

## **A Feminist Reading of Kizer’s “Persephone Pauses”**

**Salma Backroush Almaleki**

Department of English Language and Literature  
Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University  
Riyadh – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses the adaptation of Demeter and Persephone’s myth by the American poetess Carolyn Kizer. The poem is a dramatic monologue, exploring Persephone’s part of the story and her journey to the Underworld with Hades. The poem is approached from a feminist point of view. The paper sets two sections, the first reviews the theoretical parts concerning mythology and feminism, the second presents the application of the feminist theories on Kizer’s poem. The study aims to provide answers to crucial questions of the differences between the myth and the poet’s interpretation, portrayals of Demeter and her daughter Persephone, and the myth’s reinvented themes, as well as the depictions of her heroine. The study has arrived at some outcomes; first, Kizer’s poem is describing womanhood in Persephone’s individuation. Second, Kizer’s version is exploring woman’s psychological rather than social states. Third, the poetess composes her poem as a dramatic monologue to give the rightful voices to her heroine.

*Keywords:* adaptation, dramatic monologue, feminist poetry, gods and goddesses, Greek mythology

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## Introduction

Greek and Roman mythology is a source of infinite artistic themes and creations that inspires artists, sculptures and writers from all over the world. They find in myth and fables incredible imagination, scraps of passion and a touch of humanity, from which they can relate to their human experience and morality. One of these timeless myths is the story of Demeter, the Earth Goddess, and her daughter Persephone, the Queen of the Underworld. Persephone was abducted by Hades to the Underworld, her disappearance caused Demeter anguish and despair. Demeter empowered by her maternal love, revolted against the Olympian gods until she regained her daughter from the abyss of Hades's world. Pomeroy (1995) notes that "goddesses are archetypal images of human females, as envisioned by males"; therefore, the myth reveals the nature of male-female relationship in a patriarchal society, where a female is denied her powers and subjected to the male's wishes and desires to avoid his curses and punishment (p. 8). Poets have embraced such a story and composed from its essence legendary epics and memorial narrative poems. Their adaptations of the myth have generated diversity in themes and points of view, as in "Persephone Pauses" by the American poetess Carolyn Kizer –which was written in (1961). Kizer has interpreted the myth differently to serve certain themes and moral perspectives. Kizer's poem is narrated by Persephone, demonstrating her life in the Underworld and her relation to Hades, whom she abhors and pities.

Reading this poem from a feminist point of view explores the portrayals and themes of Demeter and Persephone's myth. There are critical questions concerning the poet's perspectives on the subject matter of the myth, the symbolic significance of the myth and the social implications of her adaptation. A feminist study focuses on three main aspects; differences, power, and female experience. The study of differences mainly examines the social perception of each gender and gender's potentials, as either a writer or a character (Dobie, 2012, p. 113). Regarding the study of power between sexes, feminists assume that economic system is at the root of the unequal relationship and thus attacks both economic and social exploitation of women (Dobie, 2012, p. 115). In the female experience, feminists call for recognizing women's ability that goes beyond the traditional binary oppositions of active/passive, intellectual/emotional and others (Dobie, 2012, p. 117). Recent feminist studies have scrutinized mythology, particularly Gods' and Goddesses' relationships and powers, in relation to patriarchal authority over women. Radford (2007) has discussed how goddesses are resembled as inferior to gods, and in some versions of the myth, the goddesses appear irrational and emotional, which tunes the stereotypical binary between both genders (p. 51). All these elements will outline the discussion in this study.

