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## FEMINIST REINTERPRETATION IN THE ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN TRANSLATIONS OF CIRCE BY M. MILLER

### ФЕМІНІСТИЧНА РЕІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЯ В АНГЛІЙСЬКОМУ ТА УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ ПЕРЕКЛАДАХ «ЦИРЦЕЇ» М. МІЛЛЕР

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This article presents a translation-oriented analysis of contemporary feminist rewritings of the Circe myth, with a particular emphasis on their reception and rendering in the Ukrainian cultural and linguistic space. Focusing on Madeline Miller's *Circe* as a key example of mythopoetic revision, the study investigates how the novel restores voice, agency, and psychological complexity to a figure historically shaped by layers of patriarchal interpretation. It argues that centuries of cultural reception from classical commentaries and Christian allegory to Renaissance and Romantic constructions of the alluring, dangerous, or demonic woman have produced persistent linguistic and symbolic frameworks that still inform translators' choices. Special attention is devoted to the Ukrainian translation, where shifts in gendered terminology, metaphors of embodiment, representations of the "demonic feminine," and nuances of emotional and affective agency reveal how language can either reinforce or challenge inherited narrative patterns. The analysis demonstrates that culturally embedded associations related to beauty, monstrosity, female autonomy, and moral evaluation may subtly modify the feminist impetus of Miller's narrative, creating new emphases or redistributing interpretive weight. By conceptualizing translation not as a neutral transfer but as a dynamic site of mythic renegotiation, the article addresses the extent to which feminist reinterpretation can be preserved across languages without inadvertently reinstating androcentric narrative constraints. Ultimately, the study argues that the Ukrainian translation of *Circe* offers an illuminating case of how feminist discourse travels, adapts, and acquires new meanings, revealing the crucial role of cultural context in the ongoing reclamation of mythic female subjectivity.

**Key words:** translation transformations, cultural reception, feminist reinterpretation, mythological archetype, female agency.

Стаття пропонує перекладознавчий аналіз сучасних феміністичних переосмислень міфу про Цирцею з особливою увагою до їхньої рецепції та відтворення в українському культурному й мовному просторі. Зосереджуючись на романі М. Міллер «Цирцея», як ключовому прикладі міфопоетичної ревізії, дослідження розглядає, яким чином авторка повертає цій постаті голос, суб'єктність і психологічну складність, що історично формувалися під впливом багаторівневих патріархальних інтерпретацій. Стверджується, що багатовікова культурна рецепція (від античних коментарів і християнської алегорії до ренесансних і романтичних образів спокусливої, небезпечної або демонічної жінки) сформувала стійкі лінгвістичні та символічні моделі, які і досі впливають на перекладацькі стратегії. Особлива увага приділена українському перекладу, в якому зміни в гендерно маркованій термінології, метафорика тілесності, репрезентації «демонічної жіночності» та нюанси емоційної й афективної агентності демонструють, як мова може або підсилювати, або підважувати успадковані нарративні моделі. Порівняльний аналіз доводить, що культурно закорінені конотації, пов'язані з красою, монструозністю, жіночою автономією чи моральною оцінкою, здатні непомітно змінювати феміністичний потенціал роману, посилюючи окремі смисли або переакцентовуючи інтерпретацію. Розглядаючи переклад не як нейтральну передачу змісту, а як динамічний простір переосмислення міфу, стаття порушує питання, наскільки можливо зберегти критичну гостроту феміністичної інтерпретації в іншій мовній культурі. У підсумку стверджується, що український переклад «Цирцеї» М. Міллер є показовим прикладом того,

як феміністичний дискурс адаптується та набуває нових значень, а культурний контекст стає визначальним чинником у процесі повернення міфічній жіночій постаті суб'єктності.

**Ключові слова:** перекладацькі трансформації, культурна рецепція, феміністичне переосмислення, міфологічний архетип, жіноча суб'єктність.

