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Translating Animal Art
Salin’s Style I and Anglo-Saxon cast saucer brooches

By Tania M. Dickinson

1. Introduction
Although Salin’s Style I was the most widely used animal art in early Anglo-Saxon England, its study has been mainly confined to the typology of square-headed brooches in order to establish chronology, especially origins and early development, and cultural connections, particularly with Scandinavia and the Continent.1 Leigh is the only person, from an Anglo-Saxon perspective, who has really tried to explore the relationship between the art-form of Style I and its iconographic and social meaning, and then still mostly on the basis of Kentish square-headed brooches.2 If square-headed brooches were indeed the »leading« type for Style I, providing its most complex and frequently most accomplished displays, they were not in England its only, or even most numerous, vehicle, being easily outnumbered, for example, by cast and applied saucer brooches combined.5

The omission of all but the occasional saucer brooch from discussion can probably be attributed to their Style I being perceived as generally derivative, or degenerate, in quality and their role in transmission as non-primary.4 But this is an unproductive attitude. The facts that saucer brooches developed outside the core area of Style I genesis – first in early 5th-century Lower Saxony and later, and predominantly, in central and western Anglo-Saxon districts – and that throughout their currency they showed a preference for geometric designs make their Style I particularly interesting: self-evidently, it was adopted from elsewhere and engaged with a pre-existing tradition.5 If the target is to probe how and why animal art gained its place in early medieval affections, rather than to judge its aesthetic merit, then saucer brooches may be pertinent: the so-called »indifferent« or even »bad« can hold as many lessons as the »primary« or »best«.

Moreover, ever since Salin first described Style I’s widespread repertoire of motifs and design principles, »degeneration« has been an integral concept in its characterisation. Salin showed that the most arresting aspect of the style was the emphasis on individual body-parts (elements) which enabled animal images to be transformed, whether in the initial development of classic Style I from Late Roman antecedents or, later, when the defining contour lines were lost.6 Haseloff’s list of design principles (Gestaltungsprinzipien) points to three major transformative processes: »addition«, »abbreviation« (reduction or pars pro toto as well as compression in detail) and »re-assembly« (in Haseloff’s words, »Tiersalat« – »animal salad« – or horror vacui). Leigh has added, as a fourth factor, »ambiguity«, which underlies the prevalence of dual images of various kinds.7

Armed with these guides to reading Style I, both the »coherent« and the apparently »incoherent«, its
Before Style metric motifs on saucer brooches had nearly always recognisable motifs. A find from Aston Remenham, what was not done in terms of the selection and combination of motifs (the individual animal images), presentational bands or fields by boundary rings. The circularity was emphasised by presenting motifs in single, repetitive bands (one-dimensional translation), which, depending on the motifs' number and shape and the proportions of the space occupied (in terms of width of field and arc of circle), would appear as either "running" (e.g. spirals, fig. 1) or "radiating" (e.g. foliate cross, fig. 2). A forerunner, recognising Style I on saucer brooches involves identifying motifs and forms of presentation previously established in the Anglo-Scandinavian canon, that is discrete, coherent and legible animals. Identifying less coherent versions tends to depend on such "primary" or "prior" versions being extant, from which, in turn, a chain of derivation can be recognised: the line of argument is the same as that more commonly invoked to establish internal, relative-chronological sequence.

Profile creatures were always arranged in single-line procession, normally in two animals per four or eights. A clockwise procession was preferred over an anticlockwise (in the ratio of 4:3), but, inexplicably, whilst two creatures normally processed clockwise (ratio of 7:2), three creatures moved anticlockwise (ratio of 2:5). Feet were nearly always placed to the inside of the brooch and the head in line with the body, except where transmogrification into a human head implies sideways or rearward twisting (e.g. fig. 4e). But heads do not look back-ward over the spine, as in other Late Roman-derived styles, including Scandinavian Style I. Symmetrical, mirror-image pairing of whole creatures occurs only, and debatably, on a brooch from Emscote, Warks. (fig. 6a).20 Saucer brooches thus echo one arrangement commonly adopted by Style I for marginal, profile animals, the procession consisting of two, but not the equally, or even more, common arrangement of mirror-image pairing, though there is noth-

ing intrinsically to prevent it, as its recurrent use on round brooches in Quoit Brooch Style shows.32 Although a chasing arrangement is also the hallmark of animals on Kentish garnet-inlaid rectangular belt plates, which might have been a significant source of inspiration for designs on many saucer brooches and some great square-headed brooches,33 the Aston Remenham brooch shows that the preference was established early and is to be explained by pre-existing traditions, especially for organising geometric motifs into single-line translation or "running" designs.34

