

Original Article

The Role of Fate and Freewill in Luna's Journey in Kelly Barnhill's *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*

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ABSTRACT: *Luna's journey in Kelly Barnhill's The Girl Who Drank the Moon provides a captivating study of how identity, growth, and destiny are shaped when free will and chance collide. This paper looks at how a child-like Luna, who is steeped in magic and mystery, interacts with a world entire of prophecies, societal expectations, and personal choices. While her fate appears to be predetermined, defined by her magical feats of moonlight absorption and the expectations of her society, her free will becomes the powerful force that defines her way. It also brings into question through Luna's strife to regain lost memories, extract endless magical powers, and defy restrictive social systems, whether destiny is an inescapable fact or a broad guiding structure that people have the ability to mould. This study also considers supporting characters such as Xan, Antain, and the Sorrow Eater, whose deeds further illustrate the intricate interplay between external factors and individual agency. This imagination surpasses reality and examines The Girl Who Drank the Moon as a contemporary fairy tale, encouraging people to take back their stories. These narratives' core is the complex interplay between fate and free will. In doing so, it makes people believe that even though fate plays a critical role in the direction, one's choices and determination ultimately lead to the final destination.*

KEYWORDS: *Fate, Fantasy, Magical Realism, Identity, Life journey, Freewill, Destiny*

Kelly Barnhill's *The Girl Who Drank The Moon* is about the life of a young girl named Luna who lives in a world filled with magic, whether it be witches or dragons. The novel follows Luna, who was magicked by accident as a baby and seeks to understand and control her magic. Throughout her life, Luna was raised by a witch called Xan, who saved her from a sacrifice. Her life is a combination of chosen and set events [2]. This essay seeks to analyze the interactions between free will and fate in Luna's life and how they affect her, her identity, and the relationships around her.

In *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, we can see that Luna is meant to be a sacrifice but gets saved by Xan, who accidentally gives her magic by feeding her moonlight. Throughout her life, Luna has experienced flashbacks of her past and severe migraines, which served as a reminder that her magic was coming. In an attempt to protect her, Xan tries to suppress her magic but ultimately fails. This gives Luna an opportunity to embrace her magic and try to take control of it. This paints a picture of how she underestimates her willpower, as she is furiously defying the destiny that is handed to her on a silver platter[3].

In working on magical realism, reality is imposed upon the fantasy elements where the main characters of the novel and plot structure are imposing the reality of an infant offering. Though the novel does not bring out the traditional plot structure, magical realism paves the way for understanding the real notion of characters and the structure of the plot. Kelly intentionally brings out the nuances of shameless offerings and the following consequences that were once traditionally followed by the ancient people in history. The land is fertile, a cloudy, foggy town. Protectorate is filled with restless volcanoes, slowly symbolizing the people who lived in between the rivers, Mesopotamia, a Sumerian civilization, around 10,000 BC. We can see the same land structure and practices of infant offering that Kelly also surrounds the novel in the same perspective.

The novel uses magic realism to deal with the themes of fate and free will. The story mingles elements of fantasy with a realistic setting, creating a world with magic as an inherent part of life. The town of the Protectorate, however, has a tradition of presenting the baby to the witch in the woods so as not to be terrorized by her in the village; this tradition, according to the case, is presented at the beginning. Though sacrifices are predetermined, Luna has to master her control over magic when she grows older, which actually represents her use of free will. A young man from the Protectorate, seeking to save his people by killing the witch, shows the desire to alter his fate.

It seems fate itself could prove an intangible protector for Luna during this hair-raising journey that she took on. Her inbuilt battle for identity through almost mythic self-creation presents a moving narrative particularly well-suited for the shadow of free will. She initiates her account with how the metamorphoses take place, which are exemplified through

the spectacular birth she was bestowed upon, along with those issues that need to be conquered. Each of them wins so skillfully, de-shrouding the masked identity bestowed upon her. The cultist grandmother, therefore obeying her, brought Luna's mother to the clutches of the witch, which further enabled her tectonic existence, rendering her escape from the shackles of determination that would always help her in the long run. Slowly, the story unfolds, covering her ominous thirteenth birthday, which lightly hints that she is one of the dozens of children waiting for a witch to eat them. Barnhill, in a rather ingenious manner, recreates dark tales like those by von Grimm and gives them a mystical essence, all while marking the boundaries of free will.

