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Linguistic and Cultural Specifics of Mind-Wandering in Ivan Turgenev's *Asya*[1]

In this article I argue that the choice of language and specific cultural contexts play an important role for literary representations of mind-wandering. While this has been pointed out before in both mind-wandering research and Cognitive Literary Studies (CLS), I enhance this thesis in two directions, focusing on Ivan Turgenev's short narrative *Asya* (1858). After a brief discussion of the role of linguistic contexts in CLS, I will first give a detailed account of the linguistic and cultural specificities that influence the representation of mind-wandering in Russian literary texts like *Asya*. As I will show, episodes of mind-wandering in this text rely on linguistic characteristics and cultural contexts of Russian language and literature that can hardly be conveyed in translation. Secondly, I suggest that the real challenge for culturally diverse CLS research lies in discerning the fine line between a language's specific linguistic properties and common features of literary representations of mind wandering, as *Asya* contains both specific Russian and more general features of mind-wandering.

1. Introduction: Linguistic Diversity in CLS

While the world is mostly multilingual and culturally diverse, this does not always apply to scientific research in the 21st century. With research groups from all over the world publishing in English, cognitive science reflects the general situation in the sciences, where English was established as the dominant *lingua franca* in the second half of the 20th century (cf. Ammon 2000). This situation has its benefits in the sciences because it promotes global research cooperation based on a nearly uniform terminology. The situation in the humanities, however, is more complicated. Languages form an essential element of the cultural codes necessary for understanding and analysing a cultural artefact. Thus, the significance of linguistic components for literary or cultural studies can hardly be overstated. In literary studies, the significance of language is evident as language forms the basis for both the object (texts) and the method of research (texts about texts) (Pörksen 2020, 568).[2]

As a field located at the intersection of cognitive and literary studies (cf. Zunshine 2015b), CLS has so far mirrored the dominance of English as the *lingua franca* of science and academia. This comes as no surprise for a research cluster evolving predominantly in the Anglosphere, but it nevertheless raises methodological concerns. Recent insights about the cultural (and hence multilinguistic) embeddedness of cognitive science research (cf. Fabry and Kukkonen 2019) emphasize the need for greater diversity in CLS research topics. While lip service has been paid to this necessity (Zunshine 2015b, 4), deeper methodological reflections on this issue are still lacking. Lisa Zunshine has identified the main

problem in her analysis of a Chinese novel, suggesting "that a native Chinese speaker's sociocognitive complexity is not the same as someone's who reads *Stone* in translation" (Zunshine 2015a, 179). However, the interesting questions of how exactly these cultural and linguistic differences come about and how they may (or to what extent they may not) be bridged by translation and commentary, are not addressed (cf. Zunshine 2015a).[3] Global and at the same time culturally aware CLS research is by no means impossible. On the contrary, as Renate Lachmann has shown tracing the migration of concepts between Eastern and Western European literary scholarship (cf. Lachmann 2010), critical reflection on translation inevitably fosters critical reflection on the concepts that have been translated. Thus, explicitly tackling the problem of (a lack of) multilingualism, translation, and (un-)translatability holds great potential for future CLS projects. But which steps are necessary to enable a more transnational scope?

Culturally aware CLS research should strive to cover as many various languages, literatures, and cultures as possible. As a first step, this requires minute discussions of non-English literary texts to enhance our understanding of, for instance, the linguistic and cultural specifics of literary representations of mind-wandering in non-English literature. While large-scale CLS interpretations of non-English literature may well be achievable in the future once there is more scholarship available, linguistically detailed analyses on a smaller scale appear to be a methodological demand for the time being.

When psychology in Russia was a yet to be consolidated new discipline, it drew examples from Russian realist literature (Sirotkina / Smith 2012, 414–415). Considering this affinity between so-called Russian realist literature of the 19th century – whose fine-grained psychological descriptions have long become a cliché of literary criticism (Lotman 1982, 454) – and scientific endeavours of exploring the human mind, it is surprising that the analysis of Russian literature has so far played a marginal role in CLS research at best.[4] As has been pointed out repeatedly in literary criticism and scholarship (cf. Černyševskij 1950 [1858]; cf. Pisarev 1955 [1861]; Lotman 1982, 452), Ivan Turgenev's short narration *Asya* includes particularly subtle descriptions of psychological and cognitive processes that contributed to the rise of the concept of the 'superfluous man' (see below 3.2.).[5] Depicting general social fractures on the individual psychological level (Städtke 2002, 185–189), Turgenev represents a strand of Russian realism that has always been associated with inquiries into the human mind. It seems about time, then, to broaden the scope of CLS to Russian realist literature, such as *Asya* (1858).[6]

What does Ivan Turgenev's *Asya* contribute to the study of literary representations of mind-wandering? I propose a twofold answer to this question: Firstly, *Asya* illustrates the (not entirely new but nonetheless fundamental) insight that the depiction of mind-wandering is shaped by the language in which it is represented. While it is an important first step to keep in mind the dependency of literary mind-wandering on language, it is much more intriguing to explore, how exactly this dependency comes about in a certain language. As the analysis will reveal, Turgenev's narrative shows a specific combination of linguistic and

cultural features of literary mind-wandering typical for (but not restricted to) Russian literature. Secondly, the case of *Asya* gives rise to a reformulation of the research question for future CLS research on culturally and linguistically diverse topics. Moving beyond the basic insight that language influences the realization of mind-wandering, it appears much more fruitful to ask *to what extent* language determines the depiction of mind-wandering. Since *Asya* unites specific Russian and more general features of mind-wandering, this article will point out both cultural specifics and general features of mind-wandering in literature.

