

CIRCE

A NOTE ON THIS PRODUCTION:
Verso and recto should be performed simultaneously.

CIRCE'S CROW DÆMON

Cacaw. Odysseus, Odysseus. Everyone loves Odysseus.
(folds wings over stomach in rocking chair)

Athena, too, foolish girl, is in love with Odysseus. She, who has the work of an army—to make the mortals wiser—is all the time swooning over images of Odysseus in her mind.

Athena should be thinking of war and wisdom, but: Odysseus, Odysseus. Everyone loves Odysseus.

Especially Circe. The witch.

From her stronghold on the island of Aeaea, Circe turns men into swine. Women do not visit her. Therefore it is lonely for Circe, for Circe of the lovely hair. Circe has only servants and man-pigs to amuse her. Man-pigs are amusing—hear their pathetic grunts—but lately Circe has been wanting more. Circe has been wanting a lover, a man of fierce intellect with arms strong as pythons around her chest.

So she waits for such a man. She is, because immortal, eternally patient; she will wait as she must.

CHORUS OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

(arching, pouting, squatting, hairtossing)

Odysseus of the wily mind of the shrewdness the unflappable courage the unmatched cunning the immeasurable combination of brain and brawn. Odysseus who has the gods on his side. Odysseus who has the gods against him.

ATHENA flies across page with lovelorn expression.

ODYSSEUS charges forth with spear, muscles flexed and bulging, broad chest smeared with mud and blood. ODYSSEUS furrows brow at some impossible puzzle, chewing on his lower lip with vehemence. ODYSSEUS urinates from the edge of his ship into the river, his piss-stream strong and equine, raising clouds of steam.

Enter CIRCE of the lovely hair. CIRCE curtsies.

CIRCE invites ODYSSEUS' MEN to dine with her. They are slovenly, indulgent, do not give her her proper due. CIRCE smiles wickedly, tosses her lovely hair. She nods at HALF-NAKED NYMPH-SERVANT, who leaves and returns with a tray of dessert wine. The MEN drink heartily, wipe their mouths with their sleeves. CIRCE laughs maniacally. ODYSSEUS' MEN turn into oinky, distressed pigs.

From page left, ODYSSEUS flexes, thinks hard. From above, HERMES drops bottle of immunity into ODYSSEUS' lap. ODYSSEUS opens it, chugs.

The story goes that when Odysseus lands on Aeaea and, with the help of Hermes, resists Circe's unmanning potion, Circe will go ga-ga for the god-like mortal from Greece.

She will bed him until he tires of her, and then give him a helpful hint for his journey.

She will be mature and let him, with a wistful kiss on the cheek, go, go back to Penelope, for she is his True Love For Ever And Ever.

Circe will re-man the unmanned man-pigs to show Odysseus that she is righteous and good, and she will respect his and her own autonomy enough to say goodbye with dignity and grace.

(DAEMON stands up, faces reader with wings extended and eyes pulsing red.) Not in this story. Cacaw. In this story Circe is selfish and immature. In this story Circe is childish. In this story Circe turns Odysseus into swine.

BED *(raised from page slowly)*:

Creak.

Curtain down. Curtain up.

Enter CIRCE in CIRCE's enchanted palace. In CIRCE's enchanted palace, sunlight shines always, reflecting off of CIRCE's rich hairwaves and glistening skin. CIRCE has forgotten what she looked like prior to discovering she can modify her appearance with a flick of the wrist, a twist of the tongue. But it is a trap, her beauty. She uses it to trick

ODYSSEUS drinks CIRCE's magic potion; it has no effect. CIRCE gasps. ODYSSEUS lifts sword. CIRCE releases MEN from their spell. MEN, naked MEN all around, but CIRCE gazes only at ODYSSEUS. With a flash of her eyes, CIRCE brings her bed to the page with a slam. CIRCE and O fuck.

ODYSSEUS stands on the edge of the page, looks longingly out.

CIRCE (gives O a wistful kiss): Now go, go back to Penelope, for she is your True Love For Ever and Ever.

CIRCE and ODYSSEUS embrace. CIRCE exits page right, ODYSSEUS page left.

VOICE OF CIRCE

Odysseus is mine. *(laughs maniacally)*

CHORUS OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

(tittering)

She's so bright. She's so clean. I'm telling you, she's everything.

