Exiled by Gods and Men:

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Exiled by Gods and Men:
Trauma, Violence and the Lexico-Semantic Patterns of Displacement in Madeline Miller's *Circe* and Classical Sources

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Abstract

This study aims to determine and explicate displacement lexico-semantic patterns in Madeline Miller's *Circe* (2018) and classical sources, such as *The Odyssey* by Homer, *Theogony* by Hesiod, *Argonautica* by Apollonius Rhodius, and *Metamorphoses* by Ovid. We utilized semantic field theory and digital corpus stylistics. By applying Voyant Tools, we identified 847 lexical cases related to displacement in *Circe* and 126 in the classical texts. The following semantic fields were identified: social alienation, spatial displacement, psychological interiority, vulnerability and violence, and agency and power. In classical texts, spatial displacement (43%) and power (31%) were presented only through male characters. The first-person narration in *Circe* significantly changed the above-indicated figures. Psychological interiority (39%), social alienation (24%), and vulnerability and violence (19%) were prominent for Madeline Miller. By combining feminist views and trauma theory, the study revealed original choices of lexical units made by Miller to name sexual types of violence in an explicit way, which contradicts classical masterpieces. Miller made a female the leading character in her novel and presented exile as a multi-layered trauma. This feminist influence demonstrated how classical texts were transformed and interpreted at the lexico-semantic level in modern works, including *Circe*.

Keywords: *trauma, exile, violence, displacement, lexico-semantic pattern, lexico-semantic analysis*

Introduction

In her novel, Madeline Miller depicts Circe's voice as *"strange"* and *"thin"* (Miller 2018). The following voice quality marks Circe as abnormal from her birth within the hierarchy relationship between power, voice, and marginalization within the well-established patriarchal order. Circe's voice leads to repeated rejections and, eventually, to permanent exile to the island of Aeaea. Miller transforms and reimagines Homer's enchantress. Circe is no longer an aide or an obstacle to male characters. Instead, Circe becomes a unique heroine whose narrative focuses on trauma, displacement, isolation, and violence.

Classical Greek and Roman mythology gives Circe a uniquely liminal significance. According to *The Odyssey* (Homer 1919), Circe enchants the warriors led by Odysseus into wild pigs before she becomes his lover and guide. This heroine appears across different Greek and Roman sources in the roles that present her at social, ontological, and geographical boundaries. Being the daughter of Perse and Helios, Circe inherited divine parentage. On the

other hand, she lacks the power and beauty that could have secured her status among Olympians. Extensive expertise in *pharmaka (*meaning *a herb, a drug, or a poison*) provides Circe with an exceptional capability. This gift marks her as aggressive, vicious, and cruel. Her eternal residence on the island of Aeaea represents her permanent exile. Different classical texts depict Circe as simultaneously powerless and mighty, vulnerable and threatening, isolated yet frequently visited by the males whose arrivals influence her narration.

Miller dramatically breaks this classical stereotype by entrusting the first-person narration to Circe across her entire existence, depicted in the novel. This shift in narration, from a secondary character to a leading heroine, affects how readers understand and interpret Circe's experience. It is worth noting that Odysseus describes his time on the island of Aeaea as one of numerous adventures among many others on his way home. In Miller's novel, Circe treats it as an insignificant interruption in her endless centuries of solitude. In his Metamorphoses, Ovid depicts Circe's transformation of Scylla as a very jealous beast. Miller presents this act as a consequence of limited agency, betrayal, and sexual trauma. Unlike other displaced mythological female characters, Circe refers to her exile as a permanent social and spatial isolation. Circe's displacement is neither correctable nor permanent, as there is no return home. Circe's exile is not a routine state that she could easily overcome, but rather an inevitable condition that she must obey. Thus, exile becomes one of the existential circumstances in Miller's novel.

We employed lexico-semantic analysis to examine word choices, language patterns, and semantic fields, and to explicate how classical texts and *Circe* by Miller depict displacement by means of lexical units. Classical authors utilized distinctive lexical units, including Greek *atimia (dishonor), phygē (flight),* and *nostos (homecoming)*; Latin – *exilium (exile), relegation (banishment, exile),* and *fuga (flight).* These terms were of specific cultural, emotional, and legal significance in ancient Greek and Roman societies. Miller reconsiders all the classical patterns, applying the vocabulary of unbelonging and isolation that resonates with the exile discourse of ancient Greece and Rome. Miller filters it through modern concepts and understandings concerning identity, psychological interiority, and trauma.

Literature Review

Mythology as an Integral Component of Human Life

Mythology, as an integral component of human life, has attracted the attention of eminent thinkers since antiquity. As early as the works of the ancient philosopher Aristotle, trauma is viewed as a special kind of cognition. Many philosophers study trauma to define this concept accordingly. Linguists pay attention to the ways mythology is realized in different texts. The capability of texts to arouse a conscious response, to influence, to make readers empathize, to bring them aesthetic or communicative satisfaction is always regarded as their inherent quality. In view of this, the nature of mythological thinking is examined from the linguistic perspective (Naiden 2006), despite the long-standing debate among scientists (Rabinowitz 2014; Rabinowitz and Richlin 2014) regarding the place of mythology in language. For instance, Yarnall (1994) studies Circe's representations across ancient texts.

