

NTM Spotlight on translators of color:
Excerpt for the *Odyssey* Book 10
Translated from the Ancient Greek by Basil Wright



As part of **NTM's commitment to promote the work of translators of color**, we're proud to feature in our NTM Spotlight an excerpt from the ***Odyssey* Book 10 translated from the Ancient Greek by Basil Wright**. Basil Wright is a Black and Indigenous queer writer who started the project *Afrodysey*, aiming to translate the 24 books of Homer's *Odyssey* into Standard American English and into African-American Vernacular English (AAVE/AAE), thus preserving the oral quality of the original while reaching a larger audience for this iconic work. We are very excited to help with the latter endeavor.

We'd love to hear what you think! National Translation Month is a community of 6,000+ fans across all social media, and growing. Find us on Twitter [@TranslateMonth](#), tag us using [#TranslationMonth](#), join our mailing list, submit a translation month event, or like our [Facebook](#) page. And celebrate your favorite writers in translation from all over the world in September and beyond.

—*Claudia Serea and Loren Kleinman*

The *Odyssey* Book 10, Lines 220-243

Ancient Greek (Original)	American Standard English (ASE)	African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)
<p>ἔσταν δ' ἐν προθύροισι θεᾶς καλλιπλοκάμοιο, Κίρκης δ' ἔνδον ἄκουον ἀειδούσης ὀπι καλῆ, ἰστὸν ἐποιομένης μέγαν ἄμβροτον, οἷα θεάων λεπτά τε καὶ χαρίεντα καὶ ἀγλαὰ ἔργα πέλονται.</p>	<p>The fair-tressed goddess was standing there in the doorway, We were going towards that dark-haired goddess, having heard Circe singing gracefully and beautifully and sweetly within the house.</p>	<p>And standing there in the doorway with her hair on fleek was that fine ass woman, We were finna to holler at that dark-haired goddess, having heard Circe singing better than Queen Bey up in that house.</p>
<p>τοῖσι δὲ μύθων ἦρχε Πολίτης ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν, ὅς μοι κήριδος ἐτάρων ἦν κεδνότατός τε:</p>	<p>Such that Polites, the leader of the men, the worthiest and most trustworthy of my companions said to us:</p>	<p>Her bars were so fire that Polites, the leader of us all and the one least likely to act a fool, laid down some wisdom for us:</p>
<p>ὦ φίλοι, ἔνδον γάρ τις ἐποιομένη μέγαν ἰστὸν καλὸν ἀοιδιάει, δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν ἀμφιμέμυκεν, ἦ θεὸς ἢ ἐ γυνή: ἀλλὰ φθεγγώμεθα θᾶσσον. ὥς ἄρ' ἐφώνησεν, τοὶ δὲ φθέγγοντο καλεῦντες.</p>	<p>Oh brothers, we were approaching a great loom due to the beautiful singing coming from within, the ground echoed all around, whether a woman or a god: nevertheless singing with a clear voice.</p>	<p>Aye man, we done made our way up out the ship to this great loom because we peeped the mad lyrical genius of this goddess. She had the whole damn earth quaking, she that good! Iunno if she be a woman or a goddess, but she a real one, bet.</p>
<p>ἦ δ' αἴψ' ἐξελοῦσα θύρας ὤϊξε φαινὰς καὶ κάλει: οἱ δ' ἅμα πάντες ἀιδρεΐησιν ἔποντο: Εὐρύλοχος δ' ὑπέμεινε, οἰσάμενος δόλον εἶναι.</p>	<p>Thus at once we heard a sound, and then we heard her speaking sweetly Then she quickly came outside the house and she was shining beautifully: where at once every ignorant man followed: but Eurylochus stayed behind, feigning to be in pain.</p>	<p>Then we peeped another noise and she spoke as sweetly as she sang. She appeared with the quickness and shorty was mad fine: all of us started acting a fool and followed her inside, except for that punk Eurylochus, acting like he done pulled something and couldn't walk no more.</p>
<p>εἶσεν δ' εἰσαγαοῦσα κατὰ κλισμούς τε θρόνους τε, ἐν δέ σφιν τυρόν τε καὶ ἄλφιτα καὶ μέλι γλωρὸν οἴνω Πραμνεῖω ἐκύκα: ἀνέμισγε δὲ σίτω φάρμακα λύγρ', ἵνα πάγχυ λαθοῖατο πατρίδος αἴης.</p>	<p>They were led inside and sat down onto couches and chairs, and then they ate cheese and barley grains mixed with honey and pale Pramnian wine: she had mixed the barley with baneful drugs, in order to cause us to forget our homeland completely.</p>	<p>Yo, we went inside and chilled on couches and chairs and started grubbing: we had cheese and that good Pramnian wine with the honey and barley; we was bout to get turnt up! Little did we know this chick done spiked the drinks and we deadass forgot about our homeland completely.</p>
<p>αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δῶκέν τε καὶ ἔκπιον, αὐτίκ' ἔπειτα ῥάβδῳ πεπληγυῖα κατὰ συφειοῖσιν ἐέργνη. οἱ δὲ συῶν μὲν ἔχον κεφαλὰς φωνὴν τε τρίχας τε καὶ δέμας, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος, ὡς τὸ πάρος περ.</p>	<p>Yet after eating and drinking, then at once struck them with a magic wand and shut them inside a pig pen. But the head and body of the men became like swine and cried thrice with an animal's voice, yet their mind was steadfast, as it was before.</p>	<p>After we was done grubbing, this lady gone hit us with a magic stick and put us in a pig pen! Bih, what? But the wildest part was that we started changing into pigs, crying out in an animal's voice while our human minds remained intact. Chile, it was a mess!</p>

