



Circe's struggle to fight against beauty standards in Madeline Miller's *Circe*: A new criticism study

Perjuangan Circe untuk melawan standar kecantikan dalam *Circe* karya Madeline Miller: Kajian kritik baru

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ABSTRACT

Beauty standards are a cultural technique used to determine what is considered beautiful. *Circe*, Madeline Miller's story, exhibits a type of bias known as the beauty standard. Circe, the novel's main character and the daughter of Helios, the Sun God, is the subject of this study. Circe, the main character in this story, is treated differently, especially by her siblings, because she lacks the beautiful appearance and power of other Helios' children and ladies in her life. The goal of this study is to explain the cause of Circe's prejudice despite her upper-class status, the impact of beauty standards in Circe's life, and Circe's effort to combat beauty standards in society. This study was conducted using the New Criticism theory developed by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley. The writer adopts a qualitative descriptive method from the ground up. Circe encountered discrimination due to beauty standards, according to the findings of this study. Circe's appearance differed from that of most gods' progeny, so she did not meet these beauty standards. The writer then discovers the impact of these beauty standards on Circe's life, as well as the numerous efforts Circe makes to defy the beauty standards that surround her.

KATA KUNCI

standar kecantikan, karakterisasi, elemen formal, alur

ABSTRAK

Standar kecantikan adalah teknik budaya yang digunakan untuk menentukan apa yang dianggap indah. *Circe*, kisah Madeline Miller, menunjukkan jenis bias yang dikenal sebagai standar kecantikan. Circe, karakter utama novel dan putri Helios, Dewa Matahari, adalah subjek penelitian ini. Circe, karakter utama dalam cerita ini, diperlakukan berbeda, terutama oleh saudara-saudaranya, karena dia tidak memiliki penampilan cantik dan kekuatan anak-anak dan wanita Helios lainnya dalam hidupnya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan penyebab prasangka Circe terlepas dari status kelas atasnya, dampak standar kecantikan dalam kehidupan Circe, dan upaya Circe untuk memerangi standar kecantikan di masyarakat. Penelitian ini dikaji dengan menggunakan teori Kritik Baru yang dikembangkan oleh W.K. Wimsatt dan Monroe C. Beardsley. Penulis mengadopsi metode deskriptif kualitatif dari bawah ke atas. Circe mengalami diskriminasi karena standar kecantikan, menurut temuan penelitian ini. Penampilan Circe berbeda dari kebanyakan keturunan dewa, jadi dia tidak memenuhi standar kecantikan ini. Penulis kemudian menemukan dampak dari standar kecantikan ini pada kehidupan Circe, serta berbagai upaya yang dilakukan Circe untuk menentang standar kecantikan yang mengelilinginya.

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Introduction

Women need beauty to create their identity and satisfy their desire for physical attractiveness (Ioannou, 2018, p. 331). Women's attractiveness extends beyond their faces to include the beauty of their bodies, hair, skin color, and other attributes. Every lady is beautiful in her own way. However, each person interprets the concept of beauty differently, resulting in a standard that makes one type of beauty the ideal form of beauty. According to Foy (2019), the concept of beauty standards is a set of cultural norms that describe what is considered beautiful to look at. Beauty standards assess and identify what is deemed appealing. Beauty standards have a huge influence on how women and girls perceive their bodies since they only portray and promote an ideal image of beauty that ignores each individual's variety.

The concept of beauty has existed since the time of the ancient Greeks. Women in ancient Greece were supposed to have a perfect body, long wavy hair, and a soft face (Agnew, n.d.). The ancient Greeks believed that the three most important components of beauty were symmetry, proportion, and harmony (Winwood, 2016, p. 1). *Circe* (2018), a novel written by Madeline Miller, is one of the novels that portrays the story of someone who faces beauty standards despite being from the upper class. Miller portrays an ancient Greek woman in the novel as having a different appearance than the norm of beauty, notably warm brown hair with every strand gleaming and glistening finger (Miller, *Circe*, 2018, p. 5).

