

## 6 The Linguistic Construction of Political Crimes in Kurdish-Iraqi Sherko Bekas' Poem *The Small Mirrors*

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### 6.1 Introduction

Sherko Bekas was born on May 2, 1940. He is a contemporary Kurdish poet and the son of Faiq Bekas (1905–1948), a well-known poet within traditional Kurdish poetry. Sherko was born in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and published his first book when he was seventeen years old. Bekas lived in an era (from the inception of modern Iraq up until 1991) when the Kurds had been viewed as being second-class citizens. The discrimination increased during Saddam Hussein's regime and was practiced in the educational and cultural sectors as well as in the job market. In the 1970s, Kurds were displaced, their areas Arabised and destroyed in an attempt to demolish the Kurdish dream of having their own autonomous state. The situation further escalated in 1988 with the destruction of over 3,000 Kurdish villages and more than forty chemical attacks – one even killed over 5,000 Kurds in Halabja (an event discussed later in this chapter) – and 100,000 civilians buried after mass killings.

Bekas started his political activities and his fight against the regime in 1964. He joined the Kurdish Liberation Movement in 1965 and worked for their radio station (The Voice of Kurdistan). He published eighteen collections of poetry in 1968 and two dramas. In seeking 'new aspects and dimensions' for the thus far heavily Arabised Kurdish poetry, Bekas turned to international texts and, for example, translated Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* into Kurdish. He joined the second Kurdish Liberation movement in 1974. After the failure of that movement, the Baath regime exiled him to the middle of Iraq where he stayed for three years.

At a very young age Bekas enlisted in the Peshmerga and worked as a 'party poet' for the Political Union of Kurdistan, a major political party in the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), a semi-autonomous region in Iraq (Levinson-LaBrosse 2018). He continued writing poetry about his experience

as a soldier. On 8 August 1987 in a speech at Folkore Hois ('The Whole Sky of My Borders')<sup>1</sup> he stated that he considered himself the poet 'of all Kurdish nation, the poet of revolution and Peshmergas' and continued by saying, 'I consider myself the mother poet of Kurdistan'. His poetry depicts his political, literary beliefs and cultural community wishes, aims, and preferences (Bekas 2006, p. 16). Thus, his poetry represents ideal, personal, and cultural ideologies.

In 1986, he was exiled by the Iraqi regime to Sweden where he published *The Small Mirrors* in 1987 and *Butterfly Valley* in 1991. In both collections, he mourns the victims of Kurdistan. Following the uprisings in Kurdistan in March 1991, Bekas returned to Iraqi Kurdistan. After the 1991 Gulf War, the already mentioned semi-autonomous Kurdish region KRG was created in northern Iraq and the Iraqi government withdrew its troops. The allied Western troops declared a no-fly zone which was patrolled regularly by aircrafts from the United States, Great Britain, France, and Turkey. In the first regional election, Bekas was elected a member of the Kurdish parliament and became Minister of Culture in the first Kurdish government. In 1993, he resigned from his position because of what he regarded as violations of democracy. All of his work is compiled in one anthology of eight thousand pages.

In 1970, together with other poets and writers of his generation, Bekas founded the Rwanga movement (Fahmi & Dizayi 2018). Rwanga<sup>2</sup> poetry was a reaction to the social and political situation and is considered to be 'one of the fruitful consequences of the socio-political developments' (Fahmi & Dizayi 2018, p. 72). Poets from the Rwanga movement tried to adjust poetry to real life (Naderi 2011, p. 32); thus, it breaks from the traditional rules of rhyme and rhythm to express many beautiful fantasies. Rwanga allows poets to express their vision accurately and overcome the boundaries of language. This was a radical change in Kurdish poetry (Riengard & Mirza 1998, p. 8) because Bekas identified 'new elements in the world literature' and utilised them in his own poetry (Fahmi & Dizayi 2018, p. 73). Bekas stated in an interview that this movement aims to explain that their desires are 'free to discover what has not yet been discovered, to mix local and global languages in new and creative writings, and to support freedom all over the world' (Dhiab 2007, p. 132).

