

LOVE AS PORTRAYED IN MADELINE MILLER'S NOVEL "CIRCE"

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ABSTRACT - This research discusses Circe's love as portrayed in Madeline Miller's novel which takes theme in the ancient Greek mythology. The objective of this research is to find out the types of love portrayed between Odysseus and Circe. The methodology applied in this research is qualitative. The source of the data is Madeline Miller's novel "Circe" which published by Little, Brown and Company in 2018. In analyzing the data, the researcher used Robert J. Sternberg theory about the triangle of love. The result of this research shows that there is a presence of intimacy and passion without the commitment component. The relationship between Odysseus and Circe is dominated by the intimacy component, forming closeness and attachment. Meanwhile, the passion component indicates physical attraction and the existence of a sexual relationship.

Keywords: *intimacy, love, circe, passion, novel*

ABSTRAK - Penelitian ini membahas tentang cinta Circe sebagaimana digambarkan dalam novel Madeline Miller yang mengambil tema mitologi Yunani kuno. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui jenis cinta yang digambarkan antara Odysseus dan Circe. Metodologi yang diterapkan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif. Sumber data berasal dari novel "Circe" karya Madeline Miller yang diterbitkan oleh Little, Brown and Company, New York pada tahun 2018. Dalam menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan teori Robert J. Sternberg triangle love. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya unsur intimitas dan gairah tanpa adanya komponen komitmen. Hubungan antara Odysseus dan Circe didominasi oleh komponen intimitas, membentuk kedekatan dan ikatan. Sementara itu, komponen gairah menunjukkan adanya daya tarik fisik dan hubungan seksual.

Keywords: *intimasi, cinta, circe, gairah, novel*

INTRODUCTION

Love in several literary works has been a universal focal point of attention. The diversity of love stories in literature is intricately tied to culture and time, reflecting the author's understanding of love. Depictions of love in literature serve as a mirror to the complexity and diversity of human experiences. Literature has become a medium that portrays the nuances of love in its various forms, ranging from idealistic romanticism to conflict-ridden tragedies. According to Enrique Burunant (2016: 121), love is not merely an emotion, but a profound force that shaped our lives and relationship. Love has the power to heal wounds, inspire acts of kindness, and transform individuals and communities.

Several literary works explore romantic relationships. Firstly, in European drama, there's Shakespeare's (1597) *Romeo and Juliet*. The love between Romeo and Juliet is a tragic romance. According to Nevo (1969: 241), the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* is crafted with significant events in human life, highlighting main topics of tragedy such as bad fate, unfortunate events, and uncertainty. The second work is the novel "*Layla and Majnun*" by Nizami Ganjavi, published in 2009, originating from East Asia. In the love story of Layla and Majnun, there is evident rejection from their families due to differences in social status. According to Seyed-Gohrab (2020: 4), their relationship becomes a social critique, emphasizing the importance of true love in marriage. The three stories of *Ramayana* and *Shinta*, originating from India, are in the form of poetry written by Valmiki. This poetry has been adapted into several novels, one of them being Kuvempu Puttappa's work titled "*Sri Ramayana Darshanam*" in 2011. The tale of Rama and

Shinta originates from different worlds, where Shinta is the descendant of a demon king, and Rama is a human.

The three literary works explore the theme of love between mortals. The stories of Romeo and Juliet, Layla and Majnun, and Rama and Shinta depict forbidden and passionate love. Their love stories conclude tragically and are marked by struggles against societal constraints. In the tales of Romeo and Juliet, as well as Layla and Majnun, their love is separated by death, while Rama and Shinta must confront a demon king to rescue Shinta. Despite the tragic outcomes, their stories manage to reconcile their initially conflicted families by showcasing the strength of their love and the willingness to fight for it.

The context of love in Greek mythology has its own context for the depiction of love. The social and cultural norms of ancient Greece also shape women often expected to fulfill specific roles and subject to the authority of men. The historical context of ancient Greece is emphasizing on heroism, adventure, and exploration. Love is often intertwining with quests, battles, and trials in the story, emphasizing the profound love impact can have on the lives and destinies of individuals.

