

Girl Guides:

Towards a model of female guides in ancient epic

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Declaration

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I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was not used. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Classics in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

Signed: _____

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Abstract

Numerous ancient epics and their heroes share certain characteristics. Lord Raglan and Joseph Campbell, among others, developed these characteristics into hero models. In their models, it is mentioned that many heroes undergo a *katabasis* or a figurative death and resurrection. The presence of a female guide in the hero's descent into the Underworld has been largely neglected in Classical scholarship, despite the fact that the study of epic has been for some time a largely saturated field. It will be this aspect of the epic that I intend to examine. I will be examining a selection of female guides and will create a model consisting of their similarities loosely based on those models of Raglan and Campbell.

I will be examining the role of female guides in various epics; namely, the Gilgamesh Epic (Siduri), the Odyssey (Circe), and the Aeneid (the Sibyl) and in a later chapter, those in the Argonautica (Medea) and the Pharsalia (Erichtho). In addition to these guides, I shall be examining one guide that does not come from epic, Ariadne. The female guides I shall be examining appear in two forms, either as a literal guide who descends with the hero into the Underworld, or as a figurative guide who provides assistance from a distance through advice or instruction. One of the reasons why I feel that this topic is of importance is the socio-historical context in which these texts were written, times and places when women played a largely inferior and subservient role to men. The fictional literary guides seem to be representing strong and independent women. I find this to be remarkable considering the times that these texts were written in. The analysis of these female guides will conclude with a compilation of the similarities they share that shall form the basis for my own female guide model. My

model will be established in two consecutive steps: first the female guides Siduri, Circe and the Sibyl will be examined and a preliminary model established. In addition, I will try and prove a common ancestry for them. Secondly, I will test my preliminary model on Medea, Erichtho and Ariadne. As a result, I will propose a final model comprising all the female guides dealt with in my dissertation. This model will be my contribution to scholarship on epic literature from a Comparative approach.

Abbreviations

All abbreviations follow those found in the The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 3rd Edition (Hornblower, S. and Spawforth, A. (eds) (1996) Oxford University Press (Oxford)).

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Introduction

Epic literature is a literary genre that includes a wide variety of often-diverse male and female characters. This dissertation will examine a certain type of female character who guides the hero and is present in many epics. Foley states that

‘.. ancient epics in fact contain a much broader range of important female figures, even if they must often act and speak from the margins of the male community.’¹

The role of female characters in epic is neatly summed up by the above quotation. Male characters make up the majority of lead and supporting roles in epic literature, but alongside these men exists the strange enigma of the female character. The clichéd Penelopes and Helens of literature are predominantly the only female characters who in the past were examined in great detail. On the periphery of these conventional male constructions of female characters - that of the *passé* virgin and the whore - is the seeming anomaly that is the female guide. She is a variance that seems to exist on the outside of cultural hegemony,² both of ancient societies in general and those societies that are contemporary to each respective epic. The role this peculiar character plays in the epic hero’s fulfillment of his destiny is of fundamental importance, as without her, he cannot step through the door that is the realization of his future.

¹ Foley, 2005. p104.

² Gilbert&Gubar, 1979. p19.

The female guides³ that this dissertation intends to analyse are crucial to the success of the hero, as without them, the hero's descent into the Underworld, his *katabasis* - a characteristic that many heroic narratives share - would probably not be possible. This *katabasis* is crucial to the plot development of each respective epic, as the '... narrative centre of all the adventures is the descent to the Underworld.'⁴ Yet, few scholars seem to regard the important role of these female characters in the *katabasis* as worth investigating. To date, I have found virtually no scholarship that acknowledges their shared importance and relevance to both the development of the hero and the plot. What makes epic literature and their heroes so remarkable is the fact that many of these heroes share fundamental characteristics. In addition to their shared characteristics, the plots of the respective narratives also share some basic similarities. Lord Raglan developed these similarities into his Hero Model, the early findings of which appeared in the Folklore journal.⁵ In this model, Raglan proposes that many heroes undergo a figurative death and resurrection, which as mentioned above, is known as a *katabasis*. The word *katabasis* comes from the Greek words κατά meaning down and βαίνειν meaning to go.

It will be this *katabasis* and the role of the female guide in this journey that I intend to examine. As mentioned previously, I have found in my research that the presence of a female guide in the hero's descent into the Underworld has been largely neglected in Classical scholarship, and that in fact, '... a tradition has evolved of downplaying or

³ I choose to use the word guide to describe all these characters, as they all provide guidance to the hero and it is then in this sense that I use the word guide. I chose not to use any other word such as adviser or helper as I am looking more generally in the sense of providing guidance in some form; adviser or helper I feel defines their role too specifically.

⁴ Slatkin, 2008. p 323.

⁵ Raglan, 1934. pp 212-231. His model shall be discussed and analysed at a later stage in this chapter.

ignoring the heroic deeds of female characters.’⁶ It is my belief that the fundamentally important role that these female guides play in both the development of the hero’s character and of the plot itself, has for too long gone unexplored. It is my aim then to give these wise women the acknowledgement and examination I feel they deserve. The *katabasis* I intend to examine comes in a number of forms, there are the more literal ones when the hero does ‘go down’ into the Underworld, but there are also other examples where this journey is more of a figurative one. In these instances, the journey undertaken by the hero is reminiscent of a trip to the Underworld, as it is something necessary for the hero to carry out in order to be able either to proceed with his future or even to save his own life.

I shall begin my project, which is predominantly concerned with epic literature, by examining three of the most well-known and popular epics that span three cultures and three millennia, the Gilgamesh Epic, the Odyssey and the Aeneid. In addition to these epics, in Chapter Five I shall also examine two additional epics, namely the Argonautica and the Pharsalia. The motivation behind this lies in the fact that although they span a massive period of history and cultural development, these epics all bear significant similarities that shall be explored in the subsequent chapters: The Gilgamesh Epic originates from Mesopotamia; in this epic the hero is Gilgamesh and the guide Siduri, the Greek epic the Odyssey, which features Odysseus and Circe as the woman who aids him, and the Roman epic the Aeneid, featuring Aeneas and the Sibyl as his guide. What is particularly striking about this group of female characters are the numerous similarities that these characters share despite their varying backgrounds and character portrayals; that of a seemingly authoritative female character within an androcentric text,

⁶ Mbele, 2006. p 62.

i.e. ‘this is the view that the male sex is primary and the female secondary in the organic scheme that all things center, as it were, about the male.’⁷ It is then with the idea of androcentrism in mind that I analyse these texts. The term androcentric comes from ἀνδρός, the Greek word for ‘man’ and κέντρος meaning ‘centre’, androcentric refers to literary concepts and models based on an exclusive male tradition, yet taken to be normative for literary and critical texts generally. As the dominant frame of reference in a patriarchal culture, androcentrism subordinates female experiences, concerns, and values, and suppresses women’s ‘texts or labels them inferior in terms of specifically male standards of literary worth.’⁸ Gilbert and Gubar’s argument⁹ regarding women as literal constructs of man’s ideal breaks down the various ideas of women within a male conceived text and shows how women can evolve from object of text to creator of text.¹⁰ It is through this book that I have realised that the female guides are textual constructs within an androcentric text. They exist within three layers of male gaze; the patriarchal system, the androcentric male author enforcing this patriarchal norm and the female character constructed in relation to the androcentric text. As the focus of their book is female authorship and Victorian women, its function for this dissertation is primarily that of providing a scope of theory. It is the lacuna of the downplayed importance of a certain type of female characters that I intend to explore by creating a model into which these guides can be placed and will thus be appreciated for their important roles.

My goal then is to examine these various guides within the context of their literary texts as well as the socio-political environment in which the texts were composed; this is in

⁷ OED s.v androcentric.

⁸ Childers and Hentzi, 1995. p11.

⁹ *Madwoman in the Attic*. 1979.

¹⁰ Gilbert and Gubar, 1979 pass.

order to develop a model into which they all may fit. This model shall be loosely based on those of Joseph Campbell and Lord Raglan,¹¹ who in the early to mid twentieth century created models of the characteristics of various heroes. In addition to these abovementioned three female guides, I shall also be looking at other female characters I believe to be guides in their own right; namely Medea, Erichtho and Ariadne. The sources for these additional guides come primarily from epic literature, though they do also include non-epic literature such as poetry, drama, biographies and histories. The reason that this additional group of guides shall be included is to compare them to the model that shall be constructed and they will act as the ‘guinea pigs’ with which to judge the validity of the model.

Many of these female characters seem to represent women in a position of authority, the significance of which shall be explored in the conclusion of this dissertation. As mentioned earlier, it must be taken into consideration that all these female characters exist within an androcentric framework. Namely, that of the male-authored male hero, and the often subservient and minor female characters within epic. All of the authors that I am dealing with have an andocentric bias,¹² which must be considered when analysing their descriptions and portrayals of women. This shortcoming seems to be explicable in terms of the cultures from which these texts are derived, and is even expected considering this fact. This warrants an analysis of the societies wherein the epics were composed, and the literal context of the epics for a better understanding as to why women in these texts were authored as they were. This context analysis will also

¹¹ These two models shall be examined in further depth at a later stage in this chapter.

¹² Pomeroy, 1976. Pass. This bias is implied by the mere fact of the male authorship of the texts. This in turn means that any women authored, will have to contain at least a degree of subjectivity due to this fact of the male author.

aid in depicting the inherently male oriented societies in which these texts were composed.

Specific attention will be placed on the roles of women contemporaneous to the writing of the texts, as women are the primary subjects of my analysis. As men wrote all the texts that I shall be examining, I must be aware that ‘... research tradition is guided by a male-orientated concept of epic.’¹³ These female characters are then the speculation of male authors and exist as the ‘other’ of men. This ‘associates her with a series of othered terms and concepts within a larger set of oppositions that organize the Western patriarchal symbolic order’.¹⁴ In essence, this is the creation of women as the binary opposition to men, such as black is to white and good is to bad; it is with this concept that Western society has largely been structured, with the idea of positive and negative complements. This will be relevant to me as all the texts that I am examining were written by men in the contexts of male dominated, and predominantly what would now be classified as Western societies. As all the characters I am looking at are women, it is important to remember; that these female characters are male constructed and will therefore contain a large degree of author subjectivity

There are a number of questions that arise when one begins the analysis of such ancient texts. Would the examination of the guides within the context of modern theory prove to be anachronistic? How does the fact that all the authors of these texts are male impact on our understanding of these female characters, and how does it shape their representation? Does the fact that most of the guides are divine affect their reflection of

¹³ Mbele, 2006. p 62.

¹⁴ Irigaray in Hitchcock, 2008. p 147.

ancient women? Does the limitation of cross-cultural analysis impede the success of the model? It is necessary to bear these problems in mind at the outset of this dissertation.

Theoretical Background

The outcome of this dissertation will be influenced by the models established by Lord Raglan and Joseph Campbell. The reason for choosing these two specific models is that both follow a long tradition of models and both examine different aspects of the hero. Their predecessors were the likes of Frazer, the Victorian Tyler, the late nineteenth century Von Hahn and the Freudian Rank.¹⁵ Lord Raglan's model uses a number of heroes as diverse as Odysseus, Jesus and Beowulf,¹⁶ all of whom bear certain similarities such as a divine father, a challenge to their throne, and the aid of a divinity in their quest. It is by this measure and guiding principle set out by Raglan that heroes other than those mentioned above are examined and compared. Lord Raglan's Hero Model is one of the sources for this dissertation as he is the most thorough of all hero myth modellers.¹⁷ Lord Raglan's hero model shall also provide a general outline on which to base the common characteristics of the female guides I shall examine. His model will also provide a guideline as to how my own model should be structured, and it reinforces my argument about cross cultural similarities and continuity, without necessarily apparent explanations for this.¹⁸

Major Fitzroy Richard Somerset, 4th Baron Raglan, created his model when he realised the surprising similarities shared by many heroes. It is from this observation that he developed his Hero Model that is still used as a basis for analysis of heroes in many

¹⁵ It is not necessary to expand on these other authors, as although they may have influenced Raglan and Campbell, their specific models will not be shaping my own.

¹⁶ Raglan, 1934. p 224.

¹⁷ Segal, 2000. p18.

¹⁸ An important paradox to note and acknowledge at this stage, is the fact that as Lord Raglan's model is ultimately *for* male characters *by* a male author it is therefore androcentric in nature. The model I intend to develop is *for* female characters, although these characters are composed *by* male authors.

undergraduate university courses. An article published in the Folklore journal, The Hero of Tradition, lays out these characteristics and the various heroes who subscribe to them. His model was laid out thus:

1. His mother is a royal virgin.
2. His father is a king, and
3. Often a near relative of his mother, but
4. The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
5. He is also reputed to be the son of a god.
6. At birth an attempt is made, often by his father, to kill him, but
7. He is spirited away, and
8. Reared by foster parents in a far country.
9. We are told nothing of his childhood, but
10. On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom.
11. After a victory over the king and/or giant, dragon or wild beast,
12. He marries a princess, often the daughter of the predecessor, and
13. Becomes king.
14. For a time he reigns uneventfully, and
15. Prescribes laws, but
16. Later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects, and
17. Is driven from the throne and the city.
18. He meets with a mysterious death,
19. Often at the top of a hill.
20. His children, if any, do not succeed him.
21. His body is not buried, but nevertheless
22. He has one or more holy sepulchres.¹⁹

¹⁹ Raglan, 1934. p224.

Different heroes fit his model to varying degrees, but it is this set of standards to which most of the heroes comply. I intend to adapt this design in my own model of female guides, which shall be a compilation of the characteristics that most of the guides share. Different guides will undoubtedly fit to differing extents, as different heroes fit Raglan's model to different extents. Raglan's model is not without its faults. He consciously neglects anthropological theory and only examines heroes from certain cultures, tending in general to ignore those not of Western origin.²⁰ His model then is by no means inclusive or complete, nor does he take into account the possibility of **female** heroes. Another downfall of Raglan's model is that he focuses too much on aristocracy and he is often criticised as 'being preoccupied with kingship'.²¹ This preoccupation can be put down to the fact that he himself was a member of the aristocratic class in Britain. As his model is over eighty years old, its continued validity does come into question, but is useful nevertheless as a general outline for my own model.

To make up for this significant shortcoming, it is necessary to make use of Joseph Campbell's hero model in his book The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Although he fundamentally addresses the same issues as Raglan, his model is more detailed and subdivided, and he deals with a wider variety of heroes from more diverse cultures such as Osiris, Prometheus, the Buddha, Moses and Jesus, to name a few.²² The models of Raglan and Campbell highlight different aspects of the lives of the hero and the characteristics they focus on also differ considerably.²³ Campbell only looks at the adult

²⁰ As Raglan was presenting his model in the context of Folklore, this ignoring of additional cultures can be viewed as a deficiency, but as my model primarily concerns ancient Classical and Near Eastern epic, this exclusion in my own work can be explained by this very fact that my model targets Classical epic literature and not general characteristics of female characters.

²¹ Segal, 2000. p25.

²² Segal argues that Campbell's inclusions of such a large number of heroes, which only fit various facets of his model and do not systematically fit all of it, is in fact the downfall of his model. (2000. p 22)

²³ Segal, 2000. Introduction. Doty does however accuse Segal of oversimplifying his description of Campbell and Raglan's work in some of his earlier analyses. Segal accuses Campbell of not examining

part of the heroes' life and largely ignores the first half, which is the half that Raglan's model is primarily concerned with. Campbell does go on in his work to include additional characters that are fundamental to the success of the hero. For this dissertation, the most important additional characters are those contained in *Supernatural Aid* and *The Meeting with the Goddess*, the categories in which female guides fit. Campbell is important as he believes that 'Women, in the picture language of mythology, represent the totality of what can be known',²⁴ and my model will be dealing with women. It is structured as follows:

Departure

1. The Call to Adventure
2. Refusal of the Call
3. *Supernatural Aid* ²⁵
4. The Crossing of the First Threshold
5. The Belly of the Whale

Initiation

1. The road of Trials
2. *The meeting with the Goddess*
3. Woman as the Temptress
4. Atonement with the Father
5. Apotheosis
6. The Ultimate Boon

Return

1. Refusal of the Return
2. The Magic Flight
3. Rescue from Without
4. The Crossing of the Return Threshold

individual myths, but as Doty explains, in order for Campbell to retell the myths as he does, he does engage with them (Doty, 1988. p183). Segal's work, despite this, does still provide the best general criticism of both Campbell and Raglan.

²⁴ Campbell, 1954. p116.

²⁵ The italics are my own to emphasize the sections that are of importance for this dissertation.

5. Master of the Two Worlds
6. Freedom to Live

The abovementioned breakdown is only the first half of Campbell's book; the second part can be largely left out as it deals far too specifically with the hero and his attributes and is not relevant for this dissertation. This first half of Campbell's book however, I believe to be of importance to the outcome of my research. In *The Meeting with the Goddess*, Campbell describes how in world mythology women can come to represent the totality of what can be known but can conversely become ... 'reduced to inferior states; by the evil eye of ignorance she is spellbound to banality and ugliness. But she is redeemed by the eyes of understanding.'²⁶ What Campbell seems to be saying is that as long as these characters are not examined, and continue to exist as strange anomalies, they cannot be appreciated for the roles they play.

He is the only source I have encountered who has emphasized the importance of the female guide and her divine aid, which is visible in his chapter on *Supernatural Aid* and it is this emphasized importance that I will take into my own model. This section deals primarily with female characters that provide some form of assistance to the hero in various guises, and includes Isis and among others, Siduri, the only guide from my intended model who is included in this chapter. Although Campbell acknowledges this role played by women, he is also aware that the role that they do play relegates them to an almost non-existent support role. This is not to say that Campbell's model is without its own faults; it has in recent years in fact come under a great deal of scrutiny.

²⁶ Campbell, 1954. p116.

According to Campbell himself, his self-proclaimed approach to constructing his model was with a combination of psychology and psychoanalysis. He claims to use both Freudian and Jungian analysis, but in fact relies heavily on the latter virtually ignoring the former.²⁷ Campbell himself says ‘the whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero’s passage is that it shall serve as a general pattern for men and women’.²⁸ This is however not the case, as Campbell predominantly makes use of only male characters which would seem to render this an ineffective pattern for women due to their general exclusion. A further flaw in Campbell’s model lies in the fact that he considers all heroes ultimately identical²⁹ and completely ignores the first half of the heroes’ life, which to other modellers such as Raglan, is crucial. Miller believes that ‘large-scale declarations tend to be too grandly deductive (this is particularly true of Raglan and Campbell), and their hero is too strictly cast and limited by the image of the hero myth.’³⁰ Despite the seemingly extensive criticism these two models have received, it is important to reiterate that these two models will nevertheless still provide a rough outline and will be only a general guideline in the construction of my own model.

Whilst Raglan and Campbell explore the persona of the protagonist, I shall be examining the ancillary character of the female guide.³¹ Their models are undoubtedly androcentric as they contain the inherent problem of being *by men about men*. As I am examining female characters, this presents the problem of the androcentric concept being applied to the female characters and this will have to be modified within my own model. As these characters exist within the construct of the male-authored text, there

²⁷ Segal, 1987. p10.

²⁸ Campbell, 1954. p121.

²⁹ Segal, 1987. p4.

³⁰ Miller, 2000. p viii.

³¹ My model shall not attempt to be too grandly deductive, as the intention of my model is that it can also be applied to female characters that may not appear to be female guides at initial inspection and this then needs the model to allow for a certain amount of flexibility.

will inevitably be a degree to which one cannot escape the androcentric bias. It is at this stage important to acknowledge this. It is therefore necessary, if it is possible, to remove oneself from the grips of the male model, and attempt to create a model that represents to some degree a unique model for these characters that does not merely mirror that of the male characters.

My model will be focusing primarily on Greek and Latin epic literature; although Raglan received criticism for focusing on 'Western' heroes, my choice to focus on principally these two languages is primarily due to my focal point being Classical Epic Literature. Epic Literatures from other cultures, other than the Gilgamesh Epic, whilst not currently included in this dissertation, could potentially form the basis for a further study and analysis at a later stage. Just as both Raglan and Campbell only focus on a specific time in the heroes' lives, I too shall only be examining a section of the 'lives' of the guides at a specific time, namely the time that is discussed in the texts, and shall be focusing particularly on events that occur within the texts. It is Raglan's method of constructing his model that has primarily influenced my own, and as I do not intend to include a psychoanalytical or anthropological angle to my model, Campbell will not be my focus as these are the methodologies that he employs. While acknowledging the potential relevance of these types of analyses, as both show prospective angles into which to extend this research, at this stage, my model intends to analyse whether these female characters are societal anomalies by focusing principally on the text itself. Jungian ideas of archetypes have been extensively explored recently, even in Campbell himself, and this model will not attempt to be yet another one. The word limit of this dissertation only allows one aspect to be thoroughly explored in adequate detail and for this reason at this stage, anthropology will not be included as I feel pure textual analysis

to be of primary importance. The influence of Campbell manifests most importantly through his acknowledgement of the importance of female characters. This I intend to take a step further than he does and to develop the importance of one particular type of female character.

Methodology

‘The mutual illumination of several texts, or series of texts considered side by side; the greater the understanding we derive from juxtaposing a number of (frequently very different) works, authors and literary traditions.’³²

In order to establish my intended model, it will be necessary for me to investigate to what extent the female guides share similarities. I will therefore apply a Comparative approach, and it will be with this in mind that I closely read all my primary texts. As illustrated in the models detailed above, it is the *similarities* of these guides that will provide the basis for my model.³³ This will start with a hermeneutical in depth reading of each text. Then after having studied a variety of books on the methodology of comparative literature, the ones which shall be focused on will be Bassnet’s 1993 ‘Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction’ and a Panel Discussion ‘Classics and Comparative Literature: Agenda for the ‘90’s’. I chose to focus particularly on the latter as it deals specifically with the discipline of Classics and the use of the comparative approach when dealing with Classical texts.

It will be with my own interpretation of this comparative method, (which is basically a combination of the two mentioned above) that each chapter will involve the context of

³² Bassnett, 1993. p42.

³³ It is at this stage acknowledged that although a Comparative approach generally includes both the similarities *and* differences of the texts, as this is a model of similarities, the differences shall not be examined in the same amount of depth, as the similarities will be. It is also worth noting that if the differences were discussed in detail and included in this dissertation, it would in no way impact the outcome of the model. These differences will be briefly discussed in each chapter, followed by an explanation of their relative lack of importance. There will however be an investigation into why some similarities are more important than some differences when it comes to characterising what makes a guide a guide.

each epic being examined and each female character will then be compared to women at the time of composition, to establish to what extent these characters represent social norms. Once this has been established, each guide will be compared to the guide in the preceding chapter in order to establish how important their differences are, and this will then be followed by an outline of all their similarities, which form the base of my model. This will occur in each chapter and will culminate in the guide model which shall be an accumulation of all three primary guides' similarities. This model will then be applied to additional female character to challenge both the validity of the model and whether it can indeed be applied to other female characters. A final model consisting of the characteristics of all six female characters will follow this, which shall include a description of the characteristics that I feel to be indispensable. The conclusion, which shall follow, will sum up the findings of whether these characters are indeed just social constructs or not.