**Problem Statement.** While Circe is best known for her power to transform others, her own image has undergone continual transformation across centuries of reinterpretation, a process further influenced by translation. In *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress*, J. Yarnall explores how Christian allegory has reimagined the morally complex figure from Homer's epic as "*a demonic figure personifying the linkage between the feminine, the natural, and the deadly*" [1, p. 79]. This revisionism reflects not only an ideological but also a linguistic shift, raising important questions about how gendered and culturally loaded terms like "demonic", "deadly", "natural", and "feminine" are translated in other languages, including Ukrainian.

During the Renaissance, the portrayal of Circe continued to evolve, casting her as an archetype of the seductive and dangerous woman, a "*dark muse*" for male authors such as Milton and Calderón [1, p. 99]. In Ukrainian translations, these characterizations are often reproduced quite faithfully; however, their connotations may vary depending on the socio-historical context. For instance, the English phrase *dark muse* is typically translated as «*темна муза*», which retains the metaphor but may not fully capture the historical associations of the *femme fatale* figure within the Ukrainian literary canon. As J. Yarnall concludes, the image of Circe did not originate as misogynistic in Homer's text, but it gradually acquired this quality through centuries of "*persistent, pervasive, and unacknowledged biases against women*" [1, p. 195]. This accumulation of interpretive bias, as J. Yarnall notes, has resulted in a depiction of Circe influenced less by Homer's narrative and more by centuries of androcentric retelling. In translation, these biases are not only preserved but can also be amplified or distorted through the linguistic frameworks of the target language.

Madeline Miller addresses this legacy of Circe from a contemporary feminist perspective, noting that "*in the Odyssey, Circe is very clearly the incarnation of male anxiety about female power: the fear is that if women have power, men are getting turned to pigs*" [2]. This interpretation, rich in metaphor and gender politics, presents a particular challenge for translators, especially in Ukrainian, where direct equivalents often fail to convey the same depth or tone. The difficulty in translating Circe, thus, lies not only in language itself but in reconciling the historical layers that have shaped her image. How can a figure be translated when her identity has been shaped and distorted by centuries of male authorship and myth-making? This is the central challenge taken on by both M. Miller's novel and its Ukrainian translation. Each work, in its own way, reclaims and reimagines myth with critical awareness and cultural specificity.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** This feminist reinterpretation of the myth is not unique. Earlier in the twentieth century, Eudora Welty's short story *Circe* (1955) and Margaret Atwood's poetry cycle *Circe/Mud Poems* (1974) also present the myth from Circe's perspective. These texts challenge the traditional portrayal of Circe as merely a seductress, giving her a "voice" and psychological depth. In E. Welty's story, Circe reflects on her solitude and her past with Odysseus, while M. Atwood's fragmented monologues highlight the ongoing objectification of female figures. Together, these works can be viewed as "*feminist forms of retranslation*" [3] that reimage Circe's story from her perspective, critiquing patriarchal frameworks and transforming a myth that has long been told about women into one that is told by them.

**Research aim.** While the retellings by E. Welty, M. Atwood, and M. Miller have been analyzed as feminist "interventions" in the myth, less attention has been given to how these narratives are transformed through translation. This article addresses that gap by offering a comparative analysis of Circe in English and Ukrainian, focusing on the semantic shifts and cultural filters involved in feminist mythmaking. It begins with a brief overview of rewriting as a feminist strategy, acknowledging that

although the idea of a unified female voice is debated, reimagining foundational myths from a woman-centered perspective remains a significant discursive intrusion. The article then turns to M. Miller's novel, examining how her retelling challenges traditional portrayals of Circe. It questions whether this resistance, rooted in gendered language and symbolism, retains its impact in Ukrainian translation. In doing so, the study considers how the act of translating this feminine myth may preserve or redefine its feminist potential across cultural and linguistic contexts.

