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"Beyond Good And Evil"?
On the "Ethical Turn" in Literary Studies

PÁZMÁNY

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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Foreword

Kinga Földváry

The third volume of *Pázmány Papers* invites the reader to reflect on some of the avenues that we have been exploring in the past two years, while also providing evidence of an ever broadening scope of ongoing research, exemplifying a diversity of approaches that continue to enrich our understanding of what the humanities entail. The thematic section in this issue continues the exploration of the work of Jacques Derrida, similarly to the previous years' discussions of the theme of "Hospitality." János Barcsák probes into the notion of an ethics of logic, and whether the use of formal systems may lead to ethical commitments, exploring these questions in the context of Kurt Gödel's "Gibbs Lecture." István Berszán employs a practice-oriented approach to investigate the relationship between literary studies, critique and ethics, exemplified in his reading of a short story by Ádám Bodor. Anikó Radvánszky examines the so-called "ethical turn" in literary studies through Jacques Derrida's writings, arguing that Derrida's work is characterised by an emphasis on continuity rather than rupture, and that ethics and politics were always already present in his thought.

The thematic section is followed by a selection of articles from various fields of literary and linguistic studies. Renáta Bainé Tóth explores the poetic evolution in the work of Ted Hughes through modernist and postmodernist perspectives. The discussion of the poetry of a British poet laureate is followed by an investigation of postcolonial fiction in the article of Mária Palla, who sheds light on the tension between mobility, migration, and travelling on the one hand, and settlement, stability, housing, and accommodation on the other, as a major theme in the South Asian Canadian diasporic author Anita Rau Badami's debut novel *Tamarind Mem* (1996). Moving on from literary interpretation, Diana Ghazaryan's article ventures into the field of manuscript studies, analysing a rare document preserved in the Vatican Apostolic Library, pointing out the ways it represents networks of connection among Armenian churches in the Ottoman Empire in the early modern era.

The second half of the general section is dedicated to studies in linguistics, first Ulrike Thumberger's investigation of the use of diminutives in German, specifically in Austrian pop songs from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Her study in language varieties is followed by two articles in applied linguistics: Tamari Bende's examination of the role of metaphorical language and its potential uses in second language acquisition as evidenced by her case study conducted among Georgian learners of English as a foreign language. Last but not least, Dao Thi Anh Pham explores how Vietnamese-accented speakers of English articulate coda voiceless plosives, and how their articulation is influenced by both the phonology of their first language, and other sociolinguistic factors.

The final section of the journal is dedicated to book reviews, both of recent award-winning fiction and literary criticism. It is my sincere hope that all readers will find something of interest among the volume's contents, and appreciate the way this broad scope of offerings exemplifies a diversity of voices, that of senior scholars and doctoral students, from a variety of educational and cultural backgrounds, that can inspire further discussions, following the best research traditions of the humanities.

Thematic Section

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The Ethics of Logic

Gödel's Dichotomy and the Ethical Imperative

János V. Barcsák[1]

Abstract

The logic of ethical reasoning has been analysed in many different contexts in analytic philosophy. But is there such a thing as the ethics of logic? In other words, does logic, or the use of formal systems lead to certain commitments that can be considered ethical? In this paper I will explore these questions in the context of Kurt Gödel's "Gibbs Lecture" delivered at Brown University in 1951. In this address to the American Mathematical Society Gödel assesses the philosophical consequences of his incompleteness theorems in terms of what Solomon Feferman has called "Gödel's dichotomy," according to which either "*the human mind (even within the realm of pure mathematics) infinitely surpasses the powers of any finite machine, or else there exist absolutely unsolvable Diophantine problems*" [that is, basic arithmetical problems]. In my paper I will argue that both these options are thoroughly problematic in their epistemological implications. Gödel's discussion, however, leaves a third option open, as well. For he concedes that the mind (human reasoning) *can* be represented by a finite machine (that is, by a well-defined formal logical system) which does not understand its own functioning and does not know its own consistency. Although Gödel does not consider this to be a genuine third option, I will argue that this conception is perhaps the most fruitful, or least problematic, model of how human reason can contain knowledge. As such, however, this approach requires certain commitments which can best be described as ethical. In particular, it calls for (1) a commitment to the consistency of human reasoning and (2) a commitment to truth, as the truth of the undecidable proposition pertaining to the consistent system of human reasoning. I will argue that these ethical commitments are inevitable once we deploy formal-logical systems to produce knowledge about reality. To this extent, therefore, these commitments constitute the ethics of logic.

Keywords

Gödel, formal systems, Turing-machine, the mind, ethical commitment, consistency, undecidability

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In logic, there are no morals.
(Carnap 1937, 52)[2]

1. Introduction

The phrase "ethics of logic" seems to be a contradiction in terms. Logic is, after all, the use of formal deductive systems wherein we move from formalized premisses to conclusions, from axioms to theorems, in a fully controlled, mechanical way. There is nothing ambiguous in the process, there can be no two ways of going about it. How, then, can such a conception of logic lead to questions of right or wrong, of ought or ought not? How can it lead to questions of ethics? My contention in this paper is that, although logic in itself *can* indeed be thought of as a mere formal game, or, as Kurt Gödel (1995c, 319) puts it in a critical reference to Rudolf Carnap's conception of mathematics, as an "idle running of language" from premisses to conclusions, once we *use* logic to describe or make reference to some reality distinct from it (be it mathematical or empirical reality), the *purely logical* elements of the logical system – pace Rudolf Carnap – will make certain ethical commitments inevitable.

The ethical commitments that I will eventually arrive at are not new. Basically, I will show that the use of logic leads to a double commitment to immanent consistency and to truth (not in the sense of some essence but rather as the truth of the other). It is a double commitment, therefore, that is strongly reminiscent of the double commitment to a logic of "all or nothing" (Derrida 1988, 122) and to "quasi-transcendence" (Derrida 1988, 152) that Jacques Derrida advocates in his "Afterword" to *Limited Inc*, or of the double commitment that Paul de Man's analysis of the *Social Contract* reveals (de Man 1979), or of that which characterizes Alain Badiou's truth procedures (Badiou 2005), or of that which relating to the other requires in Derek Attridge's analysis (Attridge 1999, 2004). What I hope to achieve in this paper is to arrive at these familiar conclusions in a novel way, a way that might perhaps have the merit of giving a rigorous account of the logical necessity of those familiar conclusions, and that might thus discover a common logical foundation behind all these instances.

I will outline the ethical implications of formal logic in the context of Kurt Gödel's paper, "Some basic theorems on the foundations of mathematics and their implications" (1995c). Gödel read this paper on 26 December 1951 in front of

[2] Original italics.

members of the American Mathematical Society as the twenty-fifth Josiah Willard Gibbs lecture (Boolos 1995, 290), and for this reason it is often referred to simply as the "Gibbs lecture." It survives in manuscript form and was published in Volume III of the *Collected Works of Kurt Gödel* in 1995. It is in this text that Gödel formulated what he called his "disjunctive conclusion," and what Solomon Feferman (2006) has referred to as "Gödel's dichotomy." It is in terms of this dichotomy that I shall try to formulate the ethical imperatives that the use of formal logic requires.

2. The Dichotomy

In the Gibbs lecture Gödel presents his dichotomy as an inevitable consequence of what he refers to as the "basic fact, which might be called the incompletability or inexhaustibility of mathematics" (Gödel 1995c, 305). This "basic fact," as he explains further, is most clearly and most universally established by "certain very general theorems," by which he of course means his incompleteness theorems (Gödel 1995c, 308–309). It is, in particular, the second incompleteness theorem that leads him to the formulation of his "disjunctive conclusion," which he therefore refers to as a "mathematically established fact" (Gödel 1995c, 310).

Regardless of the specific trajectory by which Gödel arrives at his dichotomy, however, I think that he essentially relies on two premisses to formulate it: (1) the inevitable presence of undecidable propositions in formal systems, and (2) the exact delineation of a class of systems that can be considered entirely mechanical ("formal" in this sense). Although in the Gibbs lecture he does not actually name these as the premisses necessary for his "disjunctive conclusion," I think that to understand this conclusion, that is, Gödel's dichotomy, we need to grasp these and only these two conditions. So let us examine them one by one.

In his famous 1931 article "On Formally Undecidable Propositions Of Principia Mathematica And Related Systems," Gödel (1992) developed an ingenious method of producing a proposition in the notation of a formal system (in this case it was Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*) that is perfectly meaningful inside the given system, and yet cannot be decided by it. It cannot be decided because deriving either the proposition itself or its negation from the axioms of the system would inevitably lead to formal contradiction. The inevitable presence of such propositions constitutes the first condition of Gödel's dichotomy.

The second condition arises from the fact that Gödel's method of constructing such propositions, as it later became clear,[3] is applicable in the case of any "formal" system of a certain minimal level of complexity;[4] that is, in the case of any system that can be viewed as fully mechanical and thus humanly controllable in its entirety. The class of systems that can be considered "formal" in this sense, that is, fully mechanical and controllable, was very clearly delineated in the course of the twentieth-century development of formal logic. Gödel (1995c, 305) names Alan Turing as the one who provided the most precise formulation of what it means for a system to be fully mechanical, and for the formulation of his dichotomy Gödel considers the class of formal systems that can be considered mechanical in Turing's sense, that is, that can be unambiguously represented by certain abstract entities called Turing-machines (Turing 1936). It is in this sense that I will likewise use the term "mechanical": mechanical is that which can be represented by a Turing-machine.

The second condition Gödel actually needs for his dichotomy arises from the clear definability of this class of mechanical systems: it is the assumption that these systems comprise everything that the human mind can "effectively" calculate; that is, everything that can be mechanized in human thought.[5] Assuming this second condition and employing the first one – that is, that in any mechanical system we can always construct an undecidable proposition – we immediately arrive at Gödel's dichotomy:

> *either … the human mind (even within the realm of pure mathematics) infinitely surpasses the powers of any finite machine, or else there exist absolutely unsolvable Diophantine problems* (Gödel 1995c, 310)[6]

The Diophantine problems Gödel refers to here are essentially problems in arithmetic that can be reduced to the problem of finding solutions to a type of relatively simple equations.[7] The second alternative in his dichotomy is, therefore, that there are relatively simple and unambiguous mathematical problems that are undecidable even in principle.

[3] See on this for example (Zach 2007, 432).

[4] The level of complexity required is that the system should be able to represent basic arithmetic.

[5] This assumption is usually referred to as the Church-Turing thesis and Gödel's dichotomy is in an important sense his special interpretation of this thesis.

[6] Original italics.

[7] In an unpublished paper from the 1930s Gödel proved that undecidable propositions of such simple form existed in all formal systems of the family referred to above (Gödel 1995d). See on this also (Feferman 2006, 139).

3. … and What It Means

Gödel's dichotomy has been thoroughly analysed in the literature, especially by Stewart Shapiro (1998) and Solomon Feferman (2006). Following these presentations and simplifying a little, we can state that what the problem boils down to is whether or not all true mathematical propositions (sufficiently formalized) are provable in a strictly formal, mechanical way. If we designate the set of all true propositions by T, the question is whether this set is coextensive with the set of all provable propositions (K), where "provable" means demonstrable in one or another of the type of mechanically controllable systems mentioned above. The problem is, in other words, whether K = T (Shapiro 1998, 278).

If K = T – that is, if all true propositions are mechanically demonstrable – then it is impossible to capture mathematical demonstrability in a single well-defined formal system, since in any such system there will be undecidable propositions, which – assuming bivalence – are either themselves true or their negation is true. There will, therefore, be at least one truth that the given system cannot prove.[8] Thus, if all mathematical truths are mechanically provable, then there is no one well-defined mechanical system that can capture all of mathematical provability. In other words, the human mind – in its ability to prove mathematical propositions – is different from, and indeed exceeds the capabilities of, any machine.

If, on the other hand, the set of provable propositions does not coincide with the set of truths (K ≠ T), then – since all provable propositions are obviously true – there will have to be propositions that are true, but not provable. What is more, these propositions will be "*absolutely unsolvable*," since by definition they do not belong to the set of humanly provable propositions (K).

4. Can All Rationally Posed Problems Be Rationally Solved?

To bring the issue a little closer to the philosophical problems that it implies, we could approach it from the perspective of the philosophical conviction that apparently motivated Gödel to formulate his dichotomy. Both Shapiro (1998, 278–279; 290) and Feferman (2006, 145) as well as Boolos (1995, 294) note that in the background of this dichotomy is Gödel's belief that all rationally formulated problems must be rationally solvable. If this were not so, then – as he put it to Hao Wang (1974, 324) – "it would mean that human reason is utterly irrational by asking questions it cannot

[8] Gödel (1995c, 309) actually uses the statement of the given system's consistency (Con_s) to establish this.

answer, while asserting emphatically that only reason can answer them." We can therefore see Gödel's dichotomy in the context of the complications that arise from the question "Can all rationally posed problems be rationally solved?"

At first sight we would expect that the answer to this question must be yes. If, for example, we pose the simple arithmetical question "Does 2 +2 = 4?," then we expect that we can answer it within arithmetic. This expectation is only further strengthened with the introduction of formal systems. Such systems, after all, were developed precisely to provide an exact sense of what we mean by a *rationally* posed question; that is, to make such questions perfectly unambiguous and thus to make sure that they can just as unambiguously be resolved. A formalized system of arithmetic, for example, serves the purpose of assuring that all arithmetical problems can be clearly formulated and just as clearly solved. What is more, as Turing showed, all this can be represented as a purely mechanical operation where no contingent irrational influences can interfere with the process of reasoning, and where we can exert control without limitation.

Gödel's proof of the inevitability of undecidable propositions, however, complicates this situation, for it applies to all mechanical systems, including those formalizing arithmetic. He showed that there are arithmetic propositions as unambiguous as 2 +2 = 4 – propositions that are even reducible to the Diophantine problems mentioned above – which cannot be decided in any formalized, mechanical system of arithmetic on pain of contradiction.

It turns out, therefore, that the seemingly innocent question "Can all rationally posed problems be rationally solved?" proves to be a rather complicated one, and one that gives rise to a dichotomy. For if the answer to this question is yes – which is the first alternative in Gödel's dichotomy – then we must conclude that the rationality which decides all rationally posed questions (that is, the human mind) cannot be captured in a specific formal system, since any such system will have propositions that are perfectly meaningful and rational in terms of the system itself, yet cannot be decided within the given system. If, therefore, we maintain that all rationally posed questions can be answered rationally, then we also claim that rationality cannot be captured in any formal logical system: "*the human mind infinitely surpasses the powers of any finite machine*," or, to simplify further, the mind is not a machine.

One might, however, insist that there is strong empirical evidence to suggest that the mind is a Turing-machine. The brain, after all, works precisely like a digital

computer: neurons either fire or do not fire, there is no third option.[9] This view, however, leads directly to the second disjunct in Gödel's dichotomy, for it implies that there must be rationally posed questions that are *absolutely* unsolvable. These rationally posed questions, as Gödel showed, can in fact be very simple arithmetical questions, so simple that they can be reduced to the form of Diophantine problems. And yet they will, on this interpretation, be *absolutely* undecidable; that is, undecidable not only within the logical system in which they are formulated, but in any humanly devisable logical system. This is so because if the mind is indeed a machine in Turing's sense, then all that the mind can prove is captured by a given formal logical system. But, as Gödel proved, in all such systems there will be undecidable propositions. We will therefore always be able to ask the perfectly rational question of whether these propositions (or their negations) are solvable in the system that constitutes the mind, but this question will be impossible to answer by the mind, even in principle.

5. The First Disjunct and Gödelian Arguments

In the Gibbs lecture, Gödel is cautious not to take sides on the question of which of the two disjuncts is likelier. He merely states his dichotomy as a "mathematically established fact" (Gödel 1995c, 310). He is also careful to point out that "the case that both terms of the disjunction are true is not excluded, so that there are, strictly speaking, three alternatives" (1995c, 310). This concession, however, merely sharpens the dichotomous nature of his disjunctive conclusion, for if it can be true both that the mind is not a machine and that there are absolutely undecidable questions, then it follows that (1) even if there are absolutely undecidable questions, the mind does not necessarily have to be a machine, and (2) even if the mind is not a machine, there can be absolutely undecidable questions. What Gödel's dichotomy boils down to is, therefore, that (1) *if* there are no absolutely undecidable questions, then the mind is certainly not a machine, and (2) *if* the mind *is* a machine, then there must be absolutely undecidable questions.

[9] This of course is a much subtler issue than my presentation here suggests. It involves the philosophical problems pertaining to Turing's thesis (also known as the Church-Turing thesis), which maintains that all "effective" (that is, in the strictest sense rational) operations of the mind are captured by Turing-machines (see note 5 above). Gödel's troubled relation to this thesis (he endorsed it, while rejecting the conclusion that there is no rationality beyond what is captured by Turing machines) is discussed at length by Judson C. Webb in his note to Remark 3 of Gödel's "Some remarks on the undecidability results" (Feferman, Solovay and Webb 1990, 292–304; Gödel 1990). In the Gibbs lecture Gödel (1995c, 309n13) himself also considers the remote but conceivable possibility "that brain physiology would advance so far that it would be known with empirical certainty" that the brain is a machine in Turing's sense.

In spite of Gödel's cautious formulation, however, the reasoning that leads to his dichotomy can of course be used to make philosophical claims. We have seen, for example, that in his private communications Gödel rejected the option that there are rationally posed questions that are rationally unsolvable. In light of this, the argument that leads to the first disjunct could be used as a general argument for the non-mechanizability of the mind.

This is in fact the direction the most famous so-called "Gödelian arguments" adopt. The most influential (or at least best known) of these are the ones put forward by John R. Lucas (1961, 1996) and Roger Penrose (1989, 1994), both of whom use the incompleteness theorems to establish that the mind is not a machine, thus endorsing the first disjunct in Gödel's dichotomy – without, however, taking into consideration the second alternative. To be more precise, both Lucas and Penrose use the inevitable presence of undecidable propositions to prove that the human mind cannot be captured in a specific formal system or Turing-machine, because as soon as such a system or machine is specified, the mind will always be able to construct – using Gödel's method – an undecidable proposition inside that system and see that it is true, whereas the given system will be unable either to prove or to disprove this proposition. In this way, as Lucas (1961, 116) puts it, the mind "can always go one better than any formal, ossified, dead, system can. Thanks to Gödel's theorem, the mind always has the last word."

Shapiro (1998, 282–283) summarizes the standard criticism of this "Gödelian argument" (referencing Hilary Putnam (1960)) as follows:

> neither Lucas nor anyone else knows that G_S [the undecidable sentence of the system constructed by Gödel's method] is true. He only knows that *if* S [the formal system proposed as the model of the mind] *is consistent* then G_S is true. But the machine (or formal system) "knows" this conditional proposition as well, since
>
> $$\mathrm{Con}_S \rightarrow G_S$$
>
> is a theorem of S (as seen by the proof of the second incompleteness theorem). Lucas can claim to know G_S outright only if he can claim to know Con_S. But how does he establish this last premise?[10]

[10] Original italics. See on this also Boolos (1995, 294–295).

For the Gödelian arguments to succeed, therefore, the consistency of the specific formal system proposed as the one comprising all of rationality (that is, the mind) must be established. Because of Gödel's second incompleteness theorem, however, this is impossible. To be precise, it is impossible to establish the given system's consistency *with mathematical certainty*,[11] and for this reason ultimately all "Gödelian arguments" go by the board.

This of course is a very schematic and superficial representation of the carefully laid out philosophical arguments on both sides, and I will not be able to do justice either to the arguments of Lucas and Penrose or to those of their opponents in this article.[12] One can, however, hardly doubt the validity of George Boolos's verdict on these Gödelian arguments. As he puts it, "It is fair to say that the arguments of these writers have as yet obtained little credence" (Boolos 1995, 295). Or to quote Hilary Putnam (2011, 332) on the same issue, "[t]hat Lucas and Penrose have failed to prove their claims about what the Gödel theorem 'shows about the human mind' is widely recognized."

Lucas and Penrose of course published their original Gödelian arguments long before the first publication of the Gibbs lecture in 1995, so they could not rely on Gödel's disjunctive conclusion. We might observe in passing, however, that Gödel's formulation of his dichotomy could not add much to the force of these arguments either.[13] What the first disjunct in his "mathematically established fact" ultimately amounts to is just that *if* we maintain that all rationally posed questions are rationally solvable, then we also inevitably claim that rationality in its entirety (that is, "the mind") cannot be captured in a single well-defined system or Turing-machine. It is unclear, however, how we could establish the antecedent in this conditional proposition. As George Boolos (1995, 294) points out, we might wonder why there should not be absolutely unsolvable questions even in the narrow field of arithmetic.[14] That there are questions which are practically unsolvable has been shown by Solomon Feferman and Robert Solovay (1990, 292),[15] and, as Boolos (1995, 294) observes,

[11] On the significance of *mathematical certainty* in Lucas's Gödelian argument see (Shapiro 1998, 281).

[12] For more recent versions of the arguments on either side see (Putnam 2011; Penrose 2011).

[13] This is probably why Gödel is cautious not to argue for the priority of either disjunct even if his private conviction was that the mind is not a machine. Boolos (1995, 294) even observes that "Gödel's disjunctive conclusion concerning the significance of his incompleteness theorems stands in contrast with the conclusion drawn by writers such as Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman (1958), J.R. Lucas (1961), and Roger Penrose (1989) …"

[14] Cf. on this also Feferman (2006, 147).

[15] Cf. also Feferman (2006, 149).

> there are many persons who, influenced by the picture of the mind as a Turing machine, find the falsity of the first and the truth of the second alternative [in Gödel's dichotomy] a pair of propositions they are quite willing to maintain. Others, while reserving judgment on the question whether (the mathematical abilities of) a mind can be (represented by) a Turing machine, simply find it extremely plausible that there are mathematical truths unprovable by any humanly comprehensible proof.

To this view we could of course respond – recalling Gödel's concession that both disjuncts may be true at the same time – that the existence of such questions does not prove the mechanizability of the mind, but this in itself is obviously no proof of the first disjunct either. It is no wonder, therefore, that Gödel himself does not use this line of argument to prove his convictions – expressed in private communications – that the mind is not a machine and that there are no rationally posed questions that are absolutely undecidable.

6. The Second Disjunct and Gödel's Platonism

While in the Gibbs lecture Gödel himself does not claim that his dichotomy can directly lead to any philosophical conclusions, he does consider the possible philosophical consequences of this "mathematically established fact." He summarizes these as follows:

> Corresponding to the disjunctive form of the main theorem about the incompletability of mathematics, the philosophical implications *prima facie* will be disjunctive too; however, under either alternative they are very decidedly opposed to materialistic philosophy. Namely, if the first alternative holds, this seems to imply that the working of the human mind cannot be reduced to the working of the brain, which to all appearances is a finite machine with a finite number of parts, namely, the neurons and their connections. So apparently one is driven to take some vitalistic viewpoint. On the other hand, the second alternative, where there exist absolutely undecidable mathematical propositions, seems to disprove the view that mathematics is only our own creation; for the creator necessarily knows all properties of his creatures, because they can't have any others except those he has given to them. So this alternative seems to imply that mathematical objects and facts (or at least *something* in them) exist objectively and independently of our mental acts and decisions, that is to say, [it seems to

> imply] some form or other of Platonism or "realism" as to the mathematical objects. (Gödel 1995c, 311–312)

While Gödel stresses that both disjuncts in his dichotomy question the validity of "materialistic philosophy," it becomes clear from the remaining part of his discussion that it is in fact the consequences of the second disjunct – that is, mathematical Platonism – that Gödel is most eager to establish. He uses the second disjunct to set this theme and devotes the remaining part of the Gibbs lecture to the defence of the Platonist interpretation of mathematics, which he characterizes at the end of the lecture as

> the view that mathematics describes a non-sensual reality, which exists independently both of the acts and [of] the dispositions of the human mind and is only perceived, and probably perceived very incompletely, by the human mind. (Gödel 1995c, 323)

Whether the second disjunct can be used to support this view is highly questionable. For first of all the antecedent in the conditional form of the dichotomy (that is, that the mind is a machine) is apparently impossible to establish.[16] Secondly, as Boolos (1995, 298) points out, even if we accept that mathematics is not entirely our own creation, it is not at all clear what we mean by the "objective existence" and the "independence" of mathematical objects. He concludes, therefore, that "it may be argued that we lack an interpretation of the key terms in this putative consequence [that mathematics is not our own creation but has objective content] under which it is true but not trivially true." (Boolos 1995, 298)

Pursuing these considerations, however, would land us in the deep water of Gödel's Platonism – a vast topic which has been thoroughly analysed and criticized in the literature, but which I will not attempt to engage with in the present article. For an evaluation of the philosophical relevance of Gödel's dichotomy, however, it is essential to note that Gödel fundamentally thinks of mathematics as being comprised of formalizable, completely mechanical axiomatic systems which describe or refer to an objectively existing (conceptual) reality. His Platonism is the view that the connection between these formalised systems and their referent is an essential

[16] In his very thorough study of the relevance of the incompleteness theorems to philosophical claims about the non-mechanizability of the mind, Stewart Shapiro (1998, 275) concludes that even the idea of the mind being a machine is too vague to provide a ground for such claims. As he puts it, "*there is no plausible mechanist thesis on offer that is sufficiently precise to be undermined by the incompleteness theorems*."

one. Meaning or reference is not arbitrarily assigned as a result of conventions,[17] but is there from the start, the axioms of the formal systems of mathematics being "correct mathematical propositions, and moreover, evident without proof" (Gödel, *1951 1995, 305). What this means is that for Gödel mathematics has objective content. The formalized propositions of arithmetic, for instance, are true or false by virtue of whether or not they correspond to mathematical objects and their relations that, according to Gödel, exist independently of the human mind. Gödel, in other words, insists that mathematics is ultimately the description of an objectively existing (conceptual) reality.

7. Philosophical Consequences: The Reference of Formal Systems

If we accept this view, however, then the two disjuncts in Gödel's dichotomy will both highlight serious epistemological problems; problems that can be seen as generally applying to all instances when a formal system is used to describe or refer to some independently existing reality.

The first one, according to which the mind is not a machine, is essentially Lucas and Penrose's position. As we have seen, this view has received many just criticisms. In my opinion, however, the main problem with this approach from a philosophical point of view is not so much what the standard criticisms point out, but rather that it inevitably leads to a loss of objectivity in knowledge, insofar as knowledge can be captured in formalized logical systems. Gödel's first disjunct and the Gödelian arguments maintain that human reason, the mind, is superior to any formal-logical system in that it can recognize a truth that the system itself cannot capture; namely, it can recognize the consistency of the system, or equivalently, the truth of the undecidable proposition, while – as Gödel showed – the system itself is incapable of proving either. But if there is indeed a truth pertaining to the system in the sense that it is true only *of* this system and is formulated solely *in terms of* this system, and if this objective truth can still only be recognized outside the system and not internally, then this questions the objectivity of the truth of the other theorems of the system. The theorems are those propositions that can be derived from self-evident truths (the axioms) through evidently truth-preserving operations (the rules) – this is after all what formal systems are all about. If we accept that the undecidable proposition or the proposition stating the consistency of the system can be recognized by the

[17] Much of the second half of the Gibbs lecture – as well as the six versions of a long unpublished paper called "Is mathematics syntax of language?" – is devoted to critiquing Rudolf Carnap's conventionalist account of mathematics.

mind as true, although it cannot be derived in the system, then this means that the mind intuits or recognizes more than what is self-evident in the axioms of the given system (since everything that can be mechanically preserved of the objective content of the axioms is contained in the theorems of the system). And why do we come to intuit or recognize this? Only because of the immanent necessities of our formal-logical system, only because – as Gödel showed – we can always mechanically produce an undecidable proposition in every mechanical system.

Can this, however, lead to an objective truth in Gödel's sense; that is, in the sense of a syntactic formula directly containing an objectively existing mathematical reality? If it could, it would mean that an objective fact would depend for its existence on nothing except that which belongs to the completely mechanical, fully controllable part of a formal logical system, that is, on nothing else but "the acts and dispositions of the human mind." Gödel insists that the axioms of what he terms "mathematics proper" are *evident* truths in the sense that they directly contain objective reality, immediately reflecting objective states of affairs.[18] Similarly, the rules that are used to manipulate the axioms and derive theorems from them are also *evidently* truth-preserving. But if there is a proposition that is true in the same sense as the evident axioms but that must be true regardless of how reality is, merely because of the syntactic construction of the formal system, that is, merely because of "our mental acts and decisions," then this would certainly compromise Gödel's criterion for the objective existence of the content of mathematics, which – he insists – exists "independently both of the acts and [of] the dispositions of the human mind." This in turn would question the ground on which the axioms can be considered *evidently* true,[19] and ultimately, it would undermine the very possibility of capturing something objective in the theorems of a formal-logical system. It would undermine the very possibility of knowledge – or at least the potential of formal-logical systems to contain knowledge.

The second alternative in Gödel's dichotomy, the one in which the mind is equivalent to a formal-logical system and there are absolutely undecidable

[18] At the beginning of the Gibbs lecture Gödel (1995c, 305) makes a distinction between "hypothetico-deductive" systems "such as geometry (where the mathematician can assert only the conditional truth of the theorems)" and "mathematics proper," "the body of those mathematical propositions which hold in an absolute sense, without any further hypothesis." For Gödel, therefore, "mathematics proper" is distinguished by being built on evidently true axioms, axioms that directly contain reality.

[19] The drift of my argument here is similar to William Tait's main objection to what he terms "superrealism," a position into which – Tait insists – Gödel only occasionally lapses, but which is apparently the position Gödel adopts in the Gibbs lecture. Tait (2005, 98) points out that "the same grounds, whatever they are, upon which a proposition, undecided by our present axioms, is nevertheless really true or really false would seem to be grounds upon which the axioms themselves are really true or really false," and this questions the *evident* truth of the axioms and renders mathematics speculative (Tait 2005, 91).

propositions, is, as we have seen, generally considered by most commentators to be the more plausible option (Feferman 2006, 147; Boolos 1995, 294). I believe, however, that this alternative, too, is thoroughly problematic from an epistemological perspective. For there is a fundamental inconsistency in the very idea of an *absolutely* undecidable problem: as Gödel pointed out to Hao Wang (1974, 324), "it would mean that human reason is utterly irrational by asking questions it cannot answer, while asserting emphatically that only reason can answer them." The concept of an *absolutely* undecidable problem implies, in other words, that decidability goes beyond human thought, that a proposition formulated in the notation of a particular formal system has a specific meaning and truth value not just beyond the given system but beyond any humanly conceivable conceptual framework. It implies that there is a sense in which a proposition is either true or false outside any humanly confirmable way, outside whatever can be known. An absolutely undecidable proposition is not merely practically unknowable, like whether or not there is life on the planet Mars, or like what happened in the first microsecond after the Big Bang, or like whether or not the value of the digit of the $10^{10^{10^{10}}}$ th place of the decimal expansion of π–3 is equal to 0.[20] It is not even theoretically unknowable, like what happened in the first Planck-time after the Big Bang. It is *absolutely* unknowable, like what happened two minutes *before* the Big Bang. The problem with assuming the existence of such absolutely undecidable propositions is, therefore, that it disregards the context in which the concept of decidability is formulated and pretends "decidability" had an absolute sense beyond any system in which formulas can be decided.

One might object that this problem only occurs if we accept the antecedent in the conditional formulation of the second disjunct – namely, that the mind is a machine – which, as we have seen, is impossible to establish. In the next chapter I will briefly explain why this is still worth maintaining as a hypothesis, even if it is impossible to prove, and I will also outline the conditions on which this hypothesis can be maintained without contradiction. Even if we do not make this assumption, however, the notion of absolutely undecidable questions still remains problematic on a Platonist account such as Gödel's. It remains so because the objective content of such a proposition would have to be a (conceptual) reality that exists beyond any humanly conceivable framework, beyond anything accessible by the human

[20] Feferman suggests this as one of those problems that are "absolutely unsolvable from the standpoint of *practice*." As he explains, "this is an example of a mathematical 'yes/no' question, whose answer can be determined in principle by a mechanical check, but which, in all probability, cannot be settled by the human mind because it is beyond all remotely conceivable computational power on the one hand and there is no conceptual foothold to settle it by a proof on the other" (Feferman 2006, 149–150).

mind. The ultimate problem with assuming the existence of absolutely undecidable propositions is, therefore, that it implies a dogmatic presupposition of objective existence beyond knowledge, beyond anything humanly knowable.[21]

8. The Way Out: Ethics

I think, therefore, that Gödel's dichotomy in fact presents a genuine philosophical impasse. For the first disjunct requires compromising objectivity in knowledge, while the second entails a dogmatic assumption of objective existence beyond human knowability. Fortunately, however, Gödel himself shows the way out of this situation, for he concedes that

> it is not precluded that there should exist a finite rule producing all [the mind's] evident axioms. However, if such a rule exists, we with our human understanding could certainly never know it to be such, that is, we could never know with mathematical certainty that all propositions it produces are correct … If it were so, this would mean that the human mind (…) *is* equivalent to a finite machine that, however, is unable to understand completely its own functioning. (Gödel 1995, 309–310)[22]

Gödel himself does not consider this to provide a genuine third option.[23] In fact, he mentions this possibility before introducing his dichotomy and essentially identifies it with the second disjunct, where the mind is a machine and there are rationally posed questions that are absolutely unsolvable. The reason why this is not a genuine third option for Gödel is of course that he is after "a mathematically established fact." He first wants to obtain this fact – which he does in his "disjunctive conclusion" – and only after that does he proceed to draw philosophical conclusions from it. We have seen, however, that the philosophical inferences from Gödel's dichotomy are at best inconclusive and epistemologically highly problematic.

I think, therefore, that the best use we can make of Gödel's dichotomy (at least in a philosophical context) is to consider it as a reminder of the two major errors we can commit when trying to account for the potential of formal-logical systems to capture knowledge. If we want to maintain that such systems *can* impart knowledge

[21] This view comes close to what Paul Horwich (1982, 186) describes – in the context of the philosophy of science – as the metaphysical realist position, which he criticises precisely for the same reason, namely, because it "involves to an unacceptable, indeed fatal, degree the autonomy of facts."

[22] Original italics.

[23] For discussions of Gödel's concession see (Shapiro 1998, 281–282; Feferman 2006, 145–146).

to us about how the world is, that such systems can actually contain reality, then we must navigate between the Scylla of compromising objectivity in knowledge and the Charybdis of dogmatically assuming objective existence beyond knowledge.

To steer clear of these two philosophical errors, however, we need to take a step back and sacrifice our desire for "mathematically established facts." And the best way to do this is, I think, to consider Gödel's concession that the mind *might be* "equivalent to a finite machine that, however, is unable to understand completely its own functioning" as a genuine third option with which we can avoid the philosophical errors pointed out by his dichotomy. Gödel does not consider this as a third option because he takes it for granted that if the mind is a well-defined system, then we can explicitly know its axioms and rules and thus we can mechanically construct propositions that are undecidable inside the system. This assumption is necessary for him because this is how he can deploy his incompleteness theorems to establish his dichotomy as a "mathematically established fact." For us to gain a genuine third alternative, however, we must waive the requirement of being able to specify exactly the axioms and rules of the system that the mind is. We must, in other words, merely *assume* that the mind is such a well-defined system, without being able to spell out all its axioms and rules explicitly. In fact, once we assume that the mind is such a well-defined system, we also accept that every reasoning, every knowing can only take place within this system, and hence, as a rule, we cannot know all its axioms, or even the mind's consistency. All that we can know is that *if* the mind is consistent, then it will have its own appropriate undecidable proposition.

These are of course rather severe limitations on knowability, yet I believe that they are still worth countenancing, because it is only in this way – that is, by assuming that the mind is a well-defined system that does not know its own operations – that we can avoid the epistemological problems entailed by the two alternatives in Gödel's dichotomy. In particular, this seems to me to be the only way in which we can salvage objectivity in knowledge without dogmatically presupposing an objective reality. This approach, however, can only succeed if we are willing to endorse certain commitments that can best be described as ethical. They are ethical in the sense that they do not derive from how things are in objective reality, but merely from what we *must do* if we want to give a reliable account in a formal logical system of how the world is objectively.

So, what *are* the ethical commitments that we must embrace to account for the possibility of describing reality in formal-logical systems? We must first assume that we are always inside the whole of this system we call the mind. In other words,

we must commit ourselves to a stance of *radical immanence*. This is not the kind of immanence that Quine's seamless "web of beliefs" involves (Quine 1951, 39–42), for Quine's approach is admittedly empirical. The web of beliefs, on his account, can be impacted from the outside by objective reality, which implies that we can have an external, transcendent, holistic view of this web. The problems with this account and its variants are discussed at length by Shapiro (Shapiro 1998, 294–300) and I will not reproduce the whole argument here. What it boils down to is that any such admittance of being dependent on an assumed empirical reality inevitably chips away from the formal, fully mechanical character of the system that we have assumed is identical with the mind. It compromises what is no doubt the most important aspect of formal systems in an attempt to account for knowledge: the guarantee that anything contained in such a system is entirely controllable by the human mind. We must, therefore, embrace a more radical immanence than this, one that resembles Derrida's "There is nothing outside the text" (Derrida 1997, 158), where of course "the text" is replaced by "formal systems."

From within, however, we must also commit ourselves to the *consistency* of the system that the mind is. This is of course a necessary correlate of assuming that the mind is equivalent to a formal system, and yet it must be highlighted because, with the assumption of radical immanence, this is what actually constitutes the fundamental ethical commitment. By Gödel's second incompleteness theorem, we cannot know the system's consistency (once we assume that we are always within this system). Consistency, therefore, cannot be mastered, controlled, or known with absolute certainty. And yet, if we want to maintain that formal systems can contain reality, we *must* commit ourselves to the consistency of the formal system that the mind is.[24]

Secondly, we must commit ourselves to truth. But emphatically not to the truth of any presumed objective state of affairs. Assuming objective existence dogmatically always leads to philosophical error. In particular, it leads to the philosophical error that Derrida dubs "empiricism" and that he analyses in great depth in his reading of Lévinas in "Violence and Metaphysics." To Derrida's incisive analysis I can add in the context of the present argument that one of the main problems with empiricism is that – as we have seen – it compromises any objectivity a well-defined system can ever hope to capture. The commitment to truth must, therefore, never be a commitment to an objective truth that transcends the system in which we formulate it. It can only be a commitment to the truth of the undecidable proposition of the

[24] I have argued elsewhere that consistency is in fact the maximal presupposition that we can maintain without jettisoning radical immanence.

system. It must, in other words, be a commitment to a truth that can never be mastered without giving up consistency, but that *immanently* transcends anything that the system in which we always already are can master.

Committing ourselves to this truth, assuming responsibility for it, and the concomitant fidelity to radical immanence and consistency are, therefore, the ethical imperatives that the use of logic demands. What these commitments dictate is, as I have anticipated, not something wholly new. It is what Derrida (1997, 61) refers to as a "pathway," what Badiou calls a "truth procedure," and what Attridge describes as relating to the other. What I have tried to show is that all these approaches can be seen as arising from the same logical necessity and thus that they all exhibit what we may call the ethics of logic.

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To What Extent Can Ethics Be Critical?

A Practice-Oriented Approach to the Relationship Between Literary Studies, Critique and Ethics

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Abstract

If we approach ethics as a demanding practical orientation, we must realize that, since criticism necessarily creates distance, it practically reflects itself out of the Levinasian proximity, whereas ethical relation, by comparison, requires to stay with or in the company of the other. Ethical encounter preserves the difference between participants, but instead of asserting or constructing a critical stance of my own, I am exposed to the impulses of the other and I learn to attune myself to them through gestural resonances. My proposal called practice-oriented physics conceives of literature not as texts, contexts or socio-historical construction, but as living gestures of attention in the time(s) of literary writing and reading. This paper explores these theoretical and practical problems in a short story by Ádám Bodor, extending the critical "extendance" of the "Saying" beyond the "Said" to the rhythmic dimensions of practical orientation.

Keywords

Ethical proximity, critical detachment, practical orientation, Ádám Bodor, Robert Eaglestone, Rosi Braidotti, Rita Felski

In this paper, I propose to examine positions of ethical criticism while reading literature in order to answer the question posed in the title. First, I follow in the footsteps of Robert Eaglestone, who in his seminal 1999 essay examines the authoritative alternatives in ethical reading at that time, and develops his own position based on his assessment. In the second half of the study, I examine Rosi Braidotti's recent post-humanist concept in order to show the ethical limitations of radical criticism. In my arguments I try to integrate current

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research on practical contact-making as object-oriented ontology, Bruno Latour's theory of actor-network theory, and Rita Felski's warning about the inadequacy of criticism, which has become an exclusive paradigm in literary studies. As a field of experimentation, I chose Ádám Bodor's short story entitled "The Forest Ranger and His Guest," which, in my reading, seeks possible routes through the different kinetic spaces of practical orientation.

1. Responsible Reading and Writing?

In Ádám Bodor's story, a lost novice hunter arrives at the forest ranger's hut. Not only has he not managed to shoot anything, but he has also been badly bitten by the ranger's dog. The host welcomes the stranger, tends to his wound, and the next day shows him the way to the bus station, but they continuously talk at cross purposes. The stranger resists the help of the local, who seems experienced as regards life in the forest, and the story ends with the ranger saying goodbye: "If you stayed for another couple of days, we may have become friends."[2] But the guest leaves and they will probably never meet again.

What does writing and reading such a literary story have to do with ethics? Martha Nussbaum would suggest that we should see the virtual situations of the story as moral tests, putting ourselves in the position of the characters (Nussbaum 1983).

> "Don't you leash it?" asked the stranger [glaring at the dog, which continued to be a threat to him].
> "I'm not in the habit of leashing it."
> "Leash it."
> "I won't," said the ranger quietly and started walking towards the hut.[3]

Nussbaum would ask first: "If you were the ranger, would you leash the dog?"; and then: "If you were the hunter, would you ask the ranger to leash it?" We can argue against a moral-philosophical reading on the grounds that it does not take into account the linguistic construction of the work of art, but reads the text

[2] "Ha marad még pár napig, lehet, megbarátkozunk." (Bodor 2003, 33. Quotations from the short story are translated by Yvette Jankó Szép.)

