

**THE FATE IN MYTH: EXAMINING THE VARIOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF LOVE,
DESIRE, GENDER, POWER, AND LABYRINTH IN LITERATURE**

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ABSTRACT :

Myths in literature serve as a bridge between the ancient and the modern, providing a timeless source of inspiration and insight for writers and readers alike. The chapter is going to minutely and critically examine the several manifestations of love, desire, gender, power, deities, etc., and how they affect actual life. Myths in literature refer to traditional stories or narratives that are often deeply rooted in a culture's history, beliefs, and values. These myths are typically passed down orally from generation to generation and may evolve or be adapted over time. They often feature gods, heroes, monsters, and other figures representing universal themes and human experiences. Literature often contributes to the promotion of national identity by highlighting the history, traditions, customs, and values of a particular nation or group. Thinking about ethics? Many myths convey moral and ethical lessons or teachings. They illustrate the consequences of human actions, the virtues of courage and wisdom, and the pitfalls of hubris and arrogance. According to modern reinterpretations, in addition to ancient myths, modern authors often reinterpret or adapt these stories to suit their own artistic and thematic purposes. Moreover, cross-cultural influences have frequently transcended cultural boundaries and have been adopted and adapted by various societies. Greek and Roman myths have influenced literature across Europe and beyond they are found in various literary genres, including epic poetry e.g. Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, drama e.g. Greek tragedies, fantasy e.g. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and even contemporary novels and short stories. Modern literature often explores how myths are relevant in today's world. Authors may use their works to celebrate and preserve their cultural heritage.

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Literature often contributes to the promotion of national identity by highlighting the history, traditions, customs, and values of a particular nation or group. Whereas modern literature often explores how myths are relevant in today's world. Authors may use myths to comment on contemporary social, political, or philosophical issues. Myths in literature serve as a bridge between the ancient and the modern, providing a timeless source of inspiration and insight for writers and readers alike. They continue to shape the themes, characters, and narratives of literary works across cultures and periods. Authors may use their works to celebrate and preserve their cultural heritage. Particular literary works or characters can become national symbols. For instance, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is a symbol of Spanish literature and identity, and characters like Uncle Sam in American literature represent national identity. Literature and nationalism are interconnected in complex ways, as literature often plays a significant role in shaping and reflecting the nationalist sentiments of society, similarly, the myth does the same. Nationalism refers to the strong identification and loyalty of individuals to their nation or country, and it can manifest in various forms, including cultural, political, and social expressions. Many countries have national epics or literary works that are considered foundational to their national identity. For example, *The Aeneid* by Virgil for Rome, *The Kalevala* for Finland, and *Beowulf* for England are all examples of works that have played a central role in shaping national identity. Literature can serve as a powerful tool for preserving and promoting a national language. Authors often write in their native language, helping to preserve linguistic traditions and assert the importance of that language to the national identity. Besides, it can be a platform for expressing political ideals and aspirations related to nationalism.

Writers may advocate for independence, sovereignty, or political unity through their works. In contexts of colonialism, oppression, or foreign rule, literature can serve as a means of resistance and assertion of national identity. Authors may use their writings to protest against oppressive regimes and to call for independence. Literature often introduces and reinforces cultural symbols and icons that are associated with a particular nation. These symbols can evoke a sense of shared identity and pride among the people. Nationalist literature frequently celebrates national heroes, leaders, and historical figures who embody the ideals and values of the nation. Literary movements can be closely tied to nationalist movements. Writers and intellectuals may be at the forefront of advocating for political and cultural change in support of nationalistic goals. The literary activities can be closely tied to nationalist movements. Writers and intellectuals may be at the forefront of advocating for political and cultural change in support of nationalistic goals. However, literature is often included in educational curricula to instill a sense of national identity and loyalty from a young age. Nationalist propaganda may also use literature to shape public opinion. Not all nationalist literature is celebratory; some works may critique or explore the complexities and contradictions of nationalism, including its potential for exclusion and conflict. Therefore, Comparative literature can analyze how different nationalisms interact with one another, leading to discussions of transnationalism and globalization. A point to be noted is that while literature can be a powerful force for promoting nationalism, it can also be a source of diversity, tolerance, and understanding when it engages with the experiences and perspectives of different cultures and groups. The relationship between literature and nationalism is multifaceted and can take on various forms depending on the historical, cultural, and political context in which it is situated. Literary movements have sometimes been closely associated with nationalist movements. Romanticism, for example, was often intertwined with nationalist sentiments in various European countries, emphasizing the emotional and cultural aspects of national identity. Many writers and literary figures have been politically engaged in nationalist movements. They have used their writings to advocate for political change, independence, or self-determination for their nations. For example, Irish writers like W.B. Yeats and James Joyce played roles in the Irish nationalist movement through their literary works. In regions or periods of foreign occupation or colonial rule, literature has served as a means of resistance and a voice for the oppressed. Writers have used their works to protest against foreign domination and assert their national identities. Examples include Palestinian literature under Israeli occupation and African literature during the colonial era. Myths have played a significant role in literature throughout history. They often serve as a source of inspiration, symbolism, and cultural reflection. One classic example of myths in literature is the extensive use of Greek mythology in ancient Greek literature and its continued influence on later works. Here's an example from Greek mythology:

