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ODYSSEAN MOTIFS IN THE MIDDLE COMEDY: WITCHES, MONSTERS AND COURTESANS

ABSTRACT. Stuligrosz Magdalena, *Odyssean Motifs in the Middle Comedy: Witches, Monsters and Courtesans* (*Motywy z Odysei w komedii średniej: wiedźmy, potwory i kurtyzany*).

The purpose of this paper is to show how Middle Comedy authors re-work mythical motifs and characters borrowed from Homer's epic poetry, inserting them into the various contexts of everyday life and imbuing them with new meaning. The analysis focuses on the fragments of plays by Anaxilas and Ephippus, which draw on the motif of animal transformation and of Odysseus' encounter with Circe and mythical monsters.

Keywords: Middle Comedy; the *Odyssey*; mythical motifs; rationalization of myth; Circe; courtesans; Anaxilas; Ephippus.

The preserved fragments of Middle Comedy, which flourished between 404 and 321 BCE, contain many references to myths recorded by authors in earlier times, usually in the form of parody, pastiche or travesty of the myths or mythical motifs known from tradition. Among those, a special place is held by references to the stories of the Trojan War around which Homer's epics were built. The tendency to re-work and re-process mythical themes and motifs can already be observed in Doric Comedy and in some Old Comedy authors, but for Middle Comedy it is considered a kind of "genre marker". Middle Comedy authors, with their interest in everyday aspects of human life, would place mythical characters in new, often surprising contexts, de-heroizing the deeds and achievements traditionally attributed to them.¹ Depictions of this sort favoured highlighting and exaggerating characters' vices, presenting those characters as trivial or even vulgar.

The importance of Odyssean mythical motifs to Middle Comedy authors as a source of inspiration and, in a sense, *pabulum*, can be gleaned from the titles of plays by Alexis, Anaxandrides, Anaxilas and Ephippus, preserved in small

¹On that subject, see Bowie 2010, 153: "[...] the Middle Comedy tended to reduce and rationalize the fantastic, fairy-tale aspects of the myths, replacing these with elements from everyday life." Cf. Zimmermann 2006, 169: "Die Quelle der Komik liegt in der Discrepanz zwischen heroischer Attitüde und Alltag oder gar Trivialität"; also see Nesselrath 1990, 236.

fragments or lost, which contain the names of the poem's main characters, that is Odysseus, Circe and Calypso.² Some of the titles indicate the comedy revolved around specific episodes in the lives of its title character, as in Alexis' *Odysseus Being Bathed*, or imply the way a familiar motif was transformed, as in the case of *Odysseus Weaving*³ by the same author.

The 4th century BCE comic poet Anaxilas refers to the *Odyssey* multiple times in his plays. The plot of his comedy *Circe* is probably based on the episode narrated in Book 10 of Homer's epic. A crucial role falls to the motif of men being turned into swine at the hand of a woman, possibly the Circe of the title. Fr. 12 Kassel-Austin (= Athen. 9.374e) seems to contain the words of a member of Odysseus' crew, Eurilochus, as he recounts his adventure to warn Odysseus of what may befall him and his companions in Circe's palace:⁴

τοὺς μὲν ὀρεινόμους ὑμῶν ποιήσει δέλφακας ἡλι-
βάτους,
τοὺς δὲ πάνθηρας, ἄλλους ἀγρώστας λύκους,
λέοντας.

She'll turn some of you into mountain-
ranging, mud-trodding⁵
delphakes,
some into wildcats, others into savage
wolves
or lions.⁶

The poet lists other animals beside pigs the heroes will turn into: panthers, wolves and lions. The lines quoted above are an adaptation of Eurilochus' words in the *Odyssey*, where in attempting to warn Odysseus and his companions of the threat of the sorceress, he mentions three types of animal transformation suffered by the daring adventurers who visit her (*Od.* 10.431–434):

ἄ δειλοί πόσ' ἴμεν; τί κακῶν ἰμείρετε τούτων;
Κίρκης ἐς μέγαρον καταβήμεναι, ἢ κεν ἅπαντας
ἢ σὺς ἢ λύκους ποιήσεται ἢ ἐλέοντας,
οἳ κέν οἱ μέγα δῶμα φυλάσσοιμεν [...].