[3] "– Nem köti meg? – kérdezte az idegen.
– Nem szoktam megkötni.
– Kösse meg.
– Nem kötöm meg – mondta az erdész csendesen, és elindult a kunyhó felé." (Bodor 2003, 30)

transparently, and refers to its own interpretations as quasi-ontological situations, not seen as interpretations. But we can also argue against a deconstructivist, rhetorical reading on the grounds that it does not take into account the gestures of enunciation and the action or event, but only the text. Writing and reading have to do with our practice and behaviour, as well as our language.

It is true, however, that when I read the beginning of the story several times to my students and then ask them to schematically sketch the main components of the scene and the characters – what is where, and in relation to what – they usually produce very different drawings. I warn my fellow readers that the ranger could address his words to us, as he said to the hunter who had complained about him: "You'll remember everything as you want" … "In whatever way you wish."[4] So, as Hillis Miller (1987) says, we are all bound to misread the text. There is no need to compound this fact by forgetting it. As a reader, it is my duty to read the text, which conceals as much as it reveals. It should be added, however, that this is our duty only as rhetorical readers; or, as rhetorical readers, we have only this duty. As gesture readers (we shall see) we have quite different duties.

Miller elevates Derrida's warning to an ethical imperative: the text is not a transparent window onto another world to which we can ascribe ontological status; we must also pay attention to the "production" of the glass. Just as we should reckon, I suggest, with the fact that literary writing and reading are more than textual activities: their refined and intense gestures of attention take place in a very wide range of kinetic – not merely rhetorical – spaces. It is true that the ranger and the guest always read the events in very different ways. While the hunter "remembers" that the ranger set his dog on him, the ranger considers the incident an accident, for which he blames not the dog but the inexperienced hunter. But this is no longer an interpretation of the text, it is a practical orientation regarding responsibility.

Robert Eaglestone also finds Miller's conception of ethics inadequate: merely a set of textual rules, imperatives and laws, as if Miller could deconstruct ethics itself. While it is true that the text cannot be grasped unambiguously, as Nussbaum would have it, neither is it merely the object of a constantly deferred interpretive desire, as Miller suggests (Eaglestone 1999, 81–82).

Emmanuel Lévinas, in his ethico-phenomenological study of language, speaks of the way in which the "Said" immobilizes language by fixing the essence and denying any "transcendence" beyond its own interpretation. The "Saying," on the other hand, always undermines the essence, overflowing the subject it marks. It is a

[4] "Maga majd mindenre úgy emlékszik vissza, ahogy akar ... Ahogy éppenséggel jólesik." (Bodor 2003, 32)

moment of unfolding, of committing oneself to the other, which in turn only exists through language, through the Said, which always betrays the transcendent Saying. Thus, while the Said imposes completeness – as well as limits – this finitude is at the same time disrupted by the Saying, like knots disrupting the continuity of a thread (Lévinas 1981, 25, 105, 165–71). Rescuing a text from its "book-misfortune" (Lévinas) is the uncanny moment when we free the text from being lost in what is Said in the book. While Lévinas regards this as the task of philosophy, Eaglestone, following Maurice Blanchot, adopts it as the ethics of reading.

According to this, we are expected now to show the flaws in what has been said so far about Bodor's narrative – problems that, like a knot in a thread, prevent continuing interpretation. If we want to give a definitive answer to the questions that have arisen in our experimental reading, we run into trouble, because the ethical status of the characters is constantly changing according to the various inquiries. Bodor's narratives are not only unpredictable, they are also untraceable stories: they constantly undo what has been said before, because we encounter aporias in them, which knot all fluid interpretations and prevent their closure. We have to ask the question: Are these characters flesh and blood, or are they rather confusing answers through which the narrator fulfils his philosophical responsibility in the Lévinasian sense? The characters do not do what we would expect them to do based on their previous actions or the thoughts and emotions attributed to them: they remain different and alien to each other, as well as to us. The moment we recognise this we feel that we are not at home in the text and in ourselves. We do not find ourselves in the other world of virtual life, but neither do we complain about our misinterpretations of the text. According to Eaglestone, it is in such moments of disruption in our understanding of ourselves and our relationship to the Logos that the ethics of literature becomes most clearly visible. "These moments of fragmentation are a testimony to the irreducible otherness of the other and to our responsibility." (Eaglestone 1999, 84)

Bodor's narrative opens us up to hearing the Lévinasian Saying by shattering the assumptions, preconceptions, or philosophy behind the Said we have already grasped in our interpretation. Or, as Blanchot says: "philosophy, which puts everything into question, is tripped up by poetry, which is the question that eludes it" (Blanchot 1986, 63). Eaglestone argues that "this tripping up …, this putting into question, this ceaseless inspiring insomnia [i.e. the impossibility of reassurance], is the ethical imperative behind any form of criticism" (Eaglestone 1999, 85).

It seems to me that in his paper, Eaglestone places critique and ethics themselves in the Lévinasian relation of Saying and Said: although critique is the Said and the ethical imperative is the Saying behind it, it remains clear that ethics is always the saying and doing of criticism. If, however, according to a non-critical but rather ethical reading of Lévinas, we conceive of the ethical space of Saying behind the Said as the reader's or writer's practical orientation in making contact with others by writing or reading gestures, then Eaglestone's thesis that the Saying is the ethical imperative behind the forms of critique appears as one in which ethics is Said but criticism is at work. Let us not forget that the impulses behind the Said can be various: not just those of critique or responsibility. They are not ethical in the sense that they are always dictated by the ethical imperative itself, but in the sense that they lead to the exercise of reading (distinguished from interpretation). Of course, practical orientation is at work in each exercise, and this impulse can be seen as an ethical imperative, but it can in no way be reduced to the encouragement of ever new attempts to question or constantly disturb interpretation or understanding.

This compulsive orientation not only makes us sleepless in the sense of "inspiring insomnia" (sometimes we can sleep in any sense of the word; Nussbaum, for example, is content with a moral-philosophical interpretation), but leads us at every moment to responsible practical choices. We have to decide whether to continue to sleep or to wake up, just as we have to decide whether to conform to Eaglestone in the practice of reading, or to follow the impulses of the artistic writing practice at any given moment, and to become skilled in a variety of practices that surely exceed the boundaries of criticism. This is not to say that they cannot be made subject to critique, but subjecting them to (or making them the Said of) criticism, is quite different from learning to connect with their rhythms during literary reading.

As Bodor's story shows us, in our world there seems to be no possibility of real contact: forest rangers and their guests can never understand each other, nor can literary scholars and their fellow scholars. But what if, for once, we agreed to spend a couple of days making friends, as the ranger proposes? It is true that the Bodor story is about the guest who wanders into the ranger's kinetic space and does not learn to orient himself there. But the passage between different kinetic spaces does not take place there, but happens in the practice of the narrator, who follows the gestures of the hunter, the gestures of the ranger and the gestures of the dog precisely: both the way someone gets lost in, and the way someone gets familiar with, the mountains. This narrator can move between different kinetic spaces, and

becomes highly skilled in each of them. Thus we, too, can learn to pay attention to events that we would miss if we did not follow the attentional cues of artistic writing, just as the novice hunter from the city misses them.

When a city dweller sets out into the wilderness, it is clear that he can easily get into trouble. And even with the help of someone more experienced than himself, he still has to learn his way around, not only in terms of taking directions, but also in befriending a dog, or its owner or the place where they live. He can also learn, for instance, to pick up the subtle movements and signs of that place. When smoke rises above the trees, it is caught in the breeze above the stream (there is always a breeze above streams). When the sun goes down and only the clouds are glowing, the air turns bluer near the stream. It may turn out that honey is good for an open wound and should be applied in a thick layer. If you are sitting by the fire, it is a good idea to peel potatoes on your feet, so that when you are finished you can just kick them into the fire. It is also possible to tell whether the colourless liquid in a bottle is water or brandy without smelling or tasting the contents of the opened bottle: it is enough to shake it. (The difference lies in their beading, but the narrator here will not tell you what it is exactly. If you are curious, take a bottle of water and a bottle of brandy and shake them to see the difference for yourself). And let us not even broach the subject of whether it was just a whim on the part of the ranger not to leash his companion in the mountains. If we take the trouble to be the narrator's guests, we can learn to orientate ourselves in his attentive practices through similar gestural resonances as he follows his characters. My proposal, called practice-oriented physics (Berszán 2016), conceives of literature not as texts, contexts, or socio-historical constructions, but as living gestures of attention in the time(s) of literary writing and reading. To read a novel or a poem is to follow refined and intense gestures of attention that the art of writing induces through practicing them.[5]

[5] A mini-glossary of introduced terms:

- *Practice*: precise gestures of attention tuned to a rhythm (e.g. singing, swimming, playing kendama, riding a horse, calculating quantities or literary reading).
- R*hythm*: the *observed rhythm* appears as the recurrence of regular patterns, but the *followed rhythm* means practical connectedness of gestures.
- *Temporality*: any distinguishable rhythm has its specific time. We define temporality as the rhythmic space of a movement/happening/practice or, in short: *kinetic space*. There is no way to find the rhythm of a practice in the kinetic space of another: in order to get into the rhythm of a practice, one has to get out of the temporality/kinetic space of all others.
- R*hythmic dimensions:* beyond the only extended time dimension (projected usually on the axis of numbers) I propose to take into account the complementary rhythmic dimensions of happenings as well. Introducing more than one time dimension entails the supposition of independent time directions. Practice-oriented physics defines occurrences with different rhythms as time directions. If rhythm is time direction, changing the direction in time means changing the rhythm.
- *Time projection*: we can follow a happening/practice in the rhythmic dimension according to its own time direction or we can follow it as a time projection to another rhythmic dimension. *Practical orientation*: practical decisions that allow us to remain within the kinetic space of a certain rhythmic dimension or to tune into another rhythmic dimension by changing the rhythm of practice.

If the ethical proximity between the self and the other is conceived as an irreducible, ultimate relation, from which everything else can be derived and which cannot be derived from anything else, then Lévinas may be read in a critical way. The critical force of his major works (*Totality and Infinity* [1979], *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* [1981]) lies in the reduction of previous critical horizons or all other critical horizons to responsible subjectivity – ethics can be critical to this extent. But ethics cannot be limited to criticism; the critical relation creates distance, but the "element" of ethics is infinite proximity or closeness. The other cannot be critically conceived, integrated or suspended, nor can it be critically transcended. The only adequate ethical relation to the other is the Lévinasian radical passivity as sensitivity and obedience beyond all knowledge: the Abrahamic self-exposure: "Here I am."

But this surrender to the imperative or impulse of the proximity of the other also means exposure to many others, to which Lévinas seeks to respond with the critical knowledge of justice that is necessitated by the entry of the third party (Lévinas 1979, 82–101). At this point, I am more inclined to a Derridean reading of the scandal of responsibility, where the insoluble paradox of the forceful sacrifice of choice between multiple responsibilities remains. Derrida sacrifices his only son, deconstruction, to establish a connection with the *mysterium tremendum* of responsibility (Derrida 1995, 53–81). There is no way to connect the time of one practice with the time of another – each practice is totally different. If I fulfil my absolute duty to one Other, says Derrida, I betray my duty to the other Others. In the same way, I cannot practice myself in two practices of different rhythms at the same time. There is no way to enter the time of one practice in the time of another different practice. Temporality means that practically there is no simultaneity (not even in the sense of a network of intercrossing between different happenings), but there is a passage from the time of one occurrence to the time of another. This is what Ádám Bodor's writing invites us to do: to find ways to pass into and discover passages between different kinetic spaces through our gestures of attention.

As a practice-oriented physicist, I define ethics as a demanding practical orientation in time(s), and propose the introduction of complementary rhythmic dimensions into the study of artistic practices in order to discover their multiple temporalities and the rhythmic differences between them.

2. Posthuman Critique Versus Post-Historicist Ethics

And yet, despite all my arguments, and as a counter-argument, the close link between radical critique and ethics has remained in force until today. Rosi Braidotti, a powerful voice in posthumanist thought who rejects humanism, calls for a rethinking of ethics to make it worthy of our age, marked as it is by great technological transformations (Braidotti 2013). Since, contrary to Lévinas's admonitions, historical progress as *becoming* is considered more intrinsic than the I–You relationship, ethics and subjectivity must be adapted to technological innovation. Braidotti proposes a vitalist monism that transcends the dialectical confrontation of otherness, and prioritizes the relational structure of intelligent, self-organizing matter. The zoe-egalitarian turn, she argues, "encourages us to engage in a more equitable relationship with animals, earth, and machines" (Braidotti 2013, 71). The nature-culture continuum replaces the Lévinasian ethical relation with networks of hybrid, cyborg identities, as described by Donna Haraway (1991), or multiple assemblages, as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), in order to explore what we can become in the current, dizzying state of technologically mediated subjectivity. The ethic of becoming claims historical superiority over responsibility to one's neighbour and all previous forms of subjectivity, as if ethical orientation itself were based on the principle of innovation. "One of the most pointed paradoxes of our era is precisely the urgency of fostering new and alternative moods of political and ethical agency for our technologically mediated world and the inertia of established mental habits" (Braidotti 2013, 58). For my part, I am confronted with another paradox: when subjectivity is reduced to the self-organization of a Spinoza-inspired vital substance, we arrive not only at an alternative posthuman subject that invests its ethical hope in technology, but also at a renunciation of the ontological status of the subject, i.e. to mere vital operations. Let us reexamine the positions in this debate by reading Bodor again.

On Braidotti's side, one could argue that in Bodor's minimalist prose we witness a regression of narrator-subject and character-subject, so that the story is followed not as a pursuit of separate identities, but as a relational flow that transcends the humanist episteme. We never read about what anyone (including the narrator) thinks or feels, only about specific interactions. Thus, the participants in the story have no identifiable or explicable substance, and consist only of their dynamic relations. None of them is a fetishized or devalued – in Braidotti's terms: sexualized, racialized, and naturalized – Other, but rather a possible version in the nature-culture continuum. There is no dialectical juxtaposition between them, but rather configurations or assemblages of hybrids and cyborgs. 'Guest' is not the only relational term here,

since 'ranger' does not refer to an identity as such either, but rather a relation to the forest or his guest. Similarly, the dog, as a culturally constructed animal, is half biological and half socio-technical in nature. The human component also appears, this time as an element "embedded" in the cyborg of wilderness management (I mean the ranger), or as a semi-foreign, semi-local experimenter, characterized by the binary hybridity of novices, a newcomer or guest (I mean the city-dwelling hunter). Around them, the mountains, dotted with cleared forest, also form a continuum of culture/nature as cultivated land.

Instead of separate entities, we find everywhere sliding transitions and relational variations: the urban hunter – being technologically mediated – has a gun and a shop sweater, a Basque cap instead of a hat, a side bag instead of a rucksack. The ranger, because of his different technological mediation, has a hut with all the necessary equipment (bunk bed, open fire, froe, torch, cooking utensils). In this combination (but only in this combination) the rucksack cannot be replaced by a bag. The dog has a master, a guardian function and a human name (Laci). It is as if Bodor were interested in precisely what happens to relationally constituted assemblages, which can be extended to pairs traditionally understood as dialectical and hierarchical opposites, such as master and dog, native and guest, or host and alien intruder. Here, each appears as part of the complex collectivity to which all other participants belong – mountain, town, stream, authority, shelter, clearing, forest, bus, trail, tools, morality, rights and sunset.

The story, of course, begins with a description of this web: who/what is where in relation to whom/what and how they relate to each other. The "plot" unfolds, not as a process that arrives at a resolution or finality, but as a rhizomatic sequence of interactions of the participants in relation to each other, in which we as observers are periodically involved until we are drawn into something else by other assemblages, when we stop reading. The Bodor story can best be described as a "narrative case study" plotted on a relational network. There is no single narrative point of view to explain everything, only variations and changes, ultimately the differentiation of self-organizing matter and its resulting new assemblages or articulations, as in the power triangle of the ranger, the hunter, and the dog, the shingles split from logs with a broad blade, or the light of the clouds after the sun has set. Such rhizomes of interaction, says Braidotti, are made of a self-organizing and structurally relational matter. And she hastens to add: "Critical posthumanists take the experimental path" (Braidotti 2013, 39) – "they search for new forms of subjectivity" (Braidotti 2013, 45).

Are the "traditional" intersubjective contacts between individual creatures developed over thousands of years less intense than the relationships within and outside of posthuman subjectivity that form today's cyborgs? It seems to me, even in this story, that despite all post- and transhuman aspirations, singular creatures cannot be abstracted from what happens to them or to us. In Bodor's narrative, we follow the story not only at the level of the relational flow, but also at the level of the gestures of the parties, who weigh, evaluate, and influence each other in many ways. It is true that subjective gestures, such as thoughts or emotional responses, are not directly visible, so Bodor never makes them explicit. But they are implicitly unavoidable; we cannot think of them as humanistic biases. When a hunter's gun is taken and hidden, the aggrieved party objects not only on the grounds of their hunter's license, but also emotionally. If the dog sees a stranger near the hut, it will attack him viciously, and if it bites his leg, the stranger will try to take revenge on the dog. As calm as the ranger remains despite the incident or the guest's accusations, he is also disturbed by the failure to make friends. Practical contact-making cannot be adequately modelled by relational interactions, because the latter – not only in Braidotti, but already in Deleuze and Guattari (1987) – can only have explicit effects, which are always what they are, being ultimately materially objective. But intersubjective relations never cease to be implicit. For example, when the ranger and the guest converse like this:

> The stranger was looking at the dog.
> "Listen" he said then. "What do you think, would this dog come with me?"
> "You mean, whether he would make peace with you? If you gave him something, for sure. He would go with you for a while."
> "I'd be curious."
> "You must have many bullets," said the ranger.[6]

The ranger at first translates the hunter's question in a seemingly unsuspecting way, but implicitly grasps the hunter's implicit intention, just as he implicitly knows the expected reactions of the dog. He foresees that a reconciliation with the dog is not impossible if the hunter gives him some food, and also that the dog will only follow him in the hope of more food, and will not go with him for a long time.

[6] Az idegen a kutyát nézte.
– Figyeljen ide – szólalt meg aztán. – Mit gondol, ez a kutya velem jönne?
– Hogy kibékülne-e? Ha ad neki valamit, biztos. Magával menne egy darabig.
– Kíváncsi lennék.
– Sok tölténye lehet – mondta az erdész. (Bodor 2003, 31)

Of course, it is implicitly foreseeable that this would be enough for the hunter to use the bullet intended for him. There is no way of knowing, any more than the ranger knows, whether the hunter has many bullets. The explicit replication, "You must have many bullets," does not implicitly refer to the number of cartridges, but indicates that the ranger knows why it would be so important for the hunter to take the dog away with him, far from its master. All this implicit following and precluding are impossible to avoid, precisely because we can never look directly into the other subject. Consequently, the subject remains just as implicit when it is expressed in concrete numbers and definite instructions:

> He disappeared somewhere next to the house, then reappeared with the gun and hung it back on the tree bark from where he took it in the evening.
> "It's hanging over there. And there goes the road."
> "So do I walk for three hours?" asked the stranger and he started.
> "For three." The ranger holding the dog's head between his legs looked after him. "If you stayed for another couple of days, we may have become friends."[7]

As if the guest were suspicious, he repeats in a question what has been said before. How can he know, and how can we readers know, whether it really takes three hours to get to the bus? Or whether this road really leads to the bus stop? Implicitly, there is the possibility that the ranger is deceiving his guest, thus taking revenge on him because, despite his hospitality, the hunter has been grumpy all along.

Why does the ranger hang the gun on the bark of the pine tree from which he took it the night before, instead of giving it to the departing hunter? And why does he hold the dog's head between his knees as the guest leaves? Is he not implicitly saving the dog from the bullet intended for him? Before the hunter could pick up his gun, the dog was safely between the ranger's knees. By keeping it there, the master also prevents the dog from giving in to the temptation of another good bite, and from accompanying the stranger armed with a gun and a desire for revenge. Further on, the host implicitly signals to his guest that he does not trust him to have regrets about or forget yesterday's implicit intentions by today. But he also implicitly trusts him that he would not shoot the dog held between his knees, thus risking also

[7] Eltűnt a ház mellett valahova, aztán megjelent a puskával, és visszaakasztotta a fa kérgére, ahonnan az este elvette.
– Ott lóg. Mellette visz az út.
– Szóval három órát megyek? – kérdezte az idegen, és elindult.
– Hármat. – Az erdész lába közé fogta a kutya fejét, úgy nézett utána. – Ha marad még pár napig, lehet, megbarátkozunk. (Bodor 2003, 33)

shooting the owner. And did he not also implicitly trust that the departing guest would implicitly realize all this?

This time it is not only about the pitfalls of interpretation, nor only about the rhetoric of misunderstanding – which is as much limited to the operation of an immanent discursive medium as Braidotti's monistic materialism to an intelligent, self-organizing matter – but about intersubjective gestures. These are never just the operations of an immanent medium, but rather the reactions of participants who exist in a singular way, who cannot be reassuringly traced back to any material process, and who are transcendent in relation to each other. Regardless of whether (and to what extent) the possibilities of friendship are fulfilled, the intersubjective connection is always between individual creatures, and happens in practical gestures. I have consistently used the term "creature" to refer to the participants, in order to indicate that this is not about the restoration of the humanist subject as fully self-aware or self-constituting, but rather about those mysterious beings that long predate the ideology of the Enlightenment and have been discussed after humanism as agents in actor network theory (Bruno Latour [2014]), as withdrawn objects in object oriented ontology (Graham Harman [2017] or in Timothy Morton's *Being Ecological* [2018, 75] as a quantum-like "ontological jump between a thing and its parts," "a deep feature of reality, that it's jumpy because things are distinct and unique").

It is problematic, both theoretically and ethically, to claim that historicist, vitalist, and materialist monism is "more advanced" than all other thought, and that subjectivity must "grow up" to its actual insights stemming from the unprecedented technology of our time. This is still and recognizably the Enlightenment rhetoric of the coveted "coming of age," (Kant 1992 [1784]) but without the phenomenological claims of Kant's philosophy. The radical unveiling of humanism retains the supremacy of critical distancing, and thus provokes alienation from the rhythm of subjective practices that are supposed to be overcome. In fact, they are reduced to their time projections in the kinetic space of an absolutely immanent horizon of materialistic monism. If we are to grasp the incomparability of the "posthuman predicament" supposed by Braidotti, we cannot ignore this narrowing tendency that ignores many ancient and current practices of subjectivity.

It seems that critical posthumanists are the only experimenters. As if, in the second third of the 20th century, Ádám Bodor could not be an equivalent researcher in the artistic research of subjectivity. The posthuman materialism and technologism of *Zoe* seeks to usurp something much broader than itself: we cannot limit experimentation with subjectivity to the initiatives of the *Cyborg Manifesto*.

The implicit gestures behind explicit acts (such as the ranger's deliberations while holding the dog's head between his knees) presuppose someone behaving in a particular way – not just a self-organizing substance. The former is no less real than the latter. Braidotti herself often makes it clear in her book, where her subjective choices differ from anti-humanist or feminist discourses with similar claims. At some level of organization, one must reckon with new emergent regularities that cannot be captured or reduced to the previous, say, material level. The problem with the substrate-reducing, or to use Graham Harman's term, "undermining"[8] approach is that it loses sight of everything that does not occur as the operation of the immanent regularities of the substrate. If we try to understand the atmosphere at the level of the air molecule, we will learn nothing about the hurricane or the hole in the ozone layer. Similarly, to take a strict view of the objective material basis of relational interactions is to lose sight of art along with the individual subject. There is no art without implicit, intense individual gestures that cannot be replaced by operational functioning.

How do we read the last sentence with which the ranger ends the story? What kind of gesture is it? Would he hold the guest back just because he is bored? Does he think he can teach the ungrateful newcomer a lesson in a few days? Or is he bothered by the unresolved feud? Does he implicitly prefer to make friends? If we as readers find this ethically preferable to rivalry, is it because of the unprecedented technological innovations of our time, or is the narrator implicitly appealing to our several thousand years of moral sense, called, in Andrei Pleşu's more sophisticated phrase, our "moral talent" (Pleşu 2000, 42–49)? Speaking of upgrading at all costs, one might ask: are the latest technological innovations more likely to develop our moral talent than the artistic narrative and the literary reading it inspires, which can be traced back to prehistoric times?

The reduction of materialist subjectivity to informational codes has the unintended side effect of narrowing the kinetic spaces of living beings at least as much as it is intended to expand the ontological and epistemological latitude of matter. "Posthuman subjects are technologically mediated to an unprecedented degree" (Braidotti 2013, 57). It may be more urgent to consider this actual state of affairs, with its miseries (e.g., the technological mediation of teenagers who shoot their classmates and teachers in mass shootings, while also making a video of the deed), than to posit it as a point of reference, or even a value preference, as the most valuable outcome of experimental subjectivity. Apart from that, Braidotti's

[8] Harman defines undermining as the tendency to reduce an object to the components of which it is made (Harman 2017, 41–47).

statements are more significant as symptoms of a technological bias than as guiding insights. "I will always side firmly with the liberatory and even transgressive potential of new technologies" (Braidotti 2013, 58). The "always" here makes it clear that it does not matter what alterations or changes of direction technological innovation entails. Instead of debating and judging this, we make it the guiding principle of our ethics as a postulate. If subjective practice is to be equated with technology, why is it that the technologically advanced gun (compared to the ancient spear) did not also make the ranger's guest an experienced hunter? It seems that technology is an extension of practice, while at the same time withering practical skills. Is it ethical to make people dependent on surrogates while diminishing their own abilities? Is it really enough to praise the efficiency of the technologically mediated human being without raising the ethical problem of reducing him to a component of a cyborg machinery?

Braidotti has an answer: "I am less inclined to panic at the prospect of the displacement of the centrality of the human, and I can also see the advantages of such a development" (Braidotti 2013, 64). The problem with such a posthuman turn is that its stakeholder tends to "mix" with technology rather than establish a practical relationship with other life forms. Braidotti's theory of becoming-animal can be written and followed without ever meeting an animal. It seems sufficient to replace them with cyborgs like Dolly, the cloned sheep, because they can be conceptualized as products of genetic engineering (whether viable or not). We no longer establish an intersubjective relationship with them (according to Braidotti, this is a case of the oedipal relationship that denies the equality of animals [Braidotti 2013, 68–70]), but we do violence to them down to the genes, and this is seen as a new zoe-egalitarianism at the level of intelligent matter.

"Post-anthropocentrism is marked by the emergence of the 'politics of life itself'. Life, far from being the exclusive property or the unalienable right of a species, the human, it is posited as process, interacted and open-ended" (Braidotti 2013, 60). Can this post-human politics of life itself encompass life? What about the art of life? What about its ethics? We cannot reduce these to politics any more than subjectivity to functional operations. It is not enough to say something new – compared to Lévinas, for example. It also matters whether we can say what we say. And not only must the new find its place and legitimacy in the web of logical relationality, but we are also ethically responsible for whatever we say. It makes no difference if we say something "new" or if we want what we say to be seen as an innovation. Our responsibility inevitably remains – regardless of any arbitrary definition we choose

for it. Responsibility is not a cultural, historical, or technological construct, but an irreducible reality of subjectivity that is inescapable for any cultural, historical, or technological construction. We need not claim that this is what makes us into subjects, as a critical reading of Lévinas suggests. It is enough to accept that since we have become subjects, our post- or transhuman ambitions cannot exempt us from ethical responsibility – simply because of our responsiveness.

Posthumanism, which replaces all previous thinking in a similar way as the earlier versions of historical critique based on Foucault's archaeology did, mistakes radical critique for thinking itself, while defining it as the only valid way to relate to any uncritical or insufficiently critical alternative transformed into subjects for critique. But despite its academic success or dominance, there are still some sensible literary scholars today. Rita Felski, in her subtle work, offers enough arguments to state calmly: "Critique turns out to be, as scholars announce with a hint of satisfaction, an infinite task. But what if critique were limited, not limitless; if it were finite and fallible; ... we might admit that critique is not always the best tool for the job" (Felski 2015, 8). Reading practices that replace critical detachment with resonant connections may not only be naive, uncritical ideas, but also experiments that maintain the need for an ethical turn towards the other, as an "unhistorical" Lévinasian proximity in both pre- and post-critical encounters.

In challenging the legitimating dominance of self-righteous historicism, Felski invokes the cross-age agents of actor network theory and its time conception, which challenge the privilege of our own age: "Latour's claim that we have never been modern does not deny that our lives differ in obvious ways from those of medieval peasants or Renaissance courtiers. He insists, nonetheless, that these differences are exaggerated and overdrawn, thanks to our fondness for stories about the disenchantment of the world, the radicalism of modern critique, and other testimonies to our own exceptional status" (Felski 2015, 158). The declaration about technological mediation as the ultimate frame of reference in philosophical and ethical orientation, or in contemporary possibilities of subjectivity, is undoubtedly a self-approving critical witness. But there are other witnesses as well: in addition to actor network theory, Felski invokes object-oriented ontology, post-historical literary studies, and affective hermeneutics. As a practice-oriented physicist I join them, together with Ádám Bodor's artistic experiments. It is revealing that at the end of the mountain story, which invites us, twenty-first-century readers to relearn our relationship to different temporalities, the ranger refers not to history but to the time spent with some kind of practice. From an ethical point of view, historical

becoming has no absolute value; the practical choice has greater stakes, by which we attune ourselves to different rhythms. There is a time for everything under the sun: a time for critique and a time for making friends.

In conclusion, the inclusion of ethics in literary studies cannot be limited to the construction of a new critical horizon maintaining critical practice as a paradigm for both literature and its research. We must supplement the critical reading of ethics with an ethical reading of criticism, which does not reduce contact-making to the functioning of any immanent medium — such as discourse, social context, cultural and technological media, or the historical being of an intelligent, self-organizing matter — but makes the proximity of the other unavoidable. I contribute to this project through research into practical orientation in time(s) presented by artistic experiments.

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Reading, Invention, Secret
Deconstruction and the "Ethical Turn" of Literary Studies

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Abstract

This study examines the so-called "ethical turn" in literary studies through Jacques Derrida's writings, questioning whether deconstruction itself underwent such a shift. While critics often speak of an ethical or political turn in Derrida's work from the late 1980s onwards, Derrida himself resisted the language of "turns," emphasizing continuity rather than rupture. The essay explores how deconstruction's engagement with notions such as gift, forgiveness, hospitality, and responsibility demonstrates that ethics and politics were always already present in Derrida's thought. It further considers how deconstruction generates its own ethos, beyond prescriptive rules, as a hyperbolic ethics rooted in the impossible and the unconditional. The connection between this ethos and literature emerges most forcefully in Derrida's reflections on secrecy: literature is not the concealment of a hidden meaning, but the experience of secrecy itself. Readings of Abraham, Melville's *Bartleby,* and other texts illustrate how literary writing stages singularity, alterity, and responsibility beyond classical ethical frameworks.

Keywords

Derrida; deconstruction; ethical turn; literature; secrecy; hyperbolic ethics; singularity; alterity; responsibility; invention

It is likely that many of us have already observed the somewhat troubling abundance of theoretical "turns" that have emerged since the second half of the twentieth century. In addition to the linguistic, iconic, media, cultural, corporeal, gender, spatial, or realist turns, the humanities have also identified an "ethical turn" among these phenomena. One might say that this is perhaps an excess of good things. It is therefore in a spirit of critical distance that we will examine a theoretical orientation – or, more precisely, the author who embodies

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it – whose work, over the past fifty years, has profoundly influenced philosophical discourse and, through it, literary discourse (and one could even say, without too much exaggeration, that it has shaped certain of these turns). Yet this author did not believe in so-called "turns" of thought.

Here we are speaking of Jacques Derrida, whose work – if one adopts a long-term perspective – appears, beginning in the second half of the 1980s, to display a shift in relation to the interpretive strategies of the preceding decades. The critique of the metaphysics of presence – that is, of the logocentric, phonocentric, onto-theological European tradition – then gives way to questions that no longer fall within a difficult-to-grasp transcendental-historical framework, but rather pertains more directly to everyday experience, to what appears self-evident or is taken as such.[2]

These are themes that may be regarded as fundamental phenomena of individual existence (ethical) or collective existence (political), such as the gift, forgiveness, hospitality, the event, the act, and so forth. In light of the texts Derrida published during this period, one might therefore legitimately assert that a certain political or ethical turn took place – or at least was at play – within deconstruction itself, more precisely within Derrida's own writings.

This turn, then, would not represent a transformation concerning only the thematic level – in other words, it would not simply be a matter of Derrida, at that time, integrating or privileging so-called ethico-political notions, concepts, or problematics within the field of his investigation. Rather, it would signal or imply an essential, internal change, namely that deconstruction itself would have taken an ethical turn. This turn, however, Derrida did not accept. And precisely because he considered that politics and ethics – both at the level of texts and at that of acts – were already present within deconstruction, even during the period prior to the 1990s. "I do not sense a rupture between my writings and my commitments, but rather differences of rhythm, of tone, of context, etc. I am more attentive to continuity than to what certain people, abroad, call the political turn or the ethical turn of deconstruction" (Derrida 2000, 18).[3]

What is at stake here is not only the nature of the ethical turn, but also – and perhaps above all – the constitutive characteristics of this mode of thought. Indeed, all the periods, all the terms, all the modes of enunciation that one finds in Derrida's work and that could seem to evoke a certain "paradigmaticity" – such as, for

[2] One of the very first representatives of this position was Simon Critchley, who was also among the first to recognize the philosophical significance of the relationship between Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. His 1992 work, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, is still considered a foundational text today.

[3] See on this question the writings of Lóránt Kicsák, for example: Kicsák (2019, 230–232).

example, the announcement, in his early period, of the "closure" of the epoch of metaphysics – resist precisely any form of paradigmatic model.

In this spirit, one can also cite one of Derrida's statements in which he explicitly rejects the term "turn": "If a 'turning' turns by 'veering' round a curve or by forcing one, like wind in one's sails, to 'veer' away or change tack, then the trope of turning turns poorly or turns bad, turns into the wrong image" (Derrida 2005, 39). It is obviously not a matter of suggesting that this philosophy would be marked by any kind of stability. Yet, instead of speaking of a "turn" – a term most often used to designate a complete change of horizon – it is easier to perceive modifications of tone and emphasis in Derrida's thought, as well as what is called its "politico-ethical dimension." And this cannot be dissociated from the transformations of the context in which this thought developed.

In other words, the issues that were scarcely perceptible in the early texts become salient – and can only become salient – because the philosophical reflection devoted to them had, thanks in part to the writings produced before the 1980s, consolidated itself sufficiently to render them more insistently thinkable.[4] Moreover, it is today much less conceivable to present deconstruction as a caricature of itself. For a long time, among the criticisms levelled against its approach to the text and to method – such as accusations of parasitism, nihilism, or anti-humanism – one of the most frequent was the claim that it was characterized by a certain "in-difference" with regard to ethics.

Today, there is hardly any doubt that, in Derrida, the re-evaluation of the philosophical status of writing, the practice of textuality that he developed, and the interpretive strategies inseparable from these, carry ethical implications. The key concepts of his treatment of the text – such as graft, dissemination, and displacement – generate a movement of understanding that restructures the horizon of thought toward something new, unpredictable, and approaching the experience of the other, of alterity; in other words, of the welcoming of the foreigner.

Phono-, logo-, phallo- and carnocentrism – through a sustained and layered reading – can be displaced: the displacement of the violent hierarchies that structure our culture is manifestly a moral task. It is thus a matter of reorienting and re-evaluating that which, within the tradition, had been repressed, relegated, or devalorized. In this sense, deconstruction is always political: it consists in a

[4] The conditions were thus in place. Among contemporary interpreters of Derrida, this position is now one of the most widely accepted. See in particular: Crockett (2018); Malabou (2005).

deconstruction of the various modes of the exercise of power and of its repressive tendencies. I cite *Of Grammatology*, published in 1967:

> There is no ethics without the presence *of the other* but also, and consequently, without absence, dissimulation, detour, differance, writing. Arche-writing is the origin of morality as of immorality. The nonethical opening of ethics. A violent opening. As one has done in the case of the vulgar concept of writing, the ethical instance of violence must no doubt be rigorously suspended in order to repeat the genealogy of morals. (Derrida 2016, 283)[5]

Following the texts of the 1990s – often evoked and interpreted as marking a "turn" – it nonetheless becomes increasingly evident that deconstruction does not possess an ethics that would be external to it, nor even that any ethics whatsoever could be derived from it: it is deconstruction itself that engenders its own ethos. An ethos that does not conform to a closed system of pre-established rules and prescriptions, that neither recognizes nor bows before any condition to which it would be obliged, but tends toward something situated beyond any prior determination – "beyond good and evil" – and, by virtue of its aporetic nature, beyond the limit of the possible.

> For a deconstructive operation, *possibility* is rather the danger, the danger of becoming an available set of rule-governed procedures, methods, accessible approaches. The interest of deconstruction, of such force and desire as it may have, is a certain experience of the impossible: that is, … of the *other* – the experience of the other as the invention of the impossible, in other words, as the only possible invention. (Derrida 2007, 14)[6]

Derrida's ethical reflections arise, at least in part, from his *critical engagement* with Kant – from a radical intensification, even a hyperbolic extension, of Kantian duty-based ethics. Influenced, not least, by Levinas's philosophy, Derrida may be said to rewrite Kant's categorical imperative. In Derrida, the unconditional no longer designates the universal form of law but rather the command of an unconditional – yet always impossible – responsibility toward the Other, toward justice, or toward the *à-venir*, the to-come. Unconditionality thus shifts into the relation with the Other: in place of the categorical imperative, it is now the face of the Other that calls. This ethical injunction is not general but always singular and addressed;

[5] Original italics.

[6] Original italics.

the responsibility to the Other is unconditional, yet it can never be fulfilled. The "command" is therefore intrinsically aporetic: one must obey the law and, at the same time, transgress it in the name of justice. The imperative remains categorical insofar as it binds unavoidably, but it can no longer be universalized.[7] The unconditional hospitality and forgiveness are impossible, for they are heterogeneous to the political, to the juridical, and even to the ethical. Yet, as Derrida writes, "the impossible is not nothing. By his own definition, it is precisely that which arrives, that which happens."[8]

Where action does not respond to conditions but leaps into the unconditional, where one does not act out of duty nor according to duty, it is there that there is truly action, ethics, morality, responsibility. This ethics that exceeds ethics – to borrow Derrida's expression –unfolds as a hyperbolic ethics.[9]

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But what, then, is the connection between all of this and literature? At this point, it is worth recalling that Derrida is a philosopher who, perhaps more than most and in ways comparable only to certain literary writers, reflects on the fact that philosophizing is ultimately a linguistic act. Going beyond the philosophical "linguistic turn," he not only makes linguistic articulation the very basis of experience, but – by dislodging language from its purely representational function – also broadens the relation

[7] Although Derrida never devotes a work exclusively to Kant's *categorical imperative*, he repeatedly returns to it as a limit-concept in his reflections on justice, ethics, and responsibility. He reinterprets the Kantian demand for unconditional moral law in terms of the aporia between law and justice. Justice, he writes, is not a calculable rule but an "inconditional imperative," a demand that cannot be codified yet nevertheless compels decision and responsibility. It is clearly traceable how, in Derrida's other writings – such as *Specters of Marx*; *Force of the Law. The Mystical Foundation of Authority*; *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas; Of Hospitality* – he transforms the Kantian notion of the categorical imperative: shifting from the universal to the singular, from the formal to the aporetic, from autonomy to heteronomy – that is, from the law of reason to the demand of the Other. In Derrida, "the categorical" thus becomes the name for what is ethically inescapable yet conceptually unformalizable.

[8] Derrida (2005a, 172.) For the paradoxical or aporetic relation between unconditional and conditional hospitality, see, among others: Derrida and Dufourmantelle (2000, 20–21, 21–23, and especially 55–57, 65–75); Derrida (2005c, 66–67).

[9] Derrida refers to the concept of "hyperbolic ethics" in the interview *Le siècle et le pardon*, where he examines the radical and unconditional aspects of forgiveness and hospitality. He explicitly uses the expression "hyperbolic ethics" to designate a form of responsibility that exceeds any normative framework or utilitarian purpose (Derrida, 2000a. All texts not available in English are quoted here in my own translation.). In this short interview, as in his major texts from the 1990s, Derrida also develops the idea that ethics is not limited to prescribed norms, but rather appears as a form of excess or overflow – always beyond established boundaries. Furthermore, in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre*, Derrida associates the ethical act with the experience of the "impossible," emphasizing that the essence of ethics lies in an infinite responsibility toward the other, one that cannot be reduced to any pre-established rule or condition. There, he explores the idea of an ethical invention based on the experience of the "possible impossible" (see Derrida 2007, 14). Hospitality, like forgiveness, is conceived by Derrida as an unconditional and paradoxical act – at once impossible and necessary (see also Derrida 2021; Derrida 2022). These writings make it clear that, for Derrida, ethics is not a fixed system, but an ongoing challenge grounded in openness to the other and in an unconditional responsibility. The guiding notion of "unconditionality" runs through the seminars of the 1990s, which explore the questions of unconditional hospitality, forgiveness, and the gift.

between language and philosophy toward performativity and the poetic dimension of language. Meaning and truth, and thus any form of ethical experience or ethical questioning, come into being only through the generative force of language. And if an ethics that exceeds good and evil is articulated through terms such as invention[10] or event, one is immediately led to think that hyperbolic ethics maintains a close relation with artistic experience, and more specifically with literature.