With regards to the three fundamental epics, the Gilgamesh Epic shall be discussed in Chapter One, the Odyssey will be discussed in Chapter Two, and the Aeneid shall be discussed in Chapter Three. I shall examine them chronologically to highlight any transmission that may become apparent. Following these three chapters, Chapter Four shall be the accumulation of these three comparative examinations, which shall be my preliminary guide model; this model will both outline the characteristics that all three guides share as well as characteristics I feel to be relevant that only two of the guides may share. Once this has been done, Chapter Five shall examine the three additional guides I have outlined above, and they will be the first guides tested to explore the validity of such a model after which will follow the revised model and the conclusion as

described above. This model will be my contribution to the scholarship on epic literature from a Comparative approach.

Literature Review

The following critical discussion on existing scholarship is not meant to be a completely comprehensive list of secondary literature on my topic. Of the multitude of publications that exist, I restrict myself to those that I feel to be of the most relevance to my topic. The role of women in the ancient world is a topic many feminists have found to be greatly appealing. Bullough, Shelton and Slavin's 1988 book³⁴ is an example of such a text. This book provides a great deal of insight into the lives and roles of women, extending from the development of agriculture to the present day. This book proves to be highly beneficial in the examination of the lives of 'real' women during the composition of the Gilgamesh Epic, the Odyssey and the Aeneid. Where this book falls short however, is in its consistent focus primarily on the subjugation and exploitation of women; it lacks the balance of an equally weighted examination into the power and influence that some ancient women did have, albeit relative. By focusing on the negative aspects of the lives of women, this book ignores the fundamental importance performed by the limited number of influential and powerful women who did exist, and in this way, is perhaps as destructive as the androcentric authors who also relegated these women into a position of inferiority. In essence, in striving to show the inequalities of women, this book effectively reinforces these ideas of subordination. My goal then is to compare and contrast both the positive and negative aspects of women's lives in an attempt to create a more balanced perspective.

³⁴ The Subordinate Sex: A History of Attitudes Toward Women. 1988.

Pomeroy's groundbreaking 1975 book³⁵ will provide the foundation of my examination into the lives of Greek and Roman women, as her book provides an in-depth examination of the roles of women as mothers, wives and daughters. Pomeroy argues that ancient sources whilst predominantly concerned with men, do not tell a modern reader much about ancient women, rather they reflect what men in the ancient world thought of women. She also provides insight into the drastically inferior role Greek and, to a slightly lesser extent, Roman women played in society. In addition to Pomeroy who some might suggest is out of date, the 1994 work by Fantham, Kampen, Pomeroy and Shapiro³⁶ provides a more 'up to date' examination of Greek and Roman women and their lives as does Cantarella's 1987 work.³⁷ These books are more exhaustive than Pomeroy 1975 and are then used in conjunction with the former in order to construct a picture of the lives of Greek and Roman women; both at the time the epics are set (which for the Odyssey and Aeneid is at roughly the same time), and at the time that the epics were written.³⁸ These books are therefore relevant for both the Odyssey chapter, and the chapter on the Aeneid.³⁹

I have only come across one book that deals with the similarities between various guides. Nelis in his book⁴⁰ outlines the similarities between Circe, Medea and the Cumaean Sibyl. The problem with this work however is that it does not look at the importance of these female figures; instead it merely uses the similarities of these characters as evidence to support the underlying theory of the similarities between

³⁵ Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves. 1975.

³⁶ Women in the Classical World. 1994.

³⁷ Pandora's Daughters. 1987.

³⁸ As there is not an exact date for the Odyssey, the eras in which it is hypothesized to have been written in will be examined.

³⁹ Other books that are used for examining the lives of women include Walcot 1984, Conkey 1991, Rabinowitz and Richlin 1993, Loraux 1995 and Katz 2000.

⁴⁰ Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius. 2001. This book is an extension of a chapter in Bouquet and Morzadec's 1994 book La Sibylle: Parole et représentation.

Odysseus, Jason and Aeneas. It is therefore necessary to piece information together from a number of diverse books and articles, none of which directly address the question at hand. Lynn Roller's 1999 work,⁴¹ deals primarily with Cybele or Kubebe. This primordial goddess is the one that many of the guides seem to share as a common ancestor, even those in Greek and Roman texts. This book provides a good foundation and background in the exploration of some Near Eastern female deities and their characteristics.

In recent years, there has been a steady increase in the scholarship dedicated to women of the ancient Near East. Bahrani's book⁴² is an excellent and relatively up to date source regarding the roles women played in the ancient Babylonian world. This book is fundamental for this dissertation as it is crucial to have an understanding of the lives of real women at the time the Gilgamesh Epic was composed, as this will provide a well-balanced outlook for the juxtaposition of fictional women constructed in this era. This book only deals with 'real' women and it is Harris' book⁴³ that fills the gap of female characters that exist in a number of Near Eastern works including the Gilgamesh Epic. As this book focuses primarily on women and their *traditional* roles in literature, it leaves the gap that Siduri, in her unconventional role shall fill within the next chapter. This book does however provide a great deal of valuable information regarding other female characters in ancient Near Eastern literature with whom Siduri can be compared. Unfortunately, I have not managed to locate any journal articles that deal with Siduri in the capacity in which I intend to examine her.

⁴¹ In search of god the mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele. 1999.

⁴² Women of Babylon. 2001.

⁴³ Gender and aging in Mesopotamia: the Gilgamesh epic and other ancient literature. 2000.

The shared similarities of the guides - which shall be expanded upon in due course - seems to suggest perhaps a shared ancestor. In order to further this hypothesis, it is necessary to examine to what extent if any, these guides have developed from a common ancestor or from a similar location. It is a well-known fact that Virgil borrows many ideas for his Aeneid from Homer's Odyssey. What is necessary then, is to see if the Gilgamesh Epic influenced Homer in any way. Any connections between the Gilgamesh Epic and the Odyssey are not as established as it initially seemed. It is therefore necessary to examine the works of two of the foremost scholars in the field of Near East transmission, ML West and W Burkert. ML West's 1997 text⁴⁴ is extremely comprehensive and deals with a wide range of Greek Literature and how it has been influenced by various Near East sources. West goes into great depth about the various methods of transmission down through the ages of Near Eastern supremacy. This source is fundamental for an understanding of Near East influence on the Mediterranean world.

Burkert's 1992 book⁴⁵ looks into various aspects of ancient Near East life to establish their influences on the Greek world. Through looking at craftsmen, healers, seers and gods, Burkert constructs a convincing argument about the influence of the Near Eastern world. Burkert's expertise cannot be called into question as he is regarded as one of the foremost historians of Greek religion. His later book⁴⁶ promised to be an extension of his critically acclaimed 1992 work but unfortunately proved to be little more than a retelling of the same theories shrouded in a different exterior. When referring to Burkert then it will invariably refer to the former work. Schrott's controversial 2008 Homers Heimat deals with the hypothesis that Homer was in fact a scribe from the southern Anatolian province of Cilicia. Schrott believes that Homer's Iliad is an adaptation of

⁴⁴ The east face of Helicon: West Asiatic elements in Greek poetry and myth 1997.

⁴⁵ The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age 1992.

⁴⁶ Babylon Memphis Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture 2004.

various older epics, including the Gilgamesh epic. As he deals only with the Iliad his work is not directly relevant, but does provide an interesting groundwork for the theory of cross cultural influence.

Homer's Odyssey is probably the most famous of the epics to be discussed and whilst the scholarship on this topic does seem exhaustive, there is only one work that deals with Circe in adequate depth and that is the work by Judith Yarnall.⁴⁷ Yarnall's book examines the reception and the roles of Circe from before her Homeric inception all the way to the twentieth century. Yarnall's text is groundbreaking in this sense as she examines the goddess worship associated with Circe, and for the first time portrays Circe as an archetypal character associated with human vulnerability and feminine sexual attractiveness. Yarnall goes one step further and traces a connection between the various receptions of Circe and the social structures at the time of the reception. She makes the connection between the roles of women in society and society's attitudes towards female characters in ancient epic.

As Yarnall examined the roles of women in society contemporaneous to the various receptions of Circe, I intend to examine the role of women both at the time the Odyssey is set and at the time Homer was supposed to have composed it. Yarnall does not however discuss the significance of Circe's role as Odysseus' guide into the Underworld, but this is somewhat understandable, as her objective seems to have been more the reception of Circe through the ages rather than an analysis into her fundamental importance as the guide of Odysseus. In regards to the gender roles within the Odyssey, Doherty's book⁴⁸ provides a unique examination into the concepts of the

⁴⁷ Transformations of Circe: The history of an enchantress. 1994.

⁴⁸ Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences and Narrators in the *Odyssey* 1995.

various narrators within the Odyssey as well as the intended audience of the narrator, which although not valid for this particular analysis, is thought provoking nevertheless. Doherty's work also provides a good example of a feminist reading of a text. Her ability to perceive the rationale behind various female characters and their archetypes provides this dissertation with a groundwork from which to develop a more in depth examination of Circe.

Concerning the connection between Homer and Virgil, Quartarone's chapter on Homeric Parallels in the 2002 Approaches to Teaching Vergil's Aeneid provides a good basis from which to expand the particular similarities in Book 6 of the Aeneid. The Aeneid is an Augustan epic and an examination of Virgil's context is relevant for an understanding of the characterization of the female characters (and the Sibyl specifically) in his epic. In relation to Augustan ideology and legislation regarding women, Martindale's 1997-edited book The Cambridge Companion to Virgil, provides a number of articles that offer a good general overview of both Virgil himself, and various aspects of the Aeneid. Levi's work⁴⁹ provides a good overview of both Virgil's early personal life as well as the Roman world he lived in.

Virgil as an author and his epic the Aeneid, are also topics that have been often exhaustively examined. Here though, there exists a paucity of information regarding the Sibyl as Aeneas' guide, although there is the 1988 book by Parke entitled Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity. This book provides examinations of the various Sibyls that existed throughout the Mediterranean and Near East, including both Jewish and Christian Sibyls. Although a whole chapter is devoted to the Cumaean Sibyl,

⁴⁹ Virgil: His Life and Times 1998.

Parke does not really examine her significance as a guide to Aeneas in the underworld but rather looks at her more generally and in relation to the numerous other Sibyls, which is useful, but does leave a gap. Another book that appeared useful is the French book La Sibylle: Parole et représentation.⁵⁰ This book is a compilation of chapters, which describe various Sibyls from Jewish, and Old Testament backgrounds and includes an analysis of the term ‘Sibyl’ as being a generic name for a fanatical virgin and even discusses an Arthurian Sibyl. The most interesting chapter for this dissertation is the one by the Irish scholar Nelis, entitled ‘La Sibylle et Médée: Virgile et la tradition argonautique’ as it provides a fairly detailed comparison between the Cumaean Sibyl and Medea in Apollonius’ Argonautica. Nelis at a later stage however, expanded on this chapter in his 2001 book that has been discussed above and it is this book then that shall be used as it is a revised and updated version of his earlier chapter. Parker’s 2004 article on the Vestal Virgins entitled *Why were the Vestal Virgins? Or the Chastity of Women and the safety of the Roman state* is important in the sense that it provides some insight into one of the aspects of religion that women seem to have been able to play a prominent role in.

For the other guides who will appear in Chapter Five of this dissertation, I shall be examining a number of sources of their myths. In some cases, multiple versions of the guide’s story will be discussed as opposed to single authors, except in instances when only one author exists. This is in order to get a more rounded perspective of these female characters. For all texts that shall be examined in this dissertation, the use of well-known translations shall be favoured over my own, as I shall not be altering the general gist of any of the stories. For Medea, as I shall be focusing primarily on the

⁵⁰ (Eds.) Bouquet and Morzadec, 1994.

version by Apollonius of Rhodes, I shall be using Green's 1997 translation and commentary as in addition to a new translation. Green includes a great deal of background information. As mentioned previously, Nelis' 2001 Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius is a very interesting source as it provides detailed connections between the two epics, as well as the their characters; including a connection between Medea and the Sibyl. In addition to this, I shall also be using the 1997 collection of essays edited by Claus and Iles Johnston entitled Medea.

For Lucan's Erichtho, Ahl's 1976 Lucan: An Introduction provided a good framework from which to explore Sextus Pompeius and Erichtho, as well as providing a general background to Lucan's fascination with Virgil, which is mirrored in his work. For a more in depth examination of Erichtho, Johnson's 1987 Momentary Monsters. Lucan and his heroes dedicates a whole chapter to Erichtho and her very peculiar depiction. Johnson also draws parallels between Erichtho and the Sibyl which proved to be surprisingly numerous. Webster's 1966 article The Myth of Ariadne from Homer to Catullus illustrates the wide variety of sources for the Ariadne myth, which has proved to be most beneficial for this study as I felt it necessary to look at a number of the versions of the Ariadne myth to get a greater scope of understanding about her character. Newman's 2003 A Genealogical Chart of Greek Mythology helped to source the familial connections between particularly Circe, Medea and Ariadne.

My intention is to fill the void that I feel this extensive variety of scholars have neglected. A comprehensive and comparative study of the wide variety of female guide characters who all seem to share characteristics that are inherently the same, yet to this day, have not been explored to their full capacity in comparison to one another.

Chapter One

Siduri the Alewife: *The original female guide*

‘The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is the longest and greatest literary composition written in cuneiform Akkadian. It narrates a heroic quest for fame and immortality, pursued by a man who has an enormous capacity for friendship, for endurance and adventure, for joy and sorrow, a man of strength and weakness who loses a unique opportunity through a moment’s carelessness.’¹

It is appropriate that the Fertile Crescent, the place where agriculture and some say civilisation began,² also happened to be the place where the genre of epic literature began. Mesopotamia was believed to be the birthplace of narrative or epic poetry.³ The Mesopotamian Gilgamesh is the first of a long line of heroes who made their mark in epic literature throughout history. These heroes all had a role to play in the development and sustainment of their respective civilisations and histories. Gilgamesh, as far as one can see, was the first hero to appear in literature and the numbers of heroes that followed him are numerous and occur in many cultures.

The Gilgamesh Epic was recorded in the Mesopotamian area, which consisted of a large urbanised society that was supported by agriculture and pastoralism. The people of Mesopotamia had a good written tradition, and the language they wrote in was Akkadian, a term that encompasses both Babylonian and Assyrian dialects. They wrote on clay tablets in the medium of cuneiform and it is from tablets such as these that have

¹ Dalley, 1989. p 39.

² Diamond, 1997. Pass.

³ Kramer, 1946. p121.

been excavated over the years, that we now possess a means by which to fill in the gaps between our known history of this world and its myth. It is from such clay tablets that we have received the Gilgamesh Epic written some 4500 years ago.

Fragments of twelve tablets exist that detail events in the life of Gilgamesh, and although they are supposedly based on historical facts, incidents dealing with mythological creatures such as the scorpion men and the bull of heaven for example, highlight the difficulty in accepting this as a purely historical narrative. These particular fragments are dated to be from about 2600 BCE but the more complete version we possess today dates from approximately 2150 BCE.⁴ The life of Gilgamesh is explored in this fragmented epic and according to myth, he was two parts god and one part man.⁵ His father is believed to be Lugalbanda, a high priest of Kullab,⁶ and his mother is supposedly Ninsun, the goddess Lady Wild Cow,⁷ and it is from her that he possesses his divinity. Historically, he appears in the factual Sumerian King List and he is the fifth king of the Erech/Uruk Dynasty. This is the second dynasty after the great flood and he ruled a city named Warka, which is in modern day Central Iraq. This King List does state, however, that he ruled for well over a hundred years, so its reliability does come into question.⁸

Already here we encounter a degree of confusion, as Gilgamesh appears not only in historical records but also in mythology. This creates a sense of ambiguity between fact and fiction and it is difficult to differentiate between the factual Gilgamesh and the Gilgamesh in myth. There are a variety of myths and supposedly factual stories

⁴ Dalley, 1989. p46.

⁵ Dalley, 1989. p40.

⁶ Kullab was the name of a quarter in the city of Uruk as well as in Babylon (Dalley, 1989. p324).

⁷ Dalley, 1989. p41.

⁸ Ibid. p 40.

involving Gilgamesh, but for this chapter only the one involving Siduri the alewife is relevant. She appears in the tenth tablet of the Akkadian version, which is towards the end of the epic.⁹ As Siduri is a character constructed by what is more than likely a male author, tradition ascribes the authorship to an incantation priest and master scribe named Sin-leqe-unnini.¹⁰ It is important to attempt to look beyond the construction of her character in an attempt to try to re-examine the character of Siduri from a more neutral perspective. In order to do this it is important to understand the context of the Siduri episode and the roles conventionally occupied by women at the time of writing. As little evidence exists of life in the early part of the Erech dynasty, when Gilgamesh supposedly ruled, it will be the contemporary society of the second century BCE that shall be examined, as this is the era in which the version I shall use dates from. This is in order to appreciate Siduri's importance and relevance to the larger task at hand, that of the development of the female guide model. Before I explore the narrative in detail, the Mesopotamian world into which this epic fits shall be examined in order to have an idea about the lives of women at the time the Gilgamesh Epic first appeared.

It is often difficult to pinpoint the exact roles of women as far back as the Third Millennium BCE, as this is when the earliest examples of the Gilgamesh text date from. This is due to the inherent androcentric bias that exists in early archaeological method¹¹ - that of predominantly male archaeologist excavating to find the remains of what they often believed to be ancient patriarchal societies - and it has to be with this in mind that these women are examined. In order to gain an understanding of the lives and roles of

⁹ There are three versions of the myth. The standard Akkadian version and the earlier Sumerian versions which are differentiated based on the opening words, and the Old Babylonian version which omits certain narratives all together. For this dissertation, the Standard Akkadian version shall be employed and whenever the text is referred to, it is this version, as it is in this version in which Siduri appears.

¹⁰ Dalley, 1989. p47.

¹¹ Wylie, 1991. See this work by Wylie for an in depth analysis of Gender Theory and Archaeology.

women at this time, it is necessary to take a number of factors into account, including literature, the Sumerian King List, women in written record, iconography and archaeological remains. In literature, other than the Gilgamesh Epic, there are far fewer women than there are men, and those that are present only play supporting roles.¹² This seems to be indicative of the society they were written in, as literature often mirrors life contemporaneous to composition and as historical women at this time often held positions of lesser importance; it makes sense then that they would also do so in literature.

The Sumerian King List on which (the historical) Gilgamesh features, is also an important source in examining the roles of women as there are two **female** kings on the list.¹³ This seems to indicate that women could indeed hold the position of king. As mentioned earlier however, the historical accuracy of the King List has come into question and it therefore cannot be used as a substantial piece of evidence that women did indeed hold positions of great power. Despite this, the fact that they are at least listed on the King List shows that at some time, women could have been regarded as worthy of holding this position. The one other position of relative authority we do know women held was that of high priestess in the temples. This could be used as a stepping-stone to moderate political authority.¹⁴ It seems strange that women would be allowed this freedom, but when one considers the fact that in Sumeria far more goddesses than gods are present in both literature and in temple remains, it seems possible that women could be the ones in charge of maintaining these temples.¹⁵

¹² Pollock, 1991. p369.

¹³ Ibid. p 369.

¹⁴ Pollock, 1991. p369.

¹⁵ Ibid. p 371.

At the é-Bau of Girsau,¹⁶ the temple to the goddess Bau, extensive economic records were discovered which detail how the temple was overseen and run by a female administrator.¹⁷ This temple was a self contained and largely self-sufficient unit that was operated in the third millennium BCE by women. The records found there indicate that women were indeed able to participate in economic life as equals to men, although separately from them.¹⁸ Bahrani suggests that ‘division between the public and private along male/female gender lines did not exist in the economy of Early Mesopotamia.’¹⁹ Even if one thinks in terms of the division between male and female in public and private life, as it existed, for example, in Greece and Rome,²⁰ there appears to be not as much gender exclusive activity in third millennium BCE Mesopotamia, though to a certain extent it did exist.

The story of Enheduanna remains in historical record and is a prime example of a woman with power. She was the daughter of Sargon, one of the greatest Sumerian kings; she was made high priestess of Nanna, the moon god, in both Ur and Uruk. In this position of authority, Enheduanna helped her father centralise his power. Before her elevation, he had held no jurisdiction or authority over these cities and it is with her help that he managed to secure his influence. It might initially seem if Sargon was merely using his daughter as a pawn in his power struggle, but upon closer investigation, it becomes clear that Enheduanna herself exercised substantial authority. She supposedly composed three epics on politics and religion, of which only fragments remain. The one is called ‘The exaltation of Inanna’, and through this work, she is believed to have

¹⁶ This was an important Sumerian city in the third millennium BCE (Dalley, 1989, p322.).

¹⁷ Bahrani, 2001. p104.

¹⁸ Ibid. p105.

¹⁹ Ibid. p105.

²⁰ See Chapters 2 and 3 for a more detailed description on the division between public and private life for men and women in Greece and Rome respectively.

extensively influenced hymnography and was in later times regarded as a goddess.²¹ She was eventually sent into exile as she was regarded to be both a religious and political threat to various leading figures.²²

Women who were not afforded the luxury of good birth seemed to work in a number of diverse fields, as recorded in economic texts. These women produced textiles, cooked, were involved in agricultural labour, herded, were midwives and even worked in animal husbandry, yet records show that they received a fraction of the remuneration that their male counterparts received.²³ Women might have done the same work as men, but they were not believed to deserve equal pay. A married woman was able to stand surety for someone or even buy real estate without her husband's intervention.²⁴ This relative economic freedom seems to suggest that although women may not have been viewed in equal terms to men, they did exercise a level of freedom not enjoyed by other women across the ancient Mediterranean. This freedom in itself may hint at Siduri's freedom, which at first glance will seem so out of place in an ancient patriarchal society.

The final clue we have about women and their lives is through art. One must remember that these works are predominantly *manmade* and when analysing the depiction of women this must be kept in mind. There are a number of statues in temples of goddesses, but these are not real women and cannot be considered part of the iconography of Sumerian women. The primary artefacts that remain depicting women are seals. On these seals, women are depicted far less frequently than men, though some seals have been found in the graves of prominent women. This would suggest that the

²¹ Fantham et al, 1994. p23.

²² Pollock, 1991. p370.

²³ Ibid. p372.

²⁴ Glassner, 1987. p83.

depictions on seals are indicative of the gender of their owners, and as men held far greater authority than women did, it would make sense that they appear more frequently on them. Those women who are depicted are engaged in scenes of weaving, pottery making, harvesting and other basic womanly chores. Men who are portrayed on seals are engaged in masculine endeavours such as war, partying and being involved in meetings of sorts.²⁵ These depictions seem to suggest a great deal about the different roles occupied by men and women as in these seals, both genders seem engaged in activities traditionally reserved for each sex. All this evidence creates a reasonable picture of women at the time of the composition of the Gilgamesh Epic. Women seemed to have experienced a degree of freedom and autonomy in certain instances; generally however, women clearly played a subservient role to men and were treated in such a way. It seems that the sphere in which women possessed the most power was in protecting their sons and it is only through these sons that women in Mesopotamian civilisations had relative influence.²⁶

The Gilgamesh Epic details the pursuits of the quasi-historical figure of Gilgamesh through his life, his quest for immortality and eventual death. He is a flawed character²⁷ with realistic attributes and the stories about him reflect both a realistically human and a divine character. The first nine books of the Epic are not fundamental for this project. The events leading up to Book X will however be briefly discussed in order to construct the context in which Gilgamesh visits Siduri. The point in the story where Gilgamesh encounters Siduri is a pivotal one. He has suffered many things including the death of

²⁵ Pollock, 1991. pp 381-382.