In the following, I will explore how and to what extent certain devices, specific to Russian cultural and linguistic contexts, influence the depiction of mind-wandering in Turgenev's *Asya*. I will begin by briefly reviewing some key definitions of mind-wandering (Section 2), before focusing on the specifics of mind-wandering in Russian realist literature as observable in *Asya* (Sections 3.1 and 3.2). Then I will turn to features of Turgenev's mind-wandering that are not restricted to the Russian context in order to assess the relationship of specific and general features of literary representations of mind-wandering in *Asya* (Section 3.3), before reflecting upon future directions for CLS in my conclusion.

2. Defining Mind-wandering

As various scholars have pointed out, a commonly agreed upon definition for mind-wandering is still missing (Christoff 2012, 52; cf. Irving / Thompson 2018; for a brief survey of current definitions, see Kukkonen / Baumbach in this issue). Metzinger, for instance, regards meta-awareness, which refers to the cognition of ongoing cognitive processes, as a key criterion for defining mind-wandering (2013, 9). He defines the latter as the absence of self-awareness so that "periods of mind-wandering end, when we suddenly 'come to ourselves'" (ibid.). As pointed out by Irving and Thompson, however, this definition excludes what research subjects have reported as a form of deliberate engagement in mind-wandering (2018, 92). Additionally, Dorsch has argued that this definition renders the clear distinction of the beginning of mind-wandering episodes impossible and suggested open-endedness as its most significant feature instead (2015, 811). Irving and Thompson have dismissed this proposal as well as a "non-starter for the cognitive science of mind-wandering" (2018, 94), since open-endedness makes it impossible to distinguish and thus analyse the specific phenomenon called mind-wandering. After the discussion of several approaches, Irving and Thompson develop their own understanding of mind-wandering as "unguided thinking" (2018, 90):

> Thought or behavior is said to be guided when it is monitored and regulated as it unfolds over time […]. It follows that for behavior to be guided, there must be regulatory processes for bringing 'deviant' behavior back on track. […] We propose that one's thinking is guided only if one would feel pulled back to its topic, were one distracted from that topic. (ibid.)

This definition is a good starting point for a literary analysis: Firstly, understanding guided thinking as both monitored *and* regulated accounts for both a conscious and unconscious engagement in mind-wandering. Hence, emerging awareness of the fact that your mind has been wandering is not equated with the end of the mind-wandering episode as long as you refrain from controlling the direction of your thoughts. This is especially important for the analysis of mind-wandering in *Asya* (and, actually, any other autodiegetic text) since self-perceived mind-wandering is all there can be found in a narration featuring an exclusive figural diegetic perspective (Schmid 2010, 106–107). Furthermore, the gerunds 'guiding' and 'thinking' point to the dynamics involved in mind-wandering, which will make an interesting case for the analysis of the interaction between physical and psychological 'movement' in mind-wandering (see 3.3).

3. Mind-wandering in Russian Literature: Turgenev's *Asya*

Taking Turgenev's *Asya* as an example, this section will first delineate linguistic and cultural aspects of the depiction of mind-wandering that are specific to Russian literature (3.1 and 3.2), before locating the narrative within broader 'conventions' of mind-wandering descriptions focusing on spatial metaphor (3.3). The latter is extremely prominent in *Asya* but appears as a more universal marker of literary mind-wandering.

In Turgenev's *Asya*, 45-year-old N.N., the anonymous narrator and male protagonist of the story, indulges in memories and recounts his younger self's encounter with Asya and her brother Gagin, the significance of which he begins to realize only in retrospect. They first met in a small town in the *Mittelrheintal* (Middle Rhine Valley) where the two men immediately took a liking to each other. The three Russian émigrés converse, dine, and go for walks in the lovely hillsides of the Rhine valleys, and grapple with a general listlessness about their individual futures as well as the periodically arising nostalgia for their homeland – clearly an optimal setting to let one's mind wander astray.

