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Female Inferiority, Existential Representation, and Heritage: A Feminist Reading of A Jewish Saviour by Salmah Al Moushi

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Abstract
Arabic feminist narratives have taken significant steps towards developing their unique narratives amidst numerous other discourses that attempt to confiscate their elements. The features constituting Arab feminist discourse have been numerous and varied, but narrative stereotypes and repeated disclosures almost dominated the general direction of Arab feminist narrative themes. Accordingly, this research paper adopts a non-stereotypical approach towards investigating the investment of feminist narratives in cultural potentials and the choices of experimentation. This paper stemmed from the following research problem: Have Arab women narratives been able, in some of their aspects, to represent cultural potentials and questions of experimentation in formulating their feminist discourse in a way that bridges the gap, both in form and content, between them and the overall Arab narrative? This study has taken A Jewish Savior (2016), a novel by the Saudi writer Salmah Al Moushi, as a model that examines the employment of heritage in framing female inferiority existentially through a non-stereotypical proposal both in form and content. This study has been surrounded by many pitfalls; hence, it seeks to evaluate the novel’s ability to overcome them in its capacity as a recently published feminist model. The novel will be analyzed from a feminist point of view with a special focus on existential representation and ideology, olyphony and experimentation attempts, and textual transcendence and the cognitive employment of heritage.

Keywords: Arab feminist discourse, existentialism, female inferiority heritage, feminism and identity, Jewish Savior, Salmah al Moushi

Introduction

Most feminist writings stem from a problem stated as “the presence of a cultural defect in our everyday lives” (Al Saegh, 2008, p. 201), leading to the necessity to differentiate between the themes involving men and women. Despite women’s themes being accepted initially within the concept of women forming a specific awareness about themselves and that they “do not see things as men do” (Selden, 1985, p. 196), Arab feminist writings in the past decade have witnessed a transformation in themes which resist the idea of marginalizing ideology, heritage and experimentation while structuring the narrative text. These elements are essential requirements for narrative writing in general and acquire a sense of deepness and the ability to keep up with other forms of literature without expressing the gender-based anxieties imposed during the early stages of the formation of the feminist narrative in which feminist writing met the condition of “the presence of the woman’s/writer’s awareness of herself and her existence” (Al Ghuthami, 1996, p. 182).

The transformational stage in the feminist mentality still needs further liberation in terms of cultural traditions and dominant practices. According to Simone de Beauvoir (1949) the restrictions imposed on women as a result of their upbringing and cultural assumptions limit their creative capabilities. However, introducing the liberation of women was limited in some Arab feminist writings to the concept of gender for some time. Such women writers exerted all their efforts to uplift spirits against the predominance of masculinity in a way that created stereotypical themes and enabled the cultural system to penetrate their writings (Shamali, 2016). This led to the exposure of feminists’ efforts to a large degree in terms of the themes they provided, which were pivoted around the same idea using the same instruments. In no way does this undermine the legitimacy of their themes. However, it should be taken into consideration that feminist writings during that period suffered from a stereotype that had to be avoided through new means, techniques, and themes. These would enable feminist discourse to keep up with developments, renew itself and allow itself to be affected by other literal models that are capable of this renovation and manifestation.

Such change can be achieved by supporting feminist thought in novel writing through ideology, the energy brought by heritage, and experimentation efforts. Kristeva (1994) says:

The issue of strangeness is connected to gender difference. We, men and women, are different creatures. The women of my generation who developed the feminist movement following the year 1968 insisted primarily on difference. According to Simone de Beauvoir, for instance, the issue was one of exposing identity or equality between men and women. An individual could realize that it was a struggle for equal pay and equal rights… but for another generation, the issue was a recognition of difference, an issue of facing (strangeness) and coexisting with it, not as two rival groups and not based hatred but as two independent entities, each respecting the other (the stranger). (p. 53)

Clearly, Kristeva encourages reconsidering the feminist writing style regarding its logical discourse. The current novel-writing scene provides us with feminist writing models which have
dispensed of the common stereotypes and have adopted new ideas and themes. One example is *A Jewish Savior* by the Saudi novelist, Al Moushi (2016). The novel is catching in its title and new in its theme as it presents the suffering of women throughout a collective history of fixed mentalities, rather than being caused by a person, man or woman, against women. The writer drew from existential references in her cultural themes. The question to be asked is: To what extent did she succeed in representing the modernizing discourse of her idea?

This study aims to reveal the existential representations in *A Jewish Savior* by Salmah Al Moushi and to explore the expressive instruments she used in her novel’s discourse- whether being ideological, drawn from heritage, or experimental- in resisting the idea of female inferiority throughout history of humanity and in presenting solid feminine models capable of changing this idea. Therefore, this study draws on feminist criticism as a foundation to solve the study problem. The study is a theoretical effort which seeks to evaluate and explore the novel through three significant aspects: Existential representation and ideology, Polyphony and experimentation attempts, and Textual transcendences and the cognitive employment of heritage.

1- Existential Representation and Ideology

Representation refers to all forms of the Other’s presence in a literary text, at the levels of characters or relationships of time, place, and cultural symbols (Al Zahrani, 2007, p. 51). It is a philosophical term used in Semiotics and suggests that the role of language is to represent things or to be instilled on a nonlinguistic reality. According to this understanding, words were seen as signs representing objects in the world (Al Qadi et al., 2010, p. 112). Feminist writing showed great creativity in representing its ideas through language, coupled with a strong narrative and representation to produce the knowledge it aspires to. Therefore, whereas Semiotics limits the process of representation to language and analyzes it as closed or constant, later developments dealt with representation as a source of producing knowledge (Hall, 2003, p.42). This knowledge produced by feminist discourse shapes the identity which represents the core of the feminist narrative. It suggests the idea of liberating itself from the masculine institution and its stagnant texts. This is caused by a state of “dynamic correlation between the referential experience and the narrative form, or between history and structure, which characterizes the feminist narrative in a way that this narrative represents the discourse of the Self in this world” (Bu Izza, 2017, p. 31) in resistance to the privileges of patriarchal control which lives by its cultural and social support and is not inherited through instinct or nature. Therefore, it is the “result of gender and not sexuality. It results from culture, not nature” (Bu Izza, 2017, p. 35). This conclusion has created a state of fruitful conflict between feminist narratives in the form of resisting the idea of gender from the novel’s point of view on one hand, and rejecting narrative representations of female inferiority and existence on the other hand. Therefore, female inferiority and female existence are evident in the struggle between meanings (the signified) and images (the signifier) rather than at the level of the traditional conflict between masculinity and femininity. It is more involved with the textual, documentary, and fundamentalist conflict, which has consolidated the inferiority of the female through divine and mythological scriptures. Therefore, the representations of pain are positioned against the models of defeat, submission, and loss.
A Jewish Savior is distinguished by a double narrative structure. It is a narrative of two stories: the story of “Majd” with her lover “Ghaith,” and another story narrated by “Majd” about a Yemeni Jewish orphan girl named “Yusha”. The narrator, Majd, is described by her best friend, Anoud:

She would only see me as a radically educated person- as she used to describe me. In her mind, I was probably only a bohemian, liberated, suspicious and strange girl. She could be right about me as each of us has her own way of living, which she has created for herself, or which has made her the person she is. Each one’s daily life has developed differently. *(A Jewish Savior, p. 99)*

Majd represents a model of an educated girl who thinks differently than other normal girls. Knowledge and culture have refined her and made her deeper and more sophisticated. She is capable of providing a deep existential vision about the female in this life. The story narrator divides the novel’s pages in half between “Majd” and “Yusha”. Yusha has suffered from being an orphan living in an orphanage after losing her entire family in a traffic accident. Her grandfather, Afiazer, is her only alive relative. She begins her journey in search of salvation amid consecutive pain and loss, and resistance to the static heritage of scriptures and ideas.

Majd creates a model of the woman who resists through wisdom, knowledge, and science: “I believe that the essence of the soul is its ability to think logically. This does not depend on whether you are a man or a woman” *(A Jewish Savior, p. 67)*. She then earns the right to develop the feminine Self. Thus, a female is more capable of writing about other females, and she can reclaim the power of steering the boat, of representation, speech, and expression of the female as the Self, away from the stereotypical binary opposition of masculinity and femininity, and feminist identity politics. *A Jewish Savior* symbolizes continuity, salvation, and passing through the gateway of pain to reclaim the lost essence and reshape the image. Therefore, the female is not only a body, a flesh; she is also a “body-self” *(Lakoff and Johnson, 2016, p. 9)*.

This Self cannot live without a discourse resisting the dominant social and cultural powers through a text that rebuilds the feminist identity amid the inflicted pain and regressive scriptures. Helen Gilbert (2000) describes the idea of representation as a reflection of “identity, voice, and hence empowerment” *(Gilbert and Tompkins, 2000, p. 6)*. This cannot be without having a voice and the ability of representing it.

Through Majd, the story’s narrator, Al Moushi introduces an existential representation of female inferiority and women’s dilemmas throughout history in a way that leads us to reconsider the dominant fundamentals and our convictions. The protagonist, Yusha, says, “A person can be free inside his mind and not somewhere else. Yes, that is the truth” *(A Jewish Savior, p. 117)*. The achievement of the existentialism of the woman/the narrator and the woman whose story is being narrated requires a belief of and a practice that “their existence is not merely a departure from the probable to reality; neither is it simply continuing to live a negative life” *(Hilal, 2012, p. 320)*. The matter is more profound and effective because existence “has a positive implication through which a person can accomplish himself in his own world… but humans exist because they surpass this to reach their own ‘self’ with an awareness that needs continuous being…and this being needs
“a choice” (p. 320). This choice needs to be made based on freedom and contemplation, which is where “Majd” quotes the Greek novelist, Kazantzakis: “Oh, when will a human being become free like this; I hope for nothing. I am not afraid of anything. I am free” (A Jewish Savior, p. 43).

Existential representations in Al Moushi’s text are abundant in a way that shows the value of freedom of writing for a female. “Nobody knows that my anxiousness is a large existential one. My senses are unable to feel my dreadful existential boredom” (A Jewish Savior, p. 70). Such freedom achieves the desired existential basis as existential anxiousness requires the novelist to search for the essence of things: “My permanent search for the essence of things exposes the world around me and returns me to the starting point…everyone here is wearing a mask” (A Jewish Savior, p. 98). This search moves away from the stereotypical conflict between femininity and masculinity to a new level of existential conflict that places both women and men before a deeper and more critical problem: “I am like all those people… I am searching for the answers that would make my soul at peace with something” (A Jewish Savior, p. 237). This choice to move forward in search for an answer follows taking a risk “because making a choice is a type of risk” (Hilal, 2012, p. 320). The significance of the centrality of existence is paramount in feminist writings in a way that develops the conflict to a new level that involves nurturing the soul away from the problem of the body. The narrator has cited a line by Sartre that states: “We do not know what we want and yet we are responsible for what we are - that is the fact” (A Jewish Savior, p. 98). What we are is what represents the centrality of existence for a female narrator. The narrator, “Majd,” and the narrated, “Yusha”, both suffer severe conditions that are not directly related to the patriarchal institution. The orphanhood suffered by Yusha is caused by fate and is exemplified by Jewish teachings that firmly state the idea of female inferiority. On the other hand, “Majd” suffers from her longing for “Ghaith.” “Ghaith” is her salvation and remedy and, therefore, she had to face his prolonged absence through reading, writing, and indulging deeply into different thoughts and ideologies, out of her belief that “every life is important in a way or another and no life is complete in our deep existence. We are not perfect” (A Jewish Savior, p. 109).

The idea of imperfection provides existential comfort to the narrator’s soul. Her protagonist resists the notion of female inferiority and fluctuates between the fakeness of life and the absurdity of waiting:

Here I am waking up to another fake day, other boring details, many lies, unjustified patience, a tiring wait for a life that will not come. I do not know what it is with me. I have started to wake up every morning and sit and think about life and death, about absurdity, about nothing, about the Mahdi and the Messiah, the antichrist, and about the shopkeeper who will bring the bread and milk. (A Jewish Savior, p. 80)

This degree of existential sophistication in the theme reveals a delicate representation of feminist writers’ feelings towards their existence. The issue has exceeded the idea of gender to the notion of existence in its complete form.

The idea of existential representation in the novel is coupled with the representation of female inferiority in religious scriptures and the cultural heritage of humanity. The narrator, “Majd”, is
keen on proving this idea through her resistance. She puts much effort into extracting its foundations to suit the case of her protagonist, “Yusha”, who is searching for her salvation from her pain and loss: “There is an ancient heritage circulating between the people of that land suggesting that females are unwelcomed, and that it is difficult for a family to accept having a girl as she is born with nine curses that come along with her” (A Jewish Savior, 18). This text is mentioned in the context of exposing the idea of women’s inferiority in the Jewish teachings, representing a problem for “Yusha” and a reason behind her harsh life being a female. Therefore, she had to look for her salvation, even in death. Females are equated with sin and inferiority: “Thank God I was not created a woman”, in an early announcement that steals the female’s self and deprives her of her natural authority to compete, learn and prove herself, and not to be limited to a narrow spiritual corner created for her by others as confinement of nonnegotiable concepts.

Yusha, we were not in the Haredim community. Men in Haredi Judaism have numerous servants. They have creatures to deliver children and please and serve them. A man must not walk between two women or two dogs or two pigs. Women are not allowed to walk on the men’s side of the road. He who teaches his daughter the Torah is teaching her sin, and the Torah is better burned than handed to a woman. (A Jewish Savior, 152)

These foundations in the Jewish faith on the concept of inferiority surpass the limitations of community and culture, which can be overcome in one way or another to become sacred ideas embedded in minds and souls, and cannot be violated. The narrator’s use of such texts mentioned by the story’s characters is a form of advancing the struggle to a religious text level more than it being a social norm that could be limited through writing: “Believe me, the Lord did not create us for Him to punish us and then regret our existence” (A Jewish Savior, p. 135). The narrator adds a representation of the value of women in the Christian and Islamic faiths by saying:

The Talmud describes women as a bag of filth and the Jewish religion stresses that women should be prevented from receiving an education and that they are unclean and impure. No problem! We were not the only ones described as unclean, sinful and evil. Christians believe that women are originally impure and unclean, and Islam sees them as lacking sanity, unclean, and as symbols of satanic seduction. I have learned that they have the same fundamental teachings regarding women. Religions are surprisingly similar, and long ago, people were debating whether women had souls or not. (A Jewish Savior, p. 135)

This large number of religious texts and scriptures symbolize an acceptance of the unrivaled idea of inferiority in religious doctrines, as mentioned by Yusha, who feels the weight of these texts on her shoulders to the extent of expulsion. Therefore, she confronts them through contemplation and by bearing the pain while waiting for salvation:

Why do I always have to be the girl who vigorously defends her human species, which has been cursed since eternity and was always the weaker, the lower, and the lesser? How can women reconcile with this history? My heart has become more valuable through the years, and I no longer need to share myself with a life that is unlike me. (A Jewish Savior, pp. 134-135)
Existential representations of women’s inferiority reoccur throughout the work, whether by the narrator, “Majd,” the protagonist, “Yusha,” or her friend, “Eliana.” These sorts of utterances serve as a step closer to salvation that will not be achieved without dismantling these widespread authoritative texts, which gain their power from their religious references.

Feminist texts try, through their transformations, to avoid confrontation with the patriarchal authority, favoring to deal with the fundamental texts that control society’s understandings and conduct. Such a confrontation with religious texts requires two mutual actions, the act of reading and the act of writing. There must be no submission to the authority of those texts or the viciousness of society.

The term “salvation” develops throughout the novel, starting with the title. The term is suggested in the second word of the title and in the form of the active participle “savior” in an indication of Yusha’s ability to provide salvation and grant it to whoever needs it, such as the narrator, “Majd,” and “Eliana.” Therefore, “Yusha” would be a provider and a receiver of salvation at the same time. The following lines are by Eliana, Yusha’s friend:

We did not commit any sins, but we are saved through our fates as lonely orphans confined to this place, these conditions and these times. We cannot but move on with patience and satisfaction and live as saved ones. My mother told me before she died: I fear that I will pass away one day and that you will not find your way. Indeed, she predicted the path which I will not know how to pass. (A Jewish Savior, p. 172).

The place, time, and loneliness imposed a condition of ‘no choice’ on Yusha and Eliana. The latter presented a hopeless submissive discourse towards the destiny of the Jewish girl with no salvation in near sight. On the other hand, Yusha, saw a glimpse of hope towards salvation and experienced this hope with vigor and patience with the help of her grandfather, Afeazer. Yusha says:

Do you think that salvation means to celebrate history’s slaughtering and wars committed by our ancestors? No, my friend, salvation is that love and dedication given to you by your grandmother. She was your Christ and Savior. Get up and celebrate her, light up some colorful candles and wish her soul some peace. (A Jewish Savior, p. 147).

Salvation is not achieved by glorifying and sanctifying scriptures without reviewing or assessing them. Also, women should dedicate themselves to giving love to one another because love and education are safe paths towards salvation from the tyranny of scriptures and their teachings. After experiencing much pain and oppression, and after gathering her determination to overcome her ordeal, Yusha says, “Indeed, you have chosen the way to save your soul. Don’t you agree that through embodiment, return, and liberty from the agonies, pain, and sufferings, the soul is purified and can, therefore, reach perfection?” (A Jewish Savior, p. 200).

A question that must be raised here is will females succeed in reaching this level of spiritual salvation amid this segregating and oppressive existential representation of their inferiority? The
answer lies in the ability of the female model to stand firm and transform her pain into positive energy. Such transformation is not achieved by all the feminist symbols in the novel. For example, Majd is neither able to gain inspiration for salvation from the cultural scriptures living inside her nor is she able to find salvation in her protagonist, Yusha. On the other hand, Yusha succeeds in crossing the road leading to salvation despite her harsh conditions and being surrounded by Jewish scriptures and teachings imposed on girls of her age. Majd says at the end of the novel, “Blessed are the deprived ones who chased love naked, bare and honest…those who were saved by pain and separation” (A Jewish Savior, p. 257). She also adds, “Blessed are the orphans who only needed a little window to look through and see the sky. They were saved by their orphanhood. Blessed are the ones whose lives stood still and hung between their hearts and the skies” (p. 257).

In this monologue, Majd acknowledges that Yusha successfully finds salvation, whereas she is not able to follow steps. Whereas both experienced suffering, the model provided by Majd in her capacity as a narrator and novelist, in the form of Yusha, is more capable of transforming the ills of pain and orphanhood into a remedy. It is as if the current state of suffering experienced by feminism is similar to that of orphanhood and rupture, which cannot be overcome without confronting scriptures with knowledge and separation, pain and weakness with patience and determination. Yusha’s salvation is achieved through contemplation, knowledge and patience, not through withdrawal and surrender. Mohammed Gheneimi Hilal says about existentialism, “Were he to withdraw himself and try to achieve his individual goals, which he does not share with his people or class, he would become a rebel. There is a difference between a legitimate revolution and rebellion as the latter is inhumane and violates human principles” (Hilal, 2012, p. 321).

Clearly, A Jewish Savior addresses abundantly Jewish Talmudic teachings that intensify the suffering experienced by Yusha. Such scriptures required substantial effort exerted by the author to explore them and connect them with the story’s events. She addresses the Feast of Lots (Purim), which is celebrated on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Adar (p. 144). She also explores the strict view of the Haredi community towards women (p. 151), the Jewish Sabbath (p. 165), the reincarnation of souls to better the soul (p. 200), the Day of Atonement (p. 203), the Thirteen Principles of Faith (p. 219), the circumcision ceremony (p. 232) and many other Jewish events that are connected to the lives of Yusha, Yamen, Eliana, Afeazer (the grandfather), the mother, Seraphim, and Shammas (the father). This effort enhances the scope of the work. It supports the argument that female suffering is already enrooted in doctrine scriptures and is not merely the product of patriarchal control overpower. It also reveals the power of women’s writings, their understanding of ideology, their use of it, as well as their ability to dig deep into its roots. It also forshadows their ability to create a situation of intellectual discussion on a human level among all nations to clarify female inferiority representations, the features of their existence, and to try to eliminate them.

2- Polyphony and Experimentation Attempts
The issue of polyphony in the narrative discourse stems from multilingualism. This is a key idea in novel writing, according to Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975), who asserts that the novel is “a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (Bakhtin, 1987, p. 33). Therefore, what we say in a novel
must have various voice options, implying that language supersedes the idea of the relationship between the uttered and the uttering to something more complex. In its experimentation phase, the Arabic novel has achieved a noticeable level of maturity regarding the idea of polyphony in the novel genre, mimicking the variety in Arab life.

Through the aforementioned, it can be said that Bakhtin construes the idea of polyphony from “the flow of linguistic forms, methods and specific structures of different origins, between speakers living in a specific society. These forms, methods, and structures cannot be attributed to the sole subjectivity of the speaker” (Saveurs & Raemdonck, 2009, p.100). Therefore, Bakhtin implies that the theme of polyphony is the principle behind the theory of language and literary discourses. The voices within a novel engage in dialogue, indicating a dialogue between different ideologies without defeating the others, whereas characters present themselves through the representations of names, characteristics, actions, and appearances. These voices achieve the principle of dialogue and eliminates the idea of monophony, as is the case in poetry.

*A Jewish Savior* is divided into two generative stories. Whereas the title foreshadows the second story only, the novel is narrated by an educated narrator while expressing her conditions and crushed soul due to her current reality and explaining the effects of her suffering more than the reasons behind it. Her chronic suffering drives her to begin writing a novel about ‘Yusha,’ an orphan Yemeni Jewish girl who had no fortunes in life. Therefore, the narrator faces Yusha’s challenging conditions, orphanhood, and rupture through patience, contemplation and deep knowledge leading to the protection of her ‘Self’.

The novel is woven in style similar to that of *The Thousand Nights and One Night*, which supports the idea of polyphony. The novelist/woman uses “Majd” as her narrator. Majd reveals her tragedy without determining the specific reasons for her sorrow except “Ghaith” leaving her and not visiting or calling her too often. Therefore, “Majd” turns to writing as a way for salvation by depicting the tragedy of Yusha. The narrator directs narration as she tells her own story or that good part of it to find a spot with a clear vision allowing her to own her female voice and diminish the effects of dependency on patriarchal literature. Through her determination to hold the right to her narrative and that of her protagonist Yusha- who is a symbol of marginalization, as her issue is beyond the geographical interests of Arab feminist writings- the narrator can elevate her case to a comprehensive human-level away from the guidance of creeds and the pressures of hatred.

Assigning the powers of representation to a female narrator attempts to own the voice, direct the discourse and reclaim the female Self. Further, the novel has even granted the narrative authority in some parts to Yusha for her to provide a perspective on her reality through representation, not speech. Because Yusha symbolizes the oppressed stolen women by means of a cultural ideological setting, therefore, discourse must be confronted with discourse, raising the value of experimentation in the novel’s structure by achieving a state of narrative duality with consent between Majd and Yusha’s stories. This duality creates a form of narrative reinforcement, which is meant to be in its own self. Majd says while chatting to her friend, Anoud, “My thoughts are confused. You know that I am busy writing the events of my novel these days. I want to finish before the end of April” (*A Jewish Savior*, 73). In another context, she says, “I have to make my
coffee and start completing my novel. The story is calling on me to write it” (*A Jewish Savior*, 83). Within this duality is intentionality to construct this narrative reinforcement between two stories. Despite the difference in time and place settings, the space for oppression and suffering is the same. Women’s worries can only be solved by women. It is a narration action that overcomes geographical, religious, and cultural obstacles to create a unified case involving pain, exclusion, orphanhood, and separation. However, these conditions form the path to salvation. Majd” says:

I have a sadistic tendency to torture myself when I’m writing stories about people’s suffering. I have this deep urge to share their agonies. I would feel ashamed of myself to write a story about a tortured soul while sitting on a riverbank, or writing in a luxurious place, or while eating tasty food. I have this obsession to share with them…their most real agonies (*A Jewish Savior*, pp.14-15).

The lines reflect the voice of the novel’s primary narrator and the clear statement about her intentions to share the agonies of women with them, regardless of the differences. She declares that sharing the sufferings and refractions is a remedy to her soul, as much as it reflects the woman’s ability to unveil her voice which intersects with the voices of other females. Majd, the narrator, is keen on highlighting her name in the novel as a clear announcement of her issue. She narrates her story publically and speaks with Ghaith openly. This dialogue highlights her name as she does not remain unknown: “Oh, Majd! It is more like a divine holocaust to purify the soul” (*A Jewish Savior*, 52). This issue of highlighting the narrator’s name reveals her voice and identity directly to enable her to use them in confronting the identities (masculine or feminine) that try to deprive her of her feminist voice.

The narrator did not hesitate in directing the whips of her criticism towards other women whom she sees as unworthy:

Women are everywhere standing under dim candle lights, smoking cigarettes in a way that shows that they are doing so to prove to themselves that they are strong and liberated. Colored faces, fake actions, and gestures which ignite a silent rage inside of me…they are an example of women who think that personal importance and worth lie in the jewelry they are wearing or in smoking a cigarette in an unprofessional way. (*A Jewish Savior*, 90)

In a different context, she adds by saying, “They are in a bitter, psychotic conflict between what they want and what they are” (*A Jewish Savior*, 96). The narrator tries through her narrative voice to criticize women who are unprepared to have the awareness required to advance their cause and appear as composed individuals, therefore, to allow them to face masculine dominance, which is acquired along with the weapons of ideological and heritage scriptures. Hence, it is no wonder that the narrator describes herself as a bohemian, liberated, mysterious and weird girl, which she justifies confirming that each of us has his/her own particular life. Such belief eliminates the individual voice and supports the idea of polyphony, which is the novel’s purpose.

The narrator is keen on restructuring the voice representations in the novel by resisting rival thoughts through action and patience, and describing cases of suffering. The novel does not
represent events as much as it represents thoughts and allows a discussion between them. Therefore, the characters’ views are expressed in the form of conflicting voices, suffering is exchanged, oppression is confronted by force, and wisdom is confronted by knowledge. Contrary to usual feminist novels, this novel does not conform to the typical layout of story narration which involves a rational development of the plot where one voice is in control. Instead, the narrator divides the narrative authority between herself and the protagonist Yusha in a way that builds the narrative representation on a dual basis of vision- as mentioned above. This narrative technique allows the protagonist to narrate part of her story using her own voice, not that of the narrator. After gaining the choice to narrate part of her story, Yusha says:

I have been a sad girl from the start. Now, they are calling me weird, and to them, I am close to being mad...Had I not become very tolerant and forgiving while looking at them-all of them- I would have become the same as them, cruel, unable to forgive and ignorant of the truth. (A Jewish Savior, pp. 175-176)

Obviously, this duality in a narration has caused splits in the story’s structure, which have resulted in highlighting other similar stories such as the suffering of ‘Yamen’, the deaf girl who was Yusha’s roommate in the orphanage. Yusha says, “I would complain a lot about her silence. She would not say or reject anything; she is just silent! Her silence led me to talk to myself, to find my inner voice” (A Jewish Savior, 191). Yusha discovers the meaning of a person finding her inner voice. She is able to talk to it, complain to it, criticize it, scold it, torture it, and even insult it. This deafness can be interpreted metaphorically as the forcefully imposed silence that appeared in many women’s stories, women who were forgotten or enslaved. So, how can we reach salvation through silence?

When Eliana comes to the orphanage, she becomes Yusha’s roommate. Quickly she begins to talk about her tragic family life and the cruelty of her parents which is dictated by a religious doctrine. She belongs to a Jewish community called the Haredim. She believes that she was a normal quiet child who was “immersed in silence and fear. I learned to be afraid at a very young age, maybe when I began to fear animals, people, strangers, physical pain, sickness, and even death which I began fearing and not understanding” (A Jewish Savior, 191). Eliana has witnessed all forms of human humiliation, terror, physical pain, illness, and defeat. She has faced many ordeals and experienced them to the fullest which has shaped her personality.

This tale reproduction produces the story’s theme and founds for the notion of desired salvation. Majd narrates her social ordeal and her pain due to her distance from Ghaith, who has a mirage dimension in work. She then resorts to Yusha’s story, pleading for salvation. Yusha tells her story and is not hesitant to make way for the presentation of other women who also deserve salvation. The rotation takes place in an experimental structure consistent with the meaning presented by the novel. And this harmony is coupled with the narrator’s announcement of the idea:

Why should I always have to be the person vigorously defending my human- kind which has been cursed since ancient times...female power has been obliterated intentionally and placed in the dark for the past 4000 years. How have humans been misled about the truth
of the female as being motherhood...mercy...life...truth...justice...dignity...knowledge...and enlightenment? (A Jewish Savior, pp.134-135)

The narrator’s voice as such limits the stereotypes abundant in feminist writings as this voice calls for reviewing the injustice inflicted upon females throughout entire human history.

These branching paths in the story’s narrative structure have paved the way to employ some epistemological issues related to the story’s subject and the intention behind writing it. There is a clear surpassing of the gender problem which shaped feminism in the Simone de Beauvoir and Virginian Wolf phases and the era to follow, in favor of other issues of knowledge which are firmly attached to feminism such as orphanhood, doctrines, and wise manhood (in the form of the grandfather, Afeazer, and the absent lover, Ghaith).

The idea of polyphony could not have been achieved as desired without the narrator, Majd, and the protagonist, Yusha, resorting to the act of writing. “There is no reason to live except to write the final scripture which I wish to produce as a way of trying to create an absurd tale” (A Jewish Savior, p. 188). The narrator, who is busy putting herself together, does not monopolize the narration to her own, personal story. The novel is divided into fourteen unnumbered sections, each of which begins with a quotation cited either from Arabic or world heritage. These sections are split evenly between the two stories, which is a sign of the equal importance of both narratives. Therefore, Majd, the narrator, is granted the right to represent her voice and express her thoughts strongly. Thus, the narrator has provided a narrative style that consolidates the independence of the work’s characters and provides them with the freedom to suggest, complain. The first-person pronoun also has an essential role in enhancing this right, dispensing of the option to use an overall narrator with complete knowledge who narrates but does not participate in the events. The use of the first-person pronoun, whose knowledge is the same as that of the characters, is a form of presenting the witnessing narrator as the work does not need to reveal the hidden features of the characters, and those characters do not need a representative and are capable of expressing themselves, as noticed throughout the work.

The above-mentioned has achieved freedom in the structure of the novel’s form in an untraditional way caused by the experimentation efforts exerted in writing. This novel does not seek simply to tell a story, but it provides a new model that dispenses the stereotypical theme and presents a narrative structure that grants the work freedom from the authority of form. Such technique has provided a space for expression and performance, which has guaranteed highlighting suffering and its causes and has provided an element of surprise in the methods of the presentation without depending on the authority of events, their succession, and the suspense they create.

The polyphony connected to the discourse structure imposes restrictions on the author’s powers preventing her from forcing her will on the other characters. Accordingly, the reader is authorized to reorder the story’s events and decide their meanings and significance. The reader is also the one who predicts their endings in light of the semantic oppositions, different points of view, and the perspectives of the narrators who represent speaking entities because “identity is achieved by
reclaiming voice and speech and by owning your discourse” (Bu Izza, 2017, p. 43). This personal discourse resists stereotypical images and fake beings. It pushes towards reconsidering the past and future, and puts limits to the incursions of dominant cultural representations through personifying the feminist voice and making it heard without the guardianship of the narration. This also leads to the personification of women’s individual experiences more than placing the blame on others. Kristeva wonders why strangers make her so anxious. She answers, “Maybe there is something wrong inside me, or maybe there is an unsolved problem or something unwise in me that brings me sorrow. And instead of solving this problem, I blame the stranger as if he were a scapegoat” (1994, p. 52). These lines indicate a transformational feature in feminist themes which have begun to address

the conscious and unconscious structure of the forces of fear, desire and repression among individuals, and women, in particular, to extract the coercions imposed on them which impede their creativity and conceal their genius, yes the genius of women! This transformation may be achieved by rereading her maps, providing new mental considerations, and mutual planning with men without distancing or oppressing them (Bakai, 2018, p. 66).

It is a retreat from mental and intellectual conflicts produced by feminist writings in their early stages and a refusal to submit to those ideas that insist on dismantling patriarchal dominance through hatred, exposure, and marginalization without looking deep into the consciousness of women’s individual experiences within the law of polyphony, which females seldom perfect in their narratives. Resorting to this approach by a small number of feminist writers is a reestablishment of their consciousness via imposing their voices through their texts.

3- Trans-sexuality (Textual transgression) and the Cognitive Employment of Heritage

The idea of textual transgressions surpasses the formal framework into becoming signs that cannot be understood without analysis, interpretation, and revelation of their apparent and concealed relationships within the whole text in which they are included in. Gerard Genette says, “I do not currently care about the text except for its textual transgression; anything that, openly or secretly, connects a text with other texts” (Genette, 1985, p. 17). Textual transgressions, in their capacity as an advanced term for thresholds, involve texts that strive to build a particular cultural structure where the text rotates consciously in its sphere. They include intertextuality within a text, moving us from the idea of intertextuality to that of transposition because the text must interact with its title, preface, conclusion, and subtitles.

The novel used several forms of textual transgression to highlight the idea of the existential representation of female inferiority. It used these transgressions as cultural shields through which it refutes these thoughts deeply rooted in successive ideologies throughout the ages. The novel made use of fourteen texts which were cited throughout its sections and which intersected textually with more than twenty quotations from the vast heritage of both global and Arab intellectuals from various places and eras. Thus, through textual transgression, the author tries to raise the value of the existential representation of females in her novel as her feminist cause is not haunted by
resisting direct patriarchal dominance but aims to find a place for women’s writings on the human cultural map.

3.1 Citation texts

The novel included several quotations in its sections with different cultural references. These quotations began with a poetic passage by the contemporary Iraqi poet, Hamdan Tahir Al Maliki, which was followed by two quotes by the Greek novelist, Nikos Kazantzakis, two quotes by the Russian poet, Anna Akhmatova, two other quotations by the American poet, Sylvia Plath, a quote by the French singer, Edith Piaf, a quote by the Brazilian novelist, Paolo Coelho, a quote by the Austrian poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, a quote by the Russian novelist, Dostoevsky, and a final quote from the “Song of Songs” in the Old Testament. This large number of quotes proves that this novel is guided by previous works of culture, framed by deep citations, and is an extension to deep human knowledge, not detached from it.

In the first quote, Hamdan Al Maliki says, “I am a seed that fell/ from a bird in the sky/ it grew in a strange land/ I was carried by the boats/ and the whimpers of the flute/ and hid behind the singer’s throat” (A Jewish Savior, p. 7). The lines provide an excellent example of an existential citation that resembles the state of hopelessness and foreshadows the significant questions asked by the narrator, Majd, who nurtured her confusion through knowledge and different cultures. She believes that “everyone is walking relentlessly through the path of the big universal plan” (A Jewish Savior, p. 7). This quotation raises the value of the lost “I” searching for salvation. This “I” is also present in the second quotation from The fratricides; a novel by Nikos Kazantzakis: “Oh God, do a miracle. Help me. How do you want me to stand alone in the face of the whole world?” (A Jewish Savior, p. 20). This quotation intersects with the events of the second section of the novel, which is an introduction to the orphanhood. Yusha will be experiencing orphanhood when she loses her whole family in a traffic accident. She has nothing left in her life at the age of thirteen except her grandfather, Afeazer, and the orphanage. She is chased everywhere by death, oppression, marginalization, and alienation, and must find her way to salvation as she resists a massive heritage of unjust scriptures. In another part of the novel, another quotation by the same Greek novelist is mentioned: “‘I am free’… ‘No, you’re not free. The string you're tied to is perhaps no longer than other people's. That's all. You're on a long piece of string” (A Jewish Savior, 42). This quotation resonates with the characters’ search for freedom. The narrator enhances this passage by a state of extended contemplation, as she believes that freedom is nothing but an illusion and by a large amount of intertextuality throughout the work.

The Russian poet Anna Akhmatova also appears in two quotations: “Perhaps, The final turn is that/ Oh, how strongly grabs us/The secret plot of fate” (A Jewish Savior, p. 28). Humans are unable to face their realities. How can Yusha face her life while entrapped inside the orphanage and captivated by religious scriptures? These quotes embody the sphere of helplessness, usurpation, melancholy, and bleakness. The writer then makes use of a poetic passage by the American poet Sylvia Plath: “Which such blight wrought on our bankrupt estate/ What ceremony of words can patch the havoc?” (A Jewish Savior, p. 57). This quotation is mentioned in the context of Majd’s long and cruel waiting for “Ghaith,” whom she has been thinking about for a long time awaiting his return. He is her only hope of a worthy life.
With Yusha’s growing suffering in the orphanage, the novel begins a new section with a quotation by the French singer, Edith Piaf: “No more smiles, no more tears/…Ring the bells/ Now it's done, why be brave?/ Why should I live like this?/ Shall I wait by the grave…?” (A Jewish Savior, p. 101). This quotation reflects the tremendous amount of sadness in Yusha’s life. She prefers death to the hell of the orphanage as she says: “Oh Lord, give me a chance to die peacefully and gracefully. Take me to you away from this punishing world!” (A Jewish Savior, p. 101). Her words echo the pain reflected in the Prelude of Talal (‘stopping by the ruins’) by the grieving voice of the nostalgic poet, thus foreshadowing the psychological composition of the characters.

