

**BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF LETTERS**

PhD THESIS

**THE POETRY OF JAN ERIK VOLD AND THE NORWEGIAN LYRIC
MODERNISM IN THE 1960s**

**SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR
PROFESSOR SANDA TOMESCU BACIU, Ph. D.**

**CANDIDATE
RALUCA-DANIELA RĂDUȚ**

**CLUJ-NAPOCA
2016**

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCANDINAVIAN MODERNISM IN LITERATURE

1. The context through which Modernism came to Norway
 - 1.1 Jan Erik Vold – a representative literary figure of the 1960s
 - 1.2 On European Modernism
 - 1.3 An overview of Scandinavian Modernism
 - 1.4 Phases of Norwegian literary Modernism
2. The Outline of Modernism in Norway
 - 2.1 The first modernist debate: A brief introduction to the first modernist debate: *Tungetaledebatten (The Gibberish Debate)*
 - 2.2 Arnulf Øverland and his vision upon literature
 - 2.3 Traditionalists vs. Modernists
 - 2.4 Erling Christie and Carl Keilhau – two prominent modernist literary figures
3. The second modernist debate: *Moderne norsk lyrikk. Frie vers 1890-1980 (Modern Norwegian Poetry. Free Verse 1890-1980)*. A Norwegian Anthology
4. Preliminary conclusions

CHAPTER II

THE NORWEGIAN MODERNISM OF THE 1960s - THE LITERARY CIRCLE AND THE LITERARY MAGAZINE PROFIL 1966-1968

1. The 1960s -the foundation of a new cultural forum
 - 1.1 The Norwegian Modernism of the 1960s – The *profilists* and the Literary Circle *Profil*
 - 1.2 The Literary Magazine *Profil*
 - 1.3 The *profilists* and their programmatic orientations
 - 1.4 Espen Haavardsholm and his poetic credo
 - 1.5 The main publications and the topics debated in the literary magazine *Profil* between 1966 and 1968
2. Preliminary conclusions

CHAPTER III

THE NORWEGIAN MODERNIST PHENOMENON: *KONKRETISME (CONCRETISM)*

1. CONCRETE POETRY- DEFINITION – THEORETICAL APPROACH

2. Etymology of the word concrete
3. The relations between concrete poetry and different fields (art, music, technology, everyday life activities, mythology)
 - 3.1 The relation between concrete poetry and linguistics
 - 3.2 The relation between concrete poetry and technology illustrated in Swedish literature
4. Three manifestoes on concrete poetry
 - 4.1 Noigandres Group's Manifesto
 - 4.2 Eugen Gomringer's Manifesto
 - 4.3 The Swedish Manifesto
5. Prominent figures representing the concept of concrete poetry in world literature
6. Preliminary conclusions
7. Jan Erik Vold's literary view regarding the concept of concrete poetry
 - 7.1 *mellom speil og speil (Between Mirror and Mirror, 1965)*
 - 7.2 *blikket (The Gaze, 1966)*
 - 7.3 *kykelipi, 1969*
8. Preliminary conclusions

CHAPTER IV

THE NORWEGIAN MODERNIST PHENOMENON: *NYENKELHETEN (THE NEW SIMPLICITY)*

1. The notion of *nyenkelhet (new simplicity)*
2. *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja (Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes, 1968)*
 - 2.1 "Trikkeskinnediktet" ("Tramlines")
 - 2.2 "Bildet stanser på Barkåker-diktet" ("The Image Stops at Barkåker- The Poem")
 - 2.3 "Funny"
 - 2.4 "Tale for loffen" ("Speech for the French Bread")
3. Preliminary conclusions

CHAPTER V

HAIKU POEMS IN JAN ERIK VOLD'S LITERARY WORK

1. The concept of *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*) as it is presented in Jan Erik Vold's haikus – *spor, snø* (*Traces, Snow*, 1970)
2. Preliminary conclusions

CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS

ARTICLES

CHAPTERS FROM BOOKS

PHD THESES

WEBLIOGRAPHY

DICTIONARIES

RECORDINGS

Appendix I

Quoted Scandinavian literary magazines

Biographical Notes

Appendix II

The Members of the Literary Circle *Profil*

Appendix III

“Lederartikkel” – “The Programmatic Article – Manifesto” (“Editorial”) of the Literary Magazine *Profil*