3.1 Attuning Mental and Narrative Pace: Aspect as a Morphological Device for Expressing the Dynamics of Mind-wandering

After yet another idle day with the Gagin siblings, N.N. heads home and engages in an episode of mind-wandering that indicates a first specific feature of literary mind-wandering in Russian:

> Помнится, я шел домой, ни о чем не размышляя, но с странной тяжестью на сердце, как вдруг меня поразил сильный, знакомый, но в Германии редкий запах. Я остановился и увидал возле дороги небольшую грядку конопли. Ее степной запах мгновенно напомнил мне родину и возбудил в душе страстную тоску по ней. Мне захотелось дышать русским воздухом, ходить по русской земле. «Что я здесь делаю, зачем таскаюсь я в чужой

> стороне, между чужими?» — воскликнул я, и мертвенная тяжесть, которую я ощущал на сердце, разрешилась внезапно в горькое и жгучее волнение. Я пришел домой совсем в другом настроении духа, чем накануне. (Turgenev 1982, 161)

> I remember that I walked home without a thought in my head but with a strange weight on my heart, when I was suddenly struck by a strong, familiar but – in Germany – rare smell. I stopped and saw beside the road a small plantation of hemp. Its smell, so redolent of the steppes, instantly reminded me of my homeland and aroused in my soul a passionate longing for it. I wanted to breathe the air of Russia and walk on Russian soil. 'What am I doing here, why am I traipsing about in foreign parts, among strangers?' I cried out, and the dead weight which I had felt on my heart suddenly changed into a bitter and smarting excitement. I arrived home in a completely different mood from the previous day. (Turgenev 2008, 112)

Focusing on the first and last sentence that frame this episode of nostalgic mind-wandering, we can observe a linguistic characteristic of mind-wandering in Russian literature, which tends to get lost in translation. The imperfective aspect of the verb "шел" ("walked") in the first sentence emphasizes the duration in the upcoming sequence, thus functioning as a linguistic signal announcing the following episode of mind-wandering. In contrast, the perfective aspect of "пришел" ("arrived") in the last sentence marks the end of the mind-wandering episode, focusing on and summing up the result of the mental process ("arrived in a completely different mood"). Whereas the Russian original makes use of the morphological distinction between imperfective and perfective aspect (highlighting the duration and the result of an action respectively) to frame this episode of mind-wandering, the English translation uses two different verbs ("walked" and "arrived") and thus weakens the framing effect and disposes of the emphasis on duration altogether (the progressive past "was walking home" might have been more precise in this regard). While English has multiple tenses for expressing the modalities of past experience (Offord 1993, 320), Russian relies on pairs of verbs indicating either imperfective or perfective aspect across different tenses. The imperfective aspect serves "to denote past, present, or future action which is incomplete, in the process of taking place" (Offord 1993, 322). Therefore, it is particularly well-suited for the literary representation of mind-wandering with its process-like nature.[7]

In order to understand the role of the imperfective aspect as a marker for upcoming episodes of mind-wandering, we need to investigate the general pace of the narration. With the imperfective aspect of the verb "шел" ("walked") in the first sentence emphasizing the duration of the action, the readers start to follow N.N.'s thoughts step by step as they evolve – a variety of thoughts, feelings, and memories connected through speedy associative jumps: feeling a little bit troubled with nothing particular on his mind in the beginning, it is the smell of hemp that drags N.N.'s thoughts to the Russian air and soil in a burst of nostalgia. This description leads to a significant deceleration of the pace of narration, culminating in the convergence of narrated time and narrating time[8] in the rhetorical questions of N.N. reported in direct speech with the main verbs in the present tense ("Что я здесь делаю, зачем таскаюсь я в чужой стороне,

между чужими?" / 'What am I doing here, why am I traipsing about in foreign parts, among strangers?'). This deceleration should be regarded against the backdrop of the narration's predominantly high pace, which compresses the events of several weeks (narrated time) into a short narration readable within a couple of hours (narrating time). In this regard, the perfective aspect "пришел" ("arrived") at the end of the passage marks the end of the mind-wandering episode by scaling the narration pace up again to intense time compression. Switching from the time-compressing perfective aspect to the durative imperfective aspect enables the literary depiction of thoughts evolving in time, transmitting the dynamics of mind-wandering Irving and Thompson described in theoretical terms as one of its fundamental features: "Wandering trains of thought unfold in a distinctive way over time" (Irving / Thompson 2018, 88).

In another instance of mind-wandering, the signaling character of the imperfective aspect is present in a less obvious manner. Again, N.N. is on his way home after an idle day at the Gagins' place on their side of the river. When crossing the Rhine, N.N. asks the ferryman to let them drift with the tide:

> Въехавши на середину Рейна, я попросил перевозчика пустить лодку вниз по течению. Старик поднял весла – и царственная река понесла нас. Глядя кругом, слушая, вспоминая, я вдруг почувствовал тайное беспокойство на сердце... поднял глаза к небу – но и в небе не было покоя: испещренное звездами, оно все шевелилось, двигалось, содрогалось; я склонился к реке... но и там, и в этой темной, холодной глубине, тоже колыхались, дрожали звезды; тревожное оживление мне чудилось повсюду – и тревога росла во мне самом. Я облокотился на край лодки... Шепот ветра в моих ушах, тихое журчанье воды за кормою меня раздражали, и свежее дыханье волны не охлаждало меня; соловей запел на берегу и заразил меня сладким ядом своих звуков. Слезы закипали у меня на глазах, но то не были слезы беспредметного восторга. Что я чувствовал, было не то смутное, еще недавно испытанное ощущение всеобъемлющих желаний, когда душа ширится, звучит, когда ей кажется, что она все понимает и любит... Нет! во мне зажглась жажда счастья. Я еще не смел называть его по имени, – но счастья, счастья до пресыщения – вот чего хотел я, вот о чем томился... А лодка все неслась, и старик перевозчик сидел и дремал, наклонясь над веслами. (Turgenev 1982, 177)