**Main body.** M. Miller's *Circe* (2018) brings attention to one of mythology's most misrepresented female figures by giving her a voice that has long been absent from classical narratives. While Homer and Ovid depict Circe as a dangerous obstacle in the male hero's journey, M. Miller reframes her as a fully realized individual. The novel switches the narrative perspective from external portrayals to the interior consciousness of Circe, transforming her from a marginal enchantress into the protagonist of her own story. This reframing is central to M. Miller's feminist approach and becomes especially significant when examined through the lens of translation. As Circe's voice crosses civilizational frontiers, the question arises: how is her agency and symbolic power rendered in another language?

The importance of this question becomes more apparent when we examine the enduring mythological tradition that M. Miller addresses, particularly how male authors have historically projected cultural anxieties onto female archetypes in myths such as that of Circe. Rooted in patriarchal traditions, these narratives have shaped the portrayal of women and the interpretive frameworks through which these portrayals are understood. Across various historical periods and cultures, myth has served to transmit shared values, reflecting and reinforcing social gender hierarchies. Classical mythology, in particular, tends to privilege the male perspective, often depicting women as passive spectacles who are looked at but rarely allowed to speak or act for themselves. As feminist theorists like M. Beard, J. Butler, H. Morales, and A. Rich have pointed out, women are frequently positioned as objects of the gaze rather than agents of their own narratives. In the words of J. Berger, "*men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at*" [4]. Such representations have been transmitted through generations of storytelling, perpetuating deeply rooted archetypes that continue to influence societal perceptions of femininity. Against this backdrop, Miller's decision to allow Circe to recount her experiences through memory and reflection challenges the traditional gender norms of classical storytelling. By becoming, as M. Altin notes, "*the bard of her own story*" [5, p. 149], Circe transitions from being an object of the male gaze to an active narrator who asserts interpretive authority over her life. Her voice presents what F. Godrej describes as "*a counter-narrative to the authoritative voices*" [6] that have shaped her myth over centuries, undermining the singular, patriarchal perspective inherited from texts such as *The Odyssey*, the *Telegony*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. By incorporating these sources into a broader mythological framework and refocusing the narrative on Circe's vulnerability, resilience, and self-determination, M. Miller reconceives a familiar story as an act of feminist reclamation. This narrative change sets the stage for understanding the stakes of translating Circe. If the novel's power lies in how it reclaims voice, perspective, and emotional nuance, then translation becomes a crucial space for examining whether the gendered assumptions embedded in myth are upheld or challenged. In the case of Circe, the task is not merely to convey meaning from one language to another but to carry across the novel's feminist reframing without reinstating the very silences it seeks to break.

The novel begins with a striking line that generalizes the importance of narration and translation: "*When I was born, the name for what I was did not exist*" [7, p. 1]. The absence of a name signals more than just personal alienation; it reveals a broader issue within a mythological system where women are often unnamed, voiceless, and defined only in relation to male power. Circe, the daughter of Helios and Perse, inherits her mother's role as a nymph rather than her father's divine authority. Her identity is predetermined by social and gendered hierarchies, which is evident when Oceanus tells Helios, "*She is yours if you want her*" [7, p. 2]. In this context, women are treated as possessions or gifts, denied recognition as individuals with their own agency. This reduction of female identity to

a socially assigned role is further underscored when Circe reflects on the very word “nymph”: “*That word, nymph, paced out the length and breadth of our futures. In our language, it means not just goddess, but bride*” [7, p. 1]. The line reveals how mythological language encodes social expectations, reducing female divinity to the prospects of future marriage. The Ukrainian translation captures this layered meaning: «*Оте слово німфа було насправді мірою і знаменням нашого майбутнього. У нашій мові воно означає не тільки німфу, а й наречену*» [8, p. 1]. In both English and Ukrainian, the term nymph evokes notions of beauty and passivity, while also suggesting containment, thus linking female identity with the role of a future bride.