## Mythology and Feminism

Mythology is an interdisciplinary field; it is partly literary, and mostly historical and cultural. Myth, as a literary discourse, is defined by Baldick (1990) as "a kind of a story or rudimentary narrative sequence, normally traditional and anonymous, through which a given culture ratifies its social customs or accounts for the origin of human and natural phenomena, usually in supernatural or boldly imaginative terms" (p. 143). Myth's significance lies in providing an explanation of a worldly phenomenon that is beyond rational justifications, giving reasons for social and cultural customs, and demonstrating deeper truth and symbolism (Abrams, 1999, p. 170). Lévi-Strauss (1955), in his study of mythology and mythology structure as an anthropologist, explains that a wide view amongst scholars places myth as an expression of fundamental feelings common to all

human beings such as love, revenge, hate, or as an explanation of unfathomable incidents such as the beginning of life/world (p. 429). Lévi-Strauss (1955) expresses his disagreement in looking at myth as a reflection of "social structure and social relations" because its very nature is conflicting (p. 429).

Many critics consider mythology, which is the system of inherited stories of ancient origins, a flexible form in which the stories are narrated in many ways. Blumerberg's *Work on Myth* (1979) highlights two important features of myth. First, myth is part of human history that helps people coping with "inexorability of given reality". Second, myth is better conceived as a work of "ongoing nature and ever-changing process" recorded in oral and written forms of narrative (as cited in Abrams, 1999, p. 171). In a myth such as Demeter and Persephone's, the two features are applicable. The story is used to justify winter, which beyond the rational explanation is seen back then as a result of the goddess's wrath, and the mythic story is told in many ways with slight differences in some details.

Myth-criticism is concerned with the literary interpretation of mythic patterns and structures found in literary works. This critical study of myth is interested in the narrative features –plot, characters, and themes –structure and symbolism, which connects it to ancient myths and religions (Baldick, 1990, p. 144). Barzun, a cultural historian, points out that "what links myth with literature is the imagination" (as cited in Basunia, n.d, p. 11). There is no prescribed method of studying or critically analyzing a myth. Collective approaches and various perspectives are applied in interpreting a myth, such as history, philosophy, archeology and other sciences. Some of these approaches study myth as part of a culture or part of a man's character, such as in Jung's concept of archetype or Frye's circle of mythos. Reeves (1997) states in his study that "myth criticism designates as the convergence of several methods and forms of inquiry about the complex relations between literature and myth" ("Myth Theory and Criticism").

It is ultimately significant to understand the nature of Greek gods and goddesses in order to analyze a myth representation or adaptation in a literary work. On this subject, Morford and Lenardon (1999) have demonstrated in their study of Greek mythology that all gods and goddesses are generally depicted as human in form and character. Although they act like humans, very often their appearance and their actions are idealized to some extent. Their beauty is beyond that of ordinary mortals, their passions are more grand and intense, their sentiments are more praiseworthy and touching, and they can embody and impose the loftiest moral values in the universe (p. 128). Humans find their ideas and lives reflected ideally in these mythic stories because these gods can mirror the physical and spiritual weaknesses of their human counterparts, they can be lame and deformed or vain, petty and insincere, they can steal, lie and cheat (Morford & Lenardon, 1999, p. 128). Like human beings, there are distinctions and hierarchies between gods and goddesses, upon which accordingly their power and influence on others are determined. The deities of the upper air or the upper world – the Olympians –are superior to those of the realm below on earth known as Chthonian (Morford & Lenardon, 1999, p. 128). Gods are worshiped in temples and honored with statues, propitiated by sacrifices and invoked by prayers. The hierarchy between gods and goddesses is viewed as the hierarchy or patriarchy between men and women, as Zeus represented as the sovereign deity, the king, father and lord for both gods and mortals. Yet, this monotheism and patriarchy are severely tested by other divinities, especially goddesses; Demeter, angry at the

rape of her daughter Persephone, forces Zeus and gods to come to her terms (Morford & Lenardon, 1999, p. 130).

