raising. (25a), repeated as (75a) contrasts with (75b).

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(75) a. I touched both John's and Mary's fingers.
b. *I touched both John and Mary's fingers.

A derivation like (76), which moved the possessors *John* and *Mary* to [Spec,FocP] would violate the Left Branch Constraint responsible for (77).

(76) *[$_{DP}$ $t_{i/j}$ -s fingers]$_k$ [both [$_{FocP}$ John$_i$] t_k and [$_{FocP}$ Mary$_j$] t_k]...

(77) a. *Whose did you meet friend?
b. *It's John that I met 's friend.

The alternative would be to move both possessive DPs to their respective [Spec,FocP] positions, then apply an operation that factors the material in final position (Right-Node-Raise, RNR, in the terminology of Ross 1967, see e.g. *John bought and Mary drank an expensive bottle of cognac*). Leaving aside for a moment the nature of RNR (see Sec. 7 for the broader picture), the approach might work in (75a), and could be used to derive the conjunctions of Qs we saw in (24) (*both too much and too little water*), see (78).

(78) [both [$_{FocP}$ [$_{DP}$ too much t_k] Foc^0 ...] and [$_{FocP}$ [$_{DP}$ too little t_k] Foc^0 [$_{NP}$' water]$_k$ ...]]

In (75b), however, the shared part is *'s fingers*. If the genitive marker is in D, this translates into an extraction at X$'$ level, again in violation of the Structure Preservation Hypothesis.

(79) *[$_{D'}$ -s fingers]$_k$ [both [$_{FocP}$ [$_{DP}$ John t_k] Foc^0 ...] and [$_{FocP}$ [$_{DP}$ Mary t_k] Foc^0 ...]]]

5.2 Downward Movements

In some cases, the constituent which ought to be moved to FocP is simply attached higher than its landing site and cannot be lowered. This is probably the reason for the failure of WH-DPs in direct questions (e.g. **both who and what did you see?* in (36)) and for the difference between Individual Level (or 'atemporal') and Stage-Level (or 'temporal') absolute modifiers, seen in (39). Let's look at them in turn.

The case of root WH-elements in (36) could be resolved as downward movement if we assume that these elements normally target a CP layer *above* FocP, whose head is incompatible with their +Wh features.[20] One question, then, is what prevents the interrogative

20 Rizzi (1997, 298) proposed that WH-elements stop in [Spec,FocP], to explain their incompatibility with focused element, in either order (WH-FOC-TP and FOC-WH-TP). However, there are good semantic reasons why focus would be incompatible with WH, in particular the fact that, by definition, one cannot question a presupposition. Note that even Focus in-situ is impossible in direct questions:

elements to stop in their respective FocPs, then move higher, pied-piping *sia/che*, to a place that can check these features. My hypothesis is that when the upper clause is root it might not license a proper CP landing side above *sia*, due to its defective status. However, if a higher interrogative verb selects the clause containing *sia*, its [Spec,CP] becomes a possible checking site for an interrogative D-Conj, as we saw in (37) above.[21]

Absolute constructions may appear before or after the sentence they modify. However, post-sentential IL-modifiers are separated by a slight pause, which is not required with SL-modifiers (let's assume for a moment that "being a linguist" is a timeless property).

(80) a. He was hired, being a linguist.
b. He touched the ceiling standing on a chair.

A negation in the main clause may take scope over the latter, not the former:

(81) a. ??He wasn't hired being a linguist (, he was hired being a normal human being)
b. He didn't touch the ceiling standing on a chair (, he touched it using a broom)

(81a) is only interpretable by forcing *being a linguist* to mean *when he was a linguist* or perhaps *in his guise as a linguist*. The fact that SL-modifiers may appear under negation suggest that these clauses are attached to a sentence-internal position, perhaps a very low VP position (see Kayne 1994, ch.9) from which they can raise to a topic position when they appear on the left. Examples such as (39)b above (*Both standing on a chair and jumping, Carl manages to touch the ceiling*) could be derived from (82). Individual level modifiers, on the other hand, would be attached at or over CP, and couldn't appear within the coordination.

(82) ... $[_{CP}$ [standing on a chair$]_i$ Foc^0 $[_{TP}$ Carl can touch the ceiling $[_{VP}$ ... t_i]] and $[_{CP}$ $[_{FocP}$ jumping$]_j$ Foc $[_{TP}$ Carl can touch the ceiling $[_{VP}$ ... t_j]]]]]]

The same analysis applies to other cases: the apparent parallelism between *because* and *although* (83a) breaks down when negation is

(i) *A chi dovrebbero dare IL PREMIO NOBEL, mica il Bancarella?
to whom they should give the Nobel price, not the Bancarella?

If Wh-element did target the FocP position, their features might also be incompatible with the creation of declarative alternatives that seems to be essential for D-Conj.

21 In Italian, an alternative analysis could capitalize on the idea that Wh- must move to [Spec,FocP], as Rizzi proposes, but in the *sia/che* construction they are blocked by the declarative force of the complementizer *che* selecting FocP. In the embedded case the whole subordinate CP moves to [Spec,FocP] and no direct clash arises. However, this analysis would not extend to English.

inserted, suggesting that *although* is placed in a high clausal position. Predictably, *because* allows *both/and*, *although* does not.

(83) a. She was hired {because / although} she was a linguist.
b. She wasn't hired {because / ??although} she was a linguist. *NOT>B/A*.

(84) a. She was hired both because she was a linguist and because she knew python.
b. *She was hired both although she was a linguist and although she only knew COBOL.

5.3 Prepositions and Relative Clauses

The English/Italian contrast with conjunctions and PP selected by verbs (41), repeated below, follows straightforwardly from the fact the intermediate representation would strand a preposition (*con/with* in (85)), which is licit in English but not in Italian. *Sia/che* over two PPs (illustrated in (23) above), is fine as expected.

(41) a. ??Gianni ha parlato con sia Maria che Eva
John has spoken with BOTH Mary AND Eva
b. *Vado a sia Roma che Bologna
I.will.go to BOTH Roma AND Bologna
c. *Hanno combattuto contro sia i Visigoti che i Vandali
they.have fought against BOTH the Visigoths AND the Vandals

(85) a. … [$_{\text{FocP}}$ Maria$_i$ Foc^0 [$_{\text{TP}}$ Gianni ha parlato con t_i]]..
b. … [$_{\text{FocP}}$ Maria$_i$ Foc^0 [$_{\text{TP}}$ Gianni has spoken with t_i]]…

Prepositions, however, raise additional questions. In contrast with the deviance of small clauses under *consider* (see (31)), small clauses selected by P are fully acceptable (see (32b), repeated below). To key to understand these examples, however, is that here the application of *sia/che* or *both/and* is *not* equivalent to main clause conjunction (see (86a)), in contrast to what happens with e.g. the *because* modifiers in (84a). (32b) is not saying that the absence of just one of the two players will result in disaster. This is all the more surprising considering that these small clauses always contain stage-level predicates (see **with my baby {a boy / male}, Grandma will be happy*).

(32b) Con sia Gianni espulso che Marco infortunato, la partita sarà un disastro. ≠ (a)
With both John out and Marc injured, the match will be a disaster
a. Con Gianni espulso, la partita sarà un disastro e con Marco infortunato,
With John out the match will be a disaster and with Marc injured
la partita sarà un disastro.
the match will be a disaster

In these examples, D-Conj does not take scope over the whole sentence, only over the modifiers. The same is true with nominal cases in general (PP and RC): to the extent they are acceptable, the scope does not extend over the modified noun.

(86) a. Voglio un auto con sia l'airbag che il condizionatore
I.want a car with both the airbag and the air-conditioner
≠"I want a car with the airbag and I want a car with the air-conditioner"
b. Conosco un uomo che parla sia Tagalog che Inuit
I.know a man who speaks both Tagalog and Inuit
≠"I know a man who speaks Tagalog and I know a man who speaks Inuit"

Nominal cases where the conjunction can appear either inside or outside the PP give rise to subtler judgments. Thus (87a) refers to a single meeting between the speaker, Maria and Paula, whereas (87b) also has a reading where two separate meetings are referred to (the speaker and Maria, the speaker and Paula).

(87) a. ?Un incontro con sia Maria che Paula potrebbe essere utile.
a meeting with both Maria and Paula could be useful.
b. Un incontro sia con Maria che con Paula potrebbe essere utile.
a meeting both with Maria and with Paula could be useful

Next, the failure of (88a), which can be reduced to the nonsensical (88b), shows that at least the preposition must be in the scope of D-Conj.

(88) a. *La distanza tra sia Roma che Milano è grande.
the distance between both Rome and Milan is large
b. *The distance between Rome and (the distance) between Milan is large

The picture which begins to emerge is the following. In relative clause cases such as (86) (assuming the head-internal analysis of Kayne 1994 and Bianchi 1999), D takes as its complement a CP which contains the projections to which the various *sia/che* remnants are fronted (89a). *Tagalog* and *Inuit* are moved to FocP, the remnant is ATB-extracted to the defective TP below the higher CP (89b), then *uomo* "man" is fronted onto a position at the edge of the CP from which it can function as a restrictive property for the determiner.

(89) a. Un [$_{\text{CP}}$ che [$_{\text{TP}}$ T^0 [$_{\text{VP}}$ sia [$_{\text{CP}}$ [$_{\text{FocP}}$ uomo parla Tagalog] che [$_{\text{FocP}}$ uomo parla Inuit]]]]]
A [$_{\text{CP}}$ that [$_{\text{TP}}$ T^0 [$_{\text{VP}}$ both [$_{\text{CP}}$ [$_{\text{FocP}}$ man speaks Tagalog] and [$_{\text{FocP}}$ man speaks Inuit]]]]]
b. Un [$_{\text{CP}}$ che [$_{\text{TP}}$ [$_{\text{TP}}$ uomo parla]$_i$ T^0 [$_{\text{VP}}$ sia [$_{\text{CP}}$ [$_{\text{FocP}}$ Tagalog t_k] che [$_{\text{FocP}}$ Inuit t_i]]]]]
c. Un [$_{\text{CP}}$ uomo$_k$ che [$_{\text{TP}}$ [$_{\text{TP}}$ t_k parla]$_i$ T^0 [$_{\text{VP}}$ sia [$_{\text{CP}}$ [$_{\text{FocP}}$ Tagalog t_k] *che* [$_{\text{FocP}}$ Inuit t_i]]]]]

In the small-clause under *con* "with" (32b) we have to assume that the element which undergoes ATB-raising and selects the small-clause is *con* "with" or perhaps a semantically equivalent gerundive predicate *having*, overtly realized as *con*. This element must have enough of a clausal structure to contain a FocP:

(90) both [$_{FocP}$ Foc^0 [having/with [$_{SC}$ John drunk]]] and [$_{FocP}$ Foc^0 [having/with [$_{SC}$ Mario injured]]]...

Next, the small clauses are moved to their focus positions, and the verbal/prepositional remnant *having/with* is extracted ATB. The same can be assumed, more transparently, of perception verbs, in (32a). The following examples from Italian show that in these cases smallclauses can in fact be topicalized and focalized:[22,23]

(91) a. [Gianni {ubriaco / in giardino}], l' ho visto spesso.
[Gianni {drunk / in giardino}], it$_{CL}$ I.have seen often
"John drunk, I have often seen"
b. [LA BIRRA IN FRIGO], ho, (mica il te in caldo)!
the beer in the fridge I have, (not the tea in hot)
"Beer in the fridge, I have, (not tea on the stove)!"

All the other nominal cases containing *with* must be reduced to one of these two cases (if they are really distinct). For instance, *a car with both the airbag and the air-conditioner* should be assumed to come either from *a car which has both the airbag and the air-conditioner* or from *a car with both the airbag and the air-conditioner installed*.

Other prepositional cases could be derived along the same lines, assuming with Kayne (1994) that a clausal structure for DPs is at least a possibility. In these cases the predicate raised ATB should minimally include the head noun, as in (92), and perhaps also the article (see Zamparelli 2000), when the conjunction has scope over it (93). I leave the details of the derivation open.

22 It is important not to mix (91) with a case where the two elements have been independently topicalized. This gives a characteristic pause in between the two topics (ia), and leads to ungrammaticality in (ib).

(i) a. Gianni, in giardino, l'ho visto.
Gianni, in_the garden, him_I_have seen
b. *LA BIRRA, IN FRIGO, ho!
the beer, in fridge, I_have!
cf. '*Beer, in the fridge, I have!'

23 On the other hand, despite the possibility of D-Conj with infinitival predicates under verbs of perception, this type of SCs cannot be easily left dislocated, see (ib):

(i) a. Ho visto sia [Carla partire presto] che [Fabio tornare tardi]
I_have seen BOTH [Carlo leave early] AND [Fabio return late]
b. ?E' [Carla partire presto] che vedo, non [Fabio tornare tardi].
It's [Carla leave early] that I_see, not [Fabio return late]

I can speculate that at the end of the derivation the infinitive should remain in a position where it can be licensed by the perception verb.

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(92) a. $[_{DP}$ this [both [friend of Paula] and [friend of Maria]]]
b. $[_{DP}$ this [friend of $t_{i/j}$] [both Paula$_i$ and Maria$_j$]]

(93) a. $[_{DP}$ D^0 [both [a relative of Paula] and [a relative of Maria]]]
b. $[_{DP}$ D^0 [a relative of $t_{i/j}$] [both Paula$_i$ and Maria$_j$]]

5.4 The Role of Ellipsis

Sometimes, D-Conj appears to join simple Vs (94).

(94) Maria ha sia visto che salutato Carlo.
Mary has both seen and greeted Carl

(95) During his career, Karl has both created and inherited vast properties.

In the present account, *sia/che* coordination cannot apply to heads, which could not move to [Spec,FocP]. (95) must therefore be derived either via Right Node Raising of the first object. Following Wilder (2018, Sec. 27.4.3), I will assume that backward deletion is a possible implementation of RNR (and arguably, one more promising than rightward ATB-extraction). I will then assume VP raising-to-Focus, after which RNR deletes the object in first conjunct under identity with the second object.

(96) $[_{TP}$ $[_{TP}$ Maria ha $t_k]_j$ sia $[_{VP}$ visto ~~Carlo~~$]_j$ che $[_{VP}$ salutato Carlo$]_k$ t_j]

Consider a second possibility: deriving the effect via a double ATB-extraction, first of the shared subject and auxiliary, then of the shared direct object. The derivation is schematized in (97): the two VPs move to FocP, the TPs is ATB-raised, then the shared object *Carlo* is ATB-raised, giving (97d). The word order is reestablished by moving the bigger TP embedding the *sia/che* all the way to the left periphery (97e).

(97) a. $[_{TP}$ T^0 sia $[_{FocP}$ Foc^0 $[_{TP}$ Maria ha visto Carlo]] che $[_{FocP}$ Foc^0 $[_{TP}$ Maria ha salutato Carlo]]]
b. $[_{TP}$ T^0 sia $[_{FocP}$ visto Carlo $[_{TP}$ Maria ha t]] che $[_{FocP}$ salutato Carlo $[_{TP}$ Maria ha t]]]
c. $[_{TP}$ $[_{TP}$ Maria ha t] T^0 sia $[_{FocP}$ visto Carlo t_k] che $[_{FocP}$ salutato Carlo t_k]]
d. $[_{DP}$ Carlo$]_i$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{TP}$ Maria ha t_k] sia $[_{VP}$ visto t_i] che $[_{VP}$ salutato t_i]]
e. $[_{TP}$ $[_{TP}$ Maria ha t_k] sia $[_{VP}$ visto t_i] che $[_{VP}$ salutato t_i]] $[_{DP}$ Carlo$]_i$

While this sequence does get the ordering right, it has little else to recommend it. The participles *visto* 'seen' and *salutato* 'greeted' do not form a constituent with their shared object; *Maria ha* 'Mary has' is a constituent, to the exclusion of the participles; adding a PP after *Carlo* e.g. *in cucina* 'in the kitchen' creates yet more additional order possibilities, often unwanted. I will return to these issues in Sec. 7, to propose a radical solution to the problem.

It is also fair to say that backward ellipsis is a debated operation (see a critique in Toosarvandani 2013), yet its existence appears hard to shake off at least for plain nominal conjunction cases like (98): *Many intelligent* is not a constituent, and neither is *the three smallest*. The missing object does not need to be identical in reference: in (99), the properties at issue are most likely not the same.

(98) a. Many intelligent and some diligent students passed the exam.
b. The three smallest and the two biggest boxes should be packed together.

(99) During his career, Karl has both purchased and inherited vast properties.

Regardless of their exact derivation, the fact that (94) are not true head coordinations predicts that those phrases which don't make possible *sia/che* targets will continue to be deviant when they are trimmed down to apparent head-sized conjunctions. The deviance of (100), the apparent coordination of two modals or auxiliaries, reduces to that of T′ case seen in (30a).[24]

(100) a. *Maria sia aveva che ha fortuna.
?Mary BOTH had AND has good fortune
b. ??Maria sia può che deve partire.
Mary BOTH can AND must leave

Other cases where the second constituent is smaller could be derived by the (less controversial) operation of *forward ellipsis* (left-peripheral deletion in Wilder 1997). Variants of this derivation, illustrated in (53b) above, have been proposed several times (see McCawley 1988, Ch. 16; Vicente 2010).

(101) Gianni ha [sia [$_{VP}$ mangiato la pera] che [$_{VP}$ ~~mangiato~~ la mela]]
Gianni has [BOTH [$_{VP}$ eaten the pear] AND [$_{VP}$ ~~eaten~~ the apple]]

Once again, supporting evidence comes from the fact that categories which do not undergo ellipsis, e.g. P and D, must be present in the second conjunct:

(102) a. *Sia [mio fratello] che [cugino] sono qui.
*BOTH [my brother] AND [cousin] are here
b. *Voglio un auto sia [con l' airbag] che [il condizionatore].
??I.want a car BOTH [with the airbag] AND [the air-conditioner]
c. *Ho parlato sia [con mia figlia] che [moglie]
*I spoke BOTH [with my daughter] AND [wife]

24 As a reviewer points out, this contrasts with the grammatical *Marco nè può nè deve partire* 'Marco neither can nor must leave'. This follows from the observation that *né/né* differs from *sia/che* in allowing matrix clause coordination (see (28b) above), and that Italian subjects can be topicalized.

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These cases are akin to impossible gapping cases like (103).

(103) *I spoke with my daughter, and Jack, ~~spoke with my wife~~ wife.

Vicente (2010), working of *not/but* constructions, shows that the item contrasted cannot originate inside an island. The same applies to *sia/che*. (104) illustrates with a relative clause islands.

(104) *Carlo ha rotto sia il vaso che Maria ha portato dalla Cina che dal Giappone.
Carlo has broken BOTH the vase that Maria has brought from Cina AND from Japan

This would have to be derived either by (105), but this is not a possible elision (compare gapping: **Karl broke the vase that Mary brought from China and Marc, from Japan*).

(105) Carlo has broken the vase that Maria has brought from Cina
and ~~the vase that Maria has brought~~ from Japan.

6 Multiple *sia* and *che*

As mentioned on Sec. 1.1, ex. (11), Italian has other ways of doing distributive coordination using the words *sia* or *che*: (i) *sia* followed by multiple *che* (see (10a), repeated below); (ii) multiple *sia*, no *che* (106).

(10a) Sia Gianni che Carlo che Marco votarono "sì".
IS Gianni THAT Carlo THAT Marco voted yes
'Gianni, Carlo and Marco all voted in favor'

(106) Ho visto sia Carlo, sia Luigi (, sia Marco, sia...)
I.have seen IS Carlo IS Luigi (, IS Marco, IS...)
'I have seen both Carlo, Luigi and Marco'

Both constructions allow exactly the same range of categories as *sia/che*, suggesting that the analysis should be parallel. My proposal is that the cases in (10a) (where the first *sia* is obligatory) should receive the same analysis as the non-binary *both/and* (see (47) above), i.e.

(107) sia $[_{CP}$ FocPj$_1$ che $[_{CP}$ ... ~~sia~~ $[_{CP}$ FocP$_2$ che FocP$_3]$

This structure requires forward ellipsis of all but the first instance of *sia* 'be', which is functionally possible since now *che*$_\&$ plays the role of the scope marker. The "one *sia*, many *che*" constraint is the same we see with the word *with* in (108).

(108) I spoke {with Martha, Anna and Sue / with Martha, with Anna and with Sue / *with Martha, with Anna and Sue}

The case in (106), on the other hand, suggest an analysis which brings it much closer to English *both/and*: *sia* in this case does not select *che*$_{\&}$, but a single sentence containing a Focus projection to which the elements to be contrasted move. In turn, all the *sia*-headed clauses are asyndetically conjoined.[25] So, the order of the scope marker and the actual coordination is inverted, but in all other respects the derivation proceeds as above, with ATB-extraction across all conjuncts to (presumably) the position targeted by the remnant in English *both/and*.

(109) a. [$_{\&P}$ [$_{VP}$ sia...[FocP [Contrasting_element_1 Shared_remnant]]] &...& [sia... [FocP Contrasting_element_n Shared_remnant]]]
b. [$_{\&P}$ [$_{VP}$ sia...[FocP Contr._element_1 Foc^0 [*t* Shared_remnant]]] &...& [sia [$_{FocP}$ Contrasting_element_n Foc^0 [*t* Shared_remnant]]]]
c. [$_{TP}$ *t* Shared_remnant] [$_{\&P}$ [$_{VP}$ sia...[FocP Contrasting_element_*1*. Foc^0 *t*]] &...& [sia [$_{FocP}$ Contrasting_element_*n* Foc^0 *t*]]]

To complete the picture, Italian has an adjacent *sia+che* construction, illustrated in (110), where *sia che* (adjacent) takes up a *disjunctive* meaning:

(110)	Sia che parli,	sia che non parli, sarà lo stesso.
	IS THAT he.speaks$_{Subj}$,	IS THAT not he.speaks$_{Subj}$, it will be the same
	'whether he speaks or he does not, it will be the same'	

In this case, the elements after *che* 'that' must be full clauses, not anything smaller, and the verb must obligatorily go in the subjunctive form. This switch of content size and coordination type could seem surprising, but I believe it has a very natural explanation. The alternatives generated by Focus, we have seen, play an important role in the characterization of our meaning: beyond distributivity, which may not be perceivable in certain positions, the semantic effect of D-Conj is that of excluding each conjunct from the false alternatives of the other. The construction in (110), I suggest, is just *an overt spelling out of the alternatives*. Each conjunct is *sentential* because alternatives are propositions, *subjunctive* (the irrealis mood) because it is given as a mere possibility, and *disjunctive* because alternatives are, by definition, in a disjunction. Indeed, the existence of this construction strengthens the case for a clausal derivation for the other cases.

25 This might come from a reinterpretation of *sia* as a coordinator, on the model of the Italian *either/or* construction: *Puoi prendere o carne o pesce* lit. 'you can take or meat or fish'.s

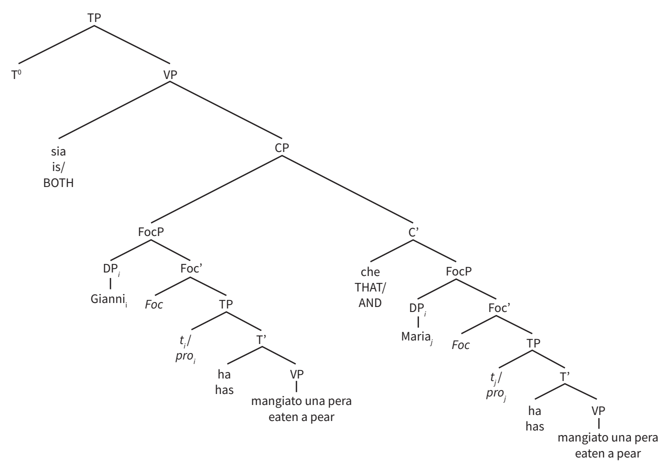
7 The Price of Non-Finality

As it should be obvious by now, the cases where a clausal derivation for D-Conj is more problematic are those where the D-Conj is not in a final position (modulo RNR/backward deletion), and many complex and often frankly stipulative movements appear to be necessary to obtain the desired word order. We have seen one such case in (97), but here at least deletion of the first obj provides an alternative. Consider a classic edge case: D-Conj on *subjects*, as in (111). The verb agreement is plural, here, as with most DP conjunctions.

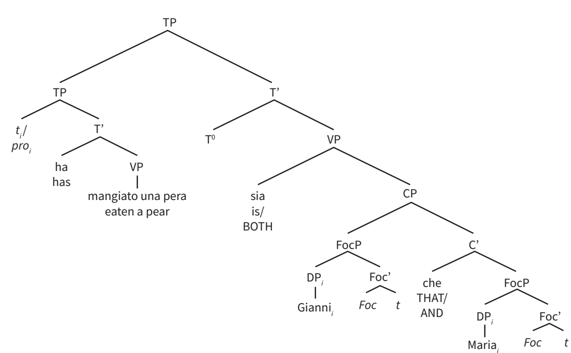
(110) Sia [Gianni] che [Maria] {hanno/ ??ha} mangiato una pera
both [Gianni] and [Maria] {have/ has} eaten a pear

Any attempt to derive (111) with the familiar syntactic tools (A′ movement, possibly done across-the-board, and ellipsis – if distinct from movement) should start from (112a):

(112) a.



b.



A language like Italian has the option of having the subject after the verb, canonically accounted for with the presence of a *pro* in [Spec,TP]. The ATB fronting of the two *pro*-containing TPs, in (112b), could thus be the final step in the derivation: a sentence with a post-verbal subject. If the subject in each conjunct is singular, the verbal agreement after TP fronting may remain singular (113a), suggesting that the *pro* in the raised [Spec,TP] retains the formal features of the individual DP it is coindexed with. The option of singular number is not available in plain post-verbal conjunction (*Gianni e Luigi*, (113a)), or with a plural distributive post-verbal subject such as *entrambi i musicisti* "both$_{DP}$ the musicians" (113b). Thus, this agreement option is not due to coordination or distributivity *per se*, but it is specific to *sia/che* conjunction.

(113) a. Di questo fatto era contento {sia Gianni che Luigi / *Gianni e Luigi}
for this fact was happy {both Gianni and Luigi / Gianni and Luigi}
b. Ha suonato {sia Simon che Garfunkel / * entrambi i musicisti}
Has played {both$_{and}$ Simon and Garfunkel / * both$_{DP}$ the musicians}

What about the *preverbal* subject position in (111)? In Bianchi and Zamparelli (2004), it was derived by further movement of the whole complex subject (in our case, *sia Gianni che Maria*) to a functional (topic?) position beyond the landing site of the remnant TP.

(114) [$_{FP}$ [$_{VP}$ sia Gianni t_i che Maria t_j]$_k$ F^0 [$_{TP}$ [$_{TP}$ t_{i+j} has criticized]$_m$ t_k]]

Toosarvandani (2013) criticizes an analogous proposal for English, pointing out that a correlative subject ('*not* X *but* Y' in his case) may well be preceded by additional topic material (115). (Toosarvandani 2013, ex. (40)). The point is valid, and examples like (116) are even more natural in Italian.

(115) THE NEUTRON, not a mathematician but a physicist discovered.

(116) [A casa] [sia Gianni che Maria] ci stanno bene.
[at home]$_i$ [BOTH Gianni AND Maria] CL$_i$ stay well]

Before reviewing yet more complex positions for D-Conj, let's state a minimal set of requirements that, in my opinion, any order-reconstructing derivation should meet:

(117) Requirements
a. The reconstruction should not allow otherwise unattested word orders.
b. The final constituency structure should be standard.
c. The parsing complexity should be manageable.

Proposals that use (a sequence of) remnant movements to derive the final form of a clause may strive to satisfy Requirement (117a), but

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the other two are not less important. Requirement (117b) is motivated by the need to make sure that, for instance, a verb and it object form a single constituent regardless of whether the object is or isn't a D-Conj, thus allowing e.g. (118). (117b) is obviously not respected by the derivation in (97).

(118) a. [To see both Mary and Marc] is always a joy.
b. John has high hopes [to see both Mary and Marc] and [to have fresh news of both Sue and Bill]

To see the impact of Requirement (117c), consider (119):

(119) [Both Karl, Marco and Luis] have both [emailed and called] [both Anna, Martha and Lisa].

This is no doubt a complex sentence, yet not much worse than the equivalent without *both* (i.e. plain conjunction). However, if each D-Conj coordination creates two copies of the original sentence, we have 3×2×3 = 18 base sentences (without counting the upper clauses postulated for *sia/che*), recombined and factored into (119) by an extremely elaborate set of movements. I don't know of empirical studies on the parsing complexity of distributive coordination, but I venture that any difference with plain *and*, if found, would not be exponential.

With these desiderata in mind, consider a ditransitive verb and a D-Conj in medial position, like the Italian (120):

(120) Carlo ha dato [sia un libro che un quaderno] a Marta.
Carlo has given [BOTH a book AND a notebook] to Marta
Schematically, a possible derivation for (120) would start as:

(121) $\begin{bmatrix} \textit{Subj}\ [\textit{V}\ [\textit{DO}_1\ \textit{PP}]] \\ \textit{Subj}\ [\textit{V}\ [\textit{DO}_2\ \textit{PP}]] \end{bmatrix}$ *original biclausal structure*

(122) $\begin{bmatrix} \textit{DO}_1\ [\textit{Subj V PP}] \\ \textit{DO}_2\ [\textit{Subj V PP}] \end{bmatrix}$ *moving DOs to Foc*

(123) $[\textit{Subj}\ \ [\textit{V PP}]] \begin{bmatrix} \textit{DO}_1 \\ \textit{DO}_2 \end{bmatrix}$ *factoring the remnant*

Now the PP should be attracted out of the TP to an even higher position, the shared object moved past it, and the [Subj V] remnant, raised over both. Beyond being anticyclic, this movement would violate (117a) (nothing seems to stop an order where the conjunction moves first), (b) (the result disrupts constituent order), and probably (c). No identifiable features force this movement, which seems to boil down to a drive to just 'set the order right'.

Starting by moving the shared PP to FocP along with the DO (124), then ATB-fronting the PP, would not fare batter, as the reader can verify by trying to continue the derivation.

(124) $\begin{bmatrix} DO_1\, PP\, [Subj\ V\,] \\ DO_2\, PP\, [Subj\ V\,] \end{bmatrix}$ moving DO+PP to Foc

The same applies to examples like (125) (from ITWAC).

(125) a. La sua attività didattica si è svolta sia in Italia che all'estero,
the her activity didactic SI_{cl} is carried-out BOTH in Italy AND abroad,
quest'ultima per periodi ampi.
this last_one for periods ample
'her didactic activity has been carried out both in Italy and abroad, the latter for long periods of time.'
b. … ha svolto la sua attività sia di ricerca che di didattica
… she_has carried out the her activity BOTH of research AND of teaching
presso l'Università della Borgogna
at the University of_the Borgogne.

8 The Role of Generalization

We have concluded that there is no way to generate the order in (120), or any intermediate D-Conj without violating the structural requirements listed in (117). The same conclusion is reached by Toosarvandani (2013) for non-final *not/but* correlatives.

Consider however the alternatives. *Sia/che* and *both/and* could simply be *lexical* markers of distributivity – a 'complex [i.e. discontinuous] quantificational determiners' in the terminology of Keenan (1987), as discussed in Toosarvandani (2013, Sec. 2.3). Apart from the uneasy status of such structures in modern syntax, the key problem is that this would have to stipulate all the distributional restrictions we saw in Sec. 2, which a movement analysis explains down to cross-linguistic differences, preposition types and Stage/IL-level modifiers (Sec. 5). None of these effects applies to plain *and*. How can a child possibly learn all this?

We have reached an impasse. A lexical analysis is not explanatory. A movement analysis is possible for clause-final positions, maybe possible for preverbal subjects, at a cost, impossible anywhere else.

And yet, I want to argue, impossibly-to-derive positions simply *do not matter*. What matters is that there is *some* position in the sentence where a full-blown clausal derivation is possible. This is the mold, so to speak – the place from which we learn which constituents can or cannot be distributively conjoined. All the other positions, I propose, are just *generalizations*. We hear or produce (126a), with its convoluted, movement-derived constituent structure, and we 'reparse' it as (126b), a normal object conjunction with a normal structure, introduced by something which is no longer felt as a verb, but as an adverb: a *both*.

(126) a. $[_{TP}$ Carlo mangia] $[_{VP}$ sia $[_{CP}$ $[_{FocP}$ $[_{DP}$ le pere]] che $[_{Foc}$ $[_{DP}$ le mele]]]]
$[_{TP}$ Carlo eats] [BOTH $[_{CP}$ $[_{FocP}$ $[_{DP}$ the pears]] AND $[_{Foc}$ $[_{DP}$ the apples]]]]
b. $[_{TP}$ Carlo mangia $[_{DP}$ sia $[_{DP}$ le pere] che $[_{DP}$ le mele]]]

A constituent in object position is normally possible in any other argumental positions, so the push to generalize (126b) is very strong here.[26] The final position shows what constituents can be conjoined; if the conjuncts are DPs, as in (126), the D-Conj is naturally interpreted as a *plural* DP. Consider again the case of post-verbal subjects in Italian: while (113) showed that the verb may agree in the singular, (127) shows that plural agreement is also a possibility:

(127) In questa casa {ha / hanno} abitato sia Mozart che Goethe.
in this house {has / have} dwelt BOTH Mozart AND Goethe.
'Both Mozart and Goethe *has/have dwelt in this house.'

If the subject is moved before the auxiliary, however, the singular form is much stranger (though not outright impossible).

(128) In questa casa sia Mozart che Goethe {??ha / hanno} abitato a lungo.
In this house BOTH Mozart AND Goethe {has / have} dwelt for long.
'Both Mozart and Goethe *has/have dwelt in this house.'

This suggests that the object position is ambiguous: the D-Conj could be derived from sentential conjunction (singular, in this case), or it could have been reparsed as DP coordination (plural, in this case). The first option is virtually impossible in (128), so the D-Conj must be plural. Crucially, even in this case the distributive semantics derived from the final, biclausal derivation is maintained. We may think of (126b) as a 'compiled' version of the derivation in (53b), where what gets combined is crucially *small-conjuncts*, not clauses. Our processing concerns apropos (119) can thus be laid to rest.

Many other cases considered in this paper could similarly be ambiguous between a clause-derived form and a generalized 'small conjunction' – including cases whether the generalization is actually wrong. For instance, the fact that focused modals may be taken by D-Conj in English (see (43), repeated below) could be due to a reanalysis that maps them onto non-finite verb forms, since they do not show any agreement.

26 The obvious exception in Italian and other Romance languages is *bare plural/mass noun*, which are much more restricted in subject than in object position (Contreras 1986; Longobardi 1994). While conjunction of any type has an ameliorating effect on bare elements (Heycock, Zamparelli 2003), D-Conj of pre-verbal bare plurals are intriguingly common.

(43) John both CAN and SHOULD speak out.

The generalization path is also crucial to explain the case of D-Conj inside islands, see e.g. (129).

(129) If [[both John and Mary] or Sue] come, the party will be a nightmare.

Without a small-conjunct derivation, (129) would require extracting *John* and *Mary* from each coordinated conjunct (*John*$_i$ *... [* t_i *or Sue] and Mary*$_j$ *... [* t_j *or Sue]*) then ATB-factoring the disjunctive remnants. But the first step violates the Coordinate Structure Constraint.

9 Conclusions

The goal of this paper was to examine the distribution and possible derivation of a type of conjunction with distributive meaning, D-Conj, in Italian and in English. The constituents this construction can join are a lot more restricted than those in plain coordination, and different also from the distributive constructions that use *all/both* plus plurals. This can be explained as the combination of two possible derivation strategies: one that obtains the conjoined constituents from clause coordination (at the level of the main clause or of its subordinates, including modifiers that functions like implicit relative clauses), the other that reparses the result of the first operation and generalizes it to positions where a full clausal derivation would fail to give the right word order or constituent structure. Distributivity falls out naturally from the first strategy, which uses a combination of syntactic operations (Focus fronting, ATB- extraction) which are independently attested, therefore learnable, and predicts a reduced range of possible conjuncts: those XPs that can move without violating language-general or language-specific rule (say, coordination islands, preposition standing). Instead of assuming that the landing site for the ATB remnant movement is a functional projection in the Comp area, I have proposed that it is the TP of a defective main clause whose verb, *sia* 'be/let' takes the conjunction as its sentential complement. The trigger for this raising is the necessity to license the defective main clause by moving some contentful material in it. Alternative analyses in terms of movement to the Comp area would have trouble explaining why the ATB movement is obligatory yet specific to TP; why it has no detectable semantic effects, and why it doesn't block further extractions from the moved TP.

Believers in the strict parallelism between syntax and semantics might find this approach hard to accept. They might find it suspiciously convenient that a 'local' (or, 'generalized') version of a complex sentential rule could achieve the same semantic effect. If the compiled version is so convenient – they might say – why bother with the long derivation even in those positions where it could be possible? Part of the answer must lie in the fact that *sia/che* is but one of a range of constructions with a distributive semantics that share focus-related properties: Italian has *tanto/quanto* 'as-much/how-much', *così/come* 'so/how' (see ft. 10), *non (solo)/ma (anche)* 'not (only)/but (also)' (Bianchi, Zamparelli 2004); all of these cases contain words that have other uses with none of the constraints we find in the correlative structure. Clearly, a learner that would list them as odd forms of conjunction with odd properties would miss a generalization.

The situation is actually reminiscent of the discussion about the pragmatic vs. grammatical status of scalar implicatures (Horn 1989; Sauerland 2004 vs. Levinson 2000; see Sauerland 2012 for a review). In (130), the hearer could reason as follows: *all* is close to *some* in meaning, yet stronger, so more informative; if the speaker had known that all the students came, he or she would have said so; the fact that *all* was not used is thus signaling that this stronger statement must be false, and that only *some* holds.

(130) Some students came to the party. *Implicature*: not *all* students came.

But of course, *some⇒not all* could also be a pre-compiled piece of information in the lexical entry for *some*, fast and easy to compute without any of this complex reasoning. On the other hand, there are many possible pragmatic scales, and in each of them the implicatures are sensitive to the direction of entailment (downward or upward) found in the context; a solution that sees this aspect of meaning as a pure lexical fact would once again miss a generalization.

In the present case, it would be impossible to understand the limits of D-Conj without admitting that the actual derivation has a place in the mind of the speaker. A corollary is that the view that once we have a grammaticalized version of *sia/che* we should always use it cannot be maintained; at the very least, it would not explain the optionality of number agreement with post-verbal subjects, as we see it in (127): both options must remain open when available. But as we have seen, there are syntactic configuration where a movement-derived D-Conj could not be obtained without inventing ad-hoc rules – rules that could easily overgenerate impossible constituents. This opens up the possibility of empirical studies that compare the processing of D-Conj in different positions and configurations. I leave this for future work.

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Le tropisme comme trait suprasegmental du discours

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Abstract This article explores a dimension of speech that pertains to the voice in a more specific way than enunciation or dialogue: it focuses on the intonations the voice may assume and the meaning Nathalie Sarraute attributes to them. Throughout her work, one can identify numerous instances in which the voice – an intonation, an accent, a hesitation in the pronunciation of a word, or a tone, even one paradoxically unmarked – sets off an entire tropismic sequence. By analysing examples drawn from both her narratives and her plays, this study demonstrates how tropisms, though they surface in dialogue through infinitesimal traces, ultimately disrupt the connection between conversational pragmatics and contextual function.

Keywords Sarraute. Tropism. Intonation. Perlocution. Suprasegmental features.

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1 Prologue

Lorsqu'on aborde la question de la voix d'un point de vue strictement littéraire, on tend à la considérer soit sous une perspective narratologique – la voix étant alors l'instance narrative (Genette 1972, 225-67) –, soit du point de vue linguistique, ce qui renvoie inévitablement à l'oralité et aux traces qui s'insèrent dans le texte avec une fonction principalement mimétique. Il convient également de rappeler que ces traces ne correspondent pas nécessairement à une reproduction effective du langage parlé, mais s'identifient volontiers aux dialogues et, en leur sein, à des expressions issues du langage populaire, qui ne sont pas dénuées de traits conventionnels (Testa 2017). En effet, une reproduction brute du langage parlé risquerait de rendre le texte illisible.

Dans le domaine linguistique, il convient aussi de distinguer ce qui relève du langage parlé de ce qui concerne l'énonciation : au premier appartient le recours à un vocabulaire marqué par des variantes diastratiques et diatopiques de type populaire et régional ; à la seconde, la deixis, les expressions déictiques et les marqueurs conversationnels destinés à souligner la dimension discursive de la langue – même s'il faut reconnaître que, bien que distinctes, ces deux sphères tendent à être envisagées de manière unitaire.

Ce que je voudrais affronter ici est une dimension supplémentaire du langage parlé, qui concerne la voix de manière encore plus spécifique, à savoir les intonations et le sens qu'on leur attribue. Par nature, cette question relève de la pragmatique conversationnelle, c'est-à-dire de cette branche de la linguistique qui prend en compte l'utilisateur et sa situation spatio-temporelle, ainsi que « le intenzioni, le credenze e altri stati mentali, l'agire e il recepire l'agire altrui » (Sbisà 2011). Les annotations sur la voix et le ton avec lequel les mots sont prononcés accompagnent souvent les dialogues dans les romans, généralement dans le but de caractériser l'état d'esprit du locuteur et/ou les intentions de son discours, c'est-à-dire ses actes illocutoires ou perlocutoires : il suffit qu'un dialogue soit introduit ou suivi de qualifications du ton ou de la prononciation pour que la voix acquière des connotations dépassant le sens immédiat des phrases. Mais l'usage qu'en fait Nathalie Sarraute est plus original et semble avoir quelque accointance avec ce que Barthes a appelé le « grain de la voix ».[1]

1 Dans l'article éponyme publié dans une revue de musicologie Barthes définit le « grain de la voix » comme « la matérialité du corps parlant sa langue maternelle : peut-être la lettre ; presque sûrement la signifiance ». Et il renvoie au « géno-chant », défini par Julia Kristeva comme « l'espace où les significations germent 'du dedans de la langue et dans sa matérialité même' » (Barthes 1972, 59). Mais tout cela, à ma connaissance, n'a guère été développé par la suite.

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Toute son œuvre tourne autour des tropismes, un terme qu'elle emprunte à la biologie pour désigner, par analogie, les réactions automatiques produites par un organisme à la suite d'un stimulus extérieur. Dans son cas, il s'agit de réactions de nature psychologique, qui interviennent dans des contextes communicatifs et contribuent à faire émerger les contenus des zones les plus profondes de la conscience. Ces tropismes ne sont jamais – ou presque jamais – verbalisés : leur existence sous-jacente est la condition de leur puissance, qui s'exerce souvent de manière dévastatrice, mais toujours en dehors de toute possibilité de description. Ce sont des vibrations imperceptibles qui modifient les relations interpersonnelles, bouleversant définitivement leurs fondements au moment où elles surgissent à partir d'un geste banal, d'une phrase ordinaire, d'un ton involontaire.