The current study focuses on why *Circe* is discriminated against despite being from the upper class, how the impact of beauty standards affects *Circe*'s life, and how *Circe*'s struggle to fight against beauty standards is portrayed in society. In order to better understand the aspect of *Circe*'s struggle and the problem caused by beauty standards that *Circe* encountered through the formal elements present in the novel, a theory of new criticism is used in the analysis of the topic.

When assessing a literary work using the New Criticism theory, we must focus on the formal aspects that are present in the text without considering the author's history or other outside information. Wimsatt and Beardsley in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* acknowledged the relevance of biography and historical context in interpreting a literary work (Wimsatt, 1954). They argued that while these factors may provide valuable insights, they should not be treated as the sole determinants of meaning. The term "the text itself" was used by New Critics because they believed that the proper way to read a literary work was inextricably linked to how the literary work was defined. Furthermore, the New Critics referred to their methodology as "objective criticism" because they believed that by focusing on each text's distinctive formal components, each text—each object interpreted—would define its interpretation (Tyson, *Critical Theory Today A User-Friendly Guide*, 2015).

The formal aspects of a tale must be unveiled one by one to discover the story's topic or issue as the primary purpose. The characterization of *Circe* will be the formal element examined in this novel. Aside from characterizations, a literary work can be evaluated through storyline, setting, and symbol to discover concerns or themes. According to Kennedy, a plot is a series of events resulting from a conflict. The actual environment of the story, such as a city, region, house, or street, is included in the setting.

Aside from the location, the setting also includes the story's period, such as the hour, year, or century (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995). A symbol is also a physical universe with literal and figurative implications (Tyson, *Critical Theory Today A User-Friendly Guide*, 2015, p. 136). In a literary work, the sign itself may have a personal symbol, which indicates that the meaning of its symbol is solely for the author, making it difficult to decipher. A public symbol is one that is usually easy to find.

Before moving on to the analysis, the author would like to address a few earlier papers that present Circe-related studies. The first study is titled *The Impact of Patriarchal Cultures Against Female Characters in Madeline Miller's Circe: A Feminism Perspective* (2021) by R. T. Widananto. Widananto's story seeks to investigate the forms and effects of patriarchy on Circe and other female characters. This study discovers two types of patriarchal culture: public and private patriarchy. Women's roles in public patriarchy are more akin to discrimination. Furthermore, in private patriarchy, women's roles are limited to housewife (Widananto, 2021).

The second study is *The Double Construction of Women in Ancient Greek Society as Seen in "Circe" Novel by Madeline Miller: Feminist Approach* (2021). The researcher focuses on the dual assumption that women are a threat and why women should be overcome. According to this study, this work illustrates two things. First, women should be conquered in order to sustain the patriarchal system that creates women to be in power. Furthermore, the second woman is dreaded because she has the potential to start a movement and overthrow the patriarchal society. (Febriani, 2021).

The third study is I. M. Öncel titled *Victim or Witch? Circe as an Allegory of Women's Struggle during the Feminist Movement* women's struggle during the feminist movement is portrayed in the novel *Circe* (Öncel, 2019). The purpose of this research is to examine women's struggles during the feminist movement as shown in the novel *Circe*. Circe's experiences throughout the novel, the researcher discovers, can be compared and contrasted to those of American women during the feminist movement, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. Inside this framework, problems inside the family, male oppression and abuse, disagreements among women, and the concept of sisterhood, birth control, motherhood, and femininity can all be discussed.

As mentioned before, this article offers a new critical study of Madeline Miller's *Circe* with a descriptive qualitative analysis method. The primary data of this study is the novel entitled *Circe* (2018). The secondary data from books and journals contain information and insights that can support the primary data analysis.