What kind of conception of literature, then, does such an ethicization make possible? Although this question could be explored from several angles within a work as complex as Derrida's, I shall choose here to approach it briefly from the perspective of the secret, since, from the early 1990s onwards, the philosopher increasingly sought in the singular functioning of the secret the characteristic features of the mode of existence of literature.[11]

But what characterizes the secret? What is a secret? Can such a question even be asked, one that – according to the grammar of deconstruction – would be profoundly essentialist? The answer is, of course, yes, provided that one immediately notes that, unsurprisingly, what interests Derrida most is the enigmatic character of the secret: that which is fundamentally inaccessible, unrepresentable, unthinkable. For the secret is something of which we have no phenomenal experience, and/or something we do not say – either because we cannot speak of it (we are not permitted to), or because we do not know how to.[12]

The essential question posed by Derrida is the following: faced with these classical definitions of the secret, which presuppose a hidden meaning or a concealed content, can one conceive of another type of secret? Does there exist another mode of functioning of the secret – perhaps what, in his own terms, we

[10] Derrida brings ethics and invention together for the first time and most powerfully in his essay *Psyche: Inventions de l'autre*. Here, invention is not merely a technical or creative act but the ethical event itself – the arrival of the Other, in which the very possibility of responsibility, hospitality, and language is at stake. "Thus it is that invention would be in conformity with its concept, with the dominant feature of the word and concept "invention," only insofar as, paradoxically, invention invents nothing, when in invention the other does not come, and when nothing comes to the other or from the other. For the other is not the possible. So it would be necessary to say that the only possible invention would be the invention of the impossible. But an invention of the impossible is impossible, the other would say" Derrida (2007, 47).

[11] The question of secrecy first emerged within the framework of a seminar series whose starting point was an ethical one: that of responsibility. What is now referred to as the "seminar on secrecy" arose from this context. The full version of this seminar was recently published under the title: *Jacques Derrida, Répondre – du secret (Seminars 1991–1992)*.

[12] "Is secrecy *as such* not, first and foremost, that which, by refusing all manifestation, all phenomenologization, and having no phenomenological essence, will never give rise to a phenomenology nor to an ontology grounded in phenomenology?" (Derrida 2025, 64)

could call a non-negative secret?[13] In meditating on the nature of the secret, the philosopher undertakes in *The Gift of Death* an analysis of the fundamental biblical narrative of Abraham and Isaac[14] (Derrida 2008, 79–114). As Kierkegaard had already emphasized in his classical work, Abraham, the knight of faith, transgresses the ethical commandment when he accepts to sacrifice his son in obedience to God's command.

For Derrida, it is above all the gesture of silence that becomes central in this narrative: at the moment when Abraham prepares to kill his child, he keeps his secret. He answers Isaac's question, but does not reveal the secret of the demanded sacrifice. The heart of the secret, here, resides in Abraham's silence: he speaks to no one, neither before, nor during, nor after the events. He says nothing of the divine command, nor does he explain his acts. Now, the ethical demand rests upon universality: it presupposes a responsibility exercised in and through language – that is to say, through entry into the order of the general, by which we must justify ourselves, give an account of our decisions, answer for our acts. Ethics requires substitution, just as language does – whereas singularity, irreplaceability, unrepeatability, silence, and secrecy stand in opposition to this.

The story of Abraham exemplarily illustrates the tension between general responsibility and absolute responsibility, between ethics and secrecy, between what can be said and what cannot be said. Whether one sees in Abraham's act the expression of the religious stage (in Kierkegaard's sense) or that of a hyperbolic ethics, one thing seems certain: this act carries a secret understood as absolute singularity, irreducible to any language. The secret at issue here does not consist in hiding a truth, in concealing a content, but in marking an infinite separation, a radical singularity, which binds the human being to an Absolute Other, here: God. Abraham cannot know the divine will; he does not know why God requires this sacrifice from him.

[13] See: "When one declares, 'A secret is what cannot be said,' or when one asserts, 'A secret is what must not be said,' in both cases, the possibility of secrecy is associated with a form of negativity. But is this negativity really as necessary as it seems? Is the question not, on the contrary (and you see that the question, which calls for a response, is neither a position nor a negation): is there not secrecy, a possibility of secrecy, prior to any negativity? Not only prior to any speech, but prior to any negativity, to any emergence of the 'no'? And are not the consequences of such a thinking of secrecy (without negativity) incalculable – especially in relation to the humanist or anthropocentric presupposition that would reserve secrecy for that speaking animal, for that spirit capable of saying 'no,' whom we call 'man'?" (Derrida 2025, 43–44)

[14] The book analyzes the ethical and theological significance of sacrifice, responsibility, and secrecy, through a rereading of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling.*

> But as soon as one speaks, as soon as one enters the medium of language, one loses that very singularity. One therefore loses the possibility or the right to decide. Thus every decision would, fundamentally, remain at the same time solitary, secret, and silent. … The first effect or first destination of language therefore deprives me of, or delivers me from, my singularity. By suspending my absolute singularity in speaking, I renounce at the same time my liberty and my responsibility. Once I speak, I am never and no longer myself, alone and unique. (Derrida 2008, 87)[15]

Speech deprives us of our singularity, since language always presupposes substitution. That being so, it has almost become a commonplace since the critique of the system of representation in *Of Grammatology* that, in every use of the sign, the sign merely stands in the place of what is absent – in other words, absence and distance are inherent in every semiotic operation. Now, it is precisely on the basis of Derrida's generalized theory of the trace that one can say that, in an expanded sense, every text is a secret. If nothing signifies directly, one can no longer speak of a simple perception of sense or meaning – there is only deciphering. Every reading thus becomes a confrontation with a certain secret. This perhaps enables us to better understand why literature maintains a privileged relation with secrecy and with the experience of a hyperbolic ethics that exceeds all prescription.

In *The Gift of Death*, within the same chapter devoted to the story of Abraham, there also appears Melville's famous short story: *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* (Derrida 2008, 60–65).[16] Bartleby, the Wall Street scribe, begins by copying documents with exemplary automatism, in a "dull and mechanical" manner, but progressively refuses to carry out secondary tasks. His polite responses – "I would prefer not to" – completely disarm his superior, the narrator, who is incapable of understanding or reacting. Bartleby's withdrawal becomes increasingly radical, his behaviour almost catatonic, and his spectral presence invades the space. He refuses every injunction, ceases to write, and ends up doing nothing but silently staring at the brick wall before him. The one who had first been the most zealous of workers eventually rejects every form of activity – and, ultimately, life itself.

[15] Due to the communal nature of language, every individual decision and every assumption of responsibility always manifests itself as a solitary, secret, and silent act. This line of reasoning is closely linked to the themes addressed by Derrida in the seminar *Répondre – du secret*, where he analyzes the relations between secrecy, responsibility, and language. (*The Gift of Death* is a reelaboration of this seminar.)

[16] In addition, Derrida discusses Melville's short story in three other texts, in relation to literature and secrecy, or the secret of literature: Derrida (1996, 38); Derrida, Dronsfeld, Midgley, Wilding (1993, 35); Derrida, Ferraris (2018).

Bartleby, the Scrivener is one of the most commented-upon short stories in American literature, particularly by philosophers.[17] It has been read as a sociological critique of the modern bureaucratic environment, as a questioning of the limits of Kantian freedom, or even as a metaphor for the originary mechanization of literary writing. Some see in him a Christ-like figure, others a Marxist resister against capitalism. Agamben perceives in him the pure potentiality of non-action – Bartleby, although he does not act, is able to act. Deleuze, for his part, discovers in Bartleby's reticence a neutral zone between refusal and acceptance: an empty space from which language itself is overturned, rendering Bartleby without attributes or referents.

Derrida, in a similar vein, sees in Bartleby's non-response a masterpiece of irony, saturated with meaning, but whose specificity lies precisely in its capacity to suspend all signification. Melville's short story constitutes a paradigmatic example of literary writing, as the possibility of a writing that continually withdraws from its own ultimate possibility – that of referring to a given or to a pre-established existent. What is at issue here is the effect of secrecy produced by the literary dispositif, an effect which, while presupposing no hidden content, points toward the reserve, the surplus proper to the literary text. Derrida explores an analogous functioning, for example, in his reading of Paul Celan, where he shows that the poem always remains open to the possibility of secrecy, to what it does not say, to what it does not name – a reserve that he qualifies as inexhaustible (Derrida 2005c). Similarly, in another analysis that has since become famous, that of Baudelaire's *Counterfeit Money*, Derrida highlights the infinite overdetermination of the gift (Derrida 1991). The gesture of handing a coin to a beggar – in Baudelaire's narrative – remains charged with an excess of meaning as soon as one seeks to understand all the possible reasons for which such a gift might be made. And we, as readers, shall never know whether the coin was actually counterfeit. From this perspective, the notion of reserve could be considered a quasi-synonym of the non-negative secret in Derridean thought.

Literature itself, writes Derrida, the anti-essentialist thinker, "is neither more nor less than the experience of existence. Writing, literature, refers to that extreme and troubling point for which there is no ultimate explanation" (Derrida 2008, 117). Analyses of the relation between secrecy and literature thus involve a dimension of the desacralization of secrecy: they show that it is not a hidden meaning that the text conceals, but that writing itself is the secret – non-sacred, non-mystical, but structural, singular. Literature – whether that of Melville, Celan, or Baudelaire – is

[17] See: Berkman 2011.

therefore "a secret without mystery." It does not hide a secret, it is the secret. From this perspective, one understands that deconstruction, so often mistakenly taken to be a destructive or relativist enterprise, is not a destabilizing activity but rather the bringing to light of the fact that (literary) writing is itself a singular, unstable, incomparable instance: "literature is the place of all these secrets without secrecy, of all these crypts without depth, with no other basis than the abyss of the call or address, without any law other than the singularity of the event called the work" (Derrida 2008, 120).

Expectation, responsibility, and ethos that are read through – or that emerge from – this dispositif go far beyond classical ethics. In this sense, Derrida's hyperbolic ethics obliges us to rethink humanist representations of literary ethicality.

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General Section

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Ted Hughes's Poetry
On the Frontier Between Modernism and Postmodernism

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Abstract

This study examines the poetic evolution of Ted Hughes by analysing his collections *Lupercal* (1960), *Birthday Letters* (1998), and *Capriccio* (1990) through modernist and postmodernist perspectives. While Hughes has often been aligned with the late modernist tradition, his later works – particularly *Birthday Letters* and *Capriccio* – demonstrate a shift towards postmodern concerns with subjectivity, fragmentation, and the instability of narrative authority. Drawing on theoretical insights from Antal Bókay and Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, the study explores how Hughes's engagement with myth, trauma, and autobiographical memory both extends and complicates modernist legacies. Special attention is given to the poet's self-mythologising gestures, including his reflections in "The Hanged Man and the Dragonfly," which illuminate a dynamic interplay between personal history and archetypal structures. The analysis also shows that Hughes's later poetry is shaped by his ongoing poetic engagement with Sylvia Plath, whose influence is visible in both the emotional intensity and the spiritual depth of these works. By comparing the formal and thematic strategies of the three collections, the study argues that Hughes's oeuvre occupies a liminal space between modernism and postmodernism, revealing a poetic voice that is simultaneously continuous with tradition and radically self-renewing.

Keywords

Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Assia Wevill, modernism, postmodernism, *Lupercal, Birthday Letters, Capriccio*

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1. Introduction: Theoretical Background

Ted Hughes's significance as an English poet is undeniable, as he was made Poet Laureate, the UK's highest honour in poetry, in 1984. Hughes is widely regarded as one of the leading figures in modern British poetry, primarily for his engagement with myth, nature and the portrayal of human suffering. The scope of this paper is to explore Hughes's poetry from both modernist and postmodernist perspectives through a selection of poems from three volumes: *Lupercal*, published in 1960, *Capriccio*, published in 1990, and *Birthday Letters*, published in 1998. The aim is to introduce the shift in Hughes's poetic voice from modernist to postmodern patterns. The aforementioned volumes represent distinct phases in Hughes's oeuvre: while *Lupercal* focuses on symbolic and mythological structures rooted in universal themes, *Capriccio* experiments with fragmentation and psychological intensity, and *Birthday Letters* adopts a deeply personal, confessional tone interrogating memory, trauma and identity through an introspective lens.

Understanding the evolution of Hughes's poetic voice also requires awareness of the personal influences that shaped his early development. Sylvia Plath played a vital role in the editing, typing and submission of Hughes's debut volume, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), contributing both practically and intellectually to its creation and success. His second collection, *Lupercal* (1960), was dedicated to her with the inscription "To Sylvia," a gesture that not only acknowledges their personal bond but also reflects her influence on his formative poetic development. According to her journals, Plath regularly acted as the first reader of Hughes's drafts, offering structural and stylistic suggestions. Her role combined emotional support with creative engagement, leaving a lasting imprint on Hughes's early work. As Peter Steinberg notes in *Great Writers: Sylvia Plath*, "Plath, still early in her Fulbright, planned to travel and teach. Now, Plath was writing more and, convinced of Hughes' greatness, began to type his poems and send them to American magazines. He appointed her as his agent and typist, two jobs she was more than happy to do" (Steinberg 2004, 62–63).

Hughes's poetic transition reflects broader philosophical and cultural shifts in twentieth-century literature. Nevertheless, modernism and postmodernism are not easily separable, and their boundaries are often blurred. Antal Bókay refers to the distinction as "undecidable" (Bókay 2006, 45-46), while Mihály Szegedy-Maszák emphasises that it is nearly impossible to draw a clear line between the postmodern

and its predecessors since it means the "reorganisation of older methods" (Szegedy-Maszák 1987, 44). Fundamentally, modernism retains a belief in deeper meaning behind chaos, whereas postmodernism questions the possibility of objective truth, embracing fragmentation, pluralism and narrative instability. Jean-François Lyotard characterises postmodernism as a rejection of universal truths and the enforcement of universal values. Instead, he suggests pluralism and diversity (Lyotard 2002, 13-19).

Nonetheless, modernism and postmodernism are strongly connected to each other and often overlap, since postmodernism emerged both as a reaction to and an extension of the foundations established by modernism. In this context, Hughes's poetry offers a compelling case study. The shift in poetic voice from *Lupercal* to *Birthday Letters* not only traces his individual development as a poet but also encapsulates a broader literary evolution from the modernist search for coherence through myth to the postmodern turn toward subjectivity, fragmentation, and self-reflexivity. While mythology underpins Hughes's early poetry overtly, it continues to operate latently in *Birthday Letters*. In this respect, it is also worth mentioning that Hughes's position in twentieth-century British poetry has often been discussed in the context of major poetic groups that emerged after the Second World War. His early career unfolded in parallel with the Movement poets, such as Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin, or Elizabeth Jennings, and also with the Group, which included George MacBeth and Edward Lucie-Smith. As István D. Rácz remarks, Hughes "never really joined any of these literary groups" (D. Rácz 2022, 414), but he was in dialogue with them. The Movement poets, with their emphasis on rationality, clarity, and formal restraint, diverged sharply from Hughes's mythopoetic and symbolic intensity, while the Group provided an alternative space for poetic experimentation. Hughes's unique position outside of these literary circles contributed to his distinctive development as a poet who engaged with yet ultimately transcended the poetic fashions of his time. According to D. Rácz, Hughes "burst into the literary scene with poetry that radically differed from that of the Movement, and this was evident already in his earliest poems" (D. Rácz 2022, 414).

2. T. S. Eliot's Influence and the Mythic Poetic Self

Ted Hughes frequently emphasised the profound influence that T. S. Eliot had on his understanding of poetry. In his essay "The Poetic Self: A Centenary Tribute to T. S. Eliot," Hughes portrays Eliot not merely as a literary innovator, but as a moral and cultural prophet responding to modernity's spiritual crisis with poetic rigour.

According to Hughes, Eliot did not simply describe the collapse of metaphysical systems but internalised it, transforming it into artistic expression. As he observes in the same tribute, originally delivered as a speech at the T. S. Eliot Centenary Celebration in 1988: "We see now that Eliot was the poet who brought the full implication of that moment into consciousness" (Hughes 1994, 269).

Hughes's high regard for Eliot stems from this ability to confront the spiritual void without relinquishing poetic seriousness. Describing the unprecedented nature of this crisis, Hughes writes: "For the first time in his delusive history he had lost the supernatural world. He had lost the special terrors and cruelties of it, but also the infinite consolation, and the infinite inner riches. It was merely a new terror: the meaningless" (Hughes 1994, 269). By transforming this void into a source of creative energy, Eliot became, in Hughes's words, a touchstone for "the poetic self," a construct capable of mediating between personal trauma and broader cultural loss.

This mythic conception of the poetic self would later become a central element in Hughes's own poetics. His work consistently reveals a preoccupation with myth, ritual, and the non-human world. In contrast to Eliot's restrained formalism, Hughes cultivates a visceral engagement with violence and transcendence through symbolic structures. As Ann Skea observes, Hughes "often described poetry as a magical shamanic journey undertaken to obtain some healing energies needed in our world," and saw imagination as a means of reintegrating the fractured inner and outer worlds (Skea 2004, 41). This reading highlights the ritualistic dimensions of Hughes's verse, particularly in collections that explore psychic and collective trauma through archetypal narratives. In his letters, Hughes's references to his father and to Wilfred Owen further underscore his evolving personal mythology, suggesting how biographical elements were transformed into a broader mythopoetic framework. In the appendix to a 1998 letter, Hughes contrasts Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, writing that Brooke was "gradually eclipsed by the much more slowly emerging work of poets such as Wilfred Owen (whose most famous poem, 'Strange meeting,' lies behind the piece of mine in Birthday Letters titled A Picture of Otto...)" (Sagar 2012, 323). Owen's presence in Hughes's reflection on war poetry underscores his significance in shaping Hughes's awareness of the poetic voice as a witness to trauma. Though Owen is only mentioned briefly, this reflection underscores Hughes's sensitivity to war's poetic legacies. Elsewhere in his correspondence, Hughes reflects on his father's silence and wartime experiences as formative influences on his own poetic imagination. In a letter to Keith Sagar, he describes rereading his father's letters and encountering a mysterious distance: "He was mostly a very

silent man" (Sagar 2012, 105). In another, he refers to his paternal grandfather as a "mystery man" – a figure remembered only vaguely yet imbued with mythic resonance: "Said to be a great singer. No photo left my Dad a 3 year old orphan... Mystery man" (Sagar 2012, 275). These impressions contribute to what the critic identified as Hughes's evolving personal mythology, where family history, silence, and loss merge with poetic expression. Elsewhere in his correspondence, Hughes recalls rereading his father's letters and feeling an unsettling sense of overdrive: "He was mostly a very silent man" (Sagar 2012, 105). The difficulty of articulating experience, whether inherited from his father's taciturn nature or absorbed through broader cultural trauma became a psychological undercurrent in Hughes's poetics. This tension between silence and expression permeates his myth-making.

3. The Modernist Framework of *Lupercal*

After the First World War, modernism emerged as a literary and cultural movement in response to the tragedy of the war, aiming to express the widespread sense of disillusionment. Rejecting Victorian-era conventions, modernist authors depicted chaos and fragmentation, features that are also present in postmodernism. However, within the modernist context these elements reflected a search for deeper truths and underlying meanings, unlike the postmodern embrace of inherent relativism. Considering this, Hughes's *Lupercal* (1960) exemplifies this modernist approach. Its use of myth, also a feature of postmodern literature, functioned within a modernist framework. Hughes employed mythological structures not to deconstruct established narratives but rather to explore universal themes of human experience and the enduring power of archetypal figures. Furthermore, in the poem "Lupercalia," Hughes juxtaposes the ancient Roman festival Lupercalia to reflect contemporary chaos. While the essence of the ancient context is the ritual of purification, the celebration of health and fertility, Hughes contrasts this with the turmoil of the modern world by depicting a scene in which these rites are replaced by confusion:

> The dog loved its churlish life,
> Scraps, thefts. Its declined blood
> An anarchy of mindless pride. (Hughes 2010, 67-68)

It is important to note that while the use of myth is prominent in this modernist work, postmodernism also engages with myth, often in more ironic, deconstructive, or self-reflexive ways. Furthermore, postmodern literature is also distinguished by its

frequent use of intertextuality, hypertextuality, quotation, adaptation, and pastiche. Through this sharp contrast between ancient rites and modern chaos, the poet emphasises the collapse of traditional values and the fragmentation of the modern condition. The phrases "declined blood" and "anarchy of mindless pride" illustrate this decline, emphasizing the loss of values in the modern world. "Declined blood" may suggest moral or cultural deterioration, while "anarchy of mindless pride" evokes the chaos and ideological conflicts of contemporary society, particularly in the context of war and political turmoil. Further modernist motifs, such as the estrangement from society, nature and self are depicted in the following lines:

> This woman's as from death's touch: a surviving
> Barrenness: she abides; perfect,
> But flung from the wheel of the living,
> The past killed in her, the future plucked out. (Hughes 2010, 67-68)

Here, the image of the woman recalls the modernist theme of emotional detachment, highlighting the fragmentation of identity through her isolation from both past and future. Expanding on this idea, the incorporation of Shakespearean elements serves as a distinctive feature of modernism, particularly in its attempt to impose structure on an increasingly disordered world. Hughes's admired modernist predecessor, T. S. Eliot, exemplifies this approach in *The Waste Land*, where references to *The Tempest* and *Hamlet* function not merely as intertextual play but as part of a broader effort to engage with cultural memory and continuity amid the anxieties of modernity. Similarly, Hughes incorporates Shakespearean elements into his work to examine, for instance, language and authority. Herbert Lomas in his essay "The Poetry of Ted Hughes" compares "Thrushes" to *King Lear* and states that "Hughes's language … almost out-Shakespeares Shakespeare" (Lomas 1987, 414). By referring to Shakespeare, Lomas must have been referring to Hughes's use of dramatic intensity and linguistic richness, which is evident in "Thrushes." In this poem, Hughes describes the bird as "Terrifying … / More coiled steel than living … / Dark deadly eye" (Hughes 2010, 56-57). The bird's features embody natural, instinctive power. The poet also describes humans by denying nature's abilities: "No indolent procrastinations and no yawning states, / No sighs or head-scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab / And a ravening second" (Hughes 2010, 56-57). Through the sharp contrast between nature and human beings, Hughes emphasises the limitations of human consciousness and highlighting modernist ideas such as self-doubt and hesitation compared to the instinctive purity and strength of nature.

4. Postmodern Readings of *Birthday Letters*

The emergence of postmodern literature is generally dated to the late twentieth century as a reaction against modernist ideas, particularly the search for absolute truth. This perspective aligns with theorists like Jean-François Lyotard, who described postmodernism as marked by a disbelief toward grand narratives. It emphasises the break from modernism through techniques such as metafiction, intertextuality, and unreliable narration, rejecting fixed identities, chronology, and the coherence of linear narratives, favouring instead fragmented and fluid constructs of meaning. In 1998, Hughes published *Birthday Letters,* a collection of poems he had written "without any intention of publishing them" over twenty-five years, after discovering he was ill, and his death was imminent (D. Rácz 2022, 417–418). Unfortunately, this turned out to be the case, as he passed away a few months after the publication of this volume. Although Ted Hughes is commonly identified as a modernist poet, a view supported by several critics, for instance Keith Sagar, postmodern characteristics, such as fragmentation, the subjective nature of truth and a rejection of stable personal identity can be identified in his work, especially in *Birthday Letters*. Hughes wrote these poems about his wife, Sylvia Plath, who took her own life in 1963. After her death, Hughes remained silent about the circumstances, which led many to believe he was the primary cause of his wife's death.

As mentioned above, the questioning of truth and identity is a defining characteristic of postmodern literature. From this perspective, Hughes's work corresponds to Antal Bókay's view that postmodernism denies the possibility of a stable self or personal identity, instead treating it as a metanarrative reconstruction (Bókay 2006, 173). The fragmented depiction of self and identity in Hughes's *Birthday Letters,* especially in "The Blue Flannel Suit," highlights the postmodern view that truth and identity are fluid, ever shifting, and open to continual questioning. Through his fragmented and shifting poetic voice he reflects the uncertainty and ambiguity of both personal and collective memories, which is a key aspect of postmodern interpretations of time and memory.

> I had let it all grow. I had supposed
> It was all OK. Your life
> Was a liner I voyaged in. (Hughes 1988)

In this retrospective start of the poem, the speaker recalls their past in a way similar to a memoir, and by admitting that he supposed everything was "OK" he reveals his naivety, which sets the ground for the unravelling of his understanding

of both self and truth, strongly connected to the postmodern concept of fragmented identity. The "liner" metaphor might refer to a predetermined journey, symbolising Hughes's perception of life as something fixed, suggesting a preordained life path.

> You waited,
> Knowing yourself helpless in the tweezers
> Of the life that judged you, and I saw
> The flayed nerve, the unhealable face-wound
> Which was all you had for courage. (Hughes 1998)

The quoted passage portrays Hughes as an immobile observer of Plath's suffering, "helpless in the tweezers" of life. This immobility, while not exclusive to postmodernism, resonates strongly with postmodern themes such as powerlessness and the passivity of the self, which is unable to act or change its circumstances. The repetition of "I saw" in the following lines highlights the distancing observer's awareness of Plath's struggle, as well as the futility of intervention. The line "the lonely girl who was going to die" reflects a recognition of inevitability and helplessness, echoing not only postmodern concerns but also modernist preoccupations with the individual's inability to alter their fate. Yet, in Hughes's work, this immobility takes on a more fragmented, subjective form of narrative, which is characteristic of postmodernism.

> I saw that what gripped you, as you sipped,
> Were terrors that had killed you once already.
> Now, I see, I saw, sitting, the lonely
> Girl who was going to die. (Hughes 1998)

By emphasising "I saw … Now I see, I saw," Hughes may be evoking confessional poetry, a hallmark of the poetics of Sylvia Plath, to whom these poems were addressed. Moreover, the confusion between the past and present reflects a representation of fragmented time, which is a feature of both modernist and postmodern literature. However, the nature of this fragmentation differs between the two movements. In modernism, fragmentation often reflects a sense of disillusionment, with the aim of reconstructing meaning from the brokenness. In contrast, postmodern fragmentation embraces the instability of time and narrative, highlighting the impossibility of a fixed or coherent meaning, and foregrounds the disintegration of traditional structures. This further strengthens the postmodern reading of Hughes's work, as it focuses on the fluidity and subjectivity of time, rejecting a linear or unified narrative.

As I looked at you, as I am stilled
Permanently now, permanently
Bending so briefly at your open coffin. (Hughes 1988)

The final lines of the poem highlight the fluidity of time through the repetition of "permanently" and the fleeting nature of Hughes's actions. Moreover, the poet often uses shocking imagery and powerful vocabulary in his works, drawing attention to the depth of the emotions and the intensity of the experiences he intends to convey.

According to Alex Davis, Ted Hughes's poetry can be considered postmodernist in the sense that it expands on modernist patterns, especially in its exploration of the limitations of language and fragmented identity. *Birthday Letters* illustrates this through its "searing-confessionalism" (Davis 2014, 35).

5. Comparative Analysis of *Lupercal* and *Birthday Letters*

Lupercal was published early in Hughes's poetic career, and the collection is written in a symbolic, mythic style, rich in imagery drawn from nature and ancient rituals. In contrast, *Birthday Letters* shifts to a more personal, confessional tone through which Hughes recalls his memories and emotions, reflecting on his thoughts and behaviour from his past with Sylvia Plath. Hughes's early works, such as *Lupercal*, align with T.S. Eliot's modernist approach of universalising individual experiences through myth. This approach can be seen in Hughes's use of mythic imagery to reflect human struggles and the search for meaning, much like Eliot's use of myth in *The Waste Land* to articulate the fragmented and desolate modern world. Hughes's work, much like Eliot's, transforms personal experiences into universal themes, emphasising a shared human condition. In contrast, his later works, such as *Birthday Letters*, break with the modernist tradition by adopting a more fragmented and subjective point of view. This shift reflects a postmodern rejection of grand narratives, emphasising individual perception and the instability of truth, a departure from the more structured and universalising fragmentation often found in modernist works like those of T.S. Eliot. While the former volume relies on mythological imagery to explore universal themes and historical events, the latter delves into his private life and inner thoughts. For instance, death in *Lupercal* is presented symbolically, primarily linked to war and the breakdown of cultural and existential frameworks, whereas in *Birthday Letters*, it becomes deeply personal, with the narrator directly confronting loss and grief.

In "A Woman Unconscious," the representation of death is not only symbolic but also apocalyptic, engaging with Cold War anxieties, particularly the looming threat of nuclear annihilation. While earlier wars were also framed in apocalyptic terms, this poem explicitly situates its imagery within the standoff between Russia and America, emphasizing the existential dread of destruction.

Russia and America circle each other;
Threats nudge an act that were without doubt
A melting of the mould in the mother,
Stones melting about the root. …

And though bomb be matched against bomb,
Though all mankind wince out and nothing endure –
Earth gone in an instant flare –
Did a lesser death come

Onto the white hospital bed
Where one, numb beyond her last of sense,
Closed her eyes on the world's evidence
And into pillows sunk her head. (Hughes 2010, 14–15)

Passing is portrayed through various images in Hughes's poetry, for example through animals, nature, strangers, and close relationships which are significant in investigating his portrayal of death. In *Birthday Letters*, by contrast, death is demonstrated from a more personal viewpoint, if we recall the lines from "The Blue Flannel Suit": "As I looked at you, as I am stilled … Bending so briefly at your open coffin" (Hughes 1988). Both poems depict the death of a woman. However, in "A Woman Unconscious," the narrator keeps his distance and the woman remains unknown. To support this with further examples, the poem "Life after Death" from the volume *Birthday Letters* displays a personal tone:

What can I tell you that you do not know
Of the life after death? …
By night I lay awake in my body
The Hanged Man …
We lay in your death,
In the fallen snow, under falling snow,
As my body sank into the folk-tale
Where the wolves are singing in the forest

For two babes, who have turned, in their sleep,
Into orphans
Beside the corpse of their mother. (Hughes 2010)

In this poem, Hughes portrays himself as the symbol of suffering, "The Hanged Man," and further intensifies the image of grief by depicting their children as "orphans." This shocking imagery strengthens the confessional tone and parallels with postmodern perspectives, emphasising fragmented identities and the subjective nature of personal perceptions. The allusion to "The Hanged Man" in the poem "Life After Death" is not incidental. It refers back to Hughes's own essay "The Hanged Man and the Dragonfly," where he reflects on the archetype of the Hanged Man as a symbol of psychic dismemberment and transformation. In this essay, Hughes associates the figure with the state of visionary paralysis and rebirth, connecting it to the Tarot card imagery, the Grail legend and the archetype of the shamanic healer. He writes: "The Hanged Man holds a special place among Baskin's graphic works. It was his first fully mature, large-scale piece... and it was like the herald of everything he has done since. One might say, it was the whole new thing itself, like a tight-wrapped seed" (Hughes 1994, 90). Hughes further interprets the Hanged Man as an archetypal image of "absolute pain, pain beyond flesh: ineffable, infinite affliction of being, from the dumb mouth of which the foetus hangs like some roping coagulation" (Hughes 1994, 91). This overwhelming pain becomes a form of transcendence through sacrifice, a sacramental operation in which "the Hanged Man has become the Dragonfly without having ceased to be the Hanged Man" (Hughes 1994, 98).

Through this lens, the narrator's self-identification as "The Hanged Man" deepens the poem's engagement with postmodern fragmentation, grief and the limits of articulation. The speaker's immersion in mythic symbolism does not offer resolution, but rather emphasises the disjointedness of memory and the paradoxical nature of transformation through suffering. It illustrates how Hughes's mythopoetic imagination, rather than offering consolation, confronts the uncanny stillness and estrangement at the heart of loss. The dragonfly, appearing later in the same essay, becomes a parallel image of metamorphosis and liminality: "The Hanged Man is a symbol of the first phase: mana nursed from agony. And the Dragonfly is a symbol of the last phase: the agony wholly redeemed, healed – and transformed into its opposite, by mana" (Hughes 1994, 98–99).

This dual imagery affirms that for Hughes, psychic suffering is not only inevitable but also constitutive of spiritual metamorphosis. The wound becomes the womb of

meaning, and the silence of pain the precondition of poetic voice. Ultimately, the dual image of "The Hanged Man and the Dragonfly" encapsulates Hughes's belief in the transformative potential of suffering, aligning his late poetics with a deeply personal yet archetypally resonant postmodern vision.

This comparison also highlights the ambiguous boundary between modernism and postmodernism in Hughes's oeuvre. While the mythic structures and universal archetypes of *Lupercal* exemplify a modernist search for coherence, *Birthday Letters* foregrounds the fractured, personal, and reflexive qualities typically associated with postmodern writing. Yet the two are not in strict opposition: rather, Hughes's poetic vision often oscillates between these modes. His use of mythology persists in both volumes, albeit with differing emphasis—external symbolisation in the former and inner psychic mapping in the latter. This suggests that Hughes's work does not transition neatly from one paradigm to the other but continuously negotiates between them. In this respect, his poetry resists rigid classification and embodies a distinctive lyrical voice shaped by both continuity and disruption.

Additionally, lesser-discussed poems in both volumes offer further nuance to Hughes's poetic trajectory. In *Lupercal*, the poem "View of a Pig" presents a stark meditation on death and materiality, where the speaker's detachment from the slaughtered animal evokes a confrontation with violence stripped of sentiment. The carcass is described as "less than lifeless, further off. / It was like a sack of wheat", and "too dead now to pity. / To remember its life (...) / Seemed a false effort, and off the point" (Hughes 2005, 76). The speaker's inability to mourn or even assign symbolic meaning to the body underscores Hughes's unflinching portrayal of physical reality and anticipates the recurring theme of ritualised suffering found throughout his work. The pig is not idealised but rendered in viscerally factual terms: "They were going to scald it, / Scald it and scour it like a doorstep" (Hughes 2005, 76), expressing an almost brutal acknowledgment of the body's utilitarian end.

In *Birthday Letters*, poems such as "Setebos" delve deeper into psychological ambiguity and trauma. By drawing on Shakespearean archetypes from *The Tempest*, Hughes blurs personal and mythical registers. Caliban becomes a metaphor for the speaker's repressed anguish, while Prospero and Sycorax are invoked to articulate competing forces of control and chaos. The line "Your bellowing song / Was a scream inside a bronze / Bull being roasted" evokes mythic torment, while the surreal question "Who has dismembered us?" reflects the fragmentation of identity within the poem's confessional context (Hughes 2005, 1128–1129). These images serve to underscore Hughes's postmodern preoccupation with moral disorientation

and the crisis of self-definition in the aftermath of trauma. "The Tender Place" offers another poignant example of the subjective reworking of suffering and psychological vulnerability. In this poem, Hughes explores the neurological and emotional trauma associated with Sylvia Plath's electroconvulsive therapy. The lines "They crashed / The thunderbolt into your skull" and "The nerve threw off its skin / Like a burning child" convey intense physical pain and psychic violation (Hughes 2005, 1050). Through this visceral imagery, Hughes not only documents Plath's suffering but also confronts the brutal reality of mental illness and its treatment. The speaker's gaze is no longer detached; it is haunted and helpless, embodying the emotional fallout of witnessing another's pain. These lines align with postmodern concerns regarding the limits of empathy, the fragmentation of identity, and the challenge of articulating trauma through language.

6. Fragmentation and Emotional Turmoil in *Capriccio*

Capriccio, published in 1990, is often seen as a continuation and deepening of the confessional mode that Hughes would further explore in *Birthday Letters*. However, *Capriccio* departs from the more elegiac and reconciliatory tone of that volume by adopting a starker, more fractured style. The poems in *Capriccio* are brief, impressionistic, and fragmented, reflecting a psyche under duress. The emotional and structural fragmentation of the volume contributes to its overall atmosphere of estrangement and anguish, marking it as one of Hughes's most postmodern poetic works. The collection reflects on the collapse of Hughes's relationship with Assia Wevill and the tragedy of her suicide, yet avoids straightforward storytelling or explicit autobiographical disclosure. Instead, it approaches trauma obliquely, using fragmented imagery and abrupt tonal shifts to convey emotional disorientation and unresolved tension.

The poem "The Error" exemplifies this indirect and disjointed poetic method. Opening with a confrontation at the grave, the speaker addresses a woman, presumably Assia Wevill, with a haunting series of rhetorical questions: "Why didn't you just fly, / Wrap yourself in your hair and make yourself scarce?" (Hughes 2005, 795–796). This accusatory tone quickly shifts into a fragmented meditation on guilt, miscommunication, and spiritual dislocation. The lines "You were always mishearing / Into Hebrew or German / What was muttered in English" (Hughes 2005, 795–796) evoke a collapse of understanding between speaker and addressee and suggest that the titular "error" may lie in the inability to interpret or communicate emotional

reality, a classic postmodern impasse. On a deeper level, the mention of Hebrew and German may also allude to Assia Wevill's own heritage, her German-Jewish father and multilingual upbringing, suggesting that their estrangement was not only emotional, but also shaped by cultural displacement. Language, in this context, becomes not merely a failed medium of intimacy, but a landscape of emotional bareness and fractured expression, an inherited dissonance where personal trauma intersects with broader historical and diasporic ruptures. The poem moves through a range of emotional registers, from grief to anger, sarcasm to helplessness, which reflect the erratic and non-linear nature of trauma. As the speaker watches the woman "feed those flames" over "six full calendar years," her suffering is likened both to martyrdom and to a slow, deliberate ritual of annihilation. The maternal image, "as if you were feeding a child," is subverted, exposing a grotesque transformation of care into self-destruction. The poem offers no closure. Only the final chilling image remains: "Finally they made a small cairn," a mute and minimal memorial that mirrors the poem's own refusal of narrative consolation (Hughes 2005, 795–796).

In "Fanaticism," Hughes probes the psychological atmosphere of obsession, emotional collapse, and sacrificial surrender. The speaker evokes the beloved's loss of self through mythic and religious imagery: "You had lifted off your future and laid it lightly / Before the door of Aphrodite's temple / As the drowned leave their clothes folded" (Hughes 2005, 788–789). This haunting metaphor, likening self-abandonment to a ritual offering, frames the woman's fate as one of fatal devotion and identity erasure. Aphrodite's temple, emblematic of beauty, love and destructive desire, becomes the site of annihilation rather than fulfilment. The image of the "drowned" underscores both passivity and finality, suggesting that the surrender was irreversible. In its brevity and symbolism, the poem encapsulates the destructive potential of erotic obsession, presenting emotional turmoil not through narrative progression but through mythic compression. Here again, Hughes's postmodern poetics refuses psychological resolution, instead portraying trauma through allusive fragmentation and symbolic resonance.

In "Shibboleth," Hughes develops the motif of linguistic exclusion and cultural estrangement with particular historical resonance. The title itself evokes a biblical episode in which language is used as a marker of identity, separating friend from foe, a metaphor for the way in which belonging is policed through speech. The poem explores the complex intersections of language, heritage and alienation: "Your German / Found its royal licence in the English," while "Your Hebrew /

Survived on bats and spiders / In the guerrilla priest-hole / Under your tongue" (Hughes 2005, 794). These lines gesture towards Assia Wevill's Central European Jewish background and her culturally hybrid identity, fractured between languages, histories and geographies. The poem situates emotional disorientation within a diasporic and translingual matrix, where ancestral voices survive in hidden, uncanny forms. The inherited tension between English, German and Hebrew suggests not only cultural displacement but also internal fragmentation. Hughes weaves personal trauma into broader narratives of historical rupture and forced assimilation. The final lines "Tangled in your panic, tripped you. It was / The frontier glare of customs. / The gun-barrels / Of the imperious noses" (Hughes 2005, 794) conjure images of surveillance, suspicion, and enforced otherness, blending geopolitical checkpoints with emotional borders. In this context, language becomes not only a failed bridge, but a shibboleth, an instrument of estrangement that recasts the private wound within a collective history of exile and erasure.

Taken together, these poems reveal a shattered lyrical voice navigating the debris of personal catastrophe. *Capriccio* does not seek resolution or redemption. Rather, it enacts the recursive logic of trauma by replaying, refracting, and resisting assimilation. The affective texture of the poems, with their abrupt tonal changes, fractured imagery, and spiritual allusions, reflects not only the emotional turmoil of the speaker, but also the broader postmodern condition of fragmented selves and unstable truths.

In contrast to the mythic universality of *Lupercal* and the retrospective tenderness of *Birthday Letters*, *Capriccio* advances Hughes's poetic vision into a terrain of raw exposure and linguistic dissonance. It exemplifies a phase in which language itself becomes suspect, a faulty vessel for mourning. Yet it is precisely in this fractured landscape that Hughes articulates the unspeakable, allowing pain and ambiguity to remain unresolved, and thus unflinchingly real.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored the poetic evolution of Ted Hughes through a comparative reading of three key collections: *Lupercal* (1960), *Birthday Letters* (1998) and *Capriccio* (1990). By examining the stylistic and thematic shifts across these volumes, the analysis has traced Hughes's negotiation between modernist and postmodernist poetics. His early mythopoetic style, influenced by modernist principles such as

impersonality, universal archetypes, and structured symbolism, gradually gave way to more personal, fragmented and emotionally charged writing that aligns with postmodern sensibilities.

Lupercal demonstrates Hughes's alignment with the modernist tradition, relying on mythic structures, animal symbolism and ritualised violence to reflect on human nature and historical trauma. In contrast, *Birthday Letters* marks a significant departure from this impersonal tone. The confessional mode, direct address to Sylvia Plath and fragmentary narrative structure reveal a more subjective and emotionally vulnerable voice. This volume embodies a postmodern turn not only in its rejection of linear storytelling and stable meaning but also in its focus on personal perception, emotional immediacy and the instability of memory.

Capriccio further intensifies this postmodern sensibility. While *Birthday Letters* seeks moments of clarity and elegiac reconciliation, *Capriccio* remains jagged, elusive and unsettling. Its impressionistic and formally experimental poems delve into grief, guilt and psychic disintegration. The fragmentation of *Capriccio* is not only structural but thematic, manifesting in the speaker's disoriented attempts to articulate trauma and loss. Through symbolic compression and liturgical allusion, the poems in *Capriccio* enact the emotional and linguistic breakdown that characterises much of late-twentieth-century poetics. Hughes's refusal to provide closure or redemption in these texts aligns his work with postmodern literary strategies while preserving his enduring concern with suffering, transformation and the limits of expression.

Thus, rather than representing a linear progression from modernism to postmodernism, Hughes's oeuvre offers a nuanced interweaving of these modes. His poetics reflect an ongoing tension between the desire for mythic coherence and the acknowledgment of emotional fragmentation. In this light, Hughes emerges not only as a transitional figure between poetic eras, but also as a singular voice whose work engages deeply with the spiritual, psychological and linguistic challenges of his time.

