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FOREWORD

The changing nature of world power shapes our world politically, economically, socially, and culturally. It impacts the development of not only separate nations and regions but also every single individual. Power is the ultimate means of decision-making, the ability to bring about a desired outcome despite resistance.

Among the key principles for creating an open-minded society and accepting each other are equality and freedom, as well as cultural capital defined as the set of skills, values and knowledge acquired in the process of socialization. Thus, education *per se* is power; it is the act and the process of empowerment that may lead to an individual or collective action for a positive change.

Despite a great deal of progress in the modern world, gender stereotypes persist and are even established by political, religious and familial laws. The association of qualities like dominance, intellect and autonomy with men, and subjugation, emotion and dependence with women is still widely present. The prevalence of these conventions affects the sense of one's identity, therefore education is a key factor in helping women identify their status and rights in society and form their identities, whereas staying ignorant, silent, isolated, and frustrated, as well as accepting exploitation, humiliation and violence will make them feel inferior. Many women around the world take action against this inferiority, patriarchal manifestation and subjugation. By striving to establish their individuality and bring awareness about their social role women express their belief that female identity should not be bound by conventions.

This volume of "Journal of Comparative Studies" includes seven articles that by applying comparative research methodology address the theme of social transformation and justice, including various aspects of gender equality, female identity, and civic education. The majority of the articles included in this volume were presented at the International Academic Conferences "Human: Language, Society, Culture" on November 21, 2022 and June 19, 2023.

In her paper "On Pedagogic Uses of Literary Machine Translation: A Case Study Based on the Language Pair English – Italian" Paola Brusasco compares the existing Italian translations with those done by neural machine translation that showed a remarkably fluent use of contemporary language and a reduction of culture-specific errors. The texts and output were analyzed from a pedagogic perspective to identify their strengths and weaknesses, assist in the revising process, avoid linguistic complexity and activate the students' situated cognition when producing or post-editing translations. Evita Badina's and Žans Badins's article "Translation Policy of Anglophone Literature in Soviet Latvia from the 1940s to the 1960s: A Comparative Perspective" focuses on the translation policies of Anglophone literature into Latvian during the first two decades of the Soviet occupation after World War II. The post-doctoral research implemented with the support of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) "Literary and Political Discourse of Translations in Totalitarianism: Anglophone Literature in Soviet Latvia" concludes that during the Soviet occupation of Latvia, the introduction and reception of Anglophone literature evolved, transitioning from purely ideological dominance to a more diverse selection of authors and genres. In her article "Female Identity in Diaspora Society: Nilanjana in Taslima Nasrin's 'French Lover' and Nazneen in Monica Ali's 'Brick Lane'" Rama Islam portrays the multifaceted challenges and opportunities faced by women within diaspora societies and the issues related to their social and self-identity. In her article "Ecofeminist Theology and Fundamentalisms within Arabic Contexts", conducted in the framework of the European Research Council (ER2C) funded project on law and women's rights "GulfFeminisms: Feminisms and Mobilization of Law in Gulf Countries", Jihan Zakarriya analyzes domination, androcentrism and superiority over women and nature through masculinist interpretations, understandings, and linguistic expressions of religions. In their study "Overcoming Prejudice in Society through Gadamer Philosophical Hermeneutics", Merlina Koseni and Enkelejda Cenaj examine the possibility of reducing the level of prejudice and intolerance in Albania through the application of Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory on communicative understanding and fusion of horizons highlighting the role of dialogue, tolerance, solidarity, reciprocity, equality and freedom in creating an open-minded and tolerant society. Additionally, the focus of Enkelejda Cenaj's and Merlina Koseni's paper "Customary Rights in the Albanian Society and Issues Related to Gender (Kanun of Leke

Dukagjini and Kanun of Luma)" is on the customary laws that had nurtured and strengthened gender role divisions in the Albanian society which contributed to the unequal position of women in family and society.

Finally, in their article "Education Divide: Civic Learning and Intended Political Participation among Youth in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania", Beatriz Matafora, Kristīne Kampmane and Anastassia Anton present the findings that underscore the crucial role of civic education in shaping the political engagement of youth in the Baltic states. Their study investigates the differences in young people's civic learning opportunities and participation in civic activities at school. The results of the "International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022" (ICCS 2022) were officially released at the end of November, which positions their research as potentially the first article offering a secondary analysis of this newly available dataset, presenting an opportunity for visibility and scholarly impact.

Editors

ON PEDAGOGIC USES OF LITERARY MACHINE TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY BASED ON THE LANGUAGE PAIR ENGLISH – ITALIAN

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Ph.D. Paola Brusasco is an associate professor in English Language and Translation in the Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures of the University of Chieti-Pescara. Her research interests and publications are in the areas of Translation Studies, ELT, and Postcolonial Studies. Her works include the monographs "Approaching Translation. Theoretical and Practical Issues" (2013; 2016), "Writing Within, Without, About Sri Lanka: Discourses of Cartography, History and Translation in Selected Works by Michael Ondaatje and Carl Muller" (2010), and various articles, while her recent contributions in edited volumes are "Pragmatic and Cognitive Elements in Literary Machine Translation" (2022), and "Edoardo Bizzarri and 'Novellieri inglesi e americani'" (2023). She has also translated many contemporary and classic authors such as Russell Banks, Colson Whitehead, Emily Brontë, and Robert L. Stevenson, and is one of the editors of the online journal "RiTra – Rivista di Traduzione".

ABSTRACT

Translation technologies and Neural Machine Translation (NMT) have not only changed the work of translators and the skills required for the profession, but also prompted the possibility of extending MT to the traditionally human precinct of literary translation (Toral and Way 2015; Toral and Way 2018; Kuzman et al. 2019; Hadley et al. 2022, among others). While for pragmatic texts the quality of NMT output is often adequate or requiring minor editing, the greater complexity, cultural specificity, and creativity of literary texts still require a relevant degree of human intervention. However, since recourse to NMT is growing, it is crucial to retain human centrality by teaching prospective translators not only postediting strategies, but also deeper reading and interpretive skills that will allow them to detect fluent yet wrong, incoherent or stylistically poor renderings of the source text. The current paper starts from a comparison of the existing Italian translations (published by Treves 1933 and Mondadori 1965) of the first chapter from Sinclair Lewis' novel "Ann Vickers" (1933) with the same chapter translated using the online software DeepL. While the existing translations do not read too dated but inevitably contain expressions that would hardly be used today, and some mistakes, the machine-translated excerpt – despite some inadequate lexical choices and predictable shortcomings at pragmatic level – shows a remarkably fluent use of contemporary language, and a reduction of culture-specific errors that back in the 1930s and 1960s presumably derived from a limited knowledge of the Other. The aligned texts and output are analysed from a pedagogic perspective in order to 1) identify their strengths and weaknesses; 2) consider the possibility of using NMT as an aid in a retranslation/revising process that would keep most of the existing translations and only replace outdated or wrong parts; 3) promote a keener sensitivity to meaning and language use in order to avoid flattening linguistic complexity; 4) develop activities aimed at enhancing the students' ability to read and recreate a text on the basis of their physical presence in the world, time and space, i.e. activate their situated cognition when producing or post-editing translations.

Keywords: literary translation, NMT, post-editing, translation pedagogy, situated cognition

INTRODUCTION

Since 2016, Neural Machine Translation (NMT) has been increasingly adopted for commercial and institutional purposes as its performance has proved far superior to previous paradigms, i.e. rule-based and statistical MT. Moreover, deep learning, AI, and massive quantities of digital data allow translation platforms to constantly improve their outputs, providing very accurate and fluent translations in many language pairs. Although creative texts are a smaller domain, especially in comparison to the documents generated for companies and institutions, the use of NMT for language pairs including English has been investigated in that domain too, probably because of the challenges involved and the attempts to bring natural language processing (NLP) closer to human uses of language. However, after initial enthusiasm, scholars are now inclined – at least for literary and creative texts – to retain human centrality out of considerations regarding both translation quality and ethical concerns.

This article goes in that direction by envisaging MT as a support that may help the translator to refresh a literary translation that has aged; it also reflects on a didactic approach that enhances literary translation skills and at the same time sensitises students to a critical use of MT. The first paragraph synthesises previous studies on machine translation of literary texts; the second analyses the source text – American author Sinclair Lewis' novel "Ann Vickers" (1933) –, its two existing Italian translations (1933 and 1965), and DeepL's machine-translated version, with some suggestions for post-editing. The last paragraph focuses on ways to use MT for pedagogic purposes.

LITERARY TEXTS AND MACHINE TRANSLATION

Creativity and the "language writ large" (Tymoczko 2014) of literature deploy a full range of deviations from standard language, relying on ambiguity and metaphor embedded in narratives that portray everyday life as well as invented worlds. The assumption that the human mind will be able to co-construct meaning and visualise imaginary scenarios makes the literary text unforeseeable. As MT relies on algorithms determining the most frequent associations of words and the expectation of matches between

items or strings in different languages, its use for creative texts seems impossible. Several studies have shown interesting results, although at present a substantial amount of human post-editing is necessary. Experiments have been carried out with both dedicated software, trained on domain-specific data, and generalist platforms like Google or DeepL, which have access to any kind of out-of-domain data. For example, Kuzman et al. (2019) evaluated excerpts of novels in English translated into Slovene using both Google and software specially trained on a small parallel literary corpus and found that the former was better – a result they interpreted as a consequence of the small size of the specialised corpus; they also hypothesised better performance if the system were trained on texts by a specific author, which however would be likely to further restrict the size of the corpus and, in the long run, would also reduce expressive possibilities. Toral at al. (2020), instead, came to the opposite conclusion in a more articulate study on texts translated from English into Catalan which involved training two MT systems on domain-specific and out-of-domain monolingual and bilingual corpora; the texts were then evaluated automatically using metrics and translators' annotations, which stated that the system trained on novels had produced more sentences equivalent in quality to human translation. Fonteyne at al. (2020) translated a novel by Agatha Christie into Dutch with Google and categorised fluency and accuracy errors; they found that 44% of the sentences did not contain errors, while the shortcomings they identified had to do with mistranslation, coherence, style and register. Brusasco (2022) analysed a 7-page long excerpt translated from English into Italian using Google, DeepL, and Microsoft, chosen because the huge database available to non-specialised platforms seemed best suited to cover the variety of topics, languages and references in contemporary novels. Assessing the output's usability from the point of view of a literary translator, she found that – despite remarkable fluency and correctness – the amount of post-editing needed and the constraints of working within and between sentences not her own slowed the task and broke the creative flow of form and content typical of the profession. A similar point was raised in other studies (Taivalkoski-Shilov 2018; Kenny and Winters 2020) that pointed out the fragmentation of the process and the loss of "voice" of the translator. Researchers also studied users' perceptions (e.g. Guerberof-Arenas and Toral 2020) by giving readers literary texts in three modalities: a raw output, a post-edited version, and a human-translated one, and investigating their narrative

engagement, enjoyment, and translation reception; MT scored the lowest and human translation the highest, with the post-edited version ranking closer to the latter, but it was also noticed that emotional engagement did not vary greatly, which suggested that, for all its limitations, at communicative level an MT output works almost as well as a text translated or post-edited by humans.

Questions are also being increasingly asked as to the desirability of perfecting MT in order to translate literature out of concern for both jobs for literary translators and the impact MT might have on the language in terms of homogenisation and simplification, which in the long run would affect how humans organise their thoughts and speech. Moreover, the risk is compounded by the fact that the data used for training MT software, and in general AI-powered models, have been proven to contain gender, age, and race bias which in turn affect MT's outputs (Montemayor 2023; Bommasani 2021; Rice et al. 2019, among others).

THE SOURCE TEXT

The source text is the first chapter of Sinclair Lewis's "Ann Vickers" (1933), a novel that follows the tomboyish adolescent protagonist from her juvenile social commitment and work with the suffragettes to motherhood and mature life. The chapter opens with a short, atemporal description of a natural environment and four children in it, almost a snapshot of the scene that is going to unfold – a kind of tableau vivant. Most of the chapter revolves around a game of "let's pretend", with the children impersonating Christopher Columbus and Queen Isabella of Spain before and during the former's expedition to find a new route to Asia. When an unknown boy joins the group, the eager and stubborn protagonist, Ann, is so charmed that she spontaneously gives up her role as Columbus. Through flash forwards, the narrator expands on Ann's independent personality while hinting at future achievements in her life.

The chapter alternates descriptions, lively dialogues, and comments by an omniscient, intrusive narrator. The dialogues reproduce children's talk effectively, with exclamations, repetitions, naïve contentions, and errors at the level of both content and pronunciation. The lexically dense descriptive passages often show an amused gaze towards the characters and the provincialism of Ann's town, as well as a somewhat

disillusioned critique of the smallness of human beings. The main semantic fields are those of playing (e.g. "play", "baseball", "raced", "snowball"), the natural environment (e.g. "river", "willows", "muddy water"), ships (e.g. "barge", "bow", "sails", "captain"), professions (e.g. "social workers", "carpenter", "teacher", "doctors", and the juxtaposition of the sexes ("boyhood", "girl", "male", "woman").

The text is highly cohesive mainly thanks to lexical cohesion (Halliday and Hasan 1976): reiteration happens via many repetitions, hyponyms and superordinates as in "revolver" and "weapon", and near-synonymy, as in "big – large – enormous", or "vessel – ship"; collocation is also present, e.g. part-part as in "shoulders – legs – eyes – hand – nose – skin", and same set, as in "boy – girl – kids – children". The chapter also shows frequent instances of pronominal reference, as in "He took *the revolver* […]. He snapped *it* open" (Lewis 1933, 6; italics mine) and, to a minor extent, ellipsis, especially in dialogues; conjunctions instead are rather sparse.

Cultural references are manifold, both as explicit terms referring to food ("oatmeal and peanut butter"), toponyms (e.g. "Watling's Island", "Main Street", "Fifth Avenue"), and religion ("Sunday school", "Episcopal", "Presbyterian", "Congregational"), and through several other references relying on the reader's background knowledge for their effectiveness (e.g. "Carl Van Doren", "Anglo-Indian proconsul", "[be] Freudian about [something]"). The ironical juxtaposition between the world experienced by the children in their game of "let's pretend" and the abundance of informal dialogues and culture-specific items engages the reader in co-constructing meaning by seeing – then filling – the gaps and recognizing what the cultural references hint at. An ideal translation would take the text towards the reader by giving them sufficient insight into the foreign culture but leave in turn a margin for their interpretive reading – an approach that would position itself midway through the strategies theorised by F. Schleiermacher (1816/2004), i.e. taking the author to the reader as against taking the reader to the author.

THE TRANSLATIONS INTO ITALIAN

The first Italian translation, by Lila Jahn, was published in 1933, the same year as the source text, by Treves, a publishing house founded in Milan in 1861 and active until 1939. The language is

very fluent, but to a contemporary reader several aspects are likely to sound dated and/or overly elevated, such as:

- the translation of the names of the main characters and of the song "Jingle Bells", a common trait of the past which became the rule under the fascist regime (1922–1943), keen on eliminating foreign words from the Italian language. This translational convention was abandoned decades ago;
- the use of subject pronouns *egli, ella, essi* [he, she, and they, respectively], now only found in very formal writing, such as some legal and bureaucratic documents, academic essays, or in literary texts meant to sound old, while usually they are either omitted, because the inflected form of verbs allows the reader to identify the subject, or replaced by their object forms, respectively *lui, lei, loro* [him, her, them], especially in dialogues or in passages characterized by an informal style;
- contracted forms that are no longer in use, except possibly in some dialects, like *diss'egli* [said he], usually rendered as *disse lui*, or even just *disse* with the elision of the pronoun if it is clear from the context, or *ch'essa* [that she], which today would probably be *che lei*.
- unusual lexical choices like *allorché* [when], *sinanche* [even]; *non trovò mai a pentirsi* [she never regretted] instead of *non ebbe mai a pentirsi* or, less formally, *non se ne pentì mai;*
- the elision of the final vowel in verbs, e.g. *raccoglier*, instead of *raccogliere* [to pick up]; *cader* instead of *cadere* [to fall]; *d'aver*, instead of *di avere* [of having], and adjectives such as *simil* for *simile* [similar];
- marked syntax and, consequently, unusual word order, as in *la sua vita svolgendosi* [her life unfolding].

In dialogues, Jahn places the definite article before names, a regional trait that today is mainly limited to either locally connoted texts or comic effects; however, dialogues are overall lively and natural in their reproduction of situated oral exchanges.

The other translation, by Isabella Leonetti, appeared in 1965 for Mondadori, currently the biggest publishing group in Italy. The thirty years separating it from the first translation are perceivable in the language, which is much more similar to current use, although the text shows the same domesticating approach to proper names and culture-specific elements like food and "Jingle Bells". Overall, Leonetti seems to stress gender by choosing more marked lexical

items, e.g. "The three boys" is rendered as *I tre maschi* [the three males], whereas Jahn (1933) uses the more generic *ragazzi* [boys, or boys and girls]. The former is probably motivated by the fact that *ragazzi* is a plural form that can also include girls (much as "children") and the translator is trying to compensate for the gender-specificity of "boyhood", appearing in the same paragraph, which is lost in Italian as no precise equivalent exists, and its possible rendering as *fanciullezza* conveys the meaning of "young age" but lacks any reference to gender. Similarly, Leonetti translates one of the boys' objections to Ann wanting to play the role of Christopher Columbus "And you're only a girl!" (Lewis 1933, 4) as *"E poi sei una donna"* [After all you're a woman], thus emphasizing gender, while a more literal rendering of "girl" as *ragazza* or *bambina* might have suggested that the problem was the protagonist's young age. These lexical choices point towards the translator's loyalty (Nord 2007) to Lewis's focus on both gender roles in early twentieth-century America and the protagonist's eagerness to follow her inclinations and find her place in society.

DeepL's output is on the whole very readable, although there are lexical errors, inconsistencies with verb tenses, an invented word (*catamonti* calqued on "catamounts"), and – predictably – problems with dialogues, affecting both naturalness and the correct rendering of the cohesive device of ellipsis. On the other hand, since it relies on billions of data, the text sounds more modern, names are not translated, as is done today, and food is rendered correctly, an aspect that readers are likely to recognise given the much wider circulation of products and the familiarity with other countries' eating habits. The translation is often fairly literal and at times results in non-fluent or even wrong Italian, but it must be said that there are also cases in which sentences are reorganised effectively. An example of the first type of translation is "Till her day and moment, […]" (Lewis 1933, 8), rendered literally as *Fino al suo giorno e al suo momento*, which might work in a very specific context where the day and moment are clearly identified and refer to a very precise time, but here the sense is "before", "in the past", and it could be rendered as *precedentemente*, as both Leonetti and Jahn did. By contrast, there are instances of effective reorganisation, e.g.:

> There are but frayed cords binding such ambitious, out-stepping American girls as Ann, not only to their native villages, but also to their families, unless they are of recent Jewish or German or Italian origin. (Lewis 1933, 9)

Le ragazze americane ambiziose e intraprendenti come Ann non hanno che corde sfilacciate che le legano non solo ai loro villaggi d'origine, ma persino alle loro famiglie, a meno che non siano di recente origine ebraica, tedesca o italiana.
[Ambitious and dynamic American girls like Ann have but frayed cords binding them not only to their native villages […]]

As expected, dialogues are not fluent, a problem that can be traced to several reasons. First, context is crucial to interpret utterances, but machine translation is based on segmentation and – despite attempts to extend its attention to multisentence sequences (Popel 2020) – the contextual span it takes into account is usually one sentence (Rothwell et al. 2023, 104). Second, a dialogue is a situated communicative process in which participants have a goal that is co-constructed in a certain environment on the basis of (at least some) shared knowledge: the amount of information known, the relationship between interlocutors, their use of intonation and body language, and their experience of the world determine language and the degree of explicitness required, but none of these elements can be perceived, and hence recreated, by the software, which, moreover has no access to the physical and emotional experience of humans. Finally, from the point of view of cohesion, dialogues are likely to contain frequent cases of reference, substitution and ellipsis, which rely on the interlocutor's (and the reader's) ability to interpret the relations between elements, but interpretation is not part of the process applied by MT. For example, after the protagonist has accepted to play Isabella of Spain, she announces she will also play Columbus:

"Now, I'm going to be Columbus!"
"You are *not*," protested Winthrop. "I'm Columbus! You can't be Iserbella *and* Columbus! And you're only a girl. You gimme that revolver!"
"I am, too, Columbus! I'm the best Columbus. So now! Why, you can't even tell me the names of Columbus's ships!"
"I can too!"
"Well, what were they?"
"Well, I can't just --- Neither can you, smarty!"
"Oh, I can't, can't I!" crowed Ann. "They were the Pinto and the Santa Lucheea and --- and the Armada!"
"Gee, that's right. I guess she better be Columbus" […]. (Lewis 1933, 4)

DeepL's output is extremely literal, apart from (1), so no other backtranslation is provided. Unnatural and/or incorrect parts are shown in bold and commented upon below following the numbers attributed to each case.

> "Ora **diventerò** (1) Colombo!   [I will become Columbus]
>
> "**Non lo sei**," (2) protestò Winthrop. "Io sono Colombo! Non puoi essere Iserbella e Colombo! E sei solo una ragazza. Dammi quel revolver!"
>
> "**Lo sono anch'io**, (3) Colombo! Sono il miglior Colombo. **E così adesso**! (4) **Perché,** (5) non sai nemmeno dirmi i nomi delle navi di Colombo!"
>
> "**Posso farlo anch'io**!" (6)
>
> "E quali erano?"
>
> "**Beh io non posso proprio** (7)… nemmeno tu, furbacchion**e**!"
>
> "**Oh, non posso non posso!**" (8)**,** si affrettò a dire Ann. "Erano il Pinto e il Santa Lucheea e… e l'Armada!"
>
> "Accidenti, è vero. Credo **sia meglio che sia** (9) Colombo," […].

As it is, the exchange is hardly understandable since short answers and elliptical forms are mismatched. *Diventerò* [I will become] (1) is not wrong in itself, but in spoken informal Italian the future tense is rarely used, and in a context like this, a child announcing their character impersonation would probably use the present and the verb *fare* [do] instead of *diventare* [become], so the translation could be *Ora Colombo lo faccio io*. The boy's short answer "You are *not*" shows emphasis through the use of italics, and cohesion is realised through ellipsis; the literal version in Italian (2), however, does not relate to (1) in tense, because the answer is in the present (while the previous sentence was translated using the future), nor in meaning, as it contains the verb "be", not "become". (3) is ambiguous: by substituting *lo* for Columbus, strictly speaking the particle would be referring back to the last sentence containing the verb "be", which does not make sense as it refers to the condition of being a girl. Viable alternatives in current Italian could be *Faccio anche Colombo* [I'll be Columbus too] or *Anch'io faccio Colombo* [I too will be Columbus – i.e. not just you]. Interjections (4) and (5), literally translated, sound very unnatural and could be replaced by exclamations like *Insomma!* [Well/For heaven's sake!] and *Figurati* [Just think]. (6), (7), and (8) contain the inadequate choice of one of the two translatants of "can", *posso* and *so*, the former referring to

permission, the latter to ability or knowledge, which is what is meant here: challenged by Ann to name the three caravels, the boy claims he knows them but, when pressed, he tries to get away by suggesting she does not know them either. Only sentence (5), translated with the verb *sai* [you know], conveys the correct meaning, while in (6), (7), and (8) – although the cohesion resulting from the five repetitions of "can/can't" is visually reproduced – the meaning is lost. As a matter of fact, in both previous translations Jahn and Leonetti detach themselves from literalism and create lines that are natural and refer correctly to the notion of "knowing". Finally, the use of two subjunctives in (9) is not only unlikely by a child but it also introduces a high level of formality absent in the slangish "she better be".

MT works by selecting the words that, on the basis of the data on which the software is trained, are most likely to appear near each other – no interpretive process takes place. In dialogues – both in real life and in fiction – much of the meaning is made through the embodied experience of the world participants have had and are having, but software has no access to that situated cognition and therefore cannot recognise nor adequately translate certain situations typical of human life (Brusasco 2022).

METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the potential use of the MT version as either a pedagogical tool in the training of literary translators or an editing aid in view of the republication of an existing translation, the ST and each of the three Italian translations were aligned using an online alignment tool; then, the segments were checked for uniformity, and a file was created with four columns containing all versions side by side in order to compare them. Table 1 (below) shows a section of the file with the aligned texts. The character styles used for certain words or strings of words identify different types of translation problems: underlined signals errors in meaning; italics points at problems with naturalness, register, and/or language that has aged; bold is used for a broad category that includes hardly detectable errors, i.e. words or segments that are plausible but do not take into account intratextual connections or contain changes in word order that alter either meaning or register; underlined bold, instead, indicates particularly adequate solutions.

ST	DeepL	L. Jahn (1933)	I. Lionetti (1965)
While they debated, there came into that willow grove, that little leaf-littered place holy to boyhood, a singing girl.	Mentre discutevano, arrivò in quel saliceto, quel *piccolo luogo illuminato dalle foglie* e sacro alla **fanciullezza**, una ragazza che cantava.	[…] e ferveva la discussione quando nella *selvetta* dei salici, o meglio quel poco di terreno tutto ingombro di foglie ch'era propriamente **il bosco sacro dei ragazzi,** capitò invece una ragazza che cantava.	Mentre discutevano, nel boschetto di salice soffice di foglie, angolino sacro ai **fanciulli**, arrivò canterellando una ragazzina.
"Jiminy, there's Ann Vickers. She'll be Iserbella," said Winthrop.	"Grillo, ecco Ann Vickers. **Sarà** *Iserbella*", disse Winthrop.	- *Eccotela!* C'è l'*Anna* Vickers. **Può farla lei** l'Isabella – disse Winthrop.	"*Urca*, c'è Anna Vickers!" disse Winthrop. **"Isabella allora la fa lei".**
"Ah, no, gee, she'll hog the whole thing," said Ben. "But I guess she can play Iserbella better than anybody."	"Ah no, *caspita*, si prenderà tutto", disse Ben. "*Ma credo che possa interpretare Iserbella meglio di chiunque altro*".	- Ma va, **quella ci rovina tutto** – disse Ben. Però credo anch'io che per l'Isabella andrebbe **meglio lei di noialtri.**	"Ma va no. Ci rovina tutto!» disse Ben. "Però **mi sa** che Isabella la saprebbe fare meglio lei di **un altro**."
"Ah, she can not! She's no good at baseball.	"**Ah, non può!** Non è brava a giocare a baseball".	- **Macché**, non va bene. Anche a baseball *non è buona affatto.*	"Oh, no, *impossibile*! Non vale niente a baseball."
"No, she ain't much good at baseball, but she threw a snowball at Reverend Tengbom."	"No, **non è molto brava a baseball, ma ha tirato una palla di neve al reverendo Tengbom".**	- No, non è *gran che buona a baseball*, **ma è stata lei a** *gettare* **quella palla di neve al reverendo Tengbom.**	"No, *non a baseball*, però ha tirato una palla di neve al reverendo Tengbom."
"Yes, that's so, she threw that snowball."	"Sì, è così, ha lanciato quella palla di neve".	Già, questo è vero. **La palla di neve l'ha** *gettata* **lei.**	"*Già*, è vero, **la palla l'ha tirata."**
The girl stopped before them, arms akimbo--a chunk of a girl, with sturdy	La ragazza si fermò davanti a loro, con le braccia alzate: un pezzo di	La ragazza, le mani sui fianchi, si fermò dinanzi a loro. Era un bel pezzo di	La ragazzina si fermò davanti a loro, mani sui fianchi, un pezzo di

shoulders and thin legs. Her one beauty, aside from the fresh clarity of her skin, was her eyes, dark, surprisingly large, and eager.	ragazza, con spalle robuste e gambe sottili. La sua unica bellezza, a parte la freschezza della pelle, erano gli occhi, scuri, sorprendentemente grandi e <u>desiderosi</u>.	ragazzina, con le spalle forti e le gambe magre. A parte la chiara freschezza della pelle, l'unica sua bellezza erano gli occhi, due occhi scuri, **vivaci** e straordinariamente grandi.	ragazzina con le spalle forti e le gambe sottili. Di bello, oltre al chiarore fresco della pelle, aveva gli occhi, scuri, incredibilmente grandi e <u>ardenti</u>.
"Come on and play <u>Iserbella</u> 'n' Columbus," demanded Winthrop.	"Vieni a giocare a *Iserbella* e Colombo", <u>chiese</u> Winthrop.	- Vieni a giocare <u>all'Isabella</u> e a Colombo – <u>chiese</u> Winthrop.	"Dài, vieni a giocare a Colombo e Isabella" <u>la invitò</u> Winthrop.
"I can't," said Ann Vickers. "I'm playing Pedippus."	"Non posso", disse Ann Vickers. "Sto giocando a Pedippus".	- Non posso – disse Anna Vickers. – Sto giocando a Pedippo.	<u>**"Non posso, sto giocando a Pedippo."**</u>
"What the dickens is Pedippus?"	"**<u>Che diavolo è Pedippus?</u>**".	**<u>- E chi diavolo è questo Pedippo?</u>**	E chi diavolo è **Pedippo**?
"He was an ole hermit. Maybe it was Pelippus. […] and he gave up all **the joys of the flesh** and he went and lived in the desert on-- oh, **on oatmeal and peanut butter** and so on and so forth, in the desert, and prayed all the time."	"Era un vecchio eremita. Forse era Pelippus. […] **<u>rinunciò a tutte le gioie della carne e andò a vivere nel deserto</u>** *con*… oh, farina d'avena e **<u>burro di arachidi e così via</u>**, nel deserto, e **<u>pregava tutto il tempo</u>**".	- Era un santo eremita**. Pedippo o forse** <u>anche</u> **Pelippo**, non so. […] e così aveva abbandonato le gioie della carne, e stava *continuamente* nel deserto, vivendo di semplice avena, sicuro… d'avena <u>e d'olio di noci</u>, e *non smettendo* mai di pregare.	"Era un santo eremita. *Pelippo, forse* […] lasciò *tutte* le gioie della carne e andò nel deserto e visse di <u>farinate e marmellata di noccioline</u> eccetera eccetera, *là* nel deserto, e **<u>pregava tutto il tempo.</u>**

Table 1. A section of the file with the aligned versions of Chapter 1

<u>Underlined: meaning</u>
italics: naturalness; register
<u>underlined bold: fluent rendering</u>
bold: ineffective word order; intratextual incoherence; hardly detectable error

As can be seen even from this short excerpt, Jahn's version tends to be wordier, a trend that is confirmed by the total length of the chapter: 2,514 words for a source text of 2,195, while Leonetti's is 2,175 and DeepL 2,192. It has to be said, though, that

in the passage quoted above Jahn succeeds in recreating the colloquiality and intentions of the characters. For example, in box 3, by using *meglio lei di noialtri* [better she than any of us] the translator makes the line sound very natural and restricts its scope to the boys in the scene, while the other two versions are correct but suggest that Ann can play Isabella better than anyone else in absolute terms. When one of the boys counters the remark about Ann's hopelessness at baseball by pointing out that she threw a ball at the Reverend, Jahn's wording emphasises that it was her who did it, thereby explicitating the boy's admiration. DeepL produces a less marked sentence, which is however fluent.