Method

This descriptive qualitative study collected qualitative data in the forms of the formal elements, which were then analyzed using the bottom-up technique. According to Creswell and Creswell, textual and visual data are used in qualitative methods, which also use a variety of designs and unique data processing procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The writer begins the analysis by reading the novel's text and comprehending each sentence and then identifies why Circe, the daughter of the Sun God, was being discriminated despite her privileged background. The writer then analyzes the impact of beauty standards in the novel on Circe's life. The next step is to examine how

Circe struggles to fight against beauty standards in society, for which new criticism and a few pertinent references are used to support the interpretation in the analysis.

Results and Discussion

Discrimination despite class

Discrimination can affect everyone, including women; it can even affect people in the upper class. Discrimination against women is frequently linked to beauty. Beauty is extremely significant to women since it acts as their identity and satisfies their desire for physical attractiveness (Ioannou, 2018, p. 331). The existence of beauty standards, which result in discrimination based on which appearance is thought appealing and which is not, is one form of beauty discrimination. Such instances are frequently encountered in literary texts, where characters face similar discrimination. Circe is the protagonist of this narrative. She is the Sun God Helios's daughter. Circe is characterized in the story as having a different appearance from the other women in the novel.

The female characters in the story are depicted as having lovely appearances, gorgeous eyes, attractive bodies, power, even if it is small, and so on. For example, Circe's mother, Perse, is a nymph, which signifies both a goddess and a bride, and as a nymph, Perse possesses abilities, albeit simple ones. The following phrase illustrates this evidence.

... Least of the lesser goddesses, our powers were so modest they could scarcely ensure our eternities. We spoke to fish and nurtured flowers, coaxed drops from the clouds or salt from the waves. That word, nymph, paced out the length and breadth of our futures. In our language, it means not just goddess, but bride. (Miller, 2018, p. 1)

The phrases "goddess" and "bride" mentioned above are typically depicted as emblems of gorgeous and attractive women. This proof can be found in the story's first encounter between Perse and Helios, where it is reported that she piqued Helios's interest when he visited her father's palace, Oceanos (Miller, Circe, 2018, p. 1). This story might be seen as Perse having a lovely appearance that charmed Helios, the Sun God. She is also characterized as having warm brown hair that shines from within, a slender waist, a tight waistline, and fresh, bright cheeks. Her body restores its shape faster than others after giving birth because she is an Oceanos child. Here is the evidence depicted in the following sentence.

Her hair was a warm brown, each strand so lustrous it seemed lit from within. ... I see her dab fingers, glinting, in the water. ... Her belly was gone, her waist reknitted, her cheeks fresh and virgin-rosy. All our kind recover quickly, but she was faster still, one of the daughters of Oceanos ... (Miller, 2018, pp. 2-4)

Circe has a gorgeous mother, one of the children of Oceanos, Helios' cousin. Circe is perceived differently because she does not have an unattractive face like her mother. Furthermore, the environment enhances Perse's attractiveness, namely Perse's fountain pool, where Helios first met Perse. The setting is lovely, full of flowers and interlaced oak trees; there is no dirt or mucous, simply clean small stones. The following sentence depicts the evidence.

The next day, my father found her by her fountain-pool ... It was a beautiful place, crowded with fat-headed narcissus, woven over with oak branches. ... no much, no slimy fogs, only clean, round stones giving way to grass. Even my father, who cared nothing for the subtleties of nymph arts, admired it. (Miller, 2018, p. 2)

Circe recounts her brilliant sister Pasipha, who received a prophecy from Helios that she would marry one of Zeus' children, and her brother, who resembles Perse, their mother, and is thus named Perses, in addition to Perse. They are both intelligent and responsive when it comes to comprehending events. The following statement depicts this evidence.

