



II CXXV 2024 HELSINKI

# Neuphilologische Mitteilungen



Bulletin de la Société Néophilologique  
Bulletin of the Modern Language Society

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# Markku Filppula

## 29.11.1949-9.4.2024

### In memoriam



Photo: Heli Filppula

**JUHANI KLEMOLA, BERND KORTMANN, MIKKO LAITINEN**

Professor Markku Filppula died after a prolonged illness on the 9th of April, 2024, at the age of 74.

Markku Filppula was born on the 29th of November in 1949 in Mikkeli, where he spent his childhood and school years. He completed his MA at the University of Helsinki in 1975, majoring in English Philology, with General Linguistics, Romance Philology and General Literature as his minor subjects. In 1975 he also received a 12-month grant to study at the Department of Old and Middle English in University College Dublin, where his interest in Irish English was kindled. In 1977 he was appointed Assistant in English at the University of Joensuu, where he completed his Lic. Phil. in 1983. In 1982, before completing his licentiate degree, Markku Filppula began his PhD studies at University College, Dublin under the supervision of Professor Alan J. Bliss, who at the time was the preeminent expert in the history and development of Irish English. His PhD project involved extensive travel around Ireland on his Jawa motorcycle, and the fieldwork and dialect interviews he collected during those travels formed a cornerstone of all his work in Irish English. He completed his doctorate at the National University of Ireland (University College, Dublin (UCD)) in 1986, and UCD was the institution he always considered his alma mater.

Markku Filppula's academic career in Finland was focused at the University of Joensuu (which in 2010 became the University of Eastern Finland (UEF)). He was appointed an Associate Professor of English there in 1988, and in 1998 he became a full Professor. In addition, he was the Dean of UEF's Philosophical Faculty of UEF from 2010 until his retirement in 2017.

Markku Filppula either lead or co-lead four Academy of Finland-funded research projects, *English and Celtic in Contact* (2000–2002), *Vernacular Universals vs. Contact-Induced Language Change* (2005–2009), *Global English: Typological, contact-linguistic and second-language acquisition perspectives* (2010–2013) and *Changing English: Users and Learners Worldwide* (2014–2017). In addition, he was appointed to four 12-month terms as a Senior Research Fellow at the Academy of Finland (1990–91, 1996–97, 2001–02, 2007–08). He was elected to the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 2007.

As a language scholar, Markku Filppula is widely acclaimed not only for his groundbreaking work on present-day and earlier varieties of Irish English and other Celtic Englishes, but also for his contributions to the study of Contact Linguistics and World Englishes. Markku's publication profile is impressive. He was the author of *Hiberno-English in a Functional Sentence Perspective* (University of Joensuu Press, 1986) and one of the central works on Irish English, *The Grammar of Irish English: Language in Hibernian Style* (Routledge, 1999). Together with Juhani Klemola and his former doctoral student, Heli Paulasto, he published *English and Celtic in Contact* (Routledge, 2008) which has become the key reference point for scholars entering this field. He also co-edited several important volumes in his fields of interest. They included *The Celtic Roots of English* (University of Joensuu Press, 2002), *Dialects Across Borders* (Benjamins, 2005), *Vernacular Universals and Language Contacts* (Routledge, 2009), *The Oxford Handbook of World Englishes* (OUP, 2016), and *Changing English: Global and Local Perspectives* (Walter de Gruyter, 2017). Given Markku's long-standing intellectual interest in historical contact between the Insular Celtic languages and Anglo-Saxon, it was no surprise that he was invited in 2009, with Juhani Klemola, to guest edit a special issue of the international journal *English Language and Linguistics* dedicated to 'Re-evaluating the Celtic Hypothesis'. As an example of his tenacity as a scholar even when faced with rapidly deteriorating health, what will now become his last article, 'The Grammar of Irish English', was published in the *Oxford Handbook of Irish English* in the spring of 2024.

In addition to his extensive contribution to research and publishing, Markku Filppula was active in several professional organizations and scholarly communities, among other things as organizer of important international conferences and workshops, such as the much-remembered Methods XI conference in Joensuu in 2002 or the (enforced by the pandemic) all-online ISLE 6 conference for the International Society for the Linguistics of English. Not least due to these and other conferences and workshops, he put the University of Joensuu, later UEF, firmly on the global map of outstanding linguistic research. Nationally, Markku served as the Chairperson of the Linguistic Association of Finland between 1992 and 1994, and in 2003 he was appointed as the Director of LANGNET – the Finnish Graduate School in Language Studies – a position he held until 2011. During that period, he also

became the Director of NordLing, the Nordic Network of Graduate Schools in Language Studies (2006–2009), and reached out to Graduate Schools in Linguistics in other countries (e.g. the Swiss-German Hermann Paul School of Linguistics in Basle and Freiburg).

As one might expect, knowing Markku's deep passion for his subject, he remained research-active long after retiring despite his deteriorating health. He rarely missed the lively, monthly research breakfast meetings of the English department at UEF, which has lost a great advocate for the discipline both nationally and internationally. He will be greatly missed by his wide circle of friends and colleagues at home as well as abroad, but the memory of this hugely respected scholar will live on through his pioneering work. **N**

JUHANI KLEMOLA, TAMPERE UNIVERSITY

BERND KORTMANN, UNIVERSITY OF FREIBURG

MIKKO LAITINEN, UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND





# Varia



„Es ist eine  
Sprachbarriere.“  
Identität und Sprache –  
Hybride transkulturelle  
Positionierungen  
zwischen Finnland,  
Deutschland, Österreich  
und der Schweiz

**CLAUDIA JELTSCH**

**Abstract** Im Beitrag wird der Zusammenhang von Identität und Sprache anhand von Aussagen untersucht, die 31 Personen in Interviews über ihre sprachliche Identität und das Thema *Heimat* getätigt haben. Allen befragten Personen ist gemein, dass sie aus Familien stammen, deren einer Elternteil Finnisch und deren anderer Elternteil Deutsch als Muttersprache hat. Nach der Einführung folgt ein Abschnitt über den Forschungsstand zum Thema sprachliche Identität im Zusammenhang mit Migration, danach ein Abschnitt über die Datenerhebung und Analysemethoden. Die Analyse erfolgt mit der Methode der qualitativen Einstellungsanalyse, die international vor allem in der Tradition von Goffmans *Frame analysis* sowie den Forschungsarbeiten von Billigs und Kärkkäinens *stance/stand taking* steht. Zentrale Forschungsfragen sind, wie sich die Interviewten zu ihren Sprachen positionieren, welche Begründungen sie dafür liefern und mit welchen Einschränkungen. Eines der zentralen Ergebnisse ist, dass eine selbst zugeschriebene finnische Identität nicht unbedingt finnische Sprachkenntnisse erfordert, jedoch um so wahrscheinlicher ist, desto bessere Finnischkenntnisse vorliegen. Subjektiv fehlende Finnischkenntnisse erschweren es den Befragten, sich selbstbewusst eine finnische Identität zuzuschreiben. Grund dafür könnten die Konzepte einer idealisierten Muttersprache und eines idealisierten *Native speaker* sein. Einige der Befragten verwenden große Mühe darauf, Finnischkenntnisse zu erwerben.

**Keywords** deutsch, finnisch, hybride Identität, Erstsprache, Muttersprachler:in, zweite Generation/SGI

## 1. Einführung

Der Zusammenhang zwischen Identität und Sprache ist ein komplexes Thema, das in vielen wissenschaftlichen Disziplinen untersucht wird. Zum Beispiel argumentiert der Soziologe und Sozialphilosoph Bourdieu (1991), dass Sprache und Identität eng miteinander verbunden sind und dass die Art und Weise, wie wir sprechen, direkt soziale Stellung und soziale Identität widerspiegelt. Sprache dient nicht nur als Mittel zur Verständigung, sondern auch als Mittel zur Herstellung und Vermittlung sozialer Identitäten. Außerdem sind Kenntnisse von mehr als einer Sprache nach Bourdieu soziales und kulturelles Kapital, da sie einer Person sowohl soziale Vorteile

als auch kulturelle Bildung und Kenntnisse verleihen können. Jedoch haben verschiedene Sprachen ein unterschiedliches Prestige. Den in der Schule gelernten Fremdsprachen und Sprachen, die als Nationalsprachen (in größeren Staaten der Welt) fungieren, kommt dabei ein größeres Prestige zu als den im Elternhaus (oft nur mündlich) erlernten Muttersprachen, Laakso *et al.* (2016, 1) komprimieren diesen Sachverhalt: „All multilingualisms are not equal.“ Zum Prestige von Sprachen fassen Ammon & Hellinger (1992: viii) zusammen:

Leaving aside the difference between ‘status’ and ‘function’, the following are among the relevant components of the concept of status change: the number of speakers (of a language), the kind of speakers (e. g. native vs. non-native speakers), their social status (e. g. a socially discriminated vs. a privileged group), the regional distribution of the language, its use in the various domains, its level of standardisation, its degree of cultivation, its legal status and also the attitudes towards or the beliefs about it. All these dimensions can be specified and operationalized in various ways — which shows the enormous complexity of the concept. In all dimensions change can take place, with potential interdependencies between the various components.

Im Folgenden beschränke ich mich auf die Soziolinguistik, entnehme jedoch Impulse aus der Soziologie.

Hier wird Identität nach Krappmann in seinem interaktionistischen Rollenmodell als mehrdimensionales Phänomen mit vier Dimensionen verstanden (Krappmann 2000): Rollendistanz, Ambiguitätsdistanz, Empathie und Identitätsdarstellung. Krappmanns „balancierende Identität“ versucht, mit den divergierenden Ansprüchen einer das Individuum einzigartig auszeichnenden persönlichen Identität und den Normen einer sozialen Identität ein Gleichgewicht zu finden. Das permanente Ausbalancieren wird von Keupp *et al.* (1999) Identitätsarbeit genannt.

Ein Aspekt der Identitätsarbeit (Keupp *et al.* 1999) (unter vielen anderen) sind die Sprachen, die man im Lauf des Lebens gehört und gesprochen hat. Dazu kommen alle anderen Faktoren, die unter der Überschrift

„Veränderung als einzige Konstante“ zusammengefasst werden könnten: verschiedene Interaktionen in wechselnden Konstellationen, biographische Entscheidungen, sozialer Wandel.

In dieser Untersuchung geht es um das Wechselspiel von Identität und Sprache. Im Blickpunkt sind Personen, deren Elternpaar aus einer ursprünglich finnischsprachigen Person und einer ursprünglich deutschsprachigen Person bestehen. „Ursprünglich“ deswegen, weil der finnischsprachige Partner in allen Fällen auch das Deutsche erlernt hat, während der deutschsprachige Elternteil nicht immer das Finnische erlernt hat. Da nicht in allen Konstellationen beide Sprachen verwendet wurden, handelt es sich auch nicht um bilinguale Familien, nicht einmal immer um Familien, da in zwei Fällen entweder durch den Tod eines Elternteils oder eine frühe Scheidung dem heranwachsenden Kind die Möglichkeit des Aufwachsens in einer solchen Familie genommen wurde. Bei denjenigen, die in einer Familie groß geworden sind, wurden unterschiedliche Entscheidungen über die zu verwendenden Sprachen getroffen. Im weitesten Sinn kann man von bikulturellen Familienkonstellationen sprechen, weil beide Elternteile ihre eigene Kultur in die Beziehung eingebracht haben. Inwiefern es für beide Teile auch Möglichkeiten gab, diese Kultur auszuleben, ist wiederum eine weitere und davon getrennte Frage.

Darüber hinaus handelt es sich in manchen Fällen nicht nur um bikulturelle, sondern um multikulturelle Konstellationen, z. B. dann, wenn ein finnisch-deutsches Paar mit seinen Kindern in den Niederlanden lebt und dann nach Finnland zieht (Carmen, DEF9/22<sup>1</sup>). Multikulturalismus wird

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1 Die Pseudonyme wurden entweder auf Wunsch der interviewten Person vergeben (der seltenere Fall), wenn mir die Wahl des Pseudonyms überlassen wurde, so wählte ich für deutschsprachige Namen ein deutschsprachiges Pseudonym, für internationale Namen ein internationales Pseudonym und für finnischsprachige Namen ein finnischsprachiges Pseudonym. Für finnische Vornamen (die im finnischen Namenskalender vorzufinden sind) wurde die Datenbank des zentralen Bevölkerungsregisters <https://verkkopalvelu.vrk.fi/nimipalvelu/> konsultiert, damit das Pseudonym ungefähr genauso häufig vorkommt wie der Originalname. Der erste Buchstabe der Personenummer verweist auf das Herkunftsland des deutschsprachigen Elternteils, DE für Deutschland, DD für die DDR, AT für Österreich und CH für die Schweiz. Es folgt F für Frauen und M für Männer, die Ordinalnummer für die befragte Gruppe (hier: die 9. Frau mit einem deutschsprachigen Elternteil

hier im Sinne von van de Vijver, Breugelmans & Schalk-Soekar (2008: 93) definiert als:

Firstly, multiculturalism can refer to a demographic feature, more specifically the poly-ethnic composition of a society. Secondly, the concept is used by policymakers to denote a specific type of policy about cultural diversity...Thirdly, multiculturalism as a psychological concept is an attitude related to the political ideology, which refers to the acceptance of, and support for, the culturally heterogeneous composition of the population of a society.

Die deutschsprachige Person als Elternteil hat ihre Sozialisierung dabei in einem der großen deutschsprachigen Länder erlebt, also in Deutschland (n: 14), Österreich (n: 8), Schweiz (n: 8) und in einem Fall in der DDR. Einer der deutschsprachigen Elternteile wuchs nach einem frühen Umzug aus Deutschland in der Hauptsache in Finnland auf.

## 2. Ziel der Untersuchung

Ziel dieser Untersuchung ist es, ein Bild davon zu bekommen, wie Menschen, die einen finnischsprachigen und einen deutschsprachigen Elternteil haben, selbst in ihrer sprachlichen Identität gesehen werden wollen. Wie positionieren sie sich zwischen „ihren“ Sprachen, Kulturen und Identitäten? Wie begründen sie diese Standpunkte? Was sagen sie zum Begriff *Heimat*?<sup>2</sup> Gibt es einen Zusammenhang zwischen den von ihnen gesprochenen Sprachen und ihrer Positionierung zum Thema *Heimat*? Welche Einschränkungen machen sie bei dem, was sie sagen? Wie bestimmt oder sicher sind sie in Bezug auf ihre Positionierungen? Über was reden sie nicht, was bleibt unerwähnt?

Die Ergebnisse können wichtige Hinweise geben, wie Menschen in einer mehr und mehr globalisierten transnationalen Welt Identitätsarbeit

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aus Deutschland) und die darauffolgende Nummer die fortlaufende Nummer des Interviews.

2 Zur Beantwortung dieser Frage ist ein weiterer Artikel der Verfasserin in Vorbereitung.

(im Sinne von Keupp *et al.* 1999) leisten. Unter Identitätsarbeit werden hier alle Anstrengungen und Unternehmungen verstanden, die von den Interviewten unternommen werden, um dem (besonders von der Außenwelt an sie herangetragenem, aber zum Teil auch internalisierten) Anspruch zu genügen, dass nur derjenige Finne oder Finnin sein kann, der die Sprache auch beherrsche. Welche Faktoren begünstigen eine hybride Identität, welche erschweren sie? Sie könnten Eltern in multikulturellen Situationen (Definition siehe Einführung) nützliche Gedankenanstöße geben, falls sich diese eine multikulturelle Identität für ihre Kinder wünschen. Sie könnten zum Beispiel auch mehr darüber aussagen, inwiefern Finnland bei der zweiten Generation eine mögliche Arbeitskräftereserve im Ausland hat, die gegebenenfalls aktiviert werden könnte (siehe auch Tuomi-Nikula *et al.* 2013).

### 3. Der Identitätsbegriff als soziologisches Konzept in der Soziolinguistik

Keupp *et al.* (1999) bedient sich der Metapher des Patchworks, um die Art und Weise zu beschreiben, wie Individuen in der Postmoderne Identitätsarbeit vornehmen. Eine Patchworkdecke wird einmal genäht. Obwohl vor dem Nähen die Entscheidung getroffen wird, welche Teile dem Gesamtwerk hinzugefügt und welche weggelassen werden, so muss doch eine endgültige Entscheidung sowohl über die Zusammensetzung als auch über die Position der einzelnen Bestandteile zueinander getroffen werden. Andere Autoren wählen die Metapher des Mosaiks (Porter 1965; Blackshire-Belay 1996), die, wenn einmal gewählt, genauso statisch ist.

Daher erscheint mir eine andere Metapher wesentlich präziser die Qualität der situativen Konstruktion wiederzugeben: die von Weckström gewählte Metapher des Kaleidoskops (2016: 26). Hier gibt es auch verschiedene Bestandteile, jedoch eine unendliche Menge von Kombinationen, die sich mit jeder Bewegung verändern und außerdem auch noch von verschiedenen Seiten aus beobachtet werden können. Obwohl Wissenschaft an sich danach strebt, unter denselben Bedingungen replizierbare Ergebnisse hervorzubringen, so sieht der Beobachtende immer wieder ein neues Bild,

und genauso kann die Momentaufnahme in Form des Interviews nicht wiederholt werden.

#### 4. Hybride Identität und deren mögliche Indikatoren

Das Konzept der hybriden Identität hat seinen Ursprung in Ansätzen, die Konsequenzen der Globalisierung besser verstehen zu lernen (Ang 2003, Canclini 2000, Hannerz 1996). Nach Rowe & Schelling (1991: 231) wird kulturelle Hybridität hier verstanden als „the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices“, siehe dazu auch Pieterse (2009: 70).

Nach Bhabha (1995)<sup>3</sup> wird Hybridität als ständig sich neu ausgehandelte Antworten auf Kolonisierung und als Auflösung von Dichotomien von sich gegenüberstehenden Kulturen verstanden. Zentrales Element ist das Konzept der Übersetzung, die auch Hall (1994: 218) beschreibt: „Menschen, die zu solchen *Kulturen der Hybridität* gehören, mußten den Traum oder die Ambition aufgeben, irgendeine ‹verlorene› kulturelle Reinheit, einen ethnischen Absolutismus, wiederentdecken zu können. Sie sind unwiderruflich *Übersetzer*.“

Als Marker für eine hybride Identität werden zusammenfassend die folgenden Merkmale angesehen. In der folgenden Aufzählung greife ich auch auf Pieterses *Assumptions about Cultures* (2009: 85; Tabellen 4.2 und 4.3) zurück und versuche, linguistische Marker des „dritten Raums“ als eigene Marker für Hybridität zu inkludieren:

- Aussagen des Nicht-Dazugehörens zu den Majoritätskulturen
- der „dritte Raum“ wird thematisiert
- der „dritte Raum“ wird linguistisch schöpferisch geschaffen, zum Beispiel durch die Verwendung von Code-Switching<sup>4</sup>, zum Teil durch

3 Zur Kritik an Bhabha unter anderem Marchart 2007.

4 Zur Verwendung von Code-Switching in einer deutschsprachigen Internetcommunity in Finnland siehe auch Kortelainen & Kolehmainen 2022; zum Zusammenhang von Code-Switching und sozialer Identität siehe auch Auer 2005. Die Untersuchung des in den Interviews verwendeten Code-Switchings hätte den Rahmen dieses Artikels gesprengt.



die Erfindung von hybriden Neologismen, die Bestandteile beider Sprachen beinhalten

- der „dritte Raum“ wird für die nächste Generation offengehalten, so wird zum Beispiel der Wunsch geäußert, dass die eigenen Kinder die finnische Sprachschule besuchen sollten, oder es werden ihnen ein (oder mehrere) finnische Vorname(n) in die Wiege gelegt (dazu siehe Jeltsch 2024)
- Widersprüchliche Aussagen zur eigenen Identität (bei einem Sprechenden, aber auch zwischen unterschiedlichen Sprechenden)
- Schwierigkeit, die eigene Identität zu erklären
- die verschiedenen Facetten der Identität werden als fließend, dynamisch und kontextabhängig erlebt – Identifizierung ist wichtiger als Identität
- der „dritte Raum“ wird zur beruflichen Karriere, indem man eine Laufbahn als Übersetzer:in oder Dolmetscher:in einschlägt oder im weitesten Sinn als „Übersetzer:in“ fungiert, zum Beispiel in Karrieren in kulturvermittelnden Institutionen, man verbringt also einen Großteil der Lebenszeit im „dritten Raum“
- Diskriminierung durch die Majoritätskulturen
- Beklemmung in Situationen, in denen man sich (anscheinend) für eine der beiden Identitäten entscheiden muss.

Allerdings muss betont werden, dass keiner dieser Marker für sich allein auf eine hybride Identität deutet, sondern immer im Zusammenhang gesehen werden muss. Je mehr dieser Marker vorhanden sind, desto eher kann man davon ausgehen, dass man von einer hybriden Identität sprechen kann. Aufgrund des Vorhandenseins oder des Fehlens dieser Marker kann man versuchen, die Stärke der Hybridität zu messen – im Sinne einer fluiden Hybridität jedoch eher auf einer Skala und nicht als binäre Größe.

## 5. Frühere Untersuchungen zur sprachlichen Identität

Zusammenhänge von Sprache und Identität wurden auf einer allgemeinen Ebene untersucht, um die Mechanismen der gegenseitigen Beeinflussung zu verstehen. Deswegen folgt hier ein kurzer Abriss zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte

in diesem Bereich. Es wird dargestellt, wie diese Zusammenhänge im Kontext von Migration gesehen und interpretiert wurden.

Sprache ist einer von vielen identitätsformenden und identitätsbeeinflussenden Faktoren. Als solcher ist Sprache ein Baustein der sozialen Identität, wie sie Tajfel (1978: 63) in der Theorie der Sozialen Identität (TSI) als „that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership“ beschrieben wird.

Sprachkenntnisse kann man durch Lernprozesse beeinflussen und einmal gelernte Sprachen unter Umständen auch wieder verlieren. Andere Faktoren dagegen entziehen sich (in den meisten Fällen) dem eigenen formenden Einwirken, wie zum Beispiel die Zugehörigkeit zu einem Geschlecht oder einer bestimmten Ethnie. Sprachen können außerdem auf unterschiedlichem Niveau beherrscht werden, differierend auch in den verschiedenen Kompetenzbereichen. So zeichnen sich die Mitglieder der untersuchten Gruppe dadurch aus, dass die eigene schriftliche Kompetenz des Finnischen durchgängig als schlechter bewertet wird als die mündliche, was für Individuen der zweiten Generation häufig der Fall ist. Unabhängig davon, wie das Konglomerat der einflussnehmenden Faktoren aussieht, in jedem Fall ist das Individuum bemüht, daraus kontinuierlich ein positives Selbstbild zu konstruieren (Naglo 2007). Unter diesem Aspekt sind Angriffe der Außenwelt auf das positive Selbstbild kritisch – später im Absatz *Diskriminierung* wird auf negative Erlebnisse eingegangen, die die Interviewten mir von sich aus berichtet haben.

Ein zentrales Konzept der TSI ist die Gruppenzugehörigkeit. Sprechende mehrerer Sprachen können sich mehreren Gruppen zugehörig fühlen – aber welches Niveau der Sprachbeherrschung muss erreicht werden, um auch in der Wahrnehmung der anderen zweifellos als Gruppenangehörige(r) akzeptiert zu werden – und welche „anderen“ werden als relevant angesehen? Die möglichst perfekte Beherrschung der Sprache wird zum Kategorisierungsmerkmal. Die Fremdwahrnehmung hat dann wiederum Einfluss darauf, was man wagt, von sich selbst zu behaupten, und gipfelt bei den Interviewten in der Frage, ob man sich „trauen“ könne, sich als Finnin oder Finne zu fühlen, wenn man die Sprache nicht beherrscht (siehe weiter unten auch Zitat von DDF1/30).

Die *Theorie der ethnolinguistischen Identität* (EIT; Giles & Johnson 1987) baut auf die TSI auf und konzentriert sich auf die gegenseitigen Wechselwirkungen zwischen ethnischer und linguistischer Identität. Sprache ist hier eingebunden in ein Netz anderer Faktoren (wie zum Beispiel Hierarchien, Einschätzungen zur Vitalität der verschiedenen Sprachen). Giles hat die Theorie weiterentwickelt zur *Communication Accomodation Theory* (CAT).

Einen Überblick über die Forschung zur gegenseitigen Beeinflussung von Sprache und ethnischer Identität liefern Gudykunst & Schmidt (1988).

Eine simplifizierte Definition sprachlicher Identität würde diese als Zugehörigkeitsgefühl zu einer bestimmten Gruppe beschreiben, die die eigene(n) Sprache(n) spricht. Selbst bei einsprachigen Personen wirft diese Definition Fragen auf: Welche Sprache ist gemeint? Standarddeutsch, wie es der Duden vorschreibt, oder Berner Deutsch oder eine norddeutsch gefärbte Variante? Bei mehrsprachigen Individuen ergibt sich dadurch die Frage, ob diese mehrere sprachliche Identitäten haben oder ob es sich um eine Identität handelt, die mehrere Facetten aufweist, oder aus mehreren Erscheinungsformen besteht.

Im Sinne des Konstruktivismus (nach Berger & Luckmann 1985) steht bei dieser Untersuchung nicht eine wie auch immer geartete ‚wahre‘ oder ‚echte‘ Identität im Mittelpunkt, die nicht wirklich existiert, sondern die Art und Weise, wie die Befragten ihre Identität im Interview konstruieren und dargestellt wissen wollen. So sehen McCall & Simmons (1978) in ihrer auf Rollenidentitäten konzentrierten Arbeit Identitäten als improvisiert, variabel und verhandelbar an. Wie möchten die Befragten von mir als Forscherin und von möglichen Rezipient:innen der Studie gesehen werden?

Kategorisierungsphänomene scheinen für die Identität von Relevanz zu sein, daher lohnt es sich zu fragen, welchen Kategorien sich die Interviewten zuordnen.

Auf Englisch wird häufig von *ethnolinguistic identity* gesprochen. Die monolinguale Perspektive ist stark in der linguistischen Forschung verankert, der postulierte Normalfall ist der einsprachige Lernende, womit ein Großteil der Weltbevölkerung – auch und gerade in Europa – (siehe dazu Laakso *et al.* 2016) außer Acht gelassen wird. Das Ergebnis sind binäre und absolute Attribuierungen, entweder man ist ‚Muttersprachler:in‘ oder nicht, entweder man kann eine Sprache oder man kann sie nicht. Der Bestandteil *ethno* könnte

fälschlicherweise zu solchen Interpretationen führen, dass der ethnische Hintergrund zwingend Voraussetzung für eine solche Identität sei – was nicht stimmt, da zum Beispiel adoptierte Kinder und andere Gruppen auch ohne den entsprechenden ethnischen Hintergrund zu einer bestimmten ethnolinguistischen Gruppe gehören können (zu Türkisch in Deutschland dazu Dirim & Auer 2004; zur allgemeinen Problematik des Begriffs Banks 1988). Die ethnische Herkunft ist dabei in einigen Fällen äußerlich nicht zu erkennen, in anderen Fällen führt das äußere Erscheinungsbild im sozialen Leben zu Missinterpretationen, Vorurteilen und Konflikten (siehe auch Tsuda 2015).

Du Bois & Baumgarten (2013: 8) sprechen von multilingualen Identitäten und fassen zusammen:

Identity is thus not a coherent, narrative account, but it consists of situated and partial claims of knowledge. In communicative interaction, individuals co-construct different context-bound identities for themselves and others, and constitute social reality in the process.

Eine konstruierte, facettenreiche und kontextabhängige – und daher fluide - Identität (im Singular oder Plural) kann als Konsens für Menschen in der Postmoderne und daher auch für die hier untersuchten Migrant:innen zweiter Generation angesehen werden.

## 6. Migrationsphänomene der untersuchten Gruppe

Untersuchungen zu im deutschsprachigen Raum lebenden Finn:innen und deren Nachkommen haben sich vor allem auf Deutschland konzentriert, mit wenigen Ausnahmen. So befragt Altenburger (2015) zur finnisch-deutschen Vornamenswahl Familien sowohl in Deutschland als auch in Österreich und der Schweiz<sup>5</sup>. Dobler-Mikola (1979) untersucht die soziokulturelle Integration finnischer Frauen in der Schweiz. Da zahlenmäßig in den 60er und 70er

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<sup>5</sup> 71,9% der befragten Familien stammen aus Deutschland, 13,8% aus Österreich und 14,3% aus der Schweiz.

Jahren des letzten Jahrhunderts die Migration aus Finnland Richtung der deutschsprachigen Länder größer war als umgekehrt, standen thematisch vor allem Migrationsmuster (Ruokonen-Engler 2012) und Assimilation (Tuomi-Nikula 1989) der ersten Generation von aus Finnland Ausgewanderten im Mittelpunkt. Sowohl auf die erste als auch auf die zweite Generation der in Deutschland lebenden Nachkommen von Finn:innen konzentrierten sich aus ethnografischer Perspektive Tuomi-Nikula, Haanpää & Laine (2013). Hauptaugenmerk war es, mögliche Motive für einen Umzug „zurück nach Finnland“ zu beleuchten, die Mehrheit der Antworten kam jedoch von Personen der ersten Generation.

Ausschließlich die erste Generation untersucht Ruokonen-Engler (2012) in ihrer biographieanalytischen Studie über transnationale Positionierungen finnischer Migrantinnen. Die bei ihr Interviewten könnten in der hier vorliegenden Studie zum Teil die Mütter der hier Befragten (die zum Zeitpunkt des Interviews ein Alter zwischen 19 und 54 hatten) sein, diese Tatsache ist insofern relevant, dass Ruokonen-Engler für die von ihr interviewten Migrantinnen feststellt, dass „die finnischen Migrantinnen in Deutschland einen hohen Bildungsstand haben und dass sie meistens schon vor ihrer Migration über gute Sprachkenntnisse verfügen“. Diese Tatsache bestätigt sich auch für die zweite Generation: Von den 31 Befragten haben 28 das Abitur bzw. die Matura abgelegt, diejenigen ohne Abitur haben die mittlere Reife abgelegt und eine Berufsausbildung absolviert. Von denjenigen mit Abitur bzw. Matura haben zwei danach eine Berufsausbildung absolviert, eine hat ein Studium abgebrochen, vier haben einen Bachelor-Abschluss auf Fachhochschulniveau absolviert, fünf einen Bachelor-Abschluss auf Universitätsniveau (davon zwei noch im Studium), 15 einen Magister- oder Masterabschluss von der Universität (inklusive einer Licence aus der Schweiz) und zwei Personen ein Doktorat. Bei den Befragten dieser Studie haben wir es mit insgesamt sehr gut ausgebildeten Personen zu tun, was dem bereits überdurchschnittlichen Bildungsstand ihrer Elterngeneration entspricht.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Laut Pollak (2021) wurde in Untersuchungen zur sozialen Mobilität in Deutschland die Nachkommengeneration in der Hauptsache mit dem Bildungsstand der Väter

Tuomi-Nikula, Haanpää & Laine (2013: 1; 8) befragten im Rahmen des Projekts *Takaisin Suomeen*<sup>7</sup> auch Finnen zweiter Generation zu ihren möglichen Plänen, „nach Finnland zurückzukehren“ und meinen, dass die zweite Generation von Ausgewanderten oder Expats bisher „vergessen worden sei“<sup>8</sup>. Insofern möchte diese qualitative Untersuchung eine Forschungslücke schließen.

Breier (2017) untersuchte Spracherhalt bei nach Deutschland ausgewanderten Finn:innen, Siitonen & Tuomi-Nikula (2003) Phänomene des Sprachkontakts und Imppola (2020) den Unterricht in den sogenannten Suomi-Schulen. Umgekehrt befragten Schirrmann & Richter-Vapaatalo (2014) nach Finnland ausgewanderte deutsche Frauen.

Bei Seitovirta (2022) standen sprachliche und nationale Identitätsfragen in der Literatur von Kafka, Yōko Tawada und Marica Bodrožić im Mittelpunkt.

Turpeinen (2015) beschäftigt sich mit Identitätsfragen von finnischen Migrant:innen in Deutschland. Bei der vorliegenden Arbeit sollen erstmals für die zweite Generation alle drei deutschsprachigen Länder berücksichtigt werden, einerseits, um ein möglichst umfassendes Bild zu erhalten, andererseits auch, um mögliche Unterschiede herausfinden zu können.

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verglichen, was die Vergleichbarkeit für diese Untersuchung erschwert, da der finnische Elternteil im Großteil der Fälle die Mutter ist.

7 Die wörtliche Übersetzung lautet: Zurück nach Finnland. Im Vorwort der Veröffentlichung wird thematisiert, dass Finnland mehr Steuerzahler:innen brauche und wegen der Vorurteile von Finn:innen gegenüber Ausländer:innen mit „anderen Werten und einer anderen Hautfarbe“ es eine mögliche Lösung sei, neben Finn:innen erster Generation auch Finn:innen zweiter Generation zu einem Umzug nach Finnland zu bewegen. Da über die letztere Gruppe keine Information vorhanden sei („heistä ei ollut olemassa tutkittua tietoa“) wurde eine Umfrage in ganz Europa durchgeführt, auf die insgesamt 145 Personen (insgesamt 82 Frauen und 63 Männer) der zweiten Generation antworteten. Die größte Gruppe (43%) darunter waren Antworten aus Deutschland: insgesamt 38 Personen mit einem Vater aus Deutschland, neun Personen mit einem Vater aus Österreich und sieben Personen mit einem Vater aus der Schweiz. Nur 4% der Befragten hatten einen finnischen Vater und eine ausländische Mutter.

8 „Eli tähän mennessä unohdetusta toisesta ulkosuomalaispolvesta“ (ebenda, 8).

## 7. Bezeichnungen für die untersuchte Gruppe

Weckström (2016: 21) spricht in ihrer ethnografischen Untersuchung über die derzeit größte Auslandsgruppe von Personen mit einem (teilweise) finnischen Hintergrund über „Sweden’s Finns“<sup>9</sup>, also Schwedens Finn:innen oder kürzer Schwedenfinn:innen. Die von Weckström untersuchte Gruppe hat mindestens einen finnischen Elternteil, oft aber sind beide Elternteile finnisch oder finnischer Herkunft. In ihrem Überblick über die Forschung zu dieser Gruppe ist auch der Paradigmenwechsel zu erkennen, der die Forschung zu Immigrantengruppen weltweit bestimmt hat. Parallel dazu könnte man hier von Deutschlands oder Österreichs Finn:innen oder Finn:innen der Schweiz reden, kürzer Deutschlandfinn:innen, Österreichfinn:innen und Schweizfinn:innen. Imppola verwendet in ihrer Arbeit über die finnischen Sprachschulen in Deutschland (2020) auf Finnisch den Begriff *saksansuomalaiset*, der in der finnischsprachigen Forschung schon seit längerem Anwendung findet (Tuomi-Nikula 1989 und 2008)<sup>10</sup>. Tuomi-Nikulas Arbeit (1989) hat in erster Linie die erste Generation von in Deutschland und Berlin lebenden Auslandsfinn:innen im Blickpunkt, Imppola die zweite Generation.

Während der Begriff ‚Deutschlandfinn:innen‘ noch gebräuchlich ist<sup>11</sup>, werden diese Kombinationen bei den anderen deutschsprachigen Ländern wesentlich seltener<sup>12</sup> verwendet. Ein weiteres Problem ist die Tatsache, dass diese Begriffe eine unterschwellige Gemeinsamkeit aller dieser Personen insofern nahelegen, als dass es sich um Varianten des ‚Finnischseins‘ handeln würde, näher definiert durch den ersten Teil des Kompositums. Daher verwendet auch Weckström (2016) den Begriff ‚zweite Generation‘.

9 Der Begriff ist auch konform mit dem in Schweden für diese Gruppe verwendeten Terminus *Sverige finlandare*, *Sverige finne*.

10 Das Finnische hat hier den Vorteil, jeweils geschlechtsneutrale Ausdrücke zur Verfügung zu haben.

11 So verwendet Maria Baier in ihrer Dissertation 2007 diesen Begriff für die von ihr untersuchten Personen.

12 So verzeichnet Google für ‚Österreichfinnen‘ keine einzige Nennung (24.4.2023), für ‚Schweizfinnen‘ gibt es insgesamt 143 Nennungen, die jedoch alle als ‚Schweiz-Finne(n)‘ erscheinen und auf Personen hinweisen, die beide Pässe besitzen.

Betrachtet man die internationale Terminologie, so wird für Personen, die im Ausland leben und deren ethnische Wurzeln aus einer Region stammen, in der sie nicht wohnen, zunehmend das Wort *Diaspora* verwendet (siehe auch Ang 2003 über die chinesische Diaspora und die Problematik dieses Begriffs). Der Begriff *Finnish diaspora* wurde jedoch einerseits für Finn:innen, die in Russland und Estland leb(t)en, verwendet (Kulu 2001), andererseits findet man ihn eher in der englischen Sprache (Karni 1979) als in der deutschen. Auch wenn der Begriff selbst noch wenig Verwendung findet, so könnten doch Impulse aus der internationalen Diaspora-Forschung Licht auf verschiedene Phänomene werfen, die bisher weniger Beachtung fanden.

Ob ‚Finnische Diaspora‘ oder eine andere Bezeichnung, die eine regionale Entität als Bestandteil hat – alle diese Bezeichnungen eint, dass sie binär sind, entweder man ist Gruppenmitglied oder nicht. Entscheidend für die Inklusion ist, welche Kriterien vom Individuum selbst und von der Umgebung als signifikant angesehen werden. Ang (2003: 144): „My theoretical starting point is that just like nations, diasporas are not natural entities but ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983). As such, I will conclude that the transnationalism of diaspora is actually proto-nationalist in its outlook, because no matter how global its reach, its imaginary orbit is demarcated ultimately by the closure effected by the category of the diasporic identity itself. In this sense, the politics of diaspora is exclusionary as much as it is inclusionary, just like that of the nation”.

Bei allen Überlegungen ist weiter zu beachten, dass die von der Forschung verwendeten Bezeichnungen nicht unbedingt mit den von den Interviewten verwendeten übereinstimmen müssen. Wie bezeichnen sich diese selbst? Dabei ist zu beachten, dass der Großteil der Befragten kaum wissenschaftliche Erwägungen in Betracht zieht, um auf Selbstbezeichnungen zurückzugreifen. Jedoch könnten die Selbstbezeichnungen Rückschlüsse zulassen, wenn zum Beispiel diese Elemente beider Kulturen in sich tragen oder den dritten Raum eröffnen.

## 8. Datenerhebung

In den sozialen Medien wurde ein Aufruf durchgeführt, angeschrieben wurden Akteur:innen im deutsch-/österreichisch-/schweizerisch-finnischen



Milieu. Der Wohnort zum Zeitpunkt des Interviews befand sich in einem der genannten Länder, musste jedoch nicht mit dem Ort der Sozialisierung oder dem Ort des längsten Aufenthalts zusammenfallen. Einige der Teilnehmer:innen wussten bereits, dass ein Forschungsvorhaben dieser Art in Vorbereitung war und warteten darauf, an der Studie teilzunehmen (n: 3). Der Großteil der zu Interviewenden wurde jedoch erst für dieses Projekt rekrutiert.

<b>Herkunft des deutschsprachigen Elternteils</b>	<b>Männer</b>	<b>Frauen</b>	<b>insgesamt</b>
Interviewte mit einem deutschsprachigen Elternteil aus Deutschland bzw. Westdeutschland	5	9	14
Interviewte mit einem deutschsprachigen Elternteil aus der DDR	0	1	1
Interviewte mit einem deutschsprachigen Elternteil aus Österreich	3	5	8
Interviewte mit einem deutschsprachigen Elternteil aus der Schweiz	4	4	8
Ingesamt	12	19	31
<b>Land, in dem der Großteil der Sozialisierung stattfand</b>			
Deutschland (bzw. Westdeutschland)	3	7	10
DDR	0	1	1
Finnland	1	2	3
Österreich	4	5	9
Schweiz	4	4	8
Ingesamt	12	19	31

<b>Wohnort der Interviewten zum Zeitpunkt des Interviews</b>			
Finnland	2	4	6
Deutschland	2	6	8
Österreich	4	4	8
Schweiz	4	5	9
Insgesamt	12	19	31

In der Beschreibung des Forschungsvorhabens wurde darauf geachtet, explizit zu machen, dass keine Überprüfung der Finnischkenntnisse stattfinden würde und die Kenntnis von Finnisch auch keine Voraussetzung für die Teilnahme am Interview war. Trotzdem war die einzige Frage, die mich im Zusammenhang mit den Interviews erreichte, die Frage danach, ob Finnischkenntnisse Voraussetzung für die Teilnahme seien. Dies könnte eventuell schon als Hinweis darauf gedeutet werden, dass es bei potenziellen Teilnehmer:innen der Studie Bedenken gab, ob sie den Anforderungen gerecht werden könnten, wenn Mehrsprachigkeit als Voraussetzung für die Studienteilnahme vorliegen müsse. Das Forschungsprojekt hat sich gegen jegliche Form objektiver Evaluierung der Finnischkenntnisse entschieden, da sonst eine Reihe an Teilnehmenden nicht partizipiert hätte. Es wären genau solche Personen nicht untersucht worden, die sich aufgrund mangelnder Finnischkenntnisse nicht angesprochen gefühlt hätten.

Die dadurch Erreichten wurden auch gebeten, im Schneeballsystem weitere Interessierte auf die Forschungsarbeit aufmerksam zu machen. Es wurde versucht, nicht nur im akademischen Milieu Interviewpartner:innen zu finden, sondern auch außerhalb. So wurde auch angeboten, zum Interview zur Privatadresse der Befragten zu fahren, so dass fehlende Mobilität kein Hinderungsgrund für ein Interview darstellen sollte. So fanden 11 der insgesamt 31 Interviews im Zuhause der Befragten statt<sup>13</sup>. Weitere

**13** Entsprechend des psychologischen Konzepts des Primings könnte diese Tatsache Auswirkungen auf die Ergebnisse haben, jedoch hätte ein möglichst neutraler Interviewort für alle dazu geführt, dass eine Interviewte als Mutter eines stark auf

Aufnahmeorte waren Räumlichkeiten bei Verwandten des/der Interviewten (n:1), Örtlichkeiten der Universität Helsinki (n: 2), der Universität Wien (n: 7), der Universität Zürich (n: 3), ein Hotelzimmer (n: 1), das Zuhause einer im finnisch-schweizerischen Milieu bekannten Finnin (n: 4) und Örtlichkeiten des Arbeitgebers des/der Interviewten (n: 2).

Wie van't Land (2000) beschreibt, hat die bei Gesprächen mit der zweiten Generation verwendete Sprache einen großen Einfluss auf die Ergebnisse. Die Interviewpartner:innen konnten sich die Sprache des Interviews selbst aussuchen, 30 von 31 wählten das Deutsche als Interviewsprache. Viele der Interviewten wären nicht in der Lage gewesen, das Interview auf Finnisch zu führen und es hätte den Stresspegel der Unterhaltung wesentlich erhöht.

Eine weitere Einschränkung ergibt sich durch das Design der Studie: Wer sich für die Teilnahme an einer solchen Studie meldet, interessiert sich für die hier untersuchte Thematik. Das könnte zum Teil erklären, warum in der Studie so viele Personen zu finden sind, die erhebliche Zeit- und Energieressourcen in das (Wieder-)Erlernen des Finnischen investiert haben. Diejenigen, die in diesem Bereich weniger aktiv waren, würden wahrscheinlich eine geringere Bereitschaft zur Teilnahme an der Studie mitbringen.

## 9. Methode

Zur Untersuchung der Fragestellung würden sich die verschiedensten Methoden anbieten. Ein Interview wurde gewählt, weil es eine der wichtigsten Prämissen war, die betroffenen Personen selbst zu Wort kommen zu lassen. Identität wird über Sprache ausgedrückt, nur mit Hilfe von Sprache kann der/die Einzelne sich erklären.

Um allen Widersprüchen in den Aussagen gerecht zu werden und möglichst viele der oben genannten kaleidoskopartigen Perspektiven auf die Identität berücksichtigen zu können, wurde eine Methode der finnischen Sozialpsychologie verwendet, die in der wörtlichen Übersetzung „Qualitative

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Betreuung angewiesenen Kinds nicht am Interview teilnehmen hätte können und eine weitere noch stillende Mutter wahrscheinlich ebenfalls nicht. Insbesondere der deutsche Kontext mit mangelhafter Kinderbetreuung hätte so zu einer Diskriminierung von Frauen und Müttern geführt, so dass der mögliche Effekt von Priming in Kauf genommen wurde.

Einstellungsanalyse“ (*laadullinen asenneanalyysi*, Vesala & Rantanen 2007: 11) genannt wird:

Ziel dieser Methode ist es, aufzuzeigen, wie Menschen wirklich ihnen vorgestellte Sachverhalte oder Streitfragen bewerten. Außerdem ist Interessensziel, wie, unter welchen Bedingungen und aus welchen Rollen oder Standpunkten heraus die Bewertungen vorgenommen werden und was noch in diesem Zusammenhang als zusammengehörig empfunden wird.<sup>14</sup>

Einstellungen werden in der Tradition von Billig (1987/1996) und Goffman (1974) jedoch nicht (wie oft in traditionell eher quantitativ ausgerichteten Methoden der Sozialpsychologie) als fix und unveränderlich angesehen, sondern als kontextabhängiges, prozesshaftes *stance taking* oder *stand taking* in Kommunikationssituationen (Kärkkäinen 2002). Die gewonnenen Aussagen werden geordnet, es wird versucht, Muster zu finden. Ihre Rhetorik wird genau daraufhin analysiert, ob zum Beispiel bestimmte, eventuell sich wiederholende Einschränkungen gemacht werden und aus welchen Rollen heraus argumentiert wird.<sup>15</sup> Die Methode wurde in der finnischen Sozialpsychologie vor allem für die qualitative Analyse der Einschätzung von gesellschaftlich strittigen Themen angewandt, wobei insbesondere Themen untersucht wurden, die sich durch technologische und gesellschaftliche Neuerungen stellen, so zum Beispiel die Einstellungen von Bauern gegenüber der EU (Vesala 2004) oder die Unternehmeridentität von Bauern mit neuen Geschäftsideen (Vesala & Peura 2002), aber auch die Einstellung von Angestellten der lutherischen Kirche zu muslimischen Immigranten (Pyy 2007), die Einstellung zum Internet bei KMUs (Matikainen 2007) oder

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14 „Sen (= laadullisen asennetutkimuksen) avulla pyritään erittelemään ja tulkitsemaan, mitä ihmiset oikeastaan arvottavat kommentoidessaan heille esitettyjä asioita tai kiistakysymyksiä. Lisäksi kiinnostuksen kohteena on, miten, millä ehdoilla ja minkälaista rooleista tai mistä asemista arvottamista tehdään ja mihin kaikkeen se liittyy.”

15 In der genauen Leseweise könnte man u. U. Ähnlichkeiten mit der Methode des *Close Readings* feststellen. Jedoch ist festzustellen, dass es sich hier um verschriftliche mündliche Aussagen handelt, nicht um primär schriftlich entstandenes Material.

das Verhältnis von Expertise und „gesundem Menschenverstand“ bei der Kindererziehung (Järvinen 2007)<sup>16</sup>. Die Methode eignet sich daher sehr gut dazu, Einstellungen von Betroffenen zu gesellschaftlich neuen Phänomenen zu untersuchen, die bisher nicht oder weniger untersucht worden sind.

Dass es sich bei transkulturellen Phänomenen im Kontext der Globalisierung ebenfalls um scheinbar neue<sup>17</sup> gesellschaftliche Erscheinungen handelt, spricht für die qualitative Einstellungsanalyse als eine geeignete und angemessene Methode für den zu untersuchenden Forschungsgegenstand.

Die Befragten antworteten auf insgesamt acht Fragen zu ihrer sprachlichen Identität und zum Thema *Heimat*. Dieses Interview wurde aufgenommen und transkribiert. Zusätzlich wurden sie zu persönlichen Gegebenheiten (Geburtsort, Wohnorte, Auslandsaufenthalte) und ihrer/ihren Muttersprache/n befragt und sie durften ihren Finnischkompetenzen deutsche Schulnoten<sup>18</sup> geben. Auch wurde ihr vollständiger Vorname und der ihrer Geschwister erfragt.

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**16** Weitere untersuchte Themen waren die Kompatibilität von Religiosität und Unternehmertum (Heinonen 2007), akademische Ausbildung und unternehmerische Ambitionen (Tonttila 2007) und Einstellungen junger Frauen zum Essen (Pajari 2007), alle in Vesala & Rantanen 2007.

**17** Anscheinend deswegen, weil Migrationsbewegungen von Beginn der Menschheitsgeschichte an essenziell zum Überleben beigetragen haben. Gründe waren Klimaveränderungen und Naturkatastrophen, so haben sich Menschen aufgrund von Veränderungen in ihrer lokalen Umgebung, wie Dürren, Hungersnöten und Erdbeben, bewegt. Es gab oft wirtschaftliche Gründe: Menschen haben sich auf der Suche nach besseren wirtschaftlichen Möglichkeiten, wie höheren Löhnen und verbesserten Lebensstandards, bewegt. Oder politische Gründe: Menschen sind aus Angst vor Verfolgung, Konflikten und Kriegen migriert. Oder es lagen soziale und kulturelle Gründe zugrunde: Menschen sind aus sozialen und kulturellen Gründen migriert, wie die Wiedervereinigung mit Familienmitgliedern, dem Suchen nach Abenteuern und dem Erkunden neuer Möglichkeiten. Alle diese Gründe haben die Migration im Laufe der menschlichen Geschichte angetrieben, von den frühen menschlichen Migrationen aus Afrika bis zur heutigen Zeit (<https://www.unhcr.org/>).

**18** Schulnoten wurde der Vorzug gegenüber einer Einstufung in den Europäischen Kompetenzrahmen gegeben, damit sich auch bildungsfernere Personen ohne weitere Erläuterungen gut einstufen können.

## 10. Analyse

Bei der Beantwortung von insgesamt acht Interviewfragen hatten die Befragten ausreichend Möglichkeiten, ihre Gedanken und Einstellungen rund um Fragen ihrer sprachlichen Identität kundzutun. Bei der Analyse galt es, wiederkehrende Muster, Kategorisierungen, Aussagen, Begründungen oder auch Einschränkungen von Begründungen zu finden. Auf die Frage: „Wer oder was hat dir geholfen oder dazu beigetragen, finnisch zu sein oder zu werden? Was hat dich davon abgehalten oder hat versucht, dich davon abzuhalten, finnisch zu sein oder zu werden?“ antwortet Karolina (34 Jahre, CHF1/24; 179–182<sup>19</sup>):

Mmh (*lange Pause*). Äh, ich denk, das naheliegendste ist sicher die Sprache, ähm. Das, also, ich mein ich beherrsche sie nicht grad so wie jemand der wirklich im Land aufgewachsen ist oder so, aber ich denk doch äh, trägt die Sprache zum, äh, zum Finnischsein bei.

Sie gibt sich für ihre finnische Sprachkompetenz eine Durchschnittsnote von 1,8 (das heißt besser als ‚gut‘) und ist trotzdem sehr selbstkritisch. Ihre Aussage zeigt die Höhe der eigenen inneren ‚Messlatte‘: Gemessen wird am Ideal eines im Land aufgewachsenen Menschen, der die Landessprache als Muttersprache gelernt hat.

Die Hybridität zeigt sich an verschiedenen Aussagen, die sich zum Teil widersprechen. Die eigene Identitätszuschreibung fällt oft schwer, wie auch bei Carmen (DEF9/22, 71–77), die auf die Frage, als wer oder was sie sich fühlt, antwortet:

Schwere Frage (*lachend*). Weil ich wohn halt ähm die längste Zeit in Finnland, also in einer Weise fühl ich mich finnisch. Aber irgendwie dann nich **ganz**<sup>20</sup> finnisch. Aber auch nich deutsch, weil ich mich n bisschen wie ein Ausländer fühle, wenn ich in Deutschland bin.

**19** Die letzten Zahlen bei allen Zitaten von Interviewten beziehen sich auf die laufenden Zeilen im Interview.

**20** Fettdruck in Zitaten der Interviewten verweist hier wie auch bei allen weiteren Zitaten auf im Original besonders betonte Wörter.

Jaana (44 Jahre alt, DEF7/19; 158–159, von Beruf Dolmetscherin) beschreibt ihre eigene Identität und schließt ihre Aussage mit einem Lachen ab:

Mikä mua on estänyt olemasta suomalaisen? En mä nyt sitte taas toisaalta oo varmaan ihan tyyppillinenkään, mä oon tämmönen sekasikiö.

(Was mich davon abgehalten hat, Finnisch zu sein? Andererseits bin ich sicherlich nicht so typisch finnisch, ich bin so ein Bastard.)

Eine Mischform, eine „Mélange“, zu sein, wird also nicht als negativ angesehen, sondern im Gegenteil als positiv. Im sogenannten „dritten Raum“ ergeben sich neue Möglichkeiten, die in keiner der beiden Ursprungskulturen verankert sind. Auf die Frage, als was Jaana sich fühlt, als deutsch oder finnisch, antwortet sie zunächst:

En kummakskaan. (Als keines von beiden. 105)

Diese Antwort könnte bereits so interpretiert werden, dass sich Jaana schon in den dritten Raum Bhabhas begeben hat.

Auf die Nachfrage der Interviewerin „Ei kummaksikaan?“ (Als keines von beiden? 106) bestätigt sie:

En, mä ei. No siis mul on Saksan passi. Ähm, et mä oon niin-kun Saksan kansalainen. (Keins von beiden. Na, ich hab schon einen deutschen Pass. Ähm, dass ich so was wie eine deutsche Staatsangehörige bin. 107)

In dieser Untersuchung wird eine hybride Identität in der Definition von Hall und Bhabha für die interviewten Personen als eine Möglichkeit angesehen. Wie im Fall von Jaana können Interviewte sich dahingehend äußern, dass sie sich keiner der beiden Ausgangskulturen direkt zugehörig fühlen. Es kann aber auch andere, indirekte Hinweise geben. Dazu kann man zum Beispiel auch widersprüchliche Aussagen zählen, wenn an einer Stelle des Interviews genau das Gegenteil vom Vorangegangenen erzählt wird. So zum Beispiel

Jens, 39 Jahre, der einerseits behauptet, stolz darauf zu sein, Finne zu sein und an einer anderen Stelle, es nicht zu sein. Oder Oskar, 19 Jahre alt (DEM1/10, 66–68), der als Sohn eines deutschen Vaters und einer finnischen Mutter sein ganzes Leben in Österreich gelebt hat, jedoch keine österreichische Staatsangehörigkeit besitzt:

...hier geboren, und das ist da, irgendwie fühl ich mich auch nicht so wirklich als Österreicher, ähm, weil ich halt nicht ein Staatsbürger bin, ich bin andererseits auch ein Staatsbürger, wie ich hier schon immer gelebt habe und die ganze Welt nur aus österreichischer Sicht sehe... so hab ich mich als Europäer bezeichnet.

Ebenfalls als ein Indikator für hybride Identität kann man die Aussage interpretieren, dass man in Deutschland immer der Finne oder die Finnin sei und in Finnland immer der oder die Deutsche. So behauptet das zum Beispiel Jochen, 47 Jahre (DEM5/21, 80–81):

In Deutschland galt ich immer als der Finne und in Finnland gelte ich unter den Finnen immer als der Deutsche.

Jedoch gibt es genauso die exakt gegenteilige Behauptung. Michael, 29 Jahre (CHM3/26, 48–49):

Und äh, wenn ich in Finnland bin, dann fühl ich mich ja wirklich finnisch. Hier schweizerisch.

Widersprüchliche Aussagen können Marker für Hybridität sein, weil diese individuell sehr unterschiedlich gelebt wird. Gemeinsamer Nenner ist, dass in einem bestimmten Kontext die eine Seite erlebt wird, in einem anderen Kontext die andere Seite.

Auch Aussagen, dass man nicht zu der Mehrheitsbevölkerung im Wohnland gehört, obwohl man in diesem Land geboren ist und dessen Pass besitzt, können als Marker von hybrider Identität gelten.

Mari (DEF1/1, 68–69) erklärt es wie folgt: „Aber es ist halt irgendwie anders, man gehört halt nicht zu dieser Gruppe dazu“.



Die Hybridität kann auch als Möglichkeit und befreiende Kraft gesehen werden, sich aus der Enge nationaler Grenzen und Rückständigkeit zu befreien. Maisa (CHF3/29, 30ff.) formuliert es so:

So aus politischen Gründen seh ich mich vielleicht eher, ähm, als finnisch, weil ich bin sehr weltoffen und sehr, ähm, eher modern. Ähm, auch was die Stellung der Frau anbelangt, ähm, hier in der Schweiz sind wir vielleicht ein bisschen, nicht rückständig, aber, ähm, in der Entwicklung nicht so weit (...). Ähm. Deswegen eher, ähm, finnisch (...) Ich bin nicht so kleinkariert.

Fast alle Befragten zeigen Merkmale von hybrider Identität. Neben widersprüchlichen Aussagen findet man Aussagen des Nicht-Dazugehörigseins, der „dritte Raum“ wird erörtert. Die Formulierungen sind vage, oft abgeschwächt, voller Zweifel, mit vielen Pausen, den Befragten scheint es Schwierigkeit zu bereiten, die eigene Identität (hinreichend) zu erklären.

Die verschiedenen Facetten der eigenen Identität werden als fließend, dynamisch und kontextabhängig erlebt. Manchmal wird der „dritte Raum“ zur beruflichen Karriere, indem man eine Laufbahn als Übersetzer:in oder Dolmetscher:in einschlägt oder im weitesten Sinn als „Übersetzer:in“ fungiert. Die Befragten berichten von sich aus von Diskriminierung durch die Majoritätskulturen und Limitierungen durch Konstrukte von Nationalstaaten (wie die Tatsache, dass zum Beispiel Österreich in der Regel keine Doppelstaatsbürgerschaft zulässt). Situationen, in denen man sich (anscheinend) für eine der beiden Identitäten entscheiden muss, sorgen für Beklemmung. Trotz dieser Limitierungen wird die hybride Identität jedoch als positiv und bereichernd erlebt.

## 11. Selbstbezeichnungen

Wie bezeichnen sich die Interviewten selbst?

Solche Fälle, in denen die Befragten für sich Selbstbezeichnungen verwenden, die in einem Wort oder wenigen Wörtern (in der Regel Substantive

oder Adjektiv-Substantiv-Kombinationen oder Adjektive) zusammengefasst werden können, sind diese in der folgenden Tabelle dargestellt.

halb-halb	ATF4/12, CHF3/29, DEF4/4
ein Mix	ATF4/12, CHF3/29
ich bin Europäer / ich bin europäisch / ich fühl mich europäisch / wahrscheinlich fühl ich mich als Europäer / als Mitteleuropäer eher	DEM1/10, DEF6/14, DDF1/30, ATM3/13
x an mir ist finnisch, y an mir ist deutsch	DEF2/2, DEF5/5
ein skandinavischer oder nordisch-mitteleuropäischer Mischmasch	ATF4/12
deutsch-finnisch	DEM4/17
fifty-fifty, vielleicht eher sechzig-vierzig doch deutsch	DEF7/18
mehr österreichisch als finnisch	ATM3/13
gespaltene Identität	DEM4/17
ich bin Zwilling, das heißt ich bin, ich fühl mich als beides	ATF4/12
weder deutsch noch finnisch	DEF8/19
deutsch-finnisches Gemisch	DDF1/30
Bastard	DEF8/19
als deutsch	DEF3/3, DEM2/15
Doppelbürger	CHF3/29
als Urlaubsfinne und Ritualfinne	DEF3/3

Hierbei interessant ist, dass Bezeichnungen, die „Europa“ beinhalten, bei Menschen fallen, die bestätigen, dass eine Identitätsdefinition schwierig sei. Bei DEM1/10 ist es die Konstellation, als Sohn eines deutschen Vaters und einer finnischen Mutter das ganze Leben in Österreich gewohnt zu haben, ohne die österreichische Staatsangehörigkeit zu besitzen. Bei DDF1/30 wird

thematisiert, dass der Staat, dessen Staatsangehörigkeit sie besaß, 1990 aufgehört hat zu existieren.

Die meisten der Befragten beantworten die Frage nach ihrer Identität jedoch nicht direkt.

Sehr viel mehr findet man Antworten wie (DEF1/1, 7): „Als Deutsche mit finnischer Mutter“.

Oft präsentiert man sich mit verschiedenen Facetten, so Susanna (DEF2/2, 90–91): „Also meinem Charakter nach zu urteilen fühle ich mich ehr finnisch (*Pause*) und so vom Kopfe her (*Pause*) denk ich deutsch (*Pause*), aber so vom Herzen her denk ich eigentlich finnisch (*Pause*) ja“. Eine Argumentation, die auch aus der Untersuchung von Imppola (2020) bekannt ist und sogar im Titel der Dissertation als „Finnland im Herzen“<sup>21</sup> ihren Niederschlag gefunden hat.

Ebenso Tuija (DEF5/5, 59–67): „Mein Herz schlägt finnisch und irgendwie mein Körper ist deutsch“. Sie präzisiert: „Aber mein Herz ist sehr finnisch, ähm, und meine Zunge ist glaub ich auch ein bisschen finnisch, weil ich hier ganz oft höre, dass meine Aussprache wie ein Muttersprachler klingt (...) nur grammatikalisch mach ich nen Haufen Fehler“.

Eindeutige Aussagen findet man nur bei Manuela (DEF3/3, 9 und 19) und Johannes (DEM2/15). Auf die Frage, als wer oder was sie sich fühle, antwortet sie: „Als deutsch“. Ihren finnischen Anteil bezeichnet sie als „Urlaubsfinne“ und „Ritualfinne“ – ihre Hybridität ist also zeitlich und eventuell auch räumlich begrenzt. Johannes erwähnt im Interview drei Mal, dass sein Vater „gar kein Finnisch“ (16–17) sprach, beziehungsweise „der kein Finnisch sprach“ (111) und „mein Vater die Sprache nich sprach“ (126) und erläutert noch „mein Vater da nicht so die Ambitionen hatte, die Sprache, ähm, zu lernen.“ Johannes sieht sich sprachlich ausschließlich im Deutschen verankert, „Finnland ist für mich keine keine Heimat.“<sup>22</sup>

Im Zusammenhang mit der Erklärung der eigenen finnischen Identität werden sowohl Ereignisse der Vergangenheit erwähnt als auch in die Zukunft

<sup>21</sup> *”Suomi sydämessä”*: saksansuomalaisten Suomi-koulun oppilaiden, heidän vanhempinsa ja opettajiensa käsityksiä Suomesta, suomen kielestä ja Suomikoulusta”

<sup>22</sup> Die doppelte Verneinung ist prosodisch eindeutig als Betonung der negativen Antwort zu erkennen.

projiziert. Mit der Verwendung von Verben wird die Prozesshaftigkeit der Identität betont: „Ich bin in Finnland gezeugt worden“ (ATF4/12, 165), „ich bin in Finnland geboren“ (DEF6/14, 8–9), „ich habe mich in Finnland konfirmieren lassen“ (DEM3/16, 46) und „ich möchte auch dort eigentlich hin wieder zurück – quasi begraben werden“ (ATF4/12, 166–167). Auch wird die eigene *migrantische Identität* (Lutz 1991) von Peter thematisiert (ATM2/9, 60–63), der bemerkt, eine Person mit Migrationshintergrund zu sein sowie Jens (DEM3/16, 60–63), der sich mit anderen Personen migrantischer Identität vergleicht – mit dem Unterschied:

Dass ich nicht wie manche vielleicht türkischsprachigen Leute, ähm, oder polnischsprachigen sich für ihre für ihre Nationalität schämen, ähm, ähm, und die verheimlichen wollen, will ich sie extra zum Ausdrück bringen.

Eine finnische Identität kann auch von denjenigen für sich in Anspruch genommen werden, die kein oder nur wenig Finnisch sprechen. Dieses Ergebnis entspricht Forschungen, die mit anderen Sprachkonstellationen durchgeführt wurden. So zeigt Oriyama (2010), dass bei japanischen Informanten der zweiten Generation<sup>23</sup> in Australien Japanischkenntnisse nicht unbedingt indikativ waren für deren selbstgeschriebene Identität als Japaner:innen („positive attitudes toward hybrid identities and Japanese maintenance were found, regardless of the levels of Japanese proficiency“, abstract).

## 12. Konzept Muttersprache

Eines der wichtigsten Konzepte beim Sprechen über die eigene sprachliche Identität ist, wie man über die eigene(n) Muttersprache(n) spricht. Darüber hinaus kann man von den Befragten nicht erwarten, dass sie die akademische Diskussion über diesen Begriff und seine Abgrenzungen

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23 Eingeschlossen war auch eine als „1,5“-Generation bezeichnete Gruppe, die in der (frühen) Kindheit noch in Japan gelebt hatte, dann aber nach Australien umgezogen war.

gegenüber *Erstsprache* und *Zweitsprache* sowie *Native Language* (u.a. Günther & Günther 2007, Halonen 2010, Piippo 2021; Mahootian 2019) sowie seine verschiedenen Kriterien kennen, wie sie Skutnabb-Kangas (1989: 44) erläutert. Ebenso wenig kann man von den Befragten erwarten, dass sie sich des Konstruktes Muttersprache bewusst sind, wie es zum Beispiel Bonfiglio (2010) erläutert.

Wie widersprüchlich und ungenau dieses Konzept ist, ist jedoch manchen Befragten sehr deutlich und sie sprechen dieses auch an, so Ines (23-jährige Frau, DEF4/4; 9–10 und 48–53) – unter Vermeidung der Verwendung dieses Wortes (sic!):

Ich habe ja bis ich sechs oder sieben war, fließend Finnisch gesprochen und das war auch die erste Sprache, die ich gelernt hab. Danach kam Deutsch.

Mmh, na ja, sprachlich gesehen kann ich ja eigentlich nur sagen, dass ich Deutsche bin, weil ich kann ja nur Deutsch. Und ich muss auch sagen, man wird ja, wenn man erzählt, dass man Finne ist, wird man sofort gefragt: ‚Wow super, kannst du Finnisch?‘ Und jedes Mal muss ich sagen: ‚Nein, kann ich nicht mehr‘ und ich schäme mich da auch für, weil ich die Sprache so gerne könnte, weil das so ne schwere Sprache ist und ich sie als Kind gesprochen habe. Und das ärgert mich zu Tode, dass ich die nicht mehr spreche!

Ines zeigt die Diskrepanz, die zwischen den beiden Kriterien der Identifikation mit einer Muttersprache bestehen können. Die „internale Identifikation“ (Skutnabb-Kangas 1989: 46), über die sich die Sprecherin Ines mit Finnisch identifiziert, stimmt nicht überein mit der externen (*external*) Identifikation, mit der andere einen als einen Muttersprachler oder eine Muttersprachlerin einer Sprache identifizieren.

Ähnlich sieht es Sirpa (DEF6/14), die genauso wie Ines die als erste gelernte Sprache Finnisch zum Teil zunächst verloren hatte (23–24):

In Deutschland fühle ich mich n bisschen als exotische Deutsche und in Finnland, ich denke, würde nich das Sprachhindernis sein, ich fühl mich schon sehr viel mehr finnisch als deutsch.

Sirpa hat im Laufe ihres Lebens versucht, diese Diskrepanz aufzulösen, indem sie sich bemüht hat, ihre Finnischkenntnisse zu verbessern (124–125):

Klar, immer mal wieder versucht, Finnischunterricht mit Privatlehrer, Finnischunterricht in der Volkshochschule, später, sogar zwei Semester Finnougristik studiert, nee, Skandinavistik, weil Finnougristik ging nicht, oder gab es nicht, sicherlich auch auch, wenn das eher unbewusst ist, nicht nur Finnisch zu sein oder zu werden, sondern auch Finnisch zu **sprechen**.

Sirpa erzählt von einer Situation, in der sie versuchte, Finnisch zu sprechen, in der sie jedoch von einer Verwandten nicht ganz verstanden wurde und sich dieses viel zu sehr zu Herzen genommen zu haben (132–137):

Und da hab ich irgendwas auf Finnisch gesagt, und da hat sie mich korrigiert, dabei war es – also es hing an **einem** Wort, man konnte das verstehen, es war vielleicht ein bisschen holprig, und da hab ich gedacht ‚oh scheiße‘ äh, da hab ich ganz ganz ganz lange Zeit ein Problem damit, Finnisch zu sprechen, weil ich dann immer gedacht hab, ich mach dann Fehler, und man versteht das dann nicht, und das geht natürlich dann nicht.

Die dreimalige Wiederholung des verstärkenden Adverbs *ganz* sowie die Verwendung eines Fluchwortes in der Äußerung zeigen, wie emotionsgeladen sich dieses Ereignis in Sirpas Gedächtnis eingepägt hatte. Eine sprachliche Unsicherheit – wie sie beim Fremdsprachenlernen häufig vorkommt und eigentlich nur als normaler Entwicklungsschritt beim Fremdsprachenerwerb angesehen werden sollte – führte hier zu einer prekären Situation, weil sie intern für sich einen anderen Maßstab angelegt hatte als beim Fremdsprachenlernen im institutionellen Kontext. Sirpa hat in ihrem Leben sehr gut Französisch gelernt und gebraucht diese Sprache täglich im

beruflichen Kontext – bei einer Unsicherheit im Französischen kamen ihr aber nicht dieselben Zweifel wie beim Finnischen.

Sirpas Erfahrung ähnelt denjenigen, die neue Sprecher einer Minoritätssprache machen, die von den langjährigen Sprechern kritisiert werden (Sallabank & Marquis 2018).

Sowohl Ines wie auch Sirpa verwenden den Terminus „Finnisch ist meine erste Muttersprache“, trauen sich aber nicht, bei derselben Äußerung das „erste“ wegfällen zu lassen. Tuija (44 Jahre alt, DEF5/5) spricht bei der Beantwortung der statistischen Fragen von Deutsch als ihrer *Vatersprache*, und Finnisch als ihrer *Mutter(.)sprache* – die Mikropause zwischen *Mutter* und *Sprache* ist dabei deutlich zu hören. Das Deutsche hat hier eine Lücke im Wortschatz, die Verwendung der Termini *Patrilekt* (oder *patrimonial language*) und *Matrilekt* (Sorensen 1967, Lüpke 2021) könnte hier zu mehr Präzision führen. Der deutsche Begriff *Herkunftssprache* könnte der Tatsache nicht gerecht werden, dass Personen der zweiten Generation Finnisch nicht wie einer ihrer Elternteile *hergebracht* haben, sondern die Sprache im Elternhaus erlebt haben (oder aber auch nicht), das Englische scheint hier mit *Heritage Language* einen idealen Terminus gefunden zu haben (siehe Laakso *et al.* 2016: 12–13). Aber auch Tuija kämpft mit dem externen Anspruch, dass eine Muttersprache gut zu beherrschen sei, bevor man behaupten könne, ein muttersprachlicher Sprecher dieser Sprache zu sein, sie startet dafür ein Experiment (111–119):

Und ich habe einen Versuch gestartet, dass ich vier Monate in Helsinki Finnland gelebt habe, um auch herauszufinden, will ich hier immer sein und schaff ich das alleine, krieg ich das hin, dass ich die Sprache so gut beherrsche, dass ich mich hier ernähren kann und hab dann gedacht, nein, diese Nuancen, die du beherrscht im Deutschen, die werd ich im Finnischen, und wenn ich es noch 10, 20, 30 Jahre studiere nie so genau treffen oder ich hätte immer das Gefühl ich genüge nicht in dieser finnischen Sprache mich auszudrücken.

Tuija scheint hier mit einem fast statischen Kompetenzbegriff zu rechnen. Egal, wie viel Finnisch sie noch lernen würde, es würde für sie und für

ihren Kontext in ihrer eigenen Einschätzung nicht ausreichen. Wie viel von diesem Anspruch ist selbst auferlegt und wie viel hängt damit zusammen, dass die Umwelt von einer statischen Kompetenz ausgeht, während wir wissen, dass „ein Mensch oft mehrere Muttersprachen haben kann, deren Kompetenzniveaus sich während des Lebens verändern können“?<sup>24</sup> (Toivanen 2022: 29).

Stefanie (25 Jahre, ATF3/11) hat als Schülerin ein Schuljahr in Finnland – an einer finnischsprachigen Schule – verbracht und verfügt daher über Finnischkenntnisse, gibt diesen nach eigener Einschätzung die Durchschnittsnote befriedigend (3). Jedoch auch sie antwortet auf die Frage, was sie davon abgehalten hätte, finnisch zu sein oder zu werden (143):

Nee, ich glaub es ist wirklich diese Sprachbarriere.

Und wiederholt diese Aussage variierend (147–148):

Aber ja, halt wenn man immer, es ist eine Sprachbarriere.

Wie hoch der Anspruch ist, erkennt man daran, dass selbst Personen mit sehr guten Finnischkenntnissen, die zum Beispiel an der Universität Helsinki auf Finnisch unterrichten, davon berichten, wie sie es erleben, wenn sie auf ihre Fehler hingewiesen werden. Kimmo (46 Jahre, DEM4/17, 165–180) gibt sich für seine Finnischkenntnisse eine Durchschnittsnote von 1,3 (nur in der Schreibkompetenz ein „gut“, alle anderen Teilkompetenzen beurteilt er mit „sehr gut“):

Finnisch ist halt **extrem**<sup>25</sup> schwer in der Hinsicht und – ich mache bestimmt immer noch halt, mir hat einer mal gesagt, ich immer noch halt gewisse grammatikalische Fehler mache, irgendein Fall oder

<sup>24</sup> Übersetzt aus dem Finnischen: ”Yhdellä ihmisellä on usein useita äidinkieliä, joiden taito voi muuttua elämän aikana.“

<sup>25</sup> Betonung durch den Sprecher. Bei Grasz (2023) findet sich die dem Finnischen attributiv zugeschriebene Schwierigkeit im Titel der Veröffentlichung: „Finnish, the most difficult language to learn?“



zwei Fälle verwechsle ich, zum Beispiel, erschieß mich (*ironisch*), aber ich weiß nicht welche (*lacht*), aber so n paar verwechsle ich halt immer, obwohl ich rein theoretisch die Formen richtig habe und so aber dann halt an ner falschen Stelle halt dann ab und zu, ne, (...) das sind dann immer die professionellen keine Ahnung *Äidinkielen*<sup>26</sup> hastenichtgesehen, die dann das sich das ab und zu sich trauen halt, mir kundzutun, aber heutzutage versuche ich oder traue ich mich auch, Text zu schreiben.

Wenn mangelnde Finnischkenntnisse die Konstruktion einer finnischen Identität erschweren, dann sollte es umgekehrt auch Hinweise geben, dass verbessernde Finnischkenntnisse es einfacher machen. Dafür gibt es ebenfalls Hinweise. So Paola (DEF7/18, 47 Jahre, 271–272), die zum Zeitpunkt des Interviews schon 20 Jahre in Finnland verbracht hat:

Ich meine was geholfen hat finnisch zu sein is, wie gesagt, wirklich die Sprache.

Von Paola hat dieses jedoch erfordert, Finnougristik zu studieren, während ihres Studiums einen Auslandsaufenthalt an der Universität Helsinki zu absolvieren und direkt nach dem Studium nach Finnland zu ziehen.

Über Finnischkenntnisse zu verfügen und die Sprache möglichst perfekt und annähernd „wie ein Muttersprachler“ zu beherrschen, können auch – um in der Terminologie von Ang (2003, 142) zu sprechen, als die Kosten angesehen werden, die man für die Dazugehörigkeit zu der finnischen Diaspora zu zahlen hat: „But notwithstanding the obvious benefits to some, what are the costs of this recent valorisation of diaspora?“ (Ang 2003: 142)

<sup>26</sup> *äidinkieli*, im Genetiv *äidinkielen*, finn. Muttersprache; ist auch der Begriff, der für das Schulfach Finnisch gebraucht wird, gemeint sind Fachleute für das Fach „Finnisch als Muttersprache“; da es sich um ein Wort handelt, das zur Hälfte aus der finnischen und zur anderen Hälfte aus der deutschen Sprache gebildet wurde, ist auch nicht klar, ob man es als Substantiv der einen oder der anderen Sprache betrachten sollte; da die Matrixsprache Deutsch ist, habe ich es hier als deutsches Substantiv mit Großschreibung versehen.

Die Wichtigkeit der Sprache wurde auch in der Untersuchung von Tuomi-Nikula, Haanpää & Laine (2013: 42) erwähnt, jedoch muss bemerkt werden, dass wegen der großen Anzahl der nach Schweden Ausgewanderten (und deren Nachkommen, bei denen in der Mehrzahl der Fälle beide Elternteile Finnen waren) Finnisch in der Regel gut beherrscht wurde und es nur insgesamt drei Personen gab (von 144 Befragten), die kein Finnisch beherrschten.

### 13. Wie wird über Finnisch und Deutsch geredet?

Einerseits ist aufschlussreich, welche Begrifflichkeiten für diese Sprachen verwendet werden. Traut man sich, Finnisch als „Muttersprache“ anzugeben oder werden andere Begriffe verwendet? Aber nicht nur die vorgenommenen Kategorisierungen sind wichtig, sondern auch die im Zusammenhang genannten Adjektive (zum Beispiel „nicht perfekt“) und erwähnte Einschränkungen („eigentlich ja, aber...“) und Erklärungen. Die von den befragten Personen geschilderten mit Spracherwerb und Sprachverwendung verbundenen Familienszenarios sind vielschichtig und komplex. In einigen Fällen hat die Mutter begonnen, mit dem Kind Finnisch zu sprechen, wechselte jedoch später ins Deutsche. Gleichzeitig könnte sein, dass mit dem älteren Geschwisterkind weiterhin Finnisch verwendet wurde, so bei Viola (ATF4/20; 21–24):

(...) bin ich i Österreich aufgewachsen, auf Deutsch, also jetzt nicht zweisprachig ähm, genau ich hab a ältere Schwester mit der meine Mama wie sie klein war no Finnisch geredet hat, ähm, und dann als ich auf die Welt gekommen bin war das schon irgendwie vergessen, ähm. Und ich bin dann nur no auf auf Deutsch aufgezogen worden.

Oder die befragte Person weigerte sich, weiterhin Finnisch zu verwenden und beantwortete alle Fragen auf Deutsch. In vielen anderen Fällen wurde Finnisch während des Urlaubs mit den Verwandten verwendet. Stellvertretend für viele andere Aussagen hier Maisa (CHF3/29, 10–18):

Ähm, ich habe im Prinzip mit meiner Mutter nicht konsequent Finnisch gesprochen oder sie mit mir nicht konsequent in der Kindheit, ähm, habe aber die Sprache immer, ähm, täglich oder sogar mehrmals täglich oder auch in der Woche sicher ein paar Mal gehört mit dem Telefon (...) meine Großmutter hat angerufen oder meine Tante hat angerufen und dann haben wir da auch am Telefon Finnisch gesprochen. Ah ich konnte es einfach nicht perfekt, ähm, auch heute noch nicht.

Nur in ganz wenigen Fällen war eindeutig klar, dass Finnisch so gut wie nie verwendet wurde, dezidiert wurde zum Beispiel von Johannes erwähnt, dass der deutsche Vater „überhaupt nicht“ Finnisch konnte und deswegen zuhause kein Finnisch geredet wurde.

Die Anzahl derjenigen Personen, die Finnisch entweder als „Muttersprache“ oder als „auch Muttersprache“ oder als „(zweite) Erstsprache“ oder als „erste Sprache“ bezeichnen, beläuft sich auf 16. In zwei Fällen heißt die Antwort „eigentlich ja“, jedoch hat man die zuerst erlernte Sprache im Laufe der Kindheit wieder verlernt (Ines und Sirpa). In beiden Fällen vermeiden die Sprecherinnen, den Terminus „Muttersprache“ für das Finnische anzuwenden. Bemerkenswert ist auch, dass insgesamt sieben Personen es schaffen, der Frage über die eigenen Muttersprachen auszuweichen, so dass keine Aussagen gemacht werden.

Vergleicht man nun, wie die selbst zugeschriebene Finnischkompetenz mit einer selbst zugeschriebenen finnischen Muttersprache zusammenhängt, so kommt man zu dem Ergebnis, dass konsequenterweise eine selbst zugeschriebene finnische Muttersprache die Selbsteinschätzung verbessert. Die schlechteste für sich selbst vergebene Durchschnittsnote einer Person mit einer selbst zugeschriebenen finnischen Muttersprache ist 3,3 – also ein „Befriedigend“. Ermutigt die Tatsache, dass man sich Finnisch als Muttersprache zuschreiben kann, zur Vergabe einer besseren Finnischnote? Auch wenn ein Teil des erlernten Finnisch nicht vom finnischsprachigen Elternteil erlernt wurde, sondern später im Land?

Selbst eine 1,0 als selbst vergebene Durchschnittsnote sorgt nicht immer dafür, dass man sich vorbehaltlos eine finnische Identität zuschreiben kann.

Henna (ATF2/7) gibt sich diese Note, begründet ihre Entscheidung, Fennistik zu studieren, wie folgt (24–25):

(...) dass ich hier eben dann Fennistik mach, damit ich überhaupt mal die ganze Grammatik kann, ähm, und n bisschen mehr zum Finnischen, ähm, lerne. Also kann ichs jetzt schon wesentlich besser als früher (*lachend*).

Offen bleibt, welche Note sie sich vor dem Studium gegeben hätte. Oder ob die gute Note erst das Ergebnis der Anstrengung – beziehungsweise der Keuppschen Identitätsarbeit – ist, die man auf sich genommen hat, um dem Anspruch gerecht zu werden, als Muttersprachler:in des Finnischen auch „die ganze Grammatik“ zu beherrschen.

Von 16 Personen, die sich eine Gesamtnote von 2,3 oder besser geben, gibt es nur drei Personen, die explizit erwähnen, Finnisch nicht als Muttersprache erlernt zu haben (Kimmo, Viola und Maisa). Es scheint also eher schwierig zu sein (jedoch nicht unmöglich), ohne eine sich selbst zugeschriebene Muttersprache Finnisch auch ein sehr gutes bis gutes Niveau im Finnischen erreichen zu können. Auf jeden Fall erfordert es ein hohes Maß an Eigeninitiative.

Betrachtet man die Personen, die sich Finnisch als Muttersprache zuschreiben (n: 14, ohne die beiden Ausnahmen, die zwar Finnisch als Muttersprache hatten, die Sprachkompetenz aber bereits im Kindesalter verloren haben), dann ergibt sich eine Durchschnittsnote von 1,7. Personen ohne diese Zuschreibung (n: 8) erreichen im Durchschnitt 3,1. Der Unterschied zwischen beiden Personengruppen macht fast eineinhalb Noten aus. Personen, die keine direkte Stellungnahme zu ihren Muttersprachen einnehmen (n: 7), erteilen sich im Durchschnitt die Note 2,7.

#### **14. Hybride sprachliche Identität bei den Interviewten**

Auf die weiter oben unter Kapitel 4 postulierten Indikatoren für hybride Identität findet man bei fast allen Interviewten Hinweise.

Positive dynamisch erlebte Positionierungen drückt Michael (CHM3/26, 98–99) wie folgt aus, als er die Frage beantwortet, was ihm in den Sinn kommt, wenn er das Wort *kotimaa*<sup>27</sup> hört:

Irgendwie bin ich dann, kommt dann so der Finne in mir hervor.

Falls Situationen erlebt werden, bei denen man sich (anscheinend) für eine der Identitätsfacetten entscheiden muss, dann werden diese Situationen als sehr unangenehm empfunden. Linnea (30 Jahre alt, CHF4/31, 24–31) erinnert sich an ein Eishockeyspiel in ihrer Kindheit:

Ich werd das nie vergessen, dieses beklemmende Gefühl, ich hab dieses Match geguckt und dachte plötzlich, ‚Oh Gott, ich muss mich jetzt entscheiden, wer bin ich? Bin ich Schweizerin oder bin ich Finnin?‘ Das war für mich absolut Horror und ich hab angefangen zu heulen und niemand hat verstanden, was jetzt los ist.

Mehrere Personen zeigen trilinguale beziehungsweise multilinguale Identitäten (zum Thema Formierung trilingualer Identitäten bei jungen schwedischsprachigen Finn:innen siehe Vincze & Joyce 2018). So sagt Viola (ATF5/20, 134ff.):

Es ist wahrscheinlich Teil meiner Identität, dass i viele Sprachen sprech, ähm, ähm, würd ich sagen. Also ich hab in Frankreich gewohnt mehrere Jahre, ähm, und Französisch ist Teil von dem Ganzen, ähm, und eben wie gesagt Universität und Arbeit ist alles auf Englisch.

Bei Oskar (DEM1/10, 20–13) ist es das Französische, seine Eltern haben sich in Frankreich kennen gelernt:

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27 Entspricht annähernd dem deutschen *Heimat*.

Wenn man es streng nimmt, bin ich dreisprachig aufgewachsen, wie ich mit drei Jahren in die französische Schule gegangen bin, ähm, also in die französische Vorschule, ähm, somit das Schreiben und Lesen hab ich auf drei Sprachen gelernt.

Carmen (DEF9/22, 38–41) wächst mit einer finnischsprachigen Mutter und einem deutschsprachigen Vater in den Niederlanden dreisprachig auf. Das Niederländische wird nach dem Umzug der Familie nach Finnland und dem Besuch des deutschen Kindergartens weiterhin gepflegt:

(...) weil wir auch hier noch in so ner Holland-Schule oder so nem Holland-Club dann waren (...) also bis ich 18 war. Da geht man jeden zweiten Samstag dann da hin.

Sie erwähnt, dass sie „ab und zu mal“ im Ausland gelebt habe (Malta, Sankt Petersburg, London) und fasst zusammen (103–105):

Aber ich glaub, dass meine Identität, ähm, baut si- baut sich auch darauf auf, dass ich von überall komme und überall war, ähm, und so und ich möchte das auch in Zukunft auch noch machen.

## 15. Diskriminierung

Finn:innen erster und erst recht zweiter Generation gelten für Mitglieder der Majoritätskulturen in allen in der Studie involvierten deutschsprachigen Ländern als „unsichtbar“, so wie es auch im Titel der biographieanalytischen Studie von Ruokonen-Engler (2012) erwähnt ist. Es muss daher einen Anlass geben, um in den deutschsprachigen Ländern als ‚Ausländer:in‘ aufzufallen. Die Sprache ist es in der Regel nicht, weil die zweite Generation Deutsch auf muttersprachlichem Niveau beherrscht. Die finnische Sprache fällt dann auf, wenn sie in Anwesenheit von Deutschsprachigen mit dem finnischsprachigen Elternteil gesprochen wird. Deswegen gibt es in den Interviews auch Aussagen, dass bei der Anwesenheit auch nur einer einsprachig deutschsprechenden Person der finnischsprachige Elternteil sofort mit dem Finnischsprechen

aufhörte und Deutsch weiterredete. Trotz dieser Unsichtbarkeit und der Privilegiertheit als „Erste-Klasse-Ausländer“ (Ruokonen-Engler 2012: 344) gibt es Berichte von Diskriminierung. In diesem Zusammenhang fällt auf, dass bei der Befragung von Tuomi-Nikula, Haanpää & Laine (2013: 15) keine Diskriminierung erwähnt wurde und ausschließlich die eigene privilegierte Position im Vergleich mit anderen Immigrantengruppen betont wurde.

Tuija erlebt auch Ausländerfeindlichkeit, betont aber (prosodisch klar erkenntlich), dass es sich nur um einen Fall gehandelt hat (122–123):

Und es gab **ein** Nachbarkind und das hat mich schon geprägt, das durfte nicht mit uns spielen, weil wir keine deutsche Mutter hatten.

Über verschiedenartige Ausländerfeindlichkeit in Bezug auf die finnischen Wurzeln<sup>28</sup> bis hin zu Kritik an der anderen Kultur berichten insgesamt neun der 31 Befragten. Die Jahrgänge derjenigen, die offene Ausländerfeindlichkeit erlebt haben, lassen darauf hoffen, dass diese langsam schwindet: 1961 (ATF1/6), 1964 (ATF4/12), 1966 (DEF6/14), 1969 (DEF5/5 und DEF7/18), 1982 (CHF1/24), 1985 (ATM1/8 und CHF4/31) und 1986 (CHF2/27). Die Berichte darüber gehen von der offenen Nennung des Worts „ausländerfeindlich“ bis zu subtileren Erwähnungen. So Agda (51jährige Frau, ATF4/12; 24–28):

Und ich hab, äh, nur in den Sommerferien immer Finnisch gesprochen weil meine Mutter, nachdem sie ja eben wenig Deutsch konnte, der Meinung war, sie muss ja mal erst Deutsch lernen und dann hatte sie leider eine Schwiegermutter, die, äh, das nicht unterstützt hat also eher ausländerfeindlich eingestellt war.

Sirpa (Jahrgang 1966, DEF6/14) erfährt mehrfache und andauernde Diskriminierung, unterstützt durch Beschlüsse der deutschen Behörden verliert Sirpa ihre finnische Muttersprache. Nach dem frühen Tod der Mutter erhält der Vater das Sorgerecht, die finnischsprachigen Verwandten (so z. B. die

28 Darüber hinaus wird das Wort *Ausländer* auch für Diskriminierung innerhalb eines Landes für Sprechende einer anderen Mundart verwendet, so CHM1/23: „und in Zürich war man mit diesem St. Galler Dialekt einfach sofort der Ausländer“.

Großmutter, mehrere Tanten und die Patentante, die mehrfach interveniert haben und angeboten haben, dass Sirpa bei ihnen aufwachsen könne) haben keinerlei Möglichkeit mehr, auf das Schicksal des Kindes Einfluss zu nehmen – trotz der Tatsache, dass der Vater als Seemann sich nicht wirklich um die Tochter kümmern kann. Auch nach dem Tod des Vaters spielt es für die deutschen Behörden keine Rolle, dass es finnischsprachige Verwandte gibt, die Sirpa zu sich genommen hätten. Nachdem Sirpa zu den deutschen Großeltern kommt, erwähnen diese in Briefen an die finnische Verwandtschaft als positiv (sic!), dass das Kind sich schon gut eingelebt habe und „schon gar kein Finnisch mehr spreche.“ Nach dem Verlust der Muttersprache kann Sirpa mit einigen Verwandten nicht mehr kommunizieren (weil diese kein Deutsch sprechen und die deutschsprachigen Briefe der Großeltern und später Pflegeeltern daher auch nicht lesen können), die Verbindung zu der finnischen Verwandtschaft läuft vor allem über diejenige Verwandtschaft, die Deutsch beherrscht.

Bei Paola (Jahrgang 1969, DEF7/18) ist es der Kinderarzt, der der finnischen Mutter davon abrät, mit der Tochter Finnisch zu sprechen, sie imitiert die Aussage des Arztes (16–18):

Nein, das sei nicht gut, also von wegen zwei Sprachen das Kind würde ja völlig durcheinanderkommen, vor allen Dingen, wenn es in Deutschland zur Schule geht.

Der Bericht der zweitjüngsten Befragten, die Diskriminierung erlebt hat, ist schon wesentlich subtiler. Linnea (30 Jahre alt, Jahrgang 1985; ihr Vater ist finnischsprachig, im Haushalt gab es finnische Au-pairs<sup>29</sup>; 306–309) berichtet von den Nachbarn ihrer Kindheit:

Und viele Nachbarn, da gab es viele so ältere Paare, die alles so Stereotyp-Schweizer (*lachend*) die waren total schockiert am

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**29** Finnische Au-pairs wurden ausschließlich in Familien mit einem finnischsprachigen Vater eingestellt. Es könnte sich hier um die Sorge handeln, dass dem Kind / den Kindern bei den für Männer typischen längeren Arbeitszeiten durch die Abwesenheit der Väter nicht genügend finnisches Input geboten werden kann.



Anfang (...) dann war Papa viel weg, und ‚das geht ja auch nicht‘ und ‚und diese Au-pairs ständig, die armen Kinder, immer eine neue Bezugsperson‘ (*die Stimme der Zitierten imitierend*).

Sofia (CHF2/27, Jahrgang 1986, 287–288) ist die jüngste derjenigen, die Diskriminierung erlebt haben. Sie erzählt von einer Lehrerin, die trotz Sofias Bemühen sich „zurückzunehmen“ sagt:

Es war im Stil ‚du bist ja sowieso was Besseres, weil du noch Finnisch sprichst.

Ihre Reaktion war es, sich „immer zurückzunehmen“ (289–290), ein Beispiel dafür, dass eine einzige Aussage einer Lehrkraft fast lebenslange Auswirkungen zeigen kann.

Ines fällt und Sirpa fiel, wie Skutnabb-Kangas (1989: 451) erläutert, in die Kategorie derjenigen, die eine Definition von Muttersprache benötigen: „The only monolinguals for whom a definition is needed are those who learned one language as their first language and later completely forgot it“.

Zusätzlich zu offener Ausländerfeindlichkeit erlebten einige Befragte ein offen ausgedrücktes Unverständnis der eigenen Identität gegenüber und sogar berufliche Diskriminierung. So erzählt Nanna (54-jährige Frau, ATF1/6 (54ff.)), dass sie wegen der Kenntnis mehrerer Sprachen auch berufliche Nachteile erlebt hat.<sup>30</sup>

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**30** „Na es ist so, die Österreicher hören sofort, dass ich nicht, dass ich eine andere Sprache auch kann. Das hört man. (...) Österreicher hören das. Und dann fangen sie immer an zu fragen, ‚woher komme ich, woher komme ich‘ und dann sag ich immer, ‚Ich bin Österreicherin, aber meine Mutter stammt aus Finnland und ich bin zweisprachig aufgewachsen und so weiter.‘ ‚Ach ja, Sie Finnin‘ und dann werd ich geprägt als Finnin und da – (...) ich bin immer in der Schublade. Das war beruflich auch leider auch so, also da hab ich mir natürlich starke Nachteile, weil ich bin dann Ausländerin oder irgendwie so in ihren Köpfen. Ja, mich stört das inzwischen nicht mehr.“

Cornelius (ATM1/8, 166ff.) berichtet in einer Aussage von seinem finnischen Vornamen, der ständig für Erklärungsbedarf sorgt und die daraus resultierende Diskriminierung.<sup>31</sup>

Karolina (CHF1/24) sind ein bis zwei Situationen negativ in Erinnerung, die sie auf die ländliche Umgebung ihrer Kindheit zurückführt (199–207).<sup>32</sup>

Gleichzeitig sollte auch erwähnt werden, dass einige Befragte explizit Diskriminierung verneinen, so zum Beispiel Susanna (DEF2/2, Jahrgang 1967, 179–181):

Nein, im Gegenteil, wenn wir Finnisch geredet haben oder so, dann hieß es immer ‘sach das nochmal’ in der Schule, finnische Wörter wollten se dann von mir wissen, ‘sach mal, das hört sich so cool an’.

Für Deutschland könnte jedoch weiter davon ausgegangen werden, dass die Muttersprachen von Immigranten tendenziell mit geringerem Prestige verbunden sind, und zwar in der Selbsteinschätzung (sic!) durch deren Sprechende, wie Schroedler, Purkarthofer & Cantone (2022: 12) in ihrer Studie bemerkten, die allerdings keine finnischen Immigranten inkludierte.<sup>33</sup> Schlussfolgernd bemerken die Autoren der Studie, dass nur Kenntnisse in

31 „Ja, was mich finnisch macht, oder was an mir finnisch ist, das ist natürlich zuerst einmal mein Name. Weil (*finnischer Vorname*) ist jetzt nicht unbedingt, (*lacht*), es ist etwas, das, das hab ich auch immer, das erste, was ich erklären musste. War aber auch immer irgendwie ja, in Österreich gibt es ja eine nationalsozialistische Geschichte und es gibt halt Leute, die sind mehr oder weniger offen gegenüber anderen Kulturen und dann kommt man natürlich spätestens in der Pubertät, wenn man in der Großstadt fortgeht, auch an Leute, denen ist das nicht geheuer, wenn man von woanders herkommt und die schauen einen blöd an oder machen blöde Bemerkungen oder ähnliches.“

32 „Und äh, das war dann schon, also es gab ein zweimal vielleicht so n bisschen negative oder schwierige Erfahrungen für mich und vielleicht auch meine Mutter, wo die Kinder... aber jetzt im Nachhinein muss ich sagen, Kinder verstehen ja auch noch nicht alles und, meinens eigentlich nicht böse und wenn sie was sagen oder sich auf eine bestimmte Art verhalten, dann kommt das ja oft auch von den Eltern. Aber es gab schon so ein paar Mal ähm irgendwelche Bemerkungen halt im Stil von ähm, ja, ‘was sprichst du eigentlich mit deiner Mutter für eine seltsame Sprache?’“

33 Inkludiert waren Sprechende des Türkischen (n: 22), Polnischen (n: 10), Russischen (n: 9), Kurdischen und Arabischen (jeweils 8), Englischen (n: 7), Spanischen, Griechischen und Albanischen (jeweils 4), Italienischen, Portugiesischen, Französischen und

globalen Sprachen wie dem Englischen, Französischen oder Spanischen Prestige beinhalten (ebenda), außerdem:

The fact that Spanish and Italian are found in the group of languages with a high perceived value may be explained by Eurocentric views about early high-cultures, or by the circumstance that these languages are part of classical foreign language curricula and can thus be framed as human capital with relative political importance following logics of education economics.

Da Finnisch in keine diese Beschreibungen fällt, könnte man davon ausgehen, dass Kenntnisse im Finnischen nicht prestigefördernd sein könnten – genauere Untersuchungen darüber fehlen jedoch. Die Tatsache, dass Finnisch seit 1995 eine der Amtssprachen der EU darstellt, könnte dem Prestige des Finnischen historisch jedoch geholfen haben.

Mit zunehmender Akzeptanz mehrerer Muttersprachen durch die Umwelt sinkt auch das Risiko von Diskriminierung.