On the whole, sheer errors in DeepL's output are not many: *illuminato dalle foglie* [lit by leaves] poetically conjures the image of golden leaves on the grove floor and might therefore go unnoticed, but the source text actually describes a layer of leaves without referring to its colour; *Grillo* [cricket], to render "Jiminy", an exclamation of surprise of dismay, could be dismissed as a hallucination – the term used to refer to MT translations that are completely off the target – but since the software selects words according to patterns of co-occurrence, the reason probably lies in Walt Disney's character Jiminy Cricket in the fairy tale "Pinocchio". The paragraph describing Ann (seventh cell in Table 1 above) contains two errors that without a comparison with the source text might go unnoticed: the girl is shown with "arms akimbo" – a self-confident, defiant posture – and "eager eyes", but in the translation she has *braccia alzate* [raised arms] and *occhi desiderosi* [eyes full of desire], which suggests surrender or even the preaching attitude of the old hermit she mentions, and adds a sexual connotation absent from the source text. These apparently minor changes actually result in a different characterization of the protagonist and partly contradict her attitude and words in the following dialogues with her friends. While it is true that *desiderosi* can translate "eager", the context suggests opting for something that expresses intensity, curiosity, vivacity, especially because the same adjective appears in the opening paragraph of the novel to describe the children in the scene: "Four children, sharp-voiced, and innocent and eager […]" (Lewis 1933, 1). DeepL maintains *desiderosi* in both occurrences, as ideally should happen in the name of consistency, but the lexical item is inadequate in both contexts. Lionetti translates the first occurrence as *avidi* [avid/greedy] and the second as *ardenti* [ardent/glowing], thereby disrupting the internal connection and adding both a negative connotation and an aspect of love or passion respectively. Jahn

shifts the meaning of the first occurrence to *allegri* [cheerful] but captures the second through the choice of *vivaci* [lively].

Disseminated through Lewis's first chapter are a number of deliberate mistakes in the children's lines meant to benevolently mock their mastery of certain areas of knowledge they are not fully familiar with – "Iserbella" instead of Isabella; "concert" instead of "consort" when Ann, impersonating Queen Isabella tries to speak in an elevated style; "pagodas" as dwellings of the Indians, etc. In the two human translations, conceptual errors are maintained, but those based on spelling and pronunciation have been corrected, probably because Italian is a phonetic language, with the result that some humour is lost. DeepL retains "Iserbella" and translates "concert" literally as *concerto*, which is correct but meaningless in the sentence; a solution might be *consorziato* [consortium member], which would be a plausible distortion of a formal, unusual word by a child.

The textual aspects discussed so far are among the translation problems that the PACTE research group (Process in the Acquisition of Translation Competence and Evaluation) identifies as "rich points":

- Linguistic problems: lexical (non-specialised) and morphosyntactic
- Textual problems: coherence, cohesion, text type and genre, and style
- Extralinguistic problems: cultural, encyclopaedic and subject-domain knowledge
- Problems of intentionality: difficulty in understanding information in the source text (speech acts, presuppositions, implicature, intertextual references)
- Problems relating to the translation brief and/or the target-text reader (affecting reformulation) that, from a functionalist point of view, would affect all Rich Points. (PACTE 2014, 90)

Interestingly, the rich points highlighted by the PACTE group as linguistic items to which trainee translators should pay attention largely coincide with the errors in the MT output, an aspect that can provide guidance in devising pedagogic activities.

SOME PEDAGOGIC CONSIDERATIONS AND PROPOSALS

The cases illustrated above are in line with previous studies (Fonteyne et al. 2020; Guerberof Arenas and Toral 2020; Brusasco 2022, among others) showing that – despite neural machine translation's improvements and better outputs – the complexity, multilayeredness, and pragmatic dimensions of literary texts still require the interpretive and stylistic skills of a human translator. However, since MT is currently the most widely used translation technology (Rothwell et al. 2023) and is likely to continue improving thanks to artificial intelligence and the expansion of training data, it seems wise to include at least some basic MT literacy in the training of literary translators, and find ways of using it that can assist the human translator while keeping his/her centrality.

A hypothesis is to use MT as an aid when an old but overall good translation needs to be refreshed in view of a new publication, as could be the case with "Ann Vickers". Since revision is a long job, with far lower fees than translation itself, the alignment of the existing translation(s) and the MT output might provide the translator/reviser fast, adequate solutions for sections previously identified as dated or containing mistakes. The procedure, which could be considered a literal application of Emmerich's notion of translation as "a form of translingual editing by which a translator both negotiates existing versions and creates a new one of her own" (2017, 2), is explored in a co-authored article (Brusasco and Taivalkoski-Shilov, forthcoming).

The suggestion put forward here, instead, is to consider MT's shortcomings and use them in (literary) translator training in order to both alert students to potential errors should they postedit an MT output, and enhance their focus on textual dimensions that contribute to making (their) translated texts pragmatically sound and consistent in interpretation. One of the crucial aspects is the contrast between the speed of MT and the slow pace of a human translator interpreting a text and honing the target language after all the elements contributing to the shaping have been taken into consideration. Such craftsmanship is endangered by changed reading and writing habits, and by the growing exposure to AI-generated texts. The spread of NMT itself contributes to a levelling of styles, genre conventions, lexical choices and overall complexity: TAUS 2016 "Translation Technology Landscape Report" predicted that "the world will get accustomed to what we

call Fully Automatic Useful Translation (FAUT) and will more and more accept this as the norm for standard translation" (Rothwell et al. 2023, 214). Luckily, texts are still ranked differently depending on their value, purpose, and risk potential, not only related to the quality of the translation, but to the consequences of their use in – for example – medical, financial or legal settings; therefore, language service providers adopt different protocols varying from fully automated translation to postediting, to professionals working with the aid of technology, which means that "useful translation" has not become the norm yet. Except for urgent information, like life-saving instructions in emergencies, and possibly for totally functional texts like instruction manuals, language and translation should retain their full range of complexity and expressiveness, a point that is particularly true in the case of creative texts. As Tymoczko (2014) noted, literary texts are ideal for training because of the variety and pliability of language, as well as the representation of numberless communicative situations and human experiences. Training activities, therefore, are geared towards the acquisition of procedural knowledge, but a strong emphasis is placed on cognition and metacognitive competence, i.e. "the ability to self-regulate cognitive processes that contribute to goal achievement and the professional success of translators" (Pietrzak 2022, 3). Moreover, the activities suggested are deliberately slow in order to both re-ground reading and writing and make the most of the time dedicated to the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Unless differently specified, activities are not intended in any specific sequence since the choice and order will be determined by the text to be translated or revised.

A top-down translation-oriented text analysis (Nord 2005) combined with close reading strategies still plays an important role when quality is at stake, be it for translation or for postediting. A clear view of the text in its entirety, with a detailed mapping of lexical relations and cohesive devices, an evaluation of staticity versus dynamism as conveyed by prevalent stative as against dynamic verbs and adjectives, the prevalence of certain word classes and lexical items, levels of meaning, information flow, intertextuality, reverberations throughout the texts – all this allows students to experience the text(ure), while careful consideration of culture-specific elements and implicatures will determine the degree of mediation necessary in order for the prospective reader to fully appreciate the text. Such analysis should be preceded and followed by experiential reading, approaching the text as a whole and allowing it to connect with personal experiences and previous

knowledge of other texts. This step is meant to allow students to become aware of more levels of signification and to activate language heard or used in the stories and situations evoked.

As noted above, reasonable predictions can be made about the "tricky" spots in a text – PACTE's "rich points" (2014): developing students' awareness of the translation problems a source text poses during the preliminary analytical phase will guide them in their decision-making. The same awareness, however, could lead to more effective revision or post-editing. A study conducted by Volkart et al. (2022), showed that students corrected only about 50% of the errors present in the MT output, which may partly depend on the fact that, unless forced to, they tended to ignore the source text and carry out a predominantly monolingual post-editing. Considering that NMT has increased the number of hardly detectable errors, it would be important for students to know what to look for when post-editing so as not to be mislead by fluent readability. Within a comparative approach, preliminary source-text analysis followed by moving back and forth between ST and MT output, as well as – when available – previous versions by human translators, is likely to sharpen the students' sensitivity to rich points, widen their expressive range and increase correctness in the case of post-editing.

Translation skills and sharper reading in view of post-editing may be promoted via completion activities in both languages to promote hypothesis formation and expectations. This entails working at microlevel with incomplete sentences, and at macrolevel – with missing paragraphs to be supplied by students on the basis of the context. An active approach to reading co-constructs meaning along the way, and it is crucial that translation students develop an ability to stop at any moment trying to imagine what may come next, be it while reading a narrative text or an instruction manual. This would be particularly useful in cases where keeping close to the source text results in a target text that is fluent and apparently correct, but whose meaning ends up deviating from what is logical, as in the examples mentioned above – "eager eyes" rendered as *ardenti* by Leonetti and "arms akimbo" as *braccia alzate* by DeepL. Incidentally, creating logical and linguistic expectations may be considered the human equivalent to the basic principle of NMT – selecting the word(s) that are most likely to appear near each other, but endowed with experience and creativity.

Closely connected to this would be asking students to develop a sort of "mental script" portraying the environment, the situation

and the participants, in order to produce dialogue which sounds natural and cohesive (see the problems highlighted in the examples above). They could ask questions such as "In what situation might this sentence be used?", and "What do people (or what would I) say in that situation?".

More general activities include focusing on unusual collocations, both in the ST in view of translation, and in an MT output as an exercise towards more accurate PE. Corpora in both languages will clarify if a lexical pair is a collocation or a creative deviation from norm that can be recreated or maintained without jeopardising meaning, or, in the case of MT, a glitch that has to be solved. Reading and writing comparable texts in the target language, carrying out extra-linguistic research on the text topics, dramatization in the case of literary texts, followed by moments of reflection on how translation strategies and procedures were affected, are other activities conducive to a wide and varied approach to translation and post-editing.

CONCLUSION

Technology has changed the world of translation, focusing on quantity, i.e. speed of delivery. NMT has outperformed previous models and its output is approaching human quality. Literary texts, however, still challenge NMT because they require interpretation, creativity and experience in and of the world, hence human translators. Yet, the economic advantages of NMT and the growing acceptance of "Fully Automated Useful Translation" (Rothwell et al. 2023, 214) go against the slow, high-quality-searching activity of the literary translator. Against this backdrop, the present article is a reflection on some uses of NMT in specific areas of literary translation, namely for revision in view of republication (Brusasco and Taivalkoski-Shilov, forthcoming) and for pedagogic purposes. Examples drawn from the existing Italian versions of Lewis's "Ann Vickers" (1933) compared with DeepL's output have been discussed to point out both the lexical areas where the software improves the existing text and the items or passages which instead require the interpretive action of a human translator. The findings have prompted some pedagogic considerations: given the rapidly evolving situation, some basic MT literacy can be useful to literary translators too, who might use it as a tool to hone their skills and enhance their linguistic sensitivity; at the same time, however, familiarising themselves with the post-editing of creative texts may

also be a way of retaining some human control on a pervading technology.

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TRANSLATION POLICY OF ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE IN SOVIET LATVIA FROM THE 1940S TO THE 1960S: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to compare the translation policies of Anglophone literature during the Soviet occupation period after World War II. The study focuses on the translations of Anglophone literature texts into Latvian during the first two decades of the Cold War under the rule of Joseph Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev.

The results allow us to conclude that during the Soviet occupation of Latvia, the introduction and reception of Anglophone literature evolved, transitioning from purely ideological dominance to a more diverse selection of authors and genres. In the first years of Soviet occupation, the Latvian book market was flooded with the literature of predominantly ideological content by Soviet, primarily Russian, authors translated into Latvian. Western literature, including Anglophone literature, was published cautiously and limited to translations of classics and progressive authors. With the change in power in the 1950s, the number of works by Anglophone writers translated into Latvian gradually increased, and more diversity in the choice of authors and genres was observed. However, these works were still carefully censored as they were written by authors from Western bloc countries. All stages of the reception process were controlled, and authors and their lives and works were presented to the public in a biased, ideologically determined way. It was particularly true for living writers.

Keywords: Soviet Latvia, translation policy, censorship, Cold War, Soviet propaganda

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary Latvian discourse, the concept of "Soviet Latvia" refers to a historical, cultural, and political era associated with the liquidation of Latvian statehood and the period of occupation. Following its annexation in 1940, Latvia became part of the Soviet system and therefore subject to Soviet ideology, which was remarkably intolerant towards Western ideas and realities. The concept of "Soviet Latvia" is marked by dynamic shifts, usually associated with changes in power in the USSR and shifts in the course of the Communist Party.

The occupation of Latvia in the summer of 1940 completely changed all spheres of life in the Latvian society, including translation policy. Among the most significant events of the period, one can mention mass repressions, collectivisation, the political reform of de-Stalinization, intensified persecution of religion, the launch of the first space satellite and the first manned flight into space, the emergence of the Berlin Wall, the corn-planting movement, and the Cold War rivalry between the USSR and the USA, resulting in a complicated and severe control implemented by various power institutions such as the Central Committee of the Communist Party, General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press (Glavlit), and the Committee for State Security (KGB) in different areas of human life. In the Soviet Union, Glavlit (1922–1991), the main censorship body, functioned to eliminate any undesirable printed materials and ensure the correct ideological interpretation of every published item. As Siddiqi notes, "Glavlit [...] was the largest and most formalized instrument for censorship, reflecting both the bureaucratic logic of rationalism and the fundamental belief that the state had at its disposal the tools to adequately regulate the circulation of information. In that sense, Glavlit was an institutional manifestation of the aspiration for stability in the control of information" (Siddiqi 2021, 1053).

In other Soviet Socialist republics and some socialist bloc countries, the information flow was controlled and censored by the local versions of Glavlit. A Polish scholar, Kamila Kamińska-Chełminiak, points out that the "Burden of setting up the censorship apparatus in Poland was almost fully borne by the employees of the Soviet censorship — Glavlit […] — who for several months of their stay in Poland, [..], formed the foundations of the new office. The mechanism of operation of the new office was to be modelled on the Soviet one" (Kamińska-Chełminiak 2021, 246). In Latvia, the main Soviet censorship body was

established on August 10, 1940, and called LGLP – the Main Literature Authority of the Latvian SSR (Veisbergs 2014, 33). The importance of these versions of Glavlit cannot be underestimated – they were influential censorship institutes that, among others, controlled all publishing issues. Soviet ideology, propaganda, and censorship comprised a powerful construct aimed at manipulating and controlling public opinion, restricting access to information, and presenting it in a highly biased way. Authorities also paid close attention to original and translated literature introduced to the Soviet reader.

In the Soviet Union, a complicated and turbulent attitude towards foreign literature existed due to geopolitical, sociocultural, and ideological reasons, including Latvia, which was part of the USSR for almost fifty years (1940–1941; 1944/45–1991). Specific priorities concerning the choice of foreign languages acceptable for translation were set. First, these were foreign languages of Soviet satellite countries (e.g., Poland, the German Democratic Republic, and Czechoslovakia). Secondly, in foreign languages of non-communist countries where the Communist movement was quite active, authors positioned themselves as real communists or friends and supporters of the Soviet Union (e.g., France and Italy). In turn, English-speaking countries were considered dangerous. Although many works by Anglophone authors were translated, including the classics (Shakespeare, Swift, and Dickens) and so-called progressive writers who were loved and praised by the Soviet authorities (such as Dreiser, London, and Cronin), the status of many authors whose views were or could become controversial or unacceptable to Soviet ideology, especially contemporary authors like Steinbeck and Hemingway, was unstable. English represented the language of the Soviet Union's main ideological opponent, particularly during the Cold War.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH MATERIAL

The present study focuses on translation from a socio-political perspective, specifically examining how this helps to reveal changes in the politics and ideology of the USSR, how manipulative mechanisms of oppressive power functioned, and what attitudes or shifts in attitudes were expected and/or demanded from society. During the Soviet rule in Latvia, manipulations in the interests of power were observed on different levels: (a) in the selection of texts

for translation, (b) in publication choices made by publishers and others in power, (c) in the strategies used in the process of translation, and (d) in the intended impact on the recipients of the translation. One manifestation of Soviet ideology can be observed in how translations are supplemented with paratextual elements like prefaces, afterwords, and other interpretive aids that contextualize the text.

The Soviet authorities regularly coordinated and strictly controlled all stages of the reception process of Anglophone literary texts to ensure an ideologically appropriate acceptance of the works. The governmental supervision of the publication of each text was strict, and the reception process was well-planned and organized, comprising all necessary activities of pre-publishing, while-publishing, and post-publishing stages. Soviet censorship officials ensured and controlled the mediation of reception from its initial phase, which consisted of the editorial work on the text and paratext (including dedications, forewords, prefaces, afterwords, postscripts, packaging, summaries on the back cover, and blurbs) to the final phase. A French sociologist Gisele Sapiro defines the following mediation ways of reception in the after-publication stage: "After publication, reception is mediated by interpretations and strategies of appropriation/ annexation of the work by agents (individuals and institutions), be they professionals (critics, peers) or amateurs, belonging to the literary field (journals, juries, academies, circles) or to other fields such as the political, the legal, the medical, the psychoanalytical, be they organizations (censorship, association, morality leagues) or private gatherings (such as reading clubs)" (Sapiro 2016, 324).

The present study considers the specifics of translation policy based on the material from the archives of the Soviet Latvian Writers' Union, the Latvian State Publishing House, and the main Soviet censorship body of Latvia – LGLP. The data collected from online Latvian Library resources and services (National Digital Library of Latvia and Periodicals) and the books – Latvian publications of Anglophone authors – are also analysed. In the present study, a perspective on translations from an external standpoint holds greater significance when discussing the results obtained from analysing the accompanying materials of the translations, such as reviews in periodicals and supplements included in the book editions (forewords, afterwords). When examining the latter, French theorist Gérard Genette's ideas on paratextual material are taken into account. It involves considering additional informative text added to the translations, such as

forewords, afterwords, or blurbs on the dust jackets of the books, as paratextual elements known as peritext, specifically prefaces (Genette 1997, 161). Genette uses this word "to designate every type of introductory (preludial or postludial) text, authorial or allographic, consisting of a discourse produced on the subject of the text that follows or precedes it" (Ibid.), noting that the postface is "considered a variety of preface" (Ibid.). The terms "paratext," "paratextual," "peritext," and "preface" are used based on Genette's theoretical framework as represented in his "Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation" concentrating on preface as a paratextual element taking the corpus of translated texts for granted. Within the context of Soviet ideological control and a well-organized censorship apparatus, the preface became an integral element in the regime's propaganda web aimed at Sovietizing the Latvian nation and a secret key, both literally and metaphorically, for encoding messages for those capable of reading between the lines.

DISCUSSION I: THE STALIN ERA

The reign of Joseph Stalin lasted almost three decades, from 1924 to 1953. Latvia came under the sphere of Soviet influence after being occupied in 1940 and reoccupied in 1944/45. The occupation meant the loss of Latvia's foreign policy, and many of the republic's internal processes were dictated by the ideology emanating from Moscow. Soviet ideology and culture promoted the idea of two worlds – the camp of capitalism and the camp of socialism:

> Since the formation of the Soviet republics, the states of the world have split into two camps: the camp of capitalism and the camp of socialism. There, in the camp of capitalism, there is national enmity and inequality, colonial slavery and chauvinism, national oppression and pogroms, imperialist atrocities.
> Here, in the camp of socialism, there is mutual trust and peace, national work and equality, peaceful coexistence and fraternal co-operation of peoples. ("Deklaracija…" 1922)

As a part of the USSR, Latvia automatically moved from the "camp of capitalism" to the "camp of socialism" based on the Soviet paradigm.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USSR AND THE WEST IN THE STALIN ERA: POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE

Political attitudes towards foreign countries during the Stalin period directly influenced the translation strategy. One of the most important ideologies of the Stalinist period was the transition from the idea of a world revolution to building socialism in a single country. In 1936, the mention of the World Soviet Socialist Republic was removed from the Stalinist Constitution of the USSR (Grickiv 2012). During the 1920s and 1930s, Soviet military intelligence regarded Great Britain as the principal military enemy of the USSR, which, for economic and political reasons, could go to war against the USSR only at the head of a broad coalition of states bordering the USSR ("Orientirovochnyj…" 2015). Therefore, censors gave special attention to translations of Anglophone literature, including fiction.

After the end of World War II, former members of the anti-Hitler coalition found themselves on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain, as Winston Churchill formulated it in his Fulton speech (Churchill). The Second World War was replaced by the Cold War. The concept of the Cold War lies in the political, economic, and ideological confrontation of the two systems, balancing on the verge of an armed clash. On March 12, 1947, the US presidential administration proclaimed the Truman Doctrine, providing American military assistance to countries where the "communist threat" loomed (The Truman). The United States became the main ideological and political opponent of the USSR in the world. It is worth noting that America was also part of the Anglophone world, and pressure on the translation industry did not ease.

The rivalry between the USSR and the USA was primarily of a military-political nature. However, both sides sought to avoid an open conflict due to uncertainty about its possible outcome (Dukes 2016, 5). As a result, other areas became the arena of the struggle, including science, sports, and art. Hence, in the cultural sphere, the relations between the USSR and the West were also marked by ideological differences and cultural clashes. The Soviet Union's promotion of socialist realism, censorship, and state control of the arts clashed with the Western values of artistic freedom, individualism, and market-based culture. The cultural exchanges between the two sides were often subject to political manipulation and propaganda, as both sought to promote their worldview and discredit the other. The persecution of dissidents and non-

conformists in the USSR was one of the most visible examples of this cultural conflict.

TRANSLATION POLICY IN THE STALIN ERA

To expedite the Sovietization process of the Latvian nation, immediately after the Soviet occupation in 1940, "the USSR developed [..] a system of cultural surveillance of Latvian SSR, including a tool for controlling literary processes – the Soviet Latvian Writers' Union" (Burima 2018, 555). One of the Union's crucial tasks was "to fight against all kinds of reactionary ideological influences" (Ibid.), which in the 1940s were mostly represented by Western culture. The translator section was founded, and they "decided at their meetings what works would be translated from foreign languages of the Western and other countries in the world, assessing whether they do not contain banned topics and lexis inappropriate for Soviet people" (Ibid., 556). It was expected and demanded that literature published in the Soviet Union would propagate the positive sides of the socialist system and criticize highly negative aspects of the capitalistic system.

The choice of literary works to be published was limited and extremely selective. Foreign authors and their texts deemed "appropriate" for reading were selected with the utmost caution. As an obvious consequence, a variety of source languages fell off, especially in the first years of occupation: "Russian immediately became the main source language, and Soviet literature turned into the mainstay of fiction translation. [...] German was almost completely ousted [...] Other languages were minimized: Western literature was reduced to progressive authors only [...]" (Veisbergs 2014, 33–34). Ideological tasks set upon foreign texts were the same as for Soviet literature: to help Latvian readers build a new – socialist – life, to create a positive outlook on socialism, to disclose all the negative sides of the capitalist system, to make society active in defending the principles of socialism and in fighting against the dangers of capitalism.

Unsurprisingly, translations from the Russian language prevailed as being more secure, more consistent with Soviet ideology, and already approved by the Party. Sovietization targeted numerous spheres of human life, including art. Soviet authorities were aware of the power of influence of all artistic expressions. Referring to Epp Annus: "The Stalinist era, with a highly circumscribed model for acceptable art, Socialist Realism,

repositioned the art sphere inside the sphere of politics. Art became a political tool to serve the Socialist worldview, under the direct oversight of the Communist Party" (Annus 2018, 1). Therefore, foreign authors were selected very carefully, considering many factors: the country they were from, the political and economic system in the country, and the writers' beliefs and worldviews. The Latvian professor and specialist in translation studies, Ieva Zauberga, outlines the tendencies related to foreign literature in the later period of the Soviet occupation (the 1960s and 1970s) and states that foreign works that did not oppose the Soviet course or that concentrated on injustices of capitalism were highly appreciated, and their authors canonized (Jack London, John Goldsworthy, Theodor Dreiser, Archibald Joseph Cronin). However, the situation was more complex with contemporary authors as one could not predict their public announcements or literary works (Zauberga 2016, 37). The research results demonstrate that the same tendencies are also well presented in Soviet Latvia of the 1940s and 1950s.

Several specific features characterize the phenomenon of Anglophone literature in Latvia during the Stalin years. Firstly, due to ideological causes, a comparatively small number of Anglophone titles were translated and published compared to the literature translated from Russian. Secondly, the preference was given to contemporary progressive writers who had declared their socialist views or demonstrated their anti-imperialistic position. In the initial years of Latvia's occupation (1940–1941; 1944/45–1949), 35 titles authored by 25 Anglophone writers were published, predominantly featuring progressive perspectives. Of these, 14 were contemporaries, and 4 were non-contemporaries considered active opponents of the capitalist system, social commentators, or supporters of revolutionary activities. From contemporary progressive authors, the names of Richard Aldington, Archibald Joseph Cronin, John Boynton Priestley, and Upton Sinclair can be mentioned. Non-contemporary authors allowed for publishing were Ethel Lilian Voynich, Mark Twain, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser (partly a contemporary (died in 1945) but is known for his socialist fiction and essays written before).

Some Anglophone works, or fragments translated into Latvian, appeared in periodicals or collections, but this seemed to be the exception rather than the rule. For example, the translation of Ernest Hemingway's novel "To Have and Have Not" was serialized in one of the Latvian entertainment magazines –

"Atpūta" [Leisure] – from January to April 1941, before the Soviet Union was involved in World War II (Hemingvejs 1941). Another example refers to the collection devoted to the Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on February 10, 1946, in which stories by authors of different countries were included, and the main criteria were either the glorification of the Soviet political system or criticism and satire of the election procedure in capitalist countries. In the collection, the Anglophone segment is represented only by progressive authors and social commentators, such as the writer and journalist (known as muckraker) Samuel Hopkins Adams; the novelist, writer, journalist, political activist, and politician Upton Sinclair; the American writer and lawyer Thomas Sigismund Stribling; the novelist and journalist Theodor Dreiser; and the writer, humorist, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer Mark Twain. The titles themselves are indicative: for instance, "Freedom of Speech" by Sinclair, "Running for Governor" by Twain, and "The Sound Wagon" by Stribling (Rudzītis 1946).

In general, Anglophone literary texts were chosen with extreme caution because their authors came from the capitalist world. Especially after World War II, when the world was split into two opposing camps – socialism and capitalism – the former wartime allies (American and British nationals) became the USSR's main political and ideological opponents. In Soviet Latvia under Stalin, Anglophone authors' books entered the publishing market with precautionary measures. Reviews were published in newspapers and literary magazines to ensure the ''correct'' reading and understanding of the text that would correspond to Soviet ideology. Thus, the Anglophone works approved by Soviet censorship were preceded or accompanied by high critical acclaim in the press, praising what had to be praised in Soviet literature of that time: a sound criticism of the capitalist system and a positive attitude towards the socialist political course. For example, in the literary monthly "Karogs" [The Flag], a Latvian reader finds out that the:

> Latvian publication of the novel "The Financier" has appeared at the right time. For us, who currently see the United States and its official leaders as the vanguard of world reactionary forces and as instigators of a potential new world war, it is important to understand the power structure of these reactionary leaders, the emergence and essence of American monopolies, trusts, and banks. Theodore Dreiser expertly

portrays this. Secondly, it is no less important for us to recognize that there were and still are talented and strong-willed individuals in America who are critical of America's reactionary forces and who know how to expose their horrors and fight against them. Through his literary works, including "The Financier," Theodore Dreiser has demonstrated this. […] Dreiser's "The Financier" serves as a weapon for us in Latvia against the bourgeois theories of the "land of great opportunity" for every hardworking person, a land where everyone attains happiness without socialism. "The Financier" dismantles these beliefs. (Niedre 1948, 479)

Similarly, in the foreword to O. Henry's collection of short stories, the reviewer writes: "As a keen and critical observer, O. Henry perceives many social contradictions, flaws, and injustices within the capitalist system. His gaze is particularly fixed upon the big speculators and stock market financiers, whom he regards as the most despicable plunderers" (Pārupe 1946, 3).

In some instances, Soviet readers were reminded that the writers hailed from the enemy's camp. Consequently, even in their best works, some remarkable drawbacks remained unacceptable and uncharacteristic of a "New Soviet Person." These drawbacks include a lack of fighting spirit, readiness to surrender and tolerate hardship, and the absence of a positive worldview or clear directions for active opposition: "In demonstrating his successes in the field of pamphleteering, ruthlessly attacking bourgeois democracy and openly criticizing the Labour government, Aldridge, like Shaw, falls short in his conclusions. He retreats into the shadow of utopian "economic democracy" when faced with the cardinal problem of resolving the issue of England's future path" (Viktorovs 1948, 5).