The tales of Greek mythology continue to capture the attention of contemporary writers, as seen in works like Madeline Miller's novel that features the Goddess Circe as the main character. The character Circe is inspired by the novel "The Odyssey," retold from Circe's perspective. Circe is portrayed as a goddess who has an affinity for mortals and falls in love with them. She is the only Greek mythology goddess depicted as a sorceress. Throughout her journey, Circe strives to accept herself, demonstrating that love and self-acceptance are interconnected and must be embraced together to achieve wholeness. In the novel *The Odyssey* by Homer, Circe character is portrayed as a witch and a secondary character. She uses her magical abilities to transform the shapes of humans into pigs, excluding Odysseus. Circe fall in love with Odysseus due to his cleverness. Additionally, Circe aids Odysseus in his return to Itacha, assisting him in battling mythological monsters.

The researcher focuses on the love story between Odysseus and Circe, presenting the intriguing dynamics of a relationship between a mortal and a goddess. This study aims to investigate the type of love depicted, exploring how the encounter between Odysseus and Circe reflects the complexity of love. By examining aspects such as attraction, conflict, and character transformation, the research discusses how this narrative influences contemporary understanding of love and relationships between mortals and deities. The goal of this study is to provide profound insights into the representation of love between Odysseus and Circe and its relevance in the context of literature and modern human thought.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Sternberg (1988: 37), the triangle of love theory contains three components, which show as the shape of an isosceles triangle. The intimacy component is at the top of the triangle, the passion component is on the left side, and the commitment component is on the right side. The position of intimacy is at the peak that is meaningful in outline the intimacy of uniting the couple while the passion and commitment are under and next to meaningful relationships such as the passion play a role as short-term relationship and the commitment acts as a relationship long term.

According to Sternberg (1988: 37), intimacy is a deep emotion that contains a strong desire, trust, and warmth to establish relationships. The characteristic of the presence of intimacy can be characterized by a feeling of always approaching both in the form of conversations with long duration and a desire to be together at all times. The desire always is close together because it follows by longing. In this case intimacy encourages giving more attention to the couple. For example, communication to get to know a partner further intends to be intimate.

According to Sternberg (1988: 42), passion is a condition of ownership and unity towards loved ones. Passion is an expression of human desires and needs as in the case of affection, sexual needs, domination, self-esteem or referred to as physiological needs. The need for passion for a partner varies depending on the individual nature, the state, or form of relationship the couple is doing.

Passion with love has a strong interest and mutual support for each other or tends to be passionate can produce intimacy towards the partner. In establishing relationships especially with the opposite sex, the existence of the passionate component can emerge quickly then accompanied by intimacy. The existence of passion for couples also varies and tailors to the needs of the couple.

According to Sternberg (1988: 46), commitment is a decision by consciously establishing relationships and maintaining one another to achieve goals. For example, in marriages that is based on arranged marriages because of arranged marriages. A person is able to live together without any acknowledgment of love first but hence involves because of logical thought considerations. Relationships begin with commitments will be followed by other components because in the face of difficulties the couple has the same goal so that the solution can be communicated together. However, this relationship does not guarantee success in establishing relationships because this relationship gives birth to long-term and long-term relationships.

Romantic love is the type of relationship that contains two components namely intimacy and passion without a commitment component. This type of relationship occurs in dating relationships. This relationship base on physical attraction and emotional involvement with the partner (Sternberg 1988: 56).