The reduction of a woman's worth to her marital value is further emphasized a few pages later during a discussion about Circe's future, which takes on a transactional tone: “*She will make a fair match,*” he said. “*How fair?*” my mother wanted to know. This might be consolation if I could be traded for something better [7, p. 9]. In the Ukrainian version, it reads: «*Вона знайде собі гідну пару. – Наскільки гідну? – допитувалася матір. Її розрадило б те, що мене могли обміняти на щось красивіше*» [8, p. 9]. Here, the adjective “*better*” is translated to «*красивіше*», swerving the focus from a general sense of value to a specific emphasis on aesthetic criteria. This lexical choice highlights a normative association where «*кращий*» (“*better*”) in the context of marriage often implies «*красивіший*» (“*more beautiful*”), revealing a subtle “marriage market” mentality. The English version retains the open-ended ambiguity of “*better*,” allowing readers to consider various dimensions of value, while the Ukrainian version narrows the focus to physical appearance, reinforcing a more traditional, beauty-centered view of female worth. This same logic underlies how Circe is marked as different – not through her supernatural powers, but through her voice and appearance, which set her apart from the idealized image of divine femininity. Unlike her radiant relatives, Circe is described as plain and animalistic, unfit for admiration or marriage: “*Her 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*” [7, p. 6]. In the Ukrainian translation, the passage reads: «*Її очі жовті, наче сеча. Голос крикливий, як у сови. Її звать Соколицею, але мали б називати Козою: така вона потворна*» [8, p. 13]. This translation is both vivid and faithful, as it retains the same animalistic imagery and crude tone. However, the use of the word «*Коза*» introduces culturally specific connotations; in Ukrainian, it can imply foolishness or ridicule, which amplifies Circe's sense of social otherness. Such linguistic and symbolic nuances matter, as they reflect Circe's non-conforming body and voice, which foreshadow her later alienation.

Paradoxically, the very traits that set her apart as deviant become central to her self-definition. Circe's “*human voice*” and “*braided hair,*” which in Homer's *Odyssey* serve as superficial characteristics, are altered by M. Miller as means through which she ultimately reshapes her world [9]. This new perspective challenges classical symbolism by transforming what was once a mocked voice into a medium of narrative authority, and the body, previously a site of shame, into a source of knowledge and transformation. This reposition also requires conveying the novel's modification of symbolic elements like voice and body while preserving their feminist significance across symbolic and linguistic spheres.

Yet reclaiming one's voice and body does not always involve using them openly. The interplay between power and silence emerges clearly in one of the novel's key scenes, when Circe transforms Glaucos into a sea god but chooses not to reveal her role in the transformation: “*...I saw how it pleased him to believe his godhead wholly his own and I did not want to take it from him*” [7, p. 44]. The scene highlights a central feminist concern in the novel – the erasure of female contribution to maintain male-centered narratives of autonomy and achievement. Circe's silence here sharply contrasts with the earlier mockery of her “screechy” tone, indicating that even when a woman has the power to speak, societal norms may still compel her silence. As J. Russ argues in *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, this kind of erasure is not accidental but systemic; it's a denial of women's agency that leads to their work being forgotten, misattributed, or dismissed [10]. The Ukrainian translation retains the overall message: «*я бачила, як він хотів вірити, що його божественна природа належить тільки*

йому, і не хотіла відбирати в нього цієї думки» [8, p. 53], maintaining Circe's deliberate choice to withhold her role. This choice aligns with B. Fernandez's observations regarding narratives where power is exercised "through silence, omission, or denial," underscoring the important distinction between intentional restraint and passive compliance [11].