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Un/Divided Loyalties in Anita Rau Badami's *Tamarind Mem*

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the tension between mobility, migration, and travelling, on the one hand, and settlement, stability, housing, and accommodation on the other, as a major theme in the South Asian Canadian diasporic author Anita Rau Badami's debut novel *Tamarind Mem* (1996). As seen, it is my contention that questions of loyalty and belonging arise from this tension, which manifests itself in the variously troubled relationships the two female protagonists have to their numerous homes, real or imaginary, during their migration inside or outside of India because for them, the home as such is always imbued with memories of the familial and communal past, as well as a sense of isolation and dislocation. The examination of questions of loyalty and belonging in relation to the home in such a context necessitates the use of diaspora criticism as well as the application of cognitive literary studies in the analysis to follow.

Keywords

migration, home, memory, belonging, diasporic writing, dehoming, Canada, India

The publication of *Tamarind Mem* in 1996 represented a landmark in the life of Anita Rau Badami since this was her debut novel, which catapulted her into a successful writing career. Coincidentally, the same year also saw the publication of a remarkable new book entitled *A Fine Balance*, by fellow South Asian Canadian novelist Rohinton Mistry. In 1996, books by other prominent Canadian writers of various ethnic backgrounds appeared too. Among these multicultural authors were Janice Kulyk Keefer of Ukrainian descent, the Afro-Caribbean Dionne Brand, the Indo-Caribbean Shani Mootoo, and Anne Michaels, of Polish-Jewish parentage. Books by authors like these, together with Badami's novel, presented from a gendered ethnic viewpoint, were indicative of a turning point in Canadian literature in the 1990s.

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Due to the growing diversity and complexity of the literary works published in Canada in which "so far voiceless groups came to be heard" (Kuester 1998, 5), a significant development occurred in the literature of the country in that decade, which some call decentring (Kuester 1998, 1), or destabilization; it followed the cultural nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s (Howells 2003, 4). Others describe the phenomenon as the pluralizing and globalizing of Canadian literature (Maver 2009, 25). Coral Ann Howells sums up the changes of the 1990s as follows: "1996 was the year when the new wave peaked, with new multicultural novels being published by the big international presses, symptomatic of the shift in Canadian fiction away from national to international focus and marketing. These novels may be representative of a trend, yet these writers speak from a wide variety of individual perspectives" (2005, 209).

The perspective adopted by Badami in *Tamarind Mem* is that of the South Asian Canadian diasporic subject. She belongs to the new, twentieth-century metropolitan Indian diaspora that Vijay Mishra refers to as border diaspora, in contrast to the old, nineteenth-century indenture diaspora (that is, displaced groups of labourers bound to their employment by enforced contracts), who settled in places like Fiji, Africa, or the Caribbean islands such as Trinidad (2008, 3, 18). Badami arrived in Canada with her husband and son in 1991 and settled in Calgary, the same city that serves as the Canadian setting of *Tamarind Mem*. Although this novel is obviously not a straightforward autobiography, the life-story of its younger female protagonist called Kamini is similar to that of the author in many other ways too.

Most importantly, Badami's father, like the fictional father figure, was a mechanical engineer working on the railroads, because of which both Badami's and her fictional character Kamini's family frequently had to relocate to new and often distant dwellings, without having the opportunity to be firmly grounded in any of the locations where they were obliged to take up residence. Although home and house are closely related, home is not confined to one house in such a situation, which has significant consequences for both Kamini and her mother Saroja as they struggle in vain to establish a stable, rooted identity. A further analogy between life and fiction here is that author and younger narrator alike arrived in Canada for the same reason as most members of the new border diaspora: they wanted to pursue studies, to create new opportunities for personal fulfilment.

In *Tamarind Mem*, where migration inside and outside India is the main source of tension, the exploration of the locations of the home, be they geographically specific places or imaginary homes of the mind, leads to the discovery of different

ways in which meanings of home and a sense of loyalty to it are constructed. In the following, it will be contended that these meanings often intersect in the parallel narratives recounted by the two protagonists of *Tamarind Mem*, in spite of the fact that they belong to two different generations and reside on two different continents: Saroja, the mother, remains in India, while her daughter Kamini establishes a new life in the diaspora in Canada. When scrutinizing how mother and daughter narrate experiences of their homes and their experiences with their families in these homes, it will be revealed that both women struggle with questions of loyalty and belonging arising from their variously troubled relationships to this special space they call home because it is imbued with memories of the familial and communal past, as well as a sense of isolation and dislocation. It will be argued that understanding the complexity of home is essential not only in a diasporic situation but also during one's internal migration in the country of her birth. Such an approach to the topic of home obviously necessitates the use of diaspora criticism in the analysis to follow, enriched with findings offered by the application of cognitive literary studies.

Although readers may first expect to discover easily identifiable binaries concerning the impacts their migrations make on the two women due to their age differences and spatial arrangements, diaspora discourse facilitates the analysis of the issues involved to reveal similarities in how their contradictory desires for freedom and belonging are expressed and the degrees to which they are fulfilled. As its etymology is customarily explained, diaspora, a word of Greek origin, "derives from the verb *diaspeirein*, a compound of 'dia' (over or through) and 'speirein' (to scatter or sow) …. In all of its various uses, diaspora has something to do with scattering and dispersal" (Kenny 2013, 2). While Kenny's explanation here focuses on the migratory aspect of the diaspora experience, Susheila Nasta emphasizes the idea of settlement and new beginnings as implied in the agricultural metaphor of sowing also present in the term's etymology (2002, 7). The tension between mobility, migration, and travelling, on the one hand, and settlement, stability, housing, and accommodation on the other, inseparable from one another in the concept of diaspora, also appears to be a major theme governing the lives of Badami's characters. Therefore, diaspora discourse is expected to lead to the discovery of unforeseen linkages in the novel. Diaspora's effect of destabilizing accepted notions of home and identity is enhanced in Badami's book by the fact that it is through memories, protean by nature, that much of the plot develops.

By focusing on intergenerational relations, another common theme of diasporic writing – and thereby giving voice to two women rather than just one – Badami

attempts to redress the omission or marginalization of these gendered age-groups in the creative literature of the past. Significantly, it is a mother – daughter relationship she depicts, which means that by presenting the daughter leaving home, she also presents the daughter leaving her mother, whereby the mother and the ancestral home are conjoined. Leaving both Saroja and India behind signifies that Kamini undergoes a process of individuation and identity formation, whose stages can be followed in the long-distance telephone conversations of mother and daughter, together with Kamini's inner monologues and memories in the first part of the novel. In her first-person narrative, she reflects on her present, isolated life in Canada filled with attempts to settle in. But she also expresses a longing for her mother and her country of birth as she recalls the familial past from her childhood to the point of her leaving India. From her memories, readers learn about her early impressions dominated by an angry mother and a gentle father, as she perceived them, along with numerous stories heard from the members of her extended family. Most importantly, the reader is puzzled, as she is, by her mother's mood swings and absences from home.

The second part of the novel is the mother Saroja's also twofold narrative, which likewise alternates between the past and the present, filling in the gaps in her daughter's story. She recalls her life experiences from her youth to the present to an audience first of three and then of four women travelling with her in a Ladies Only compartment of a train after the death of her husband, a journey that allows her to receive and add comments on the past. Dominant among her memories is how she was denied the freedom to choose in the various homes she occupied: in the parental home, she was not given the opportunity to go to university, but was instead entered into an arranged marriage. Subsequently, she finds herself in a dysfunctional family where, as a way out, she starts an affair that ends in tragedy. Her loyalty to her husband and her children is incompatible with the attachment she forms with a lover, which is the cause of her irritated remarks and her strained relationship with her husband. However, while narrating her story, she realizes her own mistakes as well and comes to terms with her painful past, which finally leads to a sense of liberation.

In diasporic writing in general, and in the literature of the South Asian Canadian diaspora in particular, the relationship of the diasporic subject to home, regardless of its specific location in a landscape or a mindscape, and its manifold implications, is a pivotal issue, which plays a significant role in the formation of diasporic communal as well as individual identity. The desire to belong to what one might call a home

of his or her own is more complex than a process of adaptation or a yearning to be accepted on the one hand, and on the other, a search for roots, nostalgia, a wish to remain loyal to the original home, and a hope to return to it or to have a homeland. To explore the intricate nature of this desire on the part of the diasporan, Avtar Brah's work is of the utmost significance. She published her major contributions to diaspora studies in the 1990s, the same decade Badami's novel came out.

Avtar Brah coined the term "homing desire" in contradistinction to a straightforward desire for a homeland (1996, 177). The newly minted term enables the theorization of the complicated position of home and the undermining of the binary of homeland and host society in relation to the contested notions of home and belonging, which contrary notions can lead to exclusions. In Brah's view, diasporans may choose to occupy different subject positions vis-à-vis their home depending on what political statements they want to make by asserting where they feel they belong and what their identity is. That is why "the concept of diaspora refers to *multi-locationality* within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries" (Brah 1996, 194). Brah also introduces the concept of "diaspora space," which she defines as "the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes" (1996, 178). For Brah, the employment of the term critiques fixity and essentialism as diaspora space is

> the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of "us" and "them," are contested. My argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is "inhabited," not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of *diaspora space* (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of "staying put" (Brah 1996, 205).

As a result, the notion of home "has to be redefined in the liminal spaces between two or more cultural dwellings" (Zhang 2008, 30). Due to the fluid and unbounded character of diaspora space and the multiple relocations and dislocations of the diasporan, the search for a home in this space "implicates a paradoxical, multilayered dehoming and rehoming process" (Zhang 2008, 31). If the wording of Zhang's observation brings to mind concepts of the *unheimlich* and its widely accepted English equivalent the uncanny, Laurel Ryan evokes the Freudian dichotomy of the homely and the unhomely even more explicitly when she states, "[t]he drive to find and go home presupposes a separation from the familiar and the homely. … There is no

home without a pre-existing dislocation from it. … Paradoxically, 'home' becomes an attempt to reclaim something that never was, to find something that did not exist before it was lost" (2016, 106). It is this search for a home and its meaning that features prominently among the themes of Anita Rau Badami's book *Tamarind Mem*. In this novel of several doublings, recognizing the presence or absence of the homely in the unhomely is of the utmost significance for the protagonists.

The name in the title, *Tamarind Mem*, with all its ominous associations, is bestowed upon Saroja, the mother character, by her servants because her sharp tongue can hurt like the sour-tasting fruit of the tamarind tree. "In my younger days, when I was a Railway wife, the servants called me Tamarind Mem for my acid tongue," remarks Saroja (Badami 1996, 260). Her daughter Kamini is not wholly unlike her mother in this respect. It is Kamini who, leaving her homeland and mother behind, immigrates to Canada, and it is by tracing her story that the author can explore the diasporic consciousness of a new arrival caught in the liminal space between two worlds. Reconstructing the ancestral home and her familial past in India through memories while coping with her sense of displacement in the society of settlement are key thematic features of this novel.

Like a true *Bildungsroman*, Kamini's narrative of her childhood begins, as may be expected, with a birth, but, unconventionally in this case, it is her sister's. The event also prompts reminiscences of Kamini's great-aunt about the birth of Kamini's mother, both events having taken place in the same ancestral home, the house of the protagonist's maternal grandparents in Mandya, southern India. These personal memories are entwined with details of, and comments on, other events from the life of the family and India's history, similarly to what can be observed in another Indian-born migrant writer Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981). This is how somewhat later the same great-aunt recalls Kamini's birth: "The year you were born, the whole country collapsed," says the aunt, referring to Kamini's birth and the Indo-Chinese war of 1962 (Badami 1996, 14) – a coincidence of personal and national history much like Saleem Sinai's birth in Rushdie's novel occurring at the precise moment of India's independence and partition at midnight, 15 August 1947. Badami openly acknowledged her indebtedness to Rushdie, saying she was part of the tradition that began with Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the tradition she calls "the post-colonial-immigrant school" (BookBrowse). However, unlike Rushdie's book, which foregrounds questions of historiography, Badami's novel examines relationships that women form against the rich texture of life in India, where references to important moments in the history of the country function as

no more than chronological pointers. For Badami, the emphasis clearly shifts from *grand récit* to *petite histoire* or, in plain English, her focus always moves to the personal, the domestic, and the biographical.

Kamini remembers having listened to stories throughout her life, which are thus twice removed from reality as these stories are filtered through the storytellers' memory first and then hers. This dual distortion of narratives of events and descriptions of locations from the ancestral past reinforce a sense of ontological instability undermining any sense of a fixed home or fixed identity. The moments when Kamini's remembered younger self sits on her father's lap to listen to his stories each time he returns to the family home from his journeys for work on the railroads are as precious for her as his presents – if not more so. These tales foster a bonding between father and daughter without either of them deliberately aiming to strengthen their mutual relationship. These stories allow the daughter to enter the public world of the father too, from which the mother, constrained in the narrowly domestic sphere of the home, is excluded. It is also in this manner, from memories turned into stories told by her paternal aunt, that Kamini learns about her father's ancestral home. Kamini never actually gets to see her father's former home: it only exists in tales because the whole village is gone now, probably washed away by the sea. Much like this ancestral village of yore, Kamini's reality is constructed from and invested with meaning by her imagination.

Due to this mixture of fact and fiction, the question of veracity is openly addressed by various characters in the book: memories "are pictures we create in our hearts …. And each of us uses different sticks of chalk to colour them," says one of Kamini's aunts (Badami 1996, 71). "The past changes in the context of the present," remarks Saroja (1996, 254); "Memories were like ghosts, shivery, uncertain, nothing guaranteed, totally not-for-sure," comments Kamini (1996, 73). Kamini in Canada and several people in India ask the same self-reflexive question at various times: the question of whether anything in the world is a fact (1996, 66), which raises the issue of veracity onto a generalized epistemological level and elevates the novel above its immediate concern with growing up as a girl in India. This epistemological uncertainty also relates the book to the postmodern poetics of the 1990s, as well as the destabilized, fluid space of diaspora where identities and homes can be constructed and deconstructed.

Kamini's memories in Canada are often induced by her longing for a home, which, at the time she is first presented in the novel, she still locates in the India of her past. In her attempts to reconstruct this home, her recollections of her childhood

and youth are frequently tinted with nostalgia.[2] This nostalgia is reinforced by her mother's postcards from India, reminding her of what she lacks in Canada. There is one postcard with its sensory reminders, which is more special than the others. On this card Saroja has "rubbed the peel of a ripe Nagpur orange" (Badami 1996, 123) hoping that the smell will not fade by the time it reaches Kamini in Canada. This card conjures up the bright colour of the fruit and fills Kamini's mouth "with the tart juice of a burst orange" (Badami 1996, 124), evoking visual and gustatory memories that contrast sharply with her current Canadian experience and console her in her isolation.

In her diasporic position, Kamini has an emotional need to anchor herself, because in striking contrast to her life in India bustling with people and their stories, and possessing an abundance of smells and tastes, there is hardly any human presence in Kamini's Canada, which brings into sharp focus her alienation in the new country. The lack of pleasant olfactory and gustatory experiences in a predominantly cold Canada further emphasizes her estrangement from her new place of residence. To overcome this alienation resulting from her displacement, she relies on some precious visual memories of the home environment, because the emergence of its features in her Canadian setting makes the latter appear more familiar, thus making it easier for her to relate to it. In other words, in this case the effect of nostalgia inscribed in the term's etymology and its German-English equivalents is in a way reversed. Rather than inducing pain by reminding the subject of an absence, the evocation of memories related to the homeland alleviates the distress caused by the radical unfamiliarity of the new environment by imaginatively comparing it to the left-behind familiar. Nostalgic pain is thus turned into its opposite. The surfacing of such memories also allows Kamini not to have to choose between loyalties to either home.

The above ambiguity of *nostalgia* is in a way similar to the equivocal signification of the term *unheimlich*, which can mean both unfamiliar and not-hidden; that is, unveiled or familiar. The English translation of the German *unheimlich* reveals the problems connected with its multiple meanings hinted at above. Unhomely is the literal English translation of the German word, drawing attention to its negation of homely or familiar as one meaning of *heimlich*. It also implies "the awkward but

[2] As Walder explains, "[t]he word 'nostalgia' comes from two Greek roots, though it did not originate in Greece …. From 'nostos' – returning home, and 'algia' – pain or longing, the term was created by Johannes Hofer, in a 1688 medical dissertation for the University of Basel" (2011, 8). The Latinized Greek compound is a mirror translation of *Heimweh* in Hofer's native German, and so is the term's English equivalent home*sickness*, a semantic feature whose significance is referred to regarding Kamini's mental and emotional state ("Homesickness"). In its later interpretation, however, nostalgia "becomes a state of mind rather than a physical condition" (Walder 2011, 8).

suggestive 'un-housedness'" (Huddart 2006, 81). However, another meaning of *heimlich* can be translated as hidden, furtive, or secret, which is thus brought into play by *unheimlich*, too. This plurality in the *unheimlich* is further emphasized by Masschelein, who regards uncertainty, ambivalence and doubling as its core elements.[3]

Canada emerges as the *unheimlich* from Kamini's list of impressions at the beginning of the novel: she is enveloped in silence, freezing cold and thick snow in her present, unfamiliar place of residence. Her initial inability to emotionally bond with her new environment makes her blind not only to the geographical but also to the cultural similarities of the two places; most of the time she fails to recognize the familiar in the unfamiliar. In this particular case, the cultural plurality of Canada remains unnoticed by her, although she already became acquainted with an analogous phenomenon in her childhood in India due to her mixed education. Its informal part was made up of the local lore and the family sagas, while the formal part was provided in Christian convent schools. But Kamini is so preoccupied with coming to terms with her past that she does not yet notice that the culture of her mother country and that of her country of settlement are both hybridized (Pirbhai 2004, 391). Both countries are aptly labelled as multi-cultural and postcolonial.

Ironically, it is also the features of the home Kamini left behind in India, as well as her childhood experiences, that, by resurfacing through memory, make it possible for her to establish a connection with the new, alien land. The curious doubling of observations provides for an "oscillation between the strange and the familiar" (Crane and Mohanram 2000, x), not unlike the *unheimlich*, and facilitates her overcoming the sense of dislocation she is daily faced with. Gradually, Kamini provides a growing number of sensory details of the Canadian landscape, in which she recognizes some of the qualities of the Indian environment, which signals that Canada is becoming her new home because, as Mallett posits, "[b]eing at home involves the 'immersion of a self in a locality'. The locality 'intrudes' upon the self through the senses, defining 'what one smells, hears, touches, feels, remembers.' Equally the self penetrates the locality" (2004, 79).

Consequently, Kamini can make connections by relating some of her sensory experiences of her place of birth to those in the strange new country of settlement.

[3] Masschelein explores the problem of the *unheimlich* from the point of view of psychoanalysis to explain why there is no negation or contradiction involved here even when the *unheimlich* is translated as the uncanny: "The prefix 'un' is not merely a linguistic negation, it is the 'token of repression.' This entails that the uncanny is marked by the unconscious that does not know negation or contradiction; even when something is negated, it still remains present in the unconscious. According to this reasoning, the contradiction resulting from negation is not exclusive or binary: denying something at the same time conjures it up. Hence, it is perfectly possible that something can be familiar and unfamiliar at the same time" (2011, 8). In this argument it follows that the uncanny operates as a *mise en abyme* and affirms plurality.

For example, in the shape of the distant mountains, which must be, though unnamed, the Rockies around Calgary, she seems to visually recognize the Eastern Ghats, the mountains along the eastern coast of India. Later, the view of sprouting dandelions in Canada brings to mind the *besharam* plants that decorated her family's Ratnapura home (Badami 1996, 137). The images seen and the images remembered merge inseparably in the manner of a palimpsest, which marks the beginning of the complex process of adaptation to the new conditions and allows dehoming to be coupled with rehoming. Realizations like these in Kamini's life point to her immersion "in trans-national memories and histories newly located in a global and diasporic moment of exile and displacement" (Molnár 2013, 26–27).

Badami's experimentation with memory in her novel does not merely locate her in diaspora studies – the episodes depicted above also lend themselves to analysis in the framework of cognitive literary studies. Kamini, her narrator-protagonist, experiences some memory events through visual sensory stimuli similarly to Des Esseintes, the protagonist of J.-K. Huysmans' *A Rebours* or *Against the Grain* (cf. Nalbantian 2003, 56–58).[4] In her nostalgic, emotionally charged remembrance of a lost home and a lost past, food, in the form of an orange as seen above, also becomes "a vehicle for recollections of childhood and family" (Holtzman 2006, 366). While the gustatory stimulus does not make her re-experience her emotional past, it does create a forceful desire for her to imaginatively return to a home where she once belonged.

Yet Badami's novel is not without some small signs of rehoming, signs indicative of the breaking of the shell of Kamini's isolation, of her entering the fluid space of diaspora and the beginning of flux in her Indian identity. Noteworthy in this respect is the episode in which Kamini, while baby-sitting for her neighbour in Calgary, spreads out her mother's postcards from India to Claire, the small child of her neighbour. Together, she and the child "cook up wild adventures for the travelling mommy" (Badami 1996, 58). She also entertains the girl with stories about her stay-at-home relatives and their servants, reviving her inherited tradition of oral storytelling, and thus combining the atmosphere of her own childhood with that of the foreign land.

Though the few instances like the ones cited above suggest the possibility of rehoming for Kamini in the sense that she is able to construct a new home for

[4] The most famous sensory, albeit gustatory, experience triggering recollections of the past can be found, however, at the beginning of Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way*, when the narrator Marcel tastes his little madeleine and starts to remember his time spent in Combray. Additionally, no less prominent yet less well-known are the similar "key memory events represented in Huxley's novel [*Eyeless in Gaza*]" with the difference that they "are almost invariably focussed on smells" (Farkas 2021, 71).

herself in Canada without fully separating herself from the old home, it is her sense of dislocation, loneliness, and isolation both from the ancestral home and the host country, features of the expatriate experience (Kanaganayakam 1996, 205-6), that prevail as recurrent motifs in the narrative of Kamini's life. She is still predominantly concerned with coming to terms with her past, especially her mother's negligent behaviour when her, Kamini's, father is away on the railway lines. She notices that her mother does not pay attention to her servants' work and even disappears one night from their shared bed. It is only from Saroja's subsequent narrative that the reader learns of the reason for the mother's unusual behaviour, which is her affair with their mixed-blood, low-class mechanic, an act signalling her desperate attempt at a passionate relationship.

From Saroja's narrative it transpires that, in accordance with the age-old patriarchal traditions prescribing roles for women on the subcontinent, her family gave her away in an arranged marriage, disregarding her exceptional intellectual abilities and her powerful ambitions to become a doctor. After her marriage, Saroja is forced to live in alien houses wherever her husband is transferred by the railway authorities and has to set up a new home again and again. The home is constantly shifting, and her husband, the mainstay of the household, is frequently absent for long periods of time, so contrary to traditional expectations, the place is far from stable, and it does not provide emotional security for her either. If anything, she feels trapped in it, confined to this domestic area as though it were a cage. Paradoxically, although her home keeps shifting in terms of geographical locations, it always remains the same, fixed, bounded space for her because of the traditional societal rules set for the different genders that she is obliged to obey no matter where her current home happens to be located. After getting married, she has no choice but to loyally follow her husband, which means that her identity is determined by being a railway officer's wife; that is why the flexibility and fluidity of identity associated with migration and thought to offer a sense of freedom are denied Saroja. When she attempts to find some pleasure in the fact that her husband's work takes him to a variety of regions working on the railway lines and Saroja expresses her wish to join him, her wish is overridden by her husband. She is excluded from his public life since he maintains separate spheres for the two of them. Ironically, as a result, Saroja is dehomed, finding it increasingly hard to stay loyal to her husband and family, as she feels displaced in the geographically shifting homes in her very homeland, in a manner similar to her daughter in Canada, no matter how different the respective causes are.

Due to the ever-changing locations of her home, the mother, just like her daughter, has problems focusing her memories and, again like Kamini, she chooses to organize these recollections around houses she and her family once occupied, without following a strictly chronological order. The lack of such an order and the blending of stories into one another can be related to the traditional, often circular structure of Indian orature, permitting diversions in the manner explicated by Michael Gorra in his description of the similarly non-linear structure of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1997, 129). Saroja is quite aware of the difficulties involved in organizing her experience when she openly addresses the problem in a postmodern self-reflexive mode: "[W]hat is one to do with a life like mine, scrawled all over the country, little trails here and there, moving, moving all the time, and never in one fixed direction? … It is as if I live within a series of dreams. As long as the dream holds I know where I am. I try to fix myself in one place, a single context. Perhaps, in my childhood home …" (Badami 1996, 155–6). Consequently, loneliness and rootlessness are not the sources of her daughter Kamini's anxiety exclusively while occupying diaspora space, but Saroja's as well, deriving from her existence as a "Railway memsahib" (Badami 1996, 155) with an uprooted subjectivity, whose life is nothing but a series of disjointed events. The itinerant life imposed upon her determines her state of mind. It is best described using the vocabulary of diaspora discourse, which abounds in expressions related to the trauma of involuntary migration, as evident in the experience of a number of diasporic groups such as the Jews, the enslaved Africans, or the Armenians throughout history.

The novel ends with both narrator-protagonists' defiant self-assertion. After her husband's death and her daughters' departure to live their own lives in the United States and in Canada, respectively, Saroja rebelliously sets out to travel by train, adopting the male privilege of her husband, which she, as his wife, was denied. Interestingly, it is when she escapes from her apartment, abandons her fixed home, and is constantly on the move that she becomes independent and gains agency, because now she travels of her own volition. Ryan claims that "[s]he rejects the homes she was forced into as a railway wife in favour of a deliberately mobile existence" (2016, 115). While travelling and thus fulfilling a lifelong dream of hers, Saroja deliberately violates the set of rules established by her husband for such occasions: she does not wipe the windows clean or keep other passengers out of her compartment.

Although she surrenders the notion of a stable home and lives the life of a nomad, she is not without companionship, which is a more essential element of what a home

is for her. Her loneliness is alleviated, if only temporarily, as she tells her life-story to an attentive audience of women. Here storytelling once again appears as a means of asserting one's identity. She also admits that although it is painful for her to live without her daughters, they have to leave and make their own lives and "build [their] own memories" (Badami 1996, 263). It is also Saroja who "avoids surveillance of her daughter [Kamini] by symbolically breaking the umbilical cord that ties them together (in the form of a telephone cord), to be, at last, a free woman" (Cuder-Domínguez et al. 2011, 8). Saroja's choice of a migrant life in India provides her with the much-desired fluid and unbounded space; that expansive and unbounded space – not unlike Canada for her daughter – is what stands for her home, where she feels she belongs and where she can find personal fulfilment.

Without admitting it, Kamini turns out to be just as sharp-tongued and obstinate as her mother has always been. She becomes the one who fulfils her own and her mother's dream to study, to become a scientist, a wish Saroja was denied by her family on the basis of her gender. However, these instances of self-assertion occur when Saroja is at the end of her life, while Kamini can take advantage of the new possibilities offered by her new home not only because it is in a different country but also because with time passing the choices of this new generation of women have multiplied. Travelling within one's own spacious country or outside its borders also offers mobility to both mother and daughter, which eventually becomes a liberating experience for the two women. How successful Kamini will become is left undecided, though. However, the instances of rehoming mentioned earlier suggest a willingness to adapt to the new environment where it appears possible to create a home combining features of her familial past and her host country without having to divide her loyalties.

By focusing on South Asian women's attempts to create an accommodating home in the diaspora in Canada and in the ancestral home in the Indian subcontinent, and by drawing attention to their inseparable interconnectedness despite the disruptions transcontinental migration causes in their lives together, with the concomitant dilemmas of belonging and loyalty, *Tamarind Mem* anticipates several of the author's concerns in her later novels. This chapter has also demonstrated the value of Khachig Tölölyan's contention that "diaspora' is merely one of several kinds of dispersion so that, in a curious reversal, it has become a synecdoche, the part – diaspora – standing for the whole" (2019, 23). That diaspora can be seen in a *pars-pro-toto* relationship to the more general phenomenon of transnationality is largely due to the significant expansion of the conceptual horizons of both diaspora and diaspora discourse. As

a result, they have become appropriate means of investigating different migratory experiences including those of the two narrator-protagonists in Badami's *Tamarind Mem*. While exploring questions of loyalty in the context of dehoming and rehoming as part of the two main characters' experience on the move, it is possible to identify unexpected intersections rather than irreconcilable binaries in this novel where two lives and two countries are juxtaposed. The discussion of the ramifications of the concept of the home also allows new forms of intersections with various disciplines to be made beyond and apart from the abovementioned diaspora studies indicated by the fact that cognitive literary studies can also assist in the exploration of sensuous nostalgia in Badami's novel. As this paper has sought to demonstrate, these intersections offer new insights and interventions to construct and reconstruct the idea of being loyal to one's home.

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The Borgiani Armeni 65 Manuscript

A Witness to Early Modern Armenian Religious-Economic Diasporic Connectivity Between Aleppo, Jerusalem and Beyond[1]

Diana Ghazaryan[2]

Abstract

The manuscript Borgiani armeni 65 from the collection of Vatican Apostolic Library is one of the 137 Armenian documents preserved there. The document is rare in its kind as it contains different pages from different time periods of Armenian history bound together. The page 8r of it is a unique letter written in 1711 in the monastery of Saint James – the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Besides being an invaluable source for historical analysis, it can also be perceived as a representation of early modern connectivity among Armenian churches in the Ottoman Empire. In this case, the letter is an alms-collecting request to the Armenian Diocese of Beroea (Aleppo). Besides being considered a tool of early modern connectivity and mobility, the performative turn in the requesting part of the letter allows it to be analyzed from a unique angle.

Keywords

Armenian history, early modern, connectivity, alms-collecting, Jerusalem, manuscript

[1] Here, I would like to express my gratitude to the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the Holy See, namely His Excellency Mr. Garen Nazarian for providing the exceptional opportunity to conduct my research in the libraries and archives of Vatican. I am also forever grateful to the Congregation of Armenian Catholic Sisters of Immaculate Conception for providing a shelter to stay while conducting my research in Rome. I would also like to say thanks to Armine Melkonyan and Sossi Sousani, along with others, for helping me with translation from Classical Armenian.

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The Armenian manuscript collection in the Vatican Apostolic Library (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana) constitutes a relatively small but significant part of it. The number of the Armenian codices in the Vatican Library is 137, 125 of which received a detailed scientific description in the catalogue by Eugene Tisserant[3] (1884–1972), a cardinal, the dean of the College of Cardinals, the prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches (1936–59) and a librarian in the Vatican Library (Arlen, 10). Tisserant's description includes the Borgiani armeni, Vaticani armeni, Barberiniani orientali and Chisiani collections. The Borgiani armeni collection consists of 88 manuscripts, from which the document Borgiani armeni 65 is the subject of our research.

The Borgiani armeni 65 manuscript[4] is an excellent example of a historical document not only for its chronological integrity but also because of its significance. The manuscript consists of nine pages, each of which, presumably, is written in different time periods, presumably even centuries. Interestingly, the pages have different sizes reaching up to 134 cm while being bound together constituting one document. Their forms, too, are controversially different: either slightly bigger than a standard size (in fact, page-size standards for manuscripts are also questionable) or too long and narrow stretching out of the borders of the document's cover.

Two of the pages have illustrations as well as the names of the illustrated historical figures written in Armenian either above or below them. The first one is a long piece of paper representing Saint Mary and Jesus (the iconographical style of Virgin Mary Odigitria),[5] Saint Gregory the Illuminator, the founder and first head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian king Trdat (Tiridates) III (298–330) who, together with Saint Gregory, proclaimed Christianity as the state religion of Armenia, Saint Stephen[6] and Saint John the Baptist (or Forerunner as indicated in Armenian in the text -Կարապետ/Garabed). The second miniature depicts the apostles Paul and Peter on the upper two sides of the arched decoration, and David, the Catholicos of All Armenians and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in a sitting position under the main arch. The figure kneeling in front of him, as it can be assumed from Tisserant's description, is bishop Aristaces. Despite their simple proportions,

[3] Eugène Tisserant. *Codices Armeni Bybliothecae Vaticanae Borgiani, Vaticani, Barberiniani, Chisiani* (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1927).

[4] The digital copy of the manuscript can be found on the website of the Vatican Apostolic Library through this link.

[5] Odigitria or Hodegetria (Our Lady Guide of Wayfarers), was said to be St. Luke's painting of the Virgin carried from Jerusalem to Constantinople's Odigôn monastery. It depicts a standing Madonna with the Child in the act of blessing carried on her left arm, while her right arm is either touching or uplifted to the Christ Child.

[6] Saint Stephen is the first of all martyrs, the first archdeacon martyred for Christ, who shed his blood for the love of Christ. He was one of the seven deacons chosen by the apostles in the first century. Deacons were the earliest pastors of the Christian Church.

these miniatures are significant testimonies, as they depict not only Biblical figures such as Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the apostles Paul and Peter, but also key historical figures from fourth-century Armenia mentioned above. Additionally, two pages of the manuscript contain stamps indicating that these documents are official agreements.

Based on the fact that the manuscript is a combination of papers from different periods of time, one can find several historical names that make the content unique. Despite lacking the standard narration of the biblical stories, it nonetheless contains prayers and praises (գոհաբանություն/gohabanowt'yown). Notably, each page of the manuscript constitutes a distinct document—be it a letter, a testimonial (վկայագիր/vkayagir), a decree (կոնդակ/kondak), or a commemoration of an event.

The page 8r of Borgiani armeni 65 is the focus of my interest. According to Tisserant's catalogue, it is a letter of the patriarch of Jerusalem to the Armenians of Beroea and their leader Peter, formerly the assistant of the Catholics of Cilicia, to request alms for the church of St. Sepulchers (Tisserant, 1927, 107). Based on the colophon, it can be calculated that the letter was written on August 30, 1711 "at the gate of the famous and ecumenical place where Christ dwelt, the great saint of the Lord, Saint James, the principal diocese of all Armenians, to the glory of God, the holy house of the judgment of the world."[7]

The content of the letter contains several key aspects to consider when studying early modern history in general and the history of the Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate in particular. It starts with a long and opulent praise towards Jesus Christ, Saint Mary and the Apostles, as well as all the priests and pilgrims who visited Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the main purpose of the letter is revealed in the second part of the document where the writer, presumably the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, addresses his pleas to the representatives of the Diocese of Beroea. In it, he asks for a donation of 200 ghurūsh (Dror Ze'svi, 1996, 143) — a silver coin used in Ottoman Empire taxation system — to the Armenian church of Jerusalem.

The translation is as follows:

> … rejoice growing ceaselessly while giving your mercy, be honoured every hour keeping the gold set by God and consigned by the apostles to the treasury of Jerusalem, with which you can celebrate every Sunday the feast of Christ's

[7] This is the original Armenian: "Գրեցավ նամակս օրհնութեան ըստ Հայկազնեաց տումարիս, և ի թուաբանութեանս ռճկ.ին. և օգոստոսի լ. ի սբ քաղաքս երուսաղէմ. Առ դրան մեծահռչակ և տիե(զ)երական քսանիստ սբ Աթոռոյս Մեծի տն եղբօրն սբյն Յակովբայ. և նախագահ վիճակիս ամ հայոց ի փառս այ, և սբյ տանս դատաստանի աշխարհի. ծանուցումս վայելուչ. հայր մեր. բոլոր սրտիւ." All translations in this text are mine. While I am grateful to those who have helped me with the translation, I take responsibility for any shortcomings.

resurrection according to Paul. Similarly, grant 200 ghurūsh with your generous mercy that was given the other year from the hands of envoy magister Joseph. In order to fill the holy grave of Christ with light with a hope for his saving grace…[8]

This brief passage documents that the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, one of the most important and influential Armenian spiritual centres, was experiencing financial difficulties at the beginning of the eighteenth century, whereas the Diocese of Beroea was supposedly in a financially more stable condition, and thus held a more influential position, at least among the Armenian church centres in the Ottoman Empire.

When studying the situation of the Armenian church in the Ottoman Empire in the modern period, Sanjian notes that the Ottoman government forced Armenian cities to obey the newly established Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem adopted its subordination to Constantinople in administrative functions. The Patriarch of Jerusalem also fulfilled the powers delegated to the Patriarch of Constantinople as leader of the Ottoman Armenian Millet throughout the dioceses under his control. He was given a lot of authority over local government, was in charge of collecting communal taxes, and was the only one who registered births, marriages, and deaths (Sanjian, 2003, 63). The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, consistently requiring financial assistance, generally operated under the subordination of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In fact, it may have taken advantage as it received financial support from the Constantinople Patriarchate (Der Matossian 2011, 25). The reason was that throughout the four centuries of Ottoman rule, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, in Palestine, excessive official and other criminal levies, bribery, and forced loans with high-interest rates depleted all the resources of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. As a result, the Patriarchate spent more than its real income and thus got into significant debt (Sanjian, 63).

Beroea, which was the Greek and Roman name of the city of Aleppo, was one of the thriving urban centres in the early modern period. Its location at one end

[8] "…խնդացէք հանապազ աճելով ի տուրս ողորմութիւնք ձերոյ, պանծացէք յամենայն ժամու հաստատուն ունելով իմիջի ձերում զԱստուածասահման, և զԱռաքելաւանդ գանձանակն սրբոյ Երուսաղէմիս, որով ևեթ կարէք պատուել ըստ Պողոսի զտօն յարութեանն Քրիստոսի յամենայն կիրակէի, ընդ նմին ևս ԲՃ ղուռուշ նուիրակութիւն պարգևելով սրբոց տնօրինականացս նորին առատատուր ողորմութեամբ ձերով. Որ և աստանօր այն ամ եկն և եհաս առ մեզ ձեռամբ յորդողի և ժողովողի զնոյնս ի մէնջ հաստատեալ նուիրակ տէր Յովսէփ վարդապետի: Որպէս զի լուսագին լիցի Աստուածաբնակ սբ Գերեզմանիս Քրիստոսի յուսալով ի շնորհս կենսունակ փրկագործութենէ նորա…"

of the Silk Road, which passed through Central Asia and Mesopotamia, made it a significant place. It was the largest city in the Syrian area and the third largest in the Ottoman Empire after Cairo and Constantinople (now Istanbul) for many years (Russell, 1794, 1-2). This turned Aleppo into one of the most prosperous cities in the early modern world. Notably, in some aspects, eighteenth-century Aleppo was a typical city of Ottoman Syria at the time, but in others, it was remarkable, maybe unique of its kind. Located at the crossroads of the pre-modern Middle East's regional and global commerce, it had been a renowned station for the East-West trade as early as the fifteenth century, with Venetian, and later English, Dutch, and other European training houses quartered within its precincts, transacting business with local merchants on a regular basis (Salibi 1994, 194–196).

The Armenian presence in Aleppo can be dated back as early as the sixteenth century while not excluding the fact of much earlier settlements (sixth century) (Semerdjian 2009, 29). Armenian settlement happened in parallel with the enlargement of the general population in the Judayda quarter, and the growth of the Christian population that constituted almost twenty percent of Aleppo's total population by the eighteenth century (Raymond, 2008, 1). Upon settlement, Armenians established hostels to receive weary Armenian pilgrims on their travels to and from Jerusalem (Sanjian 1965, 152). This pilgrimage route was described by Simeon Lehatsi's (Simeon of Poland) first-person travel accounts (Akinean, 1936). One of the first dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church outside of the Armenian mainland is the Armenian Diocese of Beroea, which includes the Syrian cities of Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor, Idlib, Latakia, and Raqqa.

It should be noted that by the early seventeenth century Armenians had already built a considerably powerful reputation in the quarter: two main churches, the Holy Mother of God church (Sourb Asdvadzadzin) dated from 1429, and the Forty Martyrs' church (Sourb K'arasnits') dating from 1455, had been serving the community's religious needs, and served as the bishop's residence. The Armenian Church's Holy See of Cilicia had jurisdiction over it. There was also a pilgrim hostel inscribed with the letters 'hokidun,' meaning 'spiritual house,' which belonged to the Jerusalem Patriarchate (Semerdjian, 58).

In line with the colophon stating the date and place of writing the letter, there is an additional small text written vertically on the same page that gives no more information than calling for the veneration of the holy place where the Armenian patriarchal seat was established and is enshrined by the Holy Virgin. The writer requests more pilgrims to the Holy Land and to the Saint James monastery from

the church of Aleppo so that the patriarchy can economically benefit from them and in this manner continue its peaceful existence. The concluding words of sincere gratitude to God and to their followers seemed important to repeat: an act determined to seal this request by reminding its readers of the spiritual weight of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It is interesting to follow the lines of the letter as it develops not only the way of requesting something, but also contains words of praise and warnings to stay away from scammers and thieves when dealing with donations.[9]

The aesthetic qualities of the language of the letter deserve special admiration. The text is filled with beautiful praise words, prayers, and words of gratitude. If we divide the text into three parts, considering the first part as an introduction, the second and main one as a request filled with gratitude, and the third as a conclusion, we can find some exquisitely rendered phrases from the second part of the document. Such phrases as "May the blessings of the Almighty God pour on you a flow of graces, a fount of God-given love, an execution of a crowned hope…"[10] are representations of heightened acknowledgement and praise. To bless the recipients of the letter with their assistance and receive God's blessing, the author sends prayers and desires to heaven. The language he used containing high register and ornamentation is not just a superfluous exaggeration but is central to the rhetorical strategy of soliciting support for the Patriarchate. It is part of the wielding of its religious authority.