She takes possession of J.K. Rowling's well-known interwoven narratives of fate and free will as Barnhill throws a shadow over the cultish activities. The complexities that underlie both sets of work give the everyday difficulties a sophisticated touch that makes them widely relevant. Pond (2010) A self-imposed belief system and reasons appear to underlie the actions of the main adversary, the young woman with the Tiger's Heart, who would go to great lengths to fulfill a prophecy[5].

In the Harry Potter Series, fate and free will are clearly seen with a realistic approach. In the last part of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, fate and free will intertwines till the climax. The promises of Voldermort reveal the forces of fate and free will. Luck and chance are the most crucial things that Voldermort blames for this failure to kill Harry. As an evil-spirited character, he blames himself, and he needs to submit himself to fate to wait for the prophecy to be fulfilled [5]. The tension between the freewill, fate and destiny comes surrounds all seven series of Harry Potter.

The open future vision is the most innate denial of fate. Nothing I say about what I will do in the future is accurate or not. However, denying destiny could imply that we have multiple options for the future without denying that only one of them is the real one. Although this type of language is more typical of a libertarian, Rowling may be expressing just that, in which case she may even be a compatibilist[6]. Dumbledore informs Harry that just because the prophecy regarding him is true, it does not necessarily need to come to pass. Does Dumbledore mean that there is no certainty that it will come to pass and that it only becomes a true prophecy when the predicted event takes place or is assured to occur? Or does he imply that neither Voldermort nor Harry are forced to act by the prophecy? Although it foretells the real future, alternative futures are conceivable. To determine what sort of destiny exists in Harry's world and what does not we must read the Potter books more closely [6].

Destiny plays its role in the interwoven fates of Luna, Xan, and the people of the Protectorate. If his town had been sacrificing babies to a witch, this troubles Antain, and he decides to go to the forest to get his revenge by killing Xan. Destiny demands that he do it to Xan. However, the twist in the tale is that Xan is not exactly a witch, but she turns out to be magical when magicians experiment on her. As a result, she is the only witch from that time who is still alive.

Luna's biological mother initially opposed these wrong beliefs and the practices. However, as time passed and the criticism and pressures of society become worse, she allows Luna to be sacrificed by the villagers to the bad witch Xan. However, Xan rescues her and makes her live with her. Luna grows up in an environment of magical powers. She was raised by Xan feeding her moonlight instead of Starlight. This gives her access to magical powers that slowly develop within her and becomes a large part of her identity. These incidents reflect the wrong notions and beliefs that the people were forced to follow by their government. Xan is mistakenly believed to be an evil witch, when in reality she was a brave and compassionate woman who tried to save children's lives. In Luna's case, she recognizes her accidental mistake of feeding her the wrong elixir and she is willing to take the ultimate step of letting Luna live in her home and allowing her to treat her like family even going to the extent of calling Xan as 'Grandmama'. Destiny and Choice play a vital role in Luna's journey. They are the two most important elements that interact in Luna's life and enable her to discover her self-identity and become a hero who saves her village from a tyrannical government that maintains power through the incitement of fear.