With the development of the novel’s events, a new phase of transformation leading to salvation begins. Taming pain is Yusha’s passport to freedom. Such transformation brings to the novelist’s mind Paolo Cohelo’s famous words: “Since the dawn of time man understands that suffering, faced with no fear, is his passport to freedom” (A Jewish Savior, p. 110). Yusha manages to tame her life with the help of her grandfather, Afeazer, who is a brilliant example of wise, balanced masculinity. In the orphanage, Yusha suffers a life under siege despite the food, drink, and shelter. Her soul is imprisoned and she yearns for salvation. Pain is not measured through other people’s eyes; it is massive in its effect on the tortured person. Thus Yusha quotes the Portuguese novelist, Jose Saramago, who says, “Excuse me but what you see as little…I see as everything” (A Jewish Savior, p. 158). Pain is neither relative nor subject to different points of view. Pain is painful whether small or enormous.

In the context of Yusha overcoming her crisis and finding her soul’s salvation, the words by Reiner Maria Rilke, the Bohemian Austrian poet, in his portrayal of the birth of Venus, are quoted: “And as the scream slowly closed again/ and from the sky’s pale light and brightness fell back into the mute fishes’ chasm/ the sea gave birth” (A Jewish Savior, p. 222). This quotation creates a framework for the state of salvation that Yusha is going through after acquiring wisdom from her grandfather. Indeed, pain is the best tamer of the maladies of the soul. The novelist concludes her quotations with the Song of Songs (the Song of Solomon) from the Old Testament, and she chooses this part:

O daughters of Jerusalem, I adjure you, if you find my beloved, tell him I am sick with love. How is your beloved better than others, the most beautiful of women? How is your beloved better than others that you so charge us? (A Jewish Savior, p. 251)

With these lines, the novelist ends the final part of the novel, which witnesses Ghaith’s long absence and Majd’s suffering. Such pain has motivated Majd’s embark on writing her book and her occupation with Yusha’s tragedy.

3.2 Intertextuality

The novel is inspired by too many cultural texts which were embedded alongside its events, creating a state of intellectual interconnection with more supreme texts which enrich the meaning.
This intertextuality is of variable types: legendary (Brometheus, Sisyphus and, God Enki), novelistic (Ghassan Kanafani, Kafka, Kazantzakis, Bukowski, Galeano, Sabato and James Dashner), poetic (Dante, Mahmoud Darwish, Al Hallaj, Sylvia Plath, Rimbaud, and Rilke), in addition to quotations from Sartre and Goethe. This traditional and contemporary intertextuality has created intellectual and cultural interconnection, which has enriched the novel. Such intertextuality reflects that the narrator is a bibliophile reader who resorts to knowledge as a lifestyle contrary to most other women.

Among the intertextuality that mimics the narrator’s feelings is the German philosopher Goethe’s play, *Faust*. She says,

> What is happening to human masses is more like Goethe’s prophesy of the soul of Faust having a firm grip on man’s neck. Man has sold his soul to the devil and has become merely a creature made of clay. He is breakable. How easy it is to break this fragile rubble! I think that everything that is happening to me is because I am different than others. I do not belong much to their confusing world. I know I have a greater destiny. (*A Jewish Savior*, 59)

The novel’s use of intertextuality with the legend of Faust allows the narrator to define her position in society. The whole idea here is based on the loss of principles in favor of pathetic sensual desires to the extent that the narrator feels like a stranger who is forced to live in a foreign land.

This alienation experienced by Majd is also present in Sartre’s words which are also quoted in the novel: “man is responsible for what he is” (*A Jewish Savior*, p. 98), although he does not know what he wants. One existential principle dictates that the combination of ignorance, loss, and responsibility is inevitable. For responsibility to be complete, two things have to be practiced; reading and writing. “Majd” believes that all one has to do is “to complete this play called Life!” (p. 155). She needs to finish reading *The Angel of Darkness* by Ernesto Sabato, which she started reading the night before. She describes the novel as “a form of human madness! In the evening, I also have to complete writing the remaining chapters of my novel. I hope to finish in the coming days” (p. 155). Indeed, reading and writing are two necessary actions she uses to face reality and find herself a suitable place in her dark world. Reading and writing require the presence of traditional, creative, and legendary texts which can lift the narrator, keep her alive, and guarantee her salvation from the darkness of the soul and the domination of scriptures.

**Conclusion**

The novel presents a new deep model of the image of women in modern feminism. This model is armed with knowledge, intellect, and existential principles and has the right to develop the Self through its superior capacity to write about the female and reclaim its authority to guide and represent without the stereotypical comparisons between masculinity and femininity involved in the politics of feminist identity perspective. The novel shows a divergence from the intellectual and mental conflicts produced by feminist writings in their early stages, which were preoccupied with dismantling patriarchal dominance through hatred and marginalization in favor of digging deep into the conscience of women’s individual experiences.
The novel enhances the idea of constructing the feminist identity by owning a narrative voice that refutes the inferiority of the female through existential representations. The novel shows the value of women’s freedom in writing. The idea of existential representation is coupled with the centrality of religious scriptures and human cultural heritage, a centrality that controls the understanding society and of social laws. This confrontation requires two combined actions to be practiced by women; the act of reading and the act of writing.

Regarding the narrative structure, the novel is divided into two generative stories allowing polyphony with the consideration that writing is a way of reaching salvation and that this new form limits the effects of subjugation to masculine literature and allows women the right to own a narrative that combats marginalization. This is proof of the importance of experimenting with the novel’s structure by creating a narrative duality supported by profound quotations and intertextuality that form a continuity of human knowledge.

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The Hierarchy of Oppression, from Authoritarianism to Misogyny: A Study in the Monodrama of Mamdouh ʿUdwan

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Abstract
This paper will focus on the drama of the Syrian dramatist and poet Mamdouh ʿUdwan (1941-2004), who has not yet received due critical attention. During his twenty years writing for the stage, ʿUdwan resisted oppressive political regimes and was consequently marginalized and impoverished. Due to censorship, his drama does not delineate the free society that he dreams of, nor does it openly censure the sources of corruption. On the contrary, he creates ambiguous male characters who enjoy a measure of dignity and social decorum but simultaneously unravel their toxic masculinity and oppressive nature. On the other hand, women are kept offstage and are victims of either male chauvinism or social hypocrisy. This study will follow the unmasking of male authority and its parallel to political and economic hegemony. The purpose is to critique the values of Arab culture, which customarily cements male privilege. An analytical study of the form and content of ʿUdwan's monodramas That's Life (1987), The Garbage Collector (1987), and The Cannibals (1984) will link oppressive social behavior to political autocracy. It suggests that misogyny and oppression of women are consequences of men feeling crushed by dictatorship and corruption.

Keywords: Arabic drama, authoritarianism, censorship, corruption, dictatorship, domestic abuse, gynophobia, Mamdouh ʿUdwan, madness, misogyny, monodrama, oppression of women, Syrian drama, toxic masculinity, tyranny

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Introduction
The Arab World has long suffered from dictatorships and a lack of political freedoms. It also features male superiority over the female. These two domains invite a great deal of activism to introduce much-needed reforms. On the one hand, civil societies need more autonomy to active engagement in political life to reduce corruption everywhere in government and society. On the other hand, women should more visibly participate in civil society's endeavors to attain democracy. This paper analyses the power dynamics in the monodrama of the Syrian playwright and poet Mamdouh ʿUdwan (1941-2004) and argues that authoritarianism and the suppression of women in the Arab world are linked. Reform in one domain will bring about improvements in the other.

Psychological research suggested that people scoring high on authoritarianism are inclined to support the maintenance of traditional gender-role identity (Duncan, Peterson & Winter, 1997, p.46). This study will trace the links between authoritarianism and toxic masculinity in ʿUdwan’s three monodramas: The Cannibals [Akalat Luhūm al-Bashar] (1984), That’s Life [Hal al-Dunya] (1987), and The Garbage Collector [Al-Zabbal] (1987). Despite the absence of women characters, these plays present scathing criticism of the unfair treatment of women and the poor opportunities afforded to them. Avoiding a blatant discussion of the Syrian government, these monodramas also portray pervasive corruption, a decline of values, and authoritarian practices. The avoidance of any direct reference to a certain totalitarian ruler can be ascribed to the heavy-handed censorship and lack of freedom of expression in Syria under the Assad regime (Kahf, 2011, Nice, 2000 and Ziter, 2015). Shying away from offering a panacea, ʿUdwan's plays mainly dramatize a sardonic view of the absurdities caused by injustice. These plays with their exasperation mixed with warm-hearted observations of human behavior, cynical twists, and grim humor provide ideal material for studying the malaise of the Syrian society under dictatorship. Perhaps it is left for the audience and literary critics to decipher the roots of problems and push towards solutions.

Dramatic Form as a Communicative Tool
ʿUdwan stated that his goal in writing literature, rather than a sociological thesis, was to communicate his ideas in an entertaining manner that reaches most people.

I always write to those who would go to sleep if they listened to a lecture in philosophy. I write only to those who share with me the belief that it is still possible to save a human being from the gnaws of another human being (ʿUdwan,1984, p. 531).

With this humanitarian interest, he uses theatrical techniques to express the central themes of his plays. For example, having a feminist proclivity, ʿUdwan often wrote about women's equal rights and dramatized injustices done to women – precariously- in the total absence of female characters. The erasure of the female enables the playwright to portray her extreme disenfranchisement. The very form of the monologue acts as a communicative tool to enact authoritarianism. One character is given the center stage and monopoly over the expressions tools throughout the play. In a letter to the editors detailing his purpose in writing drama with a single actor, ʿUdwan said, "I wanted to expose a man's life, so I let him talk at will, and bring out the male, the man, the husband, the father, and the breadwinner" (Jayyusi, 1995, p. 56). In doing so, he delineated the multiple frustrations of the male and his consequent callousness towards the female. The man in That’s Life
is mourning the death of his wife, but the audience discovers that he was cruel to her in the way the world was cruel to him. The retired garbageman in *Garbage Collector* manifests deep empathy towards the inhabitants of the poverty-ridden alleyway as he learns about their extensive sufferings from their waste. However, he has unwavering resentment towards his daughter-in-law, who aspires for a better lifestyle. The madman in *Cannibals* loses his mind because of the secret police's excessive cruelty, but he develops a phobia of women eating men alive. Being the single actor, each of the monologists in these three plays acquires the space and power to have full command over the dramatic discourse. In effect, "the monologist represents social authority parallel in kind to both political and economic authority" (Jayyusi, 1995, p. 56). The monologue form helps portray the impact of dictatorship on the individual's psyche. As a defense mechanism against the marginalization of the individual under authoritarianism, the monologist acts as a little dictator on the stage. He has complete control over the narrative, reflecting truth from his own point of view. No multiplicity of voices is allowed. However, being capable of "creating a play with a strikingly cynical twist at the end" (Jayyusi 1995, p. 13), the dramatist keeps unmasking the monologist and allowing him to voluntarily express various facets of himself until the writer’s ultimate truth is finally revealed.

**The Garbage Collector: Misogyny and Financial Deprivation**

In the long monologue of the *Garbage Collector*, the male protagonist, Abu-ʿAdnan, describes the dire poverty of the inhabitants of the alleyway in which he used to serve. He is defensive about his injured dignity and low self-esteem, especially now that he has retired from a life-long job as a garbageman. He believes that his son only wants a relationship with him to use him as a babysitter for his grandson, a job that he miserably failed at in time of emergency. His long monologue is spoken with the background of the continuous cries of an abandoned baby who is later found lifeless in the garbage. This finale accentuates the world's harshness. Learning about people's poverty and illnesses through their discarded waste, he develops deep compassion toward their hardships and feels devastated by the prevalent corruption and apathy.

Looking into the people's waste bins, he knows that Abu-Fahim can no longer afford to buy his son's most needed Asthma medication. Om-Abdulrahman started up the medication for arthritis but could not afford to heat her room or to have her windowpane fixed (ʿUdwan, 1984a, p. 506). The empty bottles betray the alcoholism of the newspaper columnist. Lamis’s waste, which includes contraceptives and objects denoting immoral sexual activities, points to an immoral lifestyle that she has adopted in order to circumvent her abject poverty (ʿUdwan, 1984, p. 512). He is outraged as the alleyway inhabitants have lost their neighborly solidarity. People now suffer in silence, and "everyone dies alone with one's own pain" (ʿUdwan, 1984a, p. 512). It is noteworthy that solidarity has cultural affinities with the male gender, which is clear in his comment: "The alleyway used to be an extended family. Any person would take action to safeguard the dignity of the whole alleyway. Aren't there any more men left?" (ʿUdwan, 1984a, p. 512). He is traumatized because no one helped him save his grandson's life. No car stopped to give him a ride to the emergency room while he was pleading for help with a sick child in hand. The city was a heartless place, "a desert, no son, no friend, no tenderness, no dignity… a desert, nothing around but cement and lights… cars are running with mad speed as if there are no humans around, as if in a desert" (ʿUdwan, 1984a, p. 526). It is a place that has made him feel worthless: "I am stupid, stupid
garbage, a waste. I only comprehend garbage where there are no phones, no ambulances, only dirt. He who lives in dirt becomes likewise" (ʿUdwan, 1984a, p. 528). His lowest point is pictured at the end of the play when he attempts to bury himself under the piles of garbage. However, even in this abys, he can still empathize with the wretched. When he discovers that the child's cries that have just stopped belong to a dead baby cast out in the garbage, his anger with the harsh world is unbridled: "Damn this world which has no place for children, damn this world!" (ʿUdwan, 1984a, p. 528). He communicates his cynicism towards his own predicaments and those of others with a mixture of human compassion and disgust at the world's injustices.

Despite his empathy for all alley inhabitants, his misogyny towards his socially aspiring daughter-in-law is unmistakable. For him, she is too powerful for her husband, and "her strong will should be broken down by having to breed and nurse lots of babies" (ʿUdwan, 1987a, p. 521). He views her influenza as a devies ploy to capture her husband's attention. Using cultural and religious misogynistic dictums, he feels righteous about antagonizing her: "God help us from the manipulation of women" (ʿUdwan, 1987a, p. 520). To him, she is a "serpent" (ʿUdwan, 1987a, p. 521) who can control her husband and keep him "as obedient as a dog" (ʿUdwan, 1987a, p.522). Furious at being excluded from her snobbish lifestyle, he takes his life-long frustrations on her. Her attempts at improving her social status are unjustifiable and condemned to him. The oppression the garbage collector has witnessed and suffered throughout his life is projected onto the more vulnerable party in his personal life, the young woman in his family. The misogyny he expresses is just a wish-fulfilling fantasy of superiority.

**Cannibals: Gynophobia and the Maddening Effect of Tyranny**

In *Cannibals*, a madman who has just been admitted to solitary confinement in a lunatic asylum hallucinates about ‘eating flesh’. He keeps a banner on the wall with the words “They will eat me” (ʿUdwan, 1984, p. 538) as he is paranoid of the tendency of human beings to eat fellow humans alive. With wry humor, he multiplies on the metaphorical use of the words ‘eat’, ‘devour’, and ‘blood’ in popular expressions, proverbs, and well-known songs to flirt with the ideas of killing, coveting, beating, opportunism, and corruption. The plethora of the ways the term ‘eat’ is used to connote a vast array of meanings and associations is hilariously witty. For example, the famous song “how to eat you duck” (ʿUdwan, 1984, p. 539), which signifies sexual appetite, threatens him with real cannibalism. The famous proverb “he knows where the shoulder is eaten” (ʿUdwan, 1984, p.), which indicates streetwise opportunism, proves to him that humans are innately cannibalistic. The expression “my blood has dried out” (ʿUdwan, 1984, p.547), which points to excessive nervous tension, is his proof that some people are vampires who can suck the blood out of others. The fixation on such multiple figures of speech range between the comic and the macabre. Having suffered the loss of siblings and friends at the hands of the tyrannical secret police (Mokhabarat), he developed a severe paranoia of being eaten alive and is declared insane. However, there is sense to his hallucinations. Digging into his incoherent sequence of ideas, one can decipher a consistent train of thought that accounts for his madness. Being denied his freedom to mourn and protest the loss of a brother, sister, father, and neighbor due to tyrannical government, he finds that the human race is still capable of primitive brutality, thus his morbid/funny fixation on blood and "eating flesh".
Everyone eats the other alive. Even the madman's brother and his newly wedded bride devour each other, making loud noises and showing the signs of love bites and hymen blood the following day (‘Udwan, 1984, p. 548). Throughout many similar lunatic delusions, some stories present themselves as the apparent reason behind his insanity. For example, his sister Hana's flesh is 'eaten' as she is run over by a car driven by a security officer or his entourage. No one dared to press charges or ever to mention the accident. The family opted to keep quiet to limit the loss. (‘Udwan, 1984, p. 551). His brother Samer is 'eaten alive' as he is incarcerated behind the closed doors of the secret police jail. The playwright could not even give them a name. They are "that group that eats people" (‘Udwan, 1984, p. 554). The younger brother just disappeared for good. No court case was filed, and the family received no news. His father was "chewed" slowly all his life. He was barely making ends meet like a donkey running after a carrot but never getting it. Having served in a government position for twenty years, the father was forced to resign with no pension, had to resort to plowing fields at his old age, and died of heartbreak. In his job, he had "to be silent, to cast a blind eye on thefts, humiliations, immoralities, family breakdown, abnormalities and murder of girls" (‘Udwan, 1984, p.553). The secret police detained his neighbor for several days after humiliating and beating him in public. Having been once a vigorous proud young man, the neighbor came out of jail a completely changed person, utterly quiet and broken. His later mysterious death points to a suicide case because of the disgrace and trauma he experienced after his systematic torture and rape in jail. All these anecdotes of autocracy-related corruption directly caused monologist's madness. He himself was never allowed to express his thought or think freely in the first place. He recollects:

The teacher prevented me from discussing ideas in class. So did my father at home. In college, the professor also prevented me. No one accepts discussion, no discussion. Accept or be quiet, or else… This has been the motto of tyrants since the beginning of time (‘Udwan, 1984, p.549).

Therefore, the madman in The Cannibals is paranoid of being eaten alive as the suffering is not limited to his mother, father, sister, brother, and neighbor. "The malaise is in the whole world" (‘Udwan, 1984, p. 550). The madman's delusions communicate fear of the monstrosity of human beings under authoritarianism.

In his philosophical hallucinations, he expresses the play’s humane theme. He discovers that people are capable of bestiality when they can justify their brutal action, an idea that the playwright studied in length in his non-dramatic book The Bestiality of Human Being (2007). Raging upon his incarceration, he foresees an incurably depraved world that heralds dystopia. The only light at the end of the tunnel is to save the innocent children that have not turned wicked yet. He screams:

Listen, you ferocious beasts. You should change from deep within. In the future, there will be no place for cannibals. The eaten will unite against their eaters… If this rule prevails, all of you will be eaten. You will become like wounded ravenous wolves; each one will devour the other until all of you perish… your only hope is the children. Save the children (‘Udwan, 1984, p.569).
The placard that reads, "They will eat me" is replaced by "They have eaten me" (ʿUdwan, 1984, p.569). The ending calls for the propagation of humanitarian culture that has been corrupted by tyranny.

Such a humanitarian mission includes freeing women. The madman can now understand the dilemma of women who feel objectified by the male gaze and scrutinized by a judgmental society. He reflects:

God help women! How can a woman walk naturally knowing that the people's gazes are devouring her? All women walk unnaturally. .... I watched my sister walk normally at home. However, when she goes out to the street, she walks as if she is on stage, and just like any actor, she tries to look normal (ʿUdwan, 1984, pp. 541-2).

In concord with the observations of Nawal Al-Saʿdawi, the most outspoken feminist in the Middle East, in her novel Two women in One (1975), he sympathizes with oppressed women. He borrows Saʿdawi argument: "They walk in short steps, keeping their legs closed as if they are going to drop something valuable. They always keep to the herd of other women, looking for security from social scrutiny" (ʿUdwan, 1984, p. 540). However, this humanitarian outlook is impaired by the madman's phobia of women that betrays itself on several occasions. Despite his proclivity for empathy with women, which is demonstrated in his grief over his sister's death and the general dilemma of oppressed women, he fears his sister-in-law and loathes pregnant women's predatory quality. Brides are blood-sucking vampires, especially in bed (ʿUdwan, 1984, p.547). "They kiss men on the mouth, suck the life out of a man and roar fiercely in orgasm" (ʿUdwan, 1984, p.548). His sister-in-law, who 'eats' her husband belongs to the chimpanzee kind. She laughs because she does not have a brain and does not worry about it getting eaten (ʿUdwan, 1984, p.546). To him, all women are partners in one ruthless conspiracy; "either they fill their stomachs with flesh and blood of men or force men to have babies to fill their stomachs with (ʿUdwan, 1984, p. 546). While the madman's narration of the tragedies caused by the state tyranny is disorganized and muffled, he communicates his phobia of women hyperbolically.

The Cannibals recognizes tyranny as a source of evil that produces injustices, corruption, and degenerate values. However, the monologue does not stop at censuring the abuse of office under a tyrannical system. It, unaccountably, transforms the oppressed into a hater of flesh-eating females. Women are to blame for the world's follies, a tendency that is familiar in theological literature. It seems that shifting the blame to the weaker sex exonerates the male from the responsibility to set the world right.

That's Life: Domestic Abuse and Social Oppression

The projection of oppression onto women is again dramatized in That's Life (1987). In this play, ʿUdwan investigates the development of individuals exposed to injustices, where corruption prevails, where the rich control the poor, where the mighty crush the weak, where the male reflects all of these injustices on the female who is the final recipient of subjugation. The long monologue that constitutes the whole play depicts a man's psychological troubles, a conflict between his legitimate desire to lead a fulfilled, dignified life and his evil side turned sour by grievances over
pervasive corruption. Despite being crushed, he is turned cruel by the privileges he has as a male. That’s Life argues that as men continually suffer such indignities, they do not internalize their inferiority. On the contrary, they compensate for their sense of worthlessness by inflating their grandiose self and becoming absolute dictators at home, treating the wife as a second-class citizen. They even morally justify their abusive behavior by reverting to already established social and religious codes.

A representative of such toxic masculinity in That’s Life is Abu-ʿAdil. He has just come from his wife's funeral to an empty house. For thirty years, she was a self-denying woman committed to serving him, cooking, cleaning, seldom going out or making any demands until she had a bad heart and died within six months. Abu-ʿAdil leaves the mourners at his son’s house and insists on staying alone. He had whined and sobbed at her grave until he made all mourners shed tears. “I wept for a life-long companionship, the intimacy of thirty years” (ʿUdwan 1987 b, p. 60). He feels righteous that he took care of her while she was ill. He even allowed his unmarried neighbor, Samira, of forty years, to take care of her and almost stay with them. At the outset, he appears as a loyal, loving husband who exemplifies social decorum and ethics. However, while pouring out his inner thoughts, his expressions fluctuate between love, bruised dignity, and narcissism, ending in unexpected misogyny. In a gradual process of unmasking the self, he changes from an empathetic character to a repulsive indecent person.

The newly bereaved widower, the “star of the stage” (ʿUdwan, 1987 b, p. 57), will soon lose the audience’s empathy in an ironic turn. He is inconsolable after her death as he feels "crippled" because "Broken bones don't heal so easily when you are old" (ʿUdwan, 1987 b, p. 57). However, he will only miss her services and the attention he is entitled to as a male, especially since he quotes the holy Qurʾan reminding himself that men are superior to women (The Noble Qurʾan, 4: 34). While only caring about the show of propriety, he is fixated on male privileges granted to him by religion and society. He is a self-educated, powerless government employee who worked hard to raise his lowly peasantry status. He has fond memories of being treated like a king by a dedicated wife who was intuitive about his daily arrival time and was so caring as to unplug the telephone during his siestas. Despite her tireless servitude to him, he gradually unfolds his arrogance and contempt for her. He never loved her or enjoyed sleeping with her because she was an uneducated inferior peasant who could not match his level of knowledge or sophisticated city lifestyle. As he was unable to express his ideas freely in an autocratic milieu, she became his confidante, not because he trusted she could keep a secret, but because he "was certain that she did not understand it all" (ʿUdwan, 1987b, p. 61). His anger episodes and recurrent beating of her are his male birthrights. He even righteously justifies this maltreatment of her falsely basing his logic on the Qurʾanic verse (4:34):

If you do not accept what I say without arguing, I will beat you. Even the Holy Qurʾan has advised us to beat our wives…. I beat you as my birthright. I beat you to give vent to my anger. And where should a man give vent to his anger if not in his own home? ...So I give vent to my anger, I curse you, and I beat you. You must put up with me and be quiet. (ʿUdwan, 1987b, p .66).
The more he unfolds his inner thoughts, the more despicable he becomes. He even slows down while calling the doctor on his wife’s last night and does not miss the chance of noticing the beautiful body of the doctor’s wife underneath the chiffon nightgown. Moreover, during the last six months while his wife was dying, he could not stop himself stalking his neighbor Samira in the shower or while asleep, fetishizing her thighs that are "white as milk" and breasts that are "screaming like hunger" (ʿUdwan, 1987b, p.455). He even tried to sexually harass her to test if she was the chase kind. Incapable of loving women as equal partners, he mainly wants the gratification of possessing them. Samira is the perfect candidate for marriage after Om-ʿAdil’s passing, as she has never been married and will not be distracted by any memory of another man. Fantasizing about controlling the body and mind of his future wife is a perfect example of patriarchy as “a state of possession” (Moane, 1999, p. 8)

Underneath the façade of this domineering patriarch is an oppressed male, dwarfed by the hierarchical state. "Abu-ʿAdil is an example of an authoritarian Arab man, an angry roaring lion at home, and a petrified rabbit outside the home" (Al-Raʿī, 1987, p. 429). He is humiliated by pervasive corruption in public life and keeps up false pretenses of dignity, but privately exudes hatred due to his abjectness. Insisting on leaving his sons and staying alone after the funeral, he betrays himself to be a misanthrope, as he hates all the mourners and scorns their consoling calls. He recollects his fawning attitude to "vile and despicable" dignitaries from work that he used to host (ʿUdwan, 1987b, p. 61). While boasting of his honorable hospitality, he admits to his petty need for them to protect him from a toxic boss. His hypocrisy emanates from his helplessness which is well epitomized in his favorite proverb: "Kiss the hand that you can't bite, and pray for it to break" (ʿUdwan, 1987b, p. 61). This well-known proverb sums up a culture of pervasive weakness-induced hypocrisy. He does not react when humiliated or cheated by the bullies everywhere at the bread line or the grocery. Instead, he pours his anger onto the wife when she points out that he was tricked into buying spoilt produce. "Stop nagging. I know I have been cheated; I know and keep quiet. Our silence does not mean that we do not know. Rather it means that we can do nothing about it" (ʿUdwan, 1987b, p. 448). To defend himself, he camouflages his helplessness with a belligerent show of grandiose dignity as he is too good to confront cheaters and low people.

He is a complex case of a victim-offender. His account of the injustices he is exposed to within an overall corrupt authoritarian system casts him in the light of an empathetic protagonist, an anti-hero worthy of compassion. However, the more he peels the onion, his manipulative personality is more evident. His recurrent verbal abuses of his wife are a way of fending off his own self-loathing. He resents his wife because she silently knows his insecurities. "You are afraid of me, so you keep quiet! But I can read your thoughts through your eyes! I can see that you're full of accusations and indictment and that you are silently shouting 'hypocrite'!" (ʿUdwan, 1987b, p.61). Quoting Hamlet, "A beast would have mourned longer", he brushes off the sense of guilt and gets betrothed to Samira on the very same day of his wife's burial. He reveals a most callous self-entitlement to happiness: "Whoever can't live should die. And if they can't do it, then others should do it for them" (ʿUdwan, 1987b, p.75). With the multiple layers of intricate lies, he reveals himself to be an utterly abominable selfish person who has been psychologically deformed by the cruelties he has been exposed to. He is prone to inflict the same cruelties on women in his turn.
Abu-ʿAdil’s monologue is a form of poetry as it condenses the consequence of oppressive social, religious, and political factors on human identity and values. It dramatizes the pyramid of hierarchical hegemony over the male individual. The forces exerted by the authoritarian government, society, and religion over the male create a cycle of oppression that finds a final recipient in women. Male dictatorship in the family as a response to authoritarianism in the Arab world is best dramatized in the form of monodrama in which a single male is the sole owner of the discourse where no democratic communication is possible. Moreover, the monologue technique is ideal for dramatizing the tragedy of loneliness, demoralization, and disenfranchisement. Moreover, the monologue enables the playwright to delve deep into a man's psyche, one layer at a time. The first layer unfolds grief and loneliness. The Second layer shows his selfishness as he misses services and male privileges. The third layer reveals selective memories reflecting humiliation everywhere in the public domain. The fourth layer links the social and government corruption to the projection of male oppression on women. There is a satirical twist and shift in empathy in which totalitarianism and patriarchy are causally connected in this last layer. The erasure of women from the stage is a deliberate technique to depict the utter disenfranchisement of the female. She is absent from the stage, but her presence is felt as the audience's empathy shifts toward her. Although the play does not offer solutions, it firmly pushes a feminist and democratic ideology.

Conclusion

An analysis of the content and dramatic form of ʿUdwan’s monodramas That's Life (1987), The Garbage Collector (1987), and The Cannibals (1984) suggests that women are oppressed as a consequence of men being crushed by extraneous forces in public life. To write for the stage, ʿUdwan needed to circumvent the state's censorship of any criticism of the present government. Instead of delineating the free society that he dreams of, he delves deep into portraying man's compensatory process while receiving public oppression and transferring it to the private sphere. His ambivalent male characters turn out to be dignity-seeking empathetic characters and, at the same time, toxically oppressive males. On the other hand, women are completely disenfranchised as they have neither a stage presence nor a voice. The gradual unmasking of the male in these three monodramas is a creative dramatic feat as it links the atomization of the male within a corrupt authoritarian system to the individual's need to regain control by exercising the same cruelty on others. The injustices practiced by the domineering male over the submissive female indirectly comment on Arab socio-political reality, which features dictatorships and a hierarchical sequence of dominations, submissions, and subjugation. As dictatorship and corruption oppress the individuals, the society, in turn, replicates the same cycle of oppression within its components, with the female at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid. Men who are active in public life assume the role of the oppressor over silent marginalized women. So, freeing women requires freeing the entire civil society.

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References


In the Ethics of Strangers: Saul Bellow Drawing Boundaries of No ‘M’an’s Land

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Abstract:
This paper seeks to demonstrate how space in Saul Bellow’s *Ravelstein* (2000) and *Humboldt’s Gift* (1975) is acquainted with the metaphors memory, spiritual journeys and philosophical meditations. Space, in the Bellovian sense, is not local nor is it historical (real); rather, it is fictional, utopian and philosophical. By the “the Boundaries of no ‘M’an’s Land,” the researcher underpins the sublime ideals of Bellow’s mental space. By the term “strangers,” the researcher refers to Bellow’s intellectual heroes who are identified with the metaphors of space. In this concern, two fundamental questions are investigated: a) how should one argue for the idea that metaphors of space are related to memory, spiritual journeys and philosophical meditations? b) what sense can be given to the relationship between the metaphors of space and the ethics of strangers? To unmask these blind spots, the aspects of metaphors are firstly investigated. Second, the relationship between these metaphors and the ethics of strangers are examined. In the light of these primary findings, the conclusion which can be drawn is that the metaphors of space do not only epitomize the quality of American, cultural, aesthetic and philosophical discourse, but also draw imaginary homelands of “strange” intellectuals. Special focus will be given to *Ravelstein* and *Humboldt’s Gift*. Bellow’s other novels and short stories are deployed to support the thesis. The Kantian notions of human welfare and moral worth and the Hegelian assumptions of the phenomenology of spirit are key concepts to illustrate the analysis.

Keywords: Boundaries, *Humboldt’s Gift*, Hegel’s phenomenology of spirit, Kant’s Moral Theory, No ‘M’an’s Land, *Ravelstein*, space, strangers, Saul Bellow

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1. Introduction

We were to travel for another week, a foot, a foot [...] I did not have the remotest idea of where we were [...] I had great trust in Romilayu, the old fellow. For days and days, he led me through villages, over mountain trails, and into deserts, far, far out (Bellow, 1959, p. 7).

Henderson the Rain King claimed once presenting us with his sketch of how the intellectual should feel “at home in the world” (Hegel, 1977, p. 217). Here, this withdrawal in the function of space seems particularly significant since intellectuals are confident of finding themselves at home, in a distinctively sublime way once leaving the ordinary world behind. Bellow called consciousness in this “happy state” a “present living spirit,” not only because the subjects feel not alienated from/in the world but also because these subjects are continually living in a happy and Platonic world of metaphors. The immediate implication is that these fictional subjects are not real figures who are living in historical spaces, but they are ideas that are developing through memory, spiritual journeys, and philosophical meditations.

Following this claim, my subject is going to be a discussion of the way a philosopher writes about a poet compared to the way a poet writes about a philosopher. Ironically enough, it will be a discussion of the way “strangers” write about “other strangers.” Being imaginary and even mythical figures, in what way do they reflect each other? How can the storyteller bring these strangers together in imaginary homelands?

2. Poets and Philosophers in Humboldt’s Gift and Ravelstein

Logically this enormous subject will have to be limited. On this view, I am going to investigate only two narratives of Bellow: Humboldt’s Gift and Ravelstein. In both texts, space is associated with the metaphors of memory, spiritual journeys and philosophical meditations. Humboldt and Ravelstein are introduced either by an anonymous storyteller or a friend who is supposed to be a poet or a philosopher. There is always someone who should survive to tell the stories of the heroes.

Overtoning a philosophical, moral theory, Bellow likes to open his narratives with spiritual journeys and philosophical meditations. Memory, following this, is the core stone of the building of the process of storytelling. The reader can only be haunted by this enterprise. Ravelstein opens with: “if I had died I would naturally have been released from the promise I had made years ago to write a short description of Ravelstein and to give an account of his life” (Bellow, 2000, p. 230), implying that he was still alive, and he actually wrote an account of his friend. The gesture of writing the life of Ravelstein turns into a philosophical and moral duty. Everything turns into fragmented memories which both resurrect and devalues the dead Ravelstein: “having come near death myself, I don’t need to fear the guilt the living often feel about those others- parents, wives, husbands, brothers and friends- in their graves” (p. 230).
The paradoxical and reciprocal movement from the grave to the earth and back from the earth to the grave does not only alter the function of space but also paves the way for philosophical meditations:

Life would soon be back, and I would occupy my seat in the life train. Death would shrink into its former place at the margin of the landscape. The patient’s desire is to crawl or limp or maneuver himself back to the life that proceeded the illness, and to entrench and fortify himself in the old position. (p. 230)

Memory traces the boundaries of life (life-death) as well as the contour of space. The life and death struggle unravels the latter in the periphery and the former at the center. Memory and space, as can be understood interchangeably, provide Ravelstein with some sense of recognition. As a matter of fact, he wants to show that he is a subject, a human being with moral ideals and not a mere living thing. Although he knows that he is a subject (a philosopher and a poet), he needs to convince the reader that death: “death would shrink into its former place at the margin of the landscape” (p. 231), that he is not a merely living creature lacking in the subject hood. What is required for self-recognition is that one should not risk his own life; rather, he should survive even through the writing of his own memories:

Rosamund was determined that I should go on living […] it was she […] who has saved me- flew me from the Caribbean just in time, saw me through intensive care, sleeping in a chair beside my bed. When I struggle to breathe she would raise the oxygen mask to swab the inside of my mouth. (p. 225)

Bellow, then, asserts that the most basic ways for a subject to demonstrate its status as a subject to another and hence to achieve recognition for subjection is to show that it is not prepared to give up life. Ravelstein innately supports this claim assuming that: “the individual who has risked his life may well be recognized as a person” (Hegel, 1977, p. 114). The assumption behind this may seem confirmed when we read Bellow’s vigorous belief in survival as a “categorical imperative” that we must obey with the attitude of a dutiful man following orders, respecting the authority of law without regard to anything else (Bellow, 1976, 1995).

Humboldt scrupulously echoes Ravelstein. Being a mad poet, he develops his moral theory only through memory, spiritual journeys and philosophical meditations. Charles Citrine, the philosopher, is the one who should survive to tell the story of Humboldt: “I was not doing well myself recently when Humboldt acted from the grave, so to speak, and made a basic change in my life […] he left me something in his will. I came into a legacy” (Bellow, 1975, p. 6). Humboldt “was just what everyone had been waiting for” (p. 1) to bring some change to the world. Assuming that we are not only living in a moral world, but also moral agents par excellence who should die to do something good, Humboldt philosophically reviews history, and considers it to be a “nightmare during which [one should strive] to get a good night’s rest” (p. 4). Enigmatic and philosophical meditations unravel the daunting task of achieving a certain sense of moral and spiritual identity. Humboldt asserts with a mad tone:
What for? What was I doing? Suppose I found a dime? Suppose I found fifty-cent piece? What then? I do not know what the child’s soul had gotten back, but it was back. Everything was melting. Ice, discretion, maturity. What would Humboldt have said to this? (p. 3)

Ambivalent answers are introduced in the form of “strange” ethical norms that highlight Humboldt’s most sublime ideals in his cognitive space. One’s identity, following this, is to be seen in relationship with being a poet, a philosopher, a historian and a mad man: “the noble idea of being […] a poet certainly made Humboldt feel at times like a card, a boy, a comic fool” (pp. 5-6). Reflecting upon Herzog’s terms “if I am out of my mind that’s all right with me” (Bellow, 1964, p. 1), Humboldt behaves like an eccentric and a comic subject, pondering upon life and death, memory and space, ethics and philosophy to satisfy certain great questions. His awareness of the fact that ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves, he strikingly attempts to negate space, memory, meditations and spiritual journeys. Charles Citrine, the storyteller of his stories, sums up his fate claiming that, “he [Humboldt] tried drugs and drink. Finally, many courses of shock treatment had to be administered. It was, as he saw it, Humboldt versus madness. Madness was a whole lot stronger” (Bellow, 1975, p. 6).