The implications of Circe's chosen silence become evident in the following episode, when she discovers that Glaucos has fallen in love with another nymph, Scylla. Her devastation, intensified by the feeling of displacement, not only in affection but in visibility, as she swerves from an active creator to an overlooked bystander. This emotional betrayal is sharpened by the language used to describe Scylla as "one of the jewels of our halls" [7, p. 44]. In the Ukrainian version, she is referred to as «Справжній самоцвіт у наших палатах» [8, p. 56]. While the metaphor is faithfully translated, it continues to frame femininity through the lens of ornamentation. Both versions express admiration. They also subtly reinforce objectifying language. The English term "jewel" suggests a woman's value lies in external display and social status, whereas the Ukrainian «самоцвіт» (gemstone) emphasizes intrinsic beauty devoid of individuality. In both cases, women are valued for their appearance rather than for who they are.

This objectifying gaze catalyzes Circe's transformation of Scylla into a monster. What begins as an act of jealousy evolves into a broader symbolic meaning when Aeëtes remarks: "Even the most beautiful nymph is largely useless, and an ugly one would be nothing, less than nothing ... but a monster always has a place. She may have all the glory her teeth can snatch. She may not be loved for it, but she will not be constrained either" [7, p. 61]. The English version offers a sharp critique of the beauty-based evaluation of women, ultimately emphasizing autonomy – understanding monstrosity as freedom from constraints. In contrast, the Ukrainian phrase «Навіть із найвродливішої німфи користі мало, а потворна була б непотрібом, порожнім місцем ... будучи ж потворою, вона завжди знайде собі місце. Вона здобуде всю славу, що зможе вхопити. За це її ніхто не полюбить, але біди вона не знатиме» [8, p. 74] introduces a softer tone, implying emotional relief rather than active defiance. Similarly, while "useless" and "less than nothing" harshly negate a woman's social value without beauty, the Ukrainian metaphors «непотріб» and «порожнє місце» evoke the deeper trauma of erasure. Here, monstrosity not only rejects the aesthetic norms imposed on women but also highlights how decisions made during translation influence the clarity of that resistance across cultures. When viewed through this lens, monstrosity becomes not just a result of pain or rejection, but a deliberate choice to resist conformity. In M. Miller's *Circe*, becoming monstrous empowers women by providing an alternative form of agency that transcends stereotypical beauty and passive obedience. This interpretation resonates with feminist analyses of the "monstrous-feminine" [12], a term coined by B. Creed to describe female figures like Medusa or Scylla, whose disruptive power arises from their defiance of patriarchal containment. Creed argues that they are not demonized for being inherently evil, but for embodying the unruly, autonomous aspects of femininity that society attempts to suppress. In Circe, this framework is reimagined: being feared becomes preferable to being silenced. The transformation into a monster is no longer viewed as a curse, but as a deliberate act of resistance that challenges the traditional narrative of victimhood.

Circe's departure from traditional roles begins not with outright defiance, but with quiet recognition of her uniqueness. One of the earliest moments that disrupts the established divine order occurs during her encounter with Prometheus, the Titan punished for giving fire to mortals. His subtle defiance stands in stark contrast to the cruelty of the gods, and when he states, "Not every god need be the same" [7, p. 18], he plants a seed of resistance in Circe's mind. For a young Circe, who has already sensed her difference but lacks the language or permission to define it, this encounter marks the first crack in the mythological framework. It introduces the idea that deviating from divine norms is not a flaw, but a form of strength – an essential concept that later fuels her departure from the roles assigned to her.

The emerging sense of agency in Circe becomes more pronounced when she makes a deliberate choice to own her transgression. Instead of denying her use of witchcraft, she openly confesses, "I did