My luminous sister Pasiphaë. 'You will marry an eternal son of Zeus.' He used his prophecy voice, ... 'Every son reflects upon his mother'. My mother was pleased with this ... She called him Perses, for herself. The two of them were clever and quickly saw how things stood. (Miller, 2018, p. 6)

Circe's perspective about all her father's beautiful children is another example of how this story displays the attractiveness of other female characters. The most gorgeous two girls have molten gold skin and hair, as well as fire-red eyes (Miller, Circe, 2018, p. 7). Lampetia and Phaethousa are two plants whose names signify "radiant and shining." The following statement depicts the evidence.

Of all my father's beautiful children, they were among the most beautiful, with skin and hair like molten gold. Lampetia and Phaethousa, their names were. Radiant and Shining. ... '... ours are bright as fire, ...' (Miller, 2018, p. 7)

Meanwhile, Circe is depicted as having a different appearance from birth, namely an unattractive appearance, as her father stated. In addition, her father foretold that she would marry a prince, a human, rather than a son of Zeus, as her mother had anticipated. This disappoints her mother, who treats her like a child that did not live up to expectations, as conveyed by her remarks, and asks Helios to prefer making another better child. The following statement describes the evidence.

*'She will make a fair match,' he said.
'How fair?' my mother wanted to know.
'A prince, I think.'
'A prince?' my mother said. 'You do not mean a mortal?'
'Surely she will marry a son of Zeus,' my mother insisted.
'No. Her hair is streaked like a lynx. And her chin. There is a sharpness to it that is less than pleasing.'
'Come,' she said. 'Let us make a better one.' (Miller, 2018, pp. 3-4)*

Circe's birth look and the benefits bestowed upon her are depicted in the dialogue above. Circe receives unfavorable treatment from her mother as a result of her appearance and blessings. Her mother ignores her even while her nanny aunt continues seeking to gain favor with Circe's mother, so her nanny aunt leaves after naming her *Hawk*, Circe. The following statement describes the evidence.

An aunt stayed on hoping to curry favour with my mother and named me Hawk, Circe, for my yellow eyes, and ... thin sound of my crying. But when she realized that my mother no more noticed her service ... she vanished. (Miller, 2018, p. 4)

Circe experiences severe treatment for her look not only from her mother, but also from her younger sister and brothers, Pasiphae and Perses, according to the quote above. They are delighted to sneer at Circe's looks, beginning with urine-colored eyes and owl-like noises, and dubbed Circe a Goat rather than an Eagle because of the hideous visage from behind their hands that resembled mink tracks. The mockery directed

at them is becoming more intense by the day (Miller, 2018, p. 6). Furthermore, Circe accepts her father's invitation to see his sacred cattle herd in Thrinakia. Circe also earns compliments on her attractiveness and voice from her sister but distinct mothers, Lampetia and Phaethousa, which mean Radiant and Shining, respectively. The following discussion provides evidence.

*'My eyes are like yours,' I said.
'How sweet! No, darling, ours are bright as fire, and our hair like sun on the water.'
'You're clever to keep yours in a plait,' Phaethousa said. 'The brown streaking does not look so bad then. It is a shame you cannot hide your voice the same way.'
'She could never speak again. That would work, would it not, sister?'* (Miller, 2018, p. 7)

Circe is surprised that a small part of her resembled her sisters from a different mother, according to the dialogue quoted above. Her sister, from a different mother, denied the likeness, and they also discuss Circe's terrible appearance and describe the differences between them. Circe desires to be accepted by her surroundings, even if it is only a small part of her because she is also Helios' daughter, according to the quotation.

Circe, like most of the ladies there, is not particularly attractive. Circe is discriminated because she is thought to be powerless, despite having yellow eyes inherited from her father, which have the power to produce fire and consume all she sees. The evidence in the exchange is shown below.