Despite being abandoned by her village, she is able to navigate a world filled with obstacles with the help of compassionate souls along the way to support and encourage her. She overcomes all the obstacles that are placed in her path by making the right choices. Through this theme, Barnhill tells us that even though fate may set some boundaries in our lives, finding ways to alter it and embracing one's true personality will help redefine our existence. This journey of self-realization and personal growth will also influence the community in which we live at large and help bring about change and light the torch of hope within the people. Her free will paves the way for the village being able to move away from dangerous and destructive customs towards a more uplifting and luminous future. It shows that 'Destiny' could be a tool used to control others, whereas 'Choices' can be used to alter and break it. Through her experience, we get to know about the transformation in herself through her Choices and Destiny. In this novel, Kelly Barnhill used magical realism to express the realities of human nature and social standards. It begins with a powerful illustration of the sacrificing practices followed by the Protectorate that connects the infant offering in the present day. It reflects the historical and traditional customs of human sacrifice. It picturizes the historical realities and historical customs. This act brings out the melding of the fantastical with the historical, making it more intriguing. "Day of Sacrifice in the Protectorate, or Star Child Day" (Barnhill 14).

After that, Xan tenderly fed the eye-shimmering Starlight to the child to become strong and be filled with vitality. It represents the gifts and powers of nature, which could be admirable and serve as the best source for growing a healthier, sustainable, and protective environment. She trusted that astronomical offerings would build up as powerful stuff. The reference to Starlight and its use in the novel serves to represent nature's beauty without any blemish. It symbolizes the bountiful blessings of various spirits. Through this, we could connect protecting and sustaining the environment with consuming the enormous grace. This would help in prolonging the interconnectedness between all living things. Once it was dark enough to see the stars, she reached up one hand and gathered Starlight in her fingers, like the silken threads of spider's webs, and fed it to the child. Starlight, as every witch knows, is a marvelous food for a growing infant. Starlight collection takes a certain knack and talent (magic, for starters) (Barnhill 20). Fate is a matter of predetermined events that are projected beyond human control. In this novel, fate plays a major role in Luna's journey. In various philosophies and cultures, fate is described as preordained. It can be both restricting and releasing. It limits our decisions beyond our control. But it also works as relief in the burden of decision making. Sometimes, accepting the situation as destiny also paves the way for another time. It's the all-important Day of Sacrifice where Luna's journey starts to work in her fate. The day is a mixture of fear, sorrow and sacrifice. Each individual held their fear and was enclosed with great silence within them. When the day arrived, her mother tries her best to save her. Her soul shouted with agony. She disagreed with the sacrifice. She yearned for her baby. She couldn't help but protest to change Luna's destiny by protecting her from the sacrifice.

“The mother made a guttural sound, deep in her chest, like an angry bear. The child began to cry, and the woman climbed even higher, putting each foot on parallel rafters and bracing her back against the slope of the roof, trying to position herself in such a way that she could remain out of reach while she nursed the baby.” (Barnhill,8).

However much she tried to save her daughter, she failed. Unfortunately, it was Luna's fate to be sacrificed by the Protectorate to the bad witch. All this was the result of the government in power peddling wrong superstitious beliefs to maintain control over the village people. While all this is happening, Luna is left to the mercy of fate, as she is too young to understand what was happening around her. However, fate plays a cunning trick in Luna's life. This horrible situation is turned into a blessed one as the child is saved by the witch rather than killed. Though her mother was afraid of her child's fate, she had no idea that it was precisely this sacrifice that would enable Luna to be exposed to a different, more hopeful life that enabled her to grow into a strong human being. This horrible incident actually paves the way for a beautiful destination. Rather than being a negative and destructive force, fate plays a major role in making the sacrifice of the mother, as represented by her tears of love, worthwhile. A mother's unbearable pain is the catalyst towards a more fruitful future. The central point of the story centers around a soft-hearted witch named Xan who rescued the children from terrible practices from the Protectorate. She saved all the children and made them live happily with their families in free cities. However, fate plays a pivotal role in Luna's life. All the children were sent to some families, but Xan made Luna stay with her. Because Luna seems peculiar from Xan's perspective, when she rescues every child, she feeds them Starlight. As per her thought, Starlight is a “marvelous food for a growing infant” (Barnhill, 20)

But Xan was fed moonlight accidentally, and later this became her regular diet. These coincidences and mishaps could also be considered to be an act of fate and destiny intertwining. What had happened wasn't according to plan. What was a mistakenly done act, becomes the main consequence that allows Luna to become a powerful and heroic individual who would go on to save her village. Even though it could be an action of destiny, it would appear to be a serendipitous action. The twist in her fate directs her to lead a life full of wonder, fantasy, mystery and discovery. This single event could be defined as a life-changing moment in Luna's journey.