## **16. Selbst zugeschriebene Finnischkompetenz als Indikator für eine finnische Identität?**

Unter den Befragten gab es Personen, die nach eigener Aussage kaum, gar nicht oder wenig Finnisch konnten. Diese teilen sich jedoch in zwei Gruppen auf: Eine kleinere Gruppe von nur zwei Personen, die den Verlust des Finnischen zwar bedauert, aber in ihrem Leben nichts unternommen hat, um (wieder) Finnischkenntnisse zu erlangen (DEF4/4, Jahrgang 1992; DEM2/15, Jahrgang 1981). Die andere Gruppe (insgesamt 14 Personen: ATF2/7, DEF5/5, ATM2/9, ATF3/11, ATM3/13, DEF6/14, DEM3/16, DEM4/17, DEF7/18, ATF5/20, CHM2/25, CHF2/27, CHM4/28, DDF1/30) litt in der Vergangenheit oder leidet noch immer (jedenfalls zum Zeitpunkt des Interviews) unter dem Anspruch der Außenwelt, als Finne oder Finnin auch Finnisch können zu sollen und unternimmt je nach eigenen Möglichkeiten zahlreiche Versuche, dieses

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Dari (jeweils 2), Vietnamesischen, Thai, Tschetschenischen, Berber, Kroatischen, Slowakischen, Kantonesischen, Ukrainischen und Milanesischen (jeweils 1).

für sich selbst konstatierte Manko zu beseitigen. Wie stark die fehlenden Finnischkenntnisse die Interviewten stören und auch die Art, wie dies mir gegenüber als Interviewerin ausgedrückt wird, ist dabei individuell sehr unterschiedlich. Zu den von den Befragten unternommenen Tätigkeiten, die entweder im deutschsprachigen Land oder in Finnland durchgeführt werden,<sup>34</sup> gehören:

- Volkshochschulkurse in der finnischen Sprache (DEF6/14)
- Privatstunden in der finnischen Sprache (DEF6/14)
- Studium der finnischen Sprache an der Universität (ATF2/7, ATM3/13, DEF6/14, DEF7/18, DEM4/17)
- Bevorzugung von Finnland als Urlaubsland gegenüber anderen Optionen (alle bis auf DEM2/15)
- Engagement in finnisch-deutschen/österreichischen/Schweizer Vereinen in Deutschland und/oder Österreich oder der Schweiz (DEF5/5; CHM3/26)
- Verfassen und Unterhaltung eines Blogs über Finnland (DEF5/5)
- Konfirmation in Finnland (DEM3/16, CHM4/28)<sup>35</sup>
- Besuch von Sommerkursen der finnischen Sprache während des Urlaubs in Finnland (ATM 2/9, ATF3/11, DDF1/30)
- längere Aufenthalte in Finnland, die über einen Urlaub hinausgehen (DEF5/5; ATM3/13)
- Aufenthalte als Austauschschüler:in oder (Austausch)Student:in oder Praktika in Finnland (ATF3/11, DEM4/17, DEF7/18, ATF5/20,

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**34** Selbstverständlich kann es auch andere zusätzliche Gründe für die hier erwähnten Maßnahmen und Tätigkeiten geben und es kann dann schwierig sein, den Anteil der verschiedenen Gründe für die Entscheidung abzuwiegen, so wird für den Umzug nach Finnland von DEF5/5 erwähnt, dass ihr zukünftiger Partner bereits in Finnland wohnte und die Entscheidung daher leicht fiel. Trotzdem ist die Vielfalt und zum Teil Hartnäckigkeit sowie der damit verbundene Zeiteinsatz mit der von vielen Interviewten beschriebenen Tätigkeiten bemerkenswert.

**35** Zum Thema „Konfirmation in Finnland – ein Weg zum Finnischsein?“ ist eine Magisterarbeit geschrieben worden (Mäkitalo 2005). Hier stellt sich die Frage, ob „Finnischsein“ auch ein Marker für multiple soziale Identität sein könnte, zu der als religiöse Identität auch das Luthertum gehören könnte.

CHM2/25, CHF2/27) oder ein Praktikum an der finnischen Seemannskirche in London (DEM3/16)

- Absolvierung des Militärdienstes in Finnland; falls der Militärdienst woanders absolviert wurde, dann wurden die Gründe dafür explizit erklärt<sup>36</sup> (DEM4/17)
- Umzug nach Finnland (DEM4/17, DEF7/18, ATF5/20)
- Wahl eines Berufes und/oder eines Arbeitsplatzes, bei dem man mit Finnland und/oder finnischen Themen im deutschsprachig-finnischen Kontext zu tun hat (DEM4/17, DEF7/18, CHM2/25, CHF2/27). Zwei der Befragten wählten eine Ausbildung als Übersetzerin und Dolmetscherin und arbeiten auch in diesem Beruf.
- explizite Erwähnung der persönlichen Relevanz dessen, dass es einem wichtig sei, dass man die finnische Sprache auch an die eigenen (noch ungeborenen) Kinder weitergebe, so Timo (ATM2/9, 95–96):

Es wäre mir in gewisser Weise wahrscheinlich auch ein Anliegen, es meinen Kindern weiterzugeben.

Diese Gruppe unternimmt ihre Anstrengungen im Rahmen des Spracherwerbs freiwillig, anders als ethnolinguistische Gruppen, die aufgrund ihres Aussehens einen Druck spüren, ihre Herkunftssprache beherrschen zu sollen, z. B. Japaner der vierten Generation in den USA, siehe dazu Tsuda (2015: 605).

Ein Teil der Studierenden, die an Universitäten Finnougristik als Fach studieren, gehört zu der untersuchten Gruppe. Über die Motivation von Finnougristikstudierenden für ihr Studium gibt es keine länderumfassenden Daten (und noch weniger historische Daten), jedoch hat Alatalo (2005) die Motivation von 30 Studierenden des Finnischen an der Universität Wien erforscht.

**36** CHM1/23 erklärt ausführlich, dass er den Militärdienst „eigentlich in Finnland“ machen wollte (149–150), sich dann aber doch für die Schweiz entschieden hatte, weil es in Finnland keine Abteilung mit Pferden mehr gebe. Jedoch verspürte keiner der Interviewten das Bedürfnis, nicht in Deutschland oder Österreich absolvierten Militärdienst zu erklären.

Sie identifiziert fünf Gruppen, eine davon nennt sie die „Rückkehr zu den Wurzeln“ (2005: 50), diese Gruppe ist identisch mit den hier Untersuchten und ebenso wie bei den hier Befragten gibt es Personen, die in der Herkunftsfamilie kein Finnisch gelernt haben. Aufgrund der kleinen Gruppe sind keine weitgehenden Rückschlüsse zu ziehen, jedoch klassifiziert sie drei der untersuchten Lernenden in diese Gruppe ein. Interessant ist, dass diese Gruppe keine einzige Unterrichtseinheit verpasste, jedoch in ihrer Motivation der Gruppe „Auswanderer“ nachsteht (die sich vor allem durch aktive Bemühungen und Planung eines definitiven Umzugs nach Finnland auszeichnete) und sich weniger sicher zeigt, ob ein Umzug oder eine Arbeitsaufnahme in Finnland geplant sei. Darüber hinaus zeigt sich, „dass bei Untersuchung der geschlossenen Umfrage alle Personen der Gruppe ‘Rückkehr zu den Wurzeln’ ein großes Bedürfnis ausdrückten, gute Ergebnisse zu erzielen. Sie wollten in allen Teilbereichen Finnisch erlernen (schreiben, sprechen und lesen) und empfanden dies als eine Herausforderung, wollten sich als Lernende des Finnischen weiterentwickeln.“<sup>37</sup>

Wie stark diese Motivation ausgeprägt sein kann (nicht zuletzt befindet sich „meine Wurzeln“ auch bei den Begriffen, die auf Finnisch verwendet wurden), bestätigt auch Ang (2003: 142): „This reaching back to one’s ancestral ,roots‘ can be a powerful, almost Utopian, emotional pull.“

Das Ergebnis ist, dass ein Teil derjenigen, die fehlende Kenntnisse des Finnischen als Manko gesehen haben, es durch ihr eigenes Engagement und damit einen Teil ihrer Identitätsarbeit (Keupp *et al.* 1999) geschafft haben, so viel Finnisch zu lernen, dass sie mit dem Ergebnis (mehr oder weniger) zufrieden sind. Das trifft besonders auf diejenigen zu, die längere Zeiten in Finnland gewohnt haben oder dauerhaft nach Finnland umgezogen sind (DEM4/17, DEF7/18, ATF5/20, CHM2/25).

Henna (Jahrgang 1988, ATF2/7, 130–132) hat sich entschlossen, neben Betriebswirtschaft auch Finnisch zu studieren, obwohl ihre Mutter mit ihr Finnisch gesprochen hat:

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**37** Im Original: „Suljettuja kyselyitä tarkastelemalla osoittautui, että kaikilla ,Paluu Juurille’-profiilin oppijoilla oli korkea saavutusten tarve. He halusivat oppia suomen kieltä kaikin puolin (kirjoittamaan, puhumaan ja lukemaan) ja kokivat tämän haasteellisena sekä halusivat kehittyä suomen kielen opiskelijoina.“, ebenda, 54–55.

Also ich bin sehr froh, dass die Mama mit mir Finnisch gesprochen hat. Wahrscheinlich würde ich das auch sowieso studieren, hätt sies nicht gemacht. Einfach, dass ichs mal lern.

Diejenigen, die ein größeres Engagement im Bereich der Aneignung des Finnischen nicht geschafft haben, überlegen sich, nach Eintritt des Rentenalters<sup>38</sup> nach Finnland umzuziehen (DEF2/2; 32–33), selbst wenn im Interview kein Bedauern über lückenhafte Finnischkenntnisse geäußert wurde:

Ich würde auch gerne nach Finnland ziehen spätestens im Rentenalter werden wir dahinziehen.

Philip (CHM4/28; 283ff.) gibt seinem Unbehagen über seine fehlenden Teilkompetenzen im finnischen Ausdruck – dabei hat er sich für seine Finnischkenntnisse eine Durchschnittsnote von 3,5 gegeben, nur für die Schreibkompetenz gab er sich eine 5,5, für das Sprechen eine 2,5:

Ich weiß, es es is vielleicht noch n bisschen *strange* wenn man mehr darüber nachdenkt, wie stark ich eigentlich mit Finnland verwachsen bin durch den Job, äh, und auch eben wie stolz ich auf das Land und wie schlecht ich die Sprache eigentlich spreche. Das ist eigentlich vielleicht das, oder wie wie dass ichs nich lesen kann, äh, und das ist etwas was mich selbst immer wieder zum Nachdenken auch bringt. Ähm, dass ich mir nich die Zeit nehme (...) wo ich mich täglich ärgere, dass ich mich nicht **mehr** mich mit der Sprache auseinandersetze.

Aber selbst Ines (Jahrgang 1992, DEF4/4, 237–239), die keine Ambitionen verspürt, ihr Finnisch zu verbessern, äußert bei der Frage, ob sie Veränderungen zum Lebensmittelpunkt plant:

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38 Dieses Vorhaben wurde auch bei Tuomi-Nikula, Haanpää & Laine (2013: 32) erwähnt.

Nee, derzeit nicht. Das war zwar immer so nen bisschen Spielerei halt. Es wär interessant, nach Finnland zu ziehen, einfach um die Sprache wieder nen bisschen zu lernen, schönes Land und Heimat aber – ähm, ist jetzt nicht fest geplant.

Interessanterweise ist es auch hier die Sprache, die vor allem an erster Stelle genannt wird, als wichtigstes Vorhaben einer solchen – wenn auch im Augenblick unwahrscheinlichen – Veränderung.

Von den Befragten wurde nicht thematisiert, ob eine positive finnische Identitätszuschreibung mit einer anderen konkurrieren würde. Die Identitätszuschreibungen scheinen nicht miteinander zu konkurrieren, was auch den Ergebnissen anderer Untersuchungen entspricht, so fanden Vincze & Joyce (2017: 97) bei ihrer Studie zu der Identität schwedischsprachiger Jugendlicher in Finnland heraus: „that Swedish language identity was positively correlated with both English and Finnish identification“.

## **17. Zusammenfassung**

Nachkommen von Finn:innen und damit Personen der zweiten Generation in den deutschsprachigen Ländern haben – trotz einiger negativer Erfahrung von Diskriminierung – ein positives Verhältnis zu ihren finnischen Wurzeln. Man kann sogar sagen: Sie fühlen sich oft Finnland mehr verbunden als ihrem derzeitigen Wohnland. Das entspricht den Ergebnissen von Tuomi-Nikula, Haanpää & Laine (2013). Sie präsentieren sich in fast allen Fällen als hybride, transnationale Agenten beider (oder sogar mehrerer) Kulturbereiche.

In der nachfolgenden Tabelle wurden die Ergebnisse zusammengefasst. Als Marker für Hybridität wurden die unter Absatz 4 erwähnten verwendet.



### Überblick über die Interviewten.

Code	Pseudonym	Alter	Wohnort zum Zeitpunkt des Interviews	Selbstzuge- schriebene Finnisch- kenntnisse als Schulnote <sup>39</sup>	finnische Identität	Finnisch ist (auch) Mutter- sprache/ Erstsprache/ erste Sprache.	Marker für Hybridität (-: keine Anzeichen; +: schwache/ wenige Anzeichen; ++: aus- gebildete Hybridität)
DEF1/1	Mari	47	DE	3,5	ja, mE	(keine Aussage)	+
DEF2/2	Susanna	47	DE	3,5	ja, mE	(keine Aussage)	+
DEF3/3	Manuela	44	DE	4,0	ja, mE	(keine Aussage)	+
DEF4/4	Ines	23	DE	6,0	ja, mE	„eigentlich ja“	+
DEF5/5	Tuija	46	DE	3,4	ja, mE	ja	++
ATF1/6	Nanna	61	AT	1,0	ja	ja	++
ATF2/7	Henna	27	AT	1,0	ja, mE	ja	++
ATM1/8	Cornelius	30	AT	1,3	ja	ja, „zweite Erstsprache“	++
ATM2/9	Timo	21	AT	1,8	ja, mE	ja	++
DEM1/10	Oskar	19	AT	2,3	ja	ja	++
ATF3/11	Stephanie	25	AT	3,0	ja, mE	nein	+

**39** Die Befragten wurden gebeten, ihren eigenen Finnischkenntnissen deutsche Schulnoten von 1–6 in den Teilkompetenzen Hörverständnis, Leseverständnis, Schreiben und Lesen zu vergeben und ihnen wurde versichert, dass keine Überprüfung ihrer Kenntnisse vorgenommen werden würden. Aus den vier vergebenen Noten wurde gleichgewichtig eine Durchschnittsnote ausgerechnet, die hier vermerkt ist.

ATF4/12	Agda	51	AT	2,8	ja	nein	+
ATM3/13	Peter	37	AT	1,5	ja, mE	ja	++
DEF6/14	Sirpa	49	DE	2,3	ja, mE	„eigentlich ja“	++
DEM2/15	Johannes	34	DE	5,3	nein	nein	
DEM3/16	Jens	39	DE	3,3	ja, mE	ja	++
DEM4/17	Kimmo	48	FI	1,3	ja, mE	(keine Aussage)	++
DEF7/18	Paola	47	FI	1,3	ja, mE	ja	++
DEF8/19	Jaana	44	FI	1,0	ja	ja	++
ATF5/20	Viola	32	FI	1,8	ja, mE	nein	++
DEM5/21	Jochen	47	FI	1,0	ja	ja	++
DEF9/22	Carmen	25	FI	1,0	ja	ja	++
CHM1/23	Ruedi	27	CH	1,5	ja	(keine Aussage)	++
CHF1/24	Karolina	34	CH	1,8	ja	ja	++
CHM2/25	Niklas	31	CH	1,5	ja, mE	(keine Aussage)	++
CHM3/26	Michael	29	CH	2,3	ja	ja	++
CHF2/27	Sofia	29	CH	1,8	ja	ja	++
CHM4/28	Philipp	35	CH	3,5	ja, mE	nein	++
CHF3/29	Maisa	33	CH	2,3	ja	nein	++
DDF1/30	Annele	49	CH	4,8	nein	nein	+
CHF4/31	Linnea	30	CH	1,3	ja	(keine Aussage)	++

Erläuterungen zur Tabelle:

mE = mit Einschränkungen

Die Zugehörigkeit zur zweiten Generation empfinden alle als positiv, jedoch ist diese auch mit Kosten verbunden: der Forderung, als Finne oder Finnin auch Finnisch sprechen zu sollen.

Diejenigen, die durch verschiedene Umstände in ihrer Kindheit und Jugend jedoch kaum, wenig oder nach eigener Auffassung zu geringe Finnischkenntnisse erlangt haben, leiden oft unter dieser Tatsache und unternehmen eine Reihe von Anstrengungen, um dem für sie kaum zu erreichenden Idealbild eines ‚Muttersprachlers‘ oder einer ‚Muttersprachlerin‘ des Finnischen nahe zu kommen. Die finnische Identität wird für viele zum Projekt, das bewältigt werden will, das es aber wert ist, in Angriff zu nehmen, eventuell auch erst für die darauffolgende Generation. So erwähnen auch bei Tuomi-Nikula (2013: 51) 6% der Personen zweiter Generation, dass sie konkrete Pläne für einen Umzug nach Finnland hegen und ein möglicher Grund dafür die „Verbesserung der Sprachkenntnisse des Kindes“ sei.

Die Hürde, als Sprecher des Finnischen zweifelsfrei als Gruppenmitglied erkannt und akzeptiert zu werden, scheint beim Finnischen sehr hoch zu sein. Auf diese Tatsache wurde bereits hingewiesen, so bemerkt Laakso (2015: 174):

Finns seem to have a low tolerance in general towards non-native Finnish (deviations which in the mouth of native speakers might count as dialectalisms or word play are often explicitly corrected), and this will be a real challenge for the integration of migrants in Finland (see also Korhonen 2012).

Ganz ähnlich argumentiert Tuomi-Nikula (2013, Vorwort): „Die Haltung der Finnen (Arbeitgeber) gegenüber Menschen, die anderswo ausgebildet wurden, die Intoleranz gegenüber Menschen, die Finnisch mit gebrochenem Akzent sprechen, und die Intoleranz auf vielen Ebenen des Lebens sollten ebenfalls angesprochen werden.“<sup>40</sup> Von ähnlichen Erlebnissen berichtet auch eine deutsche Einwanderin in Nordfinnland (Grasz 2023: 186).

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**40** ”Myös suomalaisten (työnantajien) asenteellisuuteen muualla koulutuksen saaneita kohtaan, suomen kieltä murtaen ääntäviin ja monilla elämän tasoilla esiintyvään suvaitsemattomuuteen tulisi puuttua.”

Besonders Sprachlernende der zweiten Generation könnten es als frustrierend erleben, wenn sie trotz ihres teilweise finnischen Hintergrunds nicht als Gruppenmitglied anerkannt werden. Da sie sich der Hürden besonders bewusst sind (erste Hinweise dafür liefert die Untersuchung von Alatalo 2005, jedoch wäre weitere Forschung notwendig) und Finnland aus eigener Erfahrung kennen, geben sie sich besondere Mühe beim Spracherwerb. Es könnte daher sein, dass verschiedene Sprechergemeinschaften unterschiedlich hohe Hürden haben, um andere als kompetente Gruppenmitglieder anzusehen. Da die deutschsprachigen Länder eine längere Geschichte als De-facto-Einwanderungsländer hinter sich haben, könnte die Schwelle hier ein Stück niedriger sein als in Finnland, das sich erst nach dem EU-Beitritt 1995 in höherem Maß für Einwanderung geöffnet hat. Die Dichotomie *native* und *non-native*, die für das Englische bereits vielfach in Frage gestellt worden ist<sup>41</sup>, sollte auch für das Finnische aufgelöst werden. Die monolinguale Perspektive als postulierter Normalfall scheint in der finnischen Sprachgemeinschaft ebenfalls tief verankert zu sein.


Die Herausforderung, von der finnischen Sprachgemeinschaft als Gruppenmitglied anerkannt zu werden, stellt sich vor allem für diejenigen, die als Kind nicht oder kaum zweisprachig aufgewachsen sind, unabhängig davon, in welchem deutschsprachigen Land man aufgewachsen ist oder aus welchem deutschsprachigen Land einer der Elternteile kam. Dieser Anspruch wird im übrigen oft nicht nur an Personen mit teilweise finnischem Hintergrund gestellt, sondern genauso an Migrant:innen, wie in der Untersuchung (Graz 2023a) über deutschsprachige Migrant:innen in Nordfinnland erkenntlich wird. Die Ablehnung der Umgebung gegenüber Multilingualismus<sup>42</sup> nimmt jedoch in allen deutschsprachigen Ländern mit der Zeit ab. So finden sich unter den einsprachig Deutsch Aufgewachsenen vor allem Personen, die in den sechziger und siebziger Jahren des letzten Jahrhunderts geboren und aufgewachsen sind. Bis auf die Ausnahme einer Person (die durch die Trennung der Eltern die finnischsprachige Bezugsperson verlor) sind alle nach 1984 geborenen Personen (n: 10) mindestens teilweise

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41 Als Überblick Kubota (2009).

42 Hier verstanden im Sinne von Aronin *et al.* (2013).

mit Finnisch aufgewachsen und alle ab 1991 geborenen Personen (n: 5) sehen sich in eigener Einschätzung im weitesten Sinne als bilingual. Desideratum stellen Untersuchungen zu den Motivationen der Finnischlernenden an Universitäten dar. Außerdem könnte untersucht werden, inwiefern die Tatsache, dass Finnisch durch den Beitritt Finnlands zur EU 1995 eine der Amtssprachen der EU geworden ist, unter Umständen zum Anstieg des Prestiges des Finnischen beigetragen und somit Auswirkungen auf die soziale Akzeptanz einer Mehrsprachigkeit mit Finnisch als einer der Sprachen hat. Wenn nämlich Finnisch schon in der Herkunftsfamilie gelernt wurde, dann könnte es sein, dass sich das Bedürfnis, diese Sprache unbedingt so perfekt wie möglich zu erlernen, verringert und sich dies in geringeren Zahlen von Finnischlernenden an den Universitäten (oder zu mindestens einem kleineren Anteil von Mitgliedern der zweiten Generation am Gesamtanteil aller Studierenden der Fennistik oder Finnougristik) widerspiegelt.

Wenn Finnland sich wünscht, dass mehr Personen der zweiten Generation nach Finnland zurückkehren, dann sollte hierbei nicht außer Acht gelassen werden, wie diese von der einheimischen muttersprachlich meist finnischsprachigen Bevölkerung eingeschätzt werden. Wenn Muttersprachlichkeit als binärer Wert gesehen wird und der Maßstab einer muttersprachlich erlernten Finnischkompetenz angelegt wird, den kaum jemand erfüllen kann, dann werden potenzielle Rückkehrer:innen davor abgeschreckt, nach Finnland umzusiedeln. Und bereits nach Finnland Gezogene können sich sprachlich nicht vollends heimisch fühlen. 

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HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO

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Narrating and focalizing  
the *Book of Margery*  
*Kempe*

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**Abstract** Narratology can profit from closer critical attention to premodern texts. This essay opens an extended narratological analysis of the Middle English *Book of Margery Kempe* (mid fifteenth-century). Modifying narrative theory (Genette, Bal) to suit a medieval narratology, I use discourse analysis to explore the language, focalization, and temporality of the narrating discourse. The text, with a dramatized storyteller but not an explicit narrator, deploys multiple focalizations to construct not a strict autobiography but a detailed third-person narrative of the life of a lay, extravagantly pious, and visionary woman. I describe five focalizations: two internal (Everyday and Visionary Experiencers) and three external (Summarizer, Commentator, Scribal-Textualist). The lively narration weaves together homodiegetic and heterodiegetic perspectives and constructs multifocalized accounts of the protagonist's everyday struggles and interactions with lay people and clergy and her interior experiences and visions of Jesus suffering in the Passion and "fresch" on the streets. Narratological analysis foregrounds the textual power of the protagonist's life story with intersecting and transplacing temporalities of Apostolic past, near past, and present reading time.

**Keywords** narratology, medieval narrative, Gerard Genette, Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, focalization, autography, autobiography

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Narratology can profit from closer critical attention to the *Book of Margery Kempe* (mid fifteenth century). Our understanding of the *Book's* narrative complexity can be more critically and historically adept by reading the text with innovative narratological theory. Much narrative theory and analysis have focused on post-1700 writing, especially the novel. Medieval narrative traditions encompass a thousand years of various genres and modes of storytelling. By focusing on the language of narration, a narratological analysis of the *Book* proposes a more textual way we can better understand the scope and textual power of sophisticated medieval narrative structures with their mixed temporalities, hybrid oral/written styles, and fluid audience

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<sup>1</sup> For thoughtful suggestions and provoking critiques of this analysis, I thank Ruth Evans, Olga Timofeeva, and the two anonymous *NM* reviewers.

formations and at the same time expand our appreciation for narrative as a fundamental human activity.

Why ‘narratology’? Narratology involves reading and analyzing storytelling across a range of media with linguistic, formal, and increasingly cultural critical models. In the late 1960s and 70s, the high-water mark in classical narratology, Gérard Genette’s influential *Narrative Discourse* (1972/1980), Roland Barthes’ compelling ‘Introduction to the Structuralist Analysis of Narratives’ (1966) and *S/Z* (1970), and Seymour Chatman’s *Story and Discourse* (1976) mostly discussed post-1700 prose fiction. Earlier, German theorists Franz K. Stanzel (1955/1971) and Käte Hamburger (1957/1973) had expanded the already sophisticated linguistic narratology among Continental scholars, but their work was unfortunately less available to many Anglo-American theorists until translated in the 1970s. Post-classical narratology, according to David Herman (2013) and Monika Fludernik (1996), doesn’t abandon classical narratology’s insights and critical vocabulary, but rather theorizes narrative with cognitive and semiotic, not just Saussurean, models of the sign. Post-classical narratology explores a wider range of genres and media, including not only prose fiction but also epic, romance, fairy tale, *exemplum*, saint’s life, manga, [auto]biography, historiography (chronicle, diary, letters), religious and legal discourses, film, video, and mixed-media texts. Post-classical narratology has also taken up an equally wide array of critical approaches, including cognitive theory, gender studies, emotions and senses studies, affect studies, and historicist and materialist narrative analysis. Both classical and post-classical narratology have provided sophisticated vocabulary for narrative analysis, more fine-grained than the humanist rhetorical approach of plot, ‘point of view,’ and ‘narrator.’ Both examine storytelling’s imaginative complexity and textual power beyond plot and character. Further, post-classical approaches contribute to a more materialist genealogy of narrative by historicizing and analyzing verse and prose premodern narratives in pre-print and oral/written hybrid modes.

What about medieval narratology? Eva von Contzen urges that “Both narratologists and medievalists can profit from a medieval narratology that does not reject classical or post-classical theories but is based on an informed understanding of the historical groundings of narrative forms and their place

in the history of literature” (2014:16). Classicists have taken up that challenge in the past three decades and explored various forms of ancient Greek and Latin literary narrative (de Jong 2015). However, despite the extensive narrative tradition in multiple genres produced during the European (and now global) era we call the “Middle Ages,” medieval romances have attracted the most critical narratological attention, perhaps because they seem most like novels. To be sure, theoretically oriented medieval critics have contributed important concepts to the development of more narratological criticism, as shown for example in the work of Tzvetan Todorov, Paul Zumthor, Eugene Vance, R. Howard Bloch, and more recently Monika Fludernik (2011) and A. C. Spearing (2012) (cf. Holsinger 2005). However, medievalists, with some exceptions (e.g., Evans 2021), have not really engaged with Spearing’s attention to what he calls “textual subjectivity” as part of narratology. Whereas some critics describe textual subjectivity, not only in the *Book of Margery Kempe*, in terms of representations, performances, and traces of affect or emotion (e.g., Rosenwein 2012; contributors to Burger and Crocker 2019), I locate Spearing’s “textual subjectivity” within a broad phenomenology of a textualized Subject in terms of “being in itself,” “being for itself,” and “being for others,” with their constituent questions about agency (will), identity, intention, otherness, intersubjectivity, and world making.

Post-classical narratology’s interest in diachronic or comparative questions only makes sense if medieval narratives are included. Post-classical narratology’s interest in different media and textualities can be historically inflected with analysis of how medieval narratives were produced as part of oral, manuscript, and hybrid literacies. In post-classical narratology, we need to consider medieval to modern narrative continuities and also distinctively medieval narrative forms and genres (e.g., chronicle, saint’s life, *exemplum*, sermon, dream vision, devotional visionary text), how they functioned experientially in a Christian society, how they were produced and received in social and religious contexts, how they create textual subjects, and how they contribute to our general theory of narrative.

Medieval narratives and genres are part of not only European traditions but also global genres such as the epic, folk drama, and the international popular tale (Utley 1974). Our narratological questions of medieval texts

contribute to broader narrative theory and history. For instance: What sorts of story logic do medieval narratives manifest? What are medieval storytellers' strategies for depicting characters, speech, agency, interiority, religious belief? Are the modern concepts of 'narrator' and 'authorial narrator' relevant to medieval narratives, and if so, how? How do time and space function in medieval representations of action, perception, and being? In European medieval society, how did folk, mercantile, and religious ideologies and values influence the relation between stories and commonsense, empirical, or transcendental notions of what is 'real' or 'true'? Our narrative theorizing needs to sort out which questions are relevant to the 'medieval' and which reflect or manifest something inherent in narrative itself. For instance: How do kinds of narrative contribute to what we consider to be our 'experience'? What is the relation between narrativity and our idea of a person's interiority? What does a narrative express, intentionally or otherwise?

So, what about the *Book of Margery Kempe*? Narratology can profit from closer attention to the *Book*, and as I shall argue, the *Book* is very available to sustained narratological analysis. Style, temporality, and narrating perspective are crucial to narrative structure, and all are complicated in the *Book*. Nonetheless, linguistically focused approaches to the *Book's* narrative have been few. One exception is R. K. Stone's (1970) early rhetorical/stylistic comparison of the *Book* and Julian of Norwich's *Shewings*. Stone claims that the text's "lively," "homely," "extroverted" discourse and "freshness" are formally constituted by lexical and syntactic features, including alliteration, verbal repetition, familiar word choice, and phrasal and clausal balances, all well-established features of English poetic and prose styles. The *Book's* colloquial style using exaggeration, quotidian detail, and understatement imbues the oral dictation with an "informal chattiness and spontaneity" (1970:112). Unlike many earlier critics, Stone's linguistic approach sees these formal features as part of the text's strengths rather than weakness.

More recently, a few linguistically oriented critics have been discussing the *Book's* narration with other textual approaches. In historical pragmatics, Olga Timofeeva (forthcoming) has highlighted the important role pronouns and deixis play in establishing modes of address and social interaction as depicted in the narrative. I have argued the *Book's* narration of key episodes presents a complex conversational pragmatics of public self-making



(2021:206–239). Combining discourse analysis and feminist criticism, Ruth Evans uses Benveniste’s pragmatic distinction between narrated (*énoncé*) and narrating (*énonciation*) to think about why someone’s life story might be dictated and written in the third person and why that matters to how we read the *Book* as a woman’s story. She argues that “the use of the third person as a figure allows Kempe to articulate her selfhood as a tension between identity and difference, unity and division” (2021:84).

The rest of this essay works out a more extensive narratological account of the *Book* so as to foreground the text’s multiperspective, multitemporal *writtenness* as a narrative of subject distinction and exemplarity rather than as a mediated archive of medieval ‘life.’ The *Book* constructs a distributed and multifocused kind of subjectivity. As this critical narratological reading and analysis show, the *Book* doesn’t conform easily to what we might take for granted about narrativity, temporality, and selfhood in either medieval or modern narratives.

The *Book of Margery Kempe* is more accommodating to post-classical narratology models for several reasons. The *Book*’s collaborative composition, third-person narration of a life story, historically verifiable sociocultural settings, and complex mix of everyday and visionary experiences, all suggest the text’s alterity with respect to conventions of ‘realism,’ ‘authorship,’ narrative voice, intention, and mimetic (‘natural’) narrative, that is, the conventions of individual subjectivity as articulated in modern terms. With both a single protagonist and multiple focalizing perspectives, the *Book* also prompts us to rethink the universalizing impulse of our modern, yet still largely Aristotelian, notions of story/plot, character, author/narrator, narrating subjectivity, situatedness, and temporality.

The *Book*’s availability to post-classical narratology is also enhanced by its mixed textualization. The materiality of medieval textuality is relevant to any account of medieval narratology. The mixed oral/written literacy of medieval textuality disturbs print world assumptions about textual composition and production, the materiality of language, and the relation of voice and writing. Medieval culture’s often collaborative and hybrid literacy destabilizes linguistic and literary assumptions that speech is the fundamental form of human language (e.g., Benveniste, Saussure) and that writing is simply a representation of speech (*a la* Rousseau or contemporary

education's "phonics" curricula). When we think about the *Book* in relation to its textualization, that is, to its becoming a written thing, we are already asking Derrida's question about the metaphysics of discourse. Also, taking account of the production of the manuscript text as part of the storyworld suggests how the *Book* enacts a self othering within the narrative. When we read closely the text's narrative self-representation in relation to late medieval ideologies of discourse, narratology gives us a way to think productively about what counts as authorship, narration, or 'authorial narrator' in medieval narratives and more broadly about what makes up a mimetic or non-mimetic narrative and for whom.

The boundary between inside and outside the text can be porous when reading a narrative such as the *Book*. While the *Book's* story (*l'histoire*) exists in a limited but to some extent verifiable sociohistorical context, the material artefact, the written text, constitutes everything we know in the narrative, even when we recover biographical or historical information outside the text itself. The protagonist (some version of Margery Kempe), her husband John Kempe, Archbishops Thomas Arundel and Henry Bowet, and others are discursively always part of the diegesis (story) of the narrative, regardless of their historically verifiable status outside the text. Their historicity does not make them any more or less diegetic in the narrative. For narratology, it's not a question of sorting out whether the *Book* is 'true' or not, but of describing how the narrative is structured and how the text's form and maneuvers shape and enable our reading experiences and interpretations.

As part of a medieval narratology, we can say that a text as densely written as the *Book* solicits a strong linguistic mode of critical narratology. I argue that the *Book's* variable focalizations, shifting narrating levels, and overlapping temporalities function less as a single representation and more as a multiperspective account of one woman's social and religious experiences mediated within the medieval hybrid literacy of oral storytelling transcribed by several scribes and told and edited over several years. In addition, the text's self-representation means the text exists not only as something read or heard by a reader and not only as a mediation between composers and readers but also as an object in the storyworld, a written version of a prior spoken narrative inscribed by clerics and supported by the protagonist's reading with clerics from the Bible and a small cache of spiritual texts, some

by women. We can't hear the presupposed prior oral version. The *written* narrative is our access to the narrative experience and narrating contexts of the *Book*.

## 2. Narration and autography

Since 1934, when Hope Emily Allen recovered the manuscript now marked as BL Add. MS 61823, the *Book of Margery Kempe* has been known as 'the first English autobiography,' the story of the life of the historical woman Margery Kempe as told by Margery Kempe. Reading the *Book* this way tends to deflect our attention away from the constitutive linguistic surface and pragmatic discourse by authorizing the narrative with an historical figure construed as prior and external to the text. Even when acknowledging that the narrative might be partly "made up" or mediated by the storyteller or scribes, many readers and critics have adopted a bio-historical orientation (e.g., Atkinson 1983; Gallyon 2004; Sobecki 2015). In his formal analysis, Stone refers to the *Book* as autobiography simply because it presents so much detail about the protagonist's life, unusual for a "devotional" text (1970:14–16). In the bio-historical reading formation, readers attribute the text to a female author so as (I presume) to increase the literary or historical value of the text. Authorial value and narrated modern autobiography go hand in hand. Lejeune (1975) characterizes autobiography in the strict sense as depending on "le pacte autobiographique," a tacit "contrat" between author and reader that the narrating subject is being truthful rather than fictionalizing or fabricating her life story. Lejeune's pact, which ties textual agency solely to a single narrator (fictional or nonfictional), is both a textual inference and a reading formation imposed on the text.

We have no reason to doubt the *Book* was produced as a language object in the world by several people, but it's another thing to say the *Book* was 'authored' by Kempe or her confessors or that the *Book* is historically true. (Rory Critten's [2018] reading of the *Book* as "self-publishing" is a more workable approach within the bio-historical paradigm.) Instead, I want to start with the *Book of Margery Kempe* as a text, and as a text, it presents a different configuration of narrating subjectivity from Lejeune's theory of autobiography. For one thing, the narrative discourse is composed in the third

person (“sche”), not in the conventional first-person mode of autobiography. Obviously, medieval writers knew how to use the first-person pronoun to designate a past or present speaking or narrating position in fictional, historical, or autobiographical texts, as attested by Augustine’s *Confessiones*, Abelard’s *Historia calamitatum*, Guibert de Nogent’s *Monodiae*, Chaucer’s fictional narrators, Lydgate’s authorial references, Marco Polo’s *Travels*, Mandeville’s *Travels*, and many introspective Old English, Provençal, and Middle English lyrics (cf. Amsler 1981). Kempe’s contemporary, Julian of Norwich composed both the versions of her *Showings* in the narrated first person.

However, the *Book of Margery Kempe* is not such an autobiography. The narrating time external to the diegesis, the time of narration (*énonciation*), is always present. But nowhere in the text does the principal narrating focalization keyed to the dictator in present narrating time use the first-person pronoun to narrate or comment on “hir” narrated life in the past. Rather, the first-person pronoun is restricted, with one exception, to quoted speech and to three instances in scribal metadiscourse (1.70, 309, 5101) and one instance of commentary discourse (1.1626–1645).<sup>2</sup> That is, the *I* pronoun, Benveniste’s linguistic index of a speaking self, is aligned not with the external narrative discourse but with the protagonist and other actors in the story (internal diegetic) and occasionally with narrative commentary or scribal comments about the text in production. There is no *I* associated with an author or the main narration. Because first-person speakers are embedded in the diegesis or in the material text production, the external narrating discourse reorients us away from single-voiced autobiographical discourse. As we’ll see, the text distributes the speech of narrating subjectivity among several perspectives, not all of them diegetic.

The one exception to the use of first person in quoted speech comes when the Bishop of Lincoln, Philip Repingdon, grants the protagonist and her husband permission to live in a chaste marriage. When the archbishop affirms the change in their marital status, the text reads “And the Bysshop dede no mor to us that day, save he mad us rygth good cher and seyde we were

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, citations are to book and line number in Lynn Staley’s TEAMS edition (1996).

rygth welcome” (1.783–784). First-person plural pronouns at the level of the dictating speaker. Does this passage, unique in the manuscript, represent an unrevised version of the original oral dictation of the narrative? If so, I take the passage as clarifying three things. It suggests that at least parts of the text we have have been revised to fit with the preferred third-person reference to the protagonist. Second, in the passage we read something less mediated that reflects the straightforward rhetorical and syntactic style of the original narrating discourse. Third, the passage confirms Margery Kempe to be part of the narrating composition of the text and not just the protagonist of someone else’s narration.

However, reading the *Book* as a whole strictly as an ‘authored’ autobiography entails a larger and problematic reading assumption. Since the publication of Meech and Allen’s *EETS* edition (1940), scholars have speculated about how much Kempe and individual scribes contributed to the single extant text (e.g., Hirsh 1975; Staley 1994; Bale 2017). For many, the goal is to pry out the real or “ultimate author” (Staley 1994:1–38), assumed to be an individual woman, from those clerical text makers who would manipulate the author and coopt the composition for their own religious or ambitious purposes. In these views, the ‘authorship’ question is actually about speaking authority and value (cf. Krug 2017:2–3, 13–20). The bio-historical reading formation also presumes to determine how much the historical figure Margery Kempe ‘intends’ the text or controls the production of the text assigned to her. Staley’s ingenious, basically New Critical distinction between the author ‘Kempe’ and the protagonist ‘Margery’ still privileges the historical author as the singular authorial narrator.

When we read the text as a traditional autobiography, we likely set aside the text’s explicit, complex, and intriguing narrative configuration, the product of collaborative composition by a narrating dictator working with several scribes over several years. But if we step away from the historical author question, we can think differently about how narrating the *Book* is a multifocalized textual act. Perhaps a multifocalized narrative without a distinct ‘narrator.’ As Ruth Evans has persuasively argued, “The task is not that of rescuing Margery Kempe as an author. It is rather to propose a different set of materialist reading practices for the *Book*: readings that

acknowledge its complexity of pronoun use, engage with the texture of its writing, and challenge any notion at all of ‘self’” (2007:519).

Instead of autobiography, I propose we read the *Book* as *autography*. In textual studies, the term *autography* refers to a material text inscribed by its ‘author,’ with stylus, pen, pencil, typewriter, or laptop. Lisa Samuels (1997:103) has proposed the term *autography* metaphorically to highlight the textual connection between narrating and selfhood without necessarily identifying a single intentional ‘narrator’ or ‘author.’ Spearing (2012:37), discussing medieval first-person writing, follows Samuels’ definition of *autography* as “the story of a languaged self, a written ‘I,’ rather than the autobiography of an experiencing human.” That is, because language is always already social and material, the written narrative unfolds the protagonist’s life among many writing subjects and written discourses. We read the text as *autography as a text* rather than as an historical record, as a language made object without necessarily correlating every detail with an extratextual autobiographical ‘real.’ The text incites our *reading* experiences and therefore our linguistic and affective feel for a life written rather than as an eye-witness or even ‘expert’ account.

The *Book of Margery Kempe* resonates with the theory of autography and expands textual pragmatics in several ways. Rather than restricting the narration to the first-person pronoun, the text constructs multiple narrating perspectives or pragmatic stances affiliated with several narrating functions, not all of them diegetic. The deictic movement of narrating perspectives in the text redistributes narrative temporality and subjectivity. The text’s language mediates and materializes rather than represents historical experience.

### 3. Distributing writing

The *Book* is a medieval autography of diffracted intersubjectivity. As a text, autography doesn’t require first-person narration or even a discrete narrator. As a discursive mode, autography decenters the notion of narrative subjectivity and potentially distributes the narrating act among several writing subjects. Many medieval narratives have one or more explicit or implied narrators, but many don’t. A narrative is situated as coming from a dramatized teller or it just appears on the page, and readers may or may not

mentally construct an implied teller of the *text*. The *Book* has two paratexts which narrate from a scribe's point of view how the oral narrative became textualized, but that's as close as we get to a distinct narrator or narrating consciousness. More relevant is the fact that the protagonist is represented in the text in two different ways, one diegetic and the other somewhere between diegetic and extradiegetic, telling and co-writing the story and being the central figure of the story and a figure in the narrative of telling the story too. However, that doesn't make the protagonist herself the 'narrator.'

Despite the narrative beginning with the first paratext describing the protagonist's oral dictation, the text quickly abandons that origin story and emphasizes throughout its *writtenness*. Internally, the manuscript text is referred to as a "tretys," "copy," "booke," or "wrytyng." In Middle English, "wrytyng" could refer to many different kinds of written discourse: chronicle, poetry, scripture, translation, administrative document, copy, and so forth (see *MED*, s.v. "wrytyng"). Writings were very often read aloud. Self-referential phrases such as "as is wretyn befor" (e.g., 1.1775) give the writing object status in the world.

The "wrytyng" of the text is explicitly narrated as a collaboration of the protagonist and others in the diegesis (storyworld) as well as being mentioned in the extradiegesis (outside the storyworld). The Prologue to Book 1 describes how the text was initially inscribed and then copied by at least three scribes. In one passage the paratext describes the protagonist and scribe editing the text together (1.98-99). The last scribe, "Salthows," is responsible for copying BL Add. MS 61823 after Kempe's death (c. 1439), according to Bale sometime between 1444-1449 (2017:183). The Salthows copy was later annotated by several readers, most likely clerical and mostly in the early sixteenth century (Bale 2017; Buggy 2014). We have no information as to whether other manuscript copies besides the original and Salthows' ever existed nor what version of the *Book Wynkyn de Worde* used for his 1501 printed excerpts.

The discourse of *wrytyng* mediates the briefly mentioned prior spoken version of the narrative. Reflecting the text's distributed narrating subjectivity, the terms *wrytyng/wryter* (noun) and *wryt/wryten* (verb) are assigned to various actors and activities rather than to a single character or even a single speaker and certainly not to a single controlling consciousness

in the postmedieval sense of an *author*. The dictating and narrated figures pronominally referred to mostly as “sche” (less often as “this/the creatur”) and the scribes pronominally referred to as “he” or “I” are all described at one time or another as “wryter” or as “wrytyng” or having “wryten” the text. For example: “had the creatur no wryter . . .” (1.66); “preyng hym to wrytyn this booke . . .” (1.88); “therfor sche dede no thing wryten . . .” (1.102); “. . . it was wretyn fyrst by a man . . .” (1.122); “he that wrot this boke had nevyr befor . . . (1.4234–4235); “thowtys and many mo than I cowde evyr writyn . . .” (1.5101); “in hir chambre wyth hir writer and seyde fewer beydys for sped of wrytyng . . .” (1.5139); “thu stodiist for to do writyn the grace . . .” (1.5145); “. . . than ye don wyth yowr writing” (1.5147–5148). In the *Book* the term *wrytyng* comes to signify both oral and written narration, and the image of the dictator in the text is as a writer among other writers. The text’s use of the term *wryter* for people who can read, write, or neither reflects both the text’s distributed narrating subjectivity and the multidirectional reach of late medieval understandings of literacy and textuality.

The text complicates the semantics of “wrytyng” in relation to text time. The time of reading the text is always present. The text we read is referred to internally as having been or being or about to be “wrytyn.” These three narrating (*énonciation*) times are affiliated with the text, not the dictation or diegesis. The act of writing is also marked with anaphoric or epiphoric phrases such as “as is wretyn befor” (e.g., 1.999, 1775) or “as it schal be wretyn aftyrwarde (e.g., 1.1391). These temporal expressions are situated in what I call the extradiegetic Scribal-Textualist focalization (below). The temporal adverbs *befor(n)* and *later* conceptualize the text as constituted within a continuous narrating stream made up of multiple time frames related to diegetic action, textualization, and extradiegetic discourse. As we shall see, forward (anticipation) and backward (retroversing) temporal movement is an important part of the *Book*’s narrativity at both the diegetic and extradiegetic levels.

In the *Book* the *wrytyng/wryter/wretyn/wryt* cluster signifies not an author but a network of actors, events, things, and times: the text dictated, inscribed, and revised and several actors who dictate, compose, remember, inscribe, revise, comment on, evaluate, and summarize the narrative text. In the *Book*,



literate agency is distributed across a number of enunciating (narrating) homodiegetic and heterodiegetic subjects situated in multiple time frames. The text's third-person narrative discourse ("sche") further distances the narration and further unsettles expectations for narrating coherence.

Some critics find evidence for the text's singular authorship in the occasional references to the protagonist and dictator with third-person nominals ("the/sayd/this/simple creatur"), scattered references to "synful caytyf" (1.10), or the seventeen references to "Margery," "Margery Kempe," or "Mar. Kempe of Lynne" (e.g., 2.553). These third-person references differ from the first-person references in the diegesis, but they are no less problematic. Textual cohesion depends on more than correlating all third-person references (names, nouns, pronouns) with a protagonist who is also a prior version of the one narrating the story.

The seventeen instances of the proper name 'Margery Kempe' reveal the problem. Affiliating "sche" with the historical Margery Kempe is certainly plausible but textually underspecified. All the 'Margery' references occur in the diegesis or storyworld, not in a narrated or narrating position external to the diegesis.<sup>3</sup> That is, the proper name is part of the *wrytyn* text's direct reported speech in the narrated past. Usually, the proper name is spoken by characters in the physical world, but once, when the protagonist has been arrested as a suspected heretic, "sche" hears a "lowed voys clepyng, 'Margery'" (1.3091). It's unclear whether the name is spoken by people outside her cell or in her dream. The text doesn't say. Either way, the utterance is direct reported speech.

The most direct collocation of the proper name and the first-person pronoun occurs when "sche" addresses rumors she has been a "ypocrite." Encountering a crowd in a London street talking about "Mar. Kempe of Lynne," the narrated protagonist explicitly claims the name: "for I am that same persone to whom thes wordys ben arectyd" (2.590–591). Again,

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3 The proper names "Margery," "Margery Kempe," or "Mar. Kempe of Lynne" are embedded in the story (homodiegetic) and always uttered by another diegetic actor to address the protagonist: 1.521, 544—husband; 1.604—confessor; 1.796—bishop; 1.2022—Jesus; 1.2030—God; 1.2410—Castyn; 1.2573—bishop; 1.2904—doctor of divinity; 1.3091—anonymous voice; 1.3509—goodmen; 1.3666—confessor; 1.3872—"three worschepful men"; 1.3926, 3947, 4037—Custawns; 2.553—townspeople.

the pragmatic speech situation shows that the connection between “Mar. Kempe of Lynne” and the first person *I* occurs in direct reported speech in the diegesis, not in the narrating perspective.

#### 4. Focalizing the *Book*

Narratology’s concept of *focalization* sets up a rich framework for exploring the *Book*’s complex subjectivity, shifting temporality, and variable narrating perspectives. Genette’s theory of focalization straddles the classical/post-classical narratology divide but needs to be adapted to medieval and pre-print contexts. I’ll supplement Genette’s theory with pragmatic and discourse analysis and articulate a more focused linguistic analysis of the medieval text’s narrative form and effects.

Genette (1980) distinguishes five narrating acts: order, duration, frequency, voice, and focalization. The first four are based on tense. *Order*: the sequence of events as presented in the narration (text), not as they might occur chronologically in the ‘real,’ physical world. *Duration*: the amount of narrative space/time over which a given event is narrated. *Frequency*: the number of times a particular event is recounted in a narrative. *Voice*: the narrating situation with respect to time and enunciation (Who is speaking when?).

Genette’s fifth narrative act, *Focalization* (or *Mood*), is based on linguistic aspect. All focalizations exist in the text on the narrating level (*énonciation*), not the narrated. Focalization encompasses more than a single speaker or the visual centrism underpinning ‘eye-witness testimony’ or traditional narrative criticism’s ‘point of view.’ Linguistically, aspect encodes temporality in verbs and degrees of confidence or certainty in an expression (for example, ‘He’s arrived.’ vs. ‘He is arriving.’ vs. ‘Maybe he’s already arrived.’). Aspect signifies the speaker’s stance with respect to an utterance.

Focalization is also connected with the flow of information in the text. Focalization establishes limits on what a character or narrator can be said to know or believe at a given moment and the position (pragmatic situation) from which an event or object is described to the reader. As narrating perspective, focalization occurs on different narrating levels. Also, focalization occurs in the text either homodiegetically (narrating speaker is

part of the storyworld at that level) or heterodiegetically (narrating speaker is not part of the storyworld at that level) (Genette 1980:162, 189–194). In terms of textual subjectivity, I will adapt Genette’s terms as follows: *homodiegetic* identifies narrating characters involved on the same level of action with other characters; *heterodiegetic* nominates figures or positions whose perspective or stance is not on the same narrative level or in the same storyworld as that of diegetic characters (cf. 1980:248–249).

Genette distinguishes narrating and narrated levels in terms of focalization and information flow: zero, external, and internal (1980:189–193). Zero focalization is unanchored to a localized position and often associated with the omniscient narrative tradition, able to understand characters’ minds and shift seamlessly from time to time and place to place in the story. Such all-knowing narration does occur in the *Book*, as we shall see. External focalization represents the narrative action from a perspective outside the storyworld. Genette’s theory is based on literary fiction, so the other minds problem really doesn’t exist for him. There’s nothing for the author or narrator to know. There’s no there there. I’ll discuss how the *Book*’s narration regularly appeals to what is possible to know about other people’s thoughts and feelings from an external or extradiegetic position. Internal focalization in narrative diegesis filters a characters’ thoughts, affect, beliefs, imaginative experience, and interior disposition. As such, internal focalization is likely to be more personal or restricted than zero or external focalization. In the *Book*, internal focalization is centered almost entirely on the protagonist’s mental actions, “hir” everyday and visionary experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

Mieke Bal (2009:147–165) offers important modifications to Genette’s focalization, some of which I follow here by way of expanding the narratological framework when reading the *Book*. She increases the targets of narrative focalization to include invisible (disposition, feelings, thoughts) as well as visible focalized “objects.” This is important since the protagonist’s visions are crucial to the *Book*’s narrative. Bal also clarifies Genette’s distinction between internal-homodiegetic and external-heterodiegetic focalization by distinguishing “the vision through which the elements are presented and . . . the identity of the voice that is verbalizing that vision” (Bal 2009:146). The narrator is not to be confused with the “focalizer.” In narratological reading, we need to work out how a particular focalization can be attributed

to some narrating position(s). This is important when we consider how the *Book's* protagonist's behaviors, speech, internal dispositions, and visionary experiences are narrated from multiple focalized positions.

However, I don't think we need to parse focalization as strictly as Bal does into a focalizer agent, a focalizing perspective, and a focalized object. The *Book's* textual focalizations are more networked than transitive. Focalization as a narrating position constitutes an interaction between at least two perspectives, an individual and a social one, both embedded in the text. It foregrounds how we make and use stories to give shape to what we call 'experience' or 'knowledge,' ours and others'. When we encounter narratives, we can read and experience things as familiar or expected or, just as likely, different perspectives and mediations, events and feelings which we find odd, 'unnatural,' counterintuitive, or disturbing. When we read and interact with unexpected or unfamiliar narrated people, places, objects, behaviors, and norms, a narrative challenges our horizon of expectations, sometimes so much that we change that horizon, even if only for the duration of our reading. We reassess what's a possible narrative (cf. Herman 2013: esp. 73–99, 161–215). Every narrative is an encounter, an opening to an other.

## 5. Textual functions

The *Book of Margery Kempe* and other medieval narratives challenge us to historicize and rework Genette's distinctions among focalizations, which he bases mostly on Proust's novels. Focalization is inherently pragmatic, situational, and historically contextualized with regard to audience expectations. The *Book* also prompts us to ask historicizing and materialist questions about the reach of narrative theory for distinguishing between 'natural' and 'unnatural' narrative and discerning what in historical contexts counts as the 'real world,' the possible, or the conventional (see Alber 2016, 2012; Richardson 2015).

In other words, to grasp the *Book's* focalizing practice, we need to situate the text further within medieval literate practices and look closely at variable focalization. The *Book's* textual functions and narrating focalizations to some extent correspond to medieval literacy's text-production roles of *auctor*, dictator, scribe, annotator, and commentator (Minnis 2010). In

the *Book*, these roles are implicitly part of both narrating the text and the narrated action, two different narrative levels. The *Book*'s focalizations also filter narrative information differently to how information is theorized in traditional narrative criticism's 'point of view.' Distributed and variable focalization includes narrated action and inner beliefs, attitudes, imagined or interior experience, interpretive strategies, pragmatic speech acts, and self-presentation in social interaction – everything discourse and pragmatic analysis calls 'stance,' 'perspective,' or 'frame.'

I identify five focalizations in the *Book*, all part of the text's *wrytyng*:

1. Everyday Experiencer: narrated events presented on the narrating level from the internal perspective of the protagonist in the world;
2. Visionary Experiencer: narrated events presented on the narrating level from the internal perspective of the protagonist as visionary;
3. Summarizer: narrated events presented on the narrating level from the external (heterodiegetic) perspective of a chronicler;
4. Commentator: remarks about narrated events from the external (heterodiegetic) perspective of an interpreter, apologist, or someone claiming personal knowledge of the protagonist's motives;
5. Scribal-Textualist: remarks focused on the composition and aspects of the material text from the external (heterodiegetic) perspective of the inscriber of the storyteller's dictation.

These focalizations constitute both the "wryters" and the distributed "wrytyng" of the text. The two Experiencer focalizations are protagonist-centred and homodiegetic as the dictators relate "hir" story. The Summarizer, Commentator, and Scribal-Textualist focalizations are heterodiegetic narrating perspectives and are associated with medieval manuscript production, but they have different relations to the Experiencer focalizations. The two Experiencers and Summarizer internal focalizations are responsible for most of the storyworld (diegesis), including the protagonist's travel, devotional activity, interactions with others, and visions. The Commentator and Scribal-Textualist focalizations intervene in the narration from extradiegetic perspectives, one external to the narration and the other internal not to the diegesis but to the inscription of the narration of the *Book*.

In addition to the main or “first narrative” (Genette 1980:48), a few sub-narratives are embedded in the main narrative, always focalized through one of the Experiencers in narrated or narrating contexts. Perhaps the most powerful diegetically is the protagonist’s *exemplum* of the Priest, Bear, and Pear Tree, which she tells at the Archbishop of York’s court as an indirect rebuke to clergy (1.2980–3008). The *exemplum* is in effect quoted speech in a specific narrated context. In a different, extradiegetical manner, the embedded story of how the protagonist’s scribe was conned twice by clerical scoundrels is situated at the level of narration. The story interrupts the order of the first narrative and is presented as having occurred at some out of order yet indefinite time with respect to the immediate narrative moment in the text (Genette’s “anachrony”; 1980:40). The episode is recounted as part of the narrated level of the text’s inscription and the protagonist as dictator rather than as everyday and visionary experiencer. The narrated interruption is thematically related to the question of the protagonist’s truthfulness and the scribe’s trust in the storyteller (1.1253–1336). Another sub-narrative affirms the protagonist’s prophetic trustworthiness and is also inserted anachronically, as the event occurs “long aftyr the materys” being narrated in the immediate present of the main narrative. Again, the Scribal-Textualist’s justification for this insertion is thematic: the event “is in felyng lech to the materys that ben wryten befor” (1.1338), that is, related to the protagonist’s visionary trustworthiness.

The five focalizations described above are not agents but textual functions, that is, narrating stances or pragmatic positions rather than discrete individuals, characters, or narrators in the *Book*. That narrative stances are not characterological is marked by the fact that a narrating stance or focalization does not belong consistently to one character or external figure. Rather, a narrating focalization can be activated by one or more narrating stances (homodiegetic or heterodiegetic), sometimes at the same time, sometimes at different times in the text. Some are slippery. The Summarizer and Commentator perspectives slip between internal and external narrating levels. Together, the five functions construct a multitemporal, porous narrative which enfolds the protagonist at any point with one or more narrating positions. The majority of events in the *Book* are narrated from the perspectives of the two Experiencers, the extradiegetic alter egos of the

protagonist “sche,” which we usually associate with “Mar. Kempe of Lynne” (2.553), and the Summarizer. But those are only three of the many narrating positions in the text. The text’s competing, sometimes conflicting narrative information is a function of the *Book*’s multifocalized narration.

These textual functions expand the narrative horizon and information customarily associated with autobiography and a single narrating perspective. Opening to an other, the *Book*’s various narrating perspectives interweave throughout the text, crossing space, time, and discursive streams. Frequently, but not always, narrative continuity becomes multidimensional instead of linear. Text time loosens. Anachrony emerges. The textual functions and fluid text solicit an active, fluid reader. They construct the narration and open but do not fully determine readers’ engagement with the text. The manuscript’s various annotating hands suggest how a few, likely clerical, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century readers engaged with the narrative. But the position of readers always remains open in the text, whether manuscript or print or digital.

## 6. Text, time, other minds

To specify how these five focalizations shape the narration, I’ll read a few key episodes closely and show how the narrative text is composed from different narrated perspectives and how variable focalization constructs multiple temporalities and narrating positions rather than a single personalized narrator.

Because focalization directs the flow of narrative information, it also plays a role in whether the narrative is read as ‘natural’ or ‘unnatural’ or shifts between the two. Events that don’t conform to ‘real world’ physical laws or possible actions might be considered unnatural, but for whom? Historicizing our reading makes ‘What is possible in the narrative?’ a complex question. Historicizing a text and historicizing readings of the text are not the same thing. Today, we accept possibilities medieval people wouldn’t, and vice versa. It’s hardly news to say that medieval world views do not correspond fully with modern ones. Medieval cosmology and miracles present clear cases of how realist assumptions in a narrative change over time. Variable focalization in a medieval religious narrative creates distinctive temporalities

which presuppose a transcendental realm of being, which may or may not align well with modern audiences. At the same time, our modern interest in the lives and thoughts of women and others transcends historical distance and makes the *Book of Margery Kempe* an important text for reading and rethinking women's lives and religiosity in the past.

Temporality and sequence (Genette's Order) are fundamental for narrative. Experientially, readers' perceptions of time are filtered through different narrating levels, internal or external to the diegesis. These narrating levels and perspectives manipulate narrative order by maintaining or diverting from natural chronology.

The instability of text time and story time is endemic in the *Book*. The instability of narrating and narrated time begins at the very beginning of the manuscript. The paratext associated with Book One, written after most of the text had been written, describes the narrative order of events as derived from the dictator's historical memory and not therefore rendered in strictly chronological order: "Thys boke is not wretyn in ordyr, every thyng aftyr other as it wer don, but lych as the mater cam to the creatur in mend, whan it schuld be wretyn . . ." (1.99–101). The passage implies that the dictator's memories, not the protagonist's actions, are coterminous with the narrated order. The text is not strictly a record of 'what happened' but a story of what is remembered (Genette's Order). However, given that the first paratext and the opening of Book 2, Chapter 1 post-date the first narrative, it is uncertain where the passage's implication comes from and when it was delivered in the course of composing the text. The passage might be attributed to the scribe or copyist's judgment (Scribal-Textualist) or to the dictating Everyday Experiencer's narration.

Narrative temporalities in the *Book* matter at both the macro and micro levels. Anachrony is always embedded in diachrony. A key component of the *Book's* temporality is travel. Considering the narrative at some distance (macro level), we can read story time as organized in two loosely circular orders: Book 1, from Lynn to Constance to the Holy Land to Rome and back to Lynn; Book 2, from Lynn to Constance to Danzig, and back to London, Mount Synon abbey, and finally Lynn, after which the narrative dissolves in the protagonist's cosmic prayer of spiritual unity narrated as indirect reported speech (2.66off.). Besides evoking the life of St. Bridget as a hypotext, this



macro text order suggests something of Campbell's hero quest (departure, adventures, conflict, and return; Campbell 2008).

In a medieval context, the macro text suggests how the *Book* shares a broad travel narrative pattern with medieval epic, romance, and saint lives. However, the *Book* disrupts the narrative telos of those genres. Actively reading the *Book* reveals how text time and story time are not synchronous in the text. Time is fluid and multidirectional with respect to the protagonist's exterior and interior experiences and the narrative situations in which they occur. While the narrative order of events is more or less linear, the text's narrated sequence does not constitute a narrative arc with a defined telos. The last we read of the protagonist, she has returned to Lynn and is being admonished by her confessor for having travelled abroad against his command (2.653–657). The episode is not a reconciliation, just a return to where "sche" started and her confessor is once again admonishing her. Nothing is resolved. Everything could start again, or something entirely different might happen.

The material text stops in the midst of a possible future which neither resolves nor ends the narration. The final section (2.660–800) is a devotional monologue of reported speech, the protagonist's infinitely repeatable prayer for spiritual peace and cosmic unity among all "creaturys." The prayer is situated in pan-diegetic time and described as something the protagonist has "usyd many yearys to begynnyn hir preyerys" (2.660–661). The prayer is repeated as quoted speech, but within what narrating focalization? Coming at the end of the text, as a report or quotation of what "sche" prayed for all people at indeterminate times ("usyd many yearys"), the quoted devotional words suggest some intimate knowledge of the protagonist over many years. But the narrating focalization is not so clear. Is this the Everyday Experiencer perspective? Commentator? Scribal-Textualist? The prayer is rendered in present, ongoing text time and not within any story chronology or arc. The words are consistent with the protagonist's religious speech elsewhere and potentially repeatable by others following her example (exemplarity). At this moment, the text dissolves into infinitely repeatable speech, like ritual, like prayer. And then it stops. The text, protagonist, and narration disappear.

The fluidity of the narrative's space-time field also characterizes the narration of the protagonist's visions. The protagonist's visions transplace

“hir” with respect to the narrated situation (in England, the Holy Land, and Rome). Since the Visionary Experiencer’s narrating mediates the visions themselves, we can’t be certain as to how long any particular vision actually lasts interiorly for the protagonist. The time span of a vision is not necessarily equal to the duration of the linguistic account of the vision (Genette’s Duration). Some events, especially visions of the Passion, are narrated more than once, sometimes in extended, sometimes in abbreviated form (Genette’s Frequency). The protagonist’s narrated visions, with their temporal and spatial discontinuities and repetitions, ignite a *frisson* of ‘unfamiliar’ world experience and challenge readers to grasp and integrate information narrated through the Everyday and Visionary Experiencers’ internal focalization. Medieval and modern audiences might be familiar with the Passion, but not necessarily as it is focalized imaginatively and affectively through the Visionary Experiencer’s highly personalized observer involvement.

Some episodes in the everyday and visionary storyworld are temporally more mixed sentence by sentence (micro level). For instance, the narration in present text time (time of narrating) often encompasses more than referential chronology or story time. While the principal narrating perspective is that of the Everyday or Visionary Experiencer, other stances are regularly interpolated. For instance: The Scribal-Textualist focalization intervenes in the narration with metaleptic utterances such as “as it is wretyn befor” or “as wil be wryten after,” sometimes in the first-person (e.g., 1.309). The Scribal-Textualist phrases focalize time by calling attention to the ongoing act of writing the dictated (oral) narrative (e.g., 1.3628ff.). The internal metalepses call the reader’s attention to narrative coherence by connecting prior and posterior events to the immediate narrative moment. (I set aside the later red ink and other manuscript annotations, which constitute other, post-Salthows Scribal-Textualist perspectives. See Parsons 2001; Buggy 2014). The metaleptic phrases refer to a written text being inscribed, conceptualized, and read in immediate writing or reading present time. Sometimes, the Scribal-Textualist stance emphasizes a pan-narrative perspective by referring metaleptically to figures narrated elsewhere with whom the protagonist is connected, such as Richard the “brokebakkyd man” or the protagonist’s confessors, especially Richard Spryngolde, whom some nominate as the real ‘author’ of the text.

Reading time and narrated time sometimes intersect in the text. The Scribal-Textualist function focalizes the rubrics of medieval manuscript production as part of the text's materiality. The manuscript's chapter divisions with elaborated initial letters are not part of the story being narrated nor part of the dictator's memory. They are public features of the material text, constituents of the Scribal-Textualist focalization. Manuscript markup directs our reading experiences and makes possible a reader's organized and discontinuous or "skipping" reading. One of the *Book's* most striking moments of textual and temporal discontinuity occurs at the end of Chapter 16 (BL Add. MS 61823, f. 19r), where the Scribal-Textualist addresses readers directly: "Rede first the twenty-first chaptre and than this chaptre [Chapter 17] aftyr that" (1.863). In some indefinite post-dictation time, the metatextual sentence was inserted in the manuscript by the copyist "Salthows" or another amanuensis to correct a copying or perhaps narration error. Temporally and pragmatically, the utterance directs the reading act by extradiegetically calling the reader's attention to temporal anachrony. The utterance presents not a particular scribe's writing but the Scribal-Textualist function of reading the text in immediate text time and then inserting new writing that reading instigates.

However, rather than solving a sequence problem, the inserted utterance creates a textual and reading dilemma at the micro level. At line 1.863, the Scribal-Textualist function uses the imperative mood, pragmatically implying present time, to direct the reader in advance in her present time to read discontinuously with respect to the text in hand. But it doesn't work out quite that way. If the reader follows the textual command, reads Chapter 21, and then returns to Chapter 17, she is confronted with the opening line "... On a day long befor this tyme" (1.864). When is "this tyme," which time? Rather than resolving the narrative sequence diachronically, the opening sentence of Chapter 17 further disrupts the forward linear sequence (Genette's Order) of the diegesis (story time) by using the spatializing temporal deictic marker "befor this tyme" in a referentially vague context. Scribal-Textualist discourse is regularly oriented around temporal *retroversion* and *anticipation* in the narration. The phrase refers to a time before (in front of) the immediate narrative situation and external to the diegesis, while at the same time it

projects an infinite present reading time external to the written narrative itself.

## 7. Narrating and Commentary Time

The Everyday Experiencer focalization accounts for most of the narrative episodes, focalizing the protagonist's experiences traveling, speaking, and making a life, as when she seeks a chaste marriage or decides to care for her husband whose health is failing or when she travels to the Holy Land. As Stone (1970:16) commonsensically points out, the sheer wealth of lived detail about the protagonist is unusual in a Middle English or any other medieval devotional text. One of the most sustained narrative episodes focalized entirely through the Everyday Experiencer is the protagonist's complex pragmatic interaction with clergy at the Archbishop of York's court in 1417. The text narrates the intense, antagonistic exchanges in York as the protagonist verbally parries with clergy who challenge her sincerity, truthfulness, and religious agency (cf. Amsler 2021:212–239). Eventually, she secures the Archbishop's grudging acceptance after telling (internal-homodiegetic) a pointed moral tale (*exemplum*) about clerical misconduct. In dramatic vernacular speech, the narration lays bare the conflict between the protagonist and patriarchal clergy. The York interrogation episode is narrated in chronological order, unmixed with other focalizations and replete with energetic conversation and direct reported speech. The York examination episode is one of the best examples of the text's narrative coherence in a stable time frame.

Elsewhere, however, the Commentator focalization, like the Scribal-Textualist perspective, repeatedly interpolates an external-heterodiegetic perspective into the Everyday Experiencer's storytelling focalization. The Commentator focalization belongs to text time and thus floats in and out of the narrated story. Usually, Commentator utterances (*énonciation*) explain or gloss a narrated event or add new information. In one passage (1.1626–1645), the Commentator function, like the Scribal-Textualist function, shifts narrative levels by switching from third to first-person (plural) speech. In that passage, the use of the first-person plural (“whan we may se eche day at eye . . .”) directly involves the reader with the Commentator speaking on

behalf of the community. As heterodiegetic discourse in present text time, Commentator focalization provides context, information, and evaluation as part of an extradiegetic metadiscourse, that is, new information or judgment which cannot be attributed to the protagonist or to either of the narrating Experiencers in narrated time.

The shifts between narrative coherence in a stable time frame and more general commentary discourse in and out of the narrated story suggest how the narrative works to exemplify the protagonist as a holy human figure. The *Book* is an exemplary rather than hagiographic text. Further, the narrative's multiple focalizations suggest a complex, even contradictory mode of spiritual exemplarity. The protagonist fully participates in the world constituted by intersubjectivity, (mis)trust, and discovery, yet she is set apart by her intense spiritual affect and performative piety. The Commentator, for example, sometimes explains the protagonist's behaviors as what most people do in similar circumstances (grieve, for example). Other times, the Commentator asserts what others do not recognize or acknowledge about the protagonist: that her extravagant behaviors are signs of her holiness. Some episodes attest to the protagonist's truthfulness, trustworthiness, and loyalty, but not her sanctity. The Visionary Experiencer focalization complicates the protagonist's interactions with Jesus. "Hir" beliefs and faith are filled with doubt, anxiety, and conflict as much as with holiness. The protagonist's resilience and struggle do not immediately affirm her sanctity. The protagonist's encounters with Archbishops Arundel and Bowet and other clergy affirm, however haltingly, her orthodoxy from the established Church's point of view; but orthodoxy is not sanctity.

Focalization entails that readers actively infer the boundaries of a narrative field for some narrating act from some perspective. Occasionally, the Commentator functions like the narrating objectifying "I" found in first-person autobiographies. We might assume the narrating Everyday and Visionary Experiencers have at least the same knowledge of most of the external events and all of "hir" internal experiences which the protagonist had. If so, that would establish the referential continuity of narrative subjectivity. But again, that's not always how things work out in the *Book*. Sometimes, the Commentator perspective supplements the Experiencers'

versions of events with different information as well as providing separate evaluations of those events.

Whereas the Scribal-Textualist foregrounds the material text as languaged, the Commentator focalization defends or ameliorates many of the protagonist's unruly behaviors. The text uses *felyng* (n.) and occasionally *steryn* (v.) to describe psychosomatically the protagonist's physical behaviors and the psychological or spiritual disposition they index. In Middle English, *stiren* (*steryn*) could mean physical, sexual, or spiritual arousal (*MED*, s.v. *stiren*, def. 9). Rolle regularly used the word in his contemplative writing. The verb's polyvalence suggests how "hir" affects are physical and mental motions with different possible interpretations. We often read in the *Book* how in the narrated past people responded positively or negatively to the protagonist's public behaviors and speech in everyday or spiritual contexts. Clergy and lay people call "hir" witch, Lollard, heretic, or troublemaker. She is arrested and examined for possible heresy. For some, "hir" stirrings and feelings are provocations.

However, the Commentator perspective rebuts her critics with more than strictly empirical or ideological explanations for the protagonist's behaviors. The Commentator focalization assumes privileged access to the protagonist's interior dispositions, whereas "Other wheech had no knowlache of hir maner of governawns, save only be sygth owtforth er ellys be jangelyng of other personys, perverting the dom of trewth . . ." (1.994–996). There is no narrative explanation for the Commentator's claim. It just is. The Commentator stance is amplified by separate but key diegetic episodes in which the powerful Archbishops Arundel and Bowet vouch for the protagonist's orthodoxy and where other diegetic characters interpret "hir" speech and behaviors as signs of her spiritual gifts, piety, and most important, truthfulness. Implicit in all these encounters is whether people, including readers, can trust the protagonist, what she says, and how she behaves. The Commentator focalization seeks to authorize the dictator's truthfulness across narrating levels. Both the protagonist in the past and the storyteller in the narrating present are situated as trustworthy.

## 8. Multi-focalization and transtemporality

Some episodes in the *Book* combine multiple focalizations and temporalities within a single narrated event (Genette's anachrony). Chapter 28 (1.1552–1612) is a rich example. In the chapter, we learn through the Everyday Experiencer and Summarizer focalizations the history of the protagonist's "roaring," exuberant "contemplacions," crying out, and weeping when she hears, sees, or imaginatively recreates an image of Christ's Passion. The narration proceeds in chronological order but on a timeline not restricted to the immediate narrative moment (Order) and at different narrating speeds (Duration). The cumulative effect of these mixed temporal accounts suggests an action-filled period in the protagonist's spiritual experience over many years. There's a lot going on.

Beginning with the Everyday Experiencer focalization, Chapter 28 narrates the protagonist's entry into Jerusalem: "And, whan this creatur saw Jerusalem, rydyng on an asse, sche thankyd God wyth al hir hert . . ." (1.1552–1553). Suddenly, at line 1579, the narrative orientation shifts. As the protagonist begins to cry out and weep, the text switches from the immediate past to a wider temporal focus with a summary and evaluation of her "roryng" and crying out in response to places, images, or speech about the Passion not only in Jerusalem but also later ("many yerys aftyr this tyme," "sumtyme") in England and elsewhere (1.1580–1581, 1585, 1591). The temporal focalization shifts from a distant past time in Jerusalem (retroversion) to a series of times in the nearer past (Rome, England) relative to the narrating present of the text.

In this time-shifting passage (1.1579–1612), the Summarizer focalization overtakes that of the Everyday Experiencer, accumulating and accelerating the action (Duration). Eventually, the Summarizer perspective merges with that of the Commentator. The accelerating tempo and merging focalizations expand the scene's action and narrative horizon with multiple temporalities and perspectives. The anachrony is narratively productive. The Summarizer focalization surveys in the diegesis people's explanations for the protagonist's outbursts – demon possession, sickness, drunkenness. The Commentator focalization intervenes from an external perspective to refute the laypeople's and "gret clerkys" insults directed at the protagonist. As before (1.994–996), the Commentator explains "but thei knewyn ful lytyl what sche felt, ne thei

wolde not belevyn but that sche myth an absteynd hir fro crying yf sche had wold” (1.1604–1605). In the narrating present (heterodiegetic), the Commentator focalization articulates special knowledge of the protagonist’s interior feelings (“what sche felt”) at that time. The Commentator stance presumes to know the other’s mind. This heterodiegetic focalization inserts into the narration a more “true” understanding of the protagonist’s affective speech and behaviors and implies her holiness. But just how the Commentator focalization has attained that information is not accounted for.

Nonetheless, refocalizing the narration in Chapter 28 in present narrating time (extradiegetic), the Commentator perspective inserts new information and asserts the sincerity of the protagonist’s behaviors and therefore the ethical goodness and spiritual truthfulness of her interior experience. The combination of external and internal focalizations enables readers to trust the narrating at this point. We are assured the protagonist is aware of how her public behaviors affect others, even if she can’t predict or control her feelings: “sche kept it [crying out, weeping] in as long as sche mygth and dede al that sche cowed to withstond it er ellys to put it away til sche wex as blo as any leed, and evyr it schuld labowryn in hir mende mor and mor into the tyme that it broke owte” (1.1606–1609; cf. 1.1625–1626, 3652–3654).

We read Chapter 28’s narrative structure and temporality as multifocalized and nonlinear and the action as occurring on different narrating levels. The Everyday Experiencer focalization is surpassed by that of the Summarizer and the Commentator. The Summarizer focalization (external-heterodiegetic) embeds later similar events into the immediate account of the protagonist’s “roryngys” in Jerusalem, thereby expanding the narrative horizon and quickening the narrative tempo. The clerical and lay criticisms of the protagonist are internal-homodiegetic focalization mediated by the external Commentator focalization with a sympathetic evaluation of the protagonist’s intentions. The Commentator focalization inserts into the narration an authoritative extradiegetic evaluation, one which complements the Experiencer’s and Summarizer’s internal narration.

Narratological close reading shows how the narration in Chapter 28 intertwines the perspectives of the Scribal-Textualist, Commentator, and Summarizer with the Experiencers’ homodiegetic perspectives. The Commentator focalization reshapes the narrative horizon of the text,



refocalizing, expanding, contextualizing, and correcting the diegetic narration with knowledge of the protagonist's interior experience. Chapter 28's event sequence (Order) is anachronic, whose textual effect is to thicken the narrative temporality. The sliding focalizations also encode authoritative text alongside the Everyday and Visionary Experiencers' more testimonial discourse.

## 9. Focalizing visionary time

The protagonist's visions are a core part of the narrative and raise questions about how transcendent experience can be narrated. The vision narratives comfort and support the protagonist or provide her with affective modes to express her attachment with Jesus, in marked contrast with her antagonistic or hostile encounters in the everyday world, especially among clergy. The vision episodes are similar to those in other medieval mystical writing in the late Middle Ages, notably St. Bridget, but with some differences. One difference is the text's multifocalized narrating mode.

Let's briefly consider how the Visionary Experiencer focalization relates with other focalizations in the narrative. Recent post-classical narratology has distinguished between 'natural' and 'unnatural' narratives, but we need to historicize and theoretically expand the concept when considering medieval texts. Whatever an 'unnatural' narrative might be, it is always constructed in relation to what readers and narrative actors consider 'natural' narrative to be. And what narrative actors think and what readers think are not necessarily the same thing.<sup>4</sup> The 'natural'/'unnatural' spectrum needs to be deployed critically to situate texts in different worldviews and physical assumptions. Alber (2016), starting with a model of realist constancy, defines 'unnatural' narrative as violating the assumption that "the world we inhabit is dominated by physical laws, logical principles, and anthropomorphic limitations that are permanent and stable. . . [P]henomena such as speaking animals, animated corpses, coexisting time flows, and flying islands were as

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4 I use the somewhat unfortunate terms "natural" and "unnatural" narrative in a value neutral way, as do Alber, Richardson, and Fludernik. I don't claim any special truth value or authority for the visions outside the *Book* itself, regardless of what diegetic figures in the text or other readers might claim.

impossible in the past as they are today” (2016:6). Richardson (2015) takes a more genre-based approach to the dichotomy. ‘Unnatural’ narrative contains “antimimetic events, characters, settings or *frames*, . . . representations that contravene the fictional presuppositions of non-fictional narratives, violate mimetic expectations and the practices of realism, and defy the conventions of existing, established genres” (2015:3; his emphasis). Fludernik sides with Richardson, describing ‘unnatural’ narrative as “the fabulous, the magical, and the supernatural besides the logically or cognitively impossible” (2012:362). She also places great theoretical weight on the distinction between oral (natural) and written (unnatural) narrative performances (1996, 2012).

Some caveats: What is conventional in a narrative can and will change over time. As Fludernik points out, omniscient narrative fiction has over time naturalized an inherently unnatural mode of storytelling, one in which an all-knowing teller external to the implied audience dips in and out of characters’ minds and exposes to the reader what each character is thinking and feeling as well as what they are doing. Sometimes, the Commentator focalization in the *Book* narrative has aspects of the omniscient narration convention.

Second, a text need not be entirely natural or unnatural. Mimetic narratives can include non-mimetic sections or events. It’s hard to think of a narrative that is entirely non-mimetic.

Third, what counts as ‘real-world laws’ and so forth needs to be contextualized in terms of both late medieval religious and commonsense worldviews as well as medieval debates about the trustworthiness of sense perceptions and, most important, interior experience and affect. Alber and Richardson seem to accept we can make ahistorical or universalizing assumptions about what counts as ‘unnatural.’ But it’s not enough to simply allow for the ‘willing suspension of disbelief.’ Eva von Contzen (2017) presents an excellent critique along these lines, arguing that narratology’s natural/unnatural model needs to be historically inflected with medieval texts and narrativity. Among different sections of medieval society, peoples’ varied notions of what is possible or impossible, conventional or odd circulated in religious discourse, commonsense, and experience, notions inflected by everyday and ideological factors.

The narration recounts the protagonist’s visions as interior, inherently narrative experiences through the Visionary Experiencer focalization. If

we think of the *Book's* vision narratives as imaged (not just visually) and as mental projections, we might read them as both possible and impossible narrative. Of course, there's ample evidence that people in the late Middle Ages believed in the truth of "visions," but elites and peasants alike also expressed skepticism about religious visions, miracles, and some Christian doctrine.<sup>5</sup> A person's self-reported visions were often controversial and subject to clerical inquiries to determine if they were "real" and not illusions, figments of the imagination, or worse, intentionally made up. Visions required verification and authentication to be trusted. Visions were intimately but uncertainly imbricated with authority. In late medieval culture, whether one's bodily senses could be trusted was subject to debate and interrogation in commonsense and intellectual contexts. If someone claimed to see or hear what others could not, were they perceiving with different sensory receptors or with spiritual gifts, or were they delusional or making things up?

That last question is a persistent part of the *Book's* narration of the protagonist's visionary experiences -- What is the source of the protagonist's visions? What did it mean for medieval people to think someone perceived things, whether transcendental or otherwise, outside the commonsense ordinary world? Could a person be trusted when they reported seeing what no one else could? Did the vision authorize that person's speech? Conversely, could the vision experience be languaged? Whether a medieval person's vision reports were trustworthy or not was rooted, to varying degrees, in people's faith, commonsense lived experience, communal sense of trust, and traditional superstition.

In the *Book* the protagonist's visions are sometimes described as prophecy (e.g., 1.1253–1263) but usually as empathetic piety. The text uses the devotional language of "gostly seeing" to narrate "hir" visionary experience. The protagonist's self-reported experience is presumed to be the basis for

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5 See, for instance, Lollard and Waldensian critiques of established Church doctrine and practices; Jacques de Vitry on miracles in the legend of St Margaret: "Istud autem, quod dicitur de draconis devoratione et ipsius crepatione, apocryphum et frivolum reputatur" (*Legenda aurea*, ed. Grässe 1850:401); and with caution, testimony gathered by fourteenth-century investigators in Montailou (Le Roy Ladurie 1978).

the visions' authenticity, even when "sche" doesn't trust them herself. The protagonist's struggle to believe is another persistent thread in the narrative.

As narrative events, the visions are embedded in the diegesis. They are aligned with the Visionary Experiencer focalization, whereas the protagonist's affective responses to her visions are aligned with the Everyday Experiencer perspective. The *Book's* visions fall roughly into three groups: imagining the Passion (or once, Nativity), talking with God and Jesus, and seeing Jesus manifested on the streets. All are connected with Apostolic rather than eschatological time. I'll briefly discuss the Passion and visions of Jesus on the streets. I set aside for now the visions of talking with God and Jesus, in particular the protagonist's extensive (and important) vision of talking with God and Jesus in the Apostles Church in Rome (1.2000–2156).

As an example of the protagonist's visions of the Passion, let's return to Chapter 28 and the Jerusalem episodes. The chapter foregrounds the phenomenology of space-time and perception by complicating the relation between narrated time and text time. After the protagonist's difficult journey to the Holy Land, the chapter depicts the protagonist's arrival in Jerusalem and her guided ascent of Mount Calvary with other pilgrims (1.1612–1645). Through the Everyday Experiencer focalization, "sche" is narrated in the diegetic past riding into Jerusalem on an ass (1.1553), a clear echo of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in more distant Apostolic time. In addition, the passage associates the protagonist's joy at seeing Jerusalem with a future spiritual joy. Under the sign of the Everyday Experiencer, "sche" approaches Jerusalem via Mount Joy (now the Palestinian village of Nabi Samwil [Samuil]), the location from where pilgrims first saw the Holy City.<sup>6</sup> When the protagonist nearly falls off her donkey, overcome as she is with "joy" and the "swetnesse and grace that God wrowt in hir sowle" (1.1556, 1558–1559), "sche" thanks God for showing her the "erdly cyté Jerusalem" and then immediately refers to a future time when she hopes to see the "blysfyl cité of Jerusalem abovyn, the cyté of hevyn" (1.1554–1555). However embarrassing her riding might be, the protagonist's immediate joy on earth is presented as a herald of future joy in heaven.

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6 I thank an *NM* reviewer for the Mount Joy reference.

The passage expresses multiple overlapping times and feelings. First, the narrative of the protagonist's entry into Jerusalem repeats Jesus' entry in the distant Apostolic past, only to quickly disrupt the similitude with the protagonist's near fall in the narrated present. Second, the passage collapses together three narrative temporalities -- initially, Apostolic and near past time, then the protagonist's response to seeing Jerusalem (near past) from Mount Joy, and finally a broad sweeping time frame encompassing the distant Apostolic past on earth and the protagonist's near past wish for future joy in heaven. The Everyday Experiencer focalization gathers together all these temporal positions and the protagonist's "joy" and "contemplacyon" around the pronoun "sche" in the diegetic past rendered in the immediate narrating present.

On Mount Calvary, the scene continues to manipulate the multitemporality of the protagonist's experience by shifting from Everyday to Visionary Experiencer focalization. When the protagonist comes to the actual scene of the Crucifixion, she undergoes a major spiritual transformation. Friars lead the pilgrims through the stations of the Cross in a memorial act of contemplative devotion. As the group travels up Mount Calvary, the protagonist imagines the scene of the Crucifixion and begins to weep and cry out: "*as thow sche had seyn owyr Lord wyth hir bodyly ey suffering hys Passyon at that tyme*" (1.1569–1570; my emphasis). The phrase "as thow" signals the shift from Everyday to Visionary Experiencer focalization. The deictic phrase "at that tyme" is not syntactically required, but its ambiguity combines the Apostolic past with the immediate narrated past. With the focalizing phrases "as thow . . . Befor hir in hyr sowle . . ." (1.1569–1570), the Visionary Experiencer stance highlights a contingent motivation and a situated perceptual frame in the immediate narrating present. The analogizing phrase "as thow" (*as if*) occurs in narrating text time (*énonciation*), not narrated story time (*énoncé*). It indexes the diegesis with an interpretation via the Commentator focalization. The narrative discourse maintains this discursive shift between times and focalizations as the pilgrims climb Mount Calvary while the protagonist continues to see the Passion before her: "for in the cité of hir sowle sche saw verily and freschly how owyr Lord was crucified" (1.1574–1575). In the chapter the narration continues the motif of the "cité," from historical to heavenly to one's soul. But without a contingent "as thow," the protagonist's

vision in present space-time manifests the spiritual power of sacred space on Calvary. Atop Mount Calvary, the narration presents the protagonist's immediate past perception with her "gostly ey," her imagining eye, as an interior image realistic enough to be taken as evidence with her "bodyly ey." At that point, the narrative ground shifts and the interior vision transplaces the protagonist, spiritually and psycho-somatically, from fifteenth-century Jerusalem to the Crucifixion in Jerusalem in the distant past.

At this climactic moment, the Commentator perspective in extradiegetic narrating time interpolates new information: the protagonist "myt not kepe hirself fro kryng and roryng, thow sche schuld a be ded therfor" (1.1578–1579), a view the Commentator will repeat shortly (1.1604–1605). Crossing narrating levels, the Commentator perspective then merges with the Summarizer's to provide a more historicized temporal and experiential context for the immediate event on Calvary: "*And this was the first cry that evyr sche cryed in any contemplacyon*" (1.1579–1580; my emphasis). Suddenly, the Summarizer focalization (1.1579–96), sliding between narrative and metanarrative discourse, reorders the immediate narrated event within a different timeline whose future has already occurred (story time) but which has not yet been narrated and written (text time) (anticipation). Following the Summarizer focalization narrating the protagonist's "roryng" in later past times (Genette's Subsequent Narrating), the Commentator focalization (1.1596–1612) introduces an explanation for the protagonist's interior experience of the Passion: "And whan the body myth ne lengar enduryng the gostly labour but was ovyr come wyth the unspekabyll lofe that wrowt so fervently in the sowle, than fel sche down and cryed wondyr lowed" (1.1609–1610). The Commentator stance pulls away from each of the narrated events and asserts the protagonist's intense devotion affect – she collapses with "unspekabyll lofe."

Capping off the narration on Mount Calvary, the Everyday Experiencer and Scribal-Textualist focalizations deploy syntactic transitions and anaphora which, surprisingly, return us to the immediate scene with the protagonist in the near past in Jerusalem: "*And thus sche dede in the Mownt of Calvarye, as it is wretyn befor*" (1.1612–1613; my emphasis). The textual self-reference reasserts the diegetic narrative in text time which the Summarizer and Commentator focalizations have expanded, glossed, and narrated away from.

Chapter 28's variable focalizations and multiple temporal shifts disrupt and reorder the text's events and diegetic time in a combination of everyday and visionary experience. The nonlinear narrating, not just the Scribal-Textualist focalization, is full of retroversion and anticipation. The narrated text begins in the past in fifteenth-century Jerusalem, leaps further back to the Crucifixion in the distant Apostolic past, and then quickly shifts forward to a nearer past (England and other undefined places), all which have occurred after the scene in Jerusalem (story time) but not yet in future text time. With the non-causal transition "thus" (1.1612), the narrating Everyday Experiencer focalization returns to the near past in Jerusalem, relative to the present time of narrating (text time). The passage concludes with the extradiegetic Scribal-Textualist self-reflexively binding the sentences with textual deixis to an earlier instantiation of the episode.

The text of Chapter 28 scrambles narrative cause and effect with respect to the protagonist's affective spiritual behaviors. The Summarizer's sequence of temporal refocalizations characterize the protagonist's later affective behaviors as being like her earlier behavior in Jerusalem. The protagonist's post-Jerusalem behaviors are yet to be narrated (future text time) but have already occurred in the storyworld's near past. The narrated text time reverses the narrative logic and natural chronology of events (story time). The first was like the last. The present is like the past. The past is like the present. On a different narrating level, the Commentator focalization provides an interior spiritual rationale for the protagonist's feelings and external behaviors. The narration mixes repetition with causation and explanation.

The expanded present narration (narrating time) of the vision is similar to what Michel de Certeau describes as the eternal present of mystical experiences and narratives oriented around the Passion and Apostolic times (1992:184). What is mystical, he says, is a *modus loquendi*, a way of speaking, a discourse with a never ending present. That certainly applies to the *Book*, but the narration through the Visionary Experiencer's focalization goes further than de Certeau's spiritually continuous present of the past. It also fulfils Genette's narrative act Frequency. Scenes of the Passion are reiterated as the principal narrative of the protagonist's visionary experiences.

Chapter 28 shows how the *Book's* narration intertwines narrating focalizations. Unlike the narratives in other medieval mystical writing, the

text's Visionary Experiencer and other focalizations manifest the narration not as defamiliarizing but as familiar yet highly affective social interaction. The Visionary Experiencer and other focalizations reflect how someone's report of their interior experience and feeling in their own life can also communicate the emotional power of that experience.

The protagonist's visions as narrated often support and comfort "hir," yet sometimes disturb "hir." The protagonist sometimes questions or worries about her visions and whether she should trust them and herself or not. However, the Commentator focalization doesn't let such doubts detain the reader. The protagonist's doubts are narrated through the Everyday Experiencer focalization, but the Commentator focalization ameliorates the behavior which people in the diegesis and (medieval or modern) readers might think odd. In the Mount Calvary episode, for instance, after the narration through the Visionary Experiencer focalization tells us "sche" wept and fell down while contemplating her vision of the Passion on Mount Calvary (1.1613–1625), the Commentator focalization intercedes on the metanarrating level with a familiarizing analogy. Addressing readers in immediate text time, the Commentator perspective glosses: "It is nowt to be merveyled yf . . . whan we may se eche day at eye . . ." (1.1625–1638). The focalization seeks to render the protagonist's visionary experience as familiar in terms of commonsense perception ("whan we may se eche day at eye"). The Commentator focalization authorizes the protagonist's contemplative yet boisterous affect with a general psychological account in present reading time, not restricted to the protagonist's experience alone. "We" all – narrating subjects, readers, humans – will likely react just as inconsolably if we lose something we dearly love. "Sche," the Commentator focalization suggests, is no different. What is different is that the protagonist's "gostly eye" and spiritual intention are properly focused on Jesus' sacrifice rather than on worldly losses. The Commentator focalization with present-tense explanation normalizes the protagonist's visionary affect, discernible but disturbing to others, and then idealizes the affect as proper devotional response.

The vision narratives are embedded in the diegesis, sometimes in explicitly devotional contexts, sometimes in random transtemporal, transplacing experiences. One account, the protagonist's repeated visions of Jesus in her encounters on the Roman streets (1.2010–2019), exemplifies how one vision



is embedded in the narration of another vision, such that the Everyday and Visionary Experiencer focalizations are intertwined with the Summarizer perspective.

In the Rome episodes, the embedded Summarizer focalization expands the horizon of the Commentator's (external-heterodiegetic) and Visionary Experiencer's (external-homodiegetic) focalizations in the extensive visionary conversation between the protagonist and Jesus in the Apostles Church in Rome. The subject of their visionary conversation is Jesus' "manhode," the focal point of the protagonist's unending desire for intimate contact with the embodied transcendental being of Jesus. At one point in the narrated conversation, the Summarizer focalization intervenes to recount the protagonist's visionary experiences of Christ's "manhode" on the streets of Rome, where "Sche was so meche affectyd to the manhode of Crist . . ." (1.2010). The Summarizer extradiegetic stance interpolates into the immediate diegesis a parallel narrative of the protagonist's desire for Christ's "manhode." Earlier in the text, the Summarizer focalization was vague as to where and when the protagonist cried out in her contemplations (1.1580ff.). Now, in Rome the Summarizer focalization gives a series of specific transplacing interactions (1.2010ff.). Small children remind the protagonist of the infant Jesus and cause her to weep and try to kiss them. Handsome ("semly") men compel her to turn away "les than sche myth a seyn hym that was bothe God and man" (1.2015–2016). The protagonist both desires and fears Christ's "manhode." Through the Summarizer focalization, "hir" pleasure in His holy body is narrated as ambiguous. The passage indicates how the text sometimes occasionally inserts one vision inside another to open the borders of the narrated field and depict multiple times and places in an expanded narrating horizon.

## 10. Focalization and narrative punctum

At least one vision combines Everyday Experiencer and Visionary Experiencer focalizations without any extradiegetic or interpolating perspectives. The episode in Leicester in 1417 narrates a different kind of narrative simultaneity. The protagonist was in Leicester seeking a letter from local religious authorities to guarantee her safe conduct as "sche" travelled

throughout England. At the time, “sche” was being harassed by the Mayor of Leicester and others. Soon, she would be summoned by the Archbishop of York and examined on her orthodoxy.

The Augustinian abbey in Leicester was headed by Richard (of) Rothley (in service 1405-1420). The narrative depicts Richard as at first suspicious of the protagonist, but after vetting “hir” orthodoxy (1.2692–2752) he decides to support her request for a letter of safe passage as she travelled to Lincoln to obtain a letter from the bishop discharging her from the mayor of Leicester’s jurisdiction (1.2743–2745). The narrated episode manifests a multifocalized and transtemporal narrativity and a different kind of textual subjectivity from what we read in other vision episodes.

As the abbot and his entourage enter the abbey church with what the protagonist hopes is the letter guaranteeing her safe travel, the narrative perspective quickly shifts from Everyday to Visionary Experiencer focalization. The protagonist suddenly perceives the entourage transtemporally, similar to the vision we read earlier in Jerusalem and to the visions on the Rome streets. She sees in her imagination not the abbot but Jesus and the Apostles approaching her. Perhaps the protagonist’s vision is ignited by her anticipation that the abbot is coming to protect her, an instance of her reading the world in Apostolic time. Significantly, the Commentator focalization is absent. Rather than imaginatively transplacing her into the distant Apostolic past, the narrative combines the distant Apostolic past with the immediate narrated present in Leicester; that is, the Everyday and the Visionary Experiencer focalizations are combined to encompass simultaneously the protagonist’s interior and exterior public experiences. “Sche” is narrated as being both in Leicester and as meeting Jesus and the apostles in an English church. So far, much like on the streets of Rome.

However, this time the variable but intertwined focalization is signalled by a *punctum*, a rupture in the narrative frame. As she is suddenly “raveschyd into contemplacyon,” the protagonist leans against a church pillar to catch herself:

Whan sche sey hym comyn, *anon in hir sowle* sche beheld owr  
Lord coming wyth hys apostelys, and sche was so raveschyd into  
contemplacyon wyth swetnes and devocyon that sche myth not

stondyn ageyns her [*their*] comyng as *curtesy wolde but lenyd hir to a peler in the chirche and held hir strongly therby for dred of fallyng, for sche wold a stondyn and sche myth not for plenté of devocyon which was cawse that sche cryed and wept ful sor.* (1.2755–2760; my emphasis)

The passage repeats the Visionary Experiencer’s interior focalizing phrase “in hir sowle,” read elsewhere when the text describes the protagonist’s visions. The narration also includes devotional vocabulary which echoes that found in the writings of Nicholas Love, Walter Hilton, Richard Rolle, and the Pseudo Bonaventure (now Johannes de Cauligus), the last three of whom were included in the protagonist’s reading list with her clerics (1.898–900).

However, despite these commonalities, the highlighted passage (1.2757–2758) suggests the difference between the Leicester abbey vision and most of the protagonist’s other visions. The passage above in italics is unique in the *Book*. The narration of the Leicester vision simultaneously maintains the protagonist as acting consciously and simultaneously in two narrated positions, the ecstatic and the courteous, the visionary and the everyday. The present time narrating discourse attributes the worldly protocol of “curtesy” to the protagonist’s state of mind. The contrastive connector “but” emphasizes the disjunction between visionary and everyday perceptual modes and the visionary’s psychosomatic conflict. The Leicester episode recalls the streets of Rome passages where the protagonist imaginatively sees Jesus in children and handsome men. But in the abbey church, the protagonist remains distinctly self-conscious as to her socio-material position. “Sche” insists on maintaining a more customary and socially approved presence even as she is experiencing a vivid spiritual vision. Even though the protagonist cries out and weeps “ful sor,” “sche” is not entirely overwhelmed by her ecstasy or “hy contemplacyon.” “Curtesy” motivates “hir” to control her body and her spiritual outbursts in the past time storyworld even as she is simultaneously inhabiting spiritually a distant Apostolic past. The protagonist thinks about social “curtesy” even as she is spiritually “raveschyd” by her inner vision.

