AEAEA IS REVISITED: REVISIONIST MYTHMAKING STRATEGIES IN MADELINE MILLER'S *CIRCE*

AEAEA ADASI'NA ZİYARET: MADELİNE MİLLER'IN BEN, KİRKE *ADLI ROMANINDA REVİZYONİST MİT YARATIMI STRATEJİLERİ*

Merve ALTIN
Arş. Gör. Dr., Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi,
Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü,
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı, mrvdmrts.altin@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article analyses the American novelist Madeline Miller's latest work Circe through the lens of revisionist mythmaking proposed and defined by Alicia Ostriker. Revisionist mythmaking aims at challenging and debunking the gender stereotypes embedded in myths and fairy tales by revising and retelling them from a female perspective. In Circe, Miller revisits the myth of Circe, a renowned sorceress in Greek mythology who is reputed to turn sailors into swine by magic. Miller uses the traditional image of Circe as a witch, but she makes marked changes in the nature of this ancient image. She gives voice to the long-silenced Circe and lets her tell her own story and recount her own experiences. In Miller's book, contrary to the ancient stories and mythological accounts concerning the story of Circe, she is portrayed as a multifaced and evolving character who displays a vast array of emotions from jealousy, anger, despair, sorrow to pity, love and even postpartum depression. Miller rewrites and re-evaluates the image of Circe so as to make a correction of its representation, and thus, to achieve a cultural change.

Öz

Bu çalışmada Amerikalı yazar Madeline Miller'ın en son romanı Ben, Kirke, Alicia Ostriker tarafından ortaya atılan ve tanımlanan revizyonist mit yaratımı aracılığı ile incelenmektedir. Revizyonist mit yaratımı, mitleri ve masalları kadın bakış açısıyla yeniden yorumlayarak ve yeniden yazarak bu anlatılar içerisine gömülü cinsiyet stereotiplerine meydan okumayı ve onları çürütmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ben, Kirke romanında Miller, Yunan mitolojisinin sihir ve büyü kullanarak denizcileri domuza dönüştürmesiyle nam salmış cadısı Kirke'nin hikayesini yeniden ele almaktadır. Miller, Kirke'nin geleneksel "cadı" imgesini kullanır; ancak bu imgenin doğasında belirgin değişiklikler yapar. Miller, yüzyıllar boyunca söz hakkı verilmemiş Kirke'ye kendi hikayesini anlatması, deneyimlerini aktarması için bir şans tanır. Geleneksel anlatıların aksine, Kirke, kıskançlık, öfke, çaresizlik, mutsuzluk, acıma, aşk, hatta postpartum depresyonu gibi çok çeşitli duygu durumları yaşayan, gelişen ve değişen bir karakter olarak karşımıza çıkar. Miller'in amacı Kirke'nin cadı imgesinin doğasında bir takım düzeltmeler yaparak bu imgenin kullanımında ve bu imgeye olan bakış açısında kültürel bir değişiklik elde etmektir.

Introduction

Circe is the second book of Madeline Miller, an American novelist and a high school teacher who has taught Greek, Latin and Shakespeare for over fifteen years. Miller's first novel, The Song of Achilles, was published in 2011, and it attained an eminent success. It retells Homer's *Iliad* from the point of Patroclus, Achilles' beloved companion. The book became *New York Times* bestseller, and it was also awarded the Orange Prize for Fiction in 2012. Madeline Miller's fascination with classical literature and myths manifests itself in her latest book Circe. It was first published in 2018, and it topped *New York Times* bestseller list. Moreover, Circe won several different awards such as American Library Association Alex Award, Indies Choice Best Adult Fiction of the Year Award, 2018 Elle Big Book Award, and The Red Tentacle Award. The book was also shortlisted for the 2019 Women's Prize for Fiction.