²On how Odysseus' myth was used and re-used in selected fragments of Middle Comedy, see Casolari 2003, 214–225; Jouanno 2012, 248–260; Phillips 1959, 63–67; Bakola 2010, 235–246 (on Cratinus' *Odysseis* regarded as a forerunner of Middle Comedy). An overview of the most recent research on the subject can be found in Papaioannou (2016, 188–189, note 41).

³Olson 2007, 318: "Webster (1970) suggested that the plot of *Odysseus Weaving* was an inversion of the story of the *Odyssey*, with Odysseus taking Penelope's part in producing Laertes' shroud". Cf. Arnott 1996, 465–466.

⁴See Hunter 1979, 36. Webster (1970, 6), believes the words to be spoken by a chorus of Odysseus' companions who have been turned into animals; cf. Casolari 2003, 218.

⁵Here I follow Meineke's conjecture, adopted by Olson in his edition of Athenaeus.

⁶The translations from the comic poets are by S. Douglas Olson (2006–2012).

“You poor men, where are we going? Why are you set on disaster like this, on going down to Kirke’s house? She will turn us all into pigs or wolves or lions, and force us to guard her palace [...]”.⁷

Whoever is careless enough to come near Circe’s castle is turned by the power of her magic into a pig, or one of the lions and wolves forced to guard her abode. Odysseus’ companions encounter that pack of wolves and lions guarding her castle before they are aware of her evil powers (*Od.* 10.212–213):

ἀμφὶ δὲ μιν λύκοι ἦσαν ὀρέστεροι ἢδὲ λέοντες
τὸς αὐτὴ κατέθελεξεν, ἐπεὶ κακὰ φάρμακ’ ἔδωκεν.

Round it there were mountain wolves and lions, creatures that she herself had bewitched, giving them magic drugs.

In another fragment of Anaxilas’ play (fr. 13 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 3.95b), one male character addresses another to complain of the unpleasant consequences of being turned into a pig, and perhaps to warn his interlocutor not to risk it too:

δεινὸν μὲν γὰρ ἔχονθ’ ὑὸς
ρύγχος, ᾧ φίλε, κνησιᾶν.

It’s terrible, my friend, to have a pig’s snout and need to scratch!

The verb κνησιᾶν used here, ‘to desire to scratch, itch’,⁸ also means ‘to feel sexual desire’, which S. Douglas Olson believes could allude to Odysseus’ fling with Circe.⁹ Perhaps, in reference to the depictions of Circe as a courtesan known from Middle and New Comedy, the poet made a metaphorical use of the Homeric motif of animal transformation: by casting her love-spell, Circe makes men submit to her, thus depriving them of their power and strength.¹⁰ Thus after a manner degraded, they come to resemble swine wallowing in mud. Pointing out that the transformation affects behaviour as well as appearance brings to mind the somewhat more detailed description from Book 10 of the *Odyssey*. This is how Homer describes Eurilochus’ companions after Circe touched them with her wand (*Od.* 10.239–243):

⁷The translations from the *Odyssey* are by Hammond 2000.

⁸*LSJ* 1996, 964.

⁹That ambiguity, which makes it possible to interpret Anaxilas’ play in an erotic context, is pointed out by Olson (2007, 130).

¹⁰Dutsch (2008, 75), notes this way of depicting Circe may have been typical of Middle and New Comedy. Also see Dickie (2003, 82) on the identification of the Corinthian courtesan Lais with Circe in Aristophanes’ *Plutos*: “[...] Lais is imagined as a Circe-like figure entrapping men by her magic. It may be inferred from the identification of a courtesan with a figure emblematic of sorcery that courtesans were credited with practising magic to ensnare men”.

οἱ δὲ συῶν μὲν ἔχον κεφαλὰς φωνὴν τε τρίχας τε
καὶ δέμας, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος ὡς τὸ πάρος περ.
ὧς οἱ μὲν κλαίοντες ἐέρχατο· τοῖσι δὲ Κίρκη
πάρ ἄκυλον βάλανόν τ' ἔβαλεν καρπὸν τε κρανεῖης
ἔδμεναι, οἶα σύες χαμαιευνάδες αἰὲν ἔδουσιν.

And they took on the form of pigs – swinish heads, grunts, and bristles: only their minds stayed as they had been. So they were penned there, weeping, in the sties: and to eat Kirke threw down for them acorns, mast, and cornel berries, the usual food of wallowing pigs.