In To Jerusalem and Back (1976) The Bellarosa Connection (1989) It All Adds Up: From the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future (1995) Mr. Sammler’s Planet (1970) and many other stories, space seems to be reduced into memories and meditations which generate moral and ethical norms of strange intellectuals. In this sense, ‘Jerusalem’ is a holy space which ironically never quench our thirst with a spiritual peace. The space unfortunately turns to be a metaphor of never-ending conflicts and misunderstandings. Sammler’s ‘planet’ is a utopian territory of no man’s land. Curiously enough, he begins drawing his imaginary world exactly when the storyteller of Jerusalem finds his way out from the holy land, and, then, his planet unexpectedly remained empty. ‘The dim past’ and ‘the uncertain future’ in Bellow’s latest essay qualify ‘Sammler’s planet’ by openness and vividness that devoid it from any sense. In the light of this, the flares of hope of a certain identity within the boundaries of memory and the metaphors of space appear to be illusory triumphs. The fictional subjects keep questioning the very notions of space, memory, author, authority, philosophy, history, self, other, life, death in a way they turn to be others and usurpers. Bellow, to make sure, does imply that these subjects are not only strange, unrecognized moral legislators of moral and ethical laws, but also agents of these laws. Space as a metaphor, to Bellow’s mind, should enhance and further aggravate the necessity of the switch from the lack in subjecthood, to borrow the term from Hegel, to the full belonging and identity.

Bellow never seemed to be reluctant to relate the metaphors of space to the recognition of one’s moral and ethical insights. One way of understanding this point is to override man’s sense of ethics and morality. In this respect, supporting the idea that we have moral responsibility to maximize good willing and morality in the world or even make those close to us maintain a good will becomes a Bellovian priority (Hill, 2002, p. 53). Therefore, he “repeatedly insists that each person’s responsibility to others is to respect their moral and legal rights and, beyond that, to promote their happiness [and their] moral goodness” (p. 51). Bellow fictionally justifies his moral and ethical constructivist theory by reflecting upon Hume’s humanistic ideals that “morality would be useless if it had no such direct influence upon what people do” (Mackie, 2001, p. 3), assuming
that he is not answering any question of what we ought to do or even what we have to do but curiously showing innate moral faculties implanted in human beings by their creator.

Humboldt is a good example of this moral speculation. Charles Citrine states that:

A world of categories devoid of spirit waits for the life to Return. Humboldt was supposed to be an instrument of this revival. This mission or vocation was reflected on his face. The hope of new beauty. The promise, the secret of beauty. (Bellow, 1975, p. 17)

Redeeming the world, as home to think with Hegel, from its impurities, Humboldt aestheticizes it, and turns it into an intellectual picture through his meditations. His dreams to achieve his mission, as he believes, will not see life once neglecting the “hope of a new sublime beauty.” He reflects upon:

William Blake at Felpham, Milton’s Eden, Plato’s Timoeus, Proust on Combray, Virgil on farming, Marvell on gardens […] Martin Sewell at Princeton, Henry James in Damascus […] Balzac in France […] Marx’s portrait of Louis Bonaparte […] Hegel’s world historical individual. (pp. 17-18)

The world-home should be a theatre, and we -inhabitants- should act perfectly upon its stage. Poetry is the most sublime language with which we need to communicate. Humboldt retreats from the ordinary world as Citrine interestingly informs:

Poet, thinker, problem drinker, pill-taker, man of genius, manic depressive, intricate schemer, success story [teller], he once wrote poems of great wit and beauty, but what had he done lately? had he uttered the great words and songs in him? he had not. Unwritten poems were killing him. (p. 25)

He celebrates his Platonic world. He does not intend to be solitary, but he interestingly means to be active in life, to theorize for a better moral world. The unwritten poems are possible categorical imperatives yet to come. Life, to Humboldt’s sense, has lost its ability to arrange itself. For this reason, it has to be arranged. The world should be brought home, and one must feel satisfaction in it. Building upon the Hegelian thought, Humboldt reminds that “the aim of knowledge is to divest the objective world that stands opposed to us of its strangeness, and, as the phrase is, to find ourselves at home in it: which means no more than to trace the objective world back to the notion-to our inner most self” (Stern, 2002, p. 12). In this vehement desire to achieve some sort of moral and ethical harmony with the world, Bellow arguably points that this is the duty of the intellectuals and the philosophers. Humboldt, then, as a philosopher and a poet, should not only reflect upon these issues philosophically but also aesthetically in order to achieve such a peace (p. 17). One way of taking the further is

What a human being is -I always had my own odd sense of this. For I did not have to live in the land of horses, like Dr. Gulliver, my sense of human kind was strange enough without travel. In fact, I travel not to seek foreign oddities but to get away from them. I was drawn also to philosophical idealists because I was perfectly sure that this could not be it, Plato in the myth of Er confirmed my sense that this was not my first time around. We had all been
here before and would presently be here again. There was [...] no other place. (Bellow, 1975, p. 89)

Journeying, not in Bellow’s way to ‘Jerusalem,’ but in Henderson’s manner, “the soul is supposed to be sealed by oblivion before its return to earthly life. Was it possible that my oblivion might be slightly defective (p. 90)? Humboldt, to be sure, is lost in his Platonic ethics since there is no other place where to travel and do something good.

Ravelstein aggravates these ‘strange’ ethics by deploying an escapist strategy. He shifts all the time from telling his own story to acquainting the reader with the oddities of history. The fictional and the historical overlap. Space turns to be another metaphor for other strange ethics, “for I have promises to keep/And miles to go before I sleep/For I have recipes to bake/And far to go before I wake” (p. 114). The trip takes place between sleeping and awakening, promises to bring some change to the world and to do something good are kept in the spirit of the speaker. Getting up from his sleep, he will surprisingly find himself unified with his Platonic ‘home.’ The trip ends up and all the secrets are revealed and the reader is brought back once again to the cognitive world of the storyteller. While the fictionality of the trip is highlighted through poetical devices, the ‘history of the story’ is introduced in the form of ethical and philosophical interrogations as he keeps reflecting upon the very notions of suicide, boredom, history of wars, Jewishness and Zionism.

3. The Metaphor of Space and the Boundaries of Strangers:

The reader is highly invited to think philosophically with these subjects. Consequently, being part of this enterprise, it is the purpose of the researcher, therefore, to investigate the possible relationships between meditations, journeys and memory, on the one hand, and the ethics of strangers, on the other hand. Accordingly, one reader/thinker, as Robert Stern aptly reminds “should step back and apply himself reflectively [in a Hegelian manner] and ask how it is the problem has arisen in the first place; once we see that the problem has its source in a set of one-sided assumption. If we can overcome that one-sidedness then the problem will simply dissolve and we escape the oscillation between the one satisfactory stance and its equally unsatisfactory opposite” (2002, p. 12). What logically comes out from this say is that while mapping space in the Bellovian context, one should not only investigate its social connotations, but also pause for a moment and reflect upon their cognitive and metaphorical aspects.

Zygmunt Bauman aptly reminds us that cognitive and philosophical spacing, though not objective, moral and aesthetic, yet they are human made. The misunderstanding of the other stems not from conflicting interests but rather from the ignorance of the cognitive maps of the other. That to live is to live with the other, to grasp his physical space intellectually. By the same token Ravelstein draws the world, home, an intellectual picture that sums up man’s ethical boundaries. Humboldt, echoing Herzog, posits the idea from a poetical perspective, assuming that only poetry which reduces distance between the intellectuals. Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann aggravate the structures of the life-world, the necessity of mutual understanding through the metaphor of space assuring that:
I simply take it for granted that other men also exist in this/my world, and indeed not only in a bodily manner like and among other objects, but rather as endowed with a consciousness that is essentially as mine [...] they, my fellow men, experience their relations which reciprocally include in a way that is similar, for all practical purposes, to the way in which I experience them. (Lackmann, 1974, pp. 4-5)

Henderson translates these words by sacrificing his life to save the king of the Arnewi tribe in Africa: “your majesty, move over and I will die beside you. Or else be me and live; I never knew what to do with my life anyway […] I will die anyway” (1957, p. 262). The sacrifice of one's life is a way of experiencing other’s sufferings and turning their experience into a shared feeling.

The metaphor of space becomes a problem of knowledge. American boundaries, to Bellow’s mind, should be understood interchangeably with the knowledge of the other. One may say that this happens as the distance between me and the other becomes so huge, and when I have no shared biography with the other. To quote Bauman again:

The farther away [we] are from the intimacy pole [the sphere of togetherness], the more other humans become strangers (until, at the anonymity extreme, they vanish from view altogether). Of strangers, we know too little to engage in [...] any interaction. The ‘strangeness’ of strangers means precisely our feeling of being lost, of not knowing how to act and what to expect, and the resulting unwillingness of engagement. (2007, p. 149)

Humboldt turns to be a mad poet because he fails to recognize the world around him. The other, for him, is not human at all since “humans who inhabit in that space do not have identities of their own, no personal identities, [...] they derive their identities from [the nowhere of space and the nothing of knowledge]” (p. 149). Ravelstein assumes that the other will not understand his philosophy of poetry, and that he will live and die strange among other unknown strangers. As the phrase goes, death, or the too late consciousness, that comes only after death, is the sole salvation to the problem of knowledge and cognitive spacing since the other will unexpectedly and satirically recognize both Humboldt and Ravelstein only after their deaths.

Herzog describes the other as hell. Any possibility of meeting with him/her turns into chaos since there are no shared intellectual and ethical grounds between them. Being a stranger to the ethics of the other, Herzog vehemently attacks the enemies of life stating: “let the enemies of life step down [...] let each man now examine his heart [...] let us lie down, men women, and children, and cry. Let life continue -we may not deserve it, but let it continue,” (1964, p. 67) Henderson illustrates Herzog: “I must not live in the past, it will ruin me [...] I was telling the world that it was a pig. I must begin to think how to live” (p. 242). Again, “I put my list to my face and looked at the sky, giving a short laugh and thinking, Christ! What a person to meet at this distance from home. Yes travel is advisable. Travel is mental travel” (1959, p. 142). The ethical boundaries stop the social space and the possibilities of meeting between these strangers since we find: on the other
side of the boundary [only] stretched fallow waste, semantic void and wilderness: the intellectually alien world inhabited by faceless bodies. The bodies could cross the frontier, but the rules of coexistence stayed at home and could not survive the trespassing. Humboldt was never able to cross the boundaries of the other, and Ravelstein faces death, his ultimate fate, as the only solution to the misunderstanding of the world-home. Blurring space, accordingly, ends up by being blurring memory and going through philosophical and spiritual journeys.

Humboldt informs that it is best not to meet strangers at all. This, indeed, should be carried out through the art of mismeeting. Humboldt, the unrecognizable poet, is unrecognized by the others and even by his friend Charles Citrine as he is writing strange poems and introducing a strange philosophy. Ravelstein lived and died as an alien. His life story is related through an anonymous storyteller. His intellectual readings of history and philosophy make of him a strange man that is hardly understood by the others. Humboldt and Ravelstein in Bauman’s words are: “neither neighbors nor aliens. Or rather- confusingly, disturbingly, terrifyingly- they are (or may be- who knows?) both. Neighborly aliens. Alien neighbors. In other words, strangers” (2007, p. 153). They are inhabitants of no man’s land, holders of strange ethics, ambivalent subjects, wise philosophers, mad poets, strong believers in mankind and unrecognized legislators of the world. Charles Citrine never meets Humboldt, and the whole story comes like a dream, like Humboldt’s poems, in Citrine’s way:

I knew that Humboldt would soon die because I had seen him on the street two months before and he had death all over him. -He did not see me […] every time I saw him I was terribly moved, and cried in my sleep.- Once I dreamed that we met at Whelan’s Drugstore on the corner of sixth and eighth Greenwich Village […] I burst into tears. I said, “Where have you been? I thought you were dead” […] I could not get more out of him, and I wept with happiness. Of course it was only a dream such as you dream if your soul is not well. My waking character is far from sound […] and all such things must be utterly clear to the dead […] out in Chicago Humboldt became one of my significant dead […] people doing articles, academic thesis, and books wrote to me or flew in to discuss Humboldt with me. And I must say that in Chicago Humboldt was a natural subject of reflection. (Bellow, 1957, pp. 7-9)

Ravelstein overtones the same story:
In his own way Ravelstein tried to protect me from poring over the works of the thinkers he most admired. He ordered me to write this memoir, yes, but he didn’t think it was necessary for me to grind away at the classics of Western thought. But for the purposes of a short biography I understand him well enough, and I agreed that it should be done by someone like me. - Furthermore, I am a great believer in the power of unfinished work to keep you alive […] Ravelstein, dressing to go out, and I go back and forth with him while trying to hear what he is saying. The music is pouring from his hi-fi […] he loses himself in sublime music, a music in which ideas are dissolved, reflecting these ideas in the form of feeling. He carries them down into the street with him […] Ravelstein looks at me, laughing with pleasure and astonishment, gesturing because he can’t be heard in all this
bird-noise.? You don’t easily give up a creature like Ravelstein to death. (Bellow, 2000, pp. 231-233)

Humboldt, Ravelstein and Citrine appear to be actors and skilled playwrights at the same time. They firmly suggest that we are all players, traveling players carrying our plays with us wherever we go. The cognitive space, the spiritual journeys and the philosophical meditations are the stage or the ground of playing. The purpose of their play is to make the ‘other’ know about the strangeness of their ethics, and that: “morality which always guided us and still guides us today has powerful, but short hands. It now needs very, very long hands indeed” (Bauman, 2007, p. 218).

4. Conclusion
The ethics of strangers have been proved to be the norms of morality of intellectuals in modern America. The concepts of space and boundaries have been proved to be related to these ethics. As a matter of fact, the researcher has attempted to show how and why Humboldt and Ravelstein, who are respectively a poet and a philosopher, strive to resist the ethics of amorality in modern America and establish a world home in the Hegelian way. The researcher was not only limited to the investigation of the cases of Humboldt and Ravelstein, but also the study of other examples in Bellow’s fictional world. Several and interesting overaps between Bellow’s heroes and stories seemed to be significant in the argumentation. To achieve this, these heroes established imaginary journeys which refer to space and boundaries as concepts. Memory, following this, becomes the core stone of the building of the process of the storytelling as it traces the boundaries of life (life-death) as well as the contour of the moral world in modern America. Bellow recommends through his strange heroes that to achieve a moral and ethical world, where we live happily, one should add value and sense to the space, boundaries and things.

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Race and Identity in Brit Bennett’s *The Vanishing Half*

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**Abstract**  
Race and identity transformation have been overarching themes in the works of African American writers. Brit Bennett’s *The Vanishing Half* (2020) is one fictional work that deals with identical twin sisters: Desiree and Stella Vignes. They are two light-skinned Black sisters who have chosen or rebuilt their identities based on the needs that allow them to live in peace among their communities. This study attempts to trace the importance of race and identity for the African Americans through exploring the lives of these twin sisters who leave their hometown. Through postcolonial critical concepts of identity and race, this research sheds light on the reasons behind the sisters’ decisions to keep or shed their Black identity, as well as their community’s influence on their decision to leave their hometown. This study found that the choices of race and identity the sisters made earlier in their lives identified their fate and established a path for their children. Desiree prefers to maintain her identity by marrying a Black man, and Stella sees her interest in marrying a White man and keeping her past hidden. Kennedy, Stella’s daughter with a White man, and Jude, Desiree’s daughter with a Black man, adhere to their parent’s beliefs regarding race and identity. However, Stella and Desiree still long for their origin and home, and ultimately, they gather again at home they left together.

**Keywords:** Bennett, black, half, identity, race, vanishing, white

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Introduction

Race and identity are very important topics in African American writings. It does not bother the new generation of Black, but also it is an old issue argued by the first generation of Black writers, for instance, Toni Morrison, who dedicates her works to unraveling the reality of the African Americans’ suffering and struggling through their lives, addresses race and identity in her novels. In her novels, *The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved*, and *A Mercy*, she has addressed many topics that engaged the Black people with the Whites. Such works unveil the reality of slavery in early America. This study addresses how the new generation of African Americans walk on the same path as the first generation, searching for their roots and identity, whatever the transformation that forced them to forget their race and identity, but eventually they find themselves yearning to their race and history.

This study examines how Bennett, as one of the new generation, takes the reader to the same concern of Black in general: race and identity. African Americans recognize well that their past is not written precisely so that the Black need to take the initiative to write about their long struggle to get freedom and rights. It is essential to realize the new generation’s perspective on race and identity. Are there differences between the first generation and the second one regarding the writing of their past? Through this study, the readers may comprehend the reasons behind the Black’s concern to bring light to their history and how they understand their race and identity.

Brit Bennett’s *The Vanishing Half* recounts the transformation of the identities of identical twin sisters – Desiree and Stella Vignes – from Mallard, Louisiana. The founder of Mallard, Alphonse Decuir, established the town as a place for only light-skinned Black people, and he is proud of this achievement. At 16, the twins run away from Mallard to New Orleans. Shortly after that, Stella disappears without any indication about her destination, only that she wants to go her way. This study attempts to trace the transformation of the sisters’ lives and how they reshape their identities and race to meet the demands of the communities they choose to be part of.


The narrative follows the second generation: the twins Desiree and Stella, as well as the third generation: their daughters Jude and Kennedy, who have been influenced by their mothers’ earlier choices. The chronicle spans many decades, from the 1940s to the 1990s. The decision of the sisters undoubtedly determines their futures and their identities.

Identical twins are known to share the same genetic makeup and, therefore, are supposed to be closer in thoughts and decisions than fraternal siblings. As a result, the twins agree to run away together from Mallard to New Orleans because they cannot endure working as house cleaners. The irony is that they have not found a job in the new city besides working in a laundry. At the tender age of 16, they move on with their lives without looking back. Teenagers, in general, and Desiree and Stella, in particular, need a little freedom, with youth favoring to fulfill their ambitions away from their parents and the constraints of community.
In other words, 16 is the age of rebellion against adults’ charges and against the community’s restrictions, which the twins see as a hindrance. Neither can imagine living at the mercy of adults, carrying out their orders without any objection; they only see the exhaustion in such orders. As an African American, Brit Bennett shows her concern for Black people as an extension of African past, which most African American writers use as rich material for their fiction. This is simultaneous recognition of their history to maintain identity and race as African Americans.

Bennett’s *Vanishing Half* is one of the new novels issued in 2020 and race, and identity are one of the literary gaps that this study attempts to fill in. The previous studies about the topic discussed here and the writer are minimal, and this study will pay the reader’s attention to such topics and stories. It is not an easy task to find references about the topic argued in this research.

**African-American Writings and Their Impact on American Literature**

The writings of African Americans began to get published in the second half of the eighteenth century, often focusing on equality and justice. For instance, Phillis Wheatley was enslaved in Boston dedicated her poems to morals and religious principles. Eighteenth-century authors were pioneers of African American literature, including Boston King and David George. English literature mentioned African characters only to perform specific roles in the theater, while in real life, their human rights neglected. Sidbury (2015) pointed out that:

Blacks could be found as princes, jesters, victims, heroes, criminals, slaves, and loyal retainers in English culture. Nonetheless, the complex of oppressive forces arrayed against the hundreds of thousands of Black people who actually lived in the British Empire blocked their access to literacy and the kinds of learning necessary to produce an accomplished writer. (p. 25)

African American authors represent a large part of American literature, contributing to different writings, in particular. African American writers introduce readers to race and identity by exposing their hidden history, focusing on slave resistance, racism and racialism, oppression, and color. They catch special attention to their heritage and history, which for a long time remains hidden. The word ‘African’ was used as a synonym for negro or Black. As Sidbury (2015) discussed:

Britons in England and America used the term “Africans” interchangeably with “Negroes” and “blacks” to refer to the people they purchased and imported into the Americas, as well as to the American-born (or creole) descendants of those victims of the slave trade. (p. 26)

African American history and its particularities started to appear in the late 1960s. Many African American writers addressed different issues concerning their communities in their writings, mostly fiction, and what they identified as obstacles in the way of freedom and progress. They focused on race, color, identity, immigration, oppression, injustice, slave resistance, and other milestones for Black development and stability.
The slave narrative began to emerge, for example, in *The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789). At that time, Americans and political advocates supported the abolitionist movement. Those who had been enslaved wrote about the history of slavery, isolation, and discrimination, such as Fredrick Douglass’s autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass*, which sold thousands of copies in a concise time. In addition, Harriet Jacobs published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) using a pen name to write about her experience as a slave and race-based abuse.

In the early twentieth century, after the American civil war ended, many important essays appeared, such as Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery* (1901) and W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) established an African American literary canon. Later, Black writers became more recognized for fiction and poetry during the Harlem Renaissance, known as the New Negro Movement between 1917 and mid-1930. That was a period of African American revival. Many works of fiction, and poems, in particular, emerged, reflecting the awakening and consciousness of the African Americans from the likes of Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer. Many novels addressed racial discrimination, such as Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952), narrated by an African American. In the 1970s, the voice of the African American emerged on the literary scene through Toni Morrison’s literary works, including *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), and *Song of Solomon* (1977). In the 1980s, many other literary works were published, including Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982), which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and Tony Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), which underscored the pains of slavery during the American Civil war.

In other words, African Americans recognized that no one could address their issues of rights and race other than the African American authors who had lived the traumatic experiences of exile and oppression. They went through a genuine reformation of their identities, relocating them to different cities. Loomba (2015) pointed out that:

> The racial difference has functioned as one of the most powerful yet most fragile markers of human identity, difficult to police and maintain yet persistent, a constructed idea yet all too real in its devastating effects. Are human beings essentially the same or different? Is difference defined primarily by racial or cultural attributes? (p. 112)

Therefore, the literary history highlights the Black’s ambitions and sufferings, as well as it raises global awareness of their issues of justice. Afro-American history has remained hidden and ignored in American institutions for a long time, and addressing the African American history of literature was a crime as deserved punishment. Racial stereotypes of African Americans began to weaken when the government took severe legal steps to guarantee African Americans’ participation in the daily activities of life.

Black-centered movements started to appear, such as the civil rights movement, the Black Power movement, and the Black Arts Movement, which helped bring African American issues front and center. In addition, the American government passed many laws protecting African Americans’ rights, facilitating their engagement in daily activities without racism. Furthermore,
President Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, which set in motion many of the laws ending segregation. Multiculturalism became a fact that was not easy to ignore.

On the other hand, many theorists expressed concern about postcolonial writings and theories, particularly African American literary works were marginalized and negligible. Discrimination against African American history and literature was institutionalized in the American literary canon, only taken into consideration if it reflected the concerns of Europe. Tyson (2015) stated: “…and included in the canon only when they reflect European literary tradition, that is, only when they resemble those European works already deemed ‘great’ for Eurocentrism is the belief that European culture is vastly superior to all others” (p. 378).

However, the worldview of race and African American writing changed and became tangible, and no one might ignore their efforts in fiction or other significant areas of life. Many contemporary authors have carved out a name for themselves and African American achievement in fiction, working hard to fictionalize their history and bring attention to their world of resistance and race. African Americans regraded themselves minorities and embarked on antiracist struggling in postwar Britain. Hall (2017) discussed how Black became a signifier of Black’s identity.

the term “Black” became the signifier of an emergent identity that arose not from any basis in genetics, nor from shared customs, but from the discursive slide whereby contested meanings that gathered under the markers of cultural difference served to expand the ground on which political antagonism to the status quo was articulated. (p. 32)

Tony Morrison, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, is one of these authors who made the world reconsider their views about African American writing and gained the trust of readers through the literary works of African American authors. In addition, many writers have contributed to the development of Afro-American novels, such as Tony Morrison, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, John Edgar, and others. A new generation of African Americans, such as Percival Everett, Brit Bennett, Morgan Jerkins, and others, attempt to retrace the footsteps of the first African American novelists. All are working to correct the misrepresentation of the African American story and to stabilize the roots of the African American novel.

Hirsch (2018) addresses the issues of race and identity of Black and how the community realizes the blackness of African Americans or the Black in general. “the more I asserted my Black identity, the more of a threat I became to the prevailing order—that race is something unseen, unspoken of and unacknowledged in polite society” (p. 23,24). The first generation of African Americans lived their lives unseen and marginalized. They were not powerful enough to fight for their rights and freedom.

Brit Bennett focused on reclaiming African American fiction, which was marginalized for a long time but, more recently, has been playing more significant role in American literature in general. Bennett’s debut novel, The Mothers (2016), was a New York Times bestseller, and also it received Hopwood and Hurston/Wright honors. Her second novel, The Vanishing Half (2020), was also a New York Times bestseller.
Departure for a Different World and the Reasons for Leaving

Twin sisters Desiree and Stella Vignes run away to find refuge from their work as cleaners, which they find consumes all of their effort and their energy. They are in search of better lives away from adult intervention or domination. They do not recognize how their decision would determine the course of their lives in the new communities they hoped to join or how their choice could affect their children’s future: “Selfish girls running from responsibility. They wouldn’t stay away long. City living would tire them out. They’d run out of money and gall and come sniffling back to their mother’s porch. But they never returned again” (p. 9).

The twins took advantage of the Mallard Founders Day Picnic celebration to decide their future. Ultimately, they run away to New Orleans to start a new life that each twin envisioned separately. The irony is that Desiree was very excited to leave Mallard and start a new life. At the same time, Stella was hesitant initially, expressing no excitement or motivation to go home. However, when they settled in New Orleans, Stella disappeared without informing her sister about her destination or plans, “To Stella, leaving Mallard seemed as fantastical as flying to China. Technically possible, but that didn’t mean that she could ever imagine herself doing it” (p. 12).

Stella and Desiree, even though they are twins, took different paths toward their imagined future. It was not only the physical effort and doing the laundry for the Duponts but also Mr. Dupont’s attempt to corner Stella and sexually assault her that prompted Stella to agree to leave Mallard with her sister. When her sister wants her to go with her, she is not motivated to leave her home. Later on, after such physical and sexual violations at work, she agrees to go with her sister.

Desiree and Stella realize that if they remain in Mallard, they may not get an opportunity to complete their secondary studies. They could spend their lives in one low-paying job after another, which does not offer them dignified lives. They are also concerned with the shoddy work that may not help them in their future lives. The decision to leave is inevitable to get better opportunities in the future. Desiree and Stella shared traumatic experiences by Whites looking for any excuse to perpetrate evil acts against Black people.

White folks; kill you if you want too much, kill you if you want too little.’ Willie Lee shook his head, packing tobacco into his pipe. ‘You gotta follow they rules but they change ’em when they feel. Devilish, you ask me’. (p. 38)

Tragically, the sisters witnessed the savage murder of their father, Leon, by the hands of a White man who broke his fingers and shot him four times. Leon survived and taken to the hospital, but three days later, the White group found him and ended his life with two shots to the head. There was no reason to kill Leon, but the mob claimed that he sent a note to a White woman, even though he could not read or write: “He survived, and three days later, the white men burst into the hospital and stormed every room in the colored ward until they found him. This time, they shot him twice in the head, his cotton pillowcase blooming red” (p. 36). When the opportunity comes, the sisters decide to leave without a trace.
Identity Transformations and Race Appreciation

Race means maintaining the physical, biological, and genetic particularities of human beings that distinguishes them from other groups. The idea of race classification comes from the colonizers, who insisted on maintaining such differences between ethnic groups to establish a hierarchy of superiority. Ashcroft et al. (2007) argued: “the notion of race assumes, firstly, that humanity is divided into unchanging natural types, recognizable by physical features that are transmitted through ‘the blood’ and permit a distinction to be made between pure and mixed races” (p. 198). Therefore, the colonizers’ policies leave a gap between the Black and the White that assists the White to maintain their superiority and distinctiveness.

Each race endeavors to maintain its identity as loyalty to the ethnic group. The ethnic group sees in its race a symbol of their power and survival, appreciation and glorification of their roots. However, some individuals might not pay much attention to their race or find in their race signs of inferiority. These individuals might choose to distance themselves from their race when they have the opportunity, hoping for a better lifestyle and a better community that is more responsive to their needs. Such individuals might seek to escape from their people and race, even their identity, based on fleeting concerns. However, their nostalgia leads them back to their roots. Eventually, most of those who sought to escape their original identity and race return to the home where they share the same cultural and social background with their family and friends. It is not easy for most people who try to escape their identity and race to go ahead with their lives without considering memories.

Passing as White is a pressing need for some light-skinned Blacks; however, it is not an easy task; sometimes, a person’s color, accent, or appearance uncovers the truth of their origin. The past and the race were hidden for a long time, but one day, the individuals will eventually expose themselves to embarrassing situations. Fate (2020), in his review of Bennett’s *The Vanishing Half*, discussed this:

But if you’re Black, no matter how light your skin, you’ll always still be considered Black. That is unless you desire to walk on the side of life where privilege prevails—and you’re able to “pass.” Passing as White means you don’t get followed around just because of your presumed race. It means your work choices are not limited to cooking and cleaning for White people—one step removed from slavery. (p. 39).

Stella and Desiree, two light-skinned sisters, have chosen their worlds, but their fates rely on their instant concerns. Desiree married Sam, a Black man and “The darkest man she could find” (p. 9). They have a daughter named Jude, closer to her father’s color. Jude’s classmates always bully her and call her names like “tar baby” and “blue skin.” Despite ill-treatment of the community and discrimination, Jude does not think for a moment to forget her race or roots or to attempt to satisfy Whites by mimicking their lifestyle or accent.

Stella disappears within a year of arriving in New Orleans, leaving behind a note for her sister, revealing no plan. “Here was a note left behind in Stella’s careful hand: Sorry, honey, but I’ve got to go my way” (p. 64). Unlike Desiree, Stella has worked on passing for White, taking
advantage of her light Black color and hiding her past and race to assimilate into the White community. Stella watches TV and mimics the accents of Whites. Style of life assists her with moving into the White community without drawing attention to her race or roots, and Stella marries a White man with whom she has a daughter named Kennedy. Stella does not like to talk about her past, her family, friends, or the city she leaves. She always evades answering such questions or just ignores them.

“Where are you from, Mommy?” Kennedy asked her once during bath time. She was nearly four then and inquisitive. Stella, kneeling beside the tub, gently wiped her daughter’s shoulders with a washcloth and glanced into those violet eyes, unsettling and beautiful, so unlike the eyes of anyone else she’d ever known.

“A little town down south,” Stella said. “You won’t have heard of it.” She always spoke to Kennedy like this. (p. 145)

However, Stella passes smoothly into the White community, mimicking their customs and traditions. She has chosen her race and identity, which would give her peace and safety. She fabricates lies about her race and past, even with her husband and, later on, with her daughter. Stella appears White, based on traits inherited from her father, but she spends her life on the edge, fearing someone from her past might recognize her and uncover her secret, turning her and her daughter’s lives upside down.

Stella and Desiree’s Lives After Marriage and Their Children

Desiree’s marriage ends because of her husband’s abuse. Desiree could not endure her husband’s repeated physical attacks: “She’d told him about all the ways Sam had hurt her: slamming her face into the door, dragging her by her hair across the bathroom floor, backhanding her mouth, his hand streaked with lipstick and blood” (p. 96). Such repeated violence impacts Desiree’s life, and she does not like that her daughter sees such violence. Ultimately, Desiree runs away with her little daughter Jude to Mallard, the home she once left. She thought living with someone of her race would bring her happiness, but in fact, she does not find that peace in her marriage. In the beginning, she tries to find excuses for her husband’s behavior, that he is disappointed because of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination or that he desires another baby. However, her excuses do not help her any longer, as her husband’s repeated mistreatment does not allow her an opportunity to reconsider leaving him.

She does not consider any other place than Mallard to spend life with her daughter, only her childhood home, which symbolizes refuge and security during hard times. The same house once was a source of inconvenience that she left voluntarily. She recognizes well that she belongs to that place and those people, sharing with them good and bad times.

Desiree’s marriage could not provide her with the peace and safety she sought or dreamed of and, therefore, was not a success. She chose to come back home to raise her daughter, away from her husband’s violence. Jude eventually goes to college at UCLA. A dark-skinned girl raised among light-skinned Black people. Jude was mistreated by the White because of the dark skin she
inherited from her father. Jude develops a connection with a boy who is also from the South, Reese, who is transgender. She helps him finance surgery for his chest.

Stella has married her boss, a White man named Blake Sanders, and they embark on a new life. He is wealthy, and they have a beautiful daughter named Kennedy, who has blond hair and violet eyes. Kennedy has inherited her father’s attributes. “The newborn in her arms was perfect: milky skin, wavy blonde hair, and eyes so blue they looked violet. Still, sometimes, Kennedy felt like a daughter who belonged to someone else, a child Stella was borrowing while she loaned a life that never should have been hers” (p. 145).

Stella lives with a different identity and hides her past from her husband. She lives a happy life, as she keeps her secrets to herself. The irony is that a Black family, Reginald and Loretta Walker and their daughter Cindy, move into the same neighborhood, and Stella treats them as a Black family, ignoring her race and roots. When Stella’s daughter, Kennedy calls their daughter Cindy the n-word, the Walkers leave.

You know what she said to Cindy? Well, the girls were playing some game and Kennedy was losing so she said, ‘I don’t want to play with a nigger.’” Her stomach sank. “Loretta, I—” “No, I understand,” Loretta said. “I don’t blame her. It all comes from the home, see. And like a fool, I let you into mine. (p. 190)

The twins have chosen their fate according to their expectations. Their children lead different lives. Jude applies for medical school and has met Kennedy, pursuing acting. Jude recognizes Stella and later tells Kennedy about her mother’s history when she acknowledges the resemblance with her mother.

Belonging to Race through Different Generations

Despite the sisters deciding on different lives, they have faith in belonging to a race and home. First, Desiree’s choice to return to Mallard after being abused by her husband is a sign of her strong sense of belonging to a place and people, and she prefers raising her daughter among her people. Running away from home at 16 was an escape from the challenging work as a maid, and later she worked as a fingerprint analyst in Washington, DC, after leaving New Orleans, and then as a waitress at the diner in Mallard. She eventually recognizes that she shares a culture and social background with the people and town of Mallard.

Desiree is tolerant of her husband’s abuse initially; however, when she realizes that the violence will affect her daughter’s future life, that her daughter can see the physical abuse in the bruises on her face, she decides to leave him. Desiree likes spending her life with someone closer to her race and traditions, but this does not give her an excuse to endure his frequent abuse. Jude has suffered from harsh discrimination at school because of her dark color. However, she does not deny her race or identity to appease the community.

I don’t have any girlfriends, really.” “Why not?” “I don’t know. I never really had any growing up. It’s the place I come from. They don’t like people like me.” “Blacks, you
mean.” “Dark ones,” she said. “The light ones are fine.” Kennedy laughed. “Well, that’s silly.” (p. 228)

Jude proves herself by studying and attending medical school. She does not deprecate her race or origin. On the contrary, she works toward a medical degree to prove to her community that the superiority is in her academic performance, not in her color. Being bullied by her classmates may not affect her progress in life, but it motivates to prove herself academically. She is supportive of Reese, helping him finance surgery for his chest and maintaining a close connection with him. Like her mother, Jude lives peacefully in the White community.

On the other hand, Stella struggles to hide her past and race from her White husband and daughter, despite repeated questions from Kennedy about her family and friends. Kennedy does not find satisfactory answers because Stella always ignores her questions or escapes direct answers. Stella knows that uncovering her past and race will put an end to her life with her husband, and she does not want to lose the peace and security she feels in her new world. When Jude points out Stella’s resemblance to her mother, Desiree, her twin sister, Stella strives to deny any connection for fear of losing the happy life chosen by herself. However, she does not resist the desire to visit Desiree in Mallard or hesitate to gift her expensive wedding ring to support her mother’s failing health, Adele. The reader realizes that Stella still cares about her relatives and belonging to her race and home.

Stella and Kennedy have different identities and try to indicate their superiority to Blacks, even though they are, in reality, one of them. In the beginning, Stella does not like to see a Black family in her district because it reminds her of her origin, and their existence in the community may raise many questions about Stella’s color. She presents herself to Loretta as a White descendant, while Loretta represents Blacks. Kennedy also degrades Cindy by calling her names like the n-word to indicate the inferiority of the Black family.