In *Circe*, Miller revisits the myth of Circe, a renowned sorceress in Greek mythology. By most mythological accounts, Circe is represented as a Titan, a nymph. She is one of the children of the sun god Helios and a beautiful nymph named Perse. Circe is also the sister of prominent mythological figures such as Pasiphae, Perses, Colchis and Aeetes, and she is also the aunt of one of the most infamous figures of antiquity, Medea. Circe is reputed to have a vast knowledge of herbs, potions, and poisons. She dwells on a deserted island, Aeaea. She is mostly known to the world through Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. In this epic poem, she is portrayed as "*the bewitching queen of Aeaea*" (Homer 222) a sorceress who is dealing with "*[...] wicked drugs / to wipe from their [men's] memories any thought of home*" (248). She is "*skilled in spells*" (250) and "*her heart is aswirl with evil*" (251). She is also defined as "*the lustrous one*" (256), "*[...] the awesome nymph with lovely braids / who speaks with human voice*" (261). She is portrayed as a powerful and wicked witch who lures sailors into her palace by providing a feast of rich food and wine laced with poisons that turn men into swine. Odysseus himself is protected from Circe's magic by the moly given by Hermes which makes him immune to Circe's poisons and spells. Thus, Odysseus overcomes Circe and forces her to end her magic. Circe has a "*luxurious bed*" (257), and she is willing to go to bed with Odysseus upon their first meeting. She immediately yields to Odysseus, and says

> Come, sheathe your sword, let's go to bed together,
>
> mount my bed and mix in the magic work of love -
>
> we'll breed deep trust between us. (252).

Circe gives in easily and invites Odysseus to be her lover, and eventually, she turns out to be a welcoming and caring host. Odysseus tells that

> So she enticed
>
> and won our battle-hardened spirits over.
>
> And there we sat at ease,
>
> day in, day out, till a year had run its course,
>
> feasting on sides of meat and drafts of heady wine... (256).

Odysseus and his crew stay at Aeaea enjoying the foods and wines Circe provides for them for over a year until Odysseus' men exhort him to get back to Ithaca. Circe assures him safe passage and provides him with valuable gifts. In *The Odyssey*, thus, two traits of her character are foregrounded: her being a wicked sorceress and her being a sexually charged woman. Throughout Homer's narration, Circe

transforms from a witch who stands in her own power to a typical housemaid serving her master and his men.

Circe also appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a witch who has "*unearthly powers*" (Ovid 401). She is portrayed as a ruthless sorceress who uses her power to avenge her unrequited love. In Book XIV, Glaucus, a sea-god, is infatuated with Scylla, a beautiful nymph. Scylla, however, scorns and refuses him. Then, Glaucus appeals to Circe, and begs her to make a love potion. Nevertheless, Circe has a crush on Glaucus, and tries to win his heart. Glaucus scorns Circe in return. "*Circe went white with rage (understatement) / Yet could not strike at Glaucus (for she loved him) / And turned her violent mind against the girl*" (390). Circe pours a poison into the pool where Scylla bathes, and transforms her into a monster with six heads and twelve feet. In another story, Circe is infatuated with a handsome king named Picus. Upon seeing him, she instantly falls in love, and urges him to be her husband. She tries to seduce him with her parentage, charms, and potions. Nevertheless, "*Since all her arguments to praise herself / Fell to the ground, the goddess lost her temper:*" (402), and thus, she turns Picus into woodpecker. In these stories, Circe is presented as a weak and whimsical woman who is capable of nothing but evil.

In both Homer's and Ovid's versions, Circe is portrayed as a ruthless sorceress who deals with magic out of evil, hatred and jealousy, and none of these stories elaborates on Circe's motives, her emotions and her experiences. In ancient stories, most of the female characters like Circe are represented and defined according to such traditional feminine skills as loyalty, seduction, beauty, and witchcraft. The portrayals of women in ancient myths address the presumed nature of women and their role in the ancient society. Female beauty, loyalty and women's physical and mental capabilities are questioned, or feminine attributes such as witchcraft and seduction are criticised and condemned. Thus, it can be argued that ancient myths and stories associated with women reveal male anxiety about both the female body and feminine power. As Simone de Beauvoir argues

> [h]istory has shown that men have always held all the concrete powers; from patriarchy's earliest times they have deemed it useful to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes were set up against her; she was thus concretely established as the Other. (159.)

From the ancient times onwards, the female voice has been silenced and alienated. Man becomes the subject, speaking persona and woman becomes the complementary other. It is man who is telling stories about female nature and her body which both inspires and frightens him, and thus, women's experiences are excluded from men's narration. The ancient myths and stories mirror and maintain the gender relations in the culture that have created them. The representations and symbols in these ancient stories are kept alive through constant repetition and reconsideration by means of literature and art. In this sense, myths provide foundational stories for literature, and they are considered as significant elements of literature which extends myths and archetypes. As Coupe argues "*We will discover that 'mythology', the body of inherited myths in any culture, is an important element of literature, and that literature is a means of extending mythology*" (2). In this sense, myths offer a cluster of symbols and archetypes for writers to use. Thus, some ancient archetypes and images still actively work in contemporary literature and contemporary cultures. The traditional images of women established in the antiquity and reproduced in contemporary literature and art such as quintessentially faithful wife, adulteress, evil witch, seducer, damsel in distress, etc. still "*keep woman is a state of dependence*" in Beauvoir's terms.