Moonlight, however. That is a different story.
Moonlight is magic. Ask anyone you like.
Suns and stars and meteors. The dust of nebulae. Big bangs and black holes and endless, endless Space. The moon rose, big and fat and shining. (Barnhill,25)

When little Luna grows, her magical power becomes stronger than Xan had expected. It caused an inconvenience to the environment. It affected the people close to Luna. So, Xan decided to lock up these magical powers until Luna turned thirteen. This action of Xan's is strongly grounded in a sense of love, protection and acceptance of destiny. It could be implied that the power that resides in Luna may affect her or someone will affect her. Here, destiny plays a role in protecting Luna from unwanted troubles through her magical abilities. The hand of Fate plays through Xan's actions and choices. When she decides to suppress Luna's magical abilities, it was not a decision made in haste or without the child's future in mind. It was an act of love and protection that made her project a temporary shield that would protect both Luna and the people around her from unpredictable consequences. Magic can be either a blessing or a curse. Luna was a little girl who was too young to understand the ramifications of the various actions happening in her life as a result of other people's choices. It is because of Xan's care and teachings that she is able to receive the proper guidance, that enables her to make use of the powerful magic inside her for good, rather than bad. Fate had given her these abilities, and decided a possible

destiny for her. Luna was strong enough to be up to the task and turn this unexpected gift into something that would change not only her life, but that of the society in which she came from. Initially, Xan intended to just save Luna from death. But it was all a part of destiny's plan that Xan would not only save Luna, but also infuse her with magic that she would need to learn to control. By suppressing her unstable magic, Xan saves her from unexpected troubles until she is strong and knowledgeable enough in magic to make her own choices. Some years later, Luna was excited to welcome her new age of responsibility. Xan makes sure that Luna is up to the task by making sure that she was educated, learned mathematics and poetry and was able to understand the movements of the stars and the origin of the universe. More than that Xan taught her to be human, to understand the value of love and kindness in life. She wants to prepare Luna for a life of responsibility that would force her to come into contact with a life filled with great difficulties. While destiny took Luna on a different path, Xan made sure to prepare her to overcome all the obstacles that would come up on this unexpected path. Ever since Luna turns thirteen years of age, her life becomes entangled with that of the society from which she had come. She was now faced with the responsibility of saving her people from a tyrannical government that was bent on making them their slaves always. Xan's accidental mistake with Moonlight, serves to be a catalyst for Luna's future life. Xan's teachings help her to use her magic powers at the right time and for the right purpose. In Luna's life, it's not just a role of participation; rather, it plays a role in self-discovery.

“Assuming I've done this right, the seed of magic will open on her thirteenth birthday.” (Barnhill,80)

Some of the minor characters of the novel reflect the influence of fate and provide different perspectives on destiny. These are some things that can be examined in terms of how fate influenced Luna's journey and her companions throughout her life. Antain is destined to take up a family tradition and become an Elder, which he does not want. His life is mapped out ahead of him by the demands of society. Antain's destiny is wrapped up in the main conflict of the story. He was at first part of the elder council, but he grows increasingly troubled over the sacrifice of babies to the witch. His life is turned upside down when he goes to visit Luna's mother, leaving him disfigured by her magical paper birds. Antain still manages to find love with Ehyne and has a job as a carpenter. His destiny finally sees him clash with Xan deep in the forest, most importantly in the revelation of the town's history. “It was Antain. His nephew. An Elder-in-Training”. (Barnhill 5)

