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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION: A MULTICULTURAL APPROACH TO HUMAN INTERACTIONS

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Abstract: This paper aims to reinforce the importance of cultural sensitivity regarding nonverbal communication in multicultural contexts. Intercultural communication is a key aspect of this modern highly globalized world. While people may have learned to master verbal messages in intercultural interactions, the nonverbal communication still poses some problems. This type of communication is culturally bound and varies greatly across cultures. Understanding and accepting the differences in nonverbal communication is vital for our society. Showing respect for each culture means showing respect for people. There are various challenges that may hinder the efficiency of nonverbal communication between cultures, but they can be overcome. Learning to deal with them proves the inherent ability of people to be patient and to care for one another as each culture is part of a complex ensemble of multicultural stories and backgrounds.

Keywords: *nonverbal communication; culturally bound; multicultural backgrounds; intercultural communication; challenges*

Introduction

Effective communication relies on a multitude of factors such as precision, clarity, active listening, understanding of the target audience, nonverbal communication and on the medium used for communication. Nonverbal communication is one of the most important aspects of communication, but it is often overlooked in the context of intercultural interactions. According to Dohen et al. (2010), the understanding of nonverbal messages is vital for ensuring efficient intercultural communication. Pang et al. (2024: para. 1) highlight the importance of mastering nonverbal communication as it helps avoid misunderstandings and hostility that may arise from the misinterpretation of nonverbal gestures. In the first part of the paper, we will approach the key role of nonverbal communication in the context of intercultural interactions. Secondly, we will discuss the distinct types of nonverbal communication that we may encounter in intercultural interactions. In the third part, we will highlight the challenges posed by nonverbal communication in different cultures and in the last part we will provide viable solutions for overcoming misunderstandings.

1. The importance and role of nonverbal communication in the context of intercultural interactions

The theorist Peter F. Drucker said that "The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said." This quote made us question the importance of what we convey not only by our speeches, but by our body language. Nonverbal communication is a particularly important part of our

everyday lives even if we sometimes tend to overlook its contribution to effective communication.

We live in a highly globalized world that relies on intercultural interactions to function properly. We often work, interact with people with diverse cultural backgrounds. Each culture has a set of codes that need to be respected (Cécile Boury Conseil International: para. 3). Each gesture tells something about the speaker and therefore the receiver must correctly interpret it. While a person may speak multiple foreign languages, this does not mean that he or she understands the subtleties of the language, meaning the subtleties hidden in nonverbal communication. Intercultural communication means understating hidden meanings and messages and mastering different interpretations for the same gesture depending on the culture (Cécile Boury Conseil International: para. 5).

More people need to develop their understanding of multiple cultures in order to be able to communicate not only through words, but also through their actions. As defined by *Britannica*, nonverbal communication means "the transfer of information from one person to another without the use of spoken language" (Akre: para. 1). Nonverbal communication is extremely important as it conveys different meanings depending on the cultural specificities of each target audience. If one of the people involved in this type of communication is not familiar with the meaning, the efficiency of the communication decreases.

The key role of nonverbal communication is to be "used for subtlety as part of a suite of signals" (Akre: para. 5). These signals cover a wide range of uses such as the ability to emphasize a certain aspect, the capacity to convey emotion, the establishing and the coordination of interpersonal behaviors, the display of feelings and opinions, the means to influence someone (Akre: para. 5). Learning these signs could seem difficult for people that belong to a different culture, but not all signals can be learned. For example, it has been shown that the understanding of signs related to facial expressions is universal across cultures. They do not imply a learning process, but they imply an "instinctive evolutionary origin", therefore imprinted in different cultures (Akre: para. 6). However, other aspects that form nonverbal communication are linked to the learning and living experience of a person. As part of different communities, a person can borrow certain gestures that are specific to that community. The interpretation of these gestures can sometimes be accurate, but it can often lead to misunderstandings. For instance, signals linked to the interpretation of pain, to the expression of feelings or to the personal space can lead to misinterpretation by someone not belonging to that culture (Akre: para. 6). This occurs because of the variety of

cultural backgrounds, of different personality characteristics, of different stages of psychological development and of different contexts (Su, 2022: para. 2). Su (2022: para. 2) also emphasizes that "the cultural background determines the form of nonverbal communication".

According to (Novinger, 2001), if we interpret verbal and nonverbal messages separately, miscommunication may occur. This idea had already been formulated by Mehrabian (1971), who established the importance of each element for effective communication. He showed that 93% of the meaning of a communication act relies on nonverbal communication. Mehrabian (1971) also established the percentage of each aspect of communication as a factor in the meaning of the communication process. Verbal communication represents 7%, vocal elements account for 38% and more than half of it, meaning 55% is represented by body language (gestures, posture, facial expressions, eye contact).

Nonverbal communication is therefore a key component of intercultural communication as it supports and enhances verbal messages, while helping convey feelings that sometimes cannot be conveyed by means of oral expression. This type of communication shows the attitude of the people invested in communication (respect, politeness, admiration), transmitted through gestures. As speakers involved in intercultural interactions come from various places and have multiple cultural backgrounds, nonverbal communication can act as a binding element that helps establish a connection between the two cultures. Each culture brings its own elements, its own level of unity that enriches verbal communication. While nonverbal communication can help develop trust-based relationships, it can also be quite dangerous if it falls into the trap of stereotypes and prejudices. Cultural misunderstandings can often bring harm to a certain culture if gestures or attitudes are misinterpreted. It is therefore our duty as culturally sensitive people to learn how to accept and how to deal with people who might not share the same cultural background but who share our passions and values. Understanding and acknowledging the differences helps a person take a first step into becoming a good intercultural communicator.

2. Types of nonverbal communication

In this article, we aim to identify the main types of nonverbal communication as well as decipher their meaning for different cultures. We have identified 7 categories of nonverbal communication: touch, eye contact, paralanguage, gestures, proxemics, physical appearance, and chronemics. Understanding the

meaning of each one of these factors greatly influences intercultural communication and can help ensure its effectiveness.

The first category we will analyze is touch. This type of communication has multiple roles in our interactions. Touch can symbolize a greeting, or a means of comforting someone or of showing attention. It can also be used to show control (Weinland, 2023: para. 39). The way people perceive touch is greatly influenced by the following factors: duration (the amount of time a person engages in a hug for example), the frequency (how often a person chooses this type of communication to show their feelings during an interaction) and intensity (the pressure used for a hug or a handshake for example).

Weinland (2023: para. 40) states that these factors shape the evaluation of individuals in human interactions. According to Dolcos et al. (2012: 2303), "a handshake preceding social interactions positively influenced the way individuals evaluated the social interaction partners and their interest in further interactions while reversing the impact of negative impressions." This emphasizes that one must choose the right gesture and the right time depending on the context. If he or she fails to do so, the interaction could have fewer positive results.

Touch is a very personal form of communication, therefore understanding the meaning of different gestures is essential. Depending on the duration, frequency and intensity of touch one can convey multiple messages from affection to dominance. However, touch should be used with caution and the relationship with people engaged in the communication act must be considered. There are situations where touching the other person might not be the best solution. For example, in case of communication taking place inside the family, touch can be used to show affection and care. But, in a more formal context, one must choose whether to use this type of nonverbal communication in order not to risk conveying the wrong message. Touch or its absence during an interaction has multiple meanings for different cultures so it is very important to know and follow the rules (AFS Canada, n.d: para. 3).

According to Weinland (2023: para. 56), eye contact is among the first type of communication between individuals. Knapp and Hall (2002) have proven that eye contact is more common for females during interactions and they tend to make eye contact more frequently than men. At first, gazing into someone's eyes for a long period of time or for a short period meant the interaction was not efficient and had a rather negative outcome (Burgoon et al., 1996). But more recent

research considers that gazing is highly influenced by the verbal message it accompanies (Weinland, 2023: para. 57).

Another important element of nonverbal communication is paralanguage that comprises all elements that accompany the verbal message. Pitch, tempo, intensity, pauses, silence are all part of the paralanguage, and they all influence intercultural communication.

Pitch is an essential element in determining the meaning of nonverbal communication and concerns the variations between high and low frequencies. Pitch can describe the feelings of an individual at a given time. For example, a high pitch could be an indicator of excitement or fear which could almost be perceived as screaming or squealing. A low pitch could also represent fear or shyness. Taking into account the pitch during a conversation is essential for ensuring an effective communication (Weinland, 2023: para. 47).

Tempo refers to the speed of speech. According to Weinland (2023: para. 48), "changes in tempo can reflect emotions such as excitement or anger, physical wellbeing, or energy level.". Intensity refers to the volume of someone's voice and is a great indicator of emotions (Weinland, 2023: para. 49). If one person chooses to speak in a louder voice, this choice of intensity could have multiple meanings such as anger, fear, extreme happiness, excitement, while speaking in a lower voice could mean sharing bad news, discussing a private topic, expressing distress. Besides the verbal message, the intensity with which it is conveyed influences the meaning.

Weinland (2023: para. 51) highlights the importance of pause and silence during intercultural communication. Taking a pause during an interaction helps highlight the main purpose of the talk or helps emphasize the most important aspects. Depending on the length of the pause, a different meaning can be inferred. A period of silence can also be used to convey meaning. A longer period of silence may give the receiver of the message time to process it and respond accordingly or may increase the suspense. Silence can also occur in cases of less effective instances of communication where the participants no longer share an area of interest and it is a good indicator that communication should cease.

One of the most important forms of nonverbal communication is represented by gestures which include body movements as a means of communication (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 5). These gestures can be attached to the verbal message and accompany it, but they can also act independently of the message. They are

specific to each culture, and they can be more or less obvious. Gestures may refer to facial expressions, greetings, approving or disproving of something, accepting or refusing something.

Facial expressions are very useful for understanding the emotions that someone is trying to convey. These expressions are not universal and vary greatly across cultures (Weinland, 2023: para. 54) For instance, a smile could be considered as an indicator of happiness. However, it can also mean someone is being polite or is trying to please someone. In certain cases, a smile could be an indicator of fear (in situations where communication takes the form of a verbal attack).

Proxemics is a very important part of nonverbal communication, but it can often be overlooked due to the misunderstanding of cultural conventions. Proxemics refers to the space one needs to feel comfortable and at ease while facing someone during an interaction (Weinland, 2023: para. 56). There are established norms regarding the proximity one should adopt depending on the culture they belong to. If one is not familiar or does not respect the norms imposed by a certain culture, that person risks being perceived as either too distant if he or she keeps a distance far away or not very trustworthy if they invade the other person's personal space by standing too close (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 6).

The term was coined by Edward T. Hall in the 60s and he proved that the physical distance between people during communication varies greatly according to different cultures (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 22). Hall identified four distances that show different distances one may adopt during interpersonal communication: intimate space (0-45cm), personal space (46 cm-1,2m), social space (1,2m-3,6m) and public space (more than 3,6m) (Weinland, 2023: para. 63). According to Weinland (2023: para. 64-66), the intimate space is reserved for very close relationships, while the personal space is still very close, but it allows more people. For instance, the intimate space could be between a husband and a wife, but the personal space applies to members of the family, to close friends. The social space is meant for acquaintances, and the biggest distance is represented by public space which refers to the proximity you should have with other people in the street or in a public place. It is better to be informed of the cultural conventions in order to avoid misinterpretation of proxemics and in order to respect other people's boundaries.

According to Weinland (2023: para. 73), physical appearance can also be considered a form of nonverbal communication as it has a great impact on how

people perceive one another. The appearance of a person can lead to wanting to get to know that person or, on the contrary, to the decision to avoid interacting with them. People can infer certain messages from the way we present ourselves (how we dress, what colors we choose, etc.) (Weinland, 2023: para. 76).

Ivy and Wahl (2019: 155) identified a link between physical appearance and nonverbal communication. One says a lot about who they are by their physical appearance and the changes they make to it. Also, physical appearance makes people perceive someone in a certain way and it impacts on the way that a person is perceived and how people interact with them (including how approachable or trustworthy someone finds them to be).