Circe, who is bound to play the role of a necessary evil, is an often neglected voice of the antiquity. Androcentric tradition condemns and humiliates Circe and her power, and witchcraft. In *Circe*, however, Miller gives voice to the long-silenced Circe, and lets her tell her own story and recount her own experiences. In this sense, it can be argued that Miller's *Circe* relies on revisionist mythmaking techniques. In her article, "The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking", Alicia Ostriker puts forward and defines the term, revisionist mythmaking. According to Ostriker

> [w]henever a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by a culture, the poet is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist: that is, the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible. (72).

In accordance with Ostriker's definition of revisionist mythmaking, it can be argued that Miller uses the traditional image of Circe as a witch, but she makes marked changes in the nature of this ancient image. Moreover, Ostriker defines four common elements in the revisionist works of women poets. These four elements can

also be recognised in Madeline Miller's *Circe* as it is a revisionist work. First, *Circe* is an "*enactment of feminist antiauthoritarianism opposed to the patriarchal paraxis of reifying texts*" (87). Circe occupies the central place in her own story while the male characters play secondary roles. Thus, phallocentric spatial positioning is debunked by Miller. Second, Miller's *Circe* also debunks the hierarchical order of the society by questioning and re-evaluating the social, political, philosophical, and literary values of the society. Third, revisionist mythmaking is different from the modernist mythmaking as "*it contains no trace of nostalgia, no faith that the past is repository of truth, goodness, or desirable social organization*" (87). Miller relies on the cultural and literary foundations provided by mythology, and she is able to present her own view of those foundations. The very foundations provided by mythology, however, are not always pleasurable for a woman. For instance, the repetition of the image of Circe as a wicked witch is not something to be cherished by a woman writer. Miller uses the image of Circe so as to make a correction of its representation and to achieve a cultural change. Fourth, "*revisionism correlates with formal experiment*" (87); especially "*the verbal strategies these poets use draw attention to the discrepancies between traditional concepts and the conscious mental and emotional activity of female re-vision*" (87). In *Circe*, the use of everyday language and the inclusion of simple, everyday realities creates a contrast with the elevated style of epic tradition. Though it is set in a mythological world, Circe's life, experiences, and her diction are very familiar to contemporary readers.

Circe As a Female Bard

In *Circe*, we listen to the story of Circe's quest for growing into an independent and confident woman from an immature and exiled witch, and it becomes the story of Circe's self-discovery. Contrary to the ancient epic tradition in which a third person omniscient narrator narrates the events hovering above the story world, Circe becomes the first person narrator, and she narrates her own story. The first person narration dominating the whole novel defies the patriarchal language by creating a female discourse that incorporates the issues related to family, beauty, sexism, love, jealousy, rage, rape, sisterhood and motherhood. Circe directly reveals her own thoughts and emotions, expresses her feelings, and relates her own viewpoint in relation to these issues. As an I-narrator, Circe looks back on the events in which she was involved and comments on them. She especially touches upon the familiar stories through which she has been known to the world. She becomes the bard of her own story, and she is free to choose the notes.

Circe alludes to the epic tradition that subdues female voice and female experience. She touches on the mistreatment and abuse she has suffered at the hands of male bards, and says

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

The unskilled boy to whom Circe refers is Homer, whose epic poem *The Odyssey* largely contributed to the image of Circe as a ruthless witch. No matter how ruthless and proud Circe is, Odysseus easily overcomes her. Feminine attributes, witchcraft as in the case of Circe, are powerless against man's sword. In most mythological accounts, female characters are portrayed as inferior to men. Men fight in wars, men command armies, men pursue glory, men hunt beasts, men erect cities, and men chide women. Patriarchy restricts and restrains women who are believed to be deceitful, manipulative, and weak in nature. Circe points to the fact that gender relations imbedded in the culture are maintained through the stereotypical portrayal of women and men in ancient stories and myths. Nevertheless, the story of this unskilled boy is no longer authoritative. It is "*to-be-deciphered, tangential to, incorporated within, the feminine mind*" (Ostriker 82). Circe retells her story, the story of the witch of Aeaea, from a different point of view and with a different conclusion. She says "*[m]y whole life, I had waited for tragedy to find me. I never doubted that it would, for I had desires and defiance and powers more than others thought I deserved, all the things that draw the thunder-stroke*" (Miller 214). "Desire", "defiance" and "power" were the entities disapproved of, especially if a woman displayed them. Her desire, defiance and power were used against her, and she was labelled as a witch by men. Now, Circe is ready to embrace her power and her very self. In this sense, Miller's character shows how the familiar stories turn out to be unfamiliar when told by a woman.