> As we went out into the middle of the Rhine, I asked the ferryman to let the boat float down river with the current. The old man raised his oars and the majestic river carried us along. Looking about me, listening and recalling what the day had been like, I suddenly felt a secret unease in my heart and raised my eyes to the sky, but even in the sky there seemed to be no tranquility. Dotted with stars, it constantly quivered and danced and shivered. I leaned down to the surface of the river, but even there, even in those dark, cold depths, the stars flickered and shimmered. A feeling of agitated life seemed to surround me and I felt a similar agitation rising within me. I leaned on the boat's edge… The whisper of the breeze in my ears, the soft murmuring of the water along the boat's stern irritated me, and the quick fresh breathing of the waves against the boat did not cool my feelings. A nightingale started singing on the bank and infected me with the sweet poison of its song. Tears gathered in my eyes, but they were not tears of abstract ecstasy. What I felt was not so much a vague, still recently experienced sensation of all-embracing desire, such as when the soul expands, resounds and seems to be aware that it understands everything and loves the whole world… No! It was a fierce yearning for personal happiness, happiness to saturation point, that I desired and longed for… And the boat was carried along by the current and the old ferryman sat and dozed, leaning on his oars. (Turgenev 2008, 126)

In this passage the interaction of physical and psychological movement is striking. The unguided drifting of the boat mirrors the aimless drifting of N.N.'s thoughts. Only when the ferryman releases control over his oars, N.N. manages to let his mind – as Irving and Thompson describe the phenomenon of mind wandering – "move hither and thither without fixed course or certain aim" (Irving / Thompson 2018, 88). Bearing this topographical metaphor in mind, we can identify imperfective verbs denoting perception and mental activity (psychological movement) that replace the imperfective verb of motion (physical movement) discerned as a signal for the beginning of mind-wandering in the sequence quoted above. The trias "Глядя кругом, слушая, вспоминая" ("Looking about me, listening and recalling what the day had been like")[9] causes a similar deceleration of narrative pace, enabling us to follow N.N.'s thoughts as they evolve. In this passage the spontaneous nature of his thoughts is highlighted by the abundance of exclamations and ellipses. In fact, the imperfective physical movement that accompanies the psychological movement is also present in this sequence, even though somewhat hidden in the last sentence of the sequence: The phrase "А лодка все неслась […]" ("And the boat was carried along by the current […]"[10]) with its imperfective, reflexive verb of motion underlines retrospectively that the trail of thoughts was evolving as the current was carrying the boat. The mind-wandering episode starts with the ferryman lifting the oars out of the water and comes to an end when N.N.'s attention refocuses on the image of the dozing ferryman leaning on his oars, thereby framing the sequence by two impressions of the same external object.[11]

Shifting from the linguistic to a broader cultural perspective, we may start to ponder on N.N.'s question quoted above why indeed he ended up mind-wandering "in foreign parts" (Turgenev 2008, 112) in Germany, even more so since he seems to seriously miss Russia. This leads us right into the specific Russian political and cultural context of the second half of the 19th century, where state suppression and limitation of individual activity gave rise to a new type of literary hero, the so-called "superfluous man" (Chances 2001, 115). Deprived of any opportunity to engage in politics or social activism, "superfluous" men frequently engage in woeful mind-wandering. An analysis of the Russian wandering mind, therefore, must consider this well-established type of Russian literature, and this will form the focus of the following section.

3.2. *Asya* as Narrative of a Superfluous Man

Connecting psychological insights into the role of narration for the constitution of human identity with a literary analysis of narrative perspective in *Asya*, I will argue in the following that the Russian literary topos of the superfluous man influences the kind of mind-wandering we find in Turgenev's narrative. As a representative of this popular sociological type in Russian literature from the 18th to the 20th century (cf. Chances 2001), N.N. continuously engages in mind-

wandering in order to grapple with his misfit identity. Since his mind-wandering cannot bring his experiences, emotions, and expectations to a common denominator with society's rules and requirements, N.N. is doomed to the passive fate of a superfluous man favouring idle contemplation over purposeful activity.