Bekas' poetry expresses sympathy towards the oppressed (Tabari et al. 2015, p. 1299). According to Naderi (2011, p. 12), the movement aims to gain justice

<sup>1</sup> The Whole Sky of My Borders, Speech at Folkore Hois, 8 August 1987, [www.rudaw.net/english/opinion/12092013](http://www.rudaw.net/english/opinion/12092013).

<sup>2</sup> Rawanga means 'immediate observation' in Kurdish.

and to fight suffering. It deals with realism, which stimulated the founders of the movement because of their interest in the Liberation Movement.

The poets of Rwanda proclaimed in 1970 (Naderi 2011, p. 12):

- Our writing is full of suffering ... Thus we are fighting against suffering.
- Beauty is the center of our writing ... Therefore, it is against ugliness.
- It is free and independent ... Hence it breaks boundaries.
- It is revolutionist ...

Bekas' poetry exemplifies his preoccupation with a range of political problems in his homeland, particularly the rise of the mentioned Kurdish Liberation Movement and his work for their radio station. These aspects are reflected in his poetry, particularly in *The Small Mirrors*, to be examined in this chapter.

Bekas died in exile in Sweden on 4 August 2013.

Many of his poems emphasise the importance of poetry as a powerful weapon to pursue global recognition of Kurdish culture and rights. Political attempts to oppress Bekas, as mentioned by Bachtyar Ali (Bekas 2019), failed. On the contrary, his tireless work for the Kurdish people and against oppression was recognised by him being honoured with the Swedish Tucholsky Award in 1988.

## 6.2 Bekas' Poetry and *The Small Mirrors*

Bekas' work is widespread and well-known beyond the borders of his homeland, which allows for studying his oeuvre in several languages because some of his works have been translated into Arabic, Italian, Swedish, French, German, and English. He has read his poetry in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Italy, where he was named an honorary citizen of Milan. He paid a visit to the United States in 1990 and has a proven international reputation for his literary works.

His poetry is mainly studied from the perspective of literary criticism (Abdulqadir 2019; Ali 2009; Darwish & Salih 2019; Fahmi & Dizayi 2018; Mala 2012; Mohammad & Mira 2018; Muhammed 2001; Omer 2011; Tabari et al. 2015). These studies reveal the different techniques Bekas uses in his writings to depict his political and social situation. The present author (Ibrahim 2018), however, attempted a Critical Stylistics perspective to primarily reveal ideological meaning in Bekas' texts and is thus the first to apply Critical Stylistics (Jeffries 2010) to Kurdish poetry.

*The Small Mirrors/Awena buchkalakan* is a collection of Bekas' poems published over a period of two years (1987–1988) in Kurdish and European magazines. Most of the poems now belonging to the collection of *The Small Mirrors* were published for the first time only in 2006, namely, in

the second volume of Bekas' *Diwan* (2006). This collection is characterised by 'exceptional aesthetic value, unparalleled facility with words, a poetry that is emotionally, historically, cognitively, and existentially accessible to the public through its rich yet simple everyday language' (Sharifi & Ashouri 2013). In *The Small Mirrors*, Bekas depicts the war in Kurdistan and its victims. Victims of war (as individuals and as a group, even if they are not regarded as victims of genocide) can rightfully claim victimhood status (Van Wijk 2013). How Bekas depicts them and the respective offenders sheds light on his (if not the Kurds') ideological perspective on these atrocities, which are most effectively revealed by using the framework of Critical Stylistics (Jeffries 2010).

In order to present a Critical Stylistics analysis with the aim of detecting ideological meaning in Bekas' texts, we focus on the following extract from *The Small Mirrors*. The text was translated by one of the present authors who is a native speaker of Kurdish. For a more comprehensive analysis of Bekas' *The Small Mirrors* we refer the reader to Ibrahim (2018); for an analysis of Bekas' poem *Snow* the reader is invited to follow up with Ibrahim (2016).