*it selfishly, in a bitter heart, and I would bear the consequence*” [7, p. 53]. The question “*What would they not do?*” contrasts the deceitful tactics of the gods with her own decision to take responsibility. The Ukrainian «*Зробила це себелюбно, заради помсти й хочу прийняти кару*» [7, p. 65] adeptly switches the focus from emotional pain to purposeful retaliation. In both versions, the scene reaffirms a central feminist theme: true power lies not in perfection or purity, but in the ability to recognize one’s actions and accept the consequences. Circe’s desire for recognition is one of her earliest acts of resistance. She wants her identity and her voice to be taken seriously. However, this is precisely what enrages her father. When she confesses to practicing pharmaka, it is not the magic itself that incites Helios’s fury, but the fact that she dares to speak out. “*You dare to contradict me? Worst of my children, faded and broken, whom I cannot pay a husband to take ... I pitied you ... yet you grew disobedient and proud*” [7, p. 54]. In the Ukrainian translation, the phrase becomes: «*Ти смієш перечити мені? Найгірша з моїх дітей, нікчемна й зіпсована, якій навіть за плату годі знайти чоловіка ... я шкoduвав тебе ... але тепер ти стала горда й неслухняна*» [8, p. 66]. And such divergence is revealing. In English, Helios’s insult emphasizes Circe’s lack of visibility within the divine hierarchy, describing her as “*faded and broken*”. In contrast, the Ukrainian version suggests shame and moral failure. The words «*нікчемна й зіпсована*» do more than just depict unattractiveness; they reflect specific judgments directed at women who defy societal norms. As the *Insight Report* notes, women who stray from traditional roles are often portrayed as “*spoiled, unnatural, or disrupted*” [13], reinforcing the social penalties for female agency.

The complexity of this topic becomes even more apparent when we consider how M. Miller reinterprets one of mythology’s most symbolically loaded archetypes, the witch. In Miller’s retelling, the witch is not merely a folkloric concept that varies across societies; she is transformed into a literary archetype – a recurring figure that embodies centuries of symbolic associations. The author draws on the classical image of Circe as a sorceress and redirects the focus away from male characters, challenging the patriarchal values embedded in mythic traditions. Additionally, she reimagines the “wicked witch,” traditionally associated with fear and exclusion, into a symbol of knowledge and creative power. Although the setting remains rooted in mythology, Circe’s inner world feels strikingly contemporary, making the task of translating her identity not only linguistic but contextual, especially since the archetype of the “witch” carries distinct connotations in different traditions, adding another layer of complexity to this exploration.

In Ukrainian folk tradition, the figure of the witch («*відьма*») is complex and deeply embedded in society. As O. Kis explains, the Ukrainian witch is not merely a folkloric character but “*a distinct social category ... governed by culturally normative modes of social interaction*” [14, p. 223]. Ethnographic research conducted by scholars such as O. Afanasiev, V. Antonovych, M. Sumtsov, and K. Hrushevskya shows that the term «*відьма*», rooted in the verb «*відати*» (“to know”), traditionally referred to a woman possessing esoteric or hidden knowledge who might practice healing, divination, or magic. Ukrainian folklore does not strictly differentiate between the terms «*відьма*», «*знахарка*» (healer), «*чарівниця*» (sorceress), and «*ворожка*» (fortuneteller), often blending these identities in complex, symbolically meaningful ways. This archetype resists clear moral categorization. As noted by K. Hrushevskya, Ukrainian witchcraft was “not a highly specialized profession,” and witches were viewed as direct opposites to liminal figures within ordinary society [15, p. 12]. Within this framework, the concept of “demonic feminine” is not viewed as inherently evil; instead, it represents an embodiment of ancient traditional knowledge. This form of femininity, rooted in intuition, nonconformity, and marginality, acts as a catalyst for change. It encourages self-awareness and challenges conventional boundaries. Together, these archetypes contribute to the mythic narrative of “Ukrainian demonic womanhood,” where female autonomy and spiritual resistance are recognized as essential components of a deeper, societally specific worldview.