MEN into lusting for her, then uses their slavering to justify turning them to beasts as soon she feels vulnerable in their gaze, as she has done with O's MEN. She is beginning to recognize this pattern as a problem. As her MAN-PIGS squeal with snouts roving in the dirt, a tinge of regret announce itself in her loins.

CIRCE

(to herself) No more blow hot and cold.

ODYSSEUS *(coming upon CIRCE unnoticed)*

Stitch in my side. Why did I run?

CIRCE/BELLO/BELLA

(turns at O's voice, points to sty) As they are now, so will you be, wigged, singed, perfume-sprayed, ricepowdered, with smoothshaven armpits.

MAN-PIGS

Oink.

BLOOM

Hungry for liver, love. Button goes bip at sight of liver.

CIRCE

(tosses Ulysses aside.) Then I shall get you some liver. *(Exits.)*

It is midnight, and all is dark. Over on page left, ODYSSEUS can see the brightened clouds above the palace and he knows something is up. There is enchantment here, and his MEN have not come back.

CROW *(flying above ODYSSEUS as if warning him):* Peep, peep. Pe-weep.

ODYSSEUS *nods up at CROW, steps from page right to page left.*

JAMES JOYCE

Welcome to Nighttown. It is one hundred and twenty pages long. Odysseus, c'est moi. Bloo bloom.

CHORUS OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

(swooning) James Joyce of the well-groomed mustache of the handsome eye patch the occasional bowtie. James Joyce of the most greatest literary genius. James Joyce, James Joyce. Everyone loves James Joyce.

JAMES JOYCE

Shrug. Vavavoom.

JAMES JOYCE

One hundred and nineteen more pages. *(snickers)*

Rope plunks onto page, with HERMES making his way down it. HERMES slides an antidote to CIRCE's charms into ODYSSEUS' hand. O drinks it. HERMES and rope are retracted from scene.

CIRCE

(Entering with tray) Sit, sit. (places chalice and plate before him) Drink. And take the form of the brute you most resemble.

As ODYSSEUS drinks, CIRCE is distracted by JAMES JOYCE.

CIRCE *(across page)*

Thou turnedest me into a joke, and my pigs to whores. *(extends arm)* Abracadab.

ODYSSEUS

(Drinks. No effect.) The sty I dislike. (Unsheaths sword.) Kablaaam!

CIRCE's enchantment has bounced off him and turned her NYMPH-SERVANT into a swan. Astonished CIRCE of the lovely hair zaps NYMPH-SERVANT back to nymph form and considers her nemesis with sword swung.

CIRCE

(deciding) Penetrate me not with sword but with! (snaps; bed crashes back down onto page)

WOMAN, undoing with sweet pudor her belt of rushrope, offers her all moist yoni to MAN's lingam. MAN yawns, thinks of PENELOPE. Impatient CIRCE cracks whip.

ODYSSEUS

I cannot seem to.

A FEMINIST

And I quote, "A FEMINIST: (*Masculinely*)" (481).

JAMES JOYCE

(rubs palms together) I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant.

JAMES JOYCE

(chasing tail) Arf. Rrrrrawwrf. Whimp whimmp.

A FEMINIST

Feminist critique of canonical literature A-plus. Yet, the use of male-female binary seems dated, victimizing, powerful Circe made weak and dependent on male validation. What gives.

(adjusts glasses, listens hard) Sex-positivity good. A-plus.

SYLVIA PLATH

Did you hear my brain go snap?

TED HUGHES

Polysyllabax.

VOICE OF HERMES

(legs hanging down from Olympus) Do not then resist and refuse the bed of the goddess.

ODYSSEUS

(sighs, gives Circe his full attention) Well?

CIRCE AS TALL BLONDE

CIRCE AS FIERY REDHEAD

CIRCE AS SUICIDE GIRL / SYLVIA PLATH

CIRCE AS PRINCESS LEIA

CIRCE AS HELEN

ODYSSEUS

(another yawn) It has certainly been a long day. *(sleeps)*

CIRCE'S SOLILOQUY

(to mirror)

How can this be?

Am I not a beauty?

He is the only man I want

With great yearning in my cunt

And yet he be

Too fatigued?

