



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**RETELLING OF THE CLASSICAL: GREEK MYTHOLOGY
AND THE FANTASTIC LITERATURE IN MADELINE
MILLER'S *CIRCE* AND JENNIFER SAINT'S *ARIADNE***

Master's Thesis

Gizem DEREBEK

Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

July 2023



THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**RETELLING OF THE CLASSICAL: GREEK MYTHOLOGY
AND THE FANTASTIC LITERATURE IN MADELINE
MILLER'S *CIRCE* AND JENNIFER SAINT'S *ARIADNE***

Master's Thesis

Gizem DEREBEK

Thesis Advisor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zümre Gizem YILMAZ KARAHAN

Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

July 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I present my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zümre Gizem YILMAZ KARAHAN for her support and guidance. I would like to thank her for her patience, endless motivation, moral support, and precious insight throughout my thesis. Without her thorough feedback and gentle encouragements my dissertation would not have come to a close.

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Mine ÖZYURT KILIÇ, for her personal counsel, and support through my academic studies. Thanks to her and SSUA ELL's organization of the contemporary Trojan exhibit in Istanbul and Troia Ancient City tour in Çanakkale as a part of Trojan Recital: In Homer's Footsteps and the conference series "Recycling of The Classics", I was greatly inspired to pursue the rewritings of classical literature under the scope of Greek mythology. Without her counsel, I would have never pursued my passion for literature in graduate level.

I would also like to thank Vice Dean Assoc. Prof. Dr. Beyazıt Hilmi AKMAN for his professional comments and feedback while constructing my thesis. I am grateful to Vice Chair Assoc. Prof. Dr. Filiz BARIN AKMAN and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şafak HORZUM for inspiring and assisting me further into women studies, and Greek mythology.

Most importantly, I wish to present my gratitude to my family, and especially to my mother for her never-ending patience and faith in me. My family was there for me through every negative thought and struggle and continued to support me through everything.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
ÖZET.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 FEMINISM.....	3
1.2 FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY.....	13
1.3 CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY.....	17
1.4 FANTASY LITERATURE.....	21
1.5 RETELLING THE CLASSICS	27
2. REENACTMENT OF A GODDESS: SORCERESS CIRCE.....	33
2.1 INTRODUCTION TO <i>CIRCE</i>	36
2.2 EXAMINATION OF MILLER'S <i>CIRCE</i>	38
2.2.1 The Female Identity and Individuality.....	40
2.2.2 Women, Sacrifice, and Motherhood.....	45
3. FROM HEROINE TO HERO: PRINCESS ARIADNE.....	51
3.1 INTRODUCTION TO <i>ARIADNE</i>	49
3.2 EXAMINATION OF SAINT'S <i>ARIADNE</i>	53
3.2.1 Female Interpretation and Narration.....	55
3.2.2 Sacrifice and Motherhood.....	60
4. CONCLUSION.....	66
WORKS CITED.....	71
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	83

ÖZET

KLASİK ESERLERİN YENİDEN ANLATIMI: MADELINE MILLER'IN *BEN, KİRKE* VE JENNIFER SAINT'İN *ARIADNE* ROMANLARINDA YUNAN MİTOLOJİSİ VE FANTASTİK EDEBİYAT

Feminist edebiyat kuramı ve feminist yaklaşım temelinde, edebiyatın öne çıkan alanlarından biri de kadın ve yazı yani kadınların kendi iç dünyaları ve iç dünyaları üzerine yazılar konusudur. Kadın yazarlar, çeşitli türlerde ve alanlarda toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini vurgulamak ve yapıbozuma uğratmak için farklı bir yaklaşım benimsemişlerdir. Farklı bir ifadeyle, kanonik edebi eserleri yeni bir mercekten inceliyorlar. Kurgusal eserlerde kadınları dışlamadan feminist bir edebi kanon geliştirmek için yeniden ziyaret etme eylemi çok önemlidir. Bu tez, klasik mitleri fantastik edebiyat alanı altında yeniden anlatmayı seçen kadın yazarlar Madeline Miller ve Jennifer Saint'e odaklanarak fantastik edebiyatta kadının yeri konusunu ele almaktadır. Amaçları, çalışmalarında kadın deneyimlerine ve bakış açılarına ışık tutarken kadınları ana karakterler olarak konumlandırmaktır. *Ben Kirke* ve *Ariadne*, bireysellik, evcillik, annelik ve kadın kimliği gibi birçok konuyu vurgulamaktadır. Eserleri, Homeros'un *İlyada* (MÖ 800-700) ve *Odyseia* (MÖ 725-675) ve Ovidius'un *Dönüşümler* (MÖ 8) ve *Heroides* (yayın tarihi bilinmiyor, MÖ 1-20 olduğu tahmin ediliyor) karşılaştırmasıyla konumlandırmaktadırlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Ben Kirke*, *Ariadne*, kadın bireyselliği, kadın kimliği, güç, klasiklerin yeniden anlatımı

ABSTRACT

RETELLING OF THE CLASSICAL: GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND THE FANTASTIC LITERATURE IN MADELINE MILLER'S *CIRCE* AND JENNIFER SAINT'S *ARIADNE*

One of the upcoming areas in literature is the topic of women and writing, that is writing conducted by women, about women's inner lives and worlds through the basis of feminist literary theory and feminist approach. Women writers take a different approach in order to highlight and deconstruct gender roles in various genres and areas. To put it somewhat differently, they examine the canonical literary works through a new lens. The act of revisiting is crucial for developing a feminist literary canon without the exclusion of women in fictional works. This thesis is on the topic of the place of women in fantastic literature focusing on women writers Madeline Miller and Jennifer Saint, who choose to retell the classical myths under the area of fantastic literature. Their aim is to situate women as the main characters while providing insights into the female experiences and perspectives in their works *Circe* and *Ariadne* highlight several topics including individuality, domesticity, motherhood, and female identity. They situate the works through a comparison of Homer's *The Iliad* (800-700 BCE) and *The Odyssey* (725-675 BCE) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 BCE) and *Heroides* (date of publication unknown, presumed to be 1-20 BCE).

Keywords: *Circe*, *Ariadne*, female individuality, female identity, power, retelling classics

CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

“Re-vision is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival.”

(Adrienne Rich, “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision” 18)

Literature is a powerful communicative medium between various generations, and stories are the inclusive conductors of intercultural experiences and imagination. Moreover, literature and stories are conveyors of specific societal norms and discourses of specific periods. From this perspective, women have acquired and been given specific roles according to societal norms reflected in the literature of the time. That is to say, literature reflects social discourses. Women characters and writers were thus confined in their social roles appointed by patriarchal discourse. To name a few, for example, starting from the oral tradition, women inherited the role of peace-weavers from the imagination of their ancestors. To put it somewhat differently, they were used to obtain peace through a strategic marriage as the character Hildeburh¹ in *Beowulf* shows. According to this portrayal, women are just tools for alliances through marriages, which means that women are just objectified. Another role assigned to women in a different period was closely related to religion: Mary, the loving mother and ideal housewife, and Eve, evil and fallen woman. The mother of all who truly live, Mary and the mother of all living, Eve are separated at the point of obedience, which in the following years became a central character trait in literature. In the 19th century a figure of the ideal woman and wife in Victorian period appeared under the term “The Angel in the House” in Coventry Patmore’s (1823-1896) narrative poem, portraying women as devoted, virtuous and domestic mothers and wives:

Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman’s pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities

¹ Hildeburh is the daughter of the Danish King, Hoc and the wife of the Finn.

“Hildeburh
had little cause
to credit the Jutes:
son and brother,
she lost them both
on the battlefield. [...] She,
the woman in shock,
waylaid by grief,
Hoc’s daughter—” (*Beowulf* 1070-1076)

She casts her best, she flings herself. (75)

In the quote above, Patmore comments on the ideal behavior of women; her aim is to please her husband, attend to his needs and nothing else. Such categorizations forcing women to be obedient, silent and inferior were later deconstructed through various criticisms including Virginia Woolf's (1882-1941) *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and "Professions for Women" (1931). Woolf, in her book *A Room of One's Own*, talks about the prejudice, financial and educational disadvantages that limit a woman's creativity by stating "intellectual freedom depends upon material things" (Woolf 89). She emphasizes that patriarchal society forced women to be dependent on men, as they did not have the social or intellectual freedom. Women are not inheritably inferior or silent, they were forced to be so because of their disadvantages. In "Professions for Women", Woolf refers to a figure, an angel in the house, inspired by Patmore:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. (Woolf 3)

Following the quote, Woolf states that every Victorian household had an Angel in the house. The angel, as imagined in patriarchal discourses, was submissive, sympathetic, unselfish and pure; and for all those reasons, the angel or the phantom needed to be killed for the woman to define herself without the attributes appointed to her by others. Through the following centuries, the redefinition of women continued to alter in various genres of literature, including but not precisely the fantasy literature.

The research of this thesis is based on the feminist literary theory and the feminist approach, specifically in the retellings of women fantasy literature. The main idea is to examine the feminist rewritings of the canonical literary works through a new lens while also highlighting the underlooked and misjudged women of the classical times through retellings of tragic and moral mythological stories. To be more precise, feminist scholars emphasize the ever-lasting stereotypes about female sexuality, gender roles and women's domesticity through feminist approaches.

Yet still these stereotypes started to change with new feminist scholarship. Along with the stereotypes, the understanding of time also transforms into a revolutionary form in the hands of the female scholars, enabling the reader to relate to and openly criticize two different

periods through a single stand-point. The thesis will be formulated around the topic of the place of women in fantasy literature focusing on women writers Madeline Miller (1978--) and Jennifer Saint (date of birth unknown), who both retell the classical myths under the grasp of fantasy literature so as to situate women as the main characters providing insights about the female experiences and perspectives in their works *Circe* (2019) and *Ariadne* (2021).

The aim of this thesis is further to research and highlight one of the developing areas in literature regarding the topic of women and writing—writing conducted by women about women’s inner lives and worlds through the basis of feminist literary theory and feminist approach. Women writers take a different approach in order to highlight and deconstruct gender roles in various genres and areas such as novel, poetry, contemporary dance, and theatre. They basically examine the canonical literary works through a new lens. The act of revisiting canonical works from a feminist perspective is crucial for developing a feminist literary canon without the exclusion of women in fictional works. Within this framework, the thesis will be formulated around the topic of the place of women in fantastic literature focusing on women writers Madeline Miller and Jennifer Saint reinvent the myths of Greek mythology through fantastic literature, aiming to display the Greek women as the main characters, rather than men. Such situation provides insights about the female experiences and perspectives in their works *Circe* and *Ariadne*. They also highlight individuality, domesticity, motherhood and female identity, enabling a comparison of these works with Homer’s *The Iliad* (800-700 BCE) and *The Odyssey* (725-675 BCE) and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (8 BCE) and *Heroides* (date of publication unknown, presumed to be 1-20 BCE). In order to comprehend these retellings and recyclings, the history of feminism should be addressed first.

1.1. FEMINISM

Feminism derives from one Latin root word *femina* (woman) and one Greek derivative suffix *ισμός* or *ismós*; these two suffixes transform a noun into a verb to imply a particular belief or practice (Potter “The Etymology Of ‘Feminism’”). In later years, as Karen Offen states in her article, the French philosopher Charles Fourier (1772-1837) coined the word *féminisme*, apprehending the term as the “[e]ssence of women’s emancipation lay in eradicating their legal and economic subordination to men” (45). Even though there is no official record, the term is believed to originate in 1837, the year of Fourier’s death. As Deutsche Welle states in their newspaper article, Fourier was considered ahead of his time, arguing the oppression of the marriage intuition and rooting for equal working conditions and the liberty of women. (Welle

“Charles Fourier: The man who coined the term 'feminism'”). Originally referring to the feminine qualities or character of a woman, the term *féminisme* seems to disappear until the late 19th century, only to reappear through the French champion of woman suffrage, Hubertine Auclert (1848-1914), who claimed it as a label under the term *féministe* in a letter opposing the societal restrictions and criticizing the marriage laws in France (Offen 47). The two terms — *féminisme* and *féministe* — became common words around Europe beginning in 1892. Their usage in English dates back to 1894 as *feminism* by the Oxford English Dictionary² and as *feminism* in 1895 in a literary book review (47).

As Margaret Walters (1938-2020) states in *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction* (2005), different variations were used to present opposing views. One of those variations was womanism, mainly used with hostility after the term became common in French and English (1). Yet still feminism started to be contextualized as a term. One of the leading names in contextualizing the word feminism is Virginia Woolf, who started writing about it in the 1920s, when in dictionaries “feminist” still meant ‘one who champions the rights of women’ (2). She argued for deepening the meaning to create multiple for the existence of the word itself. Over the centuries, various names argued against and/or in favor of feminism through significant movements such as the women’s suffrage movement. Geraldine Jewsbury (1812-1880) was one of the names advocating against the societal norms in the 19th century. In her novel *The Half Sisters* (1848), she criticizes how the institution of marriage suppresses a woman and questions a woman’s place in the society through the metaphor of two opposite twins —one abides by the societal norms while the other does not— (Bozer, *On Dokuzuncu Yüzyılda İngiliz Kadın Yazarlar* 12-13).³

Though feminism was not fully coined until the 19th century, actions for women’s rights existed far before. For example, about 400 years before the conceptualization of feminism, an Italian medieval writer Christine de Pizan (1364-c.1430), argued for gender equality for the first time in her biographical catalog in poem format *La Cité des Dames* or *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405). Throughout the book, her argument is brought forth through three ladies, Lady Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, in order to represent courageous, artistic, and inventive women; religious, prophetically gifted, and loved women; and steadfast female saints (“The Book of the City of Ladies”).

² Definition of *feminism* by OED: [After F. *féminisme*.] Advocacy of the rights of women (based on the theory of equality of the sexes) (“feminism n.2”)

³ In this thesis, all the translations from Turkish to English are mine unless stated otherwise.

[...] If it were customary to send little girls to school and have them study the sciences as is customary for boys, they would learn and understand the subtleties of all the arts and sciences just as well as boys. There actually happen to be such women because, as I briefly mentioned before [...] their minds are more open and more keenly directed at whatever they apply themselves to. (126)

In the quote above, de Pizan through Lady Reason, argues the intellectual capacity of women under the same equal conditions and educations as men and the few women who accomplished it prove that they tend to be even more successful than their opposite gender. As Prof. Dr. A. Deniz Bozer highlights in her book *English Women Writers from Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (2013), there is no doubt that influential women like Christine de Pizan greatly affected the English literature, providing richness to the literature itself and the many literary works to come (7).

In the 17th and 18th centuries, women in Britain were also challenging society's belief that women were subordinate slaves. Great women writers such as Aphra Behn (1640-1689) and Mary Astell (1666-1731), referred to as "The Amazons of the pen" by Margaret Walters (26), argued the high capacity of women for critical thinking and education. Virginia Woolf also gives credit to Aphra Behn for her contributions to the feminist discourse, defining her as "[A] middle-class woman with all the plebeian virtues of humor, vitality, and courage [...] She had to work on equal terms with men" (24). Distinctly, Aphra Behn earned her living out of writing, which is functional to challenge the patriarchal understanding dominant in literature. "If the plays I wrote had appeared under a man's name and were not known to belong to me, I appeal to all non-biased and prudent reviewers, wouldn't they say they are comedies as good as any male writer ever written?" (qtd. in Bozer, *English Women Writers from Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* 145). Because she challenged the dominant views in literature, she was often attacked by other male playwrights, to which she replied that if they had not known that the plays were a woman's, they would approach them differently. Another early feminist is Mary Astell, who aspires and urges women to value themselves and improve their perspectives, skills, and minds rather than follow patriarchal rules especially in her book *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694).

If it be farther demanded what these Principles are? Not to dispute the Number of 'em here, no body I suppose will deny us one, which is, *That we ought as much as we can to endeavour the Perfecting of our Beings, and that we be as happy as possibly we may.* For this we see is Natural to every Creature of what sort soever, which endeavours to be in as good Condition as its Nature and

Circumstances will permit. (28)

The quote above functions as an encouragement to women, stating they should work on perfecting themselves by seeing every being as inheritably good in nature for womenkind to be happiest they can be. She argues that women's only difference from men was a lack of intense educational training. In her first book, she created an ideal world similar to Eden, where women co-existed without the presence of any men, which to this day is a significant early example of a utopic world (Walters 27-29). Her literary work reinforces her argument that women not only can survive without men, but rather thrive once given equal rights and education.

Whilst mentioning the women writers of the 17th and 18th century, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) is one of the feminists known for her travel writing *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M-y W-y M-e* (1757) written during her travels to different parts of the world. She was often unsure about publishing her literary compositions as she belonged to the upper class and chose to distribute her writings by hand around the high communities. Different from her male contemporaries, Montagu is known to freely write about positive and negative aspects of being a woman and the topic of sexuality as a woman (Bozer, *English Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* 5-6). In the 18th century, Mary Leapor (1722-1746) is one of the leading women writers through her poem "An Essay on Women" (before 1746) where she criticizes the false importance of beauty in the patriarchal society. "Woman, a pleasing but a short-lived flower / Too soft for business and too weak for power / A wife in bondage, or neglected maid / Despised, if ugly; if she's fair, betrayed" (1-4). She expresses the stereotypical beliefs behind the image of a woman, delicate, weak and only valuable as a wife or a working maid. In her poem she emphasizes the difficulties of being a woman of the working-class by stating that women lose all their values once they age in the society.

The early versions of feminism that encourage and aim to educate other women only continued to co-exist worldwide through the following centuries; women worldwide fought for politics, citizenship, equality, and educational rights to earn full citizenship in society. The Swedish writer and an educated aristocrat, Sophia Elisabeth Brenner (1659-1730) is one of the first publicly known women activists. In her poem "The justified defense of the female sex" (1693), she defends the intellectual capacity of women and argues that women are equals to men except their physical differences (McCann et al. 22).

This brand-new approach of equality rapidly gained motion and marriage started to be widely accepted as one of the main institutions where women and their roles were suppressed. In the Old Germanic societies, marriage did not require the approval of a woman; the authority

was the man, and properties were divided accordingly (Jochens 17). Such traditions continued for years until women's suffrage gained motion. In 1734, The Swedish Civil Code, the first marital that granted same rights to women as men including property rights to women and a prohibition of selling wives as property was passed (McCann et al. 22). In England, the Married Women's Property Act passed in two parts, one in 1870 which focused mainly on marital rights and the second part in 1857, including a reform in property rights (Combs 217).⁴ In a universal sense, while women were still struggling for voting and equal rights, on April 3, 1930, Turkish women were granted the right to vote in local elections before many European countries. Only seven years after (1923), they requested equal rights to be selected as members of parliament. In 1934, they gained voting rights for national elections through necessary legal legislation change following a bill suggestion (Tekeli 194).

Regarding the women rights, in 1790, Judith Sargent Murray's (1751-1820) essay "On the Equality of the Sexes" stated that women are just as intelligent as men. "[...] his soul is formed in no sort superiour, but every way equal to the mind of her" (8). In the 18th century, the British writer, social reformer and literary critic, Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800), or the "Queen of the Blues,"⁵ (McCann et al. 26) established the Bluestockings Society⁶ aiming to educate women to freely discuss literature and arts. This in turn provides a safe space of equality, supports aspiring women writers, and promotes stimulating conversation in public without the presence of alcohol (McCann et al. 26). Such happening is significant to promoting equality during literary discussions. It means women are now a part of the intellectual world and also, they are not just companies of men in such discussions but active participants. Olympe de Gouges' (1748-1793) book *Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen* (1791) also argues for the Enlightenment values and women's rights in Britain in terms of giving the same citizenship to women as men, and the same rights to liberty, property, and

⁴ Timeline of some of the countries that granted women voting rights:

New Zealand – the Electoral Act of 1893 ("Women and the Vote")

Australia – The Australian Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 ("Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902")

Republic of Finland – 1906 (Sulkunen)

Switzerland – 1959 (Smith 171)

Saudi Arabia – 2015 (Gorney)

⁵ "Queen of the Blues" is a name given to Elizabeth Montagu by Samuel Johnson related to her association with Bluestockings. The original name is believed to derive from a man who chose to wear blue stockings when he wished to contribute to the intellectual conversation in Montagu's gatherings who Samuel Johnson also attended ("Queen of the Blues: Elizabeth Montagu's Bluestockings").

⁶ The Bluestockings Society is established by Elizabeth Montagu, Elizabeth Vessey and many others in the 1750s in England. It was founded as an intellectual space, providing framework to the discussions about religion, slavery, and the gender norms. It was a societal event hosted by Montagu with "a welcoming environment for women to participate in what came to be known as civil society" (Bucur 261).

security (McCann et al. 18-19). She further advocated ensuring the rights of married women through social contact for any man or woman choosing to unite their lives (Walters 34). De Gouges also states that married and unmarried women were disadvantaged in the past. “A married woman can, with impunity, give bastards to her husband and a fortune that is not theirs. The unmarried woman only has the feeblest rights; ancient and inhuman laws forbid her the right to the name or wealth of the father of her children” (6). As explained by de Gouges, the differences between a married and unmarried woman are drastic because an unmarried woman barely withholds any rights. Thus, marriage was presented as rather a compulsory safety net for women to have access to any form of right.

Marital rights for women has been a problematic subject since Classical times. On the same topic in classic literature, the Greek tragedian of classical Athens, Euripides (484 BCE-406 BCE), and his play *Medea* (431 BCE) display the disadvantage women experience regarding their rights and positions in society:

Of all the living creatures with a soul
and mind, we women are the most pathetic.
First of all, we have to buy a husband:
spend vast amounts of money, just to get
a master for our body—to add insult to injury.
[...] If a woman leaves her husband, then she loses
her virtuous reputation. To refuse him
is just not possible.
[...] If we do well, and if our husbands bear
the yoke without discomfort or complaint, our lives are admired.
If not, it's best to die. (Euripides 1.231-235, 238-240, 244-246)

In the quote above, Medea addresses the women of the city of Corinth, speaking out about the injustices they experience and situating herself as a role model for all women. She strongly criticizes women's social identity, setting a non-stereotypical woman figure. The translator Diane Arson Svarlien states in her preface that the reason why such plays as *Medea* are so powerful is of the compelling stories and captivating language. She attempts to convey the same meanings and emotions by re-relating Euripides' words to the 21st century (xxxiii). As this thesis aims to illustrate, mythological stories and ancient classics reflect the corresponding society of their time with their timeless messages embedded into literary works, which emphasizes the significance of rewritings in terms of women's rights.