Eventually, Kennedy develops a relationship with a physics professor, Frantz. He is the first Black man she dates, and finally, she moves in with him. Her relationship with a black man is a sign that Kennedy is beginning to accept her origins, as she does not find any problem with dating a Black man. The race marks the lives of Stella and her daughter, and Kennedy’s continued connection with Jude is evidence of her desire to belong to her race and her people. Ultimately, Stella tells her daughter the truth after Jude gives Kennedy a photo of both of their mothers with the rest of the family in Mallard. Stella does not lie when Kennedy asks her about her wedding ring, but she does not want her daughter telling the truth of their race and origin to Blake.

Stella has attained a perfect position in the community, becoming an adjunct professor of statistics at Santa Monica College. After Loretta left the neighborhood, Stella felt lonely, and her husband encouraged her to work. “Sometimes being a twin had felt like living with another version of yourself. That person existed for everyone, probably, an alternative self that lived only in mind” (p. 222). Stella has lost her friendship with Loretta and she spends her time thinking of her sister, the vanishing half.
Returning Home and Symbolism

Desiree reconsiders returning home early, after her husband’s abuse, as she is confident he will not change his behavior. She returns to Mallard to live with her people and her family, and it becomes the best place to raise her daughter. Stella, meanwhile, spends her time resisting her feelings to return. Desiree wants to forget anything that reminds her of her past, but in the end, she cannot ignore her race or her people. Stella decides to visit Desiree and requests forgiveness for denying their past. Stella attempts to maintain her family and her husband in a community that does not consider Blacks. When she took work as a secretary in New Orleans, she knew that only a White would hire someone from his race. Her color enabled her to get the job that would change her future.

Bennett addresses the feeling of abandonment each twin has concerning their other half. Each twin feels there something is missing as they disappear to find their path in life. The title does not mean that each disappears but that everyone vanishes into another community. Desiree marries a Black man, who does not resemble her light color. The people of Mallard try to keep the community’s color, light-skinned, with each new generation becoming lighter and lighter. Mallard’s founder wanted a town of visible and respectable light-skinned people, and marrying dark-skinned Blacks was not encouraged. Desiree goes against these rules by marrying a dark-skinned Black man. Meanwhile, Stella’s daughter is blond with violet eyes from her marriage to a White man.

Eventually, Bennett brings Stella and Desiree home to indicate that it is not easy to leave behind your race or identity. It runs in the blood, and willful forgetfulness cannot continue forever. Humans naturally long for their roots and motherland. Undoubtedly, Stella does not resist at the end, coming home to find her vanished second half, which she is afraid of losing forever.

Their abandonment was forced by hard times and immediate circumstances. Still, the gathering in Mallard symbolizes the twins coming back to their roots and identity, despite the decisions they have already made in their lives. The new generation, represented by Kennedy and Jude, longs for their home. Adele passes away, and there is a continuous transformation in the lives of the twin sisters, from light-skinned Black to White. The impact of the past shaped the future decisions of Stella and Desiree.

Bennett ends the narrative with Jude slipping out the back door with her boyfriend and running through the woods toward the river at sunset. And, going back to nature, to the motherland with the sun about to vanish from the sky. It symbolizes leaving their past and troubles behind with the sun’s setting. They dive into the cold water as a sort of cleansing and purification for past sins; sins will disappear to settle at the bottom of the river. In addition, the complexities of race and gender will drift away with the current. Life will continue on its course like the river, and the power of nature will lead everyone to a new stage of their lives. The river’s course is unstoppable, symbolizing life and regeneration, flowing to its destination, out of human control. “This river, like all rivers, remembered its course. They floated under the leafy canopy of trees, begging to forget” (p. 329).
There are opportunities for further research of both the narrative and the author. A hybrid examination of the younger generation and transgender identity may be a rich area for further study. In addition, the use of a psychoanalytic approach to probe deeply into the psychological aspects behind the twins’ escape and their traumatic experiences would be helpful. In particular, Stella’s attempt to hide her past, and her fear of her husband recognizing her race and roots, in addition to the physical violence and sexual harassment they experience in their hometown. This paper only focused on the transformation of the twins’ identity and the reasons/realities behind their journey to home. Belonging to their home is a fact that cannot be forgotten or ignored.

Conclusion
Although Desiree and Stella decide their race and identity, each missed their second half. Both go against the laws of their community and the rules of the race. Desiree marries Sam, a Black man, “the darkest one she could find.” However, her marriage is getting worse day by day because of her husband’s abuse that leaves bruises on her face and scars on her body. Desiree decides to return to Mallard, a safe refuge for her and her little daughter. Desiree has already violated Mallard’s race rules by marrying a dark man instead of a light-skinned man to maintain the community’s lighter color. Thus, her daughter Jude is called names like “blue skin” or “Black tar” by her classmates at school. Stella, on the other hand, makes use of her fair skin and applies for a job specified for Whites only. She wins the position, but, in turn, she must leave her past behind. Stella attempts to forget her family, friends, race, and light-skinned identity. She enjoys marrying a White man who brings happiness and security to her life. Eventually, Stella could not continue in life without thinking about Desiree, her second half. She could not continue to conceal her past, especially when confronted by Jude, who reminds her of her past. She did not inform her sister about her destination or her intentions. She wanted to pass and assimilate into the White society without any trace of inconvenience, and Stella was able to enjoy herself for a while. Stella also went against the conventions of race by choosing to assume another identity that guaranteed an honorable life. By doing so, she hides her past, her relatives and lives in fear of exposing her story. This study found that the pull of race and blood drives Desiree and Stella, as well as their daughters’ desire to return home for a family reunion that became an undeniable fact. The twins’ family reunion is a sign of belonging to their place and their people, despite the identities they have already assumed and the circumstances that forced them to abandon their identity in the first place. Ultimately, Kennedy accepts her friendship with Jude as both a Black girl and one of her relatives. Her relationship with a Black man is also an indicator of Kennedy’s yearning for her roots and race. However, Kennedy finally ends her relationship with the Black man and returns to Los Angeles.

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Narrative Aspects of the Novels by Lucy Maud Montgomery and Eleanor Porter

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Abstract
The metamodernist mood of the modern era increasingly clearly correlates with the transformation of literary methodologies and methods of reading, analysis, and interpretation of literary texts. The study of the genre specificity of the novel is one of the essential segments of the latest scientific studies, given its flexibility and significant textual representation in various national works of literature. This paper offers a critical review of the key stages in the history of the study of the novel as a literary genre, as well as shows the possibilities of understanding the poetic aspects of the author’s style. The material of the research relies on the novels by the Canadian writer Lucy Maud Montgomery and the US writer Eleanor Porter. Both authors belonged to the same historical and cultural era; their work has many typological parallels due to objective factors. At the same time, the modernist worldview was embodied in each stylistic manner in its own way. Comparison of individual styles makes it possible to carry out a typological analysis within a particular genre with access to the study of common sources of image creation, as well as modeling the interpretive paradigm of metamodernism in the projection on the literature of different historical periods taking into account national characteristics. At the same time, the research opens up the prospect of expanding the methodological horizons of narratology for its progress beyond its “boundaries”: outside of literary studies, in a significant context, as well as in space outside of fiction.

Keywords: Eleanor Porter, genre, interpretation, Lucy Maud Montgomery, metamodernism, modernism, narratology, novel, reception

Introduction:

Contemporary literary discourse is increasingly approaching metamodernist feelings and experiences. The proven methodologies and techniques of reading, analysis, interpretation of the literary text acquire a new quality because the significant achievements of previous decades form a scientific and terminological context and determine the vectors for future progress in research horizons. One of the current areas of modern literature is the study of genre specifics of the novel – from a critical review of key stages in the history of its research to the poetic study of aspects of the author’s style (in particular, based on the literary works by Lucy Maud Montgomery and Eleanor Porter).

Literature review.

Despite the fact that novel is one of the most meticulously explored literary genres, it presents new avenues for research, highlighting new methodological possibilities and examining poetic representations of a particular author’s style. G.W.F. Hegel’s Lectures on Aesthetics provided a thorough foundational basis for further scholarly exploration of the novel as a genre, accentuating some of its inherent aspects: breadth and width of life depicted in the novel; conflict between “poetry of the heart and the prose of real-life situations”; the significance of personality; character development mode(s); connection with the epic, their similarities, and differences (Hegel, 1971, p. 149). Since then, various interpretations of the novel have been proposed by multiple scholars favoring different factors as classification criteria: volume, belonging to the epic mode, the portrayal of individual and social life, etc.

Esalnek (1991) proposed examining the novel from the viewpoint of its system and structure. She developed a structural approach, the foundation of which had been laid by Yu. Lotman. Esalnek (1991) interprets the notion of the system as a combination of elements and structure as their interconnectedness, arrangement, and organization (Esalnek, 1991). Hungarian researcher G. Lukács and Russian scholar M. Bakhtin were among those who explored the novel and its peculiarities exceptionally thoroughly. Comparing the epic and the novel became the starting point for their thinking. Lukács (1971) pronounced late 19th – early 20th century the era of the novel, with romantic irony (or “irony as mysticism,” which is “the highest freedom that can be achieved in a world without God” (Lukács, 1971, p. 93)) being its chief artistic principle. Bakhtin (1975) identified the key characteristics of the novel as a dynamic genre meant to portray dynamic and incomplete reality:

It is plasticity itself. It is a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review. Such, indeed, is the only possibility open to a genre that structures itself in a zone of direct contact with developing reality (Bakhtin, 1975, p. 330-331).

Methods.

Modern literary criticism is at the stage of active methodological transformation because the tangible metamodernist experience and understanding of reality directly affect the formation of paradigmatic principles in the study and rethinking of analytical concepts of scientific discourse. One such approach, which shows maximum flexibility in the horizon of modern humanities, is
narratology, especially in its postclassical status. To re-read the novel of the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries, we applied the eloquent metaphor of Gérard Genette. In the current metamodernist development of reality, a special place belongs to one of the most appropriate concepts proposed by the French scientist. Genette (1998) introduced the motif of “dizziness” into the space of literary studies (as separate concepts, i.e., “dizzying principle of symmetry” (Genette, 1998, p. 62) or “dangerous space-dizziness” in the discourse of modern culture (Genette, 1998, p. 126), and analytical approaches in the study of the works of individual authors, such as the essay on Alain Robbe-Grillet Fixation of Dizziness (as cited in Genette, 1998) or in work on Jorge Luis Borges. The latter, according to the researcher, sought to “restrain his dizziness or doubt in the secret labyrinths of erudition” (Genette, 1998, p. 144). Coming out of the bosom of French structuralists and building a literary paradigm of narratology, Genette tried, on the one hand, to help a modern man to overcome the growing anxiety, and proposed a perfect “geometry of literature,” and on the other hand, he understood the nature of “creative experience” in more and more detail, which is the core of “dizziness.” For a relatively short period (in the coordinates of the humanities): from 1969, when in Grammaire du “Decameron” by Tzvetan Todorov the concept of narratology was substantiated – to 1997, when David Herman’s Scripts, Sequences, and Stories: Elements of a Postclassical Narratology offered a new meaning of the concept, narratology echoed a truly dizzying path of assertion, self-reflection, and now – tectonic self-transformation as a literary methodology. Having absorbed the potential and possibilities of structuralism, providing narration with a rational and conceptual justification, the “narrative theory” has multiplied by at least five times, as differentiated by Papusha (2013): 1) transdisciplinary narratology, which goes beyond literary studies, 2) transtextual narratology that goes beyond the text into context 3) transmedial narratology that goes beyond the verbal text, 4) transgenetic narratology that goes beyond the epic genre, 5) transfictional narratology that goes beyond fiction (Papusha, 2013).

For the narratological set of tools to acquire its applied significance given the current demands of modern understanding of literary and artistic phenomena, it is necessary to introduce it into a broader context. In parallel with the narratological discourse, another research direction developed in psychology, namely, cognitive psychology, thoroughly represented in the studies by George Miller, Jerome Bruner, Ulrich Neisser, and Ed Smith. In the preface to Cognitive Psychology, Robert Solso noted that in working on his book for a long time, he enjoyed reading and re-reading. Thus, in the chronotope of ontological research, narratology as a theory of narrative and cognitivism as a science of the nature of human thought metaphorically met, performing their tasks, which are, according to R. Solso, “both ambitious and exciting” (Solso, 2006, p. 34). At the intersection of these two methodologies in domestic literary criticism, a wholly logical and “dizzying” question is formulated about the subject of study of cognitive narratology: “what is the subject of study of cognitive narratology: textual structures or structures of human thinking?” (Sobchuk, 2012, p. 112).

At the same time, the paradigm becomes even more complex, rather than “dizzying and exciting,” as its methodological understanding occurs synchronously with the active transformation of the existential narrative. The assertion of the narratological approach to literary and artistic phenomena took place in the coordinates of postmodernism, when chaos sought to
order and a certain systematization. Postclassical narratology is differentiated and becomes relevant simultaneously with the understanding of metamodernist concepts and principles. And if the scientific approach seeks to be legitimized, it must assume the mood of the era, enter the ontological space as not so much the search for meaning as the search for forms of balance between work and text, meaning and sense, perception and understanding, analysis and interpretation. Attempts to “inscribe” narratological tools first in the prism of cognitivism and then introducing this construction into the space of metamodernism seem to be an even more exciting and even more ambitious task. Tawfiq Yousef is quite right in characterizing metamodernism as the dominant cultural logic of modern times (Yousef, 2017). According to the researcher, who compares modernism, postmodernism, and metamodernism, the latter “tries to surpass modernism and postmodernism to correspond to modern cultural regimes. Its basic tenet is that faith, trust, dialogue and sincerity can help overcome the postmodern irony and alienation” (Yousef, 2017, p. 33). Thus, the study of literary texts regardless of their belonging to the era of creation (pre-modernism and modernism) in the system of methodological approaches to metamodernism, seems promising in the process of marking the newest humanitarian horizon.

To develop a systematic approach to the subject of study, one should consider the dynamic process of self-identification in each area of scientific knowledge as mentioned above. The search for an answer to the relevant question of Oleg Sobchuk on the subject of cognitive narratology can be introduced into the space of geometry (imitating Genette) and primarily explore the planimetric environment – to streamline the understanding of the nature and functioning of “textual structures,” and then with the help of cognitive tools to model a stereometric space in which “structures of human thinking” will dominate the text and create a metafictional reality. It is necessary to agree with the opinion of Prof. Tatiana Chernihivska that the central postulate of today is the brain, primarily – its secrets and possibilities. Thought concepts are increasingly active and complex with individual elements of the artistic world. Depending on the rotation of the traditional but productive, “polaroid lens,” the focus of research may be centered around a certain element of the cognitive chain (perception, images recognition, attention, memory, imagination, language functions, developmental psychology, thinking, problem-solving, human intellect, artificial intelligence). In each particular context, the modeling of an artistic narrative uniquely takes place, emphasizing either textual signposts or receptive keys and assumptions. In the first chapter of Cognitive Psychology, Solso (2006) quotes Haugard Gardner:

Through the development of new logical tools, the widespread introduction of computers, the application of scientific methods in the study of human psychology and cultural customs, discovery in the field of structure and function of the nervous system, we have achieved a deeper understanding of the issues originally formulated by Plato, Descartes, Kant, and Darwin” (Solso, 2006, p. 34).

There is no doubt that the increase of knowledge in a particular field of research expands and deepens the possibilities for further study. Still, there are those aspects of the functioning of human consciousness that are extremely difficult to be exposed to a comprehensive analysis, clear systematization, and differentiation. One of the areas where personal reception creates an individual projection of the canonical text is fiction. In particular, one of the productive genres –
the novel – needs a new understanding within the definite content of the triad “narratology – cognitivism – metamodernism,” which is the subject of the proposed study.

Results.
Let us consider the specifics of the novel as a genre based on the works of two authors – each of them demonstrated the original talent, explored unique issues, embodied the canon of the novel genre given the national culture and understanding of the historical era, synchronous belonging to which gives grounds for studying aspects of their work in one methodological context. These are Lucy Maud Montgomery (Canada) and Eleanor Porter (USA).

Lucy Maud Montgomery’s (1874-1942) work played an essential role in developing the Canadian novel. Although her books generally evoke interest as vibrant examples of “children’s literature,” we would like to argue that the range of topics discussed in L.M. Montgomery’s works (a woman’s place in social hierarchy, young teachers’ professional development, and difficulties of their trade, dealing with death and sickness, fear of loneliness and alienation from society) far exceeds the boundaries of literature “for children” and “about children.”

From the viewpoint of modeling a Metamodernist chronotope, we should note the non-diegetic explicit narrator being dominant in the novels of the Anne of Green Gables series as a specific feature of said novels’ narrative structure. Although the sphere of their existence is limited to the exegesis (meaning that the narrator does not participate in any narrated events), the narrator’s position is revealed through a combination of lyrical interjections; comments; assessments of the environment, actions, and characters. In nature descriptions, for example, the point of view of the narrator is transformed into a personal point of view. The narration takes place through the representation of the protagonist, accurately conveying the expressiveness, syntactic, lexical, and stylistic peculiarities of her language:

It was October again when Anne was ready to go back to school – a glorious October, all red and gold, with mellow mornings when the valleys were filled with delicate mists as if the spirit of autumn had poured them in for the sun to drain – amethyst, pearl, silver, rose, and smoke-blue. The dews were so heavy that the fields glistened like cloth of silver, and there were such heaps of rustling leaves in the hollows of many-stemmed woods to run crisply through. The Birch Path was a canopy of yellow, and the ferns were sear and brown all along it (Montgomery, 2016, p. 175).

Along with hypertrophied sincerity and highly intensive emotional saturation, the text allows space for the perceptive level of viewpoint, with the narrator unveiling their own evaluations of characters and events. To this end, we should consider the significance of irony, which facilitates the unraveling of the fictional world in accentuating the contrast between the heroine’s poetic worldview and the narrator’s viewpoint which leans toward a more realistic stance:

…but by the time it reached Lynde’s Hollow it was a quiet, well-conducted little stream, for not even a brook could run past Mrs. Rachel Lynde’s door without due regard for decency and decorum; it probably was conscious that Mrs. Rachel was sitting at her
window, keeping a sharp eye on everything that passed, from brooks and children up
(Montgomery, 2016, p. 1).

Basing her writing off of the Bildungsroman tradition, L.M. Montgomery updated this genre quite substantially, enriching it with new themes and problems (the influence of literature and culture on personality development, the role of friendship in a young person’s life, creative reimagining and transformation of one’s reality as a way to overcome inner conflict, etc.). At the same time, we should note that her version of the Bildungsroman is frequently combined with the regional novel, a characteristic genre of Canadian literature meant to portray essential characteristics of Canadian nature and locations where the author spent a significant portion of their life. The conceptual environment where the characters live and act – the little village of Avonlea – is a composite image based on the author’s impressions of different locations on Prince Edward Island, where L.M. Montgomery lived throughout her childhood and youth. By fiercely protecting her native town from all outsider criticism, Anne expresses her wish to change Avonlea for the better, which is revealed in very concrete actions undertaken by the protagonist and her friends (e.g., starting a Village Improvement Society). To this end, it makes sense to talk about “new sincerity” to which Metamodernist perception of the world aspires.

The main issues that determined the form, content and structure of L.M. Montgomery’s fiction (devotion to one’s home, creative freedom, girls’ (or women’s) search for their place in society) are further developed in the Pat of Silver Bush divilogy (1933-1935) and the Emily trilogy (1923-1927).

Pat Gardiner is similar to Anne Shirley in that she is also bestowed with a particular “fairy gift,” which denotes her ability to perceive the world around her in a creative way, transforming it through the means of her imagination. Similarly to the Anne of Green Gables series, personification (especially when it comes to different house images) is one of the key, illuminating tropes in the imaginary world of the novel, which not only helps to characterize specific aspects of the fictional space but also supports the image of the heroine as a creative person: “Oh, I’ve got such a lovely home,” breathed Pat, clasping her hands. “It’s such a nice friendly house. Nobody … nobody … has such a lovely home. I’d just like to hug it” (Montgomery, 1989, p. 159). Pet keeps in touch with her native Silver Bush and other houses, talking to them, guessing their surreptitious dreams and aspirations:

Pat called it the Long Lonely House. <…> “It wants to be lived in, Judy,” she would say wistfully”; “Pat always felt as if the house was chuckling to itself over some joke nobody but itself knew, and she liked the mystery. She wouldn’t have liked Silver Bush to be like that: Silver Bush mustn’t have secrets from her (Montgomery, 1989, p. 24).

However, it should be noted: while the Anne novels are dominated by a narrative point of view, the Pat novels are dominated by a personal point of view. The events are narrated and explained from the viewpoint of the seven-year-old Pat Gardiner (“Mother was lying on her pillows, white and spent after that dreadful headache” (Montgomery, 1989, p. 29)); following G. Genette’s typology, we might call this “internal focalization” (with the narrator only telling us what the
character knows); in W. Schmid’s typology, this would be a “personal” point of view. Therefore, we may conclude that these works of fiction exemplify a “double narrativity” strategy utilized to achieve a more convincing depiction of events and their perception.

Emily Starr, in turn, dreams of growing up and becoming a “famous authoress” (“I haven’t any intention of dying. I’m going to live – for ages – and be a famous authoress – you’ll just see if I don’t, Aunt Elizabeth Murray!” (Montgomery, 1923, p. 39)). After her father’s death, she is prone to feeling incredibly lonely. However, she can find solace in dreaming and writing. In certain moments, Emily can see the world around her as a “flash”:

It had come with a high, wild note of wind in the night, with a shadow wave over a ripe field, with a greybird lighting on her window-sill in a storm, with the singing of “Holy, holy, holy” in church, with a glimpse of the kitchen fire when she had come home on a dark autumn night, with the spirit-like blue of ice palms on a twilit pane, with a felicitous new word when she was writing down a “description” of something. And always when the flash came to her, Emily felt that life was a wonderful, mysterious thing of persistent beauty (Montgomery, 1923, p. 7-8).

Essential factors in the rendering of the fictional world include personification (“The Wind Woman was always around; and there were the trees – Adam-and-Eve, and the Rooster Pine, and all the friendly lady-birches” (Montgomery, 1923, p. 1)) and antonomasia (“Father had had so many of them for her – “sweetheart” and “darling” and “Emily-child” and “dear wee kidlet” and “honey” and “elfkin.” He had a pet name for every mood, and she had loved them all” (Montgomery, 1923, p. 35)).

The narrative configuration of L.M. Montgomery’s novels is part of a broader literary context, with the late 19th – early 20th-century Canadian novel represented by genres such as the historical novel, Prairie novel, regional novel, Bildungsroman, etc. When analyzing L.M. Montgomery’s works, we should emphasize her contribution in updating Bildungsroman by combining it with regional story and enriching it with new themes and problems (women’s position in society; young teachers’ professional development; the role of literature, culture, creative pursuits in young people’s lives, etc.). Poetic peculiarities of this Canadian writer’s novels give us grounds to study the poetics of her fiction within the paradigm of cognitive narratology due to profound psychological analysis, but also due to a broad range of authorial narratological solutions unraveling the psychological chain: firstly, in terms of intention presentation, later on – to recognize textual markers to understand the nature of the creative idea and its implementation.

To try a comparative typological study within the historical era, the dominant mood of the experience of its age, embodied in the original narrative decisions in the literary and artistic work, we will examine the literary works by another author – Eleanor Porter (USA). First of all, it is necessary to note that an essential aspect of the existence of the artistic world, its comprehension and research is (re)reading the literary work as a process of decoding meanings, (re)understanding of reality in the mirror of Literature, interpretation of existential phenomena through the prism of mental plexuses at the textual and metatextual levels – the literary criticism studies offer the
scientific discourse an inexhaustible set of embodiments of semantic and cognitive paradigms, as well as the coordinates in the plane of a work of art. In our opinion, literary works about a child and the world of childhood constitute an interesting and promising niche for scientific research, namely – the literary embodiment of the ontological category “childhood” and the further development of the receptive model of this phenomenon. The novel by the American writer Eleanor Porter *Pollyanna* (1913) is the material for the study of the receptive potential of childhood in the context of the narratological approach from the evaluative standpoint of metamodernist experience of the world. It should be noted that the choice of the novel is because the philosophical and historical understanding of the phenomenon of childhood in the transition period (late nineteenth – early twentieth century) has reached a kind of categorical “crystallization.” All periods of formation and development of philosophical thought more or less fragmentedly correlated with childhood: from Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus to the classical German philosophers (I. Kant, G. Hegel, A. Disterweg) – childhood “nurtured” in philosophical thinking as an intermediate link in the process of forming a social individual. And only in the middle of the 19th century, the vector of the child’s gaze shifted in the direction of its “personalized” vision. For example, L. Feuerbach pondered the still unresolved question:

What is a child for? Is their destiny to be on the other side of childhood? No, because why would they be children then? Nature completes its work with every step it takes, <...> A child does not exist to become an adult – how many people die as children! – a child exists for its own sake, so it is satisfied and finds pleasure in itself (as cited in Kochubey, 2014, p. 260-261).

To understand the narrative nature of the literary text, which focuses on childhood as an idea, it is necessary to take into account the basic concepts of childhood, in particular, the theory of the historical origin of childhood. Vygotsky (2004) argues that the development of the child’s personality is not determined by the laws of natural/physiological formation of the organism (Vygotsky, 2004). According to Elkonin (2005), childhood correlates not with physical imperfection, but with the social manifestation of the individual (Elkonin, 2005). It is aslo essential to consider the cultural and anthropological concept of childhood. Mead (2004) considers the role of socio-cultural factors in the formation of children’s personality, namely – the mechanism of influence of objective and subjective aspects of human society on the “formatting” of the universal biological code in a unique child’s character (Mead, 2004). Social concepts are important as well (interpreting childhood as a particularly valuable – and always unique – reality of “unfolding” of the human personality (Cohn, 2004; Mitrofanova, 2017; Davis, 1996; Garbarino, 1987). In addition, we consider the approach suggested by Slavova (2002) to be an integral segment of scientific studies, since it introduces specific poetic qualities of literature about a child into a holistic paradigmatic context of both childhood and literature (Slavova, 2002).

As evidenced by the analytical studies of domestic and foreign scholars, the issue of childhood in its philosophical, social, cultural, aesthetic contours, etc., is an essential area for reflection and scientific discussion. We consider, first of all, the urgent need for “confrontation” with hitherto new generations of readers to be a probable impetus for attempts to comprehend the essence of childhood paradigmatically. Exploring the specifics of formatting narrative strategies,
it is necessary to take into account the receptive space, which will “enter” the fictional world and in which it will acquire the needed markers because the request comes from the reader of the metamodern world. Taking into account the reasoning and conclusions of researchers of generational phenomena, we assume that the generation of “google-babies” or “alpha” testifies to a kind of turn of the child to “pure” childhood, not dissolved in archetypal matrices or today’s indispensable digital space. Metamodernist “New Sincerity” (G. Denber) will need an appropriate artistic solution. Thus, the semantic manifestation of childhood in the poetic system of the work of art and the following parameters of its reception becomes especially relevant in modern literary criticism.

E. Porter’s novel *Pollyanna*, written in 1913 (at the culmination of the history of existentialism), offers existential phenomena and, in part, dichotomies for comprehension and analysis. The work’s plot revolves around the figure of 11-year-old orphan Pollyanna Whittier, who moves from an orphanage of the Ladies’ Aid to Aunt Polly – her only relative in the small town of Beldingsville. The novel’s plot actualizes numerous variants of manifestation of the category of “childhood” at the poetic level of modeling the artistic world. The narrative strategy of the story represents the artistic embodiment and logical structuring of key poetic markers of childhood, which can be best systematized using the concept of “frame.” Proposed by M. Minsky in 1974, for the area of artificial intelligence research, this concept refers to the cognitive structure in the phenomenological field of a man, based on “possible knowledge of typical situations and related expectations of the properties and relations of actual or hypothetical objects” (Minsky, 1979, 288). Thus, the frame system is a kind of hierarchical ordering, in which a specific “top” is subject to “slots,” “macro positions” and “terminals.” Given that Genette’s "geometry" is based on the idea of harmony and order, which is embodied in a particular modeled artistic world of the literary work, we have reason to say that the narrative strategy of E. Porter’s novel is a well-ordered cognitive structure, whose “direct functioning” is associated with the receptive process. Thus, to analyze the artistic components of the matrix of “childhood” in E. Porter’s novel, it is entirely appropriate to use a semantic frame model.

The starting point of modeling the frame structure of childhood in the artistic space of the novel is the tendentious authorial conceptualization of this category: the child protagonist is not opposed to other characters, not removed from the system of images to a particular semantic position. Here we can emphasize the intentional strategy of “encoding” meanings: out of the mouth of the child and in their actions, one can touch the most painful and intimate, one can attract attention, evoke empathy, make the desired impact. Therefore, we consider “childhood as an author’s strategy” the “top” of the frame. To express cognitive processes, childhood acquires a special meaning, designing the reception toward enhanced empathic identification.

The “terminals” of this frame structure are concretized under the semantic specificity of the novel, so the interpretation is greatly multiplied: each new reading and comprehension gives rise to new meanings of the category “childhood.” The study of frame components in the narrative strategy of E. Porter’s novel is based on the axiomatic statement that the “frame” structuring of a specific paradigm is characterized by its inconsistency and is directly related to the interpretive and methodological model, as well as analytical guidelines. The artistic world of childhood in the
The US writer offers a significant palette of structural elements of the frame “childhood” in the story. The reader’s first acquaintance with the heroine takes place at the moment of her deep loneliness: first, her mother died, and soon her father, and the charity organization sent the child to her only relative, her mother’s sister, who was forced to take care of the niece. The opposition “childhood” – “loneliness” seems obvious, but the development of the artistic paradigm of childhood involves correlations, which seem impossible at first glance. Pollyanna’s loneliness, clearly outlined in the first pages of the novel, as an objective quality of her childhood, triggers the mechanism of meaning-creation, forms the “non-childish” reality around the child, generating hitherto incomprehensible meanings and questions.

The existential significance of the category of childhood, proposed by E. Porter, is expressed by a redirected point of view: the voice of the narrator sounds like the voice of a character. After all, the critical idea is embedded in the mouth of Mr. Pendleton, once in love with Pollyanna’s mother:

Pollyanna, many years ago I fell in love with a woman. I was hoping one day to bring her to this house. <...> But <...> I couldn’t bring her here <...> Since then, this house has become a pile of gray stones for me, not a home. It needs a woman’s hand and heart – or a child’s presence <...> to become a home (Porter, 2004, p. 141).

Thus, the “child’s presence” is a marker of “vitality” necessary for further “being.” And identical with the female in its importance, the child’s soul is an attribute of a new beginning, purity, possible “tomorrow.” Thus, in the narrative structure, thanks to the frame, the basic levels of the point of view are transformed – the perceptual level is specified. Metamodernist world cognition is fully embodied here as not the oscillation of good-bad or positive-negative, but in the perception of everything simultaneously suitable at a particular moment of being.

The correlation “childhood” – “self-awareness” is vital for understanding the narrative specificity of the analyzed frame: childhood as a category acquires an incredibly holistic embodiment given its reflection and self-reflection. Awareness of its uniqueness at its unfolding – the semantic load of the model implemented by the author brings the category of “childhood” in a qualitatively different plane, where each of the possible receptions is implemented in existential contours. The teenage girl, who is experiencing loss after loss, once again is forced to come to terms with the evil turns of fate (here it is necessary to emphasize the differentiation of narrative and receptive assessments: the reader considers them evil, but the girl does not), clearly defines its purpose: it will make the world (= reality) brighter (= happier). At the same time, she is overwhelmed with fear because she will not be hugged, she will not be regretted because she is entirely alone. The correlation “childhood” – “self-awareness” appears as a kind of autonomous semantic structure in the narrative because it has no motivating context. Growing up “like this,” Pollyanna radically changes the fate of not only John Pendleton (“Girl,” he said, “I want you to come to me as often as possible. Promise? I’m completely alone, and I need you” (Porter, 2004, p. 130), but also unexpectedly for the whole town heals the seriously ill Mrs. Snow (“It’s worth seeing you once, and it’s impossible to forget. It’s a pity you weren’t there yesterday. I needed you yesterday” (Porter, 2004, p. 72). The hyperemic presentation is also achieved through certain plot
elements, such as the rescue of Jimmy Bean (a homeless orphan boy to whom Pollyanna gave not only a home but also a family), a new chance for happiness for, formidable at first glance, but, in fact, deeply unhappy, Aunt Polly and Dr. Chilton, thirsty for love – “non-childish” incarnations of childhood, embodied in the figure of Pollyanna, lead to (new)(re)realization of this category.

Joy as an ontological phenomenon determines the leitmotif of the novel, and its narrative representations specify the frame structure of the narration. This gives grounds to consider *Pollyanna* by Eleanor Porter as a literary source for the development of the concept of “joy” in the artistic world of a literary work. The ability/willingness to rejoice, the ability to “play for joy” – the paradigmatic significance of joy as a way of worldview concretizes the artistic model of “childhood.” An unusual manifestation of joy, a fundamental denial of joy as a pleasant emotion or a sublime mental state, testify to the poetic and, consequently, a receptive feature of this phenomenon. More than a century of long-standing tradition finds its new reading in the coordinates of metamodernism, which testifies to the need for a neo-metallic perception of the world. “Game of Joy,” examined in the frame structuring of the novel, offers a philosophical concept of “living” the reality: “The essence of the game is to find something to rejoice in, it does not matter what” (Porter, 2004, p. 36). For example, a completely unexpected narrative decision: to rejoice when crutches were presented instead of a doll:

> Well, goodness me! I can’t see anythin’ to be glad about – gettin’ a pair of crutches when you wanted a doll! <…> Goosey! Why, just be glad because you don’t need – ‘em!” – exulted Pollyanna, triumphantly. “You see it’s just as easy – when you know how! (Porter, 2004, p. 37).

This passage testifies to the convincing semantic “privilege” of a literary work about a child because it gives habitual reasoning the status of truth. Moreover, it should be noted that we are talking about existential concepts. The conceptual significance of the game in the history of culture is argued in the studies of the Dutch philosopher Johan Huizinga. Like every game, the “game of joy” has its rules. The social significance of the game is, first of all, in understanding the possible losses and benefits, as well as in following the directions to succeed. The game proposed by E. Porter is built on the same principles: the culmination of Pollyanna’s game is her life: when an 11-year-old “slender little girl in the red-checked gingham with two fat braids of flaxen hair hanging down her back” (Porter, 2004, p. 17) will teach a gloomy town to live in joy and enjoy life, she will face a difficult question – why should she rejoice herself, lying bound to bed? Thus, in the gradual concretization of the artistic narrative, the frame acquires not only significant semantic correlations, not only carries out a clear intention but also maximizes the receptive horizon of the work, transforming the meanings of the narrative into markers of interpretation.

The metamodernist reception of the novel’s artistic world is facilitated by a masterful, deeply psychologized childhood narrative. Thanks to the author’s strategy, the effect of complete identity (in the words of metamodernism, “true authenticity” or “real reality”) of the world, which is the subject of reflection, and the world, which is a fragment of artistic integrity, is achieved. The importance of the moment, the value of what is “here-and-now” are concentrated in a detailed reproduced vortex of real life, which is not a preparation for tomorrow but is valuable today.
because it is life itself. We can notice the modernist chronotope of the envisaged metamodernist question – the search for harmony of the world and in the world. The narrative of E. Porter’s novel comes to an end together with the answer to Pollyanna’s central question – HER “joyful” “adult” town of Beldingsville is why she will rejoice, and the “non-childish” game, the rules of which are perfectly mastered by all the adults around, will put her back on her feet. Markers of childhood in the artistic space of a literary work, the idea of which grows in the canon of anxieties of modernism, convincingly fit into the axiological paradigm of the mood of the modern “cultural era.” The frame structuring of the narrative makes it possible to identify specific patterns of the poetic model in the semantic plane of the work of art through oppositions and synthesis of conceptually dichotomous concepts.

Conclusions:
The development of the narratological paradigm of the latest literary studies significantly expands the possibilities of reading a work of art. At the same time, the active synthesis with cognitivism opens new horizons for analytical studies. Novel’s history as a genre makes it possible to identify the main stages of formation of methodological foundations for understanding the nature, essence, artistic canon, to outline the most characteristic features that find their original embodiment in each idiosyncratic system. The narrative strategies of Lucy Maud Montgomery and Eleanor Porter primarily reveal the author’s intention and build the art world in the perspective of in-depth psychological analysis, appealing to the imagination, thinking, memory, modeling images in the mind of the reader. Particular attention should be paid to the stylistic means by which the author’s idea enters the reader’s living space. Historically belonging to the era of the premonition of modernism and the unfolding of the modernist worldview, both authors prognostically enter the area of the metamodernist search. One way or another, their works seek to find harmony of the individual with the world, their heroes (in particular, heroines) represent the “new sincerity” and “meta-cuteness” that best fit into the latest context of humanities knowledge.

“Dizziness” is a way of thinking that brought Gerard Genette out of structuralism and led to the development of the classical model of narratology, although the researcher sought to master the complexity of artistic space-time, so he proposed a holistic system of text signposts. At the present stage, when postclassical status moves narratology toward the convergence with the study of the nature of human thought, Genette’s metaphor is only further expressed and acquires new modifications. After all, homo- and hetero-narration give fundamentally different reflections in projections, for example, on perception, on images recognition, on marking of memory horizons, and so on. Simultaneously with the expansion of visualization, the levels of imagination or thinking become even more hypothetical, in part rather amorphous, as philosophers and culturologists insist, proposing concepts for understanding metamodernism as a “new cultural age” (Yousef, 2017).

