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Between Care and Contempt: Corpus-Assisted Sentiment Analysis of Disability Representation in Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how the village in Feryal Ali-Gauhar's An Abundance of Wild Roses (2024) responds to Lasnik, a boy who limps, leans on a staff and stutters. It uses corpus-assisted qualitative sentiment analysis: a script extracts passages and a researcher codes them by hand, and no classifier is used. A pilot extraction, capped at 45 lines per character pair, shrank from 28 coded lines to 14 audited passages and showed how counting artefacts produced a false 12-12 split between positive and negative sentiment. A revised, uncapped extraction (all 226 occurrences of the name, a whole-text lexicon scan and an orthographic search for marked stuttering) yielded 43 coded units. Each unit was coded for stance toward the impairment, stance toward the individual, and narrative position (direct speech, thought, conduct, narration or Lasnik's own perspective). Character-voiced responses to physical impairment (gait, wounds, bandages, staff) were more often caring than responses to his speech: five of nine physical units were positive against three of twelve speech units. Ridicule and contempt, a category added in revision, appeared only where impairment was fused with judgements of intellect or conduct; all six such fused stances were negative. The clearest cases in which a listener took up what Lasnik said were warm, but they were few. The article argues that the novel stages physical care without communicative recognition, reads this pattern through Fricker's (2007) account of epistemic injustice, and shows that keyword-based sentiment analysis can locate the pattern but cannot interpret it.

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Introduction

Lasnik is first seen from a distance. In the second chapter of Feryal Ali-Gauhar's *An Abundance of Wild Roses* (2024), an unnamed adolescent in a soldier's overcoat moves out of a crowd of village children, "pulling himself forward on his good leg, dragging the lame one behind" (Ali-Gauhar, 2024, ch. 2), while the children pull at his coat and stick out their tongues. The narrator names him in the third chapter and describes him as "the young boy who couldn't speak any words which made sense" (Ali-Gauhar, 2024, ch. 3). The introduction marks his body and his speech together, and the rest of the novel shows a village whose responses range from tenderness to dismissal.

The novel is set in Saudukh Das, a village in the mountains of northern Pakistan, where an unconscious wounded stranger sets off a chain of disasters for the headman, Numberdar Moosa Madad. The publisher's description singles Lasnik out: "A lame boy foretells disaster, but nobody is listening" (Canongate Books, 2024). He limps, leans on a staff and stutters, and the narrator renders the stutter on the page through repeated consonants, as in "B-b-big Yatz eat Lasnik l-l-leg" (Ali-Gauhar, 2024, ch. 14).

This article asks how the village responds to him, and it does so with a method whose limits it also tests. It uses corpus-assisted qualitative sentiment analysis. A script locates and counts candidate passages, and the researcher reads and codes each one. The method sits closer to concordance reading than to machine classification, and the article labels it accordingly. The study was designed in two phases. A pilot extraction, capped for tractability, was audited and its failures documented. A revised extraction removed the cap, widened the screen and added coding dimensions that the pilot lacked. Both phases are reported, because the differences between them are findings about the method.

Three research questions guide the analysis.

1. What affective responses to Lasnik's physical impairment (gait, wounds, bandages and staff) are expressed in the novel, and who expresses them?
2. How does the reception of his disfluent speech compare with the reception of his physical impairment, and do listeners act on what he says?
3. What do the answers to RQ1 and RQ2 reveal about the possibilities and limits of keyword-based sentiment analysis in the study of disability in fiction?

The central argument is that the village's treatment of Lasnik divides along a line between physical care and communicative recognition. Characters bandage his wounds, lend him a staff and feed him far more readily than they credit what he says. The study contributes a transparent, reproducible sentiment profile of a disabled character in Pakistani Anglophone fiction that separates gait, injury and aid, and speech. It contributes a documented account of how the profile changed once the sampling cap, a missing category and an unexamined unit of analysis were corrected. It also proposes communicative uptake, the extent to which a listener acts on what a disabled speaker says, as a variable that polarity alone cannot capture.

Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

Disability, Narrative and the Postcolonial

A long-standing concern of literary disability studies is whether disabled characters serve as metaphors or are represented as embodied persons. Mitchell and Snyder (2000) name the habit of using disability as a device that moves a narrative along, which they call narrative prosthesis. Barker (2011) examines exceptional children in postcolonial fiction at the edge between metaphor and materiality, and Krentz (2022) reads disability in postcolonial literature through kinship and human rights. Parekh (2007) argues that gender, disability and postcolonial circumstances cannot be analysed separately. These works frame the present question. Lasnik is, on the novel's own back cover, a figure who foretells disaster, and a reader needs to ask whether his body and his speech carry meaning for the plot or are attended to for their own sake by the people around him.

Social Attitudes and the Claim of Loss

The social model of disability locates disablement in social arrangements and attitudes rather than in the impaired body (Oliver, 1990). Shakespeare (2006) has argued that this emphasis can understate the lived reality of impairment. For a study of attitudes in fiction the two positions are complementary. Characters' responses to Lasnik are social attitudes in the first sense, and the novel's attention to a bleeding knee, a stench from his boots and a mother's fear for the winter keeps impairment in view in the second. Watermeyer (2009) reopens the question of loss, which some strands of disability studies have been reluctant to admit, and asks how loss can be claimed by the person who lives it. The present study addresses a narrower and prior question: how others feel about and respond to Lasnik. It does not claim to reach his own account of loss, and it marks the points where the method stops short of it.

Epistemic Injustice

Fricker (2007) distinguishes testimonial injustice, in which prejudice leads a hearer to give a speaker less credibility than the speaker deserves, from hermeneutical injustice, in which a gap in shared interpretive resources leaves a person's experience hard to understand or to express. The concept is useful here for a specific reason. A sentiment profile records warmth and hostility, but it cannot by itself tell whether a respondent who is warm toward a disabled speaker believes him. The distinction between affect and credibility is what the uptake variable introduced below is meant to capture. The article uses Fricker's terms as an interpretive lens on the coded data and does not treat the data as proof of either form of injustice.

Sentiment Analysis as an Instrument

Sentiment and emotion analysis has an established role in computational literary studies. Kim and Klinger's (2019) survey shows that most work applies general-purpose lexicons or classifiers to corpora and treats annotation and domain adaptation as unsolved problems. Da (2019) offers a pertinent critique, arguing that quantitative claims in the field are often fragile or redundant. The response adopted here is to keep the quantitative layer small, hand-coded and fully disclosed, so that the numbers direct the reader back to passages and do not replace them.