"THE ODYSSEY" BY HOMER (CIRCA 8TH CENTURY BCE):

Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* is a prime example of how Greek mythology was integrated into literature. *The Odyssey* by Homer is an epic poem that is rich with various myths, legends, and supernatural elements. It tells the story of Odysseus, a Greek hero, as he attempts to return home to Ithaca after the Trojan War. Along his journey, Odysseus encounters numerous mythological creatures, gods, and legendary figures. The story follows the hero Odysseus as he embarks on a long and perilous journey home after the Trojan War. However, the Trojan War itself is not the focus of *The Odyssey*, it is a central event in Greek mythology and provides the backdrop for Odysseus' adventures. The war was waged between the Greeks (Achaeans) and the Trojans and is the subject of other ancient Greek works, such as the "Iliad" by Homer. One of the most famous episodes in "The Odyssey" is Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus. Polyphemus is a one-eyed giant who captures Odysseus and his men in his cave. Odysseus' cleverness in blinding Polyphemus and escaping from the Cyclops is a central part of the epic. In this lengthy poem, the Sirens are dangerous creatures with enchanting voices who lure sailors to their deaths with their songs. Odysseus and his crew encounter the Sirens, and Odysseus devises a strategy to hear their songs without succumbing

to their allure. Odysseus faces the perilous choice of navigating his ship between Scylla, a multi-headed monster, and Charybdis, a monstrous whirlpool. This episode represents the dangers of the sea and the challenges faced by sailors. Throughout the epic, readers encounter various mythical creatures and gods and goddesses from Greek mythology, such as Poseidon, Athena, Circe, and the Cyclops Polyphemus. These mythical elements add depth and symbolism to the narrative, as well as reflect the cultural beliefs and values of ancient Greece.

The **Lotus-Eaters**: Odysseus and his crew encounter a land inhabited by the Lotus-Eaters, whose lotus flowers induce a state of forgetfulness and complacency. “And round about the keel with faces pale, dark faces pale against that rosy flame, the mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came” (Tennyson Poetry Foundation) Odysseus must rescue his men from the influence of the lotus plants to continue their journey. In one part of the epic, Odysseus travels to the underworld to consult the spirit of the blind prophet Tiresias. This journey to the land of the dead is a significant mythological element in the epic poem. Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm; Nor harken what the inner spirit sings, there is no joy but calm!” (Tennyson) Throughout the poem, various Greek gods and goddesses, including **Athena**, **Poseidon**, and **Zeus**, play crucial roles in Odysseus' fate. The interactions between mortals and immortals are a recurring theme in Greek mythology.

