

After reading *The Odyssey*, an epic Greek poem written by Homer, one is left with an interesting overall impression of the main female characters. The common characteristic which personifies most, if not all of the female characters, such as Penelope, Helen, Calypso, the Sirens, and Circe is that of deception. Each female character is able to effectively deceive other male characters, with the use of one or all of the following: weaving, potions, and spells. Particularly what interests me about Book Ten of the *Odyssey* is the portrayal of Circe as a witch, and the characteristics Homer uses to personify her as such. It is important to examine how Homer structures Circe's character because, "the Homeric portrayal of Circe is of great importance, for it may be considered the first extant portrait of a witch in Greek literature" (98, Ogden). By examining the description of the encounter between Odysseus and Circe, it is evident that Homer uses weaving, potions, and spell casting, to build Circe's character as a witch. (How Circe fits in with other examples of deceiving women in the *Odyssey*)

From the very first moment the reader meets Circe, she is performing an act which illustrates her true cunning and mischievous nature. Odysseus' men first encounter Circe in her home where they "heard her singing, lifting her spellbinding voice as she glided back and forth at her great immortal loom, her enchanting web a shimmering glory only goddesses can weave" (X, 242-46, Homer). In ancient Greece the act of weaving was considered a female role, and typically represents the deceptive nature of women. Weaving takes a great amount of forethought and planning, much like that which is necessary in order to lay a trap for them. In Circe's case her weaving foreshadows the trap she has set for Odysseus' men who are about to consume poisonous food. Also, the literal weaving is symbolic of a net or web which are both objects used to capture things, thus symbolic of Circe's plan to capture the sea men. This notion of weaving as a deceptive tool is furthered throughout the Epic by other female characters, like Penelope. Unlike in Circe's case in which the weaving is merely a clue to the reader that Circe is a deceptive character, Helen's weaving is her deception. Helen is able to fight off the suitors demand for her to take a new husband by claiming she will make a decision once she is done with her weaving. However, "by day she'd weave at her great and growing web... by night she would unravel all she'd done" (X, 115-17, Homer).