Concerning women's rights, sociologists identify three waves of feminism and an

aspiring fourth wave in the last decades of the 21st century. Waves are defined through specific events or actions that characterize them, and each wave has a specific goal and a broad spectrum of aims (McCann et al. 14-15). Valentine M. Moghadam in her chapter “Varieties of Feminist Activism” of the book *Routledge Global History of Feminism* (2022) thoroughly specifies the feminism’ origins and the waves:

Feminism’s “first wave” origins, issues have entailed suffrage, peace, sexual violence, militarism and war, reproductive health and rights, legal equality and representation, poverty and class inequality, and religious fundamentalisms. Across waves, regional specificities, and political stances, feminists have tackled those issues in a variety of ways, sometimes contentiously. (37)

According to her, feminist activism can involve various ideologies, political stances depending on the state of civil society. Through the waves of feminism, women continued to face obstacles in various areas such as politics and legislation, experiencing setbacks in the patriarchal society. Through the 19th century, the right to vote became a central demand amongst the majority as the number of women writers and activists increased. In the 19th century, the first-wave feminists rooted for civil and political equality, connected to the first Women’s Rights Convention (the Seneca Falls) in 1848 in Wesleyan Chapel, New York. This Convention was organized by American women’s right activist Lucretia Mott (1793-1880) and American writer and activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) with an aim to confront the injustices of women’s rights. Stanton argued for women’s social, civil, and religious rights in the United States. She even set a constitutional case through a presentation of the “Declaration of Sentiments” (Muños 289) to emphasize the injustices within the US Declaration of Independence of 1776, including the issue of voting, property rights, and restricted education (McCann 58-59). The composition is known to reflect the tone and the language of the original Declaration of Independence, emphasizing the inferior legal, political and economic positions of women. In their declaration, they included solutions to the pre-existing problems such as access to education, property and voting rights and the end of double standard in the workplace (Muños 289). Although the declaration did not pass at the time, it outlived the original founders and continued to exist as an exemplary work in the following years.

In 1888, The International Council of Women (ICW) was established and founded by Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Washington DC, United States of America to support the causes of women’s suffrage and to promote human rights and equality in all spheres, public and private. From the beginning of 1899, the organization campaigned on health, peace, and education. Initially, they represented nine countries,

eventually extending to more than 70, now establishing its headquarters in Paris, France (McCann et al. 60-63). American women's early suffrage inspired many other campaigns around Europe, and Canada; women were inspired by the US campaigns, causing the movement to gain heat and motion to come to a positive conclusion finally. In the times of early suffrage, in Britain during the Victorian age, Victorian middle-class feminists created a framework of their own demands for women's suffrage for British and Indian women, elaborating on the image of helpless and degraded women (Sinha 359).

Following the framework, in literature the first-wave feminism is led by Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792); an early work of the feminist movement. Wollstonecraft argues that "[w]omen's apparent weaknesses were not natural, but simply the product of mis-education" (Walters 30). As Wollstonecraft highlights, women of the 18th century were mostly educated on house chores, mannerisms, and the house work. "That a proper education; or, to speak with more precision, a well stored mind, would enable a woman to support a single life with dignity, I grant" (49). Their education was drastically different from men's. Therefore, they would not be allowed to train, fight, or even travel without company; they would be kept within the safety of their own house from any alleged outside threat. Wollstonecraft traces all these mistreatments based on discourses, thereby emphasizes that mis-education and oppression from birth leading to women being regarded as inferior which was a consequence of the cultural, ideological and social practices.

From the 1960s to the late 1980s, the second-wave feminism improved to draw on sexual and family rights for women instead of focusing merely on politics, drawing particular controversial attention to itself. The second-wave feminists examine feminist theology, biology, psychology, and art, investigating and reconstructing religious practices, women's biological nature, and the female mind and body. It aims to improve the lives of woman, illuminate women's history and establish certain role models. A name that illustrated the focus of the first-wave and contemplated the second-wave in literature is the French philosopher and writer Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and her work *Le Deuxième Sexe*, or *The Second Sex* (1949). Beauvoir gained attention with a study into the treatment of women throughout history, analyzing the roots of oppression. She searches for the answer to the question, "what is a woman?" and states that for years it was defined as imperfect men and criticizes that notion. While a man is the subject and the absolute, and the woman is described as the other and the object:

But what singularly defines the situation of woman is that being, like all humans, an autonomous freedom, she discovers and chooses herself in a world

where men force her to assume herself as Other: an attempt is made to freeze her as an object and doom her to immanence since her transcendence will be forever transcended by another essential and sovereign consciousness. (41-42)

In the quotation above, de Beauvoir defends that a woman needs to establish her freedom when her entire being is restrained by the society. Society accepts the man as the primary sex and the woman as the other, or secondary and therefore attempts to reduce the entire being of a woman into an object, reducing her only to exist within the household. A woman is raised to be dependent objects, to live unfulfilling lives serving the needs of men and forever be a part of the man's consciousness while losing her own's. Here lies the focus of the second-wave feminism that mainly explores domesticity, sexuality, and motherhood from an intellectual perspective. This is what de Beauvoir does, concluding that an individual's biology is not their destiny and that the sex of a person does not define her role and position in society (McCann et al. 116-117).

Following the footsteps of Beauvoir, American philosopher and writer Judith Butler (1956-) expands on the contents of the words sex and gender by expressing her theories and differentiating the terms in her paper "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*" (1986). Butler argues and disagrees with the fact that feminists reconstructed the definition of a woman:

Gender must be understood as a modality of taking on or realizing possibilities, a process of interpreting the body, giving it cultural form. In other words, to be a woman is to become a woman; it is not a matter of acquiescing to a fixed ontological status, in which case one could be born a woman, but, rather, an active process of appropriating, interpreting, and reinterpreting received cultural possibilities. (36).

As the quote suggests, Butler states there can only be a working definition described and identified through experiences of the female gender. It is highly difficult to define to be a gender, whether it is man or woman since the definition changes according to culture. Thus, culture and the definition of gender are interrelated and while the woman cannot be defined as the other, in fact, she cannot be defined at all without considering the correlations culture brings with.

The third-wave feminism seems to refocus and emphasize the concept of liberty from the patriarchal values, starting from the 1990s. It is mainly focused on women's reproductive rights through political activist actions and literary criticisms. An American feminist, Rebecca Walker (1969--), is the first person to vocalize and name the third wave through an article,

“Becoming the Third Wave” (1992), aiming to reclaim and redefine the sexist and classist ideas about gender, sexuality, femininity, and womanhood. “Let this dismissal of a woman’s experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power. [...] Do not nurture them if they don’t prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives. I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the Third Wave” (87). As she states, Walter issues a warning to the womenkind by refocusing on the urgent need for women to take control of their own lives and highlights those men need to acquire a high level of awareness to the problems, they still experience in the 20th century.

The lead name of third-wave feminism in literature is the British feminist author Naomi Wolf (1962--) and her book *The Beauty Myth* (1990). *The Beauty Myth* is written by a women writer for women readers to reach all women-kind, criticizing unreachable beauty norms. She criticizes the false myth and its capacity to enslave women to the idea that beauty is attainable, spending energy to attain the perfect beauty which prevents them from fulfilling lives. “The beauty myth stimulates women’s fears of looking older in order to drive us in the opposite direction: indoors once more, locus of the separate sphere and the Feminine Mystique; the proper place for women in every culture that most oppresses us” (106). Regarding the quote, the connotations of the beauty myth push women to spend more time in the private sphere than the public sphere, somewhere which is a metaphor of oppression for women. She claims the beauty myth is about behavior, not physical appearance. Wolf encourages her readers to empower themselves and feel free to be their true selves; highlighting the fact that a woman only wins if she gives herself and other women permission to be fully themselves (290).

As this brief history of feminism shows, feminism challenged and continues to challenge the established ideas and certainties in societies all over the world. Starting from the early 17th century, women never stopped to fight for their rights, voice concerns and suggestions for women. It is safe to state that, the works of early women writers such as Virginia Woolf, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Astell prepared the ground for more radical and powerful literary works and essays that later became the cornerstones of feminist readings. They became a part of establishing a female literary genealogy and guidelines to women writers of the future.

1.2. FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY

Feminist literary criticism is an ever-growing and transformative field in literature, which evoked a need for self-expression and insight into a woman’s mind through women’s writing.

Within its core, feminist literary criticism entails a political and literary history of women and an analysis of how their identities are indeed embedded into the works of literature. It also involves how women are represented in past and present times, hence different temporalities through a wide array of works revolving around women, and by doing so, contributes to the future of the field through the female representation of a woman's psyche through a woman's perspective. As Gill Plain and Susan Sellers state in their book entitled *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism* (2007):

Across the centuries woman has been the subject of innumerable reconfigurations, and with every reinscription comes the necessity of rereading. In the space of the text woman can be both defamed and defended, and it is here that the most persuasive possibilities can be found for imagining the future of the female subject. (2)

Since oral literature, in many continents worldwide woman both as a character and as an object of literature has been reshaped in different perspectives and representations. Granting the cogency of this statement, women have long been deprived of being authors of a literary work as writing means exposing oneself which is forbidden for obedient women. That said, the word "author," which holds its origin in Latin from the word *auctor*, meaning "producer, father, builder, trustworthy writer," the word was later used in the mid-14th century as *autour*, or *autor*, used with the following meanings "father, creator, one who makes or creates" ("author (n.)"). The word itself has been associated with men or figures of power. Therefore, it was not sensible that a woman could be an author simply because she was not a man or a figure of authority. If a woman defied societal norms by establishing her position as an author, it means that she crossed her boundaries exposing herself to the comments and negative actions of the community.

In a mythological sense, the myth of Daphne represents the power relationship between men and women as the male author and his female muse. Daphne, an independent young and beautiful huntress against marriage, falls victim to the gaze and attention of the god of muses, Apollo. She attempts to flee from the Lord of Delphi, only to beg her father, a river god, to save her from the dominant male gaze. At last, she is saved but rooted in nature for eternity as a laurel, a daphne tree (Hamilton 156-157). Upon losing his muse, Apollo mourns the loss of his victory and announces her new position as his object of muse for upcoming poets and writers – for all artists of the world:

O fairest of maidens, you are lost to me," he mourned. "But at least you shall be my tree. With your leaves my victors shall wreath their brows. You shall have

your part in all my triumphs. Apollo and his laurel shall be joined together
wherever songs are sung and stories told. (Hamilton 157)

The myth of Daphne establishes a woman's position as an object solely created to serve the needs of men. In the literary sense, she is a muse in the shape of a wreath made of laurel leaves. As a part of Greek tradition, a laurel wreath is given to highly talented poets, crowning them poet laureate. In other words, gifting the poets the muse of Apollo and leaves from his sacred tree to inspire artists. Such instances deprive women of subject positions in literature and art.

In literature, while some women writers glorify the image of woman, expressing her inner self and reflecting her often unconventional personal thoughts since they might not be accepted per the societal normative structures, others choose to twist the very same image and justify their patriarchal representation. As this thesis intends to accomplish, feminist criticism re-emphasizes the necessity of re-reading and revisiting the past, and evaluating the present to uncover the possible interpretations of the female representations in literary works. And for that, it will be to the point to examine the works of women writers.

In a variety of genres and subjects, such as novel, poetry, gender and cultural studies, women writers employ varied strategies to critique gender roles. What is important is that women's voices are encouraged to be at the center of literary works written and narrated mostly by women. Furthermore, women are under the spotlight with different identities they write about, be they writers, subjects, and readers. In the last decades, feminism and literary criticism have been co-evolving as feminism transforms itself to be involved in the academic studies of literary texts. One of the evolving terms within the scope of feminism and criticism is the term "matricentric feminism" coined by Andrea O'Reilly as a "mother-centred mode of feminism" (O'Reilly "Matricentric Feminism: A Feminism for Mothers" 13). O'Reilly states that motherhood is deeply integrated with feminism as matricentric feminism aims to prioritize the mothers and the problems they face in various settings including social, economic, cultural and psychological within the scope of women empowerment. Thus, she emphasizes on the impossibility of criticizing feminism without mentioning the problems at hand concerning motherhood and mother-centered feminism which is a sub-field known to emerge as a response to the multiple identities of women (O'Reilly 13).

In the 21st century, feminist literary criticism is a corresponding field with other disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, linguistics, and technology, with many following. The study area includes essays, myths, comparisons to men's literature, psychological aspects, discussions, and questions in different cultures, races, and sexual orientations, from medieval to modern. In other words, feminist literary criticism is heavily wrapped around different

disciplines underlining and introducing significant rhetorical questions about women and literature such as the place of women and restrictions around women writing.

Women and writing aims to explore and to question patriarchal literature with a gendered perspective, surpassing the limitations by allowing for a new definition of literature in terms of women's literature. To achieve this redefinition, the academic field of women and writing has the aim to excavate what is hidden and often repressed as female mindset, thoughts and feelings. To do this, the field employs different intercultural theoretical works such as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's theory of 'anxiety of authorship.' Gilbert and Gubar contribute to the field with their theory entitled 'anxiety of authorship' which calls into a redefinition of women writing. The word anxiety itself derives from the Latin word *anxietatem* meaning anguish, anxiety and solicitude, noun form *anxius*, which means uneasy, troubled mind ("anxiety (n.)"). Building from the etymological definition, Gilbert and Gubar in their work *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) define the term 'anxiety of authorship' as "a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a "precursor" the act of writing will isolate or destroy her" (49). They emphasize constricting, troubling and anxiety inducing normative rules concerning women's two identities as an individual and an author, and they establish women as the authorial voice, further exploring the anxieties and dilemmas through prohibitions around women in the patriarchal society. Their theory establishes a background, and thus makes an insight into women's literature.

In relation to Gilbert and Gubar's eminent work about the 19th century literature, Danielle Hipkins states that they "make a direct link between the physical imprisonment of women writers and their mental imprisonment in the male text, both of which translate into a spatial 'anxiety of authorship' in their writing" (122). What can be extracted from this quotation is that writers have had no choice but to exist on the margins and at the hidden corners of literature per the societal conditions. Attending to 'anxiety of authorship' whose definition was given above, women's having autonomy in terms of creating their own work has been a threat to the social conditioning of women in patriarchal literature, and this threat was mainly because women write about controversial female representations that deny male surveillance. Women writers also included their own life experiences, fears and anxieties into their works. So, for a women writer to establish and prove herself as an author, she had to first free herself from the physical and discursive restricting boundaries, and then to overcome the anxiety of authorship by freeing the imprisoned women portrayed in male texts.

Regarding the modern writer's relationship with their now-existing foremothers,

Gilbert and Gubar come up with a term entitled ‘female affiliation complex’ in their book *No Man’s Land* (1991), which allows the possibility of adopting literary mothers. In the 20th century, women writers started to compete for the limited spaces available for them in a patriarchal literature following the footsteps of their literary mothers, thus producing a new form of literary rivalry. To achieve this, modern women writers not only had to develop a positive relationship with their literary mothers, but they also had to make peace with their literary fathers and fellow male contemporaries so as to overcome the preexisting anxiety.

This anxiety shows itself in a number of ways. An English poet of the 17th century in the Enlightenment era, Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661-1720) in her poem titled “Upon Ardelia’s Return Home,” (1689) uses the metaphor of shade to underline this anxiety, for example. She states that the pre-existing positions in literature was consumed by men, and as a result, only a little shade was left for women. Women were restricted to write in the shades in a figurative and literary sense since their daily responsibilities prevailed. Finch, thus, transforms shade into a feminine space of freedom, offering the woman a female-dominated poetic realm hidden in the dark from the male gaze (Köylü viii-ix, 89). Finch’s shade still speaks to us in terms of finding a solution to overcome the anxiety about women’s place in the literary world. This anxiety attests to a version of anxiety of authorship, one involving literary foremothers and sisters. To overcome this anxiety, Gilbert and Gubar emphasize that the female artist is given three paths: adopting the father’s literary tradition; owning the mother’s tradition; or the solution of an infusion of the two (Doughty 1). Gilbert and Gubar’s discussions of the 19th to 20th century fiction prove that the field of women and writing continues to evolve under feminist literary criticism as literary works are produced, in which the female mind is excavated further.

Similarly, an Italian 21st century academic, Monica Farnetti (1960--) focuses on exploring the anxiety-induced relationship of artistic creativity in literature itself and how it is repositioned as an opportunity for empowerment through the female subject, inspired by the term “*fantastique féminin*,” translating to ‘the fantastic feminine’ coined by Ann Richter in 1977. Farnetti strips the term ‘anxiety’ from its negative connotation, and repurposes it to encourage a new relation that is inspired by the female subject itself:

The publicly unacknowledged anxiety [...] about their marginal position in relation to a male-authored canon finds expression and —to some degree— resolution through the fantastic. [...] Many female writers develop a kind of fantastic that breaks its traditional association with anxiety. (188)

Farnetti’s theory is that the female fantastic, or the fantastic feminine produces and identifies

herself as a subject, contributing to the self-representation process (qtd. in Boccuti 4). By doing so, she transforms the anxiety-induced situation that forbids a woman from creating and developing a unique literary work into a situation prompting an opportunity of representation of a woman's true self.

Amongst many other theoreticians, a few British women writers certainly stand up to contribute to the field even further. One is Virginia Woolf, especially with her essays entitled "Modern Fiction," "Women and Fiction," and "The Feminine Note in Fiction" that revolve around the patriarchal gender roles and the financial and psychological disadvantages of women writers based on predetermined gender roles. Another example is Elaine Showalter's work *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) which redefines women's writing as a literature of their own to create their own margins. And in her short story "To Room Nineteen" (1963) Doris Lessing also explores the female mind and transgression of borders and a woman's physical and intellectual space. These examples can easily be multiplied. Such eminent women writers establish the discursive roots of feminist literary theory, and thus pave the way for the future of women's literature by dealing with the restrictions around literary creation. This consequently introduces a new method of reading and writing.

Women and writing is a broad, rich and promising field, introducing scholars to a framework to be expanded. It is also about the ongoing conditions and difficulties women have been facing throughout literary history. Women writers have been struggling to be accepted into the primarily male dominant spaces of literature despite the solidity and quality of their works. Therefore, the area of women and writing allows the female writers to exist in their own spaces without the interruptions and limitations of the normative patriarchal literature. In the 21st century, literary works written by women writers in different centuries are still being excavated as a part of an ongoing discovery on women's literature. What is more is that new works are created even today by women authors with an effort to fill the gaps in matriarchal literature. Works written in the last decades are a reference point for scholars and authors to measure and understand themselves. In this journey to understanding the female perspective, the literary works are an active contribution to discover one's voice and to measure it against the normative avant-gardes. Recently, rewritings of the classics add to this journey to further understand the differences between a male and female perspective.

1.3. CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

Classical mythology represents a time in the world when the human race “thought and felt untold” (Hamilton 1). It also holds traces of social rules of a certain time, their interests, connections, and how the human mind worked through the Greek word *mythos*, meaning a myth, legend, narrative, or a tale. *Mythos* is often associated with a period where the distinction between the real and the unreal was vague, imagination alive and taken literally. Ethnologically speaking, the word “myth,” originating from *mythos*, carries three possible meanings within itself. It can be perceived as simply an allegorical, popular tale told in society. Its characteristics match the etymological definition consisting of supernatural events and characters (gods, demi-gods, creatures) (Brzeziński 17). Thus, myths tell the story of the world and attempt to reasonably explain of the cosmos through mythical events. Thus, the stories within the different mythologies offer explanations to the human wonders while existing in an imaginary world at the same time. In the words of Karen Armstrong as she states in her book *A Short History of Myth* (2005), “[a]ll mythology speaks of another planet that exists alongside our own world, and that in some sense supports it. Belief in this invisible but powerful reality sometimes called the world of gods, is a basic theme of mythology” (6). A myth is also a narrative: it withholds ancient society’s customs, rituals, and perspectives. The introduction of Rudolf Steiner’s book of collected works *The Occult Truths of Myths and Legends* (2023) states that “[l]ooking into a myth or legend is like going on a journey of exploration. Each myth has so many levels of depth, and sounding each one takes us more deeply into an aesthetic pleasure, into our psyche, or right into our spiritual history” (Steiner 12). That is to say, a myth is another way of contemplating and dreaming about the world as ancient societies imagined it. It enables an individual to reinterpret a mythic story with each reading and correlate the events with one’s own. The myth also represents universal consciousness, differing from the first two meanings. It reflects on the human behavior of the time in the form of mythical instances. Furthermore, myths differ with each culture, and so do their meanings and represented values. So, say, the best possible definition would be to call it a “traditional narrative,” as the British classist Geoffrey Kirk (1921-2003) states (16-17).

In ancient Greeks, *logos* often co-existed with *mythos*. It is a Greek-derived word meaning reason, representing a rather “pragmatic mode of thought that enabled people to function effectively in the world” (Armstrong, *A Case for God* 10). From tales to reason, myths brought understanding to an unfamiliar and alienating world; societies survived on Earth by reasoning the anomalies in nature such as the rotation of the sun and natural disasters. *Mythos*

does not include observation or argumentation about reason; it rather connects events of the natural order to the supernatural while *logos* entails scientific observation and reasoning. To exemplify *mythos*, the sun-god Helios was often associated with a chariot he drove across the sky from east to west every single day, with rays of light following him. The Greeks used the existence of Helios as the god who carried the sun through the sky to explain the odd phenomenon (Hard 41). On the other hand, *Logos* was a way of controlling the uncontrollable; it explained many aspects of the world until the human mind and logic failed, and people consulted to *mythos* to help navigate their psyche. As Edith Hamilton states “[t]he invisible must be understood by the visible” (5). The ancient Greek society in particular conjured the myths in accordance with *logos*. They created a personified image of the gods, presenting them as higher beings living ordinary lives, gossiping, cheating and fighting one another. With these images uniting, the universe suddenly had an explanation in storied form. Deities wandered on Earth in the form of forests, rivers, and human beings. Each deity represented a part of nature; Poseidon, the Lord of the Waters; Zeus, the Lord of the Sky and deities like Demeter and Dionysus were goddesses/gods of Earth. Thus, deities were one with nature, as they were nature itself.