Bruneau (1980) defined chronemics as the use of time during communication. It is a concept that is closely linked to culture. Some cultures use monochronic time (carrying out one task at a time) and others use polychronic time (carrying out more tasks at the same time) (Weinland, 2023: para. 69). "This use of time involves fluidity with individuals feeling free to work on multiple tasks simultaneously rather than completing a task before moving to the next task, as in the monochronic use of time" (Weinland, 2023: para. 69). The use of time varies across cultures and depends on both personal preferences as well as cultural preferences.

3. The challenges of understanding nonverbal communication in different cultures

This section of the paper aims to explain the hidden meaning behind gestures and the challenges they pose. Whether we refer to the different meaning of the same gesture for different cultures or to different gestures and their use across cultures, gestures may pose problems to people who are not used to the specificity of a certain culture.

We will first focus on touch. Touch is very common during intercultural interactions, and it can help express a wide range of feelings starting from happiness and up to anger. Touch can be interpreted in various ways depending on the culture and their rules. For example, in most cases, in many countries, if someone touches a child's head is seen as a sign of affection and care, while if someone were to touch a child's head that belongs to an Asian culture, people will interpret this touch as lacking respect (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 20). Pacheco (2024: para. 12) highlights that there are a lot of differences between cultures. For example, people from the Mediterranean region

are more tactile, while people from Eastern Asia are more reserved when it comes to physical touch.

Eye contact is one of the most important aspects of nonverbal communication. Just one look can convey multiple emotions, and it helps people express themselves. The rules regarding eye contact vary greatly among cultures. In most Asian and African cultures, people avoid direct eye contact. However, in North America for instance, looking people in the eye during a conversation indicates active listening and is often regarded as an indication that people involved in communication are honest. If the sender of the message does not maintain eye contact, this can be interpreted as a lack of contact with the recipient and even as a secret that person is hiding (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 4). In Arab cultures or in South-Asia, people tend to look at the person they are talking to very intensely. While this type of eye contact is completely normal in those cultures, in North America, this prolonged look can be interpreted as aggressive and intrusive. In some Eastern cultures, if a woman has eye contact with a man, this gesture is considered inappropriate (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 27).

Paralanguage can differ greatly depending on the culture as each one has its own specificities that people follow. The rhythm and flow of a conversation is very important for the meaning of the message. If someone answers too quickly or fails to deliver an answer at the expected time, communication may not be that effective. For example, in North America, people speak very loudly and very fast if they talk about an area of interest or a topic, they are passionate about. People also tend not to take so many breaks while talking. However, speaking in a loud voice is interpreted as a sign of disrespect and impoliteness in Asia (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 7). In Asian cultures, pauses and silences are very important in communication. They take many breaks and people never interrupt the other person speaking (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 11). While in Asian cultures, speaking very fast is not advisable, in Australia or Russia, people consider that if the speaker is not talking quickly enough, he or she is not fully engaged and present in that conversation (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 7).

Gestures represent a big part of nonverbal communication, and they reinforce the meaning of the message conveyed. Gestures vary greatly among cultures. For example, in Japan, people tend not to gesticulate very much, while on the contrary, Italians rely on a lot of gesture while talking. North Americans are somewhere in the middle as they gesticulate moderately (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 5). Gestures can be universal or culturally specific. The same gesture can have a

completely different meaning depending on the culture. For example, smiling is considered to be quite universal, although it may have a few variations in meaning depending on the context (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 5).

We will analyze the meaning of the same gesture in different cultures. For instance, the gesture of tilting one's head to the right has different meanings. In India it means *yes*, in North America it means the opposite-*no* and in Brazil it means *I agree* (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 5).

The very well-known gesture of thumbs up means agreement in most western cultures, but this sign is considered offensive and impolite in Latin America, in West Africa and in the Middle East (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 18).

For example, someone who wants to express the approval by the OK sign (used in American and Romanian culture) could have problems being understood in other cultures. France interprets this sign as zero or not important, Japan interprets it as money, for Germany and Brazil it symbolizes vulgarity (Desmond, 1994).

Greeting someone is also very different from one culture to another. In some cultures, greetings vary depending on the connection with the respective person, with hierarchy and according to gender (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 13). In Japan, for instance, when someone bows, the angle of the bow symbolizes the level of respect presented. For greeting acquaintances in an informal way, people choose a 15-degree bow ("eshaku"). For showing more respect in a professional context or for greeting someone of higher status, people choose a 30-degree bow ("keiri"). In Japanese culture, men bow while keeping their arms and elbows at their sides, but women bow with their hands together in front of them (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 14-15).

In Thailand, physical contact is forbidden while greeting someone formally. The traditional gesture is called *Wai* and it implies the placement of the palms at chest level accompanied by a slight bow of the head (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 16).

In Tibet, greeting someone is quite unusual as people there greet someone by sticking their tongue out. This gesture is historically charged and is rooted in the region's beliefs. During the 9th century, there lived a Tibetan king who was very cruel and who was known for having a black tongue. People stick their tongues

out as a way of proving they are not a reincarnation of that king (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 19).

Facial expressions help express emotions during nonverbal communication. There are some emotions that are universal such as happiness, sadness, anger or fear, but their expression may vary depending on the culture (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 24).

For example, some cultures have very strict rules regarding the showing of feelings and emotions. In Japan, people need to have a rather neutral expression. Other cultures also view the expression of emotions as superficial or weak (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 25).

Proxemics should be one of the first elements someone take into account during an intercultural interaction to show respect. Each culture has a set of rules when it comes to the space between the speakers during the conversation (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 6)

In the Middle East, it is better to be very close to the person we are talking to, but in Asia people prefer to keep their distance (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 23). Violation of these norms leads to the risk of being perceived as either cold, distant and uninterested if one keeps their distance or the opposite, to intrusive and inappropriate if one approaches the other too much (AFS Canada, n.d.: para. 6).

Physical appearance is also extremely important for nonverbal communication. Sometimes, one may not realize the message conveyed by their physical appearance as it is highly subjective and depends on the local culture. For example, in some cultures, taking care of one's appearance is valued, but what is considered appropriate across cultures does not always apply to other cultures. In some cultures, formal attire is mandatory at the workplace, while in others casual attire is accepted (Cécile Boury Conseil International, n.d.: para. 28-29).

Chronemics can also influence nonverbal communication as people need to learn how to work with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. There are cultures that are monochronic and prefer carrying one task at a time, such as Americans, Canadians, and people from Northern Europe. But there are also people who come from polychronic culture that prefer to solve more than one task at a time such as people from Latin America, the Arab part of the Middle East and from Sub-Saharan Africa. However, one may or may not identify with these cultural

norms. It is especially important to consider the chronemics to collaborate efficiently with people belonging to distinct cultures (Weinland, 2023: para. 69).

Nonverbal communication brings several advantages to verbal communication as it helps enhance the meaning and helps guard the cultural specifics present in cultures all over the world. However, nonverbal communication may lead to some problems in terms of correctly understanding its meaning and the challenges they pose need to be understood so that possible misunderstandings be avoided.

4. Possible solutions for overcoming misunderstandings

In this last part of the paper, we will analyze possible solutions to solving the issue of intercultural misinterpretation. Pacheco (2024: para. 20) proposes 3 solutions: learning cultural sensitivity, active listening and observation and adaptability and flexibility.

Learning how to be culturally aware is one of the best ways to eliminate misunderstandings that may occur in intercultural nonverbal communication. Learning crucial aspects of the culture of the other person involved in the communication process is a means of showing respect and understanding for his or her culture. Learning these culturally linked aspects helps a person gain valuable insight regarding the nonverbal communication style of a certain culture. By researching and learning, one may come across learning that signs have various interpretations and he or she can now be able to correctly interpret them. Moreover, understanding and embracing different social norms and values encourages more natural interactions where both people feel at ease and prevent the risk of offending others, by not fitting behavior. For example, one gesture may seem polite in one culture, but totally inappropriate in another. Therefore, a person who is familiar with other cultures can communicate accordingly and can avoid misunderstandings. Becoming culturally sensitive and aware should be the first step to take toward facing intercultural challenges.

Another solution to help overcome misunderstandings in intercultural nonverbal communication is active listening and observation. One should develop active listening skills as they are one of the vital skills for intercultural interactions. The close observation of gestures, facial expressions, posture and other nonverbal elements can help a person better understand one culture. Active listening implies the skill of being present and completely interesting in a conversation and responding accordingly. This process considers the speaker's feelings, emotions and intentions. This type of practice can also be strengthened by asking questions

about certain rituals that may seem strange to one whose culture does not share the same ones. Not being afraid to ask questions proves to be a very important tool in the prevention of misinterpretation. When unsure, it is better to ask for clarification as it shows engagement and openness to learning more about other cultures.

Finally, the capacity to adapt to the style of communication of one culture is one of the essential steps one should take. Being flexible and showing willingness to adapt are two key aspects of effective intercultural nonverbal communication. Adapting to the behaviors and styles of a certain culture is important in avoiding misunderstandings and in promoting cultural awareness. Flexibility is a strong skill that relies on the alignment to some expectations. While some cultures may not have the same traditions, it is important to know and acknowledge them. An open-minded attitude about celebrating the differences between cultures strengthens the efficiency of nonverbal communication across cultures. One can learn to be more adaptable and flexible by engaging in more intercultural interactions and in embracing the beauty of cultural diversity.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper reinforces the need for cultural awareness in fighting against inefficient intercultural nonverbal communication. In this paper we have shown that intercultural nonverbal communication is a complex process that needs to be understood to be carried out efficiently. By understanding the need for intercultural interactions, people can learn to adapt and to improve their skills in order to effectively communicate and share a message, a belief or an emotion. It is only by learning that society can evolve, and it is only by respect that intercultural nonverbal communication can flourish.

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POETICS OF RESISTANCE IN MOHAMMED EL-KURD'S SPOKEN WORD COLLECTION *BELLYDANCING ON WOUNDS*

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Abstract: Palestinian poetry has a tradition of serving as a tool against colonialism and occupation. The main goals of this article are (1) to analyze three of Mohammed El-Kurd's spoken word poems within this tradition and demonstrate how he creates a poetics of resistance; (2) to identify their strategic location and formation. A close reading guided by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003) and an analysis of performative elements informed the study of "Figs, Bitch!" (2019a), "My Nakba Birthday" (2019b), and "This Is Why We Dance" (2019c). The article shows that El-Kurd's personal narrative, his incorporation of cultural elements, his use of metaphor and imagery, combined with performative delivery, challenge colonial narratives that dehumanize the Palestinian and actively assert control over self-definition.

Keywords: *Palestinian Poetry; Poetics of Resistance; Palestine; Spoken Word Poetry; Mohammed El-Kurd*

"Poetry was the one area in which national identity survived the Nakba unscathed. What political activists did not dare express; poets sang out with force." – Ilan Pappé

Setting the Stage, Awaiting the Storm
"[T]he label 'political' is used as a label to discredit any work for daring to violate the protocol of pretended suprapolitical objectivity." – Edward Said

Introduction

One cannot discuss Palestine without being political; consequently, many scholars prefer not to align themselves with the cause. The modern idea that knowledge is neutral and objective has resulted in the dominance of Western epistemologies and a narrow-minded perspective on the world (Said, 2003: 10). Knowledge is situated, and acknowledging this could be the first step toward making peripheral voices more prevalent in academia.

This article examines selected poems from Mohammed El-Kurd and Clarissa Bitar's spoken word album *Bellydancing on Wounds* (2019). It seeks to reveal how El-Kurd develops a poetics of resistance that challenges dominant colonial narratives and asserts agency in self-definition. To conceptualize a **poetics of**

resistance, I draw on McDonald's (2013) definition, which states that it is "the performative process through which 'resistance' takes on meaning in the life of Palestinians" (2013: 285). Said's *Orientalism* (2003) provides a framework for a close reading and interpretation of El-Kurd's texts.

Orientalism (2003) explores how 'the Orientalist,' the Western anthropologist, scholar, and writer, constructs 'the Other' (Said, 2003: 2). He contends that 'the Orient' is a European invention that portrays 'the East' as exotic, uncivilized, and inferior to European culture. This construction has historically driven the mission to 'civilize' other cultures and has rationalized colonialism and imperialist interventions in Arab countries (Said, 2003: xvi, 3, 39). For example, Britain's colonial ambitions resulted in Palestine being a British-controlled Mandate from 1917 to 1948, before negotiations with European Zionists led to the founding of Israel (Said, 2003: 4). Thus, imperialism can be identified as the root cause of Palestine's peripheralization.