The short fragments of that play by Anaxilas that are extant do not make it possible to observe how exactly the poet modifies or re-processes the motif of animal transformation borrowed from the *Odyssey*. According to John Wilkins, he may have applied it to demonstrate the similarities and differences between human beings and pigs,¹¹ although it remains possible that it was the love subplot that was most important, stressing the sexual aspect of the relationship between Odysseus and Circe.

Anaxilas also brings up the motif of men being turned into swine and of Odysseus encountering Circe in his comedy *Calypso*, of which only two lines are extant. In one of those, as in the abovequoted fr. 13 Kassel-Austin, the character describes his external appearance resulting from the transformation (fr. 11 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 3.95c):

ρύγχος φορῶν ὕειον ἡσθόμην τότε.

Then I realized I had a pig's snout.

We do not know which character speaks the words, however if the events of the play take place on Calypso's island, it cannot be any crewmember of Odysseus, since those are all dead by the time he arrives on Ogygia even if they accompanied him at Circe's.¹²

The first of the preserved fragments of *Calypso* probably contains a mention of Circe, seen here as an old woman, who will taste the potion meant for her guest; fr. 10 Kassel-Austin (= Athen. 4.171f):¹³

προγεύσεται σοι πρῶτον ἢ γράδς τοῦ ποτοῦ.

First the old woman will take an initial taste
(*progeusetai*) of your drink for you.

¹¹ The chapter "Comedy and the Material World", in Wilkins 2000, 20.

¹² This discrepancy is pointed out by Thorburn (2005, 110). In Bergk's opinion (1838, 404) the words may have been spoken by the unidentified Cinesias.

¹³ Bergk (1838, 404) believes that is Calypso's line to Cinesias, telling him he may accept the cup she offers him without taking the same risk he braved when he drank Circe's potion.

Anaxilas adapts for the purposes of his play the motif of a magic potion, closely related to that of animal transformation. In Homer, Circe gives Odysseus' companions the *kykeon*, a drink made of cheese, flour, honey and Pramnian wine, to which she adds herbs which have magical powers and make the drinker forget about going home (*Od.* 10.234–236):

ἐν δέ σφιν τυρόν τε καὶ ἄλφιτα καὶ μέλι χλωρόν
οἶνον Πραμνείῳ ἐκύκα· ἀνέμισγε δὲ σίτῳ
φάρμακα λύγρ', ἵνα πάγχυ λαθοῖατο πατρίδος αἴης.

She [...] mixed a drink for them with cheese, barley, and pale honey added to Pramnian wine; and in this dish she mingled harmful drugs, to make them lose all memory of their native land.

It is an important modification from the epic original how Circe acts in Anaxilas' play: she is to be the first to try the drink she offers her guest. The author also gives the sorceress the traits which characterize her in Greek comedy: old age and a predilection for abusing wine, which was considered a common “problem” of old women in the Greek world,¹⁴ particularly those of low social class, such as courtesans and prostitutes.¹⁵

It is likely that Ephippus, too, refers to Odysseus' sojourn at Circe's in his comedy *Circe*; in fr. 11 Kassel-Austin (= Athen. 10.430f) we seem to have a conversation between Odysseus and Circe about the drink offered him:

οἶνον πίοις ἂν ἀσφαλέστερον πολὺ
ὕδαρῆ. Β. μὰ τὴν γῆν, ἀλλὰ τρία καὶ τέτταρα.
Α. οὕτως ἄκρατον, εἰπέ μοι, πῆ; Β. τί φῆς;

(A.) You'd be much safer drinking watery wine. (B.) No, by earth! Three-to-four!
(A.) Tell me – you really drink it that strong?
(B.) What do you mean?

Unlike Homer's Circe, who added Pramnian wine to her *kykeon*, dark and tart,¹⁶ in Ephippus she encouraged the hero to take his wine watered-down. This manner of drinking the wine was supposed to be safer for him, which might mean

¹⁴On depictions of old women in ancient Greek literature see Borowicz, Hobot, Przybylska 2010, 75: “W ‘męskim’ świecie wyobrażeń kobiety (...) prawie zawsze piły mocne, esencjonalne wino, szybko się upajając, co miało podkreślić drastyczność obrazu, ich nienasycenie, brak opamiętania. Wyjątkową predylekcją do nierozcieńczonego wina odznaczały się stare kobiety, które często wręcz żądają trunku mocnego, nierozcieńczonego, bądź oburzają się, gdy mają pić ze zbyt małych ich zdaniem naczyń lub pić wino zbyt rozcieńczone (...)”

