

Sonja Bläuer

**“AS IF THERE CAN BE NO STORY
UNLESS WE CRAWL AND WEEP”**

Gendered Power in Madeline Miller’s
Circe and “Galatea”

ABSTRACT

Sonja Bläuer: "As if there can be no story unless we crawl and weep": Gendered Power in Madeline Miller's *Circe* and "Galatea"

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The thesis examines gendered power and its manifestations as domination and resistance in Madeline Miller's novel *Circe* (2019) and short story "Galatea" (2013). Both works are examples of feminist revisionist mythology writing. In the traditional classical myth versions, female characters are usually marginalised, being reduced to bystanders. However, in feminist retellings of classical myths the formerly silenced women are repositioned as narrators with voice and as characters with power and nuance.

The theoretical framework of the study is the poststructuralist understanding of power. The thesis utilizes Michel Foucault's conception of power as first and foremost a relation, not something one can own. Besides Foucault, the thesis makes extensive use of Judith Butler's theorizations on gender performativity. The Butlerian understanding of gender as a social construction supports Foucault's view of power, knowledge, and discourse as inseparable. The concept of discourse is an especially useful tool considering the thesis since it considers Miller's works as counter-discourse and counter-narratives against the hegemonic patriarchal master-narratives.

Revisionist mythology has a unique relationship with temporality since rewritings of myths enable considering historical and contemporary themes simultaneously. The thesis connects the experiences of Miller's characters in the patriarchal societies of ancient Greek and Rome to today's discussions on gender inequality. Thus, feminist revisionist mythology enables efficient critique towards patriarchal ideology. The sources for *Circe* lie in multiple ancient myth versions, of which the most famous is Homer's *The Odyssey*. The basis for "Galatea" can be found in the Pygmalion myth, nowadays most known from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In addition to power being a central object of feminist literary studies, feminist rewritings of classical myths are hugely popular at the moment. Despite this, there appear to be no previous, extensive studies on Miller's works, and gendered power as domination and resistance has not yet been analysed in the framework of feminist revisionist mythology.

Miller's works represent gendered power in multiple ways. Male domination manifests as power over both the female body and mind. Violence towards women, female objectification, limiting female mobility, and expectations towards women's looks and behaviour are all prominent aspects in *Circe* and "Galatea". Furthermore, the works explicitly demonstrate how the patriarchal myth versions have silenced female voices in the past. In terms of resistance, however, Miller grants the female characters agency to resist the patriarchal domination and gives them a voice with which to narrate their own stories.

Keywords: Madeline Miller, revisionist mythology, power, feminism, patriarchy, poststructuralism

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Sonja Bläuer: "As if there can be no story unless we crawl and weep": Gendered Power in Madeline Miller's *Circe* and "Galatea"

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Tutkielmassani tarkastelen sukupuolittunutta valtaa ja sen ilmenemismuotoja ylivalta ja sen vastarintana Madeline Millerin romaanissa *Circe* (2019) ja novellissa "Galatea" (2013). Molemmat Millerin teokset ovat feministisiä uudelleenkirjoituksia antiikin klassisista myyteistä, joissa naisten rooli on yleensä alistainen miehiin nähden niin kerronnan, tarinan kuin juonenkin tasolla. Feministisissä myyttiversioissa klassisia myyttejä on uudelleenkirjoitettu siten, että ne keskittyvät naishahmojen kokemuksiin ja heidän äänensä esiintuomiseen.

Tutkielmani teoriakehyksenä toimii jälkistrukturalistinen käsitys vallasta. Käytän vallan määritelmän pohjana Michel Foucaultin valta-analytiikkaa, jossa vallan käsitetään olevan ennen kaikkea suhde, ei jotakin jota voi omistaa. Foucaultin ohella hyödynnän Judith Butlerin teorioita sukupuolen performatiivisuudesta. Butlerin käsitys sukupuolesta sosiaalisena konstruktiona tukee Foucaultin näkemystä vallasta, tiedosta ja diskurssista erottamattomana yhdistelmänä. Diskurssin käsite on tutkielmani kannalta erityisen hyödyllinen työkalu, jonka avulla analysoin Millerin teoksia vastadiskurssina ja -kertomuksina hallitseville, patriarkaalisille myyttiversioille.

Myyttien uudelleenkirjoituksilla on ainutlaatuinen suhde ajallisuuteen, koska ne voivat samanaikaisesti käsitellä sekä historiallisia että ajankohtaisia teemoja. Tutkielmassani sidonkin Millerin teosten päähenkilöiden kokemuksia antiikin Kreikan ja Rooman viitekehyksessä nykypäivän feministisen keskustelun aiheisiin sukupuolten epätasa-arvosta. Feministiset myyttien uudelleenkirjoitukset mahdollistavat sekä patriarkaalisen ideologian kyseenalaistamisen että naishahmojen esittämisen voimakkaina, moniulotteisina hahmoina. *Circen* taustalla on useita antiikin ajan myyttiversioita, joista tunnetuin löytyy Homeroksen *Odyssiasta*. "Galatean" pohjana toimii Pygmalion-myytti, jonka tunnetuin versio on Ovidiuksen *Muodonmuutoksia*-runoteoksessa. Sen lisäksi, että vallan käsite on erottamaton osa feminististä kirjallisuudentutkimusta, feministisiä klassisten myyttien uudelleenkirjoituksia on viime vuosina ilmestynyt markkinoille kiihtyvällä tahdilla. Aiempaa laajaa tutkimusta Millerin teoksista ei kuitenkaan vielä ole, ja sukupuolittunutta valtaa kokonaisuudessaan ylivalta ja vastarintana ei ole ennen analysoitu feminististen myyttiversioiden viitekehyksessä.

Millerin teokset käsittelevät sukupuolittunutta valtaa monipuolisesti. Miesten ylivalta näyttäytyy teoksissa sekä naisten kehojen että mielten hallitsemisena. Teoksissa käsitellään naisiin kohdistunutta väkivaltaa, naisten esineellistämistä, liikkuvuuden rajoittamista ja heidän ulkonäköönsä ja käyttäytymiseensä kohdistuvia odotuksia. Millerin teokset ottavat myös suoraan kantaa siihen, miten patriarkaalisissa myyttiversioissa naisten ääni on vaiennettu. Naisten vastarinta sen sijaan tulee esille teoksissa siinä, miten Miller esittää naishahmot aktiivisina toimijoina ja antaa heille vallan kertoa oman tarinansa.

Avainsanat: Madeline Miller, myyttien uudelleenkirjoittaminen, valta, feminismi, patriarkaatti, jälkistrukturalismi

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Theoretical Background	6
2.1	Power as Male Domination	8
2.2	Power as Female Resistance	17
3	Male Domination	25
3.1	Power over the Female Body and Mind	26
3.2	Power as Silencing Women’s Voices	34
4	Female Resistance.....	40
4.1	Narrative Power and Voice	40
4.2	Women Gaining Agency	46
5	Conclusion.....	55
	Works Cited	58

1 Introduction

Susan Sellers calls myth “a potent force in contemporary feminist fiction” (128). While rewriting myths is certainly not a new phenomenon, several popular feminist retellings of stories known from classical mythology have appeared notably frequently on the market in recent years. In addition to highly popular Madeline Miller, whose works this thesis analyses, for example authors such as Natalie Haynes, Pat Barker, and Jennifer Saint have lately gained attention for their strictly feminist revisionist mythology. Generally, revisionist mythmaking refers to practice of writing where a story or figure that has already been accepted and defined by culture is employed and appropriated for modified ends (Ostriker 72). As Lorna Hardwick states, reimagining ancient myths and their historical contexts may help in retrieving lost voices of the past, but it also shifts the focus to the ones doing the rewriting, and thus to the lost voices of more recent times (22).

Whereas the social environments of Ancient Greece and Rome differ considerably from today’s Western societies, patriarchy as an ideology is not history even in today’s world. This is visible for example in the way women are objectified in the contemporary culture and in how “men’s sexual exploitation of, and predatory attitudes towards, women are amply documented in news outlets” (Cuttica and Mahlberg 1). Social status hierarchies still strongly promote binary categories of sex and gender that favour masculinity and disparage women and forms of femininity (Htun and Weldon 246). By objecting the narrow representations of women and their roles that have been and still are promoted in society, feminist revisionist mythology challenges both the past and present discourse that is hegemonically masculine.

Indeed, mythology holds a unique relationship with time in terms of serving as a creative platform for contemporary literature. Instead of accepting the often-claimed ahistoricity of myths, contemporary authors and other artists use myth to oppose violence against women, to explore their own artistic and social challenges, to provide realistic viewpoints on female experience both past and present, “and to speak to global and local historical and political experiences” (Rajan and Bahun-Radunović, 5). Thus, retellings of ancient myths can be used to portray contemporary society and especially the universality and timelessness of certain societal issues. Feminist revisionist mythology authors have several means in which they can transform the traditional myth versions into new interpretations. As examples of these manipulation techniques, Lillian Doherty mentions alteration of the

characters' motives, changing the narrative sequence, and shifting the narrative point of view (19). When feminist mythology writers change the traditional myth versions in these ways, the formerly disregarded female figures gain power as narrators and characters, and a space opens for questioning their former subordinate status.

In this thesis, I argue that in Madeline Miller's feminist revisionist mythology gendered power and its manifestations as both domination and resistance are represented on multiple levels. My central research question is how gendered power relations are represented and challenged in Miller's works when compared to the hegemonic myth versions. I will demonstrate how both *Circe* (2019) and "Galatea" (2013) make visible, through both change of narrative perspective and manipulation of the original myths, the issues concerning power relations and power use in classic mythology that also reflect contemporary discussion of gender inequality. In addition to the fact that feminist rewritings highlight the timelessness of female oppression, they also actively challenge the passive image of women and transform the previously disregarded female characters to strong and nuanced individuals with agency. Hence, my objective is to examine how male domination and female resistance manifest in *Circe* and "Galatea", and how Miller's works show the interplay between these two sides of gendered power both on narrative and metanarrative levels.

I will analyse the different aspects of power first as domination on female body and mind in section 3.1. This examination is achieved through considering the notions of ownership over women, female objectification, violence towards the female body, and limiting women's mobility. Further, in section 3.2, domination as silencing women's voices will be investigated both in terms of how the original, patriarchal myth versions have disregarded the female point-of-view and in terms of how *Circe*'s and *Galatea*'s experiences are depicted in Miller's works. The concept of resistance, on the other hand, includes analysis on how the original myths are manipulated in the favour of the female protagonists. Section 4.1 will focus in detail on how the shift in narrative voice changes the role of the formerly silenced female characters. In addition, specific textual passages of *Circe* and *Galatea* using their voices are looked into. In 4.2 I will examine how the long-established female stereotypes and the male hegemony are opposed in the new feminist versions of the stories by Miller granting the female characters agency. I argue that this framework will highlight the multifaceted nature of gendered power that is present in Miller's two works.

In addition to *Circe* and "Galatea", Madeline Miller has also written a third work, *Song of Achilles* (2011). It is also a retelling of an ancient myth, but since it is not a clearly

feminist one, it is excluded here. I have chosen Miller's work as my primary material for multiple reasons. In both *Circe* and "Galatea", the narrator is a single female character, which makes the narrative perspective consistent. Contrastingly, for example in Pat Barker's *Silence of the Girls* (2018) there is also Achilles telling the story, and Natalie Haynes' *A Thousand Ships* (2019) has multiple female narrators experiencing the Trojan war. Furthermore, in both *Circe* and "Galatea" the protagonist clearly fails in meeting the stereotypical expectations of them, and both works portray the oppression of women but also their empowerment quite evenly. The stories are thus also thematically similar. However, the two works also provide differing aspects to analyse in the framework of gendered power, which makes the analysis versatile.

The basis of *Circe* lies in the myths of witch goddess Circe, who is best known from Homer's *The Odyssey*. Despite appearing in this epic that is one of the cornerstones of the Western literary canon, she has only a marginal role in it. Circe's island, Aiaia, serves in the original myth version as merely a waypoint of Odysseus' journey. Circe's storyline only highlights Odysseus' wit and heroism since she is represented in the epic as a cruel, hypersexual witch who yields to Odysseus when he tricks her with the help of Hermes. The origin of Galatea is also in Greek mythology, but her character as a stone maiden is most well-known from the Pygmalion myth found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Pygmalion, who is a sculptor, despises the women in his town and decides to carve a perfect woman for himself. The sculptor falls in love with the statue, which is then made living by godly aid. The Ovidian version does not provide the character of Galatea with a voice at all, and she is silent even after she has been transformed into a living woman. It must be noted that both Circe and the statue of Pygmalion have appeared in multiple myth versions already in ancient times. For example, in addition to *The Odyssey*, Circe's character appears also in *Metamorphoses*. However, her portrayal is similarly one-sided as in Homer's epic, and considering the scope of a master's thesis, it is more efficient to focus on one patriarchal myth version per each Miller's version. Furthermore, instead of comparing both of Miller's stories to the myth versions in *Metamorphoses*, choosing two different works that have a canonical status will make my analysis multidimensional.

In Miller's work, both revisited myths have a patriarchal setting, but the characters of Circe and Galatea are no longer bystanders. Not only they gain a narrative voice with which they are able to tell their stories from their own perspectives, but they are also granted agency in terms of how they resist the prevailing conditions of power. Circe is

portrayed in Miller's version as a formerly misunderstood character, and Galatea gains a voice that her character does not have in the original Ovidian myth version. Thus, the characterization of a *resistant reader*, a concept made known by Judith Fetterley, can be applied to Miller. According to Fetterley, "questioning ideas and mythologies about women and men which exist in our society and are confirmed in our literature is to make the system of power embodied in the literature open not only to discussion but even to change" (xix-xx). Furthermore, considering how works of feminist revisionist mythology question the cultural norms that are promoted by patriarchal myth versions, they can be treated as counter-narratives. As Hanna Meretoja states, through a dialogue of interpretations, counter-narratives challenge dominating master-narratives by problematizing their underlying power structures (30, 33). Using ancient myths as a basis for addressing contemporary issues by creating counter-narratives is a powerful tool with which to challenge the narrow images of women that are built in literature.

The theoretical basis of my thesis lies in poststructuralism, specifically in the theorizations of philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault and gender theorist and philosopher Judith Butler. Foucault's conception of power as simultaneously repressive and productive (Allen, *Power* 33) is a fruitful starting point for analysing power as both domination and resistance. Although not without some critique, Foucault's work on power has inspired especially the poststructuralist feminists' views on the topic to a great extent. As Margaret McLaren asserts, many feminists find Foucault's definition of power useful since it is viewed "as a network, and as operating through discourses, institutions, and practices beneficial for understanding the ways that power operates locally, on the body, and through particular practices" (2). Butler has also extensively utilized Foucault's approach on power in their formulation of gender performativity. According to Butler, categories such as gender are performative products of regimes of power and of the knowledge that power generates (Jagger 17). Understanding gender as socially constructed is particularly useful in analysing how stereotypes of women and femininity are built and maintained by regimes of power. To gain a specifically feminist perspective on power, I will utilize feminist applications of both Foucault's and Butler's theories provided by multiple literary and social sciences scholars.

Previously published studies (see for example Keating 2014, Ostriker 1982, Rajan and Bahun-Radunović 2011, and Sellers 2001 in the thesis' Works Cited section) on feminist rewritings of classical mythology mostly concentrate on voicing female experience, which is one aspect of my study too since I will treat narrative voice as a tool of resistance.