Hamilton states that such instances are “the miracle of Greek mythology,” presenting a humanized world as individuals free themselves from the paralyzing Unknown (5-7). On similar grounds, Sarah Johnson in her article “Narrating Myths: Story and Belief in Ancient Greece,” (2015) suggests that Greek mythic narratives prepare the readers to feel as if they were in the divine realm of gods and great heroes; through stories of imagination, they bring upon logical explanations and establish connections with a divine world. Therefore, they mix *mythos* and *logos* once more. And such narratives with formative functions carry the ability to change how people decide on what is real and what is not. She also argues that such occurrence prevents scholars from grasping the importance of the myths in creating and sustaining ancient Greek beliefs ranging from heroes to the divine world. Her statement is in fact accurate for the mindset of the time, in which the ancient mythology and drama presented itself as a system of beliefs which might have led to an alternation of factual reality in people’s perceptions.

Johnson further aims to establish a form of context to differentiate other myths like Mediterranean and Egyptian from Greek myths by categorizing these myths as *historiolae* which highlights how brief myths were created to solve an immediate issue like an illness. *Historiolae* is often performative utterances where a certain ritual and name-calling is performed for a specific deity (177). The presentation of mythic power in a mythic crisis is followed by a narration of the same mythic power and later, the cure of an illness. To exemplify

this from ancient Egyptian society, an uncovered Egyptian papyrus from Ancient Egypt requires a mother with a feverish child to recite a narrative between Isis, as a mother requesting help to feed her feverish son, Horus to heal. Here, Isis herself is the mythic power in mythic crisis, involving a narration of her actions to present Horus's fever (Bommas 44). As this myth indicates, such mythological stories generally inhabit a mythic realm surrounded by more extraordinary powers than those available in the realm of everyday people (Johnson 176-178). Differing from such ancient myths, Greeks utilize myths to answer colossal questions, the way universe works (the Titans),⁷ the discovery of the fire (myth of Prometheus)⁸ and on a more personalized basis, they shed light onto the private lives of deities to establish a connection to the mortal world (myth of Cupid and Psyche.)⁹

In its essence, works written in antiquity involve cultural beliefs and assumptions of the classical time, hence involve mythic stories incorporated in their narratives. Concordantly, *The Iliad* by Homer is accepted to be the oldest Greek mythic literature, shedding partial light upon the dynamics of the society of the time, and to this day, one of the versions of the primary texts when referring to Greek mythology (Hamilton 3). Greek mythologists like Homer, transformed a terrifying world to a captivating one through the power of their imagination, that is through fantasy itself as a part of a fictional narrative. However, the sources for the Greek myths are not limited to Homer. Despite the existence of countless names¹⁰, this thesis will include the most prominent to the subject. Acusilaus of Argos (c. 6th century BCE) is an early mythographer writing about local legends from the epic tradition. Similar to him, Aeschylus (525-456 BCE) is known to be one of the earliest great Athenian tragic poets. His trilogy *Oresteia* which portrays the Pelopid ruling family is accounted for as "the most imposing monuments of ancient literature" (Hard 2). Euripides (c. 485-406 BCE) is another Athenian tragic poet most known for his works *The Bacchae* (405 BCE), *The Children of Heracles* (430 BCE) and *Medea* (431 BCE). Hesiod (c. 700 BCE), is a Boeotian epic poet of two survived poems: *The Theogony* (c. 730-700 BCE) and *The Works and Days*. *The Theogony* includes a

⁷ The Titans, also known as the Elder Gods were the gods of incredible power and strength presenting rivers (Ocean), the sun (Hyperion), even memory (Mnemosyne) (Hamilton 18).

⁸ Prometheus was a Titan also known as "the savior of mankind" for bringing fire to men, banished eternally by Zeus (Hamilton 18).

⁹ The myth of Cupid (Eros) and Psyche carries the moral lessons of love and trust. The love god, Cupid falls for Psyche who is famously known for her beauty and their love is affirmed through a series of trials brought upon Psyche by his mother Venus (Aphrodite).

¹⁰ Hard, Robin. *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology*. 8th ed. Routledge, 2020, pp. 2-16.

comprehensive history on the origins of gods, explaining the phenomena of the universe and the current hierarchy of deities. *The Works and Days* (700 BCE), however focuses on the narrative story of the first woman, Pandora and the mythological origin of races (Hard 3-8). Another classical figure, Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BCE-Date Unknown, presumed to be 17 or 18 CE), better known as Ovid, was a Roman poet known best for the technical qualities of his verses. He is best known for *Metamorphoses* (8 BCE), a narrative poem that documents the history of the world. Another one of Ovid's important works is *Heroides* (date of publication unknown, presumed to be 1-20 BCE), a collection of poems and letters that were written through Greek and Roman mythology's mistreated heroines to their lovers. "[A] reason that may have persuaded him to do so is that the 'message' of each letter is far more effective when the heroine simply tells her story—as Ariadne, Medea, and Hypermestra are doing— than when she engages in lengthy arguments, lamentations, regrets [...]" (Galinsky 34). With this collection, Ovid is likely to have created an entirely new genre with his unique perspective in his literary work. Although the collection was not well received at the time by scholars, it is seen in a much better regard in the last centuries, specifically through the lens of female literary theory. Furthermore, myths created by such significant individuals shaped cultures and societies in ancient times as an attempt to explain the anomalies of the nature through supernatural elements and tales of heroes inspired upcoming genres such as fantasy literature in the following years.

1.4. FANTASY LITERATURE

The word "fantasy" derives from Old French word *fantaisie* or *phantasie* meaning vision and imagination, with its adjective form "fantastic" or *fantastique*, meaning "to exist only in imagination, produced by mental fantasy" ("Fantasy (n.)") ("Fantastic (adj.)"). The two terms date back to early 14th century, to the transformation of myths to fairy tales. J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973), a great writer and theorist in fantasy literature, examines the roots of fantasy literature in his essay "On Fairy Stories" (1947). In his discussion, Tolkien defines fairy-stories through an etymological definition of the word "fairy," or *faerie* in 13th century Old French, which means "land of fairies" ("Fairy (n.)"). Tolkien states that fairy-stories are initially about the humankind. He refers to *Faerie* as a spectacular, yet dangerous world for the overly confident individuals. Rooted deeply in the archaic society and originating from folktales, fairytales are alienated from the concepts of time and space to emphasize the notion of universality (Nikolajeva 138). Tolkien describes the realm of fairy-story as vast and

enchancing. His discussion is circulated around the fact that the realm of *Faerie* cannot be described in a few words like fairy-story; indifferent to its purpose (satire, morality, fantasy), and fairy-story is for the ones involved with *Faerie*, in his words it is about “the adventures of men” in a supernatural setting (27-32).

In their essence, fairytales involve fantastic elements. Similar to fantasy literature, fairytales involve dimensional experiences through stories in a land far, far away with supernatural characters. This gives room for endless possibilities for fantasy literature that is a creation of the imagination, entailing multiple worlds, races, and endless possibilities. In other words, through fantasy works, a writer can always rely on the term ‘imagination,’ which by definition means “[t]he part of our mind which allows us to form pictures or ideas of things that do not necessarily exist in real life” (“Imagination”). Therefore, imagination and the fantastic allow the mind to discover uncharted territories. In fantasy, words can mean a thousand things, and an imaginary world can similarly represent uninterrupted flow of thoughts. In everyday life, people often choose their words carefully to abide by the societal rules and to be a part of the society, however, in imaginary world words do not often have repercussions and their definitions can be of infinite variables. Thus, individuals’ minds explore a world of freedom in fantasy, which enables the mind to express the repressed thoughts and emotions.

Tzvetan Todorov (1939-2017), Bulgarian-French theorist and historian, introduces the fantastic by differentiating it from “the uncanny and the marvelous” (Sandor 343). According to him, the uncanny, strange and mysterious are rooted in the nature of the literary works. “The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event” (Todorov 25). In other words, the uncanny, the moment of hesitation between what is real and what is imaginary, along with the surrender of the either the reader or the character to the world of supernatural are two of the characteristics of the term fantastic.

Upon the mention of the term uncanny, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis contemplated on the definition of the word ‘uncanny’ in his work *The Uncanny* (1919). In the introduction of his book by Hugh Haughton, it is stated that Freud begins surveying the German dictionaries while contemplating about the word itself and comes across the word *unheimlich*, which means not from home, however, Freud uses the term uncanny for its English translation (42):

The literary uncanny ‘is above all much richer than what we know from experience’ but also intensely different from it, mainly because of our historical

consciousness of genre. The supernaturalism of the fairy tale does not inspire a sense of the uncanny because there is no conflict of judgement, no clash of different models of the real in it. (46)

Following the quote above, the literary uncanny is not limited to a strange event derived of personal experiences, but based much more on the supernatural aspects. The form of supernaturalism Freud mentions is existent in Homer and his display of “the serene world of gods” (190). The stories often provide logical reasonings to supernatural occurrences in the end; however, the marvelous and the extraordinary accept the supernatural nature as the norm without any logical explanations required. As Sandor states the fantastic by its nature is not supposed to be understood by logic (343). Consequently, the reader accepts the unreasonable elements of imagination willingly. “There is no doubt that the ‘uncanny’ belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread. It is equally beyond doubt that the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so it commonly merges with what arouses fear in general” (Freud 158). From this perspective, fantasy by nature is supposed to be unreal, supernatural and imaginative. It is supposed to have a sense of the uncanny, wondering in a sea of unknowns but eventually returning to the familiar space.

As various theorists in the field of fantasy literature including Tzvetan Todorov, Kathryn Hume (1945--), W.R. Irwin Thompson (1938-2020) and Colin Manlove (1942-2020) agree, it is palpable that fantasy literature is more than merely a genre; “fantasy is [indeed] about the construction of the impossible” (James and Mendlesohn 1). Amongst other theorists, Rosemary Jackson (1947-2023) and her theory of the fantastic is one of the significant names in the field. In her book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (2009), she states “[t]he fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made ‘absent’” (2). That is to say, fantasy literature is one with the culture, and thus, reflects the societal structures. For the premises of this thesis, it can be stated that fantasy can be utilized to uncover the vague characterization of women to put an emphasis on the male characters. Rosemary Jackson “bases her theory upon the premise that being a product of indomitable desire, a fantastic text enables its reader to confront the thoughts and emotions that the dominant ideology suppresses” (Özyurt Kılıç 20). A fantastic literary work expresses the unconventional thoughts and ideologies otherwise rejected in the patriarchal society, thus it situates room for self-awareness.

Fantasy literature is also a confusing genre as it is very difficult to give a solid definition for what is included in fantasy literature. Moreover, it is particularly difficult to distinguish between science-fiction and fantasy literature because of their natures. That said, science

fiction draws on possible-science, hypothetical futures and a form of reality whereas fantasy does not need to necessarily exist in any form of reality. In the collection book *Classics of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature* (2002), the definition of fantasy literature is clarified as:

Stories of “the fantastic” may be defined as including any set in a world different from our own or that include elements recognized as alien to our own, things that are not true or not yet true. (Kelleghan 1)

In other words, the worlds in a work of fantasy literature should be set in another world with supernatural elements; the possibility of the events in the literary work should be unlikely or hardly likely to happen in everyday life. However, regarding science fiction the definition includes:

The point is that science fiction in particular [...] tends to follow the frontier of scientific possibility. This frontier, effectively static for hundreds if not thousands of years, expanded with growing acceleration all through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its expansion has created an ever-increasing area of speculation and possibility in which science fiction can flourish. (4)

As the quote clarifies, while they are both imaginary, fantasy entails a world with supernatural elements and such a world is created through a series of impossibilities whereas the world of science fiction should exist within the scope of scientific possibilities. Yet still, these two traditions are blurry with overlapping definitions and employing similar elements.

Ignoring all these conceptual overlapping definitions, fantasy or fantastic fiction is a genre starting with the fantastical elements in the ancient myths and fairytales continuing to exist within romance and epics. Fantasy fiction gained motion and fame in the classical time with works such as *Beowulf* (c. 700-750), Edmund Spenser’s (1552-1599) *The Faerie Queen* (1590), and Mary Shelley’s (1797-1851) *Frankenstein, Or A Modern Prometheus* (1818). Fantasy has unreplaceable literary works in fiction such as the first example of modern fantasy genre, John Ruskin’s *The King of the Golden River* (1841), J..R.R Tolkien’s *Lord of The Rings* (1954), and C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950).¹¹ Through the years, the fantastic evolved and divided into subgenres as the number of works multiplied. It also exploded onto

¹¹ *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights* (Arabian Nights) (1811) by Antoine Galland
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900) by L. Frank Baum
Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865) by Lewis Carroll

For more see “Chronology.” James, Edward and Mendlesohn, Farah, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp.xv-xxiv.

many branches to include various movements such as realism, structuralism, modernism and postmodernism. Despite the current debates on the premises of the genre, the borders of fantasy literature are quite difficult to define. Through new authors and ideas, fiction itself is an ever-growing genre, now including a telling of a woman's life.

Once the previous centuries and literary works by women are considered, women's literature entailed the retellings of women's dreams disguised as their controversial thoughts. It is only reasonable that women altered and repurposed the fantasy modern literature, establishing their permanent presence in the literary and literal world through fantasy. In a world where high literature is mostly male populated, it provides an explanation to why women are left to write fantasy works because these works are not taken into serious consideration by male literature authorities. Fantasy literature is taken as a popular literature rather than high literature, given that works of high literature carry literary merit, commenting and discussing the human condition and life whereas popular literature does not require as much depth, and often intended for the mass society. However, women's fantasy literature in fact involves parts from both high and popular literature; the matriarchal imaginary world, the stories, and the characters fantasy literature allows for are liberating for women. In heteronormative patriarchal literature, once a woman is labeled as such they are transformed into confined figures and denied the liberty of speech and expression. If such characters or stories in a fantasy work were to exist in a patriarchal world they would easily be labeled as irrational or wicked. In opposition, women's fantasy literature carries the depth and seriousness of high literature while addressing to society with an aim for awareness.

On that basis, fantasy literature is a multipurpose tool interrelated to human nature and psyche, whether it is a spiritual journey like George Macdonald (1824-1905)'s *Phantastes* (1858) or C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)'s *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956)), an ode to medieval literature like J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973)'s *The Lord of the Rings*) or a conductor of radical thoughts and philosophical underpinnings like Ursula Le Guin (1929-2018)'s *The Earthsea Cycle* (1968-2001). A spiritual journey involves a rite of passage where the main characters go through certain events that change their beliefs and perspectives forever, where a conductor of radical thoughts and philosophical underpinnings often includes a deeper meaning through metaphors and are reflective of an individual often unexpressed thoughts as it would not be right to express them in the real society.

For Ursula Le Guin, fantasy literature is personal, filled with experiences outside societal norms and the patriarchic structure. Prof. Dr. Mine Özyurt Kılıç in a podcast titled "Reading the Artist / Ursula K. Le Guin" (2022), highlights Ursula Le Guin's verbal

imagination where in fiction her thoughts are similar to the vibrations in the mind, following an uninterrupted flow. In her works, Le Guin crosses the literary genre boundaries as her literary compositions often withhold various genres such as fiction and essay. Her distinction between reality and fiction is vague as her works are often based on reality involving discoveries by and for women (Özyurt Kılıç).

As stated in the cover copy of her book collection *Women, Dreams and Dragons* (1998) “Her language reveals the unnamed, not yet lived, understood, and heard, but just mistaken as noise” (Le Guin Cover copy).¹² According to her, fantasy literature is an effort to share a glimpse of their elaborate dreams with the public. The vague distinction between reality and fiction allows discoveries by women writers and for women in general. For example, this vague distinction can be conveyed by dreams which signify alternative worlds and restricted thoughts. It can also be revealed through imagination which represents a world of domination. As a main part of that imaginary world, characters are transformed from being a virtual and one-dimensional object to a higher position of a subject. In her collection, Le Guin illustrates the stories of individuals on their journeys and further shares glimpses of their world with an ability to draw “a map of the inner worlds” (Le Guin 7). Her stories are unique tales of journeys, showing that Le Guin is indeed equipped with a unique language to elaborate on the hardships women experience. The book’s preface states that “Le Guin’s language is captivating because when we purify her language from the fabric of “fiction,” all there is left is her sincerity with its at full nudity and cruelty. Her subversive language unarms a person’s defense mechanism without damaging one’s emotions” (Le Guin 7).¹³ This proves that Le Guin’s difference from her fantastic contemporaries is that she found a way to upturn the patriarchic structure of “language” without disturbing anyone, which is crucial since that means Le Guin asserted herself in what is normally a patriarchal dominant genre, making space for herself and future generations of women writers.

Fantastic worlds can be utilized to convey a particular statement, serving as conductors to hidden meanings and messages that cannot be said out loud in the current conditions of societal norms. Imaginary images and symbols have significantly been a part of the fantasy genre in order to serve as a camouflage for the ideas humans are reluctant or are forbidden to mention in civilized order. Fantastic images and symbols further grant freedom of expression

¹² “Henüz isimlendirilmemiş olanı, henüz yaşanmamış olanı, hey duyulup da gürültülü zannedileni söyler o dil” (Le Guin Arka Kapak).

¹³ “Bunun en önde gelen nedeni, Le Guin’in dilini “kurgu” dokusundan arındırdığımızda ortada tüm çıplaklığı, acımasızlığı (ve bazen dehşeti) ile kalan samimiyettir. Altüst edici söylemler duygularınızı incitmese bile savunma mekanizmalarınızı elinizden alır çoğu kez” (Le Guin 7).

to individuals who are either stripped of or hidden with their thoughts within their everyday lives. A fantastic story allows the individual to speak out against the prejudices and restrictions in everyday life. Daina Chaviano, in her article entitled “Science Fiction and Fantastic Literature as Realms of Freedom” (2004) states that a fantastic story can be the most excellent present to societies with its opportunities to explore all kinds of alternative realities: it can connect and conserve resources and freedom. Such a comment is significant to the premises of this thesis mainly because alternative realities in literary works provide insights into characters and events most people have not even considered. This is quite important because through a representation of different realities and imaginary worlds, a person can discover the alternative and possibly significant connotations unspoken in everyday life. Chaviano also underlines the functionality of her own characters transforming into “representatives of the values believed to be extinct or nonexistent” (10). She deliberately utilizes fantastic symbols to emphasize the freedom her characters have, and to show that the freedom they get in fantastic stories is a form of freedom that does not exist in everyday life.

In the last centuries, the fantasy literature written by and about women is a fast-developing subject. The writers generally write with a mission to investigate and discover different and “‘female’ ways of writing fantastic texts, depending on the selection of themes, language, characters, supernatural elements and the portrayal of the uncanny and the monstrous” (Roas 2). This resonates with Richter’s term, “the fantastic feminine” in the sense that the discovery of ‘female’ ways of writing fantastic texts enables a more feminine presentation of both the stories and the characters. When considered the vast variety of fantastic texts written by men and the poor and typical characterization of women in those texts, ‘the female fantastic’ allows a woman to exist as an author and as a narrator, and offers unique perspectives in multiple ways. According to Richter, the one truly “female” literature is fantasy modern literature because women reflect their movements, thoughts within magical realism more spontaneously (qtd in. Roas 2). In literary compositions, women characters reflect the problems women encounter in their everyday lives. So, consequently, women of “female” literature, meaning women writers naturally learned to navigate and dominate the fantasy world accordingly.

Taking all these statements into consideration, the ‘female fantastic’ contradicts the normative views, commenting on the dominant false logic in our world by making use of ancient cultural and mythical stories. Gloria Alpini, in an article titled “From Female Archetypes to Female Stereotypes. Myth and Fantasy: Alienating Modes of Representation. An Interdisciplinary and Comparative Approach to *“le fantastique féminin,”*” (2005) focuses on

the similarities between myth and fantasy based on the modern male writer's works which have an alienating tendency when representing women. This notion of alienation mainly turns women into an image of perfection of supernatural origin, and ultimately reduces the characterization to only physical appearance and psyche. Thus, woman becomes a passive object, a tool for the male protagonist to either accomplish or defeat to achieve his resolution rather than an active agent in a fantastic story. As a result, the notion of alienation distorts "the traditional representations of women to allow a multiplicity of female images and viewpoints to adhere to the reality of woman and shun any mystical aura" (41). The female fantastic in the modern era distinguishes distorted representations of a woman as subordinate and submissive to resituate her as a realistic figure rather than a supernatural being. Women writers resituate the woman by giving voice to the emotions and thoughts of the silenced women like in Madeline Miller's short story "Galatea" (2013). Miller re-portrays the myth of Galatea and Pygmalion by reimagining her in a modern setting. After Galatea's marble statue is brought to life by Pygmalion, she is contained under supervision at hospital grounds, but with an unconfined and sharp mind. Miller voices her trauma and the complex thoughts to break the stereotype around women in mythological narratives.

To put it differently, fantasy literature written by women as a result of women-oriented and gendered discourses enables the subversion of the female identity through reshaping the preexisting characterization in men's literary works. It introduces the probability of altering the narrative structures to establish a new imaginary image for women, pointing at the possible interpretations available and the creation of a new literary narrative. The act of reshaping produces various different comments and presentations in characterization and through fantasy literature, mythological narratives are reinvented to highlight a more women-oriented perspective.