²⁶ Fantham et al, 1994. p22.

²⁷ Dalley, 1989. p 39.

his good friend Enkidu and he decides to journey to visit his ancestor, Ut-napishtim²⁸ who received eternal life after the Great flood. He does this because immortality has become a preoccupation to him since the death of his friend. His journey takes him through the realm of the scorpion men,²⁹ where they dissuade him from attempting to reach Ut-napishtim, yet he carries on through 24 hours of darkness. After doing this, the god Shamash also tries to discourage him, yet he still carries on until he reaches the seaside abode of Siduri.³⁰

Up until the episode featuring Siduri, women in the Gilgamesh Epic as a whole are relegated into almost non-existent support roles. Other than Siduri and Shamhat the prostitute, female characters in this epic are not even named. Even female characters that are quite instrumental such as the scorpion man's wife and the wife of Ut-napishtim remain nameless. This successfully robs them of any identity or individuality.³¹ Some scholars have suggested that 'Ancient Mesopotamians did not develop a system of binary gender equating male with positive and female with negative values.'³² If this is indeed the case, why then are the only women who have been encountered and contributed at all to the narrative in the Gilgamesh Epic: Shamhat, a prostitute, with whom Enkidu becomes human; Ninsun, who is Gilgamesh's mother; the two nameless wives and Ishtar, the goddess who floats in and out of most Mesopotamian narrative? None of these female characters seem to embody purely positive values and it is therefore questionable that the Mesopotamians did not have a binary system for gender. In fact, 'women are only regarded positively when they assist Gilgamesh (and Enkidu)

²⁸ Ut-napishtim is both a person and a place and can be classified as the Mesopotamian equivalent of the Classical Underworld.

²⁹ Gilgamesh IX: ii (Trans. Dalley).

³⁰ Gilgamesh X: i.

³¹ Harris, 2000. p122.

³² Asher-Greve, 1998. p29.

in those heroes' activities, when they nurture and advice in a maternal fashion.³³ This extremely limited role women play in this epic makes Siduri even more of an anomaly, as not only is she fundamental to Gilgamesh's fulfilment of his destiny, but she also represents a strong female character. Siduri's role is so important in fact, that in the Old Babylonian version, this role belongs to a male character³⁴ and Siduri is strangely absent. When this transition was made from a male to a female character is however unclear.

The significance of Siduri cannot be downplayed, as her depiction as such a wise and strong female character in the first millennium BCE is remarkable considering the traditional role women occupied at this time. She is even more remarkable in the fact that she does not have any sons, which, as mentioned earlier, would have afforded a certain degree of influence. Despite being seemingly childless which in itself is strange considering women are often defined by their role as procreators, Siduri seems to possess an inordinate amount of freedom for a woman. It is also important to note that Siduri is referred to as the doublet of Ishtar, specifically the Ishtar of Wisdom.³⁵ This connection will prove to be important at a later stage, as Ishtar is known as the 'Mistress of Animals' and this will help to connect her to Circe.

The occupation of an alewife for Siduri was no random selection. Alewives, as detailed in several laws such as the Code of Hammurabi and the Edicts of Amni-saduqa, show how female sellers of beer seemed to have lived outside of the normal jurisdiction of

³³ Harris, 2000. p120.

³⁴ Dalley, 1989. Pass.

³⁵ Ibid. p132.

women;³⁶ they are ‘extra-domestic.’³⁷ The ‘position of *Sabitu*, the woman responsible for brewing and selling beer, who was involved in credit transactions,³⁸ is the type of woman Siduri is supposed to have been. She would not have been under the protection of her male family members, but rather was protected by the state, as the women who provided beer on long distance trade routes were sponsored by the state.³⁹ At first glance then, she seems to be a free and liberated woman even by modern standards, but if the subtleties in the text are examined, her role becomes far more traditional than initially expected.

Indeed Siduri lives alone without a male guardian, yet she is also described as being veiled, the traditional attire of married women, so here already is the first contradiction. Yes, she is relatively free from male authority as an alewife, but this freedom is balanced with the modesty of a veil.⁴⁰ She appears as a wise woman providing Gilgamesh with advice, but when the advice is examined, it presents an ambiguity. She is advising him, but her message to him is to return home, settle down and become a family man. With this message, she is enforcing social norms⁴¹ and is showing that even a ‘free’ woman still believes in the traditional family values of Mesopotamia.

Like most of the Gilgamesh Epic, the text is fragmented which often makes it difficult to follow the intended direction of the narrative, as on many other occasions, the number of lines which have been lost is unclear. This makes it difficult to be sure how

³⁶ Ale-wives seem to have fallen into a gap between the prostitute, or non free women; and free women (Fantham et al, 1994, p 21).

³⁷ Harris, 2000. p122.

³⁸ Harris, 1987. p48.

³⁹ Dalley, 1989. p132n106.

⁴⁰ Harris, 2000. p124.

⁴¹ Ibid.

much of the story is missing.⁴² Fortunately, Book X is for a good portion relatively intact and where there is fragmentation, the narrative is still clear enough to follow. The Book opens with the same line Book IX closed with, ‘Siduri the alewife, who lives down by the sea’; although it is not overtly implied, there is a constant sense of Siduri’s divinity as she is able to direct him through a superhuman realm and as mentioned earlier is considered to be a doublet of the goddess Ishtar. The first line of Tablet X states that Siduri lives by the sea; she is also said to live by the place where the sun rises. At the end of Tablet IX, after a gap of about 24 lines, there is a description of how Gilgamesh, after emerging from the darkness, comes across Siduri’s house, which is surrounded by wilderness and is alongside the turquoise sea.⁴³ At the beginning of Tablet X, Gilgamesh only reaches Siduri after he passes through the gate of the Sun on Mount Mashu where he encounters the Scorpion people. The fact that Siduri is an alewife is reiterated in the lines that follow which describe her fermentation vats.⁴⁴ Here we have Siduri’s implicit connection to drinking which will prove to be important in the next chapter. There follows a brief description of Gilgamesh looking wild and pacing like a madman in a lion’s skin.⁴⁵

This is Siduri’s first glimpse of Gilgamesh and she is understandably nervous of him and hesitant to allow him to enter her house, as she suspects he might be an assassin. Siduri bolts the door⁴⁶ when she sees Gilgamesh approaching and is reluctant to let him enter. Once Gilgamesh realises Siduri has locked him out, he proceeds to verbally threaten her by detailing his numerous labours and then even tells her that he will smash down her door if she does not allow him to enter. He then changes his approach slightly

⁴² Dalley, 1989. p125.

⁴³ Gilgamesh IX: vi.

⁴⁴ Gilgamesh X: i.

⁴⁵ Gilgamesh X: i-ii.

⁴⁶ Gilgamesh X: i.

and explains why he has come to her, explaining how he fears death now that he has lost a dear friend and it is at this point that she relents and lets him in.⁴⁷

Gilgamesh asks Siduri to help him reach Ut-napishtim by giving him directions. Siduri is initially reluctant to help him, as no mortal had ever crossed the sea, (only the warrior god Shamash had ever successfully managed to cross it),⁴⁸ nor was there a ferry or any other way of getting across. Despite her hesitation to help him, eventually she relents and recounts to him how the waters that surround Ut-napishtim are lethal⁴⁹ and that the only way he may be able to cross is with the help of Ur-shanabi, the boatman of Ut-napishtim.⁵⁰ She then tells Gilgamesh how to find Ur-shanabi and what to do when he encounters him; he ‘... will be trimming a young pine in the forest. Go and let him see your face. If it is possible, cross with him. If it is impossible, retreat back.’⁵¹ Siduri had also told Gilgamesh that when the gods created mankind, they assigned death to humanity and reserved life for themselves. Siduri’s message means to teach Gilgamesh that man must accept his humanity.⁵² She was more than likely doing this as a way of cushioning his potential failure at reaching Ut-napishtim, but Gilgamesh, being the brute he is often depicted as, uses his physical might to ‘persuade’ Ur-shanabi to take him across to Ut-napishtim by physically assaulting him.⁵³ Although Book X continues for some length after this at which point the narrative becomes somewhat fragmented, but it is also here that Siduri leaves the narrative, as she has provided all the help that was necessary for Gilgamesh to reach his destination.

⁴⁷ Gilgamesh X: i.

⁴⁸ Gilgamesh X: ii.

⁴⁹ Dalley here connects this to the Classical view of the Underworld being surrounded by water, p132 n112.

⁵⁰ Gilgamesh X: ii. Ur-shanabi can be compared to Charon, who is the boatman of the Greek underworld.

⁵¹ Gilgamesh X: ii.

⁵² Abusch, 2001. p619.

⁵³ Gilgamesh X: iii.

The role Siduri plays in the narrative then seems to be one of verbal assistance, which is strange considering that women usually only appear in the narrative if they have some form of love connection with the hero. The relationship between Siduri and Gilgamesh appears to contain no subtleties of sexual tension of any sort. Tzvi Abusch has suggested otherwise. Abusch seems to think that Gilgamesh does indeed envisage a romantic connection with Siduri and that when in their dialogue he mentions that now that he has reached her (Siduri), he has found what he was looking for, he (Gilgamesh) means that he can stop his quest, as with her he can achieve both immortality and true happiness. Abusch believes that this is Gilgamesh making a subtle, yet simultaneously overt gesture to Siduri, which she rebuffs by detailing to him how he must find a mortal wife and have a child. If this is indeed the case as Abusch suggests, and that ‘At another time, Siduri might have been willing to be Gilgamesh’s temporary sexual partner,’⁵⁴ she would cross into a different categorisation of both guide and romantic partner.⁵⁵ This is an interesting consideration as, if this is indeed the case, this would potentially create an additional similarity between Siduri and Circe, as Circe is known to have been Odysseus’ lover.

The role that Siduri plays is critical for both Gilgamesh’s development and for our understanding of women in this text. Although Siduri initially seems to be somewhat of an anomaly within this text, when the roles of historical women were examined, it appeared that there were indeed women in Ancient Mesopotamia who held positions of authority. Siduri then seems to represent these women. As she seems to have lived on the periphery of society, there appears to be an undertone suggesting that woman who do have freedom, cannot live within the boundaries of conventional patriarchal society

⁵⁴ Abusch, 2001. p7.

⁵⁵ This suggestion of them being romantically attached is merely alluded to in the text and is elaborated upon by Abusch.

as there is no place for them. The limitations of freedom and the desire for Gilgamesh to lead a life of traditional values also highlights an important aspect of ‘real’ ancient Mesopotamian women, namely that, although they did enjoy relative freedom, they were still governed to a certain extent by the traditional roles afforded to them. Siduri is however remarkable in the sense that she created an example on which later female guides in other epics could be based.

The characteristics of Siduri that are important for this analysis are: she lives by the sea which is where the sun rises, she appears at a crucial point in the plot and as a divine ale-wife is aware that Gilgamesh will ultimately not receive immortality. She has abnormal independence and is initially hostile towards the hero as he threatens her. She does eventually relent and advises him on how to reach Ut-napishtim. Having then established these characteristics on which other guides can be based, the next step seems to be to connect her to another guide who appears to lead chronologically on from her, that is, Circe in Homer’s Odyssey.

Chapter Two

From Divine Alewife to Dread Goddess

The Transition from Siduri to Circe

‘Almost certainly Homer was acquainted with the Babylonian epic, or at least had heard tales of it. He lived at the interface of the Greek and Near Eastern worlds during the orientalizing period of Greek civilisation. And westward-moving Near Eastern literary and folk traditions like those associated with Gilgamesh may well have been part of his cultural heritage.’¹

The first step in this chapter is to establish to what extent the Gilgamesh Epic directly influenced Homer’s Odyssey. For this dissertation, it will be assumed that Homer is the author of both the Iliad and the Odyssey, as in this dissertation it is not necessary or relevant to entertain the debate about the authenticity of the one author hypothesis.² Numerous factors have been credited for the transmission of Near Eastern ideas to the Greeks. ML West’s work The East Face of Helicon has probably been one of the most influential books on this transmission or migration of ideas. West attributes this migration to a number of factors such as migration of peoples, trade and commerce through both sea traffic and on land routes as well as in various military conflicts.³ By the time Homeric epics were written, in approximately the eighth century BCE,⁴ West notes that a number of things had already migrated from the Near East to Greece: the

¹ Bryce, 2008. p88.

² Although Samuel Butler entertained the idea that a woman in fact authored the Odyssey, there is little evidence to support this hypothesis (Cantarella, 1987. p25). Although it is here noted, this hypothesis shall not be included in my examination.

³ West, 1997. pp 1- 60.

⁴ I follow here the traditional hypothesis in scholarship for the dating of the epics.

long sword, palace economy, weights and measures, the lyre, numerous loan words, iron working and goldsmith techniques, temples, ecstatic prophecy, *auloi*, and most importantly for this chapter, poetry books.⁵ Burkert on the other hand believes that in order to examine to what extent the Near East did in fact influence the Greek world, it is important to examine factors such as the world of craftsmen, healers and seers.⁶

Both Burkert and West have extensively explored the extent to which the Near East influenced the ancient Mediterranean world, including Greece; the Near East undoubtedly played an important role in the evolution of both Greek life and thought and it is through these migrations, that the Gilgamesh Epic is believed to have played its role in influencing Homer's Odyssey.⁷ Some have even suggested that 'the Gilgamesh elements in the travel tales are traditional and that the Odyssey audience would recognize them as such.'⁸ It does seem plausible that some knowledge of these traditions would have existed, albeit on a small scale.

'He (Homer) in turn became an agent in the process of east-west cultural transmission – a process that had probably already begun in the Bronze Age, and that led eventually to the incorporation into Greek literature of traditions whose origins lay in Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia. However, it is most unlikely that Homer was conscious of being an agent in this process. This would assign to his composition a dimension that was quite alien to his purpose. He composed with one main purpose in mind – to satisfy the expectations of a socially elite class that

⁵ Ibid. p 60.

⁶ Burkert, 1992. Pass.

⁷ For an in depth analysis of the extent of Near Eastern influence and the ways these ideas travelled into Greece, see West 1997 and Burkert 1992 and 2004.

⁸ Beye, 2006. pp175-176.

was mixed, but predominantly of Greek origins that lived in the Ionian region in western Asia Minor.’⁹

It has even been suggested by Sandars that Homer and other Ionian Greeks may have received the Gilgamesh Epic through the Lydians or Neo Hittites as remains of the Gilgamesh Epic have been excavated in these areas;¹⁰ Nagy believes that ‘It is enough to say that the Gilgamesh Epic, as preserved in the ‘library tablet version’ of the 7th Century BCE, (and most likely in other versions as well) came into contact with analogous ‘epic traditions’ of Greek speaking poetic craftsmen.’¹¹ In essence, ‘literary influence is to be accepted, even if the links, possibly via Phoenecian/ Aramean versions, have disappeared with the perishable writing materials on which they had been drawn.’¹² This disappearance is understandable if one remembers that early Greece was an oral society that did not have written texts, as stories were transmitted through verbal communication and there would therefore be no written record of the stories that were told. This then seems like a feasible explanation as to why no written evidence remains. It makes sense therefore that all that remains of these transmissions are familiar elements and characters veiled in other stories and myths. According to Schrott, Homer had access to an extensive library¹³ in Cilicia in which there were a number of Mediterranean and Near Eastern epics including the Gilgamesh Epic¹⁴ on which Schrott believes Homer extensively based the Iliad. Although he does not mention the Odyssey, and the unlikelihood of Schrott’s claim, it does nevertheless provide the tantalising possibility that Homer may have in fact used aspects of the Gilgamesh Epic in the Odyssey if he did indeed use them in the Iliad.

⁹ Bryce, 2008. p88.

¹⁰ Sandars, 1960. Pass.

¹¹ Nagy, 2008. p75.

¹² Burkert, 2008. p 301.

¹³ Schrott, 2008. p330.

¹⁴ Ibid. p332.

It would be difficult to fully appreciate the significance of a character such as Circe without first briefly looking at the lives of women in Ancient Greece; this is important, as basing ideas purely on one text, namely the Odyssey would leave massive gaps in the picture of women at the time of the epic. A problem arises here however, as the history of Ancient Greece spans quite a few centuries and one is faced with the question of which era in Greek history to examine, and what regions of Greece to concentrate on. It is therefore necessary to present an overview of women during the Bronze Age through the Dark Age and to the Archaic Period, as these periods cover both the time when the Odyssey was set and the time it is believed it was composed. This is an extensive but necessary time span, as it is nearly impossible to attach a completely accurate date to the authorship of the Odyssey, other than saying that it was written at some stage during the Archaic Period.¹⁵ One must bear in mind however that in later sources, there exists an ‘Athenocentrism of sources,’¹⁶ specifically the predominance of Athenian texts which reflect the extreme male dominance in Athens. This was largely unparalleled in the rest of the Greek world as no other city-state has such extensive written works remaining. However, as there is a paucity of evidence from the time of Homer, it is necessary to use these later Athenian sources to some degree in an attempt to gain a very general understanding of Greek women.

If one at least examines these three abovementioned periods, it becomes fairly safe to presume that women at the time of Homer’s writing will be covered; i.e.: during the setting of the Epic and the time it was composed in. Furthermore, at the outset of this

¹⁵ In this chapter I include analysis from both the setting of the epic and the time it is believed to have been composed but do not do so in Chapters One and Three. This is because in Chapter One, evidence is fairly limited from any one time frame and most evidence which is examined is from an accumulation of evidence from both the time of composition and the setting. Chapter Three, although set in roughly the same chronological time as this Chapter, is not examined in the same way as it is known and shall be shown, that Virgil largely bases his epic, although in a historical time, on his contemporary society.

¹⁶ Zweig, 1993. p146.

exploration it is important to remember that the Ancient Greek women that we know about are often not real women, but are women constructed in male sources and are therefore largely creations of what Greek men thought Greek women should be.¹⁷ There is 'a paucity of female voices directly expressing women's thoughts, beliefs, concerns and lives.'¹⁸ The Homeric poems are however, generally believed to be the first documents that exist that describe the lives of Greek women.¹⁹ It is therefore necessary to attempt to recreate the lives of women from what few female accounts remain and by sifting through the predominantly male accounts in order to try to come to some basis of understanding.²⁰

The original primary source from the Bronze Age is the oral tradition, which later culminated in the works of Homer. Arthur believes that 'the social position of women in Homeric times was roughly the same as in later times in Greece'²¹ The Bronze Age is of critical importance as the Odyssey is set in this era. In the Bronze Age, as in the ages that followed, society demanded that all women, i.e.; of a certain age be married,²² usually around puberty.²³ The only real exception in this era was the presence of matrilocal marriages the groom would live with the wife's family, and this would only occur if there were economic or adequate political motivations.²⁴ This was still not as common as the patrilocal alternative that one is most familiar with when considering ancient marriages, but the presence of such matrilocal marriages is worth mentioning as this mostly disappears in later ages.

¹⁷ Katz, 2000. p 512.

¹⁸ Zweig, 1993. p145.

¹⁹ Cantarella, 1987. p24.

²⁰ At this stage, it must be made clear that this analysis will be by no means a comprehensive one and a work dedicated to this topic should be referred to if further information is required. A good source to consult is Fantham et al. 1994 and Cantarella 1987.

²¹ Arthur, 1984. p14.

²² Pomeroy, 1975. p18.

²³ Cantarella, 1987. p2.

²⁴ Ibid. p14.

Marriages by capture or contest were also prevalent, which hints at the minimal role a woman would have had in deciding her own fate. Women were valued primarily for their beauty and accomplishments.²⁵ Women captured in conflict were more often than their male counterparts enslaved, many of whom would have shared the same fate as Homer's Trojan princess Cassandra, who ended up as a concubine to Agamemnon. That a sexual double standard existed is indisputable. Women were relegated the tasks of weaving and looking after the hearth. This would apply to royal women as well as slave women, as the role of women was to be in the home. Any involvement in politics or outside affairs would have been severely restricted because of these gendered roles. Women in this period were in a position of 'immutable subservience to a family head, whose powers as a husband were limited only by the competing power of the father.'²⁶ In other words, women were completely controlled by the κύριος or head of the household.²⁷

Women in the Bronze Age did however have more freedom than their later counterparts did. Although they were expected to be modest, they were not entirely secluded like later Greek women; they were even allowed to remain in public rooms with male guests.²⁸ What all this suggests is that although by modern standards, Bronze Age women led sheltered and controlled lives, compared to later Greek women, they experienced a sense of freedom, which women would not experience again until the Roman Republic. This freedom was however by no means absolute, and even Penelope who guarded Odysseus' interests while he was away at war, still fell under the power of her son Telemachus and even Andromache, who is often believed to represent archaic

²⁵ Pomeroy, 1975. p25 and Cantarella, 1987. p26.

²⁶ Cantarella, 1987. p32.

²⁷ Massey, 1988. p2.

²⁸ Ibid. p30.

female power²⁹ was still under the control of her husband Hector. This relative freedom is mirrored in some of the female characters in the Odyssey such as Circe, Calypso and the Sirens, who lived without the supervision of a father or husband. Even these isolated examples are opposed to the general picture of family and political organisation.³⁰

Evidence existing from the Dark Age is very minimal as, like its name suggests, this was a veiled period where the skill of writing had all but disappeared in Greece and even once the Phoenician alphabet had been adapted to Greek in the Archaic Period, there still exists only fragmentary literary remains. Therefore, in this Dark Age and the Archaic Period, archaeology and related disciplines are our main sources of ascertaining the roles of women. The problem that emerges when examining this era however, is the fact that the role of women was not uniform throughout Greece. It is therefore necessary to look at the roles of women in various city-states to get a more balanced perception on what the lives of women were really like. In upper class society and in most city states, political and financial expediency was fundamental in organising marital relationships, but again, women had little say over both their futures and prospective husbands as these decisions were left primarily to male family members. In Sparta, the primary concern of women was breeding children and as this was of such fundamental importance, women were treated with a certain level of concern and respect in the way that they were fed equally to men and were freed from the obligation of household maintenance, which became the sole responsibility of slave women. This relative freedom however is still linked to the breeding ability of a woman and is then not real freedom, but a superficial freedom based on the enforced gender roles that still governed their lives.

²⁹ Cantarella, 1987. p27.

³⁰ Cantarella, 1987. p32.

In Gortyn³¹ at this time, free women had the right to own, control and inherit property, which in most other cities in Greece was unheard of; penalties for adultery were also far less severe than they were in other city-states.³² Athenian women in particular did not experience any of the relative freedoms that other Greek women experienced, even though our accounts of them come from a later time. They were still primarily responsible for all housework and were not allowed to be around men who were not relatives. It is even suggested that when population limitations were necessary to enforce, female babies were subjected to ἔκθεσις,³³ exposure.³⁴ Later Athenian women are the most well documented women of Ancient Greece and it might be for this reason that we know relatively more about their lives, although it seems they were generally the most restricted. As there is limited information regarding other Greek women, we cannot know this for sure. As most evidence appears to be ‘Athenocentric,’³⁵ it is necessary to approach its reliability with scepticism. The status of women at this time in Athens seems to have reached a nadir.³⁶

Hesiod’s works, such as Works and Days and Theogony were written in the Seventh Century BCE and depict women in a light that must at least reflect to a certain extent the conditions of women in the Archaic Period. Hesiod’s perception of women is incredibly misogynistic (to use the modern term), he saw women as a necessary liability, and that women were all like the first woman Pandora, who is supposed to have brought numerous evils into the world of man. ‘Her name meant that every god had given her a gift - beauty, charm, grace, skill in women’s work, but also ‘a bitch’s

³² Cantarella, 1987. p42.