**Example 1: Extract from The Small Mirrors (Bekas 2006, pp. 651–652)**

xanûyek juriyêkî liyê mird	A room of a house died
le prseda çawî giyêrra	in the consolation it looked
bo jûrekanî drawsiyê	for the neighbouring rooms
eweyi neydî	those whom it did not see
eweyi nehat	those who did not come
lenaw dlêyi pencereyda bû bergriyê!	became, in the heart of window, a knot!
gerrekî malêyêk kujra	A house of a neighbourhood is killed
le prseda çawî giyêrra	in the consolation
bo rriyê û ban û ,	It looked for the roads
bo gerrekî em law ula	for this and that neighbourhood
eweyi neydî	those whom it did not see
eweyi nehat	those who did not come
le naw dlêyi ber heywan û serkolaên û	in the heart of the courtyard and district!
gorrepaniya bû be griyê!	became a nob
axir xo min kurdistanm	At the end I am Kurdistan
leyek tirûkeyi çawa bû	It was in a blink of an eye
piyênc hezar kanîyi liyê kujra	<u>Five thousand springs of it are killed</u>
piyênc hezar rezî liyê xinika	<u>Five thousand fruits of it are suffocated</u>
piyênc hezar şî'î liyê kujra	<u>Five thousand poems of it are killed</u>
piyênc, piyênc, piyênc, piyênc, . . .	Five five five five, . . .
wa şeş mange le prsedaye mewlewîm	It has been six months since my Malawe is in
dar be darm guyê helêexa	consolation
berd be berdm sorax ekaw	<u>Tree eavesdrop for tree*</u>

şax be şaxm çaw egîyêrriyê  
 eweyî dûkelêyî cergmî nasî û nehat  
 eweyî nemdî  
 çon leber çawî em miyêjuwe sk  
 sutawem  
 rreş, rreş, rreş, rreş  
 danagerriyê !  
 kotelê

Stone search for stone\*  
 Mountain look for mountain\*  
 Those who recognise the smoke of my  
 offspring and did not come, those I did not see  
 How for the sake of my abdomen-burnt  
 history do not turn  
 black, black, black, black!  
 Sculpture

In this chapter, we particularly focus on the linguistic construction of victims in *The Small Mirrors*, given that perpetrators are mentioned only implicitly. We argue that offenders are nevertheless present due to a binary opposition between victims and perpetrators. We use the tools of Critical Stylistics (Jeffries 2010) combined with Kövecses' (2018) developed and expanded version of Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (see Chapters 2 and 3 in this volume) to explore the construction of victims and its impact on the construction of the unmentioned offenders.

Critical Stylistics is a means to identify ideological meaning in texts by offering a framework of ten textual conceptual functions performed by texts (see Table 6.1). Under each of these functions Jeffries (2010) groups 'formal realisations' which can be looked for in texts in order to systematically analyse a text. This allows for rigour and replicability of the analysis, which is not only a principle of any stylistic analysis but particularly important when it comes to ideological meaning as it allows for the analyst to avoid bias and to prevent criticism that the analysis proves only pre-fabricated results.

Jeffries takes Halliday's (1971) three metafunctions of language (textual, ideational, interpersonal) as a starting point and argues that ideology 'enters the picture . . . where these ideational processes in texts produce worlds which have values attached to them' (Jeffries 2015b, p. 384). These values need to be explored and extracted in order to detect ideological meaning. Table 6.1 lists and explains the ten textual-conceptual functions from Critical Stylistics.<sup>3</sup>

In the following sections we analyse the extract from *The Small Mirrors* (Example 1) using all ten textual-conceptual functions and explain how victims are constructed and how their construction impacts on the construction of the not explicitly mentioned offenders. As the ten textual-conceptual functions often interlock, it is sometimes necessary for the sake of argument to briefly mention findings from other textual-conceptual functions. Given the short extract from the poem as well as space constraints, we occasionally pair two of the ten textual-conceptual functions and discuss them together. To make it easier for

<sup>3</sup> For a more in-depth introduction to Critical Stylistics, refer to Jeffries (2010).