Recent psychological research has drawn attention to narrative as a basic device for the constitution of human identity (cf. McAdams 2001; cf. Fivush 2019; cf. Habermas 2019) and emphasized the important role of mind-wandering in this process (Preiss / Cosmelli 2017). Mind-wandering about past experiences and future prospects helps to merge past, present, and future into a consistent personal identity (Metzinger 2013, 5). Combining these insights with the cultural embeddedness of cognitive and psychological processes (cf. Robinson / Taylor 1998; cf. Fabry / Kukkonen 2019), Turgenev's superfluous N.N. appears as an interesting case for a close analysis of the interaction between cultural traditions and mental processes. The superfluous man is characterized by his inability to act. Partially rooted in individual weakness as well as in restraints of state and society (Chances 2001, 112), this inability condemns the superfluous man to a life of contemplation and self-reflection, making him particularly inclined to excessive mind-wandering. Representing the Russian realist literature variation of this type, N.N. shows some sensitivity to social problems and fractures, but in the end fails to overcome societal restrictions (Černyševskij 1950 [1858], 166).

From this angle, *Asya* can be seen as a literary representation of N.N.'s ongoing attempt to construct a coherent narrative of his life. In this endeavour, mind-wandering plays an important role by connecting and reconciling N.N.'s heterogeneous experiences, thoughts, and feelings, in a single narrative. As a result, the narrator N.N. emerges as the story's real main character (in contrast to eponymous Asya),[12] who embraces the position of both narrator and experiencing 'I'. The unity of N.N.'s past and present selves should be regarded as both result and *raison d'être* of the story, not as a given fact to start with. The centrifugal powers between the diverging perspectives of young experiencing and old narrating N.N. entail the danger of a split between these two positions, which the narrative tries to ward off persistently.[13] Already the opening sentence in *Asya* – labelled a "memory novella" (Brang 1976, 132) – gives rise to this doubling of the male protagonist: "Мне было тогда лет двадцать пять, — начал Н. Н., — дела давно минувших дней, как видите" (Turgenev 1982, 149); "I was then about twenty-five (N.N. began) – as you can see, these matters belong to years long past" (Turgenev, 2008, 100). Recurring lexical markers like "помнится" and "итак" ("I remember…" and "So, …") highlight the immersion of the old N.N. into his memories and remind the reader that the encounter of N.N. and the Gagin siblings – described as evolving present within the realm of the inside narrative – is in fact a matter of "years long past". The interweaving of past and present perspectives makes the diegetic figural perspective (Schmid, 2014, 129) more complex and constantly points to the double identity the chiffre 'N.N.' stands for. Echoing its opening sentence, the story ends with the retrospective reflections of old N.N. that underline the contrast of his young and old selves by explicitly marking Asya as the product of old N.N.'s memory: "Ася

осталась в моей памяти той самой девочкой, какою я знавал ее в лучшую пору моей жизни, какою я ее видел в последний раз" (Turgenev 1982, 194); "Asya remained in my memory as that very girl whom I'd known in the best period of my life, just as I'd seen her for the last time" (Turgenev 2008, 142). Whereas his young self once interacted with real Asya, old N.N. is confined to interacting with his ephemeral memory of Asya.

Furthermore, the narrative reflects the tendency of the human mind to focus on memories of young adulthood that psychological research has referred to as 'reminiscence bump' (cf. Robinson / Taylor, 1998). It comes as no surprise then that old and lonely N.N. turns to an episode of his twenties to grapple with his "одиночество бессемейного бобыля" (Turgenev 1982, 195) ("solitariness of a bachelor's homeless life" [Turgenev 2008, 142]). The narrative thus seems to combine aspects of both a 'redemption sequence' and a 'contamination sequence' to explain how the human mind deals with challenging emotional experiences. The path of redemption implies that the emotional challenge is processed into a positive experience that helped to make an individual 'only stronger'. In contrast, the path of contamination frames the experience as fatal breaking point causing suffering ever since (McAdams / Bowman 2001, 5–6). The final paragraph of *Asya* offers a literary representation of these two mechanisms employed by young and old N.N. respectively:

> Впрочем, я должен сознаться, что я не слишком долго грустил по ней; я даже нашел, что судьба хорошо распорядилась, не соединив меня с Асей; я утешался мыслию, что я, вероятно, не был бы счастлив с такой женой. Я был тогда молод — и будущее, это короткое, быстрое будущее, казалось мне беспредельным. Разве не может повториться то, что было, думал я, и еще лучше, еще прекраснее?.. Я знавал других женщин, — но чувство, возбужденное во мне Асей, то жгучее, нежное, глубокое чувство, уже не повторилось. Нет! ни одни глаза не заменили мне тех, когда-то с любовию устремленных на меня глаз, ни на чье сердце, припавшее к моей груди, не отвечало мое сердце таким радостным и сладким замиранием! Осужденный на одиночество бессемейного бобыля, доживаю я скучные годы […] (Turgenev 1982, 195)

> Besides, I must confess that I didn't grieve over her excessively. I even found that fate had arranged things well in not uniting me with Asya. I comforted myself with the thought that I probably wouldn't have been happy with such a wife. I was young in those days – and the future, the brief ephemeral future, seemed to me limitless. Surely the same thing could happen again, I thought, and perhaps be even better, even more beautiful? I have known many other women, but the feeling aroused in me by Asya – that burning, tender, profound feeling – has never been repeated. No, no eyes have ever replaced those which once looked at me with such love, to no heart pressed against my chest has my own heart responded with such a sweet and delighted aching! Condemned to the solitariness of a bachelor's homeless life, I am living out years of vacant boredom […]. (Turgenev 2008, 142)