Appendix IV

HÄTILA RAGULPR PÅ FÅTSKLIABEN – *Manifesto for concrete poetry*

Appendix V

“Bris” (“Breeze”), *Rondo*, no. 3, 1961

Appendix VI

Manifestoes and Statements on Concrete Poetry

From Line to Constellation - Eugen Gomringer: Switzerland/Suiza

Appendix VII

PILOT PLAN FOR CONCRETE POETRY

Augusto de Campos, Decio Pignatari, Haroldo de Campos: Brazil/Brasil

Appendix VIII

Jan Erik Vold, *mellom speil og speil* (*Between Mirror and Mirror*, 1965)

Appendix IX

Jan Erik Vold, *blikket* (*The Gaze*, 1966)

Appendix X

Jan Erik Vold, *kykelipi*, 1969

Appendix XI

“TRIKKESKINNEDIKTET” (“TRAMLINES”)

Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja (*Mother Goodhearted Happy Version. Yes*, 1968)

Appendix XII

“TALE FOR LOFFEN” (“SPEECH FOR THE LOAF”) - *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon.*

Ja (*Mother Goodhearted Happy Version. Yes*, 1968)

Appendix XIII

“FUNNY” - *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted Happy Version. Yes*, 1968)

Appendix XIV

“BILDET STANSER PÅ BARKÅKER-DIKTET” (“The Image Stops at Barkåker- The Poem”) - *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted Happy Version. Yes*, 1968)

Appendix XV

Jan Erik Vold, *spor, snø* (*Traces, Snow*, 1970)

Appendix XVI

Interview with the Norwegian poet Jan Erik Vold, the 15th of February, 2015

Keywords: Norwegian lyric Modernism, Jan Erik Vold, *konkretisme* (*concretism*), Norwegian concrete poetry, *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*), the Literary Circle *Profil*, the group of *profilists*, the literary magazine *Profil*

SUMMARY

The reason for choosing this theme of research, entitled *The Poetry of Jan Erik Vold and the Norwegian Lyric Modernism in the 1960s*, is given by the innovation which was brought by the Norwegian poet Jan Erik Vold (b. 1939) and his poetic language, with a special focus on *konkretisme* (*concretism*) and *nyenkelheten*¹ (*the new simplicity*), two modernist concepts. In order to provide a theoretical approach to the above mentioned concepts, we begin our research with a presentation of the literary and cultural field in which *konkretisme* (*concretism*) and *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*) were developed for the first time in modern Norwegian literature. In this respect, among the literary phases through which Modernism came to Norway, we focus our attention on the fourth phase, of the 1960s, *Profil-opprøret* (*The Profil Revolt*). Among the publications of the *profilists*, the members of the Literary Circle *Profil*, we make reference especially to the four annual anthologies, namely *Gruppe 66, 67, 68 and 69* (*Group '66, '67, '68 and '69*).

Georg Johannesen, Dag Solstad and Jan Erik Vold, the editors of *Gruppe 68* (*Group '68*), pointed out what this anthology consists of “traditional short stories and poems, but the reader might want to fix his attention on the *nyenkle* (*new simple*) poets, on haikus, on typographical poems or on scrapbooks, presented as poems (the so called “ready-mades”)”² (Johannesen, Solstad, Vold 1968: 5, my own translation). Thus, our main objective is to point out these two literary concepts, *konkretisme* (*concretism*) and *nyenkelheten* (*the new simplicity*), aiming at

¹ *nyenkelt dikt* – is a type of poetry, simple and common, thus getting directly to the reader. In my research I have not found a correspondent in English, thus I have used the Norwegian term - Idar Stegane, “Medierevolusjon og Modernisme 1945 – 1990” (“The Media Revolution and the Modernism 1945-1990”) in Bjarne Fidjestøl / Peter Kirkegaard / Sigurd Aa. Arnes / Leif Longum / Idar Stegane (ed.), *Norsk litteratur i tusen år* (*One Thousand Years of Norwegian Literature*), p. 596. However, Asbjørn Aarseth, used “new simplicity” as an English equivalent for the Norwegian *nyenkelhet* in his article “The Modes of Norwegian Modernism”. Apart from these, Janet Garton defines, in her article, “Dag Solstad and *Profil*: Norwegian Modernism in the 1960s”, p. 355, the term “ny-enkelhet (a term for which there is no precise equivalent in English, suggesting a deliberate choice of simplicity, even naïveté, of form and expression)”. With respect to the adjectival function of the term *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*), namely *nyenkel*, *nyenkelt*, *nyenkle*, I used the following translation: *new simple*. All the Norwegian terms are kept in their original form in the body of the thesis, followed by their English correspondent in parentheses.

