

UNFOLDING THE NARRATIVE CYCLE IN KAWAGUCHI'S *BEFORE THE COFFEE GETS COLD*: A STUDY IN NARRATIVE SEMIOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper analyses the narrative structure of Toshikazu Kawaguchi's Before the Coffee Gets Cold with the help of narrative semiology and structuralist theory. With the frameworks of Roland Barthes, Vladimir Propp, A. J. Greimas and Tzvetan Todorov, the research examines how the novel builds meaning from the symbolic patterns and cyclical narrative functions used in text and character actants. In accordance with the pattern of narrative equilibrium suggested by Todorov, containing such steps as initial equilibrium, disruption, recognition, repair and new equilibrium, the text of the selected novel oscillates through emotional state of disequilibrium and recovery rather than the external confrontation. In place of the standard of a conflict and resolution curve, the selected work shows inner and metaphysical adversaries, including time, death, guilt, and emotional regrets. Each unit of the selected text follows the form of a closed narrative cycle of amelioration, dissolution, and symbolic transformation (Greimas' actantial roles; Proppian functions) in a constrained, recursive time travel world. Further, the cafe function is that of liminal and magical helper space, allowing the characters to seek closure without a change of the present. Through this, the narrative takes on Barthes' hermeneutic and symbolic codes, and does not use time travel as a plot device for the purpose of suspense but as a semiotic device for emotional and psychological depth. The study contends that Before the Coffee Gets Cold is an unusual blending of Eastern philosophical thinking with Western structuralist narrative tenets with the emphasis on the emotional rather than the causal, the climactic rather than the a developmental narrative outcome. Considering Kawaguchi's novel in terms of the coherent view of all narrative theories, the paper helps to discover how contemporary fiction reconstitutes the general narrative roles and function in responding to modern concerns of memory, mourning, and making peace with life.

Keywords:

Narrative structure, Semiology, Narrative transformation, Emotional Resolution, Cyclical Narrative

1- Introduction

Literature is made up of structures and semiotic features that signal and signify. These systems have been well explained with the help of structuralism, a theoretical method that has helped explain structure and semiology or the science of narratives as a field of study has explained how these structures work. Derived from Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics and further developed by Roland Barthes and others, including Vladimir Propp and A.J. Greimas, and Tzvetan Todorov, narrative semiotics aims to identify encoded sequences and patterns within felt narratives – functions of characters, courses of plot, and trajectories symbols perceivable across cultures and text types (Greimas, 1987; Propp, 1968). This model of analysis presupposes the presence in every story of underlying codes which have frequent binary oppositions (life/death, presence/absence etc.) making up the grammar of the narrative (Culler, 2002).

The idea of narrative equilibrium presented by Todorov is important to comprehend the dynamics in the development of stories based on the balanced framework of transformation and recovery. Todorov (1977) states that each narrative passes through five phases that include initial equilibrium, disruption, recognition, repair and new equilibrium that constitute a full narrative cycle. This theoretical prism is particularly applicable on *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* by Kawaguchi in which every tale commences with an equilibrium of emotions, which are then shaken by some loss or regret, and then rounds off the experience with a reconciliation process within and a new and more stable state. By placing these emotional shifts in the framework of the structural approach offered by Todorov, the story shows that the balance is not only reequipped, but redefined, with the focus on the psychological, as opposed to extrinsic solution. In this research, the authors have attempted a structuralist-semiological analysis of Kawaguchi's (2015) Japanese novel, *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, which is a combination of speculative fiction and philosophical analysis. Its setting is in a special premise – a café in Tokyo, where the customers are able to travel into the past but under certain fixed rules. The novel consists of four moving episodes of regret, reconciliation, and the wish of mankind to correct or bring back the events in life one regretted or late in the day understood the importance of which for advancing one's life. The author aptly combines the key moments of life of four individuals into one. Even though time traveling often causes high-stake differences or science fiction cliches, Kawaguchi plays the reverse game as she disseminates stories about mending away the feelings rather than remodeling the world. The form and emotional symmetry of these stories is architecturally and emotionally perfect for semiology dissection of the narrative codes, in particular, dynamics of amelioration, degradation, obstacles, ally intervention, adversarial conflict and narrative resolution (Greimas, 1987).