In English cultural tradition, the figure of the witch is complex, with deep historical and literary roots. As D. Purkiss observes, she is “*a composite of village gossip, Protestant demonology, and*

*popular storytelling*,” embodying both supernatural threat and social scapegoat [16, p. 8]. Historical studies by K. Thomas and J. Sharpe reveal that in early modern England, the term “witch” could refer to a range of individuals, from cunning-folk and healers to those accused of practicing malevolent magic, influenced by local customs, church doctrines, and laws. The term derives from Old English *wicce* (fem.) and *wicca* (masc.), linked to divination and magic rather than solely to Satanic pacts. In practice, such figures diagnosed illness, found lost property, or offered charms, blurring the line between benevolent and harmful magic. Similar to Ukrainian rural culture, there was no strict distinction between “witch,” “wise woman,” or “cunning man.” However, Protestant theology increasingly merged these roles into a singular, diabolical stereotype. In literature, from Shakespeare’s *Weird Sisters* to Jacobean drama, the witch is depicted as a liminal, transgressive outsider whose power derives from hidden knowledge [17]. While demonological texts portrayed her as an agent of the Devil, popular ballads and tales often depict her as a feared yet sought-after manipulator of social norms. Within this tradition, the “demonic feminine” symbolizes not inherent evil, but rather female autonomy, intuition, and resistance to patriarchal authority, capable of unsettling hierarchies and provoking change. These layered images have contributed to a distinctly English myth of witchcraft, where the witch represents both repressed female agency and the projection of collective fears. Her significance is continually reimagined across religious, legal, and literary contexts.

As a result, Circe’s symbolic role within the narrative is reconfigured. In the Ukrainian version, her connections to disruption, transformation, and autonomy may be overshadowed by interpretations focused on her attractiveness and magical allure. Instead of representing the complex ambiguity of the “demonic feminine,” she risks being viewed through a more familiar and ethically acceptable lens that emphasizes her emotional vulnerability and romantic relationships, rather than her existential independence. Thus, the translation subtly alters the reader’s perspective from a narrative of feminist defiance to one influenced by cultural familiarity. This illustrates how semantic changes and ingrained perspectives can alter the symbolic power of feminine myths across different languages.

Her subsequent exile to the remote island of Aiaia, in both the English and Ukrainian versions, marks a crucial turning point in this narrative. While the act of banishment punishes her magic and defiance, it also severs her ties to the patriarchal roles of daughter, nymph, and bride. This creates a liminal space where she can reconstruct her identity on her terms. In this sense, exile becomes a foundation for self-construction, offering what G. Özcan describes as “*resistant and decolonial strategies via reflection on their lived and embodied realities*” [18]. In the context of enforced isolation, the metaphor of the caged bird takes on profound significance: “*I will not be like a bird bred in a cage, too dull to fly even when the door stands open*” [7, p. 71]. The image encapsulates the novel’s central theme that true freedom is not simply a change in circumstance but a conscious rejection of identities imposed by others. In Ukrainian, «*Я не буду як та птаха, що виросла в клітці й не наважується полетіти, навіть якщо відчинено дверцята*» [8, p. 84], this image retains its poetic power, framing freedom not as the absence of physical constraint but as a refusal to accept identities imposed by society. This redefinition of selfhood during exile directly influences the way Circe interacts with others who enter her isolated world. Her encounter with Hermes, the Olympian messenger god, shows how exile transforms solitude into a crucible for refining her relationship with power, voice, and emotional agency. When Hermes casually informs her about the sailors killed by the monster Scylla, he delivers the news in a detached and almost playful tone, seemingly measuring her response. Circe’s internal reaction exposes a tension between vulnerability and control: “*Hermes was ... waiting for my reaction. Would I be skimmed milk for crying, or a harpy with a heart of stone? There was nothing between*” [7, p. 86]. In the Ukrainian translation, the semantic charge undergoes a nuanced change: «*Гермес ... чекав, як я озвуся. Що він побачить: мої крокодилячі сльози чи кам’яне серце гарпії?*» [8, p. 100]. The English metaphor “*skimmed milk for crying*” is rare and culturally specific, conjuring an image of diluted feelings, with a hint of quiet ridicule. In contrast, «*крокодилячі сльози*» takes its place in the Ukrainian version, offering a more direct accusation

of insincerity. This change alters the psychological stakes: instead of questioning the intensity of her feelings, the translation questions their authenticity, thereby subtly reframing Circe's emotional agency within the scene. Circe's grief is no longer seen as potentially excessive but is instead viewed as possibly feigned.