² “tradisjonelle noveller og dikt, men leseren vil kanskje særlig feste oppmerksomheten på de nyenkle lyrikerne, haiku-diktene, figurdiktene eller de rene utklippstekster, presenter som dikt (såkalte «ready-mades»).”

giving the appropriate answer to the following questions: *To what extent have these two literary concepts, konkretisme (concretism) and nyenkelheten (the new simplicity), contributed to the renewal of the Norwegian modern literature? How can these two concepts be defined and why was nyenkelheten (the new simplicity) promoted and used only by the Scandinavians?*

In this respect, the most important part of our research is dedicated to a selection of Jan Erik Vold's poems, taken from a series of his volumes of poetry, representative for the period 1965-1970: *mellom speil og speil (Between Mirror and Mirror, 1965)*, *blikket (The Gaze, 1966)*, *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja (Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes, 1968)*, *kykelipi, 1969*, and *spor, snø (Traces, Snow, 1970)*³. In other words, the most consistent part of our research is based on text analysis mainly on the close reading method of a series of selected articles from the Norwegian literary magazine *Profil* and of a selection of Vold's *konkrete (concrete)* and *nyenkle (new simple)* poems taken from the above mentioned volumes of poetry. Thus, we aim at presenting the new cultural and literary field shaped gradually in the Norwegian literature of the 1960s.

Before providing an overview of each chapter, we shall present first the structure of the thesis. Thus, it is formed of five chapters, through which is shaped the literary figure of Jan Erik Vold, together with the presentation of Norwegian Modernism, the Literary Circle and the literary magazine *Profil* and, last but not least, the two modernist concepts *konkretisme (concretism)* and *nyenkelhet (new simplicity)*, as they are reflected in a selection of Vold's volumes of poetry. It is important to remark that each chapter ends with a set of preliminary conclusions, providing in this manner a brief overview of the most important ideas and concepts presented in that chapter. In addition, the appendices play a prominent role in providing supplemental information that contributes to a better understanding of the concepts presented in the body of the thesis. Thus, they comprise the Scandinavian literary magazines that were cited and some biographical notes in alphabetical order together with a brief presentation of the most prominent members of the Literary Circle *Profil*. Apart from these, we have included the three manifestoes of concrete poetry approached in the body of the thesis, the Swedish, the Brazilian and the Swiss. In addition to these, the bilingual version (Norwegian-English) of Jan Erik Vold's concrete and *nyenkle (new simple)* poems analysed in the body of our thesis can be found in the

³ All the titles of Jan Erik Vold's volumes of poems used in this thesis have been translated by Professor Henning Howlid Wærp and published in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 297: *Twentieth-Century Norwegian Writers*.

appendices. Additionally, the last appendix contains both the Norwegian and the English version of my interview with Jan Erik Vold.

In what follows we will outline the most important ideas and concepts from each of the five chapters of the thesis. The first one, “The Construction of Scandinavian Modernism in Literature”, begins by contextualizing the idea of Modernity in Europe, followed by an overview of Scandinavian Modernism, culminating with a survey of the most important phases in Norwegian literary Modernism. The same chapter provides a presentation of Jan Erik Vold, in order to emphasise, right from the outset of our research, the fact that, even if we have started with a brief overview of Norwegian literary Modernism – through the four phases and through the Literary Circle *Profil* – we will focus our attention especially on Vold’s contribution to the renewal of modern Norwegian poetry.

However, we do not aim at providing a comparative approach regarding European and Scandinavian Modernism. Hence, we give an overview of Norwegian Modernism, with its four phases: the one of the 1890s, the second one coinciding with the 1920s and 1930s (also called the Early Norwegian Modernist period), the third phase represented by *tungetaledebatten* (*the gibberish debate*)⁴ and, finally, the fourth phase of the 1960s, which can be associated both with the Literary Circle *Profil* and the eponymous literary magazine.