The discovery of the narrative semiology system allows us to see *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* not as a repertoire of sensuous stories but as a system of signification where action, character and plot devices simply represent functions. All the elements of *Before the coffee gets cold* have symbolic functions of various kinds including but not limited to metonymies and metaphors, very frequently in references and explicit likenesses. Every character sets out on a quest; not a search for power, wealth or heroism, but of emotional wisdom, forgiveness, or completion. However, they continue to adhere to the classical narrative pattern where the hero is faced with some kind of obstacle (being love, miscommunication or death), learns to turn to an ally (the café owner or a different client) and faces conflict or strife in their soul to achieve some form of narrative closeness or metamorphosis. These are similar to Greimas's actantial model of the narrative where the subject (hero) pursues a quest for an object (goal) with the aid, or in the way of the helpers and opponents respectively, following the performance and sanction phase (Greimas, 1987; Chandler, 2007).

While developing the storyline, the author of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* makes use of cycles that correspond to semiotic principles like amelioration, degradation, ally intervention, adversarial confrontation, negotiation, simulation or dissimulation, and retribution (Barthes, 1977). In the first story, "The Lovers," Fumiko's determination to see her boyfriend Goro again before he goes to the United States also shows a cycle of amelioration; this is achieved both temporally (not being able to defy time) and psychologically (not admitting that she has feelings for him). Kazu is the ally, the waitress of the cafe, who steers Fumiko's emotions. The story ends with some benefit as Fumiko cannot change the past, but she finds peace when she expresses her opinions. In the novel, each of the four stories follows the same cycles of narrative; the handles of the novel are minimalist and symbolic, where the characters become archetypes and the cafe is the "magical realm" (Propp, 1968), the character of hot coffee becomes the symbol of the urgency of human contact.

Structurally, *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* employs repetition and variation, with each chapter following the same time travel formula but introducing new characters and emotional stakes, which aligns with Barthes's "hermeneutic code" and "proairetic code" (Barthes, 1977). Kawaguchi also uses semantic code via repeating objects and gestures that are symbolic. The novel's central constraint that time travel cannot change the presents shifts the characters' quests from external fixes to internal acceptance, exemplified in "The Sisters", where the protagonist's emotional degradation (her sister's death) is met with emotional reparation through the elimination of regret and guilt. The healing process itself is based on simulation in which characters do not change reality but produce imaginary solutions for it to make personal balance.

In *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, opposite forces are not stereotypical villains but the inner forces or metaphysical pillars of a person, like fear, guilt, time and death, against which characters struggle. While such adversarial aspects are typically fought, they are often negotiated, such as in *Mother and Child*, where a mother in stage IV terminal illness sets off to the future to meet the daughter that she cannot live to meet resulted in a symbolic recompense in the form of emotional compensation (Nakamura, 2020). In the novel, ally intervention plays an important role everywhere in the book; characters are helped by baristas, patrons, and the cafe itself, Greimas's helper actants, in the guidance and emotional support. Such relation dynamics, operating on the structuralist-narrative theory, will drag the characters out of emotional deficit into the insight of the resolution and transformation (Fabb, 2014).

There are, therefore, two purposes of this research: in order to open the codes of the narrative that shape the emotional and symbolic path through *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* and to contribute to the general discourse in the researches in the field of literary arts as for the relevance of the semiology; as an effective tool to discuss the novels in the contemporary world. In this paper, it bridges some of the gap between the structure theory and modern speculative literature in explaining how even the most complex, most emotionally driven tales are bound to be informed by archetypes which could then be decoded and enjoyed with some semiological analysis. This research paper shows how Kawaguchi's novel is composed of a well thought out set of signifiers that end up conveying timeless universal truths about such things as love, loss, time and memory. The results not only improve our perception of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, but also confirm the necessity of narrative semiology for the further reading of modern works of literature.

2- Literature Review

Toshikazu Kawaguchi's *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* is set in a compact space – a tiny Tokyo café, where four interrelated stories describe a possibility of time travel but at a price with such issues as love, regret, loss and reconciliation. The work directs that the past cannot be changed by alterations of time. According to Kacsir (2023), the emotional connection to the novel is not about the possibility to convert the past but in the possibility to express unresolved emotions and cure the inner world.

Viewed from the perspective of a structuralist, the selected novel is in conformity with classical theories concerning narrative structure. Roland Barthes' (1977) "hermeneutic code" as being especially relevant, in that suspense and meaning is incrementally explored as each story progresses. Structurally, the novel gives a sympathetic note on A, J, Greimas' model of actantial model when the subject, her character in an emotional dilemma, had to run after the object (an opportunity for an emotional resolution) with the help of the helpers (for instance, the baristas and regulars at the cafe) and the obstacles of time, fate, or guilt (Greimas, 1987). Peculiarly, who the antagonist in this novel is the main stain loss, silence, fear, regret and it is not typical antagonist characters and adds to the psychological and symbolic strength of the story.