Transformations of Style

When Style I was transferred to saucer brooches, it was changed not only through selectivity and adaptation to a pre-existing design tradition, but also by realising an inherent, transformative potential. "Abbreviation" in the form of presentation (compression of the detail) in essence accounts for the difference between animal bodies in Haseloff's Style Phase B (contour lines with transverse-line infill), which is uncommon on cast saucer brooches (fig. 4a), and in Style Phase D (two or three parallel lines), which is widespread (fig. 4b). Moreover, Style Phase D with lines of even width often appears to compress a more accomplished version in which one, thick, sloping ridge is contrasted with one or two, thin, sharp ridges (figs. 5h, 5b, 5j). Compare, for example, the animal-men in Figures 6a and 5f, or the two chasing bird-headed design, in which a finely executed, "thick and thin" version is known from eight "primary" brooches (fig. 5a), while a series of decreasingly less proficient, "secondary" renderings is known from a further eleven brooches (figs. 5d, e, j), including examples in full Style Phase D (figs. 5c and h). This latter series exemplifies how abbreviation in the form of presentation, even to a single line (figs. 5f and 5k), combined with abbreviation (or reduction) of the elements which comprise the motif, can result in a truly "degenerated" Style I — and one which might appear illegible were the prior versions not available (cf. figs. 5a, d, g, j, h, k, in that order). Indeed, characteristic elements of this particular motif, such as the "T-shaped" rendition of the leg, allow "tertiary" versions to be identified on the pair from Berinsfield grave 102, Oxon. (fig. 5l), and even in one of four framed panels on one of a pair from Black Patch, Pewsey, grave 21, Wilts (fig. 5m).

Such abbreviation, or the use of parts of an animal image rather than the whole, is probably the most commonplace transformatory feature of Style I on saucer brooches. A good example is the simplified rendering, again eight times, of the animal-mass of the Upton brooch on a pair from Shelford, Cambs (fig. 4): the 'thick and thin helmet' is reduced to a shock of striated hair, the facial features to two blobs, and the limbs to a single, 'Z-shaped' triple-bar block. Abbreviation is more often associated, however, with 'addition' (or replication) of elements and consequently with 're-assembly'. The results range from more or less incomplete creatures to 'repeat-pattern' generation.

Incomplete profile creatures occur on about one-fifth of zoomorphic cast saucer brooches. Where a field is divided radially, say by ear or by incised inlays, discrete creatures may be defined, even if their
body-parts and hence orientation are not cogent: for example, the creatures on the brooch from Girton grave 10, Cambs. (fig. 5c) are "re-assembled" parts, arguably from creatures like those on the inner field of the Upton brooch and the bird-headed animal (figs. 5a-b); those on Emscote lack authentic heads (fig. 6a); and on a brooch from Kingsey, Bucks., the imitation inlays themselves seem to serve as heads (fig. 6b). In other cases, the number of creatures intended is not apparent, because only parts can be separated out of the asymmetrical confection (e.g. Fairford, Glos. and Alfriston grave 28, Sussex, figs. 6c-d), or have become totally incoherent: animal salad, as on the brooches from Wheatley grave 14, Oxon. (fig. 9).2x

Re-assembly need not mean, however, that the identity of distinct creatures had been totally lost, as the devolutionary sequence running from the Aston Remenham "Vimose" heads and also, apparently, one leg of each of the four chasing quadrupeds of the first, but has substituted further legs or more ambiguous elements for other parts of the design. Arguably, this process went even further to produce Long Wittenham I, grave 121, Oxon. (fig. 3c), and, by substituting some geometric elements for zoomorphic ones, Baginton, Warks. (fig. 3d).