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used categorization. As described by Mahalakshmi and Duraiswamy (2012: 3131), categorization is the process of sorting the descriptive data collected by the researcher and grouping it according to the desired field to prevent the data from mixing with unrelated information. In other words, the researcher used it to organize and categorize the collected data, ensuring that the focus of the analysis remained on the love relationship between Circe and Odysseus. This aided in identifying and analyzing data relevant to the researched aspects more effectively.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Researchers discovered data indicating the components of intimacy and passion in the relationship between Odysseus and Circe. The researcher applied the triangle theory in data collection, examining the plot, setting, characterization, and theme. Out of 23 collected data points, 17 were related to the intimacy component, and 6 to the passion component, without the presence of commitment. The details of the data can be observed in the research findings:

“We lay together in my wide, gold bed. I had wanted to see him loosened with pleasure, passionate, laid bare. He was never laid bare, but the rest I saw. We did find some trust between us.” (Miller, 2018: 166)

The data indicated intimacy component within communicating intimately with the loved one. The data suggested that the desire to see each other fully had been indicative of a growing commitment to the relationship and a sense of responsibility to be faithful. The sentence **"loosened with pleasure, passionate, laid bare"** indicated a desire for openness. And the sentence **"did find some trust between us"** showed that there had been trust, which was an essential element in affection, and its presence indicated that there had been a growing emotional bond between them.

“I was a part of such things with the rest, but when others stayed to offer her prayers, I did not stay with them. I was...impatient.”

“Ten years you had fought,” I said. “It is understandable.” (Miller, 2018: 167)

The data described intimacy component within receiving emotional support from the loved one. In the given passage, Circe displays empathy towards Odysseus for his past transgressions. As evidenced by her words, **"Ten years you had fought"** and **"It is understandable,"**. Circe's support proves significant in bolstering Odysseus's self-confidence. While Odysseus acknowledges that understanding such a stance is reasonable after ten years of struggle, the emotional closeness and intimacy manifest in Circe's comprehension and support of his feelings.

“I watched the pain passing over his face. Now it hurt, and now still it hurt, and now, and now. And that was only one among his discomforts, stiff neck and acid stomach and the ache of old wounds. I ran my hands over his ribbed scars, easing him as I could. The scars themselves I offered to wipe away. He shook his head. “How would I know myself?”

I was secretly glad. They suited him. Enduring Odysseus, he was, and the name was stitched into his skin. Whoever saw him must salute and say: There is a man who has seen the world. There is a captain with stories to tell.” (Miller, 2018: 173)

The next data showed intimacy component within valuing the loved one. The data reveals an intimacy component within valuing the loved one. Circe attentively observes the expressions on Odysseus's face, capturing both pain and joy, as she seeks to alleviate his discomforts such as a stiff neck, upset stomach, and the lingering ache of old wounds. Through her tactile care, she attempts to provide comfort in a nuanced display of intimacy. Circe's acknowledgment that Odysseus's scars **"suited him"** reveals a profound respect for his character and life journey. By expressing that the scars are fitting, she signifies an appreciation for the integral role these physical marks play in shaping Odysseus's identity. This sentiment reflects a deep understanding and honor for the complexities of his personality.

“I began to ask him for small favors. Would he kill a buck for dinner? Would he catch a few fish? My stay was falling to pieces, might he mend some of the posts? It gave me a sharp pleasure to see him come in the door with full nets, with baskets of fruit from my orchards. He joined me in the garden, staking vines. We spoke of what

winds were blowing, how Elpenor had taken to sleeping on the roof, and whether we should forbid it.” (Miller, 2018: 177)

The data explained intimacy component within experiencing happiness with the loved one. In the given passage, Circe establishes intimacy through closeness with Odysseus by making a series of small requests. as seen in the sentence **“We spoke of what winds were blowing, how Elpenor had taken to sleeping on the roof, and whether we should forbid it.”** illustrating a deeper connection. The sharp pleasure she experiences upon seeing Odysseus bring in his catches signifies her appreciation for his active role and contributions to their shared life. This interaction highlights the intimacy in Circe and Odysseus's relationship, emphasizing a sense of togetherness through daily engagement and mutual appreciation.

“You must hold them off from the blood until Tiresias comes. He will drink his fill and give you his wisdom. Then you will return here, for a single day, as there may be more help I can give you.” (Miller, 2018: 187)

The data described intimacy component within having mutual understanding with the loved one. Circe exhibits intimacy through closeness by offering guidance to Odysseus as seen in the sentence **“Then you will return here, for a single day”**. This reflects a high level of trust and a close relationship between Circe and Odysseus, where Circe provides assistance and direction with the aim of aiding Odysseus in his journey. This action establishes an emotional bond, illustrating that Circe values the journey and challenges faced by Odysseus. Through these instructions and advice, Circe manifests a profound intimacy and care for her husband in his epic journey.