Table 6.1. *The tools of Critical Stylistics and their conceptual categories*

Conceptual category/textual function	Analytical tool/formal realisations
Naming and Describing	The choice of nouns to signify a referent; nominalisation; the construction of noun phrases with pre-/post-modification to identify a referent
Equating and Contrasting	Equivalence (parallel structure), antonymy, and opposition (Jeffries 2015b)
Representing Actions/States and Events	Transitivity and verb voice
Enumerating and Exemplifying	Three-part lists to imply completeness, without being comprehensive (Jeffries 2010, p. 73) and four-part lists (indicating hyponymous and meronymous sense relation), apposition
Prioritising	Transforming grammatical constructions: clefting, passive and active voice, subordination, and syntactic structure
Negation	The construction of negated meaning (Nahajec 2009)
Assuming and Implying	Presupposition and implicature
Hypothesising	Modality
Presenting Other's Speech and Thought	Speech and thought presentation
Constructing Time and Space	Choice of tense, adverb of time, deixis

Adapted from Tabbert 2015, pp. 45f.

the reader to follow, we adapted the order of the ten textual-conceptual functions in Table 6.1 to the order they will be examined in this chapter.

### 6.2.1 *Naming, Describing, and Equating Victims*

In this section, we present the findings related to the textual-conceptual functions of Naming and Describing as well as Equating and Contrasting. Due to the complexity of even such a short passage like Example 1, we would like to zoom in on three lines from Example 1 to start with:

#### **Example 2 (extract from Example 1)**

Five thousand springs of it are killed  
 Five thousand fruits of it are suffocated  
 Five thousand poems of it are killed

Example 2 provides evidence for Bekas' preference for parallelism as not only do all three lines share the same syntactic structure (subject–predicator) but also, within the subject slot, the three noun phrases consist of almost exactly the same words (same pre- and postmodifier, only the three head nouns

differ ['springs', 'fruits', and 'poems']). However, although the semantics of the three head nouns differ, their plural form is similar. Further, verb tense (present) and verb voice (passive) are identical in all three lines with 'killed' being repeated as if to girdle 'suffocated', both participles belonging to the semantic field of 'dying', although 'to kill' portrays the act from an offender's perspective, whereas 'to suffocate' brings in a victim's perspective.

Parallelism is additionally present in the fact that in all three lines the actors of these three material action intention processes (Simpson 1993) are absent. The people responsible for the killing and suffocating remain unmentioned. This, however, does not mean that these three lines provide no information about them. On the contrary, the construction of victims of crime always simultaneously presents the respective offenders based on a binary opposition between victim and offender (the effect of which has been discussed by Jančaříková [2013] and Tabbert [2015, 2016])

Answering the question of how the victims (and thus the respective offenders) are constructed brings back the aforementioned parallelism. As noted, only the semantics of the three head nouns differ, which leads to a heavy foregrounding of the meanings of these three nouns (all having positive connotations). 'Springs', however, can have two different meanings: as sources of water or as one of the four seasons. One of the two present authors, who is a native speaker, argues that the preferred meaning in this context is spring in the sense of one of the four seasons. Therefore, 'springs' as one of nature's seasons and 'fruits' as one of nature's products associate 'poems' with nature in a prosodic sense relation. Although poems are man-made and thus only indirectly created by nature, the parallelism the noun 'poems' occurs in aligns it with the semantic category of nature and its products. Additionally, the noun 'poems' brings with it connotations of art and expression which extend onto 'springs' and 'fruits' and thus describes the killing as an act of destroying nature, beauty, and art. It constructs the killings also as affecting (artistic) expression and as such touches upon the freedom of expression and the topic of censorship.

