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Cover Image: Sculpture of Antoine de Saint-Exupery with little Prince: Lyon, France. Jetro T, Shutterstock

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Editor's Introduction

It is our great pleasure and my personal honour as the editor-in-chief to introduce Volume 13 Issue 1 of the *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship*. This issue is a selection of papers received through open submissions directly to our journal.

This is the ninth issue of the journal that I have edited (the 22nd for IAFOR journals), this time, with the precious help of our new Co-Editor, Dr Michaela Keck (Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany), and our two Associate Editors, Dr Fernando Darío González Grueso (Tamkang University, Taiwan) and Dr Murielle El Hajj (Lusail University, Qatar).

We are now 30 teachers and scholars from various countries, always eager to help, and willing to review the submissions we receive. Many thanks to the IAFOR Publications Office and its manager, Nick Potts, for his support and hard work. Also, many thanks to Mark Kenneth Camiling, IAFOR Publications Assistant.

We hope our journal, indexed in Scopus since December 2019, will become more international in time and we still welcome teachers and scholars from all regions of the world who wish to join us. Please join us on Academia and LinkedIn to help us promote our journal.

Finally, we would like to thank all those authors who entrusted our journal with their research. Manuscripts, once passing initial screening, were peer-reviewed anonymously by four to six members of our team, resulting in eight being accepted for this issue.

Note that we accept submissions of short original essays and articles (1,500 to 2,500 words at the time of submission, NOT including tables, figures and references) that are peer-reviewed by several members of our team, like regular research papers. Welcome to submit a paper for our regular 2025 Issue (Submissions open: Friday February 28, 2025).

Please see the journal website for the latest information and to read past issues: https://iafor.org/journal/iafor-journal-of-literature-and-librarianship. Issues are freely available to read online, and free of publication fees for authors.

With this wealth of thought-provoking manuscripts in this issue, I wish you a wonderful and educative journey through the pages that follow.

Best regards,

Dr Bernard Montoneri
Associate Professor, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan

Editor *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship*
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Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*: The Bildungsroman and Identity Formation

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Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*: The Bildungsroman and Identity Formation

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Abstract

This article employs the psychosocial theories of Erik Erikson on identity development to negotiate the growth and learning process of Esperanza Cordero, the young adolescent heroine of Sandra Cisneros's novel *The House on Mango Street* (1984). The article not only negotiates the interplay between social and psychological aspects of identity construction but also reads Esperanza's identity in the light of the relationship between Erikson's fifth developmental stage (Identity vs. Confusion) and both the preceding stage (Industry vs. Inferiority) as well as the next stage (Intimacy vs. Isolation). As a novel of education and character building, *The House on Mango Street* manifests a necessary overlap between genre and theme, and thus a preoccupation with learning from the world through interacting variables like sensory perceptions, peer pressure, and direct experiences. The protagonist in this formative novel, being an adolescent in a crucial stage of receiving influences, seeks knowledge about the external world as well as her identity. Feelings of shame and non-belonging govern her thoughts about the house on Mango Street. Thus, Cisneros uses the house on Mango Street as a sustained trope for identity construction and personality growth. Ultimately, Esperanza finds her identity as an emerging artist (a poet and writer); and this gives her inner peace, freedom, and emotional stability to decide to come back and help other women in her community. Moreover, it is when she finds a "house" of her own within her heart she can overcome her anxieties and come to terms with her shabby neighborhood and small family house. The conclusion draws on some relevant literary contexts to establish the social commitment of the young artist as a measure of integration and success.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, Chicana literature, Erik Erikson, identity, Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*

Sandra Cisneros's novel *The House on Mango Street* (1984) is a notable instance of a bildungsroman in the Hispanic-American literary tradition and even a künstlerroman on the young artist, the aspiring poet in this case. A female bildungsroman, *The House on Mango Street* consists of more than forty shorter vignettes written in a realistic, though fragmented, style and in which we hear the narrator's written voice. The novel has a conspicuous feminist potential and is dedicated "To the Women" ("A las Mujeres") in two languages: English and Spanish. As a coming-of-age Chicana novel, it centers on a young protagonist in a primary stage of identity formation. In the course of the novel, Esperanza Cordero (the narrator) goes through the necessary "rite[s] of passage" using language or writing (i.e. literacy) to find authority and escape pressures (Dubb, 2007, p. 220). She draws on the power of stories, books, and poems in her decision to leave Mango Street to return better and stronger. The novel consists of the formative impressions she receives about life and recounts to the reader in the first person. Through her journey toward maturation, Esperanza deals with different sorts of prejudice and manipulation. She sees life from her limited perspective as a very young woman who is not adequately aware of the world of adults, which accounts for her frustrations and challenges.

Literature Review

So far, most critics who have interpreted the novel have focused on the protagonist's education and identity growth but without using the psychological theories of the American child psychoanalyst Erik H. Erikson. This article is an attempt to fill this critical gap by specifically using Erikson's theories on identity relevant to the transition from late childhood into early adulthood, which is the developmental stage in question addressed in this article. The article seeks a consistent and practical use of the psychosocial theories of Erikson and relies on a multiplicity of writings by Erikson rather than one work. To read the world and thus write/tell her story in her voice, Esperanza, Dubb contends, finds in writing and storytelling sources of power and triumph over the past (2007, p. 229). In an article on the construction of female subjectivity in two young adult novels, Fiona Hartley-Kroeger (2011) maintains that in *The House on Mango Street,* we get to "see Esperanza grow from a girl trying on female roles as she plays dress-up with her friends to a girl who knows she will leave Mango Street behind to fulfill her potential as an individual" (p. 277). In the novel, Esperanza gains agency and tries multiple subject positions in her journey toward adulthood. Oftentimes, she observes and evaluates experiences from the spectator's position (Hartley-Kroeger, 2011, p. 286) in the process of identity formation. In other words, she is a keen observer of the world in Mango Street with its neighbors, children, noises, and movements, and she is often a bemused spectator.

Some critics have pointed out the novel's realistic and even naturalistic dimensions. According to Manuel M. Martin-Rodriguez (2017), the stories of the vignettes in Cisneros's book capture "the social realities well known to most Chicanas" like poverty, gender oppression, and marginalization (p. 31), and the novel itself is a reaction to "a largely patriarchal literary tradition" (pp. 30–31), universal or local. Hence, Esperanza is keen on liberating her potential and achieving her promise as an educated woman capable of helping other women who cannot leave Mango Street. Other critics like Jayne E. Marek (1996) have read Esperanza's identity in terms of ethnic difference, minority status, and "oppositional 'otherness'" (p. 173). Matava

Vichiensing (2018) focused on direct and indirect manifestations of othering in the novel, using perspectives from literary theory (postcolonial, Marxist, Feminist, and language-related) to read the Latino experience as a minority group in the American culture (p. 52), and thus to analyze *The House on Mango Street* from the broader context of power relations associated with factors like ethnicity, gender, and class. Shaojun Duan (2018) explored both Esperanza's emerging "self-consciousness" as well as her subsequent "voiceless resistance" against patriarchal structures (p. 263).

In a relevant article on identity themes in *The House on Mango Street*, Caihong Liu (2019) contends that Esperanza overcomes different kinds of "identity crises" and "confinements" to form an identity both "in the personal and collective senses" (p. 760). However, although Liu lists several aspects of identity teenagers have to deal with during adolescence drawing on the theories of Erik Erikson, she does not adequately apply the seven aspects of positive identity she borrows from Erikson: Time Vision, Self-Assurance, Role Trial, Achievement Expectancy, Gender Identity, Polarization of Leadership, and Polarization of Thinking (Liu, 2019, p. 760). Instead, she uses some of such Eriksonian labels or their negatives to thematically organize her argument and structure its sections. The result is that Erikson is used here in theory or form rather than in practice. Moreover, Liu minimally uses only a translated version of Erikson's book *Identity: Youth and Crisis* without integrating such a book within other pieces by Erikson essential for understanding his theory. This current article attempts to do the opposite, drawing on Erikson systematically and consistently to explicate Cisneros's novel. While Liu focuses on the stage of adolescence only, this article contextualizes the psychosocial development of identity with relation to Erikson's fifth stage of development (Identity vs. Role Confusion) as well as the previous fourth stage (Industry vs. Inferiority) and the sixth stage (Intimacy vs. Isolation), which gives this article a broader and more applicable scope. Regina Betz (2012), in a reading of Chicana belonging in Cisneros's novel, legitimately contends that Esperanza's identity is torn between "her English tongue" as symbolized by the broader American culture she lives in and the Chicago context of "her traditional roots in the Spanish-speaking domain" (p. 18). This means that her being is constantly influenced by both her Hispanic ethnicity/Latino community and the mainstream American culture she is exposed to through the school system and education. It is only a form of reconciliation that can allow her to prosper and use this borderline status between two cultures to her advantage. In fact, one can argue, along with Betz, that the whole novel is contingent on this implicit paradox that it is only through leaving and rejecting Mango Street that Esperanza can return to it and help other women there. She has to accept both parts of her identity as she matures and successfully negotiate them, taking into consideration that she did not choose them in the first place.

Article Focus and Objectives

Esperanza finds in Mango Street and in her small house on this street two primary sources of education and identity formation. The street and the house become two sources of motivation for change in her life. They are closely associated with her Chicano ethnic identity. What distinguishes her from other playmates is probably an "inclination to independence and the desire to write something about her past and future" (Kalay, 2013, p. 120). Although she desires to leave Mango Street, she still wants to return to help and educate other women there. She

views her small, shabby house as a prison limiting her potential and freedom. Kelly Wissman (2007), in an article on the images of fairy tale heroines and narratives complicated and problematized in the novel, argues that the novel "reverberates not only with images of women acquiescing to or suffering in their social worlds but also of vibrant women imagining and inventing alternative psychic and physical spaces" (p. 18). Cisneros's protagonist is such a "vibrant" young woman seeking both emotional/psychological growth and an opportunity away from Mango Street. Using the work of the German-born American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, the main body of this article highlights the dual psychosocial dimensions of identity formation adolescents encounter in their teenage whereby success and confidence contribute to identity formation whereas failures and limitations lead to the opposite spectrum of role confusion. The discussion of *The House on Mango Street* in the next section is a reaction to and an engagement with Erikson's assertion that we learn to "ascribe a normative 'identity crisis' to the age of adolescence and young adulthood" (1994, p. 17). Of course, Erikson's assertion does not negate the formation of distinct identities and personality traits. It just points to the basic stages (and challenges) we all go through in the process of identity formation. The main objective of this article is to focus on the stage of adolescence in general, and early adolescence in particular, as depicted in Cisneros's novel. It is during this stage, based on Erikson's theories, that the main characteristics and features of identity are acquired and formed.

Eriksonian Perspectives on Female Identity in Cisneros's Novel

According to Erikson (1994), the process of identity formation is both intricate and multilayered; it is also a mutual, interactive process of recognition by others as well as self-recognition. It employs "simultaneous reflection and observation" and takes place on different mental levels by which a person "judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be how others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them" (pp. 22–23). Although many critics have already pointed out the bildungsroman genre of Cisneros's novel, the psychosocial process of the protagonist's identity formation has not been fully explored. While the formal elements of genre are not the focus of this study, the work of Erikson on the psychosocial development of human beings is particularly relevant here.

In the words of one critic, Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*, "at once a Chicana bildungsroman set in the *barrio* and an architectural essay on Latino neighborhoods in the contemporary American city, centers on the contrast between temporary and permanent dwellings" (Kaup, 1997, p. 387). Before arriving on Mango Street, Esperanza had lived in different places, and such shifting houses are indicators of an identity in transition. A permanent dwelling signifies a mature stable identity, and a temporary one signifies one in the making. To draw on Lacanian psychoanalysis, a permanent house is like the "phallus" as the supreme signifier of desire, power, and authority. As a symbol of (masculine) privilege, the "phallus" can never be possessed, but it is essential for the formation of subjectivity and desire. This meaning of the house of Esperanza's dreams challenges the normative psychological theory of Erikson and makes the novel a challenge to normativity. Through writing poems, being independent, and becoming educated, Esperanza seeks to be different from other Latino

women in her neighborhood. She is far from the principle of conformity in identity dynamics. Unlike Esperanza's crowded and even ugly family house, the street, however, provides an open Latino space for the construction of her Chicana identity. It is a vibrant site for interaction and negotiation as well as the reception of potent external stimuli like sounds, movements, and lights, which all sharpen the powers of observation and thus enhance personality growth.

This article attempts to investigate the psychosocial dimensions of Esperanza's identity growth, mainly using the psychoanalytic work of Erikson on life stages. Of essential importance to this argument is Erikson's claim (1993) that the adolescent's mind is "a mind of the *moratorium*, a psychological stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult" (*Child and Society*, pp. 262–263). Before the acquisition of adolescent identity, the transition between childhood and adulthood can go through this period of "moratorium" as "a socially sanctioned period in which the adolescent can be allowed to flounder and explore before settling on a more permanent identity, a time of extended play and experiment" (Welchman, 2000, p. 54). A related concept is that of ideology as the formation of a polarized world image whereby adolescents exclude those who do not think likewise (Welchman, 2000, p. 54), thus getting closer to those who resemble them in thinking and manners. Through the female protagonist, Esperanza, Cisneros's novel negotiates such tensions between childhood and adulthood in the stage of adolescence. The transition into adulthood, Freud's work had made it clear enough, is never free from the formative influences of childhood and the past. However, since Freud's developmental model was primarily psychosexual, Erikson's psychosocial model covers the negotiations involved in identity formation between the Ego and its social context, which justifies the use of Erikson in this article to look at identity formation with relation to peers, family members, neighbors, among others.

Erikson wrote on identity formation and psychosocial development. He maintains that adolescence, in particular, is a crucial stage for identity issues, although personality development is a lifelong process extending from early childhood until old age. However, if identity becomes mature and adequate in youth, it is in adolescence that it begins to take form. For Erikson, the "prime danger of this age [adolescence], therefore, is identity confusion" (Erikson, 1988, p. 12), which can be manifested in different kinds of estrangements and moratoria (p. 14). In analogous Freudian terms, identity confusion happens when normal growth and transition from one stage to the subsequent one (childhood to adulthood through adolescence in this particular case) gets arrested in the process of fixation or delay. Although the focus of this article is stage five of psychosocial development Erikson (1993) discussed in *Childhood and Society* in a section on "Identity vs. Role Confusion", usually taking place between the ages of twelve and eighteen years, we will also incorporate insights from the previous fourth stage Erikson called "Industry vs. Inferiority" usually occurring between the ages of seven and eleven years old as well as the sixth stage on "Intimacy vs. Isolation" covering the years between nineteen and twenty-nine. This should give us an adequate look into Esperanza's personality since such stages overlap and intersect in most young people.

Unlike Freud who highlighted psychosexual development during the childhood stage, Erikson gave priority to social and cultural factors that continually influence our sense of identity.

Erikson made us think about the overlap between an individual's life on the one hand and both history and society on the other hand (Douvan, 1997, p. 15). Personality development, for Erikson, occurs through eight stages/crises that should be overcome and internalized before the next stages are possible. Each crisis stage has positive and negative outcomes, which he often describes as virtues (strengths) and maladaptations (weaknesses). The first stage (infancy) is Basic Trust vs. Mistrust and the last one (old age) is Ego-Integrity and Despair. In between infancy and old age, Identity vs. Identity Confusion dominates the fifth stage of adolescence. This is when the sentiment of fidelity can be formed by Erikson (1976), which he defines as "the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged despite the inevitable contradictions and confusions of value systems" (Erikson, 1976, p. 25). This fidelity is expected to counter the inconsistencies of young age.

The fifth stage of Identity vs. Identity Confusion in Erikson's psychosocial model is particularly significant for our discussion of Esperanza's character since it concerns teenagers and the corresponding stage of adolescence. Throughout the novel, Esperanza seeks to form and sustain such loyalties with her neighbors and playmates, the girls she plays with in Mango Street. Meanwhile, she is faced with many distractions and sources of identity confusion. Her name, "Esperanza," carries contradictions and ambivalences indicative of an unstable identity because of its conflicting meanings: "In English, my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like number nine. A muddy color" (p. 10). This name triggers her identity confusion because it is the first link between her and the social world outside her private being. Esperanza says it is her great-grandmother's name (p. 10), a woman who married her great-grandfather against her will. Esperanza complains: "I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window" (p. 11). Still, students mock her for having a "funny" name. Her wish to be baptized under a new name more like her inner self like Zeze (p. 11) indicates a search for a new identity that corresponds to her hopes and dreams. Moreover, Esperanza is torn between two languages (Spanish and English) and two cultural heritages (American and Mexican). She lives in a barrio in Chicago, which makes her constantly conscious of her ethnic identity as not purely American.

In the stage of youth, Erikson (1988) contends, "the life history intersects with history: here individuals are confirmed in their identities, societies regenerated in their lifestyle" (Erikson 1988, p. 20). While identities are confirmed in youth, we can contend, that they are mainly formed in adolescence, which is the apparent age category of the novel's protagonist under discussion. Although Esperanza's age is not directly stated, we can legitimately assume she is between eleven and fourteen years old. In the course of the novel, she becomes one year older and gets confirmed in puberty. A close reading of the novel reveals that Esperanza is twelve years old at the beginning of the novel and becomes thirteen years old at the end. We are told that she gets her social security number to work her first job since she needs money for the Catholic High School (p. 53). Her friend Sally, we are told, got married before the eighth grade (p. 101), that is, before the age of fourteen. Her playmates like Marin and Sally begin to wear makeup and have boyfriends. Aunt Lala recommends Esperanza for a job at the Peter Pan Photo Finishers and asks her to say that she is one year older to get the job (p. 54). Her neighbor Minerva is two years older than her, yet she is married and has two children. All such details

suggest that Esperanza is an adolescent in her early teens, which is the age of (positive) identity formation or, alternatively, (negative) role confusion for Erikson.

In another article entitled "Reflections on Womanhood," Erikson (1976) maintains that the most significant stage for the understanding of womanhood is "the step from youth to maturity, the state when the young woman relinquishes the care received from the parental family and the extended care of the institutions of education, to commit herself to the love of a stranger and to the care to be given to his or her offspring" (p. 585). While Erikson discussed adulthood in terms of the emotional and mental ability to give and receive love/care, he discussed adolescence in terms of the emotional and mental ability to give and receive fidelity. The protagonist of *The House on Mango Street* has not reached the stage of maturity whereby she can give care to a partner or offspring. She is still drawing on social support from her family and school in her quest toward integration and identity fulfillment. In the novel, Esperanza realizes her need for friendships and playmates. She says: "Someday I will have a best friend all my own. One I can tell my secrets to. One who will understand my jokes without my having to explain them. Until then I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor" (p. 9). Being too young and having only a younger sister and two brothers, she is still without identification and peer influence. This means that her identity is still evolving. Cathy accepts to be her friend for a few days only, and when she leaves Lucy and her younger sister Rachel accept to be her friends. They buy a bike and ride it in the neighborhood. With Marin, Louie's cousin, they ride in a stolen Cadillac and quickly get off when a police car chases them. In this transitional stage between childhood and teenage, playing with friends proves a powerful formative influence because it gives Esperanza a chance to learn more and observe more. In forming loyalties with girls like Lucy, Rachel, and her sister Nenny during play, Esperanza is developing the virtue of fidelity essential for successful identity formation through mutual trust.

Although such stages or tensions Erikson posited are overlapping, stage five, in particular, relates to Identity and Role Confusion occurring during teenage and adolescence, roughly at the age of 12-18 years. This stage is primarily concerned with how young people see themselves in relation to the world. For young people, a failure to achieve or see their place results in identity loss and confusion. Since this stage coincides with early puberty and sexual desire, sexual awakening is an essential feature of this period of development. And so is the ability to observe the world as it comes, with its successes and frustrations. Children in this stage need the encouragement and support of parents and peers and the assurance of completing complex tasks successfully. Psychosocial reciprocity entails mutual recognition and social interaction with others. For Erikson (1993), failure to balance identity components makes the next stage (stage six of Intimacy vs. Isolation) more complicated since an inadequate sense of identity makes romantic or intimate relations with others more difficult. In terms of age, Esperanza inhabits this fifth stage of psychosocial development in Erikson's theory. However, a successful negotiation of identity also relies on the fourth stage of Industry vs. Inferiority when children learn competency and the value of achievements and recognition by adults. This makes the identity of young people, in general, and Esperanza's identity in this particular case, the product of construction, developments, and formative influences since identity is an interconnected web of relations and stages in Erikson's conception of this term.

Between childhood and adulthood, the adolescence stage is marked by the influence of peer groups. Adolescence is particularly important for identity formation because Erikson (1970) contends that at this particular stage, "the organism is at the height of its vitality and potency; the ego must integrate new forms of intensive experience, and the social order must provide a renewed identity for its new members, to reaffirm–or to renew–its collective identity" (Erikson, 1970, p. 750). Describing the crises of growth of individuals, Erikson links shame to guilt and the sense of being exposed to the world when the process of social integration malfunctions. With puberty, Erikson (1993) argues, youth and adolescence begin, and so does the essential search for identity. The adolescent's ego is confirmed by his/her peers, which is why for Erikson adolescents help each other "by forming cliques and by stereotyping themselves, their ideals, and their enemies" (Erikson, 1993, p. 262). With more gaps between individual identity and collective social identity, we should expect more feelings of guilt, shame, and non-belonging among adolescents.

In "Autobiographic Notes," Erikson (1970) describes the formation of Negative Identity as the failures in a normal identity: "The *negative identity* is the sum of all those identifications and identity fragments which the individual had to submerge in himself as undesirable or irreconcilable or by which atypical individuals and marked minorities are made to feel 'different'" (p. 733). Failures and instances of discrimination contribute to this negative identity the adolescent might develop. This means that an identity is forged in the balance between positive and negative attributes. Psychosocial identity develops, according to Erikson, out of a gradual process of integration of all childhood identifications that preceded this identity (Welchman, 2000, p. 49). Usually, identifications are with trustworthy models like parents, teachers, and significant others like playmates. Unresolved conflicts result in role confusion for Erikson, which is the opposite of identity construction. This negative identity, that is, identity diffusion, can be manifested in anxiety, feelings of loss, drifting relations, and disappointment with others.

To a reasonable extent, the novel consists of Esperanza's experiences with other kids on Mango Street. Nenny, Lucy, and Rachel are some of the early influences on her. She also learns from sights, sounds, and noises as well as her own ventures in the barrio. Esperanza is an adolescent protagonist, a sensitive Chicana teenager. She comes from a poor family that used to move a lot before settling in a house they bought on Mango Street in a Hispanic neighborhood in Chicago. She moved with her family to a house that became a dominant metaphor for her emerging identity. Initially, and being small and ordinary, it is not the real house the family dreamed of or told their children about:

> But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It's small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is no front yard, only four little elms the city planted by the curb. Our back is a small garage for the car we don't own yet and a small yard that looks smaller between the two buildings on either side. (Cisneros, 1984, p. 4)

With one washroom, ordinary hallway stairs, and one bedroom, this house on Mango Street is not the one her mother told stories about before her children went to bed. Although the parents promise their children that it is just a temporary abode, Esperanza realizes that nothing better is to be gained in the near future. Before moving to the current house, when she was living on Loomis, a nun from her school found her playing and asked her where she lived. When she pointed to her poor, shabby house in answer to the question, the nun's reply came as ironic: "You live *there*? The way she said it made me feel like nothing. *There*. I lived *there*. I nodded" (p. 5). Such shabby dwellings induce in Esperanza feelings of embarrassment and humiliation. Shame makes Esperanza exposed and self-conscious about an inadequate sense of self. In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson (1993) contends: "He who is ashamed would like to force the world not to look at him, not to notice his exposure" (p. 252). Shame and doubt are the opposite of autonomy for Erikson. The house she moved to on Mango Street is not the real house she could point to either. Esperanza articulates a strong ambition about having a house while consolidating her sense of ethnic identity: "One day I'll own my own house, but I won't forget who I am or where I came from. Passing bums will ask, Can I come in? I'll offer them the attic, ask them to stay, because I know how it is to be without a house" (p. 87). Her assertive tone establishes the intersection between a personal and a collective sense of identity. The house on Mango Street has small windows (p. 4), and the previous one on Loomis had wooden bars nailed on its windows (p. 5). Both images of disfigured windows communicate a stifling atmosphere where identity is suppressed rather than liberated. In each case, the makeshift house is more of a confining space than a nurturing environment. Thus, Esperanza links her attainment of an identity with getting a house of her own as well as leaving the house on Mango Street.

Throughout the novel, windows symbolize female confinement and arrested potential. One young woman who leans on her elbow out the window is Rafaela. Being beautiful, Rafaela is locked indoors because her husband is afraid she will run away from him (p. 79) when he goes out to play poker. Sally's father also takes his daughter's beauty to be a source of trouble and punishes her by not allowing her to go out (p. 81). Sally, like the narrator, longs for a nice house, big windows, and a room of her own away from Mango Street (p. 82). Sally's father beats her and is afraid she will run away like his sisters and thus disgrace the family (p. 92). When he catches her talking to a boy, he beats her and disallows her from going to school (p. 93). The narrator assumes that freedom from restrictions, stereotypes, and social judgments would please Sally, which by extension applies to her too. "There'd be no nosy neighbors watching, no motorcycles and cars, no sheets and towels and laundry. Only trees and more trees and plenty of blue sky" (p. 83). Trees and the open sky are symbols of freedom for Esperanza and her friends. On the other hand, rooms, and windows are symbols of female confinement under patriarchal authority. Hence, the thrust of the novel revolves around Esperanza having a house of her own and thus her own identity and freedom as a young woman who wants to become a writer. She articulates this desire with emphatic language:

> Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's. A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to

> pick up after. Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper before the poem. (Cisneros, 1984, p. 108)

Her determination to have a house of her own is inseparable from having a strong, independent identity. In the process of forging her identity, Esperanza is becoming more socially conscious, which is a positive orientation in her maturation process. She is aware of her ethnic and cultural roots and is not willing to rise above them.

Virginia Woolf's feminist essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929) is a relevant context here. Primarily a lecture on women and fiction delivered to female students at Cambridge, Woolf's essay remains an essential treatise on the interrelationship between financial and intellectual freedom to write. Woolf contends that women need both a room and enough money to succeed as writers. French feminist critics like Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, among others, called on women to write by way of expressing their identities and breaking free from patriarchal constraints. A room here is a symbol of a private space needed for writing great literature. This private space allows women writers to avoid distractions. The room of one's own is a unifying metaphor for the whole piece just as the house on Mango Street is the recurring trope in Cisneros's novel. Woolf's thesis is that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (p. 1). This room of her own allows her to excel as a writer and avoid imitating male fiction. Thus, this room of one's own, like Esperanza's wishes for a house, is a trope for a distinct or autonomous identity. Esperanza needs the privacy a house can provide as well as the agency of having control over property to succeed as an artist. Of course, having a house of one's own entails a level of financial security necessary for artistic prosperity.

When Esperanza reads one of her poems to Aunt Lupe, she as a narrator vents both her artistic potential and the importance of creativity for her intellectual growth. Her poem reads as the following:

> I want to be
> like the waves on the sea
> like the clouds in the wind,
> but I'm me.
> One day I'll jump
> out of my skin.
> I'll shake the sky
> like a hundred violins. (Cisneros, 1984, pp. 60-61)

The sea, the sky, and the clouds are all symbols of freedom Esperanza seeks as an artist. Additionally, the foregrounding of the first-person pronoun "I" (repeated four times) indicates agency and autonomy, both of which are essential for the process of identity construction. In a sense, Esperanza is claiming her body and soul in writing poems, and in a manner reminiscent of the call of French feminists on women to freely write their bodies. Écriture feminine, they argue, guarantees consolidating a female identity against phallocentric writing. In this case, writing is an essential component of identity formation for Esperanza. In "The Laugh of the Medusa," French feminist Hélène Cixous (1976) calls on women to break the chains of silence

and write themselves by way of reestablishing a connection with both writing and their bodies (p. 875). In the words of Cixous, a woman's "imaginary is inexhaustible" and thus writing is for them just as their bodies are theirs (p. 876). Aunt Lupe encourages Esperanza to keep writing as a step toward achieving power and staying free (p. 61). Esperanza utilizes this empathy and intra-gender support among women in her quest for an artistic vocation.

An essential part of Esperanza's identity growth, it should be mentioned, is sexual development or dealing with the male gaze. She is aware of Sire, an older boy who has a girlfriend, looking at her (p. 72). On many occasions, the novel also recounts Esperanza's sexual awakening, her realization of the power of female beauty and dress on men, and the sexual exploitation of the female body under the male touch or gaze. Such hints all indicate that the narrator is a teenager in her early teenage who is aware of yet resisting a budding sexual desire and the onset of the sexual fantasies of adolescents. In one sexual fantasy, Esperanza dreams of being held by masculine hands: "A boy held me once so hard, I swear. I felt the grip and weight of his arms, but it was a dream" (p. 73). Marin is another girl who is older than Esperanza yet who helps Esperanza enter the adult world of sexual display and masquerade. Marin wears dark nylon and a lot of makeup (p. 23). She has a boyfriend in Puerto Rico and tells the girls about the letters she exchanges with him and about their plans to marry (p. 26). With pretty green eyes and short skirts, Marin depends on her sexual appeal and beautiful looks to find a job or live in a big house. "What matters, Marin says, is for the boys to see us and for us to see them" (p. 27). Dancing and singing by herself under the streetlight, Marin waits for a car to stop and someone to "change her life" (p. 27). In this patriarchal and sexually charged world, it is a man who can save a woman's life and break her routine. However, Esperanza thinks otherwise. She wants to rescue herself by getting an education and becoming a writer and a poet, not by a man saving her from life's obstacles in a fairy tale fashion.

When Esperanza wears high heels with Rachel and Lucy, a drunk man offers Rachel a dollar to get a kiss (p. 41). With her younger sisters Nenny, Rachel, and Lucy, the girls discuss the importance of having hips. Esperanza's (sexual) identity is still being shaped in the stage of adolescence before it gets confirmed in the later stage of youth. Erikson (1993) points out that ego boundaries extend in the fourth stage of Industry vs. Inferiority to include mastering some tools and skills used by older people (p. 259). Moreover, teenagers seek to experiment with new roles and try new activities in their attempts to refine a sense of self. Riding a bike or trying makeup and high heels can all be understood in this light. This industry has a necessary social aspect too. Erikson (1993) contends that "industry involves doing things beside and with others" (p. 260). Esperanza tries such activities with other girls in her neighborhood like Lucy and Rachel. The process of identity construction is an intricate and dynamic one that primarily takes place for Erikson in stage five of Identity vs. Role Confusion, yet identity formation begins before this stage and also extends beyond it into youth.

Esperanza gets her first job in a private business called Pan Photo Finishers by lying about her age, making herself a year older. She emerges as a responsible young woman who wants to work and help pay for her education. An oriental man she meets in the coatroom during break time makes advances to her, telling her that it is his birthday, and asks for a kiss. "I thought I would because he was so old and just as I was about to put my lips on his cheeks, he grabs my

face with both hands and kisses me hard on the mouth and doesn't let go" (p. 55). This apparent contradiction between her innocence and good intentions as opposed to the man's attempt at sexual exploitation becomes a source of "identity confusion" for Esperanza in Eriksonian language. While identity formation is the virtue of the fifth stage of psychosocial development for Erikson, identity confusion is the darker side of this formative stage.

When Esperanza goes with Sally to the garden, she sees how the boys sexually molest and exploit Sally by refusing to give her back her keys unless she kisses them. This incident is another case of identity confusion for Esperanza. Angry and annoyed, and feeling that something is not right, Esperanza runs to Tito's mother to tell her. Facing a cold reaction from the mother, she runs back to the garden deciding to save her friend Sally. She takes three sticks and a brick by way to save Sally from, what seemed to her then, a sexual attack. In this situation, Esperanza directly rejects the victim status often ascribed to women in such a patriarchal Mexican American culture. More importantly, she refuses to betray Sally by leaving her alone with the boys. In a sense, Esperanza here rejects the negative mythical image of female sexuality represented in the La Malinche figure as a silent, passive, and submissive figure of betrayal (Sutanto, 2015, p. 19) in favor of survival and self-preservation. Ironically, she feels shame and disgrace again: "But when I got there Sally said go home. Those boys said leave us alone. I felt stupid with my brick. They all looked at me as if I was the one that was crazy and made me feel ashamed" (p. 97). The incident makes her full of frustration and acts like an epiphany or an awakening. According to Erikson (1993), the growing youths "are now primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are" (p. 261). What happens in this scene is, in a sense, an instance of identity confusion and shattering. As Erikson (1993) contends, "The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others" (p. 261). This implies a discrepancy between the adolescent's worldview and expectations as opposed to the values and norms of the older peers. Esperanza judges Sally and the other boys based on the previous identifications she has integrated, which fail her in this particular situation. Feeling betrayed by Sally, now she feels dispossessed and estranged from her own body: "I looked at my feet in their white socks and ugly round shoes. They seemed far away. They didn't seem to be my feet anymore. And the garden that had been such a good place to play didn't seem mine either" (p. 98). Over-identification, for Erikson (1993), results in identity loss whereby "the heroes of cliques" gain in power while exclusion is another instance of a defense mechanism against identity confusion used by adolescents when they form cliques or stereotype others (p. 262). To draw on Erikson (1976), when Sally leaves with the boys, Esperanza not only gets deserted but also loses the virtue of fidelity she has invested in Sally. Failure to form loyalties, for Erikson, is an instance of identity diffusion or role confusion.

The garden does not prove to be a good site for play or forming friendships. In a series of gradual dispossessions, Esperanza feels that the "sad red house" (p. 110) she is ashamed of is not hers and that she does not belong to Mango Street. Now comes the third and last dispossession twofold in the form of alienation from her feet that took her to the garden as well as the garden itself: "I looked at my feet in their white socks and ugly round shoes. They seemed far away. They didn't seem to be my feet anymore. And the garden that had been such a good

place to play didn't seem mine either" (p. 98). Esperanza develops a sense of identity through negative formations of non-belonging to the house, the street, and the garden. In this incident of role confusion, Esperanza also bitterly loses some of her peers. Such dispossessions make her invest more in her own life and succeed away from this emotionally and physically hostile environment. Esperanza's adventure in the garden, it can be argued, conforms to Erikson's emphasis on the "quest" aspect or "search" dimension of identity formation (1994, p. 19).