This approach follows corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS). Sinclair's (1991) work on concordance and collocation, Baker's (2006) use of corpora in discourse analysis and Partington et al.'s (2013) CADS framework share one stipulation: corpus tools find recurrent patterns and passages, and qualitative reading interprets them. In the present study the corpus tool is an extractor, and coding is carried out by a reader who reads each extracted passage. For that reason the method is described as corpus-assisted qualitative sentiment analysis. No lexicon assigns sentiment scores and no model classifies passages. Lexicons are used only to locate candidate passages.

Method

Text and Locators

The analysed text is a plain-text file of the novel (approximately 94,800 words in 25 chapters) prepared by removing front matter and formatting. The name "Lasnik" occurs 226 times. The novel is narrated in the third person and moves between focalising characters, so the study works with passages in which characters, the narrator or Lasnik himself express a stance. Because the analysed file is not paginated, quotations are located by chapter (for example, Ali-Gauhar, 2024, ch. 14). Every quotation in this article was checked against the text file by string search.

Phase 1: The Pilot Extraction and Audit

A Python script counted how often "Lasnik" co-occurred within 220 characters of one of eight candidate characters (Moosa, Ibrahim, Hassan, Zarina, Noor, Kulsoom, Fatimah and Malika). Each co-occurrence was exported with a 400-character window, up to 45 lines per pair, giving 120 lines. The cap truncated two pairs, Moosa at 45 of 76 eligible instances and Zarina at 45 of 64. Because lines were taken in textual order, Moosa's lines end in chapter 18 and Zarina's in chapter 20, although both characters appear near Lasnik until chapter 23. The pilot dataset is therefore a sample skewed toward the first three-quarters of the novel.

A regular-expression screen (*limp* | *lame* | *leg* | *foot* | *feet* | *stutter* | *stagger* | *crippl* | *walk* | *stick* | *cane* | *crutch*) flagged 28 of the 120 lines (23.3%). One reader coded each flagged line for polarity (Positive, Negative, Mixed or Neutral) and for one of six affective categories: Tenderness/care, Respect/recognition, Pity, Fear/discomfort, Resentment/blame and Erasure/silence. The coded set was then audited in four steps:

1. Overlapping windows were merged, because windows around different characters can capture the same sentence, and each line was relocated in the text.
2. Each code was checked against the text of its own window.
3. A multi-label rule was applied: where a window contained more than one stance, the passage was coded Mixed and carried each category present.
4. Each passage was assigned a relevance tier. Tier 1 passages engaged the limp, injuries, staff or speech. Tier 2 passages evaluated competence or conduct. Tier 3 passages matched the screen on vocabulary alone (a cooking stick, the feet of a corpse).

A supplementary scan used a second regular expression for repeated initial letters joined by hyphens (for example, "k-k-kick"). It found 57 stutter-marked tokens, which merge into 11 utterance clusters (tokens within 200 characters of one another) and eight scene-level episodes. Each episode was coded for polarity only.

Phase 2: The Revised Extraction

The pilot left four weaknesses that Phase 2 was designed to remove: the cap, the narrow screen, the absence of a ridicule category and the conflation of what is evaluated with who speaks. Phase 2 proceeded in four stages, implemented in the supplementary script. First, every one of the 226 occurrences of "Lasnik" was located, and a window of 300 characters on either side was taken and merged where windows overlapped, giving 47 passages. No cap was applied. Second, a lexicon of limp, aid and speech terms (limp, lame, hobble, stagger, staff, cane, crutch, gait, stutter, stammer, splutter, mumble and garbled, with their inflected forms) and the stutter-marking expression flagged 23 of the 47 passages. All 47 were nevertheless read in full. Third, the lexicons, together with body-part and wound terms (leg, foot, feet, knee, gash and bandage), were run over the whole text, and the 176 hits outside the name windows were read in context. This stage recovers passages in which Lasnik is unnamed, such as his first appearance. Fourth, the stutter-marked tokens were clustered as in Phase 1.

Of the 43 coded units, 33 lie inside lexicon-flagged name windows. A further two lie in unflagged windows and were found only by reading all 47 passages. The remaining eight, all in scenes where the name is absent or distant, were found only through the whole-text scan. In total, 10 of 43 units (23.3%) would have been missed by a keyword screen applied to name windows alone. Units fall in 12 of the 25 chapters and extend to chapter 23.

Coding Framework

A unit is one stance expressed by one agent toward an impairment-related target at one place in the text. A passage can contain more than one unit. Each unit was coded on the following variables (full definitions are in Appendix C).

Polarity and affect. Polarity was coded as Positive, Negative, Mixed or Neutral. The affective categories are the original six, with three changes. Ridicule/contempt was added, covering mockery, derision and demeaning labelling. Neutral/descriptive was added for unevaluative description. Self-directed reframing was added for the single unit in which Lasnik's own perspective reinterprets his speech.

Object of the stance. The target was coded as Gait/mobility, Injury and assistive devices (wounds, bandages, staff), Speech/disfluency, or the Person (intellect, competence, conduct). Gait, injury and aid, and speech are reported separately throughout, and the figures are descriptive.

Dimension. Three dimensions are kept apart. The first is attitude toward the impairment. The second is attitude toward the individual. A unit is coded Impairment, Individual or Both according to whether the stance attaches to the impairment, to Lasnik's worth or conduct, or fuses the two (for example, "the witless, dumb, lame boy"). The third dimension, narrative positioning, is coded in the next variable.

Narrative position. Each unit is coded by the mode in which the stance is conveyed: direct speech, thought (including free indirect discourse), conduct (what a character does), narratorial description, or Lasnik's own perspective. The coded units therefore distinguish what a character says to or about Lasnik, what a character privately thinks, what a character does and what the narrator reports.

Trigger expression. For each unit the lexicon term that triggered extraction is recorded where it appears in the extracted quotation, and otherwise as "none in extract". The column shows how much of the dataset a vocabulary screen would have captured.

