

# Odyssey and circe essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Circe On the Isle of Aea, known to the ancient Greeks as the Island of the Dawn, lived the goddess Circe. Circe is the daughter of Helios, the Sun god, and the sister of Aeetes and Pasiphae, the mother of Ariadne. Other people called her the daughter of Hekate and sister of Medea. Her legend said she was originally from Colchis on the Black Sea, but fled after poisoning her Scythian husband to take up residence in the West on the Island of Aea. She was both a Goddess and a Sorceress, and are sometimes referred to as “The Dread Goddess”.

Circe is a very complex and unique goddess, she uses all means in order to achieve her goal, especially in love. Also, she has a habit of transforming people into animals, which she enjoys a lot. Like many other Goddesses, Circe also had a strong association with birds. Birds are believed to travel freely between the Underworld and the Earth, often taking their God or Goddess with them. The Greek poet, Homer, referred to her as “Circe of the Braided Tresses,” because she was believed to use the braids of her hair, not only to control fate, but also to control the forces of creation and destruction.

It is common for someone to use braids in magic, because the tying and untying of knots has often been used in folk-magic spells as a way of binding and releasing magical energy, and Circe was, indeed, an extremely powerful Sorceress. Circe has often been linked to the death-birds known as “kirkos.” Those birds are actually falcons, who circle their prey before they finally dive in for the kill. Which is, in reality, an excellent way of describing Circe, since she encircled her human prey within her island home, and then used her magic to enchant them.

Interestingly, the Latin words circus and cirque, both have the same root as the name Circe, and they are both described as a fence for funerary games, which, indeed, perfectly describe Circe's island. Circe showed her habit in Homer's Odyssey, when Odysseus and his men landed on the island of Aeaea. After many days they found themselves landing upon the shores of Aeaea. Upon their arrival, the men drew lots to see who would stay onboard the ship and who would go off to explore the newly found land. Eurylochus and twenty two of the other men were chosen to go forth and investigate.

They found the island to be a large rich forest, thick with oak trees. The wanderers walked through the woods until they came upon a fabulous palace. There they found lions and wolves prowling about the grounds, all displaying characteristics of a most unusual nature. Instead of attacking the search party, the beasts stood upright and warmly welcomed them. If it were not for their animal forms, thought Eurylochus, they would be human. It would not be long before his suspicions would be confirmed. As the men entered the corridor of the palace they found Circe busy weaving a tapestry upon her loom.

She graciously invited her visitors to join her for dinner, and at once set before them a huge banquet. The hungry men eagerly accepted, all but Eurylochus, who suspecting a trap chose to remain outside. Safely hidden by some tall ferns, Eurylochus peeked through an open window and watched the hungry sailors fill their bellies. But the men did not realize that their food had been drugged by Circe. Circe then entered the dining hall happy to find her entire party of guests fast asleep at the table. She drew her wand and

touched each of them lightly on their shoulders, instantly turning the entire lot into a herd of swine.

Feeling quite amused with herself, Circe hurried the sailors into a sty, where she left them in the mud. Shocked and weeping, Eurylochus returned to the ship and sadly reported to Odysseus everything he saw. Odysseus listened carefully, and when the story was over he picked up his sword and ran off to rescue his crew. As he made his way to the palace, Odysseus met the god Hermes who had a magical white flower with a black root, called Moly. This was a plant that could only be grown by the gods themselves and contained properties that would repel Circe's magic.

Odysseus accepted the plant from Hermes and hid it among his clothing before continuing on with his journey. Hermes also advised him that he should be aware when dealing with the powerful sorceress, he need to let her swear an oath, in order to protect himself. He soon found himself standing in front of the palace gates. The great sorceress welcomed her new guest and once again happily set a place for him at the table. As always, Circe encouraged her visitor to eat his fill. When Odysseus appeared to be fast asleep, Circe lightly placed her wand on his shoulders.

To her surprise, Odysseus, having been protected by the magic plant jumped up with sword in hand. Circe begged for her life, promising Odysseus that in return she would share her bed with him and proclaim him co-ruler of Aea. Remembering Hermes' advise, Odysseus refused to hear of it until Circe swore a solemn oath to the gods not to cause him any further mischief. Then she released all twenty-two of his men. While she had, indeed, restored the

men to their original forms, Odysseus strongly suggested to her that she should do more for them, for having turned them into swine.