All these historical and religious details of Greek mythology are taken into account in the adaptation of their stories, in order to give authenticity and value to the literary piece. To understand these requirements, it is mandatory to explain the process of adaptation. A work of adaptation is characterized by three important features. First, a transposition of a particular work or works into another, as in the myth that is formed into a poem. Second, the act of adaptation always involves two processes; re-interpretation and then re-creation that is why the slight changes are found in adaptation of the myth of Demeter and Persephone in Kizer's poem where she tends to emphasize their views and addresses different themes. Third, the adaptation is a form of intertextuality; an engagement with the adapted work, especially in certain names, references, or statements (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7-8). Kizer's version is focusing on a psychological level, where a character's development is processed and an inner-conflict is resolved by redefining woman-hood, using mythic details such as names and incidents to form symbolic significance. The study of adaptation and its process reveal what to adapt and how to adapt in literature. The poem discussed in this paper adapts the characters and the plot of the myth to set up a distinctive form of dramatic monologue to bring forth unprecedented themes like the social and psychological effects of domestic abuse, daughter's independence from her mother, and the gap between the parents' and children's generations.

Under the umbrella of mythology's studies and criticism, feminist critics have participated in analyzing, explaining, and criticizing the myth's norm, structure and relevance to culture and social perspectives. What makes feminism interested in mythology is the fact that most of what feminism fights for or against is related to mythology in one way or another, such as patriarchy and women's roles. In order to present a solid argument about feminism and mythology, it is important to give a brief historical background about feminism and what it stands for. Feminism refers to two ideologies; a social movement and a literary theory of criticism. Feminism is generally defined as "a range of theories and political agendas that aim to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women due to sex and gender as well as class, race, ethnicity, nationality, or other forms of social exclusion" (*Feminist Dictionary*, 2013, p. 4). Feminism as a social movement is founded by the belief "in the social, economic, and political equality of sexes" (Burkett, 2016, "Feminism"). It is a worldwide movement for the recognition of women's social and cultural roles and achievements, as well as their economic and political rights. Feminism, as a theory of literary criticism, has no exclusive definition; it is defined by many feminist theorists and critics according to their views and approaches. Defining the theory of feminism "threatens to simplify what is, in stubborn, perhaps ineradicable way, complex" (Rooney, 2006, p. 1). However, the literary theory of feminism is not separable from the ideals of feminist movement, much of feminist literary criticism is "interrelated with the movement by political feminists for social, legal, cultural freedom and equality" (Abrams, 1999, p. 88).

In modern literature, there has been an attempt to portray women's characters who have been devalued by patriarchal system. Feminist writers and critics concentrate their efforts on giving female characters their lost voice and rightful position. Feminist criticism comprises of various theories and approaches concerned with the literary work and its author. The study of this

poem from a feminist point of view is considering three main critical standpoints. First, the author's influence on the depiction of the female characters; Kizer's as a female poetess and a feminist in recreating Persephone. Second, the portrayal of the female characters, mainly Demeter and Persephone, with regards to the stereotypical views of females as weak, sensitive, and irrational. Third, the social position and role of the female character, mainly in this case, Persephone as a daughter, wife, and Goddess, in the patriarchal culture of Greek mythology. The premises of feminist critics and writers towards myths investigate the patriarchal system, and goddess's roles. Feminist authors, as well, have reinvented themes and extended the roles and influences of Goddesses, to draw unconventional portrayals of female's potentials. The feminist revision of myths represents the symbolism of myths and casts light on the neglected components in mythology regarding Gods-Goddesses relationships and positions (Kay, 2006, p. 10).

### **Feminist Reading of Kizer's "Persephone Pauses"**

Changes within literary genres, especially on poetry occur as a consequence of societal and cultural changes. This study examines a version of the myth of Demeter and Persephone in modern poetry by Carolyn Kizer. She brings up another modern interpretation of the myth of Demeter and Persephone that discusses various issues concerning women, and their independence. By revising an antique myth, Kizer introduces to her audience a radical, unexpected, yet intriguing commentary on the mythic narrative by voicing Persephone, in which a comprehensive review on the life in the Underworld, on Hades, and on her personality and psychology is unfolded.

Carolyn Kizer (1925-2014) is an American poet, feminist, and translator, who lived a long profitable life in the fields of academia and social domain. She was interested in poetry from an early age, and identified herself as a romantic, modernist, orientalist, then –most importantly –as a feminist poet. She dedicated her poetic works to women's issues and for celebrating feminist principles. She described her works and achievements as a recognition for "generations of women who selflessly served men –fathers, sons and lovers –until their loss enabled these women to blossom as artists themselves" (Kizer, 2000, p. 6).