Communicative uptake. For units in which a respondent receives Lasnik's speech, uptake was coded as a proposed variable: Acted on (the respondent acts on the content), Interpreted with effort, Acknowledged or Attended (attention or feeling without taking up the content), Heard with alarm, Dismissed, Overridden (the respondent speaks or acts over him), Mocked or Unnoticed. Where a unit does not involve a respondent receiving speech, uptake is not applicable. Uptake is offered as a hypothesis-generating variable.

Reliability. All coding was carried out by one reader, and no agreement statistic is reported. The coding framework, audit criteria and every coded unit are supplied so that another reader can recode them.

Results

Phase 1: Raw Tally and Audit

The raw pipeline output suggested a symmetrical profile (Table 1). Of 28 coded lines, 12 were positive and 12 negative, with two mixed and two neutral. Tenderness/care was the most frequent category (11 lines), followed by Resentment/blame (six lines). Once lines were merged into passages, the symmetry disappeared. Of 14 audited passages, seven were positive, four negative, two mixed and one neutral, and Resentment/blame fell from six lines to two passages. Three Resentment lines described a grumble about bandages that lay some 2,700 characters beyond their windows and were set aside, and the same text had often been coded under several character pairings (up to four times), which is why 28 lines collapse into 14 passages. Five of the 14 passages (36%) matched the screen on incidental vocabulary alone. The 14 passages are listed in Appendix A.

Table 1 Polarity and Affective Category in the Pilot: Raw Coded Lines and Audited Passages

	Raw coded lines (n = 28)	Audited passages (n = 14)
Polarity, n (%)		
Positive	12 (42.9)	7 (50.0)
Negative	12 (42.9)	4 (28.6)
Mixed	2 (7.1)	2 (14.3)
Neutral	2 (7.1)	1 (7.1)
Affective category, n (%)		
Tenderness/care	11 (39.3)	8 (57.1)
Resentment/blame	6 (21.4)	2 (14.3)
Respect/recognition	3 (10.7)	2 (14.3)
Fear/discomfort	3 (10.7)	2 (14.3)
Erasure/silence	3 (10.7)	1 (7.1)
Pity	2 (7.1)	1 (7.1)

Note. Audited passages may carry more than one affective category, so category percentages do not sum to 100.

The pilot also had two gaps that its authors attributed to the instrument. The six-category scheme had no label for contempt, so Moosa's description of Lasnik in chapter 20 as "that dull-witted half-man half-boy" and "a witless creature" (Ali-Gauhar, 2024, ch. 20) was coded Pity, the nearest available label. The text shows no pity. It shows contempt that presents itself as concern for the boy's shame. In addition, the keyword screen contained "stutter", but the novel marks stuttering by spelling, so the screen reached disfluency only incidentally. Of the 11 stutter clusters, only one (the "Big Yatz" account in chapter 14) lay inside the pilot's coded set. Table 2 contrasts the two designs.

Table 2 Comparison of the Pilot and Revised Extraction Designs

Feature	Pilot (Phase 1)	Revised (Phase 2)
Extraction anchor	Name co-occurrence with 8 candidate characters (220 characters)	Every occurrence of the name (n = 226); ±300 characters, merged into 47 passages
Cap	45 lines per pair (Moosa 45 of 76; Zarina 45 of 64)	None
Screen	One regular expression (gait and injury terms)	Impairment and speech lexicons, whole-text scan and stutter-marking expression
Coverage of coded material	Moosa lines end in chapter 18; Zarina lines in chapter 20	Units in 12 of 25 chapters, to chapter 23
Agents	Eight candidate characters	Any character, the narrator or Lasnik
Coded output	28 lines, audited to 14 passages	43 units
Categories	Six, with no ridicule label	Nine, including Ridicule/contempt
Dimensions	Polarity and tier only	Object, dimension, narrative position, trigger and uptake

Note. Percentages and counts in the two phases are not directly comparable, because the units of analysis differ.

Phase 2: Overview of the Coded Units

The revised extraction produced 43 coded units (Table 3): 13 Positive (30.2%), 23 Negative (53.5%), three Mixed (7.0%) and four Neutral (9.3%). The profile is more negative than the pilot's 50% positive audited passages. The difference follows from the design changes and should not be read as a contradiction of the pilot. Phase 2 includes agents the pilot excluded (Naushad, Mariam, Sabiha, the village children and Noor) and removes the cap on the two characters who are kindest and most hostile, and it also codes speech and the person, which the pilot's screen reached only incidentally. Ridicule/contempt and Respect/recognition were the most frequent categories (eight units each), followed by Tenderness/care and Fear/discomfort (six each). Tier 1 units (impairment) number 32 and Tier 2 units (competence or conduct) number 11.

Table 3 Polarity and Affective Category of the Coded Units (Phase 2)

	n	%
Polarity		
Positive	13	30.2
Negative	23	53.5
Mixed	3	7.0
Neutral	4	9.3
Affective category		
Ridicule/contempt	8	18.6
Respect/recognition	8	18.6
Tenderness/care	6	14.0
Fear/discomfort	6	14.0
Erasure/silence	5	11.6
Neutral/descriptive	4	9.3
Resentment/blame	3	7.0
Pity	2	4.7
Self-directed reframing	1	2.3

Note. N = 43. Each unit carries one affective category.

Ridicule/contempt was voiced by characters in seven of its eight units, and all seven are Negative: the village children who laugh as Lasnik passes, Noor's "Allah knows why he didn't give you any brains" (Ali-Gauhar, 2024, ch. 2), Naushad's mock-title "my Little Lame Soldier" and "Lieutenant Lance Naik Limping Loitering Useless Louse" (ch. 19), and the thoughts of Naushad and Moosa that call him "the witless, dumb, lame boy" (ch. 21) and "a lame, witless boy wearing a woman's pink shalwar" (ch. 20). The eighth unit is the narrator's simile of Lasnik "limping like a cart with a broken axle" (ch. 2). Pity occurs only in narratorial description (ch. 19 and ch. 20), and no character in the coded set expresses it.