1.5. RETELLING THE CLASSICS

Greek mythology and mythic stories explain the social structure and society, regulating the patterns of behaviours in line with the existing order. They also reveal the traditions of the societies which are still influential in the modern world. In the 21st century, mythological stories inspire discussions in various fields, including history, religion, and, most significantly, literature per their connection to the corresponding societies. Under feminist literary criticism, scholars and women writers often revisit and criticize the classical works which originally adopt a patriarchal narrative. When discussing the act of revisiting, it is necessary to clarify the

differences between the words, revisiting, retelling, and rewriting, and why the words “retelling” and “rewriting” were chosen as the main terms for the premises of this thesis. Believed to originate from Old French and Latin around the year 1200, the prefix “re-”, meant “again; back; anew” when it first originated, however in the 21st century, additional meanings such as “back from, back to the original place” were added along with the previous connotations (“re-”). It is also stated that between its many connotations, once used in a broader sense, the prefix itself can be defined as “a turning back; restoration to a former state” (“re-”). When the prefix is added to the root words of visiting, telling, and writing, the new words revisiting, retelling, and rewriting, adopt a whole new set of meanings such as “return to a place again” (“revisit (v.)”), “tell again, relate anew” (“retell (v.)”), “reply in writing, write a second time” (“rewrite (v.)”). Between the variety of such words, women writers choose to use either retelling, or rewriting to focus on the tales of male heroes which view women as indirect objects and side characters with one objective, that is to help and assist men under the field of feminist literary theory. From this perspective, these tales inevitably capture patriarchal ideology dominant in society. However, upon revisiting these tales, it becomes evident that women characters were confined inside the margins of male writers’ characterizations. Rewriting the universal stereotypes and archetypal characterizations, such as the innocent, the evil enchantress, or the lover, contributes to the establishment of a feminist literary canon and the ongoing social protest. By “rewriting” which originally meant to answer back in writing in the 16th century (“rewrite (v.)”), women reply back to the gendered stereotypes and narrow-minded perspectives through complex characterizations. Unique narrative styles also highlight how women are scripted and described in many scholarly works and fiction. An American poet, essayist and feminist Adrienne Rich (1929-2012), in her article “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision,” (1972) states: “Re-vision -the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering a text from a new critical direction- is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (18). Through re-visioning, she emphasizes the need of the search for identity which is the main key into a woman’s survival in a male-dominated society. The writing of the past is viewed as the most important element to break the passed on patriarchal literary tradition.

In the 21st century, many women scholars such as Susan Shapiro and Helen Morales criticize and re-evaluate classical works as a part of the ongoing continuum in feminist criticism. In her article “A Feminist Approach to Classical Literature” (1985), Susan Shapiro elaborates on feminist criticism concerning classical literature by reconstructing cultural assumptions regarding gender roles and status. She specifically evaluates Homer’s *The*

Iliad and *The Odyssey* from a unique perspective, stating that *The Iliad* can be illuminating for scholars to view the assumption that women are the properties of their male counterparts or prizes to be attained. On the contrary, in *The Odyssey*, there is an interesting representation of independent, intelligent, and capable women figures speaking out against the orders and conventional rules (66). Shapiro specifically mentions the character of Phaedra in a sympathetic tone through the stress of her nature and heroic struggle, giving the readers a relief to emphasize the importance of the proto-feminist perspective of classical literature and the need to re-evaluate such works. Similarly, the book *Antigone Rising: The Subversive Power of the Ancient Myths* (2020) by Helen Morales (1970--) revisits the mythological stories ranging from amazons to goddesses from a fresh perspective to emphasize the unreal expectations from women. As a result of her discovery during revisiting, Morales claims the Greek and Roman myths have become an influential part of our culture. They are indeed the foundations of the beliefs that shape our societal lives. Morales aims to regain the control of ancient myths by interrelating the classical notions and characters to the 21st century, such as relating the school dress codes to the women's dress policy by the "women controllers" in ancient Greece (16) and the Roman goddess Diana with a Hispanic woman named Diana who protected women and girls at the expense of murdering the men (91). Attending to this twist she made, Morales successfully presents a comprehensive literary criticism, contributing to women and writing.

In recent years, retellings of Greek mythology in literature through fantasy literature have become vast and widespread, extending the borders of women and writing and women's fantasy literature. One of the upcoming writers is Natalie Haynes (1974--), with her book *A Thousand Ships* (2019), voicing the silent women figures of the Trojan War such as Calliope, the muse of epic poetry; Briseis, a war prize; and Penelope, wife of Odysseus. Through first-person narration, Haynes presents the world from each character's unique perspective, emphasizing their thoughts and mentality. She also liberates them from their passive positions in the epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, and grants them a platform to speak on. Another book to be mentioned by her is *Pandora's Jar: Women in the Greek Myths* (2021), where she retouches the stories of ten significant women from Greek mythology¹⁴ and from the plays of Sophocles and Euripides, including the characters of Pandora and Medea. As a matter of fact, the literary examples of retellings under the scope of fantasy literature existed since the 20th century, with first known being C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956). In a

¹⁴ Pandora, Jocasta, Helen, Medusa, The Amazons, Clytemnestra, Eurydice, Phaedra, Medea and Penelope.

chronological order, some of the works include Mary Renault's *The King Must Die: Theseus Series #1* (1958), Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), Ursula Le Guin's *Lavinia* (2008), Natalie Haynes' *The Children of Jocasta* (2017), Pat Barker's *Women of Troy* (2018), Natalie Haynes' *Stone Blind* (2022), Claire Heywood's *The Shadow of Perseus* (2023), Laura Shepperson's *Phaedra: A Novel* (2023), and Jennifer Saint's *Atalanta* (2023).

Through these retellings, women writers do not aim to invalidate the myths but to present a unique view untouched by male writers. Of course, these examples can easily be multiplied in terms of reflecting literary retellings of various mythologies and stories; however, this thesis aims to focus on a specific two: Madeline Miller's *Circe* and Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne*.

Circe by Madeline Miller is one of the primary texts of this thesis. It features the Greek mythological character Circe and the story from a feminist perspective in line with the fantastic literature. It situates Circe as the main character, providing insights into the female experiences and perspectives, and it talks about a woman's inner life and the world from a unique point of view, highlighting the misjudged and dehumanized imagery behind the characterization Circe. Miller intentionally restructures the mythic story intending to reconstruct Circe's image created by male figures, thus criticizing the stereotypes about female sexuality and gender roles in society through her characterization.

Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne* is the second primary text of the thesis, another retelling of Greek myths from a woman's perspective – the ancient myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. In the 21st century, Ariadne has turned into a figure of a vulnerable heroine and a victim as a woman, used as an object for Theseus' epic story, and the retelling of Saint reveals a different perspective of Ariadne. Differing from *Circe*, in *Ariadne*, we have a general third-person narrative structure in the novel, with the chapters switching between first-person narrators. These narrators are Ariadne, and Phaedra, the two sisters. Saint draws particular attention to the inner world of women residing in private places, restructuring Ariadne herself through reanimating events previously presented by male authors.

Madeline Miller and Jennifer Saint revisit the classical literature; the Greek mythology presented as in Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Homer's works are considered cornerstones to the world of classical mythology. Therefore, through the centuries, various authors attempted to rework and restructure the stories; however, the restructuring was conducted through a male perspective with the male characters as the protagonists. Differently, though, Miller and Saint criticize the ever-lasting stereotypes about female sexuality, gender roles, and women's domesticity in their novels. Myths are the mirrors to society and through works such as these, women writers clean and polish the mirror for a better reflection. To polish

that mirror better, this thesis will make use of literary analysis of these two novels, *Circe* and *Ariadne*.

The thesis will begin with chapter 1, entitled “Reenactment of a Goddess: Sorceress Circe,” providing an examination of her novel of fantasy literature, providing an intensive examination of the narrative styles and characterization. It aims to particularly focus on the female identity, domesticity, and assumptions of patriarchal myths. The ultimate aim is to draw a correlation between the original text and Miller’s rewriting to observe the crucial significance of a representation and characterization through a female perspective.

Chapter 2, “From Heroine to Hero: Princess Ariadne,” will draw attention to the female interpretation, patriarchal heroic myths, and the topics of women, sacrifice, and motherhood by providing quotes and examples from similar primary and secondary sources. The chapter will focus on Saint’s rewriting, her narrative technique and the representation of the character, Ariadne. Later, it will conclude that through the representation of a female perspective, a character can be explored deeper levels, physically and psychologically.

Both chapters will extensively discuss Homer’s and Ovid’s characterization of the two significant characters, Circe and Ariadne. This thesis will investigate the possibility of a new literary canon in the rewritings. Finally, in conclusion, after revisiting Greek mythology, upon new findings, the thesis will attempt to add to the female literary genealogy by presenting the other scholarly and literary feminist approaches to classical literature and relating it to 21st century women’s fantasy literature.

CHAPTER II

2. REENACTMENT OF A GODDESS: SORCERESS CIRCE

Myths are traditional stories with special ‘meaningfulness.’

(Lowell Edmunds, *Approaches to Greek Myth* 1)

Madeline Miller (July 24, 1978) grew up in New York City and Philadelphia as a mythology enthusiast. After earning her BA and MA in Latin and Ancient Greek, she taught and tutored high school students in Latin and Greek languages and literature. Miller took an interest in the vilified character of Circe when she read *The Odyssey* on her own at only 13. Later during her studies in Brown University, upon reading the Homeric version in original Greek, she started to re-think the story that has long been told from a male’s perspective. Consulting to her knowledge of Latin and Greek, Miller researched Circe in intensive detail by cross-checking references and different male-dominated stories such as Roman poet Ovid’s (43-17/18 CE) *Metamorphoses* (8 CE) and the story of Telegonus from the ancient Greek epic poem *The Telegony* (unknown date of composition).

In consequence of her studies, she has pointed to the need for a female perspective enmeshed with mythological realism, which is a term she uses to describe the action of inhabiting the realms of reality and history (Plotz). Miller uses the term to correspond the storyline of her novel with oral literature. According to her, mythology is a way of presenting the historical reality with fantastical elements. She writes in accordance with mythological realism, a term that appears to be coined by her (Plotz). She defines the term by the boundaries she created whilst writing in an interview with Public Books: Miller is not afraid to make changes to Homer’s original text. Overall, her mythological realism inhabits the two realms, historical and the story world as her stories are rooted in history itself. In other words, she understands the need to translate the “stories about the abuse of power” with help of mythological elements, however, its ties with the roots of the original text remains (Plotz).

In Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Circe is known as a nymph and a goddess of sorcery (*pharmakeia*)¹⁵ who was banished to her own island, Aea. Her reputation amongst mortals is majorly based on her power of transformation and how she turns every man who visits her island into a pig. Born with magical abilities, in Homeric tradition, Circe is portrayed as an infamous sorceress who used her power in accordance with ill intentions. Throughout the epic

¹⁵ Pharmakeia is the art of witchcraft that is conducted through the mixing of medicinal herbs (“Agamede”).

poem, the great hero Odysseus visits her and after outwitting Circe, he gains her respect and is granted shelter along with his men. Circe is known for housing Odysseus and his men, guiding them to survive in treacherous waters. She later appears as Odysseus' lover (Hamilton 307). Once they are bound to leave, she warns them of the awaiting threats in their journey, and overall, her shallow story ends with Circe blessing Odysseus on his journey. However, despite their positive interaction, Circe is reaffirmed as a dangerous and evil sorcerer. Inspired by *The Odyssey*, Madeline Miller portrays Circe as a nymph as well, one of the lesser goddesses and daughter of a naiad, Perse, and the sun god, Helios. In both versions, Circe is punished to spend an eternity in solitude because of the use of her transformation spells. In opposition to Homeric myth, Circe uses her powers of sorcery for clearly stated intentions rather than a vague mention: jealousy, power, and self-defense. Such female power is depicted as dangerous and ill-intentioned which is why she is banished for uncovering the said power.

For Miller, Circe essentially mirrors the anxiety men feed concerning the female power. This understanding echoes the term 'anxiety of authorship' by Gilbert and Gubar which originated from the anxiety of women to establish themselves as the authorial voice. This concern uncovers the patriarchal desire to delimit female power. In the story, for instance, the imprisonment of Circe to Aiaia island symbolizes the representation of a male power attempting at confining the female power and will in a spatial limit. Keeping these in mind, Madeline Miller situates Circe as the main character in her evolutionary novel, providing insights into the female experiences and perspectives. She further talks about a woman's inner and external experiences of the world with her unique perspective, highlighting the misjudged and dehumanized imagery behind the previous characterization of classical Circe. She restructures the mythic story intending to reconstruct Circe's image created only by male figures. With this reconstruction, she criticizes the stereotypes about female sexuality and gender roles in society. To exemplify this situation, in Homer's *The Odyssey*, Circe is mentioned as: 'Then to the Ile Aeaea we attained, /Where faire-haired, dreadfull, eloquent Circe raignd" (Griffin 10. 174-175). She is described as a dreadful blonde, reigning on her own island when Odysseus and his friends visited. She is later described as wicked and dangerous with her power of transformations. However, in Madeline Miller's version, she has an unthreatening aura despite her streaked hair and yellow eyes. She is an independent woman who is not fixed on beauty, but on survival and building a life from scratch. This hints at an enormous change in perspectives.

In a *New York Times* magazine interview conducted by Alexandra Alter, Miller states that she began re-thinking about Circe after reading Emily Wilson's translation of Homer's

The Odyssey in 2017. Wilson is a significant name in this context as she is the first woman translator of the classic to English. The cover of her book of translation which features three Greek women, two facing right and one facing left, belongs to Norton publishing, for three reasons as Wilson states in her tweet from 2017. “The *Odyssey* is told by a female Musa, guided by a female goddess, and now translated by me: 3.” (@EmilyRCWilson). The three women are supposed to represent the Greek choral poetry and the cover art is an ode to to herself, and the other women she was inspired from. Wilson’s translation is different from the original text as her choice of words and use of dialects reflect a woman’s perspective. For example, Wilson pushes the reader to further contemplate on the woman characters by means of simple nuances such as an introduction and chapter summaries that invite the reader to think further of the text from a female perspective. In her introduction she states, “It [*The Odyssey*] is a story, as the first word of the original Greek tells us, about “a man” (*andra*)” (10). Wilson continues to emphasize that the readers expect to witness the epic and supernatural adventures of a hero, not a woman’s. Wilson not only translates but questions why an event occurred and why it was told and translated differently than Homer’s version. For instance, in her introduction, she offers a commentary subchapter on women in Homer’s literary works where she contemplates on the possible lives of goddesses, wives, princesses, and slave girls.

The Odyssey allows us to imagine a far more varied array of possible female lives. Its various settings—in multiple different islands, homes, and palaces, in peacetime rather than war—are mostly places where women or goddesses have a defined position and a voice. (51)

She comments on the lives of girls and women in a different social sphere than men, the private sphere, which is often described as the home of domestic labor whereas men in the public sphere performed chores related to animals and gardening. Wilson further discusses the value of women when she states: “The most insistent declarations that women’s value depends entirely on their loyalty to their husbands[...]

(55). She questions the fear of disloyalty, which seems to be the worst fear of men and how the men of *The Odyssey* seem rather soothed when their wives obey without questioning.

In relation to Emily Wilson’s translation, Madeline Miller’s argument is that a female translator’s work pushed her to focus on small details about Circe herself. One of those details is related to the description of Circe’s braided hair. In the original Homeric version, Circe is described as follows:

Some woman, or some Goddesses this [...]
Both knockt, and calld; and straight her shining gates

She opened, issuing, bade them in to cates— (Griffin 309, 311-312)

Circe is emptied out of her power through a sexual metaphor referring to her body as the gate and described as merely another woman or a “Goddesse” who is objectified because of her tempting body. In other words, the word “Goddesse” is associated with the divine beauty of women rather than a distinction between mortality and immortality. However, despite Circe’s beauty, it was clarified that she was not an innocent person but rather a femme fatale. In Homer’s version, Circe was merely mentioned as another temptress that we are used to seeing in many other classical sources. Pauline Ripat in her article “Roman Women, Wise Women, and Witches” (2016) states that witches in literature are only represented as “negative examples and cautionary tales about proper female behavior” and insists on noting that such figures need new connotations to be attached to (105). Serving Ripat’s purpose and in opposition to Homer, Madeline Miller explores the women further to give voice to them, contemplating about the functionality of every single character in the great hero Odysseus’ story:

I stood there at the doorway, and I saw her,
the lovely Circe with her braided hair.
I called; she heard and opened up the doors
and asked me in. (Wilson 10. 310-313)

Inspired by the translation above, through questions similar to ‘Why would her hair be in braids instead of long and free like the normal description of a witch?’ and ‘How braided hair would benefit her life on the island?’, Madeline Miller herself began to conceptualize Circe’s unique voice which is at last separated from the epic stories of other men (Alter). In her novel, Miller describes the reason why Circe’s hair is described the way it is: “I learned to plait my hair back, so it would not catch on every twig, and how to tie my skirts at the knee to keep the burrs off” (Miller 71). She focuses on the functionality of the braids rather than her beauty, ultimately connecting the braids as a part of her self-education on survival on an island. Hence, Miller transforms Circe from a temptress who wishes to “subjugate” men for her gender, that is being a woman is one of the greatest temptations (Hogan 190) to a resourceful woman stripped from her comfort zone in a palace who reinvents herself for her own needs. In an article which explores Circe’s temptress representations entitled “The Character of Circe in *The Odyssey*” (2012), Circe is presented from two different sides: one as a temptress and the other as a woman of nature: “There are two sides to Circe’s character, that of sexual temptress or evil witch and that of one who knows a woman’s proper tasks and can excel in them” (McClymond 23). A significant point McClymond highlights which serves the purpose of this chapter is that Circe might be represented as a sexual temptress of evil nature, however, it is undeniable that Circe

is a nymph which means undeniably, she is related to nature itself as a divinity. The possible existence of a richer background to the character of Circe in fact originates from such speculations.

The focal point of this chapter is Miller's version of Circe but it should also be underlined that Circe, as a character in Greek mythology has been evaluated by various academics and writers prior to Madeline Miller's publication. First published in 1994, Judith Yarnall (1940--) in her book *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* evaluates Circe's perspective in Homer's story along with the origins of the story, the symbolization of her myth, and retellings of her in the Renaissance like that of Boethius who transformed Circe into an evil figure of negligence in a poem in his fourth book of *The Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 523). Boethius' philosophical work mainly discusses the significance of a man's free will and mentions Circe's powers of transformation such as how she could transform men's bodies and strip them from free will thus victimizing them, which consequently makes her an evil witch who is against the existence of men (120). Another example is Edmund Spenser's (1552-1599) "The Faerie Queene" (1590) relating the seductress at the end of book 2 to Circe by depicting her as a witch turning men into animals once they are no longer sexually appealing (Yarnall). Needless to say, Circe's representations as a temptress and femme fatale have existed throughout the course of literary history from British literature, including English translator Arthur Golding's (1536-1606) translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1567), to the Spanish literature, including Spanish dramatist Pedro Calderón de la Barca's (1600-1681) work *Los encantos de la Culpa* (date of composition before 1647) and to Christine de Pizan's (1364-1430) work named *Book of the City of Ladies* (1405).

Similar to Yarnall, Tania Demetriou in an article titled "'Essentially Circe': Spenser, Homer, and the Homeric Tradition" (2006) reviews Circe's identification within different literary contexts. The article aims that the mythical story of Circe "gains life by absorbing into itself references to the story's literary transformation" (170). Circe managed to stay relevant through countless of literary references as she is open to many interpretations per her Homeric nature. For instance, she mentions Ronsard's false representation of Circe in his work *Les Amours* (1552) as a corrupt sexual temptation being inspired by Italian poet Ludovico Ariosto's (1474-1533) *Orlando Furioso* (1516), a work of Homeric tradition. Later, as a comparison, Demetriou presents Italian writer Natale Conti (1520-1582) and her work *Mythologiae* (1568) which is an interpretation of Ulysses' adventures with Circe. The work itself represents the danger of a woman acting without oversight and corruption and if men and women surrender to the bodily pleasures. All of these presentations contributed to the evil image of Circe without

exploring any deeper aspects of her personality and life without the presence of a male protagonist.

Circe has been twisted and tweaked into many forms, simplified into an object and an image of the expression of human emotions and experience, fear, and desire in the hands of male writers: “Circe, herself in the twists and turns of her story through the centuries, has gone through far more metamorphoses than those she inflicted on Odysseus’ companion, who had merely to suffer and endure the transformation from man to beast to man” (Yarnall 1-2). That is to say, such a statement emphasizes the need for women writers to rebrand and redefine the silenced, punished and condemned woman characters through rewritings to illustrate the world from their unique perspectives. And Circe is just one of them.

2.1. INTRODUCTION TO *CIRCE*

The origin of the name Circe (Kirkê in the original Homeric sources) is rooted in Greek forming from the word Κίρκη, as a feminine version of the word kirkos, which stands for hawk (Yarnall 28). Hawk in Greek mythology is recognized as the sacred bird of the messenger god, Hermes, and more importantly the Mother of the gods, Rhea (“Rheia-Kybele Estate”). In Greek mythology, different species of a bird is often the sacred animal of more than one deity. Before Homer created the correlation where deities mostly transform themselves into birds, birds had been long associated with divinity and divine beings: “I thought of those prancing goddesses who carry birds on their shoulders, or have some fawn always nuzzling their hands, tripping delicately at their heels” (Miller 76). The association itself is believed to date back to the eastern Mediterranean, even older Neolithic settlements in Anatolia, Çatalhöyük. In Ancient Greece, once an animal was deemed sacred, they could not be hunted or abused for that would be an insult to the deity. In Circe’s situation, she was named after her physical attributions, her yellow eyes and the sharp, thin voice similar to a hawk, hence, the meaning of her name (Preston). In opposition to the other gods, the symbol of hawk was far from any sacred connotations, but used to highlight her disturbing and mortal-like qualities. These connotations of Circe’s name signify her internal power and intelligence, which once again hints at a deeper and more elaborate personality than what was represented in Homer’s work.