Furthermore, Propp's morphology of the folktale (1968) also finds a reflection in the structure and purpose of each tale. Although the novel is not folktale-like in structure, there is a motif of quests for love, reuniting or forgiveness and there is emphasis on transformation through a structured, step-by-step journey just as Todorov's (1977) theory of equilibrium. Theory of Equilibrium (1977), where a narrative starts in a state of balance, is disturbed, and finds a new equilibrium, finds echo in how each character arc starts with an emotional void, moves towards the disruption provided by time travel, and ends with some kind of internal resolution.

Cultural analysis of the novel also adds to the interpretive dimensions of the former apart from structuralism. As a physical and symbolic space, the café is a liminal space of the intervals between past and present, emotion and logic, and memory and reality. This reflects the essence of the Japanese aesthetic concept 'mono' not aware of the soft, wistful acceptance of life's impermanence which plays much in the general feel of the novel (Korsunska, 2023). Drinking coffee when it is still hot has symbolic value (opportunities that fade away quickly, the need to recognize emotional queues, and advancement of time).

There has also been high scholarly discourse on gender roles and emotional labor in the novel. Read Japanese Literature (2020) analyzes representation of female characters where in such works as the Mother and Child, women are often depicted in caring or self-sacrificing roles. From this angle, the novel advocates for emotional nearness but at other times makes use of customary, sometimes retrogressive character types that can possibly prevent its progression. On the contrary, with the use of narrative archetypes, the novel's reach spreads over cultures, but it stays rooted in the individual Japanese culture.

Although several critics, including Lewis (2023), diatribes that the prose is simplistic and when-repeating, many argue that the prose may serve to magnify the novel's philosophical perplexity and the emotional resonance. The reusing of locations and the appearance of different characters combine to prove the thematic coherence of the work. This artificial use of narrative roles, symbolic images, and metaphysical opponents in the novel provides turns of semiotic codes manifested by Barthes, Actantial model by Greimas and morphology created by Propp. Together with its delicate interweaving of structure, emotion, and culture, this novel works as an ideal object for the analysis of narrative in its emphasis on emotional resolution and what story really is.

3- Theoretical Framework

This research is based on a semiological theory of narrative where the reader can retrieve the work of Roland Barthes, A. J. Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov and Vladimir Propp. Some of these theorists propose a structuralist point-of-view from which narrative cycles and the symbolic apparatus of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* can be considered. The goal is to understand how sign structures of narrative structures, namely, cyclical processes of amelioration, degradation, and transformations with regard to different actantial roles and codes are constructed and interpreted.

3.1. Roland Barthes: Narrative Codes and Semiology

This analysis centres around Barthes' concept of the narrative codes. In S/Z (1977), he outlines five codes (the hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic and the cultural) that help the reader disassemble the way a story is constructed. This research focuses on that hermeneutic code (elements that pose and postpone questions), the proairetic code (action-oriented codes) and the symbolic code (dichotomies life/death, time/regret). In *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, such codes find their shape in the boundaries of time travel, character motivations and symbolization, i.e. coffee and the cafe seat.

3.2. Vladimir Propp: Morphology of the Folktale

Propp's 31 narrative functions and seven actants provide grounds for the mapping of character roles and plot schemata. In spite of the fact that, *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* is a modern novel,

the narrative structure and character roles (the hero, helper, dispatcher, and false hero) are what one would expect from Proppian logic. The heroes Fumiko, Hirai and Kei are set on their own path of emotional reconciliation and the aids, the helpers include Kazu or even the cafe itself, are the tools that help them in their quests and give them a symbolic meaning. The antagonistic forces, though, do not represent personified villains but abstract and symbolic ones such as time, death or memory loss. Following this structure, the cycles of amelioration and decline can be followed, which fits the idea of departure, struggle and return introduced by Propp.