Gait, Injury and Aid, and Speech

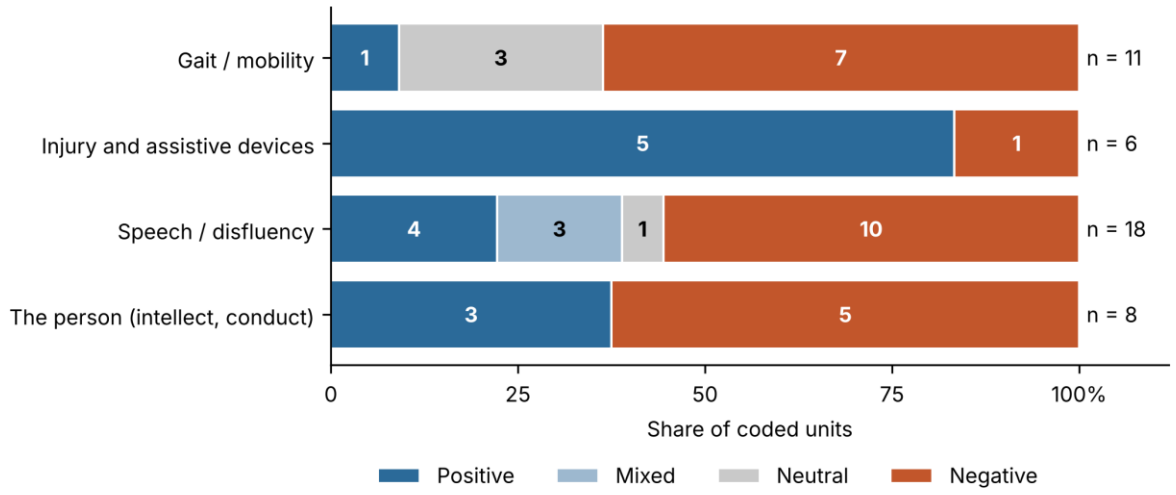
The responses differ by what is being responded to (Table 4 and Figure 1). Units that concern injury and assistive devices are the most favourable: five of six are Positive. Units that concern gait are mostly Negative or Neutral, but this reflects who is speaking. Seven of the 11 gait units are Negative, and five of those seven are voiced by the narrator or by Lasnik himself, in descriptions of effort, indignity and fear; the other two are the children's laughter and Naushad's mock-title. Among character-voiced units the picture is different. Character responses to gait and aid together number nine, with five Positive, three Negative and one Neutral. Character responses to speech number 12, with three Positive, two Mixed, six Negative and one Neutral. Five of nine character-voiced physical units (55.6%) are positive, against three of 12 speech units (25.0%). With samples this small the contrast indicates a direction and does not constitute a test.

Table 4 Polarity by Object of Stance

Object	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Neutral
All units				
Gait/mobility (n = 11)	1	7	0	3
Injury and assistive devices (n = 6)	5	1	0	0
Speech/disfluency (n = 18)	4	10	3	1
The person (intellect, conduct) (n = 8)	3	5	0	0
Character-voiced units only				
Gait/mobility (n = 4)	1	2	0	1
Injury and assistive devices (n = 5)	4	1	0	0
Speech/disfluency (n = 12)	3	6	2	1
The person (intellect, conduct) (n = 8)	3	5	0	0
Gait and aid combined (n = 9)	5	3	0	1

Note. Counts of coded units. Figures are descriptive. Character-voiced units are those conveyed through a character's speech, thought or conduct (n = 29); the remaining 14 are narratorial (10) or Lasnik's own perspective (4).

Figure 1 Polarity of Coded Units by Object of Stance



Note. Counts appear inside the bars. All 43 units: gait/mobility, 11; injury and assistive devices, 6; speech/disfluency, 18; the person, 8.

Who Responds, and in What Mode

Table 5 distinguishes the mode through which each stance is conveyed. Characters' direct speech (nine units) is evenly divided (five Positive, four Negative), whereas characters' thoughts (nine units) are largely Negative (six of nine) and characters' conduct (11 units) is divided (five Positive, four Negative, one Mixed and one Neutral). Care is thus easier to find in what characters do than in what they privately think. Narratorial description (10 units) is mostly Negative (six) and Neutral (two). The four units from Lasnik's own perspective are three Negative and one Mixed.

Table 5 Polarity by Narrative Position

Narrative position	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Neutral
Direct speech (n = 9)	5	4	0	0
Thought / free indirect discourse (n = 9)	1	6	1	1
Conduct (n = 11)	5	4	1	1
Narratorial description (n = 10)	2	6	0	2
Lasnik's own perspective (n = 4)	0	3	1	0

Note. Counts of coded units (N = 43).

Responses also differ by agent (Table 6). Zarina, the Lady Health Worker, is the principal agent in seven units: six Positive and one Mixed. The Mixed unit (ch. 7) is the moment in which she winces at his speech and puts a hand on his knee, a response coded as affective acknowledgement. Moosa is the principal agent in 10 units: three Positive, six Negative and one Neutral. Naushad is the agent of three Negative units, and the children and Noor of three more. Sakina, Lasnik's mother, appears in three units, of which two are Positive, including her report of how Zarina does not laugh at him. Her own thoughts about his speech are Negative in tone, since they are fearful (ch. 21).

Table 6 Polarity by Principal Agent

Agent	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Neutral
Zarina (n = 7)	6	0	1	0
Moosa (n = 10)	3	6	0	1
Naushad (n = 3)	0	3	0	0
Sakina (including report of Zarina) (n = 3)	2	1	0	0
Children (peers) and Noor (n = 3)	0	3	0	0
Mariam and Sabiha (n = 3)	0	1	1	1
Narrator (n = 10)	2	6	0	2
Lasnik (self) (n = 4)	0	3	1	0

Note. Counts of coded units (N = 43).

Moosa's profile deserves separate comment, because the pilot's claim that his ambivalence "runs through single scenes" does not survive the revision. In the pilot, a passage was coded Mixed because Zarina's care and Moosa's resentment fell in one window. In the revised data, Moosa's stances are separate units and they alternate across scenes. His three Positive units (ch. 10) are those in which Lasnik is serving him: gazing "with authority around the courtyard," being reminded of his "duties" and being told there is "no need to tie up the bird". His six Negative units are those in which Lasnik is an inconvenience: a new injury, a waste of bandages, a slowed errand, speech dismissed as "garbled nonsense" and a "lame, witless boy" sent on an errand. The pattern is consistent with a stance that follows Lasnik's usefulness, though a single coder's reading cannot establish that.