*'What would happen,' I said, 'if a mortal saw you in your fullest glory?'
'He would be burned to ash in a second.'
'What if a mortal saw me?'
'My father smile. ... 'The mortal would count himself fortunate.'
'I would not burn him?'
'But my eyes are like yours.'
'No,' he said. 'Look.' His gaze fell upon a log at the fireplace's side. It glowed, then flamed, then fell as ash ... 'And that is the least of my powers. Can you do as much?'
All night I stared at those logs. I could not.* (Miller, 2018, p. 5)

Circe is also discriminated because of her strength and nature, which were unlike those of other gods. Circe is regarded as an inferior or worthless being, hence she is neglected and rejected by her family and the gods' society. Circe feels unfair and unjustly treated for failing to match their expectations and standards, which made Circe feels uneasy. She believe that being Helios' daughter didn't make her valuable because she was of low blood, an angel in their eyes, and her voice was never heard (Miller, 2018, p. 58).

They couldn't believe Circe was also a powerful woman. However, they just saw Circe as a weak person to be pitied or ignored. Circe became invisible, disregarded, and isolated in their midst, like a ghost (Miller, 2018, p. 92). Likewise, they only wanted to see what they wanted to see, which included the monster in their midst. They had been blinded by their own bias towards Circe, who was perceived as weak, and refused to recognize that Circe could be more than she appeared to be (Miller, 2018, p. 171).

The impact of beauty standards on Circe's life

Because of the impact of unwanted experience, someone's qualities may shift into different attributes. Circe's life was altered by the impact of beauty standards in this novel, especially her shifting character. The character is the most important aspect depicted in literary works (Abrams, 1999, p. 32). Circe is defined at the start of the novel as a figure who is helpful, kind, loving, compassionate, and has a curious, friendly, and humble spirit. Circe feels bad for his uncle, Prometheus, who was being publicly flogged. The chastisement causes a deep enough scratch wound to discharge the ichor, God's blood, whose odor soaked the air like honey. Here is the evidence depicted in a fragment of the story.

*'Lord Prometheus? My voice was thin in the echoing room.
I could bring you nectar,' I said.
His gaze rested on mine. 'I would thank you for that,' he said. ... I trembled so much I had to carry the cup in two hands.
'Will you lift the cup for me?' ... 'You are the daughter of Helios, are you not?' he said, when he finished, and I'd stepped back.
'Yes.' The question stung.
'Thank you for your kindness.'
'Are you hungry?' I asked. 'I could bring you food.'
'I do not think I will ever be hungry again.'* (Miller, 2018, pp. 16-17)

Circe has a sympathetic and helping personality, as evidenced by the text above, and she is unconcerned with the consequences of her acts. Circe's actions are backed by the tense atmosphere created when Prometheus is subjected to Fury's whipping punishment. Long gaping sores are imprinted on Prometheus' body as a result of the lashes, leaving only the sound of panting breaths around Circe as she observes it (Miller, 2018, p. 15).

Circe is a loving character in addition to being kind and helpful. She looks after her younger brother when her mother abandoned him since her father did not give him a prophecy, and her aunt claim not to know about it as well. The following statement depicts the evidence.

*... My father blessed him, but spoke no prophecy, so my mother looked around for somewhere to leave him. My aunts were wise ... and kept their hands behind their backs.
'I will take him.' I said.
'Fine. At least you will be of some use. You can squawk at each other.'* My mother said. (Miller, 2018, p. 22)

Despite Circe's kind nature, the discrimination and marginalization she faces prompted her to undergo specific character modifications that represent her perspective in dealing with problems. As a result of feeling helpless and lacking anything to be proud of, she acquired a sense of insecurity, which led to her marginalization. Even during Circe and Glaucos' initial meeting on the ship, the mood is uneasy because Circe recognizes her own lack of confidence, which is affected by Glaucos' motions. Glaucos trembled when Circe's sleeve brushed his body which demonstrate the customary submissive demeanor of a human when meeting a great deity. Circe knew that gestures, it is fear (Miller, 2018, p. 32).

Circe also develops a chronic sense of loneliness as a result of her lack of attention and affection from her mother, sister, brother, and even her other siblings throughout

her life. Because of her unusual appearance, she is subjected to derision and ridicule. She is even unsure what she should tell Glaucos, a human, about her life. The evidence is depicted in the following statement.