Since Sally left the narrator alone in the garden, Esperanza was sexually molested by the boys too, which added to her sense of betrayal and alienation. "Sally Sally a hundred times. Why didn't you hear me when I called? Why didn't you tell them to leave me alone?" (p. 100). In Eriksonian terms, we have in this garden incident a case of role confusion, which is the negative of the virtue of identity construction. Overwhelming and distressing experiences cause identity confusion. Erikson (1993) claims that adolescents "are ever ready to install lasting idols and ideals as guardians of a final identity" (p. 261). The image of the older and beautiful Sally as an idol and a guardian is shattered when she leaves Esperanza alone and hides to flirt with the boys behind an old car in the garden.

Sally herself married before eighth grade a salesman she met at a school bazaar. Escaping a violent father, she ran into the arms of a controlling man who "does not let her to look out the window" or visit her friends (p. 102). Minerva is another woman, a little bit older than the narrator, who is a mother of two daughters and the wife of a violent husband who left her and abuses her (p. 85). Like Esperanza, Minerva is an aspiring poet. Minerva reads her poems to Esperanza and listens to those by Esperanza (p. 84). Again and again, she forgives her husband and he still beats her. Such frustrations in love, romance, and intimate desire, bitter as they are, help Esperanza on her path toward emotional maturity. In other words, identity gets formed through a reverse logic of negative formations and identifications. Observing and learning from such miserable women, Esperanza is more ready now to choose her path. Thus, while Minerva is sad and troubled by her submission to an abusive husband, Esperanza learns not to share her destiny and to exploit writing poems as a liberating tool.

As a sensitive and imaginative heroine, Esperanza becomes more aware of the complexities of her life and the challenges imposed on her by her surroundings. She has to deal with feelings of guilt, frustration, and desire. In other words, the novel traces her identity growth and gradual modification based on the experiences she goes through. Ultimately, she decides not to surrender to Mango Street. She wants to wield her power and to begin her own "quiet war" (p. 89). She decides to rebel like men who leave the food table without picking up their plates or putting back their chairs (p. 89). Her mother advises her: "Shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down" (p. 91). Traumatized by the sexual molestation in the garden, Esperanza decides to leave Mango Street and come back stronger for the others, those who cannot leave quickly like her. Since her identity was formed in Mango Street, she must come back to her roots. Although friends and neighbors would think she took her books and papers and simply left, her determination is: "They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out" (p. 110). In the stage of Intimacy vs. Isolation following identity construction, Erikson argues that young adults emerging from their quest for identity are willing to integrate their identities with those of others socially and culturally. This

implies readiness for intimacy, which Erikson (1993) defines as "the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even if they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises" (p. 263). In other words, distance and isolation are the opposite of intimacy. Esperanza gives up a selfish desire to escape the poverty and squalor of Mango Street for good by becoming an artist. Instead, she is ready to make an ethical decision to come back and help other women in her community. She is mentally ready to accept the price of her decisions and think about other women who may not have her chance in life. Her decision to come back is an instance of determination and a clear future vision, which is the opposite of role confusion and a step toward a stable identity.

Afterthoughts: The Artist and Society

Esperanza is a storyteller. She likes to tell stories to us as readers and fabricate stories inside her mind. The story she told in *The House on Mango Street* is one about a girl who "didn't want to belong" (p. 109), which is a common motif in a bildungsroman concerned with character building. She rejects belonging to the small house her family has on Mango Street and to the street itself. This case of disillusionment is reminiscent of the ending of James Joyce's story "Araby" (1991; first published in 1914), another coming-of-age literary work told in the first-person by an impressionable boy narrator with a limited understanding of reality. In Joyce's story, North Richmond Street and its houses play a significant role in the narrator's learning about life and in his ultimate "epiphany." The children play in this otherwise silent street, and it accommodates their shouts, dreams, and desires. In both works, the aspiring artist struggles against society, and maladaptation is the artist's fate. However, alienation triggers and enhances the formation of individual identity away from the collective identity imposed by society.

While Esperanza decides to leave Mango Street for the time being, Joyce's narrator decides to go to an oriental bazaar to get Mangan's sister, his first crush, a gift. Arriving late and finding most of the stalls closed and the bazaar mostly dark, the narrator is dismayed. The silly conversations he overhears add to his frustration as the young lady at the stall answers him only out of a sense of duty and suspects he is a thief. The shame and disgust the narrator feels at the end of the story remind us of Esperanza's state of mind at the end of the novel when she decides to leave Mango Street and come back when she has more power to help other women in her community. However, Esperanza seems to have triumphed over her negative feelings in her decision to be a socially committed artist.

Joyce's story "Araby" ends memorably with the narrator's sense of anger and shame: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity, and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (p. 36). In Cisneros's novel, Esperanza experiences similar epiphanies in the form of humiliation by others like her school nun before she moved to Mango Street who made her feel ashamed of her dwelling, and the boys who sexually molested her in the garden. She is equally disillusioned and sensitive, yet she seems to integrate the psychosocial virtues of adolescence embodied in identity formation. The novel's end signals her acquisition of a socially committed identity and a transition from pure individualism to

some sacrifice in her decision to return to Mango Street for the sake of other (poor or uneducated) women.

Esperanza seeks freedom and liberation as the singular path toward identity formation. The novel ends with her determination to leave the street after she packs her books and poems. She has the determination of the artist to return after the accomplishment of success. Again, Joyce's first novel *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) comes in the picture as one of the most memorable bildungsromans in modern English literature. Cisneros's novel ends this way: "They will not know I have gone away to come back. For the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out" (p. 110). Joyce's young hero, Stephen Dedalus, also decides to leave his home and friends to learn more about his life. The portrait ends this way: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (2002, p. 216). Stephen decides to leave Dublin for Paris to pursue art and fulfill his potential as an individual. What he wants to forge is his own identity as an artist. While seeking to live intensely, Stephen wants to assert his Irish identity too. Esperanza has this socially conscious role of the artist in her mind when she decides to return to those who cannot leave the barrio. To draw on Erikson's psychosocial theory, Esperanza's vital decision to return to her people after she achieves more success and independence is an indication of the successful formation of a positive identity, and this adequate identity Esperanza develops is in itself a virtue in Erikson's overall scheme.

Significantly, Erikson's next stage of psychosocial development after the fifth stage of Identity vs. Identity Confusion is Intimacy vs. Isolation. This new stage, Erikson (1993) maintains, has the young adult, with the search for identity confirmed, eager "to fuse his identity with that of others" through acts of intimacy and committed relations (p. 263). Esperanza transitions from a sense of selfish individualism to a belief in social integration. As a young artist with education and a chance in her future life to become a famous writer and a poet, Esperanza realizes that she is more privileged than other women in the barrio, which is why she begins to assume social responsibility in her decision to come back. It is her success that might enable her to transcend the poverty, discrimination, and patriarchal oppressions Mexican American women face in her community.

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Trauma Remythologized: Natsuo Kirino's *The Goddess Chronicle*

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Abstract

Natsuo Kirino's *The Goddess Chronicle* has been so far analyzed from various standpoints by researchers such as Copeland (2018), Dumas (2018), Qiao (2018), and Lianying (2018), most of them being connected to feminism. This article takes another approach and deals with the issue of trauma and death as a literary representation as portrayed in the novel. The paper demonstrates how implementing myth in a revised form helps Kirino to depict trauma in a literary text – the task that many researchers of trauma studies deem impossible. At the center of this paper's analysis are the main mythologems of traditional Japanese culture retold from the female viewpoint, connecting the fate of the goddess to the fate of a mortal woman: the latter in many ways repeats what happened in the "divine" story. The repetitions create a mythological cyclical description of life as well as its tragedy perceived as traumatic experiences, which is characteristic of the writer's novels, and outline a universal archetype of human behavior. This paper attempts to analyze these mythologemes in connection to trauma studies and shows that, if put in the fantastic (in this case, mythological) realm, representation of trauma becomes possible.

Keywords: myth, mythopoetics, representation, revisionist mythmaking, trauma

The broad body of work by Natsuo Kirino, the contemporary Japanese female author, who "defies easy categorization" (Copeland, 2018, p. 15), has been studied by many researchers[1] from various standpoints including female sexuality, gender issues, class dynamics, the struggles of the working class, as well as the challenges of portrayal of social issues within the framework of detective fiction. Because of the scope of the topics that she engages in, Kirino is known to have "captured the pulse of present-day Japan" (Qiao, 2018, p. 113). In this article, I view one of Kirino's works, *The Goddess Chronicle* (2008), through the lens of mythology[2] and trauma studies[3] and see how the trauma of living and dying can be represented with the help of mythological tropes and poetics of remythologisation.

The Goddesses Chronicle was recently analyzed, among others, by Dumas (2018), Lianying (2018), and Copeland (2018) who address the feminist issues raised in the novel. Dumas states that the novel offers "a powerful critique of the gendered institutions that continue to shape Japanese sociopolitical life" (Dumas, 2018, p. 201). Lianying, while still focusing on feminist issues, claims that the novel "deconstructs the conventional understanding of nature and myth as the opposite of culture" and places myth in patriarchal culture (Lianying, 2018, p. 179). Copeland is more interested in exploring the emotion of anger and states that "Kirino picks up where the Kojiki leaves off, inventing an angry afterlife for the female goddess Izanami" (Copeland, 2018, p. 14). Although it is hard to deny that the topic of female existence and anger is under scrutiny in Kirino's novel, the focus of this article will be shifted to perhaps less pronounced topics of trauma and its processing in a literary text through the framework of myth.

In recent decades, writers have increasingly engaged in mythic revision, which, according to Adrienne Rich (1972) and Alicia Ostriker (1982), involves reinterpreting and reshaping traditional myths to reflect contemporary perspectives and values. Rich emphasizes the importance of this practice in giving voice to those marginalized or silenced in original narratives, particularly women. She defines revision as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (Rich, 1972, p. 18). Ostriker describes it as a transformative process where myths are reimagined to challenge and subvert established norms, providing fresh insights and highlighting overlooked experiences and perspectives, where "a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by a culture (…) for altered ends" (Ostriker, 1982, p. 72). In her novel, Kirino reconceptualizes the old myth and "employs it for altered ends" to give voice to a marginalized character of Izanami and let the traumatic narrative out.

Thus, at the center of this paper's analysis are the main mythologems of traditional Japanese culture which are not simply transferred to the modern literary context but revised and altered to accommodate new meanings. Here the parallels are drawn between the fate of the Goddess

[1] Research papers and books include Seaman (2004), Copeland (2004), Seaman (2006), Iwata-Weickgenannt (2012), Matsugu (2011), Thornbury (2014), Gregus (2014), Herman (2018), Nakanishi (2018), Copeland (2018), and Qiao (2018).

[2] There is a significant body of research on Japanese mythology, and in this article, I consult with the following researches: Tylor (1877), Kitagawa (1963), Kelsey (1981), Konoshi (1984), Murakami (1988), Kadoya (2006).

[3] For trauma studies approaches to Japanese literature, see Gabriel (1988), Suttmeier (2007), Stahl, Williams and Slaymaker (2013), Ikeda, Lee (2015), Stahl (2017), Stahl (2019).

and the fate of a mortal woman: the latter in many ways repeats what happened in the "divine" story. Such repetitions create a mythological cyclical description of life as well as its tragedy perceived as traumatic experiences, characteristic of the writer's other novels, and outline a universal archetype of human behavior. These mythologems are analyzed in the paper in connection to trauma studies.

Natsuo Kirino (桐野 夏生, born 7 October 1951 in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture) is the pen name of the Japanese writer Mariko Hashioka, who for a while was acknowledged as one of the brightest representatives of Japanese detective literature, a genre she soon abandoned. She started her writing career as a romantic novelist but then turned to the psychology of crime. Her popularity arose with her novel *Out* (アウト, 1997), which won her several prestigious literary awards. It would not be an exaggeration to say that all of Kirino's works are intrinsically psychological and emotionally intense and should be seen as a representation of contemporary Japanese life. It has been noted that *The Goddess Chronicle* (女神記, 2008) "marks a departure from the author's seasoned career as a multi-award-winning crime novelist" (Dumas, 2018, p. 171), though, as Copeland (2018) claims, Kirino's works always "struggle against the boundaries of genre expectations" (p. 17). Dumas also conveys that Kirino's earlier creative explorations of dynamics and relationships within family and society, especially between women, served "as a means of interrogating the gendered systems of privilege and oppression around which contemporary Japanese life is organized" (Dumas, 2018, p. 171). The same theme of the subordinate position of women in society forms the core of the neo-mythological novel *The Goddess Chronicles*, which, while retaining the characteristic features of Kirino's prose and abandoning the crime genre and its scene, reconstructs the creation myth of Japan. The myth, which is central to Japanese culture, includes the idea that the world and Japan (one could say, the world of Japan) are mainly created by two deities, a male, Izanagi[4], and a female, Izanami; the latter dies during childbirth and becomes a ruler of the underworld. The novel incorporates the plot of the ancient myth based on the superiority of a man over a woman and juxtaposes it with the "normal" earthly life of people, making a mortal woman repeat the fate of the goddess, echoing, thus, a few prominent topics of Kirino's previous works[5].

Sixteen-year-old Namima and her older sister Kamikuu live on a teardrop-shaped island southeast of the Yamato coast. Like Kirino's other heroines, Namima dreams of breaking free from a strictly ruled society and her role in it, imposed on her against her own will. In the end, for the sake of love and freedom, she breaks the deadly taboos and escapes the island with her lover, who consequently betrays her, and she finds herself in the Realm of the Dead, where she meets the Goddess Izanami. The Goddess appears before her not only in all her divine majesty but also showing all her pain, anger, and yearning for life, all the feelings that coincide with the traumatic and unprocessed feelings of the heroine herself. Thus, the myth reveals the social and psychological processes inherent to contemporary Japanese society (such as strict social

[4] In Kirino's work, the male deity Izanagi is referred to as Izanaki but in this paper I will use the mythical name.

[5] The rich diversity of Kirino's work, which goes beyond the detective genre, is explored in more detail in the MA thesis of Adam Gregus (2014).

mores and hierarchical society where the place of a woman is still highly problematic), as depicted in Kirino's earlier novels.

Thus, this study focuses on *The Goddess Chronicle* and examines how Kirino utilizes mythological elements to portray the traumatic experiences of the main characters. By exploring the novel through the dual lenses of mythology and trauma studies, this research seeks to uncover how mythological tropes and the process of remythologisation can articulate and process trauma within a literary text. Since previous analyses of the novel have predominantly been centered on its feminist implications and critique of gendered societal norms, there is a research gap in the literature regarding the examination of trauma within the novel. Scholars like Dumas (2018), Copeland (2018) and others have explored feminist issues and emotional themes, but the intersection of trauma and mythology remains underexplored. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how Kirino's use of mythological narratives reflects and processes traumatic experiences.

This paper is divided into several sections. First, it explores the connection between Kirino's novel and the Japanese creation myth. Next, it examines the current state of trauma studies and the ongoing academic debate in this field regarding its representability. Finally, the paper analyses the artistic techniques Kirino uses to intertwine myth and trauma in her novel, narrating an archetypal story of pain and betrayal that transcends the boundaries between gods and mortals, yet ultimately offers hope of healing.

Japanese Creation Myth and the Poetics of Remythologization in Kirino's Novel

Researchers of contemporary literature and culture have observed a growing interest among writers and artists in using various forms of verbal creativity, with the fantastic genre and myth playing significant roles. Meletinsky (2014) highlights that the term "poetics of mythmaking" gains particular importance due to the extensive use of mythological plots in twentieth-century literary works by authors like James Joyce, Franz Kafka, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, and Gabriel García Márquez. He argues that ancient mythology serves as an artistic tool to organize texts and express "eternal" psychological principles (such as love, fear, and death) and enduring national cultural patterns. In recent times, there has been a significant trend of revisionist mythmaking, as described by Rich (1972) and Ostriker (1982), to give voices to marginalized characters and often to illustrate the female experience and, may I add, trauma: "they are retrieved images of what women have collectively and historically suffered; in some cases, they are instructions for survival" (Ostriker, 1982, p. 73).

This appeal to myth is not limited to Western literature but is a global phenomenon. For instance, Canongate Press in the UK published a series of cultural myths, including the English translation of Kirino's *The Goddess Chronicle*. Japanese literature noted for its unique twentieth-century development, is particularly interesting for studying the semantics and poetics of modified Japanese mythological plots, and contemporary Japanese writers often

blend elements of Western and Indigenous Japanese myths in their works[6]. The creation myth involving Izanami and Izanagi can be compared to the Greek myth of Orpheus who goes down to the underworld to save his beloved Eurydice and, just like Izanagi, fails. Kirino is not the first to adopt this plot in contemporary Japanese literature; *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (2010) by Haruki Murakami presents the myth, too, which draws attention to the differences between the ways two Japanese writers address the topic. Ostriker (1982) comments on the passive state of Euridice in male writing, "who exists only as the tragic object of Orpheus' love" (p. 74) and quotes American poetess Alta:

all the male poets write of orpheus
as if they look back & expect
to find me walking patiently
behind them. they claim i fell into hell.
damn them, i say.
i stand in my own pain
& sing my own song. (Alta, 1975, p. 8)

Kirino's Izanami, similar to Alta's Euridice, is by no means passive: she "stands in her own pain" and proudly sings her own trauma, to paraphrase the poem, which will be shown in the next sections of this paper.

To better understand Kirino's novel, however, it is essential to introduce the Japanese Creation Myth, "Tenchi-kaibyaku" (天地開闢) which translates as "Creation of Heaven and Earth". This myth, detailed in the ancient texts *Kojiki* (712) and *Nihon Shoki* (720), describes the emergence of the celestial and earthly realms, the birth of the first deities, and the formation of the Japanese archipelago. The myth (The Kojiki, 2014)[7], focuses on the foundational gods Izanagi and Izanami, who, by using a heavenly jeweled spear to stir the primeval ocean, create the first landmass. Their initial attempt at union results in the birth of a deformed child, Hiruko (later known as the god Ebisu), whom they set adrift in a boat. They attribute this failure to a ritual mistake by Izanami (transgression in speaking first as a woman) and try again, successfully creating many islands and deities. However, during the birth of the fire god Kagutsuchi, Izanami suffers fatal burns and descends into Yomi, the realm of darkness. Izanagi, grieving, ventures into Yomi to reunite with her but finds she is bound to stay after consuming the food there. When Izanagi sees her decaying form, Izanami grows furious, and he flees in terror, sealing the entrance to Yomi with a stone, effectively severing their connection (The Kojiki, 2014, pp. 8–18). Kirino's novel creatively retells and revises this myth from the standpoint of the goddess, highlighting the trauma within it.

[6] Apart from Kirino, we can name, among others, Murakami, Shimada and Kurahashi. The latter, perhaps, more than others engaged in myth (Japanese, Chinese and Western). Furthermore, as feminist researchers would argue, the functionality of the myth in female and male literature may differ, and a different approach to the study of mythology in the works of Kurahashi and Kirino should be developed.

[7] The full text of the myth can be found in English translation performed by Gustav Heldt in *The Kojiki: An account of Ancient Matters*, compiled by O no Yasumaro and published by Columbia University Press, based on the Japanese edition, edited by Yamaguchi Yoshinori and Konoshi Takamitsu Kojiki, Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshu (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1997).

In her novel, Kirino introduces several narrative planes, which are detailed in the next paragraphs, colliding the mythological plot with the plot of "earthly life" (which, depicted on a secluded island, can also be viewed through the mythological lens; however, no gods inhabit the island, only humans). Such collision shows the life and the realms of people and gods, outlining the gravity and tragedy of the fate of each of them. In the foreground, serving as the first plotline is the life of Namima, "Woman-Amid-the Waves", a sixteen-year-old girl who dies at the hand of her lover: "Born on an island far, far to the South, I was barely sixteen when I died. Now I make my home among the dead here in this realm of darkness" (Kirino, 2021, p. 3). This plotline is structured as memories of her life on the island, her death, and new existence in the Realm of the Dead, and later her return in the form of a wasp to the world of the living, where she takes revenge on her former lover by stinging him fatally.

In the Realm of the Dead, Namima hears the story of Izanami, retold intermittently by the goddess herself and her vassal Hieda no Are (Kirino, 2021, pp. 106–132), which fully coincides with the well-known story of the creation of Japan, described in Kojiki. This narrative can be attributed to the second plane (and plotline) of the novel. It starts with the heroine realizing her death and finding herself at the entrance of the Realm of the Dead: "I came to what looked like an opening. But a huge boulder had been wedged into it as if to block the way" (Kirino, 2021, p. 90). This description evokes the image of the entrance of the land of the dead from Kojiki with the bolder being the one that Izanagi had to place there to keep Izanami inside when he was escaping her kingdom: "It was as if I were entering a tomb" (Kirino, 2021, p. 93). By introducing the myth into the text, the writer seems to remove the description: the plot of the myth is conveyed as something new and hitherto unknown, which Namima herself has never heard before. The myth in the novel is not a well-known fact; it becomes part of Namima's reality, her life, her death, and her trauma.

The third plane (and plotline) of the novel retells the fate of Izanagi, who lives in the human world under the name of Yakinahiko and later Unashi (Kirino, 2021, pp.106–132). This is how he is described in his human form for the first time: "Yakinahiko was thirty and in the prime of his manhood. His countenance was noble, his complexion fair, and his height well over six feet" (Kirino, 2021, p. 190). He hunts animals and women, and all his wives die after childbirth. One of his wives, Masago, is kept in a cave after her death, and upon seeing her dead body, "Yakinahiko left the cave and virtually flew down the side of the cliff. The chief attributed his haste to grief. But it was fear. Death was defiling" (Kirino, 2021, p. 219). In such a manner, the original mythic plot where Izanagi leaves the rotting body of Izanami in the underworld and flees, is repeated. According to the author's design, at a certain moment, after realizing that everyone he loves dies – because of the promise made by Izanami: "From this day forward, therefore, I will take the lives of one thousand people each day in your land of the living" (Kirino, 2021, p. 224), after an unsuccessful attempt to kill himself and taking his friend's life in the process, the ancient god stops his "divine" existence (eternal, immortal, and unchanging): "The man lying before him was not Unashi. It was himself—Yakinahiko. At least, it was Yahinahiko's body, lifeless, surrounded by blood. (..) Was it possible that he was Unashi?" (Kirino, 2021, p. 233). All the god needed to do to become human was to kill another man. Yakinahiko who was always afraid of death, brings it on somebody else and subjects himself to it: "He had assumed the youthful body of a nineteen-year-old man. A mortal man. At last,

he was a mortal!" (Kirino, 2021, p. 234). Yakinahiko becomes Unashi, a human being, to live the life of a mortal and to accept death as Izanami once did. Thus, Kirino creatively rounds up the ancient story.

There is an overlap between the "human" plane (Namima's mortal life on the island) and the "divine" (or more mythological) plane (the goddess's hagiography, her return from the Realm of the Dead, and the description of the god's life among the living). Once in the Realm of the Dead, Namima becomes a kind of mediator connecting these planes. It is significant that she, Izanami's servant, is the mother of Yayoi, the girl with whom Izanagi, the god (who assumed the mortal form and became Unashi), wants to grow old and die (in this way the writer brings the two storylines together): "Yayoi was rescued? She was now Izanaki's wife?" (Kirino, 2021, p. 298). Another mediator is Izanagi himself, for he, the god of the myth, continues to live in the reality that not only Izanami, the goddess but also Namima, the human, has been forced to leave: "Several hundreds of years had passed since Yakinahiko had assumed the guise of a man, a human" (Kirino, 2021, p. 193). At some point, he also becomes a mortal: "I have transformed myself into a human being and allotted time on earth (…) I wilfully abandoned myself as a god" (Kirino, 2021, p. 297). And only after becoming a human, he returns, voluntarily, to the Realm of the Dead, trying to protect Yayoi's life: "Izanami, that's why I am here. Please, spare Yayoi" (Kirino, 2021, p. 299).

Namima's story, rich with archetypical elements, can be interpreted as a quest narrative. The concept of the quest narrative was extensively analyzed and popularized by Joseph Campbell, who introduced the idea in his seminal work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). Campbell's analysis is based on the common patterns he found in many myths from different cultures, which he referred to as the "monomyth" or the "hero's journey": "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder; fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (Campbell, 2008, p. 23). According to Campbell, there are a few common elements to every quest narrative, such as the call to adventure, refusal of the call, supernatural aid, the crossing of the first threshold, the road of trials, the meeting with the goddess, woman as temptress, apotheosis, the ultimate boon, refusal of the return, the magic flight, rescue from without, the crossing of the return threshold, master of two worlds, and freedom to live (Campbell, 2008). Not all of them are present in Namima's story, still quite a few of them are adopted by Kirino.

While the meeting with the goddess in this particular case is an apotheosis and a point of inner transformation for Namima, other quest elements are also present in her story: she was born into a life dedicated to fate. As a girl destined to become a priestess on a remote island, she experiences a profound call to adventure when she realizes that her life is to be one of confinement and ritual rather than personal freedom and fulfillment: "It was always my destiny to become the priestess of the darkness" (Kirino, 2021, p. 86). Initially, Namima is reluctant to accept her fate as she struggles against the societal and familial expectations placed upon her, embodying the refusal of the call. This internal conflict marks the beginning of her quest for self-discovery and autonomy. Namima's decision to leave her prescribed life and escape the island with Mahito symbolizes the crossing of the first threshold: "But I had sought to defy

fate" (Kirino, 2021, p. 86). As part of her journey, Namima goes to the Realm of the Dead and encounters the Goddess, which is a pivotal moment in her quest. She receives guidance from the Goddess but also listens to the Goddess's story, and having gone through the traumatic experiences herself, becomes a vessel for Izanami's trauma. As per Campbell's (2008) classification, Namima returns to the world of the living – but only briefly and in the form of wasp, her fate is sealed to remain at the service of the Goddess in the Realm of the Dead. She becomes the "master of two worlds"; the freedom to live, however, is replaced with the freedom to be dead and, in a sense, to serve death incorporated, Izanami: "Revere the goddess! In the darkness of the underground place, I secretly sing her praises!" (Kirino, 2021, p. 310).

Mythological consciousness, based on the mentioned archetypes of the quest narrative and defined by constant repetition and cyclicality, is often associated with ritualism. It is characteristic that the "everyday" life on the island is regulated by strict codes of rituals and taboos – in the text, we find: "Our island was governed by cruel customs. Food was rationed so only certain families were allowed to bear children (…). The island chief required that all unlawful babies be put to death (…). Old people (…) would be left to starve to death" (Kirino, 2021, p. 59). This is how the storyline of the persistent "trace" of the mythological consciousness of a human being unfolds ironically.

The deconstruction of the principle of cyclicality, repetition and, consequently, ritualism, is manifested in the text in the heroine's desire to break taboos. From childhood, Namima opposes the system that regulates her life on the island: she befriends a boy from a "cursed" family, and she gives him a forbidden basket with the leftovers that her sister Kamikuu, the future priestess of Light, has not finished, she refuses to fulfill her duties as a priestess of Darkness, and when the time comes, she runs away from the island with Mahito. When she dies, she openly recounts her sins and is grateful that the goddess still accepts her: "Even though my sins were many, the goddess did not punish me. Rather she drew me to her" (Kirino, 2021, p. 86).

However, Namima is not the only one trying to resist the rules. Her sister Kamikuu (a *miko* / priestess of Light, that is, a representative of the law on the island), having lost her husband Mahito, bitten by a bee, who is Namima, and having learned about the terrible secret of her family – the truth behind the birth of Yayoi, whom she always considered to be Mahito's younger sister, decides to commit suicide – and in order not to have Yayoi (a priestess of Darkness) die with her, she jumps off a cliff. As it is explained in the novel:

> When Kamikuu-sama dies, then the priestess of the darkness dies, too. Kamukuu-sama took her own life because the custom distressed her. If her body hadn't been discovered, we wouldn't have known if she were dead or not and we couldn't have proceeded". (Kirino, 2021, p. 264)

Yayoi herself, like her mother, Namima, also breaks the taboo, and on the eve of her execution, escapes the island with a visiting guest who turns out to be none other than the traveling Izanagi who assumed the form of a mortal. She is happy to escape death but also comprehends that it cannot be all that simple, and as she says Unashi (Izanagi here): "There is always poison" (Kirino, 2021, p. 273).

Significantly, all the protests against the system end tragically: Namima dies at the hands of her lover; Kamikuu's plan fails: her body is found by traveling sailors and returned to the island. Yayoi's fate, however, remains unknown: Izanami promises not to kill her, but in return, she takes Izanagi's life: "I will take your life and in exchange spare Yayoi" (Kirino, 2021, p. 302), that is, the girl remains all alone in a strange world after escaping from her native island.

An ancient myth comes to life in the novel of a modern writer, drawing attention to the pain and traumatic experience of human existence, serving as a kind of narrative frame, as well as an artistic way to express the inexpressible, which is how trauma is often characterized (LaCapra, 2014). In the next section, I look closely into the concept of trauma and its representability in a literary text.

Trauma Studies and Challenges of Representing Traumatic Experience in Literature

Kirino's novel describes the pains of life and death both from the psychological and mythological perspectives and calls for the analysis from the point of view of not only feminist studies (which have been done before) but also trauma studies, and the main focus of this paper is on the latter. The trauma of the human condition (or here, more specifically, a woman's condition) is represented in the novel through the mythological archetypes (the island, life and death, quest, birth, and revenge) and quest narrative (which was addressed in the previous section). Here, the field of trauma studies is introduced as well as how it fits into analyses of Kirino's work.

The examination of trauma within the realm of literature is a multidisciplinary pursuit, involving scholars hailing from various fields such as literature, psychology, sociology, and cultural studies. Among the most prominent figures in this endeavor are Caruth (1996), Herman (1997), LaCapra (2014), and Hirsch (2014), to name a few. Such scholars have significantly enriched the study of trauma in literature by offering valuable insights into how traumatic experiences are portrayed, their impact, and their interpretation within literary texts.

Cathy Caruth, in her work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1966), studies the intersection of trauma, memory, and storytelling in literature, and their influence on both individual and collective identities. Her primary focus lies on the psychological and literary dimensions of trauma, emphasizing how traumatic experiences can be represented and comprehended through narrative. Caruth posits that trauma poses a paradoxical challenge – it defies complete understanding and often remains unprocessed, yet it compels expression and comprehension that we can see in Kirino's work where the traumatized character (Namima) tries to understand and process her experience by telling it alongside with the mythic-divine-story that parallels her own experience. Caruth contends that trauma can be better grasped through the dynamics of repetition and belatedness, suggesting that "trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (Caruth, 1996, p. 181). Caruth's argument provides a suitable framework for analyses of Kirino's work and how trauma is represented in a literary text. I attempt to make

it more specific here and see how mythical reconstruction helps in understanding and portraying traumatic experiences.

One of Caruth's key insights is the concept of "delayed witnessing" (Caruth, 1996, p. 187). The researcher claims that survivors of trauma frequently struggle to articulate their experiences directly and may convey their traumatic memories indirectly or through fragmented narratives. Caruth investigates how literature, particularly works of fiction, can offer a space for survivors to bear witness to their trauma and enable a form of belated testimony. Such kind of narrative is created in Kirino's novel where Namina discusses her life after she dies and goes to serve the Goddess, whose story, very similar to her own, eventually enables her to talk about her own traumatic experience: "The words I speak, the phrases I weave together, are born from the very emotions I embody. My words may be dyed red with anger; they may tremble in yearning after the living; but they are all, each and every one, spoken to express the sentiments of the goddess" (Kirino, 2021, p. 3).

On the other hand, researcher LaCapra (2014) emphasizes that trauma is often characterized by its ineffability, signifying that it is an experience that cannot be entirely captured or adequately expressed in language: "the study of traumatic events poses especially difficult problems in representation and writing" (p. 41). LaCapra explores the boundaries of representation when it comes to trauma. Such ineffability, according to the researcher, poses a challenge for writers attempting to represent and understand traumatic events in fiction.

The concept of the unspeakability and unrepresentability of trauma has become a prominent subject of discussion, and, although initially emphasized by Caruth and LaCapra, has subsequently been questioned by other researchers. For example, Khader (2012) posits that trauma may be represented as an allegory (as in Bram Stocker's *Dracula*), and "the rhetoric of unspeakability in trauma theory is overstated (…)" and that it is necessary to create "a space for rethinking the conditions of possibility under which traumatic experiences can be rendered speakable" (p. 78). The researcher examines how trauma can be portrayed as unspeakable for individuals but communicable at a collective level through allegorical means. Khader's perspective aligns with the focus of this paper; based on the analysis of Kirino's novel, it is argued that while the traumatic experience is hard to represent, it is not entirely impossible, especially if put in the realm of fantastic (in this particular case, mythical), which is shown in more detail in the next section.

Trauma of Living and Dying through Mythological Leitmotifs

Betrayed by her spouse, the goddess Izanami finds herself ensnared in the Realm of the Dead, assuming the role of the deity presiding over the underworld. Expressing her bitter sentiment to Namima, she notes, "It's always the woman who dies" (Kirino, 2021, p. 104), addressing, thus, the submissive position of the woman and expressing her emotions regarding this situation. Similar to the deity, Namima is consumed by rage, unable to shake off the memories of her past existence.

Kirino's novel is not the first to describe female rage which starts to sound louder in revisionist myths, as both Rich and Ostriker point out in their research. Rich (1972) notes this trait even in Virginia's Woolf's "The Room of One's Own", saying that "It is the tone of a woman almost in touch with her anger, who is determined not to appear angry" (p. 20). While Woolf "is almost in touch" with her anger, Kirino's Izanami displays it fully, embracing her dark side and not shying away from her monstrous identity. In regards to this general trend in feminist revisionist mythmaking, Ostriker (1982) insightfully comments that "the female power to do evil is a direct function of her powerlessness to do anything else" (p. 78), which is connected to her trauma. Izanami, however, goes further: when the opportunity presents itself to stop "doing evil", she rejects it: "I have no intention of changing my destiny. I am the goddess who metes out death, after all. I will continue" (Kirino, 2021, p. 307).