Beowulf is a famous heroic epic in English literature, and it is a strong desire to hail the day when the story of Beowulf shall be as familiar to English-speaking people as the Iliad. *Beowulf* is an Old English epic poem that dates back to the early medieval period, roughly between the 8th and 11th centuries. It is one of the most important and well-known works of Old English literature and is considered a significant piece of world literature. The epic tells the story of a hero named Beowulf, who comes to the aid of the Danish king Hrothgar. Hrothgar's kingdom is under attack by a monstrous creature named Grendel, who terrorizes the king's hall, Heorot. “When he heard about Grendel, Hygelac's thane was on home ground, over in Geatland. There was no one like him alive” [translator] (Heaney 194 - 196). Beowulf, a Geatish warrior, arrives with the intent to defeat Grendel and protect the Danes. After a fierce battle, “The monster's whole body was in pain, a tremendous wound appeared in his shoulder... Beowulf was granted the glory of winning” (814 - 818). Beowulf succeeds in killing Grendel. However, the story doesn't end there. Beowulf faces further challenges, including battles with Grendel's mother and a dragon in his later years as a king. “Then the prince of War-Geats, warming to this fight with Grendel's mother” (1537 - 1538). Grendel's mother returns to take revenge upon Beowulf and more furiously fights back “but she rose quickly and retaliated” (1541). “Beowulf saw the Monster in his resting place, war-weary and wrecked... Beowulf cut the corpse's head off” (1585 - 1590). The existence of dragons all time excites the readers, with their might, power, fire, and other supernatural elements. Like Cadmus, Beowulf also is successful in killing the dragon, “drove it to attack, heaving up fire, hunting for enemies” (2670 - 2771) though unfortunately, Beowulf continues fighting with the dragon without concern about the dragon's bite on his neck. “he caught the hero in a rush of flame and clamped sharp fangs into his neck” (2690 - 2692) which later the deadly poison was suppurating in Beowulf's body and lastly there is a message about his death. the hero here is portrayed as very strong physically and mentally with so much power, courage, and wisdom he was able to defeat the huge dragon. “Once again the king gathered his strength and drew a stabbing knife... He stuck it deep into the dragon's flank” (2702 - 2705). However, it is always seen that the protagonist in the epic or other mythologies, killing enemies like monsters, dragons, and beasts, is called the warrior, the hero the successor, and the work results in being named a heroic epic. The poem explores themes of heroism, honor, fate, and the passing of generations. Beowulf is highly regarded for its historical and cultural significance, as it provides valuable insights into the early medieval period and the heroic ethos of the time. It is written in Old English, which is quite different from modern English, but translations and adaptations of Beowulf have made this epic accessible to contemporary readers.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is a Latin narrative poem that contains numerous myths and stories from Greek and Roman mythology. It is a collection of over 250 myths and legends, each linked by the

theme of transformation or metamorphosis. These myths explore themes of change, love, power, and the interplay between gods and mortals. Here are a few notable myths found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Ovid begins the poem with the creation of the world, describing how the elements and the universe came into being. This myth tells the story of Apollo's unrequited love for Daphne, who is transformed into a laurel tree to escape his pursuit. The Tale of Pyramus and Thisbe: This tragic love story involves two young lovers who communicate through a crack in the wall between their houses and ultimately meet a tragic end. In Greek mythology, Cadmus is credited with founding the city of Thebes. Cadmus was a Phoenician prince, the son of King Agenor and Queen Telephassa. He is known for his role in several important myths, including the founding of Thebes. The story goes that Cadmus was sent by his parents to find his sister Europa, who had been abducted by Zeus in the form of a bull. "Europa's father, in ignorance of this, orders his son Cadmus to search for the stolen girl, and adds that exile is his punishment if he fails to find her" (Bk III 1-49) Cadmus embarked on a long journey in search of his sister but was unable to find her. Instead, he received an oracle from the god Apollo instructing him to abandon his search for Europa to follow a cow that had never been yoked and to build a city wherever the cow would lay down to rest. This cow was sacred to the god Ares. Cadmus followed the cow and, after it rested in the area that would become Thebes, he consulted with the oracle again. The story of Cadmus killing the dragon is a well-known episode from Greek mythology, and it is closely associated with his role in founding the city of Thebes. As the legend goes, after following the cow sacred to the god Ares and receiving instructions from the oracle, Cadmus was directed to sow the dragon's teeth in the ground. When he did so, fully armed warriors, known as the Spartoi, sprang up from the earth. These warriors were fierce and hostile, and they immediately attacked Cadmus. To defeat this serpent or dragon, Cadmus received aid from the goddess Athena, who provided him with guidance and assistance. With Athena's guidance, Cadmus managed to slay the dragon or serpent using his spear. In some versions of the story, he subdued the creature by driving a stake through its mouth. The oracle told him to sow the dragon's teeth in the ground. When Cadmus did this, fully armed and fierce warriors, known as the Spartoi (meaning sown men), sprang up from the earth. They initially fought each other, but Cadmus threw a stone into their midst, and they turned their aggression towards him. The killing of the dragon and the sowing of its teeth is a significant episode in the myth of Cadmus and is often depicted in ancient art and literature. It symbolizes the challenges and trials that Cadmus faced on his quest to find Thebes and establish his dynasty. Cadmus managed to defeat them by following Athena's advice to throw a stone at them, which caused them to fight and kill each other. "This example stirred them all equally as if at a storm wind, and, in their warring, these brothers of a moment were felled by mutual wounds. And now these youths, who were allowed such brief lives, were drumming on their mother's breast hot with their blood" (115-137). As a result, only five of the Spartoi survived, and they helped Cadmus build the city of Thebes. Cadmus eventually became the first king of Thebes and married Harmonia, the daughter of Ares and Aphrodite, with whom he had several children. "Now Thebes stands, and now you might be seen as happy, in your exile, Cadmus. You have **Mars** and **Venus** as your bride's parents, and added to this the children of so noble a wife" (115-137). The founding of Thebes by Cadmus is a significant episode in Greek mythology, and it is often seen as the beginning of the city's illustrious history in Greek literature and legend. The Myth of Narcissus in the epic is another confounding but not very appealing. Narcissus has no knowledge about his beauty, or how charming he is, however, one day while taking a walk through the forest he passes by the pond and sees his reflection and image in the water. After he sees himself, he is amazed by his charisma and immediately falls in love with himself "While he drinks, he is seized by the vision of his reflected form" (402 - 436), he denies every and any proposal from deities and goddesses and rather persists in loving himself all through his life. "his youthful cheeks and ivory neck, beauty of his face, the rose-flush mingled in the whiteness of snow, admiring everything for which he is himself admired" (402 - 436). Hitherto he becomes the symbol of self-absorption. Today if one sees people loving themselves too much or being self-conscious the person is called a Narcissist.