"Persephone Pauses" is published within a poetic collection entitled *The Ungrateful Garden* (1961). In her book, Kizer has conducted a historical and mythic revision of female figures, studying the stereotypical portrait of women and responded to each with an infuriated passion. Her poetry tackles feminist issues, it takes aim at the patriarchal culture that shapes women's minds and bodies, and how consequently it underestimates women's lives and literary achievements. Critics have assorted her poetry as "poems about women's relationships with men in myth, history and contemporary society" (Phelps, 2002, p. 200). Kizer processes the archetypal female sacrifice that Virginia Woolf (1974) calls "the angel in the house" and explores its relation to women's oppression and submission (p. 257).

Phillips (2001), a critic of feminist poetry, claims that some female poets –Kizer one of them –tend to "disguise" their own feelings by naming them after figures in Greek mythology (p. 75). In this case, a reader can look at Persephone as a resemblance of Kizer's feelings and views, and may take her (Persephone's) voice as Kizer's own in some verses. As a poet and a person, Kizer has been much more confessional, dealing with her personal problems with "unusual frankness" (Phillips, 2001, P. 75). Kizer resorts to ancient myths and archetypal patterns for some reasons;

first, because she is "biographical" as Phillips (2001) indicates (p. 76). Moreover, she is influenced by her studies of Greek in college under the supervision of Joseph Campbell, who introduces Kizer to "bypass accepted versions of myth, versions usually made by males to enforce the male point of view, and to go back to the originals" (Phillips, 2001, p. 76). Another reason Kizer employs myth could be psychological, to ratify some social customs and human behaviors, probing deeper truths behind one's collective attitudes towards fundamental matters of life, death, partnering, and existence (Phillips, 2001, p. 76).

Feminist poetry emerged in America during the second wave of feminism between 1960s and 1980s, and was characterized by its "articulated motives and commitments of women's writing and reading as women" (Hirsch, 2014, p. 231). Feminist writers and poets have directed their efforts to recover neglected and lost literary works by women, as well as their study of women's images in literature and culture, they have stood against the patriarchal culture by what Ostriker calls "stealing patriarchal language" –preserving its denotative meaning, but revising its connotative one (as cited in Hirsch, 2014, p. 231). Kizer seeks to set an example, for other poetesses, creatively by means of "recapturing, rebuilding, retrieving, remembering, or inventing if necessary, women's dismembered or disremembered knowledge of empowerment; the knowledge of being self not other, author not mirror, subject not object" (Johnson, 2001, p. 99). She uses the traditional narratives and views against themselves, by questioning their basics and roots and proposing alternative interpretations, as in her poem "Persephone Pauses".

Kizer's "Persephone Pauses" (1961) is one of her early feminist attempts to revise and reconstruct a modern view out of an antique narrative. The poem is constructed as a dramatic monologue, yet it is significantly different from a male poet's dramatic monologue for three reasons. First, female poets are mostly more sympathetic with their protagonists, therefore they tend not to frame them with irony nor objectify them. Kizer's sympathy with her heroine, Persephone, is evident throughout the poem, for she refuses to be objectified or presented in irony. Second, poetesses hardly find characters in literature, mythology or history with whom they could express their feelings in apparently dramatic and impersonal manners that they have not been willing to directly admit. Kizer has always identified herself as a goddess, Phillips (2001) expounds that Kizer has "her own sense of being larger than life, of being of mythic proportions" (p. 76). Therefore, it is almost impossible to regard this poem as impersonal or apparently dramatic. Third, in poetesses' dramatic monologue, it is hard to distinguish between the speaker and the poetess for they both blur together, while poets' dramatic monologues have sharply two differentiated figures of the speaker and the poet (Mermin, 2011, p. 31). In Kizer's "Persephone Pauses", the poetess's views and ideals are infused into Persephone's solely speech, which makes the reader identify Kizer in Persephone's utterances. Mermin (2011) believes that all women's dramatic monologues are expected to be univocal (p. 31).