Rage, thus, becomes the prevalent emotional response to the traumatic events that happen to both female protagonists of the novel. Describing Izanami, Namima says: "A deep bitterness seeped into her eyes, along with a look of resignation" (Kirino, 2021, p. 104). In this, we can see the residue of a past traumatic experience that has a long-lasting effect on the character of Kirino's novel, in this case, the goddess. Describing her state, Namima notes: "How strange it must seem, but the emotions I have now are much sharper than they ever were when I was alive" (Kirino, 2021, p. 3). With these words, Kirino enters the discussion of the representability of trauma, mentioned in the previous section. Kirino shows that while the traumatic experience itself leaves one confused, it also multiplies the feelings and makes the experience more intense – and perhaps gives mental powers to describe it, thus making the trauma representable: "The words I speak, the phrases I weave together, are born from the very emotions I embody" (Kirino, 2021, p. 3). While Namima may struggle with her traumatic narrative, by describing the similar fate of the goddess, she processes her trauma and then can freely speak about it as well. In this is hidden the possibility of healing. According to Kaminer (2006), "producing a trauma narrative as part of the therapy process may facilitate recovery from post-trauma pathology: emotional catharsis; the creation of linguistic representation; (…) developing an explanatory account; and the identification of purpose and value in adversity" (para. 1). And Namima is working slowly through her own emotions first listening to the Goddess's story, then retelling it alongside with her own.

The significant changes in the narrative should be mentioned regarding trauma discourse. The story, told by Namima, is almost lyrical, describing the natural delights of the island life: "the waves and wind, the sands and stone. We respected the grandeur of nature" (Kirino, 2021, p. 5). By contrast, Izanami's story, which conveys the creation myth and the Goddesses' trauma, comprises completely different linguistic means, and even in the text we find that "Izanami's tone took on a heightened formality" (Kirino, 2021, p. 106). The Goddess starts her story in this way, taking up a mythical tone, which conveys a sense of timelessness and grandiosity:

> I shall speak of the creation of our world, thousands and thousands of years before you were born, Namima, far, far in the ancient past, there was nothing, no earth, no land, just roiling chaos. From this disorder the teeming matter was divided into heaven and earth. And following this came further divisions, each time into complementary pairs until the world as we know it was conceived. (Kirino, 2021, p. 106)

The novel is known to be unjustly criticized for this part (e.g. Epstein, 2013)[8], where, as Copeland (2018) notes, the "lovely language comes to a screeching halt" (p. 25). However, such a heavy style is intentional, as well as reasonable and narrates trauma in a way the Goddess (and the author) finds possible, both underscoring the importance of the narrative, putting a certain distance between the story and the narrator (enabling the retelling of the trauma) and creating a highly uncomfortable story to consume, which again evokes Alta's Euridice and her "stand in my own pain & sing my own song" (Alta, 1975, p. 8). It is important to note that Kirino shows the difficulties of the process of retelling one's trauma as well: when Izanami comes to the point of her own death, she stops and gives the floor to another habitant of the underworld Hieda no Are to continue. This change seemingly underlines the impossibility of speaking about trauma on a personal level, however, in the novel the narrative continues, even if the narrators change, letting the author in a creative way represent the pain and shock of existence (in this case, divine).

An interesting difference in dealing with trauma can be noted between the two main characters: while Namima longs to forget about her life and death and suffering to become "a calm, quiet spirit" and "float off into the darkness" (Kirino, 2021, p. 287), Izanami wants someone to listen to her story and understand it. When she first meets Namima, she seems happy to see someone whose fate is so similar to her own: "At last I have someone who will listen to what I have to say. I can unburden my heart and give vent to all my feelings. I live here trapped – tied to this wheel of suffering" (Kirino, 2021, p. 105). As we can see, the Goddess openly speaks of her suffering and desires to unburden herself by way of sharing her experience. Later on in the novel, when Namima begs the Goddess to grant her a quiet peaceful existence of a mindless spirit, Izanami notes disappointedly: "I thought you were able to understand my suffering" (p. 287), again referring to the shared destiny of the goddess and the woman. She admits that both of them suffer, however, she also points out that there is a difference between them: "Gods and humans are different. My suffering and yours are different" (Kirino, 2021, p. 291). However, when Namima asks her, why she, a goddess, should suffer, Izanami explains bringing it back to similarities in their fate: "Because I am a *female* god" (Kirino, 2021, p. 292), implying that her suffering stems from her femininity rather than divinity. Namima goes on to analyze Izanami's pain and its reasons:

> She had to steal life from the living, all the while in possession of her woman's heart. Was that the source of her pain? Or was it that while she was a goddess who killed she was also a female charged with giving birth? (Kirino, 2021, p. 292)

Namima who goes through childbirth and death herself, and consequently kills (in the form of a wasp) her former lover, still thinks that the suffering of the goddess is much more significant. Namima wants to forget everything and thus become free, but Izanami's trauma seems to run deeper, manifesting in anger. Namima reflects on this: "Human beings and gods are different. I now understood how frightening the anger of a god could be (…) How merciless a goddess

[8] One of the reviewers of the novel comments on it in the following manner: "there is a second strand which seems weighed down by the author's reverence for the source material; an almost biblical retelling of the intricacies of the legend that slows the story unnecessarily" (Epstein, 2013).

Izanami was!" (Kirino, 2021, p. 302). However, focusing on her anger she ignores, until a little later, what lies behind it: "I still did not understand that the intensity of her anger was matched by the depth of her sorrow" (Kirino, 2021, p. 302). Significantly, while Izanami "puts out" Unashi's (Izanagi's) torch, leaving him to wonder in the Realm of the Death in darkness till he meets his end, hopeless, Namima eventually finds him and feels sorry for him: "At the very least I did not want his last hours to be painful, so I came up behind him and wrapped him in my embrace" (Kirino, 2021, p. 303). This very human act of kindness so contrasting with the Goddess's action, brings unexpected results – Mahito finds her cradling Unashi and props her. Both of them being spirits, Namia does not feel anything, however, she recollects "the happiness I had felt on the boat so long ago" (p. 303), when she just had Yayoi and felt the happiest. "And now here we were, Mahito and I, holding the man who loved our Yayoi" (p. 304). At this moment, Namima is trying to get closure with Mahito: "But you killed me. Why did you do it?" and gets "You're wrong" (p. 304) in reply. That does not feel like a full catharsis, "and yet here, on my back – though I was nothing more than a wraith – I could feel the warmth of Mahito's body. Compared to Izanami, I was still human through and through" (p. 304). Though not forgiven by Izanami, Izanagi seems to be forgiven by the other citizens of the Realm of the Dead at this point, and when he dies, he escapes Izanami's world. But Izanami remains, accepting her lot: "I have defeated Izanaki (…) But I have no intention of changing my destiny. I am the goddess who metes out death, after all. I will continue" (Kirino, 2021, p. 307).

This combination of feelings, human and divine as well as Izanami's inability and, ultimately, unwillingness to let go is how Kirino chooses to depict trauma, using Namima as a medium and putting these unprocessed feelings and traumatic experiences into a mythological realm, giving them an archetypical significance. Namima, unable to forget, is forced to narrate her trauma as well, making her and Izanami's experiences "speakable".

Thus, Kirino's whole novel can be considered a trauma narrative since it conveys Namima's story that retells her life and death and tells the story of the Goddess. Kirino creates her narrative using a few important leitmotifs that underline the mythological worldview which makes it easier to represent trauma as an archetypical concept. Thus, one of the main leitmotifs is the theme of the feminine as something dark and dirty[9], which inevitably leaves a traumatic mark on the character's psyche. The leitmotif is set in the abovementioned creation myth, where it is the goddess who dies after giving birth, which allows us to place the Japanese myth in a global context – often the feminine in mythological consciousness is inextricably linked to both birth and death. Namima's presence in the underworld brings us back more concretely to the narrative tension that drives the first episode of the novel, and which will sustain it through its conclusion: "there is a deep connection between death and birth. I died in childbirth, you see" (Kirino, 2021, p. 100). The principle of Mother Earth, the giver of life as well as the abode of the dead, is also embedded in the image of Izanami: "Now the mother of the land had become the bestower of death…How horribly ironic!" (Kirino, 2021, p. 130). This motif is also evident

[9] As it was mentioned and analysed in more detail by Copeland (2018), *The Goddess Chronicle* prominently explores the concept of binarism, often portraying the negative aspects as ascribed to the female side of the binary spectrum.

in the creation of the image of Namima, who is the dark priestess, and who dies soon after giving birth. Thus, by showing that Namima's daughter Yayoi repeats her mother's fate (and both of them follow in Izanami's footsteps, the goddess being the symbol of both fertility and defilement), which can be interpreted as intergenerational trauma, the author introduces this cyclicality as a poetics of repetition, transforming her novel into a neo-myth.

As can be seen from the quotes above – as well as from the one that follows – the emotional background of the work is one of rage and longing for life: "I could feel the black flame of anger emanating from Izanami's body" (Kirino, 2021, p. 131). Namima speaks about the Goddess, but her fate copies a mythological plot. Like the Goddess, Namima is overwhelmed with emotions and cannot forget her life in the human world. She wants to understand why she has been betrayed and seeks revenge, and the bitterness of the two women defines an important leitmotif of the work. The structure of the novel is much like Kirino's earlier books: a woman experiences betrayal and must go against what her own family and society expect of her; the reasons for the inevitable murder, a characteristic feature of all Kirino's novels, and its psychological consequences are investigated. Thus, Kirino's work is a product of modern mythmaking with an archaic plot that studies the traumatic experience of living and dying from the feminine point of view.

Mythopoetic traits that frame traumatic events are manifested in Kirino's novel on several levels: in the form of direct quotations in the retelling of the well-known myth, as well as less explicit but easily decodable allusions, one of which is the mythologeme of the island, which occupies a central place in the novel. It is known that the fictional Umehebi island was based by Kirino on Kudaka Island in Okinawa, also known as "the island of the gods". Such a geographical reference creates an additional problematic opposition between Okinawa versus Yamato, where Namima and Mahito sail toward and where the gods Izanami and Izanagi are worshiped. Yamato is also the land that would eventually dominate Okinawa. In the novel, the island is shaped uniquely as a teardrop. The island itself anticipates the fate of the main protagonist that would, so to speak, amount to tears. Additionally, it is a possible allusion to the mythical island of Onogorojima, the first place created by the gods, the place where the gods first set foot on land. By placing the basic "human" and "everyday" plot in such a mythopoetic space, the author makes it clear that life on the island is close to the life of the gods, underlining already existing parallels in the fates of the woman and the goddess. Not surprisingly, the islanders have never heard the legend of Izanami and Izanagi, and Namima learns Izanami's traumatic story only when she finds herself in the underworld. In addition, the geography of the island echoes the realm of the gods: there is a dividing sign between the different parts of the island, the place where people live and the cemetery, the "world of the dead", as well as the forbidden territory. The Realm of the Dead is separated from the realm of the living by a stone, which Namima notices when she enters Izanami's realm and comments on its resemblance to the one on her island: "The boulder. Proof that our worlds connected. The boulder reminded me of The Warning on my island" (Kirino, 2021, p. 95). Everything in her afterlife painfully reminds her about the life she used to have but would never have again.

The island symbolizes a timeless space, a paradise corner of primordial nature: "Our island has no particular name. We always referred to it simply as 'the island'" (Kirino, 2021, p. 9). Such

description elevates the island to the rank of an archetype that fulfills metaphorical functions: the island is Japan itself, and its inhabitants are Japanese society, represented by all its problems in the novel. Namima remarks that "on our island, everything is already decided" (Kirino, 2021, p. 29). These words metaphorically represent a Japan that lives by a strict set of rules and taboos. With this assumption, Namima's attempts to escape the island's fixed social and existential meanings. Namima, having broken the taboo, feels not only fear but also relief: "I had disobeyed Mikura-sama's injunction – no, I had done worse: I had disobeyed the law of the island" (Kirino, 2021, p. 42).

Similar to Namima, Izanami defies any laws and traumatic expectations of what a woman should be. In this respect, the ending of the novel is particularly interesting. When Izanagi comes to her realm, she refuses to reinstate herself as the goddess of life and embraces her role as the symbol of death, defilement, and trauma and the ruler of a place that is not fully identified:

> She was the goddess who invited our desire and also our defilement; she bore the weight of the past and lived on into the future for ever. (…) And all around her the grumbling of the restless spirits knows no end but grows and grows and grows. This, too, is beautiful and clear and as insubstantial as dust. (Kirino, 2021, p. 308)

In this radical acceptance of her status and her trauma, there is a possibility of healing, both for her and for those she accepts in her kingdom. In Kirino's world, healing also comes with the denial of any male principle, presence, or privilege. The only male figures who find themselves in the Realm of the Dead (a female space, without a shape or structured identity) are deprived of any possibility of action or self-expression and subjected to the female qualities of the place. The emotion of anger, the leading emotion of the novel, becomes also what unites the women of the underworld and provides them with a sense of hope and comfort, which comes after expressing it fully by way of narrating their respective traumas. Copeland (2018) points out that "the characters in the Yomi underworld, having relinquished their physical forms, continue on as the memory of an embedded female essence" (p. 28). Just like the Realm of the Dead, it is terrifying yet not without a promise, the collective trauma of its inhabitants when fully expressed and shared gives place and means to deal with it – even if technically after their death, when they are finally removed from the restricting rules of society.

As it was pointed out by Ostriker (1982), contemporary revisionist mythmaking (in contrast to modernist one) contains "no trace of nostalgia, no faith that the past is a repository of truth, goodness, or desirable social organization" (p. 87). Kirino proves these points by revisiting the Japanese creation myth and showing that even in the days of the gods nothing was different for a woman – if there might be some appeal in Izanagi's position and fate, no woman would like to be Izanami. And yet, as it is shown in Namima's story, history repeats itself demonstrating a characteristic of revisionist mythmaking treatment of time: it "effectively flattens it so that the past is not then but now" (Ostriker, 1982, p. 87).

Being in essence a trauma narrative, Kirino's novel proves that trauma can be represented and the author bravely applies fantastic devices to make it possible. In this case, the myth is the

vessel for trauma, and Kirino masterfully uses the allusions to the Japanese creation myth and various leitmotifs (such as the duality of the world, cyclical nature of existence, repeated as fates and plots, the archetypical island and so on) to combine the human and the divine planes showcasing that trauma can be contained in either and that by paralleling those it is easier to represent and eventually overcome each. Dividing her novel into a few parts and following different plotlines, Kirino pieces out the trauma from the fragmented mythological narrative she creates.

Conclusion

Throughout literary history, both in the East and West, we see the whole set of aesthetic, reflective, critical, and ironic interpretations of traditional national myths in different literary genres. The latest repurposing of the myth has been with revisionist mythmaking, which is mainly the process of critically re-examining and reinterpreting past writings to give voice to overlooked minor characters, particularly women, as detailed in the research by Rich (1972) and Ostriker (1982). As I have argued in this paper, Kirino sets out to engage the Japanese creation myth to show in broader terms the traumatic fate of a woman in a timeless landscape. My main purpose here was to demonstrate how addressing the topic through the mythological framework helps the author to make trauma more representable, shaping the archetypic narrative of pain and suffering which can be conveyed and understood through the universal symbolic language of myths.

By way of making parallels between the fate of the Goddess and mortal woman, Kirino, with the help of the wide range of traditional archetypes (woman, water, darkness, defilement, birth, death, revenge), implicitly states that the difference between men and women is greater and more insurmountable than the difference between gods and humans. We can also say that in Kirino's work myth is de-heroized, de-sentimentalised, and reinterpreted in a way that shows that the fate of the goddess is reduced to the fate of an ordinary woman. Thus, as noted by Ostricker (1982), all history of a timeless plot becomes a palimpsest, "a reiterated layering of changeless patterns" (p. 79), where there is no golden age, and the marginalized characters always remain on the margins, and "it's always the woman who dies" (Kirino, 2021, p. 104). However, the goddess, as I have shown, chooses to accept her fate fully and be radically unapologetic about it – unlike Namima, who remains too human not to forgive. Thus, the novel skilfully addresses themes of anger, power, choice, and ultimately, pain and trauma centering on the female characters' refusal to conform to traditional roles and expectations. Despite the reader's anticipation of a conventional resolution, Izanami's decision to embrace her anger and autonomy challenges societal norms and offers new ways to address a trauma narrative: the novel celebrates Izanami's refusal to be silenced, and her assertion of autonomy and the brave acceptance of her and her subjects' traumatic experiences present her as a symbol of empowerment and healing.

In this paper, Kirino's appeal to ancient Japanese mythology as a source of poetic imagery is revealed through the analysis of the discrepancies between the author's artistic interpretations and the "original" mythological meanings of archaic symbols, the emphasis on which can turn out to be more significant than the characteristic postmodern game of parody and

deconstruction. Furthermore, the author's appeal to the archetypes of the national picture of the world is not accidental: after all, the archetypes, as it was argued by Jung (1966), "are like riverbeds which dry up when the water deserts them, but which it can find again at any time" (p. 395), hence they are perceived psychologically, emotionally, and therefore cannot be rejected rationally. This is why we can speak of remythologization as opposed to demythologizing and deconstructing the well-known stereotypes established in Japanese culture. The myth, therefore, remains, even if the accents shift: as Ostriker (1982) points out, a female poet (writer) "simultaneously deconstructs a prior 'myth' or 'story' and constructs a new one which includes, instead of excluding, herself" (p. 72).

After analyzing Kirino's novel with its seemingly cryptic and unsatisfying ending where the goddess accepts anger and trauma and provides a safe space to all who are defiled and traumatized, it is evident that the author's method of portraying trauma is both valid and effective. Not only does Kirino demonstrate that trauma can be represented, no matter how painful or unbelievable the experience is, but also responds creatively to the ongoing discussion about the inexpressibility of trauma (Caruth, 1996, Herman 1997, LaCarpa, 2004, Hirsh, 2012). In the process, she develops her unique means and techniques for addressing this challenging subject, such as using the archetypes of the island, a mortal/divine dynamic, and the change in lyrical/epic language of the narrative.

Kirino's *The Goddess Chronicle* is profoundly psychological and operates archetypes as a means of artistic expression. The sacralization of the images of the island, the underworld, the sea, and the first gods, reveals the closest, inseparable connection between myth and the Japanese national picture of the world, simultaneously providing the emotional and imaginative language to represent the trauma the main characters have experienced. Retelling the myth anew (revising and reconstructing it after "including herself") amounts to retelling one's life story which eventually offers means for coming to terms with it and promises the possibility of healing.

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Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Silvia Hamilton, and the Morgan Library *Little Prince* Manuscript

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Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) met Silvia Hamilton in New York in 1942 when he was in exile after the French defeat (June 1940). He was a perfectionist who spent countless days and nights writing, rewriting, and correcting his most famous work, *The Little Prince* (Montoneri, 2023). The first edition, published by Reynal and Hitchcock on April 6, 1943, is only half the size of the original manuscript Antoine de Saint-Exupéry sent to Silvia Hamilton before he left America for North Africa (RTBF, 2021).[1] One year later, in 1944, he was lost when his plane crashed during a reconnaissance mission over the Mediterranean. Silvia Hamilton kept the manuscript and the drawings until 1968 when she sold them to the Morgan Library & Museum in New York. This short paper sheds some light on the relationship between Saint-Exupéry and Hamilton, discussing her influence on the writing and preservation of the manuscript of *The Little Prince.* In addition, the paper provides a comparative analysis concerning the references to New York in the original text, all of which were removed by the author himself before the novella was published.

Saint-Exupéry and Silvia Hamilton

Saint-Exupéry arrived in New York on December 31, 1940. He thought that he could use his fame to convince the US to join the fight and intended to stay only a few weeks in America.[2] In actuality, he spent 27 months in New York (Schiff, 1993), first in an apartment found by the wives of his publishers, located at 240 Central Park South where his wife Consuelo joined him in the Autumn of 1941; she later bought a house in Long Island (The Bevin House in Asharoken) in August 1942 where the couple welcomed many friends (Le Figaro, 2006, p. 42). There is no doubt that in *The Little Prince*, the rose is a reference to his wife (Bouzon, 2021; « Tu sais que la rose c'est toi »; Le Figaro, 2003, p. 55; translation of the author: "You know the rose is you"). However, Silvia Hamilton's influence on the writing and preservation of the novella was clearly "essential" as Saint-Exupéry's fox would say.[3]

Saint-Exupéry met American journalist Silvia Hamilton at the beginning of 1942 (born Handelsman; 1912-1994; Reinhardt after 1944), thanks to his translator Lewis Galantière.

> My grandmother would tell me elaborate bedtime stories about her 'beaus' as she called them. The favored among them was Saint-Exupéry," says Reinhardt's granddaughter, Dana Reinhardt. "When she met him at a party, she said to a friend who spoke French, 'Tell him I love him'. (Staino, 2014)

[1] « Le manuscrit avait été exposé en 2014 par la Morgan Library & Museum. De plus de 30.000 mots à l'origine, difficile à déchiffrer, il a été réduit de moitié par un écrivain qui cherchait la plus grande simplicité de style possible. » (translation of the author: "The manuscript was exhibited in 2014 by the Morgan Library & Museum. Originally containing more than 30,000 words, difficult to decipher, it was reduced by half by a writer who sought the greatest possible simplicity of style").

[2] Saint-Exupéry's first visit to the US was in January-February 1938. He came back to New York in February 1939. While staying at the Ritz, he wrote part of *Wind, Sand and Stars*: "…it was here that Saint-Exupéry, was able to write *The Little Prince* and the *Letter to the Hostage*, as well as *Flight to Arras* and a good part of *Wind, Sand and Stars*. In America as in France, this heroic figure, who vanished as by miracle, who died the airman's death he would have wished to die, has his monument in men's hearts" (Galantière, 1947).

[3] "Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye" (Saint-Exupéry, 1943, p. 48).

Hamilton was divorced at the time and quite wealthy; she invited him to the chicest restaurants in New York, such as the famed 21 Club. Part of the novella was written when Saint-Exupéry visited Hamilton at her Park Avenue apartment; she would prepare gin and scrambled eggs for him and, though they could not understand each other (she did not speak French and he not English: "He was isolated by his inability to speak English", Schiff, 1993), they had a very intimate relationship, first as lovers and then as friends ("Their language barrier didn't seem to do much to deter their relationship. She was always thrilled when his knock came at the door"; Staino, 2014). Hamilton's black poodle, Mocha, was Saint-Exupéry's model for the sheep and her doll, a red-haired, floppy cloth Raggedy Ann type, for the Little Prince, among other models such as eight-year-old Thomas De Koninck he met while in Quebec during the spring of 1942 or Denis de Rougemont[4] he met in New York. Silvia Hamilton offered him a pet boxer who served as the model for the fox and the tiger. Hamilton also inspired the character of the fox, as the wise friend of the Little Prince (Le Figaro, 2006, p. 53; Sotheby's, 2016).

In 2014, the Morgan Library organized an exhibition that notably displayed the book Saint-Exupéry offered to Hamilton's twelve-year-old son: "For Stephen, to whom I have already spoken about *The Little Prince*, and who perhaps will be his friend" (The Morgan Library & Museum, 2014, p. 3). As far as we know, it is the only copy of the novella that the author gave to a child. Saint-Exupéry began to suspect late in 1942 that Silvia Hamilton was romantically involved with Austrian-born American film director and producer Gottfried Reinhardt[5] while they were together. After all, Saint-Exupéry was already married and Consuelo was also in New York. Relatively few people know that Saint-Exupéry made drawings to express his despair: the first one depicts the Little Prince hung, the second one is a hangman game with the name "Sylvia" (he used to write her name with a "y"; struck through and replaced with an "I").[6]

Among the many drawings Saint-Exupéry gave to Hamilton is a watercolor probably made at the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943. She sold it in Paris in 1976. It represents a self-portrait of the author looking like the Little Prince, hanging on Earth while, on a distant planet called "Fox MGM", two lovers are seated on a bench. It depicts Saint-Exupéry crushed by the love affair between Reinhardt and Hamilton. He would marry her only one year later, in March 1944. Gottfried Reinhardt notably worked with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), one of the most prestigious studios (which distributed in 1941 *Two-Faced Woman* starring Greta Garbo and produced by Reinhardt) and with Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, formed in 1935, one of the big five Hollywood film studios at the time. One cannot help but notice the irony that the lover and future husband of Silvia Hamilton, who inspired the character of the fox in *The Little Prince*, was working with Twentieth Century Fox. Moreover, Saint-Exupéry

[4] Denis de Rougemont notably helped Consuelo write her biography titled *The Tale of the Rose*, finished in 1947, but published in France in 2000, after the manuscript was discovered in an attic trunk. He was one of Consuelo's many lovers; she later "rejected his offers of marriage because he was too Protestant" (Webster, 2000).

[5] Gottfried Reinhardt (1913 Berlin - 1994 Los Angeles) was already a successful producer and writer of screenplays and books for Broadway musicals before the US joined the war (*Comrade X* in 1940; *Rage in Heaven* in 1941; *Rosalinda* in 1942). As a naturalized American, he served during WWII and made films for the Army Signal Corps (Grimes, 1994).

[6] The first drawing is accessible at this address: https://drouot.com/en/hotel-drouot/actualite/73388-ka-mondo-un-autoportrait-d-antoine-de-saint-exupery-aux-encheres. The second one is available here: https://librairie-walden.com/document/dessin-original-jeu-du-pendu-representant-silvia-hamilton

was already upset by MGM which had acquired the rights to *Flight Night* (*Vol de Nuit*; 1931), released in 1933. Following a dispute between the author and MGM in 1942, the movie ceased to be broadcast (https://www.bibliorare.com/wp-content/uploads/catalogue/pdf/kamondo-02-04-2020.pdf; see pp. 72–73). The drawing also depicts the planet Saturn, which is associated with rupture, depression, and melancholy (Ikkos, 2021). Despite being upset, Saint-Exupéry offered Hamilton his most precious possessions before he left America, including his camera, a Zeiss Ikon, the manuscript of *The Little Prince*, and dozens of drawings. She kept them preciously for 25 years.

The Morgan Library Manuscript

In 1968, Silvia Hamilton decided to sell the manuscript and the drawings to the Morgan Library in New York.[7] The published version of *The Little Prince* is much shorter than the Morgan Library manuscript, which contains 141 folios and 35 drawings (Cerisier and Lacroix, 2013, p. V). This section focuses on references to New York that the author decided to remove before publication. Probably following the tradition of fairy tales ("The space of the hero's movement is nameless", in Järv, 2007, p. 275; "Indeed most fairy tale characters go unnamed", in Spitz, 2015, online),[8] Saint-Exupéry deleted in the published version all references to specific places. For example, the original manuscripts mentioned well-known locations in New York by name. To make the story feel more universal, the author seems to have replaced famous landmarks with vague locations, which makes the novella more consistent, as characters are already nameless ("the little prince", "the rose", "the fox", and so on). Two folios mention Manhattan; folio 58[9] is a shorter version of a statement made by the pilot in chapter XVII regarding the fact that the world is not overpopulated. At least, in 1942, there were around 2 billion people in the world and Saint-Exupéry believed that « ils s'imaginent tenir beaucoup de place » (Cerisier and Lacroix, 2013, p. LIV; translation of the author: "they think they take up a lot of space").

Folio 58 (chapter XVII):

> Si les deux milliards d'habitants qui peuplent la Terre se tenaient debout et un peu serrés, comme pour un meeting, ils logeraient aisément sur une place publique de vingt milles[10] de long sur vingt milles de large. Si Manhattan était couvert de buildings de 50

[7] In a conversation with her friend Sherlee Lantz, Silvia Hamilton-Reinhardt explained why she gave away drawings made by Saint-Exupéry: "Why would you part with them?" I asked. She said that nobody in Hollywood (at that time) even knew who St. Ex. was. They had no familiarity with his fine prose and, what is more and perhaps more importantly, they were not in the least impressed that he had been her lover" (Sotheby's, 2016).

[8] The tradition lives on. For instance, Zoe Gilbert "often starts with an idea for a character or a situation. She set out to write *Folk*, by deliberately creating a place that exists inside a fairy tale. She refused to use real locations; rare is the fairy tale that refers to an actual place" (presentation and interview of award winning author Zoe Gilbert; Jackson, 2018, online).

[9] A picture of folio 58 is available on the website of the Morgan (https://www.themorgan.org/collection/little-prince/73), but as far as we know, only Cerisier and Lacroix (2013) published the transcripts of all the folios.

[10] Old French measure of length, worth about a thousand steps (from Latin 'mīlle passūs' meaning 'a thousand of paces'); later translated as 'mile' in English (worth noting that the length equal to 1.609 kilometers was established among Anglophone nations in 1959). As to "mille" (a thousand), it is indeclinable. "Vingt mille'" is twenty thousand. In chapter II of the published version: « je me suis donc endormi sur le sable à mille milles de toute terre habitée. » (Saint-Exupéry, 1998, p. 11; English translation by K. Woods: "I went to sleep on the sand, a

> étages et si les hommes, debout l'un à côté de l'autre remplissaient bien tous les étages de ces buildings, l'humanité entière pourrait loger dans Manhattan. (Cerisier and Lacroix, 2013, p. LIV)
>
> [Translation of the author:] If the two billion inhabitants who populate the Earth stood upright and a little closely together, as if for a meeting, they would easily fit into a public square twenty miles long by twenty miles wide. If Manhattan were covered in 50-story buildings and if men, standing next to each other, filled all the floors of these buildings, all of humanity could live in Manhattan.

Saint-Exupéry replaced the reference to Manhattan with a « petit îlot du Pacifique » in the published version (Saint-Exupéry, 1998, p. 59; "small Pacific islet" in Saint-Exupéry, 1943, p. 39).

Folio 61 (chapter XVII)

> Il y a deux milliards d'habitants sur notre planète. Si vous les réunissez tous pour un meeting monstre, les noirs, les blancs, les jaunes, les enfants, les milliards d'hommes et de femmes il suffit pour loger ce meeting d'une place publique de vingt milles de long sur vingt milles de large. L'humanité pourrait camper toute entière sur l'île de Long Island. Chacun aurait même la place de s'étendre par terre la nuit pour dormir. Si l'on construisait un grand building de 50 étages (le même que Rockefeller Center) et qui couvrirait Manhattan et si l'humanité s'y tenait debout, un peu serrée, en remplissant bien les étages, elle logerait toute entière dans Manhattan! ça[11] deviendrait bien sûr très compliqué de la nourrir. (Cerisier and Lacroix, 2013, p. LIV)
>
> [Translation of the author:] There are two billion people on our planet. If you bring them all together for a monster meeting, the blacks, the whites, the yellows, the children, the billions of men and women,[12] it is enough to accommodate this meeting in a public square twenty miles long by twenty miles square meters wide. All of humanity could camp on Long Island. Everyone would even have room to lie down on the ground at night to sleep. If we built a large 50-story building (the same as Rockefeller Center) that would cover Manhattan and if humanity stood there, a little tightly packed, filling the floors well, it would all reside in Manhattan! It would of course become very complicated to feed them.

thousand miles from any human habitation."; Saint-Exupéry, 1943, p. 6).

[11] Simplified by the author to facilitate reading. More precisely in the manuscript: « add.] [Évidemment ce serait *biffé*] [ça] deviendrait, bien sûr, *add*.] très compliqué de la nourrir. » Cerisier and Lacroix, 2013, p. LVI. Translation of the author: "added] [Obviously it would be struck through] [it] would become, of course, added] very complicated to feed her"; "her" is referring to humanity, which is a feminine word in French; replaced by them in the English translation).

[12] Another example of nameless people, described as vaguely as possible.

By comparison, the private collection manuscript,[13] which was probably written in 1941 (Sasportas, 2012; Artcurial, 2012), does not mention Manhattan and the Rockefeller Center; the text is shorter and "two billion" does not appear:

> If we gathered together all the inhabitants of this planet, all next to each other, tightly, as they do for some big public assembly, the whites, the yellows, the blacks, the children, the old people, the women, and the men without forgetting a single one, all of humanity would fit on Long Island. (Acturial, 2012; Montoneri, 2023)

Conclusion

The manuscripts and drawings of the novella sold by Silvia Hamilton to the Morgan Library & Museum were exhibited for the first time in France in 2022. As for the two leaves sold by Acturial in 2012, they are in private hands. Although the novella was written in New York, Saint-Exupéry erased all references to the city in the manuscript he gave to his publishers in 1943. He wanted the story to feel more universal, therefore he avoided naming places and people, using very vague descriptions in the style of fairy tales, such as "a fox", "a rose" or "a Pacific islet". Did Saint-Exupéry also remove the references to New York because he was hurt when he discovered that Silvia Hamilton was involved with another man? He certainly left America upset and heartbroken. A French friend of Saint-Exupéry living in New York in 1942 remembers:

> Lorsqu'il a terminé son récit, il m'en a lu lui-même toute la fin en pleurant, comme s'il avait pressenti sa propre fin qui ressemblera à celle du *Petit Prince* », écrit Pierre Lazareff, autre exilé de New York. (Le Figaro, 2006, p. 58)

> [Translation of the author:] When he finished his story, he read the whole ending to me himself, crying, as if he had foreseen his own ending which would resemble that of the Little Prince," writes Pierre Lazareff, another exile [living] in New York.

Originally scheduled to be published for Christmas 1942 in New York, simultaneously in French and English, the date was postponed until April 1943, because his translator Lewis Galantière was incapacitated following a severe accident. *The Little Prince* was finally published a few days before Saint-Exupéry left America for North Africa on April 13. He never saw the version published in France in 1946, after the war, when the country lifted the ban on all of his works (Galantière, 1947).

[13] Lot 384, an unpublished draft of *The Little Prince* discovered in 2012 and composed of two leaves, contains unpublished paragraphs of the novella; it was purchased by an anonymous collector in 2012, but the text is available online (Montoneri, 2023).

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Photo by Professor Chen Yilin, at Providence University, with her permission

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Surface and Depth: Reading Photographs in *Obasan* and *The Invention of Solitude*

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Abstract

Since its invention, photography has been imbued with the promise of providing a sense of fullness and has been believed to possess the unique capacity to capture the entirety of a moment. On the other hand, such assumed potentiality to capture all is yet found subject to the surface, and photography turns out to be a sort of art that lacks depth. This paper intends to focus on the tension between surface and depth in the representation of photographs in literature, a topic that is often neglected in literary studies. Through the theoretical lens of Walter Benjamin's and Roland Barthes's discourses on photography, this paper examines Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude*, both of which expose the discrepancy between what is visible on the surface and what lies beneath, as well as between what is within the frame and what exists beyond it. This paper is divided into two parts. The first part discusses how Benjamin's and Barthes's discourses on photography lead to the discussion of the surface and depth issues. The second part deals with the photographs in the two literary works, exploring how theoretical concepts of photography, including Benjamin's "the optical unconscious" and Barthes's "punctum," will help shed light on them. By juxtaposing critical discourses on photography with these literary works, this paper concludes that their representation of photographs grapples with the tension between surface and depth and resonates with Benjamin's and Barthes's notions on photography.