Goddess **Diana** turns the hunter into a stag. Goddess Diana, the Artemis in Greek mythology, punishes the hunter Acteon by cursing him to turn into a deer. But the goddess stood head and shoulders above all the others. "Diana's face, seen there, while she herself was naked" (165-205) Actaeon, a skilled hunter, accidentally stumbled upon the goddess Diana and her nymphs while they were bathing in a secluded grove. Seeing the goddess in her naked form, which was considered a violation of her privacy, angered her. In her wrath, Diana transformed Actaeon into a stag. In his new stag form, Actaeon retained his human consciousness but had the body of a deer. "Now you may tell, if you can tell that is, of having seen me naked!" Without more threats, she gave the horns of a mature stag to the head she had sprinkled, lengthening his neck, making his ear-tips pointed, changing feet for hands, long legs for arms, and covering his body with a dappled hide" (165-205) He was then pursued and torn apart by his hunting hounds, who did not recognize him. This myth serves as a cautionary tale about respecting the privacy and sanctity of sacred spaces and the potential consequences of violating them. It's a well-known episode in Roman and Greek mythology. In Book III itself another mythological story where Juno sets out to punish Semele. It is a larger narrative involving the god Jupiter (Zeus in Greek), Semele, and the jealousy of Juno. Semele was a mortal woman and the daughter of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes. She became the lover of Jupiter (Zeus), the king of the gods. This affair between a mortal and a god enraged Juno (Hera), Jupiter's wife and the queen of the gods. Juno was known for her jealousy and often sought to punish her husband's mortal lovers. "She was grieved by the fact that Semele was pregnant, with the seed of mighty Jove" (253-272). To punish Semele and thwart Jupiter's affections, Juno devised a cunning plan. She disguised herself as an old woman and befriended Semele. In the course of their conversation, Juno cunningly persuaded Semele to ask Jupiter to reveal himself to her in his true divine form, with all his glory. "What, in truth, have I gained from frequent reproaches? I must attack her. If I am right to be called the most powerful Juno...if I am queen, and sister and wife of Jove, sister at least, then it is her I must destroy" (253-272). Semele, not knowing the true identity of her lover, followed Juno's advice and requested Jupiter. However, when Jupiter revealed himself in his divine form, the overwhelming radiance and power of his true nature incinerated Semele, as no mortal could withstand the sight of a god in his full glory. This tragic event led to Semele's death. Juno had successfully punished Semele for her relationship with Jupiter, and she remained a symbol of jealousy and vengeance in Greek mythology. The story of Semele's demise is often associated with the dangers of mortal-human interactions with the divine and the consequences of defying the will of the gods. The gift was a curse for King Midas and it took a very long time to realize and by the time he realized it was too late. King Midas is a famous figure from Greek mythology known for his encounter with the god Dionysus (Bacchus in Roman mythology) and the "Golden Touch" story. King Midas was a wealthy and powerful king who ruled over the kingdom of Phrygia. Despite his riches, he was discontented and wished for more wealth. One day, he helped the drunken and dishevelled god Dionysus, who turned out to be the god of wine and revelry. In gratitude, Dionysus offered to grant Midas a wish. King Midas wished for the ability to turn everything he touched into gold, thinking it would bring him unlimited wealth. Dionysus granted his wish, but Midas soon realized that his newfound power was a curse. He could no longer eat or drink, as everything he touched turned to gold, including his beloved daughter.