Hinting at a more elaborate personality, Madeline Miller in her novel shows that Circe’s feminine qualities began to be assessed since birth, her physicality, and personality traits were evaluated to determine whether she was fit to marry an immortal or not. Similar to an infant’s growth, she discovered how the life around her worked and what her role is in it. In Miller’s

version, Circe associates with the pain that surrounded the life of a mortal woman. This fact is the pain of punishment after an encounter with the Titan Prometheus where she grants him food and water after he was punished to be eternally eaten by crows after offering humanity the gift of fire. As a result of such events, Circe finds herself contemplating about her life in the palace she resides in. “The thought was this: that all my life had been murk and depths, but I was not a part of that dark water. I was a creature within it” (Miller 19). Her entire life, Circe was considered a lesser deity wrapped in divine entities in the palace and the quote symbolizes her awareness of how she was not a part of higher gods and goddesses’ worlds. However, still as a lesser deity she could be in control of her life in that divine world. Yet, she was unimportant to people around her, even to her father. According to Circe, she only started to matter to her father once she admitted to transform the beautiful Scylla, another nymph in the palace. Circe was known to fall for a mortal man named Glaucos who seemed to only have eyes for the gorgeous Scylla. As a desperate attempt to catch his attention and an act of jealousy, Circe used *pharmaka*, the forbidden power of transformation to transform Glaucos into an immortal and Scylla into a horrible sea monster. Once she executed her magic, her father, Helios, recognized her dark potential as a sorceress and proceeded to punish her. As a punishment, she was banished away from the palace.

“Father,” I said, “it was I who made Scylla a monster.” [...] “I used wicked *pharmaka* to make Glaucos a god, and then I changed Scylla. I was jealous of his love for her and wanted to make her ugly. I did it selfishly, in bitter heart, and I would bear the consequence.” (Miller 53)

In both Homer’s and Miller’s versions, Circe was exiled to her own island Aiaia as a result of using *pharmaka* to transform a mortal and his lover into a god and a monster. In the novel, as a part of the art of witchcraft *pharmakeia*, the word *pharmaka* is used to describe the magic conducted through magical herbs, however, it is deemed wicked. “[...] Some *pharmaka*—” It was the word Aeëtes had used, when he spoke of herbs with wondrous powers, sprung from the fallen blood of gods (Miller 39). The use of that particular witchcraft is deemed illegal in the immortal world. As a lesser goddess, Circe’s usage of *pharmaka* was forbidden, however she recognizes her power of witchcraft as a chance to discover her female identity and individuality.

An emotion was swelling in my throat. It took me a moment to recognize what it was. I had been old and stern for so long, carved with regrets and years like a monolith. But that was only a shape I had been poured into. I did not have to keep it. (Miller 323)

In the quote above, the readers witness Circe's realization as she was not subjected to any other figure as a result of her discovery of the power of *pharmaka*. She becomes self-aware of her responsibilities to herself and not anyone else. From this perspective, Miller identifies Circe as a strong sorceress free from the restraints of the patriarchal world. Throughout the novel, Circe births her son, Telegonus, and raises him alone without the need of consulting to another man. She becomes both a mother and a father and it is evident that Telegonus never feels the absence of a man. Furthermore, Circe's island belongs to her, and her decisions are final. At the end of her story, she chooses to leave the island at the expense of her immortality with her son and marries a man, Odysseus' son Telemachus only to bear daughters she can teach how to be strong without the need of a punishment. Finally, Circe is at peace knowing her adventures at the island forever changed and strengthened her. On the island and above, Circe establishes herself as the ultimate figure of matriarchy and an exemplary figure for the next generations.

2.2. EXAMINATION OF MILLER'S CIRCE

In her novel, Madeline Miller uses first person narration to illustrate Circe's perspective with an aim to display the inner thoughts and emotions of a woman banished from the divine society because of misusing her powers by using certain literary tactics. One of those tactics includes the change of the writing fonts. That is to say, throughout the story, Circe often talks to herself and dares to others in italics, presenting her unsaid thoughts to the reader. For example, after she settles into the island, Circe watches his father's chariot carrying the sun throughout the day and challenges him to talk to her; however, once she is unable to get a reply, she once again dares the deities' bravery: "I tracked my father's burning chariot across the sky. Well? What do you have to say to me? [...] No answer came... Those cowards. *Does no one have the courage? Will no one dare to face me?*" (Miller 77). Through the book the unsaid thoughts lessen to emphasize her confidence as Circe gains power and develops a stronger stance against the world. Her usage of the words of unspoken is simply brilliant, allowing the reader to connect with Circe and her sufferings. Thus, it is easier for a reader to associate oneself with Circe as if she is a woman struggling in the 21st century. All of these allusions are strengthened by the book cover which displays the portrait of Circe with braided hair and by the amulet with roses on her forehead. The representation, on the one hand, signifies the cover figure's abilities as a sorcerer. On the other hand, this representation undercovers the other physical qualities such as her kind and suffering eyes clarify she is also a young woman punished as an example to others.

In her writing, Madeline Miller uses a clean and understandable language to address a wide range of audience. Her strong descriptions filled with symbols and metaphors provide depth into her writing and characters. Virginia Woolf in her essay "Craftmanship," (1937) states that the true skill of the writer is to carve art out of everyday life which reflects on the dynamics of fiction and the act of writing. Fiction and writing withhold the art of the writer in them, which is to present the words naturally, so naturally that the nature of words are to carry different meanings and interpretations. As Woolf states, "English words, are full of echoes, of memories, of associations—naturally" (248). Attending to this quotation, it is a writer's job to introduce new meanings to the English words that are already filled with multiple connotations. Miller implements deep and complex meanings to everyday words such as her constant references to birds and cages when mentioning Circe; "bird bred in a cage" (71) meaning confinement and forced reproduction, "golden cage is still a cage," (124) defined as confinement in excellent conditions or when she uses the birds as warnings of danger and signs of life. Such metaphors allow the main character, Circe to personally grow and further contemplate about her life. The novel withholds multiple meanings through a strong imaginative language.

Beyond Miller's narrative techniques, her reimagination of Circe begins from the character's very birth, which later continues through her life. The reimagination reflects on her personality and personal growth. In Homer's version, Circe is introduced as a part of Odysseus' adventures, a witch with a power to transform animate beings. She is of great beauty and great danger, a witch in a spatial realm of her own, Aiaia which is supposedly Circe's island of punishment. On this island, she is forever banished to a life of solitude; however, it transforms into a space of freedom from the restrictions of society for her. The island grants her more freedom than she would ever have in the divine society as the island allows her to grow and have unique personal experiences. For instance, at her first night on the island in the absence of the palace's security, Circe experiences fear on a different level for the first time, which contributes to her personal growth. "The fear sloshed over me, each wave colder than the last. The still air crawled across my skin and shadows reached out their hands. [...] The shadows ebbed away and it was morning. I stood up, whole and untouched. Yet I did not feel foolish. I felt as if I had passed a great ordeal" (70).

The exact point where the readers can visualize the growth is the beginning of her life in Aiaia, which marks the end of her life in the palace where she was a just passive and silent agent.

The worst of my cowardice had been sweated out. In its place was a giddy spark. I will not be like a bird bred in a cage, I thought, too dull to fly even when the door

stands open.

I stepped into those woods and my life began. (71)

Circe's freedom from the invisible chains that surrounded her life and prevented a bird from exploring the world, mirrors the fact that she is free from a life of forced marriage and forced contempt both of which she would be subjected to as a lesser divinity. As Nithya Ranjith in her article "Humanizing Circe, the Witch of Aiaia: A Novel that Projects the Repercussions of Patriarchal Supremacy" (2023) states:

Greek Mythology had clearly structured the power game favoring the Male gods. They enjoy dictating power, especially to women. These Gods decide their duties and responsibilities for them. The very kingdom itself is designed in a manner that denies the basic right of women. Women were hindered to the wall of their homes and were expected to take care of the household chores. (203)

As the quote entails, in the Greek society women, especially nymphs as a form of lesser divinity were confined by the dictating power of men. If Circe had stayed in the kingdom, her only job in life would be to marry either an immortal or a mortal and bare offspring for the male to continue his legacy. She would be denied of any form of power outside of the household. But here on this island she disowns her past, her father and everything that came with them. Dr. Clarissa P. Estés in her book *Women Who Run With the Wolves* (1992) explores the myths and stories of the wild woman archetype and whilst mentioning individualization she states:

Developing a relationship with the wildish nature is an essential part of women's individualization. In order to accomplish this, a woman must go into the dark, but at the same time she must not be irreparably trapped, captured, or killed on her way there or back." (43)

The quote withholds significance in relation to Circe's self-discovery process into individualization. Circe is thrown into the wild nature, somewhere unknown and dark when compared to her life at the colorful palace. The entire experience ultimately leads to Circe accepting herself as an individual in charge of herself. Therefore, owning her individual traits, manifesting the feminine power that laid dormant within her, she says that "I was a golden witch, who had no past at all" (189). She gains her independence through the punishment of solitude and the chance to enrich her life at her own will and not of any other men, including that of her father.

2.2.1. The Female Identity and Individuality

Circe's transition into a strong woman is powered by the self-awareness, and this transition is triggered by the male figures around her. She becomes fully conscious of society and the true strength of her own power shortly after the self-awareness hits her when she finally has the chance to discover herself through the punishment of solitude. Once she is fully aware of her magical abilities, Circe realizes as a woman she occupied little space in the previous patriarchal world. "Let me tell you a truth about Helios and all the rest. They do not care if you are good. They barely care if you are wicked. The only thing that makes them listen is power" (126). As a woman, the lesser gender in comparison to men, it is quite easy to be ignored. Whether innocent or guilty, good or wicked, the men can dispose woman with only a simple punishment. However, as Circe realizes, power overcomes the hierarchal structures in society.

Circe [is] simply as an archetypal woman of power, whose potency is grounded in her disturbing ability to give form to flesh and blood, than as an anima figure. She is as compelling to modern women seeking to explore the range of their own natures as she has been to male poets and dreamers in the past. (Yarnall 5)

In Greek mythology and in Homer's literary work, Circe is depicted as, a warning sign to other women despite various sources recognize Circe as a figure of empowerment, an encouragement to other women for self-exploration and taking control of the world around them. Power dictates others, it surrounds an individual like to an invisible force and radiates a strong aura to establish authority over others. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word power is defined as "the ability to control people or things" ("power"). In Circe's case, her magical abilities empower her through her immense power she can situate herself as a strong individual within society. Her powers are not controlled by the patriarchy, in opposite, she is in charge within the perimeters of her own island and anyone who dares to cross her will inevitably face her unlimited power. By virtue of possessing exceptional knowledge about herbs and spells, Circe wields immense power which enables her to defend herself against any possible threats she may encounter in life. That is how her stay at Aiaia turns into an opportunity for showcasing these abilities as she uses it as canvass materializes into something extraordinary with enchanted powers. Through her powers, she absorbs anyone who interacts with it irrespective of levelling differences while gaining respect from all quarters of the community for being efficient at employing witchcraft. The goddess possesses unbelievable skills which make it possible for even divine beings not being able to inflict any damage on or manipulate situations against Circe alluding at a considerable level of proficiency attained through years of rigorous

training and arduous practice in magic. This mastery over wizardry ensures that Circe does not have much difficulty bending nature itself towards fulfilling personal objectives like changing a person into an animal occasionally reflecting an inner desire or necessity stemming out of self-preservation tactics. For example, in one scene of the novel a group of sea travellers visit Circe's island for shelter and food. However, once they scan the perimeters of the island and realize Circe is alone without a man, one of the stronger men attempt to assault her. At first Circe experiences despair and as trauma and horror settles in, she ultimately feels powerless until she regains control by transforming her perpetrator into a pig.

I fought him, but he was stronger than I had thought he would be, or maybe I was weaker. The sudden weight of him shocked me, the greasy push of his skin on mine. My mind was still scrambled, disbelieving. [...] A mortal would have fainted, but I was awake for every moment. At last, I felt the man tremble, and his arm loosened. My throat was crushed inward like a rotted log. I could not seem to move. [...] His rib cage cracked and began to bulge. I heard the sound of flesh rupturing wetly, the pops of breaking bone. His nose ballooned from his face, and his legs shriveled like a fly sucked by a spider. He fell to all fours. He screamed, and his men screamed with him. It went on for a long time.

As it turned out, I did kill pigs that night after all. (Miller 164-165)

This quotation attests to Circe protecting herself against a group of men wishing to assault her. She regains her power through witchcraft, able to assert her stronger feminine power in front of the human threat that is men. The event of her sexual assault by sea men can be reasoned by the patriarchal literature as Circe's existence as a sexual temptress. The situation itself falls into the category of victim blaming in the 21st century which suggests there is a way women could have prevented such an event from happening. However, Miller redefines the reason to why Circe transforms the men who visit her island rather than to refer to as an enchantress, and ultimately links the occurring to self-defense. Not only does Circe transform the men, but with this occurring she also transforms herself from a powerless woman to a strong powerful figure who is able to protect herself from any possible danger.

As Sarah Fields mentions in her book:

Miller's *Circe* is a feminist perspective of the legend in which everything was at stake. In the context of Circe's life, turning ravening human sailors into pigs was not only another hurdle for the all-conquering Odysseus to overcome, but it was necessary self-defense. (24)

Rather than regarding power wielded by Circe with fearfulness or dismissal it is significant that

we appreciate the unique gifts that this goddess possesses. It is these abilities that enable women like her to find space to make their lives' journey amidst a world where patriarchy attempts to suppress them. With an intricate transformation from an almost invisible Olympian deity into an immensely potent sorceress, Circe becomes unmatched in her prowess and control over events – breaking all shackles of limitations placed upon women. Homer portrays Circe as seductive and dangerous which appears to be the stereotypical Greek concern “women to be incapable of not exercising their sexual charms” (Walcot 39) as Circe turns Odysseus' men into swine with her charm before casting her enchantments on him as well. However, Miller depicts a different version of events altogether, one where love seems more powerful than desire. In relation to the different portrayals of Circe, Ana Pairet, in her journal article “Shades of Circe: Wisdom and Knowledge in Christine de Pizan's *Exempla*” (2017) explores the representation of Circe in Christine de Pizan's the *Book of the City of Ladies*, which is a work de Pizan wrote inspired by Ovid and Homer. Christine de Pizan alludes to the story of Circe in her mythmaking, attempting to rewrite Circe by bending the formal and generic boundaries of her characterization. The article further investigates the underlying text behind Circe's imagery and links her being an enchanting sage to a male enchanting figure. “[Circe] This lady knew so much about the art of magic that there was nothing she could not do if she so wished, using the power of magic. She could prepare a potion that had the power to change the bodies of men into wild animals and birds” (133). De Pizan reveals Circe as a self-defending enchantress, using her magic to guard her island from invaders. “[Ulysses] He sent over his knights to find out if she was willing to give him permission to land. Circe, however, immediately took them for her enemies, and gave the knights one of her potions, which instantly changed them into pigs. Ulysses rushed over to see her and managed to have them changed back to their original form” (133-134). The function of this quote is to display a new perspective into the characterization of Circe, someone who defends herself rather than to enchanting strangers into her island to purely transform them for her own amusement. De pizan, by dissolving the construct which views Circe as a sensual enchanter, dissociates magic and sexuality. She also illustrates a form of knowledge thematically linked to wisdom by revisiting and repurposing the mythic characters.

Regarding Madeline Miller's version, Circe develops feelings for the hero Odysseus beyond those of mere sexual attraction when he turns down her advances; she handles rejection gracefully albeit hurtfully arboring no grudges against him while accepting his decision wholeheartedly and displaying a strength in character.

Later, years later, I would hear a song made of our meeting. The boy who sang

it was unskilled, missing notes more often than he hit, yet the sweet music of the verses shone through his mangling. I was not surprised by the portrait of myself: the proud witch undone before the hero's sword, kneeling and begging for mercy. Humbling women seems to me a chief pastime of poets. As if there can be no story unless we crawl and weep. (Miller 181)

Essentially, Miller challenges notions held by society for generations around female viciousness as something intrinsically linked to femininity itself placing emphasis instead on individual choices and behavior. Predictably the change presented by such oppositional characters could only arouse male discomfort at every turn making life even harder for those fighting battles like Circe's, continuously in a world dominated by men. In his article entitled "Victim or Witch? Circe as an Allegory of Women's Struggle during the Feminist Movement" (2019), Mert İ. Öncel elaborates on Madeline Miller's representation of Circe. Emphasizing Miller's aim at choosing Circe as a Greek mythological character, Öncel states that Circe's problems and struggles still relate to the 21st century. Hence, she is an allegory of women's struggle (1). Male oppression, sisterhood, conflict among women, and motherhood are among the topics Öncel chooses to analyze in depth. He argues that the main reason for all her suffering is that she is a woman and even though she is a goddess, she needs to face the everyday problems of being a woman (19). Similar to contemporary women, Circe adopts a unique identity through struggle and Miller portrays that aspect perfectly.

Circe's nuanced portrayal of women is indeed one of the novel's main attractions. Circe is a powerful character who still experiences emotions and fears as any other fully-developed character in any novel from the pain of love to the thrills of independence. Miller uses Homeric texts in a courageous and intimate way as she retells and reinterprets the Greek mythology. Her novel is refreshing, and it highlights the importance of female empowerment. Circe is a character that has a lot of admirable qualities, including her ability to support and respect other women. She forms strong bonds to the female characters. For instance, she is immediately drawn to Scylla's beauty when she first meets her. Circe persists despite Scylla's initial hostility towards her. Years upon meeting her monster form, she empathizes and recognizes Scylla's pain and loneliness even though Scylla is transformed into a monster by her as a result of jealousy.

Furthermore, Circe has a close relationship with her niece Medea, the daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis. In Greek mythology, Medea is seen as an enchantress associated the most with Jason, the prince of Iolchus. She actually falls for Jason as the result of a spell cast on her by the goddess of beauty, Aphrodite and assists him through a series of heroic trials including

the most famous one, the Golden Fleece that belonged to Medea's father. Through his life, Medea continuously guided Jason in the majority of his problems yet in the end when he decided he did not wish to marry her, but a princess, she murdered the said princess, his father and her own children (Albert 134-138).

Miller's novel portrays Medea as a young, sympathetic and complex character, despite the fact that she is often portrayed in Greek mythology as a villain. In the novel, Medea is not yet committed murder for her love, Jason but instead she displays an innocent crush on him. Circe warns Medea in her own way about the possible outcomes of her magical abilities.

They will resent you. Worse, they will suspect you, for you are the daughter of a sorcerer and a witch in your own right. You have lived only in Colchis, you cannot know how pharmakeia is feared among mortals. They will seek to undermine you at every turn. It will not matter that you helped Jason. They will push that aside, or else use it against you as proof of your unnaturalness. (150)

Their comradeship demonstrates Circe's ability to look beyond societal expectations in order to recognize other women's potential for greatness. Circe is not intimidated by Medea's intelligence and power. Instead, she celebrates them; however, she does not refrain from warning her about the outcomes of such great power.

Circe's relationship with other women is not always straightforward or easy. Her personal strength and wisdom is evident in her ability to see people as inherently good even those who are against her. She understands that women, while not necessarily evil or dangerous by nature, are the products of a culture that tries to limit and control them. Throughout the novel, Circe gains respect of several women as a result of her understanding nature. To exemplify such instances, the great hero Odysseus' wife, Penelope asks for Circe's guidance as a goddess, recognizing her as a form of authority: [...] Brighteyed Circe, Witch of Aiaia, grant me sanctuary on your dread isle, for I have no husband and no home, and nowhere else in the world is safe for me and my son. I will give you blood every year, if you will hear me" (Miller 283). Moreover, an unnamed woman in need of help call out to Circe for support, whom Circe recognizes as one of her own through empathy and sympathy: "'Goddess," she said, "Witch of Aiaia. We come to you for aid." [...] "We have fled great evil, and to escape it we have done great evil. We are tainted"' (142). Circe's character is a powerful reminder that women can be active agents of change and transformation from an object in men's stories to the subject in their own. She proves through her journey of self discovery and growth that women aren't defined by what society wants to force on them. Instead, they are defined by their own determination and strength.

2.2.2. Women, Sacrifice, and Motherhood

Madeline Miller's *Circe* gives the Titan Goddess a raw human new voice and perspective. Miller explores Circe's uncertain existence as she straddles humanity and divinity. Her sense of self constantly changes as she embraces the mortal life with the birth of her son and explores her boundaries. Miller is willing to experiment with Homer's *The Odyssey*, as Circe seeks meaning in her life. Madeline Miller's *Circe* is more than just a story of violence and magic. Miller's portrayal of Circe is sympathetic, from her sexual violence motivated by anger to her inability to form meaningful bonds with women to her eventual transition to single motherhood. Andrea O'Reilly in her book entitled *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, Practice* (2021), introduces a term "empowered mothering" which aims to "challenge and change normative motherhood" (11):

Under the theme of motherhood, empowered mothering counters the normative discourse of motherhood as limited to middle-class, married, stay-at-home mothers, to include a multitude of maternal identities, such as noncustodial, poor, single, young [...] (105)

The quote above highlights the new understanding of motherhood, which signifies that there is more to mothers than what is presented in patriarchal society and literature. Women can be both nurturing mothers and providing fathers, in other words, figures of power. Regarding Miller's deconstruction of the universal theme of motherhood, as the embodiment of empowered mothering, Circe defies the typical family structure by raising Telegonus on her own: "I touched my hand to my belly. *You father said once that he wanted more children, but that is not why you live. You are for me*" (Miller 210). Circe's exile and parenting style demonstrates how family and choice can shape an individual without other familial connections. From the beginning she was not embraced by her own family for being less than a regular deity. She was almost forgotten and raised by herself. She was basically raised to depend on the figure of a man as she was not strong and mighty enough when compared to other goddesses. For that reason, her exile from Helios and subsequent banishment to Aeaea withholds immense significance. "I trusted such frailty to no god, no family of mine, to none but myself alone" (Miller 209). The exile forces her to depend solely on herself for survival. So, Circe must learn resilience despite these experiences as she learns to survive alone on Aeaea.