Killing people has become a destruction of nature itself by means of the strategies employed to name the victims and thus enlarges the dimension of the atrocities as they concern mankind in its entirety. What underlines this is the postmodifying prepositional phrase 'of it', meaning there are many more people affected through bereavement, mourning the death of their loved ones. This links with the notion of 'indirect victimisation' (Shapland & Hall 2007, p. 179) and means that if a person falls victim to a crime, family and friends are affected as well, arguably even more so in case the victim suffers fatal injuries.

To fully grasp the meaning of the three foregrounded head nouns, their metaphorical use needs to be examined given the fact that in their literal meaning they denote inanimate ('fruits', 'poems') or even abstract ('springs')

objects. What links them to humans is, in the case of ‘springs’, that the four seasons are in fact a man-made concept to understand changes in nature over the course of a year with time also being a human concept. ‘Fruits’ with a primarily reproductive purpose for nature itself are used by humans as food for their bodies, whereas ‘poems’ are an artistic product and as such regarded as nourishment for the human soul. It is through these multi-layered relationships between the three head nouns as well as their individual meanings that all three are metaphorically used to name the victims of these atrocities. The metaphor does not stop here, however, but extends onto the offenders and, in terms of transitivity choices, the actors of the three material action processes. The absent actors in their anonymity have not merely killed human beings and thus a part of nature but with it also killed nature itself, which, in conclusion, ostracises them from nature by making them in fact enemies of the living.

Another example further illustrates the importance of Bekas’ naming strategies for the presentation of ideological meaning:

**Example 3 (extract from Example 1)**

A room of a house died

...

A house of a neighbourhood is killed

These two clauses consist exclusively of subject and predicator and show a parallel syntactic structure which we will be dealing with in the following section. As only little information as to the number of constituents is provided, this brings about the cooperation principle, in this case the maxim of quantity (Grice 1975), meaning how much information is needed to make these lines informative. This leads to graphological foregrounding of these two lines. In this section we focus on the two noun phrases exclusively because we are still examining naming choices. Note that these two lines do not appear next to each other in the poem but are separated by six lines.

By naming the victims in relation to urban structure, these two lines add a different notion in comparison to the nature theme mentioned in regard to Example 2. A house and a neighbourhood are man-made and serve not only to accommodate people but to create a living space and structure. Here, families raise their children, friendships are built and nourished, acquaintances are maintained. Illness and other negative experiences are combatted, creating love and solidarity. Both noun phrases in their consecutive order zoom out from the smallest unit (a room in a house) to the larger unit (a neighbourhood). Bekas uses a metonymic relationship between the three nouns (room, house, neighbourhood) to broaden the dimension of destruction. By not mentioning any specifics about the neighbourhood, the reader is able to associate with it by drawing on schematic knowledge and thus bringing in the reader’s own



neighbourhood, which increases immediacy and proximity of the killings as well as their devastating nature as it is not only a killing of individuals.

### 6.2.2 *Presenting Actions, States, and Events*

This section starts with a further exploration of Example 3, this time with a focus on verb choice. 'Died' and 'is killed' are two material actions (arguably so in the case of 'died'), both factive verbs with the emphasis on the result. However, 'died' might be arguably regarded as a supervention process in this context, which means that an actor and thus a culprit is not necessarily needed. If this argument is followed through, it underlines that 'room' is regarded an animate entity as the verb choices that follow in these six lines demonstrate:

#### **Example 4 (extract from Example 1)**

A room of a house died  
in the consolation it looked  
for the neighbouring rooms  
those whom it did not see  
those who did not come  
became, in the heart of window, a knot!

The verbs 'looked for', 'did not see', and 'did not come', alongside 'died', all lead the reader to expect animate entities when instead we find 'a room' and 'the neighbouring rooms' in the noun slots. The verbs 'to look for' and 'see' are mental processes of perception, usually carried out by people. The verb 'to come' is material action intention, an act of movement and changing position which a room is usually incapable to do. In Example 4, however, 'a room' is carrying out these perception and action processes which deviate from the norm.