Keywords: photography, surface and depth, the optical unconscious, the punctum, *Obasan*, *The Invention of Solitude*

Since its invention, photography has been endowed with evocative as well as evidential power. With the fecundity of imagination and the plenitude of expectations invested in photography, nevertheless, photography is often deemed tantalizing, particularly because photography's capability to represent all is limited to the mere surface, and photography turns out to be a sort of art without depth. Indeed, the tension between surface and depth in photographs should not be ignored, and this paper seeks to delve into this antithesis between the two aspects in which photography is perceived. On the one hand, photography is believed to promise a sense of plenitude or fullness with its abundant potential to capture everything. Such plenitude or fullness implies more than what photographic images present and connotes "depth," the portion beneath the surface not seen immediately, not visible to human eyes. On the other hand, some critical discourses on photography, including Walter Benjamin's and Roland Barthes's, reveal the oscillation between the sense of plenitude with which photographic images are endowed and photography's failure to represent what lies beneath the surface and beyond the frame. More specifically, two questions arise while reading Benjamin's and Barthes's works on photography. First, does the promise of fullness or completeness extend solely to the surface of photographs? Second, do photographs contain a certain depth in the sense that whatever photographs capture is not limited to the visual surface but inclusive of what Benjamin calls "the optical unconscious" and what Barthes considers as "off-frame," which amounts to the depth of photographs? This paper aims to investigate how the discourses on photography by Benjamin and Barthes prompt contemplation on the tension between surface and depth.

Further, this paper examines the photographic representation in two literary works: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude*, through the lens of Benjamin's and Barthes's discourses on photography. Both novels reveal the dialectical interplay between surface and depth in their depiction of photographs. Although incorporating photographs in literary texts to corroborate verbal narratives is not unprecedented, *Obasan* and *The Invention of Solitude* deserve more critical analysis regarding their nuanced exploration of the complexities inherent in photography's surface and depth. Notwithstanding their ostensible differences in style and subject matters – the former addressing historical trauma and collective memory of the Japanese Canadians during World War II and the latter focusing on a more personal past, wounds, and mourning for the death of the author's father, it should not be overlooked that the two texts share some similarities in the representation of photographs. While employed to frame the past and construct memory, the verbal representation of photographs in both texts challenges the purported evocative and evidential power of photography. In this sense, it is significant to engage in dialogue between theoretical concepts and literary texts, as the former illuminates the latter, and in turn, the literary representation accentuates the dialectical interplay between surface and depth in the theory of photography.

Although several critical essays approach the use of photographs in *Obasan* and *The Invention of Solitude*, discussions centered specifically on the tension between surface and depth are rare. Mainly, most critics emphasize the correlation between photographs and history, as well as between photographs and memory. For instance, Bobowska (2016) stresses that in *Obasan*, photography facilitates the construction of collective memory. But in fact, the narrator in *Obasan* has been filled with dismay because some of the photographs in the novel are appropriated to distort history. In fact, some critics notice the discrepancy between what is

captured in photographs and what is experienced and remembered. Phu (2003) argues that by verbally representing two kinds of photographs, official photos and family albums, the author of *Obasan* challenges the documentary, evidential, and indexical function of photography and manifests an abiding suspicion of photographic memory. In a similar vein, while recognizing the connection between photographs and memory, Adams (2000) suggests that in Paul Auster's memoir, the use of photographs is "not to reinforce memory but to invent memory" (p. 39). In other words, photographs could be utilized to construct memory instead of corroborating the truthfulness of memory. Further, Barrett (2009) claims that photographs, serving as a metaphor, "announce their own distance from reality and simultaneously suggest their proximity to imagination" (p. 90). Photography does not necessarily align with reality but evokes the power of imagination. Based on these criticisms, it can be argued that the function of photographs is not unequivocal but fraught with contradictions, and pivotal to this debate is the tension between surface and depth underlying the photographs in *Obasan* and *The Invention of Solitude*. By adopting Benjamin's and Barthes's notions on photography, the dialectical paradox between surficial plenitude and flatness inherent in photography can be discerned and brought into focus.

Walter Benjamin's and Roland Barthes's Discourses on Photography

Despite much discussion about Walter Benjamin's and Roland Barthes's discourses on photography, little attention is drawn to their reflection on the paradoxical ideas of surface and depth, the promise and failure of plenitude. Though Benjamin does not further develop the idea of plenitude, the word plenitude appears in his writing on photography, and the sense of plenitude, which implicates the idea of depth, the unseen or hidden portion, is implied in Benjamin's contemplation on the aura of the subjects in the photographs taken in the mid-nineteenth century Likewise, in his work on photography *Camera Lucida*, without using such exact words as plenitude, depth, or surface, Barthes intimates that most photographic images are subject to the surface and proposes a way to counterbalance the limitation of the photograph's flat surface. To some extent, both critics' efforts to investigate the nature of photography implicitly revolve around the dialectics between surface and depth in photography.

It is noteworthy that Benjamin's discourse on photography touches on the idea of plenitude, which photography promises but fails to fulfill. The idea of plenitude or fullness suggests that photography can reproduce the image of an object or a person in its completeness without losing any detail, tangible or intangible. In his article "Little History of Photography," Benjamin (1999) uses, though in passing, the German word "Fülle," meaning fullness in English, [1] to underscore the potential representational capability resulting from the development of photography in the 1830s. More specifically, when approaching the notions of the aura and the optical unconscious, he also alludes to the sense of photographic plenitude in the early stage of photography's development. According to Benjamin (1999), people in David Octavius Hill's photographs are imbued with a sense of fullness due to the aura contingent

[1] In an alternative English translation of Benjamin's "Kleine Geschichte der Photographie," the German term "Fülle" is rendered as "plenitude" in the English language. See Benjamin, W. (1972). A short history of photography. *Screen 13*(1). 5–26. https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/13.1.5

upon early photographic technology. While today it just requires a click on the shutter button of the camera for far less than a second to take a photograph, the person photographed had to remain still for longer exposures in the mid-nineteenth century. As Benjamin (1999) puts it, "the procedure itself caused the subject to focus on his life in the moment rather than hurrying on past it; during the considerable period of the exposure, the subject (as it were) grew into the picture" (p. 514). The subject is described as growing into the picture, conveying the sense that the subject is living rather than being copied into a static image. By implication, hence, the subject has a life in the depths of three-dimensional space in the picture, not just inscribed onto the surface.

Looking into Hill's photographs, Benjamin (1999) further emphasizes that the aura mediates the sense of fullness and renders the visually represented subject in the picture as vivid as real life. Benjamin (1999) comments on Hill's photographs taken in the 1840s, "There was an aura about them, a medium that lent fullness and security to their gaze" (p. 515). Though what Benjamin means by "fullness" might seem a little ambiguous, we can interpret that the subject in the photograph is imbued, instead of being flattened onto the surface, with life that exudes depth, plenitude, and fullness in the photograph. As stressed by Benjamin (1999), it is the aura that adds a sense of fullness to the subject in the photographs. Still, what is the "aura"? Benjamin (1999) continues to offer a poetic definition of the aura: "A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance" (p. 518). Highlighting the interplay of light and darkness that brings about the aura, Benjamin (1999) emphasizes that the technical dimension of early photography is the key to the emergence of the aura and states further that the way "light struggles out of darkness in the work of a Hill is reminiscent of mezzotint" (p. 517). Compared to a mezzotint, the auratic appearance in Hill's photographs emerges from darkness. As Benjamin (1999) suggests, once darkness is overcome by more advanced techniques and instruments, the aura vanishes from the picture as the darkness is suppressed just when photography is developed to the extent that it can record appearances "as faithfully as any mirror" (p. 517). Smith (2017) explains that Benjamin's aura emerging in Hill's photographs results not merely from "the full tonal range of the calotypes, the stillness of their subjects," but also from "an ineffable quality *intrinsic* [emphasis added]" (p. 59) to the photographs as well as the photographed subjects. Etymologically, the word "intrinsic" means being deep-rooted within, and the intrinsic quality suggests something in depth rather than on the surface.[2] It can be inferred that the sense of fullness mediated by the aura would connote a sense of within-ness or a sense of depth.

In addition to the aura, what Benjamin finds in the early photographs is something beyond human vision, termed by Benjamin (1999) as the "optical unconscious." In "Little History of Photography," Benjamin (1999) elucidates that photography not only reproduces what is seen but also reveals what is unseen. Benjamin (1999) notes:

[2] The word "intrinsic" is borrowed from the French word "intrinsèque," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (https://www.oed.com/dictionary/intrinsic_adj?tab=factsheet#154938). Furthermore, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* suggests that "intrinsic" is "akin to Latin 'intra,' meaning 'within'" (see https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intrinsic).

> Whereas it is a commonplace that, for example, we have some idea what is involved in the act of walking (if only in general terms), we have no idea at all what happens during the fraction of a second when a person actually takes a step. Photography, with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. (pp. 510–512)

The potential capability to capture what eludes human vision is compared to the psychoanalytic ability to unveil the unconscious. In the essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin (1970) explains the idea in different words:

> Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than to the naked eye… Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargement and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics. (pp. 236–237)

Photography is endowed with the potential termed "unconscious optics," or the capability to capture hidden details that elude our conscious visual perception. What is reproduced by photography is beyond the extent of people's consciousness. Just as Zervigón (2017) elaborates:

> photographs could reveal the nearly invisible phenomena that only the unconscious could perceive at the actual unfolding…. The camera, in other words, could serve as a seasoned Freudian analyst, ever vigilant before the 'other nature' that the untrained eye could not capture. The photographic print was in turn the analyst's report, delivering the repressed optical sensation or memory access to the pictorial agents and experiences that unconsciously form human subjectivity. (pp. 41–42)

Such terms as "unfolding" and "repressed" in Zervigón's illustration of Benjamin's unconscious optics suggest something being folded and kept in the unconscious, pointing to the depths, or the unseen dimension, beneath the surface, which photography has the potential to capture. Simply put, the idea of the "optical unconscious" or "unconscious optics" intimates the unseen embedded beneath the surface of photographs.

Despite the sense of fullness or plenitude that early photographs are posited to emanate, some discussions center on the loss of photographic plenitude, contending that the promised plenitude fails to materialize. Relinquishing the idea of plenitude, Hirsch (2012) points out that Benjamin's arguments about photographs bring to the fore "the tension between the photograph's flatness and its illusion of depth, between the little a photograph reveals and all that it promises to reveal but cannot" (p. 119). It is noteworthy that the term "plenitude" recurs several times in Hirsch's essays on family albums (2012), asserting that photographic images tend to highlight the sense of plenitude, inducing viewers to imagine the fullness of the photographic images and believe what is seen is the completeness of the scene. Hirsch more than once calls photographic plenitude into question and interprets against the sense of plenitude, which has been lauded but ends up being merely imaginary or illusionary. In

Hirsch's (2012) research, several photographers deliberately overthrow the photographic plenitude to uncover "repressed unconscious content" and delve into "what lies beneath the surface" (p. 210). According to Hirsch (2012), diverging from the imaginary plenitude or fullness, these photographers stress fragments, discontinuities, and absence when presenting photographs of the past, corroborating that some details can be excluded outside the frame. In a word, it is the excluded "space-off" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 194), "a space that is off camera, beyond the picture's frame" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 205), that underlies and buttresses the illusionary photographic plenitude.

Hirsch's view on photographic images aligns with Roland Barthes's reflection on photography in his book *Camera Lucida*. Barthes (2000) laments over the "flatness" of photographs, which simultaneously negates and implies the potential, albeit unfulfilled, plenitude of photography. Pondering his experience of being photographed, Barthes (2000) claims that his image shown in the photographs can never coincide with his self, bemoaning that photographs are "the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity" (p. 12). Such disparity and dissociation lead Barthes (2000) to conclude, "I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death" (p. 14). Even more overtly, Barthes (2000) later declares, "With the photograph, we enter into *flat* [emphasis added] death" (p. 92). How do we understand Barthes's idea of "flat death"? In his view, the body shown in the photograph always has an expression that differs from his "profound self" (Barthes, 2000, p. 12); the former is motionless, whereas the "profound" self is shifting. It is implied that, for Barthes, the photographic image, presenting the surface of his self, is merely flat or superficial, whereas the self or the real person possesses depth with diverse dimensions.

Yet, while ruminating on the flatness of the photograph, Barthes still adheres to the possibility of its depth. Barthes's reflection on photography points to the dialectics of surface and depth. Barthes (2000) states:

> I cannot penetrate, cannot reach into the photograph. I can only sweep it with my glance, like a smooth surface. The Photograph is *flat*…. It is a mistake to associate Photography, by reason of its technical origins, with the notion of a dark passage (*camera obscura*). (p. 106)

The flatness and the surface of the photograph frustrate Barthes's desire to reach into the inner part of the photograph, and the association of photography with "a dark passage" is decried as misleading, for a dark passage is characterized by a spatial dimension, not in tune with Barthes's perception of the photograph to be "flat." Given the photograph's flatness, it cannot be assumed that Barthes utterly relinquishes the depth of photographs. Barthes (2000) quotes Maurice Blanchot, who defines the essence of the image as "more inaccessible and mysterious than the thought of the innermost being; without signification, yet summoning up the depth of any possible meaning; unrevealed yet manifest, having the absence-as-presence which constitutes the lure and the fascination of the Sirens" (p. 106). With Blanchot's description of images in mind, it can be discerned that Barthes struggles with the paradox embodied by photographs that are simultaneously flat and "deep," unrevealing and manifest, signifying

absence and presence. As Barthes (2000) explains, on the one hand, the photograph is flat, and its evidential power, as well as its certitude, paradoxically arrests the possibility of interpretation. On the other hand, photographs aim to authenticate a certain existence whose "being" goes beyond the frame of the surface, "beyond simple resemblance" (Barthes, 2000, p. 107) between that being and the photographed, and Barthes (2000) further terms the "beyond" as the essence of that being, as "something inexpressible," "something… I call the *air*" (p. 107). The "air" is described as an "intractable supplement of identity" (Barthes, 2000, p. 107). We can argue that this unsubstantial, intangible air exists beyond the surface. Whereas the surface of photographs yields everything with certitude, the wholeness of the being is not confined to the surface. Rather, viewers should move their vision beyond the surface and look into the depths where the essence is hidden.

Undoubtedly, it is Barthes's dissatisfaction with the superficial resemblance presented by photographs that leads him to sift through his mother's photographs and decide that the Winter Garden Photograph is the only one where he can feel his mother. As Barthes (2000) states, discovering his mother is like "a sudden awakening, outside of 'likeness'" (p. 109), while the photographs of her images are like masks. With the masks unveiled, there remains a soul. Again, such words as "likeness" and "masks" suggest that the surface of the photographs covers what lies beneath. Intriguingly, though Barthes highly regards the Winter Garden Photograph as the one that can convey his mother's air, this photograph is not included in *Camera Lucida*, where many photographs discussed by Barthes are incorporated. The absence of the Winter Garden Photograph seems to suggest that to preserve the air of his mother in the Winter Garden Photograph intact, Barthes must exclude the photograph per se.

To overcome the photograph's flatness, Barthes (2000) distinguishes two elements of which photographs consist, that is, the studium and the punctum. As Barthes (2000) explains, the studium refers to a body of information about the photographer's intention and the photographed, about the cultural, political, historical, and social backgrounds in which photographs are produced and embedded. The field of the studium allows the viewer to grasp the signification of diverse elements in the photograph, functioning as "the rational intermediary of an ethical and political culture" (Barthes, 2000, pp. 26–27), which awakens the viewer's interest. Still, the studium can merely evoke a general and polite interest (Barthes, 2000). It is the second element, the punctum, that breaks through the photograph's flatness. According to Barthes (2000), the punctum is the element "which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me" (p. 26). Barthes's description of the punctum gives us a sense of how the smooth surface is disrupted. As Hirsch (2012) reads Barthes, "the punctum disturbs the flat and immobile surface of the image" (p. 4). Barthes (2000) further describes the effect of the punctum on the viewer as follows:

> A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated…. This second element which will disturb the studium I shall therefore call punctum; for punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice. (pp. 26–27)

We might interpret Barthes's punctum as something affecting the viewer in the sense that it moves or touches the viewer. With the punctum, the photograph is no longer a flat scene but more than an image on the surface. What is implied here is that viewers have to divert their vision from the studium to the punctum, from the surface to a certain detail that lies beneath and breaks through the surface.

The punctum gestures towards the beyond of the photographic image. Barthes (2000) elaborates, "However lightning-like it may be, the punctum has, more or less potentially, a power of expansion" and "while remaining a 'detail,' it fills the whole picture" (p. 45). Barthes (2000) states, such a punctum as a detail is an "off-center" detail (51), which is revealed "when the photograph is no longer in front of me and I think back on it" (p. 53). Pondering the signification of the punctum, we can perceive the depths beneath the surface, which does not emerge while we are looking at it. As Barthes (2000) says, "The photograph touches me if I withdraw it from its usual blah-blah: 'Technique,' 'Reality,' 'Reportage,' 'Art,' etc.: to say nothing, to shut my eyes, to allow the detail to rise of its own accord into affective consciousness" (p. 55), and further emphasizes:

> The *punctum*, then, is a kind of subtle *beyond*—as if the image launched desire beyond what it permits us to see; not only toward "the rest" of the nakedness, not only toward the fantasy of a *praxis* but toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together. (p. 59)

It is this "subtle beyond" that leads us to the depths of the photograph. Whereas the image of the photograph is inevitably confined within the boundary of what the camera can capture, the punctum leads the viewer's vision to break through the confinement, to imagine what is not captured. What cannot be captured, indeed, lies in the subtle beyond, or in other words, in the depths beneath the surface.

Reading Photographs in Literature: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* and Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude*

The dialectical interplay between the flatness, or the surface, of photographs and their promised fullness, or the depth, has intrigued literary artists. This section will examine the photographs represented in two literary texts, *Obasan* and *The Invention of Solitude*, which highlight the tantalization of photography characterized both by the potential of fullness and by its failure to represent the whole. In other words, both inscribe photographs in a way that foregrounds the tension between surface and depth in photography.

My reading of the photographic representation in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* specifically centers on the family album by engaging Benjamin's idea of the optical unconscious and Barthes's notion of the punctum. In particular, a kind of subtle beyond in the family photograph overturns our assumptions about the photograph's functions as an index of reality and a memory of the past. Researching the family album, Hirsch (2012) highlights "photography's connection to the family, its inscription in family life and its perpetuation of familial ideology" (p. 6). Nevertheless, Hirsch (2012) notes that the family album, while tending to display as well as

mediate the togetherness of the family, often "erases the ruptures of emigration and exile, of death and loss, of divorce, conflict, and dislocation. Those realities are submerged between the pages" (p. 192). In Hirsch's research, the contradistinction between surface and depth in photographs comes to the fore. Beneath the surface lies the turmoil and ruptures that cannot be easily discerned in photographs since photographs are "flat" and present merely a smooth surface rather than a complicated depth.

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* is a narrative of Japanese Canadians relocated to a designated area or interned in concentration camps by the Canadian government during World War II. The first-person narrator, Naomi, reminisces about the painful experience of being separated from her parents. Brought up by her uncle and aunt, Naomi frequently asks her uncle and aunt Obasan the question, "Where is my mother?" and meets with no answer. Naomi's mother returns to Japan with Naomi's grandma during the war and finally loses contact with her family in Canada. Traumatized by the loss of her mother, Naomi eventually confronts the truth about her mother, who remains silent and refuses to let her children know about her condition after being seriously injured and her face being disfigured in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To obey the request of Naomi's mother – "Do not tell," Uncle and Obasan always give the photographs to Naomi instead of revealing the painful truth; as Naomi recalls, "They give me no words from you. They hand me old photographs" (p. 291).[3] In Uncle and Obasan's view, the old photographs mean everything; particularly, the photographs of Naomi's mother invoke her presence, which, Uncle and Obasan believe, can alleviate the crippling sense of emptiness that stems from the absence of Naomi's mother, even healing the emotional wounds that Naomi suffers. Though Uncle and Obasan might believe that "every photograph is a certificate of presence" (Barthes, 2000, p. 87), the opposite holds true for Noami, that is, a photograph is "a token of absence" (Sontag, 1977, p. 16).

The author does not include any actual photographs in the fictive narrative; instead, all the photographs are verbally described by the first-person narrator. One of the family photographs is pivotal, the one that is taken at the birth of Naomi's brother, the first baby of the third generation in this migrant family. Naomi is lost in contemplation of this photograph when returning to Uncle and Obasan's home upon the news of Uncle's death. To a large extent, the family album visualizes and condenses family history, aiming to convey a sense of plenitude regarding family life and familial union, to commemorate the achievement of the migrant family successfully rooted in a foreign land. This photograph of familial togetherness zeroes in on the grandparents on both sides. Naomi's verbal representation of the family photograph goes as follows:

> The Nakanes and Katos are posed together, the four new grandfathers seated in front like an advance guard, with other offspring arranged behind them. What a brigade! Square-faced Dr. Kato, my mother's father, sits upright in his chair with his short legs not quite touching the floor. The toes of his black boots angle down like a ballet dancer's. A black cape hangs from his shoulders and his left hand clutches a cane and a pair of gloves. Beside him, stiff and thin in her velvet suit is Grandma Kato, her nostrils wide

[3] All the references to Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* are put in parentheses. Please see References for details.

> in her startled bony face. And there's gentle round-faced Grandma Nakane, her hair rolled back like a wreath, her plump hands held tightly in her soft lap. The last of the quartet is Grandpa Nakane with his droopy mustache, his high-collared shirt, and his hand, like Napoleon's, in his vest. They all look straight ahead, carved and rigid, with their expressionless Japanese faces…. There's *not a ripple out of place* [emphasis added]. (p. 21)

Naomi's description resonates with contradiction. On the one hand, Naomi comments on the family photograph as a smooth surface without any ripple. Such a smooth surface corresponds to the message "all is well" (p. 24), which the photograph intends to convey about the Japanese Canadian family, settling comfortably in a new country and celebrating the new addition to the family. Such an image presented in the photograph consolidates the wholeness of the family. Nevertheless, on the other hand, some details seize Naomi's attention and disturb the surface. For instance, the short legs of Grandpa Kato, on her mother's side, who sits upright in his chair with the toes of his boots angling down like a ballet dancer's, signal his strenuous efforts to be respectable; Grandma Kato's "nostrils wide in her startled bony face" convey the inner fear, silently transmitting untold messages as opposed to the message "all is well" on the smooth surface. The grandparents' "expressionless Japanese faces" are disclosed by the camera, failing to disguise their anxieties and worries. The details elude human eyes and consciousness but can be captured by the camera. Naomi's meticulous examination echoes Benjamin's scrutiny of Dauthendey and his fiancée's picture, unveiling the imperceptible to human sight, "another nature which speaks to the camera rather than to the eye" (1999, p. 510). Benjamin (1999) states,

> No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed the subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for a tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now, with which reality has (so to speak) seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it. (p. 510)

As a viewer, Naomi attempts to seek a glimpse of reality within the frozen frame of the image, to discover the unique circumstances of the moment reproduced in the photograph. And no matter how carefully this three-generation family poses for the camera, photography serves as a medium through which concealed elements or overlooked details come to light. These details also function as Barthes's punctum that disturbs the surface, contradicting its message: "All is well." The details betray the fact beneath the surface: Grandma Kato often leaves Canada for Japan for unspecified reasons, and the family is on the verge of fragmentation due to the war. As Naomi gazes into the family album, the photograph reinforces the loss of wholeness rather than deflecting the truth that the family is on the brink of disruption.

Photographs hold divergent meanings for Obasan. For her, photographs can substitute for words and lead to or retrieve the past. Indeed, Obasan is portrayed as living in the past. Next to her pillow is a box filled with photographs, and looking at the photographs, Obasan appears submerged in memories of the past before the war. To some extent, these photographs are what Hirsch (2012) calls "the mirrors of plenitude" (p. 234), mirrors that present merely delusional,

though alluring, reflections. Obasan's photographs are permeated with a sense of fullness and beautiful memories, which explains why Obasan always murmurs, "This is the best time. These are the best memories" (p. 56) while looking at the photographs. At the end of the novel, Naomi realizes that Obasan shields her from the distressing details of her mother's condition, conveyed in Grandma Kato's letter, by substituting them with the nostalgic allure of family photographs to offset separation and loss and to project a sense of imaginary plenitude.

Even though the photographic plenitude seems to evoke the best times and memories, such plentitude is subject to the surface. The photograph of Naomi taken with her mother at the age of two or three is another example of the unfulfilled plenitude. In the photograph, Naomi's arm clings to her mother's leg; as Naomi describes it, "Your leg is a tree trunk and I am branch, vine, butterfly. I am joined to your limbs by right of birth, child of your flesh, leaf of your bough" (p. 291). The mother-daughter relationship is analogous to the tree with branches and vines entwined, or the butterfly revolving around. The tight connection between Naomi and her mother in the photograph is seductive, but Naomi subsequently turns to the space beyond the frame of the photograph, where she dreams of a dead tree and woundedness, being traumatized by the loss of her mother. It strikes Naomi that the mother in the black and white photograph with a tender, kind, and thoughtful smile is illusory and beyond Naomi's reach. Though Obasan hopes to assuage Naomi's longing for her mother by offering an image of her tender mother, her mother's smile in the photograph ironically becomes Barthes's punctum, like an arrow, shooting out of the surface and pointing to Naomi's wound in real life. As Naomi laments, "Only fragments relate me to them now, to this young woman, my mother, and me, her infant daughter. Fragments of fragments" (p. 64). While in the photograph, the relationship between Naomi and her mother is permeated with a sense of security, connectivity, and soothing plenitude, what remains beyond the frame are fragments, isolation, distance, and disconnection. In other words, the photograph fails to serve as an index of reality but pricks her with the loss of plenitude; in other words, the photograph with the punctum wounds Naomi by rupturing the illusion on the surface.

The second literary text of focus is the first section of *The Invention of Solitude*, a memoir by the American writer Paul Auster. The memoir's opening depicts the abrupt death of Auster's father, leading him to sort through his father's belongings and prompting reflections on their relationship. Subtitled "Portrait of an Invisible Man," this section revolves around the dual themes of presence and absence concerning Auster's father in his life, alongside the exploration of the hidden family past, aptly emblematized and encapsulated by the two photographs reproduced in the narrative. More specifically, the first photograph overturns the assumption of photographic plenitude and highlights the flatness of photographs, and the second one reveals what lies beneath the surface through the lens of Barthes's punctum.

The first photograph is a portrait of Auster's father at a young age, presented in the memoir to illustrate the author's impression of his father. While in *Obasan*, the absence of Naomi's mother is symbolically transformed into a form of presence through the representation of her photograph, in Auster's narrative, the incorporation of his father's photograph functions as a reversal of this paradigm, where the photographic presence paradoxically corresponds to an absence within the context of his relationship with his father. What is particular about this

portrait photograph is the juxtaposition of five images of Auster's father taken at the same location, at the same time, but from different angles, as if five "fathers" of Auster's were seated in a circle. Of course, this photo has been manipulated and edited through the use of photographic techniques such as shooting and developing. But in Auster's description, these multiple images convey a sense of plenitude, a sense of fullness, promised by the multiple presences of the father, while these multiple images are merely confined to the surface. In other words, the overflowing representation of the father in the photograph is ultimately an empty image, with multiple presences as absence, invoking the absence of his father in Auster's life. Closely observing the photograph, which promises to capture everything, Auster sees nothing about his father, echoing the sentiments expressed by Barthes (2000), who laments, "however long I extend this observation, it [the photograph] teaches me nothing" (pp. 106-107). The portrait of Auster's father in the trick photograph is limited to the surface, just as his father has always been "staying on the surface," offering no more than this surface to others, without revealing his self, without examining his own "depths" (p. 13).[4] Ironically, the surficial nature of photography appropriately captures the "depthlessness" of his father (Barrett, 2009, p. 13). The terms "surface" and "depths" used by Auster in his description of his father's photograph resonate with the tension between surface and depth of photographs.

The way Auster describes this manipulated photograph of his father's portrait underscores the association between photographs and death, the equivalence between visibility and invisibility, and the parallel between presence and absence. According to Auster's description, the photograph, at first glance, shows several people gathering as if for a séance to summon the dead. Auster writes,

> Because of the gloom that surrounds them, because of the utter stillness of their poses, it looks as if they have gathered there to conduct a seance … The seance becomes a real seance, and it is as if he has come there only to invoke himself, to bring himself back from the dead, as if, by multiplying himself, he had inadvertently made him disappear…. It is a picture of death, a portrait of an invisible man. (p. 29)

For one thing, Auster metaphorically compares the convergence of several images of his father in the trick photograph to a séance, as if these people were trying to summon spirits. To some extent, the séance is not merely a metaphor but a real one, for Auster's father is perceived to be invisible and absent in Auster's real life and, therefore, in a sense, dead. For this reason, Auster considers that the séance is there to invoke the presence of his father. For another thing, the séance succeeds in providing concrete evidence of the father's existence by furnishing the plenitude of his images. Still, the trick photograph ends up affirming Auster's perception of his father, projecting his surficial, tenuous images that paradoxically reinforce his absence. In other words, the multiple images of the father appear to overflow, but in reality, they are illusory. Auster's sense of his father's absence is not solely attributed to his father's long working hours, infrequent presence at home, and limited time spent with his children, but it also stems from the pervasive feeling that, even when physically present, his father was always mentally

[4] The subsequent page number citations refer to Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude*. Please see References for details.

elsewhere, perpetuating a sense of emotional absence. Auster articulates, "For as long as he lived, he was somewhere else, between here and there. But never really here. And never really there" (p. 17). The photograph that seizes the here-and-now moment of his father's image incites Auster to suspicions as to what is seen.

The death of Auster's father leads him to memories of the past emblematized by the family album. Studying the second photograph included in his memoir, Auster dives into the depths of the photograph. It is a family portrait, taken when Auster's father was no older than one year old. According to Auster's account, the family portrait was torn down the middle but then mended clumsily. Initially, Auster perceives the tear as a mere accident, notwithstanding the unsettling sensation evoked by the trees which stand awkwardly in the background. With a close examination, Auster discovers someone's fingertips grasping the torso of one of his uncles and another of his uncles resting his hand against a chair that no longer exists in the portrait. The tear in the portrait reveals to Auster the presence of his grandfather, who originally sat on a chair next to his grandmother and whom his family refused to talk about but pretended he was non-existent. His grandfather's presence is intentionally expunged, yet discernible as the lingering fingertips remain. It is significant to note how Auster delineates the absent grandfather gradually emerging into view; it is "as if he [his grandfather] were trying to crawl back into the picture from some hole deep in time as if he had been exiled to another dimension" (p. 34). Auster's description invokes the existence of the depths of photographs, where another world exists in another dimension. As Auster puts it, "A whole world seems to emerge from this portrait, a distinct time, a distinct place, an indestructible sense of the past" (p. 32). This portrait is no more flat or depthless than with depth. Within the depths lies the erased presence of Auster's grandfather, along with a family history deliberately eschewed and omitted from the surface of the photographs. We can understand the tear as a punctum, which "disturbs the flat and immobile surface" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 4), leading to what is hidden beneath the surface.

The punctum inflicts a wound upon the viewer. Sorting through a bag of photographs left behind by his father, Auster realizes that he has been deeply wounded. He narrates in the memoir, "There has been a wound, and I realize now that it is very deep" (p. 30). Auster's wound stems from his dysfunctional, fraught family relationships and painful memories. It is noteworthy that the wound is also related to the photographs, for the pain of the wound resurfaces when he gazes upon the photographs included in the memoir. Auster's wound resonates with Barthes's idea of punctum, a detail in the photograph that interests the viewer; as Barthes (2000) states, "I wanted to explore it [photography]…as a wound" (p. 21). Auster further explores the torn family photograph and unveils the submerged incident of his grandmother shooting his grandfather, which was detailed in a series of news reports from 1919, narrating how the couple had immigrated from Austria to the United States and weathered hardships together only to witness their relationship deteriorate and the husband's infidelity. The subsequent trial and its verdict became a topic of interest among the locals, but for the family of Auster's grandmother, the whole thing was so unbearable that it was buried along with the image of his grandfather cut off from the family portrait. This broken photograph challenges the conventional notion of family portraits, which aim to convey an image of unity and plenitude of happiness; instead, Auster's family portrait contains what Barthes calls the

punctum, revealing the pain, discord, or violence hidden within the depths, elements that ordinary family albums fail to capture.

Both *Obasan* and *The Invention of Solitude* represent photographs in a way that highlights the tension between surface and depth in photographs. The family portrait in the former and the father's portrait in the latter project a sense of plenitude and wholeness, but after scrutinizing the photographs closely, the narrators in both literary texts discover that such plenitude or fullness is illusory and subject to the surface. Moreover, the family portraits in both works harbor what Barthes refers to as the punctum, directing the viewer's attention to the hidden beneath the surface and the unseen beyond the frame. Indeed, the dissonance between the visible surface and the concealed depths underscores the fact that photographs can be rife with contradictions rather than uniformity.

Conclusion

Photography is endowed with a multitude of possibilities. It can capture a sense of reality, represent every detail, and grasp a fleeting moment of here and now, or "the immediacy of the long-forgotten moment" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 510), while other representational art forms cannot. Even human memory cannot perfectly replicate what the human eye sees. As Green-Lewis (2017) explores the relationship between memory and photography in the Victorian period, things could be retrieved and revisited through photography, and what people might forget could be remembered by photography, which "seemed to promise that from here on out there would be no more fading away" (p. 38). More than reproducing all that is seen, in Benjamin's discourse on photography, what is invisible to human vision can be captured by photography, which functions as the optical unconscious to reveal the unseen, equivalent to a psychoanalyst. In a word, it is a sense of plenitude, a sense of completeness that photography is imbued with.