DISCUSSION II: THE KHRUSHCHEV TIME

The reign of Nikita Khrushchev, which lasted over ten years (1953–1964), is often associated with the Thaw period. This era was named after the story of the same name by Ilya Ehrenburg, published in the May 1954 issue of "Znamya" [The Banner] magazine (Shubin 2008). The Thaw primarily affected the internal political life of the USSR. There was a condemnation of Stalin's personality cult and repressions, the release of political prisoners, and the liquidation of the GULAG. This period can be seen as a shift from a totalitarian dictatorship to a softer form, an increase in

freedom of speech, and a relative liberalization of political and public life. However, the apparatus of censorship became more developed and multi-level. Referring to the Latvian scholar Briedis, at the beginning of the 1960s "Glavlit was still overseeing the process of censorship, but this process was now much more complex, with interaction between all levels of the censorship hierarchy" (Briedis 2010, 182). Annus states that "The post-Stalin years significantly eased the strict subordination of art to politics […], yet the relationship between art and politics retained much of its complexity" (Annus 2018, 2). The isolationist policies of the Stalinist era were replaced by a time of greater creative freedom and openness to the Western world. In 1955, leaders of the UK, the USA, the USSR, and France met in Geneva for the first time since the Potsdam Conference. On July 28, 1957, the VI World Festival of Youth and Students opened in Moscow, attended by 34,000 people from 131 countries under the slogan "For Peace and Friendship". Finally, in 1959, Khrushchev visited the USA as the head of the Soviet government.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USSR AND THE WEST IN THE KHRUSHCHEV TIME: POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE

During de-Stalinization, Latvian national communists came to power in the Latvian SSR. They advocated limiting migration, maintaining the status of the Latvian language, and restricting the scale of industrialization in the republic. Khrushchev's secret speech (February 25, 1956) caused rapid changes in society. A new and unexpected situation arose in the leadership of the party, which until then had been accustomed to unconditional obedience ("Khrushchev..." 2016). The process of de-Stalinization in society had assumed such proportions that it had gone further than the initiators of the event expected. In the summer of 1956, political prisoners' mass release and rehabilitation finally began. Tens of thousands of people returned from detention and exile to Latvia. Most of those who were killed or died during the terror were rehabilitated.

The criticism of the "Cult of personality," the beginning of the rehabilitation of the repressed, and the results of the 20th Congress radically changed the atmosphere in the country and the situation in literature, art, and science (Naumov 1996). A considerable number of literary and popular science monthlies began to be published, and symphonic music by composers banned at the

beginning of the century, such as Prokofiev and Shostakovich, began to be played. Solzhenitsyn's novel "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" made a significant impact. A whole constellation of literary and cinematic works appeared that took a completely different look at wartime events. However, the confrontation between the two irreconcilable systems continued, reaching its climax during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

TRANSLATION POLICY IN THE KHRUSHCHEV TIME

In 1961, the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union took place, where the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism was adopted along with the slogan "Communism in 20 years". This set the program for forming and developing new members of the communist society, which was activated and supported throughout the decade using all the levers of power, including literature.

The authorities in the Soviet Union paid close attention to the propagandistic mission of printed material. The role of books in the process of creating a new society in the USSR is undeniable. In the Soviet ideological struggle against the "rotten" capitalist way of life and "aggressive" imperialism, literature was an efficient weapon of propaganda and counter-propaganda. It was postulated that the USSR was the most-read country in the world. One of the slogans propagating reading among school children was "A book is the best present". The importance of books in the life of a Soviet citizen was regularly emphasized and reminded. Reading was considered an activity of the utmost importance for Soviet people of any age.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the promotion of reading was actively carried out in Latvia through printed propaganda. For instance, in one of the 1966 issues of the monthly "Jaunās Grāmatas" [The New Books], the editorial addressed the readers with the slogan "A Soviet person cannot live without books, without reading" (Vējāns 1966, 1). Another article in the same monthly, titled "A Person with a Book", emphasized the importance of books: "One of the most beautiful images of our homeland is a person who comes towards us with a book in their hand raised high" (Sudrabkalns 1967, 5). Books are often referred to as friends, comrades, or even soldiers, as seen in the quote: "Thinking about the great anniversary, books, written by manly, brave hands, line the shelves like faithful soldiers in their battle line" (Vējāns 1967, 2).

Translated literature was a crucial mouthpiece for Soviet ideology and propaganda. In Latvia, translation was particularly significant, accounting for more than half of all published fiction:

> What is stated in the party program project regarding literature, [...] applies not only to original works by writers-authors but also to writers-translators, especially in our republic. Here, translated literature in terms of volume surpasses half of all published fiction. Translators, in their translations, have the responsibility to provide Latvian readers with the most ideologically valuable and artistically outstanding works that have emerged in Russian literature, Russian Soviet literature, literature of other Soviet nations, as well as literature from around the world. ("Pielikums…" 1961, 92)

The provided quote also indicates translation choices in Soviet Latvia that prioritized Russian literature, Russian Soviet literature, and literature from other Soviet nations.

Considering translation from a socio-political perspective reveals how the USSR's politics and ideology changed and how the manipulative mechanism of oppressive power functioned. In the Khrushchev era, the regime authorities continued their quantitative (collectivization of agriculture, socialist industrialization) and qualitative (values of the Soviet system) policies to impose a socialist way of living and thinking on the Latvians, making them grow into the Soviet system and accept the identity of a New Soviet Person. It is worth noting that the "Soviet power tended to control all aspects of an individual's life, including the private life and leisure time" (Bleiere 2015, 160).

Regarding the relationship between literature and power, Briedis observes that "In the early 1960s, the reins of censorship tightened" (Briedis 2010, 130). According to the Latvian scholar, a special regulation was implemented that allowed only individuals with higher education to be hired by censorship institutions (Ibid., 129), forming a new generation of censors who were more educated, ideologically demanding, and obedient to Moscow officials. These new censors controlled all information to which society had access. "During the 1960s, a mechanism of information control was developed that remained for the most part unchanged until the end of the 1980s. The relationship between the texts and their controllers became more sophisticated" (Ibid., 182). In the Soviet Union, Glavlit eliminated any unwanted printed

materials and ensured the correct ideological interpretation of all published items.

In the Khrushchev era, the number of works by Anglophone writers translated into Latvian increased, with 86 titles appearing, including repeatedly published works. On average, eight books per year were published, compared to five books per year in the previous period under Stalin's regime. Furthermore, there was more diversity in the choice of authors and genres available to Soviet readers, who could now read detective stories, adventure literature, and science fiction in Latvian. For example, although the Latvian translation of Arthur Conan Doyle's detective novel "The Hound of the Baskervilles" appeared in 1903, it was only retranslated and published during the Soviet period in 1957. This meant that Latvians could read the novel for the first time, as literature translated and published before the Soviet occupation mainly was banned and eliminated from shops and libraries due to Soviet policy. A thematic book series titled "Adventure and Science Fiction" was launched from 1958 to 1966. It featured works by Latvian and many Soviet Russian writers and publications by foreign authors. For instance, Mayne Reid's "Osceola the Seminole" (1960), James Fenimore Cooper's "The Deerslayer" (1962), and Herbert George Wells' "The Time Machine" (1963) were among the books published in the series.

However, it should be noted that despite the evident growth of Anglophone literature published in Latvian during the Khrushchev era, these were still works written by authors from Western bloc countries and, therefore, were subjected to thorough censorship at all stages of the reception process. The authors and their works were presented to the public in a biased, ideologically determined manner, particularly for living writers. Ideology is evident in the incorporation of paratextual materials. The study of prefaces uncovered specific patterns that aim to facilitate an ''appropriate'' comprehension of a Western author and their work.

The comparative study of the first three decades of the Soviet rule in Latvia, from the 1940s to the 1960s, has revealed a remarkable peculiarity. During the 1940s and the early 1950s (under Stalin's power), numerous translations of works by Anglophone authors were published in Latvian without any preface. In total, 48 titles by Anglophone authors from America, Britain, Australia, and Ireland were published, and only 15 of them (31%) contained additional information about the author and their work. Furthermore, most of these prefaces were found in publications from the early 1950s. Of the 35 titles published in the

1940s, only eight (23%) included a preface. However, in the subsequent three years of the 1950s, more than half of the 13 titles published (54%) included a preface. Over time, the situation changed, and from the 1950s onwards, more Latvian publications of Anglophone literature began to include introductory or concluding information about the authors, their lives, views, and work. As was customary in the Soviet Union, this tendency was dictated from ''above'' as Professor Veisbergs puts it: "The new guidelines determined by the Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU of June 4 1957 stated that Western translations should carry long introductions and annotations, to help Soviet readers understand what was right and wrong" (Veisbergs 2020, 139). These guidelines stated that Western translations should include lengthy introductions and annotations to help Soviet readers understand the context.

During the Khrushchev Thaw, ideological indoctrination of society took a new turn. Prefaces and reviews in periodicals were seen as providing the correct direction for Soviet readers. 86 works (including republished titles) by British, Irish, American, British-American and Australian authors were translated into Latvian and published. Out of these, 50 works (58%) were supplemented with additional informative text such as a foreword, afterword, or blurb on the dust jackets of the books. In some cases, these were small sheets of paper found on the inner side of the cover. Notably, this indicates that these leaflets were manually glued after all book copies were published. It was common in the USSR for corrections to be made in the printed edition due to censorship demands or restrictions. Some of the prefaces are mere translations from the Russian editions previously published in the Soviet Union, while others are prepared by Latvian authors, including writers, poets, translators, reviewers, or members of the editorial board of the publishing house, who provide information about the author and their work.

In prefaces, one can discover openly expressed negative attitudes and criticism towards the capitalist system and a positive and supportive outlook on the socialist political course. They emphasize the author's progressiveness, while also condemning their insufficient fighting spirit, inactive social position, or propensity for decadence. The necessity of reading for every member of Soviet society is complemented by direct indications and guidelines on how to read and understand the text. It highlights what to look for in the book written by a Western author and its significance in the life of a Soviet person: "The novel

[R. Aldington's "All Men are Enemies"] is significant because it [...], convincingly criticizes bourgeois society and truly portrays the tragedy of the lost generation" (Šmulovičs 1964, 492).

Another common strategy is a description of horrors and cruelties inherent in the capitalist system. During the Cold War, society cultivated an image of the political enemy—the imperialist West, primarily represented by the USA. "[...] the Soviet Cold War culture had produced and disseminated an array of patterns, tropes, images, and words, devised to wage rhetorical war" (Norris 2020, 519). The reviewers spare no sharp epithets and employ colourful metaphors, referring to capitalists and capitalism as "degenerate spokesmen of the capitalist system" (Bauga 1961, 224), "these morally degraded creatures" (Ibid.), "predator morality" (Ibid.), "the nailed heel of capitalism" (Rambeka 1960, 289).

A specific technique involved comparing the United States, the main ideological enemy of the Soviets during the Cold War period, with Hitler's Germany. This practice was common in the Soviet Union during the 1950s and 1960s. For instance, Latvian political caricatures from that time equated the "Made in USA" sign with the German swastika, suggesting that both symbols could easily substitute for one another (Badina et al. 2021, 134). It was stated that after World War II, the "American ruling forces are increasingly leaning towards fascism", ("Romāna …" 1962) reminding Soviet readers of the corrupt state system and aggressive politics in the United States, drawing parallels with Nazi Germany.

As a mandatory reminder, the fantastic opportunities and achievements of the socialist system are highlighted, along with an appeal to Soviet readers to be prepared to fight for a better future for all of humanity against the enemies of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it encourages them to celebrate the course of the Communist Party.

One integral aspect of many prefaces is using the term "progressive" when characterizing Anglophone authors and their literary works. For instance, we often see phrases like "the great English progressive writer H. J. Wales" (Zālīte 1963, 356), "the outstanding American satirist and progressive realist writer Mark Twain" (Solomonovs 1955, 170), and "Archibald Cronin, who can rightfully be considered a progressive writer" (Bauga 1961, 225). In the Soviet Union, "progressiveness" is regarded as the most suitable and acceptable label for foreign authors whose works are allowed for publication. The use of the term "progressive" seems

to have become an automatic reaction in the context of Western (foreign, English, and American) literature.

Additionally, the reader is cautioned and reminded that regardless of the progressiveness of an author from a capitalist bloc country, their writings are characterized by significant drawbacks, which are unacceptable for a Soviet person. These drawbacks include a lack of fighting spirit, reluctance to actively and even aggressively resist capitalism, tolerance towards imperfections and negative aspects of the bourgeois lifestyle, and disbelief in the power of the working class: "Doris Lessing has not yet delved into the portrayal of active struggle in her work; she has not been able to capture the driving force within a nation oppressed by colonialism" (Jarmolinska 1961, 305).

To summarize, it is crucial to note that all the prefaces examined aimed to ensure the ideological education of society. Furthermore, they served as unique mechanisms for Western authors to secure publication. However, what sets these texts apart is that they were not solely written to appease censors and provide Soviet readers with the correct understanding of an author and their work, along with a mandatory set of ideological slogans and phrases:

> A curious way of fighting conventions and therefore promoting new forms and literary subjects is the intentional disguise of the translated literary texts as patriotic or socially oriented by equipping them with misleading prefaces and reviews, as well as with biographies of their authors. (Kamovnikova 2019, 34)

In 1960, when the Latvian publication of Edgar Allan Poe's short story collection was released, the renowned Latvian poet and translator of Poe, Vizma Belševica, mostly avoided the typical cliché techniques in her preface. There is no mention of "progressive writer" or "Soviet reader," although "the self-satisfied bourgeoisie" is still present. What is remarkable is Belševica's skilful evasion of certain controversial aspects of Poe's biography and creative writing. To maintain the image of an author permitted for publication in Soviet Latvia, the translator chooses not to focus on specific details of his life, such as Poe's heavy drinking or his marriage to his 13-year-old cousin. Instead, she writes that Poe "has been subjected to so much hatred and slander that literary scholars have not yet been able to fully establish the true details of his biography" (Belševica 1960, 6). Without clearly defining the

American author's literary affiliations, Belševica criticizes what was expected to be criticized in Soviet literary science. She negatively reviews Romanticism and Gothic literature, emphasizing that "In his work, Poe managed to avoid almost all the typical weaknesses of romanticists" (Ibid., 9–10).

CONCLUSION

Latvia's occupation disrupted the country's natural development and cultural landscape. Writers, like many other artists, faced the harshest censorship. The Soviet Latvian Writers' Union, speaking on behalf of the collective "we," turned into a body fighting dissent. Western culture was primarily regarded as bourgeois and reactionary in relation to Soviet culture. In the 1940s, the selection of foreign literature was highly restricted and selective, emphasizing the promotion of the positive aspects of the socialist system and criticism of the negative aspects of capitalism. Art became a political instrument, serving the socialist worldview under the direct control of the Communist Party.

Due to geopolitical interests, particular attention was given to Anglophone literature during the Stalinist period in Latvia. A meticulous selection process took place, resulting in only progressive writers being allowed to be translated, openly expressing their socialist views or demonstrating an anti-imperialist stance. Particular emphasis was placed on reviews and critical responses in newspapers and literary journals, aiming to assist, or rather impose, readers with interpreting texts following the spirit of Soviet ideology. The publication of translations of English-language literature in Soviet Latvia in the 1940s and 1950s became an example of careful selection and ideological control by the authorities.

During the Khrushchev era, the translation and publication of English literature in the Latvian language noticeably increased, offering Soviet readers a broader choice of authors and genres. The average number of books published yearly rose from five under the Stalinist regime to eight. This shift allowed Soviet Latvian readers to explore detective novels, adventure literature, and science fiction, which had previously been limited due to Soviet policies. Despite this growth, it is essential to acknowledge that these translations underwent thorough censorship throughout the entire process, and the authors and their works were presented with prejudice under ideological influence.

During the Khrushchev Thaw, the tradition of writing ideological commentaries with propagandistic intent continued. The paratextual elements preserved the same strategies inherited from the previous period. They called upon readers to actively resist capitalism on the ideological front. In addition to describing the horrors and cruelty of the capitalist world, the prefaces introduced a new propagandistic tendency – drawing parallels between the United States of America and Nazi Germany- to evoke a sense of outrage among Soviet readers.

The paratextual material aimed to shape the ideological upbringing of society while simultaneously serving as a facade for the publication of Western literature. However, it also employed deceptive tactics to promote new forms and narratives, disguising translated works as patriotic or socially oriented. The prefaces were carefully crafted to deceive the authorities and, at the same time, provide Soviet readers with captivating examples of foreign literature, all within the framework of ideological conformity.

Soviet ideology and ideological orientations, established and endorsed by the party apparatus, are vividly manifested in the paratextual material used to frame English-language literary texts. Prefaces and reviews often reveal openly expressed negative attitudes and criticism towards the capitalist system while exhibiting a positive or supportive view of the socialist political course. Emphasis is placed on the author's progressiveness, albeit accompanied by condemnation of their perceived lack of combativeness, inactive social stance, or inclination towards decadence. The necessity of reading for every member of Soviet society is complemented and reinforced by direct instructions and guidelines on how to read and understand the text, what to perceive in it, and what significance the book written by a Western author holds in the life of a Soviet individual. In the Soviet ideological struggle against the "decaying" and "rotten" capitalist way of life and "aggressive" imperialism, literature was regarded as an effective propaganda tool.

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FEMALE IDENTITY IN DIASPORA SOCIETY: NILANJANA IN TASLIMA NASRIN'S "FRENCH LOVER" AND NAZNEEN IN MONICA ALI'S "BRICK LANE"

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ABSTRACT

This article explores female identity in diaspora society portrayed in Taslima Nasrin's (1962) "French Lover" and Monica Ali's (1967) "Brick Lane". Nasrin writes about the female identity of the Indian diaspora, and Ali writes about the female identity of the Bangladeshi diaspora. This comparative study highlights two female characters from two novels, Nilanjana and Nazneen, who are always in-between tradition and adaptation. It also explores the intrinsic intersections between gender, migration and cultural dislocation. Nilanjana pursues personal liberation and Nazneen's journey tends to the balance between traditional values and self-empowerment. The encounter of these two female characters with cultural differences is highlighted through the postcolonial lens of diaspora and diasporic identity, hegemonies, feminism, and cultural studies. Drawing on the themes of migration, assimilation and resistance, this study focuses on characters' identities shaped by diasporic experiences as they face challenges of adapting to new cultures, the question of self-identity, cultural assimilation and freedom. As the boundaries of nation-states are redefined by the influence of globalization, and the growth of migration, the migration leads females from Third World countries to form their identity in the complex socioeconomic conditions, cultural divergences, and psychological landscapes. The primary objective of this research is to reveal the complexities of female experiences within diasporic communities. The positions of Nilanjana and Nazneen are very liminal in the new countries and new cultural backgrounds where diasporic patriarchal frameworks of power dynamics and cultural differences play crucial roles. This analysis sheds light on the multifaceted experiences of diasporic females who negotiate their identities in the intrinsic tapestries of cross-cultural encounters. Their relationships with the home countries and host societies, and traditional and modern values, as well as the role of language, help in shaping their identities. The basic finding of this study is a deeper understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities faced by women within diaspora societies.

Keywords: diaspora, female, feminism, identity, loneliness, exile, culture

INTRODUCTION

"French Lover" (2001) (*Forashi Premik*) was written in Bengali by Taslima Nasrin and translated into English by Sreejata Guha, and "Brick Lane" (2003) was written in English by Monica Ali. Nasrin was brought up in a conservative Muslim society in Bangladesh and Ali was born in Bangladesh but lived in England from her very early childhood. The themes of their works are not identical: in her poems, stories, novels, and columns, Nasrin mainly concentrates on women's oppression, fundamentalism, and sexuality. Later on, when she is exiled, she concentrates on diaspora. Ali focuses on the diasporic life in general. In "French Lover", Nasrin portrays Nilanjana, an educated twenty-seven-year-old girl, whereas in "Brick Lane", Ali, who belongs to a new generation of Anglophone diasporic writers, highlights an eighteen-year-old girl Nazneen. Nilanjana migrates to Paris whereas Nazneen moves to London after marriage. Through a comparative analysis of these two famous novels, this study intends to explore the challenges of female immigrants in diaspora societies and how women's experiences help to form new identities.

METHODOLOGY

This article provides an exploration of diaspora, diasporic female identity, and their position in the societies of Paris and London through a comparative analysis of two famous novels: "French Lover" and "Brick Lane". To analyze the female identity in a diaspora society, this article will employ the qualitative analysis approach. The analysis will be conducted following feminist lenses to interpret gender dynamics in the diaspora society. Concepts of diasporic identity, culture and cultural identity of in-betweenness, diasporic hegemonies, and diaspora feminism will be applied to make a comparative study of the novels.

Secondary sources have been consulted for understanding the broader concepts of diasporic hegemonies, female identity and their position in the diaspora. Citation is properly provided and the analysis is unbiased considering ethical issues. The study contributes valuable insights by presenting cultural elements and gender roles of the main male characters of the two novels. The methodology enables a comprehensive analysis of the novels of Nasrin and Ali from diasporic feminist perspectives.

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FEMALE WRITERS IN BANGLADESHI DIASPORIC LITERATURE: NASRIN AND ALI

Women play a very important role in domestic and public spheres in diasporic societies. South Asian immigrant women carry the traditional cultural values of the homeland and transmit those among posterior generations. In postcolonial discourse, diasporic female writers concentrate on the issues of women of homeland and a host country:

> […] the diasporic women writers emerge to write down the experiences of women through female perception and perspectives. The women writers depict the characters and their experiences in foreign countries in such a way that immigrant women feel identified with the women writers who articulate for them. (Karche and Mane 2022, 34)

Diasporic women writers present females' roles to interrelate their home cultures with the host-land cultures. Bangladeshi diasporic writers write about migration, identity, displacement and experiences of diasporic women.

Bangladeshi literature and Bangladeshi Anglophone literature refer to the literary works of pre-independence and post-independence Bangladesh. There are three historical phases: Bangladesh was under the British colonial rule as a part of the Indian Subcontinent before the Partition 1947, which divided Bengal into two parts – West Bengal and East Bengal (known as East Pakistan). As the majority of the people of East Pakistan were from Bengali culture and had a distinct linguistic identity, they fought against West Pakistan for independence in 1971.

> Bangladeshi literature in English has made considerable progress since its inception in the colonial period. […] there has been a surge of activity in the new millennium, with several writers making breakthroughs in the international literary scene and winning prestigious prizes. […] the tradition seems to be growing more rapidly in the diaspora than at home. […] To address this imbalance and to create a vibrant anglophone literary site at home, the country's leadership needs to take appropriate measures to strengthen the state of English and its literary fabric. A robust English writing tradition will help bring Bangladesh closer to the world by sharing its history and culture with people of other

countries in the global lingua franca, something that cannot be achieved if the national spirit is invested wholly in Bangla. (Quayum and Hasan 2022, 740)

Bangladeshi Bengali literature and Bangladeshi writing in English emerged after the independence of Bangladesh. Bangladeshi writing in English refers to the literary works of the writers who write in English at home and abroad. Bangladeshi diasporic literature refers to the literary works written by Bangladeshi writers who are living outside of Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi diasporic literature often delves into the discourse of dual identity and the tension between old and new cultures to which they belong. Bangladeshi female diasporic writers focus on the issues related to feminism, gender roles and women's rights within Bangladeshi communities. They assert their perceptions on femininity through female protagonists and reveal that migration cannot change female immigrants' identity. Bangladeshi female diasporic writers are Monica Ali, Tahmima Anam, and Taslima Nasrin who are living in the UK and the USA. They are considered South Asian Anglophone writers who focus on women's issues and their dilemmas about home culture and the diasporic cultures they encounter. They show that women are doubly marginalized and can raise their voices. In an article titled "Diasporic Feminism and Locating Women in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Arranged Marriage," it is asserted:

> The diasporic women writers have tried to represent women from margin' to 'centre' through their writings. Apart from that, in a diasporic place women faced double marginalization, but in diaspora they get chance to raise their voice because of the influence of western culture or being conscious about their rights. Mainly in diaspora, women go through the problems of assimilation, alienation, negotiation, past memory in this condition they think for themselves and try to raise their voices. (Pawar 2019, 6)

Diasporic women writers write about women's problems in their homeland and their host lands where they settle to build a new home. They write about females who are the models of South Asian women and interact with the outside world in the diaspora.

In Bangladeshi feminist writing, Nasrin is vocal against patriarchy. She was exiled for writing "Lajja" in 1994 and became a global author. She got a shelter in India; in 2004, she was

expelled from India, moved to Sweden, lived in some other European countries, and now she lives in New Delhi. Feeling exiled, displaced, alienated, dispossessed, and rootless after migration, she writes "French Lover" to focus on the psychological sufferings and it signifies "homeland" for a diasporic woman. Ali left Dhaka when she was barely four years old, and she is a part of both Bangladesh and England. She became a well-known diasporic author for writing "Brick Lane" which "is the first novel written in English by a diasporic writer of Bangladeshi origin" (Lahiri 2019, 116). Ali rises as a diasporic author belonging to a new generation of Anglophone diasporic writers.

Nasrin and Ali concentrate on immigrant women's challenges and struggles to form their identity to live in diaspora societies freely. They contribute immensely to Bangladeshi diasporic literature writing about the female characters who face a diasporic patriarchal society. They clearly demonstrate "the diverse ways in which constructions of identity are being reshaped within a transnational context" (Ranasinha 2016, 42). Diasporic women face double marginalization and they can raise their voices and become conscious about their rights due to the influence of Western cultures. In their novels, both Nasrin and Ali write about migration, assimilation, negotiation, and diasporic women's loneliness and cries for home.

DIASPORIC FEMINISM: AN OVERVIEW

"Diasporic Feminism" is a feminist theory that intersects the fields of postcolonial studies, diasporic identity and feminism. It examines diasporic female experiences, struggles and perspectives of women within diasporic communities and highlights gender, identity and cultural contexts which help to shape female identity. It emerges from migration and cultural encounters which help to shape gender relations and identities. The critical reading of diasporic feminism examines the concepts of diasporic identity, intersectionality, hybridity, cultural tension, and adaptation.

The concept of "diaspora" refers to the migration, scattering, and dispersion of people from one land to the geographical locations of another. Movement is a common phenomenon in the time of globalization and immigrants fight to adjust to the new cultural setup. Migration shapes the experiences, identities and struggles of women within a diaspora society and "The experiences of migrancy and living in a diaspora have animated much recent postcolonial literature, criticism and theory" (McLeod 2007, 207).

In the broader narratives of postcolonial studies, female migration refers to the understanding of gender dynamics which helps to understand female identity, resilience and experiences.

Postcolonial diasporic studies come from the idea of migration which changes the identity of immigrants who are from different geographical locations. Diasporic males and females face certain problems:

> Exiles or emigrants or expatriates are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. If we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing; that was lost; that we will in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind. (Rushdie 1991, 10)

Rushdie points out the loneliness and uncertainties of immigrants who cry for the past and memories. Their inability to return home becomes imaginary and invisible to them. In this regard, diasporic studies focus on the identity of immigrants who face many similar and contradictory problems.

Women of the diaspora face identity politics as they remain busy with domestic chores and patronize the cultures in the male-centered family structure. At the same time, they also challenge the male-centered perspectives. There are three categories of diasporic women: some diasporic women are free and cosmopolitan as they are neither influenced by the culture of their homeland nor completely carried away by the host culture, some are in-between modern and traditional values, and some are completely socialized into culture. Diasporic women "bear the traces of particular cultures, traditions, languages, systems of belief, texts and histories which have shaped them. But they are also obliged to come to terms with and to make something new of the cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them (Hall 1993, 361). They become the product of cultural hybridity and never think to return. Their identities are formed and are always in formation.

The issue of identity is very significant in diaspora and it naturally constructs and reconstructs cultural identity in multiple socio-cultural situations. Various races or communities migrate and face racial, cultural, and linguistic confusion in the formation of a new culture and they have to encounter defamiliarization and

hybridization. Diasporic identity constantly produces and reproduces immigrants' identities which "are marked by the multiplicity of subject positions that constitute the subject. Hence, identity is neither fixed nor singular; rather it is a constantly changing relational multiplicity" (Brah 1996, 123). Identity is a process and cultural identity is a combination of social group and collective identities. It represents the personal and individual identities of an individual who carries double consciousness which "often produced an unstable sense of self" (Tyson 2006, 421). The unstable sense of self-identity in the diaspora creates an identity crisis which makes a migrant culturally displaced and psychologically traumatized.

Culture refers to the way of life of different societies and their cultural habits. When women move to another country, they feel torn between the cultural identities of their homeland and the host land. They face problems and difficulties in diverse cultural situations; some people can partially adjust and some cannot. Cultures cross borders with migrants and "[c]ultures travel across geographical borders; they merge and separate; they cross and disrupt political and social divisions, and also, sometimes, strengthen them" (During 2005, 6–7). Culture is a process of change and it develops through practices. Interacting with other cultures is a challenge and immigrant women's identities transform into hybrid identities because "groups and individuals do not have a single identity but several" (Ibid., 151). In-between home and host cultures, diasporic women negotiate modern and traditional values and they prefer the socialisation of their home cultures.

Migration displaces and dislocates people, and it is "a process of displacement and disjunction that does not totalize experience" (Bhabha 1994, 5). The sense of displacement creates an idea called hybridity through cross-cultural encounters. Hybridity is a state when a person stands between two cultural spaces and it introduces a third space, the interstitial space or liminal space. In different socio-cultural situations, culture is an important factor in shaping one's identity and hybrid identity accepts or rejects contradictions of different cultures. Diversity forms hybrid identity and fixity which is a dangerous tenant for identity. Cultural hybridity brings together contradictory ideas, practices, and discourses and it is formed or reformed by intercultural relations through the processes of assimilation and adaptation.