³³ Ibid. p43.

³⁴ Pomeroy, 1975. p46.

³⁵ Zweig, 1993. p146.

³⁶ Fantham et al, 1994. p 43.

mind and a thieving heart' and 'lies and tricky speeches'".³⁷ He believes that women deliberately deceive men to cheat them, and that any man who believes a woman, believes a cheat.³⁸ To Hesiod and other poets and thinkers such as Semonides, who was also from the Seventh Century BCE, women were like livestock whose merits must be weighed up according to certain principles.³⁹ Semonides even goes as far as to categorise women according to different animals such as a sow, an ass and a ferret; the only one of his categorisations of women that has positive attributes, is the bee woman, whom he claims to be very rare.⁴⁰

To them, women were mere commodities and were by no means remotely equal to men. To men such as these from the Seventh century BCE, 'Greek women were in fact little more than child bearers.'⁴¹ Women to Hesiod can be summed up as being but a necessary evil. In the eyes of Hesiod and some would argue many men of his time, 'the most important function of women, that of providing an heir, was crucial to the survival and continuance of the family in an era when availability of land was increasingly restricted, and continuance of rights over family and dependent upon the existence of an heir. From this point of view of this class (the 'middle class' to which Hesiod would have himself belonged)⁴² women's sexuality emerges as a threat and as a potentiality which required regulation and supervision.'⁴³

What can be ascertained from this brief examination of Greek women is that although some did indeed experience limited freedoms, overall, women were viewed and valued

³⁷ Hes, *Op.* 42-105. (Trans. Cantarella)

³⁸ Hes, *Op.* 373-375.

³⁹ Cantarella, 1987. p35.

⁴⁰ Semonides, fr. 83-93. (Trans. Lloyd-Jones.)

⁴¹ Fantham et al, 1994. p64.

⁴² Inserted for clarity.

⁴³ Arthur, 1984. pp23-24.

according to their worth as breeders and homemakers.⁴⁴ This is an important fact to remember as Circe will now begin to be examined and her startling role in the Odyssey will become even more remarkable once she is placed in the context of the perception of women and their roles.⁴⁵ It is important to remember that ‘the true female condition in Homer was this: total exclusion from political power and participation in public life.’⁴⁶ So when the freedom and power of Circe is examined, it must be remembered that she exists on the periphery of the Greek world and this condition then applies to her too: as she too is excluded from Greek political power and participation in Greek public life.

Circe was born from Perseis, a daughter of Okeanos.⁴⁷ Her father is Helios, the Sun God and son of a Titan.⁴⁸ Her brother is Aietes, father of Medea, whose name is associated to αἶα meaning the earth, and in this way is also connected to Circe’s own island of Aiaia. The well-known image of Circe surrounded by animals connects her back to Cybele or Kubebe. For just as Circe is often described as surrounded by wild animals such as lions,⁴⁹ so to is the Phrygian goddess Cybele, which cannot be coincidental, as according to Roller, Cybele is associated with Gaia, as is Circe.⁵⁰ Circe’s island Aiaia shares a remarkably close name to Gaia and it then seems logical to deduce a common etymological ancestry. For the etymology of Circe’s name, the most commonly accepted suggestions are from the feminine form of κίρκη meaning hawk or falcon,⁵¹

⁴⁴ There are some exceptions to this, such as in various religious rites, like those at the Delphic Oracle where the Pythia delivered the prophecies of Apollo (Massey, 1988. p10.).

⁴⁵ The Homeric Hymns do also to a certain degree offer a perspective on female deities, but in this dissertation, only female characters in Epic are being examined.

⁴⁶ Cantarella, 1987. p33.

⁴⁷ Od 10:139. (Trans. Fitzgerald)

⁴⁸ Kérenyi, 1979. pp4-5.

⁴⁹ Od 10:212.

⁵⁰ Roller, 1999. p170.

⁵¹ The Dictionnaire Etymologique, Chantraine, 1968 suggests as an alternative for falcon κίρκος meaning a ring or circle. (Lemma p534) The other suggested option is that it relates phonetically to the Latin *Circus* or *Circulus* meaning circle, this connects both to the action of a bird of prey which circles in the sky (Kérenyi, 1979. p 11) and also to the sun which circles; this connects to her solar heritage.

this shall be expanded on at a later stage. Circe is known as πότηνια θήρων, or mistress of wild animals, and is revered as a sorceress of the sun.⁵²

This connection with the hawk is the first hint of Circe's Near Eastern origin.⁵³ Marinatos in her chapter on Circe in her book 'The Goddess and the Warrior' examines the iconography of Circe, and how it connects to earlier Assyrian, Anatolian, Syrian, Egyptian and even Phoenician archaeological remains. This is an indication of the well-known symbolism of various female deities such as Cybele, Kubebe and Artemis being connected to birds of prey. Through this, Marinatos shows that Circe is a Greek manifestation of these earlier mistresses of animals, specifically Cybele. This bird of prey imagery bears an inherent connection to death and life, and this connects with Circe's role as Odysseus' guide to the dead. The Anatolian hawk goddess Cybele, seems to be the logical predecessor to Circe, as they seem to share many of the same characteristics.⁵⁴ From this examination, Circe's Near Eastern roots seem highly probable. This is an important factor if the intended outcome of this analysis is to connect her with Near Eastern epic. As Homer is said by some to have come from the Samos, Chios or Smyrna area, all of which are all alongside or near the Aegean, and considering the proximity to Asia Minor, it seems highly likely that he would have been familiar with the goddess Cybele who was even present at Ephesus.⁵⁵ The character of Circe then, may very well have been modelled on this Near Eastern goddess.

Circe first appears in Book X where Odysseus has just discovered he must journey to the Underworld to consult the seer Tiresias. When Odysseus and his men land on Aiaia,

⁵² Kérenyi, 1979. p10.

⁵³ Marinatos, 2000. pp33-44.

⁵⁴ Yarnall, 1994. pp 31-32 and 194. They are both connected with the hawk and both have the ability to give form and shape to life.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p33.

a search party is sent forth to find food. These men encounter Circe and her incredible array of tame wild animals. Here they eat and drink all she offers them, and it is at this stage that there is the famous scene of the sailors' metamorphosis into animals.⁵⁶ This metamorphosis occurs as a result of Circe poisoning their drinks with a φάρμακον κακόν.⁵⁷ Odysseus's first encounter with her is after his protector god Hermes has warned him about her. He presents him with an antidote to her magical drink and tells him not to refuse her offer to be intimate.⁵⁸ Odysseus' first meeting with Circe becomes a display of conflict for power and superiority, which culminates in Circe taking Odysseus' knees in symbolic submission after he proves himself to be immune to her powerful magic, and he draws his sword as if to kill her. This seems a strange thing for a powerful goddess to do, as she could undoubtedly have defeated a mortal man armed just with a sword. Maybe then it is more important to view this symbolic submission and surrender as indicative of the innate superior strength of men that haunts ancient literature.

It is without doubt that Circe becomes enamoured with Odysseus, both at the demonstration of his ability to resist her and after they become intimate. She is so swayed by her feelings for him that she agrees to return his men from their animal forms, and in doing so increases their youth, appearance and height.⁵⁹ Both Odysseus and his men remain on Circe's island for a year, where she treats them with all the honour befitting a man of Odysseus' status. It is at this point in the book that there is a shift in Circe's function; she changes from gracious host and lover to divine-aider and

⁵⁶ The metamorphosis from human into animal can also be seen in Apuleius' Golden Ass.

⁵⁷ Od. 10:235-238.

⁵⁸ Hermes advises Odysseus not to resist Circe's sexual advances as 'The Greeks believed women to be incapable of not exercising their sexual charms and that the results were catastrophic' (Walcot, 1984. p39). In this way Circe is shown to be rather typical of what Greek men believed women were unable to suppress their sexuality and if they were rebuked, capable of inflicting severe repercussions.

⁵⁹ Od. 10 395-396.

female guide. This is necessary for the plot development as Circe is the catalyst for Odysseus' journey to the Underworld. Once Odysseus' men tell him that they grow weary to return home, Circe informs Odysseus that although he will indeed return to his home, he cannot do so without journeying to the Underworld to consult with Tiresias, the blind seer.⁶⁰ Circe directs him on how to get to the Underworld by crossing Oceanos, which is by the border of the Cimmerian people. She also tells him what animals he needs to sacrifice, a black ewe and ram. When he returns to his ship, he finds that Circe has already placed them on his ship. She also tells him that once he reaches the Underworld he must dig a pit, pour into it libations of honey, milk, water wine, and sprinkle barley on top and then pour the blood of the sacrificial animals in, as this will attract the shades. At this stage, she tells him, he must draw his sword and keep back all shades that attempt to drink before Tiresias has had a chance to come forward and speak to him.⁶¹

Although Circe does not herself accompany Odysseus on his journey to the Underworld, her thorough directions aid him as well as her personal presence would have. In addition to her verbal assistance, Circe also sends with Odysseus a strong breeze that enables his ship to arrive in only one day and night of sailing in the Underworld. Odysseus thoroughly follows Circe's instructions and consults Tiresias.⁶² Once his journey to the Underworld is complete, he is compelled to return to Aiaia to

⁶⁰ *Od.* 10: 493.

⁶¹ *Od.* 10: 501-540.

⁶² Loraux, 1995. An interesting side to Tiresias is the fact that at some stage of his personal mythology he was a woman after supposedly pulling apart copulating snakes; he was sent for by Hera and Zeus to resolve a conflict as to whether men or women received the most pleasure from sex, as he was the only person who had ever been both male and female. As a result of this immense knowledge of his, Persephone grants him his memories and he becomes the only shade who keeps his memory (*Od.* 10:493-494). The point that I am making is, as Tiresias was at one time a woman, in a sense it extends the idea of a female guide aiding the hero, as in a way he too can be regarded as a female guide in the Underworld.

bury Elpenor, one of his men who died on the night of their original departure from Aiaia, but this return is not relevant to this dissertation.

This *katabasis* is the only one of its kind in early Greek writing, and provides an understanding of how the ancient Greeks viewed the afterlife. Many of these ideas permeated later Roman ideas and beliefs, as is evident in Virgil's epic the *Aeneid*.⁶³ Homer's Underworld had a tripartite construction, which is a division of the Underworld into three distinct regions: one area for those who remain unburied, one for suicides, those who died in infancy and those in love; and finally, an area for great heroes of war. Bedford believes that the Underworld in general is more of a symbolic place than an actual place, and its symbolism is that of truth and seriousness.⁶⁴ For Odysseus, this truth and seriousness is his need to escape from his tedious journeying to return home to his wife, family and city.

To Bedford, the Underworld is concerned with reaching back to the primordial beginning in which all knowledge is contained, in this case, the knowledge of the dead who have the foresight that those alive do not possess. Bedford even goes as far as to suggest that the Underworld is a metaphorically imagined place, as the death encountered is not literal but in fact an imagined death.⁶⁵ This is true for the account of Odysseus, as although he does go to the Underworld, he does not experience death firsthand but learns from it through first hand exposure to it. Stories about the Underworld are mysteries of suffering, life and death, and they connect the reader to what Bedford believes to be 'a collective ground of universal experience.'⁶⁶ This is also

⁶³ Solmsen, 1972. p 32.

⁶⁴ Bedford, 1981. p 233.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p 234.

⁶⁶ Bedford, 1981. p 237.

true for the Gilgamesh Epic as Gilgamesh also does not experience death firsthand. In later epics such as the Aeneid, since Aeneas only visits the Underworld, but has not actually died, he too does not truly experience death. As both possess this element, then this must be to some extent also indicative of human experience of life and death.

Circe is a tutelary deity,⁶⁷ and it must be for this reason that this strange enigma of a woman with power exists in this male narrative. There is a ‘... pattern that casts female figures as either opponent or helper of the hero.’⁶⁸ Her relative freedom in comparison to other female characters in the Odyssey seems peculiar, unless one considers that her power cannot be deemed an active threat to Odysseus as she is localised on her island. In the Odyssey, ‘a sequence of individual encounters is necessitated by the fact that most female figures – including the goddesses Calypso and Circe – are spatially bound to their respective οἶκος.’⁶⁹ This is especially true for Circe, who during her whole encounter with Odysseus does not leave her island, which anyway exists, outside of Odysseus’ known world.

The jostling for power between Circe and Odysseus when they first meet can be seen to have a multiplicity of meaning, as not only are they divided on gender lines, but also on a deity/human divide.⁷⁰ This dual interplay of the scene heightens the tensions experienced by the reader as Odysseus tries to ascertain his male identity and authority with his ‘swords’. Although Circe is by no means intended to be a realistic portrayal of Bronze Age Greek women, she does perhaps provide an insight into the strange and mysterious women that the male reader might have believed existed on the periphery of

⁶⁷ Brilliant, 1995. p172.

⁶⁸ Doherty, 1995. p136.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p114.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p170.

the Greek world, such as the Amazons who were regarded with a certain degree of simultaneous awe and dread. To what degree then does Circe conform to the traditional role of Archaic Greek women? As shown earlier, Bronze Age women did seem to enjoy relatively more freedom than later Greek women did, though there was still a sexual double standard as according to Arthur, 'hostility to women was a product of the perception that women had no concrete stake in any particular social or political order or even any particular family.'⁷¹ Although Circe is different in the sense that she was not under the authority of a father or husband, nor was she obliged to marry, through her desire for Odysseus to stay with her, she is exhibiting a desire for the traditional role of a woman to be with a man.

Circe does seem to be exempt from the usual role of child bearing, but it is perhaps in this very fact, that she does not have children, that she is removed from the traditional role and characterisation of women. By being represented without children, which is one of the factors that ultimately defined women, her ability to have authority and autonomy over her island can be explained by the fact that she is not a 'real' woman. The isolated location of her island is reminiscent of the isolation of Greek women who were kept within their houses and were not able to participate in a social or political sphere. Circe too is excluded from this social and political sphere by her distant location. Therefore, although Circe seems to have more freedom than was common during both the composition and setting of the epic, at closer inspection, she is still confined to the norms of the society in which she was created.

⁷¹ Arthur, 1984. p24.

According to Burkert, ‘... the extent to which the Homeric concept of Hades corresponds to the Mesopotamian is striking,’⁷² and it is with keeping this in mind that is necessary to return to the task of establishing the similarities between Circe and Siduri. A comparison of Gilgamesh and Odysseus is not necessary for this dissertation, as my fundamental purpose is to examine the female guide characters. There is however a large amount of scholarship which already exists on this topic.⁷³ Before beginning to examine the characteristics of Siduri and Circe, the first interesting point to consider is that both heroes first encounter these female characters in Tablet X of the Standard Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh Epic, and Book X of the Odyssey. Although this is not of crucial significance, it is still an interesting piece of information, considering the extent of other similarities. Both of these heroes encounter their female guides towards the end of their journeys, when they have already encountered much, yet cannot go on without the divine aid of these female guides.⁷⁴

It is important at this stage to reiterate that it will be predominantly the similarities that are examined in detail, as the end purpose of this research is to accumulate the similarities of these various guides. Their differences are not as relevant for the outcome of this research, as a model constructed of differences would serve little purpose. However, a few of these differences will be in brevity highlighted, as an acknowledgement of the fact that these two characters are not identical. Siduri’s role in

⁷² Burkert, 1992. p65.

⁷³ For a comparison of Gilgamesh and Odysseus, see The Gilgamesh Epic and Homer by GK Gresseth in *The Classical Journal*, Vol 70, No4 (Apr-May, 1975), pp 1-18 and ML West in his chapter on the Odyssey in the East Face of Helicon, West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth pp 402-404.

⁷⁴ West in his analysis of these similarities tends to pair Circe and Calypso as doublets (1997. p404.) yet I feel that in doing this, he has taken from Circe her rightful place as Siduri’s sole successor, as the attributes he presents of Calypso are mostly repeats of the characteristics of Circe, yet are not as numerous nor as similar. As many of Calypso’s other characteristics are drastically unlike any of those possessed by Siduri, the similarities between Siduri and Calypso shall be ignored in this dissertation as they are not adequately beneficial to the development of this model and anyway mirror those shared by Circe and Siduri.

Book 10 occupies a much smaller space than that of Circe. Although they both play a crucial role in the plot development, only Circe has an explicitly sexual relationship with the hero;⁷⁵ Siduri does not threaten Gilgamesh's life whereas when Circe administers her φάρμακον κακόν to Odysseus' men and then later to him, she is trying to turn him into a pig. This does not ultimately alter the outcome of the story and for this reason is not an important enough attribute to affect the outcome of the comparison. This one example is indicative of the majority of the differences between the two guides, although there might be variations in plot and aspects of the guides' characters; they both still fundamentally serve the same purpose of aiding the hero in his *katabasis*. It is necessary to turn to the task of constructing their similarities. All these similarities shall be numbered for easy reference.

It is necessary to examine first the heroes' journey and arrival at the dwelling of their female guide, and their reception once there. **(1)** Both Odysseus and Gilgamesh cross some kind of gate or portal, Odysseus passes through the Laestrygonian city of Telepylos where he and his men face a certain degree of danger, and Gilgamesh passes through the gate of the Sun on Mount Mashu, where he encounters the Scorpion people. **(2)** The first line of Tablet X states that Siduri lives by the sea; she is also said to live by the place where the sun rises. Circe's island Aiaia, which is obviously by the sea by the mere implication that it is an island, is described as the place where the swift sun's rays are stored.⁷⁶ **(3)** Both Siduri and Circe are somewhat hostile in their first encounter with the hero, Siduri bolts the door when she sees Gilgamesh approaching, and is reluctant to let him enter. Circe turns Odysseus' men into pigs at their first meeting, and tries to turn him into a pig as well; only once he proves himself to be resistant to her magical drink,

⁷⁵ As mentioned in Chapter One, a sexual relationship between Siduri and Gilgamesh is only alluded to.

⁷⁶ *Od.* 10:135.

does she becomes wary of him. **(4)** Gilgamesh and Odysseus both threaten the lives of their intended guides, Gilgamesh threatens Siduri that he will break her door down and enter whether or not she wants him to, and Odysseus draws his sword as if to kill Circe after she gives him the magic potion to drink. **(5)** Both female guides however eventually relent and help the hero.

The personal characteristics of the two female characters are also worth examining in some depth. **(6)** Both Siduri and Circe are immortal; **(7)** they both share a strong connection to drinks of some sort. Siduri is described as a divine alewife, whilst Circe makes all men who visit her drink a magic potion. **(8)** Siduri and Circe both possess independence unfamiliar to other women of their times. Alewives in the Second Millennium BCE seem to have experienced a type of freedom as they lived outside of the direct ‘protection’ of their male family members.⁷⁷ Circe governed and ruled over her own island. This gave her independence from the authority of any male figure. Circe is seen as a mistress of wild animals as wild animals that are under her control constantly surround her, as do men she has turned into animals. At initial inspection, there appears to be no parallels with Siduri unless it is recalled that Siduri is often mentioned to be the ‘Ishtar of Wisdom’ as noted in the previous chapter.

If one accepts this parallel and connection between Siduri and Ishtar, and that they are in fact doublets, a connection then becomes apparent between this Siduri/Ishtar and Circe. **(9)** Ishtar is known as a ‘Mistress of Animals’ in Tablet VI, who tames lions and leopards. If this connection can be made then there is an additional shared characteristic, both women are mistresses of wild animals. ‘Both Circe and Ishtar are ‘Mistresses of

⁷⁷ Dalley, 1989. p 132. It is in this same endnote that Dalley mentions that Siduri was known as the ‘Ishtar of Wisdom’, which will be important at a later stage in this dissertation, as Ishtar is the goddess of the Underworld.

Beasts,’ goddesses whose power tames and controls beasts and wild forces of the natural world and this ‘Mistress of Beasts’ appears as a central figure in Anatolian religion.’⁷⁸ This idea will be explored further in Chapter Four. **(10)** The final similarity these two characters potentially share is that of being a love interest of the hero. We know that Circe and Odysseus were lovers and it is suggested that ‘At another time, Siduri might have been willing to be Gilgamesh’s temporary sexual partner.’⁷⁹ If this is indeed the case, then a romantic connection between the hero and the guide becomes a possible additional similarity.

These ten similarities are substantial and show a clear connection between Siduri and Circe. The evidence of Near Eastern influence on the Greek world mentioned earlier in the chapter then only strengthens my hypothesis of a common link or heritage between these guides. These similarities shall be explored in further depth at a later stage in this dissertation. In the next chapter, the female guide of a HomERICALLY influenced Roman author shall be examined in the expectation of expanding this idea of a female guide model, the characteristics of which seems to have developed over time and through various epics. The Sibyl of Virgil’s Aeneid shall be explored in the next chapter, after which the connection and similarities to Circe shall be investigated.

⁷⁸ Crane, 1988 p64. See Crane 1988 for additional similarities between Circe and Ishtar that do not relate to the similarities shared by Siduri.

⁷⁹ Abusch, 2001. p7.

Chapter Three

From the Goddess to the Prophetess

The evolution from divine woman to woman as divine aid

‘Vergil establishes the character of Aeneas with frequent allusion to Odysseus. The principal Homeric counterpart to Aeneid 6 is Odyssey 11, where Odysseus describes his descent to the Underworld, Elpenor in the Odyssey serves as predecessor to both Palinurus and Misenus; Teiresias in function, precedes the Sibyl, and Agamemnon, in his message prefigures Deiphobus.’¹

Virgil’s Aeneid owes considerable debt to Homer’s Odyssey.² There are numerous parallels between the two works and it goes almost without saying that both the Iliad and the Odyssey greatly influenced Virgil’s epic. Where I disagree with Quartarone is with her analysis of the Sibyl, as her role surpasses that of Tiresias. I believe that Virgil constructs her to be far more like the character of Circe than that of Tiresias, for as Nelis notes ‘throughout she is modelled on Homer’s Circe and Tiresias’.³ She is perhaps therefore better described as a combination of these two characters from the Odyssey. Before being able to properly comment on this hypothesis, it is necessary to look at the influence of Homer’s Odyssey on Virgil.

As mentioned previously, this *katabasis* in Book 11 of the Odyssey is the only one of its type in early Greek writing and provides an understanding of how the ancient Greeks viewed the afterlife. Many of these ideas in fact permeate later Roman ideas and

¹ Quartarone, 2002. pp202 & 209.

² Williams, 1964. p49.