Literate power comes to the fore in the episode. Unlike in the other narrated visions of the suffering, talking, or walking Jesus, the narrated protagonist at Leicester abbey is focalized as more cognizant of the immediate material and

social protocols in the abbot's presence and also as desiring her own safety, which depends on the abbot's social power. In other episodes the protagonist is depicted as trying unsuccessfully to control or contain her spiritual outbursts, crying out, weeping, shaking, or turning blue (e.g., 1.2474–2475, 1.3652–3654), often leaving her publicly vulnerable. In the Leicester episode, she is singularly successful in sustaining her position *between* the everyday and Apostolic worlds. The abbot's letter signifies power and safety in the everyday world, relying ultimately on Apostolic authority. "Sche" must maintain a social presence worthy of written authority. The Everyday and Visionary Experiencers co-focalization mediates the protagonist's multisensory, multitemporal perception by combining her contemplative imagination with her pragmatic literate consciousness and social savvy. Obtaining the abbot's letter gives the protagonist a kind of literate power, just as textualizing and circulating her *Book* does or at least might have done. Rather than being wholly transplanted to the distant past or wholly empathizing with the image of the suffering Jesus, the protagonist in Leicester is focalized as a lay woman empowered with corporate literacy linking the distant authoritative past, institutional power, and the immediate narrated past. Most important, the protagonist's desire for literate power and security supersedes her desire for Christ's "manhode," although it doesn't erase it. "Sche" holds herself up against the pillar, even as she cries out and weeps with ecstatic spiritual pleasure. The Everyday and Visionary Experiencers' perspectives merge in the immediate diegetic moment to form a new co-focalization which is neither one place and time nor another.

In the narrated immediate past, the Leicester abbey episode presents an imagined Jesus as very much 'fresh,' alive, and walking toward her, an active agent in the protagonist's phenomenal world rather than the sacrificial suffering image or object of sympathetic mourning. For perhaps the only time in the *Book*, the Everyday and Visionary Experiencers together focalize the protagonist as truly inhabiting two times and two places simultaneously. Moreover, the episode rewrites the text's repeated representation (Genette's Frequency) of the protagonist's uncontrollable affect of crying out and falling down in the presence of an ecstatic vision of the suffering Jesus. With co-focalized external and internal diegetic narration, the Leicester abbey episode depicts the protagonist as experiencing an Apostolic vision while

simultaneously and self-consciously maintaining her intention toward her worldly self. Motivated by her understanding of literate power, she desires and gets what she needs at that moment in the world from the Church. The protagonist manages to keep her feet to protect herself, while interiorly she experiences another transtemporal vision.

### **11. Conclusion: Writing, narrating, focalizing the *Book***

Narrating and focalizing the *Book of Margery Kempe* is formally organized through narrative functions. These textual functions distribute the narration through several internal and external diegetic positions, including the protagonist's alter egos – the boisterous, desiring, often disruptive everyday experiencer and the increasingly authoritative devout visionary experiencer. All the psychological drama and social intensity occurs at the diegetic, narrated level in the text. Sometimes, the tone of the narrated text suggests a colloquial semi-realist novel. But the various narrating focalizations manipulate the narration and encode multitemporal and multiperspective narrating acts in a kaleidoscopic narrative which defies singularity.

The textual functions are somewhat aligned with the material functions of medieval manuscript production. The *Book's* written narration is comprised of a distinct separate *narrating* act and a *narrated* diegesis, but unlike Chaucer's dramatized and impersonated narrators, a particular narrator is not associated with the text's narrated events. At different points in the text, the narration (narrating level) adopts one or more focalizing functions to depict the events and the feelings, thoughts, and speech of the protagonist and to a lesser extent those of other characters. Reading closely with narratological attention and following the fluid trajectory of shifting focalizations, we see how the narrating act implicit in every narrative at the narrating level manipulates the underlying events. Different focalizations construct different time frames in the narrative. As part of perceived textuality and reading interaction, the narrating act is external to the diegesis but is traced in the text along with the narrated level (story). Formally, the split between the narrating level (*énonciation*) and the narrated level (*énoncé*) is maintained, even in the brief narrated episodes showing the protagonist narrating her story to scribes.

If the *Book of Margery Kempe* were made into a film, the character Margery Kempe would be in nearly every scene. The diegesis is very much the protagonist's story. But the narrating act belongs to many perspectives, not only the one we attribute to the historical or textual character Margery Kempe. Commentary, summary, scribal textual intervention, and distanced dictating functions reflect the *Book's* material imbrication with late medieval book culture and manuscript textuality. The diegetic (internal) narrating is mostly conducted through the two Experiencers and Summarizer functions. The Scribal-Textualist and Commentator functions exist solely on the metatextual (external) narrating level.

As critical practice, narratology doesn't take a stand on the *Book's* verifiable historicity. And the narrative is replete with historically recognizable figures – Margery Kempe, her husband John, Julian of Norwich, Archbishops Bowet and Arundel, and Abbot Rotheley. The text refers to many other, less documented figures – numerous friars, priests, mayors, and the protagonist's confessors, including Richard of Caister and especially Robert Spryngolde (priest at St. Margaret's parish, Bishop's Lynn). Many secular people populate the narrative, usually as part of an anonymous group. The few named have faint historical footprints: for example, the Irishman Richard the “brokebakkyd man.” All of which is to say the narrative is deeply situated in a fifteenth-century English world. But that's not to say the text is an ‘historical’ or factual account of the protagonist's adult life between first giving birth and disappearing from the historical record.

Critical narratological analysis foregrounds the complex narrative structure of the *Book of Margery Kempe*. That structure produces an exciting account of a lay woman's pious experience filtered through several narrating perspectives which manifest a distributed textual subjectivity, beyond the discrete Experiencers. The structure suggests how the narrating stances and focalizations are textual features which function as narrating strategies rather than as impersonated or dramatized narrators. It's difficult to associate all the focalizations with a single integral narrating subject, so working out the various narrating focalizations shows the distributed ‘made-ness’ of the narrative. It also reveals the vernacular sophistication of the *Book's* narrating discourse, a complexity which exceeds explicit intentionality, language ownership, or authorship. Textual power is afforded at least as

much by the collaborative writing as by the representation of the protagonist. Narratology inflected with discourse analysis offers a productive framework for understanding the force of textualized language in a medieval narrative. It expands rather than replaces or excludes other ways of exploring the *Book's* extraordinary narrative and helps show why the *Book* continues to surprise, disturb, compel, and please us to read again and again. [N](#)

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Epistolary skill and  
discourse management:  
the use of  
metapragmatic  
utterances in 18th-  
century Scottish letters

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**Abstract** Studies using present-day English data have demonstrated that speakers and writers show reflexive awareness of their own language use by employing metapragmatic comments to monitor and organise their discourse. This study explores to what extent this also applies to historical data and therefore investigates the use of metapragmatic utterances for discourse management purposes in 18th-century Scottish letters. It establishes the different types of metapragmatic utterances attested in the correspondence data and, moreover, assesses the influence of the letter-writers' epistolary skills on the use of such utterances. The study finds that 18th-century writers applied metapragmatic utterances, mostly realised as set strategies, to prevent misunderstandings by clarifying and structuring their own discourse for the addressees and by judging the appropriateness of their own communicative acts. The findings further indicate that writers were aware of the conventional requirement to employ such metapragmatic utterances irrespective of their level of epistolary skill. Nevertheless, generally, a writer's epistolary skill influenced how often they used standardised discourse management strategies as well as how those strategies were integrated in the letter discourse.

**Keywords** discourse management, epistolary conventions, epistolary skill, metapragmatic utterances, monitoring, 18th-century Scottish correspondence

## 1. Introduction

When speakers interact with other interlocutors, they do not only communicate on a primary level but also on a meta-level, i.e., they are capable of reflecting on their own communication (Lucy 1993). This is, e.g., evident in the use of comments such as in (1) and (2).

1. *The good news is that the surplus of a hundred and ninety three thousand six hundred and eighty seven pounds after tax is the largest ever in the Association's history.*  
(BNC, Royal Yachting Association annual general meeting, 17 March 1993)

2. *I shall make two points. The first concerns something that we can do ourselves.*  
(*BNC*, Hansard extracts 1991–1992)

In (1), the speaker labels the upcoming utterance as news, thus clarifying its speech act function. The example in (2) serves as a comment that pre-structures the ensuing discourse for the addressee. These two examples show that speakers intervene in their own discourse by means of metacommunicative comments to organise, plan and monitor it (Caffi 2006a: 85–86). Such comments represent what Hübler & Bublitz (2007) have termed ‘metapragmatics in use’,<sup>1</sup> i.e., “the pragmatics of actually performed meta-utterances that serve as a means of commenting on and interfering with ongoing discourse or text” (Hübler & Bublitz 2007: 6). These meta-utterances make the reflexive awareness of speakers and writers explicit in discourse (see Culpeper & Haugh 2014: 258).

The use of metapragmatic utterances has been studied for various types of synchronous communication including courtroom interaction (Janney 2007) and international communication (Penz 2007, Liu & Liu 2017). Metapragmatic comments are, however, not only common in synchronous interactions but play an important role in asynchronous communication. Tanskanen (2002: 88), for instance, has shown that metapragmatic utterances in asynchronous computer-mediated discussions serve a collaborative purpose so that “communicators adopt the perspective of their fellow communicators and construct their messages in a manner which contributes to a successful communicative exchange”. Her study draws, in particular, on Caffi’s definition of metapragmatics as management of discourse<sup>2</sup> (Caffi

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**1** This framework draws on a narrow conceptualisation of metapragmatics. In fact, metapragmatics has been qualified as a ‘slippery’ term by Hübler (2011: 107), as it has been defined in different ways in the larger context of metalanguage and metacommunication. The reflexive awareness of speakers of their own and their interlocutors’ language use is central to it. Thus, for some researchers, metapragmatics encompasses all phenomena testifying to reflexivity in language use (see Lucy 1993, Silverstein 1993, Verschueren 1999: 187–195, 2004).

**2** Metapragmatics as discourse management is in fact the third of the three senses that Caffi identifies for the term metapragmatics. Metapragmatics 1 is concerned with metatheoretical reflections on pragmatics as a discipline and metapragmatics 2 with

2006a: 85). Speakers can monitor their discourse by defining it prospectively or retrospectively for the addressees, e.g., by announcing speech acts or controlling discussions (see Hübler 2011: 109–110). These definitions are editable such that they can, e.g., be confirmed, questioned or modified by the interactants. In addition, they can judge whether their discourse choices are appropriate to the communicative situation (Caffi 2006a: 85–86). Building on Caffi's conceptualisation of metapragmatics as discourse management, Tanskanen (2007: 98) classifies the metapragmatic utterances in online discussion forums into three separate but not mutually exclusive functional categories: (a) judgements of appropriateness, (b) control and planning of interaction, and (c) feedback on ongoing interaction. Judgements of appropriateness are mainly self-initiated by the writers and generally refer intratextually to their own contributions by, e.g., apologising for their length (e.g., *Sorry for the length*) or potential incomprehensibility (e.g., *I apologise for the tortured prose*). Comments whose underlying goal is to control and plan the interaction often encourage the other interactants to contribute to the discussion (e.g., *I think I left plenty of room for argument*). Such encouragement may also be achieved by providing feedback on the ongoing discussion (e.g., *Interesting and valuable discussion!*) (Tanskanen 2007: 100–101). However, feedback may also be of a negative kind and discourage interactants from further participating in the discussion. On the whole, Tanskanen's study finds that the majority of metapragmatic utterances in online discussion forums are self-initiated, i.e., they are not prompted by a previous contribution to the thread by another interactant, as well as intratextual and function as judgements of appropriateness of the writers' own contributions. This shows that the writers anticipate the potential reactions of their interactants and try to prevent misunderstandings by adding their comments.

This collaborative and anticipatory purpose of metapragmatic utterances in online discussions may well be shared with other types of asynchronous communication such as historical correspondence. While, at first glance, computer-mediated discussions and historical letters might seem to be entirely different forms of communication and text types, there are, in fact,

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the possibility conditions of communication (Caffi 2006a: 83–85). In view of their different orientations, these three senses give rise to different lines of research.

parallels between the two. Both are forms of written interaction involving a time delay, shorter for online discussion forums and longer for letters, thus allowing the writers to organise and plan their online and letter discourse, respectively. In view of these parallels, this study will explore whether historical letter-writers used metapragmatic utterances similarly to present-day writers in online discussions as a salient means of anticipatory discourse management.

The data for this study comprises a set of 90 Scottish letters from the first part of the 18th century included in the *Helsinki Corpus of Scottish Correspondence, 1540–1750* (*ScotsCorr*). The letters in this dataset are varied regarding the epistolary skills evinced by individual writers. While some letters are written in a sophisticated style with standard spelling, others, often but not exclusively authored by women, are less elaborate, manifesting, e.g., non-standard spelling practices and grammatical features (see also Meurman-Solin 2001). In view of this variation, I specifically aim to establish whether the level of epistolary skill and competence influences the use of metapragmatic utterances in the Scottish letter material. The study therefore seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Which metapragmatic utterances did 18th-century letter-writers employ for micro-level discourse management and what are their functions?
2. To what extent does a writer's epistolary skill have an effect on their use of metapragmatic utterances?

Following this introduction, section 2 consists of two parts. It firstly introduces the correspondence data (section 2.1) and secondly the criteria that were used to determine a writer's epistolary skill (section 2.2). Section 3 first of all contrasts present-day online discussions and 18th-century letter-writing (section 3.1) and then applies Tanskanen's scheme to the Scottish correspondence data, discussing how 18th-century letter-writers deployed metapragmatic utterances to monitor their letter discourse (section 3.2). In a third step, section 3.3 addresses the formulaic nature of metapragmatic utterances and discusses the potential influence of 18th-century letter-

writing manuals. Section 4 explores to what extent the use of metapragmatic utterances is influenced by a writer's epistolary skill. Section 5 ties up the findings and provides some concluding remarks.

## 2. Data and methodology

### 2.1. 18th-century Scottish correspondence data

My study uses correspondence data from the 18th-century sub-section of the *Helsinki Corpus of Scottish Correspondence (ScotsCorr)*, which cover the period between 1700 and 1750. The 18th-century dataset in *ScotsCorr* comprises a total of 117 letters by male writers and 53 letters by female writers from across Scotland. From these I drew 90 letters: 45 letters by female and male letter-writers, respectively, to represent the two genders equally. These letters were originally chosen as part of a speech act annotation project, whose goal it is to provide a pragmatically annotated corpus as a basis for historical variational pragmatic studies.<sup>3</sup> While in the female-authored sub-set, all 19 women writers are represented, the male-authored sub-set contains letters from 41 writers. *ScotsCorr* provides metadata for all letters, detailing who the writers and the addressees were, if known, as well as the date of composition and the regional origin of the writers. In most cases, it is thus possible to place the writers in terms of their social class. The majority of writers in the 90-letter sub-set for this study either belong to the nobility or the landed gentry. Only for a dozen writers are the metadata not sufficient to determine their social status and they are not contained in bibliographical sources such as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, either. In addition to information on the writers and recipients, the metadata in *ScotsCorr* specify the autograph status of the letters. The corpus is generally based on manuscripts (Meurman-Solin 2016) and the 18th-century sub-section mostly contains autograph letters. Only the corpus data for Margaret

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3 Variational pragmatics explores the influence of macro-social factors such as region and gender on language use in action and interaction. To be able to assess the impact of gender on speech act behaviour, in the first stage of the annotation project I aimed to include equal numbers of female- and male-authored letters.



Hamilton, Countess of Panmure, are based on copies of the original letters. In the majority of cases, the letters are therefore likely to represent the letter-writers' own writing practices.

Unfortunately, the metadata do not include any information regarding the educational background of the writers and additional sources such as the *ODNB* or the *New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women* do not offer much detail on their education, either. While for male members of the Scottish nobility and gentry, it is reasonably safe to assume that they would have enjoyed schooling beyond a basic level, for women such assumptions cannot safely be made. Well before the 18th century, upper class boys generally attended grammar schools, where they were taught letter-writing as part of a classical education (e.g., Brown 2000: 186–187, Daybell 2012: 55–56). Even parochial and burgh schools would sometimes have offered Latin lessons to boys. By contrast, girls from noble families and the landed gentry rarely attended grammar schools, but may have received private tuition (Glover 2011: 36), generally with a focus on, e.g., singing, dancing but also accounting and housewifery. The focus on practical skills was important in the so-called sewing schools, which in the 18th century were attended by girls from the middle class and even the landed gentry. Whereas daughters of gentry families were often sent to larger towns such as Stirling, Perth or Edinburgh to receive a genteel education, only girls from an aristocratic background were sent to London (Houston 1989: 135–136, Brown 2000: 187, Moore 2006: 115, Glover 2011: 33–34; 37–38, Nenadic 2011: 647). In view of these varied patterns concerning women, in particular, it is difficult to assess a writer's educational background. The social class of a writer is certainly not a reliable indicator of their epistolary skills. Section 2.2 will detail which criteria may usefully be applied to determine a writer's epistolary competence based on the letters they wrote.

## 2.2. Determining epistolary skill

Letter-writing is a complex skill, which involves competencies at different levels. Accordingly, Whyman's concept of epistolary literacy (2009: 76–77), developed to judge the literacy skills of 18th-century English middle and

lower class letter-writers, does not only capture their actual writing skills, covering spelling and the ability to produce coherent text, but also material aspects, e.g., the ability to handle a quill and fold a letter appropriately, as well as the mastery of epistolary conventions. Depending on how competent writers are on these various levels, they may manifest different degrees of epistolary literacy. For the purposes of this study, I will build on this concept of multifaceted epistolary literacy to be able to rank writers according to their letter-writing skills. To this end, I will briefly review the criteria developed by Whyman and other scholars and discuss to what extent they can be usefully applied to the 18th-century Scottish correspondence data forming the basis of this study.

To rate a writer's level of epistolary literacy, Whyman (2009: 77) evaluates a combination of material and linguistic features, such as a letter's layout, spelling and general language use. In addition, she also takes the scope of a letter's content and, e.g., the presence of literary strategies into consideration. Fairman (e.g., 2000, 2007, 2012) in his studies of late 18th- and early 19th-century lower-order letters, applies more refined linguistic criteria on different levels. A partly-schooled writer typically evinces poor spelling and non-standard punctuation, a preference for simple monosyllabic non-Latinate words, chaining of syntactic elements as well as, potentially, dialectal features. Fully-schooled writers, by contrast, manifest standard punctuation practices and standard orthography, utilise polysyllabic Latinate vocabulary, tend to suspend the completion of sentences by embedding subordinate clauses and do not use dialectal features in their writing. Based on Meurman-Solin (2001: 42–43), the use of connectors to indicate semantic relationships between propositions can be added as a further criterion, which allows the researcher to gauge a writer's stylistic competence.

Whyman and Fairman's criteria were developed to account for lower and middle class letter-writing practices in their own right. In my view, however, the gradient nature of the linguistic criteria, in particular, also makes them suitable tools to assess the letter-writing competency of mostly middle and upper class writers in early 18th-century Scotland. These writers all demonstrate more than basic literacy skills as well as familiarity with epistolary

conventions.<sup>4</sup> It is likely that even writers who did not receive a classical education had ample opportunity to familiarise themselves with general letter-writing conventions. Letters were, e.g., often read out aloud to family members and many parents encouraged their children to practice their letter-writing skills by copying their own letters (see Brant 2006: 65, Whyman 2009: 86–87, 107). Thus, even the least competent writers in my data will likely exhibit a higher degree of epistolary skill than most partly-schooled writers in Fairman's lower class correspondence data. Nevertheless, the Scottish letter-writers also exhibit varying degrees of letter-writing competency. Women, in particular, have been shown to manifest considerable degrees of spelling variation (see Meurman-Solin 2001). Moreover, at the beginning of the 18th century, private correspondence in Scotland, especially by women, had not yet been fully anglicised, but still exhibited some Scots orthographic features (Millar 2020: 100). However, spelling is only one of the features considered in this study to gauge a writer's writing competency. These comprise the following: (a) spelling, (b) use of vocabulary, (c) use of connectors to mark semantic relations, (d) syntactic complexity and (e) use of epistolary formulae. I further noted the presence of general Scots features. Since official Scottish writing had become largely anglicised by 1700 (Millar 2020: 100), the use of Scots in letters may indicate that the writers were not familiar with the norms of the London-based Southern standard. Nevertheless, I proceeded with caution since there is growing evidence that well-educated writers, too, employed Scots lexis and spellings to different ends, e.g., for pragmatic and semantic purposes and as markers of national identity (see Cruickshank 2012, van Eyndhoven 2021). For my categorisation, I took note of the presence or absence of non-standard features in these five categories, also considering whether these occur regularly throughout the letters or only occasionally. However, my categorisation is not based on a calculation of the number of non-standard features, e.g., per 100 words.<sup>5</sup> Since writers may

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**4** Generally, writing was a “gendered skill” in Scottish society in the middle of the 18th century, as 85 per cent of the women could not sign their name (Moore 2006: 115). This is in stark contrast to 35 per cent of men.

**5** In some cases, the writing competency displayed by one writer across different letters seems variable. They may, for instance, only manifest the use of a limited range of connectors, e.g., *and*, *but* and *for* (see Meurman-Solin 2001: 41), in one letter

evinced a higher degree of competency with some skills than with others, e.g., syntactic complexity vs. spelling, the epistolary skills of a writer are best rated along a continuum. Based on the linguistic features used to assess a writer's epistolary skills, they were placed into two categories: (a) basic and medium skills and (b) elaborate skills.

Two examples drawn from the Scottish letter material will serve to illustrate the classification. The first example is Lilius Campbell, who wrote a short letter to Alexander Campbell of Barcaldine in 1705. Her spelling is mostly non-standard, e.g., *ansurs*, *fulay resolfed*, or *apontmentt*. Some of these represent Scots spellings, e.g., *keind* (see *DOST*, s.v. *kind*, *kynd*, adj.) and *kip* (see *DOST*, s.v. *kepe*, *keip(e)*, v.). Her sentences moreover exhibit a relatively low degree of syntactic complexity with chaining of clauses that are exclusively cohesively linked by *and*, *but*, *for* and *so*, as in (3).

3. *and* if lachlan be com from Edr (= Edinburgh) he will com if not furn?*i?che?* {compressed} will com with kinloch, *for* I hop ye will be so keind as not to go {correction} anie way from hom *for* I will do nothing without yowr being present so yowr being ther is alvarlay intreted and expected  
(#1221,<sup>6</sup> Lilius Campbell to Alexander Campbell of Barcaldine, 1705)

The repetition of *will com* in the conditional clause shows that the writer had planning problems. The connector *for* is used not only to introduce a reason clause (*for I will do nothing without yowr being*) but also a consequence (*for I hop ye will be so keind as not to go*). Lilius Campbell's vocabulary comprises some Latinate words such as *expect*, *resolve* and *appointment*. The latter, which is used in the sense 'agreement', may well have been part of a more specialised vocabulary she employed when dealing with estate business.

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but a wider range in others. My overall assessment is based on the features found across all letters by one writer. For writers who are only represented by one letter, the assessment is necessarily based on this limited evidence.

The assessments for each writer are available here:

<https://github.com/Cristeenvic/Epistolary-skill-letter-writers.git>.

6 The letter ID in the *ScotsCorr* corpus is indicated by a hashtag followed by the respective number.

The letter also shows that the writer was familiar with basic epistolary conventions as she employs the conventional address form *Sir*, which is set off from the body of the letter by a wide space, as well as the common leavetaking formula *Yowr Most humbell servant Lillas Campbell*, also with the appropriate use of space. Thus, although Lillas Campbell certainly exhibits letter-writing competencies, in view of her stylistic limitations, within the Scottish letter material, I would rate her epistolary skills as basic to medium.

By contrast, Frances Herbert, the Countess Dowager of Seaforth, manifests elaborate epistolary skills in her five letters in the corpus material. Although her spelling practices are not fully standard, this is outweighed by the syntactic complexity of her sentences, e.g., with concessive structures (*tho ... yet*) and suspension through embedded relative clauses, and her generally sophisticated style, as is illustrated in (4).

4. *Tho* I haue not yet ben soe happy as to recue the anceuer of mine to you, *yet* I cannot but giue you this trouble, to beg not only your aduis *which I find is the best to me of any*, but your assistance to uptaine what I desier, *which is an act of counsell in my faour*  
(#1234, Frances Herbert, Countess Dowager of Seaforth to unspecified addressee, 1701)

She further employs a relatively wide range of connectors to indicate semantic relationships, including not only *and*, *but* and *for* but also *therefore*, *yet* and *because*. In addition, she is versatile in her use of epistolary formulae. Therefore, I rated Frances Herbert as a highly skilled letter-writer.

To sum up, this section has introduced criteria to gauge a letter-writer's degree of epistolary skill. On the basis of these, the writers represented in the 18th-century Scottish letter material were classified into two categories. This classification will allow me to assess whether the writers' level of epistolary skill had an influence on their use of metapragmatic utterances for discourse management (see section 4). As a prerequisite for this assessment, section 3 will discuss how the 18th-century letter-writers employed metapragmatic utterances to monitor their letter discourse.

### 3. Metapragmatics of discourse management scheme in 18th-century correspondence data

#### 3.1. Present-day online discussions vs. 18th-century letters

Although there are a number of parallels between asynchronous online discussions and historical letters, as pointed out in section 1, there are also differences, which may affect the way metapragmatic utterances are used in both types of communication. One such difference is that, generally, correspondence collections containing letter exchanges with both in- and out-letters are rare. Nevertheless, letters often contain references to previous letters, thus suggesting that the writers may have been engaged in longer interactions. Another difference concerns the length of the time delay involved in letter communication. In the 18th century, depending on the distance, the delivery of a letter could take several days or even longer and often letters did not reach their destination (see Whyman 2009: 53–56). At the beginning of the century, in Scotland, letters were frequently transported by town letter carriers (<https://www.gbps.org.uk/information/rates/inland/scotland-1660-1711.php>). Despite the fact that the British postal network, including Scotland, was expanded during the 18th century, postage was quite expensive, and was charged per sheet, so that many letter-writers opted to send letters with family, friends or other messengers (see Whyman 2009: 55–59, 61–65). Due to the costs involved in posting letters and the insecurity regarding their delivery, writers must have felt the need to be explicit about their communicative intentions and to try to pre-empt misunderstandings. This finds reflection in the way writers organised and monitored their letter discourse. Another difference between online communication and historical letters may lie in the nature of the metapragmatic comments used by letter-writers for discourse-organisational and monitoring purposes, since these generally represent recurrent epistolary formulae, for instance, *Yours I Received*, or formulaic chunks such as *this is to ask a favour*, for which writers would have found models in letter-writing manuals. After discussing the use of metapragmatic utterances belonging to the three categories ‘control and planning of interaction’, ‘judgements of appropriateness’ and ‘feedback on ongoing interaction’ in the 18th-century letters under analysis in section 3.2, section 3.3 will con-

sider possible models for these in an exemplary epistolary manual that may well have been available to the Scottish writers.

### 3.2. Metapragmatic utterances in 18th-century Scottish letters

The metapragmatic utterances in the 18th-century Scottish correspondence data were retrieved through close reading of the letters as part of the speech act annotation process (see section 2.1). The instances were then classified according to Tanskanen’s three categories, ultimately based on Caffi (2006a: 85–86): (a) control and planning of interaction, (b) judgements of appropriateness and (c) feedback on ongoing interaction.

The types of utterances used for the control and planning of interaction as well as feedback on ongoing interaction, i.e., Tanskanen’s second and third categories, differ most from the present-day data of online discussion forums. With respect to judgements of appropriateness, by contrast, the two datasets are much more aligned.

#### 3.2.1. Control and planning of interaction

In Tanskanen’s data, comments whose function it is to control and plan the interaction, are often either fairly explicit invitations to continue an ongoing discussion, or in fact, quite the opposite, i.e., attempts to end a discussion, as well as clarifications how a contributor’s own previous message should be interpreted. They are thus mostly typical examples of comments which cause a break in the primary communication (see Hübler & Bublitz 2007: 7–8, Hübler & Busse 2012: 2). In the 18th-century correspondence data, these breaks are generally not as salient as they are in the online discussion forums. Since the interactions in the letter material are characterised by a conspicuous lack of immediacy, with long time gaps between dispatch and delivery, the metapragmatic utterances employed by the writers mainly plan, organise and clarify the discourse for the addressee rather than, for instance, inviting them to continue a discussion opened up in a letter. This is regularly achieved through utterances by means of performative verbs or expressions, which perform a speech act but at the same time also describe it. This is, for example, the case with hedged performatives, since they, as Schneider states,

“are more congruent with descriptions and much less with the speech act indication” (2010: 275, see also Schneider 2017: 230–232), as in (5) and (6).

5. *I most beg* you may Let my Sister come. hear the begining of the nixt week to me  
(#1220, Margaret Campbell to unspecified addressee, 1700)
6. *I think my self Oblidg'd to acqwaint* your La (= Ladyship) that my Lord Arbuthnott is to goe out of toun to morrow  
(#1224, Jean Sutherland, wife of James Lord Maitland to Katherine Morison, Lady Strathnaver, 1711)

Both examples (5), where a performative request is hedged by the modal auxiliary *most* ‘must’, and (6) show that the writers reflect on their own communicative acts such that they highlight the obligation they are under to perform the respective speech acts, thus partly minimising their own responsibility (see Caffi 2006b: 174).<sup>7</sup> At the same time, they clarify their communicative intentions for the addressees and structure the upcoming discourse for them. In certain cases, these hedged performatives introduce and flag expressive speech acts such as complaints or laments (see Hübler & Bublitz 2007: 17–18), for instance, in (7).

7. *I must own* I have mett with afflictions enough to breake any thing of a generous spirit  
(#1828, Alexander Robertson, 17th of Strowan, Brigadier to Marion Baillie, 1708)

Metapragmatic utterances where writers explicitly clarify the function of a speech act referred to by the deictic demonstrative *this* also testify to the writers’ reflexive awareness. Such utterances are often prospective, as in

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7 Such hedging is a form of mitigation, whose use, according to Caffi (2006b: 174), reveals the metapragmatic awareness of an interlocutor in shaping the ‘self’ they want to present to the addressee in a given interaction.



(8) and (9), so that they pre-structure the letter discourse by announcing the following speech act.

8. *this is to aske a favor of your lop: (= lordship).*  
(#660, John Murray, 2nd Marquis of Atholl, 1st Duke of Atholl to David Melville, later Leslie, 3rd Earl of Leven, 1706)
9. *I tacke ocasion by this to salloute you and your Lady*  
(#1269, Janet Brodie to unspecified addressee, 1714)

Alternatively, they may be applied retrospectively, as in (10), which refers back to a complex apology for a land dispute, including an offer of repair and an attempt at minimizing the writer's own responsibility for the damage.

10. *this I thought fitt to inform yow of*  
(#1791, John Campbell of Mamore to Patrick Campbell of Barcaldine, 1701)

Utterances with deictic *this* are not only employed to clarify speech act functions but also the intended perlocutionary effect on the addressee, as in (11).

11. *I writ this to make yow lach. tho I be not in a laching mood myself*  
(#1253, Isabel Mackenzie to unspecified addressee, 1709)

Examples (5) through (11) all illustrate intratextual metapragmatic utterances that have a clarifying function regarding the writers' own communicative acts. Prospective utterances, in particular, pre-structure the ensuing letter discourse, e.g., (7) and (8). They thus have a clear collaborative purpose in that they pre-empt misunderstandings by making the communicative intentions of the writers explicit.

Metapragmatic utterances in the category 'control and planning of interaction' are, however, also applied intertextually to interpret the addressee's messages and communicative acts in previously received letters,

e.g., in (12). The writer qualifies the nature of the letter the addressee had sent him with the messenger Doctor Blair as *a challeng*.

12. The honour I had last day of *a challeng* from your lap (= ladyship), by doctor Blair wes equally peirceing and pleasant, and as the wound of a freind  
(#1772, John Gray, 9th Lord Gray to unspecified addressee, 1723)

In sum, metapragmatic utterances that aim at controlling and planning the interaction typically clarify the writers' own communicative intentions in a letter and also have a structuring function. By applying them, the writers may have attempted to prevent misunderstandings by making their communicative intentions as clear as possible.

### 3.2.2. Judgements of appropriateness

In Tanskanen's present-day data, metapragmatic utterances most typically act as judgements of appropriateness. They thus comment on the appropriateness of the writers' own or their interlocutors' messages in the given communicative context. Such comments may, e.g., be on the length of a contribution or on its formulation. These types of utterances are also common in 18th-century letters and they exclusively comment on the appropriateness of their own communication. As with deictic *this* and the hedged performatives discussed in section 3.2.1, the metapragmatic comments at the same time function as speech acts. Writers apologise, for instance, for the length of a letter, see (13), its style, as in (14), or indeed the letter itself, e.g., in (15).

13. I hop ye will excuse *this long letter*.  
(#1252, Isabel Mackenzie to unspecified addressee, 1705)
14. madam I belive you will not get *this confus'd ill writ letter* read  
(#1224, Jean Sutherland, wife of James Lord Maitland to Katherine Morison, Lady Strathnaver, 1711)

15. *So shall trouble your Lop: (= Lordship) no further at present*  
(#1833, John Ker, 1st Duke of Roxburghe to unspecified addressee,  
1720)

Examples (13) to (15) all illustrate retrospective judgements of appropriateness. Writers do, however, also pass such judgements of appropriateness prospectively, thus preventing any potential trouble in the communication, see (16).

16. *yet I cannot but giue you this trouble, to beg not only your aduis  
which I find is the best to me of any, but your assistance to uptaine  
what I desier*  
(#1234, Frances Herbert, Countess Dowager of Seaforth to  
unspecified addressee, 1701)

They therefore serve as hedges, for example, for upcoming requests and may be interpreted as instances of negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987) since they aim at minimizing the degree of imposition on the addressee.

### 3.2.3. Feedback on ongoing interaction

While the judgements of appropriateness in the 18th-century Scottish correspondence data are very similar to the ones found in Tanskanen's online discussion data in terms of their content,<sup>8</sup> metapragmatic comments giving feedback on ongoing interaction are of a very different nature to the examples in Tanskanen's material. They do not encourage writers to keep engaging in a certain line of argumentation, but occasionally aim at discouraging interactants from pursuing abusive communicative behaviour as in (17).

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**8** The judgements of appropriateness in Tanskanen's online discussion forum data, for instance, also include comments on the length of a message (*Sorry for the length, but the issue is complex*) and its style (*I apologise for the tortured prose*) (Tanskanen 2007: 98).

17. I returne yow the Earls Letter inclosed & the Ladys y<sup>t</sup> *she may be –  
ashamed of her Insinuationes*  
(#1855, Dougall Campbell to Patrick Campbell, 1708)

Example (17) is clearly “communication about ongoing communication by means of letters” (Hübler & Busse 2012: 4). This is also the case with the more usual feedback comments acknowledging the receipt of a letter by the addressee, a typical component of early letters (Tanskanen 2004: 259–260), as is illustrated in (18).

18. *I was honour’d with your Lops: (= Lordship’s) of the 29 of March on  
Sunday last*  
(#1834, John Ker, 1st Duke of Roxburghe to John Gordon, 16th Earl of  
Strathnaver, 1722)

By letting the addressee know that he has received his letter dated 29 March, the writer John Ker confirms to the recipient that his letter had indeed arrived, which was important at a time when the safe delivery of letters could not yet be taken for granted (see section 3.1.). Moreover, this utterance creates common ground between the correspondents regarding the knowledge basis for the present letter.

As in present-day asynchronous online discussions, the three functions of metapragmatic utterances are not mutually exclusive. An utterance can have a clarifying and structuring function, thus contributing to the control and planning of interaction, and at the same time judge its appropriateness, as in (19), where the writer Anne Mackenzie pre-emptively qualifies her request as *trouble*.

19. I am informed that the Leard (= Laird) of apellcros is to – mett (= meet) with you *which hes occisoned me to give you this trouble to beg* you may do me the - fauer. To spek to him anent that busnes of assons. uher in I am concrned (= concerned).  
(#1247, Anne Mackenzie to unspecified addressee, 1707)

To account for the multifunctionality of metapragmatic utterances such as example (19), these were assigned to more than one function in the classification.

As the use of the apologetic *trouble* formula in examples (16) and (19) shows, 18th-century Scottish letter-writers largely relied on recurrent formulae as well as formulaic chunks for the realisation of metapragmatic utterances. The following section will explore to what extent these may have been modelled on formulae found in letters contained in 18th-century letter-writing manuals.

### 3.3. Metapragmatic formulae in letter-writing manuals

Letter-writing manuals in English, which were adaptations of Latin or French originals, had been available since the 16th century. Beside theoretical instructions, these manuals contained model letters on various topics, exemplifying different writer-recipient dyads. Two early manuals, William Fulwood's *Enemie of Idleness* and Angel Day's *The English Secretary*, proved to be particularly popular and were in fact reprinted several times, with ten editions between 1553 and 1585 and nine editions between 1586 and 1635, respectively (Mack 2002: 76–82). The target audience of these manuals seems to have been the upper ranks of British society, which is also true of the increasing number of English epistolary manuals published from the 17th century onwards (Mack 2002: 101–102, Nevala 2004: 274). Some of these were more specifically targeted at women and manuals from the second half of the 18th century were aimed at a wider readership, including the lower ranks of society (Bannet 2009: 21–22).

Most 18th-century manuals were actually printed in London but these were in fact also popular in more remote areas of Britain such as Scotland (Bannet 2009: 22).<sup>9</sup> It is thus likely that the letter-writers considered for this study, who mostly belonged to the nobility and gentry, had access to letter-writing manuals. To see whether the model letters contained in manuals

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9 In the later 18th century, adaptations of London manuals were moreover published in Scotland, for instance, Dilworth's *Complete Letter-Writer, or Young Secretary's Instructor* (1783), which was printed in Glasgow (Bannet 2009: 22).

manifest the use of metapragmatic utterances to help the writers monitor and organise their discourse, the letters in *The Compleat English Secretary, and Newest Academy of Complements* by Henry Scougal, printed in London in 1714, were checked.

The model letters across different topics and writer-recipient dyads indeed regularly offer examples for metapragmatic utterances employed to plan, organise and clarify the discourse for the recipients. These include, for example, numerous instances of comments using deictic *this* to announce a following speech act, as in (20), (21) and (22).

20. Most Honoured Father, *by this I let you know*  
(*The Compleat English Secretary*, A Letter from a Son to his Father, p. 7)
21. *this is to let you know* how affairs proceed in your absence  
(*The Compleat English Secretary*, A Letter from an Apprentice to his Master in the Country, p. 10)
22. *By this letter I humbly crave leave to acquaint you*  
(*The Compleat English Secretary*, A Letter from a Tenant to his Landlord, p. 30)

Moreover, performatives hedged by the modal auxiliary *must* are also in evidence, see (23).

23. *I must confess*, my Company here is very pleasing  
(*The Compleat English Secretary*, Answer to a Letter from a School fellow to another, p. 17)

Another popular reflexive formula is employed in some variations to close the model letters, see (24) and (25).

24. *I take Leave to subscribe my self*  
(*The Compleat English Secretary*, A Letter from one Gentlewoman to another, p. 18)

25. *I crave leave to subscribe my self*  
(*The Compleat English Secretary*, A Letter of Consolation to a Widow,  
upon the Death of her Husband, p. 29)

Variants of this closing formula are also found in the Scottish letters, exclusively in the correspondence of more highly skilled writers. However, it is not used as often as the most typical closing formula *This is all...* and variations of it, which is more representative of the correspondence of less skilled writers (see section 4.1). The model letters thus contain several examples of discourse structuring comments which are not identical with the ones found in the Scottish letter material, but, nevertheless, offer a template for such comments, which could then be used creatively by writers.

In addition to discourse organisational comments, the model letters comprise examples giving feedback on ongoing interaction by confirming receipt of previous letters, as in (26) and (27), which are represented in similar form in the Scottish correspondence data.

26. Benjamin, *I received your Letter of the 19th past*  
(*The Compleat English Secretary*, Answer to a Letter from an  
Apprentice to his Master in the Country, p. 10)
27. *I received yours of the 24th past*  
(*The Compleat English Secretary*, Answer to a Letter from one Sister  
to another, p. 15)

While there is ample evidence for metapragmatic utterances organising the letter discourse and offering feedback on the ongoing interaction with the addressee, comments judging the appropriateness of a speech act or, e.g., the length or style of their letter are conspicuously rare. In fact, only two such comments were found in a model letter by a gentlewoman addressed to another and the answer to it, see (28) and (29).

28. *I am constrained thus to trouble you, I hope you will take it in good part*  
(*The Compleat English Secretary, A Letter from a Gentlewoman to another*, p. 19)
29. *I might mention many Particulars, but knowing you are ignorant of them, I shall not at this time be tedious to you*  
(*The Compleat English Secretary, Answer to a Letter from a Gentlewoman to another*, p. 20)

Thus, whereas judgements of appropriateness are commonly found in the 18th-century Scottish letters under investigation, these might indeed have spread by convention within the local letter-writing community rather than through established models in letter-writing manuals.

#### **4. The influence of epistolary skill on the use of metapragmatic utterances in 18th-century Scottish letters**

This section explores to what extent a writer's epistolary skills influence their choice of metapragmatic utterances to monitor their letter discourse. Section 4.1 discusses the degree to which writing competencies affect how often writers make use of metapragmatic utterances and in which parts of their letters. Section 4.2 takes a closer look at the distribution of different types of metapragmatic comments across the skill groups.

##### **4.1 The influence of epistolary skill on frequency of use of metapragmatic utterances**

To determine to what extent epistolary skills had an influence on the use of metapragmatic utterances, the writers represented in the 18th-century Scottish dataset were categorised according to the level of epistolary competence they demonstrate in their letters (see section 2.2). They were assigned to one of the following two categories: basic/medium or elaborate epistolary skills. Table 1 details the number of writers and letters in each category by gender. While just under two thirds of the female letter-writers are classified as having basic to medium epistolary skills, the ratio is reversed



for the male writers, where over two thirds are categorised as having elaborate epistolary skills.

**Table 1. Distribution of correspondence data across epistolary skills and genders.**

<b>Epistolary skills</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Letters</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Letters</b>
<b>Basic / medium epistolary skills</b>	Janet Brodie	1	Lawrence Calder	1
	Christian Cameron, relict of John Cameron of Glendessary	1	Thomas Calder	1
	+Jean Campbell	2	Dougall Campbell	1
	Lilias Campbell	1	John Campbell of Mamore	2
	Margaret Campbell, Countess of Balcarres	1	Neil Campbell	1
	Susanna Campbell	1	Thomas Douie	1
	Anne Hay	3	William Gordon	1
	+Anne Mackenzie	13	*William Lann	1
	Isabel Mackenzie, Countess of Seaforth	4	John Murray of Broughton	1
	Mary Maule	1	James Sinclair of Mey	2
	C. Montrose	1	John Sinclair	1
Jean Sutherland, wife of James Lord Maitland	1	Robert Rollo, 4th Lord Rollo	1	
<b>Elaborate epistolary skills</b>	Elizabeth Cunningham, Lady Kilmaurs	1	John Arbuthnott, 5th Viscount of Arbuthnott	1
	Elizabeth Gordon	1	*John Campbell of Glenorchy, 2nd Earl of Breadalbane	1
	Margaret Hamilton, Countess of the 4th Earl of Panmure	3	David Carnegie, 4th Earl of Northesk	1
	Frances Herbert, Countess Dowager of Seaforth	5	*David Carnegie, 5th Earl of Northesk	1
	E. Ruglen	1	W. P. Colyear	1
	Anna Scott, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth	3	Laurence Craigie	1
	*Frances Stirling, Lady Montgomery of Skelmorlie	1	*Hew Crawford	2

	James Douglas, 2nd Duke of Queensberry	1
	James Erskine	1
	Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat	1
	George Gordon, 1st Duke of Gordon	1
	John Gordon, 16th Earl of Sutherland, Lord Strathnaver	1
	James Graham, 4th Marquis of Montrose	1
	John Gray, 9th Lord Gray	1
	John Hamilton-Leslie, 9th Earl of Rothes	1
	James Keith	1
	*William Keith, 9th Earl of Marischal	1
	John Ker, 1st Duke of Roxburghe	2
	Kenneth Mackenzie, 4th Earl of Seaforth	1
	James Maule	1
	Patrick McDowall of Freugh	1
	George Melville, 4th Lord Melville, 1st Earl of Melville	1
	Hugh Monro	1
	James Murray, 2nd Duke of Atholl	1
	John Murray, 2nd Marquis of Atholl, 1st Duke of Atholl	1
	Alexander Robertson	1
	Alexander Ross, Solicitor	1
	George Ross	1
	Lachlan Shaw of Inverness	1

Overall, the vast majority of writers across the two groups of epistolary skill make use of metapragmatic utterances. One of the 12 male writers in the basic/medium epistolary skill group does not manifest any metapragmatic comments in his letters (marked by \* in Table 1). In the group of male

writers with elaborate epistolary skills, four out of 29 writers do not make use of metapragmatic utterances at all. Among the female writers, who are mostly represented by more letters, there are fewer writers without any metapragmatic utterances in their letters. In the basic/medium skill group there are only four letters without any metapragmatic utterances. Three were written by Anne Mackenzie, who otherwise makes use of them in her other ten letters, and one by Jean Campbell, who also uses a metapragmatic utterance in her other letter (marked by + in Table 1).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, one of the seven female writers with elaborate skills, Frances Stirling, does not employ any metapragmatic comments in her letter.

While it is thus evident that the majority of letter-writers indeed show some metapragmatic competence in their writing, such competence may well have been a matter of degree. In fact, some writers apply metapragmatic utterances sparingly and typically only use one such utterance in their correspondence, as, for instance, in the letter in (30) about a stolen cow, which the writer Jean Campbell closes by the discourse structuring comment *This is all*.

30. L. C.

Your man John Roy was here this day anent that Cow that was stollen from M<sup>c</sup> No??kaird {an unclear correction or cancellation} which {torn} m<sup>c</sup> Coall was alleadged {torn} with the m<sup>c</sup>Lauchlans and I sent Archibald m<sup>c</sup>Cal??\?? John to m<sup>c</sup>Coall and he actually denyes it tho his Maister promised to pay for him Therefore Cussane doe me the favour as to delay it till such time as my husband Comes home which I hope will? Be shortly for I expect him every night and it shall not be long in Debet And what?? {blurred} is resting by the m<sup>c</sup>Lauchlans it shall be payed when you plea?s {blurred} *This is all* with my service to yourself And family I Rest Your humble servant  
Jean Campbell?

(#1270, Jean Campbell to Alexander Campbell of Barcaldine,  
Lieutenant, 1707)

<sup>10</sup> The two writers who only have one metapragmatic utterance in some of their letters but more in others are marked by + in Table 1.

Conversely, others demonstrate fuller metapragmatic competence and generally use more than one metapragmatic utterance in their letters, which typically also represent different categories. This is, for instance, the case for David Carnegie, the 4th Earl of Northesk, as is illustrated in (31).

31. Ethie 29 Agust

My Dear Lord

my health not being such as I dare undertake so long a journey yet (31a) *Im oblidged to make my excuse* for not attending My Lord Balgonys funeralls, which I reccon your Lo; will belive scarce any thing else wold have hindered me from doing, how soon it pleases god I become a litle better, I dissign to come wait on you; I think you have resolved perfectly right, in makeing ther buriall as soon and private as possible, in my opinion all such occasions are best so, and I dare say wold {no HAVE auxiliary} been your sons own desire had he spoke on that subject. (31b) *I must say* I think my daughter has just cause of sorrow, for a kind husbands loss, but I wish she moderate it, as her duty to god, and the care she should have in wiew of his Children requires, tho this is more easie to enjoyn then practice, besides her I think wee have all lossed a good frind, and have too good reason to regrait it; my wife gives your Lo; her humble service I know you will at present bee much taken up with many different things, (31c) *so shall add now no more*, but that I very sincerity am

My Dear Lord

your most obedient  
and humble servant  
Northesk

(#1767, David Carnegie, 4th Earl of Northesk to David Melville, later Leslie, 3rd Earl of Leven, 1721)

Northesk opens his letter with an apology for not being able to attend his son-in-law's funeral, which is introduced by the clarifying discourse structuring comment *Im obliged to make my excuse* (31a). Further down in the letter, he uses another discourse structuring device, *I must say* (31b), which flags his upcoming statement on his general compassion for his daughter's sorrow. He closes his letter by a further discourse organisational comment, *so shall add now no more* (31c), which at the same time serves as a judgement of appropriateness, since he clarifies beforehand that he does not want to take up any more of the recipient's time.

To see whether such fuller metapragmatic competence as manifested by the Earl of Northesk is more widespread among writers evincing elaborate writing skills, Table 2 lists a) the writers who only employ one metapragmatic utterance per letter and b) the writers who utilise more than one metapragmatic utterance per letter.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 2. Distribution of writers by the number of metapragmatic utterances per letter.**

Epistolary skill	Writers with one metapragmatic utterance per letter	Writers with more than one metapragmatic utterance per letter
Basic/medium	12 (52 %)	11 (48 %)
Elaborate	13 (42 %)	18 (58 %)

A slight majority of writers evincing basic and medium writing skills (52 per cent) employ only one metapragmatic utterance per letter. The majority of these metapragmatic comments are either placed at the beginning of the letter, confirming receipt of a previous letter (N=3) or at the end of the letter, closing it by variations of the *this is all* formula (N=6) (see example (28) above) and an apologetic *trouble* formula (N=1). By contrast, eleven writers (48 per cent) apply metapragmatic comments more often. These writers also quite regularly acknowledge receipt of a previous letter or lack thereof (N=6) and

**11** Some female writers only use one metapragmatic utterance in one of their letters but more in other letters. These are classified in the group "Writers with more than one metapragmatic utterance per letter" in Table 2.

even more often judge the appropriateness of their letters, generally through variations of the *trouble* formula, mostly in the closing part of their letters and/or in postscripts (N=17). In addition, however, eight of them also utilise metapragmatic comments in the main body of their letters, as is illustrated by the examples from Christian Cameron's relatively short letter (257 words), see (32).

32.a *I receiwed yowr the 19 of this month* (opening)

32.b *I will be so freae with you* I cold not hinder the man to speake to me yeat that was not tyl wpone? Me {cancellation} (main body)

32.c *which is all* from D: b: (= Dear brother) your Loving sister Christian Camerone (closing)

32.d *I know you will hardlie make good sence* (postscript)  
(#1268, Christian Cameron, relict of John Cameron of Glendessary to Patrick Campbell of Barcaldine, 1722)

Among the writers with elaborate writing competencies, 42 per cent only utilise one metapragmatic utterance per letter. These are generally more varied in type, form and position in the letter than the single utterances in the basic/medium skill group. Letters are, e.g., opened by (33), combining the acknowledgement of receipt of a letter by the recipient with an apologetic and deferential thank you for it, and closed by (34).

33. your La : (= Lady ship) has great reason to think me one of the rudest creatures in the world *for not returning yr La: my humble thanks for the favour of yr oblidging letter sooner;*  
(#1257, E Ruglen to unspecified addressee, 1701)

34. in the meane time *alow me to beg,* yr la<sup>p</sup> (= ladyship) will euer looke upon me as Your la<sup>ps</sup>. most faithfull humble Seruant  
(#1223, Elizabeth Gordon to unspecified addressee, 1702)

The analysis moreover shows that the majority of the more highly skilled writers (58 per cent) employ metapragmatic utterances more extensively.<sup>12</sup> They generally use them for more than one function, for instance, to organise their letter discourse and to make judgements of appropriateness in a more elaborate style (see example (31) above).

The overall distribution in Table 2 disguises an interesting gender pattern, though. Eight of the 12 writers in the basic/medium epistolary skill group using only one metapragmatic utterance per letter are men. These are either of a gentry background or their social status is unknown. By contrast, eight of the eleven writers who apply metapragmatic comments more extensively in their letters are women. Most of them belong to the nobility. In the elaborate epistolary skill group, eleven out of the 15 male writers (73 per cent) who employ metapragmatic utterances more comprehensively in their letters as well as all three female writers<sup>13</sup> in this category are of a noble background. Thus, metapragmatic awareness seems to be linked to social status, since writers of a noble background more typically use more than one metapragmatic utterance in their letters. With male writers, this mostly seems to coincide with a high level of epistolary skill. Conversely, noble women may overall be categorised in the basic/medium skill group but nevertheless manifest a comprehensive use of metapragmatic utterances in their letters. In this context, it is interesting to see whether, in addition to a writer's general frequency of use of metapragmatic utterances, their level of epistolary skill has an influence on the types of metapragmatic comments they apply. This will be discussed in the following section.

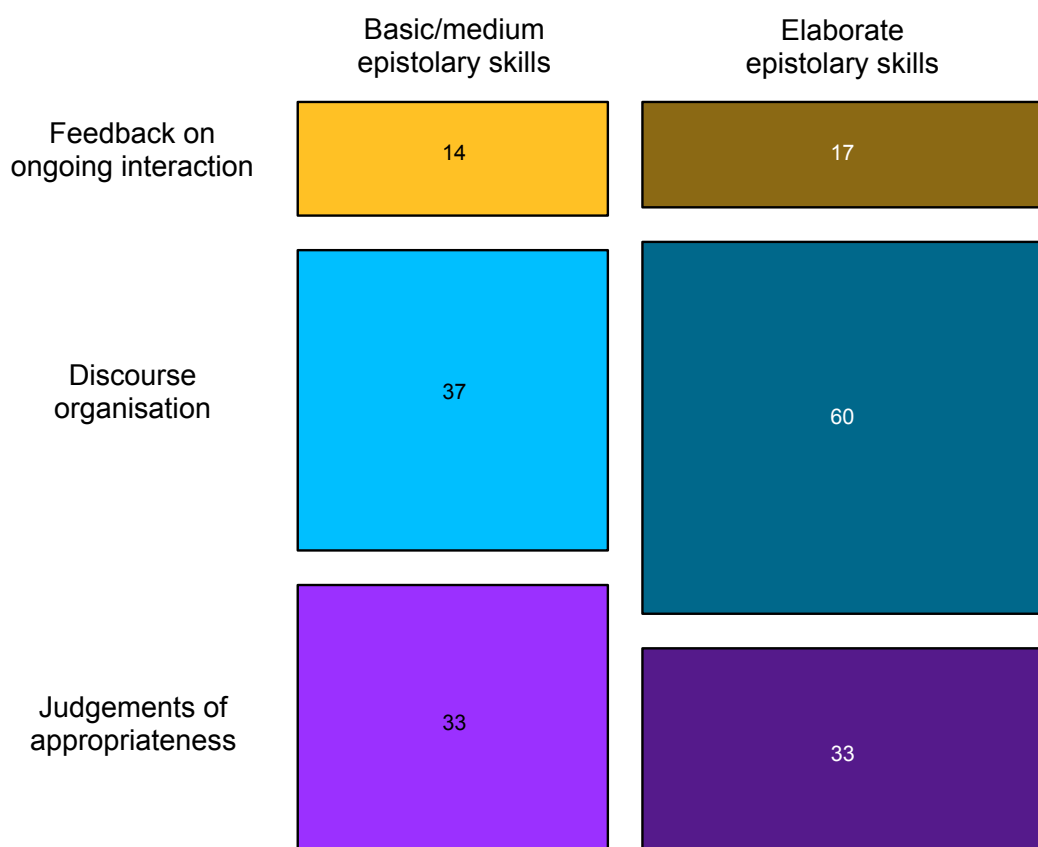
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**12** The number of metapragmatic utterances in a letter is not primarily determined by its length. There are several short letters containing more than one metapragmatic comment, for instance, #1221: 111 words, #1244: 72 words, #1800: 144 words and #1760: 172 words. Conversely, there are longer letters which only contain one metapragmatic utterance, for example, #1230: 334 words, #1263: 402 words, #1802: 456 words and #1811: 402 words.

**13** One of the three female letter-writers utilising metapragmatic utterances extensively in her letters is Margaret Hamilton, Countess of the 4th Earl of Panmure, whose letters in *ScotsCorr* are copies and therefore non-autograph.

## 4.2 The influence of epistolary skill on the distribution of metapragmatic utterances

The distribution of metapragmatic utterances by letter-writing competency illustrated in Figure 1 shows that writers in the two skills groups predominately apply them to either control and plan their letter discourse or to judge the appropriateness of their own communicative acts. The least frequent of the three discourse management types are comments providing feedback on the ongoing interaction. These are mostly restricted to acknowledgements of receipt of letters by the addressee (see section 3.2.3).



**Figure 1.** Distribution of discourse management types by epistolary skill, based on raw frequencies. In the mosaic plot, the width of the bars indicates the frequency of attestation in the three skill groups and the height of the bars their respective percentage share. Since several utterances were assigned to more than one type (see section 3), the number of types exceeds the total number of utterances (N=158).

Despite the common dominance of metapragmatic utterances employed to plan the letter interaction and to make judgements of appropriateness, the distribution of these two categories across the two skills groups also reveals



differences. 55 per cent of the instances utilised by writers with elaborate epistolary skills serve controlling and planning purposes. Conversely, for writers with basic or medium epistolary skills, these account for 44 per cent. As was shown above, in particular, less skilled writers who only make use of one metapragmatic utterance per letter tend to employ these rather mechanically to close their letters, mainly in the shape of the *this is all* formula. By contrast, the writers in the basic/medium skill group who utilise metapragmatic comments more extensively, for instance, also apply them to clarify their intentions in the body of a letter, as in (35) and (36).

35. *I most disser* (=desire) your La would send her hear with your oune horces

(#1220, Margaret Campbell, Countess of Balcarres to unspecified addressee, 1700)

36. *I think my self Oblidg'd to acquaint* your La that my Lord Arbuthnott is to goe out of toun to morrow

(#1224, Jean Sutherland, wife of James Lord Maitland to Katherine Morison, Lady Strathnaver, 1711)

The writers in the elaborate epistolary skill group, who overall utilise metapragmatic utterances more often to structure and organise their discourse than the writers in the basic/medium skill group, mostly apply these in the body of their letters (57 per cent). This may indicate that they show an increased reflexive awareness of the need to structure their letter discourse for the addressees and to clarify their communicative intentions so that there is no scope for misunderstandings. This is nicely illustrated in a letter by Frances Herbert, the Countess Dowager of Seaforth, in example (37).

37.

(...) but finding things goe extraordinary ill with me, & noe licklewood {sic} of amendment, but by my doing things with a seuer hand, which was what you know I neuer was for, yet I feare I must come to it befor I can be settled; (37a) *I thought fiet to aquant you with it*, (37b) *and at the same time desier your aduise*, (37c) *which*

*you know is allwayes what I desine to doe in thinges of this notuer if it  
be not to much trouble to you*

(#1233, Frances Herbert, Countess Dowager of Seaforth to  
unspecified addressee, 1701)

In the passage in (37), Frances Herbert closes a short account of her current unfortunate circumstances with the retrospective clarifying and structuring comment *I thought fiet to aquant you with it* (37a), to then immediately transition to her upcoming request by means of the prospective utterance *and at the same time desier your aduise* (37b). This is directly followed by a justificatory comment, which combines a clarification with a judgement of appropriateness and thus aims to reduce the imposition of the preceding request: *which you know is allwayes what I desine to doe in thinges of this notuer if it be not to much trouble to you* (37c).

The less skilled writers seem to be slightly more concerned about the appropriateness of their own writing than highly skilled writers since judgements of appropriateness represent around 39 per cent of all metapragmatic utterances compared to 30 per cent in the group with elaborate skills. Most prominent among these are variations of the apologetic *trouble* formula, e.g., (38) and (39).

38. *I well ad, no furdur troubl*

(#1243, Anne Mackenzie to unspecified addressee, 1700)

39. *pray excuse all this trubll from your reall affectionat frind Isobell  
seafort*

(#1254, Isabel Mackenzie to unspecified addressee, 1711)

While these are also attested in the letters of highly skilled writers, in the letters of writers with basic and medium epistolary skills, these instances of negative politeness aimed at minimising the degree of imposition account for 73 per cent of the judgements of appropriateness. These numbers are, however, somewhat skewed by the fact that Anne Mackenzie, who is represented in the basic/medium skill group with 13 letters, uses these *trouble* formulae extensively. Nevertheless, the pattern displayed in her letters is also

found in the letters of other less skilled writers and, when discounting Anne Mackenzie's instances, female and male letter-writers employ these trouble formulae with a similar frequency. In nearly two thirds of the instances, these *trouble* formulae act retrospectively and they are mostly – rather mechanically – placed at the end of the letter. Their ubiquity testifies to their conventional character. However, as was shown in section 3.3, they are hardly to be found in model letters contained in letter-writing manuals. The fact that the less skilled writers relied considerably on this formula could be an indicator that they were acutely aware of the fact that it was considered appropriate to justify and apologise for the trouble their writing represented for the addressee. This could even lead to an excessive use of *trouble* formulae, as in a letter by Thomas Douie (40).

40.

Madam

I have sent you hir Inclosed M<sup>r</sup> Burroughs to your Ladyshipe also  
M<sup>r</sup> Demsters to uhom I have told uhat my comishon is (23a) but *I  
ame not uoling to be trubellsom to your Ladyshipe* but I hope you  
uoll send in that 180 {an unclear correction} bolls of uheatt that  
is uanting of y<sup>e</sup> 300 bols that you agried to give to M<sup>r</sup> Burroughs &  
allthough my orders be peremtor to seass all your victuall until he  
be sattesfayed but {ins} Hoping {corrected} I ueat your Ansuer with  
y<sup>e</sup> berer uhat your Leadsшип Desirs for I most have your ansuer that  
I may knou uhat to ureat to my Master on heast (23b) for *I ame soray  
that I should be trubelsom to you* but I most obay (23c) *hoping you  
uoll axcous y<sup>e</sup> trouble*  
I ame uith all Respek

your servant

Thomas Douie

(#1800, Thomas Douie to Margaret Hamilton, Countess of Panmure,  
1716)

Example (40) is a letter of request to send 180 bolls<sup>14</sup> of wheat. The writer Thomas Douie frames his request by the *trouble* formulae, thus apologising for it beforehand (see 40a) and again at the end of the letter, where he even doubles them up in his final apology, *for I am soray that I should be trubelsom to you* (40b) and *hoping you uoll axcous y<sup>e</sup> truble* (40c).

Despite their conspicuous absence from epistolary manuals, these *trouble* formulae must have been very salient and less skilled writers may well have picked them up from the correspondence of more highly skilled writers (see section 2.2), who often incorporated them in a more sophisticated style, e.g., (41) and (42).

41. *I could not – Refuse At the Desire of some of his frends to give yow? {or you} this trouble* which I hope you'l have the goodnesse to Pardon (#1773, John Hamilton-Leslie, 9th Earl of Rothes to John Gordon, 16th Earl of Sutherland, 1716)
42. *having had the {ins} good {ins} fortune of seing you in this place and the honour My Lord has of being related to you makes me – hope I may take the freedom of giving this trouble* which is to beg that you'l deliver the inclos'd and also joyn with y<sup>r</sup> good offices in the parliament and any other way you have influence and particullarlie to intercede with your Cusin M<sup>r</sup> Sacretarrie Stanhope in My Lords favours (#1227, Margaret Hamilton, Countess of Panmure to unspecified addressee, 1716)

On the whole, although less skilled writers seem to apply judgements of appropriateness more often than highly skilled writers, considering the extensive use of the *trouble* formulae by just one writer, Anne Mackenzie, the differences between writers of different epistolary competence are indeed relatively small. Nevertheless, since these judgements of appropriateness, in particular by means of the *trouble* formulae, are so widespread, they

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<sup>14</sup> A *boll* is a Scottish and Northern English measure of capacity or weight for grains and other commodities (see *DOST*, s.v. *boll*, *bow*, n.<sup>1</sup>).

show that both writers with basic and medium epistolary skills and those manifesting elaborate skills were aware of the conventional requirement to apply these metapragmatic comments, even if they sometimes did this in a rather mechanical manner.

## 5. Conclusion

Asynchronous communication poses challenges. Interactants are aware of these and employ metapragmatic comments for collaborative purposes to pre-empt misunderstandings, as Tanskanen (2007) showed for present-day online discussion forums. Among the metapragmatic utterances in her data, self-initiated comments judging the appropriateness of their own contributions within the same post are most common. Contributors, however, also used comments to control and plan their discussions and to provide feedback on ongoing interactions. The goal of this paper was to find out whether Tanskanen's findings apply more generally to other types of asynchronous communication in different contexts as well. It was therefore explored whether interactants engaging in asynchronous interactions in the past felt a similar need to monitor their communication. For this purpose, 90 18th-century letters by Scottish letter-writers, mostly members of the nobility or gentry, were examined. These pose maybe even greater challenges than present-day online discussions, one of them being the often considerable time delay between the dispatch and the delivery of the letters, which possibly prompted writers to be explicit about their communicative intentions to try and prevent misunderstandings. Nevertheless, such metapragmatic competence may have been influenced by the varying levels of epistolary skills 18th-century letter-writers evinced. While some writers wrote elaborate prose in Standard English, others produced coherent text, which, however, consisted of relatively simple sentences written in mostly non-standard spelling. Thus, this study further aimed to establish to what extent a writer's letter-writing skills impacted their use of metapragmatic utterances for discourse management purposes.

The findings of the analysis confirm that 18th-century writers, too, managed their letter discourse by means of metapragmatic utterances. These mostly served control and planning purposes allowing the writers to clarify

and structure their discourse for the addressees, for instance by announcing speech acts, e.g., *this is to aske a favor of your lop*:. Comments to judge the appropriateness of the writers' own communicative acts or even the whole letter, though less frequent than metapragmatic utterances in the category 'control and planning of interaction', are also a typical feature of 18th-century correspondence. In fact, in most instances, the metapragmatic utterances on all three levels of discourse management are of a conventional formulaic nature. Interestingly, however, while writers may have drawn on formulae in model letters in letter-writing manuals to organise and structure their discourse and to acknowledge receipt of previous letters, their judgements of appropriateness are hardly attested in these.

As regards the influence of epistolary competence, the analysis moreover showed that both less skilled and highly skilled writers used metapragmatic utterances to monitor their own discourse. Writers of different levels of skill were thus mostly aware of the conventional requirement to employ such metapragmatic utterances but did not all manifest the same degree of metapragmatic competence. Highly skilled writers typically made use of more metapragmatic utterances in their letters than less skilled writers. They generally deployed different types of metapragmatic comments across different parts of their letters and utilised discourse structuring utterances in the body of their letters to clarify their intentions for the addressee. These may have been inspired by variations found in model letters in epistolary manuals. Less skilled writers, by contrast, used metapragmatic utterances more sparingly and often rather mechanically in the opening or closing of a letter. This finding applies, in particular, to men, though. Women in the basic/medium skill group employed metapragmatic utterances more comprehensively across the different parts of their letters both to structure their letter discourse and to judge the appropriateness of their communicative acts.

In addition, less skilled and highly skilled writers also manifest differences in the way they integrate metapragmatic comments in their letters. This is, for instance, evident in the ubiquitous *trouble* formulae, which highly competent writers skilfully incorporated in their letter discourse, whereas less skilled writers often just added them at the end of a letter, so as not to forget them. Most writers were thus aware of the need to employ such set strategies, which proves that there is a socio-cultural basis for such standardised metaprag-

matic utterances (see Hübler & Bublitz 2007: 20). The difference with respect to epistolary skill therefore does not primarily lie in the letter-writers' knowledge of conventional metapragmatic utterances but in their level of sophistication and the way standardised discourse management strategies were deployed and integrated in the letter discourse. [N](#)

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Defining Amerindian  
words in Richard  
Hakluyt's *The Principall  
Nauigations* (1589); or,  
when explorers became  
lexicographers

**SARA VON DER FECHT-FERNÁNDEZ**

**Abstract** This article deals with the incorporation of Amerindian loanwords into Early Modern English through travel literature, a genre that made essential contributions during the Age of Discovery. Specifically, it focuses on those texts included in the third volume of Richard Hakluyt's *The Principall Nauigations* (1589), the first great travel compilation written in English, which contains reports of New World expeditions and, thus, descriptions of a faraway, unknown environment rife with unknown elements whose indigenous names were adopted and reproduced in the adventurers' narratives. This collection of texts constitutes the corpus of study.

The article is a follow-up to Rodríguez-Álvarez and von der Fecht-Fernández's study (2024) on the integration of the Amerindian loanwords introduced by the authors compiled in *The Principall Nauigations* into the first English dictionaries, which yielded 25 Amerindian loanwords, like *cacao*, *maguey* and *sapota*. But, what kind of words were they? And, how were they explained to English readers? In order to find answers, this work classifies the Amerindian terms in question according to the lexical fields into which they fall. In addition, these borrowings are analysed in their contexts to determine the strategies used by English travellers to explain their meanings to readers unfamiliar with the new words. Finally, the study compares these strategies and the definitions for the same words recorded in 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century dictionaries.

**Keywords** Amerindian loanwords, Richard Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, travel literature, Early Modern English lexicography

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The expansionist adventure fostered by Elizabeth I in the 16th century following the success of Spain's advances in the New World not only led to

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the discovery of new territories, but also raised scientific interest in “the new realities contained in the treatises that described and designated them” (Nieto Jiménez & Alvar Ezquerro 2003: 85 [transl.]<sup>2</sup>). Smith (2023: 133) notes that the adoption of foreign words partly “resulted from the encounter between Europeans and the peoples they met during the trading and imperial expansions of the period” (see also Nevalainen 1999: 36). Indeed, contact with the different Amerindian languages brought about the introduction of new words to name elements of the new American<sup>3</sup> reality, particularly in travel books. In England, the texts by English adventurers and the translations of Spanish travel books into English exhibited a “tendency to use a number of words, sentences, and idioms taken from the languages spoken in each area” (González Cruz & González de la Rosa 2006: 204). As Nevalainen (1999: 332) indicates, “borrowed lexis supplies new names for new concepts”, and the new borrowed Amerindian words contributed to the expansion of the English lexicon during a time span known for its lexical effervescence: the Early Modern English period, covering the 16th and the 17th centuries. This period presents “the fastest vocabulary growth in the history of English in proportion to the vocabulary size of the time” (Nevalainen 1999: 336).

According to Fajardo Aguirre (2023: 6), the lexical explanations provided by the travellers in their chronicles “are of great interest for the history of the lexicon and, as a documentary basis, for historical lexicography” [transl.]<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the use of these terms served propaganda purposes, as they lent the story an air of truthfulness which was considered necessary to impress and persuade the potential funders of new expeditions (Campbell 2018: 230):

In general, travel writers combined external and internal forms of authentication, offering a double foundation for accepting what they had to say. On its own terms, the ‘internal’ dimension needed to establish a sense of having ‘been there’. Language competence, as

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2 Original quote: “nuevas realidades reflejadas en los tratados que las describen y que, por lo mismo, las nombran”.

3 In this article *America* and *American* are used in their historic sense, referring to what was, during the era in question, the continent of America (the New World, North and South America).

4 Original quote: “son de gran interés para la historia del léxico y como base documental para la lexicografía histórica”.

we have seen, constituted one highly effective method for doing so, partly on the supposition that such skill depended on a stay of some duration. (Carey 2019: 534)

Quite frequently, those terms coming from occupied territories were introduced indirectly through the language of their colonisers (Smith 2023: 133-134); this is the case of Amerindian terms in English, which were mostly introduced through Spanish (Serjeantson 1935: 195-196; Schlauch 1960: 97; Algeo 1996: 13; Nevalainen 1999: 372-373; Belda Medina 2002: 26; Durkin 2014: 353; Moreno Moreno 2014: 142).

In this work the expression “Amerindian loanwords” describes those terms of indigenous origin used in the Spanish American territories that were transferred into English. Thus, we are referring to the first group in Serjeantson’s classification (1935: 250), which contains the words from American languages spoken in “South and Central America, Mexico, and the West Indies”.<sup>5</sup> Amerindian loanwords entered the English language especially through translations into English of Spanish texts about expeditions to America, such as Monardes’ *Ioyfull Newes Out of the Newe Founde Worlde* (1577), López de Gómara’s *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the Weast India* (1578), and Acosta’s *The Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies* (1604).

But travel accounts written by English navigators soon followed, and figures such as Walter Raleigh, John Hawkins or Francis Drake presented to the English public their expeditions to American territories occupied by Spaniards in texts peppered with indigenous words designating exotic elements. As Serjeantson (1935: 196) states, many of these new Amerindian loanwords appeared for the first time in Richard Hakluyt’s masterpiece, *The Principall Nauigations* (1589; *TPN* henceforth).

*TPN* is a key work when it comes to English travel literature, as it is considered the first great compilation of travel texts originally written in English. It did not just preserve the information contained in many old records that otherwise might have been forgotten, but also exposed the contemporaneous discoveries of the English nation to the public, thus

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5 In order to avoid repetition, we will also use the phrase “American indigenous term” or “indigenous term”.

promoting new expeditions, and helping to lay the foundations of the emerging British Empire. As Markham indicates (1896: 9), thanks to the publication of *TPN* Hakluyt “saved numerous journals and narratives from destruction, and the deeds they record from oblivion. His work gave a stimulus to colonial and to maritime enterprise, and it inspired our literature”.

From a philological perspective, *TPN* represents a valuable source for the study of the influence of foreign languages on the development of the Early Modern English lexis. (von der Fecht-Fernández & Rodríguez-Álvarez 2023: 127). Moreover, Hakluyt adhered to Ramusio's<sup>6</sup> humanist approach by maintaining the original texts instead of incorporating them into his own narrative, thus avoiding significant editorial interventions (Carey 2012: 17-18). This “remarkable fidelity” with which Hakluyt reproduced the original material (MacCrossan 2009: 105), as well as his commitment to use primary sources (Cabello Pizarro & Stewart Stokes 1999: 185), entails a trustworthy reproduction of the language used in the original first-hand accounts that deserves to be studied and analysed.

In addition to being a reputable geographer and consultant known for his fervent patriotism and his efforts to promote English colonial expansion, Richard Hakluyt was a polyglot who, despite his own limited experience abroad, possessed extensive knowledge of the languages used by travellers (Rogers 1974: 44). It is not rare, then, to find in the pages of his work foreign words that are explained by “supplying a rough equivalent at first occurrence (‘mays’ – ‘maiz, or corne’ [...])” or maintained “when he could think of no equivalent term: ‘cacique””, consequently introducing them in the English language (Rogers 1974: 46).

But, what kind of Amerindian loanwords were introduced in these travel accounts? How did the authors of these travel narratives deal with the challenge of explaining the meaning of new words for hitherto-unseen elements at a time when the first English monolingual dictionaries had not even been published? And, above all, did the defining strategies used by travel writers anticipate the definitions for the same words in the early hard-word dictionaries of the 16th and the 17th centuries, and in those “universal

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<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Battista Ramusio was a recognised Venetian geographer and editor of travel texts, mainly known for his compilation *Delle navigationi et viaggi* (1550-1559) (Romanini 2007).

dictionaries” of the 18th century, when English lexicography started to become consolidated (Starnes & Noyes 1991; Osselton 2009)? In order to address these questions, we have established the following aims: (i) to classify the Amerindian terms according to the lexical fields they fall into for the purpose of establishing what kind of Amerindian terms were most likely to be introduced; (ii) to analyse how the meanings of these new words were explained to English readers, unfamiliar with indigenous languages; and (iii) to study the similarities between the defining practices of the authors compiled in *TPN* and the definitions of early English lexicographers up to the 18th century.

To follow this introduction, Section 2 presents the textual and lexicographical corpora used for the study, as well as the methodology adopted; Section 3 will focus, first, on the lexical fields affected by the introduction of Amerindian loanwords and, second, on the visual and textual markers that point to the American origin of the words; Section 4 contains the analysis of the defining strategies used to render the meaning of the Amerindian loanwords included in the third volume of *TPN*, dedicated to the expeditions to America, and compares them with the strategies used in 16th- to 18th-century English monolingual and bilingual dictionaries to explain the same terms. The analysis aims to ascertain whether the strategies used in *TPN* somehow anticipate the definitions that were later compiled in the first dictionaries published at the end of the 16th century, throughout the 17th, and especially in the 18th, when language codification was a main concern for dictionary compilers (Yong & Peng 2022: 82-83). Finally, the conclusions drawn from this study will be presented.

## 2. Corpus and methodology

### 2.1 *The Principall Nauigations* (1589)

*TPN* is a compilation of all the writings on British overseas expeditions undertaken “within the compass of these 1500 yeeres” (Hakluyt 1589: title page). With this work Hakluyt sought, on the one hand, to exalt England’s role in the history of maritime exploration, and, on the other hand, to urge his country to play a more active role in the colonial race, in order to put it on



a par with the main European naval powers of the time: Spain and Portugal (Borge 2003: 5; Hadfield 2007: 130; Carey 2012: 18).

*TPN* consists of three volumes, each one compiling the narratives that describe the English voyages around a different geographical area. But, apart from these narratives, we can also find other related documents such as patents, commissions, instructions, itineraries, maps and letters (Parks 1961: 126; Borge 2003: 6). The texts were not written by Hakluyt himself, but rather by those merchants, privateers or adventurers that were involved in the expeditions. Thence, Hakluyt collected, edited and published their writings (Fuller 2008: 4), and sometimes even commissioned or transcribed them from oral testimonies (Parks 1961: 127).

The present study focuses on the third and last volume, which is devoted to the Americas. According to Quinn's classification (1974: 341-377), it contains 33 travel narratives and 44 miscellaneous texts, such as the aforesaid letters, patents and itineraries. This collection of texts played a significant role in the dissemination of Latin American indigenous words in the English language. In fact, out of the 22 Amerindian loanwords in *TPN* registered in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED* henceforth; see Rodríguez-Álvarez & von der Fecht-Fernández 2024; see also Section 3 below), ten mention Hakluyt as their main source, with six of these directly alluding to the volume under consideration here.

## 2.2. 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century dictionaries

As one of the aims this article is to analyse the defining practices of the authors of the corpus and to compare them with the definitions provided by contemporary and subsequent dictionaries, a chronological list of the dictionaries consulted is included in Table 1. The selection includes both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, English-Spanish in particular, although Florio's *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598) has also been included due to, first, its great influence on the composition of later English dictionaries, whether bilingual or monolingual (Starnes 1937: 1012; Steiner 1970: 39; Hayashi 1978: 55; Domínguez-Rodríguez 2016: 154), and, second, its coverage of Amerindian terms that entered English through Spanish.

It is important to note that the *Lexicons of Early Modern English* (*LEME* henceforth) was used for the first lexicographical searches. However, as

reported in Rodríguez-Álvarez and von der Fecht-Fernandez's analysis of the applications and limitations of digital tools for the study of Amerindian words (2024: 316-322), the powerful *LEME* database has not been useful, as it omits a great number of dictionaries in which the Amerindian words in question are actually recorded. Various reasons account for this lack of data. Firstly, the contents of some dictionaries have not been uploaded to *LEME* to date (e.g. Perceval 1591, Cockeram 1623, Cocker 1704, Stevens 1706, Anon. 1707, among others), which implied that out of the 35 dictionaries in Table 1, we could only consult 13 in *LEME*. In addition, the automated searches are based on present-day English spellings, or on the different spellings recorded by the lexicographers included in the database, which do not necessarily coincide with the spellings of the Amerindian words in the travel books.

As for the headwords contained in bilingual dictionaries, they are rarely explained; instead, they offer a translation or an equivalent of the term (Hernández 1988: 160; Lancashire 1996: 6; Lancashire 2003: 4), a feature that will be mentioned further on, in Section 4.2. Regarding the approach to Amerindian words in English-Spanish bilingual lexicography, Nieto Jiménez and Alvar Ezquerro (2003: 83-84 [transl.]<sup>7</sup>) note some interesting facts:

It is true that in the Spanish-English lexicography the small vocabulary of John Thorius and the slightly larger one of Richard Stepney do not contain any reference to America in the description of their voices, and that in the work of Richard Percivale they are not excessively abundant [...] but in that of John Minsheu, an extension of the latter's, they are numerous [...], although we should note that some references to the Indies are to the East and not to the West [...]. It is interesting to note that references to the American world

7 Original quote: “Es cierto que en la lexicografía hispano-inglesa el pequeño vocabulario de John Thorius y el poco más amplio de Richard Stepney no contienen ninguna referencia a América en la descripción de sus voces, y que en la obra Richard Percivale no son excesivamente abundantes [...] pero en la de John Minsheu, ampliación de la de este último, sí son numerosas [...], si bien deberíamos advertir que algunas referencias a las Indias lo son a las orientales y no a las occidentales [...] Es interesante resaltar cómo las referencias al mundo Americano son bastante más pobres en los repertorios españoles que en los bilingües, especialmente en los ingleses, dándose la paradoja de que no pocas de las primeras documentaciones lexicográficas de americanismos se producen en esos repertorios”.

are rather poorer in Spanish repertoires than in bilingual ones, especially in English ones, and the paradox is that many of the first lexicographical documentations of Americanisms are produced in these repertoires.

English monolingual dictionaries were conceived as a solution to the enormous expansion of the English lexicon during the 16th and 17th centuries (Lancashire 2003: 5; Sterkenburg 2003: 11-12). In this regard, Peters (1968: 29) highlights:

The first English dictionary was Robert Cawdrey's *A Table Alphabeticall*, published in London in 1604. The 130-page work of 2,521 entries was the first vocabulary work in England devoted entirely to an alphabetical listing of "hard" English words explained by other English words instead of words from some other language, such as Latin.

These early English monolingual dictionaries replicate the structure of the previous bilingual dictionaries (Nagy 1999: 447; Lancashire 2003: 5), but with a more complex method of definition, one entailing use of the English language both for the headword and the description (Lancashire 1996: 7; Sterkenburg 2003: 3). In addition, they denote an attempt to "elevate the English language and to educate the vulgar reader" (Nagy 1999: 447), a function that goes beyond the mere rendering of meaning. The different defining practices of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries will serve as a counterpoint to analyse the defining practices in *TPN*.

It is important to mention here that reproducing definitions from previous dictionaries was a widespread practice among early lexicographers. Therefore, many of the definitions of Amerindian terms present similar wordings in many dictionaries (Starnes & Noyes 1991: 183; Landau 2001: 143; Rodríguez-Álvarez & Rodríguez-Gil 2006).

The study involved searching for Amerindian vocabulary in both English monolingual and English-Spanish bilingual dictionaries published over the two centuries following the publication of Hakluyt's compilation. For this purpose, we consulted 35 dictionaries in total, 10 bilingual and 25 monolingual, listed chronologically in Table 1.

**Table 1. List of dictionaries consulted, in chronological order.<sup>8</sup>**

AUTHOR	TITLE
Del Corro & Thorius	<i>The Spanish Grammer [The Spanish Dictionarie] (1590)</i>
Perceval	<i>Bibliotheca Hispanica (1591)</i>
Stepney	<i>The Spanish Schoole-master (1591)</i>
Florio	<i>A Worlde of Words (1598)</i>
Perceval & Minsheu	<i>A Dictionarie in Spanish and English (1599)</i>
Cawdrey	<i>A Table Alphabetical (1604)</i>
Bullockar	<i>An English Exhibitor (1616)</i>
Cockeram	<i>The English Dictionarie (1623)</i>
Blount	<i>Glossographia (1656)</i>
Phillips	<i>The New World of English Words (1658)</i>
Coles	<i>An English Dictionary (1676)</i>
Hogarth	<i>Gazophylacium Anglicanum (1689)</i>
Kersey	<i>A New English Dictionary (1702)</i>
Cocker	<i>Cocker's English Dictionary (1704)</i>
Kersey & Phillips	<i>The New World of English Words (1706)</i>
Stevens	<i>A New Spanish and English Dictionary (1706)</i>
Anon.	<i>Glossographia Anglicana Nova (1707)</i>
Kersey	<i>Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum (1708)</i>
Bailey	<i>An Universal Etymological English Dictionary (1721)</i>
Bailey	<i>The Universal Etymological English Dictionary, vol. II (1727)</i>
Bailey	<i>Dictionarium Britannicum (1730)</i>
Dyche & Pardon	<i>A New General English Dictionary (1735)</i>
Defoe	<i>A New English Dictionary (1735)</i>
Pineda	<i>Nuevo Dicionario, Español e Ingles e Ingles y Español (1740)</i>
Martin	<i>Lingua Britannica Reformata (1749)</i>
Anon.	<i>A Pocket Dictionary or Complete English Expositor (1753)</i>

<b>Wesley</b>	<i>The Complete English Dictionary</i> (1753)
<b>Scott &amp; Bailey</b>	<i>A New Universal Etymological English Dictionary</i> (1755)
<b>Johnson</b>	<i>A Dictionary of the English Language</i> (1755)
<b>Giral del Pino</b>	<i>A Dictionary Spanish and English, and English and Spanish</i> (1763)
<b>Kenrick</b>	<i>A New Dictionary of the English Language</i> (1773)
<b>Barclay</b>	<i>A Complete and Universal English Dictionary on a New Plan</i> (1774)
<b>Ash</b>	<i>The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language</i> (1775)
<b>Baretti</b>	<i>A Dictionary, Spanish and English, and English and Spanish</i> (1778)
<b>Connelly &amp; Higgins</b>	<i>Diccionario Nuevo de las Dos Lenguas Española ê Inglesa</i> (1797-1798)

As can be observed in Table 1, the 16th century presents five bilingual dictionaries; the 17th century, seven monolingual dictionaries; and the 18th century, 23 dictionaries, of which five are bilingual and 18 are monolingual.

### 2.3. Methodology

The methodology adopted in this article responds to the different stages of the work, which, in turn, correspond to the objectives described below in more detail.

#### (i) To classify the Amerindian terms into lexical fields

The classification of Amerindian terms into semantic fields and the number of entries in each of them help to detect the areas of interest of British explorers in these early expeditions to America. Thus, the scarcity or non-existence of terms related to, for example, religious rites or indigenous traditions, may suggest that these were issues that did not stir great interest.

In order to establish a semantic classification of the Amerindian terms already identified in Rodríguez-Álvarez and von der Fecht-Fernández (2024), the taxonomy established in the *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary* (HTOED henceforth) was followed. It is important to highlight that lexical categories in this thesaurus are divided into more specific subcategories which may feature a complex semantic organisation. Therefore, the method adopted in von der Fecht-Fernández and Rodríguez-Álvarez's article on Spanish loanwords in *TPN* (2023: 9) was adopted in this study:

[...] we followed the taxonomical classification established by the *Historical Thesaurus* in the *OED*, which is based on three major lexical fields: “the external world”, “the mind” and “society”. Each entry in the *Historical Thesaurus* offers a series of interconnected lexical fields, beginning with a general category that is divided into specific subcategories. The level of specificity is sometimes so great that offering a classification of an extensive corpus of words reaching those levels of detail was impractical and unworkable. Therefore, when carrying out the classification, we chose to ignore the three large lexical areas constituting the first level of classification, and to use only three categories. Level 2 is the starting point in order to avoid the ambiguity that might result from the generality of the first category, and is complemented by the third and fourth subcategory.

In accordance with this method, the Amerindian loanwords were classified into the following lexical fields in order to determine which category contains the greater proportion of words, as can be seen in Table 2:

**Table 2. Lexical fields of the corpus, according to HTOED.**

LEVEL 2 CATEGORIES	LEVEL 3 / 4 CATEGORIES
<i>animals</i>	birds / fish / invertebrates
<i>authority</i>	rule or government of family or people
<i>food and drink</i>	corn, cereals or grain / fruit and vegetables / intoxicating liquor
<i>people</i>	ethnicities
<i>plants</i>	cultivated or valued plants / plants and herbs / trees and shrubs
<i>the earth</i>	weather
<i>travel</i>	vessel, ship or boat

(ii) To analyse how the meanings of these new words were explained to English readers, unfamiliar with these languages

In order to accomplish this objective, the excerpts with American indigenous terms were examined to identify the different strategies used by the authors to render the meaning of these loanwords. Then, these strategies were classified

separately, providing illustrative examples that facilitate comparison with the definitions in the dictionaries. The articles by Rodríguez-Álvarez (2010) and von der Fecht-Fernández and Rodríguez-Álvarez (2023) were taken into account in this analysis, as they also discuss different mechanisms to render the meaning of Spanish and Amerindian words in English travel books about America, although the former is a preliminary study on a variety of authors, and the latter focuses just on the Spanish terms in Hakluyt.

(III) To study the similarities between the defining practices of the authors compiled in *TPN* and those used by early English lexicographers up to the 18th century

After searching the Amerindian loanwords in the corpus of dictionaries, the defining practices used in the dictionaries were analysed in order to detect possible similarities with the strategies used in *TPN*. Those defining mechanisms that were used in both corpora were then compared.

### 3. Amerindian words in *The Principall Navigations* (1589) and in the dictionaries from the 16th to the 18th century

A former study by Rodríguez-Álvarez and von der Fecht-Fernández (2024) revealed the presence of 25 Amerindian terms in the third volume of *TPN*, of which 22 are recorded in the *OED*. The list below includes these loanwords as registered in the *OED*; those that are not included in the *OED* (marked with an asterisk) are spelt as in the *Diccionario de Americanismos* of the Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española (ASALE):

*aguacate, cacao, cacique, Campeachy wood, cannibal, canoe, capulin, Carib, cassava, guano, guava, guaiacum, hurricane, maguey, maize, mamme, mesquite, nocheztli\*, potato,<sup>9</sup> pulque, tecuán\*, tiburón,<sup>10</sup> tlaxcal\*, tuna and sapota.*

9 Although the term *potato* is actually a compound of Spanish formation which combines the Amerindian words *papa* and *batata* (see the entry for *patata* in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*), it has been added to this list because most of the studies on Amerindian loanwords include it.

10 Although in the etymology of *tiburón* the *OED* points to an “origin uncertain”, it also states the following: “probably taken into Spanish or Portuguese from some West

Out of these 25 Amerindian loanwords, Rodríguez-Álvarez and von der Fecht-Fernández (2024) indicate that “13 were listed in dictionaries from the sixteenth century, nine in dictionaries from the seventeenth century, and 22 in dictionaries from the eighteenth century”. The data obtained in this study show that the only words that were not recorded in any of the dictionaries coincide with those that are not included in the *OED*.

However, Rodríguez-Álvarez and von der Fecht-Fernández (2024) did not provide a semantic classification of these borrowings, which could have shown the kind of new elements discovered by the English explorers for which they could not find a familiar name. The classification is presented in Table 3, which also contains the loanwords that were not registered in the *OED*. American indigenous terms have been classified according to their lexical fields taking the taxonomy in the *HTOED* as a reference.

**Table 3. Classification of the Amerindian terms into lexical fields.**

Lexical field	No. of Amerindian terms	Amerindian terms
animals	3	<i>guano, tecuán*</i> , <i>tiburón</i>
authority	1	<i>cacique</i>
food and drink	13	<i>aguacate, cacao, capulín, cassava, guava, maize, mamee, nochtli*</i> , <i>potato, pulque, tlaxcal*</i> , <i>tuna, sapota</i>
people	2	<i>cannibal, Carib</i>
plants	4	<i>Campeachy wood, guaiacum, maguey, mesquite</i>
the earth	1	<i>hurricane</i>
travel	1	<i>canoe</i>

Most of the lexical areas are related to the natural world encountered by the English explorers. Thus, the field with the highest number of Amerindian borrowings is “food and drink”, which designates elements useful for subsistence in a hostile and alien environment. Other categories, like “animals” and “plants”, not only named exoticisms but also commodities and potentially marketable goods that could constitute sources of wealth.

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Indian or East Indian language” (oed.com). Besides, considering that it first appeared in texts on American territories, it has been included on the list of Amerindian terms.



### 3.1. Visual identity of the Amerindian words in *TPN* (1589)

The identification of the Amerindian terms in the text was a challenging task due to inconsistencies in their spelling. However, a number of editorial practices that rely on graphic marks, such as the use of a different font, capital letters, and marginal notes, has facilitated the task, even though they are not used systematically. The very act of marking these words visually is worth noting because it suggests Hakluyt's linguistic awareness as an editor.

The most frequent practice among the aforementioned is the use of a different font, which in this article will be indicated by the use of italics, as in (1).<sup>11</sup> This practice, also applied to place names and demonyms, is likewise found in many dictionaries, as illustrated in (2).

1. In a certaine prouince which is called *Guatimala*, and *Sacanosco*, there is growing great store of **Cacao**; which is a berrie like vnto an Almond: It is the best Marchandise that is in all the *Indies*. The *Indians* make drinke of it, and in like maner meate to eate. It goeth currently for money in any market or faire, and may buy any flesh, fish, bread or cheese or other things. (Hakluyt 1589: 547)<sup>12</sup>
2. **Guáno**, s. m. so the *Indians* of *Peru* call the Dung of certain Sea Fowl, whereof they fetch vast Quantities from little Islands near the Coast, to manure their Ground [...]. (Pineda 1740)

As we can see in (1), the change of font is often combined with capitalisation, although lower case without any font change may also be found (3). Furthermore, a capitalised indigenous word can appear without a change of font, but this is less frequently the case (4):

3. [...] they redeemed their husbands with fruites, as plantans, **mameias**, pineapples, oranges, and limons [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 811)

<sup>11</sup> The use of italics or a different font to signal foreign words in a text is not new. In this regard, see McConchie (2011), Skaffari (2018), Rubright (2016: 487) among others.

<sup>12</sup> Boldface in the examples from *TPN* and dictionary entries are mine.

4. These *Indians* from 14. Yeeres olde vpwards, pay vnto the King for their yeerely tribute, one ounce of siluer, and an hannege of **Maiz** [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 588)

Finally, there are cases in which the Amerindian term is placed as a side note to highlight the element that is described in the text; thus, for example, “furicanos” (*hurricane*) is provided as a marginal note for the excerpt in (5), as shown in the caption:<sup>13</sup>

5. He farther saith, that there is a Cloud sometime of the yeere seene in the ayre, which commonly turneth to great Tempests. (Hakluyt 1589: 560)

He farther saith, that there is a Cloud sometime of the yeere seene in the ayre, which commonly turneth to great Tempests. And that sometimes of the yeere there are great windes in maner Turnados. **Furicanos.**

### 3.2. Indication of the Amerindian origin of the words

The American origin of the Amerindian words is rarely specified in *TPN*, but it is possible to find some references to the “Indian tongue” as the donor language; the text in (6), about Miles Phillips’ experiences in Mexico, illustrates this practice:

6. [...] they vnderstanding by our captaine how long we had beene without meate, imparted betweene two and two a loafe of bread made of that country wheate, which the Spanyardes call *Mayse*, of the bignesse of one of our halpennie loaues, which bread **is named in the Indian tongue *Clashacally***. (Hakluyt 1589: 569)

Still, it is more common to infer the Amerindian origin of the loanwords from the context. For instance, metalinguistic comments of the kind found in (7), “which they call”, point to the indigenous origin of the terms. In other cases,

**13** Caption from the copy of Hakluyt’s copyright-free volume in <https://archive.org/>.

phrases conveying spatial deixis make reference to the American location of the objects mentioned, implying that they (the objects and their names) are also American, as in (8). In addition, Amerindian objects are occasionally associated with their indigenous users and, implicitly, their designations can be assumed by the readers as American terms, as in (9), while other excerpts identify Spanish as the language of entry for Amerindian terms, as in (10).

7. This Citie standeth in the midst of a great lake, and the water goeth through all or the most part of the streetes, and there come small boates, **which they call** Canoas [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 546)

There is much honie both of bees, and also of a kind of tree **which they cal** Maguez. (Hakluyt 1589: 547)

Another tree **which they call** a *Miskito*: it beareth a fruite like vnto a peasecod marueilous sweete, which the wilde people gather and keepe it all the yeere, and eate it in steede of bread. (Hakluyt 1589: 547)

8. The *Cannybals* **of that Island**, and also others adiacent, are the moste desperate warriors that are in the Indias, by the *Spaniards* report, who are neuer able to conquer them [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 529)

There are many kinde of fruites **of the Countrey** which are very good, as *Plantans*, *Sapotes*, *Guiaues*, *Pinas*, *Aluacatas*, *Tunas*, *Mamios* [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 547)

9. [...] **we found a canoa and an Indian in it** which was fishing, and had caught a very large Tony [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 810)
10. Coscushaw, some of our Company tooke to be that kinde of root **which the Spanyards in the West Indies call** Cassauy, whereupon also many called it by that name [...] (Hakluyt 1589: 755)

In the case of dictionaries, references to the etymological origins of Amerindian words are included from the 17th century onwards (Osselton 1990: 1948), although this practice is not systematic. Indications of the source languages are usually embedded between parentheses or square brackets after the lemmas (11), and sometimes reveal a certain degree of uncertainty as to the origin of the word, as in (12).

11. AVOCA ' DO [**Sp. *persica*, Lat.**] a tree that grows in great plenty in the Spanish West-Indies, as also in Jamaica, and hath been transplanted into the English settlements in America, upon account of its fruit, [...]. (Scott & Bailey 1755)

POTA'TO, S. [**Span.**] an esculent root. (Barclay 1774)

12. *Haracana* or *Hero-cane* (**perhaps from the Spa. *Arancar***) to weed up or pull up by the roots, an impetuous kind of tempest or Whirlwind, happening in the Indies, and those far Countries, [...] (Blount 1656)

The identification of the source languages, however, is not always correct, and Amerindian languages are rarely mentioned, as these words entered English through Spanish. In a few entries, though, the lexicographer suggests that the term may come from an American language (13), although there is never a distinction between the various indigenous languages – Arawak, Taino, Nahuatl, etc. – and the general tags *American* or *Indian* are used instead.

13. *Cacáo*, [...] **The Name is *Indian***. [...]. (Stevens 1706)

POTA'TO. n. s. [**I suppose an American word.**]. [...]. (Johnson 1755)

MAGUEY. S. m. [...] Maguey, **an American name** for the species of aloe, the juice of which, is the common drink of the natives; called *polque* (Connelly & Higgins 1798)

We can also find structures like those used by Hakluyt in (7) in some definitions by Stevens (1706), as shown in (14), which would be reproduced later by Pineda (1740), Giral del Pino (1763) and Barette (1778):

14. *Cacique*, so **the Indians call** their petty Princes. (Stevens 1706)

In any case, references to the Amerindian origin of these words are normally implicit, both in *TPN* and in the dictionaries studied. This is what Moreno Moreno calls “geolinguistic specification” (2011: 145 [transl.]<sup>14</sup>) in his study of Spanish dictionaries of the same period, and what Nieto Jiménez and Alvar Ezquerro (2003: 84 [transl.]<sup>15</sup>) identified in Stevens’ dictionary:

To begin with, we must state that Stevens’ mentions of the American world are of a very diverse nature, for while some words are very precisely localised (for example, *acuizehuaria*, a plant from the province of Michoacán), in other cases the references are more general (for example, *anona* or *guanabana*, a fruit that grows on the American continent), or with specifications of various places or areas of greater or lesser extension (for example, *vicuña*, an animal from Peru and Chile).

In other words, tags such as “Indian”, “in India”, “of/among the Indians” are indirect references to the fact that the object, and consequently the name with which it is designated, is also “Indian”. This practice can be found in *TPN* (15) and in dictionaries as early as the 16th century (16). The use of such expressions would continue during the following centuries, together with “of/in the (Spanish) West Indies”, “made/used by the Indians” (17) or,

14 Original quote: “especificación geolingüística”.

15 Original quote: “De entrada, hemos de afirmar que las menciones que hace Stevens del mundo americano son de carácter muy diverso, pues mientras algunas voces aparecen localizadas de una manera muy precisa (por ejemplo, *acuizehuaria*, planta de la provincia de Michoacán), en otros casos las referencias son más generales (por ejemplo, *anona* o *guanábana*, fruto que crece en el continente Americano), o con especificaciones de varios lugares o zonas de mayor o menor extensión (por ejemplo, *vicuña*, animal de Perú y Chile)”.

particularly in the 18th century, with expressions alluding to specific areas of the American geography (18). Therefore, the information on the American origin refers to the object defined rather than to the word designating it.