It is essential for the study of Persephone to clear out certain points concerning her character and role. Persephone is regarded, according to many feminists, to be a symbol of individuation, a representation of woman's struggle for independence, and the ideology of separate identity from one's mother. The myth taken from the *Homeric Hymn* is told from Demeter's perspective, Hobbs (2011) emphasizes that her story reflects "the pain from her separation" and much attention is directed towards Demeter's reunion with her daughter ("Queen of

Individuation"). However, Hobbs (2011) questions where Persephone's perspective of the story lies on, and suggests that "Persephone's half of the story is as much compelling as that of her mother's because her myth is one of individuation for young women and, in the broader sense, as a myth for exploring the shadow" ("Queen of Individuation"). The concept of individuation is coined by Jung (1938) who defines individuation as "the process of forming and specializing the individual nature; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a differentiated being from the general collective psychology", in other words, one undergoes a process of developing his or her personality (p. 561). From this point, Kizer and other modern writers have expanded the idea of what Persephone possibly might narrate, for most of them modern Persephone is "faced with similar growing pains in the need to leave [her] mother" (Hobbs, 2011, "Queen of Individuation"). Henceforth, in retelling this myth, Kizer shows her spite for the patriarchal system which expects and teaches women to be submissive, by not questioning their hierarchy, authority, and actions. Persephone, in many contexts, represents that submissive woman. However, taking Persephone as the modern feminist voice of female's independence and self-identification makes her a hardcore representative of her feminist poet.

The poem is constructed as a dramatic monologue of sixty lines and divided into six uneven parts. Kizer's mono speaker is Persephone and is conceived throughout the poem as her heroine. She entitles the poem as "Persephone Pauses". This momentary pause is suggesting a contemplating time, in which Persephone (and all women comparatively) must reconsider, weigh, and reflect upon the past and the coming future set by the social, and cultural dominance of their male counterparts. Though "pause" seems short and abrupt, it is very significant to recognize a woman's ability and role in life. The poem discusses a moment of truth in Persephone's past and future.

The poem is not formed in a classical shape, the language is prosaic and the lines run on as free verse. To Kizer, "narrative and plot play a role in her work", Corn (2001) remarks (p. 31). Thus, Kizer never intends only to bring forth another classical version of the myth, but to modernize the narrative by revising it, and reshaping it to the modern audience. The poetess relies on her reader's imagination to picture visual images and create a scenario in their minds' eyes.

Kizer sets her poem's scenario when the time of Persephone's return to the Underworld arrived. Persephone has received a letter and described the moment when she held it up and noticed "The lengthened shadow of [her] hand", which reflects upon her other life and destiny in Hades's world (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). She points out that this letter is "from a friend", this mysterious unknown person casts suspense over the reader's mind, yet she gives a relief that it is from a friend (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). Persephone reveals the letter's content, it "Tells time: the sun descends again" the unknown sender has identified Persephone as "the sun" in a way that represents her as Demeter's daughter, and supposedly an earth goddess (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). At the same time, the "the sun" is indicating her fate to descend to the Underworld, as the sun is fated by natural orders to sunset at the end of the day. Identity and fate are overlapping in one line, which leaves the reader's own judgment to pass and interpret it either ways. Persephone expresses her feelings on the days she had spent with her mother, she believes that "So long, so late the light has shone. / Since rising, we have shone with ease:" ease from the darkness of the world of shadow, and that ease is "Perhaps not happiness, but still / A certain comfort from the trees", as Persephone