The representation of female identity is also a common theme that is strongly related to my thesis. The majority of the previously published articles and studies on feminist revisionist mythology use Margaret Atwood's poetry and her famous *Penelopiad* (2005) or Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* (1983) and *Medea* (1996) as primary material. In addition, Hélène Cixous' feminist appropriation of Medusa in her essay "The Laugh of Medusa" has been widely analysed. Despite its huge success, Miller's feminist revisionist mythology has not yet induced much research. Further, in spite of power being an inseparable object of analysis in feminist theory and feminist literary studies, the concept of power as domination and resistance has not specifically nor comprehensively been analysed in terms of feminist revisionist mythology before. Thus, my thesis could be said to enlarge the field of study and deepen the understanding of how contemporary feminist versions of classical myths can be used to both reveal and challenge socially and culturally hegemonical power structures.

2 Theoretical Background

In this chapter, I aim to delineate the theoretical framework for analysing power and its manifestations as domination and resistance in Madeline Miller's *Circe* and "Galatea". As noted earlier, my approach is a poststructuralist one since I will use the work of Foucault as a basis for conceptualizing power and the forms it takes. Subsequently, I will move on to utilize Butler's appropriations of Foucauldian theories that highlight gender as a socially constructed performative.

As a theoretical perspective, poststructuralism is usually associated with Jacques Derrida's idea of meaning as endlessly deferred, and "it is in this sense that language is an open system of signs, while meaning can never be self-present or ultimately defined" (Salih 31). Whereas structuralism focuses more generally on analysing structures and systems instead of content, the poststructuralist approach understands structures as resulting from "the often idealist and ideological halting of the process of structuration" (Chow). As Sara Salih summarizes, the term poststructuralism is often used interchangeably with deconstruction, and it is about deconstructing binary oppositions, which leads to revealing those oppositions as idealistic and reliant on an essential centre (21). Binary oppositions are what Rey Chow uses as an example in demonstrating how identities are results of differential relations, causing one part of the binary to be conceived as having a hierarchically upper status compared to the other one. The founding idea of feminism is to recognize and oppose the gender subordination that is based on binary thinking and is maintained by systems of social and political power. Thus, the poststructuralist understanding of binarism leading to inequality is clearly a fruitful conception for feminist thinking.

Power is to be understood here in the Foucauldian vein as existing in relations: it is not something one possesses, but something that is actively exercised and is by its nature unfixed (Foucault 26). Foucault defines power as "the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others" (qtd. in Allen, *Politics* 50). A crucial concept in understanding power is subjection, which happens in Foucauldian thought through discursive productivity, and refers to the process where one not only becomes subordinated by power but also, at the same time, becomes a subject (Butler, *Psychic* 2). Thus, in Foucault's view, power is not only a repressive force but is simultaneously productive in that it forms subjects in the first place. Discourse, as a form of power, serves in Foucault for both domination and its resistance. If discourse is understood as particularly referring to texts, it is a useful notion when analysing literature in a feminist framework, especially concerning feminist revisionist

mythology as a form of counter-narrative. Furthermore, in Foucault, resistance is not something that is outside of power, but resistance and power are seen to be coextensive (Allen, *Power* 53). Thus, when a power relation exists, there is also a possibility for resistance since it is the subversion of the power itself. What in Foucault's power theory is especially beneficial for my analysis is precisely that his notion of power involves both its negative and positive sides. The negative one is the limiting and normalizing side, called domination, and the positive one is resistance, which in Foucault has to do with the production of new ideas, relations, and possibilities (McLaren 41).

Nevertheless, poststructuralist theoretical framework or Foucault are not always the first options for feminist thinkers to go for. Many are doubtful if postmodernist and poststructuralist approaches that reject normative concepts are compatible with emancipatory interests (McLaren 1, 2). According to Foucault's critics, if normative ideals such as freedom and equal treatment are denied, Foucault does not leave any possibility to appeal to those ideals that are central to feminist politics (McLaren 19). Furthermore, Foucault has been criticized from a feminist point-of-view for his lack of contribution to specifically gendered issues of power. However, as Patricia Amigot and Margot Pujal note, Foucault analyses for example the female body in his later work and views it as a space for strategy, "subject to a process of progressive objectification and control on the part of medical and psychological discourses" (648-49). Moreover, Allen asserts that there are some profound similarities between Foucauldian and feminist approaches concerning power, such as the shared "attempts to expand the boundaries of social and political theory to include arenas of life that have heretofore been considered private, natural, and thus, out of bounds for critique" (*Power* 48). For Foucault, power exists in the whole social body instead of only in the hands of the state or the sovereign (Allen, *Politics* 53).

Besides Foucault, I will discuss how Judith Butler has appropriated his conceptions of power. As McNay states, Butler has had "the most influential impact upon feminist understanding of gender identity" with their work on gender performativity ("Subject" 175). Butler's account of the performatively constructed gender is closely looked into since it is linked to power as both domination and resistance. Butler argues that the subject is formed inside the frames of history and culture, and thus the assumption of a transcendental subject and the gender hierarchy which it is based on are dismissed (Jagger 36). Butler's understanding of the performativity of gender is rooted in the poststructuralist view of the subject, where the 'I' is in fact an illusion in the sense that it is a product of language, not a

coherent being that is simply represented by language (Jagger 18). This view allows for examining how different power relations act on the formation of the subject, for example one that is identified as being female.

Performativity is crucial in both the acting out of and, on the other hand, breaking the expectations that are directed towards the strictly sexed and gendered identity categories that are sedimented in the social order. According to Butler, these identity categories are constructed through power relations, and realized as “stylized repetition of acts” (Jagger 27, 35). In Butler’s view, gender norms that are produced and regulated by power are thus performatively reiterated by subjects who are also themselves formed by reiteration. The view that the nature of gender is performative and thus needs constant reiteration creates the possibility for the subversion of identity and, consequently, for agency and resistance (Butler, *Psychic* 16; Jagger 18). In addition to using Foucault’s views on power and subjection as a platform for their own theorization, Butler appears to fill in some gaps of Foucault’s analysis especially concerning his formulation of resistance.

Thus, by combining the strengths of the views on power and its manifestations by Foucault and Butler, I will here use a conception of power which, as Allen describes, “will illuminate the interplay between domination and empowerment” (*Power* 26) instead of focusing on only either of them. I will utilize concepts ranging from discourse to interpellation in order to present a broad view of how power works on the subject, particularly a female one. I will first explore power as male domination in 2.1. After that, in 2.2 I will discuss how power acts as female resistance.

2.1 Power as Male Domination

As a concept, domination refers to “the ability of an actor or set of actors to constrain the choices of another actor or set of actors in a nontrivial way and in a way that works to the others’ disadvantage” (Allen, *Power* 125). In the context of my thesis, the patriarchal setting of Miller’s works implies it is sexism and the privileging of male experience that serve as the main basis for domination of the female characters. As Ellen Rooney states,

The very possibility of any political action against patriarchy or masculinism requires an account of that masculinism’s flaws, a dissent from the way in which it seeks to situate and dominate femininity. In the exposure of such a masculinist “narrative of femininity,” stereotypes of woman and women appear as the effects of patriarchy, including, of course, of patriarchy's many stories.

Exposing masculinist narratives of femininity is literally what Miller does in rewriting the original myth versions that exclude female agency and the narrative voices of women. By revealing how canonical works such as Homer's *The Odyssey* are male-dominated and sustain the narrowness of women's space in culture and society, a space for alternate interpretations is opened.

As Amigot and Pujal state, in Foucault's work domination emerges when power relations become fixed and asymmetric, which leads to the possibility for resistance becoming highly limited (654). When power relations are stagnated in this way, the one that holds the power benefits significantly at the expense of the dominated party (Munro 89). Thus, domination does not equal power but is rather an effect of certain occurrence of imbalance in it. Power is itself unbiased, but it can manifest as negative or positive. Foucault does not find power itself reprehensible, but the situation where it does not flow freely, and since a society without power relations is impossible, a society with domination as little as possible is what should be struggled for (Allen, *Power* 44). Understanding power and how it operates requires understating its relationship with the formation of subjectivity, since it is not possible to treat power separately from subject in theoretical terms (Campbell 82). As I already mentioned, subjection in Foucault has a double-sided quality to it: power simultaneously both represses and produces the subject. Allen explains that subjection connotes the fact that first, "one is *subject to* a power that is exercised over one; second and simultaneously, it refers to the fact that one is able to take up the position of *a subject* only in and through this operation of power" (*Power* 36). Hence, a person's existence and the possibility to be recognized as a subject depends on subjection while it simultaneously entails subordination.

Discourse is in the Foucauldian view inseparably related to power and its manifestations. In structuralist and poststructuralist theory, language has "its own determining effect on the way that individuals think and express themselves" (Mills 7). The power of discourse, or language and other kinds of representation, lies in its ability to shape the real world. As Sara Mills describes:

A discursive structure can be detected because of the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context, and because of the effects of those ways of thinking and behaving. Thus, we can assume that there is a set of discourses of femininity and masculinity, because women and men behave within a certain range of

parameters when defining themselves as gendered subjects. These discursive frameworks demarcate the boundaries within which we can negotiate what it means to be gendered. (15-16)

In this sense, discourse can be seen as a form of power, since the definitions present in discourses influence and, more importantly, limit the way in which subjects act. Foucault has a wide range of definitions for the term discourse throughout his work. The widest of them is articulated by Mills as “all utterances or texts which have meaning and which have some effects in the real world” (6). This definition serves well for a general definition of discourse and can be applied to works of fiction as well. Another Foucauldian definition that Mills discusses is discourse as “groups of utterances which seem to be regulated in some way and which seem to have a coherence and a force to them in common” (6). For analysing the actual literary content of Miller’s works in my thesis, this definition appears the most useful since it allows for examining how masculine domination is built in discourse, conditioned by the existing power relations. As Mills notes, within this definition, a possibility for discussing for example a discourse of femininity is created (6). The third definition for discourse that Mills describes has to do with the nature of discourse as specifically rule-governed and concentrates on how a set of rules and structures produce particular discourses (6). In my view, this third definition only conditions the second as a more profound version of it, and further highlights how discourses are always tied to specific historical frameworks and sociocultural settings.

Literary texts, such as the ones I analyse in this thesis, have as Mills states “a complex relation to both truth and value” since they can be perceived to reveal truths about the human condition but are, at the same time, fictional in their form (20). I argue that despite of literary texts being fictional, the fact that they “can be seen as the products of a particular set of power/knowledge relations” (Mills 21) and at the same time appeal to emotions makes them extremely powerful in terms of having effect as a form of discourse. For example, the traditional myths that serve as the platform for Miller’s fiction construct an image of a masculine man by both reflecting the real-life social status of women as bystanders and by providing stories of heroic actions and bravery. Accordingly, feminist revisionist mythology comments on historical and contemporary discourses of femininity and masculinity, which are described by Carol Bacchi as “hegemonic interpretive schemas” that affect both women’s and men’s lives in multiple ways (201).

Conditioned by regimes of power, discourse produces knowledge, which itself is an exercise of power, and, furthermore, discourse constitutes a whole politics of truth that defines the objects of power (Amigot and Pujal 653). Indeed, knowledge and power are to be treated as complementary since they “directly imply one another” (Foucault 27). Truth is thus not to be understood as natural or objective since, in addition to its cognitive basis, it is also politically and historically produced and “inseparable from the institutional power networks in which it seeks to legitimize itself as the ‘norm’ and ‘universal’ truth” (Chow). Knowledge is used to objectify subjects as having certain functions in society, and different norms are determined to operate to govern whether an individual is fit for their function or functions (Amigot and Pujal 653). The notion of norms is an important one in a feminist context since, as McLaren states,

As both feminists and Foucault have noted, the universal norms of humanism incorporate an ideal of rationality that is constituted through the exclusion of otherness. And as feminists have argued, this ideal of rationality is coded as masculine. Moreover, it is not just the philosophical norms of humanism that support the perspective of the dominant group, social norms serve to promote and sustain the values of the dominant group. (48)

Norms, whether philosophical or social, thus become a necessary part of how domination works in providing the conceptual background against which individuals are evaluated. Considered in a feminist framework, the philosophical notion of a universal rational subject excludes women, since women have traditionally been associated more with the body and emotions; and by ignoring for example race, it privileges especially white men (McLaren 75). Amigot and Pujal also link their discussion of norms to feminist issues and take as an example the reproductive function of women as a normative construction, an essential sign of what is conceived as normal femininity, which is markedly present in discourses and institutional practices ranging from medical to educational (653). The Foucauldian concept of power-knowledge thus challenges the Enlightenment notion of truth and knowledge being separate from power and for example social relations (McLaren 21). For feminist thinking this is a very important departure, since it aids in demonstrating how, despite appearing as natural and ‘proper’, gender stereotypes are not based on any objective scientific basis. Thus, the conventional stereotypes are understood to be artificial in the sense that the power regimes

maintain beliefs of some feminine essence without there being any factual, biological evidence for those beliefs.

In the feminist context of domination, one major theme is certainly the body and how it is seen, treated, conceptualized, and used as a site for producing knowledge of gender and gender differences. Foucault has been accused of androcentrism in not taking account the effects of gender-specific disciplinary practices in his famous theorization of disciplinary tactics producing what he calls ‘docile bodies’ (Allen, *Power* 49, McLaren 15). However, he does discuss the body and takes stance on some gender-specific issues, and his notions of body have been found useful by several feminist thinkers. According to McLaren, Foucault’s notions of disciplinary practices are particularly useful for feminist analysis, “especially to illuminate the patriarchal power of feminine cultural norms” (81). Foucault discusses bodily punishment as follows:

. . . we can surely accept the general proposition that, in our societies, the systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain ‘political economy’ of the body: even if they do not make use of violent or bloody punishment, even when they use ‘lenient’ methods involving confinement or correction, it is always the body that is at issue – the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission. (25)

This excerpt shows how the notion of body is extremely important in Foucauldian analysis. The effects of power and social norms materialize on the body, be the practices of power use clearly violent or more subtle and tactful in their ways. In a feminist framework, especially the words *utility* and *submission* resonate loudly since the former can be connected to reproduction and sexual pleasure, and the latter generally to domination over women. Further, for example in discussing the hysterization of female bodies, Foucault makes evident how the fact that women are thoroughly associated with sex defines what social and political spaces are considered to be appropriate for them (McLaren 32-33). This evidently fits in the description of domination in the way it limits women’s options and space for agency both in private lives and in the larger sociocultural context. Indeed, as McLaren states, seeing women’s experience as being “pathological, abnormal, or neurotic contributes to their devaluation in the larger culture and to individual disempowerment” (156). This is clearly visible in both *Circe* and “Galatea” as I will demonstrate in my analysis.

Thus, as McNay notes in the context of Foucauldian anti-essentialist view of the body and sexuality, although the oppression that women encounter has its basis in the appropriation of the female body by patriarchy, gender inequality cannot be explained by any notion of natural sexual difference, and the conception of a ‘natural’ body needs to be treated as “a device central to the legitimation of certain strategies of oppression” (*Foucault* 21). McLaren asserts that the Foucauldian body is multi-layered in that Foucault does accept the materiality of the body but, at the same time, he sees that the body’s materiality does not “exist outside a disciplinary framework – in terms of both knowledge and practices” (15). Through being interpreted in a certain way, the body comes to bear a meaning and thus is treated accordingly. As McNay summarizes, “once the female sex has come to connote specific feminine characteristics, this ‘imaginary signification’ produces concrete effects throughout social practices”, but “these concrete effects are not the expression of an immutable feminine essence” (*Foucault* 22). In Foucault’s work the concepts of power, knowledge, and body are inextricably linked, which aids in understanding the power regimes’ extreme force in constructing what is perceived as “truth”.