Circe did as Odysseus requested, and she made his men taller and more handsome than they had ever been before. As a way of making further amends to Odysseus and his crew, Circe offered her home to them, and on the island they stayed for a year. After having lived with Circe for that year, Odysseus began to feel a great desire to return home. Amazingly, Circe did not attempt to stop him from leaving, and when she said her final farewell to him, she even told him how to sail safely past the Island of the Sirens, and the six-headed Scylla who haunted the Straits of Messina in partnership with the monster whirlpool Charybdis.

Allowing Odysseus to leave her, was not something that Circe was known to do. Odysseus was the only man who had ever defeated her, and that, for some reason, sat extremely well with her. Usually, when she did not get what she wanted, especially when she could not have a man that she wanted, Circe would use her magic, sometimes quite savagely and violently, to exact her revenge. Circe once turned a man named Picus into a woodpecker, when he refused her love, because he was in love with a woman named Pomona. There is also the well-known story of Circe and Glaucus, where she perfectly showed "uses all means in order to achieve her goal".

Glaucus was an ordinary fisherman who just happened to eat a particular kind of herb which immediately turned him into a River God, with gills, fins and long blue hair, as well as the ability to breathe underwater. One day,

Glaucus came upon a beautiful nymph named Scylla, and he fell madly in love with her. Scylla, however, found Glaucus' appearance to be so terrifying, that she ran away from him as quickly as she could. But Glaucus quickly came to the conclusion that he wanted to make Scylla his wife, but he knew that he first had to win her heart, and then transform her into the same kind of being as himself.

Glaucus soon realized that he was getting nowhere with Scylla, so he decided to obtain some magical help to make her fall in love with him. It was then that Glaucus turned to Circe, who he had always considered to be his very good friend. He told her of his love for Scylla, and how she always seemed to be so frightened of him. He told Circe, as well, that Scylla always ran away from him, whenever they happened to meet. Glaucus was an extremely desperate man, so he ask Circe if she could help him, by making a magickal potion which, when given to Scylla, would transform her into his own fishlike form.

Once that had been accomplished, Glaucus believed that things would become much easier for him, and then he could make Scylla his wife. Only one problem existed, however, regarding Glaucus' request. Circe actually in love with him, herself, and she was completely astounded, that he could even consider asking her for help, so that he might pursue another woman. Circe did tell Glaucus that she would help him, although she never intended to help him in the manner that he expected her to. Circe had other things in mind for Scylla. Instead of making the portion that Glaucus requested, Circe created a potion that's slightly different.

When she put it into Scylla's pool, the nymph slowly began to change into a collection of monsters and serpents. Very quickly, the once beautiful nymph's personality began to change, until it finally took on the characteristics of the monster that she had become. Scylla actually became so ferocious that she ended up eating everything that happened to cross her path. In the end, her monstrous body became stuck at one particular place, and she spent the rest of her life there, consuming whatever prey might happen to come her way.

This action was a completely different action than the one that Circe used when she turned Odysseus' men into swine. This time, she was consumed with jealousy, and it was because of that jealousy that she did. Circe has always been an loving woman. She often used her magic to get rid of things that hinders her love, which Picus and Scylla are great examples of it. Other than her terrifying characteristics, it was different when it came to Odysseus. Circe became a completely different kind of Goddess, minus any of the characteristics for which she was so well known.

She allowed Odysseus to leave her, to return to his wife, even though she loved him, quite deeply, herself. " This story gives a glimpse of Circe in a totally new and different light. Through her relationship with Odysseus, we are able to see what a complex Goddess Circe was. What explains Circe quite well, is the fact that she was ' whole unto herself, and alone but never lonely. " (<http://www.angelfire.com/journal/ofapoet/circe.html>) The way that Circe's behaviors changed when she met Odysseus, also shows us what the power of love can do. The myth tells us that some time later, Circe met with a violent and terrible end.

Telemachus first murdered Circe, and then proceeded to marry her daughter Cassiphone. " One can only consider what a terribly sad ending that was, for such a complex and unique Goddess as Circe. " (<http://www.angelfire.com/journal/ofapoet/circe.html>) Bibliography <http://www.theoi.com/Titan/Kirke.html> <http://www.thaliatook.com/AMGG/kirke.html> <http://messagingnetcommresearch.com/myths/bios/circe.html> <http://www.greek-gods-and-goddesses.com/circe-greek-goddess.html> <http://mythagora.com/bios/kirke.html> <http://www.angelfire.com/journal/ofapoet/circe.html> <http://www.medeaslair.net/circe.html>