Circe begins her narration by pointing out her unhappy childhood and the mistreatment she had received at the hands of her parents and siblings. She was born into a man’s world which valued beauty above all else. When Circe's mother gave birth to her, Helios was unpleased by her appearance. The nymphs were expected to be beautiful and fragile creatures. They were expected to have beautiful

voices, and to be good dancers. Chasing a nymph was an amusing activity for a god. Circe, however, did not take after her kind. She was not beautiful, and she had a terrible voice. Even her name stood for a hawk. She was too ugly to be the daughter of a mighty sun god and a beautiful nymph. Behind her back, the other nymphs and gods murmured "*[h]er eyes are yellow as piss. Her voice is screechy as an owl. She is called Hawk, but she should be called Goat for her ugliness*" (6). Day by day, Circe began to internalise the beauty standards imposed upon her by the others and began to think that it was her fate to be miserable because of who she was, an ugly nymph. "*Such were my years then. I would like to say that all the while I waited to break out, but the truth is, I'm afraid I might have floated on, believing those dull miseries were all there was, until the end of days*" (9) she says, and points to the fact that her true potential was hindered by the environment she was born into.

Her first rebellious act was offering a cup of water to Prometheus who was then a prisoner at Helios' court. Prometheus was found guilty for helping the mortals, and he was waiting for the punishment that Zeus was supposed to give. It was not a conscious act on the part of Circe as she did not really know that helping Prometheus would anger the gods. She helped Prometheus out of her kindness. Her second rebellious act was turning Glaucos, who was then a mortal, into a god by using "*pharmaka*", witchcraft. It was also her first use of witchcraft. Circe was desperate to find a husband so as to escape from Helios' court, and she was also very desperate to prove that she is not ugly. Perse despised her daughter for her appearance, and she thought that "*[n]o one else will have her*" (35). Upon meeting Glaucos, a mortal fisherman, Circe had a crush on him. She was ready to move heaven and earth to win Glaucos' favour and to please him. Glaucos was the first person in her life that praised and appreciated her. Circe changed him into a sea god by using a plant sap and introduced him to her father's hall. Glaucos and the other gods thought that it was an act of the Fates. Circe remembers that "*I longed to tell him that it was I who had given him such gift, but I saw how it pleased him to believe his godhead wholly his own and I did not want to take it from him*" (44). She was too humble to take credit for Glaucos' transformation. Moreover, she was aware of the fact that it was not a pleasing thing on the part of Glaucos to know that his transformation and his power was dependent upon a woman.

Circe had been trying hard to please Glaucos, and to make him recognise her. Therefore, she was devastated when she learnt that Glaucos was in love with another nymph named Scylla. She diverted her anger at Scylla for being beautiful and attractive. Circe put a potion into a pool where Scylla bathed, and she was transformed into an ugly monster with six heads and twelve legs. Circe, then confessed her acts of witchcraft in public. She said "*I used wicked pharmaka to make Glaucos a god, and then I changed Scylla. I was jealous of his love for her and wanted to make her ugly. I did it selfishly, in bitter heart, and I would bear the consequence*" (53). Circe wanted to be recognised, and she wanted the gods to know that she was powerful. Helios did not believe in what she said, thinking that they were the acts of the Fates. But she insisted, and made Helios angry not because she dealt with pharmaka, but because she openly contradicted the sun god: "*You dare to contradict me? You who cannot light a single flame, or call one drop of water? Worst of my children, faded and broken, whom I cannot pay a husband to take. Since you were born, I pitied you and allowed you licence, yet you grew disobedient and proud. Will you make me hate you more*" (54). In a moment of anger, Helios vilified Circe as unskilful, useless and ugly. For Helios, Circe's disobedience and her courage to face Helios in public was more important than her dealings with witchcraft. As a punishment, she was exiled to a deserted island.