In a similar way to Foucault’s accounts of subjection and power-knowledge, Butler’s theory of gender performativity also has to do with norms and how identities are built predominantly in discourse that serves the politics of truth. Butler directs Foucault’s more general discussion to matters of gender identities. As McLaren describes, feminist theory in general “presents strong arguments for the role that normative constructs of femininity and masculinity play in reproducing themselves, thus perpetuating sexism through the continuation of stereotypical, normative gender categories” (131). This is exactly what I will concentrate on in discussing Butler’s theorizations that have been found useful by many feminist scholars. Butler focuses primarily on how “the heterosexualizing force of the symbolic order and language”, examining what kinds of effects “grounding the category of woman in the materiality of bodies and posing the materiality of sexes a causal” has on a subject (Jagger 6). Butler cites Simone de Beauvoir’s renowned claim of one not being born but rather becoming a woman, and states that gender “is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (*Gender* 43). Butler understands that gender, and for example sex, sexuality, and the body as categories of identity are produced by regimes of power and are thus performative in that they paradoxically create the identities they

are believed to be only representing (Jagger 17). Thus, gender does not exist before its representation, and gender is produced rather than itself producing.

Gender is an act that produces what it describes, which is the normatively accepted binary of a 'feminine' woman and a 'masculine' man (Salih 64). Consequently, as Gillian Jagger notes, in Butler's view it is not the specificities of the female or male body that produce gender inequality but the way in which the bodies are conceptualized as having different possibilities (79). The significations and the regulatory framework that produce these conceptualizations rely on a heterosexist and phallogocentric symbolic order (Jagger 11). This results in a state marked by stereotypes and gender hierarchy where there is, at least seemingly, no room for variation or alternative interpretations. McLaren provides a practical example of how this kind of situation oppresses women by noting that the stereotypical perceptions of women as physically weak and emotionally unstable have a negative effect on women's career advancement (52). In Butler's work, gender is not an essence that implies some coherent qualities but a construction that is maintained by performativity. Butler calls for deconstructing gender into the acts that constitute it and then positioning these acts within the compulsory frames that govern genders' social appearance (*Gender* 43). The systems governing gender performance fit well under the title of domination since, as Butler states, punishment regularly follows if one fails to act out their gender in the right way (*Gender* 178). In the context of analysing Miller's works in this thesis, the matter of punishing those who act against what is expected by the dominant gender hierarchy becomes highlighted. Furthermore, the notion that gender stereotypes govern the views on what female and male characters can or are able to do is a prominent theme in both *Circe* and "Galatea".

In the Butlerian view, by continuation of active citational processes, gender norms and gender identity are constituted and fixed as a social order, and like other social norms, gender identities and subjectivities do not exist without language (Barvosa-Carter 176-77). Performativity becomes "a specific modality of power as discourse", and its normative force relies on reiteration and exclusion (Butler, *Bodies* 139). Thus, performativity is an active process that requires constant repeating for its conditions to persevere. In addition to the fear of being punished, there is something even more profound behind the fact that subjects keep reiterating the normative identity boundaries. Through combining aspects from Hegelian 'unhappy consciousness', Freudian psychoanalysis, and Althusserian notion of interpellation, Butler formulates a theory that explains "how social regulation works through 'the psychic incorporation of norms'" (Jagger 5). Interpellation refers to "the non-coercive process in which

an individual is called upon by a particular social formation to misrecognize themselves as a subject and thereby forget that they are constituted by society rather than constitutive of society as they henceforth imagine themselves to be” (Buchanan). In the Butlerian understanding, interpellation works in the context of gender from the very beginning of a person’s life. As Salih explains, the announcement of whether a new-born baby is a boy or a girl is not solely a factual statement “but an interpellation that initiates a process based on perceived and imposed differences between men and women differences that are far from ‘natural’” (89). What is more, when a person is named in these normative terms, they are initiated into ‘the patronymic lineage of authority’, thus further naming objects and securing the continuation of ‘proper’, homogenous linguistic intention (Butler, *Bodies* 163). The process of interpellation thus both acts on its direct object and ensures that this interpellation process extends to the objects that are yet to come.

When babies are announced to be girls or boys they are simultaneously positioned as subjects and are thus compelled to “cite both sexual and gendered norms in order to qualify for subjecthood within the heterosexual matrix” that “hails” them (Salih 89). In Butler’s work, qualifying for subjecthood becomes the key reason for the subject to keep reiterating their own subordinate state in subjection. The reiteration of norms relies on the passionate attachments that are formed between the subject and the identity categories they are subjected to. As Jagger formulates, desire for subjection is actually desire for existence, and this is due to “norms and social regulation that work through the establishment of primary dependencies on power and linguistic categories” (92-93). To be recognized as a ‘proper’ subject requires that the subject-to-be must internalize their subjection which is defined by the power regimes and their symbolic order. Allen summarizes the complex balancing between the desire to exist and the subordination to subjection that enables that existence as follows:

If the subject would rather attach to pain and subordination than not attach, then even if the terms of our social existence involve incorporating into our sense of ourselves norms or social categories that subordinate us, we will still prefer this to lacking any social existence whatsoever. The structures by which social recognition are conferred thus exploit our narcissistic attachment to our own continued existence. (*Politics* 77)

Since the possibilities of the one under subjection are extremely limited in choosing between being recognized as existing or not, subjection in itself is close to a form of domination from the part of society. In addition, as Mary Bunch states, subjects are continually hailed into various subject positions, and ‘unbecoming subjects’, which Bunch calls the subjects who refuse these hails, “thus risk losing social approval (even from one’s own family), social status, freedom, personal safety, and in some instances, their lives” (47). All these risks become pronounced concerning the female characters in Miller’s two stories. In behaving opposite to what is expected of them in an environment that violently defends normative gender roles, they must face consequences that vary from social disapproval to physical punishment and verbal abuse.

The vocabulary Butler uses is highly marked with references to language, naming, hailing, discourse, signification, and symbols. They have been criticised for linguistic monism, as Allen discusses, in that they seem to ignore even the facticity of the body in emphasizing discursive production (*Power* 77). Butler is thus understood to imply that bodies cannot exist outside or prior to discourse. However, as Salih argues, constructivist theories such as Butler’s “do not attempt to reduce everything to linguistic constructions but are interested in tracing the conditions of emergence of, in this case, the subject” (10). Furthermore, Butler clarifies that their claim of discourse being constitutive of bodies refers more to how “there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body”, and thus the interest is more in how bodies become meaningful, not in the materiality of body (qtd. in Allen, *Power* 78).

Before I shift my discussion to power as resistance, I will briefly summarize the advances of Foucault’s and Butler’s theorizations considering the analysis of my thesis in terms of domination. The fluid and multifaceted nature of power in Foucault allows for analysing it at a societal level as well in personal relationships. As Vanessa Munro states, Foucault particularly highlights “the interplay of the ‘micro-politics’ of power” that function at a more intimate level (82). In addition, Foucault’s definitions of discourse and its role in the maintenance and constitution of power-knowledge are fruitful in terms of literary analysis. Amigot and Pujal assert that the Foucauldian concept of power/knowledge regimes “provides a way of looking critically at canonical narratives and discourses, whether scientific, religious, or quotidian” (651). The discourse of patriarchal myths fits well under the category of canonical discourses. Furthermore, Foucault’s emphasis on power’s effects on the body is particularly useful in the context of feminist issues, and Butler’s focus on specifically gendered

identities that are formed in a regulatory framework aids in connecting Foucauldian thinking even further to feminist analysis. In addition, Butler's strategy to apply the concepts of iterability and interpellation to the analysis of subjection manages to explain in detail how insidiously subjection works on a subject, making them repeat their own subordinate status.

2.2 Power as Female Resistance

As McLaren notes, there are two notions that all the various feminist positions agree on, and they are the subordinate status of women compared to men, and that overcoming that subordination and also oppression based on for example race and gender is feminism's main goal (19). In my thesis, I will gather the attempts of overcoming subordination that are present in Miller's works under the title of resistance. Resistance could be defined, simply put, as "the ability of an individual actor to attain an end or series of ends that serve to challenge and / or subvert domination" (Allen, *Power* 126). The concept of agency is crucially important when analysing resistance. I will utilize the Butlerian definition of agency, which "consists in the ability to introduce a potentially subversive variation on the compulsory repetition of normatively prescribed acts" (Allen, *Power* 68).

In the framework of feminist literature and feminist literary analysis, what Rooney calls the disclosure of patriarchal narratives of femininity is the main goal of resistance. These disclosures have to do with the concept of counter-narratives since, as Rooney asserts, 'rewriting' conceptions of femininity and the categories that characterize women is a defining aspect of feminism. This description can be applied directly to feminist revisionist mythology because, by altering the original myth versions, the authors literally rewrite the female characters and their stories. Meretoja asserts that the Foucauldian conception of power is useful in analysing counter-narratives since Foucault's perspective on power as both restrictive and productive "acknowledges the fundamental role played by power in the constitution of subjectivity and identity, while also recognizing the subject's ability to resist and transform prevailing narratives and the power relations in which they are embedded" (34). Thus, the assumption that the hegemonic status of master-narratives will prevail unchanged is not as self-evident as their dominant role would suggest.

Whereas in the domination part I discussed power's negative side, in the context of resistance I will focus on its productive force. It is worth underlining that, as Munro states, power itself in Foucault does not manifest solely as systematic oppression from a defined source but is rather "a positive social presence that operates in all aspects of life and exerts itself in all directions" (82). Power in general is not the same as domination, and Foucault

treating domination as “a pathological example” of power relations implies that resistance should not aim at transcending the prevalent power regimes but rather at diluting the congealed power relations (Munro 94). This can be understood as suggesting that if one managed to transcend the prevalent power regimes completely, the situation would again turn into a state of domination. In a feminist context, it would mean that women for their part would start dominating men, and the power relations would still be congealed, only reversibly. Thus, equality in terms of power flowing freely is what Foucauldian aim of resistance could be interpreted as implying. In addition, what Butler emphasizes about Foucault’s theory of subjection is important in understanding the possibility of resistance:

. . . if following Foucault, we understand power as *forming* the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, the power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the beings that we are. (*Psychic 2*)

In Foucauldian understanding, the process of subjection not only engenders subordination to regimes of power or a state of being under domination, but also delivers the subject. As Butler explains, when the disciplinary apparatus produces its subjects, it necessarily “brings into discourse the conditions for subverting the apparatus itself” (*Psychic 100*). The subject is therefore always provided with the capacity for resistance, which I will discuss more below.

As I already stated in the introduction to this theory chapter, many feminist critics have been sceptical about Foucault’s thoughts due to his rejection of norms since this notion can be understood to undermine the possibility for emancipatory, progressive movement. Another related worry is that Foucault’s “rejection of a unified subject and his view that subjectivity is produced within power relations results in a concept of the subject wholly determined by social forces” (McLaren 2). In the context of domination, this would imply that the subject is completely unable to resist their subordinate condition. However, this is not the case. As Munro asserts in reading Foucault, even in states of domination where “the possibilities for resistance become substantially reduced, with the range of options for subversion available to the subject being limited”, resistance is not impossible (91). The key to understanding this lies in the paradox of power. Even in a situation where power is stagnated asymmetrically in a structure of domination, it is still a power relation, and thus it must involve

freedom for resistance, even if the most limited kind (Munro 91). Domination turns the conditions for resistance more difficult, but it does not imply a complete paralysis in terms of agency.

As for Foucault's view on the subject as a production of power and his rejection of norms, McLaren provides insight into how these notions do not necessarily implicate bleak determinism and argues that "the social, relational, embodied subject embedded in specific cultural and institutional practices found in Foucault's work is compatible with feminist aims" (15). Foucault's critics claim that if truth and knowledge need to be understood as products of power relations, it implies that there is no possibility for objective knowledge or truth, and thus a possibility for a normative framework that would be needed in order to posit critique is omitted (McLaren 22). However, even though Foucault's negative stance on norms and normative frameworks has faced critique among feminist thinkers, some critics see it as a useful thought and argue that "traditional notions of political unity, rights, and freedom carry normative implications that foreclose certain questions about who is included in the political process", which may imply systematic exclusion (McLaren 1). Applying Foucauldian rejection of norms to emancipatory movements can thus be seen as an attempt to avoid collapsing into further states of division. McLaren further argues that Foucault's objection to norms can be understood as him not rejecting *all* norms, but particular forms of subjectivity, such as the humanistic subject, which is rightful since the subject of humanism is "abstract, atomistic, rationalist, and disembodied" (79). Foucault criticises both social and philosophical norms, but he implicitly appeals to reconceptualizing norms such as domination and freedom, which allows him to do "an immanent critique without explicitly invoking the modern categories he criticizes" (McLaren 23). Furthermore, McLaren sees Foucault's conception of social norms constituting subjects as "an important mediating structure between individual identity and social, political and legal institutions", and that this link means that self-transformation is not simply an individual personal goal but "must involve structural social and political change" (16). Social norms define both an individual subject's condition and the above-mentioned institutions, and therefore a subject resisting those norms necessarily also takes stance on the wider institutional mechanisms.

In reading Foucault, Munro notes that in a state of domination, the dominated party cannot "exercise a power over the power relationship itself", and thus "regimes of resistance premised upon the invocation of transcendent Enlightenment-esque agendas for unbounded freedom and autonomy are futile" (91). However, different kinds of resistance

techniques are still possible, and Foucault discusses these especially in his later work in terms of ‘techniques of the self’. McLaren explains these techniques as follows:

One engages in practices of the self to produce self-transformation within a social context. Practices of the self draw upon the rules, methods, and customs of one’s culture, but are also practices of freedom, that is, they create new non-normalizing modes of existence and relationships. Work on oneself occurs within social and historical contexts, but with the aim of understanding how that context has shaped us, and with an eye toward social and political change. (159)

The link between personal and social or political is an important notion in the techniques of the self in a feminist framework. Moreover, as Amigot and Pujal note, the techniques’ dependency on their socio-historical context enables considering women’s agency “under specific and multiple social restrictions” (656). McLaren states that the techniques are “characterized by an articulation, either through writing or speech, or bodily practices” (15). Especially writing as a practice of the self is interesting in terms of my thesis. Counter-narratives such as Miller’s work can be perceived as a part of a larger whole that consists of different kinds of literary means to challenge the prevailing societal conditions, but at the same time the stories of Circe and Galatea are about the characters’ personal journeys towards resistance by their own means. What is more, the notions of writing and speech as techniques of the self can be detected also within the storylines in the sense that by narrating their own stories, the characters of Circe and Galatea actively transform their identities. Feminist revisionist mythology writing could be viewed as a kind of technique of the self since it not only raises consciousness of the oppression of women through ages but also transforms the original myth storylines in a way that allows the reader to also hear the female characters’ voices.