He further criticizes the binary view of the East and the West and recognizes that it exists precisely because European hegemony assumes that its culture is superior to that of 'the East' (Said, 2003: 7, 42). Said (2003) is aware of the ontological instability of binary concepts and aims to deconstruct labels that "imprison us" and antagonize one side or the other (2003: xvii). His theoretical considerations serve as a starting point for my analysis of El-Kurd's poetry, and this paper follows his methodological approach by studying **strategic location** and **strategic formation** in the selected spoken word poems (Said, 2003: 20). **Strategic location** refers to "the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about," while **strategic formation** analyzes "the relationship between texts […] and referential power among themselves" (Said, 2003: 20).

To contextualize El-Kurd's work within a broader literary tradition, the first chapter explores the history of Palestinian poetry, highlighting key themes and the poetry's referential power. Chapter two examines the strategic positioning of Palestinian identity in El-Kurd's work by analyzing the poems "Figs, Bitch!" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a); "My Nakba Birthday" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b); and "This Is Why We Dance" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c). The third chapter highlights the importance of the poet's grandmother, Rifqa El-Kurd, as a symbol of resistance. The intensity of weather metaphors is highlighted in the following chapters. Finally, the concluding chapter merges all the findings and summarizes them. Palestinian voice takes the center stage in this article. The curtain is up.

1. The political tradition of Palestinian poetry

"Truth is white, write over it /
with a crow's ink.
Truth is black, write over it / with
a mirage's light."– Mahmoud
Darwish

Poetry has long been central in Arabic culture, from the pre-Islamic *qasida*, which explores themes of love for the land, spirituality, and celebration, to contemporary poetry that primarily addresses identity, displacement, and resilience. The oral transmission of the *qasida* accentuates the importance of the spoken word to the tradition of Arabic poetry (Badawi, 1980: 1–2). While Arabic poets explore various themes, politics and societal struggles have historically played a significant role in their works. For Palestinian writers, these concerns are particularly crucial, as their work is shaped by the lived experience under colonial rule (Jayyusi, 1992: 1–2).

The *nakba* ('the Catastrophe') in 1948 and the *naksa* ('the Setback') in 1967 marked significant ruptures in Palestinian life, altering the poetic landscape (Jayyusi, 1992: 17). While modern Arabic poetry has been a political tool of resistance since the 1900s, opposition became "one of the important themes […] in the fifties" and is considered the crucial element of Palestinian poetry of the 1970s (Jayyusi, 1992: 51).

Contrary to simplified Western accounts of Israel's founding and the false claim of Palestine as *terra nullius* (Greenstein, 2022: 42), the Zionist project has always been framed as a colonial venture. Theodor Herzl (1896), who outlined the Zionist ideology[1], already recognized that Palestine belonged to an existing people (1896: 29). Subsequently, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 led to the *nakba*, and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, with over half of the land attributed to the new state. The *nakba* resulted in a significant demographic change and the displacement of around 750.000 Palestinians, forcing them to live as refugees, either within the new Palestinian borders or in the diaspora (Pappé,

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[1] 'Zionism' is often described as the right to self-determination for Jewish people. However, the material conditions the ideology has produced for the Indigenous population of Palestine have involved displacement, colonialism, and ethnic cleansing (Said, 1979: 56–57). In this article, the term 'Zionism' refers to an ideology that has enabled decades of violence against Palestinians, and that continues to contribute to and justify the ongoing genocide in Palestine. For further reading, see: Halper, J. (2021). *Decolonizing Israel, Liberating Palestine: Zionism, Settler Colonialism, and the Case for One Democratic State*. London: Pluto Press.; B'Tselem. (2025, July 28). *Our genocide* [PDF]. Retrieved from https://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files/publications/202507_our_genocide_eng.pdf.

2006b: 225–34; Masalha, 2012: 88–90). Furthermore, by the "June war of 1967, millions of Palestinians […] lived under foreign occupation, without citizenship, without civil liberties, without rights to self-determination" (McDonald, 2013: 2). Eventually, occupation has come to define and shape the everyday lives of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (McDonald, 2013: 2). This led to writers of Palestinian descent either living in exile, in Israel as second-class citizens, or stateless under Israeli rule in the Occupied Palestinian territories (Jayyusi, 1992: 2).

Just like the perspectives of other Indigenous people (El-Sherif, 2019: 99), these events have been silenced, erased, or excused by "white settlers or colonizers" (Masalha, 2012: 88)[2]. Therefore, prevailing colonial narratives constantly invalidate Palestinian identity. As Palestinians have been continuously stripped of their political agency and denied their history, art has developed a site of opposition, and poets have become the voices of resistance (Pappé, 2006a: 148).

As "the spokesperson and consciousness of the Palestinians" (Mohammad & Abdulaali, 2020: 41), national avant-garde poet Mahmoud Darwish is the most prominent poet after 1948. Born in 1941 in British-controlled Mandatory Palestine shortly before the *nakba*, and having lived through occupation and colonial violence, he and his poetry represent the Palestinian experience. His poetry concerns power relations, the construction of the subordinate, and resistance to oppression (McDonald, 2013: 273). Darwish wrote out of the "tragic necessity" to resist the radical events that disordered Palestinian lives on a global scale (Jayyusi, 1992: 62). Due to his political activism, he continuously clashed with Israeli authorities:

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[2] The terms "colonialism" and "settler colonialism" are often debated in the context of Israel due to differing perspectives on the nature of Israeli state formation and its relationship to Palestinian land and people. Some scholars argue that the settler colonial framework is an accurate description of Israeli policies, which involve the settlement of Israelis on Palestinian land and the displacement of indigenous Palestinians. Others challenge the use of these terms, suggesting that the Israeli state's formation and actions are better understood through different historical or political lenses. While acknowledging these debates, I use the terms 'colonialism' and 'settler colonialism' in this work to emphasize the displacement, dispossession, and ongoing colonization of Palestinian land, as well as to highlight the continued marginalization of the Palestinian people. These frameworks allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the Palestinian experience. For further readings, see: Pappé, I. (2017). The Value of Viewing Israel-Palestine through the Lens of Settler-Colonialism. *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, *36*(3), p. 66–81; Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(4), p. 387–409.

> In the 1960s Darwish was imprisoned for reciting poetry and traveling between villages without a permit. Considered a "resistance poet," he was placed under house arrest when his poem 'Identity Card' was turned into a protest song. (Poetry Foundation, n.d.)

The perceived threat of Darwish's poetry is evident, as he was frequently held captive after reading at poetry festivals. This further stresses the role of poetry in Palestinian resistance (Eid, 2016: 31–33). Acknowledging that language, particularly poetry, can shape the ethos of defiance and serve as a weapon against colonial narratives, occupying forces persecuted poets such as Darwish (Mohammad & Abdulaali, 2020: 44).

Beyond his status among his people, Darwish's achievements continue to influence subsequent generations of artists (Rahman, 2015: 2), including 27-year-old poet Mohammed El-Kurd. He claims the following in one of his poems: "Now, this is why we dance / Because even my poetry isn't free" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c). Palestinian poetry is frequently vilified for its political nuance, which "interrupts dominant consensual forms of power and identity" (Rahman, 2015: 2).

Furthermore, due to the involuntary displacement of Palestinians, the extensive diaspora played a role in his worldwide recognition by and influence on poets and writers around the globe. Diasporic literature is not unusual today; nonetheless, the "residual (and ardent) emphasis on the motherland" and the urgent longing to return to the homeland are what make Palestinian world literature unique (Salaita, 2003: 46).

Suheir Hammad, born in 1973, is one of the diasporic Palestinian poets who have shaped Mohammed El-Kurd's spoken-word album and who provide insight into the perspectives of anglophone Palestinian writers, while remaining influenced by Darwish's poetry. Her poetry collection *Breaking Poems* was published in 2008, the same year Palestine's national poet died. She honors the late poet by including Arabic verses of his work in her poetry and translating Darwish's words into English (Rahman, 2015: 33). Considering her diasporic background and her self-described connection to global liberation struggles as well as feminist thought, her poetry is both distinct from and aligned with Palestinian poetry because it themes dispossession and identity erasure (Rahman, 2015: 31–32; Bernard, 2021: 325–27). The title of her aforementioned poetry collection suggests the following:

> She inscribes herself in a tradition of Arabic poetry as an "interruption" or "departure," all implied in the term "breaking," and a continuation of a heritage of poetry, in the spirit of Darwish's poetry […]. (Rahman, 2015: 34)

Two distinct narratives in Palestinian poetry emerge in the work of these poets: anticolonial resistance poetry and global activism poetry. Darwish's firsthand experience of occupation and exile shaped his poetry and became the foundation of his identity. On the other hand, Hammad, a younger generation member who grew up outside Palestine, bases her work on broader global human rights activism while still strongly advocating for the Palestinian cause (McDonald, 2013: 8; Bernard, 2021: 323).

The **strategic formation** of relationships between texts and their referential power (Said, 2003: 20) becomes evident with the example of Mohammed El-Kurd, who "stacks and hoards" not only Darwish's reasons to live but also describes an elderly woman as a "zaatar diva" in his spoken word collection *Bellydancing on Wounds* (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a). Thus, he intertextually references Darwish's poem *We Have on This Earth what Makes Life Worth Living* (2013)*, a poetic inventory of moments that justify existence and preserve hope. Furthermore, he mentions Suheir Hammad's collection, *Zataar Diva* (2006). This term represents a woman who is unapologetically Palestinian, bold, and resilient, and who carries the flavors and history of her people by embodying both cultural pride and feminist empowerment.

Like Darwish, the contemporary poet and activist Mohammed El-Kurd has personally experienced displacement and the adverse effects of settler colonialism. In 2009, Israeli settlers seized part of his family's home in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, a territory under Israeli occupation. Later, he moved to New York to study Creative Writing. In 2019, his spoken word collection *Bellydancing on Wounds,* comprising six poems with musical interpretations by Clarissa Bitar, a Palestinian oud player, was released. His direct language and disruptive nature classify his poetry as "active resistance poetry" (Reshma, 2022: 2) while situating the Palestinian struggle within a broader context of collective and global anti-colonial liberation.

The political nature of Palestinian poetry blurs the boundaries between art, resistance, and daily life.[3] As noted by McDonald (2013), "Protest songs were sung at weddings as often as wedding songs were sung at protests if such a distinction could even be made" (2013: 4). This fluidity underscores how poetry, spoken word, and music serve as vital expressions of Palestinian identity, operating in an unregulated space beyond military surveillance. Through these art forms, Palestinians assert their presence, resist erasure, and reclaim narratives that extend outside of borders and oppression.

2. A voice from the margins of power

"[…] history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and re-written, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated, so that 'our' East, ''our' Orient becomes 'ours' to possess and direct."– Edward Said

This chapter is concerned with the **strategic location** (Said, 2003: 20) of his poems, "Figs, Bitch!" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a); "My Nakba Birthday" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b); and "This Is Why We Dance" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c). The goal is to identify where he positions himself, his identity, and the collective identity of Palestinians in relation to the rest of the world.

"This Is Why We Dance", the first poem on the spoken word album, constructs a collective 'we' and its counterpart, 'them.' The poem is a retelling of El-Kurd's experience of watching the 2008 Gaza bombings on TV as a boy while feeling guilty for not being affected by them, as well as an angry reflection of those events as an adult. This poem, later published in his first printed poetry collection, *Rifqa* (2021), is dedicated "to Carmel" (El-Kurd, 2021: 6), alluding to Mount Carmel near Haifa. This dedication refers to a concrete place, a territory lost to Israel and now part of it. Many poets before him, such as Mahmoud Darwish, have expressed their connection to Mount Carmel. In *Diary of a Palestinian Wound*, Darwish writes: "No need reminding: Mount Carmel is within us" (Jayyusi,

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[3] In her poem "Fuck Your Lecture on Craft, My People Are Dying" (2020), Noor Hindi emphasizes how "writing about flowers," symbolizing the ordinary aspects of life, is a privilege reserved for 'the colonizer.' Due to their experiences of colonial subjugation and ongoing violence, many Palestinians find that their identity is deeply connected to the cause. This identification is represented in their art, which very often grapples with political themes and resistance to colonialism.