In the diaspora, Indian and Bangladeshi women interact with various communities and fight against societal inequalities. The marginalised positions of women, cruel attitudes of patriarchal

mindsets and otherness become a part of diasporic hegemonies. Diasporic feminism conceptualises women's identities on the basis of hegemonies regarding caste, class, ethnicity, nationality, and gender. The relation between the power structure and oppression and struggles of diasporic women are the manifestation of the subalternisation of diasporic females. Diasporic feminism gives a critical lens through which female identity and experiences within diasporic societies are analysed. It challenges the traditional feminist paradigms and highlights the complex identity which negotiates within the context of migration and cultural displacement. It gives a comprehensive idea of women's diverse experiences and challenges in a globalised world. There is a distinction between Western and Third World women; in comparison to South Asian women, Western women engage themselves more in productive activities and try to preserve freedom and equality.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NASRIN'S "FRENCH LOVER" AND ALI'S "BRICK LANE"

Ali earns critical acclaim for addressing Bangladeshi immigrant women's identity, whereas Nasrin – for depicting an Indian immigrant woman's identity. Both deal with female identities and their struggle in diaspora societies. Nasrin's Nilanjana is a Bengali Hindu woman from Kolkata, and Ali's Nazneen is a Bangladeshi Bengali Muslim woman from Mymensingh. Although these two diasporic women are from two countries, their crises are the same in diaspora locations. They are torn apart by two countries, two cultures, their past and present scenarios, and two identities. The novel "French Lover" is set in Paris, whereas "Brick Lane" is set in the Tower Hamlets in London. Nilanjana and Nazneen grapple with cultural anxieties and quest for new identities in diaspora societies. The narratives of their identity crises and the formation of identities in diasporic locations reveal the tendency of preserving cultures and mingling with multiple cultures.

Nilanjana's husband is Kishanlal and Nazneen's husband is Chanu; both of them preserve patriarchy and they do not like the involvement of their wives in any productive activities outside home. They choose wives from *desh* (homeland) so that they can maintain *deshi* (home) culture and Chanu's wife "[…] embodies the authenticity (the real thing) of the homeland and its natural beauty and purity (unspoiled, from the village)" (Liao 2013, 119).

Immigrant men consider *deshi* girls as unspoiled, because in Bengali culture, girls normally cannot mix with other men freely.

Nilanjana and Nazneen's new journeys to the new lands lead them into perpetual displacement. They are considered as third world women and constantly struggle to reconstruct their identities, "[…] 'third-world women' as a homogeneous 'powerless' group often located as implicit victims of particular cultural and socio-economic systems" (Mohanty 1988, 66). Women of third-world countries are treated as powerless, inferior, marginal, and subordinate both at home and outside. Mohanty also states:

> The distinction between western feminist representation of women in the third world, and western feminist self-presentation is a distinction of the same order as that made by some Marxists between the 'maintenance' function of the housewife and the real 'productive' role of wage-labour, or the characterization by developmentalists of the third world as being engaged in the lesser production of 'raw materials' in contrast to the 'real' productive activity of the first world. (Ibid., 65)

In Bangladeshi and Indian Bengali patriarchal culture, arranged marriage is usual and husbands want to impose power on wives. Kishanlal and Chanu transplant and maintain *deshi* gender roles after marriage.

Nasrin and Ali show double marginalization of Nilanjana and Nazneen. Nilanjana migrates to Paris "with a smudged bindi on her forehead and sindoor smeared in her hair" (Nasrin 2002, 1) wearing a red sari after marriage. Patriarchy is a social system where men are considered superior and they control women in such a way that in India the patriarchal word *swami* [husband] means "owner" and *kannyadan* means "handing over the responsibilities of a daughter to the groom". Nasrin writes that Nilanjana's "[l]ife would pass between one hotel and the other" (Ibid., 2). Marriage changes her living place, not her identity. Kishanlal, her husband, treats her as his property and he appreciates her Indian identity and behaviour like traditional Indian women.

Ali shows that Nazneen's father makes the decision of his daughter's marriage and chooses an older man Chanu as a husband. Nazneen says, "Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be a good wife, like Amma" (Ali 2003,

12). Nazneen accepts the decision of her *abba* [father], and she would like to become a good wife like her *amma* [mother]. Most of the women from Bangladesh obey their parents, eventually accepting their parents' decisions regarding marriage:

> In rural areas in Bangladesh, generally bride's opinions are not taken seriously. In arranged marriages in Bangladesh, immigrant brides and grooms are the most desirable on the marriage market, because Bangladeshis who live in the Western world are considered to have a higher social status. (Chowdhury 2018, 5)

In Bangladesh, parents choose grooms, who are citizens of Western countries for a better life for their daughters and their higher status. Nazneen considers her mother as "a long-suffering saint" (Ali 2003, 64), because Bangladeshi gender norms are set in her mind in such a way that she likes to become a submissive wife like her mother. Marriage cannot change her identity; it leads her from one suffocating situation to another. In "Transplanted Gender Norms and Their Limits in Monica Ali's 'Brick Lane'," Hasan states: "In London, Nazneen faces the same patriarchy that has stronghold in Bangladesh and is relegated to the sphere of domestic, private life of an immigrant ghetto" (Hasan 2021, 207). Nazneen faces patriarchy at home, and later understands her subjugated situation.

Women and patriarchal socio-cultural settings of the diaspora are reflected in the writings of diasporic women writers:

> […] women's writings not only focus on domestic patriarchal issues of women in societies but in a larger context the predicament of women in socio-political and economic circumstances in the public sphere. The diasporic women's writings belong to two worlds of settlement and have tried to reveal different sorts of universal experiences in diasporic location. (Pawar 2019, 7)

Like other diasporic women writers, Nasrin and Ali focus on female identity and their involvement in domestic spheres. Women face patriarchal issues, displacement, isolation, etc. Bangladeshi male immigrants practise masculinist authority at home in the diaspora as Chanu preserves patriarchy imposing power over Nazneen, "In Bangladesh, patriarchy describes a distribution of power and resources within families such that men maintain power and control of resources, and women are powerless and dependent

on men" (Hossen 2020, 51). In Bangladeshi culture, women are treated as inferior, dependent, and powerless and men control women and all resources.

Indian and Bangladeshi diasporic women mostly practise *deshi* culture which upholds traditions; and the traditional cultural heritage leads Nilanjana and Nazneen to another oppressed situation. Traditionally a woman has a father's house, husband's house and son's house and they do not have houses of their own. In "The Doll's House" Nora tells Helmer, "[…] our home has never been anything other than a play-house. I have been your doll-wife here, just as at home I was Daddy's doll-child" (Ibsen 2016, 233). Ibsen shows that a woman in a patriarchal society is treated like a doll in the house which is considered as a playhouse.

Unlike other Indian women, Nilanjana has a premarital sexual relationship with a high-caste Brahmin named Sushanta and this kind of relationship is considered illicit in Indian culture. As Kishanlal lives in Paris, "Nila had her share of dreams about hard life sustained only in love. Perhaps every Bengali was born with that desire" (Nasrin 2002, 19). Like some Bengali women, Nilanjana dreams of going abroad after marriage, but Kishanlal marries her just to maintain a family. Though Kishanlal and Nilanjana are from India, their cultures are different as Nilanjana is a Bengali and Kishanlal is a Panjabi.

Women in diaspora societies preserve strong traditional values and social stigma and they also try to adopt and emerge as separate identities. Nazneen is from a conservative family and "Both Karim's and Chanu's views of Nazneen as the embodiment of authentic Bangladeshi identity illustrate their desire for patriarchal identity and control" (Liao 2013, 120). Bangladeshi diasporic men marry Bangladeshi women to control them; and when they feel isolated and culturally dislocated, domestic spheres become comfortable zones to apply power. Feeling threatened by losing authority, Chanu applied power over Nazneen.

Nilanjana feels her husband's luxurious house as a cage and she is treated as a housekeeper and sex object. She has to do all household chores as Kishan makes it clear that her real job is to do all the domestic work. He states, "Just look at all the dirty dishes of last night – they're still lying there" (Ali 2002, 23), and he shows his sense of possessiveness telling "[…] my wife here is quite beauty […]. After all, she is my bride" (Ali 2002, 19). Staying in France for a long time, he could not change his mind. Just like the Duke of Robert Browning's poem, "My Last Duchess", Kishanlal treats Nilanjana as an object and he likes to impose power over

Nilanjana who "cleaned the house diligently, watered the plants and cooked" (Nasrin 2002, 57) and spends her leisure time reading books.

Ali also presents Nazneen's everyday life revolving only around the family. She feels "trapped in this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity" (Ali 2002, 61). Chanu does not change with time and place and Nazneen battles with social constraints as patriarchy is a social system in which men are considered superior by definition. Patriarchy is a blind belief. In our society, "Men have more control of the ideology, resources, and authority in our lives than women" (Hossen 2020, 52). Women's lives are controlled by men and patriarchal norms of Bangladesh normally accept domestic violence. Ali shows that Nazneen cleans, cooks, and washes, the image which draws "[…] attention to the everyday life of a group of female immigrants whose world revolves around family and the home" (Poon 2009, 429). Bangladeshi women immigrants remain busy with household work to please their husbands. The categories of their unpaid work are "(1) housework; (2) mother-work; and (3) wife-work" (Chowdhury 2009, 613). Women do housework and activities of childbearing remaining busy to satisfy their husbands sexually.

As Bengali brides, firstly, Nilanjana and Nazneen do not get any scope to know anything about their life partners before their marriage. Ali shows that Nazneen is grateful to Chanu who is "[a]t least forty years old. He had a face like a frog. They would marry and he would take her back to England with him. She looked across the fields, glittering green and gold in the brief evening light" (Ali 2003, 17). Age and physical appearance do not matter to Nazneen's parents and Nazneen goes abroad with a glorious dream. Nasrin focuses on Nilanjana's marginalization when she goes out of the airport with "red silk sari, the sindoor on her forehead and hair, gold ornaments, the blue passport and the loose currency" (Nasrin 2002, 9). Nilanjana's dress shows her Indian identity and she faces subjugation.

Nilanjana and Nazneen cross borders, but they ultimately do not enjoy liberty. Nila says, "This is my first time outside the country. Although there were no oceans to cross, I feel I've crossed the seven seas to get here. It's a whole new world, totally strange" (Nasrin 2002, 28). Nila finds France totally strange and she feels, "[…] very lonely the whole day. If I had their phone numbers, I could have talked to them […]" (Nasrin 2002, 29). She is eager to talk with people to overcome loneliness; she wants to see Paris.

But Kishanlal thinks that she will get enough time throughout her life to see Paris. Nilanjana wanders aimlessly and forgets that "[…] she had to go back home, forget that she had just one identity – that she was Mrs Lal, Mrs Kishanlal" (Nasrin 2002, 67). When she travels along the roads of France, she forgets her identity as a wife and migrant.

Nilanjana and Nazneen are in-between cultures and patriarchal norms and their sense of in-betweenness challenges the traditional understanding as "Differences of gender, 'race', class, religion and language (as well as generational differences) make diaspora spaces dynamic and shifting, open to repeated construction and reconstruction" (MacLeod 2007, 207). The problems and the possibilities of different genders give changing spaces for the construction and reconstruction of identity. Nasrin and Ali show how culture affects immigrants' lives and helps to form a new identity and get a space: "Nazneen's predicament concerns her existence within the brick complex of apartments. Her domestic space epitomizes the isolation and seclusion that Bangladeshi women immigrants experience in a transplanted culture of patriarchy" (Hasan 2021, 210). Nazneen feels isolated and her desires of learning English and ice skating seem absurd to Chanu. Nila wants freedom, but Kishan devalues her quality as he states, "She might as well become a professor of Bengali in Sorbonne. It's not that easy. I had to wait for twelve years before I could open a restaurant" (Nasrin 2002, 74). Though Nilanjana is educated, Kishan belittles her and thinks that she will not be able to do anything in France.

Nilanjana and Nazneen know that the English language is essential for communication in different countries of the world. They face a crisis for their language inefficiencies as Nilanjana finds that French people prefer the French language and they intentionally use their mother tongue everywhere. Chaitali, another female immigrant, says, "Of course, they know English; but they won't speak it" (Nasrin 2002, 11). So, Nilanjana learns French from Alliance Françoise to get space in France, but her space is liminal there. Staying in France she feels more comfortable speaking Bengali. This tendency may be set before the key issues of postcolonial theory, which focuses on the concept of colonial encounters as European culture dominates and treats the Orient as a sort of degenerative culture. Ali's Nazneen does not know how to speak English. She can say only two words ("sorry" and "thank you") in English and she "had spoken, in English, to a stranger, and she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But

it was something" (Ali 2003, 48). Nazneen learns some words to interact with foreigners. Nilanjana and Nazneen's dresses represent Bengali identity as well.

Indian and Bangladeshi men and women wear different dresses as "Saris, salwars and slippers were for women and dhotis, shirts, T-shirts, trousers, ties, socks and shoes were for men […]. In this country men and women wore the same kind of clothes and it was hard to tell the difference" (Nasrin 2002, 51). Nilanjana observes that there is a distinction between male and female in India regarding dress and the same difference is not visible in France. When she starts to wear Western dress, her husband tells her "wear a sari and jewellery" (Ibid., 14), which reflects his patriarchal mindset. Ali shows that Nazneen's encounter with white Londoners is limited, but when she wears a traditional dress for going outside, she finds the difference between the English women's dress and hers. She feels alienated when she goes to Bishopsgate wearing a *sari*. Ali mentions, "Nazneen, hobbling and halting, began to be aware of herself. Without a coat, without a suit, without a white face, without a destination" (Ali 2003, 45). Nazneen feels herself an alien in the new culture.

Nilanjana and Nazneen also prefer Bengali food as the Bengalis from both India and Bangladesh are food lovers. Nasrin writes that as Kishanlal is Punjabi, Nilanjana could not eat Indian Bengali food at home. As a Bengali, she likes to eat rice and fish, but her husband eats roti and vegetables. When she eats *daaler bara*, *shukto, posto*, *begun bhaja*, *kopi bhaja*, *choto macher chorchori*, *rui macher paturi*, *shorshe yilish*, *chingri malaikari*, chicken curry and lamb curry in Chaitali's place, she feels very happy. Moreover, she goes to restaurants to have tea. She likes to drink at least two cups of tea every morning and her husband does not. Kishanlal states, "Two kinds of habits in the same house are definitely a problem" (Nasrin 2002, 24). This indicates his patriarchal mentality. Nilanjana adapts to French culture by eating French food. Diasporic cultural identity is not a finished product; it flourishes by differences. In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall states, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 120). Culture is a matter of interaction and change. Diasporic generations constantly change their cultural identity through adaptation and assimilation. In "Brick Lane" as both Nazneen and Chanu are from Bangladesh, their food habits are the same. Nazneen prepares lamb curry with tomatoes and new potatoes, chicken, vegetable dishes, rice,

kebabs, lentils, fish curry, and she makes tea at home. Chanu buys vegetables, pumpkin, gourd, spinach, okra, aubergine, spices, rice, lentils, *roshmalai*, sticky brown *gulabjam*, and *jelabee*.

Nilanjana and Nazneen's journey of self-discovery psychologically prepares them to survive on their own. They show resistance against patriarchal diasporic hegemonies in diasporic male communities. Bengali men in India and Bangladesh feel that women should not have any choice and they have to adjust with their husbands. Bengali culture does not allow women to do anything freely:

> Traditionally women in Bengal, as elsewhere in much of South Asia at the time, had little choice in their experiences as women but to accept the traditional patriarchal roles of mother, daughter, wife, or any social roles limited to the home sphere […]. (Harrington 2013, 5)

In "French Lover", Nilanjana is not economically free and she raises voice and tells Kishanlal:

> You should have married a dumb girl who'd silently do the housework and never protest at anything, who doesn't have a soul to call her own and cannot read or write, who didn't have her wits about her and didn't dream a single dream. (Nasrin 2002, 56)

Nilanjana changes and plays the role of a modern woman. Giving importance to her individuality, she makes it clear that she is not like traditional women who silently tolerate all kinds of oppression. Kishanlal scolds, "You'll have to depend on me all your life – you have no other choice" (Ibid.). The traditional concept of Indian patriarchal society enforces Kishanlal to treat Nilanjana as inferior.

In "Brick Lane", Chanu considers Nazneen's opinions as unimportant and he treats her negatively. Nazneen still tells her daughter, Shahana, "Your father is a good man. I was lucky in my marriage […]. When you are older, you will understand all these things. About a husband and wife" (Ali 2003, 251). In Bengali culture, women love their families and they show devotion to their husbands. Despite some or many mistakes, they appreciate their husbands in front of their children. Bangladeshi Bengali women are like Indian women who are "ready to do the best for her family […] as a selfless woman" (Kaushik 2007, 237). Bengali women are

the preservers of their culture and they selflessly work for their family and children.

Nilanjana interacts with the Western culture and makes a relationship with Danielle, a French lesbian feminist who introduces her to a group of middle-class European feminist women in Paris. She gains freedom as a new woman after engaging in lesbian relationships. They converse:

> So what are your plans? Are you going back?
> Nila asks 'where'? Where else? To your land?
> Do I have a land of my own? If your own land spells shelter, security, peace and joy, India is not my land.
> Danielle said, 'then stay here. Didn't you once say everyone has two motherlands, one of his own and the other France?'
> Do women ever have a land of their own or a motherland? I do not think so. (Nasrin 2002, 291–292)

Nasrin demonstrates that a woman has no land of her own and must struggle to find her place in a patriarchal setting. She does not dream of a utopian land for women as Nilanjana disconnects herself from home and feels displaced in her husband's house. Her journey to freedom starts when she goes to Danielle's place to live. She realizes, "Life isn't easy in this foreign country" (Ibid., 79) and feels an identity crisis when she observes that French boys and girls place more importance on their choices. Her idea of life changes and she begins to adopt French culture by trying to eat spaghetti with a fork, though it slips away, and wearing Western clothes. Sometimes her Bengali habits interfere and she drinks water instead of wine during the meal. The narrator comments, "In this city, she noticed, it was wrong not to drink; people thought you were uncultured and uncivilized" (Ibid., 84). She goes to a cafe and disco and drinks wine and her hybrid identity reflects her acceptance of Western culture. Ali shows that Nazneen keeps a familial bond with her sister, Hasina, and frequently writes to her. She likes Karim, but she cannot make the adverse decision of leaving her husband's house thinking about the future of her two daughters, Shahana and Bibi.

Motherhood is a very important part of Bengali women, and sometimes motherhood becomes a weapon of oppression in patriarchy. Nilanjana does not want to be a mother and therefore has an abortion. She wants to own a house and has a sexual relationship with Benoit after leaving her husband's house. She passes time visiting different places, eating, and spending money.

She lavishly spends money that she gets from her mother. Nilanjana feels that her job is more important than becoming a mother. Motherhood gives a sense of ambition to Nazneen, who like a Bangladeshi mother, sacrifices everything for her children.

In "Brick Lane", Nazneen is treated as a backdated woman by Chanu. After facing a lot of obstacles in her personal life she searches for a new identity. Ali shows a change of consciousness in terms of personal fulfillment and sexual awareness. She is inhumanly treated by her husband at home as Kamala Das, an Indian poet, treats her husband's house as an old playhouse, "The Old Playhouse":

> You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her
> In the long summer of your love so that she would forget
> Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind, but
> Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless
> Pathways of the sky. (Das 1993, line 1–5)

Das shows that men in a patriarchal society want to tame women so that they can get all kinds of comforts from them. Ali portrays Bangladeshi gender norms in the diaspora society. Chanu denies Nazneen's choices and wants to restore Bengali culture in diaspora society. Diasporic patriarchy focuses on the traditional (home culture) socio-cultural restrictions for women to control them.

Nazneen breaks tradition and resists asserting herself and shifting away from her Bangladeshi feminine identity. She makes an extra-marital relation with Karim and a sexual relationship with him. She prefers freedom and chooses public spheres instead of domestic surroundings. So, "Nazneen's feminist bildungsroman – her arrival at self-definition through her journey from Bangladeshi patriarchy to its transplanted form in the diaspora and her eventual defiance of its domestic gender norms" (Hasan 2021, 217). Nazneen gets freedom from traditional Bangladeshi gender norms and adopts new culture.

In "French Lover", Kishanlal wants to tame Nilanjana, who renounces traditions and becomes a new woman. She values her sexual autonomy in her relationship with Benoit, who shows his broadmindedness by introducing her to the street cafes and art galleries in Paris. She learns French manners from Danielle and thinks, "In this land, everyone was the same. Some had better jobs and some didn't, but everyone had their human dignity. Nilanjana thought to herself; that is how it should be" (Nasrin 2002, 86). In Bengali culture, people make distinctions between two classes and

they do not respect others' dignity. Nilanjana wants respect and makes a passionate relationship denying the subjugated situation at home. She starts discovering her own identity adopting French culture, but sometimes she eats Bengali food, invites Bengalis to her home, and speaks Bengali. She has relationships with a lesbian Danielle and Benoit, but her experience is that Frenchmen are also manly, selfish, and egoistic. There is a combination of traditional values and Western ideals in her, and her thoughts show oppositional powers of Eastern and Western cultures as in "The Ballad of East and West", Kipling states, "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" (Kipling 2012, 6766,). The cultural and geographical division between the Eastern and the Western cultures cannot be united. Nilanjana faces a diverse nature of cultures after cross-cultural exchanges. She also comes to know that French lovers commit suicide when they do not have lovers. They suffer from loneliness and think about the joyless life of the next few months. It seems strange to Nilanjana that French people go to psychiatrists to cure their sorrow. She experiences an in-between situation when she has a relationship with Danielle and Benoit. Nasrin writes about the different feelings Nilanjana and Danielle have about their relatives. Nilanjana becomes emotional hearing the news of her mother's illness, and she decides to go to Kolkata to see her mother. Danielle considers it peculiar and screams, "La familia, la familia!" (Nasrin 2002, 121), because he does not see strong familial bonds in France. Nilanjana does not feel free in a relationship with a French lover and becomes selfish. She sometimes wants to be transformed into a Western woman, but sometimes behaves like traditional women and cannot tolerate Benoit's wife, Pascale and child.

Diasporic women cry for the broken memories of home, and when Nilanjana visits Kolkata, she searches for old memories, seeing many changes. She feels sad seeing her mother's loneliness, and no one in the family thinks about her sacrifice. Her father and brother place more importance on their work than on her mother. She becomes sad after her mother's death. Avoiding Indian culture, she adopts liberal socio-cultural aspects. She considers France to be more developed, cultured, civilized, and rich, and she always tries to fill the gap between her homeland and her host country.

Ali shows that Nazneen becomes isolated and develops relations with Karim. Their emotional relationship challenges the orthodox male-dominated society. Karim opens her eyes about injustice and racial tension. She has misconceptions about Western life and she encounters hostile surroundings in England. She

becomes frustrated with Chanu and his indecisiveness. Nazneen is like a "moth surrounded by a shell of fate, religious hypocrisy and male dominated society" (Das 2015, 3). Her struggle for a new identity is reflected as she talks about the clash between Western values and the Bangladeshi Bengali culture. After adopting Western cultures, Nazneen freely pursued for emotional gratification with Karim at home.

Nasrin and Ali not only show double marginalization of diasporic women, but also provide their voices of resistance and condemnation to male-dominated society. They face gender discrimination and "In diasporic places women have not only faced discrimination or differentiation as migrant women but also as religion, linguistic group, caste and sect" (Brah 2001, 39). A new way of thinking from a feminist perspective emerges in the diaspora and encourages women to speak up and resist stereotyped and traditional social structures.

When diasporic women face problems socially, politically and economically in patriarchal settings, they start working in different fields and raise their voices against patriarchy. Though breaking relations with husband brings shame in the Bengali family, Nilanjana denies domestic life and leaves home, and Nazneen struggles to live in England without Chanu. Nilanjana becomes desperate to come out of boredom and depression in her husband's house. Ali shows that though beating is common in the Muslim diasporic community, Chanu never beats Nazneen. Like her *amma* [mother] Nazneen sacrifices herself and wants nothing from her life. Her traditional attitudes change and she strives to become financially secure.

TRANSFORMATION OF FEMALE IDENTITIES IN THE DIASPORA SOCIETY

The sense of freedom helps Nilanjana and Nazneen to form hybrid identities: "[h]ybrid identities are never total and complete in themselves […] they remain perpetually in motion, pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription" (McLeod 2007, 219). They dream of exercising freedom in the Western countries as women's rights are noticeable in the West. Western notions of modernity establish women's rights in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Generally, Western women are liberated in comparison to the countries of the East. Indian and Bangladeshi women think about achieving equality and freedom

and they also struggle for space in their host country to form new identities.

Nilanjana decides to get a job and live alone, and she liberates herself from the Indian-bound traditional rule. But her assessment of France is that as follows:

> Tell me, is there a good place on this earth? Where would you say there is total safety? There is poverty, sorrow and superstition there, as it is here. This country has racism, so does India. Women are raped in Calcutta, and it's the same here. (Nasrin 2002, 293)

She realizes that females are either sexualised or racialised everywhere and they have no place of their own. Her decision to separate from Kishanlal and her refusal of Benoit's proposal of settlement help to discover her self-identity. Nasrin wants to show that society will never give freedom to women; the sense of freedom should come from the mind of a woman.

Nazneen experiences cultural adaptation as she acculturates and blends her Bangladeshi cultural practices with London's way of life. She does ice skating in a sari as "Challenging gender conventions, Nazneen becomes a figure of adaptive hybridity in London while Chanu ends up feeling dislocated in both London and Dhaka, lost in unfulfilled desires in both host-land and old homeland" (Friedman 2021, 235). Immigrants encounter multiple cultures and must adapt to and assimilate into them. Ali's Nazneen tries to form a new identity by working for herself and her children and living in England. She moves freely in the outside world in order to integrate. When she thinks about her children, she denies Chanu's decision to return to Bangladesh and decides to live in London. Moreover, she does not want to face the patriarchal socio-cultural codes of Bangladesh. After her husband's departure for Bangladesh, she realises her new identity and finds a sense of independence and freedom. She integrates with Western culture and becomes Westernised by wearing *sari* while skating. It indicates her choice of staying with both cultures and showing individuality and freedom.

As economic freedom gives power and freedom to women, Nilanjana decides to search for a job to become economically sound. She expresses her desire for a new independent identity as she writes to her mother, Molina, "If I had money, Ma, I'd have lived happily. My own money, Ma. Without your own money you have to obey the person who has money for all your life" (Nasrin

2002, 68). She wants money from her mother and does not want to depend on her husband.

Nilanjana and Nazneen become independent and demonstrate bravery giving importance to their choices. Diasporic women face conservatism and their lives change under the influence of modern thought. Stuart Hall states that cultural identity "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (Hall 1997, 112). Nilanjana and Nazneen confront various problems in their new countries, but they also proclaim their identities. They emerge as independent women as a result of their encounters with different people and diverse cultures. Their identity is defined by language, culture, and nationality, and it changes through acculturation. Nilanjana achieves an individual identity that she cannot share with anyone and Nazneen's identity is shared with her daughters Shahana and Bibi.

CONCLUSION

Diasporic feminism celebrates the resistance of women in diaspora societies. The voices of Bangladeshi female diasporic writers, such as Nasrin and Ali, deal with sociological, historical, cultural, philosophical and diasporic feminine subjects. They express the role and position of Nilanjana and Nazneen, who are in-between cultures, cry for identity formation, can speak, raise their voices, and show resistance in diasporic societies. Hall rightly remarks:

> Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Hall 1997, 110)

Identity is a matter of formation and reformation as Nilanjana and Nazneen achieve self-identity and create a position for them in their new home in the diaspora. Women in the diaspora are not fully influenced by the culture of their homeland; they do not completely proceed with the host culture either. They form different identities through acculturation, adaptation, and rejection. Nazneen and Nilanjana are torn in-between traditional values and Western ideals. "Challenging gender conventions, Nazneen becomes a figure of adapting hybridity in London"

(Friedman 2021, 235) and Nilanjana "stands on the threshold of two homelands, physically and metaphorically: between the land of origin and the land of residence, between the metaphorical spaces of two different colours, nationalities and religions" (Gupta 2019, 98). They are oppressed and exploited; but they get new life for their interaction with modern and progressive cultural values. The feminist voices of Nasrin and Ali portray Nilanjana and Nazneen who leave the South Asian traditional domestic rules of patriarchy, choose free lives, and form new identities in the diaspora societies.

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ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGY AND FUNDAMENTALISMS WITHIN THE ARABIC CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The paper seeks to examine and redefine diverse forms of fundamentalisms within modern Arabic contexts employing an ecofeminist theology perspective. Ecofeminist theology analyses varied forms of domination, androcentrism and superiority over women and nature through deconstructing and challenging masculinist interpretations, understandings, and linguistic expressions of religions. Ecofeminist theologians relate religions and humanism as forces of unbiased, uncategorized liberation, equality, and freedom. Although the concept of fundamentalism is controversial for definers, modern and contemporary academia and media relate fundamentalism exclusively to Islam, particularly with the emergence of militant Islamist groups and global terrorist organizations. Fundamentalist movements are hierarchical, essentialist and sexist. Existing scholarship on Islamic fundamentalism lacks the feminist perspective and overlooks important forms of nonreligious fundamentalisms in Arab countries such as militarisms and semitribalisms that participate in the inferior position of women and nature. This paper examines the role of some Arab thinkers in relating women, politics, religion, and nature and specifically refers to Averroes, Fatima Mernissi, Zainab al Ghazali, and Nawal el Saadawi.