Further, this room is being described as in need of consolation, which entails that 'a room' has human emotions. Such deviations are highly foregrounding and allow us to understand that 'a room' and 'neighbouring rooms' are naming choices for people, in fact, victims of the killings. By naming them in relation to urban structure, Bekas achieves proximity in the perception of these atrocities, and, furthermore, he is able to construct those affected as innocent victims, which aligns with Christie's (1986) notion of ideal victims. Ideal victims are weak, sick, either very young or very old, are carrying out a respectable project at the time of crime, have no personal relationship with the offender, and cannot be blamed for being attacked. Such an ideal victim, for example, is the character 'Little Red Riding Hood' from the same-named fairy tale (Walklate 2007, p. 28). Victims of international crimes, however, 'face much more difficulty in publicizing their fate and consequently "benefiting" from their status as victim' (Van Wijk 2013, p. 159). This is particularly relevant here as the Iraq-Kurdish conflict is a very complex one with no clearly carved good/bad dichotomy and thus goes against Van Wijk's (2013) criteria,

according to which ‘potential [victim]-status givers’ prefer ‘comprehensible’ conflicts that have a unique selling point, ‘have a limited time span’, and are ‘well-timed’. Further, ‘domestic policies, geopolitical interests, accessibility to the region and the possibility of donors identifying with the victims’ (2013) are prerequisites for a conflict to attract public attention and for those victims to be perceived as ‘ideal’. All this is absent from the Iraq-Kurdish conflict because at that time media coverage and human rights groups were not allowed to watch and report the conflict and its results. Therefore, the conflict continued and left thousands of civilian victims, which Bekas writes about.

### 6.2.3 *Enumerating and Prioritising*

In this section we return to Example 2 from above and examine it from a different perspective, namely, how information in these three lines is prioritised and how these three lines further provide an example of enumeration, namely, a three-part list that suggests completeness.

Prioritising can happen by means of syntactic structure or by means of transformation as, for example, by changing verb voice (from active to passive or vice versa). Imagine the first phrase would read, ‘[He/she/they] killed five thousand of its springs.’ In such a phrase, the main focus would be on the actors ‘He/she/they’, whereas the victims because of their object position would remain in the background. By transforming the phrase into passive verb voice, the victims become a priority because they are now to be found in a subject position. The cognitive effect of this is of particular interest for cognitive grammarians (Giovanelli & Harrison 2018, pp. 44ff.; Langacker 1991). They would describe the cognitive effect of such transformation in relation to the principle of figure–ground, namely, that a figure in the foreground is set against a less important background. In other words, passive can be used to foreground the recipient of an action, in our case the victims. Following from their subject position, the victims are being regarded as a ‘figure’ against the ground of the (absent) offenders who would if mentioned be found in an object position. Cognitive grammar in contrast to systemic-functional grammar (Halliday 1971) focuses on cognition and thus text perception, whereas Halliday’s grammar explores meaning in context as well as interpretative effects of texts (Giovanelli & Harrison 2018, pp. 5f.). One could also regard both as two different ways of expressing the same experiential concept. As Critical Stylistics, the framework applied in this chapter, is based on Hallidayan systemic-functional grammar, this discussion of prioritised meaning allows for a short detour to explain the different approaches the two grammars take and how close they actually are when it comes to the textual-conceptual function of prioritising. Some would even argue they are, in fact, the same.

As transformation into passive voice allows for the actors to be omitted, Bekas provides the reader with an opportunity to fill in the picture of the seemingly missing offenders by drawing on image schemas readers have about atrocities committed by a government and carried out by anonymous offenders. A Western reading of this poem immediately brings to mind the Third Reich and its countless offenders carrying out orders given by a Nazi government or, not too long ago, the Balkan war. Such image schemas readers possess allow for the poem to be understood in various cultures as individual cultural backgrounds bring about individual schemas of politically motivated atrocities. This transformation simultaneously allows for the numeral 'five thousand' to stand at the beginning of the phrase, which evokes negative connotations because of its link with the five thousand murdered in Halabja by the chemical gas bombardments in March 1988.