1992: 51). El-Kurd's dedication and Darwish's poem show how this concrete place became an abstractum to the Palestinians; a lost part of themselves, a metonymy for the loss of land. Like many other Palestinian poets before him, he lives "on the soil of [the] historical land of Palestine" (Jayyusi, 1992: 4) and demonstrates that his connection to the land transcends fictional borders. The struggle of placelessness (Jayyusi, 1992: 48) is further described:

> If you ask me where I'm from, it's not a one-word answer.
> Be prepared and seated, breathless and geared.
> If hearing about a world other than yours
> makes you uncomfortable, well,
> drink the sea,
> cut off your ears,
> blow another bubble to bubble your bubble and the pretense.
> Blow up another town of bodies in the name of fear (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c)

The narrator describes how locating his home is difficult due to the political landscape and his loss of home. Moreover, El-Kurd's words express the challenge of explaining oneself and discussing the importance of place and land amid tensions between popular anti-Arab sentiment and the struggle between Arabs and Zionists (Said, 2003: 26–27). The poem appears to be directed toward a Western audience, as indicated by the personal pronoun 'you,' positioning the listener outside the poet's lived experience. His tone is confrontational and incisive, yet it simultaneously invites engagement. By placing the second verse as a disclaimer for the listener to "[b]e prepared," he acknowledges the disruptive nature of his narrative, signaling his awareness of the challenges of articulating his identity while asserting his refusal to be silenced. In the recording of this poem, this part clearly marks a "vocalic outburst of energy," which, combined with his increasing speed, the harsh tone, and the poem's content, conveys anger and frustration (Novak, 2011: 77–78).

El-Kurd engages with the trope of the demonized aggressor, a stereotype that Arabs often face due to 'the Orientalist's' view of their existence as inherently violent (Said, 2003: 347). He emphasizes the necessity of performing politeness to avoid being perceived as a threat, as reflected in his words: "smile when they talk, answer them, educate them" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c). This shows how simply asserting his presence is considered dangerous by 'them', likely referring to non-Arabs who, from a position of privilege and a colonial worldview, have internalized 'the Orientalist' stereotype of Arab violence. He further questions this

perception by asking: "Why is anger – even anger – a luxury / to me?" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c). Notably, he begins a new line before "to me?" on the textual level, and before uttering the phrase, he pauses, creating a deliberate rupture that separates him from the rest of the world. This break accentuates the uniqueness of his condition: that of someone whose anger is a privilege denied, even in the face of violence.

Another way El-Kurd depicts Palestinians as lacking political agency is through the military equipment that he assigns them. He writes "Motherfuckers work tanks, we know stones" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c). By choosing a derogatory term to describe 'them,' El-Kurd reveals his profoundly defensive stance towards the Israeli military forces. The contrast between the chosen weapons communicates the asymmetry of power, highlighting the IDF's military dominance. Thus, he aligns himself with a collective that is viewed as powerless and economically inferior, whose most potent weapon is a stone, while juxtaposing the resisting Palestinian 'we' against the dominant colonial powers equipped with advanced military technology. This juxtaposition reappears in the second poem under analysis, "My Nakba Birthday" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b), but with an additional layer of information for the audience. Here, he explicitly states that the tanks are "imprinted with US flags" (El-Kurd and Bitar, 2019b), shifting the critique towards Western imperialism and the longstanding (military) alliance between the United States and Israel (Pappé, 2006b: 152–54).

"My Nakba Birthday" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b) is the second poem on the album, and it intertwines the personal narrative of El-Kurd's birth with the historical and political events surrounding it. By aligning his very existence as a Palestinian with the traumatic legacy of the *nakba*, the poet shows the inextricable connection between his life and "choiceless politics" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b), as stated in the poem. This framing counters the dehumanization of Palestinians by asserting that their politicized existence is fabricated, imposed on them, and not self-chosen. The lines "Your unkindness rewrote my autobiography / punchlines in guts / blades for tongues" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b) convey how, even before birth, he was assigned a defensive role. 'You' could be interpreted as the colonial powers of the West that enabled the establishment of Israel, without considering the Indigenous population of Palestine. Additionally, the choice of personal pronouns may refer to the fact that 'you,' the listener, who is accepting and reinforcing prevailing narratives, is complicit in the perpetuation of this imposed identity and the marginalization of Palestinians. On an audio-textual level, he asserts his presence by delivering his words before the "oud" sets in – an uncommon choice

within this particular spoken word collection, which makes it significant (Poyatos cited by Novak, 2011: 119). This deliberate choice emphasizes his demand to be heard, ensuring that the listener cannot passively engage but must instead directly confront his perspective.

El-Kurd further expresses this dehumanization by incorporating descriptions of Palestinians as a "number in a headline," "a bomb in a white room," and a "walking suspicion" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b). By shifting between these external, Western perspectives and the deeply personal narrative of his and his twin sister Muna's birth, he actively resists dehumanization and reclaims his humanity through poetry.

In "My Nakba Birthday" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b), the emphasis is on the perspective through which Palestinian existence is perceived. In contrast, in "Figs, Bitch!" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a), the fifth poem on the spoken word album, El-Kurd situates Palestinian existence in terms of concrete external factors, such as physical appearance and territorial borders. This is also evident in the choice of the title, where he uses a tangible cultural object, the fig, to symbolize his rootedness and connectedness to the land while remaining confrontational and provocative using the derogatory term "bitch".

The narrative voice in "Figs, Bitch!" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a) depicts an elderly woman on a bus, carrying two heavy plastic bags with produce to sell at the market beyond a separation wall. As the narrator and the woman approach a military checkpoint, they encounter a soldier described as "blonde and sunburnt" and "accented and unhebrew" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a). In comparison, he positions himself and the elderly woman as part of the "other brown bodies" that are "tessellated behind bars" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a). Through these descriptions, he accentuates the soldier's foreignness, with blond hair suggesting he might be of European descent and unfamiliar with the region's intense sun. El-Kurd describes the performative nature of the soldier's identity: an outsider assuming authority in a land that is not his own, in a language he does not speak well. Additionally, power structures are reinforced, portraying the soldier as an enforcer of military control, responsible for checking the Palestinians' permits because they are not allowed to walk around freely and are restricted in movement. When asked to show her permit, the woman answers that her permit is "[her] wrinkles / older than your country's existence" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a), further claiming her rootedness to the land and framing the brown, old woman as Indigenous. He overly stresses the first syllable of the word "wrinkles" and the

second syllable of "existence" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a). This creates an irregular rhythmic connection that mimics an end rhyme through isochrony (Novak, 2011: 98), emphasizing the contrast between the two lived realities. By the pronoun 'your', the woman separates herself from the soldier and the settler-colony, while conveying how Israel is a comparatively young state built on the ashes of Palestine.

The checkpoint at "the separation and annexation wall" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a) symbolizes both a country's borders and how Palestinian people are viewed as second-class citizens on the other side. At the beginning of the poem, El-Kurd writes: "Elderly woman on the bus falls asleep on my shoulder, / No adjectives in the wind" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a). Here, the bus is still on Palestinian land, where they are not confronted with prejudices or the label 'occupied'. By the end of the poem, as they pass the checkpoint, the poet contrasts this: "Elderly woman and I pass the checkpoint / Violent vowels in the wind" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a). Crossing both literal and metaphorical borders, they feel judged, interpreted, and defined by others' words. Behind the wall, they become indistinguishable from the language of colonial powers and the reality of occupation.

I want to return to the first poem to synthesize the analysis of El-Kurd's **strategic location**. He expresses the resistant nature of Palestinians, himself included, by telling the listener that "no matter how many adjectives you stack upon my shoulders / I define me" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c). He reclaims agency over historical and personal narratives in the face of settler colonialism. Across his poetry, he challenges the imposed framing of Palestinians as inherently violent but also rejects passive victimhood. In an interview with *Mondoweiss,* he thoroughly explains his own journey with writing poetry about Palestinians and how he eventually came to reject writing by "hyper-emphasizing the victimhood" of his people, arguing that this plays into the hands of Zionist "colonial rhetoric that perpetually tries to reduce, flatten, and dehumanize Palestinian writing" (Abraham, 2021). Furthermore, El-Kurd argues that anger and a desire for change define humanity, as it is natural to oppose occupation (Abraham, 2021).[4]

Furthermore, his poetry affirms the ontological instability of the binary concepts of 'the West' and 'the Orient' (Said, 2003: xii). The poet situates himself by resisting oppressive colonial narratives and ultimately by asserting sole authority over his identity. El-Kurd contests a particular narrative that vilifies or completely

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[4] For further reading, see: El-Kurd, M. (2025). *Perfect Victims and the Politics of Appeal.* Chicago: Haymarket Books.

ignores Palestinian existence and unapologetically claims the right of Palestinians to oppose and resist colonialism.

3. The jasmine tree of Palestine

"My grandmother taught me everything I know about dignity. She taught me how to launch my sentences like missiles. How to be resilient." – Mohammed El-Kurd

Mohammed El-Kurd's poetry is deeply rooted in personal experience. In interviews and various articles, he is vocal about his grandmother's influence on this artistry. He states that "[s]he cameoed his poetry" and is explicitly and implicitly present in his works (El-Kurd, 2020). I aim to reveal how greatly Rifqa, his grandmother, is woven into his words and why her presence is vital to their disruptive nature.

Rifqa El-Kurd died on June 16, 2020, at the age of 103. Originally from Haifa, she had to flee her home and move to Jerusalem, a territory that Israel later occupied during the "naksa". She survived the "nakba", lived under foreign rule during the Ottoman Empire, under the British Mandate, and eventually under Zionist occupation. In 2009, American settlers arrived, claiming that the land and the house her family built in Sheikh Jarrah belonged to them. The settlers seized part of the house and, eventually, lived together, separated only by "a hanging cloth in the yard and a wall built between the two parts of the house" (Middle East Eye, 2020). Mohammed's grandmother fought for their rights and those of 180 other Palestinian families who received expulsion notices from Israeli courts (El-Kurd, 2020). Her resilience ultimately made Rifqa a symbol of Palestinian resistance, and activists called her 'The Jasmine Tree of Palestine' (El-Kurd, 2020; McAlpin, 2021). The nickname Rifqa earned is similar to how Abu Salma, a well-known poet and passionate activist of the early 20th century, was called "The Olive Tree of Palestine" because of his strong bond with the land, a common theme in his nostalgic poetry that praised Palestinian flora and fauna (Jayyusi, 1992: 19, 95). Her grandson remembers that she would wait for him after school, holding a bouquet of jasmine. Like Abu Salma, Rifqa felt a deep love for the land, and just like a tree, the poet says that his grandmother died standing tall, resisting occupation until her last breath (El-Kurd, 2020).

Furthermore, her influence on the young poet becomes evident through the fact that his first written poetry collection is named *Rifqa* (2021), which he wrote "to

honor her in her lifetime […]", "[t]o immortalize her" while also stating that "her roots are entangled underneath [his] every step" (El-Kurd, 2020).

In "This Is Why We Dance" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c), the poet opens with the following lines:

> Home in my memory is a green, worn-out couch
> and my grandmother in every poem:
> every jasmine picked off the backlash,
> every backlash picked off the tear gas,
> and tear gas healed with yogurt and onions,
> with resilience (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019c)

First, he establishes his deep connection with his grandmother by stating that she is ever-present in his poetry. He delivers the first two verses slowly and calmly, conveying a sense of self-assurance and peace. The colon after "poem" indicates that he elaborates on her importance in the following verses.

Not only does the jasmine motif symbolize his grandmother's resilience, but it is also embedded in a rich metaphor. To "pick up a jasmine off backlash," which could symbolize conflict and oppression, conveys that despite their adversary, she remains tied to the Palestinian land and its nature. Furthermore, the image of a flower growing through layers of backlash implies that even though the land has been harmed or concealed, Palestinian life is persistent when facing opposition. The repetition of "backlash" in the fourth verse represents the continuity of persecution.