Ehyne will be forced to abide by the rules of the Protectorate and acquiesce to the offerings offered to the witch. Ehyne's destiny is entwined with Antain's as she marries him and gives birth to their child. Her history as a one-time sister comes into play when she organizes a rebellion against Ignatia and the council. Her rebellious act affects the destiny of the whole Protectorate. “Her name was Ehyne, and though Antain had never exchanged three words in succession with her, still he missed her desperately, and now only went to school day after day on the wild hope that she would change her mind and come back.” (Barnhill 46)

Fyrian thinks he is a giant dragon who will become even larger. His perception of his own self is moulded by his belief in his predestined fate. The small dragon Fyrian lives an untimely fate when he unexpectedly begins to increase in size. His growth happens as the town's secrets begin to unravel, and he eventually becomes involved in the final battle with Ignatia. The tiny dragon perched on the branch extending over the door of Xan's tree home, opening his multicolored wings as wide as he could and arching his long neck toward the sky. His voice was loud, warbled, and atrociously off-key (Barnhill 30)

In the character of Ignatia, one binds her fate to being the true antagonist in the story. As head of the Sisters of the Star, she has survived by feeding upon the townspeople's misery for centuries. Her fate is sealed once her true nature comes out, and with that revelation, she is forced to face the consequences of her deeds. She is seen to be practically bound by her nature to feed upon sorrow just to stay alive. She manipulates others to suffer in order to uphold her authority. “Ignatia was a formidable woman. And terrifying. But Antain had always gotten on with her, and she always seemed fond of him.” (Barnhill 89)

At first, maddened by the death of her child, Luna's mother finds her own magical powers. Her destiny is also altered when she breaks free from her imprisonment and comes to play a pivotal role during the last battle in the forest. The discovery of her name, Adara, at the end of the novel, marks a regaining of her identity and a fresh start. “Luna stepped out of her mother's protective embrace, grabbing Adara's hand instead. And together they opened the door.” (Barnhill 382)

Free will is an innate skill that allows people to make choices on their own. It wouldn't include the influences of the surroundings or predetermined aspects. It expresses the deeper sense where individuals assume their abilities and calculate their actions to figure it out to the next step they will have to take in life. It executes the value of self-evaluation to determine the course of life. And it shapes their identity by discovery. Luna makes the choice by herself to explore her powers and discover her abilities within a restricted environment. Even though Luna's magic causes troubles in her environment, Luna never gives up in her decision to grow. Despite her powers being locked away, Luna continues to

explore a variety of topics related to her magic and her society by studying books, understanding the theories, and becoming well-versed in the principles of mechanics.

From her childhood, she used her magical powers in any way that she wanted. After turning thirteen, she discovered the full course of her magical abilities. She used the gifts of nature to gain her freedom and that of her community. As she immersed herself in her magical abilities, her playful magic brings her in connection with other mystical things. "Luna went running to the swamp to gather the irises into her arms and drink in the scent. As Luna ran, each footstep blossomed with iridescent flowers." (Barnhill 62)

She understands her new and developing powers that bring her closer to nature.

"I am a Crow, Grandmama," Luna cried. Which wasn't entirely true.

She had simply grown black wings and proceeded to flap about the room.

'Caw, caw, caw!' she cried." (Barnhill 63)

Her constant transformation in birds, always presented with the notion of 'flying', the theme of free will and freedom is constantly being emphasized. "She transformed a book into a dove and enlivened her pencils and quills so that they stood on their own and performed a complicated dance on the desk." (Barnhill 63)

Barnhill's choice of making Luna transform both herself and the things around her into natural items that are inherently infused with a sense of individuality and freedom further emphasize this idea of free will, fate and destiny. "Luna bumped tables with her elbows and accidentally transformed them to water" (Barnhill 64) Every action that she learns to become competent in, would help her in the final battle that allows her to save her community. This is how she enriched her magical powers before turning thirteen. With those empowering and creative magical powers, she abandoned it by respecting her grandmama's words. It reveals her good character of obedience and virtues. She concentrated on Learning and spent most of the time in the workshop. Here, her choices reflect her quality of character. A good character will be expressed in the actions. It depends upon what we do and how we think. Her remarkable idea, through her choice, exalts her character. Luna spent most of her time in the workshop. It was filled with books about metals and rocks and water, books about flowers, mosses and edible plants, books about animal biology and animal behavior and animal husbandry, books about the theories and principles of mechanics; Luna's favorite books were the ones about astronomy of the moon especially (Barnhill 133).