¹⁵In Old Comedy, they are the characters in plays by Pherecrates, Epicrates and Crates (the infamous Lamia). By portraying elderly prostitutes as drunkards, the poets met the expectations of their audience; see Dickie 2003, 77–92.

¹⁶On the characteristics of Pramnian wine see Athen. 1.30b-d.

he would find it easier to remain in control and resist her magic. Odysseus, on the other hand, insisted that he be served a stronger drink, with the proportions being 3 to 4.¹⁷ A sort of role reversal can be seen in how the two characters are depicted. Circe tried to warn Odysseus of the drink's dangerous effects, while the hero, given a predilection for strong drink by our comic poet, deliberately wished to submit to her magic. Thus in Ephippus' comic version of his, Odysseus loses his "heroic" characteristics, including his caution and restraint, revealing very mundane, human weaknesses: a tendency to get drunk on wine and to give in to feminine charms. In Circe's case, on the other hand, we see those traits highlighted which make her more like a hetaera, since the hero neither can nor wants to resist her spell, even while aware of its bad effects.¹⁸

Then in another play, Anaxilas' *Neottis*, whose title comes from the surname of a hetaera famous in the author's day, comparing courtesans to mythical creatures of feminine characteristics is the foundation of a rhetorical argument whose purpose is to criticize the whole "villainous tribe of hetaerae."¹⁹ The catalogue of mythical monsters to which famous hetaerae are compared has in it those encountered by Odysseus after he left Circe's island: Scylla, Charybdis and the Sirens. In describing the greed which is the predominant characteristic of the courtesans listed in the play, Anaxilas points out their similarity to the voracious beasts lying in wait at sea for Odysseus and his companions (fr. 22, 15–19 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 13.558c):

ἡ δὲ Νάννιον τί νυνὶ διαφέρειν Σκύλλης δοκεῖ;
οὐ δὲ ἀποπνίξασ' ἑταίρους τὸν τρίτον θηρεύεται
ἔτι λαβεῖν; ἀλλ' ἐξέπεσεν <ἡ> πορθμῖς ἑλατίνῳ πλάτῃ
ἡ δὲ Φρόνη τὴν Χάρυβδιν οὐχὶ πόρρω που ποιεῖ
τόν τε ναύκληρον λαβοῦσα καταπέπωκ' αὐτῷ σκάφει.

What difference can you see today between
Nannion and Scylla?
After she strangled two boyfriends, isn't she angling
now
to catch a third? But † fell out † a ship with a fir-wood
oar.
And isn't Phryne behaving just like Charybdis,
by grabbing the ship-owner and gulping him down,
boat and all?

When the poet has courtesans "angle for" (θηρεύεται) successive victims to "grab" (λαβοῦσα) them and "gulp them down" (καταπέπωκ'), he refers to

¹⁷Odysseus does not observe the sympotic prescriptions on the proportions in which the wine should be mixed with water. Cf. Jouanno 2012, 257.

¹⁸Cf. the portrayal of Circe in Anaxilas, fr. 13 Kassel-Austin. See Casolari 2003, 220.

¹⁹See a detailed discussion in the commentary in Bartol, Danielewicz 2011, 416–419.

Odysseus' adventure with Scylla and Charybdis in Book 12 of the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 12.235–246):

ἔνθεν γὰρ Σκύλλη, ἐτέρωθι δὲ διὰ Χάρυβδις
 δεινὸν ἀνερρύβδησε θαλάσσης ἀλμυρὸν ὕδωρ.
 [...]
 ἄλλ' ὅτ' ἀναβρόξειε θαλάσσης ἀλμυρὸν ὕδωρ,
 πᾶσ' ἔντοσθε φάνεσκε κυκωμένη, ἄμφι δὲ πέτρῃ
 δεινὸν βεβρύχει [...].
 τόφρα δέ μοι Σκύλλη γλαφυρῆς ἐκ νηὸς ἐταίρους
 ἐξ ἔλεθ' οἱ χερσίν τε βίηφι τε φέρτατοι ἦσαν.