Impairment, Individual, or Both

The dimension variable separates stances toward the impairment from stances toward the individual (Table 7). Among the 29 character-voiced units, 17 attach to the impairment alone (eight Positive, two Mixed, five Negative and two Neutral), and six attach to the individual alone (three Positive, three Negative). Six fuse the two, and all six are Negative. Every fused stance in

the data is hostile, so that the most hostile responses are those in which a physical or speech marker is turned into a judgement of Lasnik's mind or worth. Examples are "the witless, dumb, lame boy" and "Allah knows why he didn't give you any brains". The stance toward impairment taken on its own is the most mixed of the three.

Table 7 Polarity of Character-Voiced Units by Dimension

Dimension	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Neutral
Impairment only (n = 17)	8	5	2	2
Individual only (n = 6)	3	3	0	0
Impairment and individual fused (n = 6)	0	6	0	0

Note. Counts of coded units (n = 29 character-voiced units).

Disfluent Speech and Communicative Uptake

The stutter scan yielded 57 marked tokens in 11 clusters, spread over eight scenes in seven chapters. Eight of the 11 clusters lie near coded units; clusters in chapter 7, chapter 10 and chapter 19 lie outside all coded units, and they correspond to the pilot's episodes C (in part), D and F. Table 8 codes the eight scenes. The trigger column lists the orthographic markers that located each scene. In the two scenes in which a listener acts on what Lasnik says, the listener slows down and calls him "my son." Zarina answers, "Speak slowly, my son. Who has stolen your rope this time?" (Ali-Gauhar, 2024, ch. 7) and then goes to the wounded stranger with bandages. Moosa, in chapter 10, refuses gently ("No, my son, no need to tie up the bird") and accepts the rope Lasnik offers. In scenes of dismissal and override the listener responds to the sound of the speech or to its inconvenience. Noor yanks the cord from Lasnik's hand and cuffs him (ch. 2), Moosa shakes his head and turns away from the "Big Yatz" account (ch. 14), and Moosa shoves him into the lane, "spitting cruel words at him" (ch. 20), after Lasnik has stammered "N-n-n-no go N-n-n-naushad house" in fear of facing Naushad.

Table 8 Reception of Lasnik's Disfluent Speech: Eight Scenes with Proposed Uptake Coding

Scene	Ch.	Respondent	Stutter markers (trigger)	Response	Uptake	Polarity
A	2	Village children; Noor	M-m-m, t-t-take, b-b-be	Children laugh; Noor yanks the cord, cuffs him and says "Allah knows why he didn't give you any brains"	Mocked / overridden	Negative
B	7	Zarina; her children	L-l-like	Zarina winces and places a hand on his knee; the children smile	Acknowledged (affective)	Mixed
C	7	Zarina	c-c-call, c-c-come, r-r-rope, b-b-bandage	"Speak slowly, my son"; asks again, packs bandages and goes	Acted on	Positive
D	10	Moosa	b-b-bird, T-t-tie, R-r-rope, w-w-wounded	Refuses gently ("no need to tie up the bird"); smiles and pats his back when	Acted on	Positive

				Lasnik offers his rope		
E	14	Moosa	B-b-big, k-k-kick, l-l-leg	Raises his brows, shakes his head and turns away	Dismissed	Negative
F	19	Moosa	c-c-come, d-d-duty, b-b-bird	Curses him under his breath, then ushers him in and gives him a task	Acted on (grudgingly)	Mixed
G	20	Moosa	N-n-n-naushad, S-s-s-saheb	Shoves him into the lane, "spitting cruel words at him"	Overridden	Negative
H	21	Sakina (mother)	d-d-die, f-f-found, C-c-c-circle	Does not know what to make of it but interprets "to the best of her ability"	Interpreted with effort	Mixed

Note. Uptake is a proposed variable, coded by one reader. Scenes correspond to the pilot episodes A to H. Scene E is the response to unit LM13 and cluster 8; Moosa's later dismissal in the same chapter is unit DS10 (Appendix B).

Polarity and uptake diverge in informative ways. In scene H, Lasnik whispers "They will d-d-die. T-t-they will be f-f-found in the C-c-c-circle of Death," and his mother "did not know what to make of it"; she treats the whisper as a vision and interprets it "to the best of her ability" (ch. 21). The unit is Negative in tone because her reaction is fear, yet the speech is taken seriously and the interpretive labour falls on her. Among the 13 coded units in which a respondent receives speech, seven show the content refused or unnoticed (three Dismissed, two Overridden, one Mocked and one Unnoticed), three show attention or feeling without uptake (Acknowledged, Heard with alarm, Attended), and three show content taken up (two Acted on, one Interpreted with effort).

Two moments from the narrator's side bear on this. In chapter 20, as Lasnik runs to fetch Naushad, "it was the first time his speech had been smooth, unhindered, confident," and Moosa does not notice it because other concerns, "things more important than the healing that love makes possible," distract him (ch. 20). In chapter 23 Zarina listens to Lasnik's fevered chant, which ends "I am Lasnik son of Lance Naik Rahim Jan Hero of the Black Mountains," and registers that "it was not a voice she recognised." She gives his mother tablets for the fever. The passage shows attention and care for the body. It does not show that she takes up what he says, and the unit is coded Attended.

Discussion

Physical Care and Communicative Recognition

The results support a distinction that a single polarity score would hide. Care for Lasnik's body is visible and fairly consistent where characters act. Zarina cleans and bandages a gash and lends him a staff, and the staff later stands against a poplar tree as "a lone sentry" (ch. 12), an object the novel treats with some dignity. Care for his voice is thinner. Where listeners take up his speech, they do so slowly, with a changed manner of address and with an action to follow. Where they do not, they respond to the noise or the nuisance of the utterance, and the content is lost. The novel's back-cover line, "A lame boy foretells disaster, but nobody is listening" (Canongate Books, 2024), names this pattern in the register of publicity. The analysis suggests

the line is accurate in a narrower sense than it implies. Some people listen some of the time: Zarina, and Moosa when Lasnik is useful to him.

This is the central argument of the article and it is offered as a hypothesis. Its support is a small, hand-coded dataset of 43 units, with 12 character-voiced speech units and nine character-voiced physical units, from one novel and one coder. The pattern is nevertheless consistent across the pilot and the revision. In the pilot the positive Tier 1 passages concerned wounds, bandages, the staff and the boy's standing, and the harshest pilot passages concerned competence. In the revision the same division reappears with more agents and no cap.