At the end of the first chapter we provide a presentation of two representative and different Norwegian debates on modern poetry. The first one, *tungetaledebatten* (*the gibberish debate*) was formed of two groups of Norwegian literary figures: the traditionalists André Bjerke and Arnulf Øverland, and the modernists, represented by Paal Brekke, Erling Christie, Finn Carling, Carl Keilhau. It is important to note that *tungetaledebatten* (*the gibberish debate*) actually coincides with the third modernist phase. The second modernist debate came as a result of the publication of the anthology of modern poetry, *Moderne norsk lyrikk. Frie vers 1890-1980* (*Modern Norwegian Poetry. Free Verse 1890-1980*), edited by the Norwegian writers Kjell Heggelund and Jan Erik Vold.

⁴ *Tungetaledebatten* (*the gibberish debate*) – the term was used for the first time by the Norwegian writer Arnulf Øverland (1889-1968), who criticized Modernism. This term is representative of the literary debate in the 50s centring upon modernist poetry in Norway. Thus, two groups were formed: one led by the modernist poet Paal Brekke (1923-1993) and the other that focused on traditionalist ideas, represented by Arnulf Øverland and his followers. This English term, along with the expression “Tungetale fra Parnasset” (“Gibberish from Parnassus”), is used by Asbjørn Aarseth in the article “The Modes of Norwegian Modernism”.

“The Norwegian Modernism of the 1960s – The Literary Circle and the Literary Magazine *Profil* 1966-1968” is the title of the second chapter, which aims at giving the appropriate answer to the following question: *To what extent has the cultural transfer brought something new to the “peripheral”⁵ Norway?* Our investigation focuses on the fourth phase, representative for the 1960s, namely on the changes brought by the *Profil-opprøret* (*The Profil Revolt*) and the new generation of young *profilist* writers: Jan Erik Vold (b. 1939), Tor Obrestad (b. 1938), Espen Haavarsholm (b. 1945), Einar Økland (b. 1940), Dag Solstad (b.1941) and Paal-Helge Haugen (b. 1945). Thus, the Norwegian modern literature of the 1960s was strongly influenced by these young writers who had a great contribution to the creation of a new cultural field in Norway. The country was very often characterised as being a peripheral nation, both through its geographical position in Europe and the fact that all the concepts and literary movements first appeared in Sweden and Denmark, and, only eventually, in Norway. In this sense, the fact that these young writers of the Literary Circle *Profil* promote new ideas and concepts in the Norwegian literature of the 1960s reinforced the opposition to the symbolist and traditionalist wave. Consequent on this, it can be easily understood as a kind of Modernism defined through a continuous search for the *profilists*’ own identity. To put it differently, the renewal of Norwegian literary Modernism can be associated with the search for a national and a cultural identity. Another important characteristic of the Literary Circle *Profil* was that it promoted foreign literature among Norwegian readers, through a variety of translations made by its members and published in the literary magazine *Profil*.

All in all, we can notice that Modernism is quite a controversial phenomenon in Norwegian literature. Another unique aspect that contributed to the shaping of the idea of Modernity in Norway was the new generation of poets of the 1960s, a generation that asserted itself through the literary magazine *Profil*. These writers oppose the so-called *metafor-lyrikken* (*metaphorical poetry*) that strived to decipher poetic images and various allusions. In their opinion, this type of poetry made the poems too formal, too academic and hard to understand, dedicated only to a small group of informed readers. For this reason, the new generation of poets have created new forms of expression, called *konkretisme* (*concretism*) and *nyenkelhet* (*new*

⁵ As Asbjørn Aarseth explains in the article “The Modes of Norwegian Modernism”, “concerning the belated arrival of Modernism on the Norwegian literary scene, it can be argued that this is an effect as well as an aspect of the retarded development of the non-literary media on our sparsely populated and geographically speaking disconnected shores”.

simplicity). Concretism uses words as if they were things and cultivates sound effects and the dissolution of words in letters. The followers of concretism write *grafiske dikt* (*typographical poems*), where the shape is of great importance in analysing the poetic text. As for the concept of *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*), the poem must be a common one, inspired from the daily activity of the individual, thus, much closer to the readers. This wave of poems gave birth to a democratic form of poetry, which is in a closer relationship with the individual, hence, with his life. By this means, the *profilists* managed to distance themselves from the 1950s, years characterised by certain sadness and a continuous pressure. Therefore, the 1960s for Norway meant the beginning of a new era in literature, characterized by a period of progress and development.