I had told him so little of my life. ... Only the same cruelties, the same sneers at my back. ... my mother was in an especial ill humour. My father had begun to prefer his draughts ... Circe is dull as a rock. ... has less wit than bare ground. Circe's hair is matted like a dog's. If I have to hear ... broken voice of hers ... why must it be she who is left? No one else will have her. (Miller, 2018, p. 35)

Circe also feels alienated and lonely as a result of her experiences with rejection and persecution. When she is sentenced to exile on a desolate island, she stands alone in the meadow, unable to enjoy the gusts of wind because her head feels heavy. Her throat aches as she recalls how the previous year, she spends with people at her father's castle felt like throwing a rock into a pond and watching the ripples fade (Miller 2018, 67).

Circe, on the other hand, fall in love with Glaucos after meeting him and getting to know him. Circe's personality shifts from someone who likes to help to someone who is stubborn and determined to attain what she wants. Circe implores Tethys, the great nurse of the world's seas, to assist Glaucos, who swore he would never see Circe again because his father complained that he had gotten indolent and that all our cargo had gone down, leaving them hungry. Circe attempts to seek help from Tethys because she does not want to be abandoned by Glaucos and was frightened they would never meet again (Miller, 2018, p. 36). This shift in personality was completely due to the fact that it was the first time anyone had accompanied her, speaking and swapping stories since her youngest brother had left for his kingdom, a gift from his father. Here is the attached evidence.

'I am Circe, Perse's daughter. You must help me. There is a mortal who needs fish from the sea. I cannot bless him, but you can.'
'He is noble?' she asked.
'In nature,' I said.
'And what does this mortal offer you in exchange?'
'Offer me?'
She shook her head. 'My dear, they must always offer something, even if it is small, ... else they will forget to be grateful, after.'
'I do not have a spring ... Please, I will never see him again if you do not help me.'
 (Miller, 2018, p. 36)

Circe grow stubborn and resolute because she is worried, she would never see Glaucos again, despite the fact that Glaucos made no offer in exchange for what Circe did to him. Another proof is when she asks Tethys for help again to convert Glaucos into an immortal after believing that he would grow old and die, making Circe, an immortal, unable to meet him again (Miller, 2018, p. 39). Tethys, however, refuses the request because no god has such power unless it is his destiny line.

Circe is a determined woman who will do anything, even the most heinous act, to keep her lover by her side, as evidenced by the quotation above. Circe's usage of *pharmaka*, a plant formed from the blood of the dead gods that is claimed to reveal one's identity when swallowed, lends credence to this argument. Circe feeds Glaucos plant sap while he slept with his lips slightly open, and eventually Circe succeeded in transforming Glaucos into his actual identity, becoming one of the sea gods. This sentence describes the following evidence.

Glaucos' lips had fallen open ... I lifted a handful of flowers over him ... a shadow moved across his skin. ... His hands are swelling, his legs, his shoulders. ... His eyes opened. ... He leapt to his feet, towering like a storm-surge, the sea-god he had always been. ... he cried, I am changed! (Miller, 2018, pp. 42-43)

Circe wishes to live eternally with Glaucos since her first successful attempt. However, because Glaucos has become a deity, many *nymphs* approach him, and Glaucos is attracted to one of his pals, Scylla. He said that he intended to marry her. Circe is desperate, so she summons the strength to declare her affections, but Glaucos rejects her because he already considers her an older sister. Circe is dissatisfied and angered because, as previously said, Circe would do anything, even the most heinous, to have her lover by her side. She dares to do anything that will make Glaucos perceive her as a woman, and then seeks out another *pharmaka* to present to Scylla in order to reveal the actual nature and all the ugliness of Scylla, who enjoys gossiping about Glaucos' ugliness behind her back. Scylla was transformed into a colossal monster as a result of her actions. The following statement depicts the evidence.