What this hur swine thee thine no!

There must be a way I can look to please him.

PERCEPTIVE CIRCE OF THE LOVELY HAIR / AS MOLLY

BLOOM

(shakes ULYSSES awake) Poldy! Oh, Poldy! It has been too long.

They embrace. SYLVIA eyes TED. TED eyes CIRCE. Bell jar crashes down, trapping SYLVIA, who beats her fists against the glass, sticks head in oven. JOURNALIST snaps picture.

TED becomes STEPHEN DEDALUS.

SYLVIA becomes MATILDA (A TEENAGE GIRL).

MATILDA (A TEENAGE GIRL)

Oh, Stephen. The gods have brought us together at last. *(dizzy)*

CHORUS OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

(posturing) Stephen of the excellent tenor, the narrow chest and philosophical mind. Stephen who flies above the constraints of religion, nationality, and politics in his own development. Stephen who has Art on his side, Stephen who has few against him. Stephen, Stephen. Everyone loves Stephen.

STEPHEN DEDALUS

You have the most beautiful eyes.

MATILDA swoons. They kiss. STEPHEN puts arm around

MATILDA, then places hand under her shirt, caresses her stomach.

MATILDA pulls away.

MATILDA

(he touched my fat stomach, he touched my fat stomach) Stop! Don't do that!

ULYSSES

(lit up) Exuberant female. Enormously I desiderate your domination. I am exhausted, abandoned, no more young. I promise never to disobey.

They embrace. ODYSSEUS falls back to sleep.

CIRCE

What, still? *(pokes him)*

ODYSSEUS

(sputtering) Tis Calypso's fault!

CIRCE AS REAL CIRCE, UGLY CIRCE, WRATHFUL CIRCE
WHO IS CHILDISH

(through gritted teeth) Your bed is made, thou. Henceforth you are unmanned and mine in earnest, a thing of the yoke. Swine!

ODYSSEUS

(stretching awake) Your classic curves, beautiful immortal. I was glad to look on you, to praise you, a thing of beauty, almost.

But I do not want to fuck you.

STEPHEN

What? What?

MATILDA

Get out. Get out now. *(Roars fire at him. STEPHEN, hair singed, leaves. MATILDA watches him fly away, her eyes turning to stone.)*

MATILDA

I hate them I hate them I hate them. There's nothing I can do. Except—

CHORUS OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

Sit on your hands, don't do it, sit on your hands, don't do it, sit on your hands.

MATILDA gets up, strolls down the hall to the bathroom, and shuts the door. She runs the sink faucet, bends over the toilet, and sticks the butt-end of her toothbrush down her throat.

No, no. That's not right at all. MATILDA doesn't hurl when STEPHEN leaves her. MATILDA has more dignity.

MATILDA

(on her knee across page) Are you there, Goddess? It's me, Matilda. Goddess, please will you turn Stephen Dedalus into an ugly pig? I would feel a lot better if you did.

MATILDA sees that GODDESS has other things on her mind.

MATILDA

Goddess, no! Not you too! Die. *(roars fire at ODYSSEUS)*

CIRCE

(extinguishes ODYSSEUS) More complicated. Go away. *(flings MATILDA to margins)*

CIRCE

(to ODYSSEUS) Of beauty, almost? *(tears of petulant rage)* Kablaaam!
(tries to pig him again)

MATILDA

(starving self into oblivion) Are you there, Goddess? Are you there?
Goddess?

ODYSSEUS

(hopping around deflecting her spells) Master! Mistress! Mantamer!

Scene freezes. CIRCE'S CROW DÆMON flops down in front of it, gets up, shakes self off.

CIRCE'S CROW DÆMON

Odysseus's magical defenses will not wear off. Though Circe cannot pig him, she manages to tie him up and detain him, making him her plaything for some months. We all know, of course, that Zeus is watching, letting Circe play her little game. When he gets bored, he'll interfere, command her to release Odysseus from her island. Because she must, she will.

And poor Penelope sits trapped in her home, surrounded by greedy men, slovenly men, selfish, egocentric, impatient men armed with weapons and want. Poor Penelope of the aging skin and graying hair turns weary eyes to the sea and wonders where her Odysseus is, when he will return, and what divine beings he will charm along his way.