Displacement as a lexico-semantic category influences all human speech activity and becomes entrenched in the semantics of words as a means of designating various emotional states of the person. Therefore, in studying the language of a text, alongside the logical-referential semantics that reflect the concepts of human thinking, it is also important to consider an emotive component (Gaertner 2007, Castro, 2025).

Within the linguo-cognitive paradigm, it is possible to provide a more detailed account of such textual categories as mythological subjects (Leidich 2021; Mendelson 2018; Strong 2020; Zajko and Leonard 2006). In their study, Zajko and Leonard (2006) recognize the phenomenon of *laughing with Medusa*. Certain research frameworks are established, and a considerable body of empirical material is accumulated in the study of the concept. Circe by Miller belongs to this broader movement, which is also presented by works *The Penelopiad* (2005) by Margaret Atwood, *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) by Pat Barker, and *A Thousand Ships* (2019) by Natalie Haynes. Strong (2020) examines this classical feminist turn in contemporary literature. However, despite many definitions and

interpretations of the concept, there is still no single shared under-standing of it, and a general theory of the mythological concept has not yet been sufficiently elaborated.

The Notion of Trauma in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature Studies

Trauma and its mechanisms are the object of scholarly inquiry, as they play an important role in every person's life. Many disci-plines study this psychological phenomenon: psychology, physiol-ogy, medicine, biochemistry, sociology, philosophy, ethics, linguis-tics, literary studies, and others. Many psychologists focus on the study of trauma. For example, Caruth (1996) states that traumatic memory characteristics dominate the patterns presented in ancient exile narratives. Herman (1992; 1997) develops the concept of *complex trauma*. Holmes (2010), who studies the meaning of the Greek words *algos* (*pain*), *penthos* (*grief*), and *atē* (*destructive folly or delusion*). Bakewell (2013) analyzes *Suppliant Women* by Aes-chylus, combining trauma with displacement and other related concepts (Tripoula, 2024).

Trauma is studied most thoroughly in feminist criticism analysis of violence (Koutsopetrou-Møller 2021; Harrison 2015; Omitowoju 2002; Rabinowitz 2011). However, the psychology of trauma does not possess a unified theory of emotional states, and different re-searchers interpret the term *trauma* differently. Thus, Omitowoju (2002) shows rape representations in Athenian drama and argues that trauma is one of the physiological states of the organism that encompasses all human experiences and feelings. Rabinowitz (2011) analyzes sexual violence in Greek tragedy. The researcher indicates that trauma is an experience that represents a long-term state that only occasionally manifests itself in outward behavior. Trauma is situational in nature; that is, people express an evalua-tive personal attitude to possible situations and their own activity (Suter 2008). The scientist emphasizes that trauma is a complex state that has neurophysiological, neuromuscular, and phenome-nological aspects. The neurophysiological aspect is determined by the electrical activity of the nervous system (the cortex, the hypo-thalamus, etc.). The neuromuscular aspect is, above all, facial ac-tivity, as well as pantomimic, visceral-endocrine, and sometimes

vocal reactions. At the phenomenological level, trauma is manifested as an experience that has immediate significance for the subject.

Distinguishing the Notions of Displacement and Exile

The problem of differentiating the notions of displacement and exile is quite topical and attracts the attention of many scholars (Agamben 1998; Ahmed 2006; Hardwick and Stray 2008; Said 2003, Mitrou and Kolyri, 2025). Contemporary researchers dealing with the differentiation of *"trauma"* and *"exile"* can be divided into three groups. The first group of researchers analyzes how texts represent extended temporal experience and traumatic memory (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; Bal 1999; Ricoeur 1984). The fact that temporal experience and traumatic memory are interrelated is beyond doubt. Quite often, the notions *"temporal experience"* and *"traumatic memory"* are used as synonyms. Bal (1999) tries to distinguish between *trauma subjectivity* and *experience,* but encounters certain difficulties. People express a certain attitude to everything happening around them and evoking a particular type of trauma and experience. The same events may cause different traumas and experiences in people. Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) show the difference between cultural memory (institutionalized, long-term memory sustained through cultural practices and texts) and communicative memory (everyday, generational memory). People know what trauma is, yet they are not always able to describe and explain their trauma and experience clearly. This is hardly surprising, since to this day, the problem of trauma in science remains mysterious and, in many respects, not fully understood. However, its role in regulating human behavior is substantial.

The second group of researchers focuses on how texts represent marginalized voices (Lanser 1992; Spivak 1988; Stratton 2007). Feelings are referred to as a special subclass of trauma. Researchers distinguish feelings from trauma by their object-related character, which arises as a result of a specific fusion of trauma associated with a specific object.

The third group studies specific word choices, semantic fields, and patterns of language usage to construct meaning (Halliday and

Matthiessen 2014). Compared to classical studies, linguistic approaches are more stable phenomena with a clearly expressed object-related character. They are always directed to someone or something and express people's attitude towards that (Bakker 1997). For instance, Hart (2007) analyzes the language of asylum and refuge in Greek tragedy. The researcher reveals how specific vocabulary clusters, including terms for sanctuary, supplication, belonging, and protection, construct exile as simultaneously legal, religious, social, and psychological. Feelings arise as a result of the generalization of traumatic experience. They appear later than situational trauma and depend on upbringing influences more than trauma does. It is feelings, and not the events themselves, that impart a specific traumatic coloring to human experience (Semino and Culpeper 2002). Therefore, it is evident that analysis of trauma in ancient texts is represented by interdisciplinary approaches – linguistic, historical, and literary dimensions simultaneously. *Circe* by Miller participates in ongoing cultural discussions regarding how classical texts can be reimagined and reinterpreted to center previously marginalized perspectives, hence making visible forms of suffering and violence that the latter have obscured or overlooked.