3.3. A. J. Greimas: Actantial Model

The actantial model of Greimas simplifies narrative into six basic parts: the recipient, the sender, the helper, the opponent, the subject and the object. Every story in *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* can be traced to this structure, with the subject, the protagonist, and in this case, Fumiko being the one who seeks something, in this case, emotional closure or reconnection. The assistants, the cafe employees and the magic seat direct and assist in this journey and the antagonists are abstract and include time, emotional indecisiveness and guilt. The giver is the frequent motivation or emotional loss that begins the quest and the recipient is the transformed self of the character that becomes enlightened or emotionally changed at the close of the story. This model highlights the way of inner change, demonstrating that change in the novel is not the result of changing the past but the reinterpretation of the internal emotional conditions which is a crucial element of narrative semiology and one of the major messages of the novel.

3.4. Tzvetan Todorov: Narrative Equilibrium

The theory of narrative structure authored by Tzvetan Todorov assumes that any story unfolds following five major steps: initial equilibrium, disruption, recognition, repair, and new equilibrium. Such structure pattern portrays the natural pattern of harmony, disarrangement, and restoration that dictate development of the narrative. This pattern is repeated in every chapter in *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* to show how emotional balance has been lost and recovered. As an example, in the Sisters, the state of equilibrium that exists in the form of Hirai avoiding his sister is broken by the death of Kumi. The visit to the past is the recognition level, when Hirai realizes her unresolved feelings, and the regained balance is revealed in the new emotional relationship that she forms in the future. This paradigm is especially applicable in the explanation of the work of the process of amelioration and degradation in the cyclic rather than the linear or binary manner that shows the focus of the novel on the emotional continuity and change, rather than the conventional conflict and resolution.

In combination with narrative and semiological theories, they provide a rich window with which to decode *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*. With the help of Barthes, Propp, Greimas and Todorov's guidelines, we are able to identify patterns of desire transformation and symbolic hypotheses and to set a method that can decipher meanings through novel with the help of changing emotional and perceptual frameworks, but not through divergence of events.

4- Analysis

4.1. Symbolic Language and Narrative process

The repetitive narrative form of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* thrives in its complicated symbolic systems. Throughout *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, it is evident that there are clear semic and hermeneutic codes put forward by Barthes' semic concept. The picture of hot coffee in the selected work is a figure of preoccupation of the characters with time and overwhelming emotions. By making the temporal constraint very strict, the author schedules the action to be a 24-hours period, and presents a recurrent café environment, but at the same time, he or she brings a flavour of being in a time-travelled environment during this bounded time. Though, the plot develops a little more with characters' emotional journeys, constantly using subtle implications and metaphors. Observing the concept of finishing the coffee before it cools is an effective method for creating tension in a short amount of time through introspective and quiet talk.

In ‘The Lovers’ part, Fumiko inability to verbalise her feelings reflects her inner monologue: “I should have said something. But I didn’t. I just watched him leave.” (Kawaguchi, 2019, p. 27)

It expresses a tremendous feeling of regret. She had the opportunity to talk her heart out, but she did not talk, held her tongue and left everything the way it was. When even considered in the context of the written text, Fumiko’s lack of speech is something of paramount significance. Narrative semiology refers to this as a conventional example of the “hermeneutic code” in which there is the decline and flow of information in order to create suspense and feeling. The reader starts to wonder what Fumiko is not saying: What possible change may have come out if Fumiko had only let things out? For this moment, the reader is overwhelmed with a great sense of regret.

4.2. Narrative Cycle: Amelioration and Degradation

All the chapters of *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* illustrate a cycle of emotional loss and healing: a narrative cycle that fits with Todorov’s theory of narrative structure. In “The Lovers,” the reader has an opportunity to get inside Fumiko’s head to witness her battle with emotional distress as she’s seen as powerless to express herself when Goro was leaving, when in reality she wanted to say something. Although the situation is not going to change, she is clutching to every memory and she understands how long her love would last: “I wanted to tell you...that I would have waited” (p. 42). Although a lot has changed and time has been served, these experiences go on to form what Fumiko is really made of.

However, Hirai and Kei’s narrations go a step further to explain this continued sequence. In “The Sisters” Hirai’s wish to apologize for her relationship with her sister is somewhat softened by a passing, honest meeting from the past. The experience causes Hirai to reconstruct her life ahead of time providing an example of how reparation and restoration can reverse decline. In “Mother and Child”, Kei learns that she will die before she can bring into the world the daughter that she had so longed for. She shifts gaze forward, soothing her wants, and moving her to reconcile herself to her destiny. The stories feature people who deal with loss, guilt or fear by getting consolation through expression, acceptance or love. Via time travel, Kawaguchi’s novel relates discomfort with resolution for emotional journeys and closure rather than rewriting history.