Thus, for a holistic study of the novel genre in the synthesis of modern literary approaches, one should correlate narrative models with aspects of cognitive psychology, which allows for deepening poetic research at all stages of the artistic world – from the author’s idea to the latest interpretations. One of the options for answering the fundamental question of Oleh Sobchuk might
be not “what?,” but “how?” – how exactly does the mutual transformation of “textual” and “mental” structures occur in each stylistic system?

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Sobchuk, O. (2012). Rethinking the Concepts of Narrative, Character and Focalization in Modern
The Role of Derivation in Teaching Quranic Vocabulary: Between Theory and Practice

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Abstract
Words with close meanings often cause difficulty in understanding the meanings of Quranic text. At times, Quranic words with similar meanings are even used in the wrong context. As such, understanding the morphological and semantic differences between Quranic words with close meanings becomes necessary. Therefore, this research aims to explore the roots and semantic differences of Quranic words with similar meanings and ascertain the role of derivation in teaching Quranic vocabulary. The research employed the descriptive-analytical approach to trace Quranic words with similar connotations and determine their derivation methods. The findings showed that the etymological origins of Quranic vocabulary with similar meanings can help greatly in clarifying the semantic features of the words. Similarly, the findings revealed that referring to the morphological structures of words helps to discover the meanings of Quranic words with similarity in linguistic origin and difference in structure. Therefore, derivation can be an effective means of determining the connotations of Quranic words, which can be useful in teaching Quranic vocabulary. This research could help instructors to advance the method of teaching Quranic vocabulary as well as the Arabic language in general. Nevertheless, the research is limited to the role of derivation in teaching Quranic vocabulary, and thus, further studies may focus on how the origin and formation of words can help students to develop language skills.

Keywords: Derivation, Quranic vocabulary, linguistic differences, teaching Arabic

Introduction

Vocabulary is the centerpiece of linguistic elements, preceded by sounds and followed by structures (Abdelgelil et al., 2021). Quranic vocabulary has great importance and specificity. As for its importance, Quranic vocabulary is present and common in many languages of non-Arab Muslims due to their involvement in Islamic culture (Essa, Hassan, Ramlee, 2020). The Noble Qur’an represents the main source of Islam, and therefore, Muslims often borrow words from the Arabic language as well as the Quranic vocabulary in particular, in addition to the influence of the Quranic language on Arab life since the advent of Islam.

The importance of Quranic words lies in the fact that a lot of Islamic rules as well as the understanding of legal rulings are based on their usage. Therefore, several earlier Islamic scholars paid particular attention to the significance of Quranic vocabulary (Al-Iṣfahānī, 1999; Al-Farra’, n. d). Today, students of Arabic encounter certain challenges while trying to distinguish between Quranic words with close or more than one connotation (Ali, Brakhw, Nordin, & ShaikIsmail, 2012; Aqila, & Bijaksana, 2020). Nevertheless, ancient Arabic scholars realized the role of derivation in understanding linguistic differences between Quranic words (Abdelgelil, 2020). This research, therefore, seeks to explore the role of derivation in teaching Quranic vocabulary as an important source of Arabic. This research is expected to advance our knowledge of the major morphological and semantic features of Quranic words with close meanings.

Literature Review

Relationship between Derivation and Teaching of Quranic Vocabulary
In discovering an effective means of vocabulary development, derivation has been mentioned as an important feature of language that helps in this regard (Bertram, Laine, & Virkkala, 2000; Gellert, Arnbak, Wischmann, & Elbro, 2021). Therefore, what is the meaning of derivation? What is the relationship between derivation and the teaching of Quranic vocabulary? Derivation, which in Arabic means Ishtiqaq, is defined by Al-Jurjani (1983) as “deriving one word from another provided they match in meaning and structure, or differ in form” (p. 27). This definition, in particular, refers to the linguistic production skills and the transmission process which can be used in developing listening skills or the reception process. Arabic words and their meanings have comprehensive origins and roots with meanings and structures which have distinguished features while still retaining significant morphological and semantic measures.

To ascertain the correct meanings of Quranic words with close connotations, we return to the roots from which the words are derived. These roots inevitably demonstrate the semantic specificity of one word over another. Additionally, by identifying the morphological structure and meaning, semantic features of particular Quranic words with similar connotations can be ascertained. Thus, the derivation process of words helps individuals to understand the intended meaning of texts. According to Al-Razi (1980), “derivation is the most effective method of ascertaining the meanings of a word” (p. 1/29). Also, one of the characteristics of standard Arabic is that it is an etymological language. Thus, when we refer to the etymology of any word, its
meaning becomes clear. Alternatively, only the derivation feature is needed to add an adjective to the lexical meaning of words, such as the following words: "الزبر" (Az-Zabur), "السفر" (As-Sifr), and "الكتاب" (Al-Kitab). Thus, how can a learner of Arabic or a researcher in Quranic studies determine the semantic features of Arabic words? Figure 1 represents the derivation method of the above-mentioned Arabic words.

This is the derivation process from the etymological root of the words. For instance, the word "wrote", which is the past form of the verb "write" indicates that the action of writing happened and ended in the past. Also, the phrasal verb form "is writing", which shows that the action of "writing" is taking place at the moment, represents a continuous action. The Almighty Allah says:

So woe to those who scribe the Scripture with their own hands and then say, “This is from Allah,” that they may purchase, in exchange for it, a small price. Woe to them on account of what their hands have written, and woe to them on account of what they earn (Surah al-Baqarah: 79).

So woe to those who...
The verb "write" comes at the beginning of the above verse, and subsequently, the verb comes in the future form "سأكتب" (will write). The word also appears twice in the following verse.

O you who believe, when you contract a debt among yourselves for a fixed period of time, write it down, and let the scribe write it between you with fairness. The scribe whom Allah has taught should not refuse to write, so let him write, and let the debtor dictate, but he should fear Allah his Lord, and not diminish anything out of it... (Surah al-Baqarah: 282).

The above method is similarly used to derive Quranic words with their various meanings. In practicing the teaching of Quranic vocabulary, students can be introduced to Quranic words in terms of meaning and usage as well as how words are derived. This process represents one of the most important aspects of language learning (Gellert et al., 2021). Understanding the intended meanings of words in the Quran requires the ability to identify the morphological and etymological forms of the words (Al-'Askari, 2005; Al-Razi, 1980), and none of the previous studies have attempted to methodically investigate this phenomenon, particularly in teaching the Noble Quran. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of derivation in teaching Quranic vocabulary to advance our understanding of how derivation helps in ascertaining the meanings of Quranic words with similar connotations.

Analysis and Discussion

Derivation and its Role in Teaching Quranic Vocabulary

The derivation of words, especially Quranic vocabulary, is very complex. Nevertheless, there is a continuous attempt in Islamic sciences, with their various subfields, to ease the understanding Quran from various viewpoints. This study focuses on two important aspects that could help us to understand the role of derivation in teaching Quranic vocabulary; 1) efforts made to explain the meanings of Quranic words; 2) the role of derivation in understanding the precise meanings of Quranic words with close meanings.

Efforts made by Islamic scholars to explain the meanings of Quranic words

Various explanations regarding Quranic lexicons have been documented by different scholars. For example, Al-'Askari (2005), in his book entitled “Linguistic Differences” explained some crucial linguistic issues in “understanding parts of speech as well as their meanings and purpose” (p. 21). He stated the main motive of writing the book, saying:

I have never seen a kind of science and art of literature except that it has different books that bring its branches together and organize its types of speech concerning the difference between their close meanings. This closeness of meanings confuses learners. For this purpose, I wrote my book (Al-'Askari, 2005, p. 21).

Therefore, Al-'Askari was motivated to write his book by the desire to clear misperceptions in understanding word meanings. To achieve this goal, understanding the semantic features of a word is necessary for distinguishing the word from another. In the initial parts of the book, Al-'Askari mentioned eight criteria for understanding linguistic differences. These criteria serve as the theoretical basis for linguistic differences. The writer succeeded in providing an effective method of understanding linguistic differences between words with similar meanings with derivation as one of the most crucial features. According to Al-'Askari, an example of these criteria is the difference between "politics" (سياسة) and "management" (تدبير). This is because politics "سياسة" is...
derived from the word "السوس" (mites) which is a well-known animal. Politics refers to a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, and as such, cannot be an attribute of God. The word "تدبير" derived from "دبر" which means “last moment” or the end of something. Therefore, it is often said that “continuous management is a kind of policy” (Al-'Askarı, 2005, p. 17). In another context, the writer confirmed this difference, saying “a single management is not considered as a kind of policy, for every ‘policy’ is a ‘management’, and not every ‘management’ is a ‘policy’” (p. 186).

Al-'Askarı identified the semantic features that distinguish between the two words “politics and management” through an etymological criterion that brings the words back to their original roots and accurately clarifies their semantic components. The scholar successfully applied this criterion based on historical semantic analysis, description, and comparison. Al-'Askarı selected the words of his book carefully, avoided the explanation of differences between strange words, and replaced them with Quranic words, as well as spoken language. He stated:

I have included enough evidence in my book without overestimation. I have also chosen my words based on what is mentioned in the Book of Allah, and according to the words of scholars and native speakers. Besides, I have not used strange words in my book (p. 21).

We must take into consideration that Al-'Askarı (may Allah have mercy on him) was referring to his era. The people of this era were closely related to more proficient Arabic speakers compared to us. Therefore, we are in dire need to facilitate the learning of Quranic vocabulary as ignorance about this field has prevailed in contemporary society.

Furthermore, Al-'Askarı has done justice to the choice of words in his book. Thus, the scholar took into account the learners’ needs, on one hand, as well as the linguistic reality on the other hand. Until today, there has been an increased demand for the learning of the Arabic language for religious purposes (Essa et al., 2020). The language of the Quran has dominated Arab life to this day. A computer-based study of the Arabic language was conducted with huge lexicon data (Al-Zubaydī, 2001). The study revealed that the Arabic subject has about 11500 roots only. It was found that the Quran does not exceed 15% of the Arabic roots. The entire vocabulary of other documents does not deviate from the Quranic subject except by 2% only. This outcome means that the “dominant subject in Arabic writings and hadiths is the subject of the Quran” (Shaheen & Musa, 1973, p. 246 as cited in Daoud, 2001).

This domination can also be found in the vocabulary of Muslims’ languages which are borrowed from the Arabic language. Consider, for example, the Malay language, which is widely spoken in the South-East Asian Region (Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, & Southern Thailand). A study conducted by Bayoumi (2019) has proven that “the most commonly borrowed words in Malay are from the language of the Quran and Arabic. Hence, Quranic words are prevalent, especially in the Malay language” (p. 499).

The foregoing evidence supports the rationale for Al-'Askarı’s choice of Quranic vocabulary in his book. It is, therefore, crucial for Muslims to incorporate Quranic vocabulary into the teaching Arabic for both native and non-native speakers, given that the Quranic text could help learners to achieve a high level of linguistic and vocabulary development (Tuaimah, 1998).
Additionally, the Quranic text can be useful to the learners of Arabic by motivating them to learn the language. This is because religious motivation is still an important factor that determines learners’ enthusiasm to learn Arabic.

Al-'Askarî emphasizes the role of the morphological structure in understanding the linguistic differences between words with similar meanings, stating that “if the formulas and the roots differ, the meanings will inevitably differ” (p. 13), such as the difference between "النفاذ" (interrogation) and "السؤال" (question). This is because the word “question” is only used for what the person is ignorant of or in doubt about. It may also be used in a situation where the questioner asks about what is known or not known to them. The interrogative form "النفاذ" indicates the difference between “interrogation” and “question”. Likewise, all nouns with different forms have different meanings (Al-'Askarî, 2005, p. 18).

Moreover, Al-'Askarî used the inflectional morphology to differentiate between the two verbs "النفاذ" (interrogate) and "السؤال" (question). As such, ascertaining semantic differences between Quranic words requires the knowledge of lexicon structure and derivatives. To clarify the precise intended meaning, there is a need for accurate knowledge of how lexicon structures are formed as well as the significance of each structure. Linguistic knowledge is crucial in clarifying these structures and their meanings.

The role of derivation in teaching Quranic vocabulary: A practical analysis
This analysis deals with Quranic vocabulary in two different aspects: 1) establishment of words origin etymologically; 2) establishment of words origin based on their morphological forms. First, to explain the etymological origin of Quranic vocabulary, this analysis focuses on words with close or similar meanings as represented in the following Table.

Table 1. Quranic words with similar meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary that denotes knowledge</th>
<th>Vocabulary indicating the covenant</th>
<th>Vocabulary related to creations</th>
<th>Vocabulary related to lying</th>
<th>Vocabulary related to miserliness and stinginess</th>
<th>Vocabulary related to hatred</th>
<th>Vocabulary related to discourse and discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Anasa) &quot;لِسْ&quot; (isr) means (treaty, covenant, contract)</td>
<td>(ja’ala) (ja’ala) to create</td>
<td>(afaka)</td>
<td>(bakhila)</td>
<td>(sana’a) to hate intensely</td>
<td>(hadith) discourse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ahd) The covenant or the contact</td>
<td>(khalaqa)</td>
<td>(zur)</td>
<td>(shuḥḥu) scarcity and niggardliness</td>
<td>(maquta)</td>
<td>(al-qasas) means ‘stories’ or ‘news’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ʿalima), to know, to have knowledge, to be cognizant, to be aware</td>
<td>(mithaq) (plural maʿtāq means charter or treaty)</td>
<td>(fatara) means: to rip apart or break apart or crack</td>
<td>(awl)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 1, this study considers the etymological root of Quranic words with similar meanings. To analyze these words, four steps are considered: 1) mentioning some words with close meanings; 2) identifying the etymological root of the words; 3) clarifying the semantic differences between the words; 4) providing examples from Quranic verses, prophetic hadiths, and ancient Arabic poetry. For details regarding the analysis of the Quranic words presented in Table 1, please refer to Appendix A. The analysis shows that the etymological origins of Quranic vocabulary with similar meanings help greatly in clarifying semantic features of the words, which can be useful in teaching Quranic vocabulary. These findings are consistent with Al-Razi’s (1980) assertion that “derivation” represents one of the most effective means of determining words’ connotations. This is because Arabic is an etymological language, and the meaning of words becomes clear when we refer to their etymological origin.

Second, to clarify words origin based on their morphological structures, five steps were followed: 1) mentioning words with close meanings; 2) providing the morphological forms of the words; 3) clarifying the distinguishing features of the words; 4) giving examples from Quranic verses; 5) sorting out the words according to their morphological forms, taking into account the root system alphabetically. Please refer to Appendix B for practical analysis of Quranic words given their morphological structures. Similarly, this analysis revealed that referring to the morphological structures of words helps to discover the meanings of Quranic words with similarity in linguistic origin and difference in structure. This outcome supports Al-Askari’s (2005) notion regarding the role of the morphological structure in understanding the linguistic differences between words with similar meanings. According to Al-Askari, when the origins of words differ, their meanings may also differ.

Conclusion
This study explored the etymological rooting of Quranic vocabulary and clarified the semantic differences between similar Qur’anic words. According to the findings, the etymological roots of Quranic words with close meaning play a role in clarifying their semantic features. Additionally, the reference to the semantics of morphological formulas revealed the meanings of Quranic words with similar linguistic roots. Besides, the etymological roots of the vocabulary or reference to the meanings of morphological formulas do not help to achieve the clarification of all differences between words with close meanings. Thus, it is preferable to rely on other structural, contextual, and semantic properties of Arabic to ensure comprehensiveness and determine the differences. Nevertheless, certain difficulties exist in the application of etymological rooting or reference to the meanings of morphological formulas, such as problems in determining the etymological root due to semantic change of words and failure to ascertain the root from which most Arabic words are derived, as well as the inadequacy of references, which leads to differing opinions on the etymological roots of many Arabic words. The findings of this study could be especially useful to educationists in developing the curriculum for teaching Quranic vocabulary as well as the Arabic language generally. However, the study is limited to the role of derivation in teaching Quranic vocabulary. Further research may focus on how the etymological and morphological roots of Quranic vocabulary can help students to develop language skills.
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References

Al-Quraan Al-Kareem.


Appendices

Appendix A: Etymological root of Quranic words with similar meanings

Table 2. Vocabulary that denotes knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>The etymological root</th>
<th>The Semantic</th>
<th>Evidence and Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Anasa) <strong>نَعْلَمُ</strong></td>
<td>Derived from familiarity with the appearance of something.</td>
<td>The emergence of facts and things and the feeling of being familiar with them</td>
<td>Almighty Allah said: “and then if you find them mature of mind...” (An-Nisa: 6) In the hadith; “when Ismael came, he seemed to have felt something unusual...” (Bukhari, 2002, 4/143) The poet said: “If a person comes to you seeking his lies... then look, for looking for something is not like certainty.” (Ibn Manzur, 1994, 6/16). The teacher felt that his pupil has a great superiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>عَرَفَ</td>
<td>Derived from the root عِرَفَة (‘arafa)</td>
<td>Distinguish the obvious things in the slightest knowledge</td>
<td>“Those whom We have vouchsafed the Book recognize him even as they recognize their children. Yet those who have lost themselves will not believe.” [Al-An’am: 20] In the hadith “And if he saw a thing which he disliked, we would recognize that (feeling) in his face. (al-Bukhari 2002, 4/190). The two students became acquainted with one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>عَلِمَ</td>
<td>Derived from عِلْمَة (‘alima), to know, to have the knowledge, to be</td>
<td>Awareness of the effects of a thing and its evidence</td>
<td>Allah said (He said, &quot;Certainly, I know what you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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It was narrated that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said: “O people, knowledge only comes by learning.” (Al-Bukhari, 2002, 25/1).

The teacher taught the students the Arabic language and (Almighty Allah said: “and of the Hereafter they are certain [in faith]”) [Al-Baqarah: 4]

Abu Tammam said: “They have excelled over people whose virtuous people have unanimously confirmed that they are the best of people” (Abu Tammam, 1994, p. 308). I realized that the news is true.

Table 3. Vocabulary indicating the covenant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>The etymological root</th>
<th>The Semantic</th>
<th>Evidence and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>إِسْرَ [iṣr] means</td>
<td>is derived from</td>
<td>The covenant or treaty whose reneging results</td>
<td>Allah said: I {He said, “Do you affirm and accept my covenant in this respect?”} They said, &quot;We affirm.&quot;} [Al Imran: 81] Ruba bin Al-Ajaj said: “if you make the contract like a covenant” (Al-Ajaj, D. T, 2/28). The bonds of love between brothers were confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(treaty, covenant, contract)</td>
<td>(‘aṣarrat) means, I locked a thing, I trapped it and tightened it tightly</td>
<td>in its a great sin.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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ISSN: 2550-1542 | www.awej-tls.org
| عهد (اَهَد) | Derived from rain sequence | Recommending something and acknowledging preservation it. | Almighty Allah said: “Did I not command you, O children of Adam, not to worship Satan, for he is your sworn enemy” [Ya-Sin: 60].

It was narrated that Utba bin Abi Waqqas authorized his brother Sad bin Abi Waqqas to take the son of the slave-girl of Zama into his custody…”

(al-Bukhari, 1994, 146/3)

Dhu'ayb Al-Hudhali said: “If she doesn’t find me, she will say: did he betray the covenant, or did the ally commit a sin?” (Al-Shanqeeti, 1965, 1/99). The warriors (mujahidon) promise each other to achieve victory

| ميثاق (mithaq) | is derived from tighten the rope | The covenant that was judged by evidence | Almighty Allah said: “Those who break the covenant of Allah after it has been ratified, sever bonds that Allah has commanded to be maintained, and spread corruption in the land. It is they who are the losers” [Al-Baqarah: 27].

Jamil Butahyna said:

And I said to her: “notice that there is a charter and covenants from God between me and you” (Mua’mmar, 1982, p. 39). |
Table 4. *Vocabulary related to creations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>The etymological root</th>
<th>The Semantic</th>
<th>Evidence and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>جَعَلَ (jaʿala) to create</td>
<td>is derived from al-juʾl: means wages. It is what I have given a person a wage for the work he does.</td>
<td>Composing of something from another something already exists.</td>
<td>The Almighty said: “Who perfected everything He created and initiated the creation of man from clay. Then He made his progeny from the extract of a worthless fluid” [Al-Sajdah: 7-8] Al-Aʾsha said: “I said poetry for you, O Salamah, you are is the best one, and you are worthy of that” (Al-Aʾsha, d. t, p. 235). The government made the road clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>خَلَقَ (khalaqa)</td>
<td>is derived from (khalaqa) create tanned skin or leather i.e measure it according to what he wants before cutting</td>
<td>creating anything out of nowhere according to a previous estimate</td>
<td>Allah says: “O mankind, worship your Lord, Who created you and those before you, so that you may become righteous” [Al-Baqarah:21]. Zuhair said: “what you have estimated and designed, you create it well, and others estimate and design but do not create because of their inability” (Zuhair, 1988, p. 29).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ﻟُتَرَ (fatar) means: to rip apart or break apart or crack</td>
<td>derived from “crack the well” i.e dig the well</td>
<td>The beginning of creation with the installation</td>
<td>Almighty Allah said: “All praise belongs to Allah, the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that its way is to crack.

Originator of the heavens and the earth” [Fatir:1].

It was narrated in the Hadith “narrated Hudhaifa that he saw a person bowing and prostrating imperfectly. When he finished his prayer,

Hudhaifa told him that he had not offered prayer. The sub-narrator added, "I think that Hudhaifa also said: Were you to die you would die on a "Sunna" (legal way) other than that of Muhammad (peace be upon him).” Sadness broke his heart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>The etymological root</th>
<th>The Semantic</th>
<th>Evidence and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ʾafaka | derived from the earth destroyed, i.e. burned from the drought or sterility | exaggeration in lying until the falsehood becomes truth and truth becomes falsehood | Almighty Allah said: “Beware! They are the ones who, by way of a lie of theirs, (have the audacity to) say, "Allah has children" - and they are absolute liars. ﴿Al-Saffat: 151 152]. Ruba bin Al-Ajaj said: “I admire a man who is good at lying and masters it, and who mixes good speech with bad one” (Al-Ajaj, D. T, 1/408). "ʾafaka: to divert
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Evidence and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>زور (zur)</td>
<td>is derived from ‘zawart something: to enhance it and improve it’</td>
<td>Falsified a lie and enhanced it outwardly, so that it may be thought to be true.</td>
<td>Almighty Allah said: “So refrain from the filth of the idols and refrain from a word of falsehood” [Al-Hajj:30] It was narrated in the Hadith: The Prophet said “And I warn you against giving forged statement and a false witness.” (al-Bukhari, 1994, 172/3). The criminal forged the money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Vocabulary related to miserliness and stinginess

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>The etymological root</th>
<th>The Semantic</th>
<th>Evidence and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| بخيل (bakhila) | is derived from withholding and constipation | withholding money and belongings from those who deserve it | Almighty Allah said: “Yes, you are such that you are called upon to spend in Allah's way, but some of you withhold in miserliness and he who withholds in miserliness withholds against himself and Allah is the Need-Free, and you are the needy. And if you turn away, He will replace you by some other people, then they will not be like you” [Muhammad: 38]. It was narrated in the Hadith: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “The
| شح (šuhhu) scarcity and niggardliness | derived from the sparse bone of the shoulder (The part of the arm from the elbow to the wrist or the fingertips) | keen to prevent goodness | Almighty Allah said: “They are niggardly towards you. When danger comes, you see them looking at you with their eyes rolling like someone in the throes of death. But when danger is over, they slash you with sharp tongues, in greed for gains. Such people have not truly believed, so Allah will render their deeds worthless. That is easy for Allah” (Al-Ahzab: 19) |
Table 7. Vocabulary related to hatred

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>The etymological root</th>
<th>The Semantic</th>
<th>Evidence and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>شَنَأَ (šanaʾa) to hate intensely</td>
<td>It is said that a man has resentment and resentment, i.e. disgust</td>
<td>hating something</td>
<td>Almighty Allah said: “O you who believe, stand firm for Allah by bearing true testimony, and do not let the hatred of a people lead you away from justice. Be just; that is closer to righteousness. And fear Allah, for Allah is All-Aware of what you do” (Al-Maʿida: 8). It was narrated in the Hadith: Hammad said: “I heard Ayyub say: Two kinds of people have lied to al-Hasan: people who believed in free will and they intended that they publicize their belief by it; and people who had enmity with and hostility (for al-Hasan), saying: Did he not say so and so? Did he not say so and so?” (Abu Tammam, 2009, 4/336). “The rulers engaging in fierce enmity and hostility with each other and the relations between their peoples remain good.” (Omar, 2008, 2/1238)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مَقُتَ (maquta)</td>
<td>derived from the abhorrent one who marries his father's wife out of resentment it an</td>
<td></td>
<td>Almighty Allah said: “Indeed, those who disbelieve will be addressed, &quot;The hatred of Allah for you was [even] greater than your hatred of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ugly act committed by a person.”

yourselves [this Day in Hell] when you were invited to faith, but you disbelieved [i.e., refused].” (Ghafir: 10)
It was narrated in the Hadith: the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “No two men should go out to answer the call of nature with their private parts (or other parts of the body which should not be seen by others) exposed and talking to each other, for Allah abhors that.” (Ibn Hanbal, 2001, 17/412). Hypocrisy is an abominable disease

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**Table 8. Vocabulary related to discourse and discussion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>The etymological root</th>
<th>The Semantic</th>
<th>Evidence and examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>الحديث (hadith) discourse</td>
<td>derived from their saying that the man polished his sword: So named because no news is presented to it</td>
<td>A discourse reveals new things.</td>
<td>Allah said: “Allah has sent down the best discourse, a book containing subjects resembling each other, mentioned again and again, shivered from which are the skins of those who have awe of their Lord. Then, their skins and their hearts become soft enough to tend to the remembrance of Allah.” (Az-Zumar: 23). Dhu’ayb Al-Hudhali said: “It was talking - if you are impressed by – is amazing” (Omar, 2008, 2/1238; Al-Shanqeeti, 1965, 1/92).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Khaled is talking about himself. This is a self-talk.

**القصص (al-qasas)** means ‘stories’ or ‘news’

- Derived from their saying: I tracked the traces if I followed it. The story is so-called because it follows each other until it contains all its facts.

- Long story with successive issues

Almighty Allah said: “We relate to you ‘O Prophet’ the best of stories through Our revelation of this Quran, though before this you were unaware of them” [Yusuf:3]

It was reported in Musnad of Imam Ahmad about the story of Musa and al-Khidr, “Then he told him the news of the boat” (Ibn Hanbal, 2001, 35/59). Narrators tell the audience exciting stories.

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Appendix B: words origin based on their morphological forms

Figure 2: Semantic difference between أَفْعَلْ (ʾafʿal) and فعلى (faʿala) patterns.
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Figure 3: Semantic difference between 

\( \text{أَفْعَالّ} (\text{ʾafʿaal}) \) and 

\( \text{فَعْوَل} (\text{faʿul}) \) patterns.

Evidences

- Allah said: (And when those expelled come to you as captives, you shall ransom them—though expelling them was unlawful for you.) [Al-Baqarah: 85]

Arabic Patterns’ Meaning of 

- \( \text{أَفْعَال} (\text{ʾafʿaal}) \)
  - \( \text{أَفْعَال} (\text{ʾafʿaal}) \) means captive

Singular

- \( \text{أَفْعَال} (\text{ʾafʿaal}) \)
  - Plural of many nouns

Plural

- \( \text{أَفْعَال} (\text{ʾafʿaal}) \)
  - Plural of many nouns

Evidences

- Almighty Allah said (Have you ‘O Prophet’ not seen those who fled their homes in the thousands for fear of death? I Allah said to them, ‘Die!’ then He gave them life. Surely Allah is ever Bountiful to humanity, but most people are ungrateful.) [Al-Baqarah: 243]

Arabic Patterns’ Meaning of 

- \( \text{فَعْوَل} (\text{faʿul}) \)
  - Plural of few nouns from three to ten

Singular

- \( \text{فَعْوَل} (\text{faʿul}) \)
  - Plural of few nouns from three to ten

Plural

- \( \text{فَعْوَل} (\text{faʿul}) \)
  - Plural of few nouns from three to ten
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Evidences

- Almighty Allah said: (And We made in it means of sustenance for you and others, who you do not provide for.) [Al-Hijr: 20]
- Almighty Allah said: (Cast what is in your right hand, and it will swallow up what they have made, for what they have made is no more than a magic trick. And magicians can never succeed wherever they go.) [Talaa: 69]
- Allah said: (Indeed, Allah is the Knower of the unseen of the heavens and the earth. He surely knows best what is hidden in the heart.) [Fatir: 38]
- Allah said: (the Forgiven of sin and acceptor of repentance, the Severe in punishment.) [Qalaa: 3]

Arabic Patterns' Meaning of (fi'il)

- The door of an action

Vocabulary

- Razaq (razaq, “supplier, keeper, outfitter”)
- Shahr (shahr, “charmer, magic trick, wizard”)
- ‘Alam (‘alam, Knower, a person who is scholar, man of letters, knowledgeable person)
- Gafir (gafir, “Forgiver”)

Evidences

- Allah said: (Indeed, Allah “alone” is the Supreme Provider—Lord of all Power. Ever Mighty.) [Al-Hijr: 58]
- Almighty Allah said: (to bring you every skilled magician.) [Ash-Shura: 37]
- Allah said: (Do they not know that Allah ‘fully’ knows their ‘evil’ thoughts and secret talks, and that Allah is the Knower of all unseen?) [At-Tawbah: 78]
- Almighty Allah said: (But I am truly Most Forgiving to whoever repents, believes, and does good, then persists on ‘true’ guidance.) [Taala: 82]
Prismatic Identities or Authentic Selves? Elif Shafak’s *Three Daughters of Eve*: A perspective of Intersectional Feminism

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**Abstract**
Elif Shafak’s novel *Three Daughters of Eve* (2016), questions contemporary assumptions concerning women’s status in Islam and society. This study explores Eve’s daughters—Peri, Shirin, and Mona—to investigate how gender, religion, and culture overlap and stereotypes intertwine in the novel to create unique experiences, values, beliefs, and challenges in the lives of women. This study argues that Shafak’s inclusion of these overlapping aspects provides a basis for intersectional feminist discourse as a framework for understanding the complex nature of identity and self-understanding among women in the Middle East. The results of this study contribute significantly to the existing literature by demonstrating how the three females in the novel function as distinct self-identities through which Shafak negotiates assumptions of Western society about women and Islam. The study concludes that Shafak’s work, giving voice to her women elevates aspects of diversity and inclusion by revealing the various guises of discrimination against them and illustrating how these women find ways to project their unique voices and resist oppression.

**Keywords**: Elif Shafak, feminism, gender, identity, intersectionality, Islam, religion, *Three Daughters of Eve*,
Introduction
Elif Shafak (1971-Present) is an award-winning novelist, also recognized as an activist who stands for the rights of women, minorities, and freedom of speech. Like Orhan Pamuk and Sabahattin Ali, Shafak is one of the most prominent Turkish writers who have discussed controversial issues related to politics, religion, and violence against women and children. Employing elements of history, philosophy, and Sufism, Shafak’s fictional and non-fictional works, written chiefly in Turkish and English, serve as a platform for narrating stories of immigrants, minorities, women, and subcultures. As one of the most widely read female authors in Turkey, Shafak’s fictional works include The Gaze (1999), The Bastard of Istanbul (2006). Her most famous work, however, is Three Daughters of Eve (2016), a work that addresses a variety of issues related to politics, identity, and gender through the exploration of themes of faith and doubt, past and present, and the religious and secular.

In her most recent work, Three Daughters of Eve, Shafak traces the life experiences of three women, “the believer, the confused, and the sinner” (Shafak, 2016, p. 212) on their journey as students at Oxford University. She depicts the conflict that the three women experience regarding their identity as Muslim women, beginning with Peri, “the confused” heroine, who grows up in a chaotic household negatively impacted by the conflict between her secular, alcoholic father and her extremist, resentful mother. When moving to Oxford, the teenager Peri meets Shirin, a confident woman born in Iran but also moved to live in Oxford. Lacking a sense of belonging, Peri and Shirin meet with Mona, an Egyptian-American who proudly identifies as a religious feminist. In their attempt to discover their true beliefs, all three women decide to take the same seminar on God, though at different times, provided by Azur, an influencing instructor who introduces controversial arguments and ideas about God, good and evil, science and faith, existence and mortality. Throughout the novel, Shafak traces the three women through searching for their true selves. While Mona takes a firm stance towards her ideas, Shirin never accepts how her own beliefs define her. Instead, she attempts to justify her behavior and attributes by instigating a random dialogue that ends in cruelty and a fight with Mona. Meanwhile, Peri spends most of the time watching Mona and Shirin, remaining just as confused as to when she would watch her parents argue. She is positioned between Shirin and Mona, just as she was with her mother and father. Consequently, Peri never discovers her true self or comprehends the structure of her identity.

In her novel, Shafak portrays her female protagonists’ struggle to break the stereotypes associated with gender, racial and religious-based identifications as they repeatedly challenge religious and cultural stereotypes that intersect in the continual battle against discrimination. As representatives of Muslim women in the novel, Shafak’s three female protagonists face gender discrimination in various spheres of their life, the most significant challenges that women encounter daily, whether it is based on religion or on Western assumptions that Muslim women need to be “saved” from male domination. Oswald et al., (2012) define gender discrimination as experiences of “hostile sexism” women undergo by their family members, friends, teachers, co-workers, or strangers. These experiences impact females’ body image and self-esteem, placing young women in a challenging mental state that negatively affects their wellbeing (Oswald et al., 2012). Shafak introduces an intersectional feminist perspective to mirror this notion by asserting
women’s diverse experiences in combatting sexist beliefs and gender discrimination. Besides, Shafak explores Muslim women’s experiences of compounded levels of discrimination based on their religion, mainly due to Islamophobia, in their struggle to develop their identity and self-image. Constructed by interlocking systems of oppression encompassing distinct forms of abuse and modes of resistance, this intersectional approach promotes acknowledgment of women’s political identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, religion, and class) and the potential ways these can impact how women experience oppression and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). Eve’s Three Daughters share the same political identity (gender, ethnicity, and religion), yet each has a unique personality and interpretation of life. Therefore, while Shafak portrays the difficulties that Muslim women encounter due to their faith and gender identity, she also represents their multifaceted beliefs and assumptions regarding Islam and women, thus reflecting intersectional feminism’s concerns with the ways in which factors such as gender and religion intersect.

Since this novel has not been thoroughly examined, this study aims to provide a thorough analysis of Shafak’s exploration of women in Islam and society, who are often stereotyped as powerless and emotional with an inability to think clearly or needing a male figure to protect them. They are assigned specific roles and identifications related to their traits, physical appearance, domestic behavior, or occupation. For a long time, women have been forced to meet these expectations, as subordinate to men in an androcentric society. Hence, some men feel responsible for protecting women or feel this obligation so intensely that it may result in violent behavior. As Shirin asserts, if a strong woman states that “I can defend my own rights … [we women] don’t need a higher authority to do that for us!,”’ some men will believe, even then, that women need “a strong leader [who] defends women’s rights” (Shafak, 2016, p. 144). Thus, men sometimes consider themselves a necessary “higher authority” and “strong leader” because women are deemed powerless without a male to secure their rights for them. By revealing how her novel demonstrates the overlapping identity structure of Eve’s three daughters within the context of intersectional feminism, this study hopes to highlight the constructs of gender and religion influence the three characters’ self-identity, thereby revealing how although these characters share specific characteristics, each of Eve’s daughters has distinct experiences. This fact shows how factors (e.g., gender, religion, and ethnicity) intersect to shape women’s identities, impact their self-identity, and instigate diversity and inclusivity among women. This perspective ensures that intersectional feminism promotes the distinct experiences of women worldwide while also unveiling varied modes of discrimination, oppression, and ways to resist injustice. Intersectional feminist theory is a crucial contribution to the study of identities as it explores how religion and gender intersect and how identities are uniquely shaped and impacted. Therefore, this study employs aspects of intersectional feminist theory that acknowledge that women’s identities are limitless, unique, and constructed on multiple factors.

**Theoretical Context**

In “Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 152), Kimberlé Crenshaw defines intersectionality as a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality that compound in the lived experiences of individuals and are not understood in the conventional ways of thinking or defined within a single parameter such as
racism or feminism. She argues that the lived experiences of discrimination differ from one individual to another, but the limited nature of the current definition of discrimination allows for the marginalization of those with experiences that cannot be defined within such narrow parameters. This is particularly emphasized by Hooks (1982), one of Crenshaw’s influencers, who challenges the middle-class white feminists who fail to acknowledge the intertwined relationship between race and class (Hooks, 1982). Crenshaw also explains that besides the disregard that women of color often receive, their oppression becomes amplified when white women speak about themselves as women. Feminists continue to ignore how their race functions to alleviate certain aspects of sexism and how it often privileges them, thereby contributing to the domination of other women (Crenshaw, 1989). As a result, feminist philosophy remains “white,” while its ability to expand and deepen research into underprivileged women remains neglected. Thus, Crenshaw promotes intersectionality to spread awareness of the different experiences of all women.