conceived it (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). From the natural landscapes around her, Persephone finds solitude and consolation, these trees have a time on Autumn when their "crests of leaves droop down in tiers, / Their warm trunks veiled by aspen hair," as they undergo into a transformation process, every part of the trees decline "Their honeyed limbs, the loosened earth/ About the roots; while flowers recline/In dusty gardens, rest on weeds," (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). All these signs mark "a passing year", thus Persephone is aware of the passing of time, and not in need for a reminder (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). She can see time's touch on the surroundings, and as much as a human is aware of time's changings. All creatures are either growing or declining, Persephone considers her fate to be natural and not bestow on her by another force. It is natural for her to grow up different from her mother, to have her own personality, and to chart her own future. Kizer aims to lend youngsters an advice that every generation must evolve naturally. Moreover, she believes that fate is about the consequences of one's actions, not an outside mysterious force as in the ancient literature. Women must decide for themselves is the ideology behind many of her well-known poems such as *Pro Femina* (2000) in which she wrote "consider the fate of women. / How unwomanly to discuss it" (Kizer, 2000, p. 7).

The second stanza casts light on Persephone's inner conflict. She confidently accepts her destiny and straightly says: "So be it!" to herself first and to her listener, claiming her independence and ability to face up the consequences of her actions (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). In her return to Hades's world, Persephone expects her train to be "plucked by spikes of summer grass" referring to her mother's power, but "No clutch of summer holds me here" (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). She reminisces the time when she was kidnapped and taken to the Underworld, she confirms "I've gone before" to the spot where she was abducted and "I glance to my accustomed glass," the glass of innocence and purity, when she was playing at "The shallow pond, but films of slime / Waver across it, suck the verge / Where blunted marsh frond cuts the air" (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). Persephone's visual description of Hades's emergence from the bottom of the pond to take her reflects her inner-self as she is looking at her image on the face of water getting blurred before he appears, and her conflict on deciding whether to run away from this unfamiliar creature or to stay and accept his intrusion. She is disturbed, and as she "stare[s], the slime divides / Like curtains of old green velour", revealing to her something or someone that amuses her like a show behind a curtain amuses an audience (Kizer, 2002, p. 32).

In the third stanza, Persephone provides a closer look at her inner conflict. In her mind's eye, Persephone's senses are blurred, and she "gazes" into her reflection on the surface of the pond, her reflection is "Still veiled in foam" as if she cannot identify herself (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). On the other side, "the grim / Tragedian", Hades "Draws near my shade" like any male advances to a female (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). Their meeting is "In motions formal and austere, / We circle, measure, heel to hem" not fearful, nor forceful (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). Persephone depicts in her narration that Hades has not kidnaped her, but in fact has seduced her, for he "proffers me an iron plate / Of seedy fruit, to match my mouth" (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). Persephone has a choice to accept or decline his offer, and that marks the moment of transformation for her identity and for the rest of her life. This is Kizer's fairly significant remark on women's life and choices as she believes that every woman has powers and weaknesses that are exploited by their male counterparts. A woman is empowered by her intelligence, her economical resources, and her position or role in the society. Women are oppressed by undermining their powerful qualities and controlled by restricting their

activities within the private sphere. Hades seduces Persephone to come with him because she is not yet aware of her potentials under her mother's care. She is young, naïve and curious. Hades would take Persephone to his world where she has no powers or resources, and can be controlled easily in a foreign place. In this case, Persephone falls a victim of domestic abuse, where a peculiar role -Queen of the Dead- is imposed upon her and she is expected to fulfill her duties. Kizer hints that women are living in a similar situation of Persephone, and they are left with one option- to adapt. Persephone is struggling through her new life, and must rise, adapt and disclose her new abilities by embracing her true identity.