ὥς οἱ μὲν κλαίοντες ἔερχατο, τοῖσι δὲ
Κίρκη
πάρ ρ' ἄκυλον βάλανόν τε βάλεν
καρπὸν τε κρανεΐης ἔδμεναι, οἷα σύες
χαμαιευνάδες αἰὲν ἔδουσιν.

Thus immediately they had wept like
animals, and Circe
straightaway threw down acorns and
dates from the garden and the cornel-
tree for them to eat, in the place where
the lying down swine always ate.

We started crying and moaning, but
Circe didn't pay us no mind and instead
threw down acorns and dates from her
garden for us to eat.



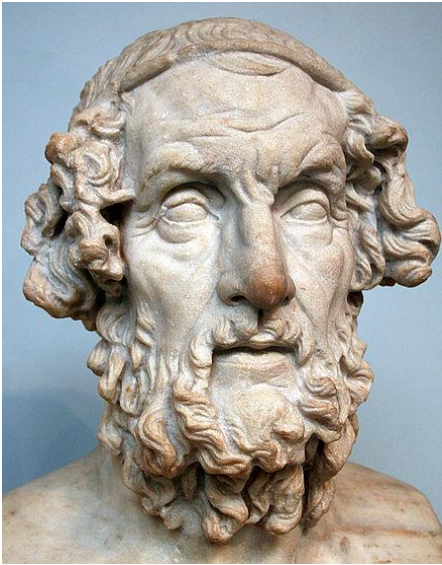
Translator's Note

This selection, taken from the *Odyssey*, showcases the arrival of Odysseus' men to Circe's island. The men meet Circe and are immediately entranced by her beauty and her singing voice, frequently calling her a goddess. This iconic scene in the *Odyssey* is where Odysseus' men are turned into pigs after eating the magically-enhanced food and drink the sorceress has prepared for them.

The challenge with this work is that Ancient Greek conjugates and declines differently than that of Latin, and I couldn't rely on my knowledge of Spanish to help clue me in on more difficult phrases. Additionally, translating the work from Ancient Greek into American Standard English, and then again into African-American Vernacular English meant that I had to take careful measures to ensure that the tone and voice of the original story was still being kept, while also remaining true to my Black heritage. My hope is that in doing so, I can bring this work to a wider audience, and create greater engagement among readers and lovers of myth.

—Basil Wright, translator

About the author:



Homer is the presumed author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, two epic poems that are the central works of ancient Greek literature. The *Odyssey* was written by Homer in the 8th century BCE. Scholars debate whether Homer was a singular writer or a pseudonym for multiple authors working on the same written work. There is no clear answer of who Homer was or where his works were written. The photo is a Roman depiction of Homer from the second century AD, portrayed with traditional iconography, based on a Greek original dating to the Hellenistic period.

About the translator



Basil Wright is a Black and Indigenous queer writer that lives in Florida with their sibling. They have a MA in Classical Civilizations and uses their degree to translate Ancient Greek & Latin works so that they can be accessible to a modern audience. More at their website towerofbasil.wordpress.com. Follow Basil Wright on Twitter [@kobanya_kana](https://twitter.com/kobanya_kana).