The way the writer approached the language as a means of communication carries a performative act in it. The performativity of language is studied by the philosophers Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Dewey. They both argued that the meaning of words and sentences becomes contextually determinate through the tacit agreement in action of the participants in communicative practices (Medina, 2010). This suggests that the meaning or interpretation of a speech act is not in the hands

[9] "…Քանզի յայժմոյս վասն մեղանաց մերոց բ(ա)զում խափեփայք ելեալ շրջ ընդ յաշխարհ յանուն սուրբ Երուսաղէմիս. զգուշ կացէք, սիրելի որդիք մեր ի Տէր, ի նոցանէ. զի գողք են աւազակք. որպէս լուեալ եմք թէ. ոմանք մարդիք չարք. աշխարհականք. և քահանայք. խորելով զտուրս ողորմութիւնք ձերոյ արգելուն զձեզ լիապէս հաղորդիլ իշնորհաց սուրբ տեղւոյս, և զրկեն զսուրբ տունս աստուծոյ. ի բարերարութենէդ ձերմէ, մի և մի՛ իւիք հաւատայք այնպիսեաց անխիղճ արանց. մանաւանդ յայնցանէ որք ղալպ պատանք արարեալ շրջագային ծախելով միամիտ ժողովրդոցդ որպէս թէ ի վերա սուրբ գերեզմանին լուսածքիցեն, մի՛ ընդունիք զնոսա և մի զպատանս նոցին…" The translation is as follows: "For now because of our sins, many deceivers came from the world to holy Jerusalem. Beware of them, beloved sons of God, for they are thieves and robbers, some are wicked men, laymen, and even priests. They will steal your alms and not let you take them to the holy places. They will plunder the holy houses of God. Do not, in your goodness, believe such unscrupulous men, who have made and sold false bandages of Christ! Do not accept them and their traps!"

[10] "Աւրհնութիւն Հօրն անեղականի… իջեալ ցօղեսցին ի ձեզ հոսմունք շնորհաց… բղխմունք աստուածապատուէր սիրոյ, գործառնութիւնք պսակադէտ յուսոյ…"

of anyone in particular, but in the hands of all speakers/writers taken collectively, that is, in the hands of the linguistic community. This way, the performativity in the letter to some extent confirms the legitimacy and the commanding influence of the writer, who, as a patriarch, consequently becomes a representative of the collective side of the Armenian Patriarchate.

It can be noted that the situation in the congregation in the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries was unstable. Because of the fact that the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and that of Constantinople were joint institutions, there were occasional disputes between them: some representatives of the clergy would sit in Constantinople while claiming the rights of the congregation in the name of the leader of Jerusalem. Controversies regarding the Jerusalem Patriarchate's management of the city's finances, internal operations, and the selection of new patriarchs frequently damaged its reputation. The Monastic Brotherhood's bishops and priests chose the patriarchs of Jerusalem from among its own members until the end of the 17th century (Sanjian, 64). However, in the second half of the 17th century, certain irregularities began to occur in the selection process of the patriarchs. Ecclesiastics frequently loaned confiscated property and holy objects in order to satisfy their bigger financial obligations. As for the Ottoman government, stability was not as important as political expediency and financial gain.

Notably, the Jerusalem See always kept a special representative in Constantinople who served in two capacities: as a mediator between the two Patriarchates, upholding the interests of his see; and as a representative of Jerusalem to the Sublime Porte, submitting various petitions on behalf of his see, either on his own or more frequently in consultation and cooperation with the Armenian leaders in the city. There were also two assistants to the representative – *hraviraks*, those who were sent to the capital every year after Easter to make preparations for and to accompany the pilgrims in the following year, and nuncios, who were the connecting envoys among different religious centres (Narkis et al, 1979, 18).

The Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate was disbanded between 1657 and 1659, and then for a decade starting in 1704, the city was ruled by special commissioners sent from Constantinople. This was the time when several disagreements arose between the representatives of the Armenian church elite to take over the leadership of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In the centre of one of the disputes appeared Eghiazar Hŕomklayec'i, the patriarch of the Saint James Monastery, whose name is mentioned in the letter and who was re-established on the holy throne three times (1664–65, 1666–68, 1670–77). Although his name is mentioned very briefly in the

text as a threat to deceivers, it is still worth studying some episodes from the years of his leadership.

Eghiazar Hṙomklayec'i (in other sources Aynt'apc'i) had been appointed as the patriarchal vicar by the then-Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Astvaçatowr Tarontsi (1645–1664). These two were the heads of the patriarchal seat, succeeding one another for about fifteen years. Eghiazar had great ambitions to be ordained as a Catholicos and to rule over the Armenians within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, leaving the mainland of Armenia and the spiritual leadership of the Armenians in the Persian Empire to the Mother See of Ējmiatsin (Sawalanian, 1931, 608). For this reason, he wrote a set of regulations with twelve articles against the Catholicos Hakob of Ējmiatsin (Sawalanian 1931, 608). The inhabitants of the city did not approve of Eghiazar and tried to remove him from power in every way. Reverend Martiros, who, together with Eghiazar, was appointed as vicar by Astvaçatowr Patriarch appealed to the grand vizier to take away the proclamation of the patriarchate from Eghiazar's hand. Still, some representatives from the Armenian wealthy lay community, one of them being Apro Čelebi, stood by Eghiazar's side, supporting him. The dispute between the two clerics continued and was finally resolved through an agreement signed by a number of prominent Armenian čelebis in 1666.

As reconciliation was not established, the disagreements started again and for two years the patriarchate changed hands between Eghiazar, former patriarch Astvaçatowr, and Martiros. In the end, Martiros vardapet, defending the name and honour of Eghiazar, appointed Reverend Xačatowr Beriatsi (from Beroea) as his deputy, and went to Constantinople via Beria (Beroea) to answer Eghiazar's prosecutors. Saint Jacob's congregants gathered in Ējmiatsin and sent a manifesto with their signature to Jerusalem, asking Eghiazar not to ignore the patriarchate and take back Martiros, his prodigal son.

Astvaçatowr patriarch died in 1670, bequeathing the leadership of the see of Jerusalem to Martiros, who came to Jerusalem to take over the position. Eghiazar, learning about the death of Astvaçatowr, returned to seize the throne of the Catholicos. Arriving in 1672, he proclaimed himself Patriarch and Catholicos. After some negotiations, Eghiazar and Minas made peace with each other. Not being able to take all the patriarchal rights from Eghiazar's hands and not wanting to endanger the internal peace of the Armenian Church, the congregants of St. Ējmiatsin were forced to recognize his supremacy over the Armenian Church (Sawalanian, 1931, 637). Thus, the union of the Armenian church was confirmed again. At the same time, it should be noted that the huge debts remained one of the primary factors

hindering the development of the monastery. According to Sawalanian, those debts did not arise from the disturbances and internal riots in the Jerusalem Patriarchate but accrued due to the competition between the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and that of Constantinople to snatch the leadership of Saint James monastery from hand to hand (Sawalanian, 1931, 645).

The emulation to take over the leadership of the patriarchate continued until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Even though the patriarchal seat was headed by a number of clergymen following one another, they managed to retain a more or less stable life in the Patriarchate. Sawalanian mentions Sahak Apowšexc'i (1708–1714), taking up the leadership of the patriarchate on December 30, 1708, and ruling until Hovhannes Kolot Baġišec'i (1715–1741).

While analysing the letter of Borgiani armeni 65 it is seen that the date of its composition coincides with the time of Patriarch Sahak's tenure. Both Sawalanian and another historian Barnabas Kantsakets'i, only state about Sahak Apowšexc'i's being a cunning intelligent person devoted to the church, who significantly eased the congregation's debts with his activities (Kewleserian, 1904, 6). Barnabas Kantsakets'i in his *"Sequence of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem" (Yachortutʿiwn badriarkʿatsʿn Erusaghemi i Yaġovpay aṙakʿeloy deaṙneghpōrē minchʿew tsʿmers ẓhamanag; Historia Patriarcharum Hierosolymitanorum),* mentions Sahak, but limits himself to mentioning just the name as the next leader of the patriarchate, and does not elaborate on his work and activities (Kantsakets'i, 1872, 58). It can be assumed that the letter of Borgiani armeni 65 was written by (or at least during his leadership of) Sahak patriarch.

From 1697 to 1704 the Patriarchate was led by Minas Hamdec'i, who, after making a number of important visits to other Armenian congregations in the Ottoman Empire, came and settled in his post. He carried out a number of important constructions inside the monastery and established friendly relations with the Franciscans. Minas Patriarch was persecuted by both Greeks and Jews because of the monastery's debts. But he treated the Greeks with love and considered the Franciscans as friends. He wrote a congratulatory message to Clement the eleventh Pope of Rome on his election as Pope in 1700 (Sawalanian, 1931, 662). After the death of Minas Hamdec'i (or Amdec'i), various priests sat on the patriarchal chair for a short time until it passed to Grigor the Chainbearer[11] (1715–1749), who was destined to free the patriarchate from large debts (Sawalanian, 1931, 672; Kantsakets'i, 1872, 60).

[11] On the life and tenancy of Grigor Chainbearer, see Kantsakets'i 1872, 60-61; Chʿamchʿyan 1786, 770–775; Poghosyan, 2017.

The manuscript Borgiani armeni 65 is a unique example of a historical document both with its structure and the significance it holds. Not only does it contain the idea of the Armenian ecumenical letters and praises of the eighteenth century, but also stands for a representation of ecclesiastical networks, or in other words, connectivity during the early modern stage. In fact, the early modern period should not be understood as a fixed entity defined by static characteristics. Instead, it can be seen as a dynamic formation shaped by historical events that enabled cross-cultural interaction and exchange. (Bentley 2007, 13). The cross-cultural exchange of the early modern period would find its representation in forms of "demographic leaps, monetization and silver, administrative centralization, paper bureaucracy, banking-state nexuses, tax-farming … religious confessionalization, renaissances, literary genres of self-expression, secular history writing, etc." (Strathern 2018, 325). The global connections of the early modern period had significant consequences, resulting in fundamental transformations in economic frameworks and political power dynamics across all continents (Parker 2010, 3), we may assert that these interactions extended from inter-regional to intercontinental exchanges.

The letter in the focus of this research is also an example of a trans-regional religious conjunction or cooperation. It documents the connections formed between two religious institutions, in this case, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Armenian Diocese of Beroea. Historical sources, such as the works by Tigran Sawalanian, Barnabas Kantsakets'i and Vartaped Hovhannes Hanne,[12] inform us that different centres of the Armenian Church, particularly the Ējmiatsin Catholicosate, the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the smaller units under their subordination (in Sis, Aleppo and elsewhere) were in constant cooperation. Through delegates, the Armenian clerical elite would send monetary aid, important letters, kondaks (decrees) or pastoral letters to their subordinate or equal religious centres in order to resolve a number of issues related to the Armenian Church.

Moreover, not only were the people who wrote or transmitted these documents important agents, but also the writings themselves. One of those writings was the letter discussed here. It can be considered a tool for strengthening inter-church, inter-regional ties and influencing the course of more global historical events. As Sebouh Aslanian elaborates on the act of alms collecting, besides a collector, it required "a portfolio of paper tools" (Aslanian 2023, 268). The letter here became in

[12] Hovhannes Hanne was a cleric in the Saint James monastery who wrote *"A book of history of the holy and great city of God, Jerusalem, and of the holy deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Kirkʿ badmutʿean srpoy ew medzi kʿaghakʿis Asdudzoy Erusaghēmis ew srpotsʿ dnōrinaganatsʿ degheatsʿ Deaṛn meroy Yisusi Kʿrisdosi), Constantinople, Printing house "Yovhannēsi ew Bōghosi", 1782.

its own way the carrier of the performative act, that kind of paper tool from the side of the Patriarchate to claim their authority while recognizing the diocese's power to help from their side. The "tacit agreement" (see footnote 11) between the two religious centres was sealed with the performative step of this document.

The idea of connectivity, that is, the networks of scholarly and literary exchange, international trade, kinship, and patronage linked to mobility, migration, or the state of constant movement in a word, can be implied from the letter from the Borgiani armeni 65 manuscript. Sebouh Aslanian describes letters of recommendation, certificates of Catholicity, letters of credit and bills of exchange, and certificates for alms as "paper instruments" (Aslanian 2023, 268). Given the fact of its content and the background of probable reason to write it, Borgiani armeni 65 can be regarded as such. This comes to prove the fact that some churches already in the eighteenth century (even though a considerable amount of churches were involved in confessionalism as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century) continued to deal with socio-economic issues, in this way being involved also in religio-political processes.

These kinds of processes were called "confessionalization," a term coined by Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling to describe and analyse the rise and politicization of religious piety and religious revival (Aslanian 2023, 241).[13] Other scholars like Lotz-Heumann and Pohlig suggest that "confessionalization proceeds from the general observation that in both the Middle Ages and in the early modern period the religious and the secular were closely linked" (Lotz-Heumann and Pohlig, 2007). Undoubtedly, the early modern period, according to Schilling, saw the influences of the earlier forms of confessionalism, the traces of which would be found in the "long-sixteenth century," when inter-connections between religious, political, and societal lines of development happened (Heinz 1992, 206). In addition, he asserted that confessionalization "is a fundamental social transformation that includes ecclesiastical-religious, psychological-cultural, as well as political and social changes." The "formation of confessions" is defined as the prominence given to religious-cultural systems that can be clearly distinguished from one another by their doctrine, ceremonies, spirituality, and the everyday culture of their people. It also includes the rise of early modern confessional churches as institutions (Brady 2016, 4). The strong results of confessionalization were the reconfiguration of Catholic missionary fervour and the "globalization" of its proselytization activities in Europe

[13] Here Aslanian suggests reading Lotz-Heumann, Ute, 2013; Brady, 2004; Wolfgang, 1999. See also Lotz-Heumann, Ute. 2001; Schilling, Tóth, 2006; Janse, 2010.

that began in 1622 under the direction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, also known as the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide.[14]

Confessionalization is evident in the analyzed document through stamps on selected sections. These stamps were the marks of several Armenian religious centres or bishops from those centres or representatives of the amira class. Amiras were a group of Armenian bankers and officials (from the Arabic amir, meaning chief or commander). They held administrational positions in state institutions making financial and industrial deals. Consequently, they managed to establish close connections with the palace, the central administration, and Turkish officialdom. These representatives of the Armenian elite, unofficial officials, as it would be, had many privileges in Ottoman society.

It was the *amiras*, along with khojas and *čelebis,* another two groups of the ruling class in the Armenian millet system[15] in the Ottoman Empire, who made deals with viziers, pashas, and tax farmers, meanwhile patronizing the Armenian schools, churches, hospitals, etc., eventually becoming the leaders of Armenian millets, especially in Istanbul in the second half of the eighteenth century (Barsoumian 2006, 16). Presumably, these wealthy people acted as guarantors in the process of alms collecting. As a matter of fact, alms collecting required a good deal of travel, often across enormous distances. For many Eastern Christian churches and monastic orders, the figure of the alms collector was vital for their economic welfare and for survival. When describing the process, Aslanian cites the words of Joseph Georgirenes, a Greek archbishop from the seventeenth century, that alms collecting in Europe was an important element of the religious economy of Eastern Christian religious centres, generally utilized to avoid paying the head tax ('harach'/'kharaj') to Ottoman authorities while also satisfying other basic necessities (Aslanian 2023, 244; Georgirenes 1678, 99).

The early modern Armenian history being a system of not only the reality of the mainland but also the Armenian communities worldwide is a proof of Armenian mobility. The movement across long distances as a part of migration, forced or voluntary, being developed in the early modern world from 1500–1800, as a consequence of pilgrimages, trade, missionary work, espionage, and communication and negotiations, or the search for new life, constituted the factors of mobility.

[14] On the history of SCPF, see Bayer 1721; Guilday 1921; Griffin 1930; Mažeikis 2007; Martinelli 2010; Ubaldi 1882

[15] Founded during Tanzimat Reformation period in 1839 and lasted up until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, millets were the administration of separate religious communities that acknowledged each community's authority in regulating its internal affairs, primarily through the independent religious court system and schools. See Barsoumian 1997, 183; Ceylan 2002.

The dispersion of hundreds of thousands of Armenians in the 17th–18th centuries across state boundaries and throughout the world's oceans and seas was a process that had a significant impact on early modern Armenian history. The role of trade-diaspora merchants, priests, pilgrims, and printers with their printed books was crucial in the early modern Armenian mobilities (Aslanian 2020).

Consequently, the Armenian church played a large part in the mobility process, as the great majority of the "intelligentsia" was made up of members of the clergy. Mobility in turn became "a process that had its own agents, opponents and beneficiaries" (Ghobrial 2019, 243–280). It can be noted that the role of nuncios and summoners or hraviraks, who in one way or another had an influence on the negotiations, the development of various relations, and the course of history, was important in the whole circuit of early modern mobility.

The fact that the church was involved not only in religious manifestations, but also in social, economic, and political affairs brings performativity to the forefront. The religious authorities had to find ways to "perform" their existence in a way that they were to get involved in mobility ties, send delegates, and alms collectors to other "associate" religious centres in the pursuit of building networks and thus benefiting somehow from them. The performative turn had to be implemented in the communicational manner as well. Consequently, they would ornament their letters, certificates, or other kinds of edicts with praise words, gratitude, and blessings. With this the church, being the representation of the purest spiritual place on Earth would prove its authoritative position.

In summary, such fundraising activities could be perceived as a component of mobility and "charity networks" as Aslanian defines them. The financial difficulties of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem made it dependent on its neighbouring Armenian religious centres and thus became a part of the early modern connectivity. The testimonials, decrees, and letters sent to various dioceses or even to the Holy Papacy, apart from their purely substantive meaning, haphazardly acted as "paper instruments" for the development of inter-communal diasporic connectivity. The letter from the Saint James Monastery in Jerusalem to the Forty Martyrs church in Beroea, as a part of the Borgiani armeni 65 manuscript, stands for proof of such connectivity. Connectivity closely tied to mobility had to be performative in its way to be more tangible and/or legitimate. That is why different tools, among them request letters, filled with praise and blessings, had to be used.

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Äugl or *Äuglein*?
Diminutive Forms in Austrian Pop Songs

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Abstract
The usage of diminutive forms has been widely described for spoken and written German in Austria. However, data for the use of diminutives in sung German remains scarce. This study investigates the use of diminutives in Austrian pop songs from two different periods of Austrian pop music, the 1970s and the 2010s. It determines the types and tokens of diminutives in 40 Austrian pop songs, thereby highlighting changes and developments which may be meaningful for the construction of national identity in Austrian pop music.

Keywords
Diminutives, language variation, language change, German in Austria, Austrian pop music, national identity

1. Introduction

The considerable degree of variance in diminutive forms in the German language has been amply elucidated (Lameli 2018, Korecky-Kröll 2022). Likewise, it has been shown that the use of diminutive forms is considerably higher in the south than in the north of the German-speaking area. In other words, in Switzerland, Southern Germany and Austria, speakers have a greater tendency to use diminutive forms, especially in spoken language. This is especially true of the Upper German dialects such as Bavarian and Alemannic (Schirmunski 1962/2010, Korecky-Kröll 2022).

The use of diminutives in Austria has been described for the written language (Schwaiger et al. 2019) as well as for the spoken language (Ziegler et al. 2021). These studies show the aforementioned variation in diminutives insofar as standard diminutive forms are commonly used alongside non-standard diminutive forms

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typical for the German-speaking south. German which is sung, e.g. the language used in pop songs, is still a research gap in this regard. This prompts the question of whether diminutives do not just occur in German in Austria when it is written or spoken, but also when it is sung. This paper will therefore deal with the issue of diminutives in Austrian pop songs by means of three questions:

1. Do Austrian pop songs use diminutives?
2. If so, which types of diminutives are most frequent in Austrian pop songs?
3. Are there differences in language use when comparing an older period of Austrian pop music, e.g. the 1970s, to a newer period, such as the 2010s?

These questions will be examined through a small pilot study of forty Austrian pop songs.

2. German and Its Varieties

German is a pluricentric language, i.e. it is spoken in different countries and regions throughout Europe, and the German-speaking countries – Austria, Germany and Switzerland – each have their own standard variety of German. In general, German-speaking sociolinguistics differentiates between three varieties used in German: the standard language, which is in everyday speech termed "Hochdeutsch,"[2] the traditional dialects, which are bound to a certain region, and the colloquial language, which ranges in between the two.

2.1. Standard Austrian German (SAG)

The standard language in Austria is referred to by terms such as Austrian German, Austrian Standard German or Standard Austrian German (SAG) by linguists. It is considered a variety with high social prestige in Austria (Soukup & Moosmüller 2011). Wiesinger (1990) defines it as "the regional realization of the written language" (445). Moreover, it represents "a 'non-dialectal' variety spoken by the educated people from the middle-Bavarian region" (Soukup & Moosmüller 2011, 41), including the cities of Vienna and Salzburg. The wording "non-dialectal" indicates that the variety is not perceived as standard language if a speaker's accent contains any salient regional

[2] Diachronically, "Hochdeutsch" ("High German") characterises the difference between the German language spoken in upland central German lands, whereas its counterpart "Plattdeutsch" ("Low German") was used as the language of the northern lowlands of the German speaking area.

features. It must be mentioned here that in the German language the word "dialect" can never be used to refer to the standard language (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015, 29). This is different from English, in which the expression "standard dialect" is common, as the following quote from the Cambridge Dictionary shows:

> The standard dialects of the language are used by governments, in the media, in schools and for international communication. (Cambridge Dictionary 2025)

SAG is a fully developed variety with a number of different norms across all levels of system linguistics, such as lexis, morphology, grammar, phonology and phonetics, as well as differences in pragmatic usage. These differences largely have to do with its history and embedding in the Upper German dialects (for details see Ebner 2019, 24–77).

2.2. Traditional Austrian Dialects

The traditional Austrian dialects are varieties spoken only locally or regionally; additionally, they may also work as sociolects. All are non-standard varieties which are fully developed on all linguistic levels, just like the standard language.

Traditional dialects of Austria belong to one of two groups: either the Bavarian group or the Alemannic group (including a transition zone ranging from Western Tyrol to the Arlberg pass). Both are part of the so-called Upper German dialect group, which is in turn a subset of the High German dialect group (i.e. the dialects spoken in the German uplands). Most Austrian dialects are in fact of Bavarian origin, because the Bavarian group stretches from the federal province of Burgenland in the east to the Tyrol in the west (Wiesinger 1990). Therefore, Bavarian dialects are spoken in eight out of nine federal provinces. Vorarlberg, the federal province in western Austria, is the exception, along with a small area called "Außerfern" in the Tyrol, which has been isolated from Bavarian-speaking Tyrol for centuries. In these areas Alemannic dialects are spoken.

Within Austria, Bavarian dialects can be further divided into Middle Bavarian (or Central Bavarian) and Southern Bavarian dialects, with a transition zone in between called Southern Middle Bavarian (see Figure 1 below). Similarly, Alemannic dialects can be further divided into smaller groups, namely Low, Middle, High and Highest Alemannic. The Alemannic spoken in Vorarlberg is categorised as part of Middle Alemannic.

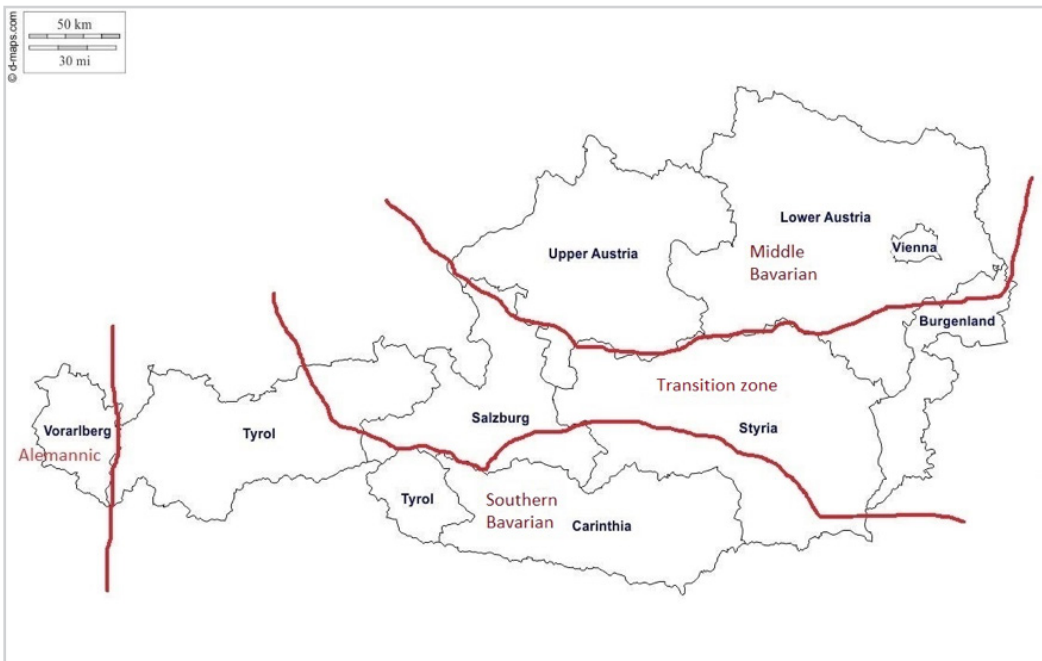

Figure 1.

2.3. Colloquial Language

The colloquial language in Austria does not represent one single variety but rather a bundle of colloquial varieties ranging from the Bavarian dialects[3] to the standard, the so-called 'standard-dialect continuum' (Ender & Kaiser 2014). Still, it is a variety which is recognized by speakers in Austria and is considered important (Ender & Kaiser 2009).

It is probably best described as a variety used when the standard language is perceived to be too formal, while a traditional dialect is not deemed appropriate (for reasons of communicative range or for reasons of social acceptance). The colloquial language may vary with regard to accent. In certain communicative situations its pronunciation may be closer to that of a traditional dialect while in others the accent used will approximate that of the standard language.

[3] For speakers of Alemannic dialects, colloquial varieties are not assumed, cf. Ender & Kaiser, 2021. This situation is similar to Switzerland, where speakers use either standard German or traditional Swiss dialects but no variety in between.

2.4. Language Attitudes and Language Use in Austria

Wodak et al. (2009) and de Cillia et al. (2020) assert in their works on national Austrian identity the importance of the German language for the Austrian nation. Especially after World War II, it was vitally important for Austria to differentiate itself from Germany (Wodak et al. 2009, 5), and the use of the German language played a role in this. Larkey (1993) indicates that "Austrian German," by which he denotes all traditional Austrian dialects in his work, became popular with the beginning of the Austropop period in the 1970s because it was suitable for establishing a clear demarcation between Austrian and German pop music (176). Similarly, with reference to de Cillia (1996), Wodak et al. (2009) recognize a low awareness of Standard Austrian German among speakers; instead, they point out that "the primary linguistic level of identification of German speaking Austrians is the dialect" (2009, 5). This perception is supported by de Cillia et al. (2020, 93 and 104–105).

At the same time, Austria is experiencing a language change, as far as the use of traditional dialects is concerned. Ziegler et al. (2021) and Glauninger (2010) note that speakers from urban centres such as Vienna and Graz tend to avoid dialect features because these are linguistically marked, and keep closer to the standard instead. This leads to a gap between rural Austria, which is more dialect-prone, and urban Austria, which is more standard-prone. Furthermore, the contact situation with Germany, especially via television and all other types of electronic media, also affects the Austrian standard. In the 2010s, SAG has adopted a number of features which are associated with a German German standard, as Wiesinger (2015) and Ernst (2015) record. Their findings are in line with a fear of language loss in Austria as expressed in Leidinger et al. (2010). They assert, however:

> Gute Überlebenschancen werden immerhin den Diminutiva prophezeit, die alles zu handlichen Proportionen schrumpfen lassen, damit wiederum gängigen Klischees vom österreichischen Hang zur 'Verzwergung' entsprechen und gut in die 'kleine' Alpenrepublik passen. [translation: At least, good chances of survival are predicted for the diminutives, which shrink everything to manageable proportions, thus corresponding to common clichés about the Austrian tendency towards 'dwarfism' and fitting well into the 'small' Alpine Republic.] (Leidinger et al. 2010, 183)

This statement refers directly to German diminutives, and especially the way they are used in Austria.

3. Diminutives in German

According to standard grammars, German nouns can form diminutives by means of two suffixes, namely *-chen* and *-lein*. Apart from their expression of smallness, they usually convey a positive emotional meaning such as affection, familiarity or harmlessness. For this reason, diminutives like **Rättchen* 'rat-DIM' or **Giftschlänglein* 'poisonous snake-DIM' are normally not formed (they may only be used in an ironic sense), while diminutives such as *Pferdchen* 'horse-DIM' and *Mäuslein* 'mouse-DIM' are (Hentschel & Weydt 2013). The components mentioned may be a reason why diminutives tend to occur frequently in child-centred speech (Korecky-Kröll 2022). Altogether, diminutive forms may have several pragmatic functions, including, for example, politeness, sympathy, empathy, familiarity and irony (Dressler & Mellini Barbaresi 1994). Due to the pragmatics of diminutives, they may seem inappropriate to some speakers, and are thus often stigmatized, which can make it difficult to elicit them in language experiments (Korecky-Kröll 2022).

It has been documented that diminutives are usually observed as properties of the German-speaking South (Ziegler et al. 2021). While they are rarely used in Northern Germany (Elmentaler 2013), their use increases from the north to the south of the German-speaking area. Hence, in Switzerland, Southern Germany and Austria, speakers have a greater tendency to use diminutive forms, especially in spoken language. This is especially true of the Upper German dialects such as Bavarian and Alemannic (Schirmunski 1962/2010, Ziegler et al. 2021).

3.1. Diminutive Use in Austria

Altogether, the use of diminutive forms has been shown to be very common in Austria (Dressler & Mellini Barbaresi 1994, Glauninger 2005). Likewise, the range of diminutive forms present in Austria is high: with reference to Dressler and Mellini Barbaresi (1994), Ziegler et al. (2021) enumerate five superordinate diminutive forms, namely *-chen*, *-lein*, *-erl, -(e)l*, and *-i*, most of which feature sub-variations.

The suffixes *-chen* and *-lein* are the standard variants. While primarily of Northern German origin, the suffix *-chen* has since spread all over the German-speaking area. The suffix *-lein* largely covers the German-speaking South, but is still not as frequently used as *-chen* (Hentschel & Weydt 2013). Originating in *-lein*, the Upper German non-standard forms can be described as diminutives ending in *-(e)l* or *-erl*, which feature variation by themselves: for the diminutive ending in *-(e)l* the forms

-l, -el, -ele and *-le* are known, for *-erl* forms such as *-erl, -tscherl, -al* and *-erle* can be recognized (Ziegler et al. 2021).

In Middle Bavarian dialects, the diminutive is usually realised as *-(e)l* or *-erl*. Since diminutives ending on *-(e)l* have partly lost their meaning of diminishment in Bavarian, this has led to the formation of a second diminutive ending in *-erl*, pronounced as [-ɐl] (Lenz 2019). Clyne (1995) assigns particular productivity to the suffix *-erl* (39), but in fact, both the suffixes *-(e)l* or *-erl* are highly productive in Austria, in the Bavarian dialects as well as in colloquial varieties. Type *-chen* is depicted as one of the two most dominant forms in Austria, along with the Bavarian suffix *-erl* (Ziegler et al. 2021, 207).

In Southern Bavarian dialects, two ways of forming the diminutive can be found, namely *-(e)l* and *-le* (Wiesinger 1990, 475). In Alemannic dialects, the diminutive is usually realised as *-le* or *-li* (Lenz 2019). In addition, there is the diminutive ending in *-i*, which shows variation with the forms *-li* and *-tschi*. The suffix *-i* is usually associated with child-centred speech, e.g. *Papi* 'daddy,' while it also occurs in the formation of nicknames (Ziegler et al. 2021). Nicknames are not treated in this paper, however.

The choice of standard vs. non-standard diminutives touches the topic of accent insofar as the different suffixes are embedded in different phonological processes. The standard suffixes often require an alternation between a vowel and its umlaut, such as <a> and <ä>, which turn out phonetically as [a] and [ɛ]; the same process applies in Alemannic dialects. Thus, in the German standard we find words such as *Garten* 'garden' [ˈgartn̩] and *Gärtchen* 'garden-DIM' [ˈgɛrtçən] or *Gärtlein* 'garden-DIM' [ˈgɛrtlain], which are realised in Alemannic accents as *Garte* 'garden' [ˈgartə] and *Gärtli* 'garden-DIM' [ˈgɛrtli]. Bavarian accents, however, show an alternation between [ɔ] and [a], so in Bavarian, the responding forms are realised as *Goatn* 'garden' [ˈg̊ɔɐtn̩] (e.g. in Vienna) or *Gortn* 'garden' [ˈgɔχtn̩] (in Tyrol), while the diminutives become *Garterl* 'garden-DIM' [ˈg̊a:tɐl] (in Vienna) and *Gartl* 'garden-DIM' [ˈgaχtl̩] (in Tyrol) (Hornung and Roitinger 2000, 134; Wiesinger 1990). Umlaut-accented forms such as **Gärterl* or **Gärtl* do not exist except for lexicalised forms which may have entered the Austrian standard language, e.g. *Mädl* (or *Mädel*) 'girl' or *Röstl* 'dish containing roast potatoes' (see section 3.2.).

That said, it is very uncommon for the standard suffixes *-chen* and *-lein* to turn up in any other context than Standard Austrian German or a colloquial variety which is phonetically close to the standard. In contrast, there is more variation with the non-standard forms *-(e)l* and *-erl*, as well as the child-centred suffix *-i*, as the latter three

may be used both in Bavarian dialects and in several colloquial varieties, no matter whether they are phonetically closer to the dialects or to the standard language. Furthermore, the Bavarian suffixes also show a tendency to turn up in the Austrian standard, especially in lexicalised forms.

3.2. Lexicalisation of Diminutives

Apart from real diminutives, which genuinely express smallness or feelings of affection, diminutives may also occur in lexicalised form, i.e. they have lost their diminishing meaning and are stored in the lexicon as lexical items of their own (Dressler & Mellini Barbaresi 1994). Bussmann et al. (1996) describe the process under the headword 'Lexicalization' as follows:

> Fully lexicalized expressions form a (new) semantic unit; their original motivation can only be deduced etymologically. This process is often also called idiomatization, to distinguish it from lexicalization. (1996, 682)

In this sense, *Mädchen* and *Madl*, both meaning 'girl,' were originally derived from the outdated word *Magd* 'maid,' which is not present in today's meaning of the words anymore. Such lexicalised (or idiomatised) forms are usually recorded in dictionaries as they are not part of productive morphological processes anymore but represent a part of the lexis of a language. Within Austria, a number of lexicalised diminutives of Bavarian origin are registered in the dictionary *Österreichisches Deutsch: Wörterbuch der Gegenwartssprache in Österreich* ('Austrian German: Dictionary of the Present-Day Language in Austria)' by Ebner (2019). Ebner (2019) makes a special reference to lexicalised forms in a chapter called "Regionale Wortbildungselemente" ('Regional elements of word formation,' 62–64), where he enumerates several examples in which the suffixes do not express any feature of diminution. Such examples are *bissel* 'a bit,' *Madel/Mädel* 'girl,' *Gstanzl* 'mocking song,' *Gröstl* 'dish containing roast potatoes,' *Zuckerl* 'candy,' *Pickerl* 'sticker,' and *Stockerl* 'stool, podium' (Ebner 2019, 63–64).

Occasionally, lexemes may obtain both a real diminutive and a lexicalised diminutive, as the headword *Häusl* shows: the first entry denotes the meaning "Einfamilienhaus, Häuschen" 'single family home, house-DIM' whereas the second entry is paraphrased as "Toilette" 'toilet' (Ebner 2019, 238). The same is true of the word *Blattl*, which can be used either to refer to a diminished form of the word *Blatt*, designating "Blatt" 'leaf,' or to the lexicalised form meaning "Zeitung" 'newspaper' (Ebner 2019, 140).

3.3. Diminutives Used in German-Language Pop Songs

There are presently no studies on the use of diminutives in pop songs sung in German. A search in the online *Corpus of Song Lyrics* (*"Songkorpus"*) using the word strings *chen and *lein provides some marginal results, though.

The word string *chen produces 14653 references on sentence level, of which only the first 200 references are presented. Among them we find mainly verbs such as *machen* 'make,' *brauchen* 'need' or nouns like *Menschen* 'humans' as well as lexicalised diminutives such as *Märchen* 'fairy tale.' As for real diminutives, seven tokens can be found within the 200 entries: *Tütchen* 'joint-DIM' (ID 15721-16, song "Zeitlos," 1997), *Männchen* 'man-DIM' (ID 15605-8, song "...Hölle losgeht," 1997), *Stückchen* 'piece-DIM' (ID 15820-11, song "Seit der Himmel," 2001), *Hühnchen* 'chicken-DIM' (ID 15797-1, "Mehr als sie erlaubt," 1993), *Säckchen* 'bag-DIM' (ID 15810-1, "Ofen aus Glas," 1991), and *Stündchen* 'hour-DIM' (twice, IDS 15789-2 and 15798-6, song "Mein dein Tag," 1994).

The same is true of the string *lein, which produces 3482 references. Again, only the first 200 entries are displayed. Most forms are adjectives such as *allein* 'alone,' or *klein* 'small.' Concerning real diminutives, the 200 entries show eight tokens, namely *Bäuchlein* 'tummy' (ID 15834-7, song "Wahr und gut und schön," 1991), *Tänzlein* 'dance-DIM' (ID 8266-11, Song "All die unerhörten Klänge," 2005), *Schwänzlein* 'tail-DIM' (ID 8312-5, Song "Der Herr Richter," 1988), *Töchterlein* 'daughter-DIM' (ID 10105-9, Song "Schieb es auf die Brote," 2008), *Entlein* 'duckling' (ID 10035-42, Song "Falsche Entscheidung," 2005), *Brünnlein* 'well-DIM (ID 1379-0, Song "Wenn alle Brünnlein fließen," 1990), *Äugelein* 'eyes-DIM' (ID 12868-32, Song "Kinderlied," 2016), and *Blümelein* 'flower-DIM' (ID 8026-5, Song "Frau Schmitz," 1988). These examples may serve to show that the use of diminutives in German-language pop songs seems in general to be rather rare.

4. Research Design

This study uses a corpus of songs based on those aired on the Austrian radio station Ö3 in the year 2021. From this corpus, 40 songs from two different periods of time were collected and analysed according to their use of diminutive forms. Both types and tokens were analysed so as to provide a meaningful description. Details on the corpus and the diminutive forms are provided below.

4.1. Corpus

The corpus was created using the website *Radiostats* (Winkler 2018–). *Radiostats* is an online project which selects current songs from Austrian radio stations by means of a Python script. All these songs are then saved in a database, and the most frequently played songs over a certain period (e.g. a day, a week or a month of a certain year, such as 2021) are shown in a list on the website.

The monthly lists for the year 2021 from the Austrian radio station Ö3 were saved from the page *Radiostats*, covering the whole year of 2021. The timeframe for the study contains songs released between 1970 to 2021, which were aired on Ö3 in 2021. All songs of Austrian origin[4] that appeared in these playlists and were sung in German were entered into an Excel file, together with their year of release. Subsequently, all monthly airplay numbers were added so as to arrive at totals for the whole year. The songs were then listed by their total airplay amount and ranked according to their frequency in the file.

Since diversity was considered an important factor within the chosen timeframe of 51 years, the two top-ranked songs from each year were respectively selected and grouped into a list. Ö3 is rather biased towards songs from the past ten years, however; therefore, some years were missing. To address this, missing data was supplemented by the top-ranked songs from adjacent years or, if this proved impossible, by the top-ranked songs from the whole decade (e.g. the 1970s). This way, a corpus was assembled containing 20 songs from each of the five decades ranging from the 1970s to the 2010s, along with four songs from the years 2020 and 2021. The whole corpus therefore comprises 104 songs by 43 Austrian artists or bands from 1970 to 2021. Out of this corpus, 20 songs from the 1970s were chosen, and 20 songs from the 2010s were selected for a meaningful comparison.

Subsequently, all selected songs for the study will be listed by a keyword so as to facilitate reading. Songs from the 1970s (1970–1979) are given in Table 1:

Keyword	Artist	Song	Release
Glock'n	Marianne Mendt	Wie a Glock'n	1970
Haus	Arik Brauer	Sie hab'n a Haus baut	1971
Köpferl	Arik Brauer	Sei Köpferl in Sand	1971
Hofa	Wolfgang Ambros	Da Hofa	1971
Wintasunn	Wolfgang Ambros	Du bist wia de Wintasunn	1972

[4] The Austrian origin of musicians and bands was determined by means of the Archive of Austrian Popular Music, accessible via https://sra.at/ (accessed February 14, 2025).

Ziwui	Wilfried	Ziwui, ziwui	1973
Vorarlberg	Ray & Mick	Oho Vorarlberg	1973
Lauf	Wilfried	Lauf Hase lauf	1974
Bleiben	Wolfgang Ambros	A Mensch möcht i bleiben	1974
Zentralfriedhof	Wolfgang Ambros	Es lebe der Zentralfriedhof	1975
Jö	Georg Danzer	Jö schau	1975
Zwickt's	Wolfgang Ambros	Zwickt's mi	1975
Gatsch	Georg Danzer	Hupf in Gatsch	1976
Weihnachten	Georg Danzer	Wie woa Weihnachten	1976
Aufgeh	Georg Danzer	Lass mi amoi no d'Sunn aufgeh' segn	1976
Ruaf	Georg Danzer	Ruaf mi net an	1976
Schifoan	Wolfgang Ambros	Schifoan	1976
66	Udo Jürgens	Mit 66 Jahren	1977
Gemeindebau	Wolfgang Ambros	Die Blume aus dem Gemeindebau	1977
Ruckn	Ludwig Hirsch	I lieg am Ruckn	1978

Table 1

The songs from the 2010s (2010–2019) are shown in Table 2:

Keyword	Artist	Song	Release
Schoppornou	Holstuonarmusigbigbandclub	Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou	2010
Moment	Christina Stürmer	Wir leben den Moment	2010
Her	Hubert von Goisern	Nit lang her	2011
Brenna	Hubert von Goisern	Brenna tuats guat	2011
Berlin	Keiner mag Faustmann	Wien-Berlin	2012
Spielberg	Julian Le Play	Mr. Spielberg	2012
Millionen	Christina Stürmer	Millionen Lichter	2013
Maschin	Bilderbuch	Maschin	2013
Anker	Julian Le Play	Mein Anker	2014
Ham	Seiler und Speer	Ham kummst	2014
Tagträumen	Tagtraeumer	Tagträumen	2015
Feiah	Krautschädl	Feiah fonga	2015

So	Lemo	So wie du bist	2016
Himmel	Lemo	Der Himmel über Wien	2016
Columbo	Wanda	Columbo	2017
Mama	Pizzera & Jaus	Mama	2017
Cordula	Josh.	Cordula Grün	2018
Ala	Seiler und Speer	Ala bin	2018
Inspektor	Seiler und Speer	Herr Inspektor	2019
Principessa	Seiler und Speer	Principessa	2019

Table 2.