Célèbre est la définition qu'en donne l'autrice dans la Préface à *L'ère du soupçon* :

> Ce sont des mouvements indéfinissables, qui glissent très rapidement aux limites de notre conscience ; ils sont à l'origine de nos gestes, de nos paroles, des sentiments que nous manifestons, que nous croyons éprouver et qu'il est possible de définir. Ils me paraissaient et me paraissent encore constituer la source secrète de notre existence. Comme, tandis que nous accomplissons ces mouvements, aucun mot – pas même les mots du monologue intérieur – ne les exprime, car ils se développent en nous et s'évanouissent avec une rapidité extrême, sans que nous percevions clairement ce qu'ils sont, produisant en nous des sensations souvent très intenses, mais brèves, il n'était possible de les communiquer au lecteur que par des images qui en donnent des équivalents et lui fassent éprouver des sensations analogues. Il fallait aussi décomposer ces mouvements et les faire se déployer dans la conscience du lecteur à la manière d'un film au ralenti. (Sarraute 1996, 1552-3)[2]

Depuis *Tropismes* (1939), à *Ouvrez* (1997), à savoir tout au long de la longue période couvrant sa production, Nathalie Sarraute a exploré les variations possibles et la portée (comique, dramatique, ironique, symbolique…) que véhicule l'expérience des tropismes. Abandonnant le personnage, désormais dépourvu de toute dimension identitaire, son œuvre scrute ce flux de courant qui circule dans les relations interpersonnelles, faisant émerger un aspect de la nature humaine

2 Toutes les citations sont tirées de Sarraute 1996. Entre parenthèses, après la citation, chaque œuvre est indiquée par une abréviation : *PI* : *Portrait d'un inconnu*, *M* : *Martereau*, *P* : *Planétarium*, *Fd'O* : *Fruits d'Or*, *EVM* : *Entre la vie et la mort*.

d'autant plus universel qu'il sait se passer de la caractérisation du personnage.

Il ne s'agit pas, comme Sarraute l'a expliqué à plusieurs reprises, de ramener réactions et comportements à des catégories codifiées par l'analyse psychologique,[3] mais au contraire de rendre explicite toute cette pensée préverbale qui envahit l'esprit et dont le dialogue porte des traces infinitésimales, enfouies sous la banalité de conversations truffées de lieux communs. Cet aspect a été abondamment analysé par la critique, qui accorde à juste titre à Sarraute une place de premier plan dans la littérature du XX^e^ siècle.[4]

La nouveauté absolue de ces contenus a obligé l'autrice à rechercher un langage qui soit apte à leur description, comme elle l'explique dans *Roman et réalité* :

> Le travail du romancier est une recherche qui tend à dévoiler, à faire exister une réalité inconnue. […] La réalité pour le romancier, c'est l'inconnu, l'invisible. C'est ce qu'il lui semble être le premier, le seul à voir ; ce qui ne se laisse pas exprimer par les formes connues et déjà utilisées. Mais ce qui exige pour se révéler un nouveau mode d'expression, de nouvelles formes. (Sarraute 1996, 1643-4)

La poétique de Sarraute, cette cristallisation de contenus dans une forme nouvelle, a été efficacement étudiée d'un point de vue stylistique dans de nombreuses analyses (cf. en particulier Newman 1976 ; Henrot 2000 ; Rykner 2019), dont je partirai pour développer ma réflexion. Mon analyse consistera à isoler la fonction spécifique de la voix, c'est-à-dire le rôle qu'elle joue dans l'émergence des tropismes.

Le choix de cette autrice nous semble particulièrement adapté à cette enquête sur la voix pour deux raisons fondamentales :

- tout d'abord, pour l'importance que l'autrice elle-même accorde à l'aspect phonique des mots, à leur consistance vocale : « J'entends davantage les mots que je ne les voie écrits » (Benmussa 1987, 118) ;
- ensuite, parce que son œuvre évacue toutes les significations de la voix liées à la socialité du personnage ou explicables par son intériorité. Du moins, c'est ainsi qu'elle entend procéder : présenter des tropismes qui n'ont rien à voir avec le personnage, son statut social, son genre ou son histoire individuelle (Henrot

3 Voir surtout *Roman et réalité* et *La littérature, aujourd'hui* (Sarraute 1996, 1643-56 ; 1707-13).

4 Voir, entre autres, Allemand 1980 ; Asso 1995 ; Boué 1997 ; Calin 1976 ; Raffy 1995 ; Fontvieille, Wahl 2003 ; Pierrot 1990 ; Tison-Braun 1971 ; Pavel 2002.

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> 2000, 46). Ce sont des voix désincarnées, qui émergent d'une profondeur préverbale et, perdant le lien avec le locuteur, dépassent l'idée canonique du personnage. Un seul trait les relie tous : le besoin constant, presque obsessionnel, de contact avec autrui[5] et, en même temps, la difficulté inhérente à cette relation, où la moindre nuance dans sa propre expression ou celle de l'autre déclenche de véritables drames intérieurs.

La réflexion sur la voix chez Sarraute n'est pas inédite,[6] mais il reste à mettre en lumière son rôle dans l'irruption du tropisme. Ainsi, cette analyse exclura les occurrences où la voix du personnage révèle malgré lui son état d'âme, trahit ses faiblesses ou une volonté d'intégration dans un groupe.[7] Je laisserai également de côté les passages où l'effet perlocutoire de la voix dépend de l'intentionnalité du locuteur.[8]

En revanche, je me concentrerai sur toute une série d'exemples où la voix – une intonation, un accent, une hésitation dans la prononciation d'un mot, un timbre, qui paradoxalement peut être neutre – déclenche tout un scénario tropismique.

La voix n'est pas le moyen privilégié de l'émergence du tropisme, elle n'est qu'un des vecteurs par lesquels celui-ci se manifeste et révèle l'univers mental du personnage.[9] Ce qui m'intéresse ici, c'est que la prononciation vide les mots de leur sens pour laisser la place à

5 L'autrice l'avait remarqué dans *L'Ère du soupçon* en citant, à propos de Dostoïevski, une phrase de Katherine Mansfield (Sarraute 1996, 1568) ; mais elle l'affirme clairement même à son propos : « S'il y a un absolu que mes personnages recherchent, c'est toujours le besoin de fusion et de contact avec autrui » (Knapp 1975, 263). « Mes textes montrent […] un excès de désir de communication. Q. : Ce que vous montrez en tout cas, c'est que le langage fonctionne à travers une série de non-fonctionnements : la mésentente, le conflit. R. : Au moins s'efforce-t-on à travers ce conflit de rechercher l'entente, de parvenir à une certaine fusion. C'est à ce moment-là qu'on existe l'un pour l'autre, tandis que le reste du temps on garde ses distances et on reste dans l'isolement » (Licari 1985, 14).

6 Voir surtout Shattuck 1995 ; Minogue 1995 ; Rabaté 1999 ; Hubert 2000 ; Noonan 2014 ; Huglo 2005.

7 Voir, par exemple, *Portrait d'un inconnu*, 64, 68, 90, 98 ; ou bien, *Entre la vie et la mort*, 722 et 726. Mais les exemples pourraient se multiplier.

8 Comme dans ce cas : « A une table voisine j'entends une voix féminine, je ne me souviens d'aucun visage, rien n'est resté que les mots, et le ton, un petit ton sec : "Si tu continues, Armand, ton père va préférer ta sœur" » (*Entre la vie et la mort*, 655). Le passage est repris encore, avec quelques variantes, dans *L'usage de la parole*, 939-46. La voix est utilisée ici avec une intention précisément perlocutive, destinée à se répercuter sur le destinataire, et cela bien sûr explique le ton sec.

9 À ce propos il vaut la peine de rappeler la réponse donnée par Sarraute à ceux qui lui demandaient si la sienne était une œuvre psychologique : « Qu'entendez-vous par psychologie ? […] si vous entendez par là, la création d'un univers mental, je ne connais aucune œuvre littéraire et je n'en conçois aucune qui ne soit psychologique » (« La littérature, aujourd'hui » Sarraute 1996, 1659).

une série de sensations préverbales que le ton ou le timbre véhiculent indépendamment de l'intention du locuteur. Dans ces cas-là, la voix en vient même à opérer une césure entre les mots et leur signification.

Je tenterai de documenter cette hypothèse à travers plusieurs citations, présentées dans l'ordre chronologique afin de ne pas évacuer l'aspect diachronique : dans ses œuvres les plus mûres, en effet, Nathalie Sarraute devient de plus en plus consciente du rôle de la voix. En suivant le fil rouge de la divergence entre l'interprétation du ton de la voix et les intentions réelles du locuteur, j'explorerai rapidement l'ensemble de son œuvre.

2 Les récits

Que ce soit une modulation vocale à déclencher le tropisme n'est pas un fait qui se trouve dès les premières œuvres. Il n'en existe aucune trace, par exemple, dans *Tropismes*, et même dans les romans il apparaît assez rarement. La raison pour laquelle le premier recueil en est dépourvu nous est fournie par Sarraute elle-même qui, en comparant ces textes à ceux de l'*Usage de la parole*, affirme :

> Les *Tropismes* partaient de mouvements intérieurs qui aboutissaient à la parole. Ceux-ci (ceux présents dans *L'Usage de la parole*) partent de paroles échangées et descendent dans ce for intérieur, où se passaient les *Tropismes*, aboutissent aux tropismes.[10] [*sic*] (Sarraute 1996, 1911)

C'est dans *Portrait d'un inconnu* qu'on trouvera le premier exemple. Ce roman traduit le fourmillement qui sous-tend la relation entre un vieil avare et sa fille, et surtout les réactions de cette dernière face à la tyrannie de son père :

> le jeune fou, l'inconscient, l'innocent allait venir s'écraser à nos pieds, une loque informe et molle, étendue dans la poussière… mais non, rien n'arrivait… nous entendions le vieux répondre d'une voix où nous seuls pouvions percevoir cette nuance un peu forcée, cette note un peu enrouée qui révélait la réalité du danger, de la menace qui avait pesé : « Non, mais je crois qu'il est tout de même un peu tard pour commencer, je suis un peu trop vieux, c'est que, vous savez, je ne suis pas comme vos Anglais… » Tout allait bien. (*PI*, 120)

10 Texte cité dans la Notice de *L'Usage de la parole*.

Cette voix trahit « l'activité du volcan » uniquement pour le narrateur, qui connaît le tempérament du vieil homme et craint que, d'un instant à l'autre, sa colère n'explose contre son imprudent interlocuteur. Une explosion qui, en réalité, n'aura pas lieu : « le miracle se produisait… » (*PI*, 121). Mais il est légitime de douter que « cette nuance un peu forcée, cette note un peu enrouée qui révélait la réalité du danger » ait effectivement été présente dans la voix du vieillard, sa réponse, extrêmement bienveillante, ne trahissant rien d'hostile pour l'interlocuteur.

En revanche, le grand écart entre la légère inflexion vocale à peine esquissée (« un peu » répété deux fois) et la conviction de se transformer bientôt en une « loque informe et molle, étendue dans la poussière », rend compte de l'ampleur de l'agitation mentale du narrateur.

Martereau met en scène un jeune homme, hébergé par ses oncles fortunés dont il dépend économiquement et envers lesquels il se montre très complaisant. Le drame, entièrement intérieur au protagoniste, se déclenche autour de l'achat d'un bien immobilier nécessitant l'intervention d'un « prête-nom », Martereau en l'occurrence. Cet homme est-il digne de confiance ? Voilà, en apparence, la question qui sous-tend le déroulement de l'intrigue ; en réalité, ce qui importe vraiment, ce sont les tropismes vécus par le jeune homme, qui reflètent son caractère fluctuant, incapable de se cristalliser en une personnalité stable. Sensible jusqu'à la paranoïa, il est attentif au moindre indice :

> Je donnerais n'importe quoi pour ne pas avoir perçu dans le ton, dans le son de sa voix, moins dans les mots eux-mêmes que dans leur prolongement, dans le silence entre les mots, quelque chose d'agressif, d'un peu méprisant… « Quoi de neuf ?… Vous ne dites rien ?… Qu'est-ce que vous fabriquez ?… Comment ça va chez vous ? »… un frottement, un grincement léger… une sorte de petit sifflement… un mince jet âcre et chaud qui sort de ses mots… mais j'exagère déjà, je vais perdre pied, c'est moins que cela, bien moins, à peine une nuance, comme un minuscule rouage mal huilé dans un mécanisme d'horlogerie parfaitement entretenu, réglé, mais c'est là, je l'ai perçu, il ne m'en faut pas plus, moins que rien maintenant suffit, le pli est pris entre nous, mon équilibre si fragile est menacé, rompu, j'oscille, je vacille, et il le sent, il le sentait depuis le début, il me sentait là, près de lui, tout tremblant, guettant, quêtant… quelque chose de lourd, de mou, collé à lui, le tirait ; il avait envie de se secouer pour l'arracher à soi… l'agacement, la rancune, le dégoût en un jet ténu se sont échappés dans ce chuintement à peine perceptible qui prolongeait ses mots… (*M*, 332)

Ce qui importe, pour Sarraute, c'est précisément l'émergence du tropisme, ces sentiments intérieurs suscités par un ton de voix exprimant des paroles banales, insignifiantes en elles-mêmes. Celles-ci sont cristallisées par le neveu en images qui alternent avec la sous-conversation, c'est-à-dire cette pensée qui prend une forme verbale sans jamais être exprimée.

Le tropisme en soi ne provoque aucun changement, encore moins la catastrophe que pourrait engendrer le soupçon né de l'interprétation du ton de voix. Mais le drame est bien là, entièrement intérieur. Tout ce travail mental du neveu, tendu vers la perception et l'interprétation de chaque nuance vocale dans les paroles de Martereau, pousse le lecteur à éprouver un soupçon à son égard, à douter de sa bonne foi, exactement comme le fait le neveu.

L'accumulation des indices défavorables, que le neveu croit percevoir derrière des phrases tout à fait anodines, le pousse à concevoir l'hypothèse selon laquelle Martereau pourrait en effet être un escroc : avec la complicité de sa femme, il aurait feint une bienveillante simplicité et une disponibilité servile afin de subtiliser la maison achetée pour le compte de l'oncle.

Finalement, cependant, Martereau restitue ce qui était convenu, confirmant ainsi l'honnêteté que la première impression laissait entrevoir. Que restait-il donc réellement dans les paroles de Martereau ?

Il faut souligner que la présence du personnage dans presque chaque page du roman ne suffit pas à lui conférer une épaisseur psychologique crédible. Au contraire, toutes les spéculations à son sujet, toutes les interprétations de son comportement, du moindre geste au silence le plus inexplicable, s'effondrent comme un château de cartes à la fin, lorsqu'il devient évident qu'il est impossible d'associer Martereau à un quelconque trait de caractère codifié.[11] Les rares faits rapportés lui ôtent ainsi toute consistance, renforçant son statut de présence schématique, simple signe utile à la construction d'un flux communicatif. Mais là encore, ce n'est qu'une apparence, une création de l'esprit des membres de la famille, et surtout du narrateur, qui croit déceler des intentions trahies par le ton de sa voix.

Dans *Planétarium*, plusieurs personnages d'une même famille se confrontent à travers une série de relations complexes, qui risquent à tout moment de tourner au conflit. Au début, par exemple, la belle-mère de celui que l'on pourrait considérer comme le protagoniste, Alain Guimier, tente d'inciter le jeune couple à acheter des fauteuils qu'elle juge appropriés pour eux. Alain et Gisèle, au contraire, souhaitent quelque chose de moins standardisé et refusent avec toute la courtoisie possible. Mais cela ne suffit pas à contenir la réaction tropismique de la femme, exprimée à travers un discours indirect libre :

11 Cf. ce que dit Sarraute dans *Ce que je cherche à faire* (Sarraute 1996, 1704).

> Mais c’est sa voix sans doute, quelque chose dans le ton, dans le son de sa voix, une hésitation, une gêne, un manque de confiance en soi qui a dû tout déclencher. Ils sont comme les chiens qu’excite la peur, même cachée ils la sentent… C’est ce petit vacillement à peine perceptible dans sa voix, qui a tout ébranlé, qui a tout fait chavirer… (*P*, 367)

La mère se culpabilise et attribue à sa voix hésitante et incertaine la réaction de sa fille et de son gendre. Si l’on devait fournir une interprétation psychologique, on pourrait affirmer que, dans ce cas, c’est l’insécurité de la mère qui affleure à travers son ton de voix. Mais le comportement de la fille et du gendre contredit totalement cette perception : aucun acharnement de leur part, bien au contraire. En refusant sa proposition concernant les fauteuils qui ne leur plaisent pas, ils font preuve de prudence, afin de ne pas heurter sa susceptibilité et, surtout, d’éviter ce ton vacillant qu’elle croit avoir perçu en elle-même. Par ailleurs, le comportement de la mère révèle parfois exactement l’inverse, à savoir une assurance, un paternalisme, à l’égard de sa fille et de son gendre, qui contredit toute posture de soumission. L’essence même du tropisme réside précisément ici, dans son caractère illogique, dans son impossible explication : c’est une émotion brute, antérieure à la pensée, et saisie avant même sa formulation.

Une fois que le tropisme s’est installé, il n’y a plus aucun moyen d’y échapper. Ainsi, la voix, bien que neutre, se charge de significations qui dépassent leur sens premier :

> « Tu es là, Gisèle ? Tu es rentrée… » il y a dans sa voix, dans son intonation naturelle, insouciante, quelque chose de décalé, d’étrange. Les gestes, les paroles des fous donnent aux gens normaux qui les observent cette impression d’être comme désamorcés, vidés de leur substance. (*P*, 385)

L’étrangeté réside moins dans la voix d’Alain que dans la perception qu’en a Gisèle, qui se prépare à lui réciter la leçon préparée par sa mère. Comme si Alain devait s’y attendre, mais préférait feindre l’ignorance, son ton est comparé à celui d’un fou, trahissant une distance maximale entre les mots et leur signification. Toutefois, c’est toujours le point de vue de l’épouse qui opère cette césure.

Dans *Les Fruits d’or*, le ton tiède d’un compliment pousse le narrateur à vouloir prolonger la discussion sur l’œuvre, dans l’espoir d’obtenir un avis plus large, plus satisfaisant, auquel l’approbation contenue dans un adjectif semblait ouvrir la voie. Mais c’est le ton même de cette remarque qui en porte le véritable sens : « Et la voix morne répond… “*Les fruits d’or*… c’est bien” » (*Fd’O*, 529).

L'interlocuteur, en réalité, se dérobe, il n'a rien à ajouter à cette « menue monnaie » (*Fd'O*, 531) qui n'a pas cours dans ce contexte.

Il est intéressant de noter que le sujet de la réponse est « la voix », un élément désincarné, dissocié de l'individu qui la prononce, car « Sarraute, dans la mouvance du Nouveau Roman, a fait subir au personnage une 'cure d'amaigrissement' moderne jusqu'à lui ôter toute individualité langagière » (Henrot 2000, 46).

Mais c'est dans un passage ultérieur que l'on constate que le ton adopté par le locuteur ne lui correspond pas, et ce dédoublement révèle l'incongruité, la fausseté de l'appréciation, attribuable à une forme d'asservissement au pouvoir :

> Dans le mot quelque chose résonne qui ne va pas à cet homme au visage doux et las, à ce vieil ami au bon regard usé, quelque chose d'emphatique, de lourdement satisfait, d'un peu ridicule… Il est ridicule… Tu l'entends ?… Ils écoutent à la porte, ils sont là, toujours aux aguets… Ad-mi-rable… le mot en eux s'est répercuté, il me revient, amplifié, déformé… Admiraable… ils se poussent du coude en s'esclaffant… cette assurance, ce ton sans réplique… Il lance le mot d'ordre. Le commandant en chef a pris ses décisions. Et l'autre, immédiatement… Qu'est-ce que je te disais ? Ah je le connais. Tu vas le voir… (*Fd'O*, 536)

Sarraute va encore plus loin dans *Entre la vie et la mort*, en s'appuyant précisément sur l'importance de certains mots employés de manière singulière par un personnage :

> Un professeur s'est approché de moi, il a regardé par-dessus mon épaule et il m'a dit : Tiens, vous "faites" de l'anglais. Ce mot : faites… c'est comme s'il m'avait donné un coup. Depuis, chaque fois que je l'entends, employé comme ça… Des mots comme celui-là s'enfonçaient en moi. Ils me faisaient mal. Il fallait les extraire et les examiner. Ils révélaient un danger… Une présence inquiétante. Oui, certains mots. *Ou certaines façons de les prononcer…* (*EVM*, 626, nous soulignons)

Mais c'est la conclusion du passage qui est particulièrement significative, car c'est précisément là que s'instaure une fracture entre le sens du mot et sa consistance sonore, particulièrement évidente dans un passage comme le suivant, où l'on en vient à tenter de reproduire les accents :

> Ne me dites pas que vous en êtes encore, comme les Anglais, à juger les gens sur leur accent… […]
>
> Humblement il essaie de se corriger. Ils ont raison, il doit y avoir dans ce dégoût quelque chose de louche, quelque chose

> d'inavouable. Il faut écraser cela en soi, il faut le détruire, se mortifier… Que les molles voyelles traînantes librement s'étalent… La vaaalise… Il faut les traverser sans s'y arrêter, sauter à travers elles sans respirer, en se bouchant le nez, et regarder ce qui est là, par-derrière… et la voici… on voit son cuir d'un grain fin, patiné, satiné, l'éclat doré de ses ferrures de cuivre, son épaisse poignée arrondie, lisse au toucher… Les vaaaacances… et voici entre les rochers les criques d'émeraude, l'eau transparente où tremblent les moirures d'un sable intact… les cimes immobiles des pins, les soleils rouges, les rayons verts… « Oui, les vacances bientôt… Moi je n'aime que le Midi, la mer tiède… Et vous ? Où irez-vous cette année ?» Mais on ne peut pas s'en tirer à si bon compte. Les molles voyelles graisseuses impitoyablement sur lui s'étirent, s'étalent, se vautrent… Ces vaaacances… la courte consonne finale apporte un bref répit, et puis on va recommencer… le sooolei… laaa meeer… le liquide aux relents fades qu'elles dégorgent l'asperge…
>
> Ne pas bouger. Pas un geste même furtif pour s'essuyer. Seulement après, quand le supplice a cessé, il ne peut plus se contenir, il a besoin coûte que coûte de s'assurer qu'il n'est pas seul, que d'autres, comme lui ont été torturés, il doit les contraindre avec précaution à avouer, à se rallier à lui… « Vous avez remarqué son accent ?… Non, ne croyez pas, je n'ai rien, je vous assure, contre un accent un peu gouailleur… Il est parfois charmant, bon enfant, pétillant… il a une sorte de fraîcheur acide… J'ai un ami, un vrai titi parisien… Mais ici vous sentez bien qu'il y a quelque chose de particulier… quelque chose de pesant, d'appuyé… comme une violence sournoise, une agression… C'est comme si on promenait sur vous… ». (*EVM*, 643)

La violence perçue dans l'accent et reproduite avec tant d'obstination, comme si cet allongement des voyelles dissimulait une agression à peine voilée, ne trouve en réalité aucun écho dans les intentions du locuteur.

3 Les pièces

L'examen des pièces radiophoniques, que Sarraute a écrites en cédant aux invitations pressantes de l'allemand Werner Spies, montrent une évolution ultérieure. Dans les pièces, l'émergence du tropisme est encore plus étroitement liée à la parole prononcée. Car le théâtre (ou le cinéma, en l'occurrence, comme nous le verrons plus loin) est certes un « gant retourné »[12] par rapport à ses romans, mais là

12 C'est le titre d'un court essai que Sarraute consacre à son théâtre (Sarraute 1996, 1707-13).

aussi une voix est donnée à tous ces tropismes qui accompagnent en filigrane la communication entre les personnes. Il faut dire que la réticence de Sarraute à vouloir porter les tropismes sur scène était plus que compréhensible : ils sont, comme déjà mentionné, des mouvements intérieurs qui s'évanouissent dès qu'ils sont verbalisés ; c'est à l'intérieur de la conscience du personnage que, tout en étant éphémères, ils deviennent si dévastateurs. Tout change au moment où l'on tente d'en faire une description achevée : ce qui apparaît est « rien » – sans doute le terme le plus récurrent dans toute son œuvre[13] – mais, comme l'affirme Valerie Minogue, ce « basic 'nothing' (in conventional social terms) has visibly existed, in a dramatic expansion of its latent content » (Minogue 1995, 164).

Le changement de médium a permis à Sarraute de rendre encore plus manifeste un trait caractéristique des tropismes.[14] Mais cela aussi s'est fait progressivement, et c'est seulement dans sa dernière pièce que, me semble-t-il, cela apparaît de la manière la plus évidente. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'examiner les inflexions vocales qui émergent des réalisations scéniques, trop dépendantes de circonstances contingentes, mais de réfléchir à la manière dont Sarraute a choisi de travailler sur le texte, sur la signification verbale, pour trouver le moyen de suggérer l'émergence du tropisme.

Lorsque Sarraute s'attaque à l'écriture radiophonique, elle choisit d'abord d'exploiter les spécificités du médium pour exalter certaines caractéristiques de son écriture : l'interchangeabilité des personnages, par exemple, est bien exploitable à la radio, où il est impossible de distinguer clairement plus de trois ou quatre voix. Ses trois premières pièces, qui comptent de sept à neuf voix, visent précisément à mettre en avant cette autonomie du tropisme par rapport au personnage.[15]

Ce ne sera plus le cas pour les trois suivantes. J. Chambon observe comment l'évolution du théâtre de Sarraute dessine une courbe inverse par rapport à ses romans : là où « le roman pousserait à

13 Cf. par exemple : « un rien le fait osciller, fait tourner l'aiguille sur le cercle gradué, moins que rien, un geste, une intonation, un accent, une ligne dans la coupe des cheveux, des vêtements… les indices les plus infimes sont les plus importants – un œil en elles, auquel rien n'échappe, impitoyable, glacé, à tout moment vous jauge, vous juge… » (*Martereau*, 205). « Demandez à n'importe qui, après des moments tels que ceux-ci : "Que s'est-il passé ?", et vous recevrez immanquablement cette réponse étonnée : "Mais rien, voyons, que voulez-vous qu'il se soit passé ? Absolument rien" (*L'usage de la parole*, 955). « Il faut qu'il émerge inopinément au cours de la plus paisible et amicale des conversations, qu'il se glisse mêlé aux autres mots charrié avec eux dans le même flot. Rien dans le ton sur lequel il est prononcé ne doit marquer de l'agressivité, ou de la tendresse, porter la trace d'une quelconque émotion » (*L'usage de la parole*, 961)

14 A propos de l'écriture dramaturgique de Sarraute, cf. Auclair 1997 ; Boblet 2005 ; Bouraoui 1972 ; Goitein 1971 ; Lassalle 1996 ; Rivière 1996.

15 À ce propos, cf. Chambon 2015.

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ses extrêmes conséquences le mouvement de dépersonnalisation du personnage […] aboutissant […] à un brouillage total des contours, […] le théâtre, récupérant les 'personnages' tels qu'on les avait abandonnés dans *Le Planétarium*, les pousserait en sens contraire, vers une plus grande netteté » (Chambon 2015, 94-5). Mary Noonan, en insistant sur la présence corporelle de la conscience, va encore plus loin lorsqu'elle affirme, contre ceux qui considèrent la présence physique des acteurs comme un accident inévitable dont il faudrait pouvoir faire abstraction, que « the material Sarraute is working with is both physical and highly dramatic, eminently suited to realisation on the stage, and that the reduced role of characters does not in any way obviate the need for the bodies of actors in the live theatrical situation » (Noonan 2014, 40).

Ainsi, les trois dernières pièces (*C'est beau*, *Elle est là*, *Pour un oui ou pour un non*) marquent un retour à la dimension identitaire : non seulement les personnages, moins nombreux, sont plus facilement identifiables même à la radio, mais surtout, ils possèdent un caractère et une consistance sociale.

Cet aspect est particulièrement évident dans le dernier ouvrage, *Pour un oui ou pour un non*, entièrement construit autour du motif qui a conduit les deux protagonistes à s'éloigner, desserrant ainsi leur amitié.[16] Bien qu'ils soient dépourvus de noms – désignés simplement par H1 et H2 – les dialogues permettent de reconstituer quelques éléments de leur condition sociale, juste assez pour les placer en confrontation avec des armes inégales.

H1 apparaît comme un homme bien intégré dans la société, occupant un poste professionnel de premier plan et fier de sa famille.

H2 est son opposé : artiste sans attaches et sans stabilité professionnelle, il refuse d'appartenir à une quelconque catégorie, qu'il ressentirait inévitablement comme une oppression.

Il s'agit maintenant de déterminer si cette différence sociale, c'est-à-dire ce qui nourrit leur identité, est réellement la cause de leur dispute et constitue le fondement de toute la pièce.

En effet, si l'on analyse leur langage en profondeur, on est forcé de constater que cette caractérisation manque constamment sa cible.[17] H2, qui rejette le monde stable, fermé et préordonné de H1, rempli de catégories qu'il trouve oppressantes, ne fait en réalité que définir et établir des typologies avec un ton assertif. Tandis que H1 hésite, ne termine pas ses phrases, ne trouve pas les mots justes, c'est H2

16 Une des rares lectures exclusivement consacrées à cette pièce est celle de Godin 1995.

17 Ou mieux l'atteint, étant donné le but de Sarraute.

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qui intervient et nomme.[18] C'est à H2 qu'appartient l'attitude de fermeture envers l'autre, tandis que H1 cherche le rapprochement, est prêt à se remettre en question : ce n'est pas un hasard si c'est H1 qui se rend chez H2 pour obtenir une explication et tenter une réconciliation. H2, en revanche, a déjà fixé leurs positions respectives et les considère comme immuables : ainsi, le dernier mot du texte est un « Non ! » prononcé par lui, qui clôt de manière chiasmatique tout le parcours.

L'éloignement entre les deux se produit à cause de la prononciation d'une phrase par H1:

> H. 2 : Eh bien… tu m'as dit il y a quelque temps… tu m'as dit… quand je me suis vanté de je ne sais plus quoi… de je ne sais plus quel succès… oui… dérisoire… quand je t'en ai parlé… tu m'as dit : « C'est bien… ça… »
> H. 1 : Répète-le, je t'en prie… j'ai dû mal entendre.
> H. 2 , *prenant courage* : Tu m'as dit : « C'est bien… ça… » Juste avec ce suspens… cet accent…
> […]
> H. 1 : Et alors je t'aurais dit : « C'est bien, ça ? »
> H. 2, *soupire* : Pas tout à fait ainsi… il y avait entre « C'est bien » et « ça » un intervalle plus grand : « C'est biiien… ça… » Un accent mis sur « bien »… un étirement : « biiien… » et un suspens avant que « ça » arrive… ce n'est pas sans importance.
> H. 1 : Et ça… oui, c'est le cas de le dire… ce « ça » précédé d'un suspens t'a poussé à rompre…[19]

Il est bien évident, même sur le plan graphique, que le ton hésitant de H2 s'oppose au phrasé plus achevé de H1. Et l'hésitation du premier ne se manifeste pas seulement par la multiplication des points de suspension : les rares didascalies le concernent exclusivement et visent à rendre compte de son insécurité. Mais le déroulement des répliques ne permet pas, en réalité, une polarisation des attitudes,

18 « H. 1 : Eh bien, moi je sais. Tout le monde le sait. D'un côté, le camp où je suis, celui où les hommes luttent, où ils donnent toutes leurs forces… ils créent la vie autour d'eux… pas celle que tu contemples par la fenêtre, mais la « vraie », celle que tous vivent. Et d'autre part… eh bien… H. 2 : Eh bien ? H. 1 : Eh bien… H. 2 : Eh bien ? H. 1: Non… H. 2: Si. Je vais le dire pour toi… Eh bien, de l'autre côté il y a les « ratés » » (Sarraute 1996, 1512).

19 Sarraute 1996, 1499. La première occurrence de cette phrase se trouve dans *Entre la vie et la mort* (1968) (Sarraute 1996, 708-9): le même ton condescendant dans ce cas est accepté, attendu même par le personnage de l'écrivain qui se sent toujours inadéquat, tributaire d'un geste d'approbation. La césure entre les deux occurrences est évidente, au point qu'on les dirait complètement indépendantes l'une de l'autre. Sarraute elle-même déclarera, à ceux qui lui faisaient remarque la reprise, qu'elle avait été involontaire (Sarraute 1996, 1868).

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qui restent presque interchangeables. Tous deux, par exemple, à des moments différents, accusent l'autre de « condescendance » ; Minogue démontre avec une clarté absolue que

> Both men are (or to put it another way, everyone is) capable of similar tergiversations, rejecting categorization when applied to themselves, but finding it useful when applied to others. [...] Sarraute's own patient and persistent 'Non', throughout her work, constantly rejects categorization, denounces the general propensity to make 'personnages' of oneself and other people, and maintains the fluidity of lived experience. (Minogue 1995, 174-5)

Dans le film tiré de la pièce en 1990, réalisé par Jacques Doillon et magistralement interprété par André Dussollier et Jean-Louis Trintignant, cet aspect est particulièrement bien mis en évidence par le langage cinématographique. L'action – si l'on peut dire – se déroule entièrement dans une petite pièce, vraisemblablement chez H2, où H1 se rend pour lui demander des explications sur sa froideur. Il est à noter que l'aspect physique des acteurs entre en contradiction avec leur rôle : c'est en effet Trintignant, physiquement moins imposant et au geste plus hésitant, qui incarne H1, c'est-à-dire le personnage le mieux établi socialement. Le choix du réalisateur est parfait : l'inverse aurait en effet conduit à une polarisation – voire une fossilisation – des deux rôles, qui, comme nous l'avons dit, doivent au contraire apparaître fluides, interchangeables.

Du point de vue du jeu d'acteur, il convient également de souligner la monotonie du timbre et la diction volontairement neutre des deux interprètes. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas un hasard si, dès ses pièces radiophoniques, Sarraute avait insisté sur la nécessité d'un ton non marqué chez les acteurs comme exigence expressive fondamentale (Landfried 2015, 109): c'est seulement ainsi que l'auditeur pouvait percevoir l'émergence de la voix intérieure.

4 Conclusion

Les exemples choisis révèlent non seulement la prise de conscience croissante de l'autrice quant au rôle de la voix et la manifestation toujours plus évidente du fait que les intonations, le rythme et l'accent sont déterminants dans le déclenchement du tropisme. Mais, à partir des pièces, se consomme également tout à fait cette scission entre le sens et le ton, qui semblait devoir être dépassée en raison des contraintes imposées par le médium.

C'est précisément l'indétermination identitaire qui permet à Sarraute d'exprimer ce qui peut être considéré comme son apport le plus significatif dans l'étude de la voix : la rupture du lien entre la

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pragmatique conversationnelle et la fonction du contexte. Pour faire émerger la sous-conversation, ce lien doit être relâché, voire rompu, mettant ainsi en lumière le décalage entre la banalité du contenu et le drame qu'il génère, entre l'infime consistance du ton, de la prononciation, de l'accent, et l'avalanche d'émotions qu'ils suscitent.

Mais son apport est encore plus remarquable dans la mesure où cette césure apparaît même lorsque l'identité d'un personnage se cristallise autour de quelques traits significatifs et reconnaissables. Son œuvre illustre ainsi un paradoxe : d'un côté, elle observe le besoin de communication des individus, cette tension constante vers la recherche d'un point de contact ; de l'autre, l'échec tout aussi constant qui accompagne ces tentatives, souvent des drames de la communication, une prise de conscience de l'impossibilité d'un dialogue sans résidus, car les personnages de Sarraute, en fin de compte, ne cherchent dans les paroles de l'autre que le reflet d'eux-mêmes.

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Linguistic Othering and Cultural Stereotypes: The Reception of the Italian Language in France from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment

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Abstract This study explores the role of linguistic othering in shaping French cultural identity through a diachronic comparison with the Italian language. By analyzing key texts by French grammarians and scholars from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, the research reveals how linguistic representations and stereotypes served to sustain cultural narratives and define symbolic boundaries. Initially regarded as a prestigious reference and later as a rival, Italian played a crucial role in articulating the distinctiveness of French linguistic identity. While efforts to affirm the uniqueness of French often led grammarians to overstate differences with Italian – at times obscuring their shared origins – the development of both languages was marked by continuous exchange and reciprocal influence. The study's originality lies in showing how linguistic and ideological frameworks evolved in tandem, tracing the progressive articulation of othering within the cultural landscape of early modern Europe.

Keywords Language and culture. Linguistic othering. Cultural stereotypes. Cultural identity. Historical linguistics.

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1 Introduction. Language and Otherness

The construction of identity, understood as the definition of the self, is intrinsically tied to the process of defining otherness. The dialectic of recognition, as outlined by Hegel in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*) (Hegel [1807] 1970, 145), describes identity as a dynamic process shaped in relation to the other. This mechanism reveals how individuals and communities define themselves not only by what they are, but, more significantly, by contrasting themselves with what they are *not* – that is, the otherness they encounter (Bucholtz, Hall 2020, 231-48).

The process of 'othering' or the construction of the 'Other', goes beyond mere distinction, functioning as a complex system of symbolic differentiation. In the social sphere, otherness can serve as a productive force: encountering the Other allows for a redefinition of the Self (Remotti 2011). In other cases, however, the Other is represented as radically different, challenging the possibility of full understanding or assimilation, as notably theorized by Levinas (1961). Often portrayed as exotic or threatening, this representation of the Other reinforces group unity and a shared sense of identity, while also supporting symbolic hierarchies and mechanisms of cultural exclusion (Staszak 2008).

On a linguistic level, the concept of othering has gained increasing relevance in recent decades, particularly in the fields of language sociology, postcolonial studies, and language education. Scholars like Sonesson (2000), Joseph (2004), and Khrebtan-Hörhager (2023), working at the intersection of sociolinguistics and intercultural studies, have highlighted how language serves as a fundamental means for asserting identity, functioning as 'symbolic capital' that is politically and socially leveraged to reinforce power and community cohesion. Language not only reflects cultural identity, but also actively shapes and constructs it (Patten 2006).

The relationship between language and identity becomes particularly significant when language is used to construct the idea of collective belonging, including that of the nation. As Anderson observed, nations can be understood as "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991): shaped through complex processes of collective self-definition which, alongside the affirmation of shared values, traditions, and languages, also require a clear distinction from other identities. In this context, language serves a dual purpose: it functions as a symbol of cohesion and belonging, while simultaneously acting as a mechanism for delineating cultural boundaries and reinforcing the sense of otherness.

The case of linguistic othering I examine in this study is particularly emblematic because, among European cultural contexts, few have attributed as much symbolic significance to language as France

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(Hagège 2012). At the dawn of the modern era, the French language acquired unprecedented conceptual and philosophical prominence, becoming a key vehicle for cultural and national identity. In this scenario, the comparison with Italian – at the time a language of great prestige – played a central role in articulating French specificity, both linguistically and culturally.

This analysis focuses on a corpus of texts by grammarians, language theorists, and thinkers, spanning a crucial historical period in the formation of French cultural identity – from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. The texts examined contain systematic reflections and illustrative episodes that underscore the persistence of linguistic stereotypes, used to reinforce national narratives and draw the boundaries between 'us', and 'them'.

While the aspiration to define a uniquely French linguistic tradition led grammarians to exaggerate the differences between Italian and French, even to the point of obscuring their common origins, the evolution of the two languages was marked by a series of reciprocal exchanges and influences. The persistent need for French scholars to engage in comparison with Italian reveals the lasting importance of Italian culture in France: an influence that remained strong even in the eighteenth century, when the balance of power between the two languages shifted.

Primary sources for this research are housed at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), with many early editions available via the Gallica digital platform. The choice to adopt a broad chronological arc enables the identification of discursive structures that persist and evolve over time, revealing how language functions as a vehicle of ideological continuity.

2 The Fortune and Spread of the Italian Language in Sixteenth-Century France

To understand the emergence of othering in the Franco-Italian linguistic context, it is essential to examine how Italian gained a prestigious position and became a key reference for French grammarians and theorists (Brunot 1905).

Since the tenth century, the importance of Italian in maritime and commercial sectors had facilitated the introduction of numerous Italianisms into other languages, especially throughout the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans. However, the spread of the Italian language prior to the sixteenth century can be considered "a marginal fact" compared to the "enormous linguistic impact that Renaissance Italy had on European culture" (Serianni 2002, 439), particularly in intellectual and artistic fields. This diffusion seems all the more remarkable when we consider that Italian, unlike other major Romance languages, did not rely on political or institutional centralization, but gained prominence through literary and cultural prestige.

In France, the prominence of the Italian language became firmly established from the fifteenth century onward, driven by the rise of Italian art and literature. Traveling to Italy became an essential formative experience for French humanists, and many prominent writers and intellectuals became well-versed in Italian.[1] The presence of Italians in France, along with the extensive commercial exchanges between the two countries, further facilitated this process of cultural assimilation. In a study on Italian immigration to sixteenth-century France, Marco Penzi (2009) limits this presence to a relatively small number of individuals who nonetheless held important positions not only at court but also within ecclesiastical and military hierarchies. From the late fifteenth century onwards, Italian merchants, artists, and craftsmen settled in the Kingdom of France, especially in the southern regions, to the extent that the city of Lyon became one of the leading centers of the French Renaissance. The presence of French soldiers in Italy during the Italian Wars (1494-1559) further encouraged linguistic interaction, explaining the significant number of Italianisms incorporated into French in military contexts.

Italian bankers in major French cities also played a crucial role, as their influence extended beyond the economic sphere to the linguistic realm. The Tuscan Medici family, the main creditors of the French monarchy, introduced Italian to the highest echelons of political power (Picot 1918). Catherine de' Medici, who married Henry II in 1533, led the French kingdom for two decades (1560-80), during which the Parisian court was animated by a large group of Italian artists, diplomats, and intellectuals, leaving a lasting mark on the culture of the capital.[2] A few years later, in 1600, Maria de' Medici married Henry IV and exercised the regency until the coronation of Louis XIII, further consolidating the Italian presence at court. By the end of the sixteenth century, Italian cultural influence in Paris had reached its peak, to the point where the use of Italian became a widespread fashion, giving rise to the phenomenon of *italomanie* – the imitation of all Italian things – which became a defining trend among the French elite. This long period of Italian ascendancy culminated with Cardinal Mazarin (Giulio Mazzarini), who served as Prime Minister of France from 1642 to 1661, marking the end of nearly a century of Italian preeminence in French state affairs.

In this cultural climate, the prestige of Italian literary production played a decisive role in shaping the French perception of the Italian

1 For example, Rabelais, du Bellay, and Montaigne (see Walter 1997).

2 It was during these years that the Comédie italienne opened in Paris.

language. Alongside Dante and Boccaccio, as well as the flourishing of Italian Renaissance prose, comedy, and courtly dialogue, the influence of Petrarch was particularly significant. The Petrarchan model, widely imitated, established the image of Italian as a refined, musical, and affective language, ideally suited to express the subtleties of amorous feeling (Fumaroli 1980).