However, as McLaren notes, Foucault does not discuss in detail the contemporary techniques of the self, and some critics claim that the ethical subject in Foucault’s later work is “individualistic and aesthetic”, which does not contribute to resistance as a larger emancipatory project (63). Further, Foucault’s theorizations of resistance are not as fully formulated as his conception of power in general. Allen summarizes Foucault’s “paradox of agency” as follows:

On the one hand, if we are always subjects in the sense of being subjected to myriad power relations, then what seems to be implied is a rather deterministic account of human action that denies the possibility of human agency; on the other hand, if we are always subjects in the sense of having the capacity to act, then the implication seems to be a rather voluntaristic account of human action that denies the grip that power relations have on us. Simply combining these two radically different conceptions of human action into one concept implies that the best we can do is to learn to live with this paradox. (*Power* 55)

However, as Allen argues, Butler is able to fulfil Foucault's incomplete notion of resistance to a great extent by "providing the kind of rich genealogical analysis of resistance that he himself neglects to provide, thereby repeating the full benefit of his brilliant conceptual insight into the interplay between power and resistance" (*Power* 57). Butler's notion of gender identities as constructions has been found useful by many readers in terms of resistance and empowerment. Through introducing the Derridean notions of iterability and citationality to the discussion, "it is possible for identities to be reconstructed in ways that challenge and subvert existing power structures" (Salih (11). McNay asserts that it is particularly the introduction of historicity or temporality to the conception of symbolic that develops Foucault's "rather elliptical remarks on how power breeds its own resistance" ("Subject" 175).

As Jagger states, an extremely important notion in Butler's work considering resistance is that the identity categories that enable the embodied subjects' existence are not completely determining, which allows for rearticulating the categories and can lead to transformation both socially and on a personal level (7). Butler turns again to psychoanalysis in stating that "any mobilization against subjection will take subjection as its resource, and that attachment to an injurious interpellation will, by a way of a necessarily alienated narcissism, become the condition under which resignifying that interpellation becomes possible" (*Psychic* 104). In other words, the same power that produced the subordinated subject is also the source of resistance, which means that the founding power becomes reoriented to signify the power that the subject opposes. Further, Butler notes that the Foucauldian subject can never be complete since it needs to be repeatedly built in subjection, and therefore states of domination in Foucault are never total either (*Psychic* 94). Since the nature of formative power relations is fluid, domination as an imbalanced power relation also needs continual, repeated production (Munro 91). Both the subject as a product of power

regimes and the power relations amid which the subject exists rely on active maintenance instead of being determining or stagnant. When “power shifts from the condition of the subject to its effects”, the subject becomes the site for reiteration (Butler, *Psychic* 16). The conditions of power that work on the subject are dependent on the subject reiterating them, but once the subject begins to alter the subordinating significations of those conditions, an arena for critique opens for use. Consequently, as Jagger formulates, agency in Butler is primarily “a matter of reworking injurious interpellations, of unsettling passionate attachments to subjection” (104).

Thus, the possibility of resignification relies on the reiterability of power, and it is precisely this reitability that temporalizes the conditions of subordination (Butler, *Psychic* 16). Butler sees gender identifications as being ‘phantasmatic’ in the sense that they are constantly under a process involving signification and resignification (Jagger 11). The Derridean notions of citationality, temporality and iterability allow Butler to claim that gender is a discursive effect, but they also make it possible to avoid what some critics see as “the ultimate determinism that haunts Foucault’s genealogy and notion of discourse” (Jagger 68). As Allen asserts, “the notion of subjection does not deny agency; to the contrary, it presupposes agency, for the disciplinary norms to which we are subject cannot reproduce themselves, they must be cited or performed by individuals” (*Politics* 73). McNay underlines the notion of temporality in this process, stating that “central to the idea of performative agency is an understanding of temporality not as a series of discrete, punctuated moments, but rather as a process of materialization in which the constraints of social structures are reproduced and partially transcended in the practices of agents” (“Subject” 177). Further, McNay highlights Butler’s conception of speech as excitable, which means that speech cannot be fully controlled, making it vulnerable to “unauthorized appropriation” and freeing it “from the all-encompassing intentionality of the putative sovereign subject” (“Subject” 178). It is possible, then, to subvert and alter conditions of for example the gender identifications that are promoted by the societal forces inside the dominating discourse.

All this would imply that the subject is seen as partly responsible for their subordinate status and that resistance would be rather straightforward in its means. However, keeping in mind Butler’s formulation of passionate attachments to one’s subjection, the continuation of existing as a recognizable subject is a powerful human need. Butler asserts that “the desire to survive, ‘to be’, is a pervasively exploitable desire” (*Psychic* 7). In addition, due to the fear of becoming a social outcast or being punished, resistance seems to require a specific mental – and physical – space in order to be possible. The conditions for a subject’s

resistance to activate are not explicitly formulated in Butler's work. As McNay asserts, Butler's conception of agency does not really answer how the temporariness of structure that allows for autonomous action actually catalyses or hinders change ("Subject" 176). Barvosa-Carter suggests that the solution to this can be found in Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural field being extremely complex with many shifting social positions and relations, which implies that a particular subject is "multiply constructed and engaged in reiterating different discourses and structural practices along many (often contradictory) axes" (179). As Barvosa-Carter further explains,

Subjects that are socially constituted within complex social webs are thus socially constructed not with one set of enabling constraints—but a variety of different sets of enabling constraints each of which consists of the meanings, values, and practices that comprise a different identity. It is this multiplicity of construction that, in my view, is the primary source for the variation in performativity that is the hallmark of agency. (179)

A reflexive space or critical distance is found when a subject inhabits one of their multiple identities and leaves the other identities aside, taking up the meanings, practices, and values that belong to the used identity and forgetting the others for a while (Barvosa-Carter 179). This thought of the multitude of identities working as catalyst for agency is visible in both *Circe* and "Galatea", as I will demonstrate further. Even though Butler's theories considering resistance are not solid even with their remarkable notion of the iterability of gender performance as a source for change, Barvosa-Carter's suggestion fulfills at least the gap that concerns my thesis.

Nevertheless, Butler's theories have also been challenged similar to those of Foucault. For example, Martha Nussbaum argues that Butler's conception of resistance is narrow, and because Butler views the subject as being socially constructed, this leaves only little room for agency (McLaren 6-7). In the words of McLaren, Nussbaum claims that "the view of resistance held by French intellectuals is personal and private, and does not promote legal, institutional, or material change" (6-7). However, as McLaren notes in terms of Foucault, his "later work echoes the feminist claim that the 'personal is political' and that theory and practice are inseparable" (48). The claim that personal is political can also be applied to Butler. Resistance begins in Butler's and Foucault's work from transforming

oneself, and for the dominating discourse to change, Butler's solution is to begin the resistance inside that very discourse that concerns oneself. Another worry that concerns Butler's notion of resistance has to do with their alleged linguistic monism that I discussed already in terms of domination. As Jagger states, Butler's view on resistance is based on a notion that since gender categories are linguistically constituted and thus not naturally given, the way to resistance is also through the very signifying practices that constitute the particular identities (7). Butler's resistance thus relies specifically on linguistic agency and power's discursive dimension. In order to gain a broader view of resistance and possibilities for agency, Allen suggests returning to Foucault in focusing also on the nondiscursive or bodily practices' importance in terms of subversive tactics (*Power* 82). This is a useful notion for my thesis since, despite the discursive side forming the framework of the thesis, non-discursive means to oppose domination can also be detected in Miller's works.

Before I proceed to the analysis section of my thesis, I will briefly combine the strengths of Foucauldian and Butlerian theorizations concerning resistance. Foucault's views that power has a productive side in terms of engendering the subject and that resistance is an inseparable part of power are both fruitful starting points for analysing resistance side by side with domination. Furthermore, his emphasis on the claim that social norms construct subjects highlights the connection between personal and political matters. Butler's work on resistance complements and elaborates Foucault's theorization, similarly as with domination, by utilizing the notion of iterability. With Barvosa-Carter's aid, also the conditions that allow Butlerian resistance to activate are explained. Finally, the fact that both Foucault and especially Butler emphasize the power of discourse in the context of resistance is important in order to analyse works such as Miller's as powerful counter-narratives.

3 Male Domination

In this section, I will focus on examining how power as male domination is visible in Miller's *Circe* and "Galatea". First, in 3.1 I will discuss power over the female body and mind. Second, in 3.2 power will be analyzed in the framework of silencing women's voices. As Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon state, patriarchal norms define women "as the sexual property of men; as objects rather than subjects; as goods to be exchanged, ignored or belittled; or as disposable beings who may be abused or even killed – in short, as less than full persons" (6). Accordingly, this analysis section includes notions of objectification, reduction of women to their bodies, sexual violence towards women, limiting female mobility, and expectations directed towards how women should look and act. These notions are clearly overlapping and appear as following from each other, which only further emphasizes the comprehensive and intricate nature of female oppression. Section 3.2 considers the concept of voice both on a metanarrative level regarding the patriarchal myths and in terms of separate examples of silencing female voices in the two works of Miller's.

In *Circe*, Miller reimagines the story of the witch goddess Circe, daughter of sun god Helios and his nymph wife Perse. Miller's version shifts the Homeric Odysseus into a side character and posits Circe as the narrator and protagonist who tells her own tale from her birth onwards. Instead of preserving the traditional image of Circe as a cruel, lustful witch, Miller presents a more nuanced view of her and explores her position as a woman in the patriarchal world of the traditional myth versions. In Miller's version, Circe spends her early youth at the palace of Helios but is later deported to the island of Aiaia for misbehaviour. The impact of the patriarchal society of ancient Greece and Circe's father's house do not, however, fully end with her exile. In "Galatea", Miller has written a new version of the Pygmalion myth. Older versions of the myth are various, but those that transform the statue into a major character began to appear not until the early twentieth century onwards (Eck 1, 13). Accordingly, Miller tells the story from the point of view of the female statue, Galatea. Pygmalion, who is simply referred to as "husband", is portrayed as a sadistic man who wishes Galatea to behave like a statue even after she has been transformed into a human. As Tracy Hallstead states of the Ovidian myth version, Pygmalion's stone maiden "has no purpose or spirit of her own but is merely a reflection of him, an object created by him and for his glory, not a subject with individual will" (2). As will be shown, this description fits well to Miller's version of the myth too, at least when considering the husband's expectations of Galatea.

Although my focus in this thesis is strictly on male domination versus female resistance, it should be noted that in *Circe*, not all women nor men are consciously dominating or suffer the same level of oppression. It is important to remember that, as Allen states, many women can exercise power over other women due to for example differences in race and class (*Power* 25). In *Circe*, some female characters are cruel, such as the goddess Athena who, due to her status as a higher goddess, has broader agency. Further, the most notable example of a less dominating man in *Circe* is Telemachus, with whom Circe eventually decides to share her life with and develop a balanced relationship. Plurality in terms of different characters' conditions inside the domination-subordination scale is thus a key element of *Circe*, and despite of some truly cruel characters in the story such as Helios, the commentary seems to be directed towards patriarchal ideology. For instance, Telemachus is portrayed to be a victim of the ideology too: he is expected to fight against the Trojans and become the ruler of a new empire even though he does not want to lead such a life. However, in "Galatea" the division between the male and female characters' essence is more straightforward since the only male figures—the husband and Galatea's doctor—are clearly represented as corrupt.

3.1 Power over the Female Body and Mind

In the patriarchal framework, a girl's life is controlled by her sex and perceived gender from the very beginning. In *Circe*, this becomes evident when Circe is born. After she is announced to be a girl, the first thing that is evaluated about her is her potential for a rich marriage and reproduction. Circe's father Helios states of baby Circe that "she will make a fair match", and Circe narrates that he was fine with having daughters, since "men and gods paid dearly for the chance to breed from their blood, and my father's treasury was said to rival that of the king of gods himself" (*Circe* 3). Prioritizing the usefulness of the female body especially in reproduction resonates with Foucault's notion of the political economy of the body. In the Foucauldian view, the body's productive force is what is most valued in society and, as McLaren notes, in a Foucauldian feminist framework the body is not central only to issues of production, but also to reproduction (115). Doherty asserts that in ancient Greece, the primary roles for women were those of mother and wife, and "sons, who represented the continuity of the family, were valued above daughters, who were given away in marriage to produce sons for other families" (137). Accordingly, in Circe's patriarchal world the quality that is most valued in women is their ability to provide male heirs.

Later in her youth, Circe desperately wishes to find a potential husband for herself: "I should have spoken to those mortals, I thought. I could have begged among them

for a husband. I was a daughter of Helios, surely one of those ragged men would have me” (29). Circe’s “girthing” continues even after the time of her birth when she was foundationally interpellated as a girl. As Butler asserts, in medical interpellation newborns are “brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender”, but after the birth the interpellation is reinforced and reiterated by various authorities and in various moments (*Bodies* xvii). Circe has internalized her subjection under social regulation; and through interpellation she thus follows the prevailing normative script since she does not see any other opportunity even in her imagination. Circe’s sister Pasiphaë’s marriage, however, is one example of how marriage is not a solution to gain a happy life. Pasiphaë speaks of her husband, Minos, as follows: “Minos does not want a queen, only a simpering jelly he keeps in a jar and breeds to death. He would be happy to have me in chains for eternity, and he need only say the word to his own father to do it” (128). Pasiphaë’s marriage appears to be determined by ensuring that Minos gets heirs, and the whole arrangement is maintained by patriarchal order. In this order, Pasiphaë is understood to be Minos’ property, and her status as queen remains only a title. A woman in Circe’s world is always subordinate to a man whether she is a goddess, queen or even a titaness.

In “Galatea”, Galatea is treated in a similar way by her husband as if she were his property. No other man is allowed to look at Galatea, and even the love between Galatea and their daughter Paphos evokes jealousy in him: “You grovel for her, but not me” (“Galatea” 8). The commonalities between Circe’s and Galatea’s stories only begin with the notion of ownership. Similar to Circe’s birth, Galatea becoming alive can be interpreted through the notion of subjection. Galatea is first a statue, carved into the shape of a woman that corresponds to the husband’s desire. When she comes alive, the expectations of how she should act as a living woman are already set on her by the husband. According to Galatea, “The thing is, I don’t think my husband expected me to be able to talk . . . Naturally, when he wished me to live, that’s what he wanted still, only warm so that he might fuck me” (7). The husband had expected Galatea to continue to act like a stone, quiet and passive. Julie Wosk connects the Pygmalion myth’s idea of a simulated woman coming alive to modern fantasies of engineered female automatons, robots, and dolls: “a woman who is pliant and compliant and answers all his needs, an artificial female that is a superior substitute for the real thing” (9). Galatea’s story thus reflects expectations towards women not only inside its original historical framework, but in today’s world too.

The notion of norms and how they affect one's mind can also be connected to Galatea in a similar way as to Circe. Over and over again her husband makes her play with him the scene from Ovid's myth version where Galatea is transformed from a statue to a living woman. Galatea narrates that it is easy to arrange herself correctly on the bed because she has had practice, but she also thinks that "there is some part of me, the stone part, that remembers and is glad to set into its old lines" (3). When she was stone, her part was only to be adored by her husband. She did not know of better, and her complete passivity guaranteed her safety. Even though as a human she is now aware of her subordinate position, it feels safer to carry out the old pattern than try to break it.