The first affirming male figure in her life, the great hero Odysseus provides her with her first true relationship and ultimately motherhood experience even in their brief encounter. "I

lay beside him in the moonlight each night. Just one more season, I imagined saying to him. [...] It would surprise him. I would catch the faintest flicker of disappointment in his eyes. Golden witches are not supposed to beg” (Miller 199). As the quotation demonstrates, the two leave an indelible impression on each other that transforms them both and gives Circe a newfound sense of self-worth.

Miller also stresses the importance of freedom and choice in her novel after Odysseus returns to the island and Circe has been left alone to raise her child. However, throughout the novel, she rejects being a sorrowful and brooding mother. In contrast, she establishes herself as the ultimate authority by refusing to allow others – such as powerful gods – to dominate or control her. This eventually leads to the creation of matriarchy in the absence of dominant seeking men.

I cut the cord, holding him all the while.

See? I told him. We do not need anyone. In answer, he made a froggy croak and closed his eyes. My son, Telegonus.

I did not go easy to motherhood. I faced it as soldiers face their enemies, girded and braced, sword up against the coming blows. (Miller 212)

Circe situates herself as one of the strong divine figures of motherhood by birthing and raising her son alone in the absence of a man. The quote above shows that Circe’s ability to transcend the boundaries of immortality and mortality in the result of experiencing the mortal aspects of life is achieved by accepting who she is and the voice with which she was born. “I would look at him and feel a love so sharp it seemed my flesh lay open. I made a list of all the things I would do for him. Scald off my skin. Tear out my eyes. Walk my feet to bones, if only he would be happy and well” (Miller 213). She accepts her son, and the unique love she experiences for him wholeheartedly. Women are born with fierce power in their hearts. People may diminish it but can never be rid of it as the power itself is pierced within their soul.

It is not surprising to see such references in an ancient classical text because ancient Greece was filled with ultimate figures of matriarchy such as Gaia, the Titan of Earth. She, the ultimate mother is one of the first existing deities that all the others originated from. Women in particular whether immortal or mortal, prayed and offered vows to Gaia for physical health, fertility and strength during difficult phases in their lives (Buxton 88). As society looked upon the great figures of mothers through a positive lense, motherhood was deemed as an inseparable part of a woman. The great figures of motherhood did not only end in Greco-Roman mythologies but Egyptian as well. In Ancient Egypt and Egyptian mythology, motherhood had a crucial place in the religious and political sense. The existence of a female pharaoh was

deemed essential, accepted as an “earthly incarnation of Isis” (Peterson 165-166). Motherhood greatly contributed to the female pharaoh’s public image and strength, so it is only natural that mothers were significant figures in Egypt as well. No matter the culture, it is safe to state that motherhood was deemed a sacred event and in Madeline Miller’s *Circe*, despite being punished even the higher deities were not able to take such a sacred thing away from the sorceress, Circe. Circe refuses to be taken advantage of by men on her journey but instead takes responsibility for her own actions in an ethical manner and chooses how best to exercise her authority, highlighting many relevant themes relevant today that Homer overlooked.

In conclusion, Madeline Miller with her novel *Circe* practices a unique feminist approach that reflects on the mythic story of the character Circe through narration techniques, writing style and themes. Circe as a main character restructures the original representation and builds her own meaningful story around it. To revisit the epigram at the very beginning of this chapter, and to remember what Lowell Edmunds states in the introduction of his book *Approaches to Greek Myth* (2014), myths carry a “special meaningfulness” (1), they might be traditional stories, however, according to the social context, they inhibit unique forms of meaning. In the 21st century, under Madeline Miller’s and many more women writers’ retellings, myths adapted new meanings. Myths offer insight into women’s lives and most importantly, as myths did in Ancient Greece, they represent the societal and cultural views and through retellings such as Madeline Miller’s they are always in circulation without the possibility of losing their meaningfulness. Through Miller’s representation Circe, “challenge[s] to and correction of gender stereotypes embodied in myth” (Ostriker 73). In particular, Circe resituated herself as a powerful but kind sorceress and a successful mother who focuses on building a female identity after being shunned from the patriarchal society only to establish her own matriarchy in her island, Aiaia. “All my life, I have been moving forward, and now I am here. I have a mortal’s voice, let me have the rest. I lift the brimming bowl to my lips and drink” (Miller 333). In the end, Circe is at peace, much stronger than ever and eventually, reaches the end of her story, that is her personal destination.

CHAPTER III

3. FROM HEROINE TO HERO: PRINCESS ARIADNE

“I stared in the mirror.
Love gone bad
showed me a Gorgon.”

(Carol Ann Duffy “Medusa” 30-32)

Jennifer Saint (date of birth unknown) is a Classical Studies major from King’s College London and an English teacher for thirteen years who grew up reading Greek mythology, fascinated by the stories and their different interpretations from Ovid to Homer. In 2021, she decided to examine such perspectives to combine, deepen and illustrate classical stories from a feminist perspective with her debut novel, *Ariadne* (2021). In an interview, she states that her main reference texts were first Ovid’s (43 BCE-17 CE) epistolary poem collection *Heroides* (25 BCE – 1 CE), including letters from heroines to heroes in mythological stories, and second Euripides’ play *Hippolytus* (428 BCE), based on the myth of Hippolytus, the son of Theseus. Saint learned these stories having conducted a thorough research on the Oxford Classical Dictionary, studying references (Macquire). These references display the two sisters, Ariadne and Phaedra as a passive agent which pushed Saint to reimagine Ariadne as an active agent, a main character in a man’s story. That story is of the great hero Theseus which entails Phaedra’s life alongside hers. As Saint states, she explicitly chose the versions of the myths where the main focus was women’s suffering (Macquire).

Jennifer Saint’s *Ariadne* is another retelling of Greek myths from a woman’s perspective. What is retold is the ancient myth of Theseus and the Minotaur; however, it is more than merely a retelling. In the 21st century, Ariadne has been transformed into a figure of a vulnerable heroine and a victim as a woman, used as an object for Theseus’ epic story, and the retelling of Saint reveals a different perspective of Ariadne. Deborah Lyons in her book *Gender and Immortality: Heroines in Ancient Greek Myth and Cult* (1997), states that “the word *heroine* carries with it an unfortunate freight of associations, suggesting not a powerful being to be invoked and propitiated from beyond a grave, but a frail creature requiring rescue by none other than a hero” (4-5). According to Lyons, the word itself is inevitably associated with the fragile figure of a woman rather than a strong man and in relation to the findings of Lyons, Jennifer Saint situates Ariadne as not a heroine, but a heroic figure who shatters the stereotypical associations and establishes herself as the hero of her own story. Saint also draws

particular attention to the inner world of women residing in private places, restructuring Ariadne through reanimating events previously presented by male authors.

3.1. INTRODUCTION TO ARIADNE

The etymological background of Ariadne dates back to the Hellenistic period where the Greek lexicographers researched the background of the name to discover that it was composed of the Cretan dialect: ἀρι (*ari-*) for an intensive prefix added with ἄδνός (*adnos*) meaning ‘holy’ or as some state ‘higher holy’ (Hanks 15). As the ‘holy’ in her name signifies, Ariadne was meant for more than a mere mortal and multiple sources support such a hypothesis by a common ground. Though different, many sources such as Ovid and Hesiod carry a common ground about Ariadne, which is dead or alive, Ariadne becomes immortal as a part of the stars, and is granted a holy place among divinities.

In Greek mythology and in Ovid’s version, Ariadne is the princess of Crete, daughter of Pasiphaë and Minos and sister to Phaedra, Androgeos and Asterion who is later known as the Minotaur (Albert 120). Not much is said about her, as she does not have her own myth, but depicted as a part of the Athenian hero, Theseus. “[...] She rarely appears in her own shape and under her own name” (Nichols 11). Ariadne is the heroine of the Athenian hero Theseus’ story; therefore, it is impossible to thoroughly examine Ariadne without an examination of Theseus. Ariadne occupies little space in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as a passive agent. In Ovid’s records, from the beginning Theseus attempted to prove and establish himself as a great hero. He is presented in the lines of a darker personality than other heroes of Greek mythology as his morals are often questioned due to his willingness to kill other individuals without remorse (Hamilton 209). What is often ignored in his myth is that Ariadne is the source to his heroic stories of greatness, without her guidance through Daedalus’ labyrinth, Theseus would not survive to tell his glorious story¹⁶. As Hamilton clarifies in his book, what happens after Theseus escapes from Crete with Ariadne is unclear. Some sources report the events as Theseus deserting Ariadne, emphasizing his villain-like nature while others state that Ariadne was seasick so he helped her ashore and left to the ship, returning to find her dead which portrays him as an innocent bystander. Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* summarizes the story as follows:

[...] The door,
So difficult, which none of those before

¹⁶ Ariadne guided Theseus out of the Daedalus’ labyrinth with a ball of thread, which he used to escape (Hamilton 213).

Could find again, by Ariadne's aid
Was found, the thread that traced the way rewound.
Then Theseus, seizing Minos' daughter, spread
His sails for Naxos, where, upon the shore,
That cruel prince abandoned her and she,
Abandoned, in her grief and anger found
Comfort in Bacchus' arms. He took her crown
And set in the heavens to win her there
A star's eternal glory [...]

and set it in the heavens to win her there a star's eternal glory. (Ovid 176)

As Ovid describes thoroughly in the quote above, Ariadne, as a woman, was mainly behind the true heroic actions of Theseus. It is widely known that Theseus is known for his battle against the Minotaur, the great Athenian hero who later proceeds to be a politician leading the people of Athens with honor. To shatter the hetero-normative understanding of this mythic story, Jennifer Saint, discovered Ovid's *Heroides* after a thorough research, though. Hence, she could use the letters sent to and from Ariadne so as to explore a new women-oriented perspective implemented in this myth.

Another comment on the characterization of Ariadne is by the Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Filipa Afonso in his book chapter "Ariadne: Kierkegaard's View on Women, Life, and Remorse" (2016) states that Kierkegaard mentions Ariadne as the perfect archetype of femininity, emphasizing the unspoken aspect of the motif of Ariadne's thread, her guidance of Theseus. He portrays Ariadne as a reflective mirror of a man by referring to two ideas; his understanding of the "intellect as the realm of men" and the typical nature of women (qtd. in Afonso 67). Even though they have the intellectual capacity to lead men through certain situations, they initially serve the purpose of guiding and supporting the male figure. In the case of Ariadne, Afonso further mentions that she lives for the great hero Theseus and is dependent on his rescue, which again symbolizes the apparent nature of women in literary texts: in a secondary position when compared to great heroes (67). Afonso's comment hints at the ultimate purpose of women characters, which is to support the male protagonist. However, he does not hint at the possibility of change in regards to the nature of women in literature.

Regarding the nature of women, it is significant to underline the mythic self in mythological examples. The mythic self is constructed through the archetypal patterns of human experience. It is often associated with the hero's journey, a mythic narrative that

describes the transformative process of personal growth and development. To explain it further, Leon Burnett's article titled "Ariadne, Theseus, and the Circumambulation of the Mythic Self" (2017) examines mythology as an aspect of the archaic mind, linking the idea of a return to the sense of eternal, expressed with the mythic self. Using the Cretan myth of Ariadne and Theseus, he emphasizes the natural function of myths, presenting a symbolic order used for self-renewing by using the sea and sea journey motifs. In the myth, sea crossing has different meanings. For Theseus, regarded as a cultural hero, it means a return to his homeland. Theseus is constantly moving as the hero, sailing first from Athens to Crete, then back to Athens. In opposition to the constant referrals to his ongoing journey, Ariadne is contained, abandoned, and waiting for a male figure to return or to enter her life (46-47). Her outer journey is stale; yet her inner journey in relation to her personality is dynamic. Hence, it is not a return to self but rather a transfiguration. Ariadne is only free of her ever-lasting containment after being introduced to an eternal figure, the god Dionysus, who does not confide in the linear rules of human life.

Finally, in Jennifer Saint's version, Ariadne's story is quite different as it begins long before she meets Theseus. From her childhood into her early adulthood, princess Ariadne grows up inspecting and examining people and their facial expressions. In particular, she examines her mother Pasiphaë's facial expressions, as Pasiphaë herself goes through the traumatic event of birthing the Minotaur, who Ariadne names Asterion. With the existence of a monster in the family, locked up in an elaborate labyrinth constructed by the architect Daedalus, Ariadne was a child who matured rather quickly. When Theseus comes to Crete with the intentions of slaying the Minotaur, thanks to her maturity and mind, Ariadne is able to see the awaiting opportunity of leaving Crete once she helps Theseus with whom she happens to fall in love. Saint displays Ariadne as an innocent and gullible woman at first who would not know how to take care of herself, however, once she is abandoned on the island of Naxos, it becomes clear by her actions that she does need the existence of a man to take care of her. Once Theseus fools and leaves her abandoned on an island, she is able to survive on her own, even on an abandoned island which happens to be the wine god Dionysus' home island, Naxos. As Shekinah Mountainwater in her novel *Ariadne's Thread: A Workbook of Goddess Magic* (1991) explicates, "[Ariadne's] primary role is as a supporter in the hero's journey, used when needed, discarded in the end" (1). In relation to this quotation, in Jennifer Saint's novel, one can observe that Theseus seems to view Ariadne as an object to be used and discarded once he no longer needs her. However, on Naxos, Ariadne survives for days as her rage to Theseus and survival instincts keep her alive until Dionysus' visit. Contrary to the other literary

representations of the myth of Ariadne, Dionysus does not take Ariadne as his wife or immediately grants her immortality since she is not an object or a man's belonging like other female figures in Greek mythology. Instead, Ariadne asserts her femininity and strength and agrees to be Dionysus priestess and the protector of his home on Naxos.

Similar to Circe, she spends her days learning about survival on the island blessed by Dionysus and establishes a positive friendship with the god, Ariadne and Dionysus slowly falling in love:

I had fallen in love with Theseus in the sizzle of lightning as our eyes connected across a macabre feast [...] I had known nothing about him when I swore to be his wife, save for the lies he had told me. With Dionysus, everything was different. I felt that we had built a trust between us, something real and tangible, and I could not deny how much I longed for him. (Saint 184-185)

As shown in the quote above, the process of falling in love is different from her crush on Theseus. Here it is not fast and one sided, but rather slow, assuring and an innocent form of love with mutual trust. Years pass, and the reader is greeted with the family of Ariadne with Dionysus including her child. Here, Ariadne is shown as an affirming mother figure and a supporting queen who is in charge of the entire island and their community when Dionysus is away.

Unfortunately, towards the end, there is the description of a battle scene between Dionysus and the King Perseus of Argos who refuses to build a shrine for Dionysus in the city. The battle between the two originates from that premise and Dionysus' determined mind that wishes to have the city of Argos, so he turns the women of Argos mad:

Dionysus sighed. "Perseus will want his vengeance upon me [...] I called out to the women," he said, as though I had not seen it happen myself. "They rejected my words, my invitation to worship."

[...] "So you brought a madness to them." (Saint 297-298)

The quote implies the reasons for the war between Dionysus and Perseus, which is significant because even though he is known as a considerate god to mortals, he does not think twice before making them suffer for Perseus' rejection. As a result of Dionysus' actions, Perseus invades the island of Naxos, which at that point is occupied with hundreds of maenads and Ariadne's family. Ultimately, Dionysus loses the war and Ariadne pays the price when Perseus turns her into stone with Medusa's head which was located on his shield. "I looked directly at his shield before I could turn my head away, straight into the contorted face at its center. Her eyes locked onto mine" (302). At the end of the novel and the war, Ariadne is granted the

immortality she was promised by Dionysus, and she continues living amongst the stars.

3.2. EXAMINATION OF SAINT'S ARIADNE

Jennifer Saint in her novel *Ariadne* utilizes multiple narrations, one through Ariadne's first person narration and the other through her sister, Phaedra's first person narration. The aim for such a technique is to expose the hidden and unsaid in women's minds through their journeys. Ariadne often thinks what she cannot say out loud, her true personality is within her thoughts and Saint cleverly exposes them to the reader, thus, revealing the unrepresented nature of the female bystander in Greek mythology. The novel begins with Ariadne's perspective who carries a cynical tone which is only recognized after a few pages, "Let me tell you the story of a righteous man" (Saint 1). She begins by calling out the ultimate figure of patriarchy, her father, King Minos of Crete for every unrightful action he took.

From the beginning of the novel, Ariadne establishes herself as the figure of power as the reader starts to learn that this is her story and she will tell it the way it is meant to be told. "I had hit upon a truth of womanhood: however blameless a life we led, the passions and the greed of men could bring us to ruin, and there was nothing we could do" (Saint 12). Throughout the novel she speaks against the injustices and the bitter reality behind being a woman in a patriarchal society. Regarding this point, Elaine P. Daroz examines the feminist discourse through the idea that the mythic stories explain the social structure serving the purpose of regulating the patterns of behaviors in line with the existing order (207). In ancient Greece, the functions of mythological narratives included dictating the correct ways of behaving. It also entailed creating exemplary punishments for those who disobeyed, like Prometheus or Circe. In *Ariadne*, Saint establishes a mythic story that shatters the mythic narratives of ancient Greece by emphasizing the incorrectness of the stereotypical and cynical behaviors disguised as the correct way:

'Medusa was beautiful,' Eirene told us [...]

'In the temple of Athena, one suitor came before her that she could not scorn or run from. The mighty Poseidon wanted the beautiful girl for himself and he would not hear her pleas or her cries, nor did he restrain himself from defiling the sacred temple in which they stood.' Eirene drew in her breath, slow and precise.

[...] My tears had stilled now and I listened intently. I only knew Medusa as a monster. I had not thought she had ever been anything else. The stories of

Perseus did not allow for a Medusa with a story of her own. (13)

The quote above serves as an example of Saint's narration technique where she reveals the injustices and false beliefs. To do this, she mentions Medusa, a mortal Gorgon whose beauty caught the attention of the sea god, Poseidon, and sexually assaulted as a result (Albert 131). As young Ariadne learned from another woman, Medusa's story was not compiled of Athena's jealousy to turn her into a monster but indeed it was a story of pain. She could not voice her own story, shadowed by the other great stories of men. "So, Medusa had to pay for Poseidon's act. It made no sense at all, and then I tilted my head and saw it with the logic of the gods" (Saint 14). Through Medusa's example, Saint cleverly disguises Medusa's true story as a part of Ariadne's personal revelation, thus hinting at the endless possibilities to interpret the novel.

In the novel, Saint explores Ariadne's childhood, psychology and her coping mechanisms, thus differentiating from the other mythological representations. So, while it seems as if Ariadne grows up with the Minatour, to Ariadne herself, she grows up with her brother, Asterion who is a little different from the rest rather than a minatour. For the longest time, she viewed the Minatour as her little brother and once the reality heavied on her, she chose to cope with this situation by way of dancing.

So I danced [...] I couldn't even hear my brother's low, guttural howls or the pleading cries of the unfortunates who were forced between those heavy, ironbolted doors with the labrys etched deep into the stone above. I danced and the slow, simmering anger boiled to rage in my veins, propelling me onwards, until I dropped in the dead centre of the floor, hopelessly entangled in scarlet skeins, panting for breath and waiting for the heavy clouds that fogged my brain and my vision to clear. (Saint 23)

For Ariadne, dancing is a powerful way to cope with the reality as it enables her to relieve the built up negative emotions and feelings such as anxiety and stress. Ariadne expresses herself through dancing; she expresses her rage and her sadness by channeling such movements into dancing. As a result, dancing helps her re-center herself and reconnect with the world around herself. "I would not think of the seven young men and seven young women who would be bound and brought to us across the seas in black-sailed ships. I would not imagine the terrors of the Labyrinth: the dank, airless stench of death and despair, and the tearing of teeth through flesh. [...] I would not think. I danced instead" (Saint 24). Therefore, one can say that dancing is a method of therapy for Ariadne in Jennifer Saint's novel. Dancing can also symbolize purity and innocence. In Madeline Miller's *Circe* when mentioning Ariadne, Miller signals the action of dancing stands for the positive emotions such as happiness, innocence and purity.

Ariadne's light feet crossed and recrossed the circle. Every step was perfect, like a gift she gave herself, and she smiled, receiving it. I wanted to seize her by the shoulders. Whatever you do, I wanted to say, do not be too happy. It will bring down fire on your head.

I said nothing, and let her dance. (Miller 118)

Circe is compassionate towards Ariadne in Miller's novel, and vice versa in Saint's. The quote above is significant in various ways: Circe as the aunt to Ariadne, wishes to warn her of the dangers that await a woman; however, she chooses to stay silent. The reason is not to disturb her, but to let her experience happiness to the fullest, something which she might not feel as strong ever again by dancing while she can.

3.2.1. Female Interpretation and Narration

As discussed in the Introduction of this thesis in detail, female characters have a crucial role in fantasy literature since they are the symbols of empowerment. Traditionally in classical fantasy works or just in Greek mythology in general, women are passive agents who do not occupy a significant role in the overall storyline. However, in modern fantasy literature women started to be the main characters, specifically in the works written by other women. The female interpretation highlights the female experience which enables women to retell their stories under a better and more luminiscent light. Through such a method, reinterpreting and reimagining the archetypal storylines and analyzing the patriarchal structures paves the way for the female interpreters to continuously challenge the passive and submissive portrayal of women and transform them into realistic, complex and strong characters in patriarchal discourse.

Jennifer Saint displays Ariadne as a responsible young woman, capable of observing the injustice around her and of expressing her unique thoughts as a result of her thorough observations. "Later, would I want to claim that I was possessed of a madness, that I didn't know what I was doing? That I moved through my story as the Fates directed, that I bore no responsibility for it myself?" (Saint 50). She takes the responsibilities of her actions instead of hiding behind an excuse of madness instead of blaming the Fates like many figures did in various myths. However, Ariadne is not the only woman who is presented a stage to express

herself in the novel, but her mother Pasiphaë, her sister Phaedra and later mentions of Leto¹⁷, Io¹⁸ and Semele¹⁹ prove that Saint aimed to establish a female literary genealogy in Greek mythology.