The fourth stanza renders the impact of Persephone's choice to eat the seeds of pomegranate. Traditionally, the red seeds are the sign of Persephone's loss of virginity by Hades (Kay, 2006, p. 139). However, Kizer reconstructs it to be a symbol of Persephone's choice to become a woman. In the myth, the seeds chain Persephone to the Underworld and guarantee to Hades her return to him. However, Kizer's interpretation changes this idea to reflect women's choices and their consequences on their lives, by picturing the incident on earth not under the ground, which means in Persephone's territory and within her limits of control, and by twisting the act of kidnapping into seducing. The seeds are to Kizer a symbolic cause for what will come forth, as much as any cause that might alter one's life. After eating the seedy fruit, Persephone has felt her "form encased in some dark stuff" transforming into her new identity as the Queen of the shadow. Hades, convinced by his authority upon her as her husband, "has bedizened, keeps me hid / Save for that quivering oval," where his throne is (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). She abhors him and wishes to be "away from him / And that excitement of his taste" (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). Nevertheless, Persephone feels his sadness for "He suffers, from my flesh withdrawn", her absence inflects pain on his heart and that reflects his need for her (Kizer, 2002, p. 33).

In the fifth stanza, Persephone faces her reality. She admits that "this unwilling touch of lust" in Hades prevents her from ignoring him, and he "Has moved some gentle part of me" which means her heart yields to his suffering (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). Although she showcases aspects of the angel in the house, who puts her husband before herself, Persephone does not submit entirely to Hades's wishes. Persephone's nature and identity as Demeter's daughter has troubled her, for it is hard to be separated from her old-self. Her unconscious conjures to her a concealed desire during "That sleeps in solstice, wakes to dream", a dream where both her personalities as daughter of Earth Goddess and Queen of the Dead commingle into one whole identity, "Where streams of light and winter join" (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). Dreams are signs expose what is buried in her mind and heart. She is conflicted between the earth and the underground, the light and the shadow, her old self and her new self as Queen of the shadow. This confusion triggers in Persephone the urge to fulfill all her desires. She suppresses her confusion in a belief that Hades knows her. Her vision has cleared as her "nerves dissolving in the gleam / Of night's theatrical desire," she realizes that she must give to gain, and fight to win (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). Looking upon Hades, Persephone perceives herself as a heroine, who embarks on a journey of self-discovery. To Persephone, her journey has reached a state where "As always, when antagonists / Are cast into the sensual / Abysses, from a failing will" (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). She rises to achieve the outcome of her sacrifice, "This is my dolor, and my dower", the balance between her light and shadow resolves her inner conflict and strengthens her to the end of her fate (Kizer, 2002, p. 33).

The last stanza concludes the confusion and conflict between the past and the future for Persephone. She calls Hades "Come then, sweet Hell! / To stir the grasses, rock the pool, / And move the leaves before they fall" to take her to the shadow where she belongs as Queen of the shadow, embracing her other identity (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). She has pondered at her life, accepted to fall into the darkness, and then she casts her letter as she hopes that the letter's wings will "bear / It on to that high messenger / Of sky, who lately dropped it here" referring to Zeus, whose patriarchal dominance has led her to Hades (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). Persephone answers Zeus that his rule reminds her "That half my life is spent in light", and therefore she liberates herself and "cast my spirit to the air, / But cast it. Summertime, goodnight!" (Kizer, 2002, p. 33). Phillips (2001) comments on the last line that "Persephone suffers mighty falls, and accepts the fact that women can't win all battles" (p. 78).