4.3. Amelioration Process: Obstacle, Elimination, Achievement

Every character faces a severe emotional test that forces the story of each character to develop. “Husband and Wife” shows Kohtake suffer alongside her personal guilt of hopeless feelings and emotional detachment in the midst of her husband’s Alzheimer’s disease. In order to remove her obstacle, Kohtake decides to look back and find her husband’s letter that he used to give her, representing the attempt to re-establish an emotional relationship. The change that follows is gradual though viable. Though still sick, Kohtake re-assumes her role of partner with her husband and finds new meaning in this continuing union.

Mother and Child gives a potent demonstration of the metaphysical effect of the process through Kei’s narrative. She is in trouble with both her physical and emotional states, which are the need of pregnancy, the sickness of her heart, and the fear of not being able to accomplish her newborn son. In the café, there is a magic-thrown seat on which Kei relives a transient meeting with her unborn girl. “I just want to see her once. Even if it’s just for a moment” (p. 135). This is an assembly which provides her relief on an emotional level on which she can make way for her anxieties and feel tangible, real quietness. This healing is personal as well as maternal as it shows that stories don’t need to advance a plot as much as they need to have an impact.

4.4. Completion of the Task: Agency vs Fate

The premise of many stories is based on whether or not the character succeeds through actions or mission. It does not stand for one side more than the other, instead it tries to find a fine line

between the two. Based on Kawaguchi's rules in the novel, the time machine has only one seat, the passengers have to sit and they have to return to the present before the coffee gets cold, and these boundaries being there the events are predestined. Although the plot is static, the characters evolve in view of their decisions. Fumiko finally reveals what she thinks and feels after all. Fumiko at last reveals her true feelings. Hirai decides for a second time to contact her sister. Kei values the short time she spends with her daughter because she makes the conscious effort to do it. Meanwhile, external events can be caused by fate, but it is actors' decisions that can transform and create them. This result shows the correlation between individual choices and boundaries they face.

4.5. Intervention of the Ally: The Role of Helpers

According to Greimas' actantial model, the helper character has a consistent appearance in every narrative. In the stories Kazu, the barista, is a true exemplar of the "magical helper" figure. She is neutral with regards to the emotional choices of the characters, existing principally as a time travel gatekeeper, the transmitter of information and rulekeeper. First of all, as an illustration the scene in "The Sisters" helps to bring this concept into focus: Her task is to describe the rules of time travel to Hirai, but she finds herself in front of a person whose opinion is not synchronized with hers; her philosophy is that keeps the journey going.

The cafe acts as a presence which helps everyone right under its columns. This small and stable system is a shelter for the renewal of feelings. Supporting roles in the normal group are filled by Nagare, Kei and the spectral woman. These connections reveal the vital interdependence in semiotic storytelling, and shows that moving the plot is dependent on the connections between characters. From Greimas' analysis, it is evident that the journey of the subject towards the object relies on the lushness of a helper.

4.6. Elimination of the Adversary

Unlike common books, where identifiable villains are available in most cases, Kawaguchi's book proffers internal and symbolic adversaries. Silence and regret in "The Lovers" act as the enemies for Fumiko to battle against them. Time and death are both adversaries in "Mother and Child". These forces are not frustrated, but they are overcome. The protagonists do not defeat their rivals, they allow them to be present without fight. This approach entails a postmodern structuralism turn from plain hero-protagonist sparring to intricate psychological equilibrium. Guilt is the major enemy of explored individuals in "The Sisters". The fact that Hirai ranged from home and her disconnection from Kumi leads to an emotional hole. By way of time travel, she meets her sibling, whom she had forgotten in the course of their lives. Her outburst and her new attitude if she subsequently appears on the scene of events shows that she managed to handle her outbursts by choosing to accept instead of confrontation.

4.7. Negotiation: Metaphorical Resolution

In *Before the Coffee Gets Cold*, negotiation is a figure of speech employed on the ironic narrative level. No matter how strong internal conflicts are, and symbols that are used for the sake of the character exchanges, the novel is not about expressing confrontations with external enemies. In "Husband and Wife" Kohtake manages to skirt around a unmistakable fight for her husband's Alzheimer's disease. She wants to navigate and heal emotionally in the face of his continuous loss of memory. She conducts a negotiation with somebody, but with no other man, a negotiation with this very idea of memory. The discovery of Fusagi's letter as: "If you're reading this, it means I've forgotten everything... but I know I loved you" (p. 85). This letter serves like a bridge: an emotional conciliation that is respectful of a lack of memories and embraces their powerful emotional connection.