Methodology

Research Design and Theoretical Framework

The following study utilizes a qualitative, comparative textual analysis methodology. It aims to combine trauma-based practices, feminist approaches, and lexico-semantic analysis. The research design focuses on the methodologies applied in classical philology, literary studies, linguistics, and cultural studies to investigate and then explicate how displacement is designed through language, specifically lexical units, in both ancient and modern texts. This approach indicates the unique and complicated nature of the object under study: the texts separated by centuries yet involved in addressing such topics as power, exile, gender, trauma, and violence.

The analytical framework originates from lexico-semantic field theory and corpus linguistics. It aims to examine how texts con-

struct specific meanings through lexical units' choice patterns, lexical clustering, and semantic relationships (Stubbs, 2001). The selected approach allows for explicating how lexical units cluster into semantic fields united under specific conceptual domains. Thus, for this research, displacement and exile, violence and trauma, mortal and divine power relations, belonging and alienation, and transformation and agency are the most significant semantic fields. By determining and analyzing the above lexical patterns across the selected texts, we reveal that both ancient and modern texts conceptualize exile as a multiplex phenomenon. The concept of exile simultaneously operates across numerous dimensions, including social, spatial, psychological, and legal ones.

Corpus Selection and Its Justification

Circe (2018) by Madeline Miller is one of the modern masterpieces analyzed in its entirety as a sustained displacement narrative. The choice of the first-person narration covering centuries provides inclusive and clear access to how a single being's consciousness treats and describes exile across time. The corpus of classical texts comprises: *The Odyssey* by Homer (specifically Book 10), *Theogony* by Hesiod, *Argonautica* by Apollonius Rhodius, and *Metamorphoses* by Ovid (specifically Book 14). It is worth noting that Homer provided the most detailed description of Circe, her island, and her relations with Odysseus. In his turn, Hesiod made emphasis on Circe's genealogy by indicating her divine bloodline. In his work, Apollonius Rhodius depicted how Circe met Jason and Medea. Ovid described Circe's transformation of Scylla in his masterpiece. It is evident that all these ancient sources collectively present Circe's life and allow for intertextual networking that Miller refers to.

The following research utilizes standard scholarly editions of Greek and Latin texts, as well as their English translations in the Loeb Classical Library. This measure allows analyzing both source-language (Greek and Latin) and target-language (English) lexical patterns. Since original Greek and Latin lexico-semantic patterns undergo inevitable variations, changes, or substitutions in English texts, it is of great significance to establish new terms and explicate their semantic complexity. Therefore, for Greek vocabulary, we

consult the Liddell-Scott-Jones *Greek-English Lexicon*; for Latin, we refer to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* to establish comprehensive semantic ranges (Liddell 1811-1898; Scott 1811-1887).

Analytical Procedures

The analytical process consists of four stages: the identification of lexical units, semantic fields mapping, the analysis of comparative patterns, and the interpretation of the key findings.

Stage One: The Identification of the Lexical Units

Using Voyant Tools (Voyant-tools.org n.d.), we uploaded Miller's *Circe* and other selected classical texts to create the research corpus. We applied a custom stop-word list and built a curated query set for displacement lexemes (single- and multi-word) in the Terms panel. Voyant returned 847 hits in *Circe* and 126 across the selected classical texts. The senses were validated via Contexts (KWIC) and refined by excluding false positives. Collocational structure from Links and distributional profiles from Trends allowed grouping the results into five analytical buckets – spatial displacement, social alienation, psychological interiority, vulnerability and violence, and agency and power, which emerged as stable clusters (See Figure 1). The classical corpus showed pronounced peaks in social and special exile vocabulary, indicating a foregrounding of movement, civic status banishment, and polis / oikos relations. By contrast, *Circe* concentrated frequency and collocated around inner states, trauma response, embodied affect, and memory, which is consistent with sustained first-person intensification and modern subjectivity frameworks under displacement. In brief, Voyant's frequency, collocation, concordance, and trend views corroborate a diachronic shift: classical source privilege externalized, civic-spatial exile, whereas Circe intensifies vulnerability, negotiated agency, and interiority.
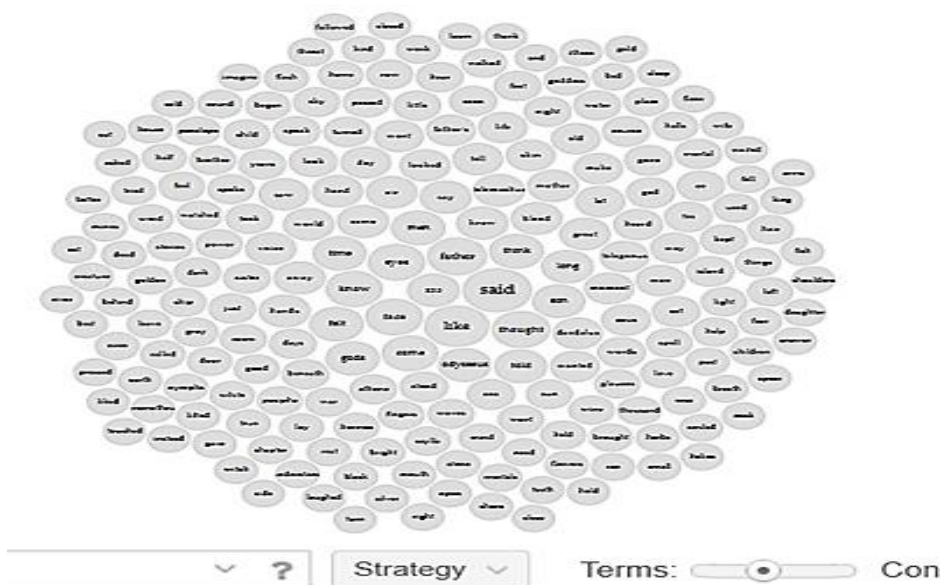
Figure 1. Termsberry (Words Relative Frequencies in *Circe* by Miller)