Kizer's version of the myth discusses the influence of one's inner-life on his/her outer-life. She believes that changing the psychology of women will result in changing their traditional beliefs and their attitudes towards themselves as they refuse to be victims, submissive, and weak. Kizer applies Jung's view of the shadow in her description of Persephone's journey to the Underworld. Jung (1977) believes that "[the shadow's] nature can in large measure be inferred from the contents of the personal unconscious", unlike the ego, which results from the collective unconscious (p. 145). Persephone wants to be free from her society's expectations. She accepts to be Hades's wife, which as well means she is embracing her inner-self. She assures that "No clutch of summer holds [her]" to be the next Earth Goddess (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). The shadow is a state of the self that requires preparation and strong will to overcome personal challenges, because as Jung (1977) states "no one can become conscious of the shadow without a considerable moral effort" (p. 145). He clarifies the nature of this moral effort by listing certain characteristics in the shadow-personality such as being emotional, obsessive, and having possessive quality (Jung, 1977, p. 145). These qualities are seen in Persephone's character, she loves nature for she finds "a certain comfort from the trees", she is obsessed with searching for meanings in herself and around her, and she has a desire to control and possess as she calls "Come then, sweet Hell! I 'll name you once" (Kizer, 2002, p. 32-33). Persephone has been willing to find herself, she is looking, staring, and gazing, but her inner-self is "still veiled in foam" (Kizer, 2002, p. 32). Hades's presence is regarded as a trigger for her to search further. His strange intervention into her life is used as a tool for feminine self-discovery, he shows her a possibility beyond her horizon as an Earth Goddess. For a person to recognize his/her dark aspects, he/she must meet a resistance between the ego and the shadow. This conflict between the ego and the shadow is rendered from a wider spectacle of self-recognition and self-alienation. Jung (1977) points out that the self retires into the background and gives place to social recognition (self-alienation), in which she becomes what is expected to be (p. 122). The challenge is posed for self-recognition to stand opposite to self-alienation. Persephone obtains self-recognition by accepting to go to the Underworld with Hades over staying with her mother (self-alienation) to become what others expect her to be – an Earth goddess.

In conclusion, Kizer's poem delivers a significant message to young women through an ideal mythic figure. When young girls are forced to become women by social conventions, they become married and mothers before they choose to be. Therefore, women are predefined to eventually be wives and mothers. However, Kizer has re-established the role of Persephone through re-defining her identity. Instead of becoming an earth Goddess like her mother,

Persephone has broken from her mother's circle, she has gone to the Underworld with Hades and has returned surely different. Her journey to the shadow is symbolically suggesting a journey to one's own shadow, to the personal unconscious. This psychological transformation will bring about a new identity, a developed character. Persephone becomes the Queen of the Shadow, thus, her new identity instigates, symbolically, an inner journey to explore the psyche's shadow as part of individuation process.

### Conclusion

This study of Carolyn Kizer's "Persephone Pauses" as an adaptation of the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone is intended to expose different interpretation, portrayals, and themes. It is conducted on the feminist views and theories, concerning the author's influence on depicting female characters, the female characters' portrayals, and their social roles. The study is divided into two sections; each provides answers to the research questions on the ideology of the poet, and the poem's themes and interpretation.

The first section explains the theoretical part of mythology and feminism, by defining their terms and aspects. Myth is viewed as an explanation of natural phenomenon such as winter, or justification of cultural rites and customs. In mythology, there is a hierarchy of gods and goddesses, distributed on patriarchal standards, where Zeus is the father and the powerful male figure above all. Myth-criticism comprises of various theories and critical approaches to analyze literary interpretations structures, and mythic patterns. Feminism is part of the myth-criticism. It is interested in mythology for two main reasons: first, the patriarchal system rooted in myths, and second, the female figures' roles and potentials. Accordingly, the feminist approach studies the author's patriarchal influence on describing female characters, the female characters' negative and stereotypical portrayals, and their roles and abilities in the social domain. These theoretical views are applied in analyzing Kizer's poem.

The second section is investigating "Persephone Pauses", a modern interpretation of the myth by Kizer. Kizer is interested in the neglected aspects of the myth, especially Persephone's side of the story. She introduces psychological views on the incident, as well as tackling feminist issues of identity and role. Through her heroine Persephone's descent to the Underworld, Kizer explains the process of individuation, borrowed from the psychoanalyst Jung. The individuation uncovers the true personality of the goddess, and sets her on a journey of self-discovery, where she can make her own choices beyond the stereotypical or accustomed identifications. The psychological transformation of Persephone is observed in this dramatic monologue as she turns from being the Earth Goddess into the Queen of the Dead. Persephone's self-recognition represents womanhood, as Kizer believes, and encourages women to define themselves by their own actions.

### About the author:

**Salma Backroush** graduated from Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University with M.A in English Literature (2017), and B.A in English Language and Literature (2014). She is interested in comparative, historical, and cultural studies. Sha has been working in private institutions and schools. She is preparing for Ph.D. in English Literature and Philosophy.

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