15. [...] and presently one of the Spanyards tooke an **Indian boate** called a Canoa, and so came ouer, being rowed by two Indians [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 568)

[...] we fed very greedily of the meat, and of the **Indian fruite**, called *Nochole*, which fruite is long and small, much like in fashion to a little Cowcumber. Our greedie feeding caused vs to fall sicke of hote burning agues. (Hakluyt 1589: 570)

16. *Cacique*, a **prince of the Indians**. (Perceval 1591)

*Potatoes*, a sort of **Indian fruit**, whose root is of great virtue. (Phillips 1658)

17. CANOO' (S.) A Boat **made by the Indians** out of the Trunk of a large Tree, by hollowing it with Fire, &c. (Dyche & Pardon 1735)  
 GUAYÁBA. s. f. [...] *The guava, or guaiava fruit of the West Indies*. (Connelly & Higgings 1798)

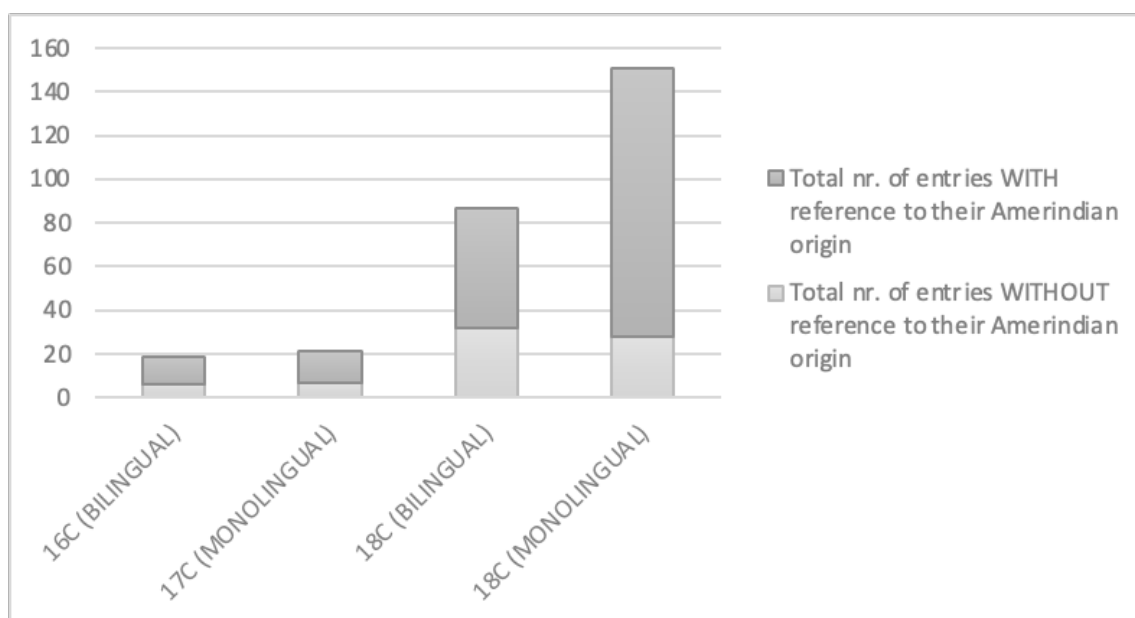
18. *Log-wood* or *Block-wood*, a sort of Wood, otherwise called *Campechio*, from the Name of the Place whence it is brought, viz. **a Town of Yucatan, a Province of New Spain, in Northern America**. It is much us'd by *Dyers*, for making a sad or dark Colour. (Kersey & Phillips 1706)

HU'RRICANES (S.) Violent Storms of Wind, raging chiefly **among the Caribbee Islands**, which blow with such Violence as to drive Ships out of the Harbour upon the Beach, beat down Houses, tear up Trees by the Roots, &c. [...] (Dyche & Pardon 1735)

CAZABE. S. m. [...] Bread made **at the Havana** and elsewhere of the cassava root, yucca, or cassada. V. (Connelly & Higgins 1798)

In general terms, the use of these mechanisms in the dictionaries to indicate the Amerindian origin of the entries was a practice that increased over time. Figure 1 shows the number of definitions in the 16th-, 17th- and 18th-century monolingual and bilingual dictionaries that contain some information from which the American origin of the object can be inferred:<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 1.** Information on the American origin of the defined object or the designating word in dictionaries.



#### 4. Strategies to define amerindian words

After exploring how the indigenous origin of the Amerindian loanwords is signalled, a new question is addressed: how the meanings of the new words are explained to the readers. In this section I will classify the different strategies used by the writers of the chapters in *TPN* to render the meaning of the Amerindian terms. Furthermore, such strategies will be compared with the defining practices of dictionaries from the 16th to the 18th centuries. It is important to note, however, that these mechanisms are rarely found in isolation, as most often two or more are combined to define the new terms.

**16** Entries that only mention the Amerindian context in the title of the works used by lexicographers as sources for their definitions have not been considered.

The different strategies identified, both in the corpus and in the dictionaries, are summarised below, and, whenever possible, for each case I will present one example from both *TPN* and the dictionaries of the corpus by way of illustration.

#### 4.1. Generic terms

A generic term is a superordinate word or phrase that represents the lexical field or category in which the word is included. As Sterkenburg (2003: 8) explains, “much of what a definition in a dictionary says, particularly where concrete nouns are concerned, refers to a referent. We cannot define a name without knowledge of the category to which it refers”. Thus, as we can see in (19) and (20), the presence of a generic term (in bold in the examples) enables the reader and dictionary user to infer that *campeachy* and *potato* are a type of wood and a type of root, respectively.

19. The chiefest marchandize which they lade there in smal Frigats is a certaine **wood** called *Campege* [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 593)

*Campechio*, a kind of *Indian Wood*. (Kersey & Phillips 1706)

20. These Potatoes be the most delicate **rootes** that may be eaten. (Hakluyt 1589: 530)

*Potatoes*, **Roots** that grow in *America*, a peasant kind of food. (Cocker 1704)

It is common for generic terms, as well as for equivalent words (see Section 4.2.), to be accompanied by structures such as *a sort of* or *a kind of*, as in examples (19), (20) and (21). The inclusion of these expressions implies that the definition provided is a conceptual approximation to the original Amerindian word rather than an accurate definition. The mechanisms to indicate the indigenous origin, described in Section 3.2. (e.g. *Indian*, *in the Indies*, *American*), are also present so that the generic term or equivalent (an English word) is transported to the American reality: “a kind of *Indian Wood*”.



The excerpt in (21) is remarkable since the generic term “flie” is used to explain not only the Amerindian loanword but also a Spanish loanword which had also been recently introduced into English in texts about America (von der Fecht-Fernández & Rodríguez-Álvarez 2023).

21. Wee were also oftentimes greatly annoyed with a kinde of flie, which **in the Indian tongue is called *Tequani*, and the Spaniards called them *Musketas***. (Hakluyt 1589: 568)

#### 4.2. Equivalent words

Employing an equivalent word means using a concept familiar to the English public that is similar to the one represented by the indigenous term. In this way readers can establish a relationship between the designation of the new Amerindian loanword and an element from their own environment. This strategy is used in both the texts of the *TPN* and in dictionary entries. In fact, early English lexicography is characterised by short and concise explanations, like the “predominantly brief” definitions in Cawdrey (Siemens 1996: 8) or the entries explained “by a synonym or brief comment” in Florio (Rosier 1963: 417).

Quite often this connection is expressed through the disjunctive conjunction *or*. Thus, an equivalent can be a word – like *wheat* for *maize* in (22), or *boat* for *canoe* in (23) –, or an expression – like *man-eater* for *cannibal* in (24), or *dangerous storms* and *violent storm of wind* for *hurricane* in (25).

22. [...] they gaue vs some of the Countrey **wheat**, called *Mayse*, sodden which they feed theyr Hogges withall. (Hakluyt 1589: 569)

*Maiz*, a kind of **graine or wheat** whereof they make bread in India. (Florio 1598)

23. And *Richard Browne* one of his companions, found one of these great pearles in one of their *Canoes or boats* [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 557)  
*Canoa*, the **boats** of the Indians. (Perceval 1591)

24. The people in those Countreys are professed enemies to the *Canibals* **or men eaters** [...] (Hakluyt 1589: 558)

CA'NIBAL, (S.) A **man-eater**. (Anon. 1753)

25. [...] our Generall thought it best to depart from thence the rather for the auoiding of certaine **dangerous stormes** called the *Huricanos*, which accustomed to beginne there about that time of the yeere, and so the 24. of July 1568. wee departed from thence directing our couse North [...]. (Hakluyt, 1589: 563)

HURRICANE, a **violent Storm of Wind**. (Defoe 1735)

### 4.3. Contextual aids

Due to the different text-types of the works studied (*TPN* being a compilation of narratives, and dictionaries a compilation of headwords and their definitions), there are some strategies to render the meaning of the Amerindian terms that are peculiar to each type of text. Thus, the narrative nature of *TPN* favours the inclusion of Amerindian terms in enumerations and in excerpts where contextual information facilitates the inference of meaning.

When reading the enumerations in (26) and (27), for example, we can deduce that the indigenous terms *cacao* and *potatos* name edible goods or, at least, commodities, since they are found next to other similar objects. Likewise, in (28) the context reveals that the Caribs spotted in their canoes near the coast are probably native inhabitants of the land that the captain sees from his ship, whereas the context in (29) helps the reader to suppose that *maiz* is a kind of grain, since it is measured in bushels (*hanege* in the text, from the Spanish *fanega*); and in (30) the references to the verb *imbark* and *swim* make clear that *canoas* refer to a type of boat.

26. [...] and there is no Port to receiue shipping, vnlesse they be Frigats, which they carry from thence to the Port of S. Iohn *de Vllua* waxe, **Cacao**, hony, & also mantels of cotten wooll [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 593).

27. [...] for there we had at our commandement Spanish wheate, **potatos**, hogs, hens, dried dogfish, and diuers other good things, to our contentment. (Hakluyt 1589: 810)
28. [...] and sailed along the coast vntill the first of Aprill, at which time the Captaine sayled along in the Iesus pinnace to discerne the coast, & saw many **Caribes** a shore, and some also in their Canowas [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 530)
29. The Indians pay tribute, being of the age of 20. yeeres, 4. shillings of money, and an hanege of **Maiz**, which is woorth 4. shillings more, vnto the King euery yeere. (Hakluyt 1589: 550)
30. [...] and imbarcking themselues in the **Canoas**, they led their horses by the reines swimming ouer after them [...] Hakluyt 1589: 568)

#### 4.4. Descriptions / explanations

The strategies presented so far do not provide any information on the specificities of the objects that distinguish them from their European counterpart(s). Indeed, making use of adjectives and phrases like “Indian” or “in the West Indies” is just a way to indicate that we are dealing with an element that belongs to the American reality; and defining through a generic term or equivalent only hints at the similarity of the Amerindian and English elements. However, there is a more informative strategy to explain the meaning of the Amerindian loanwords: the use of length-varying definitions that offer more complete information about the object designated. For instance, in (31), the author not only points out that *pulque* is a type of wine (generic term), but also provides detailed information on the ingredients contained in this specific wine; and in (32), beyond the reference to the generic term *corne*, readers are informed of the size and aspect of maize; and the text in (33) presents an elaborate description of a canoe.

31. The people of the Countrey, are of a good stature, tawnie coloured, broad faced, flat nosed. And giuen much to drinke both wine of

Spaine, & also a certain kind of wine, which they make with hony of *Maguez*, and rootes, and other things which they vse to put into the same. They call the same wine *Pulco*. (Hakluyt 1589: 548)

32. Neere about this place, inhabited certaine Indians, who the next day after we came thither, came downe to vs, presenting milk & cakes of bread, which they had made of a kind of corne called *Maise*, in bignes of a pease, the eare where of is much like to a teasel, but a span in length, hauing thereon a number of grains. (Hakluyt 1589: 530)
33. In this Island of *Sambula*, we found about 50. boates, called *Amadyes*, or *Canoas*, which are made of one peece of wood, digged out, like, a trough, but yet of a good proportion, being about 8. yardes long, and one in bredth, hanging a beake head, and a sterne very proportionably made, and on the out side artificially carued, and painted red, and blewe. (Hakluyt 1589: 526)

This kind of definition also appears in the dictionaries. For example, in (34), apart from mentioning that *canoe* is a kind of boat (generic term), the definition in Barclay specifies that it is built on a single trunk, a feature which is also mentioned in the previous excerpt from Hakluyt (33).

34. CANO'A, or CANO'E, [pron. *canóo*] S. an Indian vessel or boat, made of the trunk of a tree, dug hollow; pieces of bark sewed together; or of the small sticks of a pliant wood, covered with seal skins. (Barclay 1774)

Furthermore, definitions of American indigenous terms may include other Amerindian terms, either to expand the information or to take as a reference another loanword that may be more familiar to English audiences. This is the case of *maguey* in a text of *TPN*, as well as in various dictionary entries (35), which is used to explain the word *pulque*, or the other way around, with *pulque* being used to define *maguey*:

35. [...] & also a certain kind of wine, **which they make with hony of Maguez**, and rootes, and other things which they vse to put into the same. **They call the same wine Pulco**. (Hakluyt 1589: 548)

**PULQUE**, s. m. the juice of a tree called *maguey*, in New Spain, mixed with other ingredients. (Baretti 1778)

**MAGUEY**. s. m. *Maguey*, an American name for the species of aloe, the juice of which, is the common drink of the natives; called *polque*. (Connelly & Higgins 1798)

In the same way that zoological descriptions of the period include information about the therapeutic, numismatic or heraldic use of the new American animals they refer to (Capanna 2009: 57), the definitions of Amerindian terms designating animals and plants tended to include extra information on the potential and commercial uses of the elements described in both the texts of *TPN* and dictionaries. The dissemination of this knowledge was clearly driven by the commercial perspectives the American expansion offered to English merchants (Rodríguez-Álvarez 2010: 297-298). Examples of this type of information are the excerpts given in (36) and (37), which present similar definitions of *cassava* and *maguey* (written as *nege* in Hakluyt's example) in both *TPN* and the dictionaries by Kersey and by Stevens, respectively. In the *TPN* texts, as well as in the lexicographical entries, information is introduced on how to prepare and treat products unknown in Europe in order to make the best use of them.

36. They doe also **make bread of the roote called Cassaua, which they doe drie**, and beate it as small as they can, and temper it with water, and so bake it in cakes on a stone. (Hakluyt 1589: 560)

*Cassave*, an American Root, the Juice of which is rank Poison, but **the dry Substance is the general Bread of that Country**. (Kersey 1708)

37. About *Mexico*, and other places in *Noua Hispania*, there groweth a certaine plant called *Nege*, which **yeeldeth Wine, vinegar, Hony,**

**and black Sugar, and of the leaues of it dried, they make hempe, ropes, shooes which they vse, and tyles for their houses: and at the ende of euery leafe, there groweth a sharpe point like an awle, wherewith they vse to bore or pearce through any thing.**  
 (Hakluyt 1589: 594)

*Maguey*, is the Tree of Wonders, for it yields **Water, Wine, Oyl, Vinegar, honey, a sort of Must like that of New Wine boyl'd, Thread and Needles, besides many other things.** [...] (Stevens 1706)

Another frequent type of definition includes additional or encyclopaedic information that is not essential to define the term. Although this type of definition is more common in *TPN*, it is also abundant in dictionaries, especially from the 17th century onwards, and mainly in the encyclopaedic 18th-century dictionaries as, “at the dawn of the 18th century, two important principles are established in lexicography: the general inclusion and the encyclopaedic principles”, so much so that dictionary entries extended beyond basic definitions and included additional information (Lonati 2011: 11). This practice justifies the lengthy and detailed descriptions of new objects of American origin introduced in the texts, disquisitions that are also found in dictionary entries. In (38), for example, apart from indicating that *tequanies* are “other kinde of flies”, the author includes a warning about mosquito bites.

38. There are also in the sayd countrey a number of other kinde of flies, but none so noysome as these ***Tequanies*** be: you shall hardly see them they be so small, for they are scarce so bigge as a gnat: they will sucke one blood maruellously, and if you kill them while they are sucking, they are so venemous that the place will swell extremely, euen as one that is stoong ith a waspe or bee: but if you let them sucke theyr fill, and do goe away of themselues, then they doe you no other hurt, but leaue behinde them a redde spotte somewhat bigger then a fleabiting. At the first we were terriblie troubled with these kinde of flies, not knowing their qualities, and resistance we coulde make none against them, being naked [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 568)

Additional information is also found in dictionary entries after the mid-17th century, and, particularly, after the 18th century, because many lexicographers derived their definitions from information extracted from specialists (naturalists, physicians, botanists, zoologists, etc.) whose concern was not to define but rather to describe the elements and their uses in detail (Lancashire 2005: 164). This is the case of the text in (39) in Stevens' dictionary, which not only describes the maize plant, but also explains how it is grown, the different types of maize, its use for animals and humans, how it is prepared for consumption in different parts of the Americas, and its possible effects when prepared as a brew. All this encyclopaedic information goes beyond what is expected in a lexicographical entry, but is in keeping with the encyclopaedic tastes of 18th-century lexicographers. In this case, Stevens drew information from Acosta's *Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies* (1604):

39. *Mayz, Indian Wheat*, to make Bread of, is the only sort of Grain found in the *West Indies*; it grows on a strong Reed, with large Grains, and sometimes two Ears on a Reed, on one of which 700 Grains of Wheat have been told. They sow it Grain by Grain, and not scattering, as we do our Wheat, and it requires a hot and moist Soil. There are two sorts of it, one large and substantial, the other small and dry, which they call *Moroche*. The Leaves of it and the Reed are very good Food for Cattle, green; and dry it serves as well as a Straw. The Grain is better for Beasts than Barley, but they must drink before they eat it, for if they drink after; it swells and gives them the Gripes. The *Indians* eat it hot boil'd, and call it *Mote*, and sometimes toasted. There is a sort of it large and round, which the *Spaniards* eat toasted; they also grind it and make Cakes, which they eat hot; and these, in some places, they call *Arepas*; they also make Bread to keep and sweet Cakes of it. The *Indians* make Drink of it, as we do of Barley, this they call in *Peru*, *Açúa*, and in most other Parts, *Chicha*, which is very strong, and makes them drunk, for which reason is prohibited. They have also a way of extracting an Oil from it, which is good, and serves in stead of Butter, or Oil of Olives. *Jos. da Acost. Nat. Hist. of the West Indies. Lib. 4. Cap. 16. P. 236.* (Stevens 1706)

Other definitions include the location of the elements defined (40), or their nutritional and medicinal properties in the case of plants and herbs, as in (41) and (42).

40. **Hurricane**, a violent Storm of Wind, **which often happens in Jamaica and other Parts of the West-Indies**, in the Months of *September* and *October*; making very great havock and overthrow of Trees, houses, and all that comes in its way. (Kersey & Phillips 1706)
  
41. GUAIA ' CUM, the wood of a tree in the West Indies, very much used in physic, called also lignum sanctum. See LIGNUM Vitæ. Guaiacum is attenuant and aperient, and promotes discharges by sweat and urine. It is an excellent medicine in many chronic cases, and was once famous for curing the venereal disease, which it still does singly in warmer climates, but with us we find it insufficient. We have a resin of it improperly called gum guaiacum. Hill. (Scott & Bailey 1755)
  
42. **Tabacco**, & the great virtue thereof: The *Floridians* when they trauell haue a kinde of herbe dried, which with a cane, and an earthen cup in the end, with fire, and the dried herbs put together, do sucke thorow the cane the smoke thereof, which smoke satisfieth their hunger, and therewith they liue foure or fieve dayes without meat or drinke [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 541)

The heavy reliance on travel and science books for the composition of dictionary entries – as the final reference to Hill, author of a volume on *materia medica*, in (41) – accounts for the highly scientific and detailed nature of some of the definitions of the American indigenous terms in the corpus. As Lancashire (2005: 164) notes, the definitions compiled in dictionaries from the 17th century onwards are highly based on extracts from other works that are commonly acknowledged, whether by quoting the author's words to see the term in context or by providing the title of the volume from which the information was taken, as in (43).



43. *Haracana* or *Hero-cane* (perhaps from the Spa. *Arancar*) to weed up or pull up by the roots, an impetuous kind of tempest or Whirlewind, happening in the Indies, and those far Countries, it comes with such violence that it overturns trees by the roots, blows down houses, &c. and continues sometimes thirty dayes; Marriners and Seamen stand in great fear of it at Sea; for it infallibly wrecks their ships. **Mr. How:** **sayes**, The Devil appears often to the Pagans in these Harancanes. **Mr. Herb. saies** it happens in some Countries but once in nine years. (Blount 1656)

*Maméy*, a sort of Fruit in the *West-Indies*, bigger than a large Peach, with one, or two Stones in it, and the Pulp, harder than that of a Peach, some are sweet, others somewhat tart, the Rind is hard they are pleasant to eat, and make a good Preserve, which looks like Quince; they grow in the Islands; the Tree is large, handsome, and bears a good head. **Acost. Hist. W. Ind. p. 256.** (Stevens 1706)

GUA'VA. n.s. The flowers consist of five leaves, produced in a circular order, having many stamina or threads surrounding the ovary: the ovary is of a long tubulous figure, which becomes a fleshy fruit, crowned on the top, and containing many small hard seeds. The fruit, **says Sir Hans Sloane**, is extremely delicious and wholesome. They have only this inconvenience, that, being very astringent, they stop up the belly, if taken in great quantities. **Miller.** (Johnson 1755)

MAIZE, a kind of Indian wheat, which bears an ear a foot, sometimes a foot and a half long, upon a stalk of six or eight feet high. The whole maize plant has the appearance of a reed: The male flowers are produced at remote distances from the fruit on the same plant, growing generally in a spike, upon the top of the stalk: The female flowers are produced from the wings of the leaves, and are surrounded by three or four leaves, which closely adhere to the fruit until it is ripe. This plant is propagated in England only as a curiosity, but in America it is the principal support of the inhabitants, and consequently propagated with great care. **Miller.** (Scott & Bailey 1755)

Table 4 lists the authors and works as quoted in the dictionary entries for the Amerindian words used in the corpus, accompanied by the complete reference. They are arranged in descending order according to the number of headwords that include them, and in those cases in which the number of entries coincides, alphabetical order is followed. It should be noted, though, that due to the lack of information in some definitions, it was not always possible to identify the work quoted. Fortunately, the *Johnson's Dictionary Online* site provided some information on this aspect. In addition, the search engines of digitised collections such as *EEBO* (*Early English Books Online*) and *ECCO* (*Eighteenth Century Collections Online*) have yielded titles of unidentified works. The data obtained include names such as Gay, Granville, Herbert, Hill, Miller, Ray, Thomson, Swift and Waller.

**Table 4. List of sources used in the dictionary entries of the Amerindian loanwords of the corpus.**

Source	No. of entries including the source	Entries(s) that include this source
<p><i>F. Jos. Acos. Nat. Hist. Ind. Lib. 4. Chap. 22. Pag. 250. / Acost. Nat. Hist. W. Ind. P. 286. / F. Jos. Acost. Nat. Hist. W. Ind. Lib. 4. Chap. 24. pag. 256. / Acosta in his Nat. Hist. W. Ind. P. 266. / F. Jos. Acos. Nat. Hist. W. Ind. Lib. 4. Chap. 23. Pag. 254. / Jos. Da Acost. Nat. Hist. of the West Indies. Lib. 4. Cap. 16. P. 236. / Acost. Hist. W. Ind. P. 256. / H. Jos. Acost. Nat. Hist. W. Ind. Lib. 4. Chap. 23. Pag. 254.</i>  <b>[The Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West (1604), José de Acosta]</b></p>	20	<p><b>Stevens (1706):</b> cacao [cacáo]<sup>17</sup>, guano [guáno], guava [pacáyas, or guábas/ guayávo], guaiacum [guayacón, or pálo santo, or palo de Indias], maguey [maguey], maize [mayz], mammee [mamey] tuna [tuna y tunal]</p> <p><b>Pineda (1740):</b> cacao [cacáo], guano [guáno], guava [pacáyas, or guábas/ guayávo], guaiacum [guayacòn, or pále santo, or pálo de Indias], maguey, [maguèy] mammee [mamèy], tuna [tuna y tunal]</p> <p><b>Giral del Pino (1763):</b> cacao [caca'ò], guava [paca'yas, or gua'bas], maguey [mague'y], mammee [mame'y], tuna [tuna' y tu'nal]</p>

**17** The original entries in the dictionaries are specified in square brackets.

Miller/ Millar [ <i>The Second Volume of The Gardeners Dictionary</i> (1739), Philip Miller]	11	<b>Johnson (1755):</b> <i>aguacate</i> [avoca'do], <i>cacao</i> [cocoa], <i>cassava</i> [ca'ssada], <i>guava</i> [gua'va], <i>maize</i> [maize], <i>mammee</i> [mamme'e tree], <i>potato</i> [pota'to] <b>Scott &amp; Bailey (1755):</b> <i>aguacate</i> [avoca'do], <i>cassava</i> [ca'ssavi, or ca'ssada], <i>maize</i> [maize], <i>mammee</i> [mamme'e tree]
Hill's History of the Mat. Medica [ <i>A History of the Materia Medica</i> (1751), John Hill]	4	<b>Johnson (1755):</b> <i>cacao</i> [cocoa], <i>guaiacum</i> [guaia'cum] <b>Scott &amp; Bailey (1755):</b> <i>campeachy</i> [campe'chio], <i>guaiacum</i> [guaia'cum]
Gemelli. Vol. 6. Lib.a.cap.10. / Gemelli. Vol. VI. Lib.a.cap.10. [ <i>A Voyage Round the World</i> (1704), Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri]	3	<b>Stevens (1706):</b> <i>aguacate</i> [aguacâte] <b>Pineda (1740):</b> <i>aguacate</i> [aguacâte] <b>Giral del Pino (1763):</b> <i>aguacate</i> [aguacate]
Ray [ <i>Historia Plantarum Generalis</i> (1693), John Ray]	3	<b>Stevens (1706):</b> <i>guava</i> [pacáyas, or guábas/ guayávo] <b>Pineda (1740):</b> <i>guava</i> [pacáyas, or guábas/ guayávo] <b>Giral del Pino (1763):</b> <i>guava</i> [paca'yas, or gua'bas]
Arbuthnot on Coins / Arbuthnot [ <i>Tables of Ancient Coins, Weights and Measures</i> (1727), John Arbuthnot]	2	<b>Johnson (1755):</b> <i>canoe</i> [ca'noe] <b>Scott &amp; Bailey (1755):</b> <i>canoe</i> [cano'a, or cano'e]
Burnet's Theory [ <i>The Sacred Theory of the Earth</i> (1719), Thomas Burnet]	2	<b>Johnson (1755):</b> <i>hurricane</i> [hu'rricano] <b>Scott &amp; Bailey (1755):</b> <i>hurricane</i> [hu'rricane, or hu'rricano]
Raleigh / Raleigh's Essays [ <i>Judicious and Select Essayes and Observations</i> (1650), Walter Raleigh]	2	<b>Johnson (1755):</b> <i>canoe</i> [ca'noe] <b>Scott &amp; Bailey (1755):</b> <i>canoe</i> [cano'a, or cano'e]
Ray in his Hist. Plant. P. 1685. [ <i>Historia Plantarum</i> (1688), John Ray]	2	<b>Stevens (1706):</b> <i>guaiacum</i> [guayacón, or pálo sánto, or palo de Indias], <b>Pineda (1740):</b> <i>guaiacum</i> [guayacòn, or pále sánto, or pálo de Indias]
Shakespeare / Shakesp. Othello [ <i>The Tragædy of Othello, the Moore of Venice</i> (1622), William Shakespeare]	2	<b>Johnson (1755):</b> <i>cannibal</i> [ca'nnibal] <b>Scott &amp; Bailey (1755):</b> <i>cannibal</i> [ca'nnabal]
Addison [ <i>Cato. A Tragedy.</i> (1713), Joseph Addison]	1	<b>Johnson (1755):</b> <i>hurricane</i> [hu'rricano]

Arbuthnot on Aliments [ <i>An Essay Concerning the Nature of Aliments</i> (1731), John Arbuthnot]	1	Johnson (1755): maize [maize]
Bacon's Nat. Hist. [ <i>Sylva Sylvarvm</i> (1628), Francis Bacon]	1	Johnson (1755): cannibal [ca'nnibal]
Bentley [ <i>Eight Sermons Preach'd at the Honourable Robert Boyle's Lecture, in the First Year, MDCXCII</i> (1724), Richard Bentley]	1	Johnson (1755): cannibal [ca'nnibal]
Davies on Ireland [ <i>A Discoverie of the True Causes Why Ireland was Neuer Entirely Subdued</i> (1612), Sir John Davies]	1	Johnson (1755): cannibal [ca'nnibal]
Dryden [ <i>De Arte Graphica The Art of Painting by C.A. Du Fresnoy ; with Remarks ; Translated into English</i> (1695), John Dryden, translator]	1	Johnson (1755): hurricane [hu'rricano]
Gay [ <i>The Shepherd's Week</i> (1728), John Gay]	1	Johnson (1755): potato [pota'to]
Granville [ <i>The Poetical Works</i> (1779), George Granville]	1	Johnson (1755): cannibal [ca'nnibal]
Mr. Herb [ <i>A Relation of some Yeares Trauaile Begunne Anno 1626. Into Afrique and the Greater Asia</i> (1634), Thomas Herbert]	1	Blount (1656): hurricane [haracana or hero- cane]
Mr. How [ <i>Lexicon Tetraglotton, an English-French- Italian-Spanish Dictionary</i> (1660)? James Howell] <sup>18</sup>	1	Blount (1656): hurricane [haracana or hero- cane]
Shakesp. [ <i>M. William Shak-speare: His True Chronicle Historie of the Life and Death of King Lear and his Three Daughters</i> (1608), William Shakespeare]	1	Johnson (1755): hurricane [hu'rricano]

**18** James Howell's *Lexicon Tetraglotton* cannot be the source, as it was published after Blount's dictionary, but the wording is similar, so we may assume that this information may have been mentioned in a previous work by Howell which we have not been able to identify.

Thomson [ <i>The Seasons</i> (1730), James Thomson]	1	Johnson (1755): cacao [cocoa]
Swift [ <i>A Short View of the State of Ireland</i> (1727-1728), Jonathan Swift]	1	Johnson (1755): potato [pota'to]
Waller [ <i>Poems, &amp;c. Written upon Several Occasions, and to Several Persons</i> (1705), Edmund Waller]	1	Johnson (1755): potato [pota'to]

Table 4 shows that more than one reference work can be used to define a headword. These reference works that provide the illustrative examples included in the dictionaries are diverse in nature, ranging from medical to botanical, religious, political and literary; the latter is especially found in Johnson. In addition, due to the common practice of resorting to previous dictionaries to compile a new one (Starnes & Noyes 1991: 183; Landau 2001: 143), the same sources are used for the same headwords by different lexicographers. But it is not only the sources that are the same, as the definitions are also identical. For instance, Pineda and Giral del Pino tend to reproduce the information in Stevens (44) in the same way that Scott & Bailey include the information in Johnson (45).

44. *Maméy*, a sort of Fruit in the *West-Indies*, bigger than a large Peach, with one, or two Stones in it, and the Pulp, harder than that of a Peach, some are sweet, others somewhat tart, the Rind is hard they are pleasant to eat, and make a good Preserve, which looks like Quince; they grow in the Islands; the Tree is large, handsome, and bears a good head. *Acost. Hist. W. Ind. p. 256.* (Stevens 1706)

*Mamèy*, a sort of Fruit in the *West-Indies*, bigger than a large Peach, with one, or two Stones in it, and the Pulp harder than that of a Peach; some are sweet, others somewhat tart; the Rind is hard; they are pleasant to eat, and make a good Preserve; which looks like Quince; they grow in the Islands; the Tree is large, handsome, and bears a good Head. *Acost. Hist. W. Ind. p. 256.* (Pineda 1740)

MAME'Y, s. m. a sort of fruit in the West-Indies, bigger than a large peach, with one, or two stones in it, and the pulp harder than that of a peach; some are sweet, others somewhat tart, the rind is hard, they are pleasant to eat, and make a good preserve, which looks like quince; they grow in the islands; the tree is large, handsome, and bears a good head. *Acosta, Nat. Hist. West Ind. Pag. 256.* (Giral del Pino 1763)

45. MAMME'E tree. n. s. The *mammee tree* hath a rosaceous flower, which consists of several leaves placed in a circular order, from whose cup arises the pointal, which afterwards becomes an almost spherical fleshy fruit, containing two or three seeds inclosed in hard rough shells. *Miller.* (Johnson 1755)

MAMMEE' Tree, subst. The *mammee tree* hath a rosaceous flower which consists of several leaves placed in a circular order, from whose cup arises the pointal, which afterwards becomes an almost spherical fleshy fruit, containing two or three seeds, inclosed in hard rough shells. *Miller.* (Scott & Bailey 1755)

Moreover, the analysis of the sources has revealed that, among the quoted works identified, those written in English or translated from Latin are more frequently referred to in English monolingual dictionaries, whereas bilingual dictionaries tend to draw on sources originally written in Spanish or Italian.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, although not as a source, Monardes is mentioned in Stevens' and Pineda's works as a recommendation for the reader to obtain more information on the properties of the *guaiacum*, a recommendation which is also found in *TPN*, as shown in (46).

46. *Sassafras*. Called by the inhabitants *Winauk*, a kinde of wood of most pleasant and sweete smell, and of most rare vertues in phisike for the cure of many diseases. It is found by experience to bee farre better and of more vses then the Wood which is called ***Guaiacum***, or ***Lignum vitae***. For the description, the maner of vsing, and

**the manifold vertues thereof, I referre you to the Booke of Monardus, translated and entituled in English, *The ioyfull newes from the West Indies*. (Hakluyt 1589: 751)**

*Guayacón*, or *Pálo Santo*, or *Palo de Indias*; so Acosta in his *Nat. Hist. W. Ind.* p. 266. Calls it, and only adds, that it grows abundantly in the Islands, and is as heavy as Lead, and sinks in the Water. Ray in his *Hist. Plant.* p. 1685. Says it is a tree about the bigness of the Walnut, of an Ash colour with green Spots without, reddish within, not very thick, but extraordinary hard, much used in the Cure of the French pox. **In England it is generally call'd *Guayacum*. The Curious may see more of it in those authors, and in *Monárdes*, Fol. 12.** (Stevens 1706)

This fact is not surprising if we consider the importance of Monardes' work in making American products,<sup>19</sup> especially plants, and their therapeutic properties known throughout Europe, and his influence on the introduction of Amerindian terms (Cáceres-Lorenzo 2022), since his work includes around seventy-one Amerindian plant names identifying simple, unmanufactured medicines (Moreno Moreno 2014: 126).

#### 4.5. No defining strategies

Occasionally, no explanatory gloss accompanies the American indigenous term in *TPN*; this is mainly the case with those indigenous loanwords that were introduced in various texts on America before the publication of Hakluyt's compilation. A case in point is the word *cacique*, which often appears without a gloss, as in (47).

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**19** Nicolás Monardes (c. 1493-1588) was a physician and botanist born in Seville who wrote on the therapeutic properties of the products imported from the West Indies. His books circulated widely in Europe and his natural history, titled *Primera y Segunda y Tercera Partes de la Historia Medicinal de las Cosas que se traen de Nuestras Indias Occidentales* (1574), was so popular that it was soon translated into Latin and other European languages (Barrera-Osorio 2013: 321). The English translation by John Frampton, *Joyfull Newes out of the Newe Founde Worlde* was published in 1577 (Beecher 2015).

47. [...] for the **Casique** caused two of his Indians to leade me forward in my way [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 592)

[...] and marueiling at the glasse, I demanded how they came by it: she told me that the **Casique** brought it from *Shallapa*, a great towne distant 30. leagues from this place on the hilles whereas dwelt certaine Christians, and certaine Fryers, of the order of S. Augustine, which this **Casique** with his people on a night slewe, & burning the Fryers Monasterie, among other things reserued this glasse [...]. (Hakluyt 1589: 592)

According to the data provided by *AMERLEX*,<sup>20</sup> this word was already used in 1555 in the translation of Peter Martyr d'Anghiera's *Decades* and in Fernández de Oviedo's translation *Summarie or Abbrigement of the General Hystorie of the West Indies*, as well as in 1577 in Monardes' translation *Ioyfull Newes Out of the Newe Founde Worlde*. It also appeared in 1578 in the translation of Fernández de Enciso's work entitled *A Briefe Description of the Portes, Creekes, Bayes, and Hauens*, and in López de Gómara's translation *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the Weast India, now Called New Spayne*. The word was then included in 1581 in the translation of Zárate's *The Discoverie and Conquest of the Prouinces of Peru*, and continued to be used in 1583 in the translation of Bartolomé de las Casas' volume *The Spanish Colonie*, and in 1587 in the translation of Antonio de Espejo's *New Mexico. Otherwise, the Voiage of Anthony of Espeio*. It was, therefore, a very common term in texts on America before 1589, the year of *TPN*'s publication. Thus, including an equivalent term or a gloss explaining its meaning does not seem to have been necessary for readers familiar with this type of work.

**20** The *AMERLEX* database, which is currently under development, aims to gather “the lexical Americanisms (Amerindian and from Spain) present in a selection of Spanish and English texts on America published during the 16th and 17th centuries” (<https://iatext.ulpgc.es/aplicaciones>).



## 5. Conclusions

The analysis of the Amerindian terms introduced in the third part of *TPN*, dedicated to voyages to the New World, has reflected the effort by the editor and authors to indicate their Amerindian origin. First of all, I have described the use of editorial practices to highlight these terms and make them recognisable to the reader. Thus, these words are graphically distinguished either by the use of a different font, the use of capital letters, or their placement in the margin of the page. Our analysis of the corpus has also revealed the use of other mechanisms to indicate the Amerindian origin of the terms, such as references to American locations, to the Indians, to the Indian tongues, or to the etymological origins of the words. Such mechanisms can be found in both the texts of *TPN* and the dictionaries studied.

The classification into lexical fields following the taxonomy established in the *HTOED* has proved that most of the Amerindian loanwords introduced in *TPN* belong to the category “food and drink”, which, together with others like “animals” and “plants”, coincide with the new reality encountered by English explorers. Although previous studies have already pointed out that the Amerindian terms that entered English through Spanish are related to these lexical fields (Serjeantson 1935: 253; Cutler 1994: 48, 50; Algeo 1996: 19-22; Durkin 2014: 366, among others), the novelty of this article lies in the fact that it provides quantitative information and concrete data from primary sources, as opposed to other works on Amerindian borrowings which are based on dictionary data (Algeo 1996; Cutler 1994).

The strategies used by the authors in *TPN* to render the meanings of the new terms are very similar to the ones found in dictionary entries: (a) the use of generic terms, (b) the use of equivalent words and (c) descriptions. However, *TPN* presents other strategies inherent to a narrative text not found in a lexicographical entry. They represent contextual aids used to infer the meaning of the new indigenous terms, such as their inclusion in enumerations together with other words of a similar nature, usually introduced by a generic term that facilitates the interpretation of their meaning. The inclusion of lengthy and detailed descriptions of the new elements is not only a characteristic of *TPN*, but also of dictionaries. The latter show a progression in the amount of information they provide, going from synonyms and brief

explanations to extensive encyclopaedic descriptions based on information drawn from authoritative sources.

Finally, textual and lexicographic evidence shows that the defining practices of early English dictionaries did not differ much from the practices of the explorers who presented these terms to their readers. This article has demonstrated the importance of using both textual and lexicographical sources when undertaking studies of the lexicon. [N](#)

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Changes of perspective  
and focus in the  
*Peterborough Chronicle*  
as reflected in the use  
and distribution of place  
elements modifying  
titles paired in  
apposition with  
personal names

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**Abstract** The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was first composed in retrospect over the important national events of the previous millennium probably in Wessex in the late ninth century and continued separately in multiple ecclesiastical centers across England contemporaneously or near-contemporaneously until as late as 1154 in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, one of its seven main extant versions. There was inevitably a shift in perspective from retrospective to contemporary after annals began to be recorded in real or near-real time, and this has implications on the use and non-use of place elements modifying titles paired in apposition with personal names, such as *of Wessex* in *Alfred, king of Wessex*. Titles help identify or introduce persons named, and the accompanying place elements assist in doing so. The amount of information deemed necessary for effective communication ultimately depends on the writers' perspective and focus. From a contemporary perspective, with more out-of-text contextual information shared with readers, national matters may have been backgrounded and local matters foregrounded, potentially reflecting the aims and biases of the institutions in which the records were made.

**Keywords** apposition, names and titles, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

## 1. Introduction

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was first composed in retrospect over the important national events of the previous millennium probably in Wessex in the late ninth century and continued separately in multiple ecclesiastical centers across England contemporaneously or near-contemporaneously until as late as 1154 in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, one of its seven main extant versions and the text chosen for this study.<sup>1</sup> Although it may be too simplistic to assume, as it has traditionally been done, independent, as well as separate,

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth MS E. All subsequent references to this text will be to Irvine (2004). The relevant part of the text will be indicated by its annal and line numbers in the following manner: 449.18 (line 18 of annal 449), for example. For details of the seven manuscripts, conventionally designated as A through G, and their relationship, see Bately (1991), Clark (1970), Dumville & Keynes (1983–), Lutz (1981), Plummer (1952), and Whitelock (1996). Particularly for MS E and its language, see Clark (1970) and Irvine (2004).

local continuation of the *Chronicle* manuscripts after the initial distribution of the copies in the 890s,<sup>2</sup> each manuscript, or part of each manuscript, has its own identity, showing the aims and biases of the particular center in which it was written.<sup>3</sup> These changes in perspective from retrospective to contemporary and in focus from national to local have implications on the use and non-use of place elements modifying titles paired in apposition with personal names, such as *of Wessex* in *Alfred, king of Wessex*. Titles help identify or introduce people, and the accompanying place elements assist in doing so. The amount of information deemed necessary for effective communication depends on the amount of contextual information already supplied to or unconsciously expected from readers, and such judgement is affected by the writers' perspective and focus. This article aims to examine how the shifts of perspective and focus are reflected in the distribution of appositive expressions involving a place element in MS E.

## 2. Text

MS E is assumed to have been compiled in about 1121 in Peterborough and updated intermittently over the next few decades until around 1154 (for textual transmission, see Home 2007, 2015; Irvine 2004: xxxii–ci). It was copied by two scribes, conventionally referred to as Hands 1 and 2 (see Irvine 2004: xviii–xxiii for scribal hands and stints). Hand 1 is responsible for annals up to 1131, and Hand 2 for entries from 1132 to 1154. The entries up to 890 ultimately draw on the original compilation, known as the Common Stock, which is represented by MSS A, B, C, and G. A copy of this was taken north, and a new version incorporating northern materials, called the Northern Recension, was compiled probably in York in the late tenth or early eleventh century.<sup>4</sup> MSS D, E, and F derive from this branch of the Common Stock. In the mid-elev-

<sup>2</sup> Brooks (2011), for example, supposes intermittent but continued dissemination until at least 1131 of sections of the annals from the royal household.

<sup>3</sup> See Home (2015: 5) for how MS E “is simultaneously part of a received tradition of vernacular history, as well as a new text constructed from scratch at a particular moment in time, within a special local, cultural and literary milieu”.

<sup>4</sup> See Irvine (2004: xxxvii–xxxviii) for an argument that the Northern Recension is southern in origin, just incorporating northern sources that were brought south.

enth century, a copy of this recension was brought south to Canterbury and maintained there with the addition of entries 1023–1061, and then through another unlocalized religious center, where annals 1062–1121 were added, it finally reached Peterborough Abbey in approximately 1121. This version is what Hand 1 is assumed to have copied; therefore, the entries up to 1121 are called the Copied Annals. They are generally written in the standardized Late West Saxon literary variety (see Clark 1970: xli–xlv).

The original vocabulary and word order of the entries composed at each stage of textual development may be transmitted through multiple layers of scribal intervention to the Copied Annals largely as they were, given that the *Chronicle* scribes, while introducing their own orthographical practices relatively freely, copied their exemplars essentially word for word.<sup>5</sup> This is apparent from a comparison of shared Common Stock materials in different versions. See, for example, the opening lines of annal 755 of MSS A and E, the oldest and newest surviving manuscripts, the Common Stock parts of which were written at the end of the ninth century and in the early twelfth century, respectively (the text of MS A is taken from Bately 1986):

MS A (755.1–6)

Her Cynewulf benam Sigebryht  
his rices 7 Westseaxna  
wiotan for unryhtum dędum buton  
Hamtunscire, 7 he hæfde þa oþ he  
ofslog þone aldormon þe him  
lengest wunode, 7 hiene þa Cynewulf  
on Andred adræfde, 7 he þær wunode  
oþ þæt hiene an swan ofstang æt  
Pryfetesflodan: 7 he wręc þone  
aldormon Cumbran.

MS E (755.1–6)

Her Cynewulf benam Sigebrihte  
his mæge his rice 7 Wæstseaxna  
witan for unrihtum dædum buton  
Hamtunscyre, 7 he hafde þa oð he  
ofsloh ðone ealdormon þe him  
lengst wunode. 7 hine þa Cynewulf  
on Andred adrefde, 7 he þær wunode  
oþ þet an swan hine ofstang æt  
Pryftesflodan; sæ swan wręc ðone  
ealdormon Cumbran.

‘Here Cynewulf and the West Saxons’ councilors deprived Sigeberht, his kinsman, of his kingdom for unrighteous deeds, except Hampshire, and he had that until he killed the ealdorman who remained with him longest; and then Cynewulf drove him into Andredesleag, and he stayed there until a herdsman stabbed him by the stream at Privett; and he [the herdsman] avenged the ealdorman Cumbra.’

<sup>5</sup> The exception is the F-scribe, who omitted some entries and shortened and reworded others in compiling MS F, a bi-lingual Latin and Old English epitomized version of the *Chronicle*.

The difference is primarily that of spelling. MS A has *Westseaxna*, *wiotan*, and *unryhtum* for *Wæstseaxna*, *witan*, and *unrihtum* in MS E, for example. Other than this, there are only minor differences: MS E has *his mæge* in apposition to *Sigebrihte* at line 2 of the quotation; the pronominal object between the subject and the verb (*an swan hine ofstang*), not before the subject and the verb as in MS A (*hiene an swan ofstang*), at line 8; no Tironian *et* at line 9; and the nominal subject *sæ swan*, not the pronoun *he* as in MS A, at line 9. Although word order is not affected, *benam Sigebryht his rices* in MS A and *benam Sigebrihte [...] his rice* in MS E at lines 1–2 have different syntactic constructions. The verb takes the accusative of the person and the genitive of the thing in the former, and the dative of the person and the accusative of the thing in the latter.<sup>6</sup> Orthographical (or underlying phonetic) changes have morphological consequences, and different morphology may have triggered a different choice from multiple syntactic patterns that the verb of depriving takes. It thus seems possible to trace the diachronic development of appositive expressions even within the Copied Annals. Admittedly, the problem of provenance remains. The information on the centers of production is patchy, and the provenance of exemplars and that of those underlying them can only be guessed at. However, it may be possible to postulate a style of chronicle writing, given the close, and sometimes direct, genealogical relationship among the *Chronicle* versions: MS G is a copy of MS A, MSS B and C show special agreements between them, MS D is a conflation of the northern version and a version close to MS C, the bilingual MS F draws on MS A itself and an ancestor of MS E for its English material, and the F-scribe, collating MS A with the ancestor of MS E, makes more than thirty interventions in the text of MS A. At least, appositive patterns are very similarly distributed in these manuscripts (see Shinkawa 2024: 166–167).

6 The verb takes the dative of the person and the genitive of the thing in MSS B and C, as in *benam Sigebrihte his rices*, and also in MS D, as in *benam Sigebryhte his mæge his rices*. In MS F, the verb takes the dative of the person and the accusative of the thing, as in *benam Siberte cinge his rice*. The quotations are from the following editions: Taylor (1983), O'Brien O'Keefe (2001), Cubbin (1996), and Baker (2000) for MSS B, C, D, and F, respectively.

For convenience, this study distinguishes three periods of Old English: early (annals up to 890), middle (892–1080), and late (1081–1121).<sup>7</sup> Early annals up to 890, potentially reflecting the linguistic features of Early West Saxon, in which the Common Stock was originally composed, are assigned to the early Old English period, and late annals from 1081 to 1121, written well after the establishment of standardized Late West Saxon in the late tenth century (see Kornexl 2017), are attributed to the late Old English period. Here, the starting year of late Old English is somewhat arbitrarily set at 1081, from which year onward no annals are available in any of the other *Chronicle* versions.<sup>8</sup> Annals 892–1080, in the middle, are assigned to the middle Old English period. Since these entries were composed contemporaneously before, during, and for some time after the standardization of the language, they are expected to be the least linguistically homogenous; therefore, the relevant instances in this period are divided into earlier and later halves in referring to them, as appropriate. The dividing year is roughly around 1040.

Hand 1 incorporated into the Copied Annals twenty passages concerning Peterborough, called the Peterborough Interpolations (PIs), sometimes while copying was in progress, and at other times later in the available space and margins. They range in length from a few words to several manuscript leaves. Most of them were added at the end of relevant entries, and others in the middle or as independent annals. They are printed in small type in Irvine (2004). Although the PIs are generally regarded as written in Early Middle English (see Clark 1970: xlv–lxiii), they, being added mostly to early and middle Old English entries, may be influenced by the surrounding texts, making it difficult to place their language historically. Therefore, they are left out of the discussion when attempting to trace a diachronic development of some features concerned.

After compiling the Copied Annals, Hand 1 appears to have added further entries for the years 1122–1131 in six blocks at different times over

7 There is only an annal-number for the year 891.

8 The exception is MS H, a single-leaf fragment containing annals 1113 and 1114, which is printed in Plummer (1952: I, 243–245). However, these annals are composed independently from those in MS E. MS D ends in 1080, *MILLESIMO .LXXX.*, which appears to have been misread as *MILLESIMO .CXXX.* and is followed by a record for the year 1130.

the next decade or so. Then Hand 2 took over and wrote annals 1132–1154 continuously in one block approximately two decades later. He did not conform to the traditional annal format, dealing mainly with local events and arranging them “topic by topic” rather than “year by year” in retrospect over the years covered.<sup>9</sup> These additions by Hands 1 and 2 are called the First (Peterborough) Continuation (C1) and the Second or Final (Peterborough) Continuation (C2), respectively. They, or rather their exemplars, were almost certainly composed by the natives of Peterborough, constituting a very rare precisely dated and localized linguistic record of Early Middle English (see Clark 1970: xxxvii).

MS E may thus provide continuous evidence of appositive constituents and their relative arrangement in the tradition of English historiography, if not in any particular dialect, potentially from the early through middle and late periods of Old English in the Copied Annals, excluding the PIs, to the Early Middle English period in the PIs, C1, and C2.

### 3. Components of an appositive group and their combinations

Personal names (Ns) and titles (Ts) often constitute appositive pairs by themselves. Ts are sometimes accompanied by what is now called a definite determiner (D), such as a demonstrative (Dem) or a genitive of a noun or personal pronoun, a prepositional phrase (P),<sup>10</sup> or both, and rarely by an

9 See Clark (1970: xxv–xxvi). Brooks (2011: 60–61) argues that these annals may represent “local retrospective writing”, “what a Peterborough author would compose, when bereft of the support of a regular annalistic record, disseminated from the central government”.

10 In most cases, a P can be taken as modifying either the T or the whole appositive group. It can also modify the N alone, as in *se eorl Rotbert of Bælæsme* ‘the earl, Robert de Bellême’ (1102.3), but in rare cases. Robert de Bellême had his earldom in Shrewsbury. However, in appositive groups involving a T expressing a familial or personal relationship, such as *son* or *wife*, which requires a genitive of a noun or personal pronoun specifying the person with whom he or she is related (e.g. *the king’s*, *Alfred’s*, *his*; such a D is henceforth referred to as a person, Prsn), a P is attached to the N rather than to the T or the whole group, as in *Willelm of Ou þes cynges mæg* ‘William of Eu, the king’s kinsman’ (1096.5). The relevant appositive pair in the examples is translated literally in the original order with its second component, the N or the T-phrase, set off by commas. These commas are not intended to show an intonational break, with respect to which the present writer is noncommittal.

indefinite determiner or an adjective alone or in combination with other components. Ts of social or religious status, such as *king* or *bishop*, which are the main concern of this study, may be accompanied by a place element in the form of a P or genitive noun that specifies the place either directly by its name (e.g. *of England, England's*) or through the people living there (e.g. *of the Northumbrians, the Northumbrians*).<sup>11</sup> Ds of the former type will be referred to as places (Plcs), and those of the latter as peoples (Ppls). When followed by a P, Ts may or may not be modified by a Dem, which is almost exclusively *the/that*. The Dem must originally have been employed to indicate the T's specific identity, but the definiteness expressed by the Dem appears to have been neutralized in the presence of a very specific and identifiable N that precedes or follows the T-phrase.

In most cases, one mononymous N is paired with one T in the singular form, and only one D and/or one P, if present, accompanies the T. This study focuses on such typically occurring appositive patterns in prose annals.<sup>12</sup> Those involving multiple Ns, Ts, or Ds, Ts in the plural, polynymous Ns, or adjective modifications are excluded. So are Latin Ts in English, as well as Latin, entries. *Saint* (Latin *sanctus*) prefixed to an N, originally being an adjective, is not counted as a T here, although it developed into a noun already in Old English and possibly formed an appositive group with the following N.<sup>13</sup> Appositive patterns consisting of an N, a Ppl, and a T in this order, for example, are represented by NPplT. Occasionally, the N- and T-phrases are separated from each other, and the P is detached from the rest of the group. Such breaks are marked with hyphens, as in N-PplT and NT-P.

Mainly for lack of information on intonational breaks that most probably affected the syntactic construction of the appositive patterns, as they do

**11** Adjectives such as *Roman* serve as a place element but do so rarely in appositive groups. See, for example, 649.1, 890.2, and 1003.1. There are two occurrences of *be norðan* 'in the north', which specifies the direction, in middle Old English.

**12** Passages laid out as verse in Irvine (2004) are treated as such. The following entries consist of or include verse lines: 959, 975, 979, 1075, 1086, and 1104. They are, however, more often regarded as written in rhetorically heightened prose (see Cubbin 1996: lx; Whitelock 1996: 225, n. 4; 228, n. 2).

**13** Allen (2002: 70) analyzes 'saint X' as a compound noun.



today,<sup>14</sup> the choice of different arrangements in Old and Early Middle English is treated simply as a matter of preference. See Shinkawa (2024: 160–162) for possible motivation behind such different choice.

Table 1 shows preferred appositive patterns with or without an accompanying place element in each of the three Old English periods and the three Early Middle English specimens. Those involving a T of familial or personal relationship, in which a P, if present, is attached not to the T or the whole group but to the N, are excluded. This table lists all the instances of a P that can be interpreted as being part of the appositive group and may include some in which the P modifies a verb in the sentence, not a T in the appositive group.

**Table 1: Preferred appositive patterns in MS E.**

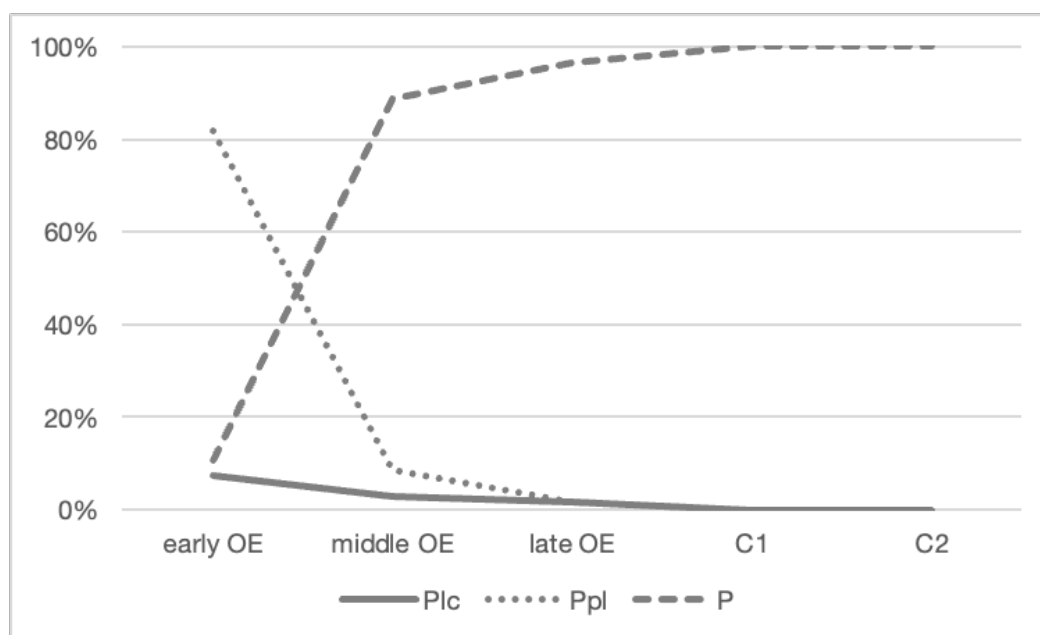
	Old English			Early Middle English			Total
	early	middle	late	C1	C2	Pls	
<b>Basic patterns</b>							
DemTN	14	36	82	21	6	32	191
DemT-N	0	1	4	1	3	3	12
NDemT	13	3	1	0	0	0	17
N-DemT	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
NT	163	244	27	2	7	54	497
N-T	3	14	4	1	0	1	23
TN	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Subtotal	194	298	118	25	16	93	744
<b>Patterns with a Plc</b>							
PlcTN	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
NPlcT	7	1	1	0	0	0	9
Subtotal	7	1	1	0	0	1	10

**14** See Mitchell (1985: I, 611). Heringa (2011), for example, focuses on loose appositions, which are separated by comma intonation, and Acuña-Fariña (2016) on close appositions without such intonational separation in Present-Day English. Way (1970), with its very narrow purpose of describing the order of modifiers in Old English noun-headed objects of prepositions that occur in C1 and C2 of MS E, is largely irrelevant.

<b>Patterns with a Ppl</b>							
PplTN	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
PplT-N	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
NPplT	69	1	1	0	0	1	72
N-PplT	7	1	0	0	0	0	8
Subtotal	77	3	1	0	0	1	82
<b>Patterns with a P</b>							
DemTNP	0	1	27	26	1	6	61
DemT-NP	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
DemTPN	0	0	4	2	0	1	7
NDemTP	1	0	1	1	0	0	3
NTP	9	28	20	3	8	18	86
NT-P	0	2	2	1	0	0	5
Subtotal	10	31	54	34	9	25	163
<b>Total</b>	288	333	174	59	25	120	999

In early Old English, there is an explicit tendency to specify a larger land-area (kingdom, shire, etc.) with a Ppl, as in *Claudius Romana cining* [NPplT] ‘Claudius, the Romans’ king [emperor]’ (47.1), and a smaller one (city, town, etc.) with a Plc or P, as in *Iðamar Rofecestre biscop* [NPlcT] ‘Ithamar, Rochester’s bishop’ (655.1) or *Tobias biscop in Rofecestre* [NTP] ‘Tobias, bishop in Rochester’ (727.1).<sup>15</sup> However, during and after the middle Old English period, Ppls and Plcs are practically no longer used, leaving Ps as the only place element available for either larger or smaller land-areas (see Figure 1).

**15** See Shinkawa (2024: 155–157) for details of the place element modifying the title paired in apposition with a personal name in MS E.



**Figure 1: Preferred place elements in appositive construction.**

Ps are typically attached to the dominant basic patterns at the time to form NTP, as in *Cnut cyng of Englande* ‘Cnut, king of England’ (1028.1), in middle Old English and DemTNP, as in *se biscop Roger of Seresbyrig* ‘the bishop, Roger, of Salisbury’ (1123.5–6), in C1, for example, but NTP is generally favored, except in C1. Separated patterns are strongly preferred in genitive contexts, as in “*Annan dohter Eastengla ciningas [N-PplT]*” ‘Anna’s daughter, *the East Angles’ king’s*’ (639.5–6). Detached Ps occur very occasionally in non-genitive contexts, as in “*þa geceas he Æðelsige munuc þærto of Ealdon Mynstre [NT-P]*” ‘then he chose *Æthelsige, monk*, for it, *of Old Minster*’ (1061.6–7), as well as in genitive contexts, as in “*Malcolmes cynges dohter of Scotlande [NT-P]*” ‘*Malcolm’s, king’s, daughter, of Scotland*’ (1100.43–44). Various prepositions heading a P come to be limited to *of* during the Old English period, probably showing the formularization of appositive patterns (see Shinkawa 2024: 157–160).

#### 4. Changes of perspective and focus in chronicle writing

There was inevitably a change in perspective after new annals were added to the original compilation. This appears to be reflected in the use and non-use of a place element modifying a T paired in apposition with his/her N, particularly *king*, the most frequently occurring one. Many distant kings had to be

identified by their kingdoms in the Common Stock, which was composed in the late ninth century, looking back mainly on the national events of the prior millennium, whereas in continuations, recorded contemporaneously or near-contemporaneously, probably with an unconscious expectation of the shared understanding with their contemporary readers, the chroniclers were allowed to be less specific and did without such geographical information more frequently. This assumption is corroborated by the marked reduction, from 50.7% (73/144) in early Old English to 8.4% (19/225) in later periods,<sup>16</sup> of instances in which *king* in such an appositive group is accompanied by a place element (see Figure 2). The number of kings who were of immediate concern to contemporary chroniclers and readers would have been limited, and further specification by territory was probably deemed unnecessary.<sup>17</sup>

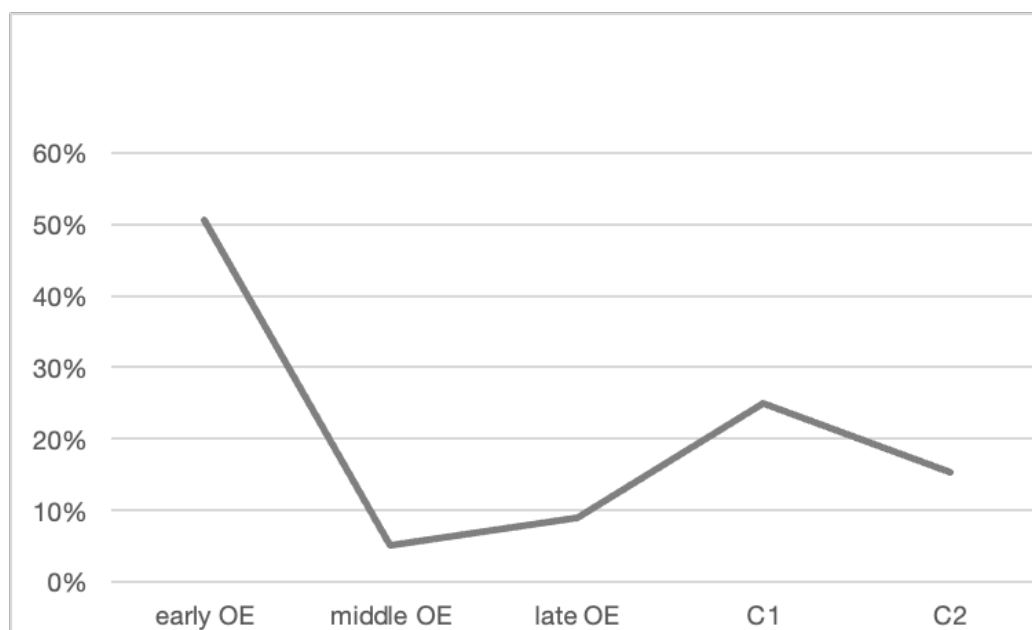


Figure 2: Geographically specified *kings* paired in apposition with their name.

The composer or composers of the Common Stock themselves had their own contemporary king, Alfred the Great, and modified his T with a place element, as in “*Ælfredes bene Westseaxna cyninges* [N-PplT]” ‘*Alfred’s* request,

**16** The breakdown for each of these periods is 5.1% (5/98) in middle Old English, 9% (7/78) in late Old English, 25% (4/16) in C1, 15.4% (2/13) in C2, and 5% (1/20) in the PIs.

**17** The gradual unification of England during the ninth and tenth centuries may also have contributed to making such specification redundant.

*the West Saxons' king's'* (885.17–18), only once out of nineteen times (5.3%).<sup>18</sup> Historical kings, too, were often not provided with the information on their territory in subsequent and, particularly repeated, mention after it had been supplied, as in:

7 þy ilcan geare gefeaht *Ecgeberht Westseaxna cining* [NPplT] 7 Beornulf Myrcena cining æt Ellandune, 7 *Ecgeberht* sige nam [...] 7 þy ilcan geare Eastengla cining 7 seo þeod gesohte *Ecgbriht cining* [NT] him to friðe 7 to mundburan for Myrcena ege [...]

‘And the same year *Egbert, the West Saxons' king*, and Beornwulf, the Mercians' king, fought at Ellendun, and *Egbert* took the victory [...] And the same year the East Angles' king and the people sought *Egbert, king*, for their peace and as their protector for fear of the Mercians [...]’ (823.1–10)

or generally when such information could be recovered from the contexts, as in “7 þa fengon his .ii. sunu to rice: *Æðelbald to Westseaxna rice* and to Suðrigean, 7 he rixade .v. gear. / Her *Æðelbald cining* [NT] forðferde [...]” ‘And then his two sons succeeded to the kingdom, *Æthelbald to the West Saxons' kingdom* and to Surrey, and he ruled for five years. / Here *Æthelbald, king*, passed away [...]’ (855.7–9, 860.1).<sup>19</sup> It may be that the composers of continuations, primarily dealing with contemporary topics, could rely more on out-of-text contextual information.

*Ealdorman* and *earl* are equivalent titles for rulers under kings before and after the beginning of the Danish dynasty (see *OED* s.vv. *alderman*, n.; *ealdorman*, n.; *earl*, n.; *jarl*, n.). The former is the native title of Anglo-Saxon nobles, and the latter was originally applied to Danish jarls. They are the second most frequently employed Ts of social status paired with an N in early through

**18** Alfred's predecessor and brother, Æthelred, is accompanied by such an element 16.6% (1/6) of the time, and Egbert, king of Wessex, who offers the second most relevant instances after Alfred, 33.3% (3/9).

**19** There are only annal-numbers for the intervening years.

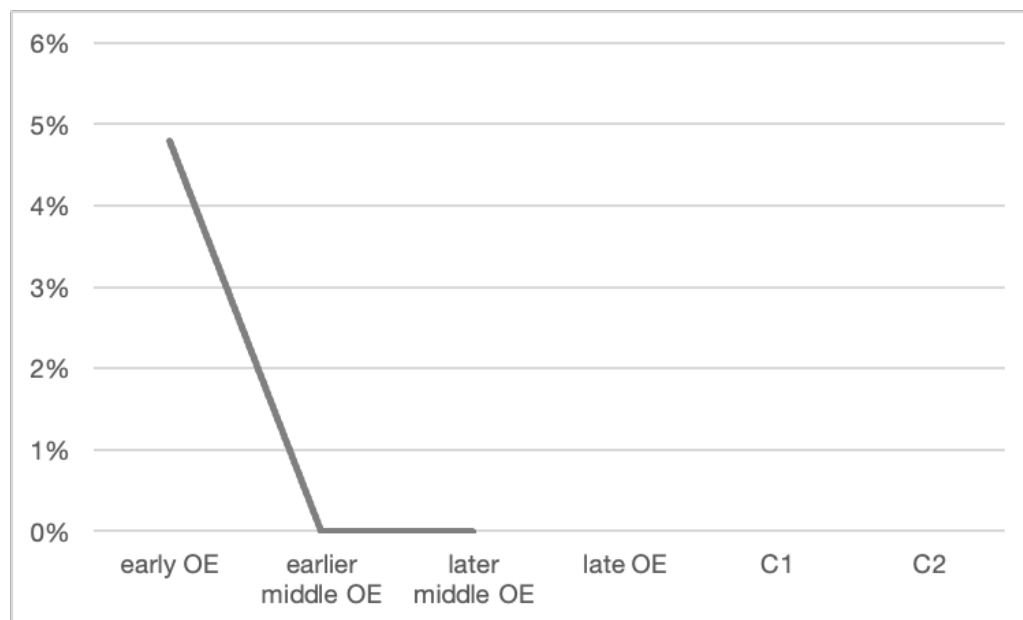
earlier middle Old English and in later middle Old English and afterward, respectively.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to *king*, *ealdorman* in such an appositive construction appears with a place element, as in *Æpælmund ealdorman of Hwiccum* [NTP] ‘Æthelmund, ealdorman of the Hwicccians’ (800.4), only once out of twenty-one times (4.8%) in early Old English. The territories of ealdormen – and, in the same manner, of earls – may have been known by those of the kings they served or by the people they fought with. For example, Beorht is introduced as an ealdorman of Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria, in “Her on ðissum geare sende Ecgferð here on Scottas 7 Briht his ealdorman [NPrsnT] mid” ‘Here in this year Ecgfrith sent an army against the Scots and *Beorht*, his ealdorman, with it’ (684.1–2),<sup>21</sup> and Weohstan is reported to have fought against his enemy with the people of Wiltshire in “þa gemette hine *Weohstan ealdorman* [NT] mid *Wilsætum*” ‘then *Weohstan*, ealdorman, met him with the people of Wiltshire’ (800.5). However, in many cases, such geographical information is not given at all or can only be guessed at to differing degrees, as in “7 Æðelheard ealdorman [NT] forðferde on kalendas Augusti” ‘And Ætherheard, ealdorman, passed away on 1 August’ (794.6–7) or in “7 þam ilcan geare feoht *Beorhtfrið ealdorman* [NT] wið *Pyhtas betwix Hæfe 7 Cære*” ‘And the same year *Beorhtfrith*, ealdorman, fought against the Picts between the Avon and the Carron’ (710.2–3). In the latter example, Beorhtfrith’s fight against the Picts around the Anglian frontier suggests his affiliation with Northumbria. Apparently, the chroniclers were not as meticulous about rulers under kings as they were about kings. *Ealdorman* occurs thirty-three times in such appositive pairs in earlier middle Old English, always without a place element, and is no longer

20 *Ealdorman* is found eleven times in the PIs added to early through earlier middle Old English entries, and *earl* twice, once each for an Anglo-Saxon earl and a Danish jarl, in the PIs added to later middle Old English annals. None of these examples is accompanied by a place element. The instances in the PIs, spanning multiple periods of Old English, will not be discussed further.

21 Ecgfrith is already introduced as a successor to Oswiu, king of Northumbria, in “Her Oswiu forðferde *Norðanhymbra cining* on .xv. kalendas Martii, 7 *Ecferð his sunu* [NPrsnT] rixade æfter him” ‘Here Oswiu passed away, the Northumbrians’ king, on 15 February, and *Ecgfrith*, his son, ruled after him’ (670.1–2).

found during and after the later middle Old English period, by which time it was completely replaced by *earl* (see Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Geographically specified *ealdormen* paired in apposition with their name.**

All three early Old English examples of *earl* paired with an N refer to Danish jarls (Fræna, Harald, Osbern) who were killed in a battle against Alfred's army. This title is soon generalized to comparable titles, both Insular and Continental, and is employed six times for Anglo-Saxon ealdormen/earls (Leofric, Thored, Uhtred, etc.) and once for a Danish jarl (Thorkell) in earlier middle Old English, and sixty-nine times for Anglo-Saxon earls (Godwine, Harold II, Swein, etc.), three times each for Danish jarls (Beorn, Hakon) and Flemish counts (Baldwin V, Baldwin VI, Robert I), and twice for Norman dukes (Richard I, William I) in later middle Old English. None of these instances of *earl* is accompanied by a place element, as in *Swegen eorl* [NT] 'Swein, earl' (1045.5). However, from the late Old English period onward, more than half of the *earls* in relevant constructions are geographically specified: 53.8% (21/39) in late Old English, 50% (5/10) in C1, and 66.7% (4/6) in C2 (see Figure 4). This is in contrast to the situation presented by *king*, in which only 9% (7/78), 25% (4/16), and 15.4% (2/13) of the instances involve a place element in respective periods.

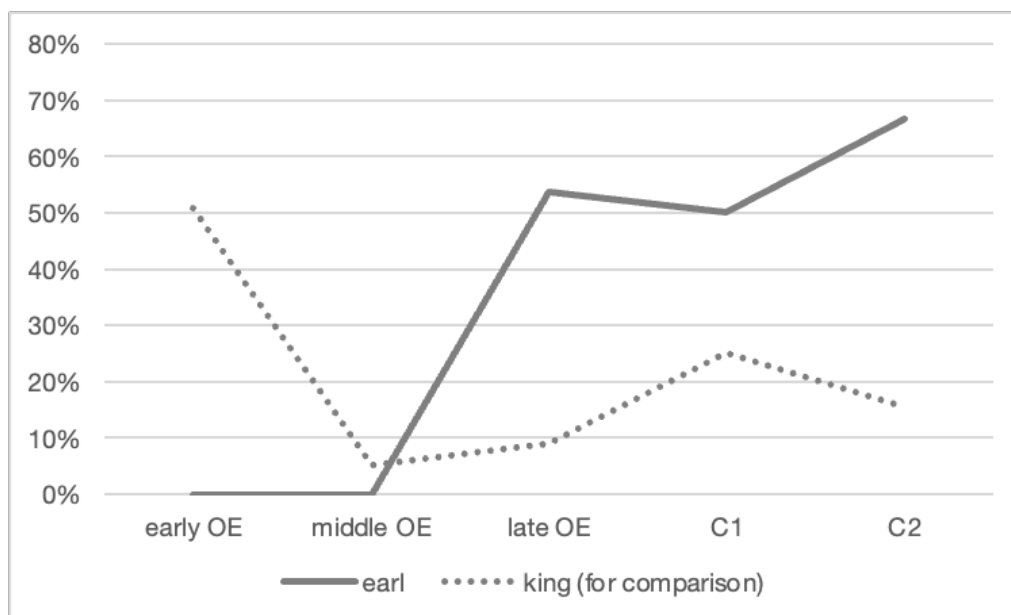


Figure 4: Geographically specified *earls* paired in apposition with their name.

While the number of kings who were of immediate concern to contemporary chroniclers and readers would have been limited enough to make further specification by territory unnecessary, there were naturally more rulers under kings to be distinguished at any time and place, and particularly after the cataclysmic political and social changes ensuing the Norman Conquest, chroniclers may have felt a stronger need to specify them than kings, who were probably taken for granted and backgrounded. The *earls* in and after late Old English are used mostly for Continental titles, with twenty-two and fifteen references to counts (Elias I, Eustace III, Robert II, etc.) and a duke (Robert II), respectively, as against eighteen to Insular earls, all of whom are of Continental lineage (Hugh d'Avranches, Robert de Mowbray, Roger de Montgomery, etc.).

Counts and dukes are usually introduced along with their geographical affiliation except when such information is supplied by context, as shown by the two instances of Robert in:

[...] 7 eac þurh þone eorl Rodbert of Normandig [DemTNP] þe mid unfriðe hider to lande fundode. And se cyng syddan scipa ut on sæ sende his broðer to dære 7 to lættinge, ac hi sume [...] to þam eorle Rotberte [DemTN] gebugan.



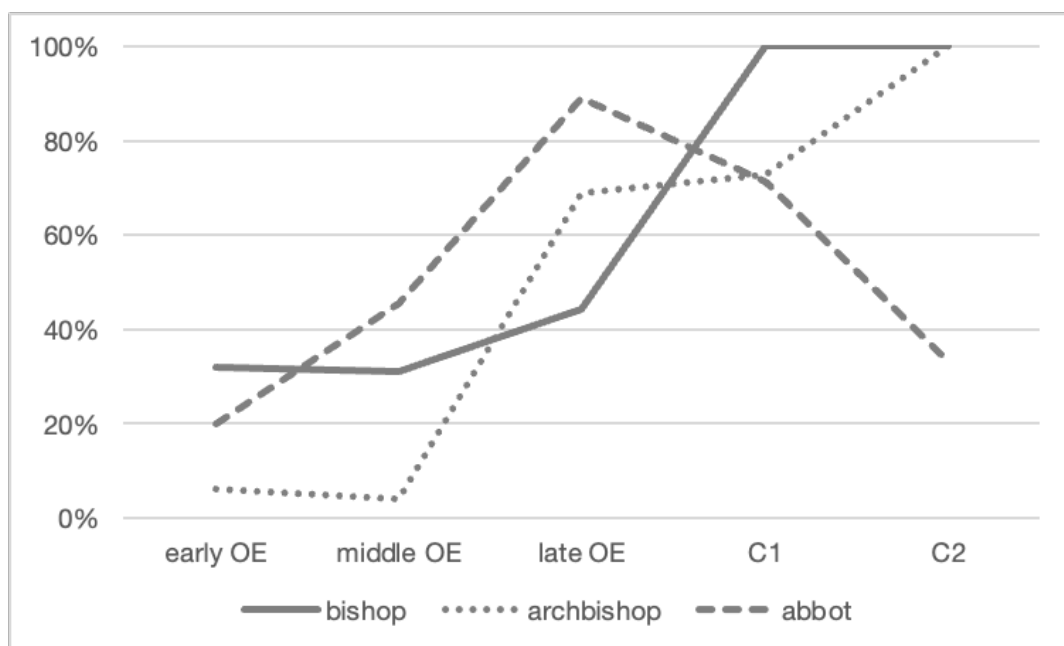
‘[...] and also because of *the earl [duke], Robert, of Normandy*, who set out with hostility hither to the land. And the king then sent his ships out to sea to injure and hinder his brother, but some of them [...] submitted to *the earl [duke], Robert.*’ (1101.5–9)

and so are earls, particularly when persons with the same name are recorded in the same annal, as in “7 on þam fare wurdon adruncene *þæs cynges twegen sunan Willelm 7 Ricard* [PrsnTN] 7 *Ricard eorl of Ceastre* [NTP] 7 Ottuel his broðor [...]” ‘And on the journey were drowned *the king’s two sons, William and Richard*, and *Richard, earl of Chester*, and Ottuel, his brother [...]’ (1120.6–8). The place elements involved here are all in the form of P, with twenty-one referring to Continental places (Bellême, Boulogne, Flanders, etc.) and nine to Insular ones (Gloucester, Northumbria, Shropshire, etc.).

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is also about bishops and archbishops. The chroniclers, members of religious communities themselves, continued to modify Ts of religious status with a place element to a certain extent from the early Old English period onward. *Bishop*, which provides the largest number of relevant instances, is geographically specified, as in *Godune Galwala biscop* [NPplT] ‘Godun, the Gauls’ bishop’ (693.2), 31.9% (15/47) and 31.1% (14/45) of the time in early and middle Old English, respectively. *Archbishop*, the second most frequently employed, is so specified, as in *Ecgberht ærcebiscop in Eoferwic* [NTP] ‘Egbert, archbishop in York’ (766.1), to the lesser extent of 6.3% (2/32) and 4% (1/25) in respective periods, evidently because there were fewer archbishoprics than bishoprics – one in Canterbury before the establishment of the other in York in 735. Similarly, *pope* is modified by a place element, as in *Agatho papa of Rome* [NTP] ‘Agatho, pope of Rome’ (675.9), only twice out of thirty-one times in the entire text (6.5%), there being only one papacy in Rome.<sup>22</sup>

22 The other possible instance is *se papa Gelasius on þas halfe þære muntan* [DemTNP] ‘the pope, Gelasius, on this side of the mountains [Alps]’ (1119.14–15). Gelasius II may be so identified because he was in exile in France on the other side of the Alps from Rome, where Gregory VIII was antipope. The P here can also be interpreted as modifying the verb *forðferde* ‘passed away’ in the sentence, specifying where he died. The breakdown for each of the relevant periods is 0% in early (0/14) and middle (0/4)

Geographically specified instances increase noticeably during and after the late Old English period: to 44.4% (8/18) in late Old English and 100% in Continuations (11/11; 10/10 in C1 and 1/1 in C2) in the case of *bishop*,<sup>23</sup> and to 68.8% (11/16) in late Old English and 75% in Continuations (9/12; 8/11 in C1 and 1/1 in C2) in that of *archbishop* (see Figure 5).<sup>24</sup> *Abbot*, the third most frequently employed T of religious status after *bishop* and *archbishop*, shows a similar jump from 20% (1/5) and 45.5% (10/22) in early and middle Old English, respectively, to 88.9% (8/9) in late Old English and 71.4% (5/7) in C1, although it dips to 33.3% (1/3) in C2 (see Figure 5).<sup>25</sup> Here, it must be recalled that *earls* too have come to be found in significant numbers with a place element from the late Old English period onward. This may show an increased local, rather than national, focus.



**Figure 5: Geographically specified *bishops*, *archbishops*, and *abbots* paired in apposition with their name.**

Old English, 25% (1/4) in late Old English, 0% in C1 (0/3) and C2 (0/1), and 20% (1/5) in the PIs.

**23** The percentage for the PIs is 26.1 (6/23).

**24** The percentage for the PIs is 50 (9/18).

**25** The percentage for the PIs is 29 (9/31).

## 5. Conclusion

Titles help identify or introduce persons named, and the accompanying place elements assist in doing so. The amount of information deemed necessary for effective communication ultimately depends on the writers' perspective and focus. Past events, for their distance, need to be provided with more background information, and things of interest, for their relevance, tend to be reported in fuller detail. Thus, *kings*, who were the main concern throughout the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, particularly those in the distant past, were geographically specified in most cases. Contemporary *kings* were not done so as often probably because their territories were assumed to be known to contemporary readers, nor were distant *ealdormen* or *earls* apparently because they were of less concern to the composers than *kings*. Contemporary *earls*, however, began to take center stage in the political and social confusion that followed the Norman Conquest; it would have been difficult to properly identify or introduce many Continental nobles without providing information about their geographical affiliation. *Bishops* and *archbishops*, who continued to attract a certain level of attention from the beginning, also appeared with a place element much more frequently during and after the late Old English period.

This apparent shift in focus from national to local events is closely connected with an inevitable shift in perspective from retrospective to contemporary after annals began to be recorded in real or near-real time. From a contemporary perspective, with more out-of-text contextual information shared with readers, national matters may have been backgrounded and local matters foregrounded, potentially reflecting the aims and biases of the institutions in which the records were made. National events, however, remained the central topics throughout the *Chronicle*, except in C2, which was chiefly concerned with Peterborough issues. **N**

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Combinatoire lexicale et  
profilage du sens du  
lexème *embryon* dans le  
discours de la  
bioéthique

ANA-MARIA COZMA & KIM LEHTONEN

**Résumé** Cet article étudie la combinatoire lexicale du mot *embryon* et la manière dont le sens de ce mot est profilé d'un syntagme à l'autre. L'étude a été menée à partir d'un corpus de bioéthique composé de discours institutionnels, d'une part, et de commentaires d'internautes, d'autre part. À partir de ce corpus, nous avons extrait à l'aide d'un concordancier tous les syntagmes dans lesquels intervient le mot *embryon*, quelle qu'ait été leur fréquence. Les syntagmes ainsi répertoriés sont présentés d'abord de point de vue de la combinatoire syntaxique, ensuite du point de vue de la combinatoire lexicale, et constituent les données que nous analyserons. Ainsi, bien qu'extraits à partir de discours effectifs, les syntagmes ont subi des simplifications qui font qu'ils se situent davantage à un niveau prédiscursif. Pour mener l'étude sur ces syntagmes, le modèle d'analyse choisi est celui de la Sémantique des possibles argumentatifs (SPA) d'Olga Galatanu (2018, 2022), sur lequel nous avons greffé la notion de profilage (Cadiot & Visetti 2001), compris comme le résultat d'un processus de convocation-évocation, selon la vision de la compositionnalité gestaltiste de Victorri *et al.* (Victorri & Fuchs 1996 ; Victorri 1997). L'analyse proprement dite consiste à identifier les associations argumentatives activées par les syntagmes : les déploiements argumentatifs, d'une part, et les associations évoquées du fait de la combinatoire lexicale, d'autre part.

**Mots-clés** sémantique lexicale, combinatoire lexicale, profilage, compositionnalité gestaltiste, potentiel de signification, stéréotype, sémantique des possibles argumentatifs, discours de la bioéthique, embryon

## Introduction

Cet article explore la manière dont l'on se représente l'embryon en bioéthique, compte tenu de la combinatoire lexicale du mot *embryon*. En bioéthique, on rencontre par exemple des syntagmes nominaux où *embryon* figure comme tête du syntagme (*embryon viable, mort, surnuméraire, in vitro, anormal, disponible...*) ou comme complément du nom (*congélation des embryons, marchandisation des embryons, statut de l'embryon...*). *Embryon* apparaît aussi, entre autres, comme complément d'objet auprès de verbes tels *manipuler, transférer, protéger*, etc. et comme complément circonstanciel (*modifications apportées dans un embryon, recherche sur l'embryon*). Dans chaque syntagme ou expression, le sens d'*embryon* est « profilé » différemment, en interaction

avec les lexèmes qui lui sont adjoints ou auxquels il est adjoint. Dans cet article, nous nous intéressons donc au sémantisme du lexème *embryon* et à la manière dont celui-ci est profilé selon les différents syntagmes. Cette question est intéressante dans la mesure où le statut de l'embryon ne fait pas l'unanimité et reste très débattu.

L'étude est menée dans le cadre de la sémantique des possibles argumentatifs – SPA (Galatanu 2018, 2022), une théorie dynamique de description du sens, qui intègre le concept de stéréotype linguistique (Putnam 1975/1989, Fradin 1984) et la vision de la sémantique argumentative (Anscombe & Ducrot 1983, Anscombe 2001, Ducrot 2001, Carel 2001)<sup>1</sup>. Ainsi, la SPA propose un modèle de description de la signification lexicale qui est dynamique, holistique, encyclopédique, associatif et stratifié. Suivant la démarche de la SPA, nous représentons la signification du mot *embryon* en termes de 'noyau', 'stéréotypes' et 'possibles argumentatifs'. Nous utilisons également les notions d'évocation-convocation (Victorri & Fuchs 1996 ; Victorri 1997) et de profilage (Cadiot & Visetti 2001), en les greffant sur le modèle de la SPA.

Trois étapes seront parcourues dans cette étude : 1) un inventaire de la combinatoire lexicale pour *embryon* sera dressé, sur la base du corpus choisi – qui nous permettra de disposer d'un ensemble de syntagmes représentatifs pour les discours de la bioéthique ; 2) une description sémantique sera proposée pour le lexème *embryon*, sur la base des dictionnaires et d'autres discours définitionnels – description visant à rendre compte du potentiel de signification du lexème ; 3) quelques syntagmes contenant *embryon* seront analysés, afin d'observer le profilage du sens d'*embryon* à l'œuvre d'un syntagme à l'autre.

Le corpus sur lequel se base l'étude est constitué des avis du Comité consultatif national d'éthique (CCNE) et des discussions en ligne lors des États généraux de la bioéthique 2018. Nous préciserons quelle est la spécificité du corpus dans la première section de l'article, où nous donnerons également un premier aperçu de la combinatoire du mot *embryon* dans le discours de la bioéthique. Le cadre théorique sera présenté dans la deuxième section, suivi par l'analyse qui sera menée dans la dernière grande section de l'article.

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1 Nous renvoyons à Galatanu (2018) pour les références bibliographiques concernant la filiation de la SPA. Cette note s'applique aussi à la section théorique de cet article.



## 1. La combinatoire du mot *embryon* dans le discours de la bioéthique

Cette étude porte sur les représentations et la combinatoire lexicale dans les discours de la bioéthique. Par discours de la bioéthique (au singulier), nous entendons l'ensemble des discours produits dans le champ de la bioéthique, quels que soient leur nature et genre ; l'unité de ces discours découle donc de leur utilisation dans un même champ de pratique (cf. Maingueneau 2021 : 18). Parmi les discours concrets produits au sein de ce champ de pratique, nous avons sélectionné pour cette étude des « avis » émanant d'une institution de bioéthique française, le CCNE, et une « consultation citoyenne » organisée en France sur des questions de bioéthique. Les discours choisis pour constituer notre corpus seront présentés dans la sous-section 1.1.

Dans ces discours, le mot *embryon* est utilisé à des fréquences différentes, selon le sujet central abordé. Par exemple, dans les avis du CCNE et dans les commentaires des citoyens participant à la consultation, le mot est très fréquent lorsqu'on parle de fécondation in vitro et d'assistance médicale à la procréation, d'utilisation des embryons in vitro et de recherche sur les embryons, de diagnostic prénatal, de don d'embryons, etc.

La combinatoire d'un mot renvoie aux associations plus ou moins fréquentes du mot avec d'autres mots, qu'il s'agisse d'autres unités lexicales (mots pleins) ou de mots outils tels que les prépositions. Généralement, le concept de « combinatoire » s'utilise pour traiter des associations privilégiées ou récurrentes, mettant ainsi l'accent sur les collocations (Grossmann & Tutin 2003).

Dans cette étude, en parlant de la combinatoire du mot *embryon*, nous envisageons ce phénomène de manière à y faire rentrer non seulement les associations récurrentes, mais aussi les occurrences plus rares ou qui ne se manifestent qu'une fois dans le corpus. Ainsi, nous nous intéressons à l'ensemble des associations lexicales possibles avec le mot *embryon* et à l'ensemble des syntagmes où ce mot apparaît. C'est avant tout la combinatoire lexicale qui nous intéresse – c'est-à-dire les lexèmes qui sont associés au mot *embryon*, que cela soit de manière fréquente ou occasionnelle –, que l'on mettra parfois en rapport avec la combinatoire syntagmatique, envisagée à un niveau davantage syntaxique. Par exemple, une association lexicale donnée peut se manifester à travers plusieurs syntagmes : *embryon congelé*, *congélation d'embryons*, *congeler des embryons* (où *embryon* est

respectivement la tête d'un SN, un complément du nom et un COD). Dans les sous-sections 1.2 et 1.3, nous présenterons les syntagmes extraits à partir du corpus, d'abord depuis une perspective syntaxique, ensuite depuis une perspective sémantique.

### 1.1. Corpus de l'étude

Deux types de discours sont utilisés pour mener cette étude, discours produits dans le contexte français : les avis émis par le CCNE depuis 1984 et un débat en ligne organisé par le CCNE en 2018. Le CCNE, Comité consultatif national d'éthique pour les sciences de la vie et de la santé, est une instance consultative française, dont la mission est d'éclairer les décideurs sur les enjeux éthiques des innovations technologiques, notamment au moyen d'« avis ». Depuis une quinzaine d'années, le CCNE a aussi pour mission d'organiser les « États généraux de la bioéthique », un grand débat public national en amont des modifications des lois de la bioéthique, ce qu'il a fait en 2009 et 2018.

Pour cette étude, nous avons retenu 25 avis sur l'ensemble des 145 émis par le CCNE jusqu'à présent. La sélection s'est faite en tenant compte du nombre d'occurrences du lexème *embryon* dans chaque avis, avec un seuil minimal de dix occurrences pour qu'un avis soit inclus dans le corpus. Dans les 25 avis retenus<sup>2</sup>, le nombre d'occurrences est très variable, allant d'une dizaine d'occurrences (avis n<sup>os</sup> 16, 75, 105, 124, 138) jusqu'à 406 et 611 occurrences (avis n<sup>os</sup> 8 et 112) – la moyenne étant de 93,84. Au total, nous disposons de 2 346 occurrences extraites des avis du CCNE.

Quant à la consultation en ligne organisée dans le cadre des États généraux de la bioéthique de 2018<sup>3</sup>, elle nous fournit 5 154 occurrences du lexème *embryon*. Ce sous-corpus est constitué des réactions des internautes aux

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2 Les avis retenus pour l'étude sont les suivants : numéros 1, 3, 8, 16, 18, 19, 24, 40, 42, 53, 54, 60, 67, 75, 90, 93, 105, 107, 112, 113, 124, 126, 129, 133 et 138. Le premier avis a été publié en 1984 et l'avis 138 en 2021. Tous ces textes sont disponibles sur le site internet du CCNE ([www.ccne-ethique.fr](http://www.ccne-ethique.fr)).

3 Cette consultation citoyenne s'est déroulée entre la mi-janvier et la fin juin 2018 sous diverses formes : rencontres et débats, auditions d'associations, comité citoyen, etc. Le débat en ligne a duré du 12 février au 30 avril 2018, a porté sur neuf thématiques, et a été structuré autour de « propositions » pour lesquelles les participants pouvaient « voter » et laisser des commentaires (des « arguments pour ou contre »).

« propositions » formulées par le CCNE pour lancer et cadrer la consultation. Nous avons laissé de côté les propositions faites par les internautes eux-mêmes et les commentaires s’y rattachant, pour nous concentrer uniquement sur les 115 propositions formulées par le CCNE et les réactions qu’elles ont suscitées.

Ces deux sous-corpus relèvent de deux genres différents : le genre institutionnel de l’avis et du rapport, dans le cas des discours qui émanent du CCNE, et le genre du débat dans le cas de la consultation en ligne. D’un côté, on a des discours à visée explicative et normative ; de l’autre, des discours à visée argumentative. Ainsi, ces sous-corpus nous offrent, d’une part, le point de vue institutionnel sur les questions de bioéthique et, d’autre part, les représentations des locuteurs de la langue en général, puisque la consultation en ligne a été ouverte à tous les citoyens.

Les occurrences et la combinatoire du lexème *embryon* ont été identifiées à l’aide du concordancier AntConc, développé par Laurence Anthony. L’outil nous a permis d’extraire l’ensemble des occurrences du mot *embryon* et leur contexte immédiat, de les lister en tenant compte du contexte gauche et droit, et d’accéder si besoin au contexte plus large d’une occurrence donnée. À partir de ces concordances, nous avons extrait la liste de tous les syntagmes où figure le mot *embryon*. Ces syntagmes ont été regroupés thématiquement, et parfois découpés, en vue de l’analyse – par exemple à partir de l’occurrence « utiliser des embryons IFIV surnuméraires pour la recherche » nous avons retenu les syntagmes *utiliser l’embryon*, *embryon IFIV* et *embryon surnuméraire*, que nous avons ensuite placés dans des groupes différents (notamment par rapport à l’utilisation de l’embryon et au résultat de l’action humaine sur l’embryon ; voir la section 1.3 ci-dessous).

## 1.2. Combinatoire syntagmatique

Si nous visons à étudier la combinatoire lexicale du mot *embryon*, il nous paraît toutefois utile de faire un détour par la dimension syntaxique des expressions comportant ce mot. Ce détour nous permettra d’avoir un meilleur aperçu des types de syntagmes au sein desquels apparaît le mot, mais aussi de souligner le fait que les associations argumentatives auxquelles nous nous intéresserons dans l’analyse (que nous présentons à un niveau théorique

dans la section 2) sont aussi portées par les rapports syntaxiques entre les mots. Sans rentrer dans les détails techniques ici, nous voulons simplement préciser que, dans notre perspective, la prédication et les différentes formes de rection, ou encore la juxtaposition, sont des manifestations en surface d'un lien associatif déjà inscrit dans les représentations sémantiques (exception faisant bien entendu les éventuelles associations nouvelles, inédites, non prévues par la langue, mais construites par le discours).

D'un point de vue syntaxique, nous avons pu identifier dans le corpus de cette étude les cas de figure suivants (les listes des exemples ne sont pas exhaustives).

#### A. Au sein d'un syntagme nominal :

- *embryon*, tête d'un SN, est accompagné de déterminants à droite ou à gauche :
  - à gauche : *jeune, nouveau, pré-, ex-*
  - à droite : *humain, viable, disponible, transférable, excédentaire, préimplantatoire* (adjectif) ; *théoriquement normal, déjà formé, issu de..., voué à..., incapable de...* (syntagme adjectival) ; *d'animal, d'IVG, d'origine, de départ, de bonne qualité, de quelques cellules, au stade..., en phase..., en cours de..., sans avenir, en entier, en surnombre* (syntagme prépositionnel) ; *ex vivo, in vitro, ex utero* (syntagme prépositionnel en latin) ; *résultant de..., ayant..., n'ayant pas...* (participe présent du verbe) ; *dits surnuméraires, reconnus normaux, mentionnés* (participe passé) ; *mosaïque, donneur de noyau, porteur d'une anomalie* (syntagme nominal juxtaposé) ; *IFIV, ITNS* (sigle juxtaposé).
- *embryon* est complément du nom introduit par différentes prépositions :
  - préposition *de* : *cellule, potentiel, développement, culture, utilisation, conservation, destruction, réification, banque, nombre, définition (...de l'embryon/d'embryon.s)*
  - prépositions *sur, pour, dans, à* : *recherche, expérimentation, travaux, intervention, prélèvement, tests, diagnostic, toute puissance (...sur l'embryon) ; respect, sécurité, retombées, modèle,*

- régime juridique (...pour l'embryon) ; la personne, transfert de..., injection (...dans l'embryon) ; fontaine (...à embryons) ;*
- locutions prépositionnelles : *à partir de ; à l'égard de ; grâce à ; sur le dos de ; au détriment de.*
  - *embryon* peut aussi être complément d'un adjectif, ou d'un participe passé/présent à valeur adjectivale :
    - *cellules souches dérivées de l'embryon ; issues des embryons ; prélevée sur un embryon ; isolées à partir d'un embryon ; provenant des embryons ; relative à l'embryon ; appliquée aux embryons ; transmises par l'embryon.*

B. En rapport avec un verbe, par rapport auquel *embryon* joue parfois le rôle de sujet, et le plus souvent la fonction de complément d'objet direct ou indirect :

- *embryon* sujet : *se développer, croître, grandir, évoluer, acquérir, mesurer, subsister, atteindre (la cavité utérine), esquisser de faibles mouvements, commencer une existence autonome ;*
- *embryon* COD : *utiliser, instrumentaliser, traiter comme un objet, manipuler, cultiver, conserver, congeler, créer, produire, fabriquer, constituer, transplanter, sélectionner, détruire, éliminer, obtenir, détenir, donner, recenser, observer, respecter, protéger, nourrir, porter, soigner, laisser croître, trafiquer, rentabiliser, sacrifier, faire mourir, discriminer, toiletter, améliorer, modifier, disséquer, blesser (la majorité des verbes du corpus s'accompagnent d'*embryon* comme COD) ;*
- *embryon* COI : *disposer de, toucher à, porter atteinte à, faire subir à, se débarrasser de, s'acharner sur, donner un avenir à, donner naissance à, conférer à, exercer sur, foutre la paix à, ôter la vie à, extraire qqch de, jouer avec, reconnaître qqc dans, intervenir sur, agir sur, travailler sur, prélever sur, légiférer sur, se précipiter sur, corriger qqch chez, reconnaître qqch dans, évoluer vers.*

### 1.3. Combinatoire lexicale

Les exemples énumérés ci-dessus pour la combinatoire syntagmatique donnent déjà un aperçu des associations lexicales avec le mot *embryon*. En nous tournant vers la combinatoire lexicale et pour préparer l'analyse portant sur la représentation du mot *embryon*, nous avons procédé à un regroupement des syntagmes selon des critères thématiques – regroupement qui fait abstraction des aspects syntaxiques détaillés ci-dessus en § 1.2. Selon ce regroupement, des syntagmes tels *utilisation des embryons*, *utiliser l'embryon*, *embryons utilisables* et *utilisateur d'embryons* sont tous réunis et traités ensemble, car ils représentent des manifestations syntaxiques d'une même association argumentative entre l'embryon et le fait qu'on l'utilise à diverses fins (nous représenterons cette association sous la forme « embryon DONC utilisation », conformément au modèle sémantique argumentatif que nous appliquerons pour l'étude ; voir § 2).