The first stage was aimed at identifying all cases within the selected corpus where displacement, exile, isolation, or related concepts appear. This included direct lexical markers (words explicitly denoting *exile, isolation,* and *banishment*) and indirect semantic indicators (descriptions of social exclusion, emotional alienation, and spatial separation). For *Circe* by Miller, this involved close reading with utmost attention to: first-person descriptions of isolation *(exile, alone, banished, strange,)*, descriptions of the island of Aeaea accentuating separation, remoteness, and solitude, interactions depicting Circe's exclusion from both divine and mortal worlds, and temporal markers focusing on the aspect of her long-lasting displacement (*age, century, eternity, or infinity*).

For ancient Greek and Latin texts, the identification of lexical units lays emphasis on both Greek and Latin vocabulary. Key Greek terms comprise: *phygē* (*exile or flight*); *erēmia* (*desolation, solitude, loneliness*); *nostos* (*return or homecoming*); *moira* (*portion, share, or fate*); *xenos or xenia* (*guest/stranger / alien or friendship*); *atimia* (*loss of rights, dishonor*). Latin terminology includes: *exilium* (*exile*), *solitudo* (*solitude*), *relegatio* (*banishment*), and *fuga* (*flight*). It is worth noting that we tracked not only isolated

cases but also co-occurrence patterns. Furthermore, we analyzed term clusters within texts and tried to explicate what semantic relationships they suggested.

Stage Two: The Mapping of the Semantic Fields

We organized all the identified lexical units into five semantic fields. Consequently, we managed to reveal conceptual structures that underlined different representations of displacement in the texts under study. During the following process, we referred to the semantic field theory suggested by Lyons (1977). The researcher stated that lexical units could gain their meanings partially through their relationships with semantically related terms (1977). Therefore, we identified five key semantic fields.

The field of spatial displacement incorporated lexical units denoting geographical isolation, physical distance, isolated islands, abandoned territories, thresholds, and movements away from centers toward boundaries.

The field of social alienation comprised lexical units denoting strangeness, community exclusion, lack of belonging, strict social relationships, and otherness.

The field of psychological interiority included lexical units depicting various emotional states, such as grief, sorrow, longing, loneliness, etc., which appeared as a result of isolation.

The field of vulnerability and violence included lexical units related to either sexual or physical violence, defensive measures, threats, bodily integrity, as well as transformations that were supposed to protect.

The field of agency and power comprised lexical units denoting capacity for action, magical skills or knowledge, divine ability, constraints on power, as well as negotiation/communication with authority representatives.

Mapping the above-mentioned fields involved creating detailed lists of lexical units within every category, considering their text distribution and frequency, as well as co-occurrence patterns. Moreover, we focused on the extensions of metaphors, where lexical units from one semantic field were used to depict concepts

from another one. For example, spatial distance was metaphorically utilized to represent the emotional alienation of the leading character in *Circe* (2018).

Stage Three: The Analysis of Comparative Lexico-semantic Patterns

We compared lexico-semantic patterns established in classical texts and *Circe* (2018). We examined which semantic fields appeared in both ancient texts and the modern novel under study. Secondly, we determined where some lexico-semantic patterns diverged or converged. Thirdly, we analyzed how the sustained first-person focalization in *Circe* (2018) affected which semantic field would specifically be emphasized by Miller. Fourthly, we determined which concepts or lexical units appeared in Miller's novel for the first time. Moreover, we tried to explicate why Miller has decided to introduce novel lexical units and concepts. Last but not least, we focused on how classical terms lacking direct equivalents in the English language were reflected in *Circe* (2018).

The comparative analysis emphasized the questions regarding narrative perspective. Therefore, it is obvious that classical texts depicted Circe's presence through visiting male characters, specifically Odysseus. The perspective of Odysseus took a dominant role in Book 10 of *The Odyssey* (Homer 1919). In her novel, Miller shifted the focus to Circe, thus making her the leading heroine. Thus, we examined how this shift, applied by Miller, impacted the identified lexico-semantic patterns.

Stage Four: The Interpretation of the Key Findings

We integrated research findings obtained from lexico-semantic analysis with numerous theoretical frameworks from classical reception theory, trauma studies, as well as feminist concepts. We examined what the identified lexical patterns revealed regarding how ancient and modern texts conceptualize displacement, violence, and trauma. According to Herman's research on trauma (1992; 2015), psychological injury appears as a result of prolonged

exposure to unbearable conditions of severe control, as well as prolonged captivity. Thus, we examined whether Circe's considerations and experiences corresponded to the patterns suggested by Herman (1992; 2015). These patterns included a sense of permanent damage, hypervigilance, restricted capacity for intimacy and trust, and distorted perceptions of offenders.