Circe was sentenced to a permanent exile because she was thought to be ugly, passive, idle, inferior, yet at the same time unpredictable, threatening, and wicked. In Aeaea, Circe began to embrace her true self and her power. Her alienation from the rules and regulations of the male dominated world allowed her to construct a new individual self. She says

> For a hundred generations, I had walked the world drowsy and dull, idle and at my ease. I left no prints, I did no deeds. Even those who had loved me a little did not care to stay.
>
> Then I learned that I could bend the world to my will, as a bow is bent for an arrow. I would have done that toil a thousand times to keep such power in my hands. I thought: *this is how Zeus felt when he first lifted the thunderbolt.* (73).

Circe was feeling lost and disregarded among the nymphs and gods. In Aeaea, she became reconciled to the idea of loneliness and being in exile, and she realised the extent of her power and embraced it. She planted herbs, tamed wild animals and

experimented with herbs. Aeaea became her kingdom. Finally, she had an opportunity to build her character through her experiences.

Circe's own accounts of her life give more depth to her character than is seen in *The* Odyssey. In *The Odyssey*, Circe is portrayed as a merciless sorceress who turns men into pigs out of personal whim. The "unskilled boy" to whom Circe refers did not bother to ask why, yet Circe adds detail to her so-called wickedness. She says "*[b]rides, nymph were called, but that is not really how the world saw us. We were an endless feast laid upon a table, beautiful and renewing. And so very bad at getting away*" (171). She was living alone on a deserted island, and this made her an easy "prey" for men as she lacked both a father and a husband. The sailors feasting at Circe's table were asking such similar questions as "*When will your husband be home?*" (162), "*You are too young to be married. Then it is your father we must thank*" (163), "*Then perhaps there is some other host we should thank? An uncle, a brother?*" (163), "*Do not tell me such a beauty as yourself dwells all alone*" (170). Her isolation and her loneliness encouraged sexual predators. Circe was raped by a sailor, and thus, she began to turn sailors into pigs so as to defend herself. Her power became a way of saying "*[s]orry that you thought I was weak, but you were wrong*" (171). The familiar story of her turning men into swines turns out to be a means of her self-defence.

In *Circe*, Miller attacks on the social and literary conventions that support the familiar mythological images. Miller's Circe criticises masculine interests and undermines androcentric practices in society. For instance, contrary to *The Odyssey*, the meeting of Circe and Odysseus was a meeting of equals. In the ancient epic, Odysseus is described as a cunning warrior, a hero, while Circe is described as his subordinate who easily gives in. In *Circe*, however, Circe greeted Odysseus as an independent and a confident woman. She explains that "*[w]hen that first crew had come, I had been a desperate thing, ready to fawn on anyone who smiled at me. Now I was a fell witch, proving my power with sty after sty*" (183). Circe, whose voice is subdued in the epic story, becomes the dominating voice that describes and judges Odysseus. She challenges Odysseus and criticises the notions of war and heroism that constitute the most important themes of the epic story. She says, "*War has always seemed to me a foolish choice for men*" (175), "*[w]eapons do not frighten me, nor the sight of my own blood*" (177), and "*[h]eroes are fools*" (192). As a well-known hero, Odysseus' daily routine in Aeaea such as killing a buck for dinner, catching fish, mending the posts, gathering fruits form the orchards,

staking vines, chatting and gossiping with Circe undermine the elevated style and the diction of the epic tradition. According to Circe's account, Odysseus stayed on the island of his own accord, and it had nothing to do with Circe's spell. Odysseus stayed on the island enjoying the food and luxury provided by Circe.

Miller brings the image of Circe close to human form so that contemporary readers can easily sympathise with her. Miller makes Circe experience various different emotions, and her life became complex and difficult when she gave birth to a son by Odysseus. As a single mother, she had to struggle against the difficulties of raising a child on her own. Like every mother usually does, she tells that she had to "*wash and boil and clean and scrub and put to soak*" (212), and at the same time, she had to clean, feed and put him to sleep. Along with such daily routines, she had to struggle with depression. "*I would look at him and feel a love so sharp it seemed my flesh lay open. I made a list of all the things I would do for him. Scald off my skin. Tear out my eyes. Walk my feet to bones, if only he would be happy and well*" (213) she says and displays a jumble of powerful emotions and thoughts that can be associated with postpartum depression. Circe's fatigue, love, anger, anxiety and excitement are very familiar to the contemporary reader.

Circe's love for her son made her vulnerable to those who wanted to harm her. She says

> [m]y whole life, I had waited for tragedy to find me. I never doubted that it would, for I had desires and defiance and powers more than others thought I deserved, all the things that draw the thunder-stroke. A dozen times grief had scorched, but its fire had never burned through my skin. My madness in those days rose from a new certainty: that at last, I had met the thing the gods could use against me. (214).