The third chapter, entitled “Norwegian Modernist Phenomenon: *Konkretisme* (*Concretism*)” offers first a theoretical approach of the concept of *concrete poetry*, at which point we present the etymology of the word *concrete*, followed by a presentation of the *concrete poetry* in relation to other different fields, such as art, mythology, linguistics, technology, daily activities and music. Secondly, we make reference to three manifestoes of *concrete poetry*, the manifesto of the Noigandres Group from Brazil, entitled *Pilot Plan for Concrete Poetry*, Eugen Gomringer’s manifesto from Switzerland, *From Line to Constellation*, followed by the Swedish manifesto, “HÄTILA RAGULPR PÅ FÅTSKLIABEN – Manifesto for concrete poetry”, written by Öyvind Fahlström. The last section of this chapter provides a presentation of the Norwegian *concrete poetry*, as it is reflected in Jan Erik Vold’s typographical and *concrete poems* selected from three different volumes of poetry: *mellom speil og speil* (*Between Mirror and Mirror*, 1965), *blikket* (*The Gaze*, 1966) and *kykelipi*, 1969. In this sense, we argue that *konkretisme* (*concretism*) manifests itself in different ways in Jan Erik Vold’s literary work. In other words, it is important to note that *concrete poetry* may have a variety of meanings and definitions, but the most important thing is that there is a very close relation between sounds (seen as letters), meaning and the visual representation of the words. Thus, the notion of *konkretisme* (*concretism*) with the above mentioned volumes of poetry appears under other different notions, such as grammatical poems, nursery rhymes poems, ready-made poems, thus revealing the variety of meanings that Jan Erik Vold attributes to this concept.

“Norwegian Modernist Phenomenon: *Nyenkelhet* (*New Simplicity*)” is the title of the fourth chapter of our thesis, in which we offer an explanation and the definition of the concept of *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*). Apart from these, in the last section of this chapter we approach the concept of *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*) through the analysis of four of Jan Erik Vold’s poems

selected from the volume of poetry *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes*), namely: "Trikkesskinnediktet" ("Tramlines"), "Bildet stanser på Barkåkerdiktet" ("The Image Stops at the Barkåker-Poem"), "Funny", "Tale for loffen" ("Speech for the French Bread"). In this respect, we find it important to note that the notion of *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*) is clearly presented in Jan Erik Vold's literary work, especially in *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes*), where the poet depicts ordinary individuals in everyday situations, thereby portraying the everyday life.

The last chapter, "Haiku Poems in Jan Erik Vold's Literary Work", is connected with the previous one through the concept of *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*), analysed from a different perspective. In this sense, we make reference to a selection of ten haikus from Vold's volume *spor, snø* (*Traces, Snow*). According to Henning Howlid Wærp, the whole "collection [is made] of three-line poems without titles" (2004: 349), each poem being printed on a separate white sheet of paper, making it resemble a few traces in the snow. Additionally, instead of presenting exclusively natural elements and the seasons of the year, which are typical for Japanese haiku poetry, Jan Erik Vold prefers to use a variety of everyday themes, such as the church bells, the pyjama pants, or the light in the birch tree, in order to create his own haikus. Thus, it is important to observe how different is the form of the poems selected from *spor, snø* (*Traces, Snow*) as compared to those analysed from *Mor Godhjertas glade versjon. Ja* (*Mother Goodhearted's Happy Version. Yes*), and still how similar they can be with regard to the concept of *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*), found in both of them.

To conclude, our thesis aims at presenting the two concepts, *konkretisme* (*concretism*) and *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*) as they are reflected in the literary work of Jan Erik Vold. It is important to note that we approached both concepts, thus offering the reader the possibility to note that even if they appear to be alike, they offer different perspectives regarding the content of the poems. It is worth mentioning that the concrete manifestoes, together with the definitions and the explanations concerning the above mentioned concepts, contributed to the consolidation of the theoretical approach regarding *konkretisme* (*concretism*) and *nyenkelhet* (*new simplicity*). Apart from these, the close reading technique applied to a selection of Jan Erik Vold's *concrete* and *nyenkle* (*new simple*) poems placed the emphasis on a more practical and applied perspective on the two concepts. On a different note, our research provides a presentation of the Norwegian lyric Modernism of the 1960s, in light of the Literary Circle and the literary magazine *Profil*,

together with a selection of articles which point out the importance of the *profilists* for the foundation of a new cultural space in the Norwegian literature of the 1960s.