On the other hand, such plenitude is a promise unfulfilled, and rather photographs are found to encompass merely the surface that lacks depth, suggesting that what we see in photographs is all there and nothing else. Still, Benjamin's optical unconscious points to within-ness, and Barthes's idea of the "subtle beyond" implies that something inherent in the photograph will be revealed to viewers in a certain way. Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* demonstrates the signification of photographs in line with Benjamin's and Barthes's discourses. Similarly, once the punctum is located, Paul Auster's family album reveals the wound and exposes the hidden depths from which the buried underneath will emerge. While family albums, in general, tend to project a sense of wholeness, togetherness, and fullness, the narrators in both texts reject such surficial projection. The narrator, Naomi, in *Obasan*, cannot find solace in the flat photographs; likewise, the author of the memoir, *The Invention of Solitude*, contrasts the overflowing presence of his father in the father's portrait with his absence in reality. In doing so, both *Obasan* and *The Invention of Solitude* bring to the fore the dialectics of surface and depth.

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Analytical Factors Boosting Service Delivery Among Staff in Academic Libraries: A Review of the Literature

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Abstract

Service delivery is an integral part of the activities that must be regularly performed by the personnel of any library, especially in academic libraries. This review paper focused on the analytical factors that could boost the service delivery among staff in academic libraries. These include quality of library services, user satisfaction, user engagement, staff performance, access to information, library usage, and the academic performance of students. The paper reviewed relevant literature on each of the outlined factors to enable library staff to know how each factor would boost their service delivery job in their various libraries where they are saddled with the task of providing relevant educational resources in meeting the information needs of readers. To this end, it is expedient for the library management to seek and put in place those motivating factors that would improve the service delivery of its staff in the academic community. Also, the library management should engage their staff on the necessity of meeting the information needs of readers as they look up to the library as their last hope in getting relevant information for their academic and research activities. Besides, the institution's management should give adequate support and provision for training and retraining of its workforce especially the library staff to enhance their productivity.

Keywords: academic libraries, Ekiti State, library staff, service delivery, service delivery factors

Service delivery is an integral part of the activities that must be regularly performed by the personnel of any library, especially the academic libraries. The ultimate goal of all academic libraries is for their personnel to effectively deliver the needed services to their clientele to meet their information needs. Academic libraries are the hearts of every institution of higher learning that must effectively disseminate actionable information to support learning, teaching, and research activities in those institutions where they are cited. Service delivery is more than just providing access to books; it is about empowering individuals and communities with the knowledge and resources they need to achieve their goals and aspirations. According to Mbofung and Popoola (2014), service delivery is an activity that "involves individuals, who have expectations of the library and information science professionals in such ways as how they relate and behave towards the users, colleagues, their organizations, and the entire society" (p. 1). Similarly, Oyedokun (2018) defined service delivery as a fundamental aspect of the librarianship profession, which has evolved to include both traditional and innovative services to support the changing needs and expectations of library users. Oyedokun (2018) further reiterated that the service delivery should be focused on meeting the current and future needs of users. Also, service "satisfaction of library users is a function of the quality of information product(s) received, the quality of information system and library services provided to access the information product. Therefore, satisfaction is a function of three main sources – quality of the information product, the information system and the services that make the information product available. A library may meet user's information needs by acquiring, organizing and making available relevant information resources backed by appropriate facilities and delivered by means best known to them, which could be manual or through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)" (Iwhiwhu & Okorodudu, pp. 1–2). This implied that in this 21st century, library services must evolve with the times and embrace new technologies to deliver services in innovative ways. By doing so, libraries can remain relevant and useful to their users.

Service delivery encompasses the range of services and resources provided by libraries to meet the information needs of their users. It is a vital component of academic libraries and plays a crucial role in supporting their overall mission and goals. Efficient and effective service delivery is essential for ensuring that users have access to the information and resources they require for their academic pursuits. Service delivery is of utmost importance in academic institutions as it directly contributes to the educational objectives of the institution. Noh (2012) opined that academic libraries serve as valuable resources that support teaching, learning, and research activities. By providing access to a diverse collection of resources, offering research assistance, and promoting information literacy skills, libraries empower users to excel in their academic works (Secker & Coonan, 2012).

However, the researchers conceptualized service delivery as a comprehensive approach aimed at empowering individuals and communities by providing them with the necessary knowledge, resources, facilities, and services to fulfill their goals and aspirations. This goes beyond mere book access and involves the strategic provision of information, support, and interactions between library professionals and users. It is an act of providing needed service(s) to any potential information seekers who access the library's educational resources. Factors such as quality of library services, user satisfaction, user engagement, staff performance, access to

information, library usage, and academic performance of students are essential in enhancing service delivery among staff in the academic library. By considering these factors, library staff can ensure that services rendered meet user expectations, foster satisfaction and engagement, optimize staff performance, facilitate access to information, maximize library usage, and positively impact academic performance. Embracing these elements enables libraries to effectively meet the diverse needs of their users and remain valuable resources within their communities. Each of the aforementioned factors shall be reviewed in this paper.

Academic libraries have long been recognized as the cornerstone of universities, as they play a vital role in knowledge generation and sharing, supporting teaching and research activities, and serving a wide range of knowledge seekers. According to Oduwole and Owolabi (2014), academic libraries are an integral part of higher education institutions that provide access to a vast array of resources, including books, journals, databases, and other digital materials. These libraries are established to support the teaching, learning, and research needs of students, faculty, and researchers, and they contribute significantly to the overall success of their parent institutions. In other words, Okiy (2015) noted that academic libraries are essential components of higher education institutions as they play a pivotal role in supporting the institution's curriculum and research activities conducted by faculty and students. Okiy (2013) further posited academic libraries as the nerve centers where academic activities revolve around, by selecting, acquiring, organizing and providing relevant information services to meet the needs of their communities which consisted of students, lecturers, researchers and other various information seekers within and outside the tertiary institutions where such libraries are sited. Academic libraries are attached to universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, colleges of technology, and research institutes that are responsible for providing access to knowledge. The library staff's responsibility is to ensure that information is available in retrievable formats and can be disseminated on request for efficient service delivery.

Literature Review

The provision of effective library services requires a deep understanding of user needs and expectations. Libraries strive to create user-centered services that are responsive, inclusive, and accessible to diverse populations. In other words, libraries strive to ensure that the information needs of their users are effectively met to get them satisfied with the services provided. According to Sharma, Anand and Sharma (2012), user satisfaction is a key measure of successful library service delivery, and understanding user preferences and requirements is crucial for tailoring services accordingly. The authors further stated that one important aspect of service delivery is the physical layout and design of library spaces. In light of this, McKay and Buchanan (2014) stated that traditional libraries have typically featured quiet reading areas, reference desks, and physical collections of books and periodicals. However, the advent of digital technologies and online resources has prompted a shift in library space design. A study on how library design facilitates and hinders group work noted the importance of creating flexible and adaptable spaces that cater to different learning and research needs. Hence, libraries should provide collaborative workspaces, technology-enabled areas, and comfortable seating to enhance the user experience and satisfaction while using the library and its facilities (McKay & Buchanan, 2014).

The concept of service delivery was introduced by researchers to comprise of materials, facilities, and services provided by libraries to meet users' diverse information, research and reading needs, as well as the effective management of resources and the use of technology to enhance access to information. This encompasses a range of traditional and innovative services, such as circulation, reference assistance, access to electronic resources, and virtual services, among others, that are designed to support and empower individuals and communities. Service delivery recognizes the evolving nature of libraries, as they adapt to changes in technology and user expectations, and emphasizes the importance of being user-centered, flexible, and responsive to the needs of the community. It requires an ongoing commitment to staying up-to-date with emerging technologies, addressing related issues such as digital preservation, data management, and copyright compliance, and providing access to a wide range of resources that are reflective of the community's diversity.

Therefore, factors enhancing the service delivery among library staff are the elements that would help to boost service delivery among library staff and these include quality of library services, user satisfaction, user engagement, staff performance, access to information, library usage, and academic performance of students. Each factor shall be discussed in turn as follows:

Quality of Library Services

The services provided by any library serve as pivotal factors in attracting readers to the library collections. In other words, the quality of library services plays a vital role in provoking readers to visit the library and access its resources to meet their information needs. It leads to enhancing service delivery among staff members in the academic libraries, it is a means of attracting potential readers into the library. In other words, the quality of services provided directly impacts the overall experience and satisfaction of library users, including students, faculty, and researchers. This section will explore the importance of service quality, its dimensions, and the impact it has on staff performance, drawing on different cited works. Yousapronpaiboon (2014) posited that service quality is the extent to which a service meets customers' needs and expectations. In the context of academic libraries, service quality encompasses various dimensions that contribute to a positive user experience. These dimensions can include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Hossain, 2016). Reliability refers to the ability of library staff to provide accurate and consistent services, such as timely access to resources. Responsiveness relates to the promptness and willingness of staff to assist users and address their queries or concerns. Assurance refers to the knowledge, competence, and professionalism of library staff in providing services. Empathy reflects the care, understanding, and personalized attention shown by staff members. Tangibles encompass the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of the library environment.

Research has shown that service quality has a significant impact on staff performance and the overall effectiveness of library services. Kim (2013) found that library service quality positively influenced staff performance, including their commitment, job satisfaction, and motivation to provide high-quality services. When library staff perceive their institution as being committed to service quality, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their work, leading to improved service delivery. Moreover, library service quality has been found

to contribute to user satisfaction and loyalty. Ullah (2012) revealed that perceived service quality significantly influenced user satisfaction with academic library services. It can be observed that satisfied users are more likely to continue using library services, recommend them to others, and maintain a positive perception of their view concerning library resources and its services in meeting the information needs of diverse users. This highlighted the importance of consistently delivering high-quality services to foster user loyalty and support of users. To ensure and enhance library service quality, continuous assessment and improvement are necessary. User feedback mechanisms, such as surveys, focus groups, and user experience studies, can provide valuable insights into areas for improvement (Bakti & Sumaedi, 2013). By soliciting feedback from library users, academic libraries can identify gaps, address challenges, and implement strategies to enhance service quality. Regular assessment of service quality indicators, such as response time, resource availability, and staff interactions, can help libraries monitor performance and make data-driven decisions for improvement (Dahan et al., 2016).

Thus, library service quality plays a vital role in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. By focusing on dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, libraries can create positive user experiences and foster staff performance. Recognizing the importance of service quality in user satisfaction and loyalty, libraries should actively seek user feedback and regularly assess service quality indicators to continuously improve their services.

User Satisfaction

User satisfaction is defined as the extent to which library users' expectations and needs are met through the services provided (Iwhiwhu & Okorodudu, 2012). Satisfied users are more likely to perceive the library services positively, utilize them more frequently, and express higher levels of loyalty (Muthuvennila & Kannan, 2020). Library staff must understand user preferences, expectations, and requirements to tailor their services accordingly. Several studies have highlighted the impact of user satisfaction on staff performance. Muthuvennila and Kannan (2020) found that satisfied library users positively influenced staff morale, motivation, and job satisfaction. When staff members receive positive feedback and see the impact of their services on user satisfaction, they are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and committed to delivering high-quality services. This, in turn, contributes to improved service delivery among staff members. Besides, other scholars in their studies presented their arguments, outcomes and results of their papers as reflected in the table below to show the users' feedback for using library resources and services:

Table 1

User Satisfaction of Library Resources and Services

Author	Argument	Outcome/Conclusion	Result of the paper
Gurumurthy and Padmamma (2023, pp. 22, 24)	The way information is gathered, stored,or ganized, processed, and consumed has changed drastically in every aspect of life since the advent of information and communication technology (ICT). The work and working patterns of libraries have also been affected by the changing ICT trend.	The review of the related studies revealed that majority of studies related to user satisfaction with the library resources and services were carried out in western countries. In contrast, very few studies have been carried out in India and other developing countries in this regard	The majority of users rely on library resources and services in meeting their information needs which also influence their study habits throughout their lives.
Temboge and Ga'anda (2022, pp. 56, 69)	The quality of information resources and services rendered should be standard to meet the users' information needs and services. It is through the users that library management can know if the library information resources and services are rendered efficiently.	The satisfaction of library patrons with library resources and services needs development of relevant information resources and delivery of high-quality users' services in order to achieve the objectives of establishing libraries in an academic environment. It is expected of management of the libraries to carefully assess their users' information and services needs and thereafter make adequate provision for such.	Majority of respondents used the library on daily bases for academic purposes; they used hardcopy and secondary sources of information Resources more than electronic format; respondents were more satisfied with serial, circulation and reference services; they were dissatisfied with electronic resources services among others.

Oyewumi, Owegboro, Opele, and Adewara (2020, pp. 137, 144)	With the deployment of digital resources in the University of Ilorin library, there is a dearth of literature on the extent to which library users are satisfied with the use of these digital resources in the course of their visit to the library for reading, studying and research within the university community. This gap in knowledge motivated the researchers into this research with a view to contributing to the general body of knowledge, theory, and practice.	Digital reference services are seen as indispensable in enhancing the effectiveness of the library in the university as technology makes more information accessible, people will need less human help in doing research.	Library should use the latest formats of digital reference services, such as online chat reference, video conferencing, and collaborative DRS to encourage regular use of the library digital information resources and services.
Abukari (2019, pp. 1, 14)	User satisfaction of libraries' resources and services has become a major focus for most libraries. User satis faction has been found to be an important factor that affects the use or nonuse of libraries	The conduciveness of the library and the currency of the library collection (among others) which are expected to make the library functional and a hub for research and learning are rather lacking.	The results showed that library users were generally satisfied with the resources and services of the library

Moreover, the current library system in Nigeria could be compared with the successful libraries of other countries as from UK, USA, and Japan. This is done in Table 2.

Table 2

Factors Affecting Library System in Nigeria, UK, USA and Japan

Country	Challenges		Provided Solutions if the challenges are still present	Expected result of the solution on readers
Nigeria	Temboge and Ga'anda (2022, pp. 56, 69)	Inconstant power supply, inconvenient library opening hours, unawareness of electronic information resources/services, among other challenges.	The library management should improve their awareness campaign on library resources and services to users, increase the library operation hours in order to afford users the opportunity of utilizing the resources and services maximally, and acquire more electronic information resources that are relevant to the curriculum of the institution as well provide State of the Art ICT facilities.	This would attract more readers to the library resources and services. Also, it would enhance user satisfaction while using the library and its facilities.
UK	Sain and Negi (2023)	Artificial intelligence, expenditure on RFID hardware, not making services relevant to students and researchers, lack of managing research tools, revealing librarians' uniqueness to other competitors, irregular updating	There should be provision of: open content, visual learning, open-source automated libraries, outreach of libraries, future tech services, embarking on cloud computing, implementation of	ICT has given birth to the modern librarian. Multitasking is a term used by modern librarians to describe being focused on the combination of technological and information

		library's rules and regulations, virtual outsourcing, digitally preserving materials, among other problems.	plagiarism and educational ethics, sustainability of its resources, among other opportunities for future libraries.	decision-making skills. To this end, libraries will continue to grow in resources acquisitions and services as S.R. Ranganathan rightly noted 'library is a growing organism'. Also, the future looks promising and exciting for libraries willing to embrace change as a result of the emerging trends, challenges & opportunities for shaping of future libraries.
USA	Caldwell-Stone (2024, p. 3)	Censorship attempts. Throughout 2023, librarians and library supporters throughout the United States documented the impact of organized censorship campaigns on America's libraries and librarians and on library users' right to read by reporting censorship attempts to the American Library Association's (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF).	There should be wide spread resistance and campaign against censorship attempts no matter the reason(s) given by its sponsors. S.R. Ranganathan among his five basic laws on librarianship postulated that 'books are for use, every reader his/her book, and every book its reader'. To this end, all lovers of information	If censorship is allowed to scale through, there will be total destruction of books, educational and intellectual resources within and outside the shores of America. Hence, such inglorious attempts must not be allowed. It implies that, if censorship is allowed to scale through, it will destroy the intellectual heritage of

			should be united in resisting any bill that may be sent to the national assembly or would be sponsored by any law maker or organization at any level. Information should be made available and affordable to all information seekers without any restriction from anyone.	mankind in the information society, it must not be allowed to take its root in America or in any developed and developing country globally. In other words, there should be intellectual freedom and expression of literary works tailored towards meeting the information needs of information seekers without restriction(s) by anyone.
Japan	Alix (2021, np)	Japan's libraries have many positive attributes and continue to evolve. However, many libraries' sectors struggle with serving users because of staff outsourcing, library leadership, lack of professional library staff, professionalism of the staff, inadequate library budgets, inadequate materials and facilities, materials not following school curriculum, a focus on circulation statistics, among other hurdles that prevent them from developing into 21st-century	Librarians must envision a modern, state-of-the-art library that brings communities together to discover themselves and the world. Similarly, Japanese librarians must gain the skills to create innovative, community focused libraries as well as concentrate on daily tasks. Besides, perform a need's	If those challenges raised in the paper are properly resolved or managed by the management of each library, it would enable them in developing into 21st-century (and beyond) information and community centers. In other words, there will be development of modern libraries as well as consistent growth of library and information

	information and community centers.	assessment to determine the services and programs desirable to users and non-users in every library sector. Finally, management, directors or managers of each libraries in Japan should work towards the improvement of budgetary allocation, this would enhance the acquisition of more relevant educational resources and cater for other needs in their libraries.	resources in Japan.

Furthermore, user satisfaction has been found to foster positive word-of-mouth recommendations and increased library usage. Afthanorhan, Awang, Rashid, Foziah and Ghazali (2019) demonstrated that satisfied users are more likely to recommend library services to others and continue using them themselves. Positive word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied users can attract new users and contribute to the library's reputation and growth. To enhance user satisfaction and, consequently, library service delivery, several strategies can be implemented. Firstly, libraries should focus on understanding user needs and expectations through surveys, feedback mechanisms, and user interviews (Iwhiwhu & Okorodudu, 2012). By actively seeking user input, libraries can identify areas for improvement and tailor their services to meet user requirements.

Secondly, providing timely and accurate information resources is crucial for user satisfaction. Access to a diverse and up-to-date collection of resources, both in print and electronic formats, contributes to user satisfaction and enhances the effectiveness of library services (Adam, 2017). Moreover, personalized assistance and guidance from library staff significantly impact user satisfaction. Cortes-Chavez, Rossa-Sierra, and Gonzalez-Muñoz (2021) emphasized the importance of empathetic interactions and user-centered services in fostering user satisfaction. Library staff should be trained to provide friendly, approachable, and knowledgeable assistance to users, addressing their queries and concerns effectively.

User Engagement

User engagement is a crucial factor in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. Engaged users are actively involved in utilizing library services, resources, and facilities, leading to a more meaningful and impactful library experience. User engagement refers to the level of active participation, involvement, and interaction of library users with library services and resources (Walker & Pearce, 2014). Engaged users demonstrate a higher level of interest, motivation, and commitment to utilizing library services, resulting in a more positive and productive library experience. Engaged users play a crucial role in enhancing staff performance. Studies have shown that engaged users are more likely to seek assistance from library staff, actively participate in library programs and events, and provide valuable feedback (Bilandzic & Foth, 2013). This active involvement allows library staff to better understand user needs, preferences, and challenges, enabling them to tailor their services and support accordingly. Engaged users also contribute to a vibrant and dynamic library environment, fostering a sense of community and collaboration among library staff and users.

Furthermore, user engagement positively influences library usage and resource utilization. Engaged users tend to utilize library resources more extensively, explore a wider range of services and facilities, and take advantage of various learning opportunities offered by the library (Shafawi and Hassan, 2018). This increased utilization enhances the effectiveness and impact of library services, encouraging staff members to continue providing high-quality support and resources. To foster user engagement and enhance library service delivery, several strategies can be employed. Firstly, libraries can create a welcoming and inclusive environment that encourages user participation and interaction. Comfortable study spaces, collaborative areas, and interactive displays can promote engagement and encourage users to spend more time in the library (Haddow, 2013). Library staff should also be approachable, friendly, and readily available to provide assistance and guidance.

Secondly, libraries can offer a diverse range of programs, workshops, and events that cater to the interests and needs of users. These activities can include information literacy workshops, research skills development sessions, guest lectures, and book clubs (Kong, 2014). By providing engaging and educational opportunities, libraries can attract and involve users, fostering a sense of belonging and ownership.

Moreover, leveraging technology and online platforms can enhance user engagement. Virtual services, social media platforms, and interactive online resources can facilitate communication, collaboration, and participation among users and library staff (Shafawi and Hassan, 2018). Online forums and discussion boards can provide spaces for users to share their experiences, ask questions, and provide feedback. Continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms are essential for fostering user engagement. Regular surveys, focus groups, and user satisfaction assessments enable libraries to gather valuable insights into user preferences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. This feedback can inform decision-making processes, service enhancements, and the development of user-centered initiatives.

Thus, user engagement is a critical factor in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. Engaged users contribute to staff performance, library utilization, and the overall effectiveness of library services. By creating a welcoming environment, offering diverse programs, leveraging technology, and seeking user feedback, libraries can foster user engagement and provide meaningful and impactful library experiences.

Staff Performance

Staff performance is a crucial factor in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. The competence, skills, and dedication of library staff directly impact the quality and effectiveness of the services provided to users. Onwubiko (2019) noted that the performance of library staff is a key determinant of the overall success and effectiveness of library services. This study shows that staff performance significantly affects user satisfaction, engagement, and perceptions of service quality. Competent and knowledgeable staff members are better equipped to meet the diverse information needs of users, provide accurate and timely assistance, and create a positive library experience.

Carlson and Johnston (2015) stressed that competence and expertise are essential qualities for staff members to deliver high-quality library services. They should possess a deep understanding of library resources, information literacy concepts, research methodologies, and emerging technologies. They also stated that continuous professional development and training programs are essential to ensure staff members stay up-to-date with the latest trends, tools, and best practices in the field. By investing in staff training, libraries can enhance the knowledge and skills of their personnel, leading to improved service delivery.

According to Odunlade (2012), motivation and job satisfaction also play a significant role in staff performance. Satisfied and motivated staff members are more likely to demonstrate enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication in their work. The author further stated that libraries can foster a positive work environment by recognizing and rewarding staff achievements, promoting work-life balance, and providing opportunities for career advancement and professional growth. Staff appreciation programs, mentoring initiatives, and performance evaluations can further contribute to enhancing staff motivation and performance.

Effective communication and collaboration among library staff members are crucial for delivering seamless and coordinated services. Teamwork, coordination, and clear communication channels facilitate the efficient handling of user inquiries, resource sharing, and knowledge transfer. Regular staff meetings, training sessions, and information-sharing platforms can promote collaboration and ensure that staff members are well-informed and aligned with the library's goals and objectives.

Library leadership and management practices also significantly influence staff performance. Supportive and effective management creates a conducive work environment, fosters staff development, and provides the resources necessary for staff to perform their duties (Wong and Laschinger, 2013). Clear roles and responsibilities, effective supervision, and transparent decision-making processes contribute to staff morale, job satisfaction, and overall performance.

Thus, staff performance is a crucial factor in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. Competent and motivated staff members, supported by effective management practices, contribute to the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of library services. By investing in staff training and development, fostering a positive work environment, promoting collaboration, and providing growth opportunities, libraries can enhance staff performance and deliver high-quality services to meet the diverse needs of their users.

Access to Information

Access to information is a crucial factor in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. It plays a significant role in meeting the information needs of users, supporting their research and learning endeavors, and ultimately contributing to their academic success. Access to a diverse and comprehensive range of information resources is essential for academic libraries. According to Anyim (2018), digital repositories, online databases, and e-journal platforms provide users with access to a vast array of scholarly content. These resources offer up-to-date research, scholarly publications, and authoritative sources that support users' information needs across various disciplines.

Providing seamless and efficient access to these resources is critical. Library staff members can employ various strategies to enhance access, such as implementing user-friendly search interfaces and navigation systems (Igbo & Imo, 2020). Intuitive interfaces and well-designed platforms simplify the search process, enabling users to locate and retrieve relevant information quickly. Additionally, Wang and Leblang (2017) noted that staff members can employ effective metadata tagging and classification systems to enhance the discoverability of resources. They also stated that clear and consistent metadata can help users locate specific resources and explore related materials, improving their overall access experience. Ensuring access to information goes beyond digital resources. Academic libraries often house physical collections of books, journals, and other materials. Efficient organization and retrieval systems, such as well-maintained cataloging and shelving practices, facilitate the access and availability of physical resources (Rowley & Hartley, 2017). Library staff members play a crucial role in ensuring that users can easily locate and retrieve physical items from the library's collection.

Equity and inclusivity in access to information are also important considerations. Library staff members strive to provide equal access to resources for all users, regardless of their background or circumstances. This included implementing accessibility features in digital resources, such as alternative text for images and compatibility with screen readers, to accommodate users with disabilities (Mathiesen, 2015). Additionally, libraries may offer services like interlibrary loan and document delivery to extend access to resources beyond their own collections, ensuring that users have access to materials that may not be immediately available.

Collaboration with other institutions and library consortia can also enhance access to information. Through cooperative agreements and resource sharing, libraries can expand their collections and provide users with access to a broader range of resources (Finch et al., 2013). Interlibrary cooperation allows libraries to leverage their collective resources and expertise, ensuring that users have access to a wider pool of information.

Thus, access to information is a critical factor in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. By providing seamless access to diverse and comprehensive resources, implementing effective search and retrieval systems, ensuring equity and inclusivity, and fostering collaboration, library staff members can enhance users' access experience and support their research and learning endeavors. Access to information is at the core of academic libraries' mission, and continuous efforts to improve access contribute to the overall success of library service delivery.

Library Usage

Library usage is a fundamental factor in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. Understanding how users interact with library resources and services is crucial for meeting their needs, improving the quality of services, and ensuring user satisfaction. Library usage encompasses various aspects, including the physical use of library spaces, borrowing and returning materials, accessing electronic resources, and engaging with library programs and services. Murray (2014) found that library usage positively correlates with user satisfaction, academic performance, and overall success in higher education. It highlighted the importance of creating an environment that encourages users to utilize library resources and services actively.

Library staff members play a vital role in promoting library usage among users. They can employ various strategies to enhance the visibility and accessibility of library resources. One such strategy is effective marketing and promotion. By employing targeted marketing campaigns, library staff members can raise awareness about the library's offerings, highlight new resources, and inform users about upcoming events and programs (Aabø & Audunson, 2012). Engaging in promotional materials, such as posters, social media campaigns, and newsletters, can attract users' attention and encourage them to explore library resources and services. Additionally, library staff members can provide personalized assistance and guidance to users to maximize their library usage. Ndoh (2023) emphasized the significance of staff-user interactions in promoting library usage. By offering individualized research consultations, information literacy workshops, and user-centered support, library staff members can help users navigate the resources, develop effective search strategies, and make the most of the available services. Technology plays a significant role in facilitating library usage. Digital platforms and tools offer convenience and flexibility for accessing library resources. Online catalogs, self-checkout systems, and remote access to electronic databases and journals enable users to engage with library materials at their convenience (Panda & Sahoo, 2019). Library staff members can provide training and support for using these technologies, ensuring that users are comfortable with digital interfaces and can take advantage of the available resources.

Furthermore, library staff members can monitor and analyze library usage data to identify patterns, trends, and areas for improvement. User surveys, circulation statistics, and website analytics can provide valuable insights into user preferences, needs, and behaviors (Saunders, 2015). By analyzing this data, library staff members can make informed decisions about resource allocation, service improvements, and the development of new programs and initiatives to enhance library usage.

Collaboration with faculty members and academic departments is also essential in promoting library usage. Library staff members can collaborate with faculty to integrate library resources and information literacy into the curriculum, ensuring that students understand the value of library resources and know how to utilize them effectively (Yevelson-Shorsher & Bronstein, 2018). By working closely with faculty members, library staff members can embed library usage as an integral part of the academic experience.

Thus, library usage is a vital factor in enhancing service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. By employing effective marketing strategies, providing personalized assistance, leveraging technology, analyzing usage data, and collaborating with faculty, library staff members can promote active library usage and maximize the benefits of library resources and services for users. Emphasizing library usage contributes to the overall success of service delivery and supports users' academic and research endeavors.

Academic Performance

Academic performance of readers especially students is a significant factor that boosts service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. The impact of library services on the academic performance of students has been widely studied. According to Shafawi and Hassan (2018), academic libraries are essential in providing resources, support, and services that contribute to the academic success of students. The availability of relevant and up-to-date resources, such as books, journals, databases, and other materials, enables students to access the information they need to excel in their studies. Library staff members play a crucial role in assisting students in locating and accessing these resources efficiently, providing research support, and offering guidance on information literacy skills (Elmborg, 2012).

Studies have shown that students who actively engage with library resources and services tend to have better academic performance. For example, Soria, Fransen, and Nackerud (2013) found that students who used library services, such as borrowing books, accessing online resources, and seeking assistance from library staff, had higher GPAs compared to those who did not utilize library services. Library services contribute to academic performance by fostering information literacy skills, supporting research endeavors, and promoting critical thinking and independent learning (Kong, 2014). To enhance service delivery and support academic performance, academic libraries can implement several strategies. One such strategy is the provision of tailored instruction and workshops on information literacy skills. Library staff members can collaborate with faculty to integrate information literacy into the curriculum, offering sessions on effective research strategies, evaluation of information sources, and citation management (Baro & Keboh, 2012). These initiatives help students develop the necessary skills to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information in their academic pursuits.

Another strategy is the adoption of technology and digital resources to enhance access to information and facilitate remote learning. Online databases, e-books, and digital repositories provide students with 24/7 access to a wealth of scholarly resources, irrespective of their physical location (Panigrahi, Srivastava, & Sharma, 2018). Library staff members can assist

students in navigating these digital resources, ensuring they are aware of the available tools and platforms for remote access.

Additionally, George and Casey (2020) noted that academic libraries can collaborate with faculty to develop discipline-specific resources and collections that cater to the unique needs of different academic programs. By curating subject-specific resources and providing targeted support, library staff members can contribute to improving the academic performance of students in their respective fields of study. Assessment and evaluation of library services also play a vital role in enhancing academic performance. Libraries should actively seek feedback from students and faculty to understand their needs and identify areas for improvement (Brown et al, 2018). User surveys, focus groups, and usability studies can provide valuable insights into user satisfaction and help libraries align their services with the evolving needs of their academic community.

Thus, academic performance is a crucial factor that enhances service delivery among staff members in academic libraries. By providing relevant resources, research support, and instruction on information literacy skills, library staff members contribute to the academic success of students. Strategies such as tailored instruction, digital resource adoption, collaboration with faculty, and continuous assessment of library services can further enhance the support provided by academic libraries, leading to improved academic performance.

Conclusion

The paper reviewed relevant literature on factors that would boost service delivery job of librarians and other library personnel in various academic libraries where they are saddled with the task of providing relevant educational resources in meeting the information needs of readers. It is expedient for us (researchers of this paper) to suggest what could be done on each of the reviewed factors as follows:

First, quality of library services. Academic libraries are fundamental to successful academic activities in any tertiary institution, library staff are expected to provide quality service in meeting the educational needs of various information seekers that would be in need of their services. Second, user satisfaction. The information needs of every library user are to be met. This would bring joy and relief to them as their information needs could be successfully provided for in the library. Every service rendered by the library personnel should be directed towards meeting the requested educational needs of users. Third, user engagement. Users should be educated during the use of library course (GST 101 or GNS 101) on some basic services provided by the library and subsequently engage them in providing such relevant services to their fellow readers without compromising the rules and regulations of the library. For example, users (especially students) could be engaged to work as part time staff in the library. This is operational in most of the Nigerian academic libraries (for example, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Yaba College of Technology, University of Ibadan, among others). Forth, staff performance,. Libray personnel are expected to perform optimally in their various asssigned duties in the library. It should be noted that library works are not for lazy people. In other words, library works are for hard working personnel and not for indolent people.

Additionally, access to information and accessibility to the library resources by readers are fundamental to the utilization of such resources. Dr S. R. Ranganathan in 1931 postulated among his five laws of librarianship that "books are for use, every reader his/her book, every book its reader, and don't waste the time of library users" (Ranganathan, 1931 cited in Librarianship Studies & Information Technology, 2022), these would be operational if library personnel could provide easy access to all the educational resources stocked in the library. This implies library users should have unhindered access to all books and other literary resources stocked in the library. In other words, accessibility paves ways for the utilization of the library resources. Also, library usage. Library resources and its infrastructural facilities should be made conducive in order to attract potential readers to use its resources and services. The library facilities (for example, rest room, water system, ICT hardwares and resources, among other facilities) should be operational in order to facilitate easy usage of the library. Finally, the academic performance of students. This is the ultmate goal of every student that utilizes the library resources and services. In other words, library resources and services should be carefully selected, acquired, organized and displayed for easy accessibility in meeting the academic needs of all students and ultimately leading to their academic performance in the institution of higher learming.

To this end, it is essential for the library management to seek and put in place those motivating factors that would improve the service delivery of its staff in the academic community. Also, the library management should engage her staff on the necessity of meeting the information needs of readers as they look up to the library as their last hope in getting relevant information for their academic and research activities. Besides, the institution management should give adequate support and provision for training and retraining of its workforce especially the library staff to enhance their productivity.

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Exploring Contrasts: Depiction of Irish Rural Life in Yeats and Kavanagh

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the depiction of Irish rural life in selected poems by W. B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh. Modern Irish poetry presents two contrasting perspectives on the portrayal of rural Ireland. Some poets like W. B. Yeats, Derek Mahon, and Seamus Heaney, along with other leading Irish poets, romanticize the Irish countryside, portraying it as charming, magnificent, and idyllic. These poets prefer to live in tune with nature, tempted by its pastoral landscape and inspired by its idealized tranquility. In contrast, other modern Irish poets, including Patrick Kavanagh, Eavan Boland, Michael Hartnett, and many others, reject this idealized vision of the countryside. Instead, they offer a stark portrayal of rural Ireland, exposing its harsh realities and revealing the poverty, struggles, and hardships encountered by Irish peasants. This article, accordingly, seeks to explore these two different literary traditions within modern Irish poetry, with a focus on W. B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh as representatives of opposing attitudes. Specifically, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by W. B. Yeats and *The Great Hunger* by Patrick Kavanagh serve as the concentration for this study. In reaching its conclusions, the article finally reveals the divergent perspectives portrayed within the two poems, highlighting how Yeats and Kavanagh employ distinct poetic techniques to present their attitudes, sharply contrasting each other.