In the context of gendered domination, the female body and its usefulness for reproduction and sexual pleasure thus seem to be the most central issues in Miller's feminist revisionist mythology. What Circe states of nymphs, or women, summarizes this objectification well in *Circe*: "Brides, nymphs were called, but that is not really how the world saw us. We were an endless feast laid out upon a table, beautiful and renewing. And so very bad at getting away" (171). As McLaren notes in the context of Foucauldian understanding of the history of sexuality, "women's thoroughgoing association with sex serves to mark out appropriate social and political spaces for women" (33). Because of this, men in Miller's work see women as being unable to make decisions or think rationally. Consequently, the male characters constantly belittle the females' intelligence and potentials. For example, in "Galatea" the husband does not want a tutor for his and Galatea's daughter, Paphos, because "that would ruin her" (8). He does not consider education as a suitable activity for their daughter, which further underlines how he reduces women to body. This view can be connected to Enlightenment philosophy and the dichotomy between body and mind. In this division, men have traditionally been connected to the mind and women to the body and, as Butler states, these cultural associations have conventionally produced, rationalized, and maintained the persisting gender hierarchy (*Bodies* 17). Similarly, Helios does not in the beginning believe in his daughter's potential at all in *Circe*. When Circe tries to confess that she turned Scylla into a monster with her witchcraft, Helios' answer is profoundly doubtful: "'Daughter, you begin to make a spectacle.' The words cut across the air. 'If the world contained that power you allege, do you think it would fall to such as you to discover it?'" (54). Taking into account the strong patriarchal framework of Circe's world, Helios' opinion can be interpreted as an example where the female body and mind are conceptualized as having different possibilities than the male ones.

Nymphs like Circe are considered to be objects of use, not users of any kind of power, as these words of Circe's brother Aëtes further suggest: "Even the most beautiful nymph is largely useless, and an ugly one would be nothing, less than nothing. She would never marry or produce children. She would be a burden to her family, a stain upon the face of the world. She would live in the shadows, scorned and reviled" (61). Again, both the importance of appearance and the potential for marriage and reproduction are underlined. Nymphs, or women, are conceptualized as only fit for looking beautiful and providing heirs for their husbands. As Allen states, "according to certain culturally hegemonic definitions, to be 'feminine' is to be passive, cooperative and obedient" in opposition to the aggressive and controlling masculinity (*Power* 132). However, there does not exist some feminine essence that makes females weaker than males, but it only appears so because of what Butler calls the phallogentric symbolic order (Jagger 11, 79). Circe and ultimately also Galatea do not fit into this order at all, which, in addition to the two women being punished for it, also reveals the artificial and fragile nature of the order.

In both *Circe* and "Galatea" the protagonists are expected to perform their gender in a way that would support and maintain the patriarchal social environment. Gender as a performative begins from one's appearance. With her hair that is "streaked like a lynx", yellow eyes, and sharp chin that is "less than pleasing" (*Circe* 3), Circe does not fit into the category of what is considered in her world as "proper" or "desirable" in a woman. She does not use her body for marital purposes as the other nymphs but practices witchcraft, which is perceived as odd and frightening since that is not what nymphs are for. At the beginning of *Circe*, Circe narrates that "when I was born, the word for what I was did not exist. They called me nymph, assuming I would be like my mother and aunts and thousand cousins . . . That word, *nymph*, paced out the length and breadth of our futures. In our language, it means not just goddess, but *bride*" (1). This can be tied to the concept of the performative in the sense that deviating from the female norm, Circe is not a solely a nymph, but something that has no reference. Being outside of the marital institution and practicing witchcraft, she becomes an outcast, considered by her father to be "worst of my children, faded and broken, whom I cannot pay a husband to take" (*Circe* 54), something that marks out as abnormal. According to Butler, "the normative force of performativity – its power to establish what qualifies as 'being' – works not only through reiteration but exclusion as well" (*Bodies* 140). For performativity to exist as an imperative, it needs boundaries that mark what does not fit inside its rules. Circe fails to act as

is expected, and thus she falls outside of the category of what is considered a proper woman by the patriarchal society.

In Ovid's original Pygmalion myth, Pygmalion decides to carve a female statue for himself because he despises "the numerous defects of character Nature had given the feminine spirit" (350). Similarly, in Miller's version the husband calls the girls of his town "sluts" ("Galatea" 6). Pygmalion, or the husband, considers the "feminine spirit" as somehow corrupt, and chisels for himself a perfect woman who would behave in a correct manner according to his wishes. This correct manner is visible in how Galatea is expected by her husband to act submissively and look perfect as a statue; every time Galatea begins to show humanlike characteristics, her husband considers her to be less and less desirable. The husband is disgusted when he notices faint stretch marks on Galatea's belly that appeared when she was pregnant with Paphos: "'They are ugly', he said" (9). Even before noticing the marks, the husband has started carving a new statue, a girl of ten, and it later becomes evident from the passage that the new statue is supposed to replace Galatea: when Galatea asks if the new statue is for some man of the town, the husband answers that it will be for himself. For her husband, Galatea is no longer desirable especially after giving birth, and thus the husband feels he needs a "flawless", untouched virgin substitute for his sexual pleasures. The shockingly low age of the new statue, which is the same as his daughter's, further underlines the wickedness of the husband's stance on girls and women. Despite the husband carving a substitute for her, he still keeps Galatea trapped in their relationship and, physically, in the hospital where he shut her after she tried to escape for the first time. As an environment, the hospital enables the husband to keep Galatea under surveillance and completely at the mercy of himself. The doctor who keeps an eye on Galatea, for which the husband pays generously, drugs her if she shows signs of restlessness: "The tea is the thing they give me when I won't lie back . . ." (5). Galatea's movements are thus forcibly kept to a minimum, ensuring that she stays in her place, unable to escape, tied to the hospital bed where the husband can do whatever he wants to her.

Limiting female mobility is a central theme also in *Circe* and it has been, as Doreen Massey asserts, "in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination" both in terms of identity and space (179). In classical mythology, even though some women leave the domestic sphere and even "wander to unknown lands", they do not violate the boundaries of public space (Konstantinou 148). Thus, even though some female characters appear to be freer, their mobility is still restricted when compared to male mobility. Circe is deported to the island of Aiaia after the magnitude of her powers becomes evident when she half-accidentally turns

Scylla into a monster. However, when Helios pronounces Circe's verdict, the first matter that he highlights is that she was acting on her own: "She defied my commands and contradicted my authority" (*Circe* 63). Helios does not care for Scylla, as Hermes asserts to Circe when she asks if anyone could stop Scylla from eating sailors: "Zeus could, or your father, if they wished to. But why would they? Monsters are boon to gods. Imagine all the prayers" (86). To the gods, Scylla was just a nymph among others, and the core reason for Circe's punishment appears to have more to do with how she has failed in performing her gender correctly than in her actual crime. Circe's actions are perceived as rebellious in that they cross a line in terms of how much agency and voice she uses as a woman. As Massey states, limiting female mobility in space and the limitation on identity are interrelated, and especially the distinction between private and public spheres demonstrates this well (179). Ariadne Konstantinou connects the Greek myths' patriarchal tendency to limit female mobility and women's access to the public sphere to the contemporary notion of 'glass wall': "Female mythic figures are free to move in space, but only within what appear to be culturally determined boundaries, thus revealing a 'glass wall' barrier in how female figures were imagined to move in Greek mythic thought" (18). By deporting Circe to the island away from the public sphere, the gods ensure that her powers will not be a threat to the hierarchical order of their society. In Circe's context the 'glass wall', which nowadays refers to the obstacles that women face when they attempt to advance in their careers, describes well how women's power has been and is still seen as something that must be kept under control.

Circe's siblings are also found to have similar kinds of magical powers as her, but they are trusted not to cause disorder: "Perses lives beyond our boundaries and is no threat. Pasiphaë's husband is a son of Zeus, and he will be sure she is held to her proper place. Aëtes will keep his kingdom, as long as he agrees to be watched" (62). The male children of Helios are quite well trusted, which appears to be due to their gender. Later in the story, Circe states explicitly that "sons were not punished" (159) in the gods' world. Pasiphaë's "proper place" as a wife secures that she will not be able to act on her own. Circe, however, has no husband to keep her in her "place", and this appears to be a further sign for the gods that her mobility in terms of space and identity must be put under control. Even though Pasiphaë practices some witchcraft too, only Circe is referred to as a witch in the story. This underlines how it is specifically unmarried women who are outside the domestic sphere that the gods see as a threat. As Adriana Madej-Stang asserts, throughout ages witches have been "identified with a deep fear of a disturbance, of a danger to the order of society and to the well-being of those

who understood themselves as well settled within the borders of the patriarchal order and its psychological and sexual corselet” (229). Furthermore, the problem of trying to sell Circe to marriage is also solved in making her live far away. These interpretations are supported by how Pasiphaë comments on Circe’s exile: “Zeus is terrified of witchcraft and wanted a sacrifice. Father picked you because you are worth the least” (128). Thus, Circe is seen as worthless because of her low value on the marriage market, but at the same time she posits a potential danger since women with any possibility for agency disturb the patriarchal system.

In addition to the issues discussed above, control over women manifests in Miller’s works also as violence against them. Some major issues that are often brought up in feminist circles in this context are rape and other sexual violence, domestic abuse and violence, and everyday harassment (Aune and Redfern 78). Corresponding events can be found in “Galatea” and *Circe*. In “Galatea”, the husband abuses Galatea for not blushing to him when he orders her to do that. After the violent outrage, he admires the bruises on Galatea’s body: “You make the rarest canvas, my love” (11). There is irony in that the stretch marks from Galatea giving birth to Paphos bothered the husband, but the bruises made by himself appear as art to him. This sadomasochism can be traced back to the notion of ownership. Because the husband sees Galatea as his property and his creation, he feels entitled to modify her body as he likes. As the sculptor who carved Galatea in the first place, he continues reworking her with violence to strengthen his hold of her and remind her of her subordinate status. As Hallstead states of the Ovidian myth version, “In order to perfect his woman, Pygmalion chisels her to size her down and polishes her flaws to make her worthy of his love while she quietly yields to him” (3). Chiselling of the body parallels to chiselling the mind, since Pygmalion shapes his statue to make her not only look perfect according to his ideals but also to remove all sense of autonomy from her. In “Galatea”, the husband also forces Galatea to have sex with him, as becomes evident from the play he makes her act with him which ends up in him “fucking” her. In addition, Galatea narrates that when she was pregnant with Paphos, the husband still kept pushing her “onto the bed or up against the wall” despite her being tired and sick (9). Domestic and sexual violence is a timeless issue: as Kristin Aune and Catherine Redfern state, despite improvements in laws, women are still intimidated and attacked, and this generally relies on “a pattern where one partner (usually male) tries to maintain power and control over the other (usually female, often his wife)” (122). Correspondingly, the husband in “Galatea” constantly reminds Galatea of her subordinate status by abusing her.

In *Circe*, violence that is specifically sexual appears when Circe is raped by the leader of a bunch of men visiting her island. The violent act in this case is not punishment, but due to an opportunity presented by the fact that Circe lives on Aiaia without a male companion; before attacking her, the man makes sure that there is no husband, brother, or other corresponding male figure around. This is probably due to him making sure that there is no one to help Circe, but it also indicates that since there is no male owner of the house, Circe is also considered free to take advantage of because she is not anyone's property. The societal framework of ancient mythology supports this interpretation since, as Elizabeth Johnston states, in ancient Greece the rape of unmarried women who were not virgins was legal (185). The matter of marriage can be connected to contemporary discussion on rape. For example, Jagger summarizes Butler's discussion on a real-life gang rape trial in which the plaintiff asked the victim that if she is married, why was she "running around the streets getting raped" as follows: "the woman's sex, 'in its materiality' is somehow seen as causing the rape, and 'that she colludes in it by stepping outside the domestic realm' (where she belongs as the partner of a man)" (60). Circe, who lives alone on her island instead of being married and living for example at her father's palace, is also outside of the traditional domestic realm.

Circe reflects her situation after being raped:

Maybe the true surprise, I thought, was that it had not happened sooner. My uncles' eyes used to crawl over me as I poured their wine. Their hand found their way to my flesh. A pinch, a stroke, a hand slipping under the sleeve of my dress. They all had wives; it was not marriage they thought of. One of them would have come for me in the end and paid my father well. Honour on all sides. (168)

In Circe's world, sexual assault or harassment would not cause a scandal or even punitive actions from the part of those who would have the societal power to do so, especially if the woman does not "belong" to a man as his wife. In the framework of women's issues today, Chamberlain discusses the link between unnoticed harassment and sexual assault in terms of Laura Bates' Everyday Sexism Project, a low-threshold online archive that gathers women's experiences of misogyny and sexism. Chamberlain states that "whether on the street or at work, sexism is a continued reminder that men dominate certain spaces, and that women are to be made very self-conscious of their presence" (123). In *Circe*, Circe was already used to men breaking her physical boundaries, since sexual harassment in the form of small, easy-to-hide gestures had been an everyday matter before her exile. After the rape, Circe wishes for

her father's aid: "My father would appear any moment, the patriarch outraged at the insult to his child. My ceiling would creak as his shoulders pressed against it. Poor child, poor exiled daughter" (167). However, Helios does not come, even though as the sun himself he would have seen what had happened. This passivity might be due to his general disinterest in his daughter, because he was the one who exiled Circe in the first place. However, also the pattern of seeing the woman as responsible for putting herself in a situation that makes her more vulnerable to sexual violence might be the reason since Circe tries to be very hospitable to the visitors despite feeling suspicious.

The issues concerning male power over the female mind and body in *Circe* and "Galatea" are easily transferable to contemporary societal framework. Issues of rape, sexuality, and gender norms are only a few examples belonging to the entirety of contemporary feminist discussion. Upheld by state action, social institutions throughout the globe disadvantage women through "mechanisms of social provision, family law, the regulation of reproduction, employment law, criminal justice, obligations for military service, and instruments of organized violence" (Htun and Weldon 245). All these issues are tied to the ways in which women's voices have been silenced throughout history, which will be discussed more in the following subsection.

3.2 Power as Silencing Women's Voices

The question of women's voices and, in the context of domination, silencing those voices are notably present in both *Circe* and "Galatea". As Kathy Ferguson asserts, "narrativity, or storytelling, is crucial for creating women's voice or any subaltern point of view", and that to be able to define a masculine point of view, a different view must be imagined for making contrast visible (276). Story patterns in traditional Greek and Roman myths are based on "the familiar frameworks of the patriarchal family and of a wider society in which authority and property are still distributed on patriarchal lines" (Doherty 10). The traditional Western myths are thus male-dominated and reiterate the model for women's subordination, of which a rather bleak example is how rape culture was maintained in ancient Greece: as Johnston explains, ancient myths in which gods "routinely rape and impregnate women, support a belief system within which violence against women's bodies is . . . established as a norm" (185). Further, as pre-existing narrative patterns, myths infiltrate "our innermost recesses, scripting our fantasies of ourselves and thus shaping our perceptions of ourselves" (Balinisteanu 47). Myths are not only stories, but construct and explain social patterns and positions.

The role of language as a producer of meaning thus cannot be underlined enough in the context of canonical literature since, as Christine Keating states, “words, our primary agent of expression, signify a discourse that has been established by a patriarchal myth, one that denies the feminine internal world” (483). The processes through which ‘woman’ has come to acquire certain meanings can be understood in terms of stabilisation and fixation, and accordingly also gender relations are “stabilised in the form of violence and hierarchy”, in the relation between signifier and subject-effect (Ahmed 92). However, discourse is prone to change since it relies in the Butlerian and Foucauldian vein on reiteration and is always historically and socially constructed and maintained, as was discussed in the theory section. Thus, as Julie Rajan and Sanja Bahun-Radunović argue, even though it is a universal tendency to see myths as “fixed narrative patterns”, they are “unstable and epistemic structures” (2).