Keywords: ecofeminist theology, fundamentalisms, militarisms, Mernissi, el Saadawi, Averroes

INTRODCUTION: WOMAN, RELIGION, POLITICS AND NATURE

The position of women and the environment in religions has been a controversial issue. For a long time, women have been fighting and refuting deep-seated sexist and androcentric interpretations of religious texts that perceive women as inferior to men, limit women's mental, physical, and psychological capabilities and abilities, and hence reduce women's socioeconomic and political roles, defining them to work inside the house. Intimately related to women's subordination to men is the dominant idea that nature and the environment are properties for men to explore and subjugate (Ruether 1997, 2012; Adams 1993; Heather 2005). In this sense, Muslim women are not an exception. Different Muslim sharia and fiqh scholars have been underestimating and inferiorizing women. Sharia is derived from the Quran, accounts of Prophet Muhammad (Hadith), and other important texts written by Islamic scholars or fiqhaa who write fiqh. Fiqh refers to the different interpretations of God's intentions and revelations in the Quran. If a Muslim person wants a religious opinion (fatwa), he/she consults fiqhaa. Two important and highly influential, yet different, fiqhaa and Islamic scholars are Abu Hamidal Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah. Al Ghazali is seen as a revivalist whose works on jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, and logic are studied and referenced in Islamic schools, universities, and religious institutions, while Ibn Taymiyyah's fatwas are seen as the basis of modern terrorism and fundamentalism (AbuKhalil 1994, 686; Bazzano 2015, 119). For al Ghazali, "marriage is a form of enslavement; thus, she is his slave, and she should obey the husband absolutely in everything he demands of her provided such demands do not constitute an act of disobedience" (Al Ghazali 2010, 120). He describes women as "innately lustful and evil" who are "to be controlled by men" for "God has appointed men as trustees over women and has called the husband 'master'" (Al Ghazali 2009, 8). Al Ghazali continues his sexist views on women and his discriminatory attitude towards "the nonhuman" stating that "the race of women consists of ten species, and the character of each (of these) corresponds and is related to the distinctive quality of one of the animals. One resembles the pig, another the ape, another the sheep" (Yavari 2004, 165–166). Ibn Taymiyyah, like al Ghazali, regards women's role in society as wives and mothers. Women's education is seen by him as unnecessary but not banned, as women's mental abilities are limited. For Ibn

Taymiyyah, women are weak and inferior to men, therefore "a woman needs to be safeguarded and protected in a way a boy doesn't need. She needs guardianship" (Ibn Taymiyyah 2011, 96). He compares women to slaves and animals, stating that "the husband has the responsibility of spending on her, as much as he has the responsibility of spending on his slaves and animals" (Ibid., 101). Al Ghazali's and Ibn Taymiyyah's inferiorization of women as "nonhuman" is still a controversial issue in contemporary Islamic thought. Many scholars claim that God authorizes men to be superior to women, the nonhuman, and the natural systems. Men should control and discipline women who are considered evil, sexual creatures and who lack agency.

Famous philosopher, physician, Islamic theologian, and jurist Ibn Rushd, also known as Averroes, is one of the early intellectuals and scholars to examine the inferior position of women in Islam from a global perspective. For Ibn Rushd, the processes of inferiorizing and secluding women have not only occurred within the traditions of monotheistic religions such as Islam, Judaism and Christianity, but had existed in Greek philosophy and culture, a long time before these religions emerged and dominated. For example, Plato believes that women should have "virtuous souls" and that only exceptional women who get adequate education can be "guardians" while the main mission of most women is "procreation" (Ibn Rushd 1974, 60–61). Likewise, Aristotle regards "the female is opposite to the male" and the relationship between them is "by nature subjects and rulers" (Aquinas 2007, 66). Plato and Aristotle see women within the essentialist roles of procreation and working inside their households along with slaves. Ibn Rushd traces how confining women to the biological roles of procreation, upbringing and satisfying men's desires "nullifies their other activities. […] Women frequently resemble plants in these cities. Their being a burden upon the men in these cities is one of the causes of the poverty of these cities" (Ibn Rushd 1974, 59). Insightfully, Ibn Rushd not only compares women's inferior position to plants or the nonhuman and the natural systems, all are subordinated and dominated by men, but also argues this inferior position of women, the nonhuman and nature is the main reason behind the widespread poverty, and socio-economic injustices. For Ibn Rushd, "women are of one kind with men and the women will practice the [same] activities as the men" (Ibid., 56). Therefore, Ibn Rushd emphasizes that with the appropriate education, "there would be among [women] warriors, philosophers, rulers, and the rest (Ibid., 56–57). Women and men are different but equal and

free. They can do the same jobs if they have the required talents and are provided with the same training, education, and opportunities. Ibn Rushd regards the inferiorization of women within both religious or nonreligious orders and societies as a political tool of hierarchy and patriarchy. The exclusion of women from accessing power, socioeconomic institutions and public domains creates unbalanced and biased societies and leads to poverty and injustice. Ibn Rushd's progressive views on women can also be seen as relevant to the concerns of ecofeminist theologians in their discussions of the concept of difference as diversity rather than opposites, their criticism of the sexist and androcentric interpretations of religious texts and the subsequent loss of the sacrality of earth and nature. Rosemary Ruether explains that "ecofeminism or ecological feminism examines the interconnections between the domination of women and the domination of nature. It aims at strategies and worldviews to liberate or heal these interconnected dominations by better understanding of their etiology and enforcement" (Ruether 2012, 22). She argues further:

> That is, social patterns developed, deeply rooted in the distortion of gender relations with the rise of patriarchal slavocracies in Ancient Near East that inferiorized women as a gender group. The system of domination of women itself was rooted in a larger patriarchal hierarchical system of priestly and warrior-king control over land, animals, and slaves as property, to monopolize wealth, power, and knowledge. (Ibid.)

Ruether refers to the important role of the institutionalization of essentialist (gendered) divisions in controlling and limiting women's access to resources and public spaces and hence reducing their political, socioeconomic, and cultural rights, and agencies. In this sense, "ecology poses a profound challenge to all the classical religions shaped by the worldview of patriarchy" (Ibid., 22). As explained by Reuther, Ibn Rushd discusses the cultural and socioeconomic sides of the complex relationship between Islam, nature, and patriarchy, arguing that fundamentalism and essentialism are intertwined, major obstacles in the face of progressive and fair attitudes towards women and nature. Ibn Rushd dissociates between religion and the oppression, and essentialization of women. Rather, he relates democracy and Islam. Unlike Islamic scholars such as al Ghazali, and Ibn

Taymiyyah who have denounced democracy and philosophical reasoning as heretic and anti-Islamic values (Sahri 2021; Peters 2005), Ibn Rushd explains that religious and democratic values are compatible since both aspire to establish justice, equality, and freedom among men and women. Geographically speaking, Ibn Rushd lived in Islamized Cordoba, now Spain, Europe, but had to think and behave according to conservative Islamic politics, cultures and theologies in Cordoba, the Middle East, and other parts of the huge Islamic Empire at that time (Adamson and Taylor 2004; Craig 1998; Sharif 1963). Rather than being torn between the huge differences between the Eastern and Western cultures, types of knowledge and historical situations, or just abide by one side, Ibn Rushd adopts a highly progressive, self-conscious, and conciliatory attitude, seeking answers to questions relevant to all humans in the West and the East. These questions include problems of equality, justice, freedom, religious tolerance, and intellectual openness to difference, human diversity, and unlimited, free quest for knowledge. Ibn Rushd's progressive concept of female equality in Islamic communities and in the West is political activism against forces of domination that trap religions and societies hostage to masculinist and phallocentric discourses of thought. Ibn Rushd explains that within a just, moral democratic society, "the nomos is an equal nomos, there is no superior among them. Hence, this city, the democratic one resembles a many-colored woven garment. Just as this kind, of garment is considered by women and youths […]. Unless strengthened by virtue or honor, it perishes rapidly, as is the case with democratic cities existing in-this time of ours" (Ibn Rushd 1974, 127). Ibn Rushd dates the inferiorization of women to political reasons. The dominant hierarchical political orders of his time, which often regenerate gender, social, ethnic, religious, class and age-related inequalities, and hostilities, intentionally meant to encourage fundamentalist attitudes to maintain superiority, whether class, racial or colonial.

Religion is politicized as an authoritative means of justifying such inferior position of women, of marginalizing youth to patriarchal authorities within private, public, and political arenas and of emboldening colonial expansions and wars. He declared that and all Muslims are "adherents of the Laws of God or Sharia" (Ibn Rushd 1974, 71). To fight fundamentalist attitudes, Ibn Rushd offers two ecofriendly attitudes towards Islam. Firstly, he encourages the idea of Ijtihad or the reform of Islamic laws, deep-seated judgments, and strict textualism in interpreting the Quran through attempting new interpretations and readings of the Quran.

He believes that the Quran is timeless and universal in the sense that Quranic verses are liable for re-interpretations by different western and eastern scholars. Muslims are not enforcing Islam on other nations by war or antagonism, but through spatial and mental tolerance and justice. Secondly, Ibn Rushd employs the functionality of the natural systems and nonhuman creatures as teleological evidence on the presence and God's creation. He attributes agency to all creatures and objects whether animate or inanimate. He states that "there are in the elements' souls creating each species of animals, plants, and minerals that exists, and that each of them needs a directing principle and preserving powers for it to come into existence and remain, they have absolute dominion over these latter souls and these bodies" (Ibn Rushd 2008, 476). He explains that passive agency is a form of power: "the passive potencies are in the same position as the active, for it is the passive potencies possessing matters which accept definite things" (Ibid.). According to Ibn Rushd, a perfect society is balanced, free, virtuous, just, and rational. If human rationality is the only reason behind human superiority, what happens, then, if humans lose their reason and act irrationally? Ibn Rushd warns that the societies "based on wealth and the hedonistic ones are of a single class" (Ibn Rushd 1974, 125), and that "the transformation in habits and dispositions necessarily changes according to that order, to the point that when the laws are utterly corrupted, the states [of the soul] existing there will be utterly base" (Ibid., 144). Ibn Rushd faced strong resistance from conservative and fundamentalist religious scholars and thinkers whose power, though stems from their strong hold on religious places like mosques and their strong cultural presence, is mainly driven by their ties and allies with Islamic rulers and caliphs (Nafi 2017; Baer 2021; Fierro 2021).

Ibn Rushd's specific reference to the marginalization of women and youth in relation to dominant religious fundamentalist attitudes and patriarchal political elites is still valid for an analysis of contemporary political, religious, and sociocultural conflicts within different Arab contexts. In the post-Arab Spring revolutions (2011–) in many Arab countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, and Iraq, women and youth lead protests and sacrifice their lives. Yet, after the revolutions, women and youth are imprisoned, oppressed, and marginalized when the democratic transition is aborted. Arab people in revolutionary countries find themselves trapped between military men and Islamists, both are violent, repressive, discriminatory, and, this paper argues, fundamentalist. The following part of the paper examines how the corrupt marriage

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between fundamentalist religious movements and political elites (militarized/military elites) functions in modern Muslim Arab countries, and how such a marriage affects women, and the environment.

PART ONE: REDEFINING FUNDAMENTALISMS IN CONTEMPORARY ARAB POLITICS

In 1899, Egyptian Islamic scholar and jurist Qasim Amin published his well-known book "The Liberation of Women", which is seen as one of the early feminist readings of Islam. In "The Liberation of Women", Amin defended Islam against accusations of oppressing and subjugating women. Rather, Amin condemned dominant oppressive and sexist practices and attitudes against Muslim women confirming Islam equated between men and women. He argued further that Muslim women should follow the footsteps of modern Western women in defending their equal legal rights with men and in accessing education and workforce. Amin rejected women's seclusion, veiling, early marriage, and violence against wives and daughters:

> Nothing in the laws of Islam or in its intentions can account for the low status of Muslim women. The existing situation is contrary to the law, because originally women in Islam were granted an equal place in human society. What a pity! Unacceptable customs, traditions, and superstitions inherited from the countries in which Islam spread have been allowed to permeate this beautiful religion. Knowledge in these countries had not developed to the point of giving women the status already given them by the Sharia. (Amin 1922, 8)

For Amin, Arab women need to redefine their relationships with spaces, both private and public, to reclaim the rights given to them by Islam. With the decline of the Islamic empire and the emergence of Western imperialism, Arab women have experienced different forms of colonial and local corrupt structures and sexist stereotypes that sexualize and territorialize their bodies as domains of male colonial appropriation or native protection (Said 1979). Amin reiterates some ideas that Ibn Rushed had already argued almost ten centuries earlier. The past Islamic heritage still dominates and haunts the present and even the future

of Muslim men and women through being integrated and referred to in Islamic laws. Throughout the nineteenth century, Arab women were not allowed to work or appear in public. Only a minority of upper- and middle-class women accessed private education and the main roles of women were being mothers and wives. Nonetheless, the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of diverse progressive intellectual, nationalist, and feminist movements in different Arab countries. Many Arab intellectuals, writers, and religious scholars such as Amin support the liberal nationalist movements in Egypt and North African Arab countries that propagated the building of modern Arab democracies after independence and the incorporation of women's rights within the progressive nationalist agenda. Women played an important role in anticolonial resistance, for instance, feminists such as Egyptian Safia Zaghloul and Huda Sharaawi led the first female public protest in modern Egypt in 1919, Tunisian Juliette Saada, Béatrice Slama, Ghilda Khiari, and Cherifa Saadaoui joined militant resistance. During the War of Liberation (1954–1962), French colonizers tortured and killed Algerian women and female militants. Algerian female figures such as Djamila Bouhired, Hassiba Ben Bouali and Zohra Drif participated in the political struggle of their country and Djamila Bouhired was imprisoned and tortured (Daoudi 2018; Macmaster 2020). Likewise, Omani women joined armed resistance in Dhofar (Al-Najjar 2003; Chatty 1996).

The first-generation liberal Arab feminists ask for the reform of personal status laws, women's access to education and work, and women's political rights. As different Arab countries started to get independence, mainly through military interventions and coups, and to build socialist republics, women fought for their rights. For example, in 1957, the Tunisian Personal Status law raised the age of marriage for girls to 17, banned polygamy, and gave women the right to divorce and to child custody. In 1959, Tunisians elected the female Member of Parliament. In 1962, Tunisian women were able to access birth control; adultery was a crime for both a wife and a husband. In 1965, Tunisia legalized abortion (Tanner 2020). In 1956, Egyptian women had the right to vote and had access to work in public domains, and in 1962, the Socialist Charter for National Action endorsed gender equality in Egypt (Ramdani 2013). In Algeria, women have access to education and in 1964, Algerians elected the first female Member of Parliament. As Arab women moved from the private to the public spheres and openly

participated in demonstrations, they defied major dominant socio-cultural taboos of women's seclusion and inferiority. Nevertheless, political Islam and Islamist feminists acted in opposition to liberal and Islamic scholars and attacked secular nationalism and feminist movements as westernized, anti-Islamic and immoral values. They called for the building of Islamic states in post-independence Arab countries. Female Islamists and Islamic political groups have propagated the founding of Islamic States based on uncritical acceptance of early interpretations of Islam. This includes the reuse of sexist and irrational interpretations that the main roles of women in society are childbearing and submission to their husbands (Al Banna 1944; Tchaicha and Arfaoui 2017). Islamists drew strength from this deep-seated heritage of sexist and colonial gendered stereotypes in Arab countries and used their military and political power to pressure local regimes to restrict women's freedom and rights, particularly in relation to personal status laws.

Arab women's gains in the post-independence eras were, then, limited by dominant patriarchal power structures. Being the powerful sides of power equations, military rulers, and religious structures, mainly the well-organized and widespread Muslim Brotherhoods, in most newly independent Arab countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon have rigorously followed aggressive and violent security policies of oppression. These security plans and policies often reintroduce or utilize fundamentalist ideas, and practices that are meant to control spaces and peoples. For example, the Muslim brotherhoods, who have been working together with military regimes to restrict liberal, socialist, and democratic opposition, have not only used violent and fundamentalist ideas against secular, liberal and democratic movements as anti-Islamic values, but have used militant violence such as the killing of the Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud al-Noqrashi in 1946 and planned to assassinate Second Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1956 (Matesan 2020). In "Fundamentalisms Observed", Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby admit that scholars cannot agree on a cross-cultural definition of fundamentalism. Marty and Appleby prefer to use the term fundamentalist-like, identifying the main characteristics of fundamentalist-like religious movements as such, which no longer perceive themselves as reeling under the corrosive effects of secular life. On the contrary, they perceive themselves as fighting back, they use militant and unmilitant ways, are selective and exclusive, and fight for God against specific enemies or others (Marty and Appleby 1994, ix–x). Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt are

a good example of such an ideological shift between militant and unmilitant activism. Following their violence under President Nasser, Muslim Brotherhoods shifted to civil activism. Militant Islamist groups like the Gama'a Islamiyya in Egypt (Islamist Group) prioritized violence and succeeded in assassinating the third Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981; they attempted to seize some police stations and Egyptian TV, but their tries and endeavors were aborted by Egyptian military and police that regained peace and control over the country (Palmer 2007; Voll 1994). The political rivalry between the ruling military and the militant Islamic Salvation Front that won parliamentary majority led to a bloody civil war in Algeria (1991–2002) where both sides employed inhuman atrocities and systematized revenge rape (Pennel 2021; Mortimer 1996).

In a similar way, independent monarchies like Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar utilized security forces and religious figures to uphold their power and to silence liberal or democratic opposition. For instance, Muslim Brotherhoods in Kuwait and Morocco have dominated the political scene as the main opposition since the 1960s (Solomon and Tausch 2020). Saudi Arabia have produced and propagated Wahhabism as the true form of Islam (Ahmed 2011; Zdanowski 1994; Dawisha 2016). Wahhabism was established by Mohammad ibn Abdel al-Wahab who adopted his ideas from Ibn Taymiyyah. Political Islam groups in different Arab countries have persistently and consistently adopted varied forms of fundamentalist ideas and practices claiming they speak for Islam. As the socialist systems in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Iraq, and Algeria started to collapse in the 1970s, militant fundamentalists and political Islam parties seized the chance to establish Islamic States with different outcomes to different Arab countries. While ideas and activities of the Muslim Brotherhoods spread in public cultures, and spaces, organized fundamentalist groups launched attacks on liberal thinkers and religious scholars in Egypt, Morocco, and Algeria and finally the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1991). Military, religious, and royal elites and rulers rewarded their followers by distributing land, resources and other economic-social benefits and advantages among them. The easy transfer of ideas of Wahhabism, Salafism, and Muslim Brotherhoods due to high immigration levels to oil countries in the Gulf and the emergence of TV directly affected cultural norms and attitudes towards women (Galal 2014; Khalil and Kraidy 2009). Arab women have experienced the duality between progressive ideas of gender equality and access to public

places and workspaces, and the resurgence of sexist interpretation of religious texts such as women's inferiority and dependency on their male guardians and the reduction of women to the biological roles of mothers and wives. Moreover, ritualized Islam demanded women to follow the strict rules concerning women's dress, veil, public appearance, and work only due to economic necessity.

The political use of fundamentalist religious movements is, however, an international phenomenon. Noam Chomsky argues that "whether Christian or Jewish or Islamic or Hindu, the fundamentalist religious impulse can be turned to serve political agendas" (Chomsky 2006, 1). He continues that "in the past 25 years, fundamentalism has been turned for the first time into a major political force. It's a conscious effort, I think, to try to undermine progressive social policies" (Ibid., 1–2). Chomsky proposes that the dynamics of fundamentalism is "universal" and should be understood as a political force "to shift the focus of many voters from the issues that really affect their interests (such as health, education, economic issues, wages) to religious crusades to block the teaching of evolution, gay rights, and abortion rights" (Ibid., 3). For Chomsky, the rise and use of fundamentalism as a general phenomenon across cultures correlate with social and economic programmes that cause hardships for most of the populations. Fundamentalist struggles, the irrationality towards ecological systems and the impoverishment of populations worldwide, particularly lower classes, and women are dominant aspects of modern societies based on capitalism, neoimperialism and socio-economic hierarchies. In "Covering Islam", Edward Said admits that "Islamic religious fervor and political objective join to create violent results" (Said 1997, 11). However, Said argues convincingly that Islamic fundamentalists are minorities that do not represent the majority of Muslim populations. Said emphasizes the fact that militant Islamists and Arab patriarchal authorities are largely supported and used by Western neo-imperial powers stating that "many of the Muslim insurgents — particularly the Taliban — armed, trained, and bankrolled by the United States have now overrun the country" (Said 1997, 9).

Contemplating Ibn Rushd's, Said's and Chomsky's discussions of patriarchy, extremism, and fundamentalism within Arabic and global contexts, this paper argues that there are global and local forms of nonreligious fundamentalisms that, many times, are as dangerous and contagious as religious fundamentalisms. This paper considers military and royal regimes in many Arab countries fundamentalist-like movements. They are pure, exclusive

minorities, supported by loyal, advantaged minorities including extended families, policemen, military men, and elite businessmen. They appeal to their populations', particularly women's, religious and moral values as well. For example, military rulers claim they protect the gains Arab women have achieved against backward, sexist Islamists and fundamentalists. Egyptian president and military officer Gamal Abdel Nasser embodies this idea of saving Egyptian women from fundamentalist Islamists by quoting the representative of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Houdabi: "a ruler is responsible for veiling women and women must not go to work" (Kandil, 2018, paragraph 10). Nasser disagrees that "I think that when a woman works, we are protecting her [this way]. Why do [some women] go astray? They do so because of the need and poverty" (Ibid.). Such "protection" can be forceful, violent and indiscriminatory like in the collective imprisonment and the torture of political male and female opponents whether Islamists, liberals or communists (Amar 2013; Zakarriya 2014). Women work but are not integrated into the decision-making processes. They have relative freedom restricted by oppressive personal status laws. For instance, during the Arab Spring protests, military/militarized regimes in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Syria and royal regimes in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia used different forms of moralistic approaches and propaganda against protesters, particularly female protesters, and the instability and chaos they were causing. Women's bodies in these countries have been used as tools of political, religious, and ethnic superiority and violence (Johansson-Nogués 2013; Khalil 2016; Gengler 2015). A dominant moralistic slogan in Egypt is protecting the national honor that entails disciplining women's bodies and enforcing different forms of sexualized and gendered sovereignty. In Egypt, the Security Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), detained female protesters and exposed them to "virginity texts, hymen inspections that are of course forms of molestation or rape as such, insisting that only pious single young women could speak as legitimate voices of the people, and that the army would exclude from politics the working-class 'whores' whose public presence was an attack on national honor" (Amar 2013, 3). The SCAF's violence against female protesters failed. Rather, Egyptian women broke sexual, social, and cultural taboos about their violations in public spaces and embarrassed the SCAF. Likewise, Libyan women's bodies were targeted by the regime's military forces during Arab Spring, yet, with a different moralistic rhetoric than the Egyptian one. The Libyan moralistic rhetoric aimed at evoking tribal honor that a

violated woman brings shame and revenge to the whole tribe. Raping women in Libya, unlike in Egypt, generates withdrawal and silence that "some female victims of rape have been ostracized, divorced, disowned, forced to flee the country, have committed suicide, and some have allegedly been killed by their relatives because of the shame and dishonour that rape brings to the family and even the tribe. The silence surrounding rape existed before the conflict as well" (Human Rights Report 2012, 139).

Power, religion, and gender shape the position of women's public and political roles in Gulf royal regimes that develop their distinct moralistic rhetoric. For instance, during the protests in 2011 in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, protesters were defamed as "Shia" who collaborate with Iran to disturb Sunna Arab communities, thus, female protesters were seen not only as immoral women who challenged values of seclusion and separation of sexes in Gulf cultures but also as the ones who betrayed their countries. Female protesters were tortured, imprisoned, sexually harassed and violated. Saudi Arabian feminist activists such as Noha al-Balawi, Aziza al-Yousef, and Loujain al-Hathloul, and Bahraini feminists such as Hajer Mansoor, Fadhila Al Mubarak, and Ghada Jamsheer were targeted by police mainly for challenging deep-seated religious and political patriarchies (Batrawy 2019; Dahan 2018; Diwan 2021). The unprecedented levels of public violence against feminists and female activists in many contemporary Arab countries can be seen as reflecting historic changes in Arab women's relationships with and understandings of patriarchal and fundamentalist-like religious, and political authorities in their countries. Although these religious and political authorities use violence and moral defamation to silence women, they also show fear of growing women's impact on politics of freedom and religious values. The final section of this paper traces three examples of ecofeminist theologians whose works and impact not merely show the validity of the diversity and multiplicity of the interpretations of the position of women in Islam but reflect how Arab women have been essential elements of defending Islam against the intersection of fundamentalist-like religious and political structures in Arab countries.

PART TWO: ECOFEMINIST THEOLOGIANS IN MODERN ARABIC CONTEXTS

Amid the above-described disturbing, and rapidly changing cultural, political, and religious polarities, deals and conflicts, Arab ecofeminist theologians such as Morocco Fatima Mernissi and Fatima al Kabbai, Egyptian Aisha Abdel Rahman, Nawal el Saadawi and Zainab al Ghazali, Iraqi Amina al Sadr, Syrian Munira al Qubysi and later Saudi Arabian Mai Yamani, among others, stand out as influential (eco)feminist theologians. They gain credibility because they studied Quran, Hadith and different Fiqh schools and they argue they represent Islam's viewpoints on women's roles in society. Although these feminist/female theologians offer different interpretations of the positions of women in Islam, their ideas not only have been shaping women's activism and rights in most Arab countries but help in deconstructing different forms of fundamentalist movements in the region as well. They all discuss women's agency within public and private spaces and their socioeconomic positions. One great achievement of modern (eco)feminist theologians is that they have revived the marginalized and ignored history of female Islamic scholars. Although Mernissi, el Saadawi and al Ghazali represent different visions of the position of women in Islam, they exemplify Ruether's description of feminist theology as "consciously pluralistic in critique of androcentrism and misogyny of patriarchal theology" (Ruether 1998, 703). Ruether continues:

> Any theology which can be defined without reference to feminism is a particular kind of theology, namely, patriarchal theology. Patriarchal theology is the kind of theology we have had in the past, a theology defined not only without the participation of women, but to exclude the participation of women. What is emerging today is a feminist critique of patriarchal theology, or feminist theology. (Ibid.)

This paper argues that Merissa's, el Saadawi's and al Ghazali's different interpretations of the positions of women in Islam not only have been shaping women's activism and rights in most modern Arab countries but help in exposing different forms of fundamentalist-like movements in the region as well. It argues further that Mernissi, el Saadawi and al Ghazali engage directly with politics of space and gender within Islamic teachings. Defining exactly what the position of women in Islam is seems an

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impossible task. A simple question emerges: what kind of Islam, where, and when? Is it the Islam practised in Egypt, and Syria, for example, where women work, get education, and appear in public? Or is it the Islam in Afghanistan that deprives women of education and secludes them completely? Or the Islam in Saudi Arabia where women get an education and work but fight to guardianship system and cannot drive? Defining one Islam and hence one viewpoint of the position of women in Islam challenges the dynamic realities of the interpretations of the Quran and the Hadith throughout different historical epochs and within diverse, global, and local socio-economic, political, and ideological contexts and changes.

Likewise, classifying Arab feminist theologians is equally difficult. Mernissi, el Saadawi and al Ghazali reflect this state of the diversity and multiplicity of the interpretations of Islam or Sharia as embodied in the Quran and Hadith. Consequently, this paper does not categorize Mernissi, el Saadawi and al Ghazali but rather attempts to understand and describe the motivations behind their feminist activism and their readings of politics, religion, and gender in general. Al Ghazali can be seen as an Islamist feminist whose ideas and interpretations of Islam are part of the projects and agendas of political Islam movements. Al Ghazali adopts a very traditional viewpoint and indicates that women's "first, holy, and most important mission in life is to be a mother and a wife" (Al Ghazali 1989, 48). For al Ghazali, the woman seeking a divorce from her husband commits a huge offense for "there is not anything more repulsive than a woman destroying her marriage and her motherhood?" (Ibid.).

Al Ghazali was not the traditional housewife and mother she promoted. Rather, she was a vocal political activist and supported the establishment of a strong and extended Islamic state (Al Ghazali 2000). Al Ghazali uncritically embraced traditionalist Islamic thoughts by scholars such as Abu Hamid al Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah, and her understanding of the position of women in Islam can be seen as contradictory and superficial. For example, al Ghazali believed that God chose a specific elite minority, who are the Muslim Brotherhoods, to lead Arabs and Muslims to create a true Islamic society and to get rid of Western imperialism (Al Ghazali 2000). Al Ghazali limited women's public roles to the service of building the aspired Islamic state. She openly adopted the political and moral stances of the Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt who accuse liberal and secular feminists of fighting Islamic values and civilization by imitating the colonial West:

Yes, my lady, you are responsible for our subjection to non-Muslims who are instigators of unbelief, licentiousness, and savagery […] you have taken to showy adornment and rebellion against our religion and all of our inheritances. Yes, my lady, you are responsible for the decline of Islamic civilization, its supremacy and what it gives to life, the gift that Allah—praise Him—bestowed upon the Islamic community. (Al Ghazali 1990, 115)

As women actively participated in public affairs under the leadership of Prophet Mohamed, Mernissi, unlike al Ghazali, distinguishes between the different types of religious scholars who have attempted to interpret Hadith and Quran, confirming that they are not immune to criticism and the rethinking of their ideas: "the body of the *ulama* (scholars) was very heterogeneous, riddled with conflicting interests of all kinds, with ethnic conflict not being the least. There were not only experts of Arab origin" (Mernissi 1991, viii). One authentic but sexist Hadith states that "those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity!" (Mernissi 1991, 58). Women can vote, and participate in elections, jihad, and protests but they are not entitled to rule or lead. While al Ghazali does not reject this Hadith that denies women any political or leadership role, Mernissi searches for the origin of this discriminating Hadith. Mernissi traces that this Hadith was specifically used after the Battle of the Camel to refer to A'isha, who was Prophet Mohamed's wife, and who after his death was in command of the Sunni side in the Battle of the Camel and who lost to Shi'ites led by Ali Ibn Abi Talib. It is an easy way to blame A'isha as a woman for the loss while the Prophet and many Muslim leaders had lost many battles as well. One of the essential characteristics of the narrators of Hadith is credibility and honesty. Applying such a rule to Abu Barka, Mernissi reveals that Abu Barka should be eliminated as a reliable narrator of Hadith since "one of the biographies of him tells us that he was convicted of and flogged for false testimony by the caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab" (Ibid., 60).