Ambivalence Belongs to Agents, Not to a Village

It is tempting to summarise a community's attitude toward a disabled character with a single valence. The data resist this. Zarina is almost always caring (six of seven units Positive, one Mixed), and Moosa, the most powerful man in the village, shifts between care, resentment and dismissal across scenes. Naushad and the children are consistently hostile. The village's response is therefore distributed unevenly across a few figures, and the apparent 12-12 split in the pilot was an artefact of counting. Moosa's alternation is best read, cautiously, as following the boy's usefulness. He is warm when Lasnik is dutiful and hostile when Lasnik is an inconvenience, and in neither mode does he credit Lasnik's speech as knowledge. This revises the pilot's earlier suggestion that Moosa holds care and resentment in one scene, a suggestion that arose from merging windows.

Contempt and the Fusion of Impairment with Intellect

The added Ridicule/contempt category changes the profile of hostility. Hostility toward the limp as such is rare among characters. The hostile stances cluster where an impairment marker is fused with a judgement of intellect or conduct: "lame" joined to "witless", a stutter joined to "dumb", a limp joined to a woman's shalwar. The formula "half-man half-boy" appears in Moosa's thoughts ("that dull-witted half-man half-boy," ch. 20), and Fatimah turns it against him in chapter 18 when she accuses him of being "kinder to the stranger and gentler with that half-wit half-man half-boy". No gait keyword falls near the second use, so it never entered the pilot's concordance. The same epithet therefore appears once as contempt and once as a charge against Moosa's tenderness. Pity, which the pilot over-assigned to Moosa's contempt, is found only in the narrator's voice. In this novel the narrator pities Lasnik, and the village mostly does not.

Narrative Position, Credibility and Epistemic Injustice

The coded units distinguish what characters say, think and do from what the narrator tells us, and the distinction matters for the argument. The narrator gives Lasnik interior access that no character has. In chapter 7 the narrator tells us that "Lasnik had seen all this and he knew, even though they thought he knew nothing. Only Moosa Madad knew that Lasnik understood these things" (ch. 7). In chapter 14 Moosa says, of the Yatz story and of the prophecies, "who can figure out what he says in any case? It's just garbled nonsense to me" (ch. 14). The two statements sit awkwardly together, since the narrator reports that Moosa knows Lasnik understands, while Moosa dismisses the content of his speech. That gap is where Fricker's (2007) concept of testimonial injustice applies most readily: credibility is deflated in the hearer's

mind while the speaker's capacity is, at another level, acknowledged. The interpretation is a reading of two passages and not a result of the sentiment coding.

Hermeneutical injustice is harder to see in this data, but the scenes with Lasnik's mother point toward it. Sakina has to interpret her son's warnings "to the best of her ability," with her "imagining fed by fear and longing" (ch. 21). The interpretive resource that would let the village hear a stutter as speech is supplied by her alone. The narrator's correction in chapter 20, that smooth speech passes unnoticed, and Zarina's failure to recognise his voice in chapter 23, suggest that the novel itself stages the gap between what Lasnik can say and what his listeners are prepared to hear. Sentiment analysis can show that the gap exists in the distribution of responses. It cannot say what the gap means, and it cannot say whether Lasnik's silences are, in Watermeyer's (2009) sense, a claim of loss. The narrator's remark that "Words meant less than the silences between them" (ch. 7) points toward that claim and lies outside what a reception-based method can read.

What Keyword-Based Sentiment Analysis Can and Cannot Do

The revision answers RQ3 with a list of what the method contributed and what it failed to see. On the credit side, the corpus-assisted design allowed every occurrence of the name to be located, the distribution of stances across agents and chapters to be shown, and the early cap and the false 12-12 split to be detected and corrected. The script and the coded dataset can be rerun and recoded by another reader. On the other side, there are five limits. First, the unit of analysis matters. Dyadic windows overlap, so a line count is not a count of events, and a count by pair can inflate whatever a single passage contains. Second, vocabulary misses. A screen that contains "stutter" misses a novel that marks stuttering by spelling, and 10 of the 43 coded units lay outside lexicon-flagged name windows. Third, naming. Lasnik's first appearance is unnamed, so a name-anchored extraction cannot find the scene in which the village first receives him. Fourth, false positives. Five of 14 pilot passages matched on incidental words ("walk", a cooking stick). Fifth, polarity mixes constructs. It cannot by itself separate a speaker's feeling toward Lasnik from the emotional tone of a scene, nor warmth from credence. Each limit is also a finding about how disability is textualised: it is carried by spelling, epithet and scene as much as by the medical and gait words a lexicon would list.

Limitations

All coding was carried out by one reader, with no second coder and no agreement statistic, and the affective categories involve interpretive judgement. Fear/discomfort and Ridicule/contempt in particular could be coded differently by another reader. The coded set is small (43 units from one novel), no inferential statistics are reported, and the figures are descriptive. The two phases use different units, so their percentages cannot be compared directly. The lexicons and the stutter-marking expression still undercount: dash-separated repetitions ("That - that - that") and unmarked descriptions of speech are not captured, and the whole-text scan returns many hits that must be judged in context. The uptake variable is proposed and has not been tested for reliability. Quotations are located by chapter because the text analysed is unpaginated. The text is English, and the findings do not extend to other novels or to Urdu-language narratives of disability. The article's reading of epistemic injustice is an interpretation of selected passages and not a quantitative finding.

Conclusion

A corpus-assisted qualitative sentiment analysis of Lasnik in *An Abundance of Wild Roses* shows a village that cares for his body more readily than it credits his voice. Character-voiced responses to wounds, bandages and the staff are often caring, responses to speech are more often dismissive, and the hostile stances are concentrated where his impairment is fused with a judgement of his intellect or conduct. Care and cruelty are distributed unevenly across a few figures: Zarina is consistently caring, Naushad and the children are consistently hostile, and Moosa alternates, apparently with the boy's usefulness. The central contribution is a distinction between physical care and communicative recognition, supported by a proposed uptake variable and read through epistemic injustice.

The methodological findings are as important as the descriptive ones. A raw line-level tally suggested an even split and a large role for resentment. An audit, an uncapped rerun, a whole-text scan and a category for contempt changed the picture substantially. Studies of disability in fiction that use sentiment analysis should state their unit of analysis, report incidental hits, separate impairment from the person and the speaker from the narrator, search for what their own screens cannot extract, and treat that remainder as data. In *An Abundance of Wild Roses* the stutter on the page, the unnamed boy in the crowd and the label spoken in anger are among the most revealing of those remainders.