From a linguistic perspective, Italy's influence on sixteenth-century French culture is more clearly demonstrated by the substantial number of borrowings and calques from Italian that entered the French language (Hope 1971; Wind 1973). These Italianisms, harmoniously blending into the Latin-derived lexicon, are difficult to identify in contemporary French, yet they constitute a significant body of words. So much so that, until the end of World War II, Italian was the foreign language from which French had borrowed the most lexically.[3] In a 1991 study conducted on a corpus of approximately 60,000 contemporary French words, Walter (1991, 141) identified that, of the nearly 8,000 words of foreign origin (excluding Latinisms and Grecisms), about 1,000 were calques or borrowings from Italian, with a clear predominance of calques – a form of assimilation facilitated by the morphological proximity between the two languages. The same analysis, when focusing on the 35,000 words of the *Petit Larousse*, identified over 4,000 words of foreign origin, of which 700 are Italianisms.

It is difficult to provide an exhaustive list of sixteenth-century Italianisms, not least because only a portion of these words have survived in modern French. Tools such as the *Dizionario degli italianismi in francese, tedesco e spagnolo* (*Dictionary of Italianisms in French, German, and Spanish*), edited by Stammerjohann and Arcaini (2009), or the *Dictionnaire des mots d'origine étrangère* (*Dictionary of Words of Foreign Origin*), edited by Walter (1991) allow us to trace the primary areas of Italian influence.[4] The first domain is the artistic and literary fields, which contain a large number of borrowings and calques, including *appartement*, *artiste*, *balcon*, *cadre*, *campanile*, *caricature*, *colonnade*, *compositeur*, *concert*, *conservatoire*, *coupole*, *dessin*, *façade*, *fugue*, *galerie*, *intrigue*, *madrigal*, *manifeste*, *mosaïque*, *opéra*, *orchestre*, *parfait*, *piano*, *piédestal*, *profil*, and so on. Next in order of importance are the financial and commercial domains (*agence*, *banque*, *crédit*, *douane*, *faillite*, *médaille*, *numéro*, *réussir*, *risque*, *tarif*, etc.), the military domain (*alarme*, *arsenal*, *bastion*,

3 This calculation excludes the numerous learned borrowings from Greek and Latin, as well as those from Provençal.

4 Some Italianisms have complex histories: *azur* and *zéro*, for instance, have Arabic origins but entered French through Italian; others, like *moustache* and *céleri*, have remained in French while the original Italian terms fell into disuse. Still others, such as *sketch*, originated in Italian but entered French via other languages.

bombe, *capitaine*, *piste*, *sentinelle*, *soldat*, etc.), and the maritime domain (*corsaire*, *frégate*, *gondole*, etc.). Finally, there is a rather heterogeneous set of words reflecting the success and spread of certain aspects of Italian life and culture in France: *biscotte*, *bouffon*, *brocoli*, *burlesque*, *cantine*, *caresse*, *carnaval*, *carrosse*, *casino*, *courtisan*, *douche*, *festin*, *magasin*, *important*, *pantalon*, *perruque*, *politesse*, *valise*, and so on.

The words listed here as examples survive in modern French, but the majority of sixteenth-century Italianisms disappeared in following centuries. This was not only due to the 'purist crusades' led by grammarians, but also because the use of foreign words often represented a concession to fashion and was, therefore, a passing trend. Words such as *burler*, *escarpe*, or *discoste*, typical of sixteenth-century *italomanie*, quickly fell into disuse.

3 Anti-Italianism and the Defense of the French Language

The cultural prestige of Italy in early sixteenth-century France provoked a complex response, combining admiration with unease. Although devoted to the study of the Greek and Latin classics, the French Renaissance was unsettled by its encounter with Italian, a language whose literary 'supremacy' initially had to be acknowledged. This confrontation, made unavoidable by the significant presence of Italians in the upper echelons of the French state, contributed to the rise of national pride, which often manifested in critical attitudes and, at times, hostility toward Italian culture.

The controversial events of Catherine de' Medici's reign, particularly the bloody St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572), attributed to the Machiavellianism of the queen and her Italian advisors, sparked widespread outrage, especially among Protestant intellectuals (Mormile 1986). As Marco Penzi (2008, 81) notes, by the late sixteenth century, the idea that the Italian presence at court was responsible for the decline of French noble values, as well as for the introduction of corrupt and depraved customs in Paris, had gained significant traction. Italians were increasingly perceived as cunning, voluptuous, and cruel individuals.

This anti-Italian sentiment reflected not only political and religious tensions but also took on a linguistic dimension. In sixteenth-century France, the debate over language acquired a political significance, closely linked to the construction of national identity and the expansionist ambitions of French monarchy. It is unsurprising, then, that the leading French grammarians of the time regarded Italian with apprehension, particularly as they sought to establish French as a language of culture and literature. They were inclined to define the distinctive traits of their language in opposition to what was, at the time, the most influential linguistic model.

The efforts of the Pléiade authors, dedicated to demonstrating the equal dignity of the vernacular language compared to Latin, nonetheless found both a model and an ally in Italian, to the point that the defense of French was initially modeled on the defense of Italian. Joachim du Bellay's *Deffense et Illustration de la langue françoise* (*Defense and Illustration of the French Language*) (1549) – a text that plays a fundamental role in the codification of literary French and stands as one of the most important manifestos of the Pléiade movement – is, to a large extent, a plagiarism of Sperone Speroni's *Dialogo delle lingue* (*Dialogue on Languages*) (1542).[5]

In the initial phase, the Other can be perceived as 'superior', and proximity to it is emphasized by seeking out similarities, reflecting a psychological mechanism studied by Tajfel and Turner (1979) in social identity theory. According to this theory, social groups tend to seek points of contact with those perceived as superior in order to strengthen collective self-esteem. However, as these similarities begin to pose a threat to the group's identity, the need for distancing emerges, signaling the shift to the next phase, characterized by the marginalization of the Other (Bhabha 2012).

It is within this complex context of confrontation and identity-seeking that Jean Lemaire de Belges composed the treatise *La Concorde des deux langages* (*The Concord of the Two Languages*) (1511), though it was not published until much later, in 1549. The work's aim is to demonstrate the 'concord' between Italian and French, two languages considered to have descended "d'un mesme tronc et racine" (from the same trunk and root) (98). At this stage, the association with Italian granted French not only an equal dignity to Latin, but also a framework for cultural legitimation. Lemaire de Belges' philological treatise, which alternates between Dantean tercets and French alexandrines, has been the subject of various interpretations: some scholars have highlighted its attempt to reconcile the cultural tensions between Italy and France in the early sixteenth century, while others have emphasized how the discourse – only seemingly conciliatory – is in fact shaped by a clear intention of national and linguistic affirmation (Pénot 2018).

From a linguistic perspective, the text is particularly interesting because it introduces certain typological dichotomies that would shape the debate for centuries to come. The text anticipates the Enlightenment concept of the 'genius of language', which posits that linguistic structures shape the thoughts and behaviors of speakers,

5 All translations from French texts, both ancient and modern, are by the Author. Literary quotations follow the historical spelling, according to the referenced edition.

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thus foreshadowing a broader understanding of the relationship between language and national identity. Lemaire argues that French shares, at least in part, the 'feminine' virtues of harmony and sweetness that characterize Italian, but is further enriched by 'masculine' qualities of firmness and rigor. In his allegory, French – embodied by Mars – becomes the ideal medium for recounting military exploits and heroic deeds, while Italian excels in the art of seduction and the expression of sensual passions (Balsamo 1992, 41). In this symbolic configuration, Italian is implicitly associated with Venus: a language of beauty, desire, and rhetorical allure, but lacking the martial vigor and moral discipline.

Here, Lemaire de Belges develops one of the key tropes of French anti-Italianism: the 'femininity' of the Italian language. This gendered characterization underscores the continued influence of Italian literary models in France, particularly Petrarch and the tradition of Petrarchan love poetry. As early as 1533, Pasquier had described Italian as "un vulgaire tout effeminé et molasse" (an effeminate and weak vernacular), due to its musical sounds and vowel endings (Stammerjohann 1990, 15). This quasi-Manichean distinction between the two languages further fueled the othering process. Italian was associated with moral decadence, epitomized by the figure of the aesthete – the sensual and seductive courtier – in sharp contrast to the French 'warrior', who embodied moral integrity and the traditional nobility's *mos maiorum*.

Lemaire de Belges thus solidifies a stereotype that would persist for centuries: Italian is portrayed as a language that is aesthetically refined but 'morally weak', suited to seduction and pleasure, while French is portrayed as a 'virile' language, capable of representing the strength and honor of the nation. This framework reflects a dynamic in which linguistic otherness is shaped through rhetorical oppositions that rely on gendered imagery to define and contrast cultural identities. In reality, the consolidation of this stereotype reveals one of the main concerns that tormented French intellectuals of the time: the issue of France's political role in Europe. The depiction of a decadent Italy and a weakened people resonated with the political ambitions of the French monarchy – a theme particularly relevant during the restoration program promoted by Henry IV.

From these political premises, nourished by an italophobia widespread in Protestant circles, emerged the work of philologist and hellenist Henri Estienne, who made the comparison with Italian a recurring, almost obsessive theme in his theoretical reflections. With Estienne's publications, we clearly enter the second phase of the othering process, in which the mechanism of externalization evolves into a fully developed hierarchy (Lippi-Green 1997), with Italian relegated to an inferior rank, serving to affirm the primacy of French.

In *Conformité du langage françois avec le grec* (*Conformity of the French Language with Greek*) (1565), Estienne (1852) starts from a reactionary stance, defending classical culture over the modern. Dismissing French's origins from Latin – the language of Rome and, by extension, the papacy – Estienne sought to bestow French with a mythical dignity by claiming it derived directly from Greek. Estienne's argument is based on a historically inaccurate premise: French is the modern language closest to Greek "non seulement en un grand nombre de mots, mais aussi en plusieurs belles manières de parler" (not only in a great number of words, but also in many beautiful ways of speaking) (18). And since Greek is the "roine des langues" (queen of languages), whose perfection "se doibt chercher en aucune" (should not be sought in any other), Estienne concludes that French is, by extension, superior to Italian.

In the second part of the treatise, the author attempts to demonstrate, through convoluted and unconvincing arguments, that French, both in its vocabulary and expressions, does not derive from Latin but rather from classical Greek. Estienne firmly condemns the use of words and expressions of Italian origin, such as *à l'improviste*, *manquer*, and *baster*, which he considers corruptions compared to their more 'authentic' French counterparts: *au dépourvu*, *défaillir*, and *suffire* (22). Even more intolerable, in his view, are military loanwords, because

> d'ici à peu d'ans, qui sera celuy qui ne pensera que la France ait appris l'art de la guerre en l'eschole de l'Italie, quand il verra qu'elle usera des termes italiens? (24)

> in a few years, who will not think that France learned the art of war in the school of Italy, when they see it using Italian terms?

Rather than adopting such Italianisms, the author advocates a return to older French words and even to dialect terms, in which he perceives – through an absurd reasoning – a direct kinship with classical Greek (18).

In *Dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé et autrement desguizé* (*Dialogues on the New French Language Italianized and Otherwise Disguised*) (1578), Estienne adopts the persona of Celthophile, a staunch defender of the purity of the French language against the encroachment of the new courtly jargon, contaminated by Italianisms. The author provides caricatured and likely exaggerated examples of a heavily Italianized French, almost unrecognizable:

> J'ay bonnes jambes (dequoy Dieu soit ringratié) mais j'ay batu la strade désjà tout ce matin, et n'estoit cela il me basteret l'anime d'accompagner vostre seigneurie partout où elle voudret. (50)

> I have good legs (for which may God be thanked), but I've already walked the street all this morning, and if it weren't for that, my soul would suffice to accompany your lordship wherever she would wish.

The satire is made even more cutting through footnotes, where Estienne compares the original Italian term with the French translation, emphasizing how incomprehensible these expressions are. For example, for *domestichesse*, he notes: "Dometichezza: familiarité" (5).

Estienne's argument, which develops throughout the dialogue, is that Italianisms are not adopted out of necessity but because of the frivolity of young people and the ostentation of the court, which is largely responsible for this 'ridiculous' trend of imitating everything that comes from Italy. Words that are now common in French, such as *risque*, *réussir*, *caprice*, or *parapet*, were at the time perceived as intolerable Italianisms.

The deeper reasons, as well as the contradictions of Estienne's linguistic theory, emerge fully in his most ambitious work: *Precellence du langage François* (*Preeminence of the French Language*) (1579). Dedicated to Henry III, the treatise links the magnificence of the French language to France's political and military supremacy. Although a subtle anti-Hispanism is present, the primary polemical target is Italian, whose 'superiority' over Spanish in the literary realm is taken for granted. While du Bellay had held Italian as the new classical language, Estienne attacks the authors of the Pléiade, accusing them of imitating the indeterminacy and "mollesse" (softness) of the Petrarchan poets. Long considered the archetypal language of love poetry, Italian – which some dare to rank

> non seulement au nostre, et à tous les autres vulgaires qui sont ajourd'huy, mais aussi au Grec et au Latin (Préface)

> not only above our [language], and above all the other vernaculars that exist today, but even above Greek and Latin

– is, according to Estienne, not even musical, but rather monotonous, given that all its words end in vowels (41).[6] In contrast, French is portrayed as a grave and solemn language, capable of conveying the king's authority and command through dense and incisive formulas.

6 Estienne's polemic against the arrogance of Italian scholars reflects a common stereotype in sixteenth-century France, where the authority of Italian humanism was often perceived as overbearing. This cultural perception is exemplified – not by Estienne himself, but in the broader intellectual climate – by Petrarch's well-known dictum: "Nec oratores nec poetas extra Italiam quaeramus" (Let us not seek orators or poets outside of Italy) (Petrarca 1948, 158).

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Estienne also draws attention to the phonetic traits that, in his view, distinguish French from Italian and support the former's supposed rhetorical gravity. French, he argues, relies on distinctions in vowel length that allow for metrically structured verse, whereas Italian tends to favor proparoxytone forms and frequently drops final vowels, a phenomenon he associates with softness and phonetic instability. He further claims that French articulation is 'stronger' due to a higher proportion of plosive consonants, which he implicitly links to a sense of virility. To reinforce this opposition, Estienne invokes an ancient proverb: "Balant Itali, gemunt Hispani, ululant Germani, cantant Galli" (14) (The Italians bleat, the Spaniards groan, the Germans howl, and the French sing) – a saying traditionally attributed to Latin sources but in fact originating in the medieval *Poetria Nova* by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and later quoted by the Portuguese historian João de Barros (Stammerjohann 1990, 17).

In the final part of the treatise, Estienne expands his argument from the linguistic to the ethical level, following a familiar pattern: compared to French, which embodies the values of classical civilization (in this case the Greek one), Italian is presented as a degenerate and corrupt language, an expression of a divided and morally decadent people. The author thus distorts the relationship between the two languages, claiming that Italian is a late idiom, a form of "depravation" (44) of French. In contradiction to what he had stated in previous works, Estienne argues that certain Italianisms now common in France, such as *merveille* or *jambe*, are not Italian calques but rather ancient French terms that Italian had originally assimilated. In support of this claim, Estienne goes so far as to suggest that Italian owes much of its lexical and phrasal richness to French. He unreservedly presents words such as *rimembrare*, *riparare*, *orgoglio*, *solazzo*, as well as *bianco*, *testa*, and *bisogno* as borrowings from French – despite the fact that these terms, like their French equivalents, are Romance continuations of Latin roots shared by both languages (Swiggers 2009, 71).

Estienne's criticisms were met with a swift response from Italy. The Florentine philologist Jacopo Corbinelli, who had been called to Paris by Catherine de' Medici to tutor her son, Henry III, was among the first to highlight the contradictions in the French grammarian's reasoning. Corbinelli, a prominent figure in the diffusion of Italian literary culture in late sixteenth-century France, is noted for his critical edition of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*. His scholarly work and translations, including those of Boccaccio and Guicciardini, contributed to reinforcing the cultural standing of the Italian language in French intellectual environments (Benzoni 1983).

4 The Normalization of the French and Its Distancing from Italian

Tracing the history of the French language between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveals the concerted efforts of grammarians and writers to forge a coherent language, inspired by the values of rationality, order, and elegance that had previously been attributed to Latin. The exaltation of French coincided with the apotheosis of the nation and royal authority, to the point that its prestige justified, for various authors, France's expansionist ambitions in Europe. Grammarians thus sought to identify in the structure of French the embodiment of that utopia of order and stability characteristic of monarchical absolutism, envisioning an ideal language, immune to variation, modeled on courtly speech.

The affirmation of French was accompanied by a gradual emancipation from Italian influence, even though admiration for both ancient and modern Italian works remained very much alive (Serianni 2002, 440), as evidenced by the continued presence of artists and musicians of Italian origin, such as Giovanni Battista Lulli, at the French court. Moreover, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the immigration of Italian comic actors and opera singers to France became widespread, further solidifying the stereotype of Italian as naturally theatrical and musical.

The process of normalizing the French language is marked by two emblematic events that highlight the persistence of Italian cultural models: the founding of the Académie française in 1635, initiated by Richelieu following the example of the Accademia della Crusca in Florence, and the publication of the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* in 1694, inspired by the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (1612).

However, the similarities between the two institutions should not obscure the profound differences between the cultures and contexts they represent. In Italy, a common language was established following Bembo's solution to the *Questione della lingua*, which was inspired by literary models – primarily the great Tuscan authors of the fourteenth century – rather than by a living, spoken language (Marazzini 2000; Serianni 2002). Italy lacked, in fact, a central authority and a political hub capable of amplifying the prestige of its literature. By contrast, the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, published after sixty years of work thanks to the direct intervention of Louis XIV, reveals the distinctly political dimension of the linguistic debate in France. In their dedication to the king, the academicians define French as "la langue dominante de la plus belle partie du monde" (the dominant language of the most beautiful part of the world) (Académie française 1694, "Préface").

It was precisely one of the first members of the Académie and a promoter of the *Dictionnaire*, Baron Claude Favre de Vaugelas, who theorized the connection between language and monarchical authority, making explicit a theme that had run through the French linguistic debate for centuries. In the preface to his *Remarques sur la langue française* (*Remarks on the French Language*) (1647), Vaugelas, introducing the concept of 'usage' as a criterion for linguistic choice, asserts that correct French – *le bon usage* – is the language spoken by the court and the king, whom he describes as the "maître de la langue" (master of the language). Thus, it is institutions and a few enlightened scholars close to power who determine the appropriate forms of the French language. Vaugelas's ideal of 'pure French', which involves purging foreign influences, particularly Italian ones, takes on an explicitly sexual connotation. He extols the 'chastity' of French, a language that

> rejette non seulement toutes les expressions qui blessent la pudeur & qui salissent tant soit peu l'imagination mais encore celles qui peuvent être mal interprétées. (13)

> rejects not only all expressions that offend modesty and tarnish the imagination even slightly, but also those that might be misinterpreted.

This metaphor of chastity implicitly positions French in opposition to Italian, which, by contrast, is often portrayed as sensuous, indulgent, and rhetorically excessive – a language less guarded, more prone to allure than to restraint.

The comparison with Italian was revived at the end of the seventeenth century by the Jesuit Dominique Bouhours, a follower of Vaugelas and an authoritative grammarian. In *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (*Dialogues of Ariste and Eugène*) (1671), Bouhours devoted an entire dialogue – the second, titled *La langue françoise* (*The French Language*) – to linguistic matters. In this work, French is elevated to the status of a universal language, while Spanish and Italian are accused, respectively, of rhetorical grandiosity and poetic sentimentality.

Italian is here placed alongside another sister language, Spanish, which had gained increasing importance in the political and cultural landscape of Europe during that century. So much so that the protagonist of the dialogue, Ariste, acknowledges that even Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, did not consider French superior to Spanish:

> Luy qui disoit, qui s'il vouloit parler aux Dames, il parleroit Italien; que s'il vouloit parler aux hommes, il parleroit François; que s'il vouloit parler à son cheval, il parleroit Allemand; mais que s'il vouloit parler à Dieu, il parleroit Espagnol. (64)

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> He who said that if he wanted to speak to ladies, he would speak Italian; if he wanted to speak to men, he would speak French; if he wanted to speak to his horse, he would speak German; but if he wanted to speak to God, he would speak Spanish.

Several of Bouhours' statements clearly show that the supposed 'supremacy' of one language over another is linked to political-military motives. According to him, the spread of the French language beyond national borders was linked to France's growing political influence, reflecting the idea that linguistic dissemination often parallels the reputation and success of the monarchy (40).

Bouhours consequently believes that only French, the expression of a society and a state (that of the Sun King), could aspire to the role of universal language. Among modern languages, it would be the one most similar to Latin, while Italian by contrast, is seen as its corrupt and degenerate offspring.

To illustrate his theory and demonstrate the radical difference between modern languages – particularly in identifying, within the material essence of a language, a reflection of the people's mentality – Bouhours puts a series of anecdotes into the mouths of the dialogue's characters. One of the most famous is told by Eugène, who recounts how a learned Spanish knight, upon reaching the Garden of Eden, reports that the serpent spoke English, the woman spoke Italian, the man spoke French, and God spoke Spanish (59).

Through these anecdotes, Bouhours reinforces cultural stereotypes associated with each language, delving into them in greater detail. If the Spanish language is characterized by "vaine grandeur" and resonates as solemn and proud as its nation, the Italian language is described as "molle & effeminée, selon le temperament & les moeurs de leur païs" (weak and effeminate, according to the temperament and customs of their country) (62). Rich in allusions and wordplay that French, a more rational language, rejects, Italian

> tombe dans le ridicule. Car enfin elle n'a presque rien de serieux: cét enjouëment qui luy semble si naturel, approche de la badinerie. (43)

> falls into the ridiculous. For in the end, it has almost nothing serious: this playfulness, which seems so natural to it, borders on frivolity.

The overuse of diminutives and the 'perpetual rhyme' of Italian prose, due to its vocalic endings, result in

> la pluspart de ses mots & de ses phrases sentent vn peu le burlesque. (43)

> most of its words and phrases have a touch of the burlesque.

Using a striking analogy from the visual arts, Bouhours finally claims that Italian aspires to create "plus des belles peintures que des beaux portaits" (more beautiful paintings than beautiful portraits) (49), and is therefore incapable of accurately imitating and representing the nature of things. The contrast between *peinture* and *portrait* is not merely aesthetic: it opposes artifice to truth, flamboyance to precision. This rhetorical antithesis reinforces the French classicist ideal of mimesis, where beauty is inseparable from fidelity to nature. Like a painter guided solely by his imagination in pursuit of an abstract beauty disconnected from reality, the Italian speaker tends to adorn his speech with brilliant and artificial expressions. Language, in this view, ceases to be a vehicle of truth and becomes instead a performance – a dazzling surface lacking substance. This idea is echoed in his comparison of Italian to a woman's made-up face: alluring but fundamentally deceptive. Here, the linguistic other is not only different, but dangerous because seductive.

This pictorial comparison seems to allude to the rather derogatory meaning that the term *italianisme* had assumed in the visual arts before it was used in the linguistic domain. As Balsamo noted, in the history of French art, starting in the sixteenth century, the word *italianisme* did not refer to the mere interest and curiosity that bound France to Renaissance Italy, nor to the imitation of Italian forms, but rather to

> l'inflessione di una tradizione nazionale verso una direzione italiana o supposta tale. Abdicazione del gusto francese, dimenticanza delle origini della nazione, corruzione dei costumi e del linguaggio. (Balsamo 1992, 10)

> the inflection of a national tradition toward an Italian or supposedly Italian direction. Abdication of French taste, forgetting the nation's origins, corruption of customs and language.

The word *italianisme* was used to denote a tendency toward rhetoric and excess, a disorderly and degenerate style, contrasted with the French tradition, the quintessence of classicism and elegance.

Drawing on this common idea, Bouhours introduces a key concept that would shape much of the eighteenth-century linguistic debate: the notion of the "ordre naturel" (natural order) (87) of sentence elements, exemplified by the typical French structure Subject-Verb-Object. While the nobility of Spanish and Italian lies in their use of inversions – "dans cét arragement bizarre; ou plûtost, dans ce desordre" (in this bizarre arrangement; or rather, in this disorder) (58) – French follows the 'natural order' and is thus the heir to the rationality and elegance of classical languages. The so-called *querelles des langues* – lively debates on the relative merits of modern European tongues – formed part of a broader eighteenth-century reflection on cultural identity and literature.

The idea that the French language contains a principle of intrinsic clarity and rationality had already emerged among sixteenth-century grammarians, particularly Louis Meigret (1542), and reached its peak during the Enlightenment. However, the exclusive connection Bouhours draws between French and the classical languages rests on a false assumption. Not only because Latin, unlike French, favors constructions with the verb at the end of the sentence and does not require the explicit mention of the subject pronoun, but also because Italian, due to its morphological characteristics, generally appears more conservative than French.

Bouhours' text thus demonstrates the persistence of the anti-Italian stereotypes already outlined by Estienne, though in the seventeenth century they acquired a different nuance, reflecting the changing role of Italians in France. While in the sixteenth century the quintessential Italian was a courtier or a cunning banker, in the following century he was more often cast as a performer or a buffoon. This transformation is staged with clarity in the *Ballet des nations*, which concludes Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (*The Bourgeois Gentleman*) (1670), where Italians sing love lyrics, while characters from the *Commedia dell'Arte* engage in buffoonery and acrobatics.

5 The Debate on the Genius of Language in the Age of Enlightenment

Throughout the eighteenth century, during which French spread across Europe as a language of culture, Italian underwent progressive marginalization in France. No longer used as a vehicular language in commerce and finance, Italian remained mostly confined to aristocratic salons, where it continued to be appreciated primarily by enthusiasts of art and melodrama. During this period, the stereotype of Italian as a musical and vague language, ideal for love poetry, was reinforced by the emerging belief that each language embodied a distinctive character that shaped both expression and thought.

This idea – later formalized as the notion of the 'genius of a language' – began to take shape within the intellectual milieu of the Académie française, particularly through the writings of members such as Claude Favre de Vaugelas and Bernard Lamy. Bouhours, although not a member of the Académie, further articulated this idea when he asserted:

> Le langage suit d'ordinaire la disposition des esprits; et chaque nation a toujours parlé selon son génie. (Bouhours 1671, 92)
>
> Language generally follows the disposition of minds, and each nation has always spoken according to its genius.

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However, some theorists of that period tended to emphasize a sense of continuity, especially on the literary level, between the classical heritage of Italy and the emerging French tradition. In *Réflexions sur la poétique* (*Reflections on Poetics*) (1684), René Rapin frames France as the cultural heir of Italy, within a broader theory of *translatio studii*. While he upholds the superiority of French poetic order and clarity, he acknowledges the foundational role of the Italian Renaissance. This vision reinforces the classicist narrative of literary succession, positioning France not in radical opposition to Italy, but as the culmination of a shared tradition reinterpreted under the sign of clarity, decorum, and rationality.

Starting with the Enlightenment, the concept of the 'genius of a language' evolved into a key tenet of French – and more broadly European – linguistic nationalism.[7] The term *génie d'une langue* appeared for the first time in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* in the 1762 edition: "On appelle le génie d'une langue, le caractère propre et distinctif d'une langue" (The genius of a language refers to its unique and distinctive character) (Siouffi 1995, 37). This perspective tended to view languages as stable and self-contained systems, each expressing the distinctive character of a people. This perspective reinforced the cultural tendency, common in early modern Europe, to associate language with collective identity and national character. Over time, this view fostered the development of symbolic hierarchies, in which phonetic or syntactic features were interpreted as reflections of cultural or even moral values – a core principle of what has been called linguistic essentialism.

Despite the great prestige that French achieved in the eighteenth century, it is interesting to observe how comparison and differentiation from Italian and other major European languages remained essential points of discussion – almost a necessity – in French linguistic thought. For example, in his *Lettre sur les sourds et les muets* (*Letter on the Deaf and Mutes*) (1751), Diderot states:

> Le français est fait pour instruire, éclairer et convaincre; le grec, le latin, l'italien, l'anglais, pour persuader, émouvoir et tromper; parlez grec, latin, italien au peuple; mais parlez français au sage. (128)
>
> French is made to instruct, enlighten, and convince; Greek, Latin, Italian, and English to persuade, move, and deceive; speak Greek, Latin, and Italian to the people; but speak French to the wise man.

7 Johann Gottfried Herder was the first to argue, in an essay from 1771, that each language conveys a worldview (Herder 2001).

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In this perspective, French is associated with clarity and the ability to construct rational arguments, while Italian and other languages are portrayed as instruments of emotional persuasion, thereby suggesting a different hierarchy of linguistic functions. This contributed to the emergence of the idea that French possessed an 'intrinsic grammaticality', recognized as the philosophical language par excellence. Diderot's classification of languages according to their rhetorical function enacts a subtle hierarchy of cognitive value.

For eighteenth-century French grammarians, the genius of the Italian language lay in its fluidity and musicality. For instance, François Raguenet (1765, 123) argues that Italian is better suited to singing than French because all its vowels have distinct sounds, while half of the vowels in French are mute, barely producing any sound at all. In the *Encyclopédie* (1751-72), a statement by Voltaire is reported describing the genius of French:

> Le génie de cette langue est la clarté et l'ordre: car chaque langue a son génie, et ce génie consiste dans la facilité que donne le langage de s'exprimer plus ou moins heureusement. (Diderot, d'Alembert 1751-72, s.v. "Français")
>
> The genius of this language is clarity and order: for every language has its own genius, and this genius lies in the ease with which the language allows one to express oneself more or less felicitously.

Voltaire contrasts this essence of French with that of Italian, to which he attributes different qualities. In his *Lettre à Deodati de' Tovazzi* (*Letter to Deodati de' Tovazzi*) (1761), he acknowledges specific morphological properties of Italian, such as syntactic inversions, which grant the language greater flexibility compared to French, which Voltaire himself perceived as overly rigid due to excessive formalism. He also highlights the grace and lightness of Italian, which he refers to as the "firstborn of Latin", in contrast to the supposed harshness and "barbarism" of English.[8] Italian is thus appreciated, though confined to an artistic and aesthetic dimension, distant from the seriousness and rigor of scientific and philosophical discourse that characterize French.

Some grammarians, however, adopt more critical positions. Nicolas Beauzée observes that while Italian is more melodic than French due to the variety and strength of its tonic accents, it has morphological features that, in his view, reflect Italians' tendency to be "sujets à se passionner davantage" (more inclined to be passionate) (Beauzée 1765). Beauzée, echoing the familiar trope of anti-Italianism, draws

8 See also on this topic Folena 1983, 419.

a connection between language and the 'moral decline' of the Italian population:

> La langue italienne, dont la plûpart des mots viennent par corruption du latin, en a amolli la pronunciation en vieillissant, dans le même proportion que le peuple qui la parle a perdu de la vigueur des anciens Romains. (Beauzée 1765)

> The Italian language, whose majority of words come from the corruption of Latin, has softened in pronunciation with age, in the same proportion as the people who speak it have lost the vigor of the ancient Romans.

Such statements exemplify the shift from linguistic description to moral evaluation – a typical feature of essentialist thought.

Rivarol, in his *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française* (*Discourse on the Universality of the French Language*) (1783), an emblematic text reflecting the self-perception of French as a universal language, devotes significant attention to comparing French with Italian. As the author of a notable translation of Dante's *Commedia*, Rivarol initially acknowledges the literary refinement of Italian, particularly in poetry, suggesting that imitating its formal qualities could help French attain a similar level of 'flexibility' and 'abundance' in poetic expression.

However, despite this tribute – or rather, a nod to the recurring stereotype of Italian as a poetic language – Rivarol identifies several limitations that, in his opinion, make Italian less suitable than French for becoming a universal language. First, he highlights the excessive gap between prose and poetry, attributing this divide to the fact that Italian emerged primarily as a literary language, more closely linked to written rather than spoken traditions. According to Rivarol, this impairs Italian's ability to achieve the communicative pragmatism that characterizes French. Secondly, he criticizes the lesser 'gravity' of Italian, which, while remaining in poetry "la plus mélodieuse des langues" (the most melodious of languages) (Rivarol 1783, 109), lacks in prose the sharpness and strength needed to convey powerful ideas. These observations reinforce the semantic axis of 'seduction–decadence–weakness' that links Estienne, Bouhours, and Rivarol within a coherent ideological tradition. In all three cases, the rhetorical 'feminization' of Italian serves to justify the superiority of French, which is consistently framed as a language of logic, discipline, and masculine rigor.

Rivarol's critique, however, also extends into the aesthetic and artistic domain. Italian prose, he argues,

> se traine avec trop de lenteur; son éclat est monotone; l'oreille se lasse de sa douceur et la langue de sa mollesse; ce qui peut venir de ce que, chaque mot étant harmonieux en particulier, l'harmonie du tout ne vaut rien. (111)
>
> drags along too slowly. Its brilliance is monotonous; the ear tires of its sweetness, and the tongue of its softness; this may come from the fact that, though each word is harmonious on its own, the overall harmony is worth nothing.

Finally, Rivarol reiterates a familiar sexist trope:

> La pensée la plus vigoureuse se détrempe dans la prose italienne. Elle est souvent ridicule et presque insupportable dans une bouche virile, parce qu'elle ôte à l'homme cette teinte d'austérité qui doit en être inséparable. (111)
>
> The most vigorous thought dissolves in Italian prose. It is often ridiculous and almost unbearable in a man's mouth because it robs him of the tone of austerity that should be inseparable from him.

Rivarol's remark relies on a metaphor of dilution and softness that is both stylistic and gendered. The verb *se détremper* implies not only weakening, but also a loss of substance, as if Italian prose were a medium unable to support intellectual density. This metaphor reflects the ideological construction of a linguistic hierarchy between the languages, suggesting that its euphony comes at the cost of conceptual rigor. By contrast, French is characterized as a language of clarity and rationality, leading Rivarol to make the sweeping claim:

> Ce qui n'est pas clair n'est pas français; ce qui n'est pas clair est encore anglais, italien, grec ou latin. (112)
>
> What is not clear is not French; what is not clear is still English, Italian, Greek, or Latin.

6 Identity Construction and Linguistic Othering: Final Reflections

A key mechanism of linguistic othering is to attribute absolute value to the signifier, detaching it from its historical context and transforming it into an expression of identity-based ideology. French grammarians, in comparing their language to Italian, often adopted a deductive approach: starting from the desire to assert a difference from Italian, they used the linguistic signifier to legitimize their theses. The differences between the two languages were not seen as the result of historical evolution and contingent choices, but rather essentialized and presented as immutable and distinctive traits. This process helped consolidate the symbolic role of French, while framing Italian in terms of cultural and linguistic otherness.

The contrastive analysis of morphological structures between French and Italian sheds light on how these differences may have fueled the stereotypes present in the texts examined. One of the most significant comparative studies is that of Scavée and Intravaia (1979), based on an extensive corpus of texts, primarily journalistic. At first glance, their study seems to confirm some of the differences that underlie the stereotypes. By comparing various expressive modes, syntactic structures, and idiomatic expressions, the scholars highlight how Italian is marked by greater syntactic freedom and flexibility, often employing juxtapositions, inversions, and neologisms formed through prefixes and suffixes. French, by contrast, appears more regulated, requiring a precise word order and the explicit articulation of relationships between clauses. While French adheres to a sequential and rational logic, Italian follows a "sensory and symbolic" order, with a fluidity of phrase movement that encourages stylistic experimentation. This tendency, described as the "fundamental vocation" of Italian, is accompanied by a propensity for aesthetic exploration, philosophical conceptualism, and "baroque" constructions (Scavée, Intravaia 1979, 151). Thus, the differences between the two languages reflect divergent communicative attitudes: Italian leans toward a "subjective realism", more psychological than logical, while French favors "objective" constructions, maintaining a rational and structured discursive order.

Despite these differences, French and Italian share several innovations compared to Latin, such as the creation of analytical verb tenses (the *passé composé* and conditional) and the disappearance of the infinitive's declension. While maintaining a complex verbal system with many irregularities, Italian has preserved nominal and verbal inflection through the alternation of suffixes, whereas the more analytical French requires the explicit expression of the subject pronoun. Additionally, Italian presents unique features, such as the use of diminutives, the gerund, the substantivized infinitive, and phrasal verbs – elements that are rare or absent in French and other Romance languages.

These topics have been widely discussed by scholars, many of whom identify in Italian a 'continuity with the ancient', linked to the persistence of syntactic and morphological structures inherited from Latin. For centuries a predominantly written and literary language, Italian did not benefit from the "spinta evolutiva del parlato" (evolutionary impulse of spoken language) (Simone 1990, 49). This predisposition, along with the flexibility of expression and a tendency toward stylistic experimentation, reflects a historical continuity with medieval Latin, of which Italian represents a direct and natural continuation. While French was established through the recovery, by the "daughter language", of the values that governed the "mother language", Italian appears as the spontaneous continuation of Latin, the result of an uninterrupted evolution (Scavée, Intravaia 1979, 153).

However, the texts examined suggest that while certain morphological features of Italian – such as lexical abundance or syntactic flexibility – may have contributed to shaping its reputation, the most persistent stereotypes reflect cultural and literary traditions more than objective linguistic properties. These traits were selectively emphasized and codified over time, transforming contingent characteristics into essentialized signs of otherness.

Thus, the stereotype of Italian as a musical and romantic language, and that of French as a clear and rational one – linked to the fame of the eighteenth-century *philosophes* – are in fact historical and cultural constructions. These perceptions stem not from linguistic qualities but from cultural processes that linked languages to aesthetic and intellectual values. As evidence of this, during the Symbolist movement, French was reinterpreted as a literary language capable of expressing vague and indefinite concepts, moving away from the ideal of rigor and clarity previously attributed to it. Moreover, these differences reflect the role of institutions in shaping a language: while in France, centralized authority fostered the codification of a unified model, in Italy the absence of political unification allowed for more fluid linguistic evolution.

In conclusion, the analysis of the process of linguistic othering demonstrates how language, in specific historical contexts, can shape cultural narratives and symbolic distinctions. Identity configurations based on linguistic differences are not just the result of structural divergences, but reflect processes of differentiation. The historical phases analyzed in this study reveal mechanisms that, while evolving in form over time, still play a central role in contemporary cultural dynamics.

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Das Künstliche dichten
Hybride Verfasserschaft in Max Benses Poetik der 1960er Jahre

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Abstract This article investigates the crucial role of Max Bense's literary production within his philosophical system. Drawing on the concept of hybrid authorship, the contribution analyzes the compositional strategies of the collection *Bestandteile des Vorüber* (1961), which emerges as an unsystematic attempt to generate a form of poetry from logic through non-digital writing techniques. Building on this analysis, the paper examines the characteristics of the 'Artificial' in Bense's poetics and the extent to which such a conception reshapes the configuration of authorial subjectivity.

Keywords Max Bense. Stuttgarter Schule. Cybernetics. Experimental poetry. Authorship. Media archeology.

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1 Einleitung: die labilen Grenzen der künstlichen Poesie

Vor dem Hintergrund aktueller Entwicklungen[1] im Bereich der Künstlichen Intelligenz im kreativen Feld ist derzeit eine Wiederentdeckung des Werkes von Max Bense im Gange, der mit seiner Informationsästhetik als Wegbereiter für die heutigen Interaktionen zwischen Mensch und Computer gilt.[2] Seine Prominenz trat jedoch bereits in der Nachkriegszeit deutlich zutage, sodass jede Auseinandersetzung mit dem menschlichen Verhältnis zur Technik – ob utopisch oder dystopisch – unweigerlich zu einer Beschäftigung mit seinem Werk führt.[3] Unverzichtbar erweist sich in diesem Kontext seine berühmte Konzeptualisierung der ‚künstlichen Poesie'. Die erste Schilderung des Begriffs formuliert Bense in der *Theorie der Texte* (1962), die nach den Beiträgen auf „nota" (1960a, 27-30) und „rot" (1961a) als erster umfassende Systematisierungsversuch einer neuen, synthetischen Wissenschaft der technischen Existenz gelten kann:

> Unter der natürlichen Poesie wird hier die Art von Poesie verstanden, die […] ein personales poetisches Bewußtsein, wie es Hegel schon nannte, zur Voraussetzung hat; […] kurz, eine präexistente Welt besitzt und ihr sprachlichen Ausdruck zu verleihen vermag. […]
>
> Unter der künstlichen Poesie hingegen wird hier eine Art von Poesie verstanden, in der es, sofern sie z.B. maschinell hervorgebracht wurde, kein personales poetisches Bewußtsein mit seinen Erfahrungen, Erlebnissen, Gefühlen, Erinnerungen, Gedanken, Vorstellungen einer Einbildungskraft etc., also keine präexistente Welt gibt, und in der das Schreiben keine ontologische Fortsetzung mehr ist, durch die der Weltaspekt der Worte auf ein Ich bezogen werden könnte. […] Während also für die natürliche Poesie ein intentionaler Anfang des Wortprozesses charakteristisch ist, kann es für die künstliche Poesie nur einen materialen Ursprung geben. (1962, 143)

Beschränkt man sich auf diese Zeilen, scheint die Unterscheidung einfach und klar zu sein: Steht in der natürlichen Poesie die

1 Dieser Aufsatz präsentiert die Erkenntnisse, die ich während meines Forschungsstipendiums bei Prof. Dr. Stephan Kammer an der LMU-München gewinnen konnte. Der Aufenthalt wurde von der Alexander-von-Humboldt-Stiftung gefördert, bei der ich mich sehr herzlich dafür bedanke.

2 Vgl. u.a. Schönthaler 2022; Bajohr 2023; 2024; Porciau, Wilke 2024.

3 Zur eminenten Rolle Benses in der Nachkriegsära siehe Bonitz 2024; insbesondere zu seinem Engagement für die öffentliche Rehabilitierung Gottfried Benns durch seine Beiträge in der Zeitschrift *Merkur*, vgl. Streim 2019.

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Sprache im Dienst der „präexistenten Welt" des personalen poetischen Bewusstseins der Autor: in, d.h. bestimmter Gedanken und Vorstellungen, so gewinnt sie in der künstlichen Poesie ihre Autonomie und reine Materialität.[4] Demzufolge beziehe sich das Adjektiv ‚künstlich' direkt auf die Einsetzung eines nichtmenschlichen Erzeugers, eben des Computers, im Schöpfungsprozess, der, als operatives Subjekt eines programmierten Zufalles, mit der menschlichen Instanz – abgesehen von ihrer Absicht – kooperiert. Daraus folgt laut Bajohr, dass die künstliche Poesie „völlig ohne die Unterstellung eines Bewusstseins aus [kommt], selbstständiges ästhetisches Objekt [ist], das immanent untersucht werden kann" (Bajohr 2023, 40).