After, she was sacrificed to the bad witch. Her biological mother struggled to protect her. Had become as mad. She forgot everything, even her name. She lost her identity; it all happened because she yearned for her daughter. She felt guilt for sacrificing herself to the bad witch. She was kept as a prisoner in the Sisters of the Star. But she felt that her daughter was somewhere near to her. "She is here, her heart called. She is here, she is here, she is here" (Barnhill 344)

Luna's courageous decision to save her village makes her meet her biological mother for the first time. They see themselves face to face. They can't see each other, which astonished her, making her feel something coincided with them. Luna's absence wounded her mother terribly. "Once I had a name. But I do not remember it. There was a man who called me 'wife' and there was a child who would have called me 'mother'" (Barnhill 345)

After some struggles, she saves her mother from prison and the way she accepts and reveals the truth resembles the truest love. Even though she got unconditional love and care from Xan, it fulfilled her heart after her mother's love towards her. "The woman without hair the madwoman (No, Luna thought, Not the madwoman. My mother. She is my mother. The word made her shiver) looked down at her boots and smiled." (Barnhill 367)

At last, Luna's decision and efforts grant great happiness in her life. It's a revivalism for the village, too. Luna brought all the citizens who were sacrificed by the Protectorate back to their village. Through her magic, she executes her life with her own choices beyond her fate and rewards the prolonged happiness to the village. Grand Elder Gherland was imprisoned. Her mother felt proud of her actions and bravery.

'I was taken from my mother,' Luna explained. 'Like you, I was brought to family who loved me and whom I love. I cannot stop loving that family, and I don't want to. I can only allow my love to increase.' She smiled. 'I love the grandmother who raised me. I love the mother I lost. My love is boundless. My heart is infinite. And my joy expands and expands. You'll see.'" (Barnhill 377).

Slowly, Xan breathes her last breath with intense happiness. "'I love you, Grandmama.' 'I know, darling,' Xan wheezed. 'I love....'" (Barnhill 379) She has completed her duty of protecting Luna and preparing her to face the world that she will have to inherit in the future. The idea of free will is implied in many of the minor characters through their decisions and actions dictating their destiny and the progression of the plot. Antain began as a devoted Council worker who was bound by tradition alone. He had the difficult challenge of doing the exact opposite, that is, disobeying the Elders while still being

able to protect his wife and child. His defiance of the Protectorate's terrible destiny encourages others to challenge the structure. In defiance of the demands of his position on the elder council, he challenges the custom of baby sacrifice. He chooses to become a carpenter and wed Ethyne in spite of being scarred by Luna's mother's paper birds. Antain expresses his free will most dramatically when he decides to travel into the forest to confront Xan, driven by his desire to halt the sacrifice tradition. In the end, he decides to disobey the Elders and pursue retribution for the Protectorate's sacrifices. His choice to rebel in order to defend his wife and child demonstrates his autonomy in choosing his own course. "Joining the Council was not Antain's choice at all. He would have preferred to be a carpenter. Indeed, he told his mother as much often, and at length not that she listened." (Barnhill 91)

Ethyne's decisions indicate that she has a strong belief in free will. She decides to marry Antain even though he is scarred, and this indicates that she does not care about what society thinks. As a former Sister, she decides to take a stand against the council and Ignatia by initiating a rebellion, signifying that she can act upon her beliefs. She decides to resist, albeit by inspiring Antain to do something against the Elders. Her determination to change things demonstrates her belief in personal choice over destiny. Ethyne symbolizes the strength of unity when an individual decides to fight back, others will follow suit. Where Antain is the brute strength against the Elders, Ethyne is the intellectual and emotional resistance, proving that change starts with consciousness.