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Appendix A

The Pilot's 14 Audited Passages

The pilot windows were centred on the character name and could not be re-derived after the audit, so the trigger-expression column was not reconstructed for this table. Trigger expressions are reported for all Phase 2 units in Appendix B.

Table A1 The 14 Audited Pilot Passages

No.	Ch.	Principal agent	What the window shows	Polarity	Affect	Tier
1	4	Moosa	Lowers himself beside Lasnik to help untie a knotted rope	Positive	Tenderness/care	3
2	4	Moosa	Tells him to fetch Zarina, who bandaged his foot ("You must go and fetch her, son")	Positive	Tenderness/care	1
3	4	Moosa	Lasnik whispers a prophecy at the gate; Moosa sighs, then leads him away by the elbow	Mixed	Fear/discomfort	1
4	7	Zarina	Lasnik's recollection: she "had not laughed at him," bandaged his foot and gave him a staff	Positive	Respect/recognition; Tenderness/care	1
5	7	Zarina	His boots release a stench; she draws her veil, opens the window and receives him	Neutral	Tenderness/care	1
6	7	Zarina	Packs bandages and leaves, Lasnik following with the bell on his staff tinkling	Positive	Tenderness/care	1
7	10	Narrator	Lasnik "gazing with authority around the courtyard," staff upright	Positive	Respect/recognition	1
8	14	Moosa	His stuttered account of a knee wound meets a head-shake	Negative	Erasure/silence	1
9	14	Zarina	Looks at the gash on his knee and seats him by the hearth	Positive	Tenderness/care	1
10	14	Moosa	Curses him for "always getting into trouble" and grumbles over bandages as Zarina examines the wound	Mixed	Resentment/blame; Tenderness/care	1
11	18	Sakina	Offers him a sweet; he eats ravenously	Positive	Tenderness/care	3
12	19	Moosa	"Moosa cursed Lasnik under his breath" at his early-morning arrival	Negative	Resentment/blame	2
13	20	Moosa	"That dull-witted half-man half-boy"; "a witless creature"	Negative	Pity (as coded in the pilot;	2

14	20	Narrator	Lasnik stands beneath the storeroom window during Kulsoom's death	Negative	Ridicule/contempt in Phase 2) Fear/discomfort	3

Note. Tier 1 = limp, injury, staff or speech; Tier 2 = competence or conduct; Tier 3 = incidental vocabulary. Passage 3 refers to a prophecy about the wounded stranger; passage 4 is focalised through Lasnik.

Appendix B

The 43 Coded Units (Phase 2)

Identifiers follow the project dataset and are not consecutive. Extracts are abbreviated; full quotations are in the supplementary workbook. Mode: Sp = direct speech, Th = thought or free indirect discourse, Co = conduct, Na = narratorial description, La = Lasnik's own perspective. Object: G = gait/mobility, A = injury and assistive devices, S = speech/disfluency, P = the person. Dimension: I = impairment, N = individual, B = both.

Table B1 *Coded Units with Trigger Expression and Uptake*

ID	Ch.	Agent	Mode	Obj.	Dim.	Trigger expression	Extract	Polarity	Affect	Tier	Uptake
LM1	2	Children (peers)	Co	G	I	none in extract	The children laughed at the young boy as they let him pass	Negative	Ridicule/contempt	2	–
LM2	2	Narration	Na	G	I	limping	limping like a cart with a broken axle	Negative	Ridicule/contempt	1	–
LM4	7	Zarina	Co	A	I	bandaged, gash	She had cleaned and bandaged the gash where one of the...	Positive	Tenderness/care	1	–
LM5	7	Zarina	Co	A	I	staff	Zarina offered him a long staff, her husband's	Positive	Tenderness/care	1	–
LM6	7	Zarina	Co	A	I	none in extract	Zarina who had not laughed at him	Positive	Respect/recognition	1	–
LM7	7	Self	La	G	I	none in extract	He knew this awkward stumbling would cause much merriment...	Negative	Fear/discomfort	1	–
LM8	10	Moosa	Co	P	N	staff	keeping his staff upright, gazing with authority around...	Positive	Respect/recognition	2	–
LM9	10	Moosa	Sp	P	N	none in extract	Now remember your duties, young man!	Positive	Respect/recognition	2	–
LM10	12	Narration	Na	G	I	none in extract	stiff and unbending on uneven patches	Neutral	Neutral/descriptive	1	–
LM11	12	Narration	Na	A	I	staff	Lasnik's staff stood against a poplar tree, a lone sentry	Positive	Respect/recognition	2	–
LM12	14	Sabiha	Th	G	I	limping	Lasnik, limping, a length of rope trailing behind him	Neutral	Neutral/descriptive	1	–
LM13	14	Moosa	Sp	P	N	none in extract	How did you come about with another injury, eh? It's not...	Negative	Resentment/blame	1	–
LM14	14	Zarina	Co	A	I	leg, wound	Zarina asked Lasnik to stretch out his leg so that she...	Positive	Tenderness/care	1	–
LM15a	14	Moosa	Co	A	I	bandages	Moosa grumbled about this unnecessary consumption of...	Negative	Resentment/blame	1	–
LM15b	14	Moosa	Th	P	N	none in extract	Curse Lasnik for always getting into trouble	Negative	Resentment/blame	2	–
LM17	18	Moosa	Co	P	N	bandaged, knee	his bandaged knee slowing him down	Negative	Erasure/silence	2	–