4.2. Diminutive Forms

For this study, five types of diminutive suffixes were chosen. These suffixes are the following:

1. Type *-(e)l*: *-(e)l* is one of two Bavarian suffixes which has entered the colloquial language and occasionally, in lexicalised form, the standard language. It is often perceived to be typical of German spoken in Austria.
2. Type *-erl:* like *-(e)l*, *-erl* is principally of Bavarian origin but also frequently used in colloquial language. Just like *-(e)l*, it can be described as a marker for German in Austria.
3. Type *-le*: *-le* is the usual suffix used in Alemannic dialects. In addition, it may also turn up in Southern Bavarian dialects.
4. Type *-lein*: *-lein* is one of two standard German suffixes. Originating in the German-speaking south, it has become a supra-regional form but is not as frequent as *-chen*.
5. Type *-chen*: *-chen* is the standard German suffix most frequently used in diminution. Originating in the German-speaking north, it has spread to all areas of the German-speaking countries.

These five types were counted in all song lyrics. In general, audio versions of songs were used as the source for identifying each type. However, the written version of the lyrics was used as an aid in order to mark all diminutive forms. In the course of this process, a number of tokens for each type could be determined. Take for example the following text sample from the song "Vorarlberg" (1973) by Ray & Mick as shown both in standardised orthography and English translation:

Standardised text	English translation
Woh-woh Vorarlberg, **-bergl**, -berg, bist zwar als Land ein Zwerg, **Zwergl**, Zwerg, klein, aber oho, jodeljo, hollodrio.	Woh-woh Vorarlberg, **-berg-DIM**, -berg, as a state you are indeed a dwarf, **dwarf-DIM**, dwarf, small but powerful, jodeljo, hollodrio {yodelling}.

Table 3.

In these lines, type *-(e)l* can be found in the words *-bergl* 'mountain-DIM' and *Zwergl* 'dwarf-DIM,' so type *-(e)l* appears in two tokens in this extract. A second sample from the same song's lyrics provides more data:

Standardised text	English translation
Wenn wir dereinst die **Äuglein** schließen, ein **Glöcklein** klingt im Abendrot – in Wien.	When we close the **eyes-DIM** someday, a **bell-DIM** rings in the afterglow – in Vienna.

Table 4.

Here, type *-lein* occurs in the words Äuglein 'eyes-DIM' and Glöcklein 'bell-DIM,' hence the extract shows two tokens for *-lein*. It can thus be determined that the song "Vorarlberg" uses at least the diminutive types *-(e)l* and *-lein*, and it contains at least two tokens for each.

5. Results

The analysis of the songs is presented in two tables: Table 5 shows the songs from the 1970s while Table 6 displays the songs from the 2010s. The songs from both periods of Austrian pop music are listed by their keywords to facilitate readability.

In both tables, the types and the tokens of the selected diminutives are presented. All diminutive forms found in the lyrics are listed by their relevant type. The examples of each type were then added in order to reach the number of tokens for each type within the decade. Lexicalised forms are marked by the abbreviation "lex.". As they are actually lexical items and not real diminutives, they are listed in the table (marked in grey colour), but only partly included in the analysis.

5.1. Usage of Diminutive Forms in the 1970s

The types and tokens of diminutives in Austrian pop songs from the 1970s are presented in Table 5:

	-(e)l	*-erl*	*-le*	*-lein*	*-chen*
Glock'n (1970)	Madl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd	nd
Haus (1971)	nd	Herzerl, Henderl, Schwefelhölzerl, Aschenköpferl	nd	nd	nd
Köpferl (1971)	Häusl; bissl (lex.)	4x Köpferl	nd	nd	nd
Hofa (1971)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Wintasunn (1972)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ziwui (1973)	nd	Pfeiferl	nd	nd	nd
Vorarlberg (1973)	6x Bergl, 6x Zwergl	nd	nd	Äuglein, Glöcklein	nd
Lauf (1974)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Bleiben (1974)	2x Stückl	Kugerl	nd	nd	nd
Zentralfriedhof (1975)	bissl (lex.)	Grablaternderl	nd	nd	nd
Jö (1975)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Zwickt's (1975)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Gatsch (1976)	Äugl	Schnoferl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd
Weihnachten (1976)	nd	Schneeflockerl	nd	nd	nd
Aufgeh (1976)	Madl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ruaf (1976)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Schifoan (1976)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
66 (1977)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Gemeindebau (1977)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ruckn (1978)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Tokens incl. lex. forms	20	13	0	2	nd
Tokens of real diminutives	16	12	0	2	nd

Table 5.

Within the 20 songs from the 1970s, the quota of songs containing a diminutive is 50% (10 songs). However, 10% of these songs contain lexicalised forms such as *Madl* 'girl' or *bissl* 'a bit,' thus only 40% of these (eight songs) include real diminutives.

Types used in this period are *-(e)l*, *-erl*, and *-lein*. Of all the songs from the 1970s, 15% (three songs) use only one type of diminutive, namely *-erl*. By contrast, combinations of types are used in 30% (six songs): 10% (two songs) feature *-(e)l* plus *-erl*, and five per cent (one song) use *-(e)l* plus *-lein*. As far as the number of songs is concerned, type *-erl* appears most frequently in the 1970s, appearing in 30% (six songs). It is followed by type *-(e)l* with 20% of songs (four songs). Type *-lein* is less frequent: it is represented by five per cent (one song).

The total number of tokens for diminutives in the 1970s amounts to 35, and without the lexicalised forms the number of tokens reaches 30. Regarding the number of tokens for the different types, the frequencies look different: here, *-(e)l* is the most frequent type with 53.33% (16 tokens), while *-erl* comes second with 40 (12 tokens). Type *-lein* holds 6.67% (two tokens).

5.2. Usage of Diminutive Forms in the 2010s

The types and tokens of diminutives in Austrian pop songs from the 2010s are displayed in Table 6:

	-(e)l	*-erl*	*-le*	*-lein*	*-chen*
Schoppornou (2010)	nd	nd	Gläsle	nd	nd
Moment (2010)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Her (2011)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Brenna (2011)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Berlin (2012)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Spielberg (2012)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Millionen (2013)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Maschin (2013)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Anker (2014)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ham (2014)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd

Tagträumen (2015)	nd	nd	nd	nd	bisschen (lex.)
Feiah (2015)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
So (2016)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Himmel (2016)	nd	nd	nd	nd	bisschen (lex.)
Columbo (2017)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Mama (2017)	Mädl (lex.)	Sackerl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd
Cordula (2018)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ala (2018)	bissl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd	nd
Inspektor (2019)	Madln (lex.)	Kasperl	nd	nd	nd
Principessa (2019)	Büdl; bissl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd	nd
Tokens incl. lex. forms	5	2	1	nd	2
Tokens of real diminutives	1	1	1	nd	0

Table 6.

In the 2010s, diminutive forms can be observed in 35% of songs (seven songs). Of these, 20% show lexicalised forms, so that 15% (three songs) can be said to contain real diminutives.

Types that occur in this period are *-(e)l*, *-erl*, and *-le*, while the type *-chen* only occurs in lexicalised form. In 15% of songs (three songs), only one type of diminutive form can be found; 5% (one song each) feature type *-(e)l*, type *-erl*, and type *-le*, respectively. Combinations of different types do not occur. As far as the number of songs is concerned, types *-(e)l*, *-erl* and *-le* are equally frequent, with each being found in 5% of songs (one song each).

The total number of tokens for diminutives in the 2010s amounts to ten, while there are three tokens for the real diminutives. The percentages are 33.33% for *-(e)l*, *-erl*, and *-le* each (one token respectively).

5.3. Interpretation

Given that pop lyrics are not a category of text or speech act in which diminutives seem particularly typical, it is remarkable that they are present to such a degree in Austrian pop songs. As far as the 1970s are concerned, the numbers can even be deemed high: in 40% of songs (eight songs) real diminutives can be found, and the number of tokens of these diminutives amounts to 30. The distribution of diminutives is also interesting: type *-erl* is used in the largest number of songs and type *-(e)l* in the second highest. At the same time, in terms of number of tokens, type *-(e)l* is most frequent (16 tokens) and type *-erl* comes second (12 tokens). Thus, the non-standard suffixes of Bavarian origin prevail in the lyrics. The standard type *-lein* is represented as well, but reaches a considerably lower number, both in terms of the number of songs (one) and in tokens (two). What comes as a surprise is the fact that type *-chen* does not occur at all in the 1970s. Since *-chen* is the most frequent type used in German standard language and also one of the two most frequent types in spoken German in Austria (Ziegler et al. 2021), this finding can be considered striking.

Regarding the 2010s, it is obvious that the number of diminutive forms has decreased radically when compared to the 1970s. Not only has the number of songs with real diminutives dropped to 15% (three songs), the number of tokens has also declined to three. There is no preferred type of diminutive in the 2010s, but types *-(e)l*, *-erl*, and *-le* are equally frequent with one token each. So again the non-standard suffixes are the dominant types in Austrian pop lyrics, but in the 2010s both the Bavarian suffixes *-(e)l* and *-erl* and the Alemannic suffix *-le* occur. As in the 1970s, standard type *-chen* does not occur as a real diminutive at all, and only appears in the lexicalised form *bisschen* 'a bit' (two occurrences). How can these considerable differences in the two periods be explained?

A recent study by Thumberger (forthcoming) shows that German-language pop songs in Austria are experiencing a change, as far as their variety is concerned. While pop songs in the 1970s were largely sung in an Austro-Bavarian non-standard pronunciation, by the 2010s the preferred accent had switched to standard German. In the 1970s, 85% of songs (17 songs) show a clear preference for a dialect accent, whereas in the 2010s, only 45% do (nine songs). The preference for an Austro-Bavarian accent in the 1970s may serve as an explanation for the high number of tokens for the types *-(e)l* and *-erl*; after all, these two types are of Bavarian origin and they are the only types used in Middle Bavarian pronunciation (except for *-i*). Likewise, the fondness for an Austrian dialect accent may also partly explain why *-chen* does not occur at all: as only 15% of songs (three songs) are sung in standard pronunciation, which does

not provide much context for suffix *-chen*. However, even if there is a preference for singing Austrian pop songs in a standard accent, as in the case of "Vorarlberg" by Ray & Mick (Thumberger, forthcoming), they seem to have a preference for suffixes which can be related to Austria. Otherwise, they do without diminutives at all, as the songs "Lauf" (1974) by Wilfried and "66" (1977) by Udo Jürgens show.

Concerning pop songs from the 2010s, the prevalence of non-standard accents has sharply decreased. Thus, one may conclude that the context for suffixes *-(e)l* and *-erl* has diminished as well, since these types are only productive in Bavarian dialects and Austrian colloquial language. However, non-standard accents are still heard in 45% of songs, while the proportion of songs using diminutives only amounts to 15%. What comes as an even greater surprise is the fact that, even though the proportion of those sung in standard has risen to 55%, real diminutives with suffix *-chen* do not occur at all. Therefore, while *-chen* is very frequent in spoken language (see Ziegler et al. 2021), this is definitely not the case in songs. Instead, even though their numbers are low both in songs and tokens, the non-standard types *-(e)l* and *-erl*, along with *-le*, are still the preferred forms. But, given the high tendency for diminutive use in Austria, one would expect either more diminutives using the non-standard suffixes *-(e)l* and *-erl* or more diminutives using the standard suffix *-chen* in the lyrics of the 2010s. These are discrepancies which cannot be fully explained by the data. A theory could be that diminutives are more stigmatized in Austrian pop songs in the 2010s than they were in the 1970s, but this remains speculative. More surveys on language attitudes, especially with reference to pop music, might be needed to elucidate such questions.

In addition to the productive suffixes, both decades feature a few lexicalised forms of *-(e)l* and *-erl*. In the 1970s, the lyrics contain forms like *Madl* 'girl' (occurs twice), *bissl* 'a bit' (occurs twice), and *Schnoferl* 'snout'; similarly, the lyrics of the 2010s show forms such as *Mädl* 'girl,' *Madln* 'girls (pl.),' *bissl* 'a bit,' and *Sackerl* 'bag.' While these words cannot be regarded as diminutives as they have lost their function of diminution and have become part of the Austrian lexis (be it colloquial or standard), they add to an 'Austrian sound' of the lyrics and may contribute to the construction of national identity.

Summed up, the research questions can be addressed as follows:

1. Yes, Austrian pop songs use diminutives.
2. The types of diminutives most frequent in Austrian pop songs are *-(e)l* and *-erl*.
3. Yes, there are differences in language use. In the 1970s, the proportion of songs with diminutives amounted to 40% (eight songs) whereas in the 2010s

the proportion is just 15% (three songs). The use of diminutives in Austrian pop songs is thus clearly decreasing, which seems to be in line with a greater prevalence of standard language use. However, when diminutives are used in songs, they show a preference for *-(e)l* and *-erl* rather than *-chen*, which does not occur in real diminutives at all.

6. Conclusion

In general, diminutive forms are used very frequently in the South of the German-speaking area. Previous research on Austria shows that the Bavarian suffix *-erl* is most frequently used alongside the supra-regional standard form *-chen*, both in spoken and written language. This paper tried to answer the question of whether the distribution of diminutives in Austrian pop songs mirrors these results. This was done by analysing five diminutive suffixes which are relevant to Austrian language use across a total of forty Austrian pop songs. These forty songs were split into two periods: twenty songs were taken from 1970–1979 and the other twenty were taken from 2010–2019.

The findings of this analysis reveal that the 1970s featured a rather high number of songs with real diminutives, namely 40% (eight songs). The overall number of tokens for real diminutives amounts to 33. Types *-(e)l* and *-erl* are the two most frequent types, with 48.48% of tokens (16 tokens) and 36.36% of tokens (12 tokens) respectively. Type *-lein* is also represented by 6.06% (two tokens), while types *-le* and *-chen* do not appear at all. In addition, 10% of songs (two songs) show lexicalised forms.

By the 2010s, the numbers of diminutives have clearly decreased. In this period only 15% of songs (three songs) use real diminutives. The overall number of tokens for real diminutives amounts to three. Types *-(e)l*, *-erl* and *-le* are all equally frequent, with 33.33% (one token each). The standard types *-lein* and *-chen* do not occur. Furthermore, 20% of songs (four songs) have lexicalised forms, and type *-chen* is only represented in lexicalised forms (twice).

Altogether, the use of diminutives in songs is obviously decreasing. However, when they have to choose, Austrian singers and songwriters still tend to opt for the Bavarian diminutive suffixes *-(e)l* and *-erl* rather than the suffixes *-lein* and *-chen*, which is visible in a higher use of *-(e)l* and *-erl*. Among certain singers, this may be one strategy of adhering to Austrian language use instead of using supra-regional German forms and through this expressing their Austrian identity.

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Teaching Metaphors in the EFL Classroom

A Case Study of Georgian EFL Learners

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Abstract

This article is part of a larger research project focusing on metaphorical language production in second language acquisition. In the current study, I first explore the significance of metaphor awareness in second language learning and the current state of research in L2 metaphor pedagogy, particularly the integration of conceptual metaphor awareness into EFL instruction. Second, I present a case study of Georgian EFL learners, which investigates the effects of teaching metaphorical expressions on learners' production of the taught expressions, with particular emphasis on the CMT-based approach and the incorporation of TBLT methodology. The effectiveness of this approach was assessed using a pre-test, post-test, two-week delayed test, and follow-up survey, which suggested significant improvement in the metaphor awareness of Georgian EFL learners compared to the control group. This study builds on Saaty's (2016) experimental research and extends its approach to evaluate the effectiveness of CMT-based instruction for advanced EFL learners.

Keywords

Georgian EFL learners, metaphoric competence, conceptual metaphor theory, task-based language teaching

1. Introduction

Metaphors have traditionally been regarded as linguistic ornamentations rather than as essential elements of language. It is unsurprising, then, that their inclusion in L2 teaching and learning is still a relatively new concept and faces many obstacles even today. The present article explores metaphorical language production from an L2 pedagogy perspective, with a particular emphasis on teaching metaphors through conceptual

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metaphor awareness. The research aim is to examine whether using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to teach metaphorical expressions enhances the metaphor awareness of L2 learners. It outlines a four-week investigation with advanced-level Georgian EFL learners, who participate in a classroom session, a series of tests, and a survey. The detailed lesson plan and tests developed for this case study offer a practical example of how teachers can implement CMT in conjunction with the task-based language teaching (TBLT) methodology in the classroom. Importantly, the case study of Georgian EFL learners addresses gaps in previous research by focusing on advanced learners, implementing a comprehensive TBLT framework for CMT-based classroom instruction, and evaluating the cued production of metaphorical expressions through an open-ended cloze task.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the theoretical foundations of integrating metaphor instruction into L2 teaching and examines key previous studies on teaching through CMT. Section 3 outlines the research design of the current case study, such as the participant profile and the methodological framework. Section 4 presents the findings of the study and compares the performance of the metaphor group and the control group. Finally, Section 5 summarizes the consequences of these findings within the larger context of L2 metaphor pedagogy.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

2.1. Metaphors in L2 Teaching

The idea of L2 metaphor pedagogy and the history of acknowledging metaphor as a ubiquitous element of language and thought are largely intertwined. To briefly recapitulate key notions, the history of metaphor recognition in language started with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) viewpoint, which suggests that metaphor greatly impacts our lives and shapes our ideas and behaviours even outside of language. According to their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), a conceptual metaphor is an association between two semantic concepts in the mind, where a familiar and concrete source domain is mapped onto a more complex and abstract target domain (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 4–5). For example, *time is money* stands out as one of the most prevalent conceptual metaphors and illustrates the value of *time* by drawing on the more tangible concept of *money* (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 7–8). Conceptual metaphors are conveyed in language through linguistic metaphors. For instance, the conceptual metaphor *time is money* finds expression in phrases like *You're wasting my time* or *How do you spend your time these days*? (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 7–8).

Eight years after the emergence of CMT, Low (1988) was a pioneer in suggesting the integration of metaphor instruction into language teaching. According to Low (1988, 129), in order for language learners to be considered proficient users, they should acquire certain metaphor-related skills that native speakers normally possess. These abilities include the capacity for logical interpretation of metaphorical expressions, knowledge of both traditional and novel metaphors, comprehension of suitable source and target domain pairings, and awareness of potentially socially sensitive metaphors (Low 1988, 129–134). Later on, Low (2008, 221–222) refined his inventory of critical metaphor-related abilities that students require but are hardly ever taught in the classroom. He highlighted skills such as identifying multiple levels of metaphorical meaning in communication, interpreting others' metaphors through cultural understanding, and discerning why speakers extend their communication beyond conventional expressions.

When it comes to teaching metaphors in the L2 classroom, Low (1998, 137–139) argues that it is neither ideal nor sufficient to teach metaphorical expressions only when they occasionally appear in texts. Instead, he suggests that engaging in activities that involve multiple texts and tasks is often more advantageous than concentrating on a single text, as this approach provides teachers with greater creative freedom in lesson design and offers students a more effective learning environment (Low 1998, 139). A further point made by Low (2008, 220) is that simply teaching students the meanings of metaphors does not guarantee that they will retain this knowledge over time or improve their use of metaphorical language; nevertheless, most instructional designs on teaching metaphors still focus solely on explaining their etymologies and definitions.

Revisiting Low's perspective on metaphor and education in 2020 reveals that the practical application of integrating metaphors into language teaching has not progressed significantly over time. Low (2020, 49) observes that despite the proposal to incorporate metaphors into L2 learning over thirty years ago, there has been minimal effort to include metaphoric competence in EFL teaching syllabi, textbooks, or exams, aside from a few rare resources and activity sets. Consequently, this limited approach to metaphor education hinders learners from acquiring the aforementioned skills that are essential to attain high proficiency in their target language. The current study helps fill this gap by showing how the CMT-based classroom instruction can improve metaphoric competence through well-planned lessons and provides practical ideas for adding metaphors to EFL teaching.

Another significant contribution to promoting figurative language use in foreign language classrooms and enhancing metaphoric competence among EFL

learners is the work of Littlemore and Low (2006). Metaphoric competence, in its broad interpretation, refers to learners' cognitive ability to comprehend and produce metaphors, as well as their sociolinguistic abilities, such as an awareness of common metaphors, socially sensitive metaphors, multilayered metaphors, and so on (Littlemore & Low 2006, 79). To facilitate students' metaphoric language competence, Littlemore and Low (2006, 200–201) advocate for involving learners in realistic, well-structured tasks with specific functional objectives, as these activities enable learners to perform the functions associated with figurative language more effectively. This methodology aligns with a three-stage, task-based language learning framework (TBLT) proposed by Willis and Willis (2007), which will be further discussed in Section 2.3. In their exploration of figurative language teaching methods, the authors distinguish two approaches: treating figurative language as a separate category, and using the conceptual metaphor approach (Littlemore & Low 2006, 205–207). The first approach treats figurative language as an isolated category and gives metaphors and idioms an exclusive position, which can unintentionally reinforce the misconception that such elements are separate from everyday language and not integral to daily communication. The authors consider the second approach more effective, as it directly integrates conceptual metaphors into teaching materials and emphasizes that metaphors are foundational to everyday language use (Littlemore & Low 2006, 207).

Building on this perspective, MacArthur's studies (2010, 2016) significantly contribute to understanding metaphor use in teaching English and developing metaphoric competence in EFL learners. Drawing on Littlemore and Low's (2006) extensive research on metaphors in foreign language learning, MacArthur (2010, 156) argues that it is insufficient to aid comprehension and retention of figurative language and emphasizes how important it is to support learners in actively producing metaphors in their second language. One suggested activity to foster metaphor production in the classroom is assigning students a writing task on an abstract yet familiar topic – such as future professions, goals, or love – after which teachers provide targeted feedback to enhance students' metaphoric competence (MacArthur 2010, 169). The author points out that teaching metaphors in EFL classes can be particularly beneficial for intermediate-level students whose skills have stagnated, as it introduces a refreshing alternative to traditional grammar and vocabulary instruction and provides a flexible method to support their progression toward advanced proficiency (MacArthur 2010, 158). The unfortunate tendency, as MacArthur (2016, 413) highlights, is that metaphors are frequently neglected in most

language courses for L2 learners and receive little consideration within Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) criteria. Given the essential role of metaphors in language learning, this oversight underlines the need for better integration in EFL classes, as explicit metaphor teaching and encouraging students to engage deeply with meanings may significantly enhance overall language proficiency (MacArthur 2016, 422). To sum up, the theoretical papers reviewed underline the importance of systematically incorporating metaphor instruction into L2 teaching and note that this approach can substantially enhance learners' figurative language competence and overall language proficiency. The importance of incorporating metaphor instruction in L2 teaching is also supported by previous empirical studies outlined in Section 2.2 and their findings are summarized in Sections 2.3 and 4.1.

2.2. Previous Research on Teaching through CMT

After exploring the theoretical aspects of L2 metaphor pedagogy, it is now essential to examine key experimental studies that have applied the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) approach in teaching English to L2 learners. These studies can be grouped into the following categories: teaching phrasal and polysemous verbs (Kövecses & Szabó 1996; Boers 2000; Csábi 2004; Condon 2008), teaching idioms (Li 2002; Boers et al. 2004; Beréndi et al. 2008; Pan 2019), and teaching metaphorical expressions (Saaty 2016; Niemeier 2017).

The primary focus of this article is the last category, which will be examined in detail in Section 2.3. However, it is first important to present a brief overview of the studies on teaching phrasal and polysemous verbs and idioms. The first-ever experimental study to employ the CMT-based approach in teaching L2 learners was conducted by Kövecses and Szabó (1996). Their focus was on teaching phrasal verbs that involved spatial conceptual metaphors, such as *up-down* metaphors (e.g. *happy is up*, *sad is down*). The CMT-based teaching approach was tested on an experimental group of 15 intermediate-level Hungarian learners of English, and their results were compared with a control group of the same size who received only a list of phrasal verbs with Hungarian equivalents (Kövecses and Szabó 1996, 346–347). Both groups completed a fill-in-the-blank task with missing phrasal verbs, where the experimental group outperformed the control group (Kövecses and Szabó 1996, 349–350). These positive results sparked further interest in CMT-inspired teaching approaches.

Boers (2000) and Condon (2008) scaled up this research on spatial conceptual metaphors. Boers (2000, 560) included 74 intermediate-level French learners of English, and Condon (2008, 114) included 111. In both studies, participants were divided roughly equally into experimental and control groups. Boers (2000, 562) reported that the experimental group's gap-filling test scores were significantly higher than those of the control group. Condon (2008, 141) enhanced the research design by incorporating both a pre-test and a delayed post-test administered six weeks after the immediate gap-filling task. Although the experimental group outperformed the control group on the immediate test, their performance showed no difference in the delayed post-test (Condon 2008, 148–149). This finding suggests that while teaching phrasal verbs via CMT may be beneficial for short-term retention, its long-term benefits are less certain.

The benefits of the CMT-based instruction were further supported by Csábi's (2004) study, which focused on teaching the polysemous verbs *hold* and *keep*. This study involved 52 Hungarian secondary-school learners of English. The experimental group received explanations for expressions that involved these polysemous words accompanied by their underlying conceptual metaphors, such as *possessing something is holding* or *control is holding something in hand*. In contrast, the control group was taught various senses of verbs *hold* and *keep* alongside their Hungarian equivalents (Csábi 2004, 238–241). Results from both the immediate gap-filling test and the two-day delayed test showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group, which led the author to suggest that explicit instruction of the conceptual metaphors behind the polysemous verbs can improve both comprehension and retention among L2 learners (Csábi 2004, 246–249).

Turning to idioms, Li (2002) conducted the first experimental study with 52 intermediate-level Chinese learners of English that focused on idioms with the *container* source domain, such as the idiom *he's up to his neck in debt* from the *difficulties are containers* conceptual metaphor. The experimental group was introduced to the target conceptual metaphors and discussed how the *container* source domain relates to the human body, while the control group received traditional explanations of idiom meanings (Li 2002, 157). In both the immediate gap-filling post-test and the one-week delayed test, the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group (Li 2002, 184–185). Additionally, a follow-up questionnaire revealed that students favoured the conceptual metaphor awareness approach and perceived it as a new method that made idioms easier to remember (Li 2002, 185–186).

Following this, Beréndi et al. (2008, 76) conducted a long-term experiment on teaching idioms through CMT with 43 intermediate-level Hungarian college students. They administered an immediate gap-filling test, with a retest two days later to assess medium-term retention and a further test after five months to evaluate long-term retention. The students were divided into a control group, who simply translated and memorized the idioms during the lesson, and an experimental group, who were introduced to CMT and received idioms grouped under their respective conceptual metaphors, such as *she breathes fire* and *to add fuel to the fire* listed under *anger is fire* (Beréndi et al. 2008, 75–76). The results of both the immediate and two-day delayed gap-filling tests showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group, which supports the hypothesis that the CMT-based teaching can improve short- and medium-term retention (Beréndi et al. 2008, 77).

Similarly, Pan (2019) examined the effectiveness of the CMT teaching approach with idioms grouped under the *anger is fire* conceptual metaphor. The experiment targeted a different participant profile: 43 elementary-level primary school Chinese learners of English, unlike previous studies that focused on intermediate learners. The control group received the target idioms with translations and associated images, while the experimental group received idioms organized by conceptual metaphor, along with corresponding images (Pan 2019, 66). In both the immediate and the one-week delayed gap-filling tests, the experimental group scored higher on average than the control group, which suggests that the CMT-based lesson may also benefit young English learners (Pan 2019, 70–72).

Finally, while these results demonstrate the effectiveness of CMT-based teaching in a classroom format, it is also significant to examine a study that explores a computer-based, self-study format. Boers et al. (2004) conducted the first experimental study to teach idioms to Dutch intermediate-level college students with the help of a self-study, computer-based program designed to aid L2 idiom comprehension. The students were divided into two groups: a control group that completed a simple comprehension task about given idioms during the self-study program and an experimental group that completed a task in which they identified the source domain of each idiom (Boers et al. 2004, 62, 70–71). Post-test results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the gap-filling task, which suggests that students who were familiar with the idiom's source domain were more likely to select the correct meaning (Boers et al. 2004, 65–66, 72). These findings show that CMT-based teaching could be beneficial in self-guided learning and offer students additional flexibility.

Interestingly, all of the abovementioned studies focus on adult intermediate-level English learners, with the exceptions of Csábi (2004), which involves intermediate-level secondary school participants, and Pan (2019), which focuses on elementary-level primary school participants. While early studies (Kövecses & Szabó 1996; Boers 2000) only administered immediate tests to compare control and experimental groups, more recent studies also included delayed tests to assess vocabulary retention. The test format in these studies predominantly involved closed cloze tasks, where participants selected words from a provided box to complete the sentences; thus, they assessed retention and comprehension rather than independent production. These similarities in study design highlight a gap in the literature and suggest the need for future research to expand beyond intermediate-level competencies. Future studies could incorporate tests that measure immediate, medium-term, and long-term retention, along with pre-tests for more accurate comparisons. Additionally, open-ended cloze tasks, where students complete gaps without a provided list, could assess both comprehension and independent production of learned expressions.

It is also worth noting that the teaching component in all of these studies was relatively simple and straightforward, with minimal focus on detailed lesson planning. Typically, the experimental groups were provided with conceptual metaphors alongside the target expressions grouped under them, while the control groups received lists of expressions with translations and definitions. This indicates that the instructional approach in these studies was not grounded in specific teaching frameworks, such as TBLT or other structured methodologies. Therefore, more attention to detailed lesson plans could offer insights into how teachers might practically adapt CMT in classroom instruction. Notably, in all the aforementioned studies on teaching phrasal verbs, polysemous verbs, and idioms, the experimental groups that received conceptual metaphor instruction consistently outperformed the control groups, with further details provided in Section 4.1.

2.3. Previous Research on Teaching Metaphors through CMT

The case study in this article builds on Saaty's (2016) research, which explores the use of CMT in teaching metaphorical expressions. What sets Saaty's study apart from the others discussed is its incorporation of a detailed lesson plan based on task-based language teaching (TBLT) methodology. By combining CMT with a structured TBLT approach, Saaty's study not only evaluates CMT's effectiveness but also offers practical tips for teaching metaphors in the EFL classroom. As noted

in Section 2.1, Littlemore and Low (2006, 200–201) recommend using realistic, structured tasks with clear objectives to raise metaphor awareness that aligns with the TBLT framework.

To provide background, it is essential to review the task-based language teaching (TBLT) framework initially developed by Willis (1996), and later refined by Willis and Willis (2007). TBLT is defined as an approach that employs goal-oriented, interconnected tasks to support language learning within a meaningful context (Willis & Willis 2007, 21–22). The TBLT framework includes three main phases: the pre-task phase, which introduces the topic; the task cycle, which engages students in applying prior knowledge; and the post-task phase, where students study and practice new vocabulary (Willis & Willis 2007, 63–84). Both Saaty (2016) and the present case study employed a TBLT problem-solving teaching session, where learners seek and provide advice on topics that range from broad issues, such as environmental concerns, to specific ones, such as teenage challenges. This type of lesson plan fosters discussion, solution development, and target vocabulary acquisition (Willis & Willis 2007, 93–94). For this type of lesson, the recommended sequence includes a Task and Report phase, where small groups share solutions on the given topic; a Text Task, where students read a short passage on the topic to prompt further discussion; and a Language Focus phase, where the teacher introduces new vocabulary, which students then apply in practice (Willis & Willis 2007, 94–99).

Turning to Saaty's (2016, 127–168) study, it focuses on teaching metaphorical expressions under the conceptual metaphor *time is money* to 67 upper-intermediate Saudi learners of English. This study is more comprehensive than other related studies, as it includes a pre-test, a TBLT-based classroom session, a post-test, a two-week delayed test, and an evaluation survey. The TBLT teaching sessions differed for the experimental and control groups: the experimental group was introduced to conceptual metaphors, which emphasized how the *time is money* metaphor underlies the target expressions, while the control group was taught using a time management theme without metaphorical emphasis (Saaty 2016, 142–146). Saaty (2016, 154) found that the experimental group, taught with the CMT-based lesson, significantly outperformed the control group on the immediate post-test, which suggests enhanced comprehension and retention of metaphorical expressions. However, both groups showed notable declines in retention on the two-week delayed test, which suggested that the long-term benefits of this approach may be limited (Saaty 2016, 155). The follow-up questionnaire included Likert-scale items, which Saaty (2016)

adapted from Li's (2002) study on idioms, along with open-ended questions about teaching methodology. Results indicated that both groups found the TBLT method effective for teaching metaphorical expressions, regardless of CMT exposure (Saaty 2016, 159–163). Section 4 will present a detailed comparison between Saaty's (2016) results and those of the present case study.

The only other study that has employed a TBLT framework to teach metaphorical expressions through the CMT-based approach is Niemeier's (2017) work, which focused on conceptual metaphors with colour-related source domains like *sad is blue*, exemplified by *to feel blue*, with 26 intermediate German learners of English. During the lesson, students had the opportunity to trace these expressions back to their underlying conceptual metaphors and clarify previously ambiguous and subjective relationships between the colour-based source domain and the expressions' meanings (Niemeier 2017, 273–274, 280). While Saaty's (2016) results demonstrated the effectiveness of the CMT-based lesson primarily for immediate retention, Niemeier's research highlighted its impact on long-term retention as well. A three-week delayed gap-filling test showed generally positive vocabulary retention; however, the author notes a major limitation of the study, namely the absence of a control group, which unfortunately restricts the statistical reliability of the findings (Niemeier 2017, 280).

To summarize, the survey of previous studies demonstrated that the use of CMT, particularly when integrated into structured frameworks like TBLT, can enhance students' comprehension and retention of metaphorical expressions. The TBLT framework likely enhances retention because it engages learners in meaningful, goal-oriented tasks that promote deeper cognitive processing and provides opportunities to practice and apply new vocabulary in practical contexts. However, while promising, these findings also highlight limitations in long-term retention and the need for further research to establish the statistical reliability and broader applicability of this approach in varied instructional settings.

3. A Case Study of Georgian EFL Learners: Design and Methodology

This section presents a case study on teaching metaphorical expressions to Georgian advanced EFL learners. It examines the efficacy of conceptual metaphor awareness in their learning outcomes and addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the metaphor awareness of Georgian EFL learners improve after being taught metaphorical expressions through the CMT-based approach?

2. How does incorporating the CMT within a TBLT framework enhance the awareness of the 14 metaphorical expressions under scrutiny motivated by the conceptual metaphor *moods are weather*?
3. How do participants assess the effectiveness of the TBLT methodology and the conceptual metaphor approach in enhancing their language proficiency?

The study, conducted over four weeks, involved 24 advanced EFL students from Georgia, allocated to the control and metaphor groups. Data was collected through three metaphor production tests and a feedback questionnaire. The design of this experimental study is adapted from Saaty's (2016) dissertation on teaching L2 metaphors through awareness-raising activities, which includes four distinct experimental studies. Specifically, this study adopts the design from Study 2 (Saaty 2016, 127–168).

The research design of the current study was carefully developed to address key limitations identified in previous studies and specifically aimed to fill gaps in the existing literature through several novel elements. First, whereas prior studies primarily examined intermediate or elementary-level participants, this study focused on C1 advanced learners to offer insights into a higher proficiency level. Second, while most previous studies lacked a dedicated teaching session or methodological framework, the current study implemented a comprehensive TBLT framework, which provides practical pedagogical tips for integrating the CMT-based approach into classroom instruction. Additionally, unlike earlier studies that mainly evaluated the retention and comprehension of metaphorical expressions, this study tested the cued production of metaphorical expressions through an open-ended cloze task, which required participants to fill in the gaps independently without being given a list of possible words.

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 24 Georgian university students, aged 20 to 21, whose first language was Georgian and who were learning English as a foreign language. All participants, consisting of 21 females and 3 males, were second-year English majors at a Georgian university. Prior to the experiment, the students took the *Oxford Placement Test* and were classified at the C1 advanced level. Detailed information about the *Oxford Placement Test* is provided on their website.[2]

[2] https://www.oxfordenglishtesting.com/oupbos/showcontent/2480

The participants were then randomly assigned to the metaphor group (16 students) and the control group (8 students). Due to a limited number of eligible participants, a greater number of students were placed in the metaphor group to allow for a more reliable and detailed examination of the instructional approach being tested. Throughout the four-week study, all participants remained in their assigned groups, with no absences at any experiment stage. After the students were fully informed about the research, they provided verbal consent, understanding that this research study would not affect their university course grades. They were also assured that, although they had to write their names on the test papers, their identities would remain confidential during the analysis.

3.2. Selection of Metaphorical Expressions

Notably, previous research on teaching through CMT has focused on the following conceptual metaphors: *happy is up*, *sad is down*, *possessing something is holding*, *anger is fire*, and *time is money*. While the metaphorical expressions associated with these conceptual metaphors were suitable for teaching and assessing metaphor awareness among elementary and intermediate EFL learners, they might not provide sufficient challenge for advanced learners. Therefore, this study incorporates a more suitable conceptual metaphor for advanced proficiency: *moods are weather*. Consequently, the target metaphorical expressions for this study consist of 14 items that share metaphorical connections to the overarching conceptual metaphor *moods are weather*. This broad metaphor includes several specific conceptual metaphors, such as *storm is aggressive behaviour* and *sunny is cheerful*. To collect the target expressions, I used books where metaphorical expressions are organized by topic, specifically Wright (2002), which includes a chapter titled "Moods Are Weather," and Lazar (2003), which features two related chapters: "A Warm Welcome: Weather" and "Breezing Through: Weather." Additionally, I referred to an article by Gutiérrez Pérez (2016, 13–14), in which the author lists conceptual metaphors related to the source domain *weather conditions* along with their constituent metaphorical expressions.

Table 1 categorizes the 14 expressions used in the study, along with their definitions and corresponding conceptual metaphors. These expressions encompass collocations, phrasal verbs, and idioms, and they demonstrate the diverse ways weather-related language conveys aspects of mood and emotion. Initially, the plan was to exclude idioms and focus solely on metaphorical expressions; however, this

approach would have resulted in a very limited selection. As a result, the final list includes seven idioms.

	Metaphorical Expression	Meaning	Conceptual Metaphor
1.	storm in/into	to enter or leave a place in a way that shows that you are angry	storm is aggressive behaviour
2.	breeze in/into	to walk into a place quickly and confidently, without worry or embarrassment	breeze is confident behaviour
3.	rainy day	a future time of need, esp. financial	rain is misfortune
4.	cloud over	if a person's face clouds over, they suddenly look unhappy or worried	cloud is present or forthcoming problems
5.	snowed under	having too much to do	snow is lack of time
6.	sunny disposition	someone who has a sunny disposition is usually cheerful and happy	sunny is cheerful
7.	warm up	to become friendlier or more receptive	warmth is affection
8.	warm welcome	a hearty, hospitable reception or greeting	
9.	frosty reception	unfriendly and not welcoming	cold/frost/ice is lack of affection/ unfriendliness
10.	icy look/voice	an icy remark, look etc. shows that you feel annoyed with or unfriendly towards someone	
11.	shower someone with something	to give someone a lot of presents or praise	shower is too much of something
12.	not have the foggiest (idea/memory)	to not know or understand something at all	fog is confusion
13.	throw caution to the wind	to ignore the risks and deliberately behave in a way that may cause trouble or problems	wind is lack of restraint
14.	under the weather	if someone is or feels under the weather, they feel ill	weather is health

Table 1. Metaphorical expressions used in the study

To assess whether the difficulty level of the chosen expressions was suitable for advanced English learners, a pilot study was conducted with the help of a fill-in-the-gap task. The pilot study aimed to determine whether advanced proficiency students were unfamiliar with the selected metaphorical expressions or already possessed prior knowledge of them. If the expressions had been too easy for advanced learners, teaching and testing their knowledge would have been ineffective. Consequently, pilot tests that involved the 14 target expressions were administered to 22 Hungarian and 10 Georgian second-year English Studies majors. Hungarian students were included in the pilot test because they were a readily available group during the initial phase of the research, whereas recruiting Georgian participants required more time due to locational constraints. Importantly, the participants in both groups were selected for their similar level of English proficiency. The pilot study results, with an average score of 4.31 out of 14 across all participants, demonstrated that the expressions were challenging enough and appropriate for teaching and assessing metaphor awareness among advanced learners.

3.3. Experiment Time Frame

The study was structured as a four-week experiment, during which the pre-test, teaching session, post-test, evaluation survey, and delayed test were conducted across consecutive weeks. A detailed timeline that outlines the activities for both the control and metaphor groups is presented in Table 2.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Control group</th><th>Metaphor group</th></tr>
<tr><td>Week I
(04.10.2024)</td><td colspan="2">Verbal consent
Pre-test</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Week II
(11.10.2024)
At 10:00 for CG
At 14:00 for MG</td><td colspan="2">Teaching session that consists of
1. Pre-task: daily mood journal and discussion</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">2. Reading task: advice on mood swings</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Language focus: Teaching the 14 metaphorical expressions through the theme of mood/behaviour</td><td>3. Language focus: Teaching the 14 metaphorical expressions through conceptual metaphor awareness</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Immediate post-test</td></tr>
<tr><td>Week III
(18.10.2024)</td><td colspan="2">Survey for evaluation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Week IV
(25.10.2024)</td><td colspan="2">Delayed test (two weeks later)</td></tr>
</table>

Table 2. Schedule of the study

3.4. Lesson Plan

I designed the lesson plan around the overarching conceptual metaphor *moods are weather* to teach the 14 target metaphorical expressions, as listed in Table 1. The lesson, titled *Mood Swings*, is based on the TBLT framework and addresses challenges learners may encounter with mood swings, including their causes, risk factors, and coping strategies. In creating the lesson plan, I again referred to relevant chapters from Wright (2002) and Lazar (2003). For the reading task, I adapted a blog article on mood swings from the *Cleveland Clinic* website.[3]

A major part of the lesson is the same for both groups; however, the main difference between the control and metaphor groups lies in the approach to teaching the metaphorical expressions in parts three, four, and six of the lesson. Part three involves individual reading, and part four consists of individual/pair planning, with differing instructions for the control and metaphor groups. For example, in part three, the control group is instructed to underline words and phrases they believe are related to *mood* or *behaviour*, such as "frosty reception," whereas the metaphor group is asked to underline words and phrases they think are related to either *mood/behaviour* or *weather*, such as "frosty reception," which describes the *reception* as being *frosty*, as if it were *weather*.