She believed that the gods were watching her like hawks because she had power, desire and defiance, the things which the gods were unwilling to share with a woman. According to a prophecy, Telegonus would kill his father. Therefore, Athena wanted to kill the child in order to save her favourite. Circe once more defied the gods and stood up to Athena. To protect her child, she used all her power to keep Athena at bay. No matter how hard she tried, she could not resist her son's desire to find his father. Eventually, the prophecy was fulfilled, and Telegonus killed his father by accident. Telegonus returned to Aeaea with two guests: Penelope, the widow of Odysseus and Telemachus, Odysseus' son by Penelope. Telemachus and

Penelope sought sanctuary in Aeaea as they were fed up dealing with suitors and the enemies of Odysseus. Circe had a chance to converse with Telemachus, and she learned a lot about Odysseus. Eventually, she came to know that Odysseus was not a great hero, but an arrogant and opportunistic human being. Telemachus told Circe how Odysseus lied about many things, how he caused hardship and misery to his family. He was not seeking glory, but a treasure, and "*[h]e would rather be cursed by the gods than be No one*" (279). According to Telemachus, "*[m]en talk of his wiles. His true talent was in how well could take from others*" (280). The male-centred tradition depicted Odysseus as a hero for his courage and intelligence, and also trumpeted Penelope, quintessential faithful the wife of Odysseus, as the epitome of womanhood, since she lived according to the rules dictated to her by the society. Circe, however, thinks rather differently. She says "*Loyal, songs called her later. Faithful and prudent. Such passive, pale words for what she was. She could have taken another husband, borne another child while Odysseus was gone, her life would have been easier for it*" (292). Circe thinks that words chosen to define her do not give credit to her quick-witted mind which was equal to that of Odysseus. She thinks that if Penelope had been able to rely on her free-will, she could have been happier. Penelope herself admitted that she had wasted her life "*on that little man's boast*" (286). Circe is of the opinion that it is a great "burden", an "ugly weight" upon someone's neck to try very hard not to err and to comply with society's rules and regulations. The conversation of the two women (a witch and a faithful wife) who were treated and defined in different terms by the society in which they were living, reveals how they were treated, constrained and defined by the society, and how the male-centred society clamps down on their free-will, on their characters and self-esteem.

Through the very end of the book, the narration changes, and Circe begins to use the present tense. All the while, she is recounting and commenting on the past events in which she took part. At the end of the book, however, she is ready to take a potion which is expected to change her into her true self; a mortal hopefully. Circe says

> My divinity shines in me like the last rays of the sun before they drown in the sea. I thought once that gods are the opposite of death, but I see now they are more dead than anything, for they are unchanging, and can hold anything in their hands. All my life, I have been moving forward, and now I am here. I have a mortal's voice, let me have the rest. I lift the brimming bowl to my lips and drink. (333).

Circe has always been wondering what it feels like to be a mortal and to be prone to death. The gods are thought to be immortal. Nevertheless, Circe thinks the opposite. How can an unchanging, stable, and stagnant person be considered as a living thing? Circe has changed from an immature and seemingly powerless nymph tormented by both her family and predators into a self-confident and powerful woman who stands up for herself and for her son. She has made great mistakes, learnt from them, faced her fears, refined, and perfected her skills like an ordinary mortal being does. Metaphorically, Circe's transformation also alludes to the death of the character created by male bards.

Conclusion

In Miller's book, contrary to the ancient stories and mythological accounts concerning the story of Circe, she is portrayed as a multifaced and evolving character who displays a vast array of emotions from jealousy, anger, despair, sorrow to pity, love and even postpartum depression. As a revisionist work, *Circe* employs a mythological figure previously defined by a culture in which Circe, the witch of Aeaea, tells her own story and gives voice to her own experiences, feelings and emotions, defying the long-held assumptions about her life and her character. Thus, the social, cultural, and literary conventions supporting the image of Circe as a nymph and as a witch are sustained, but the revision in the character and the nature of this image is considered as "*[...] a challenge to and correction of gender stereotypes embodied in myth*" (Ostriker 73). Such a revisionist approach aims at questioning the nature of traditional images in order to achieve cultural and social change in the minds of the reader. In this sense, Miller's novel, *Circe*, is "*[...] the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction*" (Rich 35). The female discourse and female experience dominating the narration are antithetical to the androcentric myths valuing the male discourse and male experience.

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