Les catégories thématiques que nous avons retenues sur la base des occurrences du corpus sont énumérées dans le Tableau 1, accompagnées d'exemples dans la colonne de droite (listes non exhaustives).

**Tableau 1. Regroupement thématique des associations lexicales relevées dans le corpus.**

Caractéristiques et activité de l'embryon	
Nature de l'embryon	nature singulière/profonde de l'embryon ; aspect caractéristique de l'embryon ; embryon naturel ; etc.
Développement (et potentiel)	l'embryon se développe/croît/grandit ; embryon en développement ; évolution de l'embryon ; évoluer vers un embryon ; etc. potentialité d'embryon humain ; potentiel de l'embryon ; etc.
Stades de développement	pré-embryon ; embryon de quelques cellules ; embryon au stade blastula ; etc.
Composantes de l'embryon	morphologie de l'embryon ; feuillet primitifs de l'embryon ; gènes et protéines de l'embryon ; etc.
État de santé de l'embryon	embryon porteur d'une anomalie génique ; embryon porteur de trisomie ; embryon (non-)viable ; embryon non sain ; embryon en parfaite santé ; etc.
Rapport avec l'organisme maternel	porter l'embryon ; nourrir l'embryon ; embryon dissocié de sa mère ; etc.

Cycle naissance-vie-mort	émergence in vitro de l'embryon ; naissance d'un embryon ; mort de l'embryon ; dépérissement d'embryons non transplantés ; etc.
Humanité	embryon humain ; humanisation de l'embryon ; personnalité de l'embryon ; etc.
Autres	souffrance possible de l'embryon ; embryon lambda ; embryon esquisse de faibles mouvements ; embryon pouvait commencer une existence autonome ; etc.
<b>Action humaine liée à l'embryon</b>	
Embryon comme résultat de l'action humaine	embryon issu d'une fécondation in vitro ; embryon issu de la PMA ; embryon en surnombre ; embryon de bonne/mauvaise qualité ; etc.
Utilisation (et instrumentalisation, chosification)	utilisation de l'embryon ; instrumentalisation de l'embryon ; traiter l'embryon comme un objet ; réification de l'embryon ; etc.
Pouvoir sur l'embryon	exploitation de l'embryon ; rapport de toute puissance sur l'embryon ; disposer d'embryons ; etc.
Divers traitements	manipulation de l'embryon ; congélation des embryons ; agir sur l'embryon ; embryon transgénique ; etc.
Conception	création d'un embryon ; fabriquer des embryons ; clonage d'embryons ; etc.
Transfert d'embryon (et implantation)	embryon non transféré ; transplanter des embryons ; etc.
Sélection	sélectionner les embryons ; tri des embryons ; améliorer les embryons ; etc.
Destruction	tuer un embryon ; avortement des embryons ; réduction d'un embryon ; suppression d'un embryon ; etc.
Abandon, don et accueil	don d'embryons ; accueillir l'embryon ; adoption d'embryon ; etc.
Stockage	conserver les embryons ; récupérer l'embryon ; banque d'embryons ; etc.
Commercialisation	utilisation commerciale d'embryons ; marché noir d'embryons ; rentabiliser les embryons ; etc.
Point de vue juridique (et statut de l'embryon)	respect de l'embryon humain ; protéger l'embryon ; statut juridique de l'embryon ; intérêts de l'embryon ; etc.
Avenir de l'embryon	destinée de l'embryon ; devenir de l'embryon ; embryon voué à la destruction ; destination des embryons ; embryons sans avenir ; etc.
Recherche	recherche sur l'embryon ; expérimentation sur l'embryon ; étudier l'embryon ; observer l'embryon ; faire subir des tests à l'embryon ; embryon transformé en cobaye ; embryon dédié à la recherche ; invention relative à l'embryon humain ; etc.

Les exemples du Tableau 1 sont, dans la majorité des cas, des simplifications à partir d'expressions plus complexes. En effet, pour pouvoir rendre compte de la combinatoire lexicale d'*embryon*, nous avons considéré nécessaire d'opérer plusieurs simplifications. Ainsi, comme nous l'avons déjà précisé à la fin de la présentation du corpus, les occurrences impliquant plusieurs formes de combinatoire syntaxique parmi celles définies en § 1.2 ont donné lieu à plusieurs associations lexicales. C'est le cas des exemples (1) ci-dessous, à partir desquels nous avons retenu : *création d'embryons* (catégorie conception) ; *embryons non destinés à transplantation immédiate* (avenir) ; *recherches sur embryon* (recherche) ; *embryon humain* (humanité) ; *embryon vivant* (cycle naissance-vie-mort) ; *embryon bénéficie du respect* (point de vue juridique) ; etc. Nous simplifions également la formulation de cette combinatoire là où c'est possible : omission de l'article, utilisation du singulier ou utilisation de l'infinitif, par exemple. Les expressions figées ou locutions sont prises comme un tout, comme dans le cas de « esquisser de faibles mouvements » et « réduire à un objet » en (2). Nous faisons abstraction de la modalisation qui porte sur les associations lexicales, par exemple « reconnus », « incapables » et « possible » en (3).

- 1a. création d'embryons non destinés à une transplantation immédiate
- 1b. recherches entreprises sur un embryon humain vivant
- 1c. embryon humain doit bénéficier du respect lié à sa qualité
- 2a. embryon esquisse de faibles mouvements
- 2c. réduction de l'embryon à un objet
- 3a. embryons reconnus triploïdes à la fécondation
- 3b. embryons incapables de parvenir normalement au stade blastocyste
- 3c. souffrance possible de l'embryon
- 4a. différenciation des cellules de l'embryon précoce
- 4b. différenciation tissulaire de l'embryon in vitro

Parfois il n'est pas facile de trancher sur l'association à retenir : dans l'exemple (4a), on peut hésiter entre « cellules » et « différenciation (des cellules) », avec une préférence pour « cellules » ; en revanche, en (4b), l'association est clairement « différenciation (tissulaire) », ce qui peut nous amener à reconsidérer le traitement de (4a). Nous voyons donc que l'extraction de la



combinatoire ne s'est pas faite sans difficultés et hésitations, tout comme le regroupement par catégories thématiques n'a pas été facile parfois et pourrait être encore affiné.

Pour clore cette section sur la combinatoire du lexème *embryon* dans les discours de la bioéthique, nous apportons quelques précisions sur les choix de collecte. Lors de l'extraction des occurrences d'*embryon* du corpus à l'aide de AntConc, nous n'avons pas pris en compte les anaphores pronominales coréférentes du mot *embryon* (*il, ils, son, ses, leur, ce, qui, dont, en, etc.*), considérant que les associations lexicales impliquant les pronoms anaphoriques se retrouvent très probablement dans le corpus mises en rapport directement avec le nom *embryon*. Nous n'avons pas pris en compte les occurrences de l'adjectif *embryonnaire* non plus, pour la même raison : la plupart des associations avec *embryonnaire* se manifestent dans le corpus avec *embryon*. Le nombre d'occurrences du mot *embryon* dans nos deux sous-corpus était suffisamment grand (2 346 et 5 156) pour disposer d'une vision précise de la combinatoire lexicale du mot et même de la fréquence de cette combinatoire, si nous avons décidé de la prendre en compte.

## 2. Approche dynamique du sens : associations argumentatives et profilage sémantique

Nous voyons dans la combinatoire lexicale du mot *embryon* un indice ou un marqueur des représentations attachées à ce mot (dans la langue et chez les locuteurs). Ainsi, pour nous, la combinatoire est intéressante dans la mesure où elle ouvre vers l'analyse des représentations sémantiques. Nous avons cherché, donc, dans un premier temps, à identifier les mots avec lesquels *embryon* se combine et les structures où il intervient (voir § 1), pour analyser ensuite, dans un deuxième temps, cette combinatoire à l'aide de modèles dynamiques de description du sens. Cette section de l'article est consacrée à l'approche théorique et aux concepts qui seront employés au moment de l'analyse.

Pour mener cette étude, nous mobilisons plusieurs théories et concepts sémantiques qui ont en commun de proposer une approche dynamique de la signification. Le cadre théorique principal pour aborder la signification linguistique et les mécanismes à l'œuvre en discours nous est fourni par la

sémantique des possibles argumentatifs (SPA) développée par Olga Galatanu (cf. 2018, 2022).

Dans l'approche de la SPA, la signification lexicale articule tout à la fois une *dimension descriptive* (ou un ancrage dénotatif), une *orientation argumentative* et une *charge axiologique* (ou, plus généralement, modale). Cette triple nature de la signification postulée par la SPA la rapproche de plusieurs autres visions théoriques, avec lesquelles elle est dans un rapport de filiation : la vision référentialiste ou descriptiviste, représentée notamment par Georges Kleiber, selon laquelle les mots servent à rendre compte du monde, en lien avec l'expérience des locuteurs ; la vision opposée, ascriptiviste, représentée par Jean-Claude Anscombe et Oswald Ducrot, et plus récemment par Marion Carel, selon laquelle seules les visées argumentatives des mots et des énoncés comptent ; et la vision du philosophe Hilary Putnam, qui emploie le terme de stéréotype pour rendre compte de l'ensemble des propriétés qu'un mot attribue à son référent (Galatanu 2022 : 103–105). Ce qui justifie des filiations aussi différentes, c'est l'objectif que se donne la SPA de rendre compte, d'une part, de la dimension expérientielle et culturelle des significations linguistiques et, d'autre part, du fonctionnement discursif du sens – qui est mis en lien avec le potentiel de signification stabilisé en langue. Ainsi, le modèle de description de la signification lexicale de la SPA est encyclopédique, holistique, associatif et stratifié. Il se situe, d'une part, à l'interface sémantique/pragmatique et, d'autre part, à l'interface langue/discours.

La configuration de la signification selon ce modèle est stratifiée : d'abord, au centre de cette configuration, il y a le *noyau de signification*, formé d'un nombre réduit d'éléments essentiels pour la signification du mot ; ensuite, ancrés dans le noyau et en grand nombre, il y a les *stéréotypes*, qui rendent compte de toute la complexité de la signification ; enfin, la troisième couche de la signification est celle qui constitue le potentiel de signification proprement dit, décrit en termes de *possibles argumentatifs*. À ces trois strates qui relèvent de la signification en langue – signification appréhendable inévitablement en tant que construit du linguiste – s'ajoute une quatrième strate qui relève du sens discursif : la strate des *déploiements argumentatifs* (*id est* les déploiements en discours du potentiel de signification), à laquelle s'ajoutent encore les *déploiements discursifs* inédits, proposés par le discours, qui viennent enrichir

la signification, contribuant ainsi au cinétisme de la signification du mot. La triple nature de la signification (descriptive, argumentative et modale) traverse toutes les strates de signification. Le noyau, les stéréotypes, les possibles argumentatifs (PA) et les déploiements argumentatifs et discursifs (DA et DD) sont représentés sous forme d'associations entre des éléments sémantiques : par exemple, en schématisant,  $n_1 \rightarrow n_2$  (pour le noyau) ;  $n_1 \rightarrow st_1$ ,  $n_1 \rightarrow st_2$ ,  $n_2 \rightarrow st_3$ , etc. (pour les stéréotypes) ;  $mot \rightarrow n_1$ ,  $mot \rightarrow st_1$ ,  $mot \rightarrow st_2$ , etc. (pour les PA, DA et DD). Un schéma de cette configuration stratifiée est disponible dans Galatanu (2018 : 260).

La SPA nous est utile pour circonscrire le potentiel de signification du lexème *embryon* (potentiel représenté donc en termes de PA), ainsi que l'activation ou l'absence d'activation de ce potentiel à chaque utilisation discursive du lexème (représentées en termes de DA et DD). Cette théorie nous permet donc d'aborder les représentations sémantiques attachées au lexème auquel nous nous intéressons et la manière dont un sens ou un autre se manifeste à chaque occurrence discursive. Les analyses qui exploitent la SPA traitent d'un lexème donné en se focalisant sur les associations que ce lexème déclenche ; par exemple l'association argumentative « *embryon* → congélation » (dans le cas des syntagmes *embryon congelé* ou *congeler des embryons*) ou « *humain/Homme* → *embryon* » (dans le cas du syntagme *embryon humain*). Il est important de préciser que ces associations ont une orientation, qui est motivée par l'existence d'un « lien naturel » de type cause-effet, phénomène-symptôme, intention-moyen, etc. et qui, conformément au principe argumentatif des sémantiques argumentatives, s'exprime à l'aide des connecteurs abstraits DONC et POURTANT : « *embryon* DONC/POURTANT<sup>4</sup>

4 Le connecteur DONC marque une association argumentative normative, autrement dit une association qui correspond à la norme et qui suit les représentations généralement admises. Dans le cas de la bioéthique, domaine où les représentations sont en évolution constante, l'utilisation du connecteur (DONC ou POURTANT) est parfois discutable et l'on peut considérer que les deux formes coexistent. Dans ce cas, l'association « *embryon* DONC congélation » conçoit l'*embryon* comme étant de nature à être congelé, tandis que l'association « *embryon* POURTANT congélation » conçoit cette possibilité comme transgressive à ce qui est généralement admis (et ce qui est admis serait alors « *embryon* DONC nég-congélation »). Si DONC semble s'imposer pour cette association entre *embryon* et congélation, POURTANT reste toutefois possible et témoigne d'une représentation totalement différente de l'*embryon*. En

congélation », « humain DONC embryon ». Puisque les associations sont orientées, l'analyse s'intéresse avant tout à l'activation d'une association parmi d'autres possibles, activation qui est traitée en termes de DA et de DD. Un syntagme comme *embryon congelé* est donc traité en SPA en constatant qu'il active une certaine partie du potentiel de signification du mot *embryon*, mais sans expliquer comment fonctionne l'interdétermination entre les mots constitutifs du syntagme (*embryon* et *congelé*).

C'est pourquoi, pour rendre compte de la combinatoire du lexème *embryon* et de l'interdétermination des lexèmes au sein de syntagmes, nous ferons appel aux fonctions d'évocation et de convocation définies par Victorri et Fuchs (1996 : § 9.3) et à la notion de profilage utilisée par Cadiot et Visetti (2001a et b) – concepts que nous définirons brièvement dans ce qui suit. Ce qui nous autorise à greffer ces concepts sur une analyse utilisant le modèle de la SPA, c'est le fait qu'ils relèvent, tout comme la SPA, d'une conception dynamique des phénomènes sémantiques. Aussi bien le processus d'évocation-convocation que la notion de profilage sont compatibles avec l'existence d'un potentiel de signification et avec l'idée de l'activation discursive d'une partie de ce potentiel pour une occurrence donnée.

S'intéressant particulièrement aux questions que pose la polysémie, Victorri et ses collaborateurs conçoivent chaque unité linguistique dans sa double capacité à *évoquer* des éléments de signification qui lui sont propres et à *convoquer* des éléments nécessaires pour construire la « scène verbale ». Le processus de convocation-évocation permet de décrire la manière dont le sens est activé en discours, en tenant compte du sémantisme des différents lexèmes cooccurrents, selon un principe de compositionnalité bien spécifique : « Pour décrire le comportement sémantique d'une unité, il faut donc pouvoir spécifier les éléments avec lesquels elle entre en interaction, qui influencent son pouvoir d'évocation et qu'elle influence en retour dans un même mouvement. Nous appelons cela le processus de *convocation-*

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adoptant la terminologie de Victorri, nous pouvons dire que les deux connecteurs créent des « scènes verbales » différentes. Malheureusement, l'étendue de cet article ne nous permet pas de mener une analyse fine de ces situations où on peut avoir une vision soit en DONC soit POURTANT, car le grand nombre d'occurrences que nous traitons nous contraint à en simplifier l'analyse.

*évocation* : chaque unité convoque des éléments de scène verbale et évoque à son tour de nouveaux éléments. » (Victorri 1997 : 54).

L'approche adoptée par Victorri est cognitiviste et gestaltiste, car, d'une part, les interlocuteurs construisent ensemble dans leur activité langagière une scène intersubjective, appelée « scène verbale »<sup>5</sup>, et d'autre part, les éléments constitutifs des syntagmes et des énoncés sont incomplets et interagissent entre eux pour stabiliser une scène<sup>6</sup>. Ainsi ces linguistes parlent-ils de « compositionnalité gestaltiste » (Victorri & Fuchs 1996 : § 8.3 ; voir aussi Col 2022 : 145).

En reprenant l'exemple de l'embryon congelé mentionné *supra* et en suivant la démarche de Victorri et ses collaborateurs, nous pouvons dire que l'adjectif « congelé » *convoque* (1) une entité particulière, (2) une propriété non essentielle de cette entité permettant une action spécifique réalisée par quelqu'un, (3) une classe d'entités capables de faire l'objet de cette action spécifique ; en même temps, l'adjectif « congelé » *évoque* notamment des températures en dessous de 0°C et la conservation en vue d'une utilisation ultérieure.

Ainsi, en articulant SPA (*cf.* Galatanu) et compositionnalité gestaltiste (*cf.* Victorri *et al.*) pour rendre compte de la signification du syntagme *embryon congelé*, nous disposons 1) du DA « embryon DONC congélation » qui met en relief l'activation d'une association stéréotypique présentant l'embryon comme pouvant être congelé, mais aussi 2) des éléments que le lexème *congélation* convoque sur la scène verbale en interagissant avec *embryon*, à savoir : 'potentiel préservé' et 'développement stoppé/inhibé' voire 'matériau biologique' (puisque par la congélation, on conserve et on fige, en maintenant dans un même état).

En ajoutant à cela la notion de profil, nous disposons également 3) d'un profilage sémantique particulier pour *embryon*, qui reflète tout simplement les éléments évoqués par *embryon* et convoqués par le lexème cooccurrent

5 « (...) l'activité de langage consiste à construire un espace cognitif d'un type bien particulier, un *champ intersubjectif* partagé par les interlocuteurs. (...) *Dire quelque chose*, c'est ajouter un élément à la scène intersubjective (...) » (Victorri 1997).

6 Les unités linguistiques, aussi bien les unités lexicales et grammaticales, « sont toutes 'incomplètes', en ce que chacune dépend du co-texte et de la situation d'énonciation pour jouer leur rôle d'évocation » (Victorri 1997).

*congélation* ('matériau biologique', 'potentiel préservé', 'développement bloqué' et 'utilisation ultérieure') – éléments qui vont de pair avec l'association argumentative « *embryon DONC congélation* ». La notion de profil définie par Cadiot et Visetti (2001) nous intéresse dans la mesure où on peut la situer au niveau des PA, où elle sélectionne certaines orientations parmi la multitude des orientations possibles, réduisant ainsi l'éventail des associations possibles.

En fait, Cadiot et Visetti proposent, eux aussi, comme Galatanu, une vision stratifiée de la signification, qu'ils organisent en motif, profils et thèmes – le motif étant la strate qui se rapproche de la strate des PA (*id est* du potentiel de signification) chez Galatanu. Ainsi, Cadiot et Visetti conçoivent « les *motifs linguistiques* comme des germes de signification chaotiques et/ou instables, et le *profilage* comme un système, déjà frayé et enregistré en lexique et en grammaire, de parcours de stabilisations différentielles pour des lexèmes en interdéfinition » (2001b : 6). Le profilage est à situer donc à un niveau prédiscursif. Or, notre étude porte sur les syntagmes relevés dans le corpus, considérés indépendamment de leurs contextes d'occurrence, donc saisis en réalité au niveau prédiscursif<sup>7</sup>. C'est pourquoi nous choisissons de parler de « profilage » lorsque nous explorerons la combinatoire lexicale et syntagmatique du mot *embryon*, même si, par ailleurs, pour identifier un profilage donné, nous passerons par le « processus de convocation-évocation » décrit par Visetti *et al.*

7 Pour cette raison, nous hésitons entre utiliser le terme DA/DD ou PA et, dans la partie d'analyse, le terme 'association argumentative' nous permettra d'éviter de trancher sur cette question. Les PA et les DA/DD sont des associations de nature identique (les deux enchaînent sur le mot lui-même, par exemple, dans notre cas, « *embryon DONC stades de développement* »), mais les PA relèvent de la signification en langue et sont des associations possibles parmi d'autres, alors que les DA/DD relèvent du sens discursif et correspondent à l'activation d'un PA en discours. Dans notre cas, s'agissant de syntagmes que nous extrayons de leur contexte, nous nous situons dans un espace intermédiaire entre langue et discours, et pour cette raison les PA seraient peut-être plus adaptés. Mais, d'un autre côté, les associations identifiées à partir des syntagmes peuvent être inédites, nouvelles, non inscrites dans la langue, autrement dit des DD, comme c'est le cas pour « *embryon DONC invention* » (*invention relative à l'embryon*). Nous ne pouvons pas dire que cette association fasse partie de la signification conventionnelle du mot *embryon* et, donc, pour ce syntagme, l'utilisation DD serait plus appropriée que PA.

Dans notre analyse, lorsque nous examinerons la combinatoire lexicale d'*embryon*, nous chercherons à identifier d'abord les DA d'*embryon*, ensuite son profilage qui s'opère par le processus de convocation-évocation du fait même de ces DA. La question qui nous guidera sera : Comment le lexème *embryon* est-il profilé dans un syntagme donné de par l'activation même d'une association particulière (*id est* de par le DA mobilisé par le syntagme) ? Cette question sous-entend que l'association argumentative à l'œuvre dans le syntagme (ou le DA) ne représente pas à elle seule le profilage d'*embryon*. Nous illustrerons cela dans la section d'analyse.

Avant de passer à la section suivante, nous voudrions rappeler que nous nous intéressons à la combinatoire lexicale sans pour autant adopter la vision des études sur les collocations, donc sans tenir compte de la fréquence des combinaisons lexicales. La combinatoire du mot *embryon* nous sert de base pour analyser les représentations inscrites dans le discours de la bioéthique – et par conséquent dans la langue, puisque nous explorerons des syntagmes indépendamment de leurs contextes, à un niveau prédiscursif.

### 3. L'embryon du point de vue des représentations sémantiques

Dans cette section dédiée à l'analyse du profilage du sens dans les syntagmes contenant *embryon*, nous commencerons par proposer une description sémantique de la signification du mot *embryon* selon le modèle de la SPA. Nous reviendrons ensuite sur la variété de la combinatoire lexicale de ce mot, en adoptant cette fois une perspective comparative sur les deux sous-corpus. Enfin, la partie la plus importante de cette section portera sur l'illustration du profilage du sens d'*embryon* en fonction de chaque syntagme où il apparaît, illustration qui prendra comme repère l'esquisse de la signification du mot *embryon* par laquelle nous commençons dans ce qui suit.

#### 3.1. Le potentiel de signification du mot *embryon*

Le terme *embryon* recouvre plusieurs stades de développement d'un œuf (un zygote) qui se segmente, jusqu'à ce que cet organisme commence à présenter des caractères distinctifs de son espèce (*cf.* Miklavcic & Flaman 2017). Certains de ces stades de développement, comme *blastula* et *gastrula*, sont mentionnés dans *Le Grand Robert*. De plus, tous les dictionnaires consultés mentionnent

la durée de huit semaines après laquelle cet organisme est considéré un fœtus. Les mots *embryon* et *fœtus* sont à considérer l'un par rapport à l'autre (Biggers 1990) : *fœtus* est décrit d'abord dans les dictionnaires comme une continuation d'*embryon* et, ensuite, par la présence des caractères distinctifs de l'espèce – une distinction qui n'a pas de conséquences sur les stéréotypes, puisque les deux mots désignent des organismes en développement.

Dans la Figure 1, nous proposons une description du mot *embryon* selon le modèle de la SPA, en nous basant sur les articles des dictionnaires pour ce mot (les dictionnaires utilisés sont *Le Grand Robert*, le *Larousse*, le *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé* et le *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*). À gauche sont organisés les éléments stables de la signification, constitutifs du noyau, et à droite, les stéréotypes, qui sont un ensemble ouvert d'associations culturellement établies, que la figure ne fait qu'esquisser.

Noyau	Stéréotypes
Œuf	→ conception, formation → organisme maternel → grossesse
DONC	
organisme en développement	→ segmentation → différenciation des tissus → stades du développement → jeune → état enclos, intra-utérin → nég-vie libre → nég-organes → durée de 8 semaines → embryogenèse → nourri par l'organisme maternel

Figure 1. Le noyau et les stéréotypes d'*embryon* construits à partir des dictionnaires.

Dans cette description, les éléments du noyau « œuf DONC organisme en développement » mettent en avant l'œuf fécondé qui en soi est un organisme en développement et qui parcourt des stades de développement successifs. Au niveau des stéréotypes, « œuf » est prolongé surtout par *conception* et *formation*, éventuellement aussi par *création*. Quant à l'élément nucléaire « organisme en développement », il oriente vers des stéréotypes variés qui



sont liés à la division cellulaire, aux stades (premiers) de développement, à l'âge de l'organisme et à sa dépendance de l'organisme maternel.

Comme des exemples de la combinatoire du mot *embryon*, on note dans *Le Grand Robert* et le *Trésor de la langue française* des syntagmes liés au développement (*développement de l'embryon*, *formation de l'embryon*), aux étapes assignées à ce développement (*à l'état d'embryon*, *stades du développement de l'embryon*, *stades embryonnaires*), à d'autres faits biologiques (*embryon fécondé*, *membranes de l'embryon*, *embryon humains*) et un syntagme lié à la recherche (*études expérimentales sur des embryons*). Les dictionnaires accordent beaucoup de place aussi au sens figuré du mot.

### 3.2. Les syntagmes où apparaît le mot *embryon*

La combinatoire du lexème *embryon* a déjà fait l'objet des sections 1.2 et 1.3, où nous avons donné une vue d'ensemble des syntagmes présents dans le corpus. Dans ces sections, nous avons présenté les syntagmes sans faire de distinction entre les deux sous-corpus. Toutefois, l'identification des syntagmes et leur classification thématique ont été menées séparément pour chaque sous-corpus, ce qui nous permet d'offrir une comparaison entre les avis du CCNE et le débat en ligne durant les États généraux de la bioéthique.

Pour rappel, nous avons créé une vingtaine de catégories thématiques, dont certaines sont axées sur l'activité de l'embryon et ses caractéristiques, et d'autres sont axées sur l'activité humaine en lien avec l'embryon :

- *Caractéristiques et activité de l'embryon* :  
Nature de l'embryon ; Développement (et potentiel) ; Stades de développement ; Composantes de l'embryon ; État de santé de l'embryon ; Rapport avec l'organisme maternel ; Cycle naissance-vie-mort ; Humanité ; Autres ;
- *Action humaine liée à l'embryon* :  
Embryon comme résultat de l'action humaine ; Utilisation (et instrumentalisation, chosification) ; Pouvoir sur l'embryon ; Divers traitements ; Conception ; Transfert d'embryon (et implantation) ; Sélection ; Destruction ; Abandon, don et accueil ; Stockage ; Commercialisation ; Point de vue juridique (et statut de l'embryon) ; Avenir de l'embryon ; Recherche.

En comparant les deux sous-corpus, nous constatons que les syntagmes identifiés dans plusieurs catégories comme dans Développement, Humanité, Conception, Stockage et Point de vue juridique sont relativement similaires.

Les différences entre les corpus proviennent surtout du genre – les avis émis par le CCNE sont publics, institutionnels et visent à informer des instances politiques et médicales, alors que les commentaires dans la consultation citoyenne sont plus personnels et émotionnels. Par exemple, dans les commentaires des internautes, on relève des expressions comme *bricoler des embryons*, *s'acharner sur l'embryon*, *dépecer l'embryon*, *embryon transformé en cobaye* – qui dénotent une forte charge subjective. La dimension affective des commentaires est négative dans la quasi-totalité des cas et se voit surtout dans les catégories Pouvoir sur l'embryon (*dominer/exploiter l'embryon*), Divers traitements (*dégrader l'embryon* ; *tripatouillage sur l'embryon*), Destruction (*génocide des embryons* ; *sacrifier des embryons*) et Recherche (*faire subir des tests à l'embryon* ; *recherche destructive de l'embryon*).

À l'opposé, les syntagmes trouvés dans les avis mobilisent, dans certaines catégories, un vocabulaire scientifique et technique, comme dans Stades de développement (*embryon au stade morula* ; *embryon au stade de 8 cellules*), Composantes de l'embryon (*morphologie de l'embryon* ; *feuillet primitifs de l'embryon* – catégorie pour laquelle nous n'avons pas trouvé de syntagmes dans les commentaires en ligne) et Divers traitements (*vivisection des embryons* ; *diagnostic sur l'embryon*).

Même si notre objectif n'est pas comparatif et même si dans la suite de l'article nous ne pouvons traiter qu'un petit nombre des syntagmes répertoriés, une perspective contrastive entre les deux corpus nous semble intéressante, car elle éclaire la diversité des associations lexicales envisageables pour les discours de la bioéthique et, en même temps, laisse entrevoir les différences que présenteraient d'autres types de corpus, par exemple des corpus produits par des communautés religieuses ou par une communauté adhérant à la vision transhumaniste.

### 3.3. Le profilage du sens du mot *embryon* d'un syntagme à l'autre

Prenons maintenant quelques exemples de combinatoire lexicale pour les analyser en termes de DA/DD (que nous désignerons à l'aide du terme plus général 'association argumentative') et en termes de profilage – en lien avec le processus de convocation-évocation à l'œuvre dans la compositionnalité gestaltiste du sens. Dans les exemples ci-dessous, nous avons volontairement choisi des combinaisons diverses aussi bien de point de vue syntaxique que lexical.

Dans l'exemple (5) nous avons l'activation de l'association argumentative « *embryon* DONC protection », qui va de pair avec un profilage particulier du sens du mot *embryon* : celui-ci est profilé comme étant « fragile » et « vulnérable ». En (6), l'association « *embryon* DONC utilisation » s'accompagne d'un profilage où l'*embryon* est vu comme « matériau » ou « objet » ; et en (7) l'association « *embryon* DONC congélation » s'accompagne d'un profilage du sens où le « matériau biologique », le « développement », le « potentiel » et l'« utilisation » sont les plus saillants, car la congélation vise à conserver pour une utilisation ultérieure et, ce faisant, elle bloque le développement en cours. En (8a), le syntagme *embryon surnuméraire* active l'association « *embryon* DONC surnombre » et le profilage qui s'opère présente l'*embryon* comme le « résultat de fécondation in vitro » (car un *embryon* surnuméraire est forcément issu de la FIV), comme un « élément faisant partie d'un ensemble plus grand d'éléments identiques » et comme « non nécessaire », voire « inutile ». Parmi les éléments de ce profil, c'est le deuxième qui acquiert le plus de saillance en (8b). Avec l'exemple (9) nous avons la présentation transgressive d'une association entre l'*embryon* et l'utérus : « *embryon* POURTANT hors utérus » ; l'association normative, généralement admise, présente l'*embryon* comme étant dépendant de l'utérus de la mère. Le profil du sens d'*embryon* dans ce cas est le même pour les deux formes, normative et transgressive : « lien avec l'organisme maternel ».

5. protéger l'*embryon*

6. utilisation de l'*embryon*

7. *embryon* congelé

8a. *embryon* surnuméraire

8b. recenser les *embryons* surnuméraires

9. *embryon* hors utérus

Ce que nous cherchons à montrer avec ces exemples, c'est qu'en plus des associations argumentatives mobilisées par les syntagmes (à savoir « protection », « utilisation », « congélation »...), il y a également une activation d'autres associations, sous-jacentes, qui correspondent au profilage du sens : « fragilité, vulnérabilité », « matériau, objet », « utilisation », « résultat de FIV », « inutilité »... Ainsi, c'est en regardant l'ensemble de ces associations (celles que nous décrivons en termes de DA/DD et celles que nous décrivons en termes de profilage) que nous pouvons rendre compte de la représentation de l'embryon selon les discours de la bioéthique. Nous y reviendrons plus bas.

Les syntagmes en (5–9) sont simples ou simplifiés volontairement. Il y a aussi des exemples plus complexes, qui résistent à la simplification et qu'il faut prendre comme tels pour éviter qu'ils ne soient incomplets (10–12). En (10), nous identifions deux associations argumentatives : « embryon DONC axe de symétrie » et « embryon DONC acquisition » ; et les profilages correspondants sont, respectivement, « composantes/morphologie » et « développement/évolution ». De même, en (11), nous avons deux associations argumentatives : « embryon DONC cellules » et « embryon DONC extraction », qui amènent comme profilage « vie » et « composantes », d'une part, et « source (de cellules) » d'autre part. Enfin, dans l'exemple (12), nous identifions les associations « embryon POURTANT incapacité » (qui active dans le profil de sens l'élément « potentiel ») et « embryon DONC stade blastocyste » (qui s'accompagne du profil « développement/évolution »). L'idée du verbe *parvenir* se retrouve dans les deux associations à la fois, renvoyant aussi bien au potentiel qu'à l'évolution.

10. l'embryon acquiert un axe de symétrie

11. extraire à partir d'un embryon (humain) les cellules (embryonnaires)

12. embryon incapable de parvenir au stade blastocyste

Avec l'exemple (13) ci-dessous, *embryon* est à la fois le point de départ de l'association argumentative « embryon DONC résultat de FIV » et le point d'arrivée d'une autre association fondée sur le lien cause-effet : « FIV DONC embryon ». Seule la première association nous intéresse pour traiter de la représentation de l'embryon, tandis que la deuxième est une association spécifique à la signification du mot *fécondation*. Il en va de même pour (14).

En revanche, la situation est différente en (15), bien que syntaxiquement la structure soit la même. Dans cet exemple, le diagnostic, en tant que cause, n'a pas comme effet l'existence de l'embryon (il ne s'agit donc pas de « diagnostic DONC embryon »), mais l'effet est la disponibilité de l'embryon une fois que le diagnostic a arrêté son développement (« diagnostic DONC embryon disponible »). L'association à retenir mobilisée par ce syntagme est alors « embryon DONC diagnostic », qui amène comme profil du sens des éléments comme « morphologie » et « état de santé ». Une autre association, liée à l'adjectif *issu*, est « embryon DONC origine/source », s'accompagnant du profilage de l'embryon en tant qu'entité qui « existe », qui est là, puisqu'elle a une origine (cela est fortement lié à l'idée de « disponibilité » des embryons, idée qui se manifeste dans les deux sous-corpus sous la forme de syntagmes variés). De manière métaphorique, l'idée de source est aussi mobilisée dans l'exemple (16).

- 13. embryon résultant d'une fécondation in vitro
- 14. embryon issu de la fusion des gamètes
- 15. embryon issu de diagnostic pré-implantatoire
- 16. fontaine à embryons [en parlant de la PMA]

D'autres emplois métaphoriques apparaissent dans notre corpus, notamment ceux de (17) et (18), que nous traitons de la même manière que les emplois non métaphoriques. En (17), l'association activée est « embryon DONC mosaïque », qui rend saillant dans le sens d'*embryon* le fait qu'il est formé d'ADN ou de gènes ; en (18), l'association est « embryon DONC donneur », avec un profilage qui conçoit l'embryon comme possédant des parties constitutives.

- 17. embryon mosaïque
- 18. embryon donneur (de noyau)

Nous fermons cette liste d'exemples avec deux syntagmes contradictoires, qui évoquent pourtant la même association argumentative (19–20). Ces exemples nous permettent d'aborder la question de la modalité comme élément constitutif du potentiel de signification du mot *embryon*.

19. vocation des embryons à naître

20. embryons sans avenir

Puisque l'embryon est un premier développement d'un enfant à naître, les syntagmes présentent parfois cet avenir comme étant éventuel. Les syntagmes (19) et (20) pris des avis de CCNE convoquent la même scène qui est pourtant abordée de manières différentes. Avec le DA du premier syntagme, on peut voir qu'il active un potentiel stable de la signification, « embryon DONC vocation à naître », qui renforce la modalité aléthique nécessaire ('devoir être p'). Le deuxième syntagme fait apparaître le DA « embryon POURTANT nég-avenir » qui active également la modalité aléthique, montrant le caractère contingent de l'avenir de l'embryon ('ne pas devoir être p'). Les deux DA sont des prolongements de l'élément du noyau « organisme en développement ». Ce qu'ils convoquent est l'avenir de l'embryon – que ce soit sa naissance inévitable ou un autre avenir indéfini. L'embryon est donc profilé comme ayant un « avenir », et par rapport à sa « naissance potentielle ».

Revenons maintenant à la double activation d'associations relevant du DA et d'associations relevant du profilage – distinction entre les deux sortes d'association qui nous appartient. Notre interprétation sémantique d'un syntagme tel *embryon congelé*, c'est de dire que dans ce syntagme, il n'y a pas uniquement une activation du potentiel argumentatif du mot *embryon* (activation qui est visible dans l'association argumentative « ... DONC congélation »), mais en plus, il y a aussi un profilage particulier du sens d'*embryon* qui se fait ; et le profilage se fait précisément parce que cette partie donnée du potentiel de signification est activée. Autrement dit, pour nous, le profilage est lié à l'activation d'une partie donnée du potentiel de signification du mot *embryon*. En réalité, le DA (dans ce cas « embryon DONC congélation ») est lui-même constitutif du profil sémantique d'embryon ; toutefois, pour les besoins de notre analyse, nous avons besoin de faire la distinction entre DA et profil. Nous expliquerons dans ce qui suit pourquoi la distinction nous est utile.

Dans le modèle théorique de la SPA, on s'intéresse aux associations argumentatives qui, toutes réunies, constituent le potentiel de signification des mots. Ces associations relèvent à la fois de la dimension expérientielle du lexique et donc des connaissances encyclopédiques des locuteurs, de

la dimension argumentative et évaluative, et de la dimension culturelle et fluctuante des représentations. La strate des stéréotypes joue un rôle clé dans la représentation du potentiel de signification, car hormis le noyau qui est constitué d'un nombre réduit d'éléments stables, ce sont les stéréotypes qui permettent de saisir toute l'étendue et la malléabilité de la signification. Dans la vision première de la SPA, les stéréotypes sont vus comme un nuage gravitant autour du noyau – un nuage qui s'organise en faisceaux de stéréotypes (car certains stéréotypes renvoient à la même idée et peuvent être regroupés de ce fait) mais où toutes les associations stéréotypiques sont traitées à égalité. Or, ce que montre notre analyse de la combinatoire du mot *embryon*, c'est que certaines associations sont plus éloignées du noyau que d'autres. Et c'est pour cette raison que nous traitons les DD à part, sans les inclure dans le profilage (alors même qu'ils en font partie, puisque dans l'esprit de la SPA, aussi bien les associations activées sous forme de DD que celles dont nous nous servons pour rendre compte du profilage du sens selon chaque syntagme relèvent de la même strate des stéréotypes et sont traitées à égalité).

Ainsi, nous faisons une différence entre les associations selon qu'elles sont plus ou moins directement rattachées au noyau. Les notions d'« intrinsèque et extrinsèque » définies par Anscombe (1995) nous permettent de nuancer cette différence. Pour Anscombe (1995 : 126), le topos intrinsèque correspond à une explicitation d'un élément de la signification ; par exemple le 'pouvoir d'achat' dans le cas de l'adjectif *riche* (*Pierre est riche, il peut s'offrir n'importe quoi*), car dans l'enchaînement argumentatif « richesse DONC pouvoir d'achat », « le second membre se contente de 'mettre en mots' ce qui était déjà contenu dans le premier ». Quant au topos extrinsèque, il est de nature différente, comme le montre l'exemple *Pierre est riche, il est donc avare*, qui se traduit par l'enchaînement argumentatif « richesse DONC avarice ». « Les topoï extrinsèques peuvent n'être utilisables de façon convaincante qu'à l'intérieur d'une communauté plus ou moins réduite », précise Anscombe (*ibid.*). Avec « *embryon* DONC *cellules* », « *embryon* DONC *développement* » nous sommes plus près des éléments nucléaires 'œuf' et 'organisme en développement', car si on parle d'*embryon*, on invoque nécessairement ces aspects biologiques (*cf.* l'idée des topoï intrinsèques). En revanche, des associations telles « *embryon* DONC *protection* », « *embryon* DONC

congélation » ou « embryon DONC objet de recherche » sont plus éloignées du noyau, car elles ne sont pas nécessairement invoquées lorsqu'on utilise le mot *embryon* (cf. l'idée des *topoi* extrinsèques). En effet, pour ces dernières associations, nous devons imaginer un chemin argumentatif qui mène de 'œuf' et/ou 'organisme en développement' aux éléments associés : ce chemin passe par « fragilité, vulnérabilité » pour arriver à « protection » ; il passe par « matériau biologique » pour arriver à « congélation » ou « recherche ». D'ailleurs, ces dernières associations n'impliquent pas uniquement l'entité 'embryon', mais également un actant humain qui agit sur l'embryon.

Dans le Tableau 2, nous donnons une vue d'ensemble de quelques-uns des exemples discutés *supra*, afin de montrer, d'une part les DA (à gauche) et d'autre part les autres associations intervenant dans le profilage du sens.

**Tableau 2. DA et profilage du sens du mot *embryon*.**

Association argumentative (DA) embryon...	Profilage du sens d'embryon
... DONC protection	fragilité, vulnérabilité
... DONC utilisation	matériau, objet
... DONC congélation	potentiel, développent, matériau biologique, utilisation
... DONC surnombre	résultat de fécondation in vitro ; partie d'un ensemble plus grand d'éléments identiques ; non-nécessité
... POURTANT hors utérus	lien avec l'organisme maternel
... DONC axe de symétrie	composantes/morphologie
... DONC résultat d'une FIV	conception in vitro ; résultat de la volonté/de l'action humaine
... DONC diagnostic	morphologie, état de santé
... DONC origine/source	existence (être)
... DONC mosaïque	composantes, assemblage
... DONC donneur	composantes, possession
... DONC vocation à naître ... POURTANT nég-avenir	évolution, potentiel, existence

Bien entendu, comme nous le voyons dans ce tableau, une même association se manifeste tantôt au niveau du DA tantôt au niveau du profilage (par exemple, « utilisation »). D'ailleurs, notre inventaire des syntagmes comporte de nombreux cas où le syntagme active un DA du type « embryon DONC



évolution/développement/stades de développement », « embryon DONC conception (in vitro) », « embryon DONC composantes/cellules/axe de symétrie » – autrement dit, des associations qui émergent dans le profilage du sens dans les exemples analysés *supra*. Il nous semble néanmoins important de prendre en compte le profilage du mot *embryon*, en plus de l'association identifiée en tant que DA dans le syntagme, car c'est l'ensemble DA-profilage qui nous donne accès à la représentation de l'embryon dans le discours.

## Conclusion

Dans cet article, nous avons répertorié les syntagmes dans lesquels apparaît le mot *embryon*, que nous avons présentés du point de vue de la combinatoire syntaxique et sémantique. Ces syntagmes sont des simplifications de contextes syntaxiques plus complexes, car nous avons décomposé les syntagmes des occurrences qui étaient plus longs en plusieurs syntagmes. Par exemple, à partir de l'occurrence *ne transplanter que des embryons apparemment sans anomalies* nous avons retenu deux syntagmes : *transplanter des embryons* et *embryons sans anomalies*. Ce genre d'occurrence apparaît souvent dans les avis du CCNE et cela explique le fait que, même si les occurrences dans les avis sont deux fois moins nombreuses que dans le débat en ligne, les syntagmes identifiés dans ce sous-corpus sont finalement beaucoup plus nombreux que pour le débat en ligne. La fréquence des syntagmes dans le corpus n'a pas été prise en compte : collocations et hapax ont été mis au même plan, car nos objectifs dans cette étude sont purement qualitatifs.

Nous avons cherché à rendre compte de la combinatoire lexicale du mot *embryon* en tant qu'elle donne accès à la manière dont on se représente l'embryon dans les discours de la bioéthique. La comparaison des deux sous-corpus en § 3.2 nous permet de voir que dans les discours de la bioéthique les associations lexicales diffèrent d'un genre à l'autre (le genre institutionnel des avis vs. le débat en ligne sous forme de commentaires) et elles diffèrent très probablement d'une communauté à l'autre, en raison des idéologies partagées par chaque communauté (communauté des médecins, communauté religieuse, communauté transhumaniste, etc.). Par exemple, comme nous l'avons discuté dans l'analyse, la congélation des embryons peut être vue comme la norme (« embryon DONC congélation ») dans les discours

des avis du CCNE, où la congélation est une réalité, alors qu'elle peut être vue comme transgressive ailleurs (« embryon POURTANT congélation », qui sous-entend « embryon DONC nég-congélation »), car le fait d'être congelé n'est pas constitutif en soi de la signification d'*embryon* – contrairement à 'cellules', 'stades de développement', 'organisme maternel', 'division cellulaire', 'potentiel', etc. (ce sont là des stéréotypes essentiels pour la signification d'*embryon*, les uns liés à l'élément nucléaire 'œuf', comme 'organisme maternel' et 'division cellulaire', les autres liés à l'élément nucléaire 'organisme en développement', comme 'stades de développement', 'division cellulaire', d'autres encore liés à l'ensemble du noyau, comme 'potentiel'). Comme nous l'avons montré, toutes les associations stéréotypiques ne sont pas aussi étroitement liées au noyau de signification ; il y a des associations très fréquentes dans notre corpus qui sont éloignées du noyau et portent sur son intégralité : 'recherche', 'congélation', 'surnombre/grande quantité' (surnuméraire), 'respect', 'statut juridique', etc.

Notre étude sur le profilage du sens du mot *embryon* dans les syntagmes répertoriés nous a permis de montrer qu'en plus de l'association lexicale visible en surface (par exemple, « embryon DONC utilisation » pour le syntagme *utilisation d'embryons*), le syntagme évoque d'autres associations, à un niveau plus profond, implicite, qui participent de la compositionnalité sémantique du syntagme. L'ensemble de ces associations relèvent de la représentation de l'embryon en discours, aussi bien celles visibles en surface (qui équivalent à des DA, déploiements argumentatifs) que celles implicites, qu'évoque la signification du mot *embryon* sous l'effet du contexte (que nous avons considérées comme constituant le profilage du mot). **N**

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L'entourage et l'identité  
de Marie de France :  
Observations sur le texte  
des Lais dans le ms. H

LEENA LÖFSTEDT

**Abstract** Marie de France is famous for her *Lais*, which are short stories, rhymed and performed to musical accompaniment. When describing their origin, she tells the reader that she based them on Celtic *lais* which she claims reported true events. However, Marie de France's *Lais* included decidedly un-Celtic elements, among them material taken from Anglo-Norman legal procedure, or details found in Ovid, and formulaic introductions reminiscent of techniques learned in twelfth century grammar schools. Collecting and analyzing these novel elements of her *Lais* might shed light on Marie's own person.

This study uses A. Ewert's edition based on the MS H (BL Harley 978).

**Mots-clés** Marie de France, entourage anglo-normand, éducation, identité

Marie de France est le nom de plume donné par Claude Fauchet en 1581 à une femme poète active pendant la seconde moitié du douzième siècle.<sup>1</sup> Elle a signé ses œuvres du nom *Marie* ; et à cette signature, elle a ajouté une fois *si sui de France*. Elle écrit en français, mais elle semble avoir vécu en Angleterre. Son identité « civile » reste énigmatique.<sup>2</sup>

Marie est devenue célèbre grâce aux douze petites<sup>3</sup> nouvelles rimées, en couplets d'octosyllabes, portant le nom de *Lais*, qui, semble-t-il, ont été présentés accompagnés de musique instrumentale (voir *le lai... / Que hum fait en harpe e en rote*, Guigemar 884). Les *Lais* contiennent des aventures chevaleresques et des histoires d'amour avec des éléments féériques et merveilleux, parfois religieux. Quant à son inspiration, elle assure elle-même qu'elle ne fait que raconter des *lais bretons* (*Les contes ke je sai verrais, / Dunt li Bretun unt fait les lais, / Vos conterai assez briefment*, Guigemar 19-21).

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- 1 Le DEAF donne la date approximative 1165 aux *Lais* de Marie de France. Cette collection est suivie de *Fables*, et l'œuvre la plus tardive généralement attribuée à Marie est l'*Espurgatoire Seint Patriz* (traduction de *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patrici* par H(enri) de Saltrey) daté de la fin du onzième/début du douzième siècle. Certains chercheurs la voient aussi comme collaboratrice à la *Vie Seinte Audree*. L'œuvre de Marie nous est parvenue en premier lieu en copies anglo-normandes.
  - 2 Carla Rossi (2009 : 96sq) donne un bon aperçu du problème ; elle présente et évalue les 'Maries' présentées par des chercheurs.
  - 3 Le plus long des *lais*, *Eliduc*, a 1184 vers, le plus court, *Chevrefoil*, n'en a que 118.

Elle peut cependant insérer un procès juridique (de type anglais) ou donner le contenu d'un livre d'Ovide (écrivain latin) dans une histoire parfaitement féérique (dans les lais de *Lanval* et de *Guigemar*) – de tels détails ne sauraient être bretons. D'où viennent-ils ? Est-ce en nous penchant sur l'origine de tels corps étrangers que nous identifierons la dame admirée, mais inconnue ? Sans empiéter sur le domaine de l'histoire de la littérature qui n'est pas mien,<sup>4</sup> cet article examinera de tels détails dans l'objectif d'en apprendre davantage sur l'entourage et l'identité de l'auteur.

L'unique manuscrit à contenir tous les *Lais* généralement attribués à Marie et à les faire précéder par un *Prologue* est British Museum > BL, Harley 978 (H), anglo-normand, du milieu du treizième siècle. Les *Lais* de Marie de France ont été édités plusieurs fois sur la base du ms. H au texte duquel les éditeurs ont fait des corrections plus ou moins importantes<sup>5</sup> en utilisant d'autres mss. des *Lais*. L'édition publiée par A. Ewert reproduit fidèlement le ms. H. En me servant de son édition déjà vétuste, je base donc mon travail sur H, qui conserve les douze lais transmis dans un même environnement du treizième siècle. Ce que j'y trouve et que j'attribue à Marie, sera ainsi daté avec certitude.

Beaucoup d'autres auteurs, contemporains ou postérieurs à Marie, ont écrit des lais 'bretons', dont certains ont été attribués à Marie. Tous les lais ne figurant pas dans le ms. H, seront omis dans cet article.

### La « vérité » celtique

D'après le *Prologue* qu'elle attache à sa collection de *Lais*, Marie de France a *rimé* (Prol. 41) des lais qu'elle avait *entendus* (oï Prol. 33) et *assemblés* (Prol. 47). Elle semble être sûre que les lais ont été faits à l'origine *pur remembrance... des aventures* dont ils rendent compte (Prol. 34-37). Dans le texte qui suit ce

4 Marie a inspiré beaucoup d'études. Je remercie un de mes lecteurs qui m'a donné l'adresse des *Lais* dans les Archives de littérature du Moyen Âge [https://www.arlima.net/mp/marie\\_de\\_france/lais.html](https://www.arlima.net/mp/marie_de_france/lais.html). J'y ajoute celle de l'International Marie de France Society, <http://www.mariedefrancesociety.org>

5 Les éditions par Karl Warnke (Halle 1885, 3e éd. 1925 ; utilisée par T-L) et Jean Rychner (Paris, Champion 1981, CFMA 87 ; utilisée par AND) sont les mieux connues ; la toute récente édition par Nathalie Koble et Mireille Séguy (Paris, Champion 2018) a été bien reçue (voir toutefois DEAF Biblel).

*Prologue*, l'introduction précédant le lai de *Guigemar*, elle affirme que les histoires qu'elle va raconter sont vraies et que les lais remontent aux Bretons (*Les contes ke jo sai verrais/Dunt li Bretun unt fait les lais*, *Guigemar* 19-20). Et le mot *verité* se répète. *C'est verité, senz nes sunt nees* (*Bisclavret* 313) ; *Verité est kë en Neustrie//Ad un haut munt* (*Les deus Amanz* 7) ; *Dit vus en ai la verité* (*Chevrefoil* 117) ; ... *si cum jeo entent/La verité* (*Eliduc* 3).

Peu avant le temps de Marie (dans les années 1130 semble-t-il), le folklore celtique, la « matière de Bretagne », avait été introduite dans la société lettrée par Geoffrey de Monmouth. Ce chroniqueur, peut-être d'origine galloise, présentait des légendes celtiques (il est le premier à mentionner le roi Arthur et la fée Morgane, p.ex.) comme une vérité historique. Bien que cette prétention ne soit pas justifiée, l'*Historia Regum Britanniae* de Geoffrey est vite devenue une source d'inspiration pour l'Europe entière. Avec de nouvelles variantes, ces histoires ont survécu jusqu'à nos jours.<sup>6</sup>

La tradition musicale des Bretons avec leurs instruments qui accompagnent les lais, est présentée au public francophone par Wace dans son *Brut*<sup>7</sup> (date de DEAF : 1155) ; cet auteur met aussi en évidence l'importance de la maîtrise des lais bretons pour l'identité bretonne.

Ces légendes et ces chansons ont dû charmer le monde contemporain et animer l'imagination créatrice d'une personne comme Marie de France. Elle a entendu plusieurs lais qu'elle ne veut pas oublier ; ainsi « *rimez en ai* » dit-elle « *e fait ditié* » (*Prol.* 41). Cependant on n'a pas réussi à identifier de modèles celtiques pour les lais de Marie de France. Koble et Séguy disent justement, me semble-t-il, que Marie « partage une mémoire collective qu'elle réinterprète avec ses propres mots » (Koble et Séguy 2018 :13 ; voir aussi Ménard 1979 : 48).

Il semble de plus que même pour les lais la transmission orale et la mémoire collective aient pu être soutenues par l'écriture déjà avant Marie. En fait, c'est *sulunc la lettre e l'escriture* (*Guigemar* 23) que Marie commence

6 La bande dessinée *Prince Valiant* par Hal Foster a commencé à paraître en 1936.

7 Voir T-L 5 : 46, 27-40.



par *Guigemar* sa présentation des contes... / *Dunt li Bretun unt fait les lais* (*Guigemar* 20)<sup>8</sup>. Pour le *Chevrefoil* elle renvoie aussi à une source écrite<sup>9</sup>.

La signification du syntagme 'lai breton' subit des modifications. « Pour les contemporains du début du XIIIe siècle, les lais ont d'abord été "bretons". Cette filiation... révélait moins une origine géographique ou culturelle qu'un type littéraire fondé... sur... une projection d'altérité. Cette identité a ensuite servi de label poétique, garant d'une forme narrative qui parle d'amour » (Koble-Séguy 2018 :18).

Marie, qui mentionne plusieurs fois l'origine bretonne des lais qu'elle veut rassembler, semble soutenir cette affirmation par la toponymie celtique. Les noms de lieu qu'elle cite situent les aventures sur les deux côtes de la Manche.

Le pays de Galles est représenté par *Carwent* 'Caerwent' et *Karliun* 'Caerleon' (*Yonec*, *Milun*) ;

Les Cornouailles, par *Tintagel* (*Chevrefoil*).

En plus, on trouve *Kardoel* '[*Caer Luel*>] *Carlisle*' (*Lanval*), nom celtique d'un lieu situé non loin de la frontière écossaise ;

La Bretagne-Armorique est représentée par *Liun* 'Saint-Pol-de-Léon' (*Guigemar*) et *Dol* 'Dol-de-Bretagne' (*Le Fresne*).

En parlant de l'Angleterre, Marie se sert régulièrement du nom celtique du pays *Lo(en)gre* (la graphie varie), qui correspond à *Lloegr*, le nom gallois de l'Angleterre<sup>10</sup>. Cependant les habitants de ce pays sont des *Engleis* (terme français d'origine germanique). L'Écosse n'est mentionnée qu'une fois par Marie qui utilise le terme *Albanie* (*Milun* 17), qui provient du latin *Albania*,

8 Par *El chief de cest comencement, / Sulunc la lettre e l'escriture / Vos mosterai un'aventure* Marie semble annoncer qu'elle se sert d'une collection de textes débutant par *Guigemar* – ou dit-elle que la place de *Guigemar* en tête de sa collection de Lais à elle est dictée par quelque trait spécifique de *l'escriture* de ce lai ? La collection devrait-elle être ouverte par une histoire longue (qui a beaucoup d'écriture), p.ex., tout comme la dernière histoire (*Eliduc*) sera longue ? - Pour une bonne présentation des sources de Marie, consulter Ménard 1979 : 45 sq (Sources celtiques), 1979 : 34 (Romans antiques).

9 *Plusurs le me unt conté e dit / E jeo l'ai trové en escrit / De Tristram e de la reine* (*Chevrefoil* 5-7).

10 Le nom gallois ajoute de la couleur celtique aux *Lais* de Marie, tout en ayant aussi l'avantage de permettre à Marie la mention de plusieurs petits royaumes sur le sol de l'Angleterre, qui à son époque à elle était un pays uni.

nom formé à partir d'*Alba*, nom gaélique du pays. Pour les habitants du pays, elle se sert du terme français *Escoz*<sup>11</sup>.

Les lais de *Guigemar*, *Equitan*, *Bisclavret*, *Lanval*, *Yonec* et *Eliduc* portent les noms de leurs personnages principaux ; ces noms semblent être celtiques<sup>12</sup>.

Le lai *Laüstic* doit son nom au rossignol qui y joue un rôle important. Dans ce nom *aüstic* tend à imiter le nom celtique de l'oiseau (breton *eostik*, voir éd. Ewert *ad l.*, p.180), et *L'* est l'article français du mot. La transmission manuscrite du poème suggère que Marie aurait compris que le nom de l'oiseau était *laüstic*, qui dans ses vers devait être pourvu d'un article : nous lisons plusieurs fois *le laüstic*.

A part le folklore, l'élément celtique des lais de Marie n'est pas important. Le double article dans 'le *Laüstic*' laisse penser que la tradition celtique présentée par Marie pourrait provenir d'une source intermédiaire française.

## Le non merveilleux chez Marie et les lois de l'Angleterre sous le régime féodal

Il a été mentionné que le lai de *Lanval* met en scène un procès mené suivant la procédure anglaise. Vu notamment la transmission anglo-normande de ses écrits, il est facile d'accepter que Marie a vécu en Angleterre.

Une comparaison des lois de l'Angleterre avec les détails juridiques présentés par Marie dans ses *Lais* semble donc être motivée<sup>13</sup>. Dans le survol qui suit, nous allons nous servir des *Gesetze der Angelsachsen* par F. Liebermann.

Le père avait une position dominante dans sa famille (Liebermannn 2,2 : 705c-706a). Le statut social de l'enfant venait de son père<sup>14</sup> : il était très impor-

11 Ce terme provient du latin *Scotus* 'personne gaélique', terme qui au haut moyen âge désignait aussi des Irlandais (p.ex. Sedulius Scotus et Iohannes Scotus Eriugena, les deux actifs à l'époque de la renaissance carolingienne). Les missionnaires irlandais sur le continent étaient des *Scoti peregrini*.

12 L'autre titre d'*Eliduc* est celtique lui aussi : *Guildelüec ha Gualadun* a conservé aussi la conjonction *ha* 'et' (cf. Latin *ac*). Seuls les noms *Milun* et le *Fresne* (avec l'article dans le texte français) ne sont pas celtiques.

13 Ma présentation qui suit a plusieurs points en commun avec McClelland 1977 : 76-92, qui pourtant ne cite pas les lois anglaises.

14 Cela était très important dans une société qui distinguait les classes sociales d'une manière très stricte.

tant pour le fils de Milun de savoir le nom de son père, de le trouver et d'être accepté par lui (Milun 464-470). Comme il n'y avait pas de majorité pour les filles<sup>15</sup>, elles n'avaient pas de compétence légale pour décider de leur mariage ; elles étaient mariées par leurs pères. L'amie de Milun fut mariée par son père sans qu'il la consultât (Milun 120-142). D'autre part les pères des princesses dans *Deus Amanz* et *Eliduc* refusèrent des demandes en mariage, apparemment sans consulter leurs filles (Les deus Amanz 29sq, Eliduc 94-95). Le père avait le droit de punir les membres de sa famille de leur manque de bienséance, et, au moins jusqu'aux environs de l'an 900, dit-on, même de vendre sa fille en esclavage (Liebermann 2,2 : 706a et 1 : 30-31 : un exemple des lois du roi Alfred<sup>16</sup>). La pratique de vendre des personnes à l'étranger était interdite déjà à l'époque du roi Canut (Liebermann 1:311, 2 Cnut § 3) et plus clairement au début du douzième siècle dans les statuts anglo-normands appelés *Articuli Wilhelmi* (Liebermann 1:488-489, *Articuli Wilhelmi* § 9), mais il semble que cette atrocité ne soit pas encore oubliée au temps de Marie : c'est le souvenir de cette coutume qui expliquerait la peur de l'amie de Milun (Milun 59-62). Les torts commis par le père devaient être corrigés par sa famille (Liebermann 2,2 : 706a) ; ainsi est-il justifié que la mère de Yonec les dénonce aussi (Yonec 81).

Les épouses se trouvaient sous le contrôle de leurs maris (Liebermann 2,2 : 366b), telles les amies de Guigemar (Guigemar 209-228) et de Milun (Milun 192) et la mère de Yonec (Yonec 26-32).

Fresne, enfant trouvée, est la seule des héroïnes de Marie qui ne se trouve pas sous le pouvoir d'un père de famille, puisqu'elle n'a pas de famille. L'abbesse, qui se présente comme la 'tante' de l'enfant, ne pouvait pas l'introduire dans une famille, puisque les religieuses cloîtrées avaient quitté le monde, et vivaient à l'écart des catégories séculières (Liebermann 2,2 : 596c). Seule la bonne éducation reçue par Fresne lui garantissait le statut de

**15** Les garçons atteignaient la majorité à 15 ans, parfois plus tôt (Liebermann 2,2 : 589b-590a).

**16** Le texte d'Alfred en traduction latine de *Quadripartitus* (voir note 18) publié par Liebermann 1 : 31b *Si quis uendiderit filiam suam in famulam, non egredietur sicut ancille exire consueuerunt* ...est cependant emprunté à l'Ancien Testament (même texte dans Vulg. Exod. 21 : 7). Cf. *Willelmi Articuli* § 9, Liebermann 1 : 489 *li reis Willame defendi, ke nul ne vendist hume hors del pais ne de la terre, come li Engleis feseint jadis*.

dame libre en dehors de l'abbaye et la possibilité de vivre comme compagne de Gurun<sup>17</sup>, qui, lui, appartenait à la haute noblesse : Fresne était appelée *dameisele* par les gens de service (le Fresne 423) et les nobles s'adressaient à elle avec le pronom *vous* (le Fresne 431-434). Cependant un mariage entre Gurun et Fresne était impossible (voir ci-dessous).

Dès la Conquête, le pouvoir du père le cède au pouvoir du suzerain.

Le royaume uni sous le roi (Guillaume le Conquérant et Henri I<sup>er</sup><sup>18</sup>) consistait en fiefs d'une importance inégale. Les rapports humains les plus importants étaient ceux entre le suzerain et son vassal, celui-ci pouvant être le seigneur d'un arrière-vassal : une série de dépendances verticales. Le terme *vassal*, parfois utilisé au sens d' 'homme lié personnellement à un seigneur', signifie proprement dit un homme qui a prêté le serment de fidélité à un suzerain qui lui a déjà concédé un fief (censé lui produire un revenu suffisant). Les rapports entre l'homme et son seigneur étaient scellés par le serment de fidélité, prononcé par le futur vassal à son futur suzerain.

Un siècle et demi avant le temps de Marie, l'évêque Fulbert de Chartres a analysé ce serment de fidélité : celui qui prête le serment de fidélité s'engage sur six points :

- Il ne doit pas mettre en péril la *santé* de son suzerain.
- Il ne doit pas attenter à la *sécurité* de son suzerain en dévoilant les plans secrets de celui-ci.
- Il ne doit pas porter atteinte au pouvoir judiciaire ni à d'autres choses relevant de l'*honnêteté* (du renom de probité) de son suzerain.
- Le *profit* de son suzerain : Il ne doit pas léser les intérêts de son suzerain quant aux possessions de ce dernier.
- La *vitesse* et le *pouvoir* : Il ne doit pas freiner les actions de son suzerain ni dresser quelque obstacle à ceux-ci.

**17** Pour ce nom aussi, je me sers de la graphie anglo-normande du ms. H. La graphie francienne serait Goron.

**18** Henri I<sup>er</sup> Beau-Clerc, fils du Conquérant, fit traduire en latin les anciennes lois anglo-saxonnes de l'Angleterre à l'intention de ses fonctionnaires qui ne maîtrisaient pas la langue du pays conquis. Cette collection d'anciennes lois (*Quadripartitus*) était utilisée pour *Leges Henrici Primi*, p.ex. et elle continua à jouer un rôle important sous les rois normands. L'édition de Liebermann des anciennes lois anglo-saxonnes inclut aussi, pour la plupart des textes, la traduction latine trouvée dans le *Quadripartitus*.

Enfin s'abstenir de faire du tort n'est pas suffisant, le vassal doit aide et conseils au suzerain dans tous ces domaines.

D'une manière similaire, le suzerain doit aider son homme fidèle<sup>19</sup>.

Dans ses *Lais* Marie évoque souvent ces deux fidélités. La fidélité de l'homme : Eliduc fait référence à la fidélité des hommes du roi (Eliduc 191-192) ; Equitan veut jouer le rôle de l'homme vassal vis à vis de son amie qu'il prendra pour suzeraine (Equitan 170-171) ; Lanval est accusé d'avoir essayé de séduire la reine, et partant, d'avoir brisé son serment de fidélité au roi, son suzerain (Lanval 363-366). D'autre part, le roi d'Eliduc renie sa foi en poussant son vassal à l'exil sans explication aucune (Eliduc 45-46) ; le roi Equitan brise son serment envers son vassal, en devenant l'amant de la femme de celui-ci (Equitan 72-78) ; et bien qu'il fût de la responsabilité du suzerain d'aider son homme fidèle, le roi Artur avait négligé Lanval (Lanval 31-32).

Le serment de fidélité peut être temporaire, prêté pour un an, pour la durée d'une guerre, etc. (Eliduc 267-269).

Les rapports basés sur de tels serments instaurent un contrôle mutuel entre le suzerain et son vassal s'étendant jusqu'à leur vie privée.

Dans le lai du Fresne, Gurun, ami de l'héroïne, est obligé par ses vassaux d'épouser une demoiselle noble qu'il ne connaissait pas. Un mariage avec Fresne dont la famille n'était pas connue, dont on ignorait le père et partant, le véritable statut social, était hors de question. En fait, le but du mariage désiré par les vassaux de Gurun (le Fresne 317-321) était d'engendrer un enfant né d'un mariage légitime entre deux personnes nobles, un enfant destiné à prêter serment de fidélité au suzerain et à hériter de la position de Gurun (permettant ainsi à ces vassaux de continuer leur vie sans trop de changements).

En général, le concubinage était toléré si l'homme n'était pas marié ; mais le concubinage était une violation de la foi conjugale en cas de mariage (Liebermann 2,2 : 558b). Pour éviter que Gurun, qu'elle aime, ne commette l'adultère en obéissant à ses vassaux, Fresne est prête à le quitter (le Fresne 392sq).

<sup>19</sup> Une traduction raccourcie et libre de Decr. C 22 q 5 c 18. Le texte original a été écrit en 1020 par l'évêque Fulbert de Chartres à Guillaume V, duc d'Aquitaine.

Le pouvoir du roi d'Angleterre sur la vie privée de son vassal est consigné dans des textes. On lit dans la charte relative au sacre d'Henri I<sup>er</sup> d'Angleterre (*charta Henrici (I) Coronati* de l'an 1100) que si un homme du roi, qu'il soit baron ou autre, a l'intention de marier sa fille, sa sœur, sa nièce ou une autre parente proche, il doit en parler avec le roi qui vérifiera que la femme en question ne soit donnée à un ennemi du roi. Et si l'homme du roi meurt laissant sa fille comme unique héritière, « moi-même, sur le conseil de mes barons, je la marierai avec sa terre... »<sup>20</sup>. Il est évident que la jeune dame ne sera pas consultée. La situation de la veuve d'un homme du roi est un peu meilleure : elle peut garder sa dot et son douaire et elle n'est pas obligée de se remarier contre son gré<sup>21</sup>.

Pendant le règne de Guillaume II (nommé Rufus), frère et prédécesseur d'Henri I<sup>er</sup>, les veuves étaient encore remariées sans qu'on demandât leur opinion (Liebermann 2,2 : 736b). Des pratiques similaires pourraient expliquer le passage de Lanval où le roi

Asez i duna riches duns;

E as cuntas e as baruns

....

Femmes et tere departi (Lanval 13-17).

Le but du mariage obligatoire d'une fille héritière était de pourvoir son suzerain d'un vassal (le mari de l'héritière) qui fasse le service militaire dû en

**20** *Charta Henrici Coronati § 3. Et si quis baronum uel aliorum hominum meorum filiam suam nuptum tradere uoluerit, siue sororem siue neptem siue cognatam, mecum inde loquatur. [3,1] Sed neque ego aliquid de suo pro hac licentia accipiam, neque defendam ei quin eam det, excepto si eam uellet iungere inimico meo. [3,2] Et si, mortuo barone uel alio homine meo, filia heres remanserit, illam dabo consilio baronum meorum (var. d.i. cum co.) cum terra sua. [3,3] Et si, mortuo marito, uxor eius remanserit et sine liberis fuerit, dotem suam et maritacionem habebit; et eam non dabo marito nisi secundum uelle suum. § 4. Si uero uxor cum liberis remanserit, dotem quidem et maritacionem suam habebit, dum corpus suum legitime seruauerit; et eam non dabo nisi secundum uelle suum. [4,1] Et terrae et liberorum custos erit siue uxor siue alius propinquorum* (Liebermann 1:521-522).

**21** Sans majorité légale, une veuve était beaucoup plus libre d'agir qu'une femme non mariée : la veuve était tutrice de ses enfants.

échange du fief ; et d'assurer, pour le fief, un héritier (le fils de l'héritière) qui puisse continuer les devoirs féodaux. Pour garantir la légitimité de cet héritier, la fille devait arriver vierge au mariage<sup>22</sup>. Le mariage de la fille héritière pouvait être comparé au devoir du service militaire du fils héritier<sup>23</sup>. Les liens affectifs entre les époux dans ces mariages obligatoires dépendaient du hasard, semble-t-il.

Les liaisons extraconjugales n'étaient pas rares : pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de jeter un coup d'œil sur des listes de progéniture des rois d'Angleterre du douzième siècle. Les hommes n'en ont pas souffert ; pour les femmes, notamment pour les filles à marier vierges par leurs pères ou leurs suzerains, la situation était différente. Qu'on pense à l'amie de Milun (Milun 55-63) : elle a dû cacher sa grossesse et envoyer son fils nouveau-né loin d'elle (Milun 87-122). Les enfants « illégitimes » nés de relations extraconjugales n'héritaient pas facilement des titres nobiliaires de leur père<sup>24</sup>. Acceptés par leurs pères, les fils recevaient cependant une bonne éducation et la possibilité de faire une carrière. Les filles étaient mariées ou cloîtrées.

Il semble que plusieurs situations pour nous étranges, mais présentées par Marie sans explications, pourraient refléter la société féodale anglo-normande. On sait depuis longtemps que dans le procès de Lanval<sup>25</sup>, Marie suit la

**22** Les circonstances du mariage d'une femme jouent un rôle décisif pour le reste de sa vie. S Jérôme († 420) présentait trois types de mariages identifiés par l'Église. Une vierge est mariée à un homme (c'est le meilleur type de mariage, dit S. Jérôme) ; elle est prise de force : union acceptable, si les pères l'acceptent, et elle reçoit son douaire et le prix de la virginité est payé ; enfin, elle est prise de force contre la volonté du père : dans ce troisième cas, le père a le droit de briser l'union et de donner la fille à quelqu'un d'autre (Decr. C 36 q 2 c 8). Gratien († 1145), à peu près contemporain de Marie, acceptait le troisième type de mariage, à condition que le ravisseur parachève sa pénitence et que le père ne brise pas l'union (Decr. C 36 q 2 c 11, Grat.).

**23** Le livre de Jean d'Ibelin, juriste cypriot du treizième siècle nous laisse penser (voir chapitres CCXXVII-CCXXIX) que cette juxtaposition était normale dans le royaume de Jérusalem (*Assises de Jérusalem*, éd. A. Beugnot [1841, Paris: Imprimerie Royale], première partie, pp. 359-365). – L'Église n'accepte pas les mariages forcés (Decr. C 31 q 2 c 1) et offre la vie monastique comme alternative (Decr. C 32 q 2 c 16).

**24** Guillaume le Conquérant était « bâtard », fils d'une maîtresse de son père (qui n'était pas marié).

**25** Cf. "The Trial of Lanval" par E.A. Francis publié dans *Studies presented to Professor Mildred K. Pope* (Manchester UP 1939) pp. 115-124 ; et les observations importantes par W. Rothwell dans "The Trial Scene in Lanval and the Development of the Legal

procédure anglo-normande de son temps. Ajoutons que le chef des jurés dans ce procès, le *comte de Cornouailles* porte un titre (*comes Cornubiae, earl of Cornwall*) qui ne fut créé que par le Conquérant. Marie a pu trouver le modèle pour ce personnage à la cour d'Henri II : Reginald de Dunstanville, fils illégitime d'Henri <sup>1er</sup>, porte les titres Earl of Cornwall, High Sheriff of Devon. On le rencontre dans un rôle d'assistant juridique du roi Henri II lors du procès de Thomas Becket en 1164<sup>26</sup>.

### L'amour courtois

La dureté de la vie privée sous le régime féodal a été adoucie par l'amour courtois ou *fin'amor* qui avait déjà existé dans les foyers troubadouresques du Midi. Le premier troubadour connu fut Guillaume IX d'Aquitaine († 1127).

La culture développée dans les cours princières et influencée par le régime féodal partageait un ensemble de valeurs telles que l'honneur, l'importance de la parole, la politesse et les bonnes manières. Elle avait une conception tout particulière de l'amour qui devait être soumis à plusieurs règles. Notamment, le mariage ne doit pas empêcher l'amour ; l'homme doit se soumettre à la volonté de sa dame (lui étant le vassal, elle, la suzeraine) dont il cherche à mériter l'affection par sa courtoisie, ses prouesses (militaires ou littéraires) et sa générosité<sup>27</sup>.

La culture courtoise<sup>28</sup> s'est répandue en partie grâce aux mariages de la haute noblesse : les deux mariages (avec Louis VII de France, puis Henri II d'Angleterre) d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine, petite-fille de Guillaume IX, l'ont introduite dans les pays dont elle était la reine. Ainsi, en Angleterre, qui a accueilli

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Register” , *NM* 101 (2000), pp. 17-36. – Mickel (1974:123 sq) dit que Marie présente le passé ”adorned with twelfth century trappings”.

**26** *Dous cuntes.../celui de Leïrcestre.../E cel de Cornewaille* (Garnier *La Vie de Saint Thomas* 1523-1525); *Li cuens Reinalz i est de Cornewaille alez* (Garnier 1874) ; voir aussi le récit de Guillaume de Canterbury dans *Mat* 1:130. Sans s'opposer directement au roi, ce dignitaire montre une certaine sympathie pour Thomas Becket.

**27** Le *Tractatus de amore* par André le Chapelain discute ce phénomène culturel déjà en 1184.

**28** L'ancienne culture des troubadours, qui attire toujours des chercheurs, charmait déjà les fondateurs de la philologie romane F. Raynouard et F. Diez. Pour un aperçu plus moderne voir la bibliographie de Reto R. Bezzola.



des visites de troubadours, un fils d'Aliénor, Henri, dit le Jeune Roi (1155-1183), est devenu l'ami du troubadour Bertrand de Born, et Richard Cœur de Lion (1157-1199), son frère cadet, fut non seulement un chef militaire légendaire, mais aussi un poète bilingue.

La culture chevaleresque du Midi venait d'arriver en Angleterre à l'époque de Marie et cela se remarque dans ses *Lais*. Les protagonistes sont sages et courtois. On s'attendait presque, semble-t-il, à ce que tout le monde eût son *ami(e)* du sexe opposé, bien que la relation fût celée. Cette condition de discrétion absolue fut dictée à *Lanval* par la fée (Lanval 144-150) et à la future mère de *Yonec* par le chevalier-oiseau (Yonec 201-210).

La relation pouvait être initiée par la femme – voir Bisclavret 116 ; Yonec 101-104 ; Milun 27-28 ; Eliduc 379-381 – aussi bien que par l'homme. Il devait toujours s'agir, semble-t-il, d'une relation cachée entre deux personnes. De fait, Marie ne dissimule pas son dédain pour

li vilain curteis  
ki jolivent par tut le mund  
puis se avantent de ceo que funt (Guigemar 488-490).

La relation amoureuse pouvait consister en l'échange de cadeaux et en causeries innocentes sans plus (c'était le cas dans le *Laüstic*), mais elle pouvait aussi devenir une longue union extraconjugale (*Guigemar*, *Equitan*, le *Fresne*, *Yonec*, *Milun*, *Chaitivel*, *Chevrefoil* et *Eliduc*).

On partageait l'opinion que l'amour d'une dame anoblissait son ami (Equitan 155-162), qui était censé dédier ses meilleurs exploits à sa dame ; mais dans les lais d'*Equitan* et de *Chaitivel*, Marie met en évidence le danger de la soumission inconditionnelle à la dame exigée par l'amour courtois. Comme amant et agissant en « vassal » de la femme de son sénéchal (qui, lui, était son vassal féodal) le roi Equitan enfreint le code féodal (Equitan 71-74) et se rend coupable de félonie envers le sénéchal, le mari de la « suzeraine ». La sénéchale, après une période de refus, d'hésitation et d'incertitude, devient avide d'être couronnée reine : la voici prête à tuer son mari (Equitan 247 sq). – Dans *Chaitivel*, la « dame » était *de mut grant sens* (49), et avait quatre jeunes hommes autour d'elle qui *Tuz la teneient pur amie* (67) sans savoir que les trois autres avaient la même certitude. Cependant elle

*Ne pot eslire le meillur.  
Ne volt les treis perdre pur l'un;  
Bel semblant feseit a chescun,  
Ses drüeries lur donout  
Ses messages lur enveiout (54-58)*

et chacun des quatre faisait de son mieux *pur ceo que a la dame pleüst* (66). Ce désir de plaire à la dame causa la perte des quatre chevaliers. Le seul survivant du tournoi, devenu impotent, aide la dame à composer un lai sur ce qui est arrivé. Elle aurait voulu l'intituler *Les Quatre Deuils* parce que, dit-elle, *Voil que mis doels seit remembrez* (202), mais il lui dit

Meuz me vaudreit la mort tenir :  
Pur c'ert li lais de mei nomez,  
Le Chaitivel iert apelez (224-226).

Et elle de répondre, sans nul remords

Par fei, fet ele, ceo m'est bel :  
Or l'apelum Le Chaitivel (229-230).

## Ovide

Ovide fut un poète romain célèbre, mais qui mourut exilé par l'empereur Auguste pour une raison restée mystérieuse. Il était connu et même copié au temps de Charlemagne, mais il a dû attendre jusqu'au onzième siècle pour être lentement accepté dans le groupe des auteurs recommandés pour les écoles (Glauche 1970 : 12).

Marie écrit au douzième siècle, à l'époque où les écoles de l'Europe avaient (re)trouvé Ovide<sup>29</sup>. L'auteur des *Lais* mentionne Ovide. Dans une scène de son *Guigemar*, lai qui ouvre sa collection de *Lais*, la déesse Vénus jette au feu

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<sup>29</sup> C'était pour compléter l'enseignement de la grammaire latine (le premier des sujets du triuim) que le programme scolaire carolingien a inclus la lecture de quelques

Le livre Ovide ou il enseine

Coment chascun s'amur estreine (Guigemar 239-240).

Le livre d'Ovide condamné au bûcher est sans doute son *Remedia amoris*. Il semble légitime de se demander si cette Vénus qui enseigne

Cument hom deit amur tenir

E lealment e bien servir (Guigemar 237-238)

aurait invité Marie à la lecture de *De arte amatoria libri tres* du même Ovide. Trouverions-nous des vestiges d'une influence ?

Les douleurs et les difficultés, les ruses et les galanteries des jeunes amoureux décrites par Ovide et Marie n'ont pas été inventées par Ovide et il n'en est pas l'unique dépositaire. Il semble plutôt que plusieurs situations problématiques dans le développement de l'amour humain se répètent de génération en génération et trouvent approximativement la même solution. L'accoutumance favorise la naissance de l'amour, dit Ovide, et Marie met l'adage en œuvre ; comparez

Fac tibi consuescat: nil consuetudine maius (Ars a. 2.345)

et

... ele l'ama sur tute rien

Tant pur le bien quë ele oï

Tant pur ceo qu'il iert pres de li (Laüstic 26-28) ;

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auteurs latins, avec une prédilection très marquée pour des poètes chrétiens (Prudentius, Iuvencus, Sedulius, etc.) sans pourtant jamais oublier Virgile. Les élèves avaient commencé leurs études par les *Disticha Catonis* (Glauche 1970 : 26). – A partir de l'an 1000 environ, l'enseignement de la rhétorique et de la dialectique gagne de l'importance et le canon recommandé est élargi. Virgile n'est plus l'unique païen admis dans les écoles : il est accompagné par plusieurs autres (Lucain, Stace, Horace, etc.), très fidèlement par Térence (Glauche 1970 : 63sq). Dans plusieurs catalogues de livres scolaires du milieu et de la fin du onzième siècle, on trouve aussi Ovide (Glauche 1970 : 72sq, 81-82), et la « renaissance du douzième siècle » est appelée l'*aetas Ovidiana*.

de même la constatation que l'amour donne l'audace d'aborder l'objet de l'amour se trouve chez les deux

Colloquio iam tempus adest...

... audentem Forsque Venusque iuuant ( Ars a. 1.607-608)

et

Amur li dune hardement (Guigemar 499)

et les deux connaissent la règle qu'une femme courtisée fait bien de laisser sa réponse ambiguë, comparez :

Sed neque te facilem iuueni promitte roganti:/ Nec tamen eduro,  
quod petit, ore nega. Ars a. 3. 475-476

et

...Amis,

Cest conseil sereit trop hastis,

De otrier vus ceste priere (Guigemar 509-512)

ou

Sire...

De ceo m'estuet avoir respit (Equitan 117-120).

Voilà des détails qui ne nous étonnent pas.

Cependant, certains enseignements qu'Ovide adresse à l'homme *cultus* conviendraient, mieux qu'à nous, à des lecteurs *courtois* du douzième siècle (les autres étaient des *rustici*, soit des *vilains*). Ovide parle de l'existence des amitiés intimes en dehors des mariages arrangés, ce qui au douzième siècle ressemble à l'amour courtois par rapport aux mariages. Ovide introduit l'amitié comme avant-coureur de l'amour :

Nec semper Veneris spes est profitenda roganti  
Intret amicitiae nomine tectus amor (Ars a. 1. 719-720)

et

Qui fuerat cultor, factus amator erat (Ars a. 1. 722).

Ovide n'apprécie pas l'amour obligatoire

Quae datur officio, non est mihi grata uoluptas (Ars a. 2. 687).

Les *Lais* non plus n'acceptent pas l'amour *par seignurie* (Equitan 148).

Comme raison instigatrice d'une liaison intime, Ovide met l'amour sur un pied d'égalité avec 'la loi', le devoir social :

Non legis iussu lectum uenistis in unum  
Fungitur in uobis munere legis amor (Ars a. 2. 157-158).

Marie qui pense au bien des protagonistes de ses *Lais*, est plus raffinée et délicate. Elle se délecte à raconter le bonheur d'une union nouée par l'amour sans autorité sociale reconnue :

Unc ne demanderent parent ;  
Sanz conseil de tut'autre gent  
Lur fiz amdeus les assembla,  
La mere a sun pere dona.  
En grant bien e en <grant> duçur  
Vesquirent puis et nuit e jur (Milun 527-532),

alors qu'elle n'admet pas une liaison forcée, mais bénie par 'la loi' (les mal mariées dans *Guigemar*, *Yonec* et *Milun*). Au lieu de comparer l'amour et 'la loi' comme causes des unions intimes humaines, elle présente les deux par ordre d'importance : elle préfère que les unions nouées par amour soient scellées par 'la loi' (*Fresne*, *Eliduc*).

Dans la Rome d'Ovide tout comme dans la société anglo-normande de Marie, les filles et les femmes devaient être strictement gardées.

Ovide constate que pour la femme un foyer dur favorise le développement de l'amour

Incitet et ficti tristis custodia serui

Et nimium duri cura molesta uiri (Ars a. 3. 601-602).

Une *tristis custodia servi*<sup>30</sup> explique-t-elle l'action assez téméraire de l'amante de Milun ? Elle fut une

...mut curteise dameisele,

Ele ot Milun nomer;

Mut le cumençat a amer.

Par sun message li manda

Que, si li plest, el l'amera (Milun 24-28).

Les pères qui se refusaient à l'idée de marier leurs filles auraient-ils contribué au développement affectif de Guilliadun (Eliduc 272-278) et de la princesse dans les *Deus Amanz* (Deus Amanz 28-48 et 59-61) ?

En tout cas, il ne fait aucun doute que la *cura molesta uiri* n'ait causé les aventures extraconjugales de l'amante de Guigemar et de la mère de Yonec.

Les deux sociétés, celle d'Ovide et celle de Marie, fonctionnent à l'aide de servants dont l'omniprésence peut nuire aux amoureux ou leur être utile. L'*Ars amatoria* assigne un important rôle intermédiaire à des personnes de service :

Sed prius ancillam captandae nosse puellae

Cura sit: accessus molliat illa tuos (Ars a. 1. 351-352)

ou

30 La dame la décrit plus tard *...jeo ne sui mie delivre,/ Ainz ai asez sur mei gardeins/ Veuz e jeofnes, mes chamberleins,/ Que tuz jurz heent bone amur/ E se delitent en tristur* (Milun 144-148).

Ancillae pueriue manus ferat apta tabellas ('que la main habile  
d'un(e) servant(e) porte des tablettes [de cire présentant tes lettres]')  
(Ars a. 3. 485).

Chez Marie, Milun se sert de son écuyer pour se mettre en contact avec sa dame (Milun 167 sq) et c'est le chambellan de la princesse qui favorise le début des amours de Guiliadun et d'Eliduc (Eliduc 335 sq). De même Guigemar n'hésite pas à s'adresser à la jeune suivante de la dame qu'il aime pour lui demander son aide et

La meschine par grant duçur  
Le chevaler ad conforté  
E de s'aïe aseüré (Guigemar 460-463).

Ovide déconseille aux filles romaines d'envoyer des cadeaux à leurs jeunes amis :

Ancillae pueriue manus ferat apta tabellas:  
Pignora nec iuueni credite uestra nouo.  
Vidi ego, pallentes isto terrore puellas,  
Seruitium miseras tempus in omne pati.  
Perfidus ille quidem, qui talia pignora seruat...(Ars a. 3.485-489).

Marie décrit cette terreur violente qui fait pâlir les jeunes filles : Guiliadun, blessée par Amor, vient de faire envoyer par son chambellan sa ceinture et son anneau à Eliduc. Le chambellan s'éloigne et

Ele remeint en teu manere  
Pur poi ne l'apelet arere;  
E nequedent le lait aler,  
Si se cumence a dementer...(Eliduc 383-386).

La pauvre princesse vacille entre espoir et désespoir, entre son amour fort et absolu et une insécurité enfantine prête à condamner à mort le chevalier (Eliduc 442), s'il ne répond pas à ses sentiments.

La scène serait-elle inspirée par Ovide ?

Ovide connaît l'habitude de jeunes amoureux de donner – sans intermédiaire ? – des cadeaux à leurs dames, mais il ne la trouve que chez les riches qui n'ont pas besoin de ses conseils

Nil opus est illi, qui dabit, arte mea (Ars a. 2. 162).

Chez Marie, l'échange de cadeaux sans intermédiaire semble marquer une étape dans le développement de l'amour. L'amour nostalgique dans le *Laüstic* ne dépasse pas l'échange de cadeaux.

Des chambres u la dame jut,  
Quant a la fenestre s'estut,  
Poeit parler a sun ami  
De l'autre part, et il a li.  
E lur aveirs entrechangier  
E par geter e par lancier.  
N'unt gueres rien que lur despleise,  
Mut esteient amdui a eise,  
Fors tant k'il ne poënt venir  
Del tut ensemble a lur plaisir (Laüstic 39-48).

Ovide présente l'insomnie et la pâleur du visage comme des signes sûrs d'un cœur amoureux.

Ces signes se retrouvent chez les protagonistes de Marie : Le roi Equitan épris de la femme de son sénéchal

veilla tant que jur fu (Equitan 101).

Guilliadun assise près d'Eliduc, reçoit le message d'Amor

Que la somunt de lui amer  
Palir la fist e suspirer (Eliduc 305-306)

et plus tard



Tute la nuit veillat issi,  
Ne resposa ne ne dormi (Eliduc 331-332).

Ovide va jusqu'à recommander la pâleur

Palleat omnis amans: hic est color aptus amanti,  
Hic decet: hoc uultu non ualuisse putent (Ars a. 1. 729-730)

...

Attenuent iuuenum uigilatae corpora noctes;  
Curaque, et magno qui fit amore, dolor.  
Ut uoto potiare tuo, miserabilis esto;  
Ut qui te uideat, dicere possit, "Amas" (Ars a. 1. 735-738).

Ces vers, je crois, ont été utilisés par Marie dans *Guigemar*. Après avoir vu sa future amie, Guigemar

Tute nuit ad si veillé  
E suspiré et travaillé (Guigemar 410-411).

S'il avait su que la dame se trouvait dans une situation similaire,

Un poi de rassuagement  
Li tolist auques la dolor  
Dont il ot pal<e> la colur (Guigemar 422-424).

Guigemar appelle la suivante de sa dame :

"Amie, u est ma dame alee?  
Pur quei est el si tost levee?"  
Atant se tut, si suspira.  
La meschine l'areisuna.  
"Sire," fet ele, "vus amez..." (Guigemar 441-445).

Cette jeune demoiselle (nièce de la future amante de Guigemar, et sa suivante, plutôt que servante) se serait-elle permis d'adresser une constatation aussi

personnelle à un homme qu'elle a rencontré la veille, et dont elle observe maintenant la pâleur, si la créatrice du passage n'avait pas lu l'*Ars amatoria* ?

### Source hagiographique ?

L'hagiographie rattachée à Sainte Audrée (<Ætheldreda, reine anglo-saxonne<sup>31</sup> vénérée à Ely<sup>32</sup>, Cambridgeshire) comprend entre autres un miracle qui, selon le texte latin qui le conserve, le *Liber Eliensis*<sup>33</sup>, daterait *de secundo consecrationis anno... Nigelli sancte Elyensis ecclesie pontificis*, c'est-à-dire de l'an 1134 (Blake 1962 : xxxix). Il existe une version en vers français de cette hagiographie: c'est la *Vie Seinte Audree*. Le miracle de l'an 1134 – raccourci et adouci en comparaison du modèle latin<sup>34</sup> – est inclus dans la *Vie Seinte Audree*<sup>35</sup> (vers 3470-3559).

Ce miracle consiste en une guérison (partielle) opérée par une inconnue avec une fleur mise dans la bouche<sup>36</sup> du malade. Il a donc eu lieu avant la date généralement acceptée pour le début de l'activité littéraire de Marie de France (pas avant 1160) ; et il est possible que Marie ait été influencée par la tradition d'Ely, orale ou déjà écrite, avant d'écrire Eliduc. De fait, le miracle de la fleur merveilleuse a plusieurs points en commun avec la fin du lai d'Eliduc (Löfstedt 2015 : 318).

L'épilogue de la *Vie Seinte Audree* est signée par Marie, ce qui a amené des chercheurs à attribuer ce texte (entier) à Marie de France<sup>37</sup>. Je pense cepen-

31 Elle était célébrée par Beda, voir Brunhölzl I. 1975 : 224.

32 Ely appartenait aux cloîtres réformés par Æathelwold au dixième siècle (voir Brunhölzl 2, 1992 : 509).

33 *Liber Eliensis edited for the Royal historical Society* by E.O.Blake 1962. – Blake date ce texte latin d'entre 1131 et 1174.

34 J'ai rendu compte de la recherche concernant les éditions de l'hagiographie de Sancta Etheldreda (dans *Acta Sanctorum et Liber Eliensis*) et des sources latines de la *Vie Seinte Audree* dans « La Vie Seinte Audree signée par Marie » NM 116/2015 : 286-287.

35 La *Vie Seinte Audree* p.p. Östen Södergård 1955. Uppsala : Almqvist & Wiksell.

36 *...prolatoque flore quem de sinu extulit in os puelle citius inmisit* (*Liber Eliensis* 308).

37 L'Épilogue d'Audrée, vers 4618 *Mut par est fol ki se oblie./ Ici escriis mon non Marie,/ Pur ce ke soie remembre La ressemblance de ces vers avec les signatures de Marie de France dans ses Fables: Me numerai pur remembrance:/ Marie ai num, si sui de France./ Put cel estre que clerc plusur/ Prendreient sur eus mun labur./ Ne voil que nul sur li le die !/ E il fet que fol ki sei ublie !* (Épilogue 3-8) ; dans le début du lai de Guigemar : *Oëz, seignurs, ke dit Marie,/ Ki en sun tens pas ne s'oblie* (3-4); et à la fin de

dant que Marie n'est pas la seule à traduire la *Vie Sainte Audree*, mais que, plutôt, nous avons là une œuvre de plusieurs personnes de compétence inégale (Löfstedt 2015 : 324). Le dernier événement historique auquel la *Vie Sainte Audree* fasse allusion date de l'an 1178 (Blake 1962 : 363, note 1) ; mais il n'est pas impossible que le travail de traduction en vue de la *Vie Sainte Audree* ait pu commencer bien avant cette date (Löfstedt 2015 : 311-312), et que l'équipe ait pu inclure Marie pour un temps et continuer le travail après son départ. Marie dit dans le *Prologue* de ses *Lais* qu'elle aurait voulu

... aukune bone estoire faire  
... de latin en romaunz traire;  
Mais ne me fust guaires de pris:  
Itant s'en sunt altre entremis (Lais Prol. 29-32).

Quelques passages de la *Vie Sainte Audree* peuvent être qualifiées de *bones estoires* traduites (très librement) du latin.

Le début de la *Vie Sainte Audree* invite à une comparaison avec le *Prologue* des *Lais* de Marie. Les deux parlent d'une lutte contre les vices. On lit dans le *Prologue*

Ki de vice se volt defendre  
Estudier deit e entendre  
E grevos' ovre comencier

et ensuite

Par <ceo> se puet plus esloignier  
E de grant dolur delivrer (Lais Prol. 23-27),

et la *Vie Sainte Audree* enseigne qu'il faut se consacrer, comme la sainte l'a fait, à *bon hovre e en bon porpens* (1) et veiller à ce

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l'Espurgatoire: *Joe, Marie, ai mis en memoire / le livre de l'Espurgatoire / en romanz* (2298-2300) saute aux yeux. Voir June Hall McCash 2002 : « La Vie Sainte Audree. A Fourth Text by Marie de France », *Speculum* 77 : 748-777 .

Ke ses biens venquent ses malices,  
Son orguil, ses mauveises vices (Aud. 13-14, Löfstedt 2015 : 312 et  
322).

Dans les deux textes les *vices* signifient des ‘reproches concernant la conduite ; mauvaises habitudes’, comparables à l’*orguil* et susceptibles de causer *grant dolur*.

Vaguement, soit, les deux passages français reflètent des textes latins, qui cependant ne parlent pas de ‘mauvaises habitudes’ :

Dans le *Prologue* des *Lais*, Marie se sert du début de la grammaire de Priscien qui décrit la dure tâche (*res ardua – grevos ovre*) de supprimer des *uitia* (‘fautes’, signifiant chez Priscien ‘fautes d’expression’<sup>38</sup>) dans d’anciennes grammaires.

Le texte de la *Vie Seinte Audree* rend un passage du *Liber Eliensis* qui célèbre les mérites de la sainte, pour éviter qu’ils ne soient effacés de mémoire *vicissitudine rerum*, ‘par l’instabilité des choses’.

Je pense qu’il y a de l’interdépendance entre les textes français, mais je ne saurais dire quel est le premier à combattre les mauvaises habitudes. Toutefois, l’idée de combattre les vices va mieux dans une hagiographie, et l’association du terme latin *vicissitudo* avec le français *vices* ‘mauvaises habitudes’ suggère une traductrice débutante.

### L’éducation de Marie

Je pense que Marie a lu Ovide et que sa maîtrise du latin lui aurait permis de participer à la traduction d’une hagiographie latine. Son intérêt pour la « matière de Bretagne » était probablement éveillé par Geoffrey de Monmouth dont *Historia Regum Britanniae* était écrite en latin. La liste des lec-

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**38** Lat *uitium*, *uitia* devient *vice(s)* en ancien français. La plus ancienne signification du mot français donnée par AND est ‘moral defect, vice’ à partir de 1212 ; ensuite la signification ‘fault, mistake’ à partir de l’an 1240 environ et la signification ‘defect, irregularity’ à partir de 1292. – De même le sens le plus ancien attesté pour *vice* par le FEW est ‘disposition habituelle au mal’ (FEW 14 : 562b), signification sans doute propagée par l’Église. – Au sujet de ce passage de Priscien voir Ménard 1979 : 18.

tures latines de Marie est sans doute beaucoup plus longue<sup>39</sup>. Elle avait en tout cas la maîtrise, au moins passive, du latin. Était-elle autodidacte ?

Elle a lu son Priscien, qui au onzième siècle l'emporte sur Donat comme auteur de la grammaire en usage dans les écoles. Il semble qu'elle ne l'ait pas lu en version abrégée<sup>40</sup>, puisqu'elle a pu se servir de l'introduction de l'œuvre du grammairien<sup>41</sup>. Cela signifie plutôt que Marie avait poursuivi des études au-delà de l'enseignement élémentaire.

Nous allons tester le niveau de l'éducation de Marie par un examen des introductions de ses *Lais*. Dans l'enseignement scolaire européen, les nouveaux ouvrages à étudier étaient présentés aux élèves à l'aide d'un *accessus* qui demandait la prise en compte de quatre faits (*locus, tempus, persona, causa scribendi*) ou bien devait contenir sept *circumstantiae*, répondant aux questions *quis, quid, cur, quomodo, quando, ubi, quibus facultatibus*. Les deux types d'*accessus* remontent à l'antiquité. Leur réintroduction dans les écoles est attribuée à des maîtres irlandais (Glauche 1970 : 39 sq) des écoles carolingiennes, dont le première était la *schola palatina* de Charlemagne<sup>42</sup>. Dans un

39 Dans le chapitre « Marie's Intellectual Background » Mickel (1974 : 21sq) mentionne l'influence des *Metamorphoses* d'Ovide sur les *Deus Amanz* et le *Laüstic* en renvoyant à l'article « Piramo e Tisbe nei Lai di Maria di Francia » dans *Studi Lugli-Valeri* (Venezia 1961), 845-853. Voir P. Ménard 1979 : 31- 50.