In turning the narrator’s point of view from a male one to a female one, authors of feminist revisionist mythology are able to highlight the previously hidden or disregarded aspects of mistreating and silencing women in the older myth versions. Miller’s works are, as established in the theory section, counter-discourse in the form of counter-narratives that reimagine both the female characters and the myths that have defined their nature and role for over two millennia. In addition to revealing the oppressive aspects that are present in the canonised myth versions, feminist revisionist mythmaking also mirrors contemporary issues of feminist concern to the past framework, as I made evident in the previous section. Even though for example the change in narrative perspective can already be considered as a form of resistance, this subsection examines how male domination is exercised through the patriarchal myths and patriarchal ideology itself. I will analyze how Miller make visible, through changing the narrative point of view, how the female voices in the older myth versions have been silenced, and how some crucial perspectives might stay hidden if the narrative power lies exclusively on patriarchal voices. In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion’s nameless statue did not speak at all, and in Homer’s *The Odyssey* readers gain an understanding of Circe only through Odysseus’ perspective.

There are several specific passages in *Circe* and “Galatea” that explicitly take stance on female voices and their silencing. Circe and Galatea tell how things “truly” happened, of which a powerful example is when Circe comments on how her and Odysseus’ love story is represented in the Homeric myth version:

Later, years later, I would hear a song made of our meeting. The boy who sang it was unskilled, missing notes more often than he hit, yet the sweet music of the

verses shone through his mangling. I was not surprised by the portrait of myself: the proud witch undone before the hero's sword, kneeling and begging for mercy. Humbling women seems to me a chief pastime of poets. As if there can be no story unless we crawl and weep. (181)

Circe calls to question how she herself and many other women are stereotypically portrayed as subordinate and weaker than men. As a witch, the stereotype of her as a woman is certainly strong in the sense of having distinctive powers, but in *The Odyssey* she still ultimately bends under Odysseus' wit and character, with some help from Hermes. Circe is also shocked by how different Penelope, Odysseus' wife, is from what has been told in songs: "Loyal, songs called her later. Faithful and true and prudent. Such pale, passive words for what she was" (292). These attributes represent an ideal wife, in Penelope's case one who loyally waits for her husband to come home from his voyage during which he is unfaithful to her. Circe thinks about Odysseus' journeys as follows: "Now I saw more clearly: all those nights in my bed had been only his traveller's wisdom. When you are in Egypt you worship Isis, when in Anatolia you kill a lamb for Cybele. It does not trespass on your Athena still at home" (195). While the women are confined to their homes and the domestic sphere, the man is free to move, not tied to one place or one partner. Despite all his odysseys, Odysseus can count on Penelope waiting for him to come home. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus stays for a longer time at both Circe's and Calypso's islands as the goddesses' lover, while Penelope stays calm and accepts everything.

The narrow scope of how women are represented in patriarchal myths is further underlined in *Circe*, when Hermes tells Circe about Scylla's horrific life as a monster: "Hermes was watching me, his head cocked like a curious bird . . . Would I be skimmed milk for crying, or a harpy with a heart of stone? There was nothing between. Anything else did not fit cleanly in the laughing tale he wanted to spin of it" (86). Women in *Circe* have a very limited set of roles that are acceptable from the point of view of the patriarchy and the ones narrating or writing the original myth versions. Furthermore, when in *The Odyssey* Circe is told to have wolves and lions roaming around her house, they are in fact "poor humans which she had bewitched and transformed with her evil drugs" (Hom. 10.208-09). She also later changes Odysseus' men into pigs. These actions are not explained at all in Homer's version of the myth, but in Miller's story there is a clear reason for Circe to change her island's male visitors into animals. After her rape, which I discussed in 3.1 in terms of sexual violence, she turns the rapist and the others who were watching into pigs. After that, she does that for a while to all the men coming to her island, as they all seem to have similar thoughts about

harming her. In *The Odyssey*, it is Circe who is portrayed as overtly sexual and dangerous, as becomes evident when Odysseus confronts her: “And now that you have me here, you are trying to get me into your bed, so that after you lie with me naked you can destroy my courage along with my manhood” (Hom. 10.322). Despite Odysseus explicitly articulating his fear for his own masculinity, he ultimately “tames” Circe in *The Odyssey* by tricking her. Then, regardless of his talk of fearing for his manhood, he has sex with her after making her swear an oath that she will not harm him. Contrastingly, in Miller’s novel both Circe’s hypersexualisation and the stereotype of her as a cruel witch become invalidated through deepening the readers’ understanding of Circe’s experiences as a victim of male domination and sexual violence.

The original myth versions are also challenged in “Galatea”. The play the husband makes Galatea act with him creates the impression of a romantic, idealized love story similar to Ovid’s myth version in which “. . . timidly blushing, she opened her eyes to the sunlight, and at the same time, first looked on her lover and heaven!” (Ovid 352). The play in “Galatea” is first described equally eloquently: “. . . And that’s when I’m supposed to open my eyes like a dewy fawn, and see him poised over me like the sun, and make a little gasping noise of wonder and gratitude”, but it ends by Galatea narrating “and then he fucks me” (Miller 7). The contrast between the play and reality, between how Galatea is supposed to perform and the harsh word choice of *fucking*, is vast. The husband wanting to act this play over and over again could be interpreted as him tightly holding on to a lie, to the older myth version, which ensures his position as the dominating figure—as the sun—compared to Galatea who is literally below him in the play. When Galatea once answers in an incorrect way to his husband’s first line of the play, the husband loses his temper: “‘Ah, my beauty is asleep.’ And I said, ‘No, I’m not’. He said, ‘For your sake, I tell you to lie down, and I will return in a moment when you have collected yourself’” (12). The play is used by the husband to remind Galatea of how she should behave obediently and passively as an object of beauty, a statue. At the same time, the reader is reminded of the original myth’s storyline, but it is done by making it seem artificial compared to what Galatea in Miller’s version goes through. The conditions of subordination are, in the Butlerian vein, temporal in their nature and thus their existence is not guaranteed to prevail. The husband maintains and justifies his dominant status through reiterating the conditions in which Galatea was born into subordination. “Galatea” can thus be interpreted as taking stance on the nature of the dominating myth version, which must be reiterated in order for it to stay relevant. For their part, cultural myths endorse what Daphne

Grace calls “the gendered role-play”, along with the “social values that surround us all from birth” (162). By not reiterating these myths in their original forms and by changing their narrative perspective, feminist revisionist mythology can reveal their oppressive nature.

The question of female voice is visible throughout *Circe* and “Galatea” also in parts where the older myths are not as explicitly commented on. As Kirsten Sandrock states, to speak and to be heard are abilities that are “commonly understood as a prerequisite for a society that no longer censors women in either private or public spaces” (74). Miller portrays in both *Circe* and “Galatea” how the female characters are constantly deprived of both the rights to speak and being listened to. For instance, when Galatea is at the hospital, her husband has made sure that if she speaks to someone there, she will not be taken seriously: “My husband had warned her that I was fanciful, that my illness would make me say things that would sound strange to her” (“Galatea” 4). The husband has told this specifically to a female nurse, which could imply that he has tried to prevent specifically any female bonds from forming. Furthermore, Galatea has no say when her husband makes her undergo an abortion. Even though she is not in fact pregnant but tries to fool the personnel of the hospital, the fact that she has no right to decide for her own body becomes highlighted. The question of reproductive rights of women is not only a past debate. Even today, for example religious organizations and conservative politicians oppose liberalizing change in issues of abortion and reproductive health services (Htun and Weldon 201). Although in “Galatea” the husband does not insist on keeping the baby but is the one who wants the abortion, he denies Galatea of reproductive autonomy. Further, forced abortion is one form of violence against women, as Aune and Redfern note (77).

Silencing the female voice in “Galatea” appears to be tied to the husband’s attempts to both control Galatea’s body and prevent people from believing in what she says, perhaps in the fear of someone judging how he is treating her. In *Circe*, the female characters’ talk is often dismissed as not important or their matter treated as false, unless it is something that flatters for example Helios. When Circe tries to confess that she practiced witchcraft with “flowers that grow from Kronos’ spilled blood”, neither her father nor her uncles believe her. Helios refuses to listen to her, interrupting her: “his voice lifted, to cover mine” (53). When Circe insists that he is wrong in not believing her, he becomes enraged and the sun’s heat in him burns her: “My flesh bubbled and opened like a roasted fruit, my voice shrivelled in my throat and was scorched to dust” (53-54). Circe is thus violently silenced for daring to say something that contradicts what Helios wants to believe. Even giving Circe’s claim a

possibility of being true would mean admitting that she, the faded and broken one, a nymph, could have powers that even the gods themselves fear. However, when Circe's brother Aëtes later tells their father the same thing, Helios believes him. His son's voice has more authority to the sun god than his daughter's. Cesare Cuttica and Gaby Mahlberg describe the attitude towards women's voices as follows:

Even when women have succeeded in speaking, their voices have been (and so often still are) described as 'loud cacophonous shrills', deprived of the authority-infused, deep and, therefore, respectable low-pitched voice of their male 'superiors'. Accused of emitting whinging and whining sounds and considered to be up to mere trivial chatting and ghastly gossiping, women have been excluded not only from (positions of) authority, but also from the discourse of authority belonging to the male world. (4)

In *The Odyssey*, Circe is described as "the dangerous goddess who talks to humans" (Hom. 10.137). In Miller's novel, the actual quality of Circe's voice is brought up several times as not being pleasing to the gods' ears: "I am told it sounds like a gull crying" (81). However, Circe learns from Hermes that she has the voice of a mortal, which makes her vulnerable: "But if you are ever among men, you'll notice it: they won't fear you as they fear the rest of us" (82). Circe using her voice that is of a mortal woman displeases the gods because it is condemned to be silenced in the strictly patriarchal society. Further, when she is amongst mortals her voice makes men mistake her for a mortal woman. Considering the chapter where Circe is raped, this belief, along with the fact that she has no male companion, seems to lead the men into thinking that she is free to be taken advantage of. A female voice in Circe's world is irrelevant and, by definition, carries no authority.

4 Female Resistance

In the previous section, I examined how male domination is present in Miller's feminist revisionist mythology. The analysis proceeded to discuss voice in terms of how the conditions of male domination in patriarchal myths are made visible in Miller's works. However, examining power only from the point of view of domination "ignores the power that women do have" (Allen, *Power* 122). Whereas the patriarchal myths may reinforce "the process of socialization into economic and gender systems still dominated by Western models" (Doherty 11), feminist revisionist mythology challenges the traditional conceptions of women's role in both literature and society in general. From small gestures and expressions to larger-scale actions, the female characters in Miller's *Circe* and "Galatea" resist male domination in various ways. In section 4.1 I will focus on resistance through the concept of voice: both the narrative power that revisionist myths grant the female characters and specific textual instances of the characters using their voice are examined. After that, in 4.2 I will analyse the concept of agency in the two stories and how the characters resist male domination.

It must be noted that not all kinds of resistant acts fit to the category of pure female resistance. For example, in *Circe* Pasiphaë is told to punish Minos with her witchcraft for his infidelity in this manner: ". . . she cursed him with a spell that turned his seed to snakes and scorpions. Whenever he lay with a woman, they stung her to death from the inside" (139). However, my thesis has a strong feminist framework, and thus these kinds of acts that harm other women cannot be considered when analysing resistance. Yet, these cruelties are present in *Circe*, which underlines the fact that also the ones under domination can use their limited power in a problematic manner.

4.1 Narrative Power and Voice

As was stated in the previous chapter, myths are not static. According to Doherty, the main proof of this is the fact that "myths exist only in a series of different versions – in antiquity as in the modern world" (144). As Ferguson asserts in the framework of feminist literature in general, in addition to illuminating the world from women's perspectives and "identifying the locations from which they speak", creating a voice for women also generates "a critique of prevailing conditions . . . and a vision of a better world" (276). Thus, besides serving as platforms for revealing the unbalanced power relations as such, rewriting traditional myths in a feminist framework can be used to imagine alternative story patterns that empower women and resist the patriarchal value system. This concerns both past and present, since aside from

having impact on today's gender issues, feminism has enabled contemporary women to "look back to recover the possibilities for resistance to the dominant discourses of the earlier eras" (Doherty 150). Although feminism as an ideology did not exist in ancient Greece and Rome, it is still possible to examine those times from a feminist viewpoint and reimagine those female figures whose portrayal has originally been narrow and one-sided. Furthermore, portraying the well-known characters from a new perspective enables feminist authors to comment on today's power relations and make visible what has or, perhaps more importantly, has not changed. This subchapter will focus on analysing how the concept of resistance can be applied to feminist revisionist mythology in terms of both the past and contemporary times, and how Miller's Circe and Galatea are able to use their voices.

When considered in a Foucauldian and Butlerian framework, Miller and other feminist revisionist authors are transforming, for their part, the dominant discourse by resignifying it. According to Doherty, the fact that myths live through different variations "confirms the poststructuralist insight that discourse is historically specific and constantly shifting" (144). Feminist revisionist mythology contests the contemporary relevance of the older myth versions and suggests more inclusive alternatives that take into account the role of diverse women as agents. As Salih asserts, "gender is an act that brings into being what it names: in this context, a 'masculine' man or a 'feminine' woman. Gender identities are constructed and constituted by language, which means that there is no gender identity that precedes language" (64). In Butler's work, the Foucauldian notion that the power that is responsible for subjection also works as the source of resistance is applied to the idea that the possibility for resistance and agency lies in the very practices that constitute gendered subjects (Jagger 89). These practices refer to discourse and signification, since the nature of Butler's agency is linguistic, as was stated in the theory chapter. Tudor Balinisteanu asserts that despite the fact that myths rely on the normative force of narrative, using a discourse's deictic force enables reconfiguring social imaginaries (47). Through working from inside the oppressing form of the highly gendered discourse of patriarchal myths, Miller and other revisionist mythmakers challenge the discourse that has dominated for centuries by proposing a new discourse.

When a discourse conflicts with another one, it forces the older one to change both structurally and content-wise, and in a feminist framework it strives for creating spaces for women and men "wherein they can resist and construct their own sense of self" (Mills 84). In literature, this is achieved by granting the previously silenced and disregarded characters

the space to tell their own stories. In fact, in Miller's *Circe* and "Galatea" there is no male focalisation at all, which further underlines their departure from the patriarchal myth versions. Furthermore, woman artists do not only use myths to question oppressive representations of women and femininity, but also take stance on "the inadequate value given to the poetic voice within their cultures" (Rajan and Bahun-Radunović 5). Marion Gymnich asserts that "in literature, the restrictions imposed on women's rights to speak for themselves in public may for example appear in the guise of assigning specific genres to female authors" (709). The literature of ancient Greece and Rome that was hegemonically male-dominated and which has formed the foundation of the Western literary canon is clearly not included in the genres that have been considered "feminine" and appropriate for women. Thus, by writing new versions of the canonical myth versions, feminist revisionist mythology authors also resist the traditional understanding of authorship as male privilege.