Keywords: modern Irish poetry, rural life, Yeats, Kavanagh

In modern Irish poetry, the depiction of Irish rural life emerges as a compelling contrast (Zhou, 2013, p. 80). Leading figures like W. B. Yeats, Seamus Heaney, and Derek Mahon were captivated by the beauty and tranquility of the countryside, viewing peasant life through the lens of romanticism. They idealized its surroundings, seeking relief and inspiration within its serene landscapes. However, another group of poets, including Patrick Kavanagh, Eavan Boland, and Michael Hartnett, emerged to reject this idyllic portrayal. In opposition, they uncovered the harsh realities of rural existence, attracting attention to the hardships, distresses, and struggles confronted by Irish farmers. These poets exemplify a realistic attitude towards rural Ireland, presenting a clear departure from the picturesque image often idealized by Yeats and others.

However, the poets standing for the idealization of Irish rural life and those opposing this attitude may have varied perspectives in their work; their poetry may offer an inclination to romanticize the countryside and may come in another stage of their development as writers to present a realistic representation of Irish rural life with its challenges, difficulties, and distresses. For example, W. B. Yeats started as a romantic poet affected by the pastoral tradition, and ended as a modernist poet depicting the realism of rural Ireland in his poetry (Yakar, 2021, p. 44). The same applies to Patrick Kavanagh, for instance, who resisted the idealization of the rural environment in which he was born, reflecting its agonies, challenging conditions, "and the gradual yet persistent fading of human vitality" (Kapoor, 2024, p. 165). However, as his literary journey progressed, he fell under the spell of romanticism and captured the irresistible beauty of the countryside in his later poems.

The research problem addressed by the present paper is to explore how Yeats and Kavanagh depict Irish rural life contrastingly in their poems. The study has three key research questions: How is rural life depicted in Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*? What technical devices do Yeats and Kavanagh employ to reflect their divergent perspectives? How are these contrasting viewpoints embraced in modern Irish poetry? The study uses close textual analysis as its essential methodological approach. The researcher scrutinizes the lines of verse and conducts a detailed analysis and interpretation of the two poems under discussion, examining themes, diction, figures of speech, and stylistic choices.

A highly distinguished Irish poet, prose writer, playwright, and one of the most significant literary figures in the twentieth century, William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was born in Dublin and spent his childhood in County Sligo, whose charming landscape attracted his heart and mind. Yeats acted as a bridge between the romantic tradition of the late nineteenth century and the modern ethos of the early twentieth century. He got the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923, established the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, and was a key figure, along with J. M. Synge and Lady Gregory, of the Irish Literary Revival. Among Yeats' most famous works are *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), and *The Tower* (1928). His most celebrated poems include "Leda and the Swan," "The Second Coming," "Sailing to Byzantium," "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," "Among School Children," "An Irish Airman Foresees his Death," and "Easter, 1916."

For the great Irish master, "the vitality of peasant culture with its vivid, even violent antagonism toward modernity is a rich source of inspiration," states Khasawneh (2013), asserting that the portrayal of Irish peasant life with its romanticized essence in Yeats' oeuvre exemplifies "an aesthetic style for coping with the conditions of a complex world by constituting an aesthetic realm and making a different kind of art" (p. 143).

Belonging to the generation after Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh (1904–1967) emerged as one of Ireland's most prominent modern poets. He was born in Inniskeen, a village located in County Monaghan. The rural experiences he acquired from life in the countryside, his upbringing among poor Irish farmers, and his work on the land provided him with the material for most of his poems and enabled him to capture "the essence of rural Irish life" (Kapoor, 2024, p. 163). As Kavanagh (1987) describes, "It's hard work at Experience's College" (p. 325). At the early stage of his literary career, the young man could not find himself as a poet within the unpromising farms of County Monaghan. He depicts his homeland as a rocky, dark place that deceived him both as a man and a poet. "O stony grey soil of Monaghan," Kavanagh addresses his birthplace, lamenting, "You burgled my bank of youth" (1987, p. 73). So, he yearned to leave the countryside for Dublin and enjoy the vibrant literary world of the Irish capital. While working on the farm, Kavanagh often wondered whether he could "go / Over the fields to the City of the Kings / Where art, music, letters are the real things" (1987, p 157).

Kavanagh's dream came true in 1931 when he first visited Dublin, where he fully migrated in 1939. In Dublin, people referred to Kavanagh as the peasant poet. There, "he looked like a farmer who had come to town to buy seeds or implements, not like a poet" (Quinn, 1991, p. 32). After a long journey of failure and success in Dublin, Kavanagh reached the conclusion that living in the countryside is much better than living in the town with its complicated details. He finally reconciled with his birthplace, ending his autobiography, *The Green Fool*, with the return of the migrant. "And when I wandered over my own hills and talked again to my own people," Kavanagh (1988) indicates, "I looked into the heart of this life and I saw it was good" (p. 11).

Literature Review

The existing literature discusses the themes, issues, and ideas related to the depiction of rural life in modern Irish poetry in general and in the poems written by Yeats and Kavanagh in particular. In his PhD dissertation, *Private and Public Voices in Irish Poetry: W. B. Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh, and Seamus Heaney (Politics, History)*, Keane (1984) reveals how the three poets differ from each other, and how they, despite their different generations and literary traditions, share common concerns in their poetry related to rural Ireland. Yeats is known for his involvement with the Irish Literary Revival and for his aspiration to revive the spirit of Irish heritage. In contrast, Kavanagh rejects the principles of the Irish Literary Revival, disapproving Yeats' mythical approach. The younger poet finds his poetic voice in the Irish rural life with its intricate details and truths, often satirizing Yeats and the revivalists. As for Seamus Heaney, he was influenced by the two prominent predecessors, echoing their national and rural themes in his poems. Yet, his poetry distinguishes itself by devoting more

energy to tracing the cultural and social roots of violence in Ireland. Despite these varied insights, the three eminent Irish figures share a common thread that connects their diverse perspectives. Even if Kavanagh and others may sharply satirize Yeatsian myths and idealized images of Ireland and its rural life, "the very force of their satire effectively affirms certain truths about Irish life," to quote Keane, "truths that inform the valid attempts at myth that Yeats a generation before or that Heaney a generation after would hold up to public view" (Keane, 1984, p. 90).

Yakar (2021), in his article titled "The Oscillation between Romanticism and Modernism in William Butler Yeats' Poems," focuses on selected poems by Yeats, tracing the evolution of the great master's poetry. In its early stage, as seen in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," Yeats' poetry romanticizes nature and its elements before transitioning to a more sophisticated modern stage evident in his later poetry, wherein political and realistic topics are heavily embraced, as noticed in "Easter, 1916" for instance. A careful examination of Yeats' literary development as a poet shows how his "romantic idealization of tranquility of nature, primitivism, intuition, and feelings is disrupted with a modernist vision in his poems" (Yakar, 2021, p. 47).

In "Towards a Poetics of Dwelling: Patrick Kavanagh's Countryside," Shokouhi (2020) focuses on Patrick Kavanagh's depiction of rural Ireland from an ecocritical perspective. The article shows how the poet's engagement with his rural environment, especially in his early stage as a writer, communicates a sense of place and meaning. According to Shokouhi, "his early work showcases a sense of place rich with nuances absent from revivalist narratives. His landscapes and characters were contemporaneous with his own time and place" (Shokouhi, 2020, p. 158).

In *Rural Modernity in Twentieth-Century Poetry*, Fluharty (2013) explores the interplay between rural and urban topics in modern Irish poetry. The study, mainly a Ph.D. dissertation, focuses on several leading Irish poets, including Thomas Hardy, W. B. Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh, Paul Muldoon, and John Montague. The research devotes a chapter to Hardy, Yeats, and Kavanagh titled "The Unknown Plain: Thomas Hardy, W. B. Yeats, Patrick Kavanagh and the Rural Diaspora," exploring how these prominent poets deal with the Irish countryside in their poetry. Here, Fluharty argues that the analysis of the poetry written by Hardy and Kavanagh, when juxtaposed with that of Yeats, reveals "the ways in which such urban-rural binaries (ideological and linguistic) often mask an interconnectedness and obscure the ways in which the rural is also a transatlantic entity, both economically and culturally" (Fluharty, 2013, p. 34).

In "The Poetic Vision of Patrick Kavanagh," Kapoor (2024) deals with the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh, exploring its main concerns. The article refers to Kavanagh's most famous works, indicating the poet's deep connection to Irish rural life and how it is distinctively represented in his poems. The article also draws attention to Kavanagh's opposing attitude to the Irish Literary Revival and its ideals that Yeats and the revivalists advocated. Kapoor remarkably discusses *The Great Hunger* as one of Kavanagh's significant works that examine the

complicated details of Irish peasant life and "depict the harsh realities of rural existence" (Kapoor, 2024, p. 163).

As shown above, the existing literature on the depiction of rural life by modern Irish poets such as Yeats and Kavanagh reveals a notable gap in research that the current study seeks to address. Through a comprehensive analysis of Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*, this article pursues not only to illuminate the contrasting perspectives of these two poets regarding the depiction of the Irish countryside but also to offer a new insight into how these opposing attitudes are skillfully conveyed through the poetic techniques employed by Yeats and Kavanagh, an aspect which the researcher believes has been overlooked in previous studies.

Contrasting Depictions of Irish Rural Life by Yeats and Kavanagh

Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree": Romanticizing the Countryside

Yeats penned "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" in 1888 when he was twenty-three. Describing an actual place in Lough Gill, County Sligo, Ireland, the poem was first published in *the National Observer* magazine in 1890 and later appeared in Yeats' collection of poems titled *The Rose* in 1839. County Sligo, where the Lake Isle of Innisfree is situated, was an essential source of inspiration for Yeats. It was not merely a place that reminded him of childhood memories. More importantly, it was a significant rural site, a dreamed-of refuge, which closely connected him with nature and the beauty of the Irish countryside.

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is a romantic poem idealizing the natural world of the Irish countryside. When the poem was composed, the time was not so far from the Romantic Movement and the widespread popularity of the nature poetry of Wordsworth, Keats, Blakes, Shelley, Coleridge, and the other foremost poets of the period. Thus, "the remarkable nature poems of the great Romantic masters," Arif (2022) points out, "were still very much in the minds of readers of Yeats's time" (p. 29). Moreover, a careful reading of the early poetry of the great Irish poet shows that "all the characteristic features and flavor of romantic poetry are present in most of Yeats's poems" (Bisai, 2021, p. 114). It is worth noting that Yeats was in London when he wrote the poem. The turbulence of the city stirred his feelings and provoked a longing to retreat to rural Ireland, where he could throw himself into the arms of nature and lead a life of peace and tranquility. This longing eventually inspired the writing of "The Lake Isle of Innisfree."

The poem depicts the speaker's yearning for the peacefulness of his childhood sanctuary, Innisfree, a small, isolated island which he feels "in the deep heart's core," as Yeats writes in the poem (Yeats, 2000, p. 31). It consists of three quatrains, mostly written in iambic hexameter, with the last line in each stanza reduced to an iambic pentameter with only four stresses. Yeats employs the *abab* rhyme pattern for each of the three stanzas of the poem. The first stanza opens with the speaker's intention to get up and travel to Innisfree to live there and enjoy the inner peace of nature, nurturing his longing soul with beauty, serenity, and

solitude. Once he gets there, he will build himself a simple hut "out of clay and wattles," in addition to:

> Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
> And live alone in the bee-loud glade. (Yeats, 2000, p. 31)

As the above lines reveal, the speaker plans to plant 'nine rows of beans' and have a 'honey-bee' hive. Imagining such a romantic setting, he dreams of dwelling alone in the tranquil meadow where the hum of bees echoes everywhere. He longs for solitary communion with the natural world and its magnificent facets, away from the complexities of urban life. Unlike Patrick Maguire, the protagonist of Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*, the speaker in Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" seeks to live alone in the countryside, accompanied only by nature and its elements. In contrast, Maguire seeks human connection. He dreams of having a wife and is often depicted working on the land with other Irish farmers or staying at home with his mother and sister.

In the second stanza of "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," the speaker idealistically describes the rural landscape where peace perfectly blends with the morning's beauty and birds' sweet melodies. In Innisfree, the poet maintains that "peace comes dropping slow, / Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings" (Yeats, 2000, p. 31). This romantic atmosphere is enhanced by Yeats' poetic techniques in the above lines. Through the use of metaphor, the poet compares peace to something that falls gently from the sky to the earth, passing the misty layers of fog and dew that veil the ground in the early morning. It finally reaches the peaceful landscape where "the cricket" happily sings, celebrating the occasion and marking the moment. Also, the repetition of the word "dropping" reveals how the process of peaceful descent takes place gradually, with an unhurried and slow rhythm reminiscent of Innisfree's quiet, relaxed, and serene atmosphere.

For the speaker, Innisfree is a dream-like location where "midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow," Yeats describes, "And evening full of the linnet's wings" (Yeats, 2000, p. 31). As the poet portrays, light flickers magnificently at "midnight" while the sunlight in the afternoon releases a glowing purple hue. The vivid imagery used by the poet reveals the different stages through which light progresses, from midnight to afternoon, reflecting the gradual visualization of the speaker's imagined cabin in Innisfree. In the evening, the little birds take flight, adorning the sky with their graceful wings. Proficiently, the poet depicts an idyllic setting that brings him immense delight, evoking feelings of awe, admiration, and serenity.

In the last stanza, the speaker reaffirms his resolution, previously declared at the very beginning of the poem, to "arise and go" to Innisfree, telling us how he, all day and night, hears the sound of water lapping against the shore of the island. Even within the city hustle, he perceives the lake sound echoing deep in his heart,

> While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
> I hear it in the deep heart's core. (Yeats, 2000, p. 31)

This is rural Ireland as envisioned by Yeats, a dreamy and romanticized place "of supreme natural beauty that is disconcerted with human struggle and conflict" (Grimes, 2022, p. 4). In the above lines, the poet uses juxtaposition to contrast rural and urban settings, as he suddenly introduces city images in the poem with phrases like "the roadway" and "the pavements grey." Thus, a sharp dichotomy is established "between the romantic island, in which primitivism is idealized, and the city with its greyness [and] drab… realities" (Yakar, 2021, p. 45). The poet's use of the word "grey" in the poem's final stanza is highly suggestive. It reflects the dullness of city life and its lack of beauty, attraction, and satisfaction. This contrast which Yeats observed between urban and rural life urged him to retreat to the countryside and "seek refuge in a sort of primordial pristine Ireland, full of enchantment and full of repose" (Arif, 2022, p. 20).

Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*: Exposing Rural Realities

Yeats' romanticized portrayal of Irish rural life in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" sharply contrasts with the harsh realities of rural Ireland depicted in Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*. Published in 1942, *The Great Hunger* is a long narrative work that consists of fourteen sections, telling the tragic story of Patrick Maguire, the main character, from young manhood to death. The poem is set in Donaghmoyne, a parish in County Monaghan. Maguire is a young farmer who lives with his unmarried sister and authoritarian mother on a farm where he does almost all the farm work. However, the young man never complains. He endures his agonies and distresses with fantastic patience. Kavanagh narrates, "Poor Paddy Maguire, a fourteen-hour day / He worked for years. It was he that lit the fire / And boiled the kettle and gave the cows their hay" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 84).

The Great Hunger deals with the theme of frustration and disappointment, showing how Maguire and his fellow Irish farmers are physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and religiously frustrated. The fourteen sections of the poem are mostly written in free verse with no definite patterns, perhaps to suit the chaotic life of Maguire and his peasant companions. This structure differs from that of "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," which generally sticks to prescribed patterns of rhythm, meter, and rhyme, as if mirroring the speaker's prearranged plans to travel to Innisfree and settle there.

Kavanagh is famous for his unique depiction of rural Ireland and the vivid images he draws from the countryside and employs in his poems. He handles the Irish peasant life in a new manner, opposing the romanticized depictions of rural Ireland that was traditionally prevalent in Irish literature. Unlike Yeats who idealized rural life and Synge who dreamt of the rustic simplicity of the countryside, Kavanagh does not idealize the life of Irish farmers. Instead, he goes deep into its details to uncover the pains and woes of the poor peasants whose life is woven with suffering and discomfort. He honestly portrays the poverty and distresses confronted by those desperate people.

Kavanagh's poetry vividly portrays rural Ireland, exposing the harsh conditions, miseries, and defeats that characterized Irish peasant life in the mid-twentieth century. Patrick Maguire represents those miserable Irish farmers who were tied to the land and simultaneously

suppressed by the Irish Catholic Church with its rigid doctrines and stern principles at that time, as the author of *The Great Hunger* points out in the poem. Kavanagh was himself a farmer. Like Maguire and his fellow potato gatherers, Kavanagh worked on the land and knew very well the suffering and disappointing conditions endured by Irish peasants. Out of experience, he tells us in *The Great Hunger*, "the peasant in his little acres is tied / To a mother's womb by the wind-toughened navel-cord / Like a goat tethered to the stump of a tree – / He circles around and around wondering why it should be. / No crash, No drama" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 101).

The title of *The Great Hunger* brings into mind the Great Famine that struck Ireland in 1845 when potato, the main crop for the Irish then, was infected by a particular disease that destroyed the crop (Kennedy & MacRaild, 2022, p. 2). As a result, a significant number of the Irish population died due to starvation, while others migrated out of the country. Though the historical famine is not explicitly mentioned in Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*, its title echoes the feelings of despair and agony characterizing the poem, together with the miserable conditions of the poor Irish peasants that have not considerably been improved from the past when the Great Famine destroyed their lives till that time when Kavanagh wrote *The Great Hunger*.

Throughout the poem, Kavanagh's use of poetic techniques plunges his readers in the heart of the Irish countryside, giving a vivid portrayal not of the inner peace and serenity that Yeats romantically depicts in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," but rather of the tragedy undergone by Maguire and his peasant companions in *The Great Hunger*. In the following lines, the poet uses both simile and metaphor to describe the gloomy lives of those victims. Kavanagh states,

> Like the afterbirth of a cow stretched on a branch in the wind
> Life dried in the veins of these women and men:
> 'The grey and grief and unlove,
> The bones in the backs of their hands,
> And the chapel pressing its low ceiling over them. (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 92)

The afterbirth or placenta refers to the organ providing the nourishment from the cow to the calf (fetus) before the calf is born. When subjected to the wind after the fetus is born, the afterbirth becomes solid and harsh. Expressively, Kavanagh employs simile to compare the hard life of Irish peasants to that cow's afterbirth, which has been outstretched in the air and has thus become very harsh. Kavanagh further uses metaphor, vividly depicting how "life dried in the veins of these women and men" as if they had become dead and lifeless. Despair, misery, and lack of love are images of the emotional frustration endured by those distressed people. Furthermore, the poet's portrayal of the failing of their health and the weakness of their bodies, revealed by "the bones in the backs of their hands", expresses how far those people are physically frustrated. The poet's use of metaphor still works as he magnificently depicts the dominant Irish Catholic Church harshly "pressing" its ceiling, which is depicted by the poet as very low and close to heads, over those helpless Irish, accordingly frustrating them religiously and caging them in a tight box of rigid teachings, as Kavanagh describes in

the poem. Commenting on the poet's depiction of the harsh and desperate life of Irish farmers as a cow's afterbirth, McDonagh (1998) writes,

> This disturbing image of the cow's dried afterbirth, a vital source of life in the womb yet subsequently redundant and strewn across the branch of a tree, suggests that the lives of the people of Donaghmoyne are almost an afterthought to their birth. Their hopes and dreams are limited from the moment of their birth by the poverty and moral immaturity of their environment and, while so full of the promise and potential of new life at birth, they quickly become desiccated and defunct. (pp. 176–177)

Patrick Maguire is so devoted to his mother and church that he never imagines having a relationship with a girl. He thinks of marriage to satisfy his emotional needs, but he is too passive to tell his mother about his desire because he knows well that she will refuse; she wants him to give all his time and energy to the land. As Kavanagh remarks in the poem, Maguire's mother "praised the man who made a field his bride" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 81). Thus, she marries her helpless son to his inherited land, and he grows up in the service of his fields. To add to Maguire's dilemma, he can never do anything that opposes the church's doctrines. Kavanagh affirms, "If he opens his eyes once in a million years — / Through a crack in the crust of the earth he may see a face nodding in / Or a woman's legs — shut them again for that sight is sin" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 81).

As a poetic technique, apostrophe is employed by the poet, inviting readers to join the scene and see how Maguire prefers his land to himself, even if the consequence is depriving oneself of what he instinctively yearns for. "Watch him, watch him," Kavanagh calls, "He lives that his little fields may stay fertile when his own body / Is spread in the bottom of a ditch" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 81). The lines raise a question: Why is it prohibited for a farmer to marry? Why cannot he establish a family and lead a happy life? Should he sacrifice his human needs for the productivity of his land? Unfortunately, human energies, in Maguire's case, "are gradually absorbed by devotion to his fields, while his psycho-sexual yearnings are simultaneously suppressed to the point of extinction. Human fertility is sacrificed to agricultural fertility" (Quinn, 1991, p. 126).

Maguire's predicament is further reflected by the poet's use of simile. Kavanagh states, "He was suspicious in his youth as a rat near strange bread, / When girls laughed; when they screamed he knew that meant / The cry of fillies in season. He could not walk / The easy road to destiny" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 81). Here, the poet compares Maguire to a rat that, though very hungry, looked too cautious to come close to "strange bread." Too faithful to his mother, who warned him against women, and too obedient to the teachings of his church, the powerless Maguire kept himself away from any female temptations. To protect Maguire, and hence the farm, the controlling mother made the poor young man wary when he met a woman and deprived him of having a wife who could provide him with love and happiness.

In contrast to the speaker in Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," who is determined to escape to the countryside to enjoy the beauty of nature, Maguire, as depicted by Kavanagh, lacks free will and cannot find his way. Whereas Yeats perceives Irish rural life as a source of

inspiration and relief, Kavanagh, on the contrary, exposes its frustrating realities, depicting the challenges, distresses, and agonies it imposes on Irish peasants. In this sense, Maguire is a victim of the constraints burdened on him by his rural environment, the dominant figure of which is his mother. As Kavanagh recounts in the poem, Maguire's life was devoid of hope, meaning, and adventure. It was nothing but a deep misfortune in the true sense of the word. "That was how his life happened," Kavanagh writes, "No mad hooves galloping in the sky, / But the weak, washy way of true tragedy – / A sick horse nosing around the meadow for a clean place to die" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 101). As the last line reveals, the poet brilliantly gives us a very evocative example of metaphor, comparing the desperate Maguire who wonders aimlessly in his rural, confined world to a distressed, sick horse desperately roaming around the field to find a clean spot in the same suppressive environment, polluted with constraints, to pass away. This image deepens the sense of despair and grief reflected by the hidden comparison between Maguire, who has lost his life in vain, and the horse whose failing health has sadly made him unwilling to live anymore, accordingly looking for a suitable place to die in.

Boredom and carelessness characterize Maguire's life. This meaning is reflected by the technique of repetition which Kavanagh employs in the following lines, "Sitting on a wooden gate, / Sitting on a wooden gate, / Sitting on a wooden gate / He didn't care a damn" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 90). The poor young man is too passive to change the repetitive rhythm of his life or move a step forward. As a result, he becomes so indifferent that he doesn't care even for the worst things. His mother has killed life inside him and turned him into a man devoid of any will or desire to rebel against the environment that captivates him. Time passes, and Maguire never changes. He is still passive, submissive, and reluctant. Kavanagh explains, "A year passed and another hurried after it / And Patrick Maguire was still six months behind life / His mother six months ahead of it" (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 94).

Despite all these agonies, Maguire took no action to change the circumstances around him. He simply surrendered to the reality he found himself in. As Kavanagh contemplates,

> And he cried for his own loss one late night on the pillow
> And yet thanked the God who had arranged these things.
> Was he then a saint?
> A Matt Talbot of Monaghan? (Kavanagh, 1987, p. 96)

In the above lines, Kavanagh uses a significant example of enjambment; the first line runs to the second without any punctuation mark, suggesting that Maguire's crying during that "late night" went on, continuously without stopping, to suit the long and endless suffering he had been experiencing. This nonstop crying was only eased by the satisfaction that suddenly crept into his soul, reminding him that it was "God who had arranged these things." Therefore, he had to accept his state and thank the Creator for what He had destined. The young man did this, expressing his humble acceptance of God's plan.

Remarkably, Maguire's patient endurance, surrender to the will of God, and satisfaction with his fate not only arouse readers' admiration for him but also suggest that he may be a saint or

a mystic. This is what Kavanagh expresses through his use of the technique of allusion in the above lines, where he refers to a person outside the poem, namely Matt Talbot. The poet wonders how Maguire could face all these challenges and frustrations and remain patient and satisfied. How could he maintain his spiritual unity despite all these pressures and never lose faith in the divine power? The poet then deduces that he could be a saint, alluding to Matt Talbot, the Irish ascetic who appeared in Dublin in the twentieth century. Thus, Kavanagh describes Maguire as the "Matt Talbot of County Monaghan."

Conclusion

This article has explored two contrasting attitudes of modern Irish poetry. On the one hand, it investigates the romanticization of Irish rural life, while on the other, it presents realistic portrayals of its challenges and harsh realities. The first attitude is exemplified by "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," written by W. B. Yeats, while the second finds expression in Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*. Yeats idealizes the rural landscape in his poem, employing his poetic techniques to paint a romantic picture of the beauty of nature in Innisfree, where he dreams of finding inner peace, serenity, and solitude far away from the city and its troubles. In contrast, in *The Great Hunger,* Kavanagh reveals the daily defeats, frustrations, and miseries encountered by Patrick Maguire, the main character in the poem, and his fellow Irish peasants. Skillfully using his technical devices, Kavanagh draws attention to the challenging conditions of rural Ireland that are often overlooked behind its romanticized image.

However, as mentioned earlier, a poet's stance towards these contrasting ideas may change throughout their literary journey, as with Yeats and Kavanagh. Despite Yeats' romantic vision in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," we can observe the great master's realistic portrayals in poems such as "Easter, 1916" and "An Irish Airman Foresees his Death." Likewise, in addition to Kavanagh's rural realism in *The Great Hunger*, we can also note his romantic insights in many poems, such as "Dear Folks" and "Lines Written on a Seat on the Grand Canal, Dublin." Remarkably, modern Irish poetry is rich and varied enough to embrace both divergent approaches in portraying Irish rural life: the idealized, as represented by Yeats' celebrated poem, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," and the realistic, as depicted in Kavanagh's masterpiece, *The Great Hunger*.

To conclude, this article has addressed a significant gap in the research related to the depiction of Irish rural life in modern Irish poetry. By providing a detailed thematic and technical analysis of Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*, the article reveals how Yeats and Kavanagh use distinct poetic techniques to reflect their contrasting representations of rural Ireland. This exploration not only stresses how these two poets distinctively portray Irish rural life differently, but also contributes significantly to a deeper understanding of their artistic styles and the broader literary context of modern Irish poetry.

For further research on the depiction of Irish rural life by W. B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh, one could explore "The Nostalgic Return to the Past in W. B. Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." Another interesting topic is "The Dilemma of Irish Peasants in Patrick

Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*." Furthermore, a significant research focus is to examine "Rural Imagery in Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger*. Finally, exploring "The Rural Versus the Urban in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh" is a research point worthy of future investigation.

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Birds of Feathers may not Flock Together: Avian Imageries in Contemporary Arab Diasporic Novels

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine how birds and avian metaphors are used by Arab writers in diaspora to reflect themes of exile, displacement and dispersion. In particular, in Inaam Kachachi's *The Dispersal* (2023) and Walid Nabhan's *Exodus of the Storks* (2021) birds and avian images are thematically and aesthetically significant motifs since the covers of some editions of the two novels feature a scene from each novel in which birds are of great importance to some characters, key events and sociopolitical, historical and cultural contexts of the texts. The deployment of these imageries on the covers of some editions represents a relatively recent tendency adopted by Western publishers to reflect the complex nature of literary representations of recent developments in the Middle East rather than relying on a long history of Orientalism to mediate this process of presentation. Furthermore, the study draws on the tripartite division of the notion of translation by Roman Jakobson (1959), particularly, his notion of the intersemiotic translation to highlight the links between a novel's cover design and the themes that it depicts.

Keywords: Arab diasporic literature, avian imagery, birds, book covers, intersemiotic translation

> Familiarity and transcendence have given birds a wider range of meaning and symbol in literature than any other animal. The resemblance of their activities to common patterns of human family behavior— "the feathered parallel," in Robert Browning's phrase—makes them exceptionally suitable for anthropomorphic imagery that links man to the common forms of nature. (Lutwack, 1994, pp. xi–xii)

Birds, as the quotation above shows, have long been a prevalent symbol in literature, representing a wide range of meanings and themes. Compared to other animals, birds are more familiar and transcendent, and these are the reasons why their presence in literature is frequently marked. According to the quotation above, birds' behaviors resemble those of humans, and this makes birds a symbol that can evoke a range of emotions and themes in literature. Birds have been used as prevailing symbols of freedom, hope, transformation, and other themes. They can be also seen as symbols of immigration, exile and diaspora. This paper argues that birds and avian imageries are relevant symbols used by Arab diasporic writers and Western publishing houses to convey themes of scattering and dispersion as a result of chronic wars and armed conflicts in the Middle East.

Birds have historically been a source of inspiration and fascination for writers of different cultural backgrounds. In Greek mythology, for instance, many gods had sacred birds: Zeus the eagle, Athena the owl, Apollo the swan or raven and Aphrodite the dove. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Athena disguises as a "bird." Moreover, in Western culture, birds are used as symbols of separation such as in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597). The nightingale is also a central symbol in Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" where it is associated with immortality and nature. Birds are also significant in literary works like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Crusoe captures a parrot and teaches it to speak. The parrot is also seen as a symbol of women's entrapment in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899). It also represents innocence in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960).

In Arabo-Islamic traditions, a "bird is the symbol of human soul" (Afzaltousi and Jalalianfard, 2015). In *The Quran*, birds are referred to as communities resembling humans. One of the major sufist literary works that employs the symbolism of birds is Ibn Al-Attar's *The Conference of Birds*, which is a didactic allegory. It employs birds to symbolize the journey of the soul towards enlightenment. Renowned Egyptian writer Tawfiq Hakim's *Bird from the East* (1938) is an early example of a narrative in which an Arab character visits Europe. Famous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's "Here the Birds' Journey Ends" is another example of the significance of avian imageries in contemporary Arabic poetry. Moreover, the hoopoe plays a crucial role in the development of the plot of Arab British Leila Aboulela's magical realist novel *Bird Summons* (2019). In this magical realist novel, the hoopoe spiritually guides Iman, a young Syrian refugee who lives in Scotland. It becomes her *de facto* tutor in the absence of parental guidance. In its attempt to make displaced Iman feel at home in Scotland and bridge the gap between the past and the present, the hoopoe constantly relates to Iman narratives and tales that flawlessly blend Eastern and Western cultural legacies. Finally, *Birds of Nabaa: A Mauritanian Tale* (2023) by Abdallah Uld Mohamadi Bah (translated by Raphael Cohen) follows the physical and spiritual journeys of its narrator from the Mauritanian village of Nabaa

to life in Madrid, the Gulf states and Guinea. Thus, in Arabo-Islamic traditions, birds are associated with freedom due to their ability to fly. They are also associated with wisdom as the Quranic tale of the hoopoe shows. Moreover, birds in inherited in Arabo-Islamic literary heritage stand for journeys towards enlightenment and awareness as exemplified in Ibn Al-Attar's *The Conference of Birds.* This paper, furthermore, shows that birds, in some Arab diasporic novels like the novels under discussion, are associated with dispersion, border-crossing, scattering and diaspora.

The above introduction shows that birds and avian imageries are salient motifs in world literatures. They transcend spatio-temporal boundaries and appeal to authors of different cultural backgrounds. Arab writers in diaspora are no exception since in their works birds and avian metaphors are frequent and have thematic and aesthetic implications. In fact, because Arab writers in diaspora live between different cultures and draw, consequently, on their Arab and predominantly Islamic heritage and Western literary and cultural traditions, it is likely that their novels become sites over which cross-cultural influences converge. In other words, an Arab writer in diaspora has a contrapuntal vision that helps them skillfully blend Arab-oriented ideas, images, and tropes with Western ones. As symbols, for instance, birds have different cultural connotations; yet, a bird's ability to fly is taken for granted to denote liberty and crossing borders. In the context of diasporic studies, birds, especially when threatened by gunfire, may come to symbolize dispersion, immigration and displacement.

Accordingly, this paper aims at examining how birds and avian metaphors are used by some Arab writers in diaspora to reflect themes of exile, displacement and dispersion. In particular, in Inaam Kachachi's *The Dispersal* (2023) and Walid Nabhan's *Exodus of the Storks* (2021) birds and bird images are thematically and aesthetically significant; in fact, the covers of some editions of both novels feature a scene from each novel in which birds are crucial symbols that occupy some characters' minds and they even become their soul companions away from their homelands. In addition, birds play key roles in these novels, reflecting their complex sociopolitical, historical and cultural values. In order to decipher these intricate implications, this paper relies on Roman Jakobson's concept of intersemiotic translation to highlight how publishers design book covers in ways that reflect the thematic and aesthetic meanings of birds and avian imageries in these novels. We argue that this represents a significant departure from Western publishers' traditional tendency to deploy Orientalist images for marketing purposes as Kailani and Abu Amrieh (2023) show in a study on book covers of selected novels by Arab Anglophone female writers.

In Kachachi's *The Dispersal* (2023), for instance, birds and avian imageries appear in the narrative and on the cover of the novel as well. First, the title itself is a translation from the Arabic word, Tishari, which refers to a bullet from a bird-hunting shotgun. When hunted, birds scatter in the sky. This image of scattered birds is present in the content and on the cover. In the narrative, there is a mention of the Yababid birds which are mythical birds that are associated with dispersing people. In the novel, the narrator says: "He [Iskander] reunited men and women who had laid their heads on the same pillow for decades, then parted in death on foreign soils. The Yababid bird that hovered over Iraq had rolled them up and thrown them all

over the world" (Kachachi, 2023, p. 196). Thus, avian imageries in the novel are employed by the novelist to explore themes of displacement, exile and dispersal.