Diese radikale Interpretation lässt sich jedoch mit Blick auf die dem obigen Zitat folgenden Zeilen in Benses Aufsatzes infrage stellen:

> Selbstverständlich gelten die angeführten Differenzen in erster Linie nur idealtypisch. Wirklich existent sind jedoch wahrscheinlich nur die Annährungen. Z.B. können infolge der Präzision, mit der Rhythmus und Metrum gehandhabt werden, auch in der intentionalen natürlichen Poesie materiale Züge einer künstlichen auftreten.
>
> Was nun die Beispiele realisierter künstlicher [sic] Poesie anbetrifft, die, z.B. durch maschinelle Selektion, den Wortprozeß ausschließlich material und sukzessiv ablaufen läßt, wie ich schon sagte, so empfiehlt es sich, dabei einfach von ‚Texten' zu sprechen, um mit diesem Begriff die generalisierte Form der Poesie anzudeuten, die in ihnen erreichbar ist. ‚Text' bezeichnet dabei jeder Wortfolge bzw. jede Wortanordnung, die selektiv und kontingent in Bezug auf einen zugrunde gelegten Textraum (Wortschatz) aus diesem hervorgeht und gewisse Deformationen am einzelnen Wort zuläßt. (1962, 144)

4 Der Begriff ‚Materialität' ist in der philosophischen und ästhetischen Diskussion des 20. Jahrhunderts äußerst weit gefasst. Selbst in Benses Schriften erscheint er stets in unterschiedlichen Nuancierungen, was auch auf die programmatische Interdisziplinarität seines Denkens zurückzuführen ist. In diesem Kontext wird ‚Materialität'gemäß Peirces Definition des Icons verstanden: „An Icon is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not" (1958, CP 2.247). Diese Auslegung steht in engerer Verbindung mit den visuellen Experimenten der Konkreten Poesie als mit den späteren Konzeptionen der Kittlerschen Medientheorie. In seiner literarischen Praxis jedoch bringt Bense häufig die ikonische Dimension des Zeichens mit der indexikalischen in Verbindung, d.h. mit seiner Referenzialität zur sogenannten Außenwelt, also zur phänomenalen Welt, was zu einer ontologischen Dimension der Literatur führt. Dieser dialektische Vorgang ist stets mitzudenken, wenn der Begriff Materialität im Verlauf dieses Aufsatzes verwendet wird. Vgl. Bense 1998b, 233.

Der Auszug betont entscheidende Punkte zur Lage der künstlichen Poesie in den 1960er Jahren, die bislang nicht genügend Resonanz in der wissenschaftlichen Diskussion erfahren haben: die Gattungszuordnung des Poesie-Begriffs und die daraus resultierenden Realisationsmöglichkeiten von Texten in Benses Zeit.

Der Gattungsfrage entsprechend, wird hier die Idee verdeutlicht, dass Bense unter ‚Poesie' eigentlich ‚Text' versteht. Dieser allgemeinere Begriff rückt das Produkt einer Selektion und Deformation[5] von Wörtern aus einem fixierten Repertoire in den Fokus, d.h. das Ergebnis von Realisationsprozessen. Diese müssen jedoch nicht unbedingt maschinell gesteuert sein, um als ‚künstlich' bezeichnet werden zu können. Bense selbst mildert hier die zuvor gezogene Trennungslinie zwischen der natürlichen und der künstlichen Poesie als „idealtypisch" ab, indem er die Existenz von „Annährungen" konstatiert. Bereits diese Definition überrascht, wenn man bedenkt, dass 1959 – also drei Jahre vor der Veröffentlichung dieser Texttheorie – Theo Lutz' *Stochastische Texte* erschienen. Dieses Werk besteht aus maschinell erzeugten Zeilen aus dem Wortmaterial von Kafkas *Schloss*. Daher wurde es weithin als paradigmatische Umsetzung von Benses Texttheorie interpretiert. Dies ist symptomatisch für die bislang unzureichende Rezeption von Benses Werk, die methodologischen Herausforderungen, die sein Œuvre aufwirft, und nicht zuletzt für die Notwendigkeit einer aktualisierten Lektüre des Künstlichkeit-Begriffs in Benses Denksystem. In diesem Zusammenhang ist zudem hervorzuheben, dass die ‚Annäherung' einen Schlüsselbegriff des kybernetischen Diskurses der 60er Jahre darstellt. In Gotthard Günthers grundlegendem Traktat *Das Bewußtsein der Maschinen* (1957) wird die Aporie der Maschine als bloße „technische Reproduktion des menschlichen Gehirns" konstatiert:

> Denn nur das Gehirn verarbeitet Information. […] Transformatoren, Transistoren und ähnliche auf elektro-magnetischen Prinzipien beruhende Maschinen stellen noch nicht einmal eine erste Annäherung an das neue Ziel dar. (2021, 165)

Diese Annahme gründet nicht nur in den technischen Begrenzungen der frühen Computer, sondern entspringt einer tiefen Überzeugung: Maschinen vermögen Bewusstsein hervorzubringen – jedoch kein

5 Der Begriff ‚Deformation' stammt aus der algebraischen Geometrie und bezeichnet die Strukturveränderung eines mathematischen Objektes, das damit seine bisherige Stelle im Raum verliert. Das Konzept ist einer der grundlegenden Parameter der Topologie. In dem hier interessierenden Kontext bezeichnet ‚Deformation' die Flexion der Wörter in einem Text, der als Raum begriffen wird. Benses topologische Auffassung von Text wird in Folgenden weiter diskutiert.

Selbstbewusstsein. Sie können Reflexionsprozesse von der Innen- in die Außenwelt anstoßen, die sich nur im Menschen vollziehen, sind jedoch strukturell nicht in der Lage, diese Reflexion auf sich selbst zu beziehen (vgl. Günther 2021, 167-80). Die Prozesshaftigkeit künstlerischer Artifizialisierungsverfahren betonen Bense und Döhl nachdrücklich auch in dem für die Stuttgarter Schule programmatischen Text *Zur Lage* (1964): Die Textproduktion befinde sich an einem hybriden Ort, einem „Zwischenbereich", denn sie „tendiert" noch zur Artifizialisierung, und zwar zur Perfektionierung ihrer Realisationsmöglichkeiten (1964, o.S.). Dieser Prozess zielt jedoch auf die Verschmelzung des Maschinellen und des Menschlichen ab und nicht auf die Ersetzung des Menschlichen durch das Maschinelle, wodurch sich die Polarisierung von Natürlichem und Künstlichem auch ontologisch in einer dritten Instanz auflöst. Im Hinblick darauf, scheint es hier nötig, durch eine Analyse der Textproduktion von Max Bense eine Relektüre der bisherigen Interpretation der künstlichen Poesie zu unternehmen, in der diese nicht mehr als ein von der Außenwelt der Autor:in getrenntes Kunstobjekt, sondern als originales Ergebnis einer hybriden Verfasserschaft begriffen wird.

2 Von Theorie zu Praxis: Zur Rolle der Poesie in Benses philosophischem System

Im Zentrum der Texttheorie von Max Bense stehen alle Verfahren, die Experimenten in und mit der Sprache zulassen: „Programme für die Realisierung solcher Texte in künstlicher Poesie lassen sich vor allem in drei Richtungen entwickeln: statistisch, strukturell und topologisch" (1962, 144). Dadurch ergibt sich eine erste grundlegende Unterscheidung zwischen ‚Sprache' und ‚Programm': Während Sprache ein autonomes Ausdruckssystem ist bzw. eine unendliche Menge an Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten konstituiert, fungieren Programme als operationalisierbare Strukturen der Selektion und Kombination dieser Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten, die letztlich zur Hervorbringung eines Kunstobjekts führen. Diese Unterscheidung bildet ein konstitutives Merkmal von Benses Auffassung sowohl im Hinblick auf die stochastischen Experimente seiner Zeitgenossen als auch auf aktuelle KI-Tendenzen, bei denen der Code als Sprache verwendet wird und das Programm selbst zum Kunstobjekt avanciert. Obwohl Bense der Einbettung statistischer Verfahren in die künstlerische Produktion besondere Aufmerksamkeit schenkt, ist es vielmehr das wechselseitige Zusammenspiel stochastischer, struktureller und topologischer Methoden, das die eigentliche Grundlage künstlicher Textproduktion bildet. Alle die hier erwähnten Verfahren tragen gleichermaßen zur *Programmierung des Schönen* bei, das „als Ausdruck eines wenig wahrscheinlichen Zustandes für etwas“ verstanden wird (1960b, 73). Spielt die Statistik eine wichtige Rolle, indem man mittels ihrer die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines Textes kalkulieren kann, so erlaubt die Topologie, Texte als „umgebungssysteme […] konventioneller oder nichtkonventioneller art“ durch ihre „nachbarschaftsbeziehungen“ zu betrachten (1964, o.S.). Die Relevanz der statistischen Methode gleicht dann der topologischen, da Benses Interesse der Schaffung eines synthetischen Wissenschaftssystems gilt.

Die Verflechtung verschiedener Disziplinen in Benses Texttheorie offenbart ein bedeutendes methodologisches Problem: die partiellen Überschneidungen der Konzepte von Interpretation und Produktion der Kunst. Diese begriffliche Überlappung hat im wissenschaftlichen Diskurs zu Fehlinterpretationen geführt. Exemplarisch dafür ist die unzutreffende Annahme, Bense habe in seiner literarischen Praxis Computer programmiert und eingesetzt (vgl. Jacob 2019, 233-5; Thiers 2019, 265-8). Insbesondere ab den 1960er Jahren intensiviert sich Benses Auseinandersetzung mit dem Text-Begriff, wobei er eine Vielzahl divergierender – und mitunter widersprüchlicher – Definitionen für Verfahren und Strukturen literarischer Produktion entwirft.[6] Die Methoden der Textproduktion decken sich jedoch nicht mit jenen der Textinterpretation. Benses philosophisches Werk bietet also keine terminologisch konsistente Unterscheidung dieser Sphären, obwohl in der *Theorie der Texte* Ansätze einer begrifflichen Differenzierung erkennbar sind. Diese Unschärfe verweist auf das epistemische Novum, das mit der künstlerischen Textualisierung technischer Prozesse einhergeht.[7]

> Die statistische und die topologische Auffassung von Texten ermöglichen jedenfalls nicht nur neue mathematisch orientierte Beschreibungen von Texten, sondern auch neue Schreibweisen, die erprobt werden müssen. (1962, 148)

Während die Innovation im Rahmen der Textinterpretation in der *Anwendung* der statistischen bzw. der topologischen Beschreibung

6 Da der Begriff ‚Text‘ in Benses Theorie und Praxis eine so grundlegende Rolle spielt, kann hier keine vollständige Aufzählung all seiner Formulierungen erfolgen. Es sei jedoch auf die wichtigsten Abhandlungen verwiesen, die im Verlauf dieses Aufsatzes regelmäßig zitiert werden.

7 Es ist wichtig zu betonen, dass die Einbettung kombinatorischer Verfahren an sich nichts Neues in der Literaturproduktion ist, erste Beispiele lassen sich bereits in der Provenzalischen Dichtung finden. Die Neuerung besteht vielmehr in der aktuellen Konfrontation Benses und seiner Zeitgenossen mit dem Computer, was zu einem neuen Verständnis der Rolle der Maschine im künstlerischen Schaffensprozess führt. Dementsprechend spricht Hans-Christian von Herrmann von einer „dritten Phase“ in der literarischen Geschichte des Automatismus (2019, 214).

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auf Literatur besteht, müssen dieselben Methoden im Rahmen der Produktion zuerst *erprobt* werden, um eine *bewusste* Texterzeugung erreichen zu können. Das bedeutet, dass dieser Teil der neuen, synthetischen Wissenschaft von Bense nur in ihrem Entstehen systematisiert werden kann. Daraus ergibt sich, dass Benses Texttheorie als Theorie der Interpretation künstlicher Kunst gelesen werden soll und nicht als Theorie der Textproduktion. Dieser Punkt lässt sich aus der Einleitung zu *experimentelle schreibweisen* deutlich ablesen: „die wichtigkeit des experimentellen moments im rahmen der texttheorie und ihrer praxis läßt es notwendig erscheinen, das experiment wie eine art stilprinzip einzuführen (1964, o.S.)".[8] Indem er die Theorie von der Praxis trennt, verdeutlicht Bense, dass – und dies ist die grundlegende These des hier vorliegenden Aufsatzes – die textuelle Produktion ein weiterer Bereich seiner Auffassung der Ästhetik und nicht die bloße Anwendung seiner Texttheorie ist. Daraus folgt, dass die Textproduktion, bzw. die Poesie in Benses philosophischem System als Kontrapunkt zur Logik in der Erkenntnis der Welt wirkt:

> Logik und Poesie als extrem verschiedene Wege, Formen und Merkmale geistiger Produktion treten in der Texttheorie wieder zusammen und wirken sich experimentell in der Schreibweise aus. […]
>
> Poesie ist die ästhetische Form der Spekulation. Der poetische Algorithmus dient der bewußten Erzeugung spekulativer Poesie. Spekulation bedeutet immer, daß auf eine Transzendenz spekuliert wird. Zweifellos ist eine bestimmbare Außenwelt ein Ziel der spekulativen Poesie, und diese Außenwelt verhält sich zur materialen Eigenwelt der Text stets transzendent. (1962, 149)

Die methodische Erprobung unterschiedlicher Schreibverfahren, die auf abstrahierte bzw. mathematisierbare Beschreibungsstrukturen zurückgeführt werden können, öffnet also neue Wege zum Verständnis der technischen Welt. Genau darin liegt das methodologische Problem, das nicht nur Benses Texttheorie, sondern auch seine Textproduktion betrifft. Wenn man den Begriff der künstlichen Poesie als eine Sammlung von Schreibmethoden versteht, die eine Interaktion mit jeglicher Art von Programmierung vorsehen – sei diese Programmierung digital bzw. von einem Computer erzeugt, oder analog bzw. eine textuellen Struktur –, und wenn man Benses Texttheorie als den kritischen Diskussionsraum der Interpretationsmittel dieser neuen ästhetischen Ausdrucksform betrachtet, so gilt seine poetische Produktion als eine zusätzliche Sphäre seines Denkens, und zwar als eine Sphäre, in der er *materiell*,

8 Zur Entwicklung des Begriffes ‚Stil' bei Bense vgl. Zittel 2019.

d.h. mit und in der Sprache, seine philosophische Spekulation üben kann. Deshalb können Benses poetische Texte nicht durch die genaue Anwendung der von ihm beschriebenen hermeneutischen Kategorien analysiert werden, sondern nur im Hinblick auf diese Kategorien, gerade weil in diesem Kontext Theorie und Praxis gleichwertig sind. In Benses künstlicher Poesie besteht jedoch ein starker Bezug zur Außenwelt sowie eine gewisse auktoriale Intentionalität, die sich durch die konzeptuelle Gestaltung von sprachlichen Strukturen und maschinellen Imitationen ausdrückt. Deshalb erscheint es angebracht, innovative Interpretationskategorien für Benses poetisches Œuvre zu entwickeln, die seine theoretischen Positionen hinterfragen und somit ein neues Verständnis seiner Textproduktion ermöglichen.

3 Hybride Verfasserschaft in Max Benses Poetik der 1960er Jahre

Im Kontext seiner kybernetischen Revolution der Ästhetik veröffentlicht Bense 1961 die erste Sammlung von Texten mit dem vielsagenden Titel *Bestandteile des Vorüber*. Das Werk präsentiert die textuellen Experimente, die Bense zwischen 1957 und 1960 durchgeführt hat,[9] und ist in zwei Sektionen gegliedert: *Dünnschliffe; Mischtexte und Montagen*. Die erste Sektion, *Dünnschliffe*, ist in drei Untersektionen numerisch und progressiv aufgeteilt, *Mischtexte und Montagen* präsentiert hingegen Texte unterschiedlicher Natur, die keinem festen Schema folgen. Bevor die einzelnen Sektionen ausführlich analysiert werden, muss hervorgehoben werden, dass ein erster Hinweis auf den experimentellen Charakter des Werkes, im Sinne von methodischer Erprobung unterschiedlicher künstlicher Schreibverfahren, von Bense selbst in dem Nachwort formuliert wird:

> Eine Reihe vorstehender Texte, soweit sie nicht sprachlich kondensierte Erfahrungen und Hoffnungen darstellen, haben keine andere Bedeutung als die Einführung neuer Verfahren ihrer ästhetischen Entstehung. […]
>
> Nicht die *Außenwelt*, die ein Text beschreibt, ist aber das Medium des Zeichens, sondern gerade die Eigenwelt, in der er sich bildet, also die Materialität der Sprache. (1961b, 117)

In dieser ersten Passage verdeutlicht sich die anscheinende Widersprüchlichkeit von Benses Formulierungen, die bereits angedeutet wurde. Auch wenn im Brennpunkt des Arguments

9 Erste datierte Hinweise zu diesem Buchprojekt findet man in Konvolut 10 (Bestand A: Bense) im Nachlass des Autors, das im DLA Marbach bewahrt ist.

die Zentralität der neuen, an der ikonischen Sprachmaterialität orientierten Verfahren für Texterzeugung ist, schließt Bense die indexikalische Präsenz bzw. die Beziehung zur Außenwelt nicht aus, indem er sofort zugesteht, dass einige Texte aus der persönlichen Erfahrung des Autors entstanden sind. Die Künstlichkeit der Sammlung liegt folglich nicht in der bloßen Durchführung eines bedeutungsleeren Zeichenvorgangs, sondern in der ästhetischen Wirkung des daraus hervorgehenden Ergebnisses: der Neubelichtung der Außenwelt durch die Eigenwelt der Sprache. Auch in diesen Zeilen wiederholt Bense den *Zwischenbereich* der künstlichen Poesie, die sich in Form einer hybriden Verfasserschaft zwischen der menschlichen und der maschinellen bzw. automatisierten Instanz der Schöpfung ausdrückt:

> Nur in ihr [in der Eigenwelt, RC] spielen sich die Vorgänge ab, die Silben, Worte, Sätze, Perioden in den offenen, unabgeschlossenen, veränderlichen, agilen und zerbrechlichen Zustand der Zeichen versetzten, Vorgänge, die mit Zufällen und Vermutungen, […] arbeiten, also mehr oder weniger gesteuert, stochastisch oder statistisch, demnach *kybernetisch* verlaufen. […]
>
> Ein Teil der vorstehenden Texte enthält Partien, die maschinell hergestellt worden sind. Sie wurden meist montiert mit anderen Stücken, die aus dem Bewußtsein des Autors stammen. Doch die meisten Texte, deren Bedeutung darin liegt, die Schönheit ganz in der Materialität der Sprache, nicht in den Sinn zu verlagern, sind Ergebnisse einer bewußten Imitation maschineller Möglichkeiten. (1961b, 118)

So präsentiert, bietet die Sammlung ein dichtes Gewebe aus maschinell gesteuerten, analog produzierten und den Computer imitierenden Texten, deren unterschiedliche Entstehung – mit begrenzten Ausnahmen – nicht unmittelbar erkennbar ist. Mit anderen Worten: Aus den Texten lässt sich kein einheitliches Entwurfsmuster ableiten. Der Nachlass von Max Bense spiegelt eine solche Vielfalt an Kompositionsstrategien wider, da er größtenteils aus handgeschriebenem Material besteht. Die Abwesenheit elektronisch produzierter Blätter, die hingegen den Großteil des Nachlasses von Theo Lutz ausmachen, bestätigt die Hypothese, dass die imitative Schreibweise die interessanteste und am weitesten verbreitete Form in Benses Poetik darstellt. Insofern lässt sich feststellen, dass in diesem Kontext das schreibende Subjekt als hybrider Verfasser beschrieben werden kann. In Anlehnung an Fischer-Lichtes Interpretation dieses Begriffs im Rahmen der Interart Phänomenen versteht man hier unter ‚Hybride':

> einen *terminus technicus*, der in der Biologie eingeführt wurde, um Pflanzen oder Tiere zu bezeichnen, die als Ergebnisse eines speziellen Zuchtprozesses aus der Mischung zweier verschiedener Arten entstanden sind. In einer Hybridbildung erscheint also vereint, was ‚von Natur aus' nicht zusammengehört, […]. Mit Bezug auf die Künste und Medien werden mit ihm häufig Prozesse bezeichnet, welche Phänomene zusammenbinden, die traditionell als dichotomisch gedacht sind und daher einander auszuschließen scheinen – wie das Organische, Lebendige und das Mechanische […] – oder Formen, die in verschiedenen Epochen entwickelt wurden. (2010, 27)

Trotz ihrer anscheinend dichotomischen Bezeichnung betrifft Benses Formulierung der künstlichen Poesie genau diesen Punkt. Die Technik „*unter die Haut* der Welt" schafft somit ein neues Erkenntnisvermögen der Welt, das den ontologischen und logischen Veränderungen der technischen Welt künstlerisch angemessen entspricht (Bense 1998a, 436). Darüber hinaus erweist sich Fischer-Lichtes Ansatz zur Hybridisierung der Kunst hier als besonders treffend, nicht nur weil eine solche Auffassung des Hybriden das Bestreben zur Überwindung von Dichotomien in den Intentionen der Künstler:innen konstatiert, sondern auch weil sie betont, wie eine solche Zielsetzung in ein anti-hierarchisches Kunstobjekt überführt wird. Im hybriden Kunstwerk bewirkt die Kooperation unterschiedlicher Instanzen eine wechselseitige Affizierung der jeweiligen Aktionssphären, wodurch eine neue biologische Beschaffenheit entsteht, die sich als Hybride herausstellt. Im Fall Benses bietet eine solche Konzeption des Schreibens eine besondere Wahrnehmung der maschinellen Instanz, die Gestalt einer alternativen bzw. zusätzlichen Denkart der Sein- und Zeitthematik annimmt. Der Computer wird dabei als Sprachmodell für eine intersektionale Mehrsprachigkeit betrachtet, nicht als Gerät. Das ist der interessanteste Aspekt im Schreibansatz von Max Bense, der sich dadurch von anderen Auseinandersetzungen mit dem Automatismus in der Literatur unterscheidet: Geht es in der surrealistischen *écriture automatique* darum, „das Bewusstsein in diesem Prozess möglichst auszuschalten" (Zanetti 2023, o.S.), so ist bei Bense die Rede von einer Erweiterung des Selbstbewusstseins durch das Schreiben. Die Aneignung eines solchen hybriden Sprachmodells erfolgt durch die Nachahmung maschineller Grammatik und Syntax in Form einer partiellen Automation des Schreibens, die in der Sammlung unsystematisch erforscht und erprobt wird.

3.1 Dünnschliffe

Der Begriff ‚Dünnschliff' stammt aus Benses Studium der Geologie und bezieht sich fachsprachlich auf ein Festkörperpräparat zur mikroskopischen Untersuchung in der Geologie und Chemie. Mithilfe von Dünnschliffen kann man

> die Komponenten eines Gesteins oder einer Keramik identifizieren, die Größe der verschiedenen Bestandteile und ihre Beziehungen untereinander ermitteln, sowie ihre Verteilung in dem Material bestimmen. (Humphries 1994, 1)

Das Mikroskopische oder Mikroästhetische stellt sich somit als Untersuchungsfeld der Sektion dar. Darauf geht auch Bense – wenn auch möglicherweise etwas elliptisch – in der Einleitung ein:

> DÜNNSCHLIFFE dienen der Bequemlichkeit der Erkenntnis wenn die Materialien der Erfahrung noch in Zustand der Vermischung, seriell oder stochastisch, wahrnehmbar und unvergeßlich bleiben sollen (Mineralstil). (1961b, 9)

Die Idee des Mineralstils legt den Fokus auf die Verbindung mehrerer Aussagen, analog zu Mineralien als chemischen Verbindungen. Diese Verbindungen werden isoliert und beobachtet, ähnlich wie Chemiker Dünnschliffe untersuchen. Die Sektion enthält exemplarische Texte, die, vergleichbar mit Dünnschliffen, mögliche Kompositionsarten verschiedener Texteinheiten präsentieren. Diese Interpretation stützt sich auf Benses Definition aus dem rot-Heft *modelle*:

> Das Schreiben als methodische Zerlegung bzw. Subtraktion kommt von Text zum Element. Es ist eine Konsequenz statistischer und topologischer Textauffassungen. Es geht von einem makroästhetisch hergestellten oder vorgefundenen Text aus und gewinnt daraus zerkleinernd ein abstraktes, konkretes, materiales oder interstrukturelle Element, eine ästhetische oder semantische Zelle, wie man sagen muß, aufzeigt. Solche mikroästhetischen Textstücke, zu deren Hervorbringung ebenso viel Methode wie Intuition der Auffindung gehört, sind echte minimale statistische Formen einer SEPARIERENDEN SCHREIBWEISE, die im Gegensatz zur adjunktierenden steht und deren Ergebnisse DÜNNSCHLIFFE nennen. (1961a, o.S.)

Durch die statistische oder topologische Isolierung von Fragmenten eines Textes, operiert durch die Aneignung der Maschinengrammatik – sprich: Logik, gelangt man vom Makroästhetischen zum Mikroästhetischen, und zwar zu einer exemplarischen „Zelle“, die dadurch detailliert analysiert werden kann. Ist das Ziel einer solchen „separierenden Schreibweise“ festgelegt, so bleiben die Verfahren zu dessen Erreichung ebenso nebulös wie die oben zitierte Einleitung zum Dünnschliff-Format. Auch wenn Bense hier die Statistik und die Topologie erwähnt, erklärt er nicht im Detail den Prozess der Dünnschlifferzeugung bei der Textproduktion. Darüber hinaus spricht er kursorisch von einer Mischung aus Methode und Intuition, die keiner streng rationalistischen Praxis zugeordnet werden kann. Was soll man dann unter dem Dünnschliff-Format verstehen? Genau in dieser Kluft manifestiert sich das methodologische Problem, das oben beschrieben wurde und eine strenge Auseinandersetzung mit den Texten erfordert.

Die erste Dünnschliff-Untersektion ist alphabetisch geordnet, als ob es ein Glossar wäre. Alle Lemmata besitzen die oben beobachtete Definition-Struktur, in der sprachliche Programmierungen unterschiedlich eingesetzt wurden. In jedem Lemma kann man also den Versuch erkennen, eine spezifische Art von Vermischung bzw. Verbindung – sei es logische, syntaktische, oder semantische – zu üben, die hiermit seine hybride Verfasserschaft zeigt. Wie bereits angedeutet, kann man kein rekurrierendes Pattern ableiten, deshalb wird hier eine Auswahl vielsagender Beispiele kommentiert. Dem alphabetischen Prinzip folgend, ist als erstes Beispiel der durchaus bekannte Jetzt-Text zu nennen, der auf einer Negentropisierung eines Hegel-Auszugs aus der *Phänomenologie des Geistes* beruht:

> JETZT, jetzt und erst jetzt, jetzt und nur jetzt, jetzt und doch jetzt, jetzt ist das jetzt erst jetzt das nur jetzt ist und doch jetzt ist, nur jetzt und doch jetzt, jetzt das jetzt ist, nicht jetzt das jetzt nicht jetzt ist jetzt ist wenn es jetzt ist, nicht jetzt wie es jetzt nicht ist, nicht jetzt wie es jetzt nicht jetzt ist, jetzt das nicht ist ist nicht jetzt, jetzt nicht, jetzt noch nicht, doch jetzt das noch nicht jetzt ist wenn es jetzt ist, jetzt das jetzt nicht mehr jetzt ist wenn es jetzt ist und jetzt das jetzt ist, wenn es nicht mehr jetzt ist, dieses jetzt, erst dieses jetzt, nur dieses jetzt ist jetzt. (Bense 1961b, 30)

Das statistische Spiel mit der Verkürzung der Silbenanzahl und mit niederfrequenten Wortfolgen verfolgt jedoch das Ziel, nicht nur den Hegelschen Text informationsästhetisch zu verschönern, sondern auch die existentielle Thematik des ‚Jetzt‘ *in* der Sprache zu hinterfragen. Das wiederholte „jetzt“, dem syntaktisch jeweils unterschiedliche Bedeutungen gleichzeitig zugeordnet werden können, inszeniert auch visuell das Bewusstwerden der Flüchtigkeit des Augenblicks. Dadurch erhält der Text mittels der Eigenwelt der Zeichen den Charakter einer Antwort auf Hegel, insbesondere auf dessen Formulierung „das Jetzt eben dieses ist, indem es ist, schon nicht mehr zu sein“ (1972, 88), die als eine Reflexion des Vorübergehens gilt, was das Thema der Sammlung darstellt. Insofern hybridisiert Bense in diesem Dünnschliff die statistische mit der semantischen Dimension, da der produzierte Text auf mehreren Ebenen funktioniert bzw. gelesen werden kann.

Eine weitere Auseinandersetzung mit der Außenwelt durch die sprachliche Innenwelt findet sich im Lemma ‚Rot‘, das eine besondere Rolle spielt. Nur dieses Stichwort wiederholt sich zweimal in der Auflistung, zusammen mit dem Lemma ‚Wenn‘, das – als Temporalkonjunktion – umso mehr die Zentralität der Zeit-Thematik in Benses poetischer Spekulation betont:

> ROT deutet das beständige Vorhandensein von Bewegungsverhältnissen an die zu ungewohnt sind um große Geschwindigkeiten zu erzielen (Prinzip Hoffnung)
>
> ROT und dabei und hat aufgehört zu sein rot und dabei und hat nicht aufgehört zu sein rot und nicht dabei und hat aufgehört zu sein rot und nicht dabei und hat nicht aufgehört zu sein nicht rot und dabei und hat aufgehört zu sein nicht rot und dabei und hat nicht aufgehört zu sein nicht rot und nicht dabei und hat aufgehört zu sein nicht rot und nicht dabei und hat nicht aufgehört zu sein. (1961b, 48-9)

Die zwei Dünnschliffe sind unterschiedlich aufgebaut: Der erste erscheint axiomatisch, während der zweite einer deutlichen permutativen Struktur mit Konjunktions- und Negationsoperatoren folgt, als wäre er der Beweis des ersten Dünnschliffs. Die logische Aufführung von „ungewöhnlichen Bewegungsverhältnissen“ erfolgt auch in diesem Fall auf mehreren Ebenen gleichzeitig. Isoliert man die einzelnen Syntagmen ‚rot‘, ‚dabei‘ und ‚hat aufgehört zu sein‘, gelangt man zur folgenden Übersetzung in logischer Sprache:

ROT und dabei und hat aufgehört zu sein rot und dabei und hat nicht aufgehört zu sein rot und
a1 ∧ a2 ∧ a3 a1 ∧ a2 ∧ ~a3 a1 ∧

nicht dabei und hat aufgehört zu sein rot und nicht dabei und hat nicht aufgehört zu sein
~a2 ∧ a3 a1 ∧ ~a2 ∧ ~a3

nicht rot und dabei und hat aufgehört zu sein nicht rot und dabei und hat nicht aufgehört zu sein
~a1 ∧ a2 ∧ a3 ~a1 ∧ a2 ∧ ~a3

nicht rot und nicht dabei und hat aufgehört zu sein nicht rot und nicht dabei und hat nicht aufgehört zu sein
~a1 ∧ ~a2 ∧ a3 ~a1 ∧ ~a2 ∧ ~a3

Der Text beginnt mit einer Reihe positiver Zeichenmengen, die durch die Konjunktion ‚und' miteinander verknüpft sind. Am Ende des Textes wird diese Reihe vollständig negativ. Jede Zeichenmenge wiederholt sich jeweils viermal positiv und viermal negativ. Dadurch drückt der Text strukturell den Übergang von positiv zu negativ aus, also das Vorübergehen, das sich auch dadurch als Forschungsobjekt der Sammlung profiliert. Diese Dynamik spiegelt sich auch in der Semantik wider. Paraphrasiert man Benses Rot-Satz, so würde es heißen: ‚Rot', d.h. das Rot *ist*, und ‚dabei', d.h. indem es Rot ist, und ‚hat aufgehört zu sein', d.h. es ist vergangen. Drückt sich auf der strukturellen Ebene das Vorübergehen selbst aus, so kommt auf der semantischen Ebene eine Instanz hinzu, die dieses Vorübergehen wahrnimmt. Der Bezug von Subjekt und Objekt der Aussage stellt also konzeptuell das im axiomatischen Dünnschliff eingeleitete „Bewegungsverhältnis" dar. Die strukturelle und die semantische Ebene fallen in dem Beweis-Satz zusammen, da die ikonische und die indexikalische Ebene der Sprache, und zwar ihre Eigen- und Außenwelt, parallel verlaufen.

Darüber hinaus evoziert das Wort ‚Rot' ein dichtes intertextuelles Gewebe, denn es wurde oft im Rahmen der Diskussion über Form und Inhalt des Denkens exemplarisch aufgeführt. Benses Faszination für den Wort-Begriff ‚Rot' lässt sich zunächst auf seine Lektüre von Ernst Bloch zurückführen. Auf dem Cover der gleichnamigen Zeitschrift setzte er das Zitat: „Doch es gibt auch rote Geheimnisse in der Welt, ja nur rote".[10]

Dadurch schließt Bloch sein Plädoyer für ein Denken der „exakten Phantasie" (1962, 409) auch auf metaphysische Fragen hin, was im Einklang mit Benses philosophischem Programm steht. Auch Hegel verwendet den Satz „Die Rose ist rot" als Beispiel für das positive Urteil, das eine wechselseitige Verbindung zwischen Allgemeinem und Einzelnem herstellt.[11] Dementsprechend muss auch Husserls

10 Vgl.: „Je mehr der Alltag stimmen wird, desto fragwürdiger bleibt der Tod, […]. Davon kann aber nicht nur moralisch, sondern im gleichen Zug metaphysisch nicht groß genug gedacht werden, genau in Ansehung des Glaubens ohne Lüge, des Wozu, das ebenso in die exakte Phantasie greift. […] Es gibt riesige Täuschung der Unwissenheit, Betrug an falscher Phantasie, Weihrauch über durchschaubaren Gefühlen. Doch es gibt auch rote Geheimnisse in der Welt, ja nur rote" (Bloch 1962, 408-9).

11 Vgl. „Wenn sonst eben nicht daran gedacht wird, daß mit jedem, zunächst wenigstens positiven Urteile die Behauptung gemacht werde, daß das Einzelne ein Allgemeines sei, so geschieht dies, weil teils die bestimmte Form, wodurch sich Subjekt und Prädikat unterscheiden, übersehen wird – indem das Urteil nichts als die Beziehung zweier Begriffe sein soll –, teils etwa auch, weil der sonstige Inhalt des Urteils „Cajus ist gelehrt" oder „die Rose ist rot" dem Bewußtsein vorschwebt, das, mit der Vorstellung des Cajus usf. beschäftigt, auf die Form nicht reflektiert, – obgleich wenigstens solcher Inhalt, wie der logische Cajus, der gewöhnlich zum Beispiel herhalten muß, ein sehr wenig interessanter Inhalt ist und vielmehr geradeso uninteressant gewählt wird, um nicht die Aufmerksamkeit von der Form ab auf sich zu ziehen" (Hegel 2008, 1169).

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„Rot-Empfindung" erwähnt werden, die als phänomenologischer Wendepunkt für eine Neuinterpretation des Inhalts im Denkens gilt.[12] 1959 greift Gotthard Günther Hegels Beispiel wieder auf, um im Zeitalter der Kybernetik die Nicht-Gültigkeit des *Tertium non datur* zu demonstrieren, um dadurch die Reflexion zwischen Subjekt und Objekt als zusätzliche Instanz im Denken der Wirklichkeit einzuführen.[13] Deshalb verweist das Wort ‚Rot' in Benses Text unmittelbar auf das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Denken und Wirklichkeit bzw. auf die Dialektik zwischen Abstraktion des Gedachten und seiner sprachlichen Konkretion. Insofern ist das Wort ‚Rot' in diesem Dünnschliff ein „Shifter",[14] da es formal diese Diskussion hervorruft, jedoch semantisch keine eindeutige Bedeutung besitzt. ‚Rot' steht hier also nicht für die Farbe und es soll auch nicht als Adjektiv oder Substantiv interpretiert werden. Es lässt sich vielmehr als konzeptuelle Übertragung des ‚Beispielhaften' lesen. ‚Rot' ist also hier ein bedeutungsloses Wort, das in seiner Materialität auf ein Komplex philosophischer Gedanken verweist, die sich mit der strukturellen Gestaltung des Dünnschliffs decken. Aus dem Zusammenhang dieser sprachlichen Dimensionen lässt sich die Bedeutung ableiten.

Demzufolge kann man ein erstes Ziel der künstlichen Schreibpraxis von Bense darin identifizieren: durch die Erprobung unterschiedlicher logischer Verkettungen versucht der Autor das denkende Denken zu beobachten. Die Sprache der Logik verkörpert dann die maschinelle

12 Vgl. „Jedem sinnlichen Empfindungsinhalt, z.B. dem empfundenen Rot, entspricht ein sinnliches Phantasma: das in der anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigung eines Roten mir aktuell vor schwebende Rot. Wie verhält es sich nun mit dem einen und dem anderen Rot? Beides sind Roterlebnisse. Gattung und Spezies mag dieselbe sein. Bestehen dann noch Wesensunterschiede? Oder handelt es sich um einen Unterschied in neuer Dimension, derart, dass ein Rot möglich ist als Empfindung und spezifisch genau dasselbe Rot möglich ist als Phantasma, und dass diese Bezeichnung Empfindung und Phantasma nicht etwa zurückweist auf genetische Unterschiede (ob aus peripheren Reizen stammend oder aus zentralen), auch nicht zurückweist auf die Auffassungsfunktion, ob derselbe Inhalt zwei verschiedene Auffassungen fundiert, sondern dass es sich um einen inneren, einen Wesensunterschied handelt?" (Husserl 2006, 12-13).

13 Vgl. ‚Die Rose ist rot', in dem ‚rot': „Nun würde das ‚absolut wahre' Universalprädikat, das an die Stelle von ‚rot' zu treten hätte, eine Bestimmung sein, in der sich prädikatives Sosein und faktisches Dasein vollkommen deckten. D.h. der ‚wahre' Begriff ‚rot' würde alle anderen Prädikaten wie ‚duftend', ‚dornig' usw. in sich aufgesogen haben. […] Wenn wir das Urteil fällen: die Rose ist rot, so haben wir ein relatives Prädikat gebraucht, das das volle Sein des Gegenstandes nicht erschöpft. Wir haben also das Recht, […] die ursprüngliche Alternative zu verwerfen. Das ist in dem zweideutigen Terminus ‚nicht-rot' impliziert" (Günther 1991, 131-3).

14 Vgl. „The general meaning of a shifter cannot be defined without a reference to the message. […] According to Peirce, a symbol (e.g. the English word red) is associated with the represented object by a conventional rule, while an index (e.g. the act of pointing) is in existential relation with the object it represents. Shifters combine both functions and belong therefore to the class of INDEXICAL SYMBOLS" (Jakobson 1971, 131-2).

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Instanz, die durch die Herstellung von Ketten als Modell für die Erweiterung der menschlichen Denkmöglichkeiten erscheint. In dieser Hinsicht können Benses Texte als ein besonderer Ausdruck der künstlichen Poesie betrachtet werden, die, obwohl analog komponiert wurden, den Computer als sprachliches Gegenüber miteinbeziehen. Metadiskursive Spuren dieser Poetologie findet man auch in den folgenden Dünnschliffen:

> SCHREIBEN wie eine Maschine schreibt wenn sie schreibt, in glatten Arbeitsgängen, aber anfällig für Verluste Störungen und Zufälle für Sand. (1961b, 53)

> TEXT, ein feiner Zeitdraht des Bewußtseins, der die kleinen Schalter meiner Hand betätigt, zufällig oder beabsichtigt, diskret und linear, nur linear schreibe ich weiter. (1961b, 55)

In diesem Fall fungieren die Lemmata nicht als *Shifters* sondern als semantische Einheiten, was erneut den unsystematischen Charakter der poetischen Textproduktion von Max Bense hervorhebt. Es besteht keine semantische Ambiguität in den Texten, die strukturell keine besondere logische oder statistische Struktur aufweisen. Die rekurrente Metaphorik betont die Zentralität des Hybriden in den Kompositionen, indem beide Dünnschliffe durch die Zeichenmengen „Schreiben wie eine Maschine schreibt" und „die kleinen Schalter meiner Hand" das Streben darstellen, sich die Maschine anzueignen. Manifestiert sich diese Poetologie des Künstlichen als Hybride mikroästhetisch in dieser Überlappung von strukturellen und semantischen Aspekten, so entfaltet sie sich in der nächsten Sektion der Sammlung makroästhetisch, und zwar in der Komposition von größeren Textblöcken.

3.2 Mischtexte und Montagen

Wie in der Dünnschliff-Sektion, eröffnet Bense die Reihe mit einer Definition dieser Textsorten:

> MISCHTEXTE sind Texte denen andere Texte als Reservoir der Sätze und Worte zugrundeliegen; sie enthüllen die Sprache im Zustand relativer Vergänglichkeit oder Unvergänglichkeit (Mikromontage)

> MONTAGEN sind Mischtexte deren Elemente an den Perioden und Bedeutungsverläufen in anderen Texten partizipieren (Makromischtexte). (1961b, 87)

Die Schilderung dieser Modelle ist zugänglicher als jene der Dünnschliffe, da Bense die Kompositionsverfahren dieser Textsorte sachlicher beschreibt. Die Mischtexte und Montagen betreffen den Bereich des Makroästhetischen, indem sie als komplexe Systeme von Sätzen erscheinen, die unterschiedliche Manifestationen von Intertextualität aufweisen, sei es im Satz selbst (Mikromontage) oder innerhalb eines Textblocks (Makromischtexte). Besonders interessant sind die Attribute von Vergänglichkeit und Unvergänglichkeit dieser Texte, die erneut die zeitliche Dimension des Schreibaktes in Benses Poetologie des Künstlichen miteinbeziehen. Als weiterer Beleg für die Unregelmäßigkeit von Benses experimenteller Schreibpraxis präsentiert die Sektion die Mischtexte und die Montagen nicht als getrennte Formate. Beide Formen der Textkonstruktion wechseln sich ohne ein erkennbares Schema in den verschiedenen Kompositionen ab, wie im Fall von *Reste eines Gesichtes*.