Another example from more recent literature: "The Lord of the Rings" by J.R.R. Tolkien (published in the mid-20th century):

J.R.R. Tolkien drew inspiration from various mythological sources, including Norse and Celtic myths, to create Middle-earth's rich and intricate world in his epic fantasy series. The character Gandalf, for instance, can be seen as a modern incarnation of the wizard archetype found in many mythologies. The concept of the One Ring also bears resemblance to the idea of a powerful and corrupting artifact, akin to mythical cursed objects. Tolkien, a philologist and scholar of mythology, drew on a wide range of mythological sources and created a mythology of his own for the world of

Middle-earth. Some of the key mythic elements and themes in *The Lord of the Rings* viz. Creation Myth, Tolkien begins *The Lord of the Rings* with a creation myth that establishes the world of Middle-earth and its history. This myth tells of the creation of the world by Eruillúvatar and the role of the Ainur in shaping it. It sets the stage for the epic struggle between good and evil that unfolds in the story. Talking about the hero's journey, it is a common mythic archetype, and it is central to the story of Frodo Baggins and his quest to destroy the One Ring. Frodo's journey from the Shire to Mount Doom follows the classic pattern of the hero's journey, with stages such as the call to adventure, trials, and challenges, and a return home transformed. Elves are a central race in Tolkien's mythology, and their history and culture are steeped in myth. The stories of the Elves, including the tale of Lúthien and Beren and the fall of Gondolin, are woven throughout the epic and provide depth to the world of Middle-earth. The Quests are a common element in myth and legend, and the quest to destroy the One Ring is the central plot of the epic Frodo, Sam, and the other members of the Fellowship undertake a perilous journey to Mordor, echoing the epic quests of mythological heroes. Good vs. Evil, the conflict between good and evil is a fundamental theme in mythology, and it is at the heart of the epic. The Dark Lord Sauron and his minions represent evil, while characters like Frodo, Aragorn, and Gandalf embody the forces of good. Myth often explores moral and ethical dilemmas, and *The Lord of the Rings* is no exception. Characters must make difficult choices that test their principles and values, such as Frodo's decision to spare Gollum or Aragorn's claim to the throne of Gondor. Moreover, Prophecy and destiny are common motifs in myth, and they play a significant role in *The Lord of the Rings*. Characters like Aragorn and Frodo are destined for greatness, and prophecies and ancient lore guide their actions. Tolkien had a deep love of nature, and this is reflected in his writing. The natural world of Middle-earth is richly described, and characters often have a deep connection to the land and its creatures. Myths offer guidance on how to live a virtuous life and make ethical decisions. For example, the story of Prometheus in Greek mythology, who stole fire from the gods to benefit humanity, can be seen as a lesson about the consequences of rebellion and the importance of knowledge. Mythologies often tap into deep psychological and symbolic realms of human experience. Carl Jung, a renowned psychologist, believed that myths and archetypes were expressions of the collective unconscious and played a crucial role in individual and cultural development. These are just a couple of examples, but myths and mythological elements can be found in literature from cultures around the world, spanning different periods. They continue to shape and enrich storytelling, providing a universal and timeless appeal. Myths have had a profound and enduring influence on human life throughout history. They provide a sense of identity and continuity by explaining the origin of a people, their customs, and their beliefs. These myths can define a group's values, moral code, and social norms. Myths often convey moral lessons and ethical principles. Myths frequently provide explanations for natural phenomena, such as the changing seasons, the creation of mountains, and the origins of animals. These explanations helped early societies make sense of their environment and develop a sense of control over it. They can foster a sense of community and social cohesion. When people share common myths and stories, it creates a sense of belonging and solidarity among members of a group or society. Moreover, Myths continue to be popular subjects in entertainment and popular culture. From movies and video games to comic books and television shows, mythological themes and characters are frequently reimagined and adapted to suit contemporary audiences.

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