The processes of abbreviation, addition and reassembly also generated repetitively-patterned designs, which are especially characteristic of Style I on saucer brooches: about 60 per cent of the zoomorphic brooches bear parts of animal images rather than an attempt at a whole creature. The process of incorporating animal parts into radial and running designs must have begun early in the translation of Style I to saucer brooches, to judge by both the well-known type in which the arms of a floriate cross are filled by full-face heads and a recent discovery from Wasperton grave 168, Warks., which has legs between the scrolls of a four-spiral motif (fig. 10a).3x The most popular arrangements of all, however, involved legs which seem to run, nearly always in a clockwise direction, round the centre. The number of legs ranges from three (as in the central field of Droxford, Hants., fig. 8a) to eight, with four (fig. 10b), six (figs. 10d-e) or seven (fig. 10g) the most frequent and five more occasional (fig. 10c). The number-patternning makes sense less as a shorthand for discrete animals and more as a reflection of running-spiral numeration. Indeed, where the leg is presented with the foot to the outside, whether bent back or pointing forwards, there is a marked resemblance to designs with running spirals (cf. figs. 10g and 10b).3x

The other main type of pattern to be generated was a frieze. Either a full-face head with profile body, block and leg (figs. 11a-b) or just alternating body-blocks and legs (fig. 11c) were repeated from three to six times, usually round a central geometric motif (hexafoil, quadrifoil, five-point star or floriate cross...
How recognizable animal-men are, and especially the direction in which their human heads face (to outside or inside of the brooch), depends on presentation. For example, the human mouth is constrained from the animal's crown/nasal on Bishop's Cleeve 1/4, Worce (fig. 9c), but from the animal's face in the case of one creature from the 'pair'-to-Fairford grave 15 (fig. 4d), mentioned above, and of one from the singleton in Mitcham grave 298, Surrey (fig. 4e). The last-named has a vertically 'Sutton Hoe'-type helmet, while the Fairford example displays a feature noted by Leigh, in which an animal's ear is transformed into a headdress with feather or streamer. This feature might help to identify animal-men without a mouth, such as Wasperton grave 18, Warks. (fig. 4g). In other cases, while the head-shape—w-th curled nape—replicates those of assured animal-men, the absence of other features makes the identity uncertain (cf. figs. 4c and 4a). And in the case of the second creature on the Mitcham brooch (fig. 4h), the human head might be read facing inwards or outwards.

Ambiguously paired or single creatures are a feature of a series of mostly late, large brooches. There is one example of what might be a 'Great Beast' from Prittlewell grave group 32, Essex, with full-face (or 'bird's-eye-view') head, two hips and shared 'S'-shaped leg (fig. 4f). Paired profile heads are more frequent and can admit of three different iconic readings (figs. 11d, e, g): they are composed either with radiating, imitation inlays between frontal faces (fig. 11d), which can appear as a single full-face head (fig. 11dii), and bars or multipale bar blocks between back-to-back heads (fig. 11diii), or vice versa (figs. 11b, c, f, h, and i). Of note are transformations where the heads are presented with rounded skulls rather than crested 'helmets'. In the upper field of a pair from East Shipley, the full-face format can be read either way up (fig. 11b-i), though it is more striking looking outwards (fig. 11h). In other versions, by fusing the dividing-bar with the eyebrows, four 'm-shaped' or 'Mr Chad' masks are highlighted, bringing forward an explicitly zoomorphised floriate cross, as on Berinsfield grave 22, Oxon., where visual ambiguity is increased by the sharp but irregular relief (fig. 11e).

Some brooches exhibit other types of ambiguity which have not been so commented upon. There is a series of brooches closely linked by shape (mostly convex, lathe-turned) and other ornament (central glass inlay or riveted stud and punched flange or outer border), which features six repeated motifs. On Lechlade grave 113, Glos., they are clearly clockwise (fig. 10d); by contrast, on a brooch from Kempston, Beds., they appear as anticlockwise 'helmets' heads (fig. 10f, especially 10i), though one is more like a 'shrimp' (fig. 10g) and it is this motif which can be read either way up. Transformations where the heads are presented with regular elements, even head-like ones, separate the sequence of legs and body-blocks (fig. 11f).

Ambivalent, or even multivalent, images are ubiquitous throughout all this Style I. Among classic treatments are animals with heads which transform into human ones, creatures which are separate in profile but, through sharing parts, can be seen as single either from above or full-face, and heads which can be read either way up.