Verses two to five break the rhythmic pattern as El-Kurd shifts to a fast, rap-like delivery. His tone becomes agitated and seemingly angry, audibly overwhelming the listener. The tension is finally released when the poet returns to his slow rhythm with short pauses after the keywords "yogurt," "onions," and "resilience." Regardless of the challenges his grandmother faced, she continued to embody resistance, strength, and healing. This is further emphasized by an article El-Kurd wrote for *The Nation*, where he describes how Rifqa, at over 80 years old, acted "as a freedom fighter, an ambulance and a half," helping protesters who were attacked with tear gas using nothing more than yogurt and onions (El-Kurd, 2020). Even though she had dementia at an older age, she was always able to identify Western imperialism as the source of her problems: "America is the reason," she exclaimed while forgetting her grandson's name (McAlpin, 2021).

Moreover, the poet praised his grandmother's wit and humor despite her exhausting life, characterized by imperial violence (El-Kurd, 2020).

4. A mouth pregnant with thunder

"Thousands of images were coined, chiseled out of the imaginations of scores of poets, Palestinians and others; no realm was left unexplored, as the whole of nature, the whole of history, the whole of life itself was summoned to help devise complex metaphors."– Salma Khadra Jayyusi

El-Kurd's poetry is rich in metaphor and imagery, with every word chosen carefully. His use of weather imagery as a metaphor for his spoken words is a powerful poetic choice that will be examined in this chapter.

In "My Nakba Birthday" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b), the listener experiences a sense of voyeuristic intimacy, as if witnessing something profoundly personal and almost forbidden, as Mohammed's mother gives birth to him and Muna. The absence of the *oud* in the beginning intensifies the slight discomfort and the unsettling atmosphere. He opens with the line, "your unkindness rewrote my autobiography" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b), asserting he never had agency over his life and was stripped of the possibility to narrate his own story. Even before birth, his very existence was defined in relation to another country's existence, forcing him into a defensive position where he must constantly justify himself.

This struggle for self-definition is further captured in the phrase "a mouth pregnant with thunder," a metaphor that suggests his voice is loud and disruptive. Later, he characterizes this as "choiceless politics" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b), implying that resistance is imposed on him as a defining condition of his identity. The term "pregnant" indicates that this need for defensive words was born from oppression, signaling a forced connection between Palestinian existence and resistance rather than an inherent part of their culture.

As the poem progresses, the background is filled with "liberation chants" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b) and loud protests. In combination with the prior verses, El-Kurd links his experience to that of countless other Palestinians, whose voices carry great force despite being repeatedly told to "push through" and only "look" and "listen" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019b). The imposed expectation of passivity and

emotional detachment is explicitly rejected, and resistance is framed as natural, arising from subjugation. Finally, the thunder symbolizes the inescapability of moral consequences for the one considered oppressor, and the brewing of a storm.

At the beginning of the "Figs, Bitch!" (El-Kurd & Bitar, 2019a), El-Kurd describes the elderly Palestinian woman's bags as carrying "seventy mountains and a river". Through the narrator's description, his falling and deactivating pitch, signaling finality, conveys an almost mythical image of the bags (Van Leeuwen cited by Novak, 2011: 105–06). He tries to help her with the bags and realizes that they are "not as heavy as they seem / not as heavy as she's lived." Unlike the soldier, the young Palestinian does not see a threat in the woman but rather a constantly adapting and unshakable person, bearing the weight of her history. However, when confronted with the soldier at the checkpoint, the language and imagery shift:

> [t]he soldier, accented and unhebrew, asks her what's in her bag.
> *Figs, bitch. What else you wanna know?*
> *I stuffed them with storms*
> *and radical discourse* (El-Kurd & Bitar 2019a)

The disconnect between the two descriptions and the new unfolding image is significant: the woman never claims to carry mountains or rivers; it is the poet's narrative voice that ascribes such importance to her. To the soldier she is speaking to, she does not repeat this imagery. Instead, similar to Rifqa, she responds with a mix of humor and defiance. At the checkpoint, the woman is already aware of the imposed perception of her as a dangerous threat, simply because she is Palestinian. She neither denies the soldier's suspicion nor tries to justify herself; instead, she embraces the absurdity, reclaims the narrative, and turns it into an act of verbal resistance.

Figs, like olives and watermelons, are often associated with and can stand metonymically for Palestine. At the word "bitch", the pitch goes up, activating and signaling continuity (Van Leeuwen cited by Novak, 2011: 105–06). The poet takes a short break and goes on by saying that she "stuffed [the figs] with storms and radical discourse." Thus, the woman weaponizes the expectation of her radicality. If her very existence is politicized and is seen as drastic, she might as well take ownership of that identity on her own terms. The thunder of Mohammed's birth, which stands as a symbol of politicized existence, has evolved into a storm that cannot be contained or silenced.

Conclusions

The curtain lowers, the echo shall persist

> *"The ultimate question is, do Palestinians have the right to symbolically resist slow death punctuated by periodic massacres, or is it incumbent upon them to lie down and die?"* – Norman G. Finkelstein

Mohammed El-Kurd's spoken word poetry operates at the intersection of literature, performance, and political resistance. As this article demonstrates, his work is embedded in the tradition of Palestinian poetry and serves as a means of self-definition and defiance of Zionist narratives. By referencing Palestinian artists such as the national poet Mahmoud Darwish and Suheir Hammad, he bridges generational and geographical gaps, situating his poetry within both a national struggle and a broader global liberation movement.

The young poet disrupts Western expectations of neutrality in literary discourse and simultaneously rejects the passive victim trope and the aggressor stereotype frequently imposed on Palestinians. Through a combination of uncompromising language, sharp imagery, and performative delivery, El-Kurd asserts agency over personal and collective Palestinian narratives. Through metaphors of thunder, storm, and rootedness, he crafts a **poetics of resistance** that is personal and inherently political. His grandmother's influence and frequent references to Palestinian nature exemplify his rootedness in Palestine.

The article highlighted the importance of spoken word poetry as an active form of cultural resistance to erasure and colonialism. El-Kurd's poetry is a defiant voice against occupation and a declaration of resistance. He is loud and demanding, and the echoes of his words persist.

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TRADUCERILE ROMÂNEȘTI ALE BALADEI HEINIENE *LORELEY* DE PÂNĂ LA PRIMUL RĂZBOI MONDIAL

ROMANIAN TRANSLATIONS OF HEINE'S BALLAD *LORELEY* UNTIL THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Mihaela HRISTEA

Abstract: Heinrich Heine's poem *Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten* bears the name *Loreley* in all Romanian versions. This poem made Heinrich Heine famous throughout the world and was Heine's most translated poem. The name Loreley was introduced into German literature by German romantic poets, who, attracted by everything that was mysterious and symbolic in folk tales, created the image of the beautiful maiden who irresistibly attracts those who admire her into her nets. In 1802, Clemens Brentano wrote a ballad that put this name into circulation in German literature. Other poets, painters and composers were then inspired by this ballad. Over time, this became the myth of the Loreley maiden. Heine took over the myth and transposed it into the type of the mermaid woman, knowing the attraction of the German people for water fairies, also called nymphs or sirens.

Keywords: *fairy tale; maiden; myth; Romanian; siren*

Introducere

Dintre cei mai buni traducătorii ai poemelor heiniene remarcăm mai întâi pe Șt. O. Iosif. Deşi uneori s-a îndepărtat simţitor de original, poetul a ştiut să compenseze acest fapt prin expresia artistică inedită, inegalabilă a tălmăciririlor sale. Ion Bentoiu s-a distins prin precizarea poeziei traduse, prin corectitudinea şi fidelitatea redării conţinutului originalului. Şi Barbu Nemţeanu se impune ca unul dintre tălmăcitorii talentaţi ai versurilor autorului, în special, al poeziei cu tentă religioasă din *Melodii ebraice*.

Tălmăcitorii au echivalat, în general, poemele heiniene cât mai îngrijit, cu o deosebită atenţie la expresia artistică, la formă şi uneori la schema metrică. Chiar dacă oamenii de cultură de la noi nu au reușit întotdeauna să redea ritmurile poeziei heiniene, ei impresionează prin strădania de a transpune conţinutul într-un mod cât mai evocator. De remarcat este şi faptul că unele poeme în vers liber din ciclul *Marea Nordului* au fost echivalate în limba română în ritmuri şi rime proprii.

Scrierile critice din această perioadă, deşi destul de puţine, au rolul atât de popularizare a scriitorului şi a operei sale în literatura română, cât şi de promovare a volumelor de tălmăciri din poezia acestuia în rândurile publicului român. Cele mai serioase şi interesante sunt studiul asupra poeziei române al lui

Titu Maiorescu, „O cercetare critică asupra poeziei române la 1867", articolele lui Ilarie Chendi, „Când s-a născut Heine?", „Germania Jună (1830-1848)" , „Despre traducătorii români ai lui Heine" și cele ale lui A. Steuerman Rodion, respectiv *Heine și Ed.Grenier. Un răspuns* și *Complicele lui Heine*. Cele din urmă au la bază argumentații și demonstrații pe bază de exemple în vederea reabilitării imaginii autorului.

O mare parte dintre aceste lucrări încearcă să-l facă pe Heine înțeles la noi, explicând motivele lipsei sale de audiență în Germania sau modul în care a fost receptat în Franța.

În a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea, scriitorii români au preluat din literatura apuseană, prin oamenii de cultură plecaţi la studii în străinătate, tot ceea ce aceştia au considerat potrivit şi apropiat culturii noastre la acea vreme şi, uneori, cum s-a întâmplat şi cu poetul german, mult mai mult decât atât. Poeţii români au tradus adesea fără să facă o selecţie atentă a poemelor, ceea ce a dus la o răspândire rapidă a aproape întregii lirici heiniene în toate provinciile româneşti. Autorul îşi câştigase renumele încă din timpul vieţii, mai ales cu poemele din *Cartea cântecelor*, celelalte volume de versuri rămânând mai puţin cunoscute, atât în Germania, cât şi în celelalte țări. *Poezii noi, Romancero*, precum şi ciclul *Poezii.1853-1854* au fost publicate după ce poetul a plecat în exil la Paris, fiind interzise în patria sa până la sfârşitul vieţii scriitorului printr-un decret din 1835.

Ceea ce i-a adus faima în ţara sa de origine, dar şi în lume au fost poemele din prima sa culegere de versuri, compuse în stilul înaintaşilor, în stilul tradiţiei romantismului german, fiind, de asemenea, profund influenţate de folclorul autohton.

Deja în aceste poezii scrise în tinereţe se regăsesc ironia, sarcasmul şi un realism care încearcă să estompeze romantismul caracteristic liricii sale erotice. Influența curentului tradiţional german din acea vreme nu a dispărut, însă, niciodată din poezia sa, păstrându-se şi în volumul *Romancero* scris în ultima parte a vieţii.

Amploarea traducerilor din această primă etapă de cunoaștere, imitare și asimilare a scriitorului la noi este surprinzătoare. Fără a lua în considerare versiunile românești ale aceleiași poezii care se regăsesc în mai multe publicaţii ale vremii, am numărat peste 750 de tălmăciri din poezia heiniană tipărite în presa din această perioadă. Mare parte dintre aceste echivalări au fost poetice, expresive, cursive, uşor de comparat cu originalul și destul de fidele acestuia. Am

remarcat că și cele anonime, deși puține, sunt bine realizate și destul de expresive.

Din cercetările efectuate am constatat că mulți dintre traducătorii care s-au încumetat să transpună poemele heiniene au fost scriitori. În general, tălmăcitorii sunt aproape necunoscuți, mai ales că mare parte dintre aceștia își semnează echivalările sub pseudonim. În lunga listă de nume a acestora regăsim, totuși, pe cele ale unor poeți recunoscuți în epocă, cum Șt. O. Iosif, N. Skelitti, Gh. din Moldova, O. Carp, Maria Cunțan, Matilda Cugler Poni, Barbu Nemțeanu și alții ale căror echivalări sunt, în majoritatea lor, valoroase din punct de vedere literar.