Part six, the language focus section, differs the most between the two groups. The control group learners were introduced to the 14 target metaphorical expressions through a list that included their definitions and example sentences. The metaphor group learners, by contrast, were briefly introduced to what conceptual metaphors are and how they influence our thinking and language. They were then taught the same 14 target expressions with the help of a list with their definitions, organized under their constituent conceptual metaphors. A copy of the complete 1.5-hour lesson plan for both groups is included in Appendix 1.

3.5. Metaphor Production Tests and Questionnaire

Two cloze tests were created to evaluate the students' awareness of the 14 target metaphorical expressions. The first test served as both a pre-test and a two-week delayed test, while the second test was used as a post-test. The original pre-test/delayed test can be found in Appendix 2, and the original post-test is in Appendix 3. In both tests, students were asked to complete the sentences by filling each gap

[3] https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/mood-swings (Accessed October 1, 2024).

with a single word. The sentences were adapted from authentic examples found in the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

It is important to note that, similar to Saaty's (2016) test format, the current study employs an open-ended cloze task that requires learners to supply the missing metaphor without any given options. This format allows for the assessment of cued production of metaphors. In contrast, previous research on teaching through CMT primarily employed multiple-choice tasks, fill-in-the-blank tasks with word banks, or underline the correct word tasks, which assess only metaphor retention and comprehension rather than independent production.

Lastly, to evaluate the teaching methodology from the participants' perspective, an evaluation questionnaire was administered during the third week of the study. The questionnaire design was adapted from Saaty (2016), who based the Likert scale items on Li's (2002) study and included four open-ended questions to gather feedback on the overall lesson experience and suggestions for improvement. The original questionnaire for the current study is provided in Appendix 4.

3.6. Procedures and Data Analysis

Two phases of data analysis were conducted to examine the effects of teaching the metaphorical expressions using the CMT-based approach. The results of the control group were compared with those of the metaphor group. First, the number of correct answers on the pre-tests, post-tests, and two-week delayed tests for both groups was counted, and the results from each pair of tests were compared to identify any patterns or differences. Second, to better understand the participants' viewpoints, the answers to the learning experience questionnaire were analyzed and compared. Together, these analyses provided both quantitative and qualitative results on the effectiveness of the CMT-based instructional approach, the details of which are discussed in Section 4.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Metaphor Test Results

To assess the learning outcomes, learners from both the metaphor and control groups completed a metaphor cloze test that comprised the 14 taught metaphorical expressions based on the *moods are weather* conceptual metaphor. Their performance

in the pre-tests, post-tests, and two-week delayed tests was evaluated by counting and analyzing the number of correct answers, with a maximum possible score of 14 on each test. An independent samples t-test was administered to compare the mean scores between the metaphor and control groups at each testing phase. Table 3 presents the participant count (n), average scores (M), standard deviations (SD), and t-test significance values (t). Additionally, Figure 1 illustrates the differences in average scores across the three tests in the form of a chart.

	Control Group (n=8)	**Metaphor Group** (n=16)	**Test Statistics**
Pre-test	M=1.25 SD= 0.89	M=1.31 SD= 0.87	t(22)=-0.164, p=0.871
Post-test	M=7.75 SD=0.71	M=12.94 SD= 0.98	t(22)=-13.083, p<0.001
Delayed test (two weeks later)	M=4.38 SD=1.19	M=10.75 SD=1.13	t(22)=-12.855, p<0.001

Table 3. Average scores for pre-tests, post-tests, and two-week delayed tests

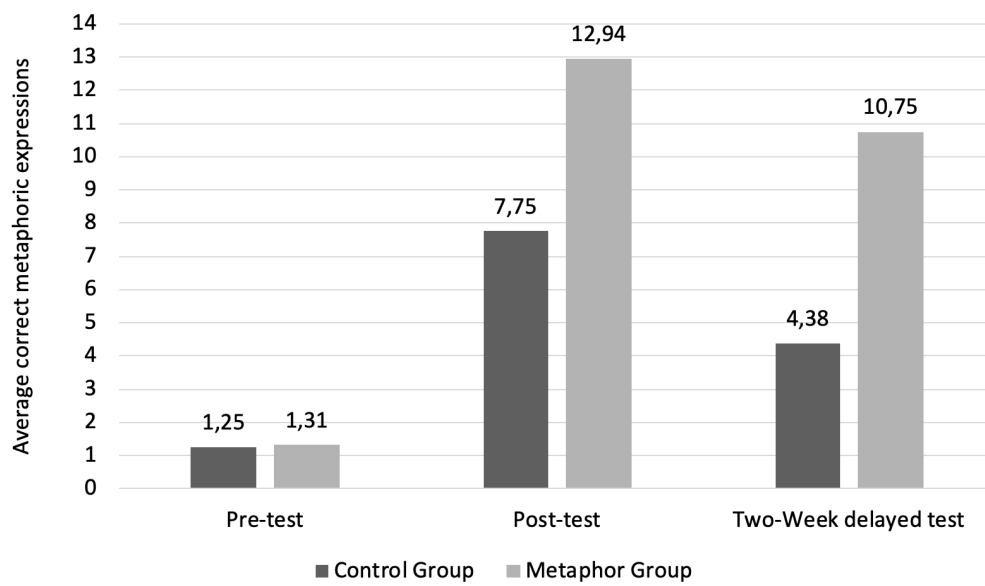

Figure 1. The differences in average scores across the three tests

Table 3 and Figure 1 demonstrate that the metaphor group had a mean pre-test score of 1.31, whereas the control group obtained a mean score of 1.25. The results show no apparent distinction between the compared groups ($t(22)=-0.164$, $p=0.871$). This consistency in the results guarantees that any differences in later assessments can be accurately ascribed to the teaching session rather than to pre-existing variations in the learners' knowledge of the target metaphorical expressions.

After completing the pre-test, both groups participated in a TBLT session, where the key difference was that the metaphor group's instructions incorporated conceptual metaphor awareness, whereas the control group's did not. The post-test results, shown in Table 3 and Figure 1, reveal a significant difference between the groups: the control group achieved an average score of 7.75, while the metaphor group scored 12.94, which is nearly twice as high. An independent samples t-test also confirmed that this difference is statistically significant, $t(22)=-13.083$, $p<0.001$. These results suggest that incorporating the conceptual metaphor approach helped the metaphor group better understand the 14 target metaphorical expressions compared to the control group.

These findings are in line with the main study that served as the basis for this experiment. According to Saaty's (2016, 152–154) post-test results, the metaphor group averaged 8.68 out of a potential score of 17, while the control group averaged 4.73. However, it is important to note that while both studies demonstrate nearly double the performance for the metaphor group compared to the control group, the overall performance of the metaphor group is higher in the current study, where learners answered approximately 92.4% of the test correctly, compared to Saaty's (2016, 152–154) study, where learners answered only 51.1% of the test correctly. This distinction in overall performance might be attributed to the difference in proficiency levels, as the advanced English learners in the current study may have benefited more from the teaching through the CMT compared to the intermediate-level learners in Saaty's (2016) study.

When it comes to other studies on teaching using the CMT-based approach (Kövecses & Szabó 1996; Boers 2000; Li 2002; Boers et al. 2004; Csábi 2004; Condon 2008; Beréndi et al. 2008; Pan 2019), the results are also aligned, as all the studies found that metaphor groups outperformed the control groups in immediate post-tests.

To evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the experiment, a delayed test, which was identical to the pre-test, was administered to both groups two weeks after the post-test. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 1, the control group achieved a mean score of 4.38, while the metaphor group scored significantly higher, with a mean

of 10.75 – more than double the control group's average. The metaphor group's significant outperformance of the control group, evident in the two-week delayed tests, mirrors the pattern observed in the immediate post-tests and suggests that the CMT-based teaching continued to enhance the cued production of metaphorical expressions over the longer term. On the other hand, as is often the case with delayed tests, scores decreased in both groups between the post-test and the two-week delayed test; however, the control group experienced a larger decline, with a mean decrease of 3.37 compared to the metaphor group's mean decrease of 2.19. The smaller decline in the metaphor group's scores further supports the effectiveness of the CMT-based lesson for the long-term retention of metaphorical expressions. It is also possible that reduced motivation or test fatigue during the follow-up stage contributed to this overall decline.

The outcomes of the two-week delayed tests in this study differ from Saaty's (2016, 155–157) findings, where both the metaphor and control groups demonstrated very low overall scores. In Saaty's study, the control group achieved a mean score of only 2.17, while the metaphor group scored 2.32 out of a maximum of 17 (Saaty 2016, 155–157). This suggests that neither the TBLT teaching method nor TBLT combined with the CMT-based approach effectively supported the long-term retention of metaphorical expressions. This difference could once again be attributed to the difference in proficiency levels, as the advanced English learners in the current study may have gained greater long-term benefits from the CMT-based teaching approach compared to the intermediate-level learners in Saaty's (2016) study.

Other studies on teaching through the CMT-based approach rarely use delayed tests, primarily because it is challenging to recruit all participants after some time has passed since the experiment. However, Li (2002, 184–185) and Pan (2019, 70–72) used one-week delayed tests in their studies, both of which showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group. These studies provide evidence for the medium- or long-term benefits of the CMT-based teaching and align with the findings of the current study. On the other hand, Condon (2006, 148–149), who utilized six-week delayed tests, did not find any significant difference between the performance of the experimental and control groups in the delayed post-test and did not find any evidence of long-term benefits, similar to the findings of Saaty (2016). Differences in delayed test results across these studies may be influenced by the varying time intervals used. Shorter intervals, such as the one-week delayed tests in Li (2002) and Pan (2019), may better capture the retention benefits of CMT-based teaching, whereas longer intervals, such as the six-week test in Condon (2006) and

the two-week test in Saaty (2016), suggest that these retention benefits fade over time. Another explanation could be that Condon's (2006) participants had limited practice with the target items and lacked a comprehensive teaching session. Alternatively, as discussed earlier, the long-term retention benefits of the CMT-based lesson may be more effective for advanced proficiency learners, as seen in the current study, compared to intermediate learners in the studies by Condon (2006) and Saaty (2016).

4.2. Questionnaire Results

The participants' evaluation questionnaire assessed their perceptions of the teaching session and methodology. Statistical methods were used for the closed-ended questions, and qualitative methods were used for the open-ended ones (see Appendix 4 for the original questionnaire). The closed-item questions asked participants to evaluate five aspects of the *Mood Swings* lesson: the informativeness and novelty of the learning material, the novelty of the teaching method, its effectiveness in aiding vocabulary memorization, and its potential to increase vocabulary. Responses were measured on a Likert scale, where 1 indicated "Strongly Disagree" and 5 indicated "Strongly Agree". I analyzed the average scores from the control and metaphor groups and found no notable differences in how the two groups evaluated their experiences. Figure 2 provides a detailed depiction of the variations in the average scores for each of the five individual closed-item questions.

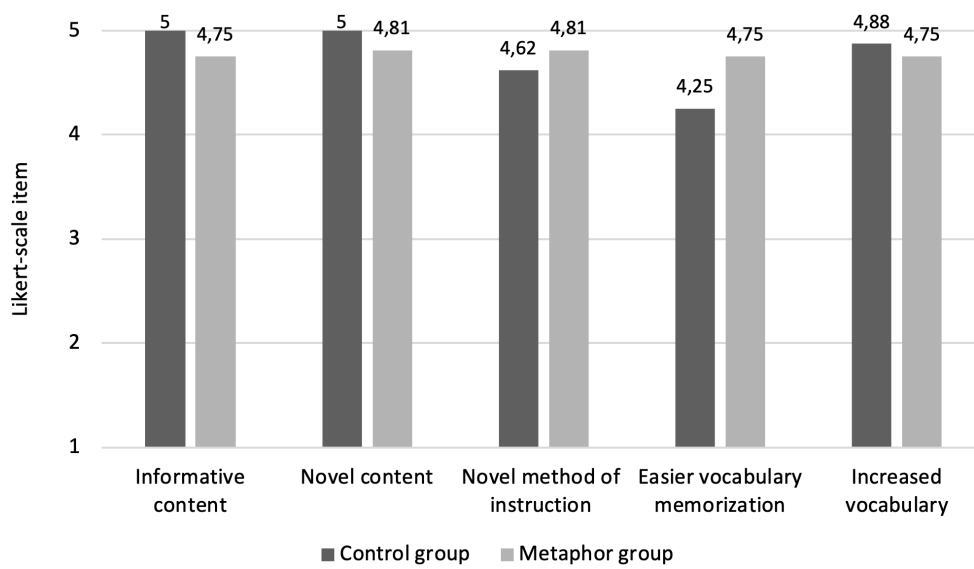

Figure 2. Average scores of closed-ended questions in the evaluation survey

As shown in Figure 2, both the control (n= 8, M= 4.75) and metaphor groups (n= 16, M= 4.77) expressed overall agreement and positive feedback on the five individual items in the questionnaire. This suggests that the TBLT approach to teaching metaphorical expressions was well-received and considered effective, regardless of whether the CMT was incorporated. These results are consistent with Saaty's (2016, 159–163) findings, where all participants also rated the TBLT-based teaching of metaphorical expressions as highly satisfactory.

I analyzed participants' responses from the open-ended section of the survey and identified three central themes: strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement. This section examines these themes based on the feedback from learners in both groups, including excerpts from their evaluations.

All learners in both the control and metaphor groups responded "yes" to the first open-ended question, "Do you enjoy learning English vocabulary through a task-based approach (i.e., learning vocabulary in the context of other skills and engaging in lifelike tasks)? Why?" In their explanations for this response, they expressed a generally positive evaluation of the task-based learning method and provided favourable comments such as "It feels more practical and real," "It kept me engaged and focused," "I learn faster in real situations," "It's more exciting than typical lessons."

In response to the second question, "What are the things you liked about the Mood Swings lesson?" all participants provided one or two key points. However, the themes of their responses differed between the control and metaphor groups. The control group primarily highlighted aspects such as the lesson's topic, its instructiveness, and practicality. For example, their comments included, "the relatable topic," "It was very interactive," and "Useful for daily conversations." While the metaphor group also acknowledged these aspects, their responses primarily centred on conceptual metaphor awareness. This suggests that the explicit instruction on conceptual metaphors enhanced their ability to identify and understand the figurative meanings of the taught expressions. For example, "It helped me to see how English language uses weather-related words to talk about emotions and mood," "Identifying the meaning of expressions was like solving a puzzle," "I enjoyed learning the hidden layers of phrases and words," "Linking words to weather made everything clearer," "Seeing emotions as weather helped me connect ideas."

For the third question, "What are the things you did not like about the Mood Swings lesson?" no significant thematic differences emerged between the two groups. Among the 24 participants, seven left the question unanswered, while eight stated that they liked everything about the lesson. The remaining nine students indicated in

their feedback that the lesson felt slightly lengthy. For example: "The Mood Log was time-consuming," "Lesson was a bit long," "I would shorten the text."

The final question, "Is there anything you would change about the Mood Swings lesson?" similarly revealed no significant thematic differences between the two groups. Five students left it blank and six said that they would not change anything. The remaining eleven students indicated in their feedback that videos and visuals could enhance engagement, and a feedback session at the end of the lesson would be beneficial. For example, "Add some video, maybe," "Add feedback at the end of the lesson."

In summary, the survey showed that both groups responded favourably to the TBLT method for teaching metaphorical expressions, with comments on the approach being largely positive. Significantly, answers to the second question, "What are the things you liked about the Mood Swings lesson?" showed a distinct difference. The metaphor group emphasized how knowing about conceptual metaphors can have a powerful influence, which they found to be both interesting and helpful for comprehending figurative meanings. Meanwhile, the control group highlighted the lesson's topic, instructiveness, and practicality. This distinction shows that the conceptual metaphor approach helps advanced learners develop a deeper understanding of figurative language and its underlying meanings.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to report the results of an experiment conducted with Georgian EFL learners to investigate the efficiency of CMT-based instruction integrated with TBLT methodology. Generally, the results indicate that employing the CMT-based approach in teaching metaphorical expressions enhances L2 learners' metaphor awareness. These findings align with those of Saaty (2016), whose study informed the design of the current research, as well as with other studies discussed in Section 2.2 of this article. Importantly, the case study of Georgian EFL learners addressed gaps in previous research in several ways. It focused on C1 advanced learners, implemented a comprehensive TBLT framework to integrate the CMT-based teaching into classroom instruction, and evaluated the cued production of metaphorical expressions through an open-ended cloze task.

The data analysis from all components of this four-week experiment, including the pre-test, post-test, two-week delayed test, and participant evaluation survey, reveals significant improvement in the metaphor awareness of Georgian EFL learners following explicit instruction on conceptual metaphors. Specifically, the

metaphor group achieved nearly twice the average score of the control group in the immediate post-tests and more than double the control group's average in the two-week delayed tests. Previous studies, such as Saaty (2016) and Condon (2006), demonstrated the effectiveness of the CMT-based teaching in immediate post-tests but noted a decline in its impact during delayed tests. In contrast, the findings of this study suggest that advanced English learners benefited from the CMT-based lesson in both the short and long term and attained better outcomes compared to the intermediate-level learners in the aforementioned studies. Therefore, incorporating the CMT-based teaching approach into English classrooms is highly recommended for C1 advanced learners to enhance their metaphor awareness and overall language proficiency. In line with this recommendation, the detailed lesson plan and tests developed for this case study provide a practical example of how teachers can implement CMT paired with TBLT methodology in the classroom.

Lastly, the participant evaluation questionnaire revealed that both the control and metaphor groups responded highly positively to the TBLT method for teaching metaphorical expressions. They appreciated it for being informative and introducing new material through an unfamiliar teaching method, which they found helpful for easier vocabulary retention and expansion. Interestingly, responses from the metaphor group about what they liked most about the lesson predominantly focused on the conceptual metaphors, which suggests that the CMT-based lesson had a strong impact on their overall experience in the teaching session.

It should be acknowledged that given the small sample size of EFL students in this experiment, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Several factors contributed to this limitation. For instance, it was difficult to access larger groups of advanced English learners, who were both willing to participate in a four-week experiment and available to take a proficiency test beforehand to confirm their level. In addition, the most suitable candidates were English majors, who had an uneven gender distribution.

Future research could expand the scope of the study to include a larger and more diverse participant pool with balanced gender representation. Additionally, longer-term delayed tests beyond two weeks could be incorporated to provide a better assessment of the CMT-based teaching efficacy. It would also be valuable to examine whether proficiency levels are the primary factor influencing the effectiveness of CMT-based lessons, or whether other variables contribute to the observed differences. Finally, future studies could explore EFL teachers' perspectives and experiences to better understand why the benefits of CMT-based instruction have not been more widely adopted within the profession.

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Correlations in Frequency of Coda Voiceless Stop Variants with Phonological and Stylistic Factors in Vietnamese-Accented English

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Abstract

This study investigates how Vietnamese-accented English speakers articulate coda voiceless plosives (/p, t, k/), influenced by L1 phonology and sociolinguistic factors. Since Vietnamese only allows unreleased /p, t, k/ in coda positions and forbids consonant clusters, the learners often adapt English coda plosives using modifications such as glottalisation, deletion, and vowel insertion. Using Labov's sociolinguistic interview framework, speech data were gathered from 22 Vietnamese speakers across different ages, regions, and English proficiency levels in four speech styles. Ten allophonic variants were identified, with unreleased and/or glottalised forms being the most common (49.3%). The study found that speech style, place of articulation, and cluster position significantly influenced pronunciation, with increased glottalisation and deletion in informal contexts, especially for /t/ and /k/, whereas /p/ remained more stable. The findings suggest that some VE variants mirror native English usage, offering insights for improving English pronunciation instruction in Vietnam through context-sensitive, evidence-based approaches.

Keywords

L2 phonology, Vietnamese-accented English, coda voiceless plosives, sociolinguistic factors, phonological transfer

1. Introduction

Coda voiceless plosives /p, t, k/ in English can vary a lot depending on both adjacent sounds and the speaker's use of language in context. In native varieties of English, these sounds may be glottalised, aspirated, or even left out entirely, depending on factors such as speaking style

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and the surrounding phonetic environment. In Vietnamese-accented English (VE), this variation becomes more complicated due to influence from L1. Vietnamese allows only unreleased /p, t, k/ in syllable-final positions, and does not permit coda consonant clusters. As a result, VE learners often produce coda voiceless plosives with variants such as unreleased, glottalised, substituted, or modified articulations, and simplify final clusters by dropping sounds, inserting vowels, or producing voiceless plosives without audible release.

Fortunately, unreleased and/or glottalised realisations of coda voiceless plosives in VE are native-like. However, prior research on VE has predominantly focused on learners' errors while overlooking the presence of native-like pronunciations of coda voiceless plosives, as well as the interaction between linguistic and sociolinguistic variation. With these factors in mind, to fill in the research gap, this study investigates the allophonic variation of VE coda /p, t, k/ and their potential correlations with sociolinguistic factors. The following questions are raised to guide the inquiry:

1. What are the allophonic variants of VE coda voiceless plosives?
2. What factors affect these VE allophonic variants?
3. What are the correlations between the allophonic variants of VE coda voiceless plosives and the affecting factors?

The study employed the sociolinguistic interview method developed by Labov (1972) to collect the pronunciations of VE coda voiceless plosives in various speech styles, from formal to informal. It further explores the allophonic variations and correlations between linguistic and non-linguistic contributions. The findings aim to enhance the efficiency of phonetic and phonological training for Vietnamese adult learners, particularly in mastering English coda /p, t, k/, and to improve pedagogical approaches for English coda consonants more broadly within Vietnamese contexts. By providing empirical insights into VE phonetics and phonology, this research contributes to the literature on VE and supports the development of targeted pedagogical strategies for English language education in Vietnam.

The paper is organised into nine sections. Sections 1, 8, and 9 cover the introduction, limitations, and conclusion respectively. Section 2 looks at how L2 phonological variation, specifically the pronunciation of coda voiceless plosives, is shaped by sociolinguistic and contextual factors in second language learning, focusing on VE. Section 3 compares how coda voiceless plosives are pronounced in Vietnamese and English, pointing out key similarities and differences that may

influence VE pronunciation. Section 4 explores how VE speakers tend to simplify coda consonant clusters, especially those with voiceless plosives, due to the rules of Vietnamese phonology. Section 5 highlights the way in which VE speakers often voice English /p/ and /k/ (influenced by L1), while /t/ tends to be easier for them, likely because Vietnamese allows some aspiration in alveolar stops but not in bilabial or glottal ones. Section 6 explains the methods used to analyse how often different allophonic variants of English coda voiceless plosives appear in VE, and how this relates to speech style and phonological factors. Section 7 presents the findings, showing how factors such as place of articulation, style of speech, and the position of the plosive in coda consonant clusters affect how these sounds are realised in VE.

2. Style and Variation in Vietnamese-Accented English

In SLA and foreign language learning, L2 phonological variation is connected to sociolinguistic interference, affected by contextual factors like linguistic dimensions, environment, formality, style, and audience (Hansen 2006). This is because variationists and SLA researchers both study structured speech forms, with variationist research focusing on changes over time in L2 speech. SLA and variation studies on non-standard dialects explore speakers' internal systems to determine if their forms are structured or haphazard, finding systematic variability in L2 data (Regan 2013). Also, collaboration between SLA and variationist researchers acknowledges that variability in L2 data is influenced by multiple elements, leading researchers to use multivariate analysis to examine how linguistic and social factors impact L2 speech (Pienemann 2007).

Speech style therefore plays a significant role in how coda voiceless stops are pronounced. In more formal settings, L2 speakers may try to pronounce stops more clearly, sometimes adding aspiration (like [t^h] or [k^h]), while in casual speech they might drop them or replace them with glottal stops (Foulkes and Docherty 2006). In VE, this stylistic variation is closely tied to L1 habits. Speakers usually pay much more attention to pronouncing standard English sounds in tasks like reading aloud, but shift back to more familiar, L1-based pronunciations during spontaneous conversation. Tang (2007), for instance, found that Vietnamese speakers used more aspirated stops when reading, but often left them unreleased or dropped in interviews.

As one English variety, VE shows non-native pronunciation patterns shaped by all L1 influence, part of Universals (Jenkins 2000, Kirkpatrick 2007), and English constraints (Major 2001). Younger Vietnamese speakers in particular often adjust their speech based on who they are talking to and what the situation calls for (Tang

2007). This kind of flexibility helps explain why their pronunciation can shift depending on formality and context. In sum, the way VE speakers pronounce coda voiceless stops depends on a mix of phonological and stylistic factors. Informal speech tends to bring out more glottalised, unreleased, or deleted forms, while formal settings push toward more standard or aspirated variants.

3. Coda Voiceless Plosives in Vietnamese and English Phonology

Vietnamese and English share unreleased and/or glottalised coda /p, t, k/. Debate persists on glottalisation with Vietnamese coda /p, t, k/. Some scholars argue against it (Michaud 2004), while others assert that all Vietnamese coda /p, t, k/ feature glottal reinforcement (Singer 2012), as in *khóc* 'cry' [kʰoʔkˀ]. The trend is that Vietnamese coda /p, t, k/ appear unreleased and/or glottalised (Tran et al. 2019). Likewise, English coda /p, t, k/ may lack audible release bursts, often reinforced or replaced by a glottal stop (Cruttenden 2014).

Despite these similarities, English and Vietnamese coda /p, t, k/ exhibit nuances. Remarkably, Vietnamese final /p, t, k/ are consistently unreleased, unlike English, where occasional releases occur (Lisker 1999) due to phonotactic and phonological factors. Vietnamese coda /p, t, k/ remain invariably unreleased and/or glottalised regardless of their adjacent consonants or vowels from contiguous syllables, as coda [ʔkˀ] in *khóc lóc* 'tearful' [kʰoʔkˀˊ loʔkˀˊ], *khóc nhè* 'cry' [kʰoʔkˀˊ ɳɛˋˋ], and *khóc đi* 'Cry!' [kʰoʔkˀˊ di], where [ʔkˀ] pronunciation persists in all examples. The reason is that Vietnamese consonants are mainly ingressive, causing implosive coda /p, t, k/, with aspirated ones limited to onsets.

English consonants, by contrast, are primarily egressive, forming voiceless plosives /p, t, k/. These plosives are typically aspirated [pʰ, tʰ, kʰ], but can be unaspirated /p, t, k/ after /s/ in clusters [sp, st, sk] (Balogné Bérces & Szentgyörgyi 2006). Acoustically, English plosives undergo closing, holding, and release phases (Laver 1994). In codas, their release varies with nearby sounds, often without audible ([pˀ, tˀ, kˀ]). They may be inaudibly released before another plosive (as in *locked* [lɒkˀt], *blackboard* [blækˀbɔːd], and *thick dust* [θɪkˀ dʌst]), nasally released before a nasal (as in *acknowledge* [əkⁿnɒlɪdʒ], *dark night* [dɑːkⁿ naɪt], and *black magic* [blækⁿ ˈmædʒɪk]), or laterally released before a lateral (as in *buckle* [ˈbʌkˡl̩] and *blackleg* [ˈblækˡleg]) (Cruttenden 2014). Frequency shifts in the pre-consonantal vowel formants help in perceiving these unreleased codas, possibly less intelligible after diphthongs, particularly [kˀ] (Ogden 2017). These cross-linguistic similarities and differences in the coda realisations may explain how L1 Vietnamese phonology influences the production of VE coda voiceless plosives.

4. Clusters and Pronunciation Choices in Vietnamese-Accented English

Where a stop appears in a consonant cluster, this also affects how it is pronounced. Hansen (2011) showed that the more complex the cluster, the more likely it is that parts of it will be dropped. In VE, stops that appear in coda consonant clusters, e.g., the /k/ in *act* or the /p/ in *helped*, are more likely to be simplified or broken up by extra vowels, especially if they are in the middle or end of the cluster (Nguyen and Ingram 2007). Tran and Nguyen (2022) further observed that Vietnamese speakers tend to simplify three-consonant clusters by omitting the first, the second, or occasionally both consonants, especially in clusters containing voiceless plosives. These deleted, simplified, or vowel-inserted realisations of coda consonant clusters are in line with Vietnamese phonology, which favours only one consonant after a vowel (i.e., CV, VC, and CVC) (Tang 2007). Furthermore, Vietnamese phonology is primarily monosyllabic, meaning consonant clusters only occur at syllable edges between single-syllable words in fluent speech (Tran et al. 2019). This supports the idea that VE speakers rely on simplification strategies that match the rules of their first language.

5. Variation across Place of Articulation in Vietnamese-Accented English

Although VE learners often alter the voicing of voiceless consonants, particularly plosives such as /p/ and /k/, by producing them as their voiced counterparts due to differences in voicing features between English and Vietnamese (Hwa-Froelich et al. 2002), they generally do not encounter significant difficulty in pronouncing English /t/ (Tran and Nguyen 2022). This may be attributed to the fact that Vietnamese allows slight aspiration in alveolar stops like /t^h/, but not in other places of articulation, such as bilabial or glottal positions (Tran and Nguyen 2022).

Taken together, the present study on VE coda voiceless plosives explores allophonic variation in foreign language learning, as well as examining the contributions of linguistic factors (i.e., place of articulation, plosive position in coda consonant clusters) and sociolinguistic factors (i.e., speech style), along with the interaction between these factors as a key role in shaping these patterns.

6. Study on the Correlations of Frequency of Coda Voiceless Stop Variants with Phonological and Stylistic Factors in Vietnamese-Accented English

6.1. Data Collection

6.1.1. Quantitative Methods

With the aim of achieving the research goals and optimising the validity and profound insights of the study, quantitative methods were employed. The speech data from VE informants was used for both acoustic and statistical analyses.

6.1.2. The Participants

A total of 22 well-educated Vietnamese speakers of English, all of whom were university students or lecturers at the time of the interviews, from Saigon University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, were selected as participants. They represented varying levels of English proficiency: 8 were at the pre-intermediate level, 9 at the intermediate level, and 5 at the upper-intermediate level. The age distribution included 15 individuals in their 20s, 6 in their 30s, and 1 over 40. Gender representation was diverse, with 14 female and 8 male participants. Additionally, the informants came from different regions of Vietnam: 3 speakers from the North, 3 from the Central region, and 16 from the South. This selection ensured a broad range of linguistic backgrounds, providing a comprehensive view of the variation in English pronunciation among Vietnamese speakers across different levels of language proficiency and sociolinguistic factors.

6.1.3. The Interview

Interview data were collected through individual audio-recordings conducted in quiet rooms on university campuses. To examine variation in the linguistic forms used by informants, the interview elicited speech data across four speech styles: (i) fully controlled speech (FC), (ii) partially controlled speech (PC), (iii) second partially controlled speech (PC2), in which participants re-read a passage, and (iv) spontaneous conversational speech (S). The interview format followed the sociolinguistic interview protocol developed by Labov (1972). As Labov (1981) noted, spontaneous speech, where speakers pay minimal attention to their speech, provides the most systematic data for linguistic analysis.

This study required both spontaneous and controlled speech data to examine how learners' real-time language production compares with their perceptions of the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese coda voiceless plosives (/p, t, k/). Furthermore, since more casual speech styles tend to reflect earlier-acquired phonological rules, whereas formal styles are often shaped later through education and conscious correction, sociolinguistic interviews were structured to proceed from formal to informal contexts.

Accordingly, the interview comprised three main tasks, presented in order from most to least formal: (1) reading 40 minimal pairs, (2) reading and completing a 200-word passage twice, and (3) engaging in a question-and-answer interactive conversation with the interviewer. The full list of interview questions is provided in the Appendix.

6.1.4. The Interview Procedures

The data collection took place over a four-month period at Saigon University in Vietnam. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The researcher interviewed and recorded the informants' speech concurrently. To minimise attention to target forms, informants were not informed about the specific speech sounds under investigation until the end of the interview. All interviews were recorded using the same smartphone device to ensure consistency in audio quality.

6.2. Data Processing

The 60-minute recordings, collected across fully controlled, partially controlled, repeated partially controlled, and spontaneous speech styles from 22 informants, were automatically transcribed using Cockatoo Transcription (AI-powered), with manual cross-checking conducted by the researcher. Transcripts were segmented and partially annotated using Praat software. Cockatoo generated text transcriptions for permanent storage and further analysis, with each informant's data organised into separate sheets. The transcriptions included pauses or hesitations, represented by ellipses (...), as well as any speech errors made by informants. Praat was used to segment, annotate, and acoustically analyse the speech data, providing visualisations and detailed measurements of relevant phonetic features.

6.3. Data Analysis

This study employed quantitative methods. Descriptive statistics were used to report the frequency (in percentages) of informants' production of allophonic variants, based on the total number of potential occurrences of English coda voiceless plosives across different places of articulation (/p/, /t/, /k/), speech styles (fully controlled [FC], partially controlled [PC], repeated partially controlled [PC2], and spontaneous [S]), and the position of the plosive within coda consonant clusters (singleton coda, or as the first, second, or third member in a cluster). Descriptive analyses were conducted using R and Microsoft Excel and served as the basis for subsequent inferential statistical tests.

Inferential statistics were conducted using R to determine significant correlations between (a) speech style, place of articulation, and the frequency of coda /p, t, k/ allophonic variants; and (b) speech style and the position of the plosive within coda clusters. A multiple regression test was used for these analyses. Statistical significance was determined at the $p = .05$ level. Additionally, any unexpected or emergent findings were also taken into account during the final analysis.

7. Results

7.1. Allophonic Variation in VE Coda Voiceless Plosives

The analysis of VE coda voiceless plosives revealed notable variation across allophonic variants, places of articulation, speech styles, and plosive positions within consonant clusters. In general, a total of ten allophonic variants were identified across the dataset (see Table 1). Table 1 provides a summary of the frequency of different voiceless coda plosive variants in VE, offering insight into how often each variant appears across the dataset. These ten allophonic variants are unreleased and/or glottalised, aspirated, dropped, plain voiceless plosive, [s]-inserted and/or substituted, [f]-inserted and/or substituted, [i]- or [ə]-inserted and/or substituted, laterally released, nasally released, and velarised.

The most dominant variant by far was the unreleased and/or glottalised form, accounting for 49.3% of all tokens. This suggests that articulatory reduction is a prevailing strategy in VE, particularly in coda position where plosive release may be minimised or replaced by glottal closure. The high frequency of this variant reflects common patterns in casual or spontaneous speech, where full articulation is often reduced for efficiency.

In contrast, aspirated plosives made up 20.7% of the data, making them the second most frequent variant. This relatively high rate of aspiration indicates that clear, fully articulated plosives still occur regularly, particularly in more careful speech contexts. Dropped plosives occurred in 10.5% of cases, showing that coda position is vulnerable to segment loss, especially in rapid or informal speech. Similarly, plain voiceless plosives, which were neither aspirated, unreleased, nor modified, were present in 9.5% of tokens, indicating that the plain form is relatively preserved, though much less frequent than the modified forms.

Among less frequent variants, [s]- insertion and/or substitution accounted for 3.6% of the data, suggesting some degree of phonological reanalysis or assimilation, possibly when speakers adjust coda structure to fit L2 phonotactic constraints. [f]- insertion and/or substitution appeared in 2.7% of tokens, typically linked to variation in the bilabial /p/, often surfacing in more casual speech. Other types of variants (i.e., lateral release, nasalisation, non-systematic modifications, velarisation, and vowel colouring ([i]/[ə])) each occurred in fewer than 1% of cases. These are likely context-sensitive or speaker-specific and do not represent regular patterns in the dataset. In sum, the data show that reduction strategies, especially unreleased and/or glottalised forms, are central to how VE speakers handle voiceless coda plosives.

Allophonic Variant	Percentage (%)
Unreleased and/or glottalised	49.3
Aspirated	20.7
Dropped	10.5
Plain voiceless plosive	9.5
[s]-inserted and/or substituted	*n/a for /p/*, included for /t/, /k/ (3.6 total)*
[f]-inserted and/or substituted	2.7
[i]- or [ə]-inserted and/or substituted	0.9
Velarised	*n/a for /k/*, included for /p/, /t/ (0.9 total)*
Laterally released	0.7
Nasally released	0.7
Non-systematic variants	0.7

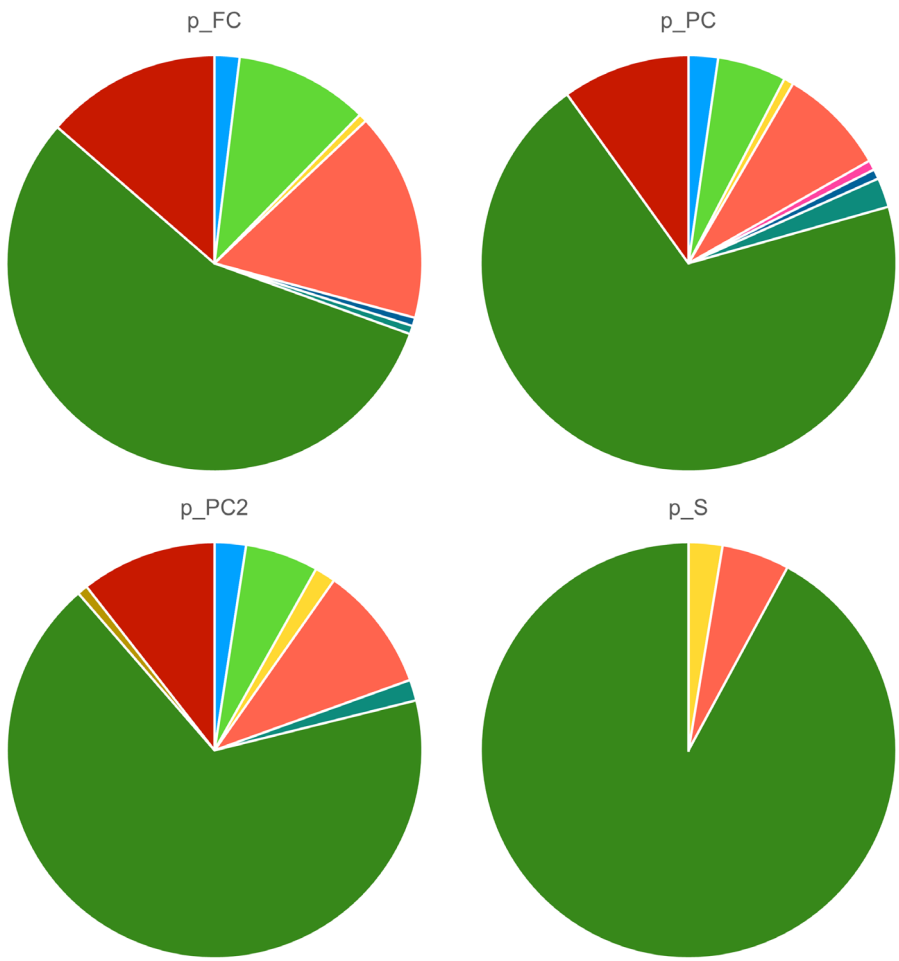
Table 1. Frequencies of Allophonic Variants of Coda Voiceless Plosives in Vietnamese-Accented English

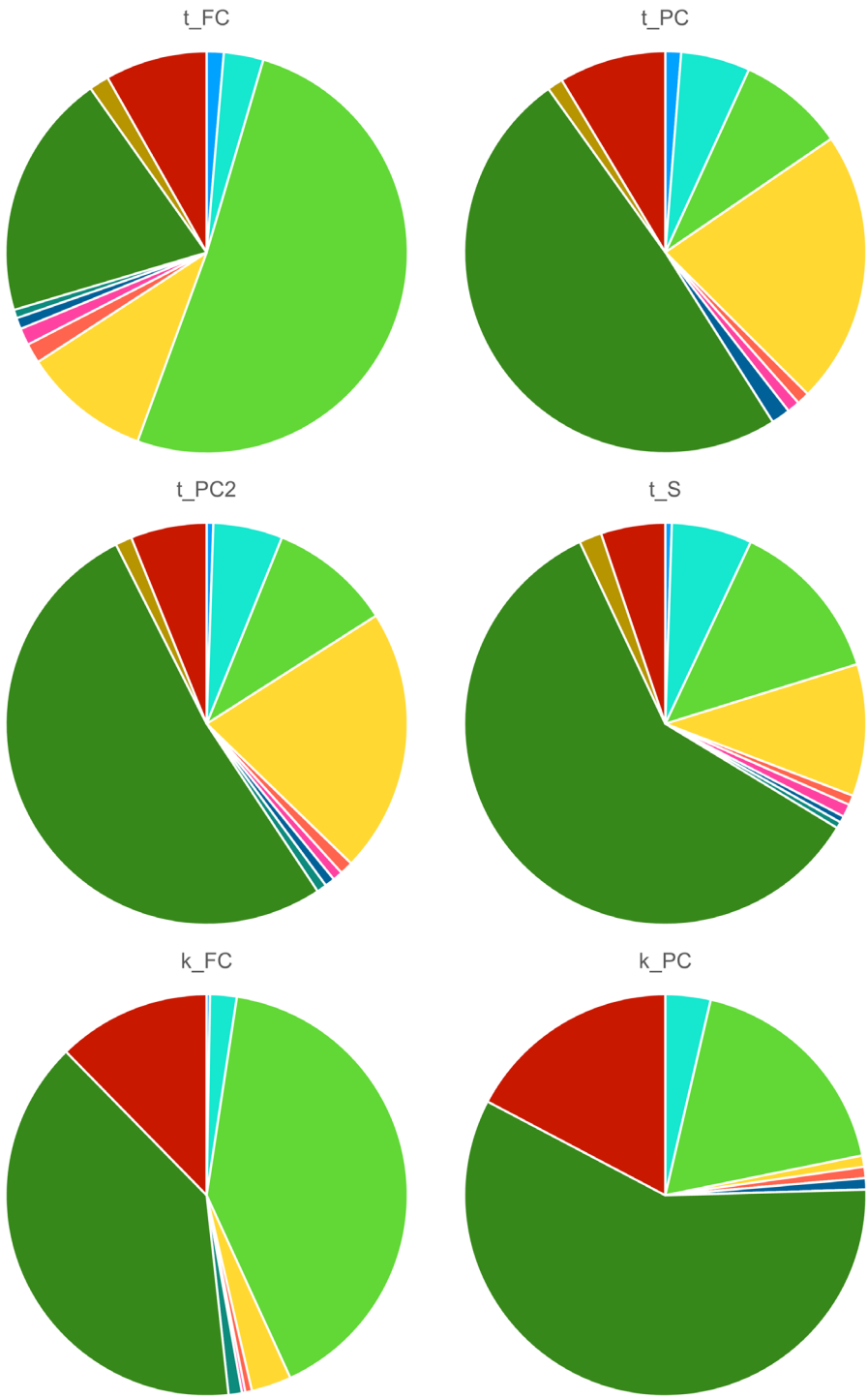
Note. /t/ exhibited all ten allophones and additional non-systematic forms. /p/ lacked [s]-insertion/substitution, and /k/ lacked velarisation.