³ Nelis, 2001. p238.

beliefs.⁴ When one examines Virgil's Augustan epic, it becomes quite apparent just to what degree Greek ideas did indeed fuse with Roman ideas, and Williams believes that 'the Iliad and the Odyssey offered a method of presenting heroic behaviour which Virgil could adapt to a more complex society.'⁵ By Virgil's inclusion of Homeric devices such as episodes, phraseology and similes, he kept a close link to Homer's world so it would be believable to Romans that Virgil's Aeneas was indeed a contemporary of heroes like Achilles and Odysseus.⁶ This was intended to make the connection between the last Trojan becoming the first Roman more believable to Romans reading his epic. Many scholars have rightly argued though, that Homer is not the only source or model Virgil used for his work.⁷ In respect to the Underworld episode, it seems highly likely that Virgil did indeed model his Underworld on that of Homer's, as shall be illustrated at the end of this chapter in the comparison of Odysseus' encounter with Circe, and Aeneas' encounter with the Sibyl.

Homer's Underworld has a tripartite construction, Virgil used this construction to model his own Underworld, creating three regions of the Styx, Tartarus, and Elysium⁸ - one area for those who remain unburied, one for suicides and those who died in infancy or in love, and finally, an area for the great war heroes. It is believed that Virgil uses the model of the Underworld supplied by Homer to create his own Underworld. In fact, it has been argued convincingly by Nelis that Virgil made use of Hellenistic scholia on the Homeric texts and had access to allegorical readings of the Homeric poems,⁹ all which would have influenced the writing of his own epic. As Virgil was Roman, he naturally

⁴ Solmsen, 1972. pp 32.

⁵ Williams, 1972. p xv.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Farrell, 1997. p229.

⁸ Norwood, 1954. p 17.

⁹ Nelis, 2001. p2.

developed his concept of the Underworld beyond that of its Homeric ancestor. It is apparent that he was greatly influenced by Platonism, which includes the idea of the soul surviving after death. He also incorporated elements of the politics of the time of Augustus into his Underworld.¹⁰ The influence of Plato can be seen in the numerous parallels between Book 6 of the Aeneid and Book 10 of Plato's Republic.¹¹ It is here that Socrates tells the Myth of Er, who, having been dead for twelve days after dying in a battle, rose from the dead and explained what happened to the soul after death: the transmigration of the soul into a new body in a continual cycle of reincarnation. This is very similar to what Anchises tells Aeneas happens to souls, though Anchises' message is of the glory of Rome and its future heroes, which was intended to inspire patriotism among readers, an element not found in Plato's version.¹²

In order to obtain a more complete picture of the time the Aeneid was composed, it is also important to examine the context in which Virgil was writing his epic and most crucially the perceptions of women at this time. The environment in which he was working will undoubtedly have shaped Virgil's own perspective of women and this all needs to be considered when analysing an androcentric text. When Octavian became the Emperor Augustus in 27BCE, he implemented radical reforms. Augustus strived for a return to a more traditional approach to the thinking on the roles of men and women, in order to strengthen morality through the family. He believed that if this return to traditional values were achieved, the Roman state would prosper as it had when a king had ruled it.¹³

¹⁰ Bailey, 1935. p 265. This shall be expanded upon at a later stage.

¹¹ Book 10 614b-621d. Additional examples can be found in the Phaedo, where the separation of the soul and body are described and the Phaedrus, where Plato describes what makes a soul either good or bad. The example from the Republic is however the one that has the most parallels to the Aeneid.

¹² Morton Braund, 1997. p218.

¹³ Putnam, 2002. Pass.

When Augustus came to power, in order to persuade Roman citizens to have more legitimate children, provisions were taken to reaffirm the importance of both marriage and marital ethics, as towards the end of the Roman Republic, there was a steady decline in the birth rate of Roman citizens.¹⁴ The *Lex Iulia de maritandibus ordinibus* and the *Lex Papia Poppaea nuptialis* were implemented in 18BCE and 9BCE respectively.¹⁵ These two laws were implemented in order to encourage Romans to marry, have children, and for women to remain faithful. The fidelity of women was of vital importance for the assurance of a legitimate heir and for that reason; women who were found to be cheating could receive severe punishment including even exile or death.¹⁶ Incentives were given to women who embraced their gender roles, such as being rewarded for bearing a certain number of children. Activities such as weaving were recommended for women, and there were even laws which encouraged womanly pursuits, such as the *Ius Trium Liberorum*. This law stated that free women who gave birth to more than three children, and slave women who gave birth to more than four children, would receive more liberty and in the case of a slave, receive her freedom.¹⁷ In essence, she could act without the supervision of a male guardian, which meant that she was no longer under the direct authority of her *paterfamilias* or her husbands' *manus*,¹⁸ though this is not to assume that many women enjoyed complete autonomy.

Although to a large extent women of the upper classes were enjoying more freedom in some ways than they ever had before, this was by no means the norm, as poorer women still suffered greatly, as did women who were confined to certain spheres of work such

¹⁴ Cantarella, 1987. p128.

¹⁵ Ibid. p122.

¹⁶ Ibid. p123.

¹⁷ Pomeroy, 1975. p 151.

¹⁸ In Rome, during the time that Virgil wrote his epic, the guardianship of a woman belonged to either her father or some other close male relative known as the *paterfamilias*. When the woman was married off, usually shortly after puberty at around 14, she was usually under the control of her husband, who inherited the right of guardianship, known as *manus*.

as weaving, wet nursing, farming and prostitution. An indication of the lack of importance of women can also be seen in the way women were named. Women did not receive their own *praenomen* and instead were named with feminised forms of the *nomen* and *cognomen* of their families.¹⁹ Although women of upper classes did often receive education, the education they received would have been inferior to that of their male siblings. Upper class women were however provided with sufficient education to oversee in some cases the education of their sons.²⁰

Men dominated Roman religion, like most other aspects of public life.²¹ The position of *Pontifex Maximus* or Chief Priest of the Roman state was an office held exclusively by men. Whilst the elite controlled traditional religion in Rome,²² religious cults in Rome afforded an outlet for ordinary people whose lives were restricted in other spheres, be it political, economical, or even sexual. These various cults provided in one way a sense of release from the mundanity of everyday life,²³ though some cults were designated for women, as a way of upholding the idea of the way women should conduct themselves, such as the cult of Fortuna, which was only open to women who had been married once, *univirae*.²⁴ The leadership in most cults belonged to men, but women often did not have much influence. The exception to this would be the Vestal Virgins who were chosen to keep the flame of Rome alive. These women were held in high regard and were the only women afforded the privilege of sitting at the front of the auditoria and at gladiatorial games whilst the rest of the women, including the upper class women, were relegated to the back.

¹⁹ Cantarella, 1987. p124.

²⁰ Massey, 1988. p23.

²¹ Ibid. p27.

²² MacMullen, 1981. p117.

²³ Pomeroy, 1975. p 205.

²⁴ Cantarella, 1987. p151.

As much as these virgins received privilege, any Vestal Virgin found to be having an affair or sexual relations would be buried alive; so it is by no means to say that these women were treated with equality.²⁵ The Vestal Virgin is however inconsistent in her depiction.²⁶ She was both *virgo* and *mater* while she represented the goddess. They were made to dress like an *uxor* and had the status of matron.²⁷ The Vestal Virgins celebrated the *fascinus*,²⁸ or male sexual organ, yet had to remain virgins on the threat of death.²⁹ Although these women were legally emancipated from their father or guardian, they still fell under the control of a man the *Pontifex Maximus*.³⁰ Therefore, although these women might appear to have had relative freedom, at closer inspection this appears not to be the case. These ‘virgins’ were social anomalies³¹ that not even the Romans themselves knew much about and the confusion then that surrounds their true characteristics remains somewhat unclear. What we can ascertain though is that they did enjoy more privileges and freedom than the average Roman woman did.

One of the few religions or cults that afforded women the right to hold ranks of importance was the cult of Isis.³² This imported Egyptian mystery cult gained in popularity during the reign of Augustus. She was identified with many other Mediterranean goddesses including Fortuna, Athena, Aphrodite, Hera, Artemis and Demeter. Isis was a wife and mother, and at one stage was even a prostitute. This attracted many women followers to her, as she incorporated all the societal roles that

²⁵ For a more in depth examination of the lives of women in Rome see Fantham 1994, Liebeschetz 1979, Pomeroy 1975, Cantarella, 1987 and Wyke 1998, to name but a few.

²⁶ See Beard 1995.

²⁷ Cantarella, 1987. p154.

²⁸ Ibid. p155.

²⁹ For a more in depth examination on what I believe to be the janus-faced nature of the Vestal Virgins and their role in Rome see Parker 2004.

³⁰ Cantarella, 1987. p155.

³¹ Beard, 1995. pp173-174.

³² It is worth noting though that according to MacMullen, less than 10% of women combined worshipped Isis and Cybele (MacMullen, 1981. p117) This is nevertheless still a substantial percentage of the population if one considers the large numbers of cults around at the time.

were possible for women. Maenadism, or the following of the Bacchic rites, in the cult of Bacchus was another form of religious worship followed by many women. Women who followed this cult were believed to get possessed by the god Bacchus and as he was the god of fertility, wine and revelry, women who participated in such ecstatic tributes to the god were often viewed negatively. Many women were attracted to this cult as 'here they found compensation for the dissatisfaction of an ungratifying emotional and erotic life.'³³ This cult was viewed by men with a great deal of suspicion and was viewed as threatening as it was an avenue in which women could express themselves. This can be seen in the accounts of various authors such as in Livy,³⁴ Plutarch³⁵ and Cicero³⁶ and explains why it was often brutally suppressed.³⁷ Men did generally not follow the cult of Isis or Bacchus at all and tended to favour the cult of Mithras, as it was the cult of the army, which was a more masculine cult.³⁸

In addition to these, another cult that developed to have quite an influential following was that of the Magna Mater. The cult of the Magna Mater was the direct importation of the Near Eastern cult of Cybele.³⁹ The cult was introduced to Rome during the Punic Wars in about 205 BCE. What makes the importation of this cult relevant for this dissertation is the fact that it was imported on the advice of the Sibylline Books that were attributed to the Sibyl, and the Delphic Oracle.⁴⁰ This shows both that before Virgil's composition of the Aeneid, the goddess Cybele was already present in Rome due to her involvement in the Sibylline books, and was then still present when Virgil

³³ Cantarella, 1987. p128.

³⁴ Book 39-40.

³⁵ Cat. Min. 7.17.

³⁶ Cael. 46.

³⁷ Cantarella, 1987. p128.

³⁸ Pomeroy, 1975. p 223.

³⁹ Beard, 1996. p165.

⁴⁰ Burton, 1996. Pass.

created the Sibyl. Both Greeks and Romans took the words of oracles such as that at Delphi and Cumae very seriously. It seems peculiar that a state so male orientated would take the guidance of a woman, such as the Sibyl or the Pythia.⁴¹ It must be remembered though, that the god Apollo was supposed to be speaking through the Sibyl and Pythia, so in essence the prophecy would be reliable as it originally came from a male god. The fact remains however, that in the Aeneid, it was a woman, the Sibyl and a god, Apollo, who led Aeneas through the Underworld, but it was only she who was his physical guide as well as the mouthpiece of the god.

Out of all the guides I shall discuss in this dissertation, the Sibyl is the one who seems to be the cornerstone of the model, as she connects to both Circe and Siduri, as shall be illustrated at a later stage. It is for this reason that her origins shall be explored in depth. This is with the objective of strengthening the case for the three primary guides - Siduri, Circe and the Sibyl - sharing a common origin. The origin of the Cumaean Sibyl⁴² and other Sibyls is believed to be Indo-European, with their ancient roots stemming from the Ancient Near Eastern city of Çatal Hüyük. Etymologically, the name Sibyl derives from the Greek Σίβυλλα.⁴³ The etymological origins are unclear other than to say that the word has a Near Eastern origin, and it is suggested that it could be a derivative of the Akkadian word *sibu* meaning old.⁴⁴ It can also be suggested that the name Sibyl stems from the ancient goddess Cybele, and that the Sibyls in fact originally derive from her, and her powers. There were numerous Sibyls across the ancient world including the Persian and Libyan Sibyl. The Cumaean Sibyl is by far the most famous Roman variant, and it is her I shall examine in further detail.

⁴¹ For an in depth examinations of the Pythia see among others MacMullen, 1981 and Parke, 1985.

⁴² For clarity, Aeneas encounters this Sibyl, as there are in fact a number of Sibyls around the ancient Mediterranean.

⁴³ Walde& Hofmann, 1954. p 532.

⁴⁴ Frisk, 1970. p 700.

According to Livy,⁴⁵ the Cumaean Sibyl is believed to have sold her oracles written on leaves to the last Roman king, Tarquinius Superbus. He initially refused to buy these oracles as he claimed she asked too much money for them; she burnt three of the volumes and asked him yet again if he wished to buy them. When he refused again claiming she was mad, she burnt three more. At this stage, Tarquinius Superbus realised that perhaps these oracles were important and bought what remained of them. These oracles, which were written on leaves, were the basis for the Sibylline books. They were found to contain the destinies of the Roman state and the future of the Roman people. They were kept in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, preserved in a stone chest, and were allowed to be inspected only by specially appointed officers, who on great occasions consulted them, and interpreted their oracles to the people. Virgil also mentions this Sibyl in his fourth Eclogue, where throughout the Eclogue alludes to the coming of a saviour, which the later Christians interpreted as Jesus.⁴⁶

Apollo, the god that possessed the Sibyl, was originally the Greek god Phoebus Apollo. This was one of the first Greek gods to be received by the Romans⁴⁷ and he was introduced as early as fifth century BCE at the Greek colony of Cumae, where Virgil's Sibyl is situated. This Sibyl is virtually the only oracle consulted by the Romans other than the Oracle at Delphi.⁴⁸ It is believed that the Cumaean Sibyl received her powers from the god Apollo.⁴⁹ Her name was Deiphobe⁵⁰ and she was said to be seven hundred years old when Aeneas visited her. When she was a beautiful young girl, Apollo offered her any gift in the world if she would spend a night with him and she asked to live as

⁴⁵ 7:27-28.

⁴⁶ Ecl. IV:1-25.

⁴⁷ MacMullen, 1981. p7.

⁴⁸ Bailey, 1935. p 163.

⁴⁹ Garstang, 1963.

⁵⁰ Parke, 1988. p79.

many years as grains of sand she could fit into one hand. After he granted her this she reneged on her side of the deal and refused to spend the night with him. Apollo still granted her her wish, but it became a curse, as Apollo granted her eternal life, but not eternal youth. Her body shriveled to the point where Petronius suggests it could fit in a jar⁵¹ and she needed neither food nor drink to sustain her.

It seems that at the time of her meeting with Aeneas she was not in a jar but able enough in body to escort him through the Underworld. Strangely her oracle was never referred to as the oracle of Apollo at Cumae but only ever the oracle of the Sibyl,⁵² his human voice, which shows that despite the prophecies coming from Apollo, the Sibyl was the important element in the oracle. The period for which the Sibyl is said to have arrived at Cumae does not correlate with the Aeneid, as she is only present at Cumae from 750 BCE. This is approximately four hundred years after Aeneas is said to have arrived in Italy,⁵³ but the story would not have worked if she had not been present as in order to enter the Underworld. Aeneas had to consult with an oracle and no other oracle would have been as geographically convenient. In the realm of mythology, timelines and chronology are not of the utmost importance anyway. It is said that the Sibyl in fact only arrived at Cumae twenty years before Aeneas' visitation, which for this story seems a viable enough timeframe.⁵⁴

The Roman concept of prophecy has its roots in ancient animistic religion, where the seer was the important person and had divine inspiration through a god. The Greek influence here is that of having a set location where the god would speak through the

⁵¹ Petron. Sat 2:48.

⁵² Bailey, 1935. p 25.

⁵³ Parke, 1988. p74.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

seer, such as the Pythia at Delphi.⁵⁵ The term Sibyl was applied to any woman possessing certain powers of prophecy; they were especially prevalent in the Near East well before the time of the Trojan War.⁵⁶ As mentioned earlier, the city of Cumae was founded by the Greeks in about 750 BCE by Chalcis, and became the centre of the Greek colony. With their authority, the Greeks brought with them the ideas of prophetesses, such as the Sibyl. It is thought that in his youth Virgil visited Cumae, and indeed the cave of the Sibyl. It is believed that by visiting this site he got the inspiration to include the Sibyl in the Aeneid.⁵⁷ Although it is possible that Virgil might not have believed in oracles such as the Sibyl, the impact of such an oracle on Roman myth was undeniable.⁵⁸ The '*antroque remugit*,'⁵⁹ the booming entrances he mentions, undoubtedly comes from his own personal experience at Cumae.⁶⁰ As mentioned earlier, Virgil was said to have been greatly influenced by the religion of the Greeks; this can be seen in the importance he places on the Cumaean Sibyl who like many of the other Sibyls, is Greek in her conception.⁶¹ It is not known if Virgil was an overtly religious man; though he held philosophy in high esteem and would undoubtedly, through his learning on the matter, have been well acquainted with the religion of both the Greeks and the Romans.⁶²

The Sibyl appears at a crucial point in the Aeneid, a point at which Aeneas is on the verge of discovering the full extent of his destiny and that of Rome. Anchises, Aeneas' father, appears to him in a dream and instructs him that he must visit him in Elysium.⁶³

⁵⁵ Parke, 1988. p9.

⁵⁶ Garstang, 1963. p97.

⁵⁷ Schoder, 1972. Pass.

⁵⁸ Levi, 1998. p 109.

⁵⁹ Aen. 6:99. (Trans. Day-Lewis)

⁶⁰ Schoder, 1972. Pass.

⁶¹ Parke, 1988. p1.

⁶² Morton Braund, 1997. p207.

⁶³ Aen. 5.700-745.

In order to do this however, he needs a guide, as the Underworld is a dangerous place for the living.⁶⁴ Aeneas was one of the heroes of the Trojan War who escaped with his band of men after the fall of Troy and travelled around the Mediterranean to try to find a new homeland for his people with the divine guidance of the gods. There is little doubt when reading the first five books of the Aeneid that Aeneas possesses many of the characteristics of a typical hero. This is what makes it even more remarkable that he needed a woman to guide him and even protect him in the underworld. Up to this point in the Aeneid, there has only been one other female character that has played a central role, that of the doomed Dido whom Aeneas encounters in Book 4.⁶⁵ It is peculiar that during his journey in the underworld, Aeneas encounters very few women as it seems predominantly men populate the underworld. One of the women he does meet though is the shade of Dido, who remains aloof and does not really engage with him.

At the beginning of Book 6, after having arrived on the Cumaean shore, Aeneas leaves his men and journeys inland to try to find the cave occupied by the Sibyl. While journeying to find her, Aeneas and Achates enter a cave full of beautiful works of art depicting mythology from Daedalus and Icarus to the Minotaur and Pasiphae.⁶⁶ It is at this point that they have their first meeting with the Sibyl, who advises them not to delay too long by looking at the pictures that decorate the walls on the way to her cave, but that they should move on in order to receive her instruction on how to enter the Underworld. When the Sibyl first appears to Aeneas and Achates, her mere presence is intimidating; she orders them to bring a black ram, barren heifers and four brown

⁶⁴ Aen. 6.264-294.

⁶⁵ Dido, the Carthaginian queen falls in love with Aeneas and kills herself when he leaves her to go and found the new Trojan state in Italy. Aeneas is ruled by his gods who have his destiny planned out for him. He cannot disobey this destiny.

⁶⁶ Circe's sister, not particularly relevant in this specific passage, but an interesting aside which in Chapter Five becomes an interesting connection.

bullocks to her, to sacrifice to Hecate and the Eumenides, ‘mighty in heaven and Erebus.’⁶⁷ First, they must bury their lost companion Misenus, and then find the Golden Bough, which must be presented to Juno, ‘the queen of the Underworld.’⁶⁸

At their first meeting, the Sibyl is unwelcoming and argumentative to her guests, almost as if she knows that their presence means they require a prophecy, which will bring about her possession again by Apollo, which she vehemently fights.⁶⁹ The Sibyl’s cave has a hundred mouth-like entrances and a hundred doors that boom like hundreds of voices. It is at the entrance to this that Apollo begins to possess the Sibyl⁷⁰ and demands for prayers from Aeneas if he wishes the doors to the Underworld to open. The whole time she tries in vain to fight off the god who possesses her and she screams and tears at herself.⁷¹ Apollo, through the Sibyl, prophesies the many terrible things that Aeneas shall encounter such as worse trouble on land than he has experienced at sea, that the Trojans shall come to power in Lavinium and during wars, terrible wars, and the Tiber will run with blood and the death of many innocent people:

*‘o tandem magnis pelagi defuncte periclis
(sed terra graviora manent), in regna Lavini
Dardanidae venient (mitte hanc de pectore curam),
sed non et venisse volent. Bella, horrida bella,*

⁶⁷ *Aen.* 6:247.

⁶⁸ *Aen.* 6:136-142.

⁶⁹ Garstang, 1963. p 99. Evidence of unwilling possession can also be found in Lucan’s *Pharsalia* 5.114-236 and in Plato’s *Phaedrus* 265b.

⁷⁰ Van Nortwick seems to be suggesting that in this passage, Virgil’s intention is to show the Sibyl to embody the female potential for disorder in a particularly pure, almost savage form; the gods’ response to such a woman is more repressive than anything that has been shown so far in the epic - she must be shown to be Apollo’s surrogate and NOT a renegade female. (1992. p132) I think Van Nortwick’s estimation to be partially correct as although the Sibyl is indeed the mouthpiece of Apollo, through her resistance to his possession, she is still showing herself to be a woman with some independent thought.

⁷¹ *Aen.* 6: 74.

*et Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine cerno.*⁷²

Accepting all this and the dangers that the Sibyl has warned him of, the entrances to the Underworld open and with his sword drawn,⁷³ a fearful Aeneas follows a woman into the depths of the Underworld.

Throughout their descent, the Sibyl remains calm whilst the war veteran and brave hero Aeneas madly slashes his sword around at the shades that surround them. This contrasts the bravery of a hero and an old woman, who it would be assumed would be the more timid one. During the crossing of the Cocytus on the boat of Charon, the Sibyl once again comes to Aeneas' rescue and feeds Cerberus, the three-headed dog of the Underworld a drugged bit of food that puts him to sleep so that they can pass him. It is at this stage that the only other prominent female character appears, that of Dido, though it is only her shade that appears and completely ignores Aeneas when he calls out to her.⁷⁴ She instead turns and returns to her first husband Sychaeus, as now that she has been reunited with him, she no longer needs Aeneas' affection and does not forgive him for leaving her.⁷⁵

The Sibyl does not let Aeneas stay there long as the night was half over and it was important that he reached his father soon. They approached a road divided between Tartarus and Elysium and approached the Phlegethon, the river of fire. The Sibyl knew this region well as Hecate had personally shown her around it.⁷⁶ It is at this stage that the Sibyl fulfils her duty and delivers Aeneas to his father Anchises, who instructs him

⁷² *Aen.* 6.83-87.

⁷³ Aeneas here draws his sword in fear, whilst Odysseus (see previous chapter) draws his sword in a threatening manner.

⁷⁴ *Aen.* 6: 450.

⁷⁵ *Aen.* 6: 455- 460.