Further, the repetition of 'five thousand' and even more often of 'five' (see Example 1 for context) enhances these negative connotations. The numeral 'five' is mentioned seven times in just four lines. Hence this repetition is highly foregrounding. However, it can be understood only against the cultural context of the poem.

The already mentioned parallel structure of the three lines in Example 2 further allows for the three differing head nouns 'springs', 'fruits', and 'poems' to appear as an enumeration, in fact, a three-part list suggesting completeness. It is this rhetorical completeness that leads to the interpretation that these three nouns name the victims comprehensively and ties in with what was discussed in Section 6.2.1 of this chapter and the interpretation outlined there.

#### 6.2.4 *Negating, Implying, and Assuming*

Negation raises the possibility of presence (Nahajec 2012, p. 39; 2014) and produces a 'hypothetical version of reality' (Jeffries 2010, p. 107). This is particularly powerful as it allows for the construction of two alternative scenarios, one that is actually happening and another that could be happening. What could happen but does not is presented in the following two instances of negation, realised by means of a negative particle ('not'):

those whom it did not see  
 those who did not come  
 Extract from Example 4

Note that these two lines are repeated in the context of 'neighbouring rooms' looking for 'roads' who did not come.

We have already established in Section 6.2.2 that the two negated verbs 'see' and 'come' are processes of perception and action, usually assigned to

animate entities. In Example 1 these processes are carried out by 'a room' and we have discussed how this deviation from expectation not only foregrounds the verbs but allows for the interpretation that 'a room' and 'neighbouring rooms' are in fact naming choices for victims.

This extends to the second instance where the focus zooms out from 'a house of a neighbourhood' to 'neighbourhood' and 'roads', adding these nouns/noun phrases to the group of naming choices for victims.

In this section, we take the argument further by examining the role of negation in this context. Negation, as Nahajec (2012, p. 35) argues, is presuppositional and produces implied meaning. We therefore discuss the two textual-conceptual functions of 'negating' as well as 'implying and assuming' here together. Whereas implicature arises from flouting cooperation maxims (Grice 1975), 'pragmatic presuppositions reside in the shared conventions of language use' (Simpson 1993, p. 128).

Negation in Example 4 pragmatically presupposes that the reader as discourse participant expects the house/neighbourhood/roads to be there, to be visible and be able to 'come' when in fact they cannot anymore because they died/were killed. Negation then has a further, implied level of meaning that arises from deliberately not observing the cooperative principles (Grice 1975). To fully grasp the implied meaning here means to take the metaphorical naming choices for victims into account, based on the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE URBAN STRUCTURE. By using a man-made structure of a 'neighbourhood', the victims are no longer regarded as individual, separate casualties but are instead tied together structurally, through their relations with one another. They build a complex system of interrelations because of family relations, friendships, and acquaintances like roads running through a neighbourhood, connecting one house and its rooms with another. The killing thus not only becomes meaningful in terms of the already mentioned indirect victimisation (where family and friends are affected when somebody falls victim to a crime) but gives rise to the notion of a systematic killing, a deliberate attempt to erase an ethnic group and thus constructs the crime close to the notion of genocide.

### 6.2.5. *Hypothesising and Presenting Others' Speech and Thoughts*

It can be argued whether modality is able to produce 'a hypothetical alternative reality' (Jeffries 2015a, p. 165) comparable to negation as outlined in the previous section, or is rather related to point of view in that it expresses a speaker's/writer's opinion about or attitude towards a proposition (Simpson 1993, p. 47). Whichever argument is followed, a closer examination of Example 1 from *The Small Mirrors* reveals no instance of modality. All sentences are categorical as the following example illustrates:

**Example 5 (extract from Example 1)**

At the end I am Kurdistan

This example not only is of relevance to illustrate Bekas' preference for categorical and unmodalised assertions in Example 1 but also provides the only evidence in this extract for the presence of a first-person narrator and thus speech presentation. It is arguably a presentation of speech rather than thought as the poet foremost speaks these words and intends them to be published rather than merely thinking them.