Fig. 9. *Animal salad*: Wheatley 14, Glos. Sc. 1:2. Photo. TMD.
of the upper limb, or, as is nearly achieved on the Kempston brooch (fig. 10f), by integrating the cheek-bars and forehead of a head to make a leg or tail. Which came first, and which, if either, was really intended, is debatable.

A final ambiguity which affects many of the transformations already described is a tendency to reduce zoomorphic images to geometric ones. For example, mosaic-like patterns occupy the spaces between the arms of a cross on a large brooch from Alveston, Warks. (fig. 8f) and between imitation inlays on a brooch from Thornborough, Bucks. (fig. 8g). In the former case, the overall design seems to replicate that on a smaller brooch from Market Lavington, Wilts. (fig. 8e); the mosaic may then be read (admittedly, generously) as abbreviated, profile animals, or Protome in Haseloff’s terms. In the latter case, the mosaic can be compared with the design on a pair of brooches from Long Wittenham I grave 71, Oxon. (fig. 8h), where ‘T-‘ and ‘angle‘ shapes are more obviously geometricised versions of full-face heads and bent legs – in essence compacted animals – such as appear on friezes like those in Figure 11a or, with the leg inverted, on applied saucer brooches of the ‘Kempston Cross‘ type (fig. 8j). Another case is the pair of brooches from Watchfield grave 75, Oxon. (fig. 8k); the central motif has been called ‘triaxial‘, but it owes its appearance more probably to the three ‘rotating‘ Style I legs at the centre of the pair from Droxford, mentioned above (fig. 8a). If so (and intermediary stages probably intervened), then the former’s outer field of multiple-bar blocks might represent the two chasing
creatures of the latter: the dominant radial blocks, which divide the field, correspond to the two, markedly radial, body-blocks of the whole animals and to the junctions between them. And if that is so, then the outer field on the brooch from Cassington II grave 5, Oxon. (fig. 8d), although surrounding a central quatrefoil, might also be "zoomorphic".

It would go too far to propose that all regular as-
tragal- and basketwork friezes were zoomorphic sub-
stitutes, but the potential for ambiguity should be ac-
knowledged, especially where there is some irregu-
arity or combination with other Style I elements. For example, a full-face head and floriate cross motif is surrounded by a mask-body-leg frieze on a brooch on-Avon 79, Warks. b: East Shefford, Berh. (British Museum 93,7-1b), but by bas-
kwerk on brooches from Berinsfield grave 107, Oxon. (fig. 12), and Horton Kirby,

3. Interpretation
Chronology
To relate analytical description to wider interpreta-
tion is to move into more difficult and speculative ar-
aea. A primary problem, which was mostly circum-
vented above, is the lack of a really secure chronology,
both in terms of absolute dates and of the time-
scapes over which devolutionary sequences might have taken place (at a uniform rate or not? Within, say, one or over a whole generation?)

The link between the Aston Remenham saucer
brooch and the square-headed brooch from Bifrons
grave 41 puts the beginning of Style I on saucer
brooches about AD 500 or current, conventional dat-
ing, that is concurrent with the beginnings of great
square-headed brooches in Saxton and Anglian dis-
tricts. Thirteen great square-headed brooches in-
cluded in Hines' Corpus came from graves which cer-
tainly or possibly also contained zoomorphic saucer
brooches, and thus permit some calibration of
chronologies, though the degree of overlap which Hines allows between his phases and within his ab-
olute dates of c. AD 500-570 causes uncertainty.43

The associations with great square-headed brooches of Hines' Phase I to early Phase 2 would place exam-
ple of coherence Style I on saucer brooches, such as two chasing animal-men (Haslingfield/ Harston, Cambs.) and bird-headed creatures (Alveston 5, fig. 11g, in the first quarter or third of the 6th century, but, as Hines pointed out at the time in quite developed versions, such as 'tertiary' renderings of the bird-headed creatures (Berinsfield 102, fig. 5g), partly incoherent creatures (Aframston 28, fig. 6c) and ambiguous 'shrimp-like' heads/legs (Lynton 61, fig. 10b, and Bidford-on-Avon 88). Associations with Hines' full to late Phase 2 and Phase 3 indicate that coherent, if 'secondary', bird-headed creatures (Thy/Crudenore, Cambs., fig. 5) and full-face heads in a floriate cross (Berinsfield 107, fig. 12) could still be produced in the second quarter and/or middle of the 6th century, but designs with re-assembled crea-
tures (Girton 19, fig. 5c), body and leg/frieze (Lechlade 18, formerly 57, Glos.) or incoherent or-
cnament (Coleshill, Oxon., Black Patch, Pewsey 21, fig. 5m, and Holdenby 4, Northants.) predominate.44