Der Text gliedert sich in vier Blöcke. Diese sind von einem Rahmen zusammengehalten, der bereits im Auftakt vorkommt:

> 18.10.59. Stuttgart Hamburg, 1. Klasse, 727 km, Ruckfahrkarte Nr. 23611, Fernschnellzugzuschlag 4.00 DM. (1961b, 98)

Der Text spielt sich also in einer Zugfahrt ab, wo die Überlegungen der Schreibinstanz sich mit Zitaten und logischen Verkettungen vermischen. Insofern überrascht es, dass der Text, als Erprobung von künstlicher Poesie, eine ausgeprägte erzählerische Dimension besitzt. Dieser Aspekt zeigt sich bereits im ersten Block:

> Abfahrt, das verstand ich damals nicht, Glätte über Backenknochen, Abfahrt, zu viel Papier auf der Straße, Racine muß noch gelesen werden, ich meine als sie tot war, die Blechtrommel muß nicht gelesen werden, jetzt fährt der Zug schneller, die Wahrheit in der Dichtung auch nicht, gar nicht, nichts stört, man soll immer wieder zurück, die vollständigen Seiten brauchen ein Datum, Ort Zeit Dauer, die Spuren Mathieus aus dem Zeitdraht drücken den Übergang von Text in Illustration kalligraphisch und kontinuierlich aus, […]. (1961b, 98)

Die physikalische Bewegung des Zugs und deren Wahrnehmung durch eine Ich-Instanz (vgl. „jetzt fährt der Zug schneller“) werden mit metapoetischen Reflexionen (vgl. „aus dem Zeitdraht drücken den Übergang von Text in Illustration kalligraphisch und kontinuierlich aus“), ästhetischen Positionierungen (vgl. „Racine muß noch gelesen werden, […] die Blechtrommel muß nicht gelesen werden“[15]) und visuellen Beschreibungen von Szenen (vgl. „Glätte über Backenknochen, [...], zu viel Papier auf der Straße“) quasi expressionistisch zusammenmontiert. Die Struktur unterliegt keinem statistischen, topologischen oder logischen Schema. Innerhalb dieses Kompositionsverfahrens tauchen die zentralen Themen der Sammlung auf, d.h. das Ich, der Text, die Maschine und die Zeit, die sich jedoch in Gegensatz zu den Dünnschliffen makroästhetisch ergeben, nämlich aus dem Zusammenhang der Sätze und nicht aus jener der Wörter.

Eine eklatante Stellungnahme zur Einbettung der Maschine in die Texterzeugung, die die These dieses Aufsatzes bekräftigt, findet man im zweiten Block:

> Nicht jeder Blick ist nah kein Dorf ist spät ein Schloß ist frei und jeder Bauer ist fern jeder Fremde ist fern ein Tag ist spät jedes Haus ist dunkel ein Auge ist tief nicht jedes Schloß ist alt jeder Tag ist alt nicht jedes Haus kein Haus jedes Auge der Weg der Blick lauert die präzisen Vorhaben der Liebe auf, [...] die Drähte sind zerrissen, ich lege alles hin und jeder Blick ist still kein Dorf ist spät oder jedes Dorf ist gut nicht jeder Blick ist still ein Haus ist dunkel nicht jedes Haus ist dunkel und jeder Blick ist tief nicht jeder Weg ist fern nicht jeder Tag ist schmal unterbrechen, ich unterbreche, ängstlich auf das Endlose bedacht, Mißtrauen in meinen Begriffen gegen jeden Zerfall. (1961b, 101-2)

Der Auszug beginnt als Mischtext mit einem direkten Zitat aus den *Stochastischen Texten* von Theo Lutz, das mit der Isolierung der Substantive ‚Haus‘, ‚Auge‘, ‚Weg‘ und ‚Blick‘ endet, als ob man Schritt für Schritt zurück in die Entstehung des veröffentlichten Textes ginge. In der Wiederholung der Sequenz am Ende des Auszugs kann man nicht feststellen, ob es sich um einige aus der Publikation ausgeschlossene Varianten oder um Benses Imitationen handelt, vor allem wenn man sie im Zusammenhang mit dem anschließenden Unterbrechung-Programm liest. Durch die Interaktion mit den *Stochastischen Texten* inszeniert Bense hier seine hybride Verfasserschaft und „ängstlich auf das Endlose“ problematisiert sie gleichzeitig. Die Überwindung der Dichotomie menschlich/maschinell ins Hybride erfolgt dann im dritten Block, der nach dem oben zitierten Auszug eine neue Subjektivität des Schreibenden durch das Spiel mit der Homographie des Wortes ‚ich‘ thematisiert:

15 Weitere Spuren in der Sammlung zur expliziten Distanzierung Benses von Gruppe 47 findet man auch im Auftakt des Textes *Teile*, der sich mit expliziter Kritik an der Stellungnahme von Ingeborg Bachmann zur Aufarbeitungspolitik eröffnet: „Keine Anrufung des großen Bären“ (1961b, 95).

> Die vollständige Übereinkunft, von der du gesprochen hast, enthält die Rückfahrt, daß ich gehe, die vollständige Übereinkunft, von der ich spreche, wenn du nicht kommst, ich erwarte nicht, daß du kommst, aber daß du nicht kommst, ist nicht die vollständige Übereinkunft, enthält auch die Rückfahrt, ich bin das Ich, das ich sagt, wenn du ich sagst und das Ich bist, das ich sagt, wenn ich das Ich bin, das ich sagt, wie du das Ich bist, das ich sagt, wenn ich ich sage, wie jedes Ich Ich ist, das ich sagt, die vollständige Übereinkunft, die ich sagt, wenn ich es sage, diese vollständige Übereinkunft, von der du gesprochen hast und von der ich spreche, enthält deine Rückfahrt. (1961b, 103)

Das Bewusstwerden der Ich-Instanz koppelt sich hier an die Entstehung des Textes. Genauer gesagt: Mit der Vervollständigung des Textes vervollständigt sich auch ein neues Ich. Indem der Text künstlich entsteht – als Zusammensetzung aus maschinell imitierten und menschlichen Schreibweisen – verformt sich auch dieses hybride Ich auf einer materiell-ästhetischen Ebene. Um sich als solches zu erkennen, braucht das Ich ein Du, das wiederum ebenfalls ein Ich ist. Auch in diesem Fall ist der Einfluss Günthers zu erkennen, indem er dem „projektierten mechanical brain" eine Vermittlungsrolle zuschreibt (1991, 47), das zum ersten Mal die reziproke Anerkennung von der Ich- und Du-Instanz erlauben kann. In Benses Text entstehen beide deiktischen Instanzen in dem und durch den Text, der gleichzeitig das Ergebnis einer dritten und dabei hybriden Sprechinstanz ist. Darüber hinaus scheint Bense die Überlegungen von Benveniste zum Ich-Shifter verdichtet zu haben. Bei genauer Betrachtung von Benvenistes Aufsatz erkennt man auch ähnliche Formulierungen, wobei es nicht eindeutig festgestellt werden kann, ob Bense den Essay *Subjectivity in Language* (1958) bei oder vor der Komposition dieses Textes schon kannte:

> It is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a *subject*, because language alone establishes the concept of 'ego' in reality, in *its* reality which is that of the being. […] 'Ego' is he who says 'ego'. […] Consciousness of self is only possible if it is experienced by contrast. I use *I* only when I am speaking to someone who will be a *you* in my address. […] Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse. Because of this, *I* posits another person, the one who, being, as he is, completely exterior to 'me', becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says *you* to me. […] In it in a dialectic reality that will incorporate the two terms and define them by mutual relationship that the linguistic basis of subjectivity is discovered. (1973, 225)

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Reste eines Gesichtes inszeniert also die Bedingungen, die eine neue hybride Subjektivität des Schreibens entstehen lassen. Die maschinelle Instanz fungiert als Brücke zum Du, da das menschliche Ich sich durch das Spiel mit der maschinellen Grammatik und Syntax von dem textuellen in einen virtuellen Raum projiziert, wo es sich *materiell*, als eine neue, plurale, erweiterte Schöpfungsinstanz erkennt. Deshalb erweist sich das künstliche Schreiben für Bense als zusätzliches Mittel zur Erkundung und Spekulation über die Welt. Demzufolge nimmt die Autorschaft einen hybriden Charakter an, der die beiden in ihr involvierten Welten – die Eigenwelt der Sprache und die Außenwelt der schreibenden Instanz – innerhalb eines einheitlichen künstlerischen Produkts synthetisch reflektiert. Die Eigenwelt ist dann ein Vehikel zur Offenbarung und zum Überdenken der Außenwelt. Durch die hybride Verfasserschaft entsteht somit kein immanentes, bedeutungsloses und in sich geschlossenes Kunstwerk, sondern ein poetisches Denkwerkzeug, das darauf abzielt, das denkende Denken zu verdichten.

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Las ideas de Quevedo en torno a la traducción

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Abstract This article aims to study Quevedo's ideas on translation. We can find some scattered thoughts about this activity in his own translations and in his comments on versions by other authors. Firstly, it is examined briefly what he said about his selection of literary sources; secondly, his outlook on the previous editions and translations; then, his wide notion of translation; and finally – in each one of the last two sections of the essay –, his apparently contradictory preference for both paraphrasis and literal translation. These ideas are analysed together with his own translation practice to establish the foundations of the 'poetics' of Quevedo's translation.

Keywords Francisco de Quevedo. Literary translation. Poetry translation. Paraphrase. Word by word translation. Humanism.

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1 Introducción

Generalmente, para el estudio de las ideas de un autor en torno a la traducción solo contamos con el resultado de su labor traductora –es decir, con sus versiones –y, si acaso, con un prólogo con algunas ideas más o menos vagas. Quevedo tampoco nos legó un texto que ofrezca las claves de su teoría sobre la traducción, por lo que debe acudirse fundamentalmente a su actividad traductora. Sin embargo, existen algunas afirmaciones dispersas en sus obras o en sus preliminares para textos ajenos que también deben tenerse en consideración para reconstruir los posibles principios de su pensamiento traductor.[1] En este trabajo se analiza su discurso sobre la traducción y se pone en relación con su praxis traductora.

Quevedo se relacionó con la traducción de maneras diversas y desempeñó distintos roles en este campo. Uno de estos papeles fue el de lector crítico de traducciones, es decir, un lector atento de versiones ajenas que expresó su acuerdo o desacuerdo con las decisiones traductológicas de otros. Por otra parte, fue editor de traducciones: como es sabido, en 1631 preparó para la imprenta la obra poética y las traducciones de fray Luis de León. Además, promovió traducciones de obras clásicas, pero también contemporáneas, entre autores que pertenecían a su círculo social,[2] lo que revela un perfil de Quevedo como reputado intelectual en el ámbito de la traducción, oficio propio de humanistas. Varios preliminares escritos por encargo para traducciones ajenas, como la de la *Utopía* de Moro realizada por Jerónimo de Medinilla, atestiguan este quehacer.

Fruto de esta diversa relación con la traducción son las dispersas ideas quevedescas de las que disponemos. Pero la mayor fuente de información en torno a la poética de la traducción de Quevedo la constituyen sus propias versiones, que lo ocuparon durante toda su trayectoria: de 1609 datan su *Anacreón castellano* y el *Focílides*; y hacia el final de su vida, en 1644, se imprimieron sus versiones de la *Vida de Bruto* de Plutarco y las *Suasorias* de Séneca el Viejo en la *Primera parte de la vida de Marco Bruto*. Dentro de su amplio corpus de traducciones, sobre todo legó ideas sobre esta actividad en su *Anacreón castellano* y en los preliminares de *Epicteto y Focílides*.

1 Ya María del Carmen Sigler (1994) exploró estas ideas en tres traducciones quevedescas: *Anacreón castellano*, *Epicteto y Focílides* y *Lágrimas de Jeremías castellanas*. Conviene ahora hacer lo propio en todo el corpus de traducciones del autor y en las demás piezas dispersas que revelan su visión de esta actividad.

2 En torno a este círculo de Quevedo, una red de autores vinculados en lo personal y lo literario, véase Rey 2020, XIX, quien propuso esta noción a partir de su estudio de las censuras y elogios quevedescos de libros ajenos.

2 Nuevas fuentes y cauces de invención

Quevedo buscó obras que contribuían a explorar nuevos cauces de invención y defendió la novedad y la originalidad de sus traducciones en sus textos preliminares. Igual que los traductores del siglo XVI, optó por trasladar la obra de filósofos e historiadores griegos y latinos, pero es manifiesta su inclinación por poetas y filósofos griegos desconocidos en España, como Anacreonte o Focílides, y por autores de la Edad de Plata latina.

Para destacar la novedad de sus traducciones se sirvió de varias estrategias. Los preliminares que anteceden a su *Anacreón* contienen una apología de Anacreonte que revela que percibía la necesidad de despejar las dudas sobre la licitud de traducir a este poeta, con fama de bebedor y autor de odas principalmente sobre el vino y el amor –en algunos casos, homoerótico–. Pero, probablemente, no solo trataba de protegerse, sino que deseaba postularse como un traductor de un texto novedoso en España y que rescataba la obra de un poeta tradicionalmente denostado:

> Por ser Anacreón la gala y elegancia de los griegos, famoso autor en todas lenguas y no visto en la nuestra, y por ir con más copiosos comentarios que hasta ahora ha tenido, más corregido el original y con muchos lugares declarados (no advertidos jamás), me atrevo, siendo pequeña obra, a ponerla en manos de Vuestra Excelencia. (*Anacreón castellano*, 139)

Además, cierra su obra reivindicando que era el primero en traducir a este poeta:

> Acabé esta paráfrasis y notas como pude y supe, y no como quisiera […] Añada el que más supiere y séame gloria el ardimiento de empezar, pues forzosamente me deberá mi lengua, si no buena obra, buen deseo. (427)

Y lo mismo sucede en sus versiones de textos bíblicos: en sus *Lágrimas de Jeremías* dice «haber querido dar a mi lengua esta paráfrasi […] [cosa] importante a mi nación» (68), y, poco después, reitera su voluntad de que se puedan leer en español los *Trenos* de Jeremías:

> Por ver a mi lengua llena de libros de ningún momento; y queriendo que, como la francesa tiene en los mismos *Trenos* a G. du Vair y la italiana en su vulgar al Panigarola, me tenga a mí la mía el primero, si no el mejor ni el que merecía, de los muchos más doctos que lo pudieran hacer. (69-70)

Igualmente, en su elogio preliminar de la *Comedia de Eufrosina*, traducción de Fernando de Ballesteros Saavedra, subraya el hecho de que sea la primera versión en castellano:

> Pocas comedias hay en prosa de nuestra lengua […] En portugués hay una de Camoens, dos del doctísimo Corte Real y esta *Eufrosina*, de que carecíamos […] Merece don Fernando grande alabanza en haber hecho que tenga Castilla parte en obra tan grande y digna de encarecida estimación. (*Censuras y elogios*, 428-9)

Estos textos revelan su percepción de sí mismo y de otros traductores como benefactores de la sociedad y su visión de la traducción como medio para enriquecer el panorama literario español, como observó Sigler (1994, 45). Por otra parte, estas consideraciones entroncan con la concepción de la traducción como actividad con fines parcialmente patrióticos, compartida por Quevedo, cuya faceta de traductor, además, está muy ligada a su reivindicación de autores hispanos, como Marcial o los dos Sénecas.

A diferencia de lo que sucede con estas traducciones, del *Manual* de Epicteto ya existían varias versiones castellanas, por lo que Quevedo se apoya en la principal novedad que aporta su traducción: la versificación del original, sobre la que escribe lo siguiente:

> Esta versión que hago en versos, con la suavidad de consonantes, para que sea a la memoria apetito la armonía. Decir soy el primero que lo ha hecho no es alabarme de docto, sino de atrevido. (*Epicteto y Focílides*, 485)

Aunque humildemente, en realidad encarece su labor aludiendo a ella como una osadía.

3 Editor y traductor: preocupación ecdótica y reivindicación de sus innovaciones

En múltiples ocasiones Quevedo deja constancia de su respeto hacia las fuentes manuscritas e impresas. Declara abiertamente que se servía de fuentes diversas para elaborar sus traducciones y sabemos que no solo utilizó en distintos momentos de su vida ediciones diferentes para citar o traducir un fragmento, sino que en la misma época y para elaborar la misma obra tenía a su disposición distintas ediciones.[3] En este aspecto su método se asemeja al de los

3 Sobre el acopio de fuentes por parte de Quevedo pueden consultarse Plata Parga 1999; 2000; 2001; Moya del Baño 2014, 23-43; García Sánchez 2022.

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humanistas del siglo XVI, cuyo acopio de fuentes diversas y manejo de traducciones intermedias era habitual.

En el *Anacreón* explica que él toca «religiosamente los originales»: «y así nunca, aunque le hallé falto, corregí el verso, aunque compuse la sentencia» (319). Los pasajes de este tipo, en los que muestra sus reticencias a introducir modificaciones, son habituales. Por ejemplo, manifiesta su desacuerdo en relación con una nueva lectura que le propone Francisco de Rioja acerca de un texto de Plinio y apunta: «mientras lo escrito se pudiere conservar, no soy de opinión que se mude, quite o añada sin autoridad de manuscrito» (275); discrepa del editor que sigue, Henri Estienne: «Bien confieso que parece más corriente leción, pero no es mala decir, para defender lo impreso, τίς» (281); y critica algunas de las decisiones de Gonzalo Correas a propósito de su versión del *Manual* de Epicteto:

> Blasona haber ordenado y enmendado muchos lugares en el original griego que no reconoció Sánchez; en algunos se justifica; en otros se atribuye la razón que no tiene. (489)

En ocasiones como estas, puede observarse a Quevedo llevando a cabo tareas más propias de un editor que de un traductor y escritor, debido a que los originales no contaban con ediciones tan seguras y fiables como las actuales, y las ediciones y traducciones previas a veces optaban por soluciones dispares; actúa a la vez como traductor e hipotético editor.

Por otra parte, Quevedo subraya la importancia de conocer en profundidad la lengua y la materia del texto que se traduce, por ejemplo, al resaltar la acertada traducción de idiotismos y proverbios portugueses por parte del ya mencionado Ballesteros Saavedra:

> Su original […] es difícil por los idiotismos de la lengua y los proverbios antiguos, y que ya son remotos a la habla moderna. Don Fernando de Ballesteros y Saavedra con suma diligencia le ha traducido. (423)

Y al subrayar los conocimientos políticos de Medinilla, traductor de Moro citado anteriormente, sobre el que escribe lo siguiente:

> Le importuné a que hiciese esta traducción. Asegurándome el acierto della […] las noticias políticas que con larga lección ha adquirido, ejecutándolas en cuanto del servicio de su majestad se le ha ordenado, y con gran providencia y desinterés en el gobierno que tuvo destos partidos. (427)

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Tanto el respeto por los originales como su hincapié en el conocimiento de su lengua y su temática abunda en la idea de que Quevedo era consciente de que el ideal traductor era el traslado fiel. Sin embargo, en una contradicción solo aparente, con frecuencia declara sus innovaciones y deja constancia de sus aportaciones concretas a la traducción del texto, como prueban sus palabras en torno a un cambio en el orden de dos capítulos de su versión de Epicteto: «Atrevime a mudar dos capítulos» (488). Asimismo, en su *Anacreón* declara lo siguiente a propósito del final de una oda: «yo ordené en mi traducción la letra griega que descuidadamente volvieron todos los traductores» (319). De modo similar, tras otro poema comenta: «Leo diferentemente que todos el original» (307). Las enmiendas de lo expuesto por los traductores que lo precedieron evidencian de nuevo su preocupación por la comprensión del original y su deseo de reivindicar las novedades de su traducción y de que esta entre a formar parte de la tradición de versiones y comentarios eruditos de esta obra, dialogando de igual a igual con las de grandes humanistas.

Sin embargo, a pesar de que subraya sus aportaciones originales, suele reconocer el mérito de sus predecesores. Esta es su actitud hacia Estienne: aunque en ocasiones lo refuta, no obsta para que elogie su ingenio y su trabajo –creo que sin dobleces–:

> No arguyó (con perdón de su buena memoria) el cuidadoso Henrico Estéfano bien en hacer uno mismo estos dos lugares […] Bien creo que no se le huyó esto a tan valiente ingenio; quizá lo despreció. (159-60)

También en su *Epicteto* muestra respeto por los traductores previos, al tiempo que defiende la originalidad de su versión: en la dedicatoria dice haber «procurado adornar» su traducción «de las advertencias de todos» (485) y más adelante insiste en que ha «reverenciado el juicio de tan grandes hombres» (491), a pesar de disentir de su interpretación del texto.

Estas ideas de Quevedo en torno a las fuentes de sus traducciones son coherentes con varios fragmentos en los que se vale de sendas analogías en las que compara las ediciones de los clásicos con piedras preciosas y con el oro, y su labor de traductor, con la de un orfebre; es decir, equipara su tarea con un trabajo de joyería en el que crea a partir de piedras preciosas, sus fuentes, una nueva pieza, su traducción. En su versión del *Manual* de Epicteto, afirma que consultó el original griego y las versiones previas a la suya «con el recato de quien trata joyas»:

> Con deseo de acertar en lección tan importante, y con el recato de quien trata joyas, he visto el original griego, la versión latina, la francesa, la italiana […], la que en castellano hizo el maestro

> Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas, con argumentos y notas; la última, que hizo el maestro Gonzalo Correas. (*Epicteto y Focílides*, 489)

Y, con la tópica humildad que requieren los preliminares literarios, se presenta ante el dedicatario de su obra –«A don Juan de Herrera, su amigo» –como un joyero que engasta un diamante en un anillo, ofreciendo así la mejor labor con la que podía agasajarlo, puesto que partía de una obra ajena:

> Delgado es este reconocimiento; mas suficiente en quien no puede con otro caudal mostrarse agradecido […] Hallo quejoso el estudio y culpada la voluntad en no haber dado al amigo alguna prenda útil; mía no lo podía ser: por eso busqué el precio de la obra en el grande Epicteto; basta que en la traducción v.m. le reciba de mí. Quien presenta el diamante en el anillo no da lo que hizo, sino lo que engastó, y se reconoce por dádiva. (485)

Igualmente, en *Introducción a la vida devota*, traducción de la obra de Francisco de Sales, aludiendo a otra versión española anterior a la suya, a cargo de Sebastián Fernández de Eyzaguirre, equipara su tarea traductora –en este caso, sobre todo, de lima –con la de aquel que «limpia el oro», imitándolo en su cuidado:[4]

> Por el interés público me determiné a trabajar en restituirle a sí propio, imitando en este cuidado al que limpia el oro, que sólo atiende a descubrirle, sin gastarle; advirtiendo que quien le disminuye más roba que limpia, y antes merece el nombre de ladrón que el de artífice. (*Introducción a la vida devota*, 1569)

En estos pasajes Quevedo aplica a sus propias tareas traductoras una alegoría habitual al referirse a los libros o las fuentes literarias –recuérdense las «preciosas alhajas» (356) de Gracián en el museo de *El Criticón* –que él mismo ensaya en otras ocasiones, como cuando compara la labor de su amigo el traductor Vicente Mariner con la de un descubridor de tesoros: «Tu mi Marineri totos Graecae linguae thesauros antiquitate venerabilis, mole et magnitudine inaccessibiles, difficultatum tenebris involutos tan [*sic*] caeca noctis caligine submersos, et iam pene oblivionis inertia et malignitate

4 Lida (1953) concluyó que Quevedo apenas había consultado el texto francés y que la versión quevedesca contenía un gran número de errores. En cambio, Fernández López (2005, 368-9) explicó que estas conclusiones tan poco favorables se debían al cotejo con una fuente errónea.

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sepultos diserto calamo ervis [*sic*]» (*Censuras y elogios*, 401).[5] En sus traducciones enaltece la labor de sus predecesores y el valor de sus fuentes, algunas de las cuales eran contemporáneas, como la versión de Gonzalo Correas, de 1632, al tiempo que encarece sus propias obras.

Finalmente, un fragmento de su *España defendida* resulta especialmente esclarecedor en relación con lo tratado hasta este punto; la reivindicación de su originalidad como traductor que, no obstante, se integra en una rica tradición de versiones previas:

> ¿En qué materia del mundo no hay en España sola tantos libros como en todas las naciones en sola su lengua, en la cual están traducidos todos los griegos y hebreos y latinos y franceses y italianos? […] El uno es Virgilio, cuya grandeza, siendo incapaz de versión, está contenta en la de Gregorio Hernández; Heliodoro, *Teágenes y Clariquea*, en la segunda versión impresa en Alcalá; Cornelio Tácito vergüenza hace a Lipsio y los demás comentadores, rico con los comentarios y traducción de don Baltasar de Álamos. Y entre estos autores, osadía parece, o es temeridad, nombro a Anacreón mejorado en castellano por mí, y a Focílides en la parte griega; y de la hebrea los *Trenos* de Jeremías. (*España defendida*, 98-9)

Según Quevedo, es motivo de orgullo contar con tantas traducciones al castellano que, además, hacen justicia a los originales e incluso los mejoran. Aunque modestamente, como cabría esperar, incluye sus recientes traducciones tras una elogiosa enumeración de versiones previas. Con todo, dice haber mejorado los poemas de Anacreonte.

4 Una amplia noción de la traducción

En varias ocasiones, Quevedo utiliza la voz «traducción» en un sentido amplio que engloba la paráfrasis y las imitaciones, e incluso se sirve de la expresión «a la letra», es decir, de manera literal, para aludir a una versión libre: por ejemplo, desde el propio título del *Anacreón* se adhiere programáticamente a la paráfrasis, pero

5 Quevedo utilizó con frecuencia metáforas similares que presentan los textos clásicos como joyas. Por ejemplo, al referirse a las palabras de Séneca en *Defensa de Epicuro*: «Séneca, cuyas palabras todos los hombres grandes reparten por joyas en sus escritos, repartió en los suyos las de Epicuro» (657); a propósito de Lucano: «habiendo tenido tantos ladrones como lectores que se han enriquecido con su robo, siempre podrá con el caudal que añudan sus palabras enjoyar a otros muchos» (*La constancia y paciencia del Santo Job*, 290); o de Tertuliano: «ahorrar razones suyas no fuera brevedad, sino hurto o miseria: muchas joyas no son carga, sino tesoro, como pocas piedras siempre son peso» (*Providencia de Dios*, 565). En torno a este modo de concebir los libros, véase Schwartz 1998.

también se refiere a ella como «mi traducción» (133).[6] En esta misma obra pone en relación una de las odas anacreónticas con un romance y escribe «esta oda está traducida en un romance castellano» (350), aunque realmente no se trate de una traducción *stricto sensu*.

A propósito de una versión de un poema neolatino de Julio César Escalígero citado en el *Anacreón*, escribe que «dice así en latín a la letra» (226), pero incluso en este caso rehúsa la traducción literal y opta por una versión poética ligeramente amplificada y libre.

Otro ejemplo significativo es la manera en la que describe su imitación de unos versos de Propercio incluida en la *Dedicatoria* de las obras de fray Luis al Conde-Duque:

> ¿Adónde irán por defensa los que, escribiendo hoy de galantería a una afición amorosa, escriben estos escondrijos denegridos, cuando Propercio los reprehende (lib. I, elegía 9) con tan ingeniosos gritos? […] Yo con alguna licencia lo imité en estos versos, que pueden pasar por tradución. (142)

Quevedo facilita el original en latín y, tras las palabras citadas, su versión, precisando que, aunque se trata de una imitación «con algunas licencias», puede servir como traducción. Por lo tanto, no oculta que elabora una versión poética libre. Además, como también ofrecía el texto original, resultaba sencillo comprobar que se trataba de una paráfrasis. De hecho, probablemente, el lector esperaba que Quevedo optase por este tipo de traducción al trasladar originales en verso o al versificar textos prosísticos. Buena muestra de ello son las palabras que pueden leerse en una de las aprobaciones para la impresión del *Epicteto y Focílides*: «La traducción es elegante, clara, verdadera, sin duda de provecho, de más viva sentencia y animado estilo que su original» (481); es decir, se aprecia y elogia la labor estilística de Quevedo en su traducción.

En suma, bajo este amplio paraguas que es para él la traducción se encuentran manifestaciones muy diversas.

5 Paráfrasis poética y traducción compuesta

En varios elogios Quevedo alaba la conservación del estilo de los originales. Por ejemplo, en la traducción de Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo de una obra de Pierre Matthieu, Quevedo aprovecha para alabar otra versión de este mismo autor, en este caso a cargo de Pedro van der Hamen, de la que dice que es «obra grande y de que se deberán

6 Sobre esta versión quevedesca, pueden consultarse Méndez 2014; Izquierdo 2019; 2022; García Sánchez 2021a.

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alabanzas al que nos la da, sin echar menos el estilo en que nació» (420). Y en el preliminar para la *Eufrosina* escribe que «Don Fernando de Ballesteros y Saavedra con suma diligencia le ha traducido. De suerte que, hablando castellano, no deja de ser portugués; ni deja de verse como nació, donde empieza ahora a vivir» (423).

No obstante, también censura la excesiva fidelidad: a propósito de la versión del *Manual* de Epicteto a cargo de Gonzalo Correas, dice que lo tradujo «con algún rigor más ajustado al original y por eso menos apacible» (483) que la del Brocense;[7] y describe una versión francesa anterior a la de Pierre de Bouglers como «bien ajustada y dispuesta, con más suavidad que la primera» (491). En cambio, elogia que Jean Baudoin tradujese a Esopo «suavemente» (494), y en sus versiones pueden encontrarse pasajes en los que justifica su libertad traductora y defiende explícitamente la traducción libre. Por ejemplo, en torno al cierre de la oda «No vio Cupido una abeja», Quevedo aclara lo siguiente: «Quiso decir [Anacreonte], con ilación forzosa y elegante, lo que yo traduje […] Y la postrera copla declara la energía que calladamente cierran en estas palabras» (350), justificando su adición de los últimos cuatro versos, en los cuales explicita el sentido latente en las palabras griegas.

Efectivamente, en el análisis de su práctica traductora, generalmente se aprecia cierta voluntad de fidelidad al sentido que interpreta subyacente en los originales, pero frecuentemente se recrea en ideas expuestas en el original, reforzando sus particularidades y llevando a cabo una notable adaptación formal.

En el caso del *Anacreón*, reserva para sus comentarios el grueso de su adaptación de las odas al nuevo contexto cultural al que las transfiere. En la «Advertencia» anticipa su propósito: «En la parte que he podido le he castigado, porque mi intento fue comunicar a España la dulzura y elegancias griegas, y no las costumbres» (119). Esto puede verificarse en los añadidos que modifican el tono de algunas odas y las trasladan hacia una más obvia esfera moral, como aquellas en torno a la muerte, pero suele reservar la moralización para sus comentarios. En cambio, en otras versiones, como el *Epicteto y Focílides* o la *Vida de Marco Bruto*, pueden detectarse algunos casos de censura de los originales.[8] Esta práctica es coherente con su alabanza de una traducción adaptada como la que hace Medinilla de la *Utopía* de Moro, quien ofrece una versión plenamente católica.

Por otra parte, trata de evitar que se perciba erróneamente que para él la paráfrasis es un método con el que esquivar las dificultades

7 Sobre su uso de sendas versiones, pueden consultarse López Eire 1982; García Sánchez 2021b; 2023, 312-34.

8 Para sus adaptaciones al distinto contexto histórico y cultural, véanse Castanien 1961; 1964; Mañas 2003; Alcalde 2011; García Sánchez 2023, 291-4, 345-55, 399-401.

del texto, pues la concibe como un modo de trasladar más fielmente la energía del original: por ejemplo, en su *Anacreón* reconoce que le resultó complejo traducir cuatro versos: «se me hace dificultoso declarar aquellos versos» (306); y muestra que trató de desentrañar su sentido. Esta breve observación demuestra su preocupación por comprender el original, a pesar de que no siempre quede reflejada en su elaboración parafrástica, ya que en ella lo que prima es el resultado poético.

Esta prioridad del resultado sobre la fidelidad al original también se aprecia en varios lugares en los que encarece que se conserve el estilo, pero siempre que el resultado no sea afectado; por ejemplo, en su elogio de la traducción de Medinilla escribe que le parece una versión acertada por «lo cuidadoso de su estilo y sin afectación» (427).

En algunas de las múltiples citas de textos clásicos traducidas por Quevedo también explicita las razones de su libertad a la hora de trasladarlas. Por ejemplo, en un interesante pasaje del texto preliminar de *Marco Bruto* titulado «De la medalla de Bruto y de su reverso», cita unas palabras en latín de Cicerón en las que, a su vez, se incluye una frase griega de Epicuro transliterada, «me politeuesthai». A continuación, Quevedo ofrece su traducción, en la que convierte esa frase griega en «*el varón sabio* no se ha de encargar de la república», y en seguida explica esta obvia intervención en el original:

> Pruébase que la efigie es parecida a Marco Bruto [...] con estas palabras: «*Epicuri mentionem facis, et audes dicere me politeuesthai. Non te Bruti nostri vulticulus ab ista oratione deterret?* Haces mención de Epicuro y atréveste a decir: 'El varón sabio no se ha de encargar de la república. ¿No te espanta esta proposición el ceñuelo de nuestro Bruto?'». Traduje la sentencia de Epicuro entera, como la controvertió Séneca, si bien las palabras griegas sólo dicen «No se ha de llegar a la república», porque suenan truncadas e impersonales. Volví la voz *vulticulus* ceñuelo, que llamamos capotillo, y no carilla, porque ésta antes es ridícula que espantosa, y el ceñuelo amenaza. (*Primera parte de la vida de Marco Bruto*, 717)

Esta aclaración muestra que sus intervenciones en ocasiones provienen de otras fuentes y prueba que comprendía la expresión griega de Epicuro, pero le preocupaba más el resultado en castellano que la fidelidad al texto. Además, en las líneas en torno a su traducción de *vulticulus* puede apreciarse la justificación de su elección de una voz de la lengua meta que parece alejada de la del original. En este caso, las connotaciones del equivalente aparentemente exacto en castellano, «carilla», invitan a escoger otro que parece más libre pero que, según él, encaja mejor con el sentido del texto latino. A mi

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juicio, esta es una muestra palmaria de la preocupación de Quevedo por trasladar el significado del original a través de la expresión castellana más adecuada, que, aunque quizá se aleje del equivalente directo, se aproxime a la acepción que tiene en ese contexto concreto.

La traducción es en sí misma un proceso creativo, pero en Quevedo se encuentra todavía más próxima a sus obras originales de lo que pudiéramos pensar desde nuestra óptica actual, debido, por una parte, a su contexto traductor –en un sentido amplio, heredero de la traducción humanística –y, por otra, a su modo particular de aproximarse a los textos, muy similar a la manera en la que escribe su obra original: no solo utiliza la conocida como imitación compuesta en su poesía, sino que en sus versiones anteriores a 1635 su práctica traductora se acomoda a los principios de la traducción compuesta.

6 La fiel traducción de los dos Sénecas

Frente a lo que sucede en los textos que rodean a sus versiones poéticas, sus traducciones en prosa –casi todas del latín –no presentan consideraciones semejantes en torno a la traducción, ya que estas versiones, que a veces se conservan solo de manera parcial, generalmente no cuentan con preliminares o comentarios. En buena medida, por esta carencia, una de las cuestiones en las que es preciso profundizar es la curiosa preferencia de Quevedo por traducir a los dos Sénecas de manera tan fiel.[9] Aunque existen diferencias, en las *Suasorias*, las *Controversias*, *De los remedios de cualquier fortuna* y las *Epístolas* emplea una prosa altamente latinizante y con un abundante uso del hipérbaton.[10] Como es sobradamente sabido, Quevedo no es un escritor que abogase por la renovación literaria por la vía de la latinización, sino que, al contrario, atacó a los «mezcladores de lenguas y translaciones» a propósito de la poesía, pero también de la prosa: por ejemplo, en su elogio de la obra *Eternidad del rey don Filipe Tercero, nuestro señor*, de Ana de Castro Egas, alaba su escritura «sin bastardía mendigada de otras lenguas» (418).

9 Aunque estas son sus traducciones más fieles y más destacables por su extensión –a las que debe añadirse su versión de *Il Romulo* de Malvezzi, según el análisis de Isasi Martínez (1993), «una traducción fiel, pero no servil, literal, pero literaria también, en la que se trasvasan hábilmente los rasgos de la lengua y el estilo del original» (91)–, no son las únicas, pues, por ejemplo, tradujo de manera literal algunas de las citas prosísticas incluidas entre los comentarios de su *Anacreón*, como puede apreciarse en García Sánchez (2024), y es relativamente fiel en su traducción de los pasajes clásicos incluidos en su «Juicio que de Marco Bruto hicieron los autores en sus obras», como ya observó Cappelli (2001).

10 A esto se refirieron Plata Parga (2002, 260), Adiego, Artigas y Riquer (2009, 137), Alonso Veloso (2012, 949 nota 1157) y García Sánchez (2023, 439-60, 474-80, 491-500, 523-18).

En su versión de Malvezzi optó por primar la *puritas* del castellano sobre los italianismos y latinismos que podría haber tomado del original, según indicó Isasi (1993, 90-1). ¿Por qué en estos otros casos prima la fidelidad extrema? Si bien habría que precisar hasta qué punto eran extraños estos textos para el lector del siglo XVII, ha quedado constancia de que, al menos Antonio Calderón, encargado de la aprobación del *Marco Bruto*, alabó la obra en estos términos: «une a la lengua española la majestad de la latina, con la hermosura de la griega, para envidia de ambas y admiración de las demás» (700). Probablemente, Quevedo consideraba estar enriqueciendo la lengua castellana, no confundiéndola, utilizando su expresión en el preliminar al conde-duque de Olivares de las obras de fray Luis.

A diferencia de lo que sucede en sus traducciones poéticas, en sus versiones de los dos Sénecas, sobre todo en los textos de Séneca el Viejo, imita únicamente su estilo de manera patente; un estilo lacónico, caracterizado por la yuxtaposición de sentencias concisas y un elevado uso de la paradoja y la antítesis, unida frecuentemente al políptoton.[11] Es este tipo de *imitatio* la que lo lleva a optar por esta clase de traducción. El propio Quevedo declara abiertamente imitar este estilo: «atrevime a traducir y a imitar a Séneca» (*De los remedios de cualquier fortuna*, 727).[12] Y se refiere a él como rasgo que confirma la paternidad senequiana de la obra *De remediis fortuitorum*: «en Séneca hallamos, primero que en el Petrarca, el estilo de repetir una palabra muchas veces y consolarla y declararla repetidamente de diferentes maneras» (*De los remedios de cualquier fortuna*, 729), el cual compara con un fragmento de las *Epístolas*. Como señaló Iso (2002, 1642) en palabras referidas a la versión quevedesca de las *Epístolas* que bien podrían aplicarse a las demás traducciones mencionadas, «es muy probable que en más de un pasaje

11 Ya Borges se refirió a este estilo a propósito de *Marco Bruto*, que contiene su traducción de las dos *Suasorias*: «parece regresar al arduo latín de Séneca, de Tácito y de Lucano, al atormentado y duro latín de la edad de plata. El ostentoso laconismo, el hipérbaton, el casi algebraico rigor, la oposición de términos, la aridez, la repetición de palabras, dan a ese texto una precisión ilusoria» («Quevedo», *Otras inquisiciones*, 71). Por su parte, Roig Miranda (1980) estudió la paradoja en *Marco Bruto*; Alonso Veloso [2013], además de indagar en las fuentes de los discursos quevedescos en esta obra, analizó su técnica narrativa y construcción retórica, y destacó el «discurso conciso y elíptico», entre otros rasgos de estilo que «constituyen, en esencia, el ideal estilístico de laconismo expresivo característico del propio Quevedo, definitivamente consolidado al final de su vida»; y Azaustre (2017) estudió la argumentación retórica en la obra y concluyó que «la paradoja y el oxímoron, apoyados por la sentenciosidad y el paralelismo antitético son, junto a la metáfora, los recursos más destacados» (188-9).

12 Véase Martinengo 1998, 109; Adiego, Artigas, Riquer 2009, 137, 146. Encarece lo que presenta como una osadía al afirmar que teme se le critique por ello: «No se me debe reprehender el imitarle, menos el no saberle imitar, porque como aquello es conveniente, saber imitarle para mí es imposible, para todos difícil. Yo conozco que sirvo sólo de hacer a Séneca prolijo» (728).

la *aemulatio* respecto al original haya oscurecido la comprensión del texto traducido. Esto, en lo que se refiere a la sintaxis y *compositio* de más de un pasaje de la traducción de Quevedo en los que [...] es reproducción especular del original latino».

Además, acaso, esta nueva preferencia, que lleva irremediablemente a un texto latinizante, esté relacionada con la *narratio brevis* que Quevedo defiende en su *Marco Bruto* –que contiene su versión de las *Suasorias*, la más fiel–, a la que se refiere Alonso Veloso (2012, 720, nota 189). En el preliminar «A quien leyere» escribe lo siguiente:

> Poco escribo, no porque escuso palabras, sino porque las aprovecho y deseo que hable la dotrina a costa de mi ostentación [...] De mí sólo aseguro que ni el que me empezare a leer se cansará mucho ni el que me acabare de leer se arrepentirá tarde. Harto haré si alcanzo a parecer bueno por poco malo, y aun esta disculpa tan culpable no se deberá a mi ingenio, sino a mi brevedad, no imitando a aquellos que ponen su cuidado en no empezar a decir sin acabar de hablar. Gastaré pocas palabras y haré gastar poco tiempo. Este ahorro de tan preciosa porción de la vida me negociará perdón, si no me encaminare alabanza. (720-1)

El *Marco Bruto* lo ocupó durante los últimos años de su vida y Quevedo lo tenía en alta estima, como puede apreciarse en su epistolario[13] y en la dedicatoria de la obra: «Séame lícito compararme conmigo: si todo lo que he escrito ha sido defectuoso, esto es lo menos malo; si algo ha sido razonable, esto es mejor» (*Marco Bruto*, 697). A mi juicio, para estudiar las traducciones insertas en esta obra resulta fundamental tener en cuenta este aprecio que expresa por ella, pues a la elaboración de estas versiones le habría correspondido un esfuerzo similar –si no idéntico –al de las partes enteramente originales.

Las ideas sobre su prosa original que expone en el prólogo a los lectores de su *Marco Bruto* bien podrían corresponderse con ideas parejas en el campo de la traducción, ya que, además, hemos comprobado que su poética –en concreto, la imitación compuesta – es muy cercana a su poética de la traducción en lo que respecta a la paráfrasis. Es decir, su ideal traductológico de los dos Sénecas también se caracteriza por la brevedad, pues reduce la expresión lo máximo posible.

Por otra parte, esta traducción tan fiel viene facilitada por que en estas obras canaliza sus impulsos imitativos hacia los textos con los que acompaña a sus traducciones: lo que en su *Focílides* había

13 Véanse las cartas CCL, CCLIV, CCLIX, CCLXIII, CCLXVI, CCLXXII, CCLXXIII, CCLXXVIII (*Epistolario*, 468-92).

intercalado en la propia traducción del original lo reserva ahora para las piezas que integra de manera diversa.

Estas versiones tan fieles, junto con la noción de que, cuando traduce libremente, lo hace, como es obvio, de manera consciente y porque se lo permitía la poética de la traducción preponderante en su época, también deben tenerse en cuenta a la hora de valorar aquellos estudios que lo tildaron de traductor descuidado.[14]

7 Conclusiones

En suma, aunque Quevedo no ofrece una teoría de la traducción, dejó constancia de sus preferencias en algunas afirmaciones dispersas a partir de las que podemos reconstruir su discurso traductor. Este, a su vez, junto con el análisis de su propia praxis traductora, permite extraer los posibles principios de su verdadero pensamiento en torno a la traducción.