Patricia Collins (2015) in “Intersectionality’s definitional dilemmas,” a study on feminism, gender, social inequality, sexuality, and nationhood in the African-American community, explains that individuals and groups are placed within intersecting systems of power in different ways and, thus, have distinct points of view. According to Collins, the best method for analyzing aspects of race, gender, age, nation, ethnicity) is to treat them in relational terms rather than treating each axis in isolation (Collins, 2015). Analyzing how each of these forms of oppression intersect with one another is essential to understanding the root causes for acts of discrimination and oppressive behavior against individuals who possess multiple identity categories (Collins, 2015). This is due to the meaning ascribed to these identities depends on how they are formed within various sociocultural contexts. Collins (2015) explains how intersectional theory considers the traditional family structure, which impacts political identities and shapes experience equally. He argues that the conventional family archetype functions as a privileged paradigm of intersectionality in the United States rather than an exploration of gender, race, class, and nationhood in the form of distinct social hierarchies that mutually construct one another. The study examines how the scope of intersectionality demonstrates precise associations between family, as a gender-based structure of the social organization, racial ideas, and practices, and the constructions of national identity in the United States. Collins’s results support an intersectionality-based perspective, which holds that multiple identities form unique experiences that cannot be separated by each identity (Collins, 2015). Collins notes that the traditional family archetype consists of a couple (i.e., a male considered the family provider and a stay-at-home wife) who procreate to produce biological children (Collins, 2015). As a result, women’s roles are restricted to the private sphere of their home, while men exist in a public work environment, this being a model of the family that accepts the traditional separation of work and family life. According to Collins, the ideology of this conventional family structure transcends to social institutions within the United States (Collins, 2015); thus, for example, the structuring of social organizations and social policy is often accomplished through a family oratory structure. Moreover, Collins suggests that families create a sense of belonging among various groups: “to the family as an assumed biological entity; to geographically identifiable, racially segregated neighborhoods conceptualized as imagined families; to so-called racial families codified in science and law, and to the U.S. nation-state conceptualized as a national family” (Collins, 2015, p. 63). Therefore, families are considered a
powerful group/team, given that social institutions, policies, and organizations are understood as important places for individuals (Collins, 2015).

In *intersectionality*, Collins and Bilge (2016) further analyze the relationship between identity politics and intersectionality as a form of analytical inquiry and practice. They assert that for many scholars, intersectionality is recognized as a theory of identity because it centers around identity. Collins and Bilge consider individuals to be combinations of their multiple identities (e.g., gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and religion) across different situations (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Thus, intersectionality appreciates the abundance of various identities that create unique individuals and emphasizes the notion of overlapping identities. But due to an exaggeration of the concept of identity, several critics have interpreted intersectionality as inherent and recommend abandoning the stress on this notion. (Collins & Bilge, 2016), but identity is essential when it comes to structuring a collective “we.” Political identity, for example, relies upon the iterative connection between an individual and social structure, as well as between people “as an existing collective or a collective that must be brought into being because they share similar social locations within power relations. A transformed individual identity is potentially transformative and long-lasting” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 206). When people change individually, they tend to stay that way. Focusing on the self and its wholeness offers a significant boost to an individual and contributes to a sense of collective independence (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Since identity is a defining feature of intersectionality, the use of intersectionality as a critical method thus, illuminates the complexity of people’s lives within an equally convoluted social context.

Carastathis (2008) is another critic who examines the model of identities and argues for the significance of intersectional theories in analyzing identity. Carastathis’ study demonstrates how the analysis of identity may be conducted within a theoretical framework and illustrates that identity emerges from intersecting factors of political inclusion. She holds that intersectionality is the leading metaphor for multifaceted identities composed of gender, ethnicity, race, class, and sexual orientation. Carastathis explains that in feminist spheres, “post-identitarian feminists” and “identitarians” (Carastathis, 2008, p. 24) employ the language of intersectionality, which effectively serve as a synonym for the “litany” of oppression, based on factors such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability. Thus, the term “intersectionality” inflects and informs in a way that increases its common usage. It becomes acceptable to use the term without accurately identifying what is being intersected or how this is occurring (Carastathis, 2008). Carastathis suggests that political identity is produced in and through political representation and that identities are the products of political relations (Carastathis, 2008). The task, then, is not to re-portray or improve the presentation of identities but to theoretically disclose it, modifying the relations that produce identities (Carastathis, 2008).

Carastathis (2013) continues to argue that theorizing identity categories as coalitions are important as identities “are often contrasted with coalitional politics in that the former is viewed as a kind of separatism based on sameness while the latter depends on alliances built across differences” (Carastathis, 2013, p. 941). Intersectional critics of identity distinguish between identity and coalition, focusing on the differences between and within groups (Carastathis, 2013). Carastathis’ study illuminates the relationship between identities and intersectional theory, as
Theorizing about identity “coalitionally” (Carastathis, 2013, p. 942) allows for the surmounting of some of the challenges involving political coalitions that are structured on the principle of homogeneous, or essential, identities. Combining all aspects of individuals’ identities is crucial to achieving the internal balance that is missing in “one-dimensional” political movements (Carastathis, 2013, p. 942). Carastathis also explains that people are asked to repress one or more aspects of their identities that a “monocular” (Carastathis, 2013, p. 942) analysis recognizes as significant. As a result, people foreclose on a potential coalition with others who share their suppressed or excluded identities. Carastathis suggests that Crenshaw’s theory of identities as “coalitions” inspires people to “summon the courage” to challenge excluded aspects that marginalize them while constructing other people as representative, or archetypal, of entire groups, communities, or movements (Carastathis, 2013, p. 945). Carastathis further suggests that considering identity through the perspective of intersectional theory reveals identity to be multifaceted, an individual’s identity being structured by the combination of various intersecting aspects. The study also suggests that excluding any aspect that defines a person’s identity or discriminating against a person based on any element that constructs their identity might force them to hide their authentic self.

Linking the discussions above to Muslim society maps the intersectional narrative in Shafak’s novel and her representation of the multifaceted assumptions regarding Islam and women and the difficulties Muslim women encounter due to their religion and gender identity. It is also significant to draw attention to Mirza’s (2012) notion of “embodied intersectionality” as an essential framework for understanding how women are perceived as “visible Muslim others in discourse”, and to how this representation is articulated and signified by the body and experienced as an empirical reality through women’s subjectivity and sense of self” (Mirza, 2012, p.13).

Three Daughters of Eve and Intersectional Analysis

Various religious backgrounds and views are illustrated through Eve’s daughters, who either face religious conflict within themselves or with those around them. Although being a Muslim and a woman are identities that intersect, the experiences and struggles of each daughter are unique. In *Three Daughters of Eve*, Shafak depicts how the discrimination that women face leads them to conceal essential facets of their identity. For example, Peri hides behind her true self due to a fear of being criticized or discriminated against by the people around her, including her family and friends. At the same time, Shirin struggles to exclude part of her identity. In addition, Shafak portrays different female characters to illustrate how multiple female identities are constructed about in relation to political identities, as well as how women intersect with a single aspect in different ways, creating unique identities. Shafak thus utilizes her writing as a tool to change the reader’s perspective of others.

This idea is expressed by Nihad (2019) who states that Shafak writes to be a voice for passive figures that remain marginalized and othered in the shadows. To reveal to the world that these figures exist and have voices, Shafak conveys their religious, ethnic, or cultural affiliation to create “conceptions of [a] cosmopolitan and … global village” (Nihad, 2019, p. 2908). Shafak grew up in a Turkish society, which has a “dual identity, religious affiliation, continental belonging and multicultural traits,... connect[ing] the Islamic Middle East and Christian Europe,” a milieu
that has led some to treat those with diverse characteristics as “the Other” (Nihad, 2019, p. 2901). Shafak has reflected these ideas in her literary works.

Bădulescu (2018) analyzes the three female characters in *Three Daughters of Eve* suggesting that each character may represent one of the three different stages that a person undergoes in life when impacted by both religion and skepticism, as well as the West and East (Bădulescu, 2018). For example, as Bădulescu indicates, Peri floats in a state of confusion, without an understanding of where she belongs, just as Turkey straddles Europe and Asia to cruelly divide the West and East (Bădulescu, 2018). Likewise, Sarbu and Kosa (2019) characterize Professor Azur as “The Figure of the Seducer” and analyze the influence he has on Eve’s daughters by way of his teaching and seduction methods (Sârbu & Kosa, 2019, p. 149). Sarbu and Kosa compare Azur to the Byronic hero Don Juan and suggest that Azur is a twenty-first-century Byronic hero, who is uniquely observed by each of Eve’s three daughters and whose image is reflected in their personalities: “he is a seducer for Shirin, a peace seeker for Mona and a storyteller for Peri” (Sârbu & Kosa, 2019, p. 155). Sarbu and Kosa explore Shafak’s way of structuring Azur—who separates his weakness from society, gradually withdrawing to maintain his secrets—as well as the three female protagonists, who individually interpret religion and react to Azur’s attitude in distinctive ways.

**Peri, the Confused**

Shafak’s heroine, Peri, struggles to understand herself and the people around her while growing up in a house that holds contrasting beliefs concerning Islam: “they were as incompatible as [a] tavern and mosque” (Shafak, 2016, p. 28). Mensur, Peri’s father, is ashamed of his wife’s behavior and appearance—a typical religious concern in the Middle East. He presumes that their ways are the best, as they “had been born into this culture and swallowed unquestioningly whatever they had been taught” (Shafak, 2016, p. 70). For Selma, Peri’s mother, Mensur’s behavior reflects a lack of learning, violence, and finality of voice. The secular modernists are arrogant because they place themselves outside of and above society, imbued with contempt derived from centuries of long-standing traditions (Shafak, 2016, p. 70). Peri’s arguments and discussions with her family members are usually marked by violence, often ending with an abusive exchange of accusations or indifference and silence. Thus, the void formed by Peri’s lack of love was filled with resentment instead, as she “learned that there was no fight more hurtful than a family fight, and no family fight more hurtful than one over God” (Shafak, 2016, p. 35).

All her life, Peri has observed her parents in conflict. Still she has never attempted to discover herself or her beliefs until she joins Azur’s class to understand the divisive opinions about faith in her family (Shafak, 2016, p. 183). In Peri’s ultimate search for truth, she feels powerless and worthless because she does not consider herself an independent thinker. Being raised by parents that express two opposite facets of their perceived notions of Islam, Peri feels a sense of doubt throughout her life, leading her to have ambivalent thoughts concerning religion. This significantly affects Peri’s identity, especially since religion is an essential role that represents and defines her as a person. As a teenager, Peri flounders between doubt and certainty. Her journey during this time is part of a critical period of exploration and the development of self-awareness. As Lopez et al. (2011) explain that teenagers explore social categories, distinctions, and
identification within specific social groups. Their exploration results in their adaption of other social identities, such as a religious identity. They become increasingly aware of the significance and meaning of various religious traditions, potentially causing their religious identification to increase over the their teenage years (Lopez et al., 2011).

Peri’s close relationship with her father places her in a difficult position regarding her mother’s ideas and views about Mensur. That is, her beloved father is merely a sinner, an “infidel” (Shafak, 2016, p. 108), in Selma’s eyes. Indeed, Mensur encourages Peri to seek an education abroad and to search for truth in science to save herself from her society’s ignorance. This constant conflict between Peri’s father and mother affects Peri’s religious beliefs:

“Yet she could not for a moment believe that the religious teachings her mother held sacred and her father railed against belonged to the same God … [However] she knew, from all that she had been taught, that Allah was the one and only” (Shafak, 2016, p. 21).

Her adoration for Mensur leads her to side with him in all matters related to faith, but her fear of losing him drives her to take Selma’s side after he has a heart attack. To Selma, however, this is a punishment from Allah because he is an “infidel” (Shafak, 2016, p. 108). On that day, Peri prays for the first time by imitating Selma in order to save Mensur. Thus, Peri lives a double life during her teenage years, hiding her faith from Mensur, while remaining loyal to her oath to God. According to Lopez et al., (2011) family and religious identities overlap suggesting that these factors may instigate changes in one’s identity and affect other identities, thus influencing how adolescents explore their religious, ethnic, and family identities. These factors may cause teenagers to explore new ideas or experience crises that challenge their existing notions of religion and relationships. In Peri’s case, the religious conflict in her family places her at a crossroads. Instead of inheriting Islam’s true, moderate beliefs and practices, she inherits the conflicting views between two streams: “culturally she was a Muslim, no doubt. Yet the number of prayers she had learned by heart would not exceed the fingers of her hand” (Shafak, 2016, p. 393). She is a Muslim who never practices religion, but “her relationship with Islam had not expired. Her confusion was a continuing affair. Alive. Perpetual. If she stood anywhere at all, it was with the bewildered” (Shafak, 2016, p. 393).

Peri always feels “a gap between her and the ways of the religion printed on her pink ID card” (Shafak, 2016, p. 122), especially as she experiences gender discrimination. During her period of faith, the young Peri prefers to pray with her friends in a mosque “amidst a congregation” (Shafak, 2016, p. 121) instead of praying alone “to be pure, monophonic” (Shafak, 2016, p. 121). However, her thoughts about this became tainted by a middle-aged man, who followed them to the mosque and asserted that “girls should pray at home,” while “his eyes [traveled] over the contours of their breasts” (Shafak, 2016, p. 121). Undergoing gender discrimination at such a young age, especially in connection to her ongoing religious journey, impacts Peri’s self-image as a woman, as well as her understanding of a woman’s status in Islam. Even though Peri responds to the man, “This is Allah’s House, it’s for everyone,” she later poses the question, “So mosques belong to men” (Shafak, 2016, p. 121)? This illustrates her refusal to accept certain assumptions that many Muslim women often experience, as they, in Aziz’s (2012) words, “face unique forms
of discrimination at the intersection of religion, race, and gender” they “are falsely stereotyped as meek, powerless, oppressed” (p.192). Peri experiences a solid positional switch to being disappointed in the Imam (i.e., the person who leads prayers in a mosque), who had overheard the conversation in passing but “said nothing to defend them” (Shafak, 2016, p. 121). Instead of encouraging young girls to enter mosques and pray, society despises them based on gender bias, thus violating their rights in the name of religion by preventing them from praying inside a mosque. However, all women have an similar equal right to practice religion and share a similar role with men in this context. Thus, characterizing religious practices or places based on gender is considered discrimination against women and negatively influences religion.

While the expression of virtue is a religious practice expected from all Muslims, men and women, as the Qur’an commands that Muslims lower their gaze, still, in a religious society, some of the males take advantage of their position and distort the image of Islam. This is depicted in the Imam’s by behavior when harassing teenage girls near mosques. He finds no inhibition to let his “eyes travel over the contours of [the young girls’] breasts” (Shafak, 2016, p. 121). Feeling disgraced because of this incident, Peri becomes more confused and raises several doubts about how religion may be perceived and interpreted. As adverse as it may be, Peri’s experience with the “veil” as an intersectional marker of gender and religion, is still comprehensible when compared to other registered women experiences, such as those evoked by Aziz (2012), who discusses how the “veil” can be representative of far more adverse female experiences that have aroused pervasive suspicion of Islam which, she declares, is not merely perceived as oppressive to women’s sexuality or freedom of choice, but is expanded into being a dangerous religious “signifier” arousing suspicion in women and linking them to violence and terrorism (Aziz, 2012, p. 192).

Peri has understood the challenges of being a woman in her society since she was a child, having experienced hostile sexism throughout her life. Her first such experience was in her formative years when a man tried to kidnap her from a park (Shafak, 2016). Although Peri does not grasp what happened to her that day until years later, except that she was saved at the last minute by her mother’s call asking Peri to return home, this situation had a lasting impact on her. In another experience, Peri encountered harassment at her brother’s wedding, when a man stared intently at her: “[It] wasn’t the kind of male gaze that conveyed attraction and stopped at that fine line, but one that pushed, insisted, claimed” (Shafak, 2016, p. 219). Although Peri “ma[de] it clear that she was not interested in him … He seemed not to understand that only a Lilliputian step separated assertiveness from aggression” (Shafak, 2016, p. 219). The man followed Peri and blocked her way to begin flirting, but Peri intercepted him and asserted that he had no “right to bother her” (Shafak, 2016, p. 220). This rejection triggered an “unmistakable hostility,” and the man insulted her by calling Peri an “arrogant bitch” (Shafak, 2016, p. 220). Immediately, the man’s attitude shifted from admiration to resentment: “How easy it was to switch from liking to loathing. In the kingdom of the East, the male heart, like the orb at the end of a pendulum, swung from one extreme to the other” (Shafak, 2016, p. 220).

Such experiences affect women’s self-esteem and mental health, especially young women; thus, Peri feels disgusted toward her body and considers menstruation a punishment. She wishes
to be “born as the third son of the Nalbantoğlus. Wouldn’t life be easier had she been a boy” (Shafak, 2016, p. 106)? Shafak explains that Peri is, in fact, “convinced that her father’s heart attack was, through some circuitous chain of causation in the universe, instigated by her period” (Shafak, 2016, p. 109). Due to gender discrimination that Peri either experiences or observes, she demonstrates a sense of aghast over being a female. This feeling is evident at her brother’s wedding when she learns that her brother suspected that his wife was not a virgin. Wondering how a woman’s happiness on this special day can turn into a sorrowful experience, Peri watches how the bride is dragged to the hospital against her will to be examined. Her family’s persecution of the poor bride impacts Peri personally. For Peri, this kind of tragedy “happened to other people—peasants in godforsaken villages, provincials who knew no better. Hers was not a family to get entangled in a virginity test at a ramshackle hospital” (Shafak, 2016, p. 230). As the young bride walked away from the examination room, Peri constantly thought how her parents may have reacted toward her had she been in her sister-in-law’s position; she “noticed her hands, manicured and hennaed, and her palms, studded with red crescents … The marks a young woman digs with her fingernails during a virginity examination” (Shafak, 2016, p. 230). Deeply affected, Peri “felt a seething rage inside … at the ages-old tradition that determined a human being’s worth was between her legs” (Shafak, 2016, p. 231).

One of the main issues that women encounter in such a culture is linking their virtue to men’s honor by legalizing violence against women, including murder. Any man who fails to aggressively react towards incidents related to women’s “honour” is interpreted as unable to protect himself and his property, of which his women are part. Even educated men are prepared to resort to violence to respond to any doubts they have about their women’s virtue. This explains why Peri’s father, for example, was involved in the virginity test. His silence indicates his agreement to expose the young woman to the test, a reaction that enrages Peri the most, causing her to feel sympathy for her mother’s suffering with her father. She imagines Selma’s difficulties and efforts to save her marriage with a man who holds such beliefs: “Peri held her mother’s hand, more by instinct than intention” (Shafak, 2016, p. 231). Even though Selma was also involved that night, Peri, for the first time, values her mother’s role and appreciates the obstacles she has faced to succeed as a wife and mother. This moment marks Peri’s standing in solidarity with the women around her, all of them are victims of tradition, forced to engage in constant battles to fulfill their social role as females in an androcentric society.

Peri, growing up in a culture that manifests conflicting views concerning Islam and women—Peri oscillates between extremism and moderation, certainty and doubt, liberty and captivity, from one parent’s side to the other, ever anxious about being considered ignorant by her father or an “infidel” by her mother. Thus, Peri constructs a confused self-image and identity about an essential aspect of her personality (i.e., religion), which leads her to become a dubious woman consumed by her inability to reconcile what others think of her and what she thinks of herself. In Shafak’s words, Peri reached a point where she could “no longer tell how much of each day was defined by what was wished upon her and how much of it was what she really wanted” (Shafak, 2016, p. 4).
Shirin, the Sinner

In her novel, Shafak depicts Shirin as “strong, stubborn. A natural-born warrior” (Shafak, 2016, p. 488) who challenges the stereotypes associated with being both a woman and Muslim. She struggles to be recognized as independent, powerful, and competent. Despite society’s mistreatment of her, she remains willing to maintain her autonomy. Although Shirin continuously resists the stereotype of a helpless woman who needs to be rescued, when she and Azur start their relationship, many of the other characters feel responsible for protecting her, even though “they were two consenting adults, neither exploiting the other” (Shafak, 2016, p. 460). Shirin is treated by Troy, a student at Oxford, whose only motive is to protect Shirin from Azur, as a minor woman who needs to be rescued. Troy represents the protective male figure. His behavior emphasizes the social stereotype that women are weak, powerless, and need a male figure, or higher authority, to protect and help them. Troy’s protective attitude towards Shirin might be part of Western countries’ attempt, as Razack (2004) argues, to regulate Muslim migrant communities’ conduct as a result of the hierarchical relationship and irreconcilable clash between the West and Islam. Such regulatory acts by Troy, representing the civilized European who must protect and instruct culturally inferior people”, Shirin, can, in many ways, be equated with the violence that these women suffer at the hands of their men and families (Razack, 2004, p.130).

Shirin herself felt like an outsider “[H]er family [were] from Iran, but they had moved around so much she didn’t feel like she belonged anywhere” (Shafak, 2016, p. 115). In Iran, “The Mullahs and the morality police silence [women]” (Shafak, 2016, p. 356), and her homeland’s higher authority uses Islam to oppress and govern them. Her father, for example, states, “It’s killing … He meant the regime” (Shafak, 2016, p. 150). Shirin only visits Iran once, when she travels with her mother to bury her grandmother, who “adored [Shirin], her first grandchild. Neighbors said till her last breath she hoped we’d come back. That’s home for [her]! Buried with Mamani in Tehran” (Shafak, 2016, p. 150). Shirin witnesses the loss of familial attachment as she observes her parents struggle. She did not choose to live in exile; it “was Baba’s dream, not mine, and here I am as British as a treacle tart but as out of place as a stuffed date cake” (Shafak, 2016, p. 150)!

Shirin associates Islam with eviction, her family’s lives as immigrants, and the Iran regime, which she blames for having to leave her country and live her entire life in exile. Shirin states, “Before you know it, it’s a republic of headscarves. That’s why my parents left Iran: your small piece of cloth sent us into exile” (Shafak, 2016, p. 417)! Thus, Shirin adapts to Islam’s political interference, considering Islam is “The Mullah” in Iran (i.e., an Islamist terrorist group). Shirin’s inner conflict initially pushes her away from recognizing her religious/cultural identity as an Iranian Muslim. She was the girl with a “short skirt, high heels, heavy makeup … And she surely didn’t look Iranian” (Shafak, 2016, p. 143). According to Sadeghi (2008), misveiling is a form of self-representation some young women in Iran choose by wearing fashionable hijab to “accommodate themselves to Iranian legal requirements” (Sadeghi, 2008, p. 250). It implies a kind of political resistance: it is a reaction toward the unwanted consequences of society’s Islamization, including compulsory veiling. This issue has been part of what Lloyd Ridgeon defines as “the problem” many Iranians have with “identifying” aspects of their “cultural authenticity”, as they oscillate between “the benefits and harms of indigenous customs and culture on the one hand and
of the merits and dangers of Western ideas and practices on the other hand” (Ridgeon, 2017, p. 59).

Shirin challenges all the aspects that restrict her from meeting the expectation of what an Iranian Muslim woman should be; otherwise, she “would be a bad influence” (Shafak, 2016, p. 152). However, she refuses all the stereotypes that restrict her within that framework and chooses to be the girl with a “short skirt, high heels, [and] heavy makeup” (Shafak, 2016, p. 143). Through her physical appearance, Shirin declares her independence from any stereotype that aims to limit her, whether regarding religion, gender, or nationality. As a “free spirit,” Shirin yearns to find her voice without barriers, so she battles the stereotypes that conceal her opinions and female identity.

Women are expected to be silent. To some people within Muslim society, women’s voices are considered *Awrah-haram*, which explains Shirin’s rebellion against the hijab, she sees as restricting her from being “a free spirit.” For Shirin, “girls who sincerely believe they must cover themselves so as not to seduce men, they silence us from inside” (Shafak, 2016, p. 423). Alongside her argumentative swagger concerning concepts about God, Islam, and Muslims, “She was particularly allergic to young Muslim women who covered their heads out of personal choice” (Shafak, 2016, p. 422). Shirin’s exasperation about religion is noticeable to those around her, as she never puts any effort into hiding it. Since their first meeting, Peri sensed Shirin’s cynical glimpse at her mother’s headscarf and long, loose-fitting coat; Shirin seemed to “disdain women who covered their heads—a disdain she felt no need to hide” (Shafak, 2016, p. 144).

Shirin shares Peri’s confusion regarding Islam and those who in appearance represent religion, but who in reality are extremists, racists, or sexists. Like Peri, Shirin is anxious to belong or identify with a group but feels frustrated that “there are crazies out there doing really sick stuff in the name of religion, our religion” (Shafak, 2016, p. 417). During the 9/11 attack, Shirin worried about its negative impact on all Muslims worldwide. She thought that they would be “vilified” because “some depraved bastards believe they’ll go to paradise if they kill in the name of God” (Shafak, 2016, p. 295). Shirin expressed concern about the image of Muslims in the West, as they argued about how “Religion fuels intolerance, and that leads to hatred and that leads to violence. For months, years even. Journalists, experts, academics” (Shafak, 2016, p. 296). According to Bayat and Herrera (2010), modern worldwide politics plays a significant role in constructing Islamic identity among Muslim youth. “Whether as radical or moderate, principled or pragmatic,” after 9/11, the generation of young Muslims has experienced an overwhelming amount of politics and the West’s preconception with Islam and Muslims (Bayat & Herrera, 2010, p. 21). Shirin’s lost faith in Islam is most likely due to the Islamic image portrayed by people who exclusively view or interpret religion according to their misconceived notions of terms. She describes this phenomenon as “the arrogance of so-called ‘experts’ or ‘thinkers’ or the self-serving platitudes of imams and priests and rabbis” (Shafak, 2016, p. 246). Alongside these opinions, the Iranian regime and terrorist groups distort the image of Islam, which is also Shirin’s image. As Mona states of Shirin, “you are—a self-hating Muslim” (Shafak, 2016, p. 419). These factors may explain Shirin’s lost belief in religion and religious people: “while she laid into all denominations, it was the faith she was brought up in that she criticized most” (Shafak, 2016, p. 422).
Shirin being a women, Muslim, and Iranian, struggles to free herself from various forms of discrimination, aiming to rid herself of these vectors, and identify herself as a “free spirit.” However, she also expresses an eagerness to enlighten herself about her religion, primarily because of Mona. Shirin rents a house to live with Mona and Peri and discover Islam. According to Peri, Shirin and Mona “had been selected for this bizarre social experiment” without her knowledge (Shafak, 2016, p. 423).

Mona, the Believer
Mona is an Egyptian-American Muslim who (unlike Peri and Shirin) is incredibly proud of her religious identity, as is reflected in her “headscarf wrapped neatly in a turban style” (Shafak, 2016, p. 115). Although Mona was born in the United States, she moved to Cairo with her family when she was about ten years old to fulfill her father’s wish that “the children should be raised in Muslim culture” (Shafak, 2016, p. 178). Unfortunately, they had to return unexpectedly to the states because of their complex life in Egypt (Shafak). Although she grew up in a Muslim household that prided itself on Islamic identity, Mona’s family never forced her to wear a hijab and always gave the children “the option” to choose. While her sisters followed a different path, Mona covered her head, a decision she considered “personal… a testimony to [her] faith,” giving her a sense of “peace and confidence” (Shafak, 2016, p. 189).

Mona and Shirin’s continuous debate illustrates that—due to Islamophobia—Muslim women, including Mona, endure discrimination because of their choice to wear a hijab. Mona explains how she has been bullied, called names, pushed off a bus, and treated as if she were dumb simply because of her headscarf. Although “It’s just a small piece of cloth” (Shafak, 2016, p. 416), Mona explains how she faces profound challenges because she wears it: “Every day I have to defend myself when I’ve done nothing wrong. I’m expected to prove that I’m not a potential suicide bomber. I feel under scrutiny all the time” (Shafak, 2016, p. 417). Furthermore, Mona is even stereotyped as an oppressed, helpless woman, who must be saved from her religion. Even though she is proud and confident to be wearing a hijab, people (including women) treat her as a submissive person who needs to be saved. These views are echoed in Bilge’s argument about Muslim women’s veil as an embodiment of the dichotomous interplay between Western hegemonic imaginaries and these women’s perceptions of themselves as free-willed subjects. Deeply rooted in colonial history, this dichotomous framing of the Muslim veil, as Bilge states, presents Muslim women as being caught between colonial domination and anti-colonist national resistance (Bilge, 2010, p.14).

Thus, Mona, who chooses to wear a hijab as a personal decision, finds herself in a difficult position when she tries to justify her choice to others. To express her views, Mona founds the “Oxford Feminist Squad” movement and criticizes how people in the West assume that only women in “Pakistan, Nigeria, [and] Saudi Arabia” need feminism “but not Britain. Surely not Oxford.” And yet, she insists, a “freshwoman in Oxford needs feminism just as much as a peasant mother in rural Egypt” (Shafak, 2016, p. 177)! It is challenging for some to “match the term [feminist] with the girl’s outlook” (Shafak, 2016, p. 177). Interested in alternative forms of feminism, Mona joins a diverse movement that emerges in opposition to Western or “white” feminism, which, as Crenshaw asserts, speaks on behalf of minority women (Crenshaw, 1989).
Viewed from the perspective of intersectional feminism, arguably, Mona’s version of feminism concerns all women, including Muslim women. As Mona asserts, “I am a Muslim feminist, and if some people think that’s impossible, it’s their problem. Not mine” (Shafak, 2016, p. 177). Despite Mona’s strong presence and her confidence in her identity as a Muslim woman, people in her society, assuming she is weak, offer her help. She repeatedly emphasizes that she is independent and has the right to choose, including which religion to follow and what she wants to wear, just like any other woman. While society treats her as an obedient woman, ignoring her enthusiasm, she insists “that Islam’s treatment of women [is] unacceptable … if [a man had been] born a woman into this faith he would have abandoned it at the speed of light” (Shafak, 2016, p. 143). From an Islamic feminist point of view, as Sevda Clark asserts, the expression of “saving a Muslim woman” or seeing the “Muslim woman [as] a victim” is a remnant of colonial power (Clark, 2007, p. 36), a perception deeply rooted in English Romantic literature, as when “personified in the Byronic tale of the white man rescuing the Turkish harem girl from her Muslim-male oppressors” (Clark, 2007, p. 36). These assumptions of Muslim women and Islam have been spread along with the expansion of colonialism. Mona resists these deeply embedded assumptions that Muslim women are deprived, suppressed, and need to be liberated from the prison of their religion and the hijab. She instead attempts to formulate a specific brand of feminism that suits Muslim women and combats the kind of Western feminism that devalues, discriminates against, or denies other women’s experiences.

In A quiet revolution: The veil’s resurgence, from the Middle East to America (Ahmed, 2011), Laila Ahmed suggests that the hijab worn by Muslim women in the American society is a means to express political solidarity with Muslims around the world who suffer from American imperialism, and also as a language for defining women’s independence against the postcolonial state. Ahmed maintains, there “are meanings that the hijab can come to have only in societies that declare themselves committed to gender equality and equality for minorities” (Ahmed, 2011, p. 236). These politically-oriented meanings are expressed in Mona’s words, who explains that for her, the hijab does not restrict her: “If I, with my headscarf, don’t challenge stereotypes, who’s going to do it for me? People look at me as if I’m a passive, obedient victim of male power. Well, I’m not. I have a mind of my own. My hijab has never got in the way of my independence” (Shafak, 2016, p. 189). Mona believes that women have the right to choose to be veiled or unveiled, and she challenges the stereotypes that mold women who wear hijabs into a particular lifestyle. Her rejection of this image allows Mona to grow into a strong, self-confident woman who is at “peace with who [she is]” (Shafak, 2016, p. 179). Open to different experiences and diverse cultures, Mona does not consider religion or the hijab to be obstacles, and she reflects these values throughout her life. As a feminist, Mona is involved in a series of volunteer organizations: Help to the Balkans Society, Friends of Palestine Society, Sufi Studies Society, Migration Studies Society, the Oxford Islamic Society (where she was one of the leading members), and “she was also about to launch a “hip-hop society” because she loved the music” (Shafak, 2016, p. 179).

Conclusion
This study examines the religious, ethnic, and gender assumptions of female Muslims by providing an analysis of the three protagonists (the believer, the confused, and the sinner) from Elif Shafak’s novel, Three Daughters of Eve. By employing the theory of intersectional feminism, this study
illustrates how stereotypes intertwine to create unique experiences, values, beliefs, and challenges in women’s lives. Our research makes a significant contribution to the literature because it confronts the modern assumptions of Western society’s ideas about women and Islam by discussing how distinct self-identities form and function in society, despite sharing some similar characteristics. The novel promotes an inclusive form of feminism that elevates diversity and inclusivity among women. Shafak’s work serves to boost the voices of all women by revealing discrimination’s many guises to illustrate how women find ways to project their unique voices and resist oppression. Furthermore, intersectional feminism provides a framework for understanding the complex nature of identity and self-understanding, especially among women minorities in the Middle East.

End Notes

1. ‘Awrah’ is an Arabic term, which, according to Lisan-Al-Arab (Ibn-Manzur), denotes something hidden/a secret. The term also means imperfection, weakness, or blemish. A person’s awrah refers to their body parts that must be covered. Exposing the intimate parts of the male and female body is considered unlawful. Although the term ‘awrah’ is used in the Quran in various contexts, it is generally used to describe body parts that should not be revealed in public.

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The Mysteriousness of The Cultural Space in Peter Mayne’s *A Year in Marrakesh*

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Abstract:
Peter Mayne’s *A Year in Marrakesh* (1953) places itself as one of the eminent Western travel narratives where the cultural space is constructed through a set of implications that glorify Western Orientalist ideology towards the Orient. Western travel narratives on this region of the world have always been loaded with tremendous representations where the constructed exotic plays a focal role. In his turn, Mayne declares his loyalty to this Western tradition given that his construction of the cultural space in Morocco is totally based on a strand of mysterious and exotic images. Therefore, this paper aims to locate the sites where the cultural space is mysteriously constructed within *A Year in Marrakesh* providing reasonable interpretations of such embodiment of the exotic. The main question here revolves around the assumption that the cultural space is taken by Mayne as one of the props on which the cultural otherness is contextualized for the sake of constructing the mysteriousness of Morocco. The qualitative methodology is used in this study as long as the ultimate aim is to deeply assess the extent to which the concept of Orientalism appears as a paradigm by which such construction takes place in the novel. The results of this paper highlight an Orientalist manipulation within *A Year in Marrakesh* by which Peter Mayne misrepresents the cultural privacy of spaces in terms of Hammam and Jamaa el-Fnaa.

Keywords: cultural space, travel writing, orientalism, mysteriousness, Morocco

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Introduction

Within the framework of Western travel writings on Morocco, the Orientalist propensity has always been a focal feature that encapsulates the construction of the cultural otherness. In this vein, a broad number of both European and American travel writers flocked in the country seeking for a different cultural atmosphere. The cultural difference of Morocco served as a haven where they get “sparked and enlivened by the romance and charm of Moorish culture” (Hibbard, 2004, p. 20) and, eventually, weed out life boredom in their home countries. Their stay in the country resulted in a wide range of narrative accounts through which their imaginations and insights about the new experienced cultural otherness are expressed and delivered to Western readership. However, their literary engagement with the cultural difference is unfortunately pregnant with a set of misrepresentations and stereotypical images. These memoirs are packed with depictions and visions that either explicitly or implicitly distort the cultural setting of Morocco.

Indeed, Western travel writers like Mark Twain, George Orwell, Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams, Edith Wharton, Williams Burroughs, Nina Epton, Peter Mayne and many others are categorized as expatriates who constructed a Moroccan cultural otherness based on their ideological and dogmatic beliefs. In this vein, the critical engagement with Western travel writings on the Orient and Africa has justified with evidence that the Orientalist propensity is the main factor leading to such construction. As a paradigm of construction by which the Orient is sentenced to Western cultural distortion and domination, Orientalism within these travel accounts takes different modes in terms of exoticism and romanticism. These modes serve as literary pattern by which the mysteriousness, backwardness, primitivity and inferiority are associated with the Orient. In this sense, it is clear that “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences”. (Said, 1978, p. 1). Undoubtedly, Said’s critical point is projected within most Western travel writings on Morocco given that the country is perceived as a part of the Orient.

Peter Mayne’s A Year in Marrakesh is mirror that projects this Orientalist tradition. The novel is entirely allocated to exoticize and primitivize the cultural setting of Morocco. Mayne’s literary engagement with Moroccan cultures and lifestyles reflects the extent to which Orientalism is adopted as pattern through which the cultural otherness is exotically constructed. In relation with this, the author’s literary engagement with Marrakesh encompasses a set of implications with the intention of exoticizing and primitivizing Moroccan cultural scene. In fact, depictions like those through which the country is introduced as land of superstition, witchcraft, women’s oppression and mysterious cultural spaces are all features of Mayne’s orientalist leaning.