By referring to feminist narratological frameworks, we examined how narrative voice and focalization affected the representation of violence by both males and females. Unlike ancient authors, Miller granted her Circe sustained first-person narration. Thus, we observed feminist interventions into different classical texts that deprived female characters of first-person narration.

Furthermore, we applied the concepts of hyper-textuality by Genette (1997) to analyze how Miller managed to transform and reinterpret classical texts. We examined the transformations that occurred at the lexico-semantic level.

Results and Discussion: Lexico-Semantic Patterns of Displacement

Semantic Field One: Spatial Displacement

On the one hand, Miller preserves classical emphasis on spatial isolation and, on the other hand, expands its phenomenological dimensions. The opening chapter establishes Circe's perception of space as fundamentally alienating: "My father's halls were dark and silent. I was a daughter, a disappointment, no more" (Miller 2018). The combination of *"dark and silent"* with *"daughter"* and *"disappointment"* describes social rejection – Helios' halls become physically oppressive through their emotional atmosphere. When exile becomes evident, Circe utters spatial displacement through layered sensory description:

> The boat set off through the white crests, the oarsmen pulling past the last edge of land. I stood at the prow, watching the ocean's shadows darken. I had thought I knew what exile meant. Now I understood: it was being shown the world, only to be told I could not touch it (Miller 2018).

The above-mentioned paragraph presents a specific lexico-semantic pattern used by Miller: spatial vocabulary (*"edge of land"* (Miller 2018) and *"ocean's shadows"* (Miller 2018) is combined

with and sensory restriction (*"could not touch"*) (Miller 2018) and epistemological language (*"I had thought"* (Miller 2018) and *"Now I understood"* (Miller 2018). The exile experiences space not merely as distance but as painful proximity to an inaccessible world.
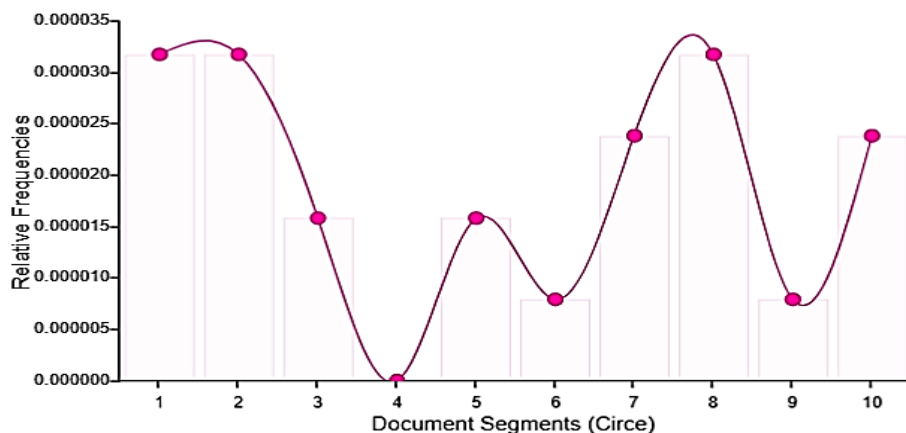

Figure 2. Edge (Relative frequencies of the word
edge in *Circe* by Miller)

Miller utilizes specific lexical repetition to construct an isolating geography of the island of Aeaea. The word *"alone"* appears 47 times across the novel – roughly once every seven pages – with specific presentation in chapters depicting the initial centuries of solitude that Circe experienced. Similarly, the noun *"island"* appears 112 times, but Miller intensifies this noun with certain adjectives and pronouns, such as *"my wild island"*, *"this abandoned place"*, and *"my exile island"* (Miller 2018). The possessive pronoun *"my"* claims ownership and emphasizes that Aeaea precisely belongs to Circe, as any other being wants it. In this case, possession is established through rejection.
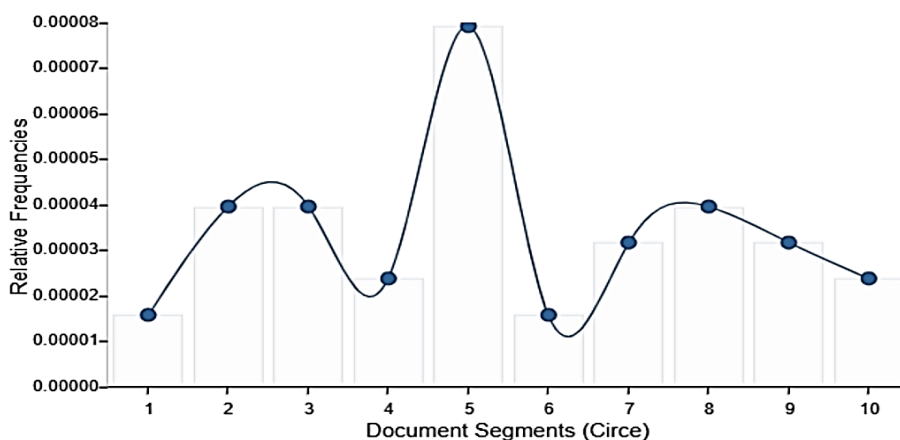
The most striking spatial innovation in the novel appears in Circe's temporal experience of unchanging geography. After centuries alone, Circe reflects: "Every day was the same. I walked the shore, I worked my garden, I spoke to my lions. The sky stayed where it was, the trees did not walk" (Miller 2018). The negative construction *"did not walk"* (Miller 2018) inverts the animistic expectations of mythological landscape, focusing on the static quality of the landscape. For an immortal being, spatial steadiness becomes temporal imprisonment. Thus, the semantic field of spatial

displacement merges with temporal stasis, hence creating what may be referred to as *"spatio-temporal confinement"* – neither time nor space changes, consequently trapping Circe's exile in a permanent present.