Like Ibn Rushd, Mernissi discusses the essential role of the marriage between politicians and imams in controlling space and time to inhibit change through manipulating past Islamic heritage. Mernissi argues further that "Westerners consume the past as a hobby, as a pastime, as a rest from the stress of the present. We persist in making it a profession, a vocation, an outlook. By invoking our ancestors at every turn, we live the present as an

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interlude in which we are little involved. At the extreme, the present is a distressing contretemps to us" (Ibid., 21). Mernissi relates women's public roles in relation to dominant patriarchal political structures in Muslim countries that sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and assert their respect for fundamental freedoms as the principle and spirit of their constitutions but, patriarchal regimes aim to stop and marginalize diverse ideas and free thinking. Mernissi examines the major veil or hijab verses differently arguing that the veil is more related to private spaces. For instance, she argues that Verse 53 of sura 33, regarded by the founders of religious knowledge as the basis of the institution of the *hijab*, is meant for the incident that took place during the night of the Prophet's wedding to Zaynab in the fifth year of the Islamic calendar where some men and women entered the prophet's house without permission. Mernissi explains further that "the Prophet was threatened by men who stated during his lifetime their desire to marry his wives after his death. […] The *hijab* was to be the solution to a whole web of conflicts and tensions" (Mernissi 1991, 92). Mernissi convincingly refutes dominant interpretations of other veil verses arguing that protecting women from change by veiling them and shutting them out of the world meant isolating the community to protect it from the West. Instigating and upholding fading masculinist traditions as a means of putting things back in a hierarchical order. Many Muslim countries issue sexist laws that assure hierarchy and respect for normative forms of authority inside the house and use security repression to ensure hierarchy outside the house. Mernissi regards the strong return of traditional ideas of veiling and secluding Muslim women as planned tools of political-religious autocracy:

> The metamorphosis of the Muslim woman from a veiled, secluded, marginalized object, reduced to inertia, into a subject with constitutional rights, erased the lines that defined the identity hierarchy which organized politics and relations between the sexes. […]. Traditional society produced Muslims who were literally "submissive" to the will of the group. Individuality in such a system is discouraged; any private initiative is *bid'a* (innovation), which necessarily constitutes errant behavior (Identified with rebellion). (Mernissi 1991, 22–23)

For Mernissi, postcolonial Muslim Arab societies have problematic relationships with the concepts of time, development, and identity. While modern societies advance individuality and freedom of expression, Muslim countries suffer despotic regimes supported by corrupt religious structures, both resurrect and project the past on the present to inhibit real development. Mernissi is not the only Arab female intellectual and feminist to refute Islamic heritage. In 1972, Egyptian physician, liberal-postcolonial feminist, writer, and political activist el Saadawi published her famous book "Women and Sex" which explores and relates different forms of private and public violence in Egypt and many Arab contexts including virginity, marital rape, wife, or daughter beating, sexual harassment, honor crimes and psychological pressure and depression (El Saadawi 1972). Like Mernissi, Saadawi argues that many of the interpretations of the Quran and Hadith are prejudiced against women. She mentions examples of early Muslim women who actively participated in public affairs and in wars such as A'isha who fought in several wars and battles and was actively involved in politics and cultural and literary activities to the degree that led the theologian of the Muslims. Many examples of Hadith were memorized and corrected by women who accompanied Prophet Mohamed. Other examples of women fighters are Nessiba Bint Ka'ab who fought with her sword by the side of Muhammad in the battle of Uhud, and had been wounded 13 times, and Urn Sulaym Bint Malhan who tied a dagger around her waist above her pregnant belly and fought in the ranks of Muhammad and his followers (El Saadawi 1982, 197–198). Yet, el Saadawi has a global approach to women's seclusion and the veil arguing that "the oppression of women is not essentially due to specific religious ideologies. The great religions of the world (of both East and West) uphold similar principles as far as the submission of women to men is concerned. They also agree in the attribution of masculine characteristics to God" (El Saadawi 1982, 192). For Saadawi, the veil "is a political symbol and has nothing to do with Islam. There is not a single verse in the Qur'an explicitly mandating it. This is a political movement using the head of women for political reasons" (Nassef 1993, 5). El Saadawi continues that "women are pushed to be just bodies – either to be veiled under religion, or to be veiled by makeup. Both are very significant of the oppression of women by religious fundamentalism and US consumerism" (Raphael 2018, 7). El Saadawi dates the problem of Arab and Muslim women to the

politicization of Islam as a power ideology and the dominance of global hierarchical economic and neoimperial structures:

> Arab women are still exposed to different forms of oppression (national, class and sexual). The original cause of their triple oppression is not Islam but the patriarchal class system which manifests itself internationally as world capitalism and imperialism, and nationally in the feudal and capitalist classes of the Third World countries. […]. Women's only hope lies in political organization and a patient long-enduring struggle to become an effective political power which will force society to change and abolish the structures which maintain women victims of the crudest, most cruel, and sometimes most sophisticated forms of oppression and exploitation. (El Saadawi 1982, 206)

El Saadawi argues further that the banners of religion have been utilized by military regimes in the Arab world and beyond such as "to overthrow Mossadeq and restore the rule of the oil monopolies in Iran, to close down on Sukarno and perpetrate mass murder on an unprecedented scale in Indonesia, to crush Salvador Allende and establish a military dictatorship in Chile and to ignite the fratricidal war being waged for long months in Lebanon" (El Saadawi 1980, 11). Women's oppression and seclusion are the product of hierarchical power structures, whether religious, military, or modern, that make one class rule over another and hence men dominate over women to sustain and constitute the core of patriarchal class, sexual and ethnic relations. Like al Ghazali, el Saadawi seeks political revolution against sociopolitical and economic patriarchal structures. In 1981, el Saadawi was imprisoned because she attacked President Anwar Sadat for his unilateral peace treaty with Israel and his open-door economic policies. In 1982, el Saadawi was released from prison after the assassination of Sadat and founded the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, an independent feminist organization, that was banned later by President Mubarak in 1992. El Saadawi was also oppressed by Islamists who accused her of fighting Islam and was taken to court by Hisba law twice. While al Ghazali aspires to build an Islamic State, el Saadawi calls for global and local fights of "the veil of the mind, by education, by religion, by patriarchy, by fear, by marriage, by the moral code. As women, we are always pushed to be hidden, to be veiled, even if we are not aware of that":

Progressive groups should unite. We are divided and scattered. There must be efforts for unity. Women and men fighting against the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the World Bank should fight together. Local and global resistance should not be separated. We must give a lot of attention to organisation and unveiling of the mind. The new superpower of the people should be organized. (Nassef 1993, 9)

Since 2011, women in many Arab countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon have been demonstrating for political and social change and justice. Arab women have experienced all forms of violence including sexual harassment, rape, torture, and imprisonment (Boger 2019; Johansson-Nogués 2013). Islamist feminists and female followers of the Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt, for example, actively participated in protests and camped in public spaces. Women's votes helped Muslim Brotherhoods in Egypt and Tunisia to gain parliamentary elections and the presidency. Compared to their counterparts in the early twentieth century and despite widespread despotism and repression, the majority of Arab women, whether politically-affiliated, such as Islamist feminists and female followers of the Muslim Brotherhoods, or liberal feminists, or Islamic feminists, or apolitical common women, express remarkable political awareness. However, the post-2011 eras clearly show and reintroduce the deep-seated binary between fundamentalist-like structures of political Islam and military/militarized regimes in different Arab contexts.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to examine the concepts of fundamentalism and essentialism as political constructs, meant to subjugate and insecuritize both men and women as dependents of hierarchical and exclusive authorities. It traces how within different Arab countries, Islamist movements and militarized/military or royal regimes, though competing over power, share and develop fundamentalist-like practices, and ideas to serve their political ambitions, and to marginalize their opponents. Arab ecofeminist theologians have played an important role in deconstructing religious and nonreligious fundamentalist orders by approaching Islamic heritage from different perspectives. For instance, Fatima Mernissi discusses Islam and women from a historical perspective, Nawal el Saadawi

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uses a postcolonial, political approach. Zainab al Ghazali studies Islam and women within the Muslim Brotherhood's political project of establishing the Islamic State. The writings of these ecofeminist theologians are very relevant to understanding the nature and politics of domineering fundamentalisms and essentialisms in Arab countries, and how women's public roles and agencies develop and change as they fight, refute or compromise with varied fundamentalist authorities in Arab countries.

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OVERCOMING PREJUDICE IN SOCIETY THROUGH GADAMER PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS

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ABSTRACT

Living and engaging in a society means living with others, accepting changes (gender, regional, political, cultural), and being able to maintain uniqueness. Albania is a small country, but it faces a high level of intolerance and regional, gender, political, cultural prejudices, etc. In this paper, we will try to apply Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory on communicative understanding and fusion of horizons as a model that can lead us at reducing the level of prejudice and intolerance towards each other. For Gadamer, communicative understanding occurs only through a way of being with the other person. The purpose of dealing with Gadamer's theory on understanding is to show the practicality of his hermeneutic theory to create new knowledge, to overcome the challenges of diversity in a society, as well as to create a just society where change and diversity are normal.

This research is a qualitative theoretical research in which the hermeneutic research methodology and secondary data analysis are used. Through a textual analysis, we will focus on the treatment of Gadamer's theory and the importance of the principles of dialogue, tolerance, prejudice, solidarity, reciprocity, equality and freedom in creating an open-minded and tolerant society.

According to Gadamer, if we want to create a just and peaceful society, we must understand the others and not simply accept their presence, we have to accept our prejudices and try to overcome them. By identifying the important values of Gadamer's theory we can create a more tolerant environment and overcome the prejudices we have towards each other in a society like ours. Overcoming the divisions within us will bring us together to lead our society towards further cultural and political development.

Keywords: hermeneutics, Gadamer, understanding, tolerance, knowledge, prejudice

INTRODUCTION

Prejudice, discrimination and unequal treatment in Albania is a widespread phenomenon. Many studies carried out in recent years emphasize the spread of prejudices and the consequences they bring to Albanian society. In Albania, there are many subcultures, for this reason not only the culture as a whole but also the subcultures contribute to the spread of prejudices. "Beyond Definitions. A Call for Action Against Hate Speech in Albania. A Comprehensive Study" conducted in November 2021 (Bogdani et al. 2021) shows a significant increase in problems among groups in need in relation to the spread of hate speech in Albania. Regarding the motives that provoke hate speech and prejudices, the following reasons are listed: poverty (54%), gender, social status, political opinion, sexual orientation (68%), physical appearance (44%), ethnicity (50%) and race (44%). The strongest prejudice encountered among young Albanians and especially in men is homophobia and the prejudices against the Roma minority (Çela et al. 2017). In Albania, people prejudice each other and these prejudices bring division and lack of trust, especially provincial prejudices and those on political convictions, which prevent the Albanians from coming together to create a more democratic and accountable society.

This research aims to provide a way in which we can come together despite our differences. Humans can live together in peace only if they are tolerant towards each other. Tolerance towards each other must be based on assumption that we understand each other and realize why we act in a certain way.

People grow up believing the things our family teaches us about ourselves and others. In Albania, people have not been able to go beyond these prejudices, they live with them and allow them to create their opinions and their behaviour towards others. These early-formed beliefs make it difficult for the Albanians to be tolerant of others who are different from them. We here propose Gadamer's theory of fusion of horizons as a solution that enables people in Albania to be tolerant towards each other and to live in peace together.

But even though Gadamer's philosophy focuses on human knowledge, which according to him is hermeneutic, in this article, we attempt finding elements in his philosophy of knowledge that can help us improve our daily lives. Thus, a question we raise here is: can hermeneutic philosophy help us in everyday life to fight prejudice?

Tolerance is a prerequisite for the functioning of a democratic society. Nowadays, an ever-greater importance is attached to "human rights" in the world, to respecting the right of others to believe, to live, to dress differently, etc. In this aspect, tolerance is an urgent need, but despite the progress in the rights that people enjoy today in many countries of the world, there are still many problems of denying them and many wars that violate them. In contemporary society, we must live with others and accept changes (ethnic, political, cultural, etc.), but we must also preserve our authenticity, what makes us unique. Tolerance implies, on the one hand, the need to preserve one's identity and, on the other hand, the need to guarantee the coexistence of members of a community through mutual recognition of the equal dignity of all. Tolerance is not about reaching some common views among all individuals, because that would lead to the disappearance of diversity and the creation of a homogeneous global society. Therefore, tolerance must be based on the possibility of discussion and debate, an endless process, which has certain values which are conditions that enable endless dialogue between diversity.

GADAMER'S HERMENEUTIC PHILOSOPHY

Gadamer's philosophy is not abstract, he saw philosophy in a mainly practical sense. Gadamer's hermeneutics is a theory that seeks universal validity but with practical purposes. The task of philosophy for Gadamer, as Marx said, is not simply to interpret the world but to change it, to take responsibility for how the world will be. Gadamer was interested in practical philosophy, and this is the fact that made him so interested in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. "I have been concerned not to say too much and not to lose myself in theoretical constructions which were not fully made good by experience..." (Gadamer 1997, 16).

Gadamer used the term hermeneutic philosophy to explain his theory of meaning. He explained that understanding occurs in every aspect of our experience. What Gadamer wanted is to return to "things in themselves" and to philosophize about the human experience. The task of philosophy is to make people understand the challenges they face and help them overcome problems.

From Gadamer's point of view, humans must create another form of reason, which develops together with instrumental reason, which is hermeneutic reason, in other words, communicative rationality or dialogue. The "philosophy of conversation" is "the

essence of what I have been working on over the past thirty years" (Gadamer 2001, 17).

Through dialogue people can foster solidarity between individuals. The main condition for having a dialogue is to have the will to accept that the other person may be right. This is impossible if people think that their point of view is the indisputable truth, and under these conditions, it is pointless to engage in a discussion. Thus, we must enter the discussion assuming that the other party may be right or at least we can learn something from the conversation with them and we can understand it.

This type of stance in dialogue constitutes the main stance in democracy and helps to realize the virtues of tolerance and pluralism. Gadamer's hermeneutics provides us with a philosophical foundation for a theory of democracy, starting with the notion of a hermeneutic reason – the art of reaching agreement and shared understanding through dialogue. Gadamer calls this reason the social reason, which he contrasts with the instrumental reason. Reason, according to Gadamer, is pluralistic, and this means that each culture, as well as each individual, must find its own ways to what is universal. Gadamer's hermeneutics attempts to unite universality with particularity and recognizes that value judgments are matters of interpretation.

Experience in the proper sense of the word, as Gadamer insists, is hermeneutic itself, because it is an experience of something else as something else. Hermeneutic consciousness is the awareness of this fact. The values that hermeneutic ethics protects are the practical conditions for the possibility of the communicative process such as tolerance, reasoning and commitment to overcome differences through discussion.

First, Gadamer proposes that language and dialogue serve to understand and reflect on the world and the human being, and, second, he contends that the history of the entire, which is part of an ongoing dialogue, emphasises the necessity of highlighting the significance of the different and the function of the external forces that influence our meaning at any given time. Thus, Gadamer was not interested in the object of knowledge but in the process of knowing or understanding itself.

GADAMER'S FUSION OF HORIZONS

The fusion of horizons theory is a description of what happens when people understand an object of cognition. In Gadamer's hermeneutics, the process of understanding a reality starts from the prejudice that the knowing subject has about reality. People approach the reality they want to understand with the knowledge they may have known about it. All the unverified information people may have had about reality forms their prejudice (pre-judicium) or prejudice about the thing, and it constitutes the point on which they rely in trying to understand that reality. For Gadamer, prejudice plays an important role in understanding:

> It is our prejudices that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and the English Enlightenment (Gadamer 1975/2006, 9).

Through the importance that Gadamer gives to prejudice, he challenges the idea that if someone wants to be objective, this does not mean that he can really be objective. Understanding someone includes understanding of oneself and one's own biases. Therefore, all understanding inevitably involves some bias. The use of prejudice in the process of understanding by Gadamer does not have a negative connotation, but it makes people aware of the fact that they have certain meanings, preferences, values, and judgments within them in every situation that affect their knowledge and understanding.

For Gadamer, human understanding occurs within a historical consciousness. In our understanding, the present and the past are inseparable. Awareness of this makes us understand the hermeneutical situation. He calls this hermeneutic situation "horizon". This means that human understanding always occurs in a particular situation. As a result, when people want to know an object, they always start from their particular horizon. Having a horizon means knowing the relative importance of everything within the horizon. As a result, understanding is a process of fusion of horizons. Understanding occurs when the horizon of the one who seeks to know merges with the horizon of what is sought to be known.

This shows that the confrontation with the other leads us to the expansion of knowledge through the acceptance of the perspectives of others. For Gadamer, once people accept the importance of different horizons, they can understand and will be part of a fusion of horizon (Gadamer 1975/2006). To be able to achieve this people need to understand that they are dealing with something foreign to them and they need to understand it.

This fusion of horizons means the creation of a new horizon. At the point of mixing, the horizon of the subject that seeks to know is joined with the horizon of a particular history:

> […] together they constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and beyond the one's frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness. It is in fact, a single horizon that embraces everything contained in historical consciousness. Our own past, and that other past towards which our historical consciousness is directed, help to shape this moving horizon out of which human life always lives, and which determines it as tradition. (Gadamer 1975/2006, 270)

People raise their awareness when they place themselves in a situation. Consequently, comprehending others entails immersing ourselves in their situations and being aware of the intractability of individuality and otherness. The process of recognition is dynamic because it continues to expand more and more.

GADAMER'S CONTRIBUTION TO A TOLERANT SOCIETY

To live in peace and justice, people must understand the other. In order to reach understanding with each other, everyone must take into account several factors, which are an important part of the hermeneutic philosophy, which lead them to tolerate and respect each other. Let's deal with these factors and see how they relate to issues of intolerance and prejudice.

1. Dialogue
   According to Gadamer, understanding between two individuals becomes possible when they enter into dialogue with each other. Dialogue makes fusion of horizons possible. In dialogue, people must ask questions

and expect for others to ask questions, because dialogue implies the openness of both parties to each other. This openness to each other can only happen when both parties in the dialogue are honest and answer questions honestly. The experience of understanding depends on our predisposition to question our recognition and understanding by others. In the pursuit of comprehension, individuals are encouraged to engage in the act of questioning, not solely for the purpose of placing their interlocutors in a challenging predicament. Conversely, a commitment to provide forthright responses, rather than mere preservation of one's initial standpoint, is advocated. By adhering to this approach, a conversational exchange is initiated, driven by a shared aspiration for knowledge acquisition on the part of the inquirer and a adequate desire for comprehension on the part of the respondent. To facilitate a genuine dialogue, Gadamer asserts that "in order to be able to ask, one must want to know, which involves knowing that one does not know" (Gadamer 1975/2006, 327).

It is also important in a dialogue to consider that the other party may be right. When people are having a dialogue, they should not seek to win the argument over the other, but to understand the other's point of view and reach a point of agreement in understanding. This is the hermeneutic opening. You can learn something from the other person involved in the dialogue. In an authentic dialogue, we do not know what its conclusion will be and we must be aware that there will always be something that is not fully understood. The goal of dialogue is not the imposition of thought but understanding between individuals. Thus, everyone must enter the dialogue with an open mind and through the process of dialogue they can discover more about themselves and the others.

2. Prejudice

Gadamer reminds us that when we face the other, we start from our prejudices, some of which we don't even know we have. Gadamer emphasizes that prejudices are useful, in the sense of preunderstanding, not judging the other in advance, but as a starting point for a dialogue, which means that each party in the dialogue has knowledge, perspectives, goals, meanings, different preliminary, so a

different horizon. In this sense, Gadamer gives a positive role to prejudice. People start knowing something from what they already know about it and then try to go beyond it to understand what is unknown. They move from what they know to what is unknown. Of course, Gadamer distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate prejudices. Through the process of dialogue, people are able to distinguish those prejudices which are unfounded or wrong, therefore illegitimate, while those which are legitimate allow them to go towards the common understanding that Gadamer calls the fusion of horizons. In a successful dialogue, these preconceptions are changed, and this brings about a transformation in meaning.

3. Respect

In order to have a successful dialogue, people must have mutual respect between the dialogue parties. In the process of recognition, the two parties must consider each other as active participants who have something to say or to understand. Our relationships with each other should be based on what we know about each other. We must become aware of our attitudes and opinions towards the other, just as the other also becomes aware of his attitudes and opinions around us, so that we are able to resolve our differences. People in general are different, they have different psychological tendencies, different characterristics, different opinions, but they must learn to respect their differences and learn to live together in society by respecting each other mutually.

4. Tradition and authority

For Gadamer, a dialogue with the tradition requires the use of reason to find answers to various questions. Often the roots of people's behaviour are hidden in tradition. However, according to him, acceptance of tradition does not mean unquestionable acceptance. Sometimes people can understand things that come from a forgotten aspect of some old tradition, because, according to him, tradition is a rich source. Regarding authority, it means the legitimate authority of a person who knows more because he is an expert in a certain field. In these cases, the person in authority must be respected, although this does not imply losing the right to question his authority.

> Recognizing someone's authority does not mean having blind faith in them, but rather a rational recognition of being advised by someone who may have more knowledge about something. This is a condition for an open dialogue that leads us to tolerance and justice.

GADAMER'S HERMENEUTIC AND TOLERANCE IN ALBANIA

The major interest in this study is to identify some relevant values in Gadamer's hermeneutic that can enhance the overcoming of prejudices in societies. In this essay, we have identified some elements of Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy which can help us to have a more peaceful and tolerant coexistence in the Albanian society. It is understandable that people grow up in environments that instil in them ideas, thoughts, opinions and often they think that they are superior and better than others who are different or think differently from them. Prejudices are a general tendency of people and this, according to Gadamer, is not something completely bad if they manage to accept them and try to go beyond them. These prejudices should serve to lead people to a better understanding of themselves and others, but instead they have stuck in their prejudices and allow them to lead people to hatred, violence, and mistreatment of one another.

Gadamer's theory can serve as a model that shows how people in Albania should act in order to coexist in peace with each other without denying their differences and preserving their uniqueness. When dealing with other people one must bear in mind the fact that they carry certain biases created by their history and their life experiences. When people enter into dialogue, they must be aware that they carry these prejudices, and just as they carry their prejudices, so do others. Therefore, people must accept their own prejudices and those of others and be open to finding a way of understanding. By opening up to each other people filter their prejudices, and this leads them to a new horizon that is a new understanding and appreciation for each other. At the mixing point of the horizon "there is a birth and growth of something reducible to neither the interpreter nor the text, nor their conjunction" (Gadamer 1975/2006, 311).

In Albania, in most of the society, people enter into dialogue with others to convince others that they are right in their arguments. The majority of people taking part in debates in Albania

are not primarily centred upon articulation with the intent of securing an attentive audience; rather, it predominantly revolves around the exposition of their own perspectives. Notably, their inclination towards active listening for the purpose of comprehension is often overshadowed by a more pronounced inclination towards listening, geared toward the formulation of effective rebuttals. In this aspect we suggest that the Albanians should comprehend that they enter into serious relationships with others, in an effort to understand each other and to filter their prejudices and move forward. If people try to understand other individuals and allow others to understand them, they will create a new understanding and see that they are active participants in the process of knowing. This can transform the way people see others and they will understand that they belong to each other. For this reason, it is important that in the Albanian society we re-evaluate the role of dialogue for a better coexistence. Due to the realisation that their opinions and presumptions may be incorrect, the boundaries of their knowledge, and the possibility of growing in their capacity for understanding others, as well as an open dialogue help people to be humbler. This type of dialogue together with mutual respect makes people see each other as partners in progress. The dialectical relationship allows people to maintain their prejudices against each other, but they ought to allow others to question their prejudices, just as they question their own.

The only solution remains a dialogue. Through dialogue conducted with a sense of humility, reciprocity and equality individuals can understand why a certain group of people think or behave in a certain way. Our society has failed to be tolerant because it lacks the effort to understand the other. Not only do the Albanians not try to understand the others, but they do not understand themselves well either, so Gadamer's theory invites us to understand the fact that we are different because we have different histories, different experiences and different traditions. People need to reflect with an open mind about themselves and others, ask others and let others ask them, accept that the others have different ideas, and accept ideas that may be better than our ideas.

Based on this analysis, Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy helps people in Albania to build a more tolerant society because the cyclical understanding it offers gives the opportunity to accept what is different without losing authenticity. According to Gadamer, people should understand the whole based on the details, and they can understand the details based on the whole,

so it is a cyclic movement "from the whole to the part and back to the whole" (Gadamer 1975/2006, 291). In this way people can maintain their individuality while integrating into society. In this way people can understand the culture, biases, language and uniqueness of each individual while engaging with the society as a whole.

According to this principle of cyclical understanding, it is important to maintain in Albania the strong national identity, history and culture. These serve to keep society as a whole and in turn we need to preserve the diversity and variety of subcultures which enrich it.

Another lesson from Gadamer's philosophy is that under-standing occurs with critical empathy. Understanding another person happens when we try to find out where he or she comes from. Individuals have to place themselves in the other person's situation so that they can comprehend alternative viewpoints and behavioural patterns. This is accomplished when they bring their biases, their identities, and their stories with others without to this endeavour thinking of them as superior to others.

Finally, Gadamer tells that meaning promotes an individual horizon and a union of horizons. To be able to understand "other" people one needs to have a horizon, but it is important to avoid the mistake of thinking of this horizon as consisting of a set of fixed, unchanging opinions and assessments. According to Gadamer, horizons are constantly in the process of formation because people test their prejudices constantly. Thus, they can be narrowed or expanded, so they can open to other horizons. When people open their horizons to others, they can have a mixture of different views.

Gadamer's philosophical ideas can help to overcome prejudices in the Albanian society due to the fact that the problem is specific and caused more by misunderstanding each other than by fundamental differences. In Albania, the problem of social prejudice is among the Albanians themselves. Although they belong to the same culture, have the same historical background, speak the same language, for different social, political, economic, geographical reasons, etc., Albanian society is considered a mosaic of subcultures. For this reason, the biggest problems are created as a result of prejudices regarding the province in which individual lives, political beliefs, gender, sexual preferences, social class, etc. Our study suggests that since we do not have major differences between each other, what we must do is try to understand and overcome our differences through recognition and expansion of understanding.

For this reason, we present the thesis that Gadamer's hermeneutic theory can serve as a template in Albania so that we can build bridges of understanding and coexist peacefully with each other while maintaining the differences between us. Guided by the Gadamerian model, it is advisable to interact with each other trying to filter our prejudices and be open to better understanding ourselves and others. What is required is the social, educational, cultural and comprehensive integration of individuals and groups through cognitive and educational treatments. The main principle is to highlight the values of prejudiced groups in order to minimize social prejudice through understanding the behaviour of others.

The way others who are different from us are seen will be transformed by this, and a sense of separation due to differences we possess will no longer be felt, thereby leading to the creation of greater social cohesion and the ability to construct a just and peaceful society.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have evidenced that Gadamer's theory, even though it is focused on knowledge, has some elements that help us understand each other better, overcome misunderstandings and avoid prejudices. Important elements of hermeneutic theory, such as dialogue, reciprocity, tolerance, respect, help us to expand our understanding but also increase the respect for cultural diversity among us, without losing the authenticity of each one. Gadamer's philosophical ideas are not simply elements of better knowledge and understanding, but also contribute to the establishment of a just and peaceful society.

An attempt has been made by us to argue that the greater tolerance towards each other can be facilitated through an understanding of the motivations and rationales behind someone's actions. The paper adapts Gadamer's hermeneutic theory as a platform that can guide people in Albania on how they can achieve a more tolerant and just society. Hermeneutic philosophy teaches people the importance of mutual respect, tolerance and dialogue with each other. These are essential mechanisms that people need to better understand themselves and others. Tolerance is an ideal that reinforces social relations and community life. It implies the acceptance of change as part of society and that change is what makes society a living entity. The Albanians should not take their prejudices as absolute truths but be open to others and try to

understand themselves and others better. Consequently, people must understand tolerance as an experience of understanding the world and oneself through dialogue.

These elements of Gadamer's philosophy could contribute to avoiding prejudice and this can only be achieved through education. We suggest that in Albania there is a great need for the creation of these habits, especially among youths and therefore it is necessary that the curricula change, especially in the addition of more subjects such as Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology etc. which have a direct impact on the formation of the individual and that stimulate thinking critically, promote empathic reflection and tolerance.

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CUSTOMARY RIGHTS IN ALBANIAN SOCIETY AND ISSUES RELATED TO GENDER (KANUN OF LEKE DUKAGJINI AND KANUN OF LUMA)

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ABSTRACT

The richness of the Albanian culture, its traditions, and customs easily fascinate any researcher. Amidst the diversity of these traditions and customs, certain elements have played a role in reinforcing gender role divisions and strengthening patriarchal mentalities. Through this article, it is intended to explore customary laws that have nurtured and strengthened gender role divisions, by exploring the customary rights in the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini and Kanun of Luma, which have been implemented in the northern and northeastern part of Albania. The Kanuns, as customary rights, and codes of laws, have served as a legal basis for a long time in the Albanian society, and they are an important part of the cultural tradition of Albania. This article highlights elements that have influenced the strengthening of patriarchal mindsets, which contributed to the unequal position of women in family and society.

Although nowadays the customary rights in the Kanuns are considered obsolete, the Kanun norms have often served as the opposite of the current legal regulations and continue to do so. In many cases, the rules of the Kanuns have been followed by the people in different areas of life, often conflicting with the law in force. The customary rights of the Kanuns and the mindset created by them have contributed to the strengthening of the patriarchal mentality and the division of gender roles. Gender roles perpetuate inequalities between females and males, where there are clear divisions inside the Kanun regulations, which are still strong and influential on gender-related issues.

Keywords: gender roles, Kanuns, customary rights, patriarchal society, Albanian society

INTRODUCTION

Many social researchers have constantly emphasized the irreplaceable and key role of girls and women in the development of society. Many social studies conclude that the progress of society is related to emancipation and equal opportunities for women. Women are more challenged than men by social gender constructs. Their position in society and opportunities for advancement have been challenged by gender roles, which have served as an obstacle creating many difficulties for women's advancement, especially in the public sphere.

Families serve as one of the first social institutions where children learn gender roles. Education about gender roles is done both by rewarding "proper" gender-related behaviours or by "punishments" for behaviours that do not "belong" to their gender. Even if the parents do not intentionally educate children about gender roles, children learn a lot by observing and imitating the roles of their parents. "Children learn more from these [different gender roles practiced by parents] even when there is no specific purpose for adults to impart gender roles" (England and Farkas 1986, 187). Even nowadays, in Albanian families, the division and differentiation in the separation of tasks according to gender are still reflected. Women and men, mothers and fathers, have traditionally had different roles in the family (Burns et al. 2001, 362). Thus, in traditional families, children are constantly in contact with the figure of the mother, who generally performs all household duties, and with the figure of the father, who is occupied with matters beyond domestic obligations and does not spend much time at home.

Not only in the family but at all institutions of society, examples of traditional female and male roles are conveyed. It is enough to take a glimpse at schools, workplaces, media (Dolby and Rizvi 2008, 141) institutions, which are dominated by masculinity (Brake 2003, 40; Tyyskä 2009, 254).