40 G. Glauche (1970 : 69-71) mentionne l'existence d'un *Priscianellus* 'vermutlich sind damit Exzerpte aus Priscian gemeint' et d'un *Priscianus paruus*. – C'est au onzième siècle que Priscien l'a emporté sur Donat comme grammairien préféré dans l'enseignement scolaire (voir *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, s.v. Donatus Aelius (par C. Jeudy), 1986, München–Zürich : Artemis Verlag).

41 *Cum omnis eloquentiae doctrinam et omne studiorum genus a Graecorum fontibus deriuatum Latinos proprio sermone inuenio celebrasse, nec solum ea, quae emendate ab illis sunt prolata, sed etiam quosdam errores... imitari, in quibus maxime uetustissima grammatica ars arguitur peccasse, cuius auctores quanto sunt iuniores, tanto perspicaciores, et ingeniis floruisse et diligentia ualuisse omnium iudicio confirmantur... cum igitur eos omnia fere uitia... expurgasse comperio... nostrorum autem neminem post illos imitorem eorum extitisse..., conatus sum... rem arduam quidem, sed officio professionis non indebitam, supra nominatorum praecepta uirorum... in Latinum transferre sermonem* (H. Keil éd. *Prisciani institutionum grammaticarum libri XVIII*, dans *Grammatici Latini* vol.3, Leipzig : Teubner, 1855)

42 La *schola palatina* de Charlemagne avait engagé l'aide des érudits étrangers arrivés d'Italie (Paul Diacre, p.ex.), d'Espagne (Theodulf Gothus), d'Angleterre (dont Alkuin de York) et d'Irlande. De fait, les pays insulaires avaient pu garder l'héritage culturel de l'Antiquité mieux que la Gaule ravagée par les migrations et les guerres. Après

ms. du neuvième siècle de S. Gallen déjà, les sept *circumstantiae* consacrées se retrouvent dans un mètre facile à retenir :

*quis, quid, ubi, quando, cur, qui modus, unde facultas* –  
ex his septenis sententia uim tenet omnis<sup>43</sup> (Glauche 1970 :85-86).

Ces deux schémas aident les instructeurs et leurs élèves partout en Europe à analyser différents ouvrages, courts et longs, et à en présenter des résumés.

Au onzième et au douzième siècle, on commence graduellement à préférer le schéma à quatre éléments. Glauche cite un manuscrit de Lucca du onzième siècle :

Quatuor sunt requirenda in initio uniuscuiusque libri : persona  
uidelicet, locus, tempus et causa scribendi,

mais ensuite :

In exordio uniuscuiusque libri septem apud antecessores nostros  
praelibanda erant: *quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo,*  
*quando* ... (Glauche 1970 : 52).

De même, dans un texte du douzième siècle :

In libris quidem explanandis antiqui non minus quam septem,  
moderni quatuor requirere solent... (Glauche 1970 : 53).

Si Marie de France a suivi quelque programme d'enseignement comparable à celui du *trivium*, quel *accessus* a-t-elle reçu à la lecture de Virgile ou à

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avoir déposé cet héritage dans le foyer de la renaissance carolingienne, l'Angleterre et l'Irlande devaient bientôt subir les invasions des hommes du Nord.

**43** Un ms. du neuvième siècle identifie les *circumstantiae* : *QUIS Sulla consul UBI Romam CUR Marii causa FACULTAS cum legionibus QUANDO mane prima QUOMODO facibus accensis QUID aggreditur* (Glauche 1970 : 86). C'est-à-dire, *QUIS* est le thème ou le sujet ou ce dont on parle, *QUID* est le prédicat, ce qui est dit à propos du sujet. Il est difficile de distinguer entre *QUOMODO* et *QUIBUS FACULTATIBUS*.

celle des pièces de Térence ? Aurait-elle entendu parler des sept ou quatre *circumstantiae* ? Plus tard, écrivain elle-même, donne-t-elle un *accessus* à ses lais, au moins aux plus longs d'entre eux ? Que dit-elle à son public avant d'entamer l'histoire propre d'un lai ?

Marie a l'habitude d'annoncer sa présentation par une phrase schématique 'je veux conter l'histoire de x' qui pourrait être analysée QUIS (je) QUID (veux...x), et qui peut être élargie. Ce début peut s'entremêler à l'introduction au lai (voir ci-dessous Chevrefoil).

L'introduction au lai proprement dit peut être réduite au seul nom du lai. Ainsi le lai du *Fresne* :

Le lai del Freisne vus dirai  
Sulunc le cunte que jeo sai (1-2).

Le lai de *Lanval* reçoit une introduction un peu plus fournie :

L'aventure d'un autre lai,  
Cum ele avint, vus cunterai:  
Fait fu d'un mut gentil vassal;  
En bretans l'apelent Lanval (1-4).

L'introduction nous apprend la réponse à QUIS (*un mut gentil vassal*).

L'introduction peut expliquer le nom<sup>44</sup>, s'il s'agit d'un nom étranger. Le *Laüstic* débute par la traduction du nom en deux langues :

Une aventure vus dirai,  
Dunt li Bretun firent un lai;  
Laüstic ad nun, ceo m'est vis,  
Si l'apelent en lur païs;  
Ceo est *russignol* en franceis  
E *nihtegale* en dreit engleis (1-6).

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<sup>44</sup> Voir les explications des noms anglo-saxons dans la tradition de l'hagiographie de Sainte Audrée (Löfstedt 2015 : 289).

Marie explique le nom du lai et donne l'information correspondant à la question UBI (*en lur país*) quant au lieu d'origine du lai. Elle ne présente pas le lai ni le rôle qu'y joue le rossignol.

*Bisclavret* débute par l'explication du nom suivie de l'explication du phénomène :

Quant de lais faire m'entremet,  
Ne voil ublier Bisclavret :  
Bisclavret ad nun en bretan,  
Garwaf l'apelent li Norman (1-4),  
*Jadis* le poeit hume oïr  
Sovent suleit avenir,  
*Humes plusurs garual devindrent*  
E es boscages meisun tindrent.  
Garualf, c<eo> est beste salvage ;  
Tant cum il est en cele rage,  
*Hummes devure*, grant mal fait,  
*Es granz forez* converse e vait.  
Cest afere les ore ester ;  
Del Bisclavret <vus> voil cunter (5-14).

Marie traduit le nom du lai, un lexème breton. Elle donne l'information correspondant aux questions QUANDO (*Jadis; souvent*), QUOMODO (*Humes... garval devindrent*), QUIS (*garual*), et UBI (*es granz forez*), QUID (*Hummes devure*) concernant le phénomène loup-garou, mais quant au lai, elle ne donne que son sujet, le QUIS (le *Bisclavret* 'loup-garou').

L'introduction peut présenter quelques questions de la liste traditionnelle des *circumstantiae* :

Le lai de *Milun* débute par des observations stylistiques. Ensuite Marie semble y promettre une explication pour la naissance du lai :

Ki divers cunte veut traitier,  
Diversement deit comencier  
E parler si rainablement  
K'il seit pleisibles a la gent.



Ici comenceraï Milun  
E musteraï par brief sermun  
*Pur quei e coment* fu trovez  
Li lais kë issi est numez (1-8).

Marie présente le nom du lai sans l'expliquer, et les questions CUR (*pur quei*) et QUOMODO (*coment*), relatives, me semble-t-il, à l'origine du lai. Le *brief sermun* censé répondre à ces questions, est-ce le lai lui-même<sup>45</sup> ?

Le lai du *Chaitivel* est introduit par les deux noms du lai, et de nouveau, Marie promet de fournir des informations ultérieures en présentant quelques questions qui dans la tradition latine servent à identifier des *circumstantiae*, bien qu'elle remette à plus tard les réponses :

Talent me prist de remembrer  
Un lai dunt jo oï parler.  
L'aventure vus en dirai  
E la cité vus numerai  
*U* il fu nez e *cum* ot nun.  
Le Chaitivel l'apelet hum,  
E si <i> ad plusurs de ceus  
Ki l'apelent Les Quatre Deuls (1-8).

Ce lai qui illustre le problème d'une dame ayant plusieurs amis, présente, après la description de la belle héroïne, la morale à tirer de l'histoire :

Tutes les dames de une tere  
Vendreit <il> meuz d'amer requere  
Quë un fol de sun pan tolir;  
Kar cil volt an eire ferir (19-22).

Hormis les noms du lai, l'introduction est peu claire. L'auteur est le QUIS de l'introduction, l'aventure dont elle promet de rendre compte est le QUID, mais

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45 Est-ce une allusion à la forme brève du genre de lai ?

les questions UBI (*U il fu nez*) et QUOMODO (*Cum ot nun*) se réfèrent-elles au lai ou au héros de l'aventure du lai (les deux s'appellent Chaitivel) ?

Leurs *accessus* n'apprennent rien au lecteur sur les lais appelés *Milun* et le *Chaitivel*, pas même pourquoi ils sont ainsi nommés.

L'introduction au lai *Yonec* est un peu plus riche :

Puis que des lais ai comencé,  
Ja n'iert par mun travail laissé;  
Les aventures que j'en sai  
Tut par rime les cunterai.  
En pensé ai e en talent  
Que d'Iwenec vus die avant,  
*Dunt* il fu nez, e de sun pere  
*Cum* il vint primes a sa mere;  
Cil qui engendra Yuuenec  
Aveit a nun Muldumarec (1-10).

Marie définit le QUIS du lai (Iwenec) comme une personne dont les parents sont connus et promet des réponses à UBI (*Dunt*) et QUOMODO (*Cum*). Les vers suggèrent que la naissance extraordinaire d'Iwenec constitue le QUID.

Deux cas d'introductions multiples.

Avec deux introductions entrelacées, le lai de *Chevrefoil* commence par une justification du travail de Marie et situe le lai dans l'histoire connue de Tristram et Iseut :

Asez me plest e bien le voil  
Del lai que hum nume Chevrefoil  
Que la verité vus en cunt  
<E> *pur quei* il fu fet e *dunt*.  
Plusurs le me unt cunté et dit  
E jeo l'ai trové en escrit  
De Tristram e de la reïne,  
De lur amur que tant fu fine,  
*Dunt* il eurent meinte dolur,  
Puis en mururent en un jur (1-10).

L'introduction au travail de Marie donne le nom du lai, identifie le QUIS (le 'je' est Marie elle-même), QUANDO (sous-entendu : le verbe est au présent), CUR (*me plest*) QUIBUS FACULTATIBUS (*plusieurs le me unt conté...*) et QUID (compte rendu de la "vérité" du lai appelé *Chevrefoil*).

Dans l'introduction du lai, QUIS est *Chevrefoil*, QUID (*fu fet de Tristram e de la reïne, de lur amur*), QUANDO (sous-entendu : le verbe est au passé), QUIBUS FACULTATIBUS (*lur amur..fu fine*) et les questions CUR (*Pur quei* final), UBI (*Dunt* 'à partir de quelle situation' local/causal) sont présentées et attendent leurs réponses.

Le lai d'*Equitan* est précédé de deux introductions assez nettement séparées.

L'une présente le travail des créateurs bretons des lais :

Mut unt esté noble barun  
Cil de Bretagne, li Bretun.  
Jadis suleient par prüesce,  
Par curteisie e par noblesce  
Des aventures que oiënt,  
Ki a plusur gent aveneient,  
Fere les lais pur remembrance,  
Que <hum> nes meist en ubliance (1-8)

et l'autre, l'histoire d'*Equitan* :

Un en firent, ceo oi cunter,  
Ki ne fet mie a ublier,  
D'*Equitan* que mut fu curteis,  
Sire de Nauns, jostis' e reis.  
*Equitan* fu mut de grant pris  
E mut amez en sun païs;  
Deduit amout e drüerie:  
Pur ceo maintint chevalerie (9-16).

La première introduction donne les sept *circumstantiae*: UBI (...*Bretagne*), QUIS (*li Bretun*), QUANDO (*Jadis*), QUID (*suleient ...Fere les lais pur remem-*

brance), QUOMODO (*Des aventures que oiënt*)<sup>46</sup>, QUIBUS FACULTATIBUS (*par prüesce, par curtesie e par noblesce*), CUR (*Que <hum> nes meist en ubliance*).

La seconde répond à QUIS (*Equitan*), UBI (*Sire de Nauns* ‘Nantais’, renvoi à Nantes), QUANDO (le verbe est au passé), CAUSA SCRIBENDI (*Deduit amout e drüerie...*). L'auteur complète l'information sur la CAUSA SCRIBENDI par la morale du lai qu'elle insère avant l'histoire proprement dite :

Cil met<ent> lur vie en nu<n>cure  
Que d'amur n'unt sen e mesure;  
Tels est la mesure de amer  
Que nul n'i deit reisun garder (17-20).

En fait, le lai d'*Equitan*, qui ressemble à un fabliau, illustre le danger de l'amour intéressé qui calcule les avantages sociaux (la *reisun*) de la liaison.

Les deux introductions d'*Equitan* sont bonnes.

L'*accessus* élaboré d'*Eliduc*, un lai très long, donne l'information nécessaire pour éveiller l'intérêt du public :

De un mut ancien lai bretun  
Le cunte e tute la reisun  
Vus dirai, si cum jeo entent  
La verité, mun escient.  
En Bretagne ot un chevalier  
Pruz et curteis, hardi et fier;  
Elidus ot nun, ceo m'est vis,  
N'ot si vaillant hume al país.  
Femme ot espuse, noble et sage,  
De haute gent, de grant parage,  
Ensemble furent lungement,  
Mut s'entr'amerent læaument;  
Mes puis avient par une guere  
Quë il alat soudees quere:

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<sup>46</sup> C'est-à-dire qu'ils tiraient la matière pour leurs lais des aventures qu'ils avaient entendues.

Iloc ama une meschine,  
 Fille ert a rei e a reïne.  
 Guilliadun ot nun la pucele,  
 El rëaume nen ot plus bele.  
 La femme resteit apelee  
 Guildelüec en sa cuntree.  
 D'eles deus ad li lai a nun  
 Guildelüec ha Gualadun.  
 Elidus fu primes nomez,  
 Mes ore est li nuns remüez,  
 Kar des dames est avenu  
 L'aventure dunt li lais fu.  
 Si cum avient, vus cunterai,  
 La verité vus en dirrai (1-28).

L'introduction de Marie semble donner les sept *circumstantiae* recommandées : UBI (*En Bretagne*), QUIS (*un chevalier... Elidus...ot espuse... s'entr'amerent*), QUID (*Mes...avient... que...ama une meschine/Fille... a rei*), QUANDO (*puis*), CUR (*par une guere*), QUOMODO (*il alat soudees quere*), QUIBUS FACULTATIBUS (*El rëaume nen ot plus bele*). – Le public apprend le problème : un chevalier dont le mariage en Bretagne est heureux doit, à cause d'un conflit (*guere*), partir à l'étranger pour trouver de l'emploi, et tombe amoureux d'une jeune princesse d'une grande beauté. Le lecteur écouter attentivement la présentation du long lai.

Le lai des *Deus Amanz* reçoit un *accessus* « moderne » à quatre *circumstantiae*. Il rend compte du contenu du lai et en explique le titre :

Jadis avint en Normendie  
 Une aventure mut oïe  
 De deus enfanz que s'entr'amerent;  
 Par amur ambedeus finerent.  
 Un lai en firent li Bretun:  
 De Deus Amanz recuilt le nun (1-6).

Dans son introduction, Marie répond à QUANDO (*Jadis*), UBI (*en Normandie*), QUIS (*Deus enfanz que s'entr'amerent*), CAUSA SCRIBENDI (*Par amour...finerent/ Un lai en firent li Bretun*) : il advint qu'un jour en Normandie deux jeunes amoureux moururent par amour, et les Bretons en firent un lai.

Cet *accessus* est séparé du lai proprement dit par une description géographique et historique de Pîtres<sup>47</sup> (7-20).

Le début du lai de *Guigemar* (proprement dit, hormis le prologue général, 1-18) prépare le public à l'aventure du héros par des détails concernant la vie de son père<sup>48</sup>. La structure de cette introduction me paraît être moderne :

Les contes ke jo sai verrais,  
Dunt li Bretun unt fait les lais,  
Vos conterai assez briefment.  
El chief de cest comencement,  
Sulunc la lettre e l'escriture,  
Vos mosterai un'aventure  
Ki en Bretaigne la menur  
Avint al tens ancienur.  
En cel tens tint Hoilas la tere,  
Sovent en peis, sovent en guere.  
Li reis aveit un sun barun  
Ki esteit sire de Liun;  
Oridials esteit apelez,  
De sun seignur fu mult privez.  
Chivaliers est pruz e vaillanz;  
De sa moillier out deus enfanz  
Un fiz e une fille bele.  
Noguent ot nun la damaisele;  
Guigeimar noment le dancel. (19-37).

**47** Le lai se réfère-t-il à un évènement historique ou à quelque tradition folklorique ?

**48** Le nombre de noms de personne est remarquable étant donné que, plus tard, même l'héroïne reste anonyme.

Dans sa longue introduction, Marie ne répond qu'aux questions UBI (*en Bretagne la menur*), QUANDO (*al tens ancienur/ en cel tens tint Hoilas la tere*) et, en donnant le nom du héros, à QUIS. La CAUSA SCRIBENDI est-elle le fait que les Bretons avaient fait un lai concernant le héros ?

Marie a appris qu'un ouvrage littéraire doit être présenté au public ; elle connaît les règles de l'*accessus* et elle réussit au moins deux introductions parfaites – pour *Eliduc* avec sept *circumstantiae* et pour les *Deus Amanz* avec quatre *circumstantiae* – qui présentent l'essentiel du lai. L'*accessus* de *Guigemar* dit que le QUIS est le fils d'un vassal breton bien situé, donne le lieu (UBI) et le temps (QUANDO) de l'histoire et permet d'extrapoler la CAUSA SCRIBENDI.

Nous avons trouvé deux cas de double introduction, dans *Equitan* et *Chevrefoil*. Celle d'*Equitan* a une introduction à sept *circumstantiae* et une autre à quatre.

Plusieurs lais débutent par des vers présentant quelques questions (*Milun* : *pur quei et coment*, *Chaitivel* : *u et cum*, *Yonec* : *dunt et cum*, *Chevrefoil* : *pur quei et dunt*) dont les réponses devraient contribuer à construire un *accessus* correct. Ces questions qui restent sans réponse dans l'introduction, montrent cependant, je pense, que Marie a été exercée à formuler des *accessus* à l'aide de questions.

Le *Laüstic* débute par une explication linguistique du nom ; de même *Bisclavret*, et pour ce dernier on trouve aussi une explication encyclopédique du phénomène du loup-garou, mais les lais du *Laüstic* et de *Bisclavret* n'ont pas d'introduction à proprement parler. La traduction des noms celtiques de ces lais garantit-elle la compétence de l'auteur et l'authenticité de ces sources ; et suffit-elle à attirer l'attention du public ?

Elle ne donne aucune introduction pour le lai du *Fresne* ; *Lanval* débute par une définition du QUIS du lai qui est un *mut gentil vassal*. On n'apprend rien du contenu de ces lais.

Cette négligence signifie-t-elle que les particularités de ces histoires étaient déjà connues, ou que les lais étaient présentés comme des divertissements légers qui n'exigeaient pas du public une attention soutenue ?

*Eliduc*, le plus long des lais, aurait demandé une soirée entière ; aussi est-il fourni d'un *accessus* impeccable. Les *Deus Amanz* est court, mais l'introduction quasi complète pourrait servir non seulement à éveiller, mais aussi à

maintenir l'intérêt du public pour le lai, malgré la digression causée par l'histoire du site auquel le lai fait référence.

La pratique des introductions, *accessus*, avait été transmise dans des écoles européennes par la renaissance carolingienne. Le fait que Marie de France connût le canon signifie-t-il qu'elle était continentale, française, de naissance et d'éducation ? Non, pas nécessairement. Il est vrai que dès le neuvième siècle le danger des invasions et des guerres contre les Vikings arrive à interrompre la belle tradition latine en Angleterre<sup>49</sup>. Mais le renouveau a eu lieu à la fin du dixième siècle, au temps de Dunstan et Æthelwold. C'est alors que les abbayes et les cités épiscopales retrouvèrent leurs anciens rôles de centres culturels, facilitant une réunion de l'Angleterre avec le continent, bien avant la Conquête normande (Brunhölzl 2, 1992 : 509).

D'autre part, cette période de rupture difficile fut aussi le temps d'Alfred le Grand, fondateur d'un programme culturel vernaculaire, lui-même auteur et traducteur. Désormais, et malgré les changements du vernaculaire – l'anglais à l'époque du roi Alfred, l'anglo-normand pendant les siècles suivant la Conquête, ensuite, de nouveau l'anglais – la culture de l'Angleterre devait se servir du vernaculaire à côté du latin. Pour les débuts de la littérature en ancien français, cela pourrait expliquer le grand nombre de textes produits en anglo-normand (voir la bibliographie d'AND ou de DEAF) et le fait que le système abrégatif de l'écriture pour l'ancien français 'stardard' reflète la scripta anglo-normande<sup>50</sup>. Il paraît probable qu'une jeune Marie intelligente et érudite a pu s'imposer comme femme de lettres plus facilement dans l'Angleterre francophone qu'en France.

**49** Alkuin, le personnage le plus important de la renaissance carolingienne a apporté au programme scolaire de Charlemagne l'ancienne tradition de York qui remontait "... in direkter Linie über Egbert, den Gründer der Schule von York, zu Beda, Benedict Biscop und den Kreis um Theodor und Hadrian zurück" (Brunhölzl 1, 1975 : 247-248). Theodor et Hadrian étaient envoyés par le pape pour continuer le travail d'Austin (<Augustin) de Canterbury (ibid. p. 200).

**50** Voir Geneviève Hasenohr "Écrire en latin, écrire en roman", 79- 110, dans *Langages et peuples d'Europe. Cristallisation des identités romanes et germaniques*. Éd. Michel Banniard. 2002, CNRS: Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail.



Denis Piramus, bénédictin de l'abbaye de Bury St Edmunds et auteur anglo-normand de la *Vie Seint Edmund le rei*, rend compte du succès et du renom de Dame Marie, mais il ajoute que les lais manquent de véracité<sup>51</sup>.

Que dirions-nous ? Les *Lais* ne sont pas des témoins fiables d'événements historiques, mais ils peuvent refléter d'anciens contes relevant du folklore. Marie attribue aux anciens Bretons les lais qu'elle a rimez (Prol. 41) – le *Chaitivel* étant en partie conçu par une dame de Nantes (voir 203 sq) et le *Chevrefoil* étant créé par Tristram (voir 109 sq), les autres étant anonymes. Les événements racontés se situent dans des environnements identifiés par des toponymes celtiques, exception faite de l'aventure du lai des *Deus Amanz* qui se déroule en Normandie, dans une région que Marie connaît (19).

Tous les lais parlent d'amour : souvent avec certains détails qu'Ovide n'aurait pas désavoués.

Les lois qui dirigent la vie des protagonistes des *Lais* – les mariages des femmes, la carrière militaire des hommes – représentent l'Angleterre sous le régime féodal.

La culture courtoise accepte l'amitié en dehors du mariage et adoucit par ses manières raffinées le quotidien de la société princière ; mais non sans danger. Dans les *Lais*, le serment de fidélité entre le suzerain et son vassal risquait d'être mis à l'épreuve par les vœux des amis courtois. Il n'est nullement sûr que la soumission du chevalier à sa dame "suzeraine" anoblît l'homme (*Equitan*) ; en tout cas il ne garantissait pas un comportement responsable de la part de la "suzeraine" (*Equitan*, *Chaitivel*).

Les *Lais* dévoilent leur auteur : une dame érudite, trilingue (français, latin, anglais), dont l'œuvre nous convainc de sa connaissance d'une technique traditionnelle dans l'enseignement de la littérature latine, répandue en Europe par l'intermédiaire des écoles carolingiennes, et de sa volonté de l'introduire dans des textes français.

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51 La Vie Seint Edmund le Rei, poème anglo-normand du XIIe siècle par Denis Piramus, éd. H. Kjellman, Göteborg : Wettergren 1935 (Göteborgs Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-samhälles handlingar, femte följdén, ser. A, Band 4, no 3) *Ki en rime fist et basti/ E compassa les vers des lais,/Ke ne sunt pas del tut* ('entièrement') *verais* (Edmond 35-38).

Cette dame est prête à se présenter et à présenter son œuvre malgré une critique parfois méprisante.

Elle laisse son lecteur admirer la conduite courageuse et altruiste de femmes indépendantes : dans le *Fresne*, outre l'héroïne, la jeune fille qui sauve le bébé d'une mère désespérée, et l'abbesse, la 'tante' de l'enfant trouvée ; dans *Milun*, la vieille servante de l'amie de Milun qui cache la grossesse de sa maîtresse et sauve l'enfant ; dans *Eliduc*, l'épouse du héros, prête à laisser le mari qu'elle avait attendu, dont elle avait célébré l'arrivée et qu'elle aimait, pour faciliter la vie de cet homme avec une autre femme, innocente et jeune.

Quant au mariage, elle s'oppose aux unions forcées et veut que seules les unions nouées par l'amour soient officiellement confirmées.

Rien dans le texte des *Lais* n'indique que cette dame ait été mariée ou ait eu des enfants. Cependant, elle en a soigné et elle sait décrire en détail comment les nouveau-nés sont vêtus et préparés pour être envoyés loin de leur mère (*Fresne*, *Milun*) ; elle sait aussi raconter la prise en charge d'un enfant trouvé devant la porte d'un couvent (*Fresne*).

Ceci me laisse penser qu'elle avait vécu au couvent, qu'elle pouvait être religieuse : de même sa connaissance de l'hagiographie d'une sainte célébrée à Ely, son intérêt pour les détails dans l'établissement d'un monastère et sa présentation de la vie monastique comme une expression de l'amour mûr et altruiste (*Eliduc*). Sa présentation de l'amour courtois est en conformité, et il est peut-être significatif que l'épouse d'Eliduc, la seule épouse sympathique dans ses *Lais*, devient abbesse (*Eliduc*).

Je pense, avec certains autres (Löfstedt 2015 : 286 et 321sq), que Marie de France est Marie Becket<sup>52</sup>, sœur cadette de Thomas Becket. Marie Becket devint abbesse de Barking en 1173. Avant cette date, peut-être religieuse déjà,

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**52** Cette identification faciliterait l'explication de certains détails dans les *Lais*. Dans le lai des *Deus Amanz Marie dit Nus savum bien de la contree/ Li vals de Pistre est nomee* (19-20). Marie Becket est en effet d'origine normande. Gilbert Becket, son père, venait d'une famille originaire de Thierville (non loin de l'Abbaye du Bec), localité qui comme le val de Pîtres est située dans le département de l'Eure. – La connaissance de la procédure judiciaire anglo-normande affichée dans *Lanval* n'étonnerait pas chez la sœur de Thomas Becket, chancelier d'Henri II.

elle aurait pu participer à la préparation d'une version française de la *Vita Sanctae Etheldredae*, texte lié à la riche abbaye d'Ely<sup>53</sup>. Il est difficile de penser qu'elle l'aurait fait à Ely après avoir été faite abbesse de Barking et cela pas seulement à cause de la distance entre les lieux ; en fait cette année 1173 voit aussi l'élection de Geoffrey Ridel, ennemi acharné de Thomas Becket, au siège épiscopal d'Ely.

Nous ne savons rien de certain de la jeunesse de Marie de France. Si nous situons les jeunes années de l'auteur à Ely<sup>54</sup> – où elle aurait appris des détails de l'hagiographie de Sainte Audrée – elle se serait trouvée dans un centre religieux déjà solidement lié au continent et dont le clergé restait attaché au gouvernement séculier de l'Angleterre. Pendant la jeunesse de Marie, l'évêque d'Ely était Nigel (1133-1169 voir Wikipedia) qui avait reçu son éducation à Laon (site d'une ancienne école carolingienne) ; il fut aussi trésorier du royaume après l'Anarchie, (1154-1158)<sup>55</sup> au début du règne d'Henri II, lorsque Thomas Becket, le frère aîné de Marie Becket, en était chancelier. Les deux hommes se sont-ils rencontrés ?

Une des personnes qui ont connu l'abbesse Marie Becket et l'archevêque Thomas Becket était Garnier (ou Guernes), biographe français de Thomas Becket (éd. E.Walberg 1936). Quand il rend compte de la réunion de Wincestre convoquée par les ennemis de Thomas Becket peu de jours avant le meurtre de ce dernier dans la cathédrale (1170), il mentionne (4789) *l'evesque d'Ely qui n'i out cure d'estre* parmi les bons évêques qui ne sont pas invités ou qui ne s'y sont pas présentés. Comme Nigel d'Ely était mort en 1169, il aurait fallu écrire *qui n'i oût cure d'estre*. Cependant, pourquoi Garnier aurait-t-il men-

53 L'abbaye avait été ravagée par les Danois, restaurée par Æthelwold et elle avait subi l'influence de la réforme normande au moins à partir de l'installation (1072) de l'abbé Theodwin, ancien moine de Jumièges (voir *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, s.v. Ely, par E.O. Blake, 1986)

54 Denis Piramus qui parle de Dame Marie, était bénédictin au couvent de Bury St Edmunds, non loin d'Ely (environ 35 km). Les deux maisons voisines ont eu beaucoup en commun (voir p.ex. Audree 3874 sq).

55 Nigel avait occupé la même charge sous Henri Ier, avant d'être élu évêque. Sous Henri II, Nigel laissait la charge à son fils Richard FitzNeal., auteur de *Dialogus de Scaccario*.

tionné cet évêque décédé, s'il n'avait pas joué quelque rôle important dans la vie des Becket ?

Mais comment Marie Becket pourrait-elle dire *si sui de France* ? Carla Rossi qui identifie Marie de France comme Marie Becket, voit cette dame exilée en France avec le reste de la famille de Thomas Becket après la fuite de l'archevêque. Partant, Marie se serait identifiée *si sui de France* comme une posture d'auteur et un signe de gratitude pour la protection obtenue en France (Rossi 2009 : 11). Cependant, il ne semble pas être démontré que Marie ait été exilée avec les autres (Guy 2012 : 231 ne la mentionne pas parmi les exilés ; Löfstedt 2015 : 323, note 37). Dans ce cas, Marie était-elle déjà religieuse, et protégée par son abbaye ? Dans ce cas, quelle serait l'explication de *si sui de France* ?

Les lois d'Henri I<sup>er</sup> (*Leges Henrici Primi* de l'an 1115 environ) préservent la distinction entre les Anglais et les Français (voir Liebermann I : 587 § 69 *De occisione Anglici*, et 592 § 75, 6 *Si Francigena*<sup>56</sup>... *in murdro perimatur*) établie par le Conquérant (voir Liebermann I : 483). C'est seulement Richard Fitzneal (fils de Nigel d'Ely), l'auteur de *Dialogus de Scaccario* (1177), qui a remarqué que la distinction n'était plus guère observée (Dial.Scacc. I 10 B, Liebermann 2,2 : 594a ; Stubbs *Select Charters* 4th ed., 1881 : 168). Si elle a été éduquée en Angleterre, Marie a sans doute connue cette distinction. La phrase de Marie *Si sui de France* peut-elle en effet signifier qu'en Angleterre elle était née dans une famille *Francigena* (et que le français était sa langue maternelle) ? L'interprétation coïncide assez bien avec l'Épilogue des *Fables* où la phrase est trouvée. Après s'être présentée, Marie y constate *Pur amur le cunte Willame*<sup>57</sup> // *M'entremis de cest livre feire / E de l'engleis en romanz treire*; Ésope l'avait traduit du grec en latin et le roi Alfred (*Alfrez*) l'avait ensuite

56 Terme officiel ('amtlich') désignant des 'Franko-Engländer', personnes francophones venues d'outre-mer en Angleterre avec le Conquérant et ses fils et petits-fils, non uniquement des Normands, voir Liebermann 2,2 : 406a s.v. 'Franko-Engländer.' - *Francigena* n'avait pas de traduction consacrée en français.

57 D'après Carla Rossi (2009 : 190) le dédicataire de cette traduction était Guillaume de Mandeville, earl d'Essex, éduqué sur le continent ; il aurait apprécié la traduction et l'histoire du texte traduit.

traduit en anglais<sup>58</sup> ; *E jeo l'ai rimee en franceis* (11-18). Pour montrer au comte Guillaume qu'elle a pu rendre en français un texte anglais, elle a dû expliquer qu'elle maîtrisait le français. **N**

LEENA LÖFSTEDT

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**58** Dans la transmission manuscrite des *Fables* de Marie, le nom *Alfrez* a beaucoup de variantes.

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L'expression artistique  
par la voix et les gestes :  
Concepts français  
à l'Âge classique

**CLAUDIA SCHWEITZER**

**Résumé** L'article propose un regard sur la théorisation et sur les instructions pour la mise en pratique de ce que les auteurs français de l'âge classique appellent *actio* : la modulation de la voix et des gestes à des fins expressives. Partant des descriptions des définitions établies par les philosophes de l'époque (école cartésienne et Lumières) au sujet des effets d'un sentiment éprouvé et transmis, l'étude proposée concerne la démarche dans différents domaines artistiques (acteurs et chanteurs, en passant par la référence aux peintres) pour donner des règles pratiques afin de transformer ces analyses en une expression artistique qui plaît, qui convainc, qui touche et notamment qui émeut.

**Mots-clés** émotion et expression, *actio*, acteur, chanteur, peinture, lexique

## 1. Introduction

L'objectif d'un artiste est l'expression d'un contenu, factuel et/ou émotionnel par les moyens de son art. Dans l'article « expression » de *l'Encyclopédie* (1751, rédigé par d'Alembert, Mallet, Cahusac, Watelet et Venel), nous trouvons plusieurs explications pour le terme *expression* : dans le domaine des Belles-Lettres, il s'agit de « *la représentation de la pensée* », une pensée qui peut s'exprimer par la voix, par le geste ou par la parole prononcée ou écrite. Dans le domaine musical, l'expression « *est le ton propre au sentiment, à la situation, au caractère de chacune des parties du sujet qu'on traite* ». Dans la peinture enfin, le terme « *s'applique aux actions & aux passions* ».

Se concentrant sur l'expression des artistes qui travaillent au moyen de la voix (acteurs et musiciens notamment), on peut résumer les indications données, à la description de la voix, son ton et ses modulations, ainsi qu'à celle des gestes qui l'accompagnent ou, parfois, la remplacent. Par extension, on peut dire que l'expression vocale englobe les modifications prosodiques de la voix comme le ton, le timbre, l'intonation, le rythme, le débit et l'accentuation (Di Cristo 2013) et paralinguistiques comme des vocalismes accompagnant les mots et phrases, le souffle ou un raclement de gorge (Léon 1993), liées à l'expression faciale et à la gestualité (Ionescu 2022).

A l'âge classique, les auteurs utilisent le terme *actio* (ou *action*) pour évoquer la voix et le geste (Chaouche 2001 : 10) au service d'une explication et pour donner des instructions sur l'expressivité des artistes, l'art dramatique,



l'art de l'éloquence ou l'efficacité vocale et théâtrale. Sophie Conte (2007) résume le point de vue de Nicolas Caussin (1619) sur l'importance et l'efficacité de l'*actio* comme suit : « *L'action est essentielle parce qu'elle rend visible ce qui est intérieur, véritable épiphanie de l'âme sur le corps. Elle s'adresse aux sens, et touche ainsi ceux que les idées ont laissés insensibles. Grâce à elle, l'éloquence est complète, charnelle et intellectuelle : elle est incarnée.* » L'*actio* donne à l'artiste la possibilité d'agir sur l'âme de son public : « *Comme la lumière qui vient du soleil, ainsi l'action vient du fond de l'âme ou on pourrait aussi dire que l'âme se manifeste dans l'action comme dans un miroir, à travers le visage, les yeux, les mains et la voix qui est le meilleur instrument pour que l'éloquence puisse se manifester* »<sup>1</sup> (Caussin 1619).

Mais pour être efficace et pour développer une bonne technique artistique, il ne suffit pas de sentir et d'être ému. Il faut encore que l'artiste comprenne comment le visage, les yeux, les mains et la voix expriment ce que l'âme ressent. Seule l'analyse de ce fonctionnement lui permet de « jouer » ensuite un rôle, de soutenir artistiquement l'expression qu'il doit certainement sentir quand il incarne un personnage, mais qui devient plus forte lorsqu'elle est artistiquement sublimée. La technique de l'artiste peut alors faire de sa représentation ce qu'un bon maquillage fait des traits d'une femme : elle met en valeur et elle rend sensible ce qui est naturellement là.

Nous proposons dans cet article un regard sur la théorisation et sur les instructions pour la mise en pratique de l'*actio* chez les auteurs français de l'âge classique. A ce dessin, nous présenterons d'abord les définitions établies par les auteurs de l'époque pour les effets d'un sentiment éprouvé et transmis, c'est-à-dire que nous nous situerons du côté des pensées. Ensuite nous nous intéresserons à la démarche des artistes pour (re)transformer ces descriptions en action et nous essayerons de voir les différences entre les approches choisies pour le geste et pour la voix. Nous nous focaliserons sur l'acteur et sur le chanteur, mais nous regarderons aussi les textes adressés

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1 « *Vt igitur lumen a sole, sic ab intima mente profluit actio, imo mens ipsa in actione se prodit, quasi in speculo, et per uultum, per oculos, per manus, per uocem, optimum eloquentiae instrumentum, in exteriora sese diffundit.* » Caussin (1619 : 9).

aux orateurs, les exigences étant assez comparables à ceux des artistes dans l'objectif de plaire, de toucher, de convaincre, bref : d'émouvoir.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Approche méthodique

Aujourd'hui, l'importance des travaux pluridisciplinaires pour l'étude de l'émotion est souvent soulignée. Ainsi, Marta Tordesillas (2022) confirme que « *l'étude des émotions est un domaine à la fois complexe et hétérogène. Il s'avère nécessaire de procéder à une approche multidisciplinaire et d'analyser l'évolution du contexte historique du concept d'émotion.* » Emmanuel Petit (2022) dresse une liste de plusieurs disciplines académiques dans lesquelles l'étude scientifique des émotions occupe une place considérable : la biologie, la psychologie, la philosophie, la sociologie, l'anthropologie, l'histoire ainsi que la littérature. Selon lui, les différentes analyses peuvent, « *dans une logique interdisciplinaire* », bénéficier de « *leurs apports différenciés* ».

Parlant de l'âge classique et de la voix, les disciplines concernées ne correspondent pas tout à fait à celles évoquées par Petit. Néanmoins, conformément au sujet de notre étude, l'expression artistique, les avantages d'une étude pluridisciplinaire à partir d'un corpus, constitué de textes philosophiques, linguistiques et artistiques semblent évidents. Cette approche reflète la conviction que la confrontation et la mise en relation de plusieurs disciplines sont importantes pour comprendre non seulement de manière générale, mais aussi dans chaque discipline en particulier les théories à la base de la conception de l'expressivité artistique à l'âge classique et les moyens que les artistes étaient censés utiliser pour engendrer une certaine émotion chez le spectateur ou auditeur. En plus, cette approche pluridisciplinaire correspond à celle des auteurs des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, généralement cultivés et instruits dans plusieurs domaines.

Cette démarche profite des thèses sur une histoire générale, développées notamment par Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2014), ainsi que des travaux sur l'histoire connectée (Douki & Minard 2007, Bertrand 2013). Il s'agit d'une

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2 Cf. Fumaroli (1995) : « *La rhétorique et le théâtre s'enracinent dans le même principe [...] selon lequel l'homme est né pour la parole et pour la parole en société.* »

multiplication des points de vue sur un seul sujet et chacun apporte plus de profondeur et permet de nouvelles perspectives.

Dans la pratique, les textes anciens doivent être mis en état d'être traités objectivement dans la perspective d'une comparaison. Le problème de base est non seulement le temps qui nous sépare de l'époque ancienne et son horizon idéologique et linguistique, mais aussi tout simplement le fait que les textes qui constituent notre corpus, sont marqués par la personnalité de leurs auteurs, leur vécu et leurs expériences. Il s'avère donc nécessaire de traduire ce discours dans un langage accessible et de le replacer dans son environnement et son contexte culturel, philosophique et esthétique. Le travail nécessite alors plusieurs étapes :

1. La définition des objets dans les textes des différentes disciplines pour comprendre exactement de quoi parle la source.
2. La traduction du contenu de la source dans un langage qui se réfère à nos connaissances actuelles (Aurox 1982), mais qui reste au plus proche de l'expression des anciens auteurs aussi. Cette « traduction » rend les textes comparables.
3. La contextualisation des objets abordés afin de les intégrer dans les théories de l'époque et les exigences de chaque art.
4. Enfin, la conceptualisation des idées repérables, car l'histoire est la « *description de l'individuel à travers des universaux* » (Veyne 1971 : 174).

### 3. La théorie des émotions

Les finalités d'un artiste de l'âge classique, quel que soit son domaine, sont de plaire et d'émouvoir. Il doit transmettre non seulement un fait, mais aussi les sentiments qui y sont liés, qu'ils soient directement exprimés par des mots (« Je me sens triste »), ou compréhensibles par une opération raisonnée (« Mon père est très malade »). Il s'agit de provoquer de l'empathie ou de la compassion auprès d'autrui, comme c'est le cas dans une conversation du quotidien. Selon Antoine-François Riccoboni (1750 : 36), « *l'on appelle expression, l'adresse par laquelle on fait sentir au Spectateur tous les mouvemens dont on veut paroître pénétré* ».

Aujourd'hui, on considère les émotions sous un angle psychologique et dans la lignée de l'approche naturaliste de Charles Darwin (1872) comme des « *réactions affectives intentes, des réponses de l'organisme à des situations données* » (Lacheret 2011) ou, avec les mots d'Emmanuel Petit (2022), « *des manifestations de la pensée* ». Sous un angle expressif, « *les émotions sont action et mouvement visible par autrui* » (*idem*<sup>3</sup>) et elles se manifestent « *par certaines expressions du visage (crispation) ou du corps (tremblement), sueur froides, palpitations, etc.* » (Petit 2022). Plus proche de notre sujet, Lacheret (2011) évoque également la voix et les comportements comme indicateurs de l'émotion. Ce type de définition, qui repose évidemment sur les recherches des deux derniers siècles, nous la trouvons déjà en germe à l'époque classique. Pour René Descartes, parole et mouvement sont étroitement liés : un mouvement du corps est toujours nécessaire pour la matérialisation d'une idée ou d'un sentiment par la parole. Ce mouvement est dû à une opération cognitive (motivé par l'esprit ou le cerveau) et à une opération émotive (due à l'âme) : « *ce qui est en elle [l'âme] une passion est communément en lui [le corps] une action ; en sorte qu'il n'y a point de meilleur chemin pour venir à la connaissance de nos passions que d'examiner la différence qui est entre l'âme et le corps* » (Descartes 1649 [1990] : 38).

Si l'émotion est comprise comme un mouvement, l'origine de cette interprétation découle directement de l'étymologie du terme même : il s'agit d'un dérivé des mots latins *emovere* (mouvement) et *motio* (action de mouvoir, Picoche 2009). Toujours selon Descartes, un objet « *de dehors* » fait une impression sur les sens de l'homme et excite ainsi un mouvement dans les nerfs. Ce mouvement déclenche un sentiment (des sensations) de l'âme auquel peut s'ajouter un mouvement du corps (1649 [1990] : 47). Ensuite, un mouvement de celui qui agit, qui gesticule et qui parle, peut se transmettre à une autre personne qui, à son tour, éprouve dans son âme un mouvement identique ou proche de celui du départ.<sup>4</sup>

3 Cf. Scherer (2004) : « *Fascial and vocal expression, as well as gestures and posture, during emotion episodes are generally considered to be central motor components of emotion.* »

4 Cf. le modèle de perception de Brunswik, adapté par Scherer, ici repris d'après Vidrascu (2007 : 10). Il s'agit d'un processus d'encodage (de l'expression) par le locuteur et, après la transmission du message, d'un décryptage (décodage) par

Or, l'acte de sentir, de recevoir un message et de s'en rendre compte se compose de la sensation proprement dite, induite par les organes sensitifs de l'homme, et d'un acte mental, intimément lié à la sensation de départ :

« Je suis le même qui sens, c'est-à-dire qui reçoit et connaît les choses comme par les organes des sens, puisqu'en effet je vois la lumière, j'ouïs le bruit, je ressens la chaleur. Mais l'on me dira que ces apparences sont fausses et que je dors. Qu'il soit ainsi ; toutefois, à tous les moins, il est très certain qu'il me semble que je vois, que j'ouïs, et que je m'échauffe ; et c'est proprement ce qui en moi s'appelle sentir, et cela, pris aussi précisément, n'est rien autre chose que penser ». (Descartes 1641 [1979] : 81, 83)

Pour comprendre le fonctionnement du processus, Descartes détaille les sensations provoquées par un bout de cire (la lumière, le bruit, la chaleur (1641 [1979] : 81). Il constate qu'afin qu'une sensation devienne compréhensible, un jugement, c'est-à-dire une opération abstraite, est toujours nécessaire. Ce jugement associe les différentes sensations, visibles, auditives ou tactiles, à l'objet, il les traduit en idées et choisit celles qui sont probantes pour comprendre la nature de cet objet.

Dans l'école cartésienne, les mécanismes de la sensation, le rôle du corps et de l'âme, la création d'une passion et son partage avec autrui seront étudiés, et on développe sur une base d'observations, d'analyses et de réflexions théoriques d'une part un métalangage, associé aux passions, et d'autre part un catalogue des émotions avec leurs expressions respectives. Au cours des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, les différentes émotions sont codifiées et les descriptions mises à la disposition des auteurs. Nous proposons ici en guise d'exemple un travail à partir de deux passions opposées : la tristesse et la joie. Les deux font généralement partie des émotions de base qu'identifient les auteurs (cf. Vidrescu 2007 : 16-18).<sup>5</sup>

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l'interlocuteur. Au niveau linguistique, des signes comme la respiration, la phonation ou l'articulation expriment l'état interne du locuteur.

5 Selon Ekman (1992), ces émotions de base possèdent 9 caractéristiques grâce auxquelles on peut leur attribuer un statut de représentativité : 1. leur universalité

La tristesse est selon Descartes (1649 [1990] : 99) « *une langueur désagréable en laquelle consiste l'incommodité que l'âme reçoit du mal, ou du défaut que les impressions du cerveau lui représentent.* » Il s'agit d'un sentiment durable, lié à une action de l'esprit, « *une réflexion soutenue & profonde sur le mal qui nous arrive* » et qui « *resserre, accable, & fixe sur son objet* » (*Encyclopédie* 1751, article « passions, rédigé par Jaucourt). Pour Etienne Bretteville (1689 : 434), elle est « *la maladie du cœur, comme la douleur est la maladie du corps* ». Les signes de cette maladie sont décrits par Descartes (1649 [1990] : 99) :

« le pouls est faible et lent, et qu'on sent comme des liens autour du cœur, qui le serrent, et des glaçons qui le gèlent et communiquent leur froideur au reste du corps ; et que cependant on ne laisse pas d'avoir quelquefois bon appétit et de sentir que l'estomac ne manque point à faire son devoir. » (Descartes 1649 [1990] : 99)

La joie en revanche est « *une agréable émotion de l'âme, en laquelle consiste la jouissance qu'elle a du bien que les impressions du cerveau lui représentent comme sien* » (Descartes 1649 [1990] : 98-99). Comme la tristesse, elle est durable, il s'agit d'une « *réflexion continue, vive & animée sur le bien dont nous jouissons* » et elle déclenche des sensations « *douces & agréables* » (Jaucourt, *Encyclopédie* 1751, article « passions »). Physiquement, elle se montre par le fait

« que le pouls est égal et plus vite qu'à l'ordinaire, mais qu'il n'est pas si fort ou si grand qu'en l'amour ; et qu'on sent une chaleur agréable qui n'est pas seulement en la poitrine, mais qui se répand aussi en toutes les parties extérieures du corps avec le sang qu'on voit y venir en abondance ; et que cependant on perd quelquefois l'appétit, à

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qui fait qu'elles sont reconnues par d'autres peuples, 2. leur existence chez d'autres espèces, 3. leur lien avec un contexte physiologique précis, 4. leur manifestation dans des contextes analogues, 5. la cohérence entre l'émotion ressentie et son expression, 6. un déclenchement rapide, 7. une courte durée, 8. leur évaluation mécanique, souvent automatique, 9. la possibilité qu'elles se manifestent d'une manière qui peut sembler déplacée.

cause que la digestion se fait moins que de coutume. » (Descartes 1649 [1990] : 104)

Les champs lexicaux mobilisés renvoient à ce que l'on appelle aujourd'hui la valence des émotions (cf. Kensinger 2004). Ils sont en opposition et évoquent des sentiments positifs (joie) et négatifs (tristesse). En psychologie, les émotions sont considérées comme une réponse spontanée du système nerveux, accompagnée par la production d'hormones. Ce processus provoque la manifestation des émotions sous forme de la disposition à une action qu'elles peuvent déclencher (Ionescu 2022). En adéquation aux stimulus positifs ou négatifs, et conformément à ce que l'on appelle aujourd'hui la dimension *arousal*, on repère des indications sur le degré d'activité ou de passivité du corps et des mouvements (*fixer, serrer, resserrer, geler, accabler // animé, plus vite, répandre*), sur l'aspect physique qui manifeste l'émotion (*lent, faible, froideur, bon appétit et bonne digestion // égal, chaleur, peu ou pas d'appétit et faible digestion*) et la qualité des sensations (*désagréable, langueur, mal, incommodité, défaut, maladie, liens autour du cœur, réflexion soutenue et profonde // agréable, douce, jouir, jouissance, abondance, bien, réflexion continue, vive et animée*). La dernière catégorie est la plus détaillée. Si, comme le note Koch (2009), l'analyse de la corporalité des passions vise « *le fonctionnement individuel et moral* », les successeurs de Descartes vont diriger leurs analyses vers « *la production d'effets affectifs prévisibles chez l'autre* », et c'est justement ce dont ont besoin les artistes.

#### 4. Emouvoir : une question de sensibilité et de technicité

L'action des artistes de l'âge classique hérite de l'ancienne *actio* (selon la terminologie de Cicéron) ou *pronuntiatio* (suivant Quintilien). Considérant le discours en public, elle regarde les particularités verbales et gestuelles nécessaires pour la réussite de l'orateur. La déclamation en usage chez les acteurs dramatiques du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'âge de l'éloquence selon Marc Fumaroli (1994), s'inscrit dans la continuité de ces techniques. On cherche l'élégance et le goût : l'esthétique de la parole éloquente, agréable et plaisante à l'oreille détermine le regard porté sur la déclamation et l'action physique des artistes. Si « *ce que fait la Nature, c'est ce que la Prononciation doit imiter* » (Le Faucheur

1676 : 88), cette imitation est à comprendre comme une imitation stylisée et la remarque concerne également le geste à part entière. L'exemple le plus connu pour la déclamation est certes la « déclamation chantée », attribuée avant tout à La Champmeslé, mais caractérisant en général une approche au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle que l'on peut décrire comme « chanter le vers », c'est-à-dire prononcer régulièrement et avec une référence forte aux règles du chant (Chaouche 2009). Autrement dit, l'esthétique demande le respect d'un rythme, d'une périodicité et d'une régularité qui créent une manière d'expression artificielle, obéissant à un code précis. La gestualité pratiquée par les artistes souligne ce code « *afin que ce langage muet des mains, des yeux, du visage, de la tête, & de tout le corps, fasse une puissante impression sur l'esprit, & touche vivement le cœur* » (Bretteville 1689 : 483).

Le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle voit naître une nouvelle esthétique, cherchant la modernité dans une expression plus simple ou « naturelle » et critiquant la déclamation du siècle précédant comme trop emphatique. L'artiste doit d'abord sentir avec le personnage, car « *il n'y a d'autre Art en cette partie que d'allumer en son propre cœur le feu qu'on veut porter dans celui des autres* » (Rousseau 1768, article « accent »). Pour le plaisir du spectateur/auditeur, Rémond de Saint-Albine (1747 : 18) attend alors de l'artiste « *les mouvemens qui doivent nous agiter.* » Il s'agit dorénavant d'imiter de la manière la plus réaliste la nature dans l'idée « *d'être vrai pour faire ressembler les personnages* » (Dorfeuille 1798/1799 : 8).

Pour cela, il est important de disposer de connaissances, car « *toutes nos idées viennent originellement des sens, toutes nos idées ne sont cependant pas purement sensibles, puisque la réflexion s'élève des sensations aux notions les plus abstraites* » (Gourdin 1775 : 3). L'artiste doit connaître les « *regles pour conduire la voix & le geste* » (Grimarest 1707, 3), car « *le Comédien doit plaire, instruire et toucher* », il doit avoir « *les dons les plus heureux, des connoissances sûres et les facultés propres à émouvoir* » (Dorfeuille 1798/1799 : 8).

La notion des *connaissances* peut être traduite par une technique solide. Jean Poisson (1717 : 10-11) se réfère à Cicéron pour insister sur l'importance de l'exercice et d'une bonne technique. Selon lui, Cicéron n'avait au départ pas les meilleures dispositions. Toutefois, grâce à l'exercice et à l'application des règles il pouvait surmonter ces difficultés et fonder sa réputation comme « *le plus grand de tous les Orateurs.* »



La première disposition d'un artiste est d'être sensible et empathique. Il doit être « *comme une cire molle, qui sous les doigts d'un savant Artiste devient alternativement une Médée ou une Sapho, il faut que l'esprit & le cœur d'une personne de Théâtre soient propres à recevoir toutes les modifications que l'Auteur veut leur donner* » (Rémond de Sainte-Albine 1747 : 32). Ensuite, l'artiste doit disposer d'un certain nombre d'attributs naturels comme « *la voix douce & agréable* » (Le Gras 1671 : 271) qui en même temps lui permet de se faire facilement entendre et dont on souhaite qu'elle soit « *juste, moelleuse, facile, susceptible de toutes les intonations possibles* » (Clairon 1798/1799 : 23). S'y ajoute la facilité du geste qui doit être naturel et comprendre « *non seulement le mouvemens des bras, mais encore celui de toutes les parties du corps* » (Riccoboni 1750 : 5). Visage et regard jouent un rôle important. Le Gras (1671 : 275) souligne que c'est par le visage « *que nous supplions, que nous menaçons, que nous montrons de la grace & de l'affabilité, de la bienveillance & de la haine, & qu'on reconnoist si nous sommes joyeux ou tristes* ». Effectivement, « *le visage sert merveilleusement à tourner & manier les affections des Auditeurs, il n'y a personne qui ne devienne triste lors qu'on voit un visage dolent & défiguré, & qui ne devienne joyeux à la veüe d'un visage gay & riant* » (*idem*).

## 5. Le travail de l'artiste 1 : images et gestes

L'expressivité est un terme souvent évoqué et fortement valorisé dans les arts. Eric Bordas (2022) mentionne à ce sujet la couleur d'un tableau, le jeu d'un musicien ou d'un comédien, qui sont évalués pour décrire la capacité d'un artiste d'évoquer des émotions chez autrui. Quant à l'âge classique, que l'esthétique d'une époque demande plutôt une forte stylisation ou un modèle plus naturel, pour l'artiste il s'agit toujours d'imiter. « *La Poésie, la Peinture & la Musique sont une imitation* », confirment d'Alembert (*et al.*) dans l'article « *expression* » de *l'Encyclopédie* (1751). Cependant, cette imitation n'est pas une copie scrupuleuse : elle nécessite toujours « *un travail d'analyse, de réflexion et finalement de récréation* » (Verschaeve 2012 : 161). A ces fins, le recours à la peinture est fréquent dans les textes destinés aux artistes. Francisco Lang (1727 : 47) par exemple explique que

« on tirera le plus grand profit de l'observation attentive des images des peintres experts ou des sculpteurs (et surtout des acteurs chevronnés comme également les orateurs sacrés) pour enrichir sa propre fantaisie à leur contact et ainsi pouvoir reproduire par le vif de l'action les images dont on a imprégné l'esprit. »

L'expressivité se situe « entre le sensible et l'intelligible » (Bordas 2022). Si l'explication écrite peut fixer une impression par le moyen du langage, le peintre fournit aux acteurs une sorte d'image instantanée du corps que ce dernier doit ensuite remplir à nouveau de mouvement. Les peintres procèdent en quelque sorte à une deuxième codification par le fait de fixer une impression visuelle qui est mise en lien avec le catalogue descriptif existant pour les émotions. Il s'agit d'une sorte d'encodage (par le peintre), suivi d'un décodage (par l'acteur). Encodage et décodage sont des processus actifs et doivent être maîtrisés.

Dans les livres de peinture, on trouve des analyses fines des mouvements et de leur lien aux émotions ressenties. Gérard de Lairese (1787 : 1, 87) par exemple propose de distinguer quatre types de mouvements : les mouvements *simples* (effectués lors des actions les plus élémentaires<sup>6</sup>) qui correspondent à ce que nous avons appelé les aspects physiques chez les philosophes ; les mouvements *actifs* (liés à une volonté d'action<sup>7</sup>), reprenant la première catégorie relevée chez les philosophes ; ainsi que les mouvements *passifs ou passionnés* (liés aux émotions spontanées<sup>8</sup>) et les mouvements *violens*

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6 Ce sont les mouvements « *que fait un homme quand il marche, en posant un pied devant l'autre, lorsqu'il porte la main à la bouche, pour boire ou pour manger ; quand il tourne la tête, etc. ; mouvements qui sont aussi naturels aux enfants qu'à l'homme fait* ». Lairese (1787 : 87).

7 Ces mouvements « *consistent à porter, à tirer, à pousser, à frapper, à grimper, etc ; et ils se dont avec connoissance de cause. Il n'y en a qu'une partie que soient aux enfans* ». (*ibid.*)

8 Ces mouvements « *doivent leur origine aux passions qui agitent le cœur ; savoir, l'amour, la haine, la colère, la tristesse, la joie, l'envie, le mépris, etc. Quoique la plupart de ces passions agissent intérieurement, ils se font néanmoins reconnaître dans certaines petites parties du corps, tels que les yeux, le nez, la bouche, les doigts, les orteils* ». (*ibid.*)

(provoqués par une impression forte<sup>9</sup>). Ces deux derniers se réfèrent aux aspects qualitatifs des philosophes. Le peintre doit observer et analyser ce qu'il veut représenter, car « *un tableau doit être peint dans l'action* » (*idem*). Les gravures qui caractérisent les expressions d'un visage associées aux différentes passions, proposées par Charles Le Brun, sont connues. Accompagnées d'une description écrite, elles permettent une étude détaillée du résultat des mouvements (ici figés) que la passion déclenche.

Dans ses descriptions de la tristesse et de la joie, Le Brun utilise les mêmes champs sémantiques développés que les philosophes (nous soulignons, ici et par la suite).<sup>10</sup> Il y ajoute encore une palette de couleurs<sup>11</sup> (fig. 1 et 2).

« L'abattement que la tristesse produit fait élever les sourcils vers le milieu du front plus que du côté des jouës ; la prunelle est trouble ; le blanc de l'œil jaune ; les paupières abatuës & un peu enflées ; le tour des yeux livide ; les narines tirant en bas ; la bouche entre-ouverte & les coins abaissez ; la tête nonchalamment panchée sur une des épaules ; la couleur du visage plombée ; les lèvres pâles & sans couleur. Le Brun (1740 : 3) »

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- 9** Ce sont les mouvements « *qui proviennent de la peur, de la crainte, du désespoir, de la folie, de la rage, etc. ; et de tout ce qui agit d'une manière violente et spontanée sur les sens de la vue et de l'ouï, tels qu'un coup de tonnerre ou d'une arme à feu, l'apparition d'un monstre ou d'une vision étrange ; par lesquels les nerfs se crispent ou se relâchent subitement, et qui affectent l'homme à tout âge* ». (*ibid.*)
- 10** Au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les études de Boucher et Ekman (1975) sur l'universalité des expressions faciales confirment une bouche pincée, tirée vers le bas, et des sourcils obliques, tirés vers le haut, pour la tristesse.
- 11** A ce titre, il est intéressant que Ionescu (2022) constate les mêmes tendances pour l'usage des adjectifs de couleur en français et en roumain : la joie est associée à une expression faciale brillante et lumineuse ainsi qu'aux couleurs blanc et rose. La tristesse en revanche se manifeste par la couleur noire ou même la disparition de toute couleur.



**Figure 1 : La tristesse selon Le Brun. Source : A woman whose face expresses sadness. Etching in the crayon manner by W. Hebert, c. 1770, after C. Le Brun. <https://www.europeana.eu/fr/item/9200579/y4ujdp9k>, consulté 20 novembre 2020.**

« On ne remarque que peu d'altération dans le visage de ceux qui ressentent les douceurs de la joye ; le front est serain ; le sourcil sans mouvement, élevé par le milieu ; l'œil médiocrement ouvert & riant ; la prunelle vive & brillante ; les coins de la bouche s'élevent un peu ; le teint est vif ; les jouës & les lèvres vermeilles. » Le Brun (1740 : 2)



Figure 2 : La joie selon Le Brun. Source : Two faces showing joy and laughter. Etching by B. Picart, 1713, after C. Le Brun. <https://europeana.eu/fr/item/9200579/r2azq333>, consulté 20 novembre 2020.

Nous pouvons y ajouter les indications pour la tenue du corps en peinture, résumées dans l'article « passions » de *l'Encyclopédie*. Pour la tristesse, « les yeux sont *abaissés*, la tête est *panchée* sur le côté, les bras sont *pendans*, & tout le corps est *immobile* », tandis que dans la joie, « les yeux, la tête [,] les bras & tout le corps sont *agités* par des *mouvements prompts & variés* ». On note un déplacement des critères décrits vers le champ des aspects physiques. Evidemment, comme nous parlons de peinture, ce fait n'est pas étonnant.<sup>12</sup>

Une fois ces définitions et images figées mises à la disposition des acteurs, ils peuvent les utiliser pour la représentation des sentiments de leur personnage : « On prenait modèle sur les œuvres de Le Brun pour les expressions du visage. Les poses et les attitudes étaient aussi extrêmes que celles qui se trouvent dans

<sup>12</sup> Pour des tableaux comparatifs sur la description de la tristesse et de la joie dans les différents domaines, voir annexes 1 et 2.

*les œuvres du Bernin*<sup>13</sup> » (Barnett 1981). Effectivement, les artistes de la scène reprennent dans leurs descriptions pour le corps et le visage celles proposées par les peintres. Selon René Bary (1679 : 93), dans un geste qu'il appelle « de la Plainte », on penche la tête vers une des deux épaules et l'acteur « met [...] les doigts les uns entre les autres, [il] tourne les mains entre-lassées du côté de la poitrine ». Le geste dit « de l'Abattement » veut que « chaque bras tombe en droite ligne vers chaque côté du corps, parce que la chute des bras suppose toujours une espèce de défaillance » (1679 : 81). Pour le visage, Bretteville (1689 : 487) nous apprend que le triste fronce les sourcils, un constat qui nous renvoie directement aux verbes *serrer* (Descartes) et *resserrer* (Jaucourt).

Pour la joie, on retrouve dans les indications pour les acteurs l'idée de l'ouverture et du mouvement. Chez Bary (1679 : 77-78), elle est associée au geste de la franchise : « *La Franchise veut qu'on éloigne les bras l'un de l'autre, & qu'en ouvrant les mains, on les tourne en dehors, parce que la franchise déploie les plis de l'ame, & que les mains tournées en dehors marquent ce déployement.* »

Pour « défiger » ou « ranimer » les images fixes, c'est-à-dire pour stimuler leur *arousal*, le vocabulaire change chez les acteurs, même s'il reste dans le même champ sémantique. On note également une préférence de l'utilisation des verbes dans leur forme active : les aspects physiques sont transformés en indications sur l'activité (des « bras pendants » par exemple deviennent « les bras qui tombent »). Notamment, les actions de tomber et de serrer s'opposant aux actions d'ouvrir et d'éloigner sont soulignées. La dimension directionnelle est ainsi fortement accentuée : c'est elle qui distingue l'image fixe de la peinture du geste de l'acteur, destiné à animer la sensation visuelle.

## 6. Le travail de l'artiste 2 : la voix

Le travail sur la voix demande une démarche supplémentaire. De sa nature éphémère et invisible, sa maîtrise impose une autre approche. Les fondements se trouvent cette fois non chez Descartes même, mais chez ses successeurs qui s'occupent de la question de savoir comment on peut expliquer le lien

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<sup>13</sup> Gian Lorenzo Bernini, dit Le Bernin, un sculpteur et peintre italien auquel on donnait le surnom de « second Michel-Ange ».

entre la sensation et la voix. C'est qu'à l'origine de la voix, il y a aussi un mouvement dans le corps humain. Le sens de l'ouïe est directement lié à la parole par un « *ébranlement des nerfs de l'oreille* » qui communique avec les parties du cerveau « *qui forment la voix* » et qui « *répondent à l'impression que la voix a faite dans le cerveau. Ils les mettent en estat de former une voix toute semblable* » (Duverney 1683 : 106-107). » Guillaume Lamy (1681 : 52-53) parle expressément de l'air agité qui produit les sons de la voix et qui se distingue par différents degrés de compression (qui sont à l'origine de son agitation). C'est ainsi que « *selon le ton de celui qui parle, nous ressentons differens mouvements. Un ton languissant nous inspire de la tristesse, un ton élevé nous donne du courage : entre les airs, les uns sont gais, & les autres melancoliques, selon les passions qu'ils excitent* » (Lamy 1699 : 231-232).

Parmi les paramètres relevés, l'*arousal*, sensible par le degré d'activité du mouvement, se voit souligné pour les gestes chez les acteurs. On note pourtant un léger changement : ils parlent moins de la direction du mouvement que de son rythme. La tristesse s'exprime par une voix, décrite par les adjectifs *languissante* (Le Faucheur, Bretteville) et *traînante* (Bary, Grimarest). S'y ajoutent les pauses, soutenues par une émission de souffle : Le Faucheur et Bretteville parlent d'une voix « *souvent interrompuë par des soupirs & par des gemissements* ». <sup>14</sup> Physiquement, la voix triste est *sourde* (Le Faucheur) et elle a un volume ou une intensité *faible* (Bary, Grimarest), même si elle doit être « *plus ou moins forte, selon la personne que l'on fait parler* » (Grimarest). Enfin, les adjectifs *plaintif* (Bary, Grimarest) et *crainitif* (Bretteville) qualifient la voix comme « *malade* » ou « *maladive* ».

Dans la description de la voix joyeuse, le bien-être est évident. On le ressent directement par une voix *douce* (Bary, Grimarest), *gaye* (Le Faucheur) et *légère* (Dorfeuille). L'activité s'exprime par les adjectifs *coulant* (Le Faucheur, Bretteville) et *animé* (Dorfeuille). Physiquement, la voix joyeuse est *facile* (Bary, Grimarest) et *pleine* (Bary, Le Faucheur, Bretteville, Grimarest), une indication qui renvoie non seulement à une sensation auditive, mais aussi à l'ouverture obligatoirement large du conduit vocal. Ce n'est qu'à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle que nous voyons mentionné un ton élevé comme transposition

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14 La citation est identique dans les deux textes.

d'un mouvement vers le haut, vu chez Le Brun : Dorfeuille décrit un « *ton élevé [qui] sert à la gaité, à l'enjouement, à la légèreté* ».

On voit ici avec beaucoup de netteté chez les acteurs que dans les descriptions des gestes les dimensions de valence et d'*arousal* prévalent sur la dimension physique. La tristesse est ainsi caractérisée par une valence négative et un *arousal* faible, et la joie par une valence positive et un *arousal* stimulé.

S'intéressant au chant, une remarque préliminaire s'impose. Comme l'acteur, le chanteur utilise sa voix, à l'opéra, il gesticule. Une contrainte physique lui impose pourtant des limites : la voix chantée demande une technique artistique supplémentaire. Si d'une part « *le Chant n'est qu'une déclamation plus embellie* » (Bérard 1755 : 50), « *une sorte de modification de la Voix, par laquelle on forme des Sons Variés & appréciables* » (*Encyclopédie*, article « chant », rédigé par Rousseau, Cahusac et Diderot), d'autre part, la voix chantée suppose la mise en jeu de mécanismes supplémentaires, des « *mouvemens du larinx en haut ou en bas* » (Blanchet 1756 : 16) pour produire une gamme de sons de hauteur plus considérables que ce n'est le cas pour la parole. Le chant demande une grande élasticité et flexibilité des organes vocaux pour former « *de beaux Sons* » (Bérard 1755 : 5), le chanteur doit avoir l'oreille et la technique pour chanter juste, pour « *lier les Sons les uns aux autres* », il doit bien articuler pour rester compréhensible et maîtriser les ornements attendus d'un musicien pour embellir les mélodies (Bérard 1755 : 151).

Dans cette entreprise, le souffle prend un rôle primordial. Les traités de Jean-Antoine Bérard et de Jean Blanchet<sup>15</sup> consacrent de longs passages à la respiration, et notamment à « *l'expiration par rapport à l'expression de la Musique vocale* » (Blanchet 1756 : 30). Les sons sont catégorisés selon leur qualité. Ils sont décrits comme violents, entrecoupés, majestueux, étouffés, légers, tendres et maniérés.

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**15** Il s'agit de deux traités sur le chant, parus à un an d'intervalle (1755 et 1756), qui se ressemblent fortement. On trouve les mêmes citations dans les deux textes, à quelques petites variantes près. L'ordre des parties constitue la différence majeure des deux textes.



Parmi leurs descriptions, celle des sons étouffés reprend avec l'idée de la rétention le faible volume de la sonorité sourde, et celle des sons tendres l'idée de la douceur que les auteurs attribuent à la tristesse. Nous verrons pourtant que la description devient plus technique chez les chanteurs.

« Les Sons étouffés

Il faut arrêter un peu chaque Son, & le retenir dans la bouche : on comprend qu'alors les mêmes oscillations des lèvres de la Glotte seront continuées, & que les Sons retenus dans la bouche s'amortiront & qu'ainsi ils acquerront les degrés d'étendue & d'obscurité nécessaires. »

« Les Sons tendres

Il faut expirer quelque temps & mollement sur chaque Son ; par-là on lui imprimera un caractère de durée & de douceur propre à la tendresse. » (Bérard 1755 : 29-31)

La remarque est également valable pour la description des sons légers, faisant référence à la douceur, la légèreté et à la mobilité, vues dans les autres domaines :

« Les Sons légers

On ne doit point insister sur les Sons : il faut rendre l'air intérieur en petit volume, & avec douceur : pour lors les Vibrations de différente espèce se succéderont dans les cordes vocales : d'ailleurs les premières auront peu d'étendue, & les Sons auront le caractère de mobilité & de légèreté dont il s'agit. » (Bérard 1755 : 30-31)

La qualité du son a son origine dans une mécanique qui peut être soutenue par une technique de prononciation, typique pour l'école française. Bérard donne dans une annexe à la fin de son livre des exemples concrets pour chaque type de son et il ajoute pour les sons *étouffés* et *tendres* que le chanteur

doit « *doubler mollement les lettres* » (les deux), prononcer de manière douce et claire (sons *tendres*), tandis que pour les sons *légers*, il doit faire attention de « *préparer tres faiblement les lettres* » pour assurer la légèreté et la mobilité de la voix. Nous avons détaillé ailleurs le fonctionnement et les effets de cette technique.<sup>16</sup> Nous nous restreignons ici à dire qu'elle a un impact direct sur le caractère des sons (que les auteurs appellent d'ailleurs « sons à caractère ») par le fait de renforcer ou de niveler la sonorité et les bruits d'occlusion ou de friction des consonnes (« lettres »). Grâce à cette technique, « *un Chanteur qui sçait employer habilement les sons violens, entrecoupés, majestueux & étaints, ou bien les sons légers, tendres & délicats, a droit de prétendre à la même réputation qu'un Artiste qui excelle dans le coloris.* » (Blanchet 1756 : 139-140).

Toute la description s'oriente vers l'activité respiratoire et articulatoire. Le champ de la description physique se remplit de nouveau, au détriment de la qualification des sensations qui, de toute façon, est censée être agréable. A la différence du peintre qui « *nous offre l'image immobile des Corps en mouvement* » (Bérard 1755 : 25), la musique (et donc le chant avant tout) « *se propose de peindre les passions du cœur humain & les mouvemens qu'ont lieu dans le Monde Physique* » (Bérard *idem*, citant le 3<sup>e</sup> livre de *l'Orateur* de Cicéron).

## 7. De la peinture à la déclamation au chant

Comme la rhétorique, les arts (plastiques, scéniques et vocaux) ont pour finalité de convaincre, d'émouvoir et de plaire. Ils cherchent à avoir « *un impact sur le désir* » du spectateur/auditeur (Le Breton 2011). L'étude de l'*actio* est indispensable pour eux : elle enseigne aux orateurs, aux acteurs et chanteurs comment ils peuvent se servir de la voix et des gestes pour arriver à leurs fins. Il était donc nécessaire de théoriser la qualité du résultat ou de l'esthétique recherchés pour ensuite définir les moyens de leur réalisation. Si, depuis l'Antiquité, les auteurs donnent des consignes et des descriptions pour la pratique oratoire, les analyses de Descartes créent une nouvelle base théorique pour le travail sur les émotions. Les traits relevés ici pour

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16 Cf. Schweitzer (2018), Pilot-Loiseau et al. (2018), Pilot-Loiseau & Schweitzer (2021).

la tristesse et pour la joie se retrouvent dans les textes des artistes des deux siècles suivants. Il semble que les études de la voix et du geste suivent un chemin comparable, mais, comme nous pensons l'avoir démontré, décalé.

Les Cartésiens livrent une sorte de prototype des passions, une description qui focalise trois aspects : l'activité du corps ou de ses mouvements (la dimension *arousal*), ainsi que les aspects physiques et la valence des sensations. Cette description, équilibrée dans ses trois champs d'étude (avec une légère préférence pour les aspects qualitatifs), concerne l'être humain dans son intégralité.

Les peintres fixent les descriptions théoriques visuellement et accentuent dans cette démarche les aspects physiques sensibles par la vue. Ils créent des codifications dont les éléments sont des universaux.<sup>17</sup> Ces images sont mises à la disposition des acteurs et ils trouvent un écho direct dans les postures et expressions faciales décrites chez eux. On peut parler de positions fixes qui figent, par exemple, l'ouverture et la fermeture, une direction (vers le haut, vers le bas) ou une tension. Comme nous l'avons vu, elles reprennent des champs lexicaux et sémantiques comparables à ceux vus chez les philosophes, mais focalisés sur l'activité du mouvement. Par le lexique choisi, tristesse et joie sont présentés comme des émotions diamétralement opposées. Les nombreuses indications expliquent comment l'acteur doit procéder pour arriver à ce qui est défini comme qualité de la sensation : il s'agit d'une transposition de l'aspect visuel vers celui du mouvement, appartenant à l'*actio*. L'aspect physique est considéré comme résultat d'une action et de la manifestation d'une émotion.

Quant à la voix, l'imitation semble être la première démarche. Elle peut être directe (« une voix *faible* ») ou abstraite (« une voix *agréable* »), transposant l'impression intellectuellement comprise en un événement auditif. Les deux opérations demandent, l'une comme l'autre, une démarche raisonnée de la part de l'artiste :

« Le Comédien qui se borne à l'étude de ses rôles, qui néglige l'instruction, qui ignore les principes de son Art, qui se contente de recevoir des Leçons, d'imiter des modèles ; qui ne sait point vaincre

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17 Voir les travaux de Boucher et Ekman sur l'expression faciale des émotions, cités plus haut.

les difficultés, qui attend ses succès des avantages qui lui sont personnels, de quelques dons heureux, n'est point Comédien, il ne fait rien ressembler, il s'offre lui-même sous le nom et l'habit de ses personnages. » (Dorfeuille 1798/1799 : 25)

Il semble que pour les acteurs, les adjectifs qualificatifs, la mention de quelques éléments paralinguistiques (soupirs et gémissements), et, avant tout, des indications sur la conduite et la vitesse de la voix suffisent. On reste dans le cadre des oppositions (tristesse - *sourd*, joie - *plein*, etc.), renvoyant aux dimensions de valence de *d'arousal*. La frontière entre la qualité de la voix et celle de la prononciation reste floue.

Pour autant, ces descriptions ne suffisent pas aux chanteurs. Pour eux, les indications pour la voix données par les acteurs sont valables, mais pas assez techniques. On peut comparer la relation entre les deux domaines avec les prototypes proposés par les peintres et la description des gestes par les acteurs : une plus grande technicité et une concentration sur les éléments en mouvement semble nécessaire. Pour le chanteur, cet élément est la gestion du souffle : sa gestion assure non seulement la qualité de la voix chantée, mais elle permet encore de créer des sons de différentes qualités qui restent techniquement et esthétiquement corrects. La même remarque est valable pour la prononciation qui doit suffire à une double contrainte : celle de la compréhension et celle de l'expressivité. On voit ainsi disparaître les oppositions strictes dans les descriptions de la quantité et de la nature des émotions. Un certain « degré d'étendu » s'oppose à « peu d'étendu », la voix triste est douce, et l'adjectif décrit également la voix joyeuse. Ainsi, par la description verbale du résultat final, l'opposition technique décrite pour les mouvements et la gestion du souffle est remise dans son cadre esthétique. Ces descriptions semblent prendre le rôle d'un régulateur qui, pour les gestes et l'expression faciale des acteurs, est livré par la peinture, leur montrant toujours une image esthétiquement acceptable. Ce « miroir », aujourd'hui donné aux chanteurs par les moyens de l'enregistrement, est encore inaccessible à l'époque classique : le langage reste le seul moyen d'explication pour eux.

Lorsque l'on analyse les catégories des mots utilisés pour les différents types de description, on note chez les chanteurs, comme c'était le cas pour les

philosophes et les acteurs dans leur description des gestes, l'utilisation des formes verbales à l'actif pour parler du corps et des mouvements physiques, tandis que les peintres et les acteurs dans leurs descriptions de la voix (des acteurs au théâtre) utilisent beaucoup d'adjectifs et de participes. Comparant les indications pour les gestes et pour la voix, les acteurs semblent concentrer leur travail actif sur les gestes, tandis que celui sur la voix reste plutôt sur un niveau intuitif. Le travail des chanteurs sur la voix est intéressant sous deux angles : d'abord par la mise en scène active de la voix comme un organe maîtrisable, une fois la bonne technique acquise ; et ensuite par le fait de réintégrer par le travail sur le souffle et sur la prononciation, divers aspects dans l'analyse. Si les descriptions des peintres et des acteurs restent linéaires, concentrées sur un seul élément (le visage, les membres du corps, une impression générale de la voix), les chanteurs retrouvent en quelque sorte la complexité qui caractérise les descriptions des philosophes.

## 8. Conclusion

Grâce à notre approche pluridisciplinaire il nous était possible de constater qu'il y a certes une certaine perméabilité entre les arts et qu'un domaine pouvait toujours s'inspirer d'un autre. Mais : tout n'est pas comparable et transposable. Ainsi, à l'âge classique comme aujourd'hui, chaque artiste doit travailler et comprendre les prototypes et les codifications des émotions. Il doit cerner et pénétrer leurs traits universaux, pour ensuite, grâce à sa propre sensibilité et capacité empathique, les transformer individuellement, les actualisant selon la situation, le personnage et son état psychique. Indépendamment du style et de l'esthétique choisis, l'expression artistique passe d'abord par le repérage et la codification des traits universaux, liés à une émotion, pour procéder dans un deuxième temps à leur réanimation et leur mise en scène individuelle. **N**

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## Annexe 1 : Indications données pour la tristesse

	<i>Arousal</i> (corps et mouvements)	Description physique	Valence
Philosophie : Théorie	Actions de fixer, serrer et resserrer, Accablement	Pouls lent et faible, Impression de froideur, Bon appétit et bonne digestion	Sensation désagréable, de geler Impression de langueur, de mal, d'inconfort, de défaut, de maladie, d'avoir des liens autour du cœur, Réflexion soutenue et profonde
Peinture (geste)	Immobilité du corps, élévation des sourcils Narines tirées vers le bas, Tête penchée vers les épaules	Bras pendants, Visage plombé Tête penchée sur le côté, les prunelles troublées, Sourcils élevés, Paupières abattues et enflées, Yeux abaissés et jaunes et le tour des yeux livide, La bouche entre-ouverte, les coins abaissés Les lèvres pâles et sans couleur	Abattement
Acteurs (gestes)	Gestes de rapprochement : (tourner les mains entrelacées vers le corps, mettre les doigts ensemble), Laisser tomber les bras (chute des bras)	La tête penchée, Les sourcils froncés	Geste d'abattement et de plainte, Impression de défaillance
Acteurs (voix)	Voix languissante, traînante et interrompue	Voix sourde avec un faible volume	Voix plaintive et craintive Soupirs, gémissements
Chanteurs (voix)	Actions d'arrêter, de retenir et d'amortir les sons, Faire durer les sons Expiration lente (continue) et molle	Vibrations égales et continues, Lettres mollement doublées Voix étouffée, Sons avec certain degré d'étendu	Son obscur, doux et tendre, Prononciation claire et douce

## Annexe 2 : Indications données pour la joie

	<i>Arousal</i> (corps et mouvements)	Description physique	Valence
Philosophie : Théorie	Sentiment animé, Pouls plus vite, Chaleur qui se répand dans tout le corps	Pouls égal, Sentiment de chaleur, Peu ou pas d'appétit et faible digestion	Sensation agréable, douce, Impression de jouissance, d'abondance, de bien, Réflexion continue, vive et animée
Peinture (geste)	Corps agité, Coins de la bouche élevés, Actions promptes et variées	Sourcils en position normale et un peu élevés, Œil médiocrement ouvert et riant Teint vif, Peu d'altération du visage) Prunelle vive et brillante, Joues et lèvres vermeilles	Front serein, Expression douce
Acteurs (gestes)	Gestes d'ouverture : éloigner les bras, ouvrir les mains et les tourner en dehors	Mains tournées	Geste de franchise, déploie- ment
Acteurs (voix)	Voix coulante et animée	Voix pleine, Ton élevé	Voix douce, gaie, facile et légère Enjouement, gaieté, légèreté
Chanteurs (voix)	Expiration en petit volume et avec douceur, Voix mobile Lettres très faiblement préparées Sons peu d'étendu et sans accent particulier, Vibrations variées		Voix légère



Formulae, gender, and  
writing experience in  
Renaissance Florence:  
an analysis of the  
Ricasoli private letters

**ELEONORA SERRA**

**Abstract** With private letters having become a genre of choice in historical sociolinguistics, epistolary formulae have attracted increasing attention. Cross-linguistically, studies showing that women letter-writers relied heavily on formulae have hypothesised that formulae served primarily as aids for little experienced writers. However, other studies have shown that formulae could perform different functions, related to group practices and self-representation. I investigate this issue in the context of 16<sup>th</sup>- and early 17<sup>th</sup>-century Florence, where letter writing was becoming increasingly codified. Drawing on little-known archival material and focusing on the epistolary closing, this article tracks the use of formulae across the private letters of three women from subsequent generations of one family, the Ricasoli, and compares it to their brothers' use. These women differed markedly in their degree of writing experience, in keeping with the increase in female literacy that was occurring across the patriciate. The results show that the woman of the last generation used more formulae, suggesting that these items functioned more as social conventions than formulation aids. The comparison with men's letters suggests that different models were available to women and men, and that upper-class women might have been more receptive to the new epistolary model that was promoted in those years.

**Keywords** epistolary formulae, writing experience, gender, private letters, genre, historical sociolinguistics, women's literacy

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Private letters, offering access to the language of a range of individuals from different social backgrounds, have become the genre of choice for exploring

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variation and change in past language stages. These ego-documents enable scholars to reconstruct language histories that are not solely based on the varieties used by social elites and male individuals, and that are not merely confined to formal genres (Elspaß 2012a; van der Wal & Rutten 2013). In the growing body of studies on the language of historical private letters, discussion has arisen around the role and social functions of epistolary formulae.

Epistolary formulae are conventional expressions that perform one or more pragmatic functions within the ‘letter’ text type. Formulae are not simply a static stock of word strings, but rather a dynamic response to the demands of language use and, as such, manifest differently from context to context and from speaker to speaker (Wray 2002: 4–5). In historical sociolinguistics, they have been found to be used differently by different categories of writers and, in a range of studies conducted on the history of Germanic languages (Austin 2004; Elspaß 2005, 2012b; Rutten & van der Wal 2012, 2014) and French (Große *et al.* 2016), their use was found to correlate with social class and gender. In these traditions, letter writers from the lower classes and female letter writers have been shown to employ more formulae than upper-class and male writers respectively. Considering that literacy and schooling, historically, were both socially stratified and gender-dependent, this correlation has been explained by recurring to the notion of writing experience: in this view, epistolary formulae functioned primarily as a ‘safe option’ (Rutten & van der Wal 2012: 183) that aided less experienced writers in formulating a text. In contrast, more experienced writers could count on a higher degree of compositional creativity. Evidence that the frequency of epistolary formulae decreased diachronically through the early modern and late modern period (Austin 2004; Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 172) has also been adduced to support this claim, since this decrease would have gone hand in hand with an increase in population literacy.

However, other works have shown that formulae, at times, served other functions besides that of aiding less experienced writers. Formulae could be used as markers of social roles and group practices by the little literate and

learned individuals alike (Laitinen & Nordlund 2012; Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 185–187; Conde-Silvestre 2016; Evans 2020: 75). They could serve as a means to engage in self-representation and identity construction (Pietsch 2015; Auer 2015; Bentein 2023b). Still other scholars have emphasised the importance of formulae in creating and maintaining a textual tradition with its own social and cultural meanings (Evans 2020: 82). Studies on the ancient classical epistolary tradition have shown that the number of formulae could fluctuate significantly as a result of changing genre traditions, so that, for example, omitting the epistolary frame became progressively more common in the Late Antique period (Nachtergaele 2015: 9, n. 27).

This interplay between the role of writing experience, group practices, identity construction, and genre conventions in the use of formulae remains unclear. As will be shown in Section 2, the early modern Italian context offers fertile ground to investigate it, both for its relatively high literacy rates and for the distinctively normative character that letter writing acquired in this tradition.

In this paper, I focus on the practice of private letter writing in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Florence to explore the relationship between the use of epistolary formulae, gender, and writing experience. Bringing to light little-known archival material, I analyse the epistolary formulae used in the private correspondence of three women who belonged to three subsequent generations of one family, the Ricasoli Baroni: these letters were produced by Lucrezia di Matteo Albizzi (written 1539–1565), her daughter Maddalena (written 1553–1587), and her granddaughter Cassandra (written 1588–1604). As will be seen in Sections 2 and 6.1, these women differed markedly in their degree of writing experience, reflecting a more general increase in women's literacy over the course of the sixteenth century. This focus on successive generations will allow me to assess the relationship between women's writing experience and their use of formulae. At a second stage, a comparison of these women's letters with letters written by their brothers will allow for further examination of the relationship between gender and use of formulae.

This article is structured as follows. Section 2 contextualises the practice of letter writing in early modern Italy and Florence. After formulating the study's main research questions in Section 3, Section 4 presents the corpus

that has been selected and transcribed for analysis. Section 5 identifies the features that are the object of the research, i.e. optional epistolary formulae used in letter closings, defines and operationalises the notion of epistolary formula, and draws up an inventory of formulae. The analysis is presented in the following two sections: Section 6 investigates the relationship between women's degree of writing experience and their use of formulae, and Section 7 delves into the relationship between writing experience, use of formulae, and gender by also including male letter writers in the picture. Finally, Section 8 reflects on the light this study sheds on the functions of epistolary formulae, and puts forward hypotheses that call for further research.

## 2. Letter writing, epistolary formulae, and women in early modern Florence

There are several reasons why sixteenth-century Italy offers fruitful ground to explore the functions of epistolary formulae. First, here, more than in other traditions, vernacular letter writing was becoming an increasingly conventionalised genre. With its expanding printing market and increasing literacy rates (Richardson 2002: 19), early modern Italy saw the circulation of a range of works aiming to teach how to write letters in Italian and offering model letters and even lists of formulae to be imitated. Early examples are Bartolomeo Miniatore's *Formulario*, first published in 1485 and reprinted more than forty times in the sixteenth century, and Giovanni Antonio Tagliente's *Componimento di parlamenti* (1531), which ran to twelve editions in the sixteenth century. Francesco Sansovino's letter-writing treatise *Del Secretario* (1564), which enjoyed tremendous success both in Italy and abroad, inaugurated a new season of 'segretario' treatises, as it was followed by countless, subsequent attempts at popularisation (see Matt 2005: 22–39). At the same time, Pietro Aretino's decision to print his own epistolary in 1538 inaugurated the new genre of vernacular letter books: the printing market quickly became saturated with letter collections by well-known authors and with letter anthologies compiled by printers, the first of which was Paolo Manuzio's *Lettere volgari di diversi nobilissimi huomini*, first published in 1542 (Braidà 2009: 7).

The success of letter books and manuals proves that, in this context, a strong need was felt for explicit norms to codify and regulate letter-writing practices. It is therefore likely that, in such a context, formulae would assume other functions besides that of *Formulierungshilfe* (Elspaß 2005: 157), serving instead as conventions related to group practices and means of self-representation. It is noteworthy, in this sense, that despite the attention paid, for several decades, to the language of the ‘semicolti’ [semi-literate],<sup>2</sup> the notion of epistolary formula as *Formulierungshilfe* has been virtually absent in Italian linguistic historiography. While a few observations on the correspondence of less experienced writers have suggested a surprising familiarity with epistolary conventions (e.g. Fresu 2014: 201; Telve 2019: 246), these findings have usually been interpreted by hypothesising an effect of the widely circulating letter books and formularies aimed at the less learned. The few studies that have investigated the use of formulae diastatically in this tradition have in fact suggested that more experienced writers used a higher, not lower, number of certain types of formulae, as they would rely more frequently on conventionalised expressions to structure the body of the text. Conversely, the less learned would rather signal the introduction of new information through a marked order of constituents (Palermo 1994: 116; Magro 2014: 129–130).

By contrast, studies in the Italian tradition have mostly tended to place emphasis on the nature of epistolary formulae as social conventions, for example by noting that some formulae were used to signal one’s social identity (Barucci 2009: 10), or that lack of knowledge of the appropriate formulae to use, for example by women, could incur social stigma (d’Amelia 1999: 86–87). In a recent study that I conducted on Michelangelo Buonarroti’s use of a set of epistolary formulae that served to end discourse (Serra 2023), formulae did not emerge as primarily *Formulierungshilfe*, as their frequency did not decrease as Michelangelo’s writing experience grew. Formulae instead seemed to function as in-group conventions, forming part of an informal register linked especially with family practice.

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2 For a review on the literature on the *italiano dei semicolti*, see Fresu (2014, 2016).



Perhaps due to the success that vernacular letter books gathered in this tradition, Italian scholars have frequently insisted that private letters – even the most informal – constitute a genre in their own right, so that even elements that would appear to be markers of orality have at times been interpreted as clichés responding to specific textual expectations.<sup>3</sup> It is within this interpretation of private and everyday letters as a conventionalised text type that scholars have postulated the existence of a progressive change in epistolary conventions. Petrucci has identified a gradual shift away from mercantile conventions – which, in terms of formulaic expressions, would have entailed a reduced formulary stripped to a bare minimum – towards a more baroque and elaborate style. He relates this shift, among other things, to the influence of public and official correspondence – which became more and more formalised in the late Renaissance – as well as to the diffusion of manuals (Petrucci 2008: 89–90).

All of this calls for an investigation into the functions of epistolary formulae in the Italian context, and into the interplay between the role of writing experience and social (and genre) conventions. In this respect, letters by women in the sixteenth century are particularly illuminating because this period saw a sharp increase in female literacy (and, consequently, in women’s writing experience).

If early modern Italy was a remarkably literate society (e.g. Burke 1987: 112), Florence in particular, on which this study focuses, was in all likelihood the most literate city in late medieval and early modern Europe (Kent 2002: 111). Here, for centuries, the needs of trade and banking had resulted in a democratisation of literacy, so that even the sons of butchers, shoemakers, and tailors had learned to put pen to paper. However, in the late Middle Ages this process had largely excluded women (Miglio 2008: 62). The situation changed quite drastically in the sixteenth century, as far as the middle and upper classes were concerned, thanks to a constellation of factors. Some of these factors, such as the establishment of the vernacular as the main literary language and the development of the printing press (Plebani 2019: 58), applied to the whole peninsula. Other factors were more local: the establishment

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3 See Trifone’s examination of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi’s letters (Trifone 2006 [1989]: 127).

of the grand duchy, including the powerful Medici women, encouraged the production of literature and art in celebration of women (Cox 2008: 185–186). In this context, literacy skills gradually became a requirement for patrician girls who aspired to a place at the Medici court (Barker 2015: 124–125).

It is in this context that more and more women from the Florentine patriciate, no longer content with simply dictating their letters to a scribe, began to take up a pen and write letters in their own hand. This happened more in private correspondence than in any other genre (Plebani 2019: 75). In this respect, sixteenth-century Florentine correspondence represents an ideal locus to study the relationship between women, writing experience, and use of formulae.

### 3. Research questions

My aim is to investigate whether optional epistolary formulae functioned primarily as a ‘safe option’ for less experienced writers in sixteenth-century Florence. In this paper, this objective translates into two research questions.

First, I ask whether an inverse relation existed between Florentine women’s use of formulae and their level of writing experience. As seen before, in other linguistic traditions women have been found to consistently use more formulae than men (Austin 2004; Rutten & van der Wal 2012, 2014) and, considering the impact that a writer’s sex had, historically, on literacy and schooling, this correlation has been interpreted by recurring to the notion of writing experience: that is, women use more formulae because less experienced writers use more formulae. Gender, however, is only an indirect index of writing experience. In this paper, I assess three women’s degree of writing experience on the basis of more direct indices, i.e. their graphic competence and their actual involvement in written practices, and ask whether it was indeed the case that the women with lower degrees of writing experience used more formulae. A positive answer would be expected if formulae, in this tradition, functioned primarily as aids for less skilled writers.

Second, returning to the extra-linguistic factor of gender as a more indirect (and more commonly used) index of writing experience, I ask whether Florentine women used more formulae than men, as has been found for

other traditions. Once again, a positive answer would support the claim that formulae functioned primarily as aids for less experienced writers.

On the other hand, negative answers to these questions would suggest that in this tradition formulaic language performed other important functions, such as tools of self-representation or markers of in-group membership or of text type.

As already noted, this paper focuses on three generations of one family. The family unit has frequently been employed as the object of analysis in historical sociolinguistics (e.g. the Paston family in Bergs 2005; the Walpole family in Henstra 2008; the Johnson family in Nevalainen 2015), including when investigating the use of epistolary formulae (e.g. the Clift family in Austin 1973). The study of the family unit enables one to rule out a range of extra-linguistic factors that might have influenced formulaic usage.

#### **4. Selecting the data: the Ricasoli corpus**

The data analysed here is a corpus of family letters that I have selected and transcribed from a family archive, the fondo Ricasoli, housed in the Florentine State Archive (ASF). The Ricasoli were a Florentine patrician family that belonged to the old feudal aristocracy, who, in the late thirteenth century, had been given magnate status with the enactment of the Ordinances of Justice (Passerini 1861: 5–6), which barred the nobility from holding any political office. By the sixteenth century, however, they had largely assimilated into the new ruling, mercantile elite (Moran 2017: 387). The family's income was predominantly based on the trade of agricultural products – including wine, for which the Ricasoli are still famous today – as the family owned vast stretches of land in the areas of Chianti, Mugello, and southern Valdarno.

A vast quantity of family correspondence survives, and not only does it span several generations, but also preserves many letters written by women. For the purposes of this study, I retrieved letters by Lucrezia di Matteo Albizzi Ricasoli (who was likely born in the last decade of the fifteenth century), by her daughter Maddalena Ricasoli (born in 1522), and by her granddaughter (and Maddalena's niece) Cassandra Ricasoli (born in 1566). This allowed me to track the use of formulae across women of successive generations, during

a time that is known to have witnessed a sharp rise in Florentine women's literacy.

Whereas these women's biographical profiles and their degree of writing experience will be explored in some detail in Section 6.1, here I explain my rationale for corpus building and provide an overall description of the corpus.

For each woman, I selected the same number of letters – which was set at eighteen – according to several criteria. First, the letters selected had to be autograph. I was able to assess autography with certainty through a combination of criteria. All three women's hands remained the same across several decades, and differed from the hand of any worker or other members of their family. Moreover, in the case of Lucrezia, further proof of autography came from her autograph signature, placed below a letter that she had dictated to a delegate writer (Ricasoli Filze 40-I-V, c. 76), and from her extremely low level of graphic competence (see Serra 2024). In the case of Maddalena and Cassandra, their account books include several autograph receipts that could be compared with the hand used in their letters.<sup>4</sup>

Second, since my aim was to compare these women's use of formulaic language, I had to keep the tenor (i.e. the relationship between writer and recipient) as constant as possible. This was crucial as the number of formulae used is known to vary depending on the social and power relationship between the interlocutors (Elspaß 2005: 195; Clarysse 2017). Hence, I only selected letters sent to close family members: this meant only including letters addressed to siblings, parents, sons and daughters, and, in the case of Cassandra, also to the aunt who had raised her after her mother's death.

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4 See, for example, the note written in 1559: 'Io Madalena R[icasol]i Arrighucci ò riceuto da Piero Valoriani [lire] 20 p[er] parte di quello mi à dare questo dì 31 di agosto' [I Maddalena Ricasoli Arrighucci have received from Piero Valoriani 20 lire as part of what he owes me, on this day 31 August] (Ricasoli Amministrazione 270). At least in the Tuscan context, palaeographers consider the use of 'io' as a sign of autography (Balestracci 2010[2004]: 29). For Cassandra, see, for example, the receipt written on 20 October 1611, no. 164: 'Io Cassandra Ricasoli Baroni ne Tornaboni ò riceuto (d)a sig[no]<sup>re</sup> Bindacco mio fratello sciudi cento (...) questo dì a l'anno sopra deto di mia mano propio' [I, Cassandra Ricasoli Baroni Tornabuoni, have received from Signor Bindaccio my brother 100 scudi (...) on this day of the aforementioned year, written in my own hand] (Ricasoli Filze 127, c. 142<sup>r</sup>).

Of the letters I selected, the eighteen written by Lucrezia were addressed to her sons Matteo (fifteen) and Braccio (three) and were written across a timespan of twenty-seven years (see Table 1). The eighteen letters by Maddalena, addressed to her brother Braccio (thirteen) and her mother Lucrezia (five), spanned thirty-five years (see Table 2). The eighteen letters by Cassandra, spanning eighteen years, were addressed to her aunt Maddalena (eleven), to her father Braccio (three), to her sister Lucrezia (three), and to her half-brother Cosimo (one) (see Table 3).