The main focus in this paper is on Mayne’s embodiment of the mysteriousness of the cultural space in Marrakesh. Within this critical reading, the thorny question revolves around the assumption that A Year in Marrakesh is a mirror that reflects how power controls and assesses the construction of space and spatial representations. This Foucauldian philosophy paves the way for another relevant question; to what extent can Orientalism, as a discourse of power, lead Mayne to construct misrepresented and distorted images of the cultural spaces in Marrakesh?
Therefore, this paper is an attempt to associate Mayne’s construction of the cultural space with the Orientalist tendency where the discourse of power gains ground. For this reason, the present paper tries to locate the various sites where the cultural space is exotically depicted, and eventually draw interpretations for such mysteriousness-based construction of the cultural subject in Morocco.

This study’s rationale is based on the academic necessity to understand the visions and purposes within Western travel discourse on Morocco. Furthermore, it provides a pathway for those interested in making comparative studies that target classic and contemporary travel narratives on the country. This stems from the belief that most of the present academic studies within the framework of Western travel writings on Morocco address the similarities and changes between the old and new visions and perspectives.

**Literature review**

Theoretically speaking, the production of the cultural space occurred as a striking issue within both cultural studies and postcolonial theory. Since 1970, the cultural theory put much focus on the question of space in discourse. Particularly, within the works of Michel Foucault who, in this sense, touched upon the spatial representations and the construction of space by discourse and power. This discourse holds a set of questions where the culture of power and the power of culture are both contextualized within a set of symbols. That is, these symbols are combined together to implicitly shape the binary of the powerful and the powerless. Therefore, it is evident that “space is a significant element of investigation as it unlocks avenues in which power becomes perceptible. Attempting to understand discourses by employing spatial strategic metaphors enhances the grasp of epistemic transformations linked to associations of power”. (Raj, 2019, p. 57). According to this, Raj pointed out that the spatial manipulation of discourse is not innocent of the influence of power. Thus, space construction can be one of the facets of the play of power where symbols are gathered to meet a particular endeavor.

The spatial representations implicated within all types of discourses could translate a real or imagined image. Space and discourse unify under the goal of producing a cultural meaning through the practices indulged within representational images of social life. Such intersectional relation specifies the space and categorizes it into a sort of representations that outfit the social and cultural structure as it is ought to be for a specific producer of discourse. Foucault’s thesis justifies such approach when he considered power as one of the major factors leading to this spatial construction of the social structure. In this sense, the eye of power, as Foucault called, can easily influence the producer’s gaze and; eventually, leads them to exercise the control within a set of representational or symbolic images. That is, the spatial construction is not innocent of the impact of overlapped beliefs that certainly form a particular ideology. Taking this into consideration, the eye of power evidently affects the nature of spatial representations. As a matter of fact, the construction of space appears compatible with the hierarchal relations of power where the constructor decides the nature of the constructed. Therefore, it is true that “space, when regarded as relational, can simultaneously hold different meanings for different individuals...This draws attention to the important role that socio-political power relations play in our subjective experience of place”. (Beeckmans, Gola, Singh & Heynen, 2022, p. 208). This goes against the homage and
solemnity that space gained in medieval times where it was seen as a stable and fixed construct. This deeply-rooted dogma is, at first, challenged by Galileo who asserted that space is no longer fixed; rather, it moves as time moves. Foucault adopted Galileo’s theory for the sake of taking off this medieval concept of space stability. To this end, in his 1967 lecture “Of Other Spaces”, he pointed out that “a thing’s place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down” (Mirzoeff, 2002, p. 230). Accordingly, space is no more than a moving entity; it moves with the movement of its surrounding. Within discourse, space is subject to this theory that power positions itself as a factor leading to the formation of a dominant image of control as long as “the whole problem of the visibility of bodies, individuals, and things, under a system of centralized observation” approved by political authority” (Foucault, 1980, p. 146). Therefore, space can be understood as a manifestation of this doctrine if the spatial construction holds implications that prioritize or eliminate the social structure. The power can be visible within both situations either what celebrates superiority or what declares inferiority. This construction of space is not based on the corporality of its physical components but rather founded on abstract agents in terms of power and authority. These agents result in an arrangement of a set meanings, ideas and images combined altogether with the purpose of bringing the myth of power to the surface. As a matter of fact, it is obvious that the construction of space within discourse cannot be neutral or normal; rather, it has to be based on a set of overlapping considerations that range from one context to another.

Foucauldian philosophical thoughts on spatial representations are validated and adopted by postcolonial theory where colonial discourse is put under critical readings. These studies are conducted for the sake of assessing the extent to which power takes place in the perceptions of the Other colonized. Orientalism, as among the facets of colonial thought, clearly unveils that “the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power” (Said, 1979, p. 5). This colonial ideology is meant to be translated within Western discourse on East through a set of configurations where racist distinctions are made to differentiate between West and East. That is, the exercise of Western power implicitly means the weakness and the inferiority of East. Such ideology became inevitable for all Western makers of discourse on this area. Notably, they worked on deploying and exalting such dogma whenever and wherever East is addressed within discourse:

Orientalism as a form of thought for dealing with the foreign has typically shown the altogether regrettable tendency of any knowledge based on such hard-and-fast distinctions as "East" and "West": to channel thought into a West or an East compartment. Because this tendency is right at the center of Orientalist theory, practice, and values found in the West, the sense of Western power over the Orient is taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth. (Raj, 2019, p. 73)

In doing so, East is meant to be a metaphor of weakness and a locale where Western power can be exercised. Western discourse On East is allocated to carry out this process by which Eastern societies are sentenced to exoticness that takes varied forms in terms of mysteriousness, primitivity, backwardness, barbarity and all images that synonymize the inferiority. In this sense, the spatial representations are among the tools employed to serve out this Orientalist ideology by which Western discourse achieves its objectives as a discourse that constructs an arbitrary
distinction between Western geography and Eastern one. The exercise of power within the spatial representations is carried out by “designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs”” (Said, 1979, p. 54). Here, it is possible to say that the imaginative space in Western discourse on East is not limited to the geographical division, but also accompanies the cultural, ethic and social boundaries.

Beside the scholarly books, literary works in terms of political letters, journalistic reports and other genres, travel writing can be seen as the most effective channel by which Western discourse exercises its authority, control and power over the Orient. Regardless of the aesthetic motive behind the inclusion of the exotic and its metaphors, which has always been a question of commodification due to the wide consumption of the literature of exoticness by Western audience, the main endeavour within travel books on Orient remains the implementation and execution of the colonial policy:

The idea of travel as a means of gathering and recording information is commonly found in societies that exercise a high degree of political power. The traveller begins his journey with the strength of a nation or an empire sustaining him (albeit from a distance) militarily, economically, intellectually and, as is often the case, spiritually. (Kabbani, 1986, p. 10)

According to the passage above, it is inevitable that Western travel writing has never been innocent of being another mirror that reflects the colonial policy and its imperial ideology towards Orient. For this literary genre, as meant to be for Orientalist discourse as whole, producing an exotic Orient where life appears dark, strange and mysterious comes to the surface as a major feature and, eventually, translates Western imperialist perception of Orient. These representations contribute to the production of unfamiliar images of Orientals and their traditions for Western readers who have never set foot in Orient and, further; reinforce the Orientalist perception they believe in since antiquity:

These Eurocentric representations of non-native people and places that occur in travel writing as well as in novels result in an eroticization of other people. He illustrates, Said, this notion through the traditional Western perspective of the Orient as a strange and mysterious space. (King, 2004, p. 32)

In this vein, Western travel writings on Orient appear as a channel by which culture “becomes a productive site where a plurality of interests are articulated and brought into contact with the kinds of military, economic, and political strategies that produce a complex system of domination.” (Behdad, 1994, p. 5) Accordingly, these travel writings represent a network of pictures that depict the extent to which the power guides Western myth and glorifies Westerns’ imaginary and biased perception of Orient.

On the same basis, and in accordance with Foucault’s theory on space, knowledge and power as it is elaborated by postcolonial theory, Western travel writings on Orient incorporate the cultural space as a locale characterized with its exoticness and mysteriousness. The Orientalist leaning has always been a focal feature that “as one screens guidebooks and travel journals, one is
immediately struck by the recurrence and preponderance of some ideas which smack of Orientalism, paternalism and exoticism”. (EL Hayani, 2020, p. 66). In this regard, it is important to point out that the cultural space in the Orient appears in these travel memoirs as micro image of the macro one given to the geographical space as whole. In doing this, the spatial representations of mysteriousness take two dimensions; the first is manifested in horizontal perspectives ascribed to Eastern societies as whole; at times, this concerns specific societies or countries, while the second is carried out through vertical perspectives where this mysteriousness is headed towards very specific cultural spaces. In focus on the vertical spatial representations within Western travel writings on Orient, the cultural space, as a figure of mysteriousness, appears to have received a set of implications that canonize the orientalist perception. Consequently, the traditions and practices that Orientals use to carry out through specific spaces are exposed to biased portrayals. Here, it is also important to conclude that the cultural space within these accounts is produced on the basis of emotional sense where-by the outcome comes aligned with what Western travel writers feel and imagine, basically, with what they decide. To clearly illustrate this point, in 1979, Said pointed out that:

The objective space of a house--its corners, corridors, cellar, room--is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel: thus a house may be haunted, or homelike, or prisonlike, or magical, so space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here. (p. 55)

This justifies the thesis that spatial representations do not necessarily picture the truth, rather; they can be a translation of the author’s ideological background; which is, in this case, an ideology based on stereotypes and prejudices against all what is meant to be Oriental. The exotic as mysterious is, consequently, an implication by which the cultural space in Orient approached within Western travel writings on the region. In this regard, this mysteriousness and outlandishness accompanied Western travel literature on Orient during 18th and 19th centuries where-by the romantic and sensual are implicated to configure the Oriental exoticness. Within these accounts, for most European travel writers “the exotic Orient was represented and conceived as a locus of romance, sensuality and idleness” (Agliz, 2015, p. 3). In doing so, the cultural space meant to be constructed in accordance with this conception in mind. Hence, a cultural place has to be romantic and sensual through the inclusion of erotic. A case in point here concerns William Makepeace Thackeray’s letters on Orient which followed his travel experience to Turkey and Egypt in the middle of 19th century. Through one of his narrative scenes, Thackeray intervened the cultural singularity of Turkish bath in attempt to construct its mysteriousness whereby it is introduced as a cultural space that secures the access to a realm of romance and sensuality:

When the whole operation of the bath is concluded, you are led with what heartful joy I cannot say softly back to the cooling room, having been robed in shawls and turbans as before. You are laid gently on the reposing bed, somebody brings a narghile, which tastes as tobacco must taste in Mahomet’s paradise, a cool sweet dreamy languor takes possession of the purified frame, and half an hour of such delicious dreamy languor takes possession over the pipe as is unknown in Europe, where vulgar prejudice has most shamefully maligne
it foul names, such as the father of all evil, and the like, in fact, does not know how to educate idleness as those honest Turks do, and the fruit which, when properly cultivated, it bears. The after bath state is the most delightful condition of laziness, I ever knew, and I tried it wherever we went afterwards on our little. (Thackeray, 2006, p. 62)

Much focus here is on the excitement provided by Turkish bath whereby the descriptions of the place are encapsulated with a sense of romance. Thackeray’s production of the sensual and the romantic emerges through the inclusion of implications of several images exemplified in the use of the narghile, the cooling room, the heartfelt joy and other ingredients that exoticize and romanticize the scene. After all, for him, the mysteriousness of this cultural place is exemplified by these pictures where the aim remains the configuration of a space that validates Western vision on Orient as whole.

Within Western travel writings, the spatial representations of culture played an important role in the consecration and the glorification of the Orientalist ideology. The history of these writings validates this propensity as long as most of Western travel writers who experienced Orient. Epic Western journeys, like those of Montague, Montesquieu, de Nerval, Bowles, Flaubert and many others, were all recorded within travel narratives that exoticize and romanticize the Oriental regions they set feet in. For instance, Gustave Flaubert confirmed this Orientalist fashion through his travel account released in 1851 after his 1841 journey through Cairo and Beirut. The passage above, not unique to, shows how Flaubert describes the Pyramids’ scene, mainly the Sphinx (Archaeological Site in Giza, Egypt) with a hair-raising tone looking at the scary picture he drew when narrating his experience with this historical and cultural space in Egypt:

View of the sphinx Abou-el-Houl (the father of terror). The sand, the pyramids, the sphinx, all gray and drowned in a large pink tone; the sky is all blue, the eagles hover slowly around the top of the pyramids. We stop in front of the sphinx, he looks at us in a terrifying way; maxim is quite pale, I'm afraid my head will spin and I try to control my emotion. We set off again at full speed, mad, carried away among the stones; we walk around the Pyramids, at their very foot, at a walk. The luggage is slow to come, night is falling. (Le Calves, 2004, p.451)

Here, the mysteriousness of the space is exemplified by the constructed image of horror; the image that is meant to be displayed by the author. His Orientalist leaning is evident given that he purposely ignored the identification of the pyramids as a cultural space that reflects the history and cultural heritage of Egypt. By doing this, the author looks loyal to his Western style whereby the cultural is turned into the mysterious with the purpose of constructing a realm of mysteriousness. Flaubert remains eminent whenever Western travel writings on Orient are issued. This is resulted from his extreme engagement in the exotiness-based production of Orient in 19th century.

The constructed mysteriousness of the cultural space can be seen as a wise Orientalist tool. That is, the process of exoticizing a particular cultural space is not limited to what is inside its physical borders. It is implicitly a construction of the social and cultural setting to which this space belongs. This stems from the constant fact that every cultural space is a convergence where a set
of cultural and social practices, beliefs and customs meet together. As a matter of fact, “no space is innocent or pure, that all spaces are inscribed through and through by societal ideology, that every society produces certain spaces, its own spaces, which define and describe that particular society and its specific set of social relations”. (Narayanan, 2022, p.29). With this in mind, Thackeray’s engagement with Turkish bath is considered as an engagement with Turkish society as whole. In fact, by associating this cultural space with romance and sexuality, he introduces Turkey as a haven where sensuality and immorality are unrestricted and allowed. It is also the case of Flaubert’s engagement with the Pyramids and the scary picture constructed while describing the Sphinx. By doing this, the author secures the exotic shape of Sphinx and implicitly constructs an image of horror that would undoubtedly remain linked to Egyptian culture.

It is lucid now that the cultural space in Orient witnessed a series of misrepresentations with Western travel writings since. With this in mind, Western travellers to the area put focus on the cultural space by which the production of exoticness can take varied forms of mysteriousness. What is fundamental for these travel writers is being in a total alignment with the widespread public ideology in West; the ideology inherited from the translation of Arabian tales and later, reinforced by the exigencies of colonialism.

With the purpose of meeting the aim of this study, the studies above are not enough to make clear interpretations of the constructed mysteriousness of the cultural space within Western travel writings on the Orient. This reflects the literary gap within the present literature on the Orientalist propensity in Western travel discourse on the Orient. Therefore, there is a necessity to create a solid scientific platform so that further academic inquiries related to this research area can come up with sufficient findings.

Analysis

As far as the above deals with a couple of representations of the cultural space set by two eminent Western writers within the archive of travel narratives, this section is concerned with assessing some of the sites where the cultural space is led to mysteriousness within Peter Mayne’s A Year in Marrakesh. In fact, Mayne penetrates the cultural spaces in Marrakesh in attempts to display an Orientalist picture that satisfies his aspiration and feeds up his readership’s desire to known about the exotic and the mysterious. For instance, as meant to be produced within Thackeray’s letters on Orient between 1841 and 1846, Turkish bath, as known for Hammam in Morocco, is portrayed as an exotic space marked with a couple of mysterious practices. Mayne takes no notice of Hammam as a space with a real cultural significance besides being an outlet where people take a public steam bath. Further, he ignores the embodiment of the religious value of this space looking at its association with Islam world and its historical significance as inherited from Roman Empire. On the contrary, the author declares his Orientalist attitudes once he steps in Hammam with his Moroccan friend Abdeslem. The latter’s intention is leading his foreign friend to know about this cultural place and get familiar with it, but the author’s reaction appears pessimistic looking at the biased descriptions he makes to portray the place. The following passage can be taken as a case in point:
In the semi-darkness I could see nothing at first, but the place was filled with sounds, echoing and ricocheting round the walls. Men were calling to each other. I could hear running water, the clatter of buckets, a strange slapping noise. Gradually my eyes became more used to the darkness and I could make out a low, vaulted ceiling. Such light as there was flowed out from an embrasure, in a horizontal semi-opaque veil below which men lay naked and relaxed in the obscurity. Already I had lost ’Abdeslem, but he reappeared in a moment, carrying his two buckets filled with water. (Mayne, 2002, pp. 88-89)

Mayne’s first encounter with Hammam gives birth to a set of implications through which he exotically constructs a set of spatial representations. Indeed, such embodiment is carried out to create the mysteriousness of the space which takes different forms in terms of darkness, noise, and nakedness. Anthropologically speaking, Hammam is seen as a social institution where many relationships take place. However, the author appears loyal to Western Orientalism whereby the unfamiliarity of Oriental places occurs as a mode of representations within Western writings. Such mode goes back to Victorian era at the time when travel writers were eager about romanticizing and exoticizing all what belongs to Orient. In fact, with the intention of feeding their readers imaginations, these writers adjusted their perceptions to the Arabian tales as meant to be translated in early 18th century. Consequently, “writing about hamams, harems and other places unfamiliar to Europe by describing such places as dreamy, mystical, exotic, heavenly and sublime were rather Orientalist clichés of describing the Other” (Franchi & Mutlu, 2018, p. 74). Mayne’s descriptions of Moroccan Hammam respond to this Orientalist tradition which is confirmed by other scenes where he narrates how he stands marveled at some of the customs that Moroccans practice in such a place:

The floor was littered with bodies. Some were stretched flat, some squatted, many were being massaged or were themselves massaging their next-door neighbours. I felt stupidly shy. My skin seemed too white, and of a strange luminosity in this world of darkness and bodies the colour of dusk. I didn’t belong here, and my sponsor was nowhere to be found. I longed to find myself a corner and to sit cloaked in obscurity, but the whole wall space was occupied and I could only stand unhappily. (Mayne, 2002, p. 70)

The rhetoric of the mysterious of the cultural space in Morocco, as clearly manifested in the production of Moroccan public bath, is not only an outcome of the deeply rooted ideology of Orientalism, it is also a mirror that reflects the Western perception of the African mindset. As widely known in the community of literary criticism, European travel writings on Africa, since 15th century, have always been concerned with the consecration of the primitiveness and the darkness of Africans and their life. Later along with the emergence of European colonial enterprise in Africa, which witnessed its peak in 20th century, the consecration of the primitiveness and darkness within Western travel accounts appeared as a fundamental tool. In this vein, the cultural identity of Africa is led to elimination and distortion that many customs and traditions are sentenced to primitivity and backwardness. Consequently, as meant to be for Joseph Conrad’s *The Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), the images drawn on Africa within these accounts are a mixture of both early imaginations and imperial interests;
then, it becomes a compulsory task for all European travel writers who flocked in the area; if not, their accounts step out of reality, the reality that West believes in, consecrates and develops:

Stories of African travel were known to European travellers when they arrived in Africa from the fifteenth century. While the travel writing they produced in subsequent centuries was not always straightforwardly pro-imperialist, it nonetheless often developed what Mildred Mortimer calls ‘fictionalized stereotypes’ about Africa, centred particularly on primitivism and darkness. (Jones, 2019, p. 284)

The quotation above clearly justifies the claim that Africa appears as a site of the exotic within Western travel accounts since antiquity. It is true that Morocco shares many of its cultural characteristics with Africa; the continent to which this country belongs. Nevertheless, it is known for a unique cultural identity where a mixture of many relationships takes place. This cultural singularity is an accumulation of overlapping beliefs, traditions, language and, values whereby languages, geography, history, and religions meet together. Some of these props belong to Africa. However, this does not necessary mean that Morocco is a country with a total African cultural identity. On the other hand, even if it is assumed that Moroccan culture is completely African, this does not justify the claim that it is primitive and dark as long as Africa itself is sentenced to cultural distortion within these travel accounts. Mayne’s distortion of the cultural space in Marrakesh is a translation of this European dogma as it is confirmed with some of the implications when he narrates “under this African sun the saxon resembles the fatty parts of cold mutton” (Mayne, 2002, p. 40) and also “perhaps they felt out of things on this mad African place” (p. 128) Therefore, the Africanity of Morocco is undoubtedly existing in Mayne’s mind; eventually, it is what drives him to stereotype and misrepresent the cultural spaces in Morocco as meant to be in the case of Moroccan Hammam.

Mayne’s intention to misrepresent to the cultural spaces in Marrakesh is not limited to the case of Moroccan hammam. Another case in point here is the square of Jamaa el-Fnaa which is a place frequented by locals and visitors thanks to the excitement it offers. Since its emergence in 11th century, beside its commercial status as a market that offers different categories of products for the visitors; basically, antiques and artisanal products, the place is known for its symbolic role as it plays its cultural role as one of the spaces where Moroccan traditions and customs are performed through music, clothes, religion, food and celebrations. However, this invaluable cultural value is eliminated by Mayne who, rather, tends to create a sort of deterioration of the place through introducing it as a mysterious site where many exotic practices take place. In doing so, Mayne provides many scenes that depict his Orientalist configuration as obviously detected when he narrates:

I wandered through the crowds, peeping over shoulders into the whirlpools, seeing nothing any more but the faces and whatever they happened to be watching. It was simply a fairground again: singers, an ostrich standing among the bones of its fellows, a woman who drinks boiling water from a kettle to the accompaniment of flutes. Boys – Chleuhs, someone told me – like little white mice pirouetting and squeaking and clinking their minute finger cymbals. Charlatans of all sorts. It is a long list. (Mayne, 2002, p. 24)
Mayne sees Jamaa el-Fnaa as place full of mysteriousness which is, for him, exemplified in many pictures that introduce it as site where the crowded, fairground, animals, charlatans, and other people with strange practices gain ground. Still, his misrepresentations are even extended to cover boys who frequently come to the square picturing them as “little white mice pirouetting and squeaking and clinking their minute finger cymbals.” (Mayne, 1953, p. 24). Through the inclusion of such images, Mayne designs a negative picture of Jamaa el-Fnaa whereby the readership is led to one ultimate conclusion that remains the savagery of the place. In this sense, the square is meant to be a threatening locale instead of being a site where visitors enjoy and learn about Moroccan traditions and customs. The author’s desire to distort the cultural position of Jamaa el-Fnaa is, consequently, quite obvious. This is confirmed with another scene via which he points:

I am frequently on the Djema’a el-Fna. I believe I know almost all the ‘acts’ by now and a good many of the djellaba-hoods that gather round them – by sight, I mean. There is a huge floating population in Marrakesh, as you would expect of this market for the great south, and at any given moment there are thousands and thousands of strangers in town. But there are hundreds of inhabitants too who seem to do no work and are always to be seen on the place. In a strange, inarticulate sort of way I have become friendly with a family of acrobats that performs every evening. It is only here that I see them. They wear professional costumes vaguely. (Mayne, 2002, p. 34)

The passage above clearly reveals Mayne’s mode of representation that remains full of prejudices and stereotypes against all what can give an objective image of Jamaa el-Fnaa square. Again, the mysteriousness of the space is built up throughout images of distortion. To this end, it is represented as a locale for strange visitors who have nothing to do; and, as a stage on which acrobats perform their works wearing vague clothes. In fact, the strangeness of the visitors and the vagueness of the acrobats are the signs of this mysteriousness that the author decides to associate with the square.

As it obvious through Moroccan Hammam and the square of Jamaa el-Fnaa, Mayne’s spatial representations cannot be categorized as objective. His opts for a subjectivity that adjusts to his Western ideology whereby Orient and Africa are geographies of mysteriousness, primitivity, savagery and all what can be a metaphor of the uncivilized. In general, this ideology can be seen as a standard mode by which the cultural object is distorted. In particular, the cultural space has to be covered with such misrepresentations as long as it gathers a couple of traditions and practices. It is, then, a booty that offers a serious opportunity for Western travel writers who, undoubtedly, find it a fertile soil where their Orientalist ideas can be planted. Following such approach, the spatial exoticness included by Mayne within A Year in Marrakesh justifies the claim that power is a Western dogma imposed through travel discourse on the Orient and Africa. Morocco, as a part of this area, is conceived on this basis whereby its cultural space is denied and dismissed. After all, it is exactly what Foucault goes to when he argues that:

Space used to be either dismissed as belonging to ‘nature’—that is, the given, the basic conditions of ‘physical geography’, in other words a sort of ‘prehistoric’ stratum; or else it
was conceived as the residential place or field of expansion of peoples, of a culture, a language or a State. (Foucault, 1980, p. 149)

Such idea is trigged within Behdad’s _Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution_ (1994). Through his chapter “From travelogue to Tourist Guide: The Orientalist as Sightseer”, Behdad sees that the exoticness of the Other becomes an object of desire for belated travellers whose endeavour is the commodification of Orient. That is, the travel book is turned into a guide that leads “to identify the already defined signs of exoticism as exotic” (Behdad, 1994, p. 48) It is, then, a second exoticizing of the Oriental culture as long as the first is carried out by earlier travellers while the second is by belated ones who only search for the commodification of this imaginary exoticness. In both of the cases, the discourse of power remains a pathway through which the cultural domination is declared within Western travel writings on Orient:

> Although the promotion of the Oriental culture as an exotic commodity is intertwined with the relations of colonial power, the discourse of tourism suggests a passage in Orientalist vision from perceiving the orient as the object of cultural domination to seeing it as an object of desire. (Behdad, 1994, p. 48)

According to Behdad, Western travel discourse turned the Orient into an object by which the cultural domination is given a sense. Undoubtedly, Peter Mayne, through his misrepresentations of the cultural space in Marrakesh, adopts the same basis of such manipulation. Eventually, his spatial engagement with the cultural subject in Morocco is an outcome of a set of factors that vary from the ideological, across the colonial to the aesthetic. In all the cases, power imposes itself as transversal dogma that leads to exercise such cultural hegemony within Mayne’s travel account on Morocco.

**Conclusion**

This critical engagement with Mayne’s _A Year in Marrakesh_ is centred on the author’s embodiment of the cultural space in Marrakesh. It is concluded that this construction is featured with the inclusion of mysteriousness as a feature that marks cultural space like Hammam and the square of Jamaa el-Fnaa. To this end, the author’s descriptions of the varies sites he experienced in Marrakesh are characterized with a set of biased visions where the exotic declares itself as a distinct mode of representations. Indeed, weird and strange images are purposely indulged with the aim of coping with the same tone that covers the different parts of this travel narrative. Undoubtedly, as reflected with the section of analysis, the cultural space in Marrakesh, as implicitly in Morocco, is constructed and manipulated in accordance with Mayne’s orientalist gaze where all what belongs to the Orient has to be introduced unfairly. Looking at this in mind, Peter Mayne is an Orientalist travel writer par excellence. His loyalty to the Orientalist paradigm reflects with evidence his eye of power within the constructed cultural spaces. Therefore, the cultural symbols inserted by Mayne are objects and tools by which the mysteriousness of these spaces is secured and validated. After all, the Orientalist dogma is evidently behind his biased perception of, not only the cultural spaces, but also all the whole cultural setting of Morocco. As a matter of fact, _A Year in Marrakesh_ is another travel account that classifies its author as one of the eminent Orientalist travel writers who flocked in the country.
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An Ecocritical Reading of Selected Sidays in Baldesco's Poetic Anthology "Kawit"

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Abstract
This paper unpacked and unearthed the ecocritical semantics in the Sidays of Filipino writer, Nemesio “Totoy” Baldesco who is widely recognized for his works in Siday, a form of Philippine poetry known for its distinct use of the Waray language spoken in the provinces of Samar and Leyte. Anchored on the principles of Ecocritical Theory, this paper sought to explore the ecocritical semantics (i.e. the symbolic lines, images, and symbolisms), and environmental meaning present in the six ecological Siday pieces from Baldesco’s poetic anthology. Results show that Baldesco’s Siday pieces contain ecocritical semantics that didactically moralizes people to protect the environment. Furthermore, the Siday pieces also moralize how humans should protect, preserve and conserve the environment. This paper concludes with a discussion on the need to promote and expand literary studies involving local literature in the Philippines.

Keywords: Ecocritical semantics, ecocriticism, environment, siday, local literature, Poetic anthology

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Introduction

Our world is confronted with various environmental disasters brought by natural or man-made calamities rooted in the enormous emanation of silicon valleys, towering infrastructures, technological breakthroughs, and innovations. Environmental challenges have become common subjects of literature since the onset of industrialization. As a result, establishing ecocriticism as a scholarly field emerged. Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary study of literature and the environment that examines environmental challenges and the various ways in which literature addresses them. With the emergence of environmental issues from numerous fields, local literature and folk litterateurs created literary works that contribute to ecological advocacies.

In 2013, the Philippines was devastatingly deplorable as it was struck by typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda). It has killed thousands of Waraynons (people from Samar and Leyte), causing significant emotional, economic, financial, and ecological devastation to the community. However, this disaster gave rise to numerous ways for Waraynons to cope and carve a light at the end of the darkest tunnel by paving the way for literature through its local writers to shed a shelter of hope by painting their stories on a literary canvas. The anthology of local poetry "Kawit," an award-winning compendium of Sidays that depict the stories of nature and experiences of locals during calamities such as Typhoon Haiyan, was written by Nemesio "Totoy" Baldesco, the most celebrated traditional Siday writer in the Visayas region. As the Father of Waray Poetry, Totoy, as he is affectionately known, is a pedicab (three-wheeled motorcycle) driver gifted with extraordinary talent in writing local literature, earning various recognitions such as the Gantimpalang Ani Award for Poetry in 1994 by the Cultural Center of the Philippines and Gawad Parangal of UMPIL (Unyon ng Manunulat na Pilipino/Union of Filipino). His famous works include "Kawit," a poetry anthology of Sidays, and "Sikad," a poem about his experience as a pedicab driver, which earned him his first national literary award. These masterpieces encompass the spirit of resistance among Waraynons, inspiring them to thrive and face adversities with zeal.

_Siday_, on the one hand, is a kind of poetry in Waray literature written in Waray language (Alunan, 2016). It is mainly an enduring literary form that has survived through the years and continuously evolves. It is a rich collection of poems and stories, both oral and written. It is the most famous literary genre among local writers in Samar and Leyte. Writing in Waray is a vital part of the Waray society as it reflects the identity and culture of its people. Hence, it is essential to integrate Waray literature in raising environmental awareness because it allows a deeper understanding of one’s culture through the use of contextualized analysis of local literature.

While certain parts of the world started to recognize the marriage of literature and the environment, academics also from Western Literature Association have commenced creating ecocriticism as a form of literary analysis which conceived nature writing. Glotfelty & Fromm (1996) served as the very first intellectuals to hold academic posts in Literature and the Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno, and maintained their positions even when the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) emerged into an organization of thousands of US members alone. New branches of ASLE and associated organizations in pioneering countries in ecocriticism have been founded since the late 1990s.
Ecocriticism is not only a study of nature in literature, but also any philosophy dedicated to studying the natural environment's function as embodied in documents contributing to material practices. Because of Baldesco's poetry, which highlights the ecocritical semantics inherent in the texts, and his status as the last living traditional *Siday* writer in the region, he embodies the philosophy of a true advocate of nature. Hence, Baldesco's poetic predilections have dilated the eyes, hearts, and minds of local Calbayognons on how important it is to protect the environment. In fact, these literary pieces uphold the dogma that humans do not own these natural resources they enjoy. Instead, they just have borrowed them from their children and their children's children.

It is with this premise that this investigation catapults the cornerstone of identifying and analyzing the *Siday* compositions from Baldesco’s poetic anthology. Specifically, this addresses how ecocritical semantics convey Baldesco’s environmental message utilizing content analysis as a qualitative method guided by the romanticist-ecocritical guideposts as a literary technique in analyzing Baldesco’s *Siday* pieces.

**Literature Review**

Several studies have been conducted that center on the use of ecocriticism as a literary theory. Primarily, Hadi, Mhana, Talif & Zainal (2019) also analyzed a collection of published poems written by Carol Ann Duffy, Great Britain’s very own Poet Laureate. This study unpacked the author’s ideologies from becoming a laureate mirroring her personality as a feminist, ecopoet, members of the “lavender” society which have all together configured a kind of nonmaterial environment intertwined with the material world or nature in the textual space through “Politics”. In the present investigation however, Baldesco’s poems significantly point out only the ecocritical semantics found in the texts, which are also attributed to his being the only living traditional *Siday* writer in the entire locality. His ideologies on human subsistence governed by their desires to effect change to the environment as the primary source of all-natural abundance are unearthed in the selected texts. Duffy accordingly concentrated more on the thoughts, emotions, views, and feelings of the poet that influenced her to signify nature in "Politics" as an odd ecopoetic text from another realm.

Further, Alvi, Majid & Vengadasamy (2019) conducted a study that compared the ecocritical meanings conveyed by the selected poems of nature of both William Wordsworth and Ghulam Sarwar Youssuf. Coming from different places, time, and experiences of writing poems that tackle nature as its primary topic, their poems point out their cognitive development, which allowed them to simulate environmental consciousness birthing three facets of attitudes towards nature: physical, intellectual, and mystical. These facets along with ecocentrism, symbiotic interrelationship and ecological consciousness, examined the linguistic and literary representations of the poems identified. As the present study navigates on the same themes, it however focuses on the writings of Baldesco alone. It amplifies how local literature could be used in order to bring dynamic impact to environmental preservation, especially to local folks. Both papers though, outlined the immense need for scholarly research into nature's underlying themes in environmental language differences perspectives as a way of encouraging environmental awareness and appreciation.
Just like Baldesco, a study on unpacking the ecoethical vision and ecological awareness in the poem-selects of Pablo Neruda. Known to be a Latin-American political poet and Nobel Prize winner, this study unearthed ethics as one of the component of ecopoetry as a new aspect studied in ecocritical poetry investigating human-nature connection. The contribution of this study is to emphasize the value of Pablo Neruda's ecoethical sensitivity against nature. The discussion focuses on poems that reflect the sense of ethics and portray the essential role of modesty in shaping our sense of responsibility towards nature while revealing the philosophy and relationship of Neruda with the non-human world. The same thing with Neruda’s poems, the present study underscores the attitude of Baldesco towards nature and obtains insights on how ethical standards can be attributed to understanding the natural world (Khosravi, et.al., 2017).

Meanwhile, Hamoud & Hashim (2016) attempted to analyze literary materials and other forms of reading texts just like any other pieces of literature for the purpose of gaining a semantic understanding of the poetical pieces of Muhammad Haji Salleh elicited from ideas on ecocriticism. The researchers demonstrated the writer’s concern about man-made intervention in the realm of nature, resulting in the catastrophic turmoil of the nature and human relationship, using six of his nature poems to show Muhammad's concept of a reciprocal relationship between the worlds of human and nature existent in the ecological balance of the ecosystem.

Moreover, Wordsworth's The Prelude: A Manifesto of Ecocriticism was discussed by Sultana & Salem (2016). Their paper explored the importance of the poetry of William Wordsworth to growing man's ecological understanding. In order to prevent the undulating consequences of human life, his thesis was evaluated using the concepts of ecocriticism with an emphasis on preserving natural resources and habitats.

The study on Ecocritical Approach to Literary Text Interpretation of Jimmy (2015) expostulates that junior scholars can learn to view literary texts as they do with the rest of the literary devices of age in an ecocritical approach. The ecocritical approach reaches effects that are not different from an environmental defense speech method.

Further, Abbasil, et.al., (2015) examined a paper that focused on William Wordsworth’s selected poems via ecocriticism from 1770-1850. As a literary theory, ecocriticism inherently analyzes texts that capture authentic meaning from various literary pieces that navigate on the importance of preserving nature amidst incrementing destructions brought about by the advancements of technology, satiating human’s thirst for an easy and comfortable life. However, as they venture on this premise, they tend to neglect their responsibility towards conserving natural resources and ecosystem so to anodyne its drastic effect to ecological homeostasis. The present study focuses on the idea of how ecocritical semantics are put across by Baldesco in some of his poems in his anthology, envisaging the picturesque of how humans interdependently relate with nature and vice versa. Thus, his poems contain images of nature stained by urbanization creating obliterating ecological stances which ruin innocence. Consequently, nature serves as the biding force that reconciles human frailties into becoming assets.
On the other hand, in the article of Buell, et.al., (2011) on literature and environment, they examined the significance of nature and the evolution of literature-environment studies. Six specific centers of interest were also summarized in depth by the researchers: the imagination of location and place-attachment, the enlistment and critique of academic research frameworks in the study of literature and the arts, the investigation of the relevance of gender bias, and depiction of the environment, the border of ecocritical and poststructuralist education as ecocriticism that stretched its perspectives far beyond current purpose on Anglican creativity, the emerging value of ecocriticism in contemporary cultures and thought, and the no less agile and complex attention of ecocriticism to artistic representation and ethics of social interactions. This premise somehow significantly shares meaning to the poem selected by Baldesco. They give value to nature and how literary texts are used in order to unravel the meaning of environmental protection beneath the tip of an iceberg.

On the other hand, Quinto & Santos (2016) conducted a study that focused on local literature and how this medium was used to voice out local Filipino sentiments and aspirations, just like the present study. They unearthed the various strategies of abrogation and appropriation on selected short stories of Manuel Arquilla. This Filipino contemporary litterateur navigated on the expression of an authentic self, presentation of an exact place, and subtle form of subversion and advancement of Filipino identities and ideologies. This study also analyzed the contemporary poems of Nemesio “Totoy” Baldesco, who is a traditional folk lyricist whose poems navigate on eliciting didactic lessons on environmental protection and preservation.