This sentence further illustrates that the entire passage is actually Direct Speech, which enhances the immediacy of what is being said, and the passage, if not the entire poem, becomes Bekas' personalised and individual speech. As such, Bekas acts as a contemporary witness to the crimes that happened in Kurdistan. In relation to crimes of the state (as well as corporate crimes; see Chapter 14 in this book), Cohen (2003, pp. 546f.) acknowledges the problem 'that the state is not an actor and that individual criminal responsibility cannot be identified', leading to a common perception that the resultant action is not "really" crime'. Cohen goes as far as to state that 'the political discourse of the atrocity is . . . designed to hide its presence from awareness'. Bekas' poem in its political background is written to resist hegemonic discourse, and it apparently takes the weight of the author's own prominence to raise awareness of a counter-hegemonic narration of events. One means to achieve this is Direct Speech. In a culture of denial (Cohen 2003, p. 548) with regard to institutionalised crime, Bekas acknowledges the anonymity of the offenders by not mentioning them explicitly. However, the offenders are nevertheless present and are constructed by means of their binary opposition to the respective victims.

### 6.2.6 *Representing Time, Space, and Society*

We wish to dwell on Example 5 and talk about identification by means of deixis. Deixis is regarded as a linguistic pointer (Semino 1997, p. 32) to time, space, or social relations, among others. In Example 5, Bekas achieves immediacy not only by means of Direct Speech (see the previous section) but also by means of temporal deixis (present tense) as well as personal deixis (personal pronoun 'I') and a relational process intensive. A closer examination of Example 1 for such linguistic pointers reveals a repeated use of 'it' as a third-person pronoun. This appears to be of relevance as we have established earlier that 'room' and 'house of a neighbourhood' are in fact naming choices for people, namely, the victims.

As for pointers of temporal reference, it appears that Example 5 marks a shift from past to present tense, which carries on throughout the subsequent Example 2. These time pointers by means of verb tense separate the killings in

the past from the present impact they have on Kurdistan and thus the Kurds, as a people spread across several countries (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria) and without a yet internationally recognised state of their own. By means of spatial deixis ('Kurdistan') Bekas refers to a foremost geographical and cultural area but also brings in the notion of ongoing efforts for independence. This again underlines the importance of detecting values attached to ideational or world-building processes, which are the carriers of ideological meaning.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The study has found out that all the textual conceptual functions are consistent in confirming the overall argument that the construction of the victims is due to a binary opposition between the victims and the perpetrators, and the offenders are only implicitly represented.

Bekas avoids mentioning the offenders and does not state specific victims. By doing so, Bekas leaves the slot empty for the reader to fill in by drawing an image of the victims and the atrocities carried out by anonymous offenders under government order. The perpetrators are constructed as cruel and the victims as ideal, both inextricably bound together in an unavoidable relationship. However, the victims face much more difficulty in receiving a global recognition of their fate, and consequently the Iraq-Kurdish conflict is a very complex one with no clear good/bad dichotomy.

Similarly, the ten textual conceptual functions are compatible in the construction of a systematic and wide victimisation in an attempt to erase an ethnic group. The victimisation involves not only killing people but also destroying nature. This constructs crime as close to the notion of genocide.

The complexity of state crime is clear in the data where the offenders are not mentioned, and Bekas resists hegemonic discourse by manipulating his wide reputation to raise awareness of a counter-hegemonic narration of events. In addition, *The Small Mirrors* shows that Bekas longs for an independent state for the Kurds.

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