1. Denumirea „Loreley"

Pentru exemplificarea calității tălmăcirilor în limba română din lirica heiniană din această perioadă, voi prezenta echivalările poeziei către care s-au îndreptat mulți dintre poeții traducători de la noi, și anume *Nu știu ce poate să-nsemne* (*Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten*), cunoscută din tălmăcirile poeților români sub denumirea *Loreley*.

Această poezie nu conține elemente din folclorul german, potrivit cercetării lui Ilarie Chendi (1903: 41 - 45). Criticul a stabilit că denumirea Loreley a fost o invenție modernă, ea nefiind de tip legendar, nefăcând parte nici din tradiția literară și nici din folclorul german. Aceasta invenție s-a transformat treptat într-un mit care s-a imprimat perfect pe structura sufletească a poporului german.

Numele Loreley a fost introdus în literatura germană de poeții germani romantici care, atrași de tot ce era misterios și simbolic în basmele populare, au creat imaginea preafrumoasei fecioare care atrage în mrejele ei în mod irezistibil pe cei care o admiră.

2. Sursele de inspirație ale baladei *Loreley*

Despre Loreley a scris mai întâi, în 1802, Clemens Brentano o baladă care a pus acest nume în circulație în literatura germană. Din această baladă s-au inspirat apoi alți poeți, pictori și compozitori. În timp, aceasta a devenit mitul fecioarei Loreley, care a impus imaginea unei tinere femei, cea mai frumoasă din Bacherach, un oraș de pe malul Rinului, despre care a scris și Heine în fragmentul său în proză *Rabinul din Bacherach*. Această fată era îndrăgită de toată lumea în afară de un singur tânăr, pe care ea îl iubea și care nu-i împărtășea dragostea. Poporul, care avea pentru ea sentimente de profundă simpatie, simțea, în același timp, și mirajul ei, puterea ei de atracție irezistibilă. Din această cauză oamenii o

consideră vrăjitoare și cer, în final, să fie judecată și pedepsită pentru utilizarea magiei. Cel care trebuia să o judece este fermecat și el, la rândul lui, de această frumusețe miraculoasă și încearcă să-i scape viața. Loreley, însă, fiind nefericită pentru că dragostea ei nu era împărtășită de bărbatul pe care ea îl iubea, cere să fie condamnată la moarte. Episcopul, care fusese impresionat de frumusețea ei, nu o condamnă la arderea pe rug, cunoscuta pedeapsă a vrăjitoarelor în Evul Mediu, ci o trimite la mănăstire, însoțită de niște cavaleri. Femeia însă refuză să meargă la mănăstire, să se călugărească și se aruncă de pe o stâncă în malurile Rinului.

Mitul fecioarei cu puteri miraculoase a fost apoi prelucrat de Joseph von Eichendorff care a scris peste doi ani o altă baladă pe aceeași temă. La acest poet apar și forțele demonice în completarea celor miraculoase, conturând un chip mai complex și mai întunecat al frumoasei fecioare. În această baladă Loreley se aseamănă cu primejdioasa Circe. Înșelată fiind de iubitul ei, ea se retrage într-un palat de pe malul Rinului și, cu inima îndurerată, se transformă într-un demon ucigaș.

Niklas Vogt prelucrează același motiv, însă în proză, scriind povestea intitulată *Lurlei.*

Aceste prime trei variante ale motivului Loreley au la bază imaginea unei femei foarte frumoase, seducătoare, dar răzbunătoare din cauza unei iubiri neîmpărtășite.

S-au dezvoltat în paralel alte variante, în care Loreley întruchipează figura unei sirene care locuiește într-un palat construit în interiorul unei stânci sau pe aceasta.

Dintre toate versiunile, cea mai răspândită a fost aceea în care Loreley este percepută ca o sirenă aflată pe o stâncă. Se pare că această imagine provine tot din prelucrările unui prieten al lui Brentano care, influențat de creațiile acestuia, a scris o altă variantă în 1824, intitulată *Loreley, o legendă de pe Rin* (*Loreley, eine Sage vom Rheine*) în care apare imaginea unei sirene care își pieptănă părul de aur stând pe o stâncă, atrăgând prin vocea ei pe tânărul ei iubit, Kugbert, fiul contelui de Rheinpfaltz, care își găsește în cele din urmă sfârșitul înecându-se în apele Rinului în încercarea de a ajunge la preafrumoasa fată de pe stâncă. Poezia aceasta se află și la baza baladei *Loreley* a lui Heine, care adoptă tot motivul sirenei în evocarea frumoasei femei. Scriitorul a reușit să sintetizeze în trei strofe tot ceea ce se scrisese până atunci pe acest motiv. Balada sa, publicată în 1824, aduce ca element nou puterea de atracție irezistibilă a frumoasei femei și

sentimentele puternice ale tânărului care, iubind-o cu patimă, nu ţine cont de primejdioasele valuri ale Rinului şi-şi pune viaţa în pericol dorind s-o vadă.

Motivul Loreley a fost, deci, introdus în literatura germană de Clemens Bretano. Heine a preluat mitul şi l-a transpus în tipul femeii-sirenă. Cunoscând atracţia poporului german pentru zânele apelor, denumite și nimfe sau sirene (Meerfeen oder Meernixen), poetul a introdus această imagine pentru a realiza o nouă versiune, mai frumoasă, mai atrăgătoare și mai captivantă, care să se răspânească ușor în rândul oamenilor simpli. Nimfele întruchipează creaturile cu puteri miraculoase, care atrăgeau oamenii în mrejele lor prin cântece şi vrajă; aceştia intrau în apă în căutarea lor şi îşi pierdeau viaţa, înecându-se. În prezentarea din articolul său, Ilarie Chendi traduce poezia lui Heine pentru exemplificare. Tălmăcirea sa, deşi textuală, este utilă în argumentarea ideilor sale cu privire la sursele de inspiraţie ale baladei heiniane.

3. Tălmăcirile româneşti ale baladei *Loreley*

În studiul sau despre balada *Loreley* a lui Heinrich Heine, Ilarie Chendi traduce poezia pentru exemplificare. Tălmăcirea sa, deşi textuală, este utilă în argumentarea ideilor sale cu privire la sursele de inspiraţie ale baladei heiniane.

Din cele 18 versiuni româneşti ale poemului *Loreley*, cele mai bine realizate sunt cele ale lui Şt. O. Iosif, O. Carp, Nicolae Schelitti şi G. D. Pencioiu. Mai apropiată de original dintre aceste trei tălmăciri este cea a lui O. Carp, însă varianta lui Şt. O. Iosif este mult mai poetică. Cea mai îndepărtată de poemul german şi cam prozaică este versiunea lui G. D. Pencioiu. Pentru edificare voi da următorul exemplu din această tălmăcire, respectiv: „Se-ntunecă fără de veste,/ Lin apele Rinului curg,/ Şi cresc ale munţilor creste/ Măreţ strălucind în amurg/". Aceeaşi strofă este transpusă expresiv şi de O. Carp în versurile: „În răcoare se-nserează,/ Rinul curge liniştit,/ Muntele se-mpurpurează/ Creştetu-i e asfinţit/", dar mai forţat şi îndepărtat de original. Aceste versuri sunt redate de Nicolae Schelitti, de asemenea, destul de poetic, însă, la el asfinţitul de soare devine „lumina zorilor": „E răcoare şi-nserează/ Rinul curge-ncetişor,/ Culmea-naltă scânteiază/ În lumina zorilor/". Imaginea sirenei fermecătoare de pe vârful de stâncă este transpusă diferit în aceste trei variante, considerate ca fiind cele mai bine realizate. La Schelitti, fata are un păr de aur strălucitor ca soarele, imagine îndepărtată de original: „Sus pe vârf şade-o fecioară, / Cozi de aur împletind, / C-o parură lucitoare, / Ca un soare strălucind./". Şi la Şt. O. Iosif, imaginea femeii suferă prin introducerea sintagmei „un chip de femeie": „Pe stâncă un chip de femeie/S-arată din negură blând./ Brăţara-i de aur scânteie,/ Ea-şi pieaptănă părul, cântând /",

deşi, într-o versiune mai veche avusese la Șt. O. Iosif o sintagmă mult mai poetică: „Şi cea mai frumoasă femeie/ Acolo apare...e o zână. / Braţara-i de aur scânteie/ Din păru-i curge lumină/." Cele două traduceri ale lui Skelitti şi Șt. O. Iosif se deosebesc de original, prima prin introducerea comparaţiei părului strălucitor al femeii cu un soare incandescent, iar cea de a doua prin accentuarea valorii bijuteriei, pe când în original părul fetei este de aur. Varianta lui O. Carp este şi ea apropiată de original, naturală şi expresivă: „Sus, frumoasă fără seamăn, / Stă o zână strălucind,/ Şi de sub podoabe-aprinse/ Cozi de aur despletind/". În ceea ce priveşte ultima strofă a baladei traduse de O. Carp, aceasta se remarcă prin simplitate şi apropierea de textul german. Aici apare presupunerea că pescarul s-ar fi înecat, aşa cum se întâmplă în poezia lui Heine, trimiţând la mituri, la legende: „Cred că s-a înnecat şi luntre/ Şi stăpânul ei bălai,/ Şi de vină-i numai glasul/ Prea frumoasei Loreley/".

Apropiată de această variantă, dar mai îndepărtată de original este şi traducerea lui Schelitti: „Văd că valul o să-nece/ pe pescarul încântat,/ Loreley în unda rece/ Cu-al său cânt l-a înfundat/", pe când ultima versiune a lui Șt. O. Iosif se îndepărtează cu totul de balada germană prin versul „Vâltoarea-l izbeşte de coastă" din ultima strofă: „Vâltoarea-l izbeşte de coasta/ Stâncoasă, şi moare-necat / Loreley a făcut-o aceasta / Cu viersul ei fermecat /". De asemenea, prima strofa din traducerea lui Șt. O. Iosif este destul de expresivă şi apropiată de poemul german ca şi transpunerea acesteia de către O. Carp: „Nu ştiu ce, nici nu ştiu cine/ Într-atât m-a întristat,/ O poveste veche-mi vine/ Să mi-o spun neîncetat./".

Poemul a fost tradus cu rezonanţe apropiate de original şi de un tălmăcitor anonim, dar şi de următorii traducători: Bivolari, Valentin Bude, Traian G. Stoenescu şi Const. G. Brădăţeanu. Prima strofă este tradusă destul de fidel în trei dintre aceste versiuni, după cum urmează: „Nu ştiu ce trebuie să însemne / Că chinul greu nu mă lasă; / Din vremuri moarte o poveste / Din gândul meu nu vrea să iasă/" (în versiunea lui Bivolari) şi următoarea: „Nu ştiu, ce vrea să zică,/ De sunt aşa de mâhnit:/ Un basm din vremuri uitate/ Îmi dă mereu de gândit. /"(în echivalarea lui Valentin Bude) şi varianta anonimă: „Şi nu ştiu cum se face,/ De sunt aşa mâhnit;/ Un basm din vremea veche,/ În minte-i pironit/". Celelalte două versiuni sunt mai slabe şi mai îndepărtate de text: „Nu ştiu ce-mi prevesteşte/ Tristeţea asta-adâncă/ Un basm din vremea veche/ Mă urmăreşte încă/", unde cuvintele „prevesteşte" şi „urmăreşte" transpun întâmplarea în circumstanţele diferite faţă de original, ca şi următoarea traducere: „De ce sunt trist câteodată/ Ca să mi-o spun nu am cuvinte; /Un basm frumos din cale afară/