It is important to remember that not all the
brooches in this second grouping combine the zoomorphic field with one or more geometric fields, whereas the brooches in the earlier set only have a single zoomorphic field. Links with Kentish chronol-
ology place the end of saucer-brooch production in the late 6th and early 7th century, well beyond Hines' end-date for great square-headed brooches by then brooches had become noticeably larger and designs were usually multi-field, composed from (mostly) highly transformed Style I, geometric or geometri-
cal motifs (e.g. figs. 5a, b, 4la) primary versions tend to re-castings, in which clay shrinkage progressively ac-
counted for loss of size and detail.45 Most evidence from saucer brooches accords, however, with the current state of the debate on Early Anglo-Saxon
casting technology, which is that, although pre-pre-
pared, wax blanks could have been used as well as ephe-
meral (skin?) templates for marking out the de-
ign (thus delimiting size and layout), the produc-
tion of a brooch-model was essentially an individual and de novo exercise.46 Quality was therefore very
much at the mercy of the freehand skills and vo-
ilon of the craftworker rather than being determined by a copy-casting technology. On a negative reading, degeneration would then be a consequence of igno-
rance and/or carelessness. The fact that in some
large series (the two chasing bird-headed creatures and the six-leg or -head series) primary versions tend

Art-form and meaning
The traditional and negative answer is that Style I was an alien art-form, used without understanding of its original meaning and purpose and with decreas-
ing success. In many cases close similarity in the di-
ensions and layout of the relief-casting might sug-
gest that deficiencies in the detail were compound-
ed by the brooches having been reproduced me-
chanically. Indeed, in the case of the series with two
chasing bird-headed creatures (figs. 5a, d4), the area of relief-decoroation tends to be smallest on the least
cohesive versions (though these do not necessarily have the smallest diameters overall) and this can con-
firm that they resulted from a long sequence of re-
castings, in which clay shrinkage progressively ac-
counted for loss of size and detail.46 Most evidence from saucer brooches accords, however, with the current state of the debate on Early Anglo-Saxon
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ilon of the craftworker rather than being determined by a copy-casting technology. On a negative reading, degeneration would then be a consequence of igno-
rance and/or carelessness. The fact that in some
large series (the two chasing bird-headed creatures and the six-leg or -head series) primary versions tend
to be found in more south-easterly areas, while secondary versions concentrate in the west (Avon valley), might lend support to an argument for a down-the-line drift in the diffusion of Style I.44

The characterisation of the Style I on saucer brooches encourages, however, more positive interpretations. The persistent and varied use of Style I on so many saucer brooches and over such a length of time implies that the animal imagery, however disguised, had genuine popularity and value. Moreover, the fact that craftsmen practised, in so many ways, the transformatory processes which it is argued are constitutive design principles of the style, implies that they were engaged actively in the production and reproduction of those principles; in that sense, they acted knowingly and willingly.45

On the one hand, as the above analyses have demonstrated, craftsmen exploited Style I's flexibility in order to integrate it with pre-existing and, arguably, still cherished design traditions. Particularly notable is the geometricising of compositions and, as time passed, motifs too. Thus, while just over half of the cast saucer brooches with zoomorphic decoration (142 out of 281 examined) are exclusively zoomorphic (not counting the central boss, real or imitation inlays and punched decoration), the other half (139) combine zoomorphic and geometric (fig. 15), either as motifs in a single field (e.g. legs with four-scrolls, or full-face heads with floriate cross) or as fields in a multi-field design (e.g. leg-swastika with Zungenmuster, or frieze of Style I elements with star, hexafoil or quatrefoil). In one rare case, from Bickford-on-Avon grave 79, Warks., an otherwise very simple design of concentric ribbing is embellished with a zoomorphic punch — a Style I leg in a triangle (fig. 14a).46