This corpus allowed me to compare the frequency and types of formulae used by women across three generations (see Section 6). I then retrieved and transcribed letters by these women's brothers, so as to compare women's usage with male usage across the generations (see Section 7). Studies on siblings allow the researcher to rule out a range of extra-linguistic factors that might account for differences in linguistic behaviour, and are therefore particularly favoured in historical sociolinguistics (e.g. Conde-Silvestre & Hernández-Campoy 2004; Bergs 2012: 94–95). Hence, systematic differences found between brothers and sisters will most likely come down to gender. These letters, once again, had to be autograph and had to be addressed to close family members.

I was able to retrieve four letters written to close family members by Lucrezia's brother Andrea di Matteo Albizzi (born in 1486), two of which addressed to Lucrezia, one to his mother Nanna, and one to his brother Niccolò (see Table 4). The low number of letters for this writer is regrettable, but although there were other letters sent by Andrea to his brother-in-law, I excluded these as in-laws were not considered close family in my analysis. Note that Andrea's letters were written at an earlier time than Lucrezia's, i.e. from 1523 to 1528.

As for the second generation, Maddalena Ricasoli had several brothers (Matteo, Raffaello, and Braccio) whose letters still survive. I chose to compare the eighteen letters by Maddalena with an equal number of letters by Braccio (born in 1525), since he was in all likelihood Maddalena's closest sibling.<sup>5</sup> The

5 See, for example, the letter of condolences Maddalena receives on her brother's death from a close friend, the nun Virginia Franchi, who refers to God having taken away 'el fratello quale amavi ta[n]to' [the brother you loved so much] (Ricasoli Filze

selected letters by Braccio are addressed to his sister Maddalena (nine), to his brother Matteo (eight) and to his mother Lucrezia (one) (see Table 5).

For the third generation I could not retrieve any correspondence by Cassandra's full brothers, so I selected and transcribed eighteen letters by Cassandra's younger half-brother Cosimo, all of which addressed to his mother (see Table 6). It should be noted that in this case there was a considerable age difference, as Cosimo, who was born in 1586 out of Braccio's second marriage to Cassandra di Antonio Rucellai, was twenty-two years younger than his sister. In order to qualitatively check for the soundness of this comparison, I also transcribed a handful of letters by Cassandra's half-siblings and Cosimo's full siblings Bindaccio (b. April 1584) and Virginia.<sup>6</sup>

I was able to confirm the autograph status of the men's letters by checking that their hand was different from the hand of other family members or workers, and that it remained the same throughout the years. In the case of Braccio, proof of autography also came from a 1557 financial declaration written 'di mia p[ro]pia mano' [in my own hand] (Ricasoli Filze 127, cc. nn.). These men's biographical profiles will be discussed in Section 7.1.

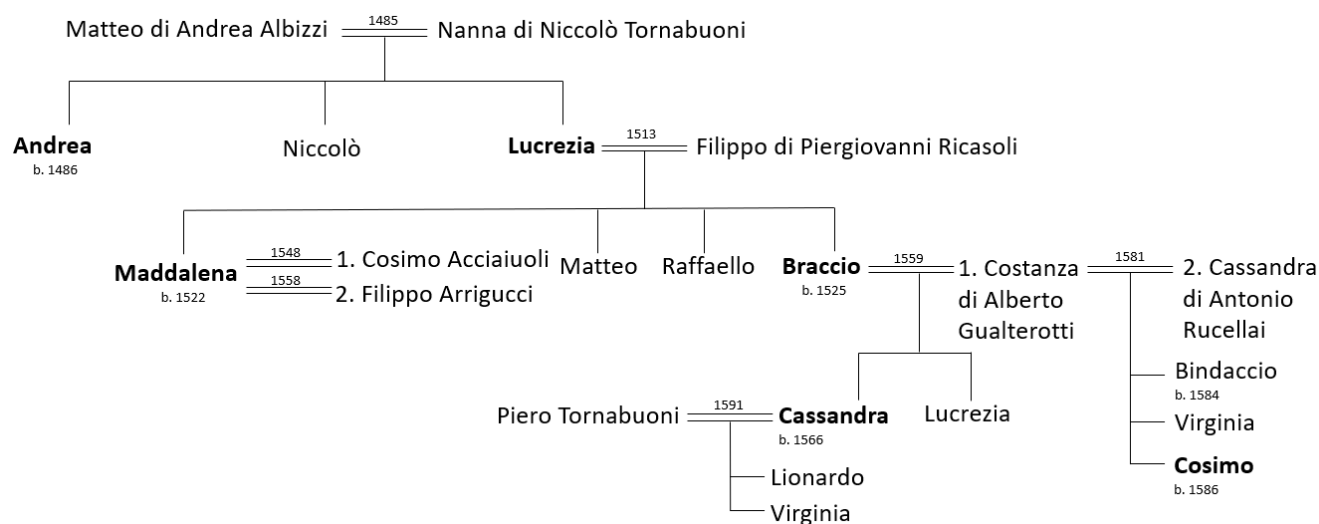
This left me with an overall corpus of over 27,000 words, made up of 94 letters. In Tables 1 to 6, letters by each writer (Lucrezia, Maddalena, Cassandra, Andrea, Braccio, and Cosimo) are listed in chronological order. To facilitate data retrieval, I attributed an ID number to each letter. These codes were assigned within the context of a bigger dataset that I have built, and will be used to cite the letters from now on. Dates have been modernised according to today's calendar, as the Florentine year began on 25 March. The number of words, which excludes the superscription, was counted after modernising word division. The label 'Archival location' specifies the letters'

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49-I-I, c. 25). A vast amount of correspondence exchanged between the two siblings survives, showing that the two cooperated closely in the running of the family business: see, for example, the many letters preserved in Ricasoli Filze 40-II-IX.

**6** I transcribed three letters by Virginia di Braccio Ricasoli (Ricasoli Filze 40-III-I, cc. 50, 52, 55) and two letters by Bindaccio di Braccio Ricasoli (Ricasoli Filze 41-III-IV, cc. 22, 45).

location within the Florentine State Archive, Fondo Ricasoli, Parte Antica Filze. The genealogical relationship between the six writers of the corpus (in bold) and their correspondents is shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1.** This tree shows the genealogical relationship between the corpus' six writers, highlighted in bold. It is not a complete family tree, as it only includes the other Ricasoli members mentioned in this paper. The dates of birth were retrieved or (in the case of Braccio) checked in the baptismal records of San Giovanni (and follow today's calendar). The dates of the marriages are drawn from secondary literature (Litta 1836, 1876; Passerini 1861; Moran 2018).

**Table 1.** Lucrezia's letters.

ID number	Date	Addressee	Addressee's role	No. words	Archival location
#r511	11/10/1539	Matteo	son	569	46-I-IV, c. 63
#r221	2/07/1542	Matteo	son	298	40-III-IV, c. 1
#r224	18/07/1542	Matteo	son	238	40-III-IV, c. 6
#r237	28/10/1542	Matteo	son	1857	40-III-IV, c. 38
#r240	20/11/1542	Matteo	son	921	40-III-IV, c. 45
#r242	4/12/1542	Matteo	son	427	40-III-IV, c. 48
#r243	14/12/1542	Matteo	son	574	40-III-IV, c. 49
#r246	2/01/1543	Matteo	son	1152	40-III-IV, c. 55
#r247	10/01/1543	Matteo	son	426	40-III-IV, c. 56
#r690	29/10/1549	Braccio	son	271	41-II-III, c. 72
#r271	1/02/1550	Matteo	son	470	40-III-VI, c. 37
#r302	17/02/1554	Braccio	son	218	32-I-VI, c. 26
#r335	29/04/1554	Braccio	son	246	32-II-II, c. 93
#r16	3/09/1565	Matteo	son	393	40-II-V, c. 46

#r17	5/09/1565	Matteo	son	316	40-II-V, c. 47
#r18	7/09/1565	Matteo	son	188	40-II-V, c. 48
#r19	8/09/1565	Matteo	son	198	40-II-V, c. 49
#r20	8/09/1565	Matteo	son	89	40-II-V, c. 50

**Table 2. Maddalena's letters.**

ID number	Date	Addressee	Addressee's role	No. words	Archival location
#r334	13/05/1553	Braccio	brother	71	32-II-II, c. 86
#r555	21/05/1553	Braccio	brother	80	32-II-II, c. 87
#r336	4/06/1554	Braccio	brother	64	32-II-II, c. 94
#r337	4/08/1554	Braccio	brother	84	32-II-II, c. 95
#r44	12/11/1558	Lucrezia	mother	229	40-II-I, c. 11
#r45	9/12/1558	Lucrezia	mother	188	40-II-I, c. 12
#r512	7/03/1562	Lucrezia	mother	93	46-I-IV, c. 120
#r513	30/08/1562	Lucrezia	mother	205	46-I-IV, c. 121
#r514	4/09/1562	Lucrezia	mother	167	46-I-IV, c. 122
#r157	29/03/1582	Braccio	brother	113	40-II-IX, c. 40
#r158	13/10/1583	Braccio	brother	148	40-II-IX, c. 45
#r159	19/10/1583	Braccio	brother	353	40-II-IX, c. 49
#r160	7/08/1584	Braccio	brother	143	40-II-IX, c. 58
#r496	23/06/1585	Braccio	brother	145	41-III-V, c. 10
#r163	25/06/1585	Braccio	brother	245	40-II-IX, c. 68
#r166	27/02/1587	Braccio	brother	220	40-II-IX, c. 75
#r167	21/05/1587	Braccio	brother	179	40-II-IX, c. 76
#r169	12/08/1587	Braccio	brother	151	40-II-IX, c. 78

**Table 3. Cassandra's letters.**

ID number	Date	Addressee	Addressee's role	No. words	Archival location
#r484	7/12/1588	Braccio	father	219	41-III-V, c. 18
#r485	11/01/1589	Braccio	father	230	41-III-V, c. 20
#r604	23/01/1589	Lucrezia di Braccio Ricasoli	sister	205	49-I-VI, c. 11
#r42	9/02/1589	Braccio	father	212	40-II-III, c. 42



#r606	29/05/1589	Lucrezia di Braccio Ricasoli	sister	253	49-I-VI, c. 13
#r607	17/06/1589	Lucrezia di Braccio Ricasoli	sister	198	49-I-VI, c. 14
#r487	21/12/1593	Maddalena	aunt	166	41-III-V, c. 31
#r488	13/05/1594	Maddalena	aunt	426	41 III-V, c. 36
#r489	7/03/1595	Maddalena	aunt	564	41-III, V, c. 40
#r490	24/05/1595	Maddalena	aunt	553	41-III-V, c. 41
#r360	22/06/1595	Maddalena	aunt	112	32-II-IV, c. 14
#r412	28/07/1595	Maddalena	aunt	552	56-I-IV, c. 44
#r491	2/08/1595	Maddalena	aunt	748	41-III-V, c. 45
#r492	3/09/1595	Maddalena	aunt	172	41-III-V, c. 47
#r493	6/11/1602	Maddalena	aunt	155	41-III-V, c. 54
#r204	16/10/1602	Maddalena	aunt	148	40-III-II, c. 60
#r495	21/02/1604	Maddalena	aunt	214	41-III-V, c. 56
#r14	20/08/1604	Cosimo	brother	195	40-II-VI, c. 7

**Table 4. Andrea's letters.**

ID number	Date	Addressee	Addressee's role	No. words	Archival location
#r321	31/03/1523	Lucrezia	sister	144	32-II-II, c. 1
#r613	3/02/1524	Lucrezia	sister	505	49-I-III, c. 7
#r400	13/02/1524	Nanna	mother	471	56-I-IV, c. 14
#r385	26/01/1528	Niccolò	brother	577	56-I-I, c. 135

**Table 5. Braccio's letters.**

ID number	Date	Addressee	Addressee's role	No. words	Archival location
#r227	2/08/1542	Matteo	brother	343	40-III-IV, c. 10
#r676	4/10/1542	Matteo	brother	362	40-III-IV, c. 32
#r237bis	2/11/1542	Matteo	brother	893	40-III-IV, c. 40
#r103	25/07/1546	Matteo	brother	965	40-III-VII, c. 47 (part 1)
#r104	25/07/1546	Lucrezia	mother	139	40-III-VII, c. 47 (part 2)
#r300	7/11/1548	Matteo	brother	158	32-I-VI, c. 18

#r622	17/11/1549	Matteo	brother	441	49-I-III, c. 50
#r26	26/04/1550	Matteo	brother	206	40-II-V, c. 7
#r28	14/11/1551	Matteo	brother	304	40-II-V, c. 15
#r137	30/01/1559	Maddalena	sister	301	40-II-IX, c. 1
#r138	13/03/1579	Maddalena	sister	87	40-II-IX, c. 2
#r477	6/04/1581	Maddalena	sister	457	41-III-V, c. 4
#r142	12/10/1583	Maddalena	sister	260	40-II-IX, c. 43
#r144	14/10/1583	Maddalena	sister	167	40-II-IX, c. 46
#r357	5/11/1584	Maddalena	sister	72	32-II-IV, c. 7
#r149	2/03/1585	Maddalena	sister	172	40-II-IX, c. 66
#r155	18/08/1587	Maddalena	sister	426	40-II-IX, c. 81
#r156	3/11/1588	Maddalena	sister	437	40-II-IX, c. 77

**Table 6. Cosimo's letters.**

<b>ID number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Addressee</b>	<b>Addressee's role</b>	<b>No. words</b>	<b>Archival location</b>
#r456	25/05/1601	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	121	41-II-IV, c. 12
#r457	26/08/1601	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	84	41-III-IV, c. 15
#r458	16/10/1601	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	83	41-III-IV, c. 16
#r459	4/12/1601	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	236	41-III-IV, c. 17
#r460	5/12/1601	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	129	41-III-IV, c. 18
#r461	10/12/1601	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	106	41-III-IV, c. 19
#r462	14/01/1602	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	179	41-III-IV, c. 20
#r188	2/08/1604	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	195	40-III-I, c. 13
#r463	23/08/1605	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	113	41-III-IV, c. 29
#r464	26/04/1606	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	138	41-III-IV, c. 44
#r465	28/07/1606	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	96	41-III-IV, c. 50
#r189	22/11/1611	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	133	40-III-I, c. 56
#r193	27/07/1612	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	70	40-III-I, c. 61
#r192	10/01/1612	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	165	40-III-I, c. 59
#r190	28/11/1613	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	166	40-III-I, c. 57
#r191	28/12/1613	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	147	40-III-I, c. 58
#r194	2/02/1614	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	80	40-III-I, c. 62
#r195	23/06/1616	Cassandra Rucellai	mother	137	40-III-I, c. 84

## 5. The object of research: optional epistolary formulae

This section identifies the object of research: first it defines the notion of epistolary formula and the criteria underlying it (Section 5.1), then it presents the rationale for limiting the analysis to optional formulae found in letter closings (Section 5.2), and finally it draws up an inventory of the formulae found in this corpus (Section 5.3).

### 5.1 Defining and operationalising the notion

To carry out this analysis I first needed to provide a clear definition and operationalisation of the notion of epistolary formula. It is sometimes difficult to determine where epistolary formulae end and the rest of the text begins (Große *et al.* 2016: 2). On the one hand, identifying formulaic language is not straightforward: whereas some instances are relatively unproblematic, there are many grey areas, such as discontinuous expressions and fillable slots (Wood 2015: 9). On the other hand, epistolary formulae are not the same thing as formulaic language in general, so there is the question of how to articulate this distinction. Following Wray's suggestion to identify a 'suit of features' rather than a single criterion to detect formulaicity (Wray 2002: 43), I use a combination of the following criteria: pragmatic function, conventionalisation, and positionality.

As for function, in Buerki's typology of formulaic language, formulae are described as a specific subtype that is distinguished by its functional character (Buerki 2020: 8). I take from this that epistolary formulae must perform a particular pragmatic function within the letter text-type. Building on Wray (2002) and Elspaß (2005), Rutten and van der Wal (2012, 2014) have proposed a functional/pragmatic categorisation of epistolary formulae that has also been adopted in other linguistic traditions, including Romance ones (specifically, French: see Große *et al.* 2016). While acknowledging that many epistolary formulae can perform more than one function, this framework distinguishes between the following main types:

- text-type formulae, such as the signature, date, address formulae, and opening formulae, which serve to identify the text as a letter;
- text-structural formulae, which serve to realise the transition from one part of the discourse to the next;
- intersubjective formulae, such as health formulae and greetings, which perform the function of ‘interaction’ by focusing on the relationship between writer and addressee;
- Christian-ritual formulae, which focus on the relationship between the writer, the addressee, and the divine world, by placing the writer and/or the addressee under divine protection.

Rutten and van der Wal (2012: 84) attribute Christian-ritual formulae a function of their own in epistolary discourse, but they note that these may also be considered a subset of intersubjective formulae.<sup>7</sup>

In implementing my analysis, word strings had to perform at least one of these functions in order to be identified as epistolary formulae. Take, for instance, the ending of this letter addressed to Maddalena by Cassandra:

La zia Maria sta bene e m[esser] Dionigi e tui gl’atri, e vi si racomando, e così io e Lionardo e la Virginia e la Virginia de Ricasoli e m[onn]<sup>a</sup> Lucrezia tuti, e da mia parte salutate e mia fratelli e sorelle e m[onn]<sup>a</sup> Camilla. Se poso p[er] voi nulla avisate. Con questo fine il Sig[no]<sup>re</sup> Dio vi doni la sua grazia. Di Firenze dì 7 di marzo 1594.  
V[ostra] nipote Cassandra

[Aunt Maria is well and so is messer Dionigi and all the others, and they commend themselves to you all, and so do I and Leonardo and Virginia and Virginia da Ricasoli and monna Lucrezia. And greet my brothers and sisters and monna Camilla from my part. If I can do

<sup>7</sup> As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, some Christian-ritual formulae could also perform the function of text-type formulae. I have not considered Christian-ritual formulae as text-type formulae as they were optional elements in my corpus (whereas text-type formulae are usually obligatory).

anything for you, let me know. With this end, may God give you His grace. From Florence on day 7 March 1594. Your niece Cassandra] (#r489)<sup>8</sup>

This closing includes text-type formulae, i.e. the location and date ('Di Firenze dì 7 di marzo 1594') and the signature ('V[ostra] nipote Cassandra'). It includes one text-structural formula, used to end discourse ('Con questo fine'), as well as one Christian-ritual formula ('il Sig[no]<sup>re</sup> Dio vi doni la sua grazia'). Finally, there are several intersubjective elements, including health statements ('La zia Maria sta bene e m[esser] Dionigi e tui gl'atri') and multiple greetings ('e vi si racomadono, e così io e Lionardo e la Virginia e la Virginia de Ricasoli e m[onn]<sup>a</sup> Lucrezia tuti, e da mia parte salutate e mia fratelli e sorelle e m[onn]<sup>a</sup> Camilla').

However, pragmatic function alone was not sufficient to operationalise the notion, as formulae also need to be conventionalised ways of performing those functions. By definition, formulae 'manifest only one – or only a few – of the various formal structures that the language allows for the expression of their meaning' (Corrigan *et al.* 2009: xxiii–xxiv). This can be captured by relying on the notion of frequency of form: Austin (1973: 11) stresses that epistolary formulae are 'used repeatedly and by more than one writer'; according to Rutten and van der Wal (2014: 75), epistolary formulae are 'formulaic strings found repeatedly in letters'. In my analysis, therefore, word strings that performed one or more pragmatic functions within letters were considered formulae only if the same formulation recurred (with the same function, and in the same context) in more than one letter and/or in letters by more than one writer. To this end, I made use not only of the corpus at hand but of other corpora, in which I searched for the recurrence of the same formulae in similar contexts by means of keywords and/or collocations. These corpora were:

**8** The corpus has been transcribed using conservative criteria. However, some modifications have been made for ease of reading: the use of capital letters, punctuation, and word division has been modernised; *u* and *v* (as well as *s* and *z*, which in Lucrezia's letters are represented by the same grapheme) have been distinguished and *j* has been rendered as *i* according to modern usage.

- another corpus of private letters by Florentine men and women (1540–1609) that I have built;<sup>9</sup>
- the private correspondence of the Buonarroto family;<sup>10</sup>
- the edited family correspondence of Caterina de' Ricci (Guasti 1890);
- the numerous sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century letter anthologies and epistolaries that are available online through Google Books and searchable through OCR.

It is true that this methodology meant excluding some idiosyncratic strings which could have been relevant, such as the expression 'E di tanto vi dicho' used once by Lucrezia (#r221).<sup>11</sup> However, at the cost of leaving out a few relevant occurrences I preferred a methodology that was not based on intuition, which is a tricky criterion to use for detecting formulaicity (Wray 2002: 20–23), especially when investigating past language stages for which we cannot rely on native speaker intuition.

This method also allowed for some degree of variation in the order of constituents as well as lexical insertions or substitutions, as is common in other studies on epistolary formulae (e.g. Austin 1973, 2004; Elspaß 2005; Rutten & van der Wal 2014). It was preferred to a frequency-based approach based on lexical bundles (like the one used by Evans 2020), which would have been problematic because of the small size of the corpus at hand, the issue of non-standard orthography (on which see Kopaczyk 2012), and the fact that formulae with fillable slots pose challenges to corpus analysis software (Wood 2015: 24). Moreover, in Renaissance Italy, some degree of variation of

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**9** This comprises 143 autograph letters addressed to close family members by sixty-five writers belonging to over thirty Florentine patrician families in the period 1540–1609 (of these writers, twenty-four are men and forty-one are women).

**10** This corpus, based on the editions by Barocchi & Ristori (1965–1983) and Barocchi *et al.* (1988–1995), was kindly given to me by the Memofonte Foundation. It is freely available for consultation, through a search interface, at the Memofonte Foundation's website: <[www.memofonte.it/ricerche/michelangelo-buonarroti](http://www.memofonte.it/ricerche/michelangelo-buonarroti)> (last accessed on 28 Sept 2023).

**11** In Serra (2024), I treated this as a formula. The idiosyncratic nature of this item probably had to do with this semi-literate writer's desire to reproduce formulae she commonly encountered, such as 'E di tanto vi avviso' (Ricasoli Filze 40-III-IV, c. 1).

formulaic material was to be expected because it was explicitly encouraged in letter-writing manuals.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, I adopted the criterion of positionality, since formulae tend to be found in particular parts of the text (Wood 2015: 25), and most are found specifically at the beginning and end of letters (Austin 1973: 11). For example, the intersubjective health formula *sano, così spero di voi* [(I am) healthy, so I hope of you] could, in principle, appear anywhere, but I only ever find it used in letter closings (e.g. Barocchi & Ristori I, 1965: 3; Barocchi *et al.* I, 1988: 52–53). As I explain in the next section, my analysis focuses on letter closings only, making positionality a key criterion in this study.

In summary, I define epistolary formulae as conventionalised expressions that perform one or more pragmatic functions within the letter text-type, and that are often restricted to specific parts of the letter.

## 5.2 The object of analysis: optional formulae in letter closings

In this paper, the analysis focuses on optional formulae used in letter closings. Although epistolary formulae (and especially text-structural formulae) may occur anywhere in the text, the body of the letter is largely non-formulaic (Rutten & van der Wal 2014: 86), whereas most epistolary formulae are restricted to the opening and closing of letters, i.e. the part of the letter that has been termed the pragmatic frame (Palermo 1994: 113) or epistolary frame (Bentein 2023a: 433). This is the part of the text that is more constrained both in terms of formulaic usage and themes (Palermo 1994: 113–119).

The decision to focus exclusively on the pragmatic frame allowed me to avoid potential pitfalls in calculating the number of occurrences. A methodology relying on a normalised frequency count calculated on the basis of the whole letter would have been problematic because letters by different writers vary greatly in length and formulae are mostly concentrated in the epistolary frame. Another option would have been to count the number of letters in which a given formula appeared. This methodology, which is

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**12** For example, the polygraph Orazio Toscanella, who wrote his *Concetti* (1560) to give his readers formulae that could be used in their letters, insisted that it was important to vary them in order to ‘personalise’ them (Toscanella 1560: fol. a7<sup>r</sup>).

adopted in Bijkerk (2004) and Serra (2023), is sound as long as formulae appear once per letter, but it would not have worked for the present study since certain types of formulae – for example greetings, but also discourse-ending formulae – can recur multiple times in one letter. Instead, I chose to focus exclusively on the letter closing, counting the number and the types of formulae used there.<sup>13</sup>

I focused on the closing, rather than the opening, since the latter is more often dependent on a range of communicative factors that cannot always be maintained constant. As shown by the following three examples from Braccio Ricasoli's correspondence, the opening may include different types of formulae depending on whether the letter constituted a reply (example a), initiated an epistolary exchange (example b), or was meant to follow up on another letter that had not yet been answered (example c).

- a) C[arissi]mo fratello, per Niccolò hebbi la vostra e intesi q[uan]to dite ... [Dearest brother, through Niccolò I have received your (letter) and understood what you say ...] (#r103)
- b) Caris[sim]o fratello, questa per avisarvi come... [Dearest brother, this is to let you know that...] (#r237bis)
- c) Car[issi]<sup>mo</sup> fratello, vi scrissi ultimame[n]te qua[n]to mi occorreva, et molto mi sono meravigliato ch[e] voi no[n] mi habbiate risposto né mandato danari. [Dearest brother, I wrote to you before what I needed, and it greatly surprised me that you never answered nor sent me money.] (#r676)

The closing, by contrast, was less influenced by the circumstances of the epistolary exchange (although it could be influenced by other factors, such as the writer's emotional state or hurry).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, previous studies have

**13** What I define as 'letter closing' coincides with what Rutten and Van der Wal (2014: 86) call 'ending', as they use the term 'closing' in a much more restricted sense.

**14** The impact of hurry and emotional state is evident in the following example from the closing of a letter by Cassandra Ricasoli, written when her daughter was ill: 'P[er]



emphasised that, in the Italian tradition, letter closings presented a higher degree of variation than openings (Antonelli 2004). This made it the ideal locus to study the frequency and distribution of formulae.

However, it is not always easy to identify where the ending of the letter begins (Antonelli 2003: 59). In his study of the sixteenth-century mercantile letter, Massimo Palermo has identified discourse-ending formulae that mark the beginning of the letter closing: he calls these formulae signals of *chiusura parziale* (Palermo 1994: 118–119).<sup>15</sup> After inspecting my data, I identified the letter closing as beginning with either a discourse-ending formula or an intersubjective formula of the ‘if you need anything’ type, which I term a ‘service formula’. When these formulae were immediately preceded by other epistolary formulae, these were also considered as belonging to the closing.

Finally, my analysis focused exclusively on optional formulae since these were the formulae whose frequency was expected to vary across writers. As noted by Rutten & van der Wal (2012: 183), text-type formulae – such as form of address, date, and signature – are obligatory in letter composition (although socio-pragmatic factors can influence their form): these formulae were therefore excluded from the analysis.

### 5.3 An inventory of formulae

Based on the criteria mentioned above (function, conventionalisation, and positionality), I obtained a full inventory of the formulae used in the closings of letters by the Ricasoli family members. As previously explained, I excluded from this inventory all text-type formulae. The inventory of optional formulae, categorised according to Rutten and van der Wal’s framework, is given in Table 7 below.

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freta no[n] dirò altro, e anche ò tanto travaglio ch[e] sono fora di me’ [I will not say anything else because I am in a hurry, and also I am so anxious that I am out of my mind.] (#r360)

**15** The structure proposed by Palermo was subsequently adapted by Antonelli (2003: 59) and Magro (2014: 132–133) to describe the typology of private letters.

**Table 7. Inventory of optional formulae used in the closing. Stars are used to signal those formulae that need to be attached to other elements, creating more complex structures.**

	Formula	Writer (number of occurrences)
<b>Text-structural formulae</b>		
Discourse-ending formulae	<i>Altro (per hora) non iscade</i> [Nothing else happens (for now)]	Braccio (3)
	* <i>Altro non avendo che dire</i> [Not having anything else to say]	Braccio (1), Maddalena (2)
	<i>Altro non mi occor(r)e</i> [Nothing else happens/I don't need anything else]	Cosimo (8)
	* <i>Altro non mi occorrendo</i> [Not needing anything else]	Braccio (2), Maddalena (1), Cassandra (4)
	<i>Altro no so che mi dire</i> [I don't know what else to say]	Maddalena (1)
	* <i>Con questa/tale fine</i> [With this end]	Cassandra (11)
	<i>Farò/fo fine</i> [I (will) end]	Lucrezia (2), Braccio (3), Maddalena (1), Cassandra (1)
	<i>Né in altro mi distenderò (salvo...)</i> [Nor will I write longer (except...)]	Andrea (1)
	<i>Non/né altro</i> [Nothing else]	Lucrezia (18), Braccio (12), Maddalena (16), Cosimo (10)
	<i>Non (ti/vi) dirò altro (salvo...)</i> [I will not say anything else (except...)]	Andrea (3), Cassandra (1)
	<i>Non sarò p(i)ù lu(n)ga</i> [I will not be longer]	Lucrezia (2), Cassandra (7)
<i>Ora non posso badare</i> [I cannot wait now]	Cosimo (1)	

Intersubjective formulae		
Greetings	A __ <i>mi raccomando/ ci racomadamo</i> [To __ I/ we commend myself/ourselves]	Andrea (3), Lucrezia (5), Braccio (1), Maddalena (6), Cosimo (2), Cassandra (4)
	(A __) ( <i>per infinite volte</i> ) <i>mi ofero e racomado</i> [(To __) (infinite times) I offer and commend myself]	Cassandra (5)
	<i>Raccomandatemi/ Mi racomanderete a __</i> [Commend me to __]	Andrea (3), Braccio (4), Maddalena (1), Cosimo (1), Cassandra (2)
	<i>Salutate __ (da mia parte/in nome mio)</i> [Greet __ (from my part/in my name)]	Braccio (3), Cassandra (9)
	<i>Vi piacerà di salutarmi</i> [You will greet __ from me]	Braccio (1)
	<i>Baca(te) (le mane a __) (da mia parte)</i> [Kiss (the hands of __) (from my part)]	Cassandra (2)
	<i>Vi baco le mane</i> [I kiss your hands]	Cassandra (3)
	<i>Ti baco e abraco</i> [I kiss you and hug you]	Cassandra (1)
	__ <i>si racomanda(no)/ono</i> [__ commend themselves]	Maddalena (3), Cassandra (10)
	__ <i>vi saluta</i> [__ greets you]	Cassandra (1)
	<i>*(e) così (fa) __</i> [(and) so does __]	Cassandra (6)
	<i>*e io per mille/infinite volte</i> [and so do I a thousand/infinite times]	Cassandra (3)
<i>*e (così) a __</i> [(and) so to __]	Andrea (1), Cassandra (1)	
Health	<i>Istà(tte) sano/i</i> [Stay healthy]	Lucrezia (16), Braccio (1)
	<i>Riuardatevi a questi caldi</i> [Take care of yourself in this heat]	Maddalena (1)
	__ <i>ista(nno) bene</i> [__ is/are well]	Maddalena (2)

Other intersubjective formulae	<i>Abiatevi chura</i> [Take care]	Lucrezia (1)
	<i>Dirai a __ che stia di buona voglia</i> [You will tell __ to stay in a good mood]	Andrea (1)
	<i>Fatevi/fati vezzi</i> [Treat yourself well]	Lucrezia (2), Maddalena (1)
	<i>Fate/farai vezi a __</i> [Treat __ well]	Braccio (3), Maddalena (2)
	<i>Fa(te) careze a __</i> [Make caresses to __]	Cassandra (3)
	<i>Se/quando (voi) volete/v'occorre/voledo nulla (da me) date aviso/avisate/scrivete</i> [If/when you need anything (from me) let me know/write]	Cassandra (12)
	<i>Se poso nulla/cosa nesuna per te/voi da aviso/avisate</i> [If I can do anything for you, let me know]	Cassandra (2)
	<i>Te(nete)mi in (bona) gratia di __</i> [Keep me in the (good) grace of __]	Cassandra (2)
<b>Christian-ritual formulae</b>		
	<i>(Che) Christo/Dio/Il Signore ti/vi guardi (da/di (ogi) male)</i> [May Christ/God/the Lord guard you (from (all) evil)]	Andrea (2), Braccio (6), Maddalena (6), Cosimo (1)
	<i>(Il) (nostro) Signore/Iddio vi felicitati/contenti</i> [May our Lord/God make you happy]	Maddalena (4), Cosimo (11)
	<i>N[ostro] Signore vi conceda ogni bene</i> [May our Lord give you every blessing]	Cosimo (1)
	<i>(Che) nostro Signore (Dio) vi/ti/la tenga/conservi (in sua (s[an]ta) gratia)</i> [May our Lord/God preserve you (in His (holy) grace)]	Maddalena (2), Cosimo (2), Cassandra (7)
	<i>(Che) il Signore Dio vi/gli conceda/doni la sua (s[an]ta) gratia</i> [May God give you His (holy) grace]	Cassandra (6)
	<i>Il Signore Dio vi conservi e vi dia la sua grazia</i> [May God preserve you and give you His grace]	Cassandra (2)
	<i>Preda Dio per me che n'ò bisogno</i> [Pray God for me since I need it]	Cassandra (1)
	<i>(Il Signore) Dio sia (senpre) (in) tuo/vostro auto</i> [May (our Lord) God (always) come to your help]	Braccio (2), Cassandra (3)
	<i>Il signore Dio sia quello che ci porga il suo auto</i> [May God be the one to give us His help]	Cassandra (1)
	<i>I(dio) (sia) con voi</i> [God (be) with you]	Braccio (5), Maddalena (5)
	<i>Che Dio ne conceda quanto desiderate</i> [May God grant you all you wish for]	Braccio (1)
	<i>Vi do la buona Passqua</i> [I wish you a happy Easter]	Cosimo (1)
	<i>Che Dio ce ne guardi</i> [May God guard us from it]	Andrea (1)

## 6. The analysis of women's letters: exploring the relationship between women's writing experience and use of formulae

This section presents a biographical and letter-writing profile of the Ricasoli women (Section 6.1) and explores the relationship between their level of writing experience and their use of formulae (Section 6.2).

### 6.1 Ricasoli women: assessing their writing experience

As outlined in Section 2, over the course of the sixteenth century Florentine women's literacy increased considerably thanks to a combination of political and cultural changes, including the spread of the printing press, which led women to take up writing and created many more women readers, and the establishment of the Medici duchy. Whereas in the early sixteenth century it was still rare for a patrician woman to write her own letters, by the end of the century writing skills had become a requirement among Florentine upper-class women. As I shall now explain, this trend is clearly visible in the corpus analysed here.

Since I did not have specific information on the education received by the women of the Ricasoli family, I have assessed each woman's degree of writing experience based on their graphic competence and on the information that could be gathered on their life and writing practices.

The woman from the first generation, Lucrezia (?–1570), was born – probably in the last decade of the fifteenth century – into the Albizzi family, a prominent family of the Florentine patriciate.<sup>16</sup> In 1513 she married Filippo di Piergiovanni Ricasoli and went on to have at least six children (Passerini 1861: table 14). After her anti-Medicean husband died in 1531, Lucrezia found herself in financial difficulties. From her correspondence we learn that in the late 1530s and early 1540s she was living in Florence in a state of poverty, confronted by a constant stream of creditors. It was at this difficult time – at around forty years of age – that Lucrezia started to write in her own hand, whereas before she seems to have relied exclusively on delegate

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**16** As I demonstrated elsewhere (Serra 2024), her parents must have been Matteo di Andrea degli Albizzi and Nanna di Niccolò Tornabuoni who, according to Litta (1876: table 2), were married in 1485.

writers. The Ricasoli archive allows us to trace her first steps in letter writing, from her first autograph post-scriptum in 1537 (Ricasoli Filze 41-II-III, c. 19), to her first autograph signature in 1538 (Ricasoli Filze 40-I-V, c. 76) and her first autograph letter in 1539 (#r511). Over the following years, Lucrezia became progressively more accustomed to penning her own letters, and from the 1550s and 1560s we have almost exclusively holograph letters. Her active role in the family business, tied to her condition as a widow, her desire for economic independence, and her struggle to retain her reputation as a patrician – rendered all the more urgent by her poverty – might all have been factors that led her to take this step in adulthood (Serra 2024). At any rate, Lucrezia’s writing experience remained low throughout her life, as attested by the elementary level of graphic execution of her letters (see Figure 2),<sup>17</sup> which would be classed as *elementare di base*, i.e. the lowest level of graphic execution according to the categorisation proposed by Petrucci (1978: 167–168). Further, Lucrezia had to repeatedly ask her son Matteo to write to her in a more readable hand (#r17, #r18):

E vorei, quando voi mi icrivette, mi icrivessi che io la intendesi bene.  
[I wish, when you write to me, that you would write in such a way  
that I understand it well.] (#r17)

Vorei mi icrivessi in moddo che la si intendessi melio. S’ i’ no  
risponddo a oni chossa, la no si intendde. Chosì oni chossa dove^r^sti  
fare iscivere a ser Antonio, cche si potessi rispondere a uelo che voi  
iscrivette. [Please write to me in a way that I understand it better. If I  
don’t reply to everything it is because I have not understood it. There-  
fore you should have Antonio write everything, so that I could reply  
to what you write.] (#r18)

<sup>17</sup> Figures 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 are photographs I took at the Florentine State Archive. They are reproduced here with permission from the Ministero della Cultura (third-party reproductions are prohibited).

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 figlio chuzissimo tangho una uozza anou  
 rippodato molto par che odimanzicha  
 ho chagata uozza parata joboo uidicho  
 chato sono irata 29 anni benedati  
 in quella chaya apolo uidicho chato  
 mai co dritto pocho ripo uidicho  
 che la fanculla anel tempo aelfa quello  
 chapu nona tanto apata dritto  
 uidicho noio dritto ritorno che in  
 ro auadate tanto quanto 10 pto ghano  
 noi parte di gli dichiara chabiano  
 lacha che malata nona dilatto e de  
 ho ghano tra apata lafaccida  
 che apatta gli lafaccida cavoi cina  
 datti natarmi ma ionoco riefa  
 ca un'apugio eai uolata chero lo  
 uadi la uolupataza dame nono alito  
 emandata dice batita chel bua dacia  
 ni uolupataza in pu chenuola lauora  
 ra aha gli nona parba daghospata  
 afatica unbua pabolata dato podere  
 lauora dice datto batita dato podere  
 mandia unbuon bua chafara bjo ma  
 un' o 6 di tanto remandiate chengato  
 la lauorata gli lauozza uera d'apato  
 apata uidicho chavoi tamatte  
 chape apatta uidicho chavoi tamatte  
 uidiche natatto al 19 diluglio 1592  
 itata nono  
 gli nona  
 olio  
 N. 6 uozza madra lucrezia

Figure 2. A letter by Lucrezia (#r224).

Lucrezia's daughter Maddalena – the writer from the second generation – was born on 1 February 1522.<sup>18</sup> She married twice (in 1548 and in 1558), and after the death of her second husband in 1573, she moved to the house of her brother Braccio, who in the meantime had become head of the family following the death of his elder brothers (Moran 2017: 387). Here Maddalena, who had remained childless throughout her two marriages, took responsibility for raising Braccio's children, and especially Cassandra, to

<sup>18</sup> San Giovanni baptismal records, reg. 227, fig. 316.

whom she was almost a mother after the death of Braccio's first wife (Moran 2017: 396). At the same time, she played an active role in administering the family business, coordinating the sale of the Ricasoli agricultural products. Examining Maddalena's letters and account books, Megan Moran has used her case to argue that Florentine women, contrary to the traditional vision that sees them entirely dedicated to domestic chores, could exert considerable agency in economic and commercial affairs, as Maddalena was recognised as a key figure in the Ricasoli family business by other family members, neighbours, and customers (Moran 2017: 395).

Maddalena's writing experience was a lot greater than that of her mother. She corresponded constantly with a host of family members, workers, and servants, leaving behind a sizable body of almost exclusively autograph letters.<sup>19</sup> Whereas her mother's level of graphic execution could be classed as elementary, Maddalena's can be termed *usuale*, that is, typical of experienced, non-professional writers (see Figure 3). Moreover, for Maddalena, writing was a daily practice: while her mother Lucrezia had delegated the writing of her account book to her son Braccio (Ricasoli Amministrazione 275), Maddalena took care of her own account books, five of which still survive (Ricasoli Amministrazione 270, 271, 272, 273, 274).<sup>20</sup> A look at these texts shows that Maddalena was well aware of the genre conventions of the mercantile family book (on which, see Ricci 2005) and was able to employ them with ease. For example, the opening page of the book written between 1553 and 1564 (Ricasoli Amministrazione 270, c. 1<sup>r</sup>) displays all the elements that have been identified as characterising the opening structure in this genre (i.e. consecration, dedication to God and the saints, prayer for one's soul and material goods, declaration of ownership, writing programme, naming of the book) (Ricci 2005: 36):

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**19** Of the many letters I have retrieved by Maddalena, only two letters, written in her old age in 1594 and 1595, were non-autograph (Ricasoli Filze 41-III-V, c. 35; 40-I-IV, c. 31).

**20** I have checked the hand in the first book, dated between 1553 and 1564 (Ricasoli Amministrazione 270).



+ Al nome sia dello Onipot[en]te Idio e de la sua madre Vergine Maria e di tuta la celestia corte del paradiso, e quali pregino p[er] me ch[e] tute le mia fancende abino buono principio e mezo e fine, e con salute de l'anima. Q[ues]<sup>to</sup> libro è della Madalena figuola di Filippo di Piergiovanni de Ricasoli e dona gà di Cosimo di Giovanni Acciaiuoli, dove iscriverò tuto quello mi acadrà giornalmente s[oprascr]ip<sup>to</sup> a[nno], e camasi memorale comicato q[uest]<sup>o</sup> dì 7 di gungo 1553.

[In the name of the Almighty God and the Virgin Mary and all the Heavenly celestial court, may They pray for me that all my affairs will commence, progress, and conclude favourably, and with salvation of my soul. This book belongs to Maddalena, daughter of Filippo di Piergiovanni de Ricasoli and widow of Cosimo di Giovanni Acciaiuoli, where I will write everything that will happen to me daily in the aforementioned year, and its name is *memoriale*, begun this 7 June 1553.]

We do not know whether Maddalena had received the same education as her brothers, but her account books and correspondence tell us that she had achieved a similar level of writing experience. It was telling, in this respect, to discover in the archive two business letters in which Maddalena served as delegate writer for her brother Braccio in October 1581, while the latter was ill (Ricasoli Filze 32-I-III, cc. 14, 16). At this time, it was uncommon for a woman to serve as a delegate writer for a man.<sup>21</sup>

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**21** In my research I have only come across one other instance when this happened (ASF, Acquisti e doni 70, c. 127).

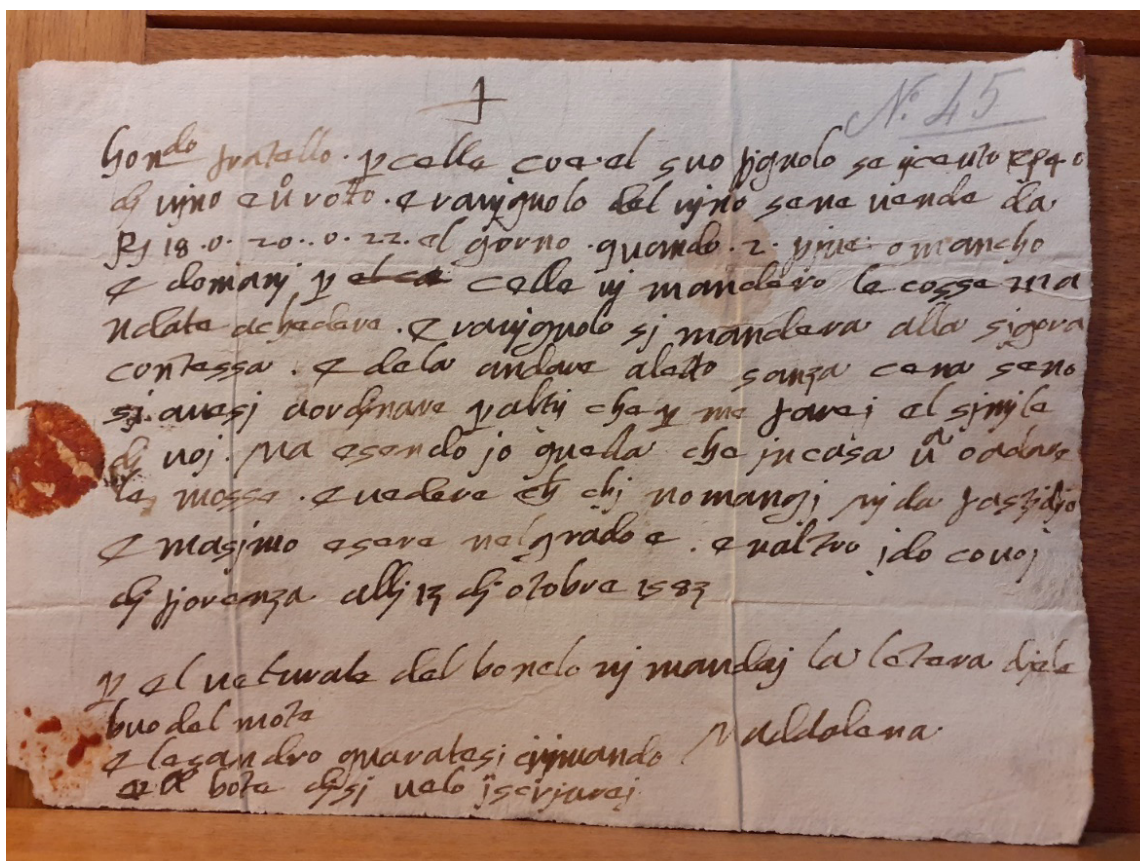


Figure 3. A letter by Maddalena (#r158).

As for the third generation, Maddalena's niece Cassandra was born on 3 November 1566<sup>22</sup> from Braccio Ricasoli's first marriage to Costanza di Alberto Gualterotti. In 1591 (Moran 2018: 189), she married the Florentine patrician Piero di Lionardo Tornabuoni, eventually bearing two children, Virginia and Lionardo (Litta 1836: table 2). She does not seem to have participated as actively in the economic life of the family as her aunt Maddalena had done, although she was sometimes led to move beyond the domestic sphere in her youthful desire to procure fashion items (Moran 2018).

Cassandra's graphic competence could be termed *usuale*, like that of her aunt. At the same time, her letters seem to show a somewhat more deliberate attempt at calligraphic writing (see Figure 4). The letters she sent to her younger sister Lucrezia<sup>23</sup> in 1589 also reveal the importance that she

<sup>22</sup> San Giovanni baptismal records, reg. 232, fig. 127.

<sup>23</sup> According to Moran (2018: 188), this Lucrezia would have been Cassandra's half-sister, born in late 1582 or early 1583 out of Braccio's second marriage. However, Marchesin (2019), making reference to some genealogical charts drawn by Braccio

attributed to a woman's ability to write, as they invariably open with words of encouragement for her sister's progress in letter writing. In the first letter (#r604), Cassandra asks Lucrezia to write in her own hand and assures her that she will not reprimand her for any mistakes: 'Scrivimi di tua mano se tu voi, se tu puoi, rispetto a' pedignoni,<sup>24</sup> ch[e] a me no[n] inporta se farai qualch[e] castrone' [Write to me in your own hand if you want, if you can; concerning errors, I don't mind if you make some mistakes]. Her second and third letter similarly open with praise for her sister's writing progress:

Ho riceuto la tua a me grata p[er] essere di tua mano, ch[e] no[n] sta se none bene rispetto ch[e] è poco ch[e] comica[s]ti. Seuita, ch[e] farai bene. [I have received your letter which is dear to me because it is in your own hand which is nothing but good, considering that it is not a long time that you have started (to learn), keep it up that you will do well.] (#r606)

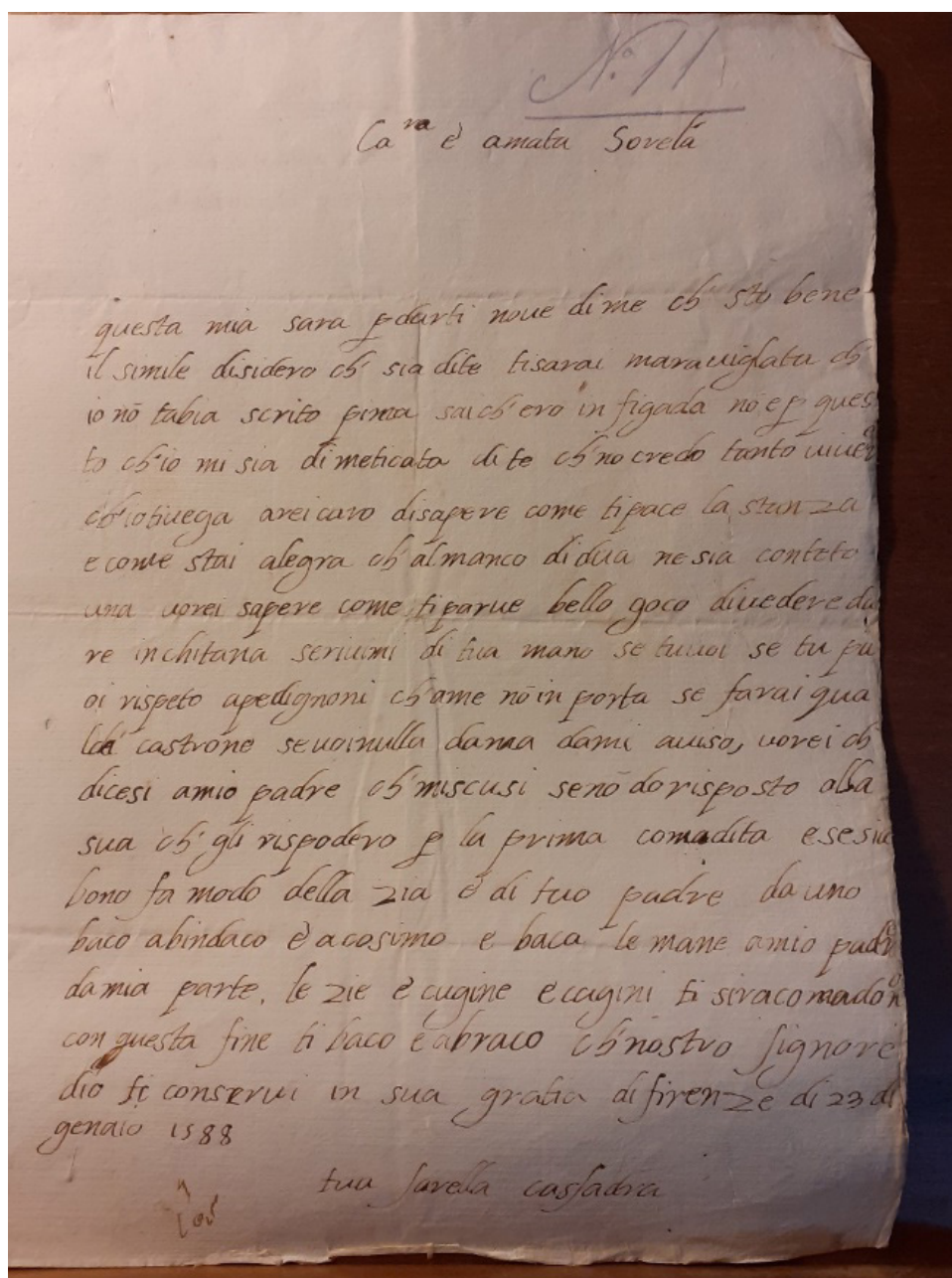
Ho riceuto la tua a me grata, p[er] la quale mi di' ch[e] l'afetione ch[e] io ti porto mi fa pacere e tua castroceli. Se no[n] fusi ch[e] io no[n] voglo ch[e] tu dica ch[e] io abia alterato il gusto, direi ch[e] questi fusino meglio. [I have received your letter which is dear to me, by which you tell me that the affection I bring you makes me like your mistakes. If it weren't that I don't want you to say that I have faulty perceptions, I would say that these (mistakes) have improved.] (#r607)

Cassandra's fluent hand and her proud role as a writing 'coach' for her little sister set this writer miles apart from her grandmother's first letter-writing efforts. This generational trajectory seems to mirror, on the micro-scale of one individual family, the increase in women's literacy that was occurring across the Florentine patriciate more broadly.

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himself which I have not been able to locate, claims that Lucrezia was Cassandra's full sister. I could not find her name in the baptismal records of San Giovanni.

**24** The term *pedignone* indicated chilblains on the feet, but the historical dictionary Battaglia reports the idiomatic expression *avere i pedignoni nella lingua* (lit. 'to have chilblains in the tongue') with the meaning of 'to speak with difficulty', 'to stammer' (Battaglia & Bárberi Squarotti 1961–2002, s.v. *pedignone*).



**Figure 4. A letter by Cassandra (#r604).**

When it comes to writing experience, we can, therefore, identify a sharp divide between the woman of the first generation, Lucrezia, whose graphic competence was very low, and the women of the second and third generations, who were much more experienced writers. On this basis, an interpretation of formulae as *Formulierungshilfe* would lead us to expect a higher use of optional formulae by Lucrezia, compared to Maddalena and Cassandra.

## 6.2 An analysis of the Ricasoli women's use of formulae

Table 8 reports the average number of optional formulae used by Lucrezia, Maddalena, and Cassandra in their letter closings (classified according to the pragmatic typology of formulae introduced in Section 5.1). The number in parenthesis refers to the number of variants employed by each woman for any given type of formula.

**Table 8. Number of optional formulae used by Lucrezia, Maddalena, and Cassandra.**

Pragmatic category	Types of optional formulae	Lucrezia	Maddalena	Cassandra
Text-structural	Discourse-ending	20(2)	21(5)	24(5)
Intersubjective	Health wishes	16(1)	1	0
	Health statements	0	2(1)	0
	Greetings	5(1)	10(3)	47(12)
	Other	3(2)	3(2)	19(4)
Christian-ritual	Christian wishes	0	17(4)	20(6)
Total		44	54	110
Average no. optional formulae		2.4	3	6.1

The results show that while the average frequency of optional formulae is not too dissimilar in Lucrezia's and Maddalena's letter closings (2.4 and 3 respectively), Cassandra uses a lot more (6.1). As for the variation of the formulae within each pragmatic type, Lucrezia had fewer options between which to choose than either Maddalena or Cassandra. I will return to the discussion of these results after presenting an analysis of the various types of formulae used.

**Table 9. Discourse-ending formulae.**

Writer	Formula	Number of occurrences	Occurrences
Lucrezia	<i>né altro</i>	18	#r511, #r224, #r237, #r240, #r242, #r243, #r246, #r247, #r690, #r271, #r302, #r335 (twice), #r16, #r17, #r18, #r19, #r20
	<i>non sarò più lunga a(lo i)crivere farò fine</i>	2	#r16, #r17
Maddalena	<i>né altro</i>	16	#r334, #r555, #r336, #r337, #r44, #r45, #r512, #r513, #r514, #r157, #r158, #r160, #r496, #r163, #r166, #r169
	<i>*non avendo altro che dire</i>	2	#r513, #r519
	<i>altro no so che mi dire</i>	1	#r163
	<i>fo fine</i>	1	#r513
	<i>*no mi ocorendo altro</i>	1	#r167
Cassandra	<i>*con questa/tale fine</i>	11	#r484, #r485, #r604, #r42, #r606, #r607, #r487, #r489, #r493, #r204, #r495
	<i>non sarò più lunga (per non infastidire)</i>	7	#r484, #r485, #r42, #r488, #r490, #r412, #r14
	<i>*non m'ocoredo altro</i>	4	#r484, #r42, #r606, #r487
	<i>farò fine</i>	1	#r487
	<i>non dirò altro</i>	1	#r360

Discourse-ending formulae (see Table 9) are the only text-structural formulae used in the closings of the Ricasoli women's letters. Their frequency is quite similar across the different writers (20 for Lucrezia, 21 for Maddalena, and 24 for Cassandra). However, Lucrezia displays much less variation in these formulae than either Maddalena or Cassandra, as she employs only two variants. In all but one letter she uses the same bigram *né altro* [nothing else] and in two of her latest letters she duplicates this discourse-ending formula by using, alongside *né altro*, a more elaborate, 'bookish' item, *non sarò più lunga a (lo i)crivere farò fine* [I will not write longer, I will put an end to writing]. This is a combination of two formulae, but the fact that this string is used twice in the same wording strongly suggests that it had been learned as

a holistic unit, i.e. as a prefabricated, memorised sequence that was retrieved and used without subjecting it to analysis. As I explained in Serra (2024: 292), this formula appears more advanced than the surrounding text and points to an influence ‘from above’ which can characterise the writings of the semi-literate. By contrast, Maddalena and Cassandra resort to five variants each. Unlike Lucrezia, they often recur to formulae that cannot stand on their own, but that need to be combined with other formulae: this is the case for *non avendo altro che dire* [not having anything else to say] (Maddalena), *no mi ocorendo altro* [not needing anything else] (Maddalena and Cassandra), and *con questa/tale fine* [with this end] (Cassandra).

Finally, Cassandra emerges as the most creative. Although in her letters the discourse-ending formula *non sarò più lunga* [I will not write longer] is most often completed by the string *per non infastidire* [not to annoy you], in one case this string is replaced by a more personal, non-formulaic explanation: ‘Non sarò più lunga che non ò pena bona tanto che no farei se none castroni’ [I will not write longer because I do not have a good pen so I would only be making a mess] (#r485). In another case, Cassandra makes use of a creative reformulation (which I have not considered a formula, in keeping with my original definition), so that the stereotypical *Non sarò più lunga per non infastidire* is turned into ‘Io sono stata tanta lunga credo vi verò a fastidio, abate pazieza’ [I have written so long that I will annoy you, have a little patience] (#r491).

**Table 10. Health formulae.**

Writer	Formula	Type of formula	Number of occurrences	Occurrences
Lucrezia	<i>ista(tte) sano/I</i>	health wish	16	#r511, #r224, #r237, #r240, #r242, #r243, #r246, #r672, #r271, #r302, #r335, #r16, #r17, #r18, #r19, #r20
Maddalena	<i>riuardatevi a questi caldi</i>	health wish	1	#r169
	<i>__istanno bene</i>	health statement	2	#r163, #r166

As for intersubjective formulae, following Rutten and van der Wal (2014: 114–118) I distinguish between health statements – i.e. formulae that communicate the health of the writer and/or of third parties – and health wishes. Both are shown in Table 10. Health statements are rare in the closings of the Ricasoli women’s letters, since they tend instead to be concentrated in the opening.<sup>25</sup> Only Maddalena uses them twice, announcing the good health of third parties through the bigram *\_\_ istanno bene* [*\_\_ are well*] [#r163, #r166]. However, health wishes are frequent in the closings of Lucrezia’s letters (sixteen occurrences). To wish the recipient good health, she consistently resorts to the same formula, i.e. a simple bigram with no insertions or lexical substitutions: *ista(tte) sano/i* [*stay healthy*]. Health wishes are almost non-existent in the letters by Maddalena and Cassandra, but this function seems to be fulfilled by Christian-ritual formulae instead (see Table 11).

**Table 11. Christian-ritual formulae.**

Writer	Formula	Number of occurrences	Occurrences
Maddalena	<i>Idio ti uardi (di (ogi) male)</i>	6	#r334, #r555, #r336, #r337, #r45, #r159
	<i>Idio con voi</i>	5	#r158, #r160, #r496, #r163, #r169
	<i>Idio vi contenti</i>	4	#r512, #r513, #r514, #r157
	<i>el nostro sigore (Idio) vi conservi in sua gratia</i>	2	#r166, #r167

**25** To give a couple of examples, see the opening of two letters by Maddalena and Cassandra respectively: ‘tengo 2 vostre e p[er] dete intendo voi istare tuti bene. El simile ène di noi, Ido laudato’ [I have two letters from you and from them I hear that you are all well. The same goes for us, praise be to God] (#r513); ‘ho riceuto la vostra a me gratisima d’avere inteso il vostro bene istare. Il simile di noi, p[er] Dio gratia’ [I have received your letter which is very dear to me for having heard of your good health. The same goes for us, thank God] (#r42).



Cassandra	<i>che nostro/il signore (Dio) vi/ti/la tenga/conservi in sua (santa) gratia</i>	7	#r484, #r485, #r604, #r42, #r607, #r487, #r14
	<i>che il signore (Dio) vi conceda/doni la sua (santa) gratia</i>	6	#r488, #r489, #r490, #r491, #r492, #r495
	<i>(il signore) Dio sia (sempre in) tuo/vostro aiuto</i>	3	#r606, #r493, #r204
	<i>il signore (Dio) vi conservi e vi dia la sua gratia</i>	2	#r412, #r491
	<i>il signore Dio sia quello che ci porga il suo aiuto</i>	1	#r360
	<i>preda Dio per me ch[e] n'ò bisogno</i>	1	#r606

In fact, aside from one formula in which the writer, Cassandra, asks the addressee to pray for her (#r606), the Christian-ritual formulae found in the Ricasoli letters wish God's grace and protection on the recipient (and sometimes on the writer alongside the recipient). These Christian-ritual 'wishes' are not used by Lucrezia, but are employed very frequently by Maddalena and Cassandra. This is best explained by considering them in the same category as health wishes. Their function is similar since, by invoking God's protection, they entail a wish for the addressee's health and happiness. Under this interpretation, the frequency of health or Christian-ritual wishes used by the three Ricasoli women is comparable, as Lucrezia, as we have seen, employs 16 health wishes, Maddalena uses 17 Christian-ritual wishes, and Cassandra employs 20.

Once again, while Lucrezia's wish consisted of one fixed bigram, Maddalena and Cassandra employ more variants (4 and 5 respectively). These variants, in turn, allow for a certain degree of lexical substitution and insertions: for example, the formula *che nostro/il signore (Dio) vi/ti/la tenga/conservi in sua (santa) gratia* [may (God) our Lord keep/preserve you in His (holy) grace], employed by Cassandra, allows for the alternation of the verbs *tenere* and *conservare* and for the optional insertion of the adjective *santa* [holy]. Cassandra even strings together two formulae, *che il (nostro) signore (Dio) vi/ti/la tenga/conservi in sua (santa) gratia* [May (God) our Lord keep you in his (holy) grace] and *che il signore (Dio) vi conceda la sua (santa) gratia* [May (God) our Lord give you his holy grace], to obtain *il signore Dio vi conservi e vi*

*dia la sua gratia* [May God our Lord keep you and give you his grace], a novel string that itself becomes a formula, since she employs it in multiple letters.

**Table 12. Greetings.**

Writer	Formula	Number of occurrences	Occurrences
Lucrezia	<i>a __ mi raccomando</i>	5	#r16, #r17, #r18, #r19, #r20
Maddalena	<i>a __ mi raccomando</i>	6	#r336, #r44, #r45, #r512, #r513, #r514
	<i>e così mi raccomandate a __</i>	1	#r513
	<i>__ vi si raccomanda(no)</i>	3	#r166, #r167, #r169
Cassandra	<i>a__ mi racomado</i>	4	#r606, #r607, #r487, #r493
	<i>racomandatemi a __</i>	2	#r360, #r204
	<i>__ si raccomanda(no)</i>	10	#r484, #r604, #r42, #r607, #r488, #r489, #r412, #r412, #r491, #r492
	<i>*(e) così (fa) __</i>	6	#r42, #r606, #r488, #r489, #r493, #r14
	<i>*e io per infinite/mille volte</i>	3	#r412, #r491, #r492
	<i>*e __ a</i>	1	#r412
	<i>(per infinite volte) mi ofero e racomado</i>	5	#r488, #r490, #r204, #r495, #r14
	<i>vi baco le mane</i>	3	#r484, #r485, #r42
	<i>ti baco e abraco</i>	1	#r604
	<i>saluta(te) __ (da mia parte/in nome mio)</i>	9	#r485, #r606, #r487, #r488, #r412, #r491, #r492, #r204, #r495
	<i>bacia(te) (le mane a) __ da mia parte</i>	2	#r484, #r604
<i>__vi saluta</i>	1	#r14	

Greetings (see Table 12), another important intersubjective element, are used much more frequently by Cassandra than by her aunt and her grandmother. Whereas Lucrezia employs 5, and Maddalena 10, there are 47 occurrences in Cassandra's closings. Once again, Lucrezia's greetings are highly fixed, as

she only uses one unvaried formula. Maddalena's greetings display more variation than her mother's, with three different alternating constructions built around the verb *raccomandare* [commend]. Cassandra's numerous greetings display by far the most variation, with the use of 12 different types. If some of this variation may be explained by her need to accommodate different addressees (for example, an informal *ti bacio e abbraccio* [I kiss you and hug you] in a letter to her sister alternates with a more formal *vi baco le mane* [I kiss your hands] in letters to her father), many equivalent formulae are used when addressing the same individual. Once again, Cassandra's formulae frequently allow for insertions and lexical substitution: for example, in formulae built around the verb *raccomandare*, the phrase *per infinite volte* [infinite times] may be left out, and *infinite* alternates with *mille* [a thousand].

**Table 13. Other intersubjective formulae.**

Writer	Formula	Number of occurrences	Occurrences
Lucrezia	fati/fatevi vezzi	2	#r242, #r18
	abiatevi chura	1	#r335
Maddalena	farai/fate vezi a __	2	#r334, #r513
	fati vezi	1	#r337
Cassandra	se/quando volete/ v'occorre/voledo nulla (da me) date aviso/avisate/ scrivete	12	#r484, #r485, #r604, #r42, #r606, #r487, #r412, #r490, #r491, #r493, #r204, #r495
	se poso (p[er] te/voi) cosa nesuna/nulla da aviso/ avisate	2	#r607, #r489
	fa(te) careze a __	3	#r484, #r42, #r606
	te(nete)mi in (bona) gratia di __	2	#r42, #r606

When it comes to other types of intersubjective formulae (Table 13), Cassandra again uses significantly more of them (19) than Lucrezia (3) and Maddalena (3). In particular, she frequently uses a formula that reassures the addressee that the writer is ready to respond to their requests (14 occurrences). This

element, which I have termed a ‘service formula’, finds no counterpart in Lucrezia’s or Maddalena’s letters.

### 6.3 Discussion

The data reveal that Cassandra uses more than twice as many formulae as Maddalena and Lucrezia. This increase is largely accounted for by Cassandra’s higher use of intersubjective formulae. We witness the emergence of a new intersubjective formula, which I have named a ‘service formula’, and most of all we see a significant increase in the number of greetings.

As for the variation in the formulae used within each pragmatic type, Lucrezia had consistently fewer options between which she could choose, and this holds true across the different categories of formulae. This is not surprising, as stylistic variation in early modern times was largely dependent on the repertoire one was able to accumulate by means of instruction and practice (Auer 2015: 154): although not much is known about these women’s education, Lucrezia certainly had less practice in letter-writing than her daughter and granddaughter. Moreover, her use of each variant tended to be highly fixed, so it is likely that she had learned formulae as holistic units. By contrast, Maddalena and Cassandra had more options at their disposal (Maddalena usually had more than Lucrezia, but less than Cassandra), and these options allowed for more internal variability. Out of the three writers, Cassandra emerged as the most creative, as she sometimes reworked existing formulaic strings to produce novel expressions.

Going back to the first research question formulated in this paper – i.e. whether women of later generations used fewer formulae – the answer is negative. Contrary to what would be expected on the basis of studies on other linguistic traditions, Cassandra, the writer from the third generation, used far more formulae than either her aunt or grandmother. Moreover, even though Maddalena’s degree of writing experience was more similar to Cassandra’s than to Lucrezia’s, Maddalena’s and Lucrezia’s letters were more similar in the number of formulae used than Maddalena’s and Cassandra’s were. This suggests that formulae, in this case, did not serve primarily as a ‘safe option’ for less experienced writers.

## 7. A comparison between women and men

Although women's language has received increasing attention in Italian linguistic historiography, studies systematically comparing the language of men and women are still rare (but see Bianconi 1987; Fresu 2003). Yet, placing women's usage in the context of male usage can help clarify further the relationship between gender, formulae, and writing experience. We have already seen that, in the private letters of the three Ricasoli women, the use of optional formulae did not inversely correlate with writing experience, as the woman with lower writing experience used fewer formulae, and the frequency of formulae was radically different between two women with comparable writing experience. The question asked here is whether we can at least prove that these women used more optional formulae than their well-educated brothers, as has been found in the case of English and Dutch.

In order to study the correlation between usage and gender across the different generations, I compared letters by the Ricasoli women with those written by their brothers, as explained in Section 4. Whereas Florentine women's writing experience increased significantly over the course of the sixteenth century, we have no reason to assume such an increase for the patriciate's men, as their writing experience would have been high even at the beginning of the period considered. However, as I did for the women, I first provide a brief biographical profile for each man, reflecting on the factors that might have impacted on their writing experience, and especially delving – when this was possible – into their education and literary interests (Section 7.1). I then present an analysis of the formulae they used (Section 7.2).

### 7.1 Men's biographical and letter-writing profiles

Lucrezia's brother Andrea di Matteo Albizzi (1486–1534), for whom, as previously mentioned, I could only retrieve four letters sent to close family members, was born on 6 March 1486 (1485 *more fiorentino*), so he was probably around ten years older than his sister.<sup>26</sup> Proving successful in politics

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<sup>26</sup> San Giovanni baptismal records, reg. 5, fig. 130. The date of birth reported in the genealogy given by Litta (1876: table 2), i.e. 6 May 1485, is incorrect.

and business, he became a close friend of two Medici popes and engaged extensively in trade between Rome and France (Litta 1876: table 2; Shearman 1960). According to Litta 1876 (Table 2), he was made a French subject by King Louis XII in 1513, and Clement VII appointed him governor and castellano of Orvieto.<sup>27</sup> Art historians have proposed that Andrea is the subject painted in Andrea del Sarto's *Portrait of a Young Man* at Alnwick Castle, a work that once belonged to the Albizzi family (see Figure 5) (Shearman 1960). It is serendipitous that, in the painting, he is portrayed in the act of holding a folded letter.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 5.** Andrea del Sarto, *Portrait of a young man, possibly Andrea di Matteo degli Albizzi*, 1510 (oil on panel), collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle. The reproduction licence for this image has been purchased from the Bridgeman Image Library (NTE6371401).

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- 27** One of Andrea's letters included in the corpus (#r385), sent in 1528, is indeed from Orvieto.
- 28** The name 'Andrea', spelt out on the letter, is one of the reasons behind the identification.

Unlike his sister, we can assume that Andrea had received a sophisticated education, which would have also included training in vernacular letter writing, as was customary for boys from elite families (D’Onghia 2014: 93). He might even have been instructed by a private tutor, a practice that had become a status symbol in fifteenth-century Florence: the Albizzi were among the families who are known to have hired such tutors (Black 2007: 440–441). It is telling (but not surprising) that the script Andrea employs distances itself from a *mercantesca*, which would have been typical of monolingual writers schooled in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Florence, and embraces elements of humanistic handwriting (see Figure 6).

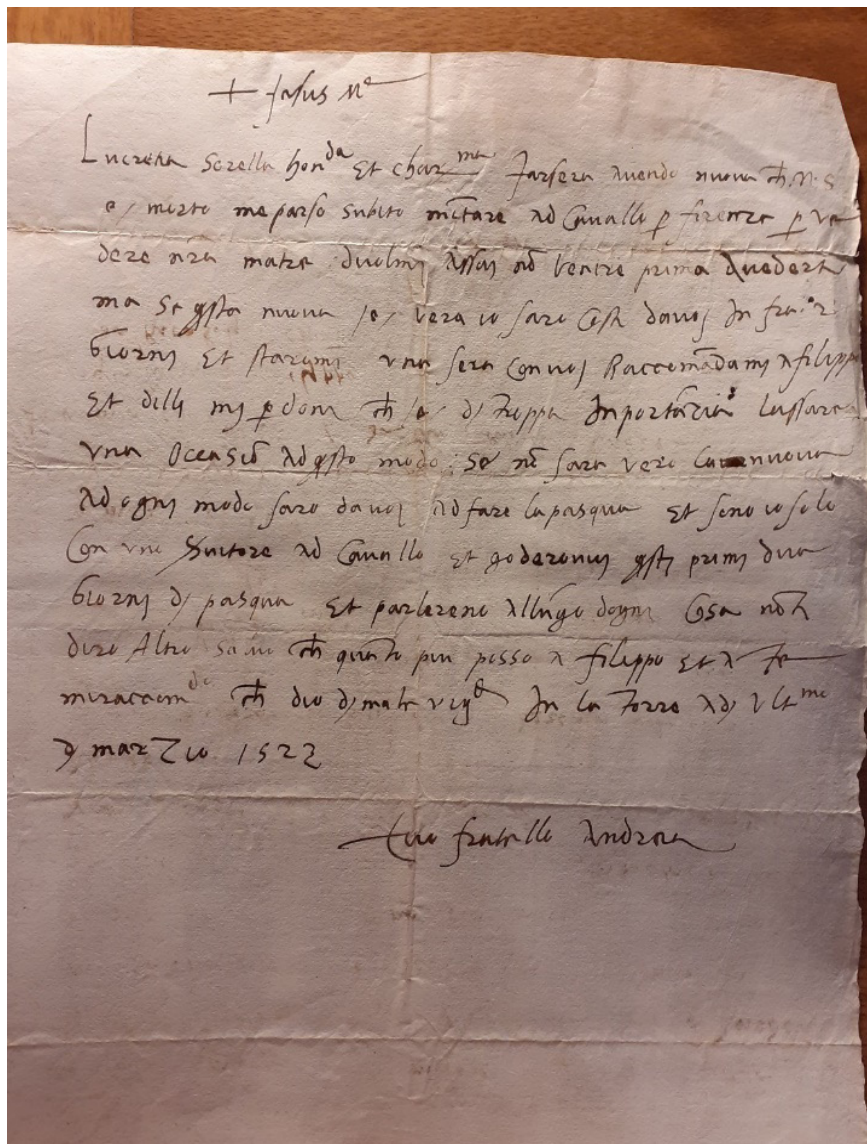


Figure 6. A letter by Andrea (#r321).

Moving to the second generation, Maddalena's brother Braccio (1525–1589) was born on 25 August 1525,<sup>29</sup> and was therefore three years younger than his sister. In his youth, he contemplated becoming a friar at the Badia Fiorentina (Ricasoli Filze 40-III-IV, c. 48), but with the death of his elder brothers he eventually became head of the family, married twice, and had at least eleven children. Passerini tells us that contemporaries considered him a learned scholar and philosopher (Passerini 1861: 170), and we have evidence of this from several sources. For example, Braccio features among the protagonists of an early, little-known dialogue written in 1548 by the man of letters Vincenzo Borghini, *De romaniis familiis*, preserved in one autograph manuscript at Florence's Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale. We also know that, given his interests in the vernacular, in 1571 Vincenzo Borghini proposed him as one of the members of the *Accademia generale della lingua*, a new language academy envisaged by the grand duke Cosimo de' Medici, a project that was eventually abandoned (Marchesin 2019: 8). An analysis of Borghini's *De romaniis familiis* has pointed out that Braccio must have been learned not only in the vernacular but also in Latin literature, and has hypothesised a possible study period at the monastery of San Marco (Marchesin 2019: 74). A look at his private letters (one of which is shown in Figure 7) further enriches this picture, revealing that he was educated in Greek too,<sup>30</sup> and giving us a further idea of his readings: his correspondence is filled with requests for books, including vernacular works by authors such as Francesco Berni, Luigi Alamanni, and Ugolino Martelli, and works of Greek philosophy and literature including by Aristotle, Xenophon, Themistius, Theocritus, Euripides, and Sophocles (#r103, #r28). This correspondence also highlights Braccio's relationship with important intellectuals of his time, and especially with Piero Vettori.<sup>31</sup> All of this leads us to hypothesise, for Braccio, an outstanding education beyond that received by most of his peers.

**29** San Giovanni baptismal records, reg. 9, fig. 94.

**30** Braccio's letters enable us to pinpoint the moment when he probably began to study this language in the winter of 1542 (#r676).

**31** See, for example, Braccio's description of his journey to Rome with Piero Vettori on the occasion of the election of Pope Julius III, and of the oration delivered by the latter as Cosimo's ambassador, in a letter sent to his brother in April 1550 (#r26).



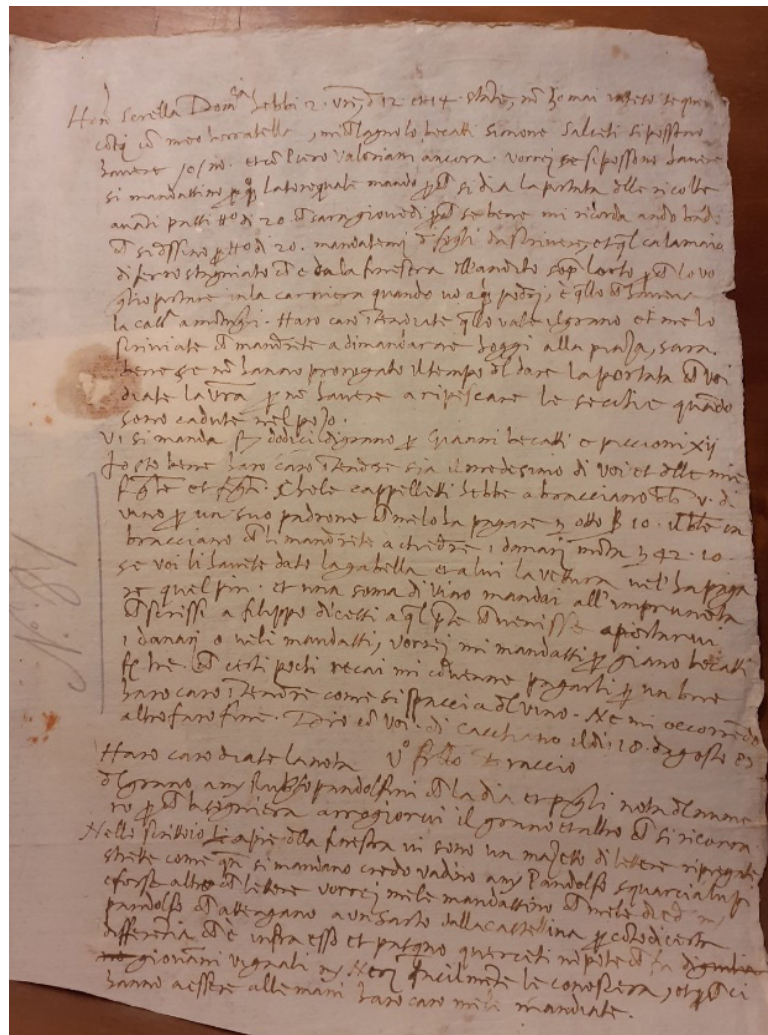


Figure 7. A letter by Braccio (#155).

As for the third generation, very little is known about Cassandra's half-brother, Cosimo. His name does not even feature among Braccio's numerous progeny in Passerini's genealogical tables (Passerini 1861: table 14), and I could find no information on him in the secondary literature. He was, however, born on 17 July 1586 out of Braccio's second marriage,<sup>32</sup> and was therefore twenty-two years younger than his sister. Unlike his brother Bindaccio, who became a member of the Accademia della Crusca,<sup>33</sup> and unlike his father Braccio, Cosimo does not seem to have distinguished himself for his learning. However, given his social standing, it is likely that he would have also received a sophisticated education (for a sample of his handwriting, see Figure 8).

<sup>32</sup> San Giovanni baptismal records, reg. 18, fig. 97.

<sup>33</sup> See the Crusca's Catalogo degli Accademici at <https://www.accademicidellacrusca.org/> (last accessed 3 Oct 2023)

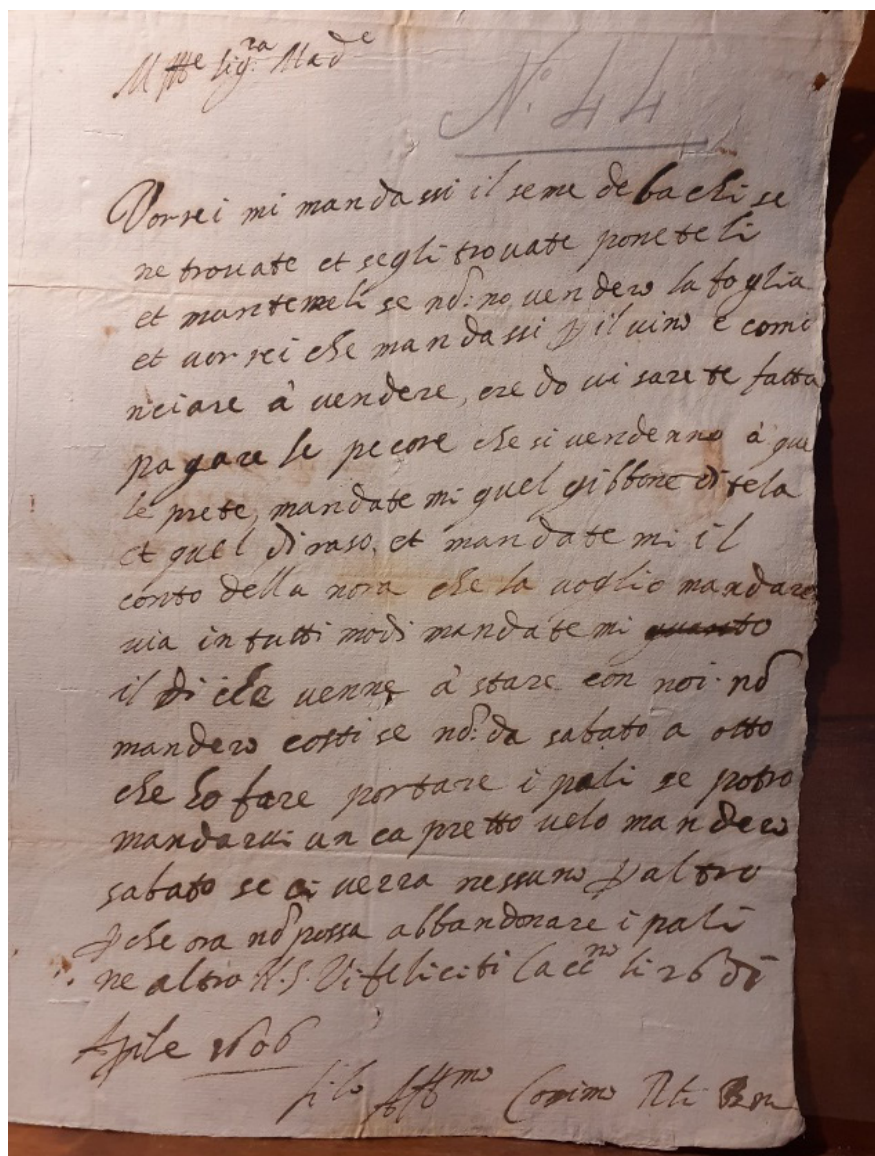


Figure 8. A letter by Cosimo (#r464).

In summary, all three Ricasoli men, as exponents of the Florentine patriciate, can be assumed to have received an excellent formal education. This education would have been superior to that received by their sisters. We know that Braccio especially was very learned in the classical languages and the vernacular alike, and that he was deemed an authority in the vernacular by the major Florentine intellectuals of his time.

## 7.2 An analysis of the Ricasoli men's use of formulae

Table 14 reports the average number of optional formulae used in letter closings by Andrea, Braccio, and Cosimo (categorised according to pragmatic

type). The number in parenthesis refers to the number of variants employed by each writer for any given type. It should be kept in mind that there are only four letters by Andrea, whereas for Braccio and Cosimo I selected the same number of letters that I selected for the women (eighteen). Since the number of letters by Andrea is so low, I did not calculate an average number of formulae, as I did for Braccio and Cosimo.

**Table 14. Number of optional formulae used in letter closings  
by Andrea, Braccio, and Cosimo.**

Pragmatic category	Type of optional formulae	Andrea	Braccio	Cosimo
Text-structural	Discourse-ending	4(2)	21(5)	19(3)
Intersubjective	Health wishes	0	1	0
	Health statements	0	0	0
	Greetings	7(3)	9(4)	3(2)
	Other	0	3(1)	0
Christian-ritual	Christian wishes	3(2)	14(4)	16(5)
Total		14 (4 letters)	48 (18 letters)	38 (18 letters)
Average no. optional formulae			2.7	2.1

The trend highlighted for the women, i.e. an increase in the use of formulae as the generations progress, is not visible for the men. If anything, Cosimo used fewer formulae than Braccio (an average of 2.1 versus 2.7). The differences highlighted across male writers, however, were nowhere as clear-cut as those separating Cassandra from the women of the earlier generations. As I did for the women, I shall now look more closely at the various types of formulae, before providing a more general comment.

**Table 15. Discourse-ending formulae.**

Writer	Formula	Number of occurrences	Occurrences
Andrea	<i>non (ti/vi) dirò altro, salvo...</i>	3	#r321, #r613, #r385
	<i>né in altro mi distenderò, salvo...</i>	1	#r400
Braccio	<i>no[n]/né altro</i>	12	#r227, #r676, #r237bis, #r103 (three times), #r104, #r300, #r138, #r144, #r357, #r156
	<i>altro (per hora) no[n] iscade</i>	3	#r300, #r622, #r26
	<i>farò/fo fine</i>	3	#r28, #r137, #r155
	<i>*no[n] mi occorrendo alt[r]o</i>	2	#r137, #r155
	<i>*altro no[n] havendo ch[e] dire</i>	1	#r28
Cosimo	<i>né/non altro</i>	10	#r456, #r457, #r458, #r459, #r460, #r461, #r462, #r463, #r464, #r465
	<i>altro non mi occor(r)e</i>	8	#r188, #r189, #r192, #r190, #r191, #r193, #r194, #r195
	<i>ora no[n] posso badare</i>	1	#r465

As far as text-structural elements are concerned (Table 15), consistently with his higher level of education, Andrea used different discourse-ending formulae than his sister Lucrezia, always stringing them together with other clauses through the connector *salvo* [except]. Meanwhile, Braccio's use is strikingly similar to that of his sister. Not only do Braccio and Maddalena use the same number of discourse-ending formulae (21) and the same number of variants (5), but 4 out of 5 variants – i.e. *né altro*, *non avendo altro che dire*, *fo fine*, and *non mi occorrendo altro* – are common to the two siblings. Cosimo, on the other hand, uses slightly fewer formulae (19 compared to 24) and fewer variants (3 compared to 5) than his half-sister Cassandra. In this case, there is no overlap in the variants used.

Health formulae are found only once in the men's letter closings: the health wish *state sano*, which was so common in Lucrezia's letter closings, is only used once by her son Braccio (#r277).

**Table 16. Christian-ritual formulae.**

Writer	Formula	Number of occurrences	Occurrences
Andrea	<i>(che) Dio di male vi guardi</i>	2	#r321, #r613
	<i>che Dio ce ne guardi</i>	1	#r400
Braccio	<i>Christo/Dio da/di male ti/vi guardi</i>	6	#r227, #r676, #r103, #r104, #r28, #r137
	<i>Dio (sia) con voi</i>	5	#r144, #r357, #r149, #r155, #r156
	<i>Dio sia in vostro aiuto</i>	2	#r138, #r142
	<i>che Dio ne conceda quanto desiderate</i>	1	#r477
Cosimo	<i>il/Nostro Sig[no]re/Iddio vi felicitì</i>	11	#r456, #r458, #r459, #r460, #r461, #r461, #r188, #r464, #r465, #r189, #r190
	<i>nostro Signore/Iddio vi conservi</i>	2	#r192, #r193
	<i>n[ostro] S[ignore] vi conceda ogni bene</i>	1	#r195
	<i>Il Signore vi guardi</i>	1	#r463
	<i>vi do la buona Passqua</i>	1	#r191

On the other hand, Christian-ritual formulae (Table 16) are more common. While his sister Lucrezia consistently employed health wishes, Andrea uses Christian-ritual formulae. Conversely, Maddalena and Braccio are once again similar in the frequency of Christian-ritual formulae (14 for Braccio and 17 for Maddalena) and in their degree of variation, with each of them using 4 variants, two of which – *Dio di male vi guardi* and *Dio con voi* – overlap. The latter especially is an item I have not found in other writers, so the fact that it is shared by the two siblings is striking. Cassandra and Cosimo are comparable in the frequency of formulae they use (20 and 16 respectively) and in their degree of variation (6 and 5 variants respectively), but there is no overlap in the formulae themselves.

**Table 17. Greetings.**

Writer	Formula	Number of occurrences	Occurrences
Andrea	<i>a__ mi raccomando</i>	3	#r321, #r400, #r385
	<i>*così a __</i>	1	#r400
	<i>mi racom[andi]/racom[andatemi] (anchora) a__</i>	3	#r613 (twice), #r400
Braccio	<i>raccomandatemi/mi racomanderete a __</i>	4	#r676, #r103 (twice), #r300
	<i>salutate __ (da mia parte)</i>	3	#r26, #r149, #r156
	<i>a__ mi raccomando</i>	1	#r104
	<i>vi piacerà di salutarmi __</i>	1	#r26
Cosimo	<i>a__ mi raccomando</i>	2	#r461, #r188
	<i>raccomandatemi a __</i>	1	#r460

The greetings used by the three Ricasoli men (Table 17) are quite similar, consisting of alternating constructions built around the verb *raccomandare* and, in the case of Braccio, *salutare*. Andrea used more greetings than Lucrezia (7 greetings in 4 letters, vs 5 greetings in 18 letters), while Braccio and Maddalena are again similar in the frequency of greetings (9 and 10 respectively) and in the number of variants (4 and 3 respectively), with two overlapping variants. Cassandra and Cosimo, on the other hand, are radically different, as Cassandra uses many more greetings than Cosimo (47 greetings with 12 variants, compared to only 3 greetings with 2 variants).

Finally, out of the three men, only Braccio makes occasional use of other intersubjective formulae, employing three times the item *fate/si faccia vezzi a\_\_* (#r477, #r142, #r149). Cassandra's high use of service formulae finds no counterpart in Cosimo's writing.

### 7.3 Discussion

The increase in the frequency of formulae detected for the women was not repeated among the men: Cosimo, as we have seen, used somewhat fewer formulae than either Andrea or Braccio. Going back to the second research question formulated in Section 3 – i.e. whether women used more optional

formulae than their brothers – the answer depends on the generation in question.

In the case of the first generation – the one where the gap in writing experience was wider – the woman, Lucrezia, used fewer formulae (on average 2.4) than her brother Andrea, who used around 3 or 4 formulae per letter closing, suggesting that formulae in sixteenth-century Florence were not simply a ‘safe option’ for less experienced writers. In keeping with these siblings’ different involvement in written culture, Andrea also had more variants at his disposal, and he used formulae differently from Lucrezia, combining them at times with non-formulaic elements to create more complex structures, for example in ‘Né i[n] altro mi distenderò, salvo p[re]garvi fuggiate q[ue]sta peste ad ogni modo’ [I will not write anything else, except to pray you flee this plague at all costs] (#r400).

The letters by the man and woman in the second generation, by contrast, turned out to be very similar in the frequency of formulae (2.7 and 3 respectively) and in their degree of variation. There was also a strong overlap in terms of the formulae themselves and one formula, *Dio con voi* [God with you] even seemed idiosyncratic of these two siblings. Apparently, it did not matter that Braccio had a fine education in the vernacular and in the classical languages, most likely not afforded to Maddalena. In the practice of private correspondence, the very close cooperation between these two siblings resulted in strikingly similar formulaic language.

Among the writers of the third generation (who, as half-siblings and born twenty-two years apart, were nowhere as close as Braccio and Maddalena), Cassandra used three times as many formulae as Cosimo (6.1 versus 2.1): hence, the trend highlighted for the first generation has completely reversed in the third.

What to make, then, of the fact that the use of formulae increases so sharply in the woman writer of the third generation, but that this increase is not detectable in the man of the third generation? Of course, it cannot be ruled out that the differences between Cassandra and Cosimo were simply idiolectal.<sup>34</sup> However, examining a few letters by Cosimo’s siblings (and Cassandra’s half-

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<sup>34</sup> On the relevance of idiolectal differences in the use of epistolary formulae, see Elspaß (2005: 195).

siblings) Bindaccio and Virginia appears to confirm this pattern of gender differentiation in the third generation. Each of the three letter closings I examined by Virginia, written in 1612 and 1613,<sup>35</sup> includes two greetings, one Christian-ritual formula, and at least one discourse-ending formula; moreover, two closings include a ‘service’ formula, and one contains two health formulae. Conversely, the two letter closings I examined by Bindaccio contain hardly any optional formulae: there is one in a letter written in 1602,<sup>36</sup> and no formula at all in a letter written in 1606.<sup>37</sup> Bindaccio’s limited use of formulae, therefore, is closer to Cosimo’s, while Virginia’s abundant use of formulae is closer to Cassandra’s.

Based on these admittedly limited data – which will need further confirmation from analysis of other corpora – it seems that women’s letters were moving towards a more polite writing style, whereas men’s letters were not. In Section 8, I shall propose some hypotheses to account for this differentiation and indicate avenues for further research.

## 8. Conclusion

My first research question was whether women with a lower degree of writing experience used more formulae. A positive answer would have supported the idea that formulae were primarily a safe option for less experienced writers, as has been found in other traditions.

In a publication exploring lifespan change in the letters of Lucrezia Ricasoli (Serra 2024), I showed that the frequency of formulae she used increased over time, as her writing experience grew. I had hypothesised that this finding might have been due to a non-linear relationship between use of formulae and (low) writing experience. That is, a stage in which a semi-literate writer uses few formulae (because they have not yet acquired them) would be followed by an increase in the number of formulae, which would go hand in hand with an increase in writing experience. As a writer’s experience rises even more, however, we might expect the use of formulae

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35 See n. 6.

36 Ricasoli Filze 41-III-IV, c. 22.

37 Ricasoli Filze 41-III-IV, c. 45.



to decrease again as the writer's need for formulation aids diminishes. Such an explanation would still have been compatible with a view of formulae as primarily a safe option for little experienced writers.

However, this explanation does not tell the whole story, as it does not explain the generational pattern highlighted in this paper. It is striking that the number of formulae rises sharply from the second-generation woman to the third-generation woman, despite these writers being more similar to each other, in terms of writing experience, than either was to Lucrezia. This is proven by the fact that, as seen before, both Cassandra and Maddalena were able to vary their formulae much more than Lucrezia. On these grounds, it does not appear that formulae, in this tradition, were only – or even mainly – aids for formulation. I propose that this increase in the use of formulae by the woman of the third generation can instead be ascribed to a shift in genre conventions.

In this respect, Armando Petrucci has noted that the medieval *lettera mercantile* – i.e. the genre of vernacular letters exchanged between merchants – was highly functional and practical in character, and that one of its defining characteristics was an extremely reduced formulary, with a text devoid, for example, of elaborate greetings (Petrucci 2008: 55). Petrucci also noted that, especially within merchant and bourgeois family circles, this minimalism in formulaic expressions – along with several other features – had spread from the *lettera mercantile* to the genre of private letters (Petrucci 2008: 54).

Scholars have identified the sixteenth century as the time of an epistolary 'revolution' (Petrucci 2008: 86), since vernacular letter-writing spread as a social practice through strata of newly literate writers and boomed at the same time as a literary genre. This revolution would have triggered a change in epistolary conventions: the letter-writing manuals and letter books that enjoyed such success in the printing market, if not directly responsible for this shift, at least attest to and reflect its existence. I propose that Maddalena is still anchored to a model of private letter informed by the *lettera mercantile*, whereas Cassandra, born more than forty years later, would have been more receptive to the new polite and elaborate epistolary style that was being promoted in polite society and letter books alike. With reference to seventeenth-century letters, and specifically to letters by women, Zari has noted that correspondence, from a genre that was once conceived as

responding to practical and functional needs, had become an element and tool of a *civil conversazione* (Zarri 1999: xvi). Cassandra's frequent use of epistolary formulae could perhaps be explained in this light. It has been suggested that similar changes took place in other traditions too: in letters written in early modern English, Elsweiler & Ronan (2023: 2) detect an increase in the complexity of closings throughout the sixteenth century.

Strikingly, however, this increase in the use of formulae across the generations was not detected in the letters by the Ricasoli men. Although idiolectal differences cannot be ruled out, as I explained in Section 7.2 the examination of a handful of letters by two other siblings, Virginia and Bindaccio Ricasoli, seemed to confirm the same tendency. At the turn of the seventeenth century, it would seem that women's private letters were moving towards a more polite writing style with an abundance of formulae (at least in the letter closing), whereas men's letters were not.

Several hypotheses might be formulated in this regard, although all must remain speculative at this stage. With the new polite model of the *lettera familiare* [private letter] gaining currency thanks to the circulation of printed letter books, one might posit the existence of a progressive 'gendering' of genres. In other words, with an increase in women's literacy, this polite model would have become available to all women from the upper classes, while the mercantile letter model might not always have been available to them. It would, however, have remained very much available to the men of different generations, since all of them had to deal with business. In fact, it might not be a coincidence that Cassandra, the writer who used more formulae, was not involved in the family business in the same way that her aunt Maddalena or her grandmother Lucrezia were, so mercantile conventions might have been less relevant to her as a reference model. This would have made her more likely to turn to the new model of private letters promoted in printed books and polite circles.

However, alternative explanations are also possible. One is that women were more likely to adopt innovative, overtly prestigious features spreading from above. This is a finding that has been repeatedly obtained in present-day societies (Trudgill 1972: 179), but historical sociolinguistic studies have so far cast doubt on the universality of this principle. In the history of Germanic languages, men were consistently found to lead the changes

originating from the high spheres of learning and professional usage, such as the spread of multiple negation and of *which*-relativiser in English (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003: 128–131) and the change from *d*- to *w*-relativisation in Dutch (Rutten & Van der Wal 2014: 302).<sup>38</sup> In other words, women could not lead the adoption of features that were unavailable to them due to educational barriers. However, the case presented here might represent a historical context in which prestige features were at last becoming available to (high-status) women, since, as we have seen, letter writing was becoming a common social practice for Florentine patrician women. The turn of the seventeenth century, then, could have been a time in which women took the lead as innovators when it came to prestige features, just as they do today. If this explanation were true, then the men of subsequent generations would be expected to eventually pick up these formulae too.

In present-day sociolinguistics, various factors have been proposed for women's preference for prestigious features: these range from linguistic insecurity (Labov 1966: 335; Trudgill 1972: 183) and the value of linguistic resources as symbolic capital (Eckert 2000) to cultural differentiation rooted in early socialisation practices within same-sex groups, groups in which – probably as a result of power dynamics – women would more often resort to linguistic resources that foster cooperativeness over competitiveness (e.g. Maltz & Borker 1983; Tannen 1990).<sup>39</sup>

A hypothesis that may be formulated for the context of early modern Florence, tied to a view of gender differences as cultural differentiation, is that as more women were developing a writing network – forming, therefore, a community of practice of their own – they went on to develop their own conventions: a higher use of intersubjective formulae might be viewed as constituting an alternative style of interaction, based more on cooperation and back-channelling than men's style. This style might have simply reproduced politeness strategies that were more expected of women in society, or might have resulted from women having a heightened receptivity to new, overtly

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**38** Comparable results have been observed in the evolution of English spelling (Sairio 2009: 312). For further discussion of this issue in historical sociolinguistics, see Sairio & Palander-Collin (2012: 631).