With no one peering over my shoulder, I was free to tell the stories I wanted to, instead. The weary Leto, cursed by Hera to stagger ever onward across the earth while her belly swelled with the twins Zeus had fathered. Io, bewildered by her metamorphosis from woman to cow when Zeus sought to hide his infidelity once more. And of course, Semele, vainly attempting to shield her eyes from the sunburst of gold that would turn her to dust. (Saint 163)

Despite the brevity above, the sentences in the quote highlight the perspective of the suffering women just moments before or after experiencing traumatic events. Leto's pain, Io's shock and Semele's primal attempt to protect herself add a unique perspective to their mythological stories. Above all, they are women who have been denied the right to tell their own stories.

In Saint's version, Ariadne describes Theseus as charming, kind, strong and gorgeous on first sight, which hints at her developing crush. "I saw the tender kindness [...] The muscles that brought to mind the palace's finest marble statues [...] He strode with such confidence and assurance [...]" (33-37). She wonders about Theseus' kindness and radiating confidence despite the prince being presented as a tribute to the Minotaur. To the innocent Ariadne, Theseus, the prince of Athens, seems to have a good nature by his act of volunteering instead of children who were supposed to be taken as tribute. Thus, she suspects nothing when the genius Daedalus warns Ariadne about Theseus when she seeks for his help to guide Theseus through the famous labyrinth:

‘Does a Prince of Athens who strives for legend want to be rescued from a monster by a beautiful girl? Do you think he will allow you to take him by the hand and smuggle him from Crete under a blanket, like a sack of grain?’

¹⁷ The Titan goddess, Leto was cursed by the goddess Hera and her jealousy after Hera found out about her affair with the god Zeus. The curse was to never find a solid land on Earth to give birth to her twins, Apollo and Artemis (Kamach).

¹⁸ A mortal girl, Io caught the attention of Zeus, who disguised into a cloud and slept with her. As a consequence, to protect Io from Hera's wrath, he transformed her into "a white heifer" ("Io").

¹⁹ A princess, Semele had an affair with Zeus, and the goddess Hera appeared to Semele under a disguise which made her doubt her relationship with Zeus. As a result, Semele asked Zeus to grant her a wish under an oath to river Styx and wished him to appear to her in his immortal form, and she turned into dust under the god's glory ("Semele"). For more, please refer to *The Homeric Hymns* by Joan Papsky (179).

[...] He means to defeat the mighty Minotaur tomorrow. [...] It will be Theseus' courage that is sung of, not your father's power.' (47- 48)

Here, Daedalus talks about Theseus' desperate need for heroism to establish a reputation for himself which will later enable him to brag about his greatness as an Athenian hero. Theseus cleverly disguises his true intentions to Ariadne so as to make her fall for him. Theseus later invites her to Athens and asks for her hand in marriage in return for helping him. The act of kindness and care continues until the righteous hero accomplishes his goals and abandons Ariadne on the island of Naxos, thus, proving Daedalus who warned her previously right. "He had promised to save her from self-destruction, from the pain of her wounds; her first companion had betrayed her" (Lewin 1). The first affirming figure in Ariadne's life, someone who could free her from the restraints of Crete, Theseus proves himself to be a traitor to Ariadne's trust and belief. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, translated by A.D. Melville in the year 2009, Ariadne's journey is described as such:

The door,
So difficult, which none of those before
Could find again, by Ariadne's aid
Was found, the thread that traced the way rewound.
Then Theseus, seizing Minos' daughter, spread
His sails for Naxos, where, upon the shore,
That cruel prince abandoned her and she,
Abandoned, in her grief and anger found
Comfort in Bacchus' arms. He took her crown
and set it in the heavens to win her there
A star's eternal glory. (Ovid 176)

Ovid thoroughly describes the importance of Ariadne's aid to Theseus. Ariadne guides him through impossible labyrinths but she is abandoned in return on the island of Naxos where she is eventually greeted by Dionysus to end her suffering. Following the same storyline, Saint expands on the journey and Ariadne's perspective, thus shedding light to her personal world.

Jennifer Saint's unique narration is similar to Ursula Le Guin who illustrates the stories of individuals on their journeys and shares glimpses of their personal world as a writer. Le Guin's stories are the unique tales of journeys as she is equipped with a unique language to elaborate on the hardships women experience on earth. As a fantasy writer she finds a way to upturn the patriarchic structure of language without disturbing anyone (Le Guin). Saint, perhaps inspired by Le Guin, successfully establishes a similar storyline by exploring the in-

depth thoughts of the female main character:

“You would be dead if it wasn’t for me!” I screamed at Theseus across the cliffs, over the indifferent ocean. [...]“You are no hero, you faithless coward!” [...] He would be bragging of how he had beaten the monster of Crete to death and scattered his bones—without a word to acknowledge my part, my sacrifice, what I had done for him. (Saint 101)

The quotation above signalizes Theseus’ attempt at erasing the female character from the narrative line to create a false heroic tale when in reality his tale exists because of the invisible characters in his life: “My story would not be one of death and suffering and sacrifice. I would take my own place in the songs that would be sung about Theseus: the princess who saved him and ended the monstrosity that blighted Crete” (76). It was Ariadne who figured how to outwit her father to help Theseus and his men out of the labyrinth and guiding them towards the ship without being seen. Undermining his own daughter’s intellectual capability, King Minos reveals his weaknesses to Ariadne without realizing as he underestimates her for she is a woman: “No one could fight my father. He was protected by his armies, by his power, by his immovable self-belief and the monster raging beneath his palace [...] But what if he did not need to be fought? It would take a cunning mind to do it, but what if Minos could be outwitted?” (Saint 45). Evaluating her father’s strengths, Ariadne finds a way to outwit him, standing up to the tyrant male power through wit. Thus, she disregards the stereotypes about the intelligence capability of women in the ancient Greek society.

On the island of Naxos, terrified and left alone for the first time, Ariadne experiences fear and sorrow for the first time in her life. However, her sensibility is the reason she stays alive until Dionysus comes by, she eats, drinks and seeks shelter because her mind in the survival mode is telling her to focus on survival rather than to whine and beg for his return unlike in Ovid’s *Heroides*, Epistle 10.

Gentler than you I have found every race of wild beasts [...] By these tears I pray you – tears moved by what you have done – turn about your ship, reverse your sail, glide swiftly back to me! If I have died before you come, ‘twill yet be you who bear away my bones! (*Heroides* 1.145)

Ariadne takes charge of herself and her situation in Saint’s version and strives on the island of Naxos until Dionysus visits. In the novel, Ariadne is raging at Theseus rather than lamenting for his return like a lost lover as she does in *Heroides*. In Saint’s retelling, she is furious and she only wishes for his return to verbally state her rage. ““You would be dead if it wasn’t for me!” I screamed at Theseus across the cliffs [...] “You are no hero, you faithless coward!””

(Saint 101). She does not lament, but calls out to his cowardice behaviors at the endless sea, which provides her a sense of relief. To revisit the epigram at the beginning of this chapter and to relate Ariadne's anger to another woman asserting dominance through anger in Greek mythology, Carol Ann Duffy in her poem "Medusa" states:

I stared in the mirror.
Love gone bad
showed me a Gorgon.
Fire spew
From the mouth of a mountain. ("Medusa" 30-32)

In the quote above, Duffy creates a metaphor with the figure of a furious Gorgon. The positive connotations of love towards the prince of Argos, Perseus, turns negative which consequently turns her mad, her rage and resentment about to erupt similar to a volcano. Similarly, after Theseus' abandonment, someone she deemed perfect, Ariadne experiences a very real level of anger upon betrayal. Saint states "I only knew Medusa as a monster. I had not thought she had ever been anything else. The stories of Perseus did not allow for a Medusa with a story of her own" (13). For Ariadne, Theseus' leave symbolizes a turnpoint in Ariadne's personal journey: once he leaves, Ariadne resituates herself as a powerful figure, who does not rely on anyone else but herself. She does not let the stories of Theseus shadow her own.

Through Theseus, Saint exposes the male heroic tale as a tale of deceit, constructed through women suffering for them. "He would be bragging of how he had beaten the monster of Crete to death and scattered his bones—without a word to acknowledge my part, my sacrifice, what I had done for him" (101). In the quote, Ariadne is contesting against the deletion of the female from the narrative. The idea of transforming into an invisible character seems to push her to think about other women and how many he would have fooled for his own heroic story that would carry his fame across the seas. Further into the story when the reader observes from the story from Ariadne's sister, Phaedra's perspective, Theseus constructs a fake story about Ariadne's death, of how she was killed by a venomous snake to pay for Artemis' wrath. All the more, in Madeline Miller's *Circe*, Ariadne's death is mentioned to have occurred the same way Theseus told the story. Unconsciously, there seems to be a link between Miller and Saint as they re-establish the background around the myth of Ariadne.

3.2.2. Sacrifice and Motherhood

Since her childhood, Ariadne is described as an attentive child, watching people around her meticulously. For that reason, it is rather unsurprising that she started comparing and doubting the rights of women around her when she developed her sense of judgement in the patriarchal society. Ariadne's first realizations about the world came about by observing her father King Minos of Crete: "They chuckled at the stories of how the girls Minos took to his bed were seized with agony at the moment of his pleasure [...] But it was Minos' decree that mattered, not our hopes" (Saint 22-28). Ariadne comments on Minos' glorified manhood while observing and attaining the awareness she needed to survive, that women did not matter and they were only agents to men.

The ancient Greek society in Saint's novel revolves around men and views women as objects of pleasure. Women mostly existed in secondary positions to men, despite being the leaders of the households within the restrictions of the private sphere. Thus, when the stories about Ariadne's mother Pasiphaë and the bull originated, rumors started to circulate around the palace. Ariadne overhears the speculations about her mother Pasiphaë and her brother, the Minotaur, which withholds a significant place in reflecting the views of society. "*She wanted it, the bull, the beast; I bet she squealed with delight and that bastard she spawned, a freak just like its mother*" (22). The quote written in italics, projects the rumor and objectifying comments told in society. Ariadne, however, is able to recognize the immoral and false comments towards her own mother even as a teenager. Women had limited rights as they resided in the household, dutiful to raise children and please the husband whilst having no control over their lives. If they did not abide by the rules of the household, they were judged and criticized greatly. "Back then, my mother would fling herself into these stories as she would her dancing, with wild abandon, before she knew her innocent pleasures would be taken as evidence of her uncontrolled excesses" (10). Per the societal norms once people started talking about Pasiphaë, they commented on her happiness and willingness to dance as invitation to be abused. In the quote, Ariadne describes the previous state of her mother before the birth of the Minotaur, when Pasiphaë had desire to live and experience life to the fullest, expressing herself through dancing like her child.

Pasiphaë's experience with motherhood essentially consists of traumatic events. Her baby, Asterion was a monstrous creature, unaccepted by society due to its wild and primal nature. As the mother of a monster, for Pasiphaë, motherhood is not only a job, but also her entire life. Her unconditional love and the complexities about her child's nature is specifically

difficult for her as a mother. “With Pasiphaë’s baby confined to a dark, stinking maze of tunnels [...] I began to see flickers of emotion in her once again. Where once she had shone with joy, love and laughter, she now was shadowed with bitterness and a slow, smouldering rage” (21). Throughout the months she was forced to stay away from her child who was confined into a labyrinth, Pasiphaë is described as silent and dissociating.

Pasiphaë sat, the food in front of her unnoticed and the wine in her goblet untouched. It took her a long time to speak. When she did, it cost her a great effort, I could see, to force her fragmented mind back to the present, back here to where we were now, blown apart as it was by the horrors of the past and set to drift on the winds of despair forever. (44-45)

Pasiphaë’s both physical and emotional trauma resulted in a fragmented mind, unable to function as it used to. She was silenced by herself as a queen and by her intense trauma of losing her offspring, waking up to its screams in the labyrinth. As a queen, she manages the household and attends royal dinners whilst struggling with the fact that the child she birthed was now forever away and utilized in the power-seeking hands of her husband, King Minos. As Rebecca Armstrong comments on the Cretan women, “We witness Ariadne abandoned over and over again [...] Pasiphaë forced to replay her extraordinary union with the bull. Yet for all the repetition, the stories do not lose their power, but rather accrue layer upon layer of meaning” (300). Despite the Cretan women’s sufferings, Ariadne’s laments over Theseus leaving and Pasiphaë replaying the assault continuously in her mind due to trauma seems to add meaning to their stories, rather than being examples of repetition.

In the novel, Ariadne unconsciously compares her mother Pasiphaë to Gorgon Medusa regarding their destiny. In Greek mythology, Medusa, a Gorgon was known to be punished for Poseidon’s assault towards her in a temple of Athena. Her punishment was the transformation of her hair into snakes and anyone who would lay eyes on her would turn into stone. Later, when Medusa was hiding away from society not to hurt anyone else, the hero Perseus, son of Zeus was sent to kill her and retrieve the head to use in battle, which he succeeded at (Albert 129, 131-132).

I could not fail to see the parallels between Medusa and Pasiphaë. Both paid the price for another’s crime. But Pasiphaë shrank and became smaller every day, even whilst her belly stretched and grew oddly misshapen with her strange baby. She did not raise her eyes from the ground, she did not open her mouth to speak. (Saint 14).

The quote above refers to the correlation between Medusa and Pasiphaë. As Ariadne watched

her mother disappear into a silent object with each passing day, she could not help but to think about the expenses of them paying for the same god, Poseidon's crimes. The great Olympian, one of the ultimate figures of patriarchy in Greek mythology is untouchable in both mortal and immortal world, thus the deities who are angry at Poseidon always choose to punish the mortals, specifically women who seem to have no value to the deities.

Overall, it is quite saddening to witness the sacrifices Greek women make in various mythological stories, only to be punished for other's mistakes. Whether it is Ariadne, Phaedra, Pasiphaë, Medusa or Circe, whether an innocent woman or a devoted one to change the patriarchal order of the world, women always seem to meet a tragic end where they are silenced forever. At the end of the novel, Saint, however, wishes to differentiate Ariadne from the rest:

Up here, drifting in the infinite dark, I hear their prayers: the women of Naxos, of Crete, of Athens and Argos and every far-flung corner of the world. [...] They call to me to guide their babies to safety, warm and damp in their arms. And here, in the dark bowl of the night sky, I hear them. I turn my light towards them and I bathe them in its unquenchable glow, gathering them all to share our inexhaustible strength together. (304-305)

Having gained the immortality Dionysus promised her when they first met as his priestess, though Ariadne is dead, she is no longer a passive agent or used as a warning to other women. Instead, Saint granted her the power to be the light Greek women needed in their daily lives. As a forever part of the constellations, Ariadne is at peace knowing she can empower the women who are desperately in need of guidance.

In conclusion, Jennifer Saint's novel *Ariadne*, discovers a new approach to the characterization of Ariadne by examining her psyche and personality through different narration methods. Ariadne was previously seen only as a heroine, serving as an object of guidance in the myth of the Athenian hero, Theseus. Saint revisits and retells the mythological story to discover the untold stories of women in Greek mythology. Ariadne, rather than being viewed as a lamenting object after being abandoned, is now depicted as a furious woman, reclaiming her position in the story. Thus, not only does she reclaim her position, but she also resituates herself as the main character.

CHAPTER IV

4. CONCLUSION

There is never a single, orthodox version of a myth. As our circumstances change, we need to tell our stories differently in order to bring out the timeless truth.

(Karen Armstrong *A Short History of Myth* 8)

Literature is a powerful medium used to convey generations of stories in culture worldwide. From religion to fantasy, a wide variety of genres were created as the concept of one's own literature was created and developed; all dependant on the patriarchal stereotypes within a societal structure. For Greek literature starting from the oral tradition, that was the display of strong and muscular male characters and their quest of attaining the female character as a prize. The two figures, the strong man and the fragile, helpless woman who sought to be the man's wife occupy a significant position when spoken about general literature. Given their crucial role, when criticizing the said literature, the plot featuring the two figures are often the starting point for most.

Most precisely, the feminist literary criticism which focuses on the relationship between men and women by evaluating the normative literature through a new, unique lens and therefore reinventing the stereotypical relationship structures that revolve around the stronger and the weaker gender. The purpose of this thesis is to further research and highlight the works of literature by women writers, specifically Madeline Miller and Jennifer Saint who focus on women's inner lives, hidden thoughts and personalities to reveal the unsaid and unspoken in normative literature with their works titled *Circe* and *Ariadne*. They retell the stories of Greek mythology by Homer and Ovid as a part of fantasy literature, highlighting the female identity, experiences and perspectives. With these retellings, Miller and Saint aimed to assist the Ancient Greek women in myth stories to regain their identities and power which was previously stripped and induced into only a heroine, a helping figure with no real characterization by male authors. It can be stated that the two authors accomplished their aim and reconstructed the image of a woman from a realistic perspective.

The rewritings of classical literature are significant because by inspecting the past through a new lens, one can successfully observe the tiny details which were overlooked and read between the lines. They also offer insight into the mindset of a character. In the 21st century, it is crucial to observe and to revisit the original literary sources to elaborate on the

state of women and to successfully criticize women's literature through female literary theory.

In Chapter 1, this thesis examined the background of the sorcerer and goddess Circe from a more feminist perspective as regards to the two works Homer's *The Odyssey*, a work of classical literature, and Madeline Miller's *Circe*, a 21st century fantasy literature work. The two works' linguistic and literary differences are discussed as they display the character Circe as two differentiating characters. To be clearer, Homer describes Circe as another objectified woman, highlighting her evil and tempting nature whereas Miller displayed Circe's strengths and weaknesses, viewing her as a self-reliant and dominant woman who is capable of surviving on her own at her island, Aiaia, in the absence of a male authority. Circe is essentially a powerful woman, in regards to her physical magical abilities of transformation and psychological capabilities. She is a Titan goddess, a sorcerer and a mother living in a matriarchal world of her own. Miller explores power in relation to the two concepts love and death and therefore becoming an embodiment of a role model for women today. Her exile and suffering contribute to her character growth and enables the reader to associate themselves and recognize the struggle of the women in both classical times, and in the 21st century. Overall, Miller presents Circe as an empowered individual who refuses to be silenced, inviting readers into her world with a soothing and disturbing familiarity that reminds its readers her existence is a representation of every single woman ever lived.

In Chapter 2, this thesis explored the character of Ariadne, the princess of Crete and the daughter of Queen Pasiphaë and King Minos whose fate generated discussions and conflicts even in classical literature based on the works of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* and Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne*. In Ovid's works, Ariadne steadily transforms from an archetypal heroine to a woman of voice, able to call out the treacherous and unethical actions of her lover, Athenian hero Theseus. Jennifer Saint reimagines Ariadne as entirely an active agent who refuses to be a side character in a man's story. Ariadne retells her own story through reinterpretation that breaks down the patriarchal structures around the normative plot. Ariadne, therefore, situates herself in the midst of the novel and creates a version of her story which leaves hardly any room for false interpretation. In the 21st century, Ariadne has been transformed into a figure of a vulnerable heroine and a victim as a woman, used as an object for Theseus' epic story, and the retelling of Saint reveals a different perspective of Ariadne. In Saint's re-enactment Ariadne is another strong and independent woman, capable of surviving in the absence of another man. By reinventing Circe and Ariadne as exemplary figures in the fantasy literature and in Greek mythology, Madeline Miller and Jennifer Saint not only contribute to the feminist discourse but also take a further step in establishing a female literary

genealogy.

The two novels *Circe* and *Ariadne* employ similar narrative techniques to fully convey the story, and present the inner thoughts of the female characters. They use first person narration, and italics to emphasize a certain train of thought. Though still first-person narration, *Ariadne* is different than *Circe* as the novel switches between two different women, Ariadne and her sister, Phaedra. Despite the two works are from different bodies of literature, one American and one English, they embody similar themes around womenhood and individuality. It can be stated that two variant cultures unite to emphasize a common issue, which is the characterization of women in literature in general without the distinction of culture or nationality. Miller and Saint share the same aim, to explore the minds of Greek women of myths by providing unique voices and personalities. Throughout the novel, perhaps the most intricate thought *Circe* and *Ariadne* embody is mortality. Whether it is from an immortal nymph's perspective or a mortal princess, both characters deeply contemplate about the fragility of the physical bodies.

Icarus, Daedalus, Ariadne. All gone to those dark fields, where hands worked nothing but air, where feet no more touched the earth. ... Every moment mortals died, by shipwreck and sword, by wild beasts and wild men, by illness, neglect, and age. It was their fate, as Prometheus had told me, the story that they all shared. No matter how vivid they were in life, no matter how brilliant, no matter the wonders they made, they came to dust and smoke. Meanwhile every petty and useless god would go on sucking down the bright air until the stars went dark. (Miller 138)

Circe's individual journey from an unbeatable immortal to a mother reminds her the fragility of mortals, she is reminiscent of her own niece, Ariadne as she holds her mortal son in her arms. For mortals, everything ends, which explains the unimportance of them to the divine gods.

Why mortals bloomed like flowers and crumbled to nothing? Why their absence left a gnawing ache, a hollow void that could never be filled? And how everything they once were, that spark within them, could be extinguished so completely yet the world did not collapse under the weight of so much pain and grief. (Saint 176-177)

Similar to *Circe*, Ariadne contemplates about the fragility of mortals and their importance in the mortal world. Though fragile, human beings carry a significance to their partners and loved ones. Despite being bright and intelligent, once they die, they barely leave any trace on the

world, only an aching pain. An immortal, however, Circe differentiates herself from the rest, even from Ariadne, as she falls for mortals despite their fragile nature, so much so that in the end she chooses to leave her island, and spend the rest of her life as a mortal once she understands what being a human entail.