Similarly, in Nabhan's *Exodus of the Storks* (2021) birds are presented on both the cover and in the narrative. The major avian scene in the novel is that of the storks which Nabil has watched when he was a child. Nabil remembers, later on in his adulthood, the view of migrating storks teeming the sky over Amman one day in November. He remembers:

> One morning towards the end of November we awoke and saw the sky over Amman teeming with storks. Hundreds if not thousands of the huge birds were darkening the sky high above us as they flew north. The scene reminded me of a verse in the Qur'an that describes how Allah sent mysterious birds to save the Kaaba from the elephants of the Aksumite king, Abraha al-Ashram, in the year 570, the year of the birth of Prophet Muhammad. 'Allah will protect al-Bayt,' said Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's grandfather, when he received the news of the march of the ambitious king who, like Sharon, headed an army of 100,000 soldiers. The Qur'an says that Allah, with his mysterious birds, indeed saved his al-Bayt, the Kaaba. The emigrating storks of Amman obviously had no intention of saving anything but their own feathers. (Nabhan, 2021, p. 168)

This episode from the novel shows how important are the birds for the main character as they are related to immigration and crossing borders. Birds here resemble Nabil in their habit of migration as he lives in diaspora. After this scene, Nabil's sister comments that "Even the birds want to get away from the Arab world" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 169). This means that in this novel, birds are associated with border-crossing, immigration and diaspora. There will be more detailed analysis of bird or avian imageries on both novels later in this paper.

It is worth highlighting that Arab diasporic writers' literary oeuvres have drawn more attention from Western readers and critics after the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001, the Arab Spring and the ensuing armed conflicts and civil wars in the Middle East. Western readers have become eager to read these works as they serve as a window into the culture of the "non-Western Other." In their turn, publishing houses have increasingly paid close attention to marketing novels by writers of Arab descent to attract readers and generate more sales. Most of the time, publishers and cover designers fill the covers with widely-held stereotypical images of Arab cultures that these novels ironically endeavor to defy and rectify. In their article "Unveiling the Cover: Marketing Arab Anglophone Female Literature," Kailani and Abu Amrieh argue that the covers of novels by Arab Anglophone female writers are marketed through stereotypical, Orientalist connotations. Examining the book covers of Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* (1996) and Abulhawa's *The Blue between Sky and Water* (2015), Kailani and Abu Amrieh insist that "publishers use nineteenth-century Orientalism and exoticism to market Arab Anglophone or diasporic literature by female writers even if this literature does not mainly focus on such issues" (2023, p. 155). Hence, in most cases, publishers prioritize the Western viewpoint about Arab cultures. This can be best illustrated by the example Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj use in their introduction of *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers.* They demonstrate that novels by Arab women

writers are commodified through the book covers to meet the expectations of Western readership. For instance, Fadia Faqir's *Nisanit* is a political novel that depicts Arab-Israeli and intra-Arab conflicts through the point of view of a female protagonist. However, the cover image of the 1987 American King Penguin edition mirrors none of the political themes of the novel. It taps instead into the audience's assumptions about Arab women. Amireh and Majaj state:

> The cover features the image of a woman completely draped in black, set against an expanse of geometric tile. […] But it bears virtually no relationship to the actual novel, in which women and men live their lives within a complex weave of political, social, and economic pressures that are not reducible to a unidimensional "Islamic" or "patriarchal" oppression. (2014, pp. 5–6)

This example shows how marketing policies exploit and manipulate texts by Arab Anglophone writers. As Amireh and Majaj succinctly put it, the book cover of the 1987 American King Penguin edition of Faqir's *Nisanit* reflects a convergence of "assumptions about the 'oppression' suffered by Third World women […] with interest in the 'exotic veiled Third World woman' to create an eye-catching image […] designed […] to attract readers and generate sales" (Amireh & Majaj, 2014, pp. 5–6). Hence, one may argue that marketing policies tap on the expectations of Western readers about Arabo-Islamic cultures.

Undoubtedly, book covers are crucial marketing tools that are supposed to portray the content and encourage readers to buy the books as Alexis Weedon states: "Book covers can be seen as a doorway through which we glimpse the text [...] It is the threshold between the public commercial arena where the book is for sale and the more intimate world of the text where the author speaks to us alone" (2007, p. 117). A book cover, in this sense, is seen as a visual translation of the verbal sign as it gives a glimpse of the text. In his tripartite division of the notion of translation, Roman Jakobson defines intersemiotic translation as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign-systems" (1959, p. 233). Jakobson states: "We distinguish three ways of interpreting a verbal sign: it may be translated into other signs of the same language, into another language, or into another, nonverbal system of symbols" (1959, p. 233). Accordingly, Jakobson described three styles of translation: Intralingual translation (rewording), Interlingual translation (translation proper) and Intersemiotic translation. He calls the third type or the Intersemiotic translation "transmutation." Although Jakobson has less dwelled on intersemiotic translation, Nicola Dusi argues that "intersemiotic translation is a complex "form of action," not a simple transcodification but a transcultural, dynamic and functional event caught between the requirement to remain faithful to the source and the need to transform it into a text that is understood and accepted in the target culture" (2015, p. 183).

Dusi's argument can be expanded to include book covers. With reference to the previous quote, the book cover is not just a mere transcodification of the narrative, but it rather includes dynamic and functional transcultural issues. This is why publishers market such novels differently, paying attention to the cultural difference and otherness. Thus, book cover illustrations are not "translations" in the ordinary use of the word. It is a translation of different

mediums, that is, from words into pictures with taking into consideration the cultural issues. In the quote above, Dusi raises a critical question of whether the intersemiotic translation is faithful to the source and whether it is understood and accepted in the target culture. These two questions are crucial in analyzing the covers and their representation of the contents of the selected novels in a way that helps us comprehend how Western publishers market novels by writers of Arab descent. The analysis will show that publishers take into consideration the complex nature of literary representations of recent developments in the Middle East which are the armed conflicts and their consequences such as dispersion, which is depicted by illustrating birds on the covers.

Dusi maintains that "intersemiotic translation can provisionally be said to take place when there is a re-presentation, in one or more semiotic systems with a different purport and substances of expression, of a form of the content intersubjectively recognized as being linked, at one or more levels of pertinence, to the form of the content of a source text" (2015, p. 184). Hence, the cover is the visual representation of the book. Besides, according to Salmani and Eghtesadi, "Intersemiotic translation involves translation between two different media, for example, from the verbal medium into the musical medium, from the verbal medium into the cinematographic medium, and so on" (2015, p. 1185). In the case of the works by writers of Arab descent, the book designer as an intersemiotic translator has to be conscious of "the fact that there is so much of the old colonial attitude, slightly displaced, at work in the translation racket" (Spivak, 2012, p. 189) Accordingly, the book designer as an intersemiotic translator needs to be conscious of the historical and cultural contexts of the book. Otherwise, the book cover will not be faithful in representing the content. The current research shows that this tendency to use orientalist images on book covers by writers of Arab descent, as Kailani and Abu Amrieh (2023) argue, has slightly changed after the Arab Spring and ensuing armed conflicts since they triggered a refugee crisis in Europe between 2015 and 2016 (Abu Amrieh, 2024, pp. 1–15). Indeed, the crisis has captured the attention of international publishing houses, inspiring them to design book covers that reflect themes of immigration, dispersal and exile. Seen from this angle, birds and avian imageries are used to reflect these themes on book covers. Hence, this paper confirms that publishers more and more try to use content from the novels on book covers. It is worth noting that authors do not have much control over choosing covers for their books. This idea of not having control over covers is proved by a personal correspondence in 2022 with one of Arab diasporic authors, Laila AlAmmar, the author of *Silence Is a Sense* (2021) and *The Pact We Made* (2019).

Kachachi's *The Dispersal*

Inaam Kachachi is a French-Iraqi journalist and author. She was born in 1952 in Baghdad where she studied journalism at Baghdad University. She moved to Paris to obtain a PhD at the Sorbonne. She is currently in Paris working for a couple of Arabic-language newspapers. Kachachi's first novel *Heart Springs* appeared in 2005 and her second novel *The American Granddaughter*, was shortlisted for International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2009. Her novel, *The Dispersal* (2023), originally written in Arabic and translated into English by Inam Jaber, was shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. It follows the career of Wardiyah

Iskander, an Iraqi physician who leaves her country to France after the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.

Kachachi's *The Dispersal* (2023) cannot be properly interpreted without referring to the political and historical context of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq. To begin with, Saddam Hussein ruled from 1979 until 2003. During this period, many conflicts took place, including the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the two Gulf wars of 1991 and 2003, and a 13-year economic embargo from 1990 to 2003. On March 19th, 2003, according to Courtney Hunt (2005), a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq for two reasons as declared by George W Bush. The war took several phases, but all of them caused devastation and destruction to the country. According to Hunt (2005), on March 19th, 2003, the United States, in alliance with Great Britain and a small coalition started Operation Iraqi Freedom. Hunt argues that "[w]ithin three weeks, Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed, and the Iraqi military surrendered" (p. 106). On April 8th, 2003, U.S. forces seized Baghdad and destroyed a statue of Saddam Hussein, symbolically ending his regime (Hunt, 2005, p. 106).

After the overthrow of Hussein's regime, looting and arsons were rampant in many Iraqi towns. Food and other goods were in short supply; public facilities were destroyed. Ensuring appropriate health care became a problem with no drinkable water and electricity. Cultural establishments were also destroyed by the war and its aftermath. For instance, the National Museum of Iraq was looted, and the main building of the Iraq National Library and Archives was set afire. This distruction is represented in literary works and these works have been studied critically. For instance, Bouchra Sadouni and Yousef Abu Amrieh (2022) focus on the postcolonial ecocriticism angle of the novel. They draw attention on the war and its effect on environment as represented in the literary works they study. Meriem Zaarour, Eman Mukattash and Yousef Abu Amrieh (2023) also focus on the impact of war on the young Iraqi artists through studying the character of Jawad in Sinan Antoon's *The Corpse Washer* (2013) and comparing this character to Nada Awar Jarrar's character, Anas, in *An Unsafe Haven* (2016). In fact, the Iraqis have suffered on an unparalleled scale because of the invasion and poor planning for the aftermath of the overthrow of Hussein. After the invasion, Fattah and Caso argue:

> Iraq lay in ruins, wracked by war, terrorism, and sectarian civil war. The number of refugees approached 4 million, or 16 per cent of the total population, split nearly evenly among those who fled the country and those who were displaced within Iraq. It is believed that 40 per cent of Iraq's middle class had fled. More than 600,000 people had died as a result of violence since the March 2003 invasion, and the majority of these deaths occurred after the fall of the Baathist regime. Health care in Iraq is in shambles, and in a conference held in Baghdad in December 2007, it was revealed that as many as 5 million Iraqi children had been orphaned, accounting for nearly 35 per cent of the child-age population. (2009, p. 267)

The quotation above is quite relevant to the novel since it is all about how Iraqis were made refugees and how they are scattered all over the world because of the 2003 war. Wardiyah's family is a case in point. Besides, Western publishers take this cultural dimension in marketing

the novel by drawing birds on the cover to represent refugees and scattering. Kachachi's novel, according to Al-Talafeeh and Abu Amrieh, highlights the role that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays in shaping one's diasporic experiences. In the novel, for instance, the son of Wardiyah's niece creates a virtual graveyard online, a digital resting place where dispersed Iraqi families may be reunited.

In *The Dispersal*, Kachachi draws an insightful picture of Iraq before, during and after the wars that dispersed Iraqis across the world. She does so by telling the story of Wardiyah, a gynaecologist, who has reluctantly left Iraq at the age of eighty because life is unbearable there. She finally arrives in Paris as a refugee to live with her niece after the dispersal of all her family. Wardiyah saw the whole society disintegrate over the conflicts, which forced her to flee, like her own children before her: Hinda left to settle in Canada, Yasmine in Dubai and Barraq on a mission to Haiti. Wardiyah and her relatives remain marked by the memories of devastated native Iraq, and at the same time discover the difficulties of the condition of an immigrant. Kachachi tells the extraordinary story of this gynaecologist ready to do anything to survive and practice in her country, ready to leave it to continue to love it in exile.

Aseel K. Alrikabi studies the novel as a postcolonial work that shows the impacts of the 2003 war on Iraqis. She demonstrates "how the status of Iraq was in the past and how it becomes after 2003 shedding light on the internal/external policies that led to the dispersion of the Iraqi people and to the loss of national Iraqi heritage" (2018, p. 1). Thus, Alrikabi's paper focuses on the novel as diaspora literature. Rasha Al Raisi also sheds light on how the novel tackles themes of diaspora and immigration. She maintains that the "mixture of hope and fear, the nostalgia, the daily struggle and worries that [the characters] go through adds a melancholic touch to the narrative" (2019, n.p.). Although Al Raisi pinpoints crucial themes in the novel, she does not refer to themes of dispersion, exile and displacement.

The Dispersal is replete with bird imageries. In the first place, it is a translation of the Arabic word "*Tishari*," which is an Iraqi term that refers to a shot from a bird-hunting shotgun that is scattered in several directions (Kachachi, 2023, p. 7). Thus, the title in Arabic also shows avian connotations. In the novel, *Tishari* is also the title of the collection of poetry that Wardiyah's niece is writing about her family who are dispersed all over the world. Thus, the first connotation of birds appears in the title of the novel. This makes bird imagery central to the novel. Furthermore, the mythic birds, the Yababid are recurrently mentioned in the novel. In the novel, the narrator states:

> The witch struck, expelling the natives of the land to the four corners of the Earth and scattering them over continents, leaving them dizzy and confused by what had happened to them. […] She giggled and sent the Yababid bird to hover over their heads, a creature that had escaped from the pages of mythology books to hover above the rooftops of loved ones and scatter them all over the world. (Kachachi, 2023, p. 14)

As the quote above elucidates, the Yababid birds are associated with "scattering" loved ones all over the globe. In a way, this accentuates the dilemma of Iraqi people who were dispersed all over the world due to the ravages of wars that took place in Iraq. The author associates the

dispersion of Iraqis due to the 2003 war to the Yababid birds. These mythical birds represent the war that took place in Iraq and scattered Iraqis over the continents. This image of birds is central to the narrative because the narrator, Wardiyah, describes how her son and daughters are scattered into three continents just like how birds scatter in every direction when they hear the bullet of the shotgun. It looks like the Yababid birds have come over the heads of the characters and say their spells to disperse them around the world. The Yababid birds are also mentioned again when Iskander, the son of Wardiyah's niece, is digging the virtual graveyard to unite Iraqis in their death. Wardiyah's niece contemplates that people of Iraq are scattered by the curse of the Yababid birds. She says: "He [Iskander] reunited men and women who had laid their heads on the same pillow for decades, then parted in death on foreign soils. The Yababid bird that hovered over Iraq had rolled them up and thrown them all over the world" (Kachachi, 2023, p. 196). Hence, the Yababid birds here are associated with issues of dispersion, scattering, exile, immigration and displacement, and therefore, they epitomize both the title and the major themes in the novel. That the Yababid birds appear early in the novel speaks volumes for the significance of avian imageries in Kachachi's narrative. One may convincingly argue that these images foreshadow later events of displacement that Kachachi's characters experience. Moreover, the recurrence of these images in the narrative reflects the intricate relationship between characters and birds. In fact, the book cover of the novel brilliantly captures this unique link.

Avian symbolism is not only pronounced in the content of the novel, but it is also portrayed on the British paperback. Thus, the publisher, the editor and the cover designer pay a great attention to the bird imagery (the Yababid birds) in the novel to depict it on the cover (paperback here: https://shorturl.at/piafQ). The paperback draws a flock of scattered, black birds high in the sky. This image is related to the narrative in two ways. These birds are the Yababid as mentioned above. In other words, the birds on the cover are the Yababid which represents the main theme in the novel, that is, dispersion. The second way in which this cover is related to the narrative is that these birds are scattered in the sky because of a bullet from a hunting shotgun. When hunted, birds scatter in every direction as presented on the cover. This is what the word "Tashari," the original title that is also written on the English cover, means in Arabic.

Accordingly, the paperback meets the meaning of the title and the gist of the novel which is the dispersion of Iraqis all over the world as a result of the 2003 War. To clarify, in intersemiotically translating the narrative (the verbal signs or words) to the cover (the non-verbal sign-systems or picture), the publisher and the book designer take the major theme of the novel into account. Thus, the designer is faithful in intersemiotically translating the content specially that he/she is fully aware of the socio-political and cultural background of the novel. It is worth noting that the sky on the cover is unclear. This indicates gloominess and bleakness which befits the themes of war and dispersion. It is worth mentioning that the spine of the book is dark green and plain with the title and the author's name written in a classic font that is unembellished. The English paperback, thus, invites diasporic readers as well as Western readers to engage with themes of dispersion, dislocation and exile as well as the centrality of bird imageries in the novel. Hence, one may convincingly argue that scattering birds are the

best symbols to represent the above themes, a thing that the publisher of the paperback has paid close attention to.

Nabhan's *Exodus of the Storks*

Walid Nabhan was born in Jordan in 1966 to a Palestinian family that was forced to leave their home village near Hebron during the 1948 Palestinian exodus. The family settled in Amman, Jordan. He arrived in Malta in 1990 and studied at Bristol University in the UK, later taking a master's degree in human rights and democratization at the University of Malta. He has published two collections of short stories and a collection of poems. His novel, which is under study in this paper, has been awarded the Maltese National Book Prize and the European Union Prize for Literature. It was translated from Maltese into English by Albert Gatt in 2021.

To better understand Nabhan's *Exodus of the Storks* (2021), one needs to be aware of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict dates back to the late nineteenth century with the migration of Jews to Palestine. However, the novel covers the period from the Nakba of 1948 to the infamous 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. Therefore, this paper will provide a historical background of this period only. To begin with, after the withdrawal of the British forces from Palestine, a war, which was later called the "Nakba" broke out between the Israeli forces and Arab armies. The war ended with the victory of the Israeli forces, and "[a]t least 720,000 of the 1.3 million Palestinians were made refugees" (Khalidi, 2020, p. 72). In another account and according to Chatelard, "[t]he 1948 conflict led to the displacement of 900,000 Palestinians, half of whom sought refuge in Jordan" (2010, p. 3). These refugees settled in camps. In the novel, Nabil is the son of one of these refugees who were displaced to Jordan. As refugees, Nabil and his siblings are later scattered around the world. The establishment of the state of Israel, which caused the Nakba, resulted from the Holocaust of the Jews in Europe.

After the Nakba, another war, commonly known as the war of 1967, the Naksa or the Six-Day War, took place. The war ended with the victory of Israeli forces and their control over Sinai, Gaza, the West Bank (including all of Jerusalem), and the Golan Heights. After that, young Palestinians went to Lebanon to join the armed Palestinian movement. This event is significant to mention because in the novel, Nabil's brother, Muhammad, has joined the PLO. Nabil and his family have visited Muhammad in Lebanon, and Nabil relates the details of the journey.

Later on, in 1973, Egypt and Syria launched an attack on Israeli forces occupying Sinai and the Golan Heights. The war ended with United Nations Security Council passing Resolution 338. In June 1982, Israeli armed forces invaded Lebanon in an endeavor to end the Palestinian armed resistance there. In 1987, a Palestinian Intifada (uprising) started in Gaza and spread to the West Bank the following day because an Israeli vehicle crashed into vehicles carrying Palestinians. This incident was followed by Palestinian demonstrations, and they clashed with Israeli forces. In 1993, the Palestinians and the Israelis signed a peace treaty, which is known as The Oslo Accords, and it paved the way for the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, clashes erupted in 2000 when Ariel Sharon, then the leader of the Likud Party, visited the Aqsa Mosque. The Second Intifada or

the Al-Aqsa Intifada, began the next day. Yet, the deeper cause for this Intifada is the Palestinians' lack of certainty on the prospects of a just and permanent peace deal with the Israelis, especially after the collapse of the Arafat-Barak talks in Washington under the auspices of the US president Bill Clinton. The Intifada ended with a truce in Sharm al-Sheikh in 2005.

Exodus of the Storks (2021) mentions most of these socio-political events because they directly affect the protagonist's life, and Western publishers seem to be fully aware of the consequences of these socio-political and cultural factors to represent them on the cover as scattered birds. The novel commences with the protagonist, Nabil, who lives in Malta, receiving a phone call from his brother, Mustafa, who lives in Amman, informing him of the demise of their father. After the phone call, Nabil reminisces about his childhood, family, friends, especially Musa, and the tragedies of the Arab world. Born in 1967 in a refugee camp in Jordan, Nabil bears the weight of three major wars on his shoulders, namely the Nakba, the Naksa and the 1973 War. As the novel opens, Nabil has then been an expatriate in Malta for about nineteen years. His life is engulfed with mysteries that are demystified at the end of the novel. He goes to Malta to study, and then he finds a job that allows him to stay there. He is enchanted with Malta, its cities and people, particularly with his sage-like friend Simon De Brincat who commits suicide later on, causing Nabil a profound grief. Nabil also reveals his five-year love affair with Nadia, a woman from Zabbar, who leaves him because he has no will to marry her nor to marry at all. It is worth highlighting that this novel has not been scholarly researched, and thus, this article is a contribution in the scholarly field.

Exodus of the Storks (2021) was originally published in 2013 under the Maltese title, *L-Eżodu taċ-Ċikonji*, by Klabb Kotba Maltin publishing house. Apparently, the choice of the title in English is quite significant. First, the term exodus originally refers to the journey of the Israelites out of Egypt. Thus, before reading the novel, Western readers, as an interpretive community, to use Stanley Fish's words, read the title symbolically on two levels. It might symbolize the Israelites exodus, but because the writer is of a Palestinian origin, it would refer to the Nakba or the Naksa. However, the narrative defies readers' expectations as it refers to the immigration of middle-easterners to the West. In this sense, it echoes Sudanese novelist Tayeb Salih's famous book *Season of Migration to the North*, a novel that has gained a prominent place in modern literary canon since it was translated into English in 1969. Hence, Nabhan plays on the word exodus because he wants to show how the establishment of Israel resulted in the exodus of Palestinians, pretty much as the Israelites left Egypt more than 2000 years ago because they were persecuted.

The other term highlighted in the title is the "Storks," and this shows that avian imagery is central in the novel. The storks are famous for their migration habit, and for a novel that depicts themes of diaspora, immigration, displacement and exile, the storks are the best representing symbol though in the Arab culture, storks are symbol of felicity as Arabs call this bird, "Abu Saad" (the father of joy). Still, storks are well-known for their seasonal migration in Arab and Western cultures. Therefore, as it appears from the title that birds and avian imageries are significant in the novel. Nabil describes a city in Malta as "strange as a bird hovering high in the sky" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 72). Thus, even in diaspora, birds occupy Nabil's mind. As the

above quotation indicates, he likens Malta to a bird flying in the sky. This reflects how the protagonist has developed a strong relationship with birds since they represent freedom, mobility and border-crossing. As a Palestinian whose life is marked by perpetual peregrinations, Nabil finds solace in following birds' movements and observing their behaviors since, like him, birds are homeless. This is also apparent when he hallucinates in Barakka in Malta about the storks that he had seen in his childhood in Amman. He says to himself, "[y]ou think of the storks from your childhood: how far away they seemed up there! They were one with one with the clouds. If only you could have joined them or they were a little closer" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 205). This quotation elucidates that since his childhood, Nabil has been thinking of fleeing the Arab world. He wishes to fly away just like birds. Even in his adulthood, he still thinks of the view of birds he has seen in childhood. Apparently, birds haunt the main character's mind and even shape the way he perceives his life.

The "exodus of the storks" is used as a symbol to indicate the desire to immigrate out of the Arab world because when Omaymah, Nabil's eldest sister, sees the view of the migrating birds, she comments: "Even the birds want to get away from the Arab world" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 169). The birds here represent diaspora. Therefore, the exodus here does not refer to the Nakba nor to the Naksa *per se*; rather, it refers to the immigration of Arabs to the "North," fleeing the Arab world. Nabil, his brothers, Sami and Muhammad, and his friend Adnan are examples of these migrating "storks." In the novel, Muhammad "left to pursue his studies in Yugoslavia" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 109). After Mohammad's departure, Nabil states: "No one even knew that the rest of my siblings would one day stand on the same doorstep and wave their hands and leave, one after the other" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 109). Moreover, he says: "our house had more or less achieved its final state having been almost emptied of inhabitants" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 191). Thus, Nabil's siblings are like migrating storks, immigrating from the South to the North. Other storks would be other people that Musa serves at the Passport Office because Nabil says that Musa has "to wake up at the crack of dawn to get ice and lemonade to soften the queuing mouths of storks leaving the country of their birth" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 180). Musa "sold bread and lemonade until closing time at the Passport Office" (Nabhan, 2021, p. 155). His place of work is also significant because people come to this office to issue passports to leave the country. Thus, in the novel bird-related metaphors are linked to immigration, dispersion and diaspora.

The most elaborate avian scene in the novel is that of the storks which Nabil has seen in his childhood. Nabil, as a child, recalls the view of migrating storks teeming the sky over Amman one day in November. He recalls:

> One morning towards the end of November we awoke and saw the sky over Amman teeming with storks. Hundreds if not thousands of the huge birds were darkening the sky high above us as they flew north. The scene reminded me of a verse in the Qur'an that describes how Allah sent mysterious birds to save the Kaaba from the elephants of the Aksumite king, Abraha al-Ashram, in the year 570, the year of the birth of Prophet Muhammad. 'Allah will protect al-Bayt,' said Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's grandfather, when he received the news of the march of the ambitious king who, like Sharon, headed an army of 100,000 soldiers. The Qur'an says that Allah, with his

> mysterious birds, indeed saved his al-Bayt, the Kaaba. The emigrating storks of Amman obviously had no intention of saving anything but their own feathers. (Nabhan, 2021, p. 168)

This view of birds is stuck in Nabil's mind. This is why he recalls this scene when he was hallucinating in Malta after many years of leaving Amman. Thus, it is a central theme that keeps nagging on him. Upon watching the storks teeming the sky of Amman, Nabil associates this view with a holy verse in Quran about birds that saved the holy Kaaba. These birds which saved Kaaba are called in Quran as "Ababeel birds." They are messengers from God which threw stones of fire over the heads of those who came to destroy Kaaba. When Nabil says "The emigrating storks of Amman obviously had no intention of saving anything but their own feathers," he appears to have no faith in God in saving the Arab world anymore because the Arab world is full of wars and massacres. Nabil draws a comparison between the storks he sees in the sky and the holy birds of Ababeel and he concludes that they are completely different as storks want to save only themselves and flee the Arab world alone without Nabil. Through this image, Nabhan draws a sharp contrast between the past and the present: while the Ababeel birds are represented as powerful in Quran, the birds that he sees in Amman's sky are helpless. However, seeing these birds, Nabil immediately thinks of flying away, a wish that eventually comes true when he leaves to Malta when he grows up. Apparently, the publisher, Peter Owen, has captured the significance of this scene and has represented it on the cover.

The cover of the British version, published by Peter Owen, shows a hand, which is supposedly Nabil's, calling on the birds to pick him up and take him out of the Arab world. This position of the hand signifies calling for help as he wants the storks to save him out as the birds in *The Qu'ran* have saved the honored Kaaba (British cover here: https://shorturl.at/cjKU8). According to the quote above, the hand is raised in vain to ask for help, yet these birds, as Nabil contemplates, are not saving anything. However, what is worth highlighting is that the sky as described in the narrative differs from the sky on the cover. Nabil says "the huge birds were darkening the sky," and yet the sky on the cover is bright with just few birds. Hence, this is not a completely faithful intersemiotic translation of the narrative in that it ignores such minor details, yet it fits with the main themes of dispersion and displacement.

As mentioned earlier, each bird has a specific symbolic value. The Stork "has usually been seen as a good omen […that] brings fortune, gifts and the breath of life to children" (Roque, 2010, pp. 101–102). The quote above emphasizes the idea that birds are messengers of God; yet, these birds will not save him or the Arab world as the mysterious birds saved Kaaba. In fact, storks are culturally important. For instance, in Europe, "white storks are deemed so lucky in some countries that homeowners will attach wheels to their roofs in hopes of attracting pairs seeking nesting sites" ("Creating safe," 2022, para.12). The migrating storks in the novel under discussion also represent the scattering of Palestinians around the world as they were displaced after both the Nakba and the Naksa. In contrast, the Maltese edition of the cover published by Klabb Kotba Maltin publishing house ignores this important scene of storks. The original paperback or the Maltese version of the book cover draws a waving hand behind a yellowish window (cover here: https://shorturl.at/1xocQ). Apparently, the designer, in intersemiotically translating the narrative into this cover, to use Jakobson's terms, takes the concluding scene in

the novel as a focal point. Precisely, at the end of the novel, the ambulance of the psychiatric asylum comes to take Nabil. In this intersemiotic translation of the narrative, the conclusion is maximized, ignoring the gist of the novel, which revolves around exile and dispersion. The conclusion, we believe, it is not the best image to represent the themes of the novel. To sum up, in a novel that depicts its protagonist's statelessness, birds and avian imageries appropriately epitomize his position as an itinerant person who flies from one place to another in search of a perch. The cover of the British version of the novel conveys the theme displacement.

Conclusion

Recent novels by Arab writers in diaspora have increasingly portrayed the hardships and difficulties that Arab people endure as they flee raging wars and armed conflicts in their homelands. Scattered all over world, Arab immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers resemble birds that disperse in all directions once gunshots are fired at them. Hence, the scene of scared birds that hover aimlessly in search of a safe haven parallels the position of homeless and displaced Arab characters who crave safety in distant lands. Both birds and immigrants are vulnerable creatures that continue to patiently travel around till they find a place to call home. Thus, dispersal has become a theme that some Arab diasporic novelists vividly depict. In response, publishing houses have also found birds and avian imageries as convenient renditions to represent themes of exile, dispersion and displacement. In this way, Western publishers are not doing only "transcodification," to Use Dusi's word, but rather they pay attention to the socio-political and cultural factors instead of concentrating on orientalist images in marketing Arab diasporic novels. Hence, the book covers of Kachachi's *The Dispersal* (2023) and Nabhan's *Exodus of the Storks* (2021), two novels that portray their characters' peregrinations, feature scattering birds.

Since the end of WWII, wars and armed conflicts have become endemic in the Middle East, causing the displacement of millions of people in the region and beyond it. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Iraq-Iran war, the Lebanese civil war and, most recently, the Syrian civil war have caused the dispersal of indigenous people around the world. Kachachi and Nabhan concentrate on the theme of scattering and living in exile due to the violent conditions back home. This scattering or dispersion is also used to market their novels. This marketing can be shown through the covers. The covers of the selected novels can be said to be faithful intersemiotic translations of the narrative. The covers of Kachachi's and Nabhan's novels use bird images to indicate immigration and dispersion. In this sense, they conform to Dusi's argument, cited earlier, that intersemiotic translation is a transcultural and persistent process that involves a seamless transformation of a text from a source culture to an image in a target culture while remaining faithful to the original and being clearly understood and accepted in the receiving culture. Seen from this angle, book covers are sites over which aesthetic and thematic representations flawlessly converge.

The discussion above shows that after the Arab Spring (since the novels under investigation are published after the Arab Spring), and because of the armed conflicts in the Middle East and concomitant refugee crisis in Europe between 2015 and 2016, publishers started to focus on

rendering themes of dispersion, exile and immigration on the covers of novels written by writers of Arab origin. Instead of drawing images of Orientalism and stereotypes about the Arab culture, as Kailani and Abu Amrieh (2023) argue in their study on Arab Anglophone female writers, this paper has illustrated that publishing houses market Kachachi's and Nabhan's novels through bird images, and thereby, they reflect several characters' exilic and diasporic experiences. This is an important step towards more nuanced and even-handed artistic renditions that do not feed off stereotypical images that have been historically exploited to market novels by writers of Arab descent.

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The Sense of Floating and Finding Moorings in Xiaolu Guo's *A Lover's Discourse*

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Abstract

This article analyses Xiaolu Guo's 2020 novel *A Lover's Discourse*. It follows the novel's unnamed protagonist, a young Chinese woman who moves to London, traces her journey through the concept of mooring. The article examines this notion of mooring through the intimate connections that the protagonist makes with the place that she lives in and through her relationship with her partner. Using the concept of moorings as a theoretical background, the article discusses what moorings mean for the protagonist. It focuses on the theme of floating and the idea of home to outline a pursuit of finding mooring that rests in the protagonist's desire to belong in the world. Moorings, this article argues, are affective and represent an individual's desire to belong. This desire is affected by the individual's experiences in life, influencing their state of being and ways of living. For the unnamed protagonist, the expectation of mooring is rooted in the possibilities of the future where her sense of living is not lost and is retained along with her sense of being together with her companion.

Keywords: *A Lover's Discourse*, belonging, floating, mooring, Xiaolu Guo

Written with Brexit as its backdrop, Xiaolu Guo's *A Lover's Discourse* (2020) is a novel that has, as its protagonist, an unnamed woman from South China who moves to London as a PhD student. Guo's unnamed protagonist arrives in England with the desire to become someone who is of the world. This notion of being someone "of the world" relates to a sense of belonging in the world where the protagonist desires to have a place and mooring in. Guo places this notion of belonging in the world in relation to their development in place – "Characters are tied to their living spaces, and their development is tied to the changes in that space" (2023). Living spaces become important for Guo's characters as it is through these spaces that they can express their desires. This notion of developing through the changes in space is reflected in Guo's earlier work, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2007), referred to hereafter as *Dictionary for Lovers*, where the protagonist Z, by discovering her sense of self in a foreign country, finds herself moving away from the expectations of her parents and towards finding her own place in the world. Angelia Poon (2013) looks at Z as someone who becomes a global subject through the process of forming a self that stresses on emotion, affect, and the "possibilities of shared understanding and intimacy" (p. 9) in the space that she lives in. Similar to Z, the unnamed protagonist of *A Lover's Discourse* develops her sense of self and the expectations of her future through her lived spaces. The protagonist's bid to find a place in the world is a development that happens in those specific spaces that she occupies and represents her desire to find her mooring in space. The notion of mooring, for the protagonist, keeps changing and developing as she moves through space, occupying different living spaces.