While young N.N. saw no need to mourn the sudden separation from Asya and processed it according to the scheme of redemption as a chance for a better and brighter future – "еще лучше, еще прекраснее" ("perhaps be even better, even more beautiful") –, old N.N. reinterprets these deceiving hopes of his naïve younger self – "Я был тогда молод" ("I was young in those days"). He switches to the contamination sequence and marks the event as a fatal turning point

condemning him "на одиночество бессемейного бобыля" ("to the solitariness of a bachelor's homeless life"). Asya's problematic social status as an illegitimate daughter then served as comforting relief – "я утешался мыслию, что я, вероятно, не был бы счастлив с такой женой" ("I comforted myself with the thought that I probably wouldn't have been happy with such a wife") –, whereas the old and lonely N.N. recognizes that he is superfluous. It is not Asya's background, but rather his incapability to follow his feelings in spite of the social norms of his time that ruined his chance of private happiness. This poignantly illustrates Turgenev's understanding of realist literature as a critical instrument to reflect upon the consequences of social norms on individual lives (Lotman 1982, 440; Städtke 2002, 171–174). This is reinforced in the final passage of the narrative, which closes with an allegory rounding off N.N.'s reflection on his life as a superfluous man:

> […] но я храню, как святыню, ее записочки и высохший цветок гераниума, тот самый цветок, который она некогда бросила мне из окна. Он до сих пор издает слабый запах, а рука, мне давшая его, та рука, которую мне только раз пришлось прижать к губам моим, быть может, давно уже тлеет в могиле... И я сам — что сталось со мною? Что осталось от меня, от тех блаженных и тревожных дней, от тех крылатых надежд и стремлений? Так легкое испарение ничтожной травки переживает все радости и все горести человека — переживает самого человека. (Turgenev 1982, 195)

> […] but I treasure as sacred relics her notes and a dried geranium flower, the piece of geranium which she had thrown down to me out of the window on that occasion. It still has a faint fragrance, but the hand which gave it me, the which I only once had the chance to press to my lips, perhaps already lies rotting in some grave… And as for me, what's happened to me? What is left of me, of those blissful and exciting days, of those winged hopes and desires? So it is that the faint fragrance from an unimportant flower outlives all the joys and miseries of a man – and eventually outlives the man himself. (Turgenev 2008, 142–143)

Recurring to the classic *vanitas* symbol of a withered flower, N.N. engages in the melancholic self-pitying that drags his thoughts ever closer to his own finitude. The flower serves as an external stimulus for excessive mind-wandering, bringing past, present, and future together: The present faint fragrance of the geranium lets N.N's thoughts wander to the past when Asya handed it to him. At the same time, the *vanitas* symbol reminds him of his future which holds in store nothing but loneliness and death. Consequently, the little flower expresses *en miniature* the central role of mind-wandering for identity constituting processes of the superfluous man in Russian literature.

3.3 The Topographical Metaphoric of Mind-wandering

It is no coincidence that the two mind-wandering episodes quoted above featured N.N. on the move. We saw how the smell of hemp (as external stimulus) sparked a burst of nostalgia in N.N. (as internal result) and how the impression of the ferryman's oars (as external stimulus) framed his mind-wandering episode (as internal result) on the Rhine (see above 3.1). As it turns out, the interaction

between physical and psychological movement constitutes a key feature of literary representations of mind-wandering, building up a dense network of topographical metaphors.

The overall setting of *Asya* reflects this physio-psychological scope of literary mind-wandering on several levels. When three Russians meet in Europe, political repression at home is part of the story, in one way or another. N.N. frames his travel abroad as a breakthrough to freedom: "Я только что вырвался на волю и уехал за границу" (Turgenev 1982, 149) ("I had just broken free of my home and gone abroad" [Turgenev 2008, 100]). Against the backdrop of the rigorous domestic policies in Russia in the mid 19th century, the émigré meeting of N.N. and the Gagin siblings serves as a magnifying glass to expose the consequences of political repressions for individual minds. Thus, the emigration from Russia to the German *Mittelrheintal* constitutes a major physical dislocation that creates the freedom of thought and idleness necessary for mind-wandering in the first place. N.N.'s describes his aimless travelling in terms that can be related to definitions of mind-wandering as unguided thinking: "Я путешествовал без всякой цели, без плана; останавливался везде, где мне нравилось, и отправлялся тотчас далее, как только чувствовал желание видеть новые лица" (Turgenev 1982, 149) ("I travelled without aim or plan. I stopped wherever I felt like it and set off again as soon as I felt the desire to see new faces" [Turgenev 2008, 100]). The ferry sequence quoted above (see above 3.1) combines mental with literal movement by intertwining the unguided thinking of N.N.'s mind with the unguided drifting of the boat. Occasionally, N.N. is shown making deliberate use of this interaction between the physical and the psychological level, for instance, when he goes for a hike in the hills to process challenging emotions that the last meeting with the Gagins has evoked in him:

> Впрочем, я старался о них не думать; бродил не спеша по горам и долинам, засиживался в деревенских харчевнях, мирное беседуя с хозяевами и гостями, или ложился на плоский, согретый камень и смотрел, как плыли облака, благо погода стояла удивительная. В таких занятиях я провел три дня, и не без удовольствия, — хотя на сердце у меня щемило по временам. Настроение моих мыслей приходилось как раз под стать спокойной природе того края. (Turgenev 1982, 166)

> Anyhow, I tried not to think about them. I wandered unhurriedly up mountains and down valleys, spent much time sitting in country inns talking peaceably with the proprietors and patrons or lying on flat warm slabs of stone and watching the clouds float by in weather that remained astonishingly fine. In this way I spent three days, and not without enjoyment, although my heart was nipped by regret at moments. The tenor of my thinking seemed exactly suited to the tranquil nature of that region. (Turgenev 2008, 116)

In this sequence, N.N. manages to return to a balanced state of mind (internal result) by moving "unhurriedly" in the "tranquil nature" surrounding him (external stimulus).

While ubiquitous in Turgenev's *Asya* and prominent in many other literary examples (see Kukkonen / Baumbach in this issue), topographical metaphors are not limited to the literary depiction of mind-wandering, but also occur in cognitive science research. Obviously, the term mind-wandering itself is highly

metaphorical, equating a trail of thoughts with the physical movement "hither and thither without fixed course or certain aim" (Irving / Thompson 2018, 88). Siri Hustvedt has repeatedly pointed out that spatial metaphors are used extensively in mental imagery (2016, 354). This observation also holds true for one of the most influential studies on mind-wandering of the last years that raised metaphorical questions when investigating "how often people's minds wander, what topics they wander to, and how those wanderings affect their happiness" (cf. Killingsworth / Gilbert 2010). In similar ways, Schooler et al. use phrases that equate mind-wandering and physical dislocation: "Despite the frequency of such flights of fancy, we are often startled by the discovery that our minds have wandered away from the situation at hand." (Schooler et al. 2011, 319). Similarly, current efforts towards 'brain mapping' build upon a cartographic version of the spatial metaphors (Andreasen 2002, 162).

Moreover, both English and Russian language contain plenty of phrasemes like "it came to my mind" / "мне пришло в голову" that make the topographical metaphoric penetrate into our everyday speech about mental states and processes. The omnipresence and inevitability of this metaphoric (Weinrich 1997, 16–17) brings it close to what German philosopher Hans Blumenberg described as "absolute metaphors" that cannot be converted into literal language (1960, 9). However, according to Blumenberg this by no means excludes the scholarly investigation of the metaphorically denoted phenomena as long as the metaphoric character is openly admitted and explicitly addressed (1960, 11). While these observations underscore the need for "more explicit reflection to be given by researchers […] to the terms they use" (Callard et al. 2013, 1) and to the metaphorical dimensions of the terminology used, especially in research on mind-wandering, their abundance in literary examples also beyond Turgenev gives rise to the assumption that spatial metaphors constitute a general feature of literary representations of mind-wandering.

4. Conclusion

Refining existing insights into the dependency of cognitive science concepts like mind-wandering on the language the mental activity is depicted in, I have shown how the morphological category of verb aspect in Russian and the topos of the superfluous man shape Turgenev's representation of mind-wandering in a way that is hardly intelligible (or reproducible) outside the Russian context without paying close attention to the original wording and cultural specifics. However, one should avoid inflating the uniqueness of mind-wandering in the context of Russian literature: While the latter undoubtedly contains special features, it is nonetheless embedded in a broader context of cultural and linguistic traditions that influence the way people have thought and written, and continue to think and write, about the human mind. The superfluous man, for instance, initially relied heavily on the tradition of the outcast hero of Western European

Romanticism (Chances 2001, 113), and different languages employ various linguistic tools to express the semantics of the verbal aspect (Leiss 1992, 287–288).

Instead of overemphasizing cultural alterity, CLS research would be well advised to discern both the unique and more general features of mind-wandering for every specific cultural context in order to increase the precision of its conclusions. The consideration of key linguistic and cultural features and their interaction, as proposed in this article, may serve as a first framework for such an approach. However, the distinction between linguistic and cultural aspects of mind-wandering, which were analysed consecutively in section 3, is nothing more than a tool, as language and culture have to be analysed together and, at a certain point, merge.[14] Finally, to return to *Asya*, which served as a case study to exemplify the aforementioned approach, Turgenev's legacy – living as a Russian émigré in Germany and France for most part of his life, translating extensively from several languages into Russian (and occasionally the other way around), engaging in vast correspondences with major figures of Western European culture of the second half of the 19th century while contributing substantially to the development of Russian realist literature – makes a convincing case that the study of cultural specifics must go hand in hand with a focus on cultural interaction for CLS to live up to the ambition of covering literature and culture "from different times and places" (Zunshine 2015a, 190).