Neîncetat îmi vine în minte./", unde primele două versuri nu transmit intensitatea sentimentului de tristeţe profundă din baladă. În ceea ce priveşte strofa în care este evocată preafrumoasa fecioară de pe stâncă, distingem ca fiind poetice şi destul de apropiate de original transpunerile lui Const. G. Brădăţeanu: „Cea mai frumoasă fată / Stă sus pe vârful sfânt, / Iar haina ei şi părul / De aur parcă sunt" şi cea a autorului anonim: „Pe vârfu-i stă fecioara/ Cea mai de farmec plină,/ Cu păr bogat de aur,/ Cu haină de lumină/", în timp ce versiunea lui Bivolari este puţin mai îndepărtată prin introducerea imaginii podoabei scumpe care nu apare în poezie: „O fată gingaşă, frumoasă/ Stă sus în vârf; ea-i un tezaur;/ Îi fulgeră podoaba scumpă;/ Îşi pieptăn-al său păr de aur/". Fata este comparată cu un tezaur, ceea ce trimite, de asemenea, la giuvaerurile ei de aur, imagine care nu corespunde mitului fecioarei Loreley. Celelalte două versiuni introduc şi ele obiectele de podoabă denumite prozaic „sculele": „Cea mai frumoasă dintre zâne/ Stă colo-n farmec sfânt, ceresc;/ Bălaiul păr îşi împleteşte/ Şi sculele îi strălucesc /" (în tălmăcirea lui Traian G. Stoenescu), iar următoarea echivalare aduce în plus pieptenele de aur şi imaginea fecioarei care-şi îndreaptă privirea de pe stâncă în jos: „O prea frumoasă fecioară/ De pe-o stâncă priveşte în jos,/ Un piepten de aur şi-l trece/ Prin păru-i lung, mătăsos/" (în transpunerea lui Valentin Bude). Nici una dintre aceste variante nu specifică însă că părul fecioarei era de aur şi straiele îi străluceau, conform versurilor heiniene. Referitor la ultima strofă a baladei, două dintre aceste tălmăciri sunt mai apropiate de original, prima prin utilizarea sintagmei „pare", care transpune totul într-un spaţiu atemporal, mitic: „Şi peste el cu tot cu luntre/ Aşterne valul neagra jale./ Şi aceasta-mi pare c-a făcut-o/ Loreley, cântecele tale/" (în echivalarea lui Bivolari), iar a doua prin stihurile: „Valul în urmă o să-nghită/ Şi pe luntraş şi barca lui,/ Căci Lorelei cu nesaţ cântă/ Şi tare-i vraja cânteculuil/" (în versiunea lui Traian G. Stoenescu). Celelalte variante se îndepărtează de original prin adăugarea unei sintagme prozaice ca „i-a întins cursa": „Talazul i-a-ntins cursa/ Şi-l pierde-al apei mers.../ Iar asta a făcut-o/ Lorela cu al său vers/" (în traducerea lui Const. G. Brădăţeanu), prin asocierea de cuvinte „al apei pântec" din versurile: „Pescar şi luntre-n urmă/ I-nghite-al apei pântec/ Şi asta a făcut-o/ Lorela cu-al ei cântec!/" (în tălmăcirea anonimă) sau prin expresia „ceasul rău" din strofa: „Sub valuri spumegătoare/ Te-ajunse ceasul rău:/ E fapta ta, frumoaso,/ Ş-a cântecului tău!/" (în versiunea lui Valentin Bude).

Celelalte traduceri ale baladei heiniene sunt destul de slabe, dintre acestea voi prezenta comparativ doar patru, respectiv cele mai însemnate versiuni, una dintre ele fiind chiar nereuşită, şi anume cea a lui Gh. D. Mugur. Aceşti tălmăcitori sunt: Mireio, G. Paul Pârvulescu, Maria Pană şi Gh. D. Mugur. În ceea ce priveşte

echivalarea primei strofe, cea mai expresivă şi apropiată de original este versiunea Mariei Pană: „Nu ştiu ce poate să fie/ De jale îmi vine să plâng/ A veacurilor melodie/ Din minte nu pot să alung/", în timp ce celelalte două echivalări redau primele două strofe într-una de opt versuri, prima parte fiind chiar destul de apropiată de balada heiniană: „Atâta de trist sunt acuma/ Că nu ştiu ce-o fi însemnând,/ Din vremurile vechi o poveste/ Nu poate să-mi iasă din gând;/ Pe Rin neguri reci se coboară/ Şi-n linişte apele curg,/ Iar munţii cu vârfuri înalte/ Măreţ scânteiază-n amurg./" (în echivalarea lui Mireio), iar cealaltă traducere este mai îndepărtată de poemul german prin versurile: „A serei dulce boare/ Scăldată-n lăcrămioare, /Se resfăcea voioasă/ Cu-al Rinului murmur;/ Şi raze infinite/ Se reflectau, pălite,/ Pe-o culme majetoasă,/ Stingându-se-mprejur/" (în tălmăcirea lui G. Paul Pârvulescu), în timp ce transpunerea lui Gh. D. Mugur se îndepărtează total de original prin introducerea imaginii castelului: „În vârful muntelui de piatră/ E un castel nepreţuit,/ Acolo singură domneşte/ Lorela Râului slăvit/".

În transpunerea imaginii fermecătoarei fecioare de pe stâncă, mai expresivă şi mai apropiată de original este echivalarea Mariei Pană: „Sclipeşte-al Fecioarei tezaur/ Ce acolo stă ca în poveşti/ Ea-şi pieptănă părul de aur/ Cu chip şi priviri îngereşti/. Aceasta adăugă însă sintagmele destul de uzuale: „tezaur", „ca-n poveşti" şi „cu chip şi priviri îngereşti", îndepărtând traducerea de original. Această strofă este amplificată în versiunea lui Mireio într-una de opt versuri: „O mândră fecioară s-arată/ Acolo, pe stânca de sus,/ Sclipind în podoabele-i scumpe/ Cum altele-asemenea nu-s/ Ea-şi piaptănă părul de aur/ Cu-n piepten de aur frumos,/ Şi cântă cu vocea-i vrăjită/ Un cântec nespus de duios/" adăugând inexplicabil următoarele patru versuri: „Sclipind în podoabele-i scumpe/ Cum altele-asemenea nu-s/ (...) Un cântec nespus de duios/". Aceeaşi strofă este transpusă în două a câte opt versuri în traducerea lui G. Paul Pârvulescu: „Misterică Lorella,/ Vergină blondă, bellă,/ Se contempla în unde/ Cu un nespus amor/ Şi-n aur adornată,/ Cu fruntea înclinată,/ Uitându-se în unde/ Se strecurau uşor,// (...) Cânta, - şi indolentă,/ Cu mâna-i transparentă/ Îşi pieptănă geloasă,/ Cu-n aer râzător,/ Blondina-i capellură/ Ce fruntea-i înconjură/ Cu-o umbră graţioasă/ De aur lucitor/" în care apar nenumărate adăugiri inutile, fără să se specifice, însă, esenţialul, faptul că fecioara avea părul de aur.

Cea mai slabă variantă este aceea a lui Gh. D. Mugur: „Ea-şi pieptănă cu dinţi de aur/ Frumosul păr ca-n vis cântând (...)/ Şi cântecul vrăjit al zânei/ Se împrăştie sub stele blând/". Ultima strofă este transpusă mai fidel de Maria Pană: „Eu cred că în valuri uşoare/ Luntre cu el a pierit-/ Şi aceasta făcut-a Fecioara/ Cu blândul ei cântec vrăjit/".

Versiunea lui Mireio, deşi comprimă ultimele două strofe ale poeziei într-una singură, se apropie destul de mult de original: „Luntraşul, nebun de durere,/ Când trece pe apele adânci,/ În sus doar priveşte, nu-i pasă/ Că luntrea-i se sfarmă de stânci.../ Mi-e teamă că apa-l înghite/ La urmă în valuri-şi vai!/ El moare – aceasta - a făcut-o/ Cântarea frumoasei Lorelei/”.

G. Paul Pârvulescu traduce ultima strofă astfel: „Nu mai văzu nici stânce,/ Nici apele adânce,/ Nici râpe, - şi nu cată/ Decât la ea, tremând./ Şi luntrea (…) merge, trece;/ Dar de o stâncă rece/ Isbindu-se de-o dată/ Se afundă, spumând!// D-atuncea unda lină,/ Când ziua trist declină,/ Adesea se-nfioră, Şi-o umbră, dintre valuri/ Nălţându-şi a ei frunte/ Se uită lung spre munte/ La bella Loriorǎ;/Ce cântǎ de pre dealuri!// Şi-n mută contemplare,/ Divina ei cântare,/ Cu inima răpită,/ O soarbe, suspinând!/ Iar când lumina luce/ Şi noapte-ncet se duce,/ Dispare absorbită,/ Un nume murmurând.”. Această echivalare se îndepărtează mult de poezia lui Heine, în aceste ultime strofe, tălmăcitorul aducându-şi propria interpretare.

Traducerea lui Gh. D. Mugur introduce imaginea unor pescari rătăciţi, uluiţi de frumuseţea femeii de pe stâncă care-i atrăgea miraculos cu duiosul ei cântec: „O muzică atunci se-aude/ Ah! Trec pescarii rătăciţi (…)/ Lorela cântă sus pe stâncă/ (…) Ei tac, ascultă, plâng smintiţi.// Lovesc lopeţile cu furii,/ Nebuni spre stâncă toţi privesc (…)/ O trosnitură (…) barca piere,/ Şi viaţa-n valuri şi-o sfârşesc.// Ca o legendă străluceşte/ Castelul alb şi luminat./ Lorela cântă (…) dorm pescarii/ Şi Rinul curge fermecat...”. Confundarea morţii cu somnul, dar şi prezenţa imaginii castelului luminat şi reactualizarea unei legende din vremuri vechi fac ca această versiune să se îndepărteze mult de original.

Concluzii

În mare parte, traducătorii baladei heiniene au încercat să realizeze echivalări destul de fidele originalului. Ei s-au străduit pe cât posibil să nu-şi aducă propria interpretare în versiunea lor, ceea ce a constituit un câştig clar pentru literatura română, care a reuşit astfel să-l perceapă şi să înţeleagă această poezie a lui Heine fără deformări, exagerări şi fără să încerce să-l asimileze printr-un procedeu amplu de românizare, interpretare şi adaptare a textului german.

Totuşi textul german pierde în versiunea românească foarte mult din caracteristicile estetice heiniene, nuanţele şi tonalităţile pe care i le transpune autorul, jocurile de cuvinte şi muzicalitatea specifică. Traducerile se abat, în general, de la schema metrică a originalului, o analiză a acestui fapt fiind destul

de dificilă, deoarece aproape niciun tălmăcitor nu păstrează ritmul sau rima versului heinian.

Oamenii de cultură români, care l-au preluat mai întâi, citindu-i opera în limba germană, au cunoscut pe de-a întregul, atât lirica, cât şi biografia heiniană şi i-au tradus opera cât mai aproape de original. Literaţii avizaţi au selectat acele poezii reprezentative pentru cunoaşterea specificităţii creaţiei sale şi a legăturii dintre opera şi viaţa poetului.

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RECENZII DE CARTE –

BOOK REVIEWS

Papadima, R. și Gherghe, M. (2025). *Manual de Legal Writing. Tehnici generale de redactare a documentelor juridice*. București: Hamangiu.

Reviewed by Marina-Cristiana ROTARU

Manualul intitulat *Manual de Legal Writing. Tehnici generale de redactare a documentelor juridice*, semnat de Raluca Papadima și Mihaela Gherghe, este un manual juridic prin care autoarele aduc o contribuție majoră domeniului scrierii juridice, insuficient cartografiat până acum.
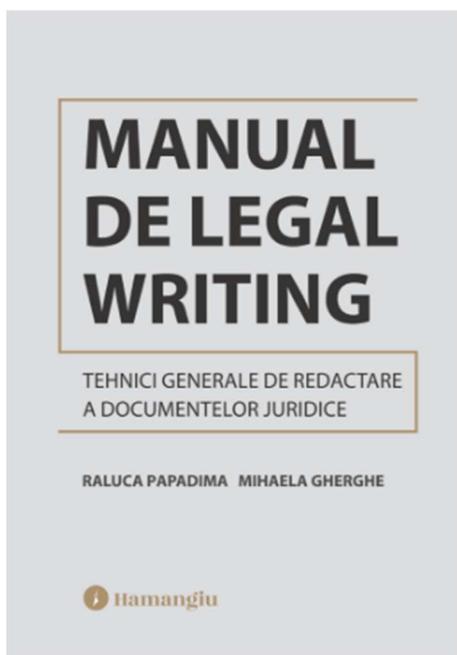
Conținutul este substanțial și foarte bine organizat, fiind prezentate, analizate și explicate atât documente specifice scrierii juridice predictive (de exemplu, lucrări academice din domeniu sau documente contractuale), cât și documente circumscrise scrierii persuasive (de exemplu, documentele prezentate în instanță, cum ar fi cererea de chemare în judecată sau întâmpinarea).