Semantic Field Two: Social Alienation

Miller transforms classical silence regarding Circe's social isolation into a sustained first-person expression of loneliness. The author devotes extensive passages to the phenomenological depiction of solitude's effects: "The days passed, and I did not count them. There was nothing to count for. I had thought - I had hoped - that someone would come. My father, perhaps, said it had been enough, that I was sorry enough, that I had learned. But no one did" (Miller 2018). The repetition of negations (*"no one," "nothing to count for,"* and *"did not count"* (Miller 2018)) accumulates across the paragraph, each negative construction increasing the absence at solitude's core.

The adjective *"alone"* functions distinctively in the novel, appearing in syntactic positions accentuating its semantic significance: "I was alone, truly and wholly"; "I lived alone and walked alone"; "I had been alone so long, I was ready to believe"; "After he left, the solitude was very great"(Miller 2018). The adverbs *"truly and wholly"* in the first example suggest the degrees of aloneness. The main heroine had been alone before, but not with this totality and disparity. The parallel structure *"lived alone and walked alone"* (Miller 2018) illustrates how isolation penetrates both movement and dwelling. The causal relationship *in "I had been alone so long, I was ready to believe"* (Miller 2018) suggests that extended isolation impacts judgments, thus prefiguring trauma theory's insights regarding social deprivation's cognitive effects.

Figure 3. Alone (Relative frequencies of the word *alone* in *Circe* by Miller)

Miller introduces the vocabulary of social alienation, which was not used in classical texts, borrowed from contemporary psychological discourse. For instance, Circe describes her feeling as *"invisible"*, *"unnoticed"*, *"nothing"* (Miller 2018) – terms that utter not merely physical separation but ontological deletion. When Hermes visits, Circe states, "I had not heard my own voice in so long it sounded strange to me"(Miller 2018). The adjective *"strange"* echoes her self-description from childhood, but now applies not to her unique nature but to her own voice rendered unfamiliar through disuse – social isolation totally alienates her from herself.

The most theoretically sophisticated treatment of social alienation can be found in Circe's analysis of her hospitality practices. After centuries of transforming male visitors into swine, she encounters Odysseus and indicates: "I had grown used to my own thoughts...I had forgotten what it was to speak and be answered" (Miller 2018). The phrase *"had grown used to"* (the Past Perfect tense, underlining the completed past action with ongoing present effects) describes Circe's adaptation to solitude as a habitual action. The contrast between *"speak and be answered"* versus merely speaking indicates that communication requires reciprocity – without response, speaking becomes a monologue. Therefore, it is evident that the long-lasting isolation may impact not only individual comfort in particular but also existence and subjectivity in general.

Semantic Field Three: Psychological Interiority

The first-person narration utilized by Miller allows unprecedented access to various psychological processes by Circe. Numerous paragraphs are devoted to memories, introspection, self-analysis, and emotional responses. The above-mentioned interiority concepts are not paid attention to in classical masterpieces. The semantic field of psychological interiority dominates the novel under study. It is obvious that lexical units describing various mental states extensively appear in Miller's masterpiece:

> I lay on my narrow cot and thought of all those hours I had spent working my loom, fingers pushing the shuttle through the threads, back and forth, the same motions repeated, the wool growing slowly into cloth. It had not seemed monotonous then. I had told myself that such a task was meditative, an offering to the gods. But the truth was, I had been grateful simply to be left alone (Miller 2018).

The above paragraph shows several original features of psychological vocabulary used by Miller. Firstly, the verb *"thought"* (Miller 2018) introduces an extended internal reflection on Circe's experience that happened to her in the past. Secondly, sensory details, including threads, *shuttle*, or *fingers*, present a psychological process in the embodied memory. Thirdly, the contrast between present recognition (*"But the truth was"* (Miller 2018)) and past self-deception *("I had told myself"* (Miller 2018)) emphasizes metacognitive awareness that Circe not only remembers but also tries to analyze her mental states experienced in the past. Last but not least, the understanding that Circe was *"grateful simply to be left alone"* (Miller 2018) before her final exile helps her to recontextualize her isolation. Circe's desire to be alone becomes a severe punishment on the isolated island.

Miller applies specific lexical patterns to describe traumatic memory. The author considers various aspects of trauma theory and traumatic experiences and skillfully integrates them into her novel. When Circe recalls attempted rape, the narration becomes fragmented: "Their hands on me. Their breath. I felt myself splitting. There were two of me now – one who remained, and one who fled, up through the ceiling, away" (Miller 2018). The fragments *("Their hands on me. Their breath"* (Miller 2018)) lack

verbs, presenting sensory impressions without narrative integration. The metaphor of splitting *("I felt myself splitting"*(Miller 2018)) makes emphasis on dissociation, and the Present tense verb *"remains"* and *"flee"* (rather than the past tense *"remained*" and *"fled")* suggests traumatic memory's intrusive presentness – despite narrating specific past events, Circe experiences them as the ongoing present.