⁷⁶ *Aen.* 6: 577.

on the future of their lineage and even predicts the great Augustus who will be a descendant of Aeneas. After this, Anchises escorts Aeneas to the gates of horn and ivory. It is said that false dreams pass through the gate of ivory and true visions pass through the gate of horn; Aeneas and the Sibyl leave through the gate of ivory.⁷⁷ From this point Aeneas sails away from Cumae and founds his new Trojan kingdom on mainland Italy, none of which could have been done without the help of the Sibyl.

At this point it is relevant to establish to what extent the Sibyl represents Roman women under Augustus. As we have seen, Roman women fell under the protection of a male family member, so too does the Sibyl as the god Apollo lords over her. The only place of relative freedom the Sibyl experiences from Apollo is when she enters the Underworld. One can see parallels here to Roman women who received some relative freedom in the cults they worshipped. The Sibyl does not seem to have any children and in this way seems to differ from traditional Augustan women who were encouraged to bear multiple children. Like Circe, perhaps this is explicable in terms of the fact that without children, the Sibyl could not truly be a woman and it could be then for this reason that she seemed to have relatively more freedom than traditional Roman women. Her childlessness can also be seen to be similar to the Vestal Virgins, who as virgins were not supposed to bear children. Generally, then, it seems Virgil's Sibyl does to some extent conform to the traditional societal norms placed on Roman women. Her peripheral existence and the fact that she lived outside of the boundaries of society can explain her relative autonomy and freedom. This is very similar to Circe who also lives on the periphery and also enjoys relative freedom.

⁷⁷ There have been a variety of interpretations for the exit through the gate of ivory and not the gate of horn. (Williams, 1972. p516)

Now that the role of the Sibyl has been examined and it is established that she does inherently contain a number of typical Augustan Roman characteristics, the level of similarity with Circe needs to be established.⁷⁸ Although this is primarily a comparison between the Sibyl and Circe, an interesting aside however is the fact that:

‘Once the name for the Babylonian Sibyl is reported to be Sambethe, and she is said to have been present in the Ark as one of Noah’s daughters-in-law, this might in earnest reflect the Sabitu of Gilgamesh.’⁷⁹

If this is indeed the case, it must be recalled that Sâbitu means alewife.⁸⁰ Then because Sâbitu has been shown to mean alewife, this provides a tenuous connection to Siduri, which by association would mean that Siduri is in some sense herself a Sibyl. This truly is a remarkable conclusion. In addition to this remarkable connection, the two share other characteristics that shall be expanded upon in the following chapter on the guide model.

Before the examination into the similarities between these two characters, it is worth noting a few of their differences. Circe has a romantic relationship with Odysseus whereas the Sibyl and Aeneas do not have any kind of sexual relationship. The Sibyl accompanies Aeneas to the Underworld whereas Circe only provides Odysseus with advice and assistance from a far. Finally, Circe is a goddess herself and the Sibyl is not a goddess, but is tightly connected to the god Apollo. These are just a few of the differences that can be found when one examines these two myths alongside one

⁷⁸ Virgil in Book 7.8-24 of the Aeneid mentions Circe though she plays a minor role, and her inclusion amounts to little more than a description of her island and her characteristics. The reason for this is perhaps that the function she plays in the Odyssey is now the function of the Sibyl in the Aeneid.

⁷⁹ Burkert, 1992. p81.

⁸⁰ Dalley, 1989. p 328.

another. Despite these occasional differences, they do not affect the outcome of the story substantially, nor do they detract from the fundamental role that these women play as guides to the heroes. The fact is, that both these stories rely on the hero receiving help from a woman during his *katabasis*, so although the finer details may, and do vary, they do not alter the basic plot line, which is what is important in these narratives.

Now that the differences have been briefly explored, one can return to the task of the accumulation of the similarities between Circe and the Sibyl. **(1)** The origins of Circe are steeped in myth, as are the origins of the Sibyl. Circe's name, as mentioned earlier, could stem from κίρκη meaning falcon. People in Asia Minor who saw her as a falcon goddess worshipped her.⁸¹ As mentioned earlier, this falcon goddess originated in Çatal Hüyük just as I have found the original Sibyls did, although I have been unable to find another scholar who makes this connection. The falcon goddess was closely related to death and it is for this reason that Circe would know so much about the Underworld. The Phrygians associated the falcon with their primary goddess Cybele⁸² from whom, as mentioned earlier, the Sibyl might originate from. This shows that although the Sibyl and Circe do vary in their characteristics, they do seem, in my opinion, to share a common ancestor who shaped their identity.

(2) Both women appear at a crucial point in the journey of the respective heroes. Circe, as Odysseus is trying to return home, and the Sibyl, when Aeneas is trying to found his new home. **(3)** Both heroes visit the women once they have landed on a new shore after having undergone a stressful incident. For Odysseus, this was his encounter with the

⁸¹ Yarnall, 1994. p29.

⁸² There are numerous variations to the spelling of her name including Kubebe, Kybele, Kybebe to mention but a few.

Cyclops, and for Aeneas it was his breaking off of his love affair with Dido. **(4)** Both Circe and the Sibyl live by the sea, Circe on the island Aiaia and the Sibyl on the Cumaean coast. **(5)** Both women initially greet the heroes with hostility and seem unwilling to help them, Circe turns Odysseus' men into swine and tries to turn him into one too, and the Sibyl orders Aeneas not to remain too long looking at the paintings. **(6)** Gradually though, both men win over the reluctant woman, Odysseus by succumbing to her physically and Aeneas by appeasing her with pious words and actions. **(7)** Both heroes receive advice on what to sacrifice to enter the Underworld; Circe places on Odysseus' ship the necessary animals to sacrifice for Tiresias and the Sibyl tells Aeneas to sacrifice a black ram among other things to the Eumenides. **(8)** Both of the guides provided directions on how to get to the Underworld, Circe provides directions and a favourable wind and the Sibyl guides Aeneas down in person.

(9) Both Circe and Sibyl are strongly connected to a god, Circe to her father Helios and the Sibyl to Apollo and **(10)** both Apollo and Helios are associated with the sun. **(11)** In addition to this, Circe and the Sibyl both have powers of prophecy that they use to help the heroes. Circe advises Odysseus which challenges he will face on his journey home and the Sibylline books were well known as evidence of the Sibyl's prophetic abilities. At this stage it is starting to become apparent that the connections shared by Siduri and Circe seem to overlap with those of Circe and the Sibyl. The next step then is to develop a model based on the analysis of these three guides, as they are the most prevalent and obvious guides. Once this model has been established, additional literary female characters shall be examined to determine the extent to which they fit this model.

Chapter Four

Towards a Guide Model

‘By deficient eyes she is reduced to inferior states; by the evil eyes she is spellbound to banality and ugliness. But she is redeemed by the eyes of understanding.’¹

This chapter moves towards an understanding of these female guides by creating for them a sphere in which to exist separate the male hero and the androcentric text. That is to say, although they all exist within a set framework within the epic, in order to understand them better, it is necessary to separate them from it and examine them simply as characters. This model will be developed from the examination of the three primary guides that I have investigated, and will provide a paradigm on which further developments can be made through the analysis of additional guides. As mentioned earlier, this intended model is roughly based on the works of two male authors, namely Raglan and Campbell, even though in their models, they are representing male characters. Any model that is developed here will inadvertently contain, to some degree, a tainted perspective, as one cannot entirely remove the male influence of a male-authored and male-conceived text. This being acknowledged, the next step is to construct my model, not as a complement to these existing Hero models, but as a freestanding paradigm for female guide characters as outlined in the Introduction.

¹ Campbell, 1956. p116. Campbell here describes female characters who are often exiled to the periphery of a text due to lack of understanding them. This bears a strong similarity to the guides that I have examined as their location in their texts is often on the periphery of the narrative and the world.

Although there is little direct evidence to tie these three guides to a shared ancestry, an Eastern origin can be inferred. Siduri is referred to as the Ishtar of Wisdom; Ishtar is the doublet of Ereshkigal, who is the queen of the earth² (Ishtar is also a generic term for goddess). Siduri is also known as Inanna,³ a ‘Mistress of Animals’. The Near Eastern goddess Cybele is both a ‘Mistress of Animals’⁴ and a mother goddess connected to the Greek goddess Gaia.⁵ This would then seem to suggest that Siduri through being the doublet of Ishtar is connected to Cybele. As Crane comments, ‘Both Circe and Ishtar/Siduri are ‘Mistresses of Beasts,’ goddesses whose power tames and controls beasts and wild forces of the natural world and this ‘Mistress of Beasts’ appears as a central figure in Anatolian religion.’⁶ As mentioned in Chapter Two, the well known image of Circe surrounded by animals connects her back to Cybele. For both Circe and Cybele are often described as being surrounded by wild animals. Circe is also connected to the goddess Cybele, both through her connection to wild animals and through her inherent connection to birds of prey. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Circe’s name is etymologically connected to the word hawk or falcon, i.e. κίρκη is the feminine form of the word hawk, so called because of its wheeling circular flight.⁷ The Anatolian or Phrygian hawk goddess Cybele then seems to be the logical predecessor to Circe.⁸ Circe is also connected to Gaia through the name of her island Aiaia. Yarnall, in her chapter ‘*Where did Circe comes from?*’ goes into great detail connecting Circe to both Inanna and Cybele through their iconography and myth,⁹ which all include wild beasts, birds of

² Dalley, 1989. p323.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Marinatos, 2000. pp33-44.

⁵ Roller, 1999. p170.

⁶ Crane, 1988. p64. Circe is said to be a ‘Mistress of Animals’ in *Od* 10.212.

⁷ Chantraine, 1968. Lemma p534, and Liddell and Scott s.v. κίρκη.

⁸ Yarnall, 1994. pp 31/2. Cybele was believed to control the gates between death and rebirth in the same way that for Odysseus, Circe controlled in a sense his entrance to the land of the dead, as it was only with her assistance that he was able to reach the Underworld.

⁹ Yarnall, 1994. p33.

prey and a connection to death and birth. All three of them are specifically featured surrounded by wild beasts that are often lions, and all have a close association to birds of prey.¹⁰ These birds of prey, when they appear in prehistoric artifacts usually symbolize life and death,¹¹ just as Circe, to Odysseus symbolizes a connection to the world of the dead. As both Inanna and Cybele connect back to Siduri, Siduri too appears as Gilgamesh's connection to the dead, as it is only through her direction that he is able to reach the world of the dead, consequently the connection between Circe and Siduri cannot be doubted, nor can their shared ancestor Cybele.

I have already pointed out in Chapter One, that Siduri is also known in Akkadian as *Sâbitû*, a name that is believed to come from *sâbu* meaning 'to drink wine' or from *sibû* meaning 'wine dealer'.¹² The name *Sâbitû* is also connected with Sabbe or Sambethe, the oldest of the Sibyls¹³ and the supposed writer of the Sibylline Oracles.¹⁴ Parke supports these connections made by Albright agreeing that Sambethe is merely the Persian, Chaldean and Hebrew name for Sibyl.¹⁵ Etymologically, the name Sibyl as mentioned previously is derived from the Greek *Σίβυλλα*.¹⁶ The precise etymological origins are unclear other than to say that the word derives from the Near East,¹⁷ and is possibly a derivative of the Akkadian word *sibû* meaning 'old', or 'wine dealer' depending on where the accent is.¹⁸ This etymological exploration leads one to the conclusion that the characters of Siduri and the Sibyl are probably linked. In addition to

¹⁰ Ibid. p36.

¹¹ Ibid. p29. Yarnall's discussion of these similarities and parallels is completely thorough and erudite. She is perhaps the best authority to consult for a more exhaustive comparison that space does not allow for.

¹² Albright, 1920. p269.

¹³ Ibid. p 287.

¹⁴ Ibid. p288.

¹⁵ Parke, 1988. pp41-46.

¹⁶ Walde&Hofmann, 1954. p 532.

¹⁷ Liddell& Scott, 1889. p728.

¹⁸ Frisk, 1970. p 700.

the etymological connection between Siduri and the Sibyl, one cannot help but hypothesize about a shared etymology for the Sibyl and Cybele. With the extensive connections between Siduri and Cybele, and Circe and Cybele and the strong argument in favour of a connection between Siduri and the Sibyl, it seems then highly likely that the Sibyl and Cybele do indeed share an etymological root. This then seems to connect Siduri, Circe and the Sibyl to Cybele.

In putting these pieces together then, it becomes apparent that Siduri and Circe must share a common ancestor in Cybele; and Siduri and the Sibyl also share an ancestor in Cybele. It is logical then that Circe and the Sibyl must be related through their common ancestor. I have found no scholar to date who has made this observation for all three of these characters. Here then is an abridgment of these connections.

Siduri = Ishtar = Inanna, who is ‘Mistress of Animals’ → Cybele, who is also ‘Mistress of Animals’. → Circe also ‘Mistress of Animals’.

Siduri = Sâbitû is connected to Sabbe/ Sambethe → the Sibyl.

Circe = Cybele → both connected to falcon iconography and both πότνια θήρων.

The Sibyl → etymologically close to Cybele.

Based on the establishment of the interrelation between the Sibyl, Siduri, Circe and their common ancestor, Cybele, it is now possible to transcribe their model. Characteristics that all three of the guides share shall be written in bold followed by an example from

each story and characteristics that are relevant. Those that only two of the guides exhibit shall be in regular font, followed by the names of the two guides in which this characteristic is found and its location.

1. **Descendants of Cybele**

- As shown above, Siduri, Circe and the Sibyl are all in some way connected to Cybele.

2. **Connected to the sun**

- Siduri lives where the sun rises.
- Circe's father is the Sun god Helios.
- Apollo, the sun god, possesses the Sibyl.

3. **Connection to a divinity**

- Siduri is a divine alewife and is herself a divinity.
- Circe's parents are gods, making her too a divinity
- The Sibyl, although not a divinity herself, as a prophetess is closely connected to Apollo.

4. **Powers of Prophecy**

- Siduri is aware that Gilgamesh will not succeed in his quest for immortality and she therefore warns him that the gods have reserved immortality for themselves.
- Circe advises Odysseus which battles to choose on his journey home and that he must avoid the Sirens.

- The Sibyl was a prophetic mouthpiece of Apollo whose prophecies were recorded in the Sibylline Oracles.

5. **Lives by the sea**

- The first line of Tablet X states that Siduri lives by the sea.
- Circe lives on an island, Aiaia.
- The Sibyl lives on the Cumaeen shore.

6. **Abnormal Independence**

- As an alewife, Siduri seems to have experienced a type of freedom, as alewives are known to have lived outside of the direct ‘protection’ of their male family members.
- Circe governed and ruled over her own island. This gave her independence from the authority of any male figure.

7. **Appearance at crucial point in the plot**

- Gilgamesh had to pass through the gate of the Sun on Mount Mashu where he encountered the Scorpion people. It is at this point in the plot where both his focus and the story shifts towards his quest for immortality.
- Odysseus has passed through the Laestrygonian city of Telepylos where he and his men faced danger and he is trying to get home after many misadventures; Circe appears at the turning point in his wanderings.

- Aeneas has just left the ordeal of Dido behind him and is trying to find his new homeland, which he can only do through his journey to the Underworld.

8. **Hostility towards the hero**

- Siduri bolts the door when she sees Gilgamesh approaching and is reluctant to let him enter her house.
- Circe turns Odysseus' men into pigs at their first meeting and later tries to turn him into one too.
- The Sibyl, in her first encounter with Aeneas, orders him not to remain too long looking at the paintings on the cave walls.

9. **The Threat of the hero**

- Gilgamesh threatens Siduri that he will break her door down and enter whether or not she wants him too.
- Odysseus draws his sword as if to kill Circe after she gives him the magic potion to drink.

10. **Change of Heart**

- Siduri eventually un-bolts her door and allows Gilgamesh to enter.
- Once Odysseus has proved resistant to her φάρμακον κακόν she invites him into her bedroom and treats him and his men with courtesy.
- After Aeneas appeases the Sibyl with pious words and actions, she agrees to help him enter the Underworld.

11. **Connected to magical drinks or other magical powers**

- Siduri is described as a divine alewife.
- Circe makes all men who visit her drink a magic potion.
- The Sibyl feeds Cerberus cake impregnated with honey and magical drugs.

12. **Sacrificial Advice**

- Circe places the necessary sacrificial animals on Odysseus' ship so that he might speak with Tiresias.
- The Sibyl tells Aeneas to sacrifice a black ram among other animals, to the Eumenides.

13. **Boat related aid**

- Siduri directs Gilgamesh in finding Ur-Shanabi, the boatman of Ut-Napishtim with whom he may be able to cross the river.
- Circe sends Odysseus' ship a favourable wind for his sailing to the Underworld.
- The Sibyl persuades Charon the ferryman to allow Aeneas to cross on his ferry.

14. **Romantic Relationship with the Hero**

- Siduri could possibly have had a romantic relationship with Gilgamesh.
- Circe was Odysseus' lover before she was his guide.

15. **Immortality**

- As Siduri is the doublet of Ishtar, and is a goddess, she is obviously divine and therefore immortal.
- Circe is also an immortal goddess
- Apollo granted the Sibyl immortality.

Siduri then has fourteen of these characteristics, Circe has all fifteen and the Sibyl has twelve of these characteristics.

These fifteen points then form the starting point for a larger guide model. It is at this point relevant to reiterate that only the similarities of the guides have been used to establish this model, as a model of differences would simultaneously be all-inclusive and exclusive by the nature of it. One may ask though why these specific similarities override the importance and possible relevance of the differences between these guides. It seems to go without saying that when one examines and compares characters across three cultures and three millennia that there will be differences and indeed there are. The differences that there are between the various guides though are far more superficial than their similarities. The differences that there are between them do not directly affect their roles as guides though, as they all still perform incredibly similar roles and all occupy a similar purpose in the plot. I therefore feel that the differences do not undermine the model as, if one removes their differences from their respective epics, one still has ultimately the same story and same events necessary for the hero to undergo his *katabasis*. If one removes these similarities however, the entire plot of the

epic breaks down, as without these similarities, the *katabasis* cannot occur, and without the *katabasis*, the storyline cannot proceed in its intended manner.

This is a tentative model and encompasses all the similarities I have extracted from the texts, although the possibility that there are still some minor similarities cannot be excluded. Any model is only as good as the characters applied to it and it is for this reason that in the following chapter, this model should be applied to guides from other literature and times. This is both to strengthen the validity of the model and to test the degree to which other female characters can be thought of as female guides. The female characters that shall be examined do still come from predominantly epic literature, since, as detailed in the introduction, this model is created primarily for the analysis of female guide-type characters in epic literature.

Chapter Five

Medea and other Guides

The Hero and the Guide in additional literature and their application to the Model

When one examines other Greek and Latin texts, it is surprising how often there are occurrences of a *katabasis*. Many of these occurrences do not take place in a physical Underworld but often in a place or circumstance resembling the Underworld in some way as elaborated upon in the Introduction. This chapter intends to examine a few of the instances where a *katabasis* occurs, whether it is a figurative journey, or a literal one. As a number of these stories come from a variety of sources, in those instances, only those that emphasise a figurative *katabasis* and the help of a guide will be mentioned. These other female guides take a number of forms and in this chapter, the purpose of the additional guides is to highlight the surprising prominence of female guide characters in Greek and Latin literature and to compare them to the model that has been established in the previous chapter. The social and historical contexts of these guides, which in previous chapters have played such an important role, shall not be examined in this chapter. This is because the primary goal of this chapter is to establish to what extent additional guides can be applied to the model, and for this reason they shall be examined outside of their contexts. Although some might not fit the model entirely, they still provide a point of interest and serve to highlight the relevance of this study through the prominence in literature of such female characters. The first two guides that shall be examined, namely Medea and Erichtho, will take precedence over the last guide,

Ariadne, as they both occur mainly in epic literature, as the primary guides mentioned in the previous chapters have.

Medea as Jason's guide

'I saved thee: this knows every son of Greece that stepped with thee aboard thine
Argo's hull...'¹

The traditional view of Medea is not that of a helpful and guiding character, but often rather of a cruel and vindictive woman; through the following analysis, her role as Jason's guide in his figurative *katabasis* shall become apparent. The most well known versions of the Medea myth come from Euripides, Apollonius of Rhodes and Seneca.² On further investigation, it becomes apparent that a number of authors did in fact write on the Medea myth, painting her in varying degrees of maliciousness.³ This chapter shall focus on the texts that most detail the pursuits of Medea in her role as guide, primarily Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica as being an epic; this text shares the most similarities to the three primary guides in the previous chapters. The importance of Medea as a female guide in Apollonius' work is a fairly recent discovery and it for this reason that Apollonius' Medea shall be examined in far more depth than the other sources on her. Other sources that shall be used will be Euripides' Medea, Ovid's Metamorphoses and Hyginus' Fabulae.

¹ Eur Med 476-477 (Trans.) Way.

² The Senecan version will not be examined in this chapter, as considering that he is later than many of the other sources, his version would not bring too much additional insight into her character. Seneca also focuses on the events that occur in Corinth and does not mention much about Medea's earlier assistance to Jason.

³ Information regarding Medea can be found in Seneca's Medea, Pindar's The Pythian Odes : 4; Ovid's Heroides, XII; Metamorphoses, VII:1-450 and Tristia, III:9. Hyginus' Fabulae 21-26; Apollodorus' Bibliothēke I:23-28 Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica; Herodotus' Histories VII: 62i and Hesiod's Theogony 1000-1002.

The story of Medea is well known, but for continuity, a brief overview of her myth shall be examined; since this will also aid in the analysis of to what degree she represents a guide. Medea is the granddaughter of Helios and the daughter of Aietes;⁴ this makes Medea the niece of Circe:

‘(Circe)...and the moment she saw Medea raise her eyes from the ground she was eager to hear her voice-a kinswoman’s, surely, for all the Sun’s descendants were impossible to mistake’⁵

Medea then would also be Ariadne’s cousin.⁶ Jason, who is one of the oldest known Greek heroes,⁷ was sent off by Pelias to recover the Golden Fleece.⁸ Aphrodite made Medea fall in love with Jason⁹ so that she would help him with his tasks. Her efficiency with potions, her charm and magic helped Jason achieve all he set out to do and she ends up sailing away with him, as by helping Jason, she has betrayed her family. On their journey away from Aia in Colchis - the place where Medea is from and which is on the periphery of the Greek world - she does many terrible things in the name of her love for Jason. She kills her brother Apsyrtus by chopping his body into pieces and leaving them floating in the sea. She does this so that her father would not be able pursue them, as he would be too devastated. She also rejuvenates Jason to youth¹⁰ by placing his years on his father Aeson.¹¹ She is then responsible for the death of Pelias by

⁴ Newman, 2003. p165. See also Euripides’ Medea 406 and 746-747.

⁵ Ap. Rhod. Argon 4: 725-727. (Trans.) Green.

⁶ ‘Medea asks Jason about her cousin Ariadne: Tell me too about that girl you mentioned (Ariadne), who won such fame for herself, the daughter of Pasiphae my father’s (Aeetes’) sister.’ Ap. Rhod Argon 3:1074 (Trans) Green.

⁷ Green, 1997. p22.

⁸ OCD (s.v Jason 1).

⁹ Eur Med 70.

¹⁰ Just as Circe does to Odysseus’ men.