As stated previously, this thesis aimed to provide insight into the women writers of fantasy literature who chose to reinvent and to retell the stories of classical literature, Greek mythology in particular. In the introduction, a research question was proposed signalling the possibilities of observing the place of women in literature and society through a 21st century perspective through the classical retellings. With its thorough discussion of the fantasy literature of the 21st century, this thesis confirms that the retellings withhold the ability explore the position of women in literature in both Ancient Greek and in the 21st century with a female perspective. The thesis, however, specifically focuses on only the two works of the 21st century and it needs to be recognized that in the last five years, various women writers decided to establish authority over the classical literatures of different cultures along with the other forms of art such as theatre and music. Therefore, the thesis merely cracks a door to the world of possibilities of literature where with further research the new trend in the fantasy literature can be explored and examined.

In conclusion, retelling stories in the 21st century is crucial as it is significant to encourage retellings in different cultures to discover new perspectives in literature and to inspire progress in literature. To revisit the epigram in the beginning of the chapter by Karen Armstrong, there are several versions of mythological stories and throughout the centuries as the humankind evolves, there is a need to retell the said stories to uncover new concepts and raise awareness about the existing issues in society. Currently, the rewritings conducted by women writers are limited to the Greek mythology and classical literature, however, as the act of rewriting and revisioning is a global concept, it can expand into almost all areas of literature.

This thesis presents merely a part of the possible future interpretations and illumination of women of ancient texts. Once looked further into the ancient cultures and their mythologies such as Egyptian, Nordic without the discrimination of Eastern and Western, it can be stated that the stereotypical images concerning the characterization of women exists almost worldwide. Even in Turkish literature there are several works in that field including Nazlı Eray's *Orphée* (2015), and *İmparator Çay Bahçesi* (2015), Ufak Tufan's *Tepegöz* (2019), Oylum Yılmaz's *Cadı* (2018), and Filiz Özdem's *Efsaneler Diyarı* (2019). In this regard, this dissertation provided a possible reading into ancient texts and women by highlighting the woman in mythologies and fantasy literature and presented a realistic imagery into the

examination of women characters from a 21st century perspective. In the light of these findings, the results of the literature study serve as a stepping stone into the mythological and fantastic worlds of possibilities as it allows further and deeper examinations into the characterization of women in terms of structure and personality.



WORKS CITED

- @EmilyRCWilson. "The Odyssey is told by a female Muse, guided by a female goddess, and now translated by me: 3. It's a group of ladies, as a nod to archaic Greek choral poetry, and as a recognition that I am one woman, but the women who have helped and taught me over the years are many." *Twitter*, 23 Dec 2017, 2:10 p.m., <https://twitter.com/EmilyRCWilson/status/944525720205889537>
- Afonso, Filipa. "Ariadne: Kierkegaard's View on Women, Life, and Remorse." *Kierkegaard's Literary Figures and Motifs: Tome 1: Agamemnon to Guadalquivir*, edited by Nun, Katalin, and Stewart, Jon, 1st ed., Routledge, 2016. Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources Volume 16.
- "Agamede." *theoi.com*, <https://www.theoi.com/Heroine/Agamede.html>.
- Albert, Liv. *Greek Mythology the Gods, Goddesses and Heroes Handbook*. Adams Media, 2021.
- Alpini, Gloria. "From Female Archetypes to Female Stereotypes. Myth and Fantasy: Alienating Modes of Representation. An Interdisciplinary and Comparative Approach to "le fantastique féminin." *Annali della Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione*, vol I, no. 2, 2005, pp. 35-46. *Edizioni Università di Macerata*, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3692>.
- Alter, Alexandra. "Circe, a Vilified Witch from Classical Mythology, Gets Her Own Epic." *New York Times*, 6 Apr. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/06/books/madeline-miller-circe-novel.html>
- "Anxiety (n.)." *Etymology*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/anxiety>.
- Armstrong, Karen. *The Case for God*. 1st ed., Knopf Doubleday Publishing, 2009.
- Armstrong, Karen. *A Short History of Myth*. Canongate Books Ltd., 2008.

- Armstrong, Rebecca. *Cretan Women: Pasiphaë, Ariadne, and Phaedra in Latin Poetry*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Astell, Mary. *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. Project Gutenberg, 2017,
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/54984/54984-h/54984-h.htm>.
- “Author (n.).” *Etymology*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/author>.
- Beowulf*. Translated by Seamus Heaney. *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Julia Reidhead, editor. 9th ed., vol. A, Norton, 2012. pp. 41-108.
- Boccuti, Anna. “Female Fantastic in Anthologies: Gendering the Genre and its Discourse.” *Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2020, p. 4. *CLCWeb*,
<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3692>
- Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated by David R. Slavitt, Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Bommas, Martin. “‘I am Isis’: The Role of Speech in the Cult of Isis.” *Egypt and the Classical World: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Antiquity*. Edited by Jeffrey Spier and Sara E. Cole, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2022, pp. 42-58.
- Bozer, Deniz A, editor. *On Dokuzuncu Yüzyılda İngiliz Kadın Yazarlar*. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2018.
- Bozer, Deniz A, editor. *On Sekizinci Yüzyılda İngiliz Kadın Yazarlar*. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016.
- Bozer, Deniz A, editor. *Ortaçağdan On Yedinci Yüzyıla İngiliz Kadın Yazarlar*. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014.
- Brzeziński, Daniel. “The Notion of Myth in History, Ethnology and Phenomenology of Religion.” *Teologia i Człowiek*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2015, pp. 13–26.,
<https://doi.org/10.12775/ticz.2015.047>.
- Bucur, Maria. “Europe and Russia.” *The Routledge Global History of Feminism*. Edited by

- Bonnie G. Smith and Nova Robinson, vol 1., Routledge, 2022, pp. 257-270.
- Burnett, Leon. "Ariadne, Theseus, and the Circumambulation of the Mythic Self." *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, vol. 40, no.2, 2017, pp 41-52. *Gale Academic Onefile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A597253067/AONE?u=anon~8418d9a3&sid=googleScholar&xid=a16b6614
- Butler, Judith. "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex." *Yale French Studies*, no. 72, 1986, pp. 35–49. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2930225>.
- Buxton, Richard. *The Complete World of Greek Mythology*. Thames & Hudson, 2004.
- Chaviano, Daína. "Science Fiction and Fantastic Literature as Realms of Freedom." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 15, no. 1 (57), 2004, pp. 4–11. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43308680>.
- Combs, Mary Beth. "'Concealing Him from Creditors': How Couples Contributed to the Passage of the 1870 Married Women's Property Act." *Married Women and the Law: Coverture in England and the Common Law World*, edited by Tim Stretton et. al., McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013, pp. 217–39. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt32b7jq.14>.
- "Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902." *National Archives of Australia*, 2010, <https://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resource-themes/society-and-culture/gender-and-sexuality/commonwealth-franchise-act-1902>
- Daroz, Elaine P. "From Greek mythology to the Contemporary discourse: the functioning of memory about feminine in a discursive perspective." *International Journal of Arts and Social Science*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2020, pp. 207-214. *IJASS*, <https://www.ijassjournal.com/2020/V3I4/41465751989.pdf>
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Vintage eBooks, 1st ed., 2011.

Deborah, Lyons. *Gender and Immortality: Heroines in Ancient Greek Myth and Cult*. Princeton University Press, 1997.

De Gouges, Olympe. "Declaration of the Rights of woman and the citizeness, dedicated to the Queen." *Olympe de Gouges: English translations of the original French texts*, 2023, <https://www.olympedegouges.eu/docs/declaration-des-droits-de-la-femme.pdf>

De Pizan, Christine. *The Book of the City of Ladies and Other Writings*. Edited by Sophie Bourgault and Rebecca Kingston. Translated by Ineke Hardy. Hackett Publishing Company, 2018.

Doughty, Terri. "Book review: No Man's Land: The place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth-Century Volume 1: The War of the Words." *Canadian Woman Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3-4, 1988, p. 1. *CWSJournals*, <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/issue/view/533>

Edmunds, Lowell, editor. *Approaches to Greek Myth*. 2nd ed., Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

Estés, Clarissa Pinkola. *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. Balantine Books, 1992.

"Fairy (n.)." *Etymology*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/fairy>.

"Fantastic (Adj.)." *Etymology*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/fantastic>.

"Fantasy (n.)." *Etymology*, <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=fantasy>.

Farnetti, Monica. "Anxiety-free: Rereadings of the Freudian "Uncanny"." Translated by Danielle Hipkins. *The Italian Gothic and Fantastic: Encounters and Rewritings of Narrative Traditions*. Edited by Francesca Billiani and Gigliola Sulis. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007, pp. 49-58.

"Feminism, n.2." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2022, <https://www.oed.com/oed2/00083535>

- Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock and Introduced by Hugh Haughton. Penguin Books, 2003.
- Galinsky, Karl. *Ovid's Metamorphoses: An Introduction To The Basic Aspects*, University of California Press, 1975.
- Gorney, Cynthia. "In Historic Saudi Elections, These Women Stepped Up as Voters and Candidates." *National Geographic*, 12 December 2015, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/151212-saudi-arabia-election-women-vote>.
- Griffin, Tom, editor. *Chapman's Homer: The Iliad and The Odyssey*. Translated by George Chapman, Introduction by Jan Parker, Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 2002.
- Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*, Grand Central Publishing, 2011.
- Hanks, Patrick, et al. *A Concise Dictionary of First Names*. Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Hard, Robin. *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology*. 8th ed. Routledge, 2020.
- Hipkins, E. Danielle. *Contemporary Italian Women Writers and Traces of the Fantastic: The Creation of Literary Space*, Routledge Publishing, 2020.
- Hogan, James C. "The Temptation of Odysseus." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, vol. 106, 1976, pp. 187-210. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/284099>.
- "Imagination." *Collins English Dictionary*, HarperCollins Publishers, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/imagination>
- "Io." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 Dec 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Io-Greek-mythology>.
- Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, edited by Terrence Hawkes, Routledge Publishing, 2009.
- James, Edward and Mendlesohn, Farah, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy*

- Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Jochens, Jenny. *Women in Old Norse Society*. 1st ed., Cornell University Press, 1995. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1tm7jbv>.
- Johnson, Sarah I. "Narrating Myths: Story and Belief in Ancient Greece." *Arethusa*, vol. 48, no. 2, *Johns Hopkins University Press*, 2015, pp. 173–218. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26314620>.
- Kapach, Avi. "Leto." *Mythopedia*, 7 Dec 2022, <https://mythopedia.com/topics/leto>.
- Kelleghan, Fiona, editor. *Classics of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature*. Salem Press, Inc. vol. 1, 2002.
- Köylü, Rabia. *Transgressing Male Boundaries: The Poetic Works of Anne Finch*. 2018. Hacettepe U, MA thesis. *Hacettepe University Open Access*, <http://openaccess.hacettepe.edu.tr:8080/xmlui/handle/11655/5445>.
- Leapor, Mary. "An Essay on Women." *Poems Upon Several Occasions*. J. Roberts, 1748.
- Le Guin, Ursula. *Kadınlar Rüyalara Ejderhalar*. Edited by Erksan Deniz, et. al., Metis, (1998) 2017.
- Lewin, Jennifer. "Ariadne." *Raritan Quarterly Review*, vol. 29, no.1, *ProQuest*, 2009, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/ariadne/docview/203885873/se-2>.
- Macquire, Kelly. "Interview: Ariadne by Jennifer Saint." *World History Encyclopedia*. World History Encyclopedia, 26 May 2021, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1760/interview-ariadne-by-jennifer-saint/>.
- McCann, Carroll, et al. *The Feminism Book*. Edited by Hannah McCann, Dorling Kindersley Limited, 2019.
- McClymond, J.D. "The Character of Circe in the Odyssey." *Akroterion*, vol. 53, no. 1, *Akterion Journals*, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.7445/53-0-37>.
- "Medusa." Duffy, Carol Ann. *The World's Wife: Poems*. Faber and Faber, 2001.

- Miller, Madeline. *Circe*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.
- Moghadam, Valentine M. "Varieties of feminist activism." *The Routledge Global History of Feminism*. Edited by Bonnie G. Smith and Nova Robinson, vol 1., Routledge, 2022, pp. 37-55.
- Morales, Helen. *Antigone Rising: The Subversive Power of the Ancient Myths*. 1st ed., Bold Type Books, 2020., 1970.
- Mountainwater, Shekhinah. *Ariadne's Thread: A Workbook of Goddess Magic*. Crossing Press, 1991.
- Murray, Judith Sargent. "On the Equality of the Sexes." *Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray*. Edited by Sharon M. Harris, Oxford University Press, 1995, <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/livingrev/equality/text5/sargent.pdf>
- Nichols, Nina daVinci. *Ariadne's Lives*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995.
- Nikolajeva, Maria. "Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern." *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2003, pp. 138–156. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mat.2003.0014>.
- Offen, Karen. "On the French Origin of the Words Feminism and Feminist." *Feminist Issues*, vol. 8, no. 2, June 1988, pp. 45–51., <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02685596>.
- O'Reilly, Andrea. *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, Practice*. Demeter Press, 2nd ed., 2021.
- O'Reilly, Andrea. "Matricentric Feminism: A Feminism for Mothers." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, vol. 10, no. 1&2, 2019, pp. 13-26, <https://jarm.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/jarm/article/view/40551>.
- Ostriker, Alicia. "The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking." *Signs*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1982, pp. 68–90. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173482>.
- "Ovid." *Brittanica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ovid-Roman-poet>.
- Ovid. Grant Showerman, trans. "OVID, HEROIDES 6 – 10" *Theoi.com*,

- <https://www.theoi.com/Text/OvidHeroides2.html#10>.
- “Ovid, Heroides 1-5.” *Theoi Classical Texts Library*,
<https://www.theoi.com/Text/OvidHeroides1.html>.
- “Ovid, Metamorphoses 1.” *Theoi Classical Texts Library*,
<https://www.theoi.com/Text/OvidMetamorphoses1.html>
- Öncel, Mert İ. “Victim or Witch? Circe as an Allegory of Women's Struggle during the Feminist Movement.” academia.edu, 2019,
https://www.academia.edu/43648609/Victim_or_Witch_Madeline_Millers_Circe_as_an_Allegory_of_Womens_Struggle_during_the_Feminist_Movement
- Özyurt Kılıç, Mine. *The Function of the Fantastic in the Works of Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson*. 2005. Middle East Technical University, PhD dissertation.
- Pairat, Ana. “Shades of Circe: Wisdom and Knowledge in Christine de Pizan’s Exempla.” *French Forum*, vol. 42, no. 3, *University of Pennsylvania Press*, 2017, pp. 393–405. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/90023856>.
- Patmore, Coventry, Henry Morley, editor. *The Angel in the House*. Project Gutenberg, 2014,
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4099/4099-h/4099-h.htm>.
- Peterson, Lauren H., et al., editors. *Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome*. University of Texas Press, 2012.
- Plain, Gill and Sellers, Susan, editors. *A History Of Feminist Literary Criticism*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Plotz, John and Turrigiano, Gina. “Madeline Miller On ‘Circe,’ Mythological Realism, and Literary Correctives.” *Public Books*, 6 June 2019,
<https://www.publicbooks.org/madeline-miller-on-circe-mythological-realism-and-literary-correctives/>.
- Potter, Michelle. “The Etymology Of ‘Feminism.’” *Medium*, Media Theory and Criticism 2017,

7 May 2017, <https://medium.com/media-theory-and-criticism-2017/the-etymology-of-feminism-4ca3caec9ad0>.

“power.” *Oxford Learners Dictionary*,

https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/power_1.

Preston, Alex. “Circe by Madeline Miller review – Greek classic thrums with

contemporary relevance.” *The Guardian*, 8 April 2018,

[https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/08/circe-madeline-miller-homer-odyssey-](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/08/circe-madeline-miller-homer-odyssey-retellingreview#:~:text=She%20is%20named%20after%20her,a%20mortal%2C%20not%20a%20god)

[retellingreview#:~:text=She%20is%20named%20after%20her,a%20mortal%2C%20not%20a%20god](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/08/circe-madeline-miller-homer-odyssey-retellingreview#:~:text=She%20is%20named%20after%20her,a%20mortal%2C%20not%20a%20god).

Ranjith, Nithya. “Humanizing Circe, the Witch of Aiaia: A Novel that Projects the

Repercussions of Patriarchal Supremacy.” *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2023, <https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.82.28>.

Rayor, Diane J. *The Homeric Hymns: A Translation, with Introduction and Notes*. University of California Press, 2014.

“Reading the Artist/ Ursula K. Le Guin / Mine Özyurt Kılıç.” *Ka // Dinlenebilir Arşiv*,

Apple Podcasts, 21 October 2022,

<https://podcasts.apple.com/tr/podcast/ka-dinlenebilirar%C5%9Fiv/id1511410923?l=tr>.

“re-“. Etymology, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/re->.

“retell (v.)”. Etymology, <https://www.etymonline.com/retell>.

“revisit (v.)”. Etymology, <https://www.etymonline.com/revisit>.

“rewrite (v.)”. Etymology, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/rewrite>.

“RHEIA-KYBELE ESTATE.” *Theoi Classical Texts Library*,

<https://www.theoi.com/Titan/TitanisRheaTreasures.html>.

Rich, Adrienne. “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision.” *College English*, vol. 34,

- no. 1, 1972, pp. 18–30. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/375215>.
- Ripat, Pauline. “Roman Women, Wise Women, and Witches.” *Phoenix*, vol. 70, no. 1/2, 2016, pp. 104-128. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.7834/phoenix.70.1-2.0104>.
- Roas, David. “The Female Fantastic vs. The Feminist Fantastic: Gender and the Transgression of the Real.” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2020, pp 1. *Purdue University Press*, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3690>
- Saint, Jennifer. *Ariadne*. Flatiron Books, 2021.
- Sandor, Andras. “Myths and the Fantastic.” *New Literary History*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1991, pp. 339–358. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/469042>.
- “Semele.” *Greekmythology.com*, https://www.greekmythology.com/Myths/The_Myths/Zeus's_Lovers/Semele.
- Shapiro, Susan C. “A Feminist Approach to Classical Literature.” *CEA Critic*, vol. 48, no. 2, *The Johns Hopkins University Press*, 1985, pp. 62–67. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44377391>.
- Sinha, Mrinalini. “Nation and nationalism.” *The Routledge Global History of Feminism*. Edited by Bonnie G. Smith and Nova Robinson, vol 1., Routledge, 2022, pp. 350-363.
- Smith, Bonnie G., editor. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*. Oxford University Press, vol 1., 2008.
- Sulkunen, Irma. “The General Strike and women’s suffrage.” *Centenary of Women’s Full Political Rights in Finland*, 20 July 2011, <http://www.aanioikeus.fi/en/articles/strike.htm>.
- Svarlien, Diane Arnson, et al. “Preface”. *Medea*. Hackett Publishing, 2008.
- Tekeli, Şirin. The Turkish Women’s Movement: A Brief History of Success.” *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, vol 7, 2006, pp. 193-198.

- “The Book of the City of Ladies”. *British Library*,
<https://www.bl.uk/works/the-book-of-the-city-of-ladies>.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach To A Literary Genre*. Translated by Richard Howard, The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *Tolkien On Fairy-Stories*. Edited by Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson, 1st ed., HarperCollins, 2008.
- Walcot, P. “Greek Attitudes towards Women: The Mythological Evidence.” *Greece & Rome*, vol. 31, no. 1, *Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association*, 1984, pp. 37–47. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/642368>.
- Walker, Rebecca. “Becoming the 3rd wave.” *ProQuest Central*, Spring 2002. vol 12, issue 2, pp. 86-87,
<http://www.tonahangen.com/wsc/hi215/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/RW3rdWave-2.pdf>.
- Walters, Margaret. *Feminism. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Welle, Deutsche. “Charles Fourier: The man who coined the term 'feminism'.” *Hindustan Times*, April 2022,
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/art-culture/charles-fourier-the-man-who-coined-the-term-feminism-101649392411770.html>
- Wilson, Emily, translator. *The Odyssey*. By Homer, W. W. Norton & Company, 2017.
- “Women and the vote.” *New Zealand History*, 2023,
<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/womens-suffrage>.
- Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women*. Harper Perennial, 2002.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 10th ed., 2002.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. University of Adelaide, 2004.

Woolf, Virginia. "Craftmanship." *Collected Essays*, The Hogarth Press, vol 2, 1996, pp. 245-251.

Woolf, Virginia. "Professions for Women." 1931,
<https://www.wheelersburg.net/Downloads/Woolf.pdf>.

Yarnall, Judith. *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress*. University of Illinois Press, 1994.



CURRICULUM VITAE

Gizem DEREBEK

Academic Degrees

Master of Arts : 2021-2023, English Language and Literature, Social Sciences
University of Ankara

Thesis Title : “Retelling of the Classical: Greek Mythology and the Fantastic
Literature in Madeline Miller's *Circe* and Jennifer Saint's *Ariadne*”

Bachelor of Arts : 2016-2021, English Language and Literature, Social Sciences
University of Ankara

Educational Training

09/2019-02/2020 **Erasmus+ Student Exchange Program**, Foreign Languages and
Literature, University of Verona.

01/2022-02/2022 **Internship Certificate**, Archival Work of Turkish Women Writers, TED
University Center of Gender Studies

01/2023-02/2023 **Internship Certificate**, Editorial Work and Translation, TED University
Center of Gender Studies

Research Interests

Women and Writing, Gender Studies, Fantasy Literature, Modern English Literature, Modern
American Literature

Foreign Languages

English (Professional)
Spanish (Beginner)
Italian (Beginner)

Publications

Derebek, Gizem. “Excavating The Female Identity from The Margins: Amy Lowell’s “A
Fixed Idea,” “The Lamp of Life”, and “The Sisters”” *International Journal of
Humanities, Art and Social Studies [IJHSS]*, vol.3, no.4, Deepublisher, August 2022,
<https://deepublisher.com/Jnl/hass/paper/Vol.25.pdf>.