Miller's *Circe* and "Galatea" are not the first feminist rewritings of the witch of Aiaia and Pygmalion's statue. For example, Margaret Atwood's "Circe/Mud Poems" from poetry collection *You Are Happy* (1974) and Carol Ann Duffy's "Circe" from *The World's Wife* (1999) both question the portrayal of Circe in *The Odyssey*, but in different ways. As Alicia Ostriker describes, Atwood transforms Circe from a cruel temptress "who throughout Western literature represents the evil magic of female sexuality" into a woman who is angry but also quite powerless (78). Duffy's Circe transforms men into pigs and gives instructions on how to cook them. Jan Montefiore states of all Duffy's poems in *The World's Wife*, "the strategy of these poems is a relentless cutting-down-to-size of male heroes" (204). In comparison, Miller imagines Circe as a notably humane character, who grows up to be a confident woman through making errors, working hard, and encountering women and men who are not necessarily thoroughly good or evil. The space of a novel enables Miller to account Circe's whole life in detail, which makes her character nuanced and identifiable.

Miller's Circe is no longer a cruel witch, but a woman searching and ultimately finding her strength. In the contemporary feminist imagery in general, a witch is neither an abject hag nor a heartless temptress; instead, the witch represents female empowerment. As Adriana Madej-Stang describes, "the witch as a social outcast could subvert the patriarchal society with her 'hexes', that is, actions questioning and challenging the existing political and social system" (vii). Further, as Justyna Sempruch notes, by "conveying the tension between past and present, the 'witch' becomes a crucial metaphor for herstory", which is "a form of feminist mythology constituting an alternative to the established male-centered master-story"

(116). Thus, the contemporary witch as a metaphor is a part of the feminist counter-narrative, challenging the traditional image of the witch that is present in the master-narrative of patriarchal myths I have discussed in this thesis. Furthermore, the still ongoing transformation of the meaning of the “witch” can be tied to what Butler discusses in terms of injurious language use: “To take up the name that one is called is no simple submission to prior authority, for the name is already unmoored from prior context, and entered into the labor of self-definition. The word that wounds becomes an instrument of resistance in the redeployment that destroys the prior territory of its operation” (*Excitable* 174). In spite of its history as an injurious term, *witch* has been employed for empowering ends by women, the same group of people whom the term has been used against. By portraying Circe as non-stereotypical witch, Miller strengthens the newer use of the term and shifts the dominating power farther away from its older, negative connotations.

As regards “Galatea”, especially the Ovidian myth version of Pygmalion and his statue has inspired several feminist revisionist versions. This is not surprising since, according to Mary Beard, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* “repeatedly returns to the idea of the silencing of women in the process of their transformation”, of which an example is how “the chatty nymph Echo is punished so that her voice is never hers, merely an instrument for repeating the words of others” (811). One notable reimagined version of the Pygmalion myth is Angela Carter’s short story, “The Loves of Lady Purple” (1974), in which Galatea is a marionette and Pygmalion a perverted puppet master. Eventually, the puppet master dies because of his own desire, and the marionette is released from his domination. In addition to Circe, Carol Ann Duffy has also written a poem of the Pygmalion myth in *The World’s Wife*. As Eck describes Duffy’s “Pygmalion’s Bride” (1999), “other than in earlier Pygmalion myth versions written by male authors, Galatea is presented as ‘knowing’ in Duffy’s poem: she does not have to be filled with knowledge by Pygmalion but is even more clever than him. She sees through him, and finally tricks him by giving in to his wishes” (25). Galatea of “Pygmalion’s Bride” thus resembles Miller’s Galatea, whose thoughts are represented in Miller’s version as clearly more reasonable than the husband’s. By revisioning the characters of Circe and Galatea that are transformed version by version into more complex and independent individuals, Miller continues the chain of feminist versions that challenge the patriarchal ideology and the traditional interpretations of the myths. Myth versions are always built on older ones, and thus feminist revisionist mythology does not only comment on the original versions but also posits itself amongst former feminist rewritings that are creating their own counter-tradition.

A powerful example of Miller changing the older myths' power relations in terms of narrative power can be found in referring to Pygmalion as "the husband". For instance, in the Ovidian myth version the statue has no name, unlike Pygmalion. The name Galatea has apparently been applied to the statue only after the classical era (Law 337). Conversely, in Miller's version Galatea is also the titular character, which suggests to the reader from the beginning that her character must be in some way highlighted. Indeed, she has all the narrative power in the story, and the reader gains knowledge only of her life, whereas in Ovid's version the story focuses wholly on Pygmalion's life story. Further, referring to Pygmalion as the husband distances his character from the reader. As John Frow states, one of the main dimensions on which names operate is their power to "perform relations of familiarity or formality – of solidarity and intimacy, or of social distance and deference" (113). Since in Miller's version the reader becomes familiar with Galatea's name only, she is the one the reader is encouraged to identify with. Even though Galatea is clearly in a subordinate position for the most part of the story, the facts that her name is also in the title and that she and her daughter are the only characters with a proper name resist the neglect of women in the original myth versions.

Readers usually attribute more authority to the narrator of a story than the characters, which is due to the narrator being perceived as the source of the story: the narrator is on the discourse level, whereas the characters stay on the story level (Gymnich 709). Galatea and Circe are both narrators and characters, which gives them all the narrative authority, but since that authority lies in the characters' personal voice it also allows for more intimacy with the reader. Further, using this type of personal voice is an especially effective tool "for highlighting the impact the cultural context may have on the life of an individual" (Gymnich 710). In the case of *Circe* and "Galatea", the character-narrators are exclusively in charge of showing and describing the readers both the major and the more insidious manifestations of gendered power.

In fact, both of Miller's works can be categorized as fictional autobiographies. Heidi Pennington defines fictional autobiography as "a first-person, retrospective account of the imaginary narrating protagonist's life story", and she further notes that they are first and foremost about "the elaboration and validation of the identity of the character-narrator" (5). Readers are thoroughly familiarized with both Circe's and Galatea's inner life and experiences. Furthermore, especially considering Circe who narrates her whole life story chronologically from her birth to her old age, the protagonists appear not to censor what they

narrate. For example, Circe openly admits being guilty of Scylla's terrible fate. As Pennington states in analysing David in Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850), the fact that David readily admits his past mistakes, "drawing attention to his once-flawed and now-matured authority", he appears to the reader as trustworthy, and his account is validated as authoritative (133). The impression of honesty further highlights the impression that Circe and Galatea are revealing the truth about themselves and their circumstances as opposed to the patriarchal myth versions, which highlights the resistant power of Miller's stories as counter-narratives.

In "Galatea", Galatea's narrative power over the husband is underlined by the way she describes him and his actions. There is evident sarcasm in for example how Galatea narrates the passage in which the husband comes to see her to the hospital: "'Leave and do not disturb us', my husband said to the maids, which was unnecessary, since they've never disturbed us, not in a year's time. But my husband thinks himself a potentate these days" (6). As the narrator, Galatea is presented as being the one who defines what is told to the reader and how. Furthermore, the personal narrator "may comment more or less extensively on (all of) the characters and the action" (Gymnich 709). Thus, Galatea has the privilege to evaluate the husband's behaviour, which enables her to also guide the reader to be critical towards him and his actions. Towards the end of "Galatea", Galatea counterattacks the husband in terms of the play he has made her act with him. When she manages to escape from the hospital the husband is keeping her in, she goes to the husband's bed chamber and wakes him up by saying: "Ah, my beauty is asleep" (14). By reversing the rules and roles of the play, Galatea also reverses the power relation between them. Since Galatea is no longer tied to bed but free, she can confront the husband, who in turn is in bed, from above. This specific spatial position also parallels Galatea's narratorial power. Galatea was used to lying in bed, listening to the husband repeating the lines of the play, which in a rather perverse way parallels to an adult telling a bedtime story to a child. However, now Galatea has the active role in the play, and she gets to be the one dictating the rules.

In *Circe*, there are multiple times when Circe is able to use her voice after she has become the witch of Aiaia. For instance, when Apollo visits Circe and states that "I think it will be better if you speak as little as possible", Circe answers: "I will not be silenced on my own island" (200). The hierarchical society of gods does not extend to Circe's island, where she is the one dictating the rules. Circe will not stay silent despite the fact that her voice is not pleasing to the gods' ears, as was discussed in the previous section. Another example of Circe being listened to is when she leaves with Daedalos and his crew to help her sister in childbirth.

Their ship must get past Scylla, and to avoid being recognized by her and putting the whole crew to danger, Circe asks for Polydamas' clothes for disguise:

'I need your cloak', I said to him, 'and your tunic, at once.' His eyes narrowed, and I could see the reflexive *no* in them. I would come to know this type of man, jealous of his little power, to whom I was only a woman. 'Why?', he said. 'Because I do not desire the death of your comrades. Do you feel otherwise?' The words carried up the deck, and thirty-seven pairs of eyes looked up. He stripped off his clothes and handed them to me. (98)

Polydamas is clearly not used to taking orders from women. However, Circe manages to silence the whole crew by stating that the destiny of the men is dependent on her knowledge, wit, and powers. Circe being in control reverses the traditional positioning of women as passive and compliant. Furthermore, Circe explicitly takes stance on dualistic thinking in terms of the narrow options of women's roles in patriarchal myths:

When the first crew had come, I had been a desperate thing, ready to fawn on anyone who smiled at me. Now I was a fell witch, proving my power with sty after sty. It reminded me suddenly of those old tests Hermes used to set me. Would I be skimmed milk or a harpy? A foolish gull or a villainous monster? Those could not still be the only choices. (183)

Miller's Circe cannot be easily categorized because of her character's complexity. She is remarkably humane because she has no fixed nature but is constantly growing and learning through both errors and successes. With Odysseus, she acts on her own terms but at the same time also respects Odysseus as an equal.

4.2 Women Gaining Agency

Agency and resistance are present throughout *Circe* and "Galatea". Before considering the conditions that finally cause and enable Circe and Galatea to take control over their own stories, I will discuss some thoughts and acts of resistance and notions of agency that are present earlier in the stories. In the beginning, both Circe's and Galatea's possibility for autonomous action is extremely limited, in the latter's case almost non-existent since Galatea is locked in the hospital. However, some perceptions on the possibility of agency and restricted subversive actions are possible, as will be shown.

In *Circe*, while she was raised to think that she and the nymphs of her kind are expected to be passive and yielding, Circe has moments of doubt already in her youth. As a child, she cuts herself purposely with Helios' dagger after perceiving that no-one had noticed her absence, thinking that she “. . . was nothing, a stone. One more nymph child among the thousand thousands” (18). She narrates in retrospect: “. . . I found a new thought in myself. I am embarrassed to tell it, so rudimentary it seems, like an infant's discovery that her hand is her own. But that is what I was then, an infant. The thought was this: that all my life had been murk and depths, but I was not a part of that dark water. I was a creature within it” (19). By harming herself, Circe realizes that she can have an influence on herself and that she is an individual 'creature'. This can be interpreted as an early notion of some possibility of agency occurring to Circe. She realises that she can at least affect her own deeds and attitude, if not the others'. Creating one's own understanding of what is valuable is a significant motif throughout the rest of the novel, as will be shown. Further, in the sense of bodily autonomy, by cutting herself Circe appears to perceive for the first time that her body is her own. She is capable of using and changing it herself, which is not a token fact in her world where girls grow up to be used for marital and reproductive purposes.

Both Circe and Galatea use their knowledge of what pleases the men in their sphere of influence to gain knowledge and allowances and to avoid punishment. For example, Galatea acts extremely submissively when the doctor is not pleased with her: “I said: ‘I'm sorry.’ He liked that, but he was also suspicious, because I had been apologising to him every day for a year. For his sake, I tried to vary it – looking down, biting my lip, twisting my fingers. Once, I burst into tears, and that had been his favourite time” (4-5). As becomes evident in the story, Galatea pleases the doctor to avoid him giving her “tea”, a drink that keeps her sedated and thus tied to bed. Galatea uses the same kind of acting to get a tutor for Paphos, which the husband at first opposes as was discussed in the previous section. However, Galatea ultimately succeeds in her aim: “. . . my husband thought that would ruin her. No, I said, she will be to her husband, as I am not. And he had smiled at me. You are useful enough. But he hired a tutor in the end, because I fawned on him every time he mentioned it” (10). By degrading herself and making the husband feel superior to her, she manages to manipulate him to a certain degree. Flattery appears to be the greatest weakness of the husband, which not only further underlines his narcissism but can also be used by Galatea, though to a limited extent. For the most part, in Galatea's situation her deliberate use of sustained gender acts is a matter of survival since the husband keeps her in control by violence.

In *Circe*, Circe narrates that she has learned to please men from her mother and uses that to gain knowledge of flowers that she aims to use for transformation. She recounts: “I bound my hair in ringlets and put on my best dress, my brightest sandals. I went to my father’s feast, where all my uncles gathered, reclining on their purple couches. I poured their wine and smiled into their eyes and wreathed my arms around their necks” (39). Further, she flatters the uncles and encourages them to tell stories of their battles, and ultimately gains the information she wants. Although Circe is described throughout the story as being not as charming as the other nymphs, by performing her gender in an accentuated manner makes her uncles pleased and even careless about what they tell her. In the Butlerian vein, by repeating these kinds of sustained social performances or “stylized repetition of acts” that include bodily movements and gestures, gender hierarchy is maintained (Jagger 27). However, both Circe and Galatea quietly resist total domination by using a form of that domination – which is the oppressive gender role of the submissive, objectified woman – to their own good.

Ultimately, both Circe and Galatea face a situation that initiates their breakaway from the male domination that has thus far defined their lives. They realize that they must act, and the need and will to decide for and create their own destinies fills them. As was discussed in the theory section, Barvosa-Carter suggests that the multiplicity of one’s subject positions could fill the gap concerning the source of Butlerian agency. When the subject inhabits one of their several possible identities, in a certain context, “the taking up of one set of tools vis-a-vis another gives the self a reflexive space, a critical distance, and a competing perspective” (Barvosa-Carter 179). In *Circe*, Circe could be interpreted as gaining a reflexive space and critical distance when she is exiled to Aiaia. She must manage on her own to survive, and she can no longer try to identify as a nymph among others but needs to fulfil her new position as the witch of Aiaia. The process is not easy, and Circe describes it as requiring patience and hard work: “I pressed on. If my childhood had given me anything, it was endurance. Little by little I began to listen better: to the sap moving in the plants, to the blood in my veins. I learned to understand my own intention, to prune and to add, to feel where the power gathered and speak the right words to draw it to its height” (73). Circe goes through a complete journey to herself and finds her powers from within.

Circe learning and cultivating her powers as a witch can be interpreted as parallel to the notions of resistance and empowerment. She narrates of her powers: “Then I learned that I could bend the world to my will, as a bow is bent for an arrow . . . I thought: *this is how Zeus felt when he first lifted the thunderbolt*” (73). She realizes that she can have effect on the

world around her, and she compares her experiences to Zeus, the supreme god. The comparison between witchcraft and empowerment is supported by a passage where Circe and Penelope discuss about what makes a witch. Circe states that she has “. . . come to believe it is mostly will” (293). She does not explain what she means by will, but narrates that she did not have to, since Penelope knew what will was. However, what the reader knows is that Circe has turned her frustration to hard work, and through that she learns that she has the capacity to act. Thus, in a sense the oppression that Circe has experienced enables her to resist the same oppression. As was discussed in the theory chapter, in the Foucauldian understanding the same power that subordinates one in subjection also produces the subject with a capacity to act, although limitedly. When Circe is no longer amid the patriarchal society and her father’s palace, the oppressive framework is not in the immediate vicinity to keep her under domination. Thus, her capacities to act as a subject are broader on the island.