The most sustained psychological vocabulary reflects emotional and cognitive effects of solitude. After centuries alone, Circe describes her unique mental state:

> I found I could not remember what it had been like to walk through the halls of Oceanos, to have nymphs all around me. I tried to summon their faces, but they would not come. I could remember only myself, standing among them like a stone (Miller 2018).

The phrases *"I could not remember"*(Miller 2018) and *"I tried to summon"* (Miller 2018) construct memory as an active attempt rather than a passive reception. The failure of memory *("they would not come"*(Miller 2018)*)* suggests that long-lasting isolation usually erases social memory, hence leaving only the isolated self. The simile *"like a stone"* (Miller 2018) implies both severity (emotional numbing) and immobility (inability to connect). Thus, based on trauma theory's postulates, emotional constriction is a result of prolonged stress or other factors.

Semantic Field Four: Vulnerability and Violence

In her novel, Miller manages to break the classical authors' silence regarding sexual violence against Circe, naming attempted rape and rape explicitly and repeatedly. The most extended sequence presents the sailors who landed on the island of Aeaea during early exile by Circe:

> They had been three days on the island when one of them seized me...He dragged me towards the woods. The others followed. I knew what they intended. Their eyes had been crawling over me since they stepped from their boat (Miller 2018).

The verb *"seized"* (*violent physical force*) initiates a unique sequence, followed by *"dragged"* (*forcible movement*) and the explicit statement *"I knew what they intended"* – Miller refuses euphemism, thus making sexual violence's intent unmistakable.
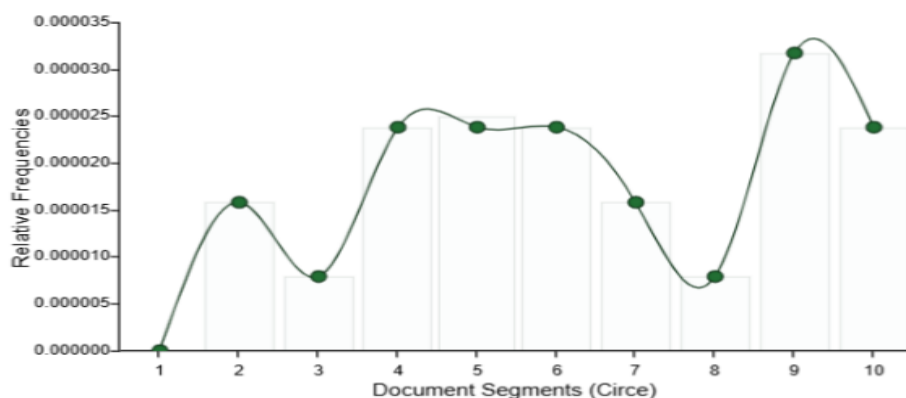

Figure 4. Seize (Frequencies of the word *seize* in *Circe* by Miller)

The paragraph continues with typical trauma vocabulary: "I twisted, trying to get free, but he only laughed. His hand reached for my dress...I felt terror then, raw and overwhelming"(Miller 2018). The adjective *"raw"* applied to terror suggests unmediated emotional intensity, whereas the other adjective *"overwhelming"* emphasizes an effect exceeding cognitive capacity. It is worth noting that both adjectives refer to trauma theory lexicon. The resolution of the scene is when Circe discovers her magic power to transform other beings. In this case, Circe's defensive magic is triggered by her fear. Therefore, transformation is one of the trauma responses rather than vicious and well-planned cruelty.

The author applies a unique lexical pattern to combine vulnerability to violence by means of temporal and conditional constructions. Circe indicates: "If I had been a mortal, they would have killed me. If I had been one of my soft, harmless sisters, I would have washed up on the beach, food for gulls" (Miller 2018). The repeated conditional *"If I had been"* (Miller 2018) constructs possible scenarios in which vulnerability produces or leads to death. The statement *"But I was not"* (Miller 2018) indicates that survival requires seeking defensive violence, as gentleness would have led to destruction. This lexical pattern recurs throughout the novel:

vulnerability necessitates defensive violence, kindness enables exploitation, and transformation becomes a protective measure.

Furthermore, Miller introduces domestic violence vocabulary, which classical authors failed to use in their masterpieces. Circe's relationship with Odysseus comprises passages presenting emotional manipulations: "He would use my words against me, twist them. 'You said you were not angry,' he would tell me, though I had said no such thing" (Miller 2018). The verb *"twist"* applied to words, and the explicit statement *"though I had said no such thing,"* (Miller 2018) names gaslighting – psychological abuse through the victim's reality denial. Thus, it is evident that Miller refers to modern domestic violence discourse to choose special lexical units to describe different types of abuse and violence in her novel.

Semantic Field Five: Power and Agency

Miller transforms Circe's power from a static attribute to a developmental process. The novel represents Circe's revelation of transformation abilities, pharmaceutical knowledge advancement, negotiation with divine authority, and ultimate self-determination. Power vocabulary constantly changes across the novel, from passive suffering to active resistance and to personalized choice.

In the first chapters, lexical patterns accentuate the lack of power. Child-Circe describes herself through different types of negation: "I was not strong. I was not clever. I was not beautiful" (Miller 2018). The anaphoric repetition of *"I was not"* constructs identity through absence, through what she lacks rather than possesses. When transformation powers develop, Miller utilizes discovery lexicon: "I felt something within me, like a thread pulling taut" (Miller 2018). The simile *"like a thread"* (Miller 2018) connects to Circe's weaving – her power emerges through metaphors of textile production, which was a traditional women's craft in ancient Greece for centuries.