Since "Mother and Child," Kei does not oppose her fear of dying but yields to it. Going to the future, then, is the way Kei confronts her destiny. When Kei sees her daughter and listens to the reassuring answer as: "Mom I am happy" (p. 151).

She chooses emotional healing rather than despair. These negotiations are marked by neither seduction nor threat. Instead, Kawaguchi utters moments of emotional openness as well as quiet dedication. These minute details reflect Barthes' view that the essence of narrative meaning is often implied or omitted, rather than stated, obviously. Barely speaking, being attentive, and being tolerant, the characters form sensual metaphors for the battle suffering from time, love, and sorrow, which imply that relief may be found in comprehension rather than argument.

4.8. Aggression: Absence of Physical Conflict

The novel is absolutely lacking in typical manifestations of aggression. Instead, the characters deal with matters that can be termed emotional resistance or confrontation. Hirai's refusal to recognize her family ties in "The Sisters" is the most direct narrative presentation of aggression taking its form as a dissimulation in which she tends to conceal her pain under a mask of self-detachment. In the same way, Fumiko's silence regarding Goro's departure implies a desire to avoid seeing the situation. Goro states that "I thought you'd try to stop me" (p. 28). This type of narration relates to structuralist terms such as simulation and dissimulation, primarily used to protect oneself against the risks, and not to mislead others. As opposed to being a way to defend, Kawaguchi replaces this definition of a confrontation from outward fighting to internal conflict where vulnerability is the actual courage.

4.9. Retribution, Recompense, and Vengeance

Kawaguchi's tales avoid the usual ideas of revenge or revenge for deeds hindered. The emotional relief, in the form of a gesture, becomes the major measure of restitution. While traveling through "Husband and Wife", Kohtake finds emotional insight and meets fresh love. In "The Sisters", Hirai is allowed to hear Kumi talk again, a feeling of forgiveness then comes about in her. The subtle emotional mending of these stories shows that semiotic closure is not only possible, but in fact can occur, outside the dramatic catharsis. Retribution occurs internally. The process of chasing closure ends up being useful in itself.

4.10. Punishment: Subtle and Internalized

Strong characters in the novel do not exert any outside outcomes on the characters. The emotional accounts of their woes and bitterness are heaped onto the characters' shoulders. There is no moral judgment and the application of a standard set. Instead the characters are left to bear the effects of their silence or choices. To Kei, the compromised chance of cycling is something that is sweet and painful, not a penalty. Consequences of looking for their emotions lead characters to feel emotionally distant, a price they have paid for pursuing the emotional truth. Fumiko is aware that the emotional price of refusing "The Lovers" offers is attached. She admits: "I let him walk away without saying a word. But I didn't. He walked away, and all I could do was stand by and observe" (p. 27). This indicates the impact of non-expression of one's self. She is able to cope with what has already happened, and an open talk about it does help her to sleep.

5- Conclusion

Toshikazu Kawaguchi's *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* is an excellent object for the purpose of narrative semiological inquiry because temporal fantasy and emotional realism do cross paths in the novel. Using Greimas's actantial model with amelioration, degradation, negotiation, aggression, each character's story has its own internal cycle of emotional turmoil and recovery, in which emotional turmoil and recovery are motivated by inner change rather than by brute action or event. The distinguishing feature of Kawaguchi's narrative is the defining of traditional story-telling pattern. Instead of opponents, the components of conflict are eternal and invisible – time, silence, guilt, and fear. It's the narrative companions' presence, their emotional support, or even a little understanding of things which makes them strong, not dominance over others. Aggression, negotiation, and punishment, in all their dealings become personal and metaphoric mirrorings of the humanist journey as characters grow from a place of emotional resistance toward acceptance. In the liminal space of a café setting, the novel's

temporal background allows characters to experiment with time travel as an emotional whole, powerful and symbolic redemption, and peaceful self-reflection rather than chronological correction.

Kawaguchi's novel stands out by focusing on emotion, introspection, and quiet resolve, providing an unusual narrative form which departs from the standard patterns. Once characters grow past their inner struggles, they get a narrative ending which is both vulnerable and connective. Therefore, the novel subverts narrative success, favoring personal growth, recovery and the determination to mention what remains unscratched outwardly rather than rejoice in what lies outside. It explains that in fantastical storytelling, the basic components of narration tend to originate from human perspectives, aspirations and experiences – such as love, memories, and embracing time.

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