Practicing witchcraft can be understood as a type of Foucault’s technique of the self, through which Circe finds her true nature, refusing to accept her new situation as a victim, abandoned on an island with no hope. As Allen states of Foucauldian resistance, in its minimal form it appears to require “both the capacity to reflect on existing techniques and the capacity to transform deliberately such technologies” (*Politics* 64). Circe narrates about her exile: “The worst of my cowardice had been sweated out. In its place was a giddy spark. I will not be like a bird bred in a cage, I thought, too dull to fly even when the door stands open. I stepped into those woods and my life began (71). The bird cage is a widely used trope in describing women’s narrow space in society. In her famous *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) which is considered one of the earliest works of the feminist canon, Mary Wollstonecraft compared women’s situation to caged birds: “Confined then in cages, like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but plume themselves, and stalk with mock-majesty from perch to perch” (100-101). Circe decides she will no longer live as she did in her father’s palace, where the only possibilities for nymphs were to marry and please the male gods or be considered as nothing. The gods that exiled her did not realize that living on the island would empower Circe instead of intensifying her subordination.

As becomes evident in “Galatea”, Galatea has tried to escape before, which was after the husband abused her, admiring the bruises. However, the ultimate trigger for Galatea to finally confront the husband’s power is the fact that he is carving a girl of their daughter’s age to be his next lover. Before trying to escape the hospital, Galatea narrates: “The tea had passed through me and my head was clear. I thought: my daughter is ten. Paphos is ten” (12).

After this thought, she begins to take the initiative to secure that the husband will not hurt anyone, especially children, anymore. Galatea's identity as a mother takes over, and her fear for punishment retreats. By faking pregnancy and then drinking the liquid ordered by the husband to end the supposed pregnancy, she manages to fool her nurse to let her go outside to "give the baby to the goddess" (13). Outside, she pretends to experience terrible pain and pleads the nurse to go and get the doctor. The nurse obeys, and Galatea is left alone for a moment long enough to escape. She goes to the husband's house and makes him run after her, leading him to the ocean with her. The statue of the husband's own making ultimately destroys him. As Galatea narrates,

He struggled and fought, but my hands were fused together and nothing he tried could break them . . . He had no chance, really. He was only flesh. We fell through the darkness, and the coolness slid up my neck and bled the colour from my lips and cheeks. I thought of Paphos and how clever she was. I thought of her stone sister, peaceful on her couch. We fell through the currents and I thought of how the crabs would come for him, climbing over my pale shoulders. The ocean floor was sandy and soft as pillows. I settled into it and slept. (15)

The husband's power over Galatea was temporary in nature, not absolute. Stating that the husband was only flesh underlines what Butler states of the artificiality of gender reality, since the power that the husband had over Galatea was due to the supremacy of masculinism in society:

That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality. (*Gender* 180)

The husband's power that was used to pathologize, abuse, and humiliate Galatea was enabled by the prevalent gender hierarchy of the surrounding society, not by any innate or natural quality of men that would justify domination. The husband was only flesh like any human. As Galatea escaped the hospital, she also escaped the miniature society inside it where masculine hegemony represented by the husband and the doctor was suffocating her.

The vast space of the ocean contrasts with Galatea's claustrophobic hospital room. Anca Vlasopolos discusses the metaphorical quality of the sea in terms of Kate Chopin's feminist classic *The Awakening* (1899) and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915), stating that the sea as a non-territory and an uncontrollable force of nature represents "the promise of unfettered possibilities outside patriarchy" (75). Like Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*, Galatea breaks free from the limiting power of the oppressive society surrounding her. Furthermore, the ocean imagery is noteworthy in terms of how water as an element has traditionally been connected to femininity. As Ana Munteanu asserts, water is often associated "with the feminine principle, the maternal principle, the subconscious, the dark side or the obscurity of the feminine psychic powers, and last but not least, with the depths of the human mind (1101). The fact that Circe's empowerment begins when she is deported to an island in the middle of the sea suggests that water has a metaphorical dimension in *Circe* too. Since the sea is associated with the subconscious and feminine psychic powers, it parallels with Circe's mental work towards becoming a powerful witch and an independent woman who ultimately refuses to be defined by the expectations of the patriarchal order.

Although Galatea and Circe mostly act alone, the theme of female solidarity is also present in Miller's works. Allen defines solidarity in a feminist framework as "the ability of a collectivity to act together for the agreed-upon end of challenging, subverting, and, ultimately overturning a system of domination" (*Power* 127). However, this definition of the term cannot be applied to either of Miller's stories. Both Circe and "Galatea" have the ancient setting of the old myth versions where no such systematic, ideological approach to transforming power relations would have been possible. I will therefore define solidarity in this thesis' context simply as women supporting each other in a patriarchal environment. In *Circe*, female solidarity becomes a powerful theme when Circe and Penelope develop a friendship despite Circe's affair with Penelope's husband Odysseus. Circe has grown up feeling envious and even hateful towards other nymphs for their beauty, since she was constantly reminded how she lacked their charm. Nevertheless, as an adult, Circe yearns for a friend even though she otherwise manages well on her own. Penelope and her son Telemachus come to Circe's island to seek asylum after the death of Odysseus. Circe and Penelope realize they have multiple things in common, such as their perseverance, motherhood and worry for their sons' safety, and experience as Odysseus' lovers. Similar to Circe, Penelope faces a situation in which she has to internalize that she must rearrange her life on her own terms. Her subject position as the wife of Odysseus has defined her whole life up to the moment of his

death. This becomes underlined when she speaks of her life with Odysseus in a critical manner: “I think of all the years of my life I wasted on that little man’s boast” (286). In *The Odyssey*, her role as Odysseus’ compliant, idealistic wife is all there is to her.

After Helios has ended her exile, Circe asks Penelope if she would want to become the new witch of Aiaia, to which Penelope answers ‘I think I would. I think I truly would. My hair, though, it is not right. It looks nothing like yours’ (329). Circe suggests that she could dye it, but Penelope jokingly answers that she will instead say that “it has gone grey from my haggish sorceries” (329). Again, a comment is made on the patriarchal stereotypes of women with agency. As I stated above, Miller’s Circe is not the cruel temptress known from *The Odyssey*, and the traditional portrayal of a witch as a hag does not apply to her, nor to the new witch of Aiaia. Circe and Penelope both laugh at Penelope’s comment, which implies that both of them are aware of the traditional script of the witch but also of the fact that neither of them truly fits in it. The shared experiences and power of Circe and Penelope resemble how Mary Daly has redefined hags to represent feminist unity: “Our foresisters were the Great Hags whom the institutionally powerful but privately impotent patriarchs found too threatening for coexistence . . . For women who are on the journey of radical being, the lives of the witches, of the Great Hags of hidden history are deeply intertwined with our own process” (qtd. in Sempruch 120). If the radicality of Daly’s language use is ignored, Circe and Penelope as the witches, or hags, of Aiaia personify female power, independency, and solidarity in *Circe*.

In “Galatea”, Galatea’s nurse shows signs of empathy towards Galatea after she has gone through the supposed abortion. Galatea describes that the nurse’s “voice was not so sharp as usual” (13), and as mentioned above, she allows Galatea to go outside after the abortion against the doctor’s orders, who is not at the hospital himself that night. The nurse’s sudden solidarity towards Galatea is due to the fact that she has also gone through an abortion herself, which she reveals in saying, “You will be alright. I have done it, and look, I live” (13). Despite Galatea faking the pregnancy and tricking the nurse to let her go outside, the fact that the nurse’s help was the key to Galatea’s escape is noteworthy. The small gesture of solidarity was powerful enough to make Galatea’s actions against the husband’s domination possible.

Similar to “Galatea”, motherhood is a highlighted theme also in *Circe*, in which Circe challenges the traditional role of women as producers of heirs for men. Further, she also becomes an example of a single mother who brings up her son on her own without any male figure around. After her exile to Aiaia, Circe begins an affair with Hermes and describes their

relationship as follows: “Our conversations were pleasures, and our couplings were the same. ‘Will you bear my child?’ he asked me. I laughed at him, ‘No, never and never’” (83). Circe has sex with Hermes for pleasure, not to fulfil the role that the patriarchal society has expected her to play. Although Circe is portrayed as an experienced temptress in *The Odyssey*, in Miller’s version the conditions Circe grew up in create great contrast between the expectations towards a woman’s behaviour and how Circe acts. Circe’s sexual liberation can be connected to today’s discussion on women’s sexual autonomy. As Prudence Chamberlain notes, women’s sexual self-determination may be considered threatening, since it “demonstrates a self-possession as well as a refusal to capitulate to the shaming of women for their sexual appetites of behaviours”, which is ironical since at the same time, our Western culture might “reward and celebrate women’s nakedness if it is bound up in capital” (117). Circe, who has multiple partners and no husband to produce heirs for, drifts further away from the norms of the society of her father and his kind. However, Circe becomes pregnant, and proudly raises her and Odysseus’ son Telegonus on her own. While pregnant, she touches her belly and contemplates: “*Your father said once that he wanted more children, but that is not why you live. You are for me*” (210). Circe’s son is not predestined to be an heir to his father but grows up on Circe’s island in an environment that is free from such societal constraints.

The ending of *Circe* is not bittersweet and tragic as in “Galatea”, but the stories’ closures are similar in that both Circe and Galatea decide for their own destiny and find peace within themselves. After performing deeds that her father would never have imagined her to be capable of, Circe has gained the courage to end her dependence of Helios’ authority. One of the great deeds is winning the tail of Trygon, which she gives Telegonus to protect him on his journey. After getting the tail, she is exhausted and thinks that she “cannot bear this world a moment longer”, to which she hears the voice of Trygon answering “*Then, child, make another*” (247). Circe remembers Trygon’s words later and comprehends that she is now strong enough to oppose her father. Hence, she decides to summon Helios and ask him to put an end to her exile. Circe narrates the encounter with Helios as follows:

His rage was so hot the air bent and wavered around him. ‘I can end you with a thought.’ It was my oldest fear, that white annihilation. I felt it shiver through me. But enough. At last, enough. ‘You can’, I said. ‘But you have always been cautious, Father. You know I have stood against Athena. I have walked in the blackest deeps. You cannot guess what spells I have cast, what poisons I have

gathered to protect myself against you, how your power may rebound over your head. Who know what is in me? Will you find out? (312)

Circe risks her life when she confronts her father, but the passage shows that she has grown from a neglected girl to a woman with confidence and dignity. In the end, Helios agrees to end the exile, and Circe tells him that he can stop counting her as one of his children. She refuses to be identified as his submissive, oppressed daughter anymore. In fact, at the end of the novel, she decides to turn herself into a mortal and live with Penelope's son Telemachus in peace. In a vision she sees herself as an aged woman: "When I look in my polished bronze mirror, there are lines upon my face. I am thickened too, and my skin has begun growing loose. I cut myself at my herbs and the scars stay. Sometimes I like it. Sometimes I am vain and dissatisfied. But I do not wish myself back. Of course my flesh reaches for the earth. That is where it belongs" (332). Rather than seeking to fill the image of the forever youthful nymphs, Circe embraces and, for her part, also normalizes the natural aging of women. Thus, both Circe and Galatea determine their own destinies, Circe by disengaging herself from her father's sphere of influence and Galatea by finishing the husband's control over her and her daughter. In Miller's two works it is the women who define how their own stories will end.

5 Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined how gendered power manifests in Miller's *Circe* and "Galatea" both in forms of male domination and female resistance. I have also discussed the ways in which feminist revisionist mythology in general makes visible and challenges the traditional distribution of power promoted by the traditional, patriarchal myth versions that disfavours women. The thesis aimed to highlight the multifaceted nature of gendered power in feminist revisionist mythology. For the part of domination, this was accomplished through analysing domination over the female body and mind, which included notions of violence against women, limiting female mobility, and the expectations directed towards how women should look and act. In terms of silencing female voices, I discussed how the patriarchal myth versions disregard female experience and analyzed specific passages of *Circe* and "Galatea" where the characters are silenced. Resistance was examined contrastingly in terms of how Miller's works grant the formerly silenced characters narrative power with which to criticize their situation as the oppressed ones. This examination was done by analyzing specific narrative techniques and by making observations on how feminist revisionist mythology on the whole takes stance on the lack of female voice in canonical literature. I also investigated resistance through the notion of female agency. While especially Galatea is under extreme domination by her husband, both protagonists are represented as capable of some subversive tactics. However, ultimately Circe, Galatea, and even Penelope break free from the limitations of patriarchal oppression. Circe and Penelope need to reconstruct their identities, and Galatea must take action in order to prevent the husband harming others.

By combining narrative and metanarrative levels of analysis, I was able to highlight the comprehensiveness of the tools that revisionist mythology offers for feminist literary emancipation. The poststructuralist framework served this thesis well, especially by providing a flexible definition of discourse, at the same time highlighting its crucial role inside the power/knowledge regime. The poststructuralist notion of discourse allowed for analyzing Miller's works as powerful counter-narratives that both reveal the artificiality of traditional gender stereotypes and even challenge the whole value system behind the patriarchal myth versions. Furthermore, the Foucauldian conception of power as inherently neutral proved to be useful. The power that Miller grants to the formerly disregarded female characters does not lead into a complete subversion of power but ends up in a more equal state where the women gain space but not, for their part, begin dominating men. Circe finds her powers both as a witch and as an independent woman, and Galatea manages to end her terrible circumstances. Thus,

the Foucauldian definition of domination as a congealed power relation is applicable to Miller's works in the sense that power flowing freely is the goal of resistance. Furthermore, Butler's theorizations of gender performativity proved to be useful in considering how profoundly one's announced gender affects a subject. Being gendered implies being subject to manifold expectations from the part of society that condition the unequal power relation between masculinity and femininity. Moreover, while Butler's formulation that subjection needs constant reiteration aids in understanding how resistance is possible, their notion of passionate attachments for subject positions managed to explain how the subject cannot be held responsible for their own subordinate status.

In revisionist mythology, the borders between history and the present conditions intertwine. Furthermore, both *Circe* and "Galatea" support the feminist statement that "private is public" in the sense that the protagonists' stories as individuals are clearly tied to larger societal issues. For example, the wider themes of violence against women and expectations towards women in terms of appearance and behaviour are issues that *Circe* and *Galatea* encounter in their own private lives. Using ancient mythology as a platform to mirror what has and has not changed in terms of is a powerful reminder that even though many things have naturally changed since the ancient times, issues concerning gender inequality are still prominent in today's world. As Aune and Redfern state, "women's *visibility* in popular culture does not mean that they are *valued*, safe from violence or equal" (8).

My thesis is contemporary in more than one way: in addition to the contemporariness of feminist issues and questions of power, the increasing amount of new feminist retellings of classical myths suggests that the demand for such empowering stories is huge. Thus, I see multiple opportunities for further research in terms of both the analytical focus and primary material. In terms of the analytical focus, more attention could be directed towards how the male characters are often also portrayed as suffering from the domination of the patriarchal ideology. Furthermore, considering the constantly growing selection of corresponding primary material, a more intersectional approach could be adopted in examining how gendered power relates to for example questions of racism and class discrimination in revisionist mythology.

Similar to *Circe* and "Galatea", also my thesis' structure moved from domination towards resistance. I chose to represent the power in Miller's works in this way, as a progress, to highlight the empowering quality and the possibilities of feminist revisionist mythology. Thus, I see that the only appropriate way to end my discussion is to quote what *Circe*, after

meeting Penelope, states of women in *Circe* (274): “It is a common saying that women are delicate creatures, flowers, eggs, anything that may be crushed in a moment’s carelessness. If I had ever believed it, I no longer did”.

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