“I would stay,” he said. “If you would have me. It will only be until spring. I will go as soon as the seas are passable. It will be scarcely any delay.” (Miller, 2018: 175)

The data expressed intimacy component within desiring to promote the welfare of the love one. In the given excerpt, Odysseus expresses a desire to prolong his stay with Circe until spring before continuing his journey. This offer reflects Odysseus's wish to extend his closeness with Circe. In the sentence **“I would stay,”**. On a deeper level, intimacy through proximity is evident in Odysseus's request itself. It signifies his eagerness to share more time with Circe, portraying his appreciation and care for their relationship. Despite being aware of the necessity to continue his voyage, Odysseus wants to celebrate their togetherness before parting ways again. This expresses a form of intimacy through closeness and underscores his deep regard for his partner.

“Odysseus had put on flesh and did not wince so often when he moved. The worst of his tempers had ebbed. I tried to find satisfaction in it. Like seeing a garden well-tended, I told myself.” (Miller, 2018: 180)

The data discussed intimacy component within holding the loved one in high regard. Circe observes the transformations in Odysseus, noting his physical improvement and reduced discomfort in movement. The statement, **“the worst of his tempers had ebbed,”** indicates that these changes also encompass positive shifts in Odysseus's temperament. This reflects intimacy through closeness, where Circe finds happiness and satisfaction in witnessing these positive changes in Odysseus. Circe expresses appreciation and care for her partner's well-being and development.

“Give thanks, I told myself. A winter is more than you had with Daedalus.

I did not give thanks. I learned his favorite foods and smiled to see his pleasure in them. At night we sat together at the hearth and talked over the day.” (Miller, 2018: 177-178)

The data was found intimacy component within being able to count on the loved one in times of need. In the given passage, Circe demonstrates intimacy through closeness in a unique manner. Despite reminding herself to be thankful, Circe expresses her appreciation for Odysseus through small, thoughtful actions. In the sentence **"I learned his favorite foods and smiled to see his pleasure in them"**. It signifies intimacy through attention to meaningful details for the partner. In essence, intimacy through closeness is illustrated through attentiveness, care, and the shared time created by Circe, emphasizing the importance of these small gestures in fostering a deeper connection between partners.

“He told me of her gentle manner, how her mild direction made men jump faster than any shout. She was an excellent swimmer. Her favorite flower was the crocus, and she wore the first bloom of the season in her hair for luck.” (Miller, 2018: 178-179)

The data expressed intimacy component within sharing oneself and one's possessions with the loved one. Circe illustrates intimacy through closeness by sharing details about his wife. Odysseus, in turn, reveals a vulnerability by opening his heart and sharing small, personal aspects that hold significance to him. Through this exchange of stories, intimacy through closeness is built as the partners mutually share and value these small details, making each other's characters and personalities more vivid and precious.

“I wished Odysseus were there so I could ask him: but how did the king get that man to help him, the one who had struck him so deep? The answer that came to me was from a different tale.” (Miller, 2018: 221)

The data illustrated passion component within strong longing. Circe's desire reflects a profound yearning for closeness with Odysseus. When she conveys that the answer that comes to her mind is from a different tale, it indicates that even in Odysseus's physical absence, his presence and influence persist strongly in Circe's thoughts and heart. The longing for closeness is evident in Circe's wish to share her questions, seeking answers or understanding through his perspective. This creates an image of intimacy through closeness that transcends physical presence. It portrays a deep connection between Circe and Odysseus, where emotional and intellectual closeness play a pivotal role.