LM18	19	Narration	Na	G	I	foot	dragging his bad foot behind him, burdened by soggy...	Negative	Pity	1	–
LM19	19	Self	La	G	I	hobbled	Lasnik hobbled out of the path of the oncoming flood of...	Negative	Fear/discomfort	1	–
LM20	19	Naushad	Sp	G	B	lame	my Little Lame Soldier	Negative	Ridicule/contempt	1	–
LM21	20	Narration	Na	G	I	lame, leg	dragging his lame leg behind him as if it were the...	Negative	Pity	1	–
LM22	21	Sakina	Th	P	N	limping, wound	returned from Moosa Madad's house limping, pale,...	Positive	Tenderness/care	2	–
LM23	21	Naushad	Th	P	B	lame	the witless, dumb, lame boy	Negative	Ridicule/contempt	1	–
LM24	21	Sakina (reporting Zarina)	Sp	G	I	none in extract	how you do not laugh at him, how you speak up for him...	Positive	Respect/recognition	2	–
LM25	20	Moosa	Th	P	B	lame	a lame, witless boy wearing a woman's pink shalwar	Negative	Ridicule/contempt	1	–
LM26	2	Narration	Na	G	I	lame	The lame boy lay at the bottom of the lane	Neutral	Neutral/descriptive	1	–
DS0	2	Narration	Na	S	I	stuttering	The boy's stuttering voice was hoarse, grating against...	Negative	Fear/discomfort	1	n/a
DS1	2	Noor	Sp	S	B	none in extract	Allah knows why he didn't give you any brains	Negative	Ridicule/contempt	2	Overridden
DS2	2	Children (peers)	Co	S	I	none in extract	The children laughed at the young boy as they let him pass	Negative	Ridicule/contempt	2	Mocked
DS3	3	Narration	Na	S	I	none in extract	the young boy who couldn't speak any words which made...	Negative	Erasure/silence	1	n/a
DS4	3	Mariam	Th	S	I	spluttered, stuttered	stuttered and spluttered as he gesticulated, crafting his...	Mixed	Fear/discomfort	1	Heard with alarm
DS5	4	Mariam	Th	S	I	garbled	Tearing herself away from the garbled mutterings of this...	Negative	Erasure/silence	1	Dismissed
DS6	7	Zarina	Co	S	I	knee	Zarina winced. She placed her hand on Lasnik's knee	Mixed	Tenderness/care	1	Acknowledged
DS7	7	Self	La	S	I	none in extract	Lasnik did not have proper words. Words meant less than...	Mixed	Self-directed reframing	1	n/a
DS8	7	Zarina	Sp	S	I	none in extract	Speak slowly, my son	Positive	Tenderness/care	1	Acted on
DS9	10	Moosa	Sp	S	I	none in extract	No, my son, no need to tie up the bird	Positive	Respect/recognition	1	Acted on
DS10	14	Moosa	Sp	S	B	garbled	And who can figure out what he says in any case? It's...	Negative	Erasure/silence	1	Dismissed
DS12	19	Moosa	Co	S	I	mumbling	Mumbling instructions to Lasnik in broken phrases	Neutral	Neutral/descriptive	2	n/a
DS13	20	Narration	Na	S	I	spluttered	He spluttered senseless words, shut his eyes, terrified	Negative	Erasure/silence	1	n/a
DS14	20	Self	La	S	I	stammered	Lasnik stammered, his lower lip quivering	Negative	Fear/discomfort	1	Overridden
DS15	20	Narration	Na	S	I	none in extract	the first time his speech had been smooth, unhindered,...	Positive	Respect/recognition	1	Unnoticed
DS16	21	Naushad	Th	S	B	mumbling, stuttering	stuttering and mumbling, a string of saliva streaking...	Negative	Ridicule/contempt	1	Dismissed
DS17	21	Sakina	Th	S	I	none in extract	Sakina did not know what to make of it. She did not want...	Negative	Fear/discomfort	1	Interpreted with effort
DS18	23	Zarina	Sp	S	I	none in extract	Lasnik had never spoken like this	Positive	Respect/recognition	1	Attended

Note. Trigger = lexicon term found in the quotation, otherwise "none in extract". Uptake is a proposed variable and is coded only for units in which a respondent receives speech (n/a elsewhere is shown as n/a or a dash). Unit DS18 is coded Attended.

Appendix C

Coding Framework and Audit Criteria

Unit of Analysis

A unit is one stance expressed by one agent (a character, the narrator or Lasnik) toward an impairment-related target (gait, injury or aid, speech, or the person) at one place in the text. Overlapping extractions of the same sentence are merged. A passage may contain several units.

Variables and Values

Table C1 Variables and Values

Variable	Values and definitions
Polarity	Positive; Negative; Mixed (a single unit carries both a favourable and an unfavourable stance); Neutral (no evaluation).
Affective category	Tenderness/care (physical or emotional care); Respect/recognition (treats Lasnik as competent, dutiful, or worthy of address); Fear/discomfort (alarm, distress or unease); Resentment/blame (irritation, grievance, blame); Erasure/silence (the stance renders his speech or presence insignificant); Pity (sorrow for his condition); Ridicule/contempt (mockery, derision, demeaning labelling); Neutral/descriptive; Self-directed reframing (Lasnik's own reinterpretation).
Object	Gait/mobility; Injury and assistive devices (wounds, bandages, staff); Speech/disfluency; Person (intellect, competence, conduct).
Dimension	Impairment (stance attaches to the impairment); Individual (stance attaches to worth or conduct); Both (the two are fused in one stance).
Narrative position	Direct speech; Thought including free indirect discourse; Conduct (what a character does); Narratorial description; Lasnik's own perspective.
Tier	Tier 1: the impairment (limp, injury, staff, speech). Tier 2: competence or conduct. (Tier 3, incidental vocabulary, applies to the pilot only; no Phase 2 unit is Tier 3.)
Trigger expression	The lexicon term found in the extracted quotation, or "none in extract".
Uptake (proposed)	Acted on; Interpreted with effort; Acknowledged (affective); Attended; Heard with alarm; Dismissed; Overridden; Mocked; Unnoticed; not applicable.

Audit Criteria

1. Each unit must be traceable to a quotation located by string search in the text file.
2. Windows that capture the same sentence are merged, and a line count is never reported as an event count.
3. Each code is checked against the full text of its own window and, where the stance depends on context, against the surrounding scene.
4. Where one unit carries two stances toward Lasnik, it is coded Mixed, and the categories present are recorded.

5. A hit on incidental vocabulary (a cooking stick, the feet of a corpse, a day's walk) is reported and excluded from the Tier 1 and Tier 2 counts.
6. A code that depends on text lying outside the window is withdrawn or recoded from the full context.
7. Every lexicon hit outside the name windows is read in context before inclusion.

Supplementary Materials

The supplementary files are: (a) *lasnik_extraction.py*, the script for Stages 1 to 4, which extracts and counts but does not classify sentiment; (b) *passages.csv*, the 47 merged passages with lexicon hits; and (c) *Lasnik_coded_units.xlsx*, the 43 coded units with full quotations and every variable.