Ethyne stood as the Grand Elder arrived, flanked by two heavily armed Sisters of the Star. She was, by all appearances, utterly unafraid. It was galling, really. The Grand Elder knitted his eyebrows in a way that he assumed was imposing. This had no effect. To make it worse, it seemed that she not only knew the two soldiers to the right and left of him but was friends with them as well. She brightened as she saw the ruthless soldiers arrive, and they smiled back. (Barnhill 273)

When we are faced with Ignatia's behavior, it is mostly based on her need for others' sorrow; her actions still represent a kind of free will. She insists on staying as the town's leader for centuries. Ignatia makes the choice to accompany Antain into the woods with the intention of killing him in order to keep her secrets safe. In spite of all her claims of being controlled by her desire for sorrow, she consciously decides to cause misery and not attempt a different way of living. Her control is not natural. It results from manipulation; therefore, she could have made a different decision. Ultimately, after Xan takes away her sorrow-eating powers, she is left a powerless, frail woman, which means that her power was constructed solely on the decisions she made, not destiny. This serves to demonstrate that she was never actually trapped by fate; her downfall comes from her own actions and not an unavoidable destiny. Sister Ignatia is the opposite of Antain and Ethyne, and while they struggle for freedom, she opts for oppression. Her tale reminds us that even the people who seem to be controlled by fate have choices, and people who opt for cruelty will ultimately have their comeuppance. Antain gets revenge and triumphs. Sister Ignatia accepts her "destiny" but is finally defeated. Ethyne challenges fate and encourages others to see they can make choices. Their differing destinies reaffirm the novel's major theme: No human is ever bound by destiny; free will is always present, but it is not always easy to exercise. "Sister Ignatia tore at her chest. Her sorrow leaked onto the ground." (Barnhill 365)

Kelly Barnhill's *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* indicates that although situations can dictate an individual's direction, real strength is found in making decisions that go against fate. Luna, Xan, and those of the Protectorate ultimately reform their fates by choosing to accept courage, love, and truth. Barnhill defies the idea that fate is a fixed force that cannot be changed, rather painting it as an advisory thread to be rewoven by deliberate intent. But somewhere, destiny is set according to the universal plan, and our choices bring some changes to our lives. This is what happened in Luna's life. Her fate travels to another world to save her village from the wrong belief. It's hard to escape from the destiny. Her magical abilities infused her to walk in the path of a predetermined situation. Those events are told to happen from her birth. She faces many problems while she decides it for herself. Many supported her to play in Destiny, and many were against her playing in her choices. She not only chose to follow her destiny. But she accepts herself here in the way she is and makes herself the way she wants. She molded her to be strong in both circumstances. That makes her overcome all kinds of conflicts.

In *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, Kelly Barnhill beautifully narrates the delicate dance between free will and destiny. Luna's journey affirms how choice has the power to fashion one's life. Although other forces may seek to dictate our direction, ultimately, it is through our choices that we determine our lives. *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* inspires the reader to rebel against societal expectations, challenge repression, and be empowered by the power of agency in their lives. Luna's birth takes place in a society where the villagers have a preconceived belief that there is a predetermined fate based on an annual child sacrifice for appeasing a rumored witch.

The practice sets the townspeople's fate in stone, whereby their fates are assumed to be determined by fear and superstition. Luna's own life contradicts this perception as she grows up learning to question the stories imposed on her by society. As Luna matures and learns about her magical powers, she takes control of her life. The instant she accepts her powers is a turning point from being a passive agent in her destiny to an active one who can influence her destiny. This is a reflection that while some things are not within her control, her decisions are what ultimately shape her destiny. Luna's path is

characterized by instances where she overcomes and escapes the limitations imposed by society and self-fear. Her development with Xan, who at first places a spell to eliminate Luna's memories of magic for her safety, establishes the conflict between security and liberty. As Luna becomes educated to reassert her magic, she symbolically escapes the limits of destiny others have attempted to put on her. As Luna and the other characters unmask the lies that underlie the Protectorate's repressive narratives, they start to take back control over their own narratives.