I gathered those flowers of true being and brought them to the cove where ... Scylla bathed each day. I broke their stems and emptied their white sap drop by drop. She would not be able to hide her adder malice ... all her ugliness would be revealed. (Miller, 2018, p. 48)

Circe is sentenced to exile to an island far away on Earth as a result of her crimes, which include defying and dismissing her grandmother's advice. A deserted island where he can no longer cause harm to people. Circe's deeds were a disgrace to her people, and she deserved to be exiled (Miller, 2018, p. 63). Furthermore, Circe's transformation or alterations caused by *pharmaka* magic are a sign that can be taken as a form of power or ability that Circe possesses to change shapes and turn individuals into other beings. This symbol represents Circe's character changes and progress, as well as the power possessed by free and independent women.

However, as Circe grows in character, she realizes that the divine society's beauty standards cannot assess a person's inner worth. Circe no longer considers herself to be simple and ordinary, weak and sad. She will be feared while also becoming gorgeous in her own right (Miller 2018, 97). Circe transforms not because of societal expectations, but because she discovers strength in accepting herself as she is, including her unique beauty (Miller 2018, 219). Circe's perspective of beauty changes as she realizes that courage, intelligence, and inner power are far more valuable than mere physical looks.

Circe's character's journey effectively alters her outlook on herself. She recognizes that her strength and courage are far more vital than complying to the holy society's beauty standards. This metamorphosis fortifies Circe's character and provides her the strength to combat discrimination and find satisfaction in accepting herself with all of her distinct characteristics.

Circe's struggle to fight against beauty standards in society

Beauty standards, as previously said, is a form of prejudice that can have a substantial impact on a person's life, particularly on women. Circe has faced discrimination due to lacks the attractive appearance of other women and lacks power. Circe, on the other hand, does not abandon her flaws. She attempts to combat these norms by discovering what identities and qualities she did not recognized she possessed.

Circe, who is depicted as having no powers at all, begins to realize in the story that she cannot rely on the protection or favor of others. Circe, a discriminating goddess who is regarded as inferior by her own family, takes the initiative to establish her own abilities and independence. She studies magic and potions in exile on the island of Aiaia, polishing her abilities and knowledge to grow stronger and more self-sufficient. This assertion is supported by the evidence listed below.

I learned to plait my hair back ... I learned to understand my own intention, ... to feel where the power gathered. I tried curses, and prayers too, ... I tried the spell when I was angry, ... calm, ... happy, ... half distracted. ... I brought a withered flower back to life. ... My powers lapped upon ... like waves. I found ... a knack for illusion, summoning shadow crumbs for the mice to creep after. (Miller, 2018, pp. 71-74)

Circe's might and particular powers can be represented by magic and potions. They can be taken as a representation of strong female power and hidden information that has the potential to change the world. Magic also shows Circe's abilities and wisdom in confronting problems and combating the discrimination she has endured for so long.

Circe also defies the aesthetic standards imposed by other gods. She refuses to be bound by other people's perceptions of beauty. Circe embraces herself as she is and refuses to conform to society's ideal appearance. Her actual strength, she discovers, is not in her physical looks, but in her inner strength and ability to serve others.

Circe also protects and shows compassion and concern for people who are seen as undesired or marginalized by society. She protects and helps everyone who visits her Aiaian island, including witches, monsters, and humans. Circe confronts injustice and fights for the human rights of all people, regardless of their background, in this performance. Here is one example of evidence, which can be demonstrated by the following statement.