On the other hand, the detailed analyses of the Style I images have shown a continuity of iconic form, and so, as Haseloff and Leigh, among others, have been at pains to point out, potentially of iconographic meaning.47 What Style I signified in its Scandinavian homeland, let alone once transferred to Kent or East Anglia, is, of course, a matter of considerable debate. There is extensive, if not universal, support for the idea that, like the closely related bracteate art, it embodied a North Germanic mythic world, relating in particular to a shamanistic cult of Odin.48 A few potentially Odin-type images occur on saucer brooches. The most striking instance is the animal-man of the Upton brooch (fig. 4h) and related applied brooches from Barrington A, grave 16B and Barrington B, grave 168, Camb.,49 the details of whose face, raised forearm, collar and even conjoined forearm and leg can be paralleled on Scandinavian A-, B- and especially C-bracteates.50 Even if this image expresses more of the northern conceptualisation of a Roman emperor than of the god Odin,51 the iconographic transmission from the Scandinavian milieu seems evident. Whether the motif's meaning survived its transformation to the version found on the Shellford brooches (fig. 4i) is unknowable, but worth entertaining. So too is the intention of the maker(s) of the Hexafoil and Style I frieze brooches from Cassington, Purwell Farm, Oxon. (a failed casting: fig. 11a) and Kempston, Beds. (an applied brooch), who so carefully positioned the points of the central hexafoil in relation to the mouths of the full-face heads in the outer frieze that each head seems to be blowing out a divine breath or tongue of fire (Atem).52

In other cases, the iconography is even more difficult to decipher. But the fact that the creatures who
chase each other round a brooch (or pair of brooches) are mostly subduely differented (e.g. fig. 13) — but the symbolism, between animals and animals, might hint at some narrative purpose. And the maker of the East Shefford brooches discussed above (fig. 13) surely had uppermost in mind some special point about humanoid heads, for not only is one set of eyes particularly for leading kindred. But the ways in which Style I was absorbed and transformed on saucer brooches suggest that the messages needed modulated and manipulation: a Northern Germanic inheritance had to be squared with other relationships, just as it has been argued, the original imagery of saucer brooches played on the association of Late Antique (geometric) motifs with «Saxo- on artifacts.»

At present, however, correlating different expressions of Style I on saucer brooches (and on other artefacts) with different social or political spheres, and so forth, is a complex series of metaphors relating reality and belief. Understandings would be acquired (revealed) cumulatively, in a revelatory art, that is one which can be read on different levels, from a simple iconographic sign, or relief, or trigger to a narrative story, to a complex series of direct references to a Northern Germanic background, while further west the message was right, perhaps a generation or more after Style I was used (80) being found without their decorative foils. This study is based on classification of 587 cast saucer brooches out of a current total corpus of just over 600. While 306 (52%) have designs that are exclusively geometric, 281 (48%) are entirely or partly zoomorphic, and 110 (18%) combine both types. In elaborately spuriously 

That dress and jewellery played a major part in constituting individual and group identity in early Anglo-Saxon England is now well established. In particular, in the 6th century kindred relationships and status, and a pivotal role for women within them, whether real or idealised, seem to have been paramount.»

The association of Style I with the most lav-
number by now, they remain less accessible to analysis and to locate. This is perhaps related to the small number of these brooches known. It is uncertain whether the few extant examples of what has been called the 'Vorlage'-type (e.g. Haseloff 1981, 90 fig. 20) are extant examples of this type. As far as the criterion of what forms the basis of the saucer brooch family is concerned, it is of local significance to the Kentish tradition. This has well been observed by others who have written about this topic, such as Leigh (1980, 369-430) who considers the initial classification of the saucer brooches and the "mirror-image arrangement had been intended, an even rather hers in the Upper Thames, and localised manufacture is indi- cated if they continue to be interpreted as copies of Kentish gar-}
I have been stimulated by discussions of two ethno-...and Great Square-headed Brooches is unfortunately not possible...the complexity of the encoded meanings is learnt progressively...the initial development of Style I in Scandinavia had it...in the Anglo-Saxon context, funerals are as likely to be the...clear correlations should perhaps not be expected: cf. Jennings, S. 1987, 84-116, esp. 112-116. Bakka, E. 1959: On the beginning of Salin’s Style I in England. Chadwick, S.E. 1958: The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Finglesham, 66-76.