On this side was Scylla. On the other side the goddess Charybdis sucked the salt sea water down, a terrible sight [...]. But when she drained the salt water down from the sea, then all the inside of the whirlpool could be seen in a maelstrom, the rock roared terribly all around [...] And that was when Scylla took six of my companions from the hollow ship, and all of them among the best in the strength of their arms.

By comparing Phryne to Charybdis, who swallows the sea and any ships sailing by complete with their crews, the author implies her to be more greedy and determined in her attempts to achieve her goal of “devouring” her clients’ fortunes than Nannion,²⁰ whom he mentions earlier. Drawing on the motif of Odysseus’ maritime adventure, Anaxilas both borrows from Homer’s epic poem and transforms vital detail, imbuing it with new meaning. Odysseus calls on his companions to row hard and steer the ship right so they can flee the ravenous Scylla while losing as few men as possible (*Od.* 12.214–216):

ὕμεῖς μὲν κόπησιν ἀλὸς ῥηγμῖνα βαθεῖαν
 τύπτετε κληῖδεςσιν ἐφήμενοι, αἶ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς
 δῶη τόνδε γ' ὕλεθρον ὑπεκφυγέειν καὶ ἀλύξαι·

You must sit by the rowlocks and strike the deep surf with your oars, in the hope that Zeus will grant us escape and deliverance from destruction here at least.

The hetaera mentioned in Anaxilas’ play is like Scylla, because one can escape her and “save the ship” if one uses the fir oar,²¹ or focuses one’s affections elsewhere in time. The comic poet very suggestively portrays the sad consequences of falling in love with the money-loving hetaera by making use of another point from Homer’s account of Odysseus’ crew encountering Scylla:

²⁰ Phryne and Nannion were famous courtesans of the fourth century BC. Both were mentioned in his catalogue of hetaerae by Timocles, fr. 27 Kassel-Austin. Also see Athen. 13.587a-b; 589d-591f.

²¹ In ancient Greece, ship oars were usually made of fir wood. There were firs among the trees Odysseus felled on Ogygia to make a raft (*Od.* 5.239).

namely in Odysseus' account, Scylla captures her victims to then pitch them high in the air so they can fall straight into her maw (*Od.* 12.247–249):

σκεψάμενος δ' ἐς νῆα θοὴν ἄμα καὶ μεθ' ἑταίρους
ἦδη τῶν ἐνόησα πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὑπερθεῖν
ὑψόσ' ἀειρομένων· ἐμ δ' φθέγγοντο καλεῶντες.

When I looked back over the fast ship and my crew, I caught sight of their arms and legs already carried high above me: and in their anguish they were crying out to me [...].

A similar end awaits those who fall for the wrong woman and fail to withdraw while there is yet time (Anaxilas, fr. 22, 29–30 Kassel-Austin = Athen. 13.558e):

οἱ δ' ἐρᾶσθαι προσδοκῶντες εὐθύς εἰσιν ἡρμένοι
καὶ φέρονθ' ὑψοῦ πρὸς αἴθρα· [...]

But the others, who think she loves them, are
immediately grabbed
and carried off high into air. [...]

Then a mention of another hetaera, Theano,²² is an opportunity to remind the audience of Odysseus' adventure with the Sirens, who were depicted as birds with women's faces (fr. 22, 20–21 Kassel-Austin. = Athen. 13.558c):

ἡ Θεανὼ δ' οὐχὶ Σειρήν ἐστιν ἀποτετιλμένη;
βλέμμα καὶ φωνὴ γυναικός, τὰ σκέλη δὲ κοψίχου.

Isn't Theano a Siren with no feathers?
She looks and sounds like a woman – but she's got the
legs of a blackbird!

Anaxilas seems to suggest here that, just like the Sirens, Theano seduces her victims with her lovely voice, concealing her true intentions, which actually come down to her hunger for the wealth of the man in love with her.²³ The twofold, man-threatening, Siren-like nature of the hetaera may be indicated by her blackbird legs. Anaxilas' character is here presumably warningly addressing a man in love with the titular Neottis. A warning against the enchanting song of Sirens, who used it to lure and then kill sailors, is given Odysseus by Circe (*Od.* 12.41–46):

ὅς τις ἀιδρεῖη πελάση καὶ φθόγγον ἀκούση
Σειρήνων, τῷ δ' οὐ τι γυνὴ καὶ νήπια τέκνα

²²Mentioned by Antiphanes, fr. 12.12 Kassel-Austin.