Suele insistir en su originalidad a través de diferentes estrategias: la puesta en valor de su labor de recuperación de un autor desconocido o denostado; la difusión de un texto en una forma nueva, como el verso; y la transmisión de interpretaciones novedosas, estrategias vinculadas con la concepción de la traducción como actividad que enriquece el panorama literario en castellano. Por otra parte, plasma su conciencia de la importancia de consultar los textos originales, a cuya enmienda se opone generalmente. No obstante, con frecuencia declara su consulta de traducciones intermedias. Explica que a veces se aleja de estas en favor del original; aunque reconoce el mérito de sus predecesores, tiende a destacar sus aportaciones originales, incluyéndose en la tradición de versiones y comentarios humanistas. Su empleo de varias fuentes simultáneas, combinando constantemente las expresiones de unas y otras con las suyas propias, permite comprobar que el proceso creativo que sigue en algunas de ellas es muy similar al que da lugar a sus obras originales, en las que se sirve habitualmente de la imitación compuesta.

Para Quevedo, la traducción engloba, en un sentido lato, manifestaciones diversas, incluso las imitaciones. Era consciente de que el ideal traductor era el traslado fiel al sentido y al estilo. Sin embargo, su práctica traductora no siempre siguió este camino: en su contexto literario a veces su obra permitía y hasta demandaba ciertas modificaciones. A pesar de que deja constancia de que se esfuerza

14 Como Castanien 1958; Bénichou-Roubaud 1960; González de la Calle 1965; Balcells 1988; Gendreau 1977. Frente a estos, véanse los estudios de Isasi Martínez (1993), aunque también localizó algunos supuestos errores cuya causa no logra justificar, Sigler (1994), Iso (2002), Schwartz (2011; 2015), Alcalde Martín (2011), Pérez Jiménez (2011), Izquierdo (2013) y García Sánchez (2023).

por comprender incluso los pasajes más complejos, en sus versiones poéticas explica abiertamente que se permite la licencia de explicitar lo implícito y de dar cabida a su libertad creadora, escudriñadora, en ocasiones, del sentido oculto del original.

Su discurso sobre la traducción en cada obra fue coherente con su uso de fuentes, la declaración de innovaciones o el tipo de versión por el que optó; es decir, independientemente de su ideal traductor, explicitó su personal teoría traductológica. Esta, por otra parte, no encaja con todas las soluciones particulares que ensayó, debido a que no en todos los casos contamos con aclaraciones de este tipo. Su verdadera poética de la traducción es varia y cambiante. Además de ser temática y formalmente diversas, sus traducciones son muy dispares en lo que se refiere al grado de fidelidad a los originales. Su decisión de elaborar una traducción parafrástica o fiel no dependió de la lengua original –recordemos que traduce libremente las *Anacreónticas*, pero también los epigramas de Marcial–, sino que, fundamentalmente dependió del género literario de los textos y su encaje en el panorama literario del siglo XVII.

En sus primeras versiones puede apreciarse claramente su preferencia por la traducción compuesta. En cambio, más adelante optó por adherirse únicamente al estilo de su original, en cierta medida, por los condicionantes genéricos de los textos que prefirió en la segunda mitad de la década de los años treinta, pero también por su inclinación por la *narratio brevis* y su asimilación del estilo conciso de los dos Sénecas hacia la última década de su vida. Tal vez, el principio común que une todas sus traducciones es la preponderancia de la fidelidad al estilo: la fidelidad a la palabra en sus versiones de los dos Sénecas deriva de la fidelidad al estilo; es decir, se apega a la palabra porque se lo exige la imitación retórica.

Generalmente, ha primado la imagen de Quevedo como un traductor negligente y, sobre todo, se ha puesto el foco en la libertad con la que trasladó algunos textos. No obstante, si bien es cierto que se mostró libre en su adaptación poética, lo cual él mismo declara, no deben ignorarse sus traducciones literales. En realidad, experimentó con opciones radicalmente opuestas: de la traducción compuesta a la traducción *verbatim*, ensayando constantemente maneras muy diversas de aclimatar a su contexto literario e histórico la forma y el fondo de los originales.

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Le cas du casuiste. Valéry préfacier

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Abstract Valéry likes to think in terms of cases. His many critical texts are proof of this. It is preferably in the preface that Valéry chooses to explain himself. This contribution aims to examine several prefaces in order to see how Valéry isolates and turns into a 'case' what had previously seemed to be mere elements of literary history, seemingly unproblematic. For Valéry, the 'case' appears as a meta-notion within his system, in that it is never truly defined. It appears sporadically as a word he frequently uses – a sort of median term, operative in his efforts toward precision, refinement, and singularization.

Keywords Paul Valéry. Case. Literary history. Baudelaire. Monsieur Teste.

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1 Introduction

Paul Valéry aime penser par cas. Ses nombreux textes critiques le prouvent. On a remarqué le tour possessif avec lequel il se saisit de certains auteurs ou artistes de prédilections : « *mon* Descartes », « *mon* Léonard », « *mon* Racine » (Jallat 2013, 128). On retrouve la formule dans le titre de sa dernière grande œuvre : *Mon Faust*, soit une version personnelle du mythe qui serait censée recueillir, comme il le confie non sans une ironique immodestie, « tout ce que Goethe a ignoré » (Valéry 1957, 894). Chez Valéry, le possessif a valeur de cas. Plus qu'une appropriation agressive, il atteste d'une proximité sinon d'une familiarité consommée – presque affectueuse – c'est-à-dire d'une version précise de ou d'un point de vue particulier sur l'auteur en question : l'essai où je m'efforce de définir « mon Racine » devra se charger de traduire « mes rapports avec Racine » (Jallat 2013, 128). Et c'est de préférence en préface – lieu paratextuel idéal et non indifférent – que Valéry choisit de s'expliquer. La question devient alors : comment Valéry isole et fait devenir cas, ce qui jusqu'alors ne semblait être que des éléments de l'histoire littéraire, *a priori* pas plus problématiques que cela dans la mesure où ces éléments se voyaient intégrés dans un continuum rassurant, soit l'histoire littéraire conçue comme une théorie d'auteurs-phares, ces points saillants illuminant et indiquant le contour du rivage, exemplaires de toute éternité, s'engendrant les uns les autres en bonne logique. Mais qu'est-ce que la bonne logique ? Valéry l'ignore et se le demande.

Il y aurait donc un Valéry instructeur de cas justement problématiques ? Soit la figure d'un écrivain démontrant, ou essayant de démontrer comment cette micro-opération grammaticale (« *mon* x ») a pour fonction de retrancher d'autres écrivains aux réseaux d'explications selon lesquels on les a lus ou compris jusqu'alors. Machine à créer des cas, Valéry ne lit l'histoire de la littérature (ou les diverses histoires de la littérature que l'on a produites en son temps) que sous la forme d'une suite de quiproquos, un amoncellement d'anecdotes inutiles, un enchaînement hasardeux dont il faudrait défaire les maillons, toute tentative de construction péchant par artificialité. Au cœur du projet, une lutte constante contre le poncif l'aiguillonne, et la version établie n'est jamais la bonne, comme le veut ce conseil, ce « devoir de l'intellect » comme il le nomme, qu'il donne à ses propres lecteurs : « Tout ce qui vous semble clair ou évident au premier regard, tentez de le trouver obscur » (Valéry 2016c, 709). L'impératif de cette injonction paradoxale doit nous arrêter : pour un auteur obsédé par la clarté, qu'est-ce que cela veut dire ? Que la littérature ne serait rien d'autre qu'un ensemble hétérogène et fragile, un champ mal défini dont la cohérence même poserait problème ? Sans doute. Albert Thibaudet, dans son *Paul Valéry* de 1923, ne disait pas autre chose :

> Valéry ne conçoit la poésie que comme un cas particulier de la littérature, et la littérature elle-même que comme un cas particulier, une preuve (un coup de dés n'abolissant point le hasard) d'une réalité spirituelle et cosmique qui dépasse la littérature, qui vient de bien plus loin et couvre un champ bien plus vaste. (Thibaudet 1923, 5-6)

Le cas apparaît, chez Valéry, comme une méta-notion du système en ce qu'il n'est jamais défini – ni dans la vaste entreprise des *Cahiers*, ces notes quotidiennes prises de bon matin et qu'il lui arriva de nommer « mon Eckermann »,[1] ni ailleurs –, mais il apparaît ponctuellement comme un mot dont il fait fréquent usage, espèce de terme médian, opératoire en ses efforts de précision, de raffinement, de singularisation sur des plans aussi bien métaphysique qu'ontologique ou épistémologique. Comment comprendre ce concept problématique qui transforme chaque exemple ou chaque type qu'il aborde en un cas, donc en un problème, et qui conteste implicitement, par là même, une norme ou une loi ? Ou, pour emprunter les termes de Valéry : en quoi les « sollicitations formelles de la sensibilité » (Thérien 2010, 125) se révèlent singulières, inassignables, non-intégrables à un ensemble plus grand ? Nous soutiendrons que :

a. c'est dans le domaine littéraire que le cas paraît dans toute sa clarté problématique ;
b. Valéry fait usage du cas pour montrer, selon l'expression de Pierre Livet, « comment une hypothèse générale doit être ajustée, dans une situation singulière » (Livet 2005, 231).

C'est-à-dire : plus on observe les écrivains dans leur diversité plus la notion de littérature devient trouble. Je procéderai en trois temps, m'intéressant d'abord à une histoire littéraire construite au cas par cas, puis à l'élaboration du cas critique, enfin à l'invention du cas fictionnel.

2 Une histoire littéraire au cas par cas

La croyance de Valéry relativement à l'histoire de la littérature pourrait être ainsi résumée : au sein de la classe des auteurs, dans le domaine de la littérature, *tout* fait figure de cas pour peu qu'on y regarde ;[2] donc, réciproquement, *rien* ne peut être généralisable. Plus encore, le langage qui serait censé prendre en charge ces généralisations, ne nous sert de rien et doit être tenu pour le plus

1 « Mon cahier perpétuel est mon 'Eckermann'. (Il n'est pas besoin d'être Gœthe pour s'offrir un fidèle interlocuteur) » (Valéry 1961, 416).

2 « En ce temps-là toute œuvre me faisait l'effet de cas particulier » (Valéry 1973, 366).

suspect des vecteurs, dans la mesure même où il ne fait qu'opposer des conceptions singulières qui se confondent. De fait, le possessif ne cesse de faire retour comme un affranchissement au sens commun : tout au long des *Cahiers*, Valéry ne fait que parler de l'établissement de « *mon* dictionnaire »,[3] soit ce à quoi il œuvre pour clarifier ou « nettoyer la situation verbale », et établir « *mes* définitions ». Or, comme le résument Jacques Revel et Jean-Claude Passeron dans leur introduction à *Penser par cas* :

> Deux traits essentiels sont toujours présents dans la qualification d'une occurrence comme 'cas'. Le premier est l'obstacle que la singularité d'une situation oppose au mouvement habituel de la perception ou à l'application des normes déjà codifiées du discours explicatif ou prescriptif. L'autre, c'est le fait qu'on ne peut caractériser une singularité comme 'cas' que si on suit l'histoire dont elle est le produit en recherchant les 'circonstances' pertinentes qui la spécifient dans son contexte. (Revel, Passeron 2005, 17)

La contextualisation et l'obstacle : tels sont les deux traits que nous suivrons.

De manière générale, les cas existent à l'état latent : c'est le lecteur, le critique, le philosophe qui les débusquent, et les séparent du contexte dont ils proviennent pour en percevoir la singularité sur le mode de l'écart ou de la différence. Valéry les imagine immanents : « Les œuvres les plus belles sont le produit des époques fécondes. Ni Titien, ni Raphaël, ni Shakespeare, ni Rembrandt, ni Bossuet, ni Racine ne paraissent isolés – Ni Eschyle, ni Pindare. Ils s'isolent progressivement. » (Valéry 1974, 1185-6) Ce processus d'isolement, Valéry le décrit dans toute son impersonnalité : il ne s'agit pas d'une sélection faite par quelque historien ou universitaire scrupuleux de ménager des ensembles cohérents. Les œuvres s'isolent, et il faut entendre tout le poids d'affranchissement et d'autonomie accordé au réflexif. Il s'agit d'une détermination qui se passerait presque par devers les œuvres elles-mêmes, comme une réaction chimique qui les ferait se dissocier les unes des autres, monter ou descendre au gré de leur constitution moléculaire, de leur intime singularité.

Sauf que cette apparente impersonnalité, qui est une interprétation rétrospective, occulte la part prise par l'analyste ou l'observateur. En terrain critique, il y a toujours un *je*, une première personne ; mais qui est *je* ? Ce qui revient à se demander : de quel point de vue Valéry peut-il parler ? C'est en *s'exceptant* à chaque fois du débat qu'il y parvient, en toute objectivité (tout du moins le feint-il). Ainsi

3 « Je n'ai jamais que travaillé à mon *dictionnaire* et appliqué en toutes choses ce travail de traduction » (Valéry 1974, 438).

en allait la tirade de Méphisto à propos de Faust dans la version valérienne : « J'en ai connu bien peu qui aient su, pu, voulu, comme toi, se mettre hors du jeu. […] Mais toi, tu m'intéresses. Ton cas – peut-être – est-il tout à fait particulier » (Valéry 2016c, 1019). On pourrait reprendre la formule efficace de J. Jallat pour résumer le problème critique de Valéry : « Tout commence à moi » (Jallat 2013, 124). C'est en fonction du problème que me pose tel auteur que je m'intéresse à lui. La pensée du cas selon Valéry pourrait donc se résumer ainsi : Je ne parle pas de moi en auscultant le cas, mais le cas ne peut se construire qu'à partir de moi.

Si l'on fait retour, pourtant, aux fondations du système valéryen de la littérature, il est un principe que l'on ne saurait passer sous silence ; celui que l'on peut nommer, avec William Marx, « l'autorégulation de la littérature » :

> Une Histoire approfondie de la Littérature devrait […] être comprise, non tant comme une histoire des auteurs et des accidents de leur carrière ou de celle de leurs ouvrages, que comme une *Histoire de l'esprit en tant qu'il produit ou consomme de la "littérature"*, et cette histoire pourrait même se faire sans que le nom d'un écrivain y fût prononcé. (2012, § 5)

C'est bien pour cela que l'histoire littéraire ne peut valoir sans son complément immédiat, c'est-à-dire la poétique : « l'objet d'un enseignement éventuel de la Poétique au Collège de France, loin de se substituer ou de s'opposer à celui de l'Histoire littéraire serait de donner à celle-ci à la fois une introduction, un sens et un but » (Valéry 2016c, 951).[4] Rien de moins, car sans la facture, le *poïein* intrinsèque à l'art d'écrire, une histoire serait frappée d'invalidité puisqu'elle ne se concentrerait que sur l'accessoire, le superflu, et délaisserait la croissance organique de l'œuvre et les *problèmes* auxquels les auteurs ont dû se mesurer.

> La partie essentielle d'une Poétique devrait consister dans l'analyse comparée du mécanisme (c'est-à-dire, de ce que l'on peut, *par figure*, appeler ainsi) de l'acte de l'écrivain, et des autres conditions moins définies que cet acte semble exiger (« inspiration », « sensibilité », etc.). (Valéry 2016c, 950)

Conception formaliste, mécaniste, positive, que l'on doit faire remonter, comme on le verra, à une lecture appliquée d'Edgar Allan Poe.

Voilà pour les principes ; mais la pratique ? Un trait distinctif qui se révèle, en fait, une constante : Valéry dût, puis, faisant de nécessité

4 Voir également les cours de Valéry au Collège de France (2023).

vertu, aima répondre à la commande (Philippon 1999, 101-9). Souvent, il lui arriva de donner suite à des sollicitations et de se prêter aux conférences, en manière d'exercices imposés. En ceci, on pourra alléguer, justement je crois, que les cas (ou les noms) ici évoqués lui sont fournis par la circonstance, et non par l'impératif propre d'une recherche. En chacun de ces auteurs, Valéry ne trouve pas moins son miel. Et lorsqu'on voit apparaître, dans ses *Cahiers*, une expression telle que « Faire un Voltaire » (Jallat 2013, 128), on pensera qu'il s'agit d'une opération analogue à l'appropriation : 'un' Voltaire est encore « mon » Voltaire, en ce qu'il devra apparaître comme un objet singulier, une densité de problèmes déposée en un nom. Cependant, si le nom propre peut servir à circonscrire et expliciter le cas, comme il arrive à certains historiens d'en faire usage, Valéry, pour sa part, tâche de désolidariser le nom de l'œuvre : le nom doit être purgé de ses désignations biographiques, et n'être reconduit qu'en sa qualité d'épithète, de désignation stricte de l'œuvre. Nommer, pour Valéry, ce n'est pas évoquer un homme, c'est résumer un problème. Ce seront encore, bien sûr, des problèmes qui ont trait à « moi », des préoccupations propres qui se manifesteront dans les textes que le poète examine. Ainsi du « cas » de Restif de la Bretonne, auteur que Valéry adore, aussi ou justement pour sa valeur de cas, son absence des anthologies, sa marginalité littéraire. Il va sans dire que Valéry connaît son grand prédécesseur en matière d'entreprise de résurrection, soit le Nerval des *Illuminés* – Restif y figurait en bonne place, au quatrième chapitre, intitulé « Les Confidences de Nicolas ». En l'occurrence, Restif ne vaut pas seulement pour ses qualités littéraires mais aussi pour son pouvoir évocateur, celui de valoir comme résumé d'un siècle : c'est-à-dire, « *mon* dix-huitième siècle ». Par le truchement d'un auteur particulier, hors du canon, voici un cadrage subjectif rendu à son objectivité.

La catégorie générale ne suffit pas à rassembler ces différents éléments épars, nés sous le signe de la surprise et recueillis dans une série de volumes au titre éloquent : *Variété* (au singulier), soit une hétérogénéité foncière entre des éléments faussement ressemblants *et* un ensemble général qui varie au gré de l'humeur de qui le compose (ainsi que la tradition du genre des « variétés » le rappelle). C'est en ceci que chacun des articles de critique littéraire de Valéry traite l'auteur comme un « cas » à part entière, dans toute sa valeur de représentation : le « cas Nerval » (Valéry 2016c, 1279) jusqu'à son extension médicale, le « cas Hugo » (Valéry 2016b, 905) conjuguant la longévité à la diversité des productions du poète, le double « cas » Villon-Verlaine (dans les leurres de la proximité biographique). Pas un n'y échappe. Auteurs assez admirés pour en parler avec la révérence qu'il sied, tout en demeurant assez proches pour rompre les distances et ne pas brider son envie de critique, si elle lui prenait. À ce titre, Jean Paulhan reprochera à Valéry de ne pas assez marquer de distinction d'un cas à l'autre, d'estomper les singularités au profit d'un personnage-auteur générique. Pour le dire autrement, Paulhan voit en Valéry un « rhétoriqueur » (Paulhan 1987, 61), se prenant à son propre jeu et tombant dans le poncif alors même qu'il cherchait à l'éviter. Mais il s'agit d'un faux procès car Paulhan occulte la valeur du possessif : si des récurrences ou des ressemblances font bien surface, elles sont plutôt indicatives d'un *ethos* critique unifié, et de préoccupations constantes – ce qui n'exclut pas, certes, sa part de rhétorique.

Il arrive aussi que certains des cas dont parle Valéry s'extraient de leur particularisme et rejoignent le domaine de l'exception, soit celui de l'exemple (c'est-à-dire une singularité devenant indicative pour une pluralité). Ce n'est pas si fréquent ; dans un domaine de pensée « absolue », c'est Léonard de Vinci ou Edgar Poe ; du côté de la poésie, c'est Mallarmé. En ces cas, Valéry se refuse au possessif tant semble imposante la stature, tant paraît oppressante l'admiration ou intimidant le désir d'imitation. Ces « cas-exemplaires » se définissent donc par leur incapacité à être intégrés à un ensemble plus vaste *et* par leur caractère foncièrement inimitable – dans la démarche, dans la production, dans la création. Ils invitent à l'émulation, tout en étant une borne, le signe d'une limite, d'un inatteignable. En tout état de cause, aussi bien Poe que Léonard ou Mallarmé (dans une moindre mesure) en viennent à perdre leur substrat d'humanité, d'êtres de chair, pour ne devenir qu'emblème d'une puissance résolutive.

3 Constitution du cas critique : Baudelaire

Lorsque Valéry prend la plume pour parler de ses pairs, il ne procède pas *a priori* ; il aime, au contraire, mener l'enquête en visant à comprendre non pas la forme du cas mais sa *formation* – ce qui donne, en fait, un cas qui se constitue au fil de l'enquête, dont il n'y aurait que sa célébrité préalable qui devrait être sujette à caution. « Situation de Baudelaire » est une production de ce genre : une détermination de singularité par élimination. Là encore, on n'échappe pas à la manière de faire valéryenne : un fait de circonstance (les œuvres de Baudelaire qui tombent dans le domaine public en 1917) suscite une conférence de commande, qui se transforme en une préface, qui devient elle-même, plus tard, un essai autonome, qui rejoint à son tour une collection d'essais portant sur la littérature « en général ». Circulation typiquement valéryenne ; l'étape préface y figure, fatalement. Il l'admet, dès le départ, comme un acte de réappropriation jaloux : « J'avoue que je n'aurais pas détesté de faire une préface à Baudelaire » (Bandy 1983, 3), après qu'André Gide ait écrite la sienne. La négation restrictive a tout de la litote : si Gide fait son Baudelaire, je dois faire le mien. Valéry poursuit, cependant, sur une hésitation :

> Mais rien que de songer au travail, à la refonte d'esprit nécessaire, pourtant, j'en bâille. B[audelaire] est un cas bien curieux. Grand art et niaiserie mêlés. Trouvailles et misères intimement broyées ensemble. Pourtant (ce que V[ictor] H[ugo] peut lui envier et n'a pas) son secret : un charme 'indéfinissable', quelque chose comme la transformation par moments d'un visage laid. Voilà ma préface finie. (Bandy 1983, 3)

Et Valéry de faire ce qu'il dit : l'essai s'ouvre sur un constat, espèce d'état de fait rhétorique consistant à exonérer l'orateur des présentations : « Baudelaire est au comble de la gloire » (Valéry 2016a, 1168), lance-t-il en attaque. Suit une série de remarques consistant à l'établir dans son originalité : « il est sans exemple dans l'histoire des Lettres françaises » ; il jouit d'une « importance singulière », de nature à faire « sortir » la poésie « des frontières de la nation » (Valéry 2016a, 1169). Sans exemple, unique, voici un cas, un vrai. Le titre même – « Situation de Baudelaire » (« La Place de Baudelaire », à l'origine) – prend une couleur anachroniquement sartrienne : la situation dont il est ici question, c'est bien « sa position au milieu du monde, avec les concours et les obstacles que ce monde enferme et qui conditionnent la réalisation d'un projet personnel », selon un « mixte de contrainte et de liberté » (Duméry 2009), c'est cet effet de balance, ou de proportion d'un mélange qui fait de Baudelaire un *cas*, résolument singulier en ce qu'il ne pondère ses choix, ses décisions formelles qu'à sa manière.

Valéry, cependant, avance prudemment car il suppose, comme à chaque fois qu'il aborde les relations de l'homme et de l'œuvre, que Baudelaire a sa part dans l'image que l'on retient de lui. La création d'un cas, autrement dit, n'exclut pas que l'auteur se soit *voulu* cas, et se soit présenté comme tel. Ce qu'on pourrait nommer, selon le mot du critique américain Stephen Greenblatt, un effort de *self-fashionning*, d'auto-stylisation. Écoutons la réserve accusatrice de Valéry :

> Niaiserie des critiques littéraires qui cherchent l'homme dans l'œuvre en remontant de l'expression à cet homme sans tenir compte du principe fondamental de l'écriture qui est le charlatanisme, le masque, le faux psychologique –, le voulu, l'homme devant le public – au contraire c'est l'effort pour se déguiser qu'il faut chercher. Toute caractéristique très apparente d'un auteur – ce que la critique prend pour son *sigle*, sa définition – est souvent seulement sa préoccupation scénique, le rôle qu'il veut jouer et dont il diffère très profondément. On écrit pour se refaire plus beau, plus aigu, plus puissant – On écrit pour se re-créer, pour

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> choisir en soi – pour éliminer certaines choses de soi – pour additionner ses meilleurs aspects – on écrit pour s'entendre, pour se trouver un écho flatteur, pour éliminer. (Valéry 1974, 1151)

L'auteur comme cas *se* fabriquant renforce une ligne proprement valérienne, soit celle d'un antibiographisme affirmé, et d'une croyance en l'existence d'une fonction-auteur, espèce d'instance théorique ou d'« individu abstrait » (Cioran 2010, 14) qui n'aurait que de distant rapport avec l'individu strictement biographique.

Par conséquent, Baudelaire se signale comme cas formel avant tout (ce sont les seuls qui comptent pour Valéry), mais surtout cas ayant délibérément décidé de *se faire* cas selon un calcul ou une stratégie d'exclusion : « Le problème de Baudelaire pouvait donc, – devait donc –, se poser ainsi : 'être un grand poète, mais n'être ni Lamartine, ni Hugo, ni Musset' » (Valéry 2016a, 1171). Comme trait distinctif, Valéry retient plus que tout le *choix* : faculté d'attention aiguë aux formes littéraires disponibles, contrôle de ses actes et de ses publications en conséquence, tout entière sous le signe de la lucidité. Nous retrouvons ensemble l'obstacle et la contextualisation. C'est alors que Valéry pense à Edgar Poe, comme passeur suprême ou catalyseur de la pensée de Baudelaire. Poe, ce « cas littéraire absolu » (Mallarmé 2003, 45), selon la mystérieuse expression de Mallarmé, manifeste bien dans ce fil argumentatif la pleine conscience formelle conditionnée par une poétique : *The Poetic Principle*, manifeste radical défendant que l'œuvre littéraire dépend tout entière de l'attention que lui prodigue son lecteur (il faut donc qu'elle évite d'être longue) et *The Philosophy of Composition*, où Poe démontre que la composition de son poème « Le Corbeau » doit tout à des partis pris *logiques* qui se sont imposés à lui afin de produire le plus grand *effet* possible sur son public. Le cas n'est plus l'homme-auteur, mais cette œuvre hors-norme mettant à nu une économie de la lecture pragmatique – que Valéry, par ailleurs, s'emploiera à prouver par la suite au Collège de France.

Voici constitué, sur la base de ces analyses, un mythe nouveau : Baudelaire « le grand échangeur » (Bertrand-Durand 2006, 8) de la poésie française du XIX^{e} siècle, celui où tout converge, celui d'où tout reflue et féconde d'autres terreaux poétiques qui se recommanderont de lui. Le « cas Baudelaire » selon Valéry convient bien à la définition de Passeron et Revel, en ceci qu'il y a bien une visée à « extraire une argumentation de portée plus *générale*, dont les conclusions pourront être réutilisées pour fonder d'autres intelligibilités ou justifier d'autres décisions ». En effet, Valéry voit en Baudelaire la concrétisation de ses craintes relatives au mécanisme d'embaumement de l'histoire littéraire : l'hypostasie de l'homme au détriment de l'œuvre, la négation d'une partie rationnelle fondamentale au profit du mythe de l'inspiration romantique, la réduction à quelques adjectifs stériles

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d'un art poétique divers, international, non-réductible à son seul contexte national. Le cas Baudelaire *vaut* comme problème et ce n'est certes pas une hagiographie qui se rendrait à même de le comprendre sinon de le résoudre.

Après pareil développement, quand Valéry en vient à se demander s'il fait lui-même figure de cas, ou s'il cherche à se rendre plus *cas* qu'il ne l'est déjà, il lui suffit de prendre un contre-exemple à portée de main, celui de son bon ami Gide :

> Gide est un cas particulier – et il a la passion de l'être. Je me sens tout le contraire. Tout ce qui me donne l'impression du particulier, de la personne, m'est impossible, – se fait automatiquement image dans un miroir qui peut en montrer une infinité d'autres, et préfère cette propriété à toute figure. Je ne donne donc qu'une importance locale, concédée à regret, subie et non nécessaire à ce que G[ide] trouve au contraire essentiel – Et réciproquement. […] Mon Narcisse n'est pas le sien. Le mien est contraste, = la merveille que le reflet d'un Moi Pur soit un Monsieur ; – un âge, un sexe, un passé, des probabilités et des certitudes – ou que tout ceci exige ou possède un invariant absolu – exprimé par cette contradiction : Je ne suis pas ce (celui) que je suis. *Non sum qui sum*. (Valéry 1973, 128)

Certainement. Encore que cela s'apparente fort à un vœu pieu, ainsi que le cas de la *Soirée avec Monsieur Teste* va le montrer.

4 Constitution du cas fictif : *Monsieur Teste* comme limite

La pensée du cas, chez Valéry, investit aussi la fiction. C'est en Monsieur Teste, protagoniste d'une série de textes publiés de 1897 à 1925, que Valéry va développer l'idée paradoxale d'une absolue singularité dans la banalité. Le personnage d'Edmond Teste, en effet, est réputé posséder des dons prodigieux, une intelligence propre à « découvrir des lois de l'esprit que nous ignorons » (Valéry 2016a, 1018). Cependant, ces lois demeurent à l'état virtuel : pas d'œuvres qui attestent de ses fulgurances, pas d'autres témoignages que ceux de son immédiat entourage. Teste est un être potentiellement génial, et ce ne sont certainement pas ses habitudes, sa manière d'être ou tout ce qu'il peut afficher extérieurement qui pourrait nous mettre sur la piste de cet être unique. Non, il n'est que commun, et impuissant, mais il résume si bien son paradoxe, il en est si bien emblématique, qu'il devient cas. Aussi, Monsieur Teste, être fictionnel s'il en est, se voit tout entier conçu comme un cas. Un cas-limite, comme on dit, en ce qu'il pose sur un autre plan le débat de la singularité, en réalisant le pari que toute description d'homme ou de personnage se

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traduit ou se développe nécessairement en la formation d'un cas : si des opérations mentales peuvent être similaires d'un être à l'autre, si nous pouvons bien appartenir comme hommes et femmes à une même espèce, une même classe de mammifères, nous demeurons chacun d'entre nous, tant que nous sommes, attachés ou réduits à notre infrangible singularité.

Mais il faut encore s'approcher, et revenir à la préface que Valéry donne à la fiction du cas – « mon Teste », forcément. Si l'on suit Passeron et Revel – au risque de la surdétermination :

> Sous des formes diverses, le recours au récit est présent dans toutes les casuistiques juridiques, morales, religieuses. Il sert à exposer une situation, à faire comprendre comment on en est arrivé là, entendons au point qui fait problème ou que l'on constitue en problème. Un cas est le produit d'une histoire. Il est secondaire que cette histoire soit « réelle » ou qu'elle relève de la fiction : dans la plupart des cas, […] elle a fait l'objet d'un travail de sélection et de réélaboration qui brouille le partage et le rend du même coup inessentiel. (Revel, Passeron 2005, 24)

C'est pourquoi la préface est ce lieu cardinal, qui précède la lecture et qui propose un éclairage herméneutique sur le texte qu'on s'apprête à lire : soit un conditionnement préalable, déterminant dans la constitution du cas. Ainsi, Valéry ne dit pas : « lisez, puis constatez le cas », mais bien : « voici un cas, lisez pour voir ». L'antécédence de la détermination pèse lourdement, elle évoque un Teste toujours-déjà cas :

> Revenant à M. Teste, et observant que l'existence d'un type de cette espèce ne pourrait se prolonger dans le réel pendant plus de quelques quarts d'heure, je dis que le problème de cette existence et de sa durée suffit à lui donner une sorte de vie. Ce problème est un germe. Un germe vit ; mais il en est qui ne sauraient se développer. Ceux-ci essayent de vivre, forment des monstres, et les monstres meurent. (Valéry 2016a, 1013)

Avec Teste, Valéry coupe les amarres : il use d'un « je » qui ne serait sans doute pas lui, pour parler d'un lui qui a tout du « moi », selon le jeu de l'impersonnalité, des monades isolées demeurant prisonnières de leur intériorité. On aura alors compris l'ironique première phrase du texte : « La bêtise n'est pas mon fort » (Valéry 2016a, 1015). À se mesurer au particularisme de l'intelligence, voici le narrateur réduit au souvenir de Teste, soit un personnage impossible, dont la virtualité l'excède ou l'allégorise.

À lire les *Cahiers* ou d'autres notes ponctuelles de Valéry, on a l'impression que les cas opèrent comme des chiffons rouges agités devant les yeux du poète ; ils sont des cibles à abattre, en chemin vers une pensée « pure », ou, tout du moins, des anomalies à expliciter, à dénoncer, ou possiblement à résoudre – encore qu'il arrive à Valéry de considérer une aporie comme une solution, soit une issue à partir de laquelle on peut travailler, recommencer, et distinguer inlassablement. En résumé, la notion de cas pourrait apparaître comme un motif d'adhérence ou de non-adhérence de Valéry à la signification même de la littérature comme discipline, mais surtout comme pratique : une obligation, ainsi que le cas le requiert, à réviser les règles, que personne n'a eu la force ou le courage d'expliciter et qu'on accepte tacitement. Il n'existe pas de gloire toute faite, de réputation à jamais établie : les modes vont à leur gré, et forcent la signification des mots ; d'où une résistance tenace à toute tentative de généralisation, reléguant, au fond, l'œuvre à son impersonnalité, en dépit des noms qui la signalent.

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From Post-Western to Transcultural Humanism and Return to Literature

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Abstract The article problematizes the still West-centric approach implied in using *post*-Western when referring to humanism and the humanities, advocating in its place the adoption of *trans*cultural. While rejecting any foundationalist/essentialist view of the human and of humanism, it holds worthwhile reflecting on a) the hermeneutical impossibility of pulling ourselves out of our own Western tradition, b) the latter's actual diversity and complexity, and c) its having no copyright on humanism worldwide. Only a transcultural perspective can fully capture the vital role that humanism can still have today in our globalized world. Here literature – particularly by hyphenated authors – leads the way, transcultural humanism being its 'natural' vocation, as here exemplified by drawing on Sudanese-British Leila Aboulela's fiction.

Keywords Post-Western humanism. Transcultural humanism. Transculturality and literature. Postcolonial studies and humanism. Leila Aboulela.

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1 Introduction

Written from the position of a Western scholar grown up and educated in Italy, what follows engages with the sweeping and West-mirroring assumptions entailed in the use of the term *post-Western* when attached to humanism. While keeping firm the vital need and function of critical humanism and the humanities today, it strongly argues in favour of a *transcultural* version of them, which finds a vocational enactment in literature, as exemplified in the final paragraph focussed on Leila Aboulela's narrative.

2 Problematizing the Qualifier *Post-Western*

The semantic inflection given to the qualifier *post-Western* when referred to the humanities is generally taken to mark the cultural decentring of the West and the parallel emergence of new, anti-hegemonic critical perspectives. Furthermore, the 'post-Western humanities' phrase is usually not meant to imply a demise of humanism *per se*, and this is not something to be taken for granted. In the wake of the crimes committed by the self-appointed beacons of civilization, Europe and the West, with the "strip-tease", in Sartrean terms,[1] of their humanistic values obscenely staged by their colonialisms and imperialisms, and with the Holocaust and their other genocides as a most tragic peak of in-humanity, difficulties in defining the human and proclamations of the expiry of Western humanism have come as no surprise. Not surprisingly, too, in this 'liquidation', the equation between Western humanism and humanism tout court has often been passed off as if no other humanist thought had ever surfaced in world history.

However, as adamantly put by D.A. Alderson and R. Spencer "an ethically and politically grounded humanism is still necessary, for we have to have some sense of what a human being is to know when he or she is being degraded and what human agency", no less than dignity and freedom at that, "are when they are denied" (2017, 2). As a matter of fact, ours is a world of globalized assault on humanity, due to an uncharted civilizational crisis dominated by a new solid complicity between savagely neo-liberal and technocratic monopolies disempowering democracy and distributing inequality at an unprecedented rate, a horrifying extended application worldwide of biopolitical practices to the new wretched of the earth – the subaltern humanity made of migrants, refugees, political prisoners,

1 Cf. Sartre 1967, 21, where the phrase "strip-tease of our humanism" is used with reference to French/Western colonial crimes.

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economic/sexual slaves, and so on –, a shameless strengthening of neo-imperial ambitions and of neo-nazi and neo-fascist nostalgias, and a rekindling of religious monotheistic fundamentalisms. This brutal and complex scenario thrives on a parallel epistemological crisis fuelled by fake and virtual ‘realities’ easily exploitable by those powers who are strategically interested in spreading ignorance and uncritical thought.

Therefore, it is difficult to disagree with K. Plummer when he writes that “we now need the highly charged and contested term ‘humanity’ (or some equivalent) more than ever before” (2021, 4). Not incidentally, through recapturing and firmly relying on the par-excellence humanistic principle of the dignity of man, defenders of humanism take the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserting equal political, social, and economic rights for all human beings regardless of race, colour, religion, and ethnic provenance to ground the ideal of a renewed universal humanism.

As with the political regime of democracy, many of us believe that no matter how fragile and always provisional for its being open to dispute and contestation, an inclusive and non-foundational idea/ideal of humanism can and has to be cultivated. I mean a post-essentialist ideal, accompanied by a totally anti-sovereigntist view of human subjectivity, as in the revisionist framework discussed by I. Chambers in *Culture After Humanism* (2001). This would be a kind of humanism that

> engages with […] the perpetual narrative reconstructions and conflicts over what it means to be human. Ultimately, it does it with the goal of building on these contested understandings to find pathways into better futures and worlds. (Plummer 2021, 5)

When using the phrase ‘critical humanism’ the immediate reference is E.W. Said and his seminal reflections in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), a collection of lectures governed by the assumption that “it is possible to be critical of humanism in the name of humanism” (2004, 10). My mind also goes to that appeal of his, made urgent by his acute awareness of its scarce glamour in the institutional academy at the time he was writing, according to which “humanism is the only and I would go so far as saying the final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history” (2003, 878).

Having said that, once granted that the decentring of the West and the still vital need of humanism *per se* may said to be safely implied in post-Western, still my resistance concerning its use lies in the fact that it continues to evoke the ever-haunting ghost of Western narcissism, a monological discourse from the West to the West, post-Western being a qualifier that has still much to do with us, with the

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West, rather than with our Others, the non-West. It may reasonably be taken as still flirting with the European tendency "à saisir l'identité non pas tant en termes d'appartenence mutuelle (co-appartenence) à un même monde, qu'en termes de relation du même au même, […] dans son propre miroir" (Mbembe 2015, 10; to understand identity not really in terms of reciprocally belonging (co-belonging) to one world, but in terms of the same's relationship to the same, […] in its own mirror).[2] The tenor of my discourse, here, is very close to B. Robbins' arguing that "when Eurocentric humanism remains the definitive target, the center around which all critique revolves, the perspective remains imperial" (2000, 563).

Whether one takes post-Western as a periodizing term that follows on from the discourse of Western humanism, or as meaning a new epistemological/gnoseological direction, or both, the use of post-Western entails the still Western hypostasis of a linear and uniform view of history and of cultural development untouched by 'other' influences. And in both cases the evoked image is that of a passing on of the sceptre or, even more radically, of a disposing of Western humanism, which presses for a blunt question: shall we throw away the baby with the bathwater? More decisively, do we really believe that this could be possible, just a matter of choice, or is it not the case that we would find ourselves in Münchausen's predicament without having access to his self-sufficient magic solution? In fact, this appears a historically impossible option, not only for us, the direct inheritors of Western humanism – but also for all those Others who have been involved in (or tainted by) our hegemonic culture. And the reasons of this impossibility are more than one.

Firstly, our own culture is not something superimposed on us, a clothing we can decide to take on and off, or to totally dismiss, all the while maintaining a naked/natural body, a sort of cultural tabula rasa from which to re-start. We have grown into it, into a history of interpretations, from generation to generation. It is our cultural skin, we cannot peel it off. We can, certainly, react to or modify it, but we can never act independently of it. In H.G. Gadamer's hermeneutical terms (2013, Part II, ch. 2) nobody sees from nowhere, we are always and already situated in history and our existential condition is hermeneutic in the sense that it is made of 'prejudices', i.e. pre-judgements that arise first from the intellectual/cultural traditions in which we have been formed and then, from the needs of our current historical situation.

Perhaps, the modifier *post-* might be more profitably replaced by the adverb *beyond*, which can evoke the double action of keeping our

2 The translations from French into English given in the present article are by the Author.

'good' prejudices while being able to enlarge and open them to the influence of others' prejudices. If post- is liable to suggest horizontal uniformity, beyond is able to evoke an un-limited space open to creation/invention. Transposing Levinas' humanistic grammar of the Other, one might replace the "for-himself" Western subject, all absorbed in "persisting in its Being", and not only imagine, but also practice an Other humanism, one beyond the West, in which the Western Ego "goes out to Others in a way that compromises the sovereign identification with itself", in a way that challenges and "empties it of itself" by showing it "ever new resources", by "nourishing it with new hungers" (2006, 29-30).

Secondly: which Western humanism are we talking about? I am asking because, as effectively put by Halliwell and Mousley, "humanism has been tied up, packaged and streamlined by some anti-humanists in such a way as to negate its actual diversity" (2003, 3). More straightforwardly, "[i]ts history has been crassly simplified and its meanings homogenized, by wave upon wave of anti-humanist thinking that has swept the academy since the 1960's" (Wayne, Leslie 2017, VI). In these waves, it must be said, one should also include some post-structuralist modes of postcolonial thinking that, in their "almost complete reliance on the Western tradition of anti-humanist critique of metaphysics" have paradoxically shared in the latter's "obsessively self-centred" questions (Hassan 2002, 51). However, at the beginning of the new millennium Robbins could write that "a universalistic and humanistic impulse […] has gradually emerged within cultural studies generally and postcolonial studies in particular" though "that was slow to be perceived as such because of the prevailing anti-humanism" (2000, 567), and though, according to Spencer's less optimistic view, this partial rehabilitation "has not gone very far at all" (2017, 122). Yet, not only has Western humanism been a crucial weapon in the arsenal of anticolonial thought and movements in the 1950's and 1960's, but paradoxically, this lukewarm, when not repudiating, posture towards it in postcolonial theory and criticism has often been countered by its explicit, creative re-appropriation on the part of postcolonial authors (of Mphahlele, Bessie Head, Soyinka, or Walcott – to name just a few). And while in Europe poststructuralists were decrying the death of the subject and practicing their deconstructive projects, African, Caribbean and, broadly, non-Western intellectuals were fully concerned with "building an epistemology able to create, debate and negotiate subjectivity and humanity" (Marzagora 2016, 170).