The next episode continues the theme in which exile becomes a stage for negotiating how Circe's emotions are perceived and narrated. She imagines the version of her story Hermes will spread: "*a bitch with a cliff for a heart*" [7, p. 86]. This phrase, aggressive and self-aware, reveals the double bind that defines her emotional reality. She is either too soft or too cold, with no space between. In Ukrainian, this is translated as «Потворюю із серцем, твердим як кремійнь» [8, p. 100]. While expressive, the line loses the same animalistic vulgarity and gendered sharpness of the word "bitch", which carries an explicit weight in English, tied to themes of both misogyny and female defiance [19]. The term «потвора» softens the gendered insult, portraying Circe as more tragic than confrontational. Similarly, the word «кремійнь» conveys hardness but omits the unyielding, vast imagery of "cliff," which evokes feelings of isolation and immovability. The translation maintains the general ideas of coldness, losing the defiance and raw anger of the original. In English, the image suggests a woman forced into cruelty as a form of self-defense, while in Ukrainian, it presents her hardened figure rather than a resisting one. These shifts illustrate how language reshapes feminist nuance. In M. Miller's text, Circe is caught between two extremes of how women are permitted to feel: too soft or too heartless. In the Ukrainian version, this dilemma is preserved, but the imagery becomes more binary and less gender-specific.

**Conclusions.** This tension between emotional perception and self-definition directly leads to one of the novel's central revelations about Circe's identity. Despite all her powers, the most striking quality of Miller's Circe is her force of will, the source from which her witchcraft originates and grows. "*What makes a witch, then?*" Penelope asks after Circe confirms that it has "*nothing to do with being a goddess*" [7, p. 292–293]. She follows this with a simple answer: "*I have come to believe it is mostly will*" [7, p. 293]. The struggle between goddess and woman is at the core of Circe's search for identity, a theme examined by both J. Yarnall in *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* and A. Goudie in *Eudora Welty's Circe: A Goddess Who Strove with Men*. J. Yarnall suggests that Circe, despite her divine nature, longs for human experience. As a goddess, she possesses power and immortality, but as a mortal woman, she could fully know love, loss, and vulnerability – experiences that remain out of reach for the divine [1, p. 183–184]. A. Goudie echoes this sentiment, noting that Circe's godhood alienates her from human emotion: she cannot fully feel what mortals endure, nor can she understand their pain. "*Circe's power,*" Goudie writes, "*neither permits her to be weak and frail nor to understand weakness or frailty*" [20, p. 486]. Thus, her strength becomes not only her defense but also her constraint. The will that empowers Circe also limits her, acting as both shield and boundary. This paradox – exhibiting immense agency while being bound by the terms of her existence – propels the transformation from being an object of others' stories to becoming the author of her own. It anchors one of M. Miller's most powerful narrative choices, replacing the distant authority of epic tradition with a voice that speaks from within the lived experience. Unlike the ancient epic tradition, which typically features a third-person omniscient narrator, the writer chooses Circe to narrate her own life from a first-person perspective. This decision creates a distinctly female discourse that directly engages with themes such as family, beauty, sexism, love, jealousy, rage, sexual violence, and motherhood. By placing Circe at the center of her own narrative, the author disrupts the gendered hierarchy of classical myth, where women are observed but rarely allowed to voice their stories.

In this retelling, Circe steps out of the shadows of a male hero's journey to take control of her narrative. Reflecting on her life, she confesses, "*My 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*" [7, p. 214]. Through these moments, the author

illustrates how the familiar can become unfamiliar when expressed by a woman, reclaiming both perspective and language.

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