A Lover's Discourse begins with its protagonist arriving in an England which itself is heading towards a new development. The backdrop of Brexit and England's own identity as a nation that seeks to leave the EU is starkly similar to the protagonist's own decision to leave China in order to pursue her PhD in visual anthropology in England. To be a "woman of the world" (p. 7), she becomes an "outsider" who, even as she tries to make a space for herself in the world, is not considered so because of her status as a Chinese immigrant. She is not a part of the country she comes to call her home nor a part of the home that she has left behind. There is a sense of loneliness that persists through the novel as the protagonist navigates through the anxiety of not having a home and trying to seek a sense of home through people, places, and language. 无语 *wú yǔ* and 无我 *wú wǒ* are two phrases the protagonist uses that stand as markers of the feeling of rootlessness which comes through the sensation of buoying without a mooring. The words *wú yǔ* are translated by the protagonist as "wordlessness" (p. 43) and "loss of language" (p. 43) and *wú wǒ* as "no self, no subject" (p. 126). The sense of loss in the character 无 – the verb defined as "not have" "be without" (Pleco Basic Chinese-English Dictionary, 2009) – situates the protagonist as one without a language or a self in the world. The outsider in the world traverses through it losing their language and their sense of self as they struggle to hold on to it, all the while negotiating with a new language and a new identity.

For the protagonist, this new language and identity that she has to negotiate is heavily influenced by her relationship with her partner, a WASP – White Anglo-Saxon Protestant – an Anglo-German man who becomes the point of the protagonist's meditation on ideas of love, desire, and belonging. The novel, named after Roland Barthes's book of the same name is, at its core, a dialogue on what love and desire are. These notions of love and desire form the

strongholds of the discourse on moorings that comes through the novel. The unnamed partner of the protagonist is a landscape architect who is vastly different from the protagonist, not only because of his identity as a European but also as someone whose idea of mooring and belonging is rooted in a different conception than the protagonist's. Yifan Jin states, "her lover, an Australian-raised German of half-English descent who shows cultural affiliation with continental Europe, cannot represent the British presence" (2024, p. 249). Like the unnamed protagonist, he is also an outsider – "I know what you mean. I'm not from Britain either" (p. 19), he says in response to the protagonist's feeling like an alien in London. However, while they both feel like outsiders in this country they have decided to reside in, their expectations of making a home there are different.

Where the protagonist seeks a house built with four walls, her lover finds a life based within the four walls of an apartment confining and restrictive, preferring the gentle swaying of a houseboat on the Canals with temporary moorings. The discourse on the space of the home, its making and the structures that become home, provides contrasting notions of what a home should and could be. The way the idea of "house" can be read moves from a utilitarian perspective towards a more affective meditation on what living in a particular space means for the couple. The protagonist's lover muses, "I often asked myself: would I be happy to live in those buildings for the rest of my life? Deep down I'm ambivalent. I find those designs too crude. Those monuments were born from the ego, but not for people. I would rather live in a tree house, or on a boat, if I could" (p. 61). In contrast to her lover's desire to live on a boat, the protagonist thinks of the lock-keeper's cottage that she had found by the canal and dreams of living in, "That would be somewhere I would like to live, if I had to choose between a boat and a house. I was not sure how I would feel, if the ground beneath my feet swayed a little every day" (p. 63). For the unnamed lover, living on a boat represents an escape from the structured, utilitarian monuments that he imagines are not truly for the people. The four walls of an apartment represent, for him, a mechanical life imposed upon him. The lock-keeper's cottage, for the protagonist, reminds her of the hometown she has left behind and makes her feel "less alien in this city" (p. 12). These distinct expectations of what they want from a home highlight the ways of living that diverge into contrasting ideas of an escape from a mechanical method of living to one that is filled with longing and desire. This notion of longing and desire represents, what is introduced to the protagonist as, a *Sehnsucht* – a German word that translates to desire or yearning and contains within it the notion of wistfulness (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Life takes on a melancholic quality of yearning that for the protagonist and her lover reflects in the houses they desire to live in.

The idea of mooring, looked at through this notion of yearning, represents a desire to belong that is reflected in the protagonist's movements in life. For the protagonist, her embodied experiences of the world are a reflection of her longing to belong. The loneliness that persists, even when together with her partner, coupled with feelings of love and anxiety of what the future holds, depicts a narrative of the desire to be moored and the journey of seeking these moorings. The language of moorings adopted in the novel is presented through the protagonist's thoughts on love, desire and her understanding of house and home. As the protagonist observes and submits to the experiences of the world and her body in the world, her perspective of the world and her own desires change. A world interpreted through loneliness,

lack, and desires, gives for an interpretation of moorings that is situated in a conscious experience of the world. Towards the end of the novel, the protagonist thinks of the word *spüren* – a German verb translated as to feel (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) – and contemplates on the "*feeling* of life," imagining life as a sensation that she misses. This missing *spüren* encompasses the notion of finding moorings in life. This article argues that the novel presents the idea of mooring through the intimate connection between the protagonist and her lover, and in her struggles to find a sense of home. As there is nothing that ties her back to her mother country, her mooring in a foreign land is through her relationship with her partner. This article contends that moorings for individuals are an affective process entrenched in the modes of living that are based on intimate encounters with others. By analysing Guo's novel, this article works towards an understanding of the relationship between a sense of floating and the desire to find a mooring for a young woman who feels untethered in the world. This article outlines an individual's pursuit of life as located within certain aspects of mooring, where intimacy, life and living, the affective modes which contribute to different possibilities of future, influence this pursuit.

On The Concept of Moorings

This article locates the notion of mooring in attachments. This sense of attachment is based on an individual's investment in a certain place. According to Charles Longino Jr., "Like boats to a mooring, persons are tied to their environment by investments in their property, by the many community contexts in which they find meaning," (1992, p. 23). Human relationships, lifestyles, and experiences of the past, for Longino, tie persons to places. An attachment to a place can thus be conceived through the access an individual gains to a place with the social relationships they form within it. Holly R. Barcus and Stanley D. Brunn (2009) state that an individual's place attachments are intertwined in the discussion of roots/routes and moorings. On the notion of place as roots, Per Gustafson states that roots "mean that place is something highly specific, something literally irreplaceable" (2001, p. 673). This reinforces that within the idea of roots, place attachments are tied to notions of emotional bonds and community. Gustafson suggests that roots involve identification with a place that is based on the individual's long-term relations with the place and the people in it. The notion of long-term relations gives the impression that roots mean that the individual is bound to a particular place, and mobility would hinder the sense of belonging that comes from long-term attachments. Here, Gustafson looks at the notion of routes, contending that the routes theme "favors a multitude of places […] reflecting an individual life path" (p. 674). Gustafson's contention of place as routes suggests that the individual's life events, that is, their choices, successes, and failures, the events that shape the trajectories of their life, make place meaningful. It alludes to the idea that mobility does not hamper one's sense of belonging but rather favors attachments to be linked to a multitude of places that have influenced an individual's life.

If the sense of rootedness is linked to attachments to a place, then the determinants of moorings, too, as Longino asserts, become linked to the place where an individual finds a sense of belonging. According to Bruce Moon, moorings are "as those social expressions which not only allow a person to materialize his or her physical, psychological and emotional well-being but also serve to bind a person to a particular place" (1995, p. 514). Moorings, for Moon, are

tied to the individual's motivation for their own well-being along with the notion of place attachments that come through the influential social relationships that the individual has formed in a place. Moon's conception of moorings places importance on the individual's own subjective perspective towards their sense of moorings. For Moon, "each mooring issue is perceived in relative terms, and so is value laden" (p. 515). This means that behind an individual's choice to consider a place as their mooring lies their own subjective experience with the place which gives meaning to their sense of mooring. Mooring is value-laden because it is linked to an individual's sense of well-being, implying that their consideration of a place as their mooring rests in their own relative desires that serve to add meaning to their own life. Bell et al. tie this idea of an individual giving value to a place to an individual's "place utility" (2019, p. 1). Helen Adams and W. Neil Adger consider place utility as a "function of place attachment and place dependence" (2013, p. 2). Here, place dependence refers to those bonds formed through place that aid an individual in fulfilling their desires. This connection between mooring and place utility suggests that the individual's relationship with place and their sense of mooring is not just tied to the affective bonds they form with and within the place but also with their expectations from the place. It highlights that facet of mobility where individual motivations are emphasized.

Moorings, therefore, can be characterized by personal experience and the sense of place itself. Dennis Conway, thus considers, the sense of mooring to explain how migrant decisions are impacted based on individual experiences and bonds of kinship, community, and institutions. Conway groups moorings as life course, cultural, spatial, and temporal (2007, p. 423), reinforcing the notion that an individual's sense of moorings is based on the patterns and events of their life, cultural attachments, spatial possibilities, and temporal notions of staying in a place. This categorization hints towards an intensity of mooring with a particular place, as owing to the degree of attachments and bonds, constituted by these groupings, an individual would consider themselves to be moored to places with varying intensities. Minna Zechner (2019) borrows from Moon and Conway to assert that moorings have a relational dimension and are based on an individual's "sense of self" (p. 69). This echoes Gustafson's perspective on routes, as Zechner suggests that the life course of mobile individuals is characterized by multiple moorings reflected in the places they feel a sense of belonging towards. The intensity of mooring thus can be formulated under this notion of multiple moorings where an individual's sense of self is realized in relation to the intensity they feel towards a particular place. Zechner also considers moorings to be characterized by a sense of interdependency with members of kin, where multiple moorings are considered on the basis of shared decision-making and "positive ways of making choices" (p. 69). Here, by placing moorings directly under the bonds of kinship that influence migrant decision-making, individual choices in terms of mooring to a place can be linked to the intimate relationships of the individual that influences their experience and attachment to place. It allows for moorings for an individual to be framed also as being influenced by the experiences of the people that they are close to.

Based on this characterization of moorings under the impressions of an individual's experiences in life, their sense of attachment to a place, and the intimate bonds that influence the sense of space, coupled with their own personal motivation towards their well-being and their sense of self, this article moves forward in its analysis of Guo's novel. The analysis'

division into the three particular themes of floating, dwelling, and affective moorings builds on this outline of the concept of moorings. It approaches the idea of floating as the state of the individual before they find their sense of mooring. This is followed by a discussion of dwelling on the notion of home, in relation to the protagonist's movement as a step towards finding moorings, and then the idea of affective moorings as that notion of place-attachments and being moored that rests on the intimate bond between the protagonist and her partner.

Floating

As the section on moorings has outlined, an individual's sense of being moored to a place is tied to their sense of belonging. In connection to this notion of belonging, the following deliberation on the theme of floating argues that the protagonist's desire for a mooring comes through her desire to find her sense of belonging in her life. The feeling of life as illustrated in the novel is situated in the feeling of floating. This notion of "floating" rests on two particular aspects: 1) the status of the protagonist as a migrant and 2) her life with her partner on the boat they name *Misty*. There is a connection between the states of floating and mooring that goes beyond their relation to water and resides in the notions of life and movement. Lines from a poem by Li Bai, translated by the protagonist as she introduces the concept of *fú shēng* to her partner, introduce the feeling of floating:

> Ah, this floating life, just a dream.
> Happiness, a deceiving mirage! (p. 173)

Floating life or *fú shēng* – also translated as fleeting life (Pleco Basic Chinese-English Dictionary, 2009) – places life as a fleeting existence that is simply a pursuit of a dream of happiness, and still a dream that individuals pursue. The protagonist's position as a migrant emphasizes this feeling of floating and her pursuit of happiness. This pursuit of happiness, for the protagonist, is tied to her trying to find a place in the world.

The protagonist loses both her parents a few months before she is set to leave China for her PhD and the death of her parents becomes her untethering from her native place – "I was […] a grown-up orphan […] condemned to be alone, whether in my native country or abroad" (p. 23). She considers "the umbilical cord" that tied her to China to be "cut, forever" (p. 93). This state of aloneness the protagonist feels is exacerbated by her feeling that "didn't need to bear the heavy weight of this country," (p. 94) and that she was just "passing through, like I was passing through England" (p. 94). It contributes to the feeling of being untethered as she has no sense of responsibility left towards her native land or to the ties that once existed in this place, illustrating that feeling of floating for the protagonist. Her pursuit of becoming "a woman of the world" and to "not be lost in it" (p. 7) is based on her feeling as if she has no roots in the world. Her roots in China have disappeared with the passing of her parents, leaving her with no attachments to the country and no reason for her to return to it. Her sense of "passing through," makes her feel as if she is just a temporary visitor, both in her native place and in England. This notion of passing through underlines the idea of not having a place to belong in the world – the protagonist floats just like a boat without mooring. Her relationship with her

partner and her building her life around this relationship is an attempt to find the sense of belonging that has been lost as soon as she finds herself orphaned.

The protagonist, despite trying to build her life with her partner, still finds herself floating in the world, a feeling she voices by comparing herself to the rootless generation – "they used rootless generation to describe the current twenty- and thirty-something people who grow up in urban spaces […] And I felt we are that generation […] And this kind of life made me feel even more rootless" (p. 116). There are two distinct facets to this feeling of rootlessness that the protagonist mentions – the rootlessness of urban life and a particular kind of lifestyle that contributes to the feeling of rootlessness. The rootless generation, a term coined by writer Li Yihua in the novel *Again the Palm Trees*, is symbolic of endless wandering (Hsien-Yung, 1976). Shuyu Kong (2016), in tracing diaspora in modern Chinese literature, talks about the feeling of rootlessness that is expressed by Modern Chinese writers as their characters travel to the West. Rootlessness, as highlighted by Kong, is covered with nostalgia for what was left behind and yet, for some, it is also about the journey taken to find a way of life. For the protagonist, her journey has been similar to this notion of the rootless generation. She is one of the rootless youths who has found herself living in an urban space stuck with just the nostalgia of her life in her native country and nothing to go back to. At the same time, this sense of rootlessness has also marked the beginnings of a new journey towards finding her sense of roots. The boat life, however, exacerbates the sense of rootlessness for the protagonist who considers this life "a camping life, a childish life, a life without roots," (p. 115), that is, for her, it represents a life that goes nowhere. The boat life, for the protagonist, does not represent her desires nor fulfils the expectations she had when she arrived in this foreign country. Her identification with the rootless generation comes through the sense of going nowhere – resembling an endless wandering without purpose – in this boat life.

In contrast to her feeling of rootlessness, her partner counters, "I don't feel I'm rootless. And I'm passing my mid-thirties" (p. 116). His feeling of being rooted in this urban landscape they both occupy comes primarily from his desire to live his life away from the confines of the expected notions of society. As the protagonist claims, "This floating life suited him perfectly" (p. 78). He finds himself unrestricted, comfortable in the boat that he mends and designs to suit his needs. The boat represents a space that is his own. Where he finds his motivation for living in this boat in the freedom of movement that it gives him, the protagonist is left feeling stagnant. "So colorful, so full of life. This was something I didn't have […] the vitality" (p. 95). The floating lives of the protagonist and her partner are starkly different from each other, even though these lives are lived in the same space. Where her partner finds himself free from the confines of a concrete, urban life, the protagonist feels stuck in this floating state. Like the boat that floats in the Canal, going nowhere, finding mooring in the stagnant water filled with algae, the protagonist, too, finds herself stagnating in this life.

Ghassan Hage (2009) uses the term "stuckedness" to describe the immobility that surrounds the state of "going-ness" of an individual. It is the feeling of waiting and the lost "capacity to imagine [a] future" (Moderbacher, 2020, p. 165). The boat life for the protagonist represents this feeling of stuckedness –

> I felt (*Ich spürte*) I was some nameless peasant wife […] Instead of reading and writing, or thinking about my project, all the time I worried about basic things – filling up the water container, checking the gas bottles. I would never just take a walk for the pleasure of it. (p. 69)

The routine of the boat life makes her feel like a peasant wife rather than the woman of the world that she had set out to be. The basic things that fill her life make it hard for her to imagine the future that she had aspired for when she left for England. Rather than caring about her own well-being, her life is configured in the routines of maintaining their boat life. The protagonist is in this 'stucked' state as she finds herself immobile living a stagnant life. As she lives on the boat with her partner, her desire to find a place to belong, to find her mooring, places her in an almost contradictory state of being stuck.

Home

The protagonist's life on the boat is built according to the desires of her partner who prefers the floating life over those designs of houses he believes are not built for people. This notion of living/building life in accordance with one's own interpretation of the idea of a house, then leads the discussion of finding a sense of belonging in place. Here, this section considers the notion of place to be tied to the idea of houses that the protagonist lives in. The protagonist's boat life further contributes to another aspect of mooring – the idea of a home. As mooring is assumed to be linked to place attachments and the notion of building a life in a certain place, the idea of home also becomes tied to the expectation of mooring. For the protagonist, the idea of home is connected with ownership – "My flat did not feel like home at all […] I owned nothing in this country" (p. 43). Their boat becomes the first home she owns with her partner – "It belonged to you and me. A home, a *jiā*" (p. 74). The character for *jiā*, 家 as she explains to her partner, consists of two radicals, one symbolizing pig and the other a roof, signifying that "a family is self-sufficient" (p. 74). For the protagonist who arrived in England with no sense of belonging, the boat becomes the first step towards self-sufficiency, of having a family, and of putting down her roots. However, as the earlier section highlights, despite owning a boat, she feels as if she is floating and stagnating in it.

Owning a house is directly linked to the protagonist's identity, as she can only call herself as a person who belongs if she legally owns a home in this foreign land. Shigehiro Oishi (2010) ties an individual's residence to their "lifespace", that is, the interconnected world of an individual's social and psychological environment. For Oishi, an individual's residence affects their behaviors, emotions, and formation of interpersonal relations. It also influences an individual's decision to move, as Oishi locates mobility in the individual's decision to choose their well-being that is related to their residence's environment. Turning back to the conception of mooring as expressions that allow the individual to conceive the expectations of their own well-being, further helps in understanding the protagonist's position in relation to the boat as something that she truly does not consider as her mooring. "Living on a boat was like not having a home any more. No roots, no land. I was deserting the solid earth, because of you, and launching myself onto an unstable surface" (p. 66). She chooses to live a life on this unstable surface only because of her partner. It adds to the notion of belonging that is not only

tied to an understanding of belonging through place but also belonging through people. 家 translates not just to home but also family and the protagonist's decision to live on a boat resides in this idea of 家, of a belonging that comes through making a family with her partner.

Kimberly Dovey distinguishes between the concepts of a home and a house by conceiving home as "a kind of relationship between people and their environment" (1985, p. 34). While the protagonist works towards making the boat her home, she is never truly satisfied with her life in it. Separated from the city and its buildings, her stake of a claim in the world – this boat and their life on it – keeps her away from the world itself. In her endeavor to escape from this stagnancy, the protagonist suggests moving out of the boat and to an apartment. This suggestion comes at a time where she discovers that she is pregnant. "I quietly hoped you would not be too sad to lose the boat. Perhaps it was time for you to build a real home for us. A real home. A house with solid walls and proper roofs" (p. 191). Her desire for a house with walls and a roof emanates from her desire to be a part of the world and through it a part of the stable ground that she has left behind. Her desire stands in stark contrast with that of her partner, who finds himself walled and confined in the flat they rent after they let go of their boat life – "You know I want to live with you, but not in a flat. I've been thinking about it for a while and I want to live in a *Bauernhaus*" (p. 203).

The *Bauernhaus*, a farmhouse, that they buy in the German countryside, represents the new possibility of a stable ground for the couple. This, too, is a house fixed according to her partner's wants – "you were fulfilling your fantasy by projecting our future onto that piece of land. What about me though? Would I fulfil any of my desires through this project?" (p. 261). However, as the protagonist's partner sets his expectations of the future upon this land, the protagonist herself is left questioning her own lost desires. Like the boat, this house becomes a place that has no vitality, where she is stagnating – "I couldn't see myself staying here—with the peace around me becoming like the silence of a graveyard […] After only a few months of living in this valley, like a fish out of water, I was gasping for life" (p. 264). The farmhouse, just like the boat, remains a place of confinement for her dreams and aspirations. It keeps her isolated from the connections of the world that she seeks – "It was so still […] simply too quiet. Where were the people?" (p. 264). She desires to return to London, where she can "feel the vigour of life […] I wanted movement […] I missed the human world, the feeling of struggling and living among other people" (p. 265). The protagonist's partner agrees to move back and together they decide to find a house near the canal like she had desired.

Mooring

Elisabetta Giuliano, in her analysis of *A Lover's Discourse*, contends that "language and communication between lovers" (p. 458) are the fundamental elements of the novel. In contrast, Eunju Hwang (2013) contends that the protagonist of Guo's *Dictionary for Lovers* and her relationship with her partner deteriorates because of failed communication. Hwang argues that the relationship crumbles because of "the unwillingness of Z's lover to compromise on his beliefs and values and because of Z's inability to accept the possibility of other ways of life" (p. 82). As Giuliano notes, the concept of "*yuanfen* 缘分 (fate)" (p. 465) seems to be a shared

thread in both of Guo's novels as the protagonists fall in love with the partners at first sight. As the protagonist claims, "The decision was made without me or you knowing it. And yet, I still had not met you then. You were there, somewhere not far from the water, looking in my direction, without seeing me and without my seeing you" (p. 267). This idea of pre-destined connection between lovers seems to undermine the will of the lovers. However, the two separate trajectories that the two relationships take highlights that there is something more than fate that ties the lovers together. This something, this section would argue, is the notion of mooring that resides in the affect between lovers.

Unlike the protagonist of *Dictionary for Lovers*, the protagonist of *A Lover's Discourse* compromises with the expectations of her lover – to live on a boat and later, to move to a remote countryside of East Germany. Similarly, her lover, too, gives up on the boat life – moving back into the confines of a flat – and returns with her to London, from the farmhouse he had built. They both feel equally bound to each other's expectations of life. Their opposing desires could have led to a crumbling relationship just like the pair in *Dictionary for Lovers*. However, they remain tied to each other. Giuliano argues that though Guo's lovers demonstrate a struggle in their relationship, in the end, they look for a "possible coexistence, a balance" (p. 466). This notion of balance resides in an understanding of mooring. "Aren't you worried about having to change the mooring all the time?" And here was your answer: "Not really, you are my mooring" (p. 64). In this conversation between the couple, the idea of mooring is situated in the notion of a person. The relationship between the two and their decision to lead a life together marks the conception of a mooring that is rooted in affect. It is an idea of mooring based on notions of desires, love, and intimacy. "My love for you was to do with this boat life, this water, this landscape, and where we would finally moor" (p. 87). The feeling of being together – the idea of "we" – is what roots the protagonist and gives way to the protagonist's imaginings of the possibilities of her future. There is a sense of boundedness in the protagonist's conception of love.

The sense of uncertainty that follows the protagonist upon her arrival in England is eased when she starts thinking of her future in relation to her partner. There is a sense of fixity in the relationship with her partner. Maria Borovnik divides the idea of fixity into two categories – immobilities and moorings where, immobilities have "aspects of distance, monotony and uncertainty" and moorings are "linked to shared experiences, predictability and some certainty" (2012, p. 60). Her life on the boat reflects this sense of monotony and uncertainty, while the certainty of her relationship with her partner, their shared experiences of life together represent their mooring in each other. Finding a mooring, or an anchoring to a place for people can be considered as "an accomplishment" (Martini, 2021, p. 60). Envisioning a clearer future feels like an accomplishment for the protagonist who feels as if she is constantly floating and stuck without moving forward. When the couple decide to get married after they find themselves pregnant, the notion of an uncertain future disappears further, and the sense of belonging becomes a fixity for the protagonist through marriage and their future child – "Perhaps *happy* was not a right word. But my future now seemed much clearer. My visa, my legal stay in Britain, all this could be solved very quickly" (p. 191). The anxiety of an uncertain future disappears as the possibility of a change in status through marriage presents a means for the protagonist to change her temporary position of stay to a fixed mooring. Mooring, through this act of

marriage, becomes layered – with the protagonist attaining a sense of belonging not just in place but, through the legal implications of marrying a European, also in those affective bonds of kinship that tie her to her partner.

Mooring, as posited through this section's explorations, exists as a sense of possibilities rooted in intimate relationships. This sense of intimacy is also tied to the notion of belonging – a belonging that comes through the relationship with another individual and the space they find themselves situated in. Matthew Ratcliffe's conception of the idea of existential feelings as feelings that constitute an individual's "sense of the belonging of the world" (2012, p. 24), structuring their reality through a *felt* sense of the experiences of the individual contributes to this understanding of moorings. The nature of possibilities for the protagonist, who finds herself simultaneously constricted by her relationship and freed from the anxiety of a temporary future, highlights a *felt* state of life that is constantly being reconfigured according to her experiences. There is a tangible feeling to the possibilities that open up to her as she looks at her future with her partner. This future rests in not just the possibility of them together but also her own individual personhood with her own desires. The idea of belonging *of* the world, is an "affect" based notion of pursuing possibilities of life and living, borne through experiences of the world. To find a mooring is to, therefore, find a sense of being in the world, a constant pursuit of the sense of self and identity, an accomplishment in establishing one's personhood through the social and intimate relationships that transform them.

As the protagonist searches for ways of living, she finds herself placing a sense of belonging to a world that she has claimed – "Still, London was the place I had begun my adult life, the place I had finally realized that I had forever lost my parents and my home country" (p. 265). London becomes a mooring of her identity as an adult in the world, marked by her loss of a past identity. She cannot go back to her home country as she is not of that world anymore – there are no moorings she can find there, no family to return to. London, this urban space, becomes the place of her transformation – from a young woman to an adult, from someone who called herself a peasant to a city dweller, and as someone with a new family that she has built on her own. The protagonist's desire to find a mooring and her looking at London as a place that she can go back to and live is the expression of finding a mooring that is based in the relational affects and place experiences of the life that she has lived and will continue to live.

> England would be our Western Chamber, and the German farm would be our Eastern Chamber. At least this way, you said, you would feel better, knowing there was a wild land waiting for us to return to, if the city life became too hard to live in one day. (p. 266)

The protagonist had, at a point, sectioned their boat, inspired by *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, into the Western Chamber and Eastern Chamber. The Western Chamber, which she claimed was hers, where she spent her time reading, sleeping, working on her thesis, and looking at the views of the canal through her window, was reminiscent of the ancient western chambers where girls spent their whole lives. The Eastern Chamber was the men's territory, and on the boat, it was where their deck and living room were located, a space where her partner built and designed their home according to his preferences. The marked spaces underline the

different expectations of living as it stands for the protagonist and her partner. The life that they had imagined before meeting each other was different, and the life they build together is entrenched in the compromises they make to sustain their relationship and overcome these differences of expectations. Their sense of mooring, thus, becomes tied not simply to a place but living in a place together.

Conclusion

This article has looked at the idea of mooring in Guo's *A Lover's Discourse* primarily through the feeling of floating, connecting it to the protagonist's idea of home and a sense of belonging that resides as much in the protagonist's relationship with her partner as in the homes they find themselves living in. As it reaches the concluding section, this article turns back to the notion of a sense of self discussed in the theoretical outline of the concept of mooring. The sense of self was argued to be connected to an intensity of mooring which is tied to the notion of an individual having multiple moorings in life. In *A Lover's Discourse*, the protagonist could be said to have lost her first sense of mooring when she loses her parents and becomes an orphan, her next mooring comes through her partner. The intensity of her mooring in this relationship with her partner has underlined her moorings in place. The boat, the farmhouse, the flat – the places they reside in – reflect her attempts to find mooring in place, and the varying intensities of these attempts to find moorings are also connected to her desire of living a life filled with vitality. These attempts may leave her feeling as if she is stuck in stagnancy, however, they also represent her will to keep persisting. The compromises the protagonist and her partner make adds to this notion of pursuing moorings together, changing their moorings in place if it does not satisfy them.

The beginning of this article had talked about the character 无 – the notion to "be without" or to "not have". By the end of the novel, the protagonist possesses a house by the canal, a family, and a sense of self that is tied to both the place that she has chosen to reside in and in the bonds of intimacy that she has forged in this place. She is not an orphan anymore and her yearning feels as if it is fulfilled. The experiences of place and people influence her, she grows, as she claims, as an adult. "In Chinese, we say *liu shui bu fu*—flowing water does not rot" (p. 225), the protagonist's words reflect that contrasting notion of floating and moorings that this article has outlined. While the feeling of stagnancy in the protagonist's life seems as if it would persist, it does not. Instead, what is given way to is a movement from one place to another in an attempt to escape stagnancy and to find stable ground. The protagonist's life, thus, resembles this notion of flowing water, that is, a life lived in movements, finding vitality and a sense of belonging that does not confine but instead reflects a *feeling* of life.

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Manuscripts are checked with anti-plagiarism software (iThenticate). However, while the editor makes reasonable efforts to determine the academic integrity of papers published in the journal, ultimate responsibility for the originality of submitted manuscripts thus lies with the author. If it comes to light that plagiarism is suspected in a published article, the journal adheres to guidelines from the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE).

Main Journal Articles

Article Structure

Title

Ensure that your title accurately reflects the contents of your paper and is free of errors.

Abstract

A concise and factual abstract is required (maximum length of 250 words). The abstract should state briefly the purpose of the research, the principal results and major conclusions. An abstract is often presented separately from the article, so it must be able to stand alone. For this reason, references should be avoided, but if essential, then cite the author(s) and year(s). Also, non-standard or uncommon abbreviations should be avoided, but if essential they must be defined at their first mention in the abstract itself.

Keywords

Immediately after the abstract, provide a minimum of three keywords.

Introduction

Present purposes of the study and provide background for your work. As per APA7, no "Introducation" heading is needed.

Conclusion

The main conclusions of the study may be presented in a Conclusion section, which can include the main findings, the implications and limitations.

Acknowledgements

Collate any acknowledgements in a separate section at the end of the article before the references and do not, therefore, include them on the title page, as a footnote to the title or otherwise. List here those individuals who provided help during the research (e.g., providing language help, writing assistance or proofreading the article).

Footnotes

Footnotes should be used sparingly. Insert them using Word's footnote function (size 10 font, single splaced), ensuring that they are numbered consecutively throughout the article in superscript Arabic numerals. Please do not insert footnotes manually.

References

In-Text Citations

Please ensure that every reference cited in the text is also present in the reference list (and vice versa).

Reference Style

Within the text: Citations in the text should follow the referencing style used by the American Psychological Association (APA). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Sixth Edition, ISBN 978-1-4338-0561-5.

List at end of paper: References should be arranged first alphabetically and then further sorted chronologically if necessary. Please single-space, and indent after the first line of each.

Reference to a Periodical Publication:

Lee, J. (2018). Yasukuni and Hiroshima in clash? War and peace museums in contemporary Japan. *Pacific Focus*, *33*(1), 5–33. https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12109

Reference to a Book:

Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (2000). *The elements of style*. (4th ed.). New York: Longman, (Chapter 4).

Reference to a Chapter in an Edited Book:

Mettam, G. R., & Adams, L. B. (2009). How to prepare an electronic version of your article. In B. S. Jones, & R. Z. Smith (Eds.), *Introduction to the electronic age* (pp. 281–304). New York: E-Publishing Inc.

For more details about referencing, please read our APA Referencing Style Guide.

DOIs

Full DOI's need to be added, where available, to the referenced work.

Hyland, K. (2007). Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *16*(3), 148–164. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2007.07.005

Style Checklist

- Please use APA style – APA Referencing Style Guide.
- 12-point Times New Roman font.
- All paragraphs and body text justified and single-spaced.
- One line should separate paragraphs or sections.
- Set page size to A4.
- Margins: Microsoft Word "Normal": This is top, bottom, left and right; 2.54 cm.

- Main headings, subheadings and sub-subheadings should be formatted as in the Article Template below. We recommend a maximum of three levels of headings.
- Please be as concise as possible when writing articles. Generally, regular articles are expected to be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length and short papers are expected to be 1500 to 2,500 words (NOT including references footnotes). No abstract and no keywords are needed with short articles.
- Japanese names should follow the modified Hepburn system of transliteration, including the use of macrons for long vowels.
- Contributors for whom English is not a native language are responsible for having their manuscript checked by a native-speaking academic prior to submitting their paper for publication.
- All figures and images must be inserted in a JPEG image format, within the page margins. Left justify images. Do not insert loose objects such as arrows, lines or text boxes. Please include figure number and caption above the figure (Figure 1: Caption), left aligned. Please ensure that all figures are referenced at least once in the main body of the text.
- Tables should be created within the Microsoft Word document, should fit onto one A4 page (if possible) and should be numbered and captioned above the table (Table 1: Caption), left aligned. Please do not insert tables as images. Please ensure that all tables are referenced at least once in the main body of the text.
- Do not use any page headers, footers or page numbers (footers are acceptable if they contain footnotes).
- Use only portrait layout. Do not include any pages in landscape layout.
- Corresponding author contact email address should be added to the end of the paper after the reference list. IAFOR is not responsible for unsolicited emails received.
- An optional Acknowledgments section may be included as the last section before the reference list. Please ensure this is as concise as possible.
- References should be single-spaced. Each reference should be indented after the first line with a 1-cm hanging indent.

Title Page Should Include:

- Title of the paper.
- Author names and affiliations: Provide affiliations for all authors (where the work was done) including full institution name and country.
- Abstract: A concise and factual abstract not exceeding 250 words is required.
- Keywords: Immediately following the abstract provide a minimum of three keywords (alphabetical).

Additional Information

APA7 has changed its table style and no longer has side or upright lines.

Table 1 (bold, left justified)
Regular Demographic/Informational Table (Title Case, italics, left justified)

Column Label	1 Column	2 Column	3 Column	4 Column
1 Row	x	x	x	x
2 Row	x	x	x	x
3 Row	x	x	x	x
4 Row	x	x	x	x
5 Row	x	x	x	x
6 Row	x	x	x	x
7 Row	x	x	x	x

Note. Any table note goes here (size 10 font)
All tables and figures are left justified (not centered).

APA7 does not use Latin terms unless in brackets (parenthetical). Instead, the style guide requires the follows:

cf.,	compare
e.g.,	for example,
etc.,	and so forth, and so on,
i.e.,	that is, that is to say,
viz.,	namely,
vs.,	versus or against.

However, “et al.” can be used in both narrative and parenthetical citations. “ibid” is never used in APA style. As per APA7, we don’t use superscript on things like dates (the 7th to 13th century). Instead, everything is normal sized (7th). Superscript is only used for math in APA. APA7 doesn't use single quotes unless it is quotes inside quotes. Here for example should be single quote: In ‘Origins of the Philippine Languages’, Cecilio Lopez mentions that…
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