²³On similarities between hetaerae and Sirens, cf. *AP* 5.161 and Paus. 9.34.3. Also see Casolari 2003, 215–216.

οἴκαδε νοστήσαντι παρίσταται οὐδὲ γάννυται,
 ἀλλά τε Σειρήνες λιγυρῆ θέλγουσιν ἀοιδῆ,
 ἦμεναι ἐν λειμῶνι· πολὺς δ' ἄμφ' ὅστεόφιν θίς
 ἀνδρῶν πυθομένων, περὶ δ' ῥίνοι μινύθουσιν.

If any man approaches in ignorance of the danger and hears the voice of Sirens, then he will never return home to have his wife and young children crowd round him and take their joy in his home-coming, but the Sirens bewitch him with their clear-sounding song. They sit there in a meadow, and around them there is a great pile of rotting men's bones, with the skin decaying on them.

However, unlike the character in Anaxilas, Circe speaks directly of the danger braved by all those deceived by the Sirens' voice.

The examples cited here of Odyssean motifs re-worked demonstrate that in Middle Comedy the foundation for interpreting mythical motifs and characters is made of associations which result from inserting them into the various contexts of everyday life, making it possible to expose or highlight the characters' bad features. This rationalization of the heroes of Homer's epic poetry, depriving them of their heroism, allows the creation of stereotypes of comic characters' attitudes and behaviour. In contrast to his original epic version, this Odysseus is not immune to the spell cast by the entities in female form that he encounters in his travels, eagerly choosing to have amorous adventures at their side, becoming a "gourmet" of women and strong wine.²⁴ Scylla, Charybdis and the Sirens stand for greedy courtesans who are a threat to the men they seek to destroy. Circe, on the other hand, is now a drunken old hag, now a lewd hetaera who uses her power to control the man.²⁵

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²⁴As observed by Casolari (2003, 224), highlighting the erotic aspect of Odysseus' adventures (stays) at Calypso's and Circe's in comedy makes him undergo the transformation "vom treuen Ehemann der Penelope zu einem 'epikureischen' Genießer". Greek comedy, including Middle Comedy fragments not discussed in this paper, most often attributes to Odysseus another vice, namely gluttony; cf. Epicharmus, *Sirens*; Cratinus, *Odysseis*; Eubulus, *Nausicaa*; Theopompus, *Sirens*; *Odysseus*. On this subject, see Jouanno 2012, 253–260. Combined with his cleverness, that vice made Odysseus the prototype for the character of the parasite (*parasitos*) in the Roman *palliata*.

²⁵Hawes (2014, 106; chapter "Heraclitus. *Peri Apiston*") uses the example of Heraclitus' *De Incredibilibus* to note that a similar effect of transforming a myth is achieved when it is rationalized: "One prominent aspect of Heraclitus' approach is his tendency to interpret female figures from myth as greedy *hetairai*. Thus, [...] Circe uses lust to bewitch and control men (16), [...] the Sirens bankrupt their clients (14), and Scylla, in 'devouring' hers, might be said to do the same." Cf. Keiser 1964, 121–123.

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ODYSSEAN MOTIFS IN THE MIDDLE COMEDY:
WITCHES, MONSTERS AND COURTESANS

S u m m a r y

The importance of Odyssean mythical motifs to Middle Comedy authors as a source of inspiration can be gleaned from the plays by Anaxilas and Ephippus, preserved in small fragments. Drawing on the motif of animal transformation and of Odysseus' encounter with Circe and mythical monsters, the poets borrow from Homer's epic poem and transform vital details, inserting them into new, often surprising contexts, and imbuing them with new meaning. The rationalization of the heroes of Homer's epic poetry allows the creation of stereotypes of comic characters' attitudes and behaviour. In the comic versions of the Odyssean myth Odysseus loses his heroic characteristics, revealing human weaknesses: a tendency to get drunk on wine and to give in to feminine charms, while Circe and the mythical creatures in female form: Scylla, Charybdis and Sirens, are interpreted as greedy courtesans who seek to destroy or control the men.