As the novel further develops, the power vocabulary becomes more confident and obvious. Mid-narrative Circe indicates: "I chose who I would help and who I would not" (Miller 2018). The verb *"chose"* (the Past Indefinite, active voice) depicts Circe as the grammatical subject making conscious decisions. The parallel

structure *"who I would help and who I would not"* (Miller 2018) emphasizes that both refusal and assistance represent Circe's active choices – withheld power is still exercised power.

The most significant power vocabulary used by Miller appears in Circe's confrontation with Athena. Protecting her son Telegonus, Circe claims: "You have yourself to blame for that…If you make him an enemy, then know that I am his. My power is not so great as yours, but I will fight you anyway" (Miller 2018). This paragraph demonstrates several essential characteristics of Miller's power lexicon. Firstly, the imperative *"know"* commands divine acknowledgment of the position occupied by Circe. Secondly, the statement *"My power is not so great as yours"* (Miller 2018) acknowledges hierarchy, while the adversative conjunction *"but"* introduces resistance despite disadvantage. Thirdly, the future tense *"I will fight"* (Miller 2018) represents a commitment to action regardless of probable outcomes. The vocabulary of power changes from a capacity description to an intention declaration – from *"what I can do"* (Miller 2018) to *"what I will do"* (Miller 2018).

The conclusion of the novel presents the most radical and evident exercise of agency. Circe chooses mortality: "I thought once that gods are the opposite of death, but I see now they are more dead than anything, for they are unchanging, and can hold nothing in their hands" (Miller 2018). The comparison *"more dead than anything"* (Miller 2018) reshapes conventional ontological dogmas. Thus, it is obvious that immortality leads to death, whereas mortality results in life. The metaphor of having nothing in their hands dates back to the earlier imagery of craft and transformation, implying that power requires both the capability to change, considering numerous factors, and the willingness to give up control. Therefore, the final power vocabulary cases provide a novel definition of the term power in the novel. Power becomes mortality, change, and choice, but not domination or superiority.

Conclusion

The study analyzed how classical authors and Madeline Miller linguistically constructed displacement in their texts. The semantic field theory and Voyant Tools were applied to conduct comparative

lexico-semantic analysis. The comparative approach revealed various patterns of distribution. 847 lexical cases related to displacement were found in *Circe* by Miller, whereas 126 were identified in classical texts. Different shifts or changes were identified in lexico-semantic fields, gender preferences, narrative presentation, and focusing, and lexical units chosen to depict trauma and exile. The most important findings concerned narrative focusing and, thus, its direct effect on the distribution of the lexical units. In classical texts, authors focused on male characters' presentation and special displacement (43%), as well as agency and power (31%). On the contrary, sustained first-person narration in Miller's *Circe* significantly inverted the above proportions. Psychological interiority (39%), social alienation (24%), and vulnerability and violence (19%) took the leading positions. It is worth noting that Miller failed to emphasize special displacement (11%) in her novel. The Voyant Tools collocation and frequency analyses corroborated a unique diachronic shift. The field of vulnerability and violence underwent the most ideologically vivid and important transformation. Classical authors simply ignored or euphemized sexual violence and assault against Circe. They preferred to depict Circe as a death threat to all the male visitors. In her novel, Miller depicted Circe's attempted rape by means of specific lexical units' choice, such as *"seized," "dragged,"* or *"terror".* Miller avoided utilizing classical taboo words or euphemisms. Circe was provided with a modern vocabulary to utter her victim's experience. The application of Voyant Tools assisted in tracking the relative frequency of the lexical unit *"seized"* and its variants that Miller used to depict the assault and further consequences. Therefore, the choice of specific lexical units helped in vividly constructing and representing trauma in *Circe.* Following feminist interventions, Miller used lexical units that classical authors had preferred to deny. The analysis of the psychological interiority field by means of Key Word in Context (KWIC) concordances showed how sustained first-person narration provided unprecedented access to experiential presentation of exile and trauma. Such terms as *"alone," "remembered," "felt,"* and *"thought"* clustered in patterns that are consistent with the description of trauma and various consequences, including PTSD. Miller used the present tense to denote past events, as well as lexical units to describe assault, rape, and emotional devastation. All the lexical patterns used by Miller aligned with clinical trials

and descriptions by Herman (1992; 2015). Thus, long-lasting isolation, violence, and vulnerability may result in unique linguistic patterns that could be utilized in different types of discourse. Furthermore, digital corpus analysis significantly contributed to analyzing and explicating the key findings. The utilization of Voyant Tools allowed lexical patterns' identification and quantification in both classical texts and modern novel samples. Moreover, classical language analysis, trauma-informed interpretation, and digital frequency analysis proved that Miller's novel functioned as "hypertext" and remarkably transformed classical texts at the lexico-semantic level. Last but not least, Miller depicted exile through specific linguistic patterns, which simultaneously operate across numerous semantic fields. Miller provided her heroine with original language to express those aspects, including exile, trauma, self-determination, violence, etc., which classical authors had avoided depicting. The choice of lexical units, their distribution, relative frequency, grammatical aspects, and the structure of collocations allowed depicting the concept of displacement, its effects, and interpretations.

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