“When he talked, he was lawyer and bard and crossroads charlatan at once, arguing his case, entertaining, pulling back the veil to show you the secrets of the world. It was not just his words, though they were clever enough. It was everything together: his face, his gestures, the sliding tones of his voice.” (Miller, 2018: 171)

The data also showed passion component within physical attraction in relationship. Circe delineates how Odysseus speaks, portraying that the depth of her physical attraction is not confined solely to the words he utters but encompasses the amalgamation of all elements constituting Odysseus's charm. Circe emphasizes that Odysseus is not just an eloquent speaker

but also a lawyer, a poet, and a cunning trickster capable of enchanting his audience. Through his words, Odysseus seamlessly integrates these various roles, creating a multifaceted allure. Furthermore, Circe asserts that this charm doesn't solely emanate from his clever words but is also derived from his facial expressions, body movements, and the nuanced tones of his voice.

"We lay together in my wide, gold bed. I had wanted to see him loosened with pleasure, passionate, laid bare." (Miller, 2018: 166)

The data explained passion component within sexual relation with the loved one. Circe depicts an intimate moment between herself and Odysseus. The phrase "**We lay together in my wide, gold bed**" creates an image of physical closeness in Circe's luxurious bed. The choice of words "**wide**" and "**gold**" likely conveys a sense of opulence and intimacy in this moment. Subsequently, Circe expresses her desire to see Odysseus "**loosened with pleasure, passionate, laid bare.**" This statement details her wish to witness Odysseus enjoying the intimate moments with an expression of revealed passion. The term "**laid bare**" indicates her desire to see Odysseus without inhibitions, both emotionally and physically, in that particular moment.

"I would stay," he said. "If you would have me. It will only be until spring. I will go as soon as the seas are passable. It will be scarcely any delay.

The last was not said to me, but also to some person he argued with silently. His men perhaps, his wife, I did not care. I kept my face turned away so he would not see my pleasure.

"I will have you, I said." (Miller, 2018: 175)

The last data described passion component within romanticism in relationships. In the provided excerpt, a profound romantic intimacy is depicted through the closeness between Circe and Odysseus. Odysseus expresses his desire to prolong his stay with Circe, assuring her that it will only be until spring and won't cause significant delays. When Circe responds with, "**I will have you,**" it transcends a mere agreement to stay together; it becomes an expression of love and a desire to deepen their relationship. Through Odysseus's presence and the exchange of words, a depiction of profound romantic intimacy emerges, revealing the depth of emotional connection and closeness between Circe and Odysseus.

The researcher findings revealed the presence of two components, namely intimacy and passion. The correlated intimacy and passion components without the presence of commitment form a type of romantic love. Odysseus and Circe meet on the island of Aiaia, a place where Circe is punished. The relationship between Odysseus and Circe began with a negotiation to sleep together under the condition that Circe wouldn't harm Odysseus on the island of the dead. Through intimate communication, Odysseus revealed that he hailed from Ithaca, not Argos. Through these tales, Circe developed sympathy and gained knowledge of the outside world. At the same time, Odysseus wanted to learn more about Circe by asking about her island, her father, the origin of her weaving skills, her history, and how she acquired her magic.

Odysseus and Circe meet on the island of Aiaia, a place where Circe is punished. The relationship between Odysseus and Circe began with a negotiation to sleep together under the condition that Circe wouldn't harm Odysseus on the island of the dead. Every night, Odysseus deepened his bond with Circe by sharing stories of his struggles in the Trojan War and how he became a renowned figure in Greece. Through intimate communication, Odysseus revealed that

he hailed from Ithaca, not Argos. Through these tales, Circe developed sympathy and gained knowledge of the outside world. At the same time, Odysseus wanted to learn more about Circe by asking about her island, her father, the origin of her weaving skills, her history, and how she acquired her magic.

Additionally, Odysseus's routine of sharing his life's journey stories was a moment that Circe always enjoyed. When Odysseus talked about his wife and son, strange feelings welled up within Circe. Hearing this made Circe desire to use her magic to make Odysseus stay and not return to Ithaca. However, she refrained from using her magic because she respected Odysseus's family. Odysseus displayed an unusual condition that hinted he needed to continue his journey towards the home of the seer Teiresias and pass by Thrinakia. With all her knowledge, Circe assisted Odysseus in finding a solution to safely navigate his journey.