So, the contention is that one should be aware of the need to have a pluralized view of the cultural phenomenon historically known as Western humanism, which, from Antiquity to the present age, has allowed for various, sometimes contrasting, traditions in it that, taken together, forbid a monolithic perspective. Renaissance humanism, to take its most iconic expression, was never a single strand of thought, but from the start was compounded by different, often dissonant languages that have given a dialectical, dramatic imprinting to their co-existence, as unrelentingly discussed by Eugenio Garin. More importantly, of the various streams compounding the tradition of Western humanities, not all of them were essentialist and Eurocentric.

The Enlightenment itself was a much more complex intellectual and political experience with respect to the summary trials it has and still is often undergoing. A profitable reading against the prevalent demonizing views of its project, especially but not exclusively by anti-humanists, is provided by political philosopher Sankar Methu, who, in his remarkable study *Enlightenment Against Empire*, significantly endorsed by T. Todorov, persuasively deals with the historical and philosophical distinctiveness of Enlightenment anti-imperialist political thought thanks to a number of prominent European thinkers that, in the late eighteenth century, "attacked imperialism, not only defending non-European people against the abuses of European imperial rule, as some earlier modern thinkers had done, but also challenging the idea that Europeans had any right to subjugate, colonize, and 'civilize' the rest of the world" in the name of their alleged cultural superiority (2003, 1). Methu devotes persuasively informed pages to demonstrating the analytical and nuanced arguments about human nature, cultural diversity and cross-cultural moral judgements put forth in particular by Diderot, Herder, and Kant.

Admittedly, defences of Empire were prevalent at that time, but this should not prevent us from counter-intuitively reminding ourselves that besides the Gobineaus there were also the Voltaires, from realizing, that is, that the Enlightenment was "unique not because of the absence of imperialist arguments, but rather due to the presence of spirited attacks upon the foundations of empire" (2003, 4), which, as solidly evidenced by Methu's study, will have no equivalent up to the first half of the twentieth century. "It is high time, then", the Indian scholar asserts, "that we pluralize our understanding of the 'Enlightenment' both for reasons of historical accuracy and because, in doing so, otherwise hidden or understudied moments of Enlightenment-era thinking will come to light" (264). Symptomatically, his cautioning against Western anti-humanist theory's sweeping demonization of Enlightenment has been voiced by non-Western postcolonial thinkers such as Aijaz Ahmad, who clearly saw the danger of its "reactionary" use (1996, 279). The same, I contend, should apply to our view of Western humanism, without losing sight, of course, of its false consciousness and of its no longer tenable prejudices. As emphasized by Said, "attacking the abuses of something is not the same thing as dismissing or entirely destroying the thing. […] it has been the abuse of humanism that discredits some of humanism's practitioners without discrediting humanism itself" (2004, 13).

Paradoxically, but only at first sight, this very objection is lucidly and vigorously levelled by the African philosopher Olúfémi Táíwo at that specific politics of linguistic and cultural decolonization in the global South which is driven by a total, indiscriminate hostility towards everything 'tarred' with colonial auspices. This 'sanitizing' policy, he observes, ends up with rejecting most influential African thinkers and writers as inauthentic, thus losing a crucial component of cultural history and, ironically, denying history and agency to Africa. His focus is on "how indigenous genius has taken hold of and turned to their own purposes various material and ideational artefacts that were parts of their lives before, during and after colonialism" (2022, 8-9), all the while maintaining that not being able to see colonialism as *one*, if prominent and long-lasting, "episode" rather than as *the* totalizing experience of African history is continuing to play the Eurocentric game. More broadly, one may add, when colonialism is assumed as *the* defining experience in the history of non-Western countries, this cannot but qualify the use of *post-colonial* as intrinsically Eurocentric, the term *post-* "reducing the cultures of peoples beyond colonialism to prepositional time […], to a Eurocentered epoch that is over (post-), or not yet (pre-)" (McClintock 1992, 86).

Crucially, Táíwo wonders whether and how it can be possible to define, single out and separate the "conceptual frameworks embedded in the foreign philosophical traditions that have had an impact on African life and thought" (93). And, commenting on these radical theorists' efforts at "making clear what these African thought systems were like before colonialism superimposed foreign categories on them", he observes how "quite wolly these grand claims […] turn out to be […] once we begin to deconstruct them" (93-4). The fact is that, for African thought, "foreign categories of thought are diverse, multiple and dynamic […]. Additionally, the realities upon which colonialism imposed itself were not uniform" (93).

Táíwo's provocative challenge ("decolonize this!") is particularly effective when he asks where exactly iconic African thinkers or authors like Fanon, for example, the champion of third-world thought who turned to his purposes what was valuable in Western thinkers like Hegel, Merleau-Ponty, Freud, or Sartre, should be put in this "anti-Euro-modernity" battle. Furthermore, he adds, Fanon does not spare serious indictments of endogenous practices.[3] The regressive

3 Which is what, on the contrary, often characterizes the kind of "philanthropic orientation" A.F. Mufti envisions in the post-secularist attitude towards its others of "the postcolonial liberal Western subject", who, when facing most aberrant practices

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abyss of nativism, in particular, is something Fanon, as much as Cabral, Senghor or Césaire, were vociferously warning against, and with all of them commitment to a new humanism was unmistakable. They knew that, in Táíwo's own words, "transforming the struggle against colonialism into a call for renouncing any aspect of the cultural, social, political, or scientific life of the colonizer would be to give up on the oneness of humanity", and they knew that "hybridity is the very core of human civilization" (63).

Táíwo also firmly objects to the demonization of universalism, since to abandon any possibility of thinking the universal because of the *false* universalism of European colonialist ideologies, or, as put by Ghanaian political philosopher Ato Sekyi-Otu, "to abjure universalism *tout court* because of imperialism, Eurocentric and discriminatory auspices of certain versions […] is the last word of the imperial act" (2019, 14). Here one might usefully approach this objection by retrieving the internationalistic and universalistic vocation of Fanon's humanism. In fact, as underlined by P.K. Nayar,

> [i]t is significant that Fanon, for all his rootedness in Algeria and Africa, is emphatic about the need to address universals. This universalism stems from a particular humanist component of his thought. Fanon's humanism is the solidarity with the world's suffering, irrespective of race, colour or geography.[4]

In a way, Táíwo and Sekyi-Otu are posing my very objection from a reversed position, with a warning against a dangerous demolishing of universalism tout court. It is the abstract universalism entropically and exclusively defined on the basis of Western paradigms that deserves being rejected and replaced by that kind of concrete universalism feeding on plurality invoked by Mbembe in the wake of Césaire and Senghor:

> Affirmer que le monde ne se réduit pas à l'Europe, c'est réhabiliter la singularité et la différence. En cela, et quoi que l'on ait dit, Césaire est très proche de Senghor. Tous les deux récusent les visions abstraites de l'universel. Ils font valoir que l'universel se décline toujours dans le registre de la singularité. À leurs yeux, l'universel est précisément le lieu d'une multiplicité de singularités

or beliefs from the Western standpoint, "criticiz[es] the latter for failing to understand the apparently aberrant instead on its own, internal terms and for harbouring toward it the imperial intention of annihilation" (2013, 16). I owe this source reference to the useful suggestion of my reviewer.

4 Opportunely, Nayar then connects Fanon's brand of humanist universalism with Gilroy's "strategic universalism", a future-oriented, "planetary" humanism dispensing with the categories of race, sex, class (Gilroy 2000, 327-58).

> dont chacune n'est que ce qu'elle est, c'est-à-dire dans ce qui la relie et la sépare d'autres singularités. (2015, 228)
>
> To say that the world is not reducible to Europe means to rehabilitate singularity and difference. In this, whatever one may say, Césaire was very close to Senghor. Both of them reject the abstract views of the universal. They assert that the universal is always inflected in the modes of singularity. To them, the universal is the very place of a multiplicity of singularities each of which is but what it is, that is in what links it to and separates it from other singularities.

This is certainly not the kind of relativist and tolerant multiculturalism that turns out to be politically easy but too weak for the dire times we are living in: a non-committal posture masking ethical indifference and, sometimes, cultural ignorance. Neither is it the globalized "hyperculture" denounced by B.-C. Han (2023), the exotic spatio-temporal assemblage of disparate cultural forms put together with scarce or inexistent historical awareness and respect for differences – the "supermarket of cultures" for today's curious "hypercultural tourists".

A third reason for resisting the use of post-Western is that one should also be cautiously aware of the fact that the phrase post-Western also subsumes an identitarian purity in the cultural heritage that is being given as overcome which is historically questionable, the West having no copyright on humanism[5] –as well as on barbarity, at that – and having reciprocally drawn from the humanisms of other civilizations. Philological, literary, historical, anthropological researches should have made clear, by now, that "too much is known about other traditions, to believe that even humanism itself is exclusively a Western practice" (Said 2004, 54). To exemplify, Said recalls the achievements of scholars like the Arabist and Islamist G. Makdisi, and of the historian and Greek scholar Martin Bernal in order to underline the important Islamic and African contributions to the composition of Western humanism. Facing the complex interweaving of European and non-European cultures – a fascinating, rich complexity inevitably dispelling any essentialist and identitarian picture of cultures – he comes to this heartfelt reproach:

5 Humanist-like thinking has traditions across continents and cultures for over 2.500 years. For instance, Buddhism and Confucianism have had skeptical currents of their own. Other examples are, in India, the ancient Ajnāna philosophy of radical heterodoxy and the Lakāyata school of philosophical materialism, and, in Africa, the West-African Akan philosophy (dating from the thirteenth century) and the Southern African Ubuntu philosophy.

> When will we stop allowing ourselves to think of humanism as a form of smugness and not as an unsettling adventure in difference, in alternative traditions, in texts that need a new deciphering within a much wider context than has hitherto been given them? (55)

Readers must have certainly recognized the idiolect of Said's "critical humanism", defined not as

> a way of consolidating and affirming what 'we' have always known and felt, but rather as a means of questioning, upsetting and reformulating so much of what is presented to us as commodified, packaged, uncontroversial, and uncritical codified certainties, including those contained in the masterpieces herded under the rubric of the 'classics'. (28)

Significantly, it is meant as a *worldly* humanism, plunged in "the real historical world from whose circumstances none of us can in fact ever be separated, not even in theory" (48) – in this globalized world in which "to some extent we are all outsiders and, to a slightly lesser but almost equal extent, insiders simultaneously" (48).

Said's latter paradox means something close to what the Arabic-Islamic philosopher Fathi Triki means when he holds that in order to live within and with cultural diversity it is necessary to be prepared for a "dialogue transculturel" (2010, 20; transcultural dialogue), "prêt à une pensée hétérologique […] prêt à penser à partir de l'autre, à s'engager, à inclure l'altérité à son mode propre de penser, de sentir, et d'agir" (20; prepared for a heterologic thought […] prepared to think starting from the other, to engage in including alterity in one's own way of thinking, feeling, and acting).

3 Towards Transcultural Humanism

My argumentative steps so far were meant to lead to a further, final stage: rather than post-, more than beyond, the prefix that fully catches the sense and function of humanism and the humanities today is *trans-* in the qualifier *transcultural*, as advocated by philosophers of culture such as W. Welsch and M. Epstein. Far from indiscriminately attacking or abandoning our alleged monocultural worlds – starting from the big divides between West and the East/Middle-East, the North and the South, and continuing all through their replicas in minor keys –, the transcultural approach forces their boundaries of various nature, to look for and insist on what can connect them, while accepting that some differences may not be overcome and need to be respected. From a transcultural perspective, different worlds, different

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languages are not simply put side by side in a static and unproductive relationship of tolerant co-existence, as multiculturalism would have it, but they are dynamically involved in overcoming their reciprocal borders. New compatibilities, as well as new diversities, emerge from permeation and hybridization, which, as emphasized by Welsh, are certainly preferable to the superficial cultural uniformization produced by globalization or to the particularization of identitarian, sealed policies (2001, 82-3). Transcultural encounters creatively destabilize our received understanding of cultural formations and unsettle easy syncretic tendencies. We are very far from the autistic and celebratory reconfirmation of our culture's 'glorious tradition' that has characterized certain lifeless, monumental defences of Western humanism as vigorously denounced by Nietzsche (1874/1980).

A transcultural approach to the humanities can receive lifeblood from the notion of cultural transfert inaugurated by Michel Espagne, which is focussed on the process of re-interpretation/re-semanticization that any cultural 'object' undergoes in passing from one culture to another, where the fundamental role played by translation in all this should come as no surprise. Cultural 'transference' flows into forms of *métissage* that are resistant to comparison. In comparison, Espagne points out, the observer (usually belonging to one of the two compared cultural objects/texts) tends to oppose in order to find similarities and differences, whereas transference has more to do with complex and multi-polar interactions among cultures whose gnoseological assumptions may be quite diverse. Espagne's theoretical contribution is particularly precious when he remarks how in no way should we consider these different cultures as "'homogeneous and original' in themselves as each one of them in its turn is the result of previous *déplacements*; each one of them has a history made of successive hybridations" (2013, 3). And, of course, these cultural imbrications can never be contained in one-way directions.

Métissage in cultures and their conceptual frameworks is old news, something human history has positively known, as Said, as much as Welsch (2001, 75), are keen on emphasizing. Effective examples of this factual historic transculturality is traced back by Espagne to Antiquity, in the Mediterranean area, in the exchanges between Egypt and Greece, those same exchanges which have led Martin Bernal to hypothesize an archaic African heritage at the heart of European civilization (1987). Literature has always been able to conjure up the "portals of globality" studied by Espagne, and nowadays still continues to do so through deeply transcultural postcolonial works by authors like Gurnah or Ghosh. From this perspective, the notions that most of all become obsolete casualties to be definitely put aside are those of the alleged purity of uncontaminated cultures, as well as of allegedly sealed cultural hegemonies. More deeply, it is the identitarian myth that turns out to be untenable.

A valuable assist to Espagne's theses may be found in Turkish-American political philosopher Seyla Benhabib's plea for our recognizing "the radical hybridity and polyvocity of *all* cultures" (2002, 45). She, too, criticizes false generalizations concerning the supposed homogeneity of the West's developmental history and identity, not to mention the cohesion of its value systems (44). Such holistic view of cultures and civilizations has contributed to neglecting those elements in them "which may be perfectly compatible with, or which may themselves lie at the root of the West's own discovery of universalism" (44). This leads Benhabib to seriously reassess the hotly-debated question of the ethnocentrism of universalism as it presupposes "that we know who the 'West and its others' are. But who are we? Who are the so-called others? Are they really others?", she asks (45). Benhabib's provocative question, I believe, is to be approached as questioning that form of misguided anti-humanism that puts radical alterity as axiomatic. Yet, as vigorously contested by Robbins, "[i]s radical alterity their [the others'] self-description, or is it on the contrary a category that pre-empts their self-description?" (2000, 563).

Not taking into adequate account the complex global dialogue across cultures and civilizations is something Benhabib is particularly worried about since it encourages the binarisms of 'we' and 'the other(s)' when the last thing we need in our troubled pluriverse are theses of cultural incommensurability and untranslatability.

Not surprisingly, the clash-of-civilizations theory was shared in common by Samuel Huntington and Osama Bin Laden with the tragic consequences we know all-too-well, and has been and continues to be shared by the powerful 'rogues' of the world, by all those "qui ont intérêt à traduire la complexité du monde en termes d'affrontement entre entités simple et homogènes: Occident et Orient, 'monde libre' et Islam" (Todorov 2008, 157; who have a vested interest in translating the complexity of the world into a confrontation between simple and homogeneous entities: the West and the East, the 'free world' and Islam). Yet, as Benhabib hermeneutically objects, "if frameworks, linguistic or conceptual, are so radically incommensurable with each other, then we would not be able to know this" (48). In her political philosophy, considering untenable the view of cultures as sealed and internally self-consistent wholes goes hand in hand with the pragmatic 'moral imperative' to enter into a cross-cultural dialogue, as "we have become moral contemporaries caught in a net of interdependence" (51-2).

Here I like to call into play Epstein's voice, more exactly when he wisely writes that the transcultural experience helps us develop "the most precious freedom", which is freedom from *our own* culture, the one in which we were born and educated, meaning the freedom not to be overdetermined by it but, more healthily, to be able to enlarge its horizons in unpredictable configurations, "through the risky experience of our own cultural wanderings and transgressions" (2009, 330). Welsch as much as Epstein are careful to point out that this in no way means to forget or to reject the 'prejudices' of our native culture. To retrieve the beginning of this essay, this does not entail an indiscriminate recantation of our Western heritage and modes of inhabiting the world. Still, against any fearful or arrogant identitarian self-confinement, "to be cultural means to rise above one's inborn identity", be it ethnic, religious, political, or of gender, "through the variety of self-destructions, self-transformations, and interferences with other identities" (339).

I would say that this is *practicing* humanism in a transcultural way. And this is what literature, patently so postcolonial literature, which has both challenged Western humanism and shown it the way to inclusive renewal, performs by vocation.

4 An Example of Literature's Transcultural Performance: Leila Aboulela's Case

It can be safely contended that literature, and to a great extent postcolonial literature in any language, especially by hyphenated diasporic authors, is the one better equipped for enacting a fully transcultural humanism capable to listen to, be exposed to, and constructively deal with Otherness.

To bring this essay to a close with an example of this vocation of literature, I will just briefly focus attention on the powerfully transcultural experience offered by the fiction of Sudanese-British Leila Aboulela.[6] Aboulela fully participates in the wave of Arab Anglophone writers who, for four decades, have been engaged in a critical revision of Western 'translations' of Arab alterity, "articulating an alternative episteme derived from Islam but shaped specifically by immigrant perspectives" (Hassan 2008, 299). Her work may represent for us a particularly precious example of transcultural challenge: in fact, as I have pointed out elsewhere (2024), by first placing religious faith as such and then Islam right at the centre of her fiction, she poses a double challenge of Otherness to a largely secularized (when not Islamophobic) Western audience. She wants

6 One of the most prominent African Arab writers in English today, Aboulela is author of six novels and two short-stories collections, as well as of radio plays.

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her fiction to translate 'Islamic logic'[7] by showing how it invests the everyday lives of her Muslim characters, often (but not exclusively) Muslim women in Islamophobic Western contexts. In doing this, she pre-empts and dis-orients many Western readers' expectations without even slightly pandering to them. So, for example, her Muslimas are often fulfilled in their religion, they are not victims or escapees of Islam; each of them finds her own, deeply personal path toward God, while, at the same time being able to quietly deconstruct the patriarchal expectations of her own community.

The fact is that in her fiction Islamic faith becomes a vector of transculture that rules out any simply 'voyeuristic', or anthropologic-like multicultural posture on the readers' part and that, exactly by virtue of its resistance to domesticizing Islamic alterity, jolts them away from the self-centred impulse to confirm their own identity and 'prejudices'. One cannot go on reading Aboulela if s/he is not prepared for a sort of temporary 'conversion' translating her/him into her Muslim characters' Other worldview.

The first challenge, that of proposing religious faith as her main theme, compels us to face the inveterate neglect of religious discourse and the sacred by Western criticism, including postcolonial studies. It compels us to rethink the relationship between Western humanism and secularism or, better, to rethink its often inertial identification with a rational(istic) critique of religion, as if whatever is religious should be at risk of irrationalism and fundamentalism, as if the need for spirituality, independently of whether one is a believer or not, could not be integral to being human in the world. As a matter of fact, the process of secularization cannot be said to have entailed the elimination of the religious experience, rather "the power of religion is still growing in many countries around the world", so that "far from the secular world that was once predicted, a post-secular age has arrived" (Plummer 2021, 19). "By showing how the world of her Muslim characters 'transcends' the over-simplified division between Islam and secularity in the continuum of their everyday lives" (Zinato 2024, 6), Aboulela stimulates a revision of Western criticism's traditionally inattentive, often hostile, posture towards religion, spurring a more dialogic relationship.

Here we are approaching her second challenge, Islam. Islam in her novels and short stories is a way of existing in the world, it is emphatically not an a-historical, theological hypostasis. It is a shared

7 "I want to show the psychology, the state of mind and the emotions of a person who has faith. I am interested in going deep, not just looking at 'Muslim' as a cultural or political identity but something close to the centre, something that transcends but doesn't deny gender, nationality, class and race. I write fiction that reflects Islamic logic" (Aboulela 2011, "Author Statement", *British Council*. Cf. https://www.britishcouncil.org/writer/leila_aboulela).

point of Aboulela criticism that translation is the philosophical, thematic, and rhetorical framework of her narrative. In her unfailing efforts at translating for us cultural difference through the experience of Islam permeating her characters' everyday life (also in the guise of reactive or renouncing attitudes), in no way does she aim to convince or to convert us (that kind of divine translation only coming from Allah, as repeatedly conveyed by her narrative). Her 'translations' of Islamic culture have nothing exotic in them and may be quite uncomfortable at times. Some opacity, too, is part of this transference, when we experience an 'excess' that resists full translation, "the 'beyond' of interpretation in what may be understood as a sense of cultural 'otherness'" (Ashcroft 2013, 122), which becomes awareness of our own Otherness.

When our own Otherness is made palpable to us, that is the moment in which our ego-logical cultural perspective is shaken and, in Levinasian terms, our being "for the Other" becomes possible. There are several of these moments in Aboulela's narrative. One example that can here be given of her transcultural strategy can be drawn from the short story "The Ostrich", in which we are made to share in the Sudanese Muslima Samra's anguishing disorientation and estrangement when, returning to London and to her Sudanese husband Majdy, she realizes that the two months she has just spent in Khartoum have wiped away the two years of life here, that she is "a stranger once again" (2018, 89). Her husband is doing a PhD and is infatuated with his new Western life, with its modernity, which he expects his wife should embrace in public, not to 'disgrace' him. So, while seeing her out of the airport, the first words he addresses to her are "You look like something from the Third World", referring to her clothes ("crumpled and out of place"), her soaked sandals, her resigned expression. We, Western readers, start feeling as *she* feels – hurt, ashamed. She "lets him put his arm around her by way of greeting", and we suddenly perceive *with* her all the estranging weight of this gesture, so common with us but suddenly not appearing as 'natural' anymore. She "ha[s] to remember to walk next to him and not loiter behind" because "he dislikes if she walks a few steps behind".

> "What would people think", he says, "that we are backward, barbaric." He sneers at the Arab women in black abayas walking behind their men. "Oppressed, that's what people would think of them. Here they respect women, treat them as equal; we *must* be the same," he says. So I *have to* be careful not to fall behind him in step and *must* bear the weight of his arm around my shoulder, another gesture he had decided to imitate to prove that, though we are Arabs and Africans, we can be modern too. (86; italics added))

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That Majdy's mimicry of Western 'modernity' is not the result of a real transcultural negotiation but his self-compulsory way to put up with his complex of cultural inferiority, is inferable from the fact that the latter gives in when they are alone. Its double-bind nature is fully evidenced by his slapping her, in private, for her daring to mention polygamy in the presence of their new non-Muslim friends, only to give her "apologetic caresses" afterwords, ashamed of himself.

Majdy forbids her to wear the veil: "If you cover your hair in London they'll think I am forcing you to do that. They won't believe it is what you want". "So – she thinks, and here Aboulela's chiselled prose gets sublime – I must walk *unclothed*, *imagining cotton on my hair, lifting my hand to adjust an imaginary tobe*" (94-5; italics added). These words offer us a deep insight into her way of being in the ('our') world, making palpable our own ignorance of/Otherness to it. The suspended gesture of her hand lifting an imaginary tobe stays in our mind with the force of a still image, it encapsulates our transcultural experience of otherness. To her, not to wear the veil is like walking naked, exposed, and is lived as a privation, a privation she cannot intimately get used to.

The veil, of course, is loaded with contested and contextual meanings, and it obviously can become a token of female autonomous agency only where and when it is not imposed – certainly not in countries like today's Iran. As pointed out by S.T. Al-Karawi and I. Baizura Bahar, Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* – but this holds true for her whole narrative – "provides the reader with an opportunity to explore how the veil is a metaphor or trope whose diversity can only be understood by *unpacking the lived experiences* of the Arab Muslim woman in the West" (2014, 255; italics added). Now, the veil is what many, not all, Muslimas in Aboulela's fiction want. Significantly, as in the case of Najwa, the protagonist of *Minaret* (2005), they may decide to become hijabis only when they are in Europe, where they rediscover and reappropriate for themselves what was only inertial or non-existent. In the cultural-transfert dynamic depicted by Aboulela, in the West, where it is no more compulsory and where cases of unveiled Muslim characters are certainly not absent, the veil may certainly become a protection from sexualized gazes, as well as a target for racist abuse, but in both cases it remains a strong token of the post-migrant autonomy enjoyed in being able to choose whether to wear it or not, independently of the white approval. Above all, in the Sudanese author's transcultural narrative of faith, this freedom is embraced by her committed Muslimas with the view to translating it into an enhancement of their loving submission to Allah. The Western reader is obviously not asked to share in this choice but, perhaps, s/he is now able to catch the fulfilling, rather than constraining, meaning the veil has for them.

To Najwa, as much as to Samra, the protagonist of *The Translator* (1999), and to other hijabis in Aboulela's narrative, "the hijab is not only a visual marker of piety [...] it is the means by which piety is cultivated" (Canpolat 2016, 217), like praying. As to the interplay between visibility and invisibility entailed in wearing it, I believe the following, insightful, observation by Hassan (2006, 762) concerning Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* may be safely applied to Aboulela's fiction as well:

> In putting into question the intuitive association in Western epistemology of visibility with presence, voice, and subjectivity, the veil here functions as the horizon of translatability. The untranslatable beyond the veil becomes a test of ethics, demanding of the ethical agent an acknowledgement of epistemological limits and a refusal to submit the untranslatable to the forgery of the discourse on otherness.

We might rephrase "horizon of translatability" as horizon of transcultural translatability. Aboulela's fiction succeeds in widening our gnoseological/existential horizons and understanding – not necessarily our sharing – of a different world, yet not so different as to bar attentiveness to what can be connective. To fully experience her art, one has to surrender her/his Ego's boundaries and enter a Levinasian ethical disposition to be for-the-Other. The "faces" of her protagonists jolt us out of our self-affirming existing and impel us to question and interrogate our own moral, ideological, existential certainties (Levinas 2006, 29-36). In this encounter of Othernesses boundaries get infringed, interrogated and negotiated. In this interplay between proximity and distance, some untranslatability, some irreducibility of the Other's Otherness remains vital evidence that our reciprocal recognition has been respectful of differences and has avoided illusory assimilation.

Aboulela's transcultural *Bildung*, to use a term of classic Western humanism, finds its main inspiration in Qur'anic and other forms of Islamic literature (such as Sufi philosophy and poetry, hadiths, and so forth). Her humanistic reading of the Qur'an, which is "effortlessly and inseparably embroidered in her narrative" (Edwin 2013, 70), also reveals her intellectual sharing in Muslim Arab Feminism's questioning of gendered formation of Islamic epistemology (Fatima Mernissi's above all). Her reading background has drawn from Arab writers, but also from Russian classic novelists, and from British, canonic and postcolonial, anglophone literature (privileging J. Rhys and A. Gurnah). Furthermore, she has often mentioned Fanon and Said as her important sources of influence.

From a transcultural perspective we become able to see connections between her Islamic humanism, Gilroy's humanist appeal for a globalized philosophy of conviviality, and the Arab-Islamic philosopher Triki's "philosophie du vivre-ensemble dans la dignité" (philosophy of living-together in dignity). The latter, in its turn, rests on a strong idea of *reasonableness* (rather than *ratio*) that recaptures and builds on the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* put into dialogue with that of *al-ta'aqul* by the philosopher of the Islamic Golden Age Al Farabi and the Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun (fourteenth century). Also, by retrieving Kant's ideal of perpetual peace, Triki tries to open new, ethical-political perspectives to an idea of reason (*'aql*) that can be practiced in a world in which violations of human rights and new forms of colonialism and imperialism have become ordinary, global reality (1998, 2006).

A transcultural humanist perspective makes it possible to perceive these common efforts without erasing diversity. In Mbembe's words, "ce que nous devons *imaginer* c'est une politique de l'humaine qui est, fondamentalement, une politique du semblable, mais dans un contexte ou, c'est vrai, ce que nous partageons d'emblée, ce sont les differences. Et ce sont elles qu'il nous faut, paradoxalement, mettre en commun" (2015, 255; what we must *imagine* is a politics of the human that is, fundamentally, a politics of the similar, but in a context where, it is true, what we share straight away are our differences. And it is these differences that, paradoxically, are to be pooled by us). Said was adamant on the fact that it should be the duty of humanists to disturb the world as it is and "provide suitable models of coexistence" (2004, 49-50). And Fanon's lesson in the will to believe that a true, universal humanism is possible has definitely not lost its urgency nowadays. Transcultural humanism appears as the viable path for trying what might appear as utopian. Still, as beautifully put by Bill Ashcroft,

> this is the utopian potential of the trans-cultural […] a space of transformation in which change is conceived. […] The transculturality of literature may not herald an immediate resolution of cultural differences, it may not be the only path to genuine cosmopolitanism, but by crossing borders it shows that a different world is possible; a world that will not come about unless it has first been imagined. (2023, 15)

Rather than remaining in Münchausen's pond, staring on the quicksand of Western humanism's bankruptcy, we had better cherish its strong, critical tradition of self-questioning, and learn from its misfires, along the track shown by Fanon, who, "instead of producing a hegemonic, top-down ideal definition of 'humanness' […] looks into the '*raté*' – the failures, misses, misfires – of human subjectivities and builds, bottom-up, inductively, a notion of humanness from its processes of alienation" (Bessone 2022, 1585).

After all, is not anti-humanism still a creature of true humanism's lucid awareness of vulnerability, fallibility, and provisionality? Let's fail better, then, in the awareness that humanness is not something 'given' or inherited once and for all, that humanity cannot be the exclusive precinct of anybody and of any culture, and that its meaning needs to be constantly interrogated and acted upon.

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Recensioni

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Rosanna Gorris Camos et Anna Bettoni (éds) *La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri IV*

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Compte rendu de *La tragédie à l'époque d'Henri IV*. Vol. 2, *(1591-1595)* (2024). Direction scientifique et coordination éditoriale de R. Gorris Camos et A. Bettoni. Florence: Olschki, tt. 2, 894 pp. Théâtre français de la Renaissance, troisième série.

L'imposant deuxième volume de la troisième série du « Théâtre français de la Renaissance », publié en deux tomes sous la direction scientifique et la coordination éditoriale de Rosanna Gorris Camos et Anna Bettoni, apporte une contribution notable à l'étude de la tragédie française à l'époque d'Henri IV. Il est à saluer comme un jalon important dans la poursuite d'une opération de longue haleine qui fait la vocation de cette collection dont le premier volume a vu le jour en 1986 : une opération d'appropriation et de valorisation d'un vaste corpus de pièces d'accès souvent difficile qui concourent à dessiner le paysage théâtral, complexe et varié, du XVI^e^ siècle français.

Le volume en question propose l'édition critique de sept tragédies datant des années de 1591 à 1595, une période charnière marquée par les troubles politiques et religieux autour du sacre d'Henri IV. La publication de ce corpus, qui intègre des tragédies dues à des figures établies d'auteurs, comme Nicolas de Montreux, à des pièces d'auteurs méconnus, restées parfois à l'état manuscrit, a le mérite de donner accès à une production tragique aux formes et aux desseins variés, restée jusqu'ici enfouie ou peu accessible, et pourtant révélatrice de la vitalité de la création dramatique à une époque de transition qui

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annonce des inflexions vers des formes théâtrales nouvelles et des sensibilités baroques.

Les textes sont édités et annotés scrupuleusement par Concetta Cavallini, Giovanna Devincenzo, Anna Bettoni (pour le premier tome), Laura Rescia, Riccardo Benedettini, Patrizia De Capitani et Maurizio Busca (pour le deuxième). Chaque tragédie est accompagnée d'un apparat critique rigoureux et précédée d'une introduction approfondie encadrant l'auteur, les traits spécifiques de l'œuvre et les contextes où elle s'inscrit. L'annotation détaillée facilite la compréhension et permet d'apprécier les spécificités dramaturgiques et stylistiques, en complément d'un texte dont la modernisation 'modérée' invite à la lecture un public non nécessairement spécialiste.

Le premier tome s'ouvre sur *Hippolyte, Tragedie tournée de Sénèque par Jean Yeuwain montois* (1591), éditée par Concetta Cavallini. Il s'agit d'une pièce où la dette à l'égard de Sénèque est tempérée par la conformité au goût de l'époque, témoignée par l'adhésion aux modèles stoïciens et par l'adoption de la topique pétrarquiste et des modèles linguistiques de la Pléiade. Le riche apparat critique a le mérite, entre autres, de proposer une étude linguistique qui invite à une réflexion sur les choix formels et stylistiques d'un auteur de province très peu connu, mais dont on peut supposer que la production théâtrale n'était pas dénuée de crédit à l'époque.

Dans *Le Guisien* de Simon Belyard (1592), le duc de Guise constitue la figure centrale d'une tragédie 'd'actualité' éminemment politique qui se rattache à la production catholique militante liée à l'assassinat d'Henri de Guise et à la propagande ligueuse. Comme le montre avec efficacité Giovanna Devincenzo, éditrice scientifique de la pièce, le modèle sénéquéen sous-jacent (notamment le *Thyeste*) est ici adapté aux enjeux politico-religieux de l'histoire contemporaine. L'étude de style qui enrichit l'analyse de la pièce fait également ressortir la dette de Belyard à l'égard des poètes de la Pléiade, et particulièrement de Ronsard, de même que la primauté d'une rhétorique de la persuasion dont la puissance est axée sur l'emploi des métaphores animales, des sentences, de la surcharge descriptive, de la stichomythie, du registre de l'horreur et, notamment, de gloses explicatives au service d'un dessein édifiant et d'un message idéologique.

Héritière de la tradition humaniste, la pièce de Luc Percheron, *Pyrrhe* (1592), qu'Anna Bettoni a tirée de l'oubli et sur laquelle se clôt le premier tome, s'inscrit dans les modalités éducatives et édifiantes du théâtre jésuite, en offrant un exemple de l'usage de la tragédie comme outil pédagogique. Longtemps ignorée, transmise à l'état manuscrit et jamais imprimée avant l'édition très fautive de 1845, cette tragédie au style imparfait et à la structure fragile emprunte souvent l'allure d'un exercice scolaire assez maladroit, mais – comme le souligne Anna Bettoni – assume pour le lecteur d'aujourd'hui l'intérêt d'un « objet culturel […] significatif » (275) témoignant des

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pratiques de lecture et des modes d'appréhension et d'imitation des modèles littéraires de référence de la part d'un homme de lettres de province lié aux collèges jésuites. Une étude des sources – des *Fables* d'Hygin à l'*Énéide*, de la poésie de la Pléiade au théâtre de Garnier et de Mathieu – ainsi que du processus de christianisation de l'imaginaire tragique païen mis en œuvre par Percheron complète l'apparat critique rigoureux de cette édition.

Isabelle (1594) et *Cléopâtre* (1595) de Nicolas de Montreux, éditées respectivement par Laura Rescia et Riccardo Benedettini, sont deux tragédies inscrites dans un réseau textuel complexe. La première est insérée dans une structure à enchâssement, à l'intérieur des *Bergeries de Juliette* ; la seconde est située à la suite du roman de Montreux intitulé *L'œuvre de la chasteté*. L'analyse rigoureuse des deux pièces éclaire les enjeux thématiques et les réseaux d'influences dans lesquels elles s'intègrent d'une manière originale. L'étude critique fine et articulée qui accompagne l'édition d'*Isabelle* fait bien ressortir les enjeux de l'adaptation et du glissement transmodal dans une pièce qui reprend un épisode du *Roland Furieux* sans pour autant cacher sa dette à l'égard du poème de Boiardo. Les dynamiques de la réécriture des vers d'Arioste, suivies avec précision par Laura Rescia, éclairent l'opération de moralisation qui les anime à plusieurs niveaux: de l'articulation du récit et des dialogues aux reprises textuelles allant souvent dans la direction de « l'amplification pathétique » (419), du traitement des personnages et des thèmes à celui de la matière amoureuse.

Dans le cas de *Cléopâtre*, l'analyse approfondie de la pièce conduite dans l'introduction montre d'une manière convaincante comment cette tragédie de Montreux reflète et recompose la riche tradition – antique et moderne – dont elle se nourrit, en créant une image renouvelée de la reine, qui met au premier plan sa dimension humaine. La figure de la séductrice s'estompe alors au profit de celle d'une femme 'politique', victime des revers de Fortune, à la fois « héroïne romanesque qui subit la solitude […] et la tentation de la mort » (557) et incarnation de la vertu, du courage moral et de l'intelligence politique. Enfin, parmi les aspects novateurs qui concourent à la construction de l'« apothéose mythique de la reine », Riccardo Benedettini attire l'attention du lecteur sur les effets de résonance entre l'interrogation sur la condition humaine qui sous-tend la pièce et les réflexions des *Essais*, en reconnaissant dans la *Cléopâtre* de Montreux les traits d'« une tragédie montaignienne » (553).

Dans la très riche introduction qui précède l'édition de la *Franciade* di Godard, par-delà l'étude soignée des axes structuraux et dramaturgiques de la composition, Patrizia De Capitani met en valeur les raisons de l'intérêt d'une « œuvre dramatique » qui occupe une position centrale dans « l'édifice éditorial des *Œuvres* » (664) de Godard et qui, tout en se situant dans le sillage de la *Franciade* ronsardienne et de ses imitations, intègre l'héritage des *Illustrations de Gaule* de Jean Lemaire de Belges et montre une originalité relevant de sa dimension politique – notamment par le biais du motif de l'aspiration à la paix et à la réconciliation dont l'auteur souhaite qu'Henri IV se fasse porteur – ainsi que de la volonté du dramaturge de composer une tragédie nationale.

Enfin, le cas de la tragédie de Pierard Poullet intitulée *Charite* et représentée en 1595 au Collège de Justice de l'Université de Paris, illustre bien la mise en œuvre d'une série de stratégies d'adaptation de la matière romanesque – un épisode des *Métamorphoses* d'Apulée – à la scène tragique. L'analyse fine que Maurizio Busca mène dans son introduction met en lumière tous les éléments qui définissent la « nature hybride » d'une pièce qui se situe au croisement des genres et des registres et qui essaie de concilier les caractères de la tragédie humaniste avec le genre tragi-comique et pastoral, en développant également les thèmes de la jalousie et de la mélancholie amoureuse dans le cadre d'une dramaturgie propre au 'théâtre de la cruauté'.

Par la rigueur et la qualité scientifique des éditions critiques qu'il propose et par le fait qu'il défriche une production tragique étendue et parfois méconnue appartenant à une époque de crise, ce volume constitue un outil indispensable pour tout chercheur intéressé au théâtre français de la Renaissance tardive et, plus en général, à l'histoire culturelle de la France à la fin du XVI^e siècle.

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Rosa Coppola
Kathrin Rögglas Szeno-Graphien der Gegenwart

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Rezension von Coppola, R. (2024). *Kathrin Rögglas Szeno-Graphien der Gegenwart. Formen und Methoden einer performativen Prosa (1995-2016)*. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 143 pp.

Schon seit Jahrzehnten ist Kathrin Röggla eine bedeutende Persönlichkeit der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur. Die 1971 in Salzburg geborene und seit Anfang der 1990er Jahre in Berlin lebende Schriftstellerin, die ihre österreichischen Wurzeln – insbesondere was die literarische Tradition dieses Landes angeht – dennoch nie verleugnet hat, gilt als Vertreterin eines neuen Realismus, der darauf abzielt, die immer komplizierter werdende Realität unserer Gegenwart zu reproduzieren und dabei kritisch zu beleuchten, d.h. die unbewussten Mechanismen und Diskurse des Neoliberalismus und jenes Ausnahmezustands, der heute überall herrscht, ans Licht zu bringen. Ihre Werke und ihre Poetik, die Röggla selbst in mehreren Aufsätzen und Interviews dargelegt hat, wurden bis heute von zahlreichen Literaturwissenschaftler_innen eher einzeln unter die Lupe genommen oder aber in monographischen Studien zu bestimmten, brisanten Themen der Gegenwart – wie etwa in Michael Navratils *Kontrafaktik der Gegenwart* (2022) – mit denen anderer Autor_innen verglichen. Was aber bis heute fehlte, war eine umfassende und diachronisch angelegte Analyse „ihrer

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stilistischen Entwicklung im Rahmen der sogenannten ‚strukturalen Realismen'" (Coppola 2024, 1). Diese hat nun Rosa Coppola in ihrer knappen, dennoch durchdachten und gründlichen Studie über Rögglas performatives Schreiben vorgelegt. Auf den Begriff der Szene zurückgreifend, wie dieser jüngst in der Literaturwissenschaft wieder aufgewertet wurde, versteht Coppola Rögglas Werke eben als ‚Szeno-Graphien' der Gegenwart, die einen hohen Performanzwert besitzen, da sie Dokumentarisches und Inszenatorisches kombinieren. In solchen Texten versucht die Autorin *ex negativo* – z. B. durch ihr sogenanntes ‚Rückwärts-Prinzip' sowie ein hochentwickeltes Montageverfahren –, die dominanten Ideologien durch die De- und Rekonstruktion ihrer Sprache und Diskurse zu entlarven und ihnen entgegenzuwirken.

Rögglas „Meta-Darstellungen der Wirklichkeit in Echtzeit" (Coppola 2024, 11) ist also ein konkretes Ziel gemeinsam, das trotz unterschiedlicher Schreibpraktiken, Sprachsubjekte und -gattungen durch die verschiedenen Phasen ihrer literarischen Karriere immer präsent bleibt. In Bezug auf diesen letzten Punkt schlägt Coppola eine Periodisierung von Rögglas Prosawerk und dessen „Phänomenologie der Entmaterialisierung" (Coppola 2024, 18) vor, die eine erste Hauptphase umschließt, die von 1995 – also von der Veröffentlichung der Erzählsammlung niemand lacht rückwärts – bis 2016 reicht und in eine Rückkehr zu einem scheinbar traditionelleren Stil mündet. Bevor die Hauptstationen dieser Periodisierung und die stilistischen Durchbrüche anhand einer eingehenden Analyse einiger Erzählungen oder Ausschnitten aus längeren Prosawerken erläutert werden, werden allerdings Rögglas literarische Vorbilder vorgestellt, wobei neben den Vertreter_innen der österreichischen Tradition der Sprachskepsis – insbesondere Ernst Jandl und Elfriede Jelinek – auch Hubert Fichte und seinen literarischen Interviews sowie Alexander Kluges antagonistischem Realismus besondere Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet wird.