Since gender roles have served as an obstacle, especially for girls and women, this made them challenge and fight more against gender roles than men. Studies show that women are the ones who have been constantly fighting gender roles and stepping out on the so-called men's sphere. They have constantly faced the dilemma of choosing between their career and family duties. They are the ones who have to sacrifice their commitments outside the home, such as work, education, and career to take care of the children or other domestic obligations. They have often been discriminated

and judged for involving in the public sphere, especially if they did follow their career or were involved in politics. Men have not been challenged in the same way, as public sphere development is considered their domain, and when the family needs more attention or someone to be at home, women are expected to take charge of those duties and obligations.

Several barriers, both cultural and structural, can prevent those who wish to participate in education or careers from doing so. Domestic obligations have often been seen as one of the main factors influencing the confinement within the domestic sphere of girls and women. According to the sociologist Zyhdi Dervishi, the domestic duties of girls and women are obligations that sap the energy and time of women, especially those who are also mothers, who "in most cases deprive themselves of progress in the professional and social career for the benefit of the spouse's career and especially of the children" (Dervishi 2004, 28).

Gender roles contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities between girls and boys, women and men. The changes that occurred after the fall of the communist regime and the social events that the Albanian society experienced afterward have only made the position of girls and women more difficult.

Like many other countries, the Albanian society is involved in facing the challenges to provide girls and women with equal opportunities and to show their potential in society. Among these efforts, we can specifically mention the ratifications that the Albanian government has made to some of the most important documents, which emphasize the empowerment of girls and women, such as CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified since 1993 by the Albanian Government, The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 was supported by the Albanian state, The Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000 at the UN high-level meeting, where objective number three is related to the "Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women", etc. All these efforts show the importance of addressing gender issues to ensure the widespread development of the Albanian society. Also, they show the importance of ensuring equal chances for girls and women to have the same opportunities and make their contribution to the development of society, without confronting them with constant choices and contradictions, where they are forced to give up their careers or pursuing further education to concentrate on the obligations and duties coming from marriage, children and domestic sphere.

Gender roles have been passed down from generation to generation, intentionally or not, and despite the advances made they continue to serve as a barrier. These gender barriers affect the status and roles of women and men. Gender roles and discrimination in their name are the result of many factors such as social, economic, political, and cultural. It is important to study these factors to address gender issues and understand deeper the position and the role of women in a certain society. This study aims to explore the Kanun norms and highlight some elements that indicate patriarchal elements and the differentiation of rights and roles based on gender. Kanun norms have contributed to the strengthening of the patriarchal mentality, as they are important elements of cultural tradition in the Albanian society. This article is intended to investigate how the mentality of the customary law has nurtured and strengthened gender divisions, taking as a case study the Kanun of Leke Dukagjin and the Kanun of Luma. These Kanuns have been applied mostly to the northeastern part of Albania.

THE ORIGIN OF CUSTOMARY RIGHTS AND THEIR USE TODAY

Customary rights existed long before the written Kanuns and were passed down orally from generation to generation. These customary rights were collected later in the written Kanun books. Kanun of Leke Dukagjini and Kanun of Luma are two of the customary laws that have operated in Albania. Renowned scholar Edit Durham asserts that the customary laws delineated in the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini predate the fifteenth century (Durham 1928, 63).

Customary rights include longstanding practices deeply rooted in the traditions and customs of a community, effectively acquiring the status of legal norms (Tarifa 2014, 31). These traditions conveyed through oral transmission, have historically served to regulate legal interactions across the centuries within Albania (Luarasi 2007, 229). More than mere regulators of social and economic transactions, Albanian customary rights have also been shaped by these very transactions, functioning as expressions of ethnic and cultural identity, particularly in the face of external forces (Elezi 1983, 29). Albanian customary law, inheriting elements from Illyrian heritage, has continually evolved through the incorporation of new norms while shedding obsolete ones. Even amid foreign rule, particularly the Ottoman occupation, this

legal framework managed to withstand assimilation efforts, thereby preserving Albanian distinctiveness (Elezi 1999, 326). Over extended periods, customary rights have functioned as de facto laws governing various aspects of Albanian society, including legal, social, and economic domains (Kastelli and Ahmetaj 2009, 5–23).

During the communist regime, the prohibition of customary rights by the state apparatus attempted to erase this age-old tradition (Xheraj 2016), but the eradication of a popular tradition from ancient times was not something that could be achieved easily. Following the fall of the communist regime, as the new democratic state and legal system were being established, customary Kanun rights resurfaced as a means of addressing and managing various matters in a context of legal instability. It is crucial to note that although the regime suppressed Kanun customary rights, they persisted in memory and practice.

After the regime's collapse, particularly in northern Albania, customary Kanun laws found a renewed application in resolving issues amidst the absence of a consolidated legal framework. Notably, matters such as blood feuds were being mediated through the regulations of the Kanun's customary laws. It should be acknowledged that during the nearly five decades of the communist era (1945–1991), these customary practices lay dormant, thus failing to assimilate the socio-economic shifts within Albanian society.

Consequently, the introduction of Kanun regulations, originally designed for divergent socio-economic and cultural contexts, hindered societal progress as they were employed outside their intended temporal and geographical parameters (Dedaj 2010, 55). This anachronistic application led to a resurgence of patriarchal perspectives, with Kanun-rooted patriarchal attitudes perpetuating notions surrounding gender roles and authoritative power (INSTAT 2013, 9).

METHODOLOGY

The challenges of the Albanian society concerning gender issues and the progress made by it cannot be understood and judged without considering all the factors that have contributed to the situation in which gender issues are today. Gender issues, especially the status and role of women, cannot be clearly understood if all cultural, social, economic, and political elements and their combinations during the history of the development of Albanian society are not taken into consideration.

Cultural customs and traditions have a special role in shaping the role and position of women in society, from which mentalities regarding gender stereotypes have been formed. Considering the important role of customs and traditions, the understanding of gender issues would be superficial if they were neglected. Customary rights have played an essential role in the sanctioning of gender roles; therefore, for obtaining the research data, the content analysis approach is used to explore gender issues in the Kanun norms. Customary rights in the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini and the Kanun of Luma have been studied to show how the sanctioned rules for the rights and duties of men and women have shaped and reinforced the patriarchal mentality and the division of gender roles. It is relevant to acknowledge that the scope of this analysis is limited to selected parts of the Kanuns, given the expansive nature of these customary law texts. Consequently, this limitation is acknowledged as it may potentially compromise a holistic understanding of the content and may truncate their clear meaning, potentially diverting readers from the contextual richness encapsulated within the larger body of the Kanuns.

GENDER ROLES AND CUSTOMARY RIGHTS

The customary rights have had an important role in the formation of mindsets. They have been applied with fanaticism in the Albanian society for a long time, rooting and strengthening the patriarchal mentality regarding the positions of men and women. It is important to specify what mindsets about women and men have prevailed in society, and how the relationships, roles, rights and duties between them have been regulated throughout the history of the development of the Albanian society. Although their influence has faded nowadays, it should not be forgotten that the patriarchal mentality is difficult to eradicate, especially when it is combined with other issues, which help this mentality to strengthen.

One of the main causes of gender-based discrimination in Albanian society is the prevalence of patriarchal customs. These patriarchal traditions are combined with issues related to unemployment, poverty, and many other social issues, making the position of girls and women even more vulnerable (UNICEF and INSTAT 2006, 8). As it will be noted below, customary rights in the Kanun have nurtured the role of the housewife and the subordinate position to the men of the family for women and girls, while precisely these roles have served as one of the main obstacles to

their progress in the public sphere. Gender roles have contributed to increasing pressure and dilemmas for women between domestic obligations and progress and engagement in the public sphere.

Numerous instances of female discrimination trace their origins to enduring patriarchal traditions and customs, which persist in their influence to this day (INSTAT 2004; INSTAT 2019, 4). According to the study by UN Women (2020), regardless of the progress that Albania has made, especially in the legal framework, gender stereotypes continue to serve as an obstacle to women's progress, while they continue to bear the brunt of domestic obligations (8–12). Women face the double burden of professional commitments outside the home and domestic obligations within it (Ibid., 5).

According to UN Women (2020), stereotypes of gender roles continue to have an impact on the progress of girls and women in the labor market, as well as in the education system where the division according to the so-called female and male professions is still noticeable (8–12). "The segregation according to fields of education is still prominent, with female tertiary students concentrating in the areas of education, health and welfare, humanities and arts, and male students studying in these fields in small proportion" (INSTAT 2020, 1).

According to INSTAT data, in 2020 the representation of women in the Albanian parliament was 29.51% compared to 70.40% of men. Regarding the labor market for the same year, women make up 52.0% compared to 67.0% for men. Meanwhile, the participation of women in secondary or higher education for women is 94% compared to 90% for men. Also, there is still a gender gap concerning salaries, men have a gross monthly salary 6.6% higher than women (INSTAT 2021, 70, 156). In recent years, the higher participation of women in education levels, especially at the university level, has been noticed, but this has not been accompanied by a significant increase in their participation in the labor market, decision-making positions, etc.

This article shows the importance of studying the challenges that one society faces to understand more clearly and deeply its situation today. Thus, to understand the issues related to gender in the Albanian society today, we must study all the elements that have influenced the situation and status of girls and women.

Although the influence of customary rights has faded, the influence of the canonical mentality, especially the patriarchal mindset of the society, continues to be considerable.

MAN AS A LEADING FIGURE

In the Albanian family, the figure of the father and his role is very important, especially in cases where families have had more than one married couple living in the same household. Although the current trends are for couples to live separately once again the spouse seems to have the right to make decisions within the family and to have the last word on various issues. Although nowadays there is a tendency for a balance between the role of the father and the mother, again in terms of direction and decision-making, the father remains the main figure. Mothers continue to have the biggest burden of household duties, regardless of the load they may have in other commitments outside the home. It also seems that girls, compared to boys, are more dependent on their families and they are required to be more accountable and ask for permission from both, their parents and siblings, if they want to go somewhere, buy something, etc., even changes in their look.

Customary rights in the Kanuns related specifically to the figure of the master of the house, the lady of the house, the division of duties, etc., which have served as the basis for regulating relationships and the division of duties and rights within the family, are discussed below. In the Albanian culture and tradition, the role of the master of the house has been one of the most important figures in the family, so much so that it may even seem like a mythical figure, to whom according to the Kanuns belongs the "ruling" of the house. This was typical of traditional families where many people were living under the same roof, making the role of the master of the house even more important. As noted in the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini, these large families are headed by "i zoti i shpis"[1] [the master of the house] (Gjeçovi 1999, 7–8), whose position is very important, and which is indicated in the Kanun. Meanwhile, the figure of the "e zonja e shtepise" [the lady of the house], regardless of her special status, remains responsible for the domestic sphere, for which she is accountable.

Thus, the lady of the house "ka tager mbi te gjitha sendet, qi bahen ne shpi" ["has control over everything that is done inside the house"], but she cannot sell, buy or exchange anything without the permission of the master of the house.

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[1] The quotes from the Kanuns are presented in their original (the standard Albanian language is not used in the Kanuns, but one of its dialects); followed by the translations made by the authors of the article.

In the Kanuns it is stated clearly that the master of the house takes the non-negotiable decisions, and all other members of the family must follow them. The lady of the house, on the other hand, has a special position compared to the other family members, but her rights are limited and she responds and takes permission from the head of the family. She cannot undertake initiatives without consulting and taking permission from the head of the family.

To become the master of the house or the head of the family was a right to which only men were entitled, usually the eldest man in the family. After the death of the master of the house, his eldest son takes the role of the master. "Djalit të parë i perket sundimi i shpis mbas dekës së t'et" [The firstborn son belongs the ruling after the death of his father] (Gjeçovi, 1999, 23), or the eldest male of the family, depending on the people living at that family.

Also, the same is found in the Kanun of Luma, where it is stated that "Shtëpinë e drejton i zoti i shtëpis" [The house is ruled by the master of the house], "Zot shtëpie mundet me qenë: ma i moqmi ndër meshkuj..." [The master of the house can be the eldest one between the men] (Hoxha 2013, 86–87).

The prevailing notion that positions of leadership are inherently male prerogatives has strengthened the enduring patriarchal mindset, firmly entrenching the belief that authority and decision-making are exclusively male domains. This mindset has imposed considerable challenges upon women who attempt to enter these traditionally labelled male domains, especially within the realms of politics and executive roles.

INHERITANCE AND GENDER ISSUES

Same as for the role of the head of the family, men seem also to benefit from the rules of inheritance. Canonical rules exclude girls and women from inheritance. As the right to be the master of the house belongs to men, the same is for the right to inheritance. If there is no male heir in a family, according to the Kanuns, the wealth and property of the family cannot be inherited by daughters.

Baba edhe në mos past djelm, nuk mundet me u lanë bijave as tokë, as plang, as shpi [If the father does not have sons, he cannot inherit the land or house to the daughters]. (Gjeçovi 1999, 26)

Kanuja njef për trashigues djalin e jo vajzën [The Kanun recognizes only the sons as heirs]. (Ibid., 28)

The same line is found in the Kanun of Luma where it is stated:

Djali njehet trashgimtar, jo cuca [The boy is recognized as heir, not the girl]. (Hoxha 2013, 121)

"Cuca e pamartueme ka gjallesën në shtëpi të babës, ka të drejtë e detyrë me punue sa të jetë në ate konak, po hise s'i qitet kur të dahen vllaznia [The girl while unmarried, she lives at her father house, she has the right and duty to work as long she lives there but she does not inherit any part when inheritance is divided between brothers]. (Ibid.)

Mashkulli – shtyll' e shpis, cuca – der' e huej [The man is the pillar of the house; the girl is a foreigner]. (Ibid., 311).

In the Albanian tradition, there were many cases when a couple, who did not give birth to a son would take one of the man's brother's sons as his own. This son inherits everything, his wealth and property, and takes care of the family if the father dies. Women and girls cannot inherit from their father or husband in any circumstance, a male heir must be found in the line of the relatives.

This mindset affected women over decades and contributed to their economic dependence on men, as well as cultivated their mindset of working and not being rewarded or paid for their work. Property and wealth belong to men, although women work all their lives and contribute to their growth. This mentality, combined with all the obstacles and other discriminations made in society, contributes to the economic dependency of girls and women and reduces their decision-making power. Moreover, from the Kanun customs women and girls belong neither to their fathers nor even to their husband's households.

THE DIVISION OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Even in the division of duties between men and women, the influence of the mindsets of the Kanun can be noticed. In both Kanuns, it is stated that the role of the provider of material goods is attributed to the man and that of raising children to the woman. Furthermore, it is stated that the children belong to their father. Thus, women give birth, educate, and raise children, and still, the

children belong only to their fathers. According to these mindsets, divorced women are entitled to nothing, neither wealth nor the custody of their children.

For example, in the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini, among other things, the husband's duties are mentioned: "a) me u përkujdesë per veshë e mbathë e për gjithshka të lypet per me mbajtë jeten" [To take care of everything that is needed to live] or for the wife's duties: "e) me rritë e me mkambë fmin me nderë;" [to raise the children with honor] (Gjeçovi 1999, 21).

Also, in the Kanun of Luma it is stated that the father has the role of the provider for his family:

> Cullt janë të babës, jo të nanës [Children belong to the father not to the mother], Baba ka kto detyra ndaj cullve: a) Me u sigurue rrnes e gjalles dhe të veshme e të mbathme, derisa të bahen të zotit e vetit [The father has these duties toward children: a) to secure their living till they grow up]. (Hoxha 2013, 119)

Moreover, in the Kanun of Leke, in the section "Prindja" [Parents], you find the norms treating rights and duties of the man – father, the woman – wife, and of the son. Daughters are not mentioned in this section. In this section "the man–father", has rights over his house and children, the woman-wife does not (Gjeçovi 1999, 21). The same as in the norms established for the master of the house, the inheritance rights, the obligations and rights towards children, etc., the truncated role and rights of girls and women are noticed.

ISSUES OF ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE

In the tradition of the Albanian society, marriages were arranged, and they were known as "martesa me shkuesi" [marriages with matchmaker]. The matchmaker was the person who went to the girl's family, met with the master of the house, and submitted the request/proposal for marriage. If the matchmaker was the one who had the idea to make this relationship happen, he first went to the young man's family and discuss it with the master of the house and the eldest men of the family. In other cases, the man's family appointed someone respected as "shkues" [matchmaker] to go to the girl's family and convey the request/proposal. Marriages in the traditional Albanian society were made through the agreement and arrangement of the families of the boy and the girl to be married.

The girl and the boy were not asked to have a say in this matter. If the engagement was agreed upon, the future couple was not allowed to meet each other, their first meeting was on their wedding night. The heads of the families of both parties and the elders of the tribes decided on the marriage. In these discussions and decisions, the opinion of the mother of the girl was not considered too, the decision was the right of the men of the family. Other forms of marriage were not approved. During the regime, this tradition was challenged for change considering it as outdated. Young people were encouraged to choose their life partners and be the main actors in this matter. Even if there were matchmaking cases, the final decision was in the hands of the future couple. Regardless of this, marriages with matchmaking have not completely disappeared, they are found even nowadays, but with major changes to the traditional form.

The Kanun states:

> Vajza s`ka tager: a) me zgjedh fatin e vet; do të shkojë per atë, per të cilin ta fejojn [The girl does not have the right: a) to choose her fate; she will go for the one with whom they will engage her]. (Gjeçovi 1999, 10)

Likewise, in the Luma Kanun, it is stated that the male members of the family have the right and the duty to decide on the engagement of a young woman:

> kanë tagër me dhanë cucë e me zanë nuse: baba, i zoti i shtëpis, mixha, kushrini, daja, barku e vllaznia, po vendos baba, pse i ka pjellë [Have the right to engage the girl and get a bride: the father, the master of the house, the uncle, the cousin, the brotherhood, but the father decides because they are his offspring]. (Hoxha 2013, 96)

As it is noticed by the rules of the Kanuns above, regarding the decision for the engagement/marriage, both for the girls and for the boys, the decision is in the hands of the men of the family. The last word for the decision belonged to the father of the girl, as she was his offspring. Thus, the right to decide, even for a very important decision such as this one, is given to the men of the family.

The discrimination against women is clear in both of the Kanuns, this is seen not only in the stipulation of different duties and rights, but it goes further. If someone was being judged for

something they had done, being a man or a woman made a big difference. For example, regarding adultery in the Kanun of Luma, the following has been mentioned:

> Burri njehet burrë, e grueja njehet grue, prandaj njisoj nuk janë. Burri asht zot në shtëpi të vet, grueja – rob në shtëpi të huej. Bani e shkeli kunorën burri, gjeje nuk i jep kuj; shkeli kunorën grueja, i jep gjegje burrit, e ka plumbin kres, pse 'nuk asht e leme, por e bleme', 'asht rob i huej. [Man is the man, the woman a woman, therefore they are not the same. The man is the master in his house – the woman a slave in a foreign house. If the man is not faithful, he will not respond to anyone; if the woman is not faithful, she will have a bullet to the head because she is bought, 'she is a foreigner']. (Hoxha 2013, 107–109)

Furthermore, according to the same Kanun, women do not have the right to seek divorce. Furthermore, a divorced woman is not considered worthy of a second marriage:

> Burri e lshon gruen kur sheh se s'vyen, grueja s'e ka kte tagër edhe kur ai asht shëmtaq, don nji tjetër ose e ban me ortake: 'rrno e duro, derë tjetër për të nuk ka!', Të bamen e grues se lan Drini, e bamja e burrit lahet me një pikë uj. Grueja që lshohet nji herë, nuk merret ma. [The man can leave the wife if he sees that she is not worth, the wife does not have this right even when he is ugly, she loves someone else or if he gets another wife: 'live and endure, there is not another chance for her!', The woman that is left by the man will not be taken anymore]. (Hoxha 2013, 107–109)

Even in the Kanun of Leke Dukagjini, it is shown how the husband is the one who "I pret balluket" [cuts the bangs] of the woman's hair (Gjeçovi 1999, 20), or in "The husband's right over the wife" (Ibid., 21), the husband has the right to divorce her as well as punish his wife if she disobeys him. Meanwhile, in "Mother, Woman", it is said that the woman has no authority over the children or the house. Even, apart from the husband, when he is dead, the son has the right to "expel the mother out of the house" if she causes fights "that stir the house" (Ibid., 22).

CONCLUSION

Gender roles contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities between girls and boys, women and men. Gender roles have been passed down from generation to generation, and despite the advances made today, they continue to serve as a strong divider and influencer in the status and roles between women and men. The Albanian traditions have served as a strong influencing factor in these divisions, which, despite all the changes that have occurred in Albanian society, are still strong and among the strongest obstacles to the progress of girls and women, especially in the public sphere. The Albanian cultural tradition is rich, and its traditions easily fascinate any researcher. Although traditional Albanian culture continues to be influenced by social developments, patriarchal elements are still challenging and influential.

The parts of the Kanuns briefly discussed above are just a small fragment of the elements with gender divisions found in the customary laws, and it is necessary to conduct a more in-depth study that goes beyond the space that this article can offer on this issue. Customary rights in the Kanun are so diverse and rich that each study seems to only scratch its surface. The parts of the Kanuns discussed in this article aim to give a modest overview of the issue of gender divisions and to encourage further studies and analyses in this field and beyond.

From the parts discussed above it can be concluded that gender roles are clearly separated and strongly punished if they are broken or violated. Ruling and decision-making in the family belong to men, while women are seen as outsiders first in their father's home and then in the husband's. The same line is followed with the division of duties, and further with the right of inheritance or decision-making, where women and girls must obey the decisions made by the men of the family.

Discrimination against girls and women is clear and sometimes harsh. Not only are they denied the same rights, but often the punishment is different for the same deeds. The exclusion of girls and women from the rights of inheritance, their treatment as outsiders in the house of the father and husband, etc., have left their mark on the position and role of girls and women in society, in the strengthening of the patriarchal mentality as well as the discrimination against girls and women.

Lastly, for a deeper understanding of gender issues, especially the status and role of women in the Albanian society, all the components (cultural, social, economic, political, etc.) and their

combinations during the history of the development of Albanian society need to be taken into consideration. Customary laws are just one of the components of the rich Albanian culture, but their role in shaping the mindset has been very important, especially mentalities regarding gender role division.

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EDUCATION DIVIDE: CIVIC LEARNING AND INTENDED POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG YOUTH IN ESTONIA, LATVIA, AND LITHUANIA

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ABSTRACT

Civic education serves as a vital tool for shaping national identity and a deeper understanding of civic duties. It assumes unparalleled importance in the contexts of the Baltic states and amidst the current geopolitical landscape, particularly the Russian war in Ukraine. The substantial Russian-speaking minority in these countries adds complexity, highlighting the need to examine their access to civic education at school.

Past studies have demonstrated the correlation between civic education, civic activities at school, and increased political participation among youth. Building on prior research that highlighted low levels of political participation among the Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic countries, this paper uses the data collected during the spring of 2022 as part of the International Civic and Citizenship Study to perform a comparative analysis of civic education in the Baltic States. Specifically, we investigate civic learning opportunities, participation in civic activities, and the intended political participation of 8th-grade students attending school programs predominantly taught in the national language or in the Russian language across the Baltic countries.

The results reveal subtle yet significant disparities between both groups, with the most pronounced differences observed in Latvia and the smallest in Estonia. Contrary to initial hypotheses, the language of testing did not emerge as the strongest predictor of intended electoral participation. Instead, active participation in civic activities at school exhibited the highest contribution to explainning the variance in students' intentions to participate in elections.

The findings carry implications for adapting school curricula and teacher training programs, emphasizing the necessity of incorporating more civic activities within primarily Russian-taught school programs. Additionally, the results underscore the importance of ensuring equitable civic learning opportunities for all ethnic groups, particularly in the face of the planned closures of primarily Russian-taught programs in Latvia and Estonia. Improving the quality of formal civic education and increasing the frequency of civic activities at school can enhance youth's future political participation, irrespective of their ethnic or linguistic background.

INTRODUCTION

Civic education and engagement are components of positive youth development, fostering not only academic engagement but also nurturing a sense of social responsibility and community connection among adolescents (Ludden 2011). Civic learning within schools plays a crucial role in shaping active civic participation and democratic engagement. A strong foundation in civic knowledge enhances both the quality and quantity of civic participation (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Informal civic education significantly increases the likelihood of voting in early adulthood (Hart et al. 2007), whereas the absence of a formal curriculum for civic learning in school reduces the likelihood of voting (Keating and Janmaat 2016). Educational opportunities centred on civic and political matters, along with actionable methods, have been proven to be highly effective in cultivating a strong dedication to civic participation (Kahne and Sporte 2008). Schools providing diverse opportunities, including student governance and extracurricular activities, enhance students' willingness to engage in civic action (Reichert and Print 2018).

In the unique context of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, civic education holds unparalleled significance, especially amidst the ongoing war in Ukraine. Against this backdrop, civic education emerges as a potent tool in shaping patriotism and national identity, particularly vital during times of war (Ivanec 2023). Recent studies in Ukraine illuminate the transformative impact of civic education, fostering pride, dedication to the country, and a deeper understanding of civic duties among students and teachers alike (Ivanec 2023). Moreover, research across various post-Soviet states underscores the effectiveness of civic education programs in reshaping perceptions about democracy among young citizens. Through these programs, participants exhibit increased belief in democratic values, positive attitudes toward democratic governance, and enhanced political efficacy (Pospieszna et al. 2023). In the wake of the shifting political dynamics in post-Soviet states after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, upholding democratic principles faces challenges. During times of instability, the focus often veers away from democratic discourse and pluralism in citizenship education, being overshadowed by conformity, loyalty, and patriotism. To surmount these challenges, it becomes important to nurture civic identities grounded in values that extend beyond mere national allegiance (Verbytska 2019). In this context, civic education not only imparts knowledge but

becomes a cornerstone in shaping resilient democratic societies, transcending boundaries and fostering a sense of collective responsibility and engagement among the youth.

In this study, our primary goal is to provide a comparative analysis of civic learning opportunities, civic engagement at school, and the intended political participation of 8th grade students in the Baltic countries, specifically Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, using data gathered from the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) 2022. In the Baltic States, ICCS 2022 was conducted in both the country's national language and Russian. This bilingual approach accommodated students enrolled in programs taught primarily in Russian, serving those with Russian or other post-Soviet states ethnic backgrounds. In Lithuania, ICCS 2022 was also conducted in Polish at Polish minority schools. This allows us to compare the experiences of students in these countries and further understand the impact of different school programmes divided by language of instruction on their civic development. This comparison is crucial, especially in the light of potential changes, such as the planned cessation of offering education in Russian in Latvia and Estonia. We use t-tests to explore significant differences between students primarily instructed in the national language and those mainly taught in Russian. This comparison pertains to their perceptions of civic learning opportunities, participation in school civic activities, and intended electoral participation.

In summary, this study holds broader implications that extend beyond the realm of comparative education. For policy makers, we hope to offer insights into civic education disparities faced by students in Baltic countries. Understanding these challenges is important for crafting policies that promote equal opportunities. Furthermore, for future teachers entering these diverse classrooms, our research offers practical insights. By incorporating the findings into teacher training programs, educators can be better prepared to address the varying levels of civic learning opportunities among students. This approach aims at recognizing and bridging the gaps in civic education experiences, fostering a more equitable learning environment for every student.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Young people learn about civic responsibility from a variety of experiences that they have at home, at school, in the classroom, and in the larger community (Schulz, Ainley, et al. 2018). School often marks the initial transition for children from the private

spheres of family and local community into the broader public sphere, where cooperation across differences becomes essential (Parker 2002). Parker (2002) contends that due to this fusion of real-world experiences, schools stand as ideal settings for civic education.

Against this backdrop, the upcoming chapters delve into the definition and forms of formal civic education and civic activities within educational institutions. These chapters illuminate pathways for imparting civic knowledge and values, drawing on extensive empirical studies to provide nuanced insights into the effect these can have on young people's political opinions and engagement.

Additionally, this study delves into the intricate landscape of electoral participation among young individuals, specifically focusing on the Baltic states. Here, democratic participation among ethnic minorities encounters unique challenges.

The paradigm for our empirical analysis is built on civic education, civic activities at schools, and electoral participation. To understand the complex relationship between language, education, and civic participation among young people in the Baltic countries, these variables are being compared across two different groups of students who participated in ICCS 2022: those who answered the questionnaire in the national language and those who answered it in Russian. Therefore, the understanding of these three concepts becomes crucial for the further analysis.

FORMAL CIVIC EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

The primary goal of formal civic education is the acquisition of political knowledge, such as educating pupils on how the government operates (Dassonneville et al. 2012). It is an education that helps an individual become a useful citizen (Fitzpatrick 2006).

Civic education can take two fundamental approaches within the school curriculum: it can either be established as an independent subject or integrated into another subject, often falling under the umbrella of social sciences (Morris and Cogan 2004). The distinction between these approaches carries significant consequences. Defining civics as a standalone subject provides it with a designated time slot on the timetable, necessitates a specific cohort of teachers who are specialized and trained for this purpose, entails the creation of tailored textbooks for student use and enables direct formal assessment. This structured approach ensures equal access and maintains a uniform

standard of provision (Morris and Cogan 2004). Conversely, integrating civic education into other subjects introduces a level of flexibility and variation in instructional methods and content delivery (Morris and Cogan 2004). This integration accommodates diverse learning styles and educational contexts, fostering adaptability in the teaching process. Understanding these diverse teaching methods is crucial in examining the contextual influences on civic education, which can be perceived as both antecedents and processes. Antecedents are the historical context that influences civic and citizenship education (for instance, through historical policies that influence how education is delivered) (Schulz, Ainley, et al. 2018). In the Baltic countries, the legacy of the Soviet past left a significant imprint on civic education. After the political changes in the region following the fall of the Soviet Union, civic education was recognized as needing substantial reform. Under the previous regime, it had served as a tool for indoctrination, shaping the beliefs of the younger generation according to the prevailing ideologies (Malak-Minkiewicz 2007). Post-socialist states, including the Baltic nations, embarked on a process of reconceptualization of civic education. The precursor to ICCS, the CIVED Study conducted in 1999, revealed an important insight: students from both "new" and "old" democracies shared a similar political ethos. This indicates the rapid impact of these changes in civic education (Malak-Minkiewicz 2007). Additionally, contemporary processes profoundly shape civic and citizenship education. For instance, the level of civic involvement and awareness among students directly affects how this subject is taught in schools. Moreover, students' ability to grasp civic-related issues is influenced by factors such as socioeconomic background and the language predominantly used at home (Schulz, Ainley, et al. 2018). In the Baltic context, marked by language disparities, our research gains significance as we examine the impact of different educational programs based on language of instruction. Our study aims to analyse how these programs influence the access and quality of civic education for distinct student groups.