After staying on the island for a year, Odysseus decides to continue his journey. While Circe imparts wise advice, their relationship appears more focused on the exchange of benefits and experiences rather than long-term commitment. Circe had to accept Odysseus's departure from the island of Aiaia and his return to his family. Several days later, Circe discovered that she was pregnant with Odysseus's child, a fact unknown to Odysseus.

Circe had to accept Odysseus's departure from the island of Aiaia and his return to his family. Several days later, Circe discovered that she was pregnant with Odysseus's child, a fact unknown to Odysseus. The birth of their son was the most profound moment Circe experienced, and she realized that everything about human needs was not enough as she learned from Odysseus's life. Her time with Odysseus was precious and became a historical story for her and her child.

Circe's character indicates her connection to human life through her relationship with Odysseus. Her perspective on humans, with their ephemeral, fragile existence and limited abilities, sets them apart from the immortal gods. The gods are portrayed as not having to toil for their existence, unlike humans who must work hard. According to Bremmer (2010: 26), the Greeks considered gods as the foundation of their religion, not their rituals. For the Greeks, the rituals they performed were a form of their belief in the existence and power of the gods. In contrast, in the story of Circe, Circe's existence as a goddess contradicts her role as a deity. Circe uses her magic without acknowledgment as a goddess by Odysseus.

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Through her relationship with Odysseus, Circe exhibits a high level of empathy towards humans. Despite acknowledging Odysseus's marriage, she never compels him to stay forever. Circe learns much about living with humans through Odysseus's stories of his wife. Odysseus's love for his wife remains unwavering, and Circe's attitude reflects a genuine acceptance of Odysseus in their relationship. She maximizes Odysseus's presence on her island to be together as much as possible. Odysseus's departure from her island forever saddens Circe. However, she cannot linger in sorrow and descend into madness like the ill-fated lovers in stories, knowing

well that the union of mortals and gods is not everlasting. As a goddess, any mortal lover is destined to leave her side.

Circe and Odysseus engage in a sexual relationship during their first encounter with Circe. It can be observed from the beginning of the Circe and Odysseus story on the island of Aiaia. According to Juha Sihvola (2002: 202), sexual desire is focused on the beloved person rather than physical attraction. This is to gain a love full of affection from the beloved person rather than their body. This aligns with Sternberg's opinion (1988: 42), that sexual relations fulfill needs in romantic relationships but not in committed relationships. The relationship between Circe and Odysseus is based on their psychological needs.

The relationship between Circe and Odysseus lacks a sense of commitment. When Circe invites Odysseus to stay on the island of Aiaia, their relationship deepens. Although there is no clear commitment to marriage, there is a touch of intimacy and mutual understanding between them. Circe's shift from a position of absolute power to someone captivated by Odysseus's intelligence and courage adds an emotional dimension to the story. Despite questions about the sincerity of Circe's feelings, their relationship reflects the complex dynamics between power and romantic attraction.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Circe and Odysseus in the narrative signifies an unconventional and distinctive manifestation of love, transcending societal norms. Despite the disparities in their social status and realms. Their romantic saga illustrates that such distinctions do not impede the development of a profound affection. Circe is portrayed as an individual who embraces Odysseus for who he is, without imposing expectations for transformation. Furthermore, Circe affords Odysseus the liberty to exercise his own agency in matters of love, signifying a respect for autonomy and individual freedom within the confines of their relationship. However, the denouement suggests that notwithstanding the freedom to elect the course of love. Couples bear a responsibility to confront the repercussions of their decisions.

It can be concluded that the form of love depicted by Odysseus and Circe is romantic love that form respectfully. The relationship portrayed is based on holding in high regard her partner such as Circe accept Odysseus decisions deficiencies as the partner and receive Odysseus respectfully. The other moment, Circe always gets memories her previous partners namely Glaucous, Daedalus, and Odysseus on the other hand Circe has Telemachus in her happy ending story.

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