This power of taking back control through storytelling illustrates that fate is not an immutable script but constantly changing interplay between personal agency and external determinism. In Kelly Barnhill's *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, the magical system is a mixture of soft magic and thematic narrative. Particular rules or constraints do not strictly define it, and thus, it is a "soft magic system" in which wonder and emotional depth are prioritized over strict mechanics. Magic appears to be a natural part of some characters, like Xan (she is a witch) and Luna (because she is under the light of the moon). This implies that magic can not only be inherited but also given by outside powers. Nature itself, including the Bog and the woods, is mystical, thus reinforcing the fact that magic is very natural. Magic facilitates great changes, like the development of Fyrian from a small dragon into his real form or Xan's eventual development into a tree. The gentle magic system permits instances of enchantment and spontaneity like Luna's misspells or Xan's capacity to change objects. The narrative employs magic to discuss maturity and responsibility. Luna is learning to harness her abilities as she matures, which represents her development towards self-discovery. Magic becomes integral to resolving conflict, be it the defeat of Sister Ignatia or ending the Protectorate's cycle of mourning. Overall, *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*'s magic system focuses on emotional resonance, natural magic, and thematic depth rather than strict rules or restrictions. This is beneficial to the novel's fairy-tale feel and to its themes of love, sacrifice, and self-discovery. We can observe through the life of major and minor characters how free will and individual decisions mould their destinies in this magical world. The way the characters interact with magic not only propels the storyline but also reflects their transformation and development throughout the story.

Finally, Barnhill's narrative encourages readers to ponder the nuances of human feelings and relationships while engaging them in a magnificently constructed world where magic is at once a tool of power and a tool of self knowledge and understanding of others. The tension between magic and character construction enhances the reading experience, leaving an indelible mark of hope, resiliency, and the value of living one's authentic self. In summary, Luna's journey in *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* is a strong critique of the idea of fate as an irreversible force. Through her development, decisions, and relationships, Barnhill shows that although external forces can mold one's life, individual agency and self-discovery can ultimately defy and redefine destiny. Luna's tale prompts readers to appreciate their strength in defining their destiny, affirming the notion that we are not so much victims of destiny but creators of our journey. Luna's journey and her struggles in this novel can be compared to other literary character's journeys as well. Just like Luna, characters in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series are also faced with the burden of a destiny that appears to be predetermined yet their personal choices eventually redefine their paths.

This comparison is commonly found in fantasy literature. By considering these similarities and differences, we can see that Barnhill's work is suitably important and viable enough to stand alongside other influential narratives that speak about the power of free will. Barnhill's storytelling is rich with techniques that bring the themes of destiny and free will to life. She makes use of Symbolism and Magical Realism to bring out her story. Magical elements act as symbols of fate and transformation. Moonlight, for example, represents both the unexpected gift of power and the unpredictable twist of destiny, while starlight symbolizes hope and the guidance of choice. She also makes use of the technique of 'Foreshadowing' to build suspense and invite readers to interpret events in multiple ways. Some scholars have argued that Barnhill's use of magical realism creates "an open space for interpretation," where the boundaries between fate and free will are blurred.

Critics note that this ambiguity allows readers to connect with the story on a personal level each decision made by the characters echoes the reader's own experiences of choosing their path. The omniscient narration gives insights into various characters' inner lives, allowing us to witness the tension between a predetermined fate and the struggle for individual freedom. In future research, we can work on the different fantasies that make us realize the present-day situation. Through Kelly Barnhill's *The Girl Who Drank Moon*, we get to know that many things coincide in the current period. The themes and elements used in the story connect the contemporary issues. We'll learn about the major societal issues that destroyed the environment through that. This shows that fate and free will are the two sides of life. It should be analyzed through our circumstances. Like Luna, we must live as good souls to do something good for society. This enhances the situational problems that occur in fate. Exploring difficulties with our abilities makes us even stronger and directs how we make our choices.

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