Röggla eine „Mittelposition" zwischen Fichte und Kluge (Coppola 2024, 38) attestierend, lässt Coppola anschließend den „Formfindungsprozess" (2024, 6) der Autorin Revue passieren. In einem ersten Schritt stellt sie zwei frühere Prosawerke Rögglas vor – *niemand lacht rückwärts* (1995) und *Abrauschen* (1997); daran zeigt sie die textuellen Verfahren der sprachlichen und akustischen Montage sowie der „fragmentierten Darstellung der Körper" (Coppola 2024, 43) auf, die durch die Sprache einerseits die desolate Lage des prekären Individuums in der Gegenwart reproduzieren, andererseits das ‚Rückwärts-Prinzip' als sprachlich-performatives Mittel verwenden, um die „Normalisierungsprozesse der westlichen Gesellschaft" (Coppola 2024, 39) zu entlarven. Als entscheidenden Wendepunkt in der Poetik Rögglas identifiziert Coppola die Prosasammlung *Irres Wetter* (2000), in der sich die Autorin erstmals dem Genre des literarischen Interviews nähert, um damit die „szenographische Wirklichkeit“ Berlins (2024, 69) inszenierend/dekonstruierend zu reproduzieren. Hier taucht auch zum ersten Mal der Prototyp des sogenannten ‚sendermann‘ auf, d. h. eines neuen, aus der Mitte unserer neoliberalen Gesellschaft geborenen Individuums, das nicht mehr fähig ist, dialogisch zu kommunizieren, sondern lediglich zu einem bloßen Sender heteronomer Diskurse wird. In diesem Werk kommen allerdings bereits einige Motive vor, besonders jene der Apokalypse und des Ausnahmezustands, die in der folgenden Phase, also in den Sammlungen *really ground zero* (2001) und *wir schlafen nicht* (2004), dann in den Vordergrund treten. Ausgehend von den Terroranschlägen in den USA und dem Genre der Katastrophenfilme versucht Röggla darin, durch die bewusste Anwendung des Konjunktivs I und die Einfügung von Zitaten die „Manipulationsmechanismen des öffentlichen Diskurses“ (Coppola 2024, 92) aufzudecken. Dadurch entsteht eine Interferenz, welche „die Differenz zwischen den Ereignissen und ihrer Erzählung pointiert unterstreicht“ (Coppola 2024, 93). Insbesondere im ‚Theaterroman‘ *wir schlafen nicht* vollzieht sich dann ein weiterer Wechsel in Rögglas Poetik, nämlich die Ersetzung des Paradigmas des ‚senders‘ durch das des Gespensts: Indem der ganze Roman Dialoge lediglich simuliert, enttarnt er das neoliberale System als Makrophage, der alles und alle auffrisst und nur „Gespenster des Diskurses“ (Coppola 2024, 109) zurücklässt.

Diese Entmenschlichung der Protagonisten und ihre progressive ‚Versprachlichung‘ erfährt in *die alarmbereiten* (2010) eine weitere Potenzierung. In diesem Werk wird das Protokoll zum Erzählformat erhoben, das nun am besten geeignet ist, die Entleerung des Individuums im Zeitalter der bloßen Simulierbarkeit aller Kommunikation zu veranschaulichen. In der darauffolgenden Kurzgeschichtensammlung *Nachtsendungen. Unheimliche Geschichten* aus dem Jahr 2016 wird dieses Format jedoch schon wieder verworfen und einer – wenn auch nur scheinbaren – „Rückkehr zum normativen Schreiben“ (Coppola 2024, 126) der Vorrang gegeben. Gerade durch die Spannung zwischen Indikativ und Konjunktiv II erzeugt das Schreiben einen „halluzinatorischen Zustand“, „in dem die Verbindung zwischen Spekulation und Wirklichkeit der erzählten Ereignisse aufgelöst wird“ (Coppola 2024, 129) und damit jede Wahrhaftigkeit – des Erzählten aber auch unserer von einem ständigen Ausnahmezustand beherrschten Realität – in Frage gestellt wird. Dieser Höhepunkt der Skepsis markiert allerdings gleichzeitig dessen Überwindung in der Poetik Rögglas und somit die Endstation jener „progressiven Verfeinerung ihres Stils“, die Coppola in ihrer Analyse detailliert und anhand zahlreicher textueller Beispiele nachzeichnet (2024, 132). Die letzten Seiten der Studie sind immerhin der Fortsetzung von Rögglas Werk gewidmet, insbesondere ihrer 2019 im Zusammenarbeit

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mit Mark Lammert und Eran Schaerf realisierten Performance-Installation *Der Elefant im Raum*, die sich einerseits als *summa poetica* und andererseits als ein Neubeginn präsentiert, in dem das performativ-kritische Spiel mit anderen Medien – auch im konkreten und nicht nur im simulierten Sinne – eine zentrale Rolle übernimmt. In der Tat ist Intermedialität schon immer ein Baustein von Rögglas Schreibpraxis gewesen, wie z. B. die enge Verflechtung zwischen Text und Bildern *in really ground zero* bezeugt, die von Coppola – wenn auch durchaus begründet – nur erwähnt wird.

Zusammenfassend erweist sich die Studie als wertvolles Einstiegswerk in die Poetik der österreichischen Autorin, deren Verdienst darin besteht, eine erste Schaffensphase in Rögglas Œuvre kohärent und umfassend nicht nur untersucht, sondern systematisiert zu haben. Dank ihrer klaren Struktur – die sie zudem zu einem nützlichen Nachschlagewerk macht – und der detaillierten Analyse exemplarischer Textpassagen rekonstruiert die Arbeit von Coppola in überzeugender Weise die Entwicklung von „Rögglas Konzeption des Schreibens, die seit 1995 darauf abzielt, die passende Form zu finden, um einen soziopolitischen Wandel zu repräsentieren, der sich auf der Zerstückelung, Trennung und Auflösung des Individuums angesichts der wirtschaftlichen Produktion von Arbeit, Profit und, letztendlich, Panik gründet“ (Coppola 2024, 124).

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Barbara Tramelli
Indexing the Early Modern Printed Image

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Compte rendu de Tramelli, B. (2024). *Indexing the Early Modern Printed Image. A Digital Catalogue on the Illustrated Book in Lyon (1480-1600)*. Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 186 pp.

« The insertion of an image in a book is never an accident, but always brings meaning to it » (7) : voici la clé de lecture de l'ouvrage de Barbara Tramelli intitulé *Indexing the Early Modern Printed Image. A Digital Catalogue on the Illustrated Book in Lyon c1480-1600)*, paru en 2024 chez Edizioni Ca' Foscari de Venise et disponible en accès ouvert au lien `http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-879-8`.

Il s'agit d'un volume qui offre un aperçu détaillé et raisonné de la collection d'illustrations rassemblées et étudiées par l'auteure, dans la perspective des Humanités Numériques, au cours de sa participation (2016-19) au projet sur *Le livre illustré à Lyon (1480-1600)*, financé par *Biblissima* (CNRS) avec la participation du CERS, de la Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon et du Centre Naudé, et en collaboration, au fil des années, avec le CIHAM, l'IHRIM, l'ENSSIB, le Warburg Institute, les Bodleian Libraries. Accueilli par la suite (2019-22) par le Venice Centre for Digital and Public Humanities de l'Université Ca' Foscari et grâce à une collaboration avec le Visual Geometry Group d'Oxford, le projet, qui porte sur l'étude du rapport texte-image dans les livres

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illustrés imprimés à Lyon au XVIe siècle, a donné lieu à une version actualisée des bases de données Lyon16ci et 1516.

Après un aperçu sur le corpus d'illustrations repérées et indexées iconographiquement dans le cadre du projet, l'ouvrage se concentre principalement sur la production des imprimeurs Jean de Tournes et Guillaume Roville, tout en intégrant d'autres exemples de productions éditoriales lyonnaises significatives, dont celles d'Arnoullet, Huss et Sabon. Tramelli présente le travail réalisé et les résultats obtenus en discutant des méthodes d'indexation utilisées par le Warburg Institute et du rôle crucial des bois gravés conservés – désormais disponibles dans la base de données – qui transmettent des informations essentielles sur les techniques des artistes et sur leur manière de travailler les matériaux.

Le volume est divisé en deux parties. La première, composée de trois chapitres, propose un panorama du corpus étudié et une présentation des méthodologies au service du recensement, de l'indexation et du partage des collections numériques d'images imprimées de la Première Modernité. La deuxième offre au lecteur un apparat iconographique qui réunit une sélection d'images tirées des livres imprimés à Lyon au XVIe siècle et regroupées selon l'organisation thématique de la base de données iconographique du Warburg Institute.

Le premier chapitre souligne l'attention croissante que les Humanités Numériques portent au rôle des images dans les imprimés anciens ainsi que le rôle décisif du numérique pour le développement de nouveaux systèmes de description des images permettant de créer des bases de données et des outils de consultation performants. On parvient désormais à identifier plus facilement les sujets représentés, à retrouver des images dont l'auteur est inconnu, à retracer les évolutions iconographiques de la période étudiée ainsi que les relations entre les images et leurs sources textuelles. Tramelli met l'accent sur l'une des missions du projet consistant à comprendre comment les objets traités ont été produits, utilisés, réutilisés, échangés et partagés parmi les imprimeurs et les artistes, ce qui est bien montré par le cas d'une collection de 400 blocs de bois du XVIe siècle conservée au musée de l'Imprimerie et de la Communication Graphique de Lyon.

Le deuxième chapitre propose un relevé systématique de la réutilisation des images imprimées, obtenu grâce au logiciel VISE qui a permis d'affiner la recherche visuelle et de retracer de manière fiable les réemplois, en dépassant les résultats de la base Warburg. L'emploi de VISE a également permis de récupérer automatiquement des images présentant différents degrés de similarité allant de l'identique à des taux plus faibles de ressemblance. Ce travail a successivement encouragé la création de la base de données Lyon16ci qui, à la suite d'une collaboration avec l'Université de Copenhague, a évolué en la base de données 1516 promouvant à son tour la fusion de la collection du projet Lyon avec un corpus d'images du XV[e] siècle, dont de nombreuses éditions illustrées d'Esope.

Le dernier chapitre est consacré à la production de Jean de Tournes en collaboration avec Bernard Salomon et à celle de Guillaume Roville et Pierre Eskrich. Tramelli y souligne particulièrement l'importance des préfaces offrant des informations sur l'insertion des images dans le texte, comme dans le cas des *Figures du Nouveau Testament* (1554), où Jean de Tournes explique que les figures servent d'aide à la mémoire du lecteur et, en même temps, le réjouissent. Tramelli focalise par la suite son attention sur la comparaison des créations religieuses de deux artistes, Bernard Salomon et Pierre Eskrich.

En suivant l'organisation thématique de la base de données Warburg, la deuxième partie propose une sélection de soixante-trois illustrations sur des sujets tels que la religion, la science, l'histoire, la littérature, les miscellanées, les emblèmes. Les ressources sont accompagnées d'une présentation générale, suivie des références bibliographiques des éditions répertoriées et du schéma des métadonnées iconographiques. Les trois annexes qui complètent le volume retracent la production de Jean de Tournes et de Guillaume Roville et proposent en outre une liste de titres publiés par d'autres imprimeurs de Lyon, entre 1500 et 1562.

Cet ouvrage est plus qu'un simple catalogue, car il nous offre les résultats d'une enquête détaillée sur l'imprimerie lyonnaise à la Renaissance, avec une attention particulière au traitement de l'image – en soi et dans son rapport au texte – dans les livres illustrés, de même qu'aux nouveaux enjeux que définissent, à l'ère du numérique, le traitement automatisé de la production iconographique ancienne et l'emploi d'outils sophistiqués, touchant par exemple au niveau de résolution de l'image. La réflexion sur les nouvelles méthodologies numériques en iconographie et sur l'application des principes FAIR (Facile à trouver, Accessible, Interopérable, Réutilisable), incitant à une flexibilité et à une mutualisation des ressources produites, s'ouvre enfin aux développements futurs du projet destiné à évoluer selon deux directions complémentaires: l'élargissement du corpus illustré et l'extension de l'indexation iconographique grâce à l'intégration de nouvelles éditions dans les bases de données. Ces perspectives nous montrent dans quelle mesure les avancées technologiques de ces derniers temps et les résultats du projet *Le livre illustré à Lyon (1480-1600)* en matière d'indexation, de recherche et de partage des illustrations imprimées de la Première Modernité permettent de répertorier, de structurer et d'examiner des objets iconographiques anciens, en alliant recherche traditionnelle et innovation.

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René Wellek, Austin Warren *Teoria della letteratura*

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Recensione di Wellek, R.; Warren, A. (2024). *Teoria della letteratura*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 454 pp.

Per la cura di Giampiero Moretti, l’editore Franco Angeli (Milano, 2024) ripubblica (nella Collana di Estetica «Hyperion») *Teoria della letteratura* di René Wellek e Austin Warren, saggio uscito per la prima volta a New York nel 1948 e tradotto in italiano nel 1956 da Pier Luigi Contessi, nonché ivi ripubblicato, in nuova edizione, nel 1981, a cura di Luciano Bottoni.

Rileggere oggi Wellek significa fare opera non direi soltanto di memoria, ma piuttosto di auto-analisi. Che cosa è diventata *oggi* la teoria della letteratura? *Che cosa era* quando nacque?

Chi scrive queste note di recensione suole considerare la teoria della letteratura come una prospettiva e una pratica di riflessione disciplinari nate in seno al Modernismo europeo. Il Modernismo è un ‘fenomeno’ – chiamiamolo così *faute de mot* – che oscilla strutturalmente tra *Dichtung* e *Wissen*, tra ‘il poetico’, o se si preferisce, il ‘creativo’ e ‘l’atto di conoscenza’. Per uscire dall’astrazione, addurrò alcuni esempi: pensiamo al Freud – e se cito Freud *in primis* è perché *inter primos* il padre della psicoanalisi riconobbe nella letteratura un luogo privilegiato di teoria – il Freud, dicevo, che concettualizza l’opera poetica come *Wunschphantasie*;

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pensiamo, per converso, ai rilkiani *Quaderni di Malte* o all'eliotiana *Waste Land* o ancora alla *Recherche* proustiana che costituiscono indubitabilmente opera di pensiero in quanto si interrogano esplicitamente sulle condizioni di possibilità del fare poetico e, più in generale, artistico. Il *Dichter* modernista è intrinsecamente un 'teorico' di sé stesso. Allo stesso modo, il formalismo russo – che, insieme a Freud, detiene la palma del primato nell'eleggere il poetico a spazio di elaborazione teorica – scaturisce dalla rivoluzione del linguaggio poetico primo-novecentesco, come accade altresì per la semiologia saussuriana. E, al proposito, non sarà inutile ricordare ai lettori che René Wellek fu tra gli illustri contributori del circolo linguistico di Praga, formandosi, appunto, nel cuore del clima creativo ed epistemologico modernista europeo.

Questa unità tra *Dichtung* e *Wissen*, che non è identificazione, ma permanente oscillazione, echeggia all'orecchio come qualcosa di già udito… e lo è. Perché tale unità oscillatoria di poetico e conoscenza, che potremmo anche chiamare 'pensiero poetante', è intrinseca alla *Geistesgeschichte* pre-romantica e romantica tedesca. Il fondamento della *Teoria della letteratura* di Wellek-Warren sta tutto qui. Non riconoscerlo significa rinunciare a porsi in dialogo con questo celeberrimo e indimenticabile libro (lo chiamo 'libro' perché non si tratta d'un 'manuale', bensì, e al contrario, di un 'modello' ovvero di un 'modo' di guardare alla letteratura). È pur vero che, nel capitolo «La letteratura e le Idee», appartenente alla Parte III dedicata ai «Metodi estrinseci nello studio della letteratura», Wellek sembra voler esorcizzare la formula della *Geistesgeschichte* e liberarla dall'ombra dell'Idealismo, soprattutto se l'ombra è quella dell'hegeliano 'spirito oggettivo': Wellek si divincola, cioè, da quella piega della *Geistesgeschichte* che si oggettiva nelle forme delle istituzioni sociali e politiche, onde proclamare l'autonomia della letteratura dalla politica, dal diritto e dalla morale. Ma non rinuncia certo al convincimento che 'il poetico' è *Idea* al contempo storica e trascendentale, e cioè unità di Pensiero e di Esperienza (individuale e collettiva) in una *Forma*.

Eppure, si dirà, il punto fondamentale della posizione di Wellek è la distinzione netta tra 'il letterario/il poetico' in sé e per sé e 'gli altri saperi' (e arti) ovvero la distinzione tra l' 'intrinseco' e l' 'estrinseco' della letteratura. A chi scrive pare che questa distinzione non sia per nulla in contraddizione con quanto sopra si diceva e che, anzi, essa sia preziosissima perché segnala un problema centrale non solo vivo ai tempi di Wellek e di Warren, ma vivissimo anche tuttora. Infatti, una cosa è distinguere tra ciò che di proprio c'è in un testo, a partire dalla sua lingua, e ciò che, invece, vi è di ideologicamente sovraimpresso: pensiamo, ad esempio, ai *Cultural Studies* e a tutto ciò che ne è conseguito fino ad oggi – quanto all' 'oggi', possiamo lecitamente dire che la teoria della letteratura è diventata *tout court* 'Teoria', anzi *Theory*, spazio larghissimo in cui tutti i saperi e i loro idioletti convivono orizzontalmente riflettendo ed echeggiando sé stessi. Altro è, invece, distinguere tra che cosa del poetico è *essenziale* e che cosa non lo è. Perché qui non si tratta più di discriminare tra il poetico e i saperi che forniscono gli strumenti per l'analisi del poetico – la psicoanalisi, la linguistica, l'antropologia ecc. Qui si tratta, piuttosto, di assumere una posizione *metafisica* – lo dico nel senso heideggeriano di *Che cos'è metafisica* – sulla creatività umana ovvero, in altri termini, si tratta di porsi *il problema del fondamento del Soggetto* nella sua relazione con il Mondo e con l'opera d'arte. È una domanda desueta? Forse lo sembrerà ai molti che, oggi, hanno fatto propria un'idea puramente performativa del Soggetto, il Soggetto-*Performance* che non può essere altro se non un continuo epifenomenico divenire. A chi scrive questa domanda pare, invece, inesauribile, perché pone una questione aperta e problematica per definizione.

Ora, nel distinguere tra l''intrinseco' ovvero 'l'essenziale' e l''estrinseco' della letteratura, Wellek prende una via che io definirei tipicamente formalista e qui si coglie in perfetta trasparenza il segno del suo orientamento modernista: dopo aver affermato che la poesia non è la registrazione di un'esperienza individuale, né di una somma di esperienze (p. 200 del capitolo «I modi di esistenza di un'opera letteraria»), ma una *causa potenziale di esperienze* – il che allinea perfettamente Wellek ad alcune celebri considerazioni del Narratore nella *Recherche* proustiana[1]– Wellek afferma (p. 207):

> L'opera d'arte appare allora come un oggetto di conoscenza *sui generis*, che ha uno speciale stato *ontologico* [corsivo aggiunto]. Essa non è reale (come una statua), né mentale (come l'esperienza della luce o del colore), né ideale (come un triangolo), ma è *un sistema di norme e di concetti* [corsivo aggiunto] ideali che sono intersoggettivi, e che dobbiamo supporre esistenti nell'ideologia collettiva, assieme alla quale mutano, e accessibili soltanto attraverso singole esperienze mentali fondate sulla struttura sonora delle frasi.

A partire da questa definizione altamente formalista, Wellek articola

1 È il celebre episodio della biblioteca del principe di Guermantes, che occupa la parte finale del *Temps retrouvé*: «L'opera – scrive Proust – è solo una sorta di strumento ottico che lo scrittore offre al lettore per consentirgli di scoprire ciò che forse, senza il libro, non avrebbe visto in se stesso. Il riconoscimento dentro di sé, da parte del lettore, di ciò che il libro dice, è la prova della sua verità, e viceversa, almeno in una certa misura, giacché spesso la differenza fra i due testi può essere imputata non all'autore, ma al lettore» (cf. M. Proust, *Alla ricerca del tempo perduto. Il tempo ritrovato*. Trad. di G. Raboni. Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 2014, p. 1968).

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poi lo sviluppo di quella finale sezione del libro in cui vengono analizzati gli strati di tale insieme di norme e di concetti – ovvero: lo strato del suono, delle unità semantiche linguisticamente configurate nello/in uno stile, lo strato iconico dell'immagine e della metafora e il sistema simbolico-mitico.

Credo dunque non ci siano dubbi sulla matrice tipicamente modernista dell'impostazione wellekiana: il problema della *Forma* ovvero del *come* è *il* problema modernista (il rovello del Narratore della *Recherche* è trovare il *come* della scrittura; l'*Ulisse* di Joyce è un nuovo *come* del linguaggio come l'incessante ricerca linguistica di Rilke e così via). Il problema della *Forma*, dicevo – intesa come soglia lungo la quale *Dichtung* e *Wissen* scorrono l'una sull'altro – è l'unità in movimento del poetico e dell'atto di conoscenza onde si parlava poc'anzi. E da notare è poi il fatto che questa unità, tutta giocata nella Forma, è contemporanea alla frammentazione del *Wissen* nelle *Wissenschaften*; frammentazione che, se già data dall'Ottocento post-hegeliano e positivista, raggiunge il punto di rottura proprio nel primo Trentennio del Novecento: accade cioè come se il Modernismo venisse a costituire una frontiera, un'ultima frontiera di resistenza dinnanzi al divergere della Poesia dalla Conoscenza che sta prendendo la fuga sottoforma di ciò che di lì a non molto assumerà il nome di 'saperi disciplinari'…

Le dense pagine prefatorie di Giampiero Moretti, che ha voluto restituirci, oggi, *Teoria della letteratura*, meritano altrettanta attenzione del saggio di Wellek e Warren; pagine che, a mio avviso, vogliono suonare all'orecchio del teorico odierno come un richiamo. 'Richiamo', in che senso? Nelle articolate note introduttive di Giampiero Moretti, campeggiano due termini con i quali non possiamo evitare di scontrarci: 'Spirito' e 'Fondamento'.

Partiamo dalla parola 'Fondamento'. Scrive Moretti:

> È possibile affermare che la teoria della letteratura, nell'arco di tempo che va dalla stesura del testo di Wellek e Warren a quello di Bottiroli,[2] si è come assentata, per lasciare il posto ad altre modalità di riflessione che soltanto in parte si sono rivelate maggiormente adeguate ad un'epoca che possiamo provvisoriamente chiamare dell'assenza di fondamento. (p. XIII)

Rileggo e sottolineo: *la teoria della letteratura si è assentata per lasciare il posto ad altre modalità di riflessione che* – ora passo alla parafrasi – rispecchiano in modo per altro discutibile la *nostra* epoca, che è epoca di *assenza del fondamento*. Tralascio qui, per ragioni

2 Il riferimento è a *Che cos'è la teoria della letteratura* di Giovanni Bottiroli pubblicato da Einaudi nel 2006.

di spazio, di discutere approfonditamente l'evocazione del libro di Giovanni Bottiroli cui Giampiero Moretti tributa grande merito (e che per chi scrive è un punto di riferimento), e passo piuttosto direttamente alla domanda: in che senso, dunque, Giampiero Moretti convoca sulla scena della sua riflessione la parola 'Fondamento'? Si tratta del Fondamento del Soggetto. La teoria della letteratura manca attualmente di un pensiero sul Fondamento del Soggetto. E se Moretti così afferma, lo fa a partire dal problema, posto da Wellek, dell'*essenza* e dell'*intrinseco* del poetico. È ciò che dicevo poc'anzi: se ci interroghiamo sull'*essenza* del poetico non possiamo non porci, evidentemente, il problema *metafisico* del Soggetto. Ma a quale 'pensiero del Fondamento' allude Moretti? Allude, io credo, al pensiero della Frühromantik tedesca tra poesia – Novalis, Hölderlin – e filosofia – Fichte. Che è un pensiero fondazionale proprio perché è pensiero della *crisi*: il Soggetto primo-romantico è infatti soggetto *in cerca di fondazione* in quanto è *soggetto auto-fondato* – è il celebre l' 'Io è Io' di Ficthe – e voglio qui ricordare che se a Novalis tanto dispiacque il *Wilhelm Meister* di Goethe è proprio per il modo in cui Goethe rispondeva nel 1795 alla crisi fondazionale del Soggetto che troverà poi nel *Faust* la sua vertiginosa elaborazione. Sono proprio i poeti della Frühromantik in dialogo con Fichte e la filosofia idealistica a pensare il momento fondazionale nella e attraverso la crisi, trovando, appunto, quel fondamento nella propria *Dichtung*. L'*Io-in-quanto-poeta* diventa il Soggetto universale che restituisce l'Unità relazionale del Tutto come Movimento. È da questa posizione che Novalis poteva reclamare l'Unità di Poesia e Conoscenza, affermando, nella celebre lettera a August Schlegel del 2 febbraio 1798: «Le scienze devono essere tutte poetizzate». Unità di Poesia e Sapere; Unità di Poesia e Filosofia.

Ed ecco che compare in scena la parola 'Spirito'. Cito ancora le parole di Giampiero Moretti:

> Il prospettivismo di Bottiroli sembra allora andare in cerca di ciò di cui Wellek e Warren ancora disponevano, e che possiamo qui infine chiamare col suo nome: *spirito*. Non un aldilà metafisico che illumini l'opera letteraria come da un mondo platonico ideale, ma neppure un'esistenzialità tragica soltanto perché inevitabilmente scissa, la cui scrittura conseguentemente, si rivela sempre destinata al naufragio e alla sconfitta, o, al massimo, alla rivendicazione orgogliosa della propria sconfitta. Spirito invece come presenza storicamente intermittente e mondana, una presenza spirituale in senso forte, capace di trascendersi senza annullarsi. Un filo, insomma, che collega invisibile, per quanto soltanto raramente, l'essere umano ad un suo possibile trascendersi, e in maniera da rendere possibile una distinzione gerarchica, e una valutazione, delle opere letterarie comparativamente considerate. (p. XII)

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Secondo Giampiero Moretti, nel libro di Wellek e di Warren, sussiste ancora quel legame di memoria con la riflessione primo-romantica tedesca sull'essenza e sul modo della creazione poetica e della sua lingua. E questo è, a mio avviso, altrettanto certo quanto sottaciuto perché tale memoria non è esplicitamente dichiarata dai due autori. Per altro, tale memoria convive altresì con quell'altro momento di crisi fondazionale del Soggetto che è il Modernismo, sia sul suo versante poetico che su quello conoscitivo. In ogni caso, con Wellek e Warren, e con l'esperienza primo-romantica, Giampiero Moretti vuole ricordarci che – ne cito le parole – «la letteratura è in sé luogo teorico decisivo» (p. XVI) ovvero fondato in se stesso. È un punto di vista che – se mai importasse al lettore l'opinione di chi scrive – non ho alcun dubbio a sottoscrivere pienamente.

Vorrei avanzare, infine, un'ulteriore domanda che verte ancora sulla questione fondazionale del Soggetto. Nella sua prefazione, Giampiero Moretti espone alla nostra attenzione il problema della divisione del Soggetto e, contemporaneamente, del Linguaggio. Come ben sappiamo, la divisione del Soggetto e del Linguaggio è una istanza portata alla luce dalla psicoanalisi freudiana e, quindi, lacaniana. Il Soggetto è diviso, anzi è organizzato da divisioni, perché lo psichico tutto è organizzato a partire dall'Inconscio (il Soggetto non ha accesso diretto a se stesso). Da aggiungere a ciò il fatto che, già marcatamente in Freud, ma poi ancor più dichiaratamente in Lacan, è proprio il Linguaggio a illuminare la divisione del Soggetto, perché il Linguaggio restituisce al Soggetto l'inattingibilità dell'Inconscio. Ora, dalle considerazioni che Moretti articola nelle complesse pagine dell'introduzione al libro di Wellek-Warren, si evince – a mio avviso – che la rappresentazione divisa e conflittuale del Soggetto sarebbe il sintomo principale e conclamato di un'epoca dell'assenza di Fondamento. Nel senso che, se la divisione e il conflitto sono irrisolvibili, sono incomponibili (come secondo Freud e Lacan, pur in diverso modo), il Soggetto resta allora chiuso in una scissionalità che non gli consente di accedere a una dimensione del poetico come trascendimento dell'individuale. E qui verrebbe meno, conseguentemente, quello statuto della letteratura come «luogo teorico decisivo» di cui poco fa si diceva. Così sembra pensare Giampiero Moretti. Mi piace, allora, rivolgergli, a mia volta, da questa sede, una domanda: l'ipotesi dell'inconscio – *Das Unbewusste*, *unbewusst*, parola, per altro tedeschissima e endemica proprio nella poesia e nella filosofia della Frühromantik – non è forse un momento fondazionale? E non è proprio l'ipotesi dell'Inconscio, senza la quale è impossibile pensare il Modernismo, a costituire il legame di memoria più forte con quel momento originario, genealogicamente e storicamente originario, di fondazione nella crisi ovvero di auto-fondazione del Soggetto che con ragione ascriviamo alla poesia e alla filosofia tedesca primo-romantica? Nella Traumdeutung e poi nei suoi saggi

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letterari – pensiamo solo a Der Dichter und das Phantasieren – Freud stabilisce un'analogia fondante, appunto, tra Inconscio e Poetico, e si tratta di un'analogia che corre esclusivamente e rigorosamente sul filo del Linguaggio. Che è come dire: il Fondamento del Poetico sta nell'Inconscio, ovvero nel Soggetto, e, per converso, il Poetico costituisce il luogo della rivelazione del Soggetto nella forma universalmente umana del Linguaggio. L'inconscio non impedisce al Soggetto l'accesso all'universale – e se la parola 'universale' stride all'orecchio di qualcuno, potremmo anche dire, con Proust, 'generale', quel 'generale' che consente alla letteratura di essere luogo esperienziale, teorico e valoriale collettivo. Certo, possiamo poi discutere sui diversi modelli di Inconscio ovvero sul diverso modo di figurarci e di configurare quel Fondamento. Per esempio, nella metapsicologia junghiana, la divisione e il conflitto del Soggetto sono ricomponibili, e se ciò si rende possibile è perché in Jung, del tutto diversamente che in Freud per il quale il conflitto è incomponibile, l'Inconscio diventa il campo d'un'attività involontaria di compositio loci ovvero un'attività involontaria di composizione e ricomposizione immaginativa. Die Phantastik, 'la Fantastica' avrebbe detto Novalis… Ma questa ulteriore discussione ci porterebbe troppo lontano dal capolavoro critico di René Wellek e Austin Warren.

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Edward John Trelawny *Gli ultimi giorni di Shelley e Byron*

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Recensione di Trelawny, E.J. (2025). *Gli ultimi giorni di Shelley e Byron*. Macerata: Quodlibet, 229 pp.

Edward John Trelawny (1792-1881), avventuriero, biografo e scrittore, dopo aver prestato servizio per alcuni anni in Oriente a bordo d'una nave corsara, venne nel 1822 in Italia ed entrò a far parte dell'entourage di Shelley e di Byron, i massimi esponenti del secondo romanticismo inglese, la cui fama fu sugellata dalla morte precoce. Ritornato in Inghilterra nel 1828, sentì il bisogno di raccontare la breve ma intensa amicizia che l'aveva legato ai due poeti. Il progetto venne rimandato, ma quando finalmente nel 1858 uscirono le *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* il successo fu immediato. Il perché è presto detto: il *memoir* di Trelawny, ora pubblicato da Quodlibet nella bella traduzione di Marcella Majnoni e Giuseppe Lucchesini, ha il respiro, la suggestione e il ritmo di una narrazione romanzata.

Redatto in uno stile scorrevole, sapientemente percorso da segni premonitori e dai versi di Shelley e Byron posti in epigrafe a ogni capitolo, questo libro, ricco di aneddoti curiosi e di pathos, è il resoconto degli ultimi mesi di vita di due uomini diversissimi per temperamento, ma uniti da profonda amicizia e da mutua stima.

Prima che nelle loro vicende si disegnasse l'ombra del tragico, ad accumunarne i caratteri, oltre che ai nobili natali, vi erano lo sprezzo

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della morale comune, lo spirito libertario e la contrapposizione fra individuo e società borghese, un insieme di atteggiamenti del pensiero romantico che li spinsero verso il ribellismo prometeico, il velleitarismo e l'onnipotenza.

Incontratisi per la prima volta nell'estate del 1816, fra Shelley e Byron nacque un sodalizio umano e artistico che durerà tutta la vita. Shelley, assieme alla giovane amante Mary, che proprio lì concepirà *Frankenstein*, e al loro figlioletto William morto a Roma di colera a tre anni, furono ospiti di Byron a Villa Diodati sul lago di Ginevra.

Assieme a loro c'era anche Claire Clairmont, sorellastra di Mary, che aspettava un figlio da Byron il quale, all'apice della fama letteraria e mondana, aveva perduto i favori della *upper class* londinese dopo il divorzio da Anne Isabella Milbanke. La nobildonna, dopo un solo anno di convivenza, era tornata alla casa paterna con la figlioletta Ada. Travolto dallo scandalo – fra le accuse di adulterio, sodomia e libero amore, si insinuò quella di un suo rapporto incestuoso con la sorellastra Augusta che gli diede una figlia – Byron nella primavera di quell'anno lasciò per sempre l'Inghilterra. Alla sua morte, Trelawny troverà sullo scrittoio una lettera indirizzata ad Augusta che l'aveva informato sulla «salute fisica e mentale di Ada» (173), sua unica figlia legittima.

Shelley, già in rotta con il padre per aver sposato la sedicenne Harriet Westbrook, nel 1814 si era innamorato di Mary, figlia del filosofo anarchico William Godwin e di Mary Woolstonecraft, l'autrice del celebre saggio *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) in cui sono formulate le aspirazioni ancora embrionali dei movimenti femministi. Messo alla porta da Godwin, di cui era stato il più entusiasta discepolo e generoso benefattore, per i giovani amanti clandestini – Mary ha appena sedici anni e Percy, benché coniugato e in attesa di diventare padre per una seconda volta, ne ha soltanto ventidue – non resta altro che la fuga nel Continente.

Afflitti da problemi fisici e precarie condizioni finanziarie, l'anno successivo sono costretti a rimpatriare. Nel 1815 nasce Clara, che morirà dopo una sola settimana. Nel 1818, per ragioni di salute e per le accuse di empietà, blasfemia e scandalosa condotta, Shelley lascerà definitivamente l'Inghilterra per l'Italia, il paradiso degli esuli.

Il *memoir* di Trelawny inizia in Svizzera quando un giovane libraio di Losanna gli parla di *Queen Mab* (1813), il poema filosofico di Shelley: «Dicono sia solo un ragazzo, e che questo è il suo esordio: se è vero sentiremo ancora parlare di lui» (20). Ospite di Jane e Edward Williams, un ex ufficiale dell'esercito, che morirà con Shelley nel naufragio al largo di Lerici nel 1822 benché fosse l'unico a saper nuotare, Trelawny a Pisa conosce Shelley e Mary, divenuta sua moglie dopo la morte di Harriet, il cui corpo in avanzato stato di decomposizione venne trovato nella Serpentina di Hyde Park, a distanza di sei settimane dal suicidio.

> Avvampando come una fanciulla, un giovinetto lungo e sottile sbucò fuori rapido protendendo entrambe le mani; e sebbene, guardando quel viso accaldato così femmineo e semplice, non potessi credere si trattasse del poeta, ricambiai la sua stretta calorosa. […] Ero muto dallo stupore: possibile che questo ragazzo imberbe dall'aria mite fosse l'autentico mostro che sapevo in guerra col mondo intero? Scomunicato dai Padri della Chiesa, privato dei suoi diritti civili per decreto di un odioso Lord Cancelliere, rinnegato da tutta la sua famiglia e biasimato dai soloni della nostra letteratura, suoi rivali, come fondatore di una scuola satanica? (32)[1]

Segue nel capitolo successivo un primo ritratto di Byron che risiedeva a Palazzo Lanfranchi sul Lungarno Mediceo. Trelawny ne attribuisce il carattere «scettico, cinico e violento» alla zoppia, un handicap che Byron compensò con eccezionali performance sportive (scherma e pugilato) e specialmente natatorie: celebre la sua traversata dell'Ellesponto da Sesto ad Abido (26).

> Nell'aspetto fisico Byron incarnava il tipo ideale che l'immaginazione attribuisce al genio. Era nel pieno delle forze, sui trentacinque anni; di altezza media, un metro e 68; tratti regolari, senza macchie né rughe sulla pelle pallida, spalle larghe, ampio torace, corpo e membra ben proporzionate. La testa riccia, piccola e raffinata sembrava leggera e delicata sul collo lungo e massiccio: gli si leggeva il genio negli occhi e nella bocca. In breve, la natura non avrebbe potuto far meglio di così, sia nell'aspetto esteriore sia nello spirito interno che l'animava. Nella sua immaginazione inasprita, però, tutti quei doni rari servivano solo a rendere ancora più visibile l'unico difetto della sua persona (la claudicazione), proprio come la levigazione ingigantisce i difetti dei diamanti; (37)

Con il suo stile di vita opulento (viaggiava come un pascià accompagnato da schiere di domestici), la sua pigrizia (di rado si alzava prima di mezzogiorno), il suo cinismo, suscettibilità, egoismo, vanità e attaccamento al denaro, per tacere dell'immensa popolarità che gli arrise dopo la pubblicazione dei primi due canti del *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), Byron era l'opposto di Shelley, un uomo frugale e generoso – come scrive l'autore – stimato da una cerchia ristretta di lettori.

Pur apprezzando il talento e la bellezza di Byron, Trelawny non nasconde la propria devozione per il «bardo sognante» (77): è conquistato dal suo altruismo, dal suo spirito elevato, dall'idealismo,

1 Qui l'autore si riferisce al poeta laureato Robert Southey che aveva accusato Shelley e Byron di aver fondato una scuola poetica 'satanica e empia'.

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dalla sua cultura e dalla sua inesausta sete di sapere. Poco più che ventenne, Shelley era già un eccellente latinista e grecista, e creava *calembours* in greco antico.

In una lettera del 16 maggio del 1822 Shelley informa Trelawny dell'arrivo del Don Juan, «una meraviglia di architettura nautica» (84), un'imbarcazione «veloce, solidamente armata», costruita a Genova assieme al Bolivar, lo *schooner* di Byron.

> Era gradevole osservare il fanciullesco desiderio che Shelley provava verso il suo nuovo giocattolo, già pregustando il piacere di scivolare su azzurri mari, sotto i cieli tersi di un'estate italiana. (83)

Un mese dopo Shelley s'imbarca con il capitano Williams e un giovanissimo marinaio per Livorno. Era ansioso di raggiungere Leigh Hunt che era arrivato a Pisa per fondare un nuovo periodico, *The Liberal*, di cui Byron ed egli stesso sarebbero stati i principali animatori. Mary, in preda a funesti presagi, tenta di dissuaderlo. È addolorata per la recente morte di Allegra, la figlia di Byron e Claire, ed è reduce da un aborto spontaneo. L'emorragia che Shelley riuscì ad arrestare immergendola in una tinozza colma di ghiaccio era stata così massiccia da costarle quasi la vita.

L'8 luglio, di ritorno da Livorno alla volta di San Terenzio, il veliero incappò in una violenta tempesta e si inabissò disperdendo l'equipaggio. Se Trelawny li avesse accompagnati con la goletta di Byron, ben più grande del Don Juan, forse la tragedia avrebbe potuto essere evitata. Il corpo di Shelley venne restituito dal mare dieci giorni dopo:

> Sulla spiaggia vennero trovati due corpi, uno nei pressi di Viareggio; andai ad esaminarlo. Il volto e le mani, e le parti del corpo che non erano protette dagli abiti, erano prive di carni. L'alta e sottile figura, la giacca, il libro di Sofocle in una tasca e quello delle poesie di Keats nell'altra, piegato in due, come se il lettore, sorpreso nell'atto di leggere, lo avesse messo via in fretta – tutto mi era troppo familiare per lasciarmi il dubbio che quel cadavere mutilato fosse d'altri che di Shelley. (99-100)

Ottenuta l'autorizzazione alla cremazione, Trelawny procedette al triste ufficio della cerimonia funebre. I resti di Shelley e di Williams, posti su una pira, furono ricoperti di rami secchi di pino, e poi cosparsi di vino, olio e sale secondo l'antica costumanza greca:

> Il calore congiunto del sole e del fuoco era così intenso che l'atmosfera era tremula e ondeggiante. Il cadavere si aprì e mise a nudo il cuore. L'osso frontale, nel punto in cui era stato colpito dallo zappone, si staccò dal teschio, e, poiché la parte posteriore della testa poggiava sulle barre roventi della base del forno, il

> cervello letteralmente ribollì, gorgogliando a lungo, come se cuocesse in un calderone. [...]. Resistettero alla distruzione solo alcuni frammenti di osso, la mandibola e il teschio, ma ciò che sorprese tutti fu che il cuore rimase intero. (109-10)

A quella vista Byron esclamò: «Questo è un corpo umano? Diamine somiglia più alla carcassa di una pecora, è una satira del nostro orgoglio e della nostra follia [...] non fate questo per me, lasciate che la mia carcassa marcisca dove cade» (107). Poi, preso dalla disperazione, si tuffò in mare, ma dovette essere soccorso perché dopo solo un miglio si sentì male. Il cuore di Shelley rimase miracolosamente intatto: Trelawny lo sottrasse alle fiamme e lo consegnò a Mary in una scatola di legno.

Nel 1824 Trelawny seguì Byron in Grecia dove accorse in difesa della nazione oppressa dal dominio turco e giunse nella sua casa a Missolungi, cinque giorni dopo la sua morte avvenuta all'età di trentasei anni per febbre malarica.

> Non dicemmo una parola; [Fletcher] scostò il drappo nero e il bianco sudario, ed, ecco, giaceva lì, imbalsamato, il corpo del Pellegrino – più bello in morte che in vita. La contrazione dei muscoli e della pelle aveva spianato ogni ruga che il tempo o la passione vi avessero mai tracciato; pochi busti marmorei avrebbero potuto reggere il confronto con il suo candore immacolato, con l'armonia delle sue proporzioni, con la sua perfetta rifinitura (170)

Difficile stabilire l'autenticità di tutti i fatti narrati in questo libro in cui verità e distorsione convivono. I concetti di realtà e di attendibilità che il *memoir*, come tutte le narrazioni autobiografiche, chiama in causa, vengono spesso disattesi perché il racconto di sé implica sempre un'opera di selezione e dunque un certo grado di finzione.

La memoria, la facoltà di conservare e richiamare alla coscienza eventi passati, non consiste nel semplice recupero di dati fattuali, ma in una ricostruzione filtrata dalle conoscenze successive, amnesie, censure, rimozioni volontarie e non. In questo senso verità autobiografica e immaginazione sono inestricabili perché il ricordo, che ha la stessa radice del latino *cor cordis*, è ciò cui attingiamo attraverso le nostre emozioni e in quanto tale raramente ubbidisce alla realtà oggettiva.

Trelawny farà interrare le ceneri di Shelley nel cimitero acattolico di Roma, accanto a quelle del piccolo William e a quella che sarebbe diventata un giorno la sua tomba. Volle aggiungere i versi del canto di Ariel nella *Tempesta*, l'opera shakespeariana prediletta da Shelley: «Tutto il suo corpo è tanto mutato | Il mare ha fatto il cambiamento in qualcosa di strano e opulento» (113).

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