¹¹ Medea has the power to summon the triple goddess Hecate, in order to extend the life of Jason. (Met VII 179-293).

convincing his daughters to cut him up and boil him in the belief that this would rejuvenate him too. As a result of this, both Jason and Medea are forced to flee to Corinth. It is here that Jason agrees to marry King Creon's daughter in Corinth, because of which, Medea is threatened with exile,¹² as it is correctly suspected¹³ that she might attempt to murder the new royal couple. In revenge for Jason's betrayal, Medea kills Creon and Jason's intended wife Creusa, as well as her own children before fleeing to Athens.¹⁴ Knowing the general myth of Medea, one can now turn to examine her depictions by various authors.

The Alexandrian Apollonius of Rhodes wrote in the third century BCE an entire epic based on the story of Jason and Medea. What sets his story apart from many of the others is the fact that he primarily concentrates on the events that occurred before the pair fled to Corinth, focusing on their first meeting and the events that occurred on and around Aia. He also generally portrays Medea in a more compassionate light than other authors; to Apollonius, 'Hera works out her revenge against Pelias by using Medeia (sic) as an unconscious agent.'¹⁵ This shows that while writing his epic, Apollonius believed that Medea was used predominantly as a divine tool and this can be seen in the more sympathetic way he portrays her character. This source is then the most relevant for this chapter, as it is at the time Apollonius sets his epic that Medea acted as a guide to Jason. This particular epic is also important within the context of the other epics that have been explored in previous chapters as: 'The Argonautica stands out as the most creative and original imitation of the Homeric poems before Vergil.'¹⁶ Apollonius' epic then seems to bridge the chronological gap between the Odyssey and the Aeneid. The

¹² Eur Med 70.

¹³ Eur Med 282.

¹⁴ OCD (s.v Medea).

¹⁵ Green, 1997. p39.

¹⁶ Nelis, 2001. p7.

story between Jason and Medea picks up in Book 3 of the Argonautica. The extract below shows how Jason knowingly came to Medea for assistance, just as Gilgamesh came to Siduri, Odysseus to Circe, and Aeneas to the Sibyl for help.

‘ By your parents I implore you, by Hekate¹⁷ herself, by Zeus, who extends his hand to guests and to suppliants; both as a suppliant and as a guest I come before you here, kneeling perforce through my need, since alone, without you, I’ll never come out on top on this grievous contest.’¹⁸

Medea experiences a great degree of internal turmoil when deciding whether or not to assist Jason and betray her own father¹⁹ and it is finally only through the persuasion of her sister Chalkiope that she eventually agrees to assist him. This paints Medea in a more understanding light than in other versions of the story, such as that by Euripides. Perhaps the best example of Medea and her similarities to the other guides mentioned previously is in the following extracts, which detail her assistance to Jason. What is interesting is the fact that Jason’s Golden Fleece and Aeneas’ Golden Bough have often been thought to contain significant parallels.²⁰ Jason’s trip to get the Golden Fleece can be considered to be a *katabasis* in a figurative underworld as the journey is fraught with danger, yet essential for him in order to gain something of great importance that is necessary for him to be able to proceed with his journey - just as Odysseus has to go into the dangerous underworld to consult Tiresias on how to get home and Aeneas too

¹⁷ Hecate’s name is the female equivalent of Hekatos, an epithet of Apollo (OCD s.v Hecate). This possible connection between Hecate and Apollo proves interesting if one bears in mind the connection between the Sibyl and Apollo and how it is with his intervention that she aids Aeneas. It is also Hecate herself who shows the Sibyl through the Underworld. It is with Hecate’s help that Medea can aid Jason, as she is the priestess of Hecate and this then creates an interesting parallel between Medea and the Sibyl.

¹⁸ Ap. Rhod. Argon 3:985-989. (Trans) Green.

¹⁹ Ap. Rhod. Argon 3:755-827.

²⁰ For the numerous other similarities between Jason and Aeneas and the Argonautica and the Aeneid, see Nelis, 2001.

has to enter this dangerous realm in order to gain information about the future of the city he is destined to establish. The danger to Jason can be seen in the necessity for Medea to control the beast that guards the fleece:

‘Now as it writhed Medea forced it down there, holding it with her eyes, in sweet tones calling on Sleep, supreme among gods, to charm this fearful creature, then invoked the night-wandering Queen of the Nether World for success in her venture.’²¹

By invoking the queen of the Nether World, in this case Hecate and not Persephone, Medea resembles the Sibyl who when guiding Aeneas through the Underworld tells him that Hecate herself showed her around the realm of the Underworld.²² This shows a connection between both these guides and Hecate, as mentioned in an earlier note. The similarities between the Sibyl and Medea extend to the reaction of Aeneas and Jason when they enter the Underworld:

‘Jason followed behind her in terror; but already the dragon, charmed by her spells, was relaxing the long spine of its sinuous earthborn frame, spreading out its countless coils, as some dark wave, stealthy and noiseless, rolls over a sluggish expanse of ocean; yet still it struggled to rear up its frightful head, still obstinately urgent to wrap its killer jaws round the pair of them together. But she with a branch of juniper, newly severed, dipping it in her potion, chanting strong spells, drizzled her charged drugs in its eyes, and their most potent odour enveloped it, laid it unconscious.’²³

²¹ Ap. Rhod. Argon 4: 144-148.

²² Aen 6:577.

²³ Ap. Rhod. Argon 4: 149-159.

This passage also has similarities primarily to Book 6 of the Aeneid. The assistance that Medea provides to Jason is comparable to the assistance that the Sibyl gave to Aeneas. Aeneas cowers behind the Sibyl with his sword drawn as they enter the Underworld; in this passage Jason follows behind Medea in terror, thus showing that both heroes hide behind women when faced with the unknown. Medea drugs the dragon that guards the Golden Fleece with spells and a juniper branch dipped in strong potions just as the Sibyl drugs the three headed dog Cerberus who guards the entrance to the Underworld. A great deal has recently been written by Nelis about the possible influence Apollonius of Rhodes had on Virgil,²⁴ including the theory that Apollonius engaged with Homer in his own work and to some extent imitated it and that Virgil, being fully aware of this influence, actively reworked the Argonautica into his Aeneid. From these above comparisons, it does indeed seem that there are numerous similarities between them, as can be also seen in this passage from Ovid's Metamorphoses, which bares striking parallels to the Sibyls aiding of Aeneas:

‘.. and the heroic son of Aeson gained the Golden Fleece. Proud of this spoil, and victor and his wife in due time reached the harbour of Iolchos.’²⁵

Although Ovid is a later source, considering his in depth examination of Medea in many of his works,²⁶ he proves to be a good additional author for the analysis of Medea as a guide. Ovid most conclusively deals with Medea in the Metamorphoses.²⁷ In this work, Ovid shows the importance and the value of the role played by Medea to Jason and like

²⁴ See Nelis's 2001 Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius.

²⁵ Ov Met VII: 155-158. (Trans. Miller).

²⁶ Ovid also wrote a 'Medea' which is no longer extant.

²⁷ She also appears in his Heroides.

Apollonius depicts her sympathetically.²⁸ In fact, he shows how she guided and aided him; and how without her, Jason would not have succeeded in his tasks. Ovid describes in detail how Medea was the one responsible for Jason being victorious in his endeavours:

‘She also, who had safeguarded him, was sore afraid; and when she saw him, one man, attacked by so many foes, she grew pale, and sat there suddenly cold and bloodless. And, lest the charmed herbs which she had given him should not be strong enough, she chanted a spell to help them and called in her secret arts.’²⁹

This passage clearly shows that it is the magical herbs Medea gave Jason that enabled him to be victorious and not just his heroic might as one might expect from a hero. What seems to make the relationship between Medea and Jason remarkable can be seen in the following passage, where he willingly acknowledges the important role Medea has played in saving his life. What Jason also has in common with other heroes who make use of female guides, is his request for her assistance with staying young. Jason’s request is reminiscent of Gilgamesh’s request to Siduri to obtain immortality. Medea helps Jason literally with this request as she herself rejuvenates him whereas Siduri aids Gilgamesh more indirectly by only telling him where to go to potentially receive immortality. Jason asks Medea rather directly to grant his desire for immortality:

‘Then the son of Aeson: ‘O wife, to whom I freely own my deliverance is due, although you have already given me all, and the sum of your benefits has exceeded

²⁸ Newlands, 1997. p183.

²⁹ Ov *Met* VII: 134-138.

all my hopes; still, if your spells can do this - and what can they no do? - take some portion from my own years of life and give this to my father.’³⁰

Hyginus is a lesser known first century BCE Roman source in regards to the Medea myth, and what makes Hyginus interesting, is his inclusion of the coercive manner in which Medea fell in love with Jason:

‘And so since she knew that Jason could not perform the commands without help of Medea, she asked Venus to inspire Medea with love. At Venus’ instigation, Jason was loved by Medea. By her aid he was freed from all danger, for when he had ploughed with the bulls, and the armed men had been born, by Medea’s advice he threw a stone among them. They then fought among themselves and slew each other. When the dragon was lulled to sleep with drugs he took the fleece from the shrine, and set off for his country with Medea.’³¹

This extract seems to suggest that Medea was coerced against her will into having feelings for Jason, just as Apollo overpowers the Sibyl, and that Hera knew that the only way Jason could be successful was if Medea helped him. Through this brief examination of Medea in various versions of her myth, it appears that there are indeed similarities between her and the other guides. The last step that remains then is to apply Medea to the Female Guide Model to ascertain to what extent she represents a guide.

1) Descendants of Cybele

Perhaps through her connection to Circe, but it is not explicit.

³⁰ Ov Met VII: 164- 168.

³¹ Hyg. Fab: 22. (Trans.) Grant 1960.

2) Connected to the sun

Medea is the granddaughter of Helios.

3) Connection to a divinity

Medea, as the priestess of Hecate, has the power to summon the triple goddess Hecate in order to extend Jason's life.

4) Powers of Prophecy

Medea knows that if she agrees to help Jason she will be forsaking her relationship with her family. She also knows that if she sacrifices her brother, she and Jason will be able to escape without her father following them.

5) Lives by the sea

Medea lives in Aia in Colchis, which is by the sea.

6) Abnormal Independence

Not readily apparent.

7) Appearance at crucial point in the plot

Medea appears at the point in the plot where Jason has to go and collect the Golden Fleece in order to regain his throne.

8) Hostility towards the hero

Medea is initially hostile to the idea of helping Jason until Chalkiope persuades her to help him.

9) The Threat of the hero

The threat of the hero here comes only after the guide's help, as Jason abandons Medea in favour of a Corinthian princess. This only happens at a much later stage in the plot but it is still interesting to show the parallels albeit them not being chronologically matching.

10) Change of Heart

Venus inspired Medea's love for Jason and Chalkiope her sister persuades her so that she would help him.

11) Connected to magical drinks or other magical powers

Medea gives a juniper branch dipped in strong potions to the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece so that Jason would be able to steal it. She also anoints Jason with a powerful drug when he is to face his opponents.

12) Sacrificial Advice

Medea instructs Jason concerning the magic rituals he must perform before the fight with the bulls, including what sacrifices he must make to Hecate to ensure his safety.³²

13) Boat related aid

³² Ap. Rhod. Argon. 3:1026-1051.

Jason and Medea disembark on the bank of the Phasis with the guidance of Medea.³³

14) Romantic Relationship with the hero

Medea and Jason have two sons.

15) Immortality

In some versions of the myth,³⁴ though not in the primary ones examined here.

It would then seem to suggest that through the guidelines of my model, Medea could indeed be considered a female guide as she has eleven definite characteristics and three possible characteristics of the fifteen characteristics of a guide. Medea has all of the characteristics that seem to be the most important, namely those directly connected to the guiding of the hero. Although chronologically some of the events do not occur at the same time as the other guides in the model, these characteristics are not the ones that drastically alter the plot, as even without these Medea still aides Jason in fundamentally the same way as the other three guides do.

³³ Ap. Rhod. Argon. 4:114.

³⁴ See Powell, 1998. p490. Though it is worth noting that this connection is only briefly mentioned.

Erichtho the Witch as guide to Sextus Pompeius

‘The necromancy of (Book) 6 serves a purpose not unlike that of the *Nekuia* in Odyssey 11 or of Aeneas’ visit to the Underworld in Aeneid 6.’³⁵

Lucan, who wrote his Pharsalia under the reign of Nero, may seem like an odd choice for inclusion in this chapter as his epic poem describing the Roman Civil Wars is by no means a conventional epic and has long been criticized for its numerous shortcomings.³⁶ As this epic does not contain one clear hero³⁷ and no trip to the Underworld, it may seem an unlikely text to examine, but as this chapter intends to deal with texts and genres that in some instances differ from the three primary texts examined; the necromancy in Book 6 of the Pharsalia provides a viable passage for analysis. His work remains an epic nevertheless, and as this dissertation is concerned primarily with the examination of epic literature, it remains an important source to analyse.

Lucan’s epic is a reaction against the Aeneid, ‘so instead of Cato consulting ancestral ghosts like Virgil allowed Aeneas, he lets a horror-comic witch called Erichtho³⁸ resuscitates a dead Pompeian soldier with a grisly spell, and then threatens him with eternal punishment unless he prophesies the future.’³⁹ This encounter with the Underworld through Erichtho, I feel warrants a figurative *katabasis* as in this episode, just as in the literal *katabasis* there is danger for the Sextus Pompeius character and some dangerous task that is necessary to accomplish. As stated earlier in the opening

³⁵ Ahl, 1976. p137. I have inserted (Book) for clarification.

³⁶ See Graves, 1957 Introduction. Lucan is often criticized for his historical inaccuracy and weak writing style.

³⁷ Johnson, 1987. px.

³⁸ Lucan is the primary source regarding Erichtho.

³⁹ Graves, 1957. p12.

quote of this section, the ‘necromancy of (Book) 6 serves a purpose not unlike that of the *Nekuia* in *Odyssey* 11 or of Aeneas’ visit to the underworld in *Aeneid* 6.’⁴⁰ Although Sextus Pompeius may not be like the other heroes explored in this dissertation, his journey nevertheless does bare some parallels to those in other epics. This epic may be a self proclaimed reaction against the *Aeneid* by the mere fact that in certain episodes, the *Pharsalia* alludes to a connection with the *Aeneid*, such as the episode that shall be here examined. This makes it a useful text to analyse as it bears some connection to the *Aeneid*, albeit a reactionary connection.⁴¹ The inclusion of a text such as this and a female character that seemingly differs so drastically from the others is deliberate; as it will test the validity of applying my model to other types of female characters, in this instance, Erichtho, whom modern day scholars have classified a witch. The term witch is often associated with necromancers.⁴² Necromancy is a term associated with the raising of the dead in order to gain something from them, often in the form of advice or a prophecy.⁴³ Practitioners of necromancy were often called φάρμακισ in Greek and *saga* in Latin meaning witch⁴⁴ and it is within this framework that Erichtho appears.⁴⁵

Sextus Pompeius, the son of the general Pompey, is described by Lucan to be the ‘unworthy son of Pompey’⁴⁶ and he approaches the Thessalian witch Erichtho towards the end of Book 6 the night before the battle that gives the epic its name, the battle at

⁴⁰ Ahl, 1976. p137.

⁴¹ Ahl, 1974. p582.

⁴² Ogden, 2001. p xx.

⁴³ Ibid. Pass.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p xx. Medea was also called a witch, but as Johnson says: ‘other witches are more classically rational than she by far: they are mostly concerned with love or money. But Erichtho seems totally indifferent to sex or to cash-or even to revenge.’ (1987. p20.) In other words, although Medea too was called a witch, Erichtho as a witch was not driven by the same motives that Medea was.

⁴⁵ At this stage in the dissertation it is unnecessary to go into depth regarding the specifics of the practice of necromancy, as the practice only explicitly appears in Erichtho. Further information would only be required if there was to be an analysis of necromancers and the guide model. For Necromancy see Ogden, 2001.

⁴⁶ Luc. 6:588. (Trans. Duff)

Pharsalia. He comes to her at a crucial point within the epic, his father and Caesar are about to engage in battle in Thessaly and he approaches her with the request of finding out who will die in the upcoming battle.⁴⁷ Thessaly is located near the sea and Erichtho is said to live in a cave overlooking the sea.⁴⁸ It is in a graveyard above his father's camp that he and some companions approach Erichtho. Sextus finds Erichtho after a fairly long and sensational description of the gruesome acts of witchcraft and the cruelty of Erichtho and the other Thessalian witches' magic, which includes a very brief description of Medea having gathered herbs in the same places as the Thessalian witches.⁴⁹ On his first encounter with Erichtho, who is 'dear to the deities of Erebus',⁵⁰ Sextus flatters her by praising her ability and her infamy.

'Famous among Thessalian women, you who have the power to reveal the future to mankind and to turn aside the course of events, I pray you that I may be allowed certain knowledge of the issue which the hazard of war is preparing.'⁵¹

She reacts to his flattery in what seems like a mock humorous manner and she proceeds to boast about her abilities. She openly compares her abilities to those of more traditional oracular sources⁵² such as the Pythia, but claims her abilities to be far superior, although she does not specify how. Once Sextus has told her what information he requires from her, she sets about locating a suitable corpse in the battlefield to use for the necromancy, which in some bizarre way is reminiscent of both the Sibyl and Circe's advice on the necessary sacrifices for the Underworld, for just as Circe and the Sibyl describe the suitable sacrifices that are necessary to enter the Underworld, so too does

⁴⁷ Luc. 6:598-603.

⁴⁸ Luc. 6:347-351.

⁴⁹ Luc. 6:441-442.

⁵⁰ Luc. 6: 513. Lucan does not elaborate which deities.

⁵¹ Luc. 6:589-592.

⁵² Luc. 6: 770-774.

Erichtho describe what makes a corpse suitable for necromancy. After this, there is a mock-horror description of Erichtho digging through the bodies of dead soldiers to locate one adequate for her to temporarily reawake.

‘But, since there is such an abundance of recent slaughter, the simplest plan is to lift one dead man from the Thessalian fields; then the mouth of a corpse still warm and freshly slain will speak with substantial utterance, and no dismal ghost, whose limbs are dried up by the sun, will gibber sounds unintelligible to our ears.’⁵³

In order to awaken the corpse she has chosen from the battlefield, she ‘puts leaves steeped with magic unutterable’⁵⁴ in his mouth and utters spells that are described as more powerful than any drug and performs a sacrifice. Her abilities with magic spells and potions connect her to all the other guides that have been mentioned and analysed up to this point. This seems to be a skill that they all share.

‘Then she begins by piercing the breast of the corpse with fresh wounds, which she filled with hot blood, she washed the inward parts clean of clotted gore; she poured in lavishly the poison that the moon supplies.’⁵⁵

Once she has uttered spells over the corpse and has prepared for the ritual, in line 700 she invokes Hecate, which would seem to connect her to Medea and the Sibyl who both also summon Hecate for assistance. The vituperation she abuses the gods with when her initial attempt to reawaken the dead body fails is again almost humorous and lightens perceptively what would ordinarily be quite a terrible scene:

⁵³ Luc. 6:19-623.

⁵⁴ Luc. 6: 683.

⁵⁵ Luc. 6: 670-671.

‘Tisiphone and Megaera heedless of my voice, will you not drive with your cruel scourges that wretched soul through the waste of Erebus? Soon I will summon you forth by your real names, and leave you, hounds of Hell, helpless in then light of the upper world; through graves and burials I shall follow and mark you; I shall drive you from tombs, and banish you from all urns of the dead.’⁵⁶

Even the dead body, once awakened, manages to connect back to the Aeneid as ‘we may compare the role of the reanimate corpse to that of Anchises and that of Erichtho to the Sibyl.’⁵⁷ Erichtho threatens the corpse that if it does not awaken and speak she will curse it and prevent the corpse from dying again, which would trap it between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The corpse’s speech is reminiscent of the speech that Anchises delivers to Aeneas⁵⁸ as both list all the heroes and famous Romans who occupy the Underworld. Anchises’ description is however a positive description of the future, while the reanimated corpse’s description is rather macabre. The corpse eventually tells Pompeius that ‘fortune divides your graves among the lands you have triumphed over’⁵⁹ and that he will not die on this battlefield. Once Erichtho has granted Sextus his request through enquiry with the corpse, she sets the corpse on a funeral pyre so that it may once again return to the world of the dead.

‘he stood still and in silence and sorrow, demanding to die once more; and death, having exerted all its power already, could not claim the life again, so the witch built up a great pyre of wood; and the dead man walked into the fire.’⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Luc. 6:730-736.

⁵⁷ Ahl, 1976. p144.

⁵⁸ Aen 6:713-748.

⁵⁹ Luc. 6:817-818.

⁶⁰ Luc. 6:820-824.

At this point Erichtho escorts Sextus safely back to the camp of his father Pompey just as dawn is about to break which is reminiscent of the Sibyl and Aeneas also returning from their journey at daybreak. When she leaves Sextus, she exits the narrative as she has fulfilled her purpose. Considering that Johnson believes that ‘Erichtho (who after all, is Lucan’s answer to Virgil’s Sibyl),’⁶¹ it is now necessary to analyse to what degree she does or does not fit into the guide model.

1) Descendants of Cybele

No apparent connection.

2) Connected to the sun

No, in fact she shuns daylight and keeps to the shadows.

3) Connection to a divinity

She is ‘dear to the deities of Erebus.’

4) Powers of Prophecy

According to herself, she has abilities that surpass those of conventional oracles such as at Delphi.

5) Lives by the sea

She lives in Thessaly in a cave near the sea.

6) Abnormal Independence

⁶¹ Johnson, 1987. p29.

As a witch, it would be assumed that she is not under the authority of any man.

7) Appearance at crucial point in the plot

She is consulted just before the battle that provides the epic with its name.

8) Hostility towards the hero

No.

9) The Threat of the hero

No.

10) Change of Heart

No.

11) Connected to magical drinks or other magical powers

She is known for her magical powers, both to alter the future and prophecies. She administers powerful drugs to the corpse in order to reanimate it.

12) Sacrificial Advice

She performs a sacrifice herself in order to summon the dead soldier from the Underworld.

13) Boat related aid

No.

14) Romantic Relationship with the hero

No.

15) Immortality

It can be assumed that such a powerful witch would indeed be immortal, as she can both inflict death and bring things back to life.

Erichtho has just eight of the fifteen characteristics of my guide model. Although this is just over half of the characteristics, it does indicate that with possible adaptation and minor reformulation, this model could also encapsulate witches and various female necromancers. Erichtho does not have some of the characteristics that seem to be intrinsically linked to the other guides, such as a connection to the sun and the interplay between threat of the hero and change of heart by the guide. However, she does have a connection to magical drinks and magical powers and claims to have the power of prophecy, which is of equal importance for this model. This seems to indicate that to some extent, Erichtho can indeed be classified as a guide, albeit in a lesser sense than some of the other guides examined. The big differences between her and the other guides can perhaps be explained by the fact that Erichtho is a witch and necromancer, whereas none of the other guides examined here are.

Ariadne as a guide to Theseus

‘But you know your thread was his saviour: for the man of Athens with his club
would never have found victory in that contest without a rosy-red girl to help him.’