Lucrarea se adresează, în primul rând, specialiștilor din domeniul dreptului și studenților de la facultățile de drept și se dovedește un instrument foarte util, atât prin complexitatea lui, cât și prin claritatea și abordarea practică a conținutului. Aceleași atribute îl fac și o binevenită metodă de învățare pentru cei care, chiar dacă nu sunt profesioniști în domeniul juridic, doresc să își consolideze cultura juridică.

Ca profesor de limbă engleză care predă limbaj juridic în cadrul unor programe de studii universitare de traducere și interpretare (nivel licență și masterat), găsesc folositoare pentru studenții filologi multe informații prezentate în acest manual, informații care îi ajută nu numai să folosească în mod corect terminologia juridică, dar și să cunoască și să înțeleagă structura unui text juridic și rolul fiecărui component al unui anume tip de text (contract, lege, hotărâre judecătorească, etc.)

Informațiile practice care se dovedesc deosebit de folositoare studenților filologi ce studiază limbajul juridic variază de la tehnicile referitoare la stilul documentelor juridice și maniera de citare a surselor juridice până la elemente de gramatică specifice acestor tipuri de documente și reguli de punctuație tipice stilului de redactare juridic.

Spre exemplu, autoarele încurajează folosirea și respectarea regulii celor 5C în ceea ce privește stilul unui document juridic, și anume:

- consecvența (adică folosirea unui stil de redactare și paginație uniform în întregul document);
- claritatea (folosirea unui limbaj simplu și direct, fără ambiguități);
- concizia (capacitatea de a reda o informație în mod sintetic);
- citarea (care trebuie să fie corectă și uniformă în întregul document);
- corectura finală a documentului (având ca scop eliminarea informațiilor și formulărilor redundante, a inexactităților, verificarea aranjării în pagină a documentului, a manierei de citare) astfel încât forma finală a documentului să respecte standardele în vigoare (Papadima și Gherghe, 2025: 39-67).

În ceea ce privește menționarea actelor normative ca sursă, autoarele atrag atenția asupra folosirii corecte a prepoziției „din". Poate că este un simplu amănunt, dar știm că detaliile fac diferența. Astfel, prepoziția „din" apare în referințele la legi sau ordonanțe. De exemplu:

- „art. 1 din Legea nr. 285 din 26 octombrie 2022 privind declararea bujorului ca floare națională a României".

- „art. 4 alin (1) <u>din</u> Ordonanța de urgență nr. 60/2025 pentru modificarea și completarea Ordonanței de urgență a Guvernului nr. 81/2021 privind aprobarea metodelor de intervenție imediată pentru prevenirea și combaterea atacurilor exemplarelor de urs brun asupra persoanelor și bunurilor acestora [...].

În schimb, prepoziția „din" <u>nu apare</u> în referirile prescurtate la codurile de legi, de exemplu:

- „art. 36 C.civ." sau „art. 15 C.pen."

Apare însă în referirile neprescurtate la codurile de legi (Papadima și Gherghe, 2025: 51). Astfel, o folosire corectă a propoziției „din" indică, în mod subtil, un anumit nivel de competență lingvistică în domeniul juridic și o anume rigurozitate.

Nici regulile de punctuație specifice documentelor juridice nu sunt trecute cu vederea de către cele două autoare. Astfel, în referirile la acte normative, în enumerarea diviziunilor unui articol de lege (alineat, literă, punct, teză), virgula nu trebuie folosită. Spre exemplu: „art. 12 alin (4), litera (a) par. 2 pct. 5 teza II din Legea nr. [...]" este scrierea corectă. Tragem astfel și concluzia că citarea corectă a diviziunilor unui articol de lege se face în ordinea descrescătoare a nivelurilor ierarhice, de la nivelul superior (alineatul) către cele inferioare (Papadima și Gherghe, 2025: 51).

Gramatica, de asemenea, joacă un rol important în redactarea corectă a documentelor juridice, cu elemente specifice anumitor acte juridice. Folosirea gerunziului, de exemplu, este tipică anumitor documente redactate de instanțe sau de judecător. Astfel, forma de gerunziu apare în formule de tipul „având în vedere" sau „considerând", care sunt formulări specifice introducerii considerentelor ce stau la baza motivării unei hotărâri judecătorești. Autoarele dau exemple clare prin care ilustrează diversele scopuri pentru care gerunziul este fo,losit în documente juridice:

- „pentru a prezenta acțiunile întâmplate anterior, mai ales în cursul ciclului procesual precedent (de exemplu, «analizând fiecare dintre cerințele legale, tribunalul a constatat că»");
- „pentru a introduce motivarea (de exemplu, «deliberând asupra recursurilor formulate»");

- „pentru a anunța formal soluția ce urmează a fi luată” (de exemplu, «examinând recursul declarat de procuror instanța constată că»”) (Papadima și Gherghe, 2025: 267).

Folosirea diatezei active și a diatezei pasive este clar explicată, făcându-se diferența între scopul uneia și al alteia în funcție de stilul scrierii juridice: persuasive sau predictive. Astfel, în scrierea persuasivă, autorul documentului poate opta pentru diateza activă sau diateza pasivă în funcție de scopul urmărit. De exemplu, avocatul reclamantului va folosi diateza activă pentru a scoate și mai bine în evidență fapta săvârșită de pârât, iar avocatul pârâtului va opta pentru folosirea diatezei pasive pentru „a-l separa pe pârât de acțiunea sa” (Papadima și Gherghe, 2025: 268).

În documentele predictive, este recomandată folosirea diatezei active deoarece ea sporește claritatea mesajului: „Vânzătorul îl va notifica pe Cumpărător” este o formulare mai clară decât „O notificare va fi trimisă Cumpărătorului” (Papadima și Gherghe, 2025: 269).

Un capitol deosebit de util pentru studenții filologi îl reprezintă cel referitor la tipurile de hotărâri judecătorești: încheierile, sentințele și deciziile. Cei mai puțini familiarizați cu terminologia juridică pot folosi termenul de „sentință” ca sinonim pentru termenul „decizie” sau „hotărâre judecătorească”. Utilitatea acestui capitol este sporită nu numai de definirea clară a fiecărui tip de hotărâre judecătorească, ci și de prezentarea structurii interne cu elementele sale constitutive.

Familiarizarea cu structura internă a unei hotărâri judecătorești ajută foarte mult traducătorul juridic în special în ceea ce privește folosirea corectă a verbelor și a timpurilor verbale. De exemplu, sentința are trei părți principale: practicaua (sau partea introductivă a hotărârii), considerentele sau expunerea (partea a doua) și dispozitivul hotărârii (partea a treia). Dacă în primele două părți, timpurile verbale sunt impuse de logica textului, în partea a treia, cea a dispozitivului, care cuprinde soluția și alte dispoziții ale instanței (Papadima și Gherghe, 2025: 318-319) se va folosi, în traducerea textului din română în limba engleză, verbul modal „shall” cu valoare obligatorie. Astfel, un student filolog care cunoaște rolul dispozitivului în structura unei sentințe va putea identifica mai ușor unde să folosească în text verbul modal „shall” prin care se exprimă o obligație, și unde nu este necesar să fie folosit.

Aceste informații ajută studenții filologi nu numai să își dezvolte cultura juridică, dar și să își sporească gradul de conștientizare lingvistică cu privire la trăsăturile morfo-sintactice și terminologice ale textului juridic în general. Aceste elemente contribuie la o mai bună înțelegere a textului juridic și, în consecință, contribuie la o traducere cât mai corectă a acestuia.

Lucrarea *Manual de Legal Writing. Tehnici generale de redactare a documentelor juridice* aduce clarificări necesare în ceea ce privește scrierea juridică de pe urma cărora pot beneficia nu numai specialiștii și viitorii specialiști în drept, dar și studenții filologi care doresc să aprofundeze cunoștințele legate de limbajul juridic. Prin structura lui bine echilibrată, prin complexitatea informațiilor și bogăția tipurilor de texte, prin abordarea metodică și caracterul didactic, manualul de scriere juridică semnat de Raluca Papadima și Mihaela Gherghe se recomandă de la sine. Alături de o lucrare deosebit de valoroasă care abordează discursul juridic, și anume *Semiotica discursului juridic*, semnată de Adriana Stoichițoiu-Ichim – o lucrare care radiografiază limbajul juridic din perspectiva pragmaticii și a semioticii și care ilustrează, în mod riguros, mecanismele lingvistice ale construirii textului juridic – *Manual de Legal Writing. Tehnici generale de redactare a documentelor juridice* devine un reper bibliografic și un instrument de lucru esențial atât pentru cei care doresc să înțeleagă și să aprofundeze scrierea juridică, cât și pentru cei care studiază limbajul juridic și doresc să îl folosească în mod corect.

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Mirel ANGHEL

Manualul scris de către cele două cadre didactice cu o bogată experiență în predarea limbii române pentru străini, Raluca Ghențulescu și Loredana Miclea, reprezintă o noutate editorială remarcabilă și deosebit de utilă atât pentru cadrele didactice care predau la Anul pregătiror de limba română pentru cetățenii străini (APLR), cât și pentru studenții străini care încearcă să învețe și să aprofundeze limba română.

Naturalețea abordării tematice, originalitatea exercițiilor și a materialelor de studiu propuse, precum și structurarea riguroasă a acestui inedit manual reprezintă câteva dintre calitățile vizibile ale cărții, odată ce îi parcurgem paginile.

Dincolo de scopul didactic al manualului, remarcăm un obiectiv îndrăzneț și bine gândit de cele două autoare: formarea competenței de a scrie texte de nivel academic, vizând, în primul rând instruirea studenților străini spre

atingerea unui important obiectiv al Anului pregătitor: scrierea eseului de absolvire necesar la finalizarea studiilor APLR.

Alegerea unor teme actuale pentru fiecare lecție și a unui vocabular autentic sunt de un real ajutor cursanților care vor folosi acest manual în cadrul cursurilor practice de receptarea textului scris.

Putem spune că o calitate notabilă a acestui manual este integrarea armonioasă cu tematica celorlalte materii studiate în cadrul Anului pregătitor. Dat fiind faptul că materiile prevăzute în planul de învățământ al APLR sunt programate a fi studiate în sistem modular, în strânsă concordanță cu progresul înregistrat de studenți, manualul publicat de Raluca Ghențulescu și Loredana Miclea introduce unele teme studiate în detaliu la cursurile practice de limbaje specializate sau la cursul de cultură și civilizație românească, fără a epuiza subiectul. Astfel, studenții primesc doar un *sneak peek* pentru ceea ce va urma. Câteva exemple edificatoare în acest sens sunt lecțiile „Sănătatea înseamnă bogăție", „Pe cărări turistice", „Protejând natura", „Stop discriminării, da toleranței" sau „Toate drumurile duc la bancă".

Am putea numi acest manual un univers tematic fascinant, care îi poartă pe studenții străini prin cele mai nebănuite taine ale galaxiei limbii române. O galaxie în plină expansiune, cu numeroase lumi în care imaginația poate călători fără nicio restriște.

Făcând parte dintr-un colectiv dinamic, creativ și foarte dedicat predării limbii române studenților străini, cele două autoare își încununează cariera cu un manual binevenit ce explorează o „paletă metodologică diversificată", așa cum chiar ele notează în descrierea de pe coperta cărții.

Călătorie plăcută printre tainele limbii române! Manual de Receptarea textului scris pentru studenții străini nu ar trebui să lipsească din dotarea studenților străini care întreprind o călătorie atât de temerară de a învăța chiar până la nivel științific limba română. Cartea publicată de Raluca Ghențulescu și Loredana Miclea întregește un corpus de lucrări pe care colectivul de cadre didactice al Anului pregătitor din cadrul UTCB le-a elaborat încă de la acreditarea acestei specializări, dovadă a implicării tuturor în îmbunătățirea procesului didactic și în extinderea paletei de materiale didactice elaborate pentru studenții străini.

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