**39** For an overview of this debate, see Schilling (2011).

prestigious norms in historical settings too. These are hypotheses that I leave for future studies.

In conclusion, the results obtained in this paper strongly suggest that optional epistolary formulae were not simply a ‘safe option’ for less experienced writers in the Italian tradition. They point to the importance of considering the use and frequency of formulae as specific elements of a discourse tradition, which could change following developments in social practices. Epistolary formulae, in Renaissance Florence, functioned as social conventions related to specific group practices and textual traditions. Although further investigation on larger corpora is needed to confirm this, the comparison between men’s and women’s letters also suggests that even in the past, women might have been more sensitive to innovative, overtly prestigious features, once these features became available to them through sufficient exposure to (and involvement in) written culture. I propose that in this context, formulae might have also come to serve as tools of cultural differentiation. **N**

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*Andarsene alla francese e  
all'inglese, to take a  
French leave e filer à  
l'anglaise: breve  
ricognizione storica di  
un fraseologismo  
europeo*

**EMANUELE VENTURA**

**Abstract** Il presente saggio, ricorrendo soprattutto alle numerose fonti oggi facilmente accessibili grazie a *Google Libri*, cerca di ricostruire la storia dell'espressione idiomatica *andarsene alla francese* 'andarsene alla cheticella, senza salutare': tale locuzione italiana, assieme alla sua principale variante *andarsene all'inglese*, mostra stretti rapporti con espressioni analoghe vive in molte altre lingue europee, e si presenta a tutti gli effetti come un europeismo fraseologico, che è stato variamente interpretato in studi precedenti. Fornendo informazioni aggiuntive sulla semantica dell'espressione e sulla sua diffusione in diacronia, e ragionando contemporaneamente sui legami osservabili fra lingue diverse, si ricava la sostanziale anteriorità dei fraseologismi fondati sull'etnonimo *francese*, ma anche la presenza ancora precedente di altre espressioni, semanticamente affini e portatrici di scortesie linguistiche che hanno spesso contrassegnato i rapporti fra popoli vicini.

**Parole chiave** *andarsene alla francese*, fraseologia, etimologia, espressioni idiomatiche, europeismi

## 1. Premessa: *andarsene alla francese / all'inglese nelle maggiori lingue europee*

L'unità fraseologica *andarsene alla francese* 'andarsene alla cheticella, senza salutare' costituisce, assieme alla sua principale variante *andarsene all'inglese*, più diffusa nell'italiano contemporaneo stando alle informazioni restituite dai più noti dizionari dell'uso (cf. *infra*), un'espressione idiomatica (d'ora in avanti: EI)<sup>1</sup> dall'origine non del tutto cristallina, ma che oggi appare contrassegnata da una circolazione su scala europea. Nelle pagine che seguono, fondandomi soprattutto su alcune fonti primarie rintracciabili grazie a *Google Libri* (strumento oggi notoriamente irrinunciabile, per questa come per altre ricerche lessicografiche dello stesso tenore, nel tentativo di risalire alle origini delle parole in epoca moderna), cercherò di portare qualche luce in più sulla storia dell'espressione, riconsiderando alcune

1 Si adottano le seguenti abbreviazioni: EI = espressione/-i idiomatica/-che; cat. = catalano; fr. = francese; ingl. = inglese; locuz. = locuzione; port. = portoghese; sp. = spagnolo; s.v. = *sub voce*; ted. = tedesco.

precedenti interpretazioni etimologiche,<sup>2</sup> e agendo, in maniera contrastiva, tanto sul piano della cronologia, quanto su quello della semantica e della relazione fra l'italiano e le altre grandi lingue europee.

Va anzitutto evidenziato, infatti, come l'EI in oggetto abbia conosciuto, fra Ottocento e Novecento, una larga diffusione a livello europeo, conservando perlopiù il medesimo significato in lingue non strettamente connesse fra loro o, almeno, non connesse in maniera diretta e storicamente profonda: come si vedrà nelle pagine che seguono, la sostanziale equivalenza sul piano semantico, accompagnata anche da una diffusa equivalenza formale, consente di ricondurla al gruppo degli europeismi fraseologici, intendendo con *europeismi* quei «tratti comuni a più lingue d'Europa, ma anche elementi formativi di parole (come prefissi e suffissi), locuzioni e persino tratti grammaticali e fonologici diffusi nelle lingue europee» (Stammerjohann 2010).<sup>3</sup>

Consultando i principali dizionari dell'uso nello spazio linguistico europeo, si assiste oggi a una situazione complessivamente bipartita, che vede come protagonisti, al pari di quanto accade anche nell'italiano moderno, i due etnonimi *francese* e *inglese*, al centro di una storia di scortesie linguistiche che sembra essersi svolta in origine fra le due sponde della Manica.<sup>4</sup> L'etnonimo

2 Di là dalle osservazioni fornite dai dizionari, l'unico ragguaglio scientifico mirato, se ho ben visto, è stato offerto da Romera Pintor (2012).

3 Più in generale, l'equivalenza semantica (e, per larga parte, morfologica) dei sintagmi interessati consente anche di parlare, con Volmert (1990), di *interlessemi*. Sulla fraseologia in una prospettiva euro-linguistica sono stati pioneristici, e restano oggi fondamentali, le ricerche di Elisabeth Piirainen: cf. almeno Piirainen (2012) e, tra le pagine di questa stessa rivista, Piirainen (2009), in cui si circoscrive il concetto generale di *widespread idiom* (ted. *weit verbreitetes Idiom*: cf. in particolare le pp. 456-458 per una definizione delle caratteristiche di un *widespread idiom*), più adatto a descrivere situazioni convergenti di usi idiomatici fra lingue diverse. Sul concetto di *equivalenza* interlinguistica e sui diversi gradi di equivalenza dal punto di vista qualitativo si vedano Dobrovol'skij / Piirainen (2005: 61) e Dobrovol'skij (2011). Tra i progetti di ricerca recenti sulla fraseologia italiana va almeno ricordato GEPHRI (*Gebrauchsbasierte Phraseologie des Italienischen*: <https://gephri.phil.hhu.de/>); per una panoramica bibliografica aggiornata sulla ricerca fraseologica in Italia (ed europea più in generale) si può partire da Messina Fajardo (2022) e Henrot Sostero (2023).

4 Per un'introduzione alla fraseologia fondata su stereotipi etnici e per una ricca esemplificazione, cf. Eismann (1994), Söhrman (1997) e Piirainen (2018); tra le

*inglese* prevale oggi (quasi certamente, però, come si vedrà *infra*, in séguito a calco del fr. *filer à l'anglaise/s'en aller à l'anglaise*) fra le lingue dell'Europa orientale (eccezion fatta per lo sloveno), nelle quali il fraseologismo ha conosciuto, con ogni probabilità, una circolazione piuttosto recente, come risulta da una presenza che si osserva perlopiù negli strumenti lessicografici digitali e nei *blog* linguistici diffusi sul *web*:<sup>5</sup>

**Tabella 1: situazione delle lingue europee oggi.**

italiano: <i>andarsene alla francese</i>	italiano: <i>andarsene all'inglese / filare all'inglese / svignarsela all'inglese</i>
inglese: <i>to take French leave</i>	francese: <i>pisser à l'anglaise / filer à l'anglaise / s'en aller à l'anglaise</i>
tedesco: <i>sich (auf) französisch empfehlen/ verabschieden</i>	polacco: <i>wyjść po angielsku</i>
portoghese: <i>sair à francesa, saída à francesa</i>	romeno: <i>a o sterge englezeste</i>
spagnolo: <i>despedirse a la francesa, despedida a la francesa</i>	russo: <i>уйти по-английски [uyti po-angliyski]</i>
catalano: <i>anar-se'n/marxar a la francesa</i>	ucraino: <i>піти по-англійськи [pity po-anhliys'ky]</i>
galiziano: <i>despedirse á francesa</i>	ungherese: <i>angolosan távozni</i>
sloveno: <i>oditi po francosko</i>	ceco: <i>zmizet po anglicku</i>
greco: <i>το στρίβω αλά Γαλλικά / την κάνω αλά γαλλικά / φεύγω αλά Γαλλικά<sup>6</sup></i>	

formule che ancora oggi godono in italiano di un'ampia circolazione, se ne possono ricordare diverse riferite ad azioni quotidiane: *parlare cinese/arabo* 'parlare in modo poco chiaro'; *bestemmiare come un turco* 'proferire spesso bestemmie'; *fumare come un turco* 'fumare moltissimo'; *fare il portoghese* 'usufruire di un servizio senza pagarlo'; *fare l'indiano* 'far finta di non capire', ecc.; si pensi, poi, a scortesie legate alla propagazione incerta delle malattie, per cui in italiano s'indicava come *mal francese* la 'sifilide', laddove i francesi, di contro, parlavano di *mal napolitain*.

**5** Si veda, ad es., la pagina *Wikipedia* dedicata alla locuz. inglese *French Leave* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_leave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_leave) [ultima consultazione: 22.12.2023]). Per il galiziano *despedirse á francesa* cf. Piirainen (2018: 179); per lo sloveno *oditi po francosko* cf. Vrbinc (2019: 151); per il romeno *a o sterge englezeste* cf. Oprea (2017 s.v. *englezéște*).

**6** Cf., fra gli altri, <https://www.hallofpeople.com/gr/paroimies.php?id=4664> [ultima consultazione: 14.4.2024], in cui *Στρίβει α λα γαλλικά* viene glossato come «Κάποιος [...] φεύγει στα κρυφά, χωρίς να αποχαιρετήσει, χωρίς να τον καταλάβουν» ['qualcuno se ne va di nascosto, senza salutare, senza farsi notare']; la variante *φεύγω αλά*

Altre lingue europee non conoscono l'espressione in esame, il cui significato, evidentemente dal valore semantico pressoché universale e proprio di ogni comunità linguistica, è trasmesso attraverso locuzioni di natura differente, che non chiamano in causa i legami con altri popoli: è il caso, per es., del neerlandese *de rattentaxi nemen* (letteralmente “prendere il taxi del topo”), che trae probabilmente la sua origine dal linguaggio giovanile (WPT s.v.); il neogreco, poi, accanto alle varianti appena citate *supra* (το στρίβω αλά Γαλλικά, την κάνω αλά γαλλικά e φεύγω αλά Γαλλικά), che appaiono oggi non particolarmente vitali, conosce anche il fraseologismo άδεια από τη σημαία (letteralmente “permesso/autorizzazione della bandiera”):<sup>7</sup> la provenienza di quest'ultima EI dal mondo militare rappresenta comunque un aspetto degno d'interesse, che rimanda ai congedi non autorizzati dei soldati e che sarà utile tenere a mente per quanto si dirà fra poco (cf. §2).

## 2. **Ingl. (to take) French leave: qualche dato aggiuntivo sulle prime testimonianze scritte e sullo spettro semantico della locuzione**

Alla base della dell'EI in epoca contemporanea va presupposta, con ogni probabilità, la locuz. ingl. *(to take) French leave*,<sup>8</sup> già ben documentata alla metà del Settecento, per quanto non manchino, come si avrà modo di ricordare *infra*, alcune attestazioni anteriori, ma molto isolate, di fraseologismi semanticamente affini e fondati su etnonimi differenti. Le prime quattro testimonianze registrate dall'OED, risalenti al terzo quarto del sec. XVIII, appartengono, dunque, a un periodo nel quale le altre lingue europee sembrano non restituire tracce di locuzioni analoghe basate sugli

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Γαλλικά si trova già registrata nel volume 9 del *Mega lexikon tēs hellēnikēs glōssēs*, curato da Dēmētrakos-Mesisklēs (1936, vol. IX: s.v. φεύγω).

7 Cf., per esempio: <https://www.slang.gr/lemma/5568-adeia-ap-ti-simaia> [ultima consultazione: 14.4.2024].

8 Lo *slang* americano ha conosciuto più di recente anche le espressioni *Irish goodbye* o *Irish exit*, come si legge da più parti nel *web* (cf., fra gli altri: <https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/irish-goodbye/>) [ultima consultazione: 14.4.2024].



etnonimi *francese* e *inglese*, che cominceranno invece a intravedersi nel primo Ottocento:<sup>9</sup>

1751 *Polite Politician* II. 54: French Leave is a phrase we had often in use, When one slily elop'd; nor left coin or excuse.

1755 J. Wesley *Lett.* (1931) III. 127: I took a French leave this morning – that is left Leeds without telling either her or her husband.

1772 *Town & Country Mag.* 33: She...left Fanny with French leave.

1775 J. Trusler *Chesterfield's Princ. Politeness* (ed. 4) 72: The taking what is called a French leave was introduced that on one person's leaving the company the rest might not be disturbed.

I dati offerti dall'OED (s.v. *to take (†a) French leave*) possono essere integrati con alcune interessanti attestazioni di anni vicini. Già del 1741, e dunque precedente alla prima testimonianza riportata dall'OED, è un passo proveniente dall'anonimo romanzo *Benedicta*, nel quale l'espressione è impiegata con un valore traslato, che ne lascia presupporre un acclimamento ormai solido già nella prima metà del secolo. Il congedo, infatti, s'immagina qui avvenire nei confronti di un cuscino, in tal modo intendendo, ovviamente, l'abbandono del letto al risveglio:

«Mrs Butler, who on this extraordinary occasion, *had taken French leave* of her pillow, was soon at the chamber door, and without taking any apparent notice of her palid countenance, insisted on helping her woman to dress her in bridal splendor» (*Benedicta* 1741, 261: corsivo mio).<sup>10</sup>

9 Per il riferimento puntuale alle fonti citate cf. le abbreviazioni bibliografiche dell'OED.

10 Per tutti i passi provenienti da fonti primarie si cita rispettando la grafia originale delle stampe consultate.

Il significato primitivo di ‘andarsene alla chetichella, fuggire senza dare nell’occhio’ è manifesto, invece, in un paio di contesti provenienti da una cronaca ufficiale inglese del 1751 relativa alla vicenda di condanna a morte di sei uomini (*Ordinary* 1751, 11 e 75 [i corsivi sono presenti nell’edizione del testo]):

- a) «He thought it best to avoid the Consequence, and so, taking *French Leave*, he made off with all imaginable Precipitation [...]»
- b) «as they had not made a Slave of him Abroad, he had Resolution enough not to be made one at Home; so taking the *French Leave*, he left the Ship and that Part of the Country, and came on Foot to *London*»

Non sarà ozioso osservare qualche altro uso analogo di poco posteriore, in grado anche di delineare l’ampio spettro semantico complessivo dell’inglese: sulle pagine del giornale «The North Briton», il politico John Wilkes (Wilkes 1765: 82) parla di un commiato che, seppur avvenuto senza aver offerto ad altri presenti la possibilità di salutare, è connotato come un gesto tutt’altro che scortese, come è evidenziato dall’apposizione dell’avv. *politely*:

«This they will the more lament, because by his *politely* taking a *French leave* of them, they lost an opportunity (of which they were universally ambitious) of giving him indelible marks of their gratitude».

Ancora, nella prima traduzione inglese della novella *El coloquio de los perros* di Cervantes (1767: 21), la locuzione è accompagnata da una glossa metalinguistica che rende ancor più chiara l’idea di un andarsene via senza badare troppo ai saluti: «I was seldom turned away, though I oftentimes used to take French leave, or, in other words, run away».<sup>11</sup> Lo spostamento dal

11 La versione inglese, interessante di per sé perché contenente l’EI qui analizzata, non rende però in modo ideale il senso della versione originale («y nadie me despidió, si no era que yo me despidiese, o, por mejor decir, me fuese»), in cui si ha un’opposizione

valore letterale a quello, abbastanza vicino, di un “darsela a gambe” senza farsi notare, spinti dal bisogno impellente della fuga, è dunque ben attestato già poco oltre la metà del XVIII secolo.<sup>12</sup> Precoci sono anche le testimonianze lessicografiche che confortano le ipotesi relative tanto all’accezione primitiva quanto al leggero slittamento semantico appena visto: Grose (1785: s.v. *French leave*), per esempio, annota come quella di prendere un *French leave* fosse un’abitudine dei debitori nei confronti dei loro creditori: ‘to go off without taking leave of the company, a saying frequently applied to persons who have run away from their creditors’.

Ciò che appare perlopiù manifesto, in tutte le più antiche attestazioni rintracciate, siano esse letterali o già connotate in direzione figurata, è dunque il legame con una forma di congedo che non è comunicato o che non è stato autorizzato: dal significato di base (OED: ‘to depart unnoticed or without permission’), dunque, si sono verosimilmente sviluppate, come confermerebbe anche la cronologia delle fonti reperibili, le accezioni secondarie, ancor più negativamente connotate e relative perlopiù all’ambito militare, di ‘(also spec. in military contexts) to escape or take flight’ e ‘to desert, to take absence without leave’ (OED).

Dal punto di vista etimologico, l’espressione è poi spiegata dall’OED, allo stesso modo di quanto si fa all’interno di altri strumenti lessicografici,<sup>13</sup> anche ottocenteschi, alla luce dell’abitudine, diffusasi in Francia nel corso del Settecento o forse già nel secolo precedente, di congedarsi senza salutare gli ospiti («According to an explanation already current in 18th-cent. Britain, this derives from a custom originating in France of going away from a reception, etc., without taking leave of the host or hostess»). Come si può ricavare dal quarto degli esempi citati dall’OED, e al pari di quanto visto poco sopra

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fra *me despidiere e me fuese* (dunque fra “mi congedai” e “partii, me ne andai”), con un gioco di parole, basato sul doppio impiego del verbo *despedir* (transitivo in *me despidió*, pronominale in *me despidiere*).

**12** Si veda, con significato affine, Almon (1769: 156): «You may take our royal word for it, that when you have thoroughly drained the treasury, and embroiled the kingdom, you must take a French leave, and fly for refuge into our arms».

**13** Cf. *CED* (s.v. *French leave*): «an unauthorized or unannounced absence or departure [alluding to a custom in France of leaving without saying goodbye to one’s host or hostess]».

nell'esempio risalente al 1765, tale abitudine non sembra essere stata avvertita, almeno in origine, come un vezzo sgarbato nei confronti della compagnia appena lasciata. Dello stesso avviso, in epoca moderna, è la ricostruzione offerta da Suazo Pascual (1999: 58–59):

«En el siglo XVII se puso de moda en la corte francesa [...] no despedirse cuando se abandonaba una reunión; porque era señal de mala educación interrumpir la reunión para despedirse [...]. Esta costumbre pasó al resto de Europa; pero cuando esta moda cambió y el despedirse a la francesa era considerado como una descortesía, los franceses rechazaron su paternidad y adoptaron la expresión despedirse a la española o a la inglesa».

Dunque, come ricorda Romera Pintor (2012: 205), due sono state le strade percorse dai linguisti per spiegare l'origine dell'espressione: 1) la semplice attribuzione di un cattivo costume alle abitudini di un popolo vicino; 2) l'esistenza di un'antica moda francese, quella di accomiarsi senza salutare il resto della compagnia, risalente al XVII/XVIII secolo e che,<sup>14</sup> almeno in origine, doveva persino rappresentare una forma di cortesia: solo successivamente percepita come sgarbata, dunque, essa finì per essere rifiutata dagli stessi francesi, che da quel momento la affibbiarono piuttosto ai vicini d'oltremarica («la thèse la plus répandue sur l'origine de ces locutions “à la française” est celle de cette ancienne mode française de quitter une réunion sans se faire remarquer pour ne pas offenser les amphitryons»: *ibid.*: 207).

Quanto agli sviluppi semantici successivi, vale la pena tornare brevemente alla più antica testimonianza registrata dall'OED: questa, conservata all'interno di un rondò satirico intitolato, per l'appunto, *French Leave*, può essere anzitutto retrodata di tre anni, essendo già apparsa in una raccolta antologica pubblicata nel 1748 (*A Choice* 1748: 54). Di là dalla minima correzione cronologica, è soprattutto il contenuto del poemetto a suscitare una certa attenzione: il breve testo, infatti, è interamente fondato su una descrizione quanto mai negativa del cosiddetto *French Leave*, che qui

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Nascentes (1966: 266): «foi moda em França no seculo XVIII e da França passou a outras nações».

sembra essere attribuito non solo a chi scappa furtivamente, senza pagare e senza scusarsi (*When one slily elop'd; nor left coin or excuse*), ma anche, con un parziale slittamento semantico di provenienza militare, alle ruberie perpetrate da un esercito di occupazione (quello francese, nello specifico) prossimo ad abbandonare il paese nemico (cf. in particolare i versi: *For tho' nothing they pay, / They strip all their hosts – to bear something away*, oltre a *And humanely they seize what the peasants have earn'd.*).

French Leave is a phrase we had often in use,  
When one slily elop'd ; nor left coin or excuse:  
And oft', we staid longest, this benefit got;  
They were rid of a babbler – for paying his shot.  
French Leave, as now taken in Brabant and Flanders,  
By the polish'd French troops, and politer commanders,  
Is still more refined: For tho' nothing they pay,  
They strip all their hosts – to bear something away.  
French Leave is so courteous, 'twill cut a man's throat,  
For claiming his own, or secreting a groat.  
French Leave the grave Spaniards in Savoy have learn'd,  
And humanely they seize what the peasants have earn'd.  
What fools would again such companions receive,  
Whilst life could withstand them – if this be French Leave?

Ci troveremmo, allora, dinanzi al significato (e alla relativa ricostruzione etimologica) che sarà più tardi rilevato, fra gli altri, da Brewer (1885 [1<sup>a</sup> edizione del 1870, s.v. *to take French Leave*):

‘To take without asking leave or giving any equivalent. The allusion is to the French soldiers, who in their invasions take what they require, and never wait to ask permission of the owners or pay any price for what they take’

In modo non dissimile, nel fascicolo di una rivista inglese risalente al secondo Ottocento (Gatty *et al.* 1871: 190), l'espressione è ricollegata alla

presunta abitudine dell'esercito francese di riscuotere tributi senza averne l'autorizzazione:

«“French Leave” is generally supposed to have its origin in the practice of the French armies of levying contributions without “leave” or payment in the countries where they happen to be campaigning».

Se i dizionari inglesi contemporanei non offrono, in genere, ragguagli puntuali su alcuni valori semantici secondari come quelli appena visti, qualcosa in più si può ricavare dagli strumenti lessicografici ottocenteschi, fra i quali spicca per esaustività Farmer/Henley (1893: s.v. *French leave*): accanto all'accezione primaria di 1) 'to decamp without notice', infatti, si registrano qui anche quelle di 2) 'to do anything without permission', 3) 'to purloin or steal' e 4) 'to run away (as from an enemy)', allegando una nota etimologica relativa ai dissapori che hanno storicamente caratterizzato il rapporto tra Inghilterra e Francia: «Derivation obscure; FRENCH, probably traceable to contempt engendered during the wars with France; the compliment is returned in similar expressions + LEAVE = departure or permission to depart. Sense 1 is probably the origin of sense 2, 3, and 4».

Alla fine del XIX secolo, dunque, appare piuttosto evidente la presenza di alcuni slittamenti semantici che, muovendo dall'accezione originaria, si diffondono prevalentemente nel mondo militare: stando alla testimonianza di Farmer/Henley (1893), *to take French Leave* indicherebbe allora non solo l'allontanarsi senza preavviso e il fare qualcosa senza averne ricevuto il permesso, ma anche lo scappare via da un nemico, oltre all'azione del rubare.<sup>15</sup>

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15 Roback (1939) segnala, peraltro, il sost. *French leave-taker* nel significato di 'deserter'.

## 2.1 Il fr. *filer à l'anglaise*

Se la tesi che lega l'espressione alla suddetta abitudine francese di accomiarsi senza salutare resta la più accreditata,<sup>16</sup> poco trasparente appare anche il cambio di etnonimo, dall'ingl. *to take French leave* al fr. *anglaise*, come testimoniato, per l'appunto, non solo dal fr. *filer à l'anglaise* (e relativa variante *s'en aller à l'anglaise*), ma anche dai diversi corrispettivi tutt'oggi attestati in alcune grandi lingue europee, a cominciare dall'italiano. Alla base ci sarebbe, come tradizionalmente ipotizzato già nella lessicografia ottocentesca, il sentimento di reciproca ostilità che ha contrassegnato la storia dei due popoli per molto tempo:

«Il s'agit dans les deux cas de la même locution, qui – malgré le changement d'ethnonyme – conserve un seul sens [...]. Les explications [...] sur cette question ne font que mettre en exergue la raison non seulement la plus plausible mais aussi certainement la plus reconnue : celle de la traditionnelle animosité entre pays voisins en raison de leur histoire, de leurs agissements et de leurs conflits – quels qu'ils soient, diplomatiques ou militaires – ou bien même d'une image stéréotypée issue de ces conflits. Cette explication de l'animosité entre nationalités reste donc bien la plus probable, d'autant plus qu'elle permet de justifier tout aussi bien les deux versions (« à la française » et « à l'anglaise »)» (Romera Pintor 2012: 211)

Il TLFi, accanto alla breve definizione che conferma il significato noto (cfr. s.vv. *anglais* e *filer*), non offre ragguagli etimologici. Come ricordato da Fantuzzi (2004: 39),<sup>17</sup> si è anche tentato di spiegare l'etimo attraverso un verbo *anglaiser*, «che nell'argot parigino dell'Ottocento significava “rubare”» (si avrebbe dunque a che fare con l' “andarsene come un ladro” piuttosto che “come un inglese”), oppure tramite il termine «*l'Anglais*, che tra i coscritti

**16** Non ha prodotto frutti, tuttavia, il tentativo di rintracciare documenti storici dirimenti che attestino a chiare lettere la pratica in questione.

**17** Il quale però non tiene conto, nelle sue considerazioni, del corrispettivo inglese *to take French leave*.

dell'accademia militare di Saint-Cyr era sinonimo di *latrina*»: da qui si sarebbe arrivati a una locuz. *pisser à l'anglais* “svignarsela passando attraverso le latrine” (attestata anche in Zola),<sup>18</sup> per la quale andrebbe poi presupposto un ulteriore passaggio a *se tirer à l'anglaise* e *filer à l'anglaise*. Altrove, invece, si è riconosciuto nell'etnonimo un rapporto con una vecchia accezione del termine *anglais* ‘creditore, usuraio’, come voce derivata del verbo *angler* ‘prendre à l'hameçon’ (cf. Duneton 2005; Rey/Chantreau 1993).

Va poi ancora ricordato, per dovere di cronaca, che almeno in alcuni contributi d'epoca ottocentesca lo stesso termine *French* dell'inglese è stato interpretato non come etnonimo in senso stretto, bensì come derivazione da *frank* nel significato di *free*, motivo per il quale l'EI «may simply mean a permission which has not been granted, but assumed» (AN 1889: 182): tutte le ipotesi appena menzionate, tuttavia, appaiono decisamente poco convincenti o, quantomeno, molto poco economiche, anche solo considerando che la cronologia evidenzia la netta anteriorità, rispetto alle locuzioni francesi, non solo dell'ingl. *to take a French leave*,<sup>19</sup> ma anche delle corrispondenti locuzioni dell'italiano, dello spagnolo e del tedesco. Tutte queste lingue, evidentemente, hanno recepito e rilanciato, nelle loro rispettive versioni, l'esplicito riferimento al popolo transalpino più che al valore etimologico originario della voce *frank*. Gli scambi dell'etnonimo in questione, ben visibili nell'odierna locuzione francese ma anche in alcune varianti più sporadiche rintracciabili in altre lingue (cf. *infra* §3), lasciano piuttosto ipotizzare che ci si trovi effettivamente dinanzi a un'eredità emblematica «dell'etnocentrismo congenito a ogni popolo e dei suoi meccanismi di auto-difesa» (Ortore 2018: 89).

Provando a retrodatare la locuzione fr. *s'en aller à l'anglaise*, non mi è stato possibile risalire di molto all'indietro rispetto alla data del 1890 indicata dal TLFi; non ho rintracciato, infatti, testimonianze precedenti al 1885, quando

**18** TLFi (s.v. *pisser*): ‘*Pisser à l'anglaise* (vieilli). Disparaître, s'en aller sans prévenir (généralement pour éviter des désagréments)’.

**19** Anche Rey/Chantreau (1993) rilevano che «[l]’attribution aux Britanniques d’une conduite discrète jusqu’à l’impolitesse semble être récente (l’expression n’est pas dans Littré)».



l'EI si legge in *Les chers voisins*, un testo fondato proprio sul confronto fra i due popoli dirimpettai della Manica (O'Rell 1885: 52):<sup>20</sup>

«J'ai dit ailleurs que "s'en aller sans dire adieu à la compagnie" s'appelait en anglais "s'en aller à la française". Quelques Anglais m'ont contredit; cependant j'avais parfaitement raison: j'ai pour moi l'autorité de Webster et autres. C'est bien là la signification de l'anglais to take French leave.

Mais ce qu'il y a de plus joli, c'est qu'en France on dit aujourd'hui: "s'en aller à l'anglaise". Et cela signifie, quoi? S'en aller sans dire adieu à la maîtresse de la maison» (corsivo mio).

Solo a qualche anno prima riconducono, poi, le prime attestazioni di *filer à l'anglaise* (nella cronaca di un concerto parigino contenuto in una rivista del 1882 si legge che, in occasione di una *Valchiria* wagneriana, il pubblico «en a profité...pour "filer à l'anglaise"»: *RMMD* 1882, 5: 154), mentre *pisser à l'anglaise* appare effettivamente documentata in anticipo rispetto alle altre due varianti francesi (cf. Delvau 1866: s.v. *pisser à l'anglaise*: 'disparaître sournoisement au moment décisif').

D'altra parte, il ritardo del francese rispetto alle altre lingue si può cogliere agevolmente anche grazie agli strumenti lessicografici del primo Ottocento: nei dizionari bilingui francese-inglese dell'epoca, infatti, l'ingl. *to take French leave* è sempre reso con espressioni indipendenti, quali *emporter le chat de la maison* (cf. *NB* 1830: s.v. *chat*) o *déloger sans trompette* (James 1802: s.v. *trompette*).<sup>21</sup>

Se è vero, dunque, come è sostenuto da più parti, che l'EI in esame è sintomatica della tradizionale rivalità franco-inglese, le testimonianze

**20** Max O'Rell è pseudonimo del giornalista e scrittore francese Léon Paul Blouet (1847-1903) il quale, trapiantato a Londra, godette di notevole successo in terra inglese sul finire dell'Ottocento.

**21** In Chambaud (1770), il fr. *emporter le chat de la maison* era tradotto proprio con *to take french leave*: nella precedente edizione del 1751, la resa inglese adottata è, invece, *to go away in a mist*, a dimostrazione del fatto che la stessa EI anglosassone non godeva ancora, alla metà del Settecento, di una diffusione capillare.

a disposizione sembrano indicare come la sua storia linguistica vada verosimilmente scissa in due capitoli cronologicamente ben distinti: il primo, con buona probabilità quello originario e già settecentesco, di provenienza anglosassone; il secondo, invece, sicuramente più tardo e frutto di calco dal francese, destinato a prevalere nel panorama europeo.<sup>22</sup> La proprietà commutativa insita in certe locuzioni, d'altra parte, è ben nota agli studi fraseologici: basterà qui porre mente soltanto alle molteplici varianti (con reciproci scambi di attribuzione fra le diverse lingue tirate in ballo) sorte intorno al leggendario plurilinguismo dell'imperatore Carlo V, il quale, secondo la versione più accreditata, avrebbe detto di esprimersi in spagnolo a Dio, in italiano alle donne, in francese agli uomini e in tedesco al cavallo.

### 2.1.1. Il fr. *sans adieu*

Per concludere la panoramica sulla situazione linguistica d'oltralpe, offrendo tutti i possibili indizi utili a formulare una qualche soluzione etimologica, va poi almeno fatto cenno dell'esistenza, in francese, di una locuz. *sans adieu* (TLFi: 'Formules adressées à une personne que l'on quitte pour un court moment'), risalente più addietro nel tempo (almeno al primo Seicento), che si rivolgeva a una compagnia di persone nel momento in cui ci si allontanava per pochi istanti, lasciando dunque intendere l'inutilità di un vero e proprio commiato. In alcuni manuali di buone maniere del primo Seicento si coglie bene l'uso del *sans adieu* francese in contesti nei quali i due interlocutori prevedevano di rivedersi in un futuro più o meno immediato: du Plessy (1622: 27) contiene, per esempio, una simulazione di dialogo intitolata *Pour sortir de la maison de quelqu'un ou l'on a demeuré quelques iours ou fait quelque repas*, nella quale l'ospite e l'ospitato si congedano con un reciproco *sans adieu*. Ancora più esplicito è quanto si legge in un'opera (anonima) come *Les compliments* (1641: 67), all'interno del commiato posto in fondo al dialogo *Pour prendre congé de ses amis lors qu'on veut partir de quelque lieu*: «Je suis le vostre, Monsieur, & avec cela ie m'en vay prendre congé de vous sans

22 Si veda a tal riguardo la documentazione restituita dal DI (II: 496), nel quale *andarsene all'inglese* e analoghi sintagmi italiani sono considerati prestiti del fr. *s'en aller à l'anglaise, s'en filer à l'anglaise*.

Adieu: parce que i'espere de vous revoir bientost, Dieu aydant»; la speranza di rivedersi presto, dunque, è alla base di un congedo *sans adieu* dell'amico in partenza, come si vede in qualche lessico francese già alla fine del Seicento (cf. Furetière 1690: s.v. *adieu*: 'On dit, *Sans adieu*, pour marquer qu'on fe reverra bientost').<sup>23</sup>

Una testimonianza risalente al 1671 può essere preziosa non solo per constatare l'uso non adattato di *sans adieu* in inglese, ma per verificare parimenti l'uso della locuzione, anche al di fuori del francese, con una funzione avverbiale e non semplicemente esclamativa: «we quitted our Lodging, leaving our Entertainer *sans adieu*, not tarrying to return thanks for his Hospitality» (Addison 1671: 126). Lasciare una persona *sans adieu* (ingl. *to leave sans adieu*) sembra qui indicare chiaramente il gesto di andarsene limitandosi a un breve saluto di cortesia (*sans adieu*, appunto), senza indugiare in convenevoli. Nei dizionari bilingui del Settecento e dell'Ottocento, la locuz. *sans adieu* è resa abitualmente con un corrispettivo inglese *I don't take my leave of you* (cf., fra gli altri, già negli ultimi anni del Seicento, Boyer 1699: s.v. *adieu*: 'A familiar way of parting upon Business for a little while').

Secondo Romera Pintor (2012: 206), le due espressioni non andrebbero confuse perché, se il *sans adieu* è sostanzialmente un "arrivederci", il fr. *filer à l'anglaise*, pienamente corrispondente, invece, all'ingl. *to take French leave*, indica un partire senza proferire parola e senza farsi notare dal resto di una compagnia, «même si cela comportait à l'origine un signe de courtoisie qui voulait signifier la même chose qu'un "sans adieu" en anglais, espagnol, allemand ou italien». Benché, dunque, vi sia una differenza sostanziale fra le due locuzioni, la medesima studiosa ricorda che entrambe sarebbero state percepite come segno di cortesia nell'atto di congedarsi da qualcuno: anche alla luce di una tale considerazione, sarà forse opportuno non escludere a priori che possa invece essere esistito un legame tra le due, con uno slittamento semantico dal "limitarsi a un breve cenno di saluto" al non salutare affatto (nella visione anglofona testimoniata dalla loc. *to take French leave*).

**23** Ancora, cf. la situazione del tutto analoga di un *adieu, sans adieu* descritta da Puget (1655: 408), sempre all'interno di una conversazione esemplare, intitolata *Pour prendre congé d'un Amy, se mettant en voyage*: «je suis venu pour vous dire un adieu, sans adieu, & prenant congé de vous, recevoir l'honneur des vos commandemens».

### 3. Sulle locuzioni italiane *andarsene alla francese* e *andarsene all'inglese* (ma anche *andarsene alla spagnola* e *andarsene alla tedesca*)

Nello spazio europeo, l'italiano mostra bene come la variante fondata sull'etnonimo *inglese*, oggi l'unica ancora indicata come circolante dai dizionari dell'uso, rappresenti la versione più tarda, impostasi nella maggior parte delle lingue europee soppiantando, laddove fosse già presente, la più antica locuzione di provenienza anglofona, basata invece sull'etnonimo *francese*. La locuz. *andarsene all'inglese* è attestabile dal 1876 (Casaccia 1876: s.v. *all'inglese (andarsene)*: 'Andarsene insalutato hospite, Partirsi senza dire a Dio, né al diavolo') e ci consente di retrodatare di circa un cinquantennio la documentazione del DI (II: 496), che la registra dal 1923; ancora posteriori, inoltre, sono le attestazioni offerte dallo stesso DI per tutte le locuzioni analoghe, quali *partire all'inglese* (1942), *filare via all'inglese* (1950), *filare all'inglese* (1957),<sup>24</sup> *filarsela all'inglese* (1993), *svignarsela all'inglese* (2000),<sup>25</sup> mentre per *squagliarsi all'inglese* si risale al 1922.<sup>26</sup>

Come accennato *supra*, la locuz. *andarsene alla francese*, evidentemente ricalcata sull'originaria locuzione inglese, precede di alcuni decenni *andarsene all'inglese*: il DI (II: 112) la registra nelle accezioni di 'andarsene senza dir nulla' (dal 1917) e 'andarsene salutando soltanto la padrona di casa' (1922), segnalando anche il milanese *salüda ala francesa* 'il partirsi da una conversazione senza salutare altro che la padrona per non disturbar tutti'.<sup>27</sup> Grazie alla documentazione offerta da *Google Libri*, si può risalire

<sup>24</sup> Ma già rintracciabile nel romanzo *L'imperio* di De Roberto (pubblicato postumo nel 1929), citato dal GDLI (s.v. *filare* §22): «Disponevasi a *filare all'inglese* senza salutar nessuno, quando Mazzarini lo raggiunse nell'anticamera».

<sup>25</sup> Tramite *Google Libri* si riesce a risalire fino al 1922 (nella rivista teatrale «Comoedia», vol. 4, p. 987).

<sup>26</sup> Quest'ultima variante, peraltro, si mostra tutt'altro che obsoleta, essendo testimoniata anche in diversi testi recenti (seppur nella forma, con verbo procomplementare, *squagliarsela all'inglese*), per quanto i dizionari dell'uso registrino oggi soltanto le alternative *andarsene all'inglese* e *filarsela all'inglese*, presenti sia in Zingarelli (2022) sia in Devoto/Oli (2022): nessuno dei due dizionari annota, invece, le corrispondenti locuzioni basate sull'etnonimo francese.

<sup>27</sup> Quest'ultima accezione, semanticamente non lontana dal fr. *sans adieu* visto *supra*, si ritrova in Petrocchi (1887: s.v. *addio*).

già al primo decennio dell'Ottocento: all'interno della *Raccolta di proverbj e frasi francesi...* di Giovannetti (1810: 26), l'EI *andarsene alla francese* traduce il già menzionato (cf. *supra*) *emporter le chat de la maison*, confermando ulteriormente la mancata permeazione oltralpe, a quest'altezza cronologica, della locuzione di provenienza anglosassone.

Fra le testimonianze lessicografiche italiane, sono poi particolarmente utili quelle raccolte dal DI in alcuni dizionari dialettali di primo Ottocento, che dimostrano, al contrario, una precoce capacità di ricezione nella Penisola: oltre a quelle registrate per l'emiliano, il romagnolo e il napoletano (*jirsenne a la francese*), molto significativa è soprattutto l'attestazione fornita da Cherubini (1814: s.v. *Spagnuoli*), che nel milanese di primo Ottocento segnala la variante *Andà via* o *Toeù lissenza a la spagnœura*, in coabitazione con *Andà via a la franzesa*: «*Andà via* o *Toeù lissenza a la spagnœura* (che altri dicono anche *Andà via a la franzesa*). *Andarsene insalutato hospite*. *Andarsene senza far motto*».<sup>28</sup> La versione che chiama in causa gli spagnoli (DI, IV: 447),<sup>29</sup> pur essendo registrata solo all'interno di un dizionario dialettale come quello di Cherubini, consente oltretutto di correggere, almeno in parte, quanto precedentemente affermato da Romera Pintor (2012: 209), la quale, ricordando la corrispondente locuz. fr. *à l'espagnole* già segnalata da Suazo Pascual (1999: 58–59), parlava di «variante très rare qui n'est pas mentionnée ailleurs».

Infine, nella storia dell'italiano, una locuz. *andarsene alla todesca*, nell'accezione più generale di 'modo di prendere congedo al termine di una occasione sociale', è registrata dal DI (IV: 551) già nel 1606, in Francesco Carletti: «Finalmente, finita la cena ed il bere, ciascuno *se ne andò alla todesca*; ed io appresso feci pensiero di partirmi di quel paese e passarmene in Inghilterra e de quivi in Spagna». Ammettendo che si tratti sempre di un congedarsi senza salutare (un fatto che non pare desumibile, tuttavia,

**28** Solo nella seconda edizione del 1839-40, peraltro, il Cherubini accoglie la locuzione anche sotto il lemma *franzès*, che non compariva, invece, nella prima edizione dello stesso dizionario.

**29** In un breve commento pubblicato su Treccani.it nel 2010 viene indicata come EI diffusa oggi in Calabria ([https://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua\\_italiana/domande\\_e\\_risposte/lessico/lessico\\_107.html](https://www.treccani.it/magazine/lingua_italiana/domande_e_risposte/lessico/lessico_107.html)).

con assoluta sicurezza, dal contesto appena citato),<sup>30</sup> questa testimonianza seicentesca, pur essendo del tutto isolata e non avendo costituito, con ogni probabilità, un modello per l'ingl. *to take French leave*, rappresenta un'attestazione significativa di quanto il valore semantico del fraseologismo, legato evidentemente a occasioni estremamente comuni della vita sociale, sia antecedente alla sua effettiva diffusione al livello europeo per tramite dell'EI inglese.

#### 4. Cenni sulla documentazione di altre grandi lingue europee (spagnolo, portoghese, tedesco)

Come l'italiano, anche le altre grandi lingue europee testimoniano l'accezione originaria di “andarsene alla chetichella, senza salutare” (ma non sembrano aver conosciuto, neppure in passato, estensioni semantiche assimilabili a quelle che si sono qui osservate, invece, per l'inglese *to take French leave*). Nell'area iberica si è imposta piuttosto chiaramente la variante fondata sull'etnonimo *francese*:

- spagn. *despedirse a la francesa, despedida a la francesa* (cf. DLE: s.v. *a la francesa* ‘Repentinamente, sin decir una palabra de despedida. Se despidió a la francesa. Me marché a la francesa’);
- cat. *anar-se'n / marxar a la francesa* (PCCD s.v. *Anar-se'n a la francesa*);
- port. *sair à francesa, saída à francesa* (cf. DPLP: s.v. *à francesa*: ‘Sem dizer adeus; sem se despedir; ex.: *sair à francesa*’), accanto a *despedir-se a francesa*, segnalata da alcuni dizionari, tra i quali Houaiss (s.v. *francesa*).<sup>31</sup>

Se già dal 1767 è attestato il cat. *anar-se'n a la francesa* («Y no podent pasr avant, esclatá un plòr que tots se varen enternir, menys Lonclás que sen

**30** Si potrebbe forse anche immaginare un ‘andarsene barcollando (essendo alticcio)’, con un riferimento ai *tedeschi lurchi* già proverbiali nella *Commedia*.

**31** Nella definizione (‘sem se despedir, procurando não ser observado’; sem dar satisfação; às escondidas, em arábico, em latim’) lo stesso Houaiss ricorda, peraltro, come locuzioni semanticamente analoghe in area lusofona siano *em arábico* ed *em latim* (cf. s.v. *arábico e latim*).

habia anat á la francesa»: cf. PCCD s.v.), per la locuzione spagnola si può risalire almeno all'inizio dell'Ottocento, quando essa compare in un *pamphlet* anonimo dedicato alle azioni di Napoleone (*Perfidias* 1808: 11), all'interno di un passo che ne descrive la ritirata ingloriosa dopo l'assedio di San Giovanni d'Acri: «En este lance Bonaparte huyó corriendo materialmente, y a vergüenza si es que la tiene, le hizo despedirse de su tropa á la francesa»: corsivo nel testo.

Ancora, nella commedia *La niña en casa y la madre en la máscara* (1815), opera del poeta spagnolo Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, uno dei personaggi afferma di amare il *despedirse a la francesa*, considerandola un'abilità da gentiluomini («Me agrada / El modo de despedirse / A la francesa...Son mañas / Del los señores de juicio [...]»: Martínez de la Rosa 1827, 196–197): ciò è in pieno accordo, dunque, con quanto visto *supra* sull'originaria percezione del gesto in senso positivo, o quantomeno non negativamente connotato.<sup>32</sup> Per il resto, nel contesto ispanofono e lusofono non si riscontrano tracce di varianti fondate sull'etnonimo *inglese*, come invece si è potuto constatare per l'italiano.

Spostandoci nell'area germanica, il tedesco conosce oggi principalmente l'EI *sich auf Französisch verabschieden*, rintracciabile dal 1791 nella variante costruita con il verbo *sich empfehlen* e registrata da alcuni dizionari almeno dalla fine dell'Ottocento:<sup>33</sup> Huber 1791: 84: «Soll ich bleiben, oder soll ich mich auf französisch empfehlen?» [«Devo rimanere o devo andarmene alla francese?»].

La forma *sich auf französisch empfehlen* è poi documentabile almeno dal 1858 anche nell'accezione secondaria di 'allontanarsi senza pagare':

«nahm hier eine Menge Rapports entgegen, dictirte drei Orders und verließ darauf die Superintendentur, ohne sich im Geringsten zu bedanken oder ein Trinkgeld zurückzulassen, was man "sich auf französisch empfehlen" zu nennen pfllegt» [«ricevette qui moltissime

32 Qualche anno più tardi la si ritrova anche in alcuni strumenti lessicografici, quali il dizionario bilingue spagnolo-francese di Neuman/Baretti (1831: s.v. *francés*, dove *despedirse a la francesa* è indicato come corrispettivo dell'ingl. *to take French leave*).

33 È il caso, fra gli altri, di Genthe (1892: s.v. *Französisch*) e Kron (1899).

segnalazioni, dettò tre ordini, e quindi lasciò la Soprintendenza senza ringraziare né lasciare una mancia, ciò che si usa chiamare “andarsene alla francese”»]: Förster (1858: 416), vista già per la corrispettiva EI dell'inglese (cf. *supra* §2).

La facile interscambiabilità dell'etnonimo finisce, anche in tal caso, per lasciar traccia di forme concorrenti che coinvolgono altri popoli vicini: il grande linguista Hugo Schuchardt segnalava, quale variante austriaca del ted. *sich auf Französisch verabschieden*, l'alternativa *sich auf holländisch empfehlen* (Schuchardt 1885: 71); questa appare confermata, peraltro, dalle pagine del foglio viennese *Fremden-Blatt* del 26.4.1867, 1, in cui la locuzione è usata con riferimento a un'eventuale fuga di reparti militari prussiani:

«der Lärm um der Frage willen sollte eingestellt werden, und wenn alle Welt sie zu vergessen angefangen hat, dann erst sollen die Preußen sich auf holländisch empfehlen, d. h. in aller Stille die Festung räumen» [«il clamore sulla questione dovrebbe cessare e, solo quando il mondo intero avrà cominciato a dimenticarlo, i prussiani dovrebbero andarsene all'olandese, cioè sgomberare in silenzio la fortezza»].

L'esplorazione di documenti coevi consente di ricavare altre informazioni di grande interesse: anzitutto, Sanders (1873: 271) restituisce le varianti *französischen* e *polnischen Abschied (nehmen)* [‘prendere un congedo francese / polacco’], considerate a loro volta come equivalenti di *Abschied hinter der Thür nehmen* [‘prendere congedo dietro la porta’]: «französischen –, polnischen Abschied, Abschied hinter der Thür nehmen; sich französisch, polnisch, hinter der Thür – verabschieden, empfehlen etc.» [‘addio francese, polacco, prendere congedo dietro la porta; congedarsi alla francese, alla polacca, dietro la porta’]).

Tali EI sono caratterizzate da una diversa costruzione sintattica, ma dalla stessa valenza semantica della locuz. *sich auf Französisch verabschieden*. Nell'area germanofona, dunque, si osserva la presenza di un ulteriore etnonimo che ben testimonierebbe l'attribuzione di scortesie linguistiche fra popoli confinanti (in tal caso fra tedeschi e polacchi): in Koop (1891:



80), dizionario idiomatico bilingue inglese-tedesco, l'unica traduzione posta in corrispondenza dell'ingl. *to take French leave* è proprio *polnischen Abschied nehmen*, locuzione attestata ancora nell'uso odierno, soprattutto nelle due forme nominali *polnischer Abgang* ['partenza polacca'] e *polnische Verabschiedung* ['addio polacco'].<sup>34</sup>

Un'altra fonte di primo Ottocento (*Magazin* 1835: 108) consente di procedere indietro ancora di qualche decennio. In un passo prezioso, nel quale ci si interroga proprio sui reciproci scambi di scortesie fra popoli, John Bull, personificazione della nazione britannica, è rimproverato per non aver affatto nascosto sentimenti di fierezza nella sua madrelingua: vi si rileva, infatti, la presenza di espressioni poco cordiali verso gli stranieri, fra le quali, per l'appunto, «“*taking French Leave*” (sich auf Französisch empfehlen – das, was man in Deutschland “sich auf English empfehlen” nennt)» [«“*taking French Leave*” (andarsene alla francese – che in Germania si chiama “andarsene all'inglese”)]].

Stando al passo appena citato, l'espressione corrente nel tedesco dell'epoca sarebbe, peraltro, *sich auf English empfehlen*, laddove la locuz. *sich auf Französisch empfehlen* è usata a mo' di glossa traduttiva della corrispondente locuzione inglese. Se non si tratta solo di una distorsione ottica indotta dalla quantità della documentazione disponibile – documentazione certamente ricca e oggi di facile accesso, ma nel complesso circoscritta –, si avrebbe dunque a che fare con una significativa attestazione del ricorso, in area tedesca, all'etnonimo *inglese* ancor prima del corrispettivo fr. *filer à l'anglais*, e dunque in maniera indipendente da quest'ultimo: certo, la testimonianza della locuz. *sich auf English empfehlen* resta del tutto isolata, ma anche in un'opera lessicografica contemporanea come Schemann/Knight (1995: s.v. *empfehlen*) sono annoverate entrambe le varianti (*sich auf Französisch empfehlen* / *sich auf English empfehlen* e *sich auf Französisch verabschieden* / *sich auf English verabschieden*) in corrispondenza dell'ingl. *to take French leave*.

Tornando all'etnonimo “polacco”, va infine sottolineato che una testimonianza molto precoce della locuz. *Polnischen Abschied nehmen* si può

<sup>34</sup> Cf., fra gli altri, <https://sciadoo.de/warum-heisst-es-polnischer-abgang-herkunft-und-ursprung-der-redensart/>.

scovare già alla fine del Seicento, all'interno di un passo nel quale si descrive la vicenda di Francesco Luigi di Borbone, noto come *le Grand Conti*: costui, giunto a Danzica nel 1697, su invito di Luigi XVI, per ricevere il trono di Polonia rimasto vacante dopo la morte di Giovanni Sobieski (1696), dovette presto desistere dall'impresa trovandovi già insediato il rivale Federico Augusto il Forte, principe elettore di Sassonia:

«Dessen ungeacht aber muß die französische Faction mit ihren Prinzen Conty bey der Polnischen Königs -Wahl untenliegen und gleichsam *einen so genandten Polnischen Abschied nehmen*» [«Malgrado questo, la fazione francese con il loro principe Conty è obbligata a sottostare e, per così dire, a *prendere un cosiddetto commiato polacco*»] (*Continuation* 1698: 2r; corsivo mio).

Bisognerà chiedersi se l'aggettivo *so genandten* ['cosiddetto'] vada interpretato come allusione a un uso fraseologico già ben circolante nella lingua tedesca – un fatto, questo, non facile da confermare, avendo qui a che fare con l'attestazione più antica che mi sia stato possibile rinvenire –, oppure se il senso della frase, anche vista la presenza dell'avv. *gleichsam* ['per così dire, in un certo qual modo'], lasci intendere che il fraseologismo sia stato usato *ad hoc* per raccontare l'evento storico in questione (si noti che il testo riportato è pubblicato nel 1698, cioè un solo anno dopo l'arrivo del *Grand Conti* in Polonia): in tal caso, non solo ci troveremmo dinanzi al potenziale atto di nascita dell'unità fraseologica tedesca *einen polnischen Abschied nehmen*, ma si sarebbe tentati di azzardare, forse in maniera neppure troppo peregrina,<sup>35</sup> che l'ingl. *to take a French leave* possa avere un qualche collegamento con la medesima vicenda, cioè quella di un personaggio storico francese (Francesco Luigi di Borbone) costretto a lasciare la Polonia in modo dimesso e umiliante, senza dare troppo nell'occhio, congedandosi dunque *alla francese* o *alla polacca*. Si noti, oltretutto, come anche dal punto di vista sintattico le due costruzioni di provenienza germanica siano del tutto analoghe (*to take* [=

35 Ipotesi che qui alleghiamo, in punta di piedi, a quelle finora illustrate, che saranno tutte da vagliare nel prossimo futuro sulla base di eventuali nuove documentazioni in grado di offrire dati dirimenti sulla questione).

nehmen] *a French* [= einen polnischen] *leave* [= Abschied]), differenziandosi dalle corrispettive locuzioni romanze, fondate piuttosto sul verbo [*andare (via)* e sinonimi] + [sintagma avverbiale *alla francese/all'inglese*].

La stessa locuzione si rinviene in altri testi tedeschi di poco successivi: in *Neue Allianz* (1704: 30–31), peraltro, la situazione descritta è di nuovo quella di un personaggio storico francese, stavolta il marchese di Vitry, ambasciatore in Polonia, che recatosi a sua volta a Varsavia, ne venne allontanato dal re Giovanni III:

«als wie etwan Anno 1683 der Franzöische Gesandte Marquis de Vitry zu Warschau / welcher gewißlich *einen rechten Polnischen Abschied nehmen* musste / weiln der König Johann III ihn nicht langer sehen noch dulden wolte» [«come, ad esempio, nel 1683 l'inviato francese Marquis de Vitry a Varsavia, che doveva certamente *prendere un vero addio polacco*, perché il re Giovanni III non voleva più vederlo né tollerarlo»].

L'accezione secondaria di 'andarsene senza pagare' (cf. §2), riferita a chi se ne va senza saldare i propri debiti e vista *supra* per *sich auf französisch empfehlen*, si può analogamente rintracciare già nel primo Settecento (Seyler 1737: 562), confermando, dunque, la storia piuttosto antica del ted. *einen Polnischen Abschied nehmen*, anche rispetto alla corrispondente locuzione anglosassone dalla quale sono stati mossi i primi passi di questa esplorazione fraseologica nello spazio linguistico europeo:

«Es ward also einer nach dem andern unsichtbar, ohne an seine in Königsberg gemachte Schulden zu gedenken und solche richtig zu machen, welches man in dasigen Landen Sprichworts-weise nennet: *einen polnischen Abschied nehmen*» [«Così uno dopo l'altro divennero invisibili, senza pensare ai debiti che avevano fatto a Königsberg e senza aggiustarli, cosa che proverbialmente è chiamata in quei paesi: *prendere un addio polacco*»].

## 5. Conclusioni

L'analisi di nuove fonti ha permesso di ricavare alcune informazioni preziose nel tentativo di ricostruire la storia etimologica dell'El *andarsene alla francese/andarsene all'inglese* e delle corrispettive locuzioni esistenti in altre lingue europee, i cui rapporti restano tuttora di non rigida definizione, soprattutto alla luce dell'interscambiabilità pressoché immediata, in termini di scortesie linguistiche, di etnonimi differenti (emblematico, come si è visto, quanto accade in area tedesca, dove il medesimo concetto è stato riferito a francesi, polacchi e, seppur con una documentazione decisamente più circoscritta, anche a olandesi ed inglesi). È stato possibile constatare alcuni fatti degni d'interesse, che qui riassumo brevemente:

1) la sostanziale anteriorità dell'espressione inglese *to take a French leave* rispetto alle corrispettive locuzioni oggi presenti in altre lingue col medesimo significato: il successo e la diffusione macroscopica dell'inglese *to take a French leave* si osserva non solo nell'ampia documentazione settecentesca, ma anche nel consistente allargamento dello spettro semantico che l'EI inglese ha conosciuto dalla stessa epoca, e soprattutto dall'Ottocento, con accezioni limitrofe che concernono soprattutto il contesto militare;

2) l'esistenza, attestata ancor prima rispetto all'ingl. *to take French leave*, di alcuni corrispettivi analoghi in altre lingue, che lasciano trapelare la dimensione universalistica del comportamento descritto: non tanto l'italiano *andare alla todesca*, già di inizio Seicento, quanto il ted. *polnischen Abschied nehmen*, che ben testimonia come la storia etimologica non sia, forse, del tutto riconducibile alla locuzione anglosassone, che pure mostra la maggiore vitalità e lo spettro semantico più ampio fra tutti i fraseologismi analoghi. Se dunque, per la fase più antica si potrà pensare anche a sviluppi poligenetici e a un maggior grado d'indipendenza delle lingue qui chiamate in causa, nella fase contemporanea si mostra piuttosto evidente, invece, il legame che connette numerose lingue europee (e, in particolare, quelle dell'Europa orientale) al modello francese, con una chiara centralità, dunque, dell'etnonimo *inglese* quale oggetto di scortesie linguistiche: la geografia linguistica, insomma, suggerisce una distribuzione attuale incentrata sul tipo *andarsene alla francese* a ovest e sul tipo *andarsene all'inglese* a est, con l'italiano che pare quasi marcare diatopicamente e diacronicamente il

passaggio dall'una all'altra EI (e con le fonti tedesche che manifestano solo qualche sintomo molto incerto di coabitazione fra i due etnonimi);

3) laddove le fonti testimonino una compresenza dei due principali etnonimi in gioco, come nel caso particolarmente indicativo dell'italiano, la versione contenente l'etnonimo *francese* si mostra precedente a quella con l'etnonimo *inglese*, che quasi certamente rappresenta un calco posteriore dell'EI di provenienza transalpina *filer à l'anglaise*. Sui possibili rapporti storici fra il congedo *sans adieu*, diffuso fra i nobili francesi del Seicento, e l'azione di *to take a French leave* nelle sue varie accezioni, è difficile formulare un'interpretazione dirimente: tuttavia, diversamente da ciò che ritiene Romera Pintor (2012), mi sembra che una connessione fra le due espressioni non sia affatto da escludere, soprattutto alla luce di uno scarto semantico che appare tutt'altro che incolmabile;

4) la preminenza, fra le lingue europee moderne, della versione con etnonimo *inglese*, di provenienza francese ed evidentemente impostosi perlopiù nel corso del Novecento, finendo per diventare maggioritaria anche in italiano: come detto *supra*, la storia dell'EI ha verosimilmente conosciuto due momenti distinti, il secondo dei quali in epoca più recente e per influsso della lingua francese;

5) al contrario, in altre grandi lingue europee (tedesco, spagnolo, portoghese), ha prevalso la variante originaria, di derivazione anglosassone, fondata sull'etnonimo *francese*;

6) la mancata permeazione oltralpe dell'EI contenente l'etnonimo *francese* rivela, con buona probabilità, quel processo di immediata repulsione della locuzione originaria, che in terra francese avrà conosciuto un rapido cambio di paradigma etnografico (tanto più nel momento in cui la presunta abitudine alla base dell'EI non era più percepita come un fatto di cortesia), con l'attribuzione agli inglesi della cattiva abitudine chiamata in causa. **N**

## Appendice

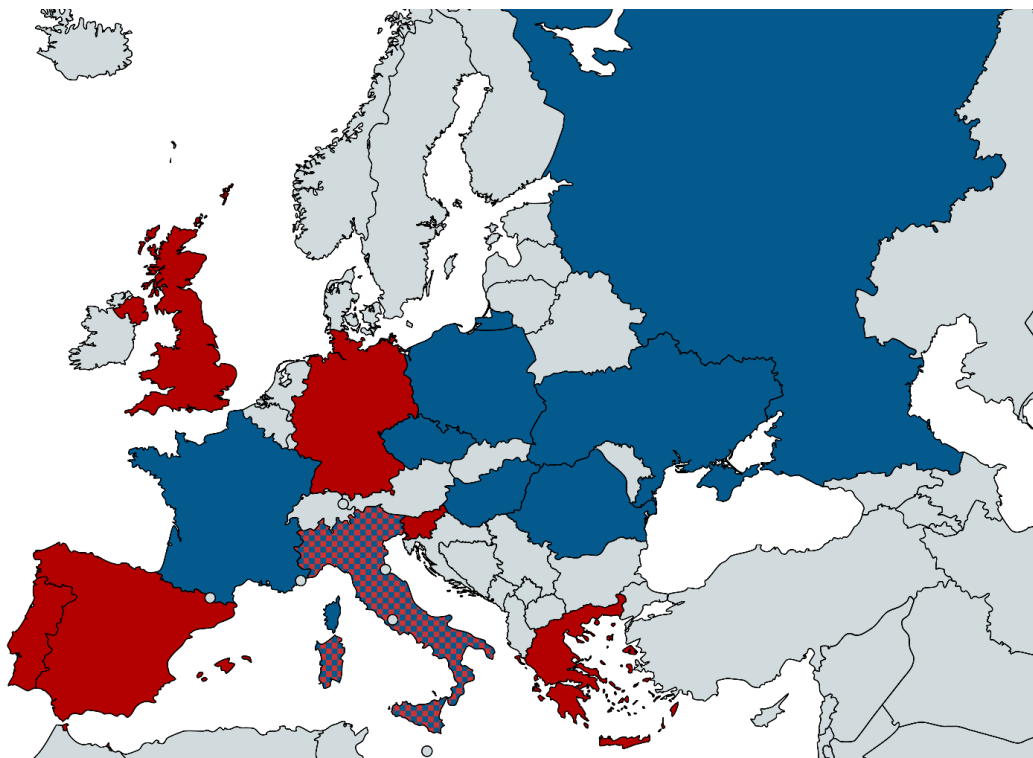


Figura 1. Distribuzione dei fraseologismi costruiti con gli etnonimi *francese* e *inglese*.

- INGLESE: *to take French leave* [1741]; TEDESCO: *sich (auf) französisch empfehlen / verabschieden* [1791], *französischen Abschied nehmen* [1873];<sup>36</sup> PORTOGHESE: *sair à francesa, saída à francesa*; SPAGNOLO: *despedirse a la francesa, despedida a la francesa* [1808]; CATALANO: *anar-se'n/marxar a la francesa* [1767]; GALIZIANO: *despedirse á francesa*; SLOVENO: *oditi po francosko*; GRECO: *το στρίβω αλά Γαλλικά / την κάνω αλά γαλλικά / φεύγω αλά Γαλλικά*
  
- FRANCESE: *pisser à l'anglaise* [1866], *filer à l'anglaise* [1882] / *s'en aller à l'anglaise* [1885]; POLACCO: *wyjsć po angielsku*; ROMENO: *a o sterge englezeste*; RUSSO: *уйти по-английски* [uyti po-angliyski]; UCRAINO: *піти по-англійськи* [pity po-anhliys'ky]; UNGHERESE: *angolosan távozni*; CECO: *zmizet po anglicku*

<sup>36</sup> Cfr. §4 per un approfondimento sulle isolate attestazioni del tedesco fondate sull'etnonimo *inglese*.

- ITALIANO: *andarsene alla francese* [1810]; *andarsene all'inglese* [1876] / *filare all'inglese* [prima del 1927] / *svignarsela all'inglese* [1922]
  
- Altri fraseologismi affini ricordati nel corso dell'indagine:
  - ITALIANO: *Andarsene alla tedesca* [1606]; *Andà via o Toeù lissenza a la spagnœura* (milanese) 'andare via, prendere licenza alla spagnola' [1814]
  - TEDESCO: *einen polnischen Abschied nehmen* [1697]; *sich auf holländisch empfehlen* [1885]

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# Lectioes praecursoriae



Pronouns separating the  
UK from the EU: *We* and  
*us* in British newspapers  
and parliamentary  
debates in 1973–2015

JENNI RÄIKKÖNEN

The author defended her doctoral dissertation *Pronouns separating the UK from the EU: We and us in British newspapers and parliamentary debates in 1973–2015* (Tampere University Dissertations 989) at the Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences of Tampere University on 19 April 2024. The opponent at the public defence was Professor Gerlinde Mautner (Vienna University of Economics and Business), and the defence was chaired by Professor Päivi Pahta (Tampere University). The following is the introductory talk delivered at the start of the viva.

## 1. Introduction

Do you remember what happened eight years ago, in 2016?

It was the year when *Pokémon Go* was released, and we started to see people, young and old, gathered outside with phones in their hands. It was the year when the Panama papers were published, providing detailed information on more than 200,000 offshore companies. It was also the year when Donald Trump was elected president of the United States. This, for many, was further evidence of the spread of populism in Western societies. I say “further” evidence of the spread of populism, because that year, the year 2016, was also the year of Brexit.

In June 2016, a majority of the British voted for leaving the European Union. The result of the Brexit referendum was a big surprise at least for many of us living in Finland. Here, in Finland, it was difficult for us to understand that such a central member of the EU would want to leave. While many of us in Finland felt that the EU secured our future as a Western country, the situation in the United Kingdom was somewhat different. The UK had always been part of the West, which meant that the EU was not needed for that purpose. In fact, Eurosceptics in the EU metaphorically described the EU as a prison, where the UK was shackled and prevented from making its own decisions (Räikkönen 2020).

Today we will not focus on Brexit that much, however, but more on what had happened before that. On issues that may have caused that the EU was not seen as being useful for the UK.

We will focus on language. On such language use that may have influenced British people's world view so that they thought that the EU is not "here", but somewhere else, separate from "us".

## 2. British Euroscepticism

The relationship between the UK and the EU was never problem-free. In its history the UK has been a significant military and colonial power. However, being a member of the European Union meant that the UK could not alone decide how it would act internationally, as it always had to consider what the EU was going to do. This meant that the UK was not "special" anymore, as it had to submit to being just another European country. And being just another European country never really fitted in the British national identity. In contrast, the image of the UK standing alone has been an important part of how the British see themselves (Wallace 2017).

There is certainly Euroscepticism and national pride in Finland, as well. Here, as in other EU countries, plans to deepen European integration always face opposition. And in fact, it is important that the EU is critically discussed, as critical discussion is an integral part of democratic societies. However, previous research has stated that the British version of Euroscepticism was different compared to other countries. It was more radical. The British sceptics were skeptical about whether the UK was European at all (Hawkins 2022: 20). Furthermore, the British Euroscepticism became part of the mainstream politics, which has not happened in other EU countries, at least not yet (ibid.: 21). And, as we know, the result of this was that by 2016 a significant number of British were ready to leave the EU.

To those that had studied the relations between the UK and the EU, and how the EU had been represented and talked about in the UK, the situation was not that surprising. From previous research we know that the UK was not particularly enthusiastic about the EU. There were British politicians and other actors that had already for decades campaigned for the UK to leave the EU before the Brexit referendum was even a topic (e.g. Forster 2002: 21).

When I started planning my PhD project in 2017, Brexit referendum had just been held the previous year. In 2016 I was finishing up my master's thesis in which I studied how immigrants were talked about in the British

parliamentary debates (Riihimäki 2016). When studying the debates on immigration, I noticed that the EU seemed to have a crucial role in the discussion. What especially struck me then was that the speakers often talked about there being a difference between what “we”, the British, want to do and what the EU tells us to do. In addition, descriptions of how “we” are different from “them” – the rest of the EU – were prominent.

Therefore, after the Brexit referendum, I knew there would be lots of interesting things in the political language that could give us more information about this historical event and why the British voted for leaving the EU. Thus, I made it my purpose to find out how linguistics could contribute to the research on Brexit.

### 3. Personal pronouns in political discourse

My dissertation focuses on the use of the pronouns *we* and *us* in British parliamentary debates and newspapers. I analysed the use of *we* and *us* in contexts where the EU was being talked about and when these pronouns were used in relation to the EU.

Before going into the study in more detail, I first want to talk about the importance of the pronoun *we*. Why study the pronouns *we* and *us* in political discourse? Or, in a more general level, why is language important when we think about politics and issues that shape our world view?

Analysing the language use of those in power is extremely important. Social structures are reflected in language and particular ways of using language influence and even shape social structures (Fairclough, Mulderring & Wodak 2011). Thus, the language use of those that hold a public office is never insignificant. The language of those in power always has a potential of changing our world view.

But, one could ask, why spend time studying such small words as personal pronouns? We do not even notice them. They are automatic. They are not significant. Right?

In everyday talk, personal pronouns might be more or less automatic. When I talk to someone, I refer to them as *you*. How are *you* doing? What are *you* going to do today? When I talk to my friend, for instance, I do not usually give pronouns much thought. But, in political language, such as in political



speeches that have been prepared beforehand, using one personal pronoun instead of another is not automatic. Or even if it was automatic, taking a closer look at the personal pronouns can inform us of the world view of the speaker.

In political language, the first-person plural pronoun *we* is a rhetorical tool that offers speakers many possibilities. For instance, it can be used to obscure who is responsible for the outcomes of bad decisions. More importantly, *we* can be used to make a separation between “us” and “them”. It can be used to include and to exclude.

The dissertation focuses on the use of the pronouns *we* and *us* in EU-related discussion in the UK. In particular, I examined contexts where the pronouns were used to refer either to the UK or the EU. Let me give you an example where *we* is used to refer to the UK. Example (1) is from *the Daily Mail*, from an article that was published in 2005.

1. Britain is a European power by virtue of geography. When Europe is sick, **we** suffer. In terms of international economic competitiveness, Europe is sick and **we** are chained to the bedside. (*Daily Mail*, 15 May 2005; emphases mine)

Note that *Europe* and *the EU* are often used interchangeably, at least in the UK. In (1), the pronoun *we* refers to the UK. This example gives the impression that the UK is not part of Europe. We, the British, are closely connected to it, but not part of it. Thus, the UK is separated from Europe and the EU.

The pronoun *we* can also be used to unite the UK and the EU by using it to refer to the whole EU, causing that the EU is seen as acting together. Let me give you an example where this is done. Example (2) is from the *Guardian*, from 2015.

2. **We** have created a single market with free movement of people, goods and services and capital. **We** have preserved peace within the union for over 50 years. (*Guardian*, 3 July 2015; emphases mine)

In (2), *we* refers to the EU, and the image of the EU is very positive and different from the previous example. Thus, examining these pronouns and their context can reveal interesting things about how the EU is represented.

When the pronoun *we* is used, descriptions of who “we” are and how “we” act are often present. The representations of “us” can tell us quite a bit about our national identity and hence, what is the desired future for us (Reicher & Hopkins 2001). Therefore, the use of *we* and *us* in British political language and how “we” are defined in relation to the EU seemed to me very important. These pronouns could potentially give us more information on why the British did not see the EU membership being in their interests.

#### 4. Data and methods

In my PhD dissertation, I examined how the pronouns *we* and *us* were used in relation to the EU in British political discourse. I wanted to know how the use of these pronouns changed within the time period that I studied, and how the UK and the EU were represented when these pronouns were used.

I used two different sets of data. The first set of data consists of the British parliamentary debates from the time period between 1973 and 2015. This period covers almost all the UK’s membership years before the Brexit referendum.

The second set of data consists of 940 EU-related newspaper articles from four different British newspapers: the *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Mail*.

In these two data sets, I looked for instances of the pronouns *we* and *us* that were used in EU-related discussions and analysed their use quantitatively, focusing on frequencies and other statistical measures, and qualitatively, with a more detailed look, focusing on how these pronouns were used in their co-text.

The dissertation contains four empirical studies, each analysing a different aspect relating to the use of the pronouns *we* and *us* in the data.

Next, I will present the main findings of each of the four empirical studies.

## 5. Findings

The main finding in the first empirical study (Räikkönen 2023) is that, before the Brexit referendum, the pronouns *we* and *us* were increasingly used to refer to the UK and decreasingly to refer to the EU in the parliamentary debates. Therefore, the debates became more and more focused on how “we” in the UK should react to the decisions made in the EU – on how the EU’s decisions affect “us”, the British. Consequently, the focus was less and less on the EU’s processes and on what “we”, the EU, were going to do together.

In the second study (Riihimäki 2019), I wanted to know how the UK, as a member of the EU, was represented in the parliamentary debates. I found out that the UK was often represented as being a leader in the EU and as more rational than the continental countries. Thus, the UK’s job was to lead others and be at the heart of Europe. However, at the same time, the UK wanted to stay out of many of the developments in the EU that would have meant losing more parliamentary sovereignty. This caused that there were concerns of whether we can lead in the EU if we do not move forward with others. What is our role in the EU if we cannot sit in the table where, for instance, economic and monetary policies are discussed? Thus, there was insecurity of our role in the EU.

In the third empirical study (Räikkönen 2022), I analysed the use of the pronouns in the newspaper data. One of the main findings in the third study was that the newspapers supporting the political right almost never reported EU issues from the EU’s perspective. Thus, the focus typically was on how the decisions made in the EU affect us, the British, and how we should react to them. The left-wing papers, in contrast, used the pronouns more evenly to refer to both the UK and the EU and thus included the EU’s perspective, as well.

In the fourth and final empirical study (Räikkönen 2024), I focused on contexts in which the EU was the ingroup. That is, on contexts where the pronouns *we* and *us* were used to refer to the whole EU in the parliamentary data and the newspaper data. The main finding of the fourth empirical study was that using *we* and *us* to refer to the EU was rare in both datasets. However, when the EU was the ingroup – and referred to by *we* or *us* – the EU was typically talked in a positive or at least neutral manner. It was commonly represented as a co-operation where countries work together. Furthermore,

the focus often was on the processes of the EU instead of on how the EU's actions affect the nation.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the four empirical studies, I argue that the image of the EU in British newspapers and parliamentary debates was mostly negative. The focus of EU-related political discussions was often on how “we”, the British, are affected by the EU, instead of on what “we” in the EU are doing together. Furthermore, based on the data that were studied, leaving the EU was a possibility for the UK from the very start of the UK's membership.

I would like to conclude the lectio by not focusing on the past but by talking about the future.

European elections are coming up in June 2024. In his closing statement in the European parliament in December 2023, the European Commissioner for Economy, Paolo Gentiloni, emphasized that, perhaps for the first time, we Europeans will have a chance to make *our* voice heard on fundamental European questions. First, on where the EU is going. Second, on *our* support for Ukraine and, finally, on *our* climate ambition.

Problems that we face today require international co-operation, be it within the EU or in other contexts. Focusing only on what would be best for my country is not sustainable anymore, if it ever was. **N**

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# Besprechungen



Jean-Christophe Pellat :  
*L'orthographe française.*  
*Histoire, Description,*  
*Enseignement.*

Paris : Ophrys. 2023.

**HENRIK RUOTSALAINEN**



Professeur émérite de linguistique française à l'Université de Strasbourg, spécialiste de la grammaire et de l'orthographe et co-auteur de la *Grammaire méthodique du français* (dernière éd. 2021), Jean-Christophe Pellat vient de publier un nouvel ouvrage sur l'orthographe de la langue de Molière. Le livre qui s'intitule *L'orthographe française. Histoire, Description, Enseignement* est paru en avril 2023 aux Éditions Ophrys. Comptant 170 pages et appartenant à la collection « L'essentiel français », l'ouvrage couvre plusieurs aspects intéressants de l'orthographe de la langue française. Plus précisément, l'auteur a divisé son ouvrage en trois parties majeures ayant chacune une thématique spécifique qui touche l'orthographe : son histoire, une description de son fonctionnement dans la langue contemporaine et finalement, son enseignement. Comme le veut la collection, le livre n'a pas l'ambition d'être exhaustif et il reste compréhensible aussi pour ceux qui ne possèdent pas beaucoup de connaissances en linguistique.

Le choix de l'auteur de consacrer un nouveau livre à l'orthographe est prometteur surtout étant donné l'importance de la normativité linguistique en France. Il est bien connu que la langue en général et l'orthographe en particulier suscitent facilement des débats passionnés en France, où la langue écrite jouit d'une grande estime (Paveau & Rosier 2008 : 250–251). Pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de lire des débats sur les forums de discussion en ligne où chaque internaute semble posséder un avis sur le bon usage orthographique. Mais le rôle de la normativité ne s'arrête pas là, car l'orthographe possède aussi une dimension sociologique dans l'Hexagone. En effet, comme l'auteur le dit dans son Introduction (p. 11), la fonction de l'orthographe ne se cantonne pas à « représenter l'oral par des signes visuels », mais la survalorisation de ce domaine de la langue dans la société française aboutit facilement à une distinction sociale : les gens qui maîtrisent l'orthographe et ceux qui ne la maîtrisent pas. C'est précisément en raison de la signification de l'orthographe dans la société que ce thème mérite aussi une présentation accessible à des non-spécialistes. En même temps, du point de vue linguistique, les relations entre l'oral et l'écrit restent très complexes dans la langue française : les lettres ne correspondent pas régulièrement aux sons. Comme Pellat (p. 11) l'affirme, l'orthographe du français se trouve parmi les plus compliquées du monde, à tel point que même les spécialistes ne connaissent pas toutes les règles. Vu les circonstances sociétales et linguistiques évoquées dans l'Introduction,

l'initiative du professeur Pellat est méritoire, bien justifiée et éveille l'intérêt du lecteur dès les premières pages.

Il s'agit également d'un effort bienvenu si l'on considère le nombre infime d'ouvrages relativement récents en français qui embrassent exactement les trois dimensions de l'orthographe choisies par Pellat. En effet, le dernier ouvrage à s'intéresser aux questions orthographiques plus ou moins sous les mêmes auspices, *Le français et son orthographe* de Daniel Luzzati, date de 2010. Parmi d'autres livres publiés au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle qui se concentrent sur l'orthographe française, on peut mentionner *Introduction à l'histoire de l'orthographe* d'Yvonne Cazal et Gabriella Parussa parue en 2022 (première éd. 2015), bien que ce livre aborde les questions orthographiques principalement sous l'angle diachronique. L'ouvrage de Jean-Christophe Pellat vient donc élargir la perspective en réunissant sous la même couverture trois aspects fondamentaux : l'histoire, le fonctionnement et l'enseignement de l'orthographe. On peut aussi ajouter, si l'on pense aux débats constants autour de la baisse du niveau de l'orthographe dans les performances des élèves français ou francophones et plus récemment autour de l'orthographe inclusive, que ce sujet n'a rien perdu de son actualité.

Voyons maintenant chaque partie du livre en détail. Comme déjà dit, dans la première partie, Jean-Christophe Pellat se livre à l'histoire de l'orthographe française. Cette partie, composée de deux chapitres (ch. 1 et 2), se trouve motivée par la complexité susmentionnée de la langue : l'auteur tente de répondre à la question de savoir pourquoi l'orthographe du français est devenue généralement « difficile » à maîtriser. Hormis les relations opaques entre les phonèmes et les graphèmes comme une grande source de difficultés, l'auteur tient également compte de la « dimension grammaticale » (p. 16) : ainsi, les accords du participe passé sont au nombre de 44 et les règles d'orthographe ne sont normalement pas exemptes d'exceptions. Ainsi, à juste titre, Pellat (p. 11) constate que pour comprendre le fonctionnement actuel de l'orthographe, il est « indispensable » de revenir en arrière et entamer le livre par un aperçu historique.

Dans le chapitre 1, l'auteur retrace d'abord l'évolution de l'orthographe française du VIII<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Avec plusieurs exemples illustratifs qui rendent le texte facile à suivre, il discute des conditions initiales sous lesquelles l'orthographe française a commencé à se développer. En effet, l'alphabet latin

était déjà, au commencement, inapte à décrire avec exactitude les phonèmes du français et la prononciation se développait à un rythme différent de celui de l'écriture. À partir du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, les clercs et les moines – auxquels incombait la rédaction de la plupart des textes de cette période – tentaient de pallier les insuffisances de l'alphabet notamment en insérant dans leurs écrits des lettres savantes directement copiées du latin, ce qui avait pour conséquence des complications graphiques. À ces difficultés s'ajoutaient aussi la tendance des scribes à agglutiner les mots ainsi que l'usage de nombreuses abréviations et de ligatures.

Le lecteur se familiarise ensuite avec deux courants orthographiques opposés, « l'orthographe ancienne » et « l'orthographe moderne », initialement nommés ainsi par des auteurs de textes métalinguistiques et des écrivains. La première tendance, « l'orthographe ancienne », était prédominante pendant la période du moyen français jusqu'au début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, une période où « l'orthographe moderne » a commencé à gagner du terrain surtout parmi les imprimeurs, les grammairiens et les auteurs qui voulaient exploiter les possibilités de l'imprimerie et renouveler l'orthographe. Pellat décrit le conflit entre les deux courants dont les caractéristiques orthographiques différentes sont rassemblées dans un tableau qui permet de les comparer de manière systématique (pp. 33–35). Un accent particulier est ensuite mis sur le rôle conservateur de l'Académie française qui choisit pour la première édition de son dictionnaire de 1694 « l'orthographe ancienne », car celle-ci contribue notamment à conserver un lien entre les mots et leur étymologie.

L'auteur continue de mettre en avant le rôle joué par l'Académie française également dans le chapitre 2. Le développement de la norme orthographique passe, en effet, par l'Académie et surtout par les éditions successives de son dictionnaire. Tout en s'appuyant sur les statistiques relevées par Nina Catach (2001), qui a comparé les fréquences des modifications orthographiques entre les différentes éditions du *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, Jean-Christophe Pellat explique – édition par édition – de quelle manière les normes orthographiques ont changé au fil des siècles. Ce parcours apporte un éclairage pertinent au lecteur, qui perçoit les grandes lignes dans la mise en place graduelle de l'orthographe d'État. À partir du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la scolarité obligatoire – dont le rôle est brièvement évoqué – contribue largement à transmettre les normes orthographiques aux Français « ordinaires ». La

partie historique s'achève par un regard sur les *Rectifications de l'orthographe française* de 1990, illustrées par un tableau qui présente les propositions de changement pour la pratique orthographique.

La partie historique reste très compréhensible, même pour ceux qui ne disposent pas de connaissances approfondies en linguistique. Il faut, bien entendu, être préparé à la terminologie grammaticale et linguistique, mais les nombreux exemples, le plus souvent entre parenthèses dans le texte, viennent à l'appui pour assurer la bonne compréhension des termes ou des notions. Il convient également de mentionner que la partie historique ne nécessite pas de connaissances préalables dans l'histoire de la langue. Très souvent, seuls les changements diachroniques qui peuvent être utiles pour la compréhension de la formation de l'orthographe sont soulevés. En guise d'illustration, l'auteur (p. 20) aborde succinctement la dénasalisation des voyelles, achevée au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans le seul but de décrire le maintien de la double consonne dans l'écriture (*grammaire, donner*) malgré la disparition de la voyelle nasale dans la prononciation. Certaines étapes historiques ou diachroniques qui restent largement en dehors du développement de l'écriture selon la perspective choisie par l'auteur sont brièvement mentionnées, datées et définies (par exemple *l'ancien français, la langue d'oïl, la langue d'oc*), mais sans entrer dans les détails. En peu de mots, on peut dire que la partie historique constitue une introduction tout à fait accessible à l'histoire de l'orthographe et pose les jalons de ce qui va suivre.

Vient ensuite la deuxième partie, intitulée *Description de l'orthographe française*, qui comporte deux chapitres (ch. 3 et 4) précédés d'un préambule. Le préambule, par son langage clair, accessible aussi au lecteur non-linguiste, soulève des questions définitoires et basiques : comment définir l'écriture et l'orthographe en général ? Ensuite, dans le chapitre 3, le lecteur apprend les trois principes de base sur lesquels l'orthographe de la langue française est fondée : les principes phonographique, sémiographique et historique, souvent imbriqués. Selon le principe phonographique, les graphèmes correspondent plus ou moins explicitement à des phonèmes, tandis que le deuxième principe, celui appelé sémiographique, signifie que les graphèmes véhiculent un sens au lieu de correspondre nécessairement à des phonèmes, par exemple souvent dans le cas des lettres muettes (*une jolie amie*). Le troisième principe, historique, exerce également une influence considérable sur l'orthographe

du français, comme dans l'écriture du mot *temps* où le graphème *s* constitue une lettre étymologique, issue du latin *tempus*. Grâce aux multiples exemples employés par l'auteur, le lecteur obtient une vision authentique de ces trois principes fondamentaux qui gouvernent l'orthographe du français.

Dans le chapitre 4, les trois principes sont développés encore davantage que dans le chapitre précédent, car l'auteur discute en détail chacun d'entre eux en commençant par le principe phonographique. Plus précisément, il dresse d'abord une liste des graphèmes du français avec leurs correspondances phoniques (pp. 86–93) – autrement dit les phonogrammes. Néanmoins, l'auteur attire ici l'attention du lecteur sur une difficulté majeure liée à la notion de phonogramme. En effet, la majorité des graphèmes ne sont pas « de purs phonogrammes » ayant une relation limpide avec tel ou tel phonème, car les deux autres principes, le principe sémiographique et/ou historique, peuvent également être impliqués dans l'usage. C'est principalement pour cette raison que l'auteur (p. 86) souhaite se contenter d'une description générale des relations entre les graphèmes et les phonèmes sans entrer dans des explications subtiles qui pourraient mettre en jeu des facteurs diachroniques complexes. Dans le cadre de ce livre qui constitue une introduction succincte à l'orthographe, ce choix se trouve bien justifié et l'auteur (p. 86, note 68) renvoie le lecteur à des sources supplémentaires « pour des explications développées ».

Notons aussi que malgré la fonction apparemment descriptive de la liste des graphèmes employée par Pellat dans le cadre de ce livre, cette liste est suffisamment englobante et systématique pour être également appliquée à des fins pédagogiques. Elle pourrait constituer une source pédagogique, à titre d'exemple pour les enseignants qui expliquent les relations entre les phonèmes et les graphèmes à des apprenants. La liste peut aider les enseignants à offrir une vision concrète en ce qui concerne la question de savoir quels graphèmes ou quelles combinaisons graphiques le même phonème peut prendre dépendant du contexte. Pourquoi par exemple le phonème [s] est-il traduit par le graphème *c* dans le mot *ceci*, mais par le *c* avec cédille dans le mot *déçu* ? La liste de Pellat permet également de sensibiliser le lecteur à des difficultés notables de l'orthographe française, comme lorsqu'il s'agit de contextes où les consonnes doubles sont employées. Pourquoi y a-t-il deux *p* par exemple dans le verbe *apporter* ?

Enfin, le lecteur arrive à un examen détaillé de la dimension sémiographique ainsi qu'à celui des graphèmes historiques à la fin du chapitre 4, où l'auteur se focalise encore sur l'enchevêtrement des trois principes mentionnés. La conclusion qui s'impose est donc la polyvalence des graphèmes du français, parfaitement illustrée par le biais d'un encart qui présente les différentes valeurs du graphème S en français (p. 99). La dernière section du chapitre 4 aborde les consonnes doubles du français, classifiées selon leurs caractéristiques en sept groupes.

Généralement, du point de vue du lecteur non-linguiste, on peut constater que la lecture des chapitres 3 et 4 peut demander davantage d'effort de concentration que la compréhension de la première partie, consacrée à l'histoire de l'orthographe, car les notions linguistiques, surtout liées aux trois principes mentionnés, sont nombreuses et fréquemment utilisées. Cependant, outre les exemples clairs, la lecture de la deuxième partie est largement facilitée par l'organisation adéquate dans le contenu des chapitres : d'abord la présentation des trois principes orthographiques du français dans le chapitre 3, qui prépare le terrain pour le chapitre 4, où ces principes sont approfondis.

La troisième partie, centrée sur l'enseignement de l'orthographe française, se découpe en quatre chapitres (ch. 5–8) et constitue ainsi la partie la plus dense du livre. L'auteur commence le chapitre 5 par une présentation de quelques principes généraux pour l'enseignement de l'orthographe et répond ensuite, en s'appuyant principalement sur les études menées par Lucci et Millet (1994) ainsi que Fayol et Jaffré (2008), à la question de savoir quels phénomènes linguistiques posent le plus souvent des problèmes d'orthographe aux apprenants francophones. En d'autres termes, il s'agit de « zones de fragilité orthographique ». Il est manifeste que surtout les futurs enseignants de FLM et les instituteurs pourraient profiter des idées et des pistes proposées par l'auteur dans ce chapitre pour remédier à la survenance ou à la répétition des erreurs orthographiques. Parlant des homophones du français, par exemple, une source fréquente d'erreurs chez les francophones natifs, Jean-Christophe Pellat (p. 108) encourage les enseignants à éviter de présenter un grand nombre d'homophones aux élèves de crainte que ceux-ci ne les confondent. En revanche, il faudrait, d'après l'auteur, se concentrer notamment sur les distinctions entre les homophones selon leur niveau de

difficulté et selon leur fréquence dans la langue (par exemple la distinction entre *on* et *ont* est moins compliquée et leur utilisation est plus fréquente dans la langue que celle entre *sans* et *s'en*). Hormis les enseignants, les auteurs des manuels de français langue maternelle pourraient également bénéficier de certaines idées soulevées dans ce chapitre pour améliorer la clarté et l'organisation des règles d'orthographe dans les manuels. En effet, l'auteur (p. 106) adopte une attitude critique par exemple à l'égard de la tendance des manuels à présenter un grand nombre de règles qui sont suivies de nombreuses exceptions. Or, comme Pellat le préconise, il faudrait plutôt se contenter de règles ayant une portée générale tout en évitant la multiplication des exceptions, qui aboutit facilement à des confusions.

Le chapitre 5 s'achève par un encart qui porte le titre « Le niveau baisse ? » (pp. 110–112). L'objectif de cet encart est d'apporter un éclairage sur la dégradation possible du niveau de l'orthographe des jeunes Français, un phénomène beaucoup débattu dans la société hexagonale depuis des décennies. Le niveau était-il meilleur autrefois ? Pour esquisser une réponse prudente à cette question, l'auteur résume les résultats provenant de trois études effectuées respectivement en 1873, 1987 et 2005. Dans chacune de ces trois études, les élèves ont été soumis à la même dictée qui sert d'indicateur du développement du niveau de l'orthographe. Les résultats montrent que le niveau s'est amélioré entre 1873 et 1987, mais l'étude de 2005 montre une baisse dans l'orthographe grammaticale.

On peut ici regretter que Jean-Christophe Pellat ne fournisse pas – hormis ces dictées – d'autres statistiques ou ne cite d'autres études qui portent sur le développement du niveau de l'orthographe. Cela aurait été bien éclairant de donner au lecteur une vision d'ensemble des études principales menées au cours des dernières décennies concernant la baisse possible. Dans une note de bas de page (p. 112, note 84), l'auteur renvoie le lecteur à l'ouvrage de C. Brissaud *et al.* (2011) pour une « présentation des différentes enquêtes », mais étant donné l'importance de la maîtrise de l'orthographe dans la société française que l'auteur évoque lui-même dans son Introduction, un survol de différentes études scientifiques aurait été à sa place dans ce livre. De surcroît, certains lecteurs – peut-être surtout les étudiants en linguistique qui vivent à l'extérieur de la France et qui ne connaissent pas nécessairement très profondément la société française – pourraient facilement se poser la

question de savoir pourquoi le niveau baisse en général. Quelles en sont les causes ? Les inégalités sociétales sont-elles une partie prenante ? Qu'en est-il de la diminution des heures de français dans les écoles en France ? Ces questions restent également sans réponse dans cet encart et dans le livre en général.

Le chapitre 6 approfondit la perspective didactique en y insérant une dimension cognitive. Pourquoi fait-on des erreurs d'orthographe ? Comment typologiser les erreurs ? Quelles stratégies d'apprentissage peut-on exploiter pour trouver la forme graphique correcte ? Telles sont les questions auxquelles Jean-Christophe Pellat esquisse des réponses dans ce chapitre. Pour déceler l'origine des erreurs d'orthographe, l'auteur (pp. 114–115) puise dans les explications fonctionnelles de Henri Frei (1929) parues à l'origine dans sa *Grammaire des fautes* et présentées sous la forme d'un encart illustratif dans ce chapitre. Quant aux catégorisations des erreurs, Pellat (pp. 117–118) cite, à l'aide d'un tableau, une typologie élaborée par Nina Catach (1980) sans oublier de mentionner les avantages de ces classements dans le travail pratique d'un enseignant de français : grâce à la typologisation d'erreurs, le professeur est prêt à repérer et à situer les erreurs selon leur type, ce qui facilite l'évaluation des productions écrites des élèves. De cette manière, il est aussi facile de suivre les progrès des élèves en orthographe. Le contenu de ce chapitre reste ainsi ancré dans la réalité du travail des enseignants, ce qui constitue l'atout majeur du chapitre et, de plus, les considérations d'ordre cognitif ne sont pas lourdes à comprendre, car la langue est claire. Ainsi, vers la fin du chapitre, l'auteur propose et évalue des astuces concrètes pour l'apprentissage et la mémorisation de l'orthographe.

Une distinction tout à fait pertinente est ensuite faite par l'auteur dans le chapitre 7 entre l'orthographe lexicale et l'orthographe grammaticale, car l'apprentissage de ces deux domaines est différent et implique par conséquent des méthodes différentes. Pour l'orthographe lexicale, Pellat (p. 126) recommande l'utilisation des listes de fréquences comme moyen pédagogique parce qu'elles mettent en lumière la fréquence des mots ainsi que leur degré de difficulté dans la langue. Ces listes peuvent aider les enseignants à décider par exemple quels textes avec quel type de vocabulaire seraient pertinents à utiliser dans l'enseignement, selon le niveau des apprenants. Pour ce qui est de l'orthographe grammaticale, un domaine



où la compréhension des notions et des analyses grammaticales s'avère cruciale pour les élèves, l'auteur (p. 129) part du principe que la présentation des notions devrait être répartie sur plusieurs années de la scolarité tout en évitant des concepts grammaticaux trop compliqués. L'auteur (p. 135) propose le même type de progression « douce » pour les accords nombreux et complexes du participe passé. C'est précisément ce principe de progression dans l'enseignement de l'orthographe qui fait que les idées présentées par Pellat sont pragmatiques dans ce chapitre. Finalement, il est important de noter que le contenu du chapitre est bien visiblement destiné aux conditions dans l'enseignement du FLM en France sans allusions à la manière dont il faudrait enseigner l'orthographe lexicale ou grammaticale à ceux pour qui le français n'est pas la langue maternelle.

Un grand nombre de propositions pédagogiques que l'on peut considérer comme très utiles pour l'enseignement de l'orthographe sont également invoquées dans le chapitre 8, le dernier chapitre du livre, dont l'objectif général est de synthétiser quels types de pratiques graphiques et d'exercices d'orthographe sont concrètement disponibles et utilisables dans l'enseignement. Dans ce chapitre, une section est également consacrée à un examen critique d'un exercice orthographique typiquement français, à savoir la dictée. Comme dans le chapitre précédent, la majorité des propositions concernent l'enseignement du français langue maternelle. Bien que l'auteur ne précise pas le niveau de scolarité exact pour lequel les exercices sont convenables, on peut – en raison de la multitude des exercices proposés et en raison de leurs caractéristiques différentes – tirer la conclusion que l'inventaire de l'auteur comporte des exercices destinés à quasiment tous les niveaux. Par exemple, une activité qui s'appelle « puzzle de phrase » (p. 150), qui consiste à donner à des élèves un nombre de mots qu'ils doivent ensuite mettre dans le bon ordre pour construire une phrase, pourrait bien être pratiquée à l'école primaire. En même temps, une autre activité suggérée par l'auteur, le remplacement des anglicismes par les mots français correspondants (p. 152) pourrait, à juste titre, être utilisée au lycée. Rien n'empêche, d'ailleurs, d'employer certains de ces exercices en FLE également, ce qui fait que les enseignants en FLE peuvent aussi profiter de la lecture du dernier chapitre pour puiser de nouvelles idées. Ainsi, pour enrichir le vocabulaire d'un apprenant FLE, l'enseignant peut proposer des activités

de formation de nouveaux mots qui consistent à ajouter des préfixes ou des suffixes à un radical (*facile* -> *facilement*) (p. 151).

Cet ouvrage rédigé par Jean-Christophe Pellat constitue un livre d'introduction au sujet de l'orthographe française, un point de départ intéressant pour comprendre le phénomène complexe que constitue l'orthographe à partir des trois dimensions choisies par l'auteur : l'histoire, le fonctionnement et l'enseignement de l'orthographe. Les trois parties du livre se complètent et il existe un bon équilibre entre elles. La première partie met en lumière les causes historiques de la complexité de l'orthographe française tout en ouvrant la voie à la description détaillée du fonctionnement de l'orthographe au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, exposée dans la deuxième partie. Ayant acquis ces connaissances sur l'orthographe contemporaine, il est aisé de lire la troisième partie consacrée à l'enseignement de l'orthographe où l'auteur passe de la théorie à la pratique pédagogique de manière très concrète, dans une approche critique. Le lecteur généralement expérimenté en linguistique ou celui qui connaît bien le système de l'orthographe mais souhaite acquérir des pistes pour l'enseignement peut bien évidemment lire directement la troisième partie. En revanche, pour l'étudiant qui ne connaît pas des faits tels que le rôle de l'Académie française en France et qui vient d'entamer ses études en linguistique, il est souhaitable – pour garantir la bonne compréhension – de lire aussi les deux premières parties avant de passer à la troisième. Il convient aussi de noter que grâce aux références indiquées dans les notes de bas de page et dans la bibliographie, celui qui le souhaite peut aisément trouver de nouvelles sources pour approfondir ce qui a été dit dans le livre.

Le livre peut être recommandé aux personnes appartenant à trois groupes cibles majeurs. Tout d'abord, il s'adresse à des étudiants en FLM et en FLE, surtout à ceux d'entre eux qui souhaitent travailler dans l'enseignement du français à l'avenir. Deuxièmement, cet ouvrage est une source pratique pour les besoins des professeurs ou des enseignants de français, en particulier en FLM mais aussi en FLE et, dans une moindre mesure, pour les instituteurs des écoles primaires. Troisièmement, les auteurs des manuels de FLM et de FLE peuvent également bénéficier des idées fraîches apportées dans l'ouvrage.

En général, on peut aussi dire que par son langage et style clairs et par la répétition occasionnelle de la même information qui sert à consolider la compréhension, le livre s'adresse à tous ceux qui souhaitent s'initier

à l'orthographe de la langue de Molière. En revanche, ce livre n'est peut-être pas recommandable à celui qui s'intéresse plutôt à la dimension orthographique sur le plan sociétal, car ces questions ne sont qu'effleurées (la question sur la baisse du niveau de l'orthographe). Étant donné l'importance de la normativité et celle de la « bonne » orthographe en France ainsi que les débats sur l'écriture inclusive, ces questions auraient mérité un approfondissement. Cela dit, le livre reste une contribution importante qui fournit des informations essentielles sur l'orthographe française en théorie et en pratique. **N**

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