(Nonnus, Dionysiaca 47.)⁶²

Another remarkable example of a *katabasis* that appears in a figurative form, as outlined in the Introduction, is that of Theseus and the Labyrinth. In this *katabasis*, the Labyrinth appears as the Underworld, as it is full of dangers and the hero needs to journey through it to accomplish his destiny and the Minotaur corresponds with the dangers faced in the Underworld. Theseus himself, like Jason, is a *bona fide* hero; they are both included in Lord Raglan’s examples in his Hero Model.⁶³ For this chapter I will focus on the texts that contain more of a focus on Ariadne’s role in the story rather than just on the general story.⁶⁴ With this in mind, the texts I will be using are Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, Apollodorus and Nonnus.⁶⁵ For a sense of continuity, an overall summary of the story shall be given before looking at the texts specified above, as although the myth is well known, there are many variations of the myth. A brief summary then of the basic story is necessary to provide an outline for this chapter.

⁶² (Trans.) Rouse. 1940.

⁶³ Raglan, 1934.

⁶⁴ Some of the primary sources for the Theseus and Ariadne story include Plutarch, in his Life of Theseus 20:1; Homer in the Odyssey 11:320 Hesiod’s Theogony 947; Ovid’s Heroides 2:75; Apollodorus’ Bibliotheca III.1.2; Diodorus Siculus in Library of History 4:61:5, and Nonnus in his Dionysiaca. As I intend to focus on Ariadne, I will in some cases not be using some of the more well known and traditional texts on this subject. Other authors who write on Ariadne include Quintus Smyrnaeus, Fall of Troy 4:385 Philostratus the Elder Imagines 1:15, Theophilus To Autolykus 7 and Hyginus’ Fabulae 14 to name but a few.

⁶⁵ I will not be using the Heroides by Ovid as I feel he focuses more on Ariadne’s abandonment and less on the active role she played in assisting Theseus.

‘Minos commanded them [the Athenians as recompense for the murder of his son Androgeus] that they give seven youths and as many maidens every nine years to the Minotauros for him to devour, for as long as the monster should live. And when the Athenians gave them, the inhabitants of Attika were rid of their evils and Minos ceased warring on Athens . . . Theseus after conversing with her (Ariadne the daughter of Minos) and securing her assistance, both slew the Minotauros and got safely away, since he had learned from her the way out of the labyrinth.’⁶⁶

The Athenians were required to send seven youths and seven maidens to Crete as tribute to King Minos every nine/ten years. These young Athenians were then led into the Labyrinth to be eaten by the Minotaur. This Minotaur was the result of the copulation between Queen Pasiphae⁶⁷ and a bull given to King Minos by Poseidon. King Minos’ daughter Ariadne, who had fallen in love with Theseus, aided him in the labyrinth,⁶⁸ ‘indeed, Theseus too once was saved from a nasty ordeal by the kindness of Ariadne.’⁶⁹ She provided him with a sword and thread and advised him how to unravel the thread as he went, so that he would be able to find his way out once he had killed Ariadne’s brother, the Minotaur. Theseus and the Athenians then escaped with Ariadne and made the journey home to Athens. Along the way, Theseus grew tired of Ariadne and left her on the deserted island of Naxos where Dionysus took pity on her and made her his wife.⁷⁰ Plutarch’s first century CE account of the Ariadne episode is somewhat brief but is a good starting point for examining the role played by her as Theseus’ guide, as it shows that Theseus only made it out of the labyrinth with the assistance of Ariadne.

⁶⁶ Diod. Sic. 4. 61. 4. (Trans.) Oldfather.

⁶⁷ Pasiphae is the daughter of Tethys and Oceanus, which would make her Circe’s sister and Medea’s aunt. (Newman, 2003. p 233) This then means that Ariadne is also the niece of Circe.

⁶⁸ This is reminiscent of both Circe falling in love with Odysseus and Medea falling in love with Jason.

⁶⁹ Ap. Rhod. *Argon* 3:997-998.

⁷⁰ A significant amount of scholarship exists on the significance of Theseus’ abandonment of Ariadne but for this chapter it is sufficient to merely acknowledge this, as it has no direct bearing on the purpose of this pursuit.

‘On the two former occasions, then, no hope of safety was entertained, and therefore they sent the ship with a black sail, convinced that their youth were going to certain destruction; but now Theseus encouraged his father and loudly boasted that he would master the Minotauros, so that he gave the pilot another sail, a white one, ordering him, if he returned with Theseus safe, to hoist the white sail, but otherwise to sail with the black one, and so indicate the affliction . . . When he reached Krete on his voyage, most historians and poets tell us that he got from Ariadne, who had fallen in love with him, the famous thread, and that having been instructed by her how to make his way through the intricacies of the Labyrinth, he slew the Minotauros and sailed off with Ariadne and the youths.’⁷¹

Plutarch therefore shows that there is a consensus amongst ancient sources⁷² that Theseus was indeed only successful with the aid of Ariadne. This excerpt shows that Ariadne instructed him on the intricacies of the labyrinth, just as Circe had advised Odysseus on how to proceed to the Underworld, and what to do once he reached it. Ariadne also warns Theseus of the dangers he faces, just as the Sibyl does for Aeneas, Circe does for Odysseus, and Siduri does for Gilgamesh. Apollodorus’ first century BCE account describes how Ariadne acquired the information required by Theseus to escape from the labyrinth through the assistance of a male character that she was well acquainted with, namely Daedalus.

‘Theseus was on the list of the third tribute to the Minotauros (some day he volunteered) . . . [Ariadne] pleaded with Daidalos to tell her the way out of the labyrinth. Following his instructions, she gave Theseus a ball of thread as he

⁷¹ Plut *Thes* .19: 1 (Trans.) Perrin, 1967.

⁷² As Plutarch used a number of now unknown ancient sources, he provides us with an additional insight into this story that we would not otherwise have.

entered. He fastened this to the door and let it trail behind him as he went in. He came across the Minotauros in the furthest section of the labyrinth, killed him with jabs of his fist, and then made his way out again by pulling himself along the thread.⁷³

This is very interesting, as Daedalus is associated with the craft god Hephaestus⁷⁴ and this would create for Ariadne a connection with a god to help her with her advice to the hero. This is like the Sibyl who is aided by the god Apollo and Circe, being the daughter of a god, in some sense would be aided by the god Helios. But perhaps the most telling of all the extracts is the one in which this chapter started:

(Dionysos addresses Ariadne:) ‘He shed the blood of the half-bull man whose den was the earth dug labyrinth . . . But you know your thread was his saviour: for the man of Athens with his club would never have found victory in that contest without a rosy-red girl to help him.’⁷⁵

Nonnus’ fourth century CE suggestion is relevant as Ariadne was in fact Theseus’ saviour. This excerpt is the only one which I know of that does not paint Ariadne as a weak love struck girl, but depicts her as a strong and wilful woman who was able to assist a hero when he was not able to help himself. This female assistance of a hero is reminiscent of Siduri’s help of Gilgamesh, Circe’s assistance to Odysseus and the Sibyl’s aid to Aeneas.⁷⁶ Ariadne is also in some versions of the myth a vegetation

⁷³ Apollod, *Bibl* 1. 7 - 1. 9 (Trans.) Frazer.

⁷⁴ OCD (s.v Daedalus).

⁷⁵ Nonnus, *Dion* 47. 434 (Trans.) Rouse, 1940.

⁷⁶ An interesting aside is that Ariadne supposedly gave Theseus a luminous wreath that Dionysos gave her in order that he may find his way through the Labyrinth (Webster, 1966 p24). This betrayal of a god’s gift is reminiscent of the Sibyl’s betrayal of Apollo’s gift of eternal life (see chapter 4 on the Sibyl for more information.).

goddess,⁷⁷ and pigs are sacred animals of vegetation goddesses.⁷⁸ As illustrated at an earlier stage, Circe is also in some ways connected to pigs and this is then another of the characteristics she shares with the other guides of the model.

Although it might seem that at first glance Ariadne cannot considerably contribute to the guide model being developed, as she is not found primarily in an epic, at closer examination it is apparent that she does in fact share many of the characteristics fundamental to the developing of this guide model. What is also striking is the fact that the literature in which Ariadne is included covers a wide variety of genres from poetry, histories and epistles. The importance then of this female guide cannot be downplayed despite the fact that she is not a literal guide and the fact that the Underworld the hero enters is figurative. There can be no denying either, that Theseus is a traditional hero and his journey into the labyrinth is his *katabasis*. With this being the case, Ariadne fits conveniently into the role of his female guide. What remains to be seen is how many of the model's characteristics Ariadne shares.

1) Descendants of Cybele

This is not made clear in any of the works but might be implied through her relation to Circe.

2) Connected to the sun

Ariadne's mother Pasiphae is the sister of Circe; this makes Ariadne her niece and therefore the granddaughter of Helios.

⁷⁷ Webster, 1966. p22.

⁷⁸ Yarnall, 1994. p44.

3) Connection to a divinity

Ariadne is believed to be a vegetation goddess. She is also connected to a god through Daedalus, whom she asks for assistance in aiding Theseus. Daedalus, as mentioned above, is connected with the god Hephaestus.

4) Powers of Prophecy

None.

5) Lives by the sea

She lives on the island of Crete that is surrounded by the sea.

6) Abnormal Independence

None that is particularly apparent.

7) Appearance at crucial point in the plot

Ariadne appears at the crucial time just before Theseus is about to enter the Labyrinth.

8) Hostility towards the hero

Not particularly so.

9) The Threat of the hero

Not initially as Theseus is a prisoner. One may consider his abandonment of her after her help to be violence against her, but as this only occurs at a later stage in the narrative, it does not fit with the chronology in the model.

10) Change of Heart

No.

11) Connected to magical drinks or other magical powers

Ariadne is connected to magical powers through her friendship with Daedalus, who provides her in one version of the myth with a luminous wreath that she gives to Theseus.

12) Sacrificial Advice

Ariadne provides Theseus with the sword to kill the Minotaur. The Minotaur can perhaps be seen as a sacrifice, as Ariadne is allowing her half brother to be killed.

13) Boat related aid

Not unless one considers that Theseus was only able to escape on his boat after Ariadne had helped him to escape from the Labyrinth.

14) Romantic Relationship with the hero

Ariadne falls in love with Theseus, and for that reason agrees to help him.

15) Immortality

No, except in versions of the myth where she marries Bacchus/Dionysus.

Ariadne then has eight definite characteristics of the fifteen characteristics of a guide, and three additional possibilities according to which versions of her myth one looks at.

This seems to suggest that although she does not have as many of the characteristics of a guide as Medea does, and barely more than Erichtho, she still seems to have enough to warrant her being classified as a guide as it seems that the characteristics she does not have tend to be the characteristics that have a lesser impact on the overall model. She does however fall short when it comes to prophecy, which seems to have been a strong characteristic shared by the guides. Despite her lacking the ability of prophecy, the fact that she is a descendant of Helios, and still helps the hero, I think can still classify her as a guide. Perhaps her seeming lack of similarities can be put down to that fact that her myth is not primarily from epic literature.

Model Revisited

The final step in this dissertation then is to condense all the guides into one model to be able to look at them in a comparative way in order to better ascertain which of the characteristics of the model are the most common and most crucial.

Descendants of Cybele

- As shown in Chapter Four, Siduri, Circe and the Sibyl are all in some way descendants of Cybele.
- Medea is not clearly a descendant of Cybele, except possibly through her aunt, Circe.
- Ariadne is not clearly a descendant of Cybele, except possibly through her aunt, Circe.

Connected to the sun

- Siduri lives where the sun rises.
- Circe's father is the Sun god Helios
- Apollo, the sun god possesses the Sibyl.
- Medea is Helios' granddaughter.
- Ariadne is Helios' granddaughter.

Connection to a divinity

- Siduri is a divine alewife and is herself a divinity.
- Circe's parents are gods making her too a divinity

- The Sibyl, although not a divinity herself, as a prophetess is closely connected to Apollo.
- Medea has the power to summon the triple goddess Hecate in order to extend Jason's life.
- Erichtho is 'dear to the deities of Erebus.'
- Ariadne is believed to be a vegetation goddess. She is also connected to a god through Daedalus whom she asks for assistance in aiding Theseus.

Powers of Prophecy

- Siduri is aware that Gilgamesh will not succeed in his quest for immortality and she therefore warns him that the gods have reserved immortality for themselves.
- Circe advises Odysseus which battles to choose on his journey home and that he must avoid the Sirens.
- The Sibyl was a prophetic mouthpiece of Apollo whose prophecies were recorded in the Sibylline Oracles.
- Medea knows that if she agrees to help Jason she will be forsaking her relationship with her family. She also knows that if she sacrifices her brother, she and Jason will be able to escape without her father following them.
- According to Erichtho herself, she has abilities that surpass those of conventional oracles such as at Delphi.

Lives by the sea

- The first line of Tablet X states that Siduri lives by the sea.

- Circe lives on an island, Aiaia.
- The Sibyl lives on the Cumaean shore.
- Medea lives in Colchis, which is by the sea.
- Erichtho lives in Thessaly in a cave near the sea.
- Ariadne lives on the island of Crete that is surrounded by the sea.

Abnormal Independence

- As an alewife, Siduri seems to have experienced a type of freedom, as alewives are known to have lived outside of the direct ‘protection’ of their male family members.
- Circe governed and ruled over her own island. This gave her independence from the authority of any male figure.
- As a witch, it would be assumed that Erichtho is not under the authority of any man.

Appearance at crucial point in the plot

- Gilgamesh had to pass through the gate of the Sun on Mount Mashu where he encountered the Scorpion people. It is at this point in the plot where both his focus and the story shifts towards his quest for immortality.
- Odysseus has passed through the Laestrygonian city of Telepylos where he and his men faced danger and he is trying to get home after many misadventures. Circe appears at the turning point in his wanderings.
- Aeneas has just left the ordeal of Dido behind him and is trying to find his new homeland, which he can only do through his journey to the Underworld.

- Medea appears at the point in the plot where Jason has to go and collect the Golden Fleece in order to regain his throne.
- Erichtho appears the night before the great battle at Pharsalia after she has been summoned by Pompeius.
- Ariadne appears at the crucial time just before Theseus is entering the Labyrinth.

Hostility towards the hero

- Siduri bolts the door when she sees Gilgamesh approaching and is reluctant to let him enter her house.
- Circe turns Odysseus' men into pigs at their first meeting and then later tries to turn him into a pig too.
- The Sibyl, in her first encounter with Aeneas, orders him not to remain too long looking at the paintings on the cave walls.
- Medea is initially hostile to the idea of helping Jason until Chalkiope persuades her to help him.

The Threat of the hero

- Gilgamesh threatens Siduri that he will break her door down and enter whether or not she wants him too.
- Odysseus draws his sword as if to kill Circe after she gives him the magic potion to drink.

Change of Heart

- Siduri eventually un-bolts her door and allows Gilgamesh to enter.

- Once Odysseus has proved resistant to her φάρμακον κακόν she invites him into her bedroom and treats him and his men with courtesy.
- After Aeneas appeases the Sibyl with pious words and actions, she agrees to help him enter the Underworld.
- Venus inspired Medea's love for Jason and Chalkiope her sister persuades her so that she would help him.

Connected to magical drinks or other magical powers

- Siduri is described as a divine alewife.
- Circe makes all men who visit her drink a magic potion.
- The Sibyl feeds Cerberus cake impregnated with honey and magical drugs.
- Medea gives a draught to the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece so that Jason would be able to steal it. She also anoints Jason in a powerful drug when he is to face his opponents.
- Erichtho is known for her magical powers, both to alter the future and prophesies. She administers powerful drugs to the corpse in order to reanimate it.
- Ariadne is connected to magical powers through her friendship with Daedalus who provides her in one version of the myth with a luminous wreath that she gives to Theseus.

Sacrificial Advice

- Circe places the necessary sacrificial animals on Odysseus' ship so that he might speak with Tiresias.

- The Sibyl tells Aeneas to sacrifice a black ram among other animals to the Eumenides.
- Medea instructs Jason concerning the magic rituals he must perform before the fight with the bull including what sacrifices he must make to Hecate to ensure his safety.
- Erichtho performs a sacrifice herself in order to summon the dead soldier from the Underworld.
- Ariadne provides Theseus with the sword to kill the Minotaur. The Minotaur can perhaps be seen as a sacrifice as Ariadne is allowing her half brother to be killed.

Boat related aid

- Siduri directs Gilgamesh in finding Ur-Shanabi, the boatman of Ut-Napishtim with whom he may be able to cross the river.
- Circe sends Odysseus' ship a favourable wind for his sailing to the Underworld.
- The Sibyl persuades Charon the ferryman to allow Aeneas to cross on his ferry.
- Jason and Medea disembark on the bank of the Phasis with the guidance of Medea.
- Not unless one considers that Theseus was only able to escape on his boat after Ariadne had helped him to escape from the Labyrinth.

Romantic Relationship with the Hero

- Siduri could possibly have had a romantic relationship with Gilgamesh.

- Circe was Odysseus' lover before she was his guide.
- Medea and Jason eventually get married and have two sons.
- Ariadne falls in love with Theseus and for that reason agrees to help him.

Immortality

- As Siduri is the doublet of Ishtar, and is a goddess, she is obviously divine and therefore immortal.
- Circe is also an immortal goddess.
- Apollo granted the Sibyl immortality.
- It can be assumed that a witch as powerful as Erichtho would indeed be immortal, as she can both inflict death and bring things back to life.
- Medea and Ariadne are immortal in some versions of their myths.

In summation, the characteristics which all the guides share are: that they all are divinities or are connected to one, they all live by the sea, they all appear at a crucial point in the plot, they all have some connection to magical drinks or potions, and they all aid the hero with sacrifices in some form or another. They all have immortality though this is only true for Medea and Ariadne in some versions of their myths. All the guides except Erichtho are connected to the sun and are in some way linked to Cybele, albeit a remote connection. Erichtho is also the only guide who does not provide boat related aid. All the guides have the power of prophecy, except Ariadne. Only Ariadne and Erichtho are not hostile to the heroes and they are the only two who do not have a change of heart and agree to help the hero. Neither the Sibyl nor Erichtho have a romantic relationship with the hero, nor does Siduri, as her romantic relationship with the hero is only a hypothesis. Only Circe and Siduri pose a threat to the hero, none of

the other guides threaten the heroes outright. The seemingly few similarities of Erichtho and Ariadne can be explained by the fact that Erichtho is a witch, and will therefore have slightly different attributes to other types of female characters, and Ariadne's myth is not contained in one specific epic poem and for this reason her myth probably serves a slightly varying role to the other guides that are in epic literature.

Conclusion

‘Fantastic occurrences are acceptable so long as they are wrought by females.’¹

The task of this dissertation has been two fold. The primary goal was to establish a model into which female guides in epic literature could fit, and the secondary goal was to examine these three primary guides within the socio-political context of the authors who wrote about them. The goal of this was to ascertain whether these characters really were social anomalies or whether ultimately they all to some extent conform to the cultural and social conditioning of women and the inbuilt androcentric bias of the authors. The fact remains that irrespective of this social and cultural analysis, these women do appear to hold a relative position of power that seems to be inherently tied up in their roles as guide to the hero.

At closer inspection of the connections between these guides and ‘real’ women, it became clear that to a certain degree, the guides do in fact resemble the ‘real’ women, or rather, the ideal of women, of the various authors’ contemporary societies. It seems that the intrinsic androcentric bias of the texts could not be escaped in the characterisation of these guides. Within the texts, all the guides including the additional ones, are located on the periphery of the societies, that is, the place they live is outside of the hero’s society. This peripheral existence seems to mirror the peripheral existence imposed on women in these ancient societies. Although these guides are neither subservient nor minor characters within their epics, as many other female characters are, they are still only given limited space and voices with which to express themselves.

¹ Iles Johnston, 1999. p33.

It seems that the depiction of most of these primary guides in some way reflect social norms. Both Siduri and Circe in their own specific ways intimate the importance of marriage and the Sibyl through her possession by Apollo is showing that women cannot act without the guidance of a man. What then of the seemingly independent nature of these characters? It seems understandable that if a man is indeed to receive advice from a woman, it cannot be a regular woman that provides such fundamental assistance. These guides, although they to some extent do reflect societal norms, they also in other ways turn away from them. Of the primary guides, none are explicitly mentioned to be mothers. Motherhood is in all the ancient societies that have been explored, closely tied up with womanhood. As none of the primary guides seem to have children, they in essence cannot really be seen as women, as they are missing one of the fundamental attributes that makes a woman a woman. This provides them with the flexibility to function outside of social prescription. This, tied in with the fact that they are divine, definitely creates an extra sphere in which they can operate.

Ultimately then, it appears that no matter how hard one attempts to remove the androcentric influence from a character, within the character itself the remnants of the patriarchal influence cannot be removed, as they form the essence of the character. Their distance in their locations and divinity though does enable them to engage in an additional sphere, which was not ordinarily available for women. Religious practices, and the attendance of oracles such as that at Delphi, were not only open to women but also were often performed by women as is illustrated by the Pythia. This provided these guides with a sphere in which to function. The existence of female prophets was widespread throughout the ancient Mediterranean world and perhaps the depiction of these guides with both relative freedom and without the restriction of 'real' women was

a way of attempting to manage and rationalize the idea of a female prophet. Either way, it appears that the female guides do to a certain degree reinforce the patriarchal norms of the authors' contemporary societies. Perhaps then too, the characteristics of the model will then appear to be stereotypical of what men believed women should be.

The first model that has been developed in this dissertation, the goal of which was to find various similarities between the women who assist and guide heroes, has encapsulated a wide variety of characteristics. The connection of the three primary guides to Cybele, I feel has been a significant discovery and contribution to scholarship on female characters in epic literature. In addition to this, when the three additional guides were added to the model, it became apparent that the similarities shared by the three primary guides to a large extent were also present in the additional guides. The first remarkable correlation was the connection that all guides (except Erichtho) share with the sun. The fact that they all live alongside the sea, I feel to be a remarkable parallel; as are the fact that most have the gift of prophecy and all of them the ability to create magic drinks and potions. At this stage it seems highly likely that these guides and their distinctive similarities must exist for a particular reason, since they are too numerous and frequent to be coincidental. As it has also been shown that many of these epics did in some ways influence one another, this could be a possible explanation for these numerous similarities. In summary, bearing in mind that when the primary guides were analysed within their contexts, many of them did to a fair extent reflect their contemporary societies' norms. It can be suggested that perhaps these similarities that these guides do share, are not really a cross cultural anomaly. Perhaps they are more explicable in the sense that they function in these specific ways as they are all constructed from an idealised male perspective on what women should be.

The guides that have been examined in this dissertation do all to varying extents fit within the model. An additional way in which to test the validity of the model would be to examine more texts which are not exclusively epics, and texts from a wider variety of locations, languages, cultures and times. This model could be extended to examine Biblical works such as in 1 Samuel 28. 3-25, where the witch of Endor raises the body of Samuel for Saul; or even later Medieval works by examining the role of Beatrice as Dante's guide in his Divine Comedy. This model could even possibly be extended to include modern literary examples of *katabasis* such as in Matheson's 1998 novel entitled What dreams may come. In this book, the protagonist Chris Nielson enters Hell with the assistance of an airhostess to look for his wife who committed suicide. My model then has attempted to be a tentative start to filling one of the gaps that exist in epic scholarship and hopes to provide groundwork for further explorations into female characters that in some way aid a hero.

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