The results also suggest that the frequency of coda voiceless plosive variants in VE was significantly influenced by the interaction of three key linguistic factors: place of articulation, speech style, and the position of the plosive within a consonant cluster. The correlations among these factors and their illustrations are presented in the subsequent sections.

7.2. Correlations of Allophonic Variants of Coda Voiceless Plosives in Vietnamese-Accented English with Their Places of Articulation and Speech Styles

As a result of a multiple regression analysis conducted in R, which yielded a statistically significant p-value ($p = 1.459 \times 10^{-14}$), a meaningful relationship was identified between the frequency of coda voiceless plosive variants, their places of articulation, and speech style. In other words, the data demonstrated that speech style had a significant effect on the realisation of these sounds, with different places of articulation (i.e., coda /p/, /t/, and /k/) being variably influenced (see Chart 1).

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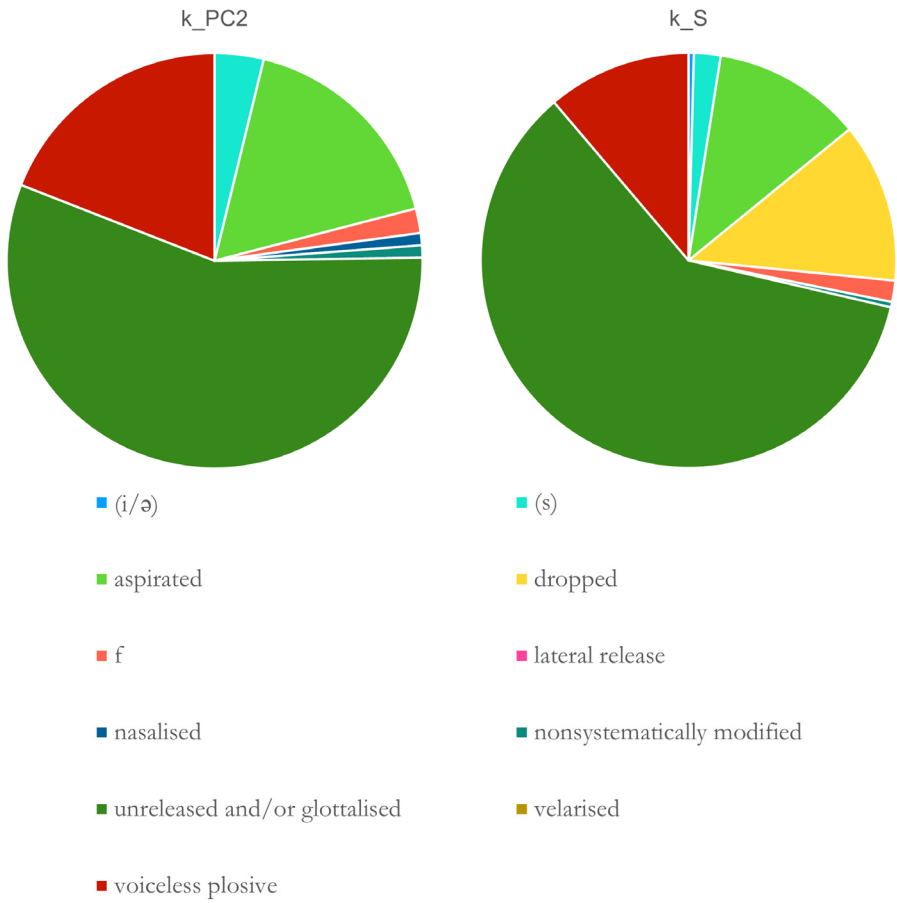


Chart 1. Frequencies of allophonic variants of coda voiceless plosives in Vietnamese-accented English across places of articulation and speech styles

Note. FC: fully controlled speech
PC: partially controlled speech
PC2: repeated partially controlled speech
S: spontaneous speech

Specifically, for /k/, in fully controlled speech, voiceless plosives were produced with more aspiration (40.8%) and fewer reductions, with only 3.2% of tokens dropped and 39.4% being unreleased and/or glottalised. However, in spontaneous speech, the /k/ sound was simplified more often, with a higher rate of glottalisation (60.2%) and a slight increase in deletion (12.5%). This suggests that when speech becomes less controlled, speakers tend to simplify the pronunciation of coda /k/, making it more likely to be dropped or glottalised.

For /p/, fully controlled speech showed minimal changes, with just 16.2% of /p/ tokens being realised as [f], which could point to some fricativisation. In

spontaneous speech, /p/ stayed mostly stable, with very little deletion (2.6%). However, in partially controlled and repeated partially controlled speech, there were more reductions, with unreleased and/or glottalised forms occurring at higher rates (up to 69.5% and 67.5%, respectively). This suggests that while /p/ tends to stay more stable than other plosives, it is nevertheless simplified in more casual or repeated speech contexts.

The /t/ sound showed the most variation across speech styles. In fully controlled speech, it was aspirated 51% of the time and had a relatively low deletion rate (10.3%). In spontaneous speech, however, /t/ was much more likely to be unreleased and/or glottalised (59.3%) and dropped (10.6%). Similarly, in partially controlled and repeated partially controlled speech, /t/ was unreleased and/or glottalised (up to 49.1% and 51.9%, respectively) and dropped (22% and 21.3%, respectively) more often. This suggests that as speech becomes less structured or more casual, speakers tend to reduce or alter the /t/ sound more frequently. In brief, the analysis of the data showed that /t/ and /k/ were more affected by speech style, with /t/ undergoing the biggest shift towards glottalisation and deletion in more casual speech. /p/ remained relatively stable, though it did show some reduction in less controlled speech contexts.

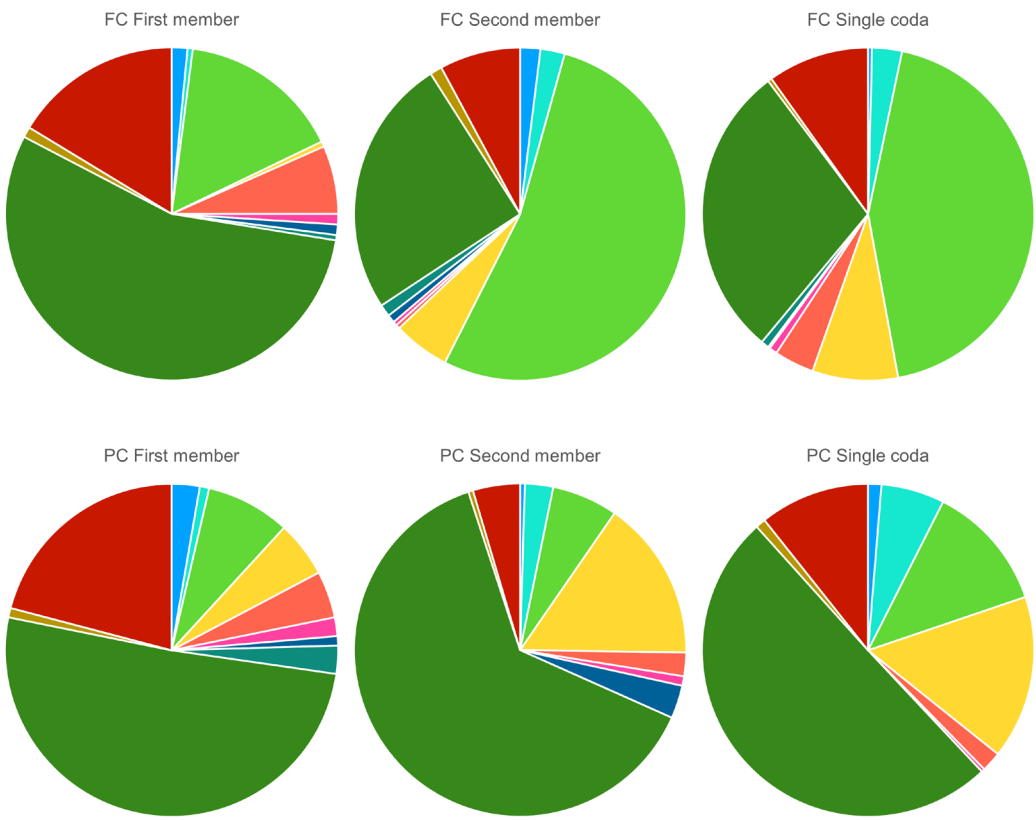
7.3. Correlations of Allophonic Variation of Coda Voiceless Plosives in Vietnamese-Accented English with Their Position within Consonant Clusters and Speech Styles

A multiple regression analysis conducted in R, which yielded a highly significant *p*-value ($p < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$), revealed a strong association between the frequency of coda voiceless plosive variants, their position within consonant clusters, and speech style. The results indicate that both speech style and the position of the plosive within the cluster, whether occurring as a single coda or as the first, second, or third member, significantly influenced the phonetic realisation of these sounds in VE (see Chart 2).

In first member positions, fully controlled speech had relatively stable forms, with aspiration (3.2%) and voiceless plosive realisations (3.3%) being the most frequent. As the speech style became less controlled, moving into partially and repeated partially controlled speech, aspiration decreased, and deletion increased slightly (by 0.9%). In spontaneous speech, these patterns became even more simplified, with only 1.1% aspirated realisations and a drop in overall plosive clarity, pointing to more relaxed articulation.

Second member positions show stronger shifts. Fully controlled speech had high aspiration rates (14.0%) and low glottalisation (6.6%). But as attention to speech decreased, aspiration dropped, deletion increased, and glottalisation became far more frequent, peaking at 23.8% in spontaneous speech. This suggests that second member positions are especially susceptible to phonetic reduction in casual contexts.

The clearest pattern appears in single coda positions. In careful speech, aspiration was very high (23.4%), and deletion was already notable (4.5%). As speech styles became less formal, deletion rose, reaching 9.9% in spontaneous speech, and glottalisation increased even more sharply, from 15.3% in fully controlled speech to 27.2% in spontaneous contexts. These findings point to a strong effect of informality on coda plosive weakening.



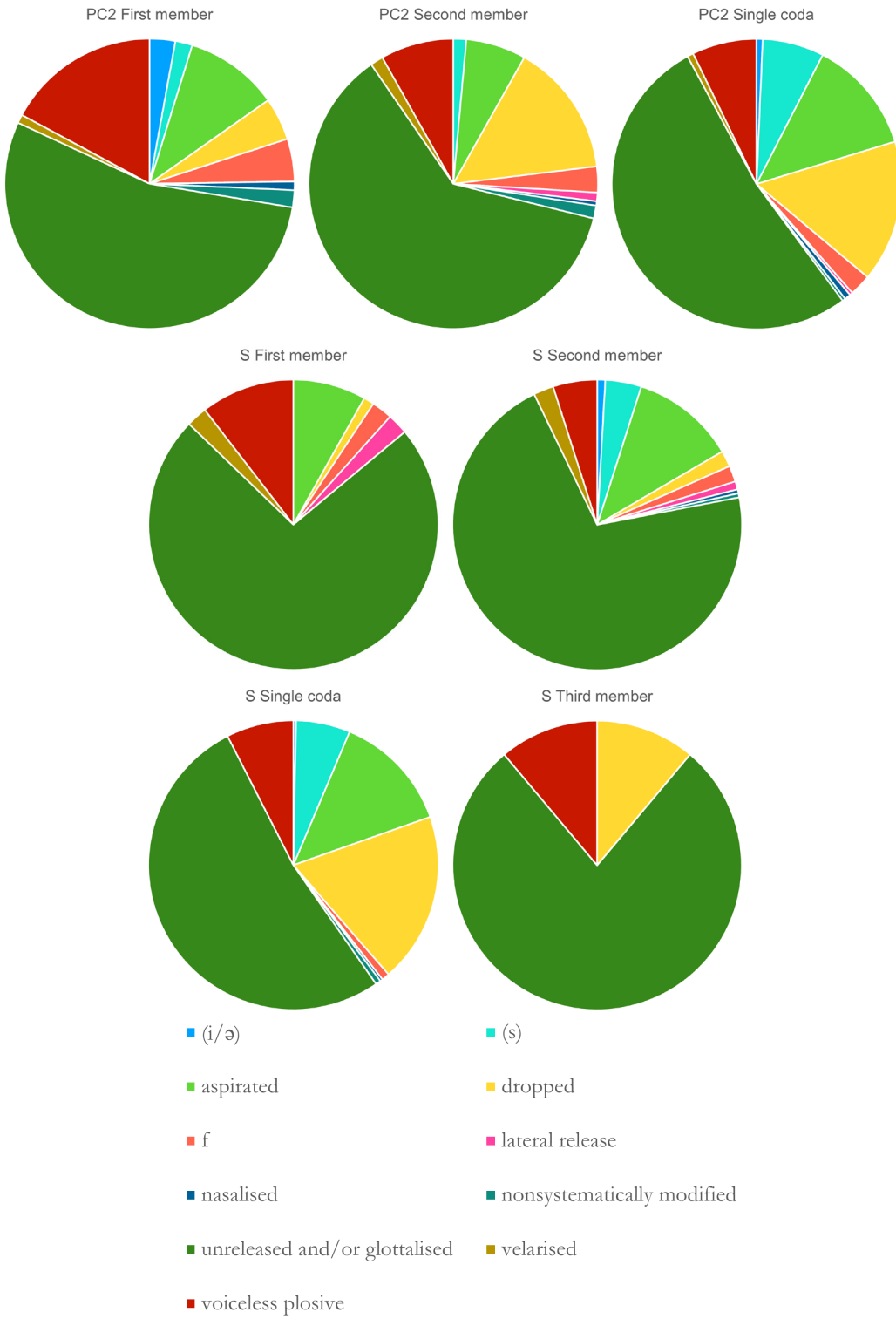


Chart 2. Frequencies of allophonic variants of coda voiceless plosives in Vietnamese-accented English across speech styles and plosive position within coda consonant clusters

Note. FC: fully controlled speech
PC: partially controlled speech
PC2: repeated partially controlled speech
S: spontaneous speech

Third member positions were rare in the data, appearing only in spontaneous speech, and showed very low variation across all categories. Due to its low frequency of occurrence in speech, voiceless plosives in the third member positions were not fully observed in the study. Hence, further study exclusively on voiceless plosives as the third member in coda consonant clusters is needed to provide sufficient insight into coda voiceless plosives in Vietnamese-accented English speech. In brief, the analysis confirms a consistent trend: as speech becomes less formal, aspiration declines while glottalisation and deletion rise, especially in second member and single coda positions.

8. Limitations

The study contains several limitations. First, coda /p/ and the plosive in the third position in coda consonant clusters occurred infrequently in the speech data, limiting their observability. Second, the sample size was small and complicated by numerous independent variables, such as variation in proficiency level, L1 accent, age, occupation, and regional background. This limitation may reduce the generalisability of the findings, highlighting the need for larger, more controlled studies. While the large quantity of speech data collected may partially mitigate this limitation, broader informant diversity remains essential to strengthen generalisability. As a result, future research should focus on these understudied areas and ensure a larger sample size to deepen understanding of VE coda voiceless plosives.

9. Conclusion

The results highlight the complex variation in the articulation of coda voiceless plosives in VE, influenced by both linguistic and sociolinguistic factors. This variation has meaningful implications for phonetic analysis, language teaching, and the broader understanding of language transfer.

Firstly, the study identifies ten allophonic variants of coda voiceless plosives in VE, including unreleased, glottalised, aspirated, and dropped forms. The most prevalent variant is the unreleased and/or glottalised form, accounting for 49.3% of occurrences. This suggests that VE speakers often employ articulatory reductions,

particularly in casual speech contexts, aligning with Vietnamese phonological patterns that favour simpler coda structures.

Secondly, the impact of Vietnamese phonology on VE is evident, as Vietnamese permits only unreleased voiceless plosives in syllable-final positions and does not allow coda consonant clusters. Consequently, VE speakers may simplify English coda clusters by omitting consonants or inserting vowels, leading to variants such as [s]-inserted or [f]-inserted forms. This phonetic adaptation underscores the role of L1 phonological structures in shaping L2 pronunciation.

Thirdly, the use of sociolinguistic interviews enabled the collection of speech data across a range of styles, from formal to informal. The analysis reveals that speech style significantly influences the realisation of coda voiceless plosives, with more casual speech associated with increased glottalisation and deletion. This finding aligns with Bybee's (2003) assertion that spontaneous speech provides systematic and valuable data for studying phonetic and sociolinguistic variation.

Fourthly, understanding the allophonic variation in VE can inform phonetic and phonological training for Vietnamese learners of English. Recognising that certain allophonic variants, such as unreleased and glottalised forms, are native-like, especially with regard to British English, can help educators prioritise more areas where learners face challenges, such as aspiration and coda consonant clusters.

In conclusion, the variation in coda voiceless plosives in VE reflects a significant interplay of linguistic structures and sociolinguistic contexts. This understanding can enhance phonetic analysis, inform language teaching practices, and contribute to a more nuanced perception of Vietnamese-accented English.

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Reviews

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Suspended Humanity

Orbital by Samantha Harvey, Vintage, 2024.

Petra Zsófia Balássy[1]

Among the Booker-Prize-winning texts of recent years, which have tended to feature strongly personal, often self-told narratives of individual destinies, the 2024 winner[2] is a somewhat surprising exception. Samantha Harvey's[3] *Orbital*, a short but very complex and comprehensive novel, is a universal ode that reflects not only on the fate of the singular, but also of the community and, ultimately, of humanity as a whole.

The plot follows six astronauts and cosmonauts of different nationalities – American, Japanese, British, Italian and Russian – over the course of one day spent on the board of an international space station that orbits around the earth. To be more precise: over the course of 24 hours, because as we are confronted with the well-known and frequently voiced fact: time – especially under these circumstances – is truly relative. One day on earth means 16 orbits: 16 sunrises and 16 sunsets for the crew members, who are suspended in space in "weightless drifting … sardine living and … earthward gaping" (2). And although they are in a constant and continuous motion as a result of various, simultaneously acting physical forces, they do not actually have the ability to move. They can literally fly due to weightlessness, yet they do not have the opportunity to choose where they go beyond the tight boundaries set by the space station. And even when they leave its confinement on the rare occasions of spacewalks, they are forced to stay connected to it, as their life depends on physical attachment to this small representation of earth in space, secured by the tether, just like an unborn child is connected to its mother in the womb.

Suspended in space and lifted from the conventional context of earthly time, "humans with a godly view … that's the blessing and also the curse" (73), they begin their own inward journeys into their own inner spaces, conjuring up their own personal and yet quite universal images of life on the planet they cannot keep

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[2] At the time of writing this review, the winner of the 2025 Booker Prize had not yet been announced.

[3] Harvey is no stranger to the Booker Prize, her first novel, *Wilderness* was also longlisted in 2009.

their eyes and minds off of. They are constantly confronted with the questions regarding their own humanity, the beginning and the end of life, the possible presence of God and after all the meaning of one's existence as a human as they are torn between the constant and simultaneous presence of the mundane and the extraordinary, the closely documented and data-driven confinement and the greatest spatial freedom possibly experienced by a human, and their limited physical presence and the infinity of mind.

The complexity of the characters is built orbit by orbit. By the end of the book, they all become refined and drawn enough so that they do not come across as schematic or two-dimensional, yet Harvey manages to keep them also general enough to be absolutely relatable, hence universal. And although their backstories are sketched individually, by the end of the novel the reader is left with the feeling that the six of them have merged into an inseparable whole, as their physical proximity also results in spiritual community. Harvey masterfully conveys a sense of interpersonal porosity that is based on their shared experience of "repetitive and unprecedented" and "inexpressibly trivial and momentous" (121).

Harvey's language is nothing short of lyrical, she uses images that are strong enough to stay with the reader for a long time after finishing the book. The rhythmic pulsation of the text is meditative in nature, the lack of marked dialogues and the repetitive structure, signposted only by the number of the ascending and descending orbits, create a stream-of-consciousness-like unity and continuity. Language and thoughts interlink with dreams and feelings, as they are shared and experienced collectively – by the crew members and the readers alike. This universality is also emphasized in those cases when the author deliberately uses the different native languages of the astronauts, only to point out in the end that they all want to convey the exact same message.

Orbital evokes questions that are not and cannot be answered on the pages of the book. Along with the crew we witness the formation and the inevitable destructive power of a typhoon from a helpless, passive perspective removed from earth. Yet, there is no explicit moral lesson on the "inconvenient truth" about the climate catastrophe caused by humanity. It does not formulate the recipe for world peace either, even though we get a beautiful description of the constantly changing face of earth caused by the war-induced border changes. And finally, it does not get involved in political statements, a fact that some consider to be one of the main drawbacks of the novel. It gently and humorously plays around with the idea of Russian "otherness" that manifests itself in a separate bathroom, and the separation

of the word *cosmonaut* from the generally used *astronaut*, but it does not move further – taking the chance offered by the neutrality of the setting. The answers are outside the book and left to the reader to ponder upon. We are given the opportunity to step out of our apparent immobility, take a step back and reflect. And by taking advantage of the opportunity provided by a different perspective, to realize what we can and should do in this infinitely small amount of time that, compared to the universe as a whole, has been given to humanity.

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Tér-iszony. Szörnyűséges terek a populáris kultúrában, edited by Ildikó Limpár, Tortoma, Barót, 2024.

Dóra Burkus[1]

The volume entitled *Tér-iszony. Szörnyűséges terek a populáris kultúrában* (Space-Phobia – Horrific Spaces in Popular Culture), edited by Ildikó Limpár, published by Tortoma in Barót (Romania) in 2024, offers an exciting and multifaceted analysis of the role of fictional spaces in popular culture. The volume's authors highlight that fictional spaces are not merely backdrops but actively contribute to the unfolding of narrative and the psychological and social dimensions of characters. These spaces can express fear, alienation, power structures, or even fundamental questions about the nature of reality.

In the introduction, Limpár points out that human thought has always tended to populate unknown spaces with monsters. The studies in the volume examine types of spaces that evoke anxiety in pop culture and demonstrate how these spaces reflect social tensions, cultural traumas, or collective fears. One of the book's greatest strengths is that it does not limit itself to spaces in traditional horror or sci-fi literature but takes a broader perspective on the relationship between space and fiction.

Monika Rusvai's study of Naomi Novik's novel *Uprooted*, seamlessly aligning with contemporary posthumanist thought, approaches the text from an eco-gothic perspective, exploring the duality that characterizes humanity's relationship with nature. Rusvai's sensitive reading reveals how, in this novel, nature emerges not only as a spatial but also an ethical and ontological challenge for modern humans.

Annamária Hódosy discusses the moral dilemmas present in pandemic films, with particular emphasis on quarantine narratives and their metaphorical significance. She highlights as central the dilemma where individuals must choose between the self-preserving instinct for survival and responsibility toward others. According to her analysis, most quarantine narratives underscore humanity's inclination toward solidarity, even when offering help entails significant personal risks.

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Vera Benczik's study investigates the representation of posthuman landscapes in various post-apocalyptic texts, showing how these spaces evoke complex emotional responses, especially when tensions arise between human and posthuman perspectives. The works analyzed – *The Girl with All the Gifts*, Paolo Bacigalupi's writings, and Sara Genge's short story *Shoes to Run* – each activate this dynamic in distinct ways. A particularly striking example is Genge's text, where the reader's empathy shifts toward the posthuman perspective, while the human characters no longer find a home in the radically transformed world.

Áron Domokos offers a particularly compelling outlook through his examination of the Third Reich's spatial practices and memory politics. His study vividly illustrates that terrifying spaces are not merely fictional constructs but take on concrete forms in history. These sites are not only symbols of specific historical periods but also deeply embedded imprints in collective memory, fundamentally shaping how we perceive and interpret space in the present.

András Fodor examines spatial representation in Scandinavian new weird fiction, focusing especially on the liminality of these spaces. His study reveals that these narratives often create blurred, continuously transforming environments where the relationship between human and non-human worlds is unstable and unpredictable. Fodor vividly shows how Scandinavian weird fiction combines folkloric motifs with contemporary horror and speculative fiction elements, producing atmospheres that are simultaneously familiar and alien, homely and threatening.

Kinga Földváry's analysis centres on China Miéville's novel *The City & the City*, where space functions as a metaphor for political and social divisions. Her study demonstrates how spatial arrangements become metaphors for power structures and social fragmentation. In Miéville's novel, the inhabitants of two intertwined cities are forbidden from perceiving each other's worlds. Földváry interprets this separation as one of the most compelling narrative representations of political ideologies and social control in contemporary speculative fiction, examining the novel's fictional spaces through the lens of real-world urban and geopolitical issues.

Anikó Sohár analyzes the maps of Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, offering a fascinating perspective on how mythology, humour, and social commentary are interwoven in this imaginative universe. Pratchett's cartography serves not only as a tool for world-building but also as a parodic commentary on geographical and political maps that attempt to define the real world. Sohár's study highlights that maps are always narrative constructions and explores how humour can function as a means to mock ideological boundaries.

Éva Vancsó's research on urban spaces in popular culture offers fresh perspectives on how metropolises become sources of collective fear and anxiety. Beginning with the biblical motif of the "sinful city" exemplified by Sodom and Gomorrah, she traces the evolution of this theme to contemporary mass culture visions such as the dystopian Los Angeles of *Blade Runner* and Gotham City's morally fractured world. Her study also explores how urban spatial imaginaries intersect with questions of moral order, asking whether the evil embodied by the city can be overcome through an internal ethical force.

Building on this theme, Orsolya Szujer's study, which follows directly after Vancsó's text in the volume, investigates the unique spatial constructions of "suburban gothic." The suburb, as a spatial metaphor for the American Dream, simultaneously promises idyll and harbours menace. Szujer's sensitive analysis reveals that this liminal space is particularly suited as a site for the disruption of social norms, identities, and family structures. Her study is valuable not only from a genre perspective but also offers opportunities for sociological and psychoanalytic readings.

Anna Kérchy's research focuses on Neil Gaiman's children's literature, with special attention to *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. These works frequently play with the idea that everyday spaces can take on grotesque and frightening dimensions from a child's perspective. Kérchy highlights how Gaiman's spaces function both as psychological symbols and as narrative devices for coming-of-age stories.

Norbert Gyuris discusses the spatial experience of labyrinths and mazes, extending his analysis into virtual and simulated worlds. He argues that in modern digital and simulated spaces, even the fundamental conditions of existence become questionable, blurring the boundaries between illusion and reality. Consequently, spatial experience becomes not only an intellectual challenge but also a site of ontological dilemmas.

The volume is concluded by Ildikó Limpár's insightful essay, which analyzes spatial construction in *Westworld* and *The Hunger Games*. Limpár considers the spatial representations in both works as crucial storytelling elements, emphasizing how the horrors depicted reflect modern society's social and cultural difficulties as well as the profound divide between imagined futures and idealized pasts. Limpár points out that empathy gradually shifts from human characters to machine or hybrid figures, indicating the emergence of a new kind of ethical sensitivity.

One of the volume's greatest strengths lies in its balance between scholarly rigor and accessibility. The language and structure of the essays allow both specialists and

readers interested in popular culture to benefit from the insights presented. The book encourages reflection on how fictional spaces influence our understanding of reality and help us comprehend our fears and anxieties. Moreover, the interdisciplinary nature of the volume, examining space as a symbolic and psychological construct makes it relevant not only in literary and film studies but also in fields such as cultural studies, philosophy, history, and even urban studies, sociology and political science, psychoanalysis and narrative theory as well. Through its interdisciplinary approach, *Space-Phobia* demonstrates how the study of fictional spaces can contribute to our understanding of broader cultural and historical processes. This multifaceted approach deepens textual understanding and opens new avenues for research, making the volume simultaneously a handbook, a theoretical foundation, and an inspiring conceptual map for analyzing cultural spatial experience. Overall, *Space-Phobia* provides a thought-provoking and comprehensive overview of horrific spaces in popular culture. It is recommended for anyone interested in the spatial dimensions of fictional worlds – whether they are literary scholars, film enthusiasts, or simply readers intrigued by the fascinating phenomena of pop culture.

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Religion and American Politics: Domestic and International Contexts, edited by Paulina Napierała, Peter Lang Group, Berlin, 2024.

Dóra Busi[1]

Religion and American Politics: Domestic and International Contexts explores the intricate and often contradictory role of religion in American politics, highlighting how it influences the domestic and international politics of the United States, as well as the political attitudes of its citizens. The volume is divided into four thematic sections, each focusing on a different aspect of the intersection of religion and politics, beginning with a chapter from editor Paulina Napierała which outlines the competing models for analyzing religion, and describes the research approaches taken in the volume. This explanatory section provides a conceptual framework for the following studies, emphasizing their methodological similarities, as well as the ways in which they differ from one another. As the book brings together authors from diverse academic disciplines, their various perspectives and theoretical backgrounds result in a multi- and interdisciplinary evaluation of the question at hand.

The first section of the book, "Evolving Relations Between Religion and American Politics," encompasses two studies that focus on religiosity and (private and collective) social behaviour. Károly Pintér examines the concept of American civil religion (ACR) in historical and contemporary contexts. Pintér argues that Donald Trump's brazen rhetoric significantly differed from previous civil religious tradition with its exclusionary, partisan, and populist themes, reflecting on the discordance between the values of ACR and the legacy of the first Trump presidency. Pintér touches on the evangelical Christian support for Donald Trump, which the following study by James L. Guth and Lyman A. Kellstedt elaborates on. Through empirical analysis, the two authors examine how religion may be a predictor for right-wing populist sympathies. Testing for the most prominent features of populist rhetoric and policies, the chapter reveals that Evangelicals form the most dedicated

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core of the populist Republican base, while atheists, agnostics, and "nones" tend to be more critical of conservative populist messages.

In "Constitutional Dimensions of Religious and Political Debates in the United States," contributors focus on legal issues, showing changes in the Supreme Court's relationship with religion through the examination of significant court cases. Sebastian Kubas tackles the Christian Right's influence on the process of the judicial review and utilization of the legal system to push political aims. Kubas argues that the Supreme Court significantly shifted the interpretation of the religion clauses of the First Amendment over time. Similarly, Jerold L. Waltman focuses on the First Amendment, particularly the recent evolution of the free exercise jurisprudence of the Supreme Court. Through case studies, Waltman reveals recent conservative successes in the legal reinforcement of religious liberty, which, the author explains, happened in the face of social change, in particular the rise in the number of atheists or agnostics in the country, or the growing acceptance of homosexuality. Both previous authors point to the continuous shift in the interpretation of the First Amendment's clauses with societal transformation. Differentiating between positive and negative conceptualizations of liberty in context of gay marriage, Emily R. Gill illustrates how the dissonance between the two interpretations colours the way conservative Christians and civil rights activists assess the expansion of the right to marry. The last piece in this section brings an interesting new element to the study of the First Amendment, namely the situation of the Muslim community in the US after 9/11. Treating Yasir Qadhi's work as an illustration, Elad Ben David describes the careful balancing of Islamic and American values that Muslims had to undertake amid the increasing hostility towards them in the post-9/11 era, showing that bolstering their American identity became crucial for many Muslims amid growing Islamophobia in the country.

Next, "Religion, Race and Politics: The Political Role of the Black Church" tackles the relationship of the Black Church with politics, focusing on the social mobilizing role of Black religious institutions. Paulina Napierała retells the history of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, expounding through the actions of its subsequent pastors on the strong activist tradition that weaves through the fabric of the church. Over the course of the history of the church, Napierała highlights, theological shifts occurred towards more liberal views, however, perhaps the most important factor in their ongoing commitment to activism was pastors' acceptance

of the social gospel. Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán y Fuentes takes a closer look at Martin Luther King, Jr.'s prophetic mysticism as it addressed racism, poverty, and militarism, arguing that for King, the three were closely intertwined. In the context of the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War on the one hand, and amid the tradition of prophetic mystics on the other, King's activism takes a holistic approach to righting social wrongs through nonviolent resistance, marrying Christian theology and political activism. Michael McLaughlin focuses on the Black Power Movement, illuminating the crucial role churches played in the success of the Black Panthers' Breakfast Program. Despite police intervention, Panthers and church officials cooperated to provide locations for the program, highlighting the social work that the group facilitated. Finally, Jajuan S. Johnson offers an overview of the history and current reality of Black church burnings, especially in context of the Black Lives Matter movement and the election of Barack Obama. Calling attention to the symbolic role of church fires, Johnson reflects on the issues of racial violence and Black liberation theology by placing cases of church arson into their broader social and political contexts.

The last section, "Religion, International Politics, and Global Issues," as the first part did, focuses on the interplay between individual political and religious attitudes and collective political opinions, broadening the scope of analysis to the international scene. James L. Guth and Brent F. Nelsen examine religious support for the "Trump Doctrine's" various facets, namely nationalism, militarism, and a unilateral approach to international relations. As in previous chapters, emphasis is placed on Trump's evangelical base, in a political landscape where increasingly, "religious influences … are now 'baked into' the party system" (320). One area where foreign policy and religion have considerable effect on each other, argues Husam Mohamad in the next chapter, is Israel and Palestine. After examining the dispensationalist and Christian Zionist understanding of the Bible's end-time prophecy, Mohamad explores how these groups successfully lobbied to advance their own policy goals, namely securing American support for Israel. Although geopolitics and security also play significant roles in US policy regarding the region, Mohamad argues that theologically motivated Christian Zionist political influence severely hindered the possibility of de-escalation between Israelis and Palestinians. Last, Lyman A. Kellstedt and James L. Guth explore how attitudes regarding global warming are affected by religious sentiment. Investigating quantitative survey data,

the authors find that religious traditionalism correlates with sceptical attitudes towards environmental protection, while those more progressive in their religiosity, as well as atheists and agnostics are more supportive of such policies. The authors do not find any indication that a straightforward and ubiquitous process of "greening of religion" (369) has taken place in the United States.

Overall, if there was one word to describe the collection of studies in this book, it would be interdisciplinarity. Introducing scholars from various fields, from political science to law, cultural studies, or history, the perspectives of different disciplines enter into conversation with one another in-between the chapters, with some contributors focusing on the national, while others on the global level, some taking on qualitative, others quantitative approaches. The selection of studies in *Religion and American Politics* covers a wide array of topics related to American religiosity and politics, but by virtue of recurring issues (such as the question of school prayer, gay marriage, or the interpretation of the First Amendment), shared historical reference points, and theoretical overlaps the book remains coherent, offering appropriately varied commentary on the complex relationship between religion and politics in the United States.

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Pop and Postfeminism: Female Dandyism in Popular Music by Nathalie Weidhase, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2024.

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Nathalie Weidhase's *Pop and Feminism: Female Dandyism in Popular Music* published by Bloomsbury Publishing House in late 2024, undertakes an intellectual meditation on the intersected picture of postfeminism and the metamorphic impact of the female dandy as the artistic spectacle across the cultural landscape. The book cover displays Lady Gaga in a sparkling metallic dress and a wig against a vibrant purple-pink background with colourful polka dots and yellow titles; the choice of this image and layout underlines the purpose of Weidhase's ambitious work – the creative self-presentation of "female dandyism" and the performance of an unapologetic self and assertiveness that depicts postfeminist narrative. The female dandy, historically correlated with the "quaintrelle," was perceived as a mimicry of masculine figures stylised in sophisticated attires, stirring the sentiments of gender polarisation and giving an androgynous impression. Weidhase, in contrast, argues that dandyism in gendered disposition might be a variable way of transgressing the performance of gender essentialism. Subsequently, she reconstitutes the essence of the dandy's self-fashioning as an influential narrative in current popular culture, politicising the aesthetically constructed persona of selected female artists through the lens of postfeminism.

From the dawn of the #*MeToo* cultural movement to Greta Gerwig's recent *Barbie* (2023), the growing attention to the postfeminist resilience narrative paves the path for the debate on the intersectional predicaments and discords regarding female identity, their autonomous role, and navigating systemic barriers within the neoliberal framework. Pop stars, such as Amy Winehouse, Rihanna, Lana Del Rey, and Lady Gaga, labelled as "unruly women" by Weidhase (8), defiantly redefine what it means to be an empowered subject by engaging with their over-aestheticised performances threaded into the festive spectacle of precariousness,

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absurdity, illness, suffering, and loss, obscurely against the mainstream thoughts of explicit "becoming." Weidhase's discussion revolves around audiovisual culture, problematising the liminality between the objectification of patriarchal media dynamics and the potentiality of agentic artistry of female pop dandies.

In the introduction of the book, Kristeva's abject theory as the subversive tool in feminist performance is mentioned to illustrate that not only female artists but also pop music genres are feminised, excluded, and perceived as abject in the cultural realm (6). Arguing that the concept of "dandy" is associated with empowerment and transformative contributions compared to "diva," while both are in the category of abject, Weidhase frames the conceptual foundations to navigate and reinforce her engagement of dandyism (11). In the world of aesthetic styling in female dandyism, the transgressive identity might also adopt hyperfemininity that goes beyond cross-dressing, yet it is challenging for female dandies to surpass the sexualised gaze (20–21). While postfeminism ambiguously supports and questions heteronormativity, the portrayal of queerness does not seem to rebel against the gender binary but instead exposes the shallowness of the ornamented image. However, the theatrical self-creation fused with spectatorship manifests the idea of gender performativity, and consequently, decorative femininity integrated with strategic control enacts semiotic defiance of traditional gender norms.

Besides, the conscious practice of aestheticising the abject features of femininity as a female pop dandy confronts the commodification of women in the entertainment field. This perspective is explored in Chapter 2, discussing how Amy Winehouse's hybrid representation of "otherness" among the pop icons and her "traditional Jewish persona" convey a distorted postfeminist femininity (41). Angela McRobbie's "postfeminist disorders" that refer to self-destruction committed out of anger at the restrictive norms of idealistic productivity for contemporary women are transformed into artwork by Amy Winehouse's fragile, underweight bodily performance in the music video "Rehab," externalising her rage, mental health issues, and addiction (59–60). As a female dandy, by embracing abject failure to conform to socially normative physical form, she challenges the neoliberal narrative of rejuvenation and empowerment written for women, rejecting the desire for self-repair (61). In the case of Rihanna, the focus of Chapter 3, a common trait that she shares with Winehouse is that both explore the negative dimensions of love and attempt to subvert the ideals of romantic relationships within the landscape of heterosexuality by portraying a

queer sensibility associated with the female dandy. Rihanna's theatrically stylised persona, imbued with her business-minded spirit and her authorship constrained by collaborative composers despite personal confessions in artistic space, prompts a contemplation of her authenticity and reveals a conflicted identity (70-71).

In Chapter 4, in connection with Lady Gaga, Weidhase highlights the dandy's balanced approach to subversion, arguing that Gaga's monstrosity, rather than embodying resistance, is celebrated as a form of motherhood, affirming the authoritative and effective role of femininity as an idealised gender empowerment within neoliberal culture (102). In the case of Gaga, mainly her music videos "Born This Way" and "You and I" are discussed, examining how she reimagines postfeminist maternity, self-defined kinship, and reproduction beyond the involvement of a father. Another trait of the postfeminist dandy is her ability to interpret and question the current sociopolitical system and ideology through her stylised performances, thereby enacting a multidimensional artistic persona. Shifting the attention to Lana Del Rey, Chapter 5 describes that her relentless embrace of the failure of romantic expectations challenges and contaminates the idealised heteronormative dynamics promised in the American dream. Her dandy persona employs nostalgia to bridge the idealised past with the unstable reality of contemporary American society and the vulnerability of postfeminist women (133).

In the last two sections of the book, Weidhase examines authenticity, authorship, and the performance of corporeality in postfeminist dandies, who emerge as a liminal space between the dominant and superior sentiment of art and popular culture, which is often stereotyped as inconsistent and overly feminine. In embodying femininity through bodily performance in the era of postfeminism, the dandy's nonconformity and rebellion are still affected by the gaze of media and conventional sociocultural norms and practices, resulting in a nuanced conception of authenticity. Music videos provide a spectacle in which the postfeminist dandy crafts her abject femininity and transgressive performances, constructing a complex structure of identity and authenticity while simultaneously challenging the normative idea of authorship as a singular personal creation of artistic work (178).

In *Pop and Postfeminism,* Weidhase illuminates how the female pop dandy questions and comments on the notion of "too much" and "not enough" in visual consumerism by adopting a subversive identity. Unruly contemporary female artists embracing dandyism in the feminised pop music industry problematise the idea of

authenticity and the spectacle exerted by the male gaze, bearing double exclusions, thereby fostering the more nuanced understanding of the conversation between being exploited as a neoliberal product and the act of sublimation. Ultimately, Weidhase's *Pop and Postfeminism* introduces a novel approach to the performative aspects of female artists' personae and their abject "other" roles in the contemporary audiovisual culture, contributing significantly to the field of gender studies, postfeminism, and celebrity studies.

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