The positive effects of formal civic education have been confirmed by different empirical studies. Studies show that civic learning opportunities play a large role in predicting students' commitment to civic participation, such as being involved in improving their community (Kahne and Sporte 2008). Research conducted with Belgian students highlighted the correlation between classroom civic education and heightened political

interest levels (Dassonneville et al. 2012). Moreover, analyses of surveys in the USA demonstrated a substantial increase in the likelihood of voting and political engagement among citizens who completed social studies or civics courses during their junior high or high school years. Extracurricular activities did not have the same impact on promoting voting and electoral engagement as classroom civics instruction (Owen 2013).

CIVIC ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL

The scope of civic learning extends far beyond the confines of formal civic education. While structured subjects or classes undeniably impart civic knowledge, an equally important dimension exists within the informal curriculum of schools. As Reichert and Print (2018) observe, these experiences, although not formally outlined in curricula, offer platforms for civic engagement. Such informal civic learning, which encompasses planned yet non-formalized activities within schools, and even extends to extracurricular pursuits, is also highly important for civic education.

One way to civically engage at school is by participating in a school council. Functioning as an elected body of pupils, the school council bears the responsibility of representing their respective classes (Veitch 2009). It is widely acknowledged that most schools in Western democracies, as well as other nations, have some type of student representation in governing the school (Saha and Print 2010). School councils serve as dynamic platforms, embodying democratic principles by empowering students to actively participate in decision-making processes. The opportunity to learn about democracy through involvement in democratic school activities is a significant learning opportunity (Saha and Print 2010). Through these councils, children learn the significance of their perspectives, thus nurturing a sense of responsibility and active citizenship.

In general, student participation in school decision-making processes has been proven to correlate with students' engagement in school decisions and the development of civic attitudes and behaviours (Ibid.). The concept of "pupil voice", as articulated by various scholars, encompasses a broad spectrum of methods through which students are encouraged to express their views and preferences (Whitty and Wisby 2007). Moreover, national standards, such as the NHSS criteria in Great Britain, emphasize

the imperative for schools to integrate student perspectives across all aspects of school life (Ibid.).

Student engagement in civic activities within schools is an important aspect of their overall civic development, and this has been shown in previous studies. The ICCS 2016 data from various participating countries indicates that a significant percentage of students, approximately 77 percent, actively participated in voting for class or school parliament representatives. Moreover, 41% of students reported engaging in decisions about school governance and 42% reported running for positions within student government (Schulz, Ainley, et al. 2018). Involvement in these particular activities has proven to be influential in fostering essential skills and attitudes that facilitate future electoral participation (Deimel et al. 2022). Longitudinal studies have shown that school-based political activities have a lasting positive impact on young people's civic engagement, both during their time in school and well into adulthood (Keating and Janmaat 2016). Participation in school elections not only correlates with feeling prepared for adult voting but also enhances political knowledge and engagement in peaceful activism (Saha and Print 2010). These results emphasize the significance of fostering active citizenship through substantial engagement within the school setting.

INTENDED ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

The act of participating in elections is a fundamental way for citizens to engage in the political process, contributing significantly to the formation of the government. To make informed choices, understanding electoral processes, political party platforms, and ideologies is crucial (Turashvili 2016). This knowledge can be acquired through civic education courses or active engagement in civic activities within schools.

In recent times, concerns about "political apathy" among the general population, especially the youth, have become prominent in media and political discourse (Sloam 2007). Youth apathy in an electoral democracy refers to a situation where young people exhibit disinterest or indifference towards voter registration and participation in general elections (Chauke 2020).

The involvement of young individuals in electoral and political processes holds importance for the development of modern democratic societies. Firstly, it ensures inclusivity in decision-making processes, allowing diverse voices to contribute to governance. Secondly, youth participation enables the

expression of their needs and opinions, thus ensuring the effective implementation of long-term policies (Turashvili 2016).

The observed decline in political participation in recent years has been attributed to the displacement of high-voting older generations by low-voting younger ones (Franklin et al. 2004; Lyons and Alexander 2000). This shift highlights the changing dynamics of political engagement among different age groups, necessitating a closer examination of youth electoral participation to understand the underlying factors influencing their involvement in democratic processes.

The Baltic countries, particularly Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, have witnessed a decline in political participation over the years, with notable decreases in voter turnout percentages (Ehin 2007). At the same time, the Baltic countries are also home to one of the largest minority communities in post-communist Europe with the lowest levels of political participation: the Russian-speaking minority (Galbreath and McEvoy 2010). This diminished participation can partly be attributed to the fact that a significant portion of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia and Estonia are stateless individuals, rendering them ineligible for electoral involvement. Unlike Lithuania, which extended citizenship to all Soviet-era migrants, Latvia and Estonia adopted a more complex approach, leaving many Russian speakers without citizenship (Galbreath and McEvoy 2010). Notably, studies reveal a stark contrast between Russian speakers in Lithuania, where over half identify with the national political community, and those in Latvia and Estonia, who feel marginalized and politically disempowered (Ehin 2007). This situation has led to a sense of alienation within the Russian-speaking minority, fostering distrust between this community and both the Estonian and Latvian governments, as well as a considerable segment of the majority population (Agarin 2013).

This context sets the stage for our analysis of intended political participation among youth in the Baltics, particularly focusing on students who responded to the questionnaire in the national language versus those who answered in Russian, aiming to investigate if these historical disparities persist in 2022.

SCHOOL SYSTEM AND CIVIC EDUCATION

Following this theoretical overview, the subsequent chapters delve deeper into the specific contexts of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Each chapter offers comprehensive information on how the school

system in each of these countries is divided by language of instruction and a brief overview of how the teaching of civic education is anchored in each curriculum. Information on recent and planned changes is also provided.

ESTONIA

During the 50-year occupation, Estonia underwent a significant demographic transformation, marked by large-scale immigration that turned the once mono-ethnic state into a multicultural society (Kunitsõn et al. 2022). After Estonia regained its independence in 1991, Estonian became the official state language again, but 34.8% of the total population in Estonia claimed Russian as their first language (Vihalemm and Hogan-Brun 2013), so schools where Russian was the main language have remained, creating a bilingual educational system. However, state-funded universities swiftly transitioned to exclusive instruction in Estonian. As a result, the primary language of teaching in state-funded higher education institutions is now predominantly Estonian, with a few private universities offering courses in Russian (Lindemann and Saar 2012). The curricula for Estonian- and Russian-language schools were unified, and the number of hours devoted to Estonian language in Russian schools increased significantly. All schools in Estonia adhere to the same national curricula, with local governments having the authority to determine the language of instruction. Preschool and basic schools, under local government discretion, may operate in any language, typically offering a choice between Estonian, Russian, or Estonian language immersion schools ("keelekümblus"). The latter involves simultaneous teaching in both languages across all subjects. In upper secondary school, students can opt for full Estonian language instruction or choose to study a minimum of 60% of courses, including civic subjects, in Estonian (Kunitsõn et al. 2022).

However, despite the unified national curriculum and the use of Ministry of Education-approved textbooks in all schools, distinctions in curriculum and teaching practices exist between schools teaching primarily in Russian and schools teaching primarily in Estonian (Toots and Oja 2021). Despite the good scores reached by Estonian education in recent PISA studies, students attending schools primarily teaching in Russian lag behind those attending schools primarily teaching in Estonian by an average of one school year (the difference is 42 points) (OECD 2020). Over the past decade, upper secondary schools in Estonia

have primarily used Estonian as the language of instruction, yet a notable portion of students (23% in 2021) fail to attain the targeted B2 language proficiency level. The main reason for this is that previous levels of study do not provide a good enough starting point to reach the targets set for upper secondary education, and even at a very high level, three years of upper secondary education are not enough to bridge the gap (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2022). Additionally, the likelihood of second-generation Russians transitioning to higher education is diminished in comparison to Estonians. Even after adjusting for demographic factors, significant ethnic differences persist, particularly within the same gender and city of residence (Lindemann and Saar 2012). For these reasons, it is planned that all schools in Estonia will be converted to Estonian as of January 2024. The transition to Estonian-language learning concerns 31571 students and 2245 teachers who do not meet the language requirements (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2022).

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, civic education in Estonia underwent a significant transformation, particularly in traditional subjects like history and Soviet-style civics. The prevailing sentiment among teachers by 1988 was that civic education, previously used for Soviet indoctrination, needed a fundamental conceptual change (Valdmaa 2002). The decline of Soviet rule facilitated the evolution of social subjects, granting teachers increased freedom to focus on relevant content. Initiatives such as the unofficial social studies programs in 1992–1993 and the formal inclusion of the civics course in the 1996 national curriculum marked pivotal steps in reshaping civic education (Kunitsõn et al. 2022). Since then, civic education has become a compulsory subject at all levels of general education, solidifying its place in the national curriculum adopted in 1996. The current curriculum, finalized in 2010 with minor adjustments in 2014, mandates civics as a compulsory course in both basic and upper secondary national curricula. Upper secondary schools specifically require two mandatory courses: "Governance of democratic society and citizen participation" and "Economy and world politics" (Kunitsõn et al. 2022). In terms of teacher training, Estonia relies on two public universities, the University of Tartu and Tallinn University, for providing education on civic and citizenship education (CCE). However, due to limited job prospects for teachers solely specializing in CCE, there isn't a dedicated teacher program in social studies. Instead, relevant competencies for teaching civic education can be acquired

through a minor within the history teachers' study program (Toots and Oja 2021).

LATVIA

During the late 80s and early 90s in Latvia, there was a main paradigm shift in the education system. Education in the Soviet Union was based on norms and authority, whereas education ought to be based on humanistic pedagogy (Zids 2019). As Kangro (2018) suggests, one can distinguish three main stages in education paradigm shift in Latvia:

1) The stage of democratization of education: getting rid of Soviet ideology (from the mid-80s until 1990)
2) The stage of education policy creation, renewal and change (from 1990 till 2004)
3) The stage of inclusion of EU laws and policies into the education system (from 2004 on)

Considering changes in the education that have took place recently, one can add two more stages: The stage of transforming the educational process from teacher-led learning to students'-led learning was implemented with the project "Skola 2030" (School 2030) and the stage of cutting the Russian language as one of the two primary languages of education (year 2022–2023).

To help readers grasp the significance of the final stage, a detailed discussion is imperative. Before World War II, Latvia boasted a diverse educational landscape, comprising schools catering to various nationalities, including German, Russian, Hebrew, Polish, Lithuanian, and others. However, after World War II and during the Soviet Union's occupation of Latvia, the educational scenario underwent a drastic transformation. The Soviet government established two primary types of schools: those exclusively instructing in Latvian or Russian and dual-stream schools where both Russian and Latvian language streams coexisted within the same premises. Notably, students attending Russian-language schools or streams encountered distinct curricula, textbooks, and shorter study durations for secondary education in comparison to their counterparts in Latvian-language schools or streams (Matisāne 2010). Together with these "new" schools and new curricula, the government created a policy of two-stream schools where inside the same building there were both students in the Russian language stream and students in the Latvian language stream (Zids 2019). Not only the differences in curricula but also the national and cultural differences between

these students attending dual-stream schools, provoked different conflicts between students, and the main purpose of those schools, which was the integration of all nationalities and the creation of friendly Soviet society, failed. Recognizing the challenges posed by this approach, the Soviet Union government in Latvia made a decision in 1988: the gradual separation of dual-stream schools. This process led to the establishment of schools exclusively teaching in either Russian or Latvian language. This transformation persisted until the end of 1995 (Misāne 2010). Following Latvia's independence in 1991, efforts to renew schools for various minority communities were initiated. However, the deeply entrenched division between Latvian and Russian as the primary languages of instruction persisted, even in schools serving other minority groups such as Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Belarusian, and the Roma community (Protassova 2002).

This period marked the initiation of educational policy reforms, focusing on shifting the educational paradigm and establishing Latvian as the primary language of instruction. In 1996, a significant step was taken to introduce Latvian as a second language in all minority schools where education was conducted in Russian. This decision was formalized into law in 1998. Notably, it was only from the 2007/2008 school year onward that Latvian became a compulsory language in all primary and secondary educational institutions, including minority schools. According to the law, from the first grade, one subject was taught in Latvian, increasing to 60% of all subjects in secondary school. Other subjects could be taught in the minority language (mainly Russian) or bilingually (Izglītības likums 1998). This transition was conceived as a gradual process aimed at ensuring that eventually, 100% of all subjects, starting from the first grade, would be taught exclusively in Latvian across all state and municipally funded schools. The shift reached a significant milestone in the 2019/2020 school year when obtaining a secondary education in any language other than Latvian in state or municipal schools became impossible. While the transition for other grades experienced some delays, the urgency escalated with the outbreak of Russia's war with Ukraine. Consequently, a decision was made, and starting from the 2023/2024 school year, a three-year plan was set in motion to ensure that in all state or municipally founded schools, students would exclusively study all subjects in the state language. Under the new regulations, the language and culture of minorities

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are incorporated as additional elective subjects or within specialized interest education programs (Ibid.).

Latvia's civic education underwent a significant transformation, transitioning from teacher-led to student-led learning methods, and revising the curriculum starting from the 2019/2020 school year. This shift integrated civic subjects into various disciplines from the 1st school year onward, with full implementation by the 2022/2023 school year. Primary education is divided into three phases: grades 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9, with civic content seamlessly integrated into social studies. The curriculum covers diverse topics, including political systems, elections, minority rights, environmental concerns, and media literacy. The initial years focus on the individual and local community, expanding in later grades to historical contexts, social groups, and economic principles. The final year emphasizes sustainability, human rights, constitutional frameworks, democracy, and civic participation, fostering a comprehensive understanding of civic responsibilities (Skola2030).

LITHUANIA

In Lithuania, the status of the Lithuanian language as the state language was officially recognized on November 18th 1988 (Kalėdienė 2011). The language policies of the country, including the usage of Russian, Polish, and other languages, are governed by the Law on Ethnic Minorities of the Republic of Lithuania (Ibid.). A 1989 study revealed that approximately 37.8% of Russians in Lithuania were proficient in Lithuanian, a significantly higher percentage compared to their counterparts in Estonia and Latvia, suggesting a higher level of integration within Lithuanian society (Best 2013). Additionally, Lithuania's approach to granting citizenship to all individuals residing within its territory, regardless of their ethnic background, led to over 90% of non-Lithuanian individuals obtaining Lithuanian citizenship (Glăvan and Andrievschi-Bartkiene 2012).

The right to education in one's native language is protected by the Lithuanian law of education, and this right is fully upheld. Statistics from the 2010–2011 school years indicated the presence of 122 schools where children from ethnic minorities could receive primary, basic, and secondary education in their mother tongue (Ibid.).

A unique aspect of Lithuania's ethnic makeup is the significant Polish minority, constituting nearly 6% of the total

population in 2019. The presence of this minority can be traced back to historical factors, including border changes and assimilation processes. The Polish language holds historical significance, having been integral to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth established in 1569 (Janušauskiene 2021).

Unlike Estonia and Latvia, Lithuanian authorities have not enforced Lithuanian as the exclusive language of instruction in schools. Although minority languages lack official status, they are used as mediums of instruction in minority educational institutions, particularly in Polish, Russian, and Belarusian schools. Teachers in these establishments are provided opportunities for relevant training and qualifications at universities. State minority schools are established in regions with significant ethnic minority populations. These schools, both single-language and mixed, offer classes in Lithuanian, Russian, and Polish, adhering to the Lithuanian language curriculum, including subjects like Lithuanian language, history, geography, nature science, and civic education (Bulajeva and Hogan-Brun 2008; Glăvan and Andrievschi-Bartkiene 2012).

Furthermore, higher education institutions in Lithuania prepare linguists and teachers specializing in ethnic minority languages. However, students from ethnic minorities pursuing other professions at the tertiary level primarily receive their education in the state language (Gečienė 2016). This multifaceted linguistic landscape reflects Lithuania's inclusive approach, where the coexistence of multiple languages is maintained within the educational framework.

Civic education in Lithuania underwent significant developments following the restoration of independence in 1990. The post-independence era aimed to give students a profound understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens in a free nation. In preparation for its accession to the European Union in 2004, Lithuania revamped its civic education program. This new initiative emphasized incorporating contents related to universal democratic principles and exchanging the concept of patriotism for a focus on national history and identity (Dukynaitė et al. 2021) Civic education is an integral component of the pre-primary, primary, and basic education curricula in Lithuania. In primary school, it is integrated into the subject "world knowledge". In lower secondary school (grades 5-8), civic education is interwoven into moral education, history, geography, and "Nature and human being". In grades 9-10, it takes the form of "Basics of civic education" and "Socio-civic activities" (Ibid.). Compulsory social-

civic activities encompass at least 10 hours per school year, although individual schools have the flexibility to allocate additional time. Additionally, since 2018, students in grades 9-10 have the option to choose a National Security and Defense module (Dukynaitė et al. 2021). Teachers qualified in history, sociology, law, political science, geography, or economics can instruct citizenship education without specific additional training. However, teachers focusing on citizenship fundamentals and those incorporating citizenship education into their teaching are encouraged to participate in supplementary training opportunities (Ibid.).

METHODOLOGY

Building upon the theoretical framework, our study advances several hypotheses to explore the relationship between the language of instruction, civic engagement, and intended electoral participation among young individuals in the Baltic states. We formulate the following hypotheses:

H1: Students primarily instructed in the national language will demonstrate significantly higher reports of civic learning, participation in civic activities, and expected electoral participation compared to students primarily instructed in Russian, indicating the influence of language on educational outcomes.

H2: The language of instruction, specifically the primary language of instruction, will serve as a robust predictor for students' intended electoral participation, surpassing the influence of other factors such as civic learning opportunities and school-based activities.

Following, our working sample and the statistical procedures used to evaluate these hypotheses are described.

SAMPLE

The analysed data was obtained through ICCS 2022, a representative survey that was carried out with eighth grade students in 24 different educational systems in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. The survey was carried out during spring and summer 2022 in the Northern Hemisphere. A student questionnaire with questions about various aspects of their political, cultural, and educational experiences and attitudes was used in this study.

In Estonia, 2671 students participated in the survey. Approximately 25% of the respondents (n=682) completed the survey in the Russian language. An overwhelming majority, more than 97% of respondents, reported being born in Estonia. Around a quarter of the participants stated that they spoke more than one language at home. Notably, among those who completed the questionnaire in Russian, nearly 98% confirmed that they primarily used a language other than Estonian in their daily home life. In contrast, among those who responded in Estonian, approximately 5% indicated that they often used a language other than Estonian at home.

In Latvia, the survey included 2868 participating students. Approximately a quarter of the respondents (n=684) completed the questionnaire in Russian. 95.6% of the students stated that they were born in Latvia. Nearly half of the participants (n=1395) reported speaking more than one language at home. Among the respondents who answered the survey in Latvian, 14% indicated using a language other than Latvian primarily in their daily home life. Within the group of students who answered the questionnaire in Russian, 95% confirmed using a language other than Latvian as their primary language at home.

In Lithuania, a total of 3551 students participated in ICCS 2022. Among them, approximately 12% (n=420) responded in Russian, indicating their affiliation with Russian minority schools in the country. Additionally, there are Polish minority schools in Lithuania, and 13% of the respondents (n=464) completed the questionnaire in Polish. The majority of students, around 75%, completed the survey in Lithuanian. Notably, nearly 96% of the participants were born in Lithuania. A significant portion, approximately 42%, reported speaking more than one language at home. Among students who answered in Lithuanian, 5% mentioned using another language besides Lithuanian predominantly at home. Conversely, a substantial majority of students (94%) who completed the questionnaire in Russian stated that Russian was their primary language at home.

By analysing the answers from each class, we observed that only one class had one half of the students answering the questionnaire in Russian and the other half in the national language. Contrastingly, the remaining participating classes universally adhered to a specific language of testing for all students. This consistent trend strongly suggests uniformity in the educational curriculum across these classes. The utilization of a singular language of testing serves as a reliable indicator, implying

that students within these classes are likely enrolled in cohesive educational programs conducted predominantly in one language.

INSTRUMENTS

To compare civic learning, civic engagement, and intended electoral participation between groups who completed the survey in their country's national language and those who answered in Russian, we examined the following scales:

- civic learning opportunities: the ICCS 2022 student survey contained a question about civic education that asked students to rate how much ("to a large extent", "to a moderate extent", "to a small extent", "not at all") they had learned about each of the following at their school: "how citizens can vote in local or national election"; "how laws are introduced and changed in [country of test]"; "how to protect the environment (e.g., through energy-saving or recycling)"; "how to contribute to solving problems in the [local community]"; "how citizen rights are protected in [country of test]"; and "political issues and events in other countries";

- participation in school-related civic activities: students were asked to report on their participation in the following civic-related school activities: "voting for class representative or school parliament/council"; "taking part in decision-making about how the school is run"; and "becoming a candidate for class representative or school parliament/council"; for each activity, they could choose one option between the following: "yes, I have done this within the last twelve months", "yes, I have done this but more than a year ago", or "no, I have never done this"

- expected electoral participation: using a set of criteria that reflected expected electoral participation as adults ("vote in local elections", "vote in national elections", and "get information about candidates before voting in an election") students in the ICCS 2022 rated their expectations to do it on a 4-point Likert scale consisting of the following options: "I would certainly do this", "I would probably do this", I would probably not do this", and "I would certainly not do this".

All scale values are based on Rasch analyses, and the detailed process of scale building for the ICCS study is documented in the technical report (Schulz, Carstens, et al. 2018).

METHOD

To answer the first research question, t-tests with independent samples were conducted in order to assess if there are significant differences in reports about civic learning, participation in civic activities at school, and intended electoral participation between students who responded in their national language and those who answered in Russian.

Furthermore, linear regression was used to assess the ability of three control measures (reports about civic learning, participation in civic activities at school and language of testing) to predict expected electoral participation.

We dichotomized the variable language of testing into two distinct categories: 0 for Russian and 1 for the national language. Additionally, students in Lithuania who answered the questionnaire in Polish were not considered in the analysis. This exclusion was grounded in the unique historical and sociocultural context of the Polish-speaking minority, which differs significantly from that of the Russian-speaking minority.

Both analyses were conducted with IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29.

RESULTS

T-TESTS

The outcomes of the independent samples t-tests are presented in Table 1 divided by country. The classification of Cohen's d was done according to Cohen (1992), differentiating between small, moderate, and large effects (.20, .50, and .80, respectively).

For the civic learning scale, a t-test was conducted between students who responded the survey in Estonian and students who responded the survey in Russian. The mean score for responses in Estonian (M = 45.6, SD = 9.7) was slightly higher than that of responses in Russian (M = 44.7, SD = 10), t(682) = 2.2, p = 0.2. However, no significant difference between both groups could be observed. In terms of civic activities, responses in Estonian (M = 46.2, SD = 10.7) exhibited significantly higher scores compared to their counterparts in Russian (M = 44.6, SD = 10.7), t(682) = 3.4, p = 0.001. The effect size was, however, quite small, with Cohen's d at 0.15. Regarding intended electoral participation, Estonian-language respondents (M = 45.5, SD = 9.3) demonstrated higher

scores than Russian-language respondents (M = 43.6, SD = 9.8), t(682) = 4.4, p = 0.001. The effect size for this comparison was 0.20, indicating a small difference.

Results in Latvia were marked by higher effect sizes than in Estonia. Students who answered the survey in Latvian (M = 46.0, SD = 9.3) had significantly higher scores for reported civic learning opportunities at school compared to students who answered the survey in Russian (M = 40.5, SD = 11.1), t(684) = 11.5, p = 0.001. The effect size was moderate, with Cohen's d at 0.54. For civic activities, responses in Latvian (M = 46.9, SD = 10.3) had significantly higher scores than responses in Russian (M = 42.0, SD = 10.4), t(684) = 10.1, p = 0.001. The effect size for this comparison was 0.49, indicating a moderate difference. In terms of intended electoral participation, Latvian-language respondents (M = 45.6, SD = 10.2) showed higher scores than Russian-language respondents (M = 40.6, SD = 9.9), t(684) = 10.3, p = 0.001. The effect size was considerable, with Cohen's d at 0.48.

Significant differences between both student groups were also observed in Lithuania. Students who answered the survey in Lithuanian (M = 46.1, SD = 9.7) had significantly higher scores compared to those who completed the survey in Russian (M = 42.3, SD = 11), t(420) = 7, p = 0.001. The effect size was small, with Cohen's d at 0.38. For civic activities, responses in Lithuanian (M = 49.2, SD = 9.2) demonstrated significantly higher scores than responses in Russian (M = 46.1, SD = 10.5), t(464) = 11, p = 0.001. The effect size for this comparison was 0.37, indicating a small difference. Regarding intended electoral participation, Lithuanian-language respondents (M = 49.6, SD = 9.1) exhibited higher scores than Russian-language respondents (M = 43.9, SD = 9.7), t(464) = 6, p = 0.001. The effect size was substantial, with Cohen's d at 0.62, suggesting a moderate difference between the groups

After t-tests, linear regression was conducted for students of each country. In Estonia, the total variance of expected electoral participation explained by the model consisting of language of test, reports of civic learning opportunities and participation in civic school activities was 7%, F (3, 2621) = 68.657, p < .0001. Language of test had the lowest beta value (beta = .066, p < .001), whereas participation in civic activities at school displayed the highest beta value and therefore the highest contribution to explaining the variance of expected electoral participation (beta = .190, p < .001).

The proposed model explained a higher percentage of the variation in electoral participation in Latvia, 12%, $F_{(3, 2661)} = 122.18$, $p < .0001$. As in Estonia, language of test had the lowest beta value for the Latvian sample (beta = .123, $p < .001$), whereas participation in civic school activities presented the highest beta value (beta = .197, $p < .001$).

Table 1. Results of t-test analysis

Language of testing						
Estonia Scales	Responses in Estonian		Responses in Russian		t	p	Cohens d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Civic learning	45.6	9.7	44.7	10	2.2	0.2	.10
Civic activities	46.2	10.7	44.6	10.7	3.4	.001	.15
Electoral Partici-pation	45.5	9.3	43.6	9.8	4.4	.001	.20
Latvia Scales	Responses in Latvian		Responses in Russian		t	p	Cohens d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Civic learning	46.0	9.3	40.5	11.1	11.5	.001	.54
Civic activities	46.9	10.3	42.0	10.4	10.1	.001	.49
Electoral Partici-pation	45.6	10.2	40.6	9.9	10.3	.001	.48
Lithuania Scales	Responses in Lithuanian		Responses in Russian		t	p	Cohens d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Civic learning	46.1	9.7	42.3	11	7	.001	.38
Civic activities	49.2	9.2	46.1	10.5	11	.001	.37
Electoral Partici-pation	49.6	9.1	43.9	9.7	6	.001	.62

In Lithuania, a different situation is observed than in the other two countries. The model explained 10% of the variance of the independent variable, $F_{(3, 2993)} = 119.33$, however, civic learning opportunities accounted for the lowest beta value (beta = .118, $p < .001$). The highest beta value was once again participation in civic activities at school (beta = .194, $p < .001$).

Results confirm Hypothesis 1 that there are indeed significant differences between students who responded in the national language and those who answered in Russian. However, Hypothesis 2 was not confirmed, as language choice proved not to be the strongest predictor for intended electoral participation; instead, it was active participation in school-based civic activities that emerged as the primary influential factor.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of responses from 14-year-old students in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania regarding civic learning, participation in civic activities, and intended electoral participation in adult age revealed nuanced differences between those who responded in the national language and those who answered in Russian. These disparities, although statistically significant, are relatively small to moderate in magnitude. Notably, the variations are most pronounced in Latvia. In contrast, the differences are comparatively smaller in Estonia.

Certainly, the observed differences between students' reports hint at potential disparities in school curricula between programs taught in Russian and the national language, especially in Latvia. This raises a crucial question that warrants further research: why do students who responded in Russian in Latvia report significantly fewer opportunities to engage with civic education and participate in school-based civic activities compared to their peers predominantly taught in Latvian? A similar inquiry arises in Lithuania. This disparity not only underscores the importance of exploring the underlying reasons but also emphasizes the need for educational reforms to ensure equitable access to civic learning experiences for students regardless of the language of instruction. Addressing these disparities is crucial for fostering inclusive civic education initiatives within the Baltic educational landscape.

An important conclusion spans across all three Baltic nations: participation in school-based civic activities such as voting for class representative emerges as the most important predictor of intending to vote in national or local elections at adult age. This

factor consistently exhibits the most substantial contribution to explaining the variance in students' intentions to partake in elections. These findings are aligned with previous research, which highlighted the significant influence of engaging in civic activities at school on expected electoral participation, a phenomenon reaffirmed by our results (Deimel et al. 2022; Keating and Janmaat 2016; Reichert and Print 2018). Considering the above-mentioned results, it is possible that the differences in intended electoral participation between both student groups are not solely due to the language of instruction but rather because of the lack of civic activities in school programs primarily taught in Russian.

In light of the impending cessation of Russian-language programs in Latvia and Estonia, the findings from ICCS 2022 carry significant weight. This assessment potentially represents one of the final possibilities for comprehensive evaluations of the disparities between students in distinct language-taught programs across the Baltic states. These results hold value for shaping future teacher training initiatives and school curricula. Emphasizing civic education and active engagement in these curricula becomes imperative to bridge the existing gap between students attending different language programs. Moreover, for the students presently enrolled in programs where Russian is the main language of instruction, bridging this gap is crucial. Out-of-school activities, such as workshops, campaigns, and local initiatives, are essential to demonstrate to these young citizens that they have the agency to participate actively, including voting, and to comprehend the functioning of the government.

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