*'Goddess,' she said, 'Witch of Aiaia. We come to you for aid.'
'We have fled great evil, and to escape it we have used great evil. We are tainted.'
'Will you help us?' she said.
It was not magic they asked for, but the oldest rite of our kind. Katharsis.
'Rise,' I said. 'And come. I will help you as I can.'* (Miller, 2018, p. 142)

Circe generously help a descendant of a deity and a human come to the island of Aiaia to ask for her help, a ritual to rid them of their misdeeds, as shown in the paragraph above. Circe's success in assisting them is linked to the environment created during the rite. Circe bath their hands and faces with holy water while the scents burnt, the distress created by their deeds dissipated, the air cleared, and the greasy odor disappeared. Here is an example of evidence from this sentence.

I ... bathed their hands and faces in sacred water while fragrant herbs burned. I felt the heaviness lifting. The air grew clean, and the oily scent faded. They prayed while I carried away the blood to pour over a tree's wrinkled roots. (Miller, 2018, p. 143)

Circe's second charity is that she is willing to assist a nymph who was also punished by banishment to Aiaia Island by Zeus' judgment because she loves a human being and her father does not tolerate his daughter's behavior. Circe later assists a sailor and his crew who came to her complaining of hunger and being lost. Circe enthusiastically accepts and escorts them to the kitchen where she serves something delicious. Here is the evidence illustrated in this quote.

A man stepped forward. ... Many of the men behind him still had their hands on their sword hilts. 'Lady, we are hungry and lost,' he said. 'And hope such a goddess as yourself will help us in our need.' I smiled. It felt strange on my face after so long. 'You are welcome here. You are very welcome. Come in.' (Miller, 2018, p. 161)

According to the statement above, the kitchen that become the setting for the incident represents Circe's generosity in welcoming visitors to her island. Furthermore, Aiaia island can be understood as a metaphor of sanctuary and independence for Circe. Circe can live freely on the island and pursue her interests in magic and healing without hindrance or condemnation from the outer world. Circe also uses magic and potions to attain power and independence while defying beauty norms. Circe gains strength and independence via the use of magic and potions. She uses her expertise to combat oppression and avenge her mistreatment. Circe employs her magic to defeat her adversaries, defend her loved ones, and gain control over her own life.

With this resistance, Circe demonstrates that she is a strong, independent, and fearless woman in the face of discrimination and injustice. She refuses to be pressured by unfair standards and works for the right of every individual to be appreciated and recognized. Circe's resistance urges readers to question and oppose societal standards.

Conclusions

The writer discovered that various formal components, including storyline, place, symbol, and point of view, aided in revealing the causes behind Circe's discrimination despite her upper-class background. These formal parts are interconnected and work together to illustrate the causes for Circe's discrimination. The plot of the story, which includes the setting, symbols, and perspectives of various characters towards Circe, reveals that there is a standard of beauty that is the reason for the discrimination because Circe does not have the appearance of most women depicted there, such as having hair. His people misjudged him and scorned him because of his sparkling and dazzling eyes.

Furthermore, the writer discovers various formal components that are interconnected in aiding to highlight the impact of beauty standards on Circe's life while studying the damage made by these beauty standards. The text contains the following elements: plot, characterization, symbols, and setting. These four characteristics combine to reflect a change in character, which is the most effective expression of the impact generated by Circe's experience with the standard of beauty. Circe had a character transformation as a result of significant aesthetic standards.

Finally, in studying the types of battle that Circe engages in to combat the standard of beauty, it can be conveyed through the formal aspects that work together in the text, notably symbols, characters, and environment. It can reveal the forms of Circe's struggle against beauty standards in society, namely developing and independent herself, rejecting the applicable standards of beauty by accepting herself as she is, protecting others who have a fate similar to hers, namely unwanted, and using magic and potions to gain strength and freedom.

Based on these findings, the author hopes that this study will be useful and important to the readers in understanding that everyone is beautiful in their own manner and that they should always be grateful for themselves. The author also hopes that this

study will help future researchers construct future studies with the same difficulty as a reference for additional research on the influence of beauty standards and the effort to combat beauty standards. Furthermore, the author advises other academics to use psychoanalytic theory to focus on Circe's protection mechanisms after a traumatic occurrence in her life.

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