While the rest of the literature and studies cited above circumnavigated on poems as the basis for the analysis, Jafni, et.al. (2016) explored the portrayal of human-nature connections in Tunku Halim’s Dark Demon Rising, invoking the relationship between the grotesque and nature which are built with terror and horror. Backed up by the Wolfgang Kayser’s notion of grotesque reception, the paper demonstrated that apart from imagery, the role of nature is also evident in channeling the relationship between humans and nature. This premise, however, is non-existent in the selected poems of Baldesco. Although his poems depict cataclysmic damages by humans as reflected in Pobre nga Mangirisda, the present study does not coincide with grotesque as an element in the ecocritical analysis. However, since ecocriticism is a dynamic literary theory that cuts across dimensions of understanding certain naturally occurring phenomena, the former study's researchers catapulted a notion on the interconnectedness of nature and grotesque unraveled through this duality.

Methods

Content analysis is used to identify the ecocritical semantics surfacing out the environmental meaning of the Siday compositions (Silverman, 2016). The corpora in this study are consist of the selected Siday compositions of Baldesco. Semantically, these Siday compositions center on the beauty of nature that raises environmental awareness among readers. These Sidays are translated and selected to have been identified to explore ecological themes: Calbayog-Syudad san Pan-as (Calbayog City of Pan-as); Dugal-ok San Kalibungan (The Devastation of Nature); Marmol Nga Bukid (Marble Mountain); Pobre Nga Mangirisda (The Poor Fisherman); Tugahan An Kabaysay
The translation of the poems from Waray into English is done by the researcher himself employing the procedures used by De La Rosa (1993) in her dissertation on the “20th Century Ninorte Samarnon Siday: A Collection and Translation.” The processes include the Addition/Expansion, Contraction/Reduction, Descriptive Equivalent, Elision, Functional Equivalent, Lexical borrowing, Modulation, One to one translation literal translation, Paraphrase and Transposition. Further, the researcher analyzes the texts using Silverman's (2006) qualitative content analysis. This method of analysis identifies, analyzes and records patterns (or "themes") within the content (Saldaña, 2015). It is a relatively simple process of describing and identifying connections and patterns across parts of the data.

Analysis

Based on the analysis of the Sidays of Baldesco, the ecocritical semantics from the images, metaphors and symbolism that are unearthed in pieces are presented below.

Calbayog Siyudad San Pan-as (Calbayog City of Pan-as)

Calbayog Siyudad San Pan-as (Calbayog City of Pan-as) highlights images of the City's precious water jewel, Pan-as Falls. The poem captures the breath-taking splendor of the mentioned location. Nature served as the etiology of a lovely Calbayog, assisting the City in becoming what it is now. It is a valuable source of water and forest products, as well as a source of economic activity. At the economic level, tourism is viewed as a main tool for regional growth, but the climate should not be taken for granted. Sustainable tourism necessitates making the optimum use of resources while also maximizing conservation and local community benefits. As a result, nature endowed the City with creations that aided people's way of life.

(1) Labi nga kaswerte, sinen syudad san Calbayog
(2) Guinbugnaan sa Taglarang, damo nga tubighog
(3) Sa lugar kun diin, mga kahoy labi ka baskog
(4) Kay sa mga Pan-as, kahoy adton taghatag kusog

(How lucky you are, City of Calbayog, Endowed by the Creator with plenty water resources, In the place where the trees grow sturdy, For in waterfalls, trees get strength) (p.23)

Metaphorically, the verse is idyllic because it addresses ecological sustainability: (2) Guinbugnaan sa Taglarang, damo nga tubighog; (3) Sa lugar kun diin, mga kahoy labi ka baskog. It means that if we mistreat nature, its beauty will inevitably vanish, and we will be the ones who suffer as a result. It also depicts a conventionalized image of rural life, with its natural state and innocence contrasted with the realistic world of corruption and urbanization. As the text promotes Calbayog city tourism, it delivers various economic and social benefits, particularly to developing rural communities. Tourism draws travelers, which leads to the creation of jobs and the generation
of additional tax money from businesses, among other things. It also promotes the retention of ancient customs. Tourism encourages the conservation of natural resources because it is regarded as an asset.

This finding disaffirmed the study of Alvi, et.al., (2019) which dismantled the author's ideologies from becoming a laureate, mirroring her personality as a feminist, ecopoet, and member of the "lavender" society, all of which have combined to create a kind of nonmaterial environment intermingled with the material world or nature in the textual space via "Politics." However, in the current analysis, Baldesco's poems emphasize solely the ecocritical semantics discovered in the texts, which are related to his status as the only surviving traditional Siday writer in the whole neighborhood. The selected texts expose his views on human sustenance, which are guided by their wishes to affect change in the environment, which is the basic source of all natural abundance. As a result, Duffy focused more on the poet's ideas, emotions, perspectives, and sentiments, which prompted her to refer to nature in "Politics" as a strange ecopoetic text from another world.

(21) Kay turo san tubig, daw buhok nga nakalugay
(6) Landaw hurma kinaiya, daw kutsarang bato
(26) Intrada daw purta mayor, singbahan dayunan

(Its running water, like a hair
Of a fairy, hills is like a face resting,
Hidden incredible view,
If you’ll try to visit look for San Joaquin Village)(p. 23)

The author employed a variety of metaphors to show the readers the natural world. (21) kay turo san tubig, daw buhok nga nakalugay simply indicates that the water flows like a straight and lovely hair that falls down freely. (6) Landaw hurma kinaiya, daw kutsarang bato is another line that relates the formation of a stone to the formation of a spoon. He basically chooses to offer a detailed description of the location. Finally, the sentence (26) Intrada daw purta mayor, singbahan dayunan illustrates the cave opening's resemblance to a church door. It suggests that two things are similar in some sense. Aside from metaphors, the poem includes symbolic depictions of terminology such as (9) Mapaso Spring, (13) Pan-as Falls, (19) Lologayan Falls, (5) Mawacat Slide, (25) Guinogoan, (26) Bangon Bugtong Falls, and (24) Barangay San Joaquin.

These breathtaking waterfalls in Calbayog City not only represent the beauty of nature, but also the global meaning of how God has paved His route for people to achieve sustainable living by creating sanctuaries and ecological niches. These offer immense bounty and graces to Calbayognon, gifted with all of these natural resources to push ecological preservation, conservation, and protection, ensuring that the City remains plentiful and fortunate no matter how many years pass. The magnificent waterfalls are not simply tourist attractions; they are also the principal source of income for the Calbayognons. These symbolic images encased in the aesthetical envelop of natural resources are nothing more than the Calbayognons' own life. They are reminiscent of the joyful and regal struggles of Calbayognons to maintain life and triumph in the face of many barriers. They have thrived to sharpen their minds and strengthen their hearts that
when necessity comes, they can illuminate the light of hope for a greater city of Calbayog exuding its radiance shown in every smile of all Calbayognons.

As with Baldesco, Khosravi, et.al., 2017 affirms the finding above with their research which uncovered ethics as a component of ecopoetry, a new dimension explored in ecocritical poetry that examines the human-nature link. This research makes a contribution by emphasizing the importance of Pablo Neruda's ecoethical sensitivity toward environment. The discussion centers on the poems that exemplify an ethical sensibility and demonstrate the critical function of humility in developing our feeling of duty toward nature, while also illuminating Neruda's philosophy and connection with the non-human world. Similar to Neruda's poetry, this research emphasizes Baldesco's attitude toward nature and elicits insights about how ethical norms might contribute to an understanding of the natural world.

Malimpyo nga Hangin, Kanan Tawo an Responsibilidad (Clean Air, One’s Responsibility)

As emblems of the literary piece's symbolic meaning, Malimpyo nga Hangin, Kanan Tawo an Responsibilidad (Clean Air, One’s Responsibility) is just one of the author's ways of letting readers and people in general know and realize that taking good care of the environment and nature is our responsibility. Hangin (wind) gave birth to life. Kalibungan literally means "backyard," but in this context, it depicts the world we know today. The environment we are currently live in provides us with more than we could ever imagine; we profit from it, and the entire reason of its existence is for us to subsist.

(1) Hangin asay naghatag kinabuhi, sa kalibungan,
(2) Hangin an kasumpay, sadton tawo ginhawaan
(3) Labis na kun adton mahanggab, harupoy nga amihan,
(4) Makakabanlas, sadton inaabat nga kapaglanan.

(Air gives us life,
Air that enables human to breathe,
One brought by Northeast monsoon,
Eases pain when we are burnt, p. 24)

It is man's obligation to protect and nurture the environment, yet we tend to wreak havoc the supposedly cared natural resources and we escape reality by ignoring the consequences brought upon us by nature. We have forgotten the reason we exist because of our greed and selfishness. In the second stanza, kahugaw signifies a location where our environment should not exist. The third stanza wants the readers to feel the agony that our environment feels and continuously experiences. The unpleasant man-made actions that influenced the place we are currently living caused a lot of damage to it. Nagngunguyngoy is a waray-waray term that describes how nature feels because the term itself represents melancholy and grief.

(9) Aton kagugub-an, daw waray na natindog nga kahot
(10) Adton kamanampan nagtabuagsa, ngan nagngunguyngoy,…
People have been destroying the environment from the moment they have existed, slowly yet as time passes by they have been doing it faster than before. Some of the acts humans have been doing which caused damage towards our environment is by using chemicals, one of which are pesticides. Humans benefit from this but the environment doesn’t, it ruins the fresh air particles. From air to land and from land to sea, all of it were damaged by man’s ignorance.

(13) Sa kaumhan, saburak paggamit, kemekal pestisedyo,
(14) Artepesyal nga pagpalibsog, komersyal nga abuno,

(Across the farm, there’s wide use of pesticide,
Artificial cultivation, commercial fertilizers) (p. 24)

Nagsusunod is a Waray term which means following, the 5th stanza tells a situation that not only man made activities affect the environment but it also affects other humans. The situation being told is that there is vehicle that puffs a dark smoke or should we say emits a black smoke, it’d affect the vehicle which follows that can trigger bad things on the health of the person
(21) Sa kakalsadahan, sauy-saoy adton nga sarakyan,
(22) Daw noos nagbubuga ata, maitom sa kahanginan,
(23) Kairo sadton nagsusunod, mahanggab sa ginhawaan,
(24) Nakakahibang sa baga, nakakaraot sa tiyan.

(In the highways successive cars pass,
Blown smoke as dark as tint of squid,
Pity are those who are next and could breathe
It may damage their lung and may cause stomachache) (p. 24)

The writer, on the other hand, removed self-consciousness from the language used in the poem by utilizing appropriate phrases and metaphorical lines to still make the readers understand the environment's agony. The author also utilized Waray as a type of language because it is predicted that only a few will be able to decipher the meaning concealed inside every line of the siday poem. Instead of utilizing simple Waray phrases, the author used vocabulary that are difficult to understand, causing the reader to take their time reading the text. The Siday named Malimpyo nga hangin, Kanan tawo responsabilidad generates environmental consciousness from the readers, which can be found within the language of the siday wrapped by its metaphors and imagery used.
(28) Maabot na ba an takna? San aton panamilit.

(Will payback time come of all what we’ve done?) (p.24)

Since most of the stanzas in the Sidays revolve only around the relationship between mankind and its environment, they tend to judge that mankind has been ruining the beauty of nature but was not mentioned in the lines because Siday used metaphorical statements to represent an idea but are obvious because instead of pointing out mankind, human actions were mentioned.
Baldesco's *Siday* is pastoral because it offers life lessons, particularly in this piece since it condemns human practices that harm the beauty of nature. It indicates that readers must realize that what people have been doing is not right after all.

(25) Asay ini an kamatuoran, labi sin kapait,
(26) Dayuday nakakaplagan na, kahimtang nga mapait,
(27) Adton tawo asay an magpupukan, sini nga dapit,
(28) Maabot na ba an takna? San ato na panamilit.

(This is the bitter reality,
That what you’ve sown is what you’ll reap,
Whoever started should be the one to end
Will payback time come of all what we’ve done?) (p. 25)

The poem is naturally pastoral that brings two dynamic issues on how environmental consciousness is aroused in every line in the *Siday*. The author wants to let the readers think twice and create situations in his mind of what might happen if he will follow the author’s conviction on doing things his own way or otherwise. If the readers still continue their wrongdoings and will disregard the things that the author conveys, then things might just worsen.

The *Siday* of Baldesco used figurative terms like personification specifically on the 2nd line of the 3rd stanza, it states that because of all the damages caused by manmade actions, the environment or the nature is whining in pain. Another figure of speech within the lines of the *Siday* can be found on the 4th stanza specifically the 3rd line which says that because of all the artificial products and chemicals, they caused the air to be polluted, blaming it all to people which exaggerated the action since other causes can trigger air pollution. Hence, hyperbole is therefore used.

These findings support Hamoud & Hashim (2016) findings. They aslo demonstrated the writer's concern about human intervention in the realm of nature, resulting in the catastrophic breakdown of the nature-human relationship, by examining six of his nature poems. They demonstrated Muhammad's concept of a reciprocal relationship between the human and natural worlds that exists within the ecosystem's ecological balance.

*Marmol nga Bukid (Marble Mountain)*

The siday "Marmol nga Bukid" displays a strong sense of brotherhood among the people of Calbayog in being able to safeguard its City from culprits who attempted to harm the nature and the juxtaposition of, as it was termed, a paradise-like-city. It also describes how people's willpower may work together to create a huge change in the society in which they live. The tale progressed from the opening verse, in which the writer explained how essential the City's location is for fisherman, since it is positioned to escape a sudden change in weather when sailing. On the other side, the second stanza stated how well-cultivated the grounds are, which is why many trees are tall and large.

(1) Labi nga karanggat, kun adlaw nabulang,
(2) Sa dagat nga sigad, siya naatubang,
(3) Sanglit kun sibasko, dire nag-aalang,
(4) Magdaragat guiya, kaburong tagsagan.

(Shimmering as strike by the sun,
As it face the the road and the sea,
Fishermen are confident to aboard
Even at stormy days for it serves as guide light.) (p. 25)

The writer's self-consciousness with his language and words was palpable, especially since he was able to use his mother tongue, Waray, in his piece so that he could relay the story of the beauty of Calbayog and how the people who lived there came together to save and protect themselves from the human destructions that were coming their way. Such an act of the people was clearly shown in the fourth stanza, which highlighted how the people created a way through their faith and camaraderie to be able to stop and conquer what they were dealing with in their City.

Aside from the writer's obvious self-consciousness with the language he used, he was also able to give the readers the opportunity to truly imagine, conceptualize, and put into a concrete picture of how he was attempting to picture out the City and how the people were able to defend it from the significant dilemma that it was facing. Through his play of words, the writer successfully immersed the readers in the natural environmental terms of what was truly going on. This was clear in the third verse, which depicted the readers' predicament.

Overall, this Siday poem is pastorally written, as the poet caters to the notion of how a beautiful city may be rescued by the people from the destructors who want to take advantage of the nature and gain money from it. The poem has a message about how huge things may be accomplished if people work together to complete a task. It demonstrates that in life, if you have the will and faith to accomplish anything or make a difference, you can do it as long as you keep your heart strong and believe in what you believe is right.

This poetry was full with analogies. The poet composed it in a plain manner so that readers could better grasp the poetry and the story it tells. However, there were stanzas where the poet used metaphors to further elaborate and make his piece more appealing to his readers, such as the line, "(1) Labi nga karanggat, kun adlaw nabulang, (2)Sa dagat nga sigad, siya naatubang," which basically meant that when the sun is facing the sea, the sea emits this beautiful shiny light that makes the entire spectrum magic.

Additionally, Sultana & Salem (2016) and Jimmy (2015) share similarities with these findings. They discussed the significance of William Wordsworth's poetry in developing man's ecological awareness. To avert the negative repercussions of human existence, his theory was examined using ecocritical principles, with a focus on natural resource conservation and habitat preservation as they posit that younger scholars may learn to examine literary texts in the same way they see the rest of the literary devices of their generation using an ecocritical lens. The ecocritical approach produces results that are comparable to those of an environmental defense speech.
Dugal-ok San Kalibungan (The Devastation of Nature)

The Siday Dugal-ok san Kalibungan is a striking illustration of the idea that if humans poison nature, the nature will poison humans too. It is revealed in the seventh verse that people create far more than the environment can handle. People's desire to manage the natural environment and ponder the consequences of doing so placed them in a unique position. It is interesting to note that the writer surfaced out self-consciousness from the language used in the poem by using appropriate words that emphasize their enormity to the readers. The author highlighted how humanity cannot escape from the raging torment brought about by the changes in the natural world. The third and fourth lines support the aforementioned in which true enough, people take part in paving a road toward the end of their demise.

(13) Mangirhat na lunop, bay-og kanaypan nga bug-os,
(14) Panot nga kapungturan, an hinungdan na hul-os,
(15) Kay Ormoc, lagadero nanhimulos naglugos,
(16) Ngan tubo guinbalyo, di’ makapugong san buklos.

(Unimmaginable distruction rocked the entire place,
The root cause, denuded forest,
In Ormoc,illegal logger manages to rush,
Planted sugarcane instead, that cannot even absorb flood.) (p. 26)

The author transports the reader powerfully to the natural world as he discusses the truth of how humans live for a long period without regard for the irreversible harm they cause to the ecosystem. Despite drastically enhancing the quality of life, the industrial revolution signaled the end of healthy living. They craved for even more as people grew used to additional conveniences. Only humans have the ability to think and act in order to make substantial advances in the world. A change is possible if everyone makes a concerted effort to consider the impact of their everyday activity towards the environment around them.

(37) Siton buklos, mga pungtod, may kapas pagpatagon,
(38) Idepisyo ngan istraktura, sadang gubaon,
(39) Yukot man nga katawhan, may kusog na pukanon,
(40) Dagul-ok san kalibungan, benggansa laumon.

(Hills were bulldozed and flattened,
Enough to create edifice and structure,
Thousands of people have the power to stop,
Devastation of Nature, expect its revenge.) (p. 26)

On the other hand, the author used his ability to combine reality and poetic language to elicit environmental consciousness from readers. Not only does the piece represent the beauty of nature, but the horrors of its destruction are carried out by forces that are supposed to work for our own good. It also acknowledges that the influence of human activities on the environment, including water, air, soil, and the life with which people share the earth, is almost unmeasurable.
(29) Tungod kay adton dagat, tugob na sadton hugaw,
(30) Kay guinhimo hapilan sighot, diri matunaw,
(31) Lapak plastic, gango, sa hubasan magka;lutaw
(32) Ug irusyon di’ mapugngan, dagat nahamabaw.

(Because of the sea, overflows with dirt,
Made like a dump site, non-biodegradable,
Mud, plastic, floats in the seashore
Erosion could not be stopped, water now) (p. 26)

The text suggests that if people continually wait for the consequences to collapse with one another, then the only conclusion to be reached is that humankind have indeed constructed a suicide machine among them. The exponential success of the human race has started to impact the natural order, as cliché as it is. Have they only thought of subsisting? As they continue to develop and have a greater effect on the natural environment, in order to attain stability for themselves and their families, it is imperative that they discuss their position and relationship with nature. Likewise, the literary piece bears an incredibly great lesson that when the heedless and destructive actions of people reach the vast cycles of the world, nature will return in time and bring danger to humanity. Along with these are doubts and fears engraved among people for the possible appalling things that will occur due to the continuous threat on the environment done only for one's immediate profits on the brain and own comfort and wellbeing in mind.

Again, human impact on the environment is inevitable. What differentiates human from others is their ability to greatly overburden the environment with very few limits put upon them. And most of the time people get the impression that they could worry a little, dial back any time and solve all the problems but truth is, once they inflict enough damage, the world just shifts into a whole new state and the damage spirals out of control – like killing lives. However, it could still be a natural phenomenon – something not even the highest official could grasp. But no matter where the coin is facing, humans need to spread the word that better solutions do exist and tale actions. Consequently, the author used metaphors to express emotions and images to readers of the natural world in an intrinsically pleasurable manner. In the line “Adton guba mo Samar, nga daw Eden kabaysay,” it can be manifested that the land of Samar is perceived to be strikingly beautiful and bountiful as the Paradise of Eden. He was able to give emphasis to what the place had been.

The current research examines how Baldesco conveys ecocritical semantics in some of his poems in his anthology, evoking images of how people are inextricably linked to nature and vice versa. Thus, his poems depict nature as tainted by civilization, resulting in obliterating ecological postures that sully the innocent. As a result, nature acts as the reconciling force that transforms human frailties into advantages hence affirming that of the study of Abbasil, et. al (2015) and Buell, et.al., (2011).


**Pobre nga Mangirisda (Poor Fisherman)**

The *Siday “Pobre Nga Mangirisda”* is a reflection of how humans thrive to overcome difficulties in life which is represented by a fisherman who struggles surviving in the most conventional way, disregarding whatever natural circumstance there is. The first two lines in the first stanza of the text reflect the fisherman’s monotonous habit of getting up at the crack of dawn and forcing himself to go fishing despite the disturbances of the natural world. In the second stanza, the first two lines also describe how the hesitant fisherman, gropes in the dark and bears the cold and gloomy environment, as represented in the line (6)*Labis na kun bituon sa langit, waray gud nalutaw*, which points out to a starless and cloudy dawn. Similarly, at some point in our lives, we find ways of surmounting the hardships in the natural selection for our own survival.

(1) Siyahan nga panuktugaok san manok, takna san maagahon,
(2) Piret mabuhat, babayaan taklap, kuntra hagkot nga panahon,
(5) Mangarapkap sa dulom, adton tiil, ruhaduha ipiktaw,
(6) Labis na kun bisan bituon sa langit, waray gud nalutaw,

(The first crow of the rooster, moment of dawn
Would struggle to leap, let go of the blanket, against the cold weather,
Cold breeze brought by monsoon, kisses the body,
Hurriedly go off the shore for fog is so thick that even sillhoutte couldn’t be seen.) (p. 27)

The writer surfaced out self-consciousness from the language used in the text by using appropriate and vernacular words that outlines the principle of human survival, therefore allowing the readers undue awareness of the poem. Such survival is embodied in the 5th stanza which describes the worsening situation of the fisherman who tolerates the adversity of the nature of his living.

On the other hand, the writer significantly brought the readers to the natural world of how the persona struggles in the most conventional way of surviving the austerity of nature. The instant by which the persona in the poem chose the unprovocative but laborious way of finding abundance lurking in the depths of the ocean mirrors the reality that humans need to skilled and dedicated enough to profit from the ways of living.

In a nutshell, the text is pastorally written by the writer for it reveals much universal, practical wisdom. Fishing is the metaphor of life. In a way, all their tendencies are catered to by humans based on what in existence appeared feasible and unlikely. Many of their believed-in inadequacies with their opinions on life are being nursed. Life doesn't deliver fish to you. We have to do what is right and what works with each situation in order to catch fish. In your own exploration process, facing natural conditions, we have to be the key player.

The author used series of metaphors all throughout the poem to allow readers to divulge into the vigilance of the natural world. (8)*Labis na kun bisan bituon sa langit, waray gud nalutaw* is regarded as a representation of a starless and cloudy sky in the crack of dawn. In the lines (14)*Layag bubuklaron, kun hangin baga nagpakahawud-hawod*, (15)*Mabugsay paluyo-luyo, kun*
adton hangin labis nga naawod, the wind possesses the embodiment of being forceful and domineering as the fisherman prepares himself for fishing. In the line (24) Gutiy la madismayo, kay hugaw iton kawil daw puputsonit can be inferred that the garbage hooked up by the persona reveal the kind of environment he was dealing with.

These findings disaffirm Jafni, et.al (2016) study. While his poems show human-caused apocalyptic harm, as seen in this text, the current research does not adhere to the grotesque as an aspect of ecocritical analysis. However, since ecocriticism is a dynamic literary theory that spans several dimensions of comprehending specific naturally occurring events, the researchers of the former study launched an idea of nature's interconnection and the grotesque's unraveling via this duality.

**Tugahan an Kabaysay (The Grandest Beauty)**

The *Siday “Tugahan an Kabaysay”* celebrates the beauty of the waterfalls found in Calbayog City. Entitled as the “City of Waterfalls”, the speaker mentioned some of the well-known and most visited waterfalls including the Pan-as Falls, Bangon Bugtong Falls, Tarangban Falls, Busay Falls and also the Mawacat Slide. By reading the title, we could tell that the speaker wants to reveal its beauty and let the readers realize their importance as among locals in Calbayog City. From the first line, Calbayog is mentioned and from that we could say that the *Siday* focuses on the place.

With all the bodies of water in the piece, an identity as to what Calbayog looks like is being established. With the use of imagery, the speaker is able to describe the places very well into the readers’ mind.

In the first two lines of the first stanza, the speaker states how precious Calbayog is because of the abundance of water resources here. The “tubighog” word mentioned which refers to water simply reflects to the source of our life. Water as one of our basic needs, plays an important role in the civilization of our City and had a dramatic impact on humans. Related with the first two lines, the second two lines also discuss how the bodies of water help in having strong trees that is pleasing to the eyes of anyone and which makes our environment greener and richer as one of the sources of livelihood.

(1) Labi nga kapinalangga, sinen syudad san Calbayog,  
(2) Guinbugnaan san Taglarang, abunda san mga tubighog,  
(3) Sa lugar kun diin adton, mga kahoy labi ka baskog,  
(4) Kay sa mga pan-as kahoy an ginlalauman san kusog.

(The most loved, the City of Calbayog,  
Endowed by the Creator, abundance of water resources,  
In the area where trees are strong.) (p. 28)

The writer stated the fact that Pan-as Falls is one of the water sources across the whole Calbayog City which is found in an isolated forest and can be accessed with a small boat. In the second stanza, the speaker described the falls as very majestic with its abundant flow of water and
the pureness of the environment can be seen in the piece when the speaker said (8) taghum nga linaw madadangatan, which simply dictates the cleanliness of the water.

In the third and fourth stanza, the speaker described the place Tinaplacan as a blessed place because of the beauty it hides within like no other. Bangon Bugtong Falls is one of the most visited places in Calbayog in the area of Tinaplacan and the speaker described the place as indeed a real beauty which seems like it was made to be perfect. How the water could reflect a clear image of yourself when you look into it and how the cold water rushes through the ground from the mountain down through the streams.

(13) Ine nga Bangon Bugtong Falls, kanan syudad pinalabi,
(14) Tikang hulog sadton tubig, sa may balitang naagi,
(15) Ngadto sadton dakon linaw, nga daw saraming ka pwerte,
(16) Tubig mataghum burabod, sa kakahuyan nag-agi.

The Bangon Bugtong Falls, the City’s pride,
From the grounds where the water pass,
And its clearness is like mirror
Unending water flow passes through trees.) (p. 28)

The bodies of water play a vital role in our lives. Not only it gives beauty but also the progress of our City. The "lamrag" used by the speaker which is given by these beauties of nature symbolize the energy and power of the City. How these water forms be able to give Calbayog the identity of "City of Waterfalls" and rich in natural resources. And though there are those that have been already abused by the consumers, the speaker wants the readers to be encouraged and that it can be prevented from being totally ruined if we learn how to appreciate and preserve its beauty.

Another falls is being introduced which is the Tarangban Falls that could be found just above the Bangon Bugtong Falls. The speaker is really indeed great in describing such nature and is able to make readers imagine the place as if they've been there through the imagery. Aside from the fact that it is spectacular, what makes it more it more attractive is because of the mini falls it has like a fountain sprinkling the ground with the cold yet refreshing water it have.

(21) May naturok pa dalanas, igbaw sadton Bugtong Bangon
(22) Adton Tarangban Falls nga an tubig turo masarangon,
(23) Ngan adton tubig daw linaw ka lus-ay kamataghumon,
(24) Kay banawag sadton adlaw, pagsidlip daw makurion.

(Running water could be heard at the top of Bugtong Bangon ,
That Tarangban Falls when flows scatters,
The pureness of its water,
The rays of the sun could hardly be seen.) (p. 28)
Imagery can be found in the 7th and 8th stanza which is about the beauty of Mawacat Slide. It is described as gigantic with a measure of 50pi and in getting there, hiking is the only option you have through the steep mountains of it. But rest assured that it's worth the hike for when you reach it and witness the beauty of it from above and let the water rejuvenate your soul.

This literary piece is an eye-opener not only for Calbayognons but also to everyone that we must encourage our generation to preserve the beauty of our place just like the city of waterfalls which makes the tourist attracted to Calbayog. One of the major things that make Calbayog unique is the waterfalls all around the area, and without it, Calbayog wouldn't be what it is now. Not only it improve the tourism of our place but also it helps Calbayog towards being progressive. And let these natural resources stay untouchable and be far from being polluted and abused by us for once its ruined, we cannot bring their beauty back anymore. The beauty that only nature has and only through preservation and discipline could we maintain its pureness for the generation to see and let them also realize its importance.

**Conclusion**

This study aimed at unpacking and unearthing the ecocritical semantics in Baldesco's *Sidays* as parts of his Poetic Anthology "Kawit". From the analysis, it was singled out that his *Sidays* have very simple indoctrinations to be imbued in people's hearts and minds- that we should protect the environment at all costs. The poems unravel various ecocritical semantics that didactically moralize people to do this life-changing advocacy. The poems discuss the significance of Mother Nature as a symbol of all human life forms that is responsible for life sustainability and expansion in a meritocratic and non-egalitarianist abode which humans dwell. Furthermore, the Sidays enrich the ideals of human nature by emphasizing that as God's creations, it is our job to take care of the other animals who have been gifted and graced with the greatest kind of awareness. Baldesco's literary works are rich in metaphors, imagery, and symbolism, which excavate all of the environmental meanings they all express.

The Sidays teach many human lifetime/lifelong lessons on how each individual in the world is held accountable for our acts and how they impact nature. They also teach us that when people's careless and destructive actions enter the enormous cycles of the world, nature will eventually return and endanger humanity. Baldesco's literary works are rich in metaphors, imagery, and symbolism, which excavate all of the environmental meanings they all express.

The Sidays teach many human lifetime/lifelong lessons on how each individual in the world is held accountable for our acts and how they impact nature. They also teach us that when people's careless and destructive actions enter the enormous cycles of the world, nature will eventually return and endanger humanity. Along with this, individuals have worries and anxieties about the potentially heinous things that may happen as a result of the ongoing damage to the environment done just for one's personal profit, comfort, and well-being. Furthermore, the writings educate every human being on the need of protecting and conserving numerous natural treasures emphasized throughout the works. Humans are the ones that rely on the environment, thus it is our responsibility to take action to protect it. The essential question of existence is how we may value the natural environment such that it will not deteriorate and obliterate right before our eyes.
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Erwin Lesbos Purcia is currently an Education Program Supervisor in English in the Department of Education- Schools Division of Calbayog City, Samar, Philippines. Prior to coming back to DepEd, he used to work as Associate Professor V in the University of Antique, Principal of the Basic Education Department and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies in Dr. Carlos S. Lanting College, Manila. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education major in English-Cum Laude at Northwest Samar State University, master's degree in English at Christ the King College, Doctor of Arts in Language and Literature at the University of Eastern Philippines and post-doctorate in Quality Management in Higher Education at Centro Escolar University, Manila. Currently, he is pursuing another master's degree in Research and Development Management in the University of the Philippines- Open University. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3167-7746

References


Book Review
Summer with the Enemy

Author: Shahla Ujaili
Title of the Book: Summer with the Enemy
Year of Publication: (2021)
Publisher: Interlink Publishing Groups
Number of Pages: 284
Translated by Michelle Hartman. USA
Reviewer: Samar Zahrawi, Ph.D.*

Summer with the Enemy is a novel written in the Arabic language by the Syrian writer Shahla Ujaili and translated to English by Michelle Hartman. It follows the life stories and complex relations of three women Lamees, her mother Najwa, and her grandmother Karma. It describes the evolution of societies and political milieu in Syria from the 1920s till the Syrian civil war around the 2010s. The novel starts in the present time, when Lamees, a young Syrian woman, having fled the ISIS siege on her hometown Raqqa, seeks asylum in Germany, Cologne, and reunites with Abboud, her childhood sweetheart. In a series of flashbacks, Lamees, the narrator, recollects episodes from her life in Syria, giving a vivid, nuanced description of the Syrian culture in Raqqa before and during the war. The value of this novel stems from its honest depiction of women's
lives within various class systems, marital relations, changing historical and political circumstances, and their adaptability to change within and outside their homeland.

Lamees, her mother Najwa, and grandmother Karma are a fine delineation of three successive generations of women. Karma comes of Armenian descent, worked as a dancer in the troupe of the famous Badia Masabni in Lebanon, and got married to Lamees’s grandfather, who afforded her an elegant lifestyle. Despite her prestigious status in the town and more liberal frame of mind than her surroundings, she would still prefer to hide her past as a dancer. Najwa, who works at the city’s public library, is ashamed of her mother’s past and trapped by the conservatism of a judgmental society. She is estranged from her husband, who has spent his marital years pursuing other women. Although she takes good care to raise her daughter and boost her self-esteem, Lamees cannot help feeling neglected. The absence of a father figure makes Lamees exceedingly demanding of her mother’s attention and more insecure of losing her to a potential partner., Lamees reports feeling excessively lonely while growing up, hence her continuous pursuit of local weddings in rural areas around her town. Meeting Nicholas, a German astrological scientist, on his research trip to Raqqa, Najwa helps him with his research and entertains romantic feelings. The demure romance between Najwa and Nicholas conjures up Lamees’s worst insecurities about abandonment, and she declares him her enemy. Deeply resenting her mother’s preoccupation with Nicholas, she spends the summertime visiting a nearby horse ranch, learning horseback riding, and developing resilience and flexibility. The horses teach her wisdom: “When to go forward, when to stop, when to loosen the halter, when to pull it tight, and when to give up” (p.103). Remembering her childhood, Lamees describes her close innocent friendship with Abboud, the son of Sahed, a Syrian veterinarian, and Anna, a Czechoslovakian wife. Upon the departure of Anna, Abboud becomes inseparable from Lamees and her family. In an innocent childish play, Abboud disguises by wearing women’s stockings over his head and pokes his head into Karma’s window. The next day Karma is found dead with a heart attack, and Lamees lives silently with a guilty feeling that her friend’s play killed her grandmother. She blocks Abboud and will not communicate with him again until after she immigrates to Germany when she is relieved from her guilt, learning that Karma was not in the room to see Abboud’s disguised face and that she died of a natural cause. Lamees’s family has long silently suffered the bullying of the Syrian government because of their feudal past. After the revolution against the government starts and Raqqa is seized by ISIS, Lamees and her mother suffer further because they are women. After a prolonged period of imposed curfew and deprivation of bare necessities, they take the perilous decision to evacuate with the remaining city inhabitants during the night on foot through a path to the river shore full of land mines. Najwa’s body blows up, and Lamees has to stay behind alone in peril to bury the remains of her mother’s body with the legs missing. As much as Lamees antagonized Nicholas during the summer when he was getting closer to Najwa, she heartily accepts his guidance with her future studies and career in Germany. She will walk toward her German savior, her former enemy wearing her mother’s pearls and over her mother’s amputated legs (p.282).

In the Background of Lamees’s personal drama, the recent history of a nation and an ever-evolving culture are brilliantly delineated. Lamees’s childhood memories depict the oppression practiced by the government as her uncle Najeeb was detained and killed without trial because of
his dissension against the Al-Baath Party. The family members hushed his death in prison under torture as no manifestation of grief was allowed to them. The memories also include her school friends, daughters of political prisoners who were unjustly trained to praise the Al-Baath party at school and home in order for the kids to live in peace away from feelings of grudges and vengeance. “How could she not speak to any of us about the pain caused by his absence, and to not broadcast her longing for her father?” (151). As Lamees relegates such practices to the background of the events, she describes the silence that engulfs the injustices practiced widely by the government. “Those who oppress us, and take our fathers from us, are no doubt our enemies” (151). As the Syrian revolution against the government breaks out, there are multiple references to civilians participating actively in the strife. Families are divided deeply in their political affiliations. The horse trainer, Abu Layla, is accused by his three sons of serving power while they are active protestors. Two of them eventually seek asylum in Europe while the youngest dies under torture in a government jail. The father’s connection to the military elite cannot save him. Some poverty-stricken civilians in Raqqa join ISIS as it ceases the town and enjoy enforcing strict rules over Lamees and Najwa, especially since they are single women living without a male guardian. The details about the austerity and inhumanity of ISIS members, the curfews, the destruction, and the fighting cast light on the discrepancy between ISIS fanatic extremists and the laid-back mild traditional civil society described in the novel prior to the advent of ISIS.

In a beautiful poetic language, the narrator describes her belonging to her homeland, the Euphrates river, which is the reason for existence and destruction at the same time (p. 153). The feeling of belonging to the place and the story of evacuation, landmines, her mother’s severed legs, the city’s destruction, the journey of uprooting, the resettling, and the resilience that comes with hardship are widely shared by millions of displaced people in Syria. This novel speaks for them, empathizes with them, empowers them, and gives them a voice.

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