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How to cite this article:
Wieschollek, Jonas: "Linguistic and Cultural Specifics of Mind-Wandering in Ivan Turgenev's *Asya*." In: *DIEGESIS. Interdisciplinary E-Journal for Narrative Research / Interdisziplinäres E-Journal für Erzählforschung* 11.2 (2022). 86–101.
URN: urn:nbn:de:hbz:468-20221213-092344-9
URL: https://www.diegesis.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/diegesis/article/download/446/638

[1] I am grateful to Sibylle Baumbach, Karin Kukkonen, and all participants of the seminar on literature and cognition that first sparked my interest for cognitive literary studies. The article benefited tremendously from advice, commentary, and revisions by Sibylle Baumbach and Karin Kukkonen. Likewise, I want to thank the anonymous reviewer and the editors of *DIEGESIS* for their thoughtful feedback and suggestions. Leon Wirtz, Robin Fischer, and Marvin Mathony deserve a special mention for helpful discussions that stood at the beginning of this project.
[2] The case of comparative literature, explicitly aiming at a translingual perspective (Zemanek 2012, 13), in the end only confirms this assessment since translation and translatability constitute major topics for methodological reflection in the field (Gamper 2021, 69; Steigerwald et al. 2021, IX).
[3] While Zunshine discusses the English translation of the novel and quotes from the original occasionally (Zunshine 2015a, 185, N. 35), the specific challenges for CLS arising from translations are not discussed. While fully supporting Zunshine's ambition that cognitive literary theory should be applied "not only to Western literary works but also to those from different times and places" (Zunshine 2015a, 190), which Zunshine impressively puts into practice in her most recent work (Zunshine 2022), deeper theoretical and methodological reflection is necessary for such endeavors.
[4] There are only a few references in passing to Russian authors like Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev in the *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies* (2015) edited by Lisa Zunshine. However, Zunshine's recent monograph *The Secret Life of Literature* (2022) offers substantial discussions of examples drawn from Russian literature.

[5] Turgenev coined the term with his *Дневник лишнего человека* (1850) (*Diary of a Superfluous Man*). Since then, it has been retrospectively used to describe a whole range of characters in Russian literature from Pushkin and Lermantov to Pasternak and Bitov (Chances 2001, 111). For the discussion of this theme with regard to *Asya* cf. Markovič 1995; Slavtscheva 2016, 34.

[6] For a discussion of the "seemingly straightforward" affinity between mental embedments and 'psychological' or 'psychologically realist' literature cf. Zunshine 2022, 142–145.

[7] While Germanic or Romance languages generally do not have comparable pairs of verb aspects, Elisabeth Leiss (1992) shows that German employs different verbal constructions to signal the distinction expressed through aspects in Russian.

[8] Narrated time refers to the intradiegetic time span while narrating time denominates the amount of time necessary to tell or read the story (Müller 1968; Lahn et al. 2016, 145–146; Schmid 2014, 232–233).

[9] The English translation of the last verb "вспоминая" adds an object that does not exist in the Russian original ("recalling *what the day had been like*"). In fact, "looking about me, listening and remembering" would be closer to the Russian text.

[10] Again, the English translation does not convey all the nuances of the Russian text. "все" clarifies that the carrying of the boat took place at the same time as the emotions and thoughts described before. The alternative translation "And the boat was carried *all* along by the current […]" expresses this more clearly.

[11] Furthermore, this episode of mind-wandering is embedded into a thick cultural tradition going back to Greek mythology and evoking forgetting, death, and love. While N.N. gradually falls in love with Asya, he starts to forget his former love, whose memory he has nourished in a daily ritual up to this point (Turgenev 1982, 162–166; Turgenev 2008, 112–117). This act of oblivion while drifting on the Rhine recalls the image of the river Lethe: By drinking the waters of Lethe, the dead souls washed away their memory before entering Hades. The restlessly rippling water results in restless agitation within N.N, illustrating the interaction of the inside and the outside world. Turgenev's description of the sky and the river in motion in this sequence also draws on imperfective verbs, hence further underscoring this parallel.

[12] The description of Asya's behaviour as deviant, unconventional, enigmatic, and also "mad" further serves to distinguish the narrator N.N. as someone who engages in controlled mind-wandering to retrieve and make sense of his past. This representation of Asya as ultimately inscrutable, arguably mentally deranged, and passive object of narration relates to greater 19th century discourses of female hysteria, an analysis of which, however, would exceed the scope of this article.

[13] A similar narrative situation is presented in Dostoevsky's *The Adolescent* (1875) where the diegetic narrator Arkadij Dolgorukij describes his experiences in the past from the perspective of his former narrated 'I' (see Schmid 2014, 129).

[14] Raising doubts about the clear-cut distinction between linguistic and cultural phenomena, Martin Haspelmath explains convincingly how grammatical structures may arise from sedimented everyday expressions (cf. Haspelmath 2002). Likewise, Brigitte Schlieben-Lange's concept of textual traditions encompasses both cultural